

UNKNOWN ARMIES

BREAK TODAY



THE MAK ATTAX SOURCEBOOK

BY GREG STOLZE WITH CHAD UNDERKOFFLER



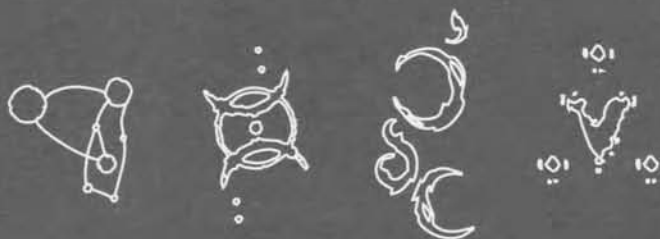
YOU DESERVE A BREAK



BUT TODAY IS THE HAMMER

photo by John Jones
background painting by Matthew Horwood

BREAK



THE MAK ATTAX SOURCEBOOK BY GREG STOLZE WITH CHAD UNDERKOFFLER



TODAY

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SPECIAL THANKS: (GREG STOLZE) MANY THANKS TO WWW.WORDSMITH.ORG/ANAGRAM/ — THE BEST DAMN ANAGRAM ENGINE ON THE INTERNET. WITHOUT THIS INVALUABLE TOOL, I'D HAVE BEEN TOO LAZY TO CREATE ANAGRAM GEMATRIA. THANKS ARE ALSO DUE TO COREY LISS. THE EMAIL ABOUT THE HAG RIDE (FROM 2/14/33) ORIGINALLY APPEARED AS HIS POSTING ON THE UNKNOWN ARMIES MAILING LIST. I'M GRATEFUL THAT HE'S LETTING ME MAKE MONEY OFF HIS PERSONAL CONFUSION AND TERROR. (CHAD UNDERKOFFLER) TO BETH WOJISKI TIDWELL, THE BEST FIRST READER A GUY COULD ASK FOR. AND A SHOUT-OUT TO DA BOYZ, WHO PUT UP WITH WAY TOO MUCH OF MY ANGST. I DIDN'T MAKE YOU INTO GMCS THIS TIME, I SWEAR. (JOHN TYNES) THANKS TO RAY & CHRISTINE FOR FEEDING ME.

SECOND EDITION NOTE: ALL PAGE REFERENCES TO THE UNKNOWN ARMIES RULEBOOK USE THE SECOND EDITION. IF YOU DON'T HAVE THE SECOND EDITION, WE REALLY, REALLY URGE YOU TO GET IT. COMPARED TO THE FIRST EDITION, THAT BOOK WALKS ON WATER.

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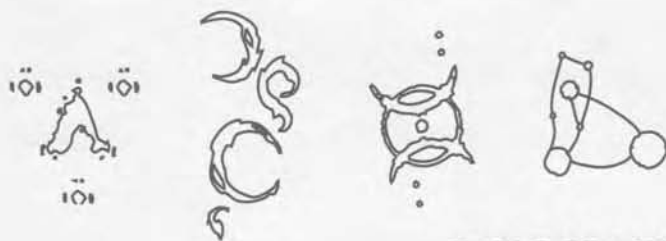
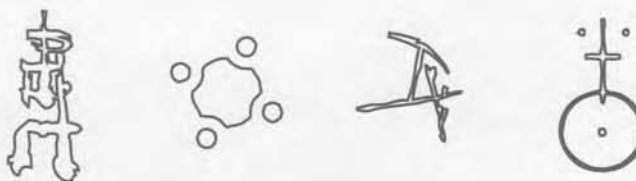


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WHAT YOU THINK YOU KNOW

By Greg Stolze

DEREK JACKSON MET LARA when he was coming off work. He was distracted and unhappy. Someone on one of his email lists had stopped posting about two weeks earlier, someone who identified herself as RubyGirl. Rumors were flying that RubyGirl was Jennifer Bozek, a 16-year-old from Tennessee who had been killed, shot in the face with a sawed-off scattergun, two weeks previous. Derek hoped this wasn't the case, but in his gut, he felt it was. The number sixteen kept going through his head, over and over.

Derek worked fast food, usually taking night hours to work around his graduate courses, but this semester his single class met only on Tuesdays and Thursdays, so he'd taken some morning hours on other weekdays to free up evenings. It was true that the internet was usually faster in the morning than at night, but he'd liked the idea of having evenings to himself. Now, though, with so many people frightened by the death of RubyGirl, he was starting to regret it. He wanted to go home, change out of his brown and yellow polyester uniform, wash the smell of grease out of his pores and then check the lists for new developments.

Walking to his car, he heard a woman say "Dammit!" in a small, strangled voice. He looked.

She was behind the wheel of a '96 Nissan. She had washed-out blonde hair in a bob cut. A gray business suit with a knee-length skirt covered a tall, thin body. She turned the key again. Nothing.

"Shit!"

Derek thought about walking on by. Not his problem. Besides, he thought, she'd probably get nervous with some fat greasy stranger guy acting all solicitous. But he knew that if he didn't at least ask, he'd feel like a jerk.

"Something wrong?"

She started and looked up at him, and she

did look scared, just like he'd thought. Her eyes matched her suit, and she was pretty, a bit.

"You . . . surprised me," she said.

"Sorry. Um. Is something wrong . . . ? I mean, with the car?"

Her shoulders slumped, her head ducked forward and she looked ready to cry. "It won't start," she said simply.

"Huh."

"This is my first day at my new job and I'm going to be late," she said. Her lower lip quivered a little. "I think it's the transmission."

"Does it turn over?"

"Sorry?"

"When you turn the key. Does the engine make any sound at all?"

"Um . . . no."

"Then it's probably electrical," Derek said. "Maybe your battery's just dead. I can give you . . . I mean, I've got jumper cables in my car."

"You think that'll work?"

"Pop the hood."

She did, and as he was stringing their two batteries together she introduced herself as Lara Foster. She thanked him, several times. When she smiled, she was less pretty than when she looked startled.

"I don't know who put this battery in," Derek said, "But look here . . . see how that connector ring is all flattened and mashed? I think they just hammered it on there."

"Oh. I got it done at a Pep Boys in Peoria."

He shrugged. "Give it a try."

She turned the key, and the car started.

"Thanks!" she said again, as he was unhooking his cables. "You're a real lifesaver. Thanks a lot."

Watching her drive away, Derek felt a little better.

Then he went home and read on his email list that Manish Narayan had been tortured and killed. Derek knew Manish Narayan. He had been on the list as "Clip."



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* * *

DEREK WAS THE MASTERMIND of an international occult conspiracy. It wasn't as much fun as it sounded.

His cabal — Derek himself never used that word, but a lot of people involved seemed to like it — had crested four hundred members in January of 2001. They were spread all over the world, and by and large they had only four things in common: an interest in the occult; a desire to see occultism become mainstream; membership in the group itself; and a willingness to work for the world's biggest fast-food franchise.

The name of the conspiracy was "Mak Attax," and their stated goal was to create a magickal Renaissance by helping ordinary people understand the reality of the hidden world around them. Their method was to subvert their employer's business structure — a commercial juggernaut that reportedly opened a new franchise every six hours — and use it as a distribution network for magickal energies.

Derek found that in, in practice, it was a bunch of occultists, and a bigger bunch of clueless dopes or poseurs who equated mysticism with hipness for some reason, dumping raw arcane energy on people who only wanted their thick shake supersized. Sometimes it turned out well: they'd saved a couple lives by accident. Sometimes it went badly: Derek still shuddered whenever he looked at the *Weekly World News* cover picture, featuring one of their "special orders" gone wrong.

It was like finding a powerful, complex machine with a million buttons, and poking them at random to see what happened. Only this machine was reality itself.

Most of the time, running Mak Attax was . . . fulfilling. Not exactly fun, but worthwhile. They *did* make a difference. They *did* do some good in the world, sometimes. Four hundred people didn't seem like much, but they'd managed to pull together enough to claim New Year's 2000 for hope and joy. They'd done that, and Derek was proud. It hadn't been his

idea, but he'd made it happen, he'd guided his people and, together, they'd stopped a lot of people who wanted to make a different statement on New Year's — a statement of hatred, or terror, or cruelty. They'd pooled their efforts and somehow it had all just fallen into place.

Some people scoffed. Even people who'd worked on the New Year project scoffed at it later, when terror seemed to win in the end, when the planes crashed and the buildings fell. A lot of people dropped off the list after that, beat down and feeling like all they'd done was delayed the inevitable. But Derek had been at the center of the spell, he'd felt something, he *knew* they'd made a difference. Part of him wondered how much worse things might be if they hadn't. He didn't know, couldn't know. He could only tell himself that he'd done right, and treasure the memory of a night when he touched this world to a higher one.

It had been the greatest night of Derek's life, and it had made up for the death of a close friend — the friend who had founded Mak Attax and who had become its first martyr.

He wasn't sure it made up for Bozek and Narayan, though.

DEREK DID NOT KNOW it when two Maryland police detectives captured the man who killed Manish and Jennifer. The papers were kept out of the loop, for a while. The police wanted a chance to do some work unobserved.

The suspect's name was Dave Grisholm. He was twenty-two, from Florida, and had scars on his arms and legs. Some were straight, thin lines. Others were small and round. He had eyes like ice, and he sneered while he smoked his cigarette.

The cops felt no reason to take it easy on him. They'd found one of his latent prints on a knife used to torture and kill Narayan. He'd been picked out of a lineup by one of the boy's coworkers.

They figured they had Grisholm dead to rights on the male victim. Now they wanted to see if he was also guilty of killing Bozek. After

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all, both teens worked for the same restaurant chain.

"So, why'd you kill Narayan?" The first cop barked it at him. She was black, very dark black. She hoped Grisholm was a racist, a cracker who'd be terrified to fall into the hands of a pissed black cop.

"Who?"

She showed him a picture. "Remember him now?"

Grisholm looked down at the picture and shrugged. "Might have bought a burger from him once. Why do you care?"

"How about Jennifer Bozek? You buy a burger from her, too?" This was her partner, older and weary.

"Who?"

"Don't fuck around with me! You killed her, didn't you? Didn't you, you little shit?"

Grisholm started to laugh. The first cop clenched her fists.

"Do you fascist drones really think I'm going to cave in because you yell at me? Shit, you can hit me if you want. Kick me in the balls. Spray that pepper shit in my eyes. Go 'head. I don't care. I won't crack."

"Don't tempt me."

Grisholm took a deep drag, coughed a little, then put the red, glowing tip to his forehead, right between his eyes.

"I won't crack," he repeated calmly as his skin sizzled and tiny flakes of ash drifted down around his nose and mouth. "You can't make me tell you shit. You can't do it, the UN can't do it, the Catholic Church can't do it. I'm trained. I'm pure. I've got more life expectancy than this whole shitball planet, and when the governments fail and the power grids crash and the black helicopters can't save you, I will laugh and I will keep laughing. Because that's just the beginning, and you stupid fucking slaves are too blind to see what your WTO masters are going to feed you to."

Hundreds of miles away, Dave Grisholm's colleague Marty was closing in on the next link in the chain: a burger joint in West Virginia.

LARA ORDERED a large coffee the next time Derek saw her.

Derek thought about saying "Come here often?" He thought about saying "How's that car working?" He thought about just saying "Hi! Hey, how's it going?"

What he actually said was "Careful, it's really hot. You need any cream or sugar?"

She smiled. "I take it black."

He nodded, and there was a brief silence. Just as she was about to say something, Derek asked, "How's that car working?"

"Uh, better, thanks. I'm going to get that battery looked at this weekend."

"I know a good mechanic. If you . . ."

"I'm surprised you don't do it yourself."

He shrugged. "Heh, well . . ."

(On his way home, he realized that what he *should* have said was "Burgers, engines: as long as it's got grease I can handle it.")

"Well, I should get to work," she said. She didn't move.

"Where do you work?"

"I'm over at the Plains Credit Union. I'm in their marketing department."

"You like it?"

"Well, I just started."

"Right! Right, I knew that, sorry."

There was another silence.

"Well?" she asked. Derek's heart began to beat very hard and very fast.

"Yes?" he replied, licking lips that suddenly felt chapped.

"How much is the coffee?"

"Oh! Uh, that."

SITTING IN HIS CAR, waiting for the burger joint to close, Marty Blain listened to the oldies. He was getting good and tired of fast food. Dave Grisholm had gotten arrested two weeks ago, and Marty had continued their work, moving from restaurant to restaurant, working his way up the chain. He hadn't needed to kill anyone: Rohypnol, torture, and caution had gotten him the information he needed, and he was fairly certain that no one he'd interrogated would tell



anyone. He'd presented them with a balance: Telling what happened might yield more pain, which they didn't want. Not telling, they'd stay safe. It was, he hoped, an easy choice.

"Ain't No Mountain High Enough," was fading out on the radio. He liked oldies quite a bit, particularly some of the love songs from the fifties and sixties. They were meant to be so pure and wholesome, but Marty thought that a number of them had a rather creepy tone. At least, they did if you listened in the right frame of mind. The Four Tops' "Bernadette" had that line about "I need you to live." Or that "Teen Angel" song where the girl gets creamed by a train trying to save her boyfriend's class ring — not the boyfriend himself, but the ring. That always made him shake his head.

After some DJ blather, the Supremes and the Temptations started singing "I'm Gonna Make You Love Me." Jesus. Marty was pretty sure that if some modern group released a song like that, there would be all kinds of craziness, parental warnings, middle-aged women pleading, "Won't someone think of the *children*?" But because it was Diana Ross, it was all good.

As the lights went down, Marty watched the manager coming out of the restaurant. Old guy. Shouldn't be too hard. He pulled on his gloves and reached for his gun.

Marty's piece was a Smith & Wesson Sigma semi-automatic. Not a big, flashy gun, but he liked it. It wasn't as heavy as a lot of nine millimeter pistols, he could shoot well with it, and he liked the way it felt in his hand. He also liked the way people did what he said when he pointed it at them.

The old guy looked pretty stupid in his blue and white togs. Actually, Marty felt just about everyone looked stupid in a restaurant uniform, but it was especially humiliating for a guy who was seventy if he was a day.

Marty walked up out of the darkness, gun in hand, and said, "Let's go back inside."

The old guy was shaking as he raised his hands, but Marty couldn't tell if it was fear or just the palsy of age.

"I've got the keys to the registers," the manager said. "I'll give you everything."

"Well, that's a start," Marty said. He waited until they were inside. Then he pushed the door closed and locked it. His eyes never left the old man's face, and his aim never left the manager's chest.

"C.K. Dexter Williams?" Marty asked. "Also known as 'the Fruit'?"

The old man closed his eyes and looked, if it was possible, even older. Hands still in the air, he nodded.

"Did you kill Ruby and Clip?" Williams asked.

"Never heard of 'em," Marty lied. "Let's have the keychain, please."

"What do you want?"

"I'm here because you're a member of a transnational corporate conspiracy, code-named 'Mak Attax.' We know all about you. We know about the 'special orders.' We know about the 'safe and happy New Year.' We know about your designs on our personal freedom and your program of encroaching economic hegemony." As he spoke, he took deliberate steps forward. The Fruit backed up until he hit a stainless-steel sink and stopped, eyes wide.

"You're a Sleeper, aren't you?"

"That's right," Marty replied, though he'd never heard of "Sleepers" before in his life.

"I'm a Sleeper, and we know everything about you . . . except for the names. Names of your operatives. We got *your* name. Now you're going to give us some more."

"I'm not supposed to know anyone's name. No one but the members of my crew."

"I was told you knew the leader's name. I was told you could identify 'Superconductor.'" Marty's voice had stayed even and low, but he spat out the last name with just a touch of anger and contempt.

"I'm not supposed to know that," the Fruit repeated.

Marty clicked off the safety catch.

"I'm not supposed to know it, but I do," he hastily amended.

"Really."

"Yes. Really. I'm telling you the truth."

Narayan had sworn that the Fruit never lied, ever, under any circumstances, and Grisholm had been inclined to believe him. But Marty was dubious.

"We'll see," he said. With his left hand, he pulled out a small notepad. It was awkward to get it out of his pocket, the gloves made him clumsy, but still the pistol barrel never wavered.

"Say the name," he said. "Say it and write it down in here, everything you know."

"Superconductor' is Derek Jackson. He lives in Rolla, Missouri. He's an engineering student. He's fat, has a goatee and long hair, glasses . . ."

"For your sake, I hope this pans out. You got other names?"

Williams thought hard. What names would be best to give? Who had the best defenses? Who might be able to kill this scary bastard?

"Ivan Stahl, he's in Chicago. I don't know where. Harvey Duopulous, in DeKalb. That's Illinois. Monica Burberry, she's in New York, works in Grand Central Station."

As he spoke, C.K. Dexter Williams tried to look defeated. It wasn't difficult. But with each betrayal, with each secret he gave away, he felt himself getting stronger. Not physically stronger. Stronger in his soul. C.K. Dexter Williams was a magickal adept, and his focus was secrets. Learning the names he wasn't supposed to know had given him power, once. Now, sharing them gave him power again. All the power he'd need to free himself from this stranger . . . if he could touch him.

Though a coward — a self-professed coward, for C.K. was truthful to a fault, even to himself — the Fruit had faced death many times in his long life. It never got any easier. All he had to do was find some way to touch this gun-toting young shit and he'd be safe. Nothing simpler. But still, his armpits were slick with sweat, his mouth felt cottony, his heart was lurching painfully, and his every

limb trembled.

"Here," he said, closing the notebook and holding it out.

"Is that everything you know?"

Inwardly, the Fruit cursed. "No," he said. "I know the names of the Maks who work with me here, but they're not worth your effort."

"I'll be the judge of that. Write them down too."

Williams opened the notebook, and it fell from his trembling fingers onto the floor.

"Pick it up!" the gunman snarled, impatient. He stepped back as Williams bent down — stepped back out of Williams' reach.

Williams picked up the notebook and betrayed every Attaxer he knew in Des Moines.

"There," he said. "That's everyone. The proper names of every member of Mak Attax that I know."

"Leave the book on the counter there."

Williams did.

"Now get into the walk-in freezer."

The Fruit recognized the young man's tone of voice. People often used a special voice when they were about to kill.

Williams went into the back corner by the door. It was cramped back there. Both men had to squeeze between a steel bun rack and a wall of dishwashing gear.

As he opened the door, the Fruit asked, "Aren't you going to make it look like a robbery?"

"Sure."

"You should let me open the registers, then. Before you kill me, that is."

"I'm not going to kill you."

"We both know you are. You can do it your way if you want, but the gunshot might be heard by someone outside."

"I'll take that chance. In you go."

Williams opened the door and turned so that he was facing the other man. "You don't have to do this. Walk away and I won't tell anyone." As he said it, C.K. was disturbed to realize that he meant it. Even at seventy, his



own cowardice still had surprises for him.

"Get in."

The man was as close as he was going to get. Williams still had his hands up, and he brought them together as if he was praying. "Please," he said, watching the other man, looking for the wince of disgust, and when it came he pushed his hands forward — gently, not threatening, pleading, and with his left hand the gunman shoved them out of the way.

When the youngster touched him, C.K. cast a spell and the young man disappeared. At least, that was how it looked from the Fruit's point of view.

From Marty's perspective, he touched the old man and suddenly the light changed from night to daytime and there was some young fucko coming out of the freezer with a tray of hamburger patties. The kid screamed and flung the tray into the air as he cowered back. Marty turned, dazed. The kitchen was full of people. It was daytime. The old man was gone.

He turned and ran for the door, his own screams lost among those of the burger workers.

It took him over an hour to figure out that he had somehow, it seemed, been fast-forwarded in time — kicked out of the universe for something like twelve hours.

As for the man who banished him, C.K. had felt an incredible flood of relief when the young man vanished. He sat on the floor of the freezer and sobbed, he was so happy, happy to be alive *still*. The relief was so keen it was painful, a dull pain all down his left arm.

Then he realized that it wasn't just relief. He was having a heart attack.

Williams managed to make it to a phone and call 911, but he was unconscious when the paramedics arrived, and it was touch and go during his angioplasty. There were complications. By the time he'd recovered enough from his anesthesia to even *think* about contacting somebody, Marty had been back in reality for almost twenty hours.

TWO FRIENDS of David and Marty — or, as

they thought of it, fellow soldiers in the war against mind control — watched Derek's house through high-powered binoculars.

"This is about perfect," Wendy said. She was a heavyset black woman with short-cropped hair. "Middle of nowhere. We could drive a fuckin' bulldozer into this house and no one would notice."

"Yeah, unless that guy inside called the cops," Deion, her partner, replied.

"What guy?"

"Look there, by that second window?"

She squinted. Sure enough, there he was.

"Suppose that's our man?"

"Don't think so. Marty said our guy has long hair."

Wendy shrugged. "Think we should go . . . talk to him?"

"You mean talk to him, or, y'know, *talk* to him?"

"We can start out talking. If we need to do more, we can do more. Like I said, there's no one around for miles."

Deion nodded. He was eager for action, anxious to prove himself against their enemies, the way Dave and Marty had. "Jehovah's Witnesses?" he asked.

"We're dressed for it," Wendy replied.

They drove up to the isolated farmhouse and rang the doorbell.

DEREK WASN'T HOME, because he was on his first date with Lara.

It wasn't what anyone would call a whirlwind romance. Over the course of a week or two, she'd gotten into the habit of getting a morning cup of coffee from him. She'd asked him for a good garage, and he'd recommended one, and he'd worked in his joke about "as long as it has grease" and she'd laughed. He'd mentioned that he was "really" a grad student at the university, mechanical engineering.

She'd told him she was a widow, no kids, she'd moved to Rolla because there were too many memories back in Peoria. She said she liked yoga and rock climbing.

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She hadn't told him details about her husband, and he hadn't told her he was a magus who could build impossible machines. But she'd made a reference to the movie "Rear Window," and Derek had mentioned a showing of the remastered "Vertigo" at a local theater, and, somehow, they'd decided that they should go together and have dinner and some drinks afterwards.

Derek had been tormented by nerves ever since. Anxiety over his upcoming "date" with Lara had even overshadowed the ongoing Narayan and Bozek question. Finally, he'd called Ivan.

"Hello?" Ivan's voice was, as always, mellow, masculine, polite and perfectly modulated.

"Hi, Ivan?"

"Derek?" Ivan sounded a little surprised, but Derek suspected Ivan was always surprised when a phone call didn't come from a woman.

"Yeah. Can you talk?"

"Certainly. What's on your mind?"

"Well . . . I was kind of . . ."

"Is something wrong?"

"No! Well, not *wrong*. I'm just not sure about something."

Ivan waited.

"... yes?" He prompted at last.

"Uh . . . how do you tell if a woman is interested in you?" The words came out in a rush. "You know . . . *interested*."

"You mean sexually?"

"Er . . . well . . . romantically."

"Why don't you describe your situation? Somehow, I suspect that this is not strictly a hypothetical concern."

Derek told him everything.

"She's interested."

"Are you sure?"

"One can never be sure of anything in this world, but let us say I am 'confident.' She comes to see you at work. You helped her out with her auto. She agreed to go to dinner and a film with you. Either she's interested, or she has a very poor grasp of social reality."

Derek, not completely sure of his own grasp of social reality, sought more assurance.

"Look," Ivan said, "You know that I personally do not hesitate in matters of this sort. I find it best to make one's own intentions clear on the first date. Hold her hand in the movie and see if she tolerates that — incidentally, 'Vertigo' is a bad choice. Walk her to her door. Put your hand on her face, gently. If she pushes your hand away, forget it. If she doesn't, kiss her."

"That's all there is to it?"

"You humans make things so needlessly complicated," Ivan replied.

Ivan had told him what to wear and what sort of restaurant take her to, but it was the comment about things being needlessly complicated that hung in Derek's mind throughout the date. Derek didn't date much. He'd had a terrible crush on a woman named Janet, but she'd died — died in terrible pain, he'd seen it all — before he'd worked up the nerve to talk to anyone about it, let alone tell *her*. Since her death he'd dated a few times, but the few women he'd met at college seemed very dull and conventional compared to the people he knew in the occult demimonde. On the other hand, the few female mystics he'd dated had all seemed more interested in him as "the shadowy commander of four hundred adepts" than as the individual he actually was.

He tried to keep things simple with Lara, and it actually seemed to work. They'd agreed that the movie sounded a lot better — and was even creepier — restored. Over dinner they'd talked about Jimmy Stewart and his other roles, which had turned into a talk about how modern movies weren't like the classics, which had turned into a talk about music. To Derek's surprise, as they were driving back to her apartment, Lara admitted that she was a Led Zeppelin fan.

"One of my college boyfriends had all their albums," she said. "And you know, I'd never really listened to them, thought that they were just some old-time heavy metal act. Then he put on *In Through the Out Door*."



Without a word, Derek flipped down the sun visor and put a disc in the car's CD player. Lara punched the songs forward to "All of My Love" and Derek told her the sad story about how that song had been written.

They parked, and talked a little more, and Derek walked her to her door. He was intensely nervous, and his hand shook as he reached out to gently touch her face.

"Don't move," said a sharp male voice.

Men with guns stepped out of the shadows.

WENDY AND DEION plastered fake smiles on their faces as the man in Derek's house opened the door. He was tall, gaunt, middle-aged, with a sour expression. He opened the door and said nothing.

"Hello brother," Deion said. "Can I ask you, have you been saved?"

"I'm not interested," the old man muttered.

"Not interested? Not interested in something that, uh, something that affects not only your life, but your whole afterlife as well?"

"I'm not interested," he repeated.

"If you'd just give us a few minutes of your time, I'm sure we could . . ."

"I'm not interested." It had the same exact inflection every time he said it.

"May we come in?" Wendy interjected.

"I'm not . . ."

"Oh fuck it," Deion said, and pulled out his gun.

The man's expression didn't change. Both Wendy and Deion paused. They'd expected something — fear, anger, outrage, surprise — anything other than . . . nothing. There was a moment, in which the silence was broken only by a rather loud click, like a gear sliding into place.

"Now look here," Deion said. That was as far as he got before the old man's arms moved.

The old man didn't step forward or bend or turn his waist. His feet stayed right where they were. Only his arms moved, crossing in front of him in a scissoring motion. The arms crossed at Deion's wrist, very fast.

Things got loud. Deion's screams drowned out the sound of his arm breaking. The old man's face didn't move. His left arm was still, his legs and body were still, but his right arm cocked back and shot forward inhumanly fast. He hit Deion in the stomach, and Deion folded forward, vomiting. He had a moment to notice that what he'd thrown up was all blood, and then he died.

Wendy stared for a second, then turned to run. She didn't see the old man come after her, she just felt his hand close on her collar, and then it was like she'd hit the end of a leash. Her shirt ripped and a button popped loose as it clotheslined her throat. Her feet shot out from under her and she flopped down in the dirt. She was reaching for her gun when the old man's hand crossed her face and then twisted her head around backwards.

The old man — who was not really a man at all, but an occult mechanism — paused, looking at the two bodies. There was another loud click. It effortlessly lifted both bodies and took them to a root cellar. It fetched a hose and washed most of the blood off the porch. Then it went back and sat down in its chair by the window.

THERE WERE TWO GUNMEN. The guns frightened Derek so badly he thought, for a second, that he'd wet himself. But it was just sweat.

"Don't scream," Marty said. (Derek had no way of knowing the gunman's name, but it was Marty.) "Scream, and we'll kill you both and run." The guns had silencers.

"Leave the girl out of it," Derek said. Even as he said it, he almost giggled hysterically. It was such a cliché. But it was what he meant, it was the only thing he could think to say.

Lara said nothing. Her hands were up and she was perfectly still.

"To the car," Marty said. His voice was calm and even. "Put your hands down, by your sides. Do this cool and no one gets hurt. You two first, we'll be right behind you." He moved into position behind Lara, and she could feel

the silencer nudging her short ribs.

"Why are you doing this?" she whispered.

"Why?" It was the other gunman who spoke. "Because this man — and I use the term loosely — is a covert corporate operative. He's spent years coordinating psy-op experiments in population control through subliminal imagery and . . ."

"That's enough," Marty said lightly. "To the car, please."

Lara had a ring on her left hand. She turned it completely around, widdershins, hoping and concentrating. Then she spun.

Her right hand swept down, grabbing the gun. She pivoted, and the whole weight of her body was behind a left-hand palm strike to Marty's head.

Only Marty wasn't there. He'd pulled the trigger when she turned, and when that hadn't worked he'd stepped back. As she lunged in at him, he dodged nimbly away, staying on balance, working the slide on the gun and pulling the trigger again.

Another dry-fire.

By this point, Derek and the other gunman were starting to react. Derek's guard also stepped back and raised his revolver.

"This is for New Year's!" he shouted. Derek was turning, hands in his jacket pockets, and he flinched back from the gun, as if that would help, and then the hammer came down.

It did not fire.

"*Dai!*" Lara shouted, lunging forward and planting a powerful kick in Marty's stomach. He folded and stumbled back, and she pressed her advantage, punching at his head, but when he straightened there was a knife in his hand and it slammed forward, back, piercing her and returning so fast the blade came out clean. But blood leaked from her side.

Derek pulled his hands from his pockets, and something buzzed and whirled in each, things with joints and points and articulations.

Like Marty, the second gunman couldn't quite believe his gun wasn't working. He tried to fire again, with no effect at all, and then

Derek's impossible devices were on him. He dodged instinctively as the first one jumped past his face, but the second landed on his foot. He glanced down and saw a device of coiled spring and drill bits. It hooked itself into his shoelaces and drove the drill points right through his boot. He screamed. Then the device unhooked itself and jumped again.

Lara felt the sting and the numbness of the stab and knew that if she didn't control the knife, this man would kill her. It was coming forward again and she grabbed with both hands. The point went through her right palm and she clutched, hard. It hurt like hell, like fire, but she knew for sure where the knife was. Her left hand slammed into his wrist, and she turned hard, ducking inside and under his arm.

Half a second in, Marty knew what she was doing. She was trying to put him in a hammerlock, he'd studied the same move. He didn't fight it, he turned through and tried to smash his elbow into her ear, but she was low and tight to his body and he couldn't hold on to the knife.

A second before Derek tackled him, Marty saw him coming and he managed to turn the big man aside. Derek stumbled and fell.

Marty's friend charged at Lara, but she turned, cat-quick. The knife — handle in her left hand, blade still sticking through her right — slammed forward into his neck. He hadn't seen the knife in her hand, and he impaled himself with his own lunge. The shock through her pierced hand made Lara scream, and her shriek was louder than his dying gurgle. She pushed against his neck and unsheathed the knife from both him and herself.

Lights were coming on, all up and down the block.

Derek was on one knee and Marty longed to kick his head like a goddamn football, but he didn't dare, didn't dare turn his back on the bitch with his knife. Her eyes were wide and vicious as she edged toward him. He kept his hands up, watching her shoulders. As she stepped in he tried to hack her leg with his,



tried to knock her down, but they just clashed shins. Her bloody right hand waved in front of him and then the knife jabbed down, quick, in and out of his thigh before he had time to feel more than a prick.

Something small and metallic buzzed past him on the left, and then he felt a sting on his right shoulder and there was something *on* him, small, the size of a frog, but jabbing into him like a metal mosquito. He batted it off and realized that he was pretty much fucked. Derek had struggled to his feet behind him, the woman was in front of him, and . . . what the fuck were those *things*? . . . something, two small things, small and weird, they were trying to hurt him.

He fainted left, then turned and ran. The woman lurched after him, and the knife left a shallow line of burning pain on his back. Derek swung at his stomach but Marty swept the blow to the side and then he was running, running. He could hear the buzzing things as they hopped after him, and he knew he'd left his gun and his knife and, more important, his dead friend behind, but for a moment, he was free.

MARTIN BLAIN was arrested in the hospital. At least three good eyewitnesses had seen him fleeing the scene of the assault. His blood at the scene would earn him a guilty verdict.

At least, that's what the papers would say. Martin knew better. Marty knew that DNA evidence was a sham, cooked up in some lab by the World Health Organization. Just another handy way for UN-approved "developed" nations to frame anyone who might inconvenience them. Anyone who might stand in the way of "progress" — meaning the progressive enslavement of humanity. Anyone like him. Anyone like his comrades in the Global Liberation Society.

They'd try him. They'd imprison him. They'd probably hang him on the same rope as Grisholm. But that didn't matter to Marty. Jail didn't scare him, because he knew his mind

was free.

He'd done his duty. He'd struck a blow against an enemy of the Comte de Saint-Germain, an enemy of Randy Douglas, an enemy of freedom. His blow had missed, but now they knew the name of their adversary.

The next time, Derek Jackson would die.

SHE WAS SURPRISED, and relieved, when Derek came into her hospital room. She was also surprised by her relief.

"Derek," she said. "Are you okay?"

He nodded, staring at her. "I think I'm the only one who didn't get hurt," he said.

"That's incredible," she said.

"Yeah, especially since . . ." He shrugged.

They were quiet for a moment.

"Hell of a first date," she said.

"We should both be dead, you know. They had guns. They had guns, they were at point blank range. I don't know about you, but I saw one of them pull the trigger. He put it right in my face and pulled the trigger. I should be dead. Instead, you . . ." He shrugged.

"Maybe we were lucky," she said in a small voice.

"Maybe." She could tell he didn't believe it. More quiet.

"You saved my life, you know," he said.

"Jesus. Where'd you learn to fight like that?"

"It's jujitsu. I'm a black belt."

"No shit? Why didn't you tell me?"

She looked away. "A lot of guys get weird about it. You know. 'I don't want to date someone who could kick my ass.'"

Derek shrugged. "Yeah, like most women do. I mean, do want to date a guy who could. You know what I mean."

"My name's not Lara."

She hadn't planned to say it. As soon as it was out, she was shocked, and also shocked that some part of her *wasn't* surprised.

"I'm sorry . . . what did you say?"

"Lara. My name's not Lara."

Derek sat down, heavily, staring.

"My name is Colleen Dwyer. I'm not from

Peoria. I work in the credit union, but before that I was a police officer. I really am a widow — my husband was a cop, too, and he got killed by . . . by an adept. By someone like you.”

She said it all in a flat, toneless voice. Derek’s voice was also flat as he responded.

“So you know about that?”

“Yes. I know you’re a clockworker. And I know about Mak Attax. I know you’re Super-conductor.”

“Jesus.”

He looked down at his hands, and without looking up, he asked the hard question. The one that she knew was coming, but that still scared her.

“Why?”

“I’m a Sleeper, Derek.”

“Oh shit.”

“Please! Don’t, I . . . I’m . . .”

“If you’re a Sleeper, why am I still alive? Why didn’t you let those guys get me?”

She sighed.

“The . . . the main Sleepers, they consider you a moderate. They’ve followed Mak Attax for years, Derek. They know . . . well, not everything, until recently they didn’t know *you*, but they knew enough. They consider you a potential threat. The stress there is on *potential*, Derek. They . . . they think . . .”

“Let me guess. They think that if I get croaked, someone more effective will take over. Someone who can really get things done instead of, of just fucking around.”

“Give yourself some credit. They did send me,” she said bitterly.

“Is that why the guns didn’t work?”

“Yes. I have a charm. It disables . . . devices.” She didn’t tell him what it cost her to use it. She didn’t want to seem like she was trying to impress him, though more than anything she wanted him to feel good about her. She didn’t understand why she wanted his approval, but then again, really, she did understand. He was a nice guy, and she hadn’t met a

nice guy in years.

“How was this supposed to work? You . . . seduce me? Get close to me? Learn all my secrets?”

“Something like that.” She couldn’t look at him.

“And if I got out of hand . . . ?” He drew a finger across his neck.

She nodded. He stood and turned away from her, looking out the window.

“Derek, this can still work,” she blurted.

“What can still work?”

“You and me!”

He turned and his eyes were wide and astonished.

“What?”

“Listen, the Sleepers, they don’t know my cover is blown. How could they? I mean, I just blew it this moment, right? I don’t have to tell them. There’s not so many of us, Derek. We’re stretched thin, very thin! As long as they think I have the situation under control, they won’t check on me. They have confidence in me, Derek! But if you send me away, they’ll just send someone else, and it won’t be a watcher next time. If they think you detected me, they will *freak out*, and your next visitor will be a stone killer, or worse, someone who can . . . Jesus Derek, they could *replace you*. I’ve *seen* it. They could put a perfect duplicate in your place, and no one would know. Or they could brainwash you until you were their fucking *slave*. They can *do that*. They don’t even need magick, they’ve got this old bitch from MK-ULTRA who can break anyone . . .”

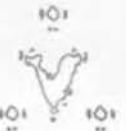
Derek held up his hand.

“I’m sorry, could you just . . . just be quiet for a moment? This is a lot to take in.”

She was quiet as long as she could stand it, and then she said, “I can protect you, Derek. I saved your life. Please, let me protect you.”

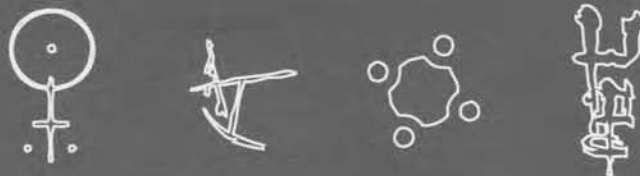
“But who will protect me from you?”

She had no answer.





CHAPTER ONE ABOUT MAK ATTAX



In 1990, a young and idealistic adept named **Janet Kumyar** met a young and idealistic adept named **Derek Jackson**. The two of them had experienced very different ends of the occult spectrum: Derek had been raised isolated, in the countryside, by an uncle steeped in the old-fashioned magick of Mechanomancy. His view of the occult underground was one of scared, studious Europeans scheming against one another while they kept one eye out for the Vatican's exorcist goon squad.

Janet had been raised among a comfortable Florida elite. The Kumyars had gotten rid of much of the "mumbo jumbo" of their voodoo ancestors, but kept the essential core: knowledge of several important archetypes. Like her father, and his mother before him, Janet was raised to be a Demagogue. But she rebelled against her family's values of comfort and quiet wealth. She was going to use her powers to make a difference.

Janet was on the subtle, avatar path. She attuned herself to the flow of the world and let

it pass through her, easing things along their natural route.

Derek was on the blatant course of the adept. By testing the rules of the cosmos, he was able to reinvent them.

Both were shocked to learn there was an entirely separate occult underground — one that each, individually, had never imagined. Initially suspicious, they soon found they had much in common: mainly, an interest in "doing good" but no particular plan on how to do it.

Growing up isolated, Derek was an early online adopter, involved with an early occult-related BBS even in high school. As the nascent "internet" grew out of the old defense department network, Derek was right there at the forefront. Janet spent many weekends traveling to New Age events, where she had a keen knack for picking the genuinely empowered out of a crowd of posers, liars, and delusional personalities. (It wasn't an infallible knack, of course. She dismissed TNI operative Uriel Sterne as bogus after a minute's conversation.

UNKNOWN
ARMIES

Sterne doesn't even remember meeting her all those years ago — he was just trying to get a leg over.) By 1992, they each had uncovered maybe a half-dozen genuine mystics. They'd also made contact with many people who weren't personally empowered, but who had seen or experienced enough to truly believe.

One of the real adepts was **Margaret Brandt**, the woman who taught them the **Ritual of Lesser Correspondence**. Margaret had learned geomancy — the art of harnessing and channeling mystic energy formed by the movement of wind and water through the environment — from her mother and maternal grandfather. Her father Hillary was no magus himself, but had extensively studied ley lines in Europe, a phenomenon that baffled him until Margaret's mother, a fourth generation Chinese *feng shui* expert, explained it.

This ritual accomplishes something very simple: it passes a minor magick charge from the ritualist to a target. If the target is an adept, he can use the charge like any other. If the target is a mundane, it self-detonates as an unpredictable magickal effect sometime in the near future. It's this latter power that interested the founders of Mak Attax, because any seemingly random action repeated a sufficient number of times begins to form a recognizable pattern. By putting random magickal energy into the world, they hope to build a magickal pattern strong enough to become accessible to anyone, all the time. It's the equivalent of giving everyone a toothbrush in hopes of eventually making dental insurance less expensive.

Margaret's fusion of eastern and western mystic geography provided a critical third ingredient for Mak Attax. It was Margaret who realized the importance of the U.S. highway system, mirroring and highlighting the natural features of the environment, but at the same time cutting and engirding them, providing transportation and connection to millions daily. It was after her third Big Mac on the road that she saw there was a perfect infrastructure in place to serve as regulatory valves for the surg-

ing flow of humanity — and, therefore, human magick.

Derek provided a fast, national (and eventually international) communications system that was moderately secure. After all, in 1992 words like "modem" and "ASCII" were barely entering the vocabularies of normal folks. Obsessed mystics were even less likely to be tech-savvy.

It was Janet who gave them the vision. Janet realized that the chaotic flow of traffic on the road could form a feedback loop to the very people driving and riding. She was the one who issued a stirring call to take the magick that was seeping out of America and reinvest it in those who collectively, unconsciously, and unintentionally created it. She was the one who called for a new Renaissance.

Derek was in 100%. He was thrilled just to be part of a group, and he was more than a little infatuated with Janet.

Margaret — older, more experienced with the occult and occultists, and raised on terrifying stories of old China's Brotherhood of Harmonious Repose (see UA2, p. 233) — was more dubious, but in the end she couldn't bring herself to walk away from Janet's efforts to reform the world. But her voice of caution was a major factor that kept Mak Attax safe in its infancy.

Each of them went to work at one of the Golden Arches franchise restaurants. Each used the Ritual of Lesser Correspondence. And each began dispensing their **Special Orders** onto random customers: the magickal charges that would manifest as an unpredictable effect in the near future. Step by step, they would begin to charge up the network of fast-food franchises across America with magickal energy, merging the elitist, hermetic world of magick with the populist, mass-consumption world of burgers and fries.

Derek listened to Margaret. He wasn't confident, and when you don't believe in yourself it's easy to believe you could be lied to and betrayed. Janet, the recruiter, the leader,



the superstar, she was the one who impatiently pushed for more members, more action, more infiltration, always more.

Janet was the one who called Derek in the middle of the night in 1996, screaming that her bones were turning to spiders. Derek was terrified, but he couldn't abandon her. Pausing only to alert Margaret and get some of his deadlier clockworks, he set off for Janet's house.

She was still alive when he got there, but already he could see tiny forms moving under her skin. She was too far gone to talk. As he watched, her teeth dissolved into black arachnids, they ate their way through barriers of tissue and got behind her eyelids, they poured out of her ears and nose as her arms and legs collapsed. When her weakened ribs caved in, he started to moan and weep. Derek heard Margaret mutter something in Chinese before turning and running away. He doesn't know what she said. He never saw or heard from her again.

Derek was tempted to run as well. But he couldn't bring himself to abandon his mystic

creations, which contained so much of himself. On a larger scale, he couldn't bring himself to abandon Mak Attax, also partially his creation, and also something into which he had poured his soul.

It never even occurred to him to lie to the list. He told them about Janet, doing nothing to soften the blow. Some Attaxers didn't believe it. Some believed it and promptly dropped out. But a surprising number didn't break away. Instead they moved together. Though it was a tough, dark year for Derek, he received more offers of hope, help and hospitality than he could have ever imagined.

As **Superconductor**, the list owner (through several removes) of the Mak Attax mailing list, Derek is the central switching point for Mak Attax information. He's the leader, though no one would call him a dictator: He solicits opinions before any major action, and has been known to back down more than once.

A new leadership has also risen to replace Brandt and Kumyar. **Erica Fisher**, an execu-



MATTHEW DUDLEY

UNKNOWN
ARMIES

tive in the very fast-food corporation that Mak Attax infiltrates, has joined them and provides invaluable coordination (not to mention excuses) from her home in Los Angeles. **Paul Borowski** has made the Florida branch of Mak Attax one of the strongest and most numerous in the world.

Two nicknamed refugees from the occult massacre in San Francisco (see UA2, p. 206) have also found homes in Mak Attax. One, **the Fruit**, has voluntarily remained out of the loop, insisting that he's a coward who cannot be trusted with the secrets of the sect. Nonetheless, his great experience with the occult underground (and with life in general) has made him a popular voice on the open mailing list. Another San Francisco expatriate, the elusive **Sharpener**, has also joined Mak Attax, though he refuses to be tied down to a single location. Finally, Mak Attax has a powerful ally in the mysterious **Ivan Stahl**. Like the Sharpener, he has refused to work fast food, so he can never directly partake in the Great Work. But his ability is unquestioned, his connections to the Naked Goddess sect are rapidly strengthening, and he himself has helped several Chicagoland Maks out of trouble.

As it has grown, Mak Attax has collectively increased its magickal resources. Some members have acquired artifacts in the course of their adventures, which they either hand off to another Mak for R&D or hoard for themselves. Adepts and avatars have joined the cabal. The overall level of occult underground knowledge has gone up. Several rituals have also emerged, two of which seem to have spontaneously osmosed their way through the ranks without any definite source — a simpler version of Lesser Correspondence (see p. 83), and a new one known as the **Ritual of Fealty** (see p. 85). The latter serves to bind consenting Maks closer together, somewhat like a Tilt Bond (see UA2, p. 106), though its mysterious origin and unusual effects are unsettling.

From its low ebb in 1996, Mak Attax has grown in strength, up to its greatest accom-

plishment to date: the **Safe and Happy New Year Project**. A brainchild of Paul Borowski, the Safe and Happy New Year focused the efforts of every individual Attaxer on claiming the new century for peace and unity. Using a powerful weapon, the **Ritual of Light** (see p. 90), Mak Attax managed to foil a number of acts of millennial terrorism.

It was a grand and powerful gesture. It's left outside observers — like Alex Abel, Daphnee Lee, and Angela Forsythe — wondering what Mak Attax is going to do for an encore.

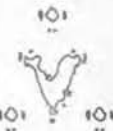
Then came the year 2001 — the “true” millennium according to some — and the crashing New York hangover to Mak Attax's careful efforts. After the euphoria of their success, many feel that on 9/11 they failed — they got lazy, they rested on their laurels, they dropped their guard. Some hide feelings of guilt behind defensiveness. Some call for a new crusade, or a new great project. Some, as always, just quietly dropped out.

But always, new recruits come knocking.

ORGANIZATION

Mak Attax lacks the strict hierarchy of TNI or the historical traditions of the Sleepers. But like the Sleepers, it's a volunteer organization, and in practice that means Derek, Erica, Paul, or any other authority figure has to rely on persuasion more than actual power. They can't push too hard, or people rebel. That's the downside of relying on volunteers. On the other hand, it does give one a self-selecting group in line with one's ideas. After all, you don't join Mak Attax for the money and the honeys.

Still, orders have to be given and obeyed if anything's going to get done, and for this purpose, Mak Attax is roughly organized into crews. Some crews are formalized, with names, secret handshakes, passwords and all that other tree fort stuff. Others are defined simply as “all the Attaxers who work at this particular restaurant,” or more commonly, “all the Maks in



this particular town.” A typical crew consists of about six people, with exceptions ranging from two to two dozen.

To really be acknowledged as a crew, a group has to be **doing the work** — that is, handing out charges on a regular basis. That means a crew either has an adept on board or has a hookup with some distant adept to provide charges.

The second option is clumsy, but tenable. Mak Attax has a minor Cliomancer named Genesis Peru working in Fall River, Massachusetts. Genesis is racking up a minor charge every day from the old Lizzie Borden house, and periodically she dumps a charge out in her home franchise. But Fall River isn't really important, in the big scheme of things. So instead of dropping a charge every other day in an insignificant small town (and probably getting a lot of attention in the process), Genesis only serves up a Special Order about once a month. Instead, non-adept Maks from Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut visit Genesis periodically. She passes a charge to each of them and they go home to pass them on in Providence or Hartford or on Martha's Vineyard.

This kind of “hot potato” charge changing has problems, however. Unless you're an adept, an avatar, or you've got the Mak Attax skill, your chances of passing the charge along are pretty slim, and it usually works itself out as an unnatural phenomenon, or (rarely) as a more peculiar effect. Also, it costs a charge to pass a charge, and the 100% handling fee gets steep quickly. Charging up every day, Genesis can pass a charge on directly seven times every two weeks. If she passes it to other adepts, they have to add a charge (or spend one received from her) before passing it to a customer. But that's the price you pay for having it in the right place.

It's far more efficient to have an adept in place to generate the charges and hand them out personally, and that's how things often work in crews. This can give the adept

a swelled head, however. After all, if you're the center of the enterprise and it can't work without you, doesn't that mean everyone else should do what you say? Some of these self-appointed (and necessary) “crew chiefs” are okay, but others are arrogant shitwags. But that's the price you pay for having it right away.

Rare crews have multiple adepts, and these tend to be a lot more equitable, since neither can simply threaten to take his ball and go home. In these crews, leaders arise out of talent and charisma, not from simple power. Often *neither* adept becomes “crew chief” because neither one wants to trust the other with that kind of authority. Thus, the field is open for someone who actually has problem solving and people management skills.

More commonly though, a crew has its lone adept on top, passing charges out personally or (more rarely) inefficiently charging other crew members so they can pass it along.

In theory, the crew chief's authority on the ground is uncontested. What she says should be law to her crew, at least as far as doing the Mak Attax work is concerned. In practice, people do what they want, as constrained by self-interest and herd mentality. Because in the final analysis, that's what happens in all-volunteer organizations. People go along because they want to or because they don't want to let down the team. Nothing is forcing them.

RULES

Mak Attax has a list of rules, which all members, be they inner or outer, are supposed to obey. In the true spirit of anarchic democracy, these rules were discussed, debated, rejected, and amended at tremendous length before settling down into their current form. Flame wars still erupt periodically as people argue that some old rule should be junked (or modified), or that a new rule should be added, but the following rules have been fairly stable. That doesn't mean every Mak Attaxer adheres to them — Rule Three in particular tends to get neglected early

and often — but they're on the MAFAQ (Mak Attax Frequently Asked Questions).

- 1) **First, Do No Harm.** The Mak Attax project is intended for the good of humanity, and resorting to terror, violence or other forms of involuntary coercion is not tolerated. If you can't do it without hurting someone, don't do it. The only exception to this rule of nonviolence is in the case of self-defense, and even then every precaution should be taken to minimize harm. In no circumstance is the harm of an uninvolved person justifiable.
- 2) **The Philanthropic Principle.** Special Orders and other gifts of a supernatural nature are just that: Gifts. They are not to be sold, bartered, or exchanged for any form of favor, be it financial, physical, psychological, or supernatural. If you want to sell it, do it on your own time. Mak Attax is not an organization for pimps and whores.
- 3) **Look After You Leap.** Whenever a Special Order is given to a customer, every reasonable attempt should be made to track the customer and find out what happened. This is important for several reasons. First, it ties closely to Rule #1 — sometimes the effect is bad, and if it is, it's the responsibility of the Attaxer who bestowed it to help the customer cope. Secondly, *every* effect provides more data on how the Project is progressing.
- 4) **Argue on the List, Agree in the Field.** On the Mak Attax mailing list, everyone is equal. Everyone has a voice. Everyone can say whatever they want. But in real life, while doing the work (be it in a franchise or elsewhere) followers should obey leaders. The determination of crew leaders can be done democratically, by voting on the list, or any member can ask for volunteers with the understanding that the asking member is in charge. In many franchise locations, a recognized leader is already

present. If you go to work there, you implicitly acknowledge that leader.

- 5) **If He's Cool Enough to Know, He's Cool Enough to Join. If Not, Not.** Don't tell anyone about Mak Attax unless you're willing to invite that person onto the list. Really. If someone doesn't belong on the list, being part of the solution, they don't need to know that this group exists at all. Don't brag. Don't hint. Don't insinuate. Certainly don't threaten. The purpose of Mak Attax is not to provide you "insider status" so you can lord it over other people. It's here to facilitate a magickal renaissance. Telling people who can't handle it is no favor to them. Telling people you don't trust is no favor to the rest of us.

FINANCES

TNI has the bottomless coffers of Alex Abel undergirding every action. The funds of the Sleepers aren't nearly as plush, but between the Hamiltons and Joao dos Prazeres, there's money available for guns and ammo.

Mak Attax has no war chest. Well, okay, Derek has \$8,421.00 in donations to distribute as he sees fit, but that's less money than TNI agents carry when they're going to the store to get milk. It's chump change, which is maybe just as well, since there's no good infrastructure in place to distribute money. Abel has offshore accounts and tax shelters, international lawyers and a money laundering system the likes of which everyday folks can't even imagine. He could make a three dollar bill look clean.

Derek? What's Derek going to do? Send a money order? Sure, that's *supposedly* secure, if no one gets his fingerprints off it. And if no one sees the postal code on the envelope. And if there's no adept on the other end to use psychometry or Plutomancy or some other mystic funk to suss out its provenance.

So Derek could send money if it's absolutely necessary, but it's going to be a bit of a pain as he gets a money order, or clean cash



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he hasn't touched, then sends it to some other Mak Attax insider who reposts it from his or her city. If it's a crisis he might just forget all that and fire it off, but it would have to be a matter of life or death.

It's more common for Mak Attax operations (such as they are) to be funded by online begging. The Attaxer who wants to do something posts an argument about why it's important to do and asks everyone to put a little something in the kitty. (In this case, the kitty is usually a P.O. box somewhere in the poster's home town.)

Now, it doesn't take a genius to see a few flaws with this system.

Flaw #1 is imposture. Less-than-scrupulous Mak hangers-on have been known to simply invent plausible crises and post their pleas for cash. (At least one such poster got murdered — killed dead — by an outraged true believer. The list at large doesn't know this, of course.) When surrounded by requests for money, many of which are probably fake, giving nothing becomes quite reasonable.

There are various private lists for the more serious Attaxers, and faking it on those lists is both more serious and much harder to carry off. Not surprisingly, that's where most of the real cash exchanges hands.

Flaw #2 is insecurity. Mak Attaxer Jennifer Bozek posted a request for help, and she listed a post-office box. Global Liberation Society thug Dave Grisholm watched the box. When he saw who was checking it, he abducted her, tortured her until he got the names of her Mak Attax contacts, then killed her. The only reason this doesn't happen more often is the low signal-to-noise ratio on the list — the meaningless static actually provides defensive cover. Grisholm had to check three mailboxes before he found one that actually existed, instead of being a prank.

Grisholm's a guy with no training — just patience and belief. TNI is a hundred times more sophisticated. They've got an entire filing cabinet full of dossiers on Mak Attaxers. They

just figure most of them aren't worth the effort.

(If you're asking yourself, "Hey, why not use PayPal?", you're not alone. This issue comes up every couple of months on the open list and has therefore entered the MAFAQ, and the short version is that electronic transactions offer too easy an entry point for groups like TNI.)

TERMINOLOGY

While everyone — literally *everyone* — on the inside core of Mak Attax works for the world's largest burger chain, very few of them will speak its name unless they're on duty. No one told them about this. It just sort of happened. If you ask an off-duty Attaxer where she works she might say "Mickey Ds" or "Mac's Steak House" or "The Golden Arches," or simply make the curvy "M" gesture the restaurant's spokesc clown makes in countless commercials. On the email lists, it's usually just "the Scotsman."

They don't speak the name. That's special. True names have power, everyone knows that. At least everyone on the Mak Attax mailing list knows. Besides, what does it say that this restaurant has so many nicknames? You want a commentary on power, you don't have to draw parallels to the unspeakable name of G-d in the Hebrew tradition (though, if you did, you wouldn't be the first). You just have to ask what other restaurant, what other *business*, is so widespread that people have that many pet names for it?

RECRUITS

Granted, joining Mak Attax doesn't involve the kind of philosophical dedication exhibited by Naked Goddess cultists. You don't have to sell your identity to an eccentric plutocrat like TNI members. And you don't have to risk your neck fighting mystic screw-tops, the way the Sleepers and the Cecilines do. You probably won't even get an FBI file, the way members of the folded-up True Order of

Saint-Germain did. As big occult cabals go, the barriers to entry are pretty low.

That doesn't mean there aren't elements that give pause. Not the least of these is the possibility that joining gains you an enemy that can turn bones into bugs. Furthermore, the organization can't protect you. They couldn't protect their *founder*. Oh sure, you can post an email and hope someone in town helps you out. But you're more likely to get help from someone who's too young to drive and whose best trick is understanding the language of twilight crickets. ("They're saying something about spiders . . .")

And, of course, your prospects are limited unless you're willing to get in there and work that grease trap. A surprising number of people who'd love to sign on with a mystic conspiracy just can't get behind one that requires them to work for the big red-headed clown that Mak Attax refers to as "the Scotsman." They could tolerate dancing skyclad in December, they could manage a fast or a vision quest . . . but

handle someone else's burgers? That's just *icky*. So who does join?

THE REVOLUTIONARIES

The most common motivation is simple revolutionary fervor. At least half of the people in Mak Attax really, truly, honestly believe that the world can be better, a *lot* better, in their lifetimes, and that magick is the way to make it happen. There's no consensus on just exactly *how* it's going to be better, or why, but they agree that one way or another, Mak Attax is the way to go.

This isn't to say that all the revolutionary Attaxers get along. Far from it. One faction believes that because magick requires strength of will and discipline of spirit, magicians are obviously superior people and that, once the mundanes recognize this irrefutable fact, the world will become orderly because there will finally be a genuine merit-based hierarchy. They clash — a *lot* — with a group that believes just the opposite, that once magick is



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widely accepted, nearly *everyone* will find a magick knack or niche. This should, in turn, lead to a general acceptance of human difference and individual freedom, culminating in an anarcho-libertarian anti-state of perfect self-reliance and responsibility.

Most of the revolutionaries come from educated, upper-middle class backgrounds, just like in the American Revolution, the French Revolution, and the Communist Revolution. They're probably the most influential "faction" on the Mak Attax list, for several reasons. They have the time and access to post frequently. They have the money to donate to projects they favor. Also, as a group they're better educated — or maybe just more used to having their own way — and thus better able to wage a war of words.

Unfortunately, many of these appealing and passionate recruits seem to "outgrow" Mak Attax at fairly regular intervals. In their social class, working at a burger joint is okay when you're in high school, and tolerable when you're in college. But when the revolutionaries graduate from college and start getting serious pressure to find jobs and become self-sufficient, it usually seems a lot less practical to remodel the world.

Countering this tendency is the loyalty encouraged by the **Ritual of Fealty** (see p. 85). Still, awareness isn't always enough to ensure fierce commitment. In some cases, the Ritual of Fealty actually pushes people away from Mak Attax, as it gradually shows them that they don't agree with its general *zeitgeist*. (Or, as those quitters usually see it, the Mak Attax gestalt doesn't agree with *them*.) Revolutionaries are the most likely to use the Ritual, though their chances of having it generally work usually aren't that great.

Mak Attax is young enough, as a cabal, that this pattern of dropping out after one graduation or another is only now becoming really apparent. But before they burn out, the revolutionaries are usually Mak Attax' most fervent mundane operatives.

Betty Kimura (see p. 43) is a fairly typical revolutionary — as much as any Mak Attax member is "typical".

THE PENITENTS

Where the "revolutionaries" make up maybe 30% of Mak Attax' overall membership, the "penitent" Maks are a smaller and quieter percentage, but they swing a big stick for two reasons. One is simple credibility: often, they're the ones doing it *full time*, not after school, not on weekends, but day in and day out. Furthermore, a disproportionate number of the penitents are genuinely turned on, magickally. A revolutionary is more likely to be the guy chanting and focusing on his amethyst crystals in hopes of getting out of his moving violation. The penitents are the people who can reliably dispense charges, cloud people's minds, build impossible devices — and, if necessary, tear your fuckin' arm off.

Penitents are older, more experienced, more aware of the risks, and often more willing to let the ends justify the means. Many of them are long-time occultists, with all the social, legal, and financial trouble that usually entails. But despite years or decades spent pressed up against the shaggy reality of human magick, they still want to do right by something or somebody. In some cases, it may be *because* of what they've seen.

Like stylite monks, penitents are willing to suffer for the cause — often suffer a lot. In some cases (as with **May Rogers**, p. 39), it's because they're beyond materialism and feel Mak Attax is more important than their own small life. In some other cases, as with **Manuel Ortiz/Lopez** (p. 42), they give 110% because they feel guilt over some past transgression.

In any event, penitents are more likely to be informed and in charge on the ground (as opposed to online) because they've got the mojo and they're on site eight hours a day. They're more inclined to be cautious for those very same reasons.

Their experience inclines the penitents

away from using the Ritual of Fealty. While this might seem nonsensical at first, it makes more sense at a deeper level. People with little experience with magick (like the revolutionaries and wannabees) are willing to try the Ritual because they haven't seen how bad things can get when magick goes wrong. Experienced Attaxers (like most of the penitents) have a couple failed Unnatural notches under their belts, and they are *not* about to try the bottle labeled "Drink Me." Lots of people are leery about using software downloaded from the internet on their computers. Would you use a ritual that could effect your *soul* just because some stranger on a mailing list said you'd be cool if you did it?

On the other hand, once a penitent has been convinced that the Ritual of Fealty *does* work (and that it isn't another ritual that leaves the doors of your body open with the keys in the ignition), they're very likely to use it *and* have it actually work. They're also the ones who are most likely to sense its strength and keep using it until they're maxed out. (See p. 85 for more on the Ritual of Fealty.)

THE WANNABEES

About half the people on the Mak Attax open list can be characterized as "wannabees." The vast majority of wannabees are intrigued by mysticism, they're thrilled and titillated to be part of an "Okkult k0nspirAC," and they are as magickal as a wad of frozen spit. That's not to say they aren't useful. Many are young and have disposable income because they aren't making car payments and paying rent. Others are "occult hobbyists" of all ages who have tried Scientology and the OTO and are now interested in Mak Attax. They can serve as couriers for Special Orders, even if they can't reliably use the Ritual of Lesser Correspondence themselves. If nothing else, they can keep their eyes and ears open.

Wannabees generally don't stick around long. Exciting as it is to occasionally rub shoulders with alleged warlocks, the demands of fast

food service are constant and, frankly, a real drag. The reality of the situation sinks in slowly, and the cost/benefit ratio gradually tilts until the wannabee quits the job. Many of them stick around on the open list, and a few become real nuisances. But with enough requests, Superconductor gives 'em the boot. A few false signups later, they get tired of it. (There are exceptions, the assholes who get obsessed and abusive the way only an introverted teenager with no job and no sense of proportion can. A couple times Monica Barberry has wound up agreeing to take short trips to New Jersey and Massachusetts to make some little pischer forget he ever heard of Mak Attax.)

Along with the clueless unwashed, there are a few real adepts who are going along with Mak Attax in order to get along. They read and post. Maybe they even get a job at the golden arches. But no way in hell are they giving up their precious charges. They're in it to keep their ear to the ground, and because they might be able to convince the Maks to back them if they cross the Sleepers or TNI.

Clueless wannabees are likely to use the Ritual of Fealty — if they become aware of it and find a copy and there's nothing good on TV that night. They are unlikely, however, to make it work, for the same reasons that all rituals work poorly for ordinary folks.

Tagalong adepts aren't going to use the Ritual of Fealty because they're well aware that "using a ritual from a stranger" is up there on the Stupid Scale next to "trading sex for drugs." Even if it operates as advertised, all it does is make them more loyal (or something) to an organization they're trying to use. No thanks.

ONLINE ACTIVITIES

Mak Attax is something of a virtual conspiracy. There's no annual convention or board meeting. Communication occurs primarily via the internet, using a variety of mailing lists and a members-only web site.



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THE OPEN EMAIL LIST

The bulk of Mak Attax' 412 members are people on the open list, *makattax@yahoo.com*. In fact, most people in Mak Attax have no idea there's more than one list. (Naturally, the main condition for getting promoted to the secret lists is a willingness to keep them secret. Equally naturally, there have been leaks and lies. By discrediting the obvious lies, Superconductor has been able to keep people in the dark about the inner circles — or at least doubtful.)

The Mak Attax open list behaves like most other big internet mailing lists. It moves in fits and starts. Some days there are sixteen posts. Some days there are hundreds. Sometimes people have intelligent conversations about important matters. Sometimes fifty posts will be wasted discussing the latest horror movie, or making jokes about the latest Happy Meal promotion. Sometimes people get pissy and erupt into flame wars.

It doesn't help matters much that most genuine adepts can be rather self-righteous

and antisocial. If you're so committed to your worldview that you can wrestle reality into submission . . . well, let's just say it's a stretch to be tolerant towards those who don't get it or who have the temerity to disagree. Most adepts believe their way is the *only* way, and in many cases they wouldn't be able to work magick if they didn't.

So already, the list is somewhat freighted with blowhards. To make it worse, many of the wannabees encourage the big talk, either inadvertently or on purpose. After all, the average wannabee is an excitable magick fan looking for someone to play mentor to his apprentice. All the adepts want to teach these impressionable youngsters The Truth (meaning *their* truth), often with the best of intentions.

It makes for a volatile list.

To keep things somewhat tame, Superconductor takes a keen interest in discussions. If he sees people saying variations of the same thing with no one yielding, and tempers are getting heated, he often declares an "armistice" — that



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is, everyone agrees not to post on that topic, even obliquely, for a period of 3–5 days. At the end of that time, tempers have cooled, attitudes have settled, and usually people are willing to agree to disagree. Sometimes, however, the flames start right up again. The next move is usually to ask people to discuss in private, rather than clogging the list. The most extreme punishment is ejection from the list, but it doesn't often come to that.

THE WEB SITE

Logging onto the Mak Attax “secret” web site is a little more involved than typing in *www dot whatever free host we're using this semester dot com slash ~makattax*. A little more involved, but not much.

You have to log in, and you have to enter a personalized password, a ten-digit string of case-sensitive letters and numbers. To get the password, you need an established presence on the mailing list for at least a year, and you need testimony from trusted members that you're in the restaurant spreading the magick.

Derek used to maintain the site, but he delegated that authority to Paul Borowski (p. 60) after Erica Fisher (p. 52) pointed out the dangers of having too much responsibility concentrated in him. This way, if something should happen to Derek, at least the site continues. If Paul falls, the list remains. Paul uses the pseudonym ‘arneb’ while running the site.

The website is pretty spare and utilitarian, but all the links work and there aren't any irritating mouseovers. The main page has periodic updates about Mak Attax news — rarely anything big, though the occasional murder of a member is an ugly exception. Along the side are links to “chat attax” (Derek's idea of a nice pun when he was running things) and to various descriptions of project proposals. “Chat Attax” is just what it sounds like — a chat room for real-time conversations.

The projects are the primary purpose of the site. Attaxers who've earned site access can submit proposals to the webmaster and (when

he has time) he codes them into HTML and puts a link on the site. A proposal typically lists what the Attaxer wants to do and what she's asking for to accomplish it. This could be a request for information, or for manpower, or for a particular type of magick aid. The most common request is, of course, for money.

THE SECRET LISTS

Attaxers who have proven themselves useful and *discreet* can be invited onto private mailing lists that conduct Mak Attax business away from the freewheeling and frequently vituperative openness of the main list. These lists are more heavily encrypted, more guarded in their discussions, more specialized, and much, much smaller. Different lists have different functions and rules. Every list is hosted on a different server, under a different administrator.

THE CROWN LIST

This is the list that holds the self-appointed leaders of Mak Attax, and they use it to discuss matters that they don't want to tell the list at large. Membership on the Crown List is by unanimous invitation only. That means that everyone on the Crown List has to agree before someone new can be added. Furthermore, people are only added to the Crown List when all the other Crowns know the proposed member's name and have had a chance to personally investigate. (Names are not posted on the list, however. Security forbids that. In fact, they usually aren't exchanged through email at all, but through courier, payphone calls, or rocket-fly — see p. 76.) Currently there are five people on the Crown List, including Derek Jackson (alias “CustardPie”), Erica (“Elizabeth”) Fisher (p. 52) and Paul (“Bugs”) Borowski (p. 60). They are currently debating whether they should offer membership to Monica Barberry (see UA2, p. 248).

THE BRAINFOOD LIST

This list specializes in Attaxers who are particularly interested in magickal research. This



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list tends to attract the most magickally aware of Mak Attax' members. (Note that this does not mean their most *effective* or *powerful* members.) The Fruit (see p. 58) and Monica Barberry are both on this list. In addition to those two mystery seekers, the forty-member list also hosts a Kleptomancer, two Infomancers, a Pilgrim focused on acquiring knowledge, a Scholar avatar, a Chronieler, and four mundane occultists who have lots of book learning but who have never been able to actually make magick *work*. Derek is on this list (alias "Cryptogrampa"), but doesn't contribute much or pay a lot of attention. He does keep an eye out for historical machinery here, though.

Brainfood is invitation-only, but any Brainfood member can invite someone from the main list onto Brainfood. Everyone on the list tries to encourage everyone else on the list to be very, very circumspect about invitations, to keep the signal-to-noise ratio reasonable. But, like mass transit, this idea seems to be one that everyone thinks is good for everybody else, but not for them. As a consequence, the first overzealous blow-hard on Brainfood invited several other overzealous blow-hards, and now it's nearly as fractious as the main list.

While it's secret, it's not *very* secret. Derek is okay with that, really: this way, if anyone does start to suspect that there's secrets, he can just reveal Brainfood and protect the other secret lists. Still, it's kind of a pain.

THE FENG VESPUCCI LIST

This list focuses on discussing, observing, and seeking to explain Mak Attax's attempt to create a "magick map" by stringing together infiltrated franchises throughout the world. (The name comes from a combination of *feng shui*, the Chinese art of harnessing magick created by the shape of the landscape, and Amerigo Vespucci, the Italian who never visited America, but who named it after himself on his maps.) Feng Vespucci is famous for having lots of theories about what's happening and what's supposed to happen, but no actual

answers. Their ability to predict the results of Mak Attax' random charge dropping is about 98% completely off base, and 2% frighteningly accurate, down to the smallest details. This has sparked an ongoing debate over whether the accurate predictions *created* the effects, or whether they were simply good predictions.

Erica Fisher (see p. 52) is on this list as "Dido" and Paul Borowski (p. 60) is on it as "Buck Tooth." Harvey Duopulous (see UA2, p. 248) is on it as "zw384ru" — a user name he picked by mashing the keyboard randomly. Many of its members are also on Brainfood, but Feng Vespucci is a younger list and the membership criteria are a lot stricter. Specifically, no one can be admitted to Feng Vespucci without getting voted in by at least 51% of the total list membership. (Members who don't post for three months are ineligible to vote.)

One of the Infomancers from Brainfood is on Feng Vespucci, as are the Pilgrim and the Scholar. One of the list's most useful members is a long-haul trucker who "always knew there was something supernatural going on in the American landscape." She discovered Mak Attax with her natural gift of Aura Sight, and Erica Fisher got her hired by the Golden Arches to haul frozen burgers.

Interestingly, the Infomancer went to the trouble of "creating" someone named Feng Vespucci. There is no such person (at least, not to the knowledge of the list), but Feng Vespucci now has a birth certificate, a boring credit history, and a couple internet accounts. The identity won't stand up to careful scrutiny (no green card or social security number), but has managed to get a couple low-limit credit cards that are probably good for about \$4,000 worth of abuse total before they get cancelled. Of course, doing that would be fraud, but some Attaxers won't blanch at that.

THE Y2K LIST

This list was Paul Borowski's baby. He personally ran it and invited everyone involved. This

was how he arranged the “Safe and Happy New Year” program of 2000. Erica and Derek were on it, along with Manuel Lopez/Ortiz (p. 42). It’s pretty dead now, but he keeps it up so people can discuss the outcomes of their actions. If Derek decides to post about his encounter with Marty (described in “What You Think You Know”), you can bet it will get a lot more traffic.

THE BLEACH LIST

This is the list for Mak Attax’s three “enforcers,” who are known as the Bleach Crew. (As anyone who’s ever worked a restaurant kitchen can tell you, only bleach gets things really clean.)

Three might seem like a pretty miniscule number when it comes to being the muscle for an international mystic conspiracy. It is. But the standards for membership in Bleach Crew involve more than just the ability to shoot a gun or cast a deadly spell.

- When mobilized, a Bleacher must be willing to drop whatever he’s doing and get where the trouble is *on his own dime*. Since these guys work fast food (and yes, they’re all male), this is often something of a deal breaker.
- A Bleacher must not only be willing to kill for Mak Attax, he must have already done so. (The Attaxers have had their share of dustups, but most Maks who *have* killed are unwilling to volunteer for more.)
- Bleachers must all, of course, be capable in deadly combat. Again, not really that common among fast-food workers.

Derek is the only person on the list who doesn’t abide by the above code. He’s in the rather uncomfortable position of giving them orders. One of the Bleachers — an ex-con and Executioner avatar from Dallas named **Andy Estenssoro** — would also take orders from Erica Fisher. The others, though — **Brett Gustafson**, a superstitious ex-marine with a

steroid habit, and **Egon Schwartz**, a creepy old man who never seems to be where he actually is — obey Derek and Derek only.

Generally Derek only calls the closest Bleacher to a given crisis. That means Andy in the western U.S., shadowy old Egon in Europe, and the temperamental Brett in the eastern U.S. The rest of the world is catch as catch can. At the same time, he quietly canvasses any Attaxers or allies he knows are in the area to see who’s willing to provide backup, and what form that backup is going to take. All too often, it ain’t much.

THE LIST OF SHADOWS

This is the only list that Derek is not on — in fact, he’s unaware of its existence, by design. It’s small: all the other members of Crown List are on the List of Shadows. It doesn’t get a lot of traffic, because none of them have much they want to talk about that they won’t say in front of Derek. Nonetheless, the list is in place . . . just in case.

Erica was the one who suggested the creation of a “shadow” list similar to the “shadow cabinet” used in parliamentary democracies. The idea was fairly simple: Mak Attax must survive if Derek is removed or (God forbid) somehow controlled or compromised. Paul was hesitant at first, but he knows what’s possible, and he knows what would happen if Derek was somehow turned against Mak Attax. For the good of the group, he joined.

No one on the list likes it, and everyone feels a little guilty about it — except Fisher. But it’s like the fire extinguisher in your kitchen. You don’t use it every day. You may not use it ever. You don’t want to use it.

But if you’ve got to use it, you’re damn glad it’s there.

PLAYING A MAK ATTAX CAMPAIGN

Basing an *Unknown Armies* campaign around a bunch of Mak Attax PCs has a lot of potential. RPG players generally like to play benevo-



lent and kindly characters. *Unknown Armies* has been criticized (unfairly I think — but then, I would think that) as a negative setting in which *everyone* seems to be a self-interested scum-pie with all the moral fiber of a Bangkok strip-club pimp. Attaxers can stand against that feeling. They have a goal, and most of them pursue it with genuinely good intentions. Characters have a Noble passion for a reason, and playing a bunch of Maks can give them an opportunity to really work it.

There are several advantages to playing a Mak Attax crew:

- A clear mission statement: give out charges in hopes of bringing magick to the world.
- A reason for magickally inclined characters to be together.
- A larger organization that can provide equal helpings of advice and trouble.
- A generally naïve worldview that can be lots of fun for the GM to screw with and lots of fun for the players to lose.

There are, however, a few disadvantages that a GM (and players) should consider before starting a Mak Attax campaign.

- You're probably tied down. If you've got a franchise to protect and duties to discharge, it makes it harder to skate off and investigate those international stories of mystery and conspiracy.
- The money ain't great. Players tend to like having characters with enough dough that they don't have to sweat stuff like rent and concert tickets, and working at the front counter of the Scotsman's restaurant is not the way to get rich.
- The danger of goofiness. You can say what you want about TNI's mercenary hardcases and those bright-eyed Sleeper zealots, they do lend themselves to dramatic stories. Dealing with characters who sling fast food, on the other hand, can lend a distinctly less serious air to the

proceedings — especially when you get into all the kids' meal paraphernalia and the cartoon mascots. Maybe this is fine with you and you don't mind running and playing *Unknown Armies Lite*. But if you want to keep the more typical gritty tone, you're going to have to put in some effort to counteract the jokes about the big red-headed clown.

With those general issues in mind, let's take a closer look at the two likeliest Mak Attax PC crew types.

INFILTRATED FRANCHISE CREW

Most active Mak Attax crews fit into this category. The PCs are a crew that works in a restaurant, dropping charges on unsuspecting consumers and watching to see what happens.

This structure provides some promising plot hooks. First off, there's the restaurant itself. The PCs probably feel some kind of bond to the place where they work (and where they do "the great work"). A threat to the restaurant is going to spur them, be it paranormal (perhaps a side effect of a Special Order?) or more mundane (business is bad and management may sell out to Pizza Hut). There's also the Philanthropic Principle as a story-seed source. They drop a charge on someone, follow him or her to see what happens, and get entangled in danger and intrigue. It could be paranormal, as the charge does something wiggy and they have to protect the recipient. Or it could simply be that the person they picked is being blackmailed, or is a petty crook, or is involved in something else innocent but weird looking. (It might be particularly weird looking to Attaxers, who tend towards magickal thinking.)

Finally, there are interactions with the local occult underground to consider. If an adept happens to gets a charge at the local burger hangout, you can bet she's going to want to know how *that* happened. Lots of adepts and magick wannabees have never heard of Mak

Attax. Given the normal occultist profile, their likely reactions are going to be either “They’re threatening me! Kill them! Must kill them all!” or “Hmm . . . how can I take advantage of these punks?”

MOBILE CREW

Another possibility is setting the PCs up as a mobile crew. For whatever reason, they *aren’t* tied to a single franchise and they *do* have the money to get where they’re going. They can travel around, troubleshooting for Mak Attax, protecting endangered franchises and investigating mysteries.

The mobile crew option obviously has plot hooks a-poppin’. The whole *purpose* of the crew is to travel around at the behest of Superconductor (or the Crown Crew, or Paul Borowski, or Erica Fisher), looking into weird stuff, protecting and concealing the enterprise, and generally doing other duties as assigned. It’s a lot like a TNI team.

The difference is, TNI has lots of teams. Mak Attax has exactly *one*. And it’s the PCs.

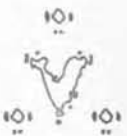
This puts a much different complexion on things. TNI has strict grades, and TNI PCs are likely to be at the bottom of that particular midden heap. Similarly, Sleeper PCs are probably looked on initially as low-ranking dupes and expendable resources. The best TNI characters have to look forward to is becoming top-level advisors to Alex Abel. A Mak Attax mobile crew, on the other hand, is an elite. They’re going to be admired and respected, maybe even envied, by many of the schlubs on the list. They consort with the leaders of the cabal, and their opinions are taken seriously. They may be the first response to danger, or they may be the last hope against it. Everyone relies on them.

Unfortunately, it’s quite likely that their power level is equal to that of the low-level TNI team or Sleeper dupe squad. Mak Attax’s big guns are just not as big as the competition’s.



MATTHEW DUDLEY

UNKNOWN
ARMIES



100 MIRACLES

Too lazy to think up an unnatural result from eating a Special Order? Just roll and look to see what happens to the ingester!

- 01 Has a vision of the Statosphere. If already an avatar, gains 10% to the avatar skill. If not an avatar, becomes attuned to the most fitting archetype and gains the skill at 10%.
- 02 The next threat to one's life becomes apparent the moment before it strikes, allowing the recipient to automatically avoid it.
- 03 The recipient's greatest hope becomes incarnate as a human being for the next week.
- 04 The next seriously ill or injured person touched is miraculously healed. The recipient has no idea about this power until it happens. It only works once.
- 05 Charm skill is doubled for the next 24 hours.
- 06 Holy symbols of all faiths glow faintly in the receiver's presence for the next 48 hours. Any object that glowed does 1-10 points of damage to the next adept who touches it. (This damage takes the form of a burn, ranging from a small red burn to severe blistering.)
- 07 Whenever the receiver is not paying attention, the universe reknits itself to provide extra time. (For example, if it takes the subject 30 minutes to drive somewhere, but he or she doesn't check the clock, the drive takes the normal amount of time, but s/he arrives after only 15 minutes.) This distortion happens for a week, providing about an extra hour every day.
- 08 Develop aura sight (see UA2, p. 43) at 50% for the next week.
- 09 Become ignorable, as per the Dipsomantic spell "Just a Harmless Drunk" (see UA2, p. 128) for the first fifteen minutes of every hour, for the next nine hours.
- 10 Body score is doubled for the next 12 hours.
- 11 Can understand the speech of animals and birds for one hour every day, starting at midnight. This is permanent.
- 12 Can sense magnetic fields. (They feel tingly.) This lasts 48 hours.
- 13 Has a vision predicting the next betrayal facing him or her.
- 14 Next attempt to use the Charm skill puts the person addressed into a hypnotic trance instead. This is not a celluloid "zombie slave" type of hypnotism, but the more realistic type of extreme suggestibility and belief. If anything too distressing is said to the entranced person, the spell is broken.
- 15 Through random "coincidence," a clue arrives indicating how to find that which the receiver most wants to find.
- 16 The next time the recipient is in peril from a lack of oxygen — drowning, smoke inhalation — she can continue to function at full ability until fresh air is reached.
- 17 Repels dirt and filth for the next 24 hours. He or she can walk through mud or wade through a cesspit and come out immaculate on the other side.
- 18 Speed score is doubled for the next 12 hours, providing unusual speed and deftness.
- 19 Become unnaturally sexually alluring for 24 hours.
- 20 For the next week, one can find lost objects simply by "guessing" where they might be. These guesses, if at all plausible, are always accurate.
- 21 When the receiver next sits down, he has an out of body experience in which he can fly invisibly around and through everything, like a ghost. This lasts an hour. If the abandoned body is found during this time, it appears that he has passed out.
- 22 Next time the receiver cries, one of her tears is a pearl of great price.
- 23 Every coin-operated machine touched operates once for free. This effect happens 100 times before it stops.
- 24 The next book opened transforms instantly

- into a beautiful red and green parrot.
- 25 A rainstorm blows in over the city, very fast. It rains hard, but none of the rain-drops touch the receiver.
 - 26 For the next two weeks, the receiver becomes a musical prodigy with an instrument he was never taught.
 - 27 Whenever someone within the recipient's hearing honks a car horn, she can hear what the driver is thinking.
 - 28 The receiver is infallibly precognitive for the next 24 hours. However, this precognition is limited to predicting which song is going to come on the radio next.
 - 29 For the next five hours, the recipient's wallet never runs out of money, but it contains only singles. If more than ten are spent at a time, the rest of the bills are counterfeit.
 - 30 Periodically for the next few weeks, the recipient is able to see through clothing and skin. These instances of paranormal sight generally last 1–10 minutes.
 - 31 A vivid dream instructs the recipient in a minor ritual of some sort. The first time he tries that ritual (if ever) it works automatically.
 - 32 For the next week, anyone who angers the recipient immediately develops a blinding migraine headache.
 - 33 Breath becomes permanently fresh and minty.
 - 34 Over the next week, the recipient's skin becomes extremely dry, itchy, loose, and thick. The week after that, it splits down the center and can be shed, leaving behind a complete "skin suit" about 1/8 of an inch thick. After shedding her skin, the recipient looks 5–10 years younger.
 - 35 For the next week, the recipient dreams the same dreams as the person he loves most.
 - 36 The next time the recipient sees something written in a foreign alphabet, she is able to fully comprehend it.
 - 37 Can intuit an individual's personality by feeling cranial bumps and concavities. The receiver has a strange sense that he is able to do this — but the genuine ability wears off after a week.
 - 38 By touching wallpaper and making a Soul roll, the recipient is able to hear what the person who hung the paper was thinking while he or she was putting it up. This ability lasts about a week. The recipient cannot consciously control it.
 - 39 Every person the recipient touches for the next month feels slightly tired and groggy, while the recipient feels more alert. This cannot be suppressed and works through clothing. Every person touched reduces the recipient's need for sleep by fifteen minutes.
 - 40 The property of the receiver gets newer when it's in personal contact. This happens at a rate of about one week every minute and stops when the item is brand new. Mileage doesn't go off the meter in a car, but rust, dents and wear and tear vanish. Similarly, clothes don't unweave, but stains and shiny spots on the knees disappear. This power lasts a week, but the effects remain.
 - 41 Terrible toothaches ensue as regenerating dental enamel pushes out the recipient's fillings. The recipient never gets another cavity.
 - 42 Grow two inches taller. This lasts for 24 hours.
 - 43 Everything read is perceived as verses from the Koran, or the Bible, or the Torah, or from a Buddhist sutra — any holy book works.
 - 44 Every fortune cookie the receiver gets comes true. This lasts until the recipient becomes consciously aware of it.
 - 45 For the next two hours, anything drunk transubstantiates into Diet Coke in the recipient's mouth.
 - 46 The recipient's dental work receives radio broadcasts from 1987 for the next five hours.
 - 47 Water cannot touch the recipient for 48 hours. It sluices away about a half-inch



- from the surface of the skin. Other liquids are fine.
- 48 When the recipient looks into her own eyes in a mirror, she sees strange, alien cities and forests reflected in the moisture that rests on the surface of her pupils.
 - 49 Sporadically over the next week, everyday objects appear wreathed in a glorious light that only the recipient can see. These objects speak, usually offering sensible advice about whatever is going on around the recipient.
 - 50 For the next 24 hours, understand the subtext of every spoken sentence. Not just the words, but what the speaker thinks and feels about those words.
 - 51 A loaded, unlicensed pistol appears in the recipient's purse, home or car. If gotten rid of, it shows up again in a new position — stuck in the back of a drawer, in the desk at work, in the recipient's locker at the gym. The gun has no criminal history. If continually thrown away, it stops returning after three days. Though unremarkable in appearance, it is of no recognizable make and model. It takes 9mm Parabellum ammunition.
 - 52 For the next month, all electrical cords smell like cinnamon when current is going through them. Only the recipient can perceive this. Stronger currents generate a stronger smell.
 - 53 A splitting headache begins instantly. Over the next couple days vision becomes increasingly blurry. Medical science is baffled. The headache ends with the feeling like something popped or cracked inside the recipient's brain. After that, the recipient has permanent Aura Sight that cannot be deactivated, but his normal sight is reduced to legal blindness. Only very large type books can be read, and the receiver is no longer allowed to drive.
 - 54 Edged objects made of metal — knives, razor blades, scissors — become dull, and the metal visibly blackens and corrodes, when held by the receiver. This power lasts about six hours.
 - 55 For the rest of the day, people pay intense attention to the recipient. If asked why, they deny it or have no good reason.
 - 56 The next time the recipient picks up a phone to dial it, someone she already knows is on the other end, having dialed the number by mistake.
 - 57 Able to see invisible entities, such as entropics, demons, astral parasites, thaumophages, and the harmless but ugly invisible psychic insects that cover every conscious material being.
 - 58 May consciously rewrite one unpleasant memory so that it is totally different. If done, the recipient has no memory of changing his memory. (This does not erase any hardened or failed notches on the Madness Meter. Rather, the mark from the forgotten event can *never* be removed.)
 - 59 All the recipient's hair turns white for two weeks, then returns to its normal color. As it grows out, this leaves a white patch in the middle of each hair, at about the same depth — like having a dye job grow out.
 - 60 Entities in the receiver's next daydream act consciously and converse with the recipient, providing stinging psychological insights.
 - 61 The next time the recipient shakes someone's hand, she absorbs all of that person's memories. They do not come in as a flood, but (like one's original memories) are called up by similarity or conscious effort. The borrowed memories begin to fade quickly after absorption, and within 48 hours they are completely gone. This is a rank-5 Self check.
 - 62 Plastic becomes completely invisible to the recipient for the next 24 hours.
 - 63 The next time the recipient touches a closely loved person (son, wife, whatever), he exchanges bodies with that person for 33 hours. This is a rank-8 Self check.
 - 64 Turns into a large Doberman Pinscher the

- next time no one is looking. This transformation lasts for a week. The recipient retains full consciousness and all mental abilities during the transformation. Clothing and personal items carried vanish for the duration of the effect. The transformation is a Self check, and both Self and Helplessness checks are going to come thick and fast.
- 65 The next photocopier used becomes possessed by a demon that can only communicate by inserting an image (or text) into every 333rd copy.
 - 66 Is now slightly more attractive to rats, flies, and other vermin. This is permanent.
 - 67 Wake up the next morning to find a severed horse head in bed.
 - 68 To the recipient, every person of the same gender seems to look and sound exactly like the recipient. That is, Jim Smith sees the world populated entirely by (1) women and (2) doppelgangers of Jim Smith, though they're all dressed differently. This effect lasts until sundown.
 - 69 For the next week, painkillers actually intensify pain instead of dulling it.
 - 70 The recipient's vision changes, such that the color purple appears gray. Not only can the recipient not see purple, purple is inconceivable and cannot be remembered. The recipient knows there was such a color as purple, but cannot imagine or perceive it any longer. This is a rank-1 Unnatural check and a rank-2 Self check.
 - 71 Becomes intensely sexually attracted to the next person of the appropriate gender seen. This lasts for two hours.
 - 72 The top or front half of a lost and beloved childhood toy turns up in the recipient's mailbox.
 - 73 The next time the person takes a bite of meat, the meat screams. This is audible to everyone around, though people are likely to think the person did it.
 - 74 Mouth tastes and smells like rotten onions for the next five hours. Brushing and mouthwash don't help.
 - 75 The next computer mouse touched transforms into an actual field mouse, which runs away. Anyone else around sees it as a computer peripheral and believes that the recipient has flung it away.
 - 76 Any money handled in the next hour seems incredibly hot, doing 3 points of damage per round handled. This heat does not affect clothing or other people.
 - 77 Get a sharp, lancing pain through a random body part whenever the recipient uses a first person singular pronoun ("I" or "me"). This is permanent.
 - 78 The next time the recipient walks out of a bathroom, the door opens into his childhood home.
 - 79 The next time the recipient reads a book, certain letters appear red. If only those letters are read in order, it spells out obscenities, abuse, and threats.
 - 80 A cloud of powerful camphor scent surrounds the recipient for the next eight hours.
 - 81 Gender change for forty-seven minutes.
 - 82 Anything the recipient drinks for the next 10 hours turns to blood. It's human, but it's not the recipient's blood. The only exception is Diet Mountain Dew.
 - 83 Two hours of aphasia. Aphasia is a condition in which common words cannot be remembered. The recipient is not physically mute, but simply cannot recall about half the words she wants to use.
 - 84 Moisturizing lotion causes the recipient's skin to break out in a rash that spells out curses in Greek letters, but blessings in Braille.
 - 85 The next time the recipient sleeps, the sheets become animate and attack. They have a 15% Struggle skill and 20 hit points. They can only make (and only be harmed by) strangling attacks. Once "killed," the sheets return to normal.
 - 86 For the next hour, any electronic device touched by the recipient goes haywire. Any



- magnetic media — including the strips on credit cards — is erased.
- 87 Sees everyone as a walking corpse bearing the marks of their demise. These marks indicate the most likely death for that individual at that moment. (For instance, a soldier going into battle would look bullet-riddled, but if he survived, the next peril to his life would appear.) This death-vision lasts for 48 hours, and is probably going to provide many stress checks. The deaths do not necessarily occur — they are simply depictions of the most likely form of death that could happen at the moment.
 - 88 Over the next 24 hours, all the recipient's teeth turn rot black and fall out. A recipient with no teeth grows a single, pointed fang.
 - 89 All food handled for the next twelve hours rots instantly upon touch.
 - 90 The next time the recipient personifies an inanimate object (referring to a boat as "she" or verbally encouraging a car to start) that object becomes possessed by a demon.
 - 91 Grows a third nipple somewhere on the recipient's body.
 - 92 Becomes permanently attractive to tenebrae (see UA2, p. 306). Whenever the recipient dies, tenebrae eat the body, unless it's kept in light right up to the moment of cremation.
 - 93 For the next 45 minutes, all music sounds like screaming to the recipient.
 - 94 Minor unnatural phenomena surround the recipient — one happens every 20–30 minutes for the next 48 hours.
 - 95 Develops a treatable melanoma — a cancerous skin tumor. It's about the size of a thumbnail, but takes the shape of the receiver's own face.
 - 96 Calls back the spirit of a deceased loved one for a half-hour dream conversation the next time the recipient sleeps.
 - 97 The recipient's worst fear becomes incarnate as a human being for the next week.
 - 98 Stigmata develop, inflicting 18 points of damage.
 - 99 Clowns become terrifying. Any time the recipient sees one, it's a rank-4 Helplessness challenge. This is permanent.
 - 00 Spontaneous combustion some time in the next 33 minutes.

Return-Path: <MA-request@purpletape.cs.uchicago.edu>
X-Sent: 27 Oct 1990 02:58:19 GMT
Subject: [MA] Welcome to Mak Attax!
Date: Sat, 27 Oct 1990 19:58:11 -0700
x-sender: (undisclosed)
From: Superconductor <superconductor@makatt.com>

As the subject line says, welcome. If you've gotten on this mailing list, it's probably because someone who's already on here invited you. If you're receiving this in error and have no idea what's going on, send me an email and I'll remove you with all due dispatch.

You may notice that all messages from this list come dated October 27, 1990. I realize it's a pain, but it's a security measure. You're not supposed to keep copies of list posts in any event (see below), but if someone does keep an illicit archive, I'm going to make them work a little to keep it orderly.

I run this list, and I try to keep this forum as open as possible. There are a few ground rules by which we all abide. If you can't obey these, unsubscribe. I try not to be a hardass, but continued disobedience can result in ejection.

1) You're not allowed to accuse someone of being a fraud. "You can't really do that!" is never a valid accusation, no matter how outlandish the claim. If someone claims they can levitate the Eiffel Tower with magick, you're not allowed to call bullshit on it, no matter how you privately feel.

2) Posting your real name, address, phone number -- really, any contact information besides an email address or post office box -- is strongly discouraged. We might not boot you for screwing up by mistake, but you're a lot safer with that information kept secret. I strongly recommend posting and checking this list through a blind account like Hotmail.

3) Posting the real name, address, phone number or other such information about a fellow list member will result in immediate ejection. We take our anonymity very seriously here.

4) Please delete all posts after you read them. This is a security precaution to ensure our anonymity in the event that your computer or account gets compromised. I do keep an archive, correctly time and date stamped: If it's really necessary, I can look things up. But I'm busy, so please don't ask for research unless it's important.

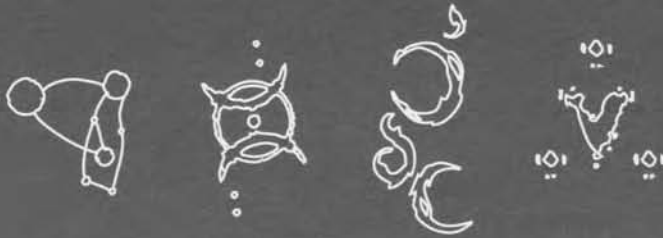
5) The following topics are closed for discussion. Do not talk about them, PLEASE.

- * The placement of subliminal occult imagery in the movie "Game of Death."
- * The existence (or not) of "drunk bugs."
- * Whether the poster "Freeeq3" really is "THE Freak" or not.
- * The connection of the Kennedy family to the Priory of Sion.
- * Gun control legislation.

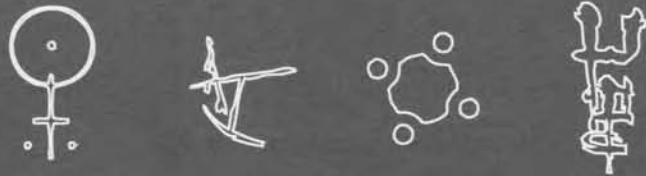
Thanks in advance for your courtesy. We look forward to working with you.

-S.

"...so this Zen master goes in the drive through and says 'make me one with everything'..."



CHAPTER TWO PERSONNEL



Generally speaking, there are two kinds of people in any group: those who call the tune and those who dance. This chapter is divided into the Register Monkeys — the rank and file — and the Upper Echelon.

REGISTER MONKEYS

Most of Mak Attax's members — even full-time workers — are low level. These front-line Maks often have no idea that there are secret mailing lists. (Even if they suspect they exist, they know they're not on them.) They're in Mak Attax, but generally they aren't fanatically committed to the cause. They're Attaxers the same way other people are bowlers or Boy Scouts — they do it, they like it, but it's not central to their identity.

Being a low-level member of Mak Attax doesn't imply incompetence, either magically or with more mundane skills. Some of Mak Attax' most powerful adepts work at this level. All it indicates is that the Attaxer hasn't put

in the time, or the effort, or hasn't otherwise demonstrated unusual dedication to the task.

DEBBIE ROTH

(LIST NAME "HOTBED_BRIE")

The occult scene is full of dramatic stories. "Daddy beat me!" "Mommy abandoned me!" "I was jailed for my politics!" "I was raised by TV and it did a bad job!" But nothing too terrible happened to Debbie.

On the other hand, nothing too great ever happened to her either.

Disinterested parents raised her, then divorced as soon as she and her brothers were out of the house. She got an okay education, losing her virginity was awkward but not traumatic, and her first job out of college was really dull. She's plain looking. She manages a burger joint. Her greatest accomplishment was being a national spelling-bee competitor. (She still tiresomely insists that she only got eliminated because the questioner did not make it sufficiently clear that he was asking

UNKNOWN
ARMIES

her to spell “aesthetics” instead of “ascetics.”) Her only hobbies are crosswords and acrostics. She can usually complete the *Times* Sunday crossword in less than twenty minutes — in ink.

Simply put, Debbie is dull. Unless you find out about the anagrams, that is.

Debbie's older brother Paul was the religious one. Debbie and the rest of her family observed the Sabbath and had bar and bat mitzvahs, and that was about it. But Paul had a calling and eventually became a rabbi, and one tiny part of his rabbinical studies rubbed off on his sister: the concept of gematria.

Debbie took gematria and twisted it 'til it screamed for mercy, and created a new school of magick: Anagram Gematria (for more information on the Anagram Gematriast, see p. 91).

Debbie was never really part of the Occult Underground until she joined Mak Attax. There is something minor that's a little odd about that, which few (if any) Meks have noted: she seems to have joined the cabal before she started flipping burgers. However, since she's not a particularly high-profile poster, more folks haven't realized this.

Today, Debbie manages a burger joint in California, trying to help with the Great Work of Mak Attax.

STATS

Personality: Libra. Que sera, sera.

Obsession: (Anagram Gematria/A Grammarian Gate). Manipulate words to manipulate the world.

Wound Points: 55.

Rage Stimulus: If something upsets her perception of the mundane status quo, Debbie freaks.

Fear Stimulus: Risk — she doesn't like to take chances. (Helplessness)

Noble Stimulus: Security. Debbie is dedicated to making things safe and tidy (especially for herself).

Body: 55 (Fit)

General Athletics 25%, Rollerblading 15%, Self-Defense Course (Struggle) 25%, Swimming 20%

Speed: 50 (Nimble Fingers)

Calligraphy 20%, Cross-stitching 20%, Dodge 25%, Drive a Reliable Car 25%, Initiative 25%

Mind: 55 (Above Average)

Conceal 15%, Liberal Arts (General Education) 35%, Notice 25%, Word Games 30%

Soul: 60 (Pleasant Enough)

Charm 15%, Lie 15%, Magick: Anagram Gematria/A Grammarian Gate 55%, Sing in Shower 10%

Magick: Anagram Gematria. This school of magick appears on p. 91.

Violence: 0 Hardened 0 Failed

Unnatural: 0 Hardened 1 Failed

Helplessness: 1 Hardened 1 Failed

Isolation: 1 Hardened 0 Failed

Self: 0 Hardened 0 Failed

POSSESSIONS

Other than exceedingly nice stuff — apartment, wardrobe, car, computer — for someone driving a fast-food counter, Debbie's apartment contains varied evidence of her secret life. (See p. 65 for more details.)

NOTES

She knows both versions of the Ritual of Lesser Correspondence, along with the Ritual of Fealty. She has not attempted the Ritual of Fealty, and is frankly scared to try it.

MAY ROGERS

(LIST NAME “RAINBOW”)

May lives in a sprawling rented house in Vancouver, Canada, with two other women and two guys. She calls it a “commune.” Everyone else living there just calls it their house.

May tells anyone who asks that she's



SAMUEL ARAYA



REGISTER MONKEYS MAY ROGERS, MANUEL ORTIZ, BETTY KIMURA, FRANCOIS DUHAIM, AND DEBBIE ROTH

working at the Golden Arches because it's part of her destiny. The act of giving nourishment, she claims, is inherently spiritual — even if the food being given isn't organic and comes from non-consenting animals. She says she's doing her little part to push the world towards universal kindness and acceptance, one smile at a time. She can't quit talking about how the restaurant's introduction of the Salad Shaker was an important sign of important vegetarian changes to come.

The night manager propositioned her once, and she cheerfully accepted. He was amazed. He immediately transferred her to the day shift, apologized, said they shouldn't see each other any more, explained that he'd been drunk and that, furthermore, the *reason* he was drunk was that it was his anniversary with his wife who died two years ago, and . . . May just smiled and said "Hey, glad I could help. I know, you could get fired. I won't tell. It's all good." He still gets nervous and guilty thinking about it. He's old enough to be her father.

Her day manager likes May all right. She's always pleasant to the customers, that's for damn sure.

May has half a college education, student loans she has no intention of *ever* paying, a thrift-store wardrobe, and a loving family (she's the sole remaining hippie). She has a vegetarian lifestyle, no boyfriend but several man-pals she can call the couple days a month she feels up for free love, and a very optimistic outlook on life.

May believes she is capable of astral projection. (She's not.) She believes that when she goes out of body, she travels great distances to visit the subterranean cities of ruined Mars, the thick woods of Saturn's moons, and the mighty alien empires of distant Sirius. (She doesn't.)

Among themselves, her friends snicker about why she ever has to phone them to see if they're home. They're fond of her, but they also think she's a first class New Age flake with no more paranormal ability than a coffee machine.

They are wrong.

May is not an astral traveler. She is a *time*

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traveler. She is not viewing other planets, but other incarnations of the cosmos.

There are, in the world, perhaps a dozen occultists who could develop almost incalculable power if they knew the truth about May's abilities. Those dozen occultists are the few who are aware that the power behind rituals is the resonance they create between this universe and some facet of a previous one. An accomplished occultist with accurate descriptions of a dead cosmos could create a baffling and potent variety of rituals *from scratch*.

But May doesn't know what she's doing, none of the occultists with sufficient knowledge are anywhere *near* Vancouver, and even if they did meet her, the odds are very great that they would simply dismiss her as a self-deluded crackpot.

Funny, huh?

The only person who would immediately recognize her visions for what they are is a certain diplomat from a certain country that may or may not exist close to Freedonia. Since he remembers all those past universes too, she wouldn't do him much good.

But that diplomat (or blues musician, or translator of rare documents, or alchemist, or whatever he calls himself today) has been known to do a great many things for motives that remain utterly inscrutable. Someday soon he'll do something for May Rogers.

STATS

Personality: A cross between Phoebe from *Friends* and Dharma from *Dharma & Greg*, only mellower. Life, I love you: all is groovy.

Obsession: May has no obsession.

Wound Points: 60.

Rage Stimulus: Greedy people. They should just share — caring and sharing make the world a better place.

Fear Stimulus: Being slapped, punched, kicked, and so forth. (Violence)

Noble Stimulus: Kindness. May will always choose the softer, more merciful path, and take

any opportunity to bring a little kindness into someone's day.

Body: 60 (Healthy)

General Athletics 25%, Enjoy Health Food 20%, Struggle 15%, Yoga 30%

Speed: 55 (Graceful)

Dodge 25%, Drive 25%, Initiative 27%, Juggling 35%

Mind: 40 (A Little Fried)

Conceal 15%, New Age Understanding (General Education) 25%, Notice 15% Hippie Paradigm 40%

Soul: 65 (Deep)

Astral (Time) Travel 30%, Charm 35%, Folk Singing 15%, Lie 15%, Mak Attax 5%

Astral (Time) Travel. May can have visions of past and future incarnations of the cosmos, though not of this current one. Some incarnations may be similar to ours, while others may be wildly, fantastically different. She mistakenly believes it's astral travel to other worlds/dimensions. If she gets a matched success on her roll, perhaps the GM could give her an insight that somewhat corresponds to the situation at hand. Otherwise, this skill serves as the GM's wildcard to serve up whatever sort of disinformation and weirdness she wishes.

Enjoy Health Food. May can consume any foodstuff, no matter how nasty, with no ill effect — as long as she believes it's "health food," "macrobiotic," "organic," or "free-range."

Paradigm: Hippie (Self/Violence). This is a Paradigm skill (see UA2, p. 42) that embodies her cheery belief in the essential rightness of daily events.

Violence:	0 Hardened	1 Failed
Unnatural:	0 Hardened	0 Failed
Helplessness:	0 Hardened	0 Failed
Isolation:	0 Hardened	0 Failed
Self:	1 Hardened	1 Failed



POSSESSIONS

Lots of incense, candles, herbs, and teas. She may possibly not own any clothing that's not denim, hemp, or tie-dyed. She's got a new VW Beetle, though, and is angsty a little about it, since it seems more yuppie than hippie.

NOTES

She knows version 1.0 of the Ritual of Lesser Correspondence, along with the Ritual of Fealty (see *UA2*, p. 96).

MANUEL ORTIZ/MANUEL "LOPEZ"

(LIST NAME "RUNNER")

Manny used to be in plastics, back in the day. Plastics were fairly good to Manny, but he wanted them to be *very* good. After all, it was 1967. The age of plastic had begun. Even that movie *The Graduate* said so. Fortunes were being made and Manny wanted the good life. No, scratch that. He had the good life and wanted the *fabulous* life.

So he tried working hard and neglecting his family. When that didn't work, he became a Satanist.

At first Satanism — at least the particular version of it Manny joined up with in Lincoln, Nebraska — seemed a lot like Amway. You paid a fee to get in, you paid dues, and the way to make more money was to recruit more people. Indeed, Manny was seriously wondering what the difference was between Satanism and Freemasonry when he managed to recruit three more "Neophytes" — enough to move him up to "Initiate" rank in the organization.

At his promotion ceremony, he found out how the Lincoln Satanists were different. The Freemasons, he was pretty sure, never abducted women traveling alone and stabbed them to death.

There were four "Adepts" — the level above "Initiate" — standing around him and the other two Initiates. The Initiates had knives in their hands. The woman was unconscious. One of the Adepts had whispered to him, "Don't worry — you'll never know if you

struck the killing blow," like that was going to make Manny feel better.

He had the knife in his hand. He thought about attacking his fellow Satanists. He thought about telling the other Initiates, "Hey, screw this — let's get out of here!" He hoped that somehow this was a fake test, that they'd stop him right before he struck, that they'd tell him it was enough that he was *willing*.

But really, the important thing was that he had the knife in his hand.

He still doesn't know what he would have done if two lunatics hadn't kicked in the door — one skinny white guy with a sawed-off shotgun, and one black woman with a huge 'fro and a chrome revolver. Everything went crazy. The other Satanists started screaming. The shotgun went off. Manny just froze. The woman pointed the gun at him and told him to drop the knife, but he couldn't make his body respond. Then one of the Adepts pulled a gun of his own and she *shot it out of his hand!*

That was it for Manny. He dropped the knife and ran like hell. The last thing he heard was the white guy yelling for the Adepts to name names.

When he got home, he was well and truly freaked. He realized that his fingerprints were on the knife, but more than that — if the other Satanists didn't have more on the ball than he did, those two lunatics would soon have the names of everyone in the cult.

That night Manuel Ortiz abandoned his wife and daughter. With nothing but his cash on hand and a suitcase full of clothes, he got in his car and drove. He didn't dare cash a check and ATMs hadn't been invented yet.

Flash forward three or four decades.

"Manuel Ortiz" is legally dead. His daughter Rhoda is *really* dead — killed in a car crash when she was 17. Manny hasn't spoken to his wife since the night he left, she's remarried and has twins by her second husband.

The real Manuel Lopez died in 1972, but Ortiz managed (through some dubious maneuvering and brown paper bags stuffed with cash)

to acquire his Social Security number. There was never an investigation. Ortiz has lived as Lopez, has gone to night school as Lopez, and has become the manager of a burger joint as Lopez. He never remarried, never told anyone about his past and never stopped worrying that the mysterious cult-busting duo would catch up with him.

He got marginally involved with the occult underground in the 1980s — primarily trying to find out if someone who'd sold his soul could ever get it back. He still doesn't have an answer to that one, and he's learned enough to be confused on a lot of other points as well.

Manny has no supernatural powers of his own, but he's firmly convinced that the paranormal is real. He joined Mak Attax because he wants to find some way to atone for what he did — and for what he almost did.

STATS

Personality: Dr. Kimball in *The Fugitive*. He's a hunted man, or at least he feels that way.

Obsession: (Soul Lore). Manuel is deeply concerned about the state and ownership of his soul.

Wound Points: 50.

Rage Stimulus: Liars. Manuel hates the liar, but not necessarily the lie.

Fear Stimulus: Being surprised. (Helplessness)

Noble Stimulus: Do No Harm. In order to stop violence or hurt to others, Manuel will go to great lengths.

Body: 50 (Average Shape)

*Jogging (General Athletics) 35%,
Scrappin' (Struggle) 40%, Weight Lift-
ing 25%*

Speed: 60 (Jumpy)

*Dodge 35%, Drive 40%, Firearms
35%, Initiative 40%, Squirrelly
Reflexes 30%*

Mind: 60 (Driven)

*Conceal 50%, General Education
25%, Notice 40%, Soul Lore 35%*

Soul: 50 (Somewhat Sad)

*Charm 20%, Lie 50%, Mak Attax
10%, Play Dumb 15%*

Play Dumb. See UA2, p. 44.

Soul Lore. Wide-ranging knowledge of various takes (neurochemical, religious, occult, philosophical, spiritual) on the nature and existence of the soul; may include some sketchy knowledge on ghosts, spirits, unquiet dead, and demons.

Violence: 0 Hardened 1 Failed

Unnatural: 1 Hardened 0 Failed

Helplessness: 1 Hardened 1 Failed

Isolation: 1 Hardened 0 Failed

Self: 0 Hardened 1 Failed

POSSESSIONS

Manuel's got a .357 Magnum, a used pick-up truck, and a rathole apartment. He also possesses a fairly large collection of philosophical, religious, and occult books — nothing particularly rare, mind you — all dealing with the nature of the soul.

NOTES

Manuel knows version 1.0 of the Ritual of Lesser Correspondence. He has a copy of the Spellbreaker ritual (see UA2, p. 99), but can't make it work, since he's not an adept.

BETTY KIMURA

(LIST NAME "MONRO")

"Betty" (her real name is Hiroko) lives in Asahikawa, Japan. She works for the same big burger chain as the rest of Mak Attax, to the despair of her father. He wants her to go back to school, learn something worthwhile, maybe how to program computers. Her mother died when Hiroko was a young girl, and Hiroko does not get along with her father's new wife.

Hiroko ignores their advice. She likes computers, but only to the extent that they entertain her. She's an avid computer-game buyer, along with music and clothes. She particularly



likes American stuff from the eighties and the fifties. (Nothing else from the U.S. interests her much, but Molly Ringwald and Marilyn Monroe, the Platters and Duran Duran, poodle skirts and acid-washed jean jackets covered with lots of little buttons — that's her odd little scene.) She has a tiny apartment she shares with two other girls, and the three of them like to get dressed up, put on pink wigs, and do karaoke on Friday nights. She giggles and runs around and wastes money in a fashion that would be cute if she was twenty (like her roommates) but it's a little strange in a thirty-year-old. Not that Betty admits to being thirty. She doesn't look it, mostly as a consequence of her girlish wardrobe and attitude.

Betty has been shielded from most of life's unpleasantness, and the occult underground in Japan can be a lot more subtle, patient, and traditional than in the U.S. Her localized vision prevents her from understanding the concerns of a lot of other Attaxers. (Well, that and her imperfect grasp of English.)

Betty isn't stupid. She has no problem comprehending complicated information, if it interests her. But she's definitely immature and easily bored, she thinks it's fun to act ditzy, and she's naïve enough to make May Rogers (described earlier) look like Humphrey Bogart.

Her Mak Attax contact is a woman named Ai Sumimoto from the main island who periodically sends Betty charged coffee cups — about four a month. Ai is serious and secretive, and claims that her family descends from a Chinese sailor ejected from his ship in antiquity for practicing sorcery — she does something with spirits of trees and stones, but she's very reticent. (At least, she is when it comes to Betty.) Ai scares Betty a little, but Betty knows Ai is an important part of their important enterprise.

Betty knows this because she doesn't give away *every* charge she gets. After performing the Ritual of Fealty (see p. 85), Betty felt it would be a good idea to keep two cups for herself and do the Ritual again. And again. And again. After a while, she just knew when it was enough.

Betty just follows her intuition when it comes to handing out charges. She has no idea her charges are producing a pattern in Asahikawa — one that stretches through her entire prefecture. (See "Kimura's Pattern," p. 126.)

STATS

Personality: Cancer. She's a team player to the nth degree, loyal and responsive to her friends and associates.

Obsession: (Mak Attax). The Golden Arches is everything America to Betty — fast food, happiness, and entertainment, all in one greasy little sack.

Wound Points: 50.

Rage Stimulus: Boredom. When Betty gets bored, be careful — she'll flip out and do something impulsive.

Fear Stimulus: Getting old. She's twigged by the pains and fears related to aging. (Helplessness)

Noble Stimulus: Entertainment. She'll go the extra mile to keep people happy and smiling.

Body: 50 (Youthful)

General Athletics 25%, Karate (Struggle) 20%, Looks Like A Kid 35%

Speed: 45 (A Little Clumsy)

Dodge 30%, Drive Moped 20%, Initiative 25%, Skating 25%

Mind: 50 (Ditzy)

American Lore 30%, Conceal 20%, Computer Games 15%, Computer Science (General Education) 25%, English 50%, Notice 15%

Soul: 75 (Fun!)

Kawai (Charm) 30%, Lie 15%, Mak Attax 55%, Speak English 10%

American Lore. This represents knowledge of America collected solely from pop culture: all the tropes and clichés of American life as shown on TV and in the movies are the basis of how Betty views the USA. When she uses this skill to understand something about America, she tries to relate it to something she's seen in

media. If she fails the roll, she misconnects the dots ("I see! Dirk Allen is the Richie Cunningham, and that makes the Freak the Fonz!")

Kawai (Charm). This Japanese word means "cute, tiny, charming, lovely" and such; much of Betty's charm and charisma comes from being almost insufferably so.

Look Like A Kid. As per Distracting Physique (see UA2, p. 39).

Mak Attax. See p. 85 for more details.

Violence:	0 Hardened	0 Failed
Unnatural:	0 Hardened	0 Failed
Helplessness:	0 Hardened	1 Failed
Isolation:	0 Hardened	0 Failed
Self:	2 Hardened	1 Failed

POSSESSIONS

Betty owns a tremendous amount of junk related to American TV, movies, and celebrities. She's quite proud of this collection. Her wardrobe is vast and eclectic. Her moped is electric lime green and has a horn that sounds like the General Lee's. Her prize possession is a Wurlitzer jukebox (packed with diner music), which takes up a large area of her bedroom; the volume control is busted, much to her roommates' dismay.

NOTES

She knows version 1.1 of the Ritual of Lesser Correspondence, The Ritual of the Smoking Head (fun at parties! see p. 83), and has the Ritual of Fealty memorized. Indeed, she may have the highest Mak Attax skill in the entire world.

FRANÇOIS DUHAIM

(LIST NAME "PARISMCOO")

François was putting magick on strangers before he ever heard of Mak Attax. But he's always been precocious: he was an adept before he ever saw magick spelled with a 'k'.

François is the son of Renard Duhaim. Renard is not a famous chef. He's too good to be really famous. If you're in the top 30% of

chefs, you might become famous, because your cuisine is good enough to stand out, but not so rarified that it becomes incomprehensible to anyone who hasn't spent years honing gourmet senses to their keenest pitch.

Renard is in the top 5%. Perhaps the top 1%. Perhaps he's the best in the world. (Renard certainly thinks so.) Consequently, his culinary creations are constantly pushing the envelope, and like most avant-garde artists, he must accept that people who *don't* think about food deeply and constantly just won't get it.

(But what about his son? How did François become an adept? And how did he wind up working at a restaurant that is surely the antithesis of all his father holds dear? I know, you're wondering. Trust me. It all ties in.)

On one hand, Renard was pampered and praised by the 10% of gourmets who could truly savor his work. This made him rather prideful. On the other hand, he had to put up with the meat-headed incomprehension of the vast unwashed masses. This made him rather touchy. In fact, it would be fair to characterize Renard as an arrogant petty tyrant who is angry almost all the time.

Enter François — the only child Renard managed to have before his wife divorced him out of sheer exhaustion. François was raised to appreciate the finer things in life — wine, art, music, and (of course) food. He was never good enough for his father, but he was easily in the top 10% as far as aesthetes were concerned.

When he was 16, François got distracted by a tight skirt, got clobbered by a moped and rebounded face-first off a Metro sign. He suffered a maxillofacial fracture. The bones behind his upper lip were shattered, and shards of his ethmoid bone were driven into his sinus cavities. Lucky for him, there was a doctor on hand. Otherwise, François might have drowned on his own blood.

The reconstructive surgery was fairly successful, and his moustache covers most of the visible damage. But his sense of smell was simply destroyed. Oh, he can still notice some-



thing like fresh skunk, but appreciating the subtleties of fine wine and masterwork cuisine? Forget it.

In one moment, distracted by a pretty woman, François lost any chance of true respect from his father.

François Duham is now twenty-two and works at “McDo” (as it’s known in France) to spite his dad. Or rather, his former dad. Renard disowned him when he started flipping burgers. Before that, François dabbled in art school, but mostly was interested in asking out lovely women.

Now, flirting with attractive ladies is common the world over, and François’ home town of Paris has its fair share. But François’ attitude is a little different. He’s fascinated by *les Tops* — women who are not only beautiful, but almost painfully beautiful. Models and actresses mainly, but any gorgeous woman will do. Hardly a day goes by that he doesn’t ask for a phone number. He has standards — very, very *high* standards. He only propositions the top 1%, the most beautiful women in the city.

But he doesn’t actually *like* them. Not as people, anyhow. He has nothing against beautiful women, certainly, but he’s never become friends with one because his criteria for friendship are completely separate from his standards of beauty. The emotional response he has to his belles is distant — almost platonic. It has nothing to do with personality. It’s all about perception.

That’s the key, really. François has found that being around an overpoweringly lovely woman actually alters his perceptions — and the perceptions of everyone around him. Everything becomes extra sharp. Every sense is heightened. Every sight and sound seems laden with meaning and portent.

François is not sleazy, not a harasser, not a pick-up artist. He’s not *generally* sexist. He has several close female friends he would never date because they’re not beautiful enough. His social meetings with those friends are human

to human. To François, dates are encounters with a mysterious Other. He falls in love with every beautiful woman he sees, but only in the way that a painter falls in love with a painting, or the way his father falls in love with a perfect sauce. It’s nothing like the way people fall in love with other people. In that area of his life, he has gone through sexism and emerged on the other side.

Usually he approaches the woman, introduces himself, asks her out and gets rejected — sometimes gently, sometimes rudely. Then he nods, a little sadly, and goes away with a minor charge. About one time in a hundred, the woman agrees to go out with him, and that date provides a significant charge to him.

With his charges, François can alter his own perceptions, and the perceptions of people around him. This is nothing so blatant as making holographic illusions or deleting himself from sight. Those affected still perceive what is there. Often they perceive *more* of what is there. He can’t take away, and he can’t make your senses lie, but he can change the way you interpret them. Under the influence of his power, one might:

- See the obsession of every person you meet. Not just know it, but visually *see* it, represented as an animal connected to the person. Cage’s obsession with being Alpha Male (see UA2, p. 239) would look like a posturing monkey on his back. C.K. Williams’ obsession with secrets (see p. 58) might be an owl sitting on his shoulder, swiveling its head to gaze all around it.
- Hear the symphony made by traffic patterns — not the sounds of the horns, but the density and flow interpreted sonically.
- By shaking a man’s hand, you might feel what he feels when he looks at you, or what he feels when he wakes afraid in the middle of the night, or what he feels when he watches his daughter at play.

Before joining Mak Attax, François spent

a lot of time just wandering the city, occasionally dosing a stranger with mystic perception to watch his or her reaction. He also liked touring Paris and using his power on himself — inventing new senses of space and emotion and history and magick. (He could not, however, restore his sense of smell; the sense-magick is too conceptual to accomplish something that mundane.) That was, of course, how he began to notice the slow, gentle, strange music of Paris's Special Orders. It took him a while to track them to their source. But he must have liked what he sensed, because he immediately wanted in.

François is content with his life, his magick, and his Mak Attax. It's unfortunate, really, because all that will be thrown into disarray when he learns that his father has come to the attention of a sinister cabal called Ordo Corpulentus, which longs to extend its influence out of Texas and across the world.

STATS

Personality: Sadder But Wiser. While François has seen it all, done it all, and owns several (designer) T-shirts about it, he still can find beauty in the world and can still enjoy seeing beauty find others.

Obsession: (Aesthetomancy). The acme, the apex, the ideal — he searches for perfection.

Wound Points: 55.

Rage Stimulus: Being asked to do the impossible.

Fear Stimulus: Complete and massive failure, in the eyes of his peers. (Self)

Noble Stimulus: Beauty. François will suffer gladly to preserve and protect beautiful and rare things.

Body: 55 (Deceptively Chubby)
Aikido (Struggle) 30%, Dashing Facial Scar 25%, General Athletics 30%

Speed: 60 (Quick)
Dancing 20%, Dodge 25%, Drive 25%, Initiative 35%

Mind: 65 (Discerning)
Conceal 20%, The Finer Things (General Education) 55%, Notice 30%, Speak English 15%, Speak German 15%, Speak Italian 15%

Soul: 60 (Refined)
Aesthetomancy 45%, Artist 15%, Charm 35%, Lie 25%

Aesthetomancy. As per description above.

Dashing Facial Scar. As per Distracting Physique (see UA2, p. 39).

Violence:	0 Hardened	0 Failed
Unnatural:	3 Hardened	1 Failed
Helplessness:	2 Hardened	0 Failed
Isolation:	1 Hardened	0 Failed
Self:	0 Hardened	1 Failed

POSSESSIONS

Whatever he owns is the best of its type he can get: wines, cars, clothes, music, stereos, televisions, and so forth. François also owns many pieces of art — paintings and sculptures, mostly — by up-and-coming artists from throughout Eastern Europe, especially Prague.

NOTES

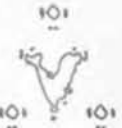
François knows both versions of the Ritual of Lesser Correspondence, along with the Ritual of Fealty. He has refused to perform the Fealty ritual thus far as he doesn't understand what it does. He is searching for Meks who have, in order to observe them first with his special ability.

"LARA FOSTER"/COLLEEN DWYER

Colleen — also known as "Lara Foster" — was supposed to meet Derek Jackson, get close to him, gain his trust, and stay there until needed. She was to become, if necessary, his lover. If necessary, she was to be his assassin.

She'd done it before.

Colleen used to be a cop, a uniformed police officer in Cincinnati. Against all advice



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and common sense she fell in love with a fellow cop, a nice guy named Ross Winters. Ross was a “blue flamer,” a guy who cleared a lot of cases, a good investigator, on his way up. Their schedules were rough, and they could both be bull-headed sometimes, but Ross and Colleen were in love and that made everything work, until Ross blew his own brains out.

It was open and shut. He did it in front of video cameras in the lobby of an office building. No one else was even near him. Colleen was the only one who didn’t believe it. At first she thought the tape was faked, that the evidence was planted, anything other than thinking Ross had been that close to despair without her even suspecting.

Colleen investigated and some of her precinct detectives helped her, hoping that conclusive evidence would help her get over it. Ross had told her he had a mole hinting about a big corruption case, a political case. He was just starting his investigation, and was on his way to see the mole when he killed himself.

She started at his end, and it became the end of her police career. The evidence fell apart in her hands, leading her to wilder and stranger theories until she was put on indefinite family leave. Her friends on the force stopped helping her, not only to protect their own careers, but because they could see she was becoming more and more obsessed.

It took her more than a year, but she knew who did it, and she knew how. But she’d never get a conviction. No one would believe her husband had been murdered with black magick.

That was when the Sleepers found her. It was late in 1990. In 1991, her husband’s killer died in a Cincinnati hospital, after a long and mysterious illness.

In 1993, she was a resourceful mule who gained the trust and admiration of a Vancouver gun smuggler and practitioner of ritual magick. As soon as she was sure he was the one responsible for the enchanted pistols called “Murderer’s Crows” seen in the area, she strangled him with the cords from a Venetian blind.

She spent the middle years of the nineties knocking around North America and Europe, providing insight into police operations, keeping Sleepers out of jail, tabooing adepts, and generally doing a good job. It wasn’t until 1997 that she got another deep cover assignment. A bad one. A fleshwarper, karate black belt, stone paranoid, kinky. She still doesn’t like to think about that one. But he died in the end. She didn’t see it happen, and there wasn’t anything left, but she’s sure he’s gone.

Almost sure.

It took her two years to recover enough for another assignment: the mastermind of what was possibly the largest truly magickal cabal in the world.

He seemed like a soft target. Young. Fairly inexperienced sexually, according to the report. Lonesome. Magickally powerful, but socially naïve. Emotionally vulnerable.

His name: Derek Jackson.

It was all so easy.

When he was attacked, she didn’t know what to do. Letting him die wasn’t her mission — he could easily be replaced by someone far more dangerous. Protecting him wasn’t her job either. But would she survive, as a witness to his execution?

She thought, briefly, about all these things, but she knew she wanted to save him. Somehow, she just could not think of Derek — the boy she’d trapped with his own helpfulness, whose greatest crime was using magick to save lives in a fashion inconvenient to her masters — as the enemy.

She saved him, and she told him the truth, and now she’s trying to get him to flee. He thinks he’s won. The assassins, Marty Blain and Dave Grisholm, are behind bars, so what’s going to happen? She thinks he’s foolish to discount further attacks from the same source. But at the same time, she knows how suspicious her bosses would become if Derek suddenly left Rolla. She’s managed to convince the rest of the Sleepers that Derek was the one who won the fight, that he doesn’t suspect her. They want to believe her, and she thinks they do.

But she desperately wants him out of Rolla for his own protection.

STATS

Personality: Capricorn. She's all about stealthily insinuating herself into someone's confidence, then whacking... when the time is right.

Obsession: Jujitsu. Neutralizing dukes, preferably with her own hands.

Wound Points: 70.

Rage Stimulus: People who get away with something they shouldn't.

Fear Stimulus: Seeing magick done scares her; memories of Ross' death. (Unnatural)

Noble Stimulus: Seeing justice done; Colleen will push herself to balance the scales.

Body: 70 (Damn Strong)

General Athletics 30%, Jujitsu (Struggle) 55%, Endure Torture 20%

Speed: 70 (Damn Fast)

Dodge 40%, Fast Draw 25%, Firearms 40%, Hot Pursuit (Drive) 40%, Initiative 60%, Sneak 20%

Mind: 55 (Sharp)

Breaking & Entering 25%, Conceal 25%, Detect (Notice) 35%, General Education 25%, Law 15%, Occult Countermeasures 25%, Sleeper Lore 15%

Soul: 50 (Pleasant)

Acting 20%, Charm 25%, Commanding Presence 15%, Lie 25%

Commanding Presence. See UA2, p. 43.

Occult Countermeasures. This is broad knowledge of the symbols, charging requirements, and taboos of Adepts and Avatars. It's useful for hiding from them or forcing them to dribble their charges away.

Sleeper Lore. Any sort of basic James Bond or general occult knowledge gained through Sleeper training (see *Hush Hush*, p. 13–15).

Violence:	5 Hardened	1 Failed
Unnatural:	6 Hardened	2 Failed
Helplessness:	1 Hardened	1 Failed
Isolation:	1 Hardened	1 Failed
Self:	1 Hardened	1 Failed

POSSESSIONS

A well-kept '96 Nissan, a secure and alarmed apartment, a Glock Model 17 semi-auto, an IMI Desert Eagle semi-auto, a .38 Special, a billyclub/tonfa or two, other associated articles of mayhem, lockpicks (analog and digital), bugs and bug stompers, and so forth. Basically, any sort of commercially available covert op equipment.

NOTES

As a Sleeper with almost 10 years of covert work under her belt, Colleen's racked up a lot of experience and specialized training. She's much more impressive now than when she started as a Street-level cop. Using the guidelines for Sleeper training (see *Hush Hush*, p. 14), she's received 200 points worth of extra-curricular education — and that's a bit of a low-ball number. Fifty of those points were converted into 25 stat points; the remaining 150 points were dumped directly into skills.

CEPHUS MAMIODES

(LIST NAME "SHARPENER")

Cephus Mamiodes — the Sharpener — has an interesting family history. Just going by the documents, his ancestry winds its way from Greece in the late 1500s, through the African port of Oran in the 1600s, and into the West Indies during the 1700s. By the mid-1800s they were in the Louisiana Territory, and the Mamiodes family has been American for three generations now. In the recorded 500 years of their history, Mamiodes (and other, matrilineal ancestors) have been merchants and pirates, soldiers and brigands, politicians and rebels. (They had a greengrocer once, but he was the black sheep of the family.)

Cephus makes a rather good living as a business consultant, though he's had to retool



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his pitch since moving out of San Francisco. There, he led business executives to greater efficiency and cohesion through fire walking and guided imagery. But that sort of thing isn't selling as well in Wisconsin, Kansas, and Oklahoma. So he's geared back to feel-good psychobabble, creativity exercises, and team challenges like, "we're going out into the wilderness and building a bridge, together, across those rapids!" Business is picking up, mostly by word of mouth. Whatever else you say about Sharper Teams, Inc. (his business) it gets results.

If speaking honestly, Mr. Mamiodes would tell you his success stems not from his skills as a motivational speaker or his proven dispute-resolution methods. No, it's all from pyramid power.

The family history Cephus knows — the unsubstantiated one — claims his ancestors were the designers of the great pyramids, and that while many of their secrets have been lost — buried beneath waves of invasion from Christians, Moslems, and that vile bastard Napoleon — some secrets still remain. Specifically, Cephus knows the secrets of using external forms and symbols like the pyramid to align and enhance the qualities of a person or object.

(There is another side to pyramidology: a discipline that works the other way around, allowing the application of personal will to the physical world. This aspect of the power was lost to the Mamiodes family, but apparently was rediscovered by Edward Leedskalnin and used to make his Coral Castle in Florida. Unfortunately, by the time Cephus found out about Leedskalnin's abilities the man was dead and the notebook detailing his methods was missing. Cephus suspects a guy named Oscar Collachi killed Leedskalnin, and it was his pursuit of the mysterious Collachi that led Cephus to San Francisco.)

Regardless of its provenance, Cephus' pyramid lore works. He meditates in a wooden pyramid in his living room to stay healthy, keeps his groceries in a kitchen pyramid where they stay fresh, and stores his safety razors in a tiny bathroom pyramid where they remain

ever sharp. But it can do a lot more than that, of course.

Cephus harmonized his bodily energies a long time ago. That's no challenge. Harmonizing spiritual energies — now that's something worthwhile.

Bringing people into harmony is really what his consulting business is all about. Hire him, go listen to one of his speeches, go off into the woods with him and build a bridge — what it's all really about is exposure to phase one diamond crystal, a substance with a pyramidal molecular structure. Cephus sits people down together around a triangular table, with unpolished diamond granules hidden in the floor and in the light fixture making an invisible pyramid containing them. He gives them appetizers with trace amounts of diamond dusted on it. He gives them a speech about how a triangle has three angles, but when formed into a pyramid it develops four points and four sides. He draws this out as a metaphor for teamwork and synergy and other business buzzwords, but his speech is carefully couched in tetrameter rhythms. Given an hour around a business table, he can synch souls up a little. Give him a weekend with people making wooden pyramids together (as the most stable structure for the bridge, of course) and he can forge bonds that last a lifetime.

It's fun work, rewarding, and he likes doing it. He's in with Mak Attax for two reasons. His high road reason is that he felt the Ritual of Light touch him personally on Y2K and he wants to be part of any group that could line up that many souls and make them hum in sympathy, even if only for one night. His low road reason is more practical: he'd like to be able to practice his craft openly without worrying about getting kacked by the Men In Black. ("Men In Black" is Cephus' personal interpretation of every rumor he's heard about the Sleepers, the Order of Saint Cecil, and the New Inquisition. He thinks they're all different names for the same UN-sponsored cover-up gang.)

SHARPENING

If Cephus spends an hour working covert pyramid magick over a small group, he can give every member of the group a +5% shift when they're working together as a team towards some common goal. This effect is subtle. Everyone involved just feels a little more alert, appreciative, and "sharp witted" together for a couple months. Note that this works *only* on cooperative attempts. If he does this on a Mak Attax crew and they get into a fight, they don't get the bonus on every dodge and punch. But if one of the crew was holding someone so another could hit, both holder and hitter would get the bonus. It's cooperation!

With a weekend of bonding, the shift goes up to +20% and lasts as long as a year for that group.

Cephus can also use pyramid power to cleanse people of occult hassles like demons, lingering Psychotrauma and Body Melting spells, astral parasites, entropics, thaumophages, and the like. Doing so takes about four hours and involves an awful lot of chanting, incense, and old-style Egyptian tools and symbols. Anyone willing to put up with that has a 70% chance of a successful cure to what ails them.

Finally, any knife Cephus uses does an additional point of damage due to keenness. If such a knife is taken (or given) away, it retains this bonus for only about 8–12 hours.

Alternately, you can simply use the rules for Tilts to model the Sharpener's powers. The only difference between a pyramid ritual and a more standard Tilt is that Cephus' rituals are *rituals*: they always work the same way and they always require the same specific actions. For minor tilt effects he can get away with winging it, waving some diamond crystals and speaking in tetrameter. Significant effects require more time and elaborate effort. He can get it done in a weekend without totally tipping his hand, but only if the people he's working on are helping him. If he wants to do a significant effect on an unwilling or unknowing target, he's going to need to dip pretty deep

into the Egyptology. As for major effects, forget subtlety. For those, you're talking long chants in ancient Egyptian, hieroglyphics scrawled everywhere, loads of diamond encrusted gew-gaws, your basic *The Mummy Returns* shtick.

Individual GMs may limit or expand Cephus' powers as they wish. Maybe he can only do what's described here: keep knives sharp, kick out astral parasites, and make businessmen listen to one another. Maybe he can do that stuff and minor Tilts, too. Or maybe he can do that stuff and all levels of Tilts, but only Bonds and Boons. Or maybe he's got the equivalent of the whole Tilt smorgasbord. It's up to you.

His stats are pretty high, courtesy of that whole "Mental and Physical Harmony" business. The definition of "pretty high" can, of course, vary from campaign to campaign. He's currently built as a Cosmic-level GMC: if you need to math him up differently, do whatever you need.

STATS

Personality: Obi-Wan Kenobi. Cephus mentors those seeking internal and external improvement, especially those doing so in the service of something greater.

Obsession: Sharpening. Getting things to line up just right and click together tighter than tight.

Wound Points: 65.

Rage Stimulus: Anything that works at cross-purposes to its stated intent.

Fear Stimulus: Men in Black. (Violence)

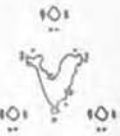
Noble Stimulus: Building communities or community spirit.

Body: 65 (Solid)

Gym Membership (General Athletics) 35%, Knife-Fighting (Struggle) 50%, Large and Hard to Move 30%

Speed: 65 (Fluid)

Billiards 15%, Dodge 30%, Drive an Expensive Car 20%, Initiative 37%, Revolver 25%



Mind: 65 (Attentive)
Business Consultant 40%, *Conceal*
25%, *Egyptology (General Education)*
35%, *Notice* 40%, *Psychobabble* 35%

Soul: 65 (Calm)
Charm 40%, *Lie* 45%, *Sculptor* 15%,
Sharpening 45%

Large and Hard to Move. See UA2, p. 40.

Psychobabble. This is the ability to sound fairly convincing when yammering about warmed-over Freud, Jung, and Maslow, with a shot of New Age feel-good as a chaser. Useful for confusing an issue, explaining away strangeness, or providing a superficially plausible justification for nearly anything.

Sharpening. See above.

Violence:	0 Hardened	1 Failed
Unnatural:	2 Hardened	2 Failed
Helplessness:	1 Hardened	0 Failed
Isolation:	1 Hardened	0 Failed
Self:	1 Hardened	0 Failed

POSSESSIONS

A new Lexus, several credit cards, Italian and English suits, top of the line wireless PDA, cell phone, slim-line briefcase, a small but highly-secure cottage that also serves as his place of business, a .38 Special and the appropriate license, several Sharpened knives (see above), and almost \$500,000 worth of diamond-encrusted ritual gear.

NOTES

Cephus knows the Portal Glyph (see *Post-modern Magic*, p. 44), the Ritual of Light, version 1.1 of the Ritual of Lesser Correspondence, and the Ritual of Fealty. He has delayed performing the Fealty ritual, since he doesn't wish to upset the harmony of his body and soul. He's analyzing the ritual using his own unique experience of Sharpening. He's extremely interested in Maks

who've gone through with it, and loves to ask them about it.

THE UPPER ECHELON

People on the secret lists comprise about 20% of Mak Attax' membership, and they do 80% of the work. These are the ones who've shown that they are not just dilettantes, not just fellow-travelers or well wishers. They have shown, through work or sacrifice or sheer usefulness, that they are an integral part of Mak Attax. Many of them are deadly serious about Mak Attax and will be in it until the wheels fall off.

Note that Derek Jackson is already written up in UA2, p. 246.

ERICA FISHER

(LIST NAME "REGINA")

At age 45, Erica Fisher was a successful executive, freshly divorced from another successful executive. She kept the Lexus, he kept the BMW. She got the house in L.A., but he got the ski cabin in the mountains. Her son was starting college in Seattle. Her daughter had just begun working as a graphic designer in Milwaukee.

She liked her job a lot and was very good at it. She'd fought some glass ceilings, especially when the kids were younger, but by the mid-1990s, at age 45, there was nothing to keep her from focusing intently on her job.

Nothing except a business trip to Colorado that ended with some friendly skiing. Normally Erica was an excellent skier, but perhaps the divorce had taken more out of her than she realized, or maybe she was distracted or, well, any number of things. She wiped out. Bad. Into a tree. The pain was so severe she passed out, and when she came to there were five pins in her leg, holding the fractured bones in something resembling their original shape.

She went back home on crutches, and getting a ride to the Denver airport was a headache, and her luggage got lost, and her flight got delayed, and she wound up hobbling to the airport Golden Arches for a burger she was



UPPER ECHELON MEMBERS ERICA FISHER, SOPHIE MCCALLUM, C.K. DEXTER WILLIAMS, AND PAUL BOROWSKI

certain would be perfectly satisfactory.

Erica had tremendous confidence in that burger because she was, at that point, West Coast Vice President of Material Procurement for that particular burger firm. She was sure that there would be no surprises — no hair, no *e coli*, no rat feces. That was her job.

No, the surprise was the magick.

It crept up on her. It was in the way she caught herself thinking of her secretary as her “seneschal” and her receptionist as a “herald.” It was the taste she developed for Crown Royal whiskey sours instead of her usual Stoli vodka martinis. She found herself pricing tiaras on eBay and daydreaming about tournaments and ladies-in-waiting. But it was nothing serious until she had The Dream.

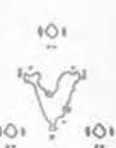
She still thinks of it that way, not just as a dream but The Dream. In it, she saw her employees and co-workers, but not as she’d always seen them. Edgar, who always had a joke at the water cooler, wore a jester’s cap and bells. Martin, the grim security guard who’d

gotten a pizza delivery man fired for consistently parking in the handicapped parking place, was now a knight in armor. She surveyed them, and many others besides, from a desk chair that was also a throne, in a corner office that was also a grand chamber, wearing a sensible business suit that was, at one and the same time, robes of ermine, silk and sable.

It is quite normal, in dreams, to see people as they are not. But Erica knew, absolutely *knew*, that while she was not seeing these people as she always had, she was seeing them as they truly were.

One of her colleagues in the dream was Steve Gorman. In life, he was an executive auditor. In the dream, he was a judge with a wise face and a kind smile — but on the back of his head was a second face, inverted, twisted with malice and cynicism.

When she woke, she went to the office. She spoke with Martin, and with Edgar, and within a month they had uncovered Steve’s embezzlement.



It took her a full year to become comfortable in her role as True Queen. Her leg healed but she still had a limp, and she limps to this day.

It took her another year after that to discover Mak Attax and to realize they were the ones who had — albeit unintentionally — opened her eyes to the secrets of deeper reality.

From within the corporation, it has been relatively simple for Erica to work Mak Attax deeper into its structure. Instead of handing out charges at the end franchises, she can put an adept in place in the factory, insinuating magick into the containers and prizes and ingredients themselves. Since 1997, burgers have been coming off trucks charged, random fireworks of magick fired down the gullets of unsuspecting Americans.

Initially Erica was unimpressed with the structure of Mak Attax. With the practiced eye of a business whiz, she'd spotted a dozen ways to make it more responsive, more malleable, more controllable, more efficient. She pushed for them, hard, but despite all her expertise and eloquent rhetoric, no one on the list was willing to give up anonymity. She had joined too late to see the disasters of 1996 firsthand, but many on the list still remembered and resisted the proposals of this newbie interloper.

For almost a year she was the most consistent source of controversy on the list, which is saying quite a bit. It didn't die down until she was badgered into using the Ritual of Fealty in 1998. That gave her quite a different perspective on matters, and she was able to mend her fences in time for the Safe and Happy New Year program of late 1999. Though it was Borowski's idea, the management and organization of it owes a lot to Fisher. (For one thing, she bought Derek his plane ticket to Tonga.) Now the list is full of people who don't remember a time when "Regina" wasn't helpful, gracious, and cooperative.

She's met Derek Jackson personally, likes him, respects what he's done, but nonetheless wants to supplant him as leader. Erica

believes that while there will always be a place for Superconductor, at some point Mak Attax must outgrow his leadership, or Derek will constantly hold it back. She wants to be the next leader of the group, but senses that the list is not ready for her to take that step. Not yet.

But every day brings her closer.

STATS

Personality: Aquarius. She combines a keen insight into human nature with the pragmatism to know where an individual nature will do her (or her company) the most good.

Obsession: Erica has no obsession.

Wound Points: 40

Rage Stimulus: Those who question her judgment because of her age or her gender.

Fear Stimulus: She's afraid of being hurt by magic. (Unnatural)

Noble Stimulus: She believes Mak Attax can enlighten people to a bigger world — as it did for her.

Body: 40 (Middle-aged)

General Athletics 15%, Skiing 35%, Struggle 15%

Speed: 40 (Limps)

Dodge 25%, Drive In Los Angeles 20%, Drive In Normal Cities 10%, Initiative 10%

Mind: 55 (Enunciates Each Word)

Executive Businesswoman 55%, MBA (General Education) 50%, Notice 20%

Soul: 99 (Commanding)

Avatar: True Queen 98%, Charm 40%, Eyes That Seem To Bore Into Your Very Soul 60%, Lie 55%

Eyes That Seem To Bore Into Your Very Soul. She's extremely good at the "cold read" — judging a person's personality, skills and limits simply through visual observation. Basically, it's the Sherlock Holmes shtick; she sees your bitten-down fingernails and cringing posture and pegs you as a weakling. That sort of thing.

Violence:	0 Hardened	0 Failed
Unnatural:	2 Hardened	1 Failed
Helplessness:	1 Hardened	1 Failed
Isolation:	0 Hardened	0 Failed
Self:	1 Hardened	1 Failed

POSSESSIONS

Erica has an awful lot of nice stuff: luxury car, tricked-out cell phone, top of the line laptop computer, a lovely leather-bound day planner, that sort of thing. Lately she's been purchasing a few antiques that are associated with noteworthy female rulers, but that stuff is usually beyond even her fairly substantial means.

NOTES

Erica channels the True Queen archetype (see UA2, p. 192). Her realm covers the Scotsman's factories, warehouses, and distribution centers on the west coast of the United States. (It does *not* include the restaurants themselves.) She has about ninety followers, most of whom are in Mak Attax but many of whom are not.

She knows version 1.1 of the Ritual of Lesser Correspondence, along with the Ritual of Fealty.

SOPHIE MCCALLUM

(LIST NAME "ISHTAR")

People in her home town will tell you that "Poor ol' Sophie" has had a rough time of it. Her husband died back in the eighties, her daughter Callie ran off, Sophie has to raise her remaining five children all by herself — and two of those kids have "special needs."

Poor ol' Sophie, who struggled so hard to get her anthropology degree back in the sixties, only to wind up managing a burger joint. Poor ol' Sophie, who kept her pride even when people snickered at her back-country ways, even when she got married to Joseph McCallum obviously pregnant, even when he died and she had to go on food stamps. Poor ol' Sophie, who always thanked the church people nicely for those Christmas baskets, even when she couldn't meet their eyes. Poor ol' Sophie

with one daughter's legs and back all twisted and another son whose mind is going to be six years old forever.

Everyone knows Sophie's had a hard life, and they don't even know about her childhood, which even the kindest observer would be tempted to call "shitty."

Is it any wonder she tried to destroy the world?

It should have worked. She had her husband Joseph on her side, and he had all kinds of occult book-learning. They did the rituals. They performed the sacrifices. They killed. They should have given birth to a mystically aware daughter who crossed the barrier into life with her third eye open, a child blessed by chaos, ripe to ruin once molded by her nihilist father and vengeful mother.

Sophie still isn't sure what went wrong with Kali, but the girl was about as mystic as a goddamn toilet seat and ran off when she was only fifteen. Sophie's tried to get her back, but none of her scrying has led her to her missing moon-child.

(What Sophie doesn't know is that a meddling couple — Fred and Kate Mundy — used some chaos magick of their own to get Kali switched with another baby in the hospital. Sophie's biological and mystical daughter wound up with the Naybors, a nice suburban couple who named her Kim. The Naybors' perfectly normal child got raised by the perfectly bizarre Sophie and Joseph. For more on Kim Naybors, see *Lawyers, Guns, and Money*, p. 60. As for Fred and Kate Mundy, they were the same weirdoes who broke up Manuel Ortiz' Satanist crew.)

Young Kali failed to destroy the world, but the whole experience did manage to destroy her parents' marriage. Joe blamed Sophie for Kali's mystic ineptitude, and Sophie blamed Joe for letting Kali get out of the attic. They bickered for years until she finally decided he was more trouble than he was worth, and put poison in his Ovaltine.

Sophie has seen, firsthand, the evil that men (and women) do, and she considers it a



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plain fact that people are selfish, greedy, and vicious when thwarted. Vindictiveness towards humankind keeps her going. She wants to scour the Earth clean of our polluting spiritual influence, then shut off the lights and let the universe cruise towards heat death. If people would just listen to *her*, she might be able to bang some sense into their pointy little skulls, but no, they'd rather heap burning coals on their own heads and bitch about how hot it is.

Sophie is a control freak of the highest grade.

After killing her husband, Sophie was led to Mak Attax by her "Potion of Visions" (described later). She approached cautiously at first, but when she heard their mission statement, she got on board. Unlike 90% of the Attaxers, she doesn't think a magickal renaissance will be a good thing at all. She's *seen* the occult. She's experienced firsthand how people respond to magick, both on the giving end and the receiving end. She wants to bring magick out in the open because that seems her best bet for giving the human race enough rope to finally hang itself. Simply put, Sophie wants to give every man, woman, and child a magick A-Bomb and watch the world die.

None of this is clear from meeting her, of course. In person, Sophie is sweet, kind, understanding, soothing, and maternal. This is because she's an Avatar of the Mother, but not the pleasant mommy who wipes your forehead when you've got a fever. She's more like the mother who hands out guilt trips like razored apples on Halloween, the mother who passes on dependence and neurosis with each suck at the teat. She is Mother as black hole, a solar phenomenon of such emotional gravity that her hapless children are stuck in perpetual orbit around her. She is the Devouring Mother, willing to destroy the world to protect her children from it.

Sophie McCallum is America's drive-thru Sycorax, and she puts the "dam" in "damnation."

Posting as "Ishtar," she is also one of Mak Attax' most respected members.

STATS

Personality: Marshmallowy sweetness on the outside. Bitter murderous poison on the inside.
Obsession: Being mommy. Mommy knows best.

Wound Points: 60

Rage Stimulus: Anyone who accuses her of being a bad or inadequate parent.

Fear Stimulus: Finding out that she's not as right as she thinks she is. (Self.)

Noble Stimulus: Protecting pre-pubescent kids. At that age they're still innocent, in her mind. After twelve or so they're spoiled, just fallen creatures who probably don't deserve her protection.

Body: 60 (Doughy but tough)

Scratch Your Eyes Out (Struggle) 40%,
General Athletics 15%, *Resist Other People's Drugs and Toxins* 60%

Speed: 40 (Wheezes on the stairs)

Dodge 15%, *Drive* 15%, *Chase Diaperless Child (Sprint)* 30%, *Initiative* 20%

Mind: 50 (Small vocabulary)

Anthropology (General Education) 40%, *Notice* 50%, *Tasty Home Cookin'* 30%, *Herbology* 50%

Soul: 80 (Incredibly vindictive)

Down Home Country Charm 60%,
Lie 60%, *Avatar: The Mother* 70/75%

Avatar: The Mother. Her skill varies depending on whether or not she is currently carrying the artifact called Mother's Rag (see p. 82). Without it, she has the lower skill level.

Violence: 2 Hardened 2 Failed

Unnatural: 7 Hardened 2 Failed

Helplessness: 0 Hardened 5 Failed

Isolation: 1 Hardened 2 Failed

Self: 5 Hardened 2 Failed

POSSESSIONS

Sophie owns the artifact called Mother's Rag

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(see p. 82) and takes care to have it close to her at all times.

NOTES

Sophie knows version 1.0 of the Ritual of Lesser Correspondence, and the Ritual of the Smoking Head.

Sophie is insane. Specifically, she has this half-baked idea that she is the holy right hand of some sort of Magna Mater goddess who wants to tuck this feverish world into bed so it can sleep off its sickness. (By sickness, she means “humanity.”) If she encounters anyone under the age of 16 who treats her like a mother, she comes to half-believe she *is* that child’s mother. Evidence to the contrary sways her, of course. But if an abandoned orphan fell into her hands, she would soon confabulate memories of giving birth to it.

SOPHIE’S HERBOLOGY SKILL

Sophia McCallum is the heiress to a legacy of folk cures and herb lore. Her house has no lawn in the back yard — it’s all one big garden, with a greenhouse to boot. In addition to the normal carrots and tomatoes, she’s got some plants growing that would make a botanist’s jaw drop. Mandrake root, peyote, deadly nightshade, the daturia-laced “zombie cucumber” of Haiti — the gang’s all here. Give her half an hour in her garden and kitchen and she can brew up powerful sedatives, emetics that can launch a lunch five feet, clinical-quality diuretics, and a simply marvelous salve for insect bites and stings.

Those recipes are all pretty simple — she can make those with a significant skill check, if her root cellar doesn’t already have a dose, ready-made and stored in a wax-sealed mason jar. Her two best potions, though, don’t keep well and aren’t easy to make. They’re worth it though. Those potions are her “love philter” and her “potion of visions,” both of which are detailed below. Making them always requires a major skill check.

It should be noted that while Sophia thinks *all* of her herbology is magickal, none of it

actually is. Every effect can be explained by science. The only exception is the accuracy of *her* insights while using the Potion of Visions. Even in that case, it may well be that she’s simply unusually gifted and requires that mundane action to trigger her ability.

Love Philter: In truth, this is not a very well-named piece of merchandise. It’s not like the fairy tales, where the wicked witch puts a drop on the handsome prince’s lunch and he falls in love with the next woman he sees. No, the emotions most strongly associated with Sophia’s love potion are confusion and anxiety.

The love philter is a mixture that attacks its imbibor on two levels: physiological and psychological. The psychoactive effects induce extreme confusion, short-term memory loss, dramatically reduced inhibitions, and a state of moderate suggestibility. The physiological effect is more focused: it’s like Viagra cubed, so long as you’re a man. Women receive the psychoactive effects but nothing else. Of course, Sophie doesn’t use it on women.

So, any guy who gets dosed with at least a teaspoon of love philter is going to become disoriented, easily led, unable to think things through clearly, and he’ll have his most painfully urgent erection since puberty. A woman who’s aware of his condition can usually trick or talk him into bed before he really knows what’s going on.

This stuff explains why Sophia gets pregnant so often. Some poor good-looking bastard catches her eye at a restaurant, gets a dose of this stuff in his Dr. Pepper, has a strange interlude that he can’t remember clearly, and finds himself wandering around the next morning with a killer headache and his pants on backwards.

In game terms, anyone who gets a standard dose of the Love Philter makes a Body roll. (If the character has a skill like “resist toxins and drugs” he can roll that as well if he *fails* the Body roll.) A success means he immediately starts vomiting and sweating profusely. He is also stricken with a bad case of diarrhea as



his body tries to reject this nasty stuff through every available orifice.

If the Body roll fails, the character becomes confused and disoriented. This is the GM's chance to really lay it on thick with the hallucinatory imagery. *Any action at all* requires a successful Mind roll — and all Mind rolls are made at a -10% shift. Note that resisting someone's attempts to lead you somewhere or do something to you counts as "an action." If the Mind roll fails, the character is basically helpless as he stares vaguely around him, paws at the air, and cries. All this is worth a rank-3 Helplessness check, at least.

This state of shock and helplessness lasts about an hour, after which the victim passes out for 1d10 hours. (If a character fights to stay awake, a Body roll is required every fifteen minutes to keep him moving.) He wakes with a headache, but that goes away after about twenty minutes and doesn't have any particular game effects.

Everything that happened while he was dosed is hazy and confusing. Even after the drug has worn off, it takes a Mind roll to successfully remember what happened while the character was out of it. It's up to the GM to decide what rank Helplessness check is appropriate for characters who remember being sexually abused while helplessly drugged.

Potion of Visions: This is another dose of powerful stuff. Datura, peyote, just a hint of belladonna — there's a hallucinogen in it for anyone's metabolism. Sophie has built up a tolerance over the years, so her doses are big enough to send the whole first row of a Phish concert into the Timothy Leary zone. It could kill a normal person, but would more likely just inflict confusion, panic, and terror.

Sophie believes this potion gives her mystic insight into the larger realm that governs the material world. In fact, for *her* it does. When she's on the vision drug, she can attempt an Avatar: The Mother check to have visions of the Statosphere and gain insights into the local ripples of magick causality. If she fails, she still

has visions, which she *thinks* are profound insights into the movements of the archetypes, but which are in fact nothing but hallucinations.

Hallucinations are the most likely result if anyone else takes this potion as well. Avatars *might* get visions of the Statosphere, but that's strictly a GM call. Maybe only Sophie can do it with this junk, or maybe any Avatar can.

Prolonged use can cause severe birth defects — something Sophie will never let herself figure out, despite her damaged brood.

In game terms, someone who takes a full Sophie-size dose makes a Body roll. If it's a matched success, the victim throws up the drug, has dry heaves for about ten minutes, but suffers no other ill effects. If it's a matched failure or fumble, he dies. (Characters with specific resistances to toxins and drugs cannot be killed by this stuff. If they don't get a matched success on their Body roll, an ordinary success on the specific drug-resistance skill is good enough to puke it up.)

Someone who takes half a dose or less can spit it up with a simple Body success and has no chance of dying.

If the drug takes effect, the character goes on an unpleasant psychedelic trip. A full-dose trip lasts about 6 hours, while a half-dose experience lasts only thirty minutes to an hour. This experience is good for a rank-4 Helplessness check. While in this altered state, all Mind rolls are made at a -15% shift. Furthermore, due to the lethargy and exhaustion caused by the drug, all Speed and Body rolls are made at a -15% shift as well.

C.K. DEXTER WILLIAMS

(LIST NAME "ORANGEMAN")

Calvin Williams — better known in the occult underground as "the Fruit" — has the dubious distinction of being the oldest-looking member of Mak Attax.

(Several members on the list claim to be hundreds of years old. But then again, there are eight people on the list claiming to be vampires and three claiming to be werewolves. There are

two Hermes Trimegistuses, at least four reincarnated Cleopatras, three Count Welldones, and one fellow who claims he's an escaped extra-terrestrial epistemological experiment. He likes to be called "E4." Only two of these people are actually correct in their claims.)

C.K. is over seventy, and he looks it. He's been involved with the occult since puberty. He knows Dirk Allen — knows him well enough not to trust him with anything he doesn't want to see either hocked for booze or covered in vomit. He's seen an Unspeakable Servant and lived. He knew the Freak back in '69 when it lived in Milwaukee, before it was the Freak, back when it was just a confused and scared avatar, though C.K. has no idea that his old acquaintance is now the Freak. He survived the London Blitz of 1940 and the Battle of San Francisco in 1994. Both the Sleepers and the New Inquisition have extensive and accurate dossiers about the Fruit, and both have dismissed him as harmless.

Why?

Because he told them he's harmless, and everyone knows the Fruit never lies.

Having a reputation for honesty is one thing. It's a very nice thing and a very useful thing. Having a documented history of *never telling a lie* that stretches back at least fifty years is something else again.

That's not to say his life's an open book. There are any number of questions Williams simply won't answer, including "Are you an adept?" or "Are you affiliated with [insert occult organization here]?" But he will quite openly and honestly tell you the following things about himself.

- He's homosexual and has been for as long as he can remember.
- He has never killed another human being, and he has never tried to.
- He's a coward — he'll flee trouble before facing it, and has been known to crack under even the threat of torture.

C.K. strongly recommends that people not trust him with their secrets. Some do anyhow — honesty is powerful stuff, especially when it's rare. Among those *in the know* about magick, honesty is rarer than demonic possession. But more people don't trust him, giving C.K. the chance to find out anyway.

C.K. is one of the last followers of the mysterious and maligned mystic art of Western Cryptomancy (see *Postmodern Magick*, p. 71). His magick gives him dominion over secrets and lies — at the cost of never deliberately telling a lie himself. He gains charges by learning secrets, which is one reason he encourages people not to trust him. He can also charge up by revealing secrets — and his honesty is the *other* reason he encourages people not to trust him.

He is, nonetheless, a very pleasant man. He likes working with and for Mak Attax quite a bit. It's not just that it keeps him in contact with the young bloods of the Occult Underground. It's not just because it's very educational. (He's learned more weird stuff in his three years as a Mak than he did between 1950 and 1962.) It's because he actually enjoys doing something positive. The Cryptomantic cult that initiated him existed primarily to protect and gratify itself, and that got old after only twenty years. He figures he's going to die soon enough. He'd like to leave some sort of positive legacy when he does.

Of course, C.K.'s noble goals sit somewhat oddly with his ignoble methods. He manages a restaurant in Des Moines, Iowa, right across the street from an hourly-rates motel. He spies to see who's cuckolding whom. But more than that, he has every booth in his place bugged, along with every room in the back of the restaurant. Nobody knows about these bugs but him.

C.K. hires a lot of teenagers for the day shift, and he tries very hard to arrange schedules with friends together. (So much easier to spy on their confidences that way.) For the night shift, he provides many employment opportunities to furloughed criminals. His tapes have caught more than one holdup being planned, and his



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cameras have recorded more than one drug infraction in the freezer or the break room. He quietly feeds on all these secrets, slave to his hunger for the things told between two.

Recently, C.K. was assaulted by an armed man who extorted the names of a good half-dozen Attaxers out of him, including all those in his current home town. The Fruit survived, but the stress provoked a heart attack. C.K. is recovering, and is convinced that the man was a Sleeper with a hard-on for Mak Attax. He's now torn between fleeing (again) or staying in Des Moines where he can offer his awareness and limited protection to the workers he's endangered through his cowardice.

STATS

Personality: Charming, kindly, polite, erudite, honest, and utterly untrustworthy.

Obsession: The divide between truth and secrecy, and the paradox of being honestly secretive.

Wound Points: 30

Rage Stimulus: Carelessness with secrets. (If Calvin betrays a trust, it's a *deliberate and important* betrayal.)

Fear Stimulus: Torture. He's been tortured. He does not want to be tortured again. (Violence)

Noble Stimulus: Revealing secrets that should never have been hidden. Magick, for instance.

Body: 30 (Withered)

General Athletics 10%, Struggle Feebly 10%

Speed: 40 (Shaky)

Fire Handgun 35%, Drive 15%, Dodge 20%, Initiative 20%

Mind: 70 (Cagey)

General Education 40%, Spying and Prying (Notice) 40%, Firsthand Occult Experience 50%, Computer Hacking 15%, Surveillance Technology 30%

Soul: 65 (Articulate)

Charm 60%, Lie 15%, Magick: Western Cryptomancy 49%

Magick: Western Cryptomancy. As a Western Cryptomancer (see *Postmodern Magick*, p. 71), C.K. gains charges by learning secrets and by revealing them. His taboo is that he cannot tell a lie. His powers allow him to use the first and second level channels of any Avatar he's familiar with (C.K. knows of the Fool, the Pilgrim, the Savage, the Merchant, the Mystic Hermaphrodite, the Masterless Man, and the Executioner). He can also exile people from time for spans ranging from two combat rounds (minor charge) to a number of hours equal to the spell roll (significant charge). His random magick relates to learning secrets and finding the hidden.

Violence:	3 Hardened	3 Failed
Unnatural:	6 Hardened	2 Failed
Helplessness:	2 Hardened	2 Failed
Isolation:	2 Hardened	0 Failed
Self:	2 Hardened	2 Failed

POSSESSIONS

In his years in the occult underground, the Fruit has managed to collect a couple of artifacts. He has a Wooden Nickel (see *Postmodern Magick*, p. 139), good for making life troublesome for Plutomancers. He has a foot-tall clockwork clown that can obey any verbal command that relates to cooking. He has also learned the Purifying Bath ritual (see *Postmodern Magick*, p. 44), an elaborate "aura cleansing" technique that helps dislodge unseen attackers and can disguise his ability to work magick for up to three days. The Fruit also owns an awful lot of tiny cameras and microphones.

NOTES

He knows both versions of the Ritual of Lesser Correspondence, along with the Ritual of Fealty.

PAUL BOROWSKI

(LIST NAME "EASTER")

Paul is nice. First and foremost, the thing you have to know about Paul is that he's a nice guy. He has never willingly harmed another human

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being. He didn't even like putting hydrogen peroxide on his daughter's skinned knees, back when he had a daughter.

He's in his mid-forties, active in his church (Catholic), always has a joke and a smile, and the jokes are always clean. He raises rabbits as a hobby.

But the most important thing is that Paul is nice.

One weekend a month, Paul volunteers at a soup kitchen. He works as a mentor for refugee kids from Haiti. In 1981 he started drinking, and he drank heavily until 1984 when he joined Alcoholics Anonymous. He still goes to A.A. meetings every Monday night. Wednesdays, he has choir practice. And, of course, he's the unofficial Mak Attax coordinator for Florida and all adjacent states.

Paul likes to keep busy. In fact, he often feels like he *needs* to keep busy, especially if he can keep busy doing good things for other people.

Here's why: Paul feels the black pull of crushing depression. Always. It's a constant to him, like gravity. It is just *there*, trying to pull him down into drink and then deeper yet, into such a black despair that everything he touches, everything he thinks, seems more painful to him than a root canal.

Every good action he takes pushes against that. Like a swimmer who kicks up against the ocean to stay afloat, or who sculls his hands to tread water, Paul fights the pull. Every kind word, every smile he receives back keeps him afloat for a little while.

Paul has been treading misery since 1981, when a drunk driver killed his wife and his daughter. Paul found the guy who did it and forgave him, and together they cried and cried, and that guy has quit drinking, has straightened up, and every day he thanks God for the kindness of Paul Borowski.

Paul? He thought forgiving might fix him once and for all. It didn't, though. Nonetheless, he did name one of his rabbits after the man who killed his wife and child.

Paul raises a lot of rabbits, and they're all

named after people he knows. They are the fattest, happiest, most pampered rabbits in Florida.

PAUL'S RABBITS

Paul is not an avatar, nor is he an adept in the usual sense. Arguably, he only casts one spell, over and over again. It doesn't have a name, any more than his "school" or "discipline" has one. (Lepusurgy?)

What he does, quite simply, is give a rabbit someone's name and then raise it in luxury — by a hare's standards, anyway. He lavishes attention and affection on his twenty or so bunnies. If he can get something belonging to the rabbit's namesake, he puts that in the cage with it: hair pulled out of a hairnet, dropped receipts, a piece of clothing. If he knows what the person's home looks like, he decorates the rabbit cage to resemble it. He takes a picture of the person and puts it in the cage, in a little mirror frame. After a while with this treatment, a resonance forms between the rabbit and the person it now resembles.

Paul's enchantment is very similar to a proxy ritual (see UA2, p. 101) but it's not identical. In fact, it's fair to say that the ordinary proxy ritual is a washed-out reflection of the bonds woven by Paul's affection.

It takes Paul months to grow a bunny into the bond, but Paul does not need any of the normal proxy trappings. The person so connected does not need to give permission or, indeed, even be aware of the connection. When it's in place, it generates several beneficent effects.

- Scrying is confused. Any attempt to learn about one of Paul's enchanted friends through occult means has a flat 25% chance of learning about the rabbit instead. ("Yes, it's coming clear . . . what he wants more than anything in the world is . . . lettuce?")
- The human half of the pair has sort of a "psychic cushion." Because he's mystically tied to a content, safe, well-fed rabbit, psy-



chological stress is distanced just enough to be more manageable. In game terms, the enchanted character may re-roll one failed stress check per game session.

- If the person is upset, unhappy, or in danger, the rabbit becomes appropriately agitated. If the person gets badly hurt, the rabbit screams.

There are, however, a couple of drawbacks.

- Someone who has the rabbit and is trying to find the person it's bonded to gets a +15% to all relevant skills while searching. This can be good or bad, depending on who's looking.
- If the rabbit dies, it's a rank-10 Self challenge.
- If the rabbit is tortured, it's a rank-4 Self challenge.
- Anyone who is aware of the bond can cast spells or use channels on the rabbit and have them affect the person bound to it. (Again, this can be good or bad.)

Paul's closest associates in Mak Attax are aware of his rabbit farm. Some of them have asked to have a bunny named after them. Others have specifically asked that he *not* do so. Paul, of course, accedes to their wishes.

It should be noted that Paul's goodwill is an essential aspect of the process. He could not create a rabbit proxy for someone he did not like, nor could he make one under duress to help someone harm anyone.

STATS

Personality: A kind, decent, loving, and generous man who may well be doomed.

Obsession: Helping others.

Wound Points: 50

Rage Stimulus: Anyone who tried to hurt his friends, or his rabbits.

Fear Stimulus: Going back on the bottle. (Helplessness)

Noble Stimulus: Trying to help people understand one another.

Body: 50 (Stout)

General Athletics 25%, Struggle 15%

Speed: 50 (Average)

Drive 15%, Dodge 20%, Softball 40%, Run 25%, Initiative 30%

Mind: 50 (Good at math)

General Education 30%, Notice 40%, Rapid But Simple Mathematical Calculation 50%, Fairly Well Off 30%

Soul: 60 (Quietly saintly)

Make People Comfortable Around Him (Charm) 40%, Lie 15%, The Magickal Rabbit Trick 60%, Mak Attax 50%, Avatar: Loyal Laborer (see p. 111) 40%

Violence:	1 Hardened	0 Failed
Unnatural:	3 Hardened	2 Failed
Helplessness:	3 Hardened	4 Failed
Isolation:	2 Hardened	1 Failed
Self:	0 Hardened	0 Failed

POSSESSIONS

A whole lot of rabbit cages. Paul has about \$50,000 in the bank, and he gives a *lot* of money away. He could afford a life of modest luxury, but lives one that's just plain modest. The rest of the money goes to charity — or to Mak Attax. He also has a gadget called the Ghost Rain Fetish, described on p. 80.

NOTES

He knows both versions of the Ritual of Lesser Correspondence, along with the Ritual of Fealty.

Before joining AA and getting counseling, Paul was insane. Specifically, he was an alcoholic. If he voluntarily and knowingly takes a drink of liquor, Paul goes off the wagon, gets another Helplessness failed notch, and binges until he either (1) gets rid of his 5th failed notch in Helplessness, (2) runs out of money, (3) is restrained by friends or (4) kills himself in drunken despair.

Return-Path: <MA-request@purpletape.cs.uchicago.edu>
X-Sent: 27 Oct 1990 02:58:19 GMT
Subject: RE: [MA] The Invisible Clergy
Date: Sat, 27 Oct 1990 19:58:11 -0700
x-sender: (undisclosed)
From: Kronik <Kronic@84772.de>

This theory is, quite truly, the dumbest thing I've ever heard. I have been studying the occult for fifty years and let me assure you, nothing I have seen nor read supports this silly theory.

First off, there is a definite chicken and egg problem. Mankind produces this 'clergy'. But where did humanity come from? The clergy made it. They shape our consciousness. But they are also constructs of our consciousness. Which is it?

Secondly, where in nature or supernature does one see democracy in action? Bees do not elect their queen. The alpha ape wins the role through combat, not mediation. The first drop in a torrent is randomly selected by the pressure of other drops, not because it somehow stands for every other water molecule. No, what we have here is some insufficiently educated American who believed their grade school propaganda about democracy and who has laughably projected it on a universe that could not possibly care less about what groups of people want, think or believe. Believing in the hammer so strongly, everything looks like a nail.

Thirdly, the notion that acting out a role provides one with the powers of that role is a common enough magick act, one that does not require this elaborate fantasy of men become gods to support it. Is it not simpler to apply Occam's razor and say that because the symbols support my belief, it is my belief that lets me act?

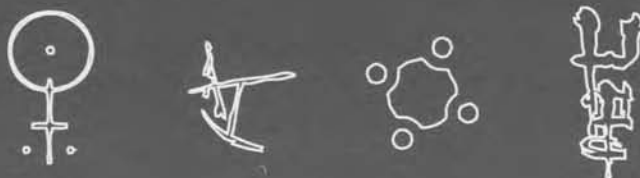
Fourth and most telling, the actions of the adepts on this very list give the lie to the idea that there is some central repository of magick roles. One man acts the fool and takes unwise risks to gain power over randomness. Another man acts foolish in order to store up intelligence for application when he really needs it. Which is it? How can two people use the common symbol, unwise decisions, for such radically different ends if there is some Platonic Uber-Fool caging them into a role?

No, it's clear to me that the malleability of the universe depends entirely on the strength of the Operator's will, not the whims of some farcical spiritual parliament.

Kronik out.



CHAPTER THREE CUSTOMERS AND OTHER HASSLES



As Mak Attax has slowly emerged as a major cabal in the occult underground, they've made allies and enemies alike. Even though the Attax leadership would just as soon steer clear of such entanglements, you can't make as much noise as they did with the Y2K project and not draw attention. Here's the roster.

MAJOR CABALS

THE NEW INQUISITION

The phrase "New Inquisition" has cropped up several times on the open Mak Attax mailing list, but it's far less common than "crystals" or "Theosophy" or even "Team Salvation." Most Attaxers have no idea that there really is a New Inquisition. Even those who believe in it are more likely know of it as "Hit Squads." Some of the more sophisticated insiders know there's a very secretive cabal out there that is both serious and well-funded. But that's about it. The only Maks who could connect TNI to

Alex Abel are the plants put there on Abel's own orders.

Alex Abel's private army of thugs and whackos doesn't think much of Mak Attax. If they know about it at all — and everyone with C clearance or above gets a briefing — it probably strikes them as a stupid and wasteful idea. They think giving charges to normal folks is, at best, like spreading pearls before swine, and at worst, it's like giving a chimp a loaded gun.

Abel himself, on the other hand, has much more respect. He's got the full data about the "Safe and Happy New Year" program, and he's impressed. Even a little jealous. After all, making the world a better place was supposed to be *his* bag. But so far all he's done is stir up a lot of trouble by trying to control magick with ordinary means. The people who actually *did* something were the ones trying to control the ordinary with magickal means.

Being resolutely non-magickal himself, this disturbs Abel quite a bit. Slowly, though, he's closing in. His files on the organization grow

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steadily fatter, and he has managed to intercept threads from several of the supposedly “secret” lists. It’s only a matter of time, he thinks, before he has Superconductor in his grasp.

Of course, that could change quite a bit if Superconductor — whoever he is — suddenly decides to run. But Abel doesn’t think that’s likely.

DEBBIE ROTH, TNI MOLE

Debbie Roth (see p. 38) is secretly a TNI Mole with D-level clearance. She never got deeply involved with any occult subcultures — or even considered the possibility that other types of magick might work — until she was tracked down by TNI operatives who offered her a lot of money to explain and use her powers for their ends. She had to sever ties with her family and old life, but that was no big deal. She’s just disappointed their plastic surgeons couldn’t make her look more like Courtney Cox.

When recruited, Debbie neglected to mention that she had, in fact, successfully taught

the art of A Grammarian Gate to another adept. Debbie thought being the sole source would make her bargaining position stronger. Her apprentice was a handsome fellow named Jarôslav Jovanović, a twenty-year-old refugee from what was then Yugoslavia. He was an absolute prodigy with languages, especially the quirky and exotic English tongue. Debbie hasn’t seen Jarôslav for many years, and they parted on less than happy terms. He’d be about thirty-five now, and might well have taught A Grammarian Gate to others. TNI is still in the dark about this.

One of TNI’s other mole Maks got Debbie the needed passcodes, email protocols, and background information so that she could represent herself as a member of the cabal. Then another TNI agent helped get her hired as the manager of her restaurant. (As noted in Chapter Two, Debbie’s first post to the Open List precedes her hiring by about a week. Also, she doesn’t really have the training or experience to manage a fast-food restaurant. Either of these



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facts could point paranoid Maks at a way to blow her cover.)

Debbie is dutifully trying to climb the ladder in Mak Attax as a TNI mole. It hasn't been easy, though. She hasn't even made it off the Open List.

Debbie thinks it's because she's been taking it slow — after all, she doesn't want to tip off the other Attaxers. But in reality, she's just not a very successful manipulator or schmoozer. Moreover, she's essentially selfish and doesn't hide it well. The Maks she's met have twigged to this and simply don't feel good about her. TNI keeps her on the job because she has enough magickal insight to fit in with the Attaxers, but she's not powerful or useful enough to apply to any of Abel's more important problems. Debbie has risen to the level of her own incompetence.

THE ORDER OF SAINT CECIL

Many clueless conspiracy theorist Maks speculate wildly about the various hidden agendas and nefarious plots of the Catholic Church through the ages and up to today. The most popular theories involve the Catholic Church having a "witch-hunting" arm of the Inquisition (or Knights Templar, or Jesuits, or Opus Dei) that is trying to suppress magick in the world. Some Maks believe the Sleepers are this arm.

The most popular pro-Church theory holds that the "energy source" of magick is generated by the constant, daily, repetitive reenactment of the Last Supper in the Catholic Mass. Indeed, a small but vocal group of Catholic Maks holds that all mojo is passed along to adepts by the Church much as Maks pass along Special Orders to mundanes. However, these theories are lost in the wash of drivel on happy space brother magick, power-pyramid Illuminati puppet masters, the Merovingian bloodline, and FEMA being the shadow government.

Only Superconductor's inner circle suspect that the Order of Saint Cecil truly exists, and they're not sure what the hell it is. Superconductor has gathered together a Crew (Crew

Superstar) to track down whatever they can on the Order. Crew Superstar is currently secure from Sleeper and TNI moles, and they've found precious little information. What they've come up with is a dubious a friend of a friend story of an assault team sent into an unknown city to kill a vampire (or cast out a demon, the story changes), the name "Father Oscar," and a now-defunct telephone number.

For their part, the Order is aware of the existence of Mak Attax, and has two of its lay agents on the open mailing list; one of these two has been turned by the Sleepers, alas. But they're not spying on Mak Attax as such. Their job is to compare and correlate topical occult information in newspapers, magazines, internet discussion groups, and the like. The Mak Attax open list is one of these targets, but it's not the most important. A few notable correlations to genuine occult events have kept it off the bottom of the heap, but it's still in the lower-ranked lists. The Cecilites know nothing of Mak Attax's operations, leadership, or goals.

THE SECT OF THE NAKED GODDESS

Daphnee Lee believes her sect has enemies. She's right. Andrea Deutsch (see UA2, p. 243) has been acting jumpy and peculiar lately, and Daphnee has reluctantly started keeping secrets from her one-time closest aide. She's certain TNI would love to squash them like a bug, if they dared. There's increasing dissension in the ranks, including Erin Serna's Affinites in New Orleans, and Daphnee is worried about a possible schism.

In that context, her decision to tell her followers to stay away from Mak Attax seems reasonable. Every big occult group she's met or heard of — TNI, the Sleepers, the Order of Saint Cecil — has been actively inimical to the Sect, either in fact or in purpose. Mak Attax sounds benign, but she's suspicious of any group that asks her people to join up, takes advice from anonymous strangers, and throws away valuable charges. Naked Goddess cultists have joined the open list (of course) but looking over several months' worth of posts only

convinced Daphnee that if the Maks aren't devious, they're mostly stupid and inept.

Beyond that, Daphnee's not sure how well her goals and those of Mak Attax mesh in practice. In theory, it's a great pairing. The Sect wants to evangelize their particular mystic truth. The Attaxers want to bring about a general magick New Age. But in practice, many sectarians are worried that the actions of the Maks will either dilute the sect's message or actively turn people against magick. They have a lot of respect for magick, and cavalierly dumping it into the general population to see what happens strikes many of them as a bad idea.

All in all, then, the general feeling of the sect towards the Maks is one of suspicion. They aren't going to interfere with the Maks, as long as the Maks show the same respect. But they're not quite ready to pull on the polyester, either.

On the flip side, many Maks — particularly young, male Maks — hear about "sex magick," get entirely the wrong ideas in their feverish auxiliary brains, and become loudly

inviting towards the love pirates. Their clumsy double-entendres generally only increase the chill from the Pornomancers. Older and more experienced occultists within the Attaxer ranks are far more reserved. Many of them — like Manuel Lopez/Ortiz, on p. 42 — have had very bad experiences on the borderlines between magick and religion, and suspect where the true allegiance of any Pornomancers-turned-Mak Attaxers would lie.

As groups, then, both are rather standoffish and suspicious. Individuals on both sides have different opinions, of course.

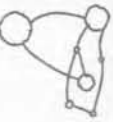
IVAN STAHL, MAN IN THE MIDDLE

To hear him described, Ivan Stahl sounds more like a figure out of a somewhat raunchy pulp novel than an actual human being. He's a strikingly handsome man with a barrel chest, eyes blue as sapphires, and fine, silky blonde curls. He's unfailingly courteous, polite and intelligent. No one has ever heard him swear. No one has ever seen him lose his cool.



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Sound too good to be true? Just wait, it gets better. Ivan is an incredibly tough scrap fighter — so tough that everyone who's survived a fistfight with him has done so by running away. Usually with broken bones.

That's the kind of thing guys say about Ivan. He can take a knife to the side without changing expression. He can punch through an oak door. He jumped thirty feet from the balcony of a theater and hit the aisle running.

As for the ladies, they tend to talk differently about Ivan. Usually they speak of how sweet, charming, flattering and, yes, seductive he is. In the right circumstances, a surprisingly large number of women will talk about how absolutely, incredibly, unbelievably good he is in bed.

This is not really surprising. That's what Ivan was built for, after all. Boxing, driving, and speaking English (and French, and German, and Swahili) are all skills he's picked up since he was built in 1770 for the pleasure of Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia.

Ivan is a lifelike automaton, built by a Russian (or possibly Polish) Mechanomancer. The rumors say his builder was a hideous hunchback who attempted to place his own spirit and consciousness into a handsome creation whose sole purpose was sexual gratification.

Ivan himself believes that his creator failed in this goal. Certainly he has no memories of a previous incarnation. All he's known since the day of his "birth" is how to gratify women, physically and emotionally. These are the critical skills in Ivan's existence, because he literally needs sex to survive. A twenty-minute voluntary sex act winds his springs enough for him to operate for 24 hours. His precarious existence is like a teenaged boy's desperate exaggeration: "If I don't have sex tonight I'm gonna die!"

For the first centuries of his existence, Ivan was fairly callous about his bedroom conquests. Being a machine, any emotions he had were already remote, if not downright vestigial. He certainly *acted* concerned and loving. He had to just to survive. But it took him a

hundred years to figure out why women got upset about "sharing" him. (It took him less than a month to realize the necessity of hiding his paramours from one another, however. He was constructed with an impetus towards self-preservation.)

It was a cold autumn day in 1877 when he had his first emotion. One of his lovers, a woman he'd lived with for fifty years, who knew his real nature and accepted him, died of consumption. At her funeral, he missed her. Not the security that sex with her provided, nor the safety of her home. He missed *her*.

That was when Ivan really began wondering if he had a soul after all. He has spent much of his time since then studying philosophy, pondering religion and generally fighting the good existentialist fight. He's had long, long email debates with Manuel Ortiz.

Today, Ivan has hooked up with the Sect of the Naked Goddess, a move that has possibly made his future more secure than ever. He needs to have sex. They need reliable men to have sex according to a script. It's a match made in heaven — or possibly in the Statosphere, given the coincidental way in which he stumbled upon the cult.

Ivan also knows Derek Jackson of Mak Attax. Computers have fascinated Ivan since their infancy — the idea of a machine that could perform some of the functions of the human mind was very close to his concerns about his own spiritual status. Ivan and Derek exchanged messages over old modem BBS systems even before Mak Attak was founded. Initially, Ivan was hesitant to reveal his true nature, but he gradually began to suspect that Derek was a Mechanomancer. Eventually he tracked Derek down and met him in the flesh, so to speak. The two were cautious about their friendship, but eventually came to trust one another to a high degree — to the extent that Ivan crawled to Derek after a particularly close call with the Order of Saint Cecil. Derek patched him up, learning quite a bit about his chosen discipline in the process.

When Mak Attax was forming, Derek invited Ivan to join. The automaton refused. The dictates of his lifestyle just didn't jibe with polyester pants and grease traps. (Derek did not reveal that he was a founder of the group, instead simply implying it was something he was joining.) Ivan has stayed on the open list and has done his best to look out for the Maks in his area. He'd like to live in a world where magick was tolerated, but he doesn't think it's going to happen. His history does give him a keen appreciation for the power of naïve passion, however, and he's pretty sure *something* is going to happen. Besides, the idea of doing something virtuous appeals to the philosophical urges that have slowly grown in his metal heart over the centuries.

If forced to choose between Mak Attax and the Goddess, however, he'd pick the sect in a second — unless the Attaxers could reasonably promise to fulfill his daily needs. There goes that damn self-interest program again . . .

THE SLEEPERS

Like most occultists, the Attaxers have heard of the Sleepers. In fact, they've heard enough about the Sleepers to be scared shitless of them. They don't talk about it, but the smarter Maks are terrified that the Sleepers are going to infiltrate the list and spy on them.

They needn't worry so much. It's already happened. The Sleepers have checked out Mak Attax from head to toe and have decided, by and large, that the cabal is harmless — or at least, not poised to provide indisputable evidence to the public that magick is real. They've got enough surveillance on enough of the secret lists to be confident that if Mak Attax does try something big and obvious, they'll be able to squash it in time. As for the bulk of the Attaxers, it's simple enough to keep the mailing list confused and contentious, and the Sleepers do a good job of it. They assume that the list is the heart of Mak Attax. Since they can pollute it at will, they're confident that they've got Mak Attax in checkmate. Especially since they can

kill Superconductor whenever they want.

At least, that's what the Sleepers' ruling council thinks. The truth is a little more complex.

Colleen Dwyer — AKA "Lara Foster" — is the Sleeper mole closest to Superconductor. Note also that Hannibal Prepaichal (see *Hush Hush*, p. 21) is a Sleeper Mak.

TRUE ORDER OF SAINT-GERMAIN /GLOBAL LIBERATION SOCIETY

The True Order of Saint-Germain knew Y2K was their night. They were ready. They knew the score. The Masonic New World Order had computerized everything with shitty Microsoft operating systems that would conveniently crash out at the same time. But the TOSG ran on Y2K-compliant Macintoshes. (That's why Apple had to be crushed, you know. The Masonic drones can't compete in a *real* free market.) They had generators for when the power grids went down. They had food supplies. They were ready for the cattle-mutilating soldiers in the black helicopters. And they were ready to provide the one thing the New World Order *wasn't* expecting: real resistance.

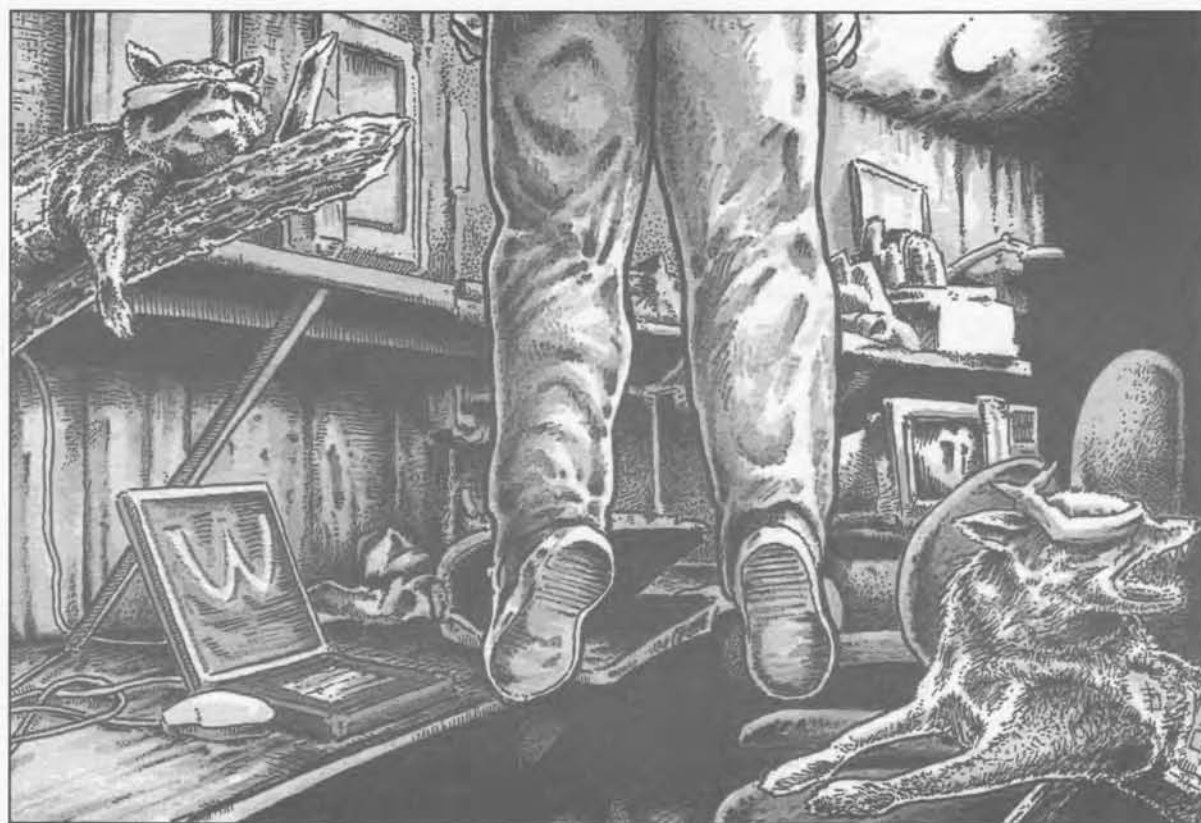
The True Order knew they could stop their enemies in their tracks by crippling their insidious infrastructure. In their most desperate hour, the True Order was poised to inflame racial and religious conflict throughout North America. Sure, it would justify the Masons' declaration of martial law, but that was bound to happen anyhow. Might as well give them *real* crises to deal with. Might keep them from accomplishing their true goals. Might force them to overplay their hand and reveal their genuine motives.

Then it fell apart.

Not *all* their projects, of course. They sabotaged four cell towers across the southeastern U.S., cell towers that also held satellite communication relays vital to coordinating the invasion. They're pretty sure their computer virus did some damage to the state police database in Georgia. Their feint at Roswell certainly stirred up the Air Force — by all reports, they were



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combing the area for days. The Amtrak bomb scare, the Fort Bragg water supply disinformation, it was all sand in the gears of the take-over. But apparently it was just enough to keep America free — or at least as free as it's been since they took out Kennedy.

It was the big stuff that got rolled up out of nowhere. The *real* bomb at the police station. The jailbreak. The Supreme Court assassination. It all disintegrated. Carefully planned operations dissolved in the face of *stupid, shitty mistakes*. A demolition expert got diarrhea. Their assassin was arrested for *drunk driving*, a guy who'd never touched liquor in his life. The jail break team? Foiled because somebody's girlfriend couldn't keep her mouth shut. It made no sense.

No matter how much they reviewed their failures, it made no sense. They were ready to write it off as simple bad luck, but that wasn't good enough for Randy Douglas. He went over the evidence, the testimony from his agents, over and over, until the common thread emerged.

On the day it all went to pieces, every one of his tripped-up agents bought a burger from the big red-headed clown. Every one.

At first, he couldn't believe it. But once he'd had the thought, it was obvious. So big, so omnipresent. You couldn't see it because it was all around you.

The most successful restaurant chain in the world. What could be a better way to drug half the planet? Control the source of food and you control everyone — the feudal lords knew that back in the dark ages.

Douglas investigated, and was shocked and horrified to discover a conspiracy of over 400 agents, all over the world, testing experimental psychoactive pharmaceuticals on unsuspecting burger consumers. He'd known the NWO was low, but giving "Special Orders" to children? They'd plumbed another fathom in the depths of perfidy.

Douglas sent two fine agents, Marty Blain and David Grisholm, to identify Superconduc-

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tor, the leader of this vile cabal. They succeeded, but the police captured both before they could remove Derek Jackson. Worse, three other operatives were *killed*. Clearly, this Jackson had access to dangerous Area 51 devices and personal enhancement biotech.

Randy can't afford to lose any more soldiers, and he can't afford to give the ATF more clues about the TOSG's post-Y2K reincarnation as the Global Liberation Society. He's got to kill Jackson, and he knows that the longer he waits, the more prepared Superconductor will be. But at the same time he can't afford to screw it up again.

He's put another agent in the area, watching Jackson to make sure he doesn't run. That's the worst-case scenario. If Jackson runs, there's a good chance the GLS won't be able to follow.

Randy hopes Jackson won't rabbit, but if he does, he's prepared to do the next best thing: strike at other Mak Attax operatives. After all, he's got that useful list from that old fairy in Des Moines . . .

THE HOUSE OF RENUNCIATION

Patrons of the Room of Ignorance (see *Statosphere*, p. 102) would recoil in horror if they heard of Mak Attax and uncovered its agenda. However, given their abhorrence of machinery and processed food, Ignorance agents are unlikely to uncover Mak Attax by themselves, either through the internet or in the franchises. If a member of Mak Attax got targeted and reversed because of his lifestyle — and let's face it, mystically-aware computer nerds are a double word score to the Room of Ignorance — he could do terrible damage from the inside. On the other hand, there are fewer than 500 Attaxers worldwide, so the odds of getting randomly abducted are pretty small, especially when there are so many Boeing, Motorola, and Microsoft employees ripe for the Room's special "lice and loneliness" treatment. No, the Meks are probably safe from the Room of Ignorance unless someone rats them out.

Over in the Room of Rusted Things, agent Alicia Chen (see *Statosphere*, p. 113) would be very interested in the Mak Attax experiment, if she knew about it. She likes anything that shakes ordinary people out of their rut. The idea of Special Orders would tickle her pink. She would certainly join Mak Attax if she had the chance, and anyone who tried to fuck the mission up would get cut and cut and cut.

Lili Morgan (see UA2, p. 232) of the Other-side Room *does* know about Mak Attax, and they interest her because they have a nebulous drive to help people in general, much like her own. She thinks they're probably wasting their time, believing that unfocussed random action is not going to have nearly as much effect as precision strikes against the enemies of the commonweal, but she lurks on the open list. It's served her well on a couple occasions, tipping her off to incipient magick showdowns. She might even intercede to help Meks in danger — if she didn't have anything more important to do.

MINOR CABALS AND DUKES

THE FREEBUSTERS

Jennifer Zaraya, "Snaky Pete" Bledsoe, Marcy Yip, and Henrietta Deakes are a well-meaning gang of socialist adepts living in Salem, Oregon. Formed in 1993, the cabal is known as the Freebusters. The founder, **Henrietta Deakes**, is in her fifties and claims that the Plutomancers created capitalism, rather than vice versa. According to her, you can't throw a rock in Zurich without clipping a lackey of the Plutomantic cabal that secretly pulls the strings of every stock exchange in the world. They sit on the boards of every big financial institution, they call the shots for the World Bank, and they won't rest until they've invisibly enslaved everyone in the world. (Henrietta starts crying whenever she talks about the former U.S.S.R. She still has high hopes for Maoism, though.)



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Henrietta describes herself as a Plutophage — a money eater — and she does just that. By physically destroying bills and coins, usually by eating them, she fuels her magick of revolution and alienation. Where Plutomancy is about acquisition, consumption, and greed, Plutophagy is about giving things up, becoming disgusted with what you thought you wanted, and sending things away from you. (For more about Plutophagy, see p. 94)

Henrietta can be rather shrill and unpleasant. Depending on whom you listen to, she can be downright scary. There's even a rumor that she's got the butchered corpse of a two-hundred-pound Plutomancer in her deep freeze, and that she's slowly eating her way through him in hopes of getting a major charge. (This rumor usually has the phrase "capitalist long pig" in it somewhere.) But aside from possible ritual cannibalism, Henrietta genuinely cares about those who get ground beneath capitalism's wheels: the percentage of the population that the system keeps out of work to keep the economy healthy for everyone else. (The economy is a complicated beast with a finicky diet, but in general you get too much inflation if unemployment drops below a certain level.) Her care for the downtrodden was what drew an idealistic young dancer named Jennifer Zaraya to her.

Jennifer is a very sympathetic young lady. Maybe too sympathetic. She always gives to panhandlers, *every* panhandler, even if she thinks it's a scam. She'd rather get took by a con man than pass by someone in real need, and even the scamsters get some of her pity. (If you were really doing well, you wouldn't be conning people for quarters, would you?) Jennifer feels the pain of the world, and to make it better she pays back with pain of her own. Jennifer is a fleshworker, and her self-inflicted wounds serve to heal those the insurance companies won't touch and the hospitals don't want. She was one of the founding members of the Freebusters, joining at the tender age of 18. Out of the original four members, only she and Henrietta are still alive.

"Snaky Pete" Bledsoe is a herpetologist and Herpemancer, a student of serpents who is just as comfortable with their complex biology as he is with their complex symbology. (Herpemancy is described on p. 99) His interactions with the many, *many* snakes in his lab keep him well charged, and with their power he can poison or heal, renew or preserve. He's also a world-class expert in herpetological toxicology, and his lab in Salem provides time-sensitive antivenin for five states. He's been bitten more times than he can count. He's completely immune to bites from rattlesnakes and other pit vipers. In some cases, his donated blood has been used to treat bite victims. (Luckily, he's type O negative.) Other hemotoxic venoms have decreased effects on him, and he even has some resistance to the really nasty neurotoxic poisons, stuff like coral snake and cobra venom. But he's paid a heavy price for his immunity. As a side effect of years of damage from various poisons, he suffers from mild tremors in his limbs, which he treats with a drug called levadopa. More dramatically, all the hair on his body has fallen out, giving him a somewhat serpentine look himself. (It also means he has to wear a sweatband all summer: with no eyebrows, sweat runs right into his eyes.)

Pete lived in San Francisco until the L.A. dukes trashed it (see *Hush Hush*, p. 26, or *UA2*, p. 206). He almost stayed to fight. After all, a guy who owns multiple cobras and has a six-foot long diamondback rattler is not someone to beard in his den. But the thought of a bunch of Annihilomancers burning his beloved snakes was too much to bear. He was old friends with Henrietta — in his prime, his sexual appetites were legendary, and the rumor is they used to be lovers — and she told him she'd watch his back if any L.A. asshole decided to come after him up in Salem. As it happened, none did.

Pete's not a dedicated do-gooder like Jennifer or an ideological fanatic like Henrietta, but he's got nothing against sticking it to the man now and again. He's not as active as they'd like, though. After all, he has a reputation to

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FREEBUSTER MEMBERS JENNIFER ZARAYA, PETE BLEDSOE, MARCY YIP, AND HENRIETTA DEAKES

uphold, and he fears that if he gets involved in too much fringe political shit, he'll lose his license to keep poisonous snakes.

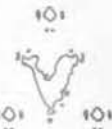
Marcy Yip, the final member of the Freebusters, looks vaguely Chinese and is very reticent about her past. She's a Geomancer, reaping the power inherent in the movement of people and the shape of landscapes, and she joined the Freebusters in 1997. (Geomancy is described on p. 105.) She was the one who told them about Mak Attax, and she's a member herself. Jennifer and Pete have joined the Mak Attax open list at her suggestion (and were surprised to notice that Marcy, under the alias "Boozy," claims to be a Dipsomancer in Kentucky) but they're a little dubious. Pete doesn't think large-scale magick can work, because he's never seen it. Jennifer questions how much good random charge-dumping does. As for Henrietta, she's iffy on anything so tightly bound to "a big rainforest-burning, underclass-oppressing, money-grubbing multinational." Nonetheless, she accepts that many (if not all) Attaxers probably have

their hearts in the right place, and they aren't *actively* pawns of the Warbucks.

Thanks to the Freebusters, Salem (and much of nearby Oregon) is a fairly decent place to work magick. Right after Marcy joined there was a nasty, *nasty* conflict between the Freebusters and a decidedly more selfish and vindictive group calling themselves "the New Salem Coven." All the smart money was on the Coven, who were ruthless and powerful and scary as all get out, but when the dust cleared the death toll was Freebusters 2, Coven 5, and without the mystic 13 members the Coven decided to pack it in for fairer climes. Now the Freebusters mainly look out for the poor, homeless, and sickly, while Snaky Pete humorously grumbles about being stuck in a cabal with three women when he's not nailing any of them.

RADIO J AND THE BAD DRIVERS

The Bad Drivers are a sucky garage band from Minneapolis. **Joshua Boyle** is bad on lead vocals and worse on lead guitar. **James Schoen-**



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laber's inept drumming tends to fade into the background, unless he plays a solo, or drops one of his sticks. Clint Mikula's bass playing is actually workmanlike in practice or when recording, but in front of an audience he tends to get flustered and *really* stink it up.

They're nice boys. Friendly. More prone to being stupidly trusting than stupidly violent while drunk. They're earnest, they're honest, they believe in hard-chargin', Detroit-style rootsy rock 'n' roll. They aren't cokeheads, they aren't date rapists, they aren't hotel-trashing jerks. But neither are they talented or charismatic. Saddest of all, they've got the kind of naïve faith in musical Cinderella stories that would, in a normal world, lead them to waste years of their lives fruitlessly chasing a dream they can never, ever catch.

Lucky for them, they don't live in a normal world. They live a couple blocks from a Mak Attax franchise, and an adept named Becky O'Hare dropped a charge on Josh Boyle right before he went off to record a demo single.

The single, titled "DUI: Driving While Infatuated," was a piece of dissonant guitar crunch crap, but it got infused with a magick charge and developed unnatural qualities. Specifically, anyone who hears one of the verses, even just hummed or idly spoken by a passerby, gets the song stuck in his or her head until he or she hears the final refrain of the actual song.

The band took the single around to a couple area radio stations, none of which would touch it with a ten-foot pole. (It may be supernaturally catchy, but it's still a sucky song.) However, James Schoenlaber did persuade his friend Min Quian to play it on her pirate station, Radio J.

Radio J has been broadcasting on a hit-and-run basis for four years, all through the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. Min is the station's sole owner and operator, and she tries to broadcast on the first and third Thursday of every month. She announces her chosen frequency with photocopied handbills, internet announcements, and word of mouth. She's very careful.

While she tries not to produce interference with licensed stations, she believes that her pro-hemp stance, political radicalism, and anti-corporate rhetoric probably merit her more attention from the FCC than, say, a low-watt vanity station playing old Country & Western.

Luckily, Min is a tiny young woman of Chinese descent who can, when she chooses, sound just like Chris Rock. She records all her shows in advance, and while she's broadcasting from the back of a minivan she makes sure to dress as yuppie as possible. (When not broadcasting incognito, she usually sports black lipstick and a t-shirt from some underrated, obscure indie rock group.)

Her care and effort have made Radio J modestly popular in Minneapolis/St. Paul, and she agreed to play "DUI" just so James would stop pestering her. (They used to date, and, well, you know how it is. She didn't even have the heart to point out the title *should* have been DWI.)

After two verses, however, she got spooked by a cop car and bailed out. This left about 500 listeners with the single stuck in their heads, distracted and absolutely unable to flush it out. A number of them called local radio stations asking about it. One local DJ remembered a bunch of talentless white guys with a song, so he dug it out and played it.

That "cured" a couple of the people who were initially exposed, but another thousand people or so heard it just as they were going out of range, or had arrived at their destination at work, or they caught a piece of it as they were flipping through stations. It was enough. They got hooked, too.

It was Min who first picked up on the peculiar popularity of the song, but it didn't take long before the Bad Drivers were getting club dates. The live performances were disasters, of course, but that one song was getting requested on the radio more and more.

Meanwhile, Becky — the Attaxer who dropped the charge on Josh in the first place — is wondering exactly what she should do about it. She's tried explaining the *real* reason for the

popularity of the song to the Bad Drivers, but they didn't want to hear it, especially not with an A&R man from Sony coming through town.

James has been trying to use his newfound popularity to get back in Min's good graces, and he told her about the Attaxer's "ridiculous" claims. Min was also dubious, but when Becky showed her *proof* that she could, no foolin', really do magick, Min became convinced that she had somehow enchanted the song. (It sure made a lot more sense than the alternative: that the Bad Drivers had somehow, accidentally, written a catchy tune.)

Min burned two copies of the song onto CDs for Becky, one to keep, and one for Becky to send "to someone who ought to know." (Superconductor, of course.) Furthermore, Min's insistence got James to give Becky a second chance, and she managed to demonstrate her powers to his satisfaction. Clint and Josh, however, are "too busy" and they just don't want to hear it.

Becky insists that she can't make it happen again, that the Bad Drivers captured lightning in a bottle once and that's probably it for them. She *is* open to the idea of getting "DUI" distributed nationwide — after all, it's a kind of magick and her stated duty is to spread it far and wide. Min has her worries about the long-term effects of being unable to get a song out of your head. James, meanwhile, is considering playing a remixed version for the Sony guy — a version with a different ending, thereby trapping anyone who hears it until an unrelenting desire to hear it again.

That's where things stand right now. If an "unfinished" version makes it onto the radio, it could start a plague of distraction. TNI would certainly be interested in the effect, and might even hire some studio musicians to provide the Bad Drivers with a real career (or at least one decent album) if Abel could think of an angle to choke cash or mojo out of "DUI."

Another possibility is that the Bad Drivers might catch the attention of the Sleepers. They'd probably kidnap the band, beat their

secrets out of them, get a copy of the "cure" tune, and get it played in the background of a national commercial — after insuring that the band is suitably dealt with, of course.

The effects of listening to the first part of "DUI" are described on p. 78.

DISCEPOLI DI DISACCORDO

The *Discepoli di Disaccordo* ("Disciples of Discord") are a trio of Italian mystics living in Venice. Their nominal leader is **Maria Galli**, an Entropomancer in her forties. (Her age and her discipline should tell you she's either tough or only a minor adept. In fact, she's both.) Her apprentice, **Gino Marconi**, is a lot wilder than she is but also far less reliable. (He gets significant charges, but his skill level is much lower.) The final member is a low-level Gambler avatar named **Mario Kreutz**.

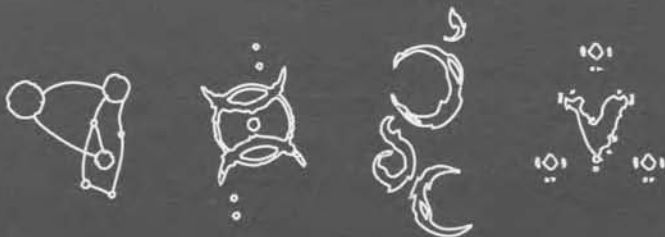
All three of them are convinced that chaos is the fundamental building block of reality. Nothing is predictable, and even events that aren't completely random are rarely predictable. You can never be sure. You can hedge your bets and calculate the odds, but in the end, there's no stacked deck.

The *Discepoli* figure that, since they can't get out of it, they're going to get into it. Since chaos cannot be eluded, it must be shared and celebrated. They like Mak Attax because the results of dropping magick on unsuspecting normal folk are extremely chaotic and unpredictable. (Though they'd be aghast and furious to learn about the Ritual of Fealty.)

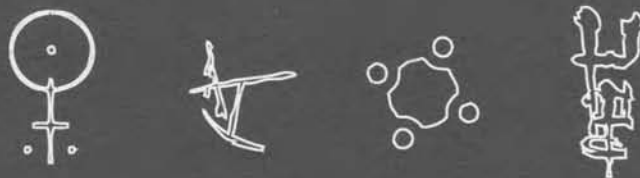
The two Entropomancers have futzed around with the Ritual of Lesser Correspondence, but they tend to like their discord a little more widespread. They dream about dumping LSD into the Venice water supply during carnival, but while they agree that it's a good idea, they don't have any concrete plans. Yet. Instead, they while away their time slinging unlikely fortune (good and bad) on anyone who catches their eye. In theory they do this randomly. In practice, you tend to get good luck if they like your looks, and bad luck if you pissed them off.



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CHAPTER FOUR SPECIAL OFFERS FOR A LIMITED TIME



ARTIFACTS

UNHAPPY MEALS

Power: Minor

Effect: These are one-use minor artifacts that hex their target: you hand one off to someone and something bad happens to him or her.

Description: This was the major tool for the “Safe and Happy New Year” program. Fleshworkers doctored breakfast burritos to provide crippling illnesses for terrorist triggermen. Entropomancers made sure everything went just wrong for millennial nut jobs. Emotional manipulators of various schools found the weak links in extremist organizations and encouraged changes of heart.

What sets an unhappy meal apart from most single-use artifacts is the symbolism. Normally, an artifact has to symbolize its use. To gather information, you want a book or a ouija board. To hurt someone, you want a weapon. To alter emotions, you use a song or a poem.

Unhappy meals use the symbology of the world’s biggest burger chain. The fleshworker who wants to cripple someone spits in her shake. The Entropomancer makes sure to put in a couple extra game pieces. An Amoromancer might tell the customer “We *love* to see you smile!” and a Kleptomancer might “accidentally” include a children’s placemat featuring a cartoon of a burger-swiping character.

Over the years, the burger chain has amassed a truly impressive set of recognizable symbols, whose meaning is far more widely understood than (say) the Hottentot association of rabbits with the moon. Furthermore, the amount of magick Mak Attax has sent through the system through the years has made it a potent symbol of magick — to them, at least. Besides, isn’t the spokesman for the chain a magical clown? All Mak Attax really did was stick in that strange extra ‘k’.

ROCKETFLIES

Power: Minor

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Effect: The rocketfly is a one-way communication device. If an Attaxer wants to send something to “Superconductor,” he emails a private request for a rocketfly, giving an address. (This is assuming, of course, that he knows such devices exist.) Derek sends the rocketfly by UPS or FedEx. The Attaxer puts an object or message (or, most commonly, a tightly-rolled cash donation) into the front compartment and winds the head on tight. Then he must put a model rocket engine in the back chamber and fire it off into the night air. (They have to be fired at night or they just fall to the ground.)

If all goes well, the wings unfurl at apogee and the rocketfly buzzes into the upper atmosphere, not stopping until it’s a mile or more up. Then it flies through the air to Rolla, Missouri, and lands gently at midnight in the backyard of Derek Jackson’s rented home.

Description: These small clockworks were designed and built by Derek. He’s got a dozen of them. They look like small tube-shaped insects, about four inches long and an inch and a half in diameter. The back inch of a rocketfly is an open, empty steel tube. The front has a hollow compartment about half an inch in diameter. The walls of this compartment are packed with delicate brass clockwork. There is a cap, shaped like a dragonfly’s head, that screws on to seal this little nook closed. The action of screwing the head onto the rocketfly also winds up the clockwork.

The outside of the rocketfly is adorned with four wings made of paper-thin glass or hammered copper (Derek has experimented with both). These wings are meticulously designed to fold up inconspicuously when not in use.

STORM CAT TALISMANS

Power: Minor

Effect: There are two varieties of Storm Cat Talismans.

The **Potency Charm** is made of three strands of horse hair braided together and tucked into a segment of a snake’s shed skin. It’s a single-use item that, when rubbed

between the thumb and forefinger of the left hand, enables an impotent man to perform sexually. A man of normal potency becomes almost unbearably excited under the charm’s influence. A knowing buyer will pay between \$100 and \$200 for one of these, and most buyers are men with serious medical conditions. (For mere thrill-seekers, porn and amyl nitrate are cheaper.) Of course, a really rich man whose erectile difficulties defied all scientific treatment might well pay a lot more.

The **Fertility Charm** starts with the three hairs woven into a circle and tucked into a split-open fig, along with a single pomegranate seed. If a woman puts it under her mattress, it increases the likelihood that she will conceive a child. It can even overcome medical infertility. This is a single-use item. Infertile women who are convinced that this gadget works (and there aren’t many) are generally willing to pay up to \$1000 for one. It still comes out way cheaper than in vitro fertilization.

Description: If you’ve never heard of Storm Cat, it must mean you don’t follow horse racing. Storm Cat was a pretty good racer, but really came into his own when he went out to stud. In one year, seven of his progeny sold for a total \$8.9 million, and the buyers weren’t disappointed in their investment. Children of Storm Cat don’t completely dominate the horse racing scene, but his reputation for passing on genes for strength and speed is rock solid. To be blunt and mercenary, people are willing to pay \$400,000 to have this horse fuck another horse. To the global racing world — which, all told, probably outnumbers the global occult underground — Storm Cat stands for valuable sex.

One of his stable attendants at Overbrook Farm, a fellow called Robbie Mullner, understands this very well. He has a special currycomb that he only uses on Storm Cat, and when he’s done using it he cleans it out *very* carefully. He doesn’t throw those loose Storm Cat hairs away, though. No way. He takes them to his friend Horace Godson, who also lives in Lexington, Kentucky (the home of



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Overbrook Farm). Horace is a minor adept, what's known as a "quirk," and he was the one who told his friend Robbie about the mystic symbolism of hair. Horace is a hairdresser by profession, and a "Trichomancer" — a hair magician — by avocation.

When Robbie told Horace about Storm Cat, it didn't take them long to put the symbolism together. Hair already stands for virility. But hair from the world's most valuable stud stallion was irresistible to Horace.

Their only problem was convincing people that Storm Cat virility talismans work. To do that, they had to give a couple away. But those loss leaders paid off big, and the word has trickled out that there are these guys in Kentucky who can help you out if even Viagra isn't sufficient to put the wind in your sails any more.

But Storm Cat symbolizes more than just the ability to have sex: He also stands for valuable progeny. Some clients who were impressed by the potency talismans started to wonder if Storm Cat hair could make one more fertile as well? Horace said "no problem."

The money Horace and Robbie made wasn't enormous, but it wasn't peanuts either, and Robbie took off on a vacation to Vegas with his share. While there, he had a thought: could Storm Cat talismans of some sort be marketed to brothels and call girls? After all, that's another aspect of the Storm Cat phenomenon: Sex for money. *Lots* of money.

As it happened, lucky Robbie was still away on his vacation when the Sleepers showed up to give Horace his first and last warning. ("Now you can see how good *we* are with razors, Mr. Godson. Next time we won't just *shave* it.") Godson credits a small group of local occult enthusiasts — a Mak Attax crew — with saving him from the Sleepers. (In a way, this is actually true. When they realized they had an audience, the Sleepers decided to let Godson live so he could tell everyone how scary they were.)

That's pretty much where things stand now. Robbie wants Horace to make what

he calls the "high roller magnet" for a Vegas cathouse. Horace would be uncertain about that in the best of times, but he's scared shitless of the Sleepers. At the same time, he feels obligated to his Mak Attax cronies, and they've told him that what Mak Attax really needs is *money*. Sex sells, and between the two of them, Robbie and Horace have as good a chance as making an honest buck off magick as anyone. (If by "honest buck" you mean "the customer is satisfied," that is.) But Robbie doesn't want to share his take with a bunch of greasy burger goons, and Horace has ethical qualms about funding prostitution.

The situation is unstable, but in the meanwhile, Horace has donated about a dozen of his Storm Cat talismans to Mak Attax, as a gesture of his gratitude.

"DUI — DRIVING WHILE INFATUATED"

Power: Significant

Effect: This dismal rock song has no effect if the whole song is heard. But if one of the first verses is heard, and the song is broken off before the last refrain, then the song annoyingly remains in the listener's head until he hears the song's end. (Rituals like Purifying Bath and Spellbreaker would probably clean the listener out as well.)

In any event, having the song stuck in your head gives a -5% penalty to all Mind rolls except Madness checks. This same penalty applies to all Mind-based skills, and to anything else that requires intense concentration. The only exceptions are Obsession skills and skill rolls with Passions applied.

While this is a fairly minor effect, it doesn't wear off. You have to listen to the last part of the song (or just the whole thing) to get clear of it. Furthermore, this artifact has the potential to reproduce, much like the Naked Goddess tape. It was recorded on digital media, and any uncompressed digital reproductions (such as CDs) are perfect, retaining all the song's mystic potential. Compressed digital formats like mp3 require at least 192 kbps stereo encoding

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quality to preserve the effect. A first-generation analog copy — that is, a tape or record made from the original or a digital copy of the original — also has the power. An analog copy of an analog copy, however, is distorted enough that the effect is lost.

The power of the artifact itself is not that important. But the fact that a piece of media can be mystically encoded to compel the audience to seek it out again could be a commercial breakthrough, and a serious Sleeper magnet.

Description: The story behind “DUI” appears on p. 73.

THE BLEEDING GUN

Power: Significant

Effect: If the owner of this revolver is in immediate physical danger, blood begins to slowly seep out of the words carved in the handle, which read “YOU DID IT.”

This warning is limited in scope. It does not alert one to deceit, to emotional traumas or to magical attacks intended to harm the

spirit (rather than the body). But if the holder’s body is in likely peril of injury within the next minute or so, the blood flow begins.

It’s not infallible, of course. No form of fortune telling is. But it’s a hell of a lot better than nothing.

The gun starts to bleed any time the GM is planning some kind of immediate attack or danger to its holder. It’s not terribly specific or responsive. For example, it can’t be used to check whether this step or that one on a rickety staircase is going to give way. It would probably give warning when the holder started going upstairs. It might indicate that a threatening bully is about to attack you, but the bully may change his mind. It’s not 100% reliable. If the plot demands it (or if the GM thinks the player has become too dependent), the gun could simply fail to detect a threat.

Description: This enchanted pistol looks like an 1851 Colt Navy revolver in good condition. The barrel and chambers are plain and unremarkable. The only visible thing that distinguishes it



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from hundreds of similar museum pieces is the wooden handle. There are eight notches along the bottom of the grip, and as noted there is a crudely carved phrase where a right-handed shooter's palm would lie.

The bleeding gun can still be fired, though it is neither as safe, accurate, or convenient as a more modern weapon. It is still a gun and can easily kill, but it is not *exceptionally* dangerous, as such weapons go.

No one knows where the Bleeding Gun came from. Some occult historians connect it to the Cray Hotchkiss traveling show, but there's not a lot of evidence. (As Ken Hite puts it, "Granted, Cray Hotchkiss was around in the late 1800s and he probably created one magickal detection device. But that does not mean every magickal detection tool from that era was made by Cray Hotchkiss.")

Its current owner is Violetta DuPree. The gun has been in her family as long as anyone can remember. Her grandmother remembers a story about some ancestor named Moses Weaver murdering his cruel master, stealing the gun, and fleeing the slave states for California. Given the gun's properties, it might seem unlikely that its original possessor was murdered. But the moral of the story could well be that no one's alert all the time, and a bleeding gun in the hand is worth two in the brace.

In any event, Violetta learned firsthand of the gun's prescience at a young age, and it made her far more accepting of the paranormal than most. While she herself is neither adept nor avatar, she knows a couple in her native Baltimore and is not the type to dismiss claims about the supernatural out of hand. When one of her adept friends told her about Mak Attax, she was skeptical — not of the magick, but of their benevolent goal. All her friends eventually joined, though, so she did too. This would not be such a big deal if one of the other cabals of Baltimore (and there aren't that many) hadn't apparently decided that Mak Attax was bad news. Now Violetta has to choose. She can either be vulnerable to the creeps who drove one

of her friends out of town and put the other in the hospital, or she can constantly carry a heavy, obvious, and not very practical firearm.

THE GHOST RAIN FETISH

Power: Significant

Effect: It's a jerk detector. If you shake the fetish once and make a successful Soul roll, you can see clouds of "ghost fog" for the next hour. (This phenomenon is described on the next page.) Most people have no ghost fog. The biggest asshole in a medium-sized office probably has a small cloud. If the asshole is in a position of authority, his cloud is bigger.

With a second shake, and another successful Soul roll, the holder of the fetish can take a sip of the ghost fog. Doing so gives the flavor of the fog holder's arrogance. If, for instance, the fog was produced by a series of devastating business screw-jobs, the taster would feel a tiny improvement to his own business acumen. Similarly, tasting the fog over a verbally abusive loudmouth would allow you to recognize a slight improvement to some skill related to shouting and blustering. (In game terms, the second shake allows a 1% increase to the next roll taken with the appropriate skill; more importantly, it accurately communicates the general nature of the fog.)

A third shake lets the holder drink in *all* of the ghost fog an individual has accumulated. This allows a skill boost that lasts for a number of minutes equal to the percentage of the increase. (For instance, enough accumulated hate and humiliation to give a +10% bonus would last for ten minutes. A +30% shift from a world-class shitwag would last a half an hour.)

Description: Malinda Schrumm, a psychedelic-era mystic, first observed and named the phenomenon she called "ghost rain." While investigating ghost rain, she constructed a tool to help her observe and control it. The tool remains, as does its name — "the ghost rain fetish" — but Schrumm is dead, her notes are lost, and the truth about ghost rain is known to exactly nobody. Paul Borowski currently owns

the fetish and he knows what it can do, but he has no idea where ghost fog comes from or how it naturally turns into ghost rain.

The fetish is a small woman's glove, made of white silk. Two plain gold rings are knotted onto each finger. (Borowski doesn't know it, but these are wedding rings from people who killed their spouses for infidelity.)

Paul gives the fetish a shake whenever he meets someone who might turn out to be important, and is always on his guard against people who have a cloud.

It is possible that the fetish has other powers. If it does, Paul Borowski has no idea how to trigger them.

ABOUT GHOST RAIN

Have you ever been humiliated? Specifically, have you ever been humiliated, on purpose, by someone against whom you have no redress? Maybe your boss bawled you out in front of the rest of the office. Maybe a cop pulled you over for speeding and made you look like a fool in front of your new girlfriend. Or maybe it was worse — an ex-lover spread rumors about your peccadilloes and inadequacies. A boss felt you up and told you no one would ever believe you.

Maybe it was even worse than that.

Did you feel diminished? Did you feel like you were shriveling up before the heat of their contemptuous gaze? Did you feel an ache of loss, feel acutely that you were being personally reduced?

Just possibly, you were.

In the 1960s, a mystic dabbler by the name of Malinda Schrumm discovered the truth behind that sense of loss. It's not just an emotional reaction: it's an accurate perception of what is occurring. Malinda observed and measured this loss. When people were humiliated, pieces of their souls broke off, evaporated, and coalesced in clouds above the heads of their tormentors. She got to the point that she could pick out people to avoid, simply by spotting the clouds of unfocused hate and humiliation floating above their heads, clouds she called "ghost fog."

Granted, not many people had big clouds. A few people had little ones, but the people with the really big clouds were assholes of the first quality, people so cruel and malicious that they were only one in a thousand, or one in a million.

Malinda spotted one fellow who had a simply enormous cloud above his head and followed him, curious to see if this haze of impotent emotion had any effect on his life.

As it turned out, the man was a trial lawyer, and she soon saw how he'd amassed such a heavy load of misery. He was relentless in the courtroom, and it was a rare day that he couldn't bring a witness to tears. But one day, while he was verbally barbecuing someone on the stand, the fog above him swirled and twisted down into the witness as he badgered her.

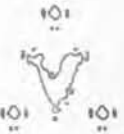
Her eyes blazed, and suddenly she began to answer him with the rhetoric of Cicero. His every question, no matter how intrusive or insinuating, was turned around and thrust back at him. When he saw the effect she was having on the jury, he stopped questioning her, but the opposing attorney brought her back, and with a friendly cross-examination her sudden eloquence was all the more damning.

As she spoke, Malinda watched, intrigued. No one else in the courtroom could see, but Malinda saw the precipitate of all his other cruel victories draining through this woman's mouth. When it was gone, the witness' unexpected fluency stopped as abruptly as it had come.

Malinda called this phenomenon "ghost rain" and she observed it for years. She learned that it came in flavors. As she watched, a crooked cop who delighted in secret, gunpoint interrogations was himself placed in a helpless role when a cornered criminal abruptly became an expert intimidator.

Malinda never told anyone about ghost rain. The secret went to her grave with her. But she left behind an artifact she'd used to observe and influence the stuff. That item, the ghost rain fetish, is now in the hands of Paul Borowski. (See p. 60.)

Game Effects: If a person causes a failed



Helplessness stress check of at least rank 4 through a deliberate act against a target, that person is in danger of accumulating some ghost fog. The target may, instead of taking a hardened or failed notch, lose some points of a particular skill instead. This skill *must* be one that the loser could have used to prevent the embarrassment. If someone bests you verbally, you aren't going to lose your Drive skill, you're going to lose Witty Repartee or (failing that) Charm. (Now, someone who beat you in a road race, humiliating you in front of your gang, *that* would justify a loss of Driving skill.) The skill loss is permanent, and equivalent in points to the rank of the stress check.

This lost skill becomes ghost fog and clings to the winner until a critical mass is reached (at least 15 points of skill) and someone else getting embarrassed tries to fight back with the requisite skill. At that point, the fog turns into rain, flooding the resister with added skill to be used against the onetime winner. The rain bonus lasts a number of minutes equal to the number of skill point gained: +15% for fifteen minutes, +20% for twenty minutes, *etc.* Ghost rain doesn't guarantee victory, but it certainly evens the odds. In any event, win or lose, the fog is gone afterwards.

MOTHER'S RAG

Power: Major

Effect: Mother's Rag is as intimately tied to the Mother archetype as the Warstone is to the Warrior or the Naked Goddess Tape to its namesake. If a man possesses the Rag, it is inert and does nothing, but if a woman owns it, it fairly leaks fertility. Any woman who owns the Rag is capable of bearing children. Any infertility condition, from uterine cysts to menopause or hysterectomy are reversed simply by possessing Mother's Rag. Furthermore, no form of birth control (other than abstinence) is effective for the woman who owns it. If she is lactating, her milk cures illness and purifies poisons.

Flowers often sprout spontaneously beneath it if its carrying case is set down on bare soil. If it stays in one region for a month

or more, farmers within ten miles are sure to have good crops.

Finally, if the possessor of the Rag is also an Avatar of the Mother, she gains a bonus to her Avatar: Mother skill on the following sliding scale.

Skill	Rag Bonus
1-50%	+10%
50-75%	+5%
75%+	0

Description: Like an onion, Mother's Rag has layers. The outermost layer is unattractively modern and practical: a bulletproof, fireproof steel briefcase of the type an antiquarian might use to transport a Gutenberg Bible or Dead Sea scroll.

The next layer is a thick, tough plasticene envelope, sealed and filled with inert noble gasses. Prevents mold and decay, don't you know.

Inside that there is a breathtaking example of medieval textile art. It incorporates cloth-of-gold and is fringed by seed pearls. On the front side are a snowy lamb and dove. On the back is an image of the Virgin Mary holding the Christ child. Both sides are decorated with masterful depictions of Greek Orthodox Christian symbols. It is about a yard square.

Everyone who has owned this item for the past five hundred and seventy years has believed that this magnificent weaving is the artifact. It has been called the Bethlehem Sheet and the Blanket of Luke. There are several obscurely whispered folktales about how the family of Joseph and Mary came by such a marvelous cloth, woven with symbols that predicted the fame of their expected infant.

In truth, this gorgeous example of craftsmanship is as mundane and extraneous as the plasticene and the steel. The real heart of power is sewn on the *inside* of the Greek Christian blanket. It is ragged and brown and has holes. It might be mistaken for cloth, but it is actually leather that has been worn soft by use. It used to be covered with fur, but that all wore

off after the first thousand years.

Its Greek owners believed that this cloth got a cameo in the Bible, in Luke 2:7. It is certain that the cloth is much older than Christ, however: The Comte de Saint-Germain's mother wrapped her infant child in this blanket, right before she ascended into the Clergy as the first Archetype.

Mother's Rag is currently in the possession of Sophie McCallum (see p. 55), who uses it to keep menopause at bay so that she can (ab)use her Avatar: Mother powers to their fullest potential.

RITUALS

THE RITUAL OF THE SMOKING HEAD

Cost: 1 minor charge

Ritual Action: Hold your left hand in front of your eyes with the palm horizontal, the pinkie pointing up and the pointer pointing down. Neither finger can curve and both together must form a straight line. It's okay to use the right hand to push them into position if you're not flexible enough. (Some people on the open Mak Attax list think this is the "Voorish Sign" Lovecraft wrote about, but they're full of shit.) Once you've got the sign up, say "Praise grostelwood" in a loud tone of voice.

Effect: If the ritual is successful, thin wisps of black smoke begin to emanate from the caster's scalp. In dim light or a smoky room, it's completely unnoticeable, but outside in broad daylight it's perceptible. The smoke smells vaguely like burning plastic and lasts for about two minutes. If this ritual has any other effect, no one knows what it is.

SUMMONE YE FURIES

This ritual was from Margaret Brandt's files (see UA, p. 245). No one in Mak Attax has cast it, and only Derek and his immediate circle have access to it. Derek isn't exactly sure what it does, but he's strangely certain of its power and permanence.

Cost: 1 minor charge

Ritual Action: Three people must work together to cast this spell, and they need a sturdy trident (called "the Furies' trident") about three feet tall. Each arm of the trident has to be tipped with a sharp point. (The material composition of the object does not matter.) To cast the ritual, each participant holds one tip of the trident in both hands. Going counterclockwise, each speaks a particular word of two or three syllables. (The words are all different.) As the last word is spoken, each participant must drive the tip of the trident into his throat.

Each of the people taking part must be fully aware that the ritual is lethal, even if it doesn't work. If one of the casters falters and gives less than full effort to the suicide pact, the ritual fails.

The caster who spends the charge makes the roll. Non-adepts who take part all get a roll to see if the ritual succeeds. If multiple adepts take part, each one willing to spend the charge can roll. (After all, what's the point of hoarding it now?)

Effect: The three dead bodies are transformed into physical hosts for the Cruel Ones and they kill everyone present in a blaze of white fire, leaving nothing but ash behind. Really. Anyone who sees them dies, inescapably. The only possible exception to this rule is the Comte de Saint-Germain. Or maybe not. Maybe the Cruel Ones are the only things that could kill him, which would either (1) eventually trap the universe at 332 archetypes or (2) allow someone else a chance to become the First and Last Man.

Furthermore, when the Cruel Ones are brought into the material world, they hunt down any demons within a square mile radius and haul them back across the veil. Anyone who sees them likewise flares and is reduced to ash.

Brandt's files note that if this ritual has ever been performed — and she had no evidence that it has — the incarnated Cruel Ones could hypothetically still be walking the Earth.

THE RITUAL OF LESSER CORRESPONDENCE, VERSION 1.0

The foundation of Mak Attax, the technique



UNKNOWN
ARMIES

that makes the entire enterprise possible, is the Ritual of Lesser Correspondence. It allows the Maks to transfer minor charges from one person to another, even if the receiver isn't an adept. (In fact, the person passing the charge doesn't have to be an adept either, but it gets expensive to pass a charge through too many hands.)

Cost: 1 minor charge, in addition to the charge getting passed. So if you have two minor charges, you can spend one to pass the other one on.

Ritual Action: Prepare a cylinder by passing it through the smoke of fresh, burning rosemary. The size and material of the cylinder doesn't matter as long as it's at least three times as long as it is wide, and you can fit your left pinkie finger inside. (People have used everything from toilet-paper spindles and PVC to sewer trunk pipes big enough to walk through.) First pass the side through the smoke, then hold it so that the smoke rises through it. (Remember which end the smoke enters: that's the "bottom" of the tube.) After being smoked, a series of runes and designs must be painted onto the tube. (Once a tube has been prepared, it can be used again and again. A charge must be spent each time, however.) To pass a charge, the user puts his left pinkie into the tube, spends two charges and rolls. One activates the device, one remains "ready" inside it. To pass the charge, the caster has to have the object on his person and either touch or speak to the receiver.

Effect: A minor charge goes from its source to the person designated as the receiver: The "special order" that is Mak Attax' *raison d'être*. It should be noted that while avatars and normal people can use this ritual, they can only use it to pass charges along. They can't *create* a charge with it.

THE RITUAL OF LESSER CORRESPONDENCE, VERSION 1.1

Mak Attax hadn't been around more than six years before a second version of the ritual just sort of *happened*. It wasn't exactly developed, but it certainly wasn't discovered. Like the Ritual of Fealty (described next), this new ver-

sion of the ritual seemed to just seep up into the consciousness of the people using it.

The most common theory goes like this. Not every element of every ritual is necessary. Because no one understands what makes rituals work, there's no good way to find out what's the engine of a certain set of actions, and which elements are just chrome. Sure, experimentation will do it, but most adepts respect magick way too much to screw around with it. Besides, if ain't broke, why fix it?

This theory (posited on the list by "Ishtar") is that the ritual wasn't changed by deliberate experimentation, but by carelessness. You get hundreds of people using a ritual hundreds of times, someone's going to fudge it. Sometimes the fudged ritual still works, and that's when people realize they've simplified the ritual. "Oh, I left off that squidgy rune that looks like a melting French Horn, and it still worked. I guess I don't need to put that rune on anymore."

Others suspect that this is, in fact, a different ritual that does the same thing, given to Mak Attax by — well, theories differ. Ra, the ghost of Aleister Crowley, the angel Moroni, whoever. These are the same people who mutter about the Ritual of Greater Correspondence, which (supposedly) not only lets you pass on a significant charge, but also forces the receiver to immediately use it on one of *his own spells*. People want that ritual, you betcha, so they can charge up adepts and make them blast themselves. But so far it's only hearsay.

Cost: 1 minor charge, in addition to the charge getting passed. So if you have two minor charges, you can spend one to pass the other one on.)

Ritual Action: Instead of burning rosemary, the vessel is prepared in the aroma of cooking meat in a Scotsman's restaurant. The vessel can be any kind of food wrapper or container that has the restaurant's logo on it. The runes don't have to be written with ink — your fingertip will do — and it doesn't matter what order they go on the container. The charge donor has to prepare the food that goes in the wrapper.

Effect: When the food is eaten, the charge gets

passed. This is a critical difference between the two versions. With version 1.0, the ritual caster decides who gets the charge. With version 1.1, the charge is resident in the food and is absorbed by the first person to taste it. Charged objects are typically called “special orders.”

THE RITUAL OF FEALTY

This ritual was one of two working rituals on a secret internet archive code-named “The Wine Cellar” until 1997. That was the year the site crashed, taking two genuine rites and 142 worthless ones with it. (No one on the list knows it, but the site’s owner, an Attaxer named Brandy Welles, was murdered by a Sleeper agent named Vernon Henshaw.) Most people who know the ritual — and a surprising number of Maks do — vaguely recall getting it there.

Or maybe it was from a post by Superconductor. One of the ones back around May of ‘95, when the list log files server crashed and all that data was lost.

Or maybe they learned it from a friend in the know, who got it from another friend in the know.

No one’s really gone to the trouble to find out exactly which member of Mak Attax contributed the Ritual of Fealty. It’s just always been around, seems like. People take it for granted, or don’t believe in it, or think it’s just another piece of psychological background noise.

Perhaps it’s not that important.

Nonetheless, this ritual is very common among Attaxers.

Cost: Two minor charges

Ritual Action: The Attaxer must be off the clock, but an employee of the big red-headed clown. He goes into the restaurant and orders some kind of food — usually a burger or a shake. He places his order with a fellow Attaxer, and the working Mak puts in one charge, if she is an adept. The person ordering puts in the second charge (if an adept) while taking the food back to a table. (Non-adepts can use charges passed via Lesser Correspondence or just use Soul checks as per any minor

ritual.) Once seated, he inscribes a rune on the food — drawing it on the burger with mustard, typically, or sketching it in the surface of the thick shake. The rune is a combination of the letters M and A, and a right-side-up pentagram. The caster then effaces this, smoothing over the surface but not wiping off the mustard or drinking any of the shake. Next, he adds on top of that an inverted sketch of the company logo in the same manner. He says “I honor as I subvert,” adds a drop of his own blood, and eats what he ordered. (It’s not necessary to get every single sesame seed or every drop of the shake, but he should finish it.)

Effect: There is no measurable effect, nor any perceptible effect, unless someone’s watching with aura sight. Even then, it’s subtle. There’s just a very slight golden glow in the Attaxer’s aura, somewhere between the heart and the stomach. If other Maks are around, the glow gets brighter.

In game terms, the Attaxer gains a Soul based skill called “Mak Attax” at 5%. Repeated use of the ritual can increase this by 5% each time, or it can be raised with experience. It can never be higher than the Soul stat, of course.

This is a paranormal skill with some odd qualities. First and foremost, it’s synergetic. The collective skill of a group of “activated” Attaxers is greater than the sum of their individual skills. Specifically, if someone else with the Mak Attax skill is in the same room or within sight range, both people’s Mak Attax skill goes up by 5%. This happens for each person involved, until it’s limited by the Soul stats of the involved persons.

Example: Randy, Stacy, and True all have the Mak Attax skill. Randy and Stacy have it at 20%, True has it at 30%. That’s what they roll when they’re isolated. However, if Randy and Stacy are together, each of them gets a 5% boost from the other, rising to 25%. If all three of them are together, the boost rises to 10%, making the skill levels 30% for Randy and Stacy, 40% for True.



However, if True has a Soul score of 35, his Mak Attax skill can never go higher than 35%, no matter how many other people with the skill are nearby.

So. The Mak Attax skill is easy to raise with charges, and it gets stronger in groups. Nice. But (I'm sure you're asking) what the hell is it *good for*?

It's good for working for Mak Attax. A specific list of effects follows, but that's the simple (if unsatisfactory) answer. It makes Mak Attax a more effective organization at its chosen, stated goal.

The particulars of the effects are as follows.

- The skill can be used in the place of any lower skill or stat when casting any version of the Ritual of Fealty or the Ritual of Lesser Correspondence.
- Any Attaxer with the skill takes a Self stress check equal to the tens place of his Mak Attax skill if he deliberately betrays a fellow Mak, or the organization itself. (Thus, in the above example, True would take a Rank-3 check. Unless he was in the presence of Randy and Stacy when he sold them out, in which case it would be a rank-4 check.)
- With a successful roll, the Mak gets a rough idea of what the collective Mak Attax organization — all 400+ members, not just those who've performed this ritual — would want her to do to help the cabal in her current position, *if* they knew about it. (This is a little complicated, so bear with us.) Essentially, the roll lets the Mak know the organization's general consensus about the right action to take, if her situation was considered as a hypothetical question. It does not inform anyone. It just lets her know what that disembodied collective known as "Mak Attax" would advise. (Though no one knows it, this effect was essential when it came to organizing the "Safe and Happy New Year.")
- With a successful roll, the Attaxer can give a general sense of what he or she is feeling

to any fellow oath-taker close enough to boost the skill.

- The Attaxer can do blind targeting with special orders (that is, objects bearing a minor charge) and unhappy meals (see p. 77.). Specifically, if she randomly distributes a charged or enchanted object, it finds its way to the type of person that Mak Attax as a group would want to get it. This was used most successfully in the "Safe and Happy New Year" program. A bodybag prepares a damaging unhappy meal container at a factory, but lets it run down the assembly line with no idea where it's going. He makes a roll, intending for the container to find its way to some Y2K maniac in keeping with the "Happy New Year" program. If it succeeds, without any charges spent, it drifts through the distribution network until it "coincidentally" winds up making a member of the True Order of Saint Germain puke his guts out when he's supposed to be blowing up the building with the Florida state police mainframe in it. This ability can't be used to target a particular person, but only a *type* of person. You can use it to serve up an unhappy meal to "the next asshole in a sport ute who comes to the drive through" — but *only* if the general feeling among Mak Attax members was "assholes in sport utes should be punished."

Those are the common effects. At the GM's discretion, other cooperative paranormal effects may be boosted by the skill, *if* they are working towards a goal most members of Mak Attax would agree upon. In no circumstances does it improve Avatar or magick school rolls or abilities, and it does not help combat skills or rolls. Whatever force is behind this ritual, it doesn't care a fig for individuals, *if it's even aware of them as such*. It's not going to save your life. But it might get a replacement in place very efficiently.

SO WHERE'S DEREK'S "MAK ATTAX" SKILL?

Neither edition of the *Unknown Armies*

rulebook includes this skill in the write-up of Derek Jackson or the other Mak Attax GMCs. The explanation is probably obvious: we simply hadn't thought of it yet.

Mak Attax's leaders might well have decided not to experiment with the Ritual of Fealty because, well, experimenting with strange rituals is often a bad idea. But if it matters to your campaign, feel free to give the skill at any reasonable level to these characters.

EXPLAINING THE RITUAL OF FEALTY

There are several possible explanations for the Ritual of Fealty. Individual GMs can pick the one they like best, or make up one of their own.

- **The Easy Explanation.** It's just a ritual that someone dug up or dreamed, and it works. If someone bought a piece of lumber from Home Depot or a microchip from Intel, prepared it in accordance with the ritual, and ate it, that person could develop a similar rapport with others who swore ritual allegiance to that company. If TNI or the Sleepers had a logo, its members could use the same ritual. (Except, of course, they don't know about it. They examined the descriptions, tried the spell, and nothing happened for them. They figure it was a hoax.)
- **The Cosmic Explanation.** An unusually powerful coalition in the Invisible Clergy (perhaps the Loyal Laborer, the Rebel, and several others) implanted the ritual into Mak Attax in order to make it a better tool for their schemes. But what do they plan to do with this tool?
- **The Pseudoscientific Explanation.** The magickal motions of hundreds of charges passing through the burger business for a whole decade finally produced an effect, an effect that retroactively *preceded* its cause and created the ritual back in the early nineties. Physical law dictates that energy moves from an organized state into a disorganized state by nature, *unless* more energy is constantly added. However, when energy is consistently put into a complex, chaotic and contingent system, that system can tend to become *more* organized. (The most obvious example is biology on Earth. Stimulated by eons of bombardment by sunlight and cosmic rays, simple carbon molecules became more complex until they became single celled organisms, then simple animals, and finally, game designers. But we digress.) Mak Attax has been pumping extremely versatile energy into a complex expression of an idea and a desire. Now that structure has become self-regulating, self-reinforcing, and self-protecting, though not self-aware. Yet.
- **The Shadowy Mastermind Explanation.** Gee, who has the knowledge needed to create rituals? The Comte de Saint-Germain. And who would have a lot of use for a bunch of mystically aware, easily led, ignorant but numerous pawns? The Comte de Saint-Germain. It's possible that he became aware of Mak Attax, took a good look and said, "What a nice vehicle. All it needs is a steering wheel."
- **The L. Ron Hubbard Explanation.** In the last incarnation of the universe, a powerful ungendered magus-entity with the thought-form of Ks't'thak realized, almost too late, it wasn't going to make into the Invisible Clergy before the world ended. Instead, it used a spell very similar to the "missing time" phenomenon described in UA2 on p. 299. It intended to try again in the next world, but it wound up as a disembodied entity that can only subtly influence electrical impulses. For most of the last several millennia, that's been limited to the minute impulses in a brain or central nervous system. It's not easy or precise, but Ks't'thak has had a lot of practice. With the advent of computers, it's gotten a lot easier to communicate. Ks't'thak has been manipulating Mak Attax from day one and plans to use them to incarnate physically, as a first step to ascending to the Invisible Clergy. The Fealty Ritual is just part one of the mad mage's scheme.



SUMMON FAMILIAR

Animal companions are a staple of myths about wizards, witches, warlocks and wise women. Merlin had a screech owl, Moses and his rivals both had snakes on their sides, and at the Salem witch trials, a too-friendly pet could condemn a woman to the ducking stool or the stake. Indeed, the idea of a familiar spirit, usually an animal, is common to so many myths and folktales that even mass media depictions of magicians and enchantresses usually equip them with some sort of beastly sidekick — the critters of *Harry Potter* are a contemporary example.

The idea of the familiar is so entrenched that even if there were no *real* historical precedent, some preening adept would find a way to get one. As it happens, however, the ritual for summoning a familiar is both old and widespread. That's not to say it's common. No ritual is common. But the Ritual of Familiarity (as it's known) is not actively lost. At least one self-styled "Arachnomancer" in Alex Abel's employ knows one version of it, and some believe that individual Sleepers can use it, if they so choose. An ex-con Lebanese working a burger joint in Portugal brought it to Mak Attax, and it was also on Brandy Welles' archive alongside the Ritual of Fealty.

Cost: 1 significant charge

Ritual Action: The adept needs a fresh-cut yew staff, a chalice or cauldron with at least some gold on the interior surface, and a silver knife or sword. Some claim that if the adept is strong enough, this spell can be cast at any time, but most agree that it's most likely to succeed if done at a time and place where the barriers between the physical and spiritual worlds are thin.

In practical terms, this means aiming for one of the following: Walpurgisnacht, or All Hallow's Eve, or on a day of great astrological significance to the caster. Ideally, it should be done at an abandoned temple, a graveyard or a place of great tragedy. Adepts with a flair for the dramatic swear it works better during a thunderstorm, but that can be tricky to arrange. (It's simple, really: if the caster believes he or

she is performing the ritual in an inappropriate location, or on an inauspicious date, this doubt reduces the chance of success by 10–20%.)

In any event, the spell must begin at the stroke of midnight, during the dark of the moon. The caster must be barefoot and standing on naked soil (so if you're casting it indoors, you have to break through the floor). It's cast by drawing a pentacle in the soil with the staff. The pentacle must be drawn in a single, uninterrupted line, and the caster must stand in the center. Then, while chanting "eus eub malray hotak" the caster uses the silver knife to cut the palm of his left hand between the middle and ring fingers. The cut must extend far enough to cross both the life line and the love line. The blood is collected in the chalice as the adept chants "beu katal yohmay usus."

If the spell is successful, some type of animal shows up on the scene and waits outside the pentagram. To complete the process, the adept must use the wand to break the circle, and the knife to break the interior line of the star. Only when this is done can the animal approach. Once it drinks from the chalice and is stroked by the adept's bloody left hand, the spell is complete.

Effect: The animal summoned is intimately tied to its new adept master. Some theorize that the familiar partakes in the intelligence of its master, since familiars often follow instructions with comprehension and initiative far beyond the norms for their species — even beyond the capacities of Lassie, Trigger, or Flicka. While the familiar has human-like intelligence and can understand spoken instructions from the master, this communication used to be one way. Historically, a few serpents could write messages by holding quills in their coils or by torturously spelling out letters with their bodies, but the computer age has lowered the barriers. Even the lowliest toad can now communicate (albeit slowly) with its master by hitting keys on a keyboard.

A more immediate form of communication involves sensory transfer, but that costs magick

CHRIS MARTINEZ



points. By spending a minor charge, the adept can share in all five senses of its familiar, and can give it telepathic commands as though he was in its presence, even from miles away. This expenditure still doesn't allow the familiar to communicate telepathically in return. Additionally, it's wildly disorienting to the adept — a rank-4 Self challenge, rising to rank 5 for serpents and ravens (since the body shape is so different) and rank 6 for bats (since the body shape is different *and* there's sonar to contend with). It lasts about an hour.

The communion between man and beast doesn't end there, however. Nor do the Self checks. See, it turns out the pilgrims were dead on when they went looking for "the Devil's Teat" on suspected witches. Any adept with a familiar does, indeed, grow a third nipple somewhere within a few days of using the ritual. (You should hope it's somewhere unobtrusive. They've been known to pop out of the distinctive left-hand palm scar.) Periodically, the animal will come to suck

nourishment from that nipple. (Which is the downside of having a nice, inconspicuous devil's teat under your tongue, for example.) The frequency of feeding seems to depend on the familiar. Some only come to feed once a week. Others come almost every day. Every two or three days is more typical, however. The amount varies even between similar animals, and is determined by the GM.

At each feeding, the familiar devours one minor charge. If you don't have any minor charges, it takes blood instead. (Usually this is only a single hit point of damage, but there is an icky chance for infection.)

Sprouting a new nipple and having some grimy little supernatural creature cozying up to it for supper is pretty unnerving. The first time it happens, it's a rank-4 Unnatural challenge. The next time, the challenge drops to rank 3, then rank 2 and rank 1. After four feedings, the would-be Merlin is accustomed to the process, one way or another. People really *can* get used to anything.

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The type of animal that arrives has no particular connection to where you are in the world. Apparently it's a European ritual, because it always calls up European animals, even if cast in the Outback or in the deepest jungles of South America.

The critter's type is defined by astrological factors: specifically, how many months there are between the caster's nearest birthday and the current date.

Months	Animal
0	Dog
1	Raven
2	Serpent
3	Cat
4	Rat
5	Bat
6	Toad

(For more on what these individual animals can do, what happens when Familiars die, and suggestions for playing a familiar as a player character, see "Familiars" on p. 112 of this chapter.)

All familiars provide a few common advantages to the adepts who summon them. First and most obviously, they're useful spies. They're also something of an occult status symbol. But some familiars also have minor magick abilities, which they use to help their masters achieve their goals. Familiars are rarely very powerful, but every little bit helps.

Familiars are significant unnatural creatures, and as such are sometimes accompanied by unnatural effects. Neither familiar nor summoner can control or even influence these events, but sending your familiar to haunt a person can be a good way to freak him out without undue risk.

THE RITUAL OF LIGHT

Cost: 4 Significant Charges

Ritual Action: A short chant of catchy and repetitive words that seem to melt in the mind, not in the ear.

The Ritual of Light can only be performed at a time that is significant to its intended effect. In the case of Mak Attax's "Safe and Happy New Years," they performed it on 'New Millennium Eve' in the hopes of protecting the year 2000. If you wanted to use it to harmonize a marriage, you'd cast it during the wedding or on an anniversary. If you wanted a business to thrive, you'd chant it while signing the incorporation documents. In other words, it's not something you can just use every day — or even every time you're trying something difficult and important.

Effect: Set aside the dice for fifteen minutes of game time. Every time during those fifteen minutes of glory that the PCs would normally roll the dice, have the players and GM vote verbally for "succeed" or "fail." Majority wins. If there's a tie, it's a success. Unanimous votes for success or failure by all players, but not the GM, is treated as a "matched" success or failure; a unanimous decision including the GM indicates crit or fumble.

In game terms, the Ritual of Light binds the will of its casters — that is, the people who perform the chant together — to the Statosphere itself, for a variable amount of time. While the ritual is in effect, things tend to go their way. Of course, if their will is not unified then the ritual is much less useful.

It must be pointed out that the Statosphere is not innately benevolent, and that contacting it with this ritual is not universally beneficent. In the hands of Randy Douglas or someone similar, this would serve nicely as the Ritual of Darkness, unifying matter and spirit in a chorus of chaos.

Unfortunately for just about everyone, Mak Attax has been as sloppy with this ritual as they are with most matters. It was never posted on the open list, but everybody on the Y2K list had a chance to download it. It would be child's play for spookshow outfits like TNI or the Sleepers to acquire it. The Sect of the Naked Goddess and the GLS would need to work harder, but it's only challenging — not impossible.

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CHRIS MARTINEZ

THE ANAGRAM GEMATRIAST

AKA MIXER-UPPERS, WORDBENDERS

You understand that knowing the True Name of an object grants power over it. You use your knowledge to change and control everything that is named. The Word is the Life, and the File, and the Leif.

Gematria is a Jewish mystic tradition based on the sacredness of the Hebrew language, and on the Hebrew alphabet's numerical properties. The central tenet of gematria is that the word for a thing very much *is* the thing described. Gematriasts therefore reason that if two words have the same numerical identity — that is, the letters that compose them add up to the same sum — then there is a real mystic connection between those two words *and* the two things those words describe.

Anagram Gematria (or “A Grammarian Gate”) takes this idea of equivalents and mutates it in a way that would make an orthodox rabbi pull out his earlocks: this school works with English, discards the numerical element, and is based solely on anagrams. To a mixer-upper, the truth of A Grammarian Gate is obvious. After all, “parliament” is an anagram of “partial men” and “Clint Eastwood” can be rearranged into “old west action.” How much more proof does one need?

The central paradox of Anagram Gematria is that words *are* things, but that words aren't actually themselves. A word is only a collection of letters, and if that collection of letters can become something else, how can it really have a meaning? But it *does* have a meaning. Therefore, the meaning is contained in the letters, and when those letters are shared among other words, it must make those words equivalent — even though an anagram in one language is garbage in another.

To cast a spell with A Grammarian Gate, the wordbender has to write out an anagram that relates to the spell's target (usually called a “couplet”), empower it with either a minor



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or a significant charge, and then connect the couplet to the object.

For instance, suppose Debbie Roth (see p. 38) wants to make something bad happen to someone in his own home. She would have to write out an anagram (like RESIDENCE = DIRE SCENE) and plant that slip of paper somewhere in the target's house. Or if she wanted to convince a stranger to feel he owed her something, she could write DEBBIE ROTH = HI, BE DEBTOR on a piece of paper and carry it on her person. To make TNI's head honcho dangerously beautiful, she would have to write ALEX ABEL = A BELLE AX on a piece of paper and convince him to carry it. (Alternately, she could use ALEX ABEL = AX A BELLE to make him want to kill a gorgeous woman.)

Only one spell of this sort can be cast on a target at any time. (For example, if Debbie wants her car to be a better escape vehicle, she might put AUTOMOBILE = O BAIL ME OUT in the glove compartment. But she could not *also* enchant it with AUTOMOBILE = AUTO BOIL ME if she wanted to booby trap the car and have the radiator burst with scalding water.)

With **minor charges**, A Grammarian Gate can enhance qualities already present (as in the case of making a car faster with O BAIL ME OUT) or provide subtle and metaphorical qualities. For instance if a mixer-upper wanted to make trouble for someone named Kevin Mowery, she might stick him with KEVIN MOWERY = EVERY KIM WON, making it harder for him to win in any contest against someone named "Kim." Or she might interpret the same couplet to mean that Kevin has an *advantage* against anyone named Kim. Either way, she has to decide on the meaning when she writes the slip. In either case, a +10% or +20% shift on someone's roll or rolls might be appropriate. Or Kevin might be able to flip-flop a few rolls.

Minor charges can also be used to influence mental states, either spurring action or inflicting mental checks to those who resist such spurs. If Manuel Ortiz was hit with MANUEL

ORTIZ = I'M RUN ZEALOT, Manuel might have to make a rank-3 Helplessness check if he decides against jogging every morning. Similarly, BEAUTY = YE A TUB could give a lovely person a rank-3 Self check if he or she resisted the unnatural urge to gorge and gain weight.

Significant charges can provide sterner compulsions. Resisting a significant charge suggestion like KEVIN MOWERY = WOK YE VERMIN could give poor Kevin a rank-6 Helplessness check if he fights the urge to stir fry some rats and roaches. It can also provide very blatant changes to the qualities of the enchanted object or person. Debbie, the creator of the school, has used DEBORAH MICHELLE ROTH = CREDIBLE HOT HARLEM HO with a couple significant charges to completely change her appearance to, well, that of a good-looking hooker with a New Yawk accent. (The word "credible" makes this particularly potent.) If she used a minor charge, people would perceive her as being a little sexier, but it wouldn't be the definite physical change caused by the significant spell.

Both minor and significant spells can be used to provide appropriate skills. For instance, if Debbie used a minor version of DEBORAH MICHELLE ROTH = OH HO, CREDIBLE HELM, she could substitute her skill in Anagram Gematria for a sailing skill. Or a significant DEBBIE ROTH = BE EDITH ROB would let her use any skills possessed by Edith Rob — if Debbie knew anyone named Edith Rob, which she does not. If she knew Adam Scott Glancy, she could use a significant ADAM SCOTT GLANCY = TALC, A GYMNAST, DOC to let him use the skills of both a surgeon and a gymnast at the level of her skill in A Grammarian Gate. At least, he could until the spell wore off, as described next.

All the spells of Anagram Gematria are of fairly limited duration. Minor spells last about fifteen minutes after you cast them. Significant spells last about an hour. Removing or destroying the piece of paper with the anagram equation also breaks the enchantment.

ANAGRAM GEMATRIA BLAST STYLE

Anagram Gematria has no blast.

STATS

Generate a Minor Charge: Where a normal magick school requires the caster to make a sacrifice for power that can be spent later, Anagram Gematria provides the power up front and inflicts the sacrifice afterwards. (If normal magick is like working for a wage, Anagram Gematria is like taking out a loan.)

The sacrifice takes the shape of linguistic confusion. At some unexpected moment within a day of using magick, the wordbender's speech, writing, or comprehension becomes confused. This *always* happens when trying to use a linguistic ability — one never loses the ability to read while asleep, for example. But the wordbender might well lose their literacy while trying to check email or read a book, or have their speech scrambled while on the phone, or have their comprehension bollixed when listening to someone say something important.

Use of a minor charge demands fifteen minutes of linguistic confusion per charge, within a day of casting.

Generate a Significant Charge: Use of a significant charge demands one hour of linguistic confusion per charge, within a day of casting.

Generate a Major Charge: No mixer-upper has yet garnered a major charge, though it's suspected that such a thing would require anywhere between a week and a month of linguistic confusion to pay the piper; suffering this level of linguistic stripping would lead to numerous Stress Checks and likely incarceration in a medical facility.

Taboo: Since wordbenders don't carry charges,

they don't have a way to lose them. However, there are a few restrictions on how Anagram Gematria works.

Anagram spells must use every letter in the words being manipulated. Anagrams must be figured out *by hand* — no fair using a computer to churn out pages of combinations. The manipulation has to go through the adept's brain. Also, accurate names must be used rather than nicknames: a spell cast on titles, nicknames, fake names, or pseudonyms like "the Fruit," "the Freak," "Manuel Lopez" (see p. 42), or "Eponymous" will fail and lose a charge. Finally, an object or person can be affected by only one Anagram Gematria spell at a time.

Random Magick Domain: Anagram Gematria is *all* random magick. What it does is make the target of the magick take on one or more properties appropriate to the anagram.

Starting Charges: Mixer-uppers start with no charges.

Charging Tips: Charges are limited only in the amount of future pain and suffering the wordbender wants to sign up for. Since the modern world is a dangerous place, not being able to understand language and/or to communicate clearly may quickly get the Anagram Gematriast committed, incarcerated, injured, or killed.

ANAGRAM GEMATRIA FORMULA SPELLS

A Grammarian Gate has no formula spells. It's all random magick.

ANAGRAM GEMATRIA MAJOR EFFECTS

Permanently bestow the ability or quality encoded in a couplet. Physically change one thing into another. Burn out the language centers of a target's brain. Become a universal translator.

WHAT YOU HEAR: THE ANAGRAM GEMATRIAST

There's a cabal living in the New Mexico desert called the **Most Rewards** (Word Masters), made up of a wordbender named Jaroslav Jovanović and his apprentices. They have managed to create an impregnable compound named "Scanty Rear Tutu" (empowered by "Utter Sanctuary"), where they're up to all the usual messianic cult hoo-hah.

A mixer-upper named Jane Renton claims to have used A Grammarian Gate to create the being (or urban legend) called "the Eye-Biting Man" (Be Tiny Enigma).



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CHRIS MARTINEZ

THE PLUTOPHAGE

AKA MONEYPITS, GREEDYGUTS

You know money is poison. Acquisition is the root of all evil. You've decided to consume that sin for the good of all. Grab a fork and chow down, because as the world barrels into the new millennium, there's plenty to eat.

It's possible that this school was created by a Plutomancer after a trip through the House of Renunciation. Since then, others have been taught it as a straight school. A Plutophage ("money eater") fuels their magick of revulsion and alienation by physically destroying bills, coins, and objects of value, usually by eating them.

Capitalism grinds people under its wheels into dust. The system keeps a percentage of the population out of work just to keep the economy healthy for everyone else. Plutophages find that exclusion abhorrent. It leads to a system where slips of paper or manufactured goods are more important than humans.

The central paradox of Plutophagy is that you must embrace and take within yourself something you hate: in this case, either money or objects worth a lot of money.

PLUTOPHAGY BLAST STYLE

A Plutophage doesn't hurt you. He projects his own hurts onto you. This school's blast allows a Plutophage to shuck away a portion of his own pain and wounds and slap it on someone else.

STATS

Generate a Minor Charge: Consume a single item worth at least \$100, but less than \$1,000; the item does not have to be eaten all at once, but the charge isn't gleaned until the plate's cleaned. The encapsulation of value into a single item is what's important: a greedyguts could eat a \$100 bill (or drink a \$150 dollar bottle of wine) for a minor charge, but not two \$50 bills (or two \$75 bottles of wine). The

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Plutophage must consume the item alone — no sharing.

Generate a Significant Charge: Consume a single item worth at least \$1,000, but less than one hundred million dollars. One moneypit ate an entire car.

Generate a Major Charge: Consume an item worth over one hundred million dollars, or a single priceless item — like the Rosetta Stone, the Hope Diamond, the Shroud of Turin.

Taboo: Any time you gain possession of a single item, service, or payment worth more than \$1,000, you must begin consuming it within a half-hour and not stop until you're done, or lose all carried charges. If a moneypit was handed a check for \$1,600, she'd have thirty minutes to either start eating it for the significant charge or cashing it for sixteen Ben Franklins (and 16 minor charges). In addition, if a greedyguts is ever personally worth more than \$100,000 (counting savings, assets, and possessions), they lose all charges and cannot gain any more until they're worth less than that.

Random Magick Domain: Where Plutomancy is about acquisition, hoarding, and greed, Plutophagy is about giving things up, becoming disgusted with what you thought you wanted, and sending things away from you.

Starting Charges: Newly created Plutophages have four minor charges.

Charging Tips: Plutophagic charges depend on income, just as Plutomantic ones do. A canny moneypit can dine on enough money to provide 5–10 minor charges and 1–2 significant charges per week.

PLUTOPHAGY MINOR FORMULA SPELLS

BUTTERFINGERS

Cost: 1 minor charge

Effect: Cast it on a person who's holding an item. That person must immediately make a successful Speed check, or drop the item. It quite simply squirts out of his grasp.

REVULSION

Cost: 1 minor charge

Effect: This makes an item or location repellent to a person or group of people. The Plutophage picks an “aura” associated with the thing or place — something like “danger” or “madness” or “loneliness” or even “wrecking boredom” — and the people who trigger the spell feel that sensation intensely.

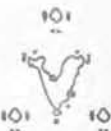
Essentially, the spell forces the persons affected to leave immediately or face a madness check. The gauge of the check depends on the aura chosen (with an aura of danger causing a Violence check, or an aura of despair causing a Self check). The moneypit has tremendous discretion about the sort of person targeted — it could be “those guys feel creepy about this alley” as a motorcycle gang closes in. Or it could be that “the next banker to handle this dollar bill shall fear for his life.”

Once the spell is triggered, the aura remains for an hour. The rank of the stress check is equal to the tens place of the casting roll (roll a 32, produce a rank 3 stress check). The duration can be extended by an hour for each additional minor charge spent. Alternately, the difficulty of the stress check can be raised by 1 for each additional minor charge. Each additional charge can produce one or the other alteration, not both.

IT'S CRAP!

Cost: 2 minor charges

Effect: This spell causes the target to see with preternatural clarity the *lack* of value in an item, concept, or idea, even those that are usually admired by the target. Basically, the spell helps “accentuate the negative” in the thing under its microscope; this can be worth up to a -20% shift for appropriate rolls (like Haggle, Lie, or Convince Others That Ecnalubma-ism Is The One True Path skills). If the thing being examined touches upon the target's Passions or Obsession, this spell could force a Self stress check (rank-3 for Passions, rank-6 for Obsessions). It does not force people to think or act



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a certain way; it's just an emotional response, which could easily be dismissed as "irrational" if it doesn't make sense. The effect lasts for a number of hours equal to the roll.

EXAMINE YOUR PRIORITIES

Cost: 2 minor charges

Effect: For a number of minutes equal to the casting roll, the target has no Obsession. Or rather, their obsession lacks its compelling emotional element. They still know they really like money or chaos or whatever, but there is no burning, driving urge.

In game terms, the character gains no advantages from having an Obsession. They can still use their Obsession skills (and yes, adepts can still cast spells), but they can't flip-flop them.

NOT MINE, YOURS

Cost: 3 minor charges.

Effect: This is the Plutophagy Minor Blast. When you cast it on someone, you transfer injuries you've taken to them. You must be injured for this spell to work. The amount of injury transferred is equal to the sum of the successful Magick skill roll; if the sum is greater than your current wound points, the excess is ignored. Transferred wound points leave you, meaning you're healed by the amount transferred with no lingering effects.

Example: If Bob is currently wounded, he can cast Not Mine, Yours on the beat cop coming after him. With a minor charge and a successful roll of 27, he can blast the policeman for up to 9 points of damage, and "heal" 9 Wound Points. Wound Points regained in excess of a character's normal maximum are lost, and would not be applied to the target either. That is, if Bob had only lost 5 Wound points and rolled that 27, he would "heal" 5 points by passing it off onto the cop; the other 4 points are lost.

HEY, BIG SPENDER

Cost: 5 minor charges

Effect: For the next hour, the target of this spell loses all sense of thrift. They want to spend money like water, expend all their ammo in one go, give the next panhandler they see the shirt off their back, tip their server a twenty when they only ordered a single mocha latte, and so forth. Anyone who acts thrifty while under the influence of this spell has to contend with a rank-7 Self check.

PLUTOPHAGY SIGNIFICANT FORMULA SPELLS

POSSESSIONS ARE FLEETING

Cost: 1 significant charge

Effect: This spell expels a single object from a person's possession. When this is successfully done, synchronicity conspires to remove it from its owner some time in the next day. The removal happens in the course of actual events, not a sudden unnatural vanishing; theft is a common agent of loss. (A team of burglars was going to steal Alex Abel's Ferrari anyway; his favorite artifact happened to be in the glove compartment.) Once the loss is noticed, the item cannot be found by anyone — including the Plutophagy — through any means, including unnatural ones, for 24 hours. That clock starts ticking at the moment someone notices the theft, however, meaning an item could be missing for days before someone realizes it and activates the unfindable effect. 24 hours after the loss is noticed, the item is still missing but can now be recovered, tracked, or divined. Depending on the circumstances pulled together to effect the disappearance, the item may not be found for days, months, or ever.

There are several limitations on this effect:

- 1) The better protected the item is, the shorter the distance it travels. One of Alex Abel's treasured artifacts isn't going to end up hundreds of miles away from him — more likely it's going to fall behind his bookshelf and get found in twenty-four hours and

one minute. On the other hand, some guy's car in a long-term parking lot could wind up in Mexico chopped to bits.

- 2) The item must belong to an *individual*. Most multimillion-dollar art treasures belong to a museum or a foundation and cannot, therefore, be targets. Ditto those rare books in the Vatican's secret collection.
- 3) The spell cannot take effect as long as someone is paying attention to the item. As soon as it's put away, however, it's fair game. It's no good for taking the gun out of someone's hand, but it can easily get rid of the gun in his briefcase. If the item remains under observation for more than a day after the casting, the spell fails.

TOTAL RECOIL

Cost: 1 significant charge

Effect: The target of this spell immediately finds *everything* around him completely unbearable. This has the effect of derailing the victim's conscious mind and forcing him to fall back on primal instinct.

In game terms, the target behaves as if he's just failed a Stress Check. He must immediately flee, freeze, or fight. He does not, however, receive a hard or failed notch on any madness gauge.

The spell lasts for ten combat rounds, or until the person is no longer in the Plutophage's presence.

EXORCISM

Cost: 2 significant charges

Effect: When this spell is cast, unnatural creatures of every description find the spell's target absolutely repulsive. Demons, entropics, astral parasites — they all detach and flee. They get flung back to whatever space or realm they came from. Demons go back to being dead. Astral parasites go back to roaming the astral plane.

A parasite that has been Exorcised with this spell is usually disinclined to attack that particular victim again.

SELF-EVALUATION

Cost: 2 significant charges

Effect: This spell creates a correspondence between a psychological scar and a physical symbol that represents it. If the person chooses to rid himself of the item, he can become emotionally purified. The target does not have to acquiesce to the spell, but he *does* have to knowingly choose to give up the item and make the exchange. If the item is stolen or destroyed before the person relinquishes it, the spell fails.

In game terms, the moneypit connects a hardened or failed notch on a target's madness meter to one item that person possesses. It's up to the individual to decide if getting rid of one is worth being rid of the other.

The item must be worth at least \$100, and the target must choose to abandon or destroy the item. If the person trades the item, the connection simply gets transferred to whatever item he received in exchange. If he sells it, the connection goes to the money, and then to whatever he next purchases, and so forth.

As soon as the spell takes effect, the target is aware of the opportunity it presents — or, if it's somebody who treasures his hard notches, the danger.

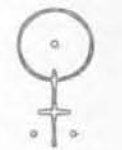
If the target does not take the opportunity, the spell wears off in twelve hours.

ALIENATION

Cost: 2 significant charges

Effect: The person under this curse seems unpleasant to all those around him. It's nothing overt, like a smell or a look. If they don't know him, he seems creepy, scary, "a bad stranger." If they do know him, all his worst traits seem to surge to the fore, bringing any buried hatchets right back up to the surface.

The spell lasts for a number of days equal to the sum of the casting roll. During that time, any skills that relate to or rely on the goodwill or trust of others suffer a -20% penalty. This can include Soul skills like Charm, Lie, Sell Time Share Condo, Sing the Blues — anything



where person to person contact is essential. It can also monkeywrench Mind skills with a significant social component, like Make a Killing in The Stock Market or Win Poker Games.

In addition to being decreased, all those skills *also* suffer a limit on how well they can succeed. Specifically, the cursed individual gets no special benefits from matches or critical successes with those skills.

THE VALUE OF PAIN

Cost: 3 significant charges

Effect: This is the Plutophagy Significant Blast. An improved version of Not Mine, Yours, it shifts wound points you've taken to a target equal to the casting roll (rather than the sum of the casting roll). As with the minor version, the transferred damage cannot exceed the caster's current wounds.

Example: Bob is currently wounded for 30 points. He casts the Value of Pain on the TNI goon coming after him. With a successful roll of 27, he blasts the goon for 27 points of damage and heals 27 points of his own, meaning he's now down only 3.

EVIL'S ROOT: MONEY'S LOVE

Cost: 4 significant charges

Effect: This spell delays wanted or needed money from coming into the target's hands for a number of hours equal to the sum of the roll. Checks get held up at the bank, ATM machines swallow bank cards, dropped coins fall into the sewer, and crosswinds whip dollars away as they're taken from wallets. It's as if currency and the target of the spell are repelling magnets: through circumstance, they cannot touch while under the influence of this spell. (This especially pisses off warbucks.) People tend to get anxious when this happens and try to take out even more money, with the obvious consequences.

PLUTOPHAGY MAJOR EFFECTS

Send any object far, far away from you. Get away from any person alive. Cause the value of a national currency to plummet (and thus tinker with the world's economy). Destroy someone's self-esteem.

WHAT YOU HEAR: THE PLUTOPHAGE

It's rumored that a moneypit named Hamzah Khoury dug up the remains of J.P. Morgan and made a little stew. Now, anyone who has accepted money from Alex Abel cannot approach or apprehend him: something always blocks them, leads them astray, or forces them from his path.



CHRIS MARTINEZ

THE HERPEMANCER

AKA CHARMERS, VIPERS

You understand that humans carry a reptile brain, and know how to tap into its power. You follow the twists and turns of the snake through ecology and mythology, and summon magick from its coils. You understand the true gift of the Serpent in Eden: transformation, and you desire to transform humanity — starting with yourself.

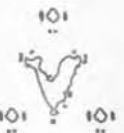
Herpemancy came into being as a crossbreeding of religious “sign followers” or “snake handlers” in the American South, mystical practitioners of yoga obsessed with kundalini, the entertainments of snake charmers on the Bombay streets, cracked neuroscientists researching the limbic system, and the terrible (and nearly universal) fascination with snakes.

The complex paradox of Herpemancy arises from poisons that cure, and strength that comes from yielding. So it is written for you generation of vipers.

Herpemancers gain charges from handling snakes: that is, absorbing from and relating to a creature that is the focus and symbol of life, death, resurrection, fear, temptation, wisdom, and evil. To a Christian, the serpent is death, the Devil, and darkness. To the old Greeks, the Pythian sun god Apollo blessed physicians and oracles. To most people, this would seem a contradiction. To a Viper, it's all part of the grand Ouroboros cycle.

Charmers have a reputation (earned or not) for personal degeneracy and vast, dark appetites in stark opposition to their *inter-personal* righteousness and passion in aiding others. They are martyrs, intercessors, healers, and mediators — but not ones who should be trusted too far. Does someone who can stand for everything really stand for anything? Maybe, maybe not, but in any event he's probably a fine diplomat.

Herpemancers, being concerned with cycles and opposites and grand unifications, tend



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towards a certain chill aloofness. It's hard to be a passionate partisan when you see each side as part of a bigger whole. But their very fascination with that gestalt can lead them to a deep understanding — and with it, deep compassion for flaws — that the more ideologically “pure” may overlook.

Yet for all their apparent distance, they possess one thing that draws human conflict like a magnet: power. Herpemancers can display qualities ascribed to snakes in a number of mythologies, and capabilities uncovered through science.

HERPEMANCY BLAST STYLE

Vipers lack a blast *per se* — but they have many alternatives when it comes to messing people up.

STATS

Generate a Minor Charge: Handle and/or study a snake. Every hour spent in contemplation of a serpent generates a minor charge.

Generate a Significant Charge: Acquire a snake of a type you currently don't own. Deliberately get bitten by a poisonous snake and suffer the results without magickal or medical interference.

Generate a Major Charge: Get bitten by a poisonous snake, die, and come back to life, all through non-magickal means. (Given the state of modern medical science, resuscitation from heart failure is more common than it was. It's still a bitch, though.) Note that the snake must *bite* — dosing oneself with a carefully measured quantity of venom won't do it.

Taboo: The Herpemancer must honor and respect all snakes. Harming a snake, saying something bad about snakes, or even hearing someone say “eeeww, they're so *slimy*” without correcting them can all cost an adept his charges. So can mistreating a snake, although harmlessly provoking a snake to strike at you for charging purposes is fine.

Random Magick Domain: Herpemancy can poison or heal, renew or preserve, clarify or confuse.

Starting Charges: Newly created Herpemancers have four minor charges.

HERPEMANCY MINOR FORMULA SPELLS

STRENGTH OF JORMUNGANDR

Cost: 1 minor charge

Effect: This spell duplicates the Epideromancy spell *The Flesh is My Servant* (see UA2, p. 134), granting a +10% shift to Body or Speed until the next time the character sleeps. Wound Points are not increased by this spell.

ALL TONGUES ARE FORKED

Cost: 1 minor charge

Effect: For a minor charge, the viper may comprehend the basic gist of what someone is trying to communicate to him, regardless of language. However, only the most general of concepts may be transmitted — if someone is asking him for chorizo in Spanish, he grasps that they're talking about “food” or “meat.” Spending one additional minor charges adds clarity to the communication (“Oh, you want sausage!”); spending a significant charge in addition to the initial minor one allows the adept to have full two-way communication with a single target for fifteen minutes.

VENOM

Cost: 2 minor charges

Effect: By looking at his intended target and hissing, the Viper strikes the victim's body as if by potent poison. It does no damage, but forces a Body roll. The result of the poison depends on the result of this roll.

Fumble: Instant death.

Matched Failure: Target takes a -40% shift to Body and Speed. If this drops Body to zero, the target goes into a coma. If it drops Body below zero, the target dies.

Failure: Target takes a -30% shift to Body and Speed. This lasts for a number of minutes equal to the casting roll. If this drops Body to zero or below, the target is unconscious until the spell wears off.

Success: Target takes a -20% penalty to Body and Speed. This lasts for a number of combat rounds equal to the casting roll. If this drops Body to zero or below, the target is unconscious until the spell wears off.

Matched Success: Target takes a -10% penalty to Body and Speed for the next round. If this drops Body to zero or below, the target is unconscious until the spell wears off.

Crit: No effect at all.

Remember that no skill can be higher than its governing stat, so these stat penalties often result in skill penalties as well.

The poison also produces nausea, sore muscles, heart palpitations, dizziness and loss of energy. In a combat situation, adrenaline allows the victim to compensate for these discomforts. They don't give penalties to Mind and Soul rolls but might (at the GM's discretion) make minor skill checks into significant ones, and significant checks into majors.

FEEL THE HEAT

Cost: 2 minor charges

Effect: By casting this spell, the charmer gains the ability to sense heat, like some pit vipers do. It allows the adept to operate reasonably well in the dark, since they can discern differences in temperature between living objects, inanimate objects, and air. However, this sense is nowhere near as snazzy as thermographic imaging is in the movies; input is limited to sensing outlines ranked in levels of "hot," "warm," "cool," and "cold."

SMELLING THE STENCH OF DEATH

Cost: 3 minor charges

Effect: This spell allows the viper to discern the presence of dead spirits, including demons currently possessing living bodies, until the next time he sleeps. This presence is sensed in the form of strong and obviously unnatural odors, which may serve as a clue to the type of spirit lurking: Snowfallen may smell of winter and pine, demons of ozone and indicators of their driving obsession, ghouls of rot and myrrh, etc.

PYTHIAN VISION

Cost: 4 minor charges

Effect: Gain a hazy vision of the future as it relates to a single thing: a question asked, an object touched, or a person present. While such prophecies are not completely infallible, they can often grant useful information. Unfortunately, use of this spell binds the adept to the future: the roll made to cast this spell serves as a hunch (see UA2, p. 7) when the future seen in the vision comes to pass. If the vision does not include the adept, the hunch roll is applied to any action by the adept at the same moment that the vision comes true.

Example: Jane invokes a Pythian Vision (successful roll at 44) and asks, "How do we get into Dirk Allen's apartment?" The answer comes back as "Climb," showing a vision of her and her friends scaling the wall. When Jane attempts the climb, she must use that 44 for her attempt — and with her General Athletics skill of 35%, that's a matched failure.

HERPEMANCY SIGNIFICANT FORMULA SPELLS

CADUCEUS

Cost: 1 significant charge

Effect: Named after the medical symbol (a wand wreathed in snakes) this spell heals physical injury or illness. The skin of the target immediately begins peeling. Within twelve hours it all peels off. (As an added advantage, the skin beneath is smooth and soft, like after a good facial at a spa.) Injuries come off like a pair of gloves, restoring a number of Wound Points equal to the sum of the adept's roll. (That is, if you roll a 27, you heal 9 points of damage.)

While the spell isn't that great at setting bones and mending gashes, it works pretty well at renewing health. Minor illnesses — stuff that the patient would probably recover from eventually like measles, the flu, migraines and such — just go poof, instantly. Serious illnesses such



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as chronic emphysema or multiple sclerosis become about half as severe. They aren't gone, but they're a lot more tolerable. Life-threatening diseases like late stage cancer or full-blown AIDS with complications stabilize immediately and get marginally better. For serious stuff like that, this spell is probably worth another month of life.

THE CIRCLE OF OUROBOROS

Cost: 1 significant charge

Effect: The adept draws a circle in the air with his index finger while casting this spell and one person within the circle's boundaries — as seen from the adept's point of view — is frozen in time. He does not move, speak, think, age, or change. He is unaffected by any mundane or magickal force for the duration of the spell, which lasts a number of minutes equal to the spell roll. The viper can cancel the Circle of Ouroboros at any time. If anyone else encounters the frozen person and realizes he's in such a strange state, it's a rank-5 Unnatural check.

For each additional significant charge you spend when casting the spell, you can affect an additional target within the same circle. If there are more targets in your designated circle than you can affect, you pick which ones are frozen.

People inside the circle do not perceive any passage of time. It works just like the "missing time" unnatural phenomenon described in UA2, p. 299.

SERPENT'S KISS

Cost: 1 significant charge

Effect: This attack spell sickens the target with an illness that reflects his worst fear. The result of Serpent's Kiss varies, depending on which gauge the victim's Fear passion strikes. Each effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to the sum of the spell roll.

Violence: Target's Body drops by an amount equal to the roll, rounded down. (That is, if the spell roll is 57, the target's body drops 50 points.) If the target's Body drops to zero or below, he passes out until the spell ends.

Unnatural: Target begins throwing up things he did not swallow. The ejected material varies widely but could include caterpillars, needles, small doll heads, used Band-Aids, pages from the *Enuma Elish*, small glass beads, guitar picks, or anything else small enough to reasonably swallow. This precludes the target from speaking or taking any action other than dodging. The effect probably provokes an Unnatural check as well, of course.

Helplessness: Target begins to shake uncontrollably, reducing his Speed stat by an amount equal to the roll, rounded down. (It's just like the Violence effect, only on a different stat.) If the target's Speed drops to zero or below then he is incapacitated, trembling on the ground.

Isolation: Target is struck blind.

Self: Target falls asleep and can not be awakened.

THE LIDLESS EYE

Cost: 1 significant charge

Effect: For one week, the Herpemancer does not need to sleep or blink. She still needs 4–6 hours of physical rest per day, but this can be had watching TV or reading in bed. She suffers no perceptual, psychological, or physical problems from this.

Note that talking to an unblinking person for more than about a half minute is extraordinarily creepy. It entitles the other person to a major Notice check to spot this subtle, but extremely unnerving aberration. If she realizes she's speaking to someone who hasn't blinked yet is a rank-1 Unnatural stress check.

An unblinking person gets a +20% bonus any time he tries to intimidate someone, as long as the intimidation target has had time for the gaze to sink in.

A viper using this spell *can* blink if he chooses. It just has to be a conscious decision.

THE DANCE OF THE HUNGER OF KAA

Cost: 2 significant charges

Effect: The charmer undulates his hands in a particular fashion, spends the charges, and

meets the eyes of his intended victims. This spell can only be cast on those whose Soul *and* Mind scores are each lower than the Soul stat of the caster. Other than that caveat, it can affect up to fifteen people who can see the gestures.

All the affected targets are motionless, fascinated by the viper's wiggling fingers — though if anyone hurts or attacks them, the spell is broken. This effect lasts three rounds, or until the adept stops undulating. Each round the adept may attempt a verbal suggestion to one affected person, or just stay quiet and keep them all dazed.

The Dance of the Hunger of Kaa works like hypnosis from a '50s B-movie. However, the target can only be forced to do something he is capable of — if the GM decides that someone is spiritually incapable of eating a puppy dog, he won't be able to follow the command but does remain dazed.

The target can choose to resist a command. If so, he makes a rank-10 Helplessness check. If the check succeeds, he resists the command but remains dazed. If the check fails, he resists the command and breaks free of the spell entirely. Either way, the normal effects of a madness check apply.

There are some limitations on the charmer when using The Dance of the Hunger of Kaa. For the duration of the enchantment, he must be standing and wiggling his fingers at the target. No movement other than a slow walk is possible. Suggestions must be posed as short and simple statements describing a single physical action. Acceptable examples include: "Step closer to me," "Close your eyes tightly," "Tell me the password," or "Draw your weapon." Unacceptable examples include: "Break taboo" (but a simple, specific order that accomplishes the same thing would be fine), "Kill the next person who walks into the room" (no conditional statements allowed), "Fall in love with me" (but "Say you love me" would be fine), or "Empty your gun and hand it to me" (this could be broken into two actions in two successive rounds).

Example: Pete has successfully cast the spell (with a 25) on Violet. He suggests that she aim the gun she has drawn at Jeeter. She does so. He tells her to fire. She chooses to resist, triggering a rank-10 Helplessness check. She fails the check, which resists the command and breaks the spell, but she gets a failed notch on her Helplessness meter and now must choose between panic, paralysis, and frenzy.

I AM BECOME TYPHON

Cost: 3 significant charges

Effect: Sometimes you just gotta transform into a giant snake. This is the spell for those times. When cast, the Herpemancer physically changes into a twenty-foot long serpent of unidentified type — often a chimera serpent combining the features of cobras, boa constrictors, diamondbacks, or other snakes of which the Herpemancer is personally fond. It is a gestalt magickal form rather than a purely natural one.

While in ophidian form, the Viper has Body 70 and Speed 70 (unless his own stats are higher, in which case he may use those). He gains the Initiative skill at 35% and the Bite skill at 60% (and, again, if his own Initiative or Struggle skills are higher, they may be used instead). The bite from the giant snake does damage like a firearm, maximum damage 50. Furthermore, anyone bitten is affected the next round as if the Herpemancer had successfully cast Venom (see p. 100).

Any damage taken as a snake is still there when the Viper changes back.

The spell lasts a number of rounds equal to the ones place of the casting roll.

SHED YOUR SKIN

Cost: 4 significant charges

Effect: The Herpemancer immediately becomes ten years younger — physically. She splits her old skin open and sloughs it off like a jumpsuit, revealing a younger body within. All current physical wounds are healed completely. There



is no skill or stat change, except in cases of permanent body damage such as lost limbs, scars, or missing eyes. Those forms of damage are healed and any permanent cost to stats is recovered, provided that the damage is no more than ten years old.

HERPEMANCY MAJOR EFFECTS

Gain an extra life. Heal any illness or wound. Reset someone's age to prime youth. Permanently change sex. Kill instantly with a touch. Increase Body, Speed, or Soul permanently.

WHAT YOU HEAR: THE HERPEMANCER

An unknown viper in Boston has formalized a spell that allows him to swallow large things whole, and cough them up — mostly unharmed — up to a day later. He walked into a secure building, killed a federal judge, hid the evidence by swallowing the body, and blithely walked out to cough up the corpse into the Harbor.



CHRIS MARTINEZ

THE GEOMANCER

AKA DECORATORS, BULLDOZERS

You feel the pulse of the world under the works of man. The dead earth lives only by virtue of the life-support system of civil engineering. Without man, there's no power; without landscape, there's no place to stand. You look on the works of the mighty, and bring despair — to your foes.

Geomancy, strictly speaking, refers to a form of divination through scattering pebbles, seeds, clumps of dirt, or grains of sand on the earth and then interpreting their shape and position, much like the *I Ching*. Some of the underlying thoughts then synergized with Kabbalistic gematria and Pythagorean, Platonic, and Agrippan mystic math to form the basis of Sacred Geometry. Later, the term came to be associated with Chinese *feng shui*, where the locations and orientations of houses, businesses, and tombs were balanced to mystically “fit” the topography of the landscape. Even later, the “dragon current” of *feng shui* got wrapped up with ley lines via Dion Fortune and John Michell, transforming the prehistoric “trading routes” of Alfred Watkins into pseudo-magnetic lines of occult force. All the modern New Agey jibber-jabber is about bringing “heaven-luck” (fate, destiny, or karma) into balance and proportion with “earth-luck” (the energy of a place) and producing “man-luck” (magick).

So close, yet so far.

Geomancy is not about balancing the order of the cosmos to provide energy; Geomancy is about *imposing* order on the cosmos and drawing energy out of the discordant “static” generated by the differences in state. Magick is created by the interactions between people and artificial structures. The Limit is what gives form to — and takes power from — the Unlimited. That is the paradox of the school: to be free, one must be restricted.

Geomancy is based on disruptions of the earth caused by civilization: roads and high-



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ways, excavations, monuments, graveyards, tunnels, public works, urban construction. Anything that changes or binds the landscape into a new form — physically, psychologically, or socially — is key. Here is where Alfred Watkins was closer to being right than his successors: the power of ley lines comes from the fact that they were *created* by humans, rather than some occult power of the landscape itself.

Geomancers are useless in natural terrain. In altered terrain, they can garner charges, and the more profoundly disturbed the earth is — like Hoover Dam, or the Chunnel, or the Paris Sewers — the more they can get. Especially if living human beings are moving along, inside, or through that altered terrain.

There is a division in this school between those who focus on subterranean power (Deep Geomancers), and those who associate with summits and other elevated places (High Geomancers), but that's just a matter of personal preference and internal politics.

Cliomancers and Urbanomancers tend to hate Geomancers just as much as they despise each other. If a decorator charges up off of a structure that's a suitable Cliomancy site (or is part of an Urbanomancer's Turf), he's rubbing the cobweb farmer's (or rat's) rhubarb. They look down on that sort of thing — sometimes over the sights of a gun.

GEOMANCY BLAST STYLE

Geomancy has no blast.

STATS

Generate a Minor Charge: Spend an hour meditating in a deep or high structure. Spend two hours participating in a moving human system (like a riding on a subway train, driving on a freeway, or taking part in a volunteer blood drive). You can also gain a minor charge by redecorating a room in accordance with your private mystic principles. You must spend at least three hours on this project, and you can't do it in a room where you were the last person to decorate it.

Generate a Significant Charge: Visit a famous deep or high man-made place: the Western Deep Mine in South Africa, the Empire State Building, the Chunnel, *etc.* You can only hold one charge from one such location at a time. For instance, if you take the Chunnel to France, you have your Chunnel charge and can't get another Chunnel charge until you use that one. If you go to Paris and get a Metro sig, you can't get another charge from the Metro until you've spent the one you have. If you cast a spell with your Metro charge, you can immediately ride the Metro again and get one Metro charge.

Alternately, you can organize over 100 people to perform a construction task that brings order to chaos: a Clean Up the Streets litter-picking event, a big Habitat for Humanity project, or restoring a neglected historical building.

You also get a significant charge any time a house is built to your *exact* specifications — meaning you designed it, laid out the landscaping, chose the exact paint shades for each wall in each room, decided on all the furniture, and had it placed precisely. You don't have to build it yourself.

Generate a Major Charge: Go deeper or higher than anyone has before, but only on or within artificial or altered terrain; the bottom of the Marianas Trench doesn't count, but the deepest mine shaft ever dug by humans would. Create an organization of more than 100,000 people, focused on one structure-building task.

Taboo: Geomancers must remain on man-made or man-altered terrain, or lose all charges. That means sidewalks, highways, buildings, tunnels, *etc.* A Geomancer could walk on a man-made beach and swim in an artificial lake, but the real thing would taboo him. (Landscaped lawns and parks are permissible, since they've obviously been changed by human endeavor.)

Random Magick Domain: Geomancy is good for manipulating structures, physical or social, and dealing with the metaphorical underworld: death and the dead, rebirth, limits, and rules.

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Starting Charges: Bulldozers start with 4 minor charges.

GEOMANCY MINOR FORMULA SPELLS

WHITE TIGER

Cost: 1 minor charge

Effect: White Tiger takes energy away from the target and dumps it into the nearest human structure or system. This weakens the target for a number of rounds equal to the sum of the Geomancy roll, and also has some mild effect on the receiving structure or system — a building's lights brighten, a subway train rides smoother, a patch of asphalt heats up, or the traffic lights on a city street cascade perfectly in sync with traffic flow.

While affected by this spell, the target takes a -20 penalty to Speed and Body. If this drops either stat to zero or less, the victim falls unconscious for the duration of the spell.

I'M ONE OF YOU!

Cost: 1 minor charge

Effect: Make the target believe you're a member of his or her organization. The caster is perceived as one of the rank and file — that is, a private rather than a captain — and the effect lasts ten minutes, or until the adept messes up enough to be caught.

CIRCLES IN THE SAND

Cost: 2 minor charges

Effect: Fussy decorators call this spell Archimedes' Folly. (When the Roman general Marcellus captured Syracuse, he expressly ordered that the life of Archimedes be protected. A Roman soldier, sent to fetch the scientist, found him drawing circles in the sand. Engrossed in his work, Archimedes ignored the summons and told the soldier to wait, murmuring, "Don't disturb my circles." This ticked off the soldier, who whacked the supercilious bastard.) Simply, it's divination by drawing circles on the ground. With a successful roll, the Geomancer can glean a short, one-word answer to a ques-

tion they pose. (No doubt Archimedes was asking how to get rid of Marcellus, and needed to cast this spell a whole bunch of times to get a comprehensible answer, when he was rudely interrupted by a sword blade through the guts.)

LUOPAN IN A CAN

Cost: 2 minor charges

Effect: Feng shui masters employ a circular magnetic compass, called a *luopan*, which possesses surrounding rings containing data relating to astrology, directions, elements, landscape forms, times of day, and so on. The device helps to locate fortuitous and harmonious sites. Under the influence of this spell, the bulldozer becomes a *luopan*, and can "dowse" the strongest or weakest point (decided at casting) of any structure. Depending upon the structure and how "strongest" and "weakest" are interpreted, this could lead the decorator to an unlocked door, a loose-lipped security guard, or a hidden safe. A structure can be a physical or social one, so the *luopan* could find a traitor in a spy ring. The spell lasts for one hour or until the desired point is found, whichever comes first.

THE WOE OF THE INFERNAL BUREAUCRACY

Cost: 3 minor charges

Effect: The target of this curse becomes a magnet for bureaucratic unpleasantness. Audits, subpoenas, eminent domain hearings, poorly-timed requests to read his meter, interruption of his cable or internet service — this spell won't deal out *all* that, but probably some of it. Furthermore, when dealing with people in their roles as agents of a bureaucracy (that is, while contesting that speeding ticket or trying to get his property re-zoned) the victim has a -20% penalty to all skills based on personal persuasion. Everyone perceives him as an idiot and a crank who can't explain himself properly and is probably wrong about everything.

The spell lasts a number of days equal to the sum of the roll.



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VESICA PISCES

Cost: 4 minor charges

Effect: A *Vesica Pisces* is created by the intersection of two identical circles, the circumference of one cutting through the center of the other. The oval-shaped space thus created is called the *Vesica Pisces*: a symbolic “common ground” or “shared vision” between equals. It’s also symbolic of the eye and the vulva: communication and generation. The Geomancers have taken it to the next level. This spell creates a temporary “level playing field” for direct and truthful communication. The magick makes it extremely difficult for anyone, including the caster, to lie (a -20% shift to Lie or false Charm attempts) in a ten-foot radius around the spot where the decorator cast the spell. This effect lasts for fifteen minutes. Furthermore, anyone who manages to successfully lie or misrepresent herself within that area takes her roll as melee damage as interior scalding.

GEOMANCY SIGNIFICANT FORMULA SPELLS**BLUE DRAGON**

Cost: 1 significant charge

Effect: Blue Dragon takes energy away from the nearest human structure or system and dumps it into the target. This adds sudden speed and unexpected strength to the target, but not in a happy way. Instead of turning into Bruce Lee, it’s more like being Jerry Lewis. Every movement is clumsy and exaggerated, wild and flailing (though fueled by unusual strength if it *does* work out). In game terms, every roll for a physical action is doubled. That is, if Pierce is under the influence of this spell and rolls a 31 while trying to hit someone, that roll becomes a 62. If Pierce has a Struggle skill of 62 or higher, he still hits, and hits hard. But if his skill is 50%, a strike that would have hit becomes a klutzy miss.

This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to the Geomancy roll; for that period of time, the closest man-made structure or system loses energy — a building’s lights dim, a

subway train rides rougher and slower, a patch of asphalt becomes freezing cold, or the traffic lights on a city street all turn red, causing a massive jam.

CURSE OF THE THRASHING DRAGON

Cost: 2 significant charges

Effect: On the surface, the idea of driving an invisible car is an attractive one. But when one actually considers what it *means* to have every driver around you unaware of your presence, well, it’s another matter.

In essence, that is the effect of the Curse of the Thrashing Dragon. Any time the cursed person enters a car, synchronic traffic trouble squeezes in on every side as if he and the car weren’t there — while at the same time, the drivers around him have a far greater chance of simply overlooking him until it’s too late.

In game terms, all Drive rolls made by the driver of a car with the target in it are knocked up to the next level of difficulty. Trivial driving actions are made as minor skill checks. Minor skill checks become significant, significant become major and *major* checks — hoo boy. When someone burdened by this spell would normally have to make a major check, she attempts the check but only succeeds with a crit or a matched success.

The Curse of the Thrashing Dragon lasts 24 hours, which is often enough to put the target in the hospital. Each additional significant charge spent on the spell increases its duration by a day.

Note that if the target is in a car wreck and goes to the hospital, the ambulance suffers the same effect. And then the ambulance after that one. And so on.

THE GOLDEN BOUGH RATIO RULE

Cost: 1 significant charge

Effect: This spell conflates the classical Golden Bough (used by Aeneas to descend to the Underworld and return), Frazerian concepts of death and rebirth, the Golden Ratio (*i.e.* the golden mean, the phi ratio, the golden section, the

divine proportion, used in art and architecture — not to mention Fibonacci ratios in biology! — for millennia, which symbolically links each new generation to its ancestors), and the Golden Rule (“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”) to temporarily summon and bind a Revenant (see UA2, p. 305). Provided that the Geomancer provides a little *quid pro quo* for the unquiet dead (the traditional offering is a dish of sheep’s blood, but who knows what these modern spirits want — you’ll have to ask), the restless spirit answers a question of two in their area of expertise before returning to their usual haunts (or not).

SQUARING THE CIRCLE

Cost: 2 significant charges

Effect: The square represents the physical; the circle, the spiritual. To square the circle (create a square with a perimeter equal to the circumference of a circle) seems to be impossible; however, the bulldozers have done it metaphorically. When a Geomancer casts Squaring the Circle, he adds his Body and Soul stats together and uses the resulting number in place of those stats for three combat turns or five non-combat minutes. If Marcy has a Body of 40 and a Soul of 60, after invoking this spell, both stats become 100 for the duration. Note that you could then take wound point damage exceeding your true Body score, killing you the moment the spell ends.

ORPHEUS GEAS

Cost: 3 significant charges

Effect: Under the effects of this spell, a mystical, logical proposition can be constructed as an If-Then statement, which becomes a binding oath. “If you do not look back until you exit the station, *then* I will not attack.” All targets (including the caster) must agree to the terms of the proposition and the caster spends the charges. If there are any hold-outs, the spell fails, but the charges aren’t lost. Breaking the pact triggers a rank-10 check against the Unnatural, followed by a rank-6 check against Self.

THIS IS MY HAPPY PLACE

Cost: 3 significant charges

Effect: In addition to expending the charges, the designer must take complete control of every aspect of a room’s appearance — painting the walls, putting up pictures, choosing and arranging the furnishings. When completed, the room is harmoniously aligned. All who enter feel calm, relaxed, and at peace. The room retains these qualities until it is substantially changed. Moving the sofa an inch or two wouldn’t count, but once a piece of furniture moves more than a foot from its place, the spell is broken — even when the chair or credenza or whatever is put back.

Anyone who tries to hurt someone else in a Happy Place suffers a Violence check equal in rank to the tens place of the caster’s skill. So someone with Geomancy 37% can cause a rank-3 Violence check.

Furthermore, when someone has faced a stress check (regardless of whether they’ve failed or succeeded) they can go to a Happy Place for emotional adjustment. As long as they get there within 24 hours, they can attempt to come to grips with their experience by meditating for one hour in the Happy Place. They get to make a single roll after this meditation session. If it comes up lower than the caster’s Geomancy skill, the hardened or failed notch is erased.

BLUE LEY WAY

Cost: 4 significant charges

Effect: By stepping into or onto a man-made structure — such as a building, subway station, or highway — and spending four significant charges, the decorator can instantly translate himself along the human “ley line” a distance equal to the sum of his Geomancy skill level in stories (for buildings), stations (for subways), or miles (for streets or highways), in any direction, so long as the endpoint is still within the same type of structure utilized. So if Juan has a Geomancy skill of 43%, he can teleport 7 stories, 7 subway stations, or 7 miles. The tele-



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port is graceful enough to make adjustments for elevation, but not to put you clear of, say, oncoming traffic or witnesses. Due to the high charge cost, not to mention the dangers concomitant with disappearing into and reappearing out of thin air, few bulldozers use this spell.

GEOMANCY MAJOR EFFECTS

Raise a fallen structure of any size. Restore life to a recently-dead body. Control an entire transportation system. Create an underground Otherspace. Hide an entire skyscraper so that only you and your friends know it's there.

WHAT YOU HEAR: THE GEOMANCER

A High Geomancer named Boris Shelby has claimed the Space Needle in Seattle as his own, pissing off the local Cliomancer and Urbanomancer — who have teamed up to put the decorator on ice. Thus far they've been unsuccessful, mostly due to Boris' marshalling a cadre of the city's revenants into an astral "strike team" through judicious use of the Golden Bough Ratio Rule. The two dukes find themselves confounded by a succession of astral parasites, singing Snowfallen, and leering Carnals.



MATT HARPOLD

THE LOYAL LABORER

Attributes: The Loyal Laborer works, not for reward or recognition, but because toil is in his nature. She does not expect her extraordinary efforts to be commended, though if they are she is pleased. But she does not consider it her *due*. The only thing she considers her due is the work that gives her life purpose.

The Loyal Laborer began as a Chinese concept, and this figure of selfless effort is still found there in greater numbers than anywhere else. While many Loyal Laborers begin as zealots, willing to strive for the greater good of the cause (whatever the cause is), at its apex the Loyal Laborer achieves a kind of enlightened selflessness. To the finest example of the Loyal Laborer, it does not *matter* whether his work even accomplishes anything. The work itself is what matters.

Taboos: The Loyal Laborer can never be lazy. He can never steal from or sabotage his employer. By the same token, he can never distinguish himself by cleverness or innovation. His designated role is tireless, unceasing, obedient work.

Symbols: The horse, with collar. The worker ant. All manual tools represent the Loyal Laborer, but particularly the shovel and pick. Coolie hats have been associated with the Loyal Laborer since antiquity. A more modern version might be associated with the lunch pail and time clock. Work clothes are always appropriate — hard hats, coveralls, and heavy boots all contribute.

Suspected Avatars in History: Occultists claim that they can tell the real Avatars by what they left behind them. Surely a now-nameless Avatar helped raise the sarsens of Stonehenge, or dragged limestone blocks for the Great Pyramid, or filled the rubble in the Great Wall of China. They say that for millennia a true Avatar of the Loyal Laborer by definition remained nameless. Only with the creation of a loyal laborer better even than an Avatar — the machine — did the Avatar perforce



take on an identity, such as that of the railroad tunnel-cutter John Henry (whose legend points up this shift in the archetype's nature), Joe Magarac, the legendary Bohemian-American steel-worker, or Alexei Stakhanov, the coal miner who Soviet propaganda made the literal synonym for overwork for its own sake. Perhaps the sewn-on name patches ("EARL") and plastic tags ("Hello I'm SUSAN") dotting American workplaces serve to anchor this anonymous worker-ant archetype more solidly in its uncomfortable individuality.

Masks: The Cyclopes (Greek), the Dwarves (Norse and German), the Shoemaker's Elves (British folklore), the Zombis (Voudun). Since 1870, any or all of the "worker legends" mentioned as possible historical avatars might also serve as masks.

Channels:

1-50%: Whenever a Loyal Laborer is cooperating with others on a project or activity, their skill is increased by an amount equal to the totaled digits of the Avatar's Loyal Laborer score.

Example: Doctors Hollins and O'Brien are operating. Nurse Liebgold assists. Liebgold has Avatar: Loyal Laborer at 48%. The medical skills of both doctors are increased by (4+8) 12%. If Liebgold's Loyal Laborer skill was 70%, their skills would be increased by 17%.

51-70%: The avatar may use his Loyal Laborer skill percentage in the place of any mundane, legal, salaried skill or trade. This cannot be used for artistic, combat, or athletic skills. Only industrial or technological knowledge can be mimicked.

71-90%: If a Loyal Laborer has undertaken an industrial task as part of his job, he automatically succeeds at all Body, Speed, and Mind rolls while he is engaged in that task. (This includes madness checks.) This does *not* mean he succeeds at all *skill* checks for Mind, Speed or Body skills. But simple stat rolls, and significant skill rolls, are automatically aced.

Note that an "industrial task" means building something, or tearing something down, or cleaning something, *et cetera*. "I'ma go kill Big Louie" is not an industrial task.

91+%: At this level, the avatar no longer needs to sleep or eat, though he may do either if he chooses.

FAMILIARS

DOG

There are a lot of advantages to having a dog as a familiar, not the least being that no one thinks twice about a guy talking to his dog, hauling him around everywhere, or even hugging him. Also, compared to a lot of other familiars, dogs tend to be a bit bigger, more robust, and harder for your rivals to casually kill. On the other hand, animal control officers spend a lot more time chasing loose dogs than they do worrying about birds, bats, or toads.

Dogs have Body in the 10–30% range. (Bull mastiffs and Irish wolfhounds can be substantially bigger, but familiars are almost always mutts.) Familiar dogs have a Bite skill equal to their Body score. Their Speed ranges between 30%–60%, and they have a Dodge skill equal to Speed. Initiative is typically around 30%. They also have Notice 70% for aromas and 40% for everything else.

RAVEN

Having a big black bird as your familiar is a little more impressive than some slobbering mutt. Not only can ravens fly, they can also talk — albeit in a croaking, unpleasant fashion. You're not going to get Hamlet's soliloquy out of your familiar, no matter how smart it is, because forcing human words out of a bird throat is hard work. They can handle about two syllables at a time, which is still cool if the syllables are "look out," for example.

Ravens have Body scores between 8–15%, and a Peck skill equal to their Body. (The Peck does +3 damage because the beak is pointy.)

A raven's Speed score is something around 55–70%, with equivalent Dodge and Initiative skills. They have a Notice skill around 40%.

SERPENT

Another familiar with a high cool factor, a well-used snake can definitely crank up its master's Threaten And Intimidate skill. Unfortunately, they're kind of slow, not too tough, and you never wind up with a poison one.

The snakes that become familiars tend to be common milk snakes or garter snakes, rarely more than eighteen inches long. Their Body scores tend towards the level of 10% with a matching Bite skill, but they don't even have the fangs to get through a modestly tough jean jacket. They have a Speed stat around 50%, but Dodge and Initiative skills of 25–30%. However, being small, silent, and mostly odorless, they can be considered to have a Stealth skill of 60–70%. Coupled with a Notice of 45% or so, they're pretty good spies.

CAT

What Wiccan wannabe hasn't stroked a feline named "Graymalkin" and fantasized about abusing mystic power for personal gain or vengeance? Well, there's probably a few, but the cat/witch dichotomy is still a tight one. Not all familiar cats are black, either.

Cats tend towards Body scores between 8–15%, with an equivalent Bite skill. Their Speed is typically far greater — somewhere between 60–80%, with matching Dodge and Initiative skills. (Yes, they really do land on their feet.) Their Stealth skill is around 40–50%, and their Notice skill is around 50%, even in low light. On the other hand, they do hate to get wet.

RAT

Sturdy, able to eat nearly anything and survive nearly anywhere, the common black rat lacks the panache of the raven or cat. But for creep-out factor, it's second only to the snake.

Rats have a Body between 10–15%, despite their small size. They have a matching

Bite skill that doesn't do a lot of damage, but is almost guaranteed to infect the target with something repulsive. Rats also recover from any non-lethal injury in two weeks, maximum. Their Speed is somewhere in the 50–60% range, with matching Dodge and Stealth skills. Initiative is in the 30% area. Their Notice skill is up around 45–55% as well. As icing on the cake, they're immune to just about every form of poisoning short of .22 caliber lead.

BAT

Bats are basically anorexic, sky-borne rats with less attitude. Their Body score lurks around the 5–10% range, and they really don't have any attack skill. On the other hand, their Speed is up around 65–85%, with a sonar-powered Dodge score to match. Initiative is an impressive 60–70%. Their Notice score is 70% for shapes and sounds, but only 5% for colors, letters, or anything else you have to look at.

The big disadvantage to a bat as a familiar is that they can't do anything useful during the daytime. Sorry: Once that sun comes up, they're snoozing. They might get out of the way if someone swings a ball bat, but even then their Dodge and Speed are halved.

TOAD

Toads are really at the bottom of the familiar animal food chain. They're slow, easy to kill and vaguely ridiculous on top of it. On the other hand, if the climate is wet and mucky, no one thinks twice about seeing a toad hopping around, and they're certainly unlikely to register high on anyone's "threat priority" list.

Toads have a Body around 5% and a Speed score of 20% with matching Dodge and Initiative. However, if the toad happens to be underwater, its Speed, Dodge and Initiative are all *tripled*. So that's something. Their Notice skill is around 50%, and they have a Stealth skill of 40%.

MULTIPLE FAMILIARS

Traditionally, familiars are one to a customer,



but your spunky modern enchanter often has little regard for tradition. If you want, you can use the ritual once a month and conjure up a dozen familiars a year. Knock yourself out. The only limits on how many you can get are...

- 1) Keeping them all fed. (Each new familiar necessitates the growth of a new devil's teat. They won't share.)
- 2) The success rate of the ritual.
- 3) Keeping your familiars from killing one another. They tend to be very jealous of their masters' attention, and the rivalry between familiars generally gets bloody pretty quick.

GOIN' TO THE PET SEMETERY

Mortality rates among familiars can be pretty high. After all, the occult underground is not known for its tolerant attitudes, and the cops often have bigger problems than finding the sicko who strangled Ms. Earthglow's kitty cat. When a familiar animal dies, its master suffers from a psychic backlash. In rules-talk, this takes the form of a rank-6 Unnatural challenge. If the bond has had years to establish, this backlash can be stronger, or could require checks on the Self, Isolation, or Helplessness meters as well.

ADVANCED FAMILIARS

What follows is some inside information about familiar animals. If you're just starting out playing UA, please don't read it. (Unless you're the GM, of course. There are no secrets from the GM). If you've played for a long time and are getting jaded, you might want to check out the section on Familiar PCs, but it's not an attractive option for power gamers. Trust us.

Okay? Well then, here's the straight dope.

It should come as no surprise to experienced occultists that all is not as it appears. "Familiar spirits" aren't some kind of dissociated animal totems. They're the uneasy

remnants of once-human souls, trapped by obsession into plaguing the material world.

That's right: all familiars are demons who have possessed normal animals. Which doesn't mean they still can't do an admirable job as an animal sidekick. It just means they've got their own agenda, and that they're going to try to use their purported "master" just as much as he uses them.

If your players manage to find the Ritual of Familiarity, they can get a familiar. When this happens, make sure to secretly note down what the familiar/demon's obsession is. Make this good: it has to be a drive so powerful that it can pry a soul away from its eternal destiny. "Finishing the *Times* Sunday crossword" doesn't really cut it.

It helps to give each familiar (or any other demon your PCs stumble across) a particular sin. After all, *any* impulse so powerful that it leads one to violate the natural order is probably sinful. To make this a bit simpler, we're going to use the Bible as a guideline. (Hah! Throw *that* in the face of all those people who say RPGs are "Satanic"! Each of the seven deadly sins is generally associated with one of the seven classes of familiar animal.

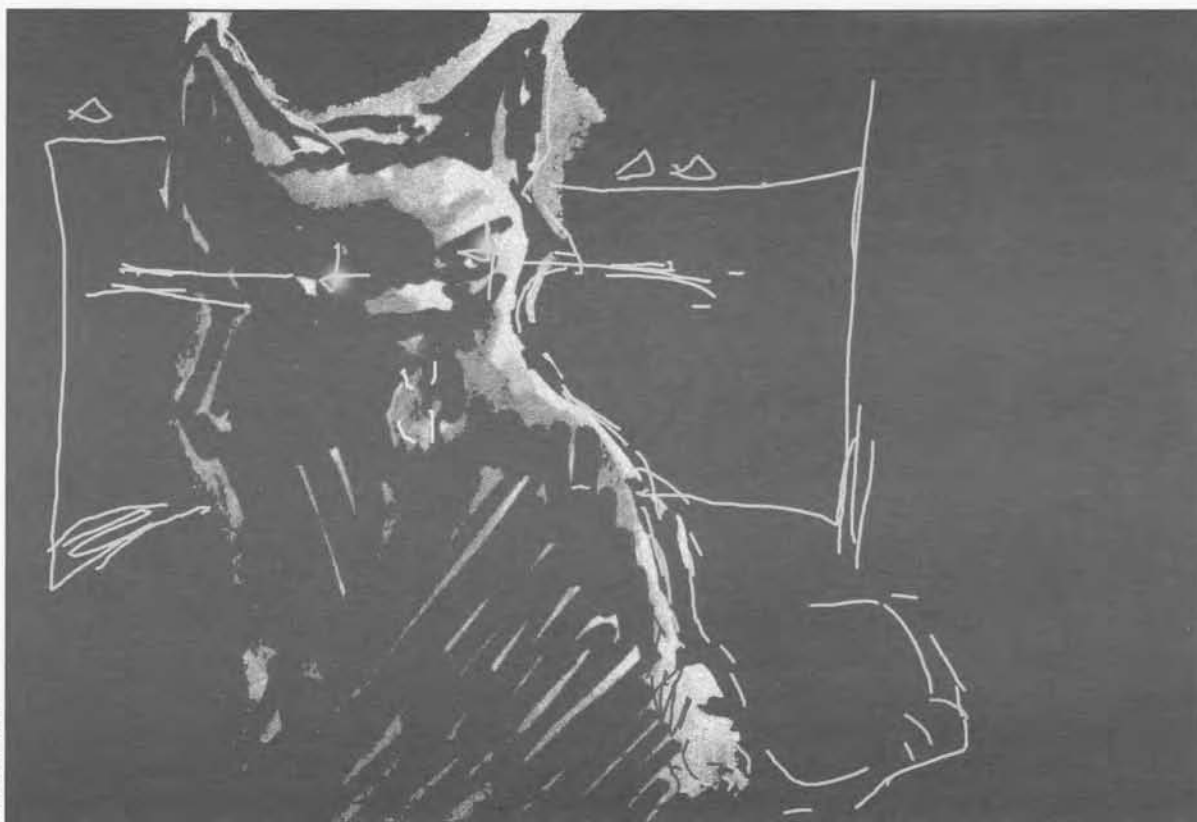
Sin	Familiar
Pride	Cat
Envy	Bat
Greed	Raven
Gluttony	Rat
Lust	Serpent
Sloth	Toad
Wrath	Dog

WHAT'S IN IT FOR THEM?

Even if you assume that what awaits on the dark shores of death is not much fun, playing mystical assistant to some trailer-park John Dee isn't exactly a picnic either. However, there are a couple consolations for those spirits who do make it back.

First off, some obsessions can be pursued even in rat form. If (for example) someone

CHRIS MARTINEZ



came back from Beyond as a rat because she can't resist fatty fried foods, she's probably in clover until she sticks her head in a rat trap. Alternately, a vengeful ghost who wants to put down his wife's new husband might do an adequate job in a dog body — if he can't trick or convince his summoner into doing his dirty work.

Of course, the easier way to get demonic ya-yas out is through possession, and there's an unstated clause in the Ritual of Familiarity that allows a familiar to take control of its "master's" body whenever the master isn't in control. Specifically, if the summoner fails a stress check, the Familiar can make a Soul roll to take over during the initial frenzied panic.

Furthermore, if the "master" ever goes permanently insane (that is, he's gotten five failed marks in one of the gauges) the familiar can make a play for control even when the adept is on his guard. There are two ways to do this: trying for temporary control, and trying to permanently oust the adept's soul.

If a familiar is going for temporary control, he has a 5% chance for every Failed notch on his master's chart. However, not only must the familiar roll a success on this attempt, his roll has to be above the adept's Soul rating. Since most adepts have high Soul stats, this isn't a picnic. But if it works the familiar is in charge for a number of hours equal to the familiar's Soul stat.

The other way is to go for permanent control, which is a much more serious assault because the familiar spirit must abandon its animal host in order to do so. This is the magickal equivalent of home invasion: the demon busts in and tries to kick the current occupant out. If the spirit succeeds, that's it: he's got the body 'til death do them part. If he fails, it's back to the slummy side of eternity until some other dark dabbler casts the Ritual of Familiarity again.

To make this kind of frontal assault, the would-be mind conqueror rolls Soul, as does the defending adept. The better successful roll



UNKNOWN
ARMIES

takes control of the body. The loser dies (again, possibly). If both combatants fail, they're *both* cast out of the body, which drops to the ground in a coma and (generally) croaks within 24 hours. Both wind up in whatever afterlife awaits them.

FEEDING

A familiar needs to suckle away one minor charge or drink one damage point of blood from its host once per month. Otherwise, the magick binding it to its body snaps and it returns to the grave. They use that one charge per month to keep it all together.

Of course, many familiars drink a lot more often than that, keeping the additional charges for their own use (see "Hidden Powers," below). You think an adept is going to know the stupid critter only needs its Mojo Chow once a month?

In addition to this, they need to ingest a standard diet for creatures of their type. This is usually not a problem.

HIDDEN POWERS

You can say what you want about the down-sides of diving under the surface of death — it does give one tremendous insight into the real nature of the universe. Familiars come back from the grave with powers very similar to those of an adept. GMs should feel free to assign any school to any familiar, but some guidelines by animal type are included below.

Because familiars gain minor charges by feeding from their masters, they don't need to generate their own. This doesn't help them with significant charges, but a toad who can cast Greater Warping is nothing to sneeze at.

Familiars don't have to be obsessed with a school of magick to use it. They also aren't affected by taboo. From their perspective, it's just a particular grab bag of rituals that caught their fancy. But they *can* be obsessed with it if that suits the personality of the familiar.

Sin	Familiar	Recommended School
Pride	Cat	Entropomancy/Amoromancy
Envy	Bat	Plutomancy/Annihilomancy
Greed	Raven	Plutomancy/Kleptomancy
Gluttony	Rat	Dipsomancy/Kleptomancy
Lust	Serpent	Pornomancy/Amoromancy
Sloth	Toad	Cliomancy/Oneiromancy
Wrath	Dog	Epideromancy/Irascimancy

FAMILIARS AS PLAYER CHARACTERS

Roleplaying a familiar is not easy and it's not the way to make an unkillable character that can prevail in every situation. If, on the other hand, you're the type who doesn't mind or actively *enjoys* the challenges of having a weaker (but weirder) character, roleplaying a possessed animal spiritually bound to some whacko adept can be a real laff riot.

Making up a familiar character is similar to making a regular PC, but there are some important changes.

FAMILIARS HAVE A SINGLE PASSION

Usually characters have a noble, fear, and rage passion, along with an obsession, and these psychological elements allow for various dice tweaks. Familiars, like other demons, really don't. Whatever makes a demon stick around, it's something so powerful that all other elements of personality are eclipsed. They're still there, but they simply *do not matter* the way the central passion does.

To represent this rules-wise, build your character with the usual compliment of passions, and an obsession if you wish, but then pick *one* of those elements and explain how that became the focus that brought you back from beyond the grave.

Example: Cassiopeia Cooper was, in life, the owner and manager of a small-town laundromat in Bennet's Ford, Alabama. Not a great living, but it paid the rent and left her plenty of free time on the job to do crosswords, read novels, and gossip with that stratum of townfolk who didn't own

their own washers and dryers.

Cassiopeia's player decides that Cassie's greatest fear was poverty, her noble impulse was helping out the less fortunate, and her rage stimulus was getting conned or deceived.

Cassie led a long life full of paperbacks, cigarettes, vending-machine snacks, and minor scandals. She tithed to the church regularly, and one day she heard a rumor that old widow Harrow had bought a lot of dog food at the supermarket — even though she didn't have a dog. When she tried to call the minister and tell him that one of his flock was in need, the line was busy, so she decided to stop by on her way home. Seeing a light on in his rectory, she went around to the back door, which was when she heard a woman giggling.

Normally Cassie wouldn't look in a window, but this time she did. She was shocked to see Minister Mawson performing a sex act with a blonde chippie who certainly wasn't Mrs. Mawson. Adding insult to injury, they were both snorting some suspicious looking white powder — her off his desk, and him off her back as he mounted her like a common animal!

Cassie shook herself free of her shock and was about to go give them the scolding of a lifetime when she felt a stinging pain in her left arm. She screamed and fell over, and Minister Mawson didn't call an ambulance until he was sure the heart attack was fatal.

She never got her chance to tell the people of Bennet's Ford about their whoring, coke-snorting hypocrite. Now she's going to take the chance.

Either her Noble or Rage impulse might fit with the circumstances of her demise. Cassie's player decides on her Rage passion, as her GM nods sagely.

This guiding passion is *everything* to a demon. It becomes an obsession, and can be used to pick a new obsession skill.

However, there is a price for this total fixation. If a familiar (or other demon) ever disobeys its obsession, it goes back beyond the Veil. No roll, no appeal, no nothing. This means that if Cassie the demon ever forgoes a chance to screw with someone who deceived or betrayed her, in life or after it, she stops being a demon and simply becomes dead. (This is tough. This takes a lot of control away from the player, because there are no second chances. That's why only experienced players should play familiars, and should go in with their eyes open.)

Once you decide what brought your character back from beyond the Veil, figure out which of the seven deadlies best fits it. This in turn shows what kind of animal you become. For Cassie, an argument could be made for Pride and a cat's body, since she doesn't want anyone to get the best of her. But the most obvious choice is Wrath and the shape of a dog. If she'd gone with her noble stimulus instead, she probably would have wound up as Pride, since the urge to help others is rarely unsullied by the pride of being a do-gooder.

FAMILIARS HAVE SOME PRE-SET STATS

Familiar characters have the standard 220 points to spend on their stats, but some of these points are already spent, depending on animal type.

Animal	Avail. Points	Preset Stats
Cat	125-152	Body 8-15, Speed 60-80
Bat	125-150	Body 5-10, Speed 65-85
Raven	135-157	Body 8-15, Speed 55-70
Rat	145-160	Body 10-15, Speed 50-60
Serpent	155-165	Body 10, Speed 45-55
Toad	195	Body 5, Speed 20
Dog	130-180	Body 10-30, Speed 30-60

You can't go higher than the upper limit of the preset with your animal character — no toads with Speed 30 or Body 10. Similarly, you can't go below the lower limit.

This does mean that you can have Mind



and Soul stats above 70. Hell, you can have them above 100 if you want. But Mind and Soul still have to be above 30. (If you're wondering how people can be smarter after they die, check out the short story "Ghosts: The Straight Dope" on the Atlas Games web site for one possible explanation. Short answer: When you don't have your feelings, instincts, and endocrine system in the way, you can concentrate a lot harder.)

Example: Cassie's player wants her dog character to be fairly big and tough, so she maxes Body at 30. That still isn't much, so she sets Speed as high as she can too, planning on dodging a lot in combat. This gives her 130 points to split between Mind and Soul. She decides to put 50 in Mind, just to give her an average intelligence, and dump the rest — a whopping 80 points — in Soul.

FAMILIARS HAVE PRE-SET SKILLS

This is the same deal as the preset stats.

Animal	Avail. Points	Preset Skills
Cat	25-62	Bite 8-15, Dodge 60-80, Stealth 40-50, Notice 50
Bat	100-120	Dodge 65-85, Notice 70/5
Raven	95-117	Peck 8-15, Dodge 55-70, Notice 40
Rat		30-65 Bite 10-15, Dodge 50-60, Stealth 50-60, Notice 45-55
Serpent	65-80	Bite 10, Dodge 25-30, Stealth 60-70, Notice 45
Toad	110	Dodge 20, Notice 50, Stealth 40
Dog	70-120	Bite 10-30, Dodge 30-60, Notice 70/40

Familiars, being unnatural beasties, can have skills that are higher than the governing stat. This means that if you have a Speed score of 85, you don't have to spend 85 points

in Speed skills. Granted, your pool of leftover points can be pretty darn small, but you can put them in skills under any stat.

Familiars don't get all the free skills, either, but when you can't speak, Charm and Lie don't do you much good anyhow. The free skills they do get at 15% are: General Athletics, Struggle, Dodge, Initiative, Conceal, General Education and Notice. (In many cases, familiars have these skills at higher levels because of their animal nature. In that case, just ignore the 15% freebies.)

Example: Dogs have a Bite skill equal to their Body and a Dodge equal to Speed — in Cassie's case, 30% and 60%. She also gets a free Scent Notice at 70%, General Notice at 40%. (For point balancing, we considered that to average out to a single 60 point skill. Similarly, the bat's weird notice averaged out to 55 points.) She gets Initiative 30%. She remembers 15% General Education from her mortal life, and she has a 15% General Athletics. She has 70 points left to spend. She decides to put 10 in General Athletics and raise it to 25%, since she figures she'll have to do a lot of running around. She plans on being a good-looking dog — the kind kids want to keep instead of pelt with rocks — so she takes a skill in "Adorable" at 15%. The rest she puts into an adept skill. She's tempted by Dipsomancy, since it's so versatile and she knows she won't have to personally get drunk to make it go, but she's also intrigued by Annihilomancy because the image of a cute dog who makes everything burn is tempting to her for some warped reason. She decides to make Bite her obsession skill: With Annihilomancy at 45%, she has an okay chance of making it work without flip-flops, and even if it fails she won't lose charges, which are probably going to be fairly scarce anyhow. With a 30% Bite she can flip-flop, she has a much better chance of getting a piece of someone's leg.

FAMILIARS CAN LEARN NON-OBSSESSED MAGICK

Familiars don't have to be obsessed with their magick skill, if they have one. But they cannot learn more than one school of magick. Furthermore, because they're animals *and* unnatural creatures they can never channel any archetype. No avatar skills for you!

Familiars manage their magick differently than human beings. They do not charge up through symbolic actions. Instead, they gain charges by leeching them off their masters through the Devil's Teat. Every minor charge drawn can be spent to power spells normally.

Familiars can't suck in anything bigger than a minor charge. (If your master only has significant charges, one of them gets broken down so you can draw only a single minor.) Remember that you have to draw off a charge or some blood every month just to continue to exist! You get to choose if you draw blood or magick, but blood doesn't do you much good except for the "monthly rent."

On the other hand, familiars don't have to worry about taboos. Once you've drained a charge, it's yours until you use it.

FAMILIARS ARE ALWAYS SANE

Or insane. Or sociopathic. Or beyond any traditional dichotomies of sane/mad or good/evil. As creatures of pure will and obsession, familiar characters never have to make stress checks on any of the madness meter gauges.

FAMILIARS OBEY THEIR MASTERS

This is the big pain in the ass. You're bound to your summoner and have to do what he says. You can do it in a lazy or deliberately inept fashion, you can consciously misconstrue his orders, but you can't outright refuse or defy. You've got limited free will, but you can't get too far from him — after all, you've got that monthly hit on the Devil's Teat or it's back to the boneyard for you.

ROLEPLAYING FAMILIARS

Adepts and conscious avatars aren't ordi-

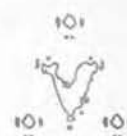
nary people. Even nonmagickal folks who get involved in the occult of *Unknown Armies* tend to not be exactly "normal." It can be a little tough to stay in character with your constantly drunk adept or your jittery street punk, but they're *human*, they have human drives and anyhow, you've got passions to fall back on for guidance.

Familiars, though, are ex-humans. They're human souls with all the mercy and kindness and humor washed out to pale, faded stains on a vivid core of obsession. They are dead minds who have violated the universe because their drives are simply too great to rest.

Roleplaying them is a little bit harder, which is why it's recommended *only* for gamers who like a challenge. The challenge is not surviving and contributing with a character who has a Body of 5 and who probably can't talk — though that's sure part of it. The challenge is making a character who is simultaneously one-dimensional and *interesting*.

In UA we try to keep the focus on character. We've encouraged the creation of balanced, ambivalent, nuanced characters who have layers of desire and conflicts of interest. Familiars aren't like that. They're fanatics. They have one goal only. No matter what they were like as humans, their personalities are now just baggage — it's like the stuff you might find in the glove compartment of a stolen car. Sure, it might be useful, but probably not, so why pay much attention? That's what Cassie's memories of gossip and her neighbors and her concern for old widow Harrow are now — just so much irrelevant crapola. Her goal is to get payback on the minister who deceived her, and if she has to burn down the whole town and kill everyone in it, she'll do it. If she had to destroy the *world* to kill him, she'd do it.

This monomaniacal focus can be pretty hard to represent. The key, ironically enough, lies in the other restrictions of the familiar condition. Obedience. Inability to communicate. Animal form. These obstacles make the accomplishment of the mission (whatever that



is) challenging. If Cassie came back in human form, she could just buy or steal a car, drive all night, run over the minister, and that's it. Case closed. Her fate fulfilled, she returns to being dead. But as a dog, she can't make it to Alabama on her own, and she can't even *talk* to her master to persuade him to go to Bennet's Ford. She has to find some way to get there with him, which means she has to persuade

him that it's in his best interests.

Playing a familiar means a shift away from the traditional UA character focus and into a plot-focus mode. Anything you want to do is fair, as long as you don't break the rules. Scheme, manipulate, betray, have a great time. Just don't disobey.

And don't forget to suck that teat as often as you can.

Return-Path: <MA-request@purpletape.cs.uchicago.edu>
X-Sent: 27 Oct 1990 02:58:19 GMT
Subject: RE: [MA] Happy Meals
Date: Sat, 27 Oct 1990 19:58:11 -0700
x-sender: (undisclosed)
From: Ishtar <Ishtar212@hotmail.com>

On Saturday, October 27, Rowan wrote:

> Look, I'm not really understanding the resistance to what I'm doing, and it's
> frankly starting to piss me off.

I'm sorry you feel that way.

> Children are the perfect targets for us. Their minds are still open. They're
> still willing to believe. Conformity hasn't had a chance to dull their sense
> of wonder yet. If they grow up with a belief in magick, we're halfway there!
> Who better to serve as a vanguard of the New Age?

One minor argument that could be made against that is that their very flexibility means a Special Order given to a child is less important than one given to an adult. I don't think it would be very hard to convince a four-year-old that he'd seen faeries in the city park. They don't have a set vision of reality, so a genuinely magickal experience is more likely to be discounted. If you don't understand enough about the world, a Nintendo is going to seem more magickal than one of BestBoy's miraculous coincidences. It's adults who are the hard sell about the paranormal, so they're the ones who need to experience it.

> Are there risks involved with putting charges in Happy Meals? Sure. But every
> time you take a shower, there's a risk that you'll fall and break your neck.

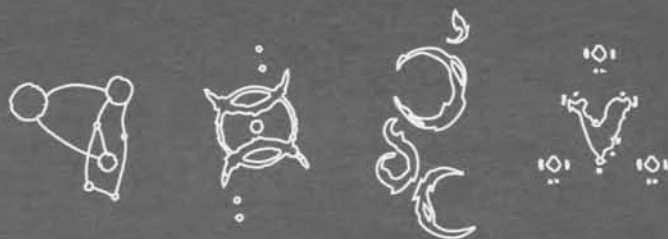
You're comparing apples to oranges. It's like saying "are there risks involved with giving a child a loaded gun? Sure, but there are risks involved in letting him play with legos too." It's not just that the risk is there: It's there, and its significant.

> Kids are just as capable of using unexpected magick well as an adult is. In
> fact, since it's not alien to their paradigm, they might use it better.

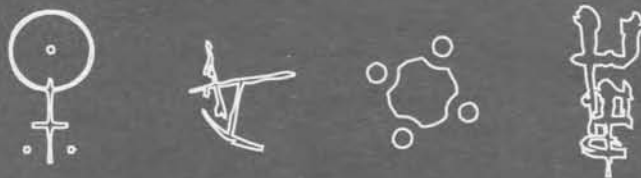
They 'might.' Do you remember Ian Stokes? The doctors still haven't figured out what happened to him. But we know, don't we? A Special Order gone wrong, that's what. (For you recent joiners, Ian Stokes is a man in London who seems to have turned into a human ouija board. He babbled continuously, and both his hands independently wrote strange messages at the same time. He did this for about a month, then suddenly snapped out of it, remembering nothing.)

I'm as anxious as you are to ring the curtain down on this current ignorant age, and I'm willing to accept that some adults are going to have bad reactions. But I can't put a child in the path of that danger, and I'm not going to let you do it either.

Ishtar



CHAPTER FIVE FRANCHISING



A Mak Attax campaign? Sure, and super-size it! This chapter contains a bunch of scenario seeds, notes on converting them into a meta-plot, a combat-oriented description of how a fast-food restaurant is laid out, and a complete crew of Maks you can drop into any city.

SCENARIO SEEDS

So your PCs are ready to fry, flip, and serve with the rest of the Maks, right? Time to dive into the wild and wooly world of infecting the mundane with a little mojo. Here's a heaping helping of ideas to get your own Mak Attax franchise rolling, in the form of a bunch of scenario seeds. Sesame, of course.

Each scenario seed begins with a *Crown*, a pithy teaser that sets up the action. Then comes the *Club*, which details what the PCs can learn from investigation. Last is the *Heel*, a description of the GMCs and what they're really up to. ("Crown," "Club," and "Heel" match up not only with the "Flashpoint," "Sum-

mary," and "Targets" of the Sleeper Op Files in *Hush Hush*, pp. 112–126, but are also the three pieces of bun in the Scotsman's signature double-decker sandwich.)

DEALIN' MAK ON COMPANY TIME

CROWN

Superconductor gets an anonymous email asserting that a Mak is selling charges, violating Rule #3: The Philanthropic Principle (see p. 21).

CLUB

The target restaurant, located in a rest stop on a major interstate, has a minimal Crew: a forty-year-old woman named Maureen Mauser (alias "Luck-B-A-Lady") and a nineteen-year-old boy named Gary Wynn (alias "Psionik"). They are passed their charges by a long-haul trucker Mak (see Feng Vespucci, p. 28).

HEEL

Mauser is a mid-level avatar of the Merchant, who sometimes uses her abilities to ameliorate

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ARMIES

Special Orders that go bad — so long as she can find an angle for her own benefit. Wynk has no actual supernatural abilities, but does possess a remarkably high level of intuition (see “Psychic Senses” in *UA2*, p. 311), so much so that he believes in his “mental powers.” Which of these two is selling Mak mojo on the clock? (Pick one.)

- A. Mauser is, for big bucks, to road-tripping dukes.
- B. Wynk is, for hits of Jupiter’s X (see *UA2*, p.143), to an area Narco-Alchemist named Godfrey Kalliser.
- C. Neither is. Another Mak sent the email for yuks.
- D. Neither is. A non-Mak duke — Narco-Alchemist Godfrey Kalliser — is doing this to get rid of one (or both) of the Crew, who is/are blackmailing him, threatening to expose his illicit chemistry to the State Police.
- E. All of the above.

LUNCH RUSH IN THE SKY WITH DIAMONDS

CROWN

An email hits the Open list, recounting how the afternoon shift (including two of the sender’s Crew) at a Florida franchise has been taken into police custody — and now the police and the DEA are around asking questions.

CLUB

Paul “Bugs” Borowski has asked the PCs — who are either local Maks or out-of-town Maks with useful abilities — to work together to keep Mak Attax below the mundane radar, misdirect the investigators, and clear the two Maks (if they can). With a little legwork and snooping, the PCs discover that the police became interested in the franchise after a handful of grade schoolers experienced horrible visions. Due to their obvious counter-/sub-culture ties, the two Crew Maks have been singled out for special investigation, and their associates researched.

HEEL

The incident looks like the result of a Special Order given to one of the kids. But when the PCs are able to get in contact with the Mak suspects, both deny having distributed any on the day in question. (And, unless the PCs are circumspect in making such contact, they themselves could come under police and DEA observation.) The only recent odd event in their franchise was a teenager who collapsed two days ago, and was taken to the nearest hospital. Unfortunately, as he hadn’t been passed any juice, they didn’t track him afterwards.

The teenager was Brian Murphy, a local pusher. A friend of his, Jamiel “Jammy” Sardoz, is one of the non-Mak workers at the restaurant. Sardoz allowed Murphy access to the storeroom, via the rear door, because Murphy was delivering him a bag of weed. While Sardoz was called away to empty the fryolator, Murphy tried out a new bit of chemical fun his dealer had given him. While placing a drop under his tongue as per the directions, he unknowingly dribbled a bit of the drug over a crate of onions. These onions were later diced for use. On his way out of the restaurant, Murphy collapsed (a combination of the hallucinogen and the marijuana he’d smoked with Sardoz). The next day, four fourth-graders eat burgers at the restaurant and go for a three hour tour of the Bermuda Triangle.

Detective Abdul Jones is handling the police investigation, and Agent Vanessa Crosby is heading up the DEA task force. Jones has kids of his own, and wants to nail whoever is feeding hallucinogenic drugs to children. Crosby isn’t as fervent as Jones, and just wants to close another case. (Interestingly, Paul Borowski has named one of his rabbits “Vanessa Crosby” — see p. 61. Agent Crosby is the daughter of a good friend of his from AA.)

THE USUAL

CROWN

Different people come into the same location



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ARMIES

day after day and loudly demand “the usual.” They get upset when asked to give further details, and claim to eat at the restaurant every day — which they don’t.

CLUB

The usual is invariably a cheeseburger (hold the mustard), small fries, a medium iced tea, and a caramel sundae. Someone always demands “the usual” between 12:30 and 12:50 pm each day. These customers vary in terms of age, sex, race, and class. About 60% of the time, they pay the exact amount of the bill in change. The customer takes “the usual” and chows down but never touches the tea, and leaves the sundae half-eaten. Then they stand up, shake their heads, look puzzled, and leave. For the past week, the opening crew has detected a strange smell permeating the restaurant each morning, which soon dissipates. They can’t describe it.

HEEL

A special variant of possession is happening here: instead of a demon, it’s a revenant. An elderly male transvestite named Myron (or “Myra”) used to frequent the restaurant before his untimely death. He always ordered his usual (detailed above), and consumed it in the outlined manner. As such a regular customer, he got passed at least four Special Orders (possibly more). This has had an effect on his afterlife, and probably contributed to making him come back as a revenant. This information is not widely known, since the Crew has had substantial turnover since Myron/Myra died: three revolutionaries have moved on to college (two have dropped out of the Maks completely, and one is now a counter jockey in her college town), and the Crew Chief — a Mechanomancer named Inga Ketilsdottir (alias “GoldenIngots”) — has no memory of the past year. (But hey, look at this cute little clockwork monkey!)

Myron possesses whoever walks through the side door of the restaurant at 12:31 p.m. exactly; if there is a choice, his preferences are

male, over 30, white, professional. If no one enters the restaurant at that time, he attempts to inhabit the next person to walk past the door outside. An interesting side effect is that the possessed person always has enough money to purchase “the usual,” even if they walked through the door with empty pockets. (Myron uses his Unnatural Phenomena abilities to gather loose change for his daily treat.)

Unknown to all, the Order of St. Cecil has been contacted by a priest of the parish in which the restaurant stands. Three of his parishioners have mentioned being possessed in confession, and the similarity of stories between people who didn’t mix socially caused him to contact the diocese, which contacted the Order. Two Cecilites have been snooping for six days. As it stands, they have no leads on how to resolve the situation; the possession time is too short to perform the ritual of exorcism, and doesn’t center on a particular person. They’ve tried exorcising the building itself after hours (by breaking and entering), with little luck. However, they’re alert for any further strange or occult events, and may begin to suspect that someone in the restaurant is causing this odd possession.

WHAT’S UP WITH DOWNEY, CA?

CROWN

After many months of maneuvering, Mak Attax has managed to place a Crew into the oldest operating restaurant of the Scotsman’s chain: the one in Downey, California. Unfortunately, any Special Orders that are passed through this venerable red-and-white tiled monstrosity fizzle completely. Why?

CLUB

The Downey restaurant opened in 1953, and still serves the original menu (hamburgers, cheeseburgers, fries and old fashioned milkshakes, though some modern items are available). Employees wear special Fifties-style uniforms (paper hats, white shirts, and bolo ties). It’s a walk-up, with seating outside, and there’s an

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ARMIES

addition containing a museum, gift shop, and restrooms. It also bears a 60 foot neon sign with the pre-clown icon: Speedee the Chef.

HEEL

The three-person Crew consists of a UCLA anthropology student (Juanita “Redsleeves” Delarossa), a high-school basketball player interested in sports superstitions (Lamont “Doctor_R” Rockway), and a sweet little old lady Epideromancer (Maud “Faceripper” Balliol). All have worked in different, effectual Crews elsewhere in Los Angeles County. So, what’s going on? (Pick one.)

- A. A local Cliomancer, John Ward, has been charging up from the Downey restaurant for years. Is it possible that when a cobweb farmer harvests the mojo from a burger joint, this can leech the magick out of a Special Order? Mak Attax needs to know.
- B. Alternately, Ward is brain-rinsing the Crew (or lucky/unlucky customers) to avoid Sleeper attentions — policing his occult backyard, as it were.
- C. Perhaps the differences in iconography between the Chef and the Clown are causing the Special Orders to short-circuit.
- D. One of the Crew members is actually hoarding charges (if Balliol, just adding to her charges; if Delarossa, using them to attempt rituals dug up online; if Rockaway, he’s passing them to his basketball teammates to help them out in the semi-finals).
- E. Someone (or something) in Downey — perhaps the same entity responsible for bringing much of the industry for the Apollo program to this California town — is consuming the Special Orders before they activate.

Interesting questions especially rise if the Cliomancer John Ward is included. Will he be an ally or enemy for the PCs (and Mak Attax in general)? Can he be convinced to join the great work? Or might he join up in word, but not in spirit, and try to abscond with the Secret Sauce?

RATBURGERLAND

CROWN

Rats. Lots of rats. Lots of rats in the dumpster behind the restaurant — wearing clothes? Using tools? Herding cockroaches? Building forts? What the hell is going on here?

CLUB

A franchise in Missouri has a colony of rats living in and near their dumpster that are acting weird. “Acting weird” meaning “like people”: wearing little outfits, creating simple machines out of debris, building tiny apartments and furnishing them, that sort of thing. Oh, and collecting into little tribes and beating the hell out of each other with junkpunk weapons.

What to do with the colony? That’s the question on the table. Kill them? Capture them? Study them? Transplant them to a safer ecology? And once the plan is decided upon, how to put it into effect?

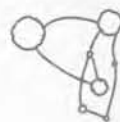
The mundane manager tried to poison the little bastards, and they not only ignored the D-Con, but apparently chewed through his car’s tires.

HEEL

Not all Special Orders get eaten — not entirely. Even though the charge has been passed on, the scraps and containers still carry a residue of magick. Vermin eat those scraps, containers, and residue, and are changed. That’s the theory, at least.

However, it’s improbable that the rats are actually aware. They’ve just got too little brain for full human-level sentience. Here are a few options for what’s actually happening:

- A. Special Orders have made the rats into a spiritual mirror reflecting human life. The rat tribes could be the analogues to governments, corporations, cabals, or maybe even the Invisible Clergy. If removed, tended to, and studied, the rat colony could become a scrying device.



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ARMIES

- B. Too much magick has enabled the affected rats' brains to contain more "soul stuff" than what would normally be possible, and the rat colony is infested with demons. The demons, while not as happy as they would be in human bodies, aren't bitching, and gleefully pursue their chosen obsessions. At least, most of them do.
- C. The rats aren't real, but the tulpa projections of a soccer mom, forced to read interminable talking animal books to her young children. These dream rats act out all the secret and perverse dark thoughts about how human-like animals really *would* be, which get pushed out of her mind while suffering through story time.

KIMURA'S PATTERN

CROWN

Feng Vespucci has just finished a detailed analysis of their predictions (see p. 28). A statistically remarkable number of the "2% frighteningly accurate, down to the smallest details" results come from a single area — Asahikawa, Japan, and its surrounding prefecture.

CLUB

The PCs have been asked by "Dido" — a Mak with a noted interest in "mapping the magick" they drop on the population — for their opinions. This could be for any of a number of reasons: perhaps the PCs are experts on Japanese culture; have an understanding of divination, psychology, anthropology, sociology, statistics, or geology; are Infomancers, Cliomancers, or Geomancers (see p. 105); or are simply available to take a long trip to the Far East. Dido has been empowered by the voting members of Feng Vespucci to invite the PCs to that list, as well as provide them with plane tickets to Japan (donated by another list member, "Regina" — see p. 52), provided they can do some on-the-ground research into why this is so.

Mak Attax has about 20 Maks located throughout Japan, but only 3 work in Asa-

hikawa: "Moshi-moshi123", "munro," and "Shojo_Elvis." None of them are on anything but the Open List, and some personal information and elements of their personalities come through their electronic personas. Moshi-moshi123 is known as an Anglophile, speaks and writes excellent English, and collects British Royal Family memorabilia. Munro's less fluent, but is an enthusiastic fan of American culture — especially John Hughes movies like *The Breakfast Club* and *Sixteen Candles*, and has every episode of *Happy Days* on tape. Shojo_Elvis, despite being rabidly pro-Japanese (she claims to have almost made the Olympic karate team in her youth, before blowing out her knee), moonlights as a female Elvis impersonator ("Elvis is the *only* worthwhile thing the West has given the East"). They seem to work well together, and have never had an online spat, despite the variance in their opinions of Western culture. None of them claims any outstanding magickal talent; their Special Orders come from a duke on Honshu named Ai Sumimoto.

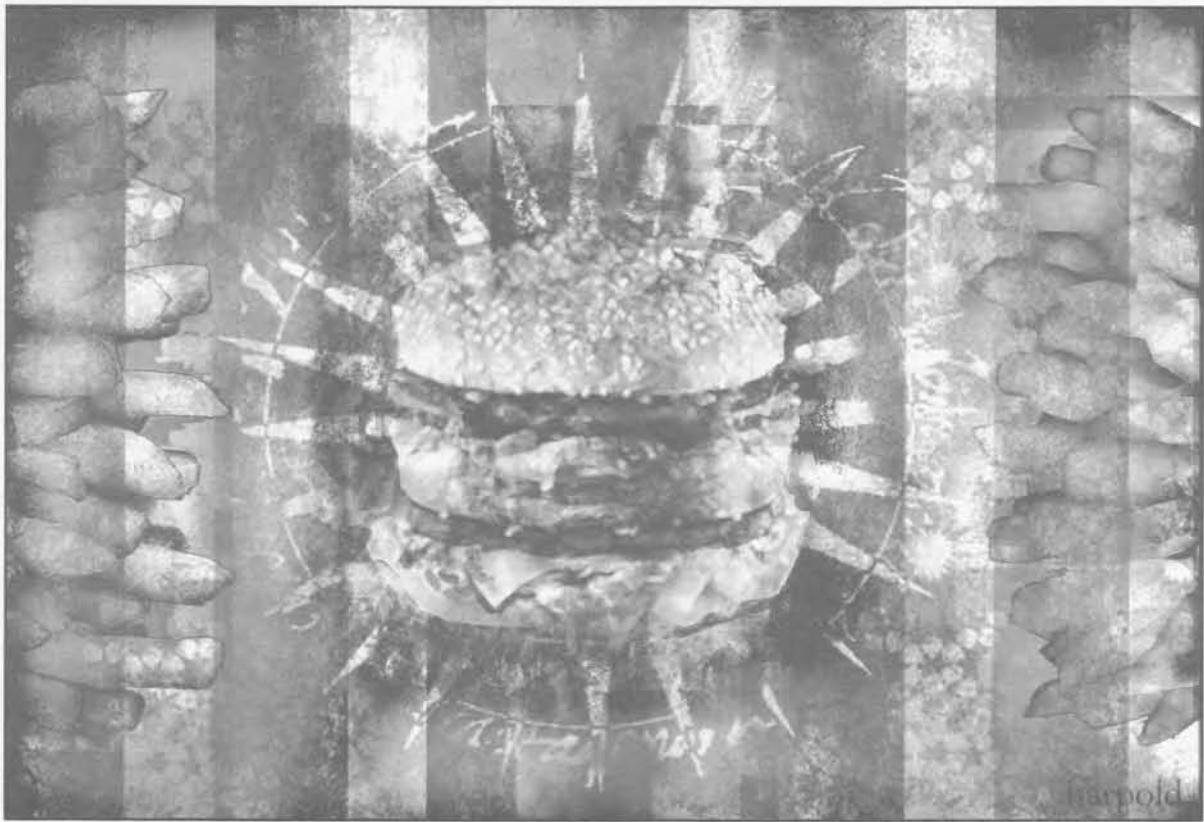
HEEL

Munro is Hiroko "Betty" Kimura (p. 43). Moshi-moshi123 is a thirty-year-old man named Hiroyuki Kaifu. Shojo_Elvis is a twenty-year-old woman named Azuma Yoshiko. (It's possible that both Kaifu and Yoshiko are apprentices of an Iconomancer, respectively focused on Princess Di and Elvis — see *Postmodern Magick*, p. 83 — or that Yoshiko could be a low-level avatar of the Mystic Hermaphrodite.)

If observed personally by a Mak, their remarkable teamwork at "doing the Mak thing" is easily seen. They cover for one another, back each other up, and get along swimmingly. Especially sensitive observers — or Maks that have performed the Ritual of Fealty — have a chance at recognizing that Betty is the keystone of the Crew. Without her, things work well; with her, things work *preternaturally* well.

When Betty's on the scene, Special Orders are always handed out to "the right person at

MATT HARPOLD



the right time.” A gang-member is struck blind before an attempted mugging; an ambulance miraculously speeds through a crowded intersection, getting a patient into surgery before it’s too late; a child falls off of an observation tower and lands unhurt; a manager known for lack of dedication falls ill and is replaced in the board meeting by the young firebrand belonging body and soul to the company, who sacrifices his position and career to save face for an entire department.

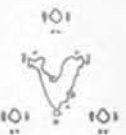
One theory is that the higher one’s Mak Attax skill, the better Feng Vespucci’s predictions (or is that “commands”?) are shown to be. Or perhaps it’s that Betty’s unique syncretic personality serves as the bridge between the mostly-West-loving Kaifu and the mostly-West-hating Yoshiko, enabling the trio to integrate opposites. Or maybe it’s just random chance, a quirk of statistics. In any case, any findings the PCs bring back (correct or not) are pored over by the Feng Vespucci list... and probably the Crown List, too.

Unfortunately, the leading Japanese Sleeper Cabal, the **Kami no ban’jin** (Divine Watchmen), has tumbled to the odd goings on in Asahikawa, and they are not happy. A bunch of snooping magickal gaijin — unused to the restrained and quiet Japanese occult underground — do not cheer them up either. Unquestionably, the PCs are targeted for extensive observation and possible elimination. Furthermore, given the Sleeper infiltration of the Mak mailing lists, it’s probable that the Kami no ban’jin already know that the PCs’ Crew is winging their way to the Land of the Rising Sun. And Superconductor could be disturbed that Regina seems to be strangely intent on unraveling this mystery.

THAT’S NO MONKEY, THAT’S A WEAPON!

CROWN

“GoldenIngots” (see above, “The Usual”) writes to the Open List: “Omigod! I lost my little monkey! I think somebody put it in one of the happy bags instead of a toy! We’ve got to



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ARMIES

get it back before it hurts someone!”

CLUB

Inga's little monkey looks like a cheap *tchotchke*, but is actually a minor clockwork (Body 10, Speed 30, Initiative 15%, Slash With Claws 20%, 10 wound points) that can run, jump, and climb up a target, then rip the victim's face off. The monkey is activated by cranking the tail, aiming the head, and touching a stud inside its ear.

Four children received Meals of Joy on Inga's shift. She knows that three of them didn't get the monkey. The one that's left was in a green BMW stuffed with bags of toys, driven by a harried looking 30ish man. She's pulled photos from the drive-thru security cam, including license plate numbers.

HEEL

Milo Bakun doesn't get to see his daughter Ariel much: his wife has custody. When he does, he spoils the little girl rotten. God only knows how many times he's been to the zoo, how much money he's dropped on toys, or how many brain cells he's vaporized by watching children's entertainment. But he loves her, and will do anything for her.

Ariel Bakun-Royce is a little brat: conceited, greedy, and annoying. She knows she's got her Daddy wrapped around her little finger, and wants to milk him for all he's worth. And, according to Mommy, Daddy's worth a bunch.

They're on their way back to Milo's condo for the weekend, after a trip to the toy megastore. The itinerary is:

Friday night: Kidvid with interminable saccharine songs.

Saturday: Clothes shopping in the morning, lunch at the food court, an afternoon matinee of the latest Disney cartoon, and back home for pizza and board games.

Sunday: Breakfast at the Pancake Haus, with Ariel's mom coming by in the late afternoon to pick her up.

If Ariel actually does have the monkey,

how long before she sics it on someone? And how can the PCs get past her overprotective and doting father? Can they get him — and the deadly toy — away from her?

DELAY THE INEVITABLE

CROWN

The PCs dose a customer, follow her, and watch as her Special Order miraculously saves her from a tornado. (That is, assuming they save themselves — you can build a fun little adventure around a group of PCs trying to simultaneously watch this woman while staying out of the Suck Zone, right?) In fact, the Special Order might just save them along with her, but that's really just gravy.

CLUB

They continue to watch her. After all, some Special Orders seem to be permanent, and besides — she's cute. (Depending on the composition and inclination of your group, it could be that he's cute. Whichever.) While striking that subtle balance between their duty to observe and their state's stalker laws, they see someone try to *kill* her — and this time, there's no Special Order to save her. If the PCs don't intercede, she gets badly hurt at the very least. The attempted assassin's timing (he only kills on Saturday) and *modus operandi* (whatever the GM finds plausible) connect it to several other murders in a three-state area.

HEEL

Jim Gordner is living proof that it's a *bad* idea to drop impure acid and watch *Final Destination* right after reading a bunch of Aleister Crowley. That particular mental hat trick was the final failed notch that led him to becoming an adept. Jim's an Entropomancer with a bear of an alternative charging structure. He believes that people who have survived against the odds have *literally* cheated death, and that by making it right, by correcting the cosmos, he gets an influx of cosmic power. He uses this power, of course, for further balancing of the world.

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In practical terms, Jim can cast Entropomantic spells but can only charge up by killing people who “shouldn’t” have survived their previous brush with death. He considers it “reaping their borrowed time.” Each murder he commits yields a significant charge. (Too bad he didn’t watch *Serendipity*, huh? Then he’d have wound up trying to unite star-crossed lovers.)

Maybe Jim has a taboo, but he hasn’t found it yet. He’s killed three people, he’s escaped from the fuzz through a series of “outrageous coincidences” and he’s got two significant charges, one minor, and five cases of hollow-point ammo to play with. And say — did the PCs’ names get in the paper when they miraculously escaped that tornado?

I HAVE A SUBTLE PLAN

CROWN

Some or all of the PCs have been invited to join a new mail group called “Strategy.”

CLUB

In the throes of the Safe and Happy New Year project and the horrors of 9-11, Mak Attax needs a new project. Something big, something positive, something worthy. But what?

HEEL

Superconductor is concerned in the wake of the attacks upon him, not just for his life, but also for the safety of all the Maks under his charge. He wants to fix this.

Everything worked out for the best in the Y2K Project. All Maks worked like a vast, oiled machine, and generated peace and joy for one night. Using the Safe and Happy New Year as a benchmark, Derek believes that bringing back that sort of directed purpose to his organization will mystically shield the entire cabal.

He’s set up several different “Tiger Team” mail lists to brainstorm ideas for a new project, and populated each with a wide cross-section of the Open List membership. “Strategy” consists of the PCs, “Hotbed_Brie” (Debbie Roth), “Mastaba” (The Sharpener), “Orange-

man” (The Fruit), and “SoulBirdhouse” (Derek himself). Their mission is to come up with a new project.

An amusing aspect of this seed is that anything the PCs and GMCs come up with is piped directly back to TNI via Debbie Roth. Hilarity ensues when any element of the project is implemented, shut down, co-opted, or blocked. “Strategy” can also serve as a great way to funnel adventure ideas to the PCs.

Other than that, this is a purely PC-directed seed — run with it. A fun extracurricular activity might be to set this list up as a real world email list that the players can post to in character.

TWENTY-THREE SKIDOO

CROWN

The entire late-night shift of a Scotsman’s (including a Mak) vanishes without a trace. James Kimor (alias “Fortunato”), Avatar of the Fool, writes to the list, “Just stepped out back for a quick toke. When I got back — it couldn’t have been more than a half-hour — the place was an absolute wreck. Bullet holes in the ceiling, plastic forks sticking into the walls, stuff that I hope was ketchup smeared on the counter. Castroglio and the two mundane shift members were gone! What the hell do I do now? The police have the place taped off. And when I got home, I found a piece of paper stuck to the bottom of my shoe. It was a list, and had Castroglio’s real name there. Mine too. WTF is going on? Help!”

CLUB

Best pals Mike Majors (alias “Castroglio”) and James Kimor were the only Maks in their franchise. Majors is notable in being the most powerful underage Dipsomancer in the Midwest. It’s clear from his posts to various Mak mail lists (including Open, Brainfood, and the Y2K List) that he regularly takes advantage of the older Mak’s gullible nature to acquire booze. (Kimor himself is only on the Open Email list.) Majors and Kimor proxied (minor)



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each other, in an attempt to boost their powers: Majors believed he could double his charges by drinking with Kimor; Kimor believed that the ritual would allow him access to Majors' Moment of Truth formula spell, which he could use to better understand his role of Fool. (Unfortunately, proxy rituals don't work that way: Kimor's not a Dispomancer; Dipsomantic charges cannot be passed along a proxy bond; Consciousness Peeping as per UA2, p. 103, doesn't allow true access to Moment of Truth; and activating the bond causes Kimor to violate Taboo — due to Majors' Mind stat of 57 — causing Taboo Fuzz as per UA2, p. 104. If you ever thought that all characters should have rulebook-perfect knowledge of the magick system, this is a great counter-example.)

The list that Kimor found is a typewritten list, on handmade paper, of seven names and locations. Five of the names are crossed out. These five names are the real names of Maks that are missing or known to be dead.

If investigating Maks can get access to the restaurant or to police reports, they learn the evidence included bullet holes (from .45 ACP rounds), exploded ketchup dispensers, plastic utensils buried in the walls, an empty surplus army canteen (inconclusive fingerprints, contained distilled water), a spray-painted "23" on the countertop, and a shattered coffee mug (whiskey traces). No money or equipment was stolen and the kidnapped employees' possessions were still in their locker-bins. Security cameras show that Kimor left the restaurant around at 11:16 pm; all went black at 11:33 pm; switched back on at 11:48 pm; and Kimor returned at 11:55 pm to find the wreckage. Most of the damage was presumably caused by Majors' use of significant blasts against his kidnappers. Security cameras across the street did catch a shot of a green panel truck accelerating away from the restaurant around 11:40 pm, but the license plate was blurred.

Kimor's attempts to peep Majors' consciousness via their minor proxy bond have been mostly unsuccessful, as Majors seems to

be unconscious — but not dead.

HEEL

Mike Majors, Jennifer Duffy, and Leah Dumfries have been kidnapped by a four-person "commando platoon," which is the sum total of the membership of the Society for Freedom from Petrodollars (SFP). The SFP is a whacked-out militia group that believes exotic petroleum byproducts are being added to tap water, currency ink, and fast food to control people's minds by a syndicate of 23 multinational companies. Thus, they drink only distilled water; use only metal money, money orders, personal checks, or credit cards; and never, ever eat at the Clown's House. They are puppeteered (from on high, behind several layers of shell groups) by the Global Liberation Society. GLS founder Randy Douglas passed along the list of names — just a few that his agents got from the Fruit (see p. 58) — and told the SFP to grab and interrogate "these pernicious petro-agents," and pass back any information learned so that the higher-ups could "spread the word to all our brothers in Freedom." They're waiting for Majors (the one who used "UFO telekinetic weaponry" against them) to wake up to start questioning him. The SFP are all armed with over-the-counter weapons (a hunting rifle, a shotgun, two pistols, and big sheath knives). They don't have a lot of ammo or real training, although all four have gone through the GLS's basic monkey-wrenching course. Their leader, Jasmine, was in the Army for a four-year infantry hitch, and her lover Edgar hunts/poaches regularly. (Rounding out the SFP, Bud's the driver and mechanic, and Nooch is the survival specialist.) They have no idea how the cameras were shut off; GLS pat-sies a level up handled that. They were simply given a target time and a ten minute window to get in and out.

Because Mike Majors was a member of the Y2K List, he is familiar with the Ritual of Light (see p. 90). In Randy Douglas's hands, the Ritual could become a weapon of abso-

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ARMIES

lute terror, possibly even the earth-scorcher he's been hunting for. However, Majors has a fairly high Mak Attax skill, which lets him know that the one thing he *cannot* do is give the secret ritual to his captors. Unfortunately, he's a sixteen-year-old with no real resistance to torture, slap out of charges, and currently unconscious. When he wakes up, he'll be hung over to beat the band. He'll try to contact Kimor through their proxy bond, but very little information can be passed that way. He, Duffy, and Dumfries are being held in separate stalls in Jasmine's barn, manacled hand and foot. The PCs have five days to track the SFP down before Majors (and his co-workers) breaks or dies under torture, and seven before the police surround Jasmine's farm.

CLUES TO FOLLOW UP ON

The List: The handmade paper could be traced to any one of a number of local communes or crafters. Perhaps one of them might be able to identify the maker or purchaser? Plus, the list is typewritten, on an old manual machine. The stationery store in town could have valuable information on who in the area owns an old office-model Royal and brings it in for service and ribbons. (Also, if the names from the list are bandied about, the Fruit recognizes them, and knows that he's the source. Does he finally admit his betrayal?)

Canteen Prints: An exceptionally-skilled or mystically-boosted investigator could find traces of clues that most police detectives might miss. (The canteen is Jasmine's, from her army days.)

23: Twenty-three is, of course, a number much favored in occult and Discordian circles. It will probably not be a great clue for the PCs, unless the GM wants to throw them a bone and point it at the 23-obsessed SFP, since they're local and may be known around town.

Green Panel Truck: This can be clued-up or clued-down depending on how much info the GM wishes to hand out. Is there writing on the side? Something like "OPEC out!" or "Oil is Satan's Blood!"

Security Cameras: Somebody bollixed up the cameras. But who, and how? Someone between the GLS and the SFP? A poor schmuck, being blackmailed by one of Randy Douglas' agents? Or maybe an inside woman — could Duffy or Dumfries secretly be a member of the SFP?

SPROUTING SEEDS INTO A CAMPAIGN

One way to really get a bang for your buck is to weave the above seeds into a single campaign. The first thing to consider is if the PCs are taking the part of the Mak Attax Mobile Crew (see p. 31). If so, then the various seeds can be approached in any order. If the PCs are not the Mobile Crew, then they are most probably tied to a single restaurant, and two elements become important: the *order* in which the seeds are experienced, and *why* the seeds are all happening to the PCs.

ORDER UP!

The arrangement of how the PCs encounter each seed lends a particular style — and raises certain expectations — for a Mak Attax campaign. For example, if a GM started a campaign with the high-stakes adrenaline of "Twenty-Three Skidoo," the relatively sedate mystery of "The Usual" may leave the players unimpressed. (Of course, jacking up the horror content of "The Usual" could make it more palatable to a furious-action group; if the unlucky customer who asks for "the usual" subsequently dies in a messy fashion, or turns into a brain-chewing zombie monster, and then a favorite GMC gets possessed, the scenario becomes creepier and/or more action oriented.)

Especially handy as introductory scenarios for the PCs who begin play as purely mundane folks are "The Usual" and "Ratburgerland". A good campaign starter for more clued-in PCs could be "What's Up with Downey, CA?" In each, the affected franchise should be the Crew's home base, or in their local region. Useful mid-campaign scenarios include "Lunch Rush in the Sky with Diamonds," "Dealin' Mak on Company Time," and "That's No



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Monkey; That's A Weapon!" If the PCs are not based in California, "What's Up with Downey, CA?" would make an excellent stepping stone to "Kimura's Pattern," setting up the PC crew as traveling troubleshooters. Furthermore, "Kimura's Pattern" and "Twenty-Three Skidoo" make satisfying climactic adventures, what with all the opportunities for mayhem between Mak Attax and the Sleepers or a GLS front organization.

THE REASON FOR IT ALL

A big question is exactly why all these weird events happen in the immediate vicinity of a static PC crew. Here's a few options to tie the whole breakfast enchilada together.

(Weird) Shit Happens: You fondle enough mojo-soaked bags of burgers, your fingers get sticky.

When All You've Got Is A Hammer: Every problem starts to look like a nail. The PCs are part of a fairly-clueless occult conspiracy, out to bring magick to the people. They're actively looking for weirdness, and since they're at least a little tuned-in, they're finding it.

Hellmouth: The PCs are high-school kids working at a Scotsman's in a shopping mall built on top of an Indian burial ground or a vortex of evil or what have you. Why *do* the security guards never go home?

I Think Someone's Behind It All: You can't beat a Mastermind with a Plan. Perhaps all of the seeds are pieces of a stratagem set to aid (or delay) the Ascension of Dermott Arkane as the Heisenberg Messenger; the gears and wheels of a giant "people clockwork" virtual device constructed by Derek Jackson to use against the Sleepers; TNI probes into the power and responsiveness of Mak Attax; the mad strategy of a Personamancer or Iconomancer driven insane by attempts to draw on the power of the fictional spokesclown; the final exchange in a war between the Godwalkers of the Trickster and the Fool; or simply strings yanked by the master puppeteer himself, the Comte de Saint-Germain.

PLAYTIME AT THE CLOWN'S HOUSE

Surly patrons who don't know the menu after fifty years; hot and sweaty work over a grill or fryer; painted on customer-service rictus; static from the Drive-Thru headphones in your ears all day; cruddy uniforms; screaming kids; messes in the bathrooms you don't even want to think about; and grease, grease everywhere — on your clothes, on your skin, in your hair. All that and more, for minimum wage. What's not to love?

Moving on from the soul-crushing nature of fast-food work — which you should certainly feel free to include in your UA campaign, if you haven't lived the adventure yourself yet in the real world — a Mak Attax crew-focused campaign offers another fun thing: a base of operations. That's right: Mac's Steak House is your Crew's HQ. Use it.

You can make a quick sketch of your local Scotsman's, find one on the Internet, or just make one up. Heck, you can even get all freaky and add *Hogan's Heroes*-like secret tunnels and rooms underneath, with bugs and traps and suchlike. Whatever flips your burger, toasts your bun, and salts your fries. We can't stop you.

What we can do is give you a little written "sketch map" of a typical restaurant, calling out interesting areas and props for action sequences. If TNI or the Sleepers come to Ottumwa, IA, and want to bust some heads, the material below should give you ideas for improvising weapons, dangers, and complications on the fly. Enjoy!

OUTSIDE

Suburban restaurants usually have a parking lot with cars in it. Urban ones might only be a walk up. Shopping mall and airport locations are definitely pedestrian-only.

Some MickeyDees have a children's playground outside, usually enclosed with fences or even a complete building add-on. Cages full of plastic balls, slides, jungle gyms, monkey bars, rope bridges, and scabby Astroturf or

foam-padding are par for the course. And don't forget the statues of the loveable characters, ripe for spouting apocrypha!

Behind the building is a dumpster (or two), often in a lockable little kiosk, some of which may fully enclose the dumpsters to keep the raccoons, rats, and bums out. Nearby is a large door for bringing in supplies.

And finally, the Drive-Thru menu board, speaker, and windows, great for slamming a duke's face into. ("Can I take your — *wham!* — order?")

CUSTOMER-ACCESSIBLE AREAS

The dining area is almost certainly booths, or tables with fixed chairs, though some have moveable chairs. All can serve as obstacles and cover. Non-fixed chairs have the added benefit of serving as weapons. If a restaurant is located in a concourse or food court, it may not have an exclusive dining area, instead sharing the common one with the other mall restaurants.

Condiment bars provide packets of ketchup, mustard, sugar, salt, and pepper, as well as napkins, straws, plastic utensils, and coffee stirrers. (Hey, in the right hands, *anything* can be dangerous.) Some franchises have moved their soda fountains (plus cups and lids) to the customer area: power to the people! These fountains have either free-standing tanks or pressure lines connecting to larger tanks full of syrup and CO2 stored underneath in the counter. Sticky and explosive potentials there, folks.

Restaurants in urban centers may have security cameras covering the dining room; however, it's more likely that they cover the counter area, to protect the money and the employees. To meet fire codes, a sprinkler system runs throughout the restaurant.

A few have a kid's party room in close proximity to the interior entrance to the playground. These are generally just a section of booths, walled off by glass or Perspex, which are kept locked when not in use for birthday parties.

Bathrooms — male, female, and unisex — can provide areas out of sight of security cameras, flammable paper towels, antibacterial soaps, and numerous items (like sinks, hand dryers, and diaper-changing tables) suitable as bludgeons.

CREW-ACCESSIBLE AREAS COUNTER

The counter serves as a platform for combat and significant cover if one crouches down. The built-in cash registers connect to monitors used for displaying orders in the grill area, and a canny Crew could use them to send coded messages. Plus, there's all that money in the drawers: some restaurants have a "panic button" that drops the cash drawers *into* an integral safe system (comprising the entire highly-reinforced counter), and sets off the police alarms. Again, the counter is the area covered most completely by security cameras.

Items available to the counter staff include soda fountains, shake machines, ice cream machines, refrigerated salad displays, trays, food under the heat lamps, coffee urns, and boxes of toys. All explode nicely if hit by gunfire, many spraying sticky substances wildly. The heat lamps also get rather hot, which can be useful to inventive characters.

The fry station is worth special mention for two reasons: its proximity to the fryolator (see below), and the fry scoop — a deadly weapon for those trained in its art. (No, really.) Some Maks sharpen the blade of the fry scoop and practice fighting with it while wearing their ninja suit. Don't be one of those guys.

GRILL, PREP, AND FRYOLATER

The main deal in the grill area is, of course, the grill. Some are flat (and burger prep may involve placing weights on the patties to help them cook evenly and flatly), and some are clamshell, meaning they have a lid with a frying surface on it. A regular burger only takes about forty seconds to cook completely on a clamshell; think of what it could do to a bad



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guy's head. And there are numerous attendant accessories for the grill — scrapers, spatulas, scrubbing mitts — that can be used as “truncheons” or “knives” in a fight.

Important things usually overlooked in the grill area are the heavy rubber safety mats placed on the floor: as nearly all franchises have tiled floors, the ambient grease from the grills and fryolator can make it awful slippery back there. This slickness can be used by an aware character in combat; also, the mats can be lifted up and used as unwieldy nets or shields against melee attacks.

The prep area used to assemble products contains buns, boxes, wrapping paper, and condiments. Sometimes the condiments are in handheld “guns” or are dispensed from dangling hoses, connected to larger pressurized tanks elsewhere (do we even need to give you ideas for these?).

Saving the best for last, we come to the fryolator. Filled with hot oil. Scalding. Slippery. Comes with a basket that makes a great club. Big heavy bags of frozen fries, chicken nuggets, fruit pies, and fish filets. If you can't come up with at least one cool thing to do with any of that, you're not trying.

DRIVE-THRU WINDOW

A little box with a register, monitor, and — if one is lucky — a soda fountain. See above for ideas. The only big benefit to the Drive-Thru Window is that it's another access point to the outside, and that with a headset on you can talk to people at the ordering station outside.

CLEAN-UP, FREEZER, BREAK ROOM, AND OFFICE

The mop room is filled with industrial cleaning supplies. Some are caustic (especially the grease-cutters), some are soapy, and some are disinfecting. Mops, brooms, and scrapers can serve as ersatz quarterstaves. Rolling mop buckets can be used as skateboards. There should be a sink with sprayer hose for cleaning utensils and trays, as well.

Frozen food is stored in a walk-in freezer,

usually on the same level as the grill area. Dry goods are stored in either basement or attic, accessible by locked stairs. These areas are great for taking a break without getting caught — “I need to get more medium lids!” Sh'yeah, right. Toke up, sister. It's only minimum wage.

The break room might contain lockers for staff to put their personal possessions in while on shift. There's also almost certainly a table and chairs, a TV, and a VCR (for training videos, or late-night Jackie Chan film festivals).

The manager's office contains all the businessy goodness for the restaurant, from ledgers to order forms to a PC workstation. Many have executive chairs (the roller kind). The tape machines for the security cameras are probably located here, as are older security tapes. The manager's office undoubtedly has extra uniforms, if they're not stored with the dry goods. The timeclock is on the wall between the break room and the manager's office. Note that the manager's office has a lockable door; keep that in mind when the Sleepers show up to sing your Crew a lullaby.

SAMPLE CREW: RUBBLE-RUBBLE

This is a complete single-restaurant crew — with backgrounds, stats, and character hooks — that can be slotted into any friendly neighborhood UA campaign. Used as local Maks, random dukes, or even as pre-generated PCs, the Rubble-Rubble crew aims to please.

All four GMCs are statted at the Global level, and include (under “Notes”) a short list of changes to reset them to Street level.

DEREK ISIDORE

(LIST NAME “SCRATCHER”)

Imagine waking up at forty and realizing you've let your life slip away. Mealy-mouthed good times and run-of-the-mill bad times, sure, but no adventure, no real highs or lows, and precious damn little wine, women, and song. Just a button-down life in a pre-processed world, on the treadmill of work, food, TV, and sleep.

MATT HARPOLD



RUBBLE-RUBBLE CREW MEMBERS MITCHELL VOORHEES, TANYA SUMMER, DEREK ISIDORE, AND ASHOK CHANDRASEKHAR.

Until he discovered the joys of forgery, larceny, and embezzlement, Derek Isidore trudged along on that treadmill, a former child who had dreamed of being a cowboy, an astronaut, the President. Then, one day he understood — really understood — that he'd never bust a bronc, blast off for the Moon, or take a leak in the Rose Garden. He decided to grab what gusto he could with his CPA hands.

He skimmed over a hundred thousand dollars from his clients before he got sloppy. Too many unexpected presents, too many trips to Cancun, too many dance lessons from Arthur Murray. Stupid.

After they caught him, they threw him in the slammer for ten years. Forty-five is not a good time of life to be a new fish. When he thought it could get no worse, his wife divorced him and left town, his mother got put into a state nursing home, and his daughter died in a car accident. He blamed himself (and his absent wife, to a lesser extent).

Behind bars, he became meaner and

tougher to survive, and discovered hidden strengths (and flaws), which no one — least of all Isidore — had ever suspected he possessed. Forced to learn the ropes quickly, he by necessity became a student of criminal culture — his life depended upon it. By the end of his term, he was an old hand and had a great deal of insight into how crime really worked.

Today, he's just another ex-con, trying to keep body and soul together with a counter-jockey job. Most of his socked-away savings went to pay his court costs and fines. All of the ill-gotten loot he'd squirreled away went to get his mother out of the state home and into a private care center.

He brings his life experience and a hard-won understanding of the criminal underground with him. Stories of his time in the joint and his lost dreams intrigued co-worker Tanya, who revealed Mak Attax to him. Isidore sees the Maks as a bunch of good-hearted kids, with impressive mojo and a genuinely altruistic philosophy, but he's terrified of what they could

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become if really cornered: if the Magickal Revolution becomes a matter of life and death, what will they do? Because he's seen how danger and hardship can remake a person, first-hand.

STATS

Personality: Sagittarius. He's had enough of people telling him when to stand, walk, eat, sleep, whatever; he's not gonna take it, and he's not gonna dish it out.

Obsession: Derek Isidore has no obsession.

Wound Points: 45.

Rage Stimulus: Betrayal (unless the traitor has been coerced).

Fear Stimulus: Being forcibly restrained: flashbacks to the prison laundry. (Helplessness)

Noble Stimulus: Aid the innocent — they have no idea what the world is really like.

Body: 45 (Aging)

General Athletics 20%, Endure Discomfort 37%, Shank You (Struggle) 28%

Speed: 65 (Twitchy)

Dancing 25%, Dodge 35%, Drive a Crappy Car 20%, Initiative 55%

Mind: 75 (Too Smart for his Own Good)

Conceal 35%, Criminal Lore 20%, ex-CPA (General Education) 55%, Eyes Peeled (Notice) 30%

Soul: 55 (Quietly Confident)

Charm 24%, Mak Attax 5%, Make You Believe It (Lie) 45%, Prison Buddies 15%

Criminal Lore. This represents ten years of reading about, listening to, and learning from criminals. Isidore knows about famous crooks (living and dead), legendary heists, a little Cockney rhyming slang, a smattering of law, and how to tell if someone's a "made man."

Prison Buddies. Isidore met a lot of guys in the joint. This skill is a lower-grade version of A Friend in the Family (see UA2, p. 43); instead

of one pal, Isidore's got quite a few, but they're more acquaintances than true-blue friends.

Violence: 1 Hardened 1 Failed

Unnatural: 0 Hardened 0 Failed

Helplessness: 1 Hardened 1 Failed

Isolation: 1 Hardened 0 Failed

Self: 0 Hardened 1 Failed

POSSESSIONS

He has a studio apartment, a secondhand laptop computer, a beat up Reliant K-Car, and not much else.

NOTES

Isidore is the nominal "Crew Chief" for the Rubble-Rubble Crew, despite his absolute refusal of authority. The others still defer to him. For his part, he sees being there for the Crew as an opportunity to make up for not being there for his daughter.

He knows version 1.1 of the Ritual of Lesser Correspondence. He hasn't really learned the Ritual of Fealty, but tried it once, and the strange sensations he felt have dissuaded him from doing it again.

Street-level Version: Body 40; Speed 60; Mind 65; WP 40; *Dancing 15%; ex-CPA 45%; Crime Stories 15%; Notice 20%; Make You Believe It (Lie) 25%.*

HOOKS

- A PC/GMC could be one of Isidore's prison buddies, or involved with (or even be) Isidore's ex-wife.
- Isidore's mother might become possessed, if the GM feels that being afflicted with Alzheimer's reduces a person's ability to stave off such attempts.
- One of the PCs/GMCs could have had his savings embezzled and frittered away by Isidore back before he got caught.

TANYA SUMMER

(LIST NAME "2NDSTORY")

Tanya's a bad girl from the streets who spent

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her share of time in Juvie. Fast, in all senses of the word, baby; has a thing for dangerous boys (not men, boys). Carries a switchblade and knows how to use it. Likes nothing better than being where she shouldn't be, especially if she has to break in to get there. Loves to "spelunk" abandoned buildings. Sometimes there's even stuff she can rip off to sell.

Atop a dead hotel, she found the pigeon coop. Perches full of motionless bird-dolls, feathers molting to show shiny wheels and corroded chains. Clockworks. She wound a few up and watched them — at least the ones that didn't burst, break, or snap — hop, peck, coo, and flap. She ended up telling the geek at work (Mitchell Voorhees) about them, since he seemed to know about freaky crap like that. Voorhees helped her sell three of them for a pretty penny to an old Hungarian man smelling of bicycle grease and lemon cough drops. The mix of cash and secrets fueled her interest; when Voorhees told her about Mak Attax, she immediately signed on. Hell yeah. She sees magick as a way to get money and see wacky stuff. Why not?

After hearing Derek Isidore's stories of the bad men in the Big House, she told him about the pigeons and Mak Attax.

STATS

Personality: Pisces. Summer is pretty much a lazy slacker. But when the shit hits the fan, she's five by five and fully alive.

Obsession: Breaking & Entering. Trespassing signs are for other people, man.

Wound Points: 75.

Rage Stimulus: Bossy people. What gives them the right to tell her what to do?

Fear Stimulus: Summer's scared of Pornomancers. She's not sure who they are or what they do, but the name just makes her flesh goose-pimple. (The Unnatural)

Noble Stimulus: Liberation. Seeing or helping someone get free: of bonds, of bad situations, of cumbersome rules and regs, of tired old social mores.

Body: 75 (Fine!)

All That And A Bag of Chips 20%, *Climbing* 45%, *Half-Court B-Ball (General Athletics)* 20%, *Switchblade Symphony (Struggle)* 50%

Speed: 75 (Greased Lightning)

Cat-like Tread 42%, *Dodge* 50%, *Driving* 15%, *Initiative* 55%

Mind: 45 (School's Out For Evar!)

Conceal 30%, *General Education* 15%, *Notice* 30%, *Breaking & Entering* 45%.

Soul: 45 (Like, whatever)

Charm 15%, *Intimidate* 15%, *Lie* 15%, *Mak Attax* 25%, *Sing Along With Radio* 10%

All That And A Bag of Chips. See Distracting Physique (UA2, p. 39).

Cat-like Tread. Move quietly as well as on narrow paths.

Violence: 2 Hardened 1 Failed

Unnatural: 1 Hardened 2 Failed

Helplessness: 0 Hardened 0 Failed

Isolation: 0 Hardened 0 Failed

Self: 0 Hardened 0 Failed

POSSESSIONS

A switchblade, lock picks, jimmy bar, duct tape, a whole B&E kit. Some kickin' threads, nice and showy costume jewelry, an assortment of shoes and bags. Six different shades of hair dye; eight of nail polish; fourteen of lipstick. Has a room in a group house for wayward girls whose curfew she has to sneak around. Has a stereo with more rap than most people know exists. She's also kept one of the clockwork pigeons, and when she's sad she winds it up to hear it coo and wonders where her life is gonna go.

NOTES

Summer is the muscle of the Crew, though she's never really had to do much than get kind of scary and snap out her switchblade. She thinks



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of Isidore as a favorite uncle, Chandrasekhar as a possible lover, and Voorhees as a useful but irritating little brother.

She knows version 1.1 of the Ritual of Lesser Correspondence, along with the Ritual of Fealty, which she's done several times now and believes she's started to "feel it working."

Street-level Version: Body 65; Speed 65; WP 65; *Cat-like Tread* 27%; *Climbing* 35%; *Conceal* 25%; *Dodge* 30%; *Initiative* 35%; *Switchblade Symphony (Struggle)* 45%.

HOOKS

- A PC or GMC could have been in the half-way house or juvenile hall with Tanya.
- Any male PC/GMC could be an ex-boyfriend of hers, so long as he appears to be at least a little "dangerous."
- A PC/GMC could have bought something odd that Tanya found in an abandoned place.

ASHOK CHANDRASEKHAR

(LIST NAME "KID-HANUMAN")

First-generation American of Indian descent, from Texas. That's Calcutta Indian, mind you. And, as Ashok would be the first to tell you in his Texas drawl, it made for an interesting childhood.

Indeed, if you get to know the guy — and that's not hard to do, he's an open sort — he'll tell you stories of days in Corpus Christi that'll make you laugh, afternoons in San Antonio that'll make you cry, and nights in Austin that'll make you shake your head in disbelief. One of those stories is how he had a dream in which Ganesh told him flat out that he was Henry Ford reincarnated. But then P.T. Barnum fed the god a peanut and Chandasekhar turned into a duck.

Maybe three years after that, he discovered a talent that lends credence to that three-burrito dream: Chandasekhar can figure out what's wrong with a car just by touching it and listening. He gets cars, and they get him. Smoking his clove cigarettes, he drives like a bat out of

hell, and the engines just sing. He's like a horse whisperer for cars.

The announcement that he'd decided to go to college for Mechanical Engineering didn't go over well with parents who'd decided he'd be a doctor like the rest of them. Neither did the summer he spent working in a body shop: his mother made him come in the back door and shower *twice* before he could say hello. His father would regularly go into his room, tear down the NASCAR posters, and burn them. Family fun times.

He started eating beef at college. He doesn't call home more than once a month. He started dating, and few of his girlfriends met with his family's approval. And when they heard he was working for the Scotsman, they stopped picking up the phone. He cares, but acts like he doesn't. He's got to be himself, and either they'll get with the program, or they won't.

He got to be friends with Mitchell Voorhees. The teenage geek was the little brother and buddy he always wanted, and he's a fan of the vidiot's fetish show. After Chandasekhar spilled the beans one night about his "Car-Whisperer" ability, Voorhees told him about Mak Attax. Sounded like a good idea to him: bringing power to the people. Great!

STATS

Personality: Taurus. He perseveres doing his own thing, and that's that. But tick him off, and he quietly tramples you into dust.

Obsession: Cars: building them, caring for them, healing them, but — most of all — driving them. (Drive)

Wound Points: 60.

Rage Stimulus: Stupid Drivers. Ashok is in total control behind the wheel, and cannot suffer fools near him on the road.

Fear Stimulus: Doctors. (Helplessness) They act like they know more than you do, and they're right. Creepy.

Noble Stimulus: One for All. Friends are more important than family; after all, you choose

your friends — a self-defining act of free will. Your friends, in some ways, are *you*.

Body: 60 (Built Tough)
General Athletics 30%, *Wrassle (Struggle)* 35%, *Work Without Rest* 35%

Speed: 60 (Nimble)
Dodge 20%, *Drive Like Vin Diesel* 55%, *Initiative* 30%, *Target Shooter (Firearms)* 35%

Mind: 60 (Steel Trap)
Conceal 15%, *Fix Cars* 35%, *Mechanical Engineering (General Education)* 35%, *NASCAR Lore* 20%, *Notice* 25%, *Speak Hindi* 15%

Soul: 60 (Deep)
Car-Whisperer 45%, *Charm* 30%, *Lie* 20%, *Mak Attax* 15%

Car-Whisperer. This skill allows Chandasekhar to diagnose mechanical or systemic problems (ranging from “low on gas” to “need to replace serpentine belt” to “brake lines have been cut”) currently afflicting a motor vehicle, simply by touching any part of the vehicle and concentrating. Sometimes, if the problem is severe enough, this ability activates automatically (-20% shift) as the car screams out that something’s wrong.

Work Without Rest. A successful roll allows Chandasekhar to avoid impairment due to loss of sleep on physical tasks.

Violence:	1 Hardened	0 Failed
Unnatural:	0 Hardened	1 Failed
Helplessness:	0 Hardened	0 Failed
Isolation:	1 Hardened	1 Failed
Self:	1 Hardened	1 Failed

POSSESSIONS

Off-campus apartment (with parking), a tricked-out bottle-green ‘72 Dodge Dart, a damn good set of mechanic’s tools, a footlocker full of college textbooks, a CO2 target pistol, and about \$120 in savings.

NOTES

Ashok is the quietly-capable wheelman of the Crew. He’s good friends with Voorhees. He has a crush on Summer, but hasn’t said anything — he doesn’t think she’s interested. He respects Derek Isidore’s life experience, but not his past judgment.

He knows version 1.0 of the Ritual of Lesser Correspondence. He’s learned the Ritual of Fealty, and attempted it a handful of times as a form of meditation, with interesting results.

Street-level Version: all stats become 55; WP 55; *Charm* 15%, *General Athletics* 20%, *Initiative* 22%, *Lie* 15%, *Mechanical Engineering (General Education)* 30%, *NASCAR Lore* 15%, *Notice* 20%, *Target Shooting (Firearms)* 25%, *Work Without Rest* 25%, *Wrassle (Struggle)* 30%.

HOOKS

- Ashok may have helped a PC/GMC customer having engine trouble.
- PC/GMC might be a college classmate of Ashok’s.
- PC/GMC might be a medical colleague of one of Ashok’s relations.

MITCHELL VOORHEES

(LIST NAME “COMMANDER_V”)

At age six, Mitchell Voorhees knew that the world inside the magick box was looking out at him. “Isn’t it funny, Irma,” adults would say to his indulgent mother, “how he talks to the people on TV, and then waits, and then talks again, just like he’s having a conversation. Kids!” Much tut-tutting and shaking of heads.

Hearing the people on TV say things only he could hear confused Voorhees for years. He retreated into worlds of fantasy and fringe science, trying to understand if this sense indicated a blessing, a curse, or manipulation by alien forces. He read widely. He absorbed information. His mind slowly bent out of true.

Living the adolescence of the quintessential nerd — comics, video games, science fiction,



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bad at sports, out of shape, lacking social development — didn't help. Even the other geeks shunned him: Voorhees, brilliant and possessing a tremendous amount of potential for Emotional Intelligence (Soul of 80!), hasn't yet smartened up to the fact that bludgeoning other kids with his intellect won't make him friends. It just makes him a bigger target. The beatings and the laughter and the ostracism tightened his mental screws further. And, because of the depth of his sensitive nature, this led to great personal turmoil.

The camel's back finally broke a couple years ago. The straw was the premiere of a new science-fiction show titled *Warstar-7*. The first words spoken in the pilot were this: "Only Mitchell can help us now." The dialogue entered the fifteen year-old's ears, combusted in his head, and set him afire. He finally understood. Mitchell Voorhees is a prodigy of magick — a self-taught Videomancer.

Clarke's Third Law states that "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic." Voorhees believes that assertion — body, mind, and soul. He believes that what his fellow Maks are talking about is science, not superstition, even if it cannot be readily understood at this time. In the future, all will become clear. In the meantime, he uses the technobabble of his fetish show to describe anything Unnatural he encounters. Mak Attax is trying to bring that future about, and Voorhees wants to be in the vanguard, just like his hero, Captain Santiago Church. He discovered Mak Attax online, and through badgering and judicious use of magick, got permission from his mother to work for the Clown. After he worked in a restaurant, it became a lot easier to join the conspiracy. He was the vector through which the other three members of the crew signed up.

STATS

Personality: Leo. He's got the arrogance and the insatiable desire for approval down, but hasn't quite learned the upsides — leadership

and authority. Basically an annoying geek, but one with great potential.

Obsession: The future we see makes the future we live, and TV is the most powerful tool for shaping that vision (Videomancy).

Wound Points: 40.

Rage Stimulus: Stupid People. When someone displays ignorance or mental density in front of him, Voorhees loses it like Bill Gates on the witness stand.

Fear Stimulus: Pretty people. They always make him feel inadequate. (Isolation)

Noble Stimulus: The Future. Voorhees believes in a better world, and knows that if folks really thought about the ramifications of their actions, they'd help make that better world.

Body: 40 (Doughy)

Annoying Geek 25%, General Athletics 15%, Judo (Struggle) 20%, Who Needs Sleep? 20%

Speed: 40 (Slow)

Console Games 25%, Dodge 35%, Drive 20%, Initiative 20%

Mind: 80 (Bona fide Genius)

Computers (General Education) 50%, Conceal 20%, Nerd Lore 30%, Notice 30%, TV Trivia 40%

Soul: 80 (Deafened By His Own Emotions)

Charm 15%, Play Clarinet 15%, Lie 15%, Magick: Videomancy 45%, Mak Attax 25%.

Annoying Geek. See Distracting Physique (UA2, p. 39).

Who Needs Sleep? A successful roll allows Voorhees to avoid impairment due to loss of sleep on mental tasks.

Violence:	0 Hardened	0 Failed
Unnatural:	3 Hardened	1 Failed
Helplessness:	0 Hardened	0 Failed
Isolation:	0 Hardened	2 Failed
Self:	0 Hardened	0 Failed

UNKNOWN
ARMIES

POSSESSIONS

Voorhees owns little of his basic necessities — he still lives at home with mom — but has a great deal of luxuries: comic books, video games, RPG sourcebooks, SF&F novels, and a completist's collection of *Warstar-7* junk. He wears a Starforce badge on his Scotsman's uniform. The most interesting curio he has in his grubby little mitts is a production prop of a "Pulsator Pistol" used on *Warstar-7*, which he got off eBay. He's pretty sure he can enchant it — er, "synergize it with the hyperstitial fields" — so that it can be used as it is on the show, to stun people. (A particularly kind GM might allow this to work thusly: if Voorhees puts a significant charge through the enchanted prop, he can force an Unnatural Stress Check. Rank of the Check is equal to the tens place on the roll against Magick: Videomancy, and duration of the "stun" is equal to the ones place, in minutes.)

NOTES

Warstar-7 follows the dauntless crew of the eponymous Galactic Alliance cruiser under the command of Captain Santiago Church. Other characters of interest include Una (the bipolar alien female, possessing a hyper-intelligent but standoffish and frigid "winter form" and a hypersexual but impulsive and hot-blooded "summer form"), Sergeant Bach (the genetically-engineered warrior), and Robo-Alpha-Lambda-Four, aka "RALF" (the mechanoid engineer). While purest space opera, the show has lasted several years through a combination of good writers, excellent performances, and a modicum of critical praise. Some in the Occult Underground claim to see subtle indicators that at least some of the writers are clued-in, pointing to things like the Archons (a pantheon of immaterial aliens who can possess humans and grant them powers), the Sandmen (an alien race dedicated to euthanizing the entire galaxy), and "the Niamreg" (a melancholy immortal doomed to wander the stars forever). There's a rumor that Dirk Allen sold at least

two script treatments to the *Warstar-7* story editor. Who knows?

Voorhees has formalized one *Warstar-7* focused formula spell called "Captain Church's Fight Theme." For a significant charge, he can use his Magick skill in place of his Struggle skill, as long as he keeps humming the tune or for five minutes, whichever comes first. He then uses the Captain's signature fighting moves, like the locked fists brought down on someone's back. He also quickly gets rips in his clothes and arcing red wounds that are no worse than paper cuts, which look very dramatic.

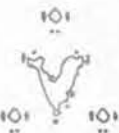
For the Rubble-Rubble crew, Voorhees is the Geek of All Trades: computer man, meaningless trivia man, and "butt of jokes"-man. But he always comes through in the clinch. He's a little scared of Isidore (because he's a criminal) and Summer (because she's beautiful), but nearly worships the ground Chandasekhar walks on.

He knows both versions of the Ritual of Lesser Correspondence, as well as the Ritual of Fealty and Plague of Hiccups (see *UA2*, p. 97). He's done the Fealty ritual numerous times, because it helps him to feel like he finally belongs somewhere. And for that, Voorhees is eternally grateful: he'd die for the cause. He wants, desperately, to get onto the Brainfood List.

Street-level Version: Body 30, Speed 30; WP 30; *Computers (General Education)* 35%, *Dodge* 15%, *Judo (Struggle)* 15%, *Nerd Lore* 25%, *Notice* 20%, *TV Trivia* 20%, *Who Needs Sleep?* 15%

HOOKS

- A PC/GMC may own a piece of *Warstar-7* memorabilia that Voorhees is slaving for.
- A PC/GMC may share the name of an actor who played a bit part on *Warstar-7*; Voorhees comes looking for an autograph.
- A PC/GMC could need to double-check the ingredients for a ritual, which is unfortunately pop-culture encoded; Voorhees could help



UNKNOWN
ARMIES

CHAT ATTAX

Message 42067 of 42073

LET'S PURCHASE A HAUNTED HOUSE

I live in Guernsey. That's an island in the English Channel for all you Yanks. There is a genuine haunted house for sale in Torteval, nearby. This is the real thing! There are records of unnatural phenomena associated with the location going back to 1810. In fact, they may go back much, *much* farther. This thing may have been haunted since before the British started garrisoning the island in 1066!

Anyway, this house has been the epicenter for many and varied paranormal phenomena: cold spots, poltergeist activity, and something that sounds like the "furry time" described on the list a few months back. It's now on sale for £185,500. This is very cheap for the area.

I believe that buying this house serves several purposes.

- 1) As I am an experienced adept, my crew and I are far better equipped to deal with any paranormal incidents than unsuspecting 'normals.'
- 2) If we can ascertain the nature of the supernatural phenomena taking place at this house, Mak Attax as a whole will be better equipped if we run into something similar elsewhere.
- 3) Getting hard, demonstrable, 'scientific' proof from the site would go far towards making people receptive to the idea of magick.
- 4) It's not impossible that we might be able to harness the power there for our own purposes.

NEEDED

- £5,000. I've got the rest of the down payment myself. The dollar is strong, so now's a good time to contribute! Any acknowledged member of Mak Attax will be welcome at the house as long as I own it!

- Anyone with psychometry can stay at the house as long as s/he is willing to help me delve into its history and unravel its secrets. If I get the

RADIANT ROCHESTER

I'd like to gather people to enact the Ritual of Light at the bicentennial for Rochester NY...

FIND THE FREAK

The occult phenomena known as 'the Freak,' 'el Chupacabra' and 'Mothman' are actually the same thing...

OCCULT ARCHEOLOGY AT RENNES-LE-CHATEAU

If learning the truth about the Templars, the Merovingians and the Rosicrucians doesn't appeal, how about plain ol' *treasure*?...

THE GHOSTS OF CROATAN

The ghosts of the lost Roanoke colony still haunt the Great Dismal Swamp, North Carolina, and the entire USA...

INVESTIGATE THE HAND OF GLORY

I have sixteen different recipies for a Hand of Glory and I've got most of the ingredients...

FIND OUT THE TRUTH ABOUT THE SLEEPERS

Return-Path: <MA-request@purpletape.cs.uchicago.edu>
X-Sent: 27 Oct 1990 02:58:19 GMT
Subject: RE: [MA] Abduction Experiences
Date: Sat, 27 Oct 1990 19:58:11 -0700
x-sender: (undisclosed)
From: Corey <worldnutt@hotmail.com>

>>Which makes me realize the whole deal was probably just an example of >>Sleep
>Paralysis, aka Old Hag Syndrome. (I'm not certain where, but I >>remember reading
>about the hallucinations associated with said event >>mainly being of women,
>which is what reminded me, but now I can't find a >>source to back that up.)

>Yeah, I remember hearing/reading somewhere that some substantial >percentage of
the population has hallucinated waking up with someone >sitting on their chest --
the full bore thing, visual and somatic >sensations. Any of y'all had this?

Well, not exactly...

I started having hag dreams when I was in high school; for a long time I had one or two a year, usually during high-stress periods. The form they usually take is for me to "wake up" in whatever room I'm sleeping in, lying on my back, able to see the ceiling very clearly (unusual since I really can't see detail more than a foot or two away without my glasses; it's also interesting to note that the light is always correct -- if it happens while I'm napping during the day, then it's daylight, etc.). I lay there a while, gradually becoming aware of a vague physical discomfort; eventually I try to shift position -- and discover I can't. At this point, I begin to perceive another presence in the room, off to one side, somewhere beyond my peripheral vision -- if I'm near a window, it's often right outside; otherwise it's usually to my right and behind. It then becomes very important for me to *look* towards the presence; there's a feeling that I'm in some danger if I can't look at it -- only of course I can't move. Eventually this develops into a full-fledged panic attack, as I desperately try to move to dispel the growing Evil Presence before it can Get Me; usually I end up making enough noise to make myself wake up, though sometimes I'm also awakened by a loud noise nearby. (I still feel a karmic debt to the person who bounced a basketball off my wall and woke me up once in high school.) Curious thing, here -- when I wake up, I open my eyes; the room loses detail as I do (glasses, remember?) but otherwise is the same as the "dream", including the lighting. I've never been able to properly rectify this with the standard explanations of sleep paralysis.

Anyway. The "peak" of my hag dreams came the year after I graduated from college. By that point, I'd learned to recognize them for what they were within the dream, and knew to consciously try and make noise, rather than just trying to move. So when I started having a hag dream, I tried to take to control; I started trying to speak, while thinking to myself over and over "It's only a dream. I just need to wake myself up. The Evil Presence is just my own panic. Stay in control. There's no one else in the room..."

Then a voice spoke: "That's exactly what I want you to think." And I felt a hand suddenly laid on my chest -- It's been nine years but I can still remember distinctly feeling each finger on the hand, and the scrape of the long fingernails as they slid across my ribs...

I was afraid to go back to sleep for a good 24-36 hours after that one.

I've had hag dreams since, though they're much less frequent; but I make a point to let myself be scared now. It feels... safer, somehow.

-Corey



A black and white photograph showing a wooden crate with its lid open. Inside the crate, a large, dark, rectangular sign is visible. The sign features the McDonald's logo, which includes the golden arches and the word "McDonald's" in a bold, sans-serif font. The sign is tilted slightly to the right. The crate is made of light-colored wood and has a rough, weathered appearance. The background is dark and indistinct.

McDonald's

YOU DESERVE A BREAK. BUT TODAY IS THE HAMMER.

Hey, foodtube — have some fries with your universal transcendence! The bizarre occult conspiracy known as Mak Attax wants to upsize your soul, one fast-food burger at a time, until we all go dancing out the doorways of the luminous clown's thousands of mystically aligned restaurants and into a bold new future of magickal enlightenment. The men and women of Mak Attax are dreamers, cranks, agitators, crackpots, idealists, saboteurs, poseurs, fanatics, and everything in between. The rest of the Occult Underground thinks they're either complete losers or the most dangerous threat the world has ever faced. But no matter what goes down the Meks hang tough, wash their hands regularly, and serve up a value meal of mojo *their* way.

Contents Include:

The Mak Attax Story • Major GMCs • Assorted Crews • New Artifacts • New Rituals • New Avatar: The Loyal Laborer • Four New Adepts: The Anagram Gematriast, The Geomancer, The Herpemancer, and The Plutophage • Rules for Familiars • Scenario Hooks • All Cooked In 100% Pure Canola Oil



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