

ASTRAL REALMS™

the World of Darkness

MAGE®
THE AWAKENING

*Listen. Can you hear it? The thunder of your soul,
roaring within the thousand thousand worlds that exist within you.*

*Gods are there, inside you. Worlds of dream and knowledge,
chains of purest gold that bind you to each and every other mind
that walks this earth.*

Sink beneath this base flesh and find the noble self within.

Read the words written on your soul.

Speak the names you find there.

Set your self free.

— Aristarchus, Moros' lovekeeper of the Adamantine Arrow

This book includes:

- Information on navigating Oneiros, Temenos and the Anima Mundi
- Dangerous denizens of the Astral, including the daimon spirit guides
- Artifacts and things of dream to aid a mage's dreamquest
- Six sample realms awaiting the adventurous



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MAGE[®]
THE AWAKENING

ASTRAL REALMS™



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DOORS

The Emperor had fled across the desert, and so the raven-haired mage and her fair, freckled companion followed. They had no choice: the Emperor was in her mind.

Every step kicked dust into the air, and it had already coated the mages' throats. A dispassionate sun hung above the horizon ahead of them, promising eventual relief and burning pain in the meantime.

"God, I wish I had a hat." The fair mage, Aodh, earned only a lungful of sand and a racking cough for his wish. "Okay, I take it back," he said through his shirtsleeve, "I wish we'd never come here. Can't we walk through a different part of your mind, or something?"

Nyx, the dark-haired beauty, was silent for a moment. "No," she said, looking ahead at Aodh without a hint of humor. "Only the Emperor knows where he's going here. We have to follow the same metaphorical paths he does, otherwise we'll never end up in the same place. Thus, following his tracks through this part of my mind."

"Great, I just love metaphor," Aodh threw back. "This whole desert is a metaphor, so why can't we follow the empty, choking metaphor of a hideous, burning desert and get on with it?"

"Because if we could, this part of dream space would already be ending. There's going to be something... special... to..." Nyx trailed off and stopped. Aodh stopped looking over his shoulder and faced front. He sighed long and deep.

"And here I was, saying this desert wouldn't be complete without a sandstorm," he said flatly as wind tugged at his shirt. Aodh flinched as the first of many grains of sand stung his forehead. "Maybe we should just get —" He stopped as he turned to see Nyx digging through the sand, shoving armfuls aside. "What are you doing?"

"Finding shelter, Aodh! The Emperor came this way, and he ran into the same obstacle we did here. Are you going to... help?" She looked up in time to see Aodh scan the surrounding dunes, protecting his eyes from the rising storm and the sun the storm half-eclipsed,

then shove his hand into an unremarkable pile of sand and pull up a trapdoor. "How'd you know?"

"Acanthus, remember?" Nyx rolled her eyes as he mock-bowed and escorted her down the stairs.

The chamber at the bottom looked like a cross between an Egyptian tomb in the cinema and a Las Vegas casino. "What is this place?" Aodh wondered aloud, and he took a few steps into its chaotic commotion.

Standing at the foot of the stairs, Nyx swallowed and said, "Probably some representation of my imagination."

"Come again?"

"My best guess is that the desert up there is boredom, a state I endure far too often thanks to the company I keep."

"Gee, thanks."

"My pleasure," she said with a smile. "Usually, boredom is just something I weather. But if it overwhelms me — like the storm would in the desert — I take refuge in my imagination." She leaned into the room and flicked her eyes back and forth, then twisted her mouth. "Unfortunately, I can't say much for my taste."

"So, this place is connected to your daydreams, then." Aodh craned his neck over the one-armed bandits. "I wonder where the sex fantasies are?"

"Aodh!" Nyx sounded exasperated, but she had a small smile and looked a little relaxed for the first time since the two mages had figured out what spell the Emperor had cast on her.

"Okay, I promise I won't go traipsing through your unconscious looking for your embarrassing secrets," Aodh said, looking over his shoulder just once as he returned to the stairs and sat down. "So... um, what do we do now that we're down here? Just wait out the storm?"

Nyx sat down next to him, her straight back contrasting Aodh's slump against the stairs. "Well, it's hard to be sure. In fact, that's part of the challenge. We figure out how to defeat the obstacle, and then



we move on to the next part of my mind. Defeating the obstacle *could* mean waiting it out,” her tone made it clear how likely she thought that, “or there’s something we need to do down here, in this gaudy metaphor for my imagination.” She looked annoyed. “Seriously, I do *not* think about gambling.”

Aodh laughed. “Boy, hearing you have a sense of humor is a breath of fresh air in this place.” Then they were both silent for several seconds. Aodh looked around conspicuously, then said, “No idea what to do, huh?” Nyx gave her head a tiny shake and Aodh an uncertain look. “I know,” he said, “Let’s get your whatsit involved, the dream guide. Um... daimon, right?” He almost fell over when he saw the fear on Nyx’s face. “Well, that’s just a, uh, suggestion, yeah?”

Nyx covered her mouth and looked apologetic. “I... had a bad experience here a few months ago. My daimon was involved, and,” she cast her eyes away from Aodh, “I’m not ready to face it again.”

“That’s no problem, Nyx, it’s cool. We’ll just figure this one out on our own, right?” Her grateful smile made the trouble worth it. “It’s fine, we can handle it.”

• • •

“*Down!*” Aodh’s quick reflexes pulled Nyx out of the way and into the fetid sewage — if it could be called water — as lightning seared just over their heads. Their quarry, the Seer of the Throne known as Boghran, disappeared down the next branch in his frantic search for an escape. She came up sputtering.

“You know, I survived this encounter the *first* time without ever getting shit up my nose!”

“That’s only because you didn’t have a gallant like me to protect you,” Aodh shot back, “Now let’s get after the bastard!” He hauled her out of the filth and ran around the corner to see Boghran disappear into another branching. Aodh and Nyx took up pursuit. “I wish I had a gun.”

“I wish you had a spell that could hurt him,” Nyx grumbled.

“Hey, any time now he’s going to start tripping over his own feet, you wait and see!” Aodh took a deep breath as they ran. “Are you telling me you came down here after a Seer unarmed?”

“No mage is ever unarmed, Aodh, even one as defenseless as you.”

“Low blow, Nyx, low blow.” They took the turn into a long, empty stretch of sewer. Aromatic liquid dribbled down the center of the corridor here in contrast to the steady, deep flow of the main tunnel. “Great, where’d he go?”

“Careful, he’s an Obrimos —”

“Yeah, I’d figured *that* out.”

“— and an adept in Matter. He can make himself invisible, throw up fake walls and change the very air we breathe into deadly poison.”

“Thanks for the intro class, Nyx. D’you have something useful to say?”

They circled, back to back. “Well, when I captured Boghran in real life, he pulled a trick like this on me. I had no idea where he was until he shot me in the back.” She paused. “This is a dream or a memory of that event... so he’s probably going to come without warning and surprise us. The challenge is to survive and knock him out instead.”

Nyx tensed, as if saying it would bring Boghran onto the offensive, but nothing happened. Minutes passed.

“Maybe we need to drop our guard, or something,” Aodh said. “Y’know, he can’t catch us by surprise if we’re so well defended like this. So...”

“So?”

“So maybe we talk a little until he surprises us?”

“We could just split up to make ourselves vulnerable,” Nyx said.

“Can’t split up, remember? I’ll get lost when you follow the metapath to the next place.”

“Great. Talking until we lose our edge it is.”

“So,” Aodh said distractedly, “When’d you run into Boghran in real life?”

“Aught-three. He was trying to spy on the Guardians, setting up a listening post outside one of our meeting places. I found him out and broke his arrangement to pieces, then caught him when he ran away through... this.”

“Capturing a Seer all by your lonesome as a newb? That’s no small feat. Guardians gotta give you respect for that.”

“Yes, they did,” Nyx answered, but she’d been quiet too long. Aodh felt her tense up behind him.

“But something’s different now, something’s changed, hasn’t it?” Aodh’s voice was level, empty of judgment. No sound came from behind him but light breathing and the slosh of feet through filth.

“Yes, something’s changed,” Nyx said. “I’m... the Guardians put me under censure.” Aodh caught and crushed his gasp before it escaped. “Dargon disapproves of how I handled the Emperor when he entered my sphere of influence, and he’s punishing me. The order is blocking my further education under the excuse of

‘reexamining my dedication to the order’s principles.’ And now that I’ve been compromised by the Emperor, it’ll be a cold day in hell before I get any trust again.” Aodh drew in breath to speak, but Nyx continued before he could let it out. “And no, I won’t accept anything from the Council. You should know better than to think that.”

“Fine. It’s well-meant, though.”

“I know, Aodh, and you’re a fine mage, for a Libertine.”

“Thanks,” Aodh said, but his voice wasn’t playful like usual, even though Nyx’s had been. “Nyx, if there’s anything I can do —”

“There isn’t.”

“— fake up a conspiracy, anything —”

“They’re too good, and you know it, Aodh. I appreciate the sentiment, but — *down!*” This time Nyx shoved Aodh into the sewage, just in time for a bolt of lightning to strike her in the shoulder. Aodh looked up from the crap as Nyx, holding her wound, muttered, “Just like last time,” and flicked her fingers at the now-evident Seer, who staggered. He watched as the two mages stared at each other, she casting rotes at him and he brushing her spells aside. Then Boghran’s eyes rolled back in his head, and the Seer crumpled into the sewage, which seeped into his fine suit. Nyx helped Aodh up.

They stood over the body. “So,” Aodh said, “Now you’ve caught him, isn’t the memory supposed to end? We get to pick a path and catch up with the Emperor now, don’t we?”

“Not quite,” Nyx said, staring at the collapsed Boghran. She absently smoothed out her blouse and twitched lint off her pants, fidgeting in a way unlike her. “There’s something more.”

“Yeah? What?”

Nyx looked Aodh in the eyes. “The Guardians of the Veil have a test to determine if a mage is ready to become a full member. They call it the Red Veil, and you have to kill someone on behalf of the order and its ideals to pass.” Aodh’s eyes widened. “I shouldn’t be telling you this, but Dargon already doesn’t trust me, and... and I know that you won’t tell anyone, Aodh.” She gave him a faint smile. Then Nyx looked back at the helpless mage. Aodh sensed the force of her will crushing Boghran’s mind, and he thought he saw blood mingling with the sewage pooled at the Seer’s nose.

“The way is open.” Nyx caught Aodh’s gaze again. “Our next path is one of darkness and privacy.”

• • •

“The cancer will kill you in three months,” said Aodh, his face creased with worry.

“No,” said Nyx.

“I got drunk and totaled your car.”

“Uh-unh.”

“Um, I did your mom?”

“Stop,” Nyx said with a grimace. “This isn’t working.”

They stood on a bare balcony under heavy clouds and above the lights of nighttime New York City, locked out of the dark penthouse. They’d survived a sandstorm of boredom, condemned the cliques amidst a maelstrom of loneliness against a university backdrop and then hunted down the Seer Boghran. But the ornate iron penthouse doors presented an obstacle neither finesse nor force could penetrate.

Nyx leaned against the balcony railing and sighed. “I hope we’re not stuck this time. We’ve been in here for... how long, Aodh?”

“Almost three hours,” said Aodh. “Feels like months, though.” He let out a long whistle. He bit his lip before continuing. “So, we’re not really stuck, here, are we? I mean, you know how to get outta this, right?”

“In all the other places, things were happening, or there was somewhere to go. Here, our options are limited to getting through the door, sitting out here or going over the edge. And I don’t think falling is the answer to this one.”

“Yeah, I hope not.” Aodh looked over the edge. “Even knowing this is your mind, I don’t think I could bring myself to do that.” He rubbed his eyes. “Okay, let’s think about this. Have you ever been here before? Do you recognize this tower?”

“No. I don’t know it, and I’ve lived in New York all my life. That’s the city down below, but I can’t place the tower.”

“Fine,” Aodh said. “So this isn’t a memory, and we’re back to metaphor. There’s something in your life that feels inaccessible, unassailable, that —”

“We’ve been over this, Aodh, and if you couldn’t get my emotions to flow with all your inane triggers, you can’t get my unconscious to ‘open up.’”

“Yeah, you keep everything so bottled up it’s a wonder we didn’t run into the invincible, unbreakable door an hour ago. What I wouldn’t give to be Moros right about now.” He looked up and quirked an eyebrow. “Hey, you can’t use that emotion-tweaking spell on yourself, can you?”

"The, uh —" Nyx closed her eyes for a second. "No. Or at least I can't get a real Imago for it."

"Nuts." Aodh's face fell back into thought. "Well, worth a shot. But listen, whatever's through this door is something you really don't want to share, with me or you, y'know? We broke through with the anger thing, here, but I think that's a blind. We should be going for more stuff like you getting kicked out of the Guardians."

"I wasn't kicked out." Nyx's voice was flat and lightning flared in the sky above.

"Sorry, I know. I was hoping... I mean, you really opened up to me when you told me that. I thought it might open the door, but no such luck." He looked up from where he was sitting on the balcony. "Maybe you need to open up more. You're hiding something else, something even darker if this creepy building and storm are any clue. Telling me might be the answer."

Nyx sneered at him. "So I'm just supposed to shout out my secrets to you, and maybe the door will open? No thanks. You've already seen more than I ever thought anyone else would ever know about me." Her voice softened. "It... it wasn't easy letting you see them, you know, and I don't think I could let out any more. Even if it would open the door."

"Hey," Aodh said, "How'd the Emperor get through if you need to open up?"

Nyx sighed. "I don't know. It means we're probably wrong about the opening up bit, and some action will open the way. But damned if I know what it is." She looked at Aodh, who was fiddling with the stone floor and looking away from her. "You're thinking



something. Don't make me read your mind." The hint of tease in her voice made Aodh meet her gaze and smile just a little.

"Well, we need to catch the Emperor and get him out of your unconscious, yeah?"

"Right," Nyx said, encouraging him to continue.

"Well, if it's that important... we could get through the door with your daimon's help."

"Aodh, I said —"

"I know what you said, Nyx, but the Guardians might never take you back if we can't prove you're not a security risk. We've gotta go on, right?" She looked like she was about to yell at him, but Aodh didn't stop. "How do we get the daimon?" He stood up and screamed into the sky. "Daimon! Daimon, come help us! Dai —"

Then it was there, standing in front of Aodh. It looked just like Nyx, lithe and pretty with her signature

night-black hair. If anything, the daimon's face looked more communicative than Nyx's, more emotive and honest. It smiled at Aodh.

"See, that wasn't so hard, was —" Nyx wasn't behind him. He turned all the way around calling her name until he was face to face with the daimon again.

"She's gone, Aodh, back into the real world." The daimon radiated sadness, regret.

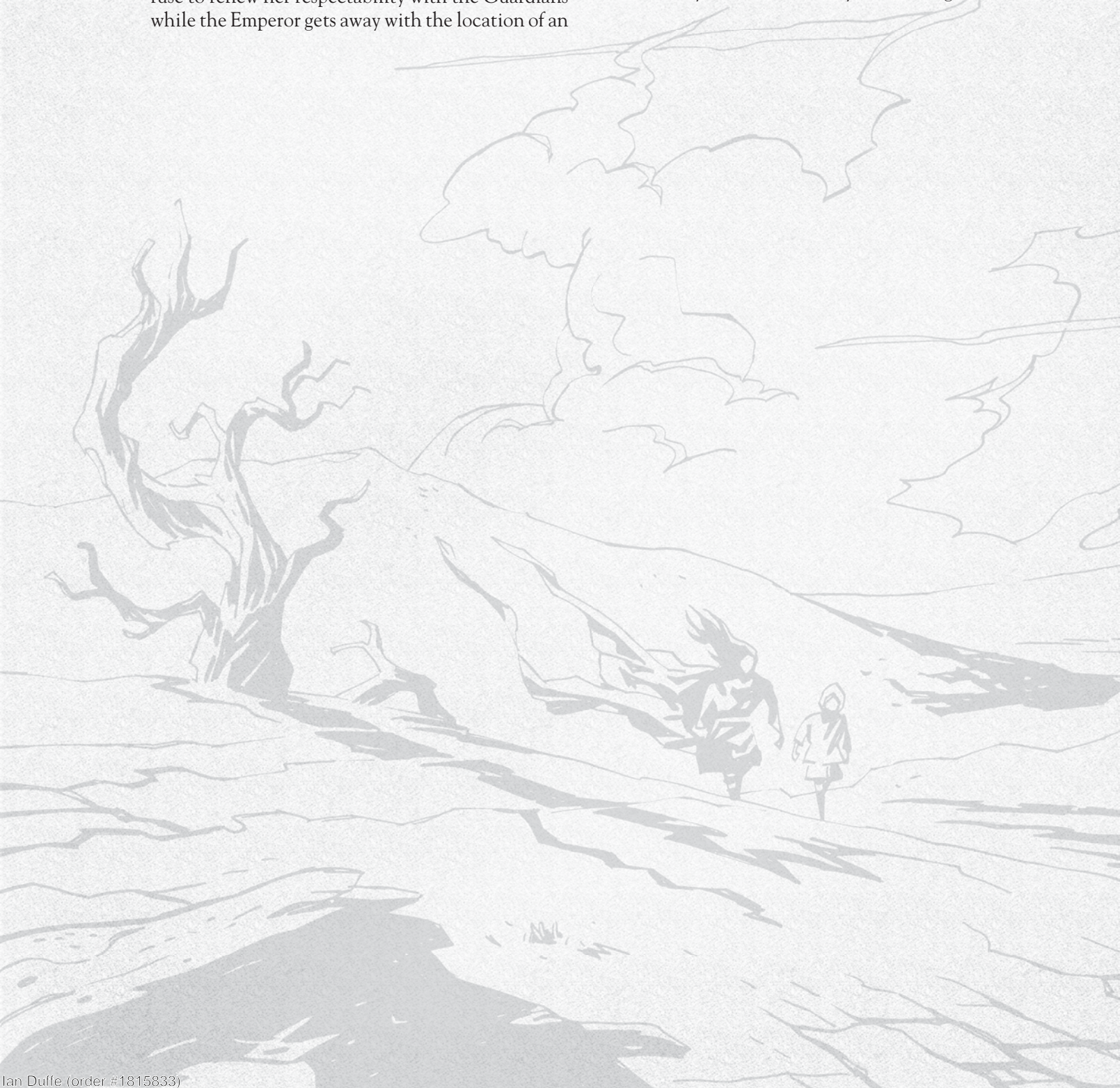
"What? Why's that?"

"Nyx doesn't want you to know that this is all a ruse to renew her respectability with the Guardians while the Emperor gets away with the location of an

artifact they hid a year ago. Now that you've met me, she knows you'll learn the truth — I'm the part of her that doesn't approve of her actions — and she's returned to the real world to kill you before you ruin her."

Aodh's mouth hung open. "Kill... me?"

The daimon looked truly sorrowful. "She never liked revealing even her petty secrets to you, and she's a cold one." It held out a slender, attractive hand to Aodh. "Come with me," said Nyx's beautiful double. "Let me show you around before you have to go."



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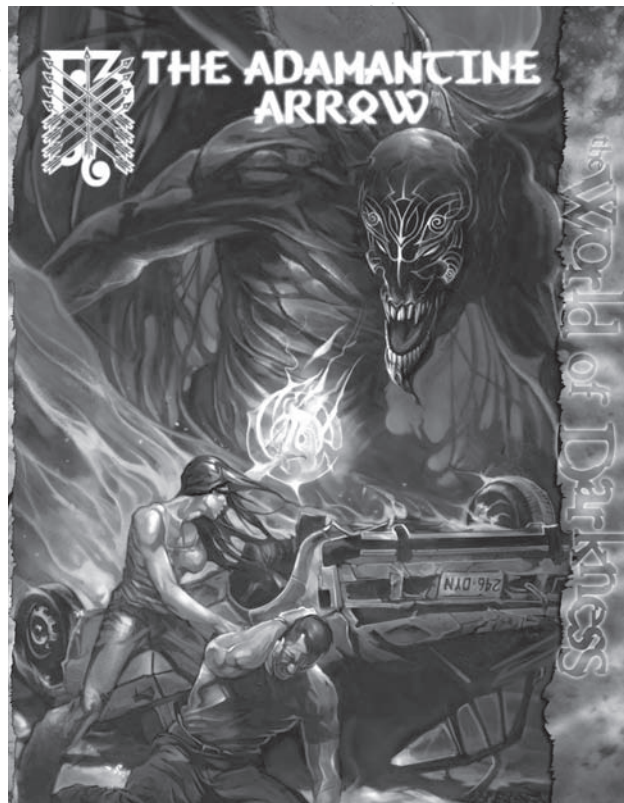
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*Coming Next
for Mage: The Awakening*



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ASTRAL REALMS™

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INTRODUCTION

*It is a thorny undertaking, and more so than it seems,
to follow a movement so wandering as that of our mind,
to penetrate the opaque depths of its innermost folds,
to pick out and immobilize the innumerable flutterings that agitate it.
And it is a new and extraordinary amusement,
which withdraws us from the ordinary occupations of the world,
yes, even from those most recommended.*

— Michel de Montaigne, “Of Practice”

To Awaken is to see the world around you open up like a flower with ten thousand petals, each petal a new possibility. It is the gift of Awakening to see all the things that the world could be, and the burden to understand that so many more possibilities are stillborn. Potential futures rife with magic, entire worlds built on the foundation of glory and sorcery have been sliced away by the Exarchs and forbidden to the earthly plane.

And yet, there are still billions of worlds beyond this one — reflections of Earth and places wholly unlike Earth, a world for every living human soul and then some. The Lie cannot extinguish these possibilities, for they are unfettered by the physical. They lie within.

To the Awakened, the idea that each soul contains a universe is not simply a romantic dream. The realms of the inmost self are real, and so is the wisdom to be found there. Go far enough into oneself, and one can fall into the soul of the world proper, the dreams of continents and oceans. There are even rumors that dreams of lost Atlantis and hidden ties to the Supernal can be found in the most shadowed and perilous recesses of the Inner Realms. All that is necessary to begin searching is the will to immerse oneself within.

The Power Within

The dreamquests of an astral voyage are far, far more than simple self-help or psychiatry. Because of the nature of shared dreams, a mage is able to tap into knowledge that she has never learned, yet that was waiting there for her to know all along. An astral journey is a perfect story to go along with something as simple as spending experience points to better oneself, and it is also an interesting way to gain access to new information that furthers the overall goals of the chronicle. This book is about these journeys, offering new details, rules, ideas and backdrops to populate a story about the Inner Realms.

An astral journey is in some ways a classic “change of pace” storyline. That isn’t to say it’s purely escapist; the problems that beset the Awakened follow them inside, although the problems take different forms. But it’s a chance to experience different backdrops and challenge different obstacles, to bask in the symbolic and exotic. Even as the objectives of a dreamquest advance the overall narrative of the chronicle, the change of pace keeps things vivid and compelling without sacrificing plausibility or continuity.

Another advantage of the astral dreamquest is that it’s open to anyone, regardless of Path or order. A mage can venture into his Oneiros alone if need be, or he can travel with his cabal into the depths of shared dreams. In some cases, even the unAwakened supporting cast of a chronicle can take part. Yes, the Inner Realms play by their own rules, and perhaps it’s not fair to say that “anything can happen” in any given story — but it’s close enough that a dreamquest can be one of the most inclusive yet personal stories available to a cabal.

The Wonder of the Astral

From a narrative perspective, astral stories are a chance to explore environments that would be impossible to encounter in anything resembling our own physical world. The fantastic elements of **Mage** can play as great a role as you see fit here. The Awakened can walk in impossible dreamscapes of bones that grow like flowers, catch comets in their hands or scramble to evade the colossal hooves of the Apocalypse made manifest. Here, more than anywhere, the very environment reinforces the idea that mages see and do the impossible. The differences can be quite subtle, such as in an Oneiros that seems subtly... off... in some ways until the mage finally realizes just how wrong the environment is. Any sort of set is possible in the astral.

This intense freedom for set design benefits the Storyteller, of course, but the player as well. Shaping the backdrop for a more surreal, fantastic **Mage** story begins with the player deciding to go into the Inner Realms, and selecting a destination there. This is a prime opportunity for excellent collaboration. With the players proposing initial images and destinations and the Storyteller riffing off those proposals and adding new twists, the potential for a vivid play experience is remarkable.

Theme

The theme of the astral is introspection. By journeying within oneself, one can reach truths that were otherwise inaccessible. As fantastic and harrowing as a trip into the Oneiros may be, it is at its most poignant when it reflects the inner thoughts, dreams and hopes of the traveler. Traveling into Astral Space for answers is no simple intellectual exercise, of course. Old traumas, ugly flaws and repressed memories and personality traits all lie within the inner self, where the mage must overcome them. Here, the unpleasant truths about oneself are all the harder to overlook.

This theme holds true even beyond the Oneiroi. Temenos reflects a world that is greater than the traveler himself, but that is still found within. Journeying through Temenos is akin to the introspection of humanity as a whole, delving within all the shared foibles of the race. Even the Anima Mundi is more a matter of looking within the world itself to see what patterns lie underneath.

Mood

Most journeys into the astral will have a dreamlike mood. Physical laws are not the constants that they are in the material world, and may change dramatically from place to place without the slightest touch of Awakened magic. Colors may appear sharper or duller than they should, whatever “should” may be worth. Dream logic and symbolism are often more powerful than a more empirical reason. By surrendering to this particular breed of logic, the traveler may find herself carried along in the current to her destination much more quickly than otherwise — though the journey may still be dangerous.

Particularly in the Oneiroi, the mood will be heavily affected by the personality of the traveler. An increasingly paranoid Guardian of the Veil enters into her own dreams and finds a realm of oppressive shadows. A once-zealous Adamantine Arrow who is beginning to suffer pangs of self-doubt walks in a world where the buildings and streets are becoming increasingly brittle, cracking under pressure. In these cases, the dreamlike mood of an astral journey may develop into a more pleasant journey or into something nightmarish, depending on the traveler. However, whatever form the mood may take, the tension of challenges and obstacles to be overcome does not vanish. Enlightenment is never gained easily.

How to Use This Book

Astral Realms begins with a cautionary tale about how the dangers in the Inner Realms are often quite proportionate to the dreamer who travels within. The rest of the book is divided into sections for both player and Storyteller use.

Chapter One: Astral Magic begins with a practical look at the most basic considerations facing mages in the astral: how will their magic work on an inward journey? Each of the Arcana is examined with respect to its function in the astral. Also included in this chapter are a number of spells and associated rites that may make surviving the journey within a little easier.

Chapter Two: Mapping the Impossible is a guide to the three levels of Astral Space: Oneiros, Temenos and the Anima Mundi. Here is more information on navigating the three, as well as an extended treatment of each plane and the wonders found there.

Chapter Three: Denizens and Things treats with the entities and objects that might be dropped into a story about the astral, or power a new one just by their discovery. A selection of entities from throughout Astral Space opens the book, with such players as the daimon, goetic demons and primal archetypes being showcased. Following that comes a number of physical Artifacts and imbued items to aid astral interaction, and certain mystical items that derive their power from the astral realms themselves.

Chapter Four: Dreamquests is this book's Storytelling section. Here you'll find plenty of advice on shaping astral stories for your chronicle: when to use them, how to best shape them to your players, and what elements might prove most useful in achieving the

story's goals. Some notes on integrating characters or antagonists from other World of Darkness games are also provided.

Finally, **Chapter Five: Realms** presents six sample Realms for mages to dare in the search for greater understanding: *Alkahest*, an outlandish empire of conquest awaiting a new master; *The Infested Dreams of John Hathorne*, an Oneiric realm born of Fae power and a Banisher's dreams; *The Realm of Mars*, a sphere of Temenos mingling the warlike and mysterious aspects of the Red Planet; *The Metropolis*, the archetypal city that contains all cities; *The Realm of Death*, home to humanity's collective dreams, fears and gods of death itself; and *The Wellspring*, a realm in Anima Mundi that contains a profound secret — the spark of sentience itself.

Sources and Inspiration

The stories implicit to an astral journey can draw from many sources, often much more surreal than is standard for a **Mage: The Awakening** chronicle. Anything involving dream imagery and symbolism is a potential seed.

On the literary front, many of the works of Franz Kafka, such as *The Metamorphosis* and “In the Penal Colony,” deal with surreal surrounding and something very like dream logic. For a somewhat playful yet still quite intriguing premise, Victor Pelevin's “Prince of Central Planning” satirizes Soviet bureaucracy by blending two worlds, one physical and one digital. Scholarly works on human myth are also excellent for providing structure to the Temenos; though there's of course more to myth than the Campbellian Hero's Journey, the parallels between world myths make for excellent building blocks for astral archetypes.

On the film front, vivid art direction and surreal imagery can provide tremendous inspiration. Consider Akira Kurosawa's *Dreams*. A series of vignettes based on the famed director's own dreams: is any other excuse to watch a Kurosawa film necessary? *MirrorMask*'s singular visuals are another good choice for inspiration; bizarre book-eating sphinxes and faceless levitating giants are only a few of the oddities that might well come out of a dreamer's Oneiros. Though the story of *What Dreams May Come* is a bit trite, the core concept is very appropriate, and the art direction neatly reflects a world that is drawn more from the traveler than he suspects.

Finally, don't forget the nearest and most vivid source of imagination: your own dreams. Some people keep dream journals by their beds, for the purpose of jotting down as much of their dreams as they can remember before the images and events fade from memory. Give it a try; you may be surprised at the kind of scenes that result.

Lexicon

The following terms pertain to objects or places peculiar to the astral, concepts that are familiar to most experienced astral travelers.

Amnion: A protective aura created to protect a mage from the Ecstatic Wind.

daimon: A mage's personal astral guide, manifesting as a reflection of herself and/or her self-image.

dream vestibule: The entry point into Oneiros.

Ecstatic Wind: The property of the Anima Mundi that potentially erodes a mage's astral form or identity.

walker: An astral construct in Temenos based on the common perception of a famous person.



CHAPTER ONE: SHAPING THE MISTS

Deep in the shadows cast by impossible sky-slicing towers, the pursuer and the pursued finally locked eyes for the first time since the chase had begun. The smirk on her face said it all: *I am caught, but I am far from beaten.*

"What are you going to do now, executioner?" she spat. "The mind is paramount here. Death has no power over me here. You think you have me? I think I have you."

He sighed, just a bit. "I'd been hoping you'd say something a little wiser, maybe a little more enlightened when we finally got around to this. When you go and say something ignorant like that..."

Shadows poured past him, reaching out with long, greedy fingers toward her. She hissed softly, stepped back with her eyes on the slinking darkness like a mongoose watching a cobra, her lips moving... and then her left heel came down on more shadow, and she fell into it.

"...Well, it just sort of spoils the moment. You know?"

*I AM CAUGHT
BUT I AM FAR FROM BEATEN*

*There is a god within us, and the heavens
Have intercourse with earth; from realms above
That spirit comes.
— Ovid, "Ars Amatoria"*

The simple fact that entire worlds hide beneath the skin of their minds is reason enough for mages to explore them. Insight into their minds and souls and into Supernal truths await them, but their mentors justly warn about the dangers. Daimons and demons and darker things lurking are not the mage's only concerns: the natural magic familiar to every neophyte acts differently in Astral Space, bending to the whims of perception common to an Astral Space. This chapter offers guidance on what to expect when using Supernal magic in the Astral, along with new spells useful for entering or affecting Astral Space.

Skewed Perspectives: Magic in the Astral

Mages grasp the concept that the laws of Astral Spaces are different from those of the Fallen World, and that they are flexible, unique, manipulable and often too chaotic to be properly called laws. It's easy because every mage has experienced transit from a world with one set of immutable laws to a vastly broader world of magic.

Difficulty arises from dealing with places where the way magic works is unpredictable; a mage knows there is so much more to the world than his little corner, but he also *understands* the way magic works. There is an art and a science to it, and the risk of a Paradox, but magic demonstrably functions the same way over multiple uses. Going someplace where magic works differently is a daunting prospect, or should be — ignorance breeds overconfidence.

It is lucky, then, that magic in Astral Space still follows some rules. Magic follows especially the rule of perception. Astral Space is symbols and meaning given shape, made into a set piece and populated with actors. That set is how mages traveling through the astral interact with it. For them, the Astral Space is an endless jungle, a looming city, the top of Ayers Rock or a mansion without an outside.

How the space appears is how magic treats it. A mage traveling within the swamp of her psychoses feels the

squelch of mud on her boots and feels the vibrant life of the vines and trees around her, and she can affect it with her magic as though it were real. The rule of thumb (for characters and for players) is, "If it looks like a duck, treat it like a duck." An inferno in the Anima Mundi is a valid target for "Control Fire," and "Alter Integrity" can shore up a weakening bridge in the Oneiros before it crumbles away with its owner's confidence.

That said, there can be distinct differences in the way that magic interacts with some aspects of an Astral Space. It all depends on how the governing mind of the space regards those aspects — this is the other end of the rule of perception. Mages may assume that an Astral Space's representation is valid and affect it with magic as though the Astral Space were real; the Astral Space holds its contents in a context that is not immediately available to its explorers, and that context also governs magic's interaction with those contents. For example, sympathy is different inside the collective unconscious. It derives from the souls of billions of humans and acquires their perceptions: To the masses, traveling between two places that are closer together is easier — thus, distance (or perceived distance) dictates the strength of a sympathetic connection.

Spells last until their Durations pass in the real world, for the most part. Spells with a Duration of one scene end with the scene in astral, whether that takes five seconds or hours in the real world. Spells given concrete Durations are measured in reality; it is one of Astral Space's strange qualities that spells with additional Duration factors may end before those without.

A spell cast while astral is undetectable in the physical world. Spells laid on an astral body are absent from the physical body. Magic is an invocation of the soul, not of the body, and the soul is elsewhere. Spells cast in Astral Space count against a mage's maximum number of active spells, even once the mage returns to real space. Astral bodies suffer magical interference as real bodies do: spells on an astral body count toward Spell Tolerance Limits.

Some spells cast in reality can affect the astral, or vice versa. Spells cast before entering Astral Space are

visible in the real world and sum with those cast only in the astral with regard to Spell Tolerance.

Arcana in the Astral

Magic follows trends in Astral Space. One may not be sure how it will work, but one can expect! All variations on Mage Sight work normally, allowing a mage to perceive supernatural effects and examine the resonance of auras. This latter ability is valuable in Astral Space, so laden with meaning are its furnishings. On the other hand, something meaningless to the Astral Space is without an aura: the locked diary on the bed is important and reeks of secret hope, but everything else in the bedroom is only window dressing and colorless to scrutiny.

Magical armoring spells protect the astral body from attack as they do the mundane body. Spells that provide knowledge work in Astral Space but *cannot provide information that isn't there*. Examples follow under individual Arcana, but the general rule is that some aspects of Astral Space's contents are known by the space and some aren't. Information that simply isn't there cannot be found.

Death

The nature of Astral Spaces limits this Arcanum. Anything given the appearance and trappings of Death falls under Death's purview, but few Oneiroi, parts of the Temenos or world soul contain ephemera or ghosts. Only select Oneiroi and some aspects of the Dreamtime contain a Twilight at all; the concept of a second, invisible layer over the material world where immaterial creatures and objects reside is too foreign a concept to the perspectives of most Astral Spaces.

Directly physical aspects of this Arcanum are less hobbled. Corpses and shadows are powerful metaphors, and Death retains its power over both. Using magic to discern a cause of death reveals much — as long as it's relevant enough to be defined by the space — and animating the dead as servants can be useful. Spells that tear Mana from a living Pattern (such as "Devouring the Slain") do not function in Astral Space because the life of the Pattern and the Mana bound up in the Pattern are elsewhere.

"Soul Jar" is a unique case. Mages in Astral Space *are* souls; they are treated as living bodies, but they are not. A mage can cast "Soul Jar" on a sealable container and, provided it is large enough, capture another mage's astral body in that container for the Duration of the spell. A captured mage cannot willingly

return to her own body, though she can be roused by someone in the material world. Native inhabitants of the astral cannot be caught in this manner — they aren't souls.

Fate

Astral Space disorients mages with strong ties to Fate. Astral objects and people have fates dictated entirely by what the space that contains them perceives as their future. At the same time, Fate governs the trends of the material world: People have fates; their dreams usually don't. Destinies inside an Oneiros are most confusing. Aspects of a person's unconscious register as without fate or destiny because they are completely dependent on the mind that contains them. Scrutiny reveals that the Oneiros's contents will remain undisturbed; an Oneiros that dictates a certain cycle (a childhood pet dies again and again, or a terrifying car accident plays over and over) reveals those objects' dual fates — they are doomed to die and fade away and become permanent inhabitants of the Astral Space.

Other destinies leak in from the material world when an event there will change the astral landscape. For example, a man insecure in his ability to protect his wife manifests this in his Oneiros as a thousand scenes of minor hurts and major wounds inflicted on his spouse. His fate is to take her out to dinner and be accosted by a mugger, whom he disarms with his wife watching; his insecurity will weaken or disappear as a result. An astral traveler examining the destiny of those scenes (before the real-world event) learns three things: the way each scene plays out, that the scene is permanent and unchanging and that the scene will disappear.

Invoking a fate on the person outside his Oneiros colors fate readings inside the dream space if the destiny is strong enough; the reverse is not true. An Oneiros-object refuses fates that run counter to that demanded by the dream space. An astral mage can alter a person's subconscious by changing the inside of her Oneiros, but laying fates there is too subtle to work.

As with Oneiroi, reading destinies inside the collective unconscious or the Anima Mundi provides multiple answers. The Fool archetype is fated to err but achieve, and still has the air of permanence. Only world-spanning destinies pierce the Temenos or Dreamtime to give astral objects there other fates: the Holocaust changed the collective unconscious, for example, and the eruption of a super volcano could change the Dreamtime.

Immediate Fate magic functions normally. It is no more difficult to predict the flip of a coin or become really lucky in astral than it is in the material world. Some spells play out in strange fashions, though. Using "The Perfect Moment" in a dream space bar inspires bizarre pickup lines and unnatural timing — but with the desired results — because picking someone up in a bar works the way the Oneiros says it should. Likewise, "Shifting the Odds" has even more unpredictable results than usual. In Astral Space, the astral car a mage wants to more quickly get around could fall out of the sky, or assemble itself from spare parts.

Oaths magically sworn in Astral Space are limited. They are made to the universe the mage currently occupies — whichever Astral Space he is in. In any other universe, be it the material world, a different Oneiros or one of the higher dream planes, that oath is void. (Oaths sworn in the material world are valid in all the Inner Planes.) Upon returning to the dimension where one has sworn an oath, that oath remains in force. The exception is in one's own Oneiros: an oath sworn there is as valid as one sworn anywhere else.

As "Soul Jar" can capture an astral body, so can "Destroy Bindings" set one free. It defeats even the powers of natural astral inhabitants to capture astral travelers.

Forces

This Arcanum translates easily into Astral Space. Astral Spaces represent themselves in ways interpretable by their creators and their travelers. Astral Spaces are composed of dreams, but they are represented with light, sound, heat and motion. A mage with Forces can manipulate all the energies he can manipulate in the real world.

This control is limited to what is *perceived*, not what *should be*. The mage runs into trouble when he assumes that things work as they do in the real world. The dream-television displays a picture, and the light from that picture can be bent and twisted and played with. But few unconscious minds think about the electromagnetic broadcast the television is picking up to display that image, and the television doesn't depend on electricity to run. Forces-based Mage Sight reveal few of the emanations constantly floating in the real world; a mage who constantly listens in on the world's free-floating information feels deaf in Astral Space.

Anything ignored by the governing mind or minds potentially loses its connection to Forces. A household outlet, a weapon for any mage with Forces 2, has no

power if the outlet's electricity is irrelevant to an Oneiros. A storm is incapable of producing lightning if it's simply inconceivable to the Astral Space. Exploring a repressed nightmare about a childhood shock or a frightening storm can do the opposite: the wall outlet becomes a more potent source of electricity than normal or the violent lightning storm adds dice to the "Call Lightning" roll.

In the Temenos, these forces work more regularly as they should: enough people think about electricity and the like to shape the collective space into something resembling reality. How frequently the television cord actually carries electricity and the air bears unseen information depends on the surrounding set pieces. A Temenos-city probably has more minds involved with its composition and is more likely to incorporate this aspect of reality. Objects that bring ignored forces to mind also make it more likely: standing near an astral satellite dish makes the invisible waves stronger.

Rare Oneiroi and locations in other Astral Spaces use other sensations to convey their symbolism. A blind person's Oneiros functions through sound, touch and smell alone, limiting the usefulness of certain Arcana — though a mage unused to operating without sight has other problems in such a place. Stranger Astral Spaces exist and further limit Forces. A creature that has no sense beyond telepathy possesses a unique Oneiros that hobbles Forces almost completely; the Arcanum still governs forces (such as light and movement) seen through others' eyes and sensed through telepathic connections.

Life

That which appears alive can be affected by this Arcanum. Though daimons are constructs of the psyche, archetypes are of the collective psyche and the creatures of the Dreamtime are metaphor and symbols; any archetypes that take an apparently living form can be targeted by Life magic. "Sense Life" detects creatures declared alive by the perception of the astral space. The right spells clear astral toxins from astral bodies. Other Life magic affects astral bodies the same way: a mage can improve her astral body's Physical Attributes and degrade the Physical Attributes other astral bodies' or astral creatures with the right spells.

Healing magic acts differently in Astral Space. Astral bodies bleed Willpower instead of Health when damaged, but they are not perfect analogs. Spells that heal wounds do not return lost Willpower, mages may



not scour their Willpower for Mana, and they may not spend Mana to restore their Willpower. Pattern restoration and scouring affect the real-world body (and the physical evidence of scouring may cause attendants to rouse the astral traveler). Spells that heal *others* have the same limits when cast on other astral travelers but function as intended on Astral Space natives.

Life *created* in Astral Space is effectively a native of that Astral Space. Some such creatures acquire a role within the astral (as a facet of an archetype, for example) and act accordingly, or they possess no role and act as the Astral Space perceives they should. Any life created with a Duration of days or longer (especially indefinite Duration) is sure to be absorbed into the Astral Space's everyday function — or eliminated.

Matter

Similar to Forces, Matter is simple to carry into Astral Space. Just as light and sound exist in most Astral Spaces, so does solid matter. Even the blind sense ground beneath their feet. Also as with Forces, detection spells only learn as much as the place defines: only the Oneiros of an engineer or materials scientist knows the real composition of its sidewalks and structures, and if an astral object is a mystery to the Astral Space, no amount of magic will tell a mage what the object does.

Machines work the way the Astral Space *thinks* they should work. “Alter Conductivity” prevents a real-world airport metal detector from picking up a concealed gun, but the astral metal detector *detects metal* (or perhaps detects weapons, depending on the dominant point of view). That’s what the detector does *and* how it works, and changing the weapon’s conductivity only fixes that if the Astral Space is technically aware of how the metal detector works. (In most cases, changing an astral object’s conductivity does little unless the space understands conductivity.) While “Detect Composition” often reveals fuzzy information regarding what makes up matter, the spell accurately determines the game-mechanical aspects of the targeted object.

Mind

Mind is not the be-all, end-all of magic in Astral Space, though Mind is the most valuable Arcanum for working with Astral Spaces from the real world. Mind is as useful in the astral as in the real world. Astral creatures, from daimons and goetic demons to collective archetypes and stranger things, can be read and influenced with Mind magic. Mind-based Mage Sight can be more useful than others in dream spaces and the collective unconscious. Relevant locations there are often relevant precisely because they have emotional weight.

Many astral natives have one-track minds and special qualities based on their natures: the Oneiros representation of a terrorizing older brother is always angry and malicious, and the Stranger archetype always plots secret things. This limits what a mage learns from them but can be a key to discovering the entity's role in that Astral Space. Other Mind spells work normally, from tweaking emotions and making inhabitants ignore a mage to controlling them.

Not everything works. Writing incomprehensible to the Astral Space cannot be understood by "Universal Language"; *repressed* meaning can be dredged up, but absent meaning cannot. And astral creatures' memories vary widely. A mother's Oneiros contains her perception of the drunk driver who struck her child, and his memories are the drunken fog of a long day's partying — the mother's imagined nothing more. Some creatures exist only briefly and play out roles without remembering anything, while some archetypes and creatures of the Dreamtime remember times before humanity.

"Dream Traveler" lets a mage into a person's surface dreams. There, she can explore the subject's character and shape the subject's mind. The symbolism is weaker than it is in Astral Space and changes are easier in the Oneiros, but the astral has many more dangers than surface dreams. Other spells let a mage access others' Oneiroi; see "Magic of the Astral," p. 22.

Prime

Astral Space is a supernatural place, but not Supernal. The Prime Arcanum is only somewhat useful there. Counterspells and dispellations are only useful if there are other willworkers in the astral, and one is not likely to find many imbued items or Supernal artifacts there. Auras reveal the nature of astral natives, helping the explorer discern daimons from goetic demons and nightmare beings. Phantasms created with Prime work equally well in the material world and Astral Space.

Prime's ability to manipulate Mana is an advantage in astral travel. There are no Hallows or tass in Astral Space — some realms represent Hallows, but they do not produce real Mana. Spells like "Siphon Integrity" fail, since astral structure contains no Mana. Tass is inaccessible to astral travelers, forcing them to rely on their personal supplies of Mana; Prime 3 allows a mage to convert real-world tass into astral tass as part of the journey inward. Likewise, a character with Prime can create tass in the astral to share his Mana store with companions; a character with Prime 5 and

Space 2 can use "Channel Mana" sympathetically to draw Mana from Hallows or tass in the real world from Astral Space.

The "Create Hallow" spell poses philosophical problems. Astral Space is a realm of soul. One can create a Hallow in a soul-place — it's easy to prove — but what are the consequences? Forging a source of Mana inside a mage's Oneiros is especially an interesting proposition. Accounts of those who have attempted to keep Hallows in their own Oneiroi, usually believing them secure sources of power, describe mages who become increasingly erratic and dangerous before disappearing or becoming so threatening that they are killed. Hallows installed in other Astral Spaces produce unpredictable consequences: Temenos realms given long-duration Hallows become lost or near-impossible to travel to and inhabitants of the Anima Mundi wipe Hallows from their maps. Some ambitious mages insist that opening a Hallow in a Sleeper's Oneiros is the key to triggered Awakenings, though more believe Sleepers unconsciously put internal Hallows out as one would a candle.

Space

Space is one of the most interesting Arcana to deal with in Astral Space. Each realm strongly defines its own rules for sympathy, and mages have no choice but to obey them. In general, two things in Astral Space have as much sympathy with each other as the space dictates, no more and no less. A child's unconscious strongly connects the teddy bear with the grandmother who made it a gift, even though the real-world bear and relative have barely any connection. The child's mother has an Intimate connection with the family's old couch as where she conceived; his Oneiros includes couch and mother, but as the kid is unaware of those associations, gives the two things no sympathetic connection at all.

The collective unconscious has its own rules for sympathy. People associate certain places, objects or people with other people, objects or things, and the strength and commonality of those associations determine sympathy. An astral AK rifle has sympathy with Russia or the Middle East, depending on the realm, and astral housecats have a minor sympathy with astral lions. Beyond those associations, travel and reaching from one place to another depend on the same restrictions people have and assume in real life: distance. Greater distance impairs Space magic more than small distances. Part of this is the collective understanding that it is easier to access Scotland from England than from France, and easier from France

than from China; it is also from flaws in the common unAwakened conception of movement and distance. When casting sympathetic magic, use the strongest of any available sympathies. For example, trying to cast “Apportation” on an African lion from a Temenos representation of Germany falls under Encountered by distance; if the mage has an astral cat to use that provides Acquainted sympathy (by association), the spell suffers a –6 penalty rather than –8.

Association-based sympathy is impossible to chart. It depends on the principles of any given realm. A cat-lover’s Oneiros makes a strong association between cats and lions, while a Temenos realm focused on seekers of lost treasure provides no sympathy between them at all. As foreigners to Astral Space, astral travelers retain the sympathies they have in real life — but only to other real-life objects. A Beijing mage has a Known or Intimate connection with the city, but has no sympathy with an astral representation of Beijing.

Dice Penalty Temenos Sympathetic Connection

–	<i>Sensory:</i> You can see, hear or otherwise sense your target. This is the default, even in the Temenos.
–2	<i>Intimate:</i> Close enough that you can get up to grab it. It might be the remote control you accidentally left in the bedroom, a beer from the closed fridge or a screwdriver from the garage.
–4	<i>Known:</i> A short drive away. It’s the trip from your apartment to campus, work, your buddy’s place or the grocery store — this is how you get ice cream when you’re out or the report you forgot in your cubicle. This level of sympathy caps out around an hour’s drive, a distinctly fuzzy measure.
–6	<i>Acquainted:</i> A long drive away or a short flight. This is the drive from Philadelphia to New York City; Portland, Oregon, to Seattle; or London to Edinburgh. It maxes out at about a full eight hours’ drive. For when you need genuine Irish stout.
–8	<i>Encountered:</i> A real road trip or a full day’s travel by air. Crossing the United States, flying across an ocean or across half a hemisphere. Any thing you need to access from that far away falls under this level of sympathy.

–10 *Described:* Distances you can’t drive and require more than 12 or so hours in the airplane. Getting from the United States to China, for example.

– *Unknown:* Faraway places you can’t get to by modern contrivance without multiple days’ travel on the receiving end. Deepest jungle, the top of Mount Everest and so on.

Despite complications with using Space in Astral Space, Space magic’s ability to perceive sympathetic connections makes it useful. Meaning is more important than appearance in Astral Space, so viewing what objects and concepts the realm perceives as connected helps unlock its secrets. Using Space to destroy sympathetic connections works the same way it does in the real world; doing so mostly prevents astral travelers from using magic to sense the realm’s real sympathies. The connections re-form over the next few days. Creating new sympathies also does not change the nature of the realm, only disguises it; creating a new sympathy has the additional benefit of forcing that level of sympathy on Astral Space. Space has the additional benefit of helping mages internalize the odd spatial structures that exist in some astral realms. “Spatial Awareness” and similar spells make it easier to navigate a realm that resembles an Escher print or simply does not exist beyond certain borders.

A mage in Astral Space cannot scry or transport himself into the real world. “Portal” and similar spells only function within the character’s current realm. Travel to another realm must be done the standard way (see Chapter Two), and travel in and out of Astral Space comes only from meditation.

Spirit

This Arcanum suffers the same difficulty as Death, as most astral realms manifest in forms other than spirits and the spirit worlds. When a creature does appear as an animistic spirit (rather than a ghostly one), it can be affected by all standard Spirit spells. It is unnecessary to cast “Spirit Tongue” to speak with the spirit-creatures, because an astral native is either capable of communicating in normal speech or its language is not meant to be (and thus incapable of being) understood.

Astral Space has no Shadow Realm, just as Astral Space usually has no Twilight. One exists only in the Oneiroi of creatures intimately familiar with the spirit

world and in Temenos realms where it is fundamental to that realm's metaphorical structure. Reports on whether the Anima Mundi has a Shadow Realm conflict with each other. Mages with the capability can step into Astral Space's Shadow Realm if one exists.

"Shape Spirit" forges a new spirit out of nothing and functions even in realms without spirits or a Shadow Realm. The new spirit begins life material, unless the realm has a state of Twilight. Creating a state of Twilight in the Astral Space where none exists is a Spirit 5 spell (see p. 29). This artificial Twilight exists as long as the spirit does and allows other effects that involve the Twilight to function for the duration.

Time

Time, just as Space, is flexible in Astral Space. Each is decided by the governing principles of a given realm, and that is how astral travelers perceive them. A mage with "Temporal Eddies" active knows how much time he perceives passing, and how much the realm believes that differs from the standard passage of time. The dawning realization of something terrible takes a minute of perceived time but seconds of "real time," while a montage appears to take minutes but could be days. This version of Mage Sight also warns a mage before time-shifting changes take place in a realm's set piece — the fade cut from an early-morning argument to a late-night dance tickles the mage's senses before it occurs, letting her know that this scene's significance is almost up.

The Time Arcanum's longer-term prediction spells, such as "Augury" and its relatives, work only haphazardly in Astral Space. They receive answers when the realm knows an answer (and as in the real world, knowledge of a future can change that future). Questions on things foreign to a realm return no answers. Any question that involves an astral visitor the realm fails outright; the realm cannot predict what happens after outsiders interfere. Things without futures, or without futures at the times inquired after, are also improper subjects of predictive spells: an important book that disappears with a transition and never shows up again in the realm has no future, and making predictions about a time that the realm never shows or considers to exist also fail. "Postcognition" has the same restriction, as trying to peer back at a time that does not exist in the realm automatically fails. Temporal sympathy is dictated by the realm just as spatial sympathy is.

More immediate spells, such as "Perfect Timing," "Glimpsing the Future," "Present as Past" and others,

work normally in Astral Space. Most realms do not disrupt "Temporal Pocket" or other spells that push out of the normal time stream. "Future Legacy" is not reliable. Casters cannot be certain if an object pushed into the future in Astral Space will return after the elapsed Duration in the real world, after the realm perceives that Duration has elapsed or when the realm leaps forward to a scene of the future. Astral travelers cast the spell at their own risk.

Other Powers in Astral Space

Mages are not the only ones with supernatural abilities, and they know it. Only willworkers have the innate ability to access Astral Space (as they know it), but it still isn't their sole province. A spell in this chapter lets a mage "pay the toll" for a trip into Astral Space, ensuring that anyone *could* get in.

Use the same guidelines for other supernatural creatures in Astral Space as for mages. Remember that powers involving the Twilight or the Shadow Realm work only if such a dimension exists.

Paradox and Other Vagaries

Astral realms are not free from the Lie, though most astral travelers never learn that. The Quiescence lies heavy on every Sleeper soul, and Astral Space is a construct of the soul. Paradoxes are stronger in Sleepers' Oneiroi than in Creation proper; some say that travel in such a place brings one closer to the Abyss. The Temenos, too, is composed almost entirely of Sleepers, but that astral stratum appears to be free of the Curse. A collective unconscious composed of Sleeping souls is somehow insulated from the Abyss in a manner often argued by experienced astral travelers.

Wise mages worry about more than just the Lie when traveling into Astral Space. Different realms have expectations, assumptions and beliefs that can inhibit casting spells just as they twist how those spells can be used. Even with advance knowledge about a given realm, these changes can be hard to predict: the Oneiros of a man afraid of death reacts to Death spells, but whether the Oneiros clamps down on them or lends them strength is unknown until one visits.

Oneiroi

The first Oneiros a mage visits is usually her own. She explores the inside of her soul and the underside of her consciousness, probably meets her daimon and takes a tour of her psyche. While there, she experiments with magic and delights in freedom from the

Quiescence (though one hopes she takes care not to harm the structure while flinging fireballs). Within her soul, magic is powerful and free — and few learn that the same is not true of other Oneiroi.

Paradoxes *do* threaten in a Sleeper's Oneiros. Worse, they are stronger than they are in the material world. Every invocation of vulgar magic in a Sleeper's Oneiros suffers an additional two dice to the Paradox roll, as though there were a Sleeper watching the spell take place. Furthermore, covert spells can become improbable just as they can in reality. Nobody watches the spells being cast. There's no danger of a mortal remembering spells cast in his Oneiros (unless he's there to watch them), but some part of his unconscious mind sees the magic — and condemns it.

Because the mortal never sees the spells cast in his mind, Disbelief does not tear spells apart. A spell cannot unravel under scrutiny that isn't there. This belief is only partially true. The Sleeper's unconscious picks apart vulgar magic slowly, usually too slowly to be of notice. Resolve + Composure rolls to determine the unraveling effect of Disbelief for magic inside a Sleeper's Oneiros are made at -3 dice. Most scene length effects end naturally before they are torn apart. When a Sleeper is brought into his Oneiros and is conscious of vulgar magic being cast there, Disbelief is at full strength.

Some Sleepers' states of mind or belief systems allow more mystery and magic in the world. Avid believers in the supernatural, the mentally unstable and children, among others, accept magic more easily into their Oneiroi. Treat Paradox rolls in such realms as though they are not observed (unless the Sleeper is consciously in his dream space with the caster).

Beyond Paradoxes, an Oneiros makes some impositions of Supernal laws easier and blockades others, even though the Quiescence tries to quash all of them. This manifests as bonuses or penalties to casting spells of specific Arcana while in that realm. You may apply penalties to subsets of spells within an Arcanum if you find it appropriate, but it is easier to lay blanket modifiers. Mages trace all such modifiers back to some source in a person's psyche or personality. Sharp mages can predict the adjustments by examining the target's personality ahead of time, but it often comes down to a flip of the coin: whether a trait improves or degrades the ability to invoke certain spells is impossible to definitively discern in advance of an exploratory visit. Bonuses or penalties should never exceed three dice.

Examples: A person who rigidly does not believe in fate or luck dampens them in his Oneiros, applying a -1 penalty to all Fate magic cast there. Morticians perfectly comfort-

able with death and the coroner fascinated by corpses add a $+1$ and a $+2$ to rolls for Death spells. An engineer with a deep understanding of kinetics penalizes Forces spells by -1 (or those affecting kinetic energy and macro-scale phenomena). Someone who wants to find proof of telepathy lends a $+1$ to Mind magic, or her insistence on telepathy making sense to Sleeper science gives it a -1 penalty. A diligent surgeon penalizes Life magic by -2 because he knows how the body works, or he improves Life magic by $+1$ because he inundates himself with life or recoils from death on the operating table. Servants of the Vodoun loa provide a $+1$ or $+2$ bonus to Spirit magic, depending on their devotion (and probably have a Twilight and Shadow Realm in their Oneiroi). Stephen Hawking imposes a -3 penalty on mages twisting Space, Time or Forces in his Oneiros, so thoroughly does he understand them.

A most frightening place for Awakened to visit is the Oneiros of a Banisher. It is the unconscious of a person who despises mages, magic and all things Supernal. Even though the Oneiros's owner recognizes magic (probably), it can still trigger Paradoxes. Intense hate of spells penalizes *all* Arcana, or many of them; often, all but the Banisher's Ruling Arcana or the limited number of Arcana the Banisher can wield are harder to cast. All this, and Banishers' Oneiroi sometimes recognize astral intruders as mages and react with great hostility to them — though few mages know that until they've entered a Banisher's dream space.

Realms of the Temenos

As mentioned, the Temenos in general does not impose Paradoxes on its astral travelers. Some specific realms do, especially those founded on a sense of skepticism, but even experienced mages feel comfortably safe in most realms of the Temenos. Similar to Oneiroi, the Temenos contains some realms that encourage or discourage certain kinds of magic; also just as Oneiroi, these magics connect to the realms' natures but cannot be reliably predicted. Knowing that a destination realm is conflict expressed through the unending war of American football means that Life magic *may* have an adjustment, but which way (or if at all) cannot be said.

Anima Mundi

Most spells work normally in the Anima Mundi. There are exceptions based on the unique properties of that place, but in a general sense, the soul of the world knows that magic exists and accepts it. Outside of special circumstances, magic in the Dreamtime incurs no Paradox dice and suffers no special penalties.

Remembering the Stats

Every astral realm is a unique place to visit, and your preparation as a Storyteller should focus on making the players' trip there a memorable one. Get the realm's statistics out of the way by jotting them down ahead of time; we recommend this shorthand. Write down "Paradox:" and follow it with —, +0 or +2. This tells you if there are no Paradox rolls, weak Paradox (no bonus to the rolls) or Paradox with a +2. If the value is +0 or +2, write "Disbelief:" under Paradox and record the dice pool for Disbelief (Resolve + Composure – 3). Then jot down any Arcana that have a bonus or penalty in the realm and include that penalty. Finally, note whether the realm has a Twilight, Shadow Realm or both. Keep this with a brief description of the realm for quick access.

Darren – college student, hard worker, anthropology major. His father had some real crackpot ideas about science and began incorporating old alchemical ideas into the research that sent him bankrupt. The set pieces are all archaeological digs Darren has studied. Include the Coliseum and the Dendera Temple Complex.

Paradox: +2

Disbelief: 2

No Twilight or Shadow

Matter: –1 (+3) – Anger at his father impairs Matter spells. A chamber in his dream space contains his hidden wish that his father could have been right; there, Matter spells get the bonus.

Time: +1 – Darren fancifully believes that anthropology looks back through time, that when studying he has the past right in front of him; only works for "Postcognition" and similar spells.

Magic of the Astral

Exploring Astral Space is attractive to many mages because of what they may learn there. It is a realm of the soul, and what mage would not like to learn more about her soul, the conduit for her magic, and about the soul in general? Astral Space is a source of arcane wisdom that enlightens the mage who studies it, and everyone wants arcane wisdom.

It's no surprise, therefore, that there are many spells designed for working with Astral Space. None make it easy to walk through these dreamscapes, but they are valuable tools for the expeditions to the Inner Planes. Most are Mind spells, but other Arcana also play a part.

Two spells from **Mage: The Awakening** deserve notice. A mage using "Multi-Tasking" can enter Astral Space through meditation while going about other business in the real world, and she is equally in both places. This limits her from casting spells in either, though, per the spell description. "Mental Shield" imposes a penalty on spells that attempt to access or affect the mage's Oneiros without her permission.

Life

Sustain Body (Life ●●●●)

One cannot stay too long in Astral Space. The body withers while the mind is at play. This spell nourishes and refreshes a mage's body from within the astral, lengthening the period an astral traveler may go without returning.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Extended

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana

The spell's target number is equal to the number of days the mage's real body has gone without nourishment. The spell makes up for lack of food and water. Air, too, though if the spell has to provide oxygen, the mage has immediate problems to worry about.

Mysterium Rote: Feeding the Cavernous Soul

Dice Pool: Stamina + Athletics + Life

Serious mystagogues cannot be bothered to leave their research in Astral Space for their body's needs. After all, one might never find a way back to this astral realm. They use this rote to stave off starvation and thirst a few more days and keep to their studies.

Mind

Astral Invitation (Mind ●●●●)

The mage marks one or more companions and creates a one-way bridge between their minds and his, allowing them to enter his dream space. A mage's dream space is full of personal information and potential secrets

— insecurities and aspirations are all evident, if not always clearly presented. Even a mage's real name can be found there, making this spell one casts only on sure friends.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

A target of this spell may choose to enter the caster's Oneiros rather than her own when passing the Astral Threshold, as long as she does so within the spell's Duration. There is no path between Oneiroi; a target who enters her own Oneiros but still wishes to enter the caster's must return to waking dream and again pass through the Astral Threshold. This spell affects one target without additional Target factors, and the caster must touch all targets. The spell can be cast at sensory range at Mind 4 and sympathetically at Mind 5. At Mind 4, the mage can cast this spell on behalf of a willing target.

Mysterium Rote: Astral Teamwork

Dice Pool: Resolve + Empathy + Mind

Dream spaces are rich with forgotten knowledge, but it takes a team to get any of the good stuff. Mystagogues use this rote to bring their cabal along for richer rewards.

Astral Entrance (Mind ●●●)

When a group enters Astral Space with the intention of traveling together, they must find each other there first. This spell makes a section of Astral Space the definitive entrance point for incoming astral travelers.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

The target number is equal to the dice bonus the caster wishes to give to incoming travelers. The dice applies to attempts to arrive at or locate the location of the ritual. It is meant for mages seeking to join the caster but also attracts astral natives.

Free Council Rote: Landing Pad

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Survival + Mind

Libertines exploring Astral Space together use this rote so they start their journey off on the right foot. Guardians of the Veil use a version of this rote

(Intelligence + Streetwise + Mind) to ambush astral travelers or capture astral natives.

Disrupt Concentration (Mind ●●●)

Concentration is important for the Awakened — spells require concentration to maintain, and much of their learning comes from extended periods of concentrated study. Astral travel requires deep concentration in the form of meditation. This spell makes a mind restless, incapable of concentrating on one thing for more than an instant.

Practice: Fraying

Action: Instant; subtract target's Resolve

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

Targets affected by this spell subtract one die from all rolls requiring concentration per success on the spell roll. Examples include research, prolonged concealment or deception or meditation. In addition, the target must roll Wits + Composure to successfully perform tasks that require concentration but do not normally call for rolls, such as studying to increase a Skill or patiently aiming a sniper rifle.

Guardians of the Veil Rote: Wasted Research

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Intimidation + Mind

There are many things that a Guardian does not want others to learn. Though "Wasted Research" isn't a complete solution, this spell slows progress while the mage comes up with a real fix. In Astral Space, this spell is a good way to make sure that a person cannot follow one up or down through the strata — or to prevent him from reaching the astral in the first place.

Lift the Astral Barrier (Mind ●●●)

Piercing the Astral Threshold into Astral Space requires Mana to open the way. This spell pays that cost on another's behalf.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana (minimum)

Once the spell is cast, the target may pass the Astral Threshold without spending any Mana; the Mana spent on this spell replaces that need. The spell's target must still take the journey into the astral through personal meditation, and must reach the Threshold before the spell's Duration ends. If cast with additional Target

factors, the spell costs one Mana per target. Astral Space does not trigger Disbelief in Sleepers, though seeing magic there still does.

Free Council Rote: Freeing the Mind

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy + Mind

In the hope of Awakening mortals or discovering new magic in the Sleeping mind, the Free Council uses this rote to bring Sleepers on astral journeys.

Seal Oneiros (Mind ●●●)

When "Mental Shield" isn't enough insurance, a mage makes his Oneiros off-limits to astral travelers by blocking it with this spell.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana (optional)

Spells that allow other mages access to the character's Oneiros must exceed the Potency of this spell. The spells also contend with "Mental Shield" if both spells are active. Spending one Mana with the spell's activation extends the Duration to a full day.

Silver Ladder Rote: Mental Barricade

Dice Pool: Resolve + Academics + Mind

Silver Ladder mages consider their minds places of great importance and incredible secrecy. They use this spell to ensure that no enemy mages come anywhere near their minds.

Preserve Astral Object (Mind ●●●)

Astral objects are fleeting. They come and go with a realm's dreamlike transitions, here one moment and gone the next. Sometimes, an astral object is too important to let go. It might be an object with an important sympathetic connection, or maybe it's just a gun the mage wants to level against a native later on. Or the mage has created something potent in his Oneiros that he wants to carry into the Temenos. This spell makes all that possible.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

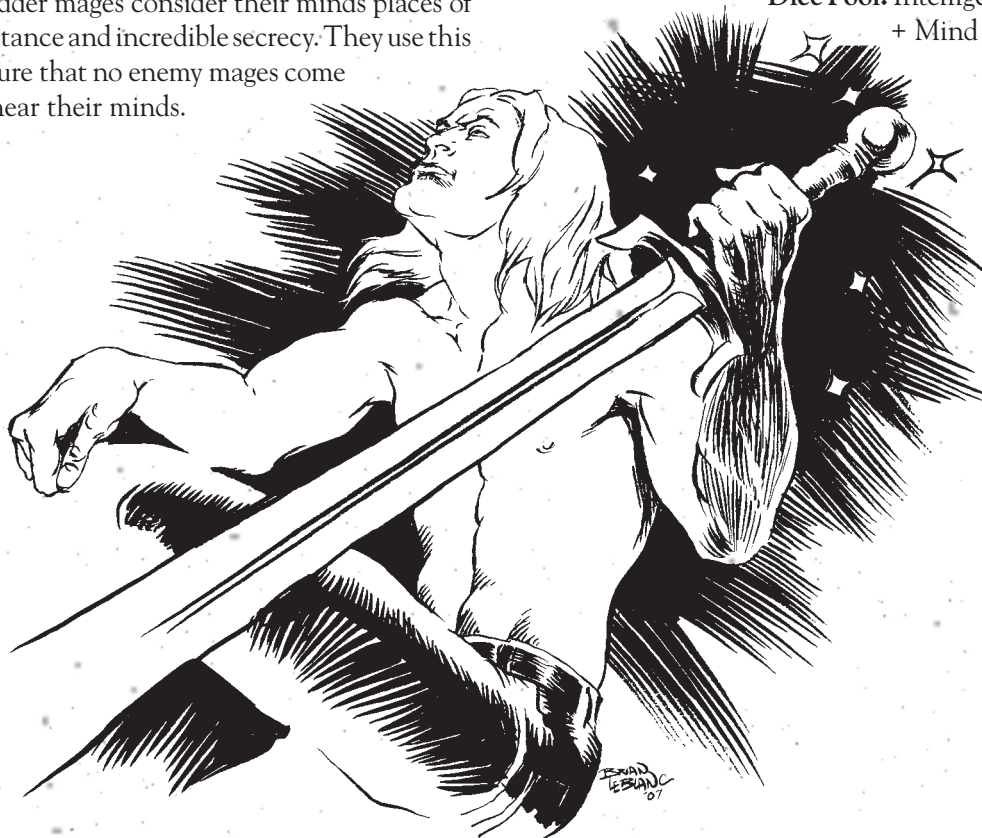
Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

If the spell is successful, the target object remains in the same scene as the mage despite shifting set pieces. The mage can leave it behind and expect to return to it, even if the realm changes a great deal in the Duration, though finding it isn't always easy. Carrying the object with him, the mage knows that it will not suddenly disappear. Also, the mage may transition into another astral stratum (from the Temenos into the Anima Mundi, for example) and bring the object with him.

Free Council Rote: Quantum State Preservation

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Science
+ Mind



Mages find the most interesting examples of psychosis in Oneiroi, and the symbols born from sick intentions found in the deeper astral realms are incredibly fascinating. Free Council psychologists who explore Astral Space (especially Jungians in the Temenos) use this rote for extra time to study their findings. The Mysterium has a similar rote (Intelligence + Occult + Mind) they use for the same purpose.

Preserve Astral Space (Mind ●●●●)

The astral is a dangerous and interesting place, but one that shifts rapidly. When a mage needs respite from the dangers or needs extra time to explore a dream space, this spell delays her departure.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

This spell affects an area one-yard in radius, protecting everything within that radius from changing at the whim of Astral Space. This creates unexpected interactions when all but a small portion of a set piece whisks away or has changed when the astral traveler returns; Awakened psychologists prize this spell for its ability to juxtapose different facets of an Oneiros for interaction and comparison. While similar to “Preserve Astral Object,” this spell is not mobile — an object taken out of the affected area is subject to the realm’s normal laws. If an object’s connected set piece has already disappeared, it disappears (or changes shape) immediately upon removal.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Bastion

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Survival + Mind

No Adamantine Arrow enjoys being behind enemy lines, and traveling through Astral Space that can change shape without warning and leave a mage surrounded by hostile creatures with no way out is as far behind enemy lines as one can get. This rote produces a base of operations, a place the mage can be sure won’t abandon him. Mysterium mages have a similar rote (Intelligence + Academics + Mind) they use to create repositories of knowledge within their own Oneiroi, keeping the repositories safe from external examination and from being washed away by dream tides.

Astral Interdiction (Mind ●●●●●)

This spell reaches into a target’s mind, questing for the path the target follows inward to Astral Space.

Once there, the spell seals the path shut and makes it impossible to find or follow.

Practice: Unraveling

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls Resolve + Gnosis reflexively

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

For the spell’s Duration, the target is incapable of entering Astral Space. People affected by this spell who are already in Astral Space can continue to explore it and travel between astral strata, but no one affected by the spell can cross the Astral Threshold until the spell ends.

Silver Ladder Rote: Blockading the Astral Road

Dice Pool: Presence + Expression + Mind

Access to Astral Space occupies a small place in the typical Awakened mind, but access is important to some and vital in some moments. Silver Ladder mages learn this rote to get more control over other mages; with it, they can punish a student of the astral by denying him access or get the edge on rivals when Astral Space is key.

Dream Bridge (Mind ●●●●●)

Magic bores a hole from one Oneiros to another, making it possible to travel between them without passing through the Astral Threshold again. Though the spell makes such a journey possible, the spell does not make the journey easy. Astral travelers must find the path or portal between Oneiroi in order to move from one to the other, and dream spaces sometimes portray the portals idiosyncratically.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

Standard use of this spell connects the caster’s Oneiros to the target’s, but the caster may instead connect the Oneiroi of two others. Unwilling targets contest the spell with Resolve + Gnosis. When cast in Astral Space, this spell relies on real-world sympathy.

Silver Ladder Rote: Through the Rabbit Hole

A protected Oneiros is one of the most secure locations possible, and that makes Oneiroi ideal for private meetings. This rote lets Silver Ladder mages enter each others’ Oneiroi without any outward evidence.

Opening the Dream Space (Mind ●●●●)

Casting this spell on another allows the mage to enter the target's Oneiros rather than her own when passing through the Astral Threshold.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Instant; target rolls Resolve + Gnosis reflexively

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

The caster must touch her target to invoke the spell and still travel into Astral Space as normal. At Mind 5, she can cast this spell at sensory range. At Mind 5, the mage can cast this spell on behalf of another — opening an unwilling person's mind to someone else; when used this way, additional Target factors can increase the number of minds opened or the number of people allowed into a single mind.

Guardians of the Veil Rote: Oneiros Intrusion

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Subterfuge + Mind

People hide their greatest secrets — even some from themselves — in their subconscious. This rote lets Guardians dig those secrets from others' Oneiroi.

Seal Other's Oneiros (Mind ●●●●)

Protecting one's Oneiros is just prudence. Sealing another's dream space away from potential intruders furthers one's aims and thwarts others' goals.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

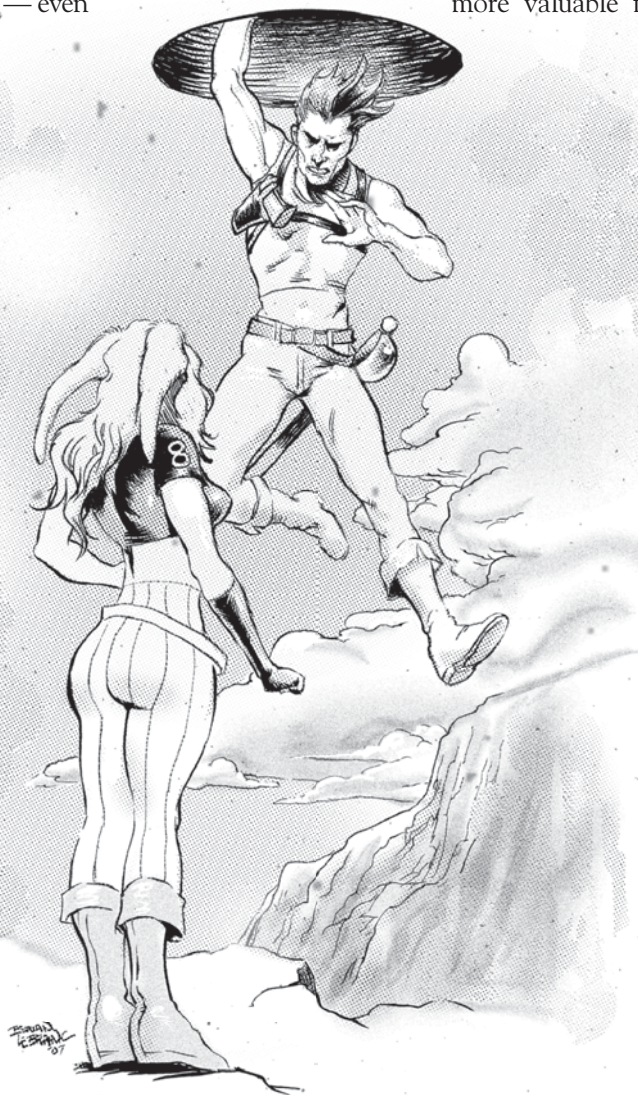
Cost: 1 Mana (optional)

This spell is identical to "Seal Oneiros" on p. 24 but affects another. Subtract unwilling targets' Resolve.

Free Council Rote: Astral Ward

Dice Pool: Presence + Science + Mind

Many misuse others' minds, exploring them to discover a person's weaknesses or manipulate their decisions. There is so much to be learned from the human unconscious that Libertines make an effort to protect minds, the last boundary beyond which people are free to be themselves. Using this rote makes more minds unsullied by Awakened intrusion, making them more valuable for the Free Council's studies.



Silver Threads (Mind ●●●●, Space ●●●●)

Astral Space is enormous and easy to get lost in. This spell binds astral bodies to one another with faint silver threads, allowing their owners to easily meet in Astral Space or keep from getting separated.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None during casting; 1 Mana per activation after casting

The spell affects one target per success. The silver threads, visible only in Astral Space, lead off the caster to each target. Identical threads lead from each target to the caster and to every other target of the spell. The threads add three dice to attempts to navigate through Astral Space toward a bound comrade.

The threads' real power is their ability to convene a group. While in Astral Space, a person bound with this spell may spend one Mana as an instant action to transport himself to anyone else affected by the spell or to transport one of them to him. A person may refuse the automatic summons, in which case the Mana is not spent. Instantaneous transport works only if both characters are in the same astral stratum; otherwise, one must travel to the other's stratum before invoking this power. To travel to one another in dream space, both characters must be in the same Oneiros or in Oneiroi that have been connected (as with "Dream Bridge").

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Ties to the Squad

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Socialize + Mind

Exploring an astral realm can be a martial exercise—the realm certainly dangerous enough. Adamantine Arrows use this rote to ensure that the unit can't be split up, even in the worst circumstances. Mystagogues use a similar rote to more efficiently discover astral wonders: the group covers more ground apart then instantly join the person who makes the most interesting discovery.

Purge Oneiros (Mind ●●●●)

This spell washes all non-native inhabitants out of a mage's Oneiros with a flood of mental energy. The mage uses this spell to cast out unwanted astral travelers.

Practice: Unraveling

Action: Instant and contested; targets roll Resolve + Gnosis reflexively

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

Astral travelers in the mage's Oneiros whose successes equal or exceed the caster's remain in Astral Space. All others wake up; they may attempt to return to their Oneiroi the standard way, if they wish. Note that the spell's target is the Oneiros, not the mages within it. At Mind 5, the mage may cast this on another's Oneiros; if the Oneiros's owner is unwilling, subtract his Composure from the roll.

Silver Ladder Rote: Dropping Off Hitchhikers

Dice Pool: Presence + Expression + Mind

Unwanted astral travelers in one's dream space are like saboteurs of the mind. Silver Ladder mages use this rote to ensure they are free of untrustworthy outside influences.

Astral Imprisonment (Mind ●●●●)

This spell seals the target's astral path shut around him and denies him the ability to move in and out of Astral Space. Mages use this spell to trap rivals inside an astral stratum with no ability to escape.

Practice: Unmaking

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls Resolve + Gnosis reflexively

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

Under the effects of this spell, a target cannot move in or out of Astral Space at all. The target has freedom within the astral realm or stratum he currently occupies, but he cannot move between strata or attempt to leave Astral Space. Furthermore, he cannot be roused from outside until the spell ends.

Guardians of the Veil Rote: Mindtrap

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Subterfuge + Mind

Guardians do some of their most sensitive and secret work inside others' minds. When another mage follows Guardians into Astral Space, this allows a Guardian to trap the mage and move on to the private astral realms. Guardians and Silver Ladder mages use this rote (Silver Ladders roll Presence + Expression + Mind) to condemn other mages to serve terms trapped in Astral Space, usually inside their own minds.

Dream Network (Mind ●●●●●)

Mages create bridges between their Oneiroi, ensuring that the astral travelers can move horizontally between dream spaces.

Practice: Making

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

The number of successes determines how many targets' Oneiroi can be networked with a single casting. Traveling from one Oneiros to another is as in "Dream Bridge," p. 25.

Successes	Targets
1 success	Two
2 successes	Four
3 successes	Eight
4 successes	16
5 successes	32

Targets can contest the spell with a reflexive Resolve + Gnosis roll each.

Free Council Rote: All in the Mind

Dice Pool: Presence + Socialize + Mind

The Oneiros is an enlightening place to work, and more so to work with multiple people in multiple Oneiroi. Libertines use this rote so their entire cabal can self-improve and work together at the same time.

Prime

Astral Tass Conversion (Prime ●●●)

When traveling into Astral Space, every mage carries with her the Mana she can normally call upon in the real world. What she lacks is a store of tass from which she can replenish that supply — and this spell makes that possible.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

The mage casts this spell before she begins meditating to enter Astral Space. Tass containing one point of Mana per success becomes available to her during her astral journey. Equivalent or greater tass must be on the mage's person in the real world; Prime 4 allows the character to cast this spell at sensory range, and

Prime 5 allows this spell to be cast sympathetically. Consuming the tass in astral consumes a similar amount of tass in the material world. Without additional Duration factors, the tass is available only for the character's first scene in Astral Space.

Silver Ladder Rote: Shining Reserves

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Prime

Never go anywhere without some extra resources to help you pull through the fight. Silver Ladder mages use this rote to ensure that they have plenty of Mana to see them through their astral trips.

Space

Maintained Sympathy (Space ●●●)

Travelers appear in the astral without any more than clothes on their back. This is usually enough — a mage's best weapons in Astral Space are his spells and his wits — but sometimes it helps to have an edge. This spell manifests representations of real-world sympathies in the astral for the mage to use.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

Each success allows the mage to designate one item (such as a lock of hair or an old book) that manifests with him in Astral Space. For the spell's Duration, he can use the items for their sympathetic connections. This spell also allows the mage to manifest dedicated magical tools in the astral — useful when traveling to realms where Paradoxes threaten. Even when a mage needs no sympathetic connections to the real world, having tokens of other astral companions makes it easier to contact them using standard sympathetic magic.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Kit Bag

Dice Pool: Wits + Survival + Space

Soldiers know the value of being prepared. The Adamant Way reinforces that wisdom. This rote lets Adamantine Arrows bring everything they they'll need into Astral Space.

Astral Reaches (Space ●●●●)

An adept of Space masters the ability to reach between astral realms and strata. The mage can use spells that short-circuit distance, such as "Apporta-

tion" and "Portal," to travel between any portions of Astral Space.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

Invoking this spell enables the mage to use this power for any relevant spells he casts during the Duration. At Space 5, the mage can also pierce from Astral Space to real space and the reverse, allowing a mage to skip the astral journey. He must still spend a point of Mana to cross the Astral Threshold.

Mysterium Rote: Puncturing the Worldskin

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Space

Enlightening as it may be, the journey into Astral Space is time-consuming and distracting. Mystagogues use this rote to foreshorten the astral journey (traveling to the Oneiros and then teleporting to a deeper stratum) or bypass the journey entirely at Space 5.

Spirit

Invoke Twilight (Spirit ●●●●●)

The mage creates a state of Twilight in an astral realm where there is none.

Practice: Making

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana

The base target number for the extended roll is four. Each point of dice penalty to the Spirit Arcanum increases the target number by one; each point of bonus decreases the target number by one.

Guardians of the Veil Rote: Fourth Dimension

Dice Pool: Presence + Science + Spirit

Exploring Astral Space becomes less arduous when a Guardian can create a spirit servitor to slip through the newly created Twilight and reconnoiter.

Sympathy to Astral Realms

What determines sympathy *to* an astral stratum, not just within it? Well:

- A person has Intimate sympathy with her Oneiros, but objects with sympathy to the person have no sympathy with that person's dream space. Being without a real name imposes the normal penalty.
- A normal object from a given astral stratum provides Encountered sympathy. An object relevant to a stratum's nature (one that bore potent metaphor) provides Known sympathy.
- Personal experience with a stratum creates sympathy as normal. The "New Threads" spell fails to improve sympathy with an astral stratum or realm unless the mage can target the stratum or realm, which requires sympathetic magic unless a manifest representation of the realm is present.

Because astral objects do not last long outside of Astral Space (they evaporate away to nothing, one point of Structure per minute), the primary method for casting sympathetically is the last.



CHAPTER TWO: MAPPING THE IMPOSSIBLE

She sits alone in a dark room, legs crossed and eyes shut. A lamp with a dimmer switch is on low, two sticks of burning incense release contrasting smells to sharpen the mind and the deep carpet is comfortable. No sign of effort creases her forehead or eyelids as she prepares to explore her inner world. When her eyes open, there are no walls in her small chamber. A twilight sun over the endless ocean replaces the dim lamp, and the carpet is a mass of thick-woven reeds, slowly absorbing seawater and sinking. She smiles and inhales the sea air as the first water seeps through the makeshift raft and into her clothes. That the raft is sinking is not a surprise; that is the direction she needs to go.

WHEN HER EYES OPEN
THERE ARE NO WALLS.
IN HER SMALL CHAMBER

*The whole story of the universe is implicit in any part of it.
The meditative eye can look through any single object and see,
as through a window, the entire cosmos.*

*Make the smell of roast duck in an old kitchen diaphanous
and you will have a glimpse of everything,
from the spiral nebulae to Mozart's music
and the stigmata of St. Francis of Assisi.*

— Aldous Huxley, Point Counter Point

Navigation

Entering Astral Space is an intensely personal process. It is a method for traveling inward through one's soul into one's dream space and beyond, into realms created, contained and owned by no one person. No two mages walk the same path into the astral — souls are too different for that. But apprentices acquire habits in astral travel from their mentors just as the younger mages inherit quirks of ritual and rote spellcasting. Other aspects of a person's soul — Legacies especially — influence the journey. There are many different sensations involved with passing the Astral Threshold and many more that *can* be involved, depending on who makes the trip.

One constant is the feeling of motion. Another constant is the argument over why that is. Traveling to Astral Space is a journey — a metaphorical, mental or actual journey, depending on how a mage looks at it. That perspective imposes itself on astral travelers' sensations. Or does the soul actually move along the axis of some dimension not perceptible to mortal or magical senses?

The sensation of travel expresses itself in the astral traveler's perception. As she meditates, her astral body travels through a self-made landscape. One walks along a dusty road free of landmarks, heading always westward away from the rising sun and into the dark of his soul. Another sits on a sinking raft, feeling the waves lapping inch after inch higher up her body until she goes under and drifts downward through her dreams. A third mage watches his meditation chamber recede away from him in all directions, as though he were traveling away from it in the inward direction. Yet another one steps out of her physical body, peels back the skin of her chest and climbs through the empty space into a new chamber with her meditating body, repeating the process as she moves toward the Inner Planes. A Walker in Mists treads circles around

a massive tree in his mind, a tree which grows younger as he walks.

Direction develops from a combination of the mage's philosophy of astral travel and her philosophy in general. A curiosity and love of discovery, combined with a fading memory of "the west" as the land of exploration and opportunity creates the eternal path, especially considering Astral Space the last frontier; another mage might cut through the jungles of darkest Africa. Slipping beneath the waves and sinking in a skin-tight bubble represents the mage's perception of slipping into the bloodstream of the world and sinking into Creation's dark places; she regards the Anima Mundi more highly than other astral strata. Traveling inward comes from the interpretation that Astral Space is, at least in part, within the mage, and climbing into it through a series of one's bodies suggests a focus on the personal aspects of the journey. The Walker in Mists Legacy imposes the natural theme combines with a sense of Astral Space being "behind" or "before" everything else into the image of a youthening tree. These correlations are not set in stone, but they are examples of how attitude toward life and the astral influences the journey.

Every astral journey begins as a mental exercise. The mage imagines floating above the waves, the cold wetness as the ocean first licks at her clothes and the sense of infinite depth beneath her. This is meditation to put into a state of lucid dreaming. Once there, the meditation becomes that much more real. Her mind draws on any memories of salt air and cold ocean water, even from when she was too young to consciously remember; what her unconscious cannot recall, it invents. Meditation within the waking dream leads her along the path until she is deep under the water — 60, maybe 80 or 100 feet deep. The cold chills her, she imagines the clammy feel of a dead fish; the pressure squeezes her, making her feel small indeed; the water is real and threatens to rob her of breath and life.

This is the Astral Threshold, which every mage must cross in order to enter true Astral Space. Everything up to this point is purely within the mage's mind. Meditation and dream meditation require practice and effort, but they are under the mage's control. The Astral Threshold is external to the mage, the thick skin that separates consciousness from the layers of unconscious constructs that exist beneath, or within, or above, or wherever. The Threshold manifests itself in the waking dream after an astral traveler has progressed to the point where she is about to enter her Oneiros. The Threshold appears as any sort of obstacle, from a physical obstruction to emotional blocks or mental puzzles. Real effort gets one to the obstacle and does half the work of getting through it, but only a point of Mana opens the way. The mage cannot spend the Mana until she has nearly surpassed the obstacle, but she cannot clear it completely until she has spent the Mana.

Mages experience the Astral Threshold as an obstacle appropriate to the path their minds show them into Astral Space. There is a great wall (possibly reminiscent of the Great Wall) which the traveler must climb, but she cannot reach the crenellation at the top until he spends Mana. Once the mage conquers the feelings of being crushed and drowned, she spends Mana to at last slay her fear and press on. One mage feels so small that he is falling through atoms and out of the universe; he invents solar systems within the atoms to ease his mind but cannot visualize them without Mana. Another again opens her body to see blood spill out and her ribs crack under her own assault; she conquers her own revulsion and spends Mana to make the ribs and flesh give as she pushes through them. Another time when she traveled inward, opening her body revealed thick veins of yellow-white cancer; she had to conquer the spreading terror of death, then. The Walker in Mists encounters a thick bramble and pays Mana to endure the pain of the thorns, or he rounds the tree to discover a cliff he must climb down and spends Mana to find the bottom or the tree begins dying and he must nurse it back to health and bring it to vitality with Mana.

The expression of the Astral Threshold varies endlessly and further reflects the traveler. It depicts some deep emotion of the mage more often than it does a belief or philosophy, being so near the Oneiros. The Great Wall appears because the mage hasn't had time for his physical recreation lately or because he resents civilization's intrusion into the world's wild places. A mage's low self-esteem causes him to feel small enough

to be ignored. Another has a deep-seated fear of death or blood, or she might be strongly intimidated by the prospect of learning either Arcanum. The Astral Threshold can manifest the same way regularly or change often. Either way, it is always difficult. Forcing one's way through a hedge of sharp thorns and feeling every prick as a deep wound does not become easier for having done it before.

Once through the Astral Threshold, the mage has reached her Oneiros but is not *in* her Oneiros. She remains on her astral path, the road she followed to her Watchtower (though it has changed since then). Any time between passing the Threshold and reaching the Temenos, she may step off the path and into her Oneiros.

An Oneiros appears in a manner that fits with a journey's theme. Traveling west, the mage sees a destination on the horizon; his path passes it by, but he knows it is there. Things cast enormous, dark shadows in the ocean as the mage drifts downward past them. Planets within the atomic structure beckon to him, but they grow larger and farther away as he travels along his fourth axis. Climbing into the fleshy body places her in a busy street that she might remember, but her body is still there to climb into if she wants to travel deeper. The Walker in Mist sees images in the tree, aspects of his Legacy or his memory, and can climb into it to experience them if he does not want to walk around the tree any longer.

Stepping into an astral stratum places the traveler into whatever part of that stratum greets travelers. Inside an astral stratum, she may do as she will, but exploring takes her away from her path. Swimming over to the shadowy figures opens entire worlds to her, which are rarely anything like the deep ocean she travels into Astral Space. In order to again travel along her path, she must return to it by metaphor or image. Finding a body of water and entering it returns her to her path by way of image; creating the sensation of drowning or sinking gets her there by metaphor. An example of the latter is exploring a memory-scene (in the Oneiros) of a reunion with family, being drowned in their unwanted affection. The mage might also do it by asphyxiating herself to the point of unconsciousness (a state she's already in) and using that to connect her with her drowning ocean.

The traveler is always aware as she passes an astral stratum, and which of the three it is. Oneiroi give travelers anxiety as they pass, a sensation of being near the things they do not and *do not want to* know about themselves. The Temenos feels weighty and

populated. Travelers near it on the path feel accompanied but uncomfortable, as if thousands of people are nearby but pointedly ignoring the mage. One cannot pass the Anima Mundi, but one still sees it from the path before stepping into it: the Anima Mundi feels enormous and old; it makes one feel small and infantile, but not degraded for it. Mages translate the sensations into definition first from training and then from experience. Those uneducated about Astral Space know only their feelings and define the astral strata based on these and what the mages encounter there. The mage can sense generalities about where stepping into the near astral stratum puts her, or which realms are near enough to step into, with a Wits + Empathy roll. Success informs her of the set piece, dominant emotions and immediately obvious dangers. Luckily, the mage is safe until she steps off the astral path.

As the mage travels on, she feels the Oneiros pass her as she sinks. Time and concentration are both necessary to continue on the path. She has reached Astral Space, but the road she takes through it is still inside her mind and her soul and she must focus her will to walk it.

The next landmark after the Threshold is a feeling of reversal. All astral travelers encounter a moment on the journey when their direction becomes the wrong one. The mage walks east and knows she should be, but it is wrong — east is no longer east. Sinking is no longer the proper direction, but rising only takes her back through the Threshold. It will not do to become larger again or to climb *outward* through her body; neither is reversing direction around the tree the proper response. The sensation arises from having traveled into the mind and a personal dream space, something entirely within the mage, but traveling *further* through it into something larger than and outside the mind. The collective unconscious exists regardless of the mage; it includes the mage's unconscious mind but is deeper than that. Just so for the Anima Mundi; as there would be no man without humanity (and no Oneiros without the Temenos), there is no humanity without the world.

Traveling further into the astral requires a reinterpretation of the journey at this point. The mage's path does not change, but it must somehow take her to a different place. Walking into the west, the mage recognizes that his path now leads him toward the sun, though he has not turned around. She continues to sink downward, but beneath her she can see the dim glow of a sun hidden by a half-mile of water. All things continue to recede from the mage, but the worlds approaching him from within are much like

those he left behind. A mage climbs through the next iteration of her body, but it is enormous and distorted and surrounds her like a room's four walls; she climbs inward but moves outwards. The Walker in Mist continues his circular hike without changing direction but acknowledges that the tree now grows older rather than younger, and that rapidly.

This feeling, unlike that of passing through the Astral Threshold, is something to which travelers grow accustomed. How the reversal represents itself may change, but in increments that do not surprise a mage — at least one who travels to Astral Space regularly. After years of astral journeys, the mage who climbs in through herself shifts from climbing into herself as an outside enclosure and begins standing still as larger simulacra of her pass around her and puncture their flesh with her consciousness — moving her still inward though she stands still.

Traveling outward (that is, away from the Anima Mundi) along the path at this depth requires the process in reverse. Instead of sinking downward and now toward the sun, the mage has been floating upward, away from the sun, and the sun has just shifted positions to be above her. As this example illustrates, traveling outward along the astral path generally manifests as the inward path more obviously reversed. Walking eastward or climbing out of body after body. Few walk the path backwards. It's easier to pull the mind directly back into the real body (a reflexive Resolve + Composure roll) than it is to walk all the way back. The only reason to walk the path backwards is to visit a shallower astral stratum after reaching a deeper one; visiting the Anima Mundi and then moving to the Temenos to follow up a clue, for example.

(Traveling outward requires the character to retrace successes already rolled. For example, a character who has rolled 18 successes but suddenly wants to enter his Oneiros must roll three successes on meditation rolls, taking the same length of time as each normal meditation roll. He needs three successes because the range at which the character can enter the Oneiros is 12 to 15; once he reaches 16 successes, he is alongside the Temenos and has left the Oneiros behind him.)

With the reversal, the mage leaves her Oneiros behind and passes the Temenos. It appears much as the Oneiros did, simply with different sensations to mark which of the three astral strata it is. The journey to the depths is almost complete, and there are no more tricks along the way — just one great disappointment.

Last of the landmarks is the end of the road. It accompanies the mage's arrival at the Dreamtime; it

is final and appears so. Further travel along the path is impossible. One who walks a long path sees it end abruptly at the top or bottom of a cliff or at the gate of a great city (a representation of the world soul). Either way, the path is gone. The mage bobs out of the water, into the sun, air and world at the bottom of the ocean; she can sink no more. Travel away from all physical things ceases; she has reached the end of that dimensional axis (perhaps its Planck length, if he's scientifically minded) and there is a place here. At the end of another mage's path, there are simply no more of her bodies to pierce and enter. The Walker in Mist's tree has grown so old and large that it has consumed his path around it, or the tree has died so he can longer use it as his focus (to go forward).

Here is the Dreamtime: The astral traveler gets a brief impression of the astral stratum as seen from the path before she is within it. Not walking the path is the same as stepping off the path, and the mage can walk no more without turning and going the way she came. Mages who know more about the Awakened state feel a sense of longing and loss when they reach the end of their astral paths. The unsurpassable roadblock is where they would travel onward were they able to continue on to their Supernal Realms. Mages sometimes imagine a spark somewhere in the distance, a view of their Watchtower: the sun above the ocean's bottom, perhaps. The path's end often manifests as a gap, hole or absence of some sort — the open sky beneath the ocean, the chasm that ends the road or there being no body to climb into. This is how the Abyss infringes on Astral Space, or it might be the result of conditioning to that effect.

Example of Travel

Forrest's character, Kilroy, embarks on the journey into his soul and beyond simply to see what lies at the end of the path. He has heard of the end of the path and wants to see it for himself. His mentor thinks it's good for Kilroy to see, so the mentor arranges for access to a Demesne. Kilroy sets up the Demesne chamber: he lays down a meditation mat, puts on his noise-cancelling headphones, turns on his CD player containing a meditation soundtrack and smokes the herb his mentor gave him to help clear the mind.

Kilroy's Wits + Composure is 5. The mat, soundtrack and herb he's using for the purpose give him +4 dice and the room is remote and calm, so there are no penalties. He's rolling nine dice for each 30 minutes of meditation.

Preparations complete, Kilroy imagines himself walking along a city road. This is his mentor's recommendation, and Kilroy's supposed to follow the path where it leads him. Kilroy imagines the feel of his feet on the pavement and warm winds of early autumn on his face. He can smell faint whiffs of gas and exhaust. There are buildings on either side of the street, but he doesn't pay attention to them.

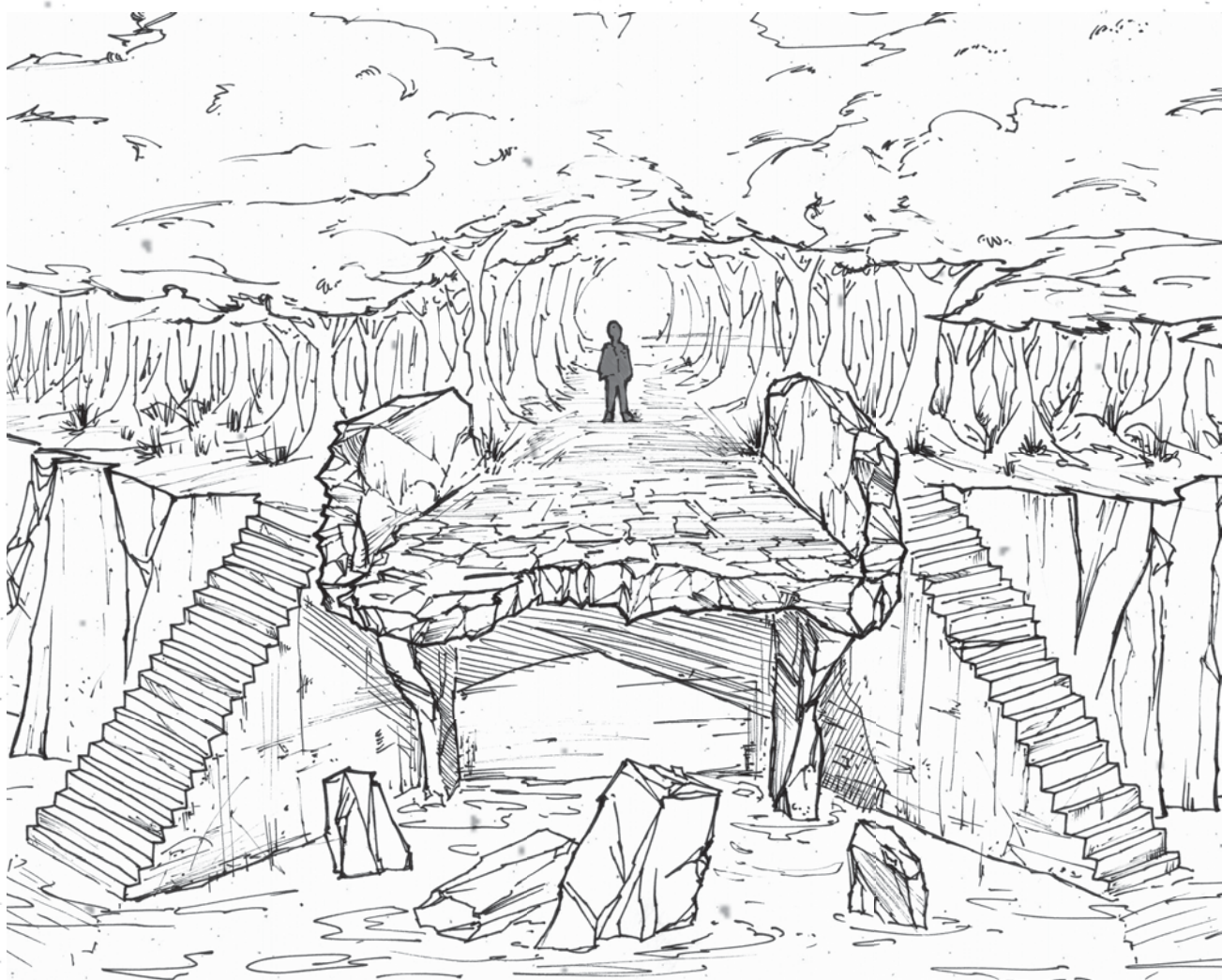
Forrest's first roll of nine dice turns up four successes. This is enough to put his character straight into waking meditation. Kilroy is no longer struggling to meditate.

Kilroy walks on in his mind. He doesn't feel hot or tired, and as far as he can tell, the road hasn't turned at all. The name of a store leaps into his mind: it's a store he used to ride the bus past every day to school. Kilroy recognizes other names and features after that, and his old middle school becomes visible down the road... and then he's next to it.

Forrest's second roll adds three successes to his running total, and the next gives him two more. Kilroy's now at nine successes, and in dream meditation. His mind dredges up old memories, and Kilroy realizes that he's walking a dream version of his old trip to school as a kid. Details are sharper because Kilroy doesn't have to come up with them — he's moved from meditating on certain impressions to concentrating on following his dream path.

Unexpectedly, the road leads into Kilroy's school. The road remains more than two cars wide with yellow stripes down the middle, but stores alternate with lockers and classrooms along either side. Kilroy continues on, curious and interested in what it means to be dreaming about this but dedicated to moving further inward. He remembers the corner coming up. It's where the principal loved to wait and catch kids running in the hall or out during class. Looking around, Kilroy realizes that no one else is in the halls: class must be in session. Nervousness makes Kilroy tremble, and he realizes that he's going to be caught and punished and this is the fourth time this week... and his mentor told him something like this would happen — well, not like *this* — but he would have to push through.

Kilroy steadfastly continues on the path, paying Mana for the privilege to defeat his fear. Even as he strolls on, confident again, he wonders if the principal might have been there had Kilroy not spent the Mana. What would it be like in dream-detention? He puts the question aside as he sees the hallway to the cafeteria to his left. There's something going on in there, some lesson being taught, and the idea of learning it makes Kilroy break out in dream-sweat. He keeps walking but doesn't pass the hall — it's very wide.



The fourth and fifth rolls add two and two successes, respectively. It's the fifth that brings him two (and past, in mechanical terms) the Astral Threshold. The Threshold manifests as Kilroy's old, student-tormenting principal, and the idea of getting in trouble slows Kilroy. Struggling through it and spending the Mana and walking on. Now he can see his Oneiros off the path — clearly, part of Kilroy's unconscious mind is tied up in his school days — but he chooses to continue walking.

That troubling hallway passes slowly. Even after dozens of steps, Kilroy could veer left and step into the hallway. He doesn't. His footsteps echo up and down the hall, making him wonder if there's anybody else here. There is: his reflection in the waxed floor tiles. It's only when he notices this that he dead ends at a closed door. The road goes right under the door, though it's plenty wide and the door is normal width. He has to keep going, and light shows him the way. A bright light shines on the other side and reflects on the pavement waxed tiles of the hallway road that

passes under the door. Kilroy gazes into his reflection's shallow eyes and takes the next step as his reflection. Everything is upside down as he walks under the door, but still the right side up. He is outside in a city, but every building is a school, and the schools only get larger as he walks along the road-school corridors. Well, his mentor said it wouldn't make all that much sense. The school-city's lights are all off and feel foreboding and distant at the same time.

A sixth roll shows five successes, enough to send Kilroy straight past his Oneiros. Here he experiences his first reversal, part putting his consciousness into his reflection and part stepping back out into the city without leaving schools behind. Forrest has now rolled 18 successes, and Kilroy walks past the Temenos. Three hours have passed in the real world.

Kilroy knows he's getting close as he walks on now, and he's getting excited. Excitement distracts him, and his progress slows to a crawl. He sees a large bridge ahead, the road passing over some sort of bay, but

can't make out the other side because of fog. Refocusing, Kilroy reaches the foot of the bridge and tries to cross — but the bridge is out. It sticks out for five feet and then ends, as if shattered by a giant hand. The fog is too thick to see the other side. He thinks he sees a dim lantern out there, as hangs from the bow of a ship, but he might be making it up. At the foot of the bridge are stairs, normal concrete and not the pavement Kilroy's been following all this time, leading down to the water.

Forrest rolls only one success on his seventh roll (19 total), but then makes up for it with three more. Two go to waste as Kilroy reaches the end of his path, represented by the broken bridge and the fog. The stairs lead to the Dreamtime, though Kilroy finds himself there anyway if he doesn't decide to follow the path back. He opts out of either choice, rolling Resolve + Composure to return to his body. After four hours, Kilroy opens his eyes in the Demesne. He's hungry and thirsty, but he wants to talk to his mentor first.

The Oneiros

The dream space. Uncomfortable secrets and denied fears live here. It is as unpredictable in set, scope and meaning as the dreams you forget on waking, but everything here is made of truth. Truth here has real form, real enough to hurt you if you don't listen. Dream space reflects the inner nature of its dreamer; a visit frightens and enlightens. Inhabitants of the Oneiros are reflections of you: the daimon embodies everything you know about yourself but refuse to acknowledge, hidden demons comprise all of your failures and darkest urges and nightmare creatures give shape to your every fear. And it is not just a place of the mind, but also of the soul. The Awakened soul is mystical, perhaps holy, and the Oneiros equally so. Your dream space changes with the soul-crafting of a Legacy, or the rending damage inflicted by creating a soul stone. The daimon knows things that could not be dredged out of your memory by the most clever psychologist or the most skilled master of Mind — matters of the soul.

All this is why mages respect their Oneiroi. Dream space contains things a mage does not want to confront, things he shies away from in his nightly mortal dreams. Answers developed by his subconscious crowd up against insights about his person and unfaced fears. Any venture into a mage's dream space carries the risk of being overwhelmed by the darkness within one's

Rule of Thumb:

Limiting Meditation Rolls

Page 128 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook** suggests limiting the number of some extended rolls to a character's Attribute + Skill. Here's how this interacts with astral travel (beyond being Attribute + Attribute rather than + Skill). Limiting the number of extended rolls limits how deep a character can reach into Astral Space before he reaches his limit and needs to rest before another attempt (and hoping he can get further, if that's what he wants). Kilroy's example shows that a character can get good dice pools with a little effort. Imagine if the character had used "Augment the Mind" to increase Wits or "Supreme Augmentation" to up Wits and Composure.

On the other hand, the only purpose you serve by limiting the number of rolls your players can make is keeping the characters out of the deeper astral strata. There's no great power there — it's not like forcing them to increase Forces before they can get a few more successes on that nasty hanging aimed "Telekinetic Strike" spell. You only deny the characters, players and yourself the opportunity to explore additional astral realms. After all, it's just another way to get in trouble, right? If you make it too hard, they'll probably never go at all.

If you can think of a good reason to keep 'em out, go ahead and limit the number of rolls. Otherwise, you're better off letting them journey as long as they dare.

soul, so the reward had better be worth it. Such things are easier to face with trusted companions, so when necessity is high, mages make an effort to bring their friends. That stress riles the Oneiros and increases the danger of an astral visitation only makes things harder — or more exciting.

First Impressions

Entering an Oneiros is like disembarking at the port of a very busy city where every person is acting out a part in a Kabuki play, where looking down the streets reveals glimpses of sex, turtle-stadiums, sailboats on

the pavement and an eloquent walrus — while the ship's pier shows it's emotional under one's feet.

The first step into dream space places a mage in the shallows of the unconscious. Mages call this the dream vestibule. Emotions and thought almost felt by the dreamer mingle with those he experiences at that very moment to create the platform for an arriving traveler. How it manifests varies with the dreamer's concept of *arrival*, *entrance* and similar words; associations with those ideas that hover just beneath consciousness, only occasionally to breach into the forefront of mind, make up the landing platform. The arrival point of a constant flier begins in the jetway, each one she takes into a terminal like every other, a void of an aircraft behind the astral explorer. The wilted social flower wants to be noticed; his conscious association is a large, professional foyer, but his unconscious association is walking into a party without being noticed.

And this is just the basic set piece, the foundation. Layered atop are emotions flowing beneath the dreamer's notice and thoughts that never quite surface. Explorers make out only near-indecipherable fragments of thought — they appear and fade as graffiti in the jetway and are half-heard whispers in the crowd of people at the party. Situations such as the latter disturb travelers, as a group of different people doing different things all speak broken sentences that, if listened to, clearly come from a single person. Sometimes it's clear that the people are talking about the traveler, and other times that can't be true at all. It's common, too, because many people think highly and often of how others see them, including entrances or exits.

The dreamer's emotions manifest by imposing themselves on the traveler or the set piece though stimuli that trigger that emotion in the dreamer. People boarding the phantom airplane frustrate efforts to get into the terminal. Trash right out of a city alley lies strewn across the party room floor, degrading the event but going unnoticed by the guests. Heavy rain drums against the jetway roof and drips through numerous leaks. Colors are washed out, and partygoers glance at the explorer as if recording data; they also look into dark or crowded corners where an assailant could hide. The jetway floor creaks, as uncertain as its dreamer. A path clears toward the dream girl; other guests and the man she's talking to are no obstacles.

Activate all the senses when highlighting dominant emotions in dream space. Sight is a powerful stimulus: darkness, light and colors all have emotional connotations. Conditions (such as sparkling clean or upside down) also register strongly through sight, though

with corresponding stimuli that heighten or confirm the sense. Hearing includes fear at hearing the police siren outside one's window or husky breath behind one's shoulder, and everything from the droning buzz of discontent to cheers of pride work. Rather than having cheers or jeers for the dreamer or traveler, make their object be someone else lets them be present without being obvious. Scent is a potent mnemonic; a familiar whiff can bring memories long forgotten to the forefront of the mind. Laundry, sex, alley waste and the decay of flesh all have memorable smells with vastly different connotations. A light caress is pleasurable, suggestive or creepy while a leering smile from a person across the room breaks personal boundaries and a chill makes one feel exposed — the sense of touch is power.

Stronger emotions produce stronger stimuli. Weak emotions, such as momentary annoyance when a phone rings or fanciful curiosity at a man's old-fashioned dress, tickle astral travelers' senses only lightly. The first manifests as a distracting ring in the distance or ignorable vibration as from a cell phone; an explorer gets a glimpse of a strange-dressed fellow in the terminal or party before he disappears in the crowd. These impressions are as transitory as their sources, so they rarely last long. The dream scene retains lasting emotions: a phone ringing in the background that no person or machine answers, grating on the travelers, a series of individuals all with odd raiment or one such person who is visibly distinct from his surroundings.

The dreamer's conscious emotions, strong sensations and active desires play greater roles at the dream vestibule. A woman lusting after her coworker, a gang of kids throwing stones at a tourist, a veteran cleaning and reloading his service pistol — all experience active emotions and intentions that a traveler's first look into the Oneiros hints at. As the traveler walks up the jetway, other disembarking passengers look alluring; partygoers glance at the traveler fearfully, flinching away from his glance — representation of the dreamer's pride in the power of fear. In the veteran's vestibule, a large replica of the crowd assembles itself while the dreamer's thoughts, whatever he's thinking about doing with the weapon, represent themselves in the larger scene.

You need more emotional representation in the Oneiros's opening scene than in other parts of the dream space; elsewhere in the Oneiros is deeper and primarily devoted to certain aspects of the dreamer's unconscious. Surface thoughts never reach so deep, like sunlight in the ocean. Emotional manifestations

are stronger than at the entrance but less frantic. They manifest in similar ways, if more bluntly and with greater impact.

Mages' vestibules are usually quiet and tidy. The astral traveler meditates to pierce the Astral Threshold and concentrates to stay on her astral path, and the dream space the traveler most often visits is her own. Meditation clears the mind, making the chamber of surface thoughts much less hectic. Stepping off the astral path and into the Oneiros opens the mind to thought, as the traveler no longer focuses on the path over all else, but the chamber remains calm. Half-conscious thoughts manifest as described above, and light emotions color the vestibule. Unless something triggers strong feelings in the traveler — such as excitement at reaching Astral Space for the very first time or blossoming optimism for whatever she hopes to find there — a person's own vestibule is fairly quiet.

There is only one dream vestibule. Astral travelers who enter a specific Oneiros spot each other (barring concealment) and interact as though they were in real space. Attempts to blend into the surroundings range from difficult to impossible; the "people" in the vestibule are not real and impose a -2 penalty on attempts to appear as one of them. Other vestibules are rich with hiding spots or completely bare of available concealment.

Under the Conscious

Every dream vestibule connects to the rest of the Oneiros. Access appears as a way into the "back" of the space, or to crawl beneath it; wherever access appears to lead (appropriate to the vestibule's set piece), it does not — it leads into the rest of the unconscious and whatever that holds for astral travelers. On the jetway, a doorway opens onto stairs down to the tarmac; if the traveler chooses not to go that way, the service door at the far end of the terminal has a ring of keys hanging from the lock, usable by anyone with the slightest interest. Slipping into the party's back room, where they toss the coats or keep the extra booze, leads into deeper dream space; climbing up onto the roof does the same.

The vestibule is limited to its initial set piece, so any route out of the main scene — the jetway and terminal or the party — takes the traveler deeper into dream space. Only going back out the way he came in (or a metaphorically similar way; see p. 33) returns the traveler to his astral path. He can, of course, return to his body with a successful Resolve + Composure roll.

Which path the mage takes from the vestibule matters. Each path has unique emotional and explorative connotations and directs the traveler to a scene in the Oneiros with at least one connection to the exit. Taking stairs down to the tarmac exhibits disregard of the rules, desire to see the operational side of things, open expanse, stairs and a hundred other things — but the strongest connotations have the most impact. Going into the service area connotes working, menial labor, taking a break, cleaning, having clearance or authority, opening and more. Climbing onto the roof at the party brings up nighttime, dreaming, longing, loneliness and heights while going into the pantry ties to household chores, tidiness, stocking up for winter, storage and darkness. To what memories and unconscious thoughts each path leads is unpredictable, nearly random, until the astral traveler forces the issue.

A Wits roll lets the traveler limit which of the path's major themes he might follow. With one success, he chooses three major themes out of the entire bunch. An exceptional success allows him to pick exactly which one theme he wants to explore. This is the dream traveler's opportunity to start his journey where he wants to be, or near it. Unless he doesn't care where he ends up, the traveler picks a path that loads the odds in his favor, then tries to cheat anyway. A person inside his own Oneiros adds Composure to the Wits roll, as his ability to remain calm and control his emotions, which focuses the patterns of his unconscious.

As long as there's more than one option, there's no telling which one or combination decides where the gateway goes. It depends on a combination of emotional flux in the dreamer (the reason the dreamer is better at controlling it), dominant emotions of people passing through (which is how others influence the path) and dumb luck. Dreams are illogical but make metaphorical or thematic sense; that's why someone can be your father and David Bowie at the same time without contradiction. Even when an astral traveler has complete control over his emotions, his goals may dictate the door lead him elsewhere. Mages on a mission to defeat a person's greatest fear find themselves in a scene where the dreamer gets in a fight. Going in to learn a mage's real name leads a traveler to the memory of picking out and naming the dreamer's first pet. This is usually limited to influencing where in dream space a gateway leads but sometimes breaks that boundary.

Mages who explore an Oneiros together remain together by staying close. Going through the same

doorway together takes them all to the same place. Focusing on the same goal or emotions allows teamwork. Even knowing that staying close and walking the same paths keeps the group together, mages are warned that "Scrying" and similar spells will come in handy. It is easy to become separated, and then the only way (without powerful magic) to reunite travelers is to navigate the metaphors toward each other or meet back up in the vestibule or real world.

There is no direct path back into the dream vestibule from the true unconscious. One does not backtrack and try again to take the right path, at least not easily. The traveler must find a viable path out of the Oneiros — not the easy path back into real space but the dream gateway back onto the mage's astral path. There are two ways to get there: through the vestibule's described entrance or through the mage's personal path. Finding the representation of an airplane or something with similar meaning and boarding it to leave returns one to the astral path from one dream space, as does leaving a party or celebration from the other. Other escapes are individual to the traveler. Once back on his astral path, the mage can reenter the Oneiros's vestibule. Doing so consumes time and effort, but not so much as returning one's body and beginning the process from meditation all over again.

Example: Henke is a young Moros with tragedy in his past. His girlfriend in college died while driving drunk; Henke wasn't there to stop her and has always felt responsible. Now, three years later, the mage has heard about astral travel and self-help in the Oneiros, and he wants to lay the specter of his girlfriend's death to rest.

Sneaking into an elder mage's Demesne, Henke sets up everything he needs and starts to meditate. Stepping into his Oneiros places him in his dream vestibule: the enrollment office at his college. Students wander here and there, getting and returning forms. Unsure where to go, Henke asks an employee — but he's a dream actor in the vestibule's limited scene. "I can't help ya if ya don't got the form," he says.

As Henke looks around, signs and public posting boards reflect his confusion: "What Are You Doing Here?" asks one, and half the rip-off tags bearing a phone number are gone. "For Sale: One Clue, \$100 OBO" states another. A sign tells him to "Leave. You don't know what you're doing" until he looks at it hard, at which point it's telling him to "Pick up enrollment forms here." Henke hears someone whisper, "The Demesne owner is so going to kick his ass." Henke can't focus on of these long enough to get more than a general idea. While he watches, the pace inside the office becomes frenetic, students bump-

ing Henke and crowding him. Henke's nervousness is compounding itself.

Trying to find a refuge from the chaos where he can recoup, Henke pushes through the crowd to the bathroom — which he remembers as a nasty little space where he always ran into people he didn't like. If he had left by the main entrance, he would have returned to his astral path.

Through the Tollbooth

Beyond the dream vestibule, there are dozens of miniature worlds for astral travelers to see and experience. Each is a scene or series of scenes that represent memories, dreams, hopes, fears, desires, urges and so on. They blur together over temporal and spatial perceptions, but a scene makes up the whole world while a mage is inside it. All the dreamer's unconscious is represented in non-discrete bits and pieces separated by symbolic distance.

It surprises novice dream travelers; they expect the Oneiros to be a grand construction, one enormous contiguous space dense with meaning and emotion, perhaps inspired by Escher or Dali in appearance. Not so.

Leaving the vestibule puts a traveler in one such scene. Scenes begin when travelers arrive, unless an astral traveler is already there, in which case new explorers join the scene at its current progress. As mentioned, a scene is a memory or set of memories, or hopes or dreams. Scenes are set in appropriate places, such as the dreamer's childhood bedroom or what he imagines CIA headquarters to look like, and they have loose scripts — more like plots with moderate ad-libbing.

Most scenes are physically small affairs, concerned with the events of a single time at a single location often no larger than one or a few rooms. The small size throws off the inexperienced explorers. Larger sets exist, generally for broader or more contentious issues. Finding oneself in a set resembling *Labyrinth* makes knowledgeable travelers nervous. Mages term some scenes "settings"; these lack plots or have the vaguest scripts that never end. Less ephemeral parts of the unconscious, such as the deepest nightmares, the character's Vice-realm and memory storage, are settings rather than scenes. They never end in the same way that standard scenes end, and the only way to leave them is to physically escape them (or leave Astral Space).

Two classes of objects occupy dream scenes: relevant and irrelevant. Irrelevant objects are window dressing,

facets of the scene that do not play a major emotional or thematic role but are there because they were imagined. Remember that dreams often lack common-sense aspects and have inconsequential senseless aspects. In the child's bedroom, the carpet is an irrelevant object. The wall between the bed and the front yard is missing, but unless the scene uses that as an unconscious (obviously) desire to escape over-restrictive parents that remains irrelevant.

Relevant objects are any things and people (in addition to astral travelers) that play major parts in the scene. Since the dreamer dreaded his dad walking in at night to unburden himself, the door that looms and threatens to creak open is a relevant object. The father who bursts in is a relevant object (a dream actor; see below), as is the comforter the dreamer hid under, defending himself by pretending to be asleep.

Scenes assume that any astral traveler is the dreamer — a reasonable assumption, but not always correct. If there is a first-person station available, an "I" in the dream or memory, the scene treats the mage as though it should all be from his perspective. Otherwise, the astral traveler is free to observe from any perspective he chooses. With multiple astral travelers in the same place, the scene's actors and events never decide who the primary actor is. The dreamer's father addresses one mage after another without apparent pattern, sometimes changing mid-sentence. A rockfall meant to pin the dreamer and spawn the traumatic memory mages now witness could hit any one of them, or more than one. If the Oneiros's owner is present or if one traveler takes a greater role in events than others, the scene focuses on that mage but not exclusively.

The scene progresses whether or not astral travelers take part, as long as one is there to watch. Scenes that address the traveler directly, always as though he were the dreamer or whomever the dreamer is dreaming of being, shape themselves to the traveler's participation. The scene has a different outcome if the traveler takes no part in the play; having no principal character stunts the scene's developments, and while it plays out as it should, the scene lacks vitality and reveals less about the dreamer's character or his secrets. Interacting with the scene's events and dream actors moves the act along more quickly and makes picking meaning out of the emotional jumble easier.

Scenes can affect astral travelers, physically and emotionally. Set pieces are made of emotion, and their construction or events within a scene inflict the relevant emotions on others. Waiting in the bedroom for the father to knock imposes heart-quivering *dread*,

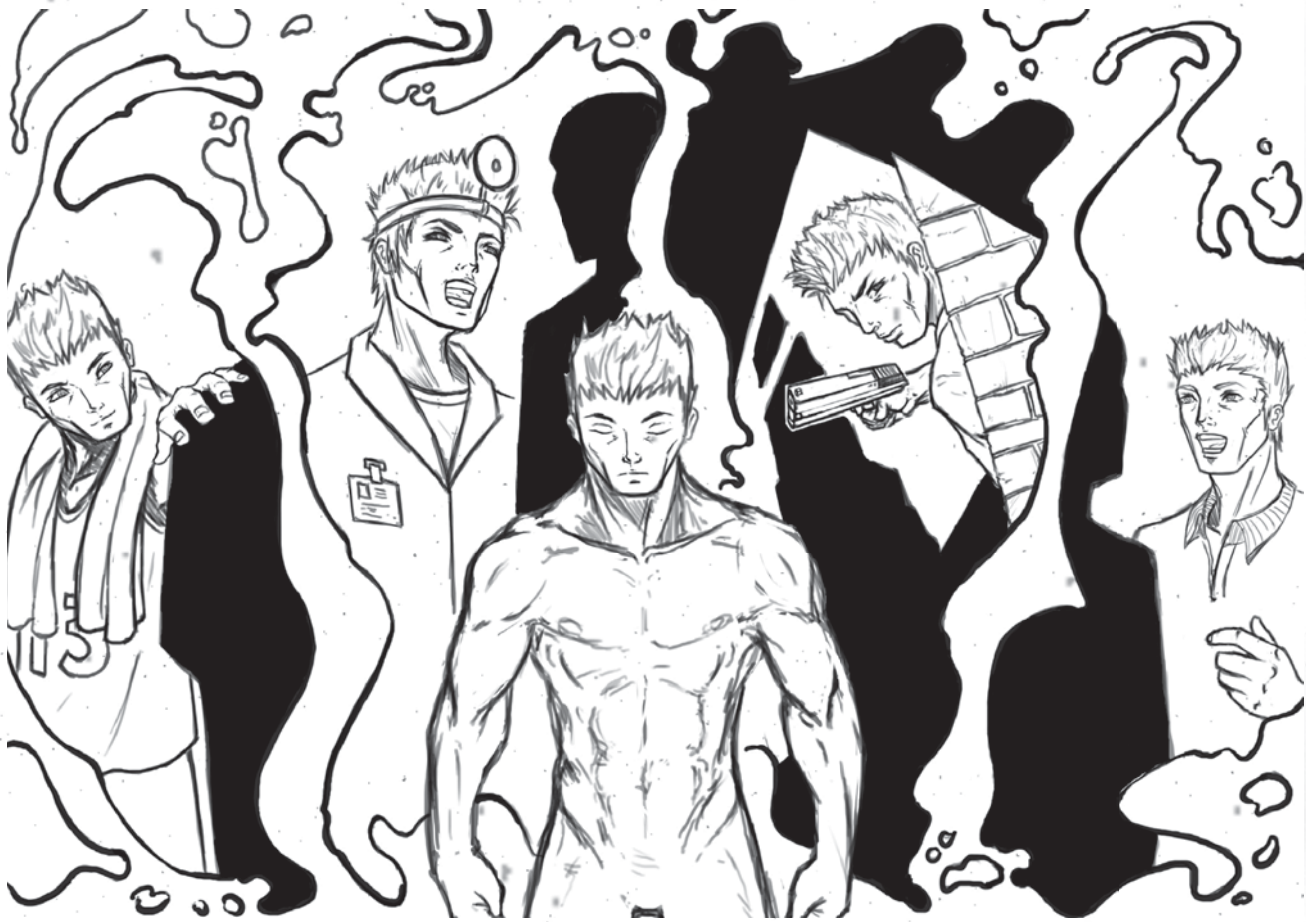
Absentee Dreams

A scene in the Oneiros exists only when an astral traveler is there to experience it. There are empty scenes, desolate of audience, playing over and over again in a person's unconscious mind. The emotions, memories and symbols swirl in an unattended unconscious, merging into one another without boundary, waiting to tickle the conscious mind and become a remembered thought, experience or feeling, if only for a moment. Only when an astral traveler enters the Oneiros does a scene coalesce around him, like a pearl around grit, and even then only the one or few actively being experienced exist at a given time.

Whether the Oneiros actually exists if no one occupies it is a longstanding question among mages. There is no proof that, without astral visitors, the Oneiros exists within a person's head at all — just the standard unconscious. The Oneiros is there when one reaches for it, and changes wrought there affect the real world for time that follows; no one argues that the Oneiros isn't real, but that it may not always *be*. That spells cast in the Oneiros with longer Durations than an astral traveler's stay remain tied to the mage after her exit from Astral Space suggests the spell must exist somewhere, but people disagree where. Is it in the mind of the person who dreamed the Oneiros (which evidence suggests), or is it just in the mind of the mage?

the door looming over the bedroom like a giant about to crush the traveler's head. The Storyteller rolls three to six dice (or more) contested by the astral explorer's Composure + Gnosis. More dice indicate a more powerful emotion, usually because the scene is that potent to the dreamer.

The scene can also inflict harm, which manifests as Willpower loss. When the first-person character in a scene takes an injury, usually because it is the memory of an injury, the scene rolls six dice as an attack, plus or minus up to three based on the lethality and emotional trauma of the event. The targeted mage applies magic sources of armor, but not Defense or defenses against magic. Each success on the roll eliminates one point of Willpower. These events target a single mage, singled out the same way as dream actors' attention. The events affect more than one in a group when all are equally



susceptible to it (all traveling in a car destined for a wreck), or at other inexplicable times.

Dream Actors

Dream actors are those figures that play out parts in an Oneiros's scenes, or in the dream vestibule. In the memory of a fun family reunion, the dreamer's cousins, aunts, uncles and dog Wolfie are all dream actors. So is the invisible friend the dreamer still had back then, if it figures in the dream. A dream actor has little free will; the dream actor acts and reacts as demanded by the dominant scene. An uncle hangs out in the periphery and drinks a beer with Dad while a cousin asks if the astral traveler wants to play Frisbee tag.

When the dreamer acts out of character, it confuses dream actors. They're part of a memory where the dreamer is nine and carefree and don't understand when he says, "I can't stay here. I've gotta find the night Jenny died!" Such events slide from dream actors' consciousnesses with little impact — Cousin Jack pauses and might ask who Jenny is, then goes back to talking about getting the Frisbee.

Larger disturbances disturb dream actors. When the astral traveler does something significant and startling

enough to knock a dream scene off track, dream actors react as the unconscious thinks they should. Burning Uncle Gerry down with dream lightning breaks the enjoyable picnic and, predictably, sets the dream family to panicking. Pushing Cousin Jack hard or often could bend the track enough to get Jack into a fight with the traveler.

Dream actors "die" just as their counterparts would in the real world, and killing dream actors is a surefire way to knock most Oneiros scenes way off track. They don't need statistics because they take only harmless roles and act or react as determined. (Dream actors return to life the next time their scene begins, unharmed and untraumatized by their forgotten deaths.) Dream actors never influence characters in ways that require dice rolls. Either a traveler participates in the scene or doesn't, and the dream actors adapt. Something that threatens astral travelers in dream space is an aggressive goetic demon or a nightmare creature; see Chapter Three. Daimons are also not dream actors, representing the reflective functions of the dreamer. They have more important tasks than simply acting. When a dream actor *does* roll a dice pool to influence the traveler, it is the daimon (or something worse) in

disguise, taking the astral traveler's dream education into its own hands.

The Daimon

Daimons vary in the amounts of support, advice and guidance they offer to astral travelers. Some greet their dreamers in the vestibule and offer help, using the daimons' considerable command over the Oneiros to lead the astral explorer to emotionally relevant scenes and causing the dreamer to question aspects of his life. Other daimons sit behind the scenes and adjust scenes to have the most impact on the dreamer. Most avoid visitors to the Oneiros except for their dreamer — defending the Oneiros isn't the daimons' job.

Chapter Three offers more detail on daimons.

Affecting Scenes

Astral travelers have little control over a scene beyond their ability to participate. By accepting and playing out a part, a mage works through the scene like a maze. She keeps track of where she's been, what dream actors have said and follows those clues to the prize at the center of every scene: knowledge. Some of that data is explicit — dream actors say the darndest things, such as, "It's your fault Mommy left us," and "I have nowhere left to run." Or the scene can tell a dream traveler directly through imagery: a dropped copy of *Great Expectations* falls open and highlights "In a word, I was too cowardly to do what I knew to be right..." making the dreamer's sense of guilt clear (or something similar from a remembered Tom Clancy novel for readers of more contemporary tastes).

Subtler meanings lie hidden in the scene's ambience, the shadows and weather and sounds discussed earlier. Astral travelers must interpret these, not just read or hear them, for the information they contain. The Empathy Skill includes practice at discerning the emotions or symbolism involved, since each scene is a facet of a human being. Blatant symbols are a flat Wits + Empathy roll, while more obscure interpretations levy penalties. Some demand the use of Intelligence + Empathy for meanings shrouded in esoteric. Empathy is not a crutch; half the fun of an Oneiros-based mystery is digging out the proper symbols and figuring out what they mean, so use Empathy sparingly.

If a scene is a maze, there are locked doors in that maze that lead to hidden chambers and unexpected treasures. There is a key to the scene, an action that opens up the events and dream actors to different possible "endings," so to speak, and provides additional

information. Rather than sitting through the father's awkward litany of miseries, cutting him off with a "Dad, I love both you and Mom, and I can't take a side" alters the scene's course; the dream-father's subsequent actions reveal the dreamer's wish that his father had been stronger, which would not have otherwise come to light. Scenes with many layers of hidden information have multiple keys. Able dream navigators with specific needs return themselves to a specific scene again and again, digging all the information they can out of it.

Not every scene *knows* its own keys. In fact, the keys one can decipher from the scene are usually less enlightening (to the dreamer or to other astral travelers) because the unconscious mind has considered them and has a response or known consequence. The dreamer has wished he could have jammed his door shut the night his father came in; an astral explorer can do that and change the course of the scene, but in a way not surprising to the unconscious and less revelatory. Because the dreamer never thought about giving a rational, adult protest to his father and refusing to listen, doing so in the scene forces the unconscious to react and is a much more potent key with far more interesting results.

Storytellers: This is not an excuse to run your players through the same scenario over and over until they get it right. Instead, it's an opportunity to give your players more information, which everyone knows is just more rope for the hanging. Let them learn the info or not and move on unless they want to dig.

Magic is its own sort of key. Spells are a traveler's *other* way of affecting a scene, which doesn't require participation. Because magic affects elements of Astral Space as though it were its real-world counterpart, mages can disintegrate doors and shapechange dream actors (harming dream actors does not cause Wisdom degeneration; destroying a daimon does). They can read an actor's mind and black out the drive-in movie where something slithering ate one of the dreamer's fingers.

Consequences of such actions are whatever the dreamer's unconscious thinks they should be. Scenes take some spells in stride (as the father walks through where the door was a moment before without reaction) and completely derail over others (such as when Dad turns into a sheep), and anywhere in between. Reading the father's mind reveals whatever the unconscious believes Dad would have been thinking, and the drive-in monster overlooks the first-person character once the lights are out — if the unconscious thinks it would have.

Perfectly normal consequences do not occur if the unconscious doesn't think of them: if all the lights go out at a real drive-in, the moviegoers make a ruckus. In the Oneiros, that only happens if such a reaction occurs to the unconscious. Mages are advised to selectively apply logic, but there's no real method for *when* to apply it.

Scenes derailed by magic are further from their natural tracks than those set on new paths by natural keys. They are more speculative in nature, more likely to reveal interesting information about the dreamer's assumptions and thought processes than about the specific memory or emotions involved; the scene strays from its normal meaning and symbolism to encompass the mage-caused changes. Magic-based keys also rarely resolve the dreamer's outstanding fears or regrets, something playing within a scene's natural framework can do. On the other hand, any information about the dreamer increases an explorer's leverage against the Oneiros and may enable the mage to better manipulate other scenes naturally.

Magical knowledge-gathering is another advantage. It takes concentration, but a willworker with Mage Sight active can pull information about the scene's

symbols right out of the walls. Learning that a specific, nondescript curtain has a painful association for the dreamer gives the traveler another tidbit to exploit in his mission. Scrutinizing resonances for emotion and meaning this way doesn't explain what a scene's all about or substitute for participation and letting it play out — it's just another weapon in a wide arsenal.

Finally, an astral traveler in his own Oneiros has a natural power there. Exerting enough control over his unconscious changes scenes, either whisking them away entirely or altering them on a closer level, the character can change dominant emotions, alter associations, twist scripts and anything else — it's basically rewriting the reality of his dream space. It isn't easy: an exceptional success on an Intelligence + Composure roll is required to effect any change at all.

If the character manages such a feat, he temporarily changes the way his unconscious mind perceives something. A nightmare becomes something laughable, or a train's terrifying instability becomes nothing to be worried about. His unconscious's change in perception changes what appears within dream space, making the nightmare monster harmless or stilling the

train's vibrations that made it so hard for an astral body to balance. Careful control removes the dread of Dad coming in at night, ending the scene without an emotional quiver, or convinces the unconscious that there was no gate there so the mage can progress through dream space.

A person can affect an Oneiros not her own, if she is clever. The right word in the dreamer's ear, a recognized smell or a certain sound can all bring certain memories to the fore, just as manipulation of the dreamer's psyche can dull old mental wounds and make the unconscious gentler. When able to influence the dreamer, either because he is astral and right beside her or because she has accomplices in real space, the character attempting to shift the subconscious needs an



exceptional success on a Manipulation + Persuasion, Intimidation or Expression roll.

Such efforts work only in broad strokes. The dreamer becomes less fearful, more susceptible to sadness or angry. A certain class of memory becomes less repressed or more terrifying. There's nothing resembling the delicate act of stilling a single train, here — to get the same effect, the character must quell the dreamer's fears of all unstable platforms and hope that that's what's making the train shake so much.

Example: Henke leaves his dream vestibule and finds himself in a dark, enclosed space. He doesn't recognize it until he looks up and sees enormous children's coats hanging above him. This is a nightmare of elementary school, when three older kids shoved him in a closet and held it shut. He had felt terrified and trapped, and the feeling returned now with a vengeance.

Muffled voices. The scene is playing. "Hey, find a door stop, we can leave him here all day." "Hear that, Markham, you'll be in here forever!" Despite the growing urge to cry, Henke remembers his tragedy and his mission. He's not going to stay here and take this — but neither can he spare the time to deal with the scene. There's not much that can keep a Moros in a cage, and Henke rots away the wall beside the door, then kicks it out.

This breaks the scene something awful. Bullies gape, then run away from the closet as Henke steps through the wall. Unsure what he's doing, Henke decides he needs a fresh start. He pulls the fire alarm. The halls fill with running children and herding teachers as his unconscious says it should, and Henke steps out into the crowd and runs with them, putting distance between him and his memory and moving into a new scene.

Had Henke had the presence of mind and the desire, he could have interacted with the bullies in the scene's context and possibly shucked himself of his ancient nightmare. Not showing fear is a minor key that gets the bullies bored so they walk away; mocking them ("Hey, you left your lunch in here! Yum!") turns the tables, getting them angry to the point where they open the door and let Henke out.

Traveling Through Dream Space

Astral travelers move between scenes in two ways. When the current scene ends, a new scene forms around them. The traveler experiences transition in the form of time's passage or travel. It is narrative in nature, as though an author stated, "And many years later..." The traveler is aware of years having passed, and of travel to a different place, but it takes a perceptual instant. It decimates accurate senses of time, one reason mages come out of Astral Space uncertain of how long they've

been under. Only perfect senses of time (such as that provided by "Temporal Eddies," the Time-based Mage Sight) defeat this effect. This sort of transition also occurs *within* scenes that cross years or miles for their short stories to fully play out; this makes it difficult to tell if a scene has changed or not, but a constant theme indicates the scene is still going.

Natural dream transitions follow emotional or semi-rational resonance between scenes. Dreaming of a first kiss blurs into a raging argument with the same girl a month later; the lust after a woman the dreamer has never been with or a non-romantic memory of a childhood friend (who told the dreamer one could get AIDS from kissing). The link ranges from obvious to undetectable. Transition imparts a loose sense of the relation between scenes on those in transit. One month's forward progress and the immediate sense of how the traveler got there (wherever the current scene is staged), the imagined steps that lead up to making out with the crush or the upsetting sensation of unaging and ending up in the schoolyard for recess.

As with leaving the dream vestibule, a Wits roll lets a character highlight some themes over others (Wits + Composure for the dreamer). It is, luckily, more distinct: there are fewer themes in a scene than in the vestibule, and a successful roll singles out just one. The mage limits emotions to pursue in the same way, but doesn't get the choice of whether chasing lust means experiencing the fantasy with the impossible crush or looking at that first Playboy magazine from a friend's father's collection. An exceptional success lets the traveler pick a specific scene from the available themes. Assuming it exists, she experiences that scene next; otherwise, her destination is random as normal.

A traveler's other method of travel through the Oneiros is by choice. He walks out of a given, active scene any way possible, effectively ending it (from his perspective, anyway) and forcing another scene to form around him. If it's impossible to physically leave a scene, such as a nightmare of prison, foreshortening the plot has the same effect; killing all the prisoners/dream actors that comprised the scene's relevant bits ends it early. In addition to cutting short scenes that don't aid the traveler, the aspect of the scene through which the mage leaves influences his next scene in the same way as the exit from the vestibule. It's more self-directed than letting a scene end and going where it puts you, but it takes just as much time.

Some scenes have sets of great size, making them difficult to physically leave, and very resilient plots, preventing a traveler from easily traveling out of that

scene. The most dangerous settings, such as that of a dreamer's Vice, are plotless and physically very broad.

It's because of how the Oneiros measures distance. A traveler must cross certain breadths of meaning or emotion to get from one scene to another. He cannot simply say, "I walk from misery across self-contempt into the concept of introspection, and from there tread upwards into amusement and the bright field of fond memories and ponies." It doesn't work like that. *Travel occurs by scenes*. Scenes of one sort are as far from scenes of another sort as the number of scenes it takes to get there — circular logic because only making the trip defines the distance. The degree of connection between two scenes depends on whose unconscious it is and how well the mage navigates them.

Paths taken through the Oneiros are unquantifiable. No mage can predict how long, in time or scenes, it takes to travel from one specific scene to another. One travels by the emotion or theme, going from one scene to another based on the dominant emotions and themes they share. Moving from one lustful fantasy to another can be immediate (no intervening scenes), as can going from a scene about a nervous first kiss to one about the first nervous discussion about kisses. Traveling from a memory steeped in rage over a run-over dog to one rich with elation requires additional navigation, unless that elation is from getting the puppy in the first place — then theme ties them.

Navigation between scenes is half luck and half skill. The astral explorer must decipher the dominant emotions and themes in a scene and use what fortune places at her disposal to reach her destination. In a scene lacking the right emotions and themes, she has to pick some of what is present and hope it leads her in the right direction. Correct analysis of the evident symbolism is a difficult skill and one of the greatest arguments for participating in a scene that otherwise doesn't interest the traveler. Letting the scene play out reveals more about the scene; snap judgments commonly cause errors (and -3 dice penalties to the Wits + Empathy roll).

Choosing which themes or emotions the traveler wants to follow is a physical act. In addition to leaving the scene, the character marks or takes with her a symbol related to the theme or themes she wants to travel. By staying close, groups ensure they all end up in the same scene.

Even when the mage narrows her direction down to a single theme, she still ends up in any one of a cluster of scenes related to that theme. Sometimes this is enough, as when a mage invades a rival's

Oneiros to dig up sources of shame, but it is hard to find a specific memory. Dream space naturally resists repetitive displays, so a traveler eventually finds what she's looking for if she remains in the proper theme through enough scenes. Add a +1 die bonus to the roll to control travel between scenes for each previous roll in such situations; even so, mages usually find the scene they want before they get an exceptional success.

Time in Dream Space

How much time passes in real space when the mage is in the Oneiros? It's hard for a character to know thanks to the transitory sensations of living years or driving hundreds of miles. In the end, it's *experienced* time that's important, not narrative time. If a dream traveler examines a set piece for what feels like 10 minutes, then looks up and the scene still hasn't started — well, an hour *did* pass. When the group cuts through a scene in five minutes by stating that their characters interact with it but not playing it out, it actually took five minutes in real space.

This is one of those times when you can look at your real clock and say, "That much time has passed in real space while you guys were in the Oneiros." The most important clock in dream space is the perceived passage of time.

Example: Henke steps from the running horde of children into a memory of when he visited Tokyo, big and crowded and full of people he couldn't communicate with on any appreciable level. The bad experience magnifies the city into dark, towering buildings flashing inchoate symbols over wide streets inexplicably filled with people roughing each other (and Henke) up more than British football hooligans. This is far from ideal; it's nothing like Henke's memory of his girlfriend or her death.

There's no reason to play out the scene, since Henke has trouble seeing connections between his goal fear of urban centers, claustrophobia, getting lost and minor xenophobia. Instead, he picks out the local subway and dashes toward it. In his mind, he connects the frighteningly crowded Tokyo subway with the train he once took from the airport out to campus. It's a tenuous theme to travel along, but it's all Henke thinks up. He ends up moving into the memory of his long train ride across America, when he had absolutely nothing to do and was bored. It'll take him a couple of more scenes to reach his destination unless he starts picking out deeper themes.

Connecting the loneliness of being surrounded by people yet unable to talk with them to the void he felt between himself and everyone else after his girlfriend's death, the trip would have been much shorter. Henke still has a few things to learn about navigating his Oneiros.

Affecting the Without from Within

Most mages travel into an Oneiros to better know themselves, to learn their inner desires and fears and master them; some explore others' Oneiroi for illicit information not otherwise to be had. But information is only one of many uses for a journey through a person's unconscious mind. Healing is another.

Mental blocks, severe phobias, derangements, social problems and most anything that arises from an aspect of the unconscious can be repaired with thorough examination of a mage's Oneiros. Entering the Oneiros with a will to change it is like taking a fine knife to the dreamer's personality and whittling away here and there, removing this or letting that shine through.

Change requires the dreamer to face down her unconscious representations of those difficulties. This means finding the scene of a particular painful memory and conquering it, whatever "conquering it" means to the character. Living through the painful memory of a sister's suicide over and over again until the dreamer really believes she couldn't have prevented it or isn't responsible for it is one way; leaping up and changing the results in the dream scene is another. It all depends on what the person really believes in her unconscious. If she believes she's actually responsible, the solution may be coming to terms with it by experiencing the nightmare up close a dozen times. When she consciously blames herself but knows deep down there's nothing she could have done, a single scene with the key of halting the suicide only to see the sister kill herself another time forces the dreamer to realize her freedom from guilt.

Adventures in the Oneiros are excellent excuses to buy off Flaws. The mage fights the demon of her Addiction within her dreams, and when she's done she no longer feels the sting of turning up a smoke. She faces her fears in a series of scenes that leaves her with some courage and eliminates the Cowardly Flaw. Navigating a literal maze to find secret chambers containing unique scenes of their own may be the key to unlocking memories lost to Amnesia. By watching herself act from others' perspectives, the character realizes that she's been Aloof or how she's alienated others with her behavior (Behavior Blind).

Confronting a childhood fright defeats the Speech Impediment the fright caused.

Mental Practice

There's no reason to limit knowledge gained from such deep introspection to erasing negative qualities from the character sheet. A mage with a low Empathy or Socialize plays through many of her memories to learn what she's doing wrong and how to better play well with others. Reading a book on survival tactics puts all of it in the mage's unconscious and alters the way scenes dealing with the subject play out; running through such scenes multiple times help bring the information from her unconscious to her conscious and increase Survival. Dredging forgotten lessons from university up from the bog of lost learning helps increase Academics, though that only goes so far.

Mages can also work on picking up Mental Merits, running through scenes that feature foreign tongues, intense memories of threats (Danger Sense), babbling streets while the character tries to concentrate (Meditative Mind) and others.

Memory-based scenes are also useful in fitting together puzzles. Using the Oneiros as the basis for an extended Investigation or Occult roll to reexamine dozens of clues and consciously noticing for the first time that the suspect's shadow had horns and so on make for a fun session. Better, it acts as an equipment bonus to the rolls of a quality depending mostly on the roleplaying involved. Saying the character does it for a bonus is boring.

Morality

Exploration of the Oneiros is especially useful when it comes to purchasing Wisdom (or other Morality traits) and throwing off derangements. Derangements have their own settings, rather large, in an Oneiros and must be faced on their own terms. Magic can help, but it's never the answer. See p. 53 for more detail on derangements in dream space.

When a mage works on increasing her Wisdom rating from inside her unconscious, she hunts down a series of different scenes (or the same one multiple times) that include examples of when she has sinned against that level of Wisdom. The mage going from Wisdom 5 to 6 walks through the memory of when she first bound a spirit to her will, rationalizing it, then continued doing it until she realized that she had no good reason — and that she didn't care. If she has a derangement associated with this transition, she must face that as well. The person going from Wisdom 7 to 8 lives through the memories of laughing when

she accidentally cut her friend and manipulating a boyfriend's emotions with Mind so he'd steal something for her. The traveler examines her actions, feels the shame of them and resolves to be better, in this way increasing her Wisdom.

Some measures a mage takes in her Oneiros are preventative. Just as a person can meditate on her beliefs to stave off moral degeneration (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 51), a mage can walk her unconscious to accomplish the same effect. The methods are always personal. One mage examines manifestations of her self-image, and when she encounters something that challenges that image, she is strong. Another experiences a murder she committed (and rationalized) years ago over and over, reaffirming that she did the right thing; when she finds herself in a similar situation, she falls back on that hidden reserve of strength. Using the Oneiros in this way is stronger than regular meditation; it adds one die to the character's next degeneration roll as long as it occurs within the next *month*. (Five-dot Hallows and Demesnes are rare and coveted enough that getting time alone in one for astral travel is hard enough, even without the need to spend Mana and walk the astral path.)

Knowledge

Self-enlightenment is a common reason for mages to enter and wander their own Oneiroi. Taking in the landscape of the soul teaches the traveler aspects of her personality, unconscious mind and Awakened soul that she otherwise overlooks. She learns a hidden shortcut through her soul that moves her closer to her realm and discovers a mental roadblock keeping her from a crucial understanding of the *Ars Mysteriorum*. These play out in a variety of ways, as literal roadblocks the mage must surpass to mazes that represent the tangle of wisdom the mage has heard but not yet made sense of — and once she navigates it, she looks back to see that it is a straight line. Travels such as these provide Arcane Experience.

Less Savory Things

One of the most frightening things a mage can do in dream space is inside someone *else's* Oneiros. With proper preparation and the right spells, a willworker can tweak the dreamer's unconscious strongly enough to make any Awakened reconsider allowing anyone into her head. This is similar to spells such as "Psychic Reprogramming" and "Breach the Vault of Memory" but works on different principles. The mage uses Supernal magic inside dream space to effect some relevant change that, through symbolism, alters the scenes the change affects.

Prediction: The Dream Merit in Dream Space

The curious ability of some individuals to seek and receive answers in their dreams is unexplained, but it has a connection to Astral Space. When a character with the Dream Merit delves into his Oneiros for inspiration and prophecy, proximity to the Temenos and the reality of dream space make his visions that much more meaningful. The Storyteller adds the character's Dream Merit rating to the Wits + Composure roll. This is definitely an excuse for the character's questions to intertwine with his insecurities and solve or create personal difficulties in addition to whatever topic the character wanted to cover.

This can be beneficial. Using Matter to create a safe, secure cover for the infinite, screaming pit representing the sum of the dreamer's failures has metaphorical power; a mage using Space could make all directions point away from the pit for a similar effect. Done in a scene with enough importance to and impact on the dreamer's subconscious, such an act quells the dreamer's fear of failure or the sense of self-loathing over them.

Not every mage has the dreamer's best interests in mind, and that is the fear that prevents willworkers from letting just anyone into their Oneiroi. A mage can cast "Fantasia" to make a powerful nightmare creature even more terrifying or "Create Life" and "Psychic Genesis" to invent an entirely new nightmare (or "Shape Spirit" for a similar effect). She can use Matter to weaken, if not destroy, the vast bridge over empty space that represents the dreamer's confidence. "Shape Liquid" could channel the pleasant drizzle away from the dreamer and his first lover, taking some of the (figurative) magic away from a fond memory. Almost any Arcanum can kill a dream actor and put sheer terror in place of a happy memory.

With enough work, a mage can create entirely new memories, emotions, urges and anything else represented in the Oneiros by a scene and setting. Doing so requires spells to create the setting and populate it with programmed dream actors (or nightmares). Because of the time and Mana necessary, Mind magic remains the most efficient way to rewrite someone's memory and emotions.

Effects built into a person's unconscious by magic last only as long as the spells do. This makes the effects always temporary, though few mages want to have false memories or urges to share their secrets with strangers even for a short while. As spells laid on a living Pattern, they cannot be made indefinite in Duration; the best a mage can do is use advanced prolongation factors to keep her creation around for a month, at which time the creation disappears or reverts to normal. Changes that are normally lasting (such as the effect of "Annihilate Matter") also revert to normal after one month. Slain dream actors return after a day, if not less.

Even good works, ones the dreamer desires, cannot be permanent. A mage hoping to help a patient psychologically learns a great deal of use by exploring her patient's Oneiros, but she cannot effect lasting change there. The best she could do is use magic in the patient's dream space to make the patient more cooperative or motivated, then work out issues in real space while the effect lasts. With some tragic cases, such work could be necessary before any real world progress is possible. It remains a second choice to "Psychic Reprogramming," as long as the psychologist is willing to do work that could be magically dispelled. The fact remains that only the dreamer himself can permanently defeat his psychological issues by traveling the Oneiros.

Example: Henke is in the ring of shadow just outside a street lamp's illumination. He sees a green sedan parked halfway down the block. He knows whose it is. Even though he wasn't here, Henke's run through this scene in his mind a hundred times: his girlfriend staggers out of the party drunk, and nobody says a word. She only has to drive two miles back to her dorm and it's three AM — the roads are safe. Except for telephone poles. He sees it happen: she leaves the party walking backwards, waving to her friends, and stumbles across the street to her car.

Henke can't watch it, not when it's this real. He already knows how it will look, anyway. The car pulls away, and Henke's perspective follows it. He knows the route intimately, and he knows what's going to happen. So he stops it. At his command, all four tires blow out simultaneously at a stop sign. Things... change. She gets out of the car and looks at the tires with drunken disbelief. Then she starts walking.

And that's it. That's all there is. No satori, no sense of accomplishment, nothing's actually different. So Henke does it again. And again. It's hard to get back to the right scenes each time, but he's starting to get better at it. He destroys the engine before she can leave. He steals the

car himself. He fuses the party door shut. He gets in the car and makes the telephone pole so brittle the car blows right through it; that time, the car hits building and shakes Henke up a bit. Once, out of frustration, Henke strangles his girlfriend himself because she just won't get it right.

That's what does it. Maybe it's the absurdity of the situation, maybe it's that he's finally actually doing something to her, but it sinks in while the nightmare-fantasy of his dead girlfriend stops struggling in his hands. This is killing her; what he did before wasn't. She killed herself with her drinking... and Henke knew it. He's still not sure why he wanted to feel responsible — maybe it was denial that someone he loved could do that to herself, or maybe he was jealous that she wouldn't open up emotionally so he had to pretend he had more influence than he really did. Maybe it'll become clear on future introspection.

Other Aspects of the Oneiros

Common elements form the foundations of most dream scenes. Memories rich with emotion or relevance to the dreamer's personality, poignant regrets, vivid prides, loves lost and lovers discovered, desires, rivalries, urges the dreamer denies, beliefs the dreamer refuses to admit; all these things make up the bulk of the Oneiros, the scenes that most astral visitors experience and interact with before leaving. Much has already been said about them, about their makeup and the way they work.

There are other places in every dream space. They are still scenes at their heart, but they are based on firmer stuff than even memories etched in stone and often lack the plots distinct to most dream realms or have very sparse scripting. These represent a person's Vice, nightmare realms, core functions of the mind and any derangements she has.

Memories

Science suggests that a person's mind contains the entire record of her life experience, with no stimulus lost except through gross physical trauma. Regardless, dull memories are hard to find. The emotionally vivid ones push to the fore, providing interesting scenes relevant to the dreamer's development and the unconscious processes that make her who she is. An astral traveler cannot fast-forward and push play to see where the dreamer types in her password or hides the priceless artifact. If it's something she remembers strongly, something tied tight to her unconscious mind, it is there for travelers to find and experience. If it's not, an astral intruder is simply out of luck.

On the other hand, the dreamer's memories *can* be manipulated through Oneiros symbolism. Every dream space has storage in it someplace, a scene without a plot that represents the mind's archival and retrieval system. Working with it requires effort, labor of some sort, always represented by drawing clean units of something out of a mess, bog or other place where things are lost and giving them organization. A computer programmer sits in front of a flickering monitor, green characters on black, in an empty warehouse and debugs, separating good code from bad. The paleontologist or dinosaur-enthusiast stands above a dig in the Utah, commanding obedient grad students in unearthing and cataloguing a recent find. A youth cleans his room, separating clothes into one pile, crusty old plates into another and so on.

This symbolic task fetches old memories out from wherever they've fallen in the process of learning and recording them and makes them more available to the conscious mind. It better correlates them with memories already accessible to the consciousness and generally makes the process of remembering and thinking just a little bit less stressful. A mage who takes regular time out of his schedule to sort his unconscious memories (which requires several hours of effort at a stretch, though judicious magic use speeds it up) gains a +1 die to rolls for memory.

Of course, what one can do one (or another) can undo. A mage can likewise obfuscate her memories with the reverse symbolism. Throwing in deliberately obtuse code with misleading comments, stealing bones and reburying them or tagging them inappropriately and making a bigger mess of the youth's room disorders the dreamer's memories. It counters the effects of a previous housecleaning or inflicts a -1 die penalty on rolls to remember general facts or events. A very thorough mage could disrupt someone's eidetic memory (which manifests as a naturally tidy place that somehow sorts itself), though it's likely to require invasive spells. Doing the reverse (creating a creature in the storage space with the motivation to constantly work sorting memories) could provide a benefit similar to the Eidetic Memory Merit or the Encyclopedic Knowledge Merit for a short time. Attempts to create such things requires Storyteller discretion. Remember that all changes to dream space revert to normal in a maximum of one month.

Not every memory is stored in the same place. The mage singles out specific classes of memories by finding appropriate metaphors for them within her

overall storage center. The programmer opens solitaire to focus on entertainment memories or open up the trash file to clean up things she's tried to forget. The paleontologist digs up an allosaurus to focus on aggressive memories. The kid tosses shirts with band names on them in one corner and athletes' jerseys in another, distinguishing pop culture from the rest of the mess. She can change the general context of her storage system with a little intra-scene travel, moving to a museum of natural science and wandering into a different display to focus on something different.

Some memories are stored in places where this general process can't reach. Strongly repressed memories are too deep or too well concealed for this method to make them available to the conscious mind. Memories that hidden are high-emotion scenes in their own right if they've been tickling the unconscious mind for a while. If they haven't even reached the unconscious, they are well and truly repressed. Releasing a memory that locked away is a scene in itself, something on par with breaking into a high-quality vault, defeating a mystical guardian or navigating a Gordian knot of a labyrinth. Magic makes such tasks easier (controlling the guardian's mind or melting the labyrinth's walls to cut straight to the center, for example), which gives mages an edge when cleaning house in dream space, but never removes the challenge completely. The challenge overcome, a repressed memory is released back into the normal vaults and accessible to the conscious mind — in which case the mage learns why she repressed it in the first place.

Astral travelers can likewise lock away memories to fully repress them. It's not often considered a healthy practice, but some things a person just doesn't need to contend with in everyday life. The mage digs up a memory from the standard memory-sorting scene and transports it into an adjoining scene of safekeeping, such as a great vault or labyrinth as described above. Such scenes are always accessible from the main storage area of the unconscious; they even provide toolkits of sorts for manufacturing the vault. Sealing away a memory for good in this fashion is hubris; doing so triggers a three-dice degeneration roll in mages of Wisdom 5 and higher.

Mages reach the storage region of the unconscious by pursuing themes of preservation, keeping, duration and similar when leaving other scenes. Leaving is simple: the storage reason has a passage out. Unfortunately, it is blank of associations, so an astral traveler cannot know (or guide) where it will lead her.

Vice

The Vice spawns an interesting scene within the Oneiros. Everyone has one, and it is part shame and part joy, part regret and part pride. A Vice landscape is broad, larger than most normal dream scenes, and very active. And very dangerous. Its contradictions are what make the landscape dangerous. It houses a powerful goetic demon, what is usually the mind's most potent unwanted urge, but it's not alone. Except in those rare cases when the dreamer is not *at all* afraid of his urges, the demon of Vice shares the space with several nightmare creatures representing the fear that he will succumb to his Vice and hurt himself... or someone else.

Mages travel to their Vices or others' for understanding. They can learn more about their weaknesses there, or discover their foes'. It is possible to indulge without harming anyone, but it's often not satisfying. Showing down the demon of Vice in its territory subdues it for a time and mimics the effects of "Goetic Struggle" in **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 324. Destroying the demon frees the mage from its influence for a while, but that time is short enough to make the effort too great a price. A mage, with the power she wields, could potentially destroy the entire area, vast though it is, but it would reform. And until it did, her demon of Vice would be free to roam her Oneiros as the daimon usually is not.

There are few enough reasons to make the realm of Vice a destination. Mages end up there anyway because there are many dark and negative emotions in the Oneiros, and getting caught up with many of them can lead a traveler into Vice. Worse, Vice is difficult to escape. Its scene does not end, and it is so broad that a mage must travel for some time to reach an end, harried all the while by demons and nightmares.

A Vice realm's appearance depends on the dreamer but has some constant qualities based on what, exactly, it urges its dreamer to do. These are generally true, if not always.

Envy

Scenes of Envy are large, not just in breadth but in perspective. Visitors feel small because the landscape *makes* them small; it is suited to a bigger, smarter, more potent and relevant person than the astral visitor. The traveler can change this; there are such people spending time in the scene, people who clearly belong here while the traveler does not. Taking importance, power or relevance from them equalizes the size of the explorer and landscape a small amount. Being comfortable in the realm of Envy means taking that comfort from others.

Gluttony

The real world is full of what the dreamer needs. So is the scene of Gluttony, but it looks bleak and desolate. It could be a liquor store with empty shelves or a supermarket with no snack aisle. But the sense of potential satisfaction is there — an astral traveler can smell her needs on the wind, or hear evidence of them hidden nearby. All that remains is to find them... but where, and how? Only by going to any length necessary does one get what one wants in the realm of Gluttony.

Greed

Everything here fulfills the dreamer's desires. If she wishes for wealth, trees are golden and leaves are money. Someone who craves recognition finds it at every turn, adulating fans lauding her accomplishments and waiting eagerly for her next masterful stroke of genius. But the sense that there is more to be had is constant. Not only is there more money around the next corner, *that's* where there's enough to satisfy her. Satisfaction eludes all visitors in Greed's realm.

Lust

There is one thing here that the dreamer wants, be it a gorgeous woman or a need for speed, and only one place to get it. There's one car and one speedway, or just one mind-blowing blonde sunbathing by the pool. Something's in the way, could be a security guard and could be an unwilling woman, but it's not a big deal — not to someone who really wants it. Joy in the realm of Lust comes from not taking no for an answer.

Pride

The realm of Pride is flawless. No matter where a visitor looks, everything is strong and clean and good — perfect. Lights are bright, reflections are sharp, apples are crisp, everything is right. As long — someone pays attention to it. Rotten smells waft out of the garbage disposal when the visitor turns her back, and the apple is soft and brown if nobody's touching it. The evidence of imperfection is slight, but there. Quality is an illusion in the realm of Pride.

Sloth

Speed is imperative in the realm of Sloth. Speed kills in the realm of Sloth. It appears to be a contradiction: everything moves fast, as if everyone were rushing to begin with and someone turned up the speed by a tenth. The world wears out at an unnatural rate, too: cars break down and rust too quickly, and people give up their rushed ghosts while trying to get something done. In the realm of Sloth, there's no reason to try.

Wrath

Violence inhabits this landscape, pure and simple. Violence warps even innocent conflicts into something bloody: tree roots mangle a sidewalk and car engines growl, threatening the stoplight to make it change. To get anything, one must play their game. *Throw* money on the counter, *punch* out for lunch, *break* a record getting back; everything is violent. Survival in the realm of Wrath means killing the other guy.

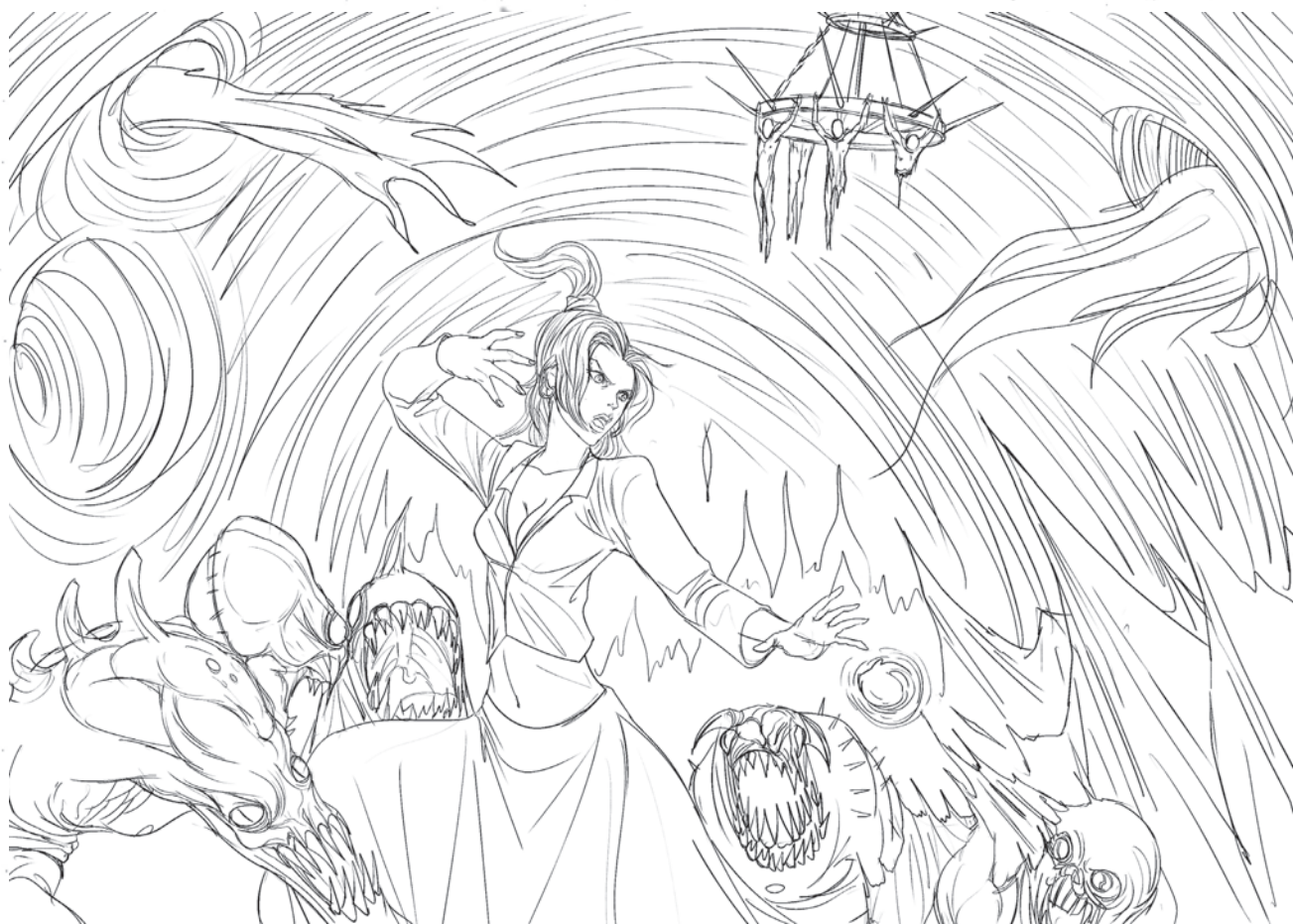
Lesser Realms

The realm of Vice in an Oneiros is the greatest of what are called the goetic realms. Lesser goetic realms are home to lesser goetic demons and are as twisted in nature as the homes for Vice. The realm for an urge to hunt down and kill the *thing* that ate your wife hides shadowed manlike creatures around every corner, all waiting for you to shoot the wrong one by mistake or to pass over the right one and turn your back. An urge strongly related to the dreamer's Vice (such as the example if the character's Vice is Wrath) is typically subsumed into the Vice's landscape, becoming an aspect of it. The urge may be its own little world within the Vice, which can be worse: escaping one dark urge leaves the traveler yet in the grips of a greater one.

Nightmare Realms

Nightmare realms are varied and frightening. Each is home to a specific one of the dreamer's worst fears and host to the nightmare creatures that lurk in her unconscious. A nightmare realm is dense with sources of that fear, ready to terrorize an astral visitor and equally ready to harm her. The realms are extremes, examples of the very worst the dreamer can conceive but not quite admit to herself. Rather than scripts, nightmare realms have inhabitants with standing orders to mentally, emotionally or physically harm any astral traveler that comes their way. The realms themselves are of a size commensurate with the strength of the fear: the home of a Rank 1 nightmare creature is one or two rooms, a Rank 2 nightmare creature has an entire house or small apartment building and a Rank 3 nightmare creature roams entire mind-consuming landscapes. Chapter Three, p. 98, has more information on nightmare creatures.

Travel to a nightmare realm can easily be accidental; they are tied to many of the same themes and emotions common through the rest of an Oneiros. Escaping the smaller nightmare realms is not as hard as



it is for realms of Vice: one can just leave. The largest nightmare realms are just as difficult to escape (without leaving Astral Space, that is) as a realm of Vice.

Mages seek out nightmare realms to confront their fears in the classic sense, defeating them and robbing them of power. Other reasons include exploring the self and discovering rivals' weaknesses.

Derangements

A madness buries itself deep in a person's psyche, as integrated as the derangement can be with the unconscious and the core personality. The madness hides so well that many people suffering a derangement never realize that they aren't perfectly normal. Their actions are rational and their fears justified.

Derangement realms make that manifest; the more severe the derangement, the larger the realm and more evident its nature. A Suspicious person develops in her mind the street where she lives (or perhaps a setting in her past) where people laugh at her behind her back and accidentally nudge her to knock her over; the Paranoid has a city district where everyone is watching her when she's not looking, her efforts to free herself from their tyranny are doomed to failure and the snipers are never more than a rooftop away.

Insanities are the only dangers in an Oneiros that threaten to capture an astral traveler and not let her go. Only fools do not arrange for an aide or friend to wake them when they expect to visit a derangement in dream space. Inside a derangement realm, any traveler suffers the relevant derangement. It's hard not to feel paranoid when all the dream actors are watching and obviously noting down what's going on. A character who *normally* suffers that derangement automatically fails any Resolve + Composure rolls to resist it; this includes the dreamer, increasing the danger of entering one's own Oneiros. Derangement realms discourage astral traveler from leaving their confines: the mage gets the idea that the conspiracy *wants* her to walk that way, that she'll *never* be able to find her way out of here so why bother or that the real world is a place of frustration and pain so it's better to avoid it by staying in here.

Elder mages advise inexperienced astral travelers to avoid derangement realms at all cost.

Temenos

This portion of Astral Space is the realm of humanity's shared dreams and imaginings. Here, visitors

can find versions of every legendary figure, fictional character, deity and cartoon character drawn, written about or imagined, as well as all of the actual, legendary and imaginary lands humanity has ever known. However, because our dreams and fictions continually change and evolve, the Temenos is far from static. A series of books or movies that becomes popular and are read or watched by millions of people can add significant new territory to the Temenos, and current events regularly change and reshape the images of the various archetypal figures found there.

However, emotional resonance and power are considerably more important than recognition or popularity. Dreamscapes and characters derived from newer images exist alongside older and more enduring lands, images and characters. In most cases, images and ideas that were widespread decades ago are considerably more widespread than more recent stories and fictions, especially if these images retain at least some of their symbolic power. This is a realm where an abundance of trenches and no-man's-lands from World War I can still be found, and where travelers in the appropriate realms regularly encounter dead cities melted by the radioactive fires of nuclear war and marching legions of bigotry and hate wearing Nazi uniforms, Ku Klux Klan robes or other similar garb.

Mystics and visionaries throughout history have obtained glimpses of this land of shared dreams. During the early decades of the 20th century, pioneering psychologist Carl Jung deduced this realm's existence from his studies of his patients and their dreams and imaginings. Jung talked about this realm in terms of eternal archetypes, but while those can certainly be found in abundance in the Temenos, it is also a realm filled with the transient ephemera of fiction, news and popular culture. In addition to eternal archetypes, there are glittering kingdoms ruled by the larger-than-life personas of various pop singers and movie stars.

Because the Temenos contains the sum of human belief and creativity and, to a slightly lesser extent, the totality of human knowledge, visitors have the chance to learn all manner of secrets that are well hidden or perhaps entirely lost in the waking world. Here, it is possible to learn everything from the secret dreams of a modern celebrity to the most esoteric theories of a mage or scholar who died 5,000 years ago. The Temenos is also a realm where fictional characters, media constructs and culture heroes all come vividly to life and where visitors can interact both them and summon them into the Fallen World. Finally, although few mages succeed in doing so, the Temenos offers

the possibility of allowing dedicated and persistent visitors to use it to affect beliefs and opinions in the waking world.

However, this vast realm is not without its dangers. Some of the more powerful archetypes and characters destroy or devour the astral bodies of unwary visitors and may even follow them back to the Fallen World, haunting their dreams and possibly possessing them. Also, visiting the Temenos involves confronting the massed weight of human belief. Careless or unlucky visitors can find their attitudes and opinions changing in response to attacks by some of the more powerful inhabitants.

In structure, the Temenos consists of hundreds of thousands of large and small realms that are usually closely connected with one another. Every realm represents a separate concept or mythic image. There are realms for death, war, various individual cities, specific books or television shows, and for almost every other concept, place, activity or ideology that is or ever has been important to any significant number of people.

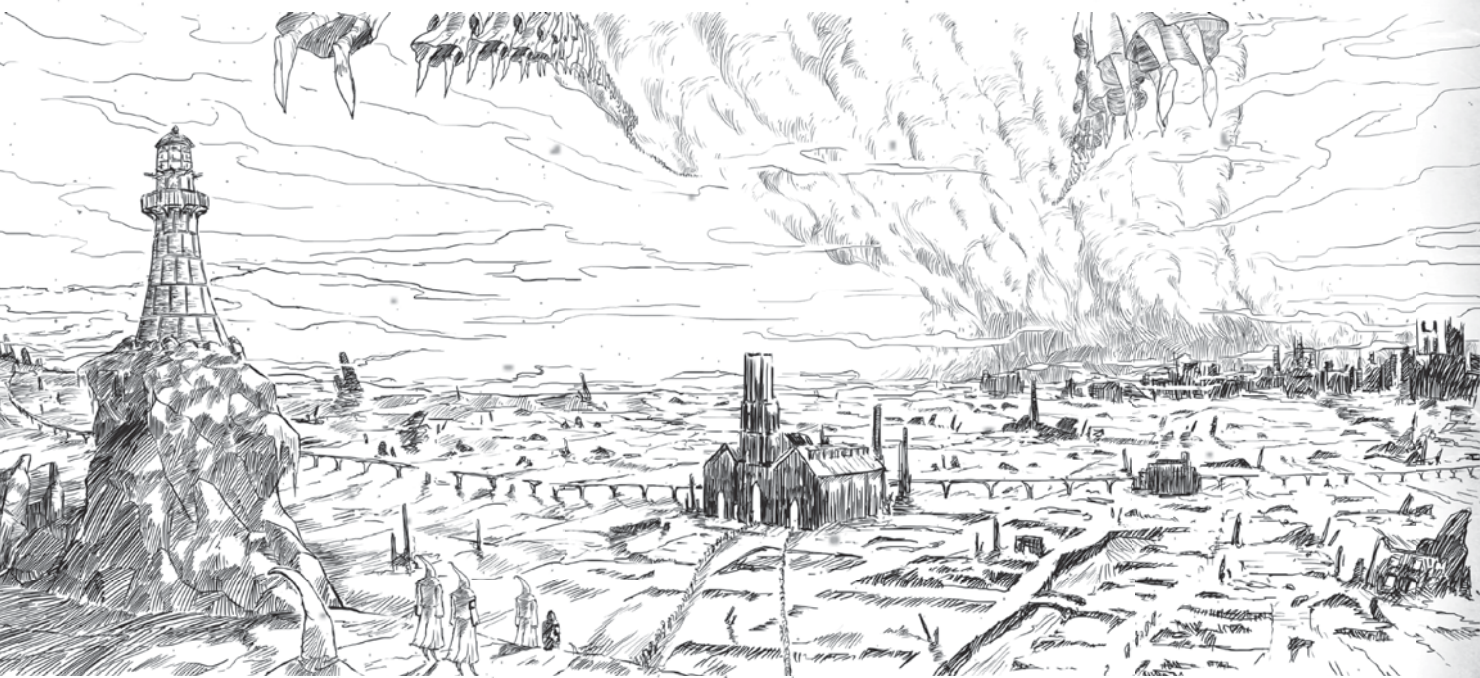
Each of these realms consists of a variety of sub-realms representing different aspects or facets of the central concept. Every pantheon of gods or demons has its own realm, from the mead-filled halls of Asgard to the circular Hell described in Dante's *Inferno*, and each of the important individual gods or demons in these pantheons has its own sub-realm. The "size" and complexity of each of these realms are rough measures of its mythic power and popularity. In various struggles representative of ideological conflicts in the Fallen

World, sometimes the inhabitants of these realms fight one another in attempts to destroy, conquer or co-opt other realms inhabited by either their enemies.

Nothing is ever lost in the Temenos. The first spirits worshipped by Paleolithic humans can still be found somewhere in the most distant reaches of the Temenos, as can the characters in the first stories told by these same humans. However, the extent of a realm and the power of individual entities in it grow and wane in response to the amount of attention and belief that they command. As a result, many of antiquities' most powerful gods are now beings of only moderate power, dwelling in small and somewhat decaying realms, while the heroes and heroines of various long-running TV shows are now considerably grander and more powerful.

Adding to the Temenos: The Path from the Oneiros to the Temenos

The difference between individual dreams and humanity's collective dreamworld can seem complex, but the reality is very simple. Ideas, characters, concepts and imaginary lands that exist largely or exclusively in the mind of one person are part of that person's individual Oneiros. However, ideas that are shared by at least several people are part of the Temenos, albeit often a very small part. The Temenos is at heart about narrative, and so every new narrative that is shared by two or more people exists somewhere in the Temenos. These narratives can be novels, plays, movies, songs, paintings, urban legends or even televi-



Ideological Attacks

The most immediate and obvious threat to visitors is the danger of falling victim to some powerful being's ideological attacks. Most attacks in the Temenos have the same affects that damage has in the rest of Astral Space — victims lose Willpower and may be forced out of Astral Space entirely. However, some of the more powerful beings here possess the ability to instead strike directly at the individual's beliefs and opinions.

An ideological attack is an attempt to impose a specific opinion or point of view upon the target. Such attacks always require some form of physical contact, but can consist of everything from a pat on the head to a blow with a spear, which may or may not also do Willpower damage. These attacks can be made using the attacker's Power + Finesse and are resolved as physical attacks. However, physical armor of any sort does not protect against ideological attacks. If the attack succeeds, the target must make a Resolve + Composure roll and roll at least as many successes as the number of successes scored by the attack. Success on this roll renders the attack harmless. Failure allows the attacker to begin changing the target's mind on some subject. If the attack does not obtain a number of successes equal to the number of dots of Willpower the target possesses, then the target's new opinion is fairly tenuous and is merely a thought or attitude that regularly drifts through the subject's mind. This attitude can be consciously dispelled and fades within 24 hours.

However, if the target suffers a number of levels of "damage" equal to her total Willpower, this new attitude becomes as deeply held as the belief that the new attitude is replacing. These successes can come from a single attack or from multiple attacks by the same attacker during the same scene. A racist could temporarily become far more tolerant, and someone who enjoyed only the latest pop music might develop a passion for opera. Unless the attacker rolls an exceptional success in on or more of these attacks, these new opinions begin to fade after a week. If the attacker rolls an exceptional success, then these new attitudes and beliefs last anywhere from a month or two, depending upon how much the character's environment and companions challenge or support these beliefs. In time, these altered opinions may fade and decay, and the character's original beliefs resurface. However, holding a repugnant or seemingly contradictory belief for several months can have a profound effect upon someone.

Mage Sight using either the Mind or Prime Arcanum automatically detects if a touch or attack is actually an ideological attack. Also, the Mind 2 spell "Mental Shield" offers the standard amount of protection against these attacks. In addition, subtract the modifiers for degree of belief listed on p. 62 from the attack. Only archetypes of Rank 4 or higher can perform ideological attacks. Such beings have Ideological Attack listed among their Numina. Making an ideological attack costs five Essence.

Storytellers should take care when using ideological attacks, since forcing a character to believe something that the player finds horrific or repugnant can be both upsetting and traumatic and should be avoided unless that player is willing to accept this particular roleplaying challenge.

sion advertisements. In addition, events in the Fallen World generate their own (often conflicting) narratives in the minds of those who are part of them or who observe them.

If an author or other type of artist creates a new narrative, but never shares this work with anyone else, then his ideas naturally remain part of his own Oneiros and have no effect on the Temenos. The same thing happens when artists share their work with others, only to find that everyone exposed to the work is completely uninterested. In such cases, the work lacks the power to become part of the Temenos. Also, if a work is too similar to some existing narrative that is

better known and that has a more powerful effect on viewers, then this new narrative is effectively subsumed into the realm of the Temenos occupied by the other, more well-known and powerful work. In such cases, the few distinctive features of the new narrative are either eliminated or become another minor element in the realm associated with the more popular narrative.

However, if a work is sufficiently powerful and original, once others see or hear it, this new narrative spontaneously generates a realm in the Temenos. If the audience is exceedingly small, this realm has few connections with the rest of the Temenos and may become an isolated realm (see p. 68). However, new

Who Can Visit the Temenos?

Although there are a multitude of ways for a wide variety of different creatures to visit any individual's Oneiros, the Temenos is the common property of humanity and so can be visited only by humans. Once human or inhuman beings such as vampires, werewolves, changelings and Prometheans cannot under any known circumstances enter the Temenos. However, inhumanly tainted beings such as the wolf-blooded and humans who have bartered away a portion of their humanity, such as skinchangers and ghouls, can enter the Temenos, because their dreams are in large part still the dreams of humans. However, tainted beings can do so only accidentally or when lead by another. Although ghosts and, on very rare occasions, spirits can slip through cracks in Twilight, the Shadow world or the Underworld into the Temenos, werewolves have so far never managed to enter the Temenos.

The only characters who can deliberately enter the Temenos are mages, and those psychics and thaumaturges (see **World of Darkness: Second Sight**) who possess either the "Dream Travel" psychic power (see **Second Sight**, pp. 38–39) or the "Dream Travel" ritual (see **Second Sight**, p. 107). Psychics and thaumaturges enter the Temenos using the exact same methods as mages, but must expend a point of Willpower instead of spending Mana. Once in the Temenos, psychics and thaumaturges are at a considerable disadvantage compared to mages. While mages can use all of their Arcana more freely in the Temenos, the powers of both thaumaturges and psychics are closely tied to the Fallen World. These mortals cannot use any of their powers while in the Temenos, making them little different from the ordinary residents of this portion of Astral Space. Also, both psychics and thaumaturges must make a successful meditation roll to awaken, meaning that if they are placed under the right sort of mental control or if given sufficiently powerful drugs or intoxicants, they may literally be unable to awaken, allowing them to be potentially trapped here until their bodies die.

In addition to voluntary visitors, sometimes especially imaginative mortals accidentally find their way into the Temenos when they fall asleep. Most such visitors simply find this to be a wonderful adventure that is more real and vivid than their ordinary dreams. However, some become trapped here, unaware of how to make their way back to their bodies. Unless tended, the characters' physical bodies will die, leaving them trapped forever in the Temenos. If their bodies are found while they are still alive, they seem to be in a coma, but can be kept alive indefinitely. However, without help, many of these literally lost souls will be unable to find their way back to their bodies.

Any mage who uses the Mind 1 spell "Sense Consciousness" on the comatose body of such a person instantly knows that the individual's soul is lost in the Temenos. At this point, the mage can use the Mind 4 spell "Dream Traveler" to attempt to communicate with the character, which requires an extended roll in which the mage must achieve at least eight successes. Alternately, the mage can simply enter the Temenos and attempt to use scrying magics to locate the individual's lost soul. In either case, the mage can then attempt to help the character's soul make a meditation roll to find her body again. Mind 3 Spells such as "Augment the Mind" or "Telepathy" can help the character do this, as can a successful meditation roll made by the mage, where he attempts to talk the character through the process of returning to her body. Each success on the mage's meditation roll will provide the character with an additional die for her meditation roll to wake up. Of course, some characters cannot wake up because their souls are being held in magical bondage or have fallen victim to ideological attacks and so they must first be freed.

narratives that have even a small degree of popularity generally avoid this fate and form new stable portions of the Temenos. This process occurs regularly, and has been doing so for many thousands of years. If the narrative becomes sufficiently popular and widespread, it becomes forever enmeshed in the vast structure of the Temenos. Long-forgotten legends created by long-dead cultures can still be found in the Temenos, because some long ago individual considered this legend to be similar to one or more narratives that still exist.

However, no narrative, character or place ever vanishes from the Temenos, although some can become very difficult to find.

Shortcuts to Realms

In addition to the lengthy and arduous process of extended meditation necessary to ascend into the Oneiros and the Temenos, every realm has some sort of shortcut for entry. These shortcuts are useful both because they are easier and also because everyone who

performs them at the same time ends up together in the same portion of the realm, allowing a cabal of mages to easily explore the Temenos together. Mages need not be at a Hollow to use one of these shortcuts. Instead, each shortcut has its own necessary condition, which can range from reciting an original poem at a certain location to going to touching a recent corpse. In all cases, everyone who does this must still spend a point of Mana and roll eight successes on an extended meditation roll, but once they accomplish this, everyone who has done this arrives at the same realm, within sight of one another.

Quests for Atlantis

One of the first thoughts many mages consider when visiting the Temenos is that they will locate and uncover the secrets of lost Atlantis. Unfortunately, such efforts are largely doomed to failure. Although the nature of The Fall remains unknown, its effects remain obvious. Mages can uncover hints of Antediluvian knowledge in the Temenos, but no mage has ever managed to uncover more than rumors, hints or at absolute most a few fragments of information that is often self-contradictory. In some unknown and unimaginable manner, the Fall ripped the knowledge of Atlantis from the very fabric of the Temenos, leaving only a few small scattered bits of knowledge behind.

In the Temenos, it is a simple matter for a mage to find many dozens of realms associated with Atlantis, but they are nothing more than reflections of the various stories and legends of Atlantis mortals have been creating since the days of Plato. Occasionally, a mage will stumble upon a version of Atlantis based upon the legends and stories of earlier mages, but such realms are exceptionally difficult to locate and once found, they contain almost no actual truth about Atlantis and absolutely nothing that was not once known to some mage who studied the Fall. Paradoxically, the few fragments of new information about Atlantis that mages have managed to located in the Temenos have never been found in any realm with an obvious connection to Atlantis. Instead, on rare occasions, when seeking some other great mystery or exploring some realm, mages uncover some artifact or individual that reveals some small tidbit of information about Atlantis that no mage previously knew. The latest piece of information was discovered 13 years ago — when one of the Daksha found hints in the Temenos that lead to the discovery of the first Fire Crystal 10 years ago (see **Legacies: The Sublime**, p. 28).

The Inhabitants of the Temenos

With a few notable exceptions, the countless realms and sub-realms that make up the Temenos are inhabited by an even more countless number of inhabitants. Just as the Fallen World is inhabited by both ordinary mortals and a variety of magical and inhuman beings, many different types of beings also inhabit the Temenos. The most numerous are also the least notable. On bustling city streets, in the crowds at some event, among the many soldiers on a battlefield and any other location containing a multitude of people, as many as eight or nine out of 10 of these individuals are more a part of the background than they are actual people.

One average, six or seven in 10 of the inhabitants of the Temenos are more like walking scenery than intelligent beings. Although mages refer to these beings by many names, the most common is “scenery people.” Just as the inhabitants in the background of similar scenes in the Oneiros, these beings are far more a reflection of the expectations of the situation than they are self-willed beings. Scenery people always act in the expected manner for the situation — walking purposefully along a busy city street, eagerly watching a skilled musical performance or yelling and throwing things during a riot. Mages in the Temenos often see people who closely resemble background characters in popular movies and televisions shows as well as people the mages casually know.

Such individuals are scenery people whose appearance is in part shaped by the expectations of the mages looking at the people. Mages can easily recognize scenery people because when examined closely (roll Wits + Empathy) they appear somewhat generic in appearance and dress. Using Mind spells to read the minds or emotions of scenery people results in the mage obtaining general emotional impressions, combined with the flashes of thought that consist of the thoughts that most of the self-willing inhabitants in the area share. Using Mind magics on a scenery person is an excellent way to gauge the mood and tone of a crowd. However, using Mind magics to affect the thoughts of one scenery person has no effect on the mood of the crowd as a whole. Mages who study the Temenos largely agree that scenery people are not actual individuals, but are instead effectively mobile parts of the landscape. Using magic on scenery people is always exceedingly simple; they can never even attempt to resist the effects of any spell.



Talking to scenery people generally results in them speaking in short simple sentences and uttering platitudes and clichés appropriate to the situation. Scenery people attempt to avoid lengthy conversations, and never engage non-scenery people in conversation. However, mages who make an effort to talk to scenery people at length and to ask their opinion of various topics occasionally find the scenery person becoming more interactive and self-willed. Sometimes this effort can result in the scenery person transforming into a resident of the Temenos.

“Resident” is one of the commonly accepted terms for the vast majority of self-willed beings living in the Temenos. The self-willed inhabitants of the Temenos possess the same three traits as ghosts or spirits — Power, Finesse and Resistance. They are also ranked like spirits (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 317). Residents of the Temenos are all Rank 1 beings who lack all Numina and other powers and who most resemble Sleepers in the Fallen World. Using magic on residents

of the Temenos is effectively identical to using magic on Sleepers in the Fallen world, except without the risk of Disbelief or Paradox. Unlike scenery people, residents have lives, memories, and desires as powerful and as complex as any mage or Sleeper, and residents consider themselves to be real people.

Residents make up roughly 95% of the self-willed (non-scenery person) inhabitants of the Temenos, and mages who seek to interact with individuals in the Temenos are most likely to encounter residents. Opinions on the origin of residents differ. Some mages claim residents are spirits of the dead who have been reborn in the Temenos. Other mages believe residents are spontaneous free-willed creations of humanity’s collective unconscious. Some mages attempt to explain to residents of the Temenos that they are nothing more than dream projections of the collective unconscious. However, given the utter impossibility of proving this fact, very few residents accept this as anything more than either mad ravings or eccentric philosophy.

The Archetypes and Gods of the Temenos

The remaining inhabitants of the Temenos are both more powerful and considerably more idiosyncratic than the residents and include both exceptionally powerful beings that seem to be natives of the Temenos as well as occasional visitors from other realms. These beings are all more powerful than residents, and those from the Temenos are known as archetypes. Archetypes range in power from Rank 2 to a very few Rank 7 archetypes. The vast majority of the inhabitants of the Temenos are between Ranks 1 and 5. All archetypes of Rank 2 or higher possess various Numina and other powers that suit the concept, idea, myth or fiction that the archetypes represent.

Some of the archetypes in the Temenos are gods — opinions differ among mages as to the existence of actual gods, but the general consensus is that if any do exist, they reside in the Supernal Realm. However, humanity has been worshipping various gods for many thousands of years, and this concerted and enduring

belief has produced a great number of exceptionally powerful living archetypes of gods. Whether or not actual gods exist, these archetypes are not actual gods, have no more or less power over the Fallen World than any other archetype and no more claim to truth or perfect knowledge. However, they all firmly consider themselves to be actual gods and typically react poorly to anyone who denies this.

Gods that currently enjoy extensive worship and belief are among some of the most powerful archetypes in the Temenos, but are also among the most diverse. Each sect of a faith creates a different version of the faith's gods. However, even the most powerful gods are no more powerful than any other exceptionally powerful archetype. Most of the less well-known gods would swiftly lose in any contest with some of the more popular and enduring media archetypes just as some of the most widely known comic book superheroes. Similarly, gods of small faiths or of ancient religions that are now mostly known as entertaining myths and stories are fairly weak archetypes, whose range of powers is quite limited and who are found in only a few realms.

Deeply religious mages who encounter their own deities in the Temenos often experience a crisis of faith if they have not gained a full understanding of the fact that the being calling itself their god is nothing more or less than a creation of the collective belief of its mortal follower. Although these deities' wisdom is occasionally visibly lacking and their behavior may be somewhat venal, some mystics nevertheless claim that these divine archetypes are in some way connected to actual gods trapped in the Supernal Realm, and that dealing with these deities is the only way to interact in any fashion with actual deities. However, most mages dismiss these claims as wishful thinking.

Fame and Walkers

Some of the more unusual and occasionally problematic inhabitants of the Temenos are the walkers. A walker is the legendary construct associated with a famous living person and thus straddles the line between archetypes and projected astral bodies. Anyone with three dots in the Fame Merit is sufficiently famous to have generated some form of walker in the Temenos, because they are sufficiently well-known that thousands of people who have never met these famous people make up stories or imaginings about them. In most cases, a walker is simply a slightly larger-than-life and more exaggerated version of the individual, but some famous people become a magnet for stories,

especially if they attempt to construct deliberate "stage personas" for themselves.

Jim Morrison's image of himself as "the Lizard King" is one of many examples of walkers who take on lives of their own. In addition to existing in many of the larger and more powerful realms in the Temenos, powerful and independent walkers can also interfere in the Fallen World. Occasionally, they possess the people the walkers are associated with, causing them to act in ways in keeping with the walker's archetypal nature, even in situations in which the actual person would choose to act very differently indeed.

A mage in the Fallen World who uses the Spirit 1 spell "Exorcist's Eye" and who adds Mind 1 to the casting will instantly notice if a famous person has been possessed by his walker. If this happens, the mage can either cast the Spirit 3 spell "Exorcism" and add Mind 3 to the casting to temporarily drive off the walker, or she can attempt a more permanent solution by traveling into the Temenos to seek the walker's realm. Harming or conquering the walker in a manner appropriate to its nature can weaken the walker sufficiently that it is no longer able to physically possess the person it is associated with. Such contests and efforts can include killing a famous armed robber's walker in a blazing gun battle or manipulating the concert that a famous singer is holding in her realm, so that the singer gives a truly wretched performance and is mocked by the audience.

Alternately, if a mage desires, he can aid the walker in its efforts to possess its associated person. Casting the Mind 2 spell "Emotional Urging" and adding Spirit 2 to the casting help a walker interested in doing so to possess the person. This spell prevents the individual from being able to resist the walker's possession. Repeated possession by a walker can result in either insanity or suicide. However, on rare occasions, the walker completely takes over the individual, who then becomes an extremely strange person — literal living legends rarely live long and are usually very difficult for their close friends or family to be around, since the living legends become caricatures of themselves and care little about the everyday details of daily life.

When someone famous dies, her walker typically remains active, especially if legends of the person's life and death are still told and medium she is associated with still attracts attention. As a result, the walkers of individuals such as John Wayne, Marilyn Monroe and Jim Morrison still have significant realms in the Temenos, even though the living person associated with each of them has been dead for decades. Just as

a walker can provide problems for the actual person while she is alive, it can also be a source of problems for anyone wishing to call up that person's ghost. As far as the various mages who have investigated this topic have been able to tell, famous individuals who produce especially powerful and independent walkers never leave behind actual ghosts. Instead, when someone attempts to use magic or mortal thaumaturgy to summon up the person's ghost, the summoner instead calls up the walker.

Same Archetype, Different Interpretation

One of the universal features of all archetypes is that they are not singular beings. There are always multiple versions of every archetype. These different versions vary in power, but all versions of a relatively uncommon or unimpressive archetype are relatively

weak, just as all versions of a powerful and well-known archetype are relatively powerful. However, some of the versions of the same archetype can be quite different from one another.

Not every culture or sub-culture regards the same archetypes and cultural icons in the same fashion. For example, the wealthy gangsta rapper is an iconic image the world over; however, this image means very different things to different groups of people. To most conservative white suburbanites in the United States, this image is a source of fear, because it simultaneously represents violence, destruction of the established social order and vice. For many young American black people, this same image is a source of power — they see in the gangsta rapper someone who is both striking back against an oppressive society and using society to obtain wealth, fame and a vast array of temptations.

The Inhabitants of the Temenos Entering the Fallen World

Mages and even thaumaturges (see **World of Darkness: Second Sight**) may summon walkers and archetypes from the Temenos while in the Fallen World. Doing so requires that the mage cast the Spirit 3 spell "Greater Spirit Summons," with Mind 4 added. Although the Space Arcanum is not required for this spell, this is a sympathetic spell, and so the level of sympathetic connection that the mage has to the being she is attempting to summon affects the spell's dice pool (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 114–115).

In addition, astral entities can also occasionally intrude upon the Fallen World on their own, communicating with and occasionally even possessing suitable individuals. Regardless of how or why such entities are present, entities from the Temenos are incapable of materializing or directly affecting the physical world in any fashion except by possessing a person or animal or communicating with one in dreams or visions.

Astral entities are treated as spirits, with the same Attributes and Influences as other spirits. However, in the Fallen World, the inhabitants of the Temenos possess ghost Numina (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, pp. 210–212) instead of spirit Numina and only ever know the Numina Animal Control, Clairvoyance, Compulsion, Ghost Sign, Phantasm, Possession and a more general version of the Terrify Numen called Create Emotion, which allows the astral being to create any emotion that the being desires and that is associated with its archetype. While in the Temenos, some archetypes can also use the ghost Numen Telekinesis, as well as the Spirit Numina Blast, Harrow, Innocuous and Wilds Sense.

Entities from the Temenos only spontaneously manifest or possess individuals in extreme situations that are closely connected to the core nature of the archetype they are associated with. An archetype noted for being a particularly brave soldier could only show up during a battle where either someone was demonstrating extreme bravery or where such bravery was sorely needed. In most cases, the entity communicates with a single pivotal individual, usually on a subconscious level or in dreams, and manipulates that person's emotions to give him the confidence to attempt some act. However, on rare occasions, the archetype possesses someone. This person must in some fashion be an appropriate vessel for the archetype — an entity associated with violence would only possess violent people, just as one associated with adolescent rebellion could possess only potentially rebellious adolescents. Although these entities have no more means to affect the physical world than any other normal human, they may use all of their Numina when possessing someone and often use illusions and created emotions to affect those around them. While an ordinary rock star can cause a crowd of listeners to become calmer or more aggressive, an archetype or walker possessing this rock star's body can almost certainly either calm a rioting crowd or transform a somewhat unruly crowd into a full-fledged riot.

To many of the inhabitants of the various nations of west Africa, this same archetype is regarded as one of the most powerful icons of American wealth and as a symbol of the "American Dream" in general. They see in it someone who has fancy clothes, a luxurious car, vast wealth used to obtain many luxuries and both large-caliber firearms and large bodyguards with which they can protect themselves from their adversaries. Opinions about most other popular and widespread images are equally diverse.

The fact that different people in the Fallen World have radically different views on the same walkers and archetypes is reflected in the Temenos by the existence of multiple versions of the same walkers and archetypes. Many of the more powerful and widespread archetypes appear in many of the realms that make up the Temenos, but the position they occupy and the way in which the others inhabitants of the realm regard them can vary radically from one realm to the next. In one realm, a particular character can be a glorious and moral hero, while in another the same archetype, with the same face and trappings, is a craven and vile villain.

Outsiders in the Temenos

Not everyone in the Temenos is a native. Just as mages can visit this realm, so can beings from other planes of existence. Naturally, some of the individuals mages encounter in the Temenos are other mages who have also astrally traveled there. However, entities from the Shadow world, the Underworld and even the Abyss also occasionally find their way into the Temenos. Naturally, the methods and motives of creatures from the Abyss remain mysterious. However, the mechanism by which spirits and ghosts manage to visit the Temenos remains equally unclear. Some mages claim that these beings do not actually visit the Temenos any more than mages do, and that spirits and ghosts also make astral journeys into the Temenos, while leaving their "sleeping" forms back in their native realms. Other mages claim that there are one or more gateways between both the Shadow world and the Underworld that allow spirits and ghosts to physically move from their realms into the Temenos. A number of mages are devoted to searching for these rumored gateways in the hopes that they would allow the mages to physically enter the Temenos. From there, many mages hope that they can find a physical portal into the Supernal Realm. However, no one has yet succeeded in finding either a physical gateway between

Dealing with Sensitive Topics

When dealing with various cultural icons and archetypes, issues of cultural sensitivity and prejudice can easily arise. Within the Temenos, every significant conflict, ideology, religion, subculture or popular narrative is a central feature of at least one realm. Some of these realms are vast and powerful, others are relatively small and weak, but they all exist somewhere in the Temenos. However, Storytellers should think carefully before having players visit certain realms. While realms focusing on racial conflict certainly exist, and include realms where the heroic knights of the Ku Klux Klan fight valiant battles against savage members of other "lesser" races and vile white "race-traitors," some players might find having their character visit such a realm to be exceedingly hurtful and distressing, even if the cabal was visiting the realm to attack the Klan members or defend their enemies.

Certain images, especially images of violence or hate being directed against people with specific ethnicities, faiths, genders or sexual preferences, can honestly be too difficult or painful for some players under any circumstances. Storytellers should consider sitting down with all of their players, either individually or all together, and discussing if any of the players think that they might have problems dealing with certain issues or types of imagery. If some players indicate that they do object to or have problems with certain types of issues, then responsible Storytellers will avoid these issues whenever possible, and if these issues do arise in the campaign, will deal with them in a fashion that avoids graphic description and takes the campaign in other directions as rapidly as possible.

the Temenos and any other realm or any path into the Supernal Realm.

Although the motives of creatures from the Abyss entering the Temenos remain opaque, the motives of spirits and ghosts are usually considerably more obvious. Some find their way into the Temenos by accident and either seek a way home or attempt to make new lives for themselves in the Temenos. Others prefer residing in the Temenos because they prefer

life here. Low-powered spirits, typically of Rank 1 through 3, often find the Temenos quite appealing. In the Shadow Realm, they must contend with large numbers of inhabitants of equal or lesser power, while in the Temenos, even a Rank 1 spirit is somewhat more powerful than a resident, and unless the spirits are too destructive or problematic in their behavior, they rarely draw the attention of archetypes or walkers. In addition, some ghosts who find their way to the Temenos are not aware of either their location or even their trust state. Such ghosts often believe they have been reincarnated in some other world, or if the realms they are in resemble their homes in the Fallen World, that they never died — either forgetting their experiences in the Underworld or believing them to be troubling dreams. Some of these ghosts lose all knowledge of their previous Numina, and only mages who scrutinize such ghosts with Death magics will learn of their nature. Other ghosts believe their ghostly powers are some form of magic they have learned or been blessed (or occasionally cursed) with and use them freely.

Affecting the Waking World

As the realm of shared dreams, the Temenos is also the focus of efforts by mages interested in using actions taken in Astral Space to modify the Fallen World. Obviously, killing people or destroying objects in the Temenos has no direct effect on the people and objects in the waking world. However, while it is impossible to make physical changes in the Fallen World via actions in Astral Space, dreams, beliefs, and ideologies are all closely entwined, and so many mages attempt to alter people's beliefs and attitudes through the mages' actions in Astral Space.

Making such changes is possible, but as every mage who has attempted it knows, it is also exceptionally difficult. The most obvious change that every mage wishes to make is to heal the Abyss or at minimum to reduce the effect of Disbelief. Unfortunately, no mage understands either sufficiently well to know what sorts of astral manipulations would directly affect, either. Also, because both the Abyss and Disbelief that are so pervasive and universal, even if a mage discovered a way to alter the astral realm that would affect either one, any effects would be negligible.

Even for less widespread and enduring phenomena, one of the key problems with all such astral manipulation is that the larger the scale of the manipulation, the more difficult the process is. For example, affecting

the attitudes of the inhabitants of an isolated small town or a small subculture containing a few dozen or a few hundred people is a challenging endeavor, but is well within the means of almost any cabal of mages. However, altering the beliefs of an entire large city is an epic endeavor that could form the focus of an entire campaign for a powerful cabal, and altering the beliefs or attitudes of the inhabitants of an entire large nation is almost always impossible. The increasing difficulty with the number of people involved is closely related to the increased difficulty mages have affecting someone famous (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 115). Public opinion and belief have a metaphysical "weight," and the more people who hold a certain belief, the harder it is to alter or affect this belief in any fashion.

All attempt made to affect beliefs or opinions in the Fallen World by altering events in the Temenos is made as an extended action, using some pair of traits appropriate to the action the characters are taking in the Temenos. The target number is defined by the number of people who hold this belief. As with most extended actions, the mages involved cannot make more rolls than the total number of dice in their dice pools, which significantly limits the possibility of affected large populations. Also, a single manipulation can never affect more than 10 million people. Although there are stories that archmages have manipulated the opinions of entire nations or possibly even the entire world, there is no more proof of these tales than of any of the many other wild tales told about these rumored mages.

Population	Target Number
100 or fewer	5
100 to 1,000	10
1,000 to 10,000	15
10,000 to 100,000	20
100,000 to 1 million	25
1 million to 10 million	30

Similarly, the degree to which most people hold this belief modifies this roll.

Degree of Belief	Dice Penalty
Casual or unimportant	None (basic success)
Mild	-1
Moderate	-2
Significant	-3
Intense	-5

Casual beliefs are opinions that people invest little weight in. For example, few people place great investment in which brand of butter they prefer; so causing people to prefer one brand over another would be fairly easy.

Mild beliefs are those that most individuals attach some weight to, but could easily be changed by someone they trust providing them with a good reason to do so. Political affiliations for people who are not particularly interested in politics and preferences for books or TV show that the person regards solely as light entertainment are examples of such beliefs.

Significant beliefs are those that the person is invested in but are not part of their core identity. Preferences for favorite foods or musicians are typical examples, at least for people who are not either professional food critics or serious musicians. Similarly, intense, but ultimately transitory, feelings for someone's current favorite actors or TV shows are also usually significant beliefs, as are political opinions for people who are not particularly invested in politics.

Intense beliefs consist of a person's core beliefs, which usually include attitudes toward people of different races or religions, strongly held political or religious beliefs, attitudes about cultural heroes or villains, such as John F. Kennedy or Adolf Hitler, and all manner of similar convictions.

People have different levels of opinions about a given topic — while many people may like a particular movie, for many it is merely something enjoyable, while for a few it may speak to some deeply important truth in their lives. When rolling to change an attitude or opinion, the penalty used is based on the most common degree to which this attitude is held among the group of people the mage is trying to affect. If a mage succeeds in manipulating the Temenos so as to make this change, he changes the attitudes of everyone whose opinion of the particular topic is no stronger than the average. If most people in a town mildly dislike the current mayor, mages can cause the inhabitants all to like this mayor, but the mages' actions will have no effect on the beliefs of the few people who truly hate or loathe the current mayor.

Attempts to affect attitudes and beliefs by affecting the Temenos can be used only to affect matters of opinion. It is possible to alter people's feelings about evolution or their preferences for television shows or political candidates. However, matters of obvious fact cannot be changed in this fashion. No matter how many exceptional successes a cabal of mages roll, convincing most people that water is a deadly poison or that fire cannot burn them is impossible, because these ideas are obviously false. Also, manipulating the Temenos can affect only the minds of the people being targeted, no manipulation of any portion of the astral realm can ever have direct effects upon the physical world.

Actually making such changes in opinion or belief always requires significant effort on the part of the characters involved. The first step is to locate a suitable realm or sub-realm. A realm focused on to a specific social conflict is always a good choice when dealing with that conflict, a neighborhood of the Metropolis (see pp. 166–173) that is a reflection of a particular city is useful for attempting to affect that city. Many other possible realms also exist, but all such choices must contain some features of both the attitudes the characters are attempting to affect and the group or location whose attitudes the characters are attempting to change.

After choosing the location in the Temenos, the characters must then decide upon a suitable strategy. If the mages are attempting to peacefully stop or prevent a riot or to cause two feuding gangs to become less hostile, brokering peace in a troubled realm in the Temenos might help. However, solving a similar conflict in the Temenos by brutally slaughtering everyone on one side of the conflict would serve only to increase tensions and violence in the Fallen World — in the Temenos, means always matter at least as much as results.

Dreams and stories are closely intertwined, and the fact that the Temenos is a realm of stories is never more apparent than when using the Temenos to try to affect attitudes in the Fallen World. To change the opinions of a group of people about a specific issue or situation, the mages involved must take some event within the Temenos that symbolically represents the views or opinions they wish to change and alter the event in such a way that it represents the desired change in opinion. Such activities can range from ending an endless and bloody war by making peace between the two sides to overthrowing an unjust and tyrannical ruler to stealing an object of great value and beauty and returning it to its rightful owner. This act must have some obvious relation to the goal in the Fallen World; the more obvious the relation, the more effective it will be.

Connections Between Realms

There are two methods of traveling between realms. Mages and other powerful beings can use magic or similar powers to travel from one realm to another by some form of teleportation, magical artifacts or similar modes of travel. For mages with Space 3 or other beings with similar powers, the relationship between two realms is irrelevant. As long as the mage has visited

the realm she wishes to visit before or possesses some form of sympathetic connection to the realm, she can travel there. Similarly, there are various forms of magical vehicles that can travel from one realm to another with great speed. For the ordinary residents of the Temenos and for mages and other beings lacking any such powers or devices, the normal way to travel from one realm to another is to there by way of the connections between realms. These connections represent places where two realms touch. For example, realms associated with universal concepts such as love, music or death touch almost every other realm, and important realms associated with important and widespread concepts such as cities or books are connected to many hundreds of different realms. Determining if and how two realms are connected is a relatively simple process of deciding how much they have in common. For example, any realm associated with a particular city is also associated with the Metropolis (see p. 166), because the Metropolis is the archetype of all cities. Similarly, any realm associated with war is well connected with the realm of death. However, many connections are less obvious. Because people die in every city, both the Metropolis and all of the realms associated with various real and imaginary cities are connected to the realm of death, but this connection is less obvious and more distant than the connection the realm of death has with the realm of war.

This degree of connection is represented by both the difficulty of locating connections to a specific realm and the time required to traverse there. Connections between realms have a rating similar to those for sympathetic connections. Unless a mage is shown the way by a native or learns the way from one realm to another, finding a path between two realms requires a Wits + Investigation roll with a difficulty based on the level of connection between the two realms.

Dice Penalty Degree of Connection Between Two Realms

- *Almost Identical:* Two realms that are different reflections of the same concept, such as two realms both associated with a single style of music or a pair of realms associated with different interpretations of a single person or ideology. Similarly, all of the sub-realms that are part of a single larger realm, such as the different neighborhoods of the Metropolis (see p. 167), all have this degree of connection.

- 1 *Closely Associated:* Two realms that are different reflections of very similar concepts, such as a realm devoted to the city of Boston and the Metropolis or the connection between a realm associated with dying and grief and one associated with death and the afterlife.

- 3 *Related:* Related realms are ones where the concepts are clearly different but are associated in the minds of most people who think of either one. For example, a realm associated with war in general or one associated with a particular war is clearly associated with realms associated death or dying. Similarly, the realm of Mars is associated with the realm of the Moon because both are familiar celestial bodies.

- 5 *Distantly Related:* Distantly related realms have some obvious but not particularly close connection. For example, a realm associated with the United States is associated with the realm of radio, but this is not an exceptionally close connection. Similarly, a realm associated with Islam is connected to one associated with books because Islam is among other things a faith with a single sacred book, but once again, this connection is not particularly close. Distantly related connections are the closest ones that can be used to travel from one realm to another and such connections must be sufficiently close to be obvious to anyone who hears of the two realms.

- *Unrelated:* There are no connections between unrelated realms. The realm associated with a small Christian sect and a realm associated with comic book superheroes are unrelated, and finding a connection is impossible.

Seeking a connection between two realms requires only one success and is an instant action for realms that are *almost identical* or *closely associated*. However, finding paths between less closely related realms is an extended action requiring a number of successes equal to the penalty on the roll. Character may make one

roll every 10 minutes for *related* realms and one roll every 30 minutes for *distantly related* realms. Seeking such a connection involves looking for portions of the realm that the mage is in that most resemble or are most closely associated with the realm she is seeking to enter. If the player makes particularly good or poor suggestions about what exactly her character is looking for, she can receive up to a + or -2 dice bonus or penalty or bonus to this roll. For example, seeking a library of sacred texts in a realm associated with Islam is an excellent way to find a path to the realm of books.

Once the characters has found such a connection, traveling between two realms takes a number of hours equal to the penalty on the above roll. Rolling an exceptional success on the roll to find the connection reduces this time to 15 minutes per -1 die penalty to the roll. Characters can step from one almost identical realm to another in no time at all. For longer journeys, the mage walks through a strange and limited intermediate realm. For example, when traveling along the connection between the realm of war and the realm of death, in the portions closest to the realm of war, the character might first walk through a battlefield after a battle. Here, soldiers lie dead; then, in a process much like watching time-lapse photography, the traveler sees the soldiers' freshly dead bodies, followed by older dead bodies and then perhaps ghosts haunting the now quiet and grimly peaceful battlefield. At this point, the character is now in the realm of death.

The connections between realms allow visitors and the natives of the Temenos to travel almost anywhere they desire. However, journeys between two realms that lack any sort of direct connection can be long and difficult, since such journeys by necessity involve traveling through one or more intermediate realms. However, over the course of a few days or weeks, characters can reach any goal desired. With sufficient time and determination, characters may travel from almost any realm to almost any other realm using these connections.

Travelers and Methods of Travel

Most realms are connected to at least several dozen other realms, and some of these connections are particularly useful for travel. Oceans are realms that by their very nature connect with a vast multitude of other realms, and ships sail these oceans. Similarly, realms that have roads or train tracks have cars and trains, and there are truckers, buses and trains that travel between dozens or hundreds of realms. The

The Consequences of Travel

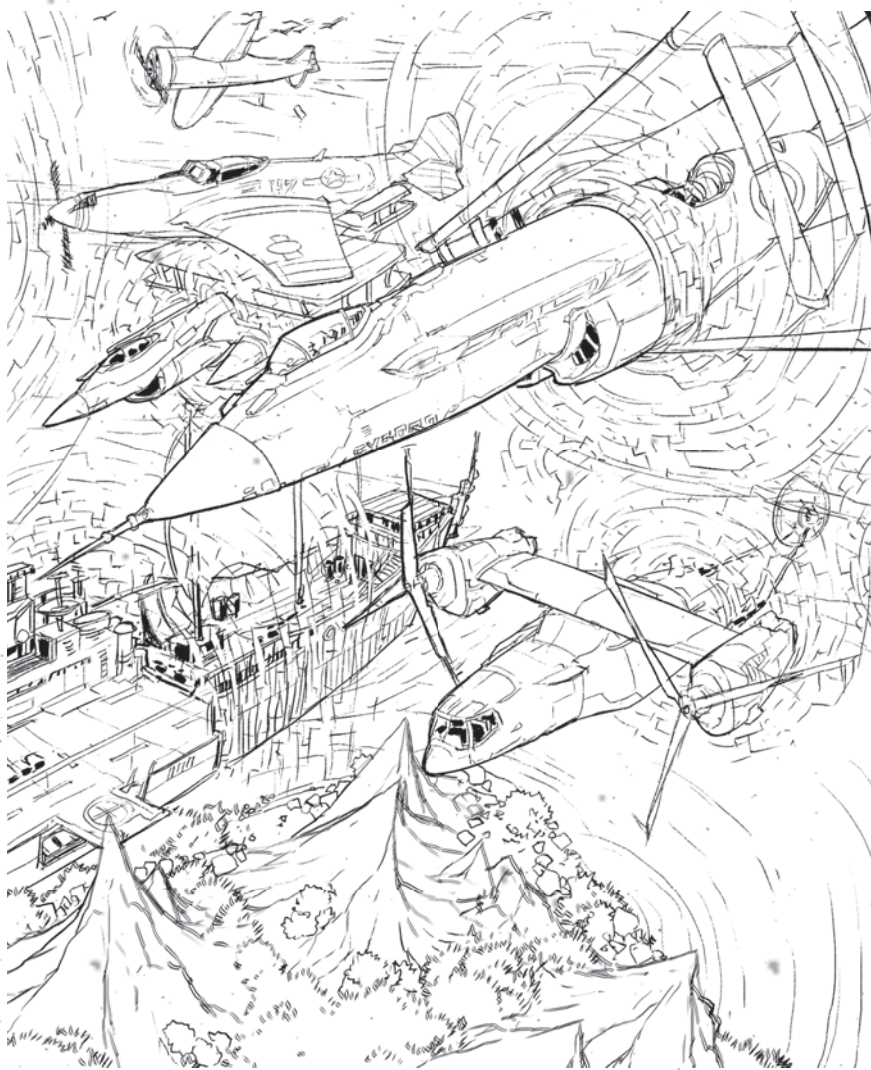
Traveling from one realm is often a somewhat complex matter. Without the use of Matter or Prime magics to reinforce the structure of objects, anything that the character wears or carries with them transforms into equivalents suitable for the new realm. Pistols can become swords or ray guns, and cars may transform into horses or covered wagons. Residents, astral visitors and other self-willed beings do not physically transform, but scenery people do, changing race or even species as is appropriate to the new realm. Also, mages who wish to use Life magic to alter their astral bodies' appearance in a realm receive a bonus of between +2 and +5 if they transform themselves into a form that is more suitable to the realm than their current one.

For example, white-skinned mages entering a realm made up of dreams about Africa before the slave trade receive a +2 dice bonus to use magic to make their skins darker, since white-skinned people are rare but did occasionally enter this setting — usually as Muslim traders or similar visitors. Similarly, when entering a realm filled with talking animals where humans do not exist, the same characters would receive a +5 bonus to transform into talking animals because the mages' current forms are so unusual that the realm greatly aids them in transforming themselves into something more familiar.

air of various realms also regularly contain airplanes and even airships, some of which travel between various realms.

Some of these boats, trucks, trains and airplanes are legendary vehicles that range from the infamous Flying Dutchman to Amelia Earhart's airplane or the Graf Zeppelin. The key features of all of these vehicles is that they can only travel to realms where they can exist. For this reason, the rocket ships and flying cars found in some realms associated with dreams of the future or popular science fiction media are confined to similar realms and thus can visit only a small number of the vast array of the realms of the Temenos.

Also, similar to all other objects, vehicles that regularly travel between realms transform when they arrive — with a sleek modern car becoming a classic 1930s car or a steam train becoming a modern diesel



locomotive. However, in all cases, these transformations are limited to surface features. A Viking long ship can transform into a more modern sailing yacht or even a lightly built steel-hulled warship. However, the long ship cannot become a vast supertanker or a submarine. The vehicle's approximate size and shape remain the same. As a result, vehicles cannot travel to realms where they would need to transform into a form that is too different from their own. The Temenos is filled with rumors of some legendary vehicles that can visit any realm, but with the exception of a few mysterious artifacts such as the exotic UFOs (see p. 121), mages have found almost none that actually can.

Many of the vessels that regularly travel between realms are fairly large and carry passengers. Some are sufficiently large that they are effectively small realms in and of themselves. Most of these mobile realms are large ships or trains, and are most notable for having a regular crew who are mostly made up of residents or archetypes and for being partially immune to the

changes brought on by traveling between realms. The exterior of these vehicles change to match the realm they are entering, but the interior remains the same. The Midnight Train is only one example of this type of mobile realm.

The other notable variety of transport between realms is far more personal in nature and consists of various archetypes associated with travel. Archetypes representing everyone from Saint Christopher to Amelia Earhart and Jack Kerouac regularly wander from one realm to another. Some travel on foot, others in fast cars, airplanes or whatever method is appropriate to them. Many of these archetypes regularly escort small groups of people whom the archetypes like or consider to be especially deserving of aid. Traveling with such a guide is the fastest method of moving from one realm to another aside from Space magics or powerful artifacts. In addition, these traveling archetypes can help people find destinations that they otherwise lack the means to find.

Often the most difficult part of any journey between realms is finding a guide and acquiring her assistance. However, even the most powerful guides are not going to be able to lead characters to Atlantis, the Supernal Realm or a physical gateway into the Shadow Realm. However, in addition to being able to find any known or imagined realm, guides can also usually help the characters locate a specific item or location within a realm, even if the characters have no idea which realm this location or item is in. Also, guides who are powerful archetypes can help characters find specific individuals, including other astral travelers, and their methods of doing so ignore any protection the target may have against magical scrying.

Changing Connections

One way to attempt to make ideological changes in the Fallen World is to affect the connections between realms. Removing or weakening the connection between two realms serves to reduce the association people feel between the two concepts. Similarly,

The Midnight Train

One of the most widely traveled of the various vehicles in the Temenos is the Midnight Train. This vehicle is a large train that is powerful and enduring enough to count as a small mobile realm. The exterior can transform into everything from a futuristic monorail or anti-gravity hover train to a late 19th-century steam locomotive — it adapts to run on any track that can accept a large, long train. However, the interior remains the same regardless of what realm the train appears in, and always resembles the interior of a well-fitted train from the 1930s, complete with sleeping cars, large dining cars and large, somewhat luxurious observation cars. The train's schedule is erratic, but the train visits every realm it can visit at least once a month, and in some realms such as the Metropolis, the train shows up every night. The train always arrives precisely at midnight in the realm and always arrives at the same station. The details of the midnight train's existence, including the location of stops, is not widely known, but rumors of the train's existence are widespread. However, only a relatively small number of individuals, most being regular travelers on the train, know its schedule and the location of the stops.

The Midnight Train is a powerful realm, and the conductor is a potent (Rank 5) archetype of the psychopomp or spiritual guide. With a word, the conductor can prevent any archetype or other being of lesser Rank from getting on or even touching the train. The conductor can do the same with any mage with a Gnosis of 5 or less. The conductor, unwilling to risk his realm, allows on more powerful beings that insist on passage, but refuses them tickets if he does not approve of them. Any less powerful beings that are refused passage instantly forget all knowledge of the train and subsequently tend to ignore mentions of the train by others.

The conductor's decisions are always final and frequently inscrutable. He does not allow would-be conquerors, mass murderers or similarly violent and dangerous people on board and almost always allows on people in desperate need or who are on some form of spiritual or altruistically motivated quest. For everyone else, the conductor's decisions seem largely based upon whim, except that if people are traveling in a group, he almost always accepts or refuses group as a whole. If he accepts someone, she then has the chance to pay for a ticket. To obtain a ticket, a character must give up something of genuine worth to her, which can be anything from a gemstone or large gold coin to a trinket with strong sentimental value.

Mages who give up the astral analog of a real object that they possess find the object has become irretrievably lost or been destroyed within a day after their return to the Fallen World. In return for the payment, the conductor gives the passenger a ticket. This ticket is good indefinitely and can be used as often as desired. Mages who return to the Temenos after obtaining a ticket always find the ticket in their hands or pockets. Touching the ticket allows someone to instantly know if a train stops at a particular location and roughly how long until the train next arrives at this stop. Stolen tickets soon vanish from thief's possession and swiftly make their way back to the owner — ticket thieves are never allowed to board the train.

Once aboard the train, new passengers are shown to a sleeping car and may ride the train as long as they wish. Some passengers never leave the train, but instead live on it and interact with the vast array of travelers who use it. Despite only stopping at midnight, the train stops at a new realm every two to four hours. Often, subjective time on the train does not correspond well with time in other realms.

removing or weakening all connections to a realm greatly weakens this realm and causes fewer people to strongly believe in the concepts and themes directly associated with it. While this is almost impossible to achieve, if mages could cut off all connections to a single realm, they could transform it into an isolated realm (see below). In almost all cases, realms have far too many strong connections to other realms to isolate

them, and even destroying a single connection is often too difficult. However, weakening or strengthening connections, such as transforming a *closely associated* connection to a *related* connection or doing the reverse is difficult but not impossible. As long as one of the realms is not too large or widespread, a dedicated cabal of mages can often accomplish such changes.

Isolated Realms

Isolated realms are ones that have no connections to other realms. Most isolated realms once had such connections, but they faded away or (on rare occasions) were destroyed by mages or powerful supernatural beings. Isolated realms represent ideas that are no longer part of the normal range of human concepts. As a result, these ideas are either exceptionally rare or entirely unknown in the Fallen World. Religions or ideologies that existed centuries or millennia ago and that have been completely forgotten are examples of isolated realms. Such realms never simply vanish from the Temenos. Realms, characters and narratives

in the Temenos can be utterly transformed, but they are almost impossible to simply destroy and never simply vanish on their own. However, while a realm that becomes isolated still exists, it can be exceedingly difficult to locate or visit. Nevertheless, with the right tools, a sufficiently powerful and dedicated mage can locate long-isolated realms and may even be able to forge new connections to such realms.

Mages with two or more dots in Time magic can use the spell "Postcognition" to locate the remains of the connections that used to exist between these realms and various other realms in much the same way the mages would look for existing connections between realms.

Madness Realms

In addition to realms devoted to ideas or beliefs lost to history, the only other isolated realms are those so odd that they are held only by single individuals suffering from one or more of the most extreme derangements, such as Schizophrenia. These realms are effectively portions of the Temenos that are in the process of being absorbed into the individual's Oneiros. Visiting these realms can be both troubling and dangerous, since visitors are wandering through a physical manifestation of someone's strange and usually only semi-coherent delusion. Madness realms can take literally any form, but almost always contain seeming random juxtapositions of elements and themes, such as love and feelings of closeness being associated with filth and decay. Also, unlike any other realms in the Temenos, the contents of these realms shift and change with great speed and do not follow any patterns of logic in doing so — during a rainstorm, a city street might melt and be replaced by a dense forest of partially flesh-covered bones that grows overnight from the melted remains of the city.

The most common reasons that characters visit madness realms is to either attempt to cure someone of his madness or to locate something of interest within the realm. In the first case, the characters must use Time magics or some other method to find the remains of the connections to other realms and rebuild at least one such connection. Doing so results in a breakthrough in which the insane individual finds a way to integrate his belief-system with those of the people around him. Having only a single connection is still a tenuous state, and such individuals typically have one or more mild derangements or a serious but not extreme derangement. However, making several connections between a personal madness realm and other better-connected realms allows the individual to fully regain sanity and is a highly effective, if far from simple, cure for insanity.

However, even if the characters do not care about returning an individual to sanity, a madness realm may contain important information related to the delusion, such as a few important nuggets of truth in the midst of an insane conspiracy theory. Using spells such as the Mind 4 spell "Read the Depths" can produce little or no useful information when used on the mind of someone seriously delusional. However, in almost all cases, the individual still retains the needed information, and so it can be found somewhere in the person's madness realm. The most direct method of obtaining this information is to physically look for it in this realm. The metaphor for important memories varies widely, but often takes the form of a diary, videotapes, a weblog or even a live theater performance. However, locating these memories requires extensive searching through the madness realm. In addition to the possibility that the mage's astral body will be injured or destroyed by the various threats in the madness realm, in these realms madness can be literally contagious. Many of the more powerful and significant figures in the realm — which are often distorted representations of the important people or media figures in the individual's life — can make ideological attacks on intruders. In all cases, instead of changing any of the target's opinions or beliefs, these attacks inflict a minor derangement on the target similar to that suffered by the individual associated with the madness realm. Multiple attacks can inflict either multiple derangements or possibly even a serious derangement on the character.

Finding an isolated realm or even the lost connections to it is difficult, because the mage must have some idea what she is looking for and where to look for it. However, once the isolated realm is located, mages can use Space magics or a powerful artifact to travel to this isolated realm and learn ancient knowledge known to no one now living. Finding an ancient isolated realm is considered a great prize by members of the Mysterium, and members who manage this difficult feat usually gain at least one dot of Status in the Mysterium.

Eccentric conspiracy theories held by only a handful of people or ideologies held only by members of a single cult are all associated with realms that have only one or two connections to other realms and so are in danger of become isolated realms. These realms are not yet isolated, but removing the remaining one or two connections to this realm is usually a fairly easy task. If a mage succeeds in destroying these connections, then over the course of a month or two, the members of the cult gradually drift away, and it either vanishes or leaves only the leader, isolated with his own beliefs. In the second case, the lack of connections to other realms in the Temenos means that the ideas associated with the realm are no longer constrained by any external factors and soon transform into the delusions of madness that form one of the madness realms described above.

Questions of Theme

One of the most important features of the many realms and sub-realms that make up the Temenos is that they all have explicit themes that express themselves in everything from the way the inhabitants interact with one another to the details of the climate and natural features. A realm that has loneliness as one of its core themes might contain sparsely inhabited cities, wide meadows with occasional, isolated trees and similar features. Similarly, a realm where war and conflict were central themes would have a great deal of interpersonal violence, buildings would have thick walls, small windows and similar sturdy and other easily defensible features and most fences and walls would be topped with spikes or barbed wire.

Storytellers running adventures in the Temenos can use these inherent themes on a variety of levels. The most obvious is that the Temenos offers a Storyteller an opportunity to tell stories with any imaginable theme. Causing the characters to need to visit a realm with a particular theme allows Storytellers to explore this theme in as much depth as they desire.

This exploration can be for its own sake — exploring themes such as dealing with grief and loss or war and conflict without radically changing the character's lives in the Fallen World. Alternately, this exploration can serve as a counterpoint to the characters' lives in the World of Darkness. Visiting a realm with the core themes of hope and triumph over injustice can serve to emphasize the meanness and cynicism of the World of Darkness. This contrast can in turn cause the characters to either think more about how they are affected by this, or possibly even to convince the characters to make an effort to attempt to work to change these attitudes in the Fallen World.

However, the selection of themes need not be limited to the Storyteller. Both the players and any characters who have studied the Temenos will also be aware of how each realm has a handful of core themes. As a result, players can suggest exploring particular themes and create reasons for their characters to visit a realm focused on them, or the characters might have some reason to seek out realms with particular themes. Unlike scenarios in the World of Darkness, where the Storyteller largely determines the theme, here theme is a variable that can be deliberately changed by moving from one realm to another.

The Laws of Theme and Story

Many realms within the Temenos are simply archetypal versions of past or present locations in the Fallen World. However, most have one or more stories or myth embedded within them. This is especially true for realms that derive from myths, legends or other fictional stories. Some realms reflect the classic “hero's journey,” in which the hero goes from being weak and obscure to being powerful and widely acclaimed, others deal with betrayal, loss, the dangers of seeking or possessing too much knowledge or a multitude of other possible stories.

For example, in realms associated with the various superhero comic books, one of the key themes is the responsibility of having great power. Powerful individuals who visit such a realm usually, and seemingly by chance, find themselves facing situations in which their particular talents can save others from harm or resolve some serious injustice. If they turn their back on this task, some sort of disaster occurs — with results ranging from the loss of an ally or friend to mass destruction. Afterwards, other opportunities to use their powers to aid others occur.

Characters who seize the first challenges presented to them have the opportunity to make this realm a better

place and possibly win the acclaim of the populace. Characters who ignore the first few challenges have the same opportunity for doing good, but are often initially assumed by most inhabitants of the realm, or at least the local authorities, to have evil intentions and must also contend with public reaction until they can do a sufficient amount of good to win the acclaim of the populace. Meanwhile, selfish or disinterested characters who ignore the first four or five opportunities for heroism soon discover that even residents they have never met distrust them and also find a multitude of opportunities to easily accomplish their goals via treachery, murder or similarly dubious acts. In these realms, every important and powerful person is either a hero or a villain, and so the realm attempts to cast new visitors into one of these two roles. Other, equally powerful imperatives exist in any realm that features a vast array of central themes. Characters who visit these realms are certain to become enmeshed in the stories of that realm. These stories cease affecting characters only when the characters either travel to a realm that no longer has the same story or the characters leave Astral Space.

The Realm of Physicalized Abstractions

One of the most obvious features of the Temenos is that changes in opinions, attitudes or ideologies all take concrete and physical form. This can mean everything from the advertising-based “cola wars” of the 1970s having been fought as real, and occasionally bloody and terrible battles in various realms of the Temenos, to changes in religious doctrine or public opinion that were relatively quiet in the Fallen World occurring via marches, battles or loud public arguments in the Temenos. Also, the results of many ideological changes are rendered in a physical metaphor, with the archetypal leaders of the losing side being executed, defeated or slain in a duel with the archetypal leaders of the winning side. Alternately, representatives of a defeated ideology may be shamed, insulted and driven out of town, or they might simply give a speech of surrender, take off the archetypal markers of their previous allegiance and don on the uniform or raiment of the other side.

When there is a dramatic change in ideology and public opinion in the Fallen World, the reaction in the Temenos never simply involves the realms in question suddenly remaking themselves — instead, these changes are always enacted in some physical form. The members of differing ideologies argue loudly in cafes or battle in the streets, defeated archetypes

commit public suicide or are literally devoured by their opponents or the Angel of Death flies swiftly through a town slaying the proponents and the archetypes of certain belief system. In the Temenos, significant ideological changes are not particularly subtle, and in many cases, disputes and conflicts in the Fallen World become far more dramatic and vivid here. Even a successful advertising campaign could result in everything from people destroying unpopular products in bonfires to magical beings transforming these items into the more popular brands, often at the request of the products’ owners.

Attempting to reshape the Temenos to alter opinions or beliefs in the Fallen World must be done in the same manner. For example, destroying a connection between two realms cannot be done simply by using powerful magic to cause the connection to vanish — such attempts automatically fail. Instead, destroying or weakening a connection between two realms requires characters to manipulate the association between the two realms so that it no longer consists of a gradual change from themes and events associated with one realm to those associated with another. Reshaping the connection so that it is all part of one of the connected realms can work, as can altering the details of the transformations within the connection so that it now leads from one of the original two realms to another realm entirely. For example, weakening the association between the realm of war and the realm of death might involve saving the lives of the dying soldiers and preventing soldiers from being hurt, and might strengthen the connection between the realm of war and the realm of medical miracles.

Within a single realm, attempting to alter the reputation of one of the local archetypes requires similarly grounded efforts — the characters can attempt to change public opinion about the mayor of a city in the Fallen World by entering the realm associated with this city. Here, characters wishing to discredit the mayor could mount a smear campaign against the mayor’s archetype, put up posters decrying this archetype’s evils, speak against him, disguise themselves as him and perform acts of vandalism against individuals or groups the mayor is known to have trouble with or use magic to cause his programs to fail and his actions to result in all manner of embarrassing problems. Similarly, if the characters wished to improve the mayor’s public opinion, they might subtly aid his projects, restrain or slay his detractors and do good deeds in his name or when disguised as him.

The Anima Mundi

Beyond the veil of dreams and the web of archetypes, the Anima Mundi arrays itself in weird, hostile majesty. The so-called Dreamtime is either the end of human spiritual power or stirs within the prehuman foundations of every soul, coiling restlessly like a limbic serpent of pure instinct and wordless knowledge. It is the most dangerous part of the Astral Reaches, threatening to spiritually mutilate mages who stumble in their journeys. Ironically, these dangers also make the Dreamtime more amenable to the Awakened than any other worldly being. Most other souls can't bulwark themselves against an environment that corrodes self-identity.

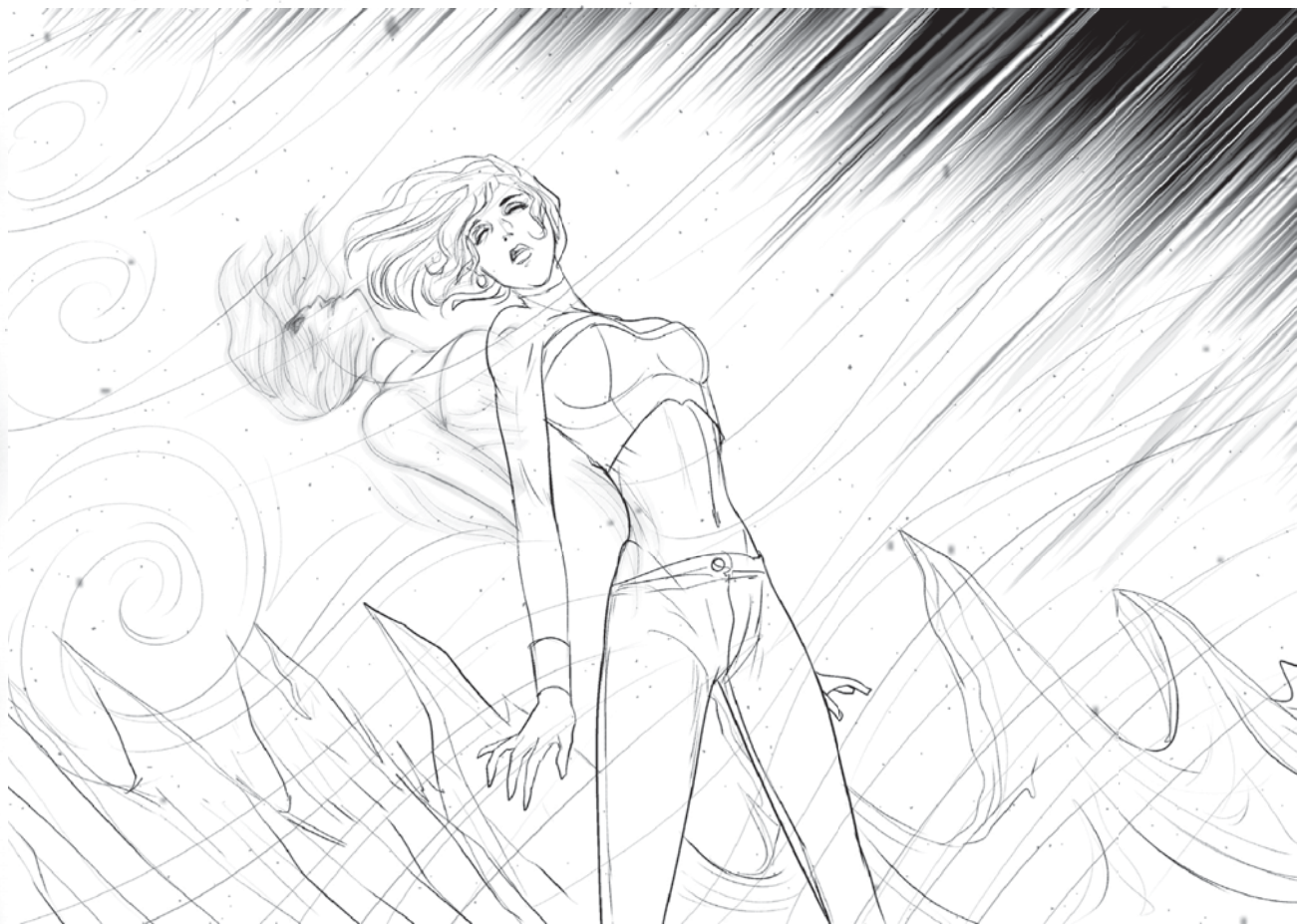
The Anima Mundi is accurately named. It's the world soul: the psychic presence of the cosmos beyond sapient minds. Animals, plants, stones and magma "dream" here — and so do steel, diodes and carbon nanotubes. The question of whether these objects actually think and have a separate astral existence or are distant echoes of conscious minds will probably never be answered, but the mages who are most familiar with the Anima Mundi rarely relegate it

to some mere "reflection." Travelers looking for the comfort of familiar pop-shamanic archetypes discover that the Dreamtime doesn't help anyone find "power animals" or spirit guides. The region's natural powers don't normally think or communicate in any fashion that's compatible with human consciousness unless a mage makes an effort to extend her spirit across the conceptual gulf. It's dangerous, but mages who succeed can reap great boons from these furtive communications. Negotiation, travel and perception all tax the mage's psychic reserves. Conserving and replenishing this Amnion (p. 72) is the major issue for mages hoping to explore the Anima Mundi in depth.

This psychic wilderness has a few human outposts, all of ancient pedigree: benefactors of feats yet to be duplicated in our Fallen age. These are among the few places mages can visit without expending Amnion, but are not necessarily pleasant retreats for an exhausted mind.

The Ecstatic Wind

Once a mage crosses the Omphalos, he confronts the Ecstatic Wind. The Wind's name derives from



its effects. Mages under its influence feel their souls diffusing into the realm.

The Astral Plane supports only self-aware consciousness until the Anima Mundi. The Dreamtime doesn't array itself according to sapient, dialectical thought. Without some form of protection, differences between a mage's mind and body or his self-identity and the region erode. This can reduce the traveler to an animalistic state or mutate the mage's astral form. In extreme cases, transformations actually manifest on the physical plane. Mages leave the Anima Mundi with everything from bestial features to impossible melds of flesh and metal.

The Ecstatic Wind is as seductive as it is dangerous. In the thrall of the Wind, seekers feel at one with the Anima Mundi: an orgasmic and spiritual rapture. In fact, the mage is losing her self-identity; her individuality bleeds away in the Wind. Neophytes confuse the experience for Supernal Ascension, go mad, lose their humanity or simply starve to death in the Anima Mundi's unmediated embrace. In a small number of cases (particularly when the mage explores the Whorl), Ecstatic Winds feel like a cold, killing force instead. Mysterium dream scholars believe that this is a manifestation of the Abyss.

Ecstatic Wind is almost nonexistent in the Anthropropic Redoubts. It steadily influences unprotected mages in the Dreaming Earth and is at its most dangerous in the Whorl's alien reaches. The effect seems to grow more intense the further a mage strays from human experiences or living things.

The Amnion

Fortunately, all mages have the ability to construct an *Amnion*: a sheath of individualism woven from the will and nimbus that protects mages from the Ecstatic Wind. This is not instinctual, but requires no more training than a brief demonstration and explanation. To create the Amnion, the mage concentrates on his sense of self, from the sensations of his astral body to his conscious thoughts and nimbus characteristics. This takes only a turn to accomplish, but once it's done, mages can maintain their Amnia reflexively. UnAwakened souls cannot create Amnia.

Working Amnia manifest themselves within astral reality based on a mage's nimbus, beliefs and personal history. An Obrimos Amnion might form angel's wings and a golden aura. One Libertine Moros was famous for creating an archaic, brass and leather diving suit.

Witnessing a mage's Amnion lets you recognize her nimbus and vice versa.

Ecstatic Wind weakens Amnia over time; the stronger the Wind, the faster an Amnion fades. Mages can also dismiss their own Amnia. Shamans have been known to take this risk, and local entities sometimes demand it, so that those in audience can perceive the full presence of their hosts. Amnia dull the full glory of the Anima Mundi by design, so mages sometimes risk greater exposure to better study the Dreamtime. The alien majesty of the region is incompatible with the human psyche, but tempting nonetheless.

Game Systems

Resolve the effects of the Ecstatic Wind in intervals based on its severity:

Mild (The Omphalos and Anthropropic Redoubts): Once per day (every 24 hours).

Medium (The Dreaming Earth): Once per scene or hour (Storyteller's choice).

Severe (The Whorl): Once per turn — but note the Whorl's treatment of subjective time on p. 84.

A mage's Amnion withstands a number of intervals equal to her Gnosis. After this, one of the Wise can spend a point of Mana (invoking Supernal authority) or Willpower (concentrating her own ego) to renew it.

The Amnion has one major drawback. It's an inherently self-centered psychic technique; the mage deliberately blunts her perceptions of the external world in favor of increased self-awareness. As a result, the Amnion imposes a -2 dice penalty on all Finesse Attribute (Wits, Dexterity and Manipulation) dice pools.

If the mage can't (or won't) invoke the Amnion, her psyche is exposed to the full presence of the Anima Mundi. Roll Resolve + Composure at each interval.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Ecstatic Wind envelops the character's soul, merging it with the Anima Mundi. She takes a part of the realm into her and leaves part of herself behind, permanently. She loses a Willpower dot. The subject also suffers an Ecstatic Stigma of indefinite Duration. The character feels an indescribable spike of pleasure and cosmic understanding. At the Storyteller's discretion, the character may develop an unquenchable desire to experience this again and might return without an Amnion to deliberately experience the world's soul.

Failure: The character's ego falters before the Anima Mundi. She loses a Willpower point and suffers a tem-

porary Ecstatic Stigma. The character might develop an addiction to the experience, but unlike the temptation of a dramatic failure, this requires prolonged exposure (as many failed intervals as the character's Wisdom or other Morality trait). She also suffers a cumulative -1 die penalty to the next roll to resist the Wind.

Success: The subject wards off the Ecstatic Wind.

Exceptional Success: The subject asserts her self-identity against the Dreamtime's all-encompassing tempest. A mage's nimbus flares with the effort. Skip the next interval's roll.

Suggested Equipment: None.

Possible Penalties: Each previous consecutive failure (-1)

Ecstatic Stigmata

Ecstatic Stigmata are similar to Paradoxes in that they impose intense changes upon a mage's being that are commensurate with his enlightenment. Gnosis is a dangerous thing in the Anima Mundi; the place offers a taste of the ultimate reality sought by sages, saints and archmagi, but does not include a pervasive human perspective. When mages fall to its temptations, they fall *hard*. Ecstatic Stigmata mark those who've compromised their self-identities in the process.

The dice pool for an Ecstatic Stigma is the same Gnosis-based pool as for a Paradox (if a mortal human is the subject, roll one die — otherwise, see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 123). Add a die for every time the subject previously checked for Stigmata during the same astral journey. Mages can spend one point of Mana to remove one die and can remove as many dice from the roll as their Gnosis-based limits on spending Mana per turn (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 76).

Consult the results for a Paradox on p. 124 of **Mage: The Awakening** and apply the following modifications:

Dramatic Failure: The character can't suffer a dramatic failure from this roll.

Havoc: This applies to the next spell a mage casts in any astral realm. As aspect of the Dreamtime seizes temporary, inscrutable control of the character's magic. Characters who aren't Awakened suffer similar problems with their own supernatural gifts. Normal humans suffer Bedlam instead.

Bedlam: Bedlam applies to the character's waking state as well, if the Duration permits it.

Anomaly: The Anomaly reflects the realm where the character acquired the Ecstatic Stigma instead of any Supernal Realm. A mage who exposed himself to

Keb will seed nearby astral space with plants, earth and sand, for instance. The Anomaly only applies to the astral realms. If the character returns to the material plane, the Anomaly's remaining Duration (if any) will play out upon his return.

Branding: Ecstatic Brands manifest themselves on the character's *physical* body, which, for a time, becomes an extension of the Anima Mundi. This dangerous sign often prompts a mage's allies to "pull the plug" on an astral journey. Brands take their shapes based on the exact area of exposure. A character exposed to the Wind of the Swath might find that one of his hands has turned into metal and glass.

Manifestation: The entity is a denizen of the Anima Mundi, either complete in of itself or an avatar of a greater being. The entity has no material form, but resides in the character's personal dreamscape and will follow him throughout Astral Space until the Duration passes or the entity is driven away. The entity's power is based on the character's unmodified Ecstatic Stigma pool (1 or half of a mage's Gnosis, rounded up). The entity is capable of reaching the material world by possessing the target or jumping from the mage to another host, but unlike a Paradox entity, this entity is not necessarily hostile.

Exploring the World's Soul

A mage who has adequately prepared for the dangers can travel far, as long as he knows where he's going. Just as all astral regions, the Anima Mundi is a place with few constants. Domains rise and fall through days, nights and seasons, or they put on new masks to reflect the Dreamtime's changing aspects.

Mages map the Anima Mundi based on its distance from human thought. The **Omphalos** is the gateway to the Dreamtime: a border stone left by ancient Temenos gods and Atlantean lords to proclaim the end of their Demesne. From here, explorers may pass through two **Anthropic Redoubts**: the Spire Perilous and the Swath. These two paths take mages to the **Dreaming Earth**, where nature's mind devises savage games of adaptation. Finally, a traveler reaches the outermost reaches of the **Whorl**, the abode of Aeons and the end of all meaning.

Travel by Ordeal

Once the mage achieves 20 successes to "rise" to the Anima Mundi (as described on p. 284 of **Mage: The Awakening**), he reaches the Omphalos. It appears to be impossible to skip straight to the Dreaming Earth

without passing through the Swath or the Spire Perilous, or to reach the Whorl without moving through the Dreaming Earth. The Dreamtime also ensures that no traveler can reach a destination for the first time without traveling to one connecting region first. Once a voyager reaches her objective once, she doesn't need to pass through this place in the future. For example, a mage making his first visit to Dahhak's court must always confront another part of the Whorl first. Multiple mages always take the route mandated by the least experienced among them.

It's also in the nature of the Anima Mundi to impose an ordeal on anyone wishing to travel between domains. Unless the mage endures the ordeal, she can wander infinite space within one domain without ever breaking through to the next.

Ordeals vary greatly, and more than one option often presents itself. The required ordeal sometimes makes itself known through the natural course of events, such as when Fire Ant Masters march upon mages who need pain to pass on to another domain. The correct ordeal is not always so obvious, though guidance from someone who has visited before can greatly increase a mage's chances of identifying and succeeding at any trial. In fact, traditional trials that repeat themselves for multiple travelers usually only occur for those who've received guidance from

an experienced guide. Shamanic medicine societies record these as a part of their religious lore. Without this advice, it's up to a soul to figure it out for herself. This usually equates to a Wits + Occult roll (one success required).

Ordeals are not necessarily astral. The mage might be required to travel to a material plane location on foot, use an organic hallucinogen (or "entheogen") or endure bodily pain. Astral and mental tasks might open the paths particular domains; complex mathematics, riddle contests and battles with astral spirits are all examples of the trials a mage might face.

The Omphalos

When Apollo defeated Python, he pinned it beneath the navel of the world, but Python would not die. Many myth cycles chronicle the subdual of chthonic powers in a similar fashion. The gods of China trapped the tails of river dragons beneath mountains. Tibetan lamas pin the living Earth beneath *phurba* knives, and British monarchs use stones to symbolize their power over the land. Are all of these memories of the Omphalos, or is this domain composed of the last, weak wisps of the human mass mind?

If an *ür-myth* explains the Omphalos, it might be the *Gray Cycle*, a supposedly Atlantean text that's been variously forged in adamantine relief, written alchemically imperishable vellum or burned into the traditions of a few of modern hunter-gatherer groups. In the text, priests build a ladder to storm the Supernal thrones of gods who have long hoarded the secrets of the universe: the plow, the silkworm, flame and steel. The priests tame the gods but pay a heavy toll, because the gods were protecting the world from their own, remorseless ancestors: titans, dragons and hundred-handed monsters. The Atlantean legions and their chained god-slaves beat back the primordial monsters and left the Omphalos as a border mark, with a one-way door that allows mages through but keeps untamed Supernal power from scouring the Earth. Some versions of the story say that the divine monsters behind the Omphalos are the dragons that led humans to Atlantis, and that the monsters did it to groom those who would defeat their jailers, the gods. The titans will eventually break the boundary stone and return to the world, but for now, the crystallized wisdom of gods and men pins the ancient powers in place, preventing the Anima Mundi from invading human dreams and archetypes.

Sample Ordeals

Here are some suggested ordeals for various crossings:

- **Omphalos to Spire Perilous:** Decipher a door locked by a riddle. Take a powerful hallucinogen.
- **Omphalos to Swath:** Eat a living animal. Suffer severe sunburn or heatstroke thanks to human effects on the climate.
- **Spire Perilous to Dreaming Earth:** Ride a Typhonide. Escape the Menagerie of a mad Ancestor. Travel to the material counterpart of a place.
- **Swath to Dreaming Earth:** Heal a diseased animal. Endure a scene in the body of a animal being hunted by humans.
- **Dreaming Earth to Whorl:** Escape a mountain chamber that's really a looping tesseract. Replicate the flight of Daedalus and Icarus.

Anyone who visits the Anima Mundi arrives at the Omphalos first, but always arrives alone, even if others are currently occupying the domain. Travelers can circumvent this by simply visualizing their companions; this ensures that they all arrive at the same instance of the Omphalos.

True to its name, the Omphalos appears to be a great, worked stone, sunken into a “ground” that conforms to travelers’ life experiences. City-dwellers walk on pavement; desert nomads’ feet touch shifting sands. It takes about an hour to walk around the Omphalos no matter how fast you travel, and the stone’s top vanishes into mist. Some voyagers have dared to climb past the clouds to see the top of the stone. Some say it just keeps going. One mage claimed that Prometheus is chained to top — and that a Stymphalian Bird devoured his companions’ souls.

The Omphalos’s exact appearance changes from time to time. Sometimes these changes reflect travelers’ cultural backgrounds and occult interests, but sometimes they don’t. Most accounts describe the stone as being carved into a series of interwoven, bas-relief knots. A recurring sense of pattern infuses all descriptions, which have included pictograms, circuit diagrams and crude spirals.

Atlantean runes also decorate the great stone. These runes do not always take the form of the classic script that most mages recognize (see the **Tome of the Mysteries** for information about these variations). Mystagogues believe that the Omphalos is somehow related to the High Speech, specifically in the way that the language provides dominion over Supernal power. They believe that the *Gray Cycle* might actually describe the invention of the Awakened language as a stone or spike to transfix the cosmos into a set of predictable laws — to gain power over things by naming them.

Mages often visit the Omphalos to study the High Speech and ancient runes. This is greatly assisted by the Pythian Mist that rises from the bottom of the stone. Anyone who inhales the Pythian Mists temporarily increases his understanding of the Atlantean language. Half-formed psychic presences inhabit him. They whisper through the mage’s mouth and translate the Awakened tongue. Travelers might see fragmented visions of long-dead sorcerers in the Mists. These sages and shamans show travelers the proper sounds and symbols, but further communication is impossible.

Banishers, apostates and order novices can learn the High Speech in this fashion and can identify Atlantean runes, though they can’t use the Pythian Mists

to strengthen spells, as this requires a specific occult technique taught by the orders. Prolonged exposure allows some mages to master Atlantean beyond the rote forms used for spellcasting. The Storyteller determines when and if this is possible; see **Secrets from the Ruined Temple** for options involving extended High Speech. Fortunately, even temporary understanding has its advantages, as mages can use the Omphalos to check their translations of old runes and chants against Omphalos-inspired knowledge.

Mages can command the Omphalos to “sing the stone open.” This creates a door or rift in the Omphalos, through which the mage and her companions may pass. This requires a knowledge of conversational Atlantean or exposure to the Mists, along with a Wits + Occult roll to call forth the correct passage. Failure equates to an hour of fruitless chanting. Dramatic failures are left to the Storyteller, but might take mages to uncharted parts of the Omphalos’s interior (see “Deadhead,” below). Mages often lower their Amnia here to better command the stone (and avoid the –2 dice penalty to Wits-based rolls). This is relatively safe, because the Ecstatic Winds’ effects are only mild, accumulating in 24-hour intervals.

Successful mages enter and walk through chasms and corridors, hoping to reach the Spire Perilous or Swath. This usually takes about half an hour. Awakened scholars have asked the stone to perform other tasks as well, but these have not been consistently recorded. One occult poem is said to grant clear, certain knowledge of a single future event — but renders the knower unable to communicate the knowledge except through difficult riddles. Another is supposed to inflict an inescapable curse on an enemy, as long as the poet is willing to suffer an equivalent curse herself. Tales of alternative corridors and the beings found within abound.

Once travelers enter the stone, they appear to be walking downward to a darkened pit. Dropping through the pit takes the traveler to the bottom of the Spire Perilous or Swath — whichever he visualized.

Anthropic Redoubts

Having passed through the Omphalos, a traveler expects some subterranean realm, but despite going *down* a dark pit, the other side goes *up*. Past the darkness, inclines, stairs and jagged handholds sprout from the “bottom” of the Omphalos. Part tower, part mountain and part tree, the bottom rises up into a sky filled with clouds, strands of lighting and shadows that seethe

Deadhead

In 1938, a Swedish Libertine named Utgard said that Mimir's well (and his talking, severed head) lay deep within the Omphalos, past corridors that could be shaped with Atlantean translations of the Sagas. Contemporaries compared this to similar stories about the head of Orpheus and John the Baptist. Nordic-globalist theories fell out of fashion after World War II, but since 2000, a handful of mages have claimed they found a path to a chamber in the center of Omphalos. There, they conversed with a being Awakened mythographers informally call "Deadhead."

Deadhead is purportedly the disembodied head of a swarthy, black-bearded man of indistinguishable ethnicity who converses in nothing but pure Atlantean. His head floats or is stored in an alcove above a shining pool that smokes with the Pythian Mists. Rumors say that Deadhead will answer any question truthfully, but asks for compensation in body parts: arms, legs, livers, eyes — even hearts. If the mage agrees in good faith, he gets his answer, but the body part in question withers into ash and rot in the *material* plane after the mage severs the body part (via an act of will) from his astral form. If the mage agrees in *bad* faith, and plans to renege on the deal, the mage is rewarded with a lie and might lose the body part anyway. (Deadhead's supposed omniscience lets him detect duplicity easily.) Mages who've claimed they visited Deadhead have come back with new magical insights — and missing eyes, hands and genitalia — so there might be some truth to it all.

They say that one mage offered Deadhead "anything" in return for the way to defeat the Exarchs. Deadhead whispered in the woman's ear, and she vanished from the Astral Reaches. Later, her cabal had to suppress an autopsy that revealed a rot-riddled brain and nervous system.

with living movement. Another distant shape looms equally tall. Based on a mage's intended destiny, the near column is either the Swath or the Spire Perilous, and the shape in the distance is the one she didn't choose when she made her way through the stone.

These are the Anthropic Redoubts: fragile extensions of humanity into the Anima Mundi. They protect

the mage from Ecstatic Winds. The Redoubts retain a strong enough aura of humanity to limit Winds to a mild effect (24-hour intervals). Still, travelers can spend days climbing a Redoubt or exploring its territory. Mages employ life-sustaining magic to preserve their dreaming bodies when they undertake these longer journeys.

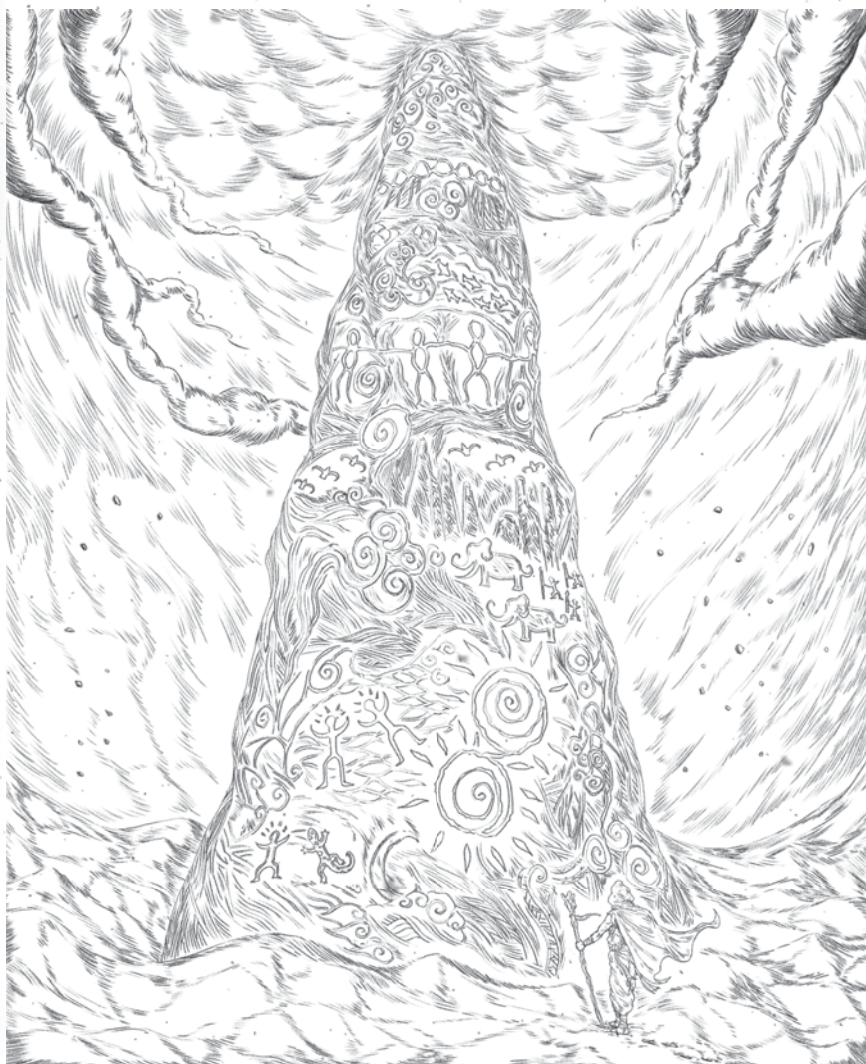
There are two primary Anthropic Redoubts: the Swath of modern environmental change and the Spire Perilous left by humanity's magical hubris. They rise up into the Dreaming Earth, twisting around each other like the snakes of a caduceus. Voyagers must undergo an ordeal to switch from one Redoubt to another. They avoid this if they just want to pass to the Dreaming Earth and beyond, but each Redoubt is also a destination in of itself.

The Spire Perilous

The Spire Perilous is a symbol of everything that humanity has squandered. Legends say that this was the *axis mundi*: the fixed center of existence that the spiritually aware could use to guide their paths. To mystics and worshipers, the Spire Perilous should be Yggdrasil, Mount Meru, Atziluth of the Tree of Life — the way to absolute truth, unfettered by human desire. And so it would be, if not for the fact that the Spire itself was fettered to Awakened will long ago — and broke under the strain.

To those who believe Atlantean myths, the Spire Perilous is the remnant of two Awakened legends. First of all, it's a reflection of the Ocean Spire: the center of Atlantis itself, given to humanity by the dragon dreams. It is said that the ancients flowered into Awakening with the help of the spire because allowed them to physically climb the *axis mundi*. Various stories describe a slender mountain, a spreading banyan tree, even a pillar of smoke and fire. Revisionists speculate that the Spire was actually a region that grew thick with hallucinogenic herbs. To ancient mages, the Ocean Spire was more than a physical feature. The Spire blended with the Realms Invisible to form a seamless whole.

The Spire fueled as much ambition as it did meditation. The Wise crossed into the realms of gods, dragons and titans, but were always told to only go so far — always short of the gods' thrones and treasure houses. Save for the Silver Ladder, each order blames the others for conceiving of a plan to change and strengthen the *axis mundi*, but grudgingly admit its brilliance. The Silver Ladder naturally feels neither



shame nor humility at the idea of laying the Celestial Ladder atop the Ocean Spire. Silver Ladder mages take full credit for the ancients' plan, though the order blames the other orders for its failure. Where the axis mundi merely helped individual mages to the Realms Invisible, the Celestial Ladder would bodily transport entire armies of the Wise. They would subdue gods and demons and change the secret names of the world.

This was the folly of Awakened man. The Spire Perilous is its monument.

The Celestial Ladder was made of matter so that its builders could bodily tread the Supernal Realms, but it used the astral axis mundi as a scaffold. When the War of the Ladder sundered all material paths to the heavens, it tore away the attached primal structure, like slivers of bone torn off with a muscle. The Spire Perilous is a wounded spine connecting human subjectivity to the world's soul. This battered psychic structure can no longer assure travelers a smooth soul journey to the Dreaming Earth, Whorl or Supernal Realms.

Most travelers visualize the Spire Perilous going "up," but mages have experienced other manifestations: harsh desert paths and tunnels that stretch deep beneath a dream of the Earth. Some travelers don't even experience motion. They find themselves strapped to scaffolds or hanged from sacred trees. Vistas shift and float before them, representing various locations in the Spire.

Small unnatural phenomena reveal themselves to close scrutiny. Tiny stones float in the air; dust devils shape human features within the sand. Such changes go above and beyond expected occult correspondences. Aboriginal songlines rewrite themselves in misleading patterns, and strange glyphs defile the Tetragrammaton. The expected signs and portents of a traditional spiritual journey twist, and *things* creep in the corners of one's eyes. As a soul travels further, it may seek out or blunder into the following locations and situations:

Gardens of Ancestors: They say that every mage who dies in the Anima Mundi enters a Garden of Ancestors, drawn to the only work of

their kind that still exists within the deepest of the subtle planes. Some shamanic traditions send their elders to die here so that they will provide eternal counsel. Their Gardens contain unspoiled jungles, huge mountains or desert vistas, where descendants may consult the astral reflections of sorcerers from another age. Not all Gardens are so benevolent, however. Stories *also* say that the Spire Perilous is a perfect prison for evil souls: mages too dangerous to leave alive but too knowledgeable to be permitted oblivion. Assassins might drag a mage to the Spire and reap her will, leaving the wisp that remains to seek a Garden or expire. They also say that some Gardens are Atlantean outposts or the trapped souls of its Awakened lords. They say that these Gardens contain powerful boons and mad mage-spirits, confined to prisons built from their own hubris.

Each Garden is a unique realm within the Spire. Some are frost-rimmed throne rooms where damned Acanthus-spirits hold fey feasts. Others are lead asteroids floating in the void, covered with mausoleums

whose resident ghouls know the date of every visitor's death. The Garden's inmates can influence their homes with their emotions and obsessions, as if their nimbus had been transformed into the landscape. They use the same game traits as ghost mages (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 327–328), except that they are not actually ghosts per se, but astral entities. They cannot exist outside of their Gardens. Visitors can enter at will, but many Garden denizens are unwilling to let visitors pass so easily. Shamans often demand proof that a passing soul isn't on her way to further defile the Anima Mundi. Prisoners might want eternal company and could use their Numina to force the issue.

Gardens of Ancestors are more difficult to find than they once were. Typhonides tear down the dream-castles, devour the inmates and plant Dreaming Earth flora and fauna in the ruins. Typhonides specifically seek out human “infestations” of all kinds.

Typhonic Gaps: Chittering, rasping sounds herald the Typhonides, children of Typhon and Echidna. These primordial monsters gnaw at the Spire Perilous at the command of their parents, undoing the violations of ages past. The Celestial Ladder's fall severed the Spire at the level of the Dreaming Earth. With that end secure, Typhonides concentrate their efforts on the base of the column, gnawing bit by metaphysical bit, waiting for the day when the column will topple or rot away from their poisoned fangs. The monsters also go on forays into the rest of the Spire, attracted by human activity, Gardens of Ancestors and other, unknowable motives.

See p. 111 for Typhonide game traits. These spirits leave rents in the Spire. Given enough time, they tear away parts of the Spire Perilous and expose to raw elemental power, drawn as the Dreaming Earth flows into the gaps. Manifestations include sheets of fire, avalanches and ocean storms. Souls can use Typhonic Gaps to travel directly to the Dreaming Earth, but each Gap *always* contains raging elemental forces — never calm land and water.

While the Ecstatic Wind is mild throughout the rest of the Spire, the Gaps radiate chthonic metaphysical power, forcing intervals of a scene or hour instead of a day. Travelers who'd rather do without the shortcut often lose time finding a way around Typhonic Gaps, as they mar the subjective geography of a region. Mile-wide pits of flame or wind appear in travelers' paths.

The Swath

Ecologists and mystics treat the world as a living system that regulates itself through complex, subtle

and fragile schemes. Seasons regulate the current and composition of the skies; our planet breathes, eats and gives birth to every living thing within it. Ancient religions recognized the Earth's divine power, but modern science now knows that humanity has usurped some of that might. In the Anima Mundi, this created the Swath: a plane of innovation, devastation and conflict between humanity and the natural world.

Just as Sleepers, mages initially doubted that the creeping Swath was a human effort, but just as Sleepers, the Wise are forced to admit that humankind is reshaping the planet to a critical degree. It began with a few small changes in the Dreaming Earth. Primal lakes bled into well-ordered irrigation channels. Choking smoke followed, along with a metallic tang to the air. In 1830, a Libertine named Orichalca found an iron spike in the Omphalos and sang open the stone around it. She found a path to a growing heap of slag, steam and wooden frames. From then on, mages visited the clacking, whirring curio to watch it grow. Technostics claimed there were plans for new wondrous devices hidden in mazes of metal and haphazard smokestacks. In the distance, visitors could see mine tailings, barren hills and strangely colored water flowing through sickly streams. They say that in 1916, an Adamantine Arrow called the place a “swath of destruction,” and the name only stuck when his companions used it in mockery. The Arrow was a Great War veteran found something horribly familiar about the gray mud and unnaturally heavy clouds.

On July 16, 1945, a blinding light struck every mage in the Swath. Back in their bodies, they suffered strange burns and spent days in the throes of an inexplicable nausea. When they returned, the Swath had grown again, its parts strangely melted and fused in places. From that moment on, it was possible to ascend from the Swath to the Dreaming Earth.

It has grown even faster since then. It now occupies the same kind of “bounded infinity” as other major astral domains. The Swath is as pervasive as powerful as humanity's domination of nature — and as full of wondrous and frightening chaos. Every technology that leaves a significant ecological footprint is represented here, along with the altered ecologies and organisms themselves. Tumor-encrusted hermaphrodite fish swim through patches of algal bloom, avoiding rainbow pools of oil in the water. These might catch fire at any moment under a sun that is unimpeded by ozone and leaves areas in a thick, suffocating humidity. While these environments are usually hostile, broken food webs and transplanted species give some astral organ-

isms advantages similar to their physical counterparts. Snakehead fish, feral cats and foreign weeds stage successful invasions of ecosystems that were never meant to handle them.

Humanity's invasion of the ecology has left a psychic imprint powerful enough to supplement the old axis mundi. The Swath is an alternative path to the Dreaming Earth now; travelers can sink into dreams of technological dominion to reach the astral wilds. The ethics of doing this divides mages. Some Technostics believe that spiritually empowered technologies will save humanity from the consequences of its actions. Intelligent "spiritual machines" and nanotechnology will tame the ecosystem. A vocal minority believes that the Swath will consume and destroy the Dreamtime, but that this is a *good* thing; the death of the Anima Mundi will force the Supernal Realms to heal the wound and renew the world. The majority of mages believe that technological salvation and Armageddon are not acceptable outcomes, but they have no power over the Swath.

Mages call a given domain within the Swath an *Earthwound*. Earthwounds reflect one or two forms of pollution or ecological disruption, taken to an extreme. These imprint themselves on reflections of material locations. A mage might swim through the submerged ruins of Manhattan Island, or traverse deserts born of former Midwestern fields. Earthwounds are usually devoid of human life, leaving empty buildings to crumble under weeds or caustic rains.

An Earthwound is a dangerous place. A traveler suffers from the environment's ambient hazards far more quickly and intensely than usual. Air pollution causes immediate, bleeding coughs. Without the ozone layer, the sun burns flesh immediately. Cancerous tumors grow to huge sizes in a matter of hours. Fortunately, these only effect astral forms unless their souls fall prey to the Ecstatic Winds. The Winds turn these psychic ailments into actual wounds and disfigurements.

The Dreaming Earth: Nature Unbound

Beyond humanity's psychic limits, the Dreaming Earth preserves the dreams of nonhuman life: gods who slumber in trees but aren't the dryads of mortal imagination; coyotes that dream of sun-baked flesh and desert prey without a moment's thought to the trickster role they play in the world's myths. There's always the sense of being watched by an all-pervading

The Diamond of the Last Days

According to some Technostics, this domain is said to reside somewhere at the "summit" or "heart" of the Swath, where the domain represents the hope of some kind of technological salvation — that humanity will save itself from the Swath with the very means they used to create it. It's said to be a citadel of glassy, indestructible towers, impossibly slender compared to the idyllic gardens and massive monuments they support.

Some say that the citadel's inhabited by humans who've used arcane technology to turn themselves into Ascended gods — half-flesh, half-Atlantean mechanism. They've traveled back in time to share their magical and scientific arts with mages from this age. Only the Swath's technological focus allows the mission to bring its innovations across the barrier of time. Of course, another point of view says that the Diamond of the Last Days is a trick of the Exarchs, designed to tempt mages into worshipping the Lie's science.

intelligence that feels neither malice nor sympathy for the specks of human consciousness that venture into its domain. The Ecstatic Wind is strong here; mortal souls feel the power of life itself, connected by millions of predator/prey, rot/growth and parasite/host relationships. Check for the Wind's effects every scene or hour.

The Dreaming Earth is wilderness: a version of the world where human works are smaller and weaker than in the material realm. Within this rough map, some ecosystems inhabit a limitless conceptual space; their jungles and deserts can literally go on forever. Huge highways in the material world become vine-riddled two-lane roads here. Monoculture crops are infested with local wild plants. The wild ripples with movement. Trees shudder and breathe; vines wander like slow snakes. Night strikes with a star-studded, cold blackness alien to people who live in the ambient light and heat of modern cities. Human astral forms are comparatively smaller than the environment around them. Ants the size of a visitor's fist crawl in living carpets.

More than that, all this moving, massive life is *conscious*, too — or it exists in a state that mages can treat as consciousness for the sake of communication

and bargaining. Even, so, it's a tricky thing. Supplicants have used gory sacrifice, self-mutilation and other desperate measures to speak to these notoriously inscrutable beings. These extreme methods often work for two reasons. First of all, the Dreaming Earth's denizens are *hungry*. Life is a pulse of mutual devouring, so adding blood or flesh to the cycle arouses the attention of its component beings. Secondly, pain and ecstasy arouse complex, human instincts. The realm "thinks" in this primal language, where sex, hunger and death array themselves in complex configurations that support all life. Mages make contact by undergoing some sort of a physical ordeal with the throes of an astral journey. They take drugs, suspend themselves from hooks and noose themselves to sacred trees. In game terms, this equates to a Wits + Manipulation roll representing a mage's gift for instinctive communication.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character either offends the entity in some way or communicates something far different from what she intended.

Failure: The character can't effectively communicate with the entity.

Success: The character can communicate with the being through gestures and primal sounds (growls, screams), but not through natural language.

Exceptional Success: The character and entity can converse with the equivalent of natural language, though it may appear to others that the character is speaking in tongues, crying, screaming or acting nonsensically.

Suggested Equipment: Every three points of bashing damage, two points of lethal damage or single point of aggravated damage suffered during the journey (+1), ritual drug use (+1), traditional vision-seeking ritual (+1 to +2).

Possible Penalties: Cultural idioms and other especially "human" approaches (-1 to -3).

Inhabitants

Mages in the Anima Mundi can scarcely trust their own senses, so catalogues of the so-called Chthonic Powers are notoriously arbitrary, changing from scholar to scholar based on researchers' astral experiences and preconceived notions. Far from being an authoritative work, the Mysterium's *Chthonomicon* is subject to constant revisions and disputes, but its categories, repeated below, at least serve as a basis for discussion. One thing that complicates any theory is the inherent non-duality of the Anima Mundi. Any separate

Wolf Dreams

The Uratha (see **Werewolf: The Forsaken**) often roam the Dreaming Earth. To them, doing so is no stranger than a human exploring his own dreamscape. In fact, the practice is so unexceptional that werewolves don't think of their travels as much more than a holy dream.

Werewolves don't feel the Ecstatic Wind because they're capable of thinking and acting similar to the other inhabitants of the realm. For more information, see "Storytelling," p. 136.

identity is, in the end, an illusion that arises based on the needs and expectations of human explorers. A Joshua Tree's Anima Locus is a cell or tendril of the Natura the tree dwells within; the Natura is an expression of the Dreamborn of Desert and perhaps, a psychic organ of Gaea.

Gaea: If she exists, Gaea is the true Earth Mother of legend and the collective soul of all life. She is much beloved of mages who grew up in the latter half of the 20th century, within pagan revivals and deep ecology movements. The feeling of an all-pervading presence in the Dreaming Earth is ascribed to her; mages of a ritualistic bent often do sacrifice to the Greek goddess before visiting the astral wilds. All the same, there is no evidence of a single, directing sentience but merely a feeling. Her spiritual gender, motives — nothing is known for sure.

Dreamborn: The Dreamspeaker Legacy (see **Legacies: The Ancient**) says that the Dreamborn are the true creators of the all worlds, but that they are mostly hidden in private Supernal territories, waiting for the right day to dream the world anew. Mysterium scholarship believes that the Dreamborn are "high archetypes." The Rainbow Serpent isn't just a snake, but the psychic template for *all* snakes, including their place in the astral and material ecosystems, ranging from every snake species in the Anima Mundi to all tempting serpents, earth goddesses and other symbols within the Temenos and Oneiric dreamscapes. The Dreamborn are thus the "first cause" of living dreams. This theory is disputed by mages who prefer more human-centered metaphysics.

Although Dreamspeakers and certain other shamans believe the Dreamborn are worthy of worship, other mages believe that these Chthonic Powers are malign,

and that mages should avoid attracting their attention. Such mages identify the Dreamborn as Titans, Hekatonchieres and other ür-monsters that shaped the world in mad battles at the beginning of time. The Omphalos exists to weigh them down in slumber, lest they wake and the world they dreamed dies.

Dreamspeakers seem to have the ability to rouse Dreamborn with their soul Attainments, leading to short-lived but powerful manifestations in the material realm. Other mages have reported some success by visiting the Anima Mundi while their bodies rest at places local myths say are the transformed, material bodies of these beings: certain rocks, streams and wild places known to traditional cultures.

Naturae: The lords of local ecosystems array themselves in alliances based on proximity and relationship. The Amazon is a great queen in the hierarchy who manifests as a weave of trees, crawling creatures and an ichor composed of the river's water, but she also ails and burns from human activity. Other Naturae take similar shapes, drawn from their ecologies and shaped into something roughly humanoid for the sake of mortal visitors. In truth, these beings *are* the astral lands they represent and, therefore, are indestructible by any means short of altering their material lands of origin. Unfortunately, that does pose them a significant threat. Many are heavy with sickness, represented by paths to and from the human-made Swath. A few have been completely claimed by the Swath or, turned to city-psyches, have "fallen" to the Temenos.

Naturae theoretically rule over their component creatures, but even they cannot violate natural law; every species still competes to reproduce and exploit an ever-changing world. A raccoon that's a component of a forest lord has little compunction about eating city trash and burrowing into houses. In this fashion, a Natura's subjects turn against it, and the Swath grows a little bigger. Naturae sometimes communicate with astral voyagers to enlist their help against such threats. Naturae reward their agents with a bit of their own power in exchange for services on the material plane.

Anima Loci: Astral emanations of specific streams, trees and fields know all about their location of origin, but little else. They can be enslaved, harmed or even destroyed by those with the Art and will to do so. When that happens, the things they represent suffer a kind of psychic "flatness." Spirits from the Shadow find the area less spiritually nourishing, as if some subtle part of the supernatural ecology is missing. Lovers who once fondly remembered a particular stream stop

thinking of it as being anything special. Destroying an Animus Loci cuts off ley lines (see **Sanctum and Sigil** for details about ley lines) running through its material counterpart. Fortunately, these effects are temporary; an Animus Loci always regenerates as long as the original tree, field or cave remains. But destroy the matter, and the Anima quickly fades away.

Animal Masters: Animals leave powerful psychic impressions that radiate to the Temenos below, leaving their mark in jackal-headed gods, nine-tailed foxes and friendly totems. The Animal Masters are none of these. In the Anima Mundi, a jackal is no trickster, but an expert on deciding whether a traveler is strong enough to avoid or weak enough to eat. Herbivores are masters of alertness and functional fear. They protect their herds according to a precise calculus of survival that leaves the weak and slow behind.

From a human perspective, Animal Masters are selfish and scheming, consumed with satisfying their instincts as completely and efficiently as possible. They do not live in the human world of abstract symbols. A feral cat dreams of hunting, dominating intruders on her territory and mating when estrus comes. The Cat Master lives according to those dreams, following a more frenetic, eventful path than the material animal. In the material realm, a human uses sapient, abstract thought to turn an animal's instincts against itself, but in the Dreamtime, a creature's instincts unfold into far more complex strategies. It can turn the tables on the human penchant for domination.

Ancient mages knew that Animal Masters have power over their material descendants. By hunting them in the Anima Mundi, mages blessed subsequent hunts in the material world. Relics of these rites remain in the form of prehistoric cave paintings and idols carved in horn and stone. In the modern age, Animal Masters can confer the ability to efficiently hunt and command their material counterparts.

Elemental Archetypes: The power of life is so pervasive that it even extends to the inanimate elements that fuel the world's births and deaths. Wind, lava and rock all stir in their own ways. Mages and other entities can rouse these elements to brief periods of activity. Mages might summon a cleansing forest fire before its appointed time or concentrate the slow wandering of continents into earth tremors. Without suitable inspiration, Elemental Archetypes are usually silent and even strange by the standards of the Dreaming Earth.

Mages of a formal, "Hermetic" bent often summon Elemental Archetypes, bidding them to inhabit their

element upon the material plane for a time. Mages trust this form of high sorcery above dealing with fickle Shadow spirits, which are too enmeshed in the world's ever-changing nature to properly control.

Dreams and Shadow

Mages aren't sure about the relationship between the Anima Mundi and the Shadow. The Shadow is a closer mirror of the material realm — almost a different "frequency" of a common reality. Shadow and Matter are tightly interwoven; one realm usually affects the other in a rapid and unambiguous fashion. (At is seems unambiguous for those versed in the lore of the Shadow Realm.)

The Anima Mundi is a realm of ideal forms and essences. Human pollution from the Swath and the Spire Perilous represents mortal contributions to something eternal, or nearly so, instead of the world's day-to-day vicissitudes. As a consequence, it's often hard to map how an event in the material realm might affect the Anima Mundi or vice versa. Some cases document straightforward correspondences, but in others, events in the material realm have either taken decades to manifest astrally or haven't had any measurable effect at all.

Is there a causal relationship between the two realms? Mages often believe that the Anima Mundi provides the basic template for matter and Shadow. Some Libertine scholars liken the Anima Mundi to Rupert Sheldrake's theories on morphic fields. It's a fringe element of Sleeper science, but it meshes well with the supernatural world's sympathetic laws. On the other hand, the opposite could be true: Shadow and matter interact, "teaching" the astral medium which form to take over time.

Chthonic Domains

As noted, the Dreaming Earth is an untamed world with cyclopean features: giant species and titanic sub-domains. The Chthonic Everest could be a thousand miles tall or impossible to scale without help from a Snow Leopard Master. As much as mages can categorize a realm of such size and diversity, most Awakened divide it into four domains: one for each classical element. This is controversial in a modern age where

sorcerers mix Chinese elemental systems with the periodic table of modern physics and the hoary high magicians of the Western Atlantean tradition are not the only option, but it's still a common reference point. Advocates of alternate systems create their own maps, but most include translations to the standard model. The dominions don't have hard-and-fast borders, but flow into each other as conditions change.

Keb — the Earth Domain: Keb is named after the Egyptian god of the earth. It's a domain of black earth, damp caves and cool stones. When souls visit ecologies built around these features, they enter Keb's realm. Earth and plant archetypes abound. The vitality of growing plant life, common to the entire Dreaming Earth, is especially powerful. Trees can rise from a sapling to old-growth size in days. Windblown seeds stick to astral bodies and dig in with small roots. This is usually harmless, but over an extended period might leave a traveler looking like the mythic Green Man.

Keb is also the grave of wild things. Decomposition strikes quickly. Insects and scavengers make short work of "dead" dream animals. Deprived of bodies, the animals roam in an insubstantial form within Keb's caves and dark cospes. Keb's animal-ghosts are said to speak with the voices of the Dreamborn and utter prophecies to those wise enough to listen.

Neuth — the Sky Domain: It normally requires imagination and a bit of magic to explore the heights of Neuth. The realm of Air saves its secrets for flying creatures, but souls do commune with Bird Masters and air archetypes on mountaintops. Neuth is cold and chaotic, but welcoming compared to the Whorl that lies beyond. Mages sometimes come here to contemplate the minds of storms or to read prophecies in the passage of astral birds and stars.

Shu — the Domain of Heat: Shu is named for the god of desiccating winds, but in the Dreaming Earth, stands for all kinds of raw heat, from the desert by day to wildfires and molten rock. Unlike the material realm, heat and fire endure here. Freestanding pillars of flame, eternally-erupting volcanoes and vast, blistering deserts all exist within Shu. Parts of the realm are utterly void of biological life, but don't lack vitality. Flame eats, grows and reproduces. The burning lands are said to be the home of the true salamander. In myth, the six-legged lizard's burning scales make an alchemical furnace hot enough to burn away all material and spiritual impurities.

Arabian mystagogues once claimed that the last princes of the jinn live here. The old texts read that

these survived from the eons before material life. Born of primordial fire, the jinn stay in Shu because they hate the embodied organisms that inherited their world. They stay in the most desolate parts of the burning lands, avoiding even the spirits of embodied things except when they send scouts to patrol the land around their basalt palaces. They hide their disgust for matter from travelers and on a cordial mask: a prelude to destroying their souls.

Tefnut — the Water Domain: Every river, lake and ocean is part of the Tefnut. Giant, hidden creatures dwell in its depths. Some are true ancients: the last survivors of species that were old when the dinosaurs fell. These creatures remember the eldest days of life, from the first life on land to when the whales' ancestors returned to the deep. They remember the crude boats of the first humans, paddling to the future site of the Awakened City. Some mages believe that their forbears summoned up the old sea monsters and bound them to guard Atlantean secrets. The original leviathans are dead, but their Astral Masters remain. These monstrous fish and crustaceans rule and hunt smaller organisms, but do not follow them to the surface's light.

Water archetypes direct Tefnut's currents. They can rocket a swimming soul to the other side of the ocean or sink it in the depths. The domain has never been extensively explored. Although astral forms cannot truly drown, the sensation of drowning in the Anima Mundi is as vivid as ever, able to exhaust and eject souls caught in the deep.

Ghosts in the Ecology

The Dreaming Earth's animal ghosts are well known, but all of the realm's human spirits are visitors of one kind or another.

Nevertheless, Mysterium occult theorists believe that the realm must have at least one path to the human Underworld.

A Thyrsus named Copper Pointing Bone claims that the Dreaming Earth is all that remains of the *original* Underworld, and that dead souls roamed here, free to hunt and be hunted until they were slain in the spirit, released to Stygia and reincarnated.

But Japanese mages have equated the caves of Keb to *Yomi*, where human souls rot forever.

The Whorl: Abode of Stars and Aeons

The Whorl begins at the edge of the Dreaming Earth and ends at the Ocean Oroboros. After crossing the Sidereal Wastes, a soul reaches the end of everything. Black waves of anti-existence lap at the Citadels of the Aeons.

The end of the Astral Plane contains stars, planets and vast, cool intellects that drift across the ultimate barrier between consciousness and Supernal reality. The end of the Anima Mundi is the end of the Lie and the shores of the Abyss. Magic floats across the gap in strange, fitful breaths, like alien insects and seeds carried by an occult trade wind. The Abyss has a tide, washing up acamoths and undreamt-of hells upon the barren shores at the end of it all.

The Whorl's spiritual geography can be roughly defined, but it is not a place given to consistent features. The Dreaming Earth immerses humanity in a more intense version of the primal ecology it has always known, but the Whorl exists beyond nature. The Whorl is not a place for life, but truth without form. When a traveler steps into the end of it all, she brings her frame of reference with her, but without other natural psychic reference points that constructed reality starts to rip and bleed. A man who walks the Whorl as a jungle finds that the trees have become semitransparent; broken branches bleed mercury and tuneless voices sing nonsense from the wounds. Above all, it is *lonely*. The ambient psychic noise of the world, from the nervous trill or young people seeking new love to the raw, natural hunger of animals, is utterly missing. A traveler brings nothing but herself, her hopes and her sins.

After undergoing a border-crossing ordeal, most travelers leave the Dreaming Earth behind by stepping "up" into the Neuth's sky and beyond. Some take alternate routes through caves and deep trenches in a Dreaming Earth ocean. As a voyager immerses himself in the Whorl, the psychic wilderness grows even stranger. Water flows up and fire radiates cold. He eventually leaves astral nature behind; his soul enters the undefined vastness of the Whorl and powerful Ecstatic Winds bite into his self-identity. Travelers check for the effects of the Wind every turn — but time is not what it was in previous realms. He's entered the Sidereal Wastes.

Without objective reference points, Sidereal time becomes a matter of perspective. For every turn that passes in the material realm, and arbitrary amount of subjective time passes that allows characters to perform a single, significant action. A 100-mile journey through hallucinated wastelands only takes a turn because, from the point of view of the soul's internal narrative, it's a single action — but striking a man with a dream-sword, polishing a chunk of amber from the Dreaming Earth, or negotiating with an astral entity takes an equal amount of time. Voyagers perceive their actions taking just as much time as they would in real life, leading to bizarre differences in relative speed. To the astral swordsman, the dream-walker vanishes in a blink of light. To the walker, the swordfighter is a statue. Mystics have been known to use the Whorl to meditate for a subjective lifetime while seconds pass on Earth. This can be enlightening or dangerous, because once the mind sets upon an activity for a "turn," the activity cannot be changed. The Whorl responds to the voyager's will and forces her to obey her own laws. Fortunately, this rule does not apply in the Citadels of the Aeons, whose masters usually (though not always) impose standard time.

Space, Time and the Whorl

The Whorl's "narrative time" seems complicated, but it isn't. Without natural reference points, the realm determines the time between events with storybook logic. A turn is thus "a period of time in which something notable happens." This means that, in game terms, once a player declares an action of almost any Duration, the action only takes a turn. Conversely, the character can only act once per turn without the dispensation of special traits or supernatural powers. Even though a swordsman is very slow compared to a dream-walker, the dream-walker can't take advantage of that to easily dodge out of the way of a sword's blow. If the dream-walker seizes the initiative, he can walk 100 miles away so that the swordsman has no chance of hitting, but the swordsman's player can just as easily follow his quarry.

Nevertheless, the flow of events can feel very, very strange. The Storyteller can always break any declared action down to multiple component turns if she feels that the narrative logic of the action would require two or more non-trivial events.

Strange Astronomy

The Sidereal Wastes hold astral reflections of stars and planets. These stars and planets are not the abode of human gods and archetypes. Mars and Venus take mortal bodies in the Temenos, not here.

Walking to a planet is not especially difficult, if one knows the path. A turn or two of travel through the subjective reaches of the Wastes will take a soul to any planet in Earth's solar system. Mages and other occultists have charted thousands of shortcuts, where a soul travels at the subjective speed of a mote of light from world to world. Otherwise, a "turn" might last months, years or centuries. An Intelligence + Occult roll is usually sufficient to find the right path. Subjectively slower voyagers will arrive at about the same time, but years of subjective isolation take their toll on the sanity of souls who take the long way.

These worlds are largely as Fallen science envisions them: barren lands of rock and noxious gas. Astral forms are not affected by the astral planets' normal environments, but can be harmed by radical variations. A traveler can withstand Venus's hellish temperatures, but heat that's exceptional for Venus can harm her. After several disastrous experiments, it's well established that mages cannot walk on the stars. The Ecstatic Winds here sometimes manifest as radiation poisoning and burns, or as mutations designed to adapt the mage to an alien world.

Even though astral planets' general conditions conform to Sleeper science, they feature ruins and artifacts and regions known only to the Awakened. Astral Mars is known to possess multiple monuments to intelligent life. Some of these ruins bear Atlantean script; others are unrecognizable. After that, the rumors get even wilder, from the angel rumored to be chained beneath the ice of Jupiter's moon Europa to the legend of Nemesis, a rogue planet made of Abyssal antimatter that destroys Awakened species and has extinguished a dozen Atlantises before the one known to the Wise.

Few souls venture outside of Earth's solar system. Despite the malleable nature of time, millennia-long subjective durations (and unknown, intervening dangers) drive virtually all travelers insane. Furthermore, it is said that there are beings outside the astral solar system that hunt dreamers who would venture too far. But there are always stories about secret routes that can take a soul to Aldebaran or Arcturus in an instant — and cautionary tales about what she might encounter when she gets there. It is said that

the distant stars are prisons for monsters so powerful that the true gods couldn't drive them into the Abyss, or that the Abyss conquered most of the other suns and planets. This explains why humans have never found signs of intelligent life elsewhere in the universe. Nothing survives but the degenerate slaves of alien, dark gods.

Lonely — But Never Alone

The Sidereal Wastes are vast, but aren't *quite* unpopulated. Aside from traveling mages, there has always been evidence of other beings. Mars is notorious for its stray goetic demons and sentient Atlantean constructs. Some of the former are explorers who lost their way. Others' origins are not known; they wear strange clothing and mutter in indecipherable languages. The Wise believe that souls who lose their way in the Wastes eventually erode down to raw emotions: Virtues and Vices given enough consciousness to sense that they're incomplete. This is said to be the fate of mages who commit to extended periods of subjective time. These spirits sometimes possess travelers in an attempt to make themselves whole again.

Mages also report encounters with everything from stereotypical "Grays" to wandering angels and maddening ribbons of indescribable color. The Sidereal Wastes may be the most spiritually desolate place in the cosmos outside of the Abyss, but even that is no guarantee of privacy or safety.

Aeonic Citadels

A soul might explore the Sidereal Wastes for subjective eons, but many mages come to the Whorl in search of some ultimate truth. Even a dream of infinite, starry night cannot sway them from a journey to the end of all dreams. The outer edge of Astral Space holds the Aeonic Citadels: homes of beings that might be ancient dragons, primal concepts and gatekeepers of the Supernal Realms. Souls must still endure an ordeal to cross from the Wastes. Successful voyagers might see a dark tunnel or forest canopy. A narrow path takes them through quickly, to the realm of the Citadels. If a mage has visited a Citadel before, he arrives at the entrance. Otherwise, he arrives at the shore of Oroboros and must make his way along its shoreline (see p. 88).

There are six Citadels. Has it always been so? Awakened legends say that the five Supernal Citadels have always existed. At the height of the Atlantean Age, mages venerated the Aeons as archangels of the true reality: remnants of the dragon dreams that guided mortals to the Ocean Spire. Priest-diplomats climbed the axis mundi to meet them. They prayed and parleyed for visions, Artifacts and arcane secrets. There were 10 Supernal Aeons then; five pairs (each one called a Syzygy) divided among the five High Realms. When the ancient Wise built their Celestial Ladder, they bypassed the guardians of the Supernal Realm. The Wise came to conquer the dragons — not beg for favors.

Mages ignored the Aeons until the Fall. Afterward, they crawled back up the newly broken Spire Perilous, climbed above the wind and stars and found the shores of the Abyss. Along with the five Supernal Citadels, they found a rough hovel that lay in the black tide of Oroboros. This was the Hollow: embassy of the Abyss.

Mages come to the Citadels for much the same reasons as they once did. They seek out the Aeons' counsel and blessings as desperate beggars instead of resplendent clerics. Dozens of volumes have been written about the Aeons: occult names, manifestations, attitudes and powers. Ultimately, they are similar to archangels or transcendent deities: unique, beyond mortal comprehension and able to shape themselves for the sake of a particular encounter. The High Speech names of the Aeons are well-known, but impossible to translate into human sounds. Thus, recent texts name them after mythic beings that they might resemble. The Aeons take shapes out of human legendry to suit a whim or express something about their natures. Subjective time ends at an Aeonic Citadel; moments pass by according to its ruler's will.

The titles below are the Citadels' most common names and manifestations, but they do appear in other forms.

The Fallen Tree of Arcadia, Citadel of Gloriana Tempora and Medraut

The hollow log is so large that clouds (gray and rainbow-colored Abyssal condensates) obscure the top. Glowing fungus provides a fey light around the entrance; the rest of the Fallen Tree sinks into Oroboros. Tradition says the gate guards are *svartalfs*: maggots shaped like men who ate the poisoned flesh of Ymir and vomited forth the living world. They ride grubs and beetles to intercept travelers.

Mages who conduct themselves according to Arcadian etiquette (never a sure thing) find themselves in gardens, courts or feat-halls gnawed from the blue bark of the Citadel. Naturally, souls should never eat or drink of the Fallen Tree's comestibles, even when offered.

Following widdershins corridors, souls find themselves in the throne room of the Arcadian Aeons. Glórianá of Time weaves while she speaks, and sometimes shifts from youth to old age. Sometimes she is associated with the Norns, but she is also seen as a sister to Hel: her rotted corpse face symbolizes the ravages of Time. Travelers beg her for long life or insights into other eras.

Beside her, Medraut of Fate — Mordred, who says he was imprisoned here to counsel mortals on the follies of Utopia — shifts impatiently on his yew bench. He lectures souls on the ways of destiny and doom, especially situations where the virtuous father their own downfalls. Guardians of the Veil sometimes venerate Medraut, and he in turn favors them, aiding the order's secret quest to tarnish all crowns and ruin all kingdoms.

The Orchid of Pandemonium, Citadel of Dahhak

If you were a mountain-sized giant exploring the shores of Oroboros, you might mistake the Orchid of Pandemonium for a lost pendant, flung onto the beach. Smaller souls see a metal flower large enough to hold a castle. The Orchid has sharp, rusty edges and carries a dull echo of every step and whisper. The Orchid is staffed with goetic demons in the shape of flames. They serve as guards, labor and illumination. Dahhak's slaves say they were born from the souls of fools who made bargains they could not keep.

Dahhak of Mind and Space receives visitors in a central chamber. Demons take the shapes of visitors and reenact moments where travelers felt intense pain or pleasure, or satisfied their Virtues and Vices. This should signal that it is pointless to conceal anything from the three-headed dragon. For more information about Dahhak, see p. 106.

The Unquiet Mansion of Stygia, Citadel of Typhon and Echidna

Dragons' bones support the Unquiet Mansion's silver walls, but its doors are lead and gold, seated in the "mouth" of a castle that looks like a starving giant in a fetal position. The gold door is decorated with a lead Atlantean rune of Matter; the lead door holds a golden Death rune. Mages say the door a soul chooses affects the Aeon's decisions.

Typhonides crawl the halls of Stygia's Citadel. Their masters entertain souls in an Atlantean tomb filled with gems, coins and twitching skeletons. Typhon of Death does not speak; he usually takes the shape of his children (see p. 111) and slithers throughout his throne room. Echidna of Matter addresses mages from a woman's body, covered in scales of precious metal and minerals. Her eyes are flawed diamonds.

Echidna normally speaks for her mate, but there have been times when he personally responds to a particularly ambitious appeal to Death. Tradition holds that a living soul can offer himself to Typhon



in exchange for one of the dead — a true resurrection. The creature's chief concern is the Spire Perilous. Legend has it that Supernal gods charged Typhon with destroying the Spire Perilous, so that mortals would never again profane the true reality. The Typhonides have set the Spire to wither and burn, and would have even eaten the dreams and gods of humanity if the Omphalos did not block them. Echidna of Matter helps supplicants divine precious substances and forge incredible alloys, but they say she extracts a price in poverty throughout a soul's mortal life.

The Copse of the Primal Wild, Citadel of the Snake and Stag

A stand of trees embraced by a thorny hedge marks the Copse of the Primal Wild — or at least it does to many Western visitors. Others see a stagnant oasis or a stand of blue-gray bamboo. The Copse is unusual in that it extends to the Dreaming Earth and even the Shadow. The Copse is the true axis mundi: a gate to all of the worlds in the Fallen sphere.

By walking through the thickest brush or turning at a tall rock at the right time and place, a soul might bypass the Sidereal Wastes or leave the astral frame of reference entirely. Some Thyrsus know these routes, but not all; they're normally taught as the mystery of a specific medicine society.

The Aeons of the Primal Wild change species constantly, taking shapes according to whim or to fit the symbolic tastes of visitors. Snake is a common form of the Spirit Aeon. She is larger than a whale and possesses an ever-shifting pattern of scales. The Stag of Life might also be an auroch or oryx — even a bear. Animal Masters and Shadow spirits attend the Aeons by a standing stone with a single, rude glyph, said to be a “page” from the true Stone Book.

Mages visit Stag for the secrets of healing and strength and Snake for the lore of the Shadow. Stag and Snake sometimes visit mages in other realms. It is said that of the Aeons, only Stag and Snake may roam beyond the Omphalos to guard the last currents of the Primal Wild's vitality. They must share it with the rest of Creation, or life itself will perish.

The Immanent Temple of the Aether, Citadel of Azazel and Lilith

A great building combining the religious architecture of countless cultures houses the Aeon of the Aether. The Immanent Temple's gates are always open. A grand

hall contains pictures of thousands of saints and sages, and even angelic script and abstract knotwork. But the Temple is empty and silent. A soft glow suffuses the entire Citadel, but there is no dust to catch the light or candles to cause it.

Two thrones sit at either end of a blank, broken altar. Azazel of Forces sits on the right. A crown of fire adds a flickering light to features so bronze and flawless they look like metal or lacquered wood. In legend, Azazel was one of the *grigori*: angels set to watch over humankind. But he fell in love with mortals and shared the secrets of divine fire and lightning. Neither angel nor demon, he occupies a moral gap that crackles with worldly power. Some envision Azazel as Prometheus. Azazel has taken that shape, but unlike the mythic Titan, Azazel doesn't teach his secrets out of sympathy for humans, but in exchange for obedient service.

Lilith sits across from him. The Lady of Prime has unnaturally white skin, the yellow eyes of an owl, red hair and coarse facial features. Just as Azazel, Lilith defied God, but not to enter in league with the Adversary. She is the female face of a magician's “true will,” that drives him to claim the scepter of divine power. Lilith is a mistress of denial and indulgence. By tempting acolytes, she forces them to discipline their minds. By coupling with them, she channels their passions into pure Mana. Mages have burst into white flame under her tutelage, unable to contain the Supernal power she induced within their souls.

The Hollow, Citadel of the Other and the Abyss

This small hut appeared shortly after the fall of Atlantis. No soul that has entered has ever left without turning to the service of the Abyss, so it is impossible to describe what its interior might be like.

A soul walking nearby along to shore of Oroboros often hears a wailing, sobbing voice of no discernable gender. Is this the Other's voice? A victim's? A convert's?

The Other is a small, old man. He has dark skin, but wrinkles, missing teeth and ubiquitous small scars have obliterated any signs of ethnicity. Souls often find him tending a fire just outside the Hollow. A small walking stick usually lies across his knees. He's friendly, but he doesn't blink or smile. There is no record of the Other having ever used force against a visitor.

But there is something *wrong* with the Other. After a single innocuous conversation, one mage

had nightmares about him that drove her to suicide. Another sorcerer said that, for an instant, she saw the Other's stick turn into a child's spinal column and skull, and that metal thorns grew in his footsteps. There are many such stories. In some, the Other even comes into the material realm, where he wears many masks. He might be a cannibal pharaoh stricken from the records of the Old Kingdom, or the Dark Man at the crossroads who represents the devil in hoodoo bargains. Scelesti worship him, but he only tends a simple fire and invites visitors to enter the Hollow and rest.

Storytelling the Aeons

The Aeons are the last representatives of the Supernal Realms. Each of the nine (and one Other) are unique; there are none like them in the entire World of Darkness. Unlike gods, angels and ancient archmages, the Aeons are approachable; mages don't visit the Aeons' ranks casually, but once or twice in a lifetime isn't out of the question. Aeons take mythic forms and mages give the Aeons legendary names and stories, but their true shapes are beyond mortal comprehension. Medraut might have once been the man legends call Mordred, or he might embody the fate of all sons who destroy their fathers.

In a way, they are living counterparts to the Watchtowers: extensions of the Supernal Realms that barely touch Fallen reality. Some mages even believe that the Aeons *are* the Watchtowers: living extensions of the path to Awakening. Ancient grimoires call the Aeons the Dwellers at the Threshold, and a mage must defeat or impress his Watchtower's Syzygy to Ascend. Other texts say that the Aeons are Ascended mages who have chosen to stay behind and counsel their successors.

Aeons are invincible; no force can harm or hinder them. Save for Dahhak and the Other, each member of the Aeon embodies a single Arcanum (Dahhak embodies two in one identity; the Other stands for the Abyss) and has near-complete mastery over it. Members may teach any rote or Arcanum rank, even beyond a mage's Path-borne limitations. This comes with a price: usually a trial or a service of some kind. The Aeons' only known limits seem to be that not all of them are free to leave their Citadels, and that they must always honor the spirit of a bargain. These facts have impelled the Aeons to rely on mortal agents when the Aeons feel that

something threatens the very existence of their Arcanum or Watchtower.

If the Aeons are a family, it is one filled with sibling rivalries. This might be founded in a common resentment of exile, or reflect a struggle with cosmic implications. They never enter one another's Citadels, so an Aeon might ask mages to spy on her "brother," filch some item from his Citadel or embark on a strange mission that weakens a Watchtower's influence. Aeons rarely kill mages who offend them, but Aeons have been known to bedevil mages to the point of madness.

Remember that you can always change an Aeon's form or Citadel. Aeons encompass many names and shapes. Remember, however, that *they*, and not human expectations, choose their forms. As archangels of the Arcana themselves, Aeons cannot be tamed and exude a regal dignity. Only the Other goes without divine airs, but his humility is a trap set by his masters.

The Ocean Oroboros

The Last Refuges sit on a shoreline of dream-stuff: rusty metal sigils, crumbling idols and bones litter the beach. Oroboros waits beyond. Awakened sagas say that it was once the great dragon responsible for separating the material realm from the Supernal planes. The Celestial Ladder thrust through Oroboros like a spear; it bled forth an ocean that swallowed its body. The depths poured in to the Abyss, and the Abyss welled up inside the sea of dream-blood, leaving the Last Ocean of Oroboros behind.

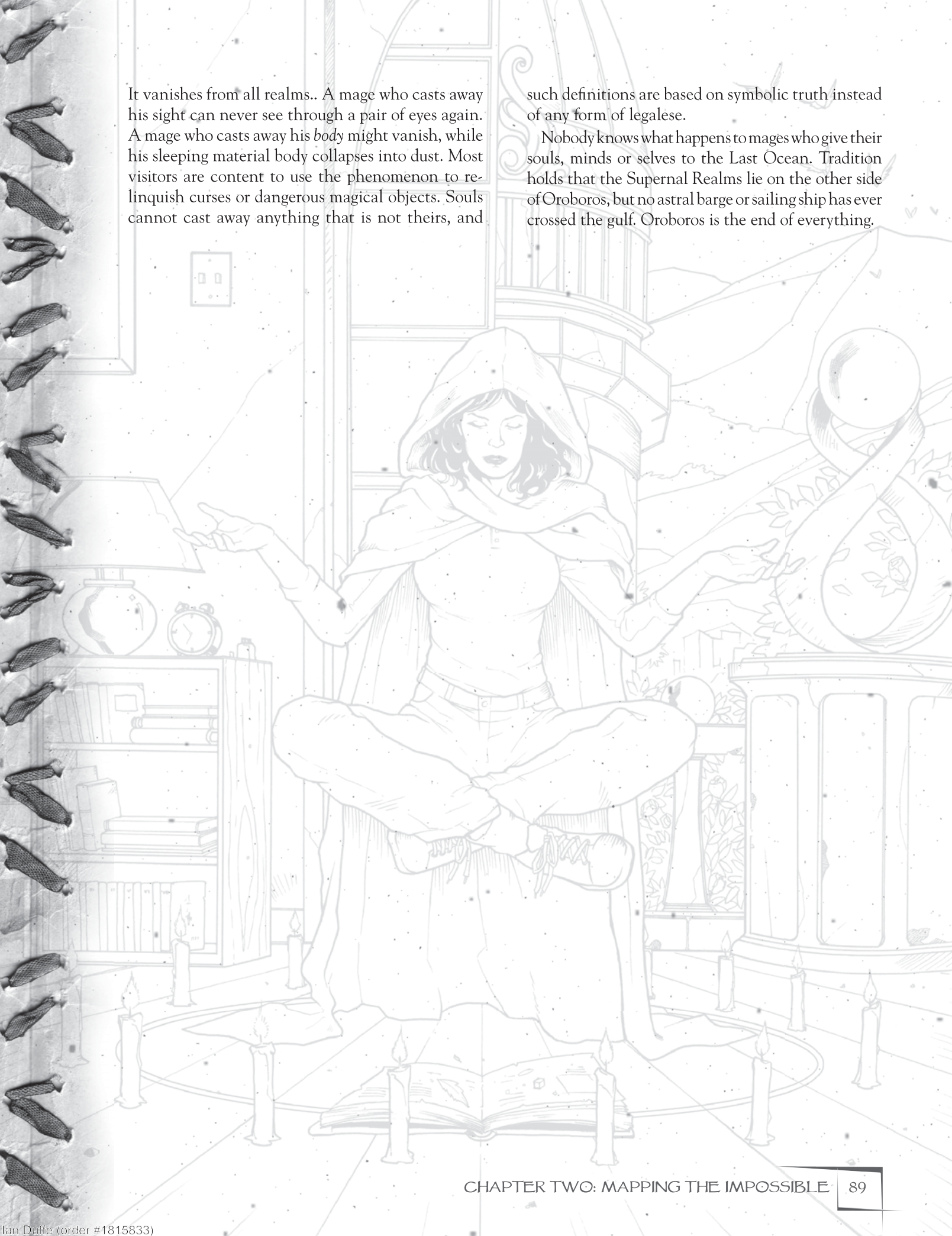
The shallows of the Ocean are the limits of Fallen being. Oroboros is the Abyss in the form of a dead dragon's black blood. Creatures crawl from Oroboros to seek succor in realms of thought, or to engage in some dark mirror of the quest for enlightenment. Some believe that this is why the acamothe seek out powerful souls. After all, the Abyss is a realm of ignorance and twisted wisdom, so its denizens must steal virtue from other domains. The Ocean also congeals into strange shapes: three-legged, scaled things with umbilici that snake back to the water's edge, or headless birds with fanged mouths on their breasts.

Oroboros has one virtue: a mage can cast almost anything into the Abyssal deep, formally declare his sacrifice and concentrate (this costs a Willpower point) to divest himself of it forever. Oroboros's waters wash over him and claim the abandoned trait.

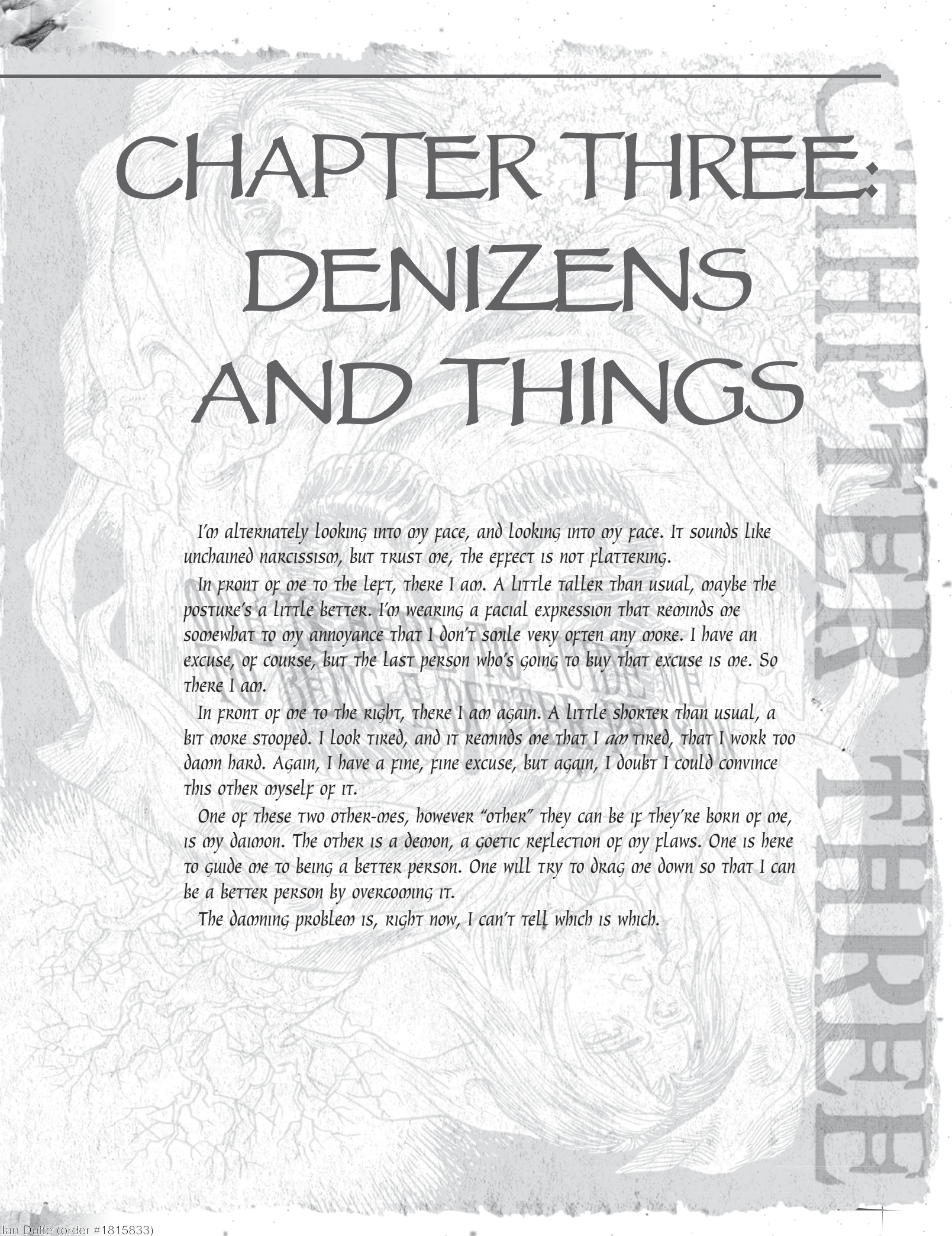
It vanishes from all realms.. A mage who casts away his sight can never see through a pair of eyes again. A mage who casts away his *body* might vanish, while his sleeping material body collapses into dust. Most visitors are content to use the phenomenon to relinquish curses or dangerous magical objects. Souls cannot cast away anything that is not theirs, and

such definitions are based on symbolic truth instead of any form of legalese.

Nobody knows what happens to mages who give their souls, minds or selves to the Last Ocean. Tradition holds that the Supernal Realms lie on the other side of Oroboros, but no astral barge or sailing ship has ever crossed the gulf. Oroboros is the end of everything.







CHAPTER THREE: DENIZENS AND THINGS

I'm alternately looking into my face, and looking into my face. It sounds like unchained narcissism, but trust me, the effect is not flattering.

In front of me to the left, there I am. A little taller than usual, maybe the posture's a little better. I'm wearing a facial expression that reminds me somewhat to my annoyance that I don't smile very often any more. I have an excuse, of course, but the last person who's going to buy that excuse is me. So there I am.

*In front of me to the right, there I am again. A little shorter than usual, a bit more stooped. I look tired, and it reminds me that I *am* tired, that I work too damn hard. Again, I have a fine, fine excuse, but again, I doubt I could convince this other myself of it.*

One of these two other-mes, however "other" they can be if they're born of me, is my daimon. The other is a demon, a goetic reflection of my flaws. One is here to guide me to being a better person. One will try to drag me down so that I can be a better person by overcoming it.

The damning problem is, right now, I can't tell which is which.

*Hell is oneself,
Hell is alone, the other figures in it
Merely projections. There is nothing to escape from
And nothing to escape to. One is always alone.
— T.S. Eliot, "The Cocktail Party"*

Inhabitants of the Oneiros

Daimons

Of all the dream space natives, the daimon is most infamous. Why it exists is a mystery: does the daimon have some urge to better the one who dreams it, or does it derive a sadistic joy from pointing out personal flaws? Or is ascribing the daimon intent and self-motivation an error? Isn't the daimon nothing more than an aspect of the dreamer's unconscious? And then, can that unconscious have desires separate from its dreamer? The questions go on.

Daimons take on any appearance necessary to do their work when their dreamers come to visit. A daimon acting openly as a dream guide is identical to the dreamer, touched up to bring the dreamer's attention to his flaws. A person who feels quiet guilt at not being charitable meets her daimon with a look of angelic kindness on its face. The daimon of a man once a bully appears just larger, with the tension of restrained violence and a smear of blood on its knuckles. Daimons, in their role as interrogator, are non-persons to scenes that they occupy while guiding their dreamers; this lets daimons pose pointed questions to the dreamer and foment introspection. Daimons may replace lesser dream actors, usually the most important in any given scene, to better influence the astral traveler.

A daimon has the same general abilities as its dreamer, plus the ability to manipulate this dream space in pursuit of the daimon's goal: improving the dreamer. Mages' daimons have power over the same Arcana as the mages themselves, though only within Astral Space. The daimon's place is dream space, where the daimon can expose its dreamer to allegories in full force; not a few express discontent at being constrained to the dream space when making a point to their dreamers, but none truly regret it.

One can destroy one's daimon, but the consequences are painful. Destroying one's daimon frees the Oneiros

New Derangement

Unbridled Confidence: Your character doesn't bother to worry about the right or wrong of it, or the negative consequences of an action beyond those that occur to him right off the bat. Introspection and careful thought are for losers. Roll Resolve + Composure to resist acting on the first impulse and ignoring the morality of it.

Effect: On a failed roll, your character does what he feels and damns the consequences. This is enough to get most anyone in trouble (and often causes Morality or Wisdom degeneration rolls), but the derangement also inflicts a -3 dice penalty on any Skill roll used to *plan* anything out.

of a moralistic manipulator and also of its beneficent guide. Observe the analogy of killing a railway engineer: doing so makes it easier to get the train off the tracks; on the other hand, you know what happens when the train hops the tracks. A mage who destroys his daimon lacks a sense of uncertainty and never second-guesses. He has eliminated his interrogator and doesn't question his impulses or reexamine his plans. This manifests as a derangement (see boxed text). Daimons within the Oneiros after a number of days equal to the character's Resolve + Composure. Permanently destroying one requires the daimon to be bereft of Essence when its Corpus hits zero. Destroying one's daimon (on a temporary or permanent basis) is an act of hubris (three-dice degeneration roll) that mages of Wisdom 4 or less ignore; the same is true of destroying *another's* daimon.

All daimons have "Influence: Oneiros 3." This Influence is limited to their native Oneiroi, meaningless unless a daimon somehow accesses a foreign Oneiros. With this Influence, a daimon navigates the Oneiros, directs its dreamer into dream sequences intended to

highlight certain flaws or failures and tweaks scenes to better influence the dreamer.

Daimons have innate senses of their dreamers' emotions, desires, weaknesses, fears and such. The higher self is an aspect of the person that stands apart from the person itself and judges without condemnation or emotion, then acts to strengthen the person — it's something like a consultant hired to examine employees and business practices and improve the company so it doesn't fold. This innate sense informs the daimon on how best to aid the dreamer, which the daimon implements in a manner appropriate to an aspect of the dreamer: a lazy dreamer has a lazy daimon, or one as fantastically busy as the dreamer wishes she were; the daimon of a dreamer suffering ennui knows exactly what rouses the dreamer's interest, or trumps his ennui so strongly it spurs the dreamer to action out of pure annoyance. These are only extremes; daimons take on any of a dreamer's many natures.

What a daimon does with this sense varies. A person who represses a need to improve herself develops a busybody daimon, one that sticks its nose into the dreamer's business whenever the daimon can. Other daimons stick more to the role of dream guide, leading an astral traveler through her Oneiros and serving as foil to her questions and denials. A mage who develops a healthy and friendly relationship with her daimon reflects that in real space: she looks at her virtues and flaws without obscuring emotions and is freer of denial and self-doubt.

No daimon acts as a dream space immune system, though a very few break this rule at the side of their present dreamers. The daimon is too important to the person's complete psyche to put itself in danger like that. The daimon is much more likely to hide (something Influence: Oneiros 3 lets the daimon do well) and direct goetic demons and nightmare creatures toward the threat until the daimon must save its Essence for its own defense.

Though daimons' (and other dream creatures') statistics are those of a spirit's, they do not naturally fall under the Spirit Arcanum. As noted in Chapter One, daimons are affected by whatever Arcanum appears to best apply. A daimon that transforms itself into a vampire to play a part in its dreamer's recurring nightmares is subject to Death rather than Life until the daimon changes again. That daimons have supplies of Essence is a source of mystery to mages, as Essence represents the Fallen World's natural magic within a mage's soul or unconscious.

Daimons (just as other dream creatures) regenerate Essence at a rate of one point per scene, or all their Essence in the time between one visit to the Oneiros and the next. Daimons all share the same Ban: a daimon may not physically harm its dreamer (harm which, in Astral Space, manifests as Willpower loss, Mana loss or Wisdom loss); one that inadvertently harms its dreamer drops to Rank one for a real-space duration of one month.

The Daimon of Rupert Kirshbaum

Quote: *Hold up, Rup, lemme show you something.*

Background: Rupert Kirshbaum was a typical local do-nothing. He spent his adolescence earning enough money at the local Wawa in Ardmore to enjoy free time with his friends, and once out of high school, he went full time. Nothing motivated him to change, so... he didn't. It was impossible not to think of going to college with Haverford right there, but it was so much easier to work checkout and call for another cashier when the line got too long. Rupert watched as his friends went on to get higher education or on-the-job training, and they drifted apart. Soon, the only people he spoke with regularly were the ones on his shift.

A puzzle waited for Rupert. There was a pattern to the convenience store's custom, bursts and pauses in people browsing the store or checking out. One year after graduation, he knew either it was there, or he was crazy. The time customers browsed was not meaningless beside the staccato rhythm of in-and-out coffee customers, and the confluence of both with cashier availability set his mind to high gear. Rupert had never been dumb, just unmotivated. Even so, he worked checkout for seven years before he figured it out.

Translating the Morse code put Rupert Kirshbaum on the Path of Nightmares, and he was soon a Libertine and champion of finding magic in the everyday. He kept his job at the Wawa, too.

When Rupert finds the time to enter his Oneiros, driven by his Free Council mentor, Rupert discovers a version of himself that patient but sharp, driven and motivated, wise but friendly. The daimon has only contempt for its dreamer's inability to pursue any of the dozens of things that roused his interest over the last decade and more. The daimon knows that Rupert misses his old friends and mocks the mage for letting them go. Rupert's daimon has a thousand ways to drive these lessons into its dreamer when he comes to visit, and will use them all if given the chance.



Description: The daimon greets Rupert in the dream space foyer each time the mage comes. When Rupert first ventured there, the daimon looked like everything Rupert had always wanted to be: smart, over-educated and well employed — in short, the phantom idea of “accomplished.” Now, it looks more like Rupert as he is, with the same slouch, comfortable clothes and too-long hair. The shared image makes the daimon a friend rather than another person antagonizing Rupert for underachieving, and that makes the daimon’s work easier.

Storytelling Hints: This daimon has its dreamer in hand. The daimon’s first tack was to convince Rupert that the Oneiros was a place where he could explore and master his many facets, and use that knowledge to improve himself and his mastery over magic. The daimon used Rupert’s Mind magic and its natural ability for manipulating its dreamer to persuade Rupert to return to his Oneiros multiple times. The daimon understands what Rupert wants more than Rupert does, and is subtle enough to lead the man around by the nose. The daimon acts more like a confidant than a dream guide.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 2, Finesse 6, Resistance 5

Willpower: 7

Essence: 15 (max 15)

Initiative: 8

Defense: 6

Speed: 13

Size: 5

Corpus: 10

Influences: Mind 3, Oneiros 3, Space 2, Time 2

Numina: Mind, Space and Time Arcana. The daimon can cast any spell available to Rupert but cannot affect anything outside Astral Space. The daimon uses a dice pool of Power + Finesse and spends Essence any time Rupert would normally have to spend Mana, e.g., when casting sympathetically or casting a non-rote Time spell (the daimon uses Rupert’s rites, too, but does not use a different dice pool). The daimon uses the magic to better influence Rupert and to keep track of him. The daimon has an Intimate connection with Rupert’s astral body and knows his real name.

The daimon’s Oneiros Influence allows the daimon to lead Rupert into appropriate memories or even freeze dream space’s time to highlight certain failures. Of course, Rupert’s daimon isn’t so blunt; it uses the Influence to take Rupert to memories that are overtly fond with hints of the bittersweet — a subtle lesson.

The Flying Daimon

Quote: *I do not know the way.*

Background: An unknown period of years ago, a powerful mage grew enraged with her daimon. It angered her, and she scythed away its bonds to her and cast it into the depths of Astral Space where the daimon could no longer irritate her. So the daimon tells any astral explorer who comes upon the creature in the Temenos or the Dreamtime, where it wanders. It has not seen its dreamer for a long time, longer than it can imagine, and it wants nothing more than to find a way back to the Oneiros that the daimon called home — and where the daimon still wishes to resume guiding the mage.

Description: Though the daimon’s mage was not a beautiful woman, the daimon wears a perfected image of her. Dark curls cascade over shoulders almost as dark, bared by dress that accentuates a perfect figure without being lewd. The daimon hopes that, should its dreamer ever see it from far off, she will recognize it and be flattered enough to bring the daimon home.



Storytelling Hints: The flying daimon is one of the many impossible things to be found in a chronicle exploring Astral Space. It's an excuse for the game to shift back and forth between Astral Space and the real world as a cabal attempts to reunite the daimon and dreamer or otherwise put the encounter to good use. The daimon is desperate, willing to promise anything for assistance in returning to the daimon's Oneiros. The daimon insists it never did anything but walk alongside its dreamer through the dream space and ask the occasional question. The daimon knows the real name and shadow name of the mage that banned it, and some of her personality traits and faults, but the search won't be easy. The mage changed her shadow name long ago — or might be dead. After all, the daimon hasn't seen her but can't tell how long it's been.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 4, Finesse 3, Resistance 3

Willpower: 7

Essence: 12 (max 15)

Initiative: 7

Defense: 4

Speed: 12

Size: 5

Corpus: 8

Influences: Death 1, Forces 3, Life 5, Oneiros 3, Space 4, Spirit 5

Numina: The flying daimon influences the Death, Forces, Life, Space and Spirit Arcana as the daimon of Rupert Kirschbaum influences the Mind, Space and Time Arcana (see p. 94). Despite the daimon's command over Space, the daimon cannot find its dreamer — either she has not been in Astral Space when the daimon has tried to locate her, or the spell she used to sever their sympathetic connection remains effective. The daimon could use its Oneiros Influence, were the daimon in its native dream space.

The Casanova's Daimon

Quote: Aren't you coming with me to the doctor?

Background: The Casanova is a mage of great handsomeness with a large appetite for sexual trysts. His interest in women is not limited to their bodies, but it does end there; when he takes a conquest, he conquers the woman and his respect for her in one act. He has had many lovers, more than twice his number of years, and he's still on the hunt. The Casanova suppresses any guilt he feels for his habits and attitudes, putting it out of his mind — until he explored his mind.

He was unfamiliar with the nature of his Oneiros and didn't know his daimon when it appeared. In the setting of his bedroom, where he had completed many of his advances, he found a beautiful woman he had never seen — his daimon in disguise. Overpowered by the woman's scent and attitude and by the prospect of dream sex, the Casanova fell into her — its — arms for a scene of passion. When his lust waned, he found himself alone with a note, "Come again, Casanova," signed with his own signature.

Now, every time the Casanova visits his dream space (better educated, certainly), he encounters his daimon, still in the form of the gorgeous woman but with the swell of pregnancy. The Casanova knows what he's done, and he feels in turns sickened and angry with himself. He knows that it's a ploy by his higher self to evoke shame over the Casanova's treatment of women... but it's still working.

Description: The daimon is a woman of light cappuccino skin whose dark, wavy hair gets a depth from its natural lighter highlights. Despite the daimon's dream pregnancy, which appears to be in the late first



trimester, the woman maintains an alluring sexuality. This form is tailored to the Casanova, who feels shame and lust — and the lust keeps him coming back.

Storytelling Hints: Characters outside the Casanova's mind recognize unexpected influence on the mage — his indulgence of the appetite for which he is so well-known has distinctly flagged. Suspicion of the dangers he could be in prompts them to act, or at least to find out what's going on. The Casanova could ask for help getting himself back to normal, allowing the players' cabal into his Oneiros in order to "defeat" his personal tormentor. Whether they help the Casanova escape his shame or decide that it's better for him to endure it depends on the group.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 4, Resistance 4

Willpower: 9

Essence: 15 (max 15)

Initiative: 9

Defense: 5

Speed: 14

Size: 5

Corpus: 9

Influences: Fate 3, Life 2, Oneiros 3, Time 1

Numina: As with the daimon of Rupert Kirschbaum, the Casanova's daimon wields command over the noted Arcana within Astral Space. The daimon manipulates the dream space with equal facility; this power let the daimon lead the Casanova straight to a dream representation of his bedroom and afterward ensured that the Casanova saw certain lessons.

Goetic Demons

These inner demons are adequately explored from an external perspective in **Mage: The Awakening** on pp. 323–326. That is the form of goetia a mage practices from without, calling up the worst of himself from deep within and either conquering or freeing it. Such magic lacks precision; it latches onto the mage's very worst impulses but cannot summon his lesser evils. Within dream space, all the mage's foul urges have form in the goetic parts of the soul.

There is a goetic demon for every little thing the mage hates about himself. Most are petty demons, formed from petty hates: they are Rank 1 and unsubtle, born of guilt at ignoring the beggar on the street or that stupid urge to punch the annoying guy at the office. Petty demons imitate their betters by trying to seduce astral visitors (primarily their dreamers, but the demons'll latch onto anyone). They react to failure as they'd like their victims to act. A minor impulse of assault lays into the traveler, while the urge to lie for no reason starts misleading the traveler.

Greater goetic demons arise from a person's darker urges, the ones that don't just go away. One is always his Vice, which often spawns others, more specific and sometimes petty; some are unrelated. Someone with the Vice of Gluttony has several along that vein: his Gluttony personified, a face for the recurring urge to steal from a friend's stash and one for the lure of sneaking some out of those incredible busts his cop friend's always making; there're also demons for that constant wish that he could abandon his invalid mother and for the need to break into his upstairs neighbor's apartment and burn the model trains that she runs all hours of the night, even though neither is related to his Vice.

Greater demons are cleverer, stronger and all-round more influential. They want nothing more than to drag the dreamer down to their level, to make him like them, make him *be* them. Some mages believe that falling prey to a goetic demon's urging allows the demon to express control over the mage's body, giving

the demon access to a real world full of opportunity for indulgence, but no demon admits knowing of or desiring such a thing, even under harshest interrogation. They only want people (especially the dreamer) to give in to the desires they have but deny.

Goetic demons look as the dreamer would under that demon's influence. The quiet urge to punch someone in the teeth appears as the mage but with a slight sheen of sweat, a glint of madness in the eyes and bruises and teeth impressions on the knuckles. A demon of murder or Wrath has blood on the hands, the mage's favored weapon (looking well used) and an immense look of satisfaction on its face. The demon of abandoning one's ward looks free and happy, has extra cash (that wasn't spent on the dependent) and nicer clothes; the train-arsonist has soot on its hands and arms, smells of kerosene and looks as if it's gotten a *damn* good night's sleep.

Of goetic demons, the one founded in a dreamer's Vice is the strongest. The demons have Influences based on the most appropriate Vice: petty demons have Influence 1, greater demons have Influence 2 and the demon of Vice has Influence 3. A person with a specific obsession separate from his Vice may have a goetic demon that rivals or even exceeds the demon of his Vice in power.

Destroying one's inner demons subdues those urges for a time, but they never truly go away. Even one reduced to zero Essence and then killed re-forms once the dreamer begins harboring those urges in his conscious mind again. Killing one's Vice demon provides a point of Willpower per indulging it, but one cannot then regain Willpower through acting out the Vice until the demon reforms (inevitably three days later).

*Petty Demon:
Tell Off the Arrogant Bastard*

Quote: That guy's not so smart. You could really get some egg on his face, man.

Background: It's not that your professor is wrong, it's just that he's so damn smug about knowing more than the class. What does he expect? You're there to learn about his subject, so why should he get to make fun of you for not knowing what he hasn't taught you yet? You have that urge to call him on it, and now it's talking to you.

Description: It looks like the dreamer, but it stands taller and appears unassailable in repartee. The book under the demon's arm shows it's smart.

Storytelling Hints: There's no propaganda for this demon, just blatant exhortation: "Why do you let him get away with that?" "You've heard the other students after class; they'd *totally* back you!" That sort of thing. The demon starts telling off astral travelers who won't agree with it, making the journey harder — or at least less pleasant.

Abilities:

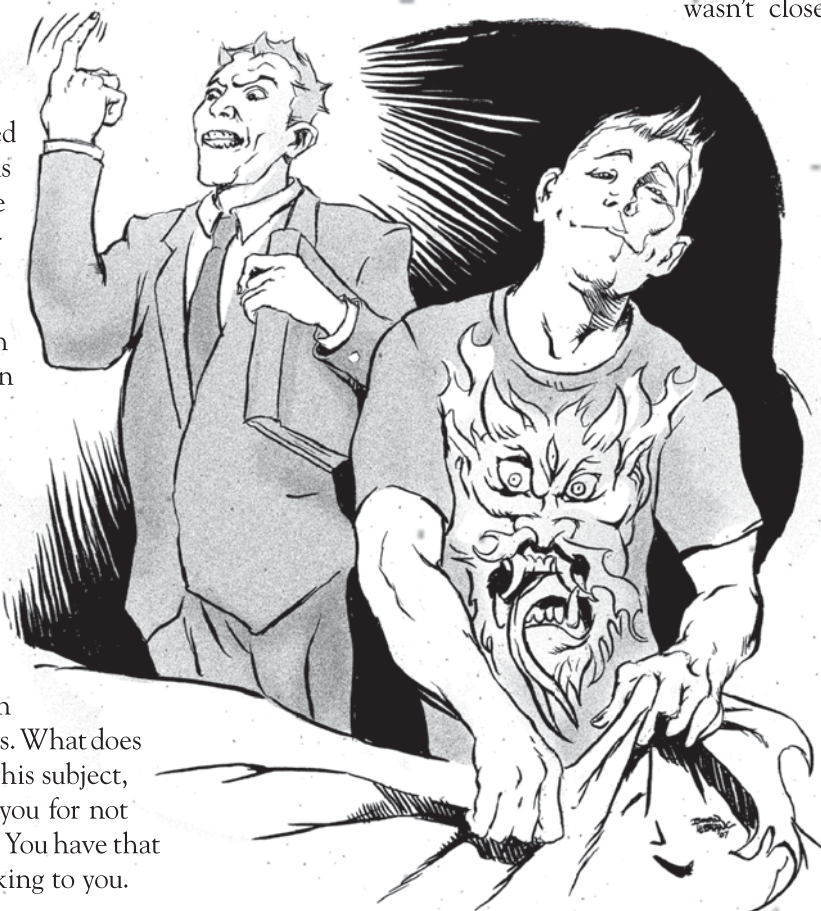
Persuasion (dice pool 3) — The demon really wants you to tell that guy off when you get out of dream space, and this is what goetic demons do: convince you against your better judgment.

Influence: Pride (dice pool 4) — The demon isn't above heightening a person's natural pride to get its way. Successful influence levies a dice penalty on the roll contesting the demon's Persuasion.

Greater Demon: Patricidal Urge

Quote: When you count up everything he's done to you, doesn't he deserve this a dozen times over?

Background: Your father... wasn't kind to you. He wasn't close,



he wasn't fatherly and he always disapproved. Everything he could do to tear you down, he did. You thought he'd be proud when you got a good job and started moving up the ladder, but all he did was sneer about your blue collar. And your little sister... she never got away from him. Her self-esteem is self-loathing, and you suspect he did more talking than he used words. You don't talk to him anymore, but it tears you up that your sister is still in that and he's still doing it every day. And you know you could end it.

Description: As all goetic demons, the patricidal urge is a variation on the mage's appearance. There's no visible sign of murder: no blood and no weapon. Its eyes glisten with tears of joy, and its face is more content than observers think possible. The demon's hands look as if they have a very strong grip.

Storytelling Hints: The patricidal urge is, at least in this case, all about the righteous righting of a severe injustice. The demon has several reasons — good ones — why you should go ahead and commit the murder, and also knows how you could do it without getting caught. Clearly the demon's been thinking about this, which means you've been thinking about it. The demon knows where you can take your sister for safekeeping, who could take her in and help you get her on the right track. The demon even has suggestions for what you could whisper over your mother's grave, and some of the demon's words are quite touching.

It doesn't hesitate to encourage vengeful, righteous murder to other astral visitors. The demon takes some time to sound out an astral traveler's wants and rages, then sets about encouraging them. After all, increasing the amount of retribution in the world is another way to make murdering his father acceptable to the demon's dreamer. Truly intransigent or insulting travelers incite this demon's wrath, which is considerable.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 5, Finesses 6, Resistance 3

Willpower: 8

Essence: 15 (max 15)

Initiative: 10

Defense: 6

Speed: 16

Size: 5

Corpus: 8

Influences: Wrath 2

Numina: Fascination with Vengeance (11 dice); Harrow (11 dice); as a demon still in dream space, patricidal urge has no other Numina, such as Possession or Claim.

Fascination with Vengeance: This Numen plants an unconscious need in the target to seek vengeance on someone who has wronged him. It takes effect the next time the target sleeps, presumably outside Astral Space. For each success by which the demon wins the contest, plotting vengeance consumes the target's life for one full day. People subjected to this Numen multiple times tend to pick up the threads of a vengeance planned before and dropped when the Numen's effect ends.

Ban: Goetic demons' Bans vary depending on their hosts. This one has the ingrained desire to protect a younger sister, from her father's harm and her father's murder. The demon loses four dice when trying to affect women who look 20 or younger and anyone accompanying such a woman.

Nightmare Creatures

This is the catchall category for things that aren't dark urges, higher selves or harmless roles in dream sequences. Generally, nightmare creatures are things born of the dreamer's fears given life and strength in her subconscious. When the picnic-perfect sky clouds over and the astral traveler follows her cues to discover the corpse in the culvert, and the corpse reaches for her, that is a nightmare creature whereas everything before had been a dream actor.

Nightmare creatures vary in strength according to the depth of the fear in the dreamer. Small fears are little more than annoyances. They stem from fears such as being late for work or getting caught with pot and having it confiscated. They are equivalent to Rank 1 spirits at best. When they show up in dream space, they look like the park ranger who doesn't care about the drugs but has to take it or the guy in front of you driving too slowly.

Rank 2 fears have greater consequences, greater reality or a deeper founding in the character's psyche. These include the corpse the character discovered as a youth, half-rotted by sewer water and swarming with insects, the anxiety that the character is a single woman in a first-floor apartment and there was a break-in down the street last week, that terrifying daydream of being jostled just before the subway train arrives and falling into its path. They manifest as strong nightmare creatures: a decaying thing with a strong grip that wants others to drown as it did, a shadowy male figure with a shining knife and loud, rasping breath or a pair of hands and elbows bumping astral travelers into coincidental dangers.

A dreamer's worst fears spawn Rank 3 nightmare creatures, mighty monsters that astral travelers are better off avoiding. These creatures come from powerful conditioned fears (such as a strongly reinforced bogeyman), traumatizing events (imprisonment by Charlie in Vietnam) and other things that stop the dreamer cold when she thinks of them. Few people have more than one such nightmare, and not everyone has a fear that powerful at all. Unlike powerful goetic demons, nightmare creatures have no interest in influencing a traveler's actions. Nightmare creatures exist only to terrorize the dreamer's unconscious and astral visitors who brave the wrong side of the Oneiros's tracks.

Confronting a nightmare creature in dream space and defeating the creature (usually through astral combat) quiets related fears in the dreamer's conscious life. Destroying one for good (by discorporating it while it has no Essence) weakens the fear considerably. A fear defeated completely by others returns to full strength over a long period of time; one defeated with the participation of the dreamer re-forms weakened, if at all. It is a viable form of therapy.

Nightmare creatures have Influence: Fear at a level equal to their Rank.

The Engine

Quote: *Whhoooooooooooo!*

Background: Your home growing up had a large backyard that stretched out to where the train came by every day. You couldn't tell the time by the train, but you knew you'd be closer to dinner. The tracks were a cool place to play, especially at the creek where they went around a bend and almost had their own canopy. You and Joey used to play down there a lot, running around the tracks and play-fighting with sticks. Then *it* happened, and you didn't play down there anymore.

Joey lost a foot to the train when he got

stuck under the rail that day. You lost your dreams, as night after night the smoke-belching engine bore down on the trapped kid and his helpless, at-fault friend.

Description: The engine is a train engine from the perspective of a pre-adolescent: huge and dark, the engine could be cool if it weren't bloodthirsty. Its wheels are ragged and rusty, and the engine's length has streaks of soot mixed with dried blood. Where the engine runs, rusty rail lays itself before the engine and disappears after it while clouds of smoke rise into the sky; the tortured screech of the engine's wheels on the rail echoes sounds like a child's panicked screams for help.

Storytelling Hints: This nightmare is an implacable monster. It locates its prey, anyone not native to the dream space, and runs them down. The engine spends most of its time puffing around and around the fateful bend in an isolated portion of the Oneiros, but the engine can make tracks to anywhere in the Oneiros if the engine has a target. Once the engine finds something to kill, the engine continues the hunt until the engine or its prey is destroyed.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 7, Finesse 2, Resistance 5

Willpower: 12

Essence: 15 (max 15)

Initiative: 9

Defense: 7

Speed: 24

Size: 20

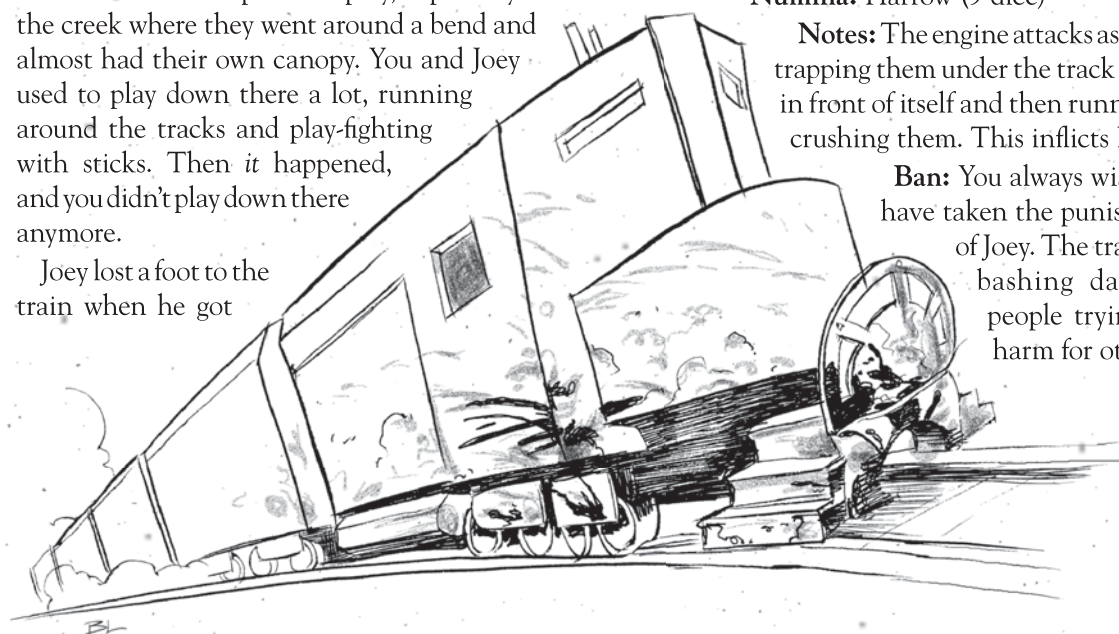
Corpus: 25

Influences: Fear 2

Numina: Harrow (9 dice)

Notes: The engine attacks astral travelers by trapping them under the track the engine lays in front of itself and then running them over, crushing them. This inflicts lethal damage.

Ban: You always wished you could have taken the punishment instead of Joey. The train inflicts only bashing damage against people trying to take the harm for others.



Dwellers in the Temenos

Astral Blight

Quote: *You stole from dreams and brought our treasure into your world. We are the hole you left behind.*

Background: Everything in Astral Space has a purpose, and everything in Astral Space is linked. Every creature, every object is a symbol and an avatar of something that once existed in the waking world. On the rare occasions when a creature or an object leaves Astral Space for the material world (whether at the beckoning of a mage or of its own accord), a hole is left behind — a wound in the collective soul. Sometimes the wound heals on its own. Sometimes it becomes blighted.

Astral Blights are a byproduct of unnatural crossovers between the Inner Realms and the Fallen World, holes in dream-stuff that gain malevolent purpose. Their nature is often compared to the nature of the Abyss, and many mages believe that Abyssal forces give Astral Blights their power. Few sane sorcerers care to test this theory, however, and Scelesti seem to prefer dealing with cunning and intelligent Acamoth over the uncontrollable Blights. They are seen most commonly in the Temenos, but can seep into the other strata of the astral.

Description: A rapidly flickering, gray-black gash in the world. Images occasionally flash in the Blight's dark body, people and places and objects that the Blight has devoured. At other times, it twists and contorts, becoming the shape of whatever hole the Blight filled — taking the form of the creature or object that was moved from Astral Space to the Fallen World, leaving a wound behind.

Storytelling Hints: Once brought into being, an Astral Blight grows by devouring more of Astral Space and expanding into the resultant hole. The only thing that distracts Blights from this task is the psychic scent of whatever it is that caused their creation — the presence of a mage who conjured an astral item into the material world, for example, or

the dreams of a Sleeper who encountered a monster that escaped Astral Space. When an Astral Blight notices such a scent, the Blight seeks to devour the source above all else.

Some Blights come closer to developing intelligence and personality than others. In particular, Blights created by the absence of intelligent astral creatures sometimes resemble twisted, insane versions of those originals. Blights obsess over finding a way to reach their makers, either by bringing the originals back into Astral Space or by traveling to the Fallen World themselves. Mages who've studied Blights are of two minds regarding this behavior, and are split over whether an Astral Blight would be destroyed by coming into contact with its creator... or whether the Blight would instead gain strength and independence.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 5,
Finesse 2, Resistance 4

Willpower: 9

Essence: 15 (max 15)

Initiative: 6

Defense: 5

Speed: 12

Size: 5

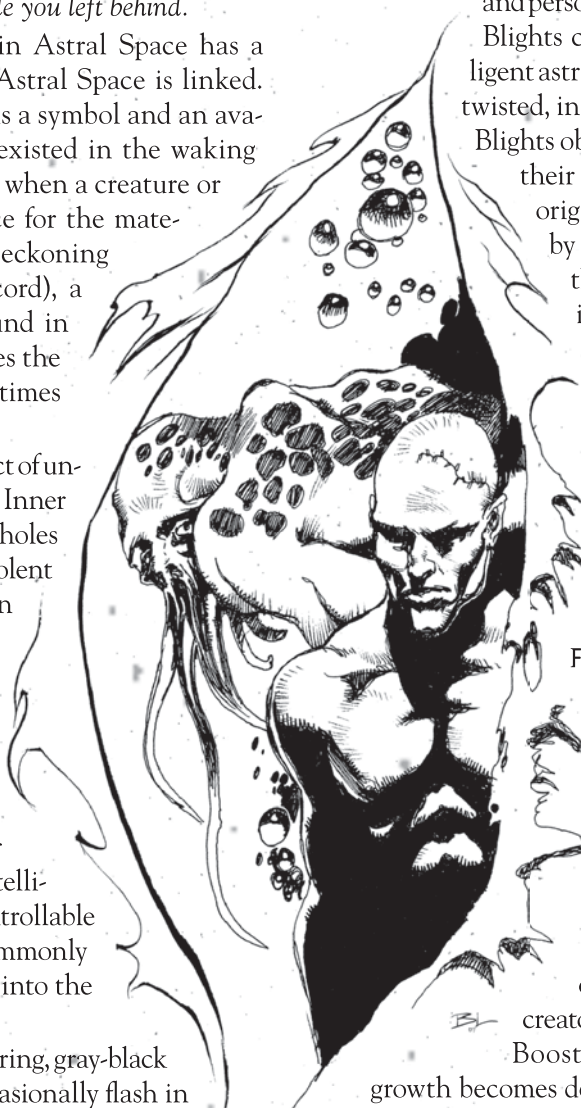
Corpus: 9

Influences: An Astral Blight can use whatever Influence its creator had, but all effects are reversed. Boosted traits become penalties, growth becomes decay and so forth.

Numina: Countermagic (dice pool 7). An Astral Blight can use this Numen as reflexive countermagic against spells targeted on the Blight or used to interfere with its actions. One Essence is spent, and Power + Finesse is rolled. If successes equal or exceed those of the spell, the spell is countered.

In addition, an Astral Blight may be able to use the Numina or spells possessed by the creature or object from which the Blight originated.

Ban: An Astral Blight cannot refuse a gift of Essence channeled from a mage or spirit. However, when absorbing Essence with a foreign resonance, the Blight suffers one point of damage per point of



Essence absorbed and cannot use the Essence to fuel the Blight's abilities.

Dream Steed

These rare beasts are found only realms where horses and riding are especially important. Dream steeds are Rank 3 archetypes of horses, and therefore are superior to all other lesser horses in all ways. Dream steeds are faster, have greater endurance and are also intelligent and obedient enough to understand and obey simple voice commands by their owners. In appearance, dream steeds resemble unnaturally perfect horses. Most are all one color, usually white, reddish brown or black, with bright, intelligent eyes. They willingly serve as everything from a swift steed for racing to a powerful destrier. However, as befits horses out of legend, dream steeds are difficult to tame and serve only suitably powerful and impressive masters. An archetype or spirit must have a Rank of 3 or higher to command such a steed, and mages must have a Gnosis of at least 3 to tame one of these beings. The only exception is that an archetype of Rank 5 or higher can order one of these steeds to serve an archetype, mage or spirit with a Rank of at least 2 for one journey. However, lesser beings can never command the loyalty of one of these proud beings.

When not given as a gift, the steed must be tamed by the rider. First, the character must capture the steed, which is naturally wild and resists capture. Once the steed is captured, the character must then make an extended Presence + Animal Handling roll, and obtain at least 10 successes. One roll can be made every two hours. If the character has at least two dots in the Mind Arcanum, she can add her score in this Arcanum to this roll.

Once tamed, dream steeds dwell in their owners' Oneiros when the steeds are not being ridden. Once a mage enters his Oneiros as part of his astral journey to the Temenos, the dream steed automatically come to him and offers, sometimes quite eagerly, for the

mage to ride it. However, mages who mistreat their dream steeds may find the horses turning on them or throwing them off fleeing when the horses are most needed. Also, mages who rarely ride their steeds will also find them growing restive and possibly leaving the mages. In general, a mage should ride a dream steed for at least several hours a month to keep the horse's loyalty. Spending time caring for the steed, allowing it to run freely while mounted or training it also all help it remain loyal.

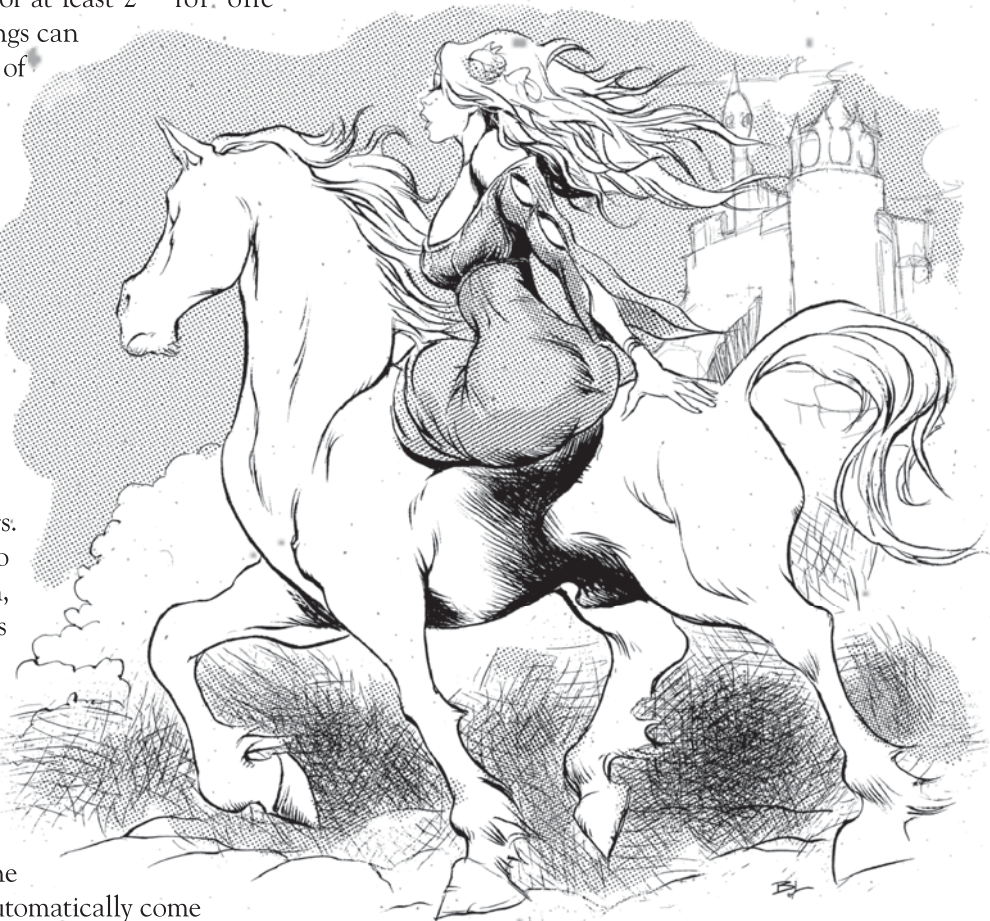
When a mage is mounted on a dream steed, the additional number of successes the mage must roll to enter the Temenos and the Dreamtime is halved. In addition, the mage can move at almost blinding speed through both realms. In the Temenos, she must take existing connections between realms, but she reduces the time needed to travel any connection by a factor of 10 and can equal the pace of any archetype with a Rank of 5 or less.

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 9, Finesse 6, Resistance 6

Willpower: 15

Essence: 20



Initiative: 12

Defense: 9

Speed: 30

Size: 8

Corpus: 14

Influence: Speed 1, Overcoming Obstacles 2

Numina: Animal Control, Harrow

Ban: Dream steeds cannot accept riders or masters who are not the steeds' equal.

Morphean

Quote: *I know the things you can never know; the things you can only imagine, because there are limits to your mind.*

Background: There are mages who would do anything to escape death. Everyone knows that — cautionary tales about Tremere liches and ghostly sorcerers abound among the orders. But very few mages know the stories of the Awakened who fled to Astral Space to escape death — once-human beings who gave up their bodies to become isolated psyches in the sea of thought.

Legends say that the first Morpheans were lucid dreamers and astral explorers who sought to escape the destruction of Atlantis. Somehow, they found a way to first sever their Oneiroi from their material bodies, then to twist those personal dream-realms inside-out so that they could be shaped into astral simulacra. In effect, a Morphean's astral body is a shell that carries its Oneiros, and a Morphean's Oneiros is the astral body the Morphean uses to journey through Astral Space. A Morphean is a stone on a sandy beach — a solid object in a mass of particles, a coherent personality in a world of loose ideas.

Morpheans travel through the whole of Astral Space — the Temenos, the Dreamtime and occasionally even Oneiroi. Most seek understanding and control over their environment, and desire power over dreams. Their own nature holds them back — while existence as pure soul-forms keeps Morpheans alive, it prevents them from growing, changing or learning. In order to protect their Oneiroi, Morpheans must accept a degree of psychic isolation; their inner demons wrestle and grow and become unrecognizable over the course of centuries, maddened by their inability to be touched by outside experience.

As mages are wont to do, Morpheans have found a loophole in this, as well. While they can't integrate new experiences into their minds, they can carry the astral symbols of such experiences along with them. Instead of learning, Morpheans collect. They acquire objects of power from realms across Astral Space, dressing in masks stolen from ephemeral beings, wearing brooches made of frozen Platonic insects from the Dreamtime and wielding weapons drawn from madmen's Oneiroi. Morpheans' greed makes them so dangerous to sorcerers — the Awakened have some of the richest experiences to steal.

Description: A featureless gray human with a hole in its head, dressed in stolen astral finery. Morpheans often disguise themselves in elaborate costumes drawn from dozens of realms, hiding their mannequin-like bodies under headgear and cloaks.

Storytelling Hints: A Morphean is no longer human. After centuries of isolation and incestuous battles, the goetic demons locked inside its Oneiros morph into something new. Incomprehensible virtues and vices rule its psyche, untouched and unaffected



by reality or mortal thought. In a sense, a Morphean draws on a sea of ideas more alien than the Anima Mundi, created by reflecting again and again on the mage's own triumphs and failures and dreams.

A Morphean's quest for power can easily interfere with mortal mages' studies. At best, a Morphean may keep to itself and scavenge astral realms of antiquity, collecting lost Atlantean thought-forms and building a sanctum in some disused dreamland. At worst, a Morphean may begin mounting expeditions into mages' Oneiroi, stealing precious memories and using them as powerful artifacts. Even though astral conflict with a Morphean can never prove fatal, defeat by a Morphean can be a fate worse than death — such a defeat can leave a mage stripped of all experiences, living with a psyche littered with the bodies of his higher self and inner demons.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 4, Finesse 4, Resistance 4

Willpower: 8

Essence: 15 (max 15)

Initiative: 8

Defense: 4

Speed: 13

Size: 5

Corpus: 9

Numina: A Morphean can cast any rote the Morphean knew during its life as a mage by spending one Essence and rolling Power + Finesse. Most Morpheans also carry astral objects with which they can access additional rotes.

Ban: Stripping a Morphean of its possessions forces it to rely on the rotes it knew during life. It may not be much, but it's a place to start....

The Teenage Rebel

Regardless of where in the Temenos this archetype appears, it is the essence of adolescent rebellion against restrictive laws and seemingly meaningless adult social conventions. In realms that are associated with America, this being often wears the face of James Dean, a young Marlon Brando or a stereotypical hippie, or a punked-out young goth woman, but many other options are also possible. However, in all cases, the teenage rebel is young, attractive, at least moderately physically fit and dressed in a bold and distinctive style that is at odds with the norms of the realm the rebel is in.

In addition to being a focal point of many realms, this entity can also be found traveling throughout the Temenos and regularly intrudes into particularly stolid or restrictive realms. In these cases, the teenage rebel is always associated with some sort of vehicle. This vehicle is typically a fast motorcycle or fast but old car, but regardless of the form the vehicle takes, the teenage rebel's vehicle is always just fast enough to outrun the local authorities. A teenage rebel can be found in almost any section of the Temenos driving in a vehicle in the most repressive or authoritarian regions. In less restrictive realms, the rebel can sometimes be found either hitchhiking or talking to local teens. However, this archetype is never idle or lazy — the teenage rebel is always active and goal directed, but the exact nature of these goals can rapidly change. Determination and perseverance are not qualities this archetype possesses in abundance.

This entity always serves as a locus of youthful dissent and always possesses three properties. The entity's appearance and even its gender and race change in response to the young people around the entity — it always transforms into someone young who is suitable



for leading or encouraging dissent or rebellion. Also, this entity has an unparalleled ability to touch the hearts of teens the entity is speaking to, especially teens who are upset or unhappy. Finally, in a trickster-like fashion, this figure can never be captured by any authority figure. In extremis, this entity can seemingly be killed in a dramatic fashion, but can never captured or restrained for more than a brief while.

Rank: 4

Attributes: Power 12, Finesse 6, Resistance 10

Willpower: 22

Essence: 25

Initiative: 16

Defense: 12

Speed: 23

Size: 5

Corpus: 15

Influence: Rebellion and Adolescence 4

Numina: Create Emotion (dissatisfaction and anger), Harrow, Possession (in the Fallen World)

Ban: The teenage rebel cannot ever willingly submit or surrender to authority.

Waxman

Quote: <a high-pitched whine, a snippet of song and the croaking of frogs>

Background: Waxmen are astral spirits tied to hallucinations and memory loss. Relatively common in Oneiroi and the Temenos (and found in variant forms in a few Dreamtime plant realms), Waxmen are well documented by both the Mysterium and the Free Council. Waxmen's origin and exact nature remain a point of contention, however — no one agrees on whether they are ideas mutated and changed by the use of psychotropic drugs, pure manifestations of hallucinogenic thought or something entirely different.

Encounters with Waxmen are difficult to predict. Although they're known to cluster within the Oneiroi of addicts and individuals with certain mental disorders,

Waxmen can also be found wandering seemingly inappropriate dreams, spawning and evaporating without rhyme or reason.

Description: A roughly human-shaped mass of streaked and melting colors. Thick globs of hue occasionally pop, merge together or transform into something resembling an organ before being reabsorbed into the body. At the edges of the figure, thread-like tendrils stretch out and take the shape of miniature trees, knives and insects before evaporating.

Storytelling Hints: Without direction, Waxmen wander aimlessly, exploring their surroundings with a childlike demeanor — tearing up grass, staring into mirrors and occasionally just sitting still and screaming. However, if magically compelled into action, they can focus long enough to complete a relatively simple task.

Intruders in a Waxman's domain are usually subjected to a series of probes, as the Waxman tests the malleability of the intruders and their possessions with its Influence. Intruders who react poorly may find themselves subjected to violence.

Rank: 1

Attributes: Power 1, Finesse 5, Resistance 1

Willpower: 2

Essence: 10 (max 10)

Initiative: 6

Defense: 5

Speed: 11

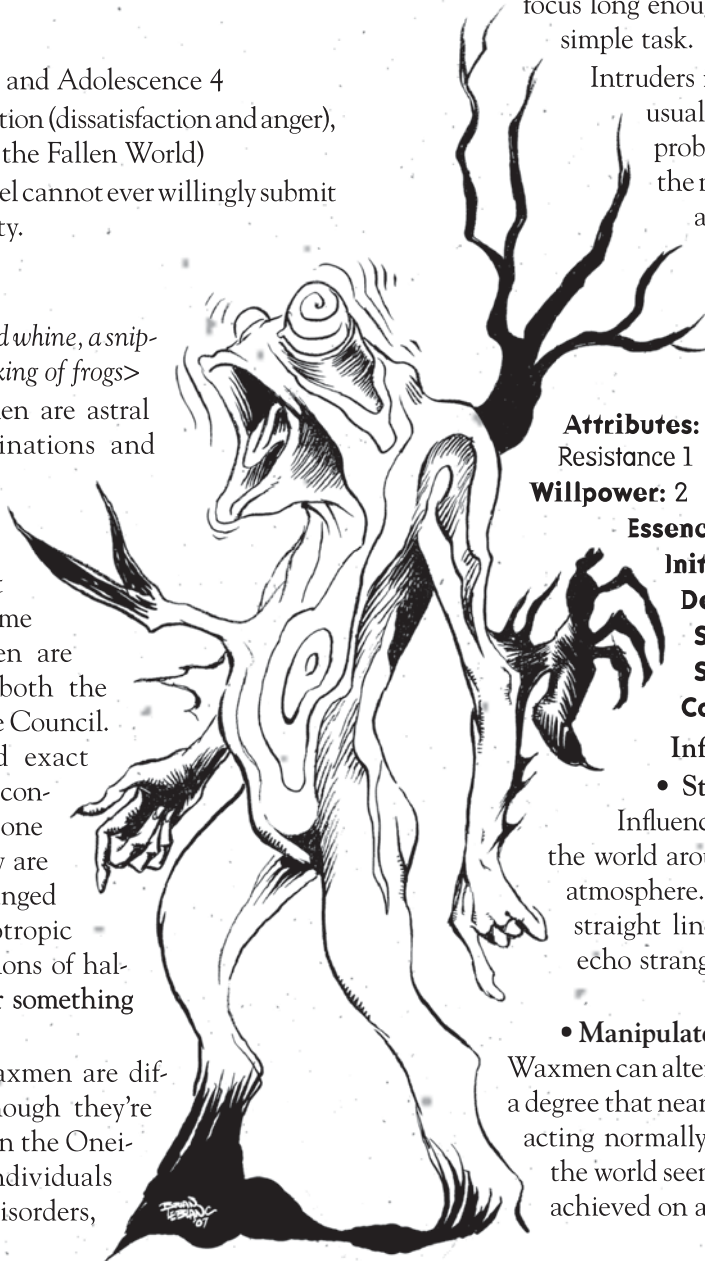
Size: 5

Corpus: 6

Influences: Hallucinations 3

- **Strengthen:** At this level of Influence, a Waxman can cause the world around it to take on a surreal atmosphere. Colors become brighter, straight lines begin to waver, sounds echo strangely and even the air gains e.

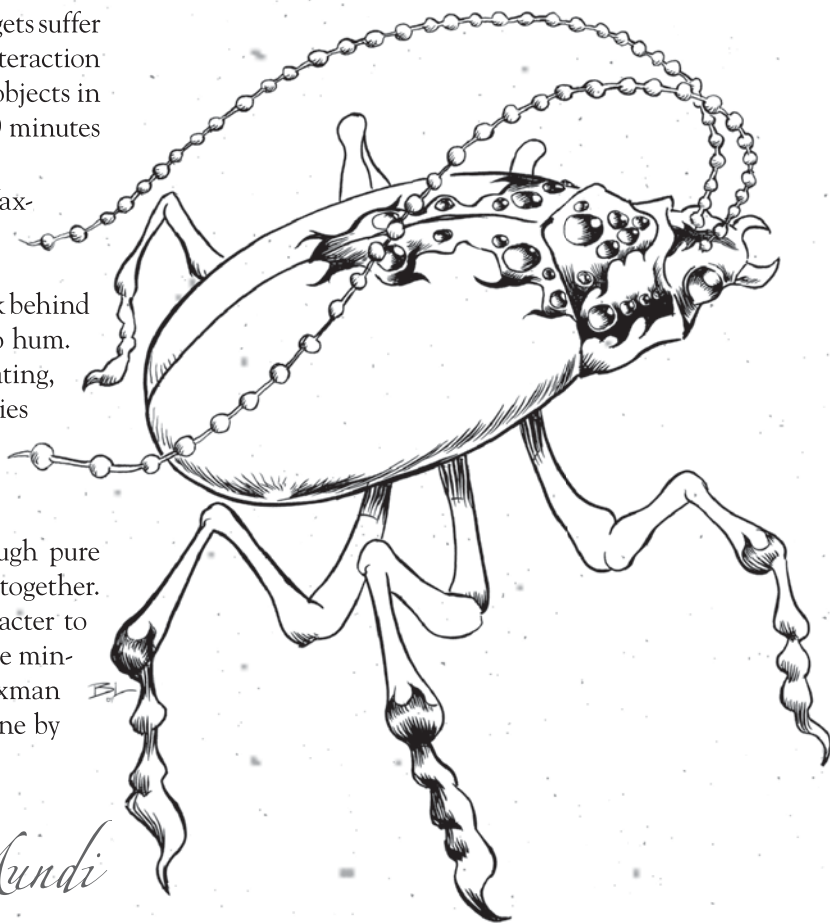
- **Manipulate:** By spending two Essence, Waxmen can alter their surroundings to such a degree that nearby creatures have difficulty acting normally. Walls seem to melt, and the world seems to spin. For each success achieved on a Power + Finesse roll (con-



tested by a target's Composure + Gnosis), targets suffer a -1 die penalty on all actions involving interaction with material objects (including "material" objects in Astral Space). The changes last for up to 10 minutes per success.

- **Control:** By spending three Essence, Waxmen can alter the appearance of reality on a fundamental level. Humans seem to dissolve into clouds of butterflies, the sun seems to sink behind the eastern horizon and mountains seem to hum. This use of Influence is identical to manipulating, but the dice penalty imposed on targets applies to all non-spellcasting actions (as well as attempts to cast spells that target material creatures and objects).

Ban: Waxmen can be held at bay through pure mental focus — and by ignoring them altogether. A Resolve + Composure roll allows a character to ignore Waxmen and all their abilities for one minute per success; any interaction with a Waxman prohibits further use of this Ban in that scene by the character.



Forces of the Anima Mundi

Cathar's Rosary of Inverted Regret

Quote: *(The victim hears dissonant wailing, but nobody else can. For some reason, it sounds beautiful.)*

The Cathar's Rosary of Inverted Regret is a beautiful, dangerous Abyssal manifestation. It got its name from a mage with the shadow name Cathar. She was the second sorcerer to fall under the Rosary's influence. The Rosary comes from the Last Ocean or somehow solidifies out of its waters: a thing made of Astral "ice" and an inscrutable creative force. In Cathar's case, the Rosary leapt from the edge of the water wrapped itself around her throat. The Rosary seemed to vanish when she tore it off, but every time she made a new soul journey, a necklace or scarf appeared around her throat.

Cathar's symptoms started with discreet self-injury. She secretly ate glass and rotting offal. When her cabal-mates found out, she claimed it helped her perform certain rituals. Cathar appeared at cabal meetings with bruises and occasional broken bones, but was unwilling to explain her injuries. She vanished for days, weeks and then months at a time.

By the time the cabal tracked her down, Cathar's face was a mass of scars and infected wounds. She was missing the little fingers on each hand and had

been sleeping outdoors on a bare stretch of concrete. When roused, she laughed hysterically. After her compatriots nursed her back to health, she ran away again. They found her dead a day later, covered in self-inflicted cuts.

Ever since then, more mages tread the edge of Oroboros carefully and put a safe distance between themselves and the things that wash ashore. There are also rumors that mages have searched for a Cathar's Rosary of Inverted Regret to use as a torture device.

Appearance: A Cathar's Rosary of Inverted Regret looks like a beetle made of burnished bronze inlaid with rubies, opals and sapphires. The antennae and soft parts look like metal wire. The Rosary gets its name from two long, trailing feeler-like structures that look like strings of black pearls or drops of amber. Each leg has one more joint than a natural insect. The Rosary uses these longer legs to scuttle from side to side like a crab — and to jump at the throats of prey. Once attached, the Rosary wraps the feelers around the victim's neck while the Rosary's mandibles grasp the soft parts of the throat (or the victim's dream of his throat). That's when the changes begin.

Storytelling Hints: Resolve the spirit's attack as a standard grapple — or as standard as such an attack gets in the Astral Reaches. Once attached, a Cathar's Rosary begins reordering a character's desires, reversing, inverting or just scrambling them so that the victim starts to desire pain instead of pleasure, degradation instead of dignity and disease instead of health. The victim does not feel the negative stimulus as if it's positive (there's no pleasure *from* pain), but feels compelled to seek these experiences out as if they were desirable. She also behaves as if she desires them, even deceiving others to hide urges she knows aren't socially acceptable. She exhibits outward signs of pleasure, but from her own vantage point, it feels as if her attempts to communicate a negative reaction have been scrambled or hijacked by a silent, alien presence.

At first, the Rosary is a source of euphoria. The mage recovers *all* Willpower — not just one point — when she satisfies a Vice. After a number of days equal to the victim's Composure, she starts to react to events in an inappropriate manner. The victim then regains one point of Willpower only when she satisfies her Virtue. The next time the victim encounters something unpleasant, make a Resolve + Composure roll. If it succeeds, there's no effect, but if the roll fails, the mage reacts as if the stimulus were pleasant and seeks it out again. Victims gain +1 to +3 bonus dice if this would risk the character's life or safety. Unfortunately, the roll suffers a -1 die penalty per week of attachment. The victim eventually starts to pursue self-destructive behavior without regard for her health and safety.

Instances of genuine pleasure are also scrambled; the mage treats these as instances of suffering. Between these reactions, the character quickly becomes a social outcast as her hygiene and social skills suffer under the Rosary's influence. Even worse, a character who suffers a dramatic failure on the roll internalizes the behavior for a scene. She convinces herself that she actually enjoys burning her hands or wrapping herself in a lice-infested, dirty blanket. At the Storyteller's discretion, three dramatic failures might justify a mild derangement; five may worsen the condition to a severe form of madness. See **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 268–271 for examples of mild and severe derangements.

It isn't difficult to remove the Rosary, but the spirit gives no sign that it is responsible for the victim's warped behavior. The Rosary has no aura and simply reflects any nearby resonance. Characters need only reduce the Rosary's Corpus to 0 during one of the victim's

dreams or an astral journey, when the Rosary manifests as something attached to the character's astral form. A Cathar's Rosary defends itself with Symbolic Camouflage and a Numen equivalent to the rote Psychic Assault. This affects victims' physical forms even in the midst of an astral journey; they suffer bashing damage instead of Willpower loss.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 4, Finesse 4, Resistance 4

Willpower: 8

Essence: 20 (20 max.)

Initiative: 8

Defense: 4

Speed: 18

Size: 5

Corpus: 9

Influence: Desire 2

Numina: Psychic Assault (as rote; add +2 dice when used against a victim) Symbolic Camouflage (new Numen; see below).

Symbolic Camouflage

This Numen is available to astral entities; it isn't common among Shadow spirits or ghosts. Symbolic Camouflage allows the spirit to disguise itself as something else, but can't turn the spirit invisible or into something completely different from its true form. A Cathar's Rosary can, for example, manifest itself as a necklace of the same stones that seem to adorn its body, a multicolored scarf or a haze of foul-smelling smoke, but it can't just vanish or make itself look like anything that gives no hint of its true form.

The spirit spends one point of Essence and rolls Power + Finesse. The result is the difficulty of witnesses' Wits + Investigation rolls to recognize the symbol's significance for the scene. Add two successes to the difficulty if witnesses have never seen the spirit in its true form.

Dahhak, Aeon-Suzerain of Pandemonium

Quote: Long ago, a dragon dreamed of mortals who would build a city to glorify it. Mortals foolishly believed that they dreamed of the dragon instead, and their city drove a blasphemy into heaven like a black iron dagger. And they set a screaming king upon the throne to rule from a wound in the sky, and knew not whether it was dragon or man.

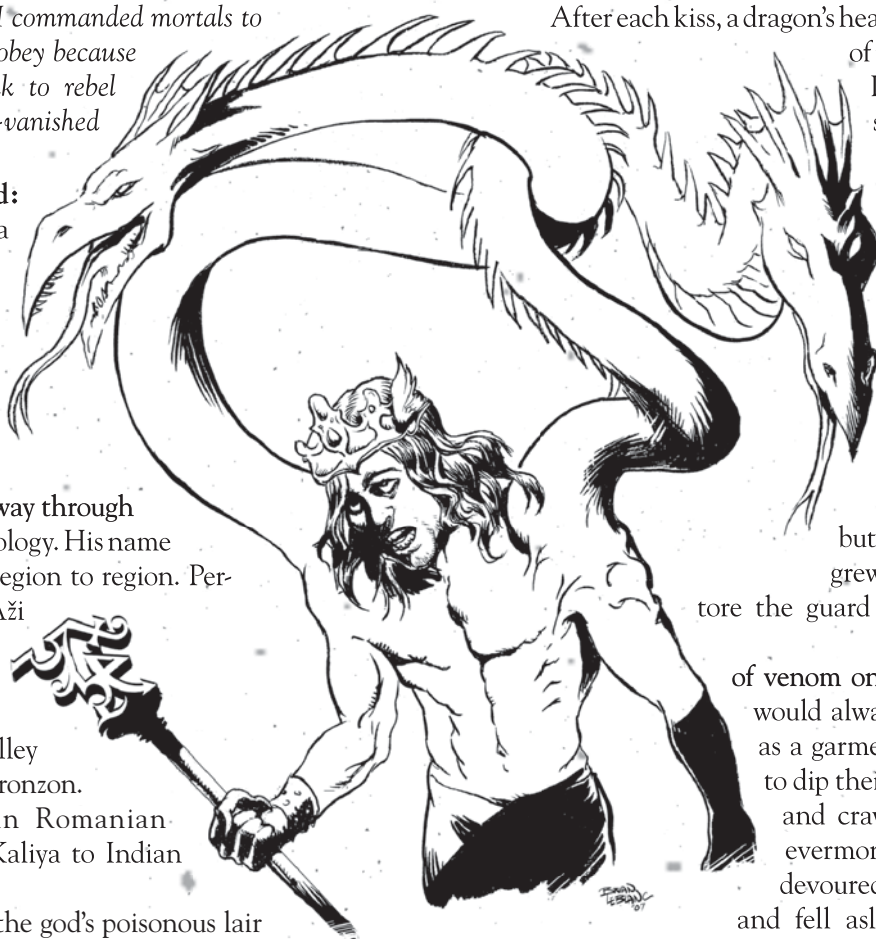
So crowned, I commanded mortals to suffer. You still obey because you're too weak to rebel against a long-vanished throne.

Background:

Dahhak was a dragon. Dahhak was a king. Dahhak was a demon. All of these are facets of an ancient legend that wends its way through Mastigos mythology. His name changes from region to region. Persians call it Aži Dahaka. In the 16th century, John Dee and Edward Kelley called him Choronzon. He's Balaur in Romanian folktales and Kaliya to Indian mages, who saw Kaliya's out of the god's poisonous lair in the material world. The name "Dahhak" is Arabic, coming from Persian Dahaka, a word that might mean "man," "stinging" or "burning."

The Mastigos story follows Persian legends closely, but weaves them with the Atlantean tradition. They say that Dahhak was a prince of the Awakened city, close to the throne and restless with ambition — so restless that his dark nature took shape as a court physician. This was more than an unconscious goetic spell. Dahhak's desire was so strong it roused the Ahriman, the dark side of Pandemonium. Ahriman taught Dahhak a spell that would slay the king and leave no trace — "like pit hidden with dead leaves," says the tale. Ahriman's magic grew in Dahhak's mind as fast as the desire for power swelled in his heart, and one day, his father vanished. Dahhak was king of Atlantis at last.

Ahriman feted King Dahhak for a thousand days. The parricide's pride grew as fat as his body, and in satisfied repose, he decided to reward Ahriman with anything he wished. The Evil One asked only to kiss him once on each shoulder — a violation of the royal person according to Atlantean law, but an overpowering temptation for the vain archmage.



After each kiss, a dragon's head sprouted from one of the king's shoulders.

Dahhak's bodyguard struck Ahriman with an adamantite sword, but the blade passed right through, for his enemy was a phantom of the king's desires, not a fleshly being. Next, the guard struck off one of the dragon's heads, but another instantly grew in its place. Both tore the guard in half. The head breathed a gout of venom on the king. Dahhak would always wear the poison as a garment; scorpions came to dip their tails in the poison and crawled over his body evermore. The other head devoured the guard's brain and fell asleep. Dahhak's Supernatural senses felt the man's eternal mind dissolve within him as Ahriman told him that to relieve his curse, Dahhak must devour minds and souls. Dahhak would be immortal and untroubled as long as the dragons fed.

Hidden behind a diamond screen, Dahhak devised a campaign against the world. He would make the barbarians into slaves to feed the dragons. Sorcerer-soldiers reaped the brightest souls from the outlands and claimed most of the world. Dried blood and the pale auras of the dead decorated the king's tower. The citizens of Atlantis grew suspicious in spite of the city's conquered wealth, because the brightest magical minds vanished within Dahhak's palace, never to return.

The common people — simple sorcerer-smiths in the Awakened City — fled to find an exiled hero known to the Persians as Fereydun. Fereydun led the people to storm the city, but to no avail. Instead, he took to the palace by stealth and with weaponry and enlightened Art, bound him within the Celestial Ladder. Dahhak could not die, because once he had found the embrace of the dragons, he became the ambitions of the city itself, bound to be the source of all its power, but of its downfall as well.

Did Dahhak create the legends, or did he shape himself to suit them? The Aeon-Syzygy is powerful enough to take any form he chooses, but legends say that the Oracles appoint Aeons from the ranks of Fallen World heroes and monsters. Just as all Aeons, the Syzygy reveals nothing of its ultimate origins, so mages merely speculate based on Dahhak's character — and it's true to its mythic origins.

Dahhak holds court like a monstrous Atlantean king. He offers Auctoritas Arcanum only to mages who are willing to humiliate themselves in abasement and offer onerous gifts. Destroy valuables in Dahhak's name, sever a limb and burn it in his glory or annihilate a memory, and a supplicant might win the Auctoritas. Dahhak is partly the Aeon of Mind, so the substance of the sacrifice matters little — it just needs to be important to the mage. The lost must bring Dahhak emotional suffering. Dahhak's rule of Space manifests as an air of omniscience. Dahhak routinely discusses matters in the material realm, including visitors' deepest secrets, as if they were trivia. And he often reminds them that his imprisonment was long ago, within an edifice that was shattered by Awakened hubris. Dahhak believes that it is *his* time again — Pandemonium's time. Just as the Realm of the Iron Gauntlet, the modern world's technology destroys distance in the service of desire. Modern minds careen between discipline and indulgence. Dahhak will never have a mortal throne again, but as the spirit of an age, he feels mightier than ever.

Description: Two huge dragons dominate Dahhak's body. They look like great snakes with teeth and spines of black iron. Intertwined, they merge within the half-torn remnants of a muscular man wearing a crystal crown. The dragons often finish each other's sentences, but sometimes speak in unison to punctuate an important statement. The voices speak with precise annunciation in an aristocratic accent. Between the necks of Dahhak, the king's human head lolls idiotically, drooling and gasping. Vestigial arms twitch; one clutches a rod tipped with an Atlantean rune that means both "ambition" and "madness."

Storytelling Hints: Encountering any Aeon should be a memorable experience. It is nothing less than an audience with a god, and Dahhak is *two* gods. At the same time, the Aeons are designed to be interacted with. Dahhak is harsh, but will grant Auctoritas Arcanum to a mage who makes a reasonable sacrifice. Nevertheless, characters should only visit the Syzygy

in moments of extreme need — no more than one or twice per chronicle unless Dahhak becomes the central figure of the story. If mages run to him all the time, Dahhak will ask for greater and greater sacrifices. This isn't just a way to control chronicle appearances. Dahhak is an avatar of human evil. He represents a lust for authority common to conquerors and tyrants. Dahhak is the dark side of the Mastigos Path. Fortunately, despite his appearance and status as an Aeon, Dahhak's evil is a form *human* evil, instead of an Abyssal force that wants to destroy reality. His evil obeys patterns of human behavior. Dahhak responds well to flattery, but he never forms attachments to humans. No matter the gesture, the creature's vanity is a bottomless pit, never to be satisfied.

Just as other Aeons, Dahhak is said to be a Dweller at the Threshold who blocks unworthy mages from breaching the Abyss. The test of final enlightenment in the Iron Watchtower is said to involve dethroning him — and resisting the temptation to take his place.

Finally, there is always the rumor of a conflict between the Watchtowers, where each Supernal Realm vies for the strongest influence over the Fallen World. While some occultists believe that this conflict is a true secret war, with vast conspiracies manipulating history and reality itself, others liken it to a petty conflict between the Aeons — the squabbling of an immortal family, exiled to the edge of existence. Direct conflict appears to be forbidden, so it may be that Dahhak employs mages to further the cause of Pandemonium, sending cabals on strange missions that metaphysically strengthen his Watchtower.

Rank: 8

Other Traits: Incalculable. Dahhak will not leave his Citadel, but he can create emissaries (normally goetic demons with Space and Mind-derived Numina) at will to accompany characters. Dahhak can manifest anywhere and control minds with unlimited subtlety or force; no application of Mind or Space is closed to him, and no attempt to defend against mental or spatial manipulation stands before him. In practice, Dahhak uses his power to give the Auctoritas Arcanum to mages willing to pay the price, or curses those whose occult experiments might threaten Pandemonium's Watchtower. Little is known about the latter aside from rumors that Dahhak has erased the minds of archmages and destroyed the mortal agents of the other Aeons.

Auctoritas Arcanum

The Aeons have many powers, but the ability most relevant to mages is commonly called the Auctoritas Arcanum ("power over Arcanum"). The Aeon gives the mage a small part of its power. This manifests in one of the following ways. The Aeon chooses which.

Binding: The mage can nullify a single spell from the Aeon's Arcanum, no matter its Potency, the number of successes or the power of the casting mage.

Potency: The mage gains the 8-again quality when casting a single spell belonging to the Aeon's Arcanum.

Power: The mage gains an additional dot (including the first dot) in an Arcanum. The mage can use this increased ability on a single spell before the ability is lost. The additional dot *can* violate Path and Gnosis limits on Arcana.

Lesser Understanding: The mage gains the ability learn a rote that uses the Aeon's Arcanum as the highest-ranked component. She learns the rote at half the normal cost. The appropriate imago and occult techniques flood her mind. She does not need to have ever encountered the rote before. The mage must know all the necessary Arcana.

Greater Understanding: The mage gains the ability to learn one new dot of the Aeon's Arcanum as if it were one of her primary Arcanum, even if doing so would violate the limits of her Path.

Aeons do not (and, perhaps, cannot) pass on the Auctoritas of an Arcanum other than its own. (As two Aeons in one body, Dahhak can grant power over Mind and Space.) The Auctoritas has no duration; a mage can carry one for a lifetime, if need be. It is, however, taxing to hold part of an Aeon's power. Each Auctoritas suppresses one *dot* of the possessor's Willpower. The dot returns once the mage uses or voluntarily relinquishes the power.

Raccoon Master

Quote: *It coughs here? It hobbles here? It dies here? Then it's only more trash. Trash for me. More to eat and eat.*



Background: Most Raccoon Masters are comfortable in the Dreaming Earth and the Swath, but more and more urban Masters are losing the ability to leave the growing realm of human influence. As part of the Anima Mundi, all Animal Masters sense the fortunes of their entire species, so even wild Masters long for the Swath's garbage and population density. No matter the locale, food and mating are the creature's two chief concerns. Outside of the Swath, other Raccoon Masters live in the forested Keb realm, but have been known to travel to the mountains and water's edge.

Description: Raccoon Masters are human-sized or slightly larger. In the Dreaming Earth, Raccoon Masters have lustrous fur and lean, muscular bodies. Swath-dwelling Masters are fat, ailing things. Odd growths sprout from their necks and lips. Their teeth are yellow.

Storytelling Hints: Raccoon Masters make skilled guides. They're not fond of hunting large prey but may try to "eat" a traveler who looks weak or injured, and might separate a member of a group who looks like fair pickings. As expert foragers, Raccoon Masters can help mages find particular places and objects in

the realm. Some Raccoon Masters also know how to quickly travel from the Swath to the Dreaming Earth and back.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 4, Finesse 6, Resistance 5

Willpower: 10

Essence: 20 (20 max)

Initiative: 11

Defense: 6

Speed: 18

Size: 5

Corpus: 10

Influence: Raccoons 3

Numina: Innocuous, Grant Influence (see sidebar), Wilds Sense (applies to the Anima Mundi and Swath)

Grant Influence

This Numen is common to all Animal Masters and Naturae. It represents the ability to grant others their "Platonic" or "morphogenic" template. Mages whose souls acquire the template can alter it through visualization. Granted, few mages quest the subtle realms to master the Platonic template of all raccoons, but control over Toronto's ecosystem (see Wonscotanach, p. 112) might be a more tempting prize.

To Grant Influence, roll the spirit's Power + Finesse. Each success grants one dot of Influence or one use of the Influence. Divide successes between the number of uses and the level of Influence granted. The spirit chooses the balance as well as the maximum power and number of uses the spirit grants. Spirits can grant up to one Rank of Influence less than they possess. Once granted, the Influence can be used anywhere its subject or domain exists, and the potential to use the Influence lasts until the possessor uses or consciously relinquishes it. This power costs the spirit one point of Essence per Influence Rank granted, plus one per use. Targets can benefit from the influence of this Numen only once at any given time.

Salamander

Quote: *Fire is the fear that all creatures flee from except for men and women. They see the torch and hammer, flowing copper and beaten iron. They see the*

shaping power of their gods in mortal hands. But even gods must burn.

Background: A salamander is an Elemental Archetype. They are normally found on the Dreaming Earth in the hottest precincts of Shu, but it is sometimes possible to find them in Keb during a forest fire. Salamanders arise only within the hottest heart of the blaze. It is even more rare, but not unheard of, for a salamander to dwell in the dreams of a smith, alchemist, artist or an occultist who respects the power of fire. This happens only when the dreamers' visions of fire are so powerful that they resonate with the primordial astral flame itself.

A salamander is something of a chieftain among Elemental Archetypes, for it is a specific dream of fire that has transcended natural heat and lightning and inspires the imaginations of mortals. This gives a salamander an uncommonly humanlike intelligence and the ability to range beyond the Dreaming Earth, into the souls of artisans and mystics. Salamanders once freely roamed the Swath as well, but they are not as common as they used to be. Humanity brought fire across, but in modern times often dislikes free, open flame — and dreams of fire must be free, or else they are nothing more than a jet of heat within some dull human apparatus.

Description: A classic salamander looks like a giant lizard with stripes colored like yellow fire. A salamander has six legs, and its tail undulates like a flame. A salamander is surrounded with an aura of roaring fire, but a salamander can choose exactly what the flame burns. The fire is actually an extension of its skin (or its skin is congealed flame); ribbons of flesh gradually change into leaping licks and sparks.

Salamanders usually speak by manipulating fire to crackle in patterns resembling human words.

Storytelling Hints: Salamanders have the basic urges of all Fire Archetypes. Fire always moves and seeks to transform everything it touches. These are the facts of fire's chemistry, given spiritual and emotional form by the Anima Mundi. Fire leaves creative power in its wake, but always with a price, because fire gives humans the power to create by destroying something and harnessing the resulting transformation, be it wood to ash or solid metal to liquid. Salamanders are sophisticated Elemental Archetypes, capable of bargaining with those who seek the salamanders' powers intelligently. A salamander is fire, so a salamander wishes to burn as much as it can.

Rank: 3



Attributes: Power 7, Finesse 7, Resistance 7

Willpower: 14

Essence: 20 (20 max)

Initiative: 14

Defense: 7

Speed: 24

Size: 8

Corpus: 15

Influence: Fire 4

Numina: Blast, Reaching (allows a salamander to reach into the Material Realm near anyone holding the salamander in their dreams), Platonic Element (Fire)

Typhonide

Quote: (a slithering, grinding, clicking noise, and the crackling of flame)

Background: Typhonides are monsters that exist to undo the dreams of mortals. The Syzygy of Stygia created Typhonides, but nobody knows whether the Syzygy's actions are the result of Typhon or Echidna's decree, a plot of the Exarchs or some subtle cosmic

Platonic Element

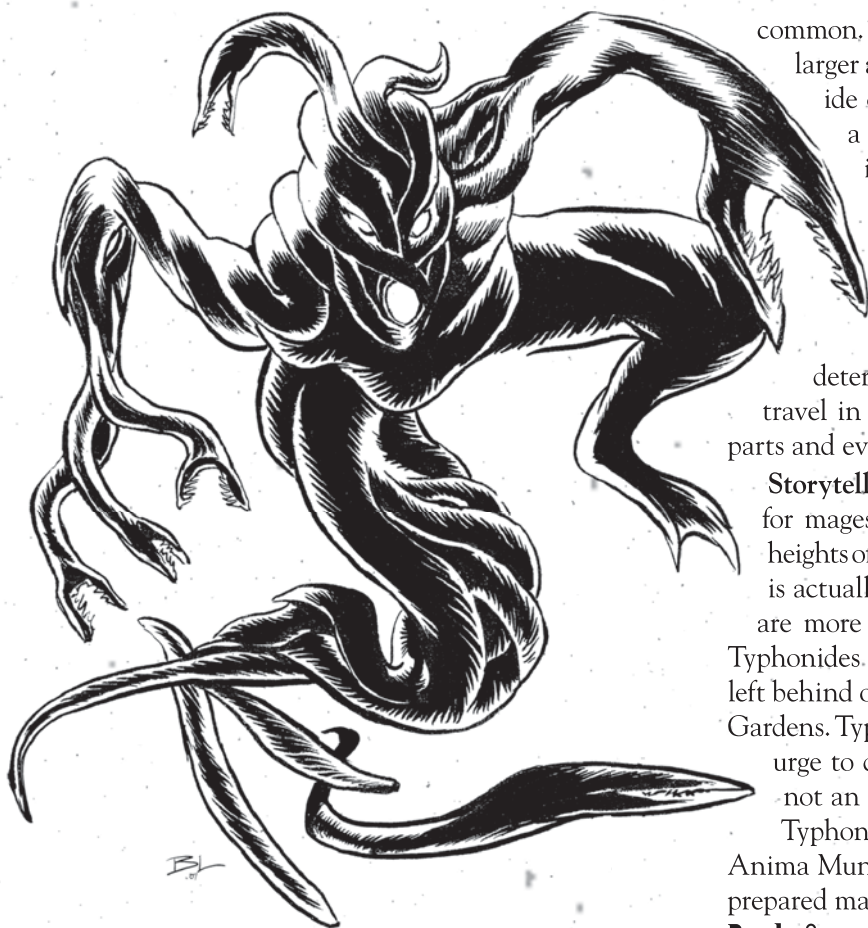
Platonic Element is a Numen that is of little consequence in Astral Space, but is incredibly important to mages. A spirit with this Numen can conjure the so-called Platonic form of an element. Once someone uses the element to create an object (as a part of the object or its manufacture), the result is a Platonic exemplar: something close to the ideal form of the thing. Mages can relinquish a spell into a Platonic exemplar for just five points of Mana. See **Tome of the Mysteries**, pp. 132–133 for more information about Platonic exemplars.

In the case of a salamander, Platonic Fire is usually used to forge metal objects such as swords and cauldrons. The salamander enters a mage's dreams in exchange for Mana and burnt offerings. The salamander uses its Reaching Numen to create the fire in the salamander's patron's forge. (Of course, the salamander can Blast the area instead, if the salamander wishes.)

To use this Numen, roll Power + Finesse and spend five points of the spirit's Essence. The number of successes determines the maximum size of the Platonic exemplar that can be created with the element. The mage can keep the element in storage, but in cases such as fire, she must continuously maintain its initial state by keeping the forge burning and so on.

law expressing itself. Mages with an interest in Norse mythology call Typhonides *nidhoggr* after the dragon that gnaws on the World Tree. To some, the Spire Perilous takes the form of this tree; other mages see it as a mountain or ziggurat and give Typhonides other names, but the monsters do not change to fit mythological whims. The Aeons feel no antipathy for those who destroy their children, and Typhonides themselves do not appear to be motivated by anything except for the urge to destroy the Spire — especially areas that appear to have been influenced by mages.

Mages often encounter the handiwork of Typhonides when climbing the Spire, but the actual creatures are not as common. They cluster at the roots of the Spire, tearing at its substance with burning jaws. They eat their way up and down it, leaving tears, punctures and



gaps in its medium. Sometimes they don't even need to directly cause any damage. It appears that a tear in a critical spot can wither or crumble the Spire in a larger area, as if the monster destroyed some kind of spiritual "vein" or "nerve" vital to the region's existence. These dead zones crumble away or turn into liquid dream-offal at unexpected moments. Mages' astral bodies can easily fall and sink. Typhonides sometimes get stuck or lost in these empty zones and make for a dangerous chance encounter, but this is less of a hazard than a full column of the creatures. Typhonides leave their abscess-nests in the base of the Spire Perilous to go on destructive forays, when they behave much as army ants. Mages in the vicinity might be attacked, but they're secondary targets compared to Ancestor Gardens and Atlantean remnants. Typhonides do not communicate, but they've been known to act with telling intelligence, even following mages in search of some hidden target.

Description: No two Typhonides are exactly the same, but most obey a common body plan. They appear to be clusters of eyeless snakes with a gem-like or metallic sheen. Blackened bronze, silver and opal are

common. The clusters weave and strap together into larger appendages and forms, so that a Typhonide can shift between a rough human form, a spider-like collection of snakes bound into limbs or a huge, slithering worm. A flickering glow like a flame emanates from the fanged mouths of each snake and from between the clusters, like a fire in the unseen center of the monster.

The number and size of the "snakes" determine a Typhonide's full size. Typhonides travel in swarms. They routinely exchange body parts and even combine into behemoths.

Storytelling Hints: Typhonides are simple hazards for mages using the Spire Perilous to reach the heights of the Anima Mundi. When the destination is actually part of the Spire Perilous, Typhonides are more of a threat. Mages often have to fend Typhonides off to recover anything the Atlanteans left behind or to consult the inhabitants of Ancestor Gardens. Typhonides never behave with malice. Their urge to destroy the Spire Perilous is an instinct, not an intellectual goal. Storytellers should use Typhonides to emphasize how dangerous the Anima Mundi can be, but not to punish reasonably prepared mages walking the astral realms.

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 9, Finesse 6, Resistance 8

Willpower: 17

Essence: 20 (20 max)

Initiative: 14

Defense: 9

Speed: 23

Size: 5-20

Corpus: 13-28

Influence: Destroy Spire Perilous 5

Numina: Destroy Ephemera (as the rote; see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 138), Discorporate (special; the discorporated Typhonide can add its Size to another nearby Typhonide)

Wonscotanach, Naturae Torontensis

Quote: Steel and wires pierce me; concrete binds me. All built by your people.

Background: The Don River Valley prefers the Anishnaabe name *Wonscotanach* ("black burnt lands"). While its brother Humber River endured 10,000 years of human settlement, *Wonscotanach* enjoyed silence, wrapping thick trees around it that would dry, spark

and burn when lightning came to kiss the valley in late summer. The ash left the soil dark and rich. New greenery always pushed up again.

Wonscotanach enjoyed the private rhythms of its existence until the 19th century, when British settlers took axes and machines to its body. The Natura had given little regard to previous settlers before. Humans mostly pestered the Humber and seemed pleased to cull themselves as they had always done. If the Don Valley had been a person, it might have chuckled when the Americans burned nearby York in 1813. But less than half a century later, the colony's growth into a city resumed. York blossomed into Toronto, and its inhabitants straightened a portion of the Don River to suit their homes and factories. The Don River choked with logs cut from Wonscotanach's own flesh. The river's fish died, and the haze of the Swath rose up all around.

Most of the 20th century was a fragmented, fevered time. Humans polluted the river, paved over it and left

Wonscotanach a steel girt mass of poisoned water, dead grass and corrupt soil. Humans turned the tide only after 1980, when they started to close the factories and clean the river. Now, the Natura has returned to a state a few mages have characterized as "half alive." In fact, Wonscotanach suffers because part of its Essence is contained within the Swath, under the city of Toronto's pavement and tunnels.

Appearance: Wonscotanach's blood is the Don River's fresh water. Wonscotanach's body is built from grass, maple trees and birch bark. Vines and long grass are its hair and beard, and it's crowned with broken deer antlers — memories of a species long vanished from its ecology. Raccoons, rats, ants and spiders crawl between the fibers. Artificial-looking punctures and gashes decorate Wonscotanach like huge tribal scars. Some look like the footprints of building basements. Others look like roads and trails.

Storytelling Hints: Wonscotanach is typical of the Naturae around many North American cities. If it was the spirit of the rural or wilderness ecology, Wonscotanach would be stronger, but human intervention put part of the Natura under the dominion of the Swath. The Natura feels sick and divided but can't heal itself. Mages who find some way to better restore the Natura's material ecology might be able to claim the spirit's Influence (using the Grant Influence Numen) for a time.

Rank: 4

Attributes: Power 11, Finesse 9, Resistance 6

Willpower: 17

Essence: 25 (25 max)

Initiative: 16

Defense: 11

Speed: 30

Size: 15

Corpus: 21

Influence: Ecology (Toronto) 5

Numina: Blast, Grant Influence, Wilds Sense



ITEMS

Astral-affecting Items

Archetype Altar (Imbued Item ●●●●●)

Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 3

This device allows the owner to summon archetypes from Astral Space. In form, this item always consists of three equal-sized rectangles of metal placed side by side and hinged so that they can fold flat or unfold in a fashion that allows them to form three walls of a small space. The metal panels are always engraved with complex abstract designs, and their edges are often elaborately carved or scalloped. These items are made by mages, but the details of their manufacture requires specific instruction by one of the few mages who understands how to create them, or temporary possession by an astral archetype of at least a Rank 4, who is willing to teach this process to the mage. After this teaching or possession, a Mage with Mind 4, Prime 3 and Spirit 2 can create this item. To use this item to summon a specific archetype, the user must decorate the altar with drawings, photographs or other images associated with that particular archetype. For example, if attempting to summon the teenage rebel, images of James Dean, young Marlin Brando and similar images would be useful. Depending upon the particular images and the archetype in question, these images provide an Acquainted, Known or possibly even an Intimate sympathetic connection with the archetype. The owner can then summon this archetype by spending one point of Mana and making a Gnosis + Mind 4 roll.

In addition to summoning this archetype, the mage can use the altar to charge items that allow the archetype to possess individuals. To do this, the mage must roll to summon the archetype, after placing a necklace, bracelet, ring or some other ornament designed to encircle a portion of the wearer's body in the center of the altar. Once she has successfully summoned the archetype, the mage spends one point of Mana to temporarily empower the piece of jewelry. The number of successes on the summoning roll indicates the length of time that the item remains charged. Use the advanced prolongation table for determining this Duration. Most mages inscribe the piece of jewelry with Atlantean runes to further increase this duration.

Anytime during this Duration that someone puts on this piece of jewelry, the archetype may attempt to possess this person, and wearing the item adds +3 to any attempts by this archetype to possess this individual. This item does not force the archetype to attempt to possess this individual; the item merely gives the archetype a chance to do so. However, archetypes always refuse to possess individuals who are not in some way suitable to their archetypes' nature. Characters who wish to make certain that the archetype possesses a specific individual must first make a deal with the archetype. However, many archetypes are eager to possess any suitable individual in the Fallen World and so require little or no persuasion to do so.

Astrally Stabilized Items (Enhanced Item ●)

Normally, astral travelers can only bring along Artifacts and imbued items on their astral journeys. To obtain other equipment, characters must either accept the wardrobe and gear their subconscious assumes to be their typical outerwear or they can use Matter or Prime magics to create various temporary items. However, character can also obtain items that have been specifically designed to also exist in Astral Space. As an added bonus, unlike clothing and similar items provided by their subconscious, these items do not shift and change in response to fit the aesthetics and expectations of the realm they are currently in. Instead, these items are as difficult to affect as their owner and any attempts by someone other than the owner to change them receives the owner's Resolve + Gnosis as a penalty to the roll. Also, as long as the item is attuned to a mage, it appears with her in Astral Space, even if it is not near her when she enters Astral Space. In this fashion, the character can bring along large objects such as cars or boat without needing to have them nearby.

These items can be purchased from other mages, or a character can create them herself. Creating such an item is a relatively simple manner. The character must take the item to a Hallow, inscribe the rune for dreams on it in High Speech and then use the Prime 3 spell "Imbue Mana" to place one point of Mana in the item. Because of the special power of the rune and the Hallow, this spell can place this Mana in an item. However, the caster can only place a single point of

Mana in the item, and the Mana is absorbed by the item, reinforcing its astral existence. As a result, the mage cannot use Prime 3 spell “Channel Mana” to recover this Mana for later use.

The mage can enchant any item up to size 20 in this fashion. Larger objects cannot be brought into Astral Space. Also, only the astral image of the item is taken into Astral Space. Destroying the astral version of an item has no affect on the actual item, and pictures taken with an astral camera and astral film have no reality in the Fallen World. Items destroyed in Astral Space not only remain intact in the Fallen World, but their astral versions are whole and undamaged the next time the owner enters Astral Space. If the mage wishes to give this item to someone else, the new owner must take the item to a Hallow and spend a one of Mana while touching the dream rune scribed on the object.

Book of Dreams (Imbued Item ●●●●)

Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2

One of the difficulties of astral travel is that it is essentially a journey into dreams. The characters can use only their memories to record text and images they find in these realms. This item solves that problem. Made in the form of a book, or occasionally now as a cell phone with a voice recorder and a camera, this item works in such a way that if the character enters the astral realm touching or holding this item in the Fallen World, information recorded in the astral form of this item remains within the physical object when the character awakens. Whether the item is made in the form of a book or some other item, the owner need only open the book or turn on the device and tell it to record any text or speech the character hears, writes or says. Also, the character can open the book and look at a location, and the image will appear in both the astral and the real book, just as pictures taken with an astral camera phone will remain in the memory of the real device.

Back in the Fallen World, any images, text or sound recordings can be photocopied, copied onto other electronic media and otherwise be treated as completely real and ordinary recordings. If desired, when in Astral Space, the character can copy the entire contents of an astral book into her Books of Dreams simply by laying a page of the Book of Dreams over a page of the astral book or by photographing each page of an astral book. Regardless of its form, the Book of Dreams always has sufficient space within it to hold whatever the character wishes to record during a single

astral journey. However, after the owner has left Astral Space and returned later, the Book of Dreams records over existing information, and so the user will need to copy off the data in some fashion before taking another astral journey. This item functions using a variant of the Space 2 spell “Srying.”

The Doorway Beyond (Artifact ●●●●●●●●)

Durability 4, Size 5, Structure 9

Mana Capacity: 14

This item offers the owner the ability to open paths to any of the accessible realms beyond the Fallen World — Twilight, the Shadow Realm, the Underworld and the astral realm — duplicating the Death 3 spell “Ghost Gate” and the Spirit 4 spell “Spirit Road,” cast as a prolonged spell. This item also provides a substitute for the Hallow and the extended meditation rolls needed to enter the astral realm. This item cannot be duplicated by the powers of Atlantean Magic. However, spirits and archetypes of level 5 and higher sometimes give these items to mages who perform impressive services for them. In all cases, the Artifact simply appears in the mage’s sanctum or home. Because The Doorway Beyond can be obtained as a gift or as payment for a service, several examples of this powerful Artifact now exist in the Fallen World.

This Artifact is always made in the form of a doorway without a door. The Artifact can appear in the form of everything from curved metal archway to an architectural feature that looks like a doorway in a wall where the builder forgot to cut an actual door. When the Artifact is activated by a roll of the user’s Gnosis + 4 and the expenditure of a point of Mana, the owner can open a gateway to any one of these four realms — the user must decide which realm she wishes to open a doorway into when she makes the roll. This gateway remains open for a prolonged Duration. However, even once the gateway has closed, in Twilight and the Astral and Shadow Realms, everyone who passed through the gateway possesses a rough sense of its location, and the person who last opened the gateway can make another roll and spend another point of Mana to re-open the gateway from the other side. No one else on the other side can open this doorway.

When the gateway is used to enter the astral realm, the owner activates the item and everyone who wishes to use this gateway must make a single successful meditation roll while in the same room as and within

10 feet of this Artifact. Then, all images who succeed in making the meditation roll can send their astral bodies through the gateway and into Astral Space. Sleepers who are nearby can also enter Astral Space if they succeed on their meditation rolls. Returning from Astral Space is handled normally. This item allows characters to physically enter the Underworld, Twilight and the Shadow Realm, but allows characters to send only their astral bodies into Astral Space.

In addition to allowing characters to enter any of these realms, The Doorway Beyond also allows the owner to choose where the doorway leads. The owner can open the gateway anywhere in any of these realms by casting versions of "Ghost Gate" and "Spirit Road" as sympathetic spells and by using the Space 2 spell "Scrying" to search Astral Space for where the owner wishes to open the doorway. When attempting to open a gateway to a distant location in one of these realms, the user must subtract any penalty for the degree of sympathetic connection from the Gnosis + 4 roll.

Chimerical Items

Many mages dream — literally or metaphorically — of bringing treasures from Astral Space back to the Fallen World. Mages see relics of great power, machines never invented by humans and icons embodying abstract concepts, and imagine what could be done with such items if they were real. Sleepers, too, dream these dreams — they grasp wealth, hope or the Holy Grail at night, and they wake up in the morning with empty hands.

To bring an item back from Astral Space is an exceptional thing, and can only be accomplished through exceptional means. Such items are generally referred to as "chimerical" and are usually recovered in one of three ways: inspired creation, manifestation or conjuration.

Of course, the world is a mysterious place, and other means of recovering chimerical items may exist. In particular, it's hard for mages to dismiss stories where people wake up and find that they really *do* clutch an item that they touched in dreams. Perhaps it's just a Sleeper fantasy, or perhaps it's something more.

Inspired Creation

After encountering an item in Astral Space — whether accidentally or as part of a great quest — a person may be inspired to try to re-create that

Astral Artifacts

By definition, an Artifact is an object directly connected to (and most often originating in) the Supernal Realms — not one tied to Astral Space. When it comes to chimerical items, however, Storytellers may wish to mix and match some of the rules of Artifacts and imbued items. In particular, chimerical items may have a higher Durability than normal, grant a degree of Status to their owners and even allow mages to use their Mana pools to power their own spells — just as Artifacts do.

So although chimerical items may not be tied to the Supernal Realms, these items are still connected to something beyond the Fallen World and qualify as something special. It's the degree of this connection that determines whether a chimerical item is considered an Artifact, an imbued or enhanced item, or just an ordinary object with a strange and mysterious story.

archetypal item in the real world. This is particularly true of items with a simple application: swords, staffs, books and sculptures are common examples.

Most often, the inspired individual slaves away for weeks, months or years, sometimes visiting the dream of the object repeatedly and other times working from a single, half-remembered vision. Mages may act knowingly, understanding why they do what they do (even without understanding the mechanics of the craft). Sleepers may become obsessed or half-mad as they produce work far beyond their own natural skills. At last, when the crafting is complete, the need to create drains away.

Such inspired creations frequently have no magical significance. They are works of art or invention that, however incredible in their own right, have no greater relevance to mages. At best, such creations qualify as enhanced items. At other times, these creations possess a clear mystical quality. Mages and Sleepers can craft imbued items and Artifacts in this way without the need for spells. A chimerical item's Mana must still come from an outside source, but Sleepers often find that their dreams show them the way to a Hallow before they begin the real work.

Not every act of creation is literal. Sometimes, a person re-creates an astral object by re-creating the imagery that surrounds the object. Consider a ham-

mer that, in dreams, kills frost giants and channels lightning; such a hammer could be re-created by a mechanic who uses a crowbar as a lightning rod and wields it in a fight against gangsters on a winter night. Often, the elements of a mystery play factor into the creation of an inspired chimerical item, and this should be no surprise — although mystery plays occur as part of an Awakening, they are as tied to Astral Space as they are to the Supernal Realms.

The astral objects that inspire mortals are almost always found in the Temenos, and some have been re-created in the Fallen World again and again over generations. Each generation of dreamers returns to the same archetypes, and each attempts to bring the same objects to life. When the material objects are destroyed or lose their meaning, they are made anew — while their inspirational archetypes are eternal.

Manifestation

Not all astral objects can be reconstructed in the Fallen World. There are items of such power and symbolic weight that they can exist only in the realm of thought and dreams — items of archetypal purity and ineffable nature. But although these items can never be carried to the mortal realm, their shadows can manifest briefly with the help of powerful magic.

In much the same way goetic mages manifest their inner demons, certain mages have learned how to manifest chimerical items. Such an item appears to be simultaneously in Astral Space and the Fallen World, but in fact, the Fallen World manifestation is a sort of illusion. It's the astral archetype given material form, matter attempting to reflect a higher truth. Such a chimerical item is typically an object of great power — the keystone to a whole realm, the thunderbolts of an astral god or the symbolic representation of a powerful concept such as love, healing or death.

Conjuration

Truly powerful mages take manifestation a step further. Instead of summoning the shadow of an astral object in the Fallen World, they tear away a piece of Astral Space itself and give it physical form. They sacrifice the ideal in the name of materiality, and cannibalize the subtle soul for gross resources. Some mages compare the conjuration of a chimerical item to the creation of a soul stone. Needless to say, this is powerful and dangerous magic — but the chimerical items such magic creates are potentially unequaled.

Chimerical Manifestation (Matter + Mind; optional Prime ...)

The mage manifests an object from Astral Space in the real world, giving the object form and power.

Practice: Making

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana

The mage must focus on a particular object in Astral Space; his sympathetic connection to the object modifies the casting roll. (Consider any object the mage has encountered in his own Oneiros — including objects brought from other realms of Astral Space — to be intimately connected to him.) When the object manifests, it appears identical to the astral object in every way.

If the object qualifies as an imbued item or an Artifact, the mage must also have Prime 4 and supply Mana for the object's Mana pool. However, the mage does not need to be capable of casting any spells the item may contain.

As with the consequences of any alteration to Astral Space, the consequences of removing a chimerical item from the astral landscape are ultimately unknown. There are those who believe that such an act would cause the item to become unique in the physical world — that by removing the archetypal book from the Temenos, human beings would find themselves unable to write new books over the coming years, decades or centuries. Without templates in dreams, the theory suggests, nothing new can be made. This is a worst-case scenario, but nonetheless, many mages tread cautiously when it comes to vandalizing the collective unconscious.

In addition to natural magical properties, conjured chimerical items also maintain a special link to Astral Space — by focusing on such an item, a mage can travel to its home realm relatively easily. Any mage can meditate on a chimerical item and enter its native plane in Astral Space, even outside a

Chimerical Conjunction (Matter + Mind + Spirit)

The mage tears an object from Astral Space into the Fallen World.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Extended

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana

This spell functions similarly to "Chimerical Manifestation," but the effect is permanent. The spell's target number is equal to the chimerical item's imbued item or Artifact rating (minimum 3).

Casting this spell is an act of hubris, requiring a mage with a Wisdom higher than four dots to make a degeneration roll.

Demesne or Hallow; in addition, reduce the normal number of successes required on the extended Wits + Composure roll by the chimerical item's imbued item or Artifact rating.

Chimerical Items and the Oneiros

Most chimerical items described in this chapter — along with most chimerical items likely to be found in a chronicle — originate in the Temenos. The Temenos houses the majority of the great archetypal treasures, along with the majority of astral objects crafted by mages. In the Dreamtime, very few "crafted" items exist at all, and claiming chimerical items from its realms is a fairly unusual occurrence.

Items appear in Oneiroi, too — memories of real items, fantasies, subconscious symbols and more. There's nothing that prevents a mage from trying to bring these items back into the Fallen World, and although it's rare that such a chimerical item possesses magic — few imbued items or Artifacts are found in Oneiroi — these objects have uses of their own.

A chimerical object taken from a person's Oneiros is intimately linked to that individual. The object can be used to create a sympathetic connection to that person, or to take advantage of that person's vulnerabilities; depending on the exact nature of the

object and the person involved, an individual may suffer a penalty on all rolls of one to three dice when confronting an opponent wielding a manifestation of his psyche. (This is similar to the effect of a bane on a character possessing the Destiny Merit.)

A chimerical item from one's own Oneiros can also prove useful. If a mage draws an object from his mind, he can sacrifice one *dot* of Willpower to give the chimerical item Willpower of its own equal to the mage's (newly adjusted) Willpower score. From that point forward, the mage can spend the Willpower invested in the object instead of his own. Once that Willpower is depleted, however, the chimerical item fades away forever.

Astral Treasures

What follows are examples of items that originate in Astral Space. Some are chimerical items that can be found in the Fallen World, while others exist purely in the Inner Realms.

Astral Bubble (Artifact ●●●●●●)

One of the most terrifying astral artifacts is the Astral Bubble. Existing only in Astral Space, this Artifact can only be acquired from an astral archetype of at least Rank 5, but the only way to acquire one is to do a significant favor for one of these potent beings. Astral Bubbles always takes the form of transparent sphere about the size of a plum that looks much like small but heavy glass Christmas ornaments. To use this item, the owner must spend a point of Mana and physically throw the bubble at the target, who cannot be a native of Astral Space. This Artifact can be used on spirits and ghosts as well as on the astral bodies of mortal visitors. If this Artifact strikes the target, the target is allowed a single Composure + Wits + Gnosis or Finesse + Resistance roll. If the subject rolls five or more successes, the Astral Bubble bounces off them and reappears instantly in its owner's hand. If the subject rolls fewer success, the bubble slides seamlessly and painlessly inside the target, coming to rest in the center of the target's body. The bubble causes no discomfort and has no affect on the target until she attempts to leave Astral Space. Any human, spirit or ghost that has been affected by an Astral Bubble cannot leave Astral Space by any means. As a result, mages and other living humans in Astral Space who have been struck by one of these items cannot wake up — their bodies remain in a coma until they are



released or someone uses a spirit or other being to possess their bodies. The subject can act normally in Astral Space, but cannot leave.

The only ways to remove this bubble and leave Astral Space are for the target to obtain the aid of an archetype of Rank 5 or higher. Such beings can easily remove the bubble, and may be convinced to give it to subject. Alternately, the subject can convince the bubble's owner to remove it. In both cases, doing so requires that the archetype or owner touch the subject and roll a single success on a Composure + Wits (or Power + Finesse) roll. If this roll succeeds, the bubble appears in the being's hand, and the subject is free to leave Astral Space normally. Although Astral Bubbles exist only in Astral Space, unless in use, they automatically return to the owner's Oneiros, where the owner can automatically retrieve the bubble if she travels through her Oneiros on the way to the deeper portions of Astral Space. If the owner travels into an Astral Space without first going through her Oneiros, she can call the Astral Bubble into her hand by making an extended meditation roll with a target number equal to the difference between the

meditation target number for her Oneiros (12) and the target number of the plane of dreams she currently occupies. The owner can make one roll per turn on this task. Becoming the owner of one of these items involves first acquiring it, and then making a successful meditation roll and spending a point of Mana and a point of Willpower. If someone wrests an Astral Bubble from the grip of the bubble's owner, the new owner can gain control of it by making a contested meditation roll and spending a point of Willpower and a point of Mana. The owner must also make this roll but need not spend either Willpower or Mana. If the prospective thief succeeds, he is the Astral Bubble's new owner. If he fails, he is automatically affected by the bubble, without the need for the current owner to spend a point of Mana.

Astral Crystal (Artifact ●●●●)

Durability 3, Size 1, Structure 4

Mana Capacity: 11

These rare items are only found in the Fallen World, and some mages who have investigated Astral Crystals claim that they are in some fashion crystallized fragments of the fabric of Astral Space. All such items appear to be fist-sized irregular lumps of polished glass that are as transparent as ordinary window glass. Matter magics reveal that these items are made of a completely unknown and unnatural material. These items can be used in two ways. A mage can use an Astral Crystal to scry into the astral realm just as if she were scrying any other location. This process is identical to performing the Space 2 "Scrying" spell, except that the mage need not know the Space Arcanum and the location scryed upon is always in Astral Space. If the mage is attempting to scry an astral version of a person or location, then the people or locations in the Fallen World count as a sympathetic connection to their astral counterparts. Mages can also easily use this item to view Astral Spaces the mages have previously visited. In addition, if a mage places one of these items in physical contact with someone who is traveling in Astral Space, the crystal automatically displays the sights and sounds that the astral traveler is experiencing, allowing individuals who are not traveling astrally to see and hear what the traveler does. In all cases, this device projects its images sights and sounds that can be seen and heard by everyone nearby.

The Chime of Grief (Imbued Item ●●●)

Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2

Mana Capacity: 11

A simple chimerical object conjured from the Oneiros of a mage too powerful for his own good, the Chime of Grief is a small silver bell that represented all its creator's miseries. In an attempt to free himself from his sadness, the mage tore the symbol of his grief out of his psyche and into the Fallen World. The spell worked, but it cost the mage his Wisdom and a part of his soul. The bell became a prize for any goetic sorcerer who needed proof of how chimerical items could be conjured.

When the bell rings, it activates a Mind 2 "Emotional Urging" spell that can only be used to induce misery and sadness. Spend one Mana and roll Gnosis + Mind to determine the degree of success.

The Codex of Lost Pages (Artifact ●●●●●●●●)

Durability 3, Size 1, Structure 4

Mana Capacity: 11

Books — particularly nonexistent books — share a peculiar link with Astral Space. Books that were never finished, books that were censored and books that exist only in legend can all be found in one realm or another, whether in astral libraries or in private hands.

The Codex of Lost Pages is a compilation that belongs to a realm of lost and half-imagined lore, a place that has destroyed more scholars than it ever enlightened. The Codex collects single pages that have disappeared from books in the Fallen World — a page destroyed by fire from an ancient grimoire here, a page torn out of a teenager's diary there.

Humans are often inspired to re-create the Codex of Lost Pages in the material world when they notice a page missing from a book of their own. A person who obsesses over the lost page, who attempts to locate it through whatever means possible, may begin dreaming of the Codex. She may begin writing obsessively in a language that appears to be gibberish, but gradually assemble these writings into a single great tome — the Codex itself.

In order to locate and read a lost page preserved within the Codex, a person must focus on the page's (presumed) contents and flip the tome open. Gnosis + Mind is rolled, one Mana is spent and an effect combining Mind 4, Space 2 and Time 2 effects is triggered. The roll is modified based on the reader's

sympathetic connection to the book containing the lost page.

Some speculation holds that a similar Artifact exists in digital form, archiving missing websites and dead links. So far, there have been no reliable references to such an Artifact appearing as a chimerical item.

Crystal Dream Bracelet (Artifact ●●●●●)

Durability 3, Size 1, Structure 4

Mana Capacity: 11

This item is usually found in the form of a bracelet made of smooth, polished quartz or some similar transparent stone. The item exists only within the astral realm, and wearers can use these bracelets to allow the mages to use their magic to affect the waking world. Without this item, a mage in Astral Space cannot use sympathetic magic to affect the Fallen World. However, while wearing this item, the user can cast spells on targets in the Fallen World using sympathetic magic. When a mage is casting a spell on a person or place, being in the presence of the person's astral body counts as a *Sensory* connection to the target. Similarly, being in the presence of an astral version of the person or place (such as a dream of a particular famous statue) counts as a *Known* connection to the target in the same way that a live video feed would. This rare item can sometimes be found in unusual shops or exotic ruins in the Temenos or can be acquired as a gift or payment from an astral being of Rank 5 or higher.

This item cannot be brought into the waking world. However, by spending a point of Willpower (symbolized by spilling blood in the object) and a point of Mana, the owner can store this item in her Oneiros, where she can automatically retrieve the item anytime she passes through her Oneiros. However, the item can be stolen by someone sufficiently skilled at invading dreams and anyone who takes this item and spends Willpower and Mana on the item controls it.

The Cup of Life (Artifact ●●●●●●●●●)

Durability 3, Size 1, Structure 4

Mana Capacity: 12

Many myths speak of a cup, chalice or cauldron that contains an elixir of life and rebirth. As many myths do, these take archetypal form in the Temenos, becoming the Cup of Life — a simple goblet of golden-hued wood that restores health to anyone who drinks from its waters. Tradition holds that no one can look upon the cup in the waking world more than once,

but once is often enough — a mage who dreams of the cup and who learns how to manifest it physically for even a brief while can bring about miracles.

The Cup of Life has two effects, either of which can be triggered when a person drinks from it. The first effect simulates a combined Life 3 “Banish Plague,” Life 3 “Healing Heart” and Life 5 “Regeneration” spell, effectively curing any physical ailments that plague the drinker. Roll Gnosis + Life, and spend one Mana.

The cup also possesses an apparently unique ability to restore a person’s soul. A person whose soul has been lost or destroyed may drink from the cup; Gnosis + Spirit is rolled, and regardless of success, the cup vanishes into the Temenos, never to be seen again by its beneficiary. So long as at least one success is achieved, however, the subject’s soul is restored, and a dot of Wisdom or Willpower lost due to soullessness is restored with each additional success. If the subject’s soul still exists in some form elsewhere, the soul instantly disappears.

The Cyclopean Stone (Artifact ●●●●●)

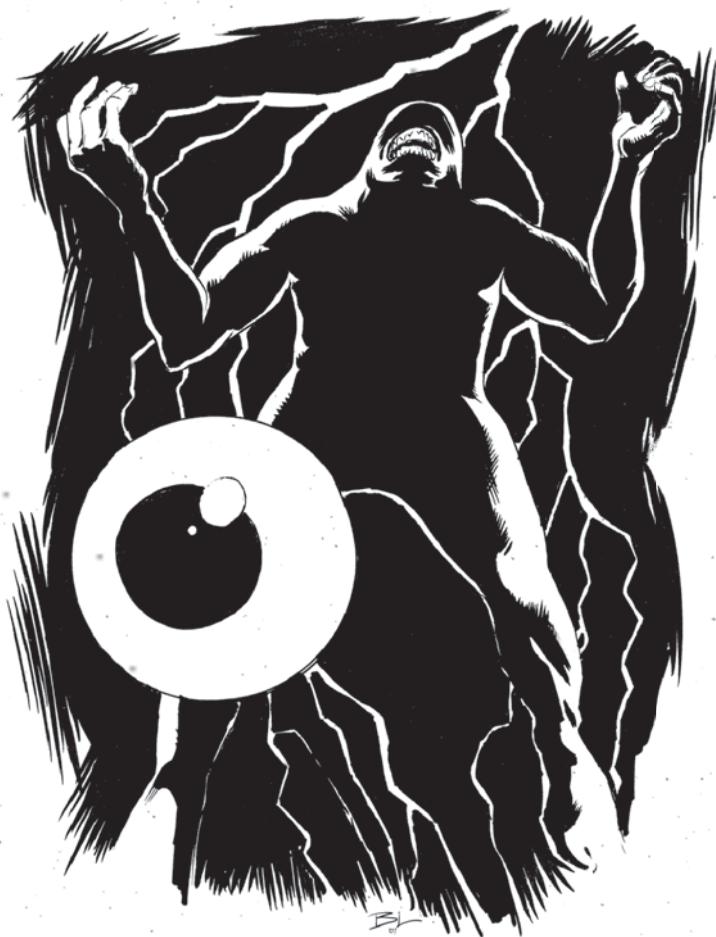
Durability 3, Size 1, Structure 4

Mana Capacity: 11

Centuries ago, a goetic mage developed a terrible rivalry with an astral being that called itself a god. The god’s power was contained in the lone eye set in the god’s forehead — a power that allowed the god to curse all those it saw and bring ruin to its enemies. In order to defeat his opponent once and for all, the mage tore the eye out of the god’s head — but fearing that even this was not enough, the mage proceeded to rip the eye from Astral Space itself and conjure the eye into the Fallen World. Since then, the eye has passed from one mage to another, and its true nature has been forgotten.

The eye — called the Cyclopean Stone by its conjurer — resembles a fist-sized sphere of stone that glitters slightly in the dark. A black spot in the center is the eye’s “pupil,” and its power (equivalent to the Fate 2 spell “Evil Eye”) is triggered merely by pointing the pupil toward a victim and concentrating. Roll Gnosis + Fate and spend one Mana to determine the results.

Carrying the Cyclopean Stone has drawbacks. A person who bears the Artifact must contend with the hatred and jealousy of the eyeless god, and can be tracked unerringly through Astral Space. Theoretically, the Cyclopean Stone would also act as a fetter if the eyeless god ever manifested in the Fallen World. Characters with the Dream Merit suffer even worse



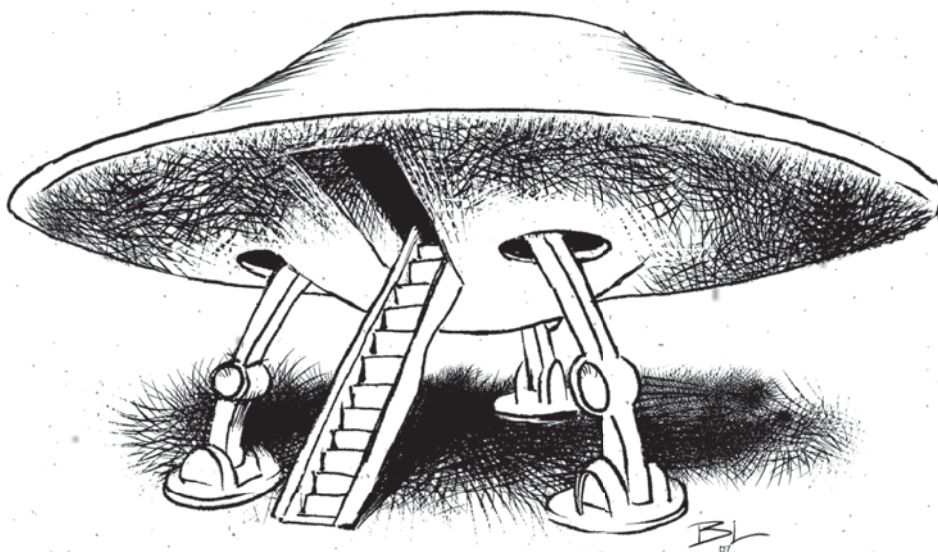
— a character who fails the Wits + Composure roll to use Dream receives dreams and visions from the eyeless astral god instead. A dramatic failure causes the character’s astral body to be drawn into the realm of the eyeless god until the dream ends, placing her at the mercy of a vengeful monster.

The Flying Saucer (Artifact ●●●●●●●●●●)

Durability 5, Size 22, Structure 27

Mana Capacity: 12

This powerful and unlikely item is one of the stranger relics found in the astral realm. Although this item can on rare occasions be found in the Oneiros, the Dreamtime or even the Shadow Realm, in the vast majority of the rare occasions the item is seen, mages encounter it in the Temenos. Most often, Flying Saucers are seen briefly flying by at high speed, but they occasionally hover mysteriously for a few minutes. On exceptionally rare occasions, mages find one that is damaged and empty, or occasionally with strange half-human inhabitants of varying appearance dead inside. If the mages find a crashed saucer, they can take



possession of it. Some mages attack or restrain Flying Saucers in an attempt to either acquire the Flying Saucer or to at least find out what manner of beings are inside. Sometimes these attacks succeed, and the mages will discover either spirits, astral denizens or occasionally other mages inside. No mages are known to have succeeded in capturing a saucer piloted by the original creators, and reports of attempts to do so indicate that the original owners are beings of significant power whose attacks can inflict permanent damage on the mage's mind or occasionally even harm their target's physical body. The most common theory is that these beings are inhabitants of one of the Supernal Realms or the Abyss, but no one has ever discovered any information about these beings or the true origin of these Artifacts. All attempts to use magic to do so automatically fail.

Regardless of the Artifact's origins, or how it is acquired, a Flying Saucer is an Artifact of considerable power. Most are between 30 and 35 feet in diameter and between 10 and 12 feet thick. The interior contains space sufficient to hold six passengers as well as the pilot. The exact details of the controls vary from one saucer to the next, but typically consist of flat, brightly colored panels that are touched to control it. The controls are relatively simple, and mages can discover their use through either trial and error or by using of the Matter 1 spell "Craftsman's Eye," if the mage also uses Forces 1 with this spell. This vehicle allows the occupants to travel at vast speed through the various Astral Spaces, moving at speeds equal to supersonic jets or futuristic spaceship in those realms where such speeds make sense. The saucer can also travel freely between different realms in the Temenos,

requiring no more than five minutes per penalty to any rolls involving connections between realms — for example, traveling between two realms that are related (a -3 dice penalty) requires only 15 minutes. Also, the pilot can even use this vessel to realms that are not connected to one another, as long as the pilot has visited or otherwise has a connection to the realm she wishes to travel to. Journeying between unconnected realms requires only one hour of travel.

This vehicle has two other capabilities. If the pilot wishes and spends one point of Mana, she can cause the vessel to physically appear in the World of Darkness. This appearance is a vulgar act, and the pilot must roll for Paradox. In addition, the ship can remain in the mortal world no longer than two minutes (which is sufficient for up to seven people to enter or leave the vessel). In addition, it can appear no more often than once every 10 minutes. If anyone on board the vessel physically leaves, the instant he leaves the saucer his body vanishes from its present location (where his body was currently in a trance) and appears to be walking out of the saucer. Characters who physically enter the saucer do not physically enter the astral realm; instead their bodies appear in their own beds (or wherever they most commonly sleep) and their astral bodies enter Astral Space inside the saucer. The pilot can cause the ship to appear at any location she has an Intimate connection to. Doing so requires a meditation roll (with a -2 dice penalty because of the sympathetic connection).

Also, if the pilot knows at least one dot of the Spirit Arcanum, she can also cause the vessel to move from the astral realm to the Shadow Realm or Twilight. This transfer also costs one point of Mana, but is not

vulgar. If the pilot desires, she can then pilot the vessel through Twilight at a speed of approximately 1,000 mph and cause the vessel to appear in any location in the mortal world she can see using the Spirit Arcanum to perceive the mortal world from Twilight or the Shadow Realm. However, all appearances in the mortal world have the previously mentioned effects. Characters who enter Twilight or the Shadow Realm in a flying saucer are psychic projections into either realm, identical to the projections produced by the Mind 5 spell "Shadow Projection."

Despite the occupants' non-physical state in Astral Space, Twilight and the Shadow Realm, the saucer allows the owner to physically travel anywhere in the Fallen World, by flying through Twilight and then briefly appearing in the Fallen World. However, one of the problems with this vessel is keeping it, since it cannot be stored in the mortal world, and if left unguarded in the Astral or Shadow Realms, the saucer is likely to be stolen by a mage, spirit or some other being. To prevent this, mages usually either pay or command a spirit or astral denizen to guard the saucer, or protect it with spells such as the Space 4 spell "Pocket Realm," the Space 5 spell "Hide Space" or the Spirit 5 spell "Spirit Manse." As a result, only the most powerful mages are likely to be able to retain possession of one of these exotic wonders.

Durability	Size	Structure	Occupants
10	20	25	1+6

Globe of Transfer (Artifact n/a)

Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 3

This astral device can be found in ancient ruins found in some of the portions of the realm of Mars that were inhabited by advanced alien creatures. Nearly identical items can also be found in sub-realms of Mars that are home to living Martians and also in various other realms that contain exceptionally powerful magic or unusual advanced technology. The Martian versions all appear as a cantaloupe-sized transparent glass sphere filled with a pale, softly glowing vapor and attached to a tall square plinth that raises the sphere between three and four feet above the floor. In all cases, these devices cannot be removed from Astral Space, or even from their current location. These devices are always connected to large and complex machinery that is too large and delicate to move.

Using the sphere is simple. The user touches it and then either touches one other person who is present or

vividly imagines another person. The user then makes a Wits + Resolve roll, with a penalty for the sympathetic connection to the target. This effect automatically fails if the target is awake. However, if the target is either also in Astral Space or simply asleep, then if the roll is successful, when the user and the target awaken in the Fallen World, they will do so in each other's bodies. As with all such transfers, both people retain all of their memories, magic and abilities as well as all of their Mental Merits. However, each individual is in the body of the other and can use it as well as they could normally use their own bodies.

This transfer is not permanent or even particularly enduring. No matter what either individual attempts to do, both people end up back in their own bodies the next time they are both asleep at the same time. In addition, even if one or both attempt to remain awake or simply do not sleep at the same time, after approximately three full days, they will both fall briefly asleep at the same time (which can be as short as a brief nap) and will awaken back in their own bodies. No one who has been transferred into another body can use this device again until after he has returned to his own body. If one of the two bodies dies, the spirit currently occupying that body almost always becomes a ghost and the body's original inhabitant also dies when she next sleeps, leaving the other body a mindless husk — however, if one body is dead, the individual in the other body can remain in this body for as long as she avoids sleeping.

Goetic Mirror (Imbued Item ●●●●●)

Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 3

Mana Capacity: 11

Travel through Astral Space can be a confounding thing, and mages have experimented with many methods of simplifying the passage from realm to realm. The Goetic Mirror is the result of one such attempt — an ornate looking glass that creates portals in its reflective surface. About the size of a large briefcase, the Goetic Mirror exists only in Astral Space; the Goetic Mirror has never possessed physical form.

To use the Goetic Mirror, a person must stand before it and focus on the image reflected within. If all goes well, the mirror then becomes a portal to whatever realm is most closely linked to the scene reflected. When the mirror reflects a human, its portal typically opens into that person's Oneiros. When the mirror reflects an astral entity, the mirror's portal opens into that entity's home realm. When the mirror reflects an

object, the mirror's portal opens into whatever realm is linked to the object.

To determine whether the portal opens successfully, roll Gnosis + Space and spend one Mana; the effect is an astral version of the Space 3 "Portal" spell. Once the portal is open, it remains in place for about a minute, during which time any number of creatures can climb through the mirror. When the portal disappears, its far end also closes — travel through the Goetic Mirror is a one-way trip.

The Mask of Ages (Imbued Item ●●●●)

Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2

An inspired chimerical item of little power and great historical importance, the Mask of Ages was the creation of a mortal sculptor. Already known for the primitive motifs used in her artwork, the sculptor one night began dreaming of an ancient culture and its great creations. She saw empty cities, deserted paths and unused workshops every night, and — although she never did find any evidence that her ancient muses had ever existed in the real world — became determined to bring what she saw to life.

Mages who have attempted to catalog the sculptor's creations have found dozens of intriguing pieces, but only one (so far) has been established as magical. The Mask of Ages is an unpainted clay ritual mask that fits over the eyes and forehead, marked with unusual patterns and geometric shapes. Anyone wearing the mask is affected by a Time 2 spell that forces the wearer to see the world as it was countless ages ago — covered by wilderness, inhabited only by the faintest traces of what would one day become human civilization — as well as the Spirit 1 "Spirit Tongue" spell; in effect, the wearer sees into the world's past and simultaneously into Twilight in the present.



Orb of Swift Dreaming (Artifact ●●●●●)

Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2

This item is one of the rare gifts that powerful archetypes in the Temenos occasionally use to reward those who have served the archetypes especially well. The Orb of Swift Dreaming can also be stolen from ancient astral treasure troves or occasionally purchased for a high price in various realms in the Temenos. Although this item is of no use to the residents of the Temenos, the various archetypes and other powerful beings also understand the item's value to mages and other mortals visiting Astral Spaces.

The details always vary from one of these items to another, but all are exquisitely made orbs that range in size from small grapefruit to large cantaloupe. These orbs are always made from precious materials. Once a character obtains one of these items, she must make it her own. To do this, she must cut herself in Astral Space and bleed onto the orb, doing one Willpower point of astral damage in the process and reducing her permanent Willpower by one dot. This dot of Willpower can be regained normally by expending experience points. The orb absorbs the blood without a trace and begins to glow faintly. When the owner next leaves the astral realm, she awakens holding this object. Anytime, the character wishes to enter the astral realm, she can spend one point of Mana to cause the orb to glow as brightly as a 60-watt light bulb.

Anyone entering Astral Space within the circle of this orb's light finds that it has energized his astral body, so that for every 12 hours the character spends in Astral Space, only one hour passes back in the Fallen World. Everyone who wishes to enter Astral Space with the owner of the orb must begin to meditate within the circle of light provided by the orb or she will not be able to enter Astral Space with the owner. The orb continues to glow until the character leaves Astral Space. Also, even if the orb is removed before the character leaves Astral Space,

the orb's effects continue for the duration of the astral journeys of everyone who entered Astral Space within its light.

The Rings of Astral Unity (Artifact)

Durability 4, Size 2, Structure 5

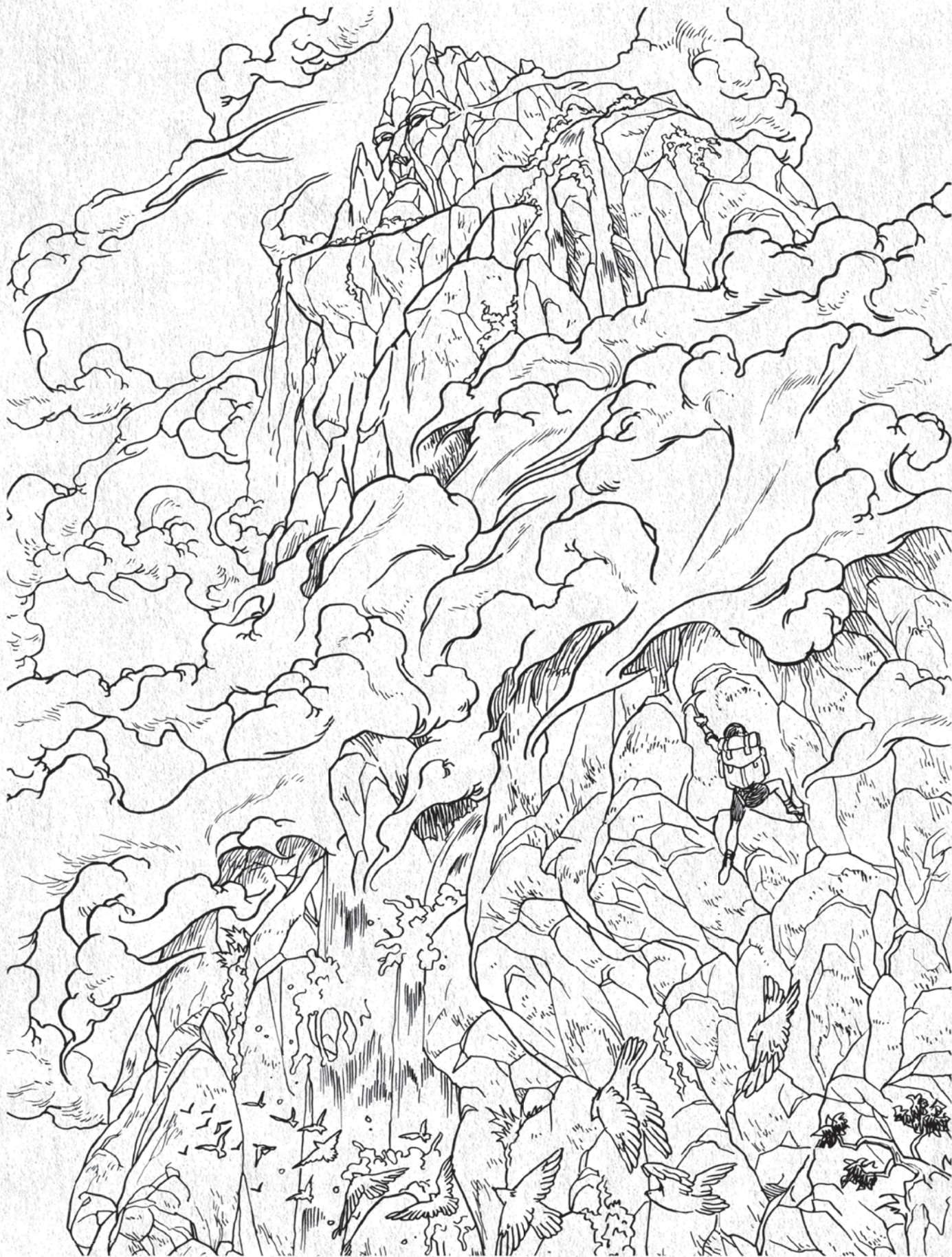
Mana Capacity: 11

This item consists of a collection of a dozen silver rings in a velvet-lined silver box. More than a dozen versions of this item exist, and the details of decoration on the box and rings are all different, but they are otherwise identical. These items are always found in the Fallen World, but some mages believe that the rings originally came from the astral realm.

Each of these rings is designed to be worn by one person; wearing more than one ring has no effect. Also, the rings are more effective when worn by multiple individuals. When only one person wears a ring, it

provides nothing besides a point of Mana from its Mana storage for the transition into the astral realm. The rings provide two additional benefits when multiple people attempting to enter Astral Space together all wear them.

Any group of people wearing these rings automatically enters Astral Space together. Instead of having to find each other at some destination, they travel together and always have a general sense of each other's location while in Astral Space. This sense serves as the equivalent of an Intimate sympathetic connection for purposes of using Space spells to observe or travel to one another while in Astral Space. In addition, the ring wearers can use the Teamwork rules (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 134) for the meditation rolls needed to enter the various levels of Astral Space. As a result, moderate-sized groups wearing these rings have a far easier time entering Astral Space and making their way to the Temenos or the Dreamtime.



CHAPTER FOUR: DREAMQUESTS

*IT HAD TO BE EASIER
TO GO BACK DOWN
THAN TO KEEP ON CLIMBING*

It was entirely possible that the climb was the most difficult thing she'd ever done. Giving birth to Jason was hard and painful, of course. Burying him had nearly destroyed her. But in neither case did she have the option to turn back. The baby had to come out one way or another, so she had to keep pushing. And when he died, there was nothing she could do to get out of dealing with it.

But this... she *could* turn back. It would be just as difficult to climb down to the knee again, and then from there down the shin until she hit solid ground (*beautiful, solid ground!*) as it was to come up, yes. But it would arguably be easier than continuing on. She hadn't even made it to the waist yet. And from there, the chest would be a hell of a climb — or maybe the arm, but that would probably be worse. If she turned back now, she wouldn't be able to talk to a god... but that was as much as most anyone could say, and nobody could fault her for it.

It had to be easier to go back down than to keep on climbing. Just knowing that was like an extra set of weights around her shoulders.

But, she told herself, if I just hold in there for a little longer, I'm going to be able to see the face soon. And at that point, everything may well change.

*Probably, Atal said, the place belonged to his especial dream world
and not to the general land of vision that many know;
and conceivably it might be on another planet.*

— H.P. Lovecraft, *The Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath*

You can find almost anything in the astral realms. This is a blessing and a curse. It's a blessing because you can tell any story there, but a curse because it's not easy to decide on any one story. Roleplaying games are defined by their restrictions as well as their possibilities. In fact, it would be better to say that restrictions create possibilities. For instance, **Mage** assumes that in the vast majority of cases, mages can't physically reach the Supernal Realms. This limit actually triggers story content because the Storyteller is free to spontaneously create Supernal artifacts and entities without dealing with the wider implications of what role they would play if a character encountered them in their native environments. It also preserves a certain mystique, because it leaves the ultimate nature of the higher world to players' imaginations. It always looms larger than anything you take the time to define with traits, names and chronicle roles.

This principle applies to astral quests. Astral realms are much more vast and complex than any book could ever comprehensively define. They contain all of the dreams and symbols in the World of Darkness. When you read this book, make a note of what we *don't* define. Look for the loose ends and implications. Combine what's written and what hasn't to define your own astral regions.

The Nature of the Astral Realms

Astral realms are designed to support some stories better than others. While dreams and archetypes can support an endless array of themes, practical considerations focus the default Storytelling style in a few important ways.

Story Considerations

First of all, astral stories are inherently episodic. That means that they best lend themselves to starting and finishing in a game session or two. This is because mages almost always leave their bodies and can't trip through their dreams for too long without coming up for food, water and other basic needs. Life magic can mitigate this somewhat, but the fact remains that mages will get everything from bedsores or filthy bodies if they're engaged in constant soul journeys. Furthermore, mages are vulnerable to attack. While their souls have not exactly left their bodies, their wills and perceptual vantage points are deep within the

The Dream Rule

The Dream Rule is the most important law of the astral realms. It's simple: *Dreams Rule*.

That means that any situation that would make sense in a dream is possible in an astral realm, even if it would violate **Mage: The Awakening's** standard rules.

The Dream Rule isn't without limits. First of all, Storytellers should only use it to support the surreal nature of astral stories. Secondly, just because something is possible in a dream doesn't mean that everyone can do it. The Dream Rule doesn't invalidate the need for magic to perform a task unless the task is extraordinarily common in that dream. The Dream Rule is also sensitive to the intended challenges of a story. For example, most people can fly in situations where the ability to fly isn't really important, because flying dreams are extraordinarily common. If flight is meant to be dangerous or impossible for normal people or characters are supposed to climb or walk across terrain, a mage needs to use magic to get into the air. Flight is significant to the conflict in the dreamscape.

The Dream Rule isn't always consistent, either. Mages and their players should be wary of assuming that just because a power worked one way in a certain situation that the power will always do so. In some cases, there are hidden forces at work, but in others, the narrative properties of the realm adapts to visitors. There are no conflicts between the story and the nature of the Astral Plane, because stories *are* its physics. Storytellers should treat the rule as a license to tell good stories, but not an excuse to belittle the characters.

other realm. This leaves the mages vulnerable to malefic magic or an enemy with a gun and no sense of fair play.

As Storyteller, you'll have to guide astral plots to a fairly quick resolution unless they specifically involve the risks of

extended travel. This doesn't mean that the story arc needs to finish up right away, but your plot should briskly make its way to at least a provisional conclusion. If that doesn't work for you, feel free to cheat! Magical items and spells can always provide the means for an extended astral epic.

The second important element has to do with the level of risk. Astral violence usually strips Willpower from the wounded. They escape by dropping out of their trance or dream state. In many cases, the worst violence can do is forcibly dump a character from the story so that he has to meditate his way back to where the action is. This changes the importance of violent conflict in an astral story. Any threat to a character's life is rare enough to be notable. Lethal astral phenomena are the stuff of legends, not an everyday hazard.

Astral conflicts are often a race against time or an endurance contest. A mage might not be able to kill her rival, but can delay him to the point where his body will deteriorate unless he gives up the quest. This might turn into a slow game of chicken, as each mage tries to outlast the other. Some mages are adept at employing astral entities and other allies to constantly harass an opponent without plunging into the depths themselves.

Aside from time and physical deterioration, other astral dangers include madness, soul loss and the strange, tender mercies of an array of malicious archetypes, dream monsters and parasites. It's hard to die in the astral, but that doesn't mean it's safe.

Types of Journeys

Astral journeys can take characters anywhere anyone's dreamed about and more. This leads the way to two basic types of journeys.

The Grand Tour

The grand tour is a voyage to multiple realms. These stories are structured to require travel. At their most basic, grand tours are a variant of the ever-popular "delivery quest," where characters show up, collect a needed item and move on to the next realm to drop the item off or trade up for the next thing they need. You can get more creative than this, of course. You might follow a fugitive mage across the realms or lead dream armies to take territory from a goetic warlord.

The advantage of a grand tour is that you can ratchet up the level of spectacle while covering a wide range of themes. Every region has its own small story to tell against the larger tapestry of your plot. You can also use this structure to give players a broader view of the Awakened world. With that knowledge in hand, they can visit astral realms on their own initiative later.

The Focused Journey

The Astral Plane contains endless dreamscapes, archetypal domains and strange reflections of the unknown. Any

one of these places can occupy an entire story — even an entire chronicle. **Mage** has used this approach before; the Temenos realms in **Boston Unveiled** are detailed locations that could stand alone as the focus of the story. Lacking an infinite page count, we couldn't do the same for every astral region. Just keep in mind that the broad view you've been given isn't a limit but a starting point.

In this story, you've taken the time to expand one corner of the Astral Plane into a fully fledged realm of its own. It can be the size of a mansion, a city or entire planet. The realm can have its own nations, heroes and myths, or it can reflect what the Material Realm might be like if history or the laws of nature were just a bit different. In these games, you might even divide the chronicle into "waking" and "sleeping" phases. Contrast mages' grim material lives with the enticements of a fantastic epic within a dream world. They might even develop alternate identities and special powers that only apply on their astral planet. Apply the Dream Rule (see p. 128) where necessary.

Personal and Archetypal Stories

Astral realms lend themselves to two basic types of stories. Personal stories mine their plots, imagery and symbolism from individual characters. Archetypal stories draw upon themes and symbols that are often thought of as "universal," though whether that's true is a matter for debate. These ideas have been fleshed out in literature and the liberal arts and represent a pool of shared knowledge — and even if there aren't any truly universal symbols, if enough people write about certain themes and images, chances are that your players will have run across them.

These two types aren't mutually exclusive. No character is an island; she'll have symbols and personal stories that reflect the broader culture. Remember, too, that throughout history, many so-called universals have really reflected only the biases of a small group — even one influential individual. In astral realms, propaganda and obsessions grow into entire worlds, where the mad impose their passions for the nature of the universe.

Personal Symbols and Stories

Let's be honest. You've read **The World of Darkness** and **Mage: The Awakening**. You've read the advice: Start with your character's overall concept, a history that precedes his Awakening. Flesh out his family, friends, hobbies and everything else that defines his basic, mundane identity. This is all good advice, but the fact is that in our urge to get the game going we'll sometimes think in terms of "a Mastigos Mind adept with three dots of Kung Fu." We don't know his middle name or where his mother lives or

anything, but we know where to put the dots and all the cool things we can do with the dice.

That's perfectly all right and, after a fashion, very practical. It helps direct the nuts and bolts end of character creation — but when it's time to make an astral story personal, these characters don't give the Storyteller much ammunition. Astral stories mark the perfect occasion to flesh out these bare-bones, faction- and game trait-focused characters. Even if you did take the time to run a character prelude and even if you *do* know what his mother's name is, you might find the following methods useful when it comes to detailing your character's motives.

The Story Worksheet

Writing workshops often exhort people to “show, not tell.” In other words, saying you feel betrayed is boring, but clenching your fists and describing how you'd take revenge is interesting. The story worksheet exists to identify these points of interest. The Storyteller uses the story worksheet to define landmarks that the characters associate with a certain type of story.

First, define the conflict. This is what your astral story is going to be about. You can start with a specific astral region in mind, but the beauty of dreams and visions is that you can easily make your own and plug it into the existing structure. The conflict is also a “universal” touchstone. That means that most conflicts can involve many different kinds of protagonists. That brings your group together.

So start your story worksheet by defining the conflict. Classic literary theory often constructs these conflicts in simple pairs of antagonists: Man versus Nature, Man versus Man, Man versus Society and so on. Start with this, or move to the next level of detail. Perhaps you want to tell an astral story about mages versus the Abyss (a possible subset of Man versus Nature).

Example: *Steve is has dropped the bait for a story in the Oneiros. He decided that he wants a subset of Man versus Himself as the theme, where the players' mages have astral doppelgängers. These are goetic demons that act out the characters' Vices and other secret urges.*

After you set the conflict, it's time to elaborate on it so you can have a proper plot. To support the sequence of events, you need to explore subsets of the basic conflict. If we define Man Versus Nature as “Climb the Spire Perilous to learn a secret from an ancient mage,” simply rolling some dice for the climb and cutting to the scene in the Ancestor Garden is pretty boring. Let's divide this into specific challenges, instead. Here are some ways to do it:

Mental, Social and Physical: Mind is powerful but not paramount in the Astral Plane. You can envision characters passing through three stages of hardship to resolve the conflict. These categories are handy because they plug right in to Storytelling System character traits.

Sentimental, Rational and Mystical: Sentimental challenges test a character's emotions in some way. Perhaps the character will be forced to choose between love and duty. Rational conflicts involve paradoxes and weighing different strategies to attain a goal. Mystical conflicts are concerned with seeing past a conflict and finding a third way, by coming to some sort of understanding about oneself or the nature of the world.

Action, Comedy and Drama: You can even use genre as a basis for your challenges. Maybe you want to start with a straight fight, followed by a humorous interlude before reaching a serious moral choice.

None of the above is an overarching model. You can combine them freely or stack them upon each other to have a Sentimental Action challenge or to follow a Social challenge with a comedic one. These are all arbitrary divisions that exist to help you map your story.

Example: *Steve decides that he wants to start out with a bit of comedy. The cabal's associates have their dreams invaded by the doppelgängers. They're long gone when the characters visit their friends' dream realms, but the hapless mages are mistaken for their doppelgängers. This might mean a slap across the face for a mage whose doppelgänger was rather forward with a romantic interest and other problems that can be played for humor. This flows into an investigation phase where the cabal tracks the doppelgängers across several realms and ends with an action scene: the inevitable confrontation. Of course, Steve needs a personal touch for each character, so with this part of the task done, it's time to get to the players.*

The Symbol Worksheet

Once you have a sense of the kind of story the group is going to play through, it's time to go to the players. Turn each part of your story worksheet into one or more questions, and try to make sure that these questions *show* you what the character associates with a particular challenge or conflict. Answers should describe images and scenarios. In fact, you can even ask questions that are pointed toward this end. Come right out and say: “What does your character visualize when she thinks of fighting the Abyss?” or “What's the worst thing your character could lose — or has already lost?”

The danger here is that you might telegraph your intentions. For some groups this isn't a problem. They're less interested in surprises than in forging a custom-made story revolving around their characters. Other players do want some level of surprise. One way to preserve the mystery is to strip away anything too specific to the story. Keep it at the level of basic conflicts and challenges. Another option is to include “decoy” questions that don't have anything to do with the scenario ahead. These decoys can actually end up being pretty useful, as you can recycle them for future stories. You can also plan ahead and give the worksheet to your players long before the story actually starts.

Example: Steve has his main conflict (Man versus Man in the form of the dream-doppelgangers) and the challenges in the conflict (a comedic challenge, an investigation and an action sequence at the end), so it's time to convert this agenda into a set of questions for the players. Steve decides that he wants images and scenarios and comes up with the following questions:

1. What specific thing would your character do if he or she could satisfy a Vice without suffering any consequences?
2. What would a "dark mirror" of your character look like? How would he or she dress? Talk?
3. What prank has your character always wanted to play on someone else?
4. Write down one thing your character has always wanted to say to someone but would be too embarrassed or afraid to actually go through with. Don't let fears of being clichéd, overblown or silly inhibit you.
5. How would your character cover his or her tracks after doing something embarrassing?
6. Describe the perfect place for your character to hide from his or her responsibilities.
7. Outline an ambush plan your character would use against someone as powerful as yourself.
8. Your character's about to fight a duel. What is he or she wearing? How is he or she armed? Imagine the first answers to come into your head and describe them.

Composing the Story

After gathering the information, it's time to flesh it out into specific scenes. Set fairly loose conditions for each scene as well as alternate versions. Take player actions into account. If you set an anticipated order of events, prepare for that to change as players skip past challenges because they're smart or lucky.

This is also the time to set astral locations for your story. Personal stories tend to work best in the Oneiros, whose realms can directly reflect an individual's dreams and desires. The Temenos is also viable if an individual's images and scenarios resonate with some universal archetype. The Anima Mundi is less amenable to anthropocentric storylines, but mages are able to stretch their souls beyond human bounds. Their desires and visions can similarly reflect some greater truth about the world. "Man versus Nature"- and "Man versus God"-style plots are appropriate here.

Once you define a general region, you can use the plasticity of the Astral Plane to custom-build a suitable realm. Each part of the Astral Plane provides its own set of rationales for doing this. In the Oneiros, you set the stage within a suitable dream that happens to include all of the props and scenery you need. In the Temenos, your stage is set within the court of a demigod. The Anima Mundi lends



Engaging the Right Brain

Chopping up a story into manageable bits is all well and good, but overuse of the approach can end up with scenarios that seem a little too pat or artificial, where characters plod from one pre-set challenge to another as the players become overly aware of the gross, narrative machinery that makes it all work. This may damage a player's ability to immerse himself in the character. You need to keep the intuitive, "right brain" elements of Storytelling intact.

One of the best ways to do this is to explore the ways in which other media can flesh out the them or conflict. In addition to asking for a description of a visual symbol or scenario, ask players to draw a picture in character or compose a piece of music (in most cases, the "composition" should really refer to an existing piece of music that you can get your hands on). Ask for media and genre references that are only fuzzily defined. This could be a web link to a picture or a pop culture phrase. Naturally, when it comes to drawing, make allowances for how comfortable a player is doodling, as well as the difference between the player's artistic skill and the character's vision.

itself to customization through Gardens of Ancestors and creations of the Aeons, as well as elemental realms and vast natural preserves.

Example: Armed with completed worksheets, Steve gets to work on developing the final plot. Three challenges naturally leads to three basic scenes, though he's not going to describe things with so much detail that he can't split up scenes to suit the pace his group wants on a particular night.

Steve dropped an earlier hint by having some of the characters' associates describe unusually vivid dreams in which one of the mages played a role. Steve ups the ante by repeating this event — but this time, one of his Storyteller characters seems unusually ill. This character also describes some symbols associated with Pandemonium's Watchtower.

If this entices the characters into an astral investigation (if not, Steve will just shelve the story for now and move to an alternate), Steve has a comedy scene ready. The stage is set within a conflux of several dreams, lashed together by the lusty doppelgänger of the cabal's Mastigos. She's always been shy and unlucky in love, so her alter ego decides to try and hook up with the dreams of people the character had an unspoken crush on. The other doppelgängers participate as well. The Obrimos who always wished he was more religious has a doppelgänger

that acts like a repressed killjoy, while the Moros who's always been shy about using his magic for personal gain has produced a counterpart who's heavy on bling and buying love. The doppelgängers are long gone by the time the characters arrive, but the weird, nightclub-like networked dreamscape remains — and it's full of everyone's offended old flames, crushes and current lovers.

If the cabal members do a little investigating, they discover that a popular bon mot or pickup line had to do with the doppelgängers attaining "apotheosis" while they bragged that they were strong enough to look beyond their creators' dreams. The Obrimos player's worksheet answers said that his character would hide from his responsibilities in a great library — one where the character could hide out with books and look for magical power without leaving the room. Steve decides on an archetypal monastery in the Temenos. The place looks like a version of Escher's *Relativity*, stuffed with stacks of books and scrolls. The other doppelgängers are there as well, but are rough with the library's keepers. They mistake the characters for the doppelgänger at first, but can be persuaded to share the fact that their counterparts were studying how to replace the cabal.

The doppelgängers can do this by imploring the Aeons of their respective Watchtowers for primary ownership of the characters' souls. The last scene is a race to the Aeons. If the doppelgängers get there first, they learn that they need to defeat the cabal and are allowed to set the battlefield within the Aeons' citadels. Steve takes their armaments and the locations from worksheet answers. If the characters get there first, then the conflict changes, as each side argues over who has the right to be the "real" characters. The imagery is then incorporated into the argument. The Aeons let these visions become reality within the microcosm of their citadels. Characters may also dream new visions, competing with their doppelgängers (and the answers they gave in the worksheet!) to prove who has the most beautiful and compelling vision of Awakening.

Archetypal Stories

Archetypes purport to strike a chord with everyone — or at least a large cultural group. Carl Jung attempted to map what he believed were universal symbols. These supposedly served as seeds for all human cultures. On a less ambitious plane, performers have invented archetypes for centuries. They create stock characters or structure a performance so that the message transcends an individual or specific situation.

There are archetypal characters and archetypal stories. You've probably heard of the "hero's journey" (or monomyth), which tries to render down the myth cycles of many cultures to a universal story. Looking beyond myth and literature, political ideologies presuppose certain truths about history and the mass of human desires. To simplify (greatly), classic Marxism believes that history is driven by the struggle between labor and capital holders for the control of labor's wealth. Capitalism tracks the evolution of markets where

Expanding the Worksheet Method

Story and symbol worksheets lend themselves to astral stories because of the subjective, mutable nature of the realms, but you can apply these worksheets to *any* story. You might want to introduce worksheets at the beginning of each chapter in the chronicle.

Aside from story inspirations, this method helps players get a better handle on their characters. Players can use the answers to detail what their characters' families, Paths and Awakenings all mean to them. Using worksheets routinely also keeps you from telegraphing your intentions. Players won't know whether you'll use the results for the Astral Plane, material world or Shadow Realm.

individuals and groups barter for the sake of self-interest. Each theory claims to be a universal statement about how events unfold, but this is never without controversy. Fortunately, the Astral Plane has room for every archetypal pretense. The Temenos contains laissez-faire capitalist and Maoist utopias. It has places where every story is a variant of Gilgamesh and Herakles, and those where commedia dell'arte or *The Golden Bough* provide the model for all events.

No matter the model, there are always hints of a true, secret structure to all dreams. Some mages say that if they understood the universal laws of the Astral Plane, they could Ascend to the Supernal Realms. Others believe that they *already* know the truth but need to convince a critical number of people to believe as they believe before the heavens will liberate them from the Lie.

The ultimate truth is up to you. You don't even need to settle on an answer. It could be that the truth is some kind of indescribable, mystical insight; those who discover it gain the power to travel between the Supernal and Fallen Worlds at will and communicate with the Oracles. Then again, the truth could be that the world is damned, and if a mage learns it in full, the Abyss claims his soul.

The Archetype Worksheet

We can use the worksheet method to sketch out archetypal stories as well, but instead of asking about characters, we ask our play group to come up with meaningful universals. Naturally, we can mix personal and archetypal methods to suit individual chronicles.

First of all, let's figure out Storyteller and player character archetypes. Start by asking a simple question: "If you could boil your character's concept down to one or two words,

what would you end up with?" In many cases, you'll already have answers for this; in which case you should refine it. Ask players to remove as much historically sensitive wording as possible. "Computer hacker" is an effective *modern* archetype, but for most astral stories, we want to get a little deeper — something earlier than industry and telecommunications, but slightly later than undifferentiated hunter-gatherer roles. That doesn't mean we exclude all consideration of anything at the extremes, but most purported archetypes lie comfortably in this historical range. "Hacker" might become "trickster" or "wise woman." You probably want to put a lid on everybody picking "wizard," as this is **Mage** and that role is kind of self-evident.

Next, ask each player to define a natural ally and nemesis in the same terms. This leaves you with three general archetypes for each character, encapsulated within a structure that includes the characters themselves. You can extend this method further. Here are some examples:

Child and Elder: How does the archetype change if the character it's based on is a child? What about an old man or woman? If the character's already elderly or a child, fill in the missing age brackets instead.

Higher and Lower Self: Ask each player to describe their characters at their noblest and at their most depraved. Spin these off into individual archetypes.

Break the Mold

Stories that rely on stock characters and plots work well enough, but they'll eventually grow stale unless you apply your creativity to the process. Character archetypes are not narrative robots; they change and grow for the sake of an original story. Maybe the trickster shows a sudden streak of honesty, or the hero *isn't* the "chosen one" — he just thinks he is.

Irony (defined as a marked difference between the literal and implied meanings in a statement or narrative) is a powerful tool you can use to tweak archetypal characters and situations. What if the hero is journeying to a conclusion where nobody needs him? Moses' journey to a promised land he could not enter himself smacks of irony, making it a device as old as Western civilization. Be careful; use too much, and you end up with toothless archetypes that don't mean anything. Ultimately, archetypes get their power from belief. If nobody believes in an archetype's validity, the archetype is nothing but a parody. If your players give an archetype power, the archetype adds sentimental depth to your stories.

Gestalt and Shell: Ask the player to add a game or personality trait to her character and define the result. She might borrow another character's expertise or personal habits. Next, ask the player what the character would be like if he was missing some central trait. Again, render the answer down into one or two words that transcend most historical associations.

By Virtue and Vice: Ask players to describe what their characters would be like if they had a different Virtue, Vice or both.

Regardless of the exact method, you'll end up with a generalized cast of characters that actually mean something to the players. You won't just impose a predefined model on your group. You can stop here if you like, but to lend your archetypes real verisimilitude, you'll probably want to find correspondences between the results and archetypes from literature, theatre and the social sciences. Go for a rough match, and once you make it, list the original descriptor beside whatever you researched. That way, you'll only be expanding the archetype instead of cutting away player contributions in favor of your research.

Once you have your archetypes, be assured of the fact that they exist somewhere out in the astral realms. They're part of your game's "canon," ready to be used in any story you choose.

Example: Steve wants to create archetypes, so he asks his players to define their characters, their nemeses and their allies. Here are his results:

Kearsley's character is a Political Schemer. His ally is an Amoral Servant. His nemesis is a Righteous Crusader.

Tara's character is a Defrocked Priest. Her ally is a Penitent Sinner. Her nemesis is a False Preacher.

Katrina's character is a Disguised Hedonist. Her ally is a Discreet Confidante. Her nemesis is an Inquisitor.

Based on their answers, Steve decides that morality plays are the best source of inspiration, along with some specific ideas from Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. It's not an exact fit but that's all right. Attaching the False Preacher to Chaucer's Pardoner inspires some story ideas, so Steve takes notes for the next phase.

The Narrative Worksheet

Our second worksheet will help us map the story. Once again, work out a basic conflict that roughly corresponds to your story idea. Express this in a "Man Versus" (really, "Character Versus") format. Just as in the player-centered story, break the main conflict down into individual situations.

Now consider the plot structure. Astral stories are naturally episodic, so don't commit yourself to an epic unless you can either break it down into short episodes or have a way for the characters to bend the practical limits on astral journey durations. Traditional plots feature rising action culminating in a dramatic turning point for the protagonists (and in roleplaying games, usually the most

Research Pointers

Here are a handful of starting points for your research:

Commedia Dell'arte: A form of improv that's at least 500 years old, Commedia dell'arte creates comedy from the antics of several stock characters and situations. Of the characters, perhaps the best known are the *zanni*: fools called Pierrot and Columbine.

Morality Plays: *Everyman* is the basic English morality play and an example of a form that started in the Middle Ages but was still known by Shakespeare's time. Everyman, the Devil and moral personifications drive these stories.

Jungian Archetypes: Carl Jung attempted to map the primal unconscious with a set of four primary archetypes and numerous specialized symbols of the unconscious, including the Shadow, the Wise Woman and others. Jung's theories might not be accurate, but they're interesting.

Personality Tests: There are many, many modern personality tests that break people down into basic types. The Myers-Briggs test is one popular method that you can find online — though most of the online tests are of dubious value even if you accept the validity of the system.

The Tarot: The Tarot is one of the prime sources for occult archetypes, including **Mage: The Awakening's** Path system.

difficult conflict), followed by a denouement that ties up any remaining plot threats or leaves them open to suggest the possibility of a sequel. This is a custom that most people adopt reflexively, but it's not the only option. You might start with an explosive, dramatic event, but extend the denouement so that the characters are not seeking action but to understand what happened during the initial event. It's also always possible to truncate the beginning and end of the traditional structure, leaving the story in media res (if you get rid of the initial setup) or at a cliffhanger (without the denouement).

Once you've done this, it's time to cross-reference your archetypes and situations. Look at the archetypes associated with characters and ask yourself how the conflicts apply to them. If you were writing a short story or myth, what would the character archetypes do at each stage? It's important that you don't treat this as a script for the actual characters. This is only meant to apply to archetypes based on the

characters. It's a rough guide, not the story itself. After that, it's time to populate the story with other archetypes. These drive elements of the story that complement or oppose the players' characters. Again, remember that these figures are *not* Storyteller characters. You haven't turned them into fully fleshed antagonists and allies yet. In fact, you don't even need to turn your archetypes into people. Convert the archetypes into objects and situations that fill the same general role as a character would.

Once again, consider whether or not you'll perform research to give the story mythopoeic punch. See how various myths might jibe with your basic plot. Once you find a suitable match, use it as a guide when you turn archetypes into actual Storyteller characters and objects. Now is also the time to turn your rough conflict and its descendant situations into palpable events. Use real-world myths and stories to fill in the blanks so that "Man Versus Nature" tells the story of a mythic flood. Don't feel confined to hoary old legends, either; urban mythology is just as valid a source and well represented in the Astral Plane. Last, mine myths for motifs: recurring events and images that out a distinct stamp on the story.

Example: *Steve's using the doppelgänger plot previously discussed, but is approaching it from a more mythological perspective. Steve populates the initial, comedic challenge with the characters' archetypal allies — but they're angry because they've actually been dealing with the characters' annoying doppelgängers. The doppelgängers themselves are based on the archetypal foils that the group created together. Steve decides to cling to the morality play model he used for the archetypes and changes the motifs accordingly. The first scene happens in a late medieval tavern. Characters progress to the monastery and finally visit the Aeons in a trip reminiscent of a journey to Heaven. Each Aeonic Syzygy takes the form of an angel and devil, who argue about the characters' worthiness.*

Motifs

In an astral story, you can easily justify recurring motifs, such as a trickster figure who always dresses in red or a warrior with a broken sword, club or other melee weapon. Sticking to these motifs gives astral voyages in your game a unique feel. The drawback is if you tend to use archetypes to do the same things over and over again. In these cases, motifs provide excessive foreshadowing.

Invent motifs based on your chronicle's background or draw them from a historical or mythic source. If you decided to link archetypes with preexisting legends, they provide a well of symbols to attach to characters and situations.

Beyond the Awakened

Mages have the greatest knowledge of an access to the Astral Plane. No other supernatural being has the innate ability to journey to every layer and realm. Nevertheless, don't assume that the astral is tailored to mages. There are realms that reflect Awakened myths and concepts and naturally, the Supernal Realms cast reflections on the whole, but the Astral Plane isn't an exclusive Awakened playground. They have certainly made their mark, but the astral reflects the entire World of Darkness.

At this point, a dedicated **Mage** fan will want to know if this means that mages don't have any special connection to the place. Have we damaged the unique status of the Awakened for the sake of including vampires and other creatures? Hardly; the astral is universal, but mages have an unmatched advantage. The difference between a mage and a vampire in the astral realms is like the difference between a gazelle and a turtle in a footrace. The turtle can move, but the gazelle has innate gifts that the turtle can never match. A refined, disciplined imagination and a taste of ultimate enlightenment are some of the basic characteristics of Awakening. The astral realms respond best to people who are used to turning their visions into reality.

Still, mages aren't the only beings with some inherent ability to navigate astral realms. Virtually every intelligent being can enter one astral space: their own dreams. While this seems rather limited in comparison to the ability to freely roam the Oneiros, Temenos and Anima Mundi, it should not be discounted out of hand. Even one dream can contain uncountable variety and vast space. Furthermore, even Sleepers learn to sculpt their own dreams with lucid techniques. This allows them to summon servants and warp the environment at will. Fortunately, few Sleepers can leave their own dreams, but there are notable, dangerous exceptions.

General Crossover Rules

The Dream Rule applies to anyone who enters the astral, but this isn't the only universal guideline. For all the variety, the realms obey a few constant rules — most of the time.

Unless specifically noted, no supernatural power overrules the general framework provided in this book and **Mage: The Awakening**. The Astral Plane refers only to the realm detailed in this book. If a power purports to be a form of "astral" travel but actually involves moving through Twilight, the power doesn't grant the ability to visit true astral realms. The astral doesn't overlap with Twilight or the Shadow Realm. Powers that affect either region don't impart astral abilities.

Powers that lead to travel through dreams usually impart the ability to traverse the Oneiros, but no further. The Temenos and beyond are the province of a few special-

ized abilities. Telepathic abilities allow the user to “hitch a ride” with an astral traveler. The telepath must score the standard number of meditation successes to travel to a particular region. His forays are limited to wherever his partner went. This method can’t be used to travel to the Temenos unless specifically noted, as travel beyond human dreams requires a point of Mana or equivalent sacrifice. Equivalent sacrifices are uncommon. Vitae, Essence, Pyros and other such power sources are not inherently equivalent to Mana when it comes to crossing the Astral Threshold. If a unAwakened character somehow has access to Mana, he must be able to actively spend it. The Mana is not automatically deducted. Some enchanted items might be able to do this for a character who isn’t a mage. If no Mana is available, an exception might be allowed in individual special cases.

Supernatural powers that function in the physical world function in astral realms. The powers’ effectiveness is always relative to the laws of the realm. A vampire who’s twice as strong as a human being can lift two elephants in a realm where the average person can lift one. The only exceptions apply to powers that inflict or heal health levels. Powers that inflict health levels of damage usually inflict Willpower point damage instead. Powers that heal health levels do *not* heal Willpower, but heal physical injuries as usual.

Vampires

Vampires can’t leave their own dreams unless they use a special supernatural power. Dreams have a special significance to the Kindred. While they dream, the icy stasis of death asserts itself, taking a toll in Blood. On the other hand, although vampires don’t need to sleep for the same reasons as mortals, the act represents some sympathy with an eminently human limitation.

Kindred dreamscapes can be poignant or terrifying, depending on which part of the vampire’s psyche is ascendant. No one who enters a vampire’s dreams can be sure whether the vampire’s human side or Beast controls the dream. In some cases, the Beast actually assumes a separate persona. It even displays far more intelligence than the howling, blood- and fire-driven thing of the material world. The Beast might torment the Man in an oubliette of nightmares, or both parties might battle over control of the dream. The Beast enjoys dreaming of the hunt and finds it easier to cast visitors in the role of prey. In control of a dream, the Beast will replay the memory of blood or a fearful moment over and over again, or the Beast might twist a mundane memory to suit its innate hatred, fear and hunger.

A vampire’s human side might be more benign, but it is hardly sinless. Guilt and denial infect his dreams. When the Man dreams of vampiric unlife, it casts atrocities as necessities of survival. The vampire recalls the hunt as a twisted romance, self-defense with “fringe benefits” or

righteous vigilantism. Sometimes the vampire denies that a feeding ever took place.

This internal conflict makes a vampire’s dreams confusing, disturbing and highly resistant to change. Magic or other techniques that change a vampire’s dreams must overcome Kindred Blood Potency. This trait has its usual effect as described on p. 122 of **Mage: The Awakening**.

Vampires who want to explore more of the astral realms than their own dreams have few options. The Auspex power of Telepathy lets a vampire enter the mind of a dreamer or meditating mage, but doesn’t grant free passage to wherever the vampire’s target goes. Instead, the vampire arrives in his target’s personal dreamscape. Treat the vampire as if he’s scored eight successes meditating and reduce other success thresholds accordingly. If the target’s in a different astral region, there’s nothing to see but a few superficial sensory impressions. The vampire does find a psychic “trail” — actually an emanation of the target’s consciousness — that he might follow to wherever the dreamer has gone. This can manifest as anything from a silver cord to a cave within the target’s personal dreamscape. If he follows this trail, he can enter any part of the Oneiros that the target’s visited during that particular journey. This requires four successes’ worth of meditation (the usual 12 minus the eight “free” successes for telepathic contact with a dreamer) as it would take a mage to visit the same region. Kindred who use telepathic “piggybacking” can’t travel anywhere other than the places visited by their quarry. They can’t venture beyond the Oneiros unless the Kindred have some way of actively spending Mana to cross the threshold. This limitation has stymied the study of astral blood magic, but Kindred occultism is a complex and powerful tradition of its own. A suitable rite might exist in the mind of an elder or a maverick neonate.

Vampires cannot feed from dreams or astral simulations of blood. They can spend Vitae to fuel supernatural powers in the Astral Plane. This expenditure occurs on the material plane. The vampire ends up hungrier for the experience.

Werewolves

Alone among dreaming, sapient beings, werewolves have the ability to freely enter the Dreaming Earth without crossing the Temenos or ascending the Anthropic Redoubts. Uratha don’t experience any sharp division between their own dreamscapes and the Dreaming Earth. They don’t need to expend a point of Mana to cross the Astral Threshold and ignore the Temenos and anything other part of the Astral Plane that stands between their personal dreams and the astral wilds. Other creatures can’t follow werewolves between dream worlds and cannot enter a werewolf’s personal dreams through the Dreaming Earth. As far as a werewolf is concerned, his Dreaming Earth is nothing more than a part of his psyche. His Dreaming Earth inspires vivid, even sacred dreams, but it is still feels like a personal experience.

Werewolves can also enter the Swath, but it's usually more common that the Swath's pollution claims part of the Dreaming Earth while the Uratha is dreaming there. Werewolves interpret this as a nightmare. The rest of the Anima Mundi simply doesn't exist to them. There's no inexplicable barrier; the Uratha doesn't perceive other realms at all.

Uratha in the Dreaming Earth do not suffer the effects of the Ecstatic Wind; they're natural inhabitants of the place. Uratha benefit from the increased size of natural animals in the realm. Add two dots to Size and Strength in Urshul and Urhan forms. Uratha have free access to their Gifts and communicate with Dreaming Earth denizens easily and naturally.

Werewolves can collect Essence from native spirits if the Uratha travel the Dreaming Earth in a lucid state (they know that they're dreaming or traveling through another world) or to need to recover Essence lost over the course of a dream voyage. In most other situations, they don't spend or lose Essence. This is not a hard-and-fast rule, so Uratha are sometimes puzzled when their Essence fluctuates after a night's rest. Werewolves gather Essence in astral realms using the same rules as the Material Realm or Shadow, subject to the Dream Rule. A werewolf who dreams of easy Essence-boosting conditions in his own dreamscape doesn't benefit from his own generous imagination.

Werewolves' ability to roam the Dreaming Earth does not translate to a sophisticated understanding of the realm's place in the cosmos. Uratha are pragmatic, visceral creatures

The Shadow Gate

There are always rumors that hidden places in the Shadow can take a traveler far beyond mere reflections of the world. Uratha speak of hidden paths and tears in the Shadow sky that can let in horrifying creatures.

Mages talk of walking from the Shadow to Heaven, Hell or an Atlantean outpost that sits on an alien shore. The Awakened call these rumored byways Shadow Gates. They believe that these might provide bodily passage from the Shadow Realm to the Astral Plane. This is all highly theoretical; no proof exists outside of questionable third-person accounts and nearly indecipherable ancient texts.

Werewolves have a much more sophisticated vocabulary for these phenomena. The First Tongue differentiates them by size, appearance, and possible threats, but even then, Shadow Gates are legends instead of known facts. Still, the amount of werewolf lore on the subject suggests some truth to the stories. Uratha do not like the idea of *any* "hole in the Shadow," so while such a place could be a boon for mages, werewolves would set their sights on guarding and closing any conduit between the worlds.



who already study the lore of two worlds. Much of the time they don't put much more stock in their dreams than a somewhat superstitious Sleeper. If a dreaming werewolf meets a mage in the Dreaming Earth, the werewolf rarely believes that he is literally coming face to face with another living being. The werewolf may consider the encounter to be a product of his imagination or some kind of prophetic event. This can be frustrating, as a werewolf has no compunctions about ripping an annoying figment of his dreams to shreds. This lack of understanding is not universal. Werewolves have their own prophets and dream scholars who have a deeper understanding of the Dreaming Earth.

Most Uratha do attach importance to dreams of the Animal Masters, Anima Loci and Naturae, because these entities' teachings apply to the werewolves' material and Shadow protectorates. Werewolves believe these astral spirits are the dreams of the Shadow Realm. They might be right.

Prometheans

Prometheans who venture beyond their personal dreams either do it with the help of a more skilled astral traveler or have developed a unique ability via an Athanor (see below). They have no innate ability to visit other astral realms.

Prometheans can't make use of dreams of Pyros; only the real thing will do. There are no known astral sources for the primal fire at the heart of the Created. Prometheans might be able to harvest Vitriol in special situations. A potential source of Vitriol might appear in the same situations in which a mage would earn Arcane Experience.

New Athanor: Crane — Soul Voyages (Ulgan)

The crane of medieval lore soars higher than other birds, where its eyes can take in the entire world. The crane sees every sinful and virtuous deed and from its place in the clouds, uses this knowledge to make itself one of the wisest birds.

Prometheans who cultivate the Crane Athanor learn the occult technique of soul journeys from Awakened mages or other mystics. The Promethean learns to purify his unnatural essence with Vitriol and, in so doing, claims the right to journey to realms that are usually reserved for the enlightened.

Trait Affinities: Wits, Resolve

Promethean Boon: The Promethean can travel to astral realms as if she was a mage. This requires the usual meditation success threshold. It costs one point of Vitriol from the character's Reagent pool to begin the journey and another to cross into the Temenos. Prometheans cannot enter the Anima Mundi.

Redeemed Boon: The Redeemed retains the Promethean boon, but with a new advantage: she can now enter the

Anima Mundi. The character now spends Willpower points instead of Reagent Vitriol to explore the Astral Plane.

Changelings

Changelings and the True Fae know how to travel among dreams. They're masters of it. **Changeling: The Lost** provides systems for dream travel on pp. 190–201. Those rules supersede the systems in this book for visiting and affecting the Oneiros. They refer exclusively to the dreams found there. The Temenos, however, is beyond the reach of changelings. It's rumored that some True Fae can enter the Anima Mundi, being closer to the raw elements of the world, but it becomes difficult to tell the exact difference between a sufficiently elemental Fae and a somewhat fey elemental spirit at these levels.

Psychics and Thaumaturges

Some humans have the talent or discipline to reach beyond their own dreams without fully Awakening. **World of Darkness: Second Sight** provides the basic systems for these psychics and thaumaturges. These "hedge magicians" have unique perspectives on the nature of the cosmos. Mages often find it difficult to understand them. In some cases, mages, psychics and thaumaturges use the same word to refer to completely different concepts.

For example, the Astral Projection power on p. 36 of **Second Sight** does *not* refer to the astral realms in this book. That power is a form of Twilight travel, not a journey to the Oneiros and beyond. On the other hand, it's a prerequisite for psychic Dream Travel (see **Second Sight**, pp. 38–39), which is a form of genuine astral travel. Thaumaturges have their own version of the power, listed on p. 107.

Both versions of the power allow its user to enter the Oneiros. The power's rules supersede those contained in this book, with a few exceptions. First of all, a Dream Travel user cannot inflict any form of physical damage on an Awakened mage. She inflicts damage to the mage's Willpower points instead. An Awakened target can choose to experience the injury physically instead, suffering the damage listed in each power's description, but the mage's player must make that choice before the attack's been resolved.

A telepath with the five-dot version of Mind Reading can "piggyback" upon someone who travels astral realms using the same rules as a vampire using *Auspex* (see p. 136). Telepaths can also use Telepathic Rapport to permanently bond with an astral voyager. In this case, the telepath can follow her partner anywhere in the Oneiros without having to make contact first.

The Dream Merit on p. 107 grants would-be astral travelers an important boon. It allows them to travel to any point in the Astral Plane using the Dream Travel Merit (characters must possess both). Crossing the Astral Threshold into the Temenos requires a point of Willpower. To venture beyond

the Oneiros, the character must accumulate eight fewer meditation successes than if she were a mage. (The power replaces the need for the first eight successes.)

Awakenings

There is one situation where otherwise unexceptional human *can* visit astral realms without any special limits. When a human being Awakens, she's capable of journeying to any realm the Storyteller deems necessary to bring forth that first burst of enlightenment. In this case, none of the normal rules for travel apply. Crossing the Astral Threshold doesn't cost Mana. Instead of meditating, the traveler moves from one realm to the next by fulfilling a task that represents one stage of her increasing understanding of magic. She travels only to places that are relevant to her background, inner nature and eventual Watchtower, but almost always proceeds through each layer in order. The Watchtower can manifest in any realm or throughout several, so that the future mage begins her climb in the Oneiros and proceeds to the Anima Mundi.

The final ascent takes her beyond the Ocean Oroboros and the edge of known Astral Space. Her Watchtower's Syzygy might appear in any number of forms to issue a final challenge before she crosses over. After that, the Sleeper Awakens in the Supernal Realm of her Watchtower and plunges back to material reality.

The Astral Plane gives you a way to play through a prelude that makes heavy use of symbolism and surreal events. You can also use soul journeys to gradually introduce the concepts of the game. Astral realms even allow you to run multiple Awakenings together as a shared soul journey. This gives players a good excuse to unite characters from disparate backgrounds. Once they dream of one another, they can seek each other out in the material world. This creates an excellent rationale to get the players' cabal together even if they physically live far away from one another.

Awakening often gives mages enough information about the Astral Plane to guide future voyages, but just as often leaves clues and mysteries in its wake. These are the seeds of future soul journeys — and major stories in your chronicle.



CHAPTER FIVE: REALMS

"I had actually hoped it would be chess."

<<I prefer Senet.>>

Clatter.

"Well, I understand that — but Senet has so much of a random element to it. Considering what the stakes are, it's difficult to accept that the game hinges on a throw of the dice. Or of the sticks."

<<I would be content that this works in my favor, if I were you.>>

"Pardon?"

<<I have been playing Senet for a very long time. If I wished to cheat, you would never know. But I favor the randomness. It means that mortals may very well win against me. It is a bit fairer.>>

"Yes, I know. It just... I like being in control. You know how it is."

Clatter.

<<Of course.>>

"And there's always the chance that you, or Death, hasn't seen the latest gambit."

<<Young one, setting up a chessboard in front of Death is an opening gambit practically older than chess itself. As we idly discuss the prospect of playing chess against her, she hears us and whets her game like a knife. It is a far poorer gamble than relying on the random cast of three sticks.>>

Clatter.

<<Ah. How unfortunate.>>

I LIKE BEING IN CONTROL
YOU KNOW HOW IT IS

*The mind, that ocean where each kind
Does straight its own resemblance find;
Yet it creates, transcending these,
Far other worlds, and other seas.*
— Andrew Marvell, "The Garden"

Alkahest

It takes only one person to change the world. One person can found an empire that endures for centuries or a religion that lasts millennia; one person can codify a philosophy that results in the deaths of millions, while another can shake the magical foundations of the universe.

Don't believe it? That's fine, too, but astral travelers had better get used to the idea if they're journeying anywhere near Alkahest. The notion that an individual can convert the world to his cause has power in the human subconscious, and humanity's enormous ambition is made manifest in this astral realm.

Alkahest is a militant kingdom with an empty throne. The kingdom's three great legions seek the chance to establish hegemony over neighboring realms — to march into the Temenos on a mission of conquest and forced conversion. The reasons don't matter; the armies unthinkingly accept whatever ideology rules Alkahest. So long as they can try to spread their belief by force, they'll do so to the best of their ability. And when one of Alkahest's rulers is deposed, the armies return home and await their next great leader.

Although Alkahest's landscape and appearance fluctuate with the kingdom's ruling ideology, they revert to one consistent vision when no one sits on the throne. Visitors to the realm tend to notice its "sun" first — a great eye watching from the cloudy sky, representing (according to the locals) the blessings of providence upon Alkahest's undertakings. The eye looks down at a city of black iron, flanked by a gray bay on one side and an endless desert on the other. In the city's center rests the Citadel, a metal fortress atop a ziggurat that plays host to the realm's ruler.

The people of Alkahest are homogenized and nearly indistinguishable from one another. They wear the same clothes and don masks to hide their faces. Subtle differences allow a careful observer to tell them apart — one has a unique hairstyle, while another wears a green jacket instead of the standard blue. The locals insist that these minor differences make them a highly

diverse group, and that they find unity only because of their shared cause.

As for Alkahest's leaders, they have historically taken a variety of forms. Some have been astral incarnations of ideologies who traveled from their home realms to Alkahest — gods and martyrs, mythical forefathers and idealized emperors. Not all leaders have been anthropomorphized — books and scrolls and crowns have also appeared on Alkahest's throne, interpreted by devout priests and clerks. Mages speculate, too, that not all of Alkahest's leaders come from the Temenos; at times, goetic demons may have slipped out of their Oneiroi to spread their makers' beliefs, and astral travelers have sought Alkahest's throne in order to conquer Astral Space themselves.

It's these unlikely possibilities that cause mages to worry most about Alkahest. It's one thing when an ideology spreads by force in the Fallen World and is reflected in the Temenos. But if a mage, spirit or Abyssal monster were to knowingly use Alkahest to stage invasions of dreams and ideas, what would result? Could humanity truly be endangered by an attack from inside its collective soul?

No one knows for certain — but for those who believe, Alkahest is a realm to be watched.

Getting There

Alkahest doesn't welcome visitors, but neither is it cut off from the rest of the Temenos. Reaching Alkahest is mostly a matter of knowing where you're going — anyone sailing the seas of the Temenos, particularly in a military vessel, can eventually reach Alkahest's shores with the help of a map or a guide. Without such direction, a mage must use what other resources are at hand.

The quickest way to find Alkahest without directions is also the most dangerous. During times of war, astral travelers can often find Alkahest's legions marching through the Temenos, and a stranger to Astral Space who surrenders to the army is apt to get a free ticket to the Citadel. Outsiders are rare and highly valued prisoners, and even the most bloodthirsty soldiers

usually take mages to a higher authority rather than deal with them personally.

Similarly, mages willing to risk the consequences of discovery might join a regiment in disguise as the unit returns home. Such an act needn't begin in Astral Space itself — a mage in the Fallen World who dresses in the ideological trappings of a legion, who surrounds herself with the right propaganda and who meditates in an appropriate location may arrive marching alongside legionnaires in her dreams. How well this works is greatly dependant on the ideology in question — it's not hard to find the right accoutrements when a mainstream political belief is behind Alkahest's power, but dressing and surrounding oneself with the ritual gear of a lone madman's religion can be trickier.

Details of the Realm

The city of Alkahest operates with military precision beneath the all-seeing eye of providence. Every location has a purpose, tied to the overarching purpose of all the legions of Alkahest — conquest and conversion. There are no farms or malls or stadiums in the realm, because the people of Alkahest don't need food or goods or entertainment. There are only barracks, printing presses, conference rooms and prisons.

During times of peace, visitors can move freely through the city. The citizens of the realm aren't especially social creatures, but they respond when spoken to and answer questions about their place and their goals. During times of war (and any time when Alkahest has a ruler is a time of war), strangers are stopped and questioned, and allowed free movement only if they prove that they are loyal to the cause; typically, a writ from a high-ranking legionnaire or a resident of the Citadel is required.

Beyond the city limits, the bay and the desert stretch endlessly. Rumors of rebels and insurgents in the wastes occasionally filter through the ranks, but the people of Alkahest never seek insurgents out. If there are undesirables in the realm, they'll be converted as soon as they make themselves known — and in the meantime, the legions have other targets.

The Grand Armory

The Legion of Swords operates out of the Grand Armory, a hexagonal structure that surrounds the ziggurat of the Citadel like a wall. Guards patrol the rooftops day and night, dressed in military attire and armed to suit their ruler's whim. Inside, simple

black-and-white hallways lead past barracks and war rooms, and stairways lead to hospitals and torture chambers.

The Legion of Swords is one of the three great legions of Alkahest, and is the legion most concerned with straightforward warfare. The Swords do their part by conquering other lands and forcing conquered peoples to follow the edicts of Alkahest's leader. The Swords are brutal and direct, concerned only with the trappings of belief — a person who wears the proper clothes or speaks the right words is, to the mind of a Sword, clearly loyal. Conversely, the Swords are the ones who ensure that Alkahest's ideology can't be corrupted through liberal interpretation — a person can believe whatever he wants to believe, but he either acts rightly or he doesn't.

The tactics of the Swords are tempered by the greater ideology of the realm, but are inhumane at best. Under a pacifist regime, Swords enforce compliance by denying basic sustenance to populations under the Swords' control. Under a militant dictatorship, Swords decimate their foes simply to prove a point. Torture is a common Sword tactic to ensure right action in individuals, and Sword doctors are typically as skilled at applying pain as relieving it.

The Swords also possess more esoteric methods of enforcement. Swords commonly force prisoners to wear masks indicating compliance, and especially recalcitrant individuals are dressed in "puppet suits" — outfits that a Sword can safely manipulate from within the Armory. Some mages suggest that many of the Fallen World's tortures were inspired by dreams of the Swords — that fantasies of forced compliance manifest in dreams, and dreams gradually become the stuff of reality.

The Bureau

The second of Alkahest's great legions lives and works within the warrens of the Bureau, a sprawling network of buildings that crosses the whole city and consists of offices, newsrooms and auditoriums. Mantras and loyalty pledges echo through the hallways, and posters depict victory in conquered territories. In the Bureau, the Legion of Voices prepares propaganda for consumption by conquered (or soon-to-be-conquered) populations, writes victory speeches and publishes apologetics regarding Alkahest's ideology.

Although fewer in number than the Swords, the Voices have a more prominent presence in Alkahest than their militant brethren. During the Swords' marches across the

Temenos, only select Voices accompany the Swords. The rest of the Voices stay at home, perfecting their art and the messages they send to the front line.

While the Swords enforce physical submission to Alkahest's hegemony, the Voices attempt to sway the minds of their foes. The Voices do so without compassion or hesitation; their only desire is to make the conquered believe the same things the Voices do, and to think in the same way. Reason and logic are weapons in their arsenal, but so are lies and distortions. Even drugs and brainwashing techniques are perfectly acceptable to the Voices (although Alkahest's individual regimes may prohibit their use).

High-ranking Voices learn to manipulate all the words in their presence, rearranging printed and spoken text into anagrams so that it suits their needs — converting cries of defiance into admissions of defeat. Trying to converse with a group of Voices while retaining one's own beliefs is almost impossible; for each minute that a conversation lasts, a character must succeed on a Resolve + Composure roll or lose a point of Willpower.

The Foundation

The last of Alkahest's great legions is the Legion of Builders, based in what residents of the realm call "the Foundation." The Foundation makes up all the open spaces in Alkahest — the parks, waterways, plazas and empty lots that are scattered throughout the city — as well as the handful of cathedral-like buildings that sit in the midst of the emptiness.

From the Foundation, the Builders plan the perfect environment in which to nurture Alkahest's ideology. The Builders draw blueprints for temples, where the peoples of conquered lands can congregate and learn. The Builders conceive of cities where everyone can find their proper place. The Builders concoct poisons and pollutants that can transform a land so that Alkahest's teachings can then promise salvation. In short, the Builders believe that a person's surroundings determine that person's beliefs and actions.

The Builders' greatest work may be the tunnels beneath Alkahest itself. There, the legion has created simulated worlds in which to experiment, all connected by a vast maze. These worlds are made of cardstock and wood, but are an incredible spectacle nonetheless — they depict the universe Alkahest seeks to create, where Alkahest's ruler is lovingly accepted by all. In many cases, these worlds are utopias, and serve as "proof" of Alkahest's ultimately noble ends.

While inside one of the Builders' customized astral environments, characters can gain regular experience points (in addition to the Arcane Experience normally awarded during astral journeys) — but these points can be used only to improve traits considered "desirable" by the Builders, and the points come at a price. For every experience point gained, the character loses a point of Willpower. Characters become just as Alkahest desires them to be: easily pliable and with all the proper talents.

Less dramatic than the Builders' environments are their forges and laboratories. The Builders are constantly seeking ways to more effectively convert one material into another — to alter the resonance of the astral landscape and rewrite the nature of the Temenos. The Builders possess acids that convert symbols of hope into hopelessness, and hammers that break down beliefs into their component parts. Any mage seeking to understand the nature of astral constructs could do worse than to study the lore of the Legion of Builders.

The Prison of Failed Dreams

Deep beneath the ziggurat that upholds the Citadel is the Prison of Failed Dreams. Here, Alkahest locks away its greatest foes and its greatest failures — the enemies it could not convert and the leaders who proved unworthy. The armies of Alkahest don't enter the dark tunnels, and don't call the Prison by name. It is simply "beneath the Citadel," and it is the place where Alkahest hides its shame.

Within the Prison, each inmate lives in a wing by himself or herself. Each of these smaller prisons is a perfect reflection of its inhabitant's Oneiros, marred only by reminders of where the prisoner really is. The fantastic palace of a would-be prince has no windows, while a mage's library is missing any books that praise freedom or recount escapes. Prisoners who come to terms with their status find themselves in small, gray cells, wrapped in chains or confined by a straight-jacket. But more often, prisoners throw themselves into their fantasy worlds and try to forget the Prison and Alkahest altogether.

Those held in the Prison fall into two categories. The first type of inmate is the unbreakable man, woman or spirit that refuses to submit to Alkahest's reign. Despite the best efforts of the legions, they cannot transform every person and realm they capture, and there are always holdouts who retain their identity and their

beliefs. Alkahest dislikes admitting that such beings even exist, and regards them as abominations.

The second type of inmate is the deposed ruler. Inevitably, the beings who rule Alkahest lose their wars — they spread themselves too thin, find realms impossible to convert or are overthrown by newer, more popular ideological figures. But Alkahest does not kill or exile its failed kings. Instead, those outmoded symbols of obsolete belief systems are chained and buried inside the Prison. By walking from cell to cell, a visiting mage can visit the avatars of forgotten empires, discredited philosophies and failed religions. Ragged men and women reminisce about their moments of glory, when it seemed as if the world would be transformed into their image. Some await the day when they will rise again, while others count their many mistakes and scratch them into the filthy walls.

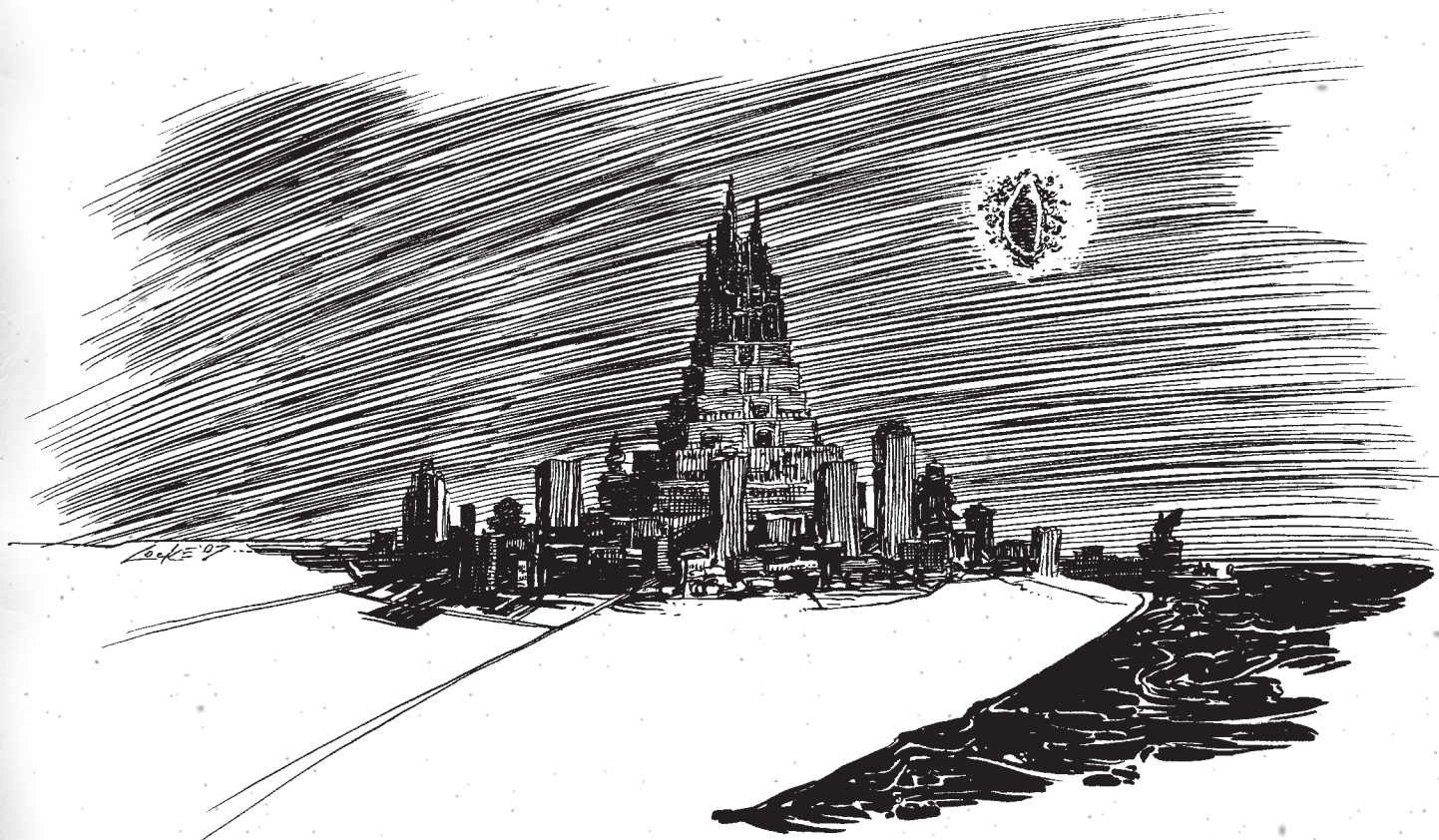
The Citadel

The Citadel looms over the center of Alkahest, a fortress of black metal towers and crenellated walls standing atop a ziggurat of black marble. The structure houses Alkahest's king and his personal guards, and at its heart is the center of all Alkahest — the true seat of power where Alkahest's ruler presides, whether an iron throne, a round table or a speaker's forum.

During the times when no king reigns, the Citadel sits empty with its gates wide open, awaiting a new conqueror. Petitioners wishing to become Alkahest's new ruler sometimes come from across the Temenos, stretching in a line from the Citadel's gates to Alkahest's bay. At other times, the empty Citadel is a lonely place, a mysterious fortress explored only by the brave.

A petitioner need only try out the seat of power to learn whether Alkahest will accept her. If her desires are clear enough, her will strong enough, then Alkahest becomes her own: the Citadel's mighty gates swing shut, its rooms morph to reflect her thoughts and the legions begin their march to convert the world to her cause. Most petitioners, however, lack a clarity of vision required to claim the prize. They leave Alkahest disappointed, returning to the dreams that spawned the petitioners.

Unlike the rest of the realm, the Citadel is not built to convert unbelievers. The Citadel exists to protect the king, and to ensure that the king's purity is not despoiled by any outside force. Whatever ideology guides Alkahest must not change, evolve or reflect on its own weaknesses — otherwise, Alkahest ceases to be infallible, and its mission becomes meaningless.



The Emperor's Clothes

Each ruler of Alkahest alters the realm in his or her own image. Everything from subtle details in the legions' uniforms to the scope of the landscape is malleable, as demonstrated by the following incarnations of the realm.

The Eternal Brotherhood

Centuries ago, an Awakened monk found his way to the throne of Alkahest and sought to create a world of peace and simplicity. Alkahest became an orderly, utopian land of grassy plains and blue ponds, and its conquests became extensions of the monk's vision. But while the monk dreamed of a nation where study and contemplation were commonplace, he soon saw that the books and letters he received from the front contained no new discoveries or insights. When he realized that his own limits restricted his country's spiritual growth, he spent decades researching a way to escape the Citadel.

Thule

For a brief while, Alkahest was transformed into a fascist nightmare by a mystic who sought to use the realm as a weapon. The ruler was created from a mixture of fear and loyalist fervor, the legions possessed a racial "purity" that would be impossible in the real world and the buildings would have done the ancient Romans proud. This Alkahest did not last long; the legions found themselves forced to kill, rather than convert many of their enemies, and astral ghosts turned back the tide.

Mad Michael's Paradise

This incarnation of Alkahest was brought about by an asylum inmate in Victorian England. Somehow, he discovered the throne of Alkahest in his dreams, and transformed the realm into a phantasmagorical nightmare devoted to helping the world understand his vision. The legions donned bestial masks and took up surreal weapons, and conquests were inundated with maddening sights until they willingly joined the growing nation. A mage finally unseated Mad Michael, and the throne was left empty for many years thereafter.

In this way, the Citadel is as much a jail as the Prison of Failed Dreams. Rulers who, at first, relish their power inevitably recognize that they are frozen in stasis, not permitted to see anything but themselves. There is no one to appreciate them, no one to further develop their teachings. Thus the Citadel destroys the ideals it protects.

Characters / Critters

The residents of Alkahest are of one mind, all unquestioningly dedicated to the spread of their ruling ideology. Most have little intelligence beyond what's necessary to perform their tasks; the legions are experts at their work, but attempts at humor or spirited debate elicit nothing more than a stare. Beyond Alkahest's armies, the realm contains few inhabitants. Rumors of rebellious beings beyond the city limits — the seeds of failure sewn in every conquest — remain unsubstantiated.

Diagnostician

Quote: *When you can see your flaws the way I can, you'll understand why they need to be corrected.*

Background: Used by all three of the legions of Alkahest, Diagnosticians identify and highlight traits that must be corrected in prisoners and other deviants. Diagnosticians fill the roles of scouts, strategists and doctors, and often accompany mixed groups of Alkahest's soldiers. Although Diagnosticians are not especially fierce or deadly, the marks they leave on their victims can be extremely traumatic — as well as a signal to other, more dangerous residents of Alkahest.

Description: A shadowy, human-shaped creature with translucent skin and a single large eye in lieu of a face, dressed in an outfit somewhere between a robe and a lab coat.

Storytelling Hints: Diagnosticians point out the flaws in every action a person takes. They might come across as robotically pessimistic if they didn't find solutions to every problem they identify. Too aggressive? Try meditation. Too slow? Try a new diet. Unwilling to accept Alkahest's ideology? They're here to help....

Rank: 1

Attributes: Power 1, Finesse 4, Resistance 2

Willpower: 3

Essence: 10 (max 10)

Initiative: 6

Defense: 4



Speed: 10

Size: 5

Corpus: 7

Numina: Reveal Flaws (dice pool 5)

• **Reveal Flaws:** Spend two Essence and roll Power + Finesse contested by the target's Resolve + Composure. For each success achieved by the Diagnostician, the target suffers a penalty of one die on future contested rolls against creatures from Alkahest. The target's flaws are literally written onto her skin to await correction — words such as “narcissistic,” “debtor” or “poor genetics” appear on her forehead, arms and palms. The words can be washed off with ordinary water, but have a tendency to reappear during moments of self-doubt.

Ban: A Diagnostician who is forced to look at itself in a mirror is instantly destroyed. No one's sure whether Diagnosticians destroy themselves rather than risk finding flaws in their own kind, or whether they actually do examine themselves — and are promptly obliterated by the act.

Disconnector

Quote: <the sound of a knife against a whetstone and of shear blades rubbing together>

Background: Disconnectors are shock troops from

the Legion of Swords who epitomize the phrase “divide and conquer.” Disconnectors exist to sever ties of the mind and soul — the bridges between memories, the link between thought and action and the bonds between friends and family members. When Disconnectors have reduced a person or a society to a collection of pieces instead of a coherent whole, it becomes easy for the legions to assimilate whatever's left.

Description: A black figure wearing the mark of a corkscrew-sword on the figure's chest. Instead of hands, strange tools emerge from the figure's wrists, constantly changing from one form to the next — one moment a pair of pliers, the next a blade or a saw.

Storytelling Hints: Disconnectors are only barely intelligent, and follow whatever orders they receive from their superior officers in the legion. Disconnectors are highly pack-oriented, usually traveling in groups of three or four. They appear to communicate with one another via an array of metallic cutting and clicking noises, but they use this “speech” only to work together and to divide up their enemies.

Rank: 1

Attributes: Power 4, Finesse 2, Resistance 2

Willpower: 6

Essence: 10 (max 10)

Initiative: 4



Defense: 4

Speed: 11

Size: 5

Corpus: 7

Numina: Cut Emotional Ties (dice pool 6), Sever Virtue or Vice (dice pool 6)

- **Cut Emotional Ties:** As the Space 3 spell “Destroy the Threads.” Roll Power + Finesse and spend one Essence.

- **Sever Virtue or Vice:** This Numen allows a Disconnector to cut a person off from essential aspects of herself, along with the emotional resources those aspects provide. Roll Power + Finesse and spend two Essence, contested by the target’s Resolve + Composure. If the Disconnector succeeds, it prevents the target from regaining Willpower by fulfilling either her Virtue or Vice (Disconnector’s choice) in the future. The effect lasts for one week per success.

Ban: Despite (or maybe because of) their nature, Disconnectors are intimately linked to one another. If a Disconnector loses sight of other members of its pack, the Disconnector suffers a -1 die penalty on all rolls for each pack member lost.

Memetrician

Quote: Relax. Pull your hair back. The injection will be completely painless, and your new thoughts will seem totally natural.

Background: Memetricians are a creation of the Legion of Voices, built to infiltrate, influence and destabilize populations targeted for conquest by the Legion of Swords. Each Memetrician is a delivery vector for poisonous thoughts — thoughts that lay the groundwork for total conversion, and lead subjects down the proverbial “slippery slope” to complete agreement with Alkahest’s ideology. Such thoughts are carefully crafted by Voice doctors based on the psychology of their targets, but many Memetricians fail in their missions because of the elusive and unpredictable nature of the mind. Still, they are highly valued and extremely useful, and the Voices spawn more Memetricians before every war.

Description: A gray-skinned, hairless, androgynous human wearing black goggles, a black uniform and fingerless gloves. From the fingertips protrude long syringes, each needle dripping with rainbow-hued fluid. A Memetrician marches gracefully when it walks, and smells faintly of antiseptics.

Storytelling Hints: Memetricians are single-minded and stealthy, but can expertly explain their nature and



their task to anyone who confronts them. They are hollow shells, emptied out so that they can deliver the thoughts created by the Voices; if Memetricians ever had personalities of their own, those were lost long ago.

Rank: 1

Attributes: Power 2, Finesse 3, Resistance 2

Willpower: 4

Essence: 10 (max 10)

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Speed: 10

Size: 5

Corpus: 7

Numina: Emotional Urging (dice pool 5), Incognito Presence (dice pool 4), Psychic Reprogramming (dice pool 5)

- **Emotional Urging:** As the Mind 2 spell of the same name. Roll Power + Finesse and spend one Essence.

- **Incognito Presence:** As the Mind 2 spell of the same name. Roll Power + Resistance and spend two Essence.

- **Psychic Reprogramming:** As the Mind 5 spell of the same name, but for each alteration made, the reprogramming requires one week to take effect. Roll

Power + Finesse and spend three Essence. Memetricians activate this ability by injecting victims with their fingertip-syringes.

Ban: Each time a Memetrician is targeted by a Mind spell that attempts to affect or influence the Memetrician's thoughts, the Memetrician takes one point of damage per success (in addition to the spell's normal effects). As idea vessels, Memetricians have only a limited amount of space for their own thoughts; anything that adds to the "vessel" causes their own identity to overflow and dissipate.

Story Hooks

- **The Bitter Emperor:** The legions of Alkahest march across the Temenos. Realm after realm falls before their might, and the world of dreams becomes a harsh and dangerous place where conquered populations survive only to further their mysterious Emperor's ambitions. No one knows who the new ruler of Alkahest really is, or what he wants — the legions appear uninterested in spreading a genuine ideology, only in forcing the universe to submit to their new leader's will.

In response, the cabal must find a way to stop the march of the Emperor's legions and to trap or overthrow the Emperor himself. In order to do so, the characters must enter the realm of Alkahest and find allies who can keep the characters hidden — prisoners and rebels who despise the Emperor's regime. Only in Alkahest will the cabal be able to find the start of a trail that leads to the Emperor's true identity. The trail will take the cabal from realm to realm, and eventually to the Emperor's birthplace in the Temenos.

The Emperor is a creation of bitterness, an incarnation of the resentment and hatred generated by ideas and objects that become forgotten and neglected. Armed with this knowledge, the cabal has what it needs to create a weapon to destroy the Emperor out of memory and illumination. The cabal will need to return to Alkahest to depose the Emperor once and for all. And then, someone must decide what to do about the vacant throne....

- **The Lost:** It's been a long time since Alkahest had a leader, and the legions are growing restless. The realm has been forgotten by most creatures of the dream world, and the few petitioners who've sought the realm in recent years lacked the willpower and the conviction to seize the throne. So for the first time in history, the hegemon of the legions — the

commanders of Alkahest's army — have decided to take the initiative.

Squads of Alkahest's terrifying soldiers are creeping through the Temenos and into human Oneiroi, capturing inner demons and astral entities and bringing them back to Alkahest's internment camps. The purpose appears to be conversion for the sake of conversion; Alkahest has become a cancer, growing without meaning or use.

It's not long before the cabal hears of goetic mages suffering from strange maladies. The mages' inner demons are being kidnapped as the legions grow bolder and bolder. The cabal must confront the squads and do research to track the problem back to Alkahest.

But the cabal has an ally. From beneath Alkahest's Citadel, one of Alkahest's former kings has learned how to send faint messages through dreams. He's willing to help the cabal stop the legions' incursions, but he has a steep price: he insists that someone must sit on Alkahest's throne in order to keep the realm permanently under control, and he wants to be that person. The cabal must travel to Alkahest, battle the hegemon of the legions and face the former king. And somehow, the mages must force Alkahest to submit to their will.

- **The Crucible:** A stone sphere reputed to contain Atlantean secrets comes into the hands of the cabal, but to all appearances, the sphere is entirely mundane. Accessing its power requires ancient alchemical magic — magic that will transmute the sphere back into its true form. A lost Moros master may know what is required, but he disappeared years ago on a journey into Astral Space.

Following hints left in the lost master's library, the cabal proceeds into the Temenos. A series of traps is in place to thwart the cabal's progress, each trap overseen by warriors from the legions of Alkahest. The trail leads through realms conquered and assimilated by Alkahest, as well, although the legions have long since left behind the pacified populations.

The cabal finally comes to Alkahest itself, where they find that the Moros has become a renowned advisor to the king and to the legions. The Moros seeks to learn the legions' methods of transmutation within Astral Space, and the legions, in turn, benefit from the mage's expertise. The Moros is uninterested in helping the cabal, but the cabal has the means to change his mind — if the weapons of the legions can be put to use, then the Moros himself can be transmuted from foe to friend.

The Infested Dreams of John Hathorne

John Hathorne is a Banisher. Born in a home of strict atheists, his youthful rebellion took him to fundamentalist Christianity. When he was only 17, a week of fervent prayer and fasting opened his eyes to the light when he visited Heaven and was uplifted. An unwitting Obrimos, he soon experienced events that revealed the purpose of his holy life: to hunt witches, whom the Lord forbade. John currently does his holy work in Caldwell, Idaho, but he slowly treks eastward. He'd like to visit the grounds of Salem for prayer and inspiration.

Though John acts unyielding in his faith and his mission, he suffers a great conflict. Something about his belief disturbs him. John's parents raised him to always question the world and himself; it was that practice that led him to God, and he still believes in it. He finds that he never questions his mission to rid Earth of willworkers, and *that* bothers him. It's a strange workaround: he can't question his mission, but he can question that inability. The more John thinks about it, the more scared he gets — and soon, it might just drive him absolutely bonkers.

Overview

Hathorne's unconscious mind is not untouched. A creature that calls itself Urganam, that claims to be some form of earthbound Fae, has taken up residence within. Urganam met John in the guise of a churchgoer as Hathorne passed through a small Nevada town and immediately smelled a madness about him. A quick pledge formed between them, unknown to Hathorne, and Urganam has been with — within — the mage ever since. It has controlled Hathorne's with a firm hand and reshaped his Oneiros to please itself and maintain the emotions of its host that Urganam enjoyed at their first meeting.

Much of John Hathorne's Oneiros is unchanged. The strongest memories of his childhood remain, his epiphany and the day he joined the church, being lifted up to Heaven itself and given God's blessing... all these are firm and constant scenes in John's dream space. Urganam has not changed them, because they produced the most delicious emotions even before it began refining Hathorne's flavor.

Fae in the Oneiros

From this, it's clear that changelings can cross over with mages in this part of Astral Space. How does this work? The fae gains access to the person's dreams by any normal method; mages are more difficult to access. What changelings consider accessing dreams rides the border of the superficial and the astral; they touch any of a person's superficial dreams and the part of the Oneiros that is made up of discrete scenes.

Changeling methods of manipulating dreams function in either. They may study a person's dreams and shift them slightly in the Oneiros. Dreamscaping the Oneiros creates new scenes or wipes away old ones, changes that remain (and influence the dreamer) for one week per point of the oneiromancer's Wyrd. Scenes in the Oneiros are considered to have an Intensity equal to the dreamer's Resolve + Composure.

The changeling cannot access the deepest Oneiros, such as memory storage or the realm describing a person's Vice. True Fae, able to dream warp, *can* reach and affect these places.

Dream combat works as described in **Changeling: the Lost**. The sweeping changes fae make to a dreamscape as environmental attacks are still, at heart, simple attacks. A fae's ability to warp dream reality in ways that mages can't, bound by the Oneiros's laws as they are, shocks the rare mage with opportunity to combat fae in Astral Space, but it doesn't decide the outcome.

A mage with the Lucid Dreaming Merit does combat as changelings do if he encounters them while in a lucid dream. Should he encounter a fae opponent while the mage is an astral traveler, he fights as mages normally fight.

When fae and mages meet in the Oneiros, it's not likely to be their own. Mages and fae can enter mortals' Oneiroi with their individual powers, and neither is likely to understand why the other is there. Changelings can always access the same parts of their own Oneiroi that they can access in others, though changelings' don't use the name, making it another place for an exploring mage to encounter a fae. True Fae don't have dreams.

For Storytellers without **Changeling**, just assume that Urganam shapes John's Oneiros to its whim and use the stats provided for the creature.

John's other dream realms have grown and flourished under the creature's ministrations. His realm of Vice is strong; Urganam found a willing ally in the demon of John's Pride. To ensure this doesn't scare the mage from his God-given mission, Urganam has built a stronghold of righteousness in John's Oneiros; this place's strong walls and unflinching symbols prevent the Banisher from even considering that his holy quest might false. Select nightmare realms are also stronger: the fear of being unable to question his intentions sheds smaller scenes of dread into Hathorne's Oneiros often, feeding this new conflict the Fae finds so energizing.

Getting There

For players' characters to access John's dreams, they first need a reason. Any *sane* willworker is going to want as little to do with a Banisher, unless she goes out of her way to kill or incapacitate him. To make this an interesting plot hook, put Hathorne doing his work in the characters' Consilium. He reveals himself as a threat without successfully ending any lives, making redemption possible (though few players will think of it). A later scene of conflict with the characters makes them personally involved and provides them with a cut of hair or other source of strong sympathy.

This sets up the scene in which the characters scry John, using that staple of Awakened conspiracy and combat to discover their Banisher weeping in a church and begging for help. For characters still inclined to execute the madman without further investigation, a Storyteller may add details suggesting that John wants to doubt his way but can't. Players who don't bite that hook don't want it; you'll just have to let them go.

Things continue to get complicated once a group decides to at least *approach* John Hathorne. They must approach him during a moment of weakness or be sufficiently manipulative to bring out his issues and break off his attack. He asks for help, insisting that there is something "in my head... in my *dreams*" putting him wrong. Helping isn't easy: the group must use "Astral Invitation" cast by an adept of Mind to enter John's Oneiros, and they need a mighty Hallow or a Demesne to enter Astral Space. Finally, even with those, the characters would be well-advised to either open Hathorne's Oneiros to them and then disappear to their place of meditation or keep him unconscious. His inner conflict does not stay his murdering hand long.

All that done, getting to John's Oneiros is a simple matter of following the characters' individual astral paths to the right place.

The Devil of the Details

Mages entering John Hathorne's Oneiros have several interesting places to visit — and one devious, well-entrenched opponent who considers his playground *full*.

Magic in John's Unconscious

This Oneiros belongs to a Banisher; some unconsciously deny magic so strongly that their dream space imposes Paradoxes. Not John. He accepts magic even as he condemns it as witchcraft. Because Hathorne's experience with magic suggests that Forces and Prime, his Ruling Arcana, are manifestations of God's will, explaining their bonus.

Paradox: None; No Twilight or Shadow Realm; Forces +1, Prime +1.

Powerful Scenes

Wandering John's higher Oneiros means passing through some of his more prominent memory- and emotion-based scenes. Scenes other than those described here involve youthful and awkward romance, learning how to travel broke, some joyful times in the church before his Awakening, an embarrassing event at school and happy times with his parents before he left home.

Father's Lesson: The setting is a comfortable den in John's childhood home. A window looks out on a large garden, bookshelves line the walls and two comfortable chairs point toward a television in the corner opposite the door. A traveler becomes young John, sitting on the floor talking to his father, the scene's lone dream actor. The child's perspective makes the father huge but kind, with receding straw-blond hair, glasses and comfortable clothes.

It begins with a question out of nowhere: "Well, why do you think that is, Aaron?" (Clever mages figure out this is part of the Banisher's real name.) The response, "I don't know," invites a lesson in the Socratic method on the importance of asking questions of oneself, of what one believes, of what others say and so on. Playing along is standard; offering intelligent debate to the argument is a key that unlocks different responses each time it is used. In one, the father sputters and has no logical retort (John's desire to stump his atheist father); another has the father calmly answer every

argument with superior logic (John's desire to trust his father and believe in self-questioning).

Revelation: This scene blurs together John's religious epiphany and his acceptance into the local Christian community. There is no first-person perspective: John, not much younger than he is now, kneels before the altar in a cathedral with tears dripping from his chin. "Why," he asks aloud, before whispering to himself. "If there is no reason I can see, it must be something I can't. It must be You, God," he cries out, throwing his arms wide. The world blurs and time passes, showing John's baptism, his first awkward Sundays at church and his volunteer work for church projects. Before the scene fades, observers see the contentedness in his eyes.

Discovery: Deep within the city library, Hathorne spends weeks — observers feel them pass — frantically turning pages of old books on witchcraft and occultism. As pages and days turn, images of secret societies play on the walls of John's mind: men and women turning from the Lord in search of unworldly power, which they wield against the faithful. John shows his own willworking, here, becoming invisible to avoid the library's night watchman and creating his own light to read by.

Meeting with a Stranger: This scene is faint, because it's not a strong memory. In it, John (the first-person perspective) talks to a spindly man in front of a roadside diner. The exchange is brief, but John ignorantly accepts the man's help "improving your dreams" without knowing anything about that help. John didn't notice the hunger in the man's eyes, but it was in the edge of his awareness, and an observer in his Oneiros picks it up. That, and that the man physically disappears as John passes into the diner, seen in a reflection. Urganam could wipe this memory from Hathorne's mind, but leaves the memory as a tease.

Holy Murder: John Hathorne has assaulted three mages in the past, and each event is an intense memory for the man. Astral travelers observe each of these from the first person. In the first, his excitement and apprehension grow apace as he shadows an older man for several blocks, John's God-given awareness ("Supernal Vision") highlighting the witch's abuses of power, before dragging the mage into an alley and stabbing him once before the man knocks John down and hobbles away. John doesn't know if the mage survived.

The second is a confrontation on a dark street in the middle of the night, as rain gently falls. A woman calls out, "This is for Tetrax!" John, silhouetted by a street-light, responds only with a lightning bolt from Heaven. The battle is then short; John's faith ("Magic Shield")

deflects two of her spells before he slams her through a tenement door. He looks at the body but doesn't check for life; astral observers can tell using magic or examination that John unconsciously thinks she lived — or doubts she died. Dominant emotions are shock, a moment of fear and then righteous confidence.

John stands in the street outside a typical suburban house as a bolt of lightning strikes the house, sparking a fire that spreads faster than it should. Concern and anticipation are strong emotions. A door slams open in the backyard and concern crescendos into panic, which Hathorne ignores as he pushes a sheet of fire from the roof down into the backyard. He runs when lights turn on up and down the street. As he runs, his victim's curses chase him and color the scene with relief as it ends.

It isn't obvious, but the concern and relief stem from John's growing awareness that he is unable to question his devotion to rooting out and killing witches. That emotion is an excellent path to the next scene.

Bewilderment: John kneels in the same cathedral as in the earlier scene, but he is no longer as young. He stands and turns to a table of religious symbols that appears as he looks for it. Each symbol he considers in turn; the cross, the font of holy water, an image of Mary, the Bible. He thinks over each, then touches it and absorbs it into his body and life. The fifth symbol, a gallows and swinging noose, takes no thought at all. In fact, he looks past it without seeing it as he accepts its influence on him. As he turns from the table, his hands are bloody and he weeps silently.

Mountain of Pride

The realm that represents Hathorne's Pride is the summit of a great mountain. It makes one think of Moses. Broad and rocky, the summit looks and feels holy; everything about it makes a person feel as though God is watching, and He approves. The harsh landscape is a sacred test and stark reminder of God's perfection, and there is a constant sense of being part of and vital to a greater plan. When one's eyes are closed, one feels adrift in a void, surrounded by nothingness and without any destination.

Climbing down the slope is the fastest escape from this realm, but the slope is treacherous. One does not turn one's back on God. Not only does the descent require constant Athletics checks, but the maze of paths down twist inward on themselves and leave travelers in dead ends or heading back up the mountain. Worse; the demon that lives here acts as a vengeful God. It attacks astral travelers who leave its domain, loosening their grips and hurling them into chasms.

Library of Memories

Despite the distance John Hathorne has come from his parents, their personal library still represents the font of knowledge to him. His storage center is a large, bright room with one door, long walls with floor-to-ceiling bookshelves and a broad window opening into daylight and some pine trees. A comfortable chair is in the center of the room.

Urganam has obscured John's natural memories, thinking that unimpeded access to his past experiences may move him to fight off the unwanted parasite. The books here have made-up titles (*A Litany of Toothaches*) and real titles representing an aspect of John's life (*The Boy Scout Handbook*, symbolic of the patterns and habits in John's life). The books are also incredibly out of order, and entire shelves have been cleared off without regard for their contents. Piles of books hide in corners, not at first evident, and some books have even been hidden beneath the chair, under the rug

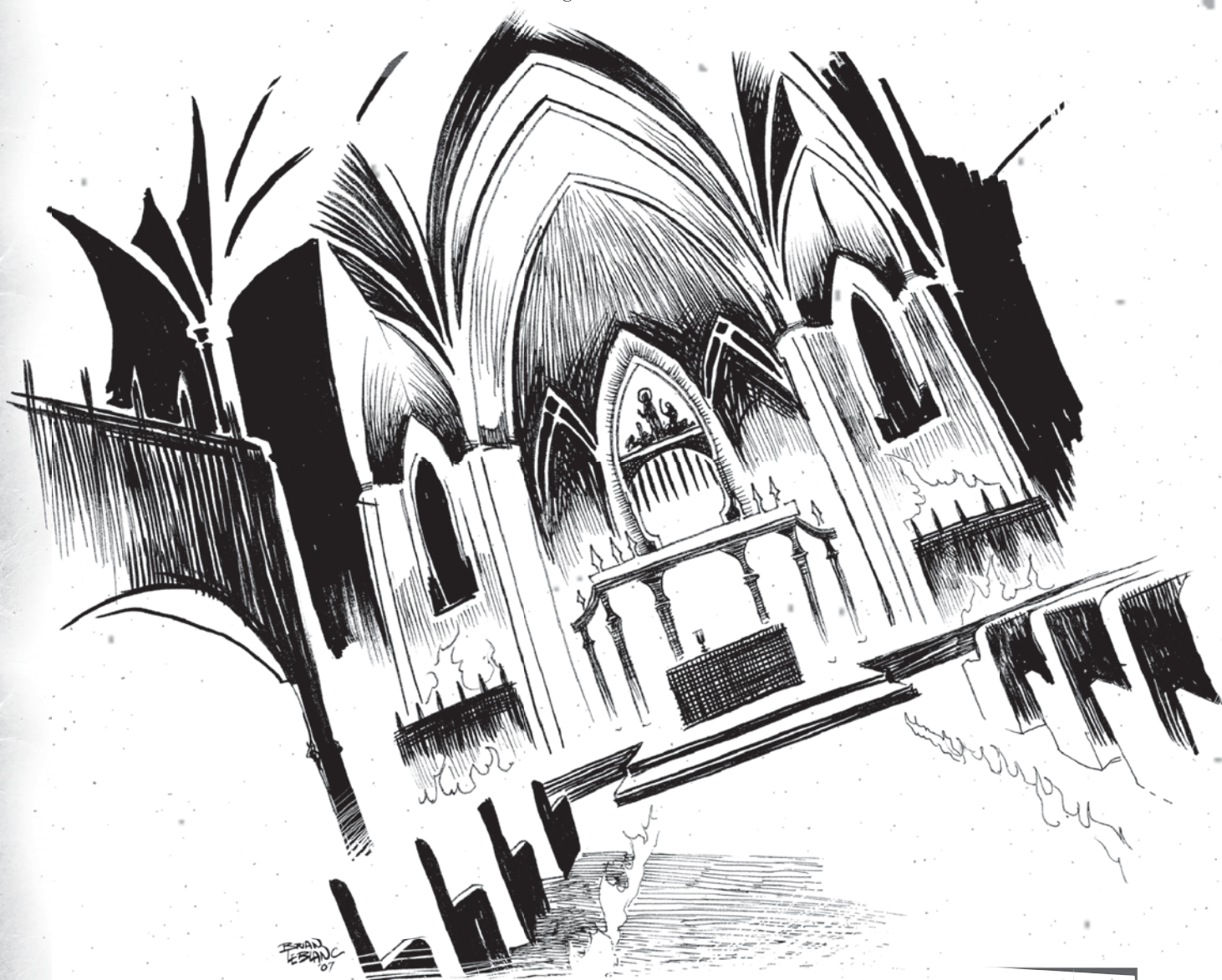
or behind the shelving. Reorganizing the library is an extended Intelligence + Academics or Investigation roll; 30 minutes of perceived time per roll, 10 successes necessary to undo Urganam's damage and the effort attracts Urganam's attention.

Specialized libraries are out the door and up or down the hall. One way is the children's section (John's old room) and the other direction contains memories of mysteries, enigmas and adult themes (his parents' room).

Fear Country

Hathorne's two greatest fears in life are failing God on his mission or failing God by *being on* the mission (i.e., John has misinterpreted God's will). Urganam savors the conflict these two fears provide. To make the taste sharper, Urganam has merged them into one massive, twisting landscape.

Separate, the first was an enormous empty cathedral with a glorious altar; hints of the cathedral where John



found God abound, but it also resembles the massive cathedrals of Europe, up to the massive organ against one wall. The cathedral's primary quality was that of silence, for God no longer spoke to John. The latter had two aspects: one was a classic representation of Hell, a desert of burning sands under a rain of fire; the other was pure emptiness, a black void the represented John's terror that he could be wrong about his faith entirely.

Only recently has the house of John's fears acquired a third contributor, the dreamer's fear of his fanaticism. Hathorne needs to be able to examine his ideas and motives through introspection, but the presence of Urganam's stronghold (see below) quashes any attempts. This has spawned a new fear all its own. Before Urganam joined the fear to the other two fears, the realm was a series of three rooms, each with a door to the two others but without any windows or exits. Paintings, books, maps and more cover the walls, tables and floor, but they all encourage the execution of witches without explanation: art is of blasphemers' deaths; books are accounts of witches executed, methods for finding and killing them or simple exhortations to do it; maps show where witches live and their daily routes, or places where past witches have been put to death. Some of this information is accurate, drawn from John's study on the subject; the rest is simple conjecture.

Now, the conjoined realm takes the worst from each. A massive stone cathedral dominates the infinite plain of red-hot sands. Eternal flames climb the cathedral walls, and stained glass witches hang and burn in the flames. Fire rains from the sky except when the clouds clear to reveal hole in the Heavens, a black moon; where light from this black moon touches the desert, there is nothing but the emptiness of a Godless death. The inside of the cathedral is like an oven, and the long shadows cast by its pews and corners are as empty as an atheist's heart. A mosaic on the floor shows righteous warriors piercing the hearts of the Devil's worshippers, and prayer books contain only hymns to execution and holy murder. The golden altar within smolders with the heat; molten gold pools where the penitent must kneel, but the altar never diminishes.

The nightmare creatures native to each realm now inhabit this place together. None likes the others, though they understand their situation enough to combat astral travelers cooperatively.

Stronghold of Urganam

Visitors appear at the single iron gate in a 100-foot mortared granite wall that seems to run off forever in both directions. The gate is held close with a massive bar, enough to keep out any mortal, but perhaps not a mage. Inside the 10-foot-thick wall, a wide courtyard spreads out to the horizon beneath a shining sun that never sets. A cluster of buildings sits a mile away along a gold-paved road; perspective makes these enormous buildings look small from the gate.

At the cluster's center is a replica of St. Peter's Basilica and Square from the Vatican City, adjoined by the Sistine Chapel. Lesser cathedrals and churches surround these central structures. Hathorne once read of and saw pictures of these places and admired them; Urganam took these images from John's mind and bound them here.

Everything about the construction proclaims the righteousness of John's faith and his cause. Statues of him in gold and marble are everywhere, showing the man standing above a cowering heretic with a sword, kneeling before Jesus, laying his hands on the sick to help them and so on. Plaques proclaim John the cleanser of Earth, the next Messiah, the son of God, the favored hero of God and so on. Michelangelo's work in the Sistine Chapel displays John Hathorne in place of Adam. The inscription above the basilica entrance honors John rather than St. Peter. The inside honors John Hathorne and St. Peter as equals, and records of John's exploits praise his devotion and rectitude. These images show up in John's dreams regularly, where they disturb and bolster him equally.

Urganam itself resides here. It watches the stronghold of John's righteousness to be certain it doesn't falter in guiding him and occasionally travels forth to renew its warpings of John's other dream places.

Enemies Within

The Pride of John Hathorne

Quote: Welcome to Paradise.

Description: John's Pride looks just like John, but flawless. Creases of worry and imperfections of skin are absent, as is any sign of doubt. The body is physically magnificent, and the eyes are gentle with compassion and sharply aware. The head bears a shining halo of light, and there is a constant sense of total approval from God Above.

Storytelling Hints: This demon creates pride by exhibiting the trait. The demon's every motion and

word describe the demon's superiority and perfection, daring others to display their pride in their disagreement or out of self-defense. The demon considers every action Hathorne takes to be ideal and defends them without rest or logic. The demon uses its Influence to evoke Pride when necessary.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 6, Finesse 3, Resistance 4

Willpower: 10

Essence: 15 (max 15)

Initiative: 7

Defense: 6

Speed: 14

Size: 5

Corpus: 9

Influence:
Pride 3

Numina:
Sense Weakness
(nine dice)

- **Sense Weakness:** On a successful roll, the goetic demon learns one of three things about its target: his Vice, a derangement he suffers or a physical liability (such as a Flaw). The demon does not learn anything it already knows and learns only one weakness at a time.

Ban: When John has admitted to error within the last 24 hours, halve all the demon's dice pools.

The Fear of Failing God

Quote: <condemning silence>

Description: John's fear of failing in his God-appointed mission and disappointing his Lord manifests as a classic angel. It stands eight feet tall, has a perfectly handsome face with swept back golden hair, wears white robes and has powerful white wings. The angel's expression is that of constant disapproval and disappointment, as if the person before the angel could have been so much more, if he had only tried.

Storytelling Hints: This Fear never speaks; its condemnatory silence is eloquent. When a traveler comes to the Fear's domain inside the cathedral, the Fear joins the traveler after a short time and watches

with sadness. Only one with a heart of stone does not feel like a failure in this creature's presence.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 3, Resistance 5

Willpower: 10

Essence: 15 (max 15)

Initiative: 8

Defense: 5

Speed: 13

Size: 6

Corpus: 11

Influence: Fear 2

Numina: Blast
(eight dice), Harrow
(eight dice)

- **Blast:** The Fear of Failing God focuses its intense regret for a person's inadequacies on that person, tearing his confidence and astral body to shreds.

Ban: The Fear cannot Harrow anyone who blasphemes in its presence.

The Fear of False Righteousness

Quote: Sinners! Blasphemers! Trespassers against the will of God! His wrath is upon you!

Description: This fear manifests as a monstrous and muscled human body with the head of a bull sewn onto its bleeding neck. The grotesquerie bellows its anger at those who claim God's name and inspiration falsely as it hunts the burning sands of John's fears. The Fear's cracked and yellowed fingernails are stone-hard and more than vicious enough to rend a human — or an astral body — into shreds.

Storytelling Hints: The Fear of False Righteousness is a torturer, a creature whose sole goal is to instill a terror of *real* righteousness into John and anyone the Fear meets to ensure they are too reluctant to ever commit the sin again. The Fear circles the infinite sands of its domain in search of prey, which the Fear of False Righteousness chases tirelessly until the person (or Oneiros native) is gone from the realm



of fear or is nothing more than bloody tatters. The Fear follows prey into the cathedral without hesitation, which causes conflict with the Fear that rules there.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 7, Finesse 3, Resistance 3

Willpower: 10

Essence: 15 (max 15)

Initiative: 6

Defense: 7

Speed: 16 (species factor 6)

Size: 6

Corpus: 9

Influence: Fear 2

Numina: Harrow (10 dice)

Ban: This Fear cannot harm anyone who claims to repent and prostrates himself to the creature. Rising from prostration ends this protection.

The Fear of Blind Devotion

Quote: Yes, but why? Why do you think that?

Description: This Fear looks only like a man in his 40s with receding blond hair and sad, deep eyes with heavy bags. Regret mars an otherwise handsome face. Astral explorers who have run the gamut of Hathorne's important dream scenes recognize this man as the dreamer's father, seen from an adult's perspective. The clothes this Fear wears vary but are always comfortable and well worn. With the creation of one merged fear country, this Fear often appears in black with a clerical collar as if John's father somehow belonged in a place of worship.

Storytelling Hints: The Fear fights only with logic, a weapon effective on John but perhaps less so on most others. The Fear spends most of its time hiding from the Fear of Failing God, which is strong and happy to crush John's impulse to do anything other than recoil from his fear of disappointing and losing God. As a result, the Fear of Blind Devotion reveals itself



only when astral travelers are there to listen and possibly defend it. If the Fear has a real person's ear, the Fear of Blind Devotion tries to open a dialogue about the errors of blind faith and the importance of challenging one's own beliefs. Even as a creature of logic, the Fear is not above using its Fear Influence to encourage debate or make its arguments seem safer.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 2, Finesse 6, Resistance 4

Willpower: 8

Essence: 15 (max 15)

Initiative: 10

Defense: 6

Speed: 13

Size: 5

Corpus: 9

Influence: Fear 2

Numina: Silent Words (10 dice)

• **Silent Words:** At the cost of one Essence, the Fear speaks inside its target's mind for one turn per success. No person beside the target senses the Fear's words.

It uses this power to communicate without drawing down the other fears'

wraths, directing astral travelers from hiding to safe places within the massive cathedral. Unwilling targets contest with Composure + Gnosis.

Ban: Saying "You're not my father," "I don't want to see you again" or equivalents forces the Fear to leave the one who says it alone.

Urganam

Quote: What is this? My perfect solitude, altered? How... unexpected.

Description: Urganam has lived solely inside John Hathorne's unconscious for so long that Urganam no longer keeps a concrete form unless the creature wants to. When traveling through the rest of the Oneiros, Urganam is amorphous, a flowing puddle of fantasy and

dream. Looking into Urganam reflects the observer's desires and terrors, viewed through the lens of an entity that appreciates its own pleasure over all else and takes that pleasure — and sustenance — from conflicting emotions.

Inside Urganam's stronghold, Urganam dons the form of the Pope wearing John's face. This image features in John's dreams with the rest of the distorted Vatican and wakes him in sweats. Urganam's face bears disdain for everything that is not *it* and makes its superiority look effortless.

Storytelling Hints: Urganam wants no interference as the creature enjoys John's growing madness and his diminishing moral code. Urganam uses all of its resources to force any astral explorers out of Astral Space. Urganam first directs Oneiros natives at the interlopers, hoping to expel them while preserving its secrecy. The fears and demon detailed here are prime candidates, since the Fae can carry the fears through the dream space at Urganam's whim, but other natives suffice in a pinch.

If forced to confront astral travelers on its own, Urganam first represents itself as John's introspection — his daimon. In truth, Urganam crushed John's daimon as its opening move when invading the mage's mind, and Urganam now imprisons the creature beneath Urganam's stronghold. This is part of why John's righteousness always trumps his self-questioning.

Urganam welcomes the astral travelers and offers to guide them, leading them through harmless (and clueless) dreams. Some Urganam creates on the spot, designed to ease explorers' worries.

When recognized or threatened by intruders, Urganam does not hesitate to kill their astral bodies and send them back to real space with a final message that Urganam owns this dreamland.

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 8, Finesse 10, Resistance 6

Willpower: 14

Essence: 20 (max 20)

Initiative: 18

Defense: 10

Speed: 23 or 28 (amorphous form; species factor 10)

Size: 5

Corpus: 11

Influence: Dreams 5

Numina: Armor of Fantasy (14 dice), Feed (18 dice), Leave Dream (18 dice)

• **Armor of Fantasy:** Urganam surrounds itself with raw fantasy, reflecting an attacker's imagination back



at him with enough force to slow an attack. Every person to attack Urganam subtracts armor equal to the higher of his Wits, Intelligence, Power or Finesse. Creatures without creativity (including most Oneiros natives and spirits) lose no dice.

• **Feed:** Urganam does not regain Essence on a per-scene or per-day basis as Oneiros natives do. Urganam feeds on emotions, the stronger the better. Activating this power while in any of John's emotional scenes or realms allows the Fae to regain Essence equal to successes rolled. When confronted by astral travelers, Urganam can do the same if their emotions run high. For this reason, Urganam faces astral travelers with support from a nightmare creature or watches such an encounter from hiding. Feeding does not harm the target. Urganam cannot harvest more Essence from a single person per day than that person's Willpower.

• **Leave Dream:** If Urganam must, it spends three Essence to leave John Hathorne's dream space. This is a final resort, something that Urganam only does if the alternative is destruction — Urganam does not re-form as true creatures of dream do.

Ban: Touching dream-iron expels Urganam from the Oneiros; Urganam has destroyed all iron in Hathorne's dream space.

Note: These statistics represent Urganam after much time acclimatizing to John's Oneiros. Faced in real space, Urganam is quite different. If it flees John's unconscious, Urganam flees back whence it came and never returns.

The Realm of Mars

Mars has been a focus for dreams and visions of alien worlds and alien civilizations for many centuries. The realm is the astral version of the planet Mars and also a realm containing all of the stories, myths and legends surrounding this planet and all of the planet's mythic and symbolic associations. This realm has two central themes — encountering the alien and conflict. Here, the norms, truths and expectations of Earth may not be true. Also, above all else, Mars is a realm of conflict. All of the various sub-realms of Mars each have a central conflict, and this conflict pervades all aspects of this sub-realm. Although various individual conflicts can be resolved, new ones always arise, because they are an intrinsic part of the nature of the realm of Mars.

Here, visitors can test themselves against all manner of obstacles and challenges, including everything from a harsh and deadly environment to an army of fierce warriors or alien war machines created by monstrous beings. Some members of the Adamantine Arrow regularly travel here so they can prove themselves against all manner of difficult challenges. The realm of Mars is also an ideal place for members of the Adamantine Arrow, and other martially inclined mages to test various combat scenarios or new types of tactics, since sufficiently dedicated visitors can find almost any imaginable conflict somewhere within this realm. In addition, scholars who are willing to risk themselves in the pursuit of knowledge can find all manner of alien insights that often can be found nowhere else.

Getting There

In addition to the usual lengthy and difficult meditation needed to visit the Temenos, visitors can also reach the realm of Mars through easier methods. The simplest involves touching one of the meteorites found in the Antarctic that originated from Mars while vividly imagining traveling to Mars. The other method involves looking at Mars through a telescope powerful

enough to reveal at least vague details of the surface (a 500-power lens on a well-made home telescope is sufficient) while making a successful meditation roll (with a penalty of -2 because of also having to look through a telescope when making this roll).

Anyone who succeeds in doing either of these dreams of traveling to Mars the next time he sleeps. If he spends a point of Mana and succeeds in an extended meditation roll with a target number of eight, he arrives in the realm of Mars. The exact method of travel varies with the person, and ranges from a dream that begins with the character standing under an open sky looking up at Mars, and then rising up in a beam of light and appearing on the Martian surface a few moments later, to climbing into a rocket ship and traveling through space. If several people all attempt to visit the realm of Mars by touching the same meteorite or looking through the same telescope, they all travel to Mars together, either in the same beam of light, on the same rocket ship or by some similar means. Regardless of how they get there or whether they are traveling alone or together, the journey to Mars is always rapid and uneventful.

Upon arrival, visitors always arrive at the summit of Olympus Mons, the highest mountain on Mars and the planet's single most distinctive feature. The summit consists of a rough plateau 53 miles across and 37 miles wide, surrounded by a steep escarpment that ranges from a few yards to four miles high. Visitors always arrive inside the caldera, within 20 yards of this escarpment, and characters who travel to Mars together always arrive within no more than a dozen yards of one another.

Themes and Magic Use on Mars

The realm of Mars is among other things a realm of conflict. This conflict can take a multitude of forms, ranging from a dead world and nearly airless world where humans require protective suits to survive to a barbaric planet filled with dangerous beasts and monstrous enemies. In all cases, a visit to the realm of Mars involves adversity and conflict.

As a result, magic involving adversity and conflict always gains a +1 bonus. Spells to attack others or to protect anyone from physical danger (including environmental threats and physical attacks) gain a +1 bonus, as do all rolls to use Matter or Prime magics to create or enhance weapons or armor.

Travel Between the Different Sub-realms of Mars

After the initial choice on Olympus Mons, it is still possible to travel from one version of Mars to another. The nature of the realm of Mars means that as long as someone is actively engaged with his present situation — fighting a battle against mechanized war machines or four-armed, sword-wielding barbarians, exploring ancient ruins, struggling to survive in difficult conditions or even lustily sampling the delights of a decadent city, the person remains in a consistent version of Mars. However, when someone becomes bored or inattentive and wanders aimlessly, he can drift from one version of Mars to another. Unless the mage uses magic to alter his clothing and gear, these items change to keep pace with the changing environment. A character who wanders from an airless Mars to a harsh but livable desert world inhabited by deadly tentacled aliens would find that his spacesuit had changed into clothing suitable for a desert and would also find that he was wearing some sort of light armor. Mages can use Matter spells to alter their gear as they see fit or they can use the Prime Arcana to create new gear. However, anyone who travels to a sub-realm of Mars without air and without allowing his clothing to transform into a spacesuit risks asphyxiation.

Deliberately traveling from one sub-realm of Mars to another is possible but difficult, since the act of paying attention to one's surroundings is antithetical to the state needed to wander from one version of Mars to another.

Doing so requires a successful meditation roll, and doing so with the intention of finding a specific version of Mars requires an extended meditation roll with a target number between 2 and 4, depending upon how different the desired version is from where the character is. For example, going from a lifeless Mars to a world with a breathable atmosphere, abundant water and teeming wildlife would have a target number of 4.

The Sub-realms of Mars

The method in which visitors leave Olympus Mons determines which of the many sub-realms of the realm of Mars they visit. Walking around the edge of the

caldera, visitors see a variety of methods for descent, ranging from a break in the surrounding wall of rock that looks like an easy path down the side of the volcano to a bewildering variety of vehicles and riding animals. Everything from futuristic but relatively normal-looking vehicles with balloon tires to strange eight-legged beasts the size of large horses, huge three-legged war machines and fliers that travel using some form of magic or anti-gravity are all present. The nature of the various vehicles and animals near where the character or characters appear is largely random, but by walking around the rim of the caldera, the characters encounter a nearly endless variety of such methods of transport.

The Realistic Mars

Actually climbing down the mountain is by far the most prosaic option and results in a journey to the most prosaic version of Mars — a nearly lifeless, almost airless world much like the one astronomers see through their telescopes and that various space probes have visited. As soon as anyone climbs over the edge, she finds that she is wearing a spacesuit. The exact type of spacesuit varies from one visit to another, and can range from spacesuits similar to those currently in use to spacesuits made by a significantly more advanced technology or skintight ones more suitable for the covers of lurid science fiction magazines published in the 1950s.

This version of Mars is lifeless and ultimately rather dull for everyone except geologists. As a result, it's exceedingly easy to become bored and shift to another version of Mars. The nearer versions are all visions of Mars as a human colony world, with everything from domed colonies struggling to survive to the beginning of grandiose terraforming endeavors. In all of these versions of Mars, the conflict that defines this realm consists of contests between the colonists and the harsh and deadly environment.

The denizens of these versions of Mars are typically intelligent, hardworking individuals who almost always appear as humans in good health and physical condition. However, in the realm of Mars, conflict is inevitable, so on versions of Mars where large areas are under secure domes or where terraforming is well underway, other forms of conflict naturally arise. The most common forms of conflict in these sub-realms are political and ideological — individuals with different ideologies or goals argue and occasionally engage in various acts of violence. Some people object to the speed of any terraforming endeavors, or simply disagree

Connections to the Planet Mars

In the early 21st century, the surface of Mars is relatively well-known to researchers and those members of the general public who are interested. As a result, the portions of the realm of Mars that are most similar to the physical reality of the planet Mars are actually quite close. Spending time in the most realistic version of Mars can be used as a Known (-4) sympathetic connection to the planet Mars for purposes of using Space magics to scry or visit the planet. However, the same is true of high-resolution photographs or a meteorite from Mars. Of course, any mage interested in doing this must first ask herself why she is interested in visiting a lifeless and hostile world.

about the form government on Mars should take or how close its ties to Earth should be. In some of these versions of Mars, there is actual warfare between separate colonies or between Mars and Earth. These sub-realms are part of the Mars of War.

The Mars of War

While all versions of Mars are unusually inclined to conflict, anyone who seeks out violence in the realm of Mars can easily find that some versions of Mars are vast and terrible battlefields. Anyone taking one of the various armed and armored war machines down from the summit of Olympus Mons will also arrive in one of these sub-realms. While all of these wars are in some way associated with the planet Mars, they also partake of all of the universal qualities of human warfare, with and abundance of horrific atrocities, touching heroism, profound bravery, craven cowardice and pointless death. While there are an almost unlimited number of possible versions of the Mars of War, almost all fall into one of the following four categories:

1) Worlds where the war is fought between human colonists on Mars and the armies of Earth. Here, the conflict is about freedom and self-determination vs. loyalty and obedience. Visitors can also potentially visit the version of Earth in this sub-realm. However, most conflict occurs on Mars, as invaders from Earth and colonies loyal to Earth battle proponents of Martian independence. These wars almost always include vast and terrible weapons of mass destruction that can depressurize an entire colony or destroy many thousands of Martian soldiers in a single huge explosion.

2) Worlds where these human colonists attack or are attacked by aliens that are either the native inhabitants of Mars or alien invaders from another world. Here, the conflict is either between humans and alien invaders or more commonly between humans and alien Martians. This conflict rages between human and alien, and between invaders seeking new land and new resources and natives who are attempting to defend their homes. Usually, in these wars the aliens are not implacable or incomprehensible enemies, and so negotiation and diplomacy are possible.

3) Worlds where savage and alien Martians attack Earth. When visiting this version of Mars, mages either appear on Mars or find themselves suddenly on Earth in the midst of a Martian invasion, in close proximity to either a Martian-held stronghold or a large Martian attack. In these sub-realms, the Martians are always considerably more technologically advanced than the humans the Martians are attacking. These Martian are also usually (but not always) alien and terrible foes who are difficult to understand and almost impossible to reason with. The only way to defeat them is either by chance or by understanding them and their weaknesses.

4) A version of the Mars of Heroic Honor (see below) where two or more sides go to war. Here, the battles are heroic endeavors in which individual warriors of truly heroic prowess can defeat dozens of more ordinary opponents and an entire battle can sometimes be decided by single combat between the greatest warriors on each side. In these wars, the warriors might use swords or ray guns or both, but heavy weapons are either unknown or used only to knock down city walls. Destroying hundreds or thousands with a single massive cannon or ray gun simply does not occur, and anyone who attempts to do so would be considered the most heinous of villains, who finds all of the other horrified combatants allied against him.

The Mars of Heroic Honor

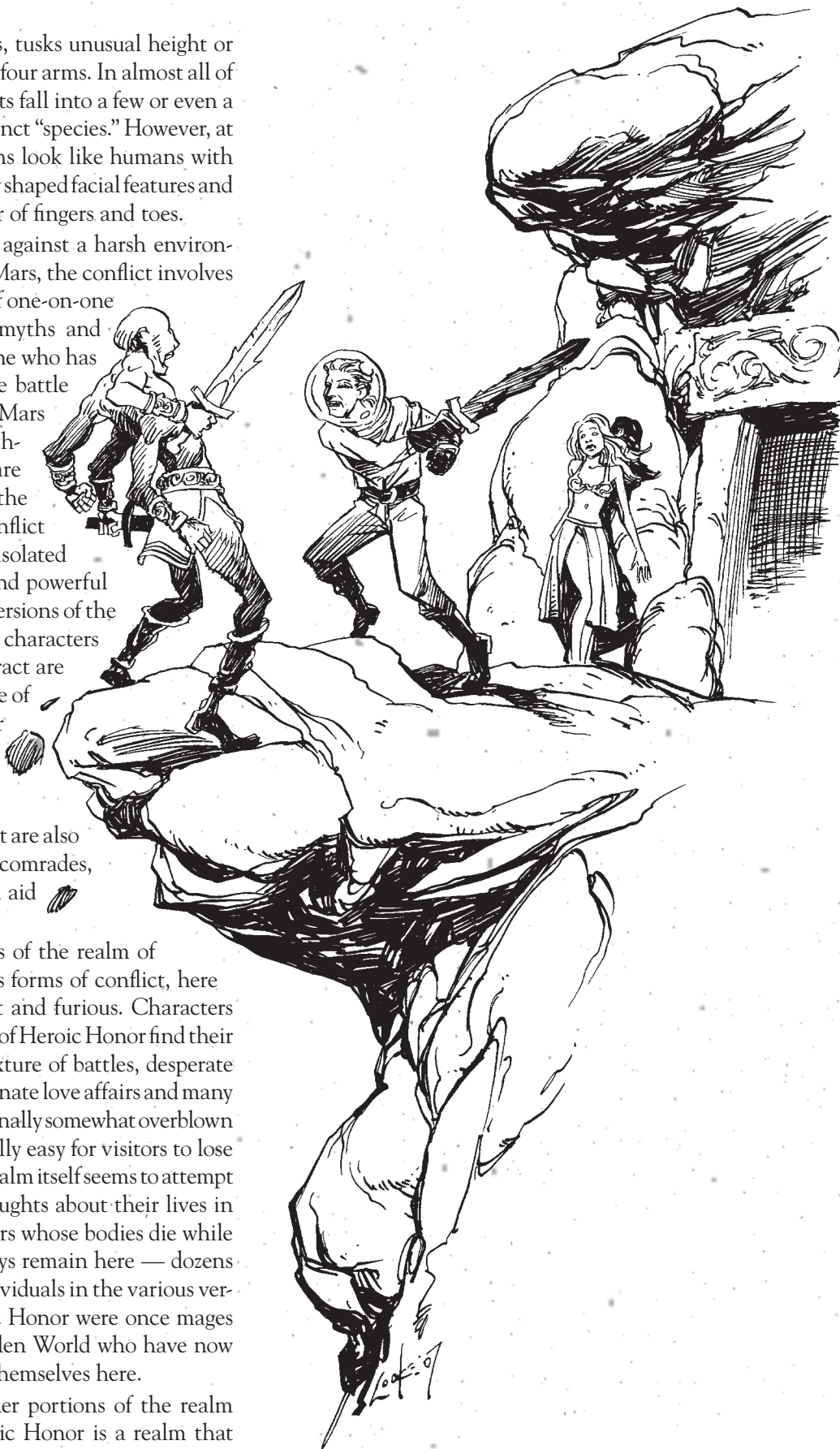
Taking any of the exotic riding animals or the more unusual and unlikely seeming vehicles on Olympus Mons results in the characters entering a Mars that appears to be something out of some planetary romance novel or comic book. The details differ from one of these sub-realms to another and range from a young lush Mars with shallow seas to an old world covered in vast red deserts kept alive by a carefully maintained network of canals. In almost of these worlds, some or all of the inhabitants are visibly not human. Instead, they have oddly colored skin as well as occasionally

features such as tails, scales, tusks unusual height or even exotic features such as four arms. In almost all of these worlds, the inhabitants fall into a few or even a few dozen separate and distinct “species.” However, at least some of these Martians look like humans with oddly colored skin, strangely shaped facial features and perhaps an unusual number of fingers and toes.

Instead of war or battles against a harsh environment, on these versions of Mars, the conflict involves duels, honor and the sorts of one-on-one conflicts found in heroic myths and modern action films. Anyone who has a chance to observe a large battle on one of these versions of Mars will see that the battle is nothing like either modern warfare or most battles fought on the Mars of War. Instead, all conflict ultimately consists of small, isolated struggles between skilled and powerful combatants. On all of the versions of the Mars of Heroic Honor, most characters with whom the mages interact are armed and trained in the use of swords, blasters or whatever the local weapons of choice are. Here, the Martians are quick to take offense to an insult or perceived slight, but are also fiercely loyal to their chosen comrades, and most repay any and all aid to the best of their ability.

While all of the portions of the realm of Mars are filled with various forms of conflict, here the action is especially fast and furious. Characters who spend time in the Mars of Heroic Honor find their stays to be filled with a mixture of battles, desperate escapes, heroic feasts, passionate love affairs and many similarly intense and occasionally somewhat overblown adventures. It is exceptionally easy for visitors to lose track of time here, and the realm itself seems to attempt to distract people from thoughts about their lives in the Fallen World. Characters whose bodies die while they are in this realm always remain here — dozens of important or notable individuals in the various versions of the Mars of Heroic Honor were once mages or thaumaturges in the Fallen World who have now made permanent lives for themselves here.

Even more than the other portions of the realm of Mars, the Mars of Heroic Honor is a realm that attempts to fit visitors into broadly drawn roles in



a story. Characters who demonstrate any degree of competence find obvious opportunities for heroism within a few days or possibly even a few hours of their arrival. The helpless and the downtrodden will be brutalized in the characters' presence, someone fleeing pursuit will beg them for help or they will be in a position to overhear villains planning some heinous act. Characters who rise to one or more of these opportunities rapidly become enmeshed in all manner of heroic problems, with further challenges soon occurring after every victory.

Characters who deliberately turn down or avoid such opportunities and who care more for their own agendas or safety than the fates of others soon find that opportunities for heroism become less common, as do those characters who betray their fellow characters or casually break their word. Instead, such individuals find greedy and immoral individuals approaching for opportunities for mutual gain. Also, the characters' efforts to accomplish some goal often attracts the attention of an unscrupulous tyrant or a greedy power broker who offers them whatever help they might require, in return for the characters' help in disposing of a problematic hero who is attempting to foil the villain's efforts. Although characters who choose or fall into this role are on rare occasions offered chances to redeem themselves, such opportunities are always difficult and dangerous.

Characters who join forces with villains or continue to avoid heroism soon find that any plans made in this realm always tainted with greed, suffering and death, and many of their efforts will fail as heroic opponents seek to oppose the characters at every turn. Similarly, characters who are passive or seem helpless initially find themselves in situations in which they are forced to act to save themselves. If they continue in their helplessness, they soon become pawns who are kidnapped or threatened as a tool to influence their friends and allies.

One of the more difficult features of all versions of the Mars of Heroic Honor is that a character's reputation and his role in the stories that the realm attempts to place him in continues from one visit to the next. If someone visits this realm once and then returns eight years later, the realm continues to treat him as a hero, villain or victim based on his previous actions. Although roles and reputations can be changed, doing so takes time and effort, and characters who use Mind Arcanum to cause the people around them to believe the mages are heroes find that the realm effectively casts them as even more horrific villains than they were before.

Virtues and Vices on Mars

Because of Mars's nature, some Virtues and Vices function differently on Mars, because this realm is strongly associated with conflict.

Vices and Virtues that are either associated with or antithetical to this principle affect characters differently. Characters can regain all of their Willpower by fulfilling the Fortitude and Justice Virtues twice per chapter. However, if a character has the Charity or Prudence Virtue, she regains only half her Willpower (round up) when it is fulfilled. Similarly, characters with the Vice Wrath regains two points of Willpower anytime the Vice is fulfilled, but characters with the Vice Sloth only regain one point of Willpower every two times (round down) that they fulfill this Vice.

The Mars of Ancient Knowledge

One of the most unusual portions of the realm of Mars are those sub-realms devoted to imaginings of Mars as the home to ancient and powerful alien beings, who are the inhabitants of a dying world. Here, the central conflict can be everything from the conflict of a dying species with its increasingly hostile environment to, as H.G. Wells wrote in *The War of the Worlds*, "...intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic [who] regarded [the Fallen] world with envious eyes." The inhabitants of these sub-realms are alien creatures with inhuman thoughts and motives. Although they began as human imaginings of alien beings, these astral Martians have become fully independent beings and most are relatively powerful archetypes. Some of these beings hold knowledge that can be useful to mages, but many are profoundly dangerous.

The greatest danger when dealing with these beings is that a few of the most brilliant, alien and malevolent of these creatures have in some unknown fashion become associated with entities from the Abyss. As a result, communicating with alien creatures also involves communicating with entities from the Abyss. Such creatures can naturally provide great aid to a mage, but with the same dire costs that dealing with the Abyss and its inhabitants always entails.

Thankfully, many of these beings are not quite so alien or hostile. In general, ancient Martian intelligences who struggle against their dying world, but who are not seeking to conquer other worlds, are less powerful and somewhat less knowledgeable than their most hostile counterparts,

but they are also significantly less dangerous. In return for the characters' aid on some project of theirs, many of these beings are willing to answer questions.

Although Mars has no direct connection to Atlantis and so any Martians' knowledge of it is limited, many of these beings are exceptionally brilliant and capable of reading the minds of anyone who will allow them to do so. As a result, mages can come to these Martians with questions, present them with the data the mages have so far managed to obtain, and the Martian intelligences can sometimes see solutions or correlations that the mages have overlooked. In addition, because dozens or hundreds of mages over thousands of years have consulted these same beings, some know rites and information about storehouses of magical knowledge that the beings gained from these ancient mages.

However, Storytellers should remember that even the most seemingly benevolent and helpful of these beings is an alien creature with motives that are to some degree unknown and potentially unknowable. Also, the most benevolent of these creatures often look beyond the simple wishes of the mage asking them for information. Instead, these vast and ancient intellects often consider how giving this information will affect the mage and her actions, and what she is likely to do with it. As a result, they can seem exceedingly capricious. However, honor is an important aspect of many of these Martian sub-realms, and so most Martians keep at least the letter of any agreement that they make.

However, most of these aliens care little for humanity, or at minimum have no interest in the mages approaching them. As a result, even the most benevolent Martians require recompense for their advice or knowledge. Typical services consist of fighting off enemies, providing the Martians with some difficult to obtain piece of information or some form of substantial aid in helping to save themselves or their species from the creeping extinction that is the hallmark of all of these versions of Mars. Some understand that they are astral beings and instead ask for the mage to create and distribute art or writing about them and their lives in the Fallen World. Some of these sub-realms are worlds that are now devoid of life, but that were once inhabited by brilliant Martians who became extinct thousands or millions of years before. On these worlds, characters find the records and technologies of the ancient Martians, which can provide knowledge and great danger. In these sub-realms, the conflicts involve the harsh environment and the dangers and difficulties of attempting to use and understand powerful but profoundly alien knowledge and technologies.

Characters of Mars

Heroic Champion

Quote: *This is no place for the craven or unjust. This is Mars!*

Description: Heroic champions are one of the more common archetypes found in the Mars of Heroic Honor. Depending upon the actions and character of visitors, these archetypes can be staunch allies, loyal employers or implacable foes. They are deadly combatants and refuse to retreat or surrender if the lives of innocents or someone under their care are at stake.

Storytelling Hints: They cannot be bribed or suborned, but their honor is also their greatest weakness. Threatening to harm or kill an innocent will cause a heroic champion to surrender, and heroic champions are also always bound by their word. They can be summoned into the Fallen World, but often find the experience disturbing because their simple morality and rigid code of honor are rare and difficult to maintain there. If summoned, they can only enter the bodies of people who are relatively courageous and selfless.

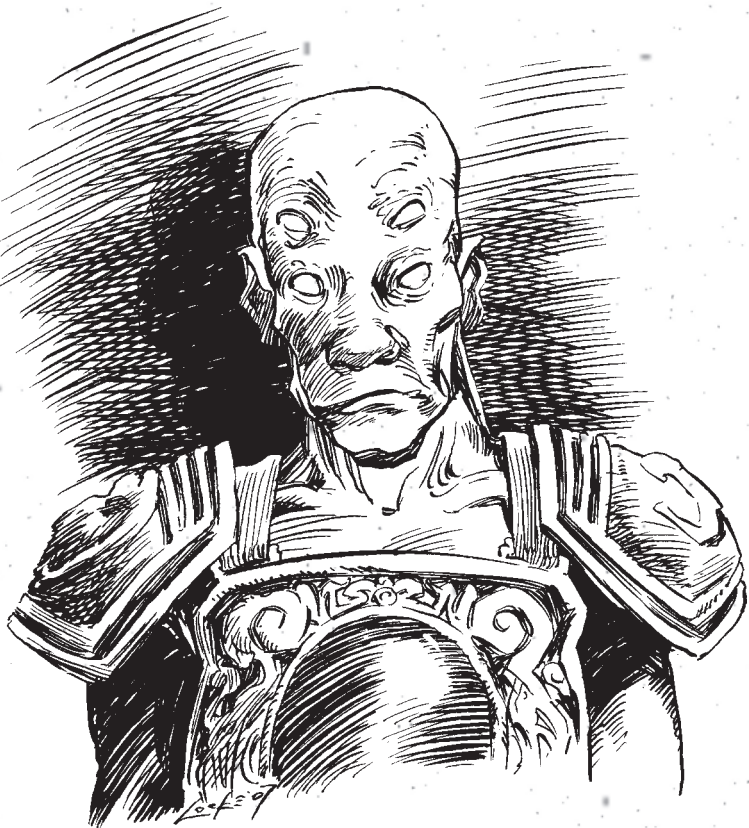
Rank: 2–4

Attributes: Power 4–12, Finesse 2–6, Resistance 4–12

Willpower: 8–24

Essence: 15–25

Initiative: 6–18



Defense: 4-12

Speed: 11-23

Size: 5-6

Corpus: 9-18

Influence: Combat 2-4

Numina: Animal Control, Create Emotion (courage, calm and fear), Possession (in the Fallen World)

Ban: Heroic champions can only behave in an honorable fashion and are incapable of breaking their word.

Wise and Ancient Martian

Quote: <<cool, inquisitive susurrus of syllables>>

Description: These entities may take almost any form, from nearly human bipeds to strange, sluggish asymmetries borne on peculiar walking machines.

Storytelling Hints: Found in the Mars of Ancient Knowledge, these powerful beings are somewhat benevolent, but are also profoundly alien. They deal fairly with visitors, but sometimes prefer giving visitors what the Martians think the visitor needs, rather than what the visitor asks for.

Rank: 3-5

Attributes: Power: 4-10, Finesse 8-15, Resistance 4-10



Willpower: 8-20

Essence: 20-50

Initiative: 12-25

Defense: 8-15

Speed: 14-28

Size: 4-7

Corpus: 9-17

Influence: Ancient and Exotic Knowledge 3-5

Numina: Compulsion, Ghost Sign, Phantasm, Telekinesis

Ban: Their thoughts and actions can never be completely comprehensible to any humans.

Malevolent but Brilliant Martian

Quote: <<exclamations in a garbled, dissonant language>>

Description: Found in the Mars of Ancient Knowledge, these powerful beings range from aliens who are profoundly self-centered to those who are actively hostile to all other intelligences. These Martians are all exceedingly alien, but their less friendly motives are often frighteningly familiar. Just as their more benevolent counterparts, these entities may appear in any manner of forms. They tend to wear their malevolence more openly, though, and are typically more menacing in aspect.

Storytelling Hints: Some seek only to betray and destroy those who come seeking their aid, but others will deal well with people who offer themselves as their pawns or servants, but only as long as these pawns or servants remain useful. A few of these beings are actually acamoth from the Abyss (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 322-323).

Rank: 4-5

Attributes: Power: 10-15, Finesse 10-15, Resistance 6-10

Willpower: 16-25

Essence: 25-50

Initiative: 20-30

Defense: 10-15

Speed: 23-33

Size: 5-7

Corpus: 9-17

Influence: Exotic Knowledge and Dangerous Technologies 4-5

Numina: Compulsion, Ghost Sign, Harrow, Phantasm, Possession, Telekinesis, Terrify

Ban: They must keep the exact letter of their agreements, but always attempt to twist these agreements to their own advantage.



Story Hooks

This realm of conflict and alien encounters is filled with a multitude of stories and simply visiting one of the many sub-realms ensures that the characters will be presented with an opportunity to become involved with the ongoing conflict. The characters might encounter a human colony that requires help to avoid destruction by violent invaders or some looming natural disaster, or the characters might find themselves in the middle of some duel of honor or as the only line of defense between a group of helpless but wise scholars and the armies of a brutal tyrant. However, most mages think of Mars as a realm that holds a wealth of alien but potentially useful knowledge.

Story Hooks Involving Alien Martians and Martian Knowledge

In addition to the close association between Mars and conflict, which often includes violent conflict, Mars is also above anything else an alien planet. As a result, Mars can hold all manner of unexpected surprises, including ones that can have profound and dangerous affects on visitors from the Fallen World. These dangers are fairly minimal in versions of Mars that are similar to the actual planet — at most, visitors experience the death of their astral bodies. However, such dangers can become far greater in the more exotic sub-realms. The most obvious dangers are the presence

of actual aliens, either living or dead. Many versions of Mars contain either living Martians or dead Martians who left behind ruins and relics.

The most powerful living Martians can potentially twist visitors' minds and damage their souls via ideological attacks, and the effects of the relics of long-dead Martians can be even more insidious and deadly, because the relics they left behind may be so utterly alien and incomprehensible that no amount of powerful magic can fully reveal what they do. The most powerful of these devices can permanently heal derangements, reduce the difficulty (and experience point cost) of increasing a specific Mental or Social Attribute or even give the user a new Mental Merit or an exotic Skill Specialty. However, these same devices can also induce derangements, imprison the user in some non-physical cage that also prevents him from leaving Astral Space, damage the user's mind or possibly even steal the user's soul.

Dealing with Martians and especially with ancient Martian relics should be challenging for even powerful mages, and even powerful magic should not serve as too much of a shortcut to these difficulties. The more alien living Martians do not think like humans. The Mind 3 spell "Universal Language" will almost certainly produce translations that are not exact and are at least somewhat confusing. Attempting to read the minds or emotions of an alien being can be a difficult and frustrating experience. Similarly, analyzing Martian relics with Matter, Prime and Time magics need not reveal all details of the device because their function and use may be based upon sufficiently alien principles that no human is fully able to understand all of what they do.

Attempting to communicate with Martians or to understand and learn to use their devices can be a vastly rewarding process, but is almost always difficult and involves some degree of trial and error and risk as the characters attempt to understand the concepts and principles behind the Martians and their technologies. When possible, Storytellers should make understanding Martian life and Martian psychology a key aspect of learning to use powerful Martian technologies or communicating complex concepts to Martians. An excellent way to help characters understand ancient Martian relics that they uncover would be to for the cabal to use Time magics to observe the scenes of Martian life and scenes of Martians using the various relics and then allowing the players the chance to puzzle out the various activities of these alien beings.

Conflict is one of the central themes of Mars, and these themes should be present when the characters are dealing

with either ancient Martian ruins or exceedingly alien Martians. In addition to the obvious physical difficulties and dangers of uncovering functional devices in ancient ruins, many of the most powerful and important relics should be guarded by various protective devices that can do everything from “kill” a character’s astral body to temporarily drive the character insane. Alternately, the relics may be unguarded, but some might be exceedingly dangerous to use. In all such cases, the major conflict is wresting knowledge from the unknown; failing at this conflict often has consequences beyond the failure itself. Similarly, when dealing with advanced and powerful living Martians, seriously mistaken assumptions about them should sometimes have similarly drastic consequences — asking to use a “mind enhancement” device might increase a character’s Mental Attributes for a few days or might produce one or more severe derangements, if the character misunderstood what exactly is being enhanced.

The Metropolis

This realm is the archetype of the city. The Metropolis contains every city that has ever existed or been imagined within the realm’s boundaries. This realm is divided into a multitude of neighborhoods. Some consist of entire cities surrounded by open space, with the nearest buildings several hundred yards away; others are distinct portions of various real or imagined cities. However, even the most isolated neighborhood is within easy sight of all of the surrounding neighborhoods — the entire realm is a single dense urban landscape. Some neighborhoods are surrounded by walls or lakes, and a few are even built in the midst of lakes or rivers, with canals as in Venice. The most fantastic neighborhoods hover in the air above most of the rest of the city, but all are part of the same vast realm.

In addition to being an ideal place from which to attempt to manipulate public opinion or other emotional factors present in any city in the Fallen World, the Metropolis is also a realm of many secrets, where the past and present of every real and imagined city constantly commingle. As a result, all of the hidden or forgotten truths about locations or prominent citizens associated with any city can be found here by someone willing to take the time and effort to find them. The Metropolis is one of the favorite haunts of a number of members of the Mysterium, who maintain that there is no end to the occult secrets held within this realm.

In the Metropolis, similar districts are located near

one another. Also, anyone who wanders in a direction will find the nature of these neighborhoods gradually changing. As a result, it is possible to walk, or take a vehicle ranging from a chariot to a helicopter or a flying car, from the temple district of a small Bronze Age walled city to the financial district of a 21st-century city containing more than 10 million people. The key to travel in the Metropolis is directed movement. Cities are centers of human activity, and so the way to find the portion of the Metropolis you are looking for is to walk in a direction that most looks like the area you want to find. Seeking a rich neighborhood is accomplished by walking down the street that looks the wealthiest one in the character’s present surroundings and then repeating this process at every intersection.

Asking for directions also works, but is often somewhat inexact when asking for directions to any location radically different from the character’s present surroundings. When standing in the midst of a portion of Victorian London, asking for directions to another European or American Victorian city or to a different district of London often results in obtaining concise and easy-to-follow directions that will swiftly lead to the desired destination. However, asking for directions to 21st-century Tokyo will usually be met with a mixture of confusion and some fairly vague directions that are often correct but are little better than looking for the street with the most Asian restaurants that also looks the most modern. However, the Metropolis contains various professional guides who can assist travelers for a fee (see p. 170).

Getting There

The easiest and fastest method of entering this realm is for the character to go to the top of the tall buildings in any city of more than a quarter of a million people and look out upon this city for at least 10 or 15 minutes. Characters who then fall asleep in any Hallow or Demesne located within the same city dream of the Metropolis if they spend Mana and make an extended meditation roll with a target number of eight.

The Many Realms of the Metropolis

The various neighborhoods of the Metropolis are each effectively separate sub-realms. However, they are more closely connected to one another than is common in most other realms. Moving from one neighborhood to another merely requires walking or riding in

a vehicle. One of the central themes of the Metropolis is cosmopolitanism. In addition to containing cities and cultures from every era and corner of the globe, the Metropolis also contains a vast array of imaginary cities, from Thomas Moore's Utopia to various important cities from popular fantasy or science fiction novels. However, the Metropolis's cosmopolitanism also extends in more unexpected directions. In addition to deliberate visitors, occasionally Sleepers who are dreaming accidentally wander into the Temenos. If they live in an urban area, they regularly end up in the Metropolis for the duration of their dreams. Urban ghosts and spirits that are either associated with urban phenomena or particular urban locations also sometimes accidentally find their way into the Metropolis. As a result, not all of the inhabitants are the typical residents of the Temenos. A shopkeeper or mayor that the characters are talking to may be a powerful ghost, a Sleeper from the Fallen World who is asleep and dreaming or even a Rank 6 spirit who wandered into the Metropolis and found it entertaining.

Variant Neighborhoods

One of the tricks in visiting the Metropolis is that in addition to containing every real and fictional building and neighborhood, the realm also contains variants of these locations that are the results of urban legends, as well as the fears or secret desires of mortals who dream about or live in these cities. These variant neighborhoods range from nightmare versions of cities noted for crime and violence, where hulking semi-human figures all carry large firearms and gun battles are exceptionally common, to cities destroyed by nuclear attacks or desolate neighborhoods where the entire populations were killed by a plague that left the buildings intact. Many versions of such disasters can be found, ranging from neighborhoods that have just been destroyed or depopulated, to ones where the crumbling ruins of the buildings have been overgrown by trees and are



now inhabited by wild animals that escaped from zoos or wandered into the city from the wilderness. The most dead and lifeless of these neighborhoods form connections to the realm of Death (see p. 173).

There are also far deadlier devastated cities, including ones where street-to-street battles are being fought by desperate survivors and neighborhoods that at first seem deserted, but after dark, zombies, deformed and deadly mutants or cannibalistic savages emerge from the dark shelter of basements and interior rooms and roam the streets in search of living prey. Visiting one of the deserted neighborhoods can be an invaluable way to learn about buildings that are otherwise too secure or too crowded to study. However, the difference between an empty neighborhood and an almost-empty neighborhood filled with deadly threats is often far from obvious. A simple scan with the Life Arcanum will not reveal the presence of hungry undead or deadly war machines waiting to kill intruders.

The Arcology

One of the more recent additions to the Metropolis is almost a separate realm that lies within the Metropolis. The arcology is a series of realms, which are all completely enclosed cities — in effect, the arcology is an entire city in a single vast building. The various neighborhoods of the arcology range from tawdry constructions that look like overgrown and somewhat decaying shopping malls with attached apartments to futuristic wonders. In the largest and most fantastic, millions of inhabitants live in a vast building many hundreds of stories tall, filled with all manner of amazing devices such as cleaning robots, 3-D video projectors and holographic ads that follow prospective customers around. Some of the more exotic arcologies have windows that look out upon alien landscapes. Those located on Mars form a gateway to the realm of Mars; all that is necessary to move from the Metropolis to this realm is to leave the arcology and walk out onto the surface of Mars.

Entering the arcology requires going into a neighborhood that is a dense modern city and going along skywalks or into the depths of one of the larger shopping malls, and leaving the arcology requires searching out those areas that most resemble modern shopping malls or office complexes and moving from there to a less enclosed neighborhood. Similar to the rest of the Metropolis, the arcology consists of regions that range from utopian visions of peaceful and prosperous urban life to hellish and brutal neighborhoods. In some, gang warfare is endemic, and people kill each other

from caches of food. In others, the only reason no one leaves is that the world outside is a wasteland filled with toxic pollution or deadly levels of radioactivity. A few neighborhoods in the arcology are devoid of all inhabitants or are inhabited solely by zombies and serve as connections to the realm of Death.

Characters in the Metropolis

Although this vast realm is diverse, it is also in a very real sense a single huge city. As a result, the Metropolis has a variety of individuals who help maintain this unity. The following four types of characters are found in almost every inhabited neighborhood of the Metropolis.

Peacekeepers

Quote: *Remain where you are, citizen. This is a routine inquiry.*

Description: Just as any city, the Metropolis has a government and individuals who maintain order and enforce the laws. The actual laws of the Metropolis are many and varied — in some neighborhoods, the laws are incredibly restrictive, while others have very few. However, in all, murder and large-scale property destruction are frowned upon and being caught doing either will earn the wrath of the peacekeepers.

Peacekeepers within the Metropolis take many forms ranging from Roman legionnaires to futuristic law-enforcement robots. However, the most common are figures who look like the athletic and photogenic U.S.



police officers found on television shows and movies seen throughout the Fallen World. Most peacekeepers are simply ordinary inhabitants of the Temenos who can inflict physical harm on others, usually via firearms or occasionally swords or spears. However, some peacekeepers are potent magical beings, including both powerful archetypes of various law-enforcement icons, and a few are spirits or ghosts who have moved into the Metropolis and now work to keep it safe and secure. As a result, characters who are causing problems for others can face problems far more severe than simply having their astral bodies restrained or destroyed.

Storytelling Hints: Archetypes of Rank 4 who act as peacekeepers can use their influence over the Metropolis to ban individuals from it. Peacekeepers make a Power + Finesse roll, vs. the target's Resolve + Gnosis. If the peacekeeper wins, the individual is instantly sent back to his body, and although he can return to the astral realm, including the rest of the Temenos, he cannot re-enter the Metropolis. One way to break this Ban is by using the Prime 4 spell "Supernal Dispellation" and add Spirit 3 to the casting. When he tries to enter the Metropolis, he must compare the successes rolled with this spell to the number of successes rolled by the peacekeeper who cast the Ban. Success allows the mage to break the Ban but also alerts this peacekeeper that her Ban was broken. The only other way to re-enter the Metropolis is for the mage to walk up to one of this realm's many gates (which is as far as someone under this Ban can go) and ask to speak to the peacekeeper who cast the Ban on him. At this point, the mage must apologize and offer some form of restitution, such as performing a significant service for the peacekeeper or the Metropolis as a whole.

Rank: 1-4

Attributes: Power: 4-15, Finesse 3-10, Resistance 3-10

Willpower: 7-25

Essence: 10-25

Initiative: 6-20

Defense: 4-15

Speed: 12-30

Size: 5-6

Corpus: 8-16

Influence: Restoring Peace and Order 1-4

Numina: Blast, Create Emotion (calm or terror), Telekinesis, Wild Sense. Some have Possession (usable only in the Fallen World).

Ban: Peacekeepers must defend their neighborhoods at all costs.

The Mayors

Quote: *My sole concern is for the welfare of my people.*

Description: The Metropolis lacks any sort of central authority, but each neighborhood is controlled by a mayor. Similar to the neighborhoods themselves, these mayors range from corrupt and venal monsters who care about nothing except for their own wealth, power and comfort to idealistic visionaries who honestly wish to make certain that everyone in their neighborhoods is safe and content. Naturally, most of the mayors lie somewhere in between these two extremes.

While the peacekeepers are largely independent, they also must acknowledge the authority of their neighborhood — the mayor. In most neighborhoods, the peacekeepers and the mayor work together, but in the troubled neighborhoods, they are at least somewhat at odds. Although there are exceptions, the majority of mayors are archetypes of Rank 3 to 5.

Storytelling Hints: Characters who wish to find out about a neighborhood or who wish assistance in some endeavor that takes place within a neighborhood often contact the neighborhood's mayor. Mayors can usually command many of the resources of a neighbor-



hood through reverence, loyalty or fear and so can be powerful allies. However, even obtaining an audience with a mayor usually involves providing some reason for the mayor to be interested in the characters. Publicly demonstrating powerful magic is naturally one useful way to accomplish this. Next, the characters must persuade the mayor to aid them. If the endeavor is of mutual interest to the characters and the mayor, this is rarely difficult. However, obtaining other forms of aid always requires some form of deal or payment. Unique and powerful objects from elsewhere in the Temenos can be used for some such payments, but many mayors prefer powerful individuals to help them become more powerful or keep others from usurping the mayors' power.

Ambitious mayors regularly attempt to expand their territory. Neighborhood boundaries are not always stable, and shifts in power and influence of various mayors can increase or decrease the size of a particular neighborhood. In the most extreme cases, one neighborhood can completely subsume another. Aid in some of these maneuverings is always welcome, and providing sufficient aid will pay for almost any service the characters might ask.

Encroaching on another neighborhood or preventing such an encroachment can involve everything from delivering rousing speeches, perhaps enhanced by Mind spells, to battling bands of thugs and toughs to committing or preventing arson or sabotage. In addition, many mayors face rivals within their own neighborhood. Characters seeking aid may be requisitioned to help with political campaigning, possibly including all manner of actions such as stuffing ballot boxes or preventing a rival's supporters from voting. Alternately, a character might act as the mayor's champion in a duel of honor. In return, the characters can gain access to any building, use the mayor's authority to cause any resident or archetype living in the neighborhood to answer questions he might otherwise keep silent about or learn secrets of the neighborhood known only the mayor. If the characters are using a particular neighborhood in an effort to affect beliefs and opinions in the Fallen World, gaining the assistance of the mayor is usually necessary.

Rank: 3–5

Attributes: Power 5–12, Finesse 5–12, Resistance 5–12

Willpower: 10–24

Essence: 20–50

Initiative: 10–24

Defense: 5–12

Speed: 15–29

Size: 4–6

Corpus: 9–18

Influence: Their neighborhood 2–4

Numina: Create Emotion (Awe and Fear), Harrow, Phantasm, Possession (in the Fallen World)

Ban: Although mayors can ignore the welfare of their neighborhood, they cannot actively work against it, even for personal gain. Also, their power rises and falls with the size and power of their neighborhood.

City Guides

Quote: *Going to Bedlam Street, are you? I can get you there, no trouble. Minor charge.*

Description: In addition to the official power structure of the peacekeepers and mayors, there are also widespread unofficial power structures. One of the most useful and pervasive of these are the guides. These beings vary greatly in appearance, but most are (or at least appear to be) fairly young. Guides know the layout of the buildings and streets in their neighborhoods and in most nearby neighborhoods, and some of the most powerful guides can provide information about entire areas of the Metropolis, such as all neighborhoods from



the last decade of the 19th century or knowledge of every neighborhood of New York, including all eras of the city and fictional versions. No guide knows all or even most of the neighborhoods of the Metropolis.

Storytelling Hints: Finding a guide who knows the nearby neighborhoods is usually quite easy in any portion of the Metropolis that welcomes or even accepts outsiders. Guides frequently approach newcomers who look lost or are clearly searching for something. Guides can rarely help someone find a specific person, but within the portion of the Metropolis they know well, they can locate any building, and the better guides can find a neighborhood in a range of different times. To find a location, the guide must physically lead the characters to their destination, which can sometimes take many hours of walking. In almost all cases, these journeys require less than a day, and finding the same neighborhood in a different era rarely requires more than a few hours of walking, and even less time if the characters have a vehicle.

However, guides never work for free. Ordinary guides typically require relatively minor payments, which can range from being told an unusual and rare story or urban legend about their neighborhood to obtaining some relatively inexpensive item from a distant portion of the Metropolis. Some guides instead wish to have access to one of their clients' memories of the neighborhood they know in the Fallen World (or in the fictional work that it is derived from). Mages with the ability to share thoughts and memories often have little trouble paying ordinary guides.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 6, Resistance 4

Willpower: 7

Essence: 15

Initiative: 9

Defense: 6

Speed: 14

Size: 4–5

Corpus: 8–9

Influence: Locating places and objects. (1–2)

Numina: Innocuous, Wild Sense

Ban: They are bound by the wording any deals they make.

Expert Guides

Quote: *Where do you need to go? Desire Station? Hell's Kitchen? The Electric Areopagus? I can take you.*

Description: To locate distant portions of the city or particularly specific or unusual versions of a



neighborhood, such as finding a deserted version of a populous neighborhood usually requires finding an especially skilled guide. These guides rarely approach lost visitors and often require the services of another guide to locate.

Storytelling Hints: Because of their skill, these expert guides require correspondingly high payments. One of the more common payments they require is spending a day walking around in the Fallen World in the Fallen World equivalent of one of the neighborhoods they are familiar with. As with any other archetype, the only way they can do this is by being summoned and then possessing someone for this time. Usually, the guides request that they be allowed to possess the bodies of the people the guides lead through the Metropolis.

Alternately, some expert guides ask for rare and expensive items from a distant portion of the Metropolis, or even from some other realm in the Temenos, or access to a memory of a specific location in one of the areas they know. However, expert guides need no help in accessing someone's memories and can do so simply by touching their client's head. However, many do not wish to share a client's memories and instead require that the client give the guide the memory — meaning that the client will forget the memory and even the

most powerful magic will not recover this memory. Expert guides can only take memories with permission, but if it is granted, they can remove a client's memory of a specific location with a brief touch.

Rank: 3–4

Attributes: Power: 4–10, Finesse 8–12, Resistance 4–10

Willpower: 8–20

Essence: 20–25

Initiative: 12–22

Defense: 8–12

Speed: 17–28

Size: 5–6

Corpus: 9–16

Influence: Locating places and objects 3–4

Numina: Harrow, Innocuous, Wild Sense, Borrow and Take Memory (see above), Possession

Ban: They are bound by the wording of any deals they make.

Story Hooks — Secrets of the Metropolis

The Metropolis is one of the largest and most diverse realms in the Temenos. Visitors can find a variety of unique wonders and dangers here.

Using the Metropolis

Characters wishing to manipulate the Temenos in order to create changes in attitudes and opinions often find that the Metropolis is one of the best places to make this attempt. A single city is the largest practical area within which mages can attempt to change attitudes and opinions, and this realm contains within it all cities. Alternately, characters can visit the Metropolis to learn more about some location within a city in the Fallen World. Employing a guide or otherwise finding their way to specific neighborhoods or buildings allows characters to examine any building that has ever stood within any city in the Fallen World, in the building's present state and at any state during the building's existence. Doing this allows the characters to learn the secrets and details of buildings that might be far too risky or difficult to visit in the Fallen World. A character could learn about anything from the exact location of a body bricked up in a hotel room wall to the details of a bank's alarm system. Unless the characters make use of a guide or ask the assistance of the local mayor, examining the details of a high-security building can be problematic. However, one way around this problem

is for the characters to visit one of the uninhabited versions of the neighborhood the building is located in, as the inhabitants are likely to object to detailed scrutiny of the building's interior. Unfortunately, some vacant neighborhoods are not as empty as they first appear.

In addition, the fact that the Metropolis contains within it every city humanity has ever created or inhabited has lead many mages to reason that somewhere within the Metropolis lies the lost city of Atlantis. While this may be true, its location remains a mystery — just as everything else connected with Atlantis and the Fall, hints and remnants can be found, but concrete or detailed information remains elusive. Almost every mage who regularly visits the Metropolis has had the experience of seeing some distinctive feature of Atlantean architecture or fragments of the most archaic versions of the High Speech inscribed on some grand public building or written as graffiti on a dingy wall. However, these fragments almost never lead to further information about Atlantis and generally serve only as frustrating reminders that some mysteries are extremely determined to remain hidden.

The Artifact Seller

However, sometimes the Metropolis does reveal a few of its secrets. Occasionally, when passing a shop window or the stall in an outdoor market, a mage notices something of obvious Atlantean manufacture for sale, often something small, such as a coin or a small figurine. (Roll Wits + Occult with a –2 dice penalty to recognize such an object, only mages who know High Speech can make this roll.) The object itself is of no consequence, but if the mage asks where the shopkeeper obtained this object, the mage always hears a story about a somewhat mysterious individual who sold the object to the shop owner. Locating this individual is never easy. The first step always involves purchasing the object — without carrying an Atlantean object originally from this person, the mages have no chance of finding the seller. However, the object itself provides no help — this individual cannot be located or spied upon via any form of magical scrying.

Instead, the mage and his companions must set out into the Metropolis on an extended effort to locate the mysterious artifact seller. The shopkeeper can always provide some information about this person, but sometimes nothing more than a neighborhood this person mentioned living in or visiting frequently. A combination of determination and Time and Fate magics usually suffice to find the artifact-seller, but this process is never easy or swift.

The general pattern of finding the artifact-seller involves using the description and other information from the shopkeeper to locate where this individual lives or usually spends time and then asking the local inhabitants about the seller. Once the characters locate the artifact-seller, he will hint that he knows information about Atlantis. If any of the characters asks a direct question about Atlantis, the seller requests the artifact back and will answer relatively minor questions, such as providing a few tidbits of information about the location of a particularly legendary artifact.

Usually, the seller asks some favor from the characters before answering any questions. This favor always involves the characters accomplishing some goal in the Temenos and can be literally anything, and can be as trivial or difficult as the Storyteller wishes, as long as it is something the characters can reasonably accomplish. More revealing or significant questions are almost always dismissed out of hand as something the seller either cannot talk about or something that the characters are not ready to hear. Sometimes the seller utterly refused to answer any questions and instead provides some piece of unasked for information about Atlantis. After he has done this, he is sometimes willing to talk about matters having nothing to do with Atlantis, but reveals nothing of great import and within no more than half an hour will bid them goodbye and depart. Attempts to follow him always fail.

The artifact-seller is immune to all Arcana, and all attempts to restrain or attach him automatically fail, usually by seeming to just miss him. However, he never again speaks to anyone who attacks him and immediately departs if he sees this person. Characters can locate the artifact-seller multiple times, but the artifact-seller always requests the artifact the characters are carrying, so each time the characters wish to find him, they must first acquire an object of his that is for sale in the Metropolis. He can be found literally anywhere within the Metropolis, as can the artifacts he sells. Also, every record of his appearance is different — with gender, race, style of dress and apparent age all being equally subject to change. However, he always recognizes people he has encountered before and will ask less lengthy and difficult favors of people who are always polite and respectful.

The Mysterium has records of encounters with the artifact-seller going back more than 1,000 years as well as hints that he is actually far older. Although theories about his origin and nature abound, the two most common is that he is either a Supernal being who exists to provide information about Atlantis, or he is

the last fragment of Atlantis that survives within the Metropolis. Regardless of his true nature, he is one of the most useful sources of information about Atlantis in all of the Temenos and thus one of the major reasons that mages regularly visit this realm.

Dangers of the Metropolis

Just as the many cities that make up the Metropolis, it is a vibrant place filled with all manner of social interactions. Some of these interactions are hostile. In addition to the risks of injury or “death,” characters can also run into deadly enemies from the Fallen World. Chance meetings are an inherent part of any urban interaction, and so characters should occasionally run into ordinary Sleepers who have unknowingly wandered into the Temenos, other astral travelers the characters have previously encountered in either Astral Space or the Fallen World as well as ghosts, spirits and even inhabitants of the Abyss who have somehow made their way into the Temenos. Some such meetings can be joyful reunions, while others can lead to violence, but such occasional coincidences are very much a part of visiting the Metropolis. However, Storytellers must be careful not to overuse such coincidences. Periodically running into an old friend or a hated enemy in the Metropolis is interesting; doing so every few scenes is silly and annoying.

Finally, everyone who spends any time in the Metropolis is going to be noticed by the other residents. The Metropolis has the same anonymity of most large cities, but that does not mean that residents do not notice people, especially people who may display unusual abilities or ask odd questions. By combining Mind and Fate magics with talking to the residents, any persistent mage can find out if someone is in a given portion of the Metropolis, and rumors of anyone particularly notable can easily travel across the entire realm, albeit often in an erratic and somewhat distorted fashion. However, this also means that others, including the characters’ enemies, can find the characters.

The Realm of Death

In the Fallen World, Death is one of the universals that occur to all humans who remain human, and eventually even to those who do not. As a result, the realm of Death is one of the most largest and most powerful realms in the Temenos. The realm of Death connects to almost all other realms in the Temenos. The realm of Death is not focused on suffering or dy-

ing. Instead, this is a realm that is the astral version of all of the many images of the afterlife that humanity has imagined in its long history.

Although mystics who dream of this realm sometimes confuse it with the Underworld, the realm of Death is a very different place. Instead of being the actual home of the dead, this is a realm composed of humanity's dreams about death and all that comes after. Although actual ghosts can sometimes be found here, they are visitors and not natives. Also, unlike the Underworld, the realm of Death contains all of the gods of the dead ever imagined by mortal minds. A final difference with the Underworld is that the realm of Death has a single supreme ruler — the archetype and personification of Death itself, which is one of the most powerful archetypes in all of the Temenos.

Entering the Realm of Death

Traveling to the realm of Death is relatively easy, because of its size and power. When already in the Temenos, characters need merely seek out a portion of any realm that is closely associated with death and dying, including battlefields, especially grim prisons, graveyards, funeral homes, poorly run hospitals and similar locations. When a character in one of these locations touches someone who recently died, the connection to the realm of Death becomes clear, and the character need only follow the connection.

Entering the realm of Death from the Fallen World is also relatively easy — the characters need only touch a human body that has died within the last three days. Characters who do this and then fall asleep or meditate need only spend a point of Mana and make an extended

meditation roll with eight successes. All characters visiting this realm end up in the outer reaches of the realm of Death. Characters who all touched the same dead body all arrive at the same location in this realm.

The Form of the Realm of Death

This realm has a consistent and easily mapped form. It is roughly circular — the outer edge consists of the Outer Reaches, which is the realm of recent death and dying. In the center lies the vast and dread house of Death — the supreme ruler of the entire realm. Between the Outer Reaches and Death's House are a vast assortment of realms, each of which is a different one of the many hundreds of versions of the afterlife that humanity has imagined.

The Outer Reaches

The Outer Reaches is a limbo-like realm where the



inhabitants of the Temenos and those ghosts who find themselves in this realm wander ceaselessly, uncertain whether to go forward or remain where they are. Most of the terrain consists of graveyards, mortuaries, old battlefields filled with bleached skeletons and similar locations. However, there is also a host of more exotic sub-realms, such as the ruins of a dead city, where all inhabitants were killed by plague or nuclear war. Some of these areas overlap with other realms. For examples, the lifeless and ruined cityscapes overlap with the Metropolis.

The one common feature is that all these sub-realms are devoid of anything or anyone living. No plants grow, and even all the rats and cockroaches are dead. A few of the strangest of these realms are filled with complex, but utterly mindless, robots perpetually cleaning and repairing pristine houses and shops in a sub-realm where all life died long ago. Many of these realms have no inhabitants, or at least no sentient inhabitants, but others are inhabited by residents and archetypes of the Temenos who appear as ghosts, and occasionally by actual ghosts from the Underworld who have found their way into this realm. Some of these inhabitants appear as walking corpses or skeletons, while others are spectral shades that are unable to physically interact with the world.

Although some of the inhabitants of these sub-realms arrived from portions of the Temenos, none ever leave the realm of Death on their own. However, many can be convinced to leave by an outsider such as a visiting mage. Others regularly move from one of the realms of the Outer Reaches to another, often not by deliberate choice. Moving from one sub-realm to another is somewhat tricky — each of these realms adjoins other realms that are relatively similar. A dead town depopulated by plague might be next to one destroyed by nuclear war, one that is a similar dead village inhabited by zombies and another that is a very different plague-ravaged hamlet.

To find a particular realm, travelers must often pass through a variety of similar realms. Moving from one realm to the next always involves entering an enclosed location that is devoid of all light and cut off from all views of the outside. Then, the character must leave via a door that was not the one he entered through. However, the room need only be dark an instant before opening the door to the outside.

Going into a basement with multiple entrances, shutting the doors and briefly dousing the lights is one of the easiest methods of traveling. Normally, this mode of travel is random and simply results in the character

Ghosts in the Realm of Death

Visitors to the realm of Death meet a great number of residents who closely resemble people the visitors once knew when they were alive, and occasionally people the visitors know who are still alive. These scenery people are merely reflections of the characters' thoughts about these people. However, in addition to scenery people, residents and the various powerful archetypes that inhabit this realm, the realm of Death is also home to a few spirits from the Shadow Realm and a moderately large number of ghosts. The path between this realm and the Underworld seems exceeding open and well traveled, although the vast majority of ghosts arrive in the realm of Death accidentally and no mage who has examined either this realm or the Underworld has found a physical gateway between them.

The best explanation any mages have come up with is that occasionally a gateway to the realm of Death opens in the Underworld and draws any nearby ghosts into this realm. However, this pathway is not two-way. Once a ghost has entered the Temenos, the ghost cannot easily return to the Underworld. This limit also prevents ghosts here from entering Twilight or materializing in the Fallen World. Just as the vast majority of the other residents of the Temenos, the only way ghosts can visit the Fallen World is if they are summoned there.

Some of these ghosts are difficult to distinguish from the residents, and many ghosts have no idea that they are not still in the Underworld. Many ghosts are unconsciously drawn to afterlives that fit their actions and beliefs when they were alive. However, some of the more powerful and self-aware ghosts have learned to use their Numina to help improve their station, moving to portions of this realm that they find most comfortable or in a few cases setting up sections of this realm that they control. The Neighborhood is one portion of the realm of Death that is controlled by and mostly inhabited by ghosts.

ending up in one of the adjoining realms of the Outer Reaches. However, making a successful meditation roll and focusing on either a specific Outer Reaches realm

that is reasonably similar to the one the character is in or simply on some feature of the realm that is different results in the character opening a door leading into the desired realm. Only the character actually opening the door can make this meditation roll. Opening a door in a dark room shut off from the outside is also the only way to move deeper into the realm of Death.

Those who seek to move further into this realm find before them a vast series of doors — each leading to a different one of the many hundreds of different versions of the afterlife that humanity has imagined or feared during its long and imaginative history. For almost all inhabitants of the Temenos and many ghosts, entering into one of these afterlives is a one-way journey. All of these many doors can be accessed from any of the realms of the Outer Reaches. All someone must do is sincerely desire to move on to a specific afterlife and open the door.

The Neighborhood

This section of the Outer Reaches is inhabited solely by ghosts — the inhabitants can instantly tell if someone is a ghost or not. The Neighborhood is unconnected with any of the afterlife realms, but unlike the rest of the Outer Reaches, the Neighborhood is close to being a separate realm within the realm of Death. The Neighborhood consists of a large area walled in by a solid fence of polished black stone. Within, the Neighborhood is a strange jumble of times and places. Each inhabitant lives in a dwelling almost identical to the one she inhabited in life; 1930s rooming houses with electric lights and radios sit next to small Roman villas, row houses from China's T'ang dynasty, and Mongol yurts from the days of Genghis Khan. Most of the inhabitants have been in the Neighborhood for many decades or even centuries and know each other's languages.

The inhabitants allow visitors who are not ghosts to enter the Neighborhood, but forbid any from settling there. Some ghosts welcome visitors from the Fallen World, and are anxious for news of their descendants or other legacies they have left behind, such as the popularity of books or songs the ghosts wrote. However, since most ghosts here are a century or more old, such news can be difficult to come by. Also, some ghosts are firmly convinced that the actual Fallen World exists in the Temenos and that any talk about how the entirety of the Temenos is some sort of shared dream of humanity is total nonsense.

Some ghosts know information of use to mages and reveal it if provided with information about the descendants, businesses or creative works the ghosts left behind. However, some ghosts become enraged

and attack the characters or fall into deep despair and refuse to answer questions if presented with unpleasant information such as their descendants all being dead or their creative works being long forgotten. Scholars of ancient history often find the Neighborhood itself to be a treasure, and spend hours or days examining the details of the houses and lives of some of the older inhabitants, who can easily become annoyed and attempt to drive intruders asking annoying questions off.

The Many Afterlives

The realm of Death is most known for containing hundreds of different visions of the afterlife, each of which is presided over by the appropriate demons, gods, goddesses and judges of the dead. Here, visitors can find various Christian and Muslim Heavens and Hells, the Jewish Sheol, the Taoist Island of the Immortals, the dreary Roman afterlife across the river Styx, the joyous halls of Valhalla, Hel's bitter cold realm and a vast multitude of others. In these realms, a student of ancient religions can find details of ancient belief unknown to mortal scholars. Also, in some of the oldest versions of the afterlife, dedicated mages can sometimes find a few tiny hints and traces of Atlantis, usually in the form of residents who claim to remember it. The vast majority are lying or deluded, but some may not be.

With the exception of the small number of ghosts who inhabit these realms, all of the souls in torment or paradise are scenery people or residents, and the various gods, goddesses, spirits and demons are all archetypes of various Ranks. Some devout mages come to talk with their deities to pray and ask advice, but although these beings all accept prayer and may dispense advice, any revelations obtained from such beings are purely personal — true Supernal or divine knowledge cannot be obtained in the Temenos. However, visitors to the Temenos should remember that just as all the rest of the gods of the Temenos, the deities and other powerful archetypes who control these afterlives firmly believe that they are the actual gods, goddesses, demons and divine servants that are worshipped in the Fallen World. Treating these beings as nothing more than corporeal dreams can swiftly earn the beings' ire. Most can easily destroy a mage's astral body, and many are able to perform more lasting and dangerous attacks.

Characters who wish to enter one of these afterlives must abide by the rules of that particular afterlife. Characters wishing to enter most afterlives must either negotiate with the being guarding the entrance or pass some test. Being a devout believer in the faith associated

with a particular afterlife almost always guarantees a character free entrance to that particular afterlife. Failing that, knowledge of the faith combined with deferential respect show to the guardians and rulers of the realm are usually the minimum necessary to be allowed to enter. Others who wish to enter may be requested to obtain some gift or perform some service.

Mages can attempt to simply use their magics to fight their way in. However, the gods and other beings that control the various afterlives are all at least Rank 4 archetypes and react poorly to intruders who attack them or attempt to ignore their authority. Without careful preparation and great power, mages who attempt to enter an afterlife without permission and interrogate the inhabitants almost always end up having the intruders' astral bodies turned to ashes. Also, unless the character has permission to enter the particular afterlife, rolls to use Space magics to attempt to covertly enter suffer an automatic -2 dice penalty. Also, entering an afterlife in this fashion automatically draws the attention of any rulers and guardians of this realm. These beings then rush to deal with the intruder. Depending upon the nature of the afterlife, mages who attempt to remove an archetype, resident or ghost from the afterlife may find this attempt greeted with anything from grateful joy to steadfast refusal. A few afterlives lack guardians. The two most notable are the Void and Nirvana, but as noted below, these realms contain their own dangers.

The Void

The most baffling and potentially terrifying of these afterlives is the one that is most commonly referred to as the Void. Instead of being a separate sub-realm, the Void can be most easily described as an absence of a realm. The Void can only be found by individuals who are seeking non-existence, or those who are deliberately looking for the darkest and most static portions of the realm of Death. The outskirts of the Void consist of open and empty meadows or fields under a moonless night. Walking further into the darkness leads the character into the Void itself. Here, there is a total lack of any sensation — no light, no sound, no smell or taste and, most strangely, no touch. Everyone inside the Void is adrift in endless, empty darkness.

There is no archetype in charge of this portion of the realm of Death. Mages who have studied it assume that it is the expression of mortal fears of isolation and non-existence. The Void is potentially one of the greatest dangers present in the Temenos, because this realm is a trap. Anyone who spends too much time here goes from

being merely lost and disoriented to losing all sense of herself. Once this occurs, the character is unable to move within the Void and so can never find a way out. She also forgets how to wake up and so is unable to leave Astral Space and return to her body. More than one mage who has entered the Void has been overcome by this realm and remained trapped here until his body died.

There is only one good reason to enter the Void — to locate a ghost, archetype or other being that is trapped there. However, such ventures are always fraught with risk. Characters who spend time in the Void must make a Resolve + Composure roll every 10 minutes to retain their orientation and sense of themselves. Failing this roll causes the character to suffer a -2 dice penalty to his next roll. Unfortunately, success means that the character still suffers a -1 die penalty to this roll. Character who roll dramatic failures lose all sense of themselves and cannot leave (even by awakening) without help.

The Space 2 spell "Scrying" can determine if someone is inside the Void and can also locate the individual, by using the spell repeatedly and triangulating. However, all penalties to the hourly Resolve + Composure rolls also apply to the use of any Space magics inside the Void. The safest way to retrieve someone from the Void is to use Space spells such as "Portal" or "Teleportation" to arrive by the person's side and then use the same spell to leave. However, using "Portal" to enter the Void always requires at least three successes, no matter how good a sympathetic connection the character has to the individual he is trying to rescue.

Those who forget themselves inside the Void cannot be contacted using Mind magics and cannot be returned to consciousness inside the Void. Rescuers can only attempt to lead or teleport the person out, at which point they rapidly returns to awareness. Anyone rescued from the Void is likely to be exceedingly grateful for the rescue. Rescuing someone from the Void is an excellent way to obtain the cooperation of an inhabitant of this realm.

The Void is also a good place to dispose of enemies — any archetype of Rank 3 or less can become lost in the Void just as any mage or other mortal. Some unscrupulous mages, including the members of the Seers of the Throne, use Mind magics to befuddle the astral bodies of enemies the Seers find in the Temenos. Before the Duration of this spell expires, they dump the person into the Void. If the Mind magic does not wear off for several more hours, the character may lose awareness of herself before she can recover enough to escape.

Nirvana

Just as the Void is a realm where all inside it are sufficiently lost and isolated that they lose all sense of themselves, Nirvana is a realm where all inside lose all sense of themselves because they are so closely connected to everyone else within the realm. Everyone in Nirvana is under the effect of a permanent version of the Mind 5 spell "Network," so everyone is in constant telepathic contact with one another. Regardless of what someone may think of this idea before entering Nirvana, the actual experience is profoundly transcendent and utterly beyond description.

Once in Nirvana, characters can make extended Wits + Resolve rolls to attempt to sift through the mass of thoughts their minds receive every second. Doing this allows visitors to learn a particular piece of information known to someone in Nirvana. Characters may make one roll every 10 minutes, with a target number between 5 and 15, depending upon the obscurity of the information. Something known to many members of a certain culture, sub-culture or organization typically has a target number of 5, while something known only to a single individual always has a target number of 15. Of course, to even have a chance of learning such a unique piece of information, someone who knows it must actually be in Nirvana. Archetypes and ghosts of various enlightened mystics can be found here, but ordinary ghosts and worldly archetypes are rarely found in Nirvana.

However, Nirvana also contains dangers — the longer someone is there, the less she wishes to leave. Someone who does not initially wish to remain in Nirvana must make a meditation roll every 30 minutes to keep focused on the task she wishes to accomplish. The babble of thoughts provides a -1 die penalty to this roll, and any failure increases this penalty by an additional -1. A dramatic failure on this meditation roll means that the character has lost all desire to leave Nirvana, and refuses to leave it without being forced to do so. Mages who visit Nirvana and succumb to its lure allow their astral bodies to remain in Nirvana until they are removed, which can easily be fatal. Anyone who has been in Nirvana for more than a few days will have succumbed to its influence and will actively fight any attempt to force her to leave.

The Palace of Death

Most realms contain at least several powerful archetypes and are divided up into a variety of linked sub-realms. However, many lack any sort of central

location or any sort of single ruler. The realm of Death not only contains a central location that is effectively the heart of the realm, but is ruled by one of the most powerful archetypes in all of the Temenos, the archetype of Death.

The Palace of Death is located at the exact center of this realm. Characters can easily find this palace by simply always walking in the direction of the most obvious, and in many cases the most frightening, portion of the various afterlives. Characters can even walk directly from the Outer Reaches to this palace if they can make a successful Wits + Occult roll to find the way. Any character with one or more dots in the Death Arcanum automatically knows which direction the Palace of Death is in and need not make any roll to find the Palace of Death.

Regardless of what portion of this realm the character comes from, approaching this palace is always the same — the character walks down a flat black road, with trees made of bleached bones lining either side. The night is always dark, and there is never more than a sliver of moon in the sky. The palace itself is also made of bleached white bones and radiates such a palpable aura of death that everyone seeing the palace must make a Resolve + Composure roll to approach. Those who fail can gather their courage after an hour and try again, but they cannot otherwise enter unless forced or their fear is eliminated by magic. Moros mages with at least one dot in the Death Arcanum and other mages with at least three dots in the Death Arcanum are sufficiently attuned to death that they do not need to make this roll. In addition to containing countless skeletal servants, this sub-realm also contains hundreds of powerful ghosts. In addition, every deity, angel or spirit who is worshipped as a judge or guardian of the dead regularly visits to pay obeisance to Death.

Gods and Archetypes of the Realm of Death

A large number of the archetypes found in this realm are gods or direct servants of gods, such as angels. Religious mages who wish to understand more about gods and worship almost always visit this realm. However, the answers found here can be quite confusing, since every possible version of every god who deals with the dead exists somewhere in this vast realm. Mages who spend time talking to the more accessible deities often return with all manner of spiritual insights. All accepted theories about the Temenos clearly state that no one can

learn anything in the Temenos that was not at some time known to someone in the Fallen World, and so true divine revelations cannot be found here. Nevertheless, these beings know more about death and the dead than any other entities that mages can communicate with. As a result, a great many Moros mages come here to attempt to understand more about death.

Anubis: Jackal-headed God of the Dead

Quote: <<You wish to speak with me? Be certain to unburden your heart first.>>

Description: Although the religion of the ancient Egyptians is now followed only by a few eccentric neo-pagans, it was once a major religion and almost every educated person has heard stories about and seen images of Anubis. So, although he is no longer as powerful as he once was, his power remains considerable.



Storytelling Hints: Anubis (or Anpu) is associated with fairness, given his role in the weighing of souls. He is therefore considered more approachable than many of his fellow death-gods, given his judicial impartiality.

Rank: 5

Attributes: Power: 12, Finesse 15, Resistance 12

Willpower: 24

Essence: 50

Initiative: 27

Defense: 15

Speed: 34

Size: 6

Corpus: 18

Influence: The Dead and the Dying 5

Numina: All Ghost Numina

Ban: He must always deal fairly with the living and the dead.

Death

Quote: *You're here early. I wasn't expecting you until next year.*

Description: One of the most powerful archetypes in all the Temenos, Death is known to every human who has lived. As death is something that is universal, unknown and ultimately powerful, dreams of death are ancient and mighty. Meeting Death requires another Resolve + Composure roll with a -2 dice modifier. Only mages who have visited the Underworld or who possess five dots in the Death Arcanum do not need to make this roll. Anyone who fails instantly wakes up in a cold sweat.

All descriptions of Death are different, but the most common involve a bleached grinning skeleton, a faceless hooded figure carrying a scythe or an attractive woman dressed all in black. Most deeply religious people see one of the various images of the angel or spirit of death found in their faith.

Storytelling Hints: In addition to knowing more about death and the dead than any other being in the Temenos, Death is also one of the most dangerous beings in all Astral Space. If Death wishes, its touch can kill, destroying not just the character's astral body but slaying the character's physical body. With a touch, the character's astral body is automatically destroyed, and the character's physical automatically takes a number of levels of aggravated damage to cause her to instantly die. Medically, the cause of death most closely resembles a heart attack — the character's heart simply stops beating. Mages with Life 4 can use



the spell "Healing Heart" to save the character's life. Even a single success saves the character's life, because one dot of aggravated damage is restored.

Rank: 7

Attributes: Power: 20, Finesse 20, Resistance 25

Willpower: 45

Essence: Effectively unlimited

Initiative: 45

Defense: 20

Speed: Effectively unlimited

Size: 5-7 (variable)

Corpus: Effectively unlimited

Influence: Death and the Dead 7

Numina: All

Ban: Death must hold to any deals it makes.

Story Hooks

In general, the only reason someone visits this realm is academic interest in theology, seeking to ask a question of someone dead, either a real or legendary figure, or to ask a question of Death itself.

Story Hooks for the Outer Reaches or the Afterlife Realms

Some visitors come to the afterlives to talk to or seek advice from the gods or judges of the dead there. However, only the most devout or desperate mages usually try this. However, many come seeking one of the residents or ghosts residing in either the Outer Reaches or one of the various afterlife realms. In addition to many thousands of ghosts, some of whom are more ancient than those normally found in either Twilight or the Underworld, this realm also contains versions of every walker or archetype based on a real person who has ever died. As a result, there are vast stores of knowledge here. Persuading a resident of the Outer Reaches to share his knowledge or finding a way to convince one of the rulers or guardians of an afterlife realm to allow a group of living beings from the Fallen World to talk with a ghost, resident or archetype in its realm can be quite challenging. Doing either may require everything from taking actions in the Fallen World to aid a ghost's descendents to keeping the memory of a walker alive to the characters finding themselves caught up in the eternal machinations of divine politics, where gods use any willing servants to attempt to gain advantage over their divine rivals and allies. Many questions can be answered here, but the price can be complex and is often more expensive than it first appears.

Dealing with Death

Dealing with Death can be exceedingly rewarding. Death can answer any question about the dead, revealing the location of a secret diary or a horde of buried treasure buried in the ruins of a cellar whose location was known only to a long-dead scholar, or recite the entirety of a lost Classical Greek play. Although Death cannot reveal any information about Atlantis and any statements Death makes about the nature of the afterlife are as suspect as all similar statements about unknowable subjects are in the Temenos, Death is still one of the greatest sources of information in Astral Space.

Unfortunately, Death never gives its information away for free. Death always asks a price for the secrets it reveals, and Death's price is never low. Death sets a different price for every secret and can never be bribed with promises of riches. Threatening Death results in responses ranging from grim amusement and a raised price to the immediate murder of the individual foolish enough to do so.

There is one payment Death always accepts—life. Any inhabitant of the Fallen World who is willing to give her life for a secret can learn this secret before she dies and can

also ask Death to reveal this secret to her companions. If this is desired, the character can even ask for the secret and wake up, but she will die within 24 hours, and no known force can save her life. Characters who die in this fashion always appear as ghosts who serve in the Palace of Death. However, the person must willingly accept death and cannot be doing it for any reason other than a sincere desire for either the secret or the uses to which it will be put. Attempts to use magic, blackmail or similar methods to convince someone to give her life in this fashion always causes Death to instead kill the person responsible for the coercion and then reveal the secret.

Without someone willing to give her life for a secret, Death sets its own price on any piece of information asked of it — Death never bargains and all offers are final. Usually, payment is in advance, but Death is willing to accept later payment. However, the terms are always exceptionally strict: the questioner must swear to provide the desired payment within one lunar month (28 days), and if she fails, she dies 28 days after she receives the information.

Death rarely asks for information, because Death knows all that it needs to. Instead, its requests always involve the dead in some way and can include activities in the Fallen World, the Underworld and the Temenos. Death's requests involving the Fallen World range from locating and repairing a tomb to saving a particular graveyard from destruction, recovering a body and restoring it to its rightful burial place (a task that can be far from easy if the body is a mummy in a museum), laying a ghost in Twilight to rest by fulfilling some last request, carrying a message from the dead to the living or occasionally slaying someone. Typical victims of the last request are humans or magical beings that have lived for an unnaturally long time — vampires and mages using magical objects to extend their lifespan are the most common targets.

Requests involving the Underworld usually involve locating a particular ghost and delivering some message to it. These messages are often enigmatic and sometimes completely defy all attempts at translation. On a few occasions, the ghost vanishes immediately after hearing this message.

Death's requests involving the Temenos can take almost any form, from persuading a ghost to come to the Underworld to carrying a message or negotiating a treaty with another powerful archetype. All of Death's requests can also include performing all manner of enigmatic activities such as erecting a statue or stealing some rare or unique object and either giving it to someone in particular or destroying it.

The Wellspring

What separates humanity from the animals? What aspect of the human soul distinguishes the Temenos from the Anima Mundi? Some mages believe the answer resides in the Wellspring — a realm hidden within the primeval layers of the Dreamtime, a place where inhuman beings can touch a mystic spark and be uplifted to a new level of being.

Within the domain of the Wellspring, animals compete for the prize of consciousness itself. The Wellspring is the chance for creatures to think, to speak and — perhaps — to touch the Supernal Realms and wield the power of magic. The Wellspring reflects the evolution of ape into human, and represents the dream of a similar transformation for other species. Just as much of Astral Space, the nature of the Wellspring's enchantment is a mystery — but the natives of the Anima Mundi don't worry over details. The desire for transformation exists, and that alone is enough to lure creatures in.

Strictly speaking, the Wellspring is more a phenomenon than a proper realm. The Wellspring forms periodically, a new plane born from the elements of other places and times. The Wellspring often goes unrecognized at first, camouflaged as part of another realm's landscape of endless forests or caverns. The sacred waters that grant its gifts are hidden in a muddy oasis or a glorious fountain, as befits the Wellspring's surroundings. But along with the Wellspring come clues to its presence: remnants of animal civilizations it created and destroyed, guardians and caretakers who follow it from place to place and, inevitably, powerful animal avatars of the Anima Mundi that seek to benefit from the Wellspring's gifts.

The Awakened are arguably the pinnacle of the Wellspring's creations. Mages not only transcend their ancestral, simian roots but rise above the mass of humanity to achieve a still higher level of awareness. This doesn't mean that mages are welcomed in the Wellspring's domain, however. The beings that desire the Wellspring's waters are often resentful of humankind, and viciously compete with intruders. The guardians of the Wellspring understand what mages are capable of, and attempt to test any sorcerer's limits.

Yet few mages who learn of the Wellspring can resist its allure. Seeking wisdom, power or both, the Awakened have sought the Wellspring for millennia, hoping that its energies will transform them as it does lesser beings. Chronicles of the Wellspring's

history rest in the libraries of Thyrsus mystagogues, and a handful of mages believe that the Wellspring is a necessary stop along every sorcerer's journey to Awakening. But whether the legends are true or not, no one doubts that the Wellspring is one of the sacred secrets of the Anima Mundi.

Getting There

Mages traveling to the Wellspring typically discover that finding the realm is far more challenging than entering it. The Wellspring moves from one location within the Anima Mundi to the next, rarely staying in one place for more than a few months. Moreover, the Wellspring can disappear entirely for years at a time; whether the Wellspring ceases to exist during these periods or merely goes unnoticed, no one knows.

But just as a material spring can be discovered by a trained outdoorsman in a vast expanse of wilderness, the Wellspring can be pinpointed within the Anima Mundi by knowledgeable astral explorers. A mage who observes the migration of beasts within the Dreamtime may follow a newly beaten trail to the Wellspring's realm, and the ruins of animal civilizations that form at the Wellspring's edges are an unmistakable sign. Some mages are called to the Wellspring by visions that guide the mages through one dreaming realm after another, through vast stretches of inner landscapes — but these prolonged quests have their own perils, and the paths are often twisted.

Mages less comfortable with astral sojourns may instead attempt to predict the location and timing of the Wellspring's next manifestation. Such divinations usually involve calculating astrological and seasonal phenomena, and are performed at natural Hallows in the Fallen World. Post-Atlantean mages built many structures and monuments atop hills and mountains that, in conjunction with the stars, pointed the way to distant destinations; it's possible that the ancients knew how to map the Wellspring's location, and used markers in the physical and astral worlds to lead the way.

As a last hope, a mage seeking the Wellspring might track down a sympathetic location in the Fallen World. Some believe that an expedition to the cradle of humanity — a quest for the site where the ancestors of modern humans began to think and act less like apes and more like people — could grant access to the Wellspring in dreams. This in itself would be a significant undertaking, but modern anthropological research suggests a few starting points. Mages taking this path should also prepare for conflicts with whatever powerful, ancient spirits reside in those ancestral

sites — these spirits are unlikely to enjoy having their homes used as a stepping stone to the Inner Realms, and may exact their own tolls.

There are other material beings that sometimes seek the Wellspring. In particular, werewolves dream of the realm without understanding its true nature. Animals, too, sometimes reach the periphery of the Wellspring in their dreams, but no one knows why or under what circumstances. In theory, a mage could enter the Oneiros of such a creature and follow the trail into the Anima Mundi, but she would need to avoid the defenses and inner demons of a strange and foreign mind.

Details of the Realm

Because the Wellspring grows out of realms already present in the Anima Mundi instead of existing as a distinct plane of Astral Space, the Wellspring's geographical boundaries are vague, at best. Determining where the domain of the Wellspring ends and where the vast plains, forests and oceans of another realm begin is an imprecise science. But although the Wellspring's form and appearance change to match neighboring realms, the Wellspring's domain does have unique features that recur in every incarnation.

The Lost Kingdoms

Scattered throughout the domain of the Wellspring are the ruins of lost civilizations — animal civilizations that rose and fell entirely within the land of dreams; civilizations that owe their creation to the Wellspring's power. On first glance, some of these ruins look as though they could have been built by humans: their architecture uses familiar geometric forms, their artwork depicts naturalistic scenes and their buried tools seem suited for five-fingered hands. Other ruins are clearly alien, and serve no purpose discernable by the human mind.

All the Wellspring's animal civilizations have roughly the same story. They are founded by animals that receive the Wellspring's gifts, whether through effort or happenstance. A snake drinks from a hidden pool and learns to think and speak, or a crow flies across the Anima Mundi in search of a mysterious fountain, ultimately gaining the power of magic. Such uplifted creatures go on to reproduce, to create families that are similarly enlightened. Over a period of days — days that last whole seasons in the dream world — families go on to start nations. Animals build, and speak and write. And sooner or later, the animal

Three Nations

Of all the civilizations produced by the Wellspring, the ruins of three remain most prominent in the realm long after their downfall. Storytellers can use these animal kingdoms as is, as inspiration for original locations or as still-living civilizations for cabals to visit and confront.

Crikteepree, Empire of Crows

Crikteepree was a treetop civilization, and its citizens carved the ageless, ancient trees of their empire with images and words until it seemed like rivers of bark-brown parchment poured out of a leafy green ocean in the sky. The crows of Crikteepree recorded every event in their lives, every success they achieved onto the trees.

And the crows were craftsmen, as well as artists. They spun threads of gold and silver wire through their beaks, pulling them from the earth like worms, and wove flying machines, canopies, jewelry and weapons. They were warriors, slicing apart other animals and battling one another in feudal flocks.

This infighting eventually destroyed the empire and every last bird in it.

What survives of Crikteepree is in the trees, however. Most of the empire's records are lost, but a few remain in fallen logs and dead trunks. At the very least, they're there for visitors to the Wellspring to ponder, and provide a history of the Wellspring from the perspective of its children.

The Fraternity of Cats

The dreams of housecats reflect their domestication, and their civilization — their Fraternity — was strongly influenced by their real-world circumstances. During the time when cats were uplifted by the Wellspring, holes in tree trunks and slender cave tunnels led onto balconies and narrow fire escapes that shouldn't have existed without humanity. But they did exist, and broken brick and concrete now lay among the Wellspring's ruins.

The housecat civilization was one of luxury and comfort for its rulers, and fear and torment for lesser beings. When the cats emerged from their hiding places, anything they saw was potential prey, potential sport. They had little interest in art or science, and instead focused on social pursuits.

The cats knew secrets, though; secret routes through cities, secret hiding places, human secrets that filtered from the material world into dream. The Wellspring allowed the cats to understand what those secrets meant, and a few of the old sages still wander through the ruins of their collapsed society, mangy and half-starved.

The Colony

Accepting the Wellspring's gifts didn't change much for the bees. Their intricate social structure transitioned smoothly into a caste system, and their hives — now the size of small cities and containing gardens and greenhouses of their own — remained the center of activity. The queen ruled over all.

But more than any of the other kingdoms' progenitors, the queen understood the gift she'd been given. She was, in comparison to previous queens, what a queen was to a drone. And she sought more. Under her direction, the Colony sought to understand consciousness, dreaming, magic and Awakening.

Just as Atlantis, the Colony ultimately self-destructed. The queen disappeared, seeking the path from Astral Space to the Supernal Realms, and her people couldn't endure without her. But the bees still dance their spells in parts of the Wellspring, as living Imagos put in motion many years past.

kingdoms always fall. They're only dreams, after all, and don't have a world to sustain them.

But the Wellspring preserves its children's faded glories at the outskirts of the realm. And while the lost kingdoms are desolate, empty and crumbling, there are treasures to be found and secrets to be unearthed

within. An astral ornithopter crafted for and by birds might be worthless to a mage, but beings elsewhere in the Dreamtime might value the astral ornithopter greatly; cave paintings produced by cats could grant a sorcerer the insight needed to deal with a cat spirit in the material world.

Visitors to the Wellspring could come upon an animal civilization that still thrives, of course. These civilizations rarely welcome outsiders, and see intruding mages as monstrous. A mage dedicated to establishing communications would have to contend with the swift evolution of society as seasons pass and generations come and go — and ultimately, with the chaos and destruction that accompany a civilization's fall.

The Questing Wilds

Beyond the ruins of the lost animal kingdoms await the Questing Wilds. Here, seekers of the Wellspring must contend with many enemies — the feral descendants of the lost kingdoms, mad animals unable to cope with the Wellspring's gifts and lurking, jealous creatures that failed the search — along with the dangers posed by the realm itself.

The wilds resemble the lands surrounding the Wellspring, but are strangely empty of ordinary animal life. Visitors in search of the waters at the Wellspring's Heart must obtain guidance to proceed further, or else they'll simply wander across endless stretches of the landscape. A map from a lost kingdom, advice from one of the Wellspring's previous visitors or mystic insight can suffice to show the proper path.

After orienting themselves, the next trouble Awakened visitors encounter in the wilds is the strength of their own "scent." The creatures of the Wellspring's

realm smell out souls, and although ordinary dreaming animals can pass through without trouble, the soul of a mage is easy to pick out for beings such as Wheelies and the Lurker (see below).

A mage must therefore disguise her aura or risk attracting attention. A sorcerer with access to severed human or animal souls can carry them to mask her true scent, or leave them in a trail to mislead stalkers. The kingdoms developed their own way of helping visitors move discreetly: travelers stored their names, their language and their magic in special bags while they sought the Wellspring, disguising themselves as animals by keeping their human consciousness hidden. Simple spells (such as the Death 2 spell "Suppress Aura") are often enough to ward off basic trouble, if not the worst of the Wellspring's denizens.

Along with beasts, astral pilgrims inevitably encounter the environmental perils of the Questing Wilds. These appear to be simple trials, at first — a great chasm divides the land and must be crossed, or food becomes scarce and drink poisonous — and can be overcome by relatively minor efforts such as by building bridges or boiling water. But the trials have another aspect: whenever a pilgrim uses tools or vulgar magic to overcome difficulty, that pilgrim draws the attention of the realm's inhabitants.

The trials become increasingly problematic to overcome "naturally" as one approaches the Heart of



the Wellspring. Sheer cliff faces covered in ice must be climbed, and trails lead into utterly black caves. Some mages believe that these final obstacles *must* be overcome by extraordinary means — that, as part of its test, the Wellspring demands that seekers demonstrate the breadth of their abilities. If so, the Wellspring clearly punishes success.

The Heart of the Wellspring

A dedicated traveler who overcomes the perils of the wilds may eventually find the Heart of the Wellspring. The Heart appears different in every incarnation, but is always a source of water — a spring in the mountains, an oasis in the desert or geothermal vent along the sea floor. To ordinary sight, the Heart doesn't look like anything special. To Mage Sight, the Heart is an extraordinary place overflowing with power. The Wellspring is the Holy Grail of animal awareness, and to sip from the Heart is to attempt spiritual evolution.

The experience of drinking from the Wellspring is as individual as an Awakening. For less intelligent creatures, the effect is often subtle — an ant with an expanded consciousness is still an ant, at least until it's had time to reflect. More aware creatures often hope the Wellspring will grant them the insight to use magic or to travel uninhibited through Astral Space. No one knows what the effect would be on a mage; at best, the Wellspring might increase a mage's Gnosis as he gains knowledge of his soul and the world around him, while at worst, it might cause a mage's soul to lose coherence as it metaphysically expands, dissolving into Astral Space. Perhaps the effect depends on how fully the mage is prepared.

The Wellspring's Gift

The notion that there's something intrinsically human that sets us apart from animals is an old and romantic one — but is it really accurate? In their own way, animals are conscious, thinking beings, and many animals in the real world have an amazing capacity for language and expression.

Ultimately, the Wellspring isn't intended as a tool for exploring these questions in a chronicle. Indeed, it's simplest to assume that the Wellspring brings a metaphorical Awakening to animals, touching their souls in a way that enhances their understanding of the universe and makes them more “human.” The details don't need to be scientifically examined; Astral Space is a realm of dreams and dream logic, after all.

So What Do I Get?

Not all stories set within the Wellspring need to involve the cabal drinking from the Heart — but many players will try to take a sip anyway. What happens then?

One option is to grant an award of Arcane Experience or (for the generous) an extra dot of Gnosis to those who drink. In this case, Storytellers might also require a degeneration roll to see if the character suffers a loss of Wisdom; it's very easy for sudden insight to overwhelm a character's capacity for judgment. Perhaps more extreme, a character who benefits from the fountain could suffer a permanent -1 dice penalty on Social rolls when dealing with humans, as she evolves to the next level of being. Storytellers should be careful to foreshadow any drawbacks, however, so that players have some idea what they're getting into beforehand.

Instead of a mechanical reward, drinking from the Wellspring might lead to further adventures. It could inspire dreams of the Supernal Realms, suggesting a strengthened connection that a character could then nurture. Abyssal beings might despise such a link between the Supernal and Fallen Worlds, whereas Seers of the Throne might view such an “evolved” character as a threat to the Exarchs.

That said, Storytellers interested in discussing how animal consciousness works can still make a go of it. A chronicle with a more realistic sensibility would benefit from a light touch when it comes to the lost kingdoms, and a greater focus on the perils of the Questing Wilds and the Wellspring's guardians. On the other hand, Storytellers who wish to avoid the subject altogether may want to focus on the magical aspects of the Wellspring, and the bond it strengthens between the soul and the Supernal Realms.

Characters / Critters

The denizens of the Wellspring are a mix of ordinary animals, survivors of the lost kingdoms, visitors and freaks. For the most part, they do not question the strangeness of their environment; as natives of the Anima Mundi, they are well adjusted to the surreal nature of their world.



The Last Neanderthal

Quote: *Why do you seek the Wellspring's gifts? Understanding does not bring triumph. Understanding does not bring peace.*

Background: The Last Neanderthal is the self-appointed shaman of the Wellspring. He is an ancient dream originating in the Temenos who fled to the Anima Mundi upon deciding he shared more in common with animals than with humanity. Mourning the death of his species, cursing his own ability to recognize their extinction, he came to the Wellspring hoping to reconcile with the world.

He didn't find what he wanted. Instead, the Last Neanderthal tends the realm and offers a warning to anyone he believes might listen: awareness solves nothing. His species was among the first to benefit from the Wellspring's gifts, and his people still died, one by one, until only memories and dreams remained.

Description: The Neanderthal is an ageless, dark-skinned man with tangled hair and a matted beard, dressed in furs and bone. He stoops slightly as he walks, his head is broad and his forehead is flat. He smells of mildew and sweat, and he never looks in anyone's eyes.

Storytelling Hints: Despite his bitterness, the Neanderthal makes no attempts to physically stop

visitors from drinking from the Wellspring. He stays close to the Wellspring's Heart, doing what he can to protect the sacred grounds, and reluctantly answering the questions of those who seek his wisdom. On occasion, astral travelers seek out the Wellspring purely to meet the Neanderthal, and to try to uncover the secrets of his lost race.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 6, Finesse 2, Resistance 6

Willpower: 12

Essence: 15 (max 15)

Initiative: 8

Defense: 6

Speed: 13

Size: 5

Corpus: 11

Influences: Human Ancestry 3

- **Strengthen:** By spending one Essence, the Last Neanderthal can roll Power + Finesse (eight dice) and, for each success, add one to one of the Attributes of a chosen human or Neanderthal (including himself). The changes last for up to one minute per success.

- **Manipulate:** By spending two Essence, the Last Neanderthal can reduce a human's learning to a Paleolithic level. For each success achieved on a Power + Finesse roll (contested by the target's Resolve + Gnosis), the target suffers a -1 die penalty on all rolls involving Mental Skills. The changes last for up to 10 minutes per success.

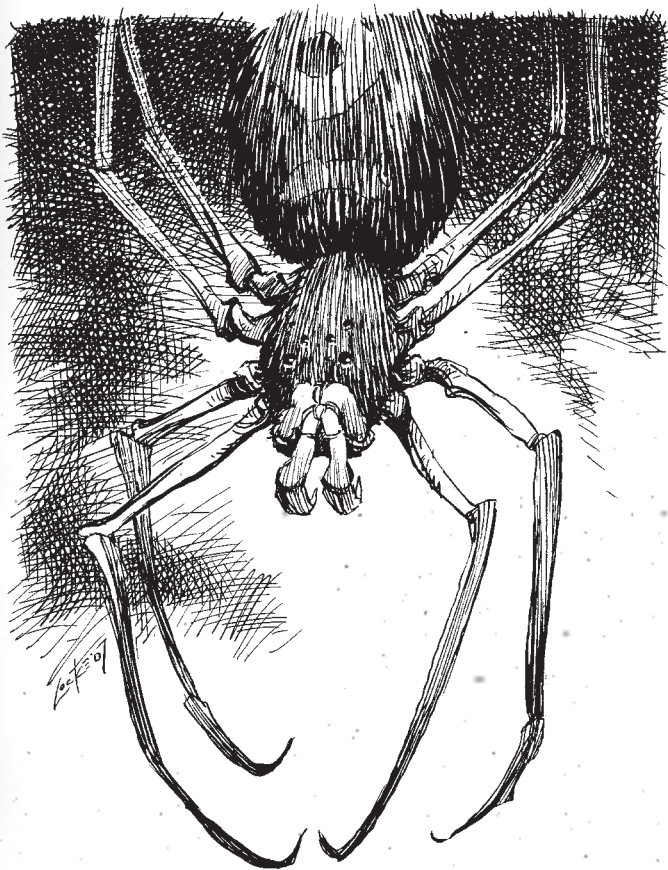
- **Control:** The Last Neanderthal can call upon astral "ghosts" of dead Neanderthals by spending three Essence. Treat this use of Influence as identical to the Death 3 "Quickened Corpse" spell. The ghosts remain for up to 10 minutes per success.

Ban: The Last Neanderthal must accede to the requests of anyone who carries (in the physical or the astral world) a remnant of his lost civilization.

The Lurker

Quote: *The strong prey on the weak. The clever prey on the foolish. The Awakened prey on Sleepers. I prey on children who wish to grow up.*

Background: The Lurker is the top predator in the realm of the Wellspring, lying in wait for eager pilgrims and feasting on their developing souls. The lost kingdoms claimed that the Lurker is a spider who drank the water at the Wellspring's Heart and decided to stay, and grow and eat. They claimed that the Lurker embodied a fear that growth and evolution are self-destructive. They claimed that the Lurker created the Wellspring



as a trap, a devious lure to draw in prey. They claimed many things, in many different stories.

The Lurker would say that the stories are all wrong, and that the truth is much worse. But that's *all* the Lurker says about itself. It's a voice in the dark, toying with pilgrims and watching them as they cross the realm. The Lurker tells tales of the past, of the Wellspring's origins, and openly admits that they're lies.

Description: A many-legged arachnid nightmare the size of a small truck, the Lurker is covered in dark fur and blurred by a shadowy fog. Instead of spinning webs, the Lurker's own legs serve to thread it to nearby tree trunks or rock formations, allowing it to hang high and watch its prey below.

Storytelling Hints: The Lurker seems to favor victims with highly evolved souls, but it often snatches its prey just within sight of the Wellspring — thus denying creatures the chance to reach the waters and expand their awareness. It's unclear whether this is a sadistic game, or if the Lurker genuinely prefers meals able to penetrate the Questing Wilds. What is clear is that the Lurker doesn't want anyone to actually *reach* the Wellspring.

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 7, Resistance 7

Willpower: 12

Essence: 20 (max 20)

Initiative: 14

Defense: 7

Speed: 19

Size: 13

Corpus: 20

Numina: Terrifying Change (dice pool 12)

- **Terrifying Change:** The Lurker can look into an Awakened soul and seed doubt within, making the mage unable to cope with how far she's left humanity behind. Spend two Essence and roll Power + Finesse contested by the target's Resolve + Composure. For each success, the Lurker can bestow one severe derangement upon the target (with a maximum number equal to the target's Gnosis). The derangements last for one day per success.

Ban: When facing a creature who has sipped from the Wellspring, the Lurker suffers a penalty to all dice pools equal to the creature's Gnosis or Willpower (whichever is lower).

Wheelies

Quote: <metallic screeches, clangs and the sound of flapping wings>

Background: The Wheelies are spiritual evolution gone wrong. Once the dreams of animals who sought to drink from the Heart of the Wellspring and transition to the next stage of being, they found themselves unprepared for what they received. Instead of becoming something new and unique — something built on their own heritage — they were twisted into a parody of human advantage and achievement.

Wheelies were justifiably despised by the lost kingdoms for their status as freaks and cosmic mistakes. Wheelies hate all creatures as aware and as conscious as themselves, but have formed no society or civilization. They roll throughout the Wellspring's domain in small packs, hunting intruders and frightened natives.

Description: A black metallic wheel covered in grease and rust, spinning in the air. Its spokes protrude from the outer surface and end in jagged metal claws and mouths, dripping oily bile.

Storytelling Hints: There's nothing to talk to, nothing to negotiate with in a Wheelie's soul; these monsters combine the worst aspects of animals and angry spirits. Still, there's something pathetic about them, and it would be a kindness to find a way to restore them to their former animal state.

Rank: 1

Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 3, Resistance 2

Willpower: 5

Essence: 10 (max 10)

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Speed: 12

Size: 3

Corpus: 5

Numina: Countermagic (dice pool 6), Second Sight (dice pool 6)

- **Countermagic:** A Wheelie can use this Numen as reflexive countermagic against any form of magic, including covert spells. Spend one Essence, and roll Power + Finesse. If successes rolled for the Wheelie equal or exceed those for the spell, the spell is countered.

- **Second Sight:** As the Spirit 1 spell of the same name. Roll Power + Finesse and spend one Essence. Wheelies use this power to scrutinize resonance and track their foes across the domain of the Wellspring.

Ban: Wheelies never attack entities that, according to their Second Sight, lack at least a human-level awareness of the universe. Wise mages disguise their auras before proceeding through lands inhabited by Wheelies.

Story Hooks

- **The White Elephant:** Somewhere in the Fallen World, an animal messiah has been born. It roams the wilds and brings miracles to its kind; it summons rain, heals with a touch and purifies the land. The animal messiah isn't a spirit, but spirits seek it out and pay it homage. Mages, too, search for the animal messiah, and a few know the truth: somehow, the animal's soul has reached out to the Supernal Realms.

But the animal messiah is in danger from the moment of discovery. Hunted by mages who seek to sacrifice the messiah for power and wounded by a venomous

counterpart embodying savagery and cruelty, the animal goes into hiding. An ancient Thyrus mage turns to the players' cabal for help, knowing that the animal must be healed and trained — and knowing that the animal will flee anyone who approaches it in the material world.

In order to save the animal messiah, the cabal must journey into Astral Space and seek out the Wellspring. There, the animal sips

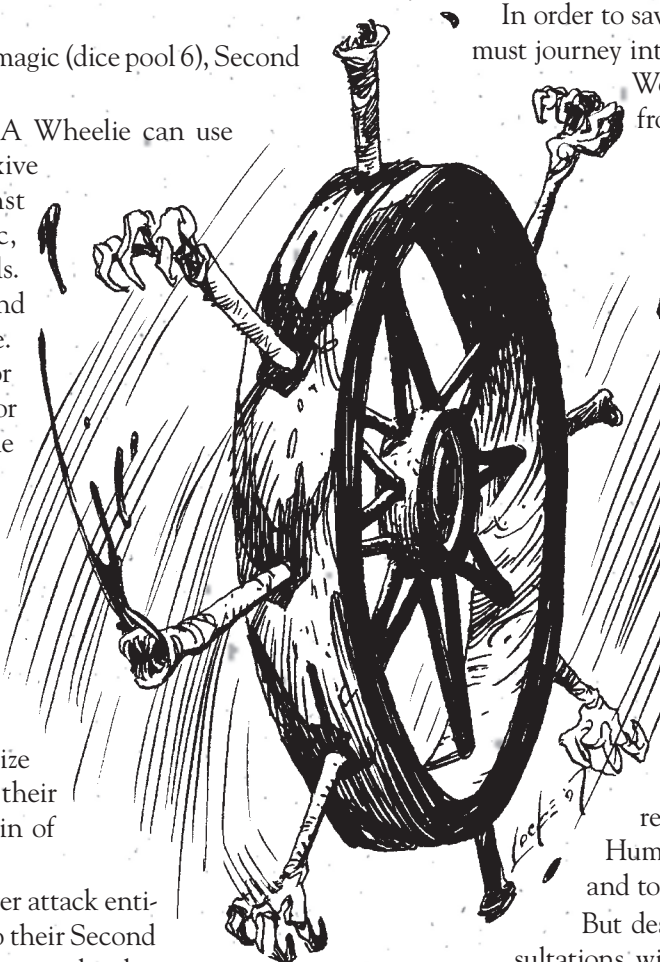
from the sacred waters each night in its dreams, and can be led away to fulfill its destiny. But the animal's enemies have a presence in dreams, too, and the cabal must protect the creature when the time comes.

- **The Search for Fire:** The cabal learns that a Seer of the Throne has begun searching for a primordial power — a power she believes first created humankind as we know it, and later granted mages the ability to tap the Supernal Realms. The Seer recently left to find the "Cradle of Humanity" somewhere in east Africa and to claim the power for herself.

But despite her ancient texts and consultations with spirits, the Seer's notes lead to nothing but a parched oasis. In order to track her down and stop her, the cabal must follow her into Astral Space and to the location of the Wellspring. There, the Last Neanderthal awaits to give the cabal guidance through the Questing Wilds, hoping that either the party or the Seer will prove worthy of the Wellspring's gifts.

Depending on the cabal's progress through the Wellspring's domain, the characters may reach the Seer only in time to see her triumph, and be forced to gather the forces of the Anima Mundi to battle a post-human being. But if the cabal is swift, it may be the first to reach the Heart of the Wellspring — and the first humans to sip from it for many millennia.

- **The Heirs to the Earth:** Not long ago, an ambitious sorcerer made a pact with a scorpion spirit to perform a single task in return for power and magic.



The spirit knew what it wanted; at its request, the sorcerer traveled to Astral Space and the Heart of the Wellspring, bringing the Wellspring's sacred water to the dreaming scorpions of the Anima Mundi.

Now, the dreaming scorpions are building a new kingdom, and many sleeping humans find themselves entering a terrifying world each night. The scorpion spirit hopes that the arachnid civilization will eventually be realized on Earth, on a distant day after humanity falls — but the kingdom is nothing to dismiss in the present, even in dreams.

The cabal's involvement may begin when it notices the phenomenon of shared nightmares of a scorpion kingdom, or the cabal may face off with the sorcerer who made the pact with the scorpion spirit. In order to keep the scorpion kingdom in check, the cabal must travel to the Wellspring and somehow thwart the kingdom's spread at its source — perhaps by stopping the Heart of the Wellspring itself and keeping the scorpions from the source of their heightened consciousness, or by bargaining with an entity such as the Lurker who can cull a newly evolved race.

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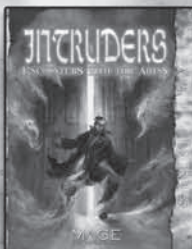
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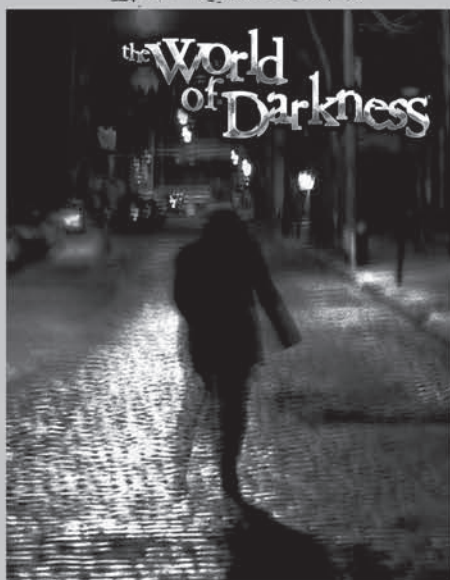


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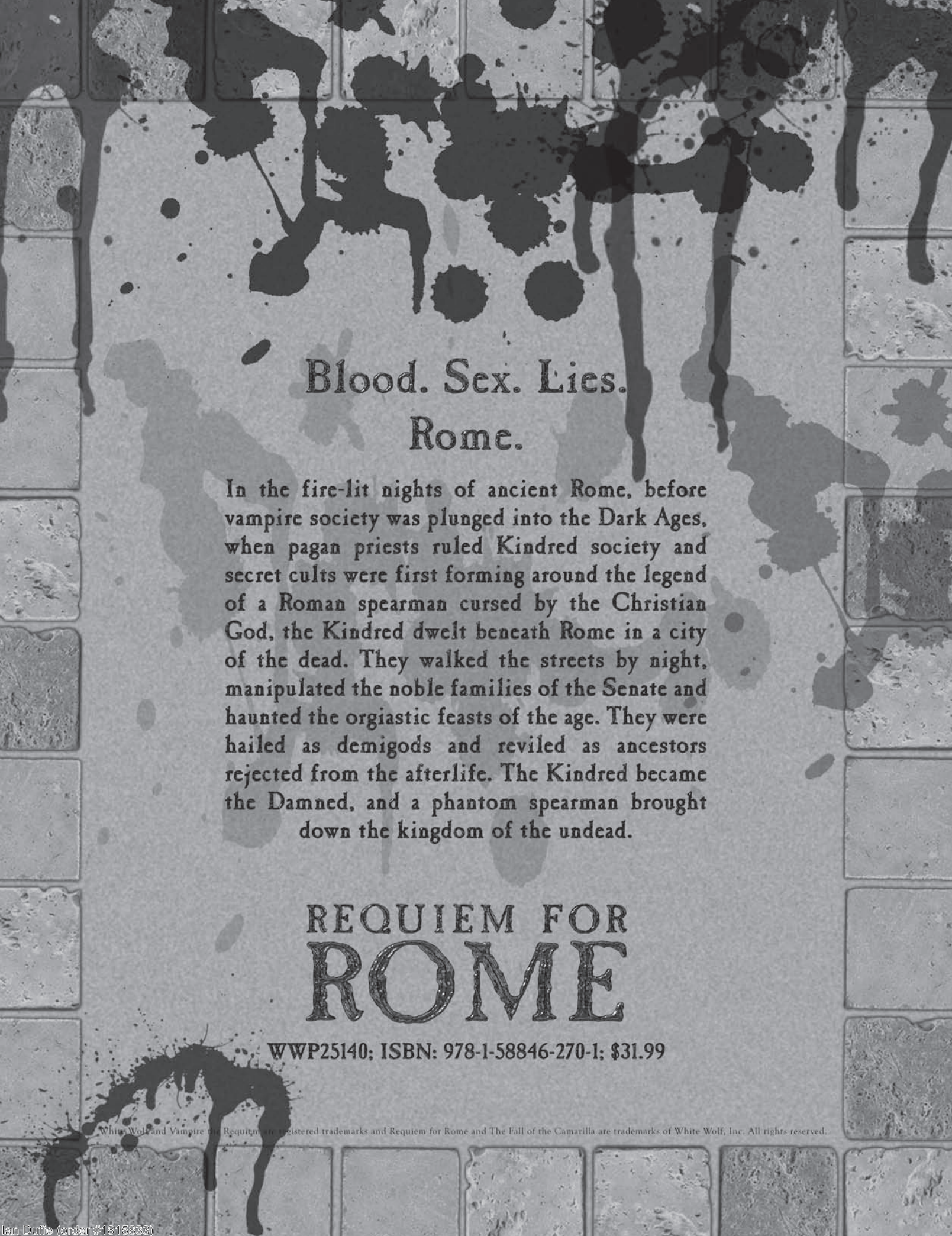
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