

ZODIAC RING

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a Lame Mage Production
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Introduction

The Zodiac Ring is a cosmic artifact linked to the astrological pattern that guides the destiny of every person born. It was recently unearthed by the magician Octavius Erasmus, who had sought after it for decades. With the Ring at last in his possession, Erasmus would find those individuals who had within them the potential to become living embodiments of the Zodiac signs. Once united, these twelve Zodiac avatars would fulfill an ancient prophecy and unlock the future of humanity.

Or so he planned. After awakening himself as the avatar of Pisces, Erasmus's first recruit was the small-time crook Sammy Jeffries, the avatar of Aries. Jeffries recognized a golden opportunity when it came knocking on his door. When the time was right, he betrayed Erasmus and took the Ring for himself. Now Aries is awakening the other Zodiac avatars with himself as the leader, and with no concern for the mayhem he causes along the way.

The would-be Zodiac avatars are normal people scattered around the world. They are unaware of their importance or the cosmic drama that is about to overtake them, ordinary people whose lives will soon change forever as they are transformed into distant and inhuman vessels of the celestial Zodiac.

Some of them may be people near and dear to the heroes.

Some of them may be among the heroes themselves.

But although Aries holds the Ring now, he may not be the last avatar to decide that the fate of the Zodiac would be better off in his own hands, leading to a conflict that could plunge the Zodiac and those around them into a bitter civil war...

The material in **Zodiac Ring** can be run as a few short adventures or a globe-trotting mini-campaign, with heroes drawn into the unfolding cosmic events. An entire campaign can be centered around the successive generations of Zodiac characters and the battle to control the Ring and fulfill the Prophecy.

The Zodiac Ring itself is a powerful dramatic tool, confronting the heroes with normal people transformed both physically and mentally into superhuman entities. The scenario will have even greater personal impact if the people being transformed are friends or allies of the heroes, or even the player characters themselves.

Section 1 (Concept) explains the nature of the Zodiac and the avatars, the Prophecy, and the powers of the Zodiac Ring.

Section 2 (Avatars) includes twelve NPC avatars representing all the signs of the Zodiac, and describes how you can tailor the scenario by replacing the people awakened as Zodiac avatars with NPCs from your own game, or even the player characters themselves. It also includes guidelines for designing additional avatars and options for changing people back to normal.

Section 3 (Scenarios) covers everything else you need to run the game. Multiple scenario outlines are provided to let you choose the kind of game you want, anywhere from a single session to a full campaign. Two primary scenario arcs are included, **Zodiac Rising** and **War of the Zodiac**, along with likely side events. Important **Revelations** are outlined to help you control the flow of the game, and each action scene includes detailed **Shticks** to help you bring

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out classic dramatic moments and breathe life and excitement into the encounters.

Even after these scenarios are played through and the immediate threat ended, the Zodiac Ring can be an ongoing plot device to introduce new generations of superhuman Zodiac avatars, or provide unexpected changes to characters in your campaign.

Note—The characters in this scenario are named after their Zodiac sign, so successive avatars of the same Zodiac sign are given roman numerals in parenthesis to help distinguish them. This is for ease of reference and does not reflect an actual name change—Pisces (II) would be just be called Pisces by other characters.

Zodiac Concept

Across all time and space is spun this unseen skein, a web of fate laid upon us by the celestial powers in ancient day, in charity of our mortal coil. What purpose this pattern, this Zodiac? A wheel eternal, spinning through lifetimes, each child born guided by his appointed sign? Or more? A promise of apotheosis for the chosen few, there to sit in the cosmic heights and guide destiny with one's own hand?

Could this be the inheritance left us, a golden promise when we, their children, prove ourselves ready to take the mantle of deity from them and fulfill their grand design?

If the clues gleaned from my decades of study have truly yielded up the hiding place of the Zodiac Ring, shall history record I was too craven to set my feet upon the path? Shall it be said of Octavius Erasmus “oh, a fine fellow for rummaging through tomes and conjuring the odd shade or two, but not really much of a doer”?

Awakened from eons of slumber, the Avatars of the Zodiac could at last stand together and the prophecy of the Zodiac be complete.

Tomorrow I shall depart.

from the personal writings of Octavius Erasmus, Magician of the Invisible Order, later awakened as the avatar of Pisces

Avatars of the Zodiac

In Zodiac astrology every person is born under one of twelve signs that shapes and guides their life. In some individuals the Zodiac sign has a strong influence, in others it has little influence, if any.

At any time, there are a handful of people in the world who have a deep connection to their Zodiac sign—these people are **potential avatars**. Some potential avatars have personalities that clearly reflect their sign, while others appear ordinary but have the Zodiac bond hidden deep within them. Normally, potential avatars live their lives unaware of their cosmic importance, but in the presence of the Zodiac Ring they can be **awakened** and become a full **Zodiac avatar**, a living embodiment of their Zodiac sign.

Awakened Zodiac avatars undergo a dramatic transformation. They are imbued with the cosmic energy of their sign, granting them extraordinary powers. Even their clothing is transformed into costumes that often have a mythical or classical style reflecting the

Zodiac's ancient roots (such as the jewelry of Virgo or the golden mask of Aries). Some may undergo a radical physical change as part of their powers (such as Capricorn being turned into living rock or Cancer becoming an inhuman man-tank), but most look the same as they did before.

The awakening also drastically polarizes their personality, turning them into an even more extreme, almost inhuman, reflection of their sign. Many awakened avatars display an arrogance and disdain towards normal humans. Though not necessarily evil, it may well be that mortal man cannot suddenly take on the mantle of near godhood without risking hubris.

Avatars remember their past life, but it usually holds little attachment for them—it seems a trivial dream compared to the reality of their new awakening. Even if they fought tooth and nail to avoid being transformed when they were still “normal,” Zodiac avatars welcome their awakening after the fact. They recognize that it is something that was within them all along, something that was part of their nature. They are truly not the people they once were.

Only one avatar can exist for each sign at one time—a new avatar can only be awakened for a particular sign after the current one is destroyed or loses avatar status. Successive avatars for the same sign can be quite different from one another, each representing the sign in a different way.

Partially Awakened Avatars

Some potential avatars experience a partial awakening without coming into contact with the Zodiac Ring. Usually this means acquiring a fraction of the powers of their Zodiac sign and having their personality slowly change to match their sign. Partially awakened avatars will not know the source of their powers and may believe they manifested for other reasons (mutation, lab accident, etc.).

If partially awakened avatars are fully awakened with the Ring, they gain the full powers of their sign but experience no sudden change in personality—they have already unknowingly integrated their Zodiac nature into their normal personality so it is less of a shock. They remain basically the people they were before, but more powerful. Both Aries and Taurus were partially awakened avatars with limited powers before Pisces found them, unaware of the true source of their powers.

The Zodiac Ring

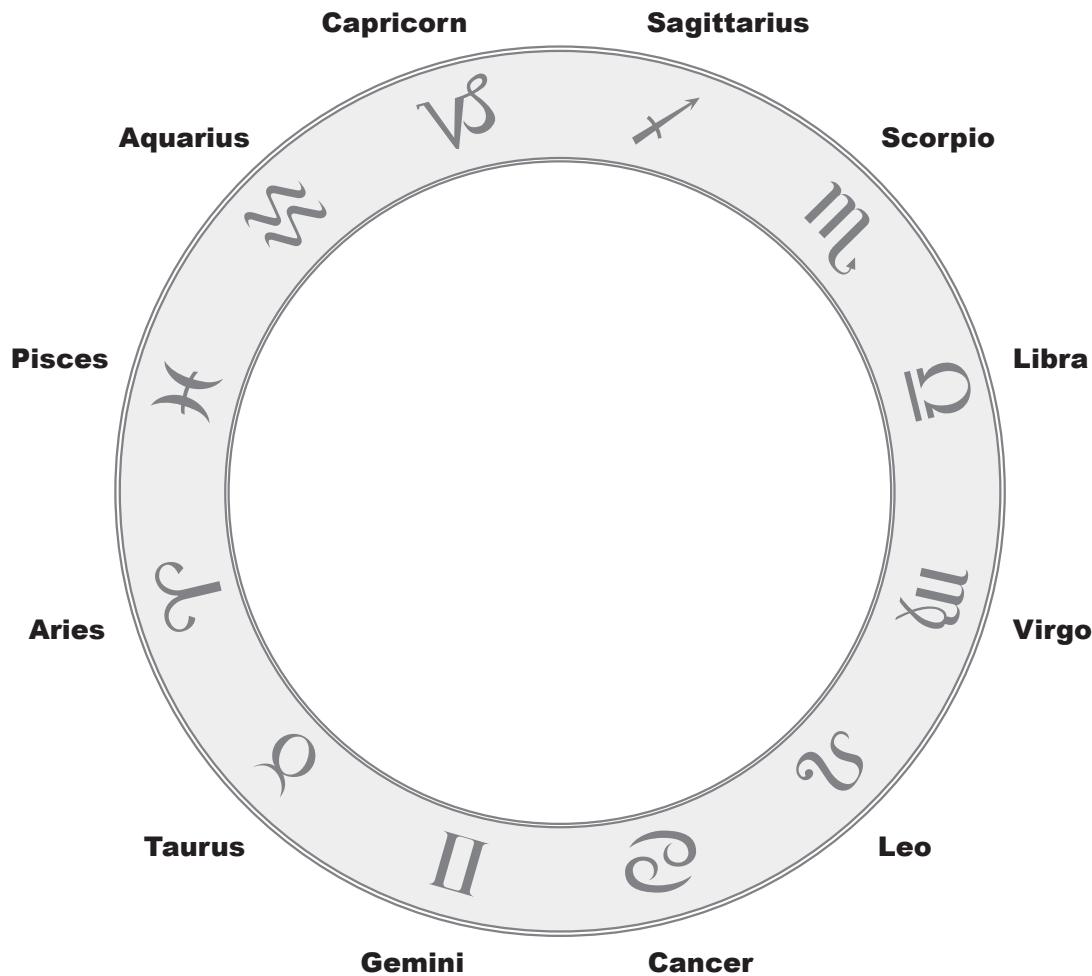
Alice Danvers sighed as she examined the haphazard stacks of books around her. It was going to take her all night to sort this out, but at least someday all her hard work would be appreciated.

A white flash filled the gloomy aisle with a harsh glare. Alice turned, shocked, and stared at the strange figures that had appeared.

“What... what are you... you’re not allowed in here!”

The nearest figure chuckled as he raised a flat metal ring. “Don’t worry, this won’t hurt a bit.” Then silver fire engulfed her, and Alice Danvers was no more.

The Zodiac Ring is a cosmic artifact linked to the astrological Zodiac cycle which is believed to shape the nature and destiny of every person born. The Ring does not merely draw its power from the



Zodiac, it is the physical keystone to the Zodiac's celestial pattern. Its existence keeps the cosmic order of the Zodiac in balance.

Physically, the Ring is a flat metal hoop twelve inches across. Its surface is inscribed with the twelve signs of the Zodiac in their order of progression, along with many markings of an arcane or merely decorative nature. The Ring is clearly very old, the metal dark with age and mottled in places from millennia of exposure.

Damaging the Ring

Its cosmic origin makes the Zodiac Ring extremely difficult to damage or affect with any powers. The strange metal resists attempts to scratch or bend it. Powers like telekinesis or disintegrate are likely to have no affect whatsoever, as the artifact simply "ignores" the forces used against it.

Toughness 20 Impervious

Power Resistance 20 (Nullify, all powers, power resistance). Note that Power Resistance only works when powers are used against the Ring itself. Using Telekinesis to hurl a rock at the Ring works normally, as does lifting the ground the Ring is resting on.

Defense is holder's defense +9 when held (diminutive object).

The Ring can be broken by certain actions of the Zodiac themselves as described in **Splitting the Ring** (page 6). Also see **Variant-Vulnerable Ring** (page 34) for making the Ring easier to destroy.

Powers of the Ring

The Zodiac Ring has three basic powers that can be used by any Zodiac avatar: it can find those connected to the Zodiac including potential avatars and already awakened avatars (Locate), it can transport the Zodiac across great distances (Teleport), and it can awaken potential avatars (Awaken). Any avatar will instinctively understand how to use these powers if they grasp the Ring. Doubtless the Ring has more significant hidden powers that could be tapped by a knowledgeable mystic or someone with cosmic affinity, making it an open-ended plot device for future adventures.

The powers of the Ring determine the pattern of typical encounters with the Zodiac: First the Zodiac lay low somewhere remote using the Ring to locate a new potential avatar. When the potential avatar is found, the Zodiac teleport nearby and track the person down. When they are near enough, they awaken the avatar and teleport away again with their new member.

All of the Zodiac Ring's powers have the Cosmic and Zodiac descriptors.

Locate—The Ring can be used to locate those with a strong affinity for the Zodiac. This includes potential avatars and awakened avatars. Locating someone can be a slow process. An avatar must

commune with the Ring and concentrate on the desired Zodiac sign. Less disciplined users like Aries just let the strongest impulses guide them and do not look for a particular sign at all.

Concentration check (Wisdom if untrained), DC 30 check after one minute. If the first check failed try again after each interval on the time table with +2 for each interval that has passed (DC 28 after 5 minutes, DC 26 after 20 minutes, etc), to a minimum of DC 20 after one day. The searcher can roll again after each day of Concentration until the person is found.

If the search is halted or interrupted the searcher can pick up where they left off, but cannot choose to start again and re-roll the lower time intervals. The searcher can choose to try finding a different Zodiac instead and start a new search, but when they return to finding a Zodiac they were looking for previously the search resumes where they left off. A different searcher using the Ring starts from scratch regardless of who else used the Ring.

Locating awakened avatars is easier than locating potential avatars—reduce the DC by 5.

The time it takes to locate potential avatars determines the time between scenes, so you should feel free to arbitrarily change it to suit your game (for example, making a search take weeks if you want the Zodiac encounters to be interspersed between other adventures in your campaign).

Locating an avatar (potential or awakened) attunes the Ring to that person and prepares the Ring for teleportation. The Ring holder can vaguely sense the distance and direction of the located person but not the actual location, so the destination of a teleport is a surprise until it happens.

The Ring can only locate a person to within about fifty feet, so if a potential avatar is in the middle of a crowd, his or her identity will not be revealed until the awakening process starts. This can add drama to a scene—the Zodiac may think that one person is the potential avatar only to discover it is really someone else entirely.

Teleport—The Ring can transport the Zodiac around the world in the blink of an eye, a useful ability when the next potential avatar might be a thousand miles away. Teleportation can only be used after the Locate power has been used to attune the Ring to a potential or awakened avatar or after a potential avatar has just been awakened. The Ring's teleportation power is limited because it is intended as a plot device to bring the Zodiac to and from scenes, not provide them with unlimited arbitrary transportation.

Teleport 20, only Zodiac avatars or potential avatars are teleported (conscious or not). All must be within 100 foot radius. Long-range teleport only (full round action). Unwilling passengers get a DC 30 Will save to resist. Limited—can only be used after Locate or Awaken.

When a Zodiac avatar (potential or awakened) is located, the Ring can be used to teleport to their vicinity. This can be done immediately or sometime in the future before another search is made. The Zodiac will arrive anywhere from fifty feet to a quarter mile from the target (determine randomly or choose as suits the plot).

The Ring can also be used to teleport after it awakens a potential avatar, providing the Zodiac with a means of escape after they

have accomplished their objective. The Ring needs a short period to assimilate the energy from the awakening, preventing the Zodiac from fleeing immediately. This gives the heroes a shot at them before they teleport away again.

Suggested 3-5 round delay before the Teleport can be used after Awakening. Lengthen or shorten as desired for dramatic effect.

After an awakening, the teleport destination will be a remote but basically neutral locale (a distant mountain range, a forest at the edge of some town, etc). Doubtless these locations have some arcane meaning, but to the average observer they seem random. The holder of the Ring can concentrate and try to choose the destination of a post-awakening teleport.

Concentrate DC 30 to pick Teleport destination

Awaken—Once the Ring is brought near a potential avatar it can be used to awaken them as a full avatar of their Zodiac sign. The holder of the Ring does not know who exactly will be awakened until the process starts, only that the potential avatar is somewhere nearby.

Full round action to try to awaken. Target must be within 50 feet and Ring bearer can sense when this is the case. Bearer makes a DC 15 Concentration check. Success means the awakening starts, failure means the bearer failed to connect with the avatar and nothing happens—retry each round as desired.

Once the awakening starts, a field of brilliant white light surrounds both the bearer of the Ring and the potential avatar—if they are not adjacent separate fields cover each of them, otherwise a single field encompasses them both. This energy is cosmic fire from the heart of the universe. It prevents any interference during the awakening, and anyone leaping to stop the process will be met with a powerful backlash. These energy fields only last until the potential avatar is awakened, at which point it dissipates harmlessly revealing the new Zodiac avatar.

Force Field 20 Impervious

Power Resistance 20 Nullification (stops any outside powers)

Aura Strike 12

Awakening takes one round, starting with the full round action by the bearer of the Ring and finishing before their next initiative count. You can arbitrarily make some awakenings take several rounds if it makes the situation more dramatic. The bearer of the Ring must spend full round actions to continue the awakening process until it is complete, tempting the heroes to try to interrupt the process.

A potential avatar can also be spontaneously awakened by holding the Ring even if no other avatars are present. This is how Octavius Erasmus became Pisces.



Finding the Ring

Any awakened Zodiac avatar can feel the presence of the Ring even over great distances. Even if the Ring is captured by the heroes any remaining Zodiac avatars will be able to track it down. Hiding it somewhere just delays matters, though of course the heroes will not know this.

After a full round make a DC 15 Notice check to sense the direction and distance to the Ring, increasing the DC by 2 for each rank on the Extended Range Table (for example DC 31 when 2,000 miles away).

The Ring remained hidden before Octavius Erasmus uncovered it through his arcane studies because there were no awakened Zodiac avatars to sense it.

Splitting the Ring

While the Ring is practically invulnerable to outside forces, it is bound to the Zodiac avatars and the cosmic Zodiac pattern just as they are bound to it. If two avatars physically try to wrest the Ring away from each other, they may turn the power of the Zodiac against itself and split the Ring into two equal parts.

Both avatars fighting for the Ring will be engulfed in the same cosmic fire that appears during awakening. The Ring remains absolutely immobile, frozen in place, until the contest is resolved. Even though the avatars may appear to be pulling on the Ring, their physical strength makes no difference—this is a contest of the psyche.

Each round, both avatars roll a Will save and compare the results. If either rolls 10 more than the other, the contest is ended and that avatar pulls the Ring away. Otherwise the contest continues and they roll again next round. If both sides rolled 20 or higher on their saves the struggle is too much and the Ring breaks, each avatar recoiling with half of the Ring in their hand.

You can also disregard these rules and simply have the Ring break if it is dramatically appropriate.

The Ring will split evenly with six signs on each half. Each half of the Ring has the powers that the whole Ring had, except each half can only locate or awaken an avatar whose sign is on that half of the Ring. This makes deciding where the break occurs very important to the plot. Consider which avatars are already in play and which remain to be awakened.

Even though each half of the Ring is functional, breaking the Ring will cause cosmic unbalance. There are no immediate visible effects, but anyone sensitive to these matters will be alarmed at the long term consequences to the celestial Zodiac pattern and the countless destinies in its care.

To fix the Ring, two Zodiac avatars must each hold one half of the Ring and then press them back together. The avatars and the Ring will be surrounded in cosmic fire, and they must concentrate to unite the Ring or the amassed energy will explode outward engulfing everyone nearby.

Both avatars make a DC 15 Will save. Success by both avatars means the Ring welds itself back together and is good as new. Failure by either results in a Blast 14 Explosion.

The Prophecy

An ancient prophecy foretells that while the Ring grants powers to the avatars of the Zodiac setting them above ordinary mortals, if all the avatars stand together "they will know no bounds." It was this prophecy the magician Octavius Erasmus (Pisces) intended to fulfill by seeking out the Zodiac avatars and awakening them.

The exact meaning of the prophecy is open to interpretation. Erasmus believed the avatars would become god-like in their power and wisdom, taking their appointed place as the orchestrators of human destiny. Hearing this, Aries understood it to mean "lots of power" and so has continued Pisces's quest for his own benefit.

Aquarius believes that uniting the Zodiac will herald the New Age and bring an era of peace and unity to all the cosmos. This is not so different from what Erasmus envisioned, except Aquarius sees it as a time of brotherhood of all men, not a time for the Zodiac to sit as gods above man.

The other avatars can feel the pull of the Prophecy deep within them, but their expectation of what will happen if it is fulfilled is half instinct and half what they are told. Most expect the Prophecy will give them some unfathomable power because that is exactly what they want it to give them.

Whether the prophecy has any literal meaning beyond the fact that the Zodiac would benefit from working together is up to you (see **Fulfilling the Prophecy**, page 34).





Zodiac Avatars

Personalizing Avatars

“Anne Marie?!? No... it can’t be!”

“Anne Marie is no more. I am Virgo!”

The Zodiac Ring scenarios can be played out using the avatars described below, but you are encouraged to exchange some of the people who will be awakened for NPCs who are already in the game. This ups the role-playing stakes and makes the scenario much more personal. It is one thing to see a random citizen get superhuman powers, but it is another to have your fiance change into a distant and inhuman goddess before your eyes.

Even if you are playing Zodiac Ring with brand new heroes, you can quickly establish relevant NPCs before they are transformed. Ideally you would introduce the NPC in a scene as early as possible before the scene where they are awakened. This makes the NPC more real than just trotting them out to be immediately transformed by the Ring. A good trick is to introduce an NPC as a complication interfering with the hero getting to the scene (for example, hero forced to break date with fiance to rush to the crisis at City Hall). Since the NPC has no connection to the action, the players will believe the NPC was only introduced to provide an introductory obstacle, never suspecting that you are really laying the groundwork to have the NPC awakened as an avatar in a later scene.

Some potential avatars may be adversaries of the heroes instead of allies. Maybe it is a rabid reporter with a vendetta against the heroes who gets awakened, or a sleazy lawyer that has kept criminals the heroes busted out of jail. The players might be overjoyed at this opportunity to take their aggressions out against a frustrating adversary who they could not fight directly before.

At most only a few potential avatars should be known to the heroes, and probably no more than one with a close relationship. More is too improbable, even for the coincidence ripe superhero genre—it will make the heroes wonder if there is some reason why the Zodiac is centered around them.

Player Characters as Avatars

Aries’s face was suffused with glee. Behind him the Crusaders lay battered and bruised, powerless to interfere as he raised the Zodiac Ring towards the drivers trapped in the gridlocked intersection. “Now let the Ring reveal the avatar of Sagittarius. Awaken! Arise and take your proper place among the Zodiac! Aries commands it!” But no cosmic light appeared among the terrified commuters, and Aries was too preoccupied to notice the glow from his fallen enemies behind him.

“I don’t get it! Is this thing broken? The Ring led us here. The avatar of Sagittarius has got to be... what?!? Captain Amazing?!?”

“Sorry Aries, looks like this is not your lucky day...”

In addition to normal people, NPC heroes or villains who already have superpowers could turn out to be partially awakened Zodiac avatars. They may have believed their powers came from some other source, but it was really their Zodiac powers emerging. Their powers could be increased or tweaked to better fit the theme of

their sign as part of their awakening (see **Designing Additional Zodiac Avatars**, page 20). Like any awakened avatars they will have a brand new costume, but since they were partially awakened they will experience no major personality shift.

For a real twist make one of your PC superheroes a Zodiac avatar. Since no one knows who exactly the Ring is awakening until the process starts, the villains will be just as surprised as the heroes. This can also make the ongoing plot much more complicated—anyone trying to unite the Zodiac and fulfill the Prophecy will have to persuade the hero to join forces or destroy him. It also means a PC will be able to use the powers of the Zodiac Ring, giving the heroes a lot more options.

Whether you use the Zodiac PC option will depend a lot on your players and the kind of game they are used to. You should think carefully about whether this will be received as an interesting plot twist or as unwelcome tampering with the player’s character. Different players will feel entirely differently about this kind of thing. When in doubt, take the player aside ahead of time and see whether they are receptive to the idea. If that player can keep a secret it can still come as quite a surprise to the rest of the group.

Characters with powers who turn out to be avatars can be assumed to be partially awakened and have little or no change in powers or personality, but awakening can also be a vehicle for a player to radically change an existing PC hero. A character with no real powers of their own (that obsessed avenger of the night, the battle armor guy, or the trick-shot archer) may suddenly gain powers and go through a disorienting personality change as well.

See **Changing Avatars Back to Normal** (page 20) if you want to revert a character. If a PC hero’s powers and personality did not change, it does not really matter if they “change back” to normal form—even if a character is an avatar of the Zodiac, there is no reason he cannot ignore his cosmic relevance and go back to wearing his old costume and using his old name.

Zodiac NPCs

The twelve Zodiac avatars that appear in **Zodiac Rising** and **War of the Zodiac** are described. If avatars are eliminated, new avatars can be awakened in their place, letting you create avatars of your own. Ideas for future avatars are also included on each character sheet. Each is given a simple title to highlight the concept (e.g. the Judge) but in practice each avatar would go by the name of its Zodiac sign.

Character sheet notes:

Enhanced abilities and size modifiers are figured in.

Alternate Powers are marked (alt), Dynamic Alternate Powers are marked (dyn)

Area powers with the Progression feat are shown with a range of sizes (for example, 100 to 1000 ft radius). The character can pick the size every time they use the power.

Attacks section is a quick reference of the primary attacks used by the character. Options that can be used with the attack (for example, Power Attack) are included in parenthesis. The character can make other types of attacks as well—these are just the ones commonly used.



AQUARIUS

PL 10

STR	DEX	CON
10 / --	10 / --	10 / --

INT	WIS	CHA
14 / +2	18 / +4	12 / +1

Defense	16 (13 flat)	Tough	+0
Attack	+1	Fort	+0
Init	0	Ref	+0
Grapple	+1	Will	+8

POWERS

	cost
nullify 15 (all effects at once, concentration, reaction)	105
(alt) nullify 10 (area 250 ft radius, perception, selective, reaction, concentration)	1

(all powers cosmic & zodiac descriptors)

FEATS

all-out attack
attack specialization (neutralize) 2
trance

SKILLS	rank / total
concentration	8 / 12
knowledge-philosophy	8 / 10
perform-oratory	4 / 5

ATTACKS

+5 nullify 15 (all-out attack)
area nullify 10 (selective, no reflex save)

TACTICS

Aquarius uses his Nullify as a reaction to counter powers used to attack him or his allies. If Aquarius is using his area Nullify to suppress multiple targets he has can still use that Nullify 10 to counter, but not his Nullify 15 since his array is switched.

He will use All-Out attack to hit difficult targets, oblivious to how vulnerable it leaves him to mundane attacks. Even though his Nullify is a reaction he can only use it to make an attack (not a counter) once per round on his action.

Aquarius may use his Nullify to counter fellow Zodiac if they are being too destructive and he thinks they have lost sight the Zodiac's true goal, which in his mind is bringing about the New Age.

Aquarius must concentrate to maintain his power but he is quite capable doing so and delivering passionate pleas for peace and brotherhood at the same time.



QUOTES

"I can understand where you're coming from, but if it's one thing history has taught us, it's that violence is not the answer. Only by opening up a really meaningful and honest dialog can we really bring about change."

"Of course you can argue that aggression is intrinsic to the human condition, but if we want to really evolve as a species we cannot limit ourselves to the same kind of thinking that humanity should have out-evolved hundreds of years ago..."

DESCRIPTION

Before his awakening, Dr Joshua Davidson held a comfortable position as a professor of philosophy. He lectured on the limitless potential that humanity could attain, once it set aside conflict and embraced high ideals.

As Aquarius the Water-Bearer, he embodies those utopian principles. The gift he brings is brotherhood among men. He does this by nullifying powers of any kind, thus truly making all men equal in his presence.

Aquarius believes he and his fellow avatars are meant to usher in a New Age of peace for all humanity. He does not approve of the violence and strife that surrounds them, but for now he consoles himself that it is a temporary evil from which peace will emerge.

Aquarius is a frustrated idealist, an intelligent man who is if anything too intellectual and not realistic enough about the world around him. His earnest attempts to open a dialog and really discuss the issues are not likely to go over in the middle of a fight.

ZODIAC SIGN

Aquarius the Water-Bearer is an air-sign. The Water-Bearer is a symbol of aid, empathy and healing. Aquarius is also the sign of the new age thought to herald a utopian future (the Age of Aquarius).

FUTURE AVATARS CONCEPTS

Healer-bringing succor to the needy (area healing with resurrection)

abilities 14 + skills 5 + feats 4 + powers 106 + combat 14 + saves 4 + drawbacks 0 = 147 pp

ARIES

PL 10

STR	DEX	CON
10 / --	14 / +2	10 / --
INT	WIS	CHA
14 / +2	10 / --	14 / +2

Defense	20 (15 flat)	Tough	+10 (0 without force field)
Attack	+4 (+8 ranged)	Fort	+3
Init	+2	Ref	+8
Grapple	+4	Will	+5

POWERS

	cost
element control fire 12 (TK fire, area 60 ft radius, dynamic)	37
(dyn) flame blast 12	2
(dyn) flame cone 10 (blast, area cone 100 to 1000 ft long)	2
(dyn) wild fire 10 (blast, area shapeable 50 to 5000 5 ft cubes)	2
(alt) fire cloud 10 (blast, area cloud 50 to 5000 ft diameter)	1
(alt) nova 10 (blast, penetrating, area explosion 100 to 1000 ft radius, no range)	1
(alt) incinerate 9 (blast, concentration, contagious)	1
(dyn) heatwave 10 (fatigue, range, area 50 ft radius)	2
(dyn) wall of fire 7 (blast, sustained, area line 175 to 350 ft long)	2
(dyn) smoke 12 (obscure sight, 5 mile radius)	2
(dyn) environmental control 12 intense heat (5 mile radius)	2
aura of fire 10	20
force field 10	10
immunity fire	5

(all powers fire, cosmic & zodiac descriptors)

FEATS

attack focus ranged 4	evasion
defensive attack	taunt (bluff demoralize)
distract (bluff daze)	

SKILLS	rank / total
bluff	8 / 10
concentration	8 / 8
notice	8 / 8
sleight of hand	4 / 6

ATTACKS

+8 flame 12 (defensive attack)
area flame 10

TACTICS

Aries is a wily and destructive opponent, flaunting his wildly increased powers and disregarding the collateral damage he causes.

He regularly uses Distract and Taunt as move actions while he sets whole areas of the battlefield on fire. Aries prefers area attacks and can create fire in a variety of patterns. Against easy targets or if he is concerned about getting hit he will use normal fire blasts with Defensive Attack (he cannot use it with area attacks). Aries relies on his fire Aura to deter melee attacks but has no qualms about engulfing himself in a fire cloud if surrounded since he is immune.

With his array Aries can use area attacks (area 10 blast, no progression) and still have 6 pp left to maintain small dynamic alternate powers like Obscure. With his blast 12 he still has 12 pp free.

He can use his heatwave (Fatigue) and smoke (Obscure) to disorient and wear down groups but he is more likely to just try to burn them to the ground. He is not above starting fires that endanger civilians to force heroes to go rescue them.



QUOTES

"It's mine, all mine! Hahahaha!"
"Because I said so! I've got the Ring, so I'm in charge. Got it?"
"So then I said 'Hot enough for ya?' Get it, hot enough for ya? It kills me! Well, yeah, he was pretty much on fire by then anyway."

DESCRIPTION

Before being awakened by Pisces, Samuel "Sammy" Jeffries was a small-time supervillain called Pyrophile (PL 6). He used his fire powers to rob banks and armored cars before being locked up. It is a tribute to just how small-time he was that it was regular police who apprehended him, not a superhero.

Jeffries discovered his powers after being trapped in a burning warehouse during a botched heist. He should have been killed, but instead he walked out without a scratch. He never wondered too hard where his powers came from—some kind of mutation he figured.

When Pisces appeared in his cell and explained that he was a potential avatar of the fire-sign Aries, Jeffries assumed the man was crazy. Once Aries realized that the whole Zodiac thing was for real, he betrayed Pisces and took the Ring for himself.

In his heart Aries is still a small-time crook, but Pisces's interminable speeches about prophecy and cosmic destiny have given him delusions of grandeur. It does not hurt that his powers have increased many times over, or that he holds the Zodiac Ring, an artifact of unknown cosmic power. Fate has finally smiled on Samuel Jeffries, and he is going to ride it for everything it is worth.

ZODIAC SIGN

Aries the Ram is a fire-sign. It symbolizes opposition and initiation.

FUTURE AVATARS CONCEPTS

Battering Ram—hunchback speedster who slams into enemies with his curved horns (super-speed, immovable unstoppable only when slamming)

CANCER

PL 10

STR DEX CON
30 / +10 8 / -1 22 / +6

INT WIS CHA
12 / +1 12 / +1 4 / -3

Defense	14 (12 flat)	Tough	+16 (+10 impervious)
Attack	+7	Fort	+12
Init	-1	Ref	+4
Grapple	+21 (improved)	Will	+9

POWERS

	cost
growth 4 (Large, permanent)	16
strike 3 mighty (claws)	6
enhanced strength 12	12
protection 10 impervious	20
immunity life support	9
immunity interaction skills	5
sensory shield 4	8
darkvision	2
speed 3 (50 mph)	3
swimming 3 (10 mph)	3

(all powers cosmic & zodiac descriptors)

FEATS

environment adapt (water)	startle (intimidate feint)
fearless	takedown attack
improved grapple	

SKILLS

	rank / total
concentration	9 / 10
intimidate	15 / 14
notice	8 / 9
sense motive	8 / 9

ATTACKS

+7 claw 13 (takedown)

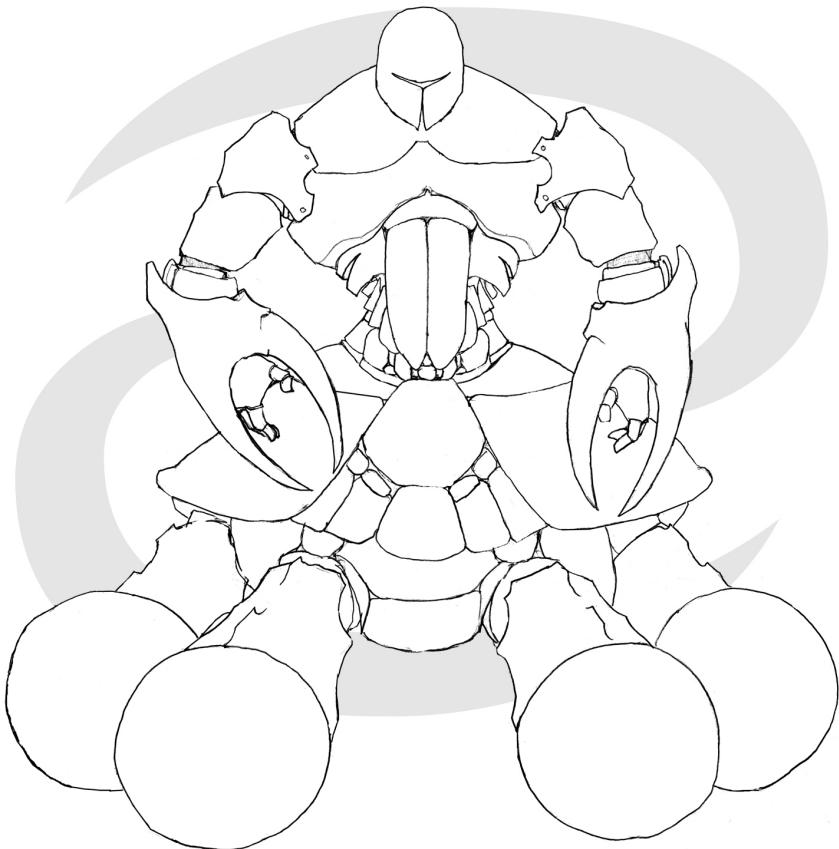
DRAWBACKS

mute (common, moderate)
inhuman (common, minor)

TACTICS

Cancer favors the direct approach, rumbling straight towards his target and smashing them with his claws. Once in melee he will use move actions to Startle his enemies, throwing them off balance with his relentless attacks. He will use aggressive stance versus difficult to hit targets relying on his armor to protect him. He will use his large size and reach to dominate an area around him, using Improved Grapple to hold one opponent while swatting another. Cold and emotionless, he cannot be intimidated, scared, or bluffed (Immunity interaction skills).

Opponents seeing him waddle on his stubby legs may underestimate his speed until his wheel-pods start rolling him forward. Cancer is also full amphibious, spinning wheel-pods like propellers.



QUOTES

>rumble rumble rumble<

DESCRIPTION

Life was over for Graham Chalmers. The wealth and success he had worked for for years were no protection against the degenerative spinal disease that slowly robbed him of the use of his arms and legs. He was left a shell of a man, friendless and alone except for his paid medical staff, restricted to his wheelchair and watching the world through the windows of his estate. Years stood still for him.

The Zodiac Ring transformed the withered paraplegic into a monstrous man-tank, a living personification of Cancer the Crab. He is basically human-shaped from the waist up, joined to a crab-like lower body, covered everywhere with a dark green armored shell. Instead of normal crab legs Cancer has six stubby leg-shafts that end in spherical wheel-pod feet. He can pick his way forward like a spider or spin the pods like wheels to ramble forward at alarming speeds.

If any of Chalmers's personality survived his illness and awakening there is no sign of it. Cancer does not communicate. He usually sits motionless, barely seeming alive, until action is called for and then he rumbles forward like a juggernaut. He seems to accept the company of his fellow Zodiac and he follows whatever plans are initiated, but what really goes on in his mind is a mystery.

ZODIAC SIGN

Cancer the Crab is a water-sign. It is also associated with growth and fruitfulness.

FUTURE AVATARS CONCEPTS

Dryad-plant control

CAPRICORN

PL 10

STR	DEX	CON
26 / +8	10 / --	18 / +4
INT	WIS	CHA
14 / +2	14 / +2	12 / +1

Defense	18 (14 flat)	Tough +12 (+8 impervious)
Attack	+8	Fort +10
Init	0	Ref +2
Grapple	+18	Will +8

POWERS

	cost
elemental control earth 12 (TK rock, dynamic)	25
(dyn) rock bolt 12 (blast)	2
(dyn) rock spray 10 (blast, area cone 100 ft, no range)	2
(dyn) hail 8 (blast, area 40 ft radius)	2
(dyn) stalagmite 10 (blast, indirect 3)	2
(dyn) snare 12	2
(dyn) create object 8 (continuous)	2
(dyn) quake 10 (trip, area 50 to 500 ft radius)	2
(dyn) dust storm 8 (obscure sight full, hearing partial, 1250 ft radius)	2
density 6 (includes super str 2 & immovable 2, permanent)	18
protection 5 impervious	10
immunity (life support, criticals)	11

(all powers earth, cosmic & zodiac descriptors)

FEATS

fearless

SKILLS	rank / total
intimidate	8 / 9
knowledge-earth sci	4 / 6
knowledge-physical sci	4 / 6
profession-engineer	4 / 6
sense motive	4 / 6

ATTACKS

+8 rocks 12 (blast or snare)
area rocks 10 (no range)
+8 strike 8

TACTICS

Capricorn has considerable physical strength but he relies entirely on his Earth Control and ranged attacks. His blast attacks can either be rock that appears out of thin air or that is part of the environment and hurls at the target—either one has the same effect, the distinction is merely descriptive. He can make surprise attacks with stalagmites that erupt from the ground beneath targets (Indirect) even where there is no earth, such as the floor of a space station.

His Created Objects (rocks) are continuous and remain even after he switches array. For group transport Capricorn can TK a massive slab of rock with himself and others riding atop it. He can still use other dynamic alternate powers if the rock does not require his full TK strength.



QUOTES

"You try my patience."
"Fight, yield—it will make no difference."
"These rocks shall be your tomb."

DESCRIPTION

Carl Blake was a hard man all his life. Working oil rigs and mining towns, he was prone to few words and even fewer displays of emotion. Even after he made foreman he was more likely to roll up his sleeves and show his men what needed to be done than give a speech.

As Capricorn, avatar of the Zodiac, he was transformed into a creature of living rock, a terrible and impassive statue come to life.

Capricorn is a master of the earth, manipulating rock or causing it to condense out of thin air as needed. He can call down rains of hail or make stalagmites erupt from below. Capricorn remains looming and impassive even in the midst of the violence he creates.

Among the avatars described here Capricorn is more likely to lead than follow. He speaks little but when he does his voice rumbles forth like grinding stones, brooking little opposition.

ZODIAC SIGN

Capricorn the Goat is an earth-sign. It is associated with stability and strong will.

FUTURE AVATARS CONCEPTS

Satyr—prancing goat-man whose stomping hooves can shatter rock or dance up an earthquake

GEMINI

PL 10

STR	DEX	CON
10 / --	12 / +1	10 / --

INT	WIS	CHA
12 / +1	14 / +2	18 / +4

Defense	18 (14 flat)	Tough	+4 (0 flat)
Attack	+6	Fort	+3
Init	+1	Ref	+8
Grapple	+6	Will	+8

POWERS

	cost
emotion control 10 (contagious, area 50 ft radius)	40
(alt) emotion control 10 (contagious, single target)	1
(alt) nauseate 10 (overwhelming emotion, alternate save Will)	1
empathy 10 (mind reading empathy only, area 50 ft radius, move action)	20
immunity (his own emotion power)	1
(all powers cosmic & zodiac descriptors)	

FEATS

benefit (senator)
connected
defensive roll 4

SKILLS	rank / total
bluff	8 / 12
diplomacy	8 / 12
gather info	6 / 10
profession-politician	8 / 10
sense motive	10 / 12

ATTACKS

area emotion control (contagious)
+6 nauseate 10

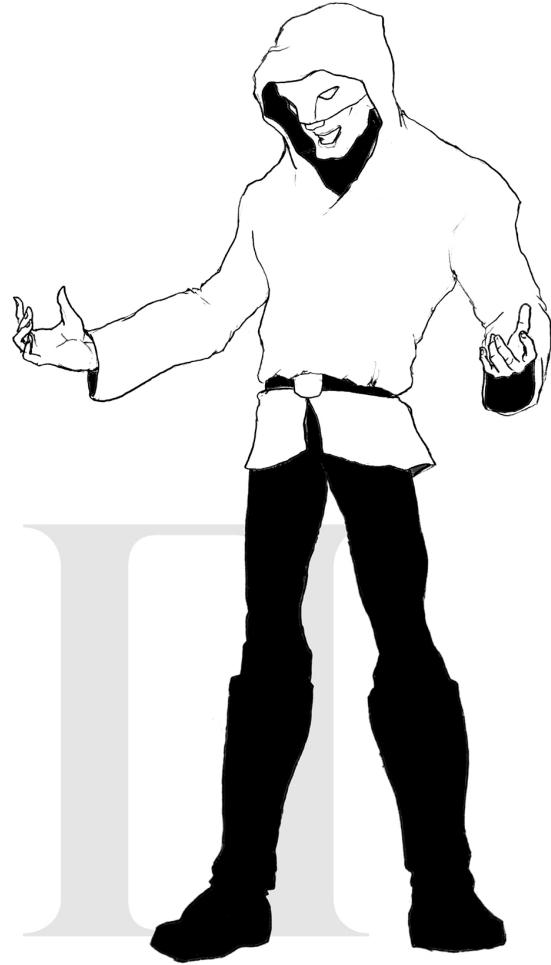
TACTICS

Gemini is a menace to friend and foe alike. His area Emotion Control is not selective and his induced emotions are Contagious, which can lead to chaos when characters fight or try to restrain each other. Gemini's teammates are just as likely to catch contagious emotions as his enemies are, but in his eyes that just makes things more entertaining.

Innocent bystanders are one of Gemini's favorite weapons. He can fill them with Hate for the heroes to make them attack, Fear of where they are at to cause a stampede, Love for heroes to cause a crushing affectionate mob, or just Hate for each other to force the heroes to subdue the rioting mob before they hurt themselves.

Gemini instinctively uses Empathy as a move action to get a sense of what Emotions will be the most effective. If an opponent gets too close he will use his Nauseate touch to overwhelm them with some emotion (joy, terror, doubt, etc.).

As discussed in the **Gemini Dilemma**, the GM may consider using Fiat to have Gemini take lethal damage if heroes are too cavalier about endangering the Senator. Note that if flat-footed, surprised or stunned Gemini loses his Defensive Roll, leaving him with a +0 Toughness save.



QUOTES

"Such a fine line between love and hate. Such a fine and wonderfully brittle line."

"It's so good to be surrounded by so many loyal friends."

"Don't they say it's far better to have loved and lost? You should thank me."

"Such beautiful, beautiful toys to play with!"

DESCRIPTION

Senator Robert Ikemann was young, handsome, and well-spoken, a moderate liberal with a bright political career ahead of him that could well have lead to the Presidency. Like all politicians, swaying popular sentiment was Ikemann's stock-in-trade, but guided by his conscience and his morals.

As Gemini, Ikemann has completely lost those constraints. One meaning of the sign Gemini is divided character, and his power is the ability to turn people's emotions against them. Gemini manipulates emotions for the simple joy of it, twisting people one way and then the other for his own amusement. It fascinates him to watch the emotions he sets in motion interact and collide, no matter how tragic the outcome.

Gemini tends to overlook his own physical danger in combat. He is so confident that he can control those around him and make them dance to his tune that he sometimes makes himself an easy target. He could easily wind up a casualty in the heat of battle, leaving the heroes to explain what happened to the well-loved Senator.

ZODIAC SIGN

Gemini the Twins is an air-sign. It signifies duality and divided character or mentality.

FUTURE AVATARS CONCEPTS

Twins—splits into two twins fighting in tandem (duplication, teamwork, setup)

Deceiver—turning peoples senses against them (illusions)

LEO

PL 11

STR DEX CON
34 / +12 16 / +3 34 / +12

INT WIS CHA
10 / -- 10 / -- 18 / +4

Defense	20 (15 flat)	Tough	+12
Attack	+10	Fort	+12
Init	+3	Ref	+8
Grapple	+22	Will	+8

POWERS

	cost
roar (linked dazzle and fear, area 100 ft radius, no range)	
dazzle hearing 5	7
emotion fear 10	6
aura of fire 10	20
(alternate) fire blast 10 (explosion 100 ft radius, no range)	1
enhanced strength 18	18
enhanced constitution 18	18
immunity fire	5
immunity mental effects (only while berserk)	5

(all powers cosmic & zodiac descriptors, some powers fire)

FEATS

all-out attack	power attack
fearless	startle (intimidate feint)

SKILLS

intimidate	rank / total
profession-athlete	12 / 16
	8 / 8

ATTACKS

+10 strike 12 & 10 aura (power attack, all-out attack)

DRAWBACKS

berserker rage (very common, moderate)

TACTICS

Leo opens combat with a terrifying roar and surrounds himself with his flaming Aura. He then attacks the opponent who appears to be the greatest challenge head-on, pummeling them with his mighty fists or crushing them in his grip (grapple).

In melee he uses Power Attack and All-Out Attack combined to reduce his defense and increase his damage. His melee attacks do Aura damage in addition to his strength damage (save separately against each). He will use move actions to Startle (feint) or Demoralize foes with the sheer ferocity of his attacks. If hard pressed he will Extra Effort to Surge and attack multiple times, battering his enemies and suffering exhaustion rather than let himself be beaten.

If surrounded or pestered by multiple attackers he will roar or engulf himself in a fiery area burst to swat them aside. This lowers his Aura until he can switch the array next round.

His berserk rage drawback means that swept up in the fury of battle Leo will fight relentlessly against any attacker, regardless of the odds and with no concern for allies or bystanders.



QUOTES

"That boast shall be your last."
 "Leo calls no man master!"
 "One, many—I do not care. I will grind you all beneath my foot."
 "Enough talk! Now you shall learn that Leo is your better."
 >ROAR!<

DESCRIPTION

Darryl Cage was a professional football player, a serious athlete who kept his eye on the game and did not get distracted by the call of fame and fortune. If anything Cage was too serious, never willing to be second best.

His awakening as the avatar of Leo has unleashed that determination and passion as raw unrestrained force. Leo is utterly fearless, a primal alpha male like the lion for which he is named. He accepts no living creature as his superior, Zodiac or otherwise, and confronts any enemy head-on with total ferocity.

ZODIAC SIGN

Leo the Lion is a fire-sign. The lion has connotations of kingship or tyranny, as well as pride and bravery.

FUTURE AVATARS CONCEPTS

Lion Queen—agile and moderately strong hand-to-hand combatant with a voice of command (enhanced strength & dexterity, mind control sense dependent)

abilities 26 + skills 5 + feats 4 + powers 80 + combat 40 + saves 13 + drawbacks -4 = 168 pp

LIBRA

PL 10

STR DEX CON
26 / +8 20 / +5 24 / +7

INT WIS CHA
14 / +2 14 / +2 16 / +3

Defense	20 (15 flat)	Tough +10
Attack	+8 (+12 melee)	Fort +7
Init	+5	Ref +7
Grapple	+20	Will +7

POWERS

		cost
nemesis 8	(only 3 pp/rank, limited—personal powers only)	32
protection 3		3
flight 4		8
enhanced strength 14		14
enhanced constitution 10		10
enhanced dexterity 8		8

(all powers cosmic & zodiac descriptors)

FEATS

all-out attack	power attack
attack focus melee 4	quick change
interpose	

SKILLS

	rank / total
gather info	4 / 7
intimidate	6 / 9
investigate	4 / 6
knowledge-streetwise	4 / 6
sense motive	6 / 8

ATTACKS

+12 strike 8 (power attack, all-out attack)

TACTICS

Libra's Nemesis power generally supplements her existing style instead of giving her entirely new abilities. It focuses on Immunities and other powers that let her resist her opponent or remove immunities they might have to her attacks (e.g. adding Penetrating to her Strength damage). Confronted with someone like Aries, she is more likely to acquire Immunity to fire and increased saves than a cold Blast. Sample Nemesis powers versus the Zodiac are:

aquarius - immunity trait effects 5

aries - immunity fire 5, penetrating strength 8, immunity interaction skills 5

cancer - fearless 1, penetrating strength 8, super-strength 5, immovability 5

capricorn - immunity earth 5, penetrating strength 8, superstrength 5

gemini - immunity emotion effects 5, immunity interaction skills 5, mental shield 7

leo - immunity fire 5, immunity deafness 2, fearless 1, super-strength 4, regeneration 8 (bruise free each round, injury standard action)

pisces - impervious toughness 8, supersenses (danger-sense, scent, tracking, ultravision, infravision), notice +8

sagittarius - immunity interaction skills 5, immunity luck 2

scorpio - immunity interaction skills 5, immunity critical hits 2, reflex save +6, regeneration 8 (bruise free each round, injury standard action), protection 3 made impervious

taurus - penetrating strength 8, superstrength 4, immovability 8

virgo - immunity mind control 5, mental shield 8



QUOTES

"Libra fights for justice!"

"If you want to get to them, you've got to go through me."

"Go ahead and try. Libra's more than a match for you."

DESCRIPTION

Detective Dani Walker was a tough cop who bucked the rules to get the job done. She was relentless, pursuing cases long after other officers would have let it go.

As an avatar of Libra she embodies justice, her power putting her on an even footing with any enemy she squares off with. She is a fearless avenging angel who flies straight into the thick of battle. Her battle cry ("Libra fights for justice!") leaves no room for compromise.

Unlike many of the other Zodiac, Libra can change between her secret and heroic ID and will not abandon her former life. In her normal form she is not so different than she was before her awakening, a determined looking black woman in her mid-twenties. When she transforms into Libra the Zodiac mindset overcomes her and she becomes implacable and undaunted, a relentless gleam in her eyes.

ZODIAC SIGN

Libra the Scales is an air-sign. The scales symbolize judgment, justice, balance and harmony.

FUTURE AVATARS CONCEPTS

Judge—sees into the hearts of men and judges them, those found wanting receive his death gaze

Peacemaker—emotion control calm & mind control peace

PISCES (II)

PL 10

STR DEX CON
10 / -- 12 / +1 14 / +2

INT WIS CHA
12 / +1 14 / +2 12 / +1

Defense 20 (15 flat) Tough +6 (+2 flat)
Attack +0 (+10 melee) Fort +2
Init +1 Ref +7
Grapple +10 Will +3

POWERS

shapeshift 10 (animals only, free action, continuous)
(all powers cosmic & zodiac descriptors)

cost

90

FEATS

attack focus melee 10
defensive roll 4

SKILLS

	rank / total
bluff	4 / 5
knowledge-pop culture	4 / 5
stealth	4 / 5

ATTACKS

+10 attack X (damage depends on animal form)



TACTICS

Pisces will almost always be in some animal form—why change back to his boring human form? He can shapeshift as a free action once per round and will do so without hesitation if a new form would provide some advantage or even just some entertainment.

Animal traits will determine his size, movement and how much damage he can do. Use animals in M&M to determine his shapechanged stats. Pisces keeps his own traits if they are better than the animal form, so in most cases he will keep his +10 attack and +10 defense (modified by size), plus as much of his Defensive Roll as is permitted by PL. Toughness due to Constitution or Protection will supersede his Defensive Roll.

For example as a large creature he will have Defense 19 (20 - 1) and then whatever Toughness the animal has plus Defensive Roll up to a maximum of 11. As a smaller animal his Defense could be increased to a maximum of 24 given his Toughness 6.

QUOTES

>oooh-oooh-aah-aah... cheep-cheep... mreeoooww?
"Yeah, sure, whatever."

"The ocean? Nice. Get some dolphin time in."

"Hmmm 'furry, duckbilled egg-laying mammal with poisonous claws and radar.' Oh yeah."

DESCRIPTION

A college dropout who couldn't even muster the energy to move away from his college town, Richie Hauser spent his days on the couch, hanging with friends, smoking things, watching television and dining on delivery pizza. For Richie it was paradise on earth, a mellow nirvana he saw no reason to leave.

Then the Zodiac came along and zap! he was the avatar of Pisces before he could get off the couch. Sure his old life was good, but being able to change into birds and kangaroos and muskrats and stuff is pretty cool too.

Pisces is generally laid back, active but not really too caught up in what is going on. He follows his whims and is always trying out new animal forms even if they do not have a clear tactical advantage—he is just as likely to enter combat as a boxing kangaroo as he is a lion.

ZODIAC SIGN

Pisces the Fish is a water-sign. It is associated with change and mutability as well as dreams and mysticism.

FUTURE AVATARS CONCEPTS

Magician—sorcerer skilled in the mystic arts (magic control)
Amphibian—strong water-breather

SAGITTARIUS

PL 10

STR DEX CON

10 / -- 16 / +3 10 / --

INT WIS CHA

18 / +4 16 / +3 20 / +5

Defense	30 (uncanny)	Tough	+0
Attack	+10	Fort	+6
Init	+15	Ref	+12
Grapple	+13 (finesse)	Will	+6

POWERS

	cost
luck control (bad luck-force re-roll, area 50 ft radius, selective)	9
immunity critical hits	2

(all powers cosmic & zodiac descriptors)

FEATS

beginner's luck	improvised tools
blind-fight	jack-of-all-trades
distract (bluff daze)	luck 5
dodge focus 20	master plan
elusive target	precise shot 2
evasion 2	redirect
fascinate (bluff & diplomacy)	second chance (gambling)
grappling finesse	seize initiative
hide in plain sight	set-up
improved initiative 3	taunt (bluff demoralize)
improved throw	ultimate effort (reflex, tough)
improved trip	uncanny dodge

SKILLS

	rank / total
bluff	12 / 17
diplomacy	10 / 15
escape artist	8 / 11
gather info	8 / 13
notice	6 / 9
profession-gambler	8 / 11
sense motive	14 / 17
sleight of hand	10 / 13

ATTACKS

+10 strike 0

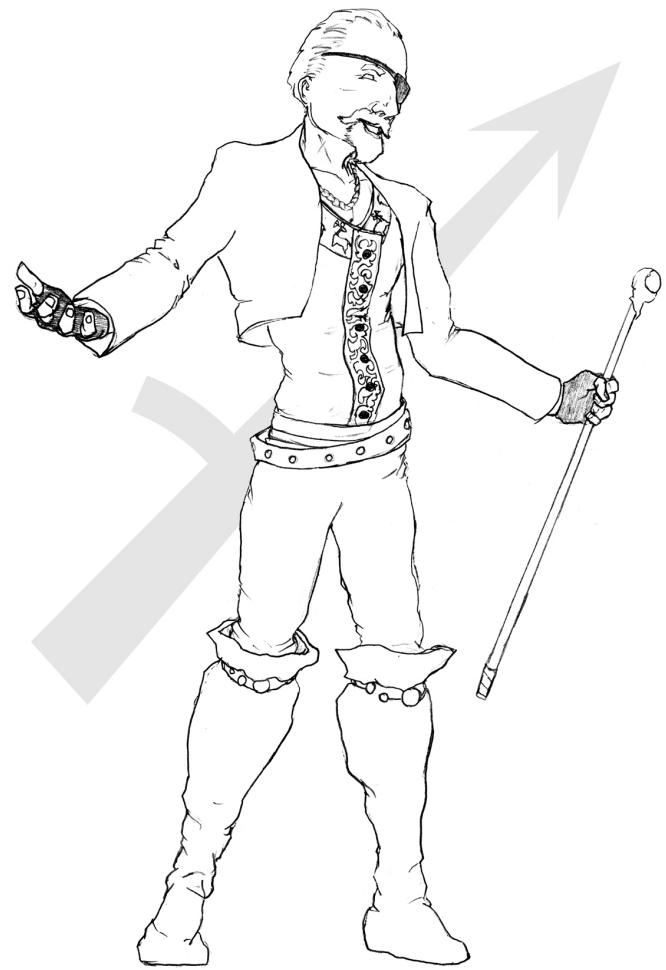
TACTICS

Sagittarius has hero points of his own (Luck feat) to use with his Luck Control power or other purposes. He uses his area Luck Control in situations where several enemies all have to roll at once, such as when an ally uses an area attack. This can be a devastating combo.

He does not dirty his hands with fisticuffs, preferring to provide encouragement and sage advice instead. His glib commentary can distract opponents without being overtly hostile, using Distract or Taunt, or bluffing for a Feint and using Setup to give the advantage to an ally, or Trick a hero into making a mistake. A gracious compliment from Sagittarius may prove to be a dangerous distraction.

His supernatural luck (Def 30, full Uncanny Dodge and Evasion) means that he always seems to be in just the right place to stay out of harms way. He can stroll casually through the middle of a battlefield without appearing harried or dismayed.

His cane is not intended as a weapon. At most he will use it to deliver a sharp rap on the forehead of a particularly ill-mannered lout (Taunt), or casually trip someone rushing past him.



QUOTES

"Fortune may have pitted us as adversaries sir, but I see no reason we cannot conduct ourselves as gentlemen."

"Happy to oblige, though a fight here would undoubtedly endanger all these good people. Perhaps you would care to reconsider? Take your time."

"Why life itself is a gamble. We may not take our winnings from the table, but I dare say it behooves us to play our hand as best we may. Wouldn't you agree?"

DESCRIPTION

Before being awakened as the avatar of Sagittarius, Montgomery Alexander Beaumont was a gentleman gambler, rogue and scoundrel in the fine old southern tradition. He exudes a refined yet rakish charm and an unflappable if somewhat sardonic grace and courtesy.

Sagittarius is a brilliant planner and subtle strategist. It does not hurt that he is also absurdly lucky. A good gambler hedges his bets, calculates the odds, and then knows when to take risks and let the dice fall where they may, and Sagittarius is an excellent gambler. Far from being a gloating mastermind, Sagittarius can be so gracious and self-effacing in victory that it might not be clear to the heroes that they have played right into his schemes and lost.

With his intelligence and charm Sagittarius could easily lead, but he prefers to be the power behind the throne. This too is a calculated bet—the king maker reaps many of the same rewards as the king and does not make such an inviting target.

ZODIAC SIGN

Sagittarius the Archer is a fire-sign. It is associated with genius, daring and fortune. Sagittarius is sometimes depicted as a centaur.

FUTURE AVATARS CONCEPTS

Fire Archer—creates bow of flame that shoots seeking arrows of living fire (blast homing)

Centaur—mythical half-man half-horse

SCORPIO

PL 10

STR DEX CON
12 / +1 26 / +8 22 / +6

INT WIS CHA
12 / +1 12 / +1 10 / --

Defense	24 (uncanny)	Tough	+6
Attack	+7 (+14 melee)	Fort	+6
Init	+12	Ref	+12
Grapple	+15	Will	+6

POWERS

whip-lashes 6 (strike, penetrating)
(alt) snare 6 (tether, reversible)
(alt) trip 6 knockback
(all whip are no range, reach 30 ft, indirect 3, split, precise)
enhanced dexterity 12
enhanced constitution 12
swinging
leaping 2 (5x distance)
(all powers cosmic & zodiac descriptors)

FEATS

acrobatic bluff	improved defense
attack focus melee 7	improved disarm
chokehold	improved throw
defensive attack	improved trip
elusive target	takedown attack
evasion	uncanny dodge
improved block 2	weapon bind
improved critical 3 (lash)	

SKILLS

acrobatics	rank / total
escape artist	10 / 18
intimidate	8 / 16
notice	7 / 7
stealth	7 / 8
	8 / 16

ATTACKS

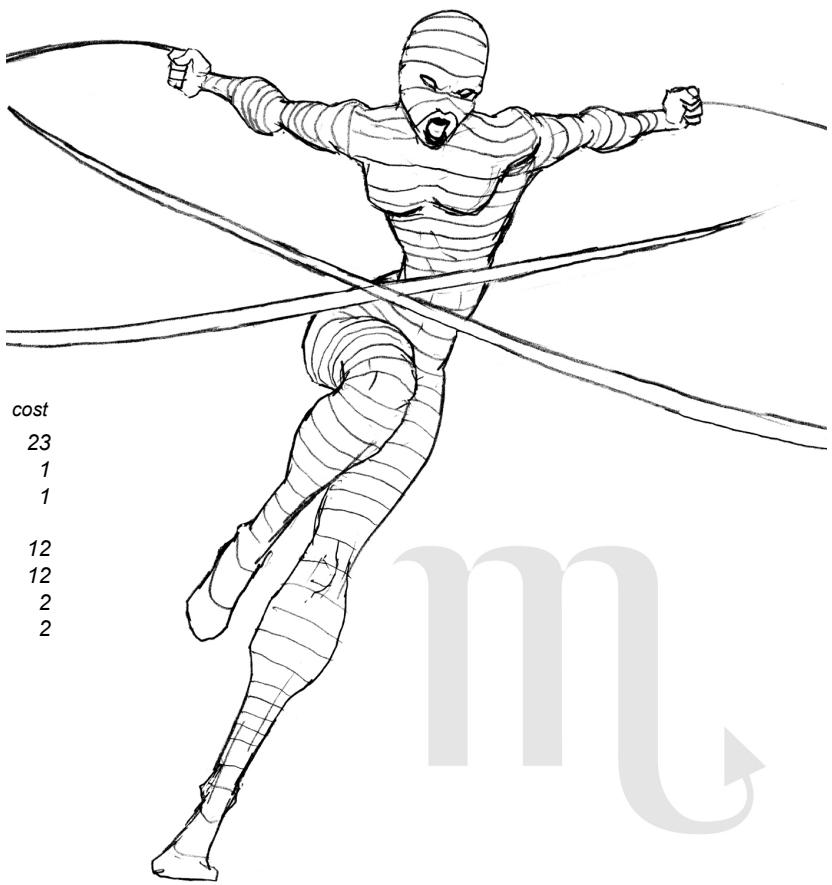
+14 lash 6 penetrating, crit 17-20, 30 ft reach (indirect, split attack, defensive attack)
+14 trip 10 (improved trip, improved throw)
+18 block (weapon bind)

TACTICS

Scorpio uses Acrobatic Bluff to feint as a move action or her Indirect feat to curl her whip behind an opponent to get surprise attacks. She can strike from a distance, taking advantage of spots like ledges to frustrate less mobile opponents, but if other ranged attackers are nearby she will close to get her Elusive Target cover benefit. Scorpio often chooses to do lethal damage with her attacks.

Snare is Instant Lasting so she can coil an opponent in her whip-lash then switch her array next round and attack the bound opponent or other targets with her other whip. She uses Split Attack or Extra Effort to Surge and attack with both lashes in one round.

Her whip-lashes protrude from her body and cannot be taken away from her so they do not count as Devices. If they are severed or cut short she can use her Zodiac powers to extend more almost instantaneously.



cost

23
1
1
12
12
2
2

QUOTES

"I'm sick of all this talk!"
"Go ahead, run. Make it more fun for me. I may even let you go."
"Dodge all you want, it's only a matter of time before you feel my stin... ARGH! Umn, you'll pay for that. You'll pay dearly."

DESCRIPTION

Scorpio is everything librarian Alice Danvers was not. Where Danvers was timid, retiring and introverted, Scorpio is aggressive, vindictive and cruel. If there is anything left of Alice Danver's personality Scorpio is hiding it well.

Scorpio's whip-lashes make her a lethal short-range combatant. These thin cables extend from the back of each of her hands. She can control the tension and flexibility at will, using them as cutting whips or stabbing straight out like a spear as she springs and tumbles across the battlefield. She can also retract her lashes entirely leaving only a short nub showing.

When she has the upper hand, Scorpio plays cat-and-mouse with her victims. If pressed, or worse still beaten, she flees to lick her wounds, but the so-called victor can be assured that they now have the dubious honor of occupying Scorpio's every waking thought as she burns for her chance at vengeance.

ZODIAC SIGN

Scorpio the Scorpion is a water-sign. It has some associations with divination and truth saying.

FUTURE AVATARS CONCEPTS

Sibyl-diviner/truth sayer with hypnotic paralyzing gaze

TAURUS

PL 10

STR DEX CON
40 / +15 10 / -- 40 / +15

INT WIS CHA
10 / -- 8 / -1 10 / --

Defense	12 (11 flat)	Tough	+18 (+10 impervious)
Attack	+5	Fort	+15
Init	0	Ref	+2
Grapple	+25	Will	+6

POWERS

	cost
enhanced strength 24	24
enhanced constitution 24	24
super-strength 5 (heavy load 100 tons)	10
protection 3 impervious	6
impervious toughness 7	7
immovable 10 unstoppable (only while moving)	10
surefooted 2 (super-movement)	2

(all powers cosmic & zodiac descriptors)

FEATS

fast overrun
power attack

SKILLS

	rank / total
intimidate	12 / 12
notice	8 / 7
sense motive	4 / 3

ATTACKS

+5 punch 15 (power attack)



TACTICS

Like his Zodiac namesake the bull, Taurus hunkers down and charges straight at his opponent. He stomps over anything in his way (Surefooted) and is incredibly hard to stop (Immovable, only while moving). He will overrun anyone in the way of his intended target.

Initially brooding and irritable, Taurus will use Power Attack and aggressive stance more and more as he becomes angry. This might not make him more likely to hit agile opponents but he may do massive damage to the surroundings even if he misses. Taurus will not intentionally endanger civilians to get an advantage but when his temper flares he is oblivious to the collateral damage he is causing.

QUOTES

"Yer gettin on my nerves."
"How was I supposed to know it would break? What am I, a nucular scientist?"
"I said lemme alone!"

DESCRIPTION

All his life Dean Loman was stronger than most other guys. Not amazingly strong, but strong enough, stronger even than a man of his considerable bulk should be. Others might have gone far with such a gift, but fortune never smiled on Dean. He was always just trying to keep out of the trouble that always seemed to dog his heels.

Before Pisces found him, Dean settled into the life of a drifter, working odd construction jobs before moving along to the next town. Because his Zodiac powers were already partially awakened, becoming Taurus did not change Dean's personality much except to make his temper even worse. Taurus is brooding and slow to anger, but with a temper that blinds him once aroused—a dangerous trait now that his strength has increased one hundred fold.

Taurus knows that brains has never been his strong point. For now he's willing to leave the planning to Sammy (Aries). Taurus may be easy to trick, but it would be wise to be far, far away when he realizes he has been made a fool of.

ZODIAC SIGN

Taurus the Bull is an earth-sign. The bull is implacable, temperamental, grounded yet relentless.

FUTURE AVATARS CONCEPTS

Minotaur—half man, half bull (same as Taurus, but lower strength and add strike horns, add scent and tracking scent, improved overrun)

abilities 10 + skills 6 + feats 2 + powers 83 + combat 14 + saves 9 + drawbacks 0 = 124 pp

VIRGO

PL 10

STR	DEX	CON
8 / -1	10 / --	10 / --

INT	WIS	CHA
12 / +1	10 / --	28 / +9

Defense	16 (13 flat)	Tough	+0
Attack	+2	Fort	+0
Init	0	Ref	+4
Grapple	+1	Will	+4

POWERS

cost
 inviolate 10 (mind control, one command—don't interfere with me, 60 reaction, sense-dependent (vision, special—see Tactics), continuous lasting)
 enhanced charisma 12
 (all powers cosmic & zodiac descriptors)

12

FEATS

attractive
 distract (bluff daze)
 fascinate (bluff, diplomacy & perform)

SKILLS

	rank / total
bluff	4 / 13
diplomacy	4 / 13
perform-dance	2 / 11
perform-sing	2 / 11
profession-model	12 / 12
sense motive	8 / 8

ATTACKS

(none)

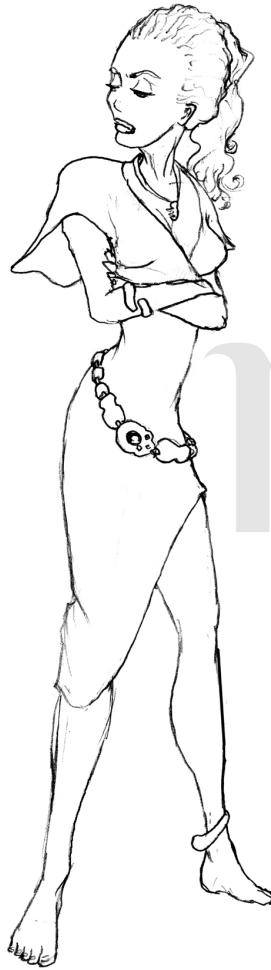
TACTICS

Virgo's power is the reverse of the usual Perception range—she does not have to perceive the target, they have to perceive her. She could be asleep or unconscious and her power would still have full effect (reaction). The initial mind control requires the target to see her, but once it is in effect it does not matter if the person can see her or not. Closing your eyes and trying to harm her will not work, nor will collapsing a building you know she just walked into. Ignorance is an effective defense—if you are unaware of her presence you can act freely.

Her power is Continuous Lasting—once an attacker fails a save they do not get another save without Extra Effort. Even if an attacker initially succeeds, they will have to make saves again each time they interfere with her until they fail.

Virgo is generally too self-centered to help her teammates, but she could foil attackers by readying an action to walk between them and their target. Her presence can protect her companions from things like area attacks or even attacks where knockback could send the victim into her—if the attacker sees she would be affected, the attacker must resist her power. She is nearly impossible to arrest and can stop a tank just by standing in front of it, so long as the driver notices her.

In her arrogance Virgo tends to forget that her power only affects conscious beings, those that appreciate her perfection. She has no defense against unintentional dangers like a ricochet or mindless hazards like a burning building. An attacker cannot knowingly use indirect threats to bypass her power—if a character tries to take an action they think would affect her, her power comes into play.



QUOTES

"Stop me? You will do nothing of the sort, for I am perfection itself. Cherish the moments that you are even fortunate enough to gaze upon me."

"I am like no sight ever to grace mortal eyes. You are unworthy of my presence."

"You bore me. Begone!"

DESCRIPTION

Elan Star was a vain up-and-coming fashion model, and if anything her transformation into Virgo has increased this vanity. She is arrogant and aloof—anything that is not about her is just not important, and it vexes her when others do not recognize this.

Virgo's power is her perfection, a perfection that is so compelling that others cannot bring themselves to impede or interfere with her in any way, let alone harm her. Doing otherwise just feels "wrong."

Virgo may be vain but her beauty is not just her imagination. She is a gorgeous woman with petite features, luxurious blond hair held back by a coiffure. She wears a diaphanous white wrap of a pseudo-Grecian style. Jewelry adorns her arms and ankles but no so much as to draw attention away from her appearance. Virgo walks barefoot, confident that even the ground does not dare soil her feet.

ZODIAC SIGN

Virgo the Virgin is an earth-sign. The virgin symbolizes perfection, purity and order.

FUTURE AVATARS CONCEPTS

Medusa—gaze turns victims to stone, trapping them in a perfect state forever (combines perfection and earth concepts)



The Zodiac as a Supervillain Team

As a supervillain team, the Zodiac is unusual because it is not really a team at all. The members are random, drawn from all walks of life, and there is no guarantee that the new Zodiac member will have any interest in cooperating with the others. The signs encompass a wide range of personalities making conflict among the avatars very likely. This may be part of the reason the Prophecy has never been fulfilled—getting all twelve to stand together united would be quite a feat indeed.

From a game balance point of view this also makes it less likely the heroes will be faced with a dozen cooperating Zodiac supervillains all at once. It is more likely that the Zodiac will break up into smaller feuding groups as described in the **War of the Zodiac**.

Designing Additional Zodiac Avatars

There can only be one avatar of each Zodiac sign at a time, but if an avatar is eliminated there will always be another potential avatar ready to be awakened in their place. Successive avatars can reflect different aspects of the same sign and manifest quite different powers accordingly.

When creating your own avatars there are a few different approaches you can use to come up with a character concept for a given Zodiac sign.

The most direct approach is a concept derived from the name and/or symbol of the Zodiac—an avatar for Leo the lion who is half-man half-lion, an avatar of Taurus the bull who is a lumbering man-bull, etc. The character does not have to be a literal representation of the symbol. Scorpio has whip-lashes that are evocative of a scorpion's sting, but it is a loose connection at best. Taurus behaves a lot like a bull, lumbering around and charges at things, but physically he looks like any other powerhouse.

Another approach is to use the sign's element. Each sign falls under one of the four elements of fire, air, earth or water, as noted in the description of the sign on each avatar's character sheet. Aries (a fire-sign) and Capricorn (an earth-sign) follow this model, each having corresponding elemental powers.

Some Zodiac signs also have hidden or esoteric meanings associated with them, as noted in their descriptions. One of Pisces's associations is change and mutability, so Pisces's avatar is a shapechanger. Gemini represents duality or division, so Gemini's avatar has the ability to turn people against themselves by controlling their emotions.

Finally, an avatar could just reflect their sign in personality and appearance, not in thematic powers. They could have generic powers, such as being generally stronger, faster and more resistant to harm than an ordinary mortal, or even have basic cosmic powers. For example, a future avatar of Virgo could be a handsome perfectionist, physically perfect and with the ability to project cosmic blasts.

You can also blend these ideas, such as having primary powers based on the symbol but with additional powers based on the element. The avatar of Leo, a warrior evocative of a fierce lion surrounded by a fiery aura, uses this method.

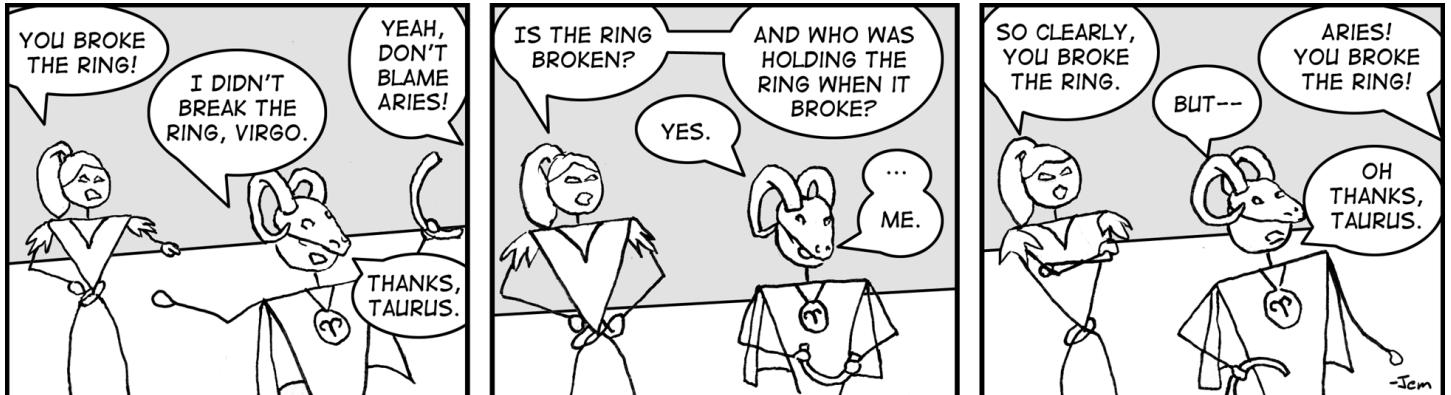
Introducing successive avatars lets you explore different character concepts for each sign. In this adventure the first Pisces was a magician (hidden meaning) and the second was a shapechanger (hidden meaning). The next could be an amphibian merman (symbol) or a character with water control (element).

Changing Avatars Back to Normal

Because the Zodiac Ring scenarios are about an artifact that grants apparently ordinary people super powers, players are more likely to focus on trying to remove the powers of their opponents than they might in other games.

It is up to you to decide if there is a way to change a Zodiac avatar back to a normal person. Players may expect such a solution, a silver bullet to eliminate the problem and put everything back to normal. If you want to run a simpler scenario, you could permit a means of reverting avatars to allow an easy happy ending. Players interested in complex plots may find it far more interesting to examine the repercussions of normal people who have had their lives suddenly changed forever, particularly if the default potential avatars were replaced by NPCs already known to the players. How does a superhero handle his former damsels in distress becoming a superhero in her own right, or even worse a supervillain? If you do introduce this kind of change to an NPC in an ongoing game and it turns out to be no fun for the player, consider letting the PCs discover a means to revert the NPC even if there was not one before.

Some possible methods of changing an avatar back to normal are listed. You may choose to include some or none of them as desired. If the method to turn a Zodiac avatar back to normal is sufficiently unpredictable or uncontrollable, it can happen as part of the plot but not provide the heroes with an easy means of completely defusing the Zodiac. If it is something the heroes can do themselves (bring avatars to point X or zap them with device Y) expect it to become the focus of the game. Of course reverting avatars to normal just



means someone else can be awakened as an avatar of that sign if the Zodiac Ring is still on the loose...

Change of Heart—Zodiac avatars are a reflection of their sign. If they undergo a drastic personality changes that put them at odds with their sign, they could spontaneously lose their powers and become normal people again. Aquarius is an idealist, believing that humanity can work together to build a better tomorrow. If he becomes disillusioned and pessimistic he could stop being a Zodiac avatar.

Burn Out—Using too much power could burn out a Zodiac avatar, making it impossible to channel cosmic power any longer. The person reverts to normal and may require some time convalescing. This could happen when avatars dramatically Extra Effort their powers and fatigue themselves beyond Exhausted—instead of merely going unconscious they burn out and collapse. It does not have to happen every time an avatar goes unconscious from fatigue, only when dramatically appropriate.

Power Struggle—If two Zodiac avatars struggle to control the Ring, the loser might be robbed of his avatar status entirely. Since an avatar cannot be forced to fight for the Ring, this can be used as a dramatic twist without being easily replicated by the heroes.

Zap Them—A method is found to remove an avatar's powers. This could be a magic ritual requiring the Zodiac to be lured to a mystic site (Stonehenge, Easter Island, the Great Pyramid), a technological device that blocks the cosmic rays that are giving them their powers, or psychic suggestion to get the “person within” to reject the avatar persona and return to normal. The technique could be all or nothing, requiring the heroes to gather the entire Zodiac in one place, or a piecemeal cure that is too difficult to use during combat but can cure avatars once they are captured.

Killing Zodiac Avatars

Unless the game is particularly grim, death is probably not a common occurrence. If the heroes accidentally cause the death of one of the more the vulnerable Zodiac avatars it may underscore that the awakened Zodiac are generally normal people who did not ask for this fate (see **The Gemini Dilemma**, page 26). If there is a schism and in-fighting within the Zodiac, it is more likely there will be deaths because the Zodiac are powerful but inexperienced—they have less restraint than the heroes would while fighting their former comrades.

There is a plot benefit to having avatars eliminated since it allows new avatars to be introduced, but you should be cautious of having too many fatalities for plot purposes, since it can frustrate the idealistic heroes and darken the tone of the game. A single death can be played as a tragedy, but repeated too often it starts to lose any meaning.



Zodiac Scenarios

The Zodiac Ring can be played as a very direct “smack the bad guys, grab the dingus” game or as a much more complex scenario with the Zodiac splintering and fighting against itself while the heroes have to deal with the ramifications of innocent people (possibly including loved ones or one of the heroes themselves) being transformed into super-powered avatars. Choose from the scenes outlines and plot options described below to customize the game to your taste.

Even after this scenario has run its course the Zodiac Ring can return as a plot device later on—new generations of avatars awakened to fill the gaps, new uses for the Ring’s cosmic powers, and so on.

Scenario Outline

Different combinations of scenes can be used to make Zodiac Ring a longer or shorter game:

stand-alone (1 game session)—Use scenes 1 and 2 only, focusing primarily on **The Gemini Dilemma** (the missing Senator). Scene 2 (fashion show) should spill out onto a main street to make it reasonably climactic. Consider using **Variant–Vulnerable Ring** (page 34). Only a fraction of the Zodiac make an appearance. The Zodiac gets nipped in the bud before it even gets started but could reappear later if the Ring is not permanently destroyed.

short series (2-3 game sessions)—Zodiac Rising. Use scenes 1 through 4. Scene 3 (oil rig) should be a pretty tough fight for the heroes followed by the climactic battle in scene 4 (football stadium). Leo may wrest the Ring away from Aries preventing the Zodiac from escaping and forcing a showdown.

epic (4 or more sessions)—War of the Zodiac. Use all Zodiac Rising scenes (1 through 4). The Zodiac breaks up and turns on itself, probably during scene 4 (football stadium). The Ring is split and two warring Zodiac camps each try to awaken more avatars to join them before confronting their brethren to unify the Zodiac and fulfill the Prophecy. Heroes awakened as Zodiac avatars or friendly avatars like Libra can help use a Ring fragment to track down the opposing Zodiacs.

micro-epic (1 game session)—Compress the entire War of the Zodiac into one game session. The Ring is already broken when the heroes become involved—Aries has half, Capricorn has the other half. Aries’s team appears at City Hall (scene 1) and awakens Gemini. Before the dust has even settled Capricorn’s team awakens Libra across town. She fights the Zodiac instead of joining them and sides with the heroes when they arrive. Libra provides the heroes with insight on the Zodiac as both teams race around and collect the remaining avatars behind the scenes. Both teams collide in a climactic battle at the football stadium (scene 4) when Leo, the last avatar, is awakened.

The order of the scenes determines which avatars are active and creates a certain dramatic build up (such as having a huge public battle at the football stadium at the climactic moment of the story arc, not at the beginning). You can change the order, skip some scenes, etc.

If you want to mix the Zodiac action with other story arcs in your game you can use any of the multi-game outlines above but alternate Zodiac games with other non-Zodiac games. Increase the time it takes to find each potential avatar with the Zodiac Ring.

Scenes should also be customized to accommodate any replacements you make in the potential avatars. If you want a hero’s boyfriend to be the potential avatar of Virgo instead of Elan Star you should change scene 2 (fashion show) to surroundings where that person would be encountered. If you can find a reason for that person to be present you might not need to change much at all (for example the boyfriend is a wealthy socialite, so you decide he is on the guest list).

If one of the PC heroes turns out to be a potential avatar you can have the Zodiac show up to awaken them in any setting so long as the heroes are there first for some reason. The Zodiac will not know a hero is the potential avatar. They may just think it is bad luck that the hero is already there, but really the Ring brought them to him.

Revelations

There are key points the heroes have to uncover to understand what is going on. When these revelations are made determines the pace of the game. Some of this information will change how the heroes deal with the Zodiac, such as learning that the villains they are fighting are really ordinary people transformed by the Ring (revelation number 2).

The revelations are listed in roughly the sequence in which they should occur. Red Herrings are listed where heroes are likely to temporarily come to the wrong conclusions about what is going on. These kind of false starts are fine and can make the game more interesting all around.

- 1) Aries is seeking out the missing members to complete the Zodiac. **Red Herring**—The disappearance of Senator Ikemann from City Hall will look like a kidnapping, leading the heroes to believe Aries has a political agenda or wants a ransom.
- 2) The Zodiac Ring is being used to give normal people (and sometimes not so normal people) superpowers. **Red Herring**—If the heroes learn that Aries was formerly the criminal known as Pyrophile they may incorrectly conclude that the Zodiac are just supervillains who have adopted a Zodiac theme. The heroes may also guess that Senator Ikemann already had manipulative powers and used them to gain his political office.
- 3) Only certain individuals are potential avatars of the Zodiac. There can only be one active avatar for each sign at a time.
- 4) Being awakened as a Zodiac avatar can change someone’s personality drastically. Normal citizens become arrogant megalomaniacs, unconcerned with the welfare of “mere” mortals. Even once trusted friends can become dangerous adversaries. The personality change is much smaller among those who had some of their Zodiac powers emerge slowly (the partially awakened).
- 5) Uniting the Zodiac will fulfill an ancient prophecy. This may grant the Zodiac avatars god-like power or possibly bring about a utopian New Age.
- 6) Avatars of the Zodiac are not automatically friendly with each other, nor are they necessarily malicious. Leo will attack anyone who does not submit to him. Libra is a hero. Other avatars will squabble and vie with Aries for control of the Ring. **Red Herring**—The first few Zodiac awakened by Aries are fairly passive in accepting his leadership and his vision for the Zodiac, but that is just a lucky break for him. The heroes are likely to assume that all Zodiac are united when they awaken. A rampaging Leo in scene 4 (football stadium) should demonstrate how incorrect that assumption is.



Gathering Info

So how do the heroes go about getting the information they need? Many of the revelations will occur due to direct action in the game, but other information can be gathered behind the scenes as the heroes try to piece together what it all means.

Basic Research—Background information about the Ring, the Prophecy and the Zodiac in general can come from characters with suitable skills. If none of the heroes have this kind of knowledge they may need to turn to an NPC for assistance, possibly even the **Ghost of Pisces** (page 33). Role-playing to get info is preferable to simply rolling a die.

knowledge (pop culture)

- 10 common meaning of Zodiac signs
- 15 elements associated with each sign
- 20 esoteric meanings associated with some signs

knowledge (arcane lore)

- same info as pop culture, but reduce DC by 5
- 15 Zodiac Ring is an ancient celestial artifact
- 20 Zodiac Ring is part of the cosmic Zodiac pattern—damaging the Ring damages the pattern
- 25 Octavius Erasmus is said to be foremost authority on the mystical theories of the Zodiac
- 30 prophecy of uniting the Zodiac

A character with access to research materials (libraries, etc) can take 20.

Examining the Ring—If the Ring is captured, the smaller arcane markings could be interpreted. This could provide more information than basic research, such as details of the Prophecy or clues of how to mystically turn avatars back to normal people.

knowledge (arcane lore), examining Ring

- same info as knowledge (arcane lore) in Basic Research (except finding Octavius Erasmus), but DC reduced by 10
- 25 specific powers of the Ring
- 25 methods for turning avatars back to normal people, if possible

A character with access to research materials (libraries, etc) can take 20.

Questioning captured avatars—If the heroes interrogate a captured Zodiac avatar they could gain valuable clues about the nature of the Zodiac and what is going on. The willingness of the prisoner to talk and the kind of information the heroes get will depend very much on who they capture and how the heroes approach them. Taurus is one the more informative prisoners because he was around from the beginning and knows all about the first Pisces (Octavius Erasmus) and how Aries got the Ring. Because he was partially awakened he is also still a fairly ordinary guy at heart unless something sets his temper off.

Hunting the Zodiac

Initial scenes are presumed to happen on the heroes' home turf, which is how they become involved in the first place. Later scenes can happen anywhere around the world as the Zodiac use the Ring to locate potential avatars and teleport to them. You can customize the scenes to emphasize an international globetrotting feel, just keep in mind that the heroes will have to be able to get to the scenes quickly.

If they do not have appropriate powers or resources to travel quickly it is best to keep things local and have most of the scenes occur near the heroes' home city. Why are all the potential avatars nearby when they could be anywhere in the world? Given that there are a handful of potential avatars for each sign at any time, the Zodiac is just finding those that are nearest to them.

If the heroes just wait for the Zodiac to strike again, they will have to rely on traditional means of getting alerted and involved as described in the **Enter the Heroes** section for each scene. After a few encounters the heroes are likely to look for means to track down or anticipate the Zodiac. How they do so will depend on their abilities. A few possibilities include:

- An inventor uses satellite data to detect trace particles emitted when the Zodiac use the Ring to teleport.
- A character with mystic or cosmic awareness enters a trance to attune themselves to the cosmos and sense the power of the Ring when it is being used.
- A friendly or PC Zodiac avatar discovers they can sense the Ring just by concentrating (see **Finding the Ring**, page 6)

A device or spell using the Inventor or Ritualist feat to detect the Ring when it teleports costs 12 pp, assuming the character has already gathered sufficient technical or mystical data, etc.

For plot purposes almost any method except an avatar's ability to sense the Ring should only detect the power spike when the Ring is used to teleport. That brings the heroes to the scene when there is action instead of finding the Zodiac sitting around trying to locate the next potential avatar. If the hero PCs don't have any such abilities they could rely on allies such as helpful scientists, reclusive mystics, etc. Having an allied or PC Zodiac avatar will make finding the Ring much easier.

Expect the Unexpected

Scene descriptions assume that the potential avatar in the previous scene was awakened and that all Zodiac avatars escaped. It is unlikely that things will always go quite that way.

- Even with the Ring's teleportation ability some Zodiac avatars may be left behind and captured. Captured Zodiac will be out of action until they are rescued or escape. Zodiac who do not teleport but successfully flee on their own can be easily located with the Zodiac Ring and reunited (see **Capturing Avatars**, page 33).
- The Ring itself may be captured, giving the heroes a useful interlude to examine and study it and requiring the Zodiac to come looking for it (see **Capturing the Ring**, page 33).

- Avatars may be killed or otherwise lose their powers. Aquarius, Gemini, and Virgo are all physically vulnerable and could be killed if heroes are careless (see **Killing Zodiac Avatars**, page 21).
- Unless the Zodiac are defeated it is unlikely that the heroes will prevent them from awakening a potential avatar they came looking for. Until the awakening process starts, neither the Zodiac nor the heroes know exactly who the person is, making it harder for the heroes to do things like whisk the target away. Once the awakening process does start it is very hard to interrupt. If the Zodiac is prevented from awakening a potential avatar sooner or later they will have to return and try again if they want to complete the Zodiac.
- The heroes may defeat the Zodiac sooner than you anticipated. All the avatars are locked up tight and the heroes have the Ring. If this victory seems premature, see the **Variant—Unexpected Avatars** (page 34) to introduce a wild card and get the ball rolling again.

Scaling Up or Down

Depending on the abilities of your heroes, you made need to scale the scenario up or down to provide a fun challenge. You increase the power of the villains by introducing avatars who are awakened behind the scenes earlier than listed. For example Scorpio does not appear until scene 2 (fashion show), but she could be awakened before scene 1 (city hall) instead.

You can decrease the power of the villains by leaving out avatars that are introduced behind the scenes, but this diminishes the threat of the Prophecy since the Zodiac will be not be as close to being complete. A better solution is to spread out the avatars in a particular scene so that the heroes do not have to fight them simultaneously. On the oil rig (scene 3) avatars can be scattered all over the place causing trouble. On the train (scene 5) avatars can be separated in different cars. The less the Zodiac stick together and use teamwork, the less of a threat they will be.

You can also emphasize the distractions in the environment to keep some of the avatars busy (for example, Taurus yelling at oil rig crew to leave him alone rather than charging towards the heroes) but recognize that if the villains are interacting with bystanders the heroes are likely to perceive this as a threat they should deal with immediately and move to engage.

Regardless of how you scale it, the heroes should recognize that the threat of the Zodiac is steadily increasing as more avatars are awakened, and that before long the heroes might be completely overwhelmed.

Prelude

Octavius Erasmus was a scholar and mystic, a magician of the occult arts who spent decades sequestered away in his tower cobbling together obscure bits of arcane lore.

Erasmus had always been fascinated by the Zodiac and its mystical patterns. His years of study had made him perhaps the foremost authority on it in the world. One goal had long occupied his thoughts—the fabled Zodiac Ring, said to be a true physical embodiment of the cosmic cycle. Legends said that it in ancient times it had been laid in mortal hands by the celestial powers, so

that one day when humanity was ready it could inherit the mantle of godhood and steer its own destiny.

When Erasmus finally discovered the resting place of the Ring in the crypts of a Medieval monastery, he hesitated to leave the security of his scrolls and tomes and dare such a bold venture, but in the end his curiosity won out. With the Zodiac Ring in hand, it was a simple matter for Erasmus to awaken himself as the avatar of the Zodiac sign Pisces, a potential he had within him all along and which no doubt had contributed to his natural talent in the occult and his fascination with the Zodiac.

Now as Pisces, he saw clearly that it was his destiny to awaken the other Zodiac avatars and thus fulfill the prophecy. Because of his occult lore, Pisces believed it would be most auspicious to awaken the Zodiac in their natural order. Since he (Pisces) was the first to awaken the next would be Aries, followed by Taurus, followed by Gemini, etc. Using the power of the Ring, Pisces teleported himself into the prison cell of Sammy Jeffries (aka Pyrophile) the potential avatar of Aries. Pisces awakened Aries then proceeded to lecture him about destiny, the inscrutable threads of fate, and the pattern of the Zodiac before Aries reminded him they should get away before the guards busted in.

Pisces was excited to have another Zodiac avatar for company and to share the great adventure they were embarking upon. Aries was happy for the unexpected prison break, but he was fully convinced Pisces was a crackpot and a patronizing, long-winded crackpot to boot.

The next avatar Pisces located and awakened was Dean Loman, the potential avatar of Taurus. Like Aries, Taurus was already partially awakened so he remained a fairly ordinary joe, giving them far more in common with each other than with the high-minded hermit magician. Despite his previous failures, Jeffries was an opportunist. He recognized this was a once in a lifetime chance, and he was not about to waste it being bossed around by some old know-it-all. Confident that Taurus would go along with him after the fact, Aries double-crossed Pisces. He attacked when Pisces's defenses were down, destroying him before the magician realized what was happening.

Did Aries intend to kill Pisces? His powers had been magnified by his awakening, and this was the first time he really used them, so Aries may have killed Pisces when he only intended to incapacitate him. Aries has never seemed to shed any tears about it.

Taking the ring for himself Aries followed Pisces's plan to awaken the other Zodiac, but with the important modification that he would be the leader, not Pisces. With his brains and Taurus's brawn what could go wrong?

Aries continued where Pisces left off and located the potential avatar of Gemini. Despite listening to endless hours of the magician's theories, Aries does not have the theoretical knowledge of the Zodiac that Pisces had. After Gemini he will just try to find avatars at random, not bothering to awaken them in a particular order the way Pisces intended.

Part 1-Zodiac Rising

Each of the scenes below has basically the same goal for the Zodiac—find and awaken a potential Zodiac avatar. Several avatars are awakened behind the scenes without drawing enough attention to attract heroes (Scorpio, Aquarius, Pisces (II), and Cancer, plus Aries and Taurus before the scenario starts). You can choose to create encounters for those avatars or skip scenes that are listed below and have those avatars awakened without the heroes getting involved.

At the start of the scenario Aries is the major impetus behind the Zodiac. He is the self-appointed ringleader (so to speak), at least until someone else in the Zodiac decides to stop listening to him.

1) Awakening Gemini-City Hall

Aries uses the Ring to transport himself and Taurus to the vicinity of the potential avatar of Gemini. Unbeknownst to Aries, the person he is looking for is the popular senator Robert Ikemann who is visiting City Hall on a political junket.

Aries has not yet adjusted to his increased power and still thinks like a small-time crook. He enters the building circumspectly, ironically burning through a fire door or having Taurus punch a hole in a rear wall ("I said quietly you big oaf!"). They sneak along as best they can, using the Ring to home in on the potential Gemini, but this sneaking inevitably fails the first time they encounter a security guard or a visitor sign-in desk. They initially panic and resort to excessive force, Aries sending gouts of fire lashing down hallways to scatter guards and Taurus smashing entire floors to rout panicked city clerks, but Aries soon recognizes that his power is truly far greater than ever before. His initial panic changes to glee, and drunk with power he sends rippling waves of flame in all directions, endangering the building and everyone in it.

Zodiac Present

Aries w/Ring and Taurus. Add Scorpio if desired. Gemini awakened during the scene.

Enter the Heroes

Heroes could be at City Hall for various reasons in heroic or secret ID. The scene makes more sense if the heroes are keeping a low profile themselves—Aries is not cocky enough yet to march in while superheroes are getting awarded medals on the front steps. If the heroes are not already present there will be plenty of opportunity to notice the trouble as city-wide police alerts, fire alarms, etc. are issued as City Hall burns. Observant heroes may just smell the smoke.

Heroes may already have heard that Senator Ikemann is visiting City Hall from reading the papers or watching the news. This kind of foreshadowing will just make them more likely to fall for the kidnapping red herring.

Action

If desired Aries and Taurus could become separated during the chaos. Some heroes could bump into Taurus stomping around the hallowed halls trying to figure out where Aries has wandered off to while others confront Aries himself. This is useful if heroes are themselves arriving separately.

Aries should reach the Senator before the heroes intervene. If you want a gradual revelation of the Zodiac Ring plot it is important that

the no one sees Senator Ikemann being transformed into Gemini. Most civilians will be too busy running for their lives, and the people still near the Senator when Aries awakened him were already incapacitated by the searing heat or falling debris.

Gemini could be disoriented by the transformation and out of the action—in the flaming chaos of the burning City Hall he can be overlooked as another dazed civilian. Or Gemini could be fully alert and standing by Aries's side reveling in his power, leading the heroes to believe that three villains attacked City Hall, not two.

The heroes will probably encounter Aries in the same rotunda where he found the Senator. Fiery explosions have blown out much of the ceiling and outer wall, leaving the chamber exposed to the sky. Battered and unconscious civilians are scattered about the room, including the Senator's aides, assistants, and a few bodyguards who made a futile attempt to hold the door against Aries. Flames are spreading everywhere and Aries stands in the center, the very heart of the raging inferno.

Despite the thrill of his new power Aries has no interest in a prolonged fight. He is eager to get going and find more Zodiac avatars. After all what's the point of being the boss if you don't have any underlings? It is too early to let any of the Zodiac get captured, so you should make sure Aries is careful his allies are nearby before using the Ring to teleport them all away, leaving the heroes with a burning City Hall on their hands. The flash of light emanating from the Ring when Aries teleports should make it clear to any heroes watching that the Ring is the source of that power.

Bystanders

city officials (Politicians, M&M Chapter 11)

clerks (Bystanders, M&M Chapter 11)

police (M&M Chapter 11)

firemen (M&M Chapter 11)

Revelations

Villains are using Zodiac-themed names. The Ring that Aries carries lets them teleport.

Shticks

Loose lips—Taurus may slip up and call his buddy Aries "Sammy." Investigations will easily uncover that a super-criminal with fire powers named Samuel Jeffries recently disappeared from a state prison.

Burning down the house—Thanks to Aries, fires are spreading in numerous places throughout City Hall. Many city workers are fleeing the building but there are people trapped by the flames and unable to get out, as well as people injured in the attack who are unconscious, pinned under rubble, etc. Many opportunities for heroic rescues, as well as moral dilemmas as heroes must choose between smacking the bad guys and saving the victims.

There will be plenty of people in danger even after the Zodiac villains teleport away. Run through one or two rescues in detail, skimming over the rest as needed. Describing a single victim in detail and having them thank the heroes personally will make the rescues seem more real. This gives the heroes a chance to feel good about the encounter even though they failed to catch the villains. It should also highlight that Aries is a menace who needs to be hunted down and stopped.

Media coverage—An attack on City Hall and the abduction of a Senator is a big news draw. The scene will quickly be crawling

with reporters with plenty of questions. Heroes may be pressed to explain to the public how they let this happen, why they couldn't stop the criminals, etc.

Political entanglements—And if the press isn't bad enough, city authorities will be furious. Since the criminals aren't around to blame, the heroes are likely to take the proverbial heat. What took them so long to get here? What kind of heroes can't even protect City Hall? How could they let these criminals escape with the Senator right under their noses? Heroes' previous relationships with the authorities may make this better or worse. City officials may be sorely disappointed that well-loved and trusted heroes let them down, but dark vigilante heroes might actually find themselves taking the blame for endangering civilians.

Aftermath

This scene provides an easy way to bring independent heroes together. The disappearance of the Senator will give them a common goal going forward even before they understand the threat of the Zodiac.

Heroes are likely to mistake this for a kidnapping centered around Senator Ikemann's politics—the authorities will certainly characterize it that way. Investigation of "who would want to kidnap the Senator and why" will lead down a hundred avenues, all of them dead ends. The Senator was a well known and very active politician. He had many friends and of course many political enemies as well.

If the heroes investigate Aries and Taurus they will find no previous record of them under those names. They are likely to learn to learn about the recent disappearance of Pyrophile aka Samuel Jeffries from his prison cell, particularly if Taurus said Aries's name. The heroes are likely to think Pyrophile just came up with a new supervillain name and theme since he already had fire powers.

The Gemini Dilemma

Most of the Zodiac villains are normal people who did not ask to be transformed into inhuman godlings, but Gemini is a well-known Senator. How do the heroes explain to the authorities that one day he abandoned his years of public service and just became a supervillain?

If the heroes recognize that Gemini is Senator Ikemann before they know about the Zodiac avatars and the awakening process, they may suspect that Ikemann had manipulative powers all along which he used to further his political career, but that he only now came out as a supervillain. If the heroes investigate they will find nothing unnatural in his past to support this theory, but that might not deter them until they learn more about the Ring and the avatars.

Like some of the other Zodiac avatars Gemini does not have much protection against physical harm. He could easily be accidentally hurt or even killed if the heroes take a callous approach and assume that all so-called villains can be attacked with unrestrained force (see **Killing Zodiac Avatars**, page 21). Even if the heroes are careful to pull their punches, collateral hazards like collapsing buildings or a missed energy blasts could put Gemini in danger. Consider using GM's Fiat to treat a hero's attack as lethal instead of stun if they are being careless and it seems like an attack that would endanger a normal person.

Once the heroes discover that Gemini is Senator Ikemann they are faced with two dilemmas. First, Gemini is a menace, but the heroes should be concerned about harming the Senator as discussed above. Second, the authorities and the press will still be demanding updates on the search for the "kidnapped" Senator. What can the heroes say? If they stand in front of reporters and just blurt out that a well-loved Senator is actually a supervillain all hell will naturally break loose. Heroes may score hero points for just for weathering the backlash.

Senator Ikemann is just one of many people caught up in the drama of the Zodiac, but his fame forces the heroes to confront the issue. Because of the attention from the authorities and the media, **The Gemini Dilemma** will be a central issue to begin with, but as the scenario unfolds the bigger picture of the Zodiac, the Ring and the Prophecy will take center stage.



2) Awakening Virgo-Fashion Show

The heroes might be frustrated that all their investigations into the kidnapping of Senator Ikemann are getting them nowhere. Lucky for them the Zodiac strikes again, crashing a trendy fashion show looking for the potential avatar of Virgo.

Zodiac Present

Aries w/Ring, Taurus, Gemini and Scorpio. Scorpio was awakened behind the scenes since the last encounter. Add Aquarius or Pisces (II) if desired. Virgo awakened during the scene.

Enter the Heroes

If a hero has a secret ID that would fit the scene, such as a reporter covering the show or a socialite on the invite list, they could be here when the trouble starts. If no characters fit directly, one could just have a friend or acquaintance who invited them. A hero in secret ID could be caught in the crowd when the Zodiac burst in, unable to sneak away and change into hero ID. The hero may be stuck until other heroes arrive and provide a distraction, but could gain valuable insight listening to the chit chat between the Zodiac. The other heroes are alerted as police etc. race towards the commotion at the building.

Action

Aries knows the potential avatar is here but he does not know who it is, so the Zodiac's first move will be to prevent any civilians from escaping for fear of losing her. Aries's walls of flame, Scorpio's cracking lashes, and Taurus's menacing glower will herd the audience and models into a panicked knot. Aries will waste some time trying to use the Ring to pick out the potential avatar from the crowd (an impossible task).

Once the heroes arrive the other members of the Zodiac will keep them busy while Aries gives up on pinpointing the potential avatar and just blindly awakens whomever it is. This will be the first awakening the heroes witness, so emphasize the impressive fury of the cosmic fires surrounding both Aries and Elan Star, Elan's initial shock and terror at being surrounded by those fires in the first place, and her complete change of personality as she emerges as the aloof and haughty Virgo. After some fighting, Aries will once again use the Ring to teleport the Zodiac away.

Bystanders

fashion models (Bystanders, M&M Chapter 11)
audience (Bystanders, M&M Chapter 11)
photographers (Reporter, M&M Chapter 11)

Revelations

The Ring is transforming people into superhumans, filling the ranks of the Zodiac. The transformation is involuntary and changes the subject's personality drastically.

Heroes may learn that Gemini is really Senator Ikemann now or any time later. They may simply guess but not know for certain once they see Virgo transform, or they could knock Gemini's mask off in a battle or just recognize his confident baritone.

Shticks

Crowd control—Even if Gemini fought at City Hall, this will be the first encounter where there are bystanders for him to manipulate, a situation he will take advantage of to the utmost. Heroes will have to contend with hordes of civilians consumed with hate for them, followed a moment later by another crowd struggling just to

touch them and express their fanatical love. Gemini takes genuine pleasure in watching the chaos his manipulation causes, even as one of mobs collides with another and the infectious emotions create a tangled mess. Heroes will have their hands full dealing with the crowd without hurting them. Award hero points for those making an extra effort to restrain the bystanders without harming them.

The encounter should leave the heroes with a clear picture that Gemini is a completely amoral manipulator, making the revelation that he is Senator Ikemann even more shocking.

No flash photography—The fashion show is packed with photographers, some of whom might try to get an exclusive shot of the heroes in action and blind a hero at the worst possible moment. Appropriate for an unlucky or hapless PC, or one who is having too easy of a time. Award hero points if it actually puts the hero at a disadvantage.

Aftermath

Since the heroes witnessed Elan Star's transformation into Virgo, they will probably want to know why Aries picked her—did she already have superpowers, some past associations with Jeffries, etc? Any investigation of her background will turn up nothing out of the ordinary for a rising supermodel.

Authorities and the press will be keyed up over the missing Senator and the heroes' second public failure to stop the Zodiac. Heroes may be feeling the heat.

It should now be clear to the heroes that this is more than just villains coming up with a new names and costumes. Any witnesses will recognize that it was the Ring that caused the transformation, so the heroes should be hurrying to find out anything they can about it (see **Gathering Info**, page 23).

The Zodiac will be busy finding and awakening Aquarius and Pisces (II), leaving heroes some downtime to research. Both awakenings happen without incident, at Aquarius's college campus and Pisces's apartment respectively, so the heroes do not get involved. If the heroes have come up with a means of sensing the Ring's powers (see **Hunting the Zodiac**, page 23) they may sense those awakenings but arrive after the Zodiac have left. These failures help the heroes refine their detection technique and arrive sooner next time.

3) Awakening Capricorn-Oil Rig

The Zodiac's search for the potential avatar of Capricorn teleports them to an oceanic oil rig. It can be in the middle of the sea or the coast near the heroes' city as needed.

The rig is fairly large so it takes Aries some time to locate the correct individual, giving the heroes more time to arrive on the scene. Meanwhile the other members of the Zodiac wreak havoc among the alarmed rig workers. Taurus smashes whole sections of the rig when workers try to drive him away, Scorpio plays cat and mouse, and Gemini toys with the crew's emotions for his own amusement. The rig is likely to be substantially damaged by the time the heroes arrive, with plumes of fire reaching up into the sky and workers running around in a panic trying to put them out.

Zodiac Present

Aries w/Ring, Taurus, Scorpio, Gemini, Virgo, Aquarius, and Pisces (II). Aquarius and Pisces (II) awakened behind the scenes since the last encounter. Capricorn awakened during the scene.

Enter the Heroes

The rig will issue an SOS call once it is boarded which will be picked up by Coast Guard and other authorities. The heroes could be in the middle of a meeting with the authorities when the alert comes in. If they have no means of rapid transport, they will be hustled onto a fast chopper and flown to the rig.

Action

By now the heroes should be quite worried about the increasing odds. The Zodiac start this scene with seven members and finish with eight, which is likely to give them a substantial advantage over the heroes. If this keeps going on the Zodiac will soon become too powerful to stop.

Now that the heroes have some understanding of the Ring's power, they are likely to make some bold moves to get it away from Aries or destroy it. As usual Aries will look for the potential avatar while the other Zodiac fight the heroes or just cause mayhem. They are not very organized and may spend as much time bickering with each other as they spend fighting. They can be grouped or scattered across the rig as desired.

Aquarius's presence also changes the situation considerably. The heroes are likely to be caught off guard by his ability to counter and neutralize their powers. If they pay any attention to his lectures about peace and a New Age, they may recognize that his credo does not really jibe with his allies (see **Converting Aquarius**, page 33).

Include small signs of dissension in the ranks to set the stage for Leo and the revelation that the Zodiac is not inherently united. Capricorn will not outright oppose Aries so soon after his awakening, but he will remain impassive in the face of any orders his would-be leader blurts at him, fighting the battle his own way.

Bystanders

oil rig workers (mix of Bystanders and Thugs, M&M Chapter 11, either unarmed or using wrenches, pipes etc as clubs)

Revelations

Appearance of Pisces (II) reveals that new avatars replace destroyed avatars, assuming heroes have already learned of

the previous Pisces (Octavius Erasmus). Small hints that Zodiac avatars are not inherently united.

Shticks

Man overboard—Workers are knocked into the sea by explosions, the shuddering rig, or damage to the floor plates. Conscious workers can likely stay afloat for some time but injured or unconscious workers may be in more immediate danger. For more excitement add flaming fuel or oil spills to threaten the bobbing workers. Award hero points for rescuing civilians. Avatars may also become separated from the rest of the Zodiac this way and be left behind when they teleport away.

She's gonna blow—Damage to the main drilling shaft threatens to cause a pressure explosion, engulfing the entire rig in oil and flammable gasses. There should be warning signs of the rupture (trembling gantries and foremen running to shut down valves), so heroes can intervene to seal the breach. This can provide a dramatic ending to the battle, with the Zodiac teleporting out but leaving the heroes to scramble to stop the explosion.

Aftermath

There will lots of opportunity for the heroes to help with the clean up and rescue after the battle, with the rig in flames and countless workers struggling to keep afloat. If heroes have powers that could make a difference consider including an actual oil spill from the damaged rig. Conscientious heroes should not rush off without helping, but the heroes should feel that even while they are doing these good deeds the Zodiac are on the loose again, preparing to strike who knows where next.

The oil rig is a likely place for the Zodiac mistakenly teleport away without a team mate, particularly if an avatar went into the sea (see **Capturing Avatars**, page 33).

4) Awakening Leo-Football Stadium

Aries uses the Zodiac Ring to find the potential avatar of Leo, and it teleports them smack into the middle of a major league football game. The sold-out crowd's cheers turn to gasps of astonishment as the Zodiac appear on the field just as the quarterback hands off the ball to star running back Darryl Cage, the unwitting potential avatar of Leo.

Not all the football players will not immediately recognize what has happened, so they will continue the play unless the referees blow the whistle. Mayhem breaks out on the field as the football players and supervillains collide, all broadcast live to thousands of households across the nation.

This scene is well-suited to a large and dramatic battle. It can be the end of the Zodiac, or a turning point where the Zodiac is broken by internal schism if you want to continue with the **War of the Zodiac** scenario. Since the action is being televised (in addition to being watched first-hand by thousands of people), it is a good chance for heroes to really shine and make up for previous defeats.

Zodiac Present

Aries w/Ring, Taurus, Scorpio, Gemini, Virgo, Aquarius, Pisces (II) and Capricorn. Leo awakened during the scene.

Enter the Heroes

The game is being televised live, so even if the heroes cannot detect the Ring's powers they will be alerted quickly. They could be taking a break back at their HQ, relaxing and watching their home team on the tube when the trouble starts. And they've got money on this game!

Action

The action for this scene can be broken down into two phases: before Leo is awakened and afterwards. Before Leo is awakened it is a good time to play up the football shticks outlined below. This can give the scene a fun or even light-hearted tone for the players as their heroes slug it out on the gridiron.

Leo's awakening will change all that. In previous scenes, awakening a new avatar just added another character to the Zodiac, but Leo is a menace of nearly primal fury. He will attack anyone to demonstrate his dominance, endangering Zodiac, hero and civilian alike.

As soon as he is awakened, Leo roars and makes for Aries, attacking anyone who gets in his way. His Zodiac instincts drive him to seize the Ring, plus Aries has probably declared himself as Leo's would-be leader, a claim that cannot go unchallenged. Aries's fire has no effect on Leo so he will scream for help from the other Zodiac, particularly Taurus. They may or may not help him, though Taurus is unlikely to turn his back on his buddy. It is a rude awakening for Aries, shattering any illusions he had that he could retain leadership of the Zodiac just by virtue of having the Ring.

If nothing is stopping Leo, Aries will beg for Aquarius to nullify his powers. In the middle of a knock-down drag-out fight, this could result in Leo being hit by a super-powered attack (whether from heroes or Zodiac) before it is realized he is defenseless. That could accidentally kill Leo outright (GM's Fiat). Leo could also burn out his powers by exhausting himself (see **Changing Avatars Back to Normal**, page 20).

If you plan on this battle being the big finale, Leo should snatch the Ring away from Aries if no one else has already done so, preventing

the Zodiac from escaping. This forces a showdown between the Zodiac and the heroes.

If you want this to lead into **War of the Zodiac**, the Ring breaks into two pieces when Leo tries to wrest it from Aries (see **Splitting the Ring**, page 6). Capricorn rebels and tries to take one half. Aries may be left with the other. See **Picking Sides** (page 30) to determine how the avatars should split up. The schism should occur after Leo runs amuck—if the Zodiac splits up before that they might be forced to unite again to fight off Leo. If the Ring is not broken by Leo, it could break when Capricorn tries to seize it instead. If the Ring is not broken here the schism could occur behind the scenes, but it is preferable to have the heroes witness the break up of the Zodiac.

Bystanders

football players (Soldier, M&M Chapter 11, Str 16, Con 16, add All-Out Attack, Fast Overrun, Improved Overrun feats, replace equipment with armor 2, use appropriate attacks like slam or overrun instead of punches)

sports fans (Bystanders, M&M Chapter 11)

security guards (Thugs, M&M Chapter 11, replace equipment with handcuffs, radio)

police (M&M, Chapter 11)

Revelations

Conflict between Zodiac avatars. Possibly the breaking of the Ring and the avatars taking sides.

Shticks

Get in the game—Someone grabs the Zodiac Ring, and heroes and villains start chasing each other down the field trying to recover it. Football players get caught up in the moment and play offense or defense depending on which end zone the Ring bearer is unwittingly running towards—naturally the heroes wind up on the same side as their home team. The announcers try to call the action over the stadium PA and the crowd goes wild!

Fans on the field—Fans jump the barricades and charge the field, irate that anyone interferes with their team. Rioting fans could prove a threat to heroes and villains alike, and certainly a distraction to heroes forced to take their eyes off the Zodiac to prevent anyone getting hurt. Gemini will use any crowds (or football players) to his advantage, fueling the emotional fires.

Low-flying blimp—What's a football game without a blimp? Originally providing aerial television coverage, the blimp dips closer to get a better look at the chaos erupting on the field. A stray (or intentional) energy blast could rip a gaping hole in the gas bag and bring it careening down on the stadium crowd, requiring heroic intervention. Oh the humanity! [note: Blimps use helium not hydrogen. Helium is not flammable, but it will make your voice squeaky, which could prove embarrassing when a hero appears before the cameras to take credit for the save.]

Aftermath

If you are not continuing with the **War of the Zodiac** scenario, a win for the heroes could mean the end of the Zodiac, with the heroes fighting to victory on national television.

If Leo survives with his powers intact he will go his own way, independent of the other Zodiac, creating a completely separate menace for the heroes to deal with. Or he could demand complete fealty from the other avatars and enforce it with an iron fist, a volatile situation for as long as it lasts.



Part 2-War of the Zodiac

In the War of the Zodiac, the Ring is broken into two halves, and avatar turns against avatar in a struggle to gain control. The heroes chase after both groups of avatars as they chase after each other. Heroes may join forces with some avatars such as Libra or a disaffected Aquarius, or find avatars in their own ranks. Having avatars on their side will be very useful if the heroes can capture and use part of the Ring.

The Zodiac Rising scenes were fairly linear, but in the War of the Zodiac the action becomes much more free-form and unpredictable. Possible scenes are given, but the order they occur in and how they play out will depend on your preferences and the actions of the heroes. For example, the heroes could enter a scene tracking down one team of avatars, only to have the other team appear and ambush the first, resulting in a three-way free for all.

Scenes are given to introduce the remaining avatars, but by now it is likely that some avatars will have been eliminated, and the Zodiac will be hunting for the next potential avatars to fill those slots. You can create new scenes for those new avatars or have them awakened behind the scenes as desired. Potential avatars could be anywhere, leading to additional complications. For example, one team of Zodiac could be discovered in the middle of an assault on the secret base of a major criminal organization. The Zodiac have no real interest in the organization, but the potential avatar they are trying to reach is a lowly minion somewhere in the base.

Picking Sides

Aries believes that because he holds the Ring and is the one awakening them, the Zodiac avatars will naturally recognize that he is the leader. Most newly awakened avatars go along with this for a time as they adjust to their new condition, but once they get their bearings and see Aries's failings they may reconsider. More headstrong personalities like Sagittarius or Capricorn are unlikely to endure Aries's commands for long, and an avatar like Leo will not tolerate any other creature lording over him without a fight.

In **Zodiac Rising**, Capricorn is likely to be the one who defies Aries, forcing the other avatars to pick sides. A sample division is provided, but these may change based on events in your own game. For example, if Capricorn accidentally crushed Scorpio in a previous fight, she is more likely to hold a grudge and side with whoever is standing against him. Some avatars may also have already been eliminated.

Aries' team—Gemini, Taurus and Virgo

Capricorn's team—Aquarius, Pisces and Scorpio

Taurus is still loyal to his buddy Sammy and is unlikely to abandon him regardless of how much Aries yells at him. Aquarius is frustrated that Aries does not see the importance of bringing the New Age so he is ready for a change of leadership. Scorpio is just sick of Aries and his posturing. Virgo would probably rather leave Aries as well, but she may be too haughty and wait for a personal invitation, leaving her stuck with the wrong team.

When the Ring is split it will break with the following signs on each half, with Aries and Capricorn probably each getting half in Scene 4 unless the heroes grabbed one. Feel to adjust this split so long as the Ring breaks evenly with six opposing signs on each side.

Left half signs (Aries)—Capricorn, Aquarius, Pisces, Aries, Taurus, Gemini

Right half signs (Capricorn)—Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius

Each half of the Ring can only locate or awaken avatars whose signs are on it. Each team will be scrambling to awaken what new avatars they can to gain the upper hand. Aries's team is at a serious disadvantage since they probably have far fewer avatars available to awaken. This will make his team easier pickings compared to Capricorn and may motivate Aries to some desperate action. Even if Aries cannot locate any potential avatars he can locate active avatars like Capricorn whose sign are on his half of the Ring. Aries's team could strike at any time, though it may not go well for them.

You can also run the **War of the Zodiac** without breaking the Ring, but that will leave the side that does not have the Ring at a serious disadvantage and make the action more predictable.

5) Awakening Sagittarius-Express Train

Capricorn uses his half of the Ring to locate the potential avatar of Sagittarius, transporting his team on to a racing cross-country passenger train. The train is hosting a private high stakes card game attended by a number of unsavory characters, among them gentleman gambler Montgomery Alexander Beaumont.

Zodiac Present

Capricorn w/Ring half, Aquarius, Pisces, Scorpio and Cancer. Cancer awakened behind the scenes since the last encounter. Sagittarius awakened during the scene.

Enter the Heroes

If the heroes do not have some means of detecting the Ring's powers in use and getting to a scene quickly, they may have a hard time getting here before Sagittarius is awakened. If the Zodiac have not already caused too much alarm on the mostly empty train, they may stay for a while as Capricorn and Sagittarius come to terms, giving the heroes time to make their entrance.

Action

The train is divided into open cars with rows of seats, passenger cabin cars with a narrow hallway down one side, and dining cars. The train is far below maximum occupancy, the inter-city express being not as popular as it used to be in the old days.

The interior of the train is very close quarters. The fight is likely to spill outside with flyers racing alongside and more nimble characters fighting on the roof. Cancer will sit still until trouble starts. His size makes him a tight fit, but it will not slow him down as he crushes seats and rips apart doorways to make larger openings for himself to reach his opponents. Scorpio will take the roof, springing from car to car and looking for opportunities for ambush. Heroes flying alongside the train may be in for a rude surprise and a rough landing when a startled Aquarius sees them and reflexively neutralizes their powers. Pisces will guard Aquarius, or at least stay in his general vicinity in some form or another while Capricorn looks for Sagittarius. The gamblers and their bodyguards do not pose a serious threat to the Zodiac but their resistance may precipitate violence.

Revelations

None

Bystanders

gamblers (Politicians, M&M Chapter 11)
gambler bodyguards (Thugs, M&M Chapter 11, pistols but no leather jackets)
passengers (Bystanders, M&M Chapter 11)

Shticks

Throw hero off the train—A hero or villain who gets thrown off the train is probably out of the fight (and badly roughed up) if they do not have some movement powers (flight, super-speed, etc.) or someone to retrieve them. Ejected avatars could be left behind when the Zodiac teleport out.

Fighting on the roof—The roof provides more room to maneuver and is clear of bystanders, but it also increases the risk of falling off the train. Scorpio will start on the roof, practically daring heroes to leap from car to car after her. Periodic hazards like low overhead trestles or bridges should keep the combatants on their toes.

Decoupling cars—If heroes are on cars to the rear of the villains, Scorpio may lash out with her whips and cut the coupling connecting the cars, letting the heroes and the rear of the train drift free unless the heroes act fast and jump forward. If her teammates are far enough ahead Scorpio will repeat this trick again and again, cutting each car loose ahead of the heroes and watching them struggle to keep up. For Scorpio this is a good time. The upside is that the passengers in the cars that are left behind are basically out of danger as they coast to a halt.

Something on the tracks—If hard-pressed, Capricorn is cold-blooded enough to use his rock control to create a landslide in front of the train, giving the heroes the choice of interfering with him or saving the train and all the passengers aboard. He will make sure the heroes see the danger and will create it far enough away that the heroes will have time to intervene if they hurry—he wants to distract the heroes, not simply wreck the train.

Runaway train—Damage to the steering compartment could prevent the engine from decelerating, sending a runaway train straight into the crowded rail-yard in city center. The emergency brakes could be used, but at these speeds they are just as likely to derail the train.

Aftermath

Sagittarius and Capricorn come to terms, with Sagittarius agreeing to act as Capricorn's advisor and support him as leader. Sagittarius's strategic genius may cement Capricorn's advantage and spell real trouble for Aries and the heroes.

If the fight on the train ended in a wreck the heroes may stay to help to clean up the mess and assist in the rescue. If the heroes feel it was their fault that they did not stop the wreck, letting them help the victims gives them a chance to make up for it and feel heroic again.

6) Magician's Tower

The heroes investigations may lead them to the tower of the late Octavius Erasmus. It is a crumbling ruin deep in the Scottish moors, but looks are deceiving. The interior is a maze of spiral corridors and great halls, far larger on the inside than the outside. It is proof that though the magician may be dead his magic lives on.

The Magician's Tower can be an colorful trove of information or an actual adventure in itself, with mystical wards and guardians still protecting the magician's secrets. A few possibilities within the tower include:

- Escher stairwells, where you have to go down to go up, and one person's ceiling is another person's floor.
- A monstrous face engraved on a door demands an answer to a riddle before letting anyone pass. Mystical fields reflect attempts to breach the door by force and the face snaps at anyone trying to touch it.

Deflect w/Reflection 12

Aura Strike 10 bite–characters pulling away from the snarling teeth will avoid being bit

- A large mirror half shrouded by a curtain catches a hero's eye. The heroes may note something sinister in their reflection a moment before their evil doppelgangers emerge and attacks them (use same stats as heroes). If a doppelganger escapes the tower it could run amuck as an evil imitation of the hero.
- Caged demons, imps and spirits of various sorts are trapped by Erasmus's wards until someone releases them. With his death that could be quite a long wait. They will whine piteously or bargain for release. Some could be informative, revealing secrets of the tower or the Zodiac, while others could really be terrible demons disguising themselves in more pitiful forms to elicit sympathy and release. (Demon M&M Chapter 11)
- Heavy bound oak doors that open into strange worlds or the distant past.

If you want to introduce the **Ghost of Pisces** this is a likely place to find him, wandering forlorn among his precious books and other worldly possessions, lamenting his ignominious fate. Heroes with an arcane bent might return to explore the tower further at a later date and uncover more of the magician's secrets. Did Erasmus build this tower himself, or are its roots far older still? Who know what mysteries await?

7) Awakening Libra-City Hall, Part 2

"Awaken Libra. You are of the Zodiac. Together we shall crush all who stand against us."

"Wrong Capricorn. Libra fights for justice!"

Police Detective Dani Walker is not having a good day. After being chewed out by her Captain for disregarding department procedure (again) she was called down to City Hall to apologize personally. Trudging down the broad marble steps outside the building lost in thought, about the last thing she expects is for Capricorn and his fellow Zodiac avatars to appear in the middle of the street. Then again, she does not suspect that she is the potential avatar of Libra either.

The action has come full circle, coincidentally bringing the Zodiac right back to City Hall. If Libra is the only Zodiac remaining to be awakened then it is a fine time to have Aries's team and any other remaining Zodiac show up for a battle royale.

Zodiac Present

Capricorn w/Ring half, Aquarius, Gemini, Sagittarius, Scorpio and Cancer. Libra awakened during the scene. Remaining active Zodiac avatars arrive shortly thereafter.

Enter the Heroes

Regardless of the methods the heroes have developed for tracking the movements of the Ring, this is right in their backyard. Heroes could respond to emergency alerts or just hear the fighting as Libra takes on the rest of the Zodiac single-handed.

A more dramatic option is to have the heroes make an appearance at City Hall, possibly to explain their progress or lack thereof dealing with the Zodiac and returning Senator Ikemann. They might be in the middle of explaining how hard it is to track teleporting bad guys when the Zodiac literally drop in their laps.

Action

City Hall is probably still being repaired after Aries and Taurus made a mess of it in scene 1. The scaffolding and fresh paint should serve as a reminder of everything the heroes have been through up to this point and put them in the mood to wrap things up.

The action can be broken down into three phases: Libra alone versus the Zodiac, the heroes arrive and join the fight, and then Aries and any other opposing Zodiac show up and attack.

The heroes should be pleasantly surprised to find that Libra is an ally and not another enemy. Her actions should demonstrate that she is a hero and not a rogue Zodiac like Leo, such as shielding threatened bystanders with her own body or stopping falling rubble from hitting the crowd. Her powers make her a match for any of the Zodiac but not all of them at once, but she is not the kind to back down no matter what the odds—justice does not hedge its bets. She will fight on tenaciously until she is beaten down or the heroes lend a hand.

Once Aries and the remaining avatars attack, the Zodiac teams may dissolve into a chaotic free-for-all as individual avatars settle built-up grudges, even if that grudge happens to be against someone on their own team. At some metaphorical level this collapse reflects the real truth of the Zodiac—because the signs encompass literally all kinds of people, internal conflict may be part of its nature. The unity of the Zodiac may be nothing more than a pipe-dream. Aquarius may weep.

Revelations

Zodiac can be heroes as well as villains.

Bystanders

citizens (Bystanders, M&M Chapter 11)
police (M&M Chapter 11)

Shticks

None

Aftermath

See **Further Adventures with the Zodiac** (page 34).



Additional Action

Capturing the Ring

After witnessing an awakening and seeing the Zodiac teleport away, the heroes will be quick to recognize that the Ring is the key to the situation. Expect numerous battle plans to center around getting the Ring away from Aries or whoever else has it. This is just as it should be, and despite set-backs it is likely the heroes will eventually succeed.

Examining the Ring is a good way for the heroes to gain some insight into the Zodiac (see **Gathering Info**, page 23). Capturing the Ring also creates a dynamic break in the action and turns the tables—now instead of the heroes hunting the Zodiac, the Zodiac will be hunting them.

Getting the Ring back will become the top priority of any Zodiac on the loose. Without the Ring no more potential avatars can be awakened, so their ranks will be static until it is recovered. The Zodiac avatars also recognize that the Ring is the key to even greater power. Heroes are unlikely to know that the avatars can sense the Ring wherever it is, so they might be surprised when the Zodiac come storming in on their secret headquarters.

Destroying the Ring

Once they understand what is going on, it is likely that the heroes will see the Zodiac Ring as the source of all their problems. Destroying the Ring might appear to be the simplest solution. The Ring's invulnerability makes this no easy matter, but more importantly the Ring is part of the inscrutable pattern of destiny surrounding every person born. Destroying it would create an imbalance in the natural cycle of life and spiritual growth, resulting in cosmic repercussions. Heroes may learn this from their research into the Zodiac.

Heroes should also be concerned about the ramifications for the people who were awakened. If the Ring transformed them from ordinary people into inhuman supervillains, the Ring is probably necessary to change them back. Even if the heroes never succeed in changing back any avatars, this possibility should make them hesitant to destroy the Ring. Heated arguments between the heroes could erupt, weighing the greater good of preventing any future awakenings against sacrificing any chance of reverting those already affected.

Capturing Avatars

Aries is a small-time crook not a mystical scholar—he only has a crude understanding of the Ring's powers. He could easily teleport out when one of his teammates was out of range and mistakenly leave them behind. A captured avatar could be a valuable source of information (see **Gathering Info**, page 23).

Sooner or later the other Zodiac avatars are going to have to come back and rescue any captured comrades if they want to complete the Zodiac and fulfill the Prophecy. It might be sooner or it might be later, depending on who is captured and how useful they are to their fellows. A strategist like Sagittarius is likely to arrange a distraction for the heroes while the prison break is underway.

Converting Aquarius

Most of the avatars show little concern for mere mortals after their sudden awakening into demi-godhood, but Aquarius believes it is the Zodiac's destiny to usher in a utopian New Age and unite humanity. In his heart he is an idealist and a pacifist. He tolerates his comrades destructive behavior because he tells himself that change must sometimes be accompanied by strife and turmoil, and that an open dialog is the key to teaching the other avatars their true purpose. He envisions a perfect future where his fellow avatars suddenly grow up and become wise and responsible caretakers of human destiny, but this is really just a fantasy.

Aquarius's growing dissatisfaction with the methods of his fellows could lead to disillusionment and a loss of his powers (see **Changing Avatars Back to Normal**, page 20), or it could lead to him side with the heroes against the Zodiac. Observant heroes may recognize this opportunity and appeal to Aquarius. How he reacts will depend on how he has seen the heroes behave—if they are just as ruthless as some of the Zodiac he is unlikely to be swayed.

Ghost of Pisces

Once they learn of Octavius Erasmus and his untimely death, heroes with mystical powers could go directly to the source and try to conduct a seance with his ghost. Or if the heroes visit the **Magician's Tower** the ghost could be found there, rattling chains and haunting the halls.

The forlorn shade will bemoan his fate with Shakespearean verve (“oh, never again to feel the gentle touch of the sun ‘gainst upturned cheek...” and “piteous fate it is, to wander lost and alone till the very stars twist themselves from the firmament” and so on). With perseverance and some tolerance for poetic melancholy the heroes may be able to get useful information out of him. Death has robbed





him of his magical powers, but he is still the foremost authority on the Ring and Zodiac lore.

It may be that only once the struggle for the Ring has ended will the ghost ever know peace since that is what caused his demise. For a more malignant twist, Erasmus appears to a benign and pitiful old shade, but he knows he cannot rest until the Zodiac is assembled and the prophecy complete since that is what he was trying to accomplish before his death. He will give what appears to be useful advice, but really he is trying to trick the heroes into fulfilling the prophecy.

Fulfilling the Prophecy

Once the last avatar is awakened and all Zodiac signs are accounted for, the prophecy will become the central issue. At that point there will be no more new avatars to recruit, leaving it to the current Zodiac avatars to duke it out for control of the Ring and the future of the Zodiac. Queue the climactic showdown.

Erasmus believed all twelve avatars would have to be awakened, and then all should stand together in contact with the Ring. Erasmus took it as a given that the avatars should all be of one mind, joined in their thoughts and desire. The actual likelihood of all 12 avatars uniting and standing peacefully around the Ring is very slim. There is too much inherent conflict between them.

Aries or Capricorn could try to fulfill the prophecy just by having all the avatars present and touching the Ring, even if some of those avatars are unwilling or unconscious. They could try to abduct uncooperative avatars with the Ring's teleport powers, and coerce or subdue them later. They may be wasting their time, or it could have a chance of success, as you prefer.

Dramatically the threat of the Zodiac achieving godlike power or altering the very cosmos is a good one, but like the bomb counting down that will destroy the city, we count on the heroes to intervene and stop it in time. But what if they don't? If you are in the mood to completely upset your game world, consider the following possible outcomes of fulfilling the prophecy:

Age of Aquarius—A new age of peace and tranquility descends upon humanity. Around the globe harmony and understanding become the norm. The Zodiac avatars lose all powers as their energies are channeled to bring about the great change, and other villains simply lose their desire to cause harm. But what good are heroes in a world with no strife? Could a rogue hero, frustrated by the loss of his sole purpose in life, be driven to find a way to shatter this interminable peace? Will the PCs help or try to stop it?

Apotheosis & Theomachy—The avatars inherit the mantle of godhood, gaining immense powers and growing to titanic size. Sadly Erasmus was wrong that enlightenment would follow—they are still saddled with human flaws like greed, arrogance and spite. The god-avatars fight each other, until weary and stalemated they retreat to different parts of the world to lord over unwilling worshippers. Major heroes across the world resist them and are destroyed. Nations cease to exist as the globe is divided between the twelve warring gods. Surviving heroes must struggle underground to find a way to break their power, or even travel back in time to stop the Zodiac before they ever united.

Variants

You can change the nature of the Zodiac and the Ring to suit your game. A few options are provided, and each is marked depending whether it will lengthen or shorten the game.

Vulnerable Ring (shorter game)—The Ring is not invulnerable. It can be destroyed, and there are no cosmic repercussions for doing so. Destroying the Ring prevents more avatars from being awakened, which largely ends the Zodiac threat (at least until another method is discovered to awaken avatars in some later game). Breaking the Ring could even remove the powers of all the existing Zodiac avatars, but this could lead to a very short game.

Who needs the Ring? (longer game)—All Zodiac avatars can sense and awaken other potential avatars with or without the Ring (but not teleport). Use the same checks required to locate avatars.

Who says there can be only one? (longer game)—One of the Zodiac figures out how to awaken another avatar for a sign even when one already exists. The second avatar may have similar or different powers than the first just like any successive Zodiac. While there are more than one both may be weaker than a single avatar would be. Or both could have full power, leading to the possibility of hordes of active avatars.

Unexpected Avatars (longer game)—Even before Octavius Erasmus found the Ring, some Zodiac avatars were already awake and active. Now they have sensed the power of the Ring in use and have come looking for it. Use any of the avatars that are not already accounted for. This is a useful contingency if the heroes are too successful and capture all the awakened avatars before the Zodiac can really get up to speed. These unexpected avatars could stage a rescue or grab the Ring for themselves, putting the scenario back in motion. A conflict between these "old" and "new" avatars could precipitate the **War of the Zodiac**.

Future Adventures with the Zodiac

Even after all the events above have been played out, the Zodiac and the Ring can be brought back in later games. Loose avatars can be used like normal supervillains, and who knows what real powers might remain undiscovered in the Ring?

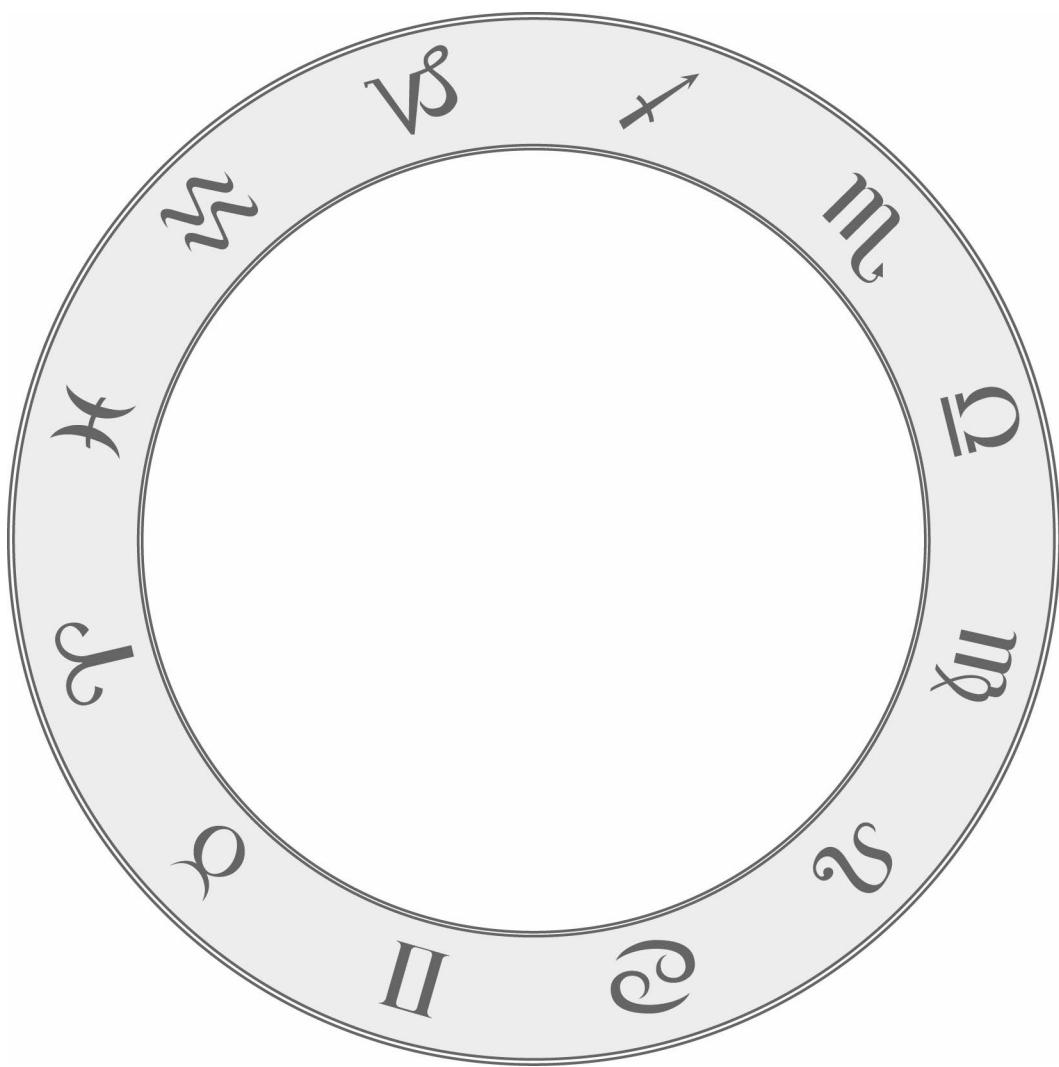
Libra fights for justice!—Unlike most Zodiac, Libra leads a double-life, transforming back into her normal human form and continuing her career as Detective Dani Walker, but calling on the power of Libra when the situation demands it. She could become an ongoing ally of the superheroes or a disapproving rival if the heroes do not live up to her standards.

Replacement Zodiac—Lacking the Ring to awaken more avatars, some Zodiac team up with "normal" supervillains who have adopted names and costumes to fill in the other Zodiac signs. They are not real avatars, just a villain team with a theme. This new "Zodiac" goes on a rampage until the heroes shut them down.

Collect Them All—A cosmic entity or would-be godling hunts down and captures any awakened Zodiac avatars. Once he has them all he prepares to absorb their energy, taking the celestial power of the entire Zodiac into himself and robbing humanity of its very destiny!



Player's Handout-Zodiac Ring



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