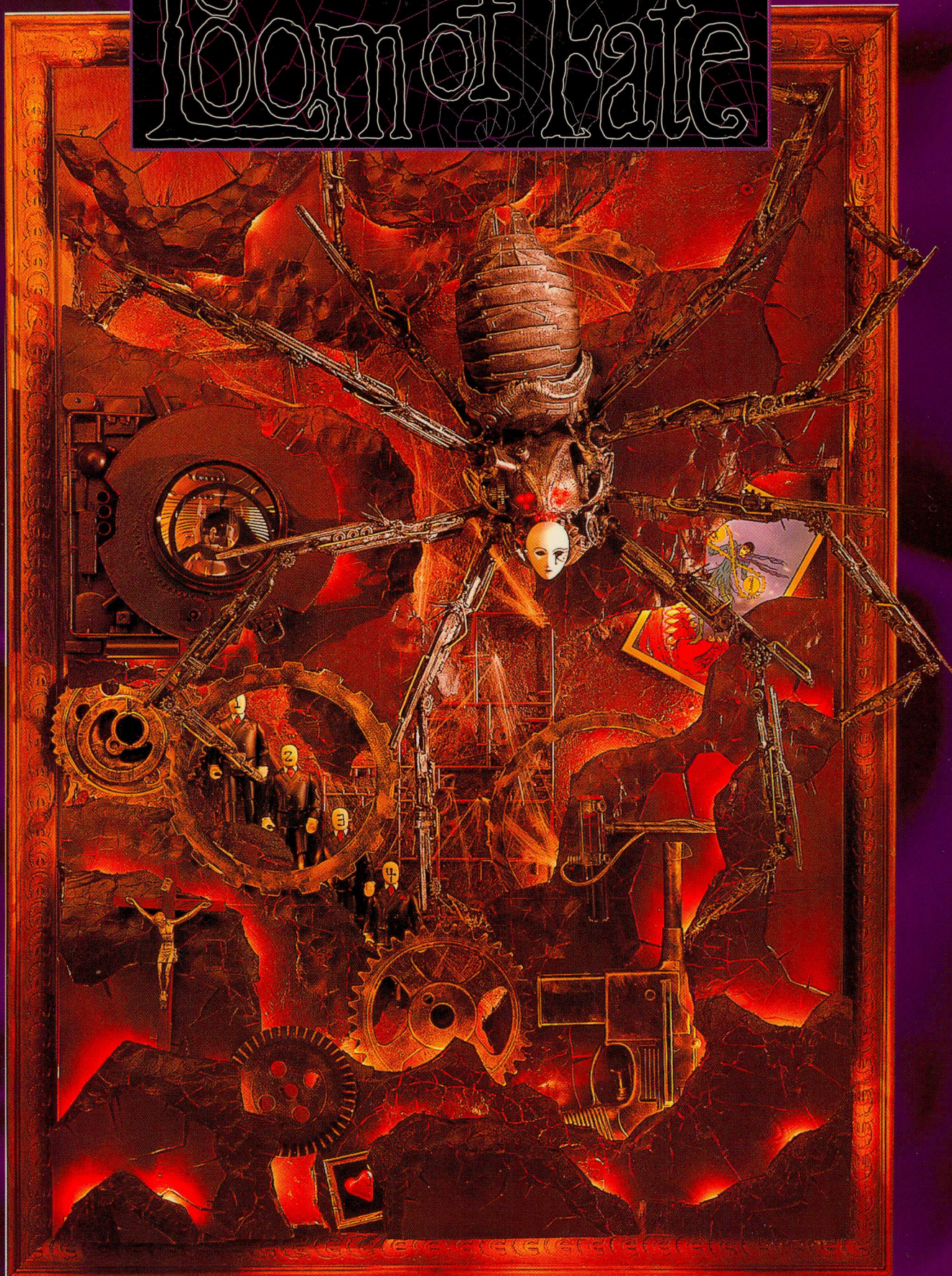


Boom of Fate



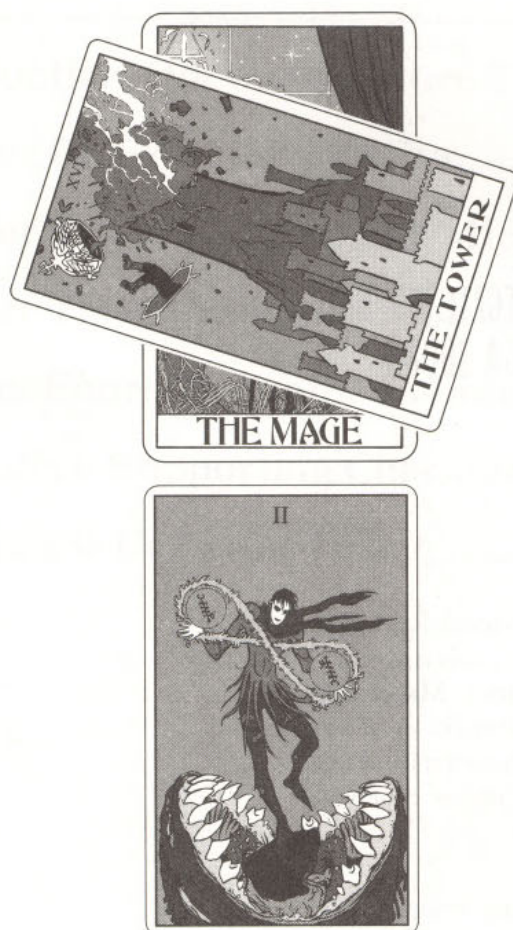
A Tale of Destiny
for Mage: The Ascension™

Boom of Fate™

Choices Made and Futures Followed

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.

— William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Act V, Scene II)



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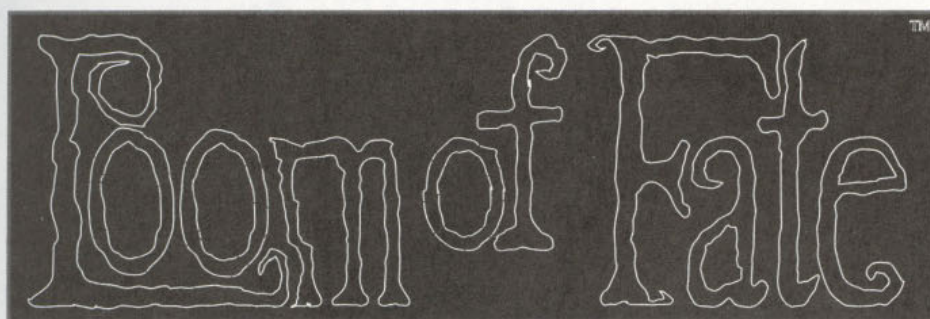
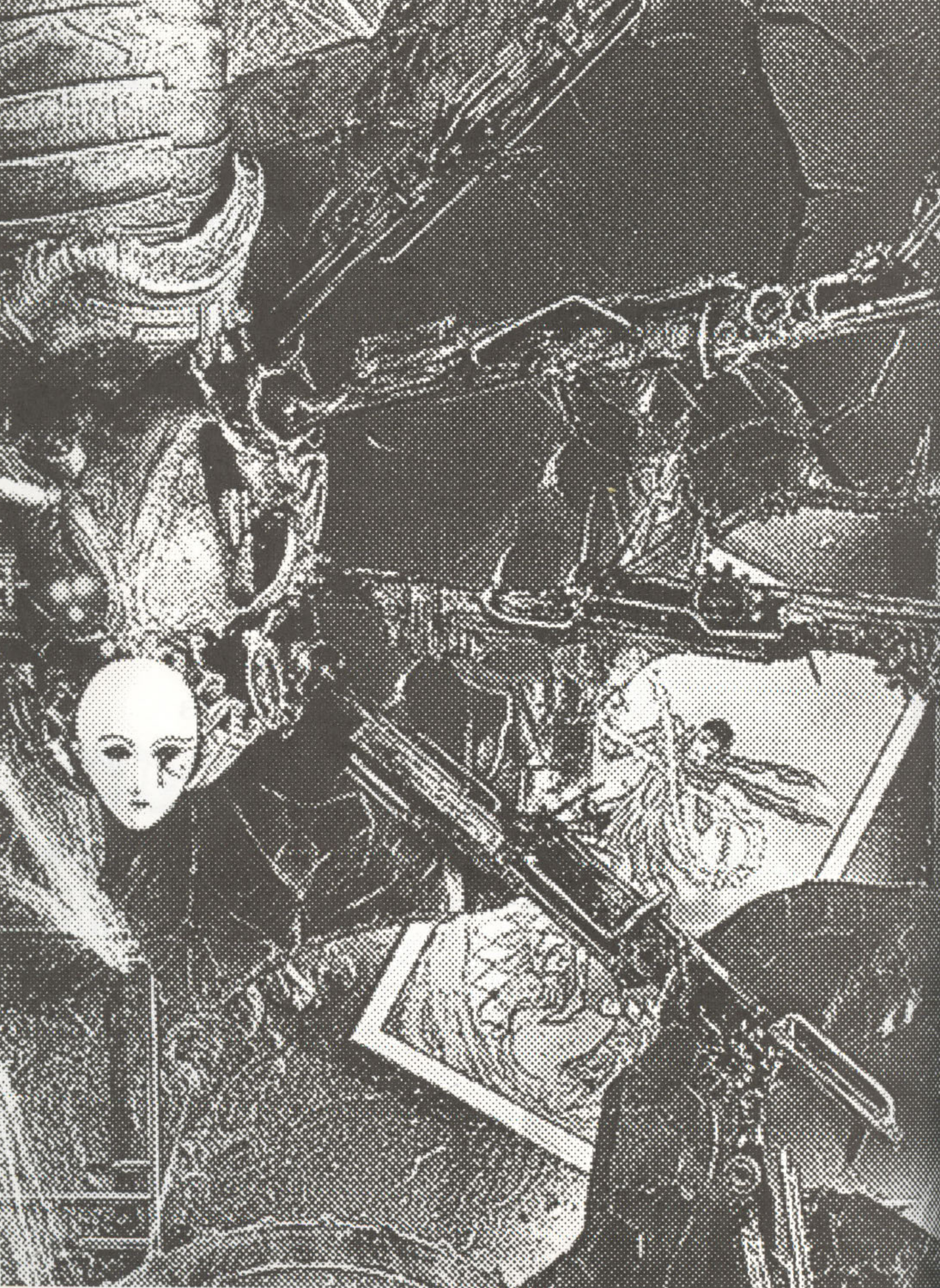


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Introduction: Once and Future Things

*Another Voice, when I am sleeping, cries
"The flower should open with the morning skies"
And a retreating whisper as I wake —
"The flower that once has blown for ever dies."
— The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, verse XXVIII*

Loom of Fate is a complete four-chapter story for **Mage: The Ascension**. Set in San Francisco, it entwines player mages in a web of usury and tragedy, where free will threatens to unravel the very fabric of reality. This supplement details plots, characters and settings, thus enabling your troupe to tell an earthshaking story. Appendix One compiles all character descriptions for ease of reference. Appendix Two contains guidelines for running a Tarot-like card-reading.

This plot encourages character interaction and problem-solving rather than violent confrontation. Therefore, any number of player characters of any level of enlightenment may take part. They may represent diverse Traditions, though students of the Spheres of Time and Spirit are most appropriate.

This adventure expands on "All Hallow's Eve," the scenario given in the back of the **Mage** rulebook, but differs in several ways from the first story. If you have already run "All Hallow's Eve," you may wish to modify the details given in this book to conform to the original story. If not, run **Loom of Fate** as it stands, incorporating any elements of "All Hallow's Eve" that you want.

Variations on a Theme

As Storyteller, you may use **Loom of Fate** in a number of ways. First of all, this story could be told with no modifications. The scenes included should provide enough roleplaying, mystery and action to last several gaming sessions. Second, you might modify the existing scenes or add others to suit your troupe's style of play. If you feel particularly ambitious, you could even change the setting from San Francisco to elsewhere.

Loom of Fate could also become the first chapter in a continuing chronicle. The Bay Area is integral to the Technocracy's American operations, and warlike players could wage a long and dangerous guerrilla campaign against the Technomancers. Though this "Fighting the Technocracy" concept seems the most obvious of many options, other plot threads offer possibilities.

At this moment, several players are reading these words; stop immediately or risk ruining your own enjoyment. Storytellers — and we know who you are (••Correspondence, •••Mind) — please continue.

Background: The Wyld Bound

In the beginning, there was a place of power: a hilly headland where Gaia's children felt her pulse more strongly, where gods walked among mortals, and where strange entities were born. Undulating dunes near the western sea held a powerful Node linking Earth to a Wylding Realm. Though a few brave Dreamspeakers drew power from the local pools of Quintessence, for the most part static reality had yet to conquer this Wylderness. Dynamic magick held sway.

Then one summer day a foreign ship dropped anchor offshore. Pale men disembarked. They explored briefly while repairing their ship and replenishing supplies, but were driven off by wild beasts and an unstable reality. Before sailing west, these explorers affixed a brass plaque to a post near shore. Its inscription claimed the land for a distant queen. Though Sir Francis Drake's claim was premature, that 17th day of June in 1579 foreshadowed mankind's conquest over the Node.

The invasion evidently angered the spirits. A short time after the pale men departed, a massive earthquake shattered the area, creating what would later be called the San Francisco Bay. Many native people died, and the Uktena werewolves created a caern to guard a site where they said a spirit called the Cataclysm slept restlessly. Hereafter, there were only occasional tremors, and these were accepted as the price the land demanded from the mortals dwelling there.

Before Europeans arrived, Native Americans accepted magick as a natural part of reality. They had only slightly bound the Wylderness through the natural process of human nature attempting to impose order and structure on the unknowable. The Europeans, under the fledgling Technocracy, changed all that.

Technomancer scouts came with the first explorations into the West, mapping Wyld magic out of the lands they "discovered." They noted likely bases of operation as they went, and San Francisco, with its harbor, mountains, stable climate and powerful Node, seemed perfect. As the Technomancers wove their spells of containment, the Wylderness weakened. Around the mission of San Francisco de Asis, the Technomancers raised a city, which suppressed and eventually smothered the Wylderness. The Technocrats of San Francisco now control this dormant Node, tapping its raw Quintessence.

To contain the spirits of the Wyld, the Progenitors and Void Seekers (the old name for the Void Engineers) summoned a powerful pattern spider named Cob, reinforcing it with great power. Over the years, the Technomancers have increased Cob's might with cybernetic enhancements, Weaver spirit essence, and bio-restoratives. In return, Cob has stabilized the region, allowing the Technomancers to

establish a brisk overseas trade, an international idea exchange, and several important laboratories.

The Wyld, however, will not be denied. Shifting chaos strains against Cob's web, and some leaks through the mesh. Wyld spirits tear at the strands of the web, and Cob and its fellow pattern spiders must repair this web daily. This conflict is mirrored in the contrasting social orders of the Bay area. On one hand, rich and conservative elements struggle to control the city. On the other, San Francisco's famous radical subcultures strive for ultimate freedom. The Quintessence of the region feeds on this dichotomy and is fed by it in return. The Bay area is neither dynamic nor static, but a wildly shifting combination of both.

This Quintessence fluctuation further erodes Cob's static structure. Constant struggle has weakened the pattern spider. Periodic attacks upon Cob itself by Marauders and Wyld spirits have hastened the process of inevitable entropy. Eventually, Cob will lose its power and cease to exist.

This decay was graphically demonstrated in 1906. On April 18th, Cob lost cohesion. Wyld Things broke loose from the web and raged across the Near Umbra. This Wyld Quintessence manifested in the real world as earthquakes and fire, and in the terror and confusion that followed.

By frantically manipulating symbols of order, such as the city government, Technomancers restored order to San Francisco. They did not comprehend the magnitude of the problem, however, instead assuming that mere lack of vigilance had allowed the magick of the Node to escape.

Cob had, in fact, regained control only through sheer will. Furthermore, the 'Quake of 1989 and the tremor of October 1993 prove that even Cob's will is insufficient. The Wylderness threatens to break free, perhaps awakening the fabled spirit Cataclysm in the process, unless an equally powerful pattern spider replaces Cob.

The Umbral struggle has attracted the attention of many groups. Even the Technomancers have recently become aware of the difficulties of Cob. Some mages wait to see what happens; others take advantage of the situation.

In one camp stands a Progenitor Chantry led by Dr. Himiitsu of the U.C. Medical Center. Himiitsu plans to transform Norna Weaver (an Orphan) into a pattern spider to replace Cob. Norna's powerful Avatar, great Destiny and Orphan status make such a reincarnation possible. Directly opposing this plan are a gang of nameless and faceless Marauders. They have learned that Norna can potentially imprison the Wylderness in a static net, giving the Pattern a powerful new grip on the Bay Area. Only their alien perceptions and lack of organization have prevented them from eliminating her thus far....

The player characters will soon find themselves entangled in this web of destiny. Their actions may tip the balance for fate or free will. The most difficult factor of this equation is understanding where free will ends and destiny begins.

Wyld and Weaver

Mages understand that creation is an ongoing process, measured in dynamic change and static stability. Both are necessary elements of reality. Without change, there is no advancement. Without stability, advancement loses momentum and spirals into formless chaos, achieving nothing. Many Tradition mages feel that Ascension lies between these extremes. This line is a narrow one, and few agree on where it's drawn.

The Ascension War wages around that line. The Technocracy would enforce stability by containing the Wyld. The Marauders would rend that woven Pattern, setting the Wyld free. Tradition mages know that either course threatens the tenuous hold that sustains human civilization. Loom of Fate draws the battle lines through the center of San Francisco. Who knows which card Fate's fickle hand holds for the city, or for the Sleepers within?

Plot Threads

This section summarizes the chapters forming this book and explains how they relate to the overall story. It outlines a probable course for the story and discusses key events that advance the plot. The plotline presented here is not the only option, or even the best one for your troupe.

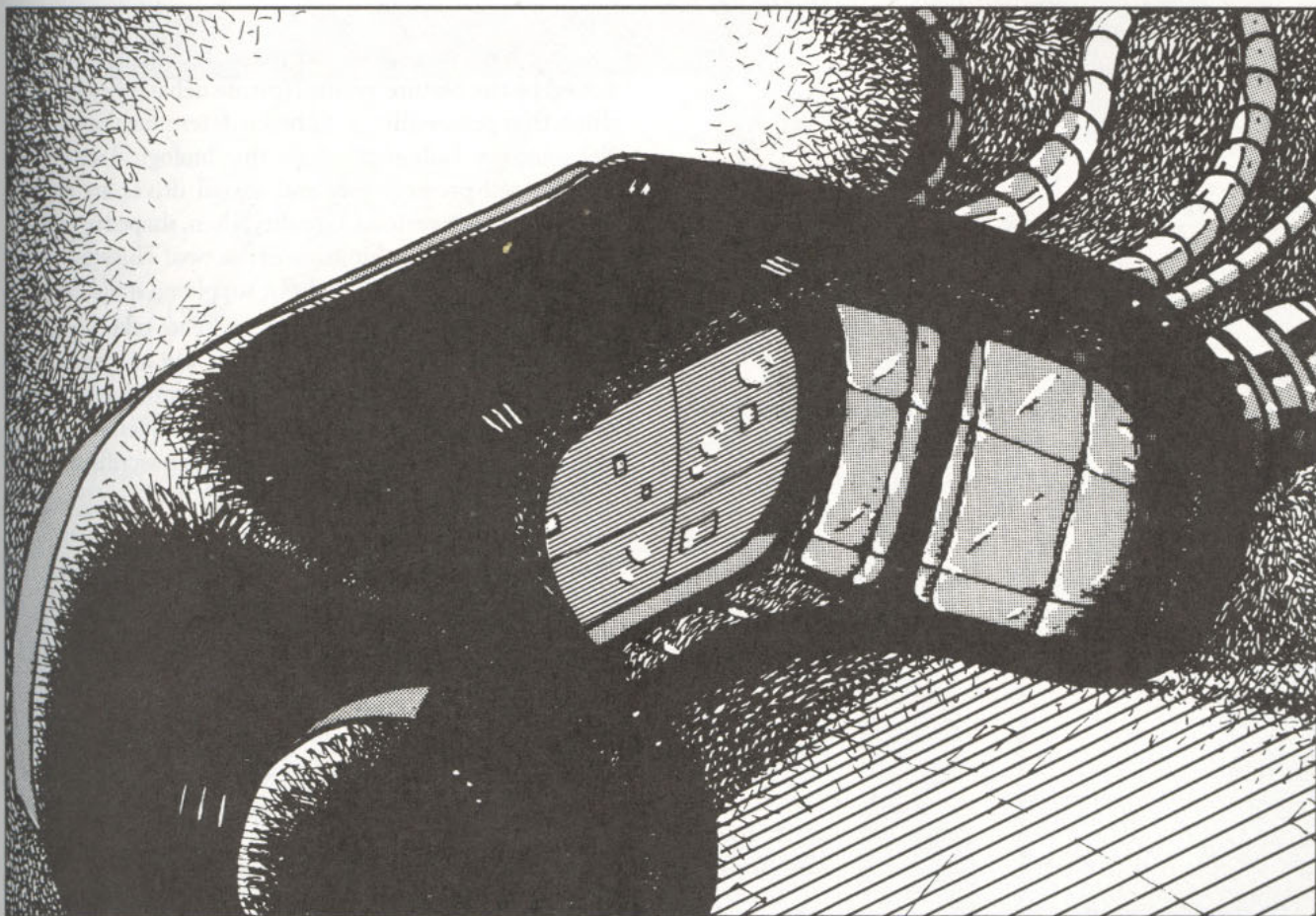
Feel free to modify, delete and add any scenes you feel would contribute to a good story.

Note that the pacing of this story is very much left to you. As presented, the story starts on October 31st; a tempest rages through much of the story. Marauders attack, and a Technomancer Symposium is held to decide the Technocracy's course of action. These bits can be molded to conform to the actions and desires of the characters.

A glance at the "Aftermath" of each scene reveals how these story threads relate to one another. Each scene suggests one (and usually more) possible continuations of the story, beyond those the players choose for themselves. Thus the plot, while nonlinear, is still structured. Remember that players tend to tread the unbeaten path; they may surprise you with their goals and how they pursue them. When possible, encourage their input and be prepared to improvise scenes.

In the end, the outline below is simply a guideline, a reference aid and a convenient means of explaining the story. Once a Storyteller understands the basic plot, she may more easily modify it and can always consult this framework if things get confusing.

Note that the order of these scenes is nonsequential. You may find yourself flipping back and forth through the



book as the troupe follows various leads. Therefore, it helps to familiarize yourself with the general layout.

The Basic Outline

Chapter One: Player-character mages travel to San Francisco (if they were not there already) to participate in a fortune-telling session. While on their way, they stumble through a chaotic accident scene caused by the subconscious magick of Norna Weaver and the imminent arrival of a group of Marauders. The players discover that Norna is wanted by the Technocracy. By helping her, the mages also become targets. At the end of the scene, Madame Cleo Verthank performs a Tarot reading that hints at a horrible fate.

Chapter Two: Here, player mages must take the initiative. After researching various topics, they discover just enough of what is going on to pique their curiosity. They discover that Norna Weaver is destined to become a prominent mage, if properly molded. Mages who visit San Francisco's Umbra may discover a number of significant sites. Hints of a powerful, dormant Node provide prompting.

While delving into Norna's mundane life, the players discover yet another layer of the plot to capture Norna: both her parents have died at the hands of the Technocracy. Later, Marauders attack, intent on eliminating Norna.

Chapter Three: Events begin to move more rapidly. The Technocracy holds a Symposium wherein Technomancers propose their plan to transform Norna Weaver into a pattern spider. While the Technocracy meets, Marauders attack and injure Cob, causing a minor earthquake. At some point, Dr. Himiitsu contacts the mages. By revealing his plans, he hopes to gain the characters' help...or at least set them up for an ambush.

Chapter Four: During the story's climax, characters take the battle to the Technocracy's home turf. They search for clues in Merika Seth's apartment or Dr. Himiitsu's office at the U.C. Medical Center. Finally, they invade the Technomancer Chantry known as GeneTech Lab, or even Cob's lair in the Umbra.

Conclusion: Depending on the mages' action, the story ends in one of two ways. Either they sacrifice Norna for the greater Technocratic good, transforming her into a pattern spider — or they protect Norna from her fate and watch as...nothing happens. Though the mages have been led to expect the worst, some hidden force keeps reality from unraveling. A new clock, however, has begun to tick, and the fate of San Francisco may not be denied a second time....

Theme

The future is not set. There's no fate but what we make for ourselves.

— Reese, *The Terminator*

Loom of Fate focuses on two major conflicts. The first and most obvious is between static and dynamic forces, represented by Cob and the Technomancers on one side, and the Wylderness and Marauders on the other. But beneath this surface tension lies a deeper conflict between fate and free will. Which of these forces truly holds sway over the World of Darkness?

Obviously, mages exert a tremendous control over reality through magick and sheer will. They provide living examples, then, that free will is the dominant force of the universe. Yet rumor suggests that the Oracles of Time know something about the eventual fate of all humanity, including mages. How much free will does humanity have, then, if even the weavers of the Tapestry dance on predetermined threads?

Putting the question of mages aside, the same question can be asked about the Sleepers. Do they control their lives, or are they mere marionettes whose strings are manipulated by Awakened puppeteers? If the latter is true, then mages themselves have taken the roles of the Three Fates — spooling out, weaving, and cutting the lifelines of lesser mortals. The personal dilemma of Norna Weaver and the tragic ends of her parents should cast a human light across an abstract concept that players might otherwise choose to ignore.

For both mundane and mage, this argument is subsumed by the Nature versus Nurture debate. People like to think that personality and choice determine their actions. Yet some psychologists suggest that biological imperatives such as self-preservation and sexual drives are stronger subliminal motivations. Is reality, then, shaped by free will, destiny, or some combination of the two? This story should raise probing questions without supplying simple answers.

As a roleplaying story, *Loom of Fate* takes a stand on this issue by default. It presents free will as stronger than fate. Though the story taunts players into seeing destiny everywhere, their decisions do make a difference. At the end, they must ultimately choose between sacrificing Norna Weaver and helping to change her "fate."

As Storyteller, your goal is to goad player mages into believing in predestination while also allowing their choices to affect the story — a daunting challenge indeed! The story itself presents some ways to accomplish this; other hints follow in "Guidelines For Nonlinear Stories," given below.

One possible method would be the rigorous enforcement of roleplaying that conforms to Nature and Essence; this will give the impression that a character's actions are out of that player's hands. While this might underline the point of the story, it might also anger your players.

Another tactic could be "coincidental" prods that spur the characters along a certain path. Are these events true coincidences, or is there a stronger hand (other than that of the Storyteller) guiding these events?

Whatever you do, do not force the players along too many routes that they would not have otherwise chosen. Let your players feel the pull of destiny while allowing them to make their own decisions. Players who feel like rats pushed through a maze will just get upset.

A note about searching for someone through Correspondence or Mind magick: **the searcher must still know just whom he seeks!** The ability to extend one's perceptions does not give a mage the ability to locate anyone instantly. A similar rule applies to Correspondence travel. The mage must still know exactly where she is going. A mistake (i.e., a failed roll) could have disastrous consequences. Difficulties for Co-locating or Mind-sensing should be high (8 or 9) in a large city.

While on the subject of theme, it might be helpful to discuss the meaning of this story's title. It refers to the work of Cob, and by extension, all of San Francisco. Cob weaves the local pattern web, and with it the fates of all who live in San Francisco. The city has its own character, which influences its inhabitants as much as they create it. This give-and-take is known by some as the "resonance" effect. Both Cob and the city's mortal inhabitants weave the

Loom of Fate together, though few, if any, ever realize this. Your cabal can explore the theme of the story through this metaphor.

Mood

Your cries of agony, where will they not reach?

Where on Citaeron will they not re-echo?

No man living

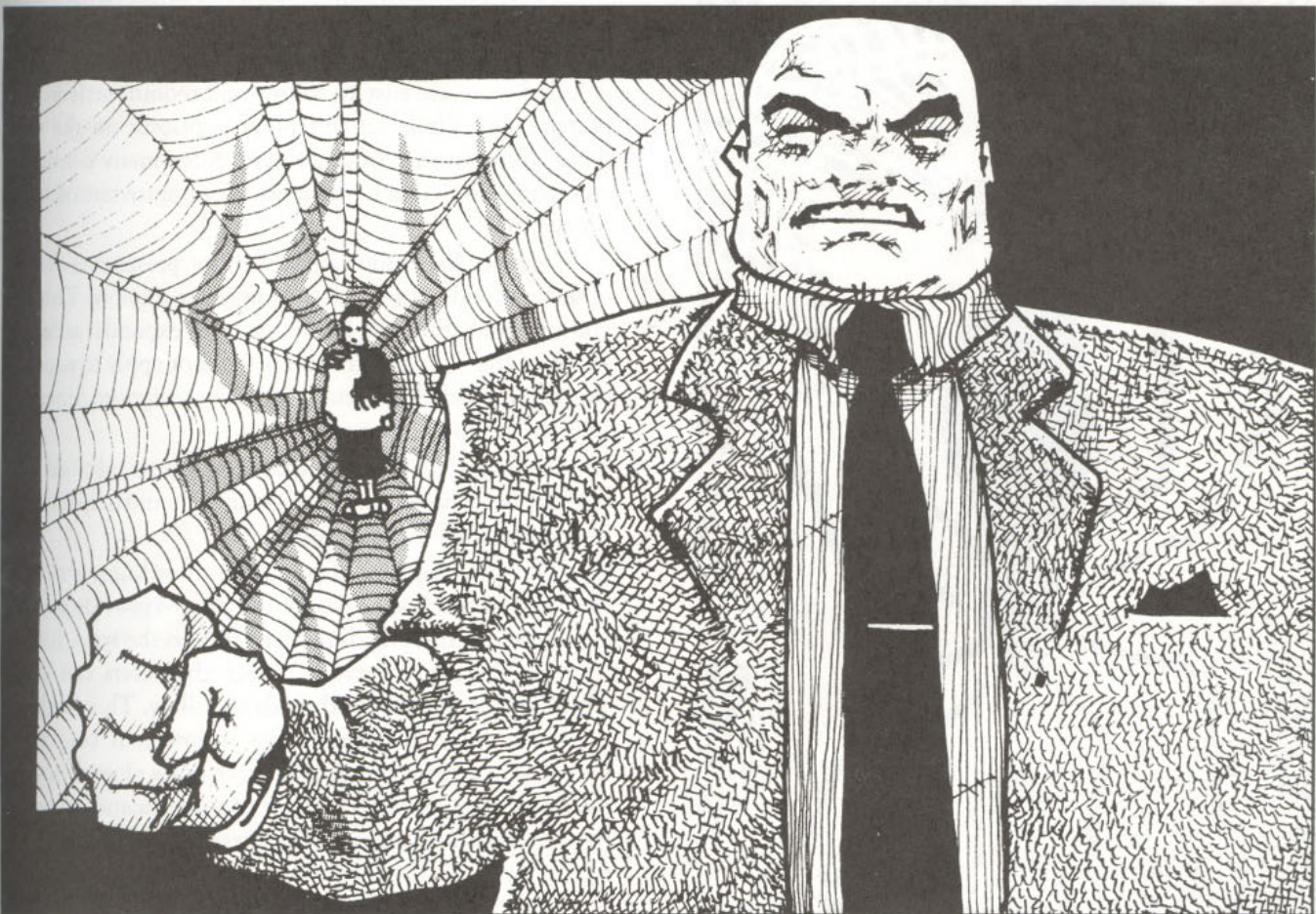
Will meet a doom more terrible than yours.

— Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*

For the most part, the Storyteller should maintain a mood of tragedy — tragedy in the classical sense rather than the popular conception. The usual connotation of tragedy is simple sadness and loss. The classical definition of tragedy, however, is a character's inevitable downfall caused by a personal shortcoming — a "fatal flaw."

Whose fatal flaw shapes the fate of Norna Weaver? Is it the hubris of the Technocracy and Marauders? Could it be the player characters, crossing the paths that destiny has laid and possibly interfering in the process by their actions? Or is the flaw within Norna herself, as she flees or embraces a seemingly predetermined end?

Two ways to highlight this tragic end are foreshadowing and suspense. Chapter Three of Mage presents some thoughts on foreshadowing. Suspense can fall into two categories. The first type provokes intellectual curiosity.





10 Loom of Fate

Madame Cleo's fortune-telling hints at future events and hopefully makes players anxious. The second type prompts emotional involvement through feelings of imminent danger. *Loom of Fate* as a whole hints at the destruction of San Francisco. Stress this terrible fate to keep your players moving.

Norna Weaver is very much aware of her impending fate; her Demeanor reflects this. During the story's course, the player-character mages realize that their own futures hold many unpleasant experiences.

Guidelines for Nonlinear Plots

*Time is a train
Makes the future the past
Leaves you standing in the station
Your face pressed up against the glass.*
— U2, "Zoo Station"

Many of the events in *Loom of Fate* hinge upon whether or not Norna Weaver is captured by the Technocracy, and, if she is, where and when. Rather than assuming she will be grabbed regardless of the players' actions, we have presented a variety of options for the Storyteller to pursue, with contingencies for many different circumstances. This section discusses three methods for promoting nonlinear plots in this and other stories.

Many published stories seem too linear. Others are so vague that the need for Storyteller preparation defeats the purpose of a "store-bought" story. The paradox is this: more detailed plots are easy to follow and require little work to prepare, but often restrict player options; on the other hand, plot outlines offer guidelines for many contingencies, but require much preparation or improvisation from a Storyteller.

Loom of Fate follows a third route, presenting a variety of settings and options for the players to explore. This way, you may guide the story immediately or expand it as desired. Many of the scenes in this book will not apply to your tale; they are provided as options to follow or ignore depending on your group's course of action.

Experience has shown that most games take odd turns during play. The following guidelines should help make the Storyteller's life a little easier.

The first method of promoting nonlinear stories — one used in this book — is for the plot to provide multiple exits from each scene. Imagine a fork in the road. Just as a traveler chooses her path, player characters can decide which of the many plot threads to follow. This method is crude but easy to prepare. For instance, if your mages investigate a crime scene, plant five or six clues. They may overlook some or fail to realize the significance of others, but the remaining clues will present further avenues of

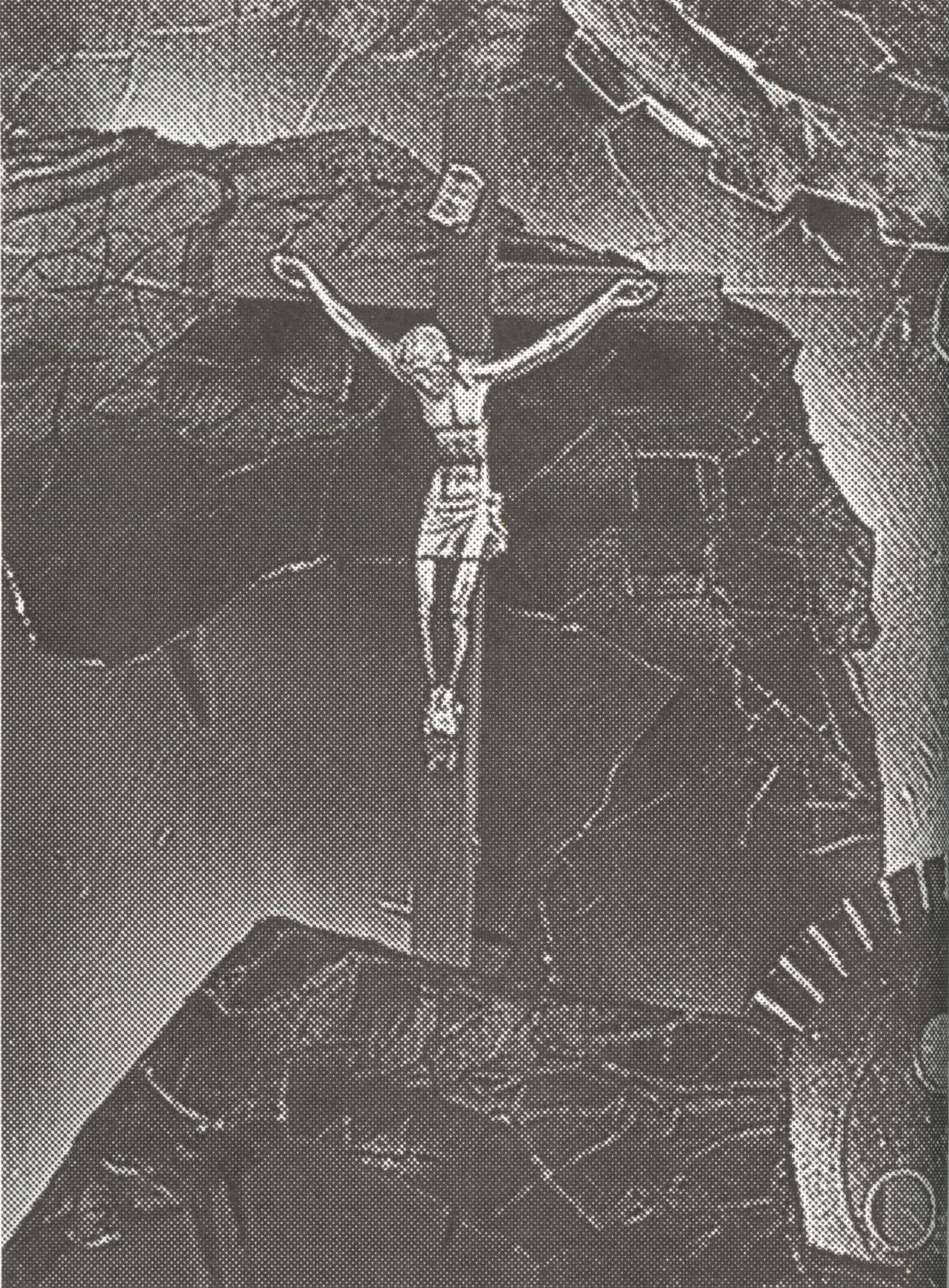
investigation. When improvising such choices, avoid yes/no options; a "no" usually spells an end to the story.

For a second method, simply allow players to follow their fancies off on some weird tangent. Even if these wanderings lead nowhere, indulge them for a while. Avoid saying "Don't bother breaking into Dr. Himiitsu's home; you'll find no clues there." Instead, improvise the scene. Not only will players worry about missing important (though imaginary) clues, but they could influence the story in remarkable ways. What if Dr. Himiitsu discovers them rifling through his personal papers? Does he call the police, take care of them with magick, or try to recruit them? Your cabal will decide!

If you are not confident with improvisation, relocate important information or change an entire scene. For

instance, one scene is set in Lincoln Cemetery; if the mages investigate another graveyard, you might use that one instead.

This brings us to a final point. "Linear" does not necessarily refer to set locations and predetermined events. Rather, it means allowing players' actions to affect the plot in a single given direction. Loom of Fate may be run in a linear fashion if the Storyteller desires. If the players miss an event, take this into account and continue down your predetermined course. Perhaps they hear about the event later, or see its effects. If they miss something integral to the story, integrate it later. Or don't. Characters can and should fail occasionally, although their failures should mean something to the chronicle. By the same token, reward success. Player characters are the story's protagonists; their choices should make a difference.



Chapter One: All Hollow's Eve

*Why, all the Saints and Sages who discuss'd
Of the Two Worlds so learnedly, are thrust
like Foolish Prophets forth; their words to scorn
Are scatter'd, and their Mouths are stopp'd with dust.
— The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, verse XXIX*

This chapter introduces a number of plot threads. While seemingly separate, all of these threads juxtapose by the story's conclusion.

By means of a mysterious business card (and perhaps other strange occurrences), the player mages are drawn to San Francisco. There, several bizarre encounters — the least of which is a chaotic traffic accident — suggest that trouble is brewing. The most obvious cause of this trouble is a girl named Norna Weaver, who exudes magickal

power. Spurred by curiosity, the mages pursue Norna, either to chastise her for misuse of magick or to see that she is safe. The characters discover that she is an Orphan, unaware of her power's true nature. Furthermore, she is hunted by mysterious Men in Black and haunted by visions of a horrible fate.

This fate, unfortunately, also seems to include the player-character mages — at least, if one believes the readings of a fortuneteller!

Scene One: Three Weird Sisters



Plot

No matter where they live, despite any Arcane they maintain, all the mages somehow acquire parchment-colored business cards: Written on the reverse of each card, in cramped calligraphy, is the message, "I shall see you at dusk, on All Hallow's Eve." Hopefully, the very nature of this invitation prompts mages to visit San Francisco, if they do not already live there. Additional motivation depends upon character personality and your chronicle style; perhaps they intend to prove Madame Cleo a charlatan, or know her to be a true mage and seek advice.

If this is not enough, bait other hooks. Over the next couple of months, introduce other reasons to visit San Francisco. Some examples:

- Those who maintain a facade of normalcy might have to visit a sick relative or take a business trip.
- One character might be lucky enough to win a trip for two (or more) to "exotic San Francisco, gateway to the Orient!"
- A Disciple of Time feels a sense of foreboding emanating from the West Coast.
- As a last resort, a patron or Mentor asks them to "go west, young mage." He may have a legitimate reason or simply feel that such a trip would be for the best....

Coincidence? Not in the World of Darkness. Tempt players into this story, but try not to railroad them.

Besides these key developments, player mages may pursue a number of other subplots. The impending accident allows them to explore their feelings toward Sleepers (i.e., are they worth saving?) and perhaps begin a pattern of either static or dynamic magick-use. Rescue attempts may make them heroes.

Setting

*I can see lights in the distance
Trembling in the dark cloak of night
Candles and lanterns are dancing, dancing
A waltz on All Souls Night.*
— Loreena McKennitt, "All Souls Night"

This scene begins wherever you have set your chronicle. If the characters do not already dwell in San Francisco, travel there might be accomplished via magickal teleportation (Correspondence 3 or 4) or more mundane means. If the latter, you might do some research or calculation — cost of airfare, mileage on highways, length of the trip in hours, etc. — to add realism. You could even make the travelogue a scene unto itself.

MADAME CLEO VERTHANK

Old World Oracle

** Fortunes Told*

** Fates Revealed*

** The Gift Deck Is Never Wrong*

**Tempest's Eye
Hyde Street Pier
San Francisco**

No Telephone

On the evening of October 31st, mages cross downtown San Francisco on their way to meet the mysterious fortuneteller, Madame Cleo. Remnants of evening fog roll through the concrete valleys below Nob Hill. While traveling north on Taylor, they pass the aluminum-paneled Hilton Hotel, apartments in Classical and Revivalist styles, and Victorian townhouses framed by wrought-iron tracery. Some of the smaller buildings, such as clubs and theaters, boast Spanish-style roofs or architectural spillover from nearby Chinatown.

The streets are full on All Hallow's Eve. Children disguised as monsters and Ninja Turtles roam the sidewalks playing trick-or-treat. Concerned parents hover nearby. The Wyld seethes beneath the mild facade of order. Here, two punks fight over the right to smash a jack-o-lantern; there a leper seeking spare change first begs, then assaults a hippie. The street scene overloads all five senses: dense but speeding traffic; honking horns and squealing tires; the thick taste of vehicle exhaust; a feeling of claustrophobia. Characters may hear the following message from a nearby TV or radio.

"...no comment. Now lets check in with Merika Seth, reporting live from Taylor and California. Merika?"

"Thanks, Bob. From this vantage, I suggest all you listeners avoid the downtown entirely. Even the normally clear Taylor Street is crammed with vehicles spilling over from the gridlock on Grant Avenue. The traffic situation is partially due to a final surge of rush-hour traffic and crowds of trick-or-treaters. But mostly we can blame this afternoon's World Series win by our Giants over the Oakland A's. I think everyone agrees that the exciting result of this six-game series was well worth its delay.

"And those quakes which damaged the two stadiums earlier this month are all the excitement Mother Nature's given us. This last day of October ends with the average temperature of 61 degrees Fahrenheit. For tomorrow, I predict more exciting weather — thunderstorms and lots of rain for the first week of November."

The first newscaster, Bob, cuts back in. "And we all know Merika's forecasts have never been wrong. That's Weather and Traffic, here on KWLJ. Next...."

Characters reach the intersection of Taylor and California in time to see the weather lady wrapping up her report. A red and green cable car runs slowly east, up Nob Hill, pulled by its endless steel cable. Amid apartments and hotels towers Grace Cathedral, its strange architectural style best described as "Gothic in Reinforced Concrete." Its rose windows illuminate the dusk.

Drama: The Accident

As characters approach the intersection of Taylor and California, reality begins to unravel. Each character must roll Perception + Alertness (difficulty 4) and consult the following table:

During this initial event, chaos continues to escalate. Make this accident worthy of a high-budget action movie—that is, totally unrealistic. When players roll, introduce complications on results of only one or two successes.

Botch: The mage's mind is elsewhere, but she is jarred back to reality by impact with a car. She does not gain the benefit of a dodge roll, but can still roll for soak (see details in main text). A more alert companion could possibly push her out of the way or affect the car via magick.

Failure: Same as above, but she may still make a last-minute dodge (difficulty 8).

One success: She sees nothing but the obvious—that described above. She may also dodge the car hurtling toward her (difficulty 7).

Two successes: The character notices a Honda Prelude swerve toward her and may dodge (difficulty 6).

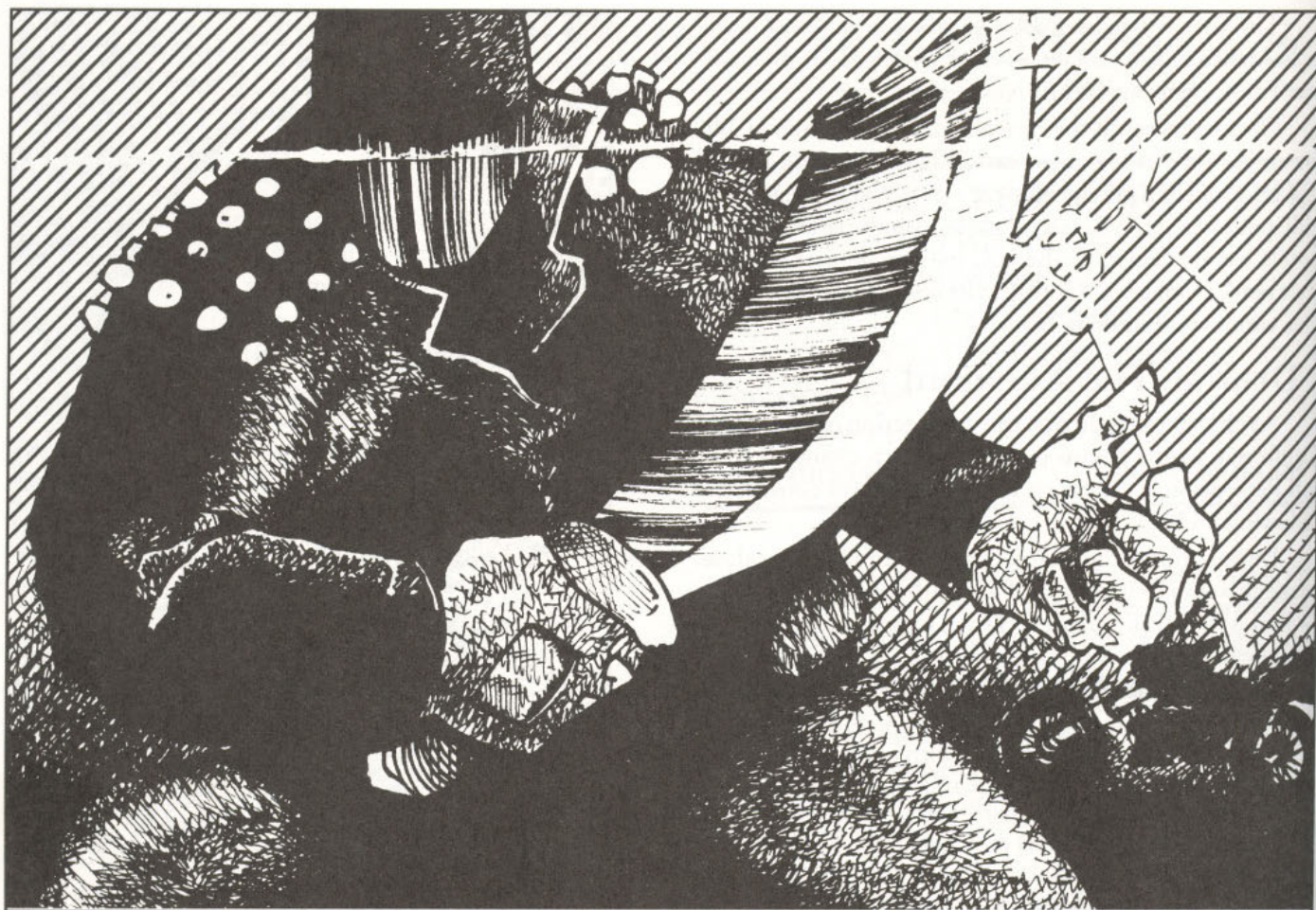
Three successes: The oncoming Honda swerves to avoid a girl (Norna Weaver) who hopped off a cable car in the middle of traffic. The character may dodge (difficulty 5).

Four successes: All traffic signals at the intersection show green or "walk." A character with at least one Sphere in Entropy realizes the malfunctioning signals and brake failures are caused by magick—Entropy magick emanating from Norna Weaver. The character may dodge the approaching car (difficulty 4).

Five successes: A character with Entropy 2+ is so alert she can attempt to minimize the randomness and bring chance back into balance. Otherwise, she may dodge (difficulty 3).

To dodge, roll Dexterity + Dodge (or Dexterity + Drive if in a vehicle). Each success reduces damage by one Health Level; zero damage indicates complete safety. Base damage from a collision is one Health Level for each 10 mph of the offending vehicle (assume a 40 mph speed limit). Seat belts add three dice when soaking impact damage.





Perhaps the driver swerved to avoid the Honda, only to bear down on Norna Weaver... and the car's brakes fail! Meanwhile, the Honda strikes Merika Seth (the radio reporter). Vehicles and pedestrians tragically mingle. A petroleum truck skids into two streetlamps near Huntington Cemetery, and sparks threaten to ignite the fuel. Norna reels in horror at the chaos that she has inadvertently caused, and flees the scene, dodging around a corner and disappearing from view.

Right-thinking mages can prevent many fatalities. Players will undoubtedly imagine magical effects to save themselves and others. Disciples of Correspondence might augment dodge rolls with coincidental magick; each success reduces damage by one level. They might also use vulgar magick (Sphere 3) to teleport out of the way. Forces magick can siphon a car's kinetic energy (Sphere Rank Four; three successes), while Matter magick can reduce a car's mass.

The Marauders Ride!

Just as the mages gain control of the situation (assuming that they do!), introduce this final element. Mages with Rank Two or higher in the Spirit Sphere feel as though they are being watched. Mages with a Perception + Alertness Dice Pool of five or more dice automatically sense the bass rumble of idling engines. Give alert characters a few seconds to ready themselves. Suddenly, everyone hears the

roar of motorcycles, and a dozen cyclists zoom from amidst the wreckage, bearing nightmarish riders — Marauders! They fly across sidewalks, scattering children and rubber-necks as they circle in search of Norna Weaver. The presence of so many mages baffles the Marauders' magick-sense. One Marauder rides up to the character with the greatest Avatar rating and just sits there, staring through a blank, dented visor.

Characters might take this opportunity to evaluate their opponents. A mage with Awareness 3+ might try to read auras (Perception + Awareness; difficulty 9); any successes send his mind reeling with alien thoughts and lunatic emotions. The ensuing psychic headache adds one to the difficulties of all Mental rolls until eight hours of sleep have passed. An Intelligence + Cosmology (or Dream) roll (difficulty 6), will identify these cyclists. One success supplies the name "Marauder"; further successes provide additional details (see p. 34 of *Mage: The Ascension*).

The staring Marauder finally realizes this mage is not Norna. He suddenly breaks off and rejoins the gang. After circling the intersection a few times, the cyclists scatter to the four winds from this intersection. They easily lose pursuers (by slipping through space and spirit).

After the accident, a mage, possibly one with the Influence Background, finds herself interviewed by Merika Seth for KWLF. (Intelligence + Alertness (difficulty 7) allows the mage to note that the radio reporter seems quite

healthy despite her apparent "incident"; the Honda, however, sports a nasty dent.) Questions may include: "Your name, sir?"; "And your occupation?"; "By what chance did you find yourself here, at California and Taylor?"; "Did you see what caused the accident?"; and perhaps, "What made you risk your own life to save another?" The odd tone of her questions may make the characters suspicious, as well they should be.

Unless characters swiftly flee the scene, the police will detain them as witnesses.

Aftermath

Although characters may pursue a number of options from here (including a visit to the hospital), they will probably pursue Norna Weaver. If they don't, prompt them with an Intelligence + Intuition roll (difficulty 6). This leads to Scene Two.

Other options include:

- Continuing on to meet with Madame Cleo. See Scene Three.
- Hanging around the accident site in search of further clues. This leads to Scene Six.
- Following Merika Seth to determine how she survived her "near hit" with an automobile. Refer to Scene Thirteen.

Scene Two: Daughter of Time



Plot

What Is Going On?

Norna has been troubled of late by a nagging feeling of doom. Her foreboding quickly surpassed normal adolescent angst, finally becoming a full-blown panic. She needed to talk to someone, and soon, to reassure herself that she was still sane.

But where could she go? She had few acquaintances and no real

friends. Then she had remembered Reverend Williams of Grace Cathedral. Though Norna herself had not been to service in years, her mother had remained faithful. The reverend had even visited the house once or twice. Reverend Williams was the only one she could trust — he would listen; he would help. This sudden, powerful compulsion to speak to Reverend Williams drew her to the cathedral.

Traveling across town, Norna felt eyes watching her. She sidetracked frequently, but the farther she walked, the more frightened and frantic she became — as if she were not fleeing from something, but toward it. She hopped a cable car for the last dozen blocks. She almost laughed with relief when Grace Cathedral loomed into view...and then she saw the black Cadillac following her cable car — a nightmare icon brought to life through her fears.

Tempting fate, she jumped from the moving cable car and ran through traffic. Her subconscious reacted, spewing magick in a desperate attempt to create a diversion. And a diversion was sorely needed. The Men in Black were following her; the Marauders were watching her; the player mages almost ran into her; and all the while, someone has been waiting for her — someone in a position of trust....

This is where the mages become involved. To follow Norna Weaver from the accident scene, mages must make extended Perception + Investigation rolls (difficulty 7), accumulating five successes. Crashing vehicles, Marauders and media coverage may complicate the chase (see Scene One). Norna, meanwhile, takes refuge in Grace Cathedral.

Reverend Williams is a secret agent of the Technocracy. Like many Technomancers in San Francisco, he has received orders to abduct Norna Weaver. If necessary, he calls upon "Spirits of Heaven" (pattern spiders) or Men in Black — to aid him.

Setting

Grace Cathedral is an impressive blend of tradition and modernity. The gilded bronze doors on its east entrance were taken from casts of Ghiberti's Gates of Paradise on the baptistery in Florence. One portal lies ajar, indicat-

ing that Norna threw it open. Once players step inside, cavernous emptiness swallows the clamor of city streets.

Tiers of stained glass extend along the cathedral's length, rising to the roof groins. High above the hanging chandeliers, fan vaults support the ceiling like Masonic spiderwebs. Mages who make a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 7) feel uneasy — and well they should, for the bishop of the diocese, Reverend John Williams, has defected to the Technocracy.

At first, the cathedral seems deserted. Empty pews stand in orderly rows. An organ boasting 7000 pipes lies silent in its balcony. No priest is in sight. A dancing luminescence draws vision to the apse, where thousands of candles flicker from niches and candelabras, and a dozen hanging braziers defuse incense. Celestial Chorus mages realize these trappings are part of a ceremony to ward off spirits. Other mages may learn this by means of Rank One Spirit magick or a roll of Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 6; three successes).

In the World of Darkness, the Gauntlet weakens on All Hallow's Eve, allowing spirits to manifest more easily. Halloween costumes, jack-o-lanterns, and gifts of food descend from magick practiced during the Mythic Age to frighten off or appease these spirits.

The player characters hear voices nearby. A Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 4) or a thorough search of the cathedral leads to a pilgrimage choir behind the apse. The voices — one male, one female — issue from a confessional.

The Judas Goat

Norna and Reverend Williams sit in the confessional, separated by a partition. Their discussion is outlined below. How much characters hear depends on when they arrive and how long they eavesdrop (perhaps requiring a Dexterity + Stealth roll; difficulty 5). Give the characters the benefit of the doubt — Williams has taken his time to gain Norna's trust and has no reason to expect visitors.

"I think that I'm going crazy, Father," says Norna. "I can't breathe. I feel like I'm suffocating...it's like something gigantic is weighing down on me...."

Reverend Williams cuts in: "You're just going through normal teenage difficulties. I see many young people like you, tormented by feelings of doom. I think that it comes from our society, the way we have been raised to believe that the end is just around the corner. Relax, Norna; all of this will pass."

Again, Norna is quiet, as if debating her next words. Then she blurts out, "It goes a lot further than that, Father Williams! Today I imagined my mother dead, and I'm worried...."

"I'm sure that this is nothing, Norna, nothing to be worried about at all." Williams finishes by reassuring Norna that her mother is safe, but very likely worried. He says he will go telephone her.

In fact, Reverend Williams is leaving to call Dr. Himiitsu at the U.C. Medical Center (tracing this call requires a Correspondence 2, Forces 1 magick roll; difficulty 5, three successes needed). While Williams is gone, the mages can talk with Norna.

She speaks only to those who pique her curiosity (Appearance + Leadership, difficulty 5, two successes). Those who fail receive a sarcastic response: "I saw you arrive," she says through the confessional door. "Don't talk to me. The longer you remain near me, the more you're certain to lose." Norna vaguely remembers the mages from a vision — one that ends in suffering. She is uncertain if they will help or hurt her.

Total acceptance will take time and extended Charisma + Expression rolls (difficulty 6, 10 successes needed; each roll simulates two minutes of talk). Mages sharing similar philosophies face less difficulty; refer to the Hollow Ones Tradition in Chapter Six of *Mage*. Those faring poorly quickly realize it, as Norna subconsciously employs magick. Watches and other mechanical trappings break down, clothing rots, and people suffer the effects of Delion's Haze (Entropy 2, Time 3). Even if Norna befriends the mages, she is unlikely to leave the cathedral quite yet.

Reverend Williams returns at a dramatically appropriate moment. He greets strangers with cautious curiosity, maintaining a facade of respectability for as long as possible. Taking Norna aside, Williams explains that her mother is fine; nothing has happened to her. In fact, she is driving over right away to pick her up.

At this Norna blanches. "But our car is in the shop!" she blurts. The good reverend tries to cover for his mistake, but it becomes increasingly difficult for him to keep Norna in the cathedral, especially if players take advantage of his *faux pas*. The difficulty of the above Charisma + Expression roll lowers to 3! If ten successes are gained, Norna follows the mages' advice.

If confronted with violence or the possibility that Norna will slip from his grasp, Williams undergoes a sudden, vicious transformation. His pleasant face contorts with rage and he leaps atop the altar. Losing his temper and civilized demeanor, he shouts, "How dare you profane the House of my Lord and Master? For this, He will bind you in eternal fetters and drain your very essence! Then you will beg for forgiveness and release. May Cob have mercy upon you!"

Drama

With these final words, Reverend Williams throws up his arms and looks to the vaults. (A Perception + Alertness roll, difficulty 6, allows the characters to notice that as the sleeves of Williams' robes slip down his arms, tufts of rigid



black hair are visible.) His eyes glaze over as he shifts his perceptions to the Near Umbra and calls upon agents of his master, Cob.

Three pattern spiders hear the summoning and immediately attack. During the spiritual assault (which characters cannot see unless they peer into the Umbra), Williams tries to escape with Norna. In the unlikely event that all player mages are immobilized, Williams snatches Norna and takes off in his "company car," a green Volvo. As soon as the characters gain the upper hand, four Men in Black arrive.

Characters hear loud but distant footsteps echoing from the front of the nave. Turning around, they see four men, dressed in black, standing no more than a yard away. The Men wear mirrorshades, black suits with crisp white shirts, fedoras, and raincoats.

One Man in Black flashes a badge (a Wits + Law roll, difficulty 6, allows a mage to realize that it is fake) and "requests" that the mages leave. Though the Men in Black will make veiled threats, they do not attack unless the players initiate combat. At that point, they simply draw and fire their pistols, never seeking cover and never registering pain. During the confrontation, Reverend Williams tries to grab Norna. She does not go willingly and may escape at the Storyteller's discretion.

If characters overpower the Men in Black, the creatures disintegrate before the mages can question them. Their clothes contain no IDs or personal effects, save one; a neatly folded sheet of foolscap reading: "752 Ashbury Street, (415) 555-1357" (this is Norna's home number).

If the player mages and Reverend Williams' minions are evenly matched, Norna will slip out during the confrontation, frightened by everyone's unhealthy interest in her.

If the pattern spiders and Men in Black are clearly losing, Reverend Williams will escape and pursue Norna.

Aftermath

If Norna escapes the reverend's clutches, she may meet up with the players outside the cathedral after the fight, or simply disappear into the night, depending on the direction that the Storyteller wants the adventure to take. In any event, she may later be found at her father's grave (Scene Seven).

The mages have stumbled upon an intriguing plot. If they choose to keep their appointment with Madame Cleo, see Scene Three. If Norna is still with them, she will want to go. If Norna is abducted, persistent mages may follow up on a number of leads:

- If they befriend Norna, a visit to her home may be in order. Norna eventually takes comfort in a group of protectors. Even without Norna's guidance, the characters could arrive at the Weaver household by means of the address found on a Man in Black. In either case, refer to Scene Six.

- If Reverend Williams abducts Norna, the mages might still give chase. Depending on the level of subtlety, use Shadowing or Stunt Driving rules. Dense traffic, fog, and approaching darkness make pursuit problematic (difficulty 8). Williams' destination—the U.C. Medical Center—lies between five and 15 minutes distant, depending on his haste. As a last resort, a Rank Three Correspondence effect could locate Norna after a 24-hour search through All-Space. The U.C. Medical Center is described in Scene Fourteen; the secret Progenitor lab is described in Scene Fifteen.

- Scene Four covers a plethora of general inquiries, from the identities of Men in Black to the importance of Norna Weaver.

Scene Three: Between Decks



Plot

Madame Cleo Verthank, the fortuneteller whose invitation began this story, is in fact a true mage. A Master of Time, she has foreseen certain elements of the characters' fate and warns them by means of a Tarot-like reading. Though she will refuse to alter the fate of the city by direct intervention, she

can continue to provide vague and subtle guidance throughout the chronicle.

Setting

By now, the first few stars have appeared in the darkening sky. They soon disappear as characters descend though the bank of fog concealing the wharf. The smells of salt and fish permeate the air.

On their way to Hyde Street Pier, mages pass galleries, landscaped plazas, seafood restaurants and abandoned warehouses. The entire district flourishes beneath the hedge of skyscrapers that keeps San Francisco from spilling into the Bay.

The pier itself is a western extension of Fisherman's Wharf, bracketed between Aquatic Park and the Embarcadero Freeway. Out on the bay, dozens of campfires blaze on Alcatraz Island. The Tempest's Eye, a 19th-century whaler, is moored on the wharf. It is an eccentric sight; multicolored flags and strings of Christmas lighting decorate its blunt simplicity. It floats peacefully in the dark waters, silent save for the snapping of a poorly lashed sail and the tinkling of bulbs. A sloping gangplank sags between wharf and deck.

The upper deck is flat and bare save for six overturned rowboats and a hatch leading belowdecks. The hatchway is pitch black. A light source is needed to navigate the narrow stairs safely. The last person down hears a shrill voice ask, "You will close the hatch, will you not?" Other characters hear only the squeaks and pattering of rats.

The stairs lead to a partial cabin, separate from the hold. It is crammed full of occult paraphernalia, old sea chests, fishing gear, bowls of rotting fruit, and other junk. In a relatively clear space sits an oak table, surrounded by chairs. There is one chair more than the total number of characters present, including Norna, but the cabin is otherwise empty. After the characters poke about for a few minutes, Madame Cleo emerges from the shadows, shadows that were empty but a moment earlier.

The Fortuneteller

Madame Cleo introduces herself and, before the characters can reply, introduces them as well! She says each name, followed by a brief catch phrase ("And you are Maggie Wrathward, nurse during light, insatiable succubus by night. Fortunate for you that burning at the stake is no longer fashionable!"). Only mages with strong Arcane ratings (4 or 5) can stump her.

Pushing aside a cracked crystal ball and a vase of dying poppies, Madame Cleo sits at the table and invites her guests to do likewise. She explains why she has invited them here: "Quite simply, I have seen something of your fates..." If Norna is present, Madame Cleo raises her eyebrows and says, "You, my dear, look forward to — and avert your eyes from — the future. Is that not right?"

Then she begins the card-reading, a convenient format for coincidental Time magick. Guidelines for this event are found in Appendix Two. As she reads, Madame Cleo passes each mage the card that she has drawn for him. As explained in Appendix Two, these cards are minor Talismans. When the reading is over, Madame Cleo cackles knowingly. "Fate or free will?" she asks. "Which is it, truly, that lays the Path?" So saying, the mystic fades away, taking her deck with her but leaving the gift cards behind.

After their meeting with Madame Cleo, characters climb above decks and open the hatch to a torrent of rain. Though stormclouds darken the sky, it is clearly day. Time has indeed flown; so quickly, in fact, that an hour has passed for every minute spent with the fortune-teller!

Aftermath

The recent card-reading may disturb some characters. These mages might look into the various permutations and possibilities of their fates. This is covered in Scene Four.

Here are other possible story paths:

- They could return to the accident site that began this story; see Scene Six.
- If Norna Weaver still accompanies them — or if they have an address to follow up on — the characters may visit 752 Ashbury Street; this leads to Scene Seven.
- The mages may remember Merika Seth's incredible survival during the traffic accident. Should they follow this lead, refer to Scene Thirteen.



Chapter Two: Discerning a Pattern

*Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument,
About it and about: but evermore
Came out by the same door as I went in.*
— The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, verse XXX

The actions the mages take hereafter depend on Norna's fate in the cathedral. Did she escape? Was she taken? Is she with the characters? Norna will stick with the characters if they have thus far protected her from Reverend Williams, but she has a mind of her own. She voices her opinion about any subject that concerns her. If characters fail to act in Norna's best interest, she will leave them.

This chapter gives a variety of options for the characters to pursue. By now, the characters are probably dying to know what is going on. Many paths of inquiry may be followed. For answers, they can interview contacts, perform research, or comb the Near Umbra.

Meanwhile, events continue behind the scenes. One scenario has Norna still on the loose, rescued by the characters or on her own. Dr. Himiitsu, the Progenitor seeking Norna, considers these new variables before formulating another plan. He instructs his agents to shadow the

mages (and Norna, if she is on her own). They must watch and wait, but not act — not yet....

A second scenario sees Norna abducted. The Technomancers hold her in their secret lab beneath the U.C. Medical Center. While Dr. Himiitsu awaits the upcoming Symposium for approval, Norna's magick provides clues to her whereabouts (see "Norna" in Scene Four for details).

Scene Four presents a number of leads for curious characters to follow. If the players travel into the Near Umbra, Scene Five covers pertinent details. Scene Six describes the Weaver house. If the characters visit, with or without Norna, they will encounter some unpleasant surprises. In Scene Seven, Norna visits her father's grave. If the players have lost her, they will find her here. In Scene Eight, the gang of Marauders battles the player characters.

Scene Four: Lines of Investigation



This is not a regular scene. Rather, it compiles topics that mages may investigate over the course of the story. Depending on your chronicle style, you might improvise a number of mini-scenes to roleplay in full. For instance, a Dreamspeaker who contacts her Mentor should probably roleplay her requests (and roll Manipulation + Mentor to determine how much help he provides).

Lines of investigation are broken into subtopics.

Talking to Norna

If mages gain Norna's trust, she clears up a few mysteries. For the extent of her knowledge, see Norna's character description and parts of the Plot section in Scene Two. Characters who spend time with Norna may see through her Demeanor. A Perception + Subterfuge roll (difficulty 6) reveals that Norna needs an authority figure in her life...and also a friend.

Mages may wish to tap Norna's divining ability. Unfortunately, it works most freely during times of stress (e.g., just before an ambush). Sometimes, however, visions appear via dreams. Each night, roll her Wits + Meditation (difficulty 8); two successes allow her to make a Time magick effect roll. Norna remembers these bouts of pre- or post- cognition upon waking.

Mystic Individuals

The first few scenes introduced Marauders and Men in Black. Mages who have never before encountered them may wish to learn more. An Intelligence + Research roll (difficulty 7) made at a mystic library or Chantry garners the information found in the **Mage** rulebook (pgs. 34 and 50; 47 and bits of 282). The number of successes indicates the amount and accuracy of this information. Those lacking such facilities can instead roll Intelligence + Dream (to research Men in Black) or Intelligence + Cosmology (for Marauders). Remember to account for the Men in Black's Arcane rating by subtracting three dice.

Other subjects include:

- **Norna Weaver:** This requires that a mage search through public records. An Intelligence + Influence roll (difficulty 6) gains access to the mundane details of Norna's life — birth certificate, home address (see Scene Seven), school record and so forth. In effect, paraphrase some of the information found under Norna's description (Scene Two). The researcher also finds the death certificate of Norna's father and records of his burial in Lincoln Cemetery (Scene Eight).

Norna might be loose in San Francisco. A Perception + Streetwise roll (difficulty 9) or Correspondence magick could track her down, possibly just before Men in Black or Marauders show up. See Scenes Seven and Eight for Norna's likely hangouts.

If she has been abducted, only Rank Three Correspondence, a full-length investigation (the substance of this story), or pure coincidence will locate her. She is being held in a secret lab beneath the U.C. Medical Center (as described in Scenes Fourteen and Fifteen). One clue to her whereabouts is a news report about a serious blackout that strikes the Medical Center within an hour of her disappearance.

- **Cob:** Reverend Williams calls upon Cob when angry. This name comes up again and again throughout this story. If a mage wonders who Cob is, have her roll Intelligence + Cosmology (difficulty 6). Alternately, she can interview a spirit, in which case the roll becomes Manipulation + Awareness (difficulty 6). In either event, consult the table below.

- **Technomancer Presence:** Plans of the Technomancers should not be shared lightly. Only if your chronicle is one of espionage — where infiltrating the Technocracy is common — should you provide this avenue

Botch: The mage gleans false information, specifically: Cob is a powerful warlock of the Verbena Tradition. He often takes the form of a swan, stout horse or ear of corn.

Failure: She has never heard the word "Cob."

One Success: "Cob" sounds familiar. Though uncertain about its exact reference, she relates it to spirits.

Two Successes: Cob is a pattern spider residing in the Near Umbra corresponding to San Francisco. Characters who want more information must step sideways; see Scene Six.

Three Successes: Cob is the tremendously powerful pattern spider that rules San Francisco. This Umbrood actually built the city through its spiritual reflection. The mage knows the general location of Cob's lair (as detailed in Scene Sixteen).

Four Successes: Cob is more than a pattern spider; it is said to be the spiritual manifestation of San Francisco itself.

Five Successes: Cob is losing cohesion, being torn apart by Wyld forces. When Cob is disrupted (the spiritual equivalent of death), it is said that San Francisco will also collapse.

of investigation. Maybe a Virtual Adept could learn something from hacker contacts. In these situations, a roll of Perception + Streetwise (difficulty 9) may uncover some facts. Three successes are needed to garner concrete information.

The specifics are left to you, but may include: news of an upcoming Symposium (perhaps even the time and place; see Scene Ten); that the Technomancers are seeking a band of Marauders; that they recently sought someone; perhaps a name or two; or the existence of a secret Progenitor lab.

- Other Traditions: Characters might seek fellow mages for advice, especially local representatives of their Tradition. A Perception + Etiquette roll (difficulty 6) contacts a mage of a friendly Tradition. You must determine how helpful this person is.

Work this encounter into the story. For instance, two Euthanatos could meet in Lincoln Cemetery (Scene Eight). A Virtual Adept might contact Merika Seth via a BBS without realizing to whom he speaks!

Other Tradition mages will be of limited assistance. While the players seek or guard Norna, the Marauders tear the city apart looking for her, and the Technocracy and Traditions try to limit the damage. The players may stumble across the aftermath of one or more of these peripheral battles before they cross the Marauders' path again in

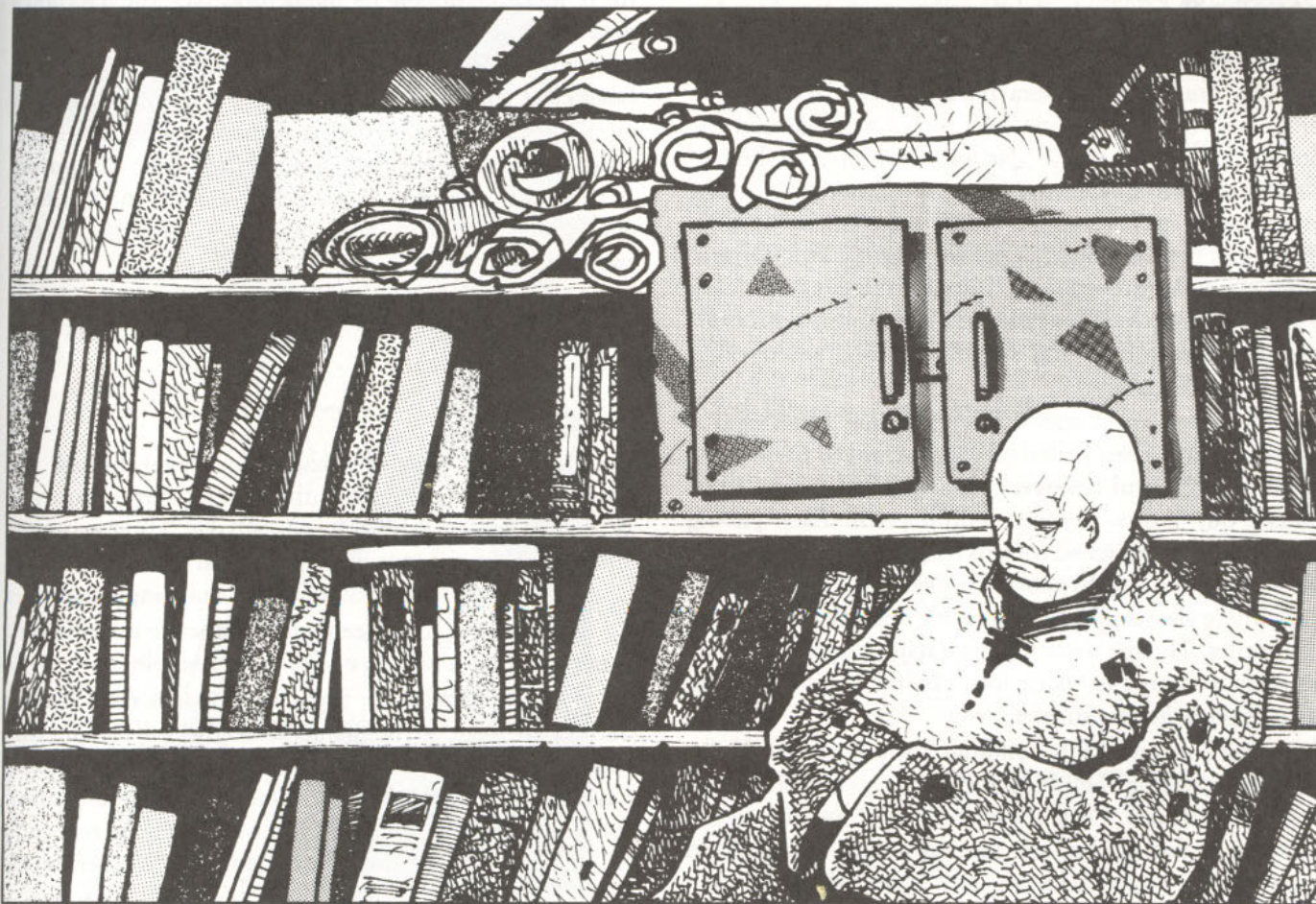
Scene Eight. While the players may use Chantry libraries, they will not have access to any high-level help.

The Way Down, a large Hollow One Chantry, once occupied an abandoned church near the Bay. Unfortunately, the goth scene in San Francisco has waned in recent years, and the Hollow Ones, ever creatures of fashion, have moved the earthly manifestation of their Chantry elsewhere, leaving the Way Down a has-been club.

The Cult of Ecstasy maintains a Pleasuredome, called the House of Quodosch, in Berkeley. They keep a large modern library of the occult, but it is so disorganized that even the mage residents do not know how to find anything. C of E mages, Dreamspeakers, Verbenas and Sons of Ether are welcome here. All other mages will be watched with curt disdain and shown the door as soon as possible.

Most Traditions believe that a mage of promise shall arrive near the turn of the millennium, bearing a powerful Avatar and destined for greatness. With proper guidance, this mage will help bring about something great. The specifics of this vary by Tradition. Some call it Reconciliation, others Ascension. Dreamspeakers may think of it as the Apocalypse.

If anyone suggests that Norna might be this mage, she will panic and flee at the first opportunity. At this point, she wants no such honor.



What the Future Holds

Disciples of Time may not be content to listen to others speak of fate, instead preferring to perform some divination of their own. Even the simplest Time magick reveals the fast approach of a temporal current carrying dozens — perhaps hundreds — of fates toward a maelstrom of possibility. The maelstrom centers on San Francisco.

A Rank Two Time effect determines the probable future of a person, place, thing, etc. The benefit here lies in focusing on a specific subject. Choose appropriate prophecies from the Tarot reading in Appendix Two, or invent your own. More successes indicate a higher degree of detail. Note, however, that the greater the detail, the more you have to manipulate future events. The difficulty of such divination is high (8 to 10) and the details should be vague.

Interpreting the Prophecies

Each mage leaves Madame Cleo's reading with a card representing his destiny. An Intelligence + Awareness roll (difficulty 7) or Prime magick effect reveals an enchantment. Three successes determine its function (in game terms).

A second puzzle lies in interpreting each vague prophecy. For the most part, let players do this themselves. Provides hints via Intelligence + Enigmas rolls (difficulty 8); each success gives one hint. Having narrowed down the meaning, the mages may now make other rolls to glean further information. For instance, mages determine that Card VIII, in the Future position, indicates a law office — but which one? An Intelligence + Intuition roll (difficulty 6) will narrow the search to, say, three possibilities (only one or two successes), or pinpoint Union Law (three or more successes).

Scene Five: The Umbrascap



Plot

This scene is a general description of San Francisco's Umbra. If the mages have the means, they may search the Umbra for clues or step sideways to gain entry to certain places.

Setting

San Francisco's Umbra reflects a conflict between order and tradition on one side, bohemian chaos on the other. Quintessence, the spiritual byproduct of human habitation, has molded the Umbra in its origin's image. From the city's conservative "Victorian element" and the shaping of the Technocracy comes a tightly knit Pattern. However, this grid constantly shifts and seethes with chaos. The ground continually ripples, as if something were crawling just beneath the surface. Spirits of order and disorder scurry everywhere.

Most real-world streets have spiritual counterparts, but these have been pulled taut and arranged in an organized grid. Careful observers note that the longer roads radiate outward from some central point. Each paving stone is perfectly aligned with its neighbors; together, they form repetitive and hypnotic checkerboard patterns, except where gleeful Wyld Things have pulled cobbles up for projectiles. Though these roads are narrow and ill-lit, they seem safer than the "back lots." In the shadows, Wyld Things gnaw at structures.

There are no earthly buildings. Instead, the roads pass between towering obelisks, cubic structures and other geometric constructs. Over these creep wild, reddish vines, growing as fast as they are pruned. Large, multifaceted crystals hang suspended in the half-light, pulsating with a

dim fluorescence. Occasionally, a wormlike spirit-train slides through the streets, independent of cable or rail; its passengers press against viewports, shrieking silently, daring one to imagine their next stop.

The Pattern Web — a vast network of steel cables crisscrossing high above — binds and secures this region of the Umbra. Through its mesh, one sees the Horizon's perpetual twilight. Wyld Things and pattern spiders swarm everywhere. The Pattern Web is continually torn apart as fast as it is created or repaired.

Dozens of spirits travel back and forth on unknown errands. These spirits include pattern spiders, net-spiders (strings of computer data made conscious), and spirits of glass, steel, electricity and concrete. Odd Wyld Things swarm about.

Mages may converse with spirits via Rank Two Spirit magick. The reaction of approached spirits varies from helpfulness to hostility.

Travel

During this story, the mages may travel through the Umbrascap. To navigate without help, mages must roll Wits + Cosmology (difficulty 6) each day. Three successes allow travelers to arrive at their destination with minimal hassle. A botch on this roll could be truly unpleasant....

If the mages have been guided by some information, they might pay a visit to one of three notable sites:

- **Seth's Workshop:** Stepping sideways near Merika Seth's apartment on the Diamond Heights will reveal a tiny Realm carved from the Tapestry. This pyramidal structure has no obvious entrances, but a Perception + Investigation roll (difficulty 8) or Rank One Matter effect reveals a concealed portal. A simple push dematerializes one block



for a turn. The interior is apparently a data vault, with dozens of filing cabinets lining each wall.

One drawer, labeled "Elements," contains a dozen computer files — personified in the Umbra by black manila folders — named for a variety of weather patterns. If the file is disturbed, several frantic elementals escape into the Umbra. Another drawer holds a file titled "Project: Reincarnate." Here the mages find a blueprint depicting the growth of a delicate, silver spider into a mechanical monstrosity (Norna's Avatar to a great pattern spider).

This workshop is the spiritual extension of a computer hard drive, a sort of Umbral MacPaint for Merika Seth. If Merika is working at her computer when characters arrive (Storyteller's discretion), she can use magick at the touch of a keystroke. Those who step sideways find themselves in her apartment. See Scene Thirteen.

- **Cob's Lair:** In the Near Umbra, the city-grid radiates from a central point — Cob's lair. This is the hub of most local activity. Pattern spiders continually return to receive orders or report progress.

Visitors are unwelcome, and are subject to attack by both pattern spirits and Wyld Things (Appendix One). If mages persist toward the center of the Pattern Web, they notice signs of disorganization. Paving stones are wobbly or missing. Cracks appear on some structures. The Pattern Web sags slightly. Construction crews keep busy, but their repairs seem shabby and piecemeal. The hill at the city's hub looks as if it was formed *after* the city's construction rather than before; it literally displaces the local streets. One imagines a giant tree root pushing upward — or a volcano forming....

A network of steel cables and mechanical wiring conceals Cob's lair. Here the mesh of the Pattern Web is most dense. For a look inside the webwork, see Scene Sixteen.

- **GeneTech Lab:** Just above Cob's web floats a huge polyhedron, apparently constructed from dull, white plastic and painted steel. The Pattern Web anchors the shape to it, like a balloon's mooring cables. Thick power cables dangle from the structure, disappearing into the web below. A few antennae probe the Umbra.

This edifice is actually the outer frontier of a Horizon Realm, the foundation for a Progenitor Construct known as GeneTech Lab. In the mundane world, this secret lab apparently exists below the U.C. Medical Center. Though most Portals open into physical reality, the Construct does have a spiritual "back door"; see Scene Fifteen.

Aftermath

Characters could slip through the Gauntlet anywhere. Those who forget to look before they leap sideways might land in some predicament — high-speed traffic, a formal dinner party, and so on. Specific destinations are outlined below.

- If mages recover pieces of a Marauder cycle left behind at the accident site in Scene One, they could possibly track these magickal bandits via a Rank Three Correspondence effect. Three successes are required. Each attempt takes one day. Scene Nine describes a melee with Marauders, possibly resulting from a successful track.

- Mages may slip sideways within Merika's workshop, returning to physical reality in her apartment. This is covered by Scene Thirteen.

- Should the characters attempt to enter GeneTech Lab, refer to guidelines in Scene Fifteen.

- Cob's lair is fully described in Scene Sixteen.

Scene Six: The Weaver Residence



*Go on and fly
Try everything
You'll be back*

Sure as the gypsies sing, my darlin'.

—Theories of the Old School, "Gypsy Spell"

If Norna still accompanies the players, she will want to check on her mother at home. If the characters are searching for her, they may get her address from one of the Men in Black. In any case, they arrive at the house to discover that Mrs. Weaver is alive! In truth, she is dead; the woman they meet is a Progenitor clone.

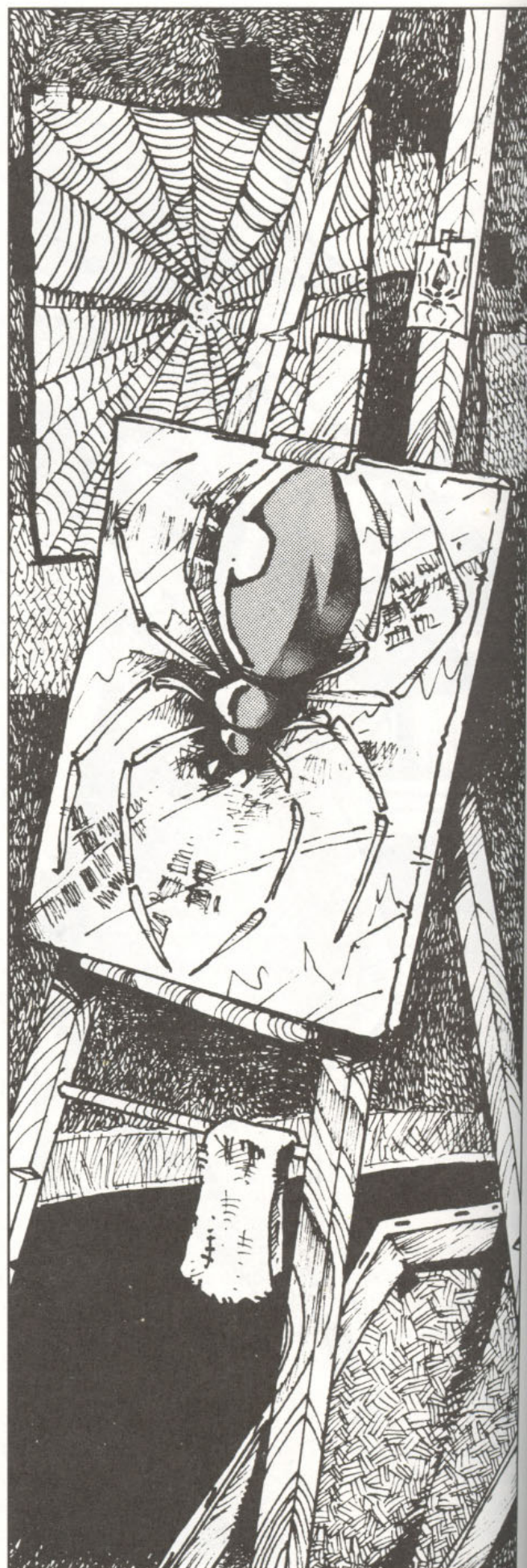
Plot

Dr. Himiitsu had ordered two Men in Black to watch the house. On the day this story began, they were to snatch her. When Norna failed to arrive home (see Scene Two), the Men in Black approached the house. Posing as federal agents, they asked a few meaningless questions while actually probing her thoughts for Norna's location. Mrs. Weaver was a strong-willed woman. When she suspected that something was wrong, she bolted. She did not get far.

The tragic irony is this: Mrs. Weaver would still be alive if Norna had not fled at the vision of her mother's death!

Dr. Himiitsu had not wanted to kill Mrs. Weaver, but had prepared for just such an occasion. His Progenitors had previously used stolen DNA samples to create an almost-perfect clone, dubbed Mrs. Weaver II. She had been with the Men in Black in case of trouble.

Hopefully, the mages uncover this doppelganger. They may then freely search the house, confirming the death of



Mrs. Weaver and finding yet another indication of how tightly their fates are bound to Norna's. If the mages drop off Norna (unaware of her peril), she is promptly kidnapped. Nevertheless, the story continues, introducing more ways for them to become involved.

Setting

Haight-Ashbury is an upper-middle-class residential district. Only in this district of San Francisco does one see such a collection of 19th-century homes. The richer residents maintain Queen Anne-style Victorians. The "poorer" dwellings showcase Italianate and Georgian styles of architecture. Scattered among these live-in museums are tasteful apartments, houses and flats. Except for the uneven landscape, parts of Haight-Ashbury resemble the London of 100 years ago.

If not for the lousy weather, one could imagine suit-clad gentlemen and parasol-protected ladies strolling along the walks. As it is, only a few trenchcoated figures trudge through the rain. Perception + Alertness rolls (difficulty 9) reveal these figures to be Men in Black, sent to spy on the mages. Nothing short of Correspondence magick will shake them; only Adepts of Correspondence can confront them. They seem content to watch, at least for now.

The Weaver residence at 752 Ashbury Street is a well-kept Victorian with a circular porch and single tower. At first glance, all seems safe. The door is closed, the drapes open. Lights shine from each window and a television stereo blares a newscast. If the mages knock or ring the door chimes, Mrs. Weaver answers after just enough time for them to think about breaking and entering.

If mages come alone, Mrs. Weaver is polite but aloof. She reluctantly agrees to talk with "officials" — Manipulation + Law (difficulty 6); each success allows one question — but has no time for reporters, salesmen or odd strangers.

If Norna accompanies them, Mrs. Weaver lets out a relieved gasp. "Oh, Norna!" she cries. "I've been so worried! Don't you ever do that again!"

Perceptive characters catch Norna's reaction: she is first startled, then relieved to see her mother alive. Yet she shows no further "weakness." After looking at one other for a few seconds, they both become aware of the mages. Norna explains how they helped her. Her mother thanks them in a tone that clearly indicates the conversation is at an end. Only if they show no signs of leaving does Mrs. Weaver invite them in for a drink. She attempts to get rid of the mages as quickly as possible without seeming overly rude.

Drama

This scene's drama involves penetrating the doppelganger's disguise. Afterward, the players might search the house. Possible discoveries follow.

- **Disturbing Images:** Norna's second-floor bedroom extends into the tower. Beside the normal trappings of a young girl, the most obvious feature is artwork hanging on walls, stashed away in drawers, and resting, half-finished, on easels. Paintings, sketches, embroidery, even photography are all represented. This is Norna's work: primitive yet promising. Those who examine the art may notice an arachnid motif, particularly silver and black spiders.

- **Shades of Dr. Weaver:** A search of the master bedroom turns up a hatbox on a closet's top shelf. It contains some of the late Dr. Weaver's possessions: a gold pocket-watch, his medical degree, a copy of the death certificate (died of a brain hemorrhage, age 42), records of the burial plot in Lincoln Cemetery, and a black-and-white photograph.

In this photo, Dr. Weaver holds a four-year-old Norna, stethoscope hanging about her neck. A large Oriental man enters a building in the background. An Intelligence + Alertness roll (difficulty 6) allows the viewer to recognize the distinctive architecture of U.C. Medical Center.

- **Corpse in the Attic:** If characters thoroughly search the attic, have them roll Perception + Investigation (difficulty 5). With even one success, they find the body of Mrs. Weaver, hastily hidden in a trunk in the cobwebbed attic.

Naturally, this discovery upsets Norna. Though she maintains an uncaring demeanor, bursts of destructive Entropy magick reveal her true emotions. Sympathetic characters should try to comfort her, rolling Charisma + Culture (difficulty 6, modified by roleplaying). Three or more successes send her into a healthy fit of crying and end the devastation.

- **Postcognition:** Focused properly, Rank Two Time magick reveals what went on here. This includes the location of Mrs. Weaver's body and the subsequent arrival of another Mrs. Weaver.

Aftermath

This scene provides few definite exits. The plot assumes that characters fall back on one of the story directions provided earlier. Also, the mages' actions may depend on Norna's wishes. She would like to visit her father's grave one last time. Mages who grant this request travel to Lincoln Cemetery, and Scene Seven.

- If mages seek Norna, they could check Lincoln Cemetery (Scene Seven). If she is still free, she will be there.

- By now, they may realize that the U.C. Medical Center plays some pivotal role. Should they investigate, refer to Scene Thirteen.

Scene Seven: R.I.P.



Plot

Characters might come to Lincoln Cemetery either at Norna's behest (if she accompanies them) or to look for the young Orphan (if she doesn't).

Here Norna stands by her father's grave, seeking comfort and inspiration in her time of crisis. She probably goes away disappointed...unless a Disciple of Spirit helps her contact the spirit of Dr. Weaver. Depending on the magicks employed, he either materializes as a ghost or possesses one of the mages. In any case, he relates his death at the hands of Dr. Himiitsu.

Before leaving the Cemetery, someone notices a black-garbed man slipping away between the headstones. Paranoid characters give chase, only to discover that he is a Sleeper attending a nearby funeral.

Setting

Lincoln Cemetery lies at the extreme northwest of San Francisco, on the Lobos headland. Mourners take little comfort in the rough, liquid-lead waves that beat and foam against the coast like rabid beasts. The beacon from Mile

Rock Lighthouse seems dim. Cypress trees line the landward edges, their scale-like leaves flapping in the stiff breeze. Though rain has stopped, dark clouds continue to blot out the sky.

Most of Lincoln Cemetery is devoted to grave-plots, mausoleums, and memorials, all segregated by nationality. On one vast plot in the Chinese section stands an elaborate tomb, replete with arches and temple dogs. If the mages have come looking for Norna, they find her standing by her father's grave, near the Chinese section.

Norna feels a bit lost. As her mundane life slips away, and the world of mages opens before her, she needs some time to orient herself.

"I've always seen the strangeness," she explains to no one in particular. "From the corner of my eye; from inside my head. But now I accept it as real. It's like I've awakened from a peaceful sleep...and entered a nightmare." If she has not already done so, this would be a good time for Norna to tell her life story.

Norna's father was her best friend. She wanted to say goodbye to this last and strongest link. This is an excellent cue for someone to intervene. A Spirit mage could summon the spirit of Norna's father. Even one success alerts the



spirit to the summoning! Dr. Weaver senses his daughter's presence and attempts to reach her. If an Adept of Spirit weakens the Gauntlet (two successes are enough, this being Halloween), Dr. Weaver slips through.

If the Gauntlet is too strong, Dr. Weaver attempts to possess the mind of a random person; he continues trying until he succeeds or runs out of targets. If the ghost succeeds, the host shudders for a second, then seems slightly disoriented. His bearing changes to a loose-limbed but dignified stance, with much gesturing and hand movement. When speaking, he has a different accent and vocabulary.

Take the player of the possessed character aside and coach him in his new role. Provide all the necessary information (see below) and let him go to it.

Dr. Weaver had noticed the unhealthy interest that his colleague Dr. Himiitsu had taken in Norna. Fearing the worst, he confronted Himiitsu, who assured Dr. Weaver that no such thing had crossed his mind. The argument gave Dr. Weaver a headache, and he went home. He died of a brain hemorrhage that night. He still believe that Dr. Himiitsu has a crush on his daughter, and fears for her safety.

Now the mages can ask specific questions; the Storyteller may use this opportunity to drop any clues she wants the players to have. Dr. Weaver is unaware of the Technocracy or its true interest in Norna. Dr. Weaver can only remain in physical reality for seven turns before being disrupted (assume a limit of seven question-and-answer exchanges). One thing he mentions in passing is that his wife has joined him: "We wait for you, Norna."

This dialogue ends when the spirit of Dr. Weaver fades from sight, or the "possessed" wants his body back.

Drama

To end this scene with dramatic flare, introduce a wild goose chase. Just before leaving Lincoln Cemetery, have each mage rolls Perception + Alertness (difficulty 6). Those who succeed notice a black-suited figure picking his way through the cemetery on a tangent away from them. Justifiably paranoid of Men in Black by now, the mages probably give chase.

Make the chase dramatic. Describe how the dark figure pulls up the collar of his trenchcoat; quickens his pace; slips behind hedges, memorials, and cypress trees. Introduce obstacles, such as open plots or low walls around which a pursuer must travel.

Depending on how quickly they catch up, mages might trap their prey against some tomb. Or consider this scene: they break through a rain-soaked hedge and into a dozen black-clad figures, who turn upon the intruders menacingly. The mages then realize that the black-suited figure was only a Sleeper, late for funeral services!

Aftermath

Norna is alone — she has lost her parents, has few friends, and has attracted unhealthy interest. Sympathetic mages might try to get her back on track. She needs a Mentor to teach her how to control her magick. She needs somewhere to belong. Most of all, she needs help to make it through the imminent future.

Here are a few suggestions for subsequent scenes:

- Dr. Weaver identified Himiitsu as his murderer. Mages seeking vengeance might arrive at the U.C. Medical Center and Scene Thirteen.

- The ghost also mentioned that Mrs. Weaver is dead. This may be news to Norna. Confirming this would require they visit her house (Scene Six).

- Finally, if you plan this scene carefully, the Marauder attack in Scene Eight could occur in Lincoln Cemetery — quite an evocative setting.

Scene Eight: Enter the Fray

*Get your motor runnin'
Head out on the highway,
Lookin' for adventure
Or whatever comes our way...
— Steppenwolf, "Born to be Wild"*

Plot

In these scene, the Marauders return with a vengeance. The reason for their attack depends on the course of your plot. If Norna accompanies the mages, she is the primary target. The Marauders have discovered that she is crucial to the Technocracy's plans for

keeping the Wylderness entrapped. They want her dead.

Another possibilities finds the characters intentionally meddling in the Marauders' plans. They may have watched for Marauder activity or possibly tracked them using Correspondence magick. The Technocracy and the Marauders have clashed once or twice while the characters were elsewhere; the Marauders might mistake the players



for Technomancers. Perhaps coincidence simply conspires against them....

For whatever reason, Marauders attack. Their attack draws agents of the Technocracy, who want to protect Norna (if she is present) and drive off these enemies of stability. The scene probably ends with characters escaping in the confusion. Then again, the extremely foolish may be captured by Men in Black; the extremely determined may even find allies in the Marauders!

Setting

This scene occurs whenever you want it to, wherever the players happen to be at the moment. You might want to manipulate events slightly to make the most of a setting. Time this attack for some dramatic moment in some interesting location — Lincoln Cemetery, the Golden Gate Bridge, the player group's sanctuary (assuming that they have one) or even Norna Weaver's house!

Whatever the setting, note that the Drama section assumes some wide-open space. A raid into the cabal's sanctum, for instance, would be handled differently.

Challenge of the Spheres

Just before the Marauders teleport into the scene, each mage rolls Wits + Intuition (difficulty 8). The highest number of successes equals the number of turns of warning. This warning is vague, perhaps just a feeling of foreboding: "I've got a bad feeling about this!" Disciples of Time may have foreseen this event and prepared an ambush.

At any rate, 10 cyclists appear from nowhere (two have been lost during previous raids), engines roaring, tires squealing, screaming alien battle cries. As before, the Marauders circle like sharks. One Marauder engages each mage while the rest continue circling.

Each contest is different; keep in mind the players' interests and their characters' abilities. Each Marauder retreats by teleportation upon losing; one of his fellows subsequently engages the victor.

- **Facedown:** A Marauder rolls up beside one mage and stares at him through a blank helmet. He has initiated a traditional Combat of Wills. Use the Facedown rules from p. 261 of the *Mage* rulebook, but use Appearance + Intimidation instead (and remember the Marauder's Dream Background). The mage's strength lies in his higher Willpower. If the Marauder loses face, he disappears.

- **The Way of Swords:** If one of the mages fancies herself a fencer, she meets a fellow enthusiast. One Marauder dismounts, drawing a huge scimitar from a scabbard on his back. During the fight, he teleports about, dodging blows and performing flank attacks. Each success at Correspondence magick lowers his own difficulty and raises his opponent's difficulty by one (for purposes of hitting). Countermagick allows the mage to sense these movements.

- **Teleport Tag:** This option applies to a mage of Rank Three Correspondence. A Marauder steps up to the mage

and backhands him across the face, then disappears. This begins a common custom among Correspondence mages — the Tesseract, more vulgarly known as Teleport Tag. The rules are simple. First, combatants must remain within a limited distance of the Point of Challenge (equivalent to one city block). Second, the Tagged must catch up with and strike his challenger within five jumps. A mage first activates Correspondence Sensing to locate his challenger, then shifts to that location. One there, both opponents roll initiative. If the mage wins, he may attempt to strike the dodging Marauder. If he loses, the Marauder shifts away too quickly, and the hunt resumes. If Tagged, the Marauder backs down.

- **Chicken:** This engagement works if the mages were driving somewhere when the Marauders attacked, or if they try to escape in a vehicle. A Marauder shifts through space to get ahead, then speeds toward them. Assume the two vehicles are five turns from collision. Each turn, both drivers roll Wits + Drive (difficulty of the opponent's Willpower). To simulate the increasing tension, gradually increase the required number of successes — one success on the first turn, two on the second, and so on. A driver who fails to score the required successes must turn aside (though a player may chicken out any time).

If neither driver turns aside... Well, passengers in enclosed vehicles lose three Health Levels, minus soak (seatbelts provide three extra dice). Cyclists lose seven Health Levels, minus soak. A Marauder could shift out of danger in time...if the crazy bugger wanted to.

Another variation on this involves some sort of pursuit (p. 258 of *Mage*). The Marauder cycles have these stats: Safe Speed 70, Maximum Speed 120, Maneuverability 8.

- **Spirit Pawns:** A mage with at least Rank Two in the Spirit Sphere is challenged to a game of Umbral Chess. One mage (determined by initiative, mutual consent, or other means) thinks of the nastiest Umbrood she knows. She then attempts to call upon it. The second mage must think of a rival spirit, preferably more powerful than the first. He tries to summon it. If all goes well, the two Umbrood meet and battle one another. The Disciples of Spirit peer into the Umbra to see which triumphs. The mage whose pawn is defeated must back down.

In game terms, the first mage rolls Intelligence + Cosmology (difficulty 6), and must achieve at least one success. She then attempts to Summon Spirit; again, achieving at least one success. The second mage does the same. To see who summoned the more powerful Umbrood, total each mage's skill and magick successes; the more successful mage summoned the most powerful spirit. The logic behind this is that some mages know of more powerful spirits, but are only able to attract their Minions; other mages know only Minions, but can easily call upon them.

- **Invent any other engagement** that players might enjoy, or at which their characters are proficient. A martial-arts duel is a good example. A Marauder's Dream gives him a fighting chance at anything.

These engagements are merely diversions. While mages are distracted, the remaining Marauders continue to circle, all the while combining to create a magical effect designed to tear Norna apart if she is present. Every other turn, roll the Marauders' combined Correspondence (difficulty 6). Each cluster of three successes causes Norna to lose one Health Level as she stretches and warps. Norna resists with Willpower; mages can attempt counter-magick. If Norna is not present, the Marauders target anyone who seems to be doing too well or fighting too dirty.

Just when things look grim for the mages (or if they are doing too well), 15 Men in Black approach. Their orders were to follow the cabal and capture Norna undamaged. They are dedicated to destroying the Marauders. Three black Cadillacs suddenly skid to a stop beyond the circling cycles. If necessary, three Men in Black cordon off the area to limit Sleeper witnesses. Two others attempt to snatch Norna (these, the mages must deal with). Other Men in Black engage the Marauders. A veritable blinking contest begins as each opponent shifts to gain an advantage. Soon they move so fast that one hardly sees them. Only Disciples of Correspondence can target them. Marauders and MiBs then disappear completely, continuing their battle somewhere else.

In fact, the Marauders are beaten away. If mages defeat the two Men in Black assigned to snatch Norna, they can escape. If slow to act, though, they must deal with the three crowd-controllers. If the mages do not escape soon, eight surviving Men in Black return. They combine on Mind effects to induce thoughts of surrender (difficulty 5; four successes required), and probably succeed.

Making a Deal with Madness

Truly patient characters may try to communicate with the mad cyclists: to find out what they want; to negotiate peace; or to offer alliance. To get the Marauders' attention, a mage must score three successes on an Appearance + Leadership roll (difficulty 8). If successful, one cyclist breaks off the attack. Here is the mage's chance to attempt Oration or Fast Talk, adding any Destiny rating to the Dice Pool. At least three successes are required. If a mage manages to make peace, the Marauder offers this information:

- Static ones have imprisoned an ally. This one (and here he points to Norna) will be the new warden. Therefore, she must die, her Avatar extinguished. If mages explain that they oppose the Technomancers, the Marauders seem satisfied (for now).

- The Marauders are planning to attack the changeless ones, through a Portal they have discovered. If the cabal shows interest, they vow to return for them. The mages might also persuade them to give away the entrance's location. In this case, a Marauder boasts "Tunnelzzz below!" (meaning the sewers) and presents them with a glass orb containing murky yellow liquid, in which an arrowhead floats. This weird compass will locate a sewer Portal to GeneTech Lab.

The Men in Black have nothing to say except, "Resistance is futile."

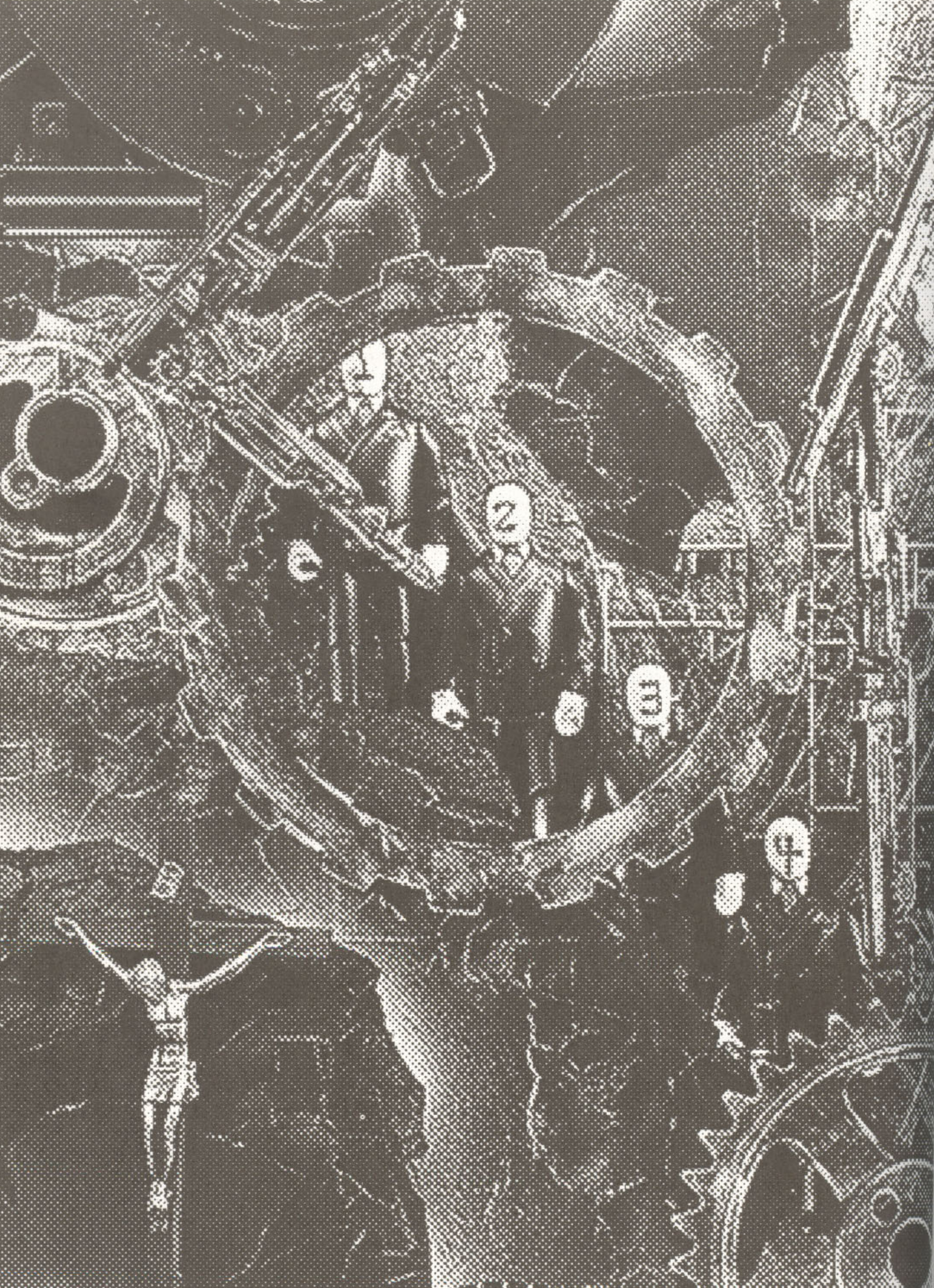
Aftermath

This scene is a diversion. The adversaries are inscrutable, and mages probably learn very little from the attack. However, this attack may well lead to several strange tangents:

- If mages participate in the Marauder attack, refer to Scene Ten for details. Eight cyclists return to pick up the mages (who ride behind or in sidecars). The warband rides through sewers and access tunnels toward one of GeneTech Lab's secret Portals (Scene Fourteen). After raiding the Technomancer Construct, the band slips into the Near Umbra to attack Cob in its lair (Scene Fifteen). However, no matter how much force the band can muster, it is eventually overcome by pattern spiders. The Marauders retreat back into the Progenitor lab and through the Portal. They then scatter, leaving the mages to flee on their own.

- The Marauder compass leads to a Portal to GeneTech Lab. Refer to Scene Fourteen for its entrances and defenses.

- Finally, Men in Black might capture the mages. They take prisoners to GeneTech Lab and suspend them in clone tanks. The Storyteller must adapt Scene Fourteen to take this into account. Their best opportunity for escape comes with the Marauder attack in Scene Ten.



Chapter Three: Tangled Webs

*With them the seed of wisdom did I sow,
And with my own hand wrought to make it grow;
And this was all the harvest that I reap'd —
"I came like Water, and like Wind I go."
— The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, verse XXXI*

The mages have learned much about the goings-on in San Francisco. They have overcome troubles, puzzles, traitors and physical danger. In this chapter, circumstances move against them.

First, the Technocracy holds a Symposium wherein the fate of Norna Weaver is ultimately decided. If she is not yet in the Technocracy's hands, Dr. Himiitsu receives even greater resources with which to capture her and neutralize any troublemakers.

Meanwhile, the remaining Marauders take advantage of this meeting to attack GeneTech Lab and Cob's lair. They mortally injure the spirit, and San Francisco feels the effects. The Wylderness tests its static prison, and a sudden tremor damages buildings, sparks fires, and panics citizens. This is but a taste of what would happen should the

Wylderness break free. The mages realize that the clock is ticking....

Finally, Dr. Himiitsu contacts the mages. He explains what is at stake. If mages are protecting Norna, they face an unenviable choice between her liberty and the rupture of reality.

During Madame Cleo's card-reading, the Tower may have appeared in someone's Future position. This chapter provides two towerlike settings: the Union Law Office building and Coit Tower on Telegraph Hill. Fulfill the prophesy of madness by introducing a brief bout of Quiet possibly brought on by a Technomancer's Mind magick. Appropriate imagery for this fit includes spiders and cobwebs, or even repeated tower motifs.

Scene Nine: Net Gain



Plot

This scene describes an emergency Technomancer Symposium, scheduled for 9 p.m., November 7th. This information is placed in its own section for a few reasons. First, the meeting is an important behind-the-scenes event. Its effect on the plot should be clearly explained. Another reason is for the Storyteller to use this scene as a cutaway. By describing their enemies' actions, you can incite a range of emotions in the player mages: anticipation, helplessness, anger or a sense of looming fate. It also gives the enemy a face, thus setting the stage for future antagonists. Finally, characters might have learned the location of this meeting by searching Seth's apartment (Scene Eleven) or Himiitsu's office at the U.C. Medical Center (Scene Twelve). The brave, desperate or crazy may attempt to crash the meeting.

Setting

The Technocracy holds its Symposium on the 26th floor of the Union Law Office, located downtown in Union Square. Within the district, one finds stores such as Macy's, boutiques, the Geary and Curran Theaters, and over 40 hotels. Nearby, cable cars meet the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) at the station in sunken Hallidie Plaza. Traffic is always gridlocked. Mages entering this region note that parts of downtown are blacked out. Power returns in half an hour.

Union Square, the heart of San Francisco's commercial district, is a 2.6-acre oasis planted with palms, boxwoods and seasonal flowers, all concealing an underground parking lot. The square barely contains its constant bustle; preachers rant at any who listen, while panhandlers accost any who stop. Office workers eat lunch on benches next to homeless sleepers. Street musicians and mimes amuse tourists waiting for a cable car. Pigeons roost in all available space. Corporate types loosen their ties as they head eastward across the square and enter Maiden Lane, a "red light" alley lined with prostitutes' cribs. Surrounding buildings partially shelter the square from wind and intermittent showers.

The Union Law Office building blots out the southern sky. A glass and sheet metal skin clings to the framework, embodying a style known appropriately as Corporate International Brutalist. Even more than the exterior, the inner lobby, halls, and offices present an unfeeling and inhuman environment; the steel-frame furniture, gray walls, and lack of decoration certainly provide an appropriate meeting place for the Technocracy.

The smoky windows of office doors bear gold-painted numbers rather than names. On the 26th floor, one locates the office of the Union Law firm. All senior partners are conspicuously absent today, all taken ill by a coincidental flu epidemic. Yet voices issue from the boardroom, whose door is locked and windows blinded.

Weavers of Fate

In the shadowy boardroom, representatives of the Conventions have assembled to determine the fate of Norna Weaver. Brother Johnson of the New World Order sits at the table's head, his emotions concealed by a featureless (!) face. Two Men in Black lurk behind his chair. On his right, Dr. Himiitsu stands beside the seated Merika Seth, representing the Progenitors and their proposed experiment. Their Superior bodyguards stand nearby. On Johnson's left sits Harold Wu, the eyes, ears and voice of the local Syndicate. Tecson of Iteration X sits at the far end of the table, scanning the others with one cybernetic eye. He seems more comfortable with his two HIT Mark companions than with organics. Also present is the Void Engineer Eva Raum, dressed in a white flight suit with the EuroSpace logo.

Most of them know about the proposed experiment. At this Symposium, they are to give formal approval and negotiate the transfer of any necessary resources. What follows is a typical exchange:

Rolling up a chart, Dr. Himiitsu concludes his presentation.

"In closing, I propose another attempt at Project: Reincarnate, this time using Norna Weaver as a subject." Here he glances at Merika Seth. "We believe her Avatar is powerful enough to survive the process. As well, her status as an Orphan should help her adapt to the new form. By contrast, Williams was essentially weaker and firmly entrenched in the Chorus' reality paradigm. We have estimated the success rate at 73.6%."

"It had better work," snaps Harold Wu. "The Syndicate has invested too much in this venture to see another failure."

"The Inner Council has every confidence in Dr. Himiitsu and his Progenitors," says Brother Johnson, the tone of his voice stifling dissension. Turning his blank face to Himiitsu, he asks, "I take it the Order's agents assigned to your team have performed adequately?" Before the question can be answered, the building sways. Dr. Himiitsu turns to Merika. Her surprised expression is enough to tell him that neither had expected an earthquake.

"Oh, no — the lab," he mumbles in synch with Merika's gasp of "Cob!" Then together, both curse, "Marauders!"



To Arms!

If the player mages crash the Symposium, the Technomancers follow these tactics:

They scatter. The two HIT Marks and two Superiors open fire with mundane weaponry. Merika Seth hits a few buttons on her portable computer and slips into the Umbra. Eva Raum talks into a wrist communicator and promptly dematerializes (Correspondence). The Syndicate's representative decides it is time to leave, and quickly does so. Dr. Himiitsu knows that his duty lies at GeneTech Lab; jumping through a window, he swallows a handful of pills and transforms into a crane. Tecson of Iteration X stands and fights, hurling Forces and Matter projectiles and striking with his cybernetic piledriver arm. Brother Johnson directs his Men in Black to intimidate mages into surrendering (Mind).

Characters

Descriptions of Dr. Himiitsu and Merika Seth are found in Appendix One. No statistics are supplied for the other Technomancers. The Storyteller can create these himself, or simply assume that each mage is a Master or Adept of one Sphere and a Disciple of at least one other. Iteration X is associated with the Sphere of Forces; the New World Order specializes in Mind; the Syndicate controls Spirit, while the Void Engineers master Correspondence magick.

See p. 282 of the Mage rulebook for descriptions of HIT Marks, Men in Black and Superiors.

Aftermath

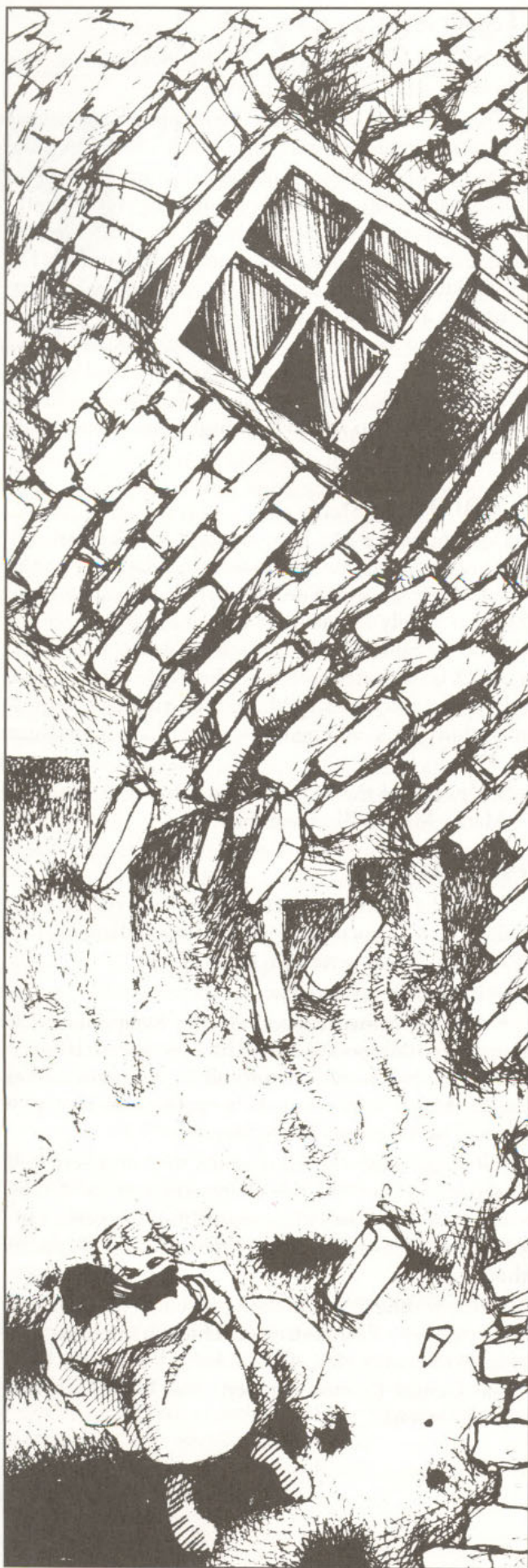
While the Technomancers discuss plans, the Marauders take action. Their attack on Cob's lair and its effect on San Francisco are described in Scene Ten.

Other follow-ups include:

- Having gained support at the Symposium, Dr. Himiitsu need only go ahead with his experiment. If he has yet to abduct Norna, he commits all his resources toward doing so. Mages who continually oppose him receive a message. This composes Scene Eleven.

- If mages crash the Symposium, they may very well face defeat. Do not cut the characters a break if they attempt this. The least failure results in them being captured. Scenes Ten and Fourteen explore the ramifications of this.

- On the other hand, lucky mages could triumph, and even overpower a Technomancer. Through interrogation, they learn the entire plan. This probably leads to the U.C. Medical Center (Scene Thirteen) and GeneTech Lab (Scene Fourteen).



Scene Ten: Call of the Wyld



Plot

This scene is an event rather than a setting. While mages go about their business, they witness a number of minor disasters. A small but noticeable earthquake rattles the city, surprising seismologists and frightening citizens. The tremor cracks a few water mains and snaps power cables, blacking out entire blocks. Although the damage is minimal, dozens of minor elements contribute to a picture of order breaking down. This quake should spur the players to do something, and soon!

This trail of chaos leads to the Marauders. While the Technomancers met, the Unpredictable Ones infiltrated GeneTech Lab through a secret Portal leading to the sewers. They fought with Superior guards, slew Progenitor mages, and smashed equipment. Taking advantage of the weak Gauntlet, they slipped into Cob's lair in the Near Umbra! They attacked the weakened Umbrood and dealt Cob a mortal blow. Before being able to free the Wylderness, however, the Marauders were overrun by swarms of pattern spiders. They retreated through the Gauntlet into GeneTech Lab, then into the sewers.

Still, the Marauders did some damage. As Cob shudders in its death throes, its Pattern Web weakens, and Wyld chaos begins to leak into reality. Unless a replacement for Cob is found soon, San Francisco will fall apart.

Setting

This scene occurs wherever characters happen to be when some Marauder runs Cob through with his scimitar. The mages may have even joined the attack, in which case the news of the earthquake greets them upon their return, giving them reason to question their decision.

Drama

This section describes three types of drama. Highlight one or more of them depending on your story's pacing and the troupe's interest. Some may not apply to particular settings, but may figure into the story as part of a newscast.

- **Earthquake:** San Francisco is hit by a sudden tremor, measuring 4.1 on the Richter scale. If the characters are near tall buildings, a block of crumbling statuary breaks loose from a ledge and plummets toward some innocent bystander. Call for Perception + Alertness rolls (difficulty 4) and consult the Perception table given in the accident scene in Scene One. This provides a difficulty for dodges.

Being struck by a concrete gargoyle results in the loss of four Health Levels (before soak).

- **Fire:** Sparked by snapping power cables or something as simple as hot grease knocked off a stove, a few fires have started in the city. Characters pass a burning building. Through a third-floor window, they barely make out some victim being overcome by smoke. Though sirens echo through the streets, a fire engine has yet to reach this blaze (another symptom of chaos).

To save this person, a rescuer must first reach the third floor (30 feet up). Climbing from balcony to balcony is hazardous (difficulty 8) but possible (see Climbing, p. 236 of *Mage*). A more direct method is to run through the flames on the lower level and the stairwell. This requires two turns of running through smoke and falling beams, and the raging inferno will cause second-degree burns over much of the body (see Fire, p. 249 of *Mage*). Vulgar Correspondence magick is the simplest trick.

Once on the third floor, rescuer and victim must still escape (hopefully, someone thought to bring a rope...). Finally, first aid may be required.

Note that an Adept of Forces can attempt to control the flames. The Storyteller should permit a sort of extended action (not usually allowed with magick), allowing portions of the flames to be affected. A total of 10 successes will extinguish the fire. The same effect can be achieved by Disciples of Matter if they create water.

- **Upset Citizens:** By coincidence, an unusual number of protest groups are active today. The nature of this scene depends on the mages' location. Perhaps the mages meet some minority group in Union Square, protesting real or imagined injustice. Better yet, pro-life activists have assembled outside the U.C. Medical Center. They have assembled based on a rumor that the research wing uses human fetuses in its experiments. A few police officers keep watch. The quake momentarily sobers them, but the arrival of Dr. Himiitsu provokes frenzy once again. One fanatic has brought a gun. He shoots the doctor before being apprehended by police. Dr. Himiitsu rushes into the Medical Center, seemingly oblivious to the wound.

This sort of event seethes with dramatic possibility. The mages might try to restore order by physical presence, oration or Mind magick. The mages' mere presence may lead to police mistaking them for troublemakers and arresting them. If the players are too forceful, they might become targets of violence themselves.

Aftermath

Disciples of Spirit note (with a Rank One magickal effect) that all the recent disasters are but reflections of something occurring in the Near Umbra. This line of thinking could lead through the Gauntlet (Scene Five) and to Cob's lair (Scene Fifteen).

Desperate now, Dr. Himiitsu wants to begin Project: Reincarnate immediately. If Norna is still shielded by the mages, he commits all resources toward her capture. Refer to Scene Eleven.

Scene Eleven: Laying It on the Line

*There is no disaster greater than taking on an enemy
Too easily. So doing nearly cost me my treasure. Thus
Of two sides raising arms against each other, it is the
One that is sorrow-stricken that wins.*

—Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, Verse LXIX, Book Two

Plot

This scene applies to mages who continually shield Norna or otherwise disrupt the Technocracy's plans. One mage receives a graphic vision of a tower on a hill. This is Coit Tower on Telegraph Hill, as an Intelligence + Enigmas roll (difficulty 4) will confirm. The image appears to a random mage each hour until the players act on this "hunch" (Mind magick originating from several Men in Black working in conjunction). If characters continually resist through counter-magick or Willpower, a Man in Black simply delivers a written message. (Page 40.)

Assuming that the characters accept this offer, they meet Dr. Himiitsu (actually a clone) atop Coit Tower. He explains his plans for Norna and the consequences of failure, and even asks if they wish to help. He hopes they will surrender Norna. If not, Men in Black move in for a final attempt at abducting the Orphan.

The scene ends in one of two ways. Either the mages and Norna are taken to GeneTech Lab (willingly or "in irons"), or the Wylderness threatens to break free.

Setting

Telegraph Hill is one of many undulations forming the foundation of San Francisco. Its name derives from history;

GeneTech Laboratory Construct



Better Living through Genetics

Enlightened Ones:

Why do you continually oppose us? Our agenda is sound; we seek only to protect reality. Whatever our differences, the hostilities must end now. In the very least, learn what's at stake before taking your stand — then accept the consequences. If you embrace reason, meet me at Coit Tower. Don't worry about the time; I'll know.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Himiitsu

Director of Research

this hill was the site of the first West Coast telegraph. Located in the northeast sector of the city, it overlooks the ruined Embarcadero Freeway. A stretch of the wharf runs to the north, while Chinatown stretches to the south. Telegraph Hill Boulevard winds up the slope, passing condominiums, landscaped lawns, patches of trees and rickety wooden steps. The road eventually ends at Coit Tower.

Coit Tower was donated to the city by an eccentric lady named Lillie Coit in memory of her husband. As if to recognize her love of firefighting, the tower (which was constructed in 1934) looks something like a stylized hose nozzle. It also resembles the Leaning Tower of Pisa. From the tower's base, a staircase spirals up to a landing roughly 50 feet above the hill's crest. While characters wait, the sky darkens tremendously. Thunder rumbles above. Suddenly, a storm breaks, dumping black rain upon the city.

After waiting in the rain for a few minutes, the characters see a glistening black Cadillac creep up Telegraph Hill Boulevard and park at the base of Coit Tower. A large man in gray pulls himself out. He enters the tower. After another 30 seconds, he reaches the landing where the mages wait.

Dr. Himiitsu introduces himself. He gets straight to the point. He relates the existence of Cob (as Seth explained it to him) and the Pattern Web that suppresses the Wylderness. He tells how Cob is dying, "even faster now because of the Unpredictable Ones' meddling." Finally, he explains his plan to transform Norna Weaver into a powerful pattern spider.

"So you see, your interference threatens the very fabric of reality. I am not an evil man, nor an unreasonable one, but the Path often forces us toward unreasonable decisions, unfortunate ones. If we fail to install a new warden, San Francisco will fall and a seething chaos will warp the land. I alone have borne this burden for too long. The decision now rests with you."

The mages now face an uncomfortable choice. They can either stand up for Norna's rights or sacrifice her to protect reality. Norna is a conformist and needs guidance. Her decision will depend a great deal on what is said, and by whom.

Norna, at this point, feels the tug of her destiny; it frightens her, but it excites her as well. She has always had a fatalistic streak a mile wide. Now, with her parents dead and the possible fate of the city on her action, she could go either way.

If the Storyteller prefers a simple resolution to this dilemma, make Charisma + Leadership rolls for Norna's trust. The difficulty depends on the roleplaying and how much Norna trusts each person: a proven friend faces a difficulty of 4; Dr. Himiitsu, 8; while the default difficulty is 6. If the mages agree with Dr. Himiitsu, they may substitute their difficulties for the doctor's. If their advice differs from Dr. Himiitsu's, the rolls are opposed. Consult the following chart for Norna's reaction:

If mages side with Dr. Himiitsu, he thanks them for "thinking of the grand scheme." Suspicious characters can even witness the transformation if they wish.

Success Reaction

Botch: "Don't talk about me as if I weren't here! I hate you all!" Lashing out with subconscious Entropy, Norna flees down the spiral steps and out of Coit Tower. As the mages watch, two Men in Black slip out of the Cadillac and grab her. Norna will resist her transformation, if it comes to that.

Failure: "I'm not a puppet; I can make up my own mind. No. Why don't you be the guinea pig?" With more roleplaying, allow another roll. Norna resists any transformation.

One Success: "Well...OK." Still uncertain, Norna sides with this character. She resists any transformation.

Two Successes: Norna is somewhat convinced. If it comes down to it, she resists her transformation because of fright. Another Charisma + Leadership roll (difficulty 6) would calm her.

Three Successes: Norna sees the common sense in what is suggested. If this involves her transformation, she will not resist.

Four Successes: Norna is won over. If this involves her transformation, she is even a bit excited and proud. Although she remains afraid, Norna will not resist.

Five Successes: Norna is a complete pawn. If this involves her transformation, she will not resist, though she will still be sad for the end of her life as she knows it.

"The Error of Your Ways!"

If, however, the players still oppose the Technocracy, all hell breaks loose. Dr. Himiitsu attempts to grapple Norna (if present) and flee down the staircase. Men in Black "creep out of the woodwork." One appears on the landing each turn (a total of five will appear); two others ascend the spiral stairs, blocking escape or pursuit of Dr. Himiitsu; two more wait in the Cadillac below, in driver and "shotgun" position respectively. Two Cadillacs are parked at the base of Telegraph Hill. One is empty; the other holds five Men in Black, ready to pursue fleeing mages.

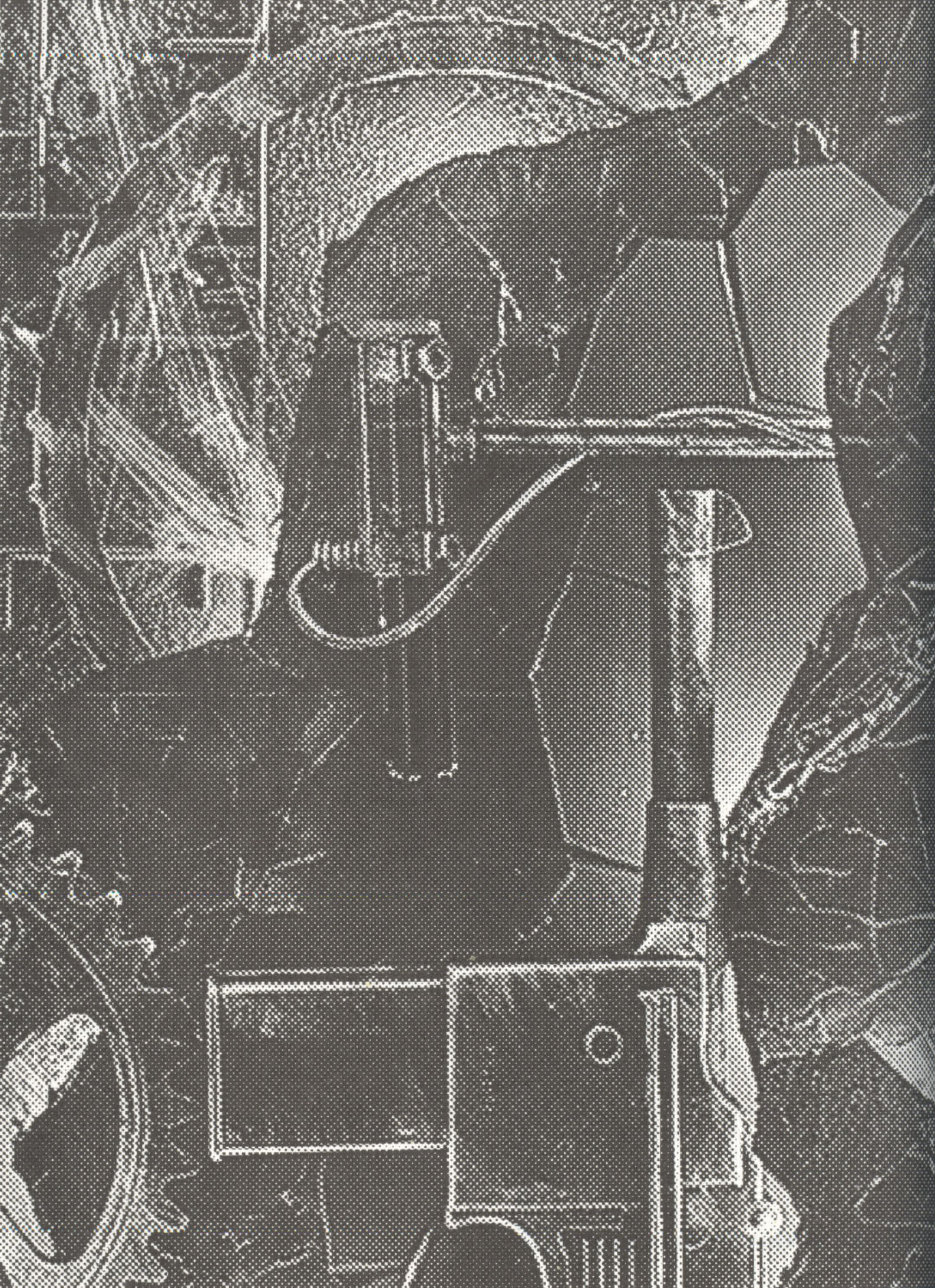
The Men in Black coordinate on numbing minds while Norna is abducted. They will use lethal force if necessary. This scene's drama is intended to be intense and overwhelming, but not unbeatable. Orchestrate the action so that clever, persistent and lucky mages can triumph.

On the other hand, the story could continue after their capture.

Aftermath

One way or the other, the mages will probably end up at the U.C. Medical Center (Scene Thirteen) and GeneTech Lab (Scene Fourteen).

- Should Norna remain free for much longer, the Wylderness seems ready to break free. The Conclusion deals with this possibility.



Chapter Four: Prometheus Unbound

*Into this Universe, and Why not knowing,
Nor Whence, like Water willy-nilly flowing;
And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,
I know not Whither, willy-nilly blowing.*
— The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, verse XXXII

This chapter describes the antagonists' inner sanctums: Merika Seth's apartment; the U.C. Medical Center and GeneTech Labs where Dr. Himiitsu can be found; and Cob's lair in the Near Umbra. These are the likely locations

for this story's climax, the final snipping of the threads of fate. Whatever courses the players follow, they will conclude this story in the Horizon Realm of the Progenitors.

Scene Twelve: Warp and Weft

Plot

From the start, characters may suspect Merika Seth of being a mage. She survived a near-hit with an auto and is renowned for predicting the weather. A Virtual Adept might have contacted her in the Net and wondered how she knew so much. Disciples of Spirit could have discovered her workshop in the Umbra and slipped sideways into her apartment.

If the characters follow these leads, they may find Seth's address readily enough. Upon arriving, the mages might investigate the apartment for clues, or even question Merika herself if she is home.

Setting

When not working at KWLF, mingling at dance clubs, or discussing Project: Reincarnate with Dr. Himiitsu in GeneTech Lab, Merika resides in her apartment on Diamond Heights.

Diamond Heights is a steep and windy ridge just south of Twin Peaks, on the border of San Francisco proper. Despite austere

weather, the locale provides a commanding view of the settled slope and the wild and secluded valley called Glen Canyon Park. One sees suburban townhouses, a few apartments and several churches. A shopping center, elementary school, and the Glen Park BART Station can also be found, concealed by distance and sheets of rain.

Generally, the architecture is uninspired, lacking the sense of history that distinguishes older districts. Merika Seth lives on Red Rock Way, in a sixth-floor apartment.

To enter the apartment, someone must pick the lock (Dexterity + Technology; difficulty 8) or break down the door (a feat of Strength). The doors and windows have sophisticated alarms. Unless the players deactivate this system (Intelligence + Technology; difficulty 7, four successes), the police arrive before the players can leave.

Seth's apartment faces southeast. Ripples of rainwater wash down the huge living room window, obscuring the view. Occasionally, a flash of lightning helps illuminate the softly lit room, which is tastefully furnished in black and beige, juxtaposing old and new. A sandstone statue rests beside an advanced entertainment center; an antique endtable sits next to a black leather sofa. A door on the left opens into a kitchen, while the right-hand hallway leads to the bedroom, bathroom and study.

By searching the apartment, mages note a number of pertinent details:

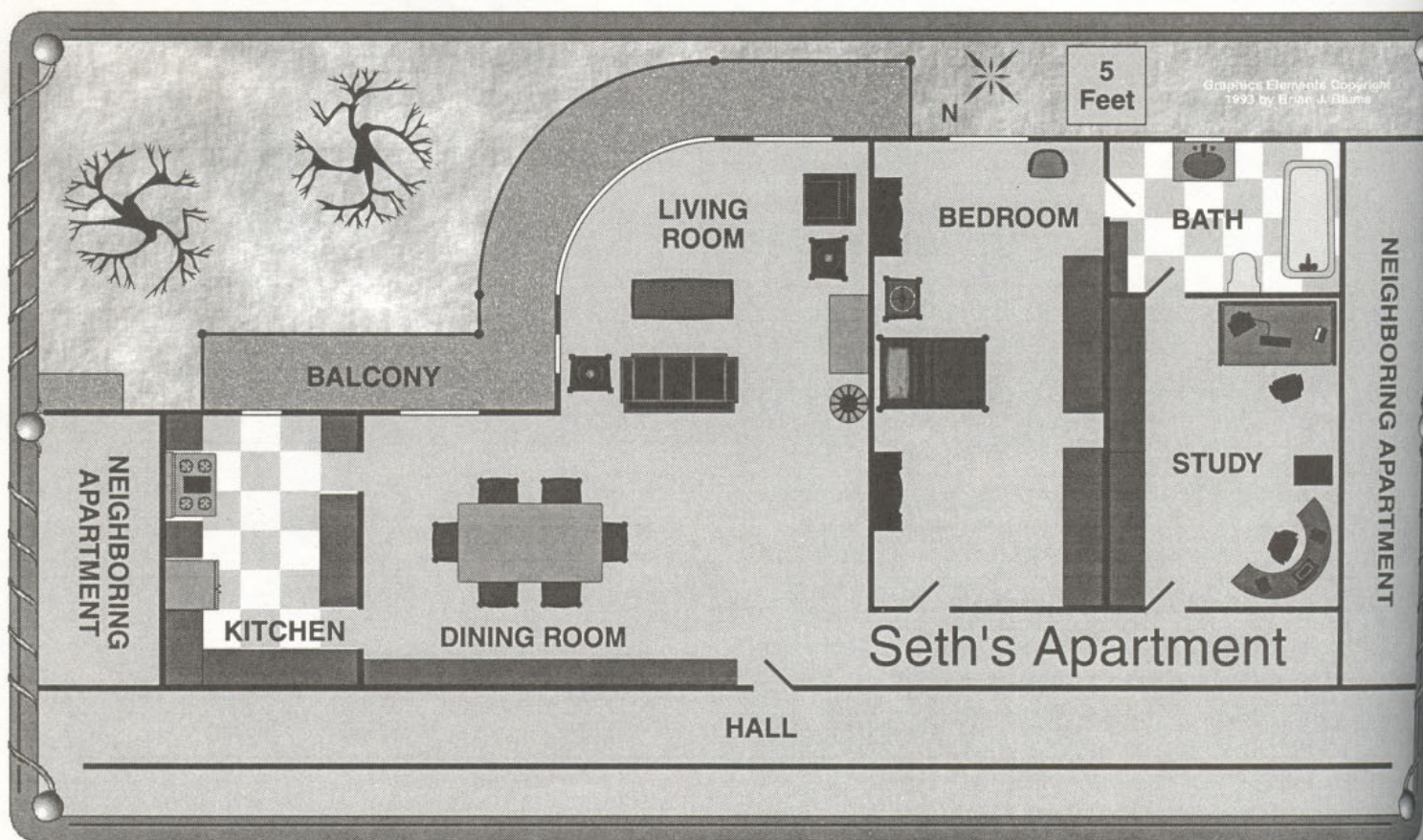
- False Sympathy: A general search of the bedroom, coupled with a Perception + Investigation roll (difficulty 4), uncovers a "Get Well" card in a night-table drawer. The card seems to read: "Heard about your recent accident.

Hope the car can be repaired! You should be more careful. Heal quickly and get well soon. K.H." In fact, a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 9) detects a message written in magickally invisible ink, which reads: "Symposium to be held in the boardroom (26th floor) of the Union Law Office, 253 Geary. Moved up to tonight at 7 p.m. Be prompt." Adjust the time on the card to whatever time works best for your game.

- IBM Clone: The study contains, among other things, a personal computer. It looks custom-built from a number of systems, as well as other strange parts (cathode ray tubes, Nintendo joysticks, etc.)! Booting up the computer/ bypassing its security system requires an Intelligence + Computer roll (difficulty 5; three successes).

A desktop program includes an "address book." It makes reference to "Dr. Ken Himiitsu, Director U.C. Medical Center: (415)-476-1000, Extension #12." The Storyteller might call for Wits + Intuition rolls before supplying this clue.

The hard-drive directory lists some strange file names, such as "Project: Reincarnate." If accessed, this file seems to be a sort of paint program depicting various digital sketches of arachnids. See "Seth's Workshop" in Scene Five for more details.



- Attached via cables to this computer are a set of virtual reality goggles and gloves. Merika uses these foci for Spirit magick, particularly for slipping sideways. Only another Virtual Adept could use this gear, which can access the Net Realm.

- Also in the study is a sophisticated weather forecast workstation. It includes specialized software and attachments to barometric hardware assembled on this apartment's roof. The workstation is online. A monitor displays a contour map of central California with digital cloud cover and atmospheric readouts. A window in a lower corner reads: "C:\TEMPEST Processing." A Wits + Computer roll (difficulty 6) reveals that the workstation is not so much forecasting future weather conditions as monitoring (controlling !!) the present storm. Euthanatos and a few other mages may have heard of the rote called Shango's Grave.

Shutting down the workstation will not end the storm; it is a tool for Merika's coincidental magick, not a Talisman.

It may be dramatic to have Merika interrupt an intrusion, returning home in time to catch the mages unaware. She will not, to put it mildly, be pleased, but would rather flee than fight impossible odds. Seth will be furious, but not stupid. Her reaction to visitors depends on what the mages have done up to this point, but she will remember them from Scene One. With the Marauders loose in the city, Seth will be on her guard.

Mages may question Merika if they get the chance. Fast-talk and interrogation fail to impress her; charm and seduction make a better impression. She is a poor liar, so the right questions elicit many answers. However, incautious mages find the tables turned; Merika's charm and good looks might win over the players, or trap them until the police arrive. Merika Seth is a local celebrity; players will lose any confrontations involving the authorities.

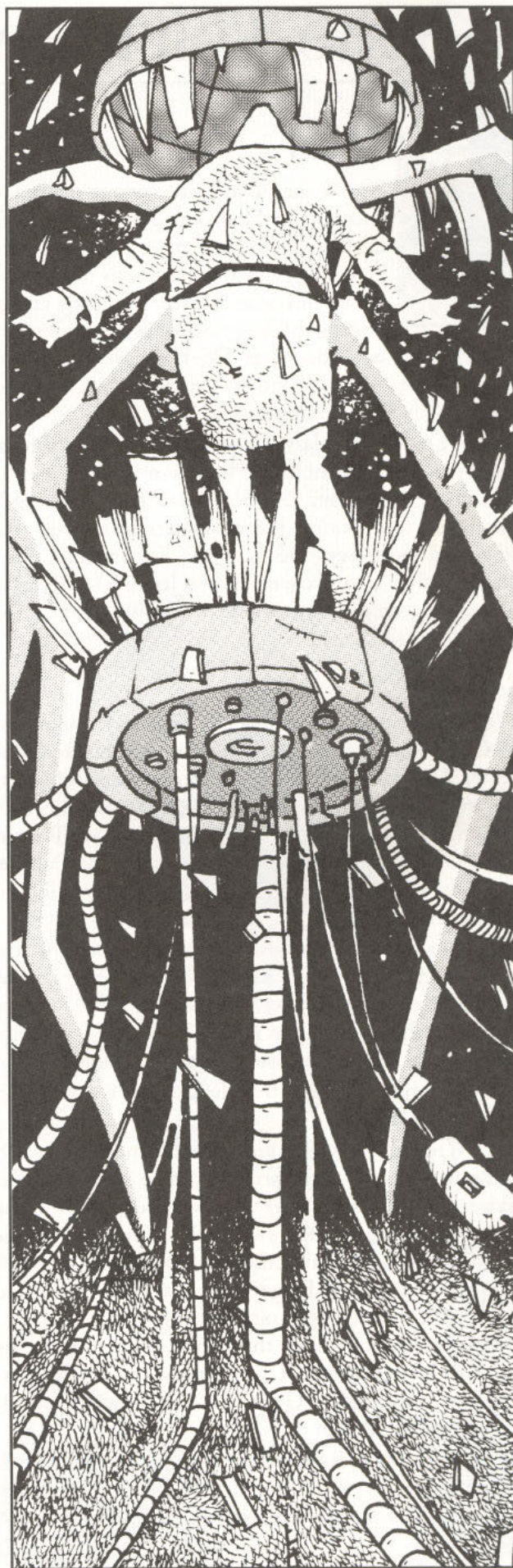
Aftermath

Barring the possibility that mages are hauled off to jail for breaking and entering, their investigations could lead to other scenes:

- Stepping sideways in Merika's apartment leads to "Seth's Workshop" in Scene Five.

- The "Get Well Card" identifies the time and place of a Technocratic Symposium. If it has not already passed, player characters might want to crash it. See Scene Nine.

- By telephoning Dr. Himiitsu's number, they reach a secretary at the U.C. Medical Center. Following up on this physically, they enter the next scene, Thirteen.



Scene Thirteen: Stitch in Time



Plot

Any of the players who require medical attention may be taken to the U.C. Medical Center, one of two major hospitals in San Francisco, and the closest to many of the scenes in **Loom of Fate**. Ironically enough, visiting this hospital brings the characters to the Technocracy's doorstep. Dr. Himiitsu has linked a Progenitor Horizon Realm to the Medical Center and hopes to save San Francisco from there.

The players may have followed various clues throughout the story that point to Dr. Himiitsu and his Progenitors, and might investigate the hospital. After bypassing Dr. Himiitsu's receptionist, the characters search his office, finding a secret message from the Technocracy. In an elevator, they also discover a Portal leading to GeneTech Lab, a Progenitor Construct "beneath" the Medical Center.

Setting

Just southeast of Golden Gate Park lies the University of California. This college specializes in medical disciplines. The U.C. Medical Center is a collection of buildings sloping down Mt. Sutro. A linked pair of square, clear-span towers form the Health Sciences Instruction and Research Units One and Two. Other structures house the College of Dentistry, Surge Research Lab, School of Nursing, and Outpatients Clinic.

The storm has not abated. Leaving the parking structure, the mages are drenched by flapping sheets of rain. Between booming thunder, they hear a clock tower announcing the time in bass gongs. This sound, combined with the black sky, instills a feeling of depression and doom.

For purposes of plot, the Medical Center offers three places of interest.

- The local elevators are not mundane machines. For those with a key, they form Portals to GeneTech Lab. Mages may find such secret doors through a few means. Disciples of Prime or others with a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 8) can sense raw Quintessence pulsing beneath their feet. A Forces mage may note that residual energy still crackles in circuitry attached to the "B" button. In fact, if someone presses this button while introducing a surge of energy (Rank Three Forces, one success), the elevator "descends" to GeneTech Lab, passing through a Portal into the Realm.

- The Surge Research Lab is one place where Dr. Himiitsu can be found, though he spends more time in GeneTech as the plot progresses. Behind closed doors

lining stark corridors, scientists experiment with frozen embryos, partially dissected fetuses, and DNA strands.

- Another of Himiitsu's haunts is his office. Outside its door, Agnes Merridrew, the doctor's elderly receptionist, crouches behind an IBM, her hooked fingers pecking away at the keyboard.

If anyone asks about Dr. Himiitsu, Merridrew requests the inquirer's name and checks an appointment list. By the way she fumbles at the computer, it is obvious that she hails from a simpler time...or that she's stalling. When she fails to find their name, she offers to make an appointment... "How's 11:00 of Tuesday, two weeks from today?"

To bypass Agnes, characters must Fast Talk, use Mind magick, or employ other means. One possibility is to add one's name to the appointment list by precise manipulation of the monitor's pixels (Rank Two Forces; three successes). Another idea is for someone to distract Agnes while others slip into the office. Agnes is a great talker, and it takes very little to get her started.

Characters who manage to read Agnes' computer screen by some means can see a window in the lower left corner of the monitor. A message in the window reads: "All roads lead to Rome. All strands lead to Cob. Make haste. M.S." This message is from Merika Seth. Only Agnes is "keyed" to this computer. Unauthorized users will set off an alarm to Dr. Himiitsu.

Agnes herself knows nothing about her employer's true nature. Threats or magickal questioning will buy the players little more than trouble.

The Good Doctor's Office

Entering the office, the players search for clues (assuming Dr. Himiitsu is absent!). A paper-tray holds an interesting memo. Its coil and slightly smeared message reveal that it came through a fax machine. Though the message seems to refer to a transfer of medical files from San Francisco General Hospital, it is actually a concealed memo from another Technomancer. By succeeding on a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 9), a mage can read between the mundane lines:

Dr. Himiitsu,

The Marauder problem is out of hand. This month's Symposium will be held in the boardroom (26th floor) of the Union Law Office, 253 Geary. Invite Ms. Seth; perhaps in person she can better explain this "spirit" phenomenon. Your last report referred to an "impending crisis." Therefore, we shall meet earlier than planned, at 7 p.m. on November 7th.

Brother Johnson,

Inner Council, New World Order

The office is mundane in every other way. There are no clues anywhere to implicate Dr. Himiitsu in Dr. Weaver's death.

Aftermath

This scene has two major exits. If characters discover the location and date of the Technocratic Symposium, they could crash (assuming it has not passed). This leads to Scene Nine. Or they may infiltrate GeneTech Lab via an elevator (Scene Fourteen).

Scene Fourteen: GeneTech Lab



*I'm goin' down into the maelstrom,
Goin' down, gonna drown.*
— Radio Birdman, "Into the Maelstrom"

Plot

One way or another, the mages will visit GeneTech Lab. They may raid it for Quintessence, knowledge or vengeance. They may be captured by the Technocracy, or possibly even ally with them.

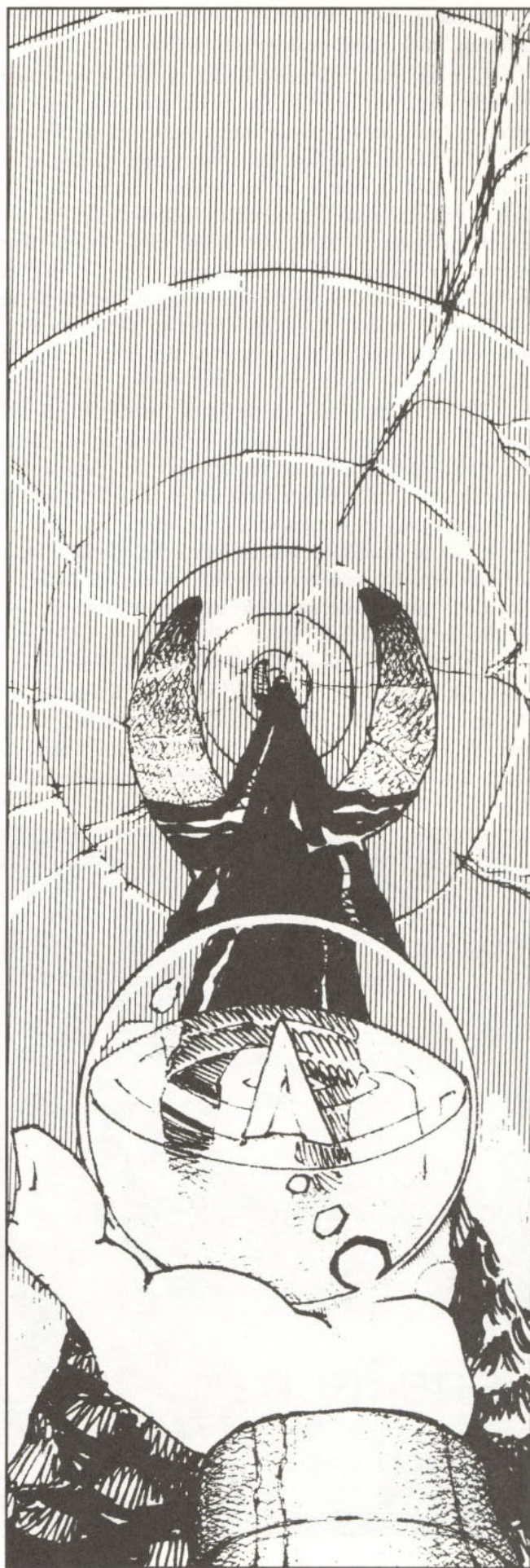
If characters find the Progenitor Construct themselves, they enter though one of three places. Various access tunnels under San Francisco lead here, as do special elevators from the U.C. Medical Center. An unknown breach from the Umbra exists as well. The mages could arrive early during the story when all is running efficiently, or in the destructive wake of a Marauder attack. They may even accompany the raiding cyclists.

With so many variables, the plotting of this scene varies tremendously. Therefore, the description below is but one version. It assumes the mages arrive by themselves after the Marauder attack. The Storyteller can easily work backwards from this point if necessary.

Setting

The foundation of GeneTech Lab is a Horizon Realm powered by the Wylderness. The Realm has these Sphere ratings: Correspondence 0, Entropy -2, Forces +1, Life +4, Matter 0, Mind +1, Prime +2, Spirit -1, Time 0. For a general description of how such ratings work, see p. 181 of *Mage: The Ascension*.

The Node supplies 25 Quintessence per month. Here, the Gauntlet's rating is 2, requiring only one successes with Spirit magick to slip sideways. Magical difficulties at the Node are three less!



As mentioned above, the Construct has three means of access. Each presents its own difficulty.

- **Underground:** Dozens of tunnel systems wind through the concrete crust beneath San Francisco. Some provide access to gas mains and power lines; others are sewers. A few lead to Portals to GeneTech Lab. The tunnels' twists, turns, branches and crossings are extremely disorienting. To navigate this maze, roll Perception + Intuition (difficulty 8; 6 with a schematic) each turn. If the mages botch, they become lost. The number of rolls depends on how far from the U.C. Medical Center the players began, ranging from one (within sight) to 30 (edge of the city). The Marauder compass from Scene Eight points unerringly to GeneTech Lab.

Within sight of an earthly Portal, intruders face another obstacle. The Progenitors have bred mutant alligators as guards. Lurking beneath sewer water, or lying still to resemble logs, these beasts can easily surprise mages. Call for Perception + Alertness rolls (difficulty 7). If someone scores four or more successes, he alerts the others so far in advance that they could conceivably sneak past. After the Marauders' attack, the 'gators are more alert (five successes required to get by).

- **Near Umbra:** From Cob's web in the near Umbra, mages can climb mystic power cables to reach the floating Horizon Realm. The cables breach a shimmering membrane (the Gauntlet) beneath GeneTech Lab. Disciples of Spirit can easily penetrate this membrane; other Awak-

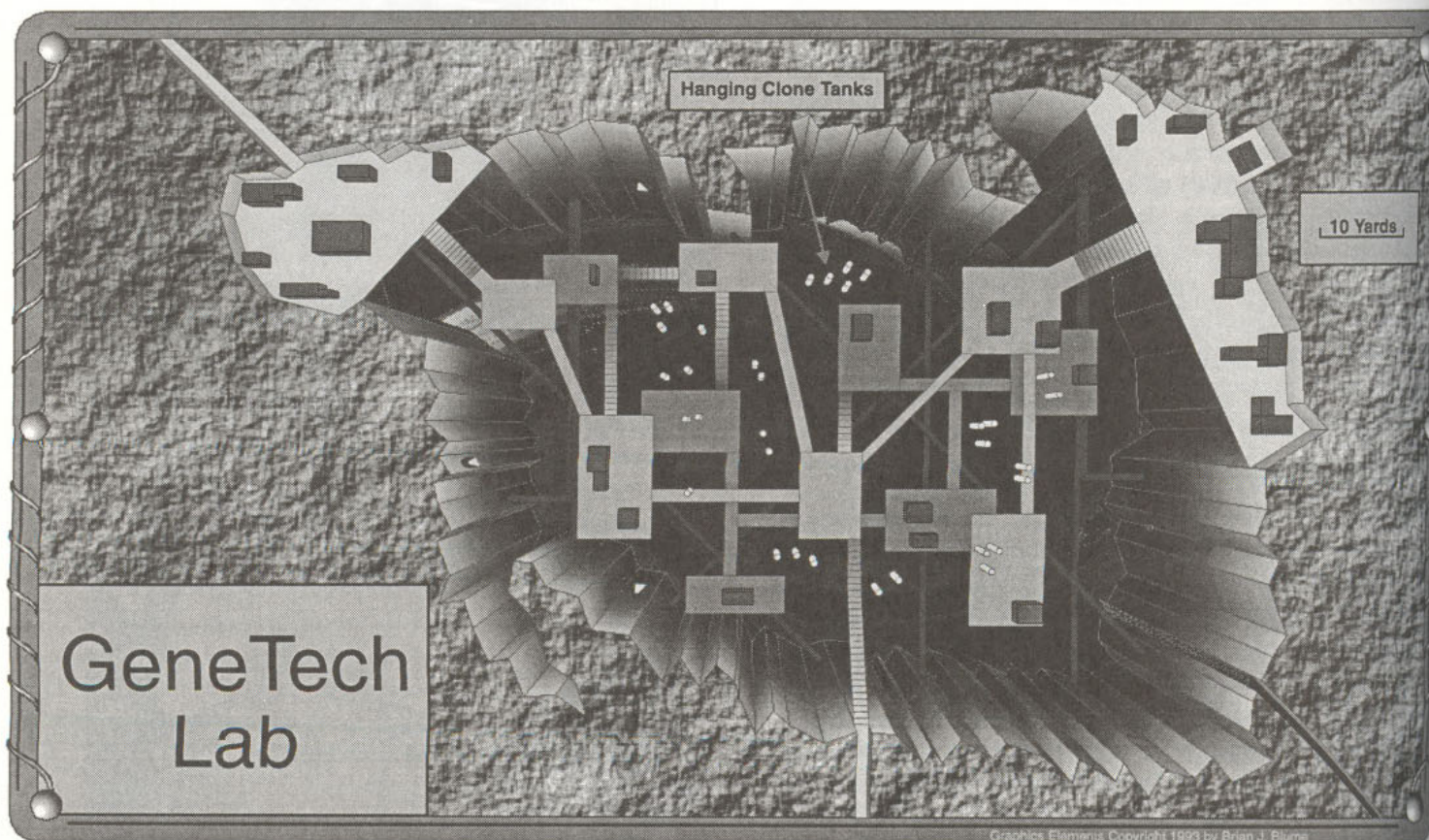
ened beings may do so by spending one point of Willpower. Once the membrane is breached, mages find themselves "surfacing" into an inky pool at the bottom of a cavern. To reach the lab's main level, they must climb cables from the water (difficulty 4). From within the Realm, the membrane resembles brackish water. Only a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 7) or Spirit magick hints otherwise.

- **Elevators:** As discussed in Scene Thirteen, certain elevators descend from the U.C. Medical Center to GeneTech Lab. Superiors guard the landing and may note an elevator's imminent arrival.

GeneTech Laboratories

GeneTech is a strange Realm; it resembles a giant cavern. Perhaps the Wyld emanations feeding the Realm have made a more sanitary environment impossible. Dozens of tunnels open from the walls, some spilling water into a lightless pool below. The Progenitors have added to this mess, constructing a series of balconies, steel bridges, suspended landings, and ladders. The net effect is a multilayered tangle of cables, wiring, pipes, catwalks, neon tubing and girders, all suspended above the cavern's watery floor. The place resembles some James Bond villain's lair or a mad doctor's lab (which, of course, it is). The air throbs with a hum of strange machinery. Every once in a while, a mysterious clang echoes off the walls and water.

When characters reach the upper catwalks, they see the Progenitors' latest experiments. Giant test tubes hang



Graphics Elements Copyright 1993 by Brian J. Blume

from the ceiling, attached to machines by cables and wiring. Bodies in various stages of growth float in amber fluid, occasionally convulsing. Some of these bodies are definitely not human.

If the Marauder have attacked, GeneTech Lab is in ruins. Piping and power cables are severed. Some spray pressurized water, or thrash and sizzle from live electricity. Others drip multicolored liquid or emit dazzling sparks — raw Quintessence! Machines have shored out. Catwalks tilt precariously. Some cloning tanks have shattered, aborting their contents; undeveloped bodies sprawl in pools of nutrient fluid like fish out of water. One looks like a young Dr. Himiitsu. Everything has been smashed, slashed, burned, and magically warped.

Arriving Free

The primary drama involves infiltrating the lab. Even after bypassing Superiors and alligator guards, mages must remain alert. At least one Superior patrols the catwalks at all times. Every few turns, characters must Sneak. In most cases, a complete success avoids detection; however, guards are more alert after the Marauder attack (five successes required!). Incautious mages might stumble into a Superior, Progenitor scientist, or even Dr. Himiitsu.

If our characters have entered through sewers or the Near Umbra, they must navigate pipes and cables to reach the lab proper. Assign Climbing and Jumping tests as appropriate.

Arriving in Chains

Captured mages find themselves imprisoned in empty clone tanks. These are molded of high-tech Plexiglas, requiring a Strength Feat of 6 to shatter (assume six soak dice and six Health Levels for purposes of weapon damage). Attached tubing usually feeds processed Quintessence into the tanks; now they drain the prisoner of one Tass per hour (similar to the Rank Three Prime effect Bond of Blood). Clone tanks also have the incidental side effect of dampening magick. Prisoners do not benefit from the Realm's Sphere modifiers; furthermore, magical effects are at +2 difficulty. Of course, mages are stripped of foci. The best chance of escape comes with the Marauder attack; if that has already occurred, they at least have a great view of Norna's transformation....

Mages who come to GeneTech Lab by invitation get to listen to Dr. Himiitsu's monologue as they tour the facilities. He gladly boasts about Progenitor genius. Prisoners are forced to listen to a harsher version of the same speech.

Lab Staff

At full strength, GeneTech Lab is staffed by half a dozen Progenitor mages, an apprentice or two, and Dr. Himiitsu. Merika Seth is an honorary Fellow. At least six Superiors keep guard. With a week's warning, the Chantry could rush the development of as many as 20 Superiors (though these would be akin to Howling Commandos rather than human beings). Finally, 15 Men in Black have been temporarily assigned to GeneTech Lab. Busy shadowing the city or engaged in battling the Marauders, they rarely enter the lab. Reverend Williams also drops by in more peaceful times to confirm his faith in Cob and the Technocracy.

After the Marauder attack, the staff thins out significantly. Besides Dr. Himiitsu (who was absent), only two Progenitor mages, Frey and Friia, survived the attack. Half the Superiors have fallen as well; one guards the elevator Portal while two patrol the upper catwalks. Dr. Himiitsu, Merika Seth, and Reverend Williams will all be in the lab to witness the final transformation.

Superior statistics can be found on p. 282 of the *Mage* rulebook. They carry hunting knives and Ruger 10/22 rifles with scopes. The other characters are described in Appendix One.

Aftermath

Physical exits from GeneTech lab include an elevator-Portal to the U.C. Medical Center (Scene Thirteen) and a breach in the Gauntlet leading to Cob's web (Scene Fifteen). Disciples of Spirit can easily slip into the Near Umbra; refer to Scene Five for a geography lesson.

Captured mages seek opportunities to escape; the Marauder attack outlined in Scene Nine provides one. Finally, the Progenitors may be ready to go through with their plan. Norna's transformation occurs in the Conclusion.

Scene Fifteen: Cob's Web

There's a butterfly trapped in a spider's web

That's my soul up there.

— The Police, "King of Pain"



Plot

This is another scene where the players' goals can vary tremendously. They may intend to slay Cob, or just witness the damage firsthand. They may come to offer help, or perhaps simply to steal Quintessence. Depending on the mages' motives and actions, they could clash with Marauders, pattern spiders or Wyld Things.

Setting

The mages may reach Cob's lair by dropping in from GeneTech Lab or crawling through perimeter webbing from the Near Umbra.

Cob's lair is encased by a thick mesh of Pattern Web. The sagging cables are tangled and adhesive, complicating travel through them. A touch sends vibrations along the web, alerting pattern spiders to intruders. To navigate the webworks, mages must make extended Dexterity + Athletics rolls (difficulty 6). A Disciple of Correspondence can lower this difficulty by one per success on Immediate Spatial Perceptions. A character who accumulates 10 successes reaches the other side. Failure indicates that she touches a strand, attracting a pattern spider. On a botch, she becomes tangled.

The strands are extremely tough. Snapping them requires a Strength Feat of 10. Assume the strands have five soak dice and five Health Levels for purposes of damaging them with certain weapons (e.g., a shotgun or chainsaw, but not a staff or even a non-magickal sword). Entropy and Matter magick are also effective.

Weaver of the Web

Within this mass of webs lies Cob's lair, a vast, open space with loose webbing strung here and there. An irregularly shaped rift opens in the floor. Over this opening, a web of thick cables strains against some invisible force. Each strand quivers with tautness; a few have snapped. The anchor points crack and split with stress. Pattern spiders scurry about. A particularly large pattern spider, Cob, sprawls next to the rift, trying in its weakened condition to weave two strands together.

The Umbrood is an impressive sight, even in its weakened state. The gigantic spider-spirit looms over its minions, its cybernetic skin ripped and rusting in a dozen places. If the Marauders have staged their attack, Cob moves sluggishly, Tass spurting from a huge rent in its abdomen. Nothing the mages can do will save the dying Umbrood. Cob is doomed.

A character with two or more ranks in the Spirit Sphere can talk to Cob, though it is bound to be a bizarre conversation. Cob is extremely clever and sees through most lies (Fast Talk faces a difficulty of 8). An honest approach is more profitable. Even so, Cob is busy trying to maintain the Pattern Web (though his efforts are futile) and has little time to talk with flesh-beings. Mages who try to help (e.g., by Repair rolls or Matter magick) get Cob's attention. There is little anyone can do; Wyld things undo the repairs as quickly as they are made.

Cob knows much about the Near Umbra and a little about the physical world through dreams. Because Cob is only coincidentally allied with the Technocracy, it may allow mages to restore Quintessence.

Approaching the rift, one notices multicolored vapors rising through the mesh. A mage can inhale this gaseous Quintessence to recharge his Avatar, though its Wyld origin creates quite a buzz (one fewer die to all actions for one scene). Below, the Wylderness Node is a swirling mass of molten ooze. As this primordial soup surges against the rift's walls, some splashes through the web. The droplets form Wyld Things. These spirits devour the webbing until pattern spiders converge upon and immobilize them.

Many thick cables pump Quintessence from the Node to the Horizon Realm above. These cables provide a means of reaching GeneTech Lab. The 100-foot climb (difficulty 6) requires an accumulation of 20 successes.

Aftermath

By climbing power cables, mages can reach the Horizon Realm above and enter GeneTech Lab; this setting is described in Scene Fourteen. Mages who penetrate the surrounding webbing find themselves in the Near Umbra (Scene Five).

This is also a good place from which to watch the transformation of Norna's Avatar into a pattern spider. This occurs in the Conclusion.

Conclusion: Time to Unwind

*...Were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
—T.S. Eliot, "Journey of the Magi"*



In the Conclusion, the mages tie up all the loose ends or loosen the final bond. In general terms, the plot ends in one of two ways. The first scenario has Norna Weaver undergoing a transformation of body and Avatar, being reincarnated as a powerful pattern spider. Her efforts stabilize the Pattern Web. In the second scenario, mages interfere with the Technocracy's plans. Norna is safe, but at what cost to reality?

These are generic endings. Your Troupe's storytelling will change the details and perhaps put a new spin on events. What if some martyr offers to take Norna's place? Optimally, the candidate is a Hollow One with an Avatar of no less than 4 and a Destiny of no less than 3. To reward this player's heroic sacrifice, a generous Storyteller might provide an extra five or 10 freebie points toward the creation of his next character.

The outline below should help a Storyteller deal with either event.

Scenario One: Norna Reborn

*Farewell now my sister
Up ahead there lies your road
And your conscience walks beside you
It's the best friend you will ever know.*
— Dead Can Dance, "Tell Me About the Forest"

Free or bound, the player mages watch as the Progenitors seal Norna in a clone tube and flood it with raw Quintessence. Dr. Himiitsu works dials, levers, and buttons on a great machine. Beside him, Merika Seth has typed "C:\SPIRIT>RUN PROJECT V2.2" into her portable computer. A silver spider appears on the monitor. As Seth makes final adjustments to the program, the image flexes and mutates. Norna contracts in obvious pain, then stretches as her body strains to grow in all directions.

Systems

This physical transformation is a conjunctional effect combining Rank Five Prime, Rank Four Spirit and Rank Five Life effects. Taking all factors into consideration, the difficulty is only 2! Roll Himiitsu's five dice of Arete anyway; 1s still fail, while 10s allow additional rolls (Himiitsu's specialty is cloning). Apply one success from Willpower. If Norna resists, roll her Willpower and subtract the successes. Dr. Himiitsu needs five successes. Norna's

spiritual transformation is a Rank Four effect. Follow the same procedure with Seth's Arete of 4. She must use Willpower to achieve five successes. This narrative assumes both mages succeed.

Above, in the tank, Norna transforms. Her hands and feet extend, forming additional joints on longer, more arachnidian limbs. Four additional limbs sprout from her torso. Her entire body warps into two distinct segments, becoming like polished chrome (Norna and her Avatar retain enough will to assume a more appealing shape than Cob's). The spider-child grows in mass, soon pressing up against the glass. Dr. Himiitsu shouts for someone to lower and open the tank...too late. Fragments of Plexiglas and precious gallons of Quintessence shower the Progenitors as Weaver pounces onto a catwalk. Without looking back, it clammers down the cavern's wall and penetrates the watery membrane.

In its new lair, Weaver binds the Wylderness. Over time, it replaces the cablelike Pattern Web with fine, silver filaments. In the real world, San Francisco restores order. The power shortages, leaks and tremors stop. The Technocracy strengthens its presence; GeneTech Lab replaces damaged machinery, grows more guards, and attracts more Progenitor mages.

Even if the mages contribute to this success, their position with the Technocracy remains uncertain. Though they may have aided Dr. Himiitsu, they know too much and present a threat to the order. If the Technomancers survive the story, the player characters will see them again!

Fates Laughing

The transformation of Norna into Weaver is doubly ironic. The Technocracy is right; Norna must be sacrificed for the greater good. In restoring order with Norna's transformed spirit, however, the Technocracy has altered the Pattern, weakening its own long-term hold on power. By reworking Cob's web, Weaver will, over time, right the long-standing imbalance between Dynamism and Stasis.

Although Weaver has become a pattern spider, the essence of the girl she once was will guide the web she weaves for San Francisco. Norna knew the value of the Wyld within the weave, and may work it into her grand pattern rather than binding it tightly in threads of order. Norna's rebirth ushers in a new kind of stability for the city, a more balanced path between Dynamism and Stasis, Wyld and Weaver. A path to guide the city toward Ascension.

Scenario Two: The Cataclysm Stirs

"Define bad..."

"Imagine all of the atoms in your body halting and suddenly going in reverse at the speed of light."

"Okay, that's bad..."

Exchange between Ray and Egon, *Ghostbusters*



Norna escapes, or is killed. The transformation fails, or never occurs. Cob loses cohesion and breaks apart. As if sensing weakness, the Wylderness surges and swells beneath the pattern-web. Then with a loud, metallic twang, cables snap....

The Wyld strains, the ground trembles, the Realm shakes...and nothing happens! Dr. Himiitsu is baffled. This delay should gain the characters an opportunity to pay back old scores or escape if they can. The Portals back to Earth will still work, though they may quickly shift out of space if the Realm is badly damaged. A running battle may erupt from the Realm into the sewers or even into the Medical Center, although Dr. Himiitsu will break off pursuit if it endangers the Sleepers. The mages will escape, but they have gained

powerful enemies within the Technocracy and puzzling questions to answer.

What happened? Better still, what *didn't* happen? The Wyld should have burst forth; reality should have unraveled; San Francisco should even now shatter into ruin. Why does the Web still hold?

The answer may be found at an obscure werewolf caern across the Bay, in Mt. Tamalpais State Park. Here, a group of Garou placate a mysterious spirit of destruction called the Cataclysm. As an embodiment of destruction, this Cataclysm must tear the Pattern Web asunder before the Wyld can be set free. This caern is detailed in the *Werewolf* supplement **Caerns: Places of Power**, although the Storyteller could certainly invent her own caern from scratch.

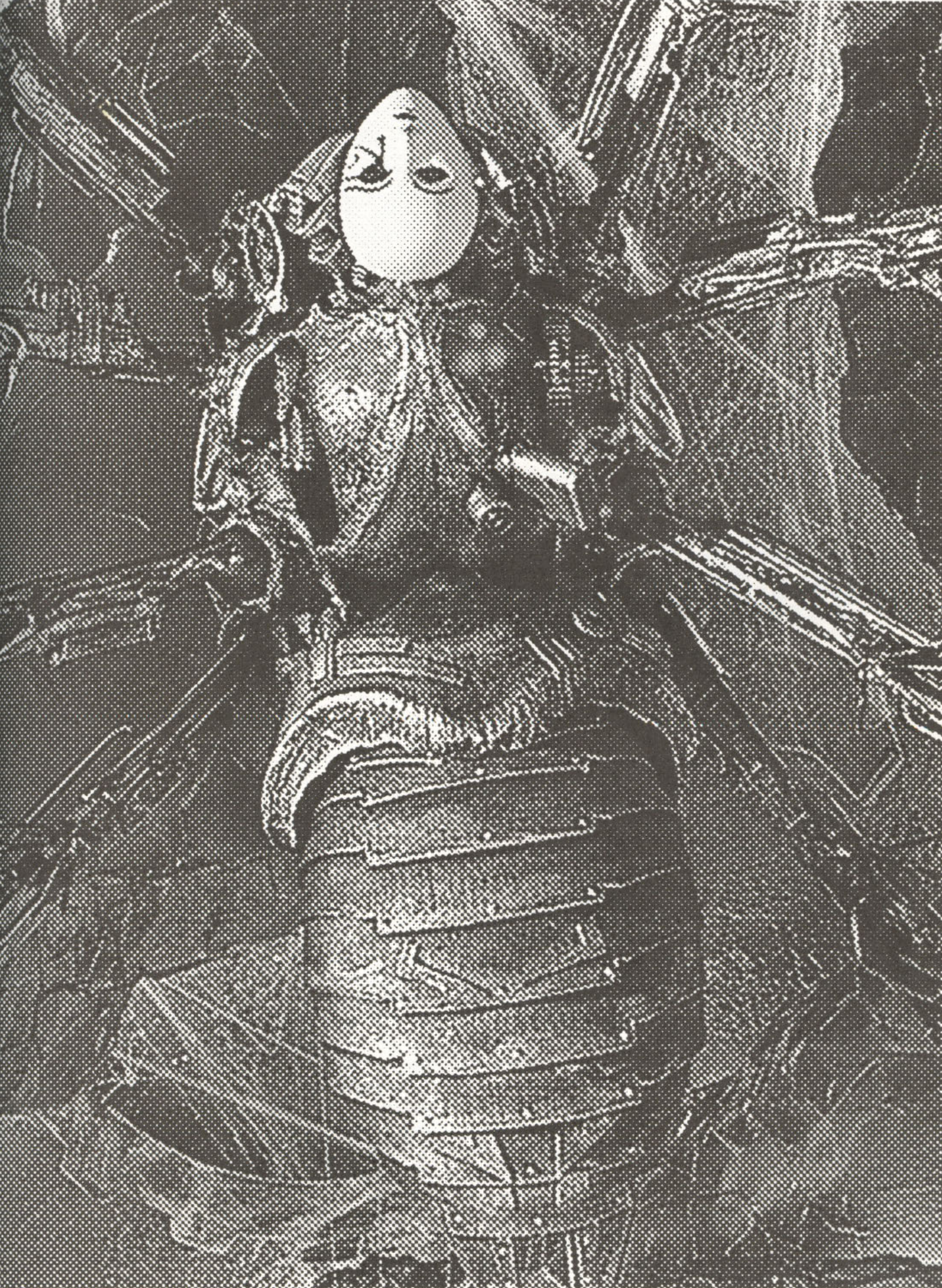


The werewolves and mages are currently unaware of the roles that both play in the stability of the region. The weave of the web and the power of the caern both act to subdue the Cataclysm and contain the Wyld within a stable order. Because this destructive spirit, this Wyrms being, is bound, a necessary piece of the natural order is missing. The Wyld creates; the Pattern gives it substance; to disrupt the substance, Entropy still must tear down the Pattern.

Because they know nothing of werewolf lore, the Technocracy is blind to the existence of the Cataclysm. They see Order and Chaos as the only two factors at work in existence, thus missing the whole picture. When the

Web strains, but does not break, the Technomancers will put every effort into finding this safeguard and exploiting it. The werewolves, it should be noted, will not be pleased.

Thus, the strands of Fate continue to unwind, even if Norna Weaver escapes her destiny. The players will want to know what keeps the Web intact, as will the Technocracy. The Marauders will want to know why the Wyld is still bound. The straining of the Web and the continued breakdown of order and stability in San Francisco will raise the stakes in this race. With Cob dead, the Cataclysm stirs. If the Web is not rewoven, the tug-of-war between Wyld and Weaver will awaken the Cataclysm, and the entire Western Seaboard will suffer for it.



Appendix One: Supporting Cast

Greater numbers might drift through the drama, of course — thousands in fact — but they could only ever be phantoms, agents, or, on rare occasions, reflections of the real and self-willing beings who stood at the center.

-Clive Barker, Imajica

This chapter compiles the descriptions of all characters important to **Loom of Fate**, grouped by association.

Primary Non-Player Characters

Norna Weaver

Essence: Primordial

Nature: Conformist

Demeanor: Deviant

Tradition: Hollow One

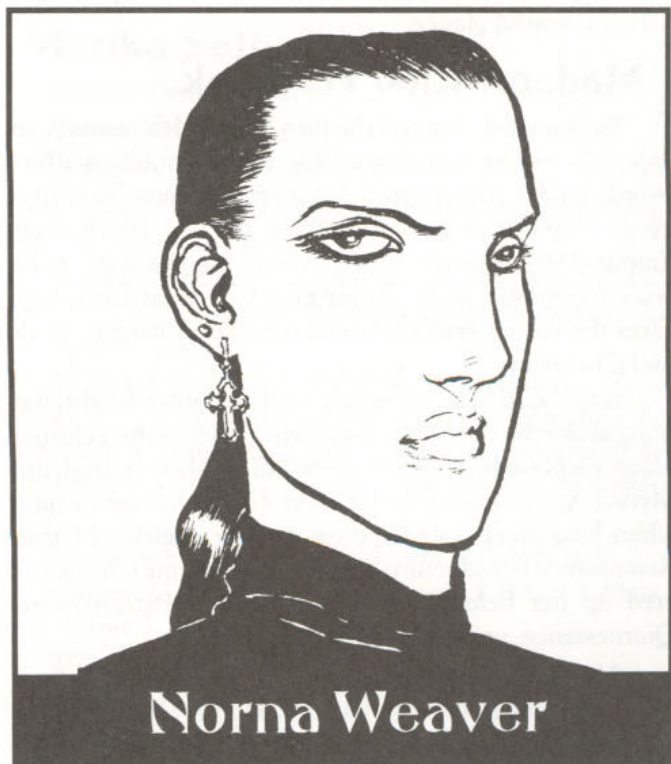
Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 1, Awareness 3, Culture 3, Etiquette 2, Expression 4, Intuition 4, Intimidation 1, Linguistics 2, Medicine 1, Occult 2, Stealth 1, Subterfuge 2

Backgrounds: Avatar 5, Destiny 5

Spheres: Entropy 3, Time 3

Willpower: 5



Norna Weaver

Arete: 3

Quintessence: 5

Paradox: 3

Background: The daughter of an eminent surgeon, Norna grew up with all the luxuries money could buy. Her parents invested in the first early signs of remarkable intelligence and creativity, encouraging their child prodigy. Norna mastered Spanish and Latin by the age of eight, and showed promise in a number of artistic pursuits, though her morbid imagery concerned her instructors.

Despite her family's wealth, Norna lacked a normal upbringing. Her mother treated her more like a possession than a loved one, allowing Norna free expression while confining her with overprotectiveness. Her father showed true affection, but the two spent much of their quality time in the emergency ward and research labs of the U.C Medical Center. His death left a huge void in her life.

Norna suffers from two inexplicable phenomena: flashes of precognition, which too often come true and hint at a terrible fate that looms before her; and a charmed life despite the frequent accidents that follow her. She has no conscious control over her magickal talents and does not want to consider their implications.

Image: A 15-year-old girl with black hair drawn back severely from a high forehead. Her eyes are dark and knowing; those who meet her stare invariably feel defiled, as if she knows their innermost feelings and thoughts. Norna tends to dress in bulky skirts, stockings, and soft shoes — all black.

Roleplaying Hints: Continually stare at people, but rarely speak. What you do say should often be weird and disturbing. Defy orders with sarcasm and smart-ass comments; if the authority figure fails to cave in easily, comply with a resentful glance.

Madame Cleo Verthank

Background: Around the turn of the 14th century, an especially bright star pierced the night sky like a silver sword. Under this omen, Cleo Verthank was born to a gypsy couple in a northern region of the Holy Roman Empire. Her Mentors were gypsy seers, mad hermits, and a few sorcerers attached to the last great Covenant, Doissetep. Over the years Verthank has advised many mages, cabals and Chantries.

Exactly 76 years after her birth, another bright star hung above the earth. Verthank reflected that this celestial blade was poised as if to deliver the killing blow. Indeed, the Mythic Age was in full decline. Yet she had foreseen a time when, long after the abandoning of vulgar magick, a Mythic Renaissance would return in force. So Madame Cleo gathered up her belongings, filled her Life Pattern with Quintessence, and stepped out of history.

After each giant leap forward in time, Verthank paused just long enough to battle Paradox and plot her temporal route. She is presently on an extended layover. Because of



her many temporal leaps, Madame Cleo suffers from a Paradox Flaw: everyone within 13 feet of her slips though time more quickly than usual; each minute becomes one hour.

Aside from her awesome powers of time travel and divination, Madame Cleo has little magickal talent — certainly nothing approaching combat ability. Thus, statistics are neither provided nor needed — Verthank is a plot device, not a foe. As a servant of the Oracles of Time, her charge is to warn the mages and Norna about their fates. She is unaware of the Oracles' master plan (they, in fact, want Norna to survive at any cost), but suspects that the mages' destiny will affect reality itself.

Image: Madame Cleo is an ancient, heavysset woman. Her swarthy skin is wrinkled and sagging. Dark pouches underscore her eyes. She has but two remaining teeth. A few locks of gray hair protrude from beneath a dirty scarf. Madame Cleo wears colorful, loose-fitting garb and pounds of cheap jewelry.

Roleplaying Hints: As often as possible, speak in the future tense; when this confuses players, repeat in the correct tense. To get your point across, grab someone's hand and speak directly into her face. Act eccentric, cackling for no apparent reason. Become very serious when discussing fate.

The Technocracy

Dr. Ken Himiitsu

Essence: Pattern

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Visionary

Convention: Progenitors

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 5, Wits 2

Abilities: Brawl 3, Computer 3, Culture 2, Intimidation 2, Law 1, Leadership 4, Medicine 4, Research 4, Science 4, Technology 5,

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Influence 3, Node 5

Spheres: Life 5, Prime 4, Matter 4, Mind 1

Willpower: 10

Arete: 5

Quintessence: 14

Paradox: 6 (Because of accumulated Paradox, Himiitsu's hair grows at a rapid rate. His facial hair is unaffected.)

Background: To Sleepers, Dr. Himiitsu is head of the U.C. Medical Center and a competent medical scientist, but nothing more. He is actually a Progenitor mage. The future of San Francisco rests in his hands.

At work, Dr. Himiitsu maintains the guise of popular friend and colleague. He stops to talk with medical students and research assistants, and exchange passing pleasantries with those who imagine they have something important to do. As he does so, however, Himiitsu continually remembers his duties as head of the Construct. His responsibilities

as director of the U.C. Medical Center pale in comparison to these other duties.

Himiitsu is not an evil man; he bears a real concern for the Sleepers, and the impending fate of San Francisco weighs heavily on him. The Technocracy has charged him with stabilizing the city, and he takes his post seriously. To accomplish his task, he has recruited Merika Seth, whose creativity, computer skill and knowledge of Spirit are critical to success. Support for his task has been minimal; many among the Technocracy refuse to believe that Cob is in serious danger.

Dr. Himiitsu learned of Norna Weaver through association with her father, also an M.D. at the Medical Center. Noticing her powerful Avatar, he maneuvered closer to Dr. Weaver to keep an eye on Norna. He still regrets having to kill his colleague and will avoid violence if possible. He can, however, be quite ruthless if need be.

Image: Dr. Ken Himiitsu resembles a sumo wrestler. He stands over six feet tall and weighs half a ton. Each morning, he shaves his head bald; by the end of the day, his hair has grown to a half-inch crew cut (a Paradox effect). When not covered by a lab coat, he wears a steel-gray sports jacket, which has been custom-tailored to his massive physique.

Roleplaying Hints: You are clever and charismatic when you want to be, intimidating and harsh when your time or temper is short. You tend to overlook trivial details, but when striving for a goal, your will, endurance and physical size make you a juggernaut.

Cabal: In mundane guise, Dr. Himiitsu is Director of the U.C. Medical Center. His real duty lies in heading GeneTech Lab. Many of the Technomancers do not take his plan seriously, and he aches to prove them all wrong.

Merika Seth

Essence: Pattern

Nature: Director

Demeanor: Avant-Garde

Tradition: Orphan, trained by and then defecting from the Virtual Adepts.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 5, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 1

Abilities: Alertness 2, Awareness 1, Computer 3, Cosmology 3, Culture 2, Drive 1, Etiquette 1, Enigmas 2, Expression 4, Intuition 2, Investigation 1, Leadership 2, Linguistics 2, Occult 1, Science 2, Streetwise 2, Technology 2

Backgrounds: Influence 3, Mentor 2, Talisman 4

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

Willpower: 8

Arete: 4

Quintessence: 10



Paradox: 0

Background: Merika's past is vague and will probably remain so. Her real life began when she discovered that magick existed. Through a BBS, she found her first Mentor, a Virtual Adept calling himself Ramses (or RAM). After gaining all that she could from him, Merika linked up with the all-powerful Technocracy. Since then, she has taken every opportunity to achieve power over Sleepers, and influence among those who really matter — other mages.

Unlike many Virtual Adepts, Merika is not a hacker, computer geek, or video gamer. She is a skilled programmer and lives for manipulating computer technology. Merika either has enough sense to oscillate between real and virtual reality or is simply too shallow to maintain interest in any one topic for long. She could never be a full-time mage. Her faddishness had led to a number of mundane cover occupations, all of them glamorous.

Most recently, she has worked as meteorologist for KWLF. Strangely enough, her forecasts have never been wrong. Unbeknownst to Sleepers and many mages alike, Merika Seth does not report the weather; she creates it. Her weather forecast (quite literally "fore cast") workstation is a sophisticated vehicle for coincidental magick.

Merika Seth is the third Wyrd Sister (or Sister of Fate) in *Loom of Fate*. Norna Weaver is a prisoner of destiny. Madame Cleo Verthank can only report on the possible course of future events. Merika Seth symbolizes the power of Free Will over Fate, showing how a seeming observer can influence her world.

Image: Merika appears to be of Eastern origin; but whether the Near or Far East is difficult to say. She combines the best features of a half-dozen different racial groups

— smooth, tanned skin; golden brown irises flashing from almond-shaped eyes; dark, glossy hair worn stylishly short. Overall, she looks darkly exotic, mysteriously erotic.

Merika dresses in the latest fashions. Strapless blouses and open-backed dresses reveal ideogram-tattoos stitched into her back and shoulders. (A roll of Intelligence + Dream, difficulty 8, reveal these to be the technobabble of pattern spiders.) She always wears a pyramid-shaped amulet (actually a Talisman, see below).

Roleplaying Hints: You are a poor liar, so don't bother trying. Soften the truth if necessary. During conversation, look directly at players for a few seconds before speaking in a husky whisper. When disapproving, habitually cross arms lightly across your chest.

You learn the latest gossip on any topic, then lose interest quickly. Lines of questioning, responsibilities and current lovers all eventually fall by the wayside, particularly if you have lost control over them.

Cabal: Merika is a traitor among traitors. Turning her back on Virtual Adepts, she allied with the very power bloc from which that Tradition first defected — the Technocracy. She works closely with Dr. Himiitsu's Progenitors in an effort to restore San Francisco's pattern spider. In exchange for this help, she may draw from the Quintessential spillover near the Wylderness.

Talisman: Merika wears a pyramid-shaped Talisman crafted from unknown metal; she refers to it affectionately as "my personal pyramid power." This charm currently holds 10 Tass of Quintessence. The first of two potent effects increases the wearer's healing capacity (Life 3). The second transforms the entire body into an extradimensional alloy, effectively raising Strength and Stamina by one point per success while decreasing her Dexterity and Appearance by a like amount (Life 4, Matter 4) This effect is vulgar in the extreme and lasts for a maximum of one hour.

Reverend John Williams

Essence: Dynamic

Nature: Conformist

Demeanor: Martyr

Tradition: Celestial Chorus defector

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 2, Computer 1, Cosmology 1, Culture 4, Drive 1, Enigmas 2, Etiquette 2, Expression 2, Leadership 2, Linguistics 1, Research 2, Science 2

Backgrounds: Avatar 2, Influence 3

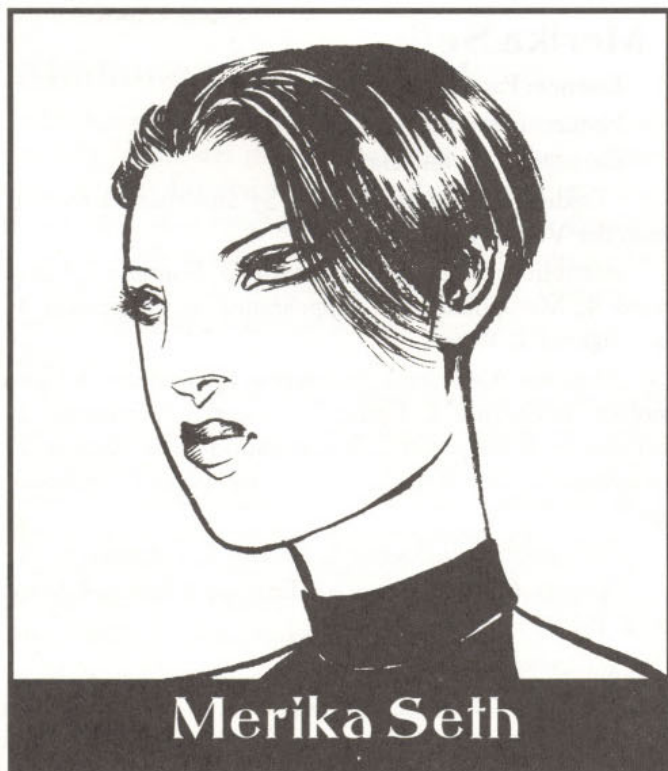
Spheres: Life 2, Prime 2, Spirit 2

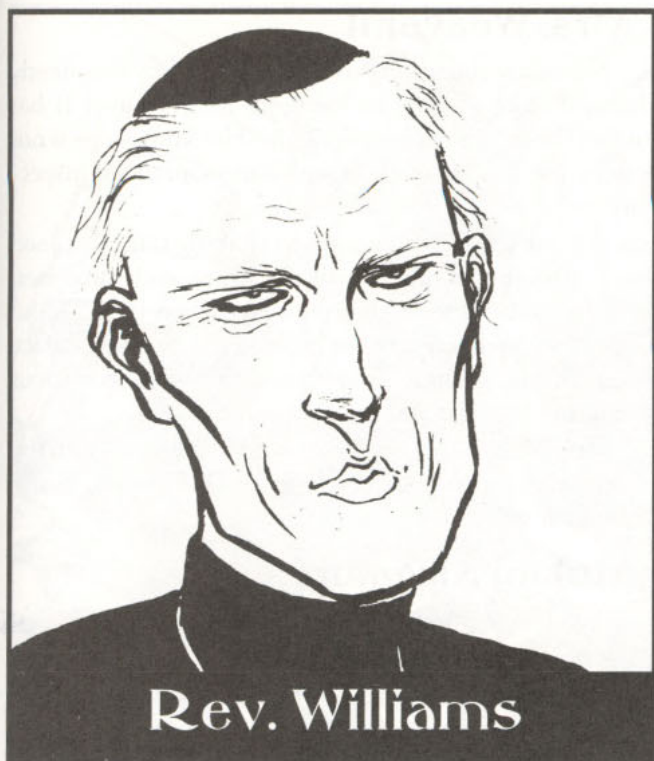
Willpower: 5

Arete: 2

Quintessence: 2

Paradox: 2





Rev. Williams

Background: John Williams lacked attention as a boy. Because of his small size, team captains literally overlooked him when picking players for sports. Because of his average ability in academics, teachers paid him neither praise nor concern. He was the middle child in a family of seven.

So he threw himself into religion. Not only was he finally noticed by his pious parents, but he caught the attention of some One even more significant. Whether through divine right or hard work, John Williams quickly rose to the rank of bishop and was assigned a diocese in San Francisco. Imagine his pleasure upon discovering that he was being considered for a higher hierarchy — induction into the Celestial Chorus! He has served the One faithfully for 10 years.

Last year, Dr. Himiitsu attempted to transform Williams into a pattern spider. The failed experiment corrupted his body, broke his mind and warped his Avatar. Now, his mind slips between the spirit and material worlds. Though Reverend Williams is still well liked, his associates have begun to wonder about his sanity.

Image: A small man in his early 50s, with sharp features and wispy white hair. During ceremonies and in public, he appears in full clerical dress, from miter to sanctuary slippers. Beneath these vestments is proof of his corruption: the remnants of Himiitsu's failed experiment. Stiff black hairs cover his torso and the upper portions of each limb. Four vestigial arthropod legs spout from his sides, and dozens of milky, multifaceted eyes cover his chest.

Roleplaying Hints: Usually calm, friendly but firm, with an air of authority. Panic when things do not go as planned. You have difficulty making decisions or taking action by yourself. Therefore, call for "backup" — spirits or

Men in Black — at the least hesitation. Fanatical to begin with, and brainwashed to boot, you would martyr yourself for the good of Cob and the messengers of His Word (the Technocracy). Make frequent pseudo-Biblical references; when angry, warp these prayers with arachnid imagery.

Cabal: Reverend Williams broke with the Chorus after his transformation. Now he forms the third major player in Dr. Himiitsu's bid for control.

Frey and Friia

Essence: Pattern

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Visionary

Convention: Progenitors

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Abilities: Athletics 1, Computer 2, Culture 3, Expression 3, Linguistics 1, Medicine 4, Occult 3, Research 2, Science 3, Subterfuge 1, Technology 2

Backgrounds: Arcane 1, Destiny 2, Mentor 2

Spheres: Life 2, Mind 2, Prime 2

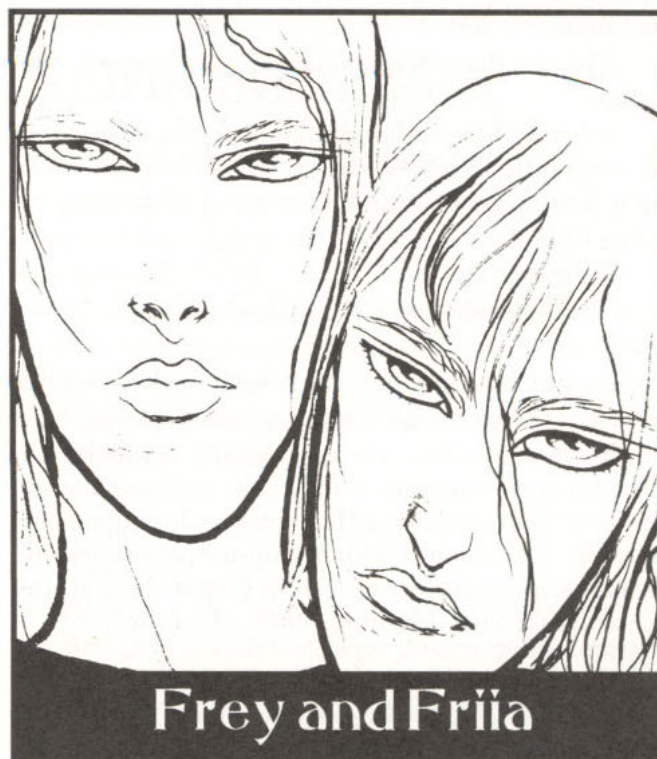
Willpower: 5

Arete: 2

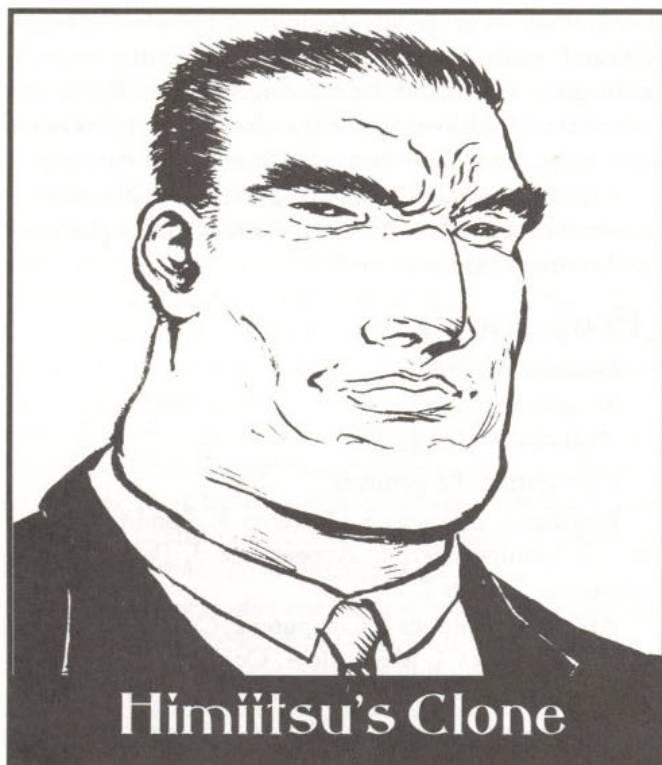
Quintessence: 0

Paradox: 0

Background: Frey and his sister Friia are obvious twins, fine specimens of Scandinavian stock: tall and fair, with long, white-blond hair and pale blue eyes. They claim to be identical twins, though any geneticist would declare this impossible. They speak Swedish to one another.



Frey and Friia



Himiitsu's Clone

These Progenitors are charged with conditioning newly grown clones. Dedicated to their job, they rarely leave the lab. Frey and Friia managed to survive the Marauder attack through their loyalty to one another and nobody else.

Progenitor Clones

Dr. Himiitsu's Clone

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Abilities: Brawl 4, Intimidation 2, Leadership 1, Subterfuge 2

Spheres: None, although this clone was treated with an experimental process that accelerates regeneration, equivalent to Rank Three Life magick (roll Stamina instead of Arete).

Willpower: 3

Health Levels: OK, OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -2, -5, Terminated

Innate Countermagick: All Progenitor clones receive two dice of countermagick versus magickal attack.

Background: This clone physically resembles Dr. Himiitsu in most respects. Only a close colleague has any chance of being suspicious (Perception + Intuition [difficulty 8]). Conditioned with Himiitsu's personality and memories, it knows everything about Project: Reincarnate. See above for a full description of Dr. Himiitsu.

Mrs. Weaver II

Norna's real mother has been replaced by this nearly identical clone. Since her creation, Mrs. Weaver II has studied the details of Norna's family. Her knowledge is not perfect, but good enough to withstand superficial inspection.

A Rank One Life effect shows that she is in very good shape, though not unnaturally so. Three such successes, however, indicate that she has never given birth! Mind magicks are ineffective when probing emotions or surface thoughts, but a Rank Three probe of the subconscious reveals her true agenda.

Mrs. Weaver II exists to put Norna at ease. When the little prodigy sleeps, she will telephone Dr. Himiitsu. Soon, a black car will arrive....

Mutant Alligators

Attributes: Strength 7, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 3, Brawl 5, Stealth 3

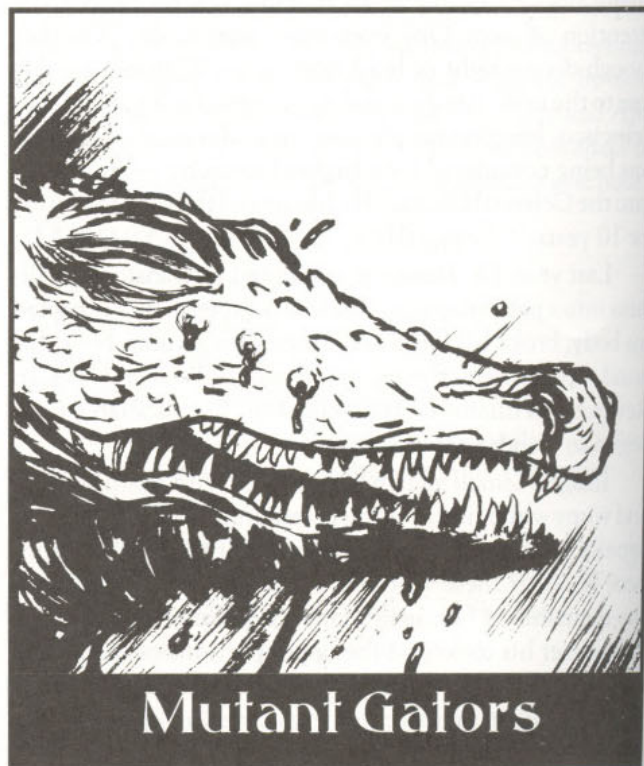
Willpower: 4

Health Levels: OK (x3), -1 (x4), -3 (x4), Incapacitated

Attack: Bite (difficulty 5; Strength + 3 damage)

Armor: Thick skin adds three dice to soak rolls.

Innate Countermagick: As Progenitor clones, these alligators receive two dice of countermagick versus magickal attack.



Mutant Gators



Marauder Cycle Gang

The Marauders

Marauder Cycle Gang

Essence: Dynamic

Nature: Rebel

Demeanor: Deviant

Tradition: Marauders

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 1, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1, Perception 1, Intelligence 2, Wits 5

Abilities: Awareness 3, Brawl 2, Cosmology 3, Dodge 5, Drive 5, Enigmas 4, Intuition 5, Melee 3, Survival 1, Technology 1

Backgrounds: Arcane 5, Dream 5

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Spirit 3

Willpower: 3

Arete: 3

Quintessence: 0

Paradox: 0

Background: The tug-of-war between Cob's Pattern Web and the underlying Wylderness has already snapped more than one thread of reality. The Gauntlet loosens its grip on San Francisco.

Taking advantage of this fact, Marauders have slipped through from the Umbra. They believe that by breaking down reality, they can create a permanent Portal between Earth and the Near Umbra. This possibility provokes them into declaring all-out war with the Technocracy and Cob.

These Marauders are alien to our reality. They cannot communicate with Gaia's children and have trouble ad-

justing to the senses humans take for granted. Mostly, they operate intuitively or by discerning auras.

Image: These Marauders appear as a motorcycle gang. No two mages or cycles look alike. One fur-clad Marauder rides a huge, black Harley with a horned skull between the handlebars (Intelligence + Science, difficulty 6; the skull is from no earthly beast).

Another guides a sleek, humming cycle. This one wears a leather space suit with a gas-mask attachment. Most disturbing is the helmet's slit visor; instead of eyes, an oscillating crimson laser scans the streets.

A third Marauder brandishes a serrated axe and horned bow, shouting gibberish from atop a steppe pony. The mount's plutonium-shod hooves strike blue sparks as it gallops through the streets. This rider is a composite barbarian from nil-history.

Dirt bikes, three-wheelers, and a W.W.II sidecar bike are also represented. Each rider wears a full-face helmet and body-concealing clothing. These Marauders are armed with a variety of swords.

Roleplaying Hints: The Marauders are unknowable. Do not attempt to roleplay one of these creatures — it will ruin their strangeness. When speaking of them, use neutral terms: "the cyclists," "they," "them," even "it." Never say "the Marauders" or "he/she."

The Marauders are unpredictable. Sometimes they act in perfect harmony; other times, their thoughtless violence is just as likely to injure a comrade as an enemy. Use this random factor to challenge your troupe without overpowering them.

Cabal: This gang numbers 13 in the beginning and nine at the end. Through this story, they may appear singly, in small groups, or all together. Unless your troupe decides otherwise, their origins remain unknown.

Spiritual Entities

Cob, Umbrood Preceptor

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6, Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 1, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Culture 1, Dodge 3, Intimidation 2, Intuition 4, Technology 2

Backgrounds: N/A

Spheres: Correspondence 2, Matter 4, Prime 2

Willpower: Formerly 10, now 4

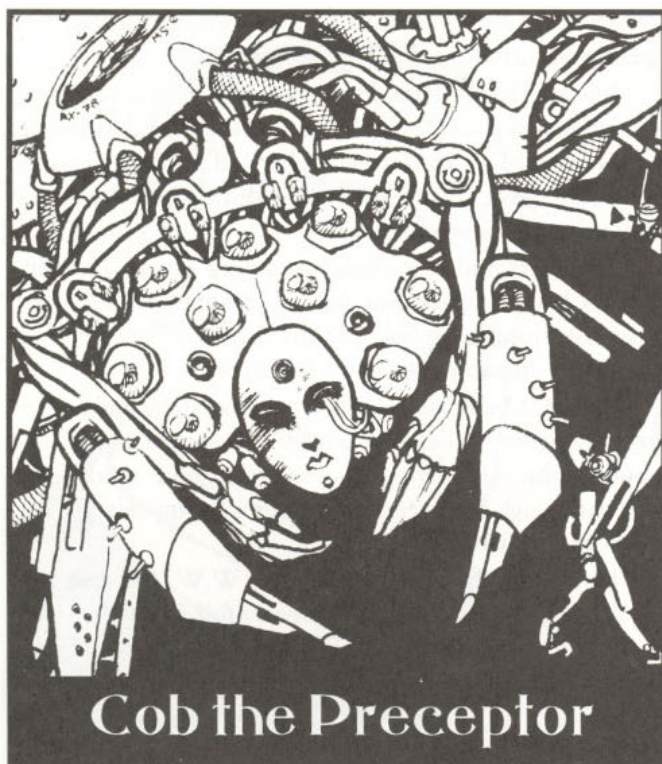
Arete: 6

Quintessence: 20

Paradox: 0

Health Levels: OK, 0, -1, -2, -3, -4, -5, Disrupted

Background: Cob is a unique pattern spider, conjured decades ago by the Technocracy and strengthened since then by the Conventions' magicks. Cob's ties to the city



Cob the Preceptor

have made it far more powerful than most of its kind, but the tug-of-war between Wyld and Pattern has also aged and weakened the spirit. Cob is wise, if single-minded, but beneath its dedication characters may sense its weariness.

Image: While Reverend Williams refers to Cob in male gender and Merika considers Cob female, it is an effectively genderless spirit entity. Cob resembles a monstrous, mechanical "arachnoid." From its abdomen grow eight jointed limbs, each ending in a prehensile gripper. Instead of muscles, they operate under a system of hydraulics. Fluid leaks from rusted joints, stiffening Cob's movement.

Its abdomen is elongated and flexible, like a scorpion's tail, for better manipulation of spinneret. Its metallic skin is dull black and patterned with rivets. Rust shows in spots, and other parts seem melted. Bundles of wiring snake between different body segments, some tangled or cut. Cob's many eyes glow like television static.

By the beginning of this story, Cob has lost cohesion (three fewer dice to all actions). The Marauder raid in Scene Ten accomplishes its goal; wild magick and a scimitar blade disrupt the weakened spirit.

Pattern Spiders, Umbrood Minions

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 1

Abilities: Expression 2, Science 5.

Powers: Physical-Spiritual Ties (Spirit 1), Sense Weakness in Reality (Prime 1), Solidify Reality and Calcify (each Prime 2)

Willpower: 6

Arete: 6

Health Levels: OK, -0, -1, -2, -5, Destroyed

Pattern spiders search the Near Umbra for cracks in Quintessential reality. Upon finding any, they reweave the patterns. As a side effect, pattern spiders can create spiritual objects; each magickal success roll gives the object one Health Level for purposes of durability.

Pattern spiders can also target objects in the material world. Living creatures, for instance, become sluggish and rigid, eventually freezing altogether (apparently covered by a thin layer of calcified stone). This effect resembles the Rank Two Prime effect Rubbing the Bones. Calcified victims may still use mental abilities and magick.

Wyld Things, Umbrood Minions

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Abilities: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 3

Special Abilities: Shapeshift (Entropy 3), Randomize (Entropy 2), Warp Matter (Entropy 3), Mutate (Entropy 4), "Schizo" (Entropy 5).

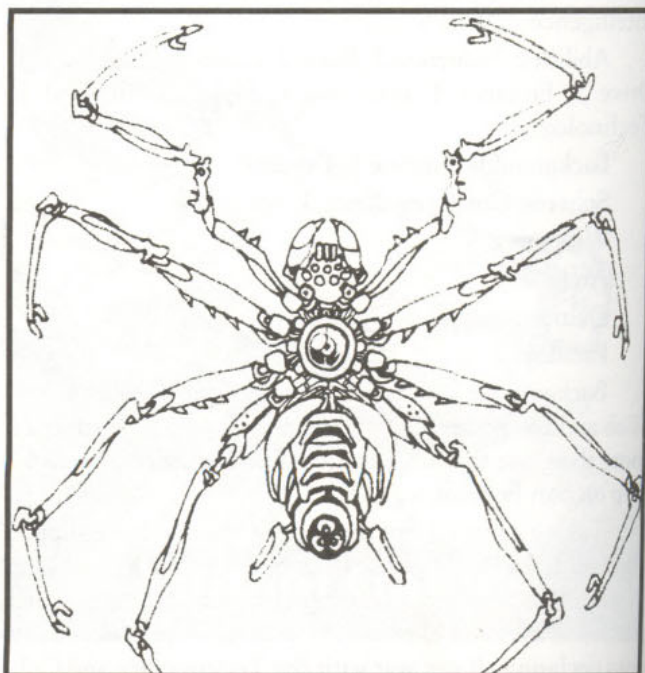
Willpower: 4

Arete: 5

Health Levels: OK, 0 (x3), -3 (x3), Splattered

Background: Neither solid nor liquid, Wyld Things are difficult to describe. Somehow they combine the consistency of protoplasm with the quickness of mercury. These blobs seem about three feet in diameter, though their shifting nature defies measurement.

As agents of chaos and change, Wyld Things create random entropic disruption. They may randomize events, warp inorganic matter (as per "Erode Matter") and mutate living flesh to cause cancerous growths. This latter effect



Pattern Spiders



Wyld Things

causes the loss of four Health Levels per success; it may be resisted by countermagick and Willpower. Wounds are considered aggravated.

Wyld Things' most frightening power is the ability literally to change another's mind. This Entropy effect randomly alters the victim's Nature. The duration of such "schizophrenia" depends on the amount of successes rolled against the target's current Willpower; one day per success, with semi-permanent changes possible if six or more successes are rolled. A botch scrambles the Umbrood's own mind for a similar amount of time.

Spirit of Dr. Weaver

Dr. Weaver appears as a gaunt man with wildly cropped, graying hair and beard. His features are faded and tinged with blue. His voice is soft, sad and somewhat hollow; a slight delay separates each telepathic sound and the movement of his incorporeal lips.

Dr. Weaver has been dead for just over two years. Like all lesser spirits, he manifests only where the Gauntlet is 4 or less. His ghost is intangible, immune to physical harm. Similarly, he cannot interact with the environment. Ignore Physical Attributes and Health Levels, though he loses one Health Level per turn of manifestation; this is caused by Paradox. Lacking a larynx, he communicates directly with others' minds.



Dr. Weaver's Spirit

Appendix Two: The Gift Deck

Earthshaking fire from the center of the earth will cause tremors around the New City. Two great rocks will war for a long time, then Arethusa will redden a new river.

— Michel de Nostradamus, 1556

This fictitious deck is based on the Major Arcana of a real Tarot Deck. Storytellers can utilize an actual deck to play out the fortune-telling scene, corresponding the number of the real card with the Gift Deck number. "IX. The Mage," for instance, matches "IX. The Hermit." Real Tarot cards, regular playing cards, or even die rolls can be used for this reading.

Madame Cleo's card-reading provides background information, clues, and possible aid that the characters may later utilize. Each of the cards provides some hint to the undercurrent of fate that runs throughout the story, and may give perceptive players a glimpse at the overall picture.

Each card also carries a one-time magickal effect, Madame Cleo's gift to the mages fated to assist Norna Weaver. At any point in the story, these cards may be "played" by the character who receives them, thus giving that character a much-needed edge. Whether or not the cards' magick may be evoked after the events of **Loom of Fate** is up to you, but such is not advised.

Performing a Card-Reading

The card-reading in this story uses a simple three-card spread, suitable for a large group of players. You can always

invent variations (such as altered meaning for flipped cards) or adopt real Tarot-reading techniques.

First, have the querent (the subject of the reading) shuffle and cut the deck. Then take the deck and fan it out. The querent chooses three cards, one at a time, with her left hand, laying them down on the table from left to right.

The first card represents the inquirer's past; the second, her present condition; and the third, one of her possible futures. Cross-reference the specific card with its description below. Read off the appropriate interpretation, which varies depending on the card's position — past, present or future. (Note that in this story, the cards do not necessarily apply to individual characters; they may actually reflect a collective fate.)

Have the player mage retain the "Present" card (see *Format* below for an explanation). Return the others to the deck. Repeat the entire process for each character who participates.

If the Storyteller either does not have or does not want to use a Tarot deck, the following systems can substitute:

- A deck of playing cards; Ace to 10 of Hearts represent Cards I to X, Ace to 10 of Spades represent XI to XX, and the Joker fills in for XI.

- Die rolls may serve as well; two dice are rolled and the results are added together. Roll a third die, and if the result is a 1 or a 2, the Gaia card is drawn.

Format

Descriptions of each card follow a set format. This format and a brief explanation are outlined below.

Image: The card itself.

Meaning: Each card has a specific meaning, reference, and symbolism — again, identical to a standard Tarot deck. This explanation will help you use the Gift Deck in other stories.

Past: Only if this card turns up in the "Past" position should you read aloud the interpretation. Following this quote are notes to identify the reference. This usually reveals something of the story's background.

Present: If this card appears in the "Present" position, read aloud the interpretation. This refers to the querent's role in the story. He should keep this card, and may notice (Intelligence + Awareness; difficulty 4) that it is enchanted. At any point in the story, a mage can play his card and reap the benefits described. The card disappears as soon as it is played, and cannot be used again. All increases to Spheres last only one scene, but may temporarily exceed Arete.

Future: Read the interpretation aloud if this card turns up in the "Future" position. Because players are notoriously unpredictable, the notes provide a number of possible references. A Storyteller should manipulate events to fulfill the prophesy in some manner — and then draw attention to this fact.

The Cards

I. The Sleeper

Image: Top view of a bed, sleeper within.

Meaning: Refers to the querent's destiny. More specifically, it

applies to the human half of a mage, his Nature.

Past: "You were once a somnambulist, a sleepwalker. Now Awake to reality, you can never regain that innocence." This reminds the mage of his mortal heritage.

Present: "With knowledge comes power. With power comes responsibility." During this story, the character acts as though he were a Caretaker in addition to his normal Nature. Thus he regains Willpower in two ways. At the story's conclusion, the character may permanently switch to this Nature, if he wishes.

Future: "Ties to the mundane world prove too strong; with this millstone around your neck, you may drown in a stream of fate." This could refer to the character sacrificing Norna to maintain reality. Alternately, you could introduce a Sleeper acquaintance into the story; when she gets into trouble, the mage risks all to save her.

II. The Pure One

Image: A glowing white humanoid set against a starry background.

Meaning: Refers to a mortal's soul, the mage's Avatar. It describes the Essence of enlightenment.

Past: "In a previous life you visited this place to bask in the primordial springs. This was when change was healthy." This refers to the mage's Avatar, which has seen the Wylderness before its stagnation.

Present: "The Pure One seems to stare back at you, does it not? As if trying to explain its wishes. Adopt compatible goals, for two wills are better than one." During this story, the mage regains Willpower by conforming to Essence as well as Nature. Dynamic Avatars reward those who effect change on individuals or society. Avatars of Pattern reward those who maintain the status quo or reinforce patterns. Primordial Avatars reward those who overcome personal problems, such as a fear, prejudice or flaw of Nature. Questing Avatars reward explorers of strange tangents and imaginative goals.

Future: "Conflict is the essence of any meeting between Pattern and Dynamism. A change will lead to stagnation; stability will cause great chaos." This means: If Norna Weaver and her Avatar are transformed into a pattern spider, the structure of reality will remain intact; her safety could result in the unraveling of reality.

III. The Wyld

Image: A swirling, psychedelic mass, gold predominating.

Meaning: Initiative and action, especially as brought about through the Sphere of Prime.

Past: "Fantastic beasts once roamed a coastal Wylderness. Civilization has driven them all into extinction." Self-explanatory.

Present: "At present, your life pattern is strongly woven into the fabric of reality. Your heartbeat echoes the power of the Dragon."

When played, this card grants an extra Sphere of Prime for that scene.

Future: "The unknowable return when you least expect. Though wild at heart and weird on top, they have a method to their madness." This speaks of the Marauder attacks, and hints at their plans for Norna (see Scenes Eight and Ten).

IV. The Weaver

Image: A spider hanging from a silver thread.

Meaning: The Weaver symbolizes stability and willpower.

Past: "The hunter sat in the shadow of civilization, crafting its mesh. The work finished, it flung the net over wild beasts." This refers to Cob and its binding of the Wylderness.

Present: "Remember Penelope and Odysseus of Ithaca. She fended off suitors for 10 long years by weaving, unraveling and reweaving a single cloth. He persevered throughout a perilous voyage to return home to his wife. Both accomplished their goals through patience and determination." By playing this card, the mage regains all lost Willpower.

Future: "You shall confront one who controls the uncontrollable. But remember that even the best-laid plans can go awry." This can refer to Dr. Himiitsu (with his genetic manipulation) or Merika Seth (and her weather control).

V. The Faerie

Image: A pixie sitting cross-legged on a mushroom.

Meaning: Inspiration, imagination, enlightenment, Arete.

Past: "Careful plans failed before the arrival of a young spirit—a source of inspiration." This refers to Dr. Himiitsu's failures before noticing Norna Weaver's powerful Avatar.

Present: "You are the seeker and the finder, a master of inductive reasoning and sudden realization. When all seems lost, wait for inspiration." When the mage plays this card, he gains one point of Arete for a single scene and temporarily escapes the need for one focus (his choice).

Future: "I see a bridge to other places, other times. In this place, people feed off the imagination of others, yet are

drained of their own creativity." This could refer to an art gallery or museum, which you may add to the story.

VI. The Kindred

Image: Two pale figures locked in an embrace, against a green background.

Meaning: Passion and the Sphere of Life.

Past: "The giver of false life has raised soulless husks. These hollow men have chased a Hollow One. These living dead have brought death to life. The blood on this card is still warm." This card links Men in Black with Dr. Himiitsu and hints at the death of Norna's mother.

Present: "Within your body, the four humors are in perfect moderation. Therefore, you empathize with others more easily, and

can recognize their own imbalance." This card increases the

Sphere of Life by one rank.

Future: "Be wary of the womb of man, the spawning ground of false life. Here your emotions will be sorely tested." This refers to the U.C. Medical Center and GeneTech Lab below (Scenes Thirteen and Fourteen, respectively). At the story's climax, mages must choose between Norna and maintaining reality.

VII. The Node

Image: Standing stones against a blue skyline.

Meaning: Triumph, protection by Providence. Nodes are often equated with mystic bridges, and therefore with the Sphere of Correspondence.

Past: "Workings on one level always affect results on another. The ebb and flow of the life-force draw from the will of the lives around it, and they draw from it in return." This relates to the push-and-pull between Dynamism and Pattern that forms the Quintessential nature of San Francisco.

Present: "All things are strung together by threads of cause and effect, sometimes invisible. Pull one and watch the corresponding connections unravel." By playing this card, the mage gains one rank in the Sphere of Correspondence.

Future: "Conflict centers upon a single point. Control of this Node determines who triumphs." The Node to which the card refers is the Wylderness.

VIII. Justice

Image: Its allegory, a woman with scales and a sword.

Meaning: Justice.

Past: "This time-stream was channeled by the imposition of law over freedom—the spread of a jurisdiction which was neither impartial nor balanced." This refers to the Technocracy's hold over the Wylderness.

Present: "When randomness is removed and impartiality introduced, one's abilities become the true measure."

A mage who plays this card removes a level of chance from that scene. This enhances the automatic success rule. Rather than a marginal success, he receives one full success for each die in the Dice Pool equal to or higher than the difficulty.

Future: "Destiny will be decided in a pinnacle of joint law. A tribunal will pass judgment on one, and thus many, but bring justice to none." This passage refers to the Symposium that the Technocracy will hold in the Union Law Office (Scene Nine). There Dr. Himiitsu will gain his colleagues' approval to transform Norna Weaver.

IX. The Mage

Image: A gray-robed old man with staff and lantern.

Meaning: Wisdom, prudence, the Sphere of Mind.

Past: "This city was founded by learned men. These men has a mission, to teach those they deemed ignorant. Sadly, their study of this region helped define it." This refers to the foundation of San Francisco.

Present: "Like the mage, your knowledge is your power. Outthink your enemies. Better yet, second-guess them." This card increases the Sphere of Mind by one rank.

Future: "In a place of study and research will you find the answers you seek." This could refer to the U.C. Medical Center (Scene Thirteen) or GeneTech Lab (Scene Fourteen).

X. The Wheel of Fortune

Image: A purple wheel. The three women hanging from the spokes represent the Norns (or Fates).

Meaning: Destiny, karma, fate. These subjects are intimately linked to the Sphere of Time.

Past: "Your destiny is determined in another time and place, but fulfilled in the material world." This refers to how Quintessence shapes — and is shaped by — human life and perception.

Present: "Your destiny is interwoven with that of others on a vast Loom of Fate. Should you become entangled, only a quick snip will separate you; by tugging away, you might unravel the fabric." By playing this card, the mage gains one rank in the Sphere of Time.

Future: "Beware the Agents of Fortune, masters of the Dynamic." This refers to the Marauder attack in Scene Eight.

XI. Force

Image: An orange lightning bolt.

Meaning: Strength, force.

Past: "Two great rocks have warred for a long time. But primordial forces wear down static pattern." This refers to conflict between the Wyldrerness and Cob's web.

Present: "Feel the almost-imperceptible tremors beneath your feet; sense the lightning in the air. They portend

a time of violent change. Base your actions on these signs." This card increases Forces by one rank.

Future: "This card recalls the prophecies of Nostradamus: 'Earthshaking fires from the center of the earth will cause tremors around the New City.'" One possible future, in which Norna survives, could find San Francisco destroyed by earthquake, fire and riot.

XII. The Haunt

Image: A white ghost rising from a body.

Meaning: Sacrifice, ordeal.

Past: "In the recent past, one mage suffered an ordeal that sacrificed his soul; in the near future, another will be subjected to a similar ordeal, a similar sacrifice." This refers to the failed transformation of Reverend Williams and the proposed attempt on Norna Weaver.

Present: "You can see through the shadow separating idea from reality." When played, this card increases the mage's Sphere of Spirit by one rank.

Future: "Be wary of spirits that cross between worlds, however familiar they may seem. Your future is filled with great sacrifice." The first line refers to either the ghost of Norna's father (appearing in Scene Seven) or other spirits. The second refers once again to the story's climax.

XIII. Death

Image: The Grim Reaper, decapitating a man with his scythe.

Meaning: Death

Past: "One mortal discovered the secret of life; his reward was death." This refers to Dr. Weaver's death at the hands of Dr. Himiitsu after learning of Project: Reincarnate.

Present: "It is not yet your time to die. Still, do not tempt Death." When played, this card restores all the mage's Health Levels.

Future: "I see the dead laid out in orderly rows, as if a formation of soldiers had been struck by a sudden plague. Avoid this place, lest you join them." This refers to Lincoln Cemetery (Scene Seven).

XIV. The Talisman

Image: Some sort of bizarre device.

Meaning: Temperance, economy, moderation. The Sphere of Matter.

Past: "In the past, a humble seer had images drawn so all could see their future." This refers to Madame Cleo's Gift Deck, a minor Talisman created by a fellow mage at Doissetep.

Present: "You are a tool in another's hand. Seek moderation between the worker and his work." This card raises the mage's Sphere of Matter by one rank.

Future: "A talisman lies within your grasp." This hints at the enchanted nature of the Gift Deck.

XV. The Wurm

Image: A black snake or dragon.

Meaning: Disease, great strength. Refers to a character's attributes.

Past: "Your enemy fell from grace and was bound by chains of material folly. Yet this thrall became Master. Otherwise formidable, its weakness lay in a lack of spirituality." By referring to the Technocracy's rise to power, these lines identify the mages' enemy.

Present: "As Sword of Vengeance, you must fight the many evils of this world. Strike quickly, strongly and relentlessly." When played, this card raises one of the mage's Attributes to 5 for a single scene.

Future: "You will come to a prison where the First Horseman suffers continual torture. The jailer even now does battle with the Fourth." These lines refer to the U.C. Medical Center (where disease is combated), and to Dr. Himiitsu (a Master of Life). Scene Thirteen describes this setting.

XVI. The Dark Tower

Image: A crumbling, black tower.

Meaning: Ruin, deception. The Sphere of Entropy.

Past: "After much strife, one army triumphed. A multitude of towers became prison to the vanquished, who were soon forgotten." San Francisco imprisoned the Wylderness. Most Technomancers are ignorant of its existence.

Present: "You are like Nidhogg, the dragon gnawing on the roots of the World Tree Yggdrasil. Hidden from sight, you topple the greatest of structures." This card supplies one rank in the Sphere of Entropy.

Future: "Unforeseen disaster lies hidden upon high. Destruction of the human mind awaits those who pridefully penetrate the sacred mysteries." The first line may refer to Coit Tower on Telegraph Hill (Scene Eleven), or the Union Law Office (Scene Nine). The second indicates a bout of Quiet, referred to in the introduction to Chapter Four.

XVII. The Spheres

Image: Nine spheres; blue (Correspondence), purple (Time), red-orange (Force), green (Life), gray (Mind), silver-white (Spirit), gold (Prime), black (Entropy), and brown (Matter).

Meaning: Hope, faith, truth revealed. The magick of Spheres.

Past: "Just as heavenly bodies move perpetually across the sky, grand plans and weighty magicks were recently set in motion; they may be nigh impossible to stop." This refers to the designs of Dr. Himiitsu and the Technocracy.

Present: "Though out of your depth, you may still succeed by trusting in greater powers." When played, this

card subtracts one from the difficulty of all magick tests for one scene.

Future: "Someone will soon trust the traitor. Another will betray the believer. But this betrayal will lead to hope renewed." Both Reverend Williams and Merika Seth are traitors to their calling. Norna's trust in Williams and the clone of her mother both lead to her betrayal. Still, if she embraces her fate at the end of the story, Norna becomes a vehicle of hope for the entire city.

XVIII. The Garou

Image: A man and a wolf, both howling at the moon.

Meaning: Danger, false friends. A person's demeanor.

Past: "I have seen a wolf in shepherd's clothing. He planned to lead a member of his flock to slaughter." This refers to Reverend Williams and his attempted abduction of Norna.

Present: "You seem to get under everyone's skin, and see the nature of the beast within." From now until the end of the story, the mage can detect another's inner Nature with a Wits + Subterfuge roll (difficulty 7). By changing his own Demeanor to match, he can better relate; lower the difficulty of Social rolls by the number of successes attained.

Future: "Danger lurks in the most unlikely places. A false friend will prove one's downfall." This could refer to a number of things: Dr. Himiitsu's overtures of friendship (Scene Eleven); the character's sacrifice of Norna Weaver; or some other false friend. It could also refer to the Garou caern that safeguards the Cataclysm.

XIX. The Mummy

Image: A mummy before a pyramid, sun above.

Meaning: Marriage, happiness, wealth, those Back-grounds that tie a mage to the mundane world.

Past: "Arranged by Fate herself, two parties entered into a marriage of convenience. Both prospered." This refers to Cob and the Technomancers.

Present: "Though many travel toward a similar destination, you must serve as guide." Once dealt this card, the mage immediately gains Destiny 1 (or raises an already existing Destiny by 1). This lasts until he fulfills his fate by the story's conclusion.

Future: "An old acquaintance, long forgotten, will return to aid you. A new friend, recently recognized, will propose a happy union." The Storyteller is on his own with this one. She should introduce a significant non-player character into the story — perhaps an Ally, Mentor, or mundane relation. The second line could refer to a relationship or business deal, or to a sudden savior mage from the House of Quodosch. Again, the exact meaning lies within the Storyteller's domain.

XX. The Ascension

Image: Butterfly leaving a cocoon, caterpillar nearby. Ascension.

Past: "One has undergone a transformation, a change for the worse imperiling the evolution of his soul." This refers to Reverend Williams' corruption.

Present: "This card mirrors your soul. Listen to that inner voice for guidance, for enlightenment." Sometime after the card-reading, the mage's Avatar contacts him. Even if the mage lacks enough experience to raise Arete, the Seeking can begin immediately. There are two hitches, however. First, each Avatar has its own agenda: Dynamic Avatars hope to release the Wylderness; Avatars of Pattern Essence try to protect Cob and its Pattern Web; Primordial Avatars want Norna to survive at all costs; Questing Avatars insist upon watching and learning rather than taking action. Second, the Seeking must continue into other stories until the mage reaches further enlightenment.

Future: "The future holds great change, for an individual as well as the world. The nature of this transformation is unclear." This could refer to Norna Weaver, the unraveling of reality in San Francisco, or even the Ascension to which Weaver may guide San Francisco.

XXI. Gaia

Image: The globe; other planets revolve around it.

Meaning: Success, harmony, attainment. Quintessence.

Past: "Mystic beings were once attracted to the Wylderness, like bees buzzing about a garden, like wolves circling prey, like ravens wheeling above carrion." This describes the Wylderness before being smothered by the Technocrats.

Present: "This card represents a portion of the horde which lies buried beneath the ground, guarded by a many-headed hydra. You are charged with its recovery." This card stores five Quintessence, which the mage can use at any time.

Future: "Through harmony shall you attain success." Is this the harmony of Ascension, the Path that Weaver may follow if Norna embraces her fate? Or is it the spirit of cooperation between the players, which might lead them to succeed? Perhaps the success here refers to Free Will, the untying of the binding threads of destiny.

SAN FRANCISCO

One Mile

SAN FRANCISCO BAY

Fisherman's Wharf

Hyde Street Pier

Lombard St.
The Embarcadero
Telegraph Hill
Grace Cathedral
Chinatown

LINCOLN CEMETERY

Lake St.

Park Presidio Blvd.

Lincoln Blvd.

Divisadero St.

Sacramento St.

Hyde St.

California Union Square
Taylor

Market St.

Mission St.

Fulton St.

GOLDEN GATE PARK

Clarendon Ave.

Weaver Residence

7th Ave.

U. C. Medical Center

Van Ness Ave.

Sunset Blvd.

Great Highway

Ocean Beach

PACIFIC OCEAN

Third St.

280

20th St.

101

Army St.

Dolores St.

Castro St.

Mission Dolores

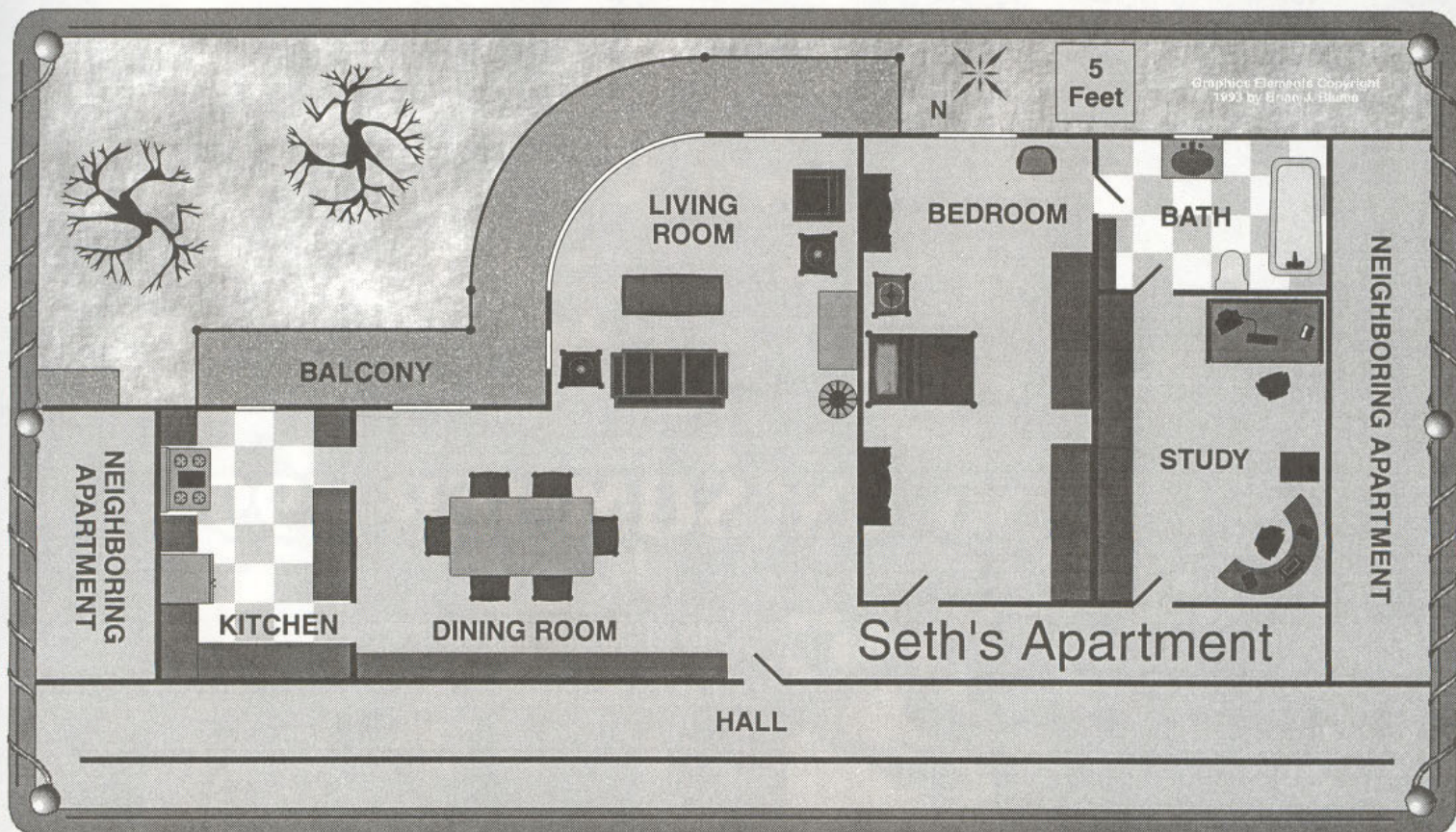
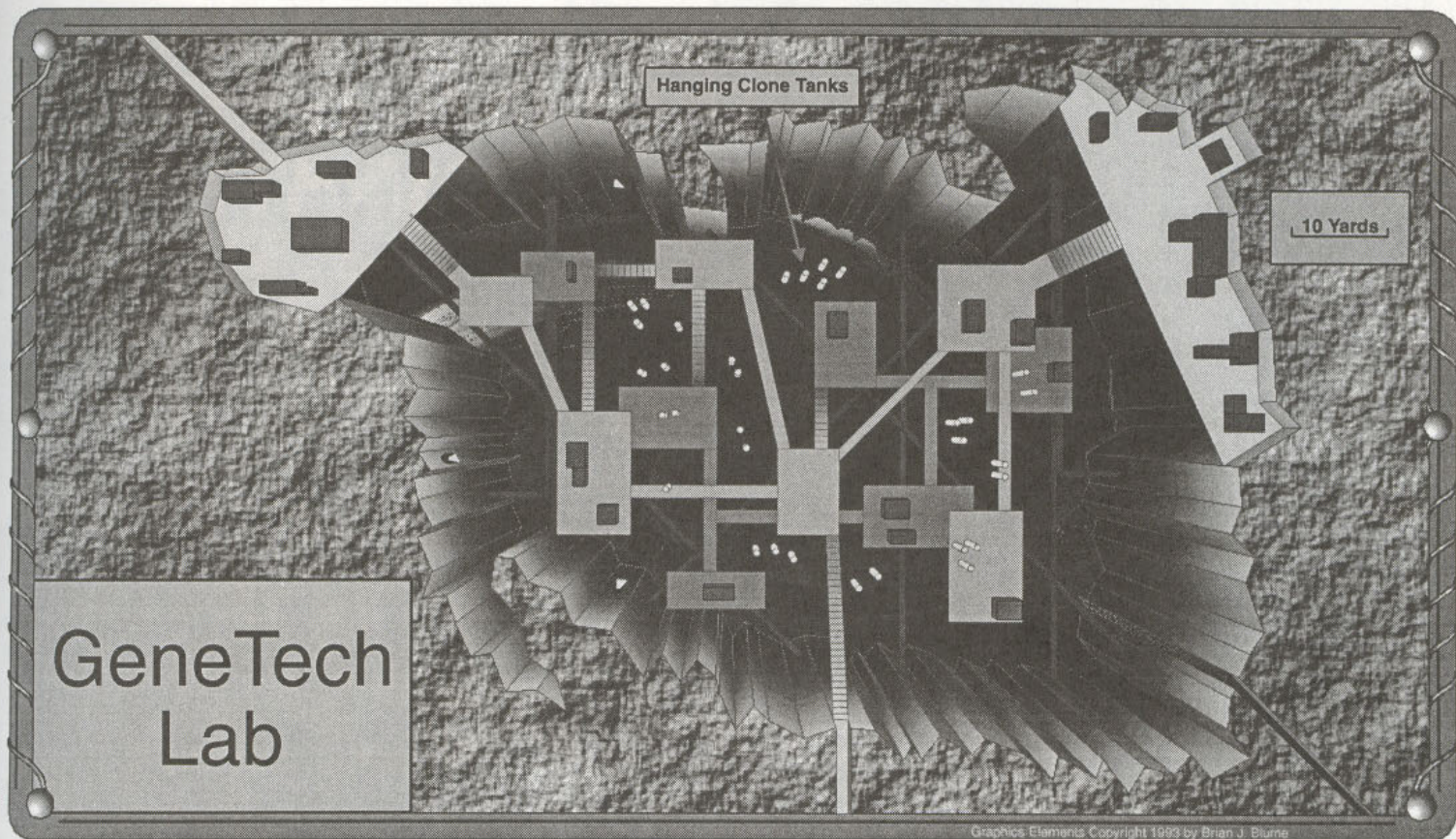
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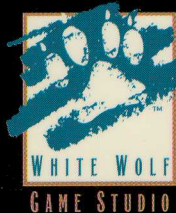
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