

UNHANNON A-REVEAL

BOOK THREE: REVEAL





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To our legions of alpha, beta, and gamma playtesters and to our generous backers — this game exists because of you! You did this!

We are the music makers,
And we are the dreamers of dreams,
Wandering by lone sea-breakers,
And sitting by desolate streams; —
World-losers and world-forsakers,
On whom the pale moon gleams:
Yet we are the movers and shakers
Of the world for ever, it seems.
Ode, Arthur O'Shaughnessy

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INTRODUCTIONS AND REVELATIONS

WHAT IS THIS?

Book Three: Reveal is an encyclopedic reference work for *Unknown Armies*. It's mostly for the gamemaster (GM), but since the GM is free to ignore, twist, embellish, or tease the contents, don't expect to find all their secrets here.

Each chapter is assigned a letter of the alphabet. This is mostly for the benefit of finding things by name, but it's likely you won't know what you're looking for in here until you see it. Rather, *Book*

Three: Reveal is at its most useful when you flip open to a page and read something that you'd like to introduce during your antagonist phase, the prep work you do before you run a game session. Some of this material points back to *Book Two: Run*, but much of it only appears in here.

We suggest browsing it when you're sitting in one place for any length of time without much else to do. You know what we're talking about.

COMMON DEFINITIONS

Here are some entries we felt you'd probably like to have pulled all the way out of alphabetical order and into this introduction, because they're terms and setting elements you are going to use a lot. We've already covered all of this in *Book One: Play* and *Book Two: Run*, but you're looking at *Book Three: Reveal* right now, so here it is.

ADEPT

Adepts are people who can harness magick, which is a fancy way of saying that pressing their will and actions against the normal grain of society and the cosmos generates friction, and they have found ways to apply that friction to get what they want. All adepts have some set of meaningful, strict parameters to which they must adhere in order to bridge the gap between "what I will" and "the world as-is," taking the form of taboos and ritualized behaviors. The more of their quirky rites they practice, the larger their bankroll of occult energy, typically called "charges," becomes. Eventually, they discharge it to make events occur. Violating a "taboo" — prohibited behaviors that are typical to normal folks — robs them of their energy, with no payoff.

Adepts have been observed with charging behaviors as varied as compulsive photography, self-harm, and human sacrifice. Known taboos have included prohibitions against being seen naked, speaking in the first person, and being rained on.

Many adepts are considered to be agents of entropy, because they disrupt the established expectations of society, or logic, or physics. But

many adepts consider themselves to be followers of order — a different and superior order to that which binds and blinds the ignorant and mundane.

THE BIG LIST OF ADEPT SCHOOLS

There are many, many schools and individual traditions of magick practiced by adepts, more than we could possibly list. Here is the list of all schools mentioned or included in either this book or in *Book One: Play*.

- Agrimancy (*Book One: Play*, page 139)
- Amoromancy (page 12)
- Annihilomancy (page 12)
- Bibliomancy (page 15)
- Cameraturgy (*Book One: Play*, page 143)
- Cinemancy (*Book One: Play*, page 147)
- Cliomancy (page 25)
- Cryptomancy (page 28)
- Dipsomancy (page 32)
- Entropomancy (page 36)
- Epideromancy (page 37)
- Fulminaturgy (*Book One: Play*, page 151)
- Geomancy (page 44)
- GNOMON (*Book Two: Run*, page 58)
- Herpemancy (page 47)
- Iconomancy (page 51)
- Infomancy (page 51)
- Irascimancy (page 51)
- Kleptomancy (page 55)
- Mechanomancy (page 61)
- Moturnancy (*Book One: Play*, page 155)
- Narco-Alchemy (page 63)
- Oneiromancy (page 67)
- Personamancy (page 72)
- Plutomancy (page 73)
- Plutophagy (page 73)
- Pornomancy (page 73)
- Refumancy (*Book One: Play*, page 128)
- Sociomancy (*Book One: Play*, page 159)
- Thanatomancy (page 87)

RESIDUE

what remains when the essence of something evaporates
poems are the residue of poets

Time and
cosmos.

Infinity
and void.

The woman
who
created
the world
was the
first
one who
measured
it.

- Urbanomancy (page 99)
- Vestimancy (*Book One: Play*, page 163)
- Viaturgy (*Book One: Play*, page 167)
- Videomancy (page 101)

ARCHETYPE

Many mystics believe there are archetypes of human behavior that have an independent, largely unchanging existence outside of and separate from all the people who conform to them. They say that the role of "Mother" exists apart from women who've given birth, and that if all women were gone there would still be a Platonic maternal ideal dwelling in a hazy sort of idea space called the Statosphere.

According to a theory inarticulately promulgated by writer, alcoholic, and accused murderer Dirk Allen, there's a limit to how many archetypes the cosmos can tolerate. When they reach a critical mass of 333, the Statosphere collapses into a singularity — the Big Bang of a new reality. This is believed to have happened many times.

Another name for the current slate of archetypes is the Invisible Clergy.

THE BIG LIST OF ARCHETYPES

There's a limit of 333 archetypes, and there's no way we're going to include all of those (and any list you might come up with stands a good chance of changing before you're finished). The following archetypes are mentioned in either this book or *Book One: Play*.

- The Captain (*Book One: Play*, page 97)
- The Chronicler (page 24)
- The Confessor (page 28)
- The Demagogue (page 32)
- The Executioner (page 39)
- The Explorer (*Book One: Play*, page 100)
- The Firebrand (*Book One: Play*, page 101)
- The Fool (*Book One: Play*, page 103)
- The Flying Woman (page 41)
- The Guide (*Book One: Play*, page 105)
- The Hacker (*Book One: Play*, page 106)
- The Healer (page 47)
- The Hunter (page 50)
- The Judge (page 53)
- The Loyal Laborer (page 58)
- The Martyr (page 59)
- The Masterless Man (page 60)
- The Merchant (page 61)
- The Messenger (*Book One: Play*, page 107)
- The Mother (*Book One: Play*, page 108)
- The MVP (page 61)
- The Naked Goddess (*Book One: Play*, page 109)
- The Necessary Servant (page 63)
- The Opportunist (*Book One: Play*, page 111)
- The Outsider (page 68)
- The Peacemaker (page 71)
- The Pilgrim (page 72)
- The Rebel (page 77)
- The Savage (page 81)
- The Scholar (page 81)
- The Solid Citizen (*Book One: Play*, page 112)
- The Sexual Rebis (page 82)
- The Star (*Book One: Play*, page 113)
- The Survivor (*Book One: Play*, page 115)

- The Trickster (page 91)
- The True King (*Book One: Play*, page 116)
- The Two-Faced Man (page 91)
- The Unsung Champion (*Book One: Play*, page 118)
- The Warrior (*Book One: Play*, page 120)

AVATAR

Humans who behave like archetypes, either accidentally or on purpose, become avatars. The vast and subtle power of patrons in the Statosphere descends upon avatars. The more closely they hew to their type, and the longer they maintain the connection, the more the cosmos rewards them.

Like adepts, avatars bridge the gap between their internal hopes and the world of matter around them. Also like adepts, they have to avoid taboos that break the symbolism that amplifies their beliefs and will. Unlike adepts, avatars go along with the cosmic status quo, and are rewarded for their collusion by being lucky or protected or enhanced.

Avatars are often regarded as agents of order, because they are aided in their endeavors by established cosmic principles, and because they in turn reinforce those known and expected roles. However, some of those archetypes are unpredictable, fierce, destructive, and cruel. Moreover, those who believe archetypes can be unseated or altered cite the actions of traitor avatars as the most likely agency for such changes. That leads some to regard them as eminent agents of entropy.

CHARGER

"Charger" is a slang term within some English-speaking mystic subcultures, referring to someone with a decent degree of influence, knowledge, and importance. Like most terms that pick up any currency, it has layers of meaning. Some associate it with the idea of mystic "charges" that adepts acquire and spend to cast their spells. Someone who can reap charges is a charger and therefore deserving of respect. Others believe it came from the connection to horses, because people who get involved in the occult underground tend to charge with tremendous determination, whether or not that's warranted or wise. It's even been bruited about that they're like cell phone chargers — without them, everything stops working because they connect to power sources, of one sort or another.

CHECKER

In the game of checkers, all the pieces start out of equal value, though position may make one more useful and another more protected. In the slang of 21st century English-speaking mysticism, a checker is a person who has an interest in the occult, but who has not yet done anything unusual or distinguished. Checkers are on the board, which makes them more involved than ignorant ordinary folks, but aren't expected to have a lot of ability or insight.

Then again, checkers is an unusually egalitarian game. In the more elitist game of chess, the populous-but-unimportant pieces are pawns, and in common parlance, pawns are people who get moved without ever understanding the manipulator who grasps them. They might take down a rook or a knight, but they're ultimately just the servants of their player.

In checkers, any piece can jump over a string of foes, possibly even reaching the back row and transforming into

something far more impressive, even as pawns can become queens. Similarly, an occult checker may be a little green, but that doesn't mean he's completely contemptible. People surprise you, and the guy who was a joke last month may be dictating terms when he reaches the back row. Of course, someone who dictates terms is probably considered a charger.

DEMON

Most people, the lucky kind, think demons are mythological — pure evil monsters that possess people so they can undermine the natural order of things. Those who are a little less fortunately ignorant know they're real. Intangible, amoral and incredibly destructive, demons are mostly a threat to those who summon them, or who play at doing so. They know hideous secrets, crave the dressing of human form, and often seem as random as they are cruel.

The most informed people know that demons aren't fallen angels: they're fallen humans, dead people who couldn't move on and who are now entirely unbound by the moderating impulses of instinct. They can still be bargained with, sometimes to advantage, but even if you know a demon used to be your best friend, it doesn't mean it's more likely to deal honestly with you. If anything, it's likely to be worse.

THE BIG LIST OF UNNATURAL ENTITIES

In both *Book Two: Run* and this book, there are a number of truly terrifying and disturbing monsters categorized as "unnatural entities." They're not demons, they're the other shreds of reality existing alongside humanity and usually entirely hidden from sight or knowledge. This list tells you where to find them.

- Abandonment Tissues (Adult and Child) (page 9)
- Astral Parasites (page 14)
- Claws (page 25)
- Compensarians (page 27)
- Diametrics (*Book Two: Run*, page 110)
- Don't Sleeps (page 33)
- Fiends (*Book Two: Run*, page 107)
- The Gentleman (page 44)
- Grounding Lovers (page 45)
- Happy Cat Mask (page 46)
- Honeypots (page 49)
- Kindly Dead (page 55)
- Kuchisake-onna (page 56)
- Lonely Ones (page 57)
- Peris Thieves (page 71)
- Revengefuls (page 78)
- Stains (page 84)
- Surgical Teams (page 84)
- Taggers (page 85)
- Time Leeches (page 89)
- Trash Golems (page 91)
- Unfamiliars (page 98)
- Wheezehounds (page 102)
- Whisperers (*Book Two: Run*, page 109)

GODWALKER

Those who subscribe to the theory that all probability is governed from the Statsphere by ex-human archetypes whose avatars pursue their objectives more directly usually believe in a sort of superior avatar — the godwalker. Whichever avatar best embodies the behaviors of the archetype approaches the Statsphere more closely, and is especially favored with uncanny powers that don't defy the laws of physics so much as ignore them entirely. Godwalkers put their own spin on the meaning of the archetype and have unique abilities that reflect their private agendas.

Should a godwalker come to reflect the popular consciousness of the archetype better than the previously ascended person, a replacement occurs. The godwalker becomes the archetype, and the archetype is expelled back into the material realm by way of the House of Renunciation — now incarnate and mortal, the former archetype must oppose and destroy everything she previously embodied and nurtured. But given the limits of mere humanity, such fallen spirits are usually just bitter, maladjusted cranks, easily dismissed as crazy if you can't verify the fading memories they retain from their time as immortal social principles.

A supportive godwalker is an archetype's best friend. They can directly perceive and influence human affairs in concrete ways that are difficult, or even impossible, to achieve from the Statsphere. When aligned, they're an archetype's strong right hand. But a godwalker who has a different approach can replace her patron. If that approach has greater mindshare than the original, the godwalker becomes a knife at the archetype's throat. A contrary godwalker might be the only thing that truly threatens an archetype.

INVISIBLE CLERGY

One occult theory holds that the universe resembles, in principle, nothing so much as a republican democracy. As social roles, or archetypes, become more and more common, and occupy an increasing share of humankind's attention, people who best embody the type are forced out of material reality into a higher plane called the Statsphere. Those ascended archetypes are, collectively, known as the Invisible Clergy.

Within this cosmology, the Clergy holds the position usually occupied by goddesses and gods. They clash, meddle in the affairs of humankind, pursue ideological agendas, and are dread and potent though unseen. Unlike gods, it's believed that they can be expelled — flung from heaven if a mortal ever supplants their position in the mindspace of the living. That person replaces the archetype, giving a new flavor to all social interactions involving that idea. If a lecherous, selfish person becomes the new Bureaucrat, all mortal bureaucrats are going to feel a pull to be licentious and thoughtless. More commonly, the shifts are procedural, as in the change of the Hunter

Compare charger and checker to "Duke" on page 35 and "Lord" on page 58.

More rules for demons can be found in Book Two: Run at "Demons" on page 101.

to reflect skip tracer and detectives over people killing animals for their plates.

PONY

Pony is slang term within the occult underground meaning someone who's a tool, stooge, or patsy. A non-metaphorical pony is something you ride to spare your feet, something kind of cute and harmless and appropriate for a child. If a charger calls someone "my pony," she means someone she can take advantage of without consequence. People are rarely called "pony" to their face, unless somebody's trying to start something.

STATOSPHERE

The Statosphere is a higher dimension of existence, where probabilities become tangible or, at least, intentional. It is the home of the archetypes, human beings removed from mere humanity to become emblematic embodiments — "gods," if you're superstitious — of the social roles they played in their mortal spans. The plans or intentions of the archetypes in the Statosphere are widely regarded as prime movers for events on Earth, especially those that seem coincidental or highly infused with synchronicity. A few outliers believe that once one becomes an archetype, one leaves aside mere human concerns like "plans" and "hopes," becoming a powerful but entirely indifferent force of nature. Most, however, believe the Statosphere to be the home of epic grudges.

THE LITTLE LIST OF GMCS

This book (and *Book Two: Run*) includes a few gamemaster characters (GMCS) and they're not all conveniently in alphabetical order (some of them are under groups and organizations) so this list gathers them all in one place for you as a quick reference.

Alex Abel, Mastermind (*Book Two: Run*, page 85)

Cage, Chief of Security (*Book Two: Run*, page 86)

Dame Benedicta, a Great Lady (page 29)

Edward Escobar, Worn-Out Federale (page 38)

Geri, the Sword (*Book Two: Run*, page 73)

Mira, the Seeker (*Book Two: Run*, page 73)

Miriam Cruz, Agent of the Chapel of Mirrors (page 22)

Taiyama Hiroto, the Spider (*Book Two: Run*, page 72)

Compare pony to "Duke" on page 35, "Lord" on page 58, "Charger" on page 6, and "Checker" on page 6.

For much more on the Statosphere, see Book One: Play, page 78.

A IS FOR APEX PREDATOR

A GRAMMARIAN GATE

See "Anagram Gematria" on page 12.

ABANDONMENT TISSUES (UNNATURAL ENTITY)

Imagine a very sad thing, a child without parents. Orphaned by events or by callousness, trying to navigate a world that seems implacably vast, incomprehensible and indifferent. Consider the yearning in the heart of such a one.

Imagine, side-by-side, a different sorrow. This time, a parent struck by that least-natural of tragedies: outliving one's child. A million generations of evolutionary instincts screaming failure and grinding on the mourning adult's nerves — the longing of that adrift adult is, perhaps, the one thing equal to the pain of the orphaned child.

These two pains reflect each other like mirrors, and the promise of completeness could draw them together, like the inverted poles of magnets. It happens. In war, a woman loses her daughter to the crash of a bomb and takes the hand of a boy whose home burned up like his parents' flesh. They find each other and something healing comes of it. It is a beautiful thing, though a beauty with a great deal of suffering in its complexion.

But what if that lost child and broken adult are in the same place, but separated by time? That's how abandonment tissues form.

The "tissue" in question is a form spun of loose, unattended matter — cobwebs and trash, dust and broken gravel. From a distance, five pounds of fallen leaves and tree-trapped garbage bags can look like a human form, when they move just right, when the light catches them just so. Especially when the observer very badly wants them to be someone.

If an abandonment tissue forms around a mortal child, it takes the form of an adult — an adult who died in that area while still mourning their own lost offspring. The tissue begins with the memories and personality of the dead, but the copy is inexact. Certain necessities for its new role warp that old palimpsest and make it secretive, cryptic, and crafty. It knows it must never be seen by others, so it hides and encourages its summoner child to hide it as well. Usually, it hides the child too. As time goes on, the borrowed identity runs out of steam. Sometimes the tissue only lasts long enough to keep the child alive until someone mortal can come to the rescue.

But sometimes the child's attachment and strength of will seep in to replace the draining ghost-stuff. As that happens, the tissue becomes less and less like that long-lost sad grown-up and more and more like a child's view of an adult. This could make the tissue entirely permissive, unable to say no. But if the child's view of caregivers grew from an experience of neglect and abuse, the tissue-parent gradually conforms to that expectation.

Adult abandonment tissues have a limited shelf-life. Like imaginary friends, they rarely survive pubescence. After a year or two at most, they begin to degrade, getting weaker and weaker until they fade out entirely.

ADULT ABANDONMENT TISSUE (MINOR UNNATURAL ENTITY)

Wound Threshold: 30.

Spectral 2d10+40%: They are incredibly quiet and blend easily because they're largely composed of the litter of whatever happens to be around. Substitutes for Dodge, Substitutes for Pursuit, Substitutes for Secrecy.

Undifferentiated Garbage Body 100%: Firearms only do hand-to hand damage to them, shooting through without hitting anything essential. Punches, kicks, and hand weapons function normally.

Ain't Right 100%: Seeing one up close is an Unnatural (7) challenge the first time one is encountered.

When a living adult's grief calls to a child that died forgotten, the results are smaller, more helpless, but more robust. The child never grows, never becomes less demanding, and is rarely calm or pleasant. Only the attention of the grown-up who called it from the past can soothe it to silence, so people in possession of — or, arguably, possessed by — these ghostly trash-kids tend to get more isolated as they tend to the baby they must deny having, or take care of the toddler no one else ever sees.

Whereas adult revenants of this type run out of essence unless the child replenishes them, child abandonment tissues start draining their adult

Aspartame
Marie Sane
a Gone
Egg 12.



about two months after forming. If the adult already has a relationship with a protégé, they have to choose between the current protégé or the tissue-child. If the living friend is chosen, the tissue is dispelled (a Self (6) check, sorry). If the tissue is chosen, all the relationship percentiles in protégé are reassigned to the tissue.

After a tissue has spent a week as the sole protégé, it starts draining the caregiver's other relationships, pretty much at random. It sucks 1d10 percentiles off one every night, adding the stolen points to protégé until all the other relationships are emptied out or protégé hits 100%. When either of those events occurs, the host goes into a coma.

The first night after its caregiver is incapacitated, the screaming and frustrated thing falls apart. After that, the adult awakens and can start rebuilding or replacing the lost friendships. Of course, they then must face an echoing second loss that certainly recalls their first.

CHILD ABANDONMENT TISSUE (MINOR UNNATURAL ENTITY)

Wound Threshold: 15.

Undifferentiated Garbage Body 100%: Firearms only do hand-to hand damage to them, shooting through without hitting anything essential. Punches, kicks, and hand weapons function normally.

Ain't Right 100%: Seeing one up close is an Unnatural (7) check the first time one is encountered.

ABNORMAL PATHOGEN RESEARCH GROUP

Cholera. The Black Death. Spanish flu. Malaria. Recent hits like swine flu and Ebola. Pandemics inspire fear in the herd-mind of humanity not unlike the unnatural. They both also inspire people to rise above and protect the world from such dangers. To the Abnormal Pathogen Research Group, these two threats to civilization are one and the same.

HISTORY

Dr. Mika Cohen spent much of 2011 working as a Doctors Without Borders field medic, looking to mix altruism and adventure into stories for her future grandchildren. Her group was treating people in Algeria that September when three people fell grievously ill within hours of each other, including a colleague. After the sun went down, and while Mika was tending to them, all three sick people started convulsing and changing into something. She ran to get help, which saved her life — those who were still in the medical tent were mauled and the three disappeared into the night.

Enter John Harper, an older man resembling the iconic "Great White Hunter." He arrived the following morning, tracking killings just like this one. Of all the people around, Dr. Cohen was the rare person who hadn't completely rationalized the experience away. Harper more or less drafted Cohen to his hunt. Though she'd never fired a gun, she had a strong instinct for what the creatures would do next, looking at them not as a pack but as an infection. They eradicated the creatures — six by then — and Harper moved on the next morning.

The experience stuck with Mika. Overnight, she went from someone who saw good in the world to someone cold and clinical. She went back to the US and took a job at the Centers for Disease Control — she wouldn't fight monstrous contagions in the field one outbreak in a time, but research cures and vaccines to, in her words, "nuke them from orbit." She kept a clear head, edited her story about what happened in Algeria, and worked to get people to trust her personally and professionally. She'd seen enough *X-Files* to know what talking about the supernatural would get you. Mika was playing a long game, though at the cost of secrecy and isolation.

The long game started to pay off last year, when she was approached by Quinn Andersen, a big pharma junior executive. Andersen had an experience a few months prior — one involving getting saved by the same John Harper — that sparked him to fund a small operation to capture, contain, and study pathogens that turn people into monsters. Dr. Cohen was the missing piece, the person with scientific expertise who believed in the otherworldly.

The three of them form the core of the Abnormal Pathogen Research Group — clandestinely funded by a pharmaceutical giant, covertly supported with CDC resources.

OPERATIONS

There are two wings to APRG: Diagnostics and Treatment. Dr. Cohen heads up Diagnostics. When reports of something improbable or scientifically odd come up (a PIE, or "potentially infectious entity"), they find their way to Cohen's desk at the CDC. She's found three sympathizers within the CDC and a couple dozen in other health agencies throughout the world that clue her in when there's something over their heads. She gets six or eight cases a year, and maybe two turn out to be genuinely unnatural.

Those that look legitimate trigger Treatment, which is where Harper comes in. Cohen usually has a location, a hypothesis based on eyewitness accounts, and whatever evidence gets shipped to her, so she joins with Harper and one or two other people he's contracted to assist in the hunt. Their mandate from Andersen is to bring back as intact a sample as possible, which once included capturing a live infectious entity. It seemed to be equal parts dolphin, alligator, and human. They found it in South Carolina.

Andersen has a cold storage facility in Athens, Georgia — 90 minutes east of the CDC offices in Atlanta. Cohen spends nights and weekends after a capture analyzing what they've found, with the goal of finding a vaccine to keep the horrors at bay. The facility doubles as a safe house and armory for Harper.

ISSUES

Andersen has around \$250,000 diverted to the APRG, mainly used for travel expenses, equipment, and the storage facility. But he's only a junior executive, and his pet project is under constant scrutiny as a money-sink. He's been able to spin bullshit into gold so far, but he needs to deliver something interesting soon to justify the expense... or find a way to hide the paper trail better. He's putting pressure on Cohen to find something safe, not involving an infection entity but still satisfactory to his superiors.

Cohen's stretching herself thin. Sympathetic coworkers have been able to cover the occasional absence, but she's used the "my mom/aunt/uncle is ill" excuse one time too many. (It only works so well on medical statisticians.) Mika is known as a brilliant researcher, but the CDC has lots of brilliant researchers, so that won't keep her in her position for long if things continue as they are. Having to work more for Andersen to keep the APRG funded puts even more strain on her.

Since the last mission, Harper's been having nightmares. They chased after something that

As the sniffling spy stammered: I have a code in my nose.

seemed to spread through dreams, and he's afraid that he's infected. Of course, he's told no one about this, due to an excess of grizzled male bravado. He's also neglected to mention his own occult interests — there's a reason he plays so

strongly to type — and the degree to which the thrill of the chase inspires him more than anything so silly as altruism.

See "Hunter, The" on page 50.

ALCOHOL

Adepts who believe in the Moorcock Hypothesis believe that alcohol is a *totemic substance sacred to entropy*. Or, if "sacred" is too strong a word, "very likely to increase" entropy. Alcohol opens one to ideas that might otherwise be shot down by skepticism, creates artistic, business, or romantic possibilities, and lets people take risks with honesty that they might otherwise reconsider. It also dramatically increases the risk of car wreck, regrettable one-nighter, drug overdose, and falls down the stairs. You give a little, you get a little.

Whether or not there truly is an occult energy distilled into booze, just about any city with a

significant mystic subculture has a bar that draws in beer-wine-and-whiskey thirsting checkers. The barkeep may be a knowing endorser of chaos, magick, or both, or may just be silently nonplussed by the weirdos that find his establishment so congenial. A feng shui expert in San Diego claimed she could find "the duke bar" within 48 hours of entry in any major city by mapping the local dragon lines, but that was back in the glory days of the Sleepers. It's widely believed she was co-opted by that eldritch society of mystic assassins.

See "Moorcock Hypothesis" on page 62.

AMOROMANCY

A school of magick focused on love, amoromancers accrue charges by provoking erotic feelings from others, but are forbidden to reciprocate.

Their powers warp and influence fascination, arousal, and the hatred that arises from frustration.

ANAGRAM GEMATRIA

This magickal practice rearranges the letters of words to create mystic correspondences between otherwise unrelated persons, states or objects. By rearranging the letters in "Shane Ivey" into "Yeah Veins," an adept of this style could temporarily make someone named Shane Ivey into an expert

phlebotomist. Similarly, linking "police car" and "coca peril" could make a volatile drug cartel much more likely to target one particular vehicle. The people who practice Anagram Gematria, or "A Grammarian Gate," are reportedly subject to uncontrollable bouts of garbled speech.

ANNIHILOMANCY

Destruction-based magick that purports to clear away the clutter and confusion of modern life through cleansing disintegration. Strongly aligned with entropy, annihilomancers cannot repair or maintain anything — to do so denies its innate desire to cease existing. They gain charges by wrecking stuff and expend them to wreck more stuff.

Anything that happens in transit just adds a patina of authenticity.

ANY RANDOM MAN = DAMN RAM ANNOY (MINOR ARTIFACT)

This item was almost certainly an accidental production of some sort of word-bending adept.

When it comes into the possession of a male person by chance, it "sticks" to him — always showing up in close proximity (crumpled in a pocket, stuck to a shoe, clinging to the back of a seat), even if thrown away or destroyed. It always comes back. Almost always, anyhow.

While a male carries the ARM = DRA all male sheep within 100 yards are enraged by his presence and immediately seek to attack him. Castrated rams are exempt from this effect.

This "ill-fortune" slip can only be removed from the target male by a cleansing ritual or suchlike magick, or the grasp of a woman. She can then "release" it to find another dude to curse; she is unable to destroy the slip, or to give it to any specific male target.

It looks like a 2" x 0.25" slip of brown paper, seemingly cut from a grocery bag. The words "ANY RANDOM MAN = DAMN RAM ANNOY" are written in block capitals in green ink, and are surrounded with arcane runes and mystic sigils in black, red, and blue ink.

ASMR

ASMR stands for "autonomous sensory meridian response" and people who have them insist that they are totally, absolutely a real thing. But not everyone has them. And not everyone who has them has the same ones, even if you control for the inherent subjectivity of asking people to describe internal experiences. Furthermore, not everyone who has them gets them from the same stimuli. So scientifically, it's all kind of an anecdotal mess.

But people who have ASMR aren't necessarily that concerned about the science of it, since many find that ASMR just feels nice. The term "brain orgasm" gets used, even by people who insist that ASMR isn't sexual at all. It's just a weird frisson, usually in the head and neck, very distracting but in a pleasurable, relaxed, zoning-out-after-the-second-glass-of-wine way. It's usually triggered by speech, particularly speech disconnected from the urgency of daily life. Someone tediously listing the events of their day, in a slow turgid tone, can trigger ASMR in the right receiver. Women whispering seems to be a common cause. There are a ton of videos on YouTube, many involving roleplay scenarios, but not typically sexual ones — instead of a naughty nurse taking your temperature, you hear a very calm, soft-spoken physical therapist realigning your ankle bones.

No one's entirely sure what's going on scientifically with ASMR. It seems logical that if people are having them now, they've been having them since time immemorial. Probably we're only now finding out it's happening to others because the general public finally has a psychosocial lexicon that lets us meaningfully communicate unique and individual interior experiences, the internet lets people group themselves by interests and taste instead of geographical proximity, and

personal shame is at low levels unheard-of since the age of Nero.

Of course, the reason science hasn't gotten a tight handle on ASMR could be that it's a magickal phenomenon instead of a strictly biological one. And indeed, chargers who can perceive immaterial presences and energies have found some really interesting stuff going on in the auras of people in the throes of a meridian response. Specifically, they seem to be eating something.

How would one consume something immaterial and imperceptible? With one's equally abstract state of mind. A well-respected clairvoyant from Pittsburgh swears that she saw an astral entity ("Just a big bundle of tentacles and buboies and gunk") circling a client who was beginning to get into an ASMR groove by watching someone very carefully fold origami out of crackly rice paper. "That zero-g cuttlefish thing got closer and then suddenly — ZAP! — it got jerked right into her brain and a piece of it tore off. It fled, and she had this dreamy, tranced-out look on her face. Said that was about when she went all blissful."

Does ASMR turn human beings into mystical carnivores? Hard to say, but the idea that swallowing something can make you feel good has evidentiary support from the billion-dollar liquor industry. The question of whether this psychic feeding has a long-term effect, positive or negative, on the people chowing down is wide open. But operators who suspect they've been cursed, or that they're being tormented by an invisible creatures, are starting to seek out ASMR experiencers, in the hopes that they can get their astral hassle gnawed off.

ASTRAL PARASITES (UNNATURAL ENTITY)

These immaterial pests are psychic predators. From the astral plane, which is their home, they latch on to living humans and feed. Normally they can't perceive humans, but any human who spends a magick charge is briefly visible on the astral plane. Sometimes they can spot people who are using powerful artifacts or who are in highly magickal locations like *The Bon Ton*. They're uncommon, so many adepts go their whole careers with only one or two parasite infestations. Some adepts can direct them against specific targets whether those victims do magick or not.

If an astral parasite gets its hooks into you, it nourishes itself on one of your positive abilities. Some parasites specifically go after, say, Status, while others just grab one at random. They never go after negative abilities, so your Struggle and Secrecy are safe. They might reduce your personal charisma so your Status or Connect drop, they might just make you depressed to the point your Fitness diminishes, or they might distract or diminish you until Notice or Know are affected.

The targeted ability takes a -10% penalty the first day it's attached, increasing to -20% the second day, -30% the third, and so on, until the ability is penalized into impossibility. When the penalties are equal to the ability or exceed it, the victim goes into a coma and the critter detaches and wanders off. The penalty diminishes by 10% a day until it's all gone. If you couldn't find someone to purge you before you went into a coma, in that coma you stay until you make a successful Fitness roll. You can make one Fitness roll to wake again every day.

On the astral plane, parasites take a variety of unpleasant forms. They're usually about the size of a Yorkie dog and composed of non-symmetrical legs, wings, tendrils, mouths, beaks, dorsal fins, and other, non-taxonomied organs. They're dumb, but if you're on the astral plane they fight like little bastards.

ASTRAL PARASITE (MINOR UNNATURAL ENTITY)

Wound Threshold: 3d10+20.

Astral 100%: Because it's intangible and invisible, it can't be seen or harmed if you're living your life within the five normal senses. Probably just as well, since it also can't usually see or harm you.

Pain in the Astral 3d10+30%: If you're on the astral plane with one, it may come at you, bro. This is the identity it rolls to substitute for Struggle and Pursuit. When it hits astral targets, it does damage like a +3 cutting weapon — increased damage on matches, one Wound of miss damage every attack.

Ain't Right 100%: Seeing one up close is an Unnatural (6) challenge the first time one is encountered.

See "Bon Ton, The" on page 19.



B IS FOR BOBBITT, JOHN AND LORENA

BELLING THE CAT (MINOR RITUAL)

After performing this ritual, the caster can sense the approach of a single target.

Cost: 2 minor charges.

Ritual Action: A physical trace — hair or fingernail clippings, blood, sputum, a body part, etc. — of the target must be crushed in a stone pestle with a similar trace from the caster. Next, dried pansy petals and fennel seed are added, then burned on a copper dish. The ashes are mixed with liquid and the caster drinks it.

BIBLIOMANCY

A style of magick focused on books, though not necessarily on reading. Books are totemic objects to bibliomancers, who build libraries of rare and valuable tomes, drawing their

BLACK TONE

Everyone's heard of the blue note, the foundation of the music that makes you feel worse until you realize that somehow worse is better. There's also that old song about the organist who accidentally played one chord that was the perfect sound, but could never find it again. White noise helps you sleep and of course, there's the storied brown note, an infrasonic pulse that makes people lose bowel control. But what interests the denizens of the occult underground are stories about the black tone.

If the people who've experienced it are believable — and, by most standards, they aren't even close — the black tone is not itself a sound, but a unique and captivatingly different type of silence.

Rumors persist that there are mystical instruments carved from wood that was once a set of California occultists who got turned into trees. If such an instrument is obtained but very deliberately not played — not just ignored or forgotten, but mindfully left silent — it can produce the black tone. Others claim there's a ritual that involves raising bees on deadly nightshade pollen. If that type of beeswax is used for ear plugs, it can block out exterior sound and produce the black tone's abnormal hush.

But the problem with covering up exterior sound is that the human frame is filled with interior noises. If you plug your ears with your fingers, you soon hear the thrum of your blood in your veins, or the grind of your jaws as you chew on a cracker. So experiencing the black tone involves not only producing it in worldly quiet, but also silencing one's own body. This is important because through the black tone you can hear the whispers of the archetypes as they influence the tangible world through the Statosphere.

Effect: For a number of hours equal to the roll result, the caster hears the approach of the target in his thoughts like the screeching of metal on slate; the volume increases the closer the caster and target are to each other. This can be quite distracting.

Any form of ritual cleansing or suchlike magick, cast on either party, ends the spell. Also, various types of protective magicks muffle or entirely silence the screech, at the GM's discretion.

power from their acquisitions and breaking taboo if they destroy or relinquish any volume. Their powers give them access to great knowledge, and hidden information.

RULES FOR THE BLACK TONE

Someone who generates a proper black tone and meditates by sitting absolutely still can hear the whispers of the Invisible Clergy in between heart beats. This causes a Helplessness (3) check and, whether the check fails or succeeds, the alarm of it causes the person to stop hearing the tone, as their breath and heart rate speed up. Only people who have three or more hardened notches in Helplessness can get anything more useful than a creep-out from this sort of tonal meditation. They get a small sense of what's going on — enough to provide a hunch that lets them flip-flop their next roll. People can only get one black tone hunch at a time.

Having the black tone played while one is put under with sedatives and then completely immobilized, with a perfusionist on hand to operate the heart-lung machine so the heart can be stopped? That's considerably more serious. Most medical professionals can lose their license for doing that sort of thing when it's not absolutely necessary, because it's dangerous. If the perfusionist fails their roll for medical operations, the patient dies. So... that's bad. But just as concerning, while the patient in that instance has a good long exposure to the whispers of the Clergy, it's hard to retain them through the confusion of anesthesia. So make a Secrecy roll if the perfusionist succeeds. If you fail the Secrecy roll, you get a hunch, just like the meditation in the previous paragraph. But if you succeed, you add 2d10 percentiles to an Invisible Clergy Lore identity, or gain it if you previously lacked it. Also, you may start hearing voices in rain sounds, the noises of washing machines, or the wind through telephone wires.

The clearest way to get insights through the black tone is to have it playing, be awake, and have your heart stopped

by some kind of paralytic agent. Your best (?) bet for this would be heroin and alcohol in combination. Oleander grows everywhere, but produces terrible stomach pains and bloody diarrhea before stopping your heart. A potassium chloride injection does it too, but only after an intensely painful heart attack.

Now, going through one of the above poisoning scenarios kills. A successful roll with a Medical identity can revive the character if someone's standing by with an ADR machine and the right opioid antagonist, or calcium chloride infusion, or activated charcoal, depending on how the heart-stopping occurred. Someone who's specifically prepared for the poison used gets to roll their identity at a +10% bonus.

But! If the black tone hearer survives this experiment (which, as an editorial aside, is incredibly foolish) he faces a Helplessness (4) check and, whether he succeeds or fails, gains a hunch on his next two rolls and +20% to his Invisible Clergy Lore identity. However, for the rest of that person's life, exposure to the black tone gives a Helplessness check, and it's always one higher

than the previous. So if he exposes himself meditatively after the poisoning, it's a rank 5 check. The check after that is rank 6, then rank 7, and so on.

INVISIBLE CLERGY LORE: THE IDENTITY

It's not quite a sixth sense, as much as it is a set of knowledge that lets you understand your five normal senses on new levels. Hidden connections are obvious, the rhythms of coincidence are implicitly understood, and the nonsense of the world suddenly speaks clearly. A mathematician sees parabolas in every water fountain, and a painter sees the balancing structure used in every frame of a movie. Invisible Clergy lore is similar, but for synchronicity.

I know Invisible Clergy lore, of course I can: tell an avatar from a lunatic, jump to incorrect conclusions that somehow pan out, distinguish the residue of gutter magick from the residue of amateur art projects.

Substitutes for: Knowledge.

Feature: Substitutes for Secrecy.

Feature: Evaluates the Unnatural.

She was out of breath but not out of options.

BLOOD CAKE (MINOR RITUAL)

Cost: 1 minor charge.

Ritual Action: You need to follow the steps to make a particularly rich pound cake. Butter, sugar, no margarine, no shortcuts. Pour half your batter into the pan, then, carefully pour three ounces of your own blood into the center of the batter, then, even more carefully, cover the bloody center with the other half of the batter. Bake as usual. You have to eat the whole thing. Every bite. After that, you are immune to the mind control, seductive powers, and supernatural fright created by vampires and werewolves for three full moons. The ritual works, for certain. The question is, what if vampires aren't real?

Effect: What this is supposed to do and what it actually does are a little disconnected. The grimoires that describe it sincerely present it as a sovereign defense against lycanthropes and strigoi. But those creatures, as traditionally conceived, don't exist. So what this actually is, is something more like magick Prozac. It relieves anxiety. If cast correctly, the background stress and unhappiness of permanent insanities are suppressed for three days. If you're confronted with the subject of a phobia, it still triggers the panic response, but you won't worry about the trigger as much until it's right up in your face. For three days, you sleep a little easier and have fewer facial tics.

BLUE LINE

For as long as there has been weirdness that goes bump in the occult underground, there have been people in power that notice. You can't keep all the strangeness covered up forever. Case files get opened by curious cops, videos end up in the hands of private eyes, and government agents put some of the less savvy operators on watch lists. That's how it all started, a long time ago. Cops talk to one another, swapping stories and information. Didn't take long to become clear to those who had their ear to the ground that there was a lot more out there than they understood. If they were going to protect and serve the public trust, they had to wise up. So began the Blue Line.

If the Blue Line was efficient and organized, they'd be a terrifying force for law and order. As it is, the group operates as a loose network of law

enforcement officers up and down all levels of government, all out to maintain order in a world that can't keep its hands off entropy. These cops, sheriffs, skip tracers, highway patrolmen, and private eyes all across the globe aim to keep the public safe from whatever supernatural menaces climb out of the dark. They trade information, suspect lists, and resources whenever they can, providing safe houses, manpower, and weapons when needed. A phone call to the right guy in the right place, and you can have a few cops waiting to back you up to face down some avatar punk who's gone out of line. With one email, a cop who's gone out on his own and got caught by his superiors can get cleared by someone farther up the food chain.

Most members of the Blue Line believe themselves to be dedicated to a higher purpose, the only ones capable of dealing with the creeps and the nightmares that no one else knows about. They use whatever is necessary, including rituals confiscated and learned on the go, and bust whatever heads they have to, all in the name of peace on the streets. If a few civil liberties get broken down along the way? All for the greater good. Get in good with the Blue Line and you never have to pay a parking ticket again, and they might bury that rival if you can spin a good story about how they're a threat to society. Get on their bad side, and you're on a watch list forever.

HISTORY

The modern incarnation of the Blue Line draws its contemporary origins to Frederick Abberline, the lead detective on the Jack the Ripper murders in 1888. Abberline was hot on the trail of the Ripper case and reached out to fellow law enforcement as far as New York and Chicago for information about similar crimes. What he got was an outpouring of information about strange and unusual cases, things that boggled the man's mind. While people still debate what the Ripper case was really about, and there are a million rumors, Abberline's investigations led him to scratch the merest surface of the occult underground. What he saw set in motion the wheels of police organization, a live wire of information spread from copper to constable, to anyone who would listen. While headquartered out of London, the organization was known as the Backyard Boys, as the officers involved would meet in an old pub in the shadow of Scotland Yard.

Abberline remained the central hub for branches of the Backyard Boys as their thin, but broad influence stretched across the continent and into the United States. After his departure to the Pinkerton Agency's European Office, his reach stretched even further to the private investigative sector. It was then, in 1892, that history says the Backyard Boys started integrating occult rituals and tools into their practice, introduced by Boswell Lindquist, a Swedish-English immigrant to New York City, who was an actual practicing adept. He helped Abberline get the tools to pass down to other law officers so they could start fighting occult fire with fire. The stories go that they both got their clocks cleaned by a cult called the Daughters of Atlantis in Monte Carlo, and Abberline retired. Lindquist may still be kicking around. His last known sighting was as a graveyard caretaker in Tombstone, Arizona. That may actually be his son, or grandson, however.

The Blue Line contracted and restructured after Abberline's retirement. No longer an organization with a leader, it was a loose fog of rumor and reputation, but it retained its reach. The name changed in the early 20th century as the symbol of the blue line came to represent law enforcement, and members began calling each other Liners. Today, the deprecating slang term is "Cohle."

OPERATIONS

The Blue Line has no direct hierarchy, no training manual, no code words, or security clearances. It is entirely informal: one cop tells another about a head-scratching case after a few beers, and that second maybe says, "Oh, there's a trooper up by Crystal Springs you ought to talk to. I got her phone number somewhere." Police culture already prizes loyalty and discretion; having your batshit weird suspicions taken seriously distills that into an even more concentrated form.

That said, almost everyone in the Blue Line despises it, or at least, resents the necessity it represents. They hate the weird, the unnatural, even the bafflingly beautiful elements of magick and mysticism — not in the way that Nazis hate Jews, a hate that's part fascination but mostly desperate distraction from one's own doubts and failings. No, this is the way you hate stepping in a dog turd, the way you hate it when your car breaks down. They don't think magick is evil and must be destroyed. They think magick is a goddamn hassle and they wish it was someone else's problem.

So your average Cohle grudgingly and skeptically gets involved, but at the same time, pragmatically understands that there is stuff out there you just can't explain and *someone* has to deal with it. Then, once it's no longer obviously a big *thing*, they breathe a sigh of relief and get on with their lives.

A few, however, get really interested. These are the ones who collect rituals and artifacts and, often, guns. The typical "oh no not this again" pragmatists tend to distrust these enthusiasts, but if an issue gets intractable or kooky enough, one of these more interested officers finds out and tends to take over entirely. The reluctant Liners rarely put up much of a struggle.

Out of earshot, these experts are known as "Mulders" or "Van Helsing" and they are constantly watched for signs that they are "going native."

The fine difference between a Mulder and a Van Helsing is that Mulders want to believe, want to understand, and think there's a truth out there that they can find with sufficient diligence. A Van Helsing sees monsters in every shadow and thinks it's their life's mission to smite evil.

The natural course of a Mulder is to get drummed out of law enforcement for increasingly erratic behavior, then plunge fully into occultism. They don't last long, as a rule, but they make big and ugly noises before some mystic makes them go away forever, or else some Liner gets them committed or jailed for their own good.

Van Helsing, on the other hand, leave instead of being given the boot, and they continue to be a resource to Liners until, typically, they go too far. It is the nature of a Van Helsing to start suspecting the occult everywhere, even where it's not, and to take the actions they feel no one else has the knowledge (or, perhaps, the integrity) to perform. They kill or otherwise destroy innocent people. The best case is, they hermit up in a cabin somewhere, waiting out the end of days and firing blind at imaginary werewolves. The worst case looks a lot like a serial killer, a really skilled one who exploits a deep knowledge of how law enforcement works, often with a depressing racist or Islamophobic angle.

And yet, they're needed and tolerated because they're the repositories of knowledge. No one else can stand the babble or make sense of it. So if your story about that weird case gets around to two or three cops who can't make heads or tails of it, they're reluctantly going to call in the local expert. Who knows? If there's really fire under that smoke, that Mulder or Van Helsing might be the only person who knows that *this* is a grease fire, and that dumping water on it just makes things worse.

Naturally, cops and federal law enforcement officers are pretty sophisticated about their communications and email and dead drops. Mostly it's face to face though, for reasons of simple expediency. Liners view "help" as "someone right there with you," not some weirdo in Spain giving you advice over Skype.

Despite all this secrecy, the Blue Line has been noticed and they know it. *GNOMON* is aware of all federal Liners, and has seen fit to offer up one Mulder-type from the Forest Service to Paige Glendower, possibly just to see what Paige would do. If you're curious, she got him fired and wrecked his credit rating. *GNOMON* hasn't narc'd on the Blue Line to *FLEX ECHO*, and seems to be shielding them for the moment. That could all change if someone asks it the wrong question.

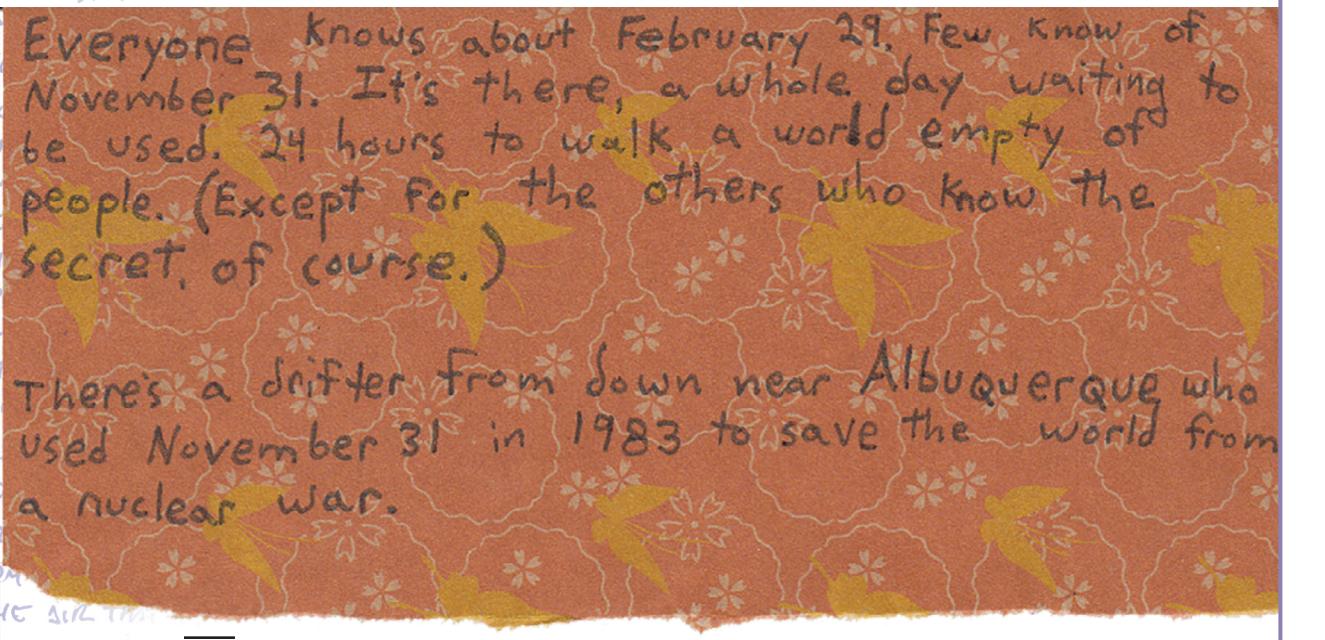
The Blue Line has also, on occasion, crossed paths with the Sleepers and a Catholic order of anti-mystics called the Order of St. Cecil. Rank-and-file Liners tend to steer clear of anyone who dabbles too much in the occult, but those organizations have made pitches to Mulder and Van Helsing Liners, successfully bringing some into the fold. The Blue Line considers the voted-out sheriff in North Dakota and the SWAT officer from Oregon who dropped off the map after reading *My Name Is Dirk A.* to be traitors and enemies of the cause. The Border Patrol guy who "went to work for the Vatican's exorcists" still stays in touch and is considered "mostly all right, I guess."

RESOURCES

Most members of the Blue Line have whatever they've got access to on the job. If they're a member of a law enforcement office, they can pull on the resources of their department, including databases to do background checks and search for associated cases. Still, most law dogs know that these searches can be traced. For that reason, they have a back channel network set up, maintained by a series of computer engineers working on the job, called the LANE (Line Activation and Network Explorer). With the right login, Liners can slip into databases on every level of law enforcement across national boundaries to track down information. It's not perfect and it's not wholly secure, and few pretend it is.

Van Helsing and a few Mulders with safe houses provide another resource, though there's often reluctance to use them because... well, most cops in this situation don't want to drink that Kool-Aid. You spend too much time with the ones who've spent too much time with the weird, and things start to sound *crazy plausible*. But sometimes you need a place to hit the mattresses off-grid, and Van Helsing usually stock their boltholes with basic provisions, including throw-away weapons and body armor, usually seized from criminal elements and repurposed for the Line. Some of these dedicated Liners can only maintain broken-down shacks, others have fully stocked back-room clinics or hotel rooms on permanent reserve, where you don't even get charged for what you take from the mini-fridge.

See "FLEX ECHO" on page 55 of Book Two: Run.



BON TON, THE

In a little strip mall called St. Germain Plaza in Miami, Florida, there used to be a bar/café called The Bon Ton. Its address was 333 Leslie Avenue, and it was frequented mostly by students from the nearby Kendall campus of Miami Dade College, and by Cuban ex-pat fans of a curious game called "dominoker."

On March 3, 2003, an unprecedented occult event occurred there at 3:33 AM. It's now known as the 03/03/03 Event, and the fallout from it is ongoing. Not least of all are the changes to The Bon Ton.

First off, the place is now officially weird. Its habitués can still find it easily, as can anyone who ate or drank there three times or more. Anyone else who tries to find it has... trouble. Sometimes it's right where the map says. Sometimes they can't find St. Germain Plaza. Sometimes they wind up miles off course in Liberty Square.

Of course, if you do get there, you may wonder why you bothered, unless you're a big fan of ghost-hunting or Fortean phenomenon. The Bon Ton now has free cold spots, poltergeist crashes, groaning voices, and spotty cell phone reception. So it's no big surprise that the old owners closed its doors in 2004. While the nail salon at 334 Leslie and the Zumba gym at 332 are hanging in there, endeavors that try to open up in 333 usually go out of business within months — the longest lasting was a pizza delivery place that operated from 2010–2011. Now it's vacant again.

The letters of its old name seem to push through all attempts to paint over them. The last business, Corrales Brothers Tax Preparation, put a big lighted sign over it, only to have it collapse during heavy rains in October 2013. In the space where it once hung, the faded words THE BON TON are visible through the real estate logo that preceded the ill-fated Corrales.

Just as the name doesn't seem to want to change, the space seems to crave occupation. Locks on its doors malfunction within days of

installation, sometimes hours. It's nearly impossible to keep The Bon Ton sealed, and the site has hosted high school make-out sessions, drug buys, degenerate rituals despised by mainstream Santería, and meetings of a club of pre-teen neighborhood girls who are fascinated with Somalian piracy.

What The Bon Ton is waiting for is an entrepreneur who's also a charger. This is not to suggest that the site is intelligent or has feelings. It's entirely inanimate. But just as a rainstorm can seem to hate you based solely on its timing and intensity, The Bon Ton seems to want someone knowledgeable about the paranormal to occupy it. A business run by such a person is almost certain to prosper, especially if it was connected to alcohol, coffee, or nicotine. A bookstore would do as well.

AT THE BON TON

Within the confines of The Bon Ton, certain paranormal effects are in constant effect.

- The owner/proprietor of The Bon Ton receives one minor magickal charge every day at 3:33 AM, regardless of any other behaviors. If it's an adept receiving this charge, taboo-breaking dissipates it as usual. Everyone else can either use it on minor rituals or have it discharge randomly as a minor unnatural phenomenon within 48 hours.
- A minor unnatural phenomenon is likely to happen there once per day. A significant unnatural phenomenon is likely to happen there once a month. Every year on March 3rd, a *major unnatural phenomenon* takes place somewhere within a mile of The Bon Ton.
- Any avatar attempting to use a channel within The Bon Ton gets to flip flop the activation roll.

See "Unnatural Phenomena" on page 80 of Book One: Play.

BREATHE UNDERWATER (MINOR RITUAL)

Cost: 1 minor charge.

Ritual Action: You need a friend you trust. Really, really trust. You and the friend have to go to a river or large body of water. Moving water. A bathtub won't do unless you can run water in it and it's big enough for both of you to be inside it at the same time. Anyway, you get your friend to hold you underwater. They have to hold on and keep you there no matter how you thrash and fight. They have to hold you under until you stop fighting. If the ritual worked, you'll be able to breathe suddenly, underwater, and stop struggling. If the ritual fails, you're probably dead.

Being drowned like this is a Violence (3 or 4) check and Helplessness (4 or 5) check. The person holding you down has to face a Violence (3 or 4) check, higher if you up and die. There could be some Self checks there too, if your partner does not routinely drown friends.

Effect: If this ritual is successful, you're able to breathe underwater for a month. If it isn't successful, well, you won't need to.

BUTTER KNIFE (SIGNIFICANT RITUAL)

Cost: 1 significant charge.

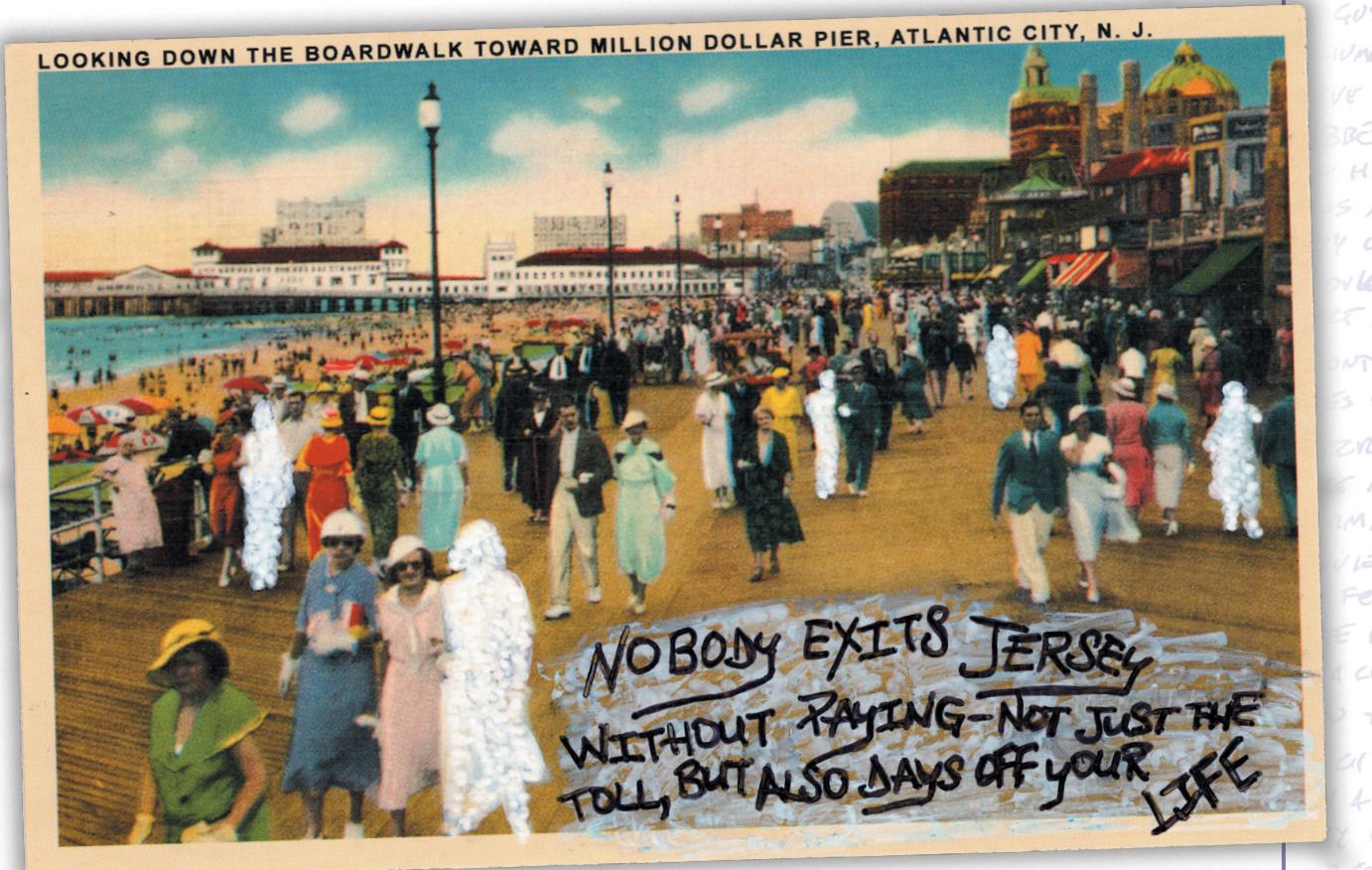
Ritual Action: You must first get into a home at 3:30 when the family is home. You must be uninvited and unwelcome, so of course it's best if they don't know you're there. Whisper the names of the family members and a secret you know about each person named. If you do that and the ritual worked, when you enter the kitchen you can find a dull butter knife, unremarkable in every way, inside the oven. You've begun. Reach for the knife, and when you touch it, your harrowing starts.

The harrowing is a profoundly convincing hallucination in which you experience the horror and disappointment of a battered spouse, a neglected child, and the head of a household who is driven to murder his family to cover his failure. These feel entirely real, like your own experiences. This involves a Helplessness (6) check, an Isolation (8) check, and a Self (10) check.

This is the point where you usually make too much noise for the family to ignore, unless you manage to pass all three checks. If you fail a check, you're either fleeing, fighting, or frozen during the next part.

The next part is, you meet an entity called the Un-Father. It attempts to cut you to pieces, automatically doing 1d10 points of damage every turn, unless you tell him all the things that would make you a terrible parent or a terrible child. Make that admission and he fails to kill you. The members of the family probably hear you yelling this stuff. If you can howl out confessions for three full combat turns, the Un-Father releases you from the harrowing.

Effect: This ritual allows you to find an object of power after enduring a harrowing. There are several rituals like it. This one in particular gives you a butter knife that allows you to coerce the head of household where you got the object. Their descendants face the same compulsion if you hold the knife and command them. If they don't do what you say, it's a Violence (4) check.



C IS FOR CRYPTOSPORIDIUM

CENTURION (SIGNIFICANT ARTIFACT)

Effect: The wielder of one of these artifacts commands an army of a hundred... pennies. With a successful Secrecy roll and concentration, the holder can make up to a dollar's worth of pennies roll around as she desires; the range at which they can be manipulated is about 100 feet. The penny-blob has about as much lifting and pushing power as a full-grown guinea pig.

Wielders who hold charges can spend a minor one to actually launch the pennies into the air with substantial force, enough to fly about 10 feet and do damage equivalent to a punch (sum of the dice). This attack is carried out using the Secrecy ability.

Description: A mutilated penny — Abe Lincoln with painted horns and fangs, the year has been scratched over to read "333," and the cent symbol (¢) has been melted into the reverse.

CHAPEL OF MIRRORS (A ROOM OF RENUNCIATION)

Obsession leads to dark places and causes people to do horrible acts against one another. Magick is often a darker obsession than most. There is a Room within the House of Renunciation that recognizes this: the Chapel of Mirrors.

AGENDA

The Chapel exists solely to take in adepts — those who have a core, paradoxical obsession that gives them power to violate natural laws — and reveal the depravity inherent to that. The Chapel doesn't care if you use your magick to violent ends, use mundane violence to secure magickal resources, or just stay on your farm or in your home watching television to generate charges. Being an adept is cosmically blasphemous, but redemption is possible.

The Room recognizes that most adepts essentially follow a faith, a faith of self over a higher power. The Chapel doesn't strip away that belief; it reshapes it into something unselfish, and in doing so changes the adept's connection to magick.

Curiously, it doesn't take in adepts that truly demonstrate selflessness or faith in a higher power, though Agents of the Chapel suspect there's a Room that does.

APPEARANCE

The Chapel of Mirrors resembles a small hospital chapel, with a podium, three short pews, and a confessional near the back. The light of the room shines endlessly from the simple windows, and nearly every surface is mirrored — the ceiling and walls, the podium, the backs of the pews, everywhere where one would look straight or up except for the dark-stained wooden confessional.

The reflections the mirrors cast show an adept's nature, sometimes with a demon on her back, other

times cloaked in shadow except for glowing eyes. Whatever the appearance, it's tailored to the adept. An Agent of the Room, on the other hand, looks entirely normal in reflection.

Music plays through an old PA system. Most of the time, it's something tranquil or a spiritual from a variety of cultures. Occasionally, it plays moments from the adept's life.

RENUNCIATION

The Chapel uses three abilities to remold adepts.

Denial of Blasphemy: When an adept steps inside the Room, all of their charges are drained away. This makes the adept nauseous if they held minor charges, and outright sickened for hours if they held significant charges. No one knows what would happen to an adept holding a major charge. Any attempt to gain a charge instead harms the adept, inflicting 1d10 wounds. If they hit their wound threshold, they die, but at least they die like they lived — weird and stubborn.

Book of Life: Each of the books in the pews is the same: an account of the adept's life, written as scripture to be interpreted. Chapters are divided up into different "witnesses," people who matter to the adept or those whom the adept caused strife. Instead of the adept's internal story of triumph and self-determination, it paints all the moments where they needed another person, where their lust for power crippled and destroyed lives, where they're the villain in another's story. When an Agent reads from the book, the adept cannot help but hear the words — chanting loudly doesn't drown it out, and even deafening oneself can't stop the words from being felt.

Less is
more
because
the hungry
have more
power than
the sated.

Confessional: The confessional is locked, and cannot be broken into or moved. When the Chapel's Agent wishes to leave the adept alone with their thoughts, he goes into the confessional, which also holds a door to the prosaic world. The Agent often tells the adept that as soon as they're ready to confess and be changed, the confessional can open for them. The moment that the adept genuinely wants to forsake magick, the confessional opens and the Agent invites them in for penance.

Once inside, the Agent simply asks the adept to list their magickal sins against reality and ask for forgiveness. This can take hours and even days, as the Room brings to the adept's mind every little transgression. If they complete this ritual of confession, they're transformed and can freely walk away. If they leave the confessional before finishing, though, it locks again until the adept is ready to start over.

Transformation of Magick: Once fully renounced, the adept becomes an "anti-adept," a person who can break the magick of other adepts. Their magick identity becomes "Un-Magick," and their obsession loses its hold on them, along with its ability to let them flip-flop rolls. Un-Magick can be used to notice unnatural auras and adepts with charges, and defends against unnatural effects. Dodging a spell with Un-Magick works like dodging a blow with the Dodge ability.

The identity is also used to harm to those who would unrepentantly wield magick. An anti-adept who is firmly holding or grabbing an adept with charges can roll Un-Magick to inflict harm. If successful, this causes one charge to explode inside the adept; if the adept is carrying around different types of charges, then it's always the highest type. The damage is hand-to-hand damage if the adept is just holding minor charges, and firearms damage if holding significant charges. The effect from a major charge is left to the GM's imagination.

Because the anti-adept is no longer obsessed with magick, the strength of this new talent burns itself out and fades over time. Every time the identity is used, reduce its rating by 1d10%, down to a minimum of 15%. If the anti-adept doesn't use the identity in a given week, it still fades, just slower — reduce it by 1%.

AGENTS

The Chapel of Mirrors always has an single Agent, who takes the form of a minister, priest, sage, earth mother, or some other form of spiritual leader. It cycles through Agents more often than some other Rooms, largely when a former adept wishes to "take up the cloth" and relieve the Agent that guided them of duty. The current Agent is Sister Miriam Cruz.

The Room grants its sole Agent the following powers:

Hallowed Entrance: The Ritual of Renunciation for the Chapel works for any doors that lead to salvation. Of course,

doors to a church or a rabbi's office work, but so would a door leading to an AA meeting.

Haunting Visage: When in the prosaic world, the Agent can focus on an adept that's holding charges. For the next few hours, when the adept looks in the mirror, they see their unnatural presence, just as they would see in the Chapel. Agents do this to cause fear and self-doubt, and use that to draw an adept into the Room.

Pillar of Un-Magick: The Agent has the Un-Magick identity equal to their old magickal identity, and it doesn't degrade so long as they're Agent of the Chapel. They can see with utter clarity the charges that an adept is holding.

It's also possible for an Agent to let an imprisoned adept out of the Chapel before the transformation, if for some reason she decided to do that. The Agents haven't named this privilege, because they don't know they can do it.

It has never occurred to them to try.

MIRIAM CRUZ, AGENT OF THE CHAPEL OF MIRRORS

Chaos ruled Miriam's life from a young age. A drunk driver killed her mom as she was crossing the street. Her dad jumped from one crap job to the next, never able to hold one down for long. Her older brother taught her how to boost cars and hustle people, and was killed in a gang shootout when he was 16. A couple years later, Miriam made her way north to Tijuana, leaving the dead and her deadbeat dad behind.

There, Miriam met a charismatic occultist named Ariana. Ari took the young thief under her wing and showed her the "true path of entropy." She broke Miriam down and rebuilt her into an entropomancer — one who gives herself to chance in order to control it.

Miriam wouldn't be like her family anymore. No, she'd have chance by the balls and make it work for her.

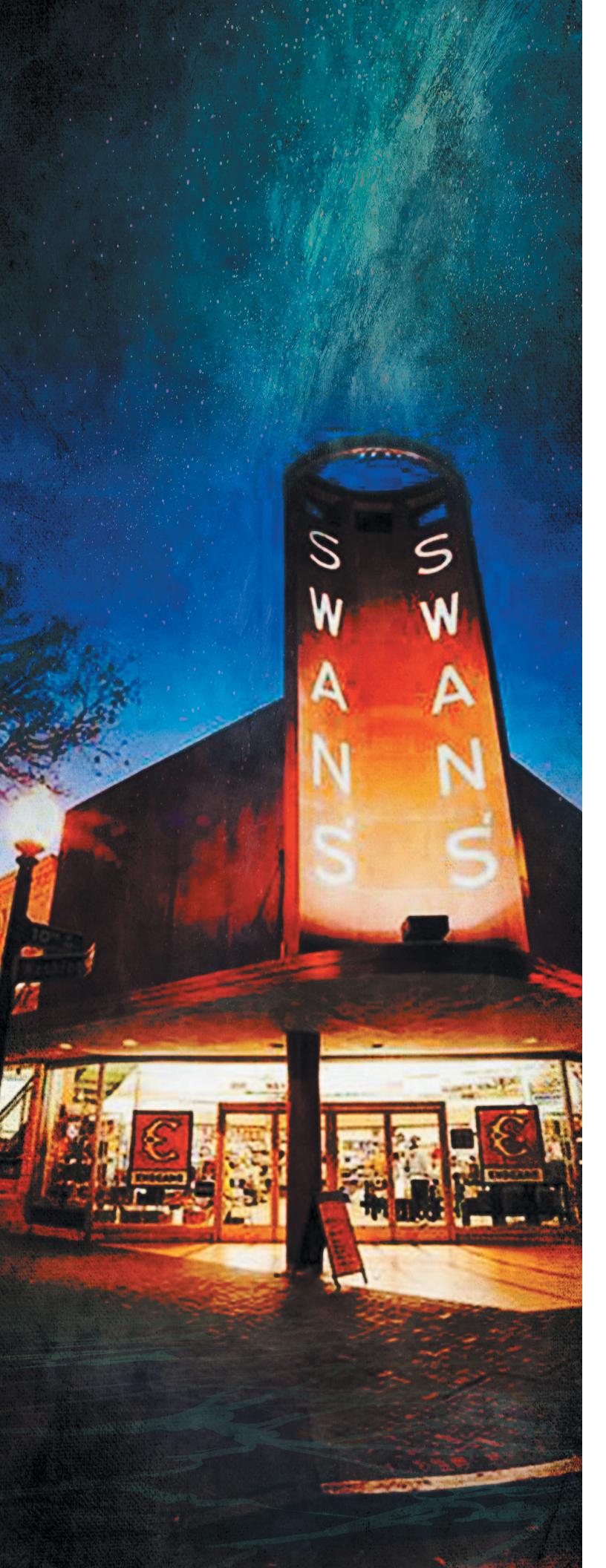
Fast-forward a couple years. Ariana gets herself killed trying to get some juice to outrun some Sleepers. Miriam watches her surrogate mother die, then gets back to fleeing herself. A priest waves her into a church, and she runs into the Chapel.

Three months of literal self-reflection led by Reverend Matthew Troedson — a former history magus who murdered another adept over the Liberty Bell — turn her from an adept of entropy into a devout servant of order and of a higher power. Troedson walks away from the Chapel, telling Miriam it's her turn to guide the misguided. The moment she accepted the duty, she aged twenty years. The Room wanted an Agent that commanded more respect than a runaway teen. Unbeknownst to Miriam, the Room repaid Troedson's duty by giving him those twenty years.

Unlike some Agents that take a higher-level view and concern themselves with the Invisible Clergy and the state of the cosmos, Miriam cares about individuals. Dressed as a nun — and fully seeing herself as one — Sister Miriam keeps

MIRIAM CRUZ, AGENT OF THE CHAPEL OF MIRRORS

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



a special eye on those who were lured into a life of twisted magick so they could fill a void left by pain and loss. When she leaves the Room to let a prisoner stew for a few hours, Miriam visits troubled teens. She figures that if she can keep someone from the life she had in the first place, they won't need to visit the Chapel later. Unlike some previous Agents, Miriam is loath to use her anti-magick ability, though she does to protect people from dangerous magi.

STATS

Personality: Media ideal of a nun: patient and pious, with a touch of mother hen.

Obsession: Sympathetic ear. Guiding others through a dangerous path and into salvation.

Wound Threshold: 65.

Rage Stimulus: Violence against the innocent, whether physical or emotional.

Fear Stimulus: Helplessness. Anyone who looks like her family, including Ariana.

Noble Stimulus: Orphans and troubled teens, especially those who don't believe in a higher power.

Un-Magick 70%: Described in "Transformation of Magick" on the previous page.

Sympathetic 40%*: Substitutes for Connect, Substitutes for Status, Therapeutic (* obsession identity).

Ex-Urchin 50%: Provides Firearm Attacks, Provides Initiative, Substitutes for Pursuit.

Veteran of the Magick Wars 45%: Casts Rituals, Evaluates the Unnatural, Substitutes for Secrecy.

As an Agent of the Chapel of Mirrors, Miriam has all the powers described earlier in this section.

POSSESSIONS

Miriam just has a simple nun's habit, though she keeps a small knife concealed on her — a gift from her brother. She also has around \$96 worth in local currency whenever she leaves the Room, which she is more likely to spend on others than herself.

CHEMTRAILS

People look up at the sky and see white lines like keloid scars across the firmament — lines trailing behind jets way up high. It's not hard to see these contrails (literally "trails of condensation") as unnatural because, let's be real here, they totally are. From "hot of nature" it's no great cognitive leap to "intentionally man-made" and from there to "sinister." The chemtrail conspiracy theory insists that the government is spraying chemicals out of planes to do... something. What that something is depends on the theory to which one ascribes. Germ warfare against a particular race is a popular one, though it's rarely the race you'd expect. Making people sick, particularly poor folk or the denizens of certain geographical locations, that's another popular one. You get some weather control believers too.

The assumption that the marks across the blue are the signs of something outside normal belief is, in fact, correct. But the conspiratologists have it back-to-front. The contrails aren't causing new patterns. They are the signs of invisible patterns, now made manifest.

As anyone with even basic insights into the Invisible Clergy knows, human will is a powerful force, and masses of humans can deform reality simply by paying attention to it. For almost all of human history, most people died within ten miles of where they were born. The roads horse carts and human pilgrims trod flat indicated ley lines, the courses of energy between human settlements. They were literally the

lines along which knowledge and attention flowed, because people could only perceive that which was close by.

Now, however, we fly and make phone calls and drive hundreds of miles a day in metal boxes powered by dead dinosaurs. The lines of attention are now bubbles and cables and imperceptible waves. Instead of linking villages populated by dozens to cities of thousands, they connect towns where hundreds of thousands reside, to cities with dozens of millions.

Jet contrails are the ley lines of the modern world. They course with lubricated meaning. People who fly through them become indirectly, imperceptibly more attuned to the Stratosphere. It's not enough to give an avatar any kind of power boost, though some crazy adept could probably milk it for charges if she built her whole magickal identity around the flying version of Geomancy... Stratomancy, I suppose?

No, the real meaning of those lines in the sky, if you have the craft to read them, is simply this: they mean that people who get to fly are more likely to get to fly in the future. Which is just another way of saying that the rich remain rich, while the people who aren't mostly stay that way.

It was always that way. But in the past, that reinforcement was like a donkey on a road taking one person from Paris to Brittany. Now it's taking hundreds of people from Hawaii to Japan at 555 mph.

CHRONICLER, THE

An archetype of the Invisible Clergy, the Chronicler records the events of the day. They are drawn to important events, even if others don't recognize them as such, and are given

keen powers of observation. In exchange, it is demanded of them that they record and share what they've gleaned.

CHURCH OF THE INSCRUTABLE WILL

This ripe slice of American crazy started out in Baltimore, but has since spread to Pittsburgh, Trenton, Albany, and, surprisingly, São Paulo, Brazil. Founded by a woman named Jandice (pronounced "Jan-DEE-chay") Dimas, the Church of the Inscrutable Will holds that radical liberty begins from within, and that if we could only be free from our self-imposed shackles, no other bonds could hold us.

So far so good, as cult premises go. People who are happy with themselves and their lives rarely go in for shiny-new religions, especially ones that require you to break off ties with your family. But if you hate yourself and your parents and your decisions, then a group that invites you to transform yourself by getting shut off from all that sounds pretty good.

So Jandice assembled a group of sad sacks and convinced them she held the key to unlock all the bonds that were holding them back from happiness. The first step was to submit oneself to the Cosmic Will but — here's the hard part! — the Cosmic Will is inscrutable. So when you're starting out, the first stage is to deliberately and consistently contradict your own first impulse, in order to wipe out the ego that occludes perception of higher orders.

That's right: the first commandment of the Church of the Inscrutable Will is the exact opposite of "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law." It instead insists that doing

what you don't want — confronting your fears and resisting your temptations — is the way to renewal. After that it gets into divination to hear what the universe is saying, once you've confused yourself so badly that you don't even know what you want any more. This state of befuddlement is something of a sacrament to Jandice and her people.

Of course, the most reliable divination, or interpretations thereof, come from Jandice. She really does believe in all this at least half the time. If the advice and prophecy she gives winds up benefitting her? Hey, that's consistent with her argument that she's the epicenter of the Inscrutable Will and that the cosmos wants her to be helped and happy and coddled.

This would fall apart in a month if Jandice wasn't electrifyingly charismatic and capable of making any crazy thing sound like a fun, safe adventure. It would be relatively harmless if the Church hadn't found a mutant symbol Ouija board that is genuinely in contact with an otherworldly intelligence. Will the voice of the board win out over Jandice's sybaritic cool? Or might they find that they can work together?

CLAWS (UNNATURAL ENTITY)

It's heralded by the odor of rotten meat, and those who have survived its hunt for any prolonged period of time have done so by being savvy to the scent and running instead of thinking when they smell it.

It's a curse-given body, and it's a body that hungers. Often, it shows up to hunt down and destroy those people who are otherwise suffering from unnatural phenomena. It's spiritual vinegar in the wound.

Its body is naked and gray, with slick skin that is always moist with blood and thick lipids that drip off of it constantly, leaving a smear wherever it travels. It has no eyes or mouth, but it still eats. It appears to track by scent and senses movement but cannot see. Instead of fingers, it has chitinous talons ten inches long. It starts stalking by scratching the victim in their sleep, leaving progressively worse and worse gouges that they wake with in the morning — wounds they cannot explain. Eventually, it starts to appear when they are awake and out at night, but only they can see it, though anyone can smell it. Eventually, it decides to close in, it openly attacks the victim while he's awake... then backs off again. Week by week, the attacks grow worse until it accidentally kills the victim by playing too rough, or else dies itself.

There are ways to drive claws off. Those methods are hard to test. The story goes that what it really wants is to drive its victims to suicide. Indeed, many people can't cope with the pressure and end up taking that option. So, theoretically, if you could successfully kill yourself and be brought back by medical means, claws would be satisfied and abandon you in favor of new victims. It's also suggested it cannot abide the light of the full moon, which burns its skin.

When chargers are suffering from supernatural difficulties and unexplained phenomenon, they are careful to never say "Well, at least it couldn't get any worse." This is the surest way to become stalked by a claws.

The creature's Stab You identity is how it attacks. It does hand-to-hand damage, +3 for being pointy. Its Find You identity lets it track its chosen target, no matter what mundane means are used to avoid the claws. Magick methods have a better record of confounding it. The Escape You identity lets it get away when injured, even if there seems to be no way out for it.

If anyone other than the victim tries to attack a claws, they have to first make a successful Notice roll to get a sense of where it is. It's not only invisible to them, it seems to be non-present — it doesn't disturb fog or leave tracks in snow and flinging paint around is likely to only stain its target.

That same quality of non-presence clings to the residue when a claws is killed. If you do manage to kill the damn thing, it dissolves into a puddle of meat-sweat, with only the ten pointy claws remaining solid.

Both the puddle and the talons have unnatural qualities to them. The nails are unnoticeable to anyone other than the person who dealt the death blow. They do damage like a straight razor or a switchblade, except you can only stab with them, not cut or slice. They still do miss damage, however, because it's easier to stab somebody with a weapon that they won't see. After a few uses they start to splinter and become useless, but before that happens they're handy if you want to be armed in an airport. Or a penitentiary.

As for that greasy muck, if you rub it on yourself you become as invisible as a claws. Outside of physical combat, people need to make a Notice roll to figure out that there's something wrong — otherwise they just ignore you. When violence occurs, they have to roll Notice before attacking you. The odor remains though. In fact, while the invisibility only lasts 1d10+40 minutes, the smell remains for days.

Each dead claws dissolves into one dose of "don't see me but sure as hell smell me" lotion.

CLAWS (SIGNIFICANT UNNATURAL ENTITY)

Smells like meat.

Wound Threshold: 60+1d100.

Find You 60%: Substitutes for Notice, Substitutes for Pursuit.

Stab You 55%: Substitutes for Dodge, Substitutes for Struggle.

Escape You 50%: Substitutes for Fitness, Substitutes for Secrecy.

CLIOMANCY

This form of history-based magick harvests energy from places where the attention of humankind has been focused by past events. Cliomancers' power is fragile, draining

away if unused, but when properly deployed they can pry secrets from the past, erase memories, and inception false recollections.

CLOVEN ORANGE (MINOR RITUAL)

Cost: 1 minor charge.

Ritual Action: Take a fresh orange and a list of ingredients like ambergris and thyme and styrax and spikenard. You know, old witchy medieval ingredients. You have to treat the orange, pressing cloves into the peel's surface in artistic patterns. Rubbing oils into the peels. The whole thing is pretty involved and can take a few hours. Then, you need to wear the thing. In the old days, people had pieces of jewelry that they wore the orange in, but that might be conspicuous these days. The old witches claimed that the process bound a little god of good health into the orange to protect you. Treated correctly, a cloven orange can last years.

Effect: This ritual slipped out of the hands of some old school Italian goddess worshipers. If you create the cloven orange correctly, and are wearing it, you get to flip-flop any Fitness rolls to avoid illness. Also, you smell a little better than you normally would. Like... maybe a third better.



COMPENSARIANS (UNNATURAL ENTITY)

The cosmos exists as a balance between order and entropy. Or at least one theory says so. This is the occult underground, so be prepared for ten conflicting ones. These two primal forces are forever in conflict. But what's actually fighting that conflict? Compensarians, that's what.

These are the universe's analogues to white blood cells. Compensarians cluster in the real world when chaos or order is high and try to bring the opposite to the area. "Ghosts" arranging chairs in pyramids? Could be compensarians trying to right the balance towards order. Poltergeist activity randomly moving things around the living room? Just compensarians trying to add entropy where it's sorely lacking. This means unnatural phenomena, usually up to two minor or one significant per day, but more is certainly possible when there's a ton of order and/or chaos around for the compensarians to fight.

These entities can infect humans, especially adepts and avatars, since those tend to wield forces that muck about with the order and entropy balance. The unlucky human must make a Secrecy check with a penalty set by the GM to reflect how much order or chaos the human is showcasing. Those infected with compensarians tend to display symptoms of either bipolar disorder or OCD, depending on how chaotic or ordered the person was behaving prior to infection. Compensarians cannot be removed by magick, not even rituals and spells designed to banish unwanted intangible entities. They can still be killed by those with the power to harm immaterial critters, however. If the infected spends 24 hours living as the compensarian demands, orderly or chaotic, it goes away on its own. How do you know what the entity wants? Try acting deranged. If it amps up the OCD, you need to be more orderly. If not, keep it up for the next day.

Some people even go fishing for compensarians, summoning them with gutter magick in the case of chaos antigens, or ancient Thaumaturgy for those that attack order. They do this for one of several reasons:

- Anyone who kills a compensarian gets a *significant charge*.
- If you act the way it likes, it tries to use its Prophetic Blessing identity on you to bestow a goodbye gift as it leaves.
- If you act against its inclination, it tries to use its Emotional Detachment identity. Sometimes, it's easier to say goodbye to an unwanted mentor or protégé if you care a lot less.
- Sometimes people like having unnatural phenomena around to spook the squares.

Charges are described in "Adepts" on page 124 of Book One: Play.

COMPENSARIAN (UNNATURAL ENTITY)

Wound Threshold: 3d10+30. They're intangible, so it takes something special to kill them, but the rewards are entirely real.

Create Unnatural Effect 50%: As mentioned above, they can roll this three times a day in a circumstance with an average chaos and order balance. Two rolls are for minor effects — whatever is most likely to help or hurt its host, depending on whether the host is going along or kicking against the goads — and one's for a significant effect. If a roll fails, it can try again later, until it exhausts its three daily rolls.

Prophetic Blessing 65%: When appeased, Compensarians attempt to encourage their former hosts to stay in balance. That's how it seems, anyhow. They could be entirely without intelligence or motives and this is just how they defecate in people's consciousnesses. Whatever it is, it provides a burst of insight about the future, *giving a hunch* on the host's next roll. They only do this as they depart!

Emotional Detachment 45%: If you battle the compensarian, it takes the fight to you and your relationships. Once per day, it can roll this identity and, if it succeeds, it takes 10% off your strongest relationship. Ouch.

See "Hunch Rolls" on page 14 in Book One: Play.

COFFEE

Once the entropy-loving half of Moorcock Hypothesis believers declared that alcohol was their sacrament, it was probably only a matter of time before believers in order threw up some other substance as a mirror — because, obviously, if order is truly the dominant force in the cosmos, each side has to have its eternal beverage to *keep everything matchy-matchy*.

Honestly, if you're looking for something that spawns tidiness the way alcohol spawns disorder and confusion, you probably need to continue the search. Yeah, the caffeine makes you wide awake and refreshed, but someone who's scatterbrained dry is going to be scatterbrained twice as fast after a double espresso. That said, just as there's usually one bar in a city of any size to which checkers and

chargers find themselves drawn nightly, there's also a coffee shop that attracts them by day, even if it's out of the way.

The crossover patrons between the bar and the café are usually a fairly small subset, either widely admired and respected, or deeply mistrusted and suspected for some vague sense of "trying to serve two masters." It's undeniable that, whatever you think of the Moorcock Hypothesis, these establishments always seem to have conflicts of ambiance. If one's laid-back and welcoming, the other is formal and elitist. If one is bookish and refined, the other is loud and crass. So maybe those people beefing about having it both ways are onto something.

See "Moorcock Hypothesis" on page 62.

COMTE DE SAINT-GERMAIN

"Le Comte de Saint-Germain" is just the second most recently publicized name of an entity that was, until 2003, functionally immortal. He was, for a very long time, the memory of the cosmos and a key figure in its machinations.

According to the theory of the Invisible Clergy, human belief in social roles forces people who embody those roles out of tangible reality and into a higher, non-physical plane — the Statosphere. But one of the Clergy's archetypes remained constant throughout all the reboots and revolutions, the First and Last Man. He watched over humanity (though not always with kindness), guided it (though not always with wisdom), and protected it (though never from itself). Then, when 332 other archetypes had ascended, he passed into the Statosphere, shut down the

universe, and merged with the others to give birth to a new world. As soon as that world produced something that was a "person," that identity became him.

This happened more times than anyone, now, can grasp or remember.

At one time, the Comte had a fairly decent memory of the worlds that went before — a recall that let him design rituals based around previous cosmographies, giving him magickal power without the obsession and heartache associated with being an adept. But in the year 2003, something changed. In what is known as the 03/03/03 Event, the Comte entered a restaurant called The Bon Ton, but exited elsewhere after passing through the House of Renunciation.

See also
"Human Eternal, The" on page 50,
"Old Mother Apocalypse" on page 67,
"Freak, The" on page 42.

Yesterday's dreams are today's scraps.

Always feed your past to the dog.

CONFESSOR, THE

This archetype heals the soul through the simple act of listening. They are blessed to gain trust and judge the lives of their fellows, but are constrained

to listen and help any who confess — no matter how vile the crime. Moreover, they must record all the sins and failings to which they are privy.

CRYPTOMANCY

This style of magick is either concerned with lies, or with secrets, and either way it is very difficult to get a straight answer about it from its adepts.

D IS FOR DEGENERACY



DAME BENEDICTA

Some sculptors claim they don't carve a slab of marble to reveal their visions, but to free the figures already trapped inside. The riddle of the stone was unraveled by Cellini a couple of centuries ago, and his work eventually became his undoing. Rumors say the master sculptor became so fixated on the possibility that his works were alive, that he believed his statues were talking to him, begging him to summon the demon who trapped their spirits in the cold marble.

While no one knows what happened for sure, there was a voice speaking to Cellini. Trapped in Medusa's Shield, an adept is thought to have spoken through the legendary statue to instruct Cellini on how to free her spirit. Cellini followed the voice's instructions, becoming obsessed with the idea that his art could preserve the dead. Using Necromancy, Cellini believed he was performing a ritual to free a great lady's spirit from the stone. Unbeknownst to him, the rituals the artist was provided were to give that "great lady" control over the mask Cellini had created from the imbued stone.

The voice that spoke to Cellini had a child, and a grandchild, and a whole long line of descendants. Dame Benedicta is the great-great-great-great-great granddaughter of that ancient adept,

and she has inherited the wisdom of all those preceding generations, as is family custom.

No one, living or dead, knows who Dame Benedicta really is, other than the fact that she's Greek, moderately wealthy, uses a false identity, is obsessed with antiquities, and is an exceptionally talented personamancer. Unlike other collectors, Dame Benedicta is on the hunt for broken statues, shards of pottery, and other remnants that have long been forgotten. Those who watch her closely believe that she is attempting to recreate a specific statue. To what end, or which figure, no one is sure.

Dame Benedicta travels the globe in the guise of an anthropologist who specializes in the study of tribal masks. She has been spotted combing the Aegean Sea for artifacts, accused of breaking into Vatican archives, and recorded climbing in the Ural Mountains of Siberia. When she's not searching for fragments or giving lectures, she spends her free time collecting death masks, most notably those of Isaac Newton, Mother Shipton, and Evangeline Adams.

Dame Benedicta is currently teaching anthropology at the University of Cambridge. While she's not actively malicious toward adepts outside of her own family, she won't go out of her way

See "Personamancy" on page 72.

to help a stranger, either — not without a good reason. She prefers to work with relatives and uses her rites to help them, but may warm up to people with a respectable family pedigree that she can relate to. In exchange for information, she does favors from time to time for those who are stubborn enough and willing to earn her trust. Once an outsider does, however, Dame Benedicta is reluctant to see that person go.

STATS

Personality: Dame Benedicta acts as if she's far removed from the typical cares that plague other people. Radiating power, her confidence is wrapped up in the secrets she keeps. She has a lot of pride, too, in her heritage and in her family. While she seems nice enough, Dame Benedicta is always somewhere else, her mind on a distant goal she has yet to accomplish.

Obsession: Dame Benedicta seeks to recreate the ritual her ancestor once performed. She wishes to shed her earthly body, become a mask, and control all other masks nearby with its power.

Wound Threshold: 60.

Rage Stimulus: Discovery. Dame Benedicta does not reveal to anyone she can wield magick or what her real name is. Those who find out she's an adept should consider themselves lucky if they cross paths with her and survive the encounter.

Fear Stimulus: Helplessness. The lady is deathly afraid of losing her magick and becoming a normal human. She wants to be anything but, for reasons she keeps to herself.

Noble Stimulus: People who sacrifice themselves for the good of their family.

Personamancer 75%*: Casts Rituals, Gains Charges, Use Gutter Magick (* obsession identity).

Anthropology Professor 60%: Evaluates Status, Substitutes for Knowledge, Substitutes for Notice.

Filthy Rich 50%: Coerces Helplessness, Coerces Self, Substitutes for Status.

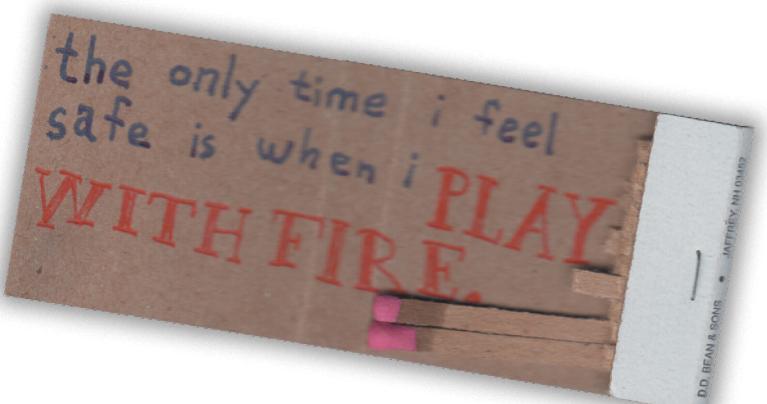
POSSESSIONS

Dame Benedicta carries the rusted chisel that Cellini once used to work her ancestor's ritual upon the stone. She prizes this object above all others, and she carries it with her always. The object itself is dormant and holds no magic, though it might one day be useful to her. She also has a small blackened mirror in her possession that she uses for communicating with the dead. The mirror is rumored to have once belonged to Madame Blavatsky, but that has yet to be substantiated. The mirror can identify a spirit's nature by its aura. Demons and revenants are outlined in red, while benign spirits have a violet hue. Also, because she specializes in the identification and acquisition of tribal masks throughout antiquity, the tools of her trade — *Personamancy* — are never far behind.

In addition to these possessions, Dame is the member of a well-connected family in Greece. The family, who's name she does not publicly reveal, are rumored to be shipping magnates who can trace their lineage all the way back through the ages to Circe herself.

DAME BENEDICTA

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



DATA FREEDOM FOUNDATION (DFF)

"Make that study show religious believers are less altruistic than dedicated atheists, and you get a cool \$50,000. Do we have a deal?"

Some people cannot stand being wrong. When faced with scientific data contrary to their beliefs, they change the subject, get angry, or question the evidence. The fine folks at the Data Freedom Foundation created a new option: use magick to make the info different.

Publicly, the DFF is a nonpartisan think tank that hires freelancers to collect, collate, and analyze research on a variety of political and economic topics. While this does happen, most of these freelancers are adepts or avatars hired to change data to fit ideological paradigms.

Wonder drug causing strokes? Fourth quarter earnings lower than projected? Vaccines not causing autism? Use magick to either change the data being recorded, or alter the existing data. Or people. Or history, if you're strong enough. If a study is looking into a link between abortion and cancer, the DFF sends freelancers out to ensure that link exists. Maybe they alter records to add abortions to the medical history of cancer patients. Maybe they find women who had abortions and give them cancer. Either way works fine for the DFF.

Sure, they could do this mundanely — hacking into the servers storing the data and editing it there, say. But the world believes in hacking. It doesn't believe in magick, which means it's easier for the DFF to cover their tracks. Would you believe some idiot saying someone cast a spell over the numbers in his spreadsheet?

Many in the occult underground would never have anything to do with the DFF. But it's run by millionaire Thomas Koors — a powerful avatar of the Opportunist — and pays crazy well.

DEATH CARS

Have you ever driven by a house and seen an old car up on blocks, maybe in the driveway with a rainbow pool of oil underneath it, maybe out back in the tall weeds? Ever wonder how they got that way?

Well, sometimes people just work on their cars incessantly; get two of the same kind and part out the cruddier one in order to keep the nicer one nice. So the husk you see may just be the results of automotive parasitism.

Or it may be a carefully prepared defensive artifact. It may be there to trap ghosts.

The ritual to create a death car varies from nation to nation, state to state... county to county in America's rust belt. But they all need a car in which someone has had sex. If that car is placed near a domicile with the tires and wheels removed, and the headlights and tail lights either taken out or smashed, it becomes a death car as soon as rain has fallen upon it, and remains one until it's removed from that home, or when the house itself is razed or falls apart. Some rituals add on other details — the spark plugs have to be removed and replaced with dead men's finger bones, or the license plates have to be spray-painted black, or there needs to be a funeral procession flag on it — but given the variety, it's likely that those are just nonfunctional cosmic cosmetics.

OPERATIONS

Climate change is a hot topic (ha!) for the DFF. They are always looking for chargers to cook the numbers and show the climate isn't getting hotter, or at least isn't doing so because of humanity. Bonuses are paid for showing it's getting colder.

The DFF is looking into expanding into election fraud. Since votes are data, why not change those to ensure the right politicians get elected? A few within the DFF are not pleased with this idea, and are considering quitting at an opportune moment.

RESOURCES

Money, and bucket loads of it. This buys lots of other resources, like influence and gear, but the one resource the DFF is deficient in is actual magick. None of the staff can use it outside of owner Thomas Koors, and they have no artifacts or rituals. That's what freelancers are for. Koors likes to keep those occult flakes at a deniable arm's-length, because he knows first-hand their propensity for injecting entropy into any organization that holds them too close. He understands that adepts in particular can never be fully bought because their loyalty is always to magick first, and anything that permits them to be magick second. He works on being that #2 priority and is happy with that.

Because of its uniquely obscuratory function, the DFF does not pursue objectives of its own. However, a week of its machinations are usually sufficient to decrease any weighty or cosmic objective by ten percentiles. They can't increase objectives — only degrade and diminish. Moreover, they can't work on local stuff. It's just too fine-grained.

This may be a ritual it's actually possible to perform entirely by accident.

If the vehicle is successfully changed into a death car, any once-human spirit that approaches the house has to succeed at an Urge roll or else get sucked into one of its seats. This means that a minivan can catch more ghosts than a pickup truck. Entities without an Urge, like *phasmata* or really degraded revenants? They're stuck automatically, and remain until the car or the house is ruined.

Determined spirits get one Urge roll every night, at midnight, to try and escape, but there's a cumulative -10% penalty every night after the first. If they manage to get free from the death car, they have the choice of fleeing the area — even if they'd normally be compelled by obsession or enchantment to proceed on to the house. If they don't flee, they have to make another Urge roll at their normal rating to bypass the car again.

While in the car, the spirits exist in a state of narcotizing tedium, the kind of thoughtless highway hypnotic trance that passengers sometimes get on a long, boring road trip. Some who've escaped describe vividly dull hallucinations that only ended with a midnight trip to a highway rest stop or a truck stop diner.

DEMAGOGUE, THE

The Invisible Clergy contains at least one politician, the archetype of the great persuader, the speaker whose explanation ties everything neatly

together. Demagogue avatars are incredibly skilled at rousing the emotions of their hearers, but they are forbidden to ever, ever admit they were wrong.

DEVIL'S GAME (SIGNIFICANT RITUAL)

Cost: 1 significant charge.

Ritual Action: On the twelfth of any month, two hours before naval twilight, you must be in an empty room sitting on a chair facing another chair. In the chair across from you should be a full-length mirror. Take care that it does not lean back so that it distorts your reflection in any way. You must light a candle so it illuminates you without the flame showing in the reflection. At that point, you pour a glass of wine for yourself and one for the Devil. Invite him in a polite manner and wait. If your reflection reaches for the glass you laid out, hurry and reach along with it. If you can bring the wine to your lips at about the same times as your reflection, you have succeeded in the ritual.

After you finish your sip, the Devil asks you a question from the mirror. Answer it honestly, completely honestly, and it drinks in response. The questions are terrible, and answering them is emotionally draining. Typically, every question inflicts a Self check. GMs can adjudicate the rank based on the admission.

Every time it drinks, you can ask a question. After it answers, you must sip. If you can manage to apportion out your drinks so the glass lasts to twilight, the Devil leaves and you've won the

game. If you lose focus and finish the wine, the Devil wins. Either way, some of the terrible things you tell the Devil about yourself get out to two or three people in your life, but, on the bright side, you have some answers you can count on.

Effect: If you perform the ritual correctly and follow the guidelines laid out, you can summon an entity that claims to be "The Devil." As far as anyone's able to confirm that claim — that is, not very far at all — it's correct, or at least believes it's telling the truth. The demon that comes answers questions honestly as it can. It may say "I can't answer that," in some cases, but believe if it says it can't, it can't, and there's a very good reason. It is very knowledgeable, though more so about matters astral and cosmic than things like "Is my daughter sexually active?" The answer to that could well be "Give me a minute... um... at this exact moment, no. Other than that, who can say?"

"The Devil" cannot escape the mirror, can't possess you or anyone else and can't inflict any weirdness on you. So already this is considerably safer than much demonolatry. The "horrid truth" reveals are a drag, since it picks people with whom you have *relationships*, but if the worst things in your life aren't too bad, this is a good deal.

As described in "Relationships" on page 36 of Book One: Play.

DIPSOMANCY

Adepts of this magick school consume alcohol, and the world becomes drunk with them. Their powers are capricious, warping reality itself to make the implausible actual. But they can never

use magick when sober, and seem to be limited to minor effects unless tied to the greater history of drinking through some totemic cup or vessel.

DITTANY OF NAXOS

Mentioned in a very rare, possibly forged version of Theophrastus' *Enquiry Into Plants*, dittany of Naxos is an annual plant that grows about five inches tall. It only grows wild in swampy areas of the Greek island of Naxos. Dittany of Naxos is a weed, used exclusively for creepy magick stuff. It has wiry black hairs on its stems, oval green leaves, and small yellow flowers surrounded by dark green bracts. It blooms in early summer.

Dried and burned as putridly pungent incense, it allows physical objects to dematerialize into the astral plane while wreathed in its smoke, and only while wreathed in its smoke. Magicians have wasted years trying to take useful advantage of this capability, with mixed success.

DOLL, THE (MINOR RITUAL)

Cost: 2 minor charges.

Ritual Action: You need a victim and a person in the victim's life you want out. Craft or buy a wooden doll with no arms and no legs. Translate both names, the victim's and the person's, into Japanese as best you can and carve those names into the doll's body. Then, blood. Paint the thing in blood. Yours is fine, theirs is better. Then give the doll to the victim. It doesn't have to be a direct gift. So long as the victim keeps the doll, and the spell roll succeeded, the curse remains in effect.

Effect: In ancient rural Japan, in times of famine or severe winter, occasionally, a village would get together and decide that they simply had too many mouths to feed. In these cases, they would deliver a little wooden doll to any family with a newborn, who had to either do away with the

baby, or leave the village. It's suggested there was magic in the doll, making the pain duller or compelling the family — hard to say, that magic was lost a long time ago. Instead, this ritual compels a person to break ties with someone in their life.

As long as one of the people named in the ritual has the doll, any time the two people interact, one of them takes a Self (4) check caused by feelings of irrational mistrust, suspicion, and even panic. If there's a relationship between them, it decreases by five percentiles every day.

If the doll is identified as the cause of the dismay, destroying it breaks the curse. Damaged relationships remain diminished, but can be repaired normally.

*If you
grind
anything
fine
enough it
becomes
a spice.*

*The
greater
the
sacrifice,
the more
potent the
flavor.*

DON'T SLEEPS (UNNATURAL ENTITY)

In their larval state, don't sleeps are simply psychic parasites that feed off of a mind's energy when a person is hallucinating. By and large, they simply float, drawn to locations of heavy drug users or the severely mentally ill. Most of the time, they eat and drift away, unnoticed and no threat to those who feed them.

Occasionally, though, they move past this larval state and take on a second form. This form — what some checkers refer to as don't sleeps — release a toxin into the air near their victims, preventing them from sleeping. Lack of sleep eventually induces auditory hallucinations, then visual ones. The creatures feed as long as the victim's mind continues to operate. If the person dies, or prevents these hallucinations, the don'ts flutter off, starved, to find a new victim.

The question of perceiving these oneiric pests is a little complicated. Usually, a thing is visible or it's not, but in this case, there's "seeing" them and then there's really seeing them. They're tangible and present, but 99% invisible to cameras and the eyeballs of the non-tripping. They're small and light and transparent, drifting along in a bouncy trajectory. They look like nothing so much as an eyeball floater or, if you've never had floaters, like a tiny hair made of cling wrap. If you can perceive their psychic radiance due to enchantment or psilocybin or whatever, your mind interprets it as a smear of brilliant color. As they get bigger and fuller (on the astral plane — their physical bodies never grow) they start to reflect the contents of minds that feed them, in the way that a parrot might learn to mimic speech in return for crackers. Instead of just cool colors, man, you see your dad's face or Jesus or your old childhood bedroom.

People who are holding magick charges can spot the astral colors of don't sleeps without

trying. Avatars, however, can't discern their psychic contrail even if high, and the don't sleeps can't feed off them. Apparently, something else is already snacking on avatar dreams.

Note that the gas that prevents sleep is, similarly, tangible. If captured and scanned under a microscope, it turns out to be a complex chain of organic molecules. However, the gas excreted by don't sleeps keeps people awake magickally — duplicating the molecules synthetically, which isn't hard if you have the resources, produces no wakefulness, even though the chemicals are identical. This can cause Unnatural (3-4) check to careful chemists. The gas particles are about three microns in diameter, so a three-dollar paint mask from the hardware store can block them out. But if you do breathe in enchanted don't sleep gas, each dose keeps you awake for two to twenty hours. A mature don't sleep can kick out a dose about every five hours. But so far, no one's found a way to keep a grown one alive in captivity for more than a day, even when they gobble mescaline around the creatures like they're gorging on Halloween candy.

Being forced into insomnia is no fun. After 72 hours awake, the sleepless victim faces a Helplessness (2) check. Every four hours of wakefulness after that, the check rises by two. 76 hours is (4), 80 hours is (6) and so on until it tops out at 10.

DON'T SLEEPS (MINOR UNNATURAL ENTITY)

Did you see that?

Wound Threshold: 1.

Inflict Insomnia 80%: This unique identity lets them kick out the gas that inflicts insomnia.

Secrecy 90%: They can only use this to escape detection.

DREAM PEPPERS

The Guatemalan star-gourd pepper (*Capsicum stellariana*) is not widely cultivated because it tastes bitter-sour with a soapy aftertaste, and it often afflicts eaters with flatulence that's been likened to the smell of cheese rotting in an old gym sock. The pepper's colored like an eggplant, shaped like a gourd, and the size of a banana. It grows wild in Guatemala's northern lowlands and people who can't catch a turkey have been known to eat it, when they're hungry enough. Dried, salted, and sugared, it's bland enough to make for an unpopular regional soup. Not many people eat star-gourd peppers raw, though they're perfectly safe for consumption. But only the raw star-gourd pepper has mystic properties. They're called "dream peppers" (*yume no koshō*) by the Japanese occultists who found them by way of oracles and augury.

These particular mystics were being tormented by a westerner who had mastered the arts of dream invasion. They were desperate for a cure. They found that, when eaten raw, the dream pepper overwhelmed the vile nocturnal sendings of their *gaijin* foe.

It has since been confirmed, among the few people those Japanese insomniacs trusted: eat a raw dream pepper, and you have the same dream. What dream? The dream of the pepper, of course.

If you eat one when it's winter in Guatemala, you dream about tranquil brown oblivion. There is no imagery, no sensation, but only a comfortably wordless sense of anticipation. Spring dreams are temperate and pushy. It feels like being in a sleeping bag and trying to rip your way free from the inside. So, not at all comfortable for claustrophobes, who often wake from those dreams sweaty and gasping. Summer is brightness and warmth and effort, like stretching in every direction. It's not entirely unpleasant, but it's more like a psychedelic hot yoga workout than anything else. Fall dreams, on the other hand, aren't much fun. That's when peppers get gravid and fruit which, to pepper dreamers, feels like having your hands swell up with desperate erogenous sensation and then, instead of release, they just fall off — plop! It's not bad enough to cause a stress check, but most people wake up feeling deeply disquieted.

Like most dreams, pepper dreams quickly fade in the daytime, so unless you write one down immediately upon waking, it's unlikely that a frequent eater would realize that they were having the same dream, or that regular eaters in the plural would happen to recall and share their experiences and then compare them to diet.

Nonetheless, there is now a very small but determined market for exported *Capsicum stellariana*, mostly among people who have deep, recurring, sheet-drenching nightmares. But a few ambitious occultists are wondering if it would be possible to record over the pepper's dreams with something else or use them as a conduit for some sort of psychic broadcast.

Danny said that they're just thought forms, and that they're pretty harmless. He knew a lot about all kinds of psychic entities and ghosts and all that shit, so, if he said it was harmless I believe him. But basically, we'd get a little high, then these things would flutter into the zoom all glowing like crazy beautiful butterflies. We'd eat shrooms and they'd hover around us and dance and sing this song and it was fucking beautiful. I loved those things. He said we had to pace ourselves, you know? So we didn't over do it. Lynsey said that was kind of bullshit, and if they were harmless they were harmless. So. She figured out what Danny did, and we started summoning them when Danny wasn't around. We'd call them around all the time. It was like they fed on our hallucinations, and they were getting fat. Bigger and hungrier. They changed too, still beautiful, but more birdlike than butterfly. They had bodies and faces like people I knew. Their songs had words now. Words I heard in my dreams sometimes.

Then I... I stopped sleeping. They would come even when I wasn't high. Lynsey told me she hadn't slept in about a month right before she jumped off that bridge. I... It's been weeks now. Every time I think I'm going to fall asleep, something happens. I hear their voices. I can't sleep when I hear their voices and, and anyway, I'm starting to see things. Like I'm tripping when I'm not. Not just the Don'ts. But like other things. I'll imagine someone is talking or someone is in my zoom, or the computer is talking to me, and then, the Don't shows up. They're so big. Their faces. They're so hungry and I can't... I can't... I can't...



DUKE

Back in the 1990s, “duke” was the cool word for someone interested in weird stuff who could actually make things happen. Maybe it was a reference to royalty, or to the Doonesbury character, or to outranking the Comte de Saint-Germain.

But every generation thinks it invented sex, magick, and cell phones, and the Baby Boomers are only right about that last one. People born after 1985 tend to use “checker” and “charger” because they’re gender-neutral or simply because they’re not what creepy old snobs use.

If someone still uses “duke,” it’s because he’s been around a long time, or wants to seem like it, or is desperately afraid to use any newer phrase that might not offend somebody.



E IS FOR ERGOTISM

ENTROPOMANCY

This is entropy magick in its purest form. Entropomancers give themselves to chance, taking terrible risks in order to reap power, regardless of whether their risk succeeds or fails. They are then privileged to dictate events that others must

leave "random." They make the certain unsure in order to break ordinary determinism. But they are forbidden to dare others, or even ask them, to do any task they are themselves unwilling to risk.

ENTROPY

People who follow the Moorcock Hypothesis believe that entropy is one of the fundamental elements of all existence, existing in tension with, and in opposition to, order. In Michael Moorcock's novels, entropy (or, as he called it, "chaos") was the force of evil, decay, and disruption, and some still view it that way. The more mid-road entropy decriers suggest that it's an entirely indifferent force of the universe, not a cackling wicked figure poking people with its horns and pitchfork. Still, they admit, when your life goes to hell, it's *probably entropy to blame*.

This seems an unfair calumny to many, especially adepts who are not great respecters of traditional views and priorities. To them, entropy is the sudden inspiration that seems to come from nowhere and illuminate every area of your life from a different perspective. Entropy is liberation, free will, and love at first sight. If it's responsible for your car getting swiped and your credit being ruined by outrageous mismanagement and coincidence, well, isn't that a small price to pay to avoid being an automaton?

EPPERSTEIN CLINIC

Dr. Leo Epperstein was an Adlerian psychologist in the 1950s who got a lot of attention for his treatment of a Jane Doe client found wandering the streets of Los Angeles. She claimed to be a member of the Karuk tribe and, although she appeared to be in her early twenties, she said sailors had kidnapped her in the year 1888.

Epperstein's unique approach with Jane Doe was to take her assertion at face value and attempt to adapt her to modernity. She'd previously been treated for delusions, but Epperstein suggested that while her delusion displayed the typical weirdness of a true psychotic break with reality, it was neither incorrigibly nor irrationally held. She was willing to consider alternate explanations: they just weren't very convincing. No one could be found who recognized her. At that time, there were less than a thousand fluent Karuk speakers alive, but Jane Doe clearly knew it like a native and had a deep grasp of Karuk culture, even recognizing landscape features around the Klamath River.

Despite her openness to alternative explanations, attempts to find people who knew her or whom she recognized in the modern era ground to a standstill. She had been very depressed until Epperstein took over her case and changed tacks. Instead of insisting on her denial of her memories as a precondition for release, he simply said he

was going to defer judgment and try to prepare her to live as a woman of the year 1954.

Once the attempt to explain her circumstances was downplayed, she made great strides, proving herself a hard worker and careful student of modern technology. After two years of residential treatment, Jane Doe was released and went on to live out her days employed by a produce market and, later, a small diner.

As for Epperstein, his success with Jane Doe led to referrals from all over the state and, later, all over the US. He treated a man who claimed he'd been kidnapped by "the fae" for a hundred years under a Colorado hill, a woman who insisted that the Aztecs had flung back the Spanish in Mexico many years before, until "the world changed," and a fellow who said he'd been expelled from reality for a thousand years, but could still speak modern English because "he'd been watching from the stratosphere."

In some cases of traditional delusion, Epperstein followed the typical course, but he was always fascinated by otherwise rational patients who seemed perfectly capable of adapting to the world, at least somewhat despite believing themselves to be from history, or from alternative present-days. He adored the book *The Man in the High Castle* and kept first editions of that, along with *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* and *Bring*

See "Moorcock Hypothesis" on page 62.

the Jubilee, prominently displayed in his office. He founded the clinic that bears his name in the desert outside Eureka, Nevada, in 1976. Though its founder passed away in 1991, the clinic remains open. Most of its business is a well-regarded

EPIDEROMANCY

Magick of the flesh is old and written in pain. Epideromancers subdue their flesh through self-harm, in the process becoming stronger, faster, and often alienated from morphological norms. An epideromancer can swallow glass shards and earn the power to cure a hemangioendothelioma

substance abuse residential treatment program, but they maintain a small ward for rehabilitating people who have the types of delusions that so interested Dr. Leo.

EROTIC PASTRIES

There is a market for cakes and baked goods that are shaped, colored, and frosted to resemble breasts and genitals. Often they're given in jest, as part of a bachelor or bachelorette party — those hedonistic last flings where people symbolically or literally debauch themselves in a way unfitting for staid married couples, getting drunk and being ground on by strippers and yelling "Woo!" A cake shaped like a bottom is not out of place at such festivities.

Almost nobody involved in the production, sale of, and consumption of sexually explicit desserts realizes that they are partaking in an ancient rite dating back to Dionysian mystery cults and possibly farther.

Bread is the staff of life, as they say, a phrase that seems suggestive in this context. Especially since the dough has to rise and expand before being put in a hot enclosure to be finished. It's a dietary staple, essential for many people's lives.

You know what else is essential for life? Sex. So perhaps it's not so odd that these two life symbols get conflated into erotic pastry.

What, then, is the opposite of life? Obviously, it's death. There's a reason no one brings a tit cake to a funeral, and that's because it doesn't belong at an event that's about coming to grips with inevitable mortality. Instead, they're served up before weddings, which are all about the immortality of the human race, despite the deaths of its constituent humans.

The death-defiance implicit in these foods is strong enough to overwhelm and subsume certain other forms of death-defiance. By far the most popular method of dodging whatever fate awaits beyond the veil of death is by becoming a ghost, or demon, if you prefer a more loaded

that baffles medical science. Or they can gain the power to pull someone's nose off like it's made of taffy. But the price of mastering the flesh is selfishness in their dominance. They cannot allow another to treat or change their bodies, even to the extent of getting a haircut.

phrase. Because these dirty Danishes are emblematic reinforcers of the life-starting part of the natural order, they have a deleterious effect on the restless dead. Specifically, if you throw one at a tangible revenant, it hurts them. Possibly more than hitting them with, say, a boulder or a chainsaw.

Intangible hauntings are even more susceptible to these delicacies. If one is waved aggressively in the direction of an unhosted demon or ghost, the entity may be irresistibly drawn into it. Those who have eaten such possessed pies and sweets have reported bizarre coincidences and Fortean phenomena.

As for real, true immortals? Such cakes are poisonous to them. Very few of them are aware of this flaw in their death-cheating plan, however, since few immortals go to bachelorette parties. Could come as a real shock.

EROTIC PASTRY RULES

If you throw a dick cake or whatever at a revenant, use Fitness. It does damage like a firearm.

If a salacious dessert is brandished at an immaterial ghost or demon, the entity has to make an Urge roll or get sucked into it until it's consumed or goes stale. If it goes stale, the entity emerges, disoriented. If it's eaten, the person who eats the last bite gets a minor charge and the spirit is destroyed.

Artificial immortals who eat even one bite of an erotic pastry have to succeed at a Fitness roll or die. Even if the roll succeeds, the cake does 1d10 damage. Those whose immortality is an expression of the cosmos, like the old Comte de Saint-Germain and the current Human Eternal, are not subject to this undignified weakness.

ESCOBAR, EDWARD

Edward Escobar is a native of Ciudad Juárez in Chihuahua, Mexico. Born in the struggling lower-class neighborhoods, Escobar dodged recruitment into the local crime organizations when his mother became the mistress of a local politician. That connection gave Escobar access to education and both his mother and her boyfriend approved when he joined the police force. The politician believed he would get a bright young cop on his payroll, someone who would look the other way. Escobar proved instead to be a straight shooter, a cop intent on trying to do right in a corrupt environment. When he tried to expose a human trafficking ring preying on young women from the poorest neighborhoods, he was beaten nearly to death in a back alley behind the precinct by fellow officers on the take. His life, however, was saved by a Blue Line member named Axel Garza who saw Escobar as an ally. Seems the traffickers were passing the kidnapped girls along for human sacrifice in the US, and together Garza and Escobar stopped them. Unfortunately their comrades across the border were unable to follow the leads that would have ultimately led to *Ordo Corpulentis*.

Escobar was only twenty-two when he caught that case. Now at forty-six, Escobar is a worn-down federale, having clawed his way up the ladder as honestly as he could. He's been working with the Blue Line for most of that time. He's also the father of three daughters by his wife Ana, and his eldest has two young sons. He's a vegetarian and teetotaler, to the great amusement of many of his coworkers.

Any bribes Escobar has taken over the years have been funneled over to Axel Garza, the man who saved his life all those years ago. Garza's trajectory has been... flatter. He's still on the police force, working a low-level desk job, but on the side he is very much a Blue Line Mulder. He's put time, effort and money — mostly Escobar's money — into a few local safe houses, set up in a series of flophouses in the poorest neighborhood of Juárez. Garza is also the main point of contact for US Blue Liners who chase leads into northern Mexico, despite his poor English. If you need to get over the border with no questions asked, Garza's the one you talk to, but Escobar's the one who gets it done.

STATS

Personality: Escobar is a careful balance between earnest officer of the law and practical/cynical federale. He knows how things have to work in his home country and hates every second of the corruption, but uses it to his advantage. At home he is a devout Catholic and family man.

Obsession: Escobar has no obsession.

Rage Stimulus: Anyone who harms animals.

Fear Stimulus: The threat or idea of being crippled.

Noble Stimulus: Escobar never turns away when a child is in danger.

Wound Threshold: 60.

Federale 40%: Coerces Violence, Evaluates Violence, Provides Firearm Attacks.

Pragmatic 50%: Protects Self, Substitutes for Knowledge, Substitutes for Status.

Law Enforcement Experience 60%: Provides Initiative, Provides Wound Threshold, Substitutes for Notice.

POSSESSIONS

Escobar goes nowhere without his bulletproof vest, two sets of handcuffs, three pistols, and a shotgun in the trunk of his car. His cruiser is an aging Cadillac from the last decade. It has the latest GPS and a false bottom underneath his backseat for carrying extra equipment or... whatever. It was big enough for a dead 200-pound *chupacabra*, though hopefully that won't come up again. He carries numerous kinds of ammunition, including rounds blessed by his local priest. A devout man, he carries a cross both on him and on his dashboard. His burner cell is always on hand. Escobar never goes anywhere without bribe money, in both pesos and dollars.

See "Ordo Corpulentis" on page 64 of Book Two: Run.

EDWARD ESCOBAR

Notches	Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
Hardened	5	3	2	2	1
Failed	1	3	2	2	0

Θ2I [SCHWA SECUNDUM INDOGERMANICUM]

Named after an esoteric linguistic reconstruction, this cabal is unpredictable in a world that's already pretty weird. The best way to sum up their outlook is that they are dedicated to "putting the rabbit into the hat for the purpose of taking it back out again as a dove." Their fans and foes alike tend to consider them "on the side of entropy."

Somehow — and non-Θ2Is have no idea how (spell, ritual, channel, what?) — schwa-two-eyes can turn one flavor of adept magick into another, or one flavor of avatar channel into another. That is, the astral or aura signature of a Viaturgy spell can be made to read like a Fulminaturgy spell, or a channel of the Masterless Man can appear as if it were being generated by the Chronicler.

This alteration almost never has any effect on anything, except making the schwa-two-eyes happy in some weird esoteric philosophical way. It's like they get high on watching the aura-colors shift, or it proves God loves them, or that they've figured out the Key Harmonic of the Alchemic Universe.

But the most important word in the phrase "almost never" is "almost."

The vanishingly few times this has any effect is when the type or flavor of magick or channel is important, usually in magickal defenses, interactions, or contingencies. In those isolated cases, masking an aura signature can have interesting effects — cutting through shields, disarming alarms or wards, or causing cascades of occult feedback.

It's not known whether schwa-two-eyes can pick which signature to change things to, and they're not telling. They do charge for the service — money, information, artifacts, votes, favors to be paid later, and so on — to those who want them without joining the cabal. These costs are steep, but not unreasonable for a bit of expert and finicky work in a highly specialized field.

EXECUTIONER, THE

A deadly archetype associated with the deliberate termination of human life, the Executioner's avatars are creatures of order, always operating at the behest of an accepted authority. They can take orders from a judge or a crime boss, but they do not pick their own targets. They do not decide, they carry out the sentence.



F IS FOR FEAR

FIG VINE

Back in 1937, a striking green box covered in Art Nouveau vines and lush purple fruit appeared, briefly, on toy store shelves along the Pacific coast of the United States. Despite its beautiful design, the board game *Fig Vine* never really caught on. Its publisher, Taylor & Laurent Games & Novelties, went out of business four years later.

In 1989, a historian at the University of Oregon found a copy of the game while going through her late grandmother's things. Her name was Jess Mayo, and she was immediately struck by the similarities in design between the board and cards, and a text from 1931 called *Les Prêtres Elevés*, a collection of free verse by Denis Guillot and illustrated by Cybelle Laurent.

Les Prêtres Elevés had emerged from a fractious collision of Rosicrucianism and erotically charged practices based on Franz Mesmer's work with "animal magnetism," which Guillot formulated and practiced in the French city of Le Havre. The poems of *Les Prêtres Elevés* presented a unity between animal, mineral, and vegetable, with "the sublime human will" rising from a balance of all three. Guillot's work was not well received, and his ultimate fate was to die in 1940 during the Nazi advance into his home country.

Cybelle Laurent, his early collaborator and, according to fragmentary documents Dr. Mayo unearthed, partner in possibly illegal sex rituals, disappeared before the war. Fascinated by the stylistic commonalities between Fig Leaf and *Les Prêtres Elevés*, Dr. Mayo eventually tracked down the records of the defunct game publisher and found that it had

been incorporated by Arним Taylor and "Bella" Laurent in Oregon. Mayo determined that they had initially produced 5,000 copies of the game, but that only 1,220 sold. 3,500 were reportedly burned by a warehouse owner after the company refused to pay for storage. When she acquired another copy through the aftermarket, paying over a thousand dollars for it, she found that "C. Laurent" was credited with the artwork in the instructions. (The direction booklet from her grandmother's copy had been lost.)

The purported goal of *Fig Vine* is to grow the most balanced and harmonious garden and attract the best guests to your garden party, but the "guest" cards included some that, frankly, Dr. Mayo would have crossed the street to avoid — "The Headsman" and "Mr. Two-Face" actually gave her nightmares, while "Rebis" just made her feel inexplicable confusion.

Since 2002, when she published an article on Fig Leaf comparing art from the game with that of Cybelle Laurent, she has started getting threatening letters sent to her at her university office. They're always on paper that's lavender in both color and scent, with impeccable handwriting, making horribly bloody threats with perfect grammar. The return postage is always from a small town in Oregon.

She has not told anyone that the handwriting seems to match Cybelle Laurent's on the original paintings from which the *Les Prêtres Elevés* illustrations were struck. If it is Cybelle Laurent, she's over 110 years old.

FLORIDA SCHOOL FOR BOYS

Opened on January 1, 1900, this reform school was surrounded by rumors of abuse and even murder until its closure in 2011. Over the years, most allegations were buried or ignored by local authorities but, in the years before the school was permanently closed, dozens upon dozens of bodies were discovered. The people who ran the school beat the boys, sometimes to the point of death.

Years of bodies are layered under the Florida soil and, even though the school has an official graveyard, the unofficial burials vastly outnumbered the resting places of those given the dignity of a name in death.

Demons have a thing about unfinished business on Earth, and there's a hell of lot of unfinished business for these boys. The youngest boy was four years old when he was killed, the oldest seventeen. Their lives were cut short by the callous abuse of those entrusted with their welfare. Today, the boys are getting some of that anger off their chests.

The school is located in the Florida Panhandle. In the dilapidated and condemned building, now slated for demolition, vines crawl over window panes scoured opaque by the years. Dusty clapboard sheds sing in the wind as the old

brick structures stand stalwart against the humid Florida weather. The boys could care less about the climate, though. They're having the time of their afterlives.

After decades of bottled abuse, it's no surprise the boys aren't well behaved. For miles around, poltergeist reports have quadrupled in the last two years. A church-sanctioned exorcist visited the home of a former guard at the school, only to be driven out screaming.

The demon orphans are acting out though host bodies. See, they've developed a way to possess a body quickly, no muss no fuss. What that is, no mortal yet knows. Whether it's an artifact, ritual or ignorant medium, it could be the single key to controlling the situation. Or ending it. Or just relocating it.

While that mystery junction across the veil between life and death is active, the boys will be boys. Armed robbery, breaking and entering, arson, random shootings, and worse all seem to center around the panhandle. If the boys weren't truly bad before being sentenced to the reform school, they are most definitely bad now.

One can understand why. They had a life that was, in the words of Thomas Hobbes, "Nasty, brutish, and short." Though some of them are a century dead, they never matured beyond their teenage years. Imagine a group of teenage boys able to do whatever they want anonymously and without consequence. Now imagine them as undead demons. Yeah. By now, I guess you've figured out about... Florida.

For the time being, the boys have no plan. They're simply having fun in the ways they have come to know "fun." The abuses visited on them are being visited threefold on the nearby towns. It's only a matter of time before they get bored with that and decide to take their show on the road.

There's a moral quandary in dealing with these unfortunate lads. There is no question their actions fall firmly on the spectrum of evil, but there's also a case to be made that they're only partially responsible for them. A local member of an occult cabal called the Knights of the Road has taken to looking into the boys' situation. His name is Frankie, and he grew up in a situation not dissimilar to the reform school boys. Frankie aims to make the boys into something organized and disciplined. But controlling these kids is easier said than done. They are wild spirits who believe America is their playground. Thus far, they haven't taken any direct action against Frankie, but the more he tries to keep them in line, the more he

reminds them of their tormentors. It's a situation that won't remain static for long and, when it erupts, Florida is going to see something as potent as when the villagers of Salem tried to quash their own occult underground in the 1690s. The panhandle is part of the Bible Belt, and America is overdue for a histrionic reaction to witchcraft.

JEFFREY A. WEEMS — DEAD KID

If anyone can be said to be the leader of this motley pack, it's Weems. A sixteen-year-old who was beaten to death by two teachers in 1959, Weems was always a troublemaker. He was in the reform school for grand theft auto and petty larceny. His first day, one of the ruling punks tried to lean on Weems, but Weems didn't go along. The next day, two thugs cornered him in the cafeteria. The supervisors turned a blind eye.

Weems leapt over the counter and introduced one kid's face to the deep fryer. He took out the next one with a butcher knife. The rest of the kids cheered. Weems got his first beating that night.

Weems has even less regard for authority than he did before. He doesn't have control over the group, but many of the boys listen to what he says. Frankie is trying to negotiate with Weems to rein in the kids. Thus far, Weems' answer is, "Hey, the world owes us a lot of time to do what the hell we want, old man." Still, Weems hasn't sicced the kids on Frankie yet, so maybe the two have some rapport between them.

Ghost stories exhibit the same gender imbalance as the rest of culture.

Even ghosts haunt mostly men.

Terror should be as blind as justice.

surly bonds of gravity. But they must ignore the restrictions placed by others' expectations, or else be earthbound like the rest of us.

FLYING WOMAN, THE

These female-only avatars break restraint and exalt self-reliance. They resist self-doubt and, for those truly in touch with the archetype, slip the

FOO FIGHTERS (UNEXPLAINED PHENOMENON)

During World War II, small luminous balls of light or fire were spotted by night aviators both over Europe and the Pacific. Considered to be an early example of the UFO phenomenon, these foo fighters would fly in formation with aircraft and acted as if they were intelligently controlled, but they never displayed hostile behavior, nor could they be outmaneuvered or shot down.

Various explanations for foo fighters included Nazi experimental aircraft or rockets, St. Elmo's fire or ball lightning, reflections of light by ice crystals, weather balloons, vertigo-induced optical illusions, or visual dazzle from bursts of flak. They're actually a combination of some of these, strained through coincidence.

It is an optical phenomenon involving reflections of light and electrostatic effects, but it is only perceptible to tetrachromats — humans that have four different cone cells in their retina rather than the usual three, allowing them to see different wavelengths than a typical human can. While human tetrachromacy is extremely rare — the first one was identified only in June 2012 — pilots are selected for excellent eyesight. During the adrenaline surges of combat, a particular type of cirrus cloud cover, and low-light conditions, a handful of tetrachromat night aviators perceive low-intensity electrostatic atmospheric effects.

Foo fighters, per se, haven't been seen as planes have gotten faster; nowadays, what's seen is the different but less complicated UFO phenomena.

FOOL, THE

The Fool is the tool of entropy, which seems curiously reluctant to break its callow minions even as they go where they shouldn't, say what

they oughtn't, and do things they're too stupid to realize are stupid. They walk unscathed through the wreckage their own actions ignorantly cause.

FREAK, THE

Born Chris Indrick, the entity that spent three decades known only as the Freak was an intersex baby — a child born with ambiguous genitals. There are many intersex conditions, and together they impact perhaps one birth in a hundred. In Chris Indrick's case, she was surgically assigned femininity.

One does not need to be intersex to be uneasy with the flesh of one's birth, but in the Indrick case that seems to have contributed to a lifetime spent feeling shy, marginal, and wrong-bodied. But Chris was also extremely intelligent, and curious. Her intellectual obsessions led her both into magick and medicine, fields that have only been separate in the last small segment of human history. She began pursuing the path of the *Sexual Rebis*, known then as the *Mystic Hermaphrodite*. At the same time, her ambitions also led her to Epideromancy.

Pursuing clashing magick theories is always a hazard to one's sanity, but Indrick also ran afoul of a magus named Dirk Allen, who killed her lover in an alarmingly offhand way. That loss sent Chris deeper into a mystic tailspin, but exceptional willpower fused the contradictory threads of Epideromancy and the avatar path into a unified practice that made her a godwalker — the highest representative of an archetype in the physical realm.

It also made Chris Indrick lonesome, paranoid, callously violent, spectacularly self-destructive, and almost universally feared.

Nobody except the former Chris Indrick and the Comte de Saint-Germain know what they talked about in the early hours of March 3, 2003. Almost no one knows that they spoke at all, and there's much speculation about who invited whom to enter The Bon Ton and come out changed. It staggers the mind to imagine what might induce a paranoid godwalker like the Freak to enter the House of Renunciation, but it's equally shocking to think what might make the Comte agree to, or suggest, a process that removed his immortality.

But they went in, at 3:33 AM, and the outcome of the 03/03/03 Event has yet to be determined. There is no longer a Freak — they have become the Human Eternal. As for the one-time Comte, his changes have been equally radical. Now he's called Old Mother Apocalypse.

See also "Bon Ton, The" on page 19, "Comte de Saint-Germain" on page 28, "House of Renunciation, The" on page 49, "Human Eternal, The" on page 50, and "Old Mother Apocalypse" on page 67.

See "Sexual Rebis, The" on page 82 and "Mystic Hermaphrodite, The" on page 61.



G IS FOR GIROLAMO SEGATO'S GRAVE

GARGOYLES

Over the centuries, some occult scholars have claimed a few late medieval French, or Spanish, or Italian magi figured how to replicate Jewish clay golems, only in stone. No

credible evidence for this claim has ever showed up over the centuries.

Until last week.

GENTLEMAN, THE (UNNATURAL ENTITY)

It is only an observer. That's what you have to remember while you're going crazy with fear, dying of cancer, and being murdered by your friends and family.

It is only an observer and all it does is watch.

The Gentleman is man in a plain black suit. His limbs are long, and his features are blank. He has no hair. His fingers, if they are fingers, seem jointed in too many places, at too many angles. He may or may not have tendrils of shadows that can whip and grab, pulling victims toward him. What he does with them when they're pulled in is hard to say. They're just gone, found later in strange places and out of sync with time, gibbering and confused, possibly missing limbs.

But. It's only an observer. It gives off a kind of radiation that makes those exposed to it develop a serious and

possibly deadly cough. This is a side effect of its presence rather than an attack.

What it does, ultimately, is adapt. It comes, it observes, appearing in places where it does not belong, monitoring its victims. Seeing it, talking about it, telling others about it, means the Gentleman starts to pay attention to others in the first victim's life. They too see it. They cough. They grow afraid. They begin looking for patterns, significance, explanations. What is it, why is it there, why is it watching them? What does it want? They make up explanations, finding symbols and myths to fit their experience — especially easy in the internet age. The Gentleman's pool of victims grows as its first subjects reach out for help. It observes. These explanations slowly shift the reality of the Gentleman, and what he was changes to accommodate. Instead of observing, it kidnaps. It steals time. It leaves strange occult

marks behind. Ultimately, it only is what its victims believe it should be.

Most of the time, the Gentleman isn't actually involved in any actual violence to its victims. It's a side effect of the Gentleman moving them through time and space, its radiation, or the people involved simply going crazy and destroying one another.

Many of the victims begin taping themselves obsessively. Catching him on tape is important, though no one is quite sure why.

Seeing the Gentleman causes a stress check on a randomly determined meter, of a randomly rolled rank. If the witness tells anyone about the vision, the Gentleman can reappear to the witness. It's granted one appearance for everyone the victim informs. So, yeah, giving a speech or posting on a web forum? Bad move. Every appearance means another random stress check.

Moreover, the more attention it's paid, the more reality deforms around it. In addition to appearing to one new witness per day, the Gentleman begins to provoke unnatural phenomena. Their frequency and severity depend on how many people have been made aware of it.

PROVOKING UNNATURAL PHENOMENA

People	Phenomena
1	1 minor phenomenon/week per witness
2-5	10 minor phenomena/week, spread among various witnesses
6-20	10 minor/week, plus 1 significant/week for the initial witness
21-100	10 minor/week, plus 1 significant/week per witness
100-1,000	100 minor/week, plus 1 significant/week per witness
1,001+	100 minor and significant/week, plus 1 major/month for the initial witness

GEOMANCY

A dying, premodern style of magick, Geomancy imposes an artificial order on the world in order to generate power through the friction when the world resists. Highways, tunnels, buildings, dams — anything that binds the landscape into a new form can yield charges to these adepts,

HOST

The human identity lasts after death, and the naïve believe that ghosts are benevolent or harmless, like Patrick Swayze in that one movie where he feels up Demi Moore. In fact,

Fortunately, the Gentleman is tangible and can be harmed with standard weapons, though every weapon does only plain hand-to-hand damage. If killed, he dissipates into empty clothes and black grease, either of which may have occult properties. Within a few years, he's back somewhere else, usually far away.

The Gentleman cannot attack, but all attacks against him are at -20% because he dodges obsessively and incessantly. If he can flee long enough to be unobserved for a whole combat round, he dematerializes, staying away from that victim for at least a week.

Ironically, the people who deal best with the Gentleman are people who fear for their sanity, but are also afraid to get help. They see him, have a terror reaction, and then never tell anybody. Because they didn't share it, the Gentleman is barred from visiting them again. But their silence ensures that it's very hard to piece together this pattern.

THE GENTLEMAN (SIGNIFICANT UNNATURAL ENTITY)

If you can see him, he can see you. There is only one Gentleman.

Wound Threshold: 60.

Evade Harm 50%*: Provides Initiative, Substitutes for Dodge, Substitutes for Secrecy (* obsession identity).

Once every 10 years, Colonel Sanders, Ronald McDonald, Mickey Mouse and others gather in the very center of America to plan the next decade's fads and trends.

who lose their powers if they touch unspoiled, unshaped wilderness. They are masters of structure, both physical and social, as well as things beneath the earth — be they literal or metaphorical.

without the mitigating factors of instincts, glands, and hormones, human personalities tend to get pretty nightmarish. That's why those in the know call them demons.

GHOST, SEX

See "Sex Ghost" on page 81.

GRAPPA DI VERONICA (ARTIFACT)

Grappa is a kind of Italian brandy made from the crushed skins and material left over after wine has been made. It's potent, and technically can only be called grappa if it's made in or near Italy. As a general guideline, it tastes a lot better than anything made from trash should.

Grappa di Veronica is a particular vintage made from the pressings of a red wine from the Valle d'Aosta in 1872. It takes its name from Veronica Scarsella, a resident of the valley who was killed by crushing in a wine press early in the season.

Now, the people who crushed Veronica had their reasons. She had creepy witch powers and had sucked the life out of two local girls, each of whom, instead of dying properly, transformed into a mute, subordinate duplicate of Veronica herself, with leaves instead of tongues and bodies stuffed with ripe red grapes. Scarsella's enemies found that crushing a vegetable replica of this type produced wine of unsurpassed flavor. They got a little carried away, as

people sometimes do when confronted with witchcraft, and decided to kill Veronica by the same method.

The wines made from her body doubles are just delicious — they have no paranormal powers. But because murder was against the law, even witch murder, her killers cleaned up the winepress, returned it to service, and got on with their lives.

Except Veronica's evil obsession lives on, through the grappa that was made of the residue that remained in the implement of her death. Grappa di Veronica tastes pretty good, but if you black out after drinking it, it's probably because you've been possessed. Yep, Veronica Scarsella is a demon, but unlike the wild spirits that just want flesh to indulge in lifelike vice, Veronica has a plan. If she can get access to the right seeds and soil, she can grow herself a new body to occupy permanently. Granted, it would be mute, but better than temporary struggles with modern drinkers.

GROUNDING LOVERS (UNNATURAL ENTITY)

It seems the universe doesn't take kindly to adepts holding on to magickal power, as these creatures tend to show up when charges are being hoarded. On the surface, grounding lovers look like attractive humans, though not *suspiciously* attractive. If you're a 5, your grounding lover is probably a 6. They are romantically interested in the miser adept, but again — not suspiciously so. They casually meet the adept in real life, strike up a friendship, and soon try to seduce them. The tricky thing about this is the grounding lover never drops character or acts obsessed. For example, a grounding lover spurned acts a little hurt and embarrassed but doesn't freak out. That said, it never gives up and continues to politely and persistently try to get with the adept. This goes on until those charges are spent, or until the adept takes a ride on the love train. In the first case, the grounding lover simply walks away and refuses to have anything to do with the former object of their obsessive affection. In the second case? Kaboom.

Grounding lovers exist solely to drain charges from magick-using humans. If an adept has sexual contact with a grounding lover, one-half of any stored charges are sucked into the grounding lover, who then screams in pain and explodes like a confetti-filled balloon. This causes 4d10 wounds and triggers a Violence (3) check and an Unnatural (4) check.

These entities look human but sure aren't. Any medical test comes up empty — no heartbeat, no pulse, no blood, etc. When confronted with this fact, grounding lovers are either truly ignorant of what they really are, or they are put on a damn good performance pretending not to understand. No difference, really, as it still wants its target.

Magick inspection, on the other hand? They're flawless — simulated auras, a believable stream of thoughts if mind-read, a complete and plausible history available to oracles who can see the past. None of it adds up — people and places in the ersatz memories either don't exist or were never in contact with the creature claiming to be human. But adepts are often fooled because it's hard to be a great magician *and* a great detective. Moreover, since magick so often bypasses mundane attempts at creating a fake identity — you can get a facelift but it's hard to disguise your soul — adepts tend to trust their powers more than they trust credit reports and newspaper morgues.

If an adept keeps three or more significant charges for three months without doing any magick at all, there's about a 50% chance per day of one of these non-humans taking interest.

GROUNDING LOVERS (MINOR UNNATURAL ENTITY)

Wound Threshold: 40.

Simulate Humanity 75%: Substitutes for Connect, Substitutes for Fitness, Substitutes for Status.

H IS FOR HILLSIDE THICKETS, DARKEST OF

HAIRDRESSER CONSPIRACY

Hair has always had mystical connections. It's a part of you, but you can cut it off with no ill effects. Moreover, it grows back on its own — try that with an ear, see what you get. It's "a woman's glory" by no lesser authority than the Bible, but it betrays on every bad hair day. When it comes to making symbolic effigies of people, hair's only competition is fingernail parings. Real talk here: loose hair's a lot easier to acquire.

Cutting someone's hair, then, lets you weaken them Samson-style or symbolically become them, or lets you make them look out of style. A fair number of adepts of various persuasions associated themselves with hair stylists in the 1940s in order to maintain a supply of this mystically potent stuff.

That, then, is the root of the Hairdresser Conspiracy. Barbers who weren't occultists noticed the darksome meddling with their clients and they didn't like it one damn bit. After a few attempts at direct confrontations had unexpected consequences — one Oklahoma medical museum has some absolutely ghastly images of a barber

who killed himself after hair started growing on the insides of his mouth and throat — they found a subtler solution. They discovered an alchemical concoction that drew down the fixative powers of Saturn onto hair, disconnecting it from its source and rendering it magickally sterile. But how to get it onto all the hair?

The answer is that blue gunk you still see in barber shops, with the combs floating in it. Thanks to the widespread adoption of this disinfectant for razors and scissors and such, most barber hair in the US and much in Europe is magickally neutralized before it even hits the salon floor. The product's use is reputedly mandated, by brand name, in two states.

The Hairdresser Conspiracy was so successful that most of the people coming out of beauty schools in the US have no idea of the source of the superstitions embedded in their training. They just know you gotta use the blue stuff.

Whether this elixir's powers of symbol-solvency apply to anything but hair is a matter much discussed in the occult underground.

HAPPY CAT MASK (UNNATURAL ENTITY)

In the years leading up to and including World War I, a few manufacturers made special gas masks for children. These were often made to look like popular cartoon characters or friendly animals to put the children at ease when wearing the confining mask. Rumor has it, that a specific line of these masks, the Happy Cat Masks, were knowingly sold when they did not function. Supposedly, *every* child who wore those masks during wartime died, and every existing mask is cursed. In actual fact, the masks have all been destroyed, but their image remains. It's the shape of a living plague that seeks out children to join in a quest to punish big bad adults.

There is a ritual related to the Happy Cat Mask, and performing it with an exceptional success lets the caster sic the creature on a chosen target. Getting a standard success attaches the Happy Cat Mask to its invoker. But acts of wanton cruelty against the helpless can also draw this being's attention.

The problem with the Happy Cat Mask is not that it kills its host, willing or otherwise — though yeah, it tends to. No, the problem is, it's contagious. When it appears, it assaults its first target, but also spreads its identity to any children it happens to interact with in the process of that first harrowing.

It is, apparently, a seven-year-old child that speaks English with a thick Hong Kong accent, dressed in children's school clothes. It wears a gas mask, or most specifically, a Happy Cat Mask. It's strong and fast for its size, but largely kills by releasing poison into the air. It corners its victim again and again, letting them escape at the last minute before trying again later. When the victim dies, finally, it is with a degree of hope that he can escape before it's too late. Their tortured faces show this strangled hope in death.

Children exposed to the entity while it's attacking risk becoming Happy Cat Masks if not quickly removed from the victim's life entirely.

They grow masks, emit poison, and seek out adults to punish.

There is a way to save the child, but they are likely to grow up with a taste for vengeance and of course, the supernatural. The Happy Cat Mask doesn't understand how to process acts of genuine kindness and sacrifice made on behalf of innocent children. Making a real sacrifice of self in front of someone who has been turned into a Happy Cat Mask drives the mask away, leaving an unharmed human host. If they are not saved before the summoner finally dies, they vanish off with the Happy Cat Mask. Stories suggest wherever they go they are happier than they were in life but... we tell ourselves a lot of things about sad stories with children, don't we?

Happy Cat Mask can flip-flop its Struggle rolls. It does hand-to-hand damage (sum of the dice) +10 wounds due to its hideous strength. If it succeeds at an attack roll that's

lower than 15, or if its gets a matched success, it emits a cloud of gas that affects everyone within about ten feet. People exposed to the gas take 1d10 wounds and have to make a Fitness roll to keep acting without penalty. If the Fitness roll fails, they lose their next action coughing and weeping, and then fight on at a -10% penalty.

HAPPY CAT MASK (MINOR UNNATURAL ENTITY)

What did you do?

Wound Threshold: 3d10+40.

Struggle 50%*: See entry (* obsession identity).

Go Elsewhere 25%: This is the creature's chance of becoming astral and leaving when it's injured, beset, or otherwise having a bad time of it. Once it turns immaterial, it can't reform for forty-eight hours.

HEALER, THE

While this archetype would seem to be one of unconstrained benevolence, it's not for the discriminating. Healers

HERPEMANCY

A niche style of magick, Herpemancy is based around snakes, their mythological properties, their associations with oracular insights, poisons, and medicine. Herpemancers handle

HONECKER'S HOEDOWN (EVENT)

There are a lot of questions about Rufus Honecker. Some facts are well known — he was born in 1977, in Memphis, Tennessee, and started playing in skiffle bands when he was only thirteen. His first album, "She Said I Do-Si-Don't" came out in 1999 and didn't sell very well. He moved on to play banjo, guitar, and bass on several Americana roots music albums and a 2004 mainstream country recording called "Rodeo Bull," then dropped out of sight for eight years after that.

Now Rufus Honecker plays live shows, exclusively. Only small venues — roadhouses and juke joints when he can manage it. The publicity is barely there and the ticket prices are absurd — close to \$100 per, sometimes. But there's a guarantee printed on the reverse of every ticket: "Fall in love at Honecker's Hoedown or your money back."

No one has taken him up on that refund.

People go to Honecker's Hoedown and they fall in love, all across the American south from the Atlantic coast of Virginia to the Texas border. He won't play Texas, though. He gets a haunted look on his face and just shakes his head if asked about the Lone Star State. "I can't go in there, ain't permitted," is his only explanation.

Back to the interesting bit: people go to Honecker's Hoedown and fall in love, which sounds great, doesn't it? By all reports the love that starts with Honecker's music is genuine and heartfelt — as real as anything you can't see, taste, or measure can be.

Why this happens, to everyone in the audience (which, granted, is usually like fifty people) is a mystery and a matter of intense interest and speculation to occultists, and fans of jug

must respond to any plea for help when they can offer it, no matter how awful the patient or how risky the circumstance.

snakes to gather power, and harming serpents is forbidden. They can't even tolerate insults to snakes made in their presence.

band music. Is Honecker the hook on which an Amoromancy major charge got hung? Some kind of matchmaking godwalker? An agent of the House of Renunciation whose hoedowns are actually a portable Room, inverting the lives of the lonely and loveless?

However it works, the Honecker love song is pretty much irresistible. If you buy a ticket, go to the show, and dance, you are going to meet someone and you do, inescapably, fall in love. As long as they also paid and danced, the affection is mutual. Moreover, while it starts with blistering passion, it cools into a steady affection that lasts months and years. Zach Galifianakis compared love to "the feeling you get when you see your waiter arriving with your food." Honecker love is like that, always.

Sounds worth a hundred bucks, doesn't it?

Unfortunately, while the benefits are brilliant and right up front, there are some pitfalls that aren't immediately obvious. You see, Honecker love is unconditional. It changes, the way water changes shape in a new bottle, but it never goes away.

Normal love between humans is imperfect. You meet someone with a lot to recommend them — smart, funny, attractive, wants the same things out of life — and if you don't screw it up, and stick through the sucky parts when your partner gets sick or loses hair or gains hair in unwanted places or has really irritating friends, you might develop a love that is unconditional for all intents and purposes. The kind of love where you believe them instead of evidence, because they've never let you down. The kind of love where you can forgive anything because they've already made your life so much better than it would otherwise be.

Now, imagine that kind of durable, intense affection directed at someone who didn't earn it. That's what you're looking at in Honecker's Hoedown.

You straight bro? Too bad, you do-si-do'd with a dude and now he's your soul mate.

You're a lefty-libby, NPR-listenin', "I'm With Her" Democrat? Such a shame, you've fallen in love with a paleo-conservative who has views that would make Donald Trump say, "Whoa there, I'm not soft on crime but aren't you basically endorsing the Hunger Games for pot smokers?"

Not every Honecker match is an ironic melding of opposites, but when you consider how hard it is for people to get together even when they're from the same ethnicity, background, sports allegiance demographic, class, religion, and set of sexual mores, it becomes real clear that the odds of a disastrous mismatch are way, way, way greater than the chances of harmony.

But maybe you're just lonely enough that taking pot luck sounds acceptable. "Sure," you say, "I'm a biological-determinist racist atheist who loves kayaking and thinks the History channel totally sold out, but I bet I can make it work with a morbidly obese Jewish mystic 9/11 truther. Love conquers all!"

Consider that this is *not* just pot luck. This is everyone else's leftovers. The dating pool into which a Honecker ticket-holder dives is composed entirely of people so lonesome and desperate that paying a hundred bucks to be compelled into binding affection with a complete stranger is acceptable. Sure, there are a few dopes who don't think it through, but do you like those odds? Do

you like the idea that your *win condition* is falling for someone too dim to realize the risks?

Damn, what does that say about you?

HONECKER EFFECT

Anyone who follows the steps described above, buying a ticket and dancing at the show, winds up in a pair match. The love and affection is, to the extent that anyone can tell, genuine. That includes the pair involved!

On the other hand, even real love is complicated. It's perfectly possible to get mad at someone you love. Real mad. It's possible to hate someone as much as you love them, or even more. People are good at holding on to contradictions.

Mechanically, you develop a favorite relationship with that person, and it starts at a nice solid 75%. If you already had a favorite? Too bad. Former fave is no longer that compelling. If one of your other relationships is empty you can move half the percentiles from your previous favorite rating into it and good luck explaining to your wife why, now, you only want her career advice.

Any time someone in a Honecker match fights with their assigned partner, it's a Helplessness (3-4) check, because it feels so wrong. Of course the Self checks involved with holding a terminal degree and being in love with an illiterate may be higher, but they're unlikely to recur as often. Leaving your Honecker mate, or being left, is an Isolation (3-4) check.

Note that the Honecker Effect doesn't replace or delete old loves, or preclude new ones. It just stamps one into your heart, indelibly.

When I finally know everything about you, I will know nothing of myself.

HONEYPOTS (UNNATURAL ENTITY)

Curiosity killed the cat. Sometimes, it kills people.

Most honeypots look like tall, dusty bookshelves, the kind overflowing with cool books, mystic tomes, and rare titles. You know, the kind that many in the occult underground drool over? ("That might have lost rituals and shit in there? Dibs!") A few resemble brand-new, top-of-the-line refrigerators, all gleaming brushed steel that make you imagine delicacies and tastes that can only be afforded by people rich enough to buy such a fridge. One even looked like a coffin. But they are all large enough to fit a human body inside.

Sound ominous? There's a good reason for that. These are Venus flytraps for people. When a human touches the honeypot, it splits open lengthwise to reveal a long maw filled with giant stingers. It attempts to swallow the person, and if it does, the stingers suck out its victim's soul over the course of a day. The body is then spit out like old gum. Just-fed honeypots enter a dormant phase after eating. For two to three days they can be safely touched. Honeypots never attack when

more than one person is present, but they do just appear, suddenly and silently, in people's homes.

Given how most people aren't stupid enough to fall for such an obvious trap ("Hey, I didn't have a bookcase full of magick texts in my bathroom this morning!") honeypots would be a rare nuisance at best if it weren't for cultivation. Much the same way syrup is tapped from a tree, honeypot farmers trick or push a human into the honeypot and literally tap it. The sap that comes out is magickal charges in liquid form. A charge's worth of sap can be collected per day, and the honeypot gives up 3 significant charges before needing another human victim. Like honey, the sap can stay good for hundreds of years. Unlike honey, it doesn't taste good in tea.

Adepts who ingest honeypot sap — its taste is kind of "aloe-y" — can use the significant charge normally. Ordinary folks or avatars who eat it can use the charge to enhance the use of ritual magick. If not used within a week or so, the charge usually expresses itself in the form of a significant unnatural phenomenon, or one to five minor unnatural



phenomena. These usually manifest in a way that fits the drinker's psychology, so they can help in a crisis as long as you're not consumed by self-loathing or doubt. How's that Self meter looking?

HONEYPOD (SIGNIFICANT UNNATURAL ENTITY)

Wound Threshold: 100.

Suck You Dry 50%*: This attack ability does damage like a firearm, and the plant can flip-flop rolls when attacking. Once it hits, it's attached — you can handle that with the *grapple gridiron*. Good news is, it doesn't do damage while on the gridiron, just on the initial hit. Plus, if you escape from it and can get away before it succeeds at another strike, it can't chase you. Once freed, the victim can get away as long as she tries to avoid it before it succeeds at another hit. I mean, it's a plant. It can't chase down a fleeing meal. The bad news is, if it gets you to its end zone on the gridiron, you're digested (* obsession identity).

HOUSE OF RENUNCIATION, THE

This was a place where bad things happened to people who clearly deserved nothing but the worst.

David Sedaris

No one knows where the House of Renunciation is. No one knows who its mysterious agents are. But the rumors are persistent, consistent, and grim. They tell of people who go into a place, somewhere that shouldn't fit in space. While they're in there, a span that may not fit in time, they change. When they come out, they're opposites. Go in pacifist, come out suicide bomber. Go in sadist, come out masochist. Go in moderate Democrat, come out raving for blood-soaked racial tyranny.

The history of the phrase indicates that the first person to claim to be from the House of Renunciation was Hubert Roscommon, and he didn't mean it in the sense of a building with doors and bedrooms, but as a noble house, like the Windsors or the Minamotos. But in the modern era, it's more like a haunted house where you become your own worst enemy.

You're going to hate that guy so much, but that's all right. The House loves you, just the way you're going to be.

See "The Grapple Gridiron" on page 68 of Book One: Play.

For more extensive information, see "The House of Renunciation" on page 117 of Book Two: Run.

HUMAN ETERNAL, THE

There has always been a caretaker of the cosmos, a human who periodically entered and exited the Invisible Clergy unchanged, providing continuity every time the universe regenerated itself. For an unknowable time, it was the same man, who sometimes was a woman, and who went by the title Comte de Saint-Germain until 2003.

As a consequence of the 03/03/03 Event, the role has passed on to someone new — a person named Chris Indrick, formerly called the Freak but now styling themself the Human Eternal.

Having entered the House of Renunciation consumed by misanthropy and self-loathing, empowered by sex and violence and knowing only a void where they craved a sense of purpose and place in the world, the Human Eternal's strongest motivation now is to continue the universal cycle, overseeing the smooth functioning of the cosmos as an improving system. They are tranquil, asexual, and compassionate. Whether those traits can survive the trials their new role demands is very much an open question.

See also
"Old Mother Apocalypse" on page 67,
"Joys and Sorrows" on page 52,
"Freak, The" on page 42, and "Comte de Saint-Germain" on page 28.

HUNTER, THE

There's attempting to get something, and then there's going after it with an all-consuming passion. The archetype of the Hunter does the latter. These avatars designate a person or object as their quarry and pursue it tenaciously, forbidden by their connection to the Statosphere

from changing goals until they capture it — or fail so completely that they have no choice but give up. Their powers are narrow, focusing entirely on finding and seeking, but within their bailiwick they are nigh-inescapable.



IS FOR MYSELF

ICONOMANCY

This type of magick resembles a postmodern form of ancestor worship. Iconomancers ritually adore famous dead people in order to borrow those people's traits and reputations. Their weakness

lies in their need to hide behind their idols. Should the image of an iconomancer be widely broadcast, their abilities are bound and depleted.

IMMORTALS

There used to be a magick ritual that inured people from death by natural causes. They still aged, but only to a certain point — the current crop of ritual immortals all look elderly — after which they can continue indefinitely as long as they don't get murdered or fall prey to mischance.

The rite that creates immortality is lost... or perhaps only misplaced. But even if recovered, it can no longer be cast. One of the components is fresh leaves from an equatorial African fig variety, *Ficus menziesii*, that went extinct in 1908 to no fanfare whatsoever. Not only is it dead and gone, there's only one preserved sample of it, and it's misfiled in the New South Wales Herbarium

as an example of *Ficus verruculosa*, which it closely resembles.

As for the ritual immortals, those who remain tend to be a shriveled, cautious, and unimaginative lot. They like to manipulate various adepts and avatars into accumulating occult devices and information for them, but they're usually too timid to do it. Most of them do secretarial work at various government offices or corporate headquarters.

There are also a few individuals whose immortality is cosmic in nature, not the result of anything so crude as magick. The most notable of these was the Comte de Saint-Germain, but he no longer qualifies.

See also
"Human Eternal,
The" on
page 50.

INFOMANCY

Electronic media is omnipresent in developed nations, and some people are so wrapped up in it that their entire experience of reality becomes screen-mediated. Some of *them* turn into infomancers, who reconfigure media on scales small and large to gather power and then apply that power to transmit, translate, and transform

information. But if they ever absorb media without altering, commenting on, or defacing it — if they read a book without marking up the margins, listen to a song uncritically, or allow themselves to be absorbed by a TV show or movie or play without live-tweeting it — their charges fade.

IRASCIMANCY

Anger magick is not for the timid. Irascimancers drink in the rage they incite in others, but only when it has real teeth. Mere internet trolling won't empower these adepts, unless it prompts someone to steal their credit card numbers or SWAT them or dox them and come to their house with a jerry can of gasoline. They have to incite anger, and angry action, to expose and influence the wrath of others and to express their own seething rage. Some people consider irascimancers real jerks, yet others say no, they're actually total assholes.

All the bodies in the
New York City medical
examiner's office
all sat up in
unison and
declared

J IS FOR JARMUSCH, JIM

JESUS CHRIST ADVISORY BOARD (JCAB)

"So I said to him, 'God is love, and we're making love, so we're really... making God.' Guess what? He said that made sense to him! Try that with yours!"

Years ago, two self-proclaimed second coming of Jesus Christ with decent-sized cults happened to meet at Chicago's O'Hare Airport. Oscar Hernandez and Maurice Bent are both magickal con men, as well as avatars of the Captain and the Star, respectively. They instantly recognized each other as the manipulative dicks they were, and that helped the two become friends. They talked openly about their cults, traded ideas for maintaining their thrall over members, and kept in touch. They jokingly called their discussion the "Jesus Christ Advisory Board," and the name stuck.

Today, this is an online group that trades ideas and techniques for creating and ruling over a new religious movement. There aren't many members, and almost all are cynical hypocrites rather than deranged-but-serious religious fanatics. Most of the discussion is mundane and covers topics like staying below the government's radar, how to deal with cultists too smart for their own good, and the merits and drawbacks of announcing doomsday. But some of the talk is how to use magick to further your control over the faithful.

The occult underground would probably ignore the JCAB were it not for two facts. First, the JCAB is willing to trade services of its believers for money, sex, power, or whatever internal void its Jesus Christs are trying to fill in the first place. Need a few witnesses to loudly and legally claim you were nowhere near the house that blew up? Pay a JC well enough and his flock is yours.

The second fact is less useful. These cult leaders are very, very happy in their positions and very, very willing to attack anyone who threatens their

status. If they think you're going to throw them under the bus, such as telling the feds or trying to deprogram their members, the entire JCAB starts talking about the best methods for killing you slowly. And they'll act on that quickly.

OPERATIONS

These folk hate publicity. Each has a sect ranging from five to one hundred members, and if they want recruits, they find more quietly. To that end, a few threads on the JCAB board discuss how to stay hidden. More than a few posts suggest hiring adepts or avatars to make things, and people, disappear. But no one on the board has a real grasp of what adepts really are, and even Maurice and Oscar, who are avatars, have only warped and biased views of what avatars are.

Also, Maurice Bent is slowly going mad. He's starting to believe that he really is the second coming of Christ, and that the other JCAB leaders are false prophets. It's only a matter of time before Bent goes off the deep end and starts plotting against his colleagues.

RESOURCES

While some of the JCAB's disciples have turned over their finances to their Jesus Christs, most gave it away to charity. That means these cults are either poor, or run by rich and selfish leaders. Manpower is what they are strong in, both in terms of numbers and dedication. When Jesus Christ asks these believers to go to bat for you, they do so without question and swing for the fences.

One underutilized resource is their knowledge of propaganda and PR. These leaders know one hell of a lot about how to manipulate people, and for a price, they share.

JOYS AND SORROWS

One cannot expect an immortal to go through a million lifetimes, or more, unaccompanied. Just as the Comte de Saint-Germain was protected from aging by the structure of the universe, the same cosmos provided him with wives, and with a series of children. Joy is his daughter, but he's only permitted one at a time. His wives are all named Sorrow.

The family dynamic between the immortal caretaker of the universe, the Sorrows, and Joy, is peculiar and tragically dysfunctional. Joy records

human high points in an unreal library that travels from place to place, unobtrusively weaving itself into the fabric of space so that chosen individuals can record their happiest moments. When the cosmos is about to end and be reborn, the Comte brings those joys into the mix. Or... he did.

The Sorrows, on the other hand, jealously seek their descendent Joy and sometimes they catch her. They can't go into her library, but they can recruit mortal flunkies to drag her out. If they get their hands on her, they hold down the screaming

Enough of these maddening hours.

Unkempt madwomen have need of my attention.

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child and cruelly tattoo a story of random misery and ill fate onto her skin. Which is awful, especially if you have to see it.

What's worse, though, is if you have to live through the nasty little tale that gets scribed on Joy's unblemished flesh. "His wife was flying back from the war when the pressure change loosed a deep-vein thrombosis and killed her — ironically!" or "Despite all her efforts and success, her father let slip on his death bed that he'd always believed she slept her way to the top" or "Baby shoes for sale, never worn." When the ink and blood have mingled, some poor chump-of-the-universe has that unwanted deviation written into the script of his life. Some chump who always survives.

Always. Because the Sorrows don't want to kill mere mortals. They track those poor suckers whose lives they've kneecapped because, some day, Joy comes calling. Those who've been hurt the most by Sorrow are those whose greatest moments are immortalized.

Unless the mortals cheat. Because if one of those mortals can find the tattoo on young Joy, slice it out with their own hands and eat it, the universe undoes it. History rewrites

itself, like playing a sad country song backwards. You get your wife back, your child back, you get back your father's respect. All you have to do is hurt a little kid. Oh, and accept that having your happiness remembered for eternity matters less than forgetting your pain right now.

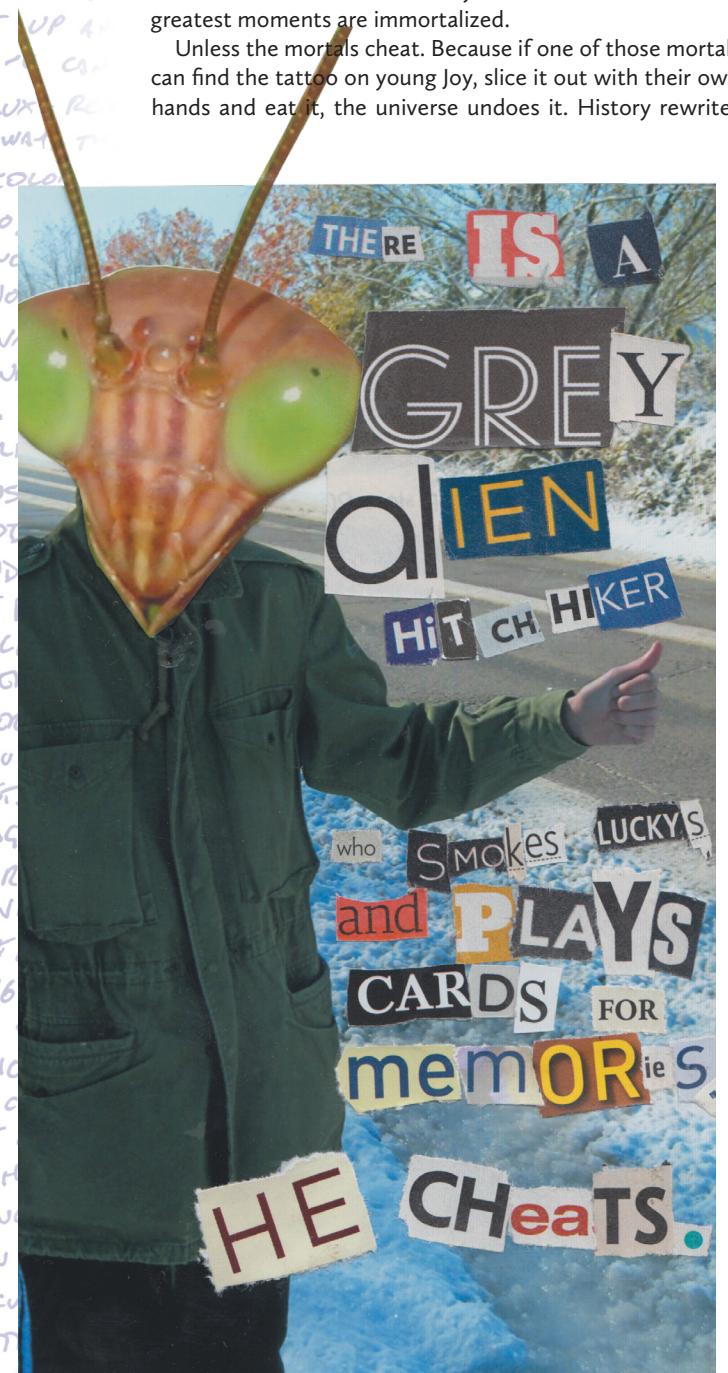
Some people tell Sorrow to go fuck herself. Some can't sell out Joy fast enough. When Joy's been through too much, she leaves the library, scarred and covered in gruesome stories, and becomes the newest, youngest Sorrow. She marries the Comte and gets pregnant and has a baby named Joy, whom she is fated to hurt, and hurt, and hurt, until all the people she witches into misery have made their choice at Joy's library.

That's how it worked for a long time. But in 2013, the current Joy got caught, and the last unmarked inch of her skin got written on, and she came out ready to wed. But instead of the Comte, she found the Human Eternal, who flat out refused to marry anyone or be part of the whole racket.

No one's sure what effect this is having on the universe.

JUDGE, THE

Those tasked with discernment, either by legal decree or self-appointed, can attune themselves to this archetype to hone their abilities to perceive what is or is not relevant and true. But they must never hesitate to pass judgment when they are in full possession of the facts. And one does not become attuned to the Statosphere in this capacity by making trivial choices.



K IS FOR KERATINOUS HORN BLACK MARKET

KARP'S GULCH

Karp's Gulch is in South Dakota. It's a steep, stream-cut valley, not terribly deep or sharp or otherwise noteworthy. Named by Logan Karp in 1872, it's unremarkable unless you go into the cave. The cave has no name, as far as anyone living knows, and Karp himself never found out about it.

The entry to the Karp's Gulch cave is small — less than a yard wide and shorter top to bottom. Anyone who wants to enter has to belly-crawl. So pretty much only teenagers have known about it. But they've known about it since the early decades of the 20th century, and kids have a way of getting older. On the other hand, the most daring early teens of the 20th century also had a way of getting killed in wars, so the groaning cave has been discovered several times, only to be ignored or forgotten.

It's unofficially called the groaning cave by the two teenagers who discovered it most recently, and the three friends who've been shown it. It doesn't moan all the time, but sometimes you can hear weird wheezy sounds from it.

Crawl inside and it widens, somewhat. There's a round or spindle-shaped chamber the size of a walk-in closet, where four of those five teens have gone to have sex, and it's equipped with candles, empty wine bottles, and a thoughtful can of air freshener. Two thin hallways lead off the spindle, rapidly forking and multiplying, rising and falling and wreathed in stalactites.

All five of the teens have explored, but the one who isn't having sex has gone way farther, and has seen light deep at the bottom of the cave at night, where there's no way there should be any.

Her name's Addison, and her family's the kind of abusive and neglectful domestic shitshow that makes spending the night in a cave seem kind of attractive sometimes. For a

while she was with one of the guys in the group but, well, you know.

The light she saw was steady and bright, and as she got closer the sound of wind — the groaning — got louder. But there was a pretty scary deep crack across the tunnel, and when she came back with some scrap lumber to bridge it, she couldn't find the light any more.

What Addison doesn't know is that the light is daylight, falling through a crack in space between the cave under Karp's Gulch and a spot sixteen feet off the ground above the îles Kerguelen, also known as the Desolation Islands, in the far south Indian Ocean, closer to Antarctica than to any permanent human settlement. The îles Kerguelen are in daylight when it's night in South Dakota, and the groaning is caused by shifts in air pressure flying in and out of the cave. In fact, this spatial continuity error is largely responsible for both the cave itself, and for the anomalous hill on the island.

Finding out about Karp's Gulch and learning the truth about the hole between two nowheres does not have a great deal of practical potential. Anything that could be hidden on the îles Kerguelen would probably be just as secure deep inside a South Dakota cave. The aperture is a rough circle about two feet wide, so fitting through isn't easy if you're full grown. The edges feel... fuzzy? They can't be broken but they won't cut anything. But sticking your head and arm through is an Unnatural (8) check, so it's great for mystery tourists, if nothing else. Any objective based on space-warping, or on convincing people that space doesn't always obey hidebound contiguity rules, could gain 2d10+10% percentiles from study of the Karp's Gulch anomaly, with very little justification at all.

KINDLY DEAD (UNNATURAL ENTITY)

They don't always show up, not every time someone is perishing, but sometimes when someone who has had a particularly bad time in life goes, the kindly dead appear to them. The dying person is the only one who can see the kindly dead unaided, but they describe them as normal people, just translucent. Their voices are gentle and their words are loving. They assure the fading mortal that whatever comes next, though they can say nothing specific, is better than "this." What "this" is (mortal life? or the dying process? being one of the kindly dead?) they won't say. Their witness stops feeling pain and is washed with a comfortable warmth and a feeling of peace. They often resist attempts to resuscitate them or otherwise save their lives. Being at death's door, though, they can't put up much resistance, so some people survive their brush with the kindly dead. Often survivors lose some part of their spark, seeming distant and

difficult to rouse to violence or passion. The experience changes you.

Those who have been visited by the kindly dead once and survive it, are never visited again. Survivors of encounters can transform one failed notch in Violence to a hardened notch and do the same for a failed notch in Helplessness. In extreme cases, people have been known to lose their fear stimulus altogether.

There's a ritual that can capture kindly dead, involving a candle, a paper bag, and a little bit of truck tire. The caster must put the open bag on a dying person's thighs and light the candle inside it, without setting the bag on fire. The tire chunk goes in too. Once the spirit's captured in the bag, it can't get out until the bag goes on someone's head. When that happens, the person loses their direction and

undergoes a severe bout of self-examination — usually one that ends with much greater personal tranquility.

In game terms, this ritual is significant, and if correctly performed, the bag gains the power to strip one person of their obsession, if they have one.

KLEPTOMANCY

These sticky-fingered adepts gain magick by transgressing a very fundamental tenet of society: "That's mine and you can't have it!" They steal little things and big things and lose their powers if they ever get caught or even slow down too

KNIGHTS OF THE ROAD

Some say they began back when the Civil War ended and the vets came home on the rails — not always alive, mind you. Some say they came about during the Great Depression when the Dust Bowl ran across the big skies of America. The Knights of the Road know, but they aren't talking. Hobos, homeless, transients, and drifters, the Knights of the Road hold to the hobo code. Decide your own life, don't let another rule you. When in town, always respect the local law and officials, and try to be polite at all times. The code ensures that those who follow you don't have a tougher time because of the way you acted. Real hobos follow the code.

What are real hobos? They're the ones you don't know about. At any time there's thousands of drifters and rail jumpers crossing the nation, but only a few know that they follow the old ley lines — those discovered by Native Americans and covered with track by the robber barons. This secret inner circle of hobos meets once every ten years to elect their king and queen. It is they who determine the course of the Knights of the Road.

Jemeson Finch, in his 1933 anthropological study of hobo life *A Kettle For My Pillow*, observed, "They are a classless society, a loose-knit organization of men and women bound by the common desire to let the rails take them where they will, so long as they can jump off at any time." During the Great Depression, possibly before, certain members of this tenuous society stumbled upon the occult practice currently called "gutter magick." Perhaps they invented it.

The Knights are dedicated to the freedom that was the promise of America prior to what they call "the robber barons." This term once referred to the giants of industry like Vanderbilt and Morgan, but now serves to reference anyone and anything that could be qualified as the monied elite. No surprise, with an enemy like that, hippies drifted into the organization during the 1960s. There's tell all over the country that Woodstock was some mass ritual organized by the Knights of the Road who saw the writing on the wall and tried to preserve a more innocent America. It was already too late.

The Knights number less than two hundred and lack the hierachal structure needed for unified action. This very transitory nature also makes them very hard to find or attack. Because they are always in motion, they are moving targets. Because they are bums, they are marginalized. The

KINDLY DEAD (MINOR UNNATURAL ENTITY)

It's time, it's peaceful.

Wound Threshold: 50. They're intangible and invisible, mind you.

Connect 75%.

Psychic Near-Death Therapy 75%: This is the means by which they make those shock meter adjustments.

much. But as long as they're continually lifting and pocketing everything that isn't nailed down, they can open locks, befuddle observers, hide in plain sight — or even steal your breath, your memories, and your reputation.

grid has trouble seeing them, and those who rely on the grid and its apparatchiks have trouble tracking them. The Knights are largely invisible to this technological structure of surveillance, demographics, and biometrics. They do not use texts or emails or even the conventional mail. The Knights of the Road leave secret messages for each other on the stalls of truck stop washrooms. They run a secret mail circuit known as W.A.S.T.E., as described in *The Crying of Lot 49*. They say Thomas Pynchon is one of their own. To those who balk at that, the Knights ask, "When's the last time you saw a picture of him?"

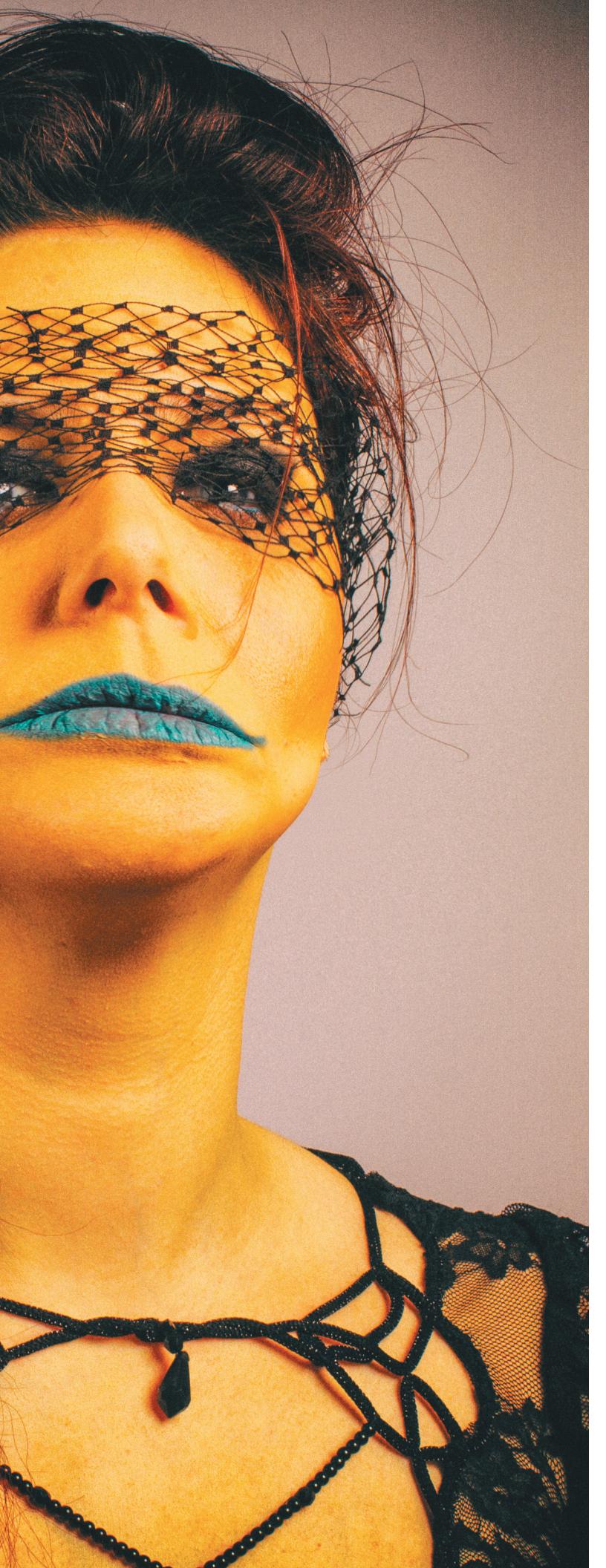
Their creed is freedom and open-mindedness, but in practice the Knights of the Road can be harsh. They constantly war with the greater powers they believe control everything. Thus, while a Knight of the Road doesn't want to disrupt local law enforcement if they don't have to, sticking it to the FBI is definitely in their wheelhouse. Government and surveillance are their mortal enemies. Like any structure formed around an ideology, however loose, the Knights often overstep their mandate. In fact, the very idea of having a king and queen is anathema to many members. Internecine conflict is common. Little surprise for people who pride themselves on individuality.

Knights of the Road never stay in one place for more than thirty days or sleep in the same room more than twice in a row.

RESOURCES

The Knights' main strength is secrecy and information. They exist on the margins of society and do not draw attention. When's the last time you took a good look at the homeless man begging at the corner?

Having their own methods of communication allows them to circumvent a good deal of modern surveillance. They know a great many things about the occult underground, having been living in the margins for some while, but no one hobo knows everything. What they don't know, they can often find out. If you want them to share information with you, you have to prove your worth or, failing that, buy them a nice meal or a bottle of fine liquor. The Knights of the Road are secretive, but they're still vagrants and wanderers. A little kindness goes a long way with them.



WEAKNESSES

They don't have money. One doesn't take up the bindle and stick expecting riches.

They don't have a fearsome reputation — indeed, few have heard of them. Instead, current Knights look at the wider masses of homeless drifters and seek out disciples.

KUCHISAKE-ONNA

SLIT-MOUTHED WOMAN (UNNATURAL ENTITY)

The story goes that she was a lovely woman defaced by a rival, who split her from mouth to ears before murdering her over a beautiful man. The truth is, she was not a specific woman, but rather, she is the reflection of thousands of women raised to live by their beauty and destroyed when that beauty is lost through violence and jealousy.

Her manifestation goes something like this. She appears to a group of attractive young men or women. She wears a medical mask, as is common in the parts of Tokyo and Osaka where she most often appears. The people wear these masks to prevent the spread of illness. In her case, it hides her grotesquely butchered face. She asks those she approaches, "Do you think I'm pretty?" Whatever they answer, she then takes off her mask and asks, "Do you think I'm pretty now?" If they say yes, she cuts them up like she is. If they say no, she attacks them on the spot with a pair of scissors.

The best course of action when facing her is to equivocate. Someone who doesn't say no or yes but instead says he's late for an appointment and has to go, or who changes the subject, or who pretends not to understand can get away. Dodge the question, and she apologizes for interrupting you and moves on.

There is a way to summon her and cause her to haunt a new city. It involves avenging a wronged woman and scarring your own face.

She attacks using Scissor Slash, does +3 damage with her scissors, and can flip-flop her rolls.

KUCHISAKE-ONNA

(MINOR UNNATURAL ENTITY)

Do you think she's pretty?

There is only one Kuchisake-onna.

Wound Threshold: 8o.

Scissor Slash 80%*: Provides Initiative, Provides Wound Threshold, Substitutes for Struggle. Her scissors count as a +3 sharp weapon (* obsession identity).



IS FOR LOVE

LIAR'S GUTS (MINOR RITUAL)

Cost: 1 minor charge.

Ritual Action: First, you say a little rhyming couplet in Greek. That's the easy bit. Next, you have to swallow a handful of maggots. They must be alive when swallowed, and remain alive during the course of the ritual. You have to keep them down — vomiting them up breaks the ritual. So long as even one maggot remains alive, squirming, in your stomach, you can lie without being detected.

Swallowing a handful of live maggots is a Helplessness (3-5) check, depending on how many raw, mobile meals you ate growing up. Once they're down there, it's a Fitness

check to keep from upchucking the mass of 'em. But once you've passed that Fitness test, you have one to ten minutes of lie time before your stomach acid kills the last one.

Effect: By completing this ritual, you can lie with the ring of absolute conviction. No test, magickal or scientific, is able to pierce your lies. People believe you, or at least believe you're sincere and lack any intent to deceive. Even stuff like a polygraph gets fooled. An MRI indicates that you're using the parts of your brain dedicated to memory, not imagination. The ritual is just that good!

LIVERMAILE, KENMEER

From Chicago, Kenmeer rode the rails for nigh on twenty years. During that time, he was crowned king of a roving mystic conspiracy called the Knights of the Road. His reign was just, though sometimes bloody, and there was a peaceful transition of power when he finally settled down in Tacoma, Washington. He wasn't forced out and he didn't give up in disgust: bad health and age eventually caused this restless spirit to homestead. He's still rich in knowledge and often consulted by current Knights. His name is legend

among their kind. Once, he amputated a friend's leg with a shotgun when the VA refused to.

Kenmeer's a courier now, taking odd jobs in the Pacific Northwest while typing fragments of his great American novel on his laptop. He knows the ins and outs of the Knights of the Road, but hasn't been an active member since he settled. No more than anyone ever could — leaving the road means retiring from the Knights.

LONELY ONES (UNNATURAL ENTITY)

Not all unnatural entities are out to kill you. Some just want help, comfort, and reassurance, lost as they are in a foreign universe. The lonely ones are such lost beings, desperate to attract attention and get help in order to return to their own world. They manifest by knocking, rattling, moving small objects, causing local electrical disturbances, and so forth. Ponies call them poltergeists.

They tend to prefer people of simple mind, who aren't so armored against belief; it's just a little easier to communicate with them or through them. Children can sometimes see a manifestation of the lonely ones, and adults assume they're talking to an imaginary friend.

The lonely ones don't usually mean to do harm, but occasionally they start fires or clobber bystanders with dropped objects. Lonelies are typically bound to a location, person, or object; the longer they've been stranded in our world and bound to that anchor, the more frantic they become. A truly old lonely one may be filled with rage and escalate its manifestations, lashing out in despair. They attack using their Polterschick score and do damage is equal to the sum of the two dice rolled.

It's possible, with a lot of effort, to communicate with the lonely ones but it's a very frustrating process filled with misunderstandings. It may also cause the desperate beings to cling to the medium and refuse to let them go, frantic to hold on to the only conduit for communication they have found. Even short of this, they can become very protective of the humans they chose as "friends" and unleash violence if their humans appear to be threatened.

LONELY ONE (MINOR UNNATURAL ENTITY)

Desperate poltergeist looking for attention.

Wound Threshold: 20 + a percentile roll (1-100). Note that because they're not physically *there*, weird and unnatural means are required to harm them.

Polterschick 10-50%: Provides Initiative, Substitutes for Fitness, Substitutes for Struggle.

LORD

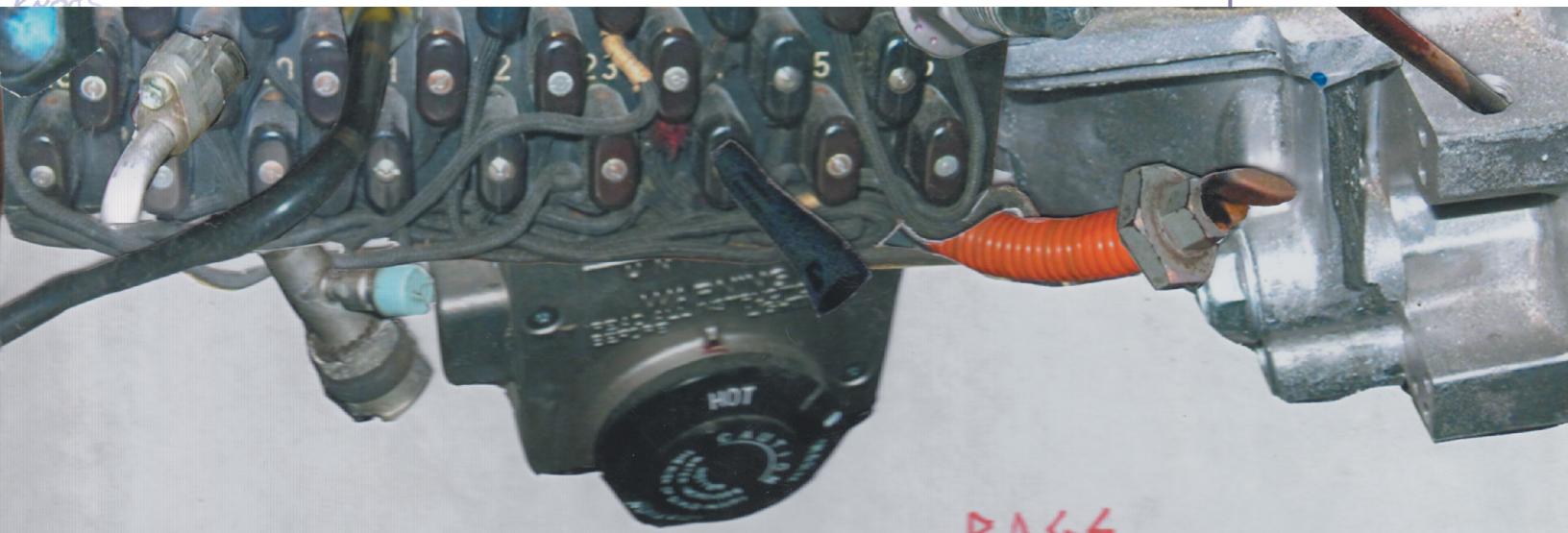
"Lord" is a currently unfashionable term for someone who knows how the world really works — usually an avatar or adept but sometimes just someone who has accumulated a lot

of weird wisdom. It's comparable to "charger" but with a touch more awe. However, the unspoken consensus is that anyone who uses this old-fashioned term without sarcasm certainly can't be one.

LOYAL LABORER, THE

The Loyal Laborer is the archetype of the untiring, unquestioning worker. It is an old and potent one, but constrained by nature into a subservient position. Subtle and ceaseless, they break their connection to the Statosphere if they are ever lazy or dishonest... or if they innovate and stand out from their assigned position.

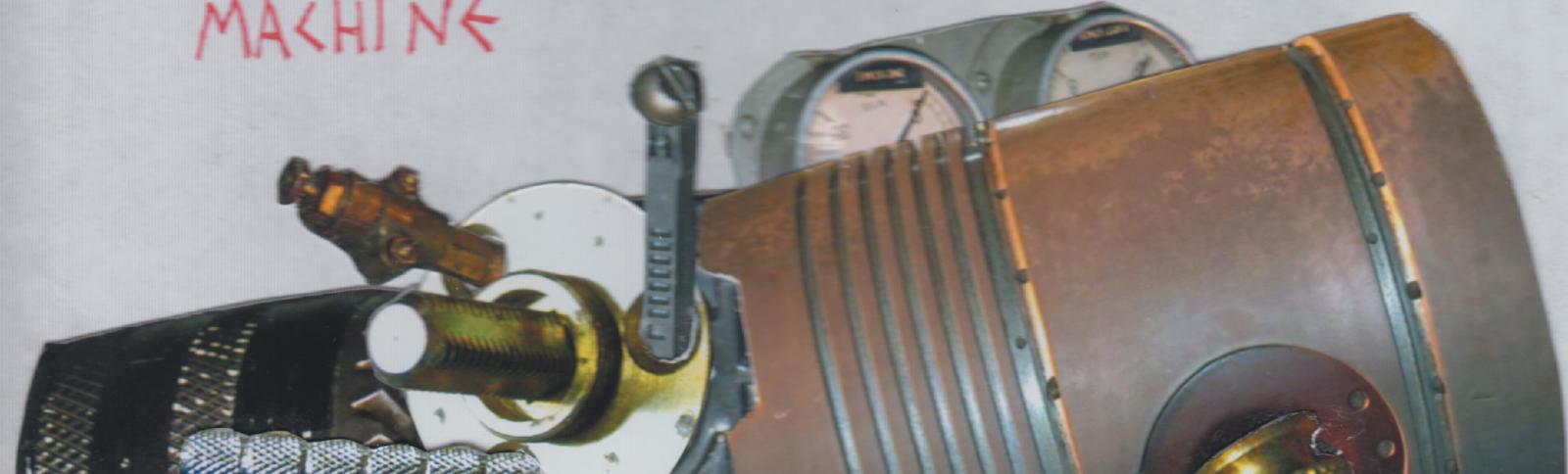
Those who are both man and woman possess powers and understandings unknown to either polarity.



RAGE
AGAINST

Be the ~~change~~ you want to ~~see~~ in the world.

MACHINE



M IS FOR MALARKY

MAK ATTAX

A mystic cabal consisting of mostly the young and idealistic, Mak Attax was the biggest clued-in occult gang of the 1990s, and arguably the most successful. Their stated goal is to create a magickal renaissance by piping hot, fresh, arcane charges through America's ley lines, utilizing fast food restaurants on highways. Random people get "special orders" that include packets of mystic energy along with their shakes and cheeseburgers — magick which expresses itself in ways

tragic, wondrous, or simply strange. On New Years' Day 2000, they collectively cast the Ritual of Light in each time zone as the new millennium dawned. 9/11 and its consequent horrors drained a lot of the hope out of Mak Attax, leading to internal tensions and vulnerability. Their co-founder and mastermind, known as "Superconductor," has been missing for some time and is presumed dead, but the members still carry on the work.

MARTYR, THE

These avatars subsume themselves to a cause greater than their own lives, often at the cost of those lives. But while they live, their connection to the Statosphere makes them untiring, incredibly effective at their chosen tasks, and capable of shouldering the burdens of others. The price for

these powers is paid in isolation and self-sacrifice. The Martyr can never, ever prioritize their personal well-being above their cause, whether that cause is the elimination of Ebola in Sierra Leone or the elimination of Christians in Syria.





MASTERLESS MAN, THE

The avatars of this archetype are defined by their autonomy and alienation — a social brokenness they did not choose, but which they have made no effort to heal. The Masterless Man is the entropy that fights entropy, supporting an order

that has no place for deadly freelance wanderers. He's the ronin, the gunslinger, the vigilante. His prowess in combat is fearsome, but erodes if he ever chooses to settle down or give true loyalty to any hierarchy.

MECHANOMANCY

One of the oldest of the modernist schools of magick, Mechanomancy focuses on blurring the lines between "human" and "mechanism." After sacrificing their own humanity by giving up precious personal memories, mechanomancers can infuse constellations of cogs and gears

with the qualities of living things — volition, agency, even the ability to reproduce. They cannot, however, incorporate technological elements from later than 1800. Also, their perpetual-motion clockworks tend to explode if their excess energy is not redirected.

MERCHANT, THE

Let's make a deal! These avatars exchange this for that and skim off the top. They can sell you the ability to speak Chinese in exchange for ten years of your youth, or buy your winsome smile for a cure to your migraines and nightmares. As long as there's an agreed-upon exchange,

a powerful Merchant can transfer even intangibles. But beware: Merchants are known to have a knack for inflating the value of what they offer, they traffic with demons as equals, and they hate being cheated or tricked. They make no selfless offers.

MOTHER, THE

An old and powerful archetype, mother stands for comfort, safety, and love. But mother also stands for constraint, infantilism, and dependence. No avatar of the Mother can

retain a strong connection if she idly stands by when a child is harmed, and her resources for defending herself and others socially, physically, and emotionally are considerable.

MVP, THE

Sports matter. Sports are where people pit their bodies, minds, and wills against one and other in a direct and objective contest where *nobody has to die*. At their purest, they inspire us with achievement, and no one inspires more than the Most Valuable Player. This archetype represents

the pinnacle of the idealized athlete, and true aspirational heroes who never showboat or disgrace themselves remain empowered by the crowd's belief and can, in turn, improve lives individually and in the collective.

MYSTIC HERMAPHRODITE, THE

Up until the end of the 20th century, the Sexual Rebis was called the Mystic Hermaphrodite.



MESONS

Mesons are subatomic particles composed of one quark and one antiquark. They're of intermediate mass, categorized as hadrons, and decay within hundredths of a microsecond. There are a lot of different mesons with names like "pion" and "kaon" and "charmed eta meson" and "strange B meson." They give headaches to physics students and are even smaller than protons.

A pair of chargers in Switzerland believe that mesons, as a class, are the particles that transmit magick from human consciousness into the wider world.

The adepts' names are Misette and Océane Guillory (no relation). They met by chance in a Paris airport when someone was holding up a sign with their last name on it. It was being held for an unrelated third Mlle. Guillory, but she doesn't really enter into the story.

Being keen on the operations of synchronicity, the Guillory ladies had tea and quickly realized that they were both mystics, albeit of greatly different stripes. Finding each other congenial, which is not common in the occult demimonde, they started consulting, researching, and vacationing together. People started to suspect, incorrectly, that they were lovers.

It was in Switzerland, on one of those vacations, that they both picked up pesky *astral parasites*. They shook down what local dukes and avatars they could find, but no one acted unusually guilty. Then they had an illuminating dream — the same

illuminating dream. It was a vision of the Sun card from the tarot, only instead of a radiant sun, it was a vast hoop of circuits that rotated through more than the normal three dimensions, changing into an immense halo of pipes with something invisible but still somehow bright coming off it. They had no idea what it was, or that they'd experienced the same dream, until they happened to see a picture of the CMS detector at CERN.

They immediately traveled to Meyrin to investigate, and found that the entire region around CERN's Large Hadron Collider was experiencing a significant uptick in unnatural phenomena. It was even more pronounced inside the epicycle within the footprint of the Super Proton Synchrotron.

Misette is hopeless with physics, but Océane's practices make it possible for her to absorb information with inhuman rapidity. Unfortunately, her comprehension of the physics she's voraciously studied is incomplete, perhaps impacted by her insistence that mescaline helps her focus. But they are both convinced that there is some connection between experiments that release meson particles (which occur in nature only in rare high-energy collisions) and the sort of reality deformation associated with adept magick use or the attentions of the Invisible Clergy. If they're right, everything currently done by the will of the occult operator could one day be a reproducible scientific process.

Neither woman is quite sure how they feel about that possibility.

If you insist on visiting a travel agency, at least make it an impossible one.

See "Astral Parasites" on page 14.

MESSENGER, THE

This archetype governs the transmission of news. They can tell the truth with the force of a hammer blow, after ferreting it out with oracular rituals. Locks cannot hold and obstacles remove themselves when they stand between the Messenger

and someone who must hear their words. But truth is a demanding master, and it breaks Messenger taboo to directly deny any known truth when confronted with it.

MOORCOCK HYPOTHESIS

Named for British fantasist Michael Moorcock, the Moorcock Hypothesis breaks everything encountered into agents of order or entropy. It makes for a tidy pair of cosmic forces in tension. Some people like one or the other and a few think the trick is to maintain a useful balance between.

On one hand, viewing the world as one where constraint and predictability and incremental improvement wages a war against decay and entropy and the unexpected can provide an ethos to which allegiance can be pledged, and many find it useful as an organizing principle for their thoughts and observations. But on the other hand... so what? Only the most anthropomorphizing versions of the hypothesis consider these forces anything other than utterly unconscious and implacably indifferent — incapable of anything resembling awareness! — of and to

human beings. So saying you're an agent of order probably influences the implicit nature of things about as much as declaring your loyalty to Big League Chew.

People, on the other hand, care about labels. They care a lot. So as long as you name yourself an agent of order to other people who value that, all good. Try it in front of self-styled chaos operatives and things are likely to get loud.

N IS FOR NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS

NARCO-ALCHEMY

Drugs consume a lot of people, and a small percentage get bent in just the right way to become adepts. Minor practitioners of the art of narco-alchemy use themselves as a crucible, refining drug effects within themselves to master their impulses, bring good luck, and heal their bodies... until their buzz wears off. More

significant alchemists create works which can infuse others with gregarious grandeur, fierce strength, or keen insight. But their temporary effects fade along with their druggy euphoria, and even the permanent changes wrought by greater works are disrupted if the altered person ever takes impure street drugs.

NECESSARY SERVANT, THE

Avatars of the Necessary Servant archetype are never the commanders, the CEOs, or the presidents. They are the unmentioned and unmemoable functionaries who actually get things done. Giving direction in their own name breaks their

connection to the Statusphere, but as long as they're working subtly, behind the scenes, their ability to navigate hierarchies is unparalleled. Moreover, all such avatars recognize one another automatically.

NEVERWHEN PEOPLE

Rebooting the universe is not a tidy thing. People fall through the cracks and find themselves just where they were — but the world around them is now different. There's big differences ("Where's the United Kingdom of Great Britain and America?") and small differences ("I was wearing a blue shirt, wasn't I?"), but it's the personal differences that are most striking ("I'm married?"). Worse, the universe knows they shouldn't be here and takes steps to get rid of them. Deadly accidents follow these poor, doomed folk. Bad luck is just another day for them, as coincidence and synchronicity gang up to throw a series of ladderfalls, contagions, and mistakes of identity at them.

These are the Neverwhen People, and they die sooner or later, mostly. But while they are alive, because they are not supposed to exist, they can more easily exploit magick. All Neverwhen People can use *common gutter magick techniques*. Some may not know they can use these, but it quickly becomes clear that they can do things others cannot.

Remember when we said these folk will die sooner or later? That's true for, say, 95% of the Neverwhen People. But some have such a strong will that they defy the universe trying to kill them and manage to live... well, indefinitely. They don't age, and while they still need food, water, and shelter to stay alive, they won't die from natural causes. The universe still wants to kill them, and nasty accidents tend to pop up around them. But they won't get heart attacks or cancer, unless they eat Big Macs or smoke cigarettes all day long for years, as that's not exactly natural. Inevitably, major players in the occult underground are rumored to be this stubborn variety of Neverwhen People.

Most Neverwhen People have no clue what's going on, and they seek out the occult underground trying desperately to get some answers. And when those in the know realize what's going on, they run away as fast as they can before a plane crashes into them.

As described in "The Soft Way: Gutter Magick" on page 178 in Book One: Play.



NEW ALEXANDRIA LIBRARY

"You need a homunculus creation ritual? I think that's in unit 2168. But what do you have to trade?"

The New Alexandria Library began as a private collection belonging to George Cecil Jones, mentor to Aleister Crowley. Jones' library was full of mystical books, all of which were complete bullshit. The collection was bought by a gunpowder adept named Roger Lewis who, once he realized it was crap, began collecting texts that really described magickal rituals. Other initiates came to him, hoping to read about a new rite or gain a bit of knowledge to up their game. Lewis only permitted this if the lender gave quid pro quo, a simple barter system that allowed his library to grow.

As decades passed, Lewis passed the collection on to his daughter, who passed it to her son, who passed it to his half-niece (long story), and so on. Those in the know continued to pay the price for borrowing, slowly but surely building the library's size and scope. Today, the collection has over 200 books, 85 scrolls, and hundreds of pamphlets, pages, and diagrams. Taken together, there are probably a dozen complete, functional rituals in there, and the battered and incomplete components of twice that.

These days, anyone can apply and get a New Alexandria Library card. Contrary to expectations, it's just a laminated card with your picture on it. The rules for lending have not changed. Any book borrowed must be repaid with something genuinely occult, something the library doesn't already have.

The trick is, while Roger Lewis insisted that any ritual offered for trade be demonstrated first, that ran into two serious problems. First, a lot of adepts and avatars could use their standard powers and claim the results were from the weird pantomime they'd done with cat bones and wasp nest paper. Many "tested" rituals were just con jobs.

On the other hand, some rituals you don't want to do more than once, like the one where you poke out your own eye to create an unspeakable servant. So some rituals are accepted if there's a reasonable body of associated evidence. In time, that stretched to cover ceremonies that just came with a really good provenance.

Another wrinkle is Lewis family might have been shrewd, but they never learned proper organization. The New Alexandria Library is in several storage units in Aurora, Illinois without even a card catalog. It's gotten to the point where Miguel Lewis, current head librarian, has no clue where anything is or what to take as barter.

OPERATIONS

Miguel's daughter, Maria, wants to scan all of the books and put them online. At least one influential online person, organization, or entity is pleased with this idea and helps keep things organized despite Maria's tendencies to misname files or skip pages.

The library seriously needs a security upgrade. A lot of regular folk get sucked in by Miguel's two honeypots, which he milks to fuel a protective ritual that sprays scalding hot

duck fat on intruders. Still, there have been intrusions — more than the Lewis family knows about. That's why Miguel is placing low-tech, Wile E. Coyote-style traps around the storage units. That, and angry dogs.

Miguel is proud of his library and wants to keep it growing. He has even taken to advertising on Craigslist that he swaps "real rituals for real rituals."

RESOURCES

At the GM's discretion, the New Alexandria Library may contain a spell, ritual, or tasty tidbit desired by an ambitious adept or avatar. Finding it, and finding something to pay with, and getting the payment accepted as legit — those are the issues. Another problem is convincing Miguel Lewis that the offering isn't already there somewhere.

NEW INQUISITION, THE

Black America's proudest billionaire in the 1990s discovered the functional occult at the height of his wealth. His name is Alex Abel and he immediately assembled a network of crooks, paramilitary bruisers, and reality drop-outs to run magick the way De Beers runs the diamond industry. This enterprise was called the New Inquisition (TNI), and in the decades in which it strutted and bellowed upon the silent stage of mysticism, it made a lot of enemies. Some of them could do something about their irritation, and did.

Abel lost a lot in the Great Economic Whoopsie of 2008, but more than that, his own private

criminal conspiracy turned on him. Barely escaping an attempt on his life by his bodyguard, Abel has doubled down on paranoia and reformed the surviving structure of TNI as a personality cult with loyalty as its highest value. It used to be about James Bond tech and fat rolls of cash. Now it's about psychological reinforcement and bunker mentality. But TNI is still active, still seizing artifacts and pursuing rituals and giving join-or-die ultimatums to promising adepts. TNI continues its operations, if only because Abel interpreted the efforts to destroy him as proof that his methods were effective.

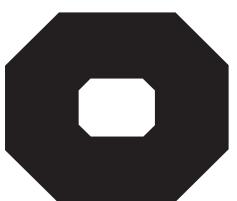
For more information, see "The New Inquisition" in Book Two: *Run*, page 82.

NICOTINE

An addictive and highly popular legal stimulant, nicotine has also been used in the practice of magick since before the white man came to North America and started growing it on huge plantations. Rituals that incorporate tobacco smoke, the cheapest and easiest avenue for nicotine, often use it to indicate the presence of intangible entities. Rumors of a magickal school called "Fumosurgy" persist, but anyone who tries to track down an actual adept of it finds the clues fading like smoke into an endless sky.

As the Moorcock Hypothesis gains popularity, nicotine is positioned with alcohol and coffee as a third mystic chemical by the few who prefer some idea of "balance" to either entropy or order. But talking about "balance" seems to be a dog whistle for sticking your nose where it doesn't belong, or a plain ol' hankering to play "let's you and him fight."

THERE ARE FOUR
HIDDEN WORDS THAT CAN MAKE
SOMEONE TELL THEIR TRUE AGE,
THEY WERE SECRETLY REMOVED
FROM THE FIRST EDITION OF
WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY.
IT'S POSSIBLE THEY COULD
BE USED TO FORCE OUT
OTHER TRUTHS AS
WELL,



IS FOR ONEIDA STIRPICULTURE

#OCCUPYTHETOWER

"You think magick is going to make life better for the people? Then you're either naïve or the enemy."

As liberalism grew in the '50s and '60s, a group calling itself the Guerrilla International Party emerged, mixing magick and liberal ideology. At least, that's what they claimed. Really, these Gippies never concentrated on much besides drugs and sex, but in the past few years, the group suddenly re-invented itself with a new name: #OccupyTheTower.

It also has a new philosophy: magick is a tool of the rich and powerful to maintain social and economic dominance. Magick needs to be eradicated if humanity is ever going to have a truly just society. To that end, the group targets all who use magick. They don't care if you're a mechanomancer or an avatar of the Survivor. If you use magick, you're part of the oppressor hegemony. Cast a spell, and you're The Man.

Since magick is underground, public protests aren't very useful. That said, they sometimes stage sit-ins or rallies at magickal hotspots known only to the occult underground, like that one wig store used by adepts as a sort of unofficial clubhouse, or the home of a powerful avatar. Despite that, this group doesn't worry about occupying so much as hurting you. They are more than willing to act violently against those who use magick. It should be noted that, unlike other groups, this one takes great care to make sure their targets really can use magick. Also, the violence is always mundane — no fighting fire with fire here.

OPERATIONS

There are three leaders known only by online handles: fapbot, kekiepuss, and BlueEyeSkies. All are hardline and police membership for wrong ideas and "bias." In other words, if you piss off one of them or just mildly wonder if the group is on the wrong path, you're kicked out. Several members who wanted to use magick to fight magick have already been promptly ejected.

BlueEyeSkies wants to stage a big event, something splashy to the underground but under mundane media radar. They are trying to find the loudest, baddest charger that the group could realistically take down.

RESOURCES

#OccupyTheTower's communication network is seriously impressive. They can get a gaggle of members online within minutes, and can do some small but impressive attacks including doxxing and DoS. They also have plenty of guns and homemade explosives, but they're smart enough to keep these hidden so the government doesn't mistake them for terrorists, despite how that label kinda fits.

Their current objective is "Find a charger whose assassination would send shockwaves through the occult underground." They're at 75%.

OLD MOTHER APOCALYPSE

Once she was ageless, powerful, knowledgeable. Once she was indestructible, an instrument of cosmic... something. It's hard to remember now.

Once she was the Comte de Saint-Germain. Then, on 03/03/03, Chris Indrick — the notorious Freak — convinced her to pass through The Bon Ton and, from there, through the House of Renunciation.

Now she's old. Vulnerable. Powerless. Now she forgets... forgets so much that's crucial. The other worlds, the old ones, the ones that form rituals... she recalls a little, she fills notebooks with scribbled images and words and music, but it fades.

She knows there's a girl who sees those old worlds clear. Somewhere. Sometimes she knows that. Other times she forgets about her entirely.

She can't remember if she went in The Bon Ton willingly, or was tricked or somehow coerced. She knows that the Freak came out different too. The so-called Human Eternal.

How she sneers, in her dimly lit Melbourne apartment, thinking about someone with one

mere mortal lifetime, trying to keep the universe reincarnating smoothly. Old Mother Apocalypse is quietly quite certain that Indrick is nowhere near up to the task. Especially against competition that knows what they're doing.

The universe has been through countless iterations she can almost recall. Some were better and some were worse, but it's clear to her now that the system — start, grow, 333, implode, GOTO 10 — is not improving things. She now seeks to nail down the current incarnation of matter and spirit, to make this universe the last, to prevent any ascensions but particularly the final ones.

She is marshaling an army to do as she bids. Some already swore loyalty to the "True Order of Saint-Germain," once upon a time. Some of them are bitter tattooed sadists named Sorrow.

Not all of them would be willing to kill every last human being in order to stabilize the world forever. Old Mother Apocalypse hopes enough of them are.

See also "Bon Ton, The" on page 19, "Comte de Saint-Germain" on page 28, "Freak, The" on page 42, "House of Renunciation, The" on page 49, "Human Eternal, The" on page 50, and "Joys and Sorrows" on page 52.

ON (MINOR RITUAL)

Cost: 2 minor charges.

Ritual Action: Make or purchase a gift. It should be extravagant for your income level, but not above or below your perceived social standing. What people think of you is important in the ritual casting, even if it's not important in the grand scheme of things. Wrap the gift in fabric with flower or plant patterns on it. You must present the ritual gift in a public forum, proclaiming loudly that you expect nothing in return. This time, you do not. Explain briefly the concept of social debt. If the target freely accepts the gift and you've cast the spell correctly, the curse falls upon the target.

Effect: Social debt is important. Anyone who's worth dealing with keeps a mental tally of what they've done, what they've paid forward, and who they owe. Sometimes, though, you have to deal with people too full of themselves or too dense to understand social debt. This ritual enforces social order.

The next time the person enchanted by On takes advantage of someone else's generosity, or fails to thank someone for a kindness, he suffers a vivid hallucination involving shrinking down to the size of a harmonica and running, terrified, from the giants his peers have become. Ultimately, some uncaring full-size person tramples him and he snaps out of the illusion. This forces a Helplessness (4-5) check.

ONEIROMANCY

The magick of dreams is, paradoxically, fueled by sleeplessness and delirium. By staying awake until they are literally hallucinating, oneiromancers can alter the perceptions of others, inflict exhaustion, and even restructure reality to briefly conform to dreams, or nightmares. But any time they're unimpaired by exhaustion, they are as trapped by the laws of physics as any other normal human.

OPEN HEART SURGERY

If you think about it, having a professional stop your breathing and pulse, crack open your ribs like you're a lobster dinner, and do stuff to your heart... that's the kind of thing our ancestors would have called sorcery of the highest order. It's also totally metal.

Because adepts tend to sneer at science almost as much as scientists sneer at magick, no one has gotten around to figuring out what might come out of you spiritually when you're on your back getting heart surgery. Nor have they contemplated what might go in.

Some people who have serious open heart surgery report a bright light and voices of loved ones and so on, which is just par for the course when it comes to dying. Someone with a better grasp on what was going on — say, an avatar, or someone who'd already had a vision of the Statosphere — could actually conduct recon in those circumstances. They could open their soul to the mystic currents of the invisible, intangible

world and let it write a message on their heart. The problem is, reading the message would require some kind of Kirlian x-ray, or possibly Kirlian MRI.

But wearing your heart on your sleeve is, notoriously, a way to get daws pecking at it. Daws are English birds related to ravens, and ravens are symbolic guides to the underworld. Which means, unfortunately, that open heart surgery leaves one vulnerable to possession by demons. However, this is pretty rare, since the only people demons know about and can perceive from their immaterial existence are those who do rituals to summon them or those with deep identity issues. But if either condition — wounded soul or occult tomfoolery — occurs near open heart surgery... well, things get ugly.

Or they might not. Demons aren't notably eager to get into a body that could drop dead in moments, nor one that's paralyzed and weakened. Then again, demons are, to a one, desperate and driven.

ORDER

A primal force of the universe, if you subscribe to the Moorcock Hypothesis. Opposed by entropy, order is the tendency of matter to become more organized and tranquil as energy is added to it. Because there are many more ways for a thing to be messy than for it to be tidy, order is highly prized by many humans who want a predictable setting in which to exercise their efforts. If things are orderly, then you know what you get when you work. If they are disorderly, who knows what's going to happen?

The most avid orderers worship it almost like a god, and they're desperate to confine everything into predictability for it. Like many religious fanatics, they're fine with sacrifices for the higher good. If they need to quell some rambunctious

freedom and corral some squirrelly innovation, it's a small price to pay for trains that run on time, dammit!

Needless to say, people whose lives are less perfect tend to be less enamored with the current order and more open to the entropy that brings change, flushes out stagnation and maybe gives new opportunities that calcified old-guard hegemonies are too stodgy and conservative to grasp. But even they are likely to insist that order is an utterly impersonal and uncaring force of nature, not a stern prohibiting patriarch in the sky flinging about thunderbolts. Still, when you're stuck in a dead-end job and the thrill is gone with your boyfriend and you've got writer's block, you know what to blame.

OUTSIDER, THE

This archetype covers the excluded, the out-of-place, the interloper who may be useful, but who isn't trusted. But Outsiders only exist relative to societies. They can't thrive in perfect isolation any more than they could with acceptance. As long as they're an undigested knot of difference, they can leverage their exoticism to become the novelty which is fearsome... or desired.

*She smiles
three times
and then
you die.*

P IS FOR PARSONS, JACK

PANDORA'S BOX (MINOR RITUAL)

Cost: 1 minor charge.

Ritual Action: This is said to be a minor trust or punishment ritual performed by old pagan cults when letting in new members. You cast this ritual on a special box, and send someone you are unsure of on a specific quest. If the ritual is completed, that person's loyalty to you is magickally protected. They must take part willingly.

Do not tell your target what's in the box. That's the most important. Fill a small box with personal items, bones, things that jingle, whatever you like. A mirror. Anything is OK.

Next, lightly seal the box and chant. The box is ready. Give it to your target, tell them that to prove their trust, they must take the box to a crossroads at midnight and bury it. They must not look inside. Warn them that you will never trust them again if they find out what is inside, but don't tell them the full extent of this ritual and what it does.

Effect: Assuming the ritual succeeds, you know immediately if they break the box's seal, or if they fail to bury the box at midnight as instructed. If they bury it and never break the seal, they automatically resist the next attempt to sway their loyalty from you with magick — indeed, any attempt to influence their behavior with enchantment. If the attempted influence is an adept's spell, it seems to work, the charges get spent, but the target apparently overcomes it through sheer willpower.



PAZUZU'S CIRCLE

In Baghdad, in 2003, Sergeant Guy Moore was ordered to help secure the antiquities museum. He'd seen enough of his men killed taking Iraq and decided that the maxim "to the victor go the spoils" ought to hold true. For his part, Sgt. Moore took some gold, some trinkets, and a bowl that caught his eye. He hid them for the rest of his deployment, eventually smuggling them home. The bowl, though chipped and scarred over the ages, received no further damage while Moore was at war. He came to believe that it was, in fact, keeping him alive — a totem for his safety.

Cut to 2006 when Guy Moore finally, permanently rotated back to the world. He came home with terrible PTSD and spent his nights in the basement cleaning his weapons and fiddling with the bowl while his wife worried about him upstairs. Eventually, she left.

Somewhere between 2006 and 2008, he managed to decrypt the writing on the bowl and summoned that which was bound to it — a spirit of the dead from ancient Babylon known as an *utukku*. The entity claimed to be Pazuzu, King of the Demons of the Wind.

The demon in the bowl is famous, but he isn't the legendary King of the Demons of the Winds. That was a lie. Demons lie a lot. He was named Utnapishtim, he who would become Noah in later stories, he who foretold the flood.

See, the thing is, Utnapishtim saved a lot of people, but not everyone. Soon enough, survivors started blaming him for not building a big enough ark. They started blaming him for those who didn't make it. People like to point fingers and, eventually, a mob gathered. Utnapishtim was stoned to death. The man who tried to save people was killed for his trouble.

It wasn't enough that they killed him, the grieving and angry survivors bound his spirit to a plain bowl for all time... or so they thought. In that bowl, he's been stuck for more than four millennia. When Moore released him, Utnapishtim encountered an entire world overrun with what he perceived as evil spirits. We call it the 21st century.

Utnapishtim became convinced he was being punished by the gods. Surely, he had done something wrong? Maybe the mob was right. Maybe the boat wasn't big enough. Maybe he should have told more people, but he was only one man. Now, he's convinced the entire world is run by monsters. His role must be to stop them. He has therefore assumed the mantle of Pazuzu, a traitor demon who helped man eradicate the evil demons from Earth.

As Pazuzu, he gets the vets in his circle to help him track and kill fiendish spirits. These demons are invariably just people. Once, it was a real bad guy — he'd killed his wife and hidden the body. Every other time, it's been someone who's just mentally ill or misunderstood. After forty

centuries in a bowl, Utnapishtim isn't exactly sane himself. He believes he's doing good.

On the rare day he isn't hunting the wicked, Utnapishtim inhabits the body of Moore or one of the other vets and goes for a walk. He feels the wind prickle the fine hairs along his neck and arms. He listens to the sea lap against the wooden docks and marvels at the strange machines humans have developed. Invariably, he gets sad and depressed and retreats back to the skeevy motel the cult is currently calling home.

Pazuzu's Circle is comprised largely of veterans, many of them horrifically injured. For people with extensive second-degree burns, say, demonic possession is actually desirable. The typical possession experience is, the entity struggles with you, and then there's lost time, and then you wake up and it's four days later and you have dog blood under your fingernails. When the missing experience was "four days removing layers of cheese-like flesh," the amnesia is a blessing. As for Utnapishtim, after the bowl he relishes any sensation. Hoping to expiate his sins, he's willing to suffer the closest to hell that life can offer.

OPERATIONS

Utnapishtim's main goal is to acquire enough followers so that their belief can reify him into corporeal form. He believes this will turn him into Pazuzu once and for all. (It won't.)

However, Utnapishtim has almost no understanding of modernity. He doesn't comprehend modern technology or why people were at war over his old stomping grounds in Babylon. His plans are hardly moving at the speed of the internet. Recruiting is very hands-on, with the cult going to VFW halls and PTSD support groups looking for the next warrior to fight against the rising tide of monsters. It gives both the recovering vets, and Utnapishtim, purpose.

Utnapishtim has heard rumors about the occult underground, and he wants to know more. It is, after all, the closest thing to what he knows. He has no hope of ever understanding the internet, but adept magick and avatars are relatable. After all, weren't the old gods archetypes after their fashion? And, if Pazuzu isn't around anymore, maybe Utnapishtim really can step in. First, though, he needs a permanent body.

Circle members collect the small fish in the underground and bring them before Utnapishtim/Pazuzu for questioning. Sometimes he possesses them, if he can. Sometimes the vets waterboard them. Still, it has been a long time since Utnapishtim was active in anything sorcerous and this new, post-modern magick is harder to use than he first thought it would be. He needs to infiltrate a group that really knows what's going

The cobblestone road that eats its own tail lets few escape with their mind intact, but it does have a good fish-and-chips shop.

on. Currently, he's trying to make inroads using his followers. It's all in the name of saving the world.

RESOURCES

The cult moves, drifting with the variegated moods to which Utnapishtim is prone. His home is gone, and so he wanders. They don't have a lot of cash, but Utnapishtim has gotten them to use their military skills to rob banks. He understands money.

SGT. GUY MOORE

Guy has long lost sight of what anything was about in Iraq. Moreso with anything he's been doing since. He isn't a bad man, just deeply confused. If Pazuzu takes his body and acts out some dubious things, he can rationalize it because maybe that's what Guy feels he deserves. In some ways, he thinks Pazuzu is his punishment for what he did over there. Ironically, he and Utnapishtim share in this same kind of guilt. Moore brought a demon home from war. It isn't an

uncommon feeling or even a necessarily tragic one. This time, it's literal.

UTNAPISHTIM (PAZUZU)

Utnapishtim is delusional. That said, he really is a 4,000-year-old man who was trapped in a bowl. In his day, demons were everywhere. Today, not so much. Utnapishtim is a man out of time. He's gone a little mad from his imprisonment and focused on the mythology of a world four millennia dead which he still trusts as reality. The way the world worked then must be the way the world works now, right?

He's never going to grasp technology, and he's probably never going to believe the demons he's killing are just people. That wouldn't make sense. He can only justify what happened to him as part of a grand scheme by the gods to break and rebuild him into the warrior demon they need to cleanse the world of the malign forces which run it now. Utnapishtim hopes, once his task is done, he can be forgiven for whatever transgressions he committed, as the world returns to Babylonian normalcy.

PEACEMAKER, THE

As long as there's been conflict — meaning, as long as there has been humanity worthy of the name — there have been those striving to overcome it. Peacemaker avatars possess

the power to make physical conflict distasteful or even impossible, but at the cost of never — ever — resorting to it, no matter how justified.

PENIS THIEVES (UNNATURAL ENTITY)

Currently, they're plaguing some parts of western Africa and Europe, but the creatures called penis thieves actually haunt most places humans live. At base, they are cannibal spirits reflecting those who died wronged by a culture too opulent to care for its own. While their wickedness is invariably blamed on human witchcraft, there is nothing human in these things and there's no known spell to make or control them. They are vengeful, and the only way to satisfy their lust for revenge is with a twisted mind game. A culture of toxic masculinity warped these spirits, leaving them hungry for the thing that destroys when it is meant to create.

Their signature assault is psychological, though they can tangibly bite other parts too. Victims of these spirits do not actually lose their penis, but literally cannot be convinced it is still there.

The creatures appear as shriveled starving bodies no more adult than they are children, and no more male than they are female. Their skin's like paper. Their mouths, the only clear features, are circular, with a row of razor-sharp teeth like a lamprey. Their mouths are always caked in blood.

While they're frail, they have disproportionately distressing attacks. If they physically bite, it does damage like a firearm. If they psychically bite (using Psychic Penectomy) a success means the target believes his penis has been snacked right off. Psychic Penectomy only works on people with penises, obviously. This gruesomely intimate mauling causes a Violence (4) check and a Helplessness (5) check, even though it does no physical damage and, in fact, cannot be perceived by anyone else. The delusion of having been maimed persists a number of days equal to the total of the Psychic Penectomy roll.

PENIS THIEF (MINOR UNNATURAL ENTITY)

You can't understand the hunger.

Wound Threshold: 30.

Chomp Chomp 75%: Provides Initiative, Substitutes for Dodge, Substitutes for Struggle.

Psychic Penectomy 60%: Unique.

Human rights activists are calling this "an imminent threat to women" and "a tragic cultural madness that needs to be stopped" with education. Some bloggers have even called for peace keeping force intervention. The international observers described women being pulled into the streets by gangs of angry men and beaten or burned to "get the witch out of them."

The cause of the beatings and mutilations? These women are being accused of witchcraft and penis-theft. The local story goes that sometimes witches use black magic to steal the members of men in their sleep, drying and reselling the flesh as a magical artifact. Western observers have found no evidence of these artifacts being bought or sold.

Worse, there is no sign at all of any men who have been mutilated in this way. When questioned, most of the mob members claim it was some other man, a cousin or a brother. One man observers could track down claimed to have been a victim of this witchcraft. He remained physically complete, but could not be convinced of it.

EVERYTHING ON SALE!

Biggest

PERSONAL AD (SIGNIFICANT RITUAL)

Cost: 2 significant charges.

Ritual Action: After repeating the correct chants, begin searching through personal ads in any local paper going back the last three months. It has to be a printed newspaper.

If you succeed at the ritual, one ad stands out to you. There's no guidelines for identifying the correct one, it's a gut thing. Once you identify your right personal ad, make contact by phone. It's never email, for some reason. Eventually, maybe after some back and forth, you get a message with very specific instructions on a time and place to meet. Go. Wear brown. Follow the instructions correctly or the ritual won't pay off and your home is almost certain to be robbed within a year.

When you arrive, a man with no face meets you with a briefcase. He says nothing, as he has no mouth. Act as though he is greeting you.

No one else pays any attention to the hideous faceless apparition.

If you smile and tell him "nice to meet you" in any language but your native tongue, he hands you the briefcase. Inside is an object of great value or usefulness to you... or that becomes useful in the future.

Effect: Correctly answer the ad, and gain outrageous fortune. The first time you use the object from the case, your roll is automatically an 01. You don't have to define what the object is until you use it. The roll on which you use it, however, has to be one where an item that can fit in a briefcase is useful.

PERSONAMANCY

The ritual use of masks has a long and colorful history in nearly every society, and the modern magick of masks ties in to postmodern and poststructural ideas about identity — specifically, that we humans aren't very good at having one. Personamancers eschew their real opinions and real passions in favor of one pretense after another until, perhaps, anything real about them fades away entirely. Their power to dissolve, reinforce, and borrow identities is unparalleled,

and they excel at controlling how they are perceived, as long as that perception is not true.

There is some overlap between Personamancy and the clothing-based discipline of Vestimancy. Followers of these rival schools are more likely than not to utterly loathe each other. Only the vestimancers are straightforward about this, however.

PIGEON LANGUAGE

In Norse mythology, the great hero Sigurd learns the language of birds after tasting the heart of Fafnir the dragon. It's a sign of wisdom — that's why the wise father of the gods, Odin, had two ravens that perched on his shoulders and whispered him secrets about all the kinky stuff going on in the human realm.

It's well known that in Padua in the 1960s, there was a magician who claimed to understand "pigeon language" and, from it, was able to divine the locations of artifacts, avatars, places where magick had been worked, and once, even the location of the entry to a strange microcosmic realm.

People have tried to learn the language of pigeons ever since that poor fellow was gutted like a fresh goby, but with

limited success because they've all been paying attention to the sounds pigeons make. But the true pigeon language isn't heard, it's read like a script — or, perhaps, more like an interpretive dance. If someone knew the points of data being described — the mystic currents of Venice, say — then filmed the famously huge swarms of pigeons around St. Mark's, a couple months of intense analysis would yield a fairly robust lexicon.

Learning the pigeon language is a weighty magickal objective. However, once used, pigeon language can be used once per session to automatically add 1d10 to a local objective, once per week of game time. It's too small-focus to influence weighty or cosmic objectives.

PILGRIM, THE

Followers of the Pilgrim archetype are questing for a goal or, after finding one, pursuing a new one. Unlike the Hunter, whose quarry is something or someone tangible, the Pilgrim is after an experience or an insight or an accomplishment. One is concrete, the other is abstract. Moreover, unlike the

Hunter, the mystic channels of the Pilgrim are more focused on movement than on discernment. Their taboo is indifference, as their patron in the Invisible Clergy ignores them when they are not actively moving towards their stated goal.

PLUTOMANCY

The magick of Plutomancy focuses on acquisition and money. With their spells, plutomancers can use synchronicity to call objects to themselves, cast auguries with the serial numbers on bills, and know any man's price. But while they gather charges through incessant acquisition, they lose

it if they spend their money. They are the ultimate misers, starving in the midst of plenty... or else spending freely but knowing that in so doing they've made themselves mundane and powerless.

PLUTOHAGY

Plutohagy should not be consumed with Plutomancy — I mean, "confused." Should not be confused with Plutomancy. Plutohagy is a magick school based around literally devouring money and value. Plutophages ("money eaters") cannot acquire anything of great value without the hard

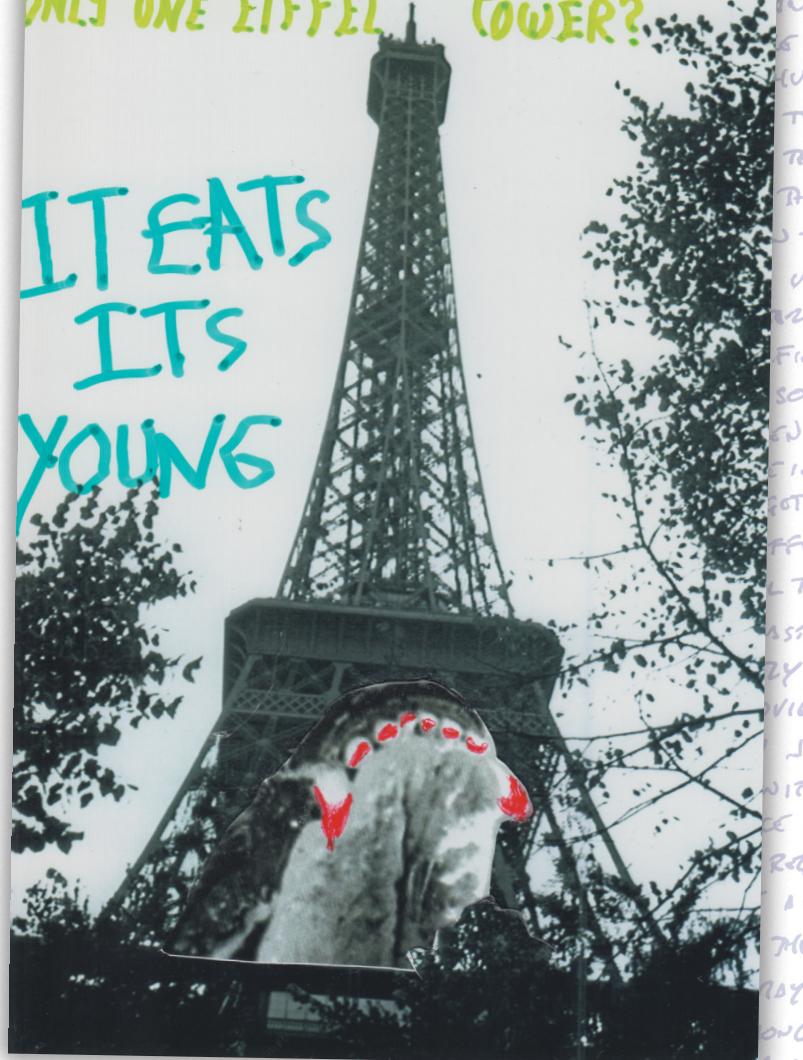
choice of either beginning to devour it within a half-hour, or losing their mojo. But while they have charges, they can infect others with tailored revulsion, or listless anomie, or they can share their own suffering.

PORNOMANCY

The specialty of the Sect of the Naked Goddess, Pornomancy is about following the Naked Goddess — a woman who ascended into the Invisible Clergy in the middle of an adult film shoot. Pornomancers imitate her recorded sex acts with painstaking fidelity in order to gain charges, then spend charges to influence others, create desires or compulsions and, especially, to forge synchronicity into curious runs of good fortune. Their taboo is sex outside a ritual context. Adepts of this school have forever yoked sexuality into the service of mysticism. They cannot do it for money, art, enjoyment, or love without losing their abilities.

DO YOU KNOW WHY THERE'S
ONLY ONE EIFFEL TOWER?

IT EATS
ITS
YOUNG





Q IS FOR QUIETISM

QUELLER'S WAND (ARTIFACT)

The queller's wand is a hotly pursued legend in a community that's blasé about miracles. Artifact cultists are willing to kill for mystic gewgaws that have wildly impractical uses, or only rumored and unprovable effects. Imagine how keen they are to lay hands on a magick wand that's actually useful.

The queller's wand eases the mind of madness and permits the disentanglement of puzzled, broken coping mechanisms. In the right hands, it's a powerful tool for healing. For everyone else? A nifty way to make other people put up with your anxieties and frustration.

The thing itself is about 3/4 of an inch thick and 18 inches long, worn down on the ends from decades, or more likely centuries, of dramatic gestures. The native wood of it seems to be pinkish, though it's hard to tell for sure and nobody is terribly keen on letting anybody scrape off a splinter to test. It's painted over in a flaking reddish lacquer, inlaid with dense mystic glyphs at one end. The frequency, size, and complexity of the symbols peters off the closer you get to the far end, where they're entirely absent. From the handprint-staining left by generations of users, you hold it by the blank end. At the tip, away from the grip side, is a single character that looks something like an exclamation point crossed with a musical note and a cross section of a nautilus shell.

One uses the queller's wand either by tapping it on one's own head and then pointing at someone else, or by touching someone else's head with it. No chanting, incense, or meditation required.

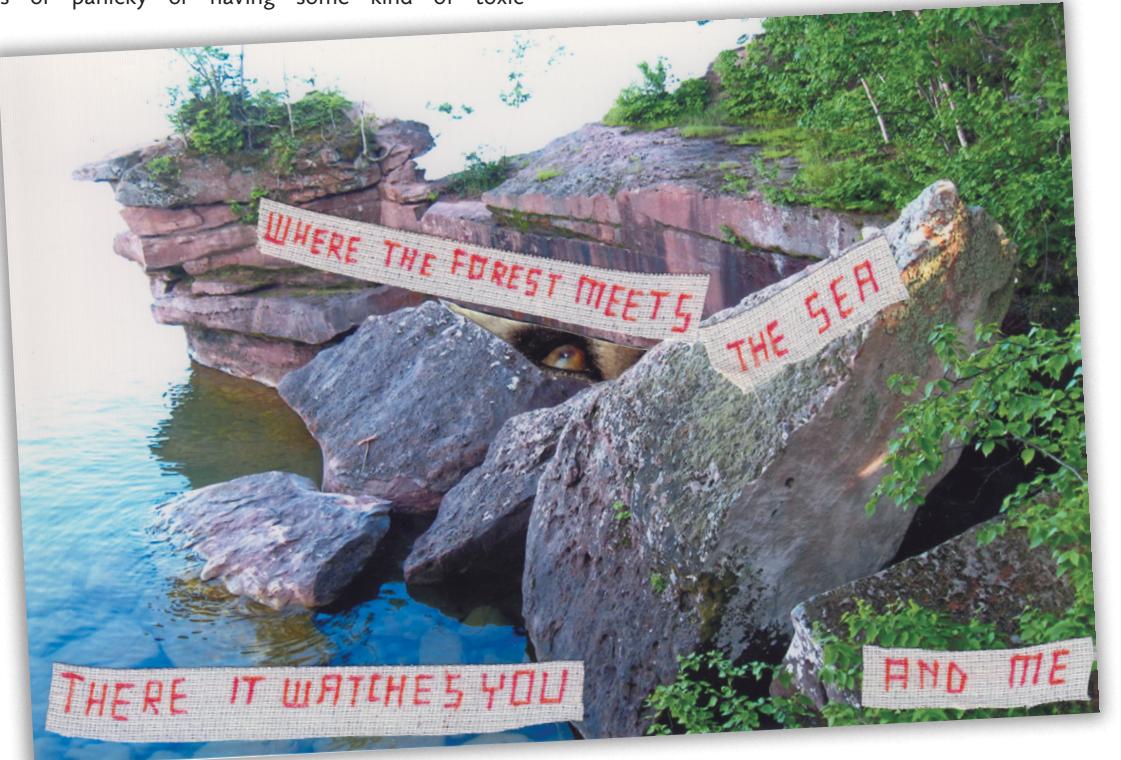
If you tap yourself, nothing happens... unless you're anxious or panicky or having some kind of toxic

super-freakout. Rules-wise, you can use the queller's wand on yourself if you have a form of permanent insanity and it's about to get triggered. If you're afraid of dogs, you can use it when you see dogs. If you're unnaturally attracted to the smell of photocopies, you can use it when you catch a whiff from the Xerox machine at the library. When you do this, you can briefly ignore your form of insanity — call it a twenty-minute reprieve — during which you do all right, if not one hundred percent normal. But it's a perceptible difference. It's also perceptible for the person to whom you transfer all those bad vibes.

If you point the wand at someone after using it, that person absorbs a shockwave of your displaced trouble, in the form of a rank 3 stress check of one sort or another. GMs who are unsure of what to use can just make it the Unnatural. If you don't aim it, it goes off on its own as soon as you come into someone's presence. If there are several people around when it's loaded, it discharges at random.

So that's how you use it selfishly.

Using it to relieve the pain of others is a different matter. If you touch someone with the wand, it allows you to function as if you're a psych counselor with a Therapeutic identity rating of 50% and you've just chatted with them for an hour about their issues and syndromes. If you have the Authentic Thaumaturgy identity, you can use that instead of the wand's built-in 50%, but that requires you to wear a black robe, mark your left eyelid with a sort of circle/pig nose/corkscrew glyph in red ink, and utter a brief chant to Saturn.





QUINE, CLINTON

Clinton Quine's preferred internet handle is "Dogfood." On Twitter, he's @dogfood33, but he hasn't posted in months.

Clinton Quine never made it through vet school, but he worked at several clinics in and around Madison, Wisconsin, as a veterinary assistant. He's good with dogs. Really good. Coworkers made dog whisperer jokes. They called him in whenever there was a hound that was big, or agitated, or in any way scary. Within five minutes, he'd have it rolled on its back with his hand on its chest. He was the master of the tongue-loll tail-wag, even though he didn't have a dog of his own or, indeed, any pet.

Clinton Quine wound up doing a lot of the euthanizing at the clinics. He never said he liked it, exactly, but he resisted it less than anyone else and, so, by a sort of procedural law of least resistance, he wound up killing a lot of sick dogs and cats and hamsters and gerbils.

Clinton Quine was good at his job.

Clinton Quine seemed particularly happy to see the really big breeds, St. Bernards and Irish Wolfhounds and Great Danes. If you asked his bosses, they'd say the only thing he liked better than a big dog was a big dog with a single woman owner.

Clinton Quine bought a second-hand laptop computer that he set up to run Tor and he used that to maintain a web page called "The World's Prettiest Murder Victims." It took him almost a whole month to satisfy himself that no one would be able to track the site back to him. He only updated it from someone else's unsecured home Wi-Fi, in an apartment over a local donut shop.

Clinton Quine just stopped showing up for work one day. He cleaned out his bank account and defaulted on his lease. His coworkers were starting to worry, and then the police started asking questions. At first his colleagues thought the cops were concerned for Clinton. It was only when they worked out that three women had been murdered, and that the common thread between them was that they all brought their dogs to the same vet, and that the dogs had apparently failed to attack the killer, that they realized the police were concerned about Clinton.

Clinton Quine has posted on Twitter twice in the last eight months. Once was from Tennessee. Once was from Montana. "The World's Prettiest Murder Victims" got updated last week with pictures of all three Madison victims. They weren't all conventionally pretty but you can tell that whoever took these pictures put a lot of care into their arrangement. You can just tell.

R IS FOR RESTRICTION

REBEL, THE

This rabble-rousing archetype would seem to be aligned with entropy, and often is, but if you look past the surface it's not that simple. The Rebel has a cause and it is in the name of that cause — good or bad — that they recruit and lead. Thus, a Rebel could act in good faith to promulgate a new order.

Cynics often quote Kafka's observation that "Every revolution evaporates and leaves behind only the slime of a new bureaucracy." Good or bad, Rebels need to act and to succeed. Only a steady diet of progress, or apparent progress, against oppression can keep them in tune with the Statusphere.

REBIS, SEXUAL

See "Sexual Rebis, The" on page 82.

RED SAUCE (MINOR RITUAL)

Cost: 1 minor charge.

Ritual Action: First, make a meal with red sauce or Bolognese. Coq au vin is especially good at hiding the taste. The charge should be invested in the cooking process. You also need to bleed, fresh from a wound, into the cooking pot. Menstrual blood isn't necessary, but it works, despite the fact that it's not fresh or running blood. After, feed the meal to someone.

Effect: In parts of the American south, men won't eat red pasta sauce served to them by women they're dating for fear that she's put her menstrual blood in it to bewitch them into falling in love. Actually, this is half true. (Well, very rarely it's half true.) Putting red blood into red sauces gives you some control over anyone who willingly eats the meal.

While they eat, talking and chatting goes as it normally does. As the meal is just about over, if you ask your guest a yes or no question, he answers yes. He simply blurts it out no matter what he intended to say. He might not mean yes, he might later try to backpedal, but in that moment, all he is physically able to reply is a positive answer. This triggers an Unnatural (2) check. Depending on the question, Self checks may follow.

Interestingly, men who try this ritual find that women tell them "no."



*I swear
to God
and she
asks me to
watch my
language.*

*I watch
my
language
and the
words
become
butterflies.*

*We need
a new
reality.*

REPTILIAN HUNTING SOCIETY

According to some real kooks, there's a race of shape-changing lizard people (or snake people, or whatever) that are secretly running things like a reptilian Illuminati. Because they can shapechange to look just like humans, they've infiltrated the top levels of government to accomplish their evil, inhuman goals, which are... well, the conspiracy usually falls apart at this point. But that's not important — there are reptilians running the White House!

David Icke is likely the most famous believer, but Wendy Chipakali and her husband Dinesh are the most dangerous. They are both adepts who seriously believe in this stuff. How seriously? Their Reptilian Hunting Society uses magick and mundane methods to identify and assassinate suspected reptilians. The key word is "suspected" because, rather conveniently, these reptilian bastards can look perfectly human, even down to the DNA. Because cross-breeding.

Wendy isn't dumb enough to target big-name politicians, yet, so she keeps the Society focused on local-level officials and members of the occult underground. In her mind, killing reptilians who can use magick is even better than getting rid of the reptilian school board president. While the Society

isn't well-funded or widespread, it's full of the kind of energy and dedication that only the truly mad possess.

OPERATIONS

The Chipakalis want to grow the Society and are combing through conspiracy sites to find potential recruits. But they are especially interested in adepts and avatars, and have started recruiting these as well. Their recruitment efforts are laughably inept. Those who refuse are obviously reptilians. Obviously.

Occasionally, a member openly wonders if all magick is a sign of reptilian influence. Wendy quickly and loudly shuts down such speculation, but that's just led to grumblings that maybe she is a reptilian. I mean, what better way to avoid the Society than by infiltrating it?

RESOURCES

Their best resources are time and energy. They might not have a lot of people, but members are utterly convinced of the reptilian threat and work tirelessly to fight it.

REVENGEFULS (UNNATURAL ENTITY)

When a person dies normally, or at least without unfinished business or the help of magick, the soul moves on somewhere else, and the body left behind is lifeless muck. But when the death is caused by magick, well, not much happens differently. The soul moves out, and the body's still muck. But... when the person is killed by magick, and he knows it, and he's royally pissed about it, he might become a revengeful.

The combination of magickal energies and overpowering desire for revenge arrests the dying process. Calling them "undead" brings to mind images of vampires and zombies, which is why it's probably better to call them "should be dead" or "will die any day now." However their bodies look, no matter the damage to internal organs or whatnot, the spirit is still there and the person is still alive... well, alive-like. The unbearable pain quickly dims to a dull roar, and the revengeful can move around, think, talk, etc.

Revengefuls are obsessed with getting even with the person they think caused their magickal end. There are two ways these ex-people take revenge. Less intelligent and patient ones track down the adept or avatar or thaumaturge who killed them, or whom they think killed them, and give them one blast of magickal energy, doing damage like a gunshot with no damage cap. This kills the revengeful, whose soul finally heads wherever it belongs. The more patient revengefuls stalk their killer, rolling out of the shadows at inopportune moments to showcase their gross, obviously dead bodies. Hey, what are they going to do, kill them again? In fact, these revengefuls live for up to a year this way, or until they give into temptation and blast the sucker.

Anyone who captures and studies a revengeful for a month or more can add $2d10+10\%$ to objectives of any scale that deal with magickal revenge, death, or the defeat of death. They hate being studied though. Wouldn't you?

REVENGEFUL (SIGNIFICANT UNNATURAL ENTITY)

Wound Threshold: 50. If a revengeful isn't dealt more wounds than its wound threshold, it recovers all damage taken as soon as the fight ends and it's unobserved.

Leftover Identity $3d10+40\%$: Something from their normal life remains — should be tailored to each individual creature.

Retributive Strike 100%: They roll this one time to explode and do damage like a firearm. Then they're gone.

Fight Like a Zombie 30%: Substitutes for Struggle, but loses initiative whenever it's in question.



RITUAL OF DARKNESS

This powerful act of Thaumaturgy temporarily aligns the Statosphere with the human realm, drawing the darkest and most vengeful aspects of every archetype and putting them at the disposal of the caster or, more commonly, casters. Under the influence of this rite, a house, a town, or the

world entire can be shadowed with suspicion, cruelty, and envy. The more people partake in the ceremony, the greater its power becomes.

RITUAL OF LIGHT

This powerful act of Thaumaturgy temporarily aligns the Statosphere with the human realm, drawing the brightest and most positive aspects of every archetype and putting them at the disposal of the caster or, more commonly, casters. Under the influence of this rite, an island, a state, or the whole globe can be lit up with courage, compassion, and harmony. The more people partake in the ceremony, the greater its power becomes.

The occult cabal Mak Attax deployed the Ritual of Light on New Years' Day 2000, in an attempt to harmonize the entire world and claim the new millennium for peace and understanding. The results were mixed.

Applied with malice, the Ritual of Light becomes the Ritual of Darkness.

The subprime mortgage crisis was an esoteric sacrifice, part of a ritual to heal humanity's sex hangups. The second installment is due when the cure is complete. The target date is in 2038.



RUBIES, GRIBKOV

Matvei Gribkov was a scientist in the Soviet Union, back when there was such a thing. An early pioneer in the field of crystal synthesis, he worked on artificial diamonds for Soviet precision manufacturing, but his real expertise was in rubies. After decades of effort and research, he developed the "Gribkov process," which made artificial rubies sufficient for use in high-precision military laser range-finders. Unfortunately for Matvei, he underestimated the potential of neodymium-doped yttrium aluminum garnet lasers, and his ruby devices were obsolete before he even got the manufacturing process down to a reasonable cost. Seventy-seven artificial Gribkov rubies were made between 1961 and 1970, all but a dozen of them for lasers.

It wasn't until the nineties, after the dissolution of the USSR, that Gribkov's rubies and lasers were looted from military vaults by disgruntled and corrupt officers who hadn't been paid for months. At some point, someone from the German occult underground discovered the special properties of Gribkov's rubies. Since that time, there's been what you might call a thriving aftermarket.

In some unknown way, Gribkov rubies interact with the afterlife. If you look through the Gribkov glasses, a pair of ruby eyeshades that Elton John would simply adore, you can see demons and ghosts, even when they're immaterial and normally invisible. The same thing happens with the Lenina Ruby (named after his wife), a fist-sized rock on a low-karat gold chain. Spirit-spotting through the Lenina is complicated by its round brilliant cut and many facets. Not to mention that running around with a huge red jewel pressed to your eye often attracts attention.

As for the Gribkov ruby lasers, they annoy demons and ghosts — "annoy" at the very least. No one's sure what they do, because the spirits aren't talking. Would you believe them if they did? Anyhow, demonologists have reported that summoned spirits seem to become more tractable after being strobed with a Gribkov device. "Not quite like they'd been tortured," said one expert, "More like after a couple hours of stress positioning. They for sure don't like it!"

At least three of the Gribkov rubies were ground down into pellets and inserted subdermally along the knuckles and forearms of an Estonian medium named Liubchanina Kuusk, who claims that she can now deliver punches and elbow-smashes to the evil spirits that have bedeviled her for most of her life. Two of the lasers were in the possession of the *Sleepers* but are believed to have disappeared during the destruction and looting of their Lisbon safe house. As for the Gribkov process itself, his papers are available on the internet, but seem incomplete. The equipment he used was either junked, left to rust, or sold off the backs of trucks somewhere in Moldova. An eccentric billionaire could probably recreate the process, if motivated, but there are cheaper ways to make better artificial gems these days. "Better," at least, for all industrial and non-ghostbusting purposes.

Starting with Gribkov's notes, recreating his process is a weighty objective.

See "Sleepers" on page 85.

S IS FOR SEDER- MASOCHISM

SAVAGE, THE

Unlike many archetypes that manipulate society, or resist it, or serve it, the Savage exists outside it and ignores it. Using language to deceive is against the simplicity of this pre-technological

role, as is too much knowledge of machinery. Instead of relying on works, the Savage's own body is improved. In the wilderness, there are few better suited to survive and flourish.

SCHOLAR, THE

This archetype collects and prizes knowledge to the exclusion of nearly everything else. Their ability to understand and retain information is exceptional, but to refuse to learn something — no

matter how dangerous or painful — weakens one's connection to the Scholar. Destroying a unique source of knowledge is worse, even if it's done for the best of reasons.

SECT OF THE NAKED GODDESS

When an adult film star ascended to the Invisible Clergy, the tape of the session became a mystic artifact, inspiring covetousness in all who beheld the tape, and unveiling secrets of the Statosphere to those who watched it. Moreover, a camera operator named Daphnee Lee became the first pornomancer and founded a sect based on uncovering the will of their new deity — the ascended Naked Goddess. With power over synchronicity and desire, they got big and powerful fast, promptly earning the ire of the other new and big cabal (*the New Inquisition*) as well as the oldest and most menacing (*the Sleepers*). But for all

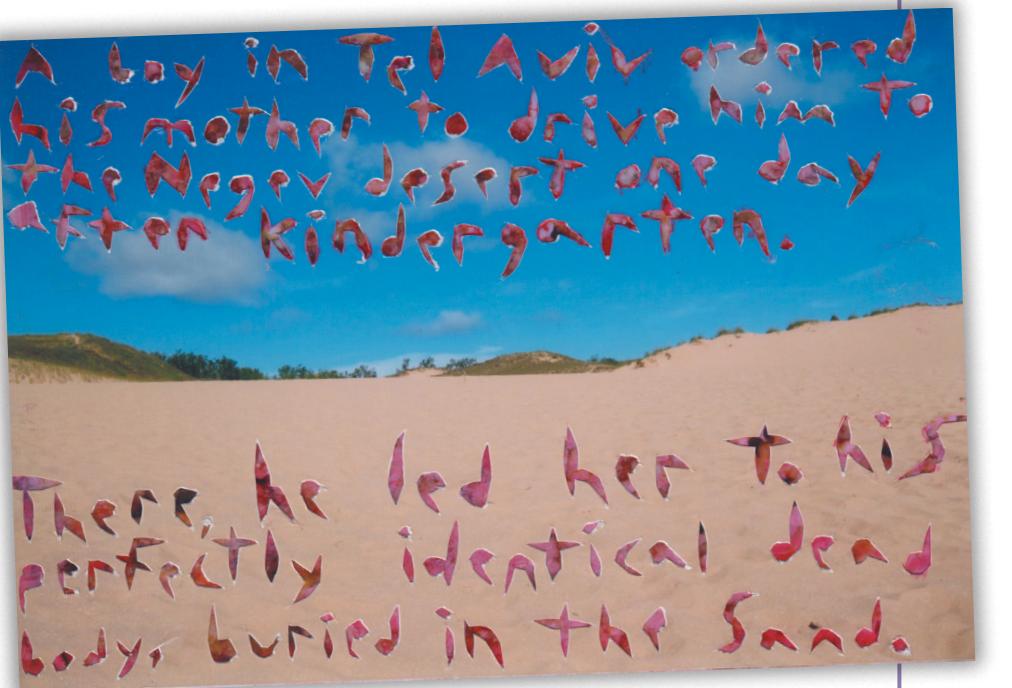
their rivalries, it's internal dissent that has given the Sect its most grievous wounds. Its central faction, still led by Lee, continues to operate as a top-down religious movement. A splinter group of motumancers insists that the Goddess' true will is to break the social artifices that keep people apart. A third, the smallest, consists of avatars or those claiming that status for the Goddess herself. They seem utterly incapable of expressing a clear ethos or goal, leading to speculation that mystery may be the Naked Goddess' entire reason to exist.

For more on the Sect of the Naked Goddess, see page 69 of Book Two: Run.

See "New Inquisition, The" on page 65 and "Sleepers" on page 83.

SEX GHOST

See "Ghost, Sex" on page 44.



SEXUAL REBIS, THE

An archetype representing the unity of contrasts and contraries, the Sexual Rebis expresses the synergy between man and woman, mundane and mystical, flux and stability, possibly even order and entropy themselves. The rebis in alchemy was the unification of opposites, a fusion that prefigured atomic technology by releasing tremendous energy.



SLEEPERS

An international occult conspiracy claiming descent from priest-kings of Atlantis, or something, the Sleepers' primary interest has always been in keeping the existence of magick secret — at the least, deniable. It's an article of faith with the Sleepers that when magick is proven to people who don't have it, they flip the table and riot. There is a fair body of evidence supporting this hypothesis. Sleepers don't want to necessarily stop magick practice (though they do that a lot, and with great violence), they just want it on the down-low.

It has been suggested that the Sleepers, for all their pro-social rhetoric, are just powerful magicians at the top of the ladder trying their best

to saw out the rungs before anyone else reaches their level.

Whatever the truth of their origins and motivations, they suffered heavily during the post-9/11 military-industrial-occult-intelligence conflict known as "the Whisper War." They — along with *the New Inquisition, Mak Attax, and the Sect of the Naked Goddess* — were heavily damaged by infighting, intra-cabal fighting, and opportunistic abuse by assorted law enforcement and espionage organizations. They have since reformed as something more like a sobriety movement, with the disreputable author and dipsomancer Dirk Allen as an unlikely inspiration.

More Sleeper information is in Book Two: Run under "Sleepers" on page 74.

See "New Inquisition, The" on page 65, "Max Attax" on page 59, and "Sect of the Naked Goddess" on page 81.

STACKED CATTLE

A phenomenon reported twice by reputable witnesses and five times by less trustworthy sources, stacked cattle have been seen only in Sonora, Mexico. The two blurry photographs that purport to depict it show cows in vertical piles or heaps or structures that resemble nothing so much as human towers or cheerleading pyramids. Those who've seen stacked cattle say the cows don't like it, but don't seem to have any idea how to get out of it until, eventually, the bottom layer trembles or gives out, and the whole thing tumbles. Injuries are universal, typically broken legs.

One witness, an admitted alcoholic named Maria Harris, said she saw the cows being

stacked. An immense flock of birds, both great white herons and smaller dark ones she couldn't see as well — crows? blackbirds? — had lifted the cattle into the air and placed them one atop another. She also claimed that one large bull had slipped from their grasp from at least forty feet up, striking the ground and spattering. The remains she indicated were consistent with a full grown bullock plummeting unsupported onto dry ground from a great height.

No theories have yet been advanced about the meaning or significance of stacked cattle, but it seems to happen during the tornado season — late spring through early summer.

STAINS (UNNATURAL ENTITY)

Humans impose their will on the universe all the time. It's kinda our thing. But not every version of that is magick. Hell, our ancestors started doing it when they took a fallen tree branch and bashed in the head of a goat. When something is used over and over again by the same person in basically the same way, our will contaminates the thing. We leave behind a stain.

Stains can be anything used repeatedly by the same person, but it must be an active use. You have to manipulate it and do something with it, not just wear it. An IUD can be "used," but it never becomes a stain. We're talking things like guns, remote controls, chess sets, motorcycles, footballs, playing cards, banjos, careras, and so on. These are usually called "favorite" or "lucky" by the owner, to reflect how much the owner uses it.

Over time, these get marked by the owner's personality and desires — and those impressions can contaminate someone else who uses it. Whenever the *objet d'stain* is used as intended, the stain rolls its Impression identity. If it succeeds, a bit of the old owner's personality seeps into you for minutes equal to the roll. Resisting its impulses

Jessica has some playing cards that used to belong to a corrupt NYC cop known for brutality and drug abuse. The cards have Impression 30%. Jessica shuffles the deck, and the GM rolls. Getting a 17, the cards have her in thrall. She is now a bit violent and wouldn't mind a little coke right now, if you have some. And if you don't, why not go get some before she beats your ass? Resisting the urge to seek out blow and start fights makes her face a Self (3) check. She's in this state for 17 minutes.

inflicts a Self stress check equal to the tens place of the Impression rating. Then you return to normal and wonder why Larry Flint's lighter made you want to complain about censorship.

Note that the stain is based on the user's personality, not how the object was used.

STAIN (MINOR UNNATURAL ENTITY)

Wound Threshold: 1-100, depending on how durable the object is. But since they can't move, it's usually not a big hassle to ruin one.

Impression 20+4d10%: In addition to inflicting the previously described stress check, the stain can roll this identity to plant ideas in the holder's head. These implanted notions have no particular

impetus behind them — they're easily dismissed as passing fancies, but the stain is pretty persistent as it tries to recreate the emotional temperature of its creation.

Note that while the stress check is only inflicted when the item is used, the vague impressions can be projected any time the object is touched or carried.

SURGICAL TEAMS (UNNATURAL ENTITY)

Places in the real world where magick is repeatedly performed, such as a ritual altar or an avatar's bedroom, can become permanently warped by the twisting of reality. Cold spots, electromagnetic variances, and similar phenomena associated with a "haunted" place can identify areas where such warping has begun. But when these places are severely affected, the universe sends in a surgical team to fix the area — and anyone nearby.

These teams look like three to six surgeons and nurses from the mid-20th century, complete with white gowns, caps, gloves, and surgical masks. Yet they have no eyes or eyebrows, and crude, cartoon-like mouths are painted on the masks. Their height tends to fluctuate, though onlookers never see the moment of change. One moment, they are shorter than the average person. Another moment, they are strangely tall and thin as if pulled and stretched.

They calmly walk through a doorway or from around a tree, down some stairs, or similar method, looking like they were there the whole time, carrying black medical bags. They surround the affected area and, if left alone, fix it with some kind of mock surgical procedure: the doctors hold out their hands; nurses take tools from the bags and hand them over; surgeons poke and prod floors, walls, tables, even empty space (which sometimes bleeds). After anytime from five minutes to an hour, they put away their tools and walk away to disappear once out of view. Any unnatural phenomena in the area cease.

The ritual to summon them, surprisingly, is a minor one. The price you have to pay for a chance to make it work, though, is high indeed.

These creatures are always silent, and while they can hear, they ignore people as long as they are in turn ignored. The mouths painted garishly on their masks can change to reflect their mood, however. When the team arrives, the mouths are small smiles. If someone tries to communicate with them repeatedly, the painted mouths are suddenly frowning. If anyone dares interrupt them, the mouths are now snarling and full of fangs. If people ignore this warning, the team attacks with their weird tools (+3 damage bonus).

While they don't speak and can't be held captive — they vanish back where they came from the instant you turn your back — they can be killed and they do leave tangible bodies behind. Autopsying one is good for a +2d10% objective boost on any scale — as long as the objective relates to something unnatural.

Moreover, while their masks and clothes seem to be mundane, albeit entirely unlabeled and untraceable, their odd tools have weird properties. At the very least, they are entirely immutable by means of avatar channel or adept magick. Whether they really are useful when it comes to making artifacts is a matter of great debate. If you've got one, however, there are people willing to pay handsomely for it.

SURGICAL TEAM MEMBER (MAJOR UNNATURAL ENTITY)

Wound Threshold: 50.

Anti-Occult 75%: Should any negative magickal effect be slung onto one of these entities, they have a 75% chance of removing it with a simple slicing gesture.

Surgical Precision 50%: Provides Initiative, Substitutes for Medical, Substitutes for Struggle.

Surgical Surcharge 100%: Any adept spell cast on a surgical team member costs an additional significant charge. If the adept can't pay, the spell fails and still costs its full price.

The idea that our world orbits Sol, instead of the other way around, is the greatest heresy of the Anthropocene.

T IS FOR TOXOPLASMOSIS

TAGGERS (UNNATURAL ENTITY)

The collective dreams of a million people, a hundred thousand, even thirty thousand are a powerful force. Any location that is commonly identified as a city is a sort of organism, and the dreams of the people inside become the dreams of the organism as a whole. Taggers are like the doodles we draw first thing in the morning, or the words to a tune we invented in our dreams, jotted down in a hurry. They're manifestations of a city's need to grab some part of their dream and hold on to them in the waking hours. They appear as a kind of faceless cloud of hooded youths, featureless and naturally *other*. They swarm empty streets or fill abandoned buildings with apparently meaningless graffiti. It's not meaningless, of course, it is the collective expression of every single living thinking person within the city. Some of these images are vulgar and dull. Some of them so breathtakingly beautiful they offer visions of a greater destiny.

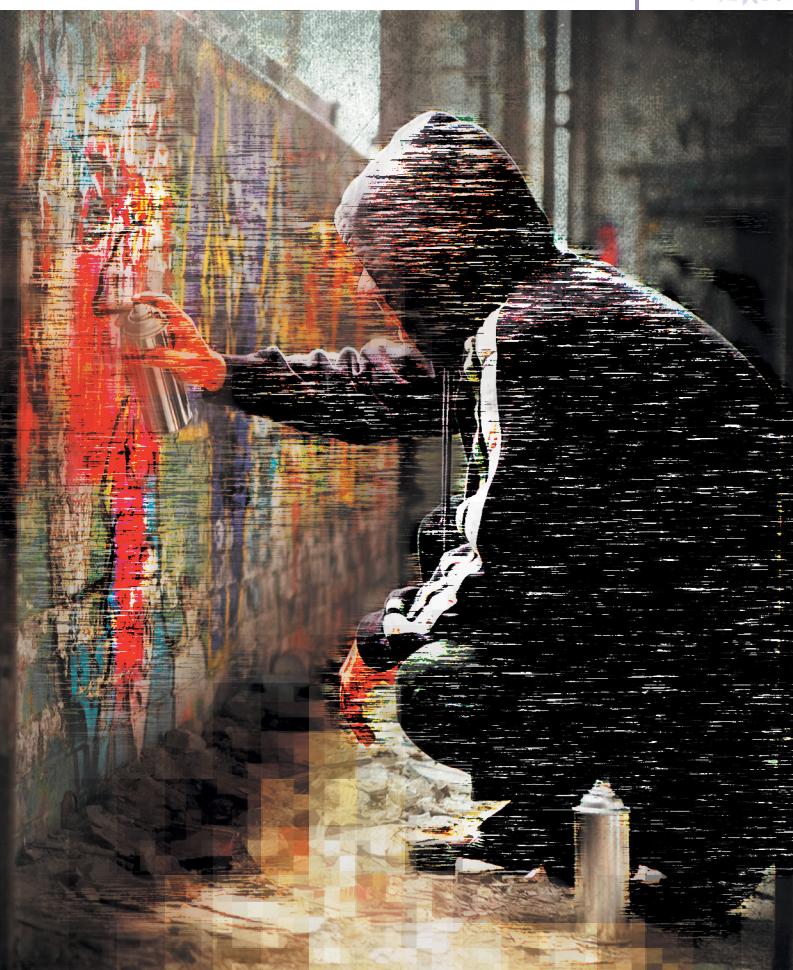
Some checkers theorize that every person has a tagger, and that if you can track them, you can get a peek into the person's deepest fears, regrets, and aspirations. Others suspect that these creatures are actually eating our dreams,

robbing us of that inspiration and peace, and the graffiti they form are the creatures' waste.

Should you identify a tagger (and the swarm seems to function as a single entity) there are two ways to turn that to your advantage — reactive and proactive.

The reactive strategy is to study the thing, follow it, see what neighborhoods it haunts and keep a careful record of what it paints. Do this for a week and you find that the pictures really start to speak to you, as if they're addressing your personal concerns and goals. The second week, the insights provided give you 10 percentiles to any objective you're pursuing. The third week, profoundly personal things show up, stuff you don't want anyone to know. Seeing this is a Helplessness (2-4) check. Fourth week, it starts tagging areas you frequent. Its murals also show up near people you care about, and are clearly about you. The week after that, everyone in town is seeing murals specific to your objective, which gains 20 percentiles if it's local. But after that the tagger either moves away or dies, having sprayed its last.

The proactive strategy is to grab the damn thing, or at least one component of the hooded youth swarm. Examined closely, the entity is actually all of a piece. The



meticulously recreated, accurately logo-branded clothing blends with the featureless chitin of the face, its cloth-skin overlapping with the metal-skin of its spray-can hands. If you cut the thing open, it's a great lacework of spray paint reservoirs and veins, all leading to the hand-nozzles. Lab experimentation indicates that the cloth of its body is cloth, the metal is metal, and the stuff that looks like tissue is tire rubber.

But before you dissect the thing, the rest of the swarm probably contacts you with a mural, begging for the return of its missing member. If you can figure out what its image means, and communicate with it, and not get beaten up by its other elements, it's possible to get it to draw a mural to your specifications. A dictated image enters the collective unconscious and adds $2d10+5\%$ to your objective, regardless of its scale.

TANNING BEDS

Have you ever wanted to climb into something that looks like a coffin designed by Scotty from Star Trek and get bombarded by ultraviolet rays until your melanocytes are raw with exhaustion and your skin has what is known, in the trade, as a "deep, dark, sensual tan" — or possibly melanomas? What if I told you that bed-tanning provides incidental occult protections?

I'm not going to lie to you. It's not really potent protection, but in this uncertain world, can't you use every advantage you can get?

Here's how it works: you lie in a tanning bed for a quarter-hour or so, and when you get out, there's a kind of... field around you. If someone tries to put some sort of long-distance spell or curse or whammy or channel on you in the hour after you've gotten out of the tanning bed, it misfires. If it's charge-based, the adept may not lose the charges, clueing them in that it failed. Other methods of malign magick from afar? The charger may not know.

TEA

Adherents of the *Moorcock Hypothesis* insist on framing the world as a dialectic between entropy and order. While alcohol and coffee do seem to have some genuine resonance with those abstract forces, or with people's perceptions of them, tea possesses no such congruence, no matter how much people who bleat about "balance" would have it otherwise.

Tea does have mystic properties, but only when used as a pigment, not a beverage. Specifically, an image painted with tea is indistinguishable from reality, to many psychic and occult senses. If you get a portrait of you at the beach painted in Earl Grey, and hang it in your bedroom, there's a 50/50 chance that someone trying to find you with clairvoyance sees you at the beach instead of you in

Afterward though, the tagger certainly either hates or fears you.

TAGGER (MINOR UNNATURAL ENTITY)

The city dreams, and taggers paint those dreams on its face.

Wound Threshold: 50. Each component in the crowd of individuals that composes a single tagger has a wound threshold of 50. There are usually at least three in a swarm, five is more typical, and eight isn't unheard-of.

Struggle 50%: They do standard hand-to-hand damage, hitting you with their spray-can appendages.

Pursuit 70%: They're quick little bastards when they're fleeing. No one knows if they're just as fast when they chase you, because they've never chased anyone.

This protection only works if you're out of the caster's sight. If they're right in your personal space, those UV rays offer all the protection of a toilet-paper wetsuit, but if they try to hex your name from two states over, or deliver a spell via text message, the tanning bed effect is a damn good shield.

Note, however, that it protects from physical harm only. Someone trying to find out about you, or confuse you, or steal your memories, or impregnate you with a moon child from another continent? All that stuff's still on the table. It might also prohibit someone who's trying to be nice to you with magick from doing so, but that doesn't seem to come up nearly as often.

It's only one hour of protection, but that's one hour more than a lot of folks get. Is it any wonder that some occult paranoids are turning their skin into beef jerky by going to the tanning salon compulsively?

your storage unit, painting symbols on a machete. If you get two paintings, it gets more complicated still. The easiest mechanic is to roll $1d10$ for yourself and one for each painting: lowest number gets scanned. Being subject to scrying makes tea paintings fade and blur, however, and a day or so after it has served as a decoy, it looks like a sixth-grade watercolor that got left in a steamy bathroom too long. Which is, itself, a clue that someone's trying to peek at you and has been misdirected.

For all its vaunted mystic oomph, coffee paintings have no known powers.

I nursed my cocktail of rum and coke and ephedrine and wrote nine thousand words in one night. At dawn they got up off the page and took their secrets with them.

See "Moorcock Hypothesis" on page 62.

TEMPTATION ALLEY

Being an avatar is easy for some people, damned-near impossible for others. Not only must you walk the correct path, you must avoid taboos that can ruin everything for you. Many people try and fail, and now a group has formed around the really bitter failures.

A version of this group has existed off-and-on as long as there's been people trying and failing to become avatars. A few of these got upset about the whole thing and want to ruin it for everyone. They track down an avatar and tempt or force her into breaking taboo. If they can't have the glamour and power that comes with proximity to the Statusphere, then no one can. And thanks to the internet, these griefers have gotten organized.

Temptation Alley as it exists today began as a message board for ex-avatars set up by Aisha Carter. She was a one-hit wonder in the 1990s (the single "Christmas Crushin'") and one-time avatar of the Star. There are now 43 members, though the active ones who check it every day and post a lot number less than a dozen. Some are genuine ex-avatars, some are self-deluded, some are angry hangers-on with grudges against the Invisible Clergy, and some are avatars who either don't know what they are or who think this is a group to keep eyes on.

They scan the news for evidence of an avatar using channels, as well as wander among the underground hoping to overhear something

important. Usually, they simply try to tempt an avatar into breaking taboo. However, Carter has grown seriously bitter over the years, and now she's pushing for a more physical and deadly approach.

The newest person to join the online message board goes by the handle "OlMamApocalypse" and has made some very cryptic remarks about "progressing to the next level" and how "avatars are only the symptom of a larger cosmic sickness."

See also
"Old Mother
Apocalypse"
on page 67.

OPERATIONS

Carter's girlfriend, Pamela Fenenko, is worried about Carter's violent trend and is carefully trying to push the group towards non-violence. Carter hasn't realized this — yet.

Robert Goodwin, ex-avatar of the Captain, is especially pleased with the violence. He is planning a series of sniper-style shootings of suspected avatars. Normally, the group votes on which suspect to tempt. Goodwin won't wait for a vote.

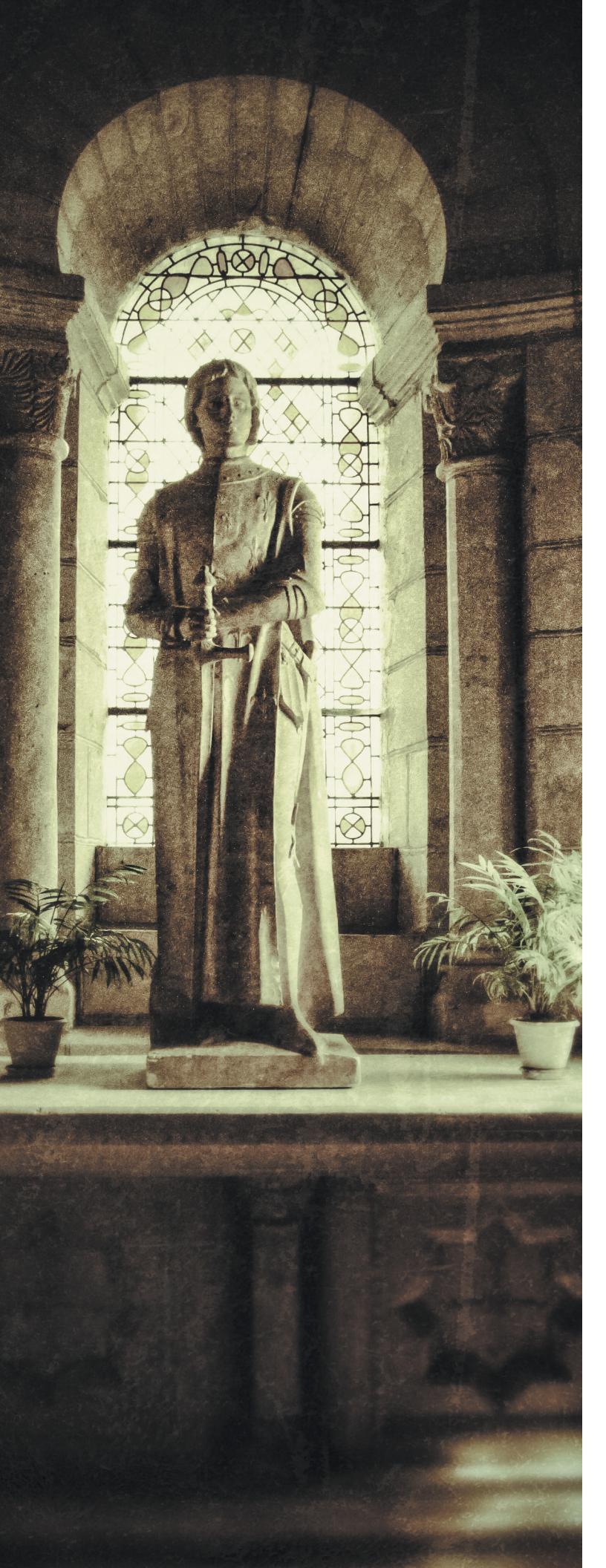
RESOURCES

Temptation Alley has gigabytes of data on suspected avatars and their powers, including real names, home addresses, birthdays, and more — like some kind of hyped-up version of identity theft. However, much is incomplete or incorrect. Many suspects aren't even avatars.

THANATOMANCY

One hesitates to describe any school of magick as "irredeemably evil," but it is difficult to practice death sorcery in accordance with any accepted moral code. Thanatomancers kill animals for their lesser charges, and humans for their greater ones. Some may kill only willing victims, but as the case of Armin Meiwes proves, most cultures don't accept "he was asking for it" as an excuse.

Moreover, even occultists who are generally noncommittal about that whole "killing people" forbiddance look askance at thanatomancers for trucking with demons. Their creepy healing and harming spells could get a pass, but demons? Nope.



THIS IS A BAD IDEA? (SIGNIFICANT RITUAL)

Cost: 1 significant charge.

Ritual Action: Find a place that is sacred or historically significant to the group. If it's a religion, a house of worship works especially well. Then, while charged with magick, you should call out an important member of the group, accusing them of transgressions or hypocrisies. These accusations must be true, even if you can't prove them. Next, mutilate or destroy an image or representation of that authority figure. Members of the community may try to stop you. You have to finish the destruction of the image and then somehow release some sort of bodily fluid on the ground before you're expelled from the location. If they beat you and you bleed, that works. Urine works too. Also spit. Once they kick you out, make your roll.

Effect: If you want, really want, to make yourself a pariah in a certain community, you can do it with magick. With this ritual you become so hated and loathed within a group that they don't even want to think about you. Attempting to interact with you forces checks on the Self meter as they're consumed with loathing.

SELF CHECKS

Action	Stress
Conversing civilly with you	6-7
Saying your name	4-5
Touching you gently	4-5
Talking about you outside your presence	3-4
Attacking you	2-3

Should they overcome the obnoxiousness of your presence enough to attempt violence upon your person, they just roll the one stress check, and its result stands until you get away from them. Or you die. Or they die.

The repugnance lasts a number of months equal to the tens place of your roll.

TIME LEECHES (UNNATURAL ENTITY)

The pace of change is accelerating all the time, and we don't know where the minutes and seconds of our lives trickle to. Sometimes, this acceleration of our entire reality compresses entities in the forward time direction through the thin membrane of our universe, like foam within a larger bubble. At any moment they might pop, and the one thing they need to sustain their own existence is *time*.

These time leeches (also called time sucks or chronovores if you want to be *fancy*) betray their unnatural existence in our world when they steal moments of time from a victim. When someone experiences lost time, missing time, or time slips — perhaps suddenly realizing that the last hour of their life is completely gone from memory, or briefly observing the passage of time at a different rate from that of the surrounding world — it's not necessarily alien abduction. It could be a side effect of normal consciousness impacting perception. It could be a concussion, or a drug flashback. Or it could be a time leech.

No one knows for sure whether they can steal time from animals or inanimate objects, but reports of items and even locations — forest groves, hidden rooms, entire streets — blinking in and out of existence have led to speculation.

A recently formed time leech only needs to steal moments. The choice of target is based on location: time leeches erupt into our continuum in little groups and latch on to the closest victim. If there are several targets available, they scatter, and prioritize the young. By retracing the movements of multiple victims, it is sometimes possible to locate the source of the incursion, which may continue to leak time leeches for a while after the initial burst.

Time leeches can attack their victim once per scene. They prefer not to act in front of witnesses, unless it's a crisis situation like a fight or a car chase. The increased attention on short spans of time is like catnip to these things; they can't resist it.

There are several effects of being leeched out of reality, and they're not universally bad. If you go missing for an hour or more, any other immaterial entities attached to you lose track of you and detach, wandering off across the astral plane. Similarly, ongoing magickal effects get broken by *any* temporal disconnect. Permanent changes enacted by magick are still there when you get back — if magick made your brown eyes blue, or taught you ancient Greek, or disintegrated your hand, those alterations don't get reset by a time slip. If it's an edge case, GM decides. While you're unreal, no one can do anything to you, though for this type of time loss, people do remember you.

Now for the bad stuff. If you're driving a car, you rematerialize in the car, not in the middle of the road, but the car *does* go out of control while you're gone. People who see you disappear face an Unnatural (4-6) check if you vanish while they're looking straight at you. It's an Unnatural (2-3) check if they see you round a corner and then you're not there, or if they lose track out of the corner of their eye. Experiencing a time shift of an hour or more is an Unnatural (4-5) check.

Time leeches cannot be fought by mundane means since they are incorporeal; banishing or destroying them usually requires a ritual or other magickal assault. There's a minor ritual that can summon, or perhaps create them. When it succeeds, though, the leech that arrives is attached to the caster. The same ritual can then let the caster pass the leech on to someone by touch.

TIME LEECH (MINOR UNNATURAL ENTITY)

Thief of time.

Wound Threshold: 20+2d10.

Chronovoracious 3d10+50%: Time leeches attack by rolling their Chronovoracious score, against a difficulty of an aware target's Knowledge or Secrecy, whichever is higher. If the target isn't aware that there's some intangible critter re-sectioning his daily 24 hours, their difficulty is 10, though an o1 (as always) is a crit.

The result of the leech attack depends on its result.

LEECH ATTACKS

Result	Effect
Fumble	The leech detaches from the target and troubles her no longer.
Matched Failure	Nothing happens to the target, and the leech can't attack again next scene.
Failure	Nothing happens.
Success, 5 or less	Target vanishes from reality for one combat round. She can't act, but she can't be acted on, either. If it's really hectic, people may not even notice. After all, what's more plausible? That so-and-so briefly vanished or that you lost track of her in the middle of a gunfight?
Success, 51+	Target vanishes from reality for 3-30 seconds, which can be disastrous if she's driving a car or something.
Matched Success	Target vanishes from reality for an hour.
Crit	Target vanishes from reality for a day.

TO CAUSE A HAUNTING (MINOR RITUAL)

Cost: 2 minor charges.

Ritual Action: Find a single family home, not an apartment. It must be a home in which people reside, though the people inside need not be the people who normally live there. Then you have to board it up and burn it down. People have to die in the fire. That's a Violence (7) check at the bare minimum.

After you've accomplished that, by your own direct actions, you can collect burned wood or wallboard from the house. If you take one of those pieces of wood into the hearth of another house, or the center of another structure, the building becomes haunted.

Effect: It's brutal, but you can cause a place to seem haunted by angry spirits that wail and cause the walls to bleed and all that creepy poltergeist

stuff. Conducting the ritual pretty much makes you a bad person.

If the ritual succeeds, one to two minor unnatural phenomena occur in the house every day, as long as there's someone present to experience it. A significant unnatural phenomenon happens once a week — provided there's a witness. The magick won't waste itself if there's no one there to be spooked. A major unnatural phenomenon happens once a year. This continues until the house is destroyed, or until someone removes the singed chunk of burned house from its hearth.

The damnable thing is, there's no ghost or spirit to exorcise. The house isn't really haunted by an entity. It's just ground zero for weird phenomena that everyone blames on ghosts.

See also
"Human
Eternal, The"
on page 50,
"Old Mother
Apocalypse"
on page 67,
"Bon Ton, The"
on page 19,
and "House of
Renunciation,
The" on
page 49.

03/03/03 EVENT

On March 3, 2003, the universe was shaken. The epicenter of this event was a bar in Florida called The Bon Ton. Little is known about exactly what transpired or how, but two notorious

occultists — the Freak and the Comte de Saint-Germain — entered The Bon Ton at the early hours of the morning and purportedly passed through the House of Renunciation.



TRASH GOLEMS (UNNATURAL ENTITY)

Some call them waste elementals but they're best known as trash golems, even though they're not actually golems. Do you think a kabbalah scholar would make anything out of trash? Does that sound kosher to you? But the name stuck. As far as anyone can tell, they really are just piles of garbage with no connecting tissue or flesh, walking under their own power.

Some say they're beings of scorn and desire who animate our discarded junk, desperate to be wanted again; others say they're Earth's retaliation against our wastefulness. What we do know is that they appear in places where the refuse of the very rich and the very poor commingle. They arise unseen in the dark of night and start walking towards population centers. During the day, they disguise themselves as piles of detritus in an alley, by the roadside, under an overpass; at night, they walk toward the hustle and bustle of humanity.

It's not clear who or what they're looking for, but once they start pursuing a target, they keep at it until they're destroyed or select a new target. One can escape them when they go dormant at dawn, but they've been known to walk hundreds of miles over the course of weeks to find a target that left town. When they do catch their prey, they engulf and slowly absorb them.

A trash golem that manages to reduce a target to unconsciousness absorbs the victim into itself within minutes. Once completely ingested, a victim's original body disappears; it's possible to pull apart the components of the trash golem but they leave no human parts in sight. Just cigarette butts and food packaging and junk mail.

No one has ever been known to be freed or exorcised after being absorbed by a trash golem, but then again they're a fairly recent phenomenon

and not much is known about their vulnerabilities. The best way to destroy a trash golem seems to be complete immolation; even a small piece of refuse can start collecting pieces again to rebuild itself. A remnant piece of a trash golem recovers a number of wounds equal to its wound threshold minus its current wounds per day until it is back to full health, incorporating new trash in its composition as it absorbs it. So even the smallest piece of the largest trash golem, with 79 wounds, returns to full strength within a week: 79 wounds drops to 78 ($80 - 79 = 1$) on day 1, then 76 ($80 - 78 = 2$) on day 2, then 72 ($80 - 76 = 4$) on day 3, 64 ($80 - 72 = 8$) on day 4, 48 ($80 - 64 = 16$) on day 5, 16 ($80 - 48 = 32$) on day 6, and 0 wounds on day 7.

While they're disgusting, and can be surprisingly tough if they got some construction waste in their blend, they're not as dangerous as, say, a Bengal tiger. They're slow and uncreative. But they don't give up.

TRASH GOLEM (SIGNIFICANT UNNATURAL ENTITY)

Walking heap of deadly garbage.

Wound Threshold: 30-80 and firearms only do hand-to-hand damage against them.

Trashfight 3d10+30%: Substitutes for Dodge, Substitutes for Fitness, Substitutes for Struggle. About a quarter of these creatures have enough rusty rebar or smashed toilet porcelain in their makeup to get a +3 damage bonus. Otherwise, they do normal hand-to-hand damage.

Innocuous 50%: Substitutes for Secrecy when hiding and for Pursuit when running away. This ability doubles if they go dormant and stop moving completely.

In
rejecting
this world
and its
heartbreaks
I
constructed
a new
cosmos in
my mind
and set it
spinning,
my own
private
orrry.

It is
better
than yours.

TRICKSTER, THE

People love stories about those who make their way, not by strength or necessarily by their pure hearts, but by quick wits, clever plans, and impenetrable deception. There are real people who inspire those stories, and those people follow the Trickster archetype. But the difference between

a commonplace liar and a Trickster avatar is that most liars are capable of honest pursuits, when it suits them. Tricksters must always choose the crooked route, even when it's not the best course.

TWO-FACED MAN, THE

The Trickster's darker cousin, this archetype does not necessarily deceive for a cause or for the joy of it. It just necessarily deceives. Its powers of persuasion and disguise are potent, letting its avatars conceal themselves and betray nearly anyone. Some even betray the archetype itself, by believing in something and openly supporting it. But such behavior always costs them the protection of their Statusphere patron.

Some women point to the title of this archetype and claim that it can only be channeled by males, but they're either lying or have, themselves, been misled.



TRUE KING, THE

Under the aegis of this archetype, the ruler, the land, and the people become one. Every True King has a realm for which they take responsibility, and over which they exercise dominion. These realms can be abstract or

concrete — the King of Euthanasia, the True Queen of Rock Island, Illinois, the Monarch of Neckties. Whatever their choice, they can never harm it or leave it in peril, and in return it becomes their senses and their agent.



U IS FOR URANTIA

UNEXPLAINED PHENOMENA

This book's full of occult ideas, experiences, and phenomena. But they aren't all there is. This section is the contrast: a buffet of mysterious phenomena whose causes are genuinely natural, though they look really weird when you're missing key information.

Chargers and checkers pay attention to weird events. What are the odds that they uncover the real mystic deal one hundred percent of the time? As for occult groups, they're likely to want to investigate anything that seems mysterious out of greed ("How can I get this power?") or fear ("Is this some new rival magick?"). The natural inclination of investigators in the real world is to seek a natural explanation; the natural inclination of characters in *Unknown Armies* is to look for a supernatural or conspiratorial interpretation. Mixing a little of the normal-but-weird in with the truly unnatural puts both elements in high contrast, and might shake up some preconceived notions.

Previous editions of *Unknown Armies* covered a variety of odd events and myths: cattle mutilation, "fairies," mysterious disappearances, firewalking, hoaxes, psychic senses, spontaneous combustion, UFOs, and vampires. But that's just the tip of the seemingly supernatural iceberg. There are even more strange things in the world.

AURA SIGHT

Though there are a few folks who can see auras and the lack thereof in people, there are far more people who claim they can do so. Most are charlatans, and some are deluded or misled by those around them. The truly odd cases are those who genuinely see colors around people — explained fairly easily if you know what synesthesia is.

Synesthesia covers a broad neurological concept where senses are linked to each other, as well as to associated concepts. It's sometimes referred to as ideesthesia. Some synesthetes have a color-taste sensory crossing, where colors seen leave a taste in the mouth and vice versa. Others see letters or numbers as assigned to different colors, which has been known to cause distress in children that see characters drawn with the "wrong" color. People who feel what they see have mirror-touch synesthesia. Of course, even those with the same form of synesthesia won't necessarily experience certain stimuli in the same way — bickering about whether "R" is blue or orange isn't unheard of.

Important to the concept of aura sight, some forms of synesthesia cause emotional reactions to cross with visual input, giving a color to a human being. These synesthetes trust their literally colored reactions, in the same way that other people just get a feeling about someone whether positive or negative.

In a modern, interconnected world, having a neurologist diagnose you with synesthesia and direct you to communities of other synesthetes demystifies it to a degree. When

you find out that Nikola Tesla and Billy Joel are synesthetes, this makes a form of sense. On the other hand, growing up in a place where the word "synesthesia" doesn't exist, it's easy to see this as a divine gift. Combined with a community that takes aura sight as counsel, the supernatural explanation is reinforced.

Oh, if you hear people talking about how LSD opens their "third eye" and allows them to perceive the true world or similar, they're talking in part about temporarily drug-induced synesthesia.

CONSPIRACIES

People love conspiracy theories — a proposition that accuses some group of people of secretly and deliberately having caused or covered up an event or situation, usually an illegal or harmful one. Some of this is apophenia in a confusing world of random, coincidental, unpredictable, or otherwise inexplicable events.

Sometimes conspiracies extend to full-blown paranoia with or without a side order of psychological fabulation: people want to believe them despite evidence to the contrary, because it makes a better story. Sometimes, there are real unknowable mysteries or military or industrial secrets that people pattern-match their own truth out of. Sometimes, conspiracies are real.

The Bermuda Triangle is an example of the first: according to the US Navy, the triangle does not exist, and the name is not recognized by the US Board on Geographic Names. However, it's tragically boring, when you look at the numbers: given the amount of traffic, over time, and the documented evidence (that which hasn't been spurious, inaccurate, or embellished, on purpose or not), it's not even in the top ten of the most dangerous shipping or travel areas. Sorry.

The Bavarian Illuminati are fun — some sort of splinter sect of Freemasons with that name did exist, with actual historical figures of minor note claiming membership, and they're far enough in the past to have an effect on history, but they're still inside the Age of Enlightenment and the post-Gutenberg world of literacy. People could, did, are, and will again complain and theorize about them and their dark operations and plans for a New World Order for all time. The Philadelphia Experiment (routine, but secret, research done during WWII on the destroyer escort USS Eldridge), the formula for Coca-Cola (the recipe is considered a trade secret and is known to only a few employees of the company), and current High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program (HAARP) activities fit in this category.

Then there are documented cases of real conspiracies in the world — Nixon and his aides covering up the Watergate break-in, the XYZ Affair (in 1797-1798 an American diplomatic commission was approached through informal

MORE THINGS IN HEAVEN AND EARTH

*There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.
Hamlet (1.5.167-8), Hamlet to Horatio*

The world is just awesome when you take a minute to think about it. This awe is generated not just by the mystifying and unexpected qualities or events of the unexplained, but also the intricacy and the emergent effects when those mysteries are explained.

Much of what we have found or currently still find cryptic in the universe, in the real world or the setting of *Unknown Armies*, have been shown to have answers that fall under some broad categories:

THE WORLD IS BIG. We often don't comprehend how big the United States of America is, much less North America, much less your favorite ocean, much less the whole Earth, solar system, galaxy, or universe. There are vast swathes of even highly populated areas that are either essentially unexplored, or fall off the map. Check out lost towns like Elkmont, Tennessee; Chloride, Arizona; and Bodie, California. If arranged properly, all of the planets in the solar system can fit between Earth and the moon. Give the entire population of China basketballs, and they can sink 1,367 "one-in-a-million" free throws.

THE WORLD IS OLD. Earth, as modern science reckons it right now, is 4.54 billion years old. The last dinosaur died around 65 million years ago after ruling for about 160 million years, and it took about 63 million years for something resembling what we call human (*Homo habilis*) to show up. Anatomically correct humans (archaic *Homo sapiens*) only show up roughly 400,000 years ago; Çatal Hüyük, the oldest proto-city we know of, existed around nine thousand years ago (7500 to 5700 BCE); the earliest proto-writing shows up around eight thousand years ago (6600 BCE); and all of human recorded history starts around five and a half thousand years ago (3400 BCE). As of this writing, the founding of the United States of America was 238 years ago.

LIFE IS COMPLEX. Spider silk is a wonder material with the equivalent tensile strength of mid-range steel at one-sixth the density. Pit vipers have heat sensing organs that detect infrared radiation. Bats and dolphins use echolocation and sonar. Genetic chimerism means that a living being can carry more than one type of DNA. DNA itself is common to all Earth life; humans share about 18% of the same genes as baker's yeast, 25% as a wine grape, 44% as a honeybee, 65% as a chicken, 88% as a mouse, 90% as a chimp, and 100% as another human — look at how different each is; especially in the expression of those genes between different humans.

CONSCIOUSNESS IS WEIRD. There are more synaptic connections in the human brain (a quadrillion) than there are stars in the Milky Way (300 billion). The observer-effect suggests that the simple act of observation creates changes in the phenomenon being observed. While five human senses are regularly recognized and talked about, we have many more — temperature (thermoception), kinesthetic sense (proprioception), pain (nociception), balance (equilibrioception), and really weird ones like different chemoreceptors for detecting salt and carbon dioxide concentrations in the blood — that we don't really realize we have. Nor do we consciously think about them, or discuss widely (or at all) these sensory experiences. Humans are pattern-matching beings (apophenic), seeing connections between things and events — some real, some false — and then ascribing causation, correlation, meaning, value, morality, and/or divine will to them.

PEOPLE FALSIFY. People misperceive, miscalculate, misattribute a lot of things in the world — often unconsciously, but also on purpose. We don't know, so we assume or we lie, actively or passively.

Lots of these exist in the entries in the main text. Of course, that's just what we want you to think, as we are telepathically communicating our thoughts across space and time to you, in a way that is actually changing your conscious and brain electrochemistry right this second, through the visual stimuli of a series of ink symbols that activate memory-modules of learning, context, symbolism, and allusion.

See "The World is Old" on page 94.

channels by agents of French Foreign Minister Talleyrand, demanding bribes before formal negotiation; this led to the Quasi-War), the covert research of Project MKUltra ("the research and development of chemical, biological, and radiological materials capable of employment in clandestine operations to control human behavior" — thank you, Church Committee!), and, to an extent, every intelligence organization in the history of world. After all, what are secret codes like the Caesar cipher, Navajo windtalkers, and the Enigma machine, but a sort of mechanical conspiracy?

The simple fact is that the bigger (in terms of people, infrastructure, and scope) a real conspiracy is, and the more recent, the more likely it is that people find out that it exists at all. Then they start to theorize, associate, confabulate, and lie. "Three can keep a secret when two are dead" and "leave no trace" operate here. There are probably dozens of conspiracies — let's just pick some — merchants price-fixing wine in ancient Babylon, the harem of Sultan Selim II, or the cat-and-mouse world of industrial espionage between yo-yo companies — that no one has ever, or will ever, find out about... because they involved few people a long time ago about stuff that's not really important today.

JESUS IN A TACO (PAREIDOLIA)

Seeing religious or other imagery in natural phenomena is sometimes called simulacra. It's common across cultures and times, and may be one of the universal experiences of being human.

Whether it's seeing Jesus in a taco, the Virgin Mary in a mildew stain, the word "Allah" in a tomato or a quote from the Qur'an in a gourd, a callus on a tree that looked like a monkey (like Hanuman or Sun Wukong), or the face on Mars in Cydonia, all these can be summed up as different expressions of pareidolia.

Pareidolia is a psychological and perceptual phenomenon involving a vague and/or random stimulus, often an image or sound, being perceived as significant. It's a focused type of apophenia.

Human beings are hardwired to identify the human face at birth, thanks to a specialized area of the brain's fusiform gyrus. This allows babies with limited visual abilities and experience to use minimal details to recognize faces at a distance and in poor visibility. Being able to tell Mommy from a monster is a handy evolutionary advantage.

Of course, humans being what we are, not only is there a market for portable simulacra, or charging admission to view static ones, but folks have created ways to make your own — a toasting iron that allows you to get your very own grilled cheese sandwich bearing the Virgin Mary's face, every time, perfectly.

LOST LANGUAGES

Human beings have been around *a long time*, and have been talking to each other for a good chunk of it. Heck, they won't shut up. Well, until they're dead — and sometimes not even then.

You've got your extinct languages (no longer has any speakers), dead languages (known in written form, but not spoken for communication everyday), and lost languages (which can combine elements of the two).

There are an almost uncountable number of languages that were spoken for centuries, then melted away like last year's snowfall. Entire nations of people have lived, communicated with each other, and died without leaving a single trace.

We got really lucky when Bouchard found the Rosetta Stone and Champollion cracked the Egyptian scripts there. There are a number of written languages that have never been deciphered, like the Indus script (the only writing of some of the first civilizations we know of), the Etruscan alphabet, Rongorongo (from Easter Island; inscribed on wood with sharks' teeth), and curiosities like the Phaistos disc of Crete and the Zapotec script of Mexico.

Granted, most of these things are probably only saying things like "This bridge not rated for more than three donkeys," "Accept Gonohowa as chief or face the consequences," or possibly "East village peasants suck."

MYSTERIOUS, REMOTE DEATHS

For as long as humans have been alive, we have found strange ways to get ourselves killed. Science has illuminated many illnesses and conditions that were formerly mysterious, but there is still plenty that we don't know about — and the unsolved mystery behind the Dyatlov Pass incident showcases that.

In February of 1959, seven men and two women hikers suffered gruesome deaths on a trip in the northern Ural Mountains, specifically on the east shoulder of the Kholat Syakhl (which is Mansi for "Dead Mountain"). Now known as the Dyatlov Pass incident, five of the hikers were found dead nearly three weeks after they left by a search and rescue team, who were only alerted to a possible problem when none of the group returned by a pre-appointed time.

The hikers had apparently abandoned their tent, which was badly damaged by being cut open from the inside. The group's belongings and shoes were left behind in the tent. Two were found almost naked, near what looked like a makeshift fire pit; the other three of those initially found were in poses that suggested they were trying to get back to the tent. The other four were found two months later, under a dozen feet of snow in a nearby ravine — they were better dressed, using the clothes from the others as makeshift shoes and extra layers of clothing.

The investigation concluded that the first five died of hypothermia. The incident became stranger once the other four were found with evidence of foul play: major skull damage, chest fractures, and severe mutilation. One hiker was missing her tongue, eyes, and part of her lips. Some of the hikers' clothing was radioactive. Others hiking during that time recall seeing strange orange lights in the sky, and there's other odd evidence that the investigators discounted. They concluded that "compelling natural force" caused all nine deaths, and sealed the investigation — not uncommon in the Soviet era, of course. It continues to fuel speculation to this day.

There are many natural and supernatural theories, but the answer is something that any adept worth a damn understands: when a group of people panics, that can get lethal. And it only takes one person panicking to set off a chain reaction as others react by joining in or trying incompetently to manage the crisis. One of the hikers was spooked late at night, and swore that an avalanche was coming. The expedition's leader, Igor Dyatlov, for whom the incident is named, attempted to reassure them that they were safe, but the sounds of lightning nearby sparked the disaster. The panicked hiker grabbed his knife and ripped open the tent to escape, with another joining him immediately. They took no time to get their gear on.

With the tent ruined, the others charged after, and in the dead of night lost their way. The two that panicked eventually calmed down, and built a fire to keep warm and to signal where they were, but no help came. The four that fell into the ravine took most of their injuries from the fall, with the woman losing much of her face due to postmortem decay. Dyatlov passed out from exhaustion while trying to retrace their path and find the tent. The other two tried to help him along, but exhausted themselves in the process.

The Dyatlov Pass incident proves two things. First, train for panic situations or stay home, but even training's no guarantee of surviving one. Second, if you add random data in an investigation, people start assuming unnatural explanations because they're trying to make a solution fit everything presented.

The radiation is still kinda weird, though.

STIGMATA

Stigmata is an interesting case of factual error manifesting culturally. Most stigmata manifests as bloody, open sores on the palms, reminiscent of Jesus' crucifixion. A great deal of Christian art over the centuries has depicted palm wounds, rather than the accepted fact that the Romans crucified at the wrists. Artistic license for this misrepresentation is certainly justified: showing open palms wounded is a more intimate expression than showing wrists turned. But it also means that most stigmatics bear similarities to the art of their faith rather than the historical truths behind it.

The hard truth is that stigmatics fake it. Many do so consciously; some for attention, but more often as a form of mutilation to seek penance or a closeness to divinity. (A rare few of these become epideromancers, who view their magick from a sacred perspective.) Unfortunately, some stigmatics suffer from severe mental illnesses that both drive them to inflict these wounds and robs them of the memory of it; they genuinely believe their stigmata to be a miracle.

QUICKY UNEXPLICIES!

Animal Intelligence (critters that are "too smart"): confirmation bias, fabricated evidence, hoaxes, mistaken beliefs; see Koko the gorilla, tool use by crows, the Tsavo Man-Eaters, and the theory of mind.

Cryptids (lake monsters, Alien Big Cats, chupacabras, sasquatch, North American kangaroos): hoaxes, misperceptions, illegal animal importation, and possible ancient survivals, given that the world is big and old (see "The World is Big" on page 94); consider coelacanths, dwarf elephants, and *Homo floresiensis*.

Out of Place Artifacts (OOPAs) and **Entombed Animals** (in limestone or coal): these are objects or creatures found in a very unusual or seemingly impossible context that challenges conventional history and science due to inaccurate descriptions or reportage, mistaken interpretations, wishful thinking, and mistaken beliefs; compare the Maine penny and the Kensington Runestone; also see Utsuro-bune (the "hollow ship" of Japanese legend) and "The World is Big" on page 94.

Spooky Feelings (dread, threat, being watched, hairs standing up, spiritual presences): look up electromagnetic hypersensitivity and transcranial magnetic stimulation.

Virgin Births: AKA parthogenesis.

Weird Weather (rains of critters or objects, angel hair, star jelly, red/yellow/black rain): strong winds, microclimates, aeroponic spores, molds, and fungus.

Werewolves: hypertrichosis, the Beast of Gévaudan, and animal intelligence (see above).

Since many stigmatics are poor and uneducated, they live in conditions where proudly displaying open wounds rather than treating them leads to infection, which in turn keeps the stigmata on display. Stigmata can also manifest properly, with the wrists rather than the palms, in the feet, in the forehead where the crown of thorns bit into flesh, and in the ribs where Jesus was speared.

UNEXPLAINED NOISES

The world is flooded with sound, and most of the time we can't see what causes a noise — whether it's genuinely invisible like wind, or something outside of our field of view. We rationalize unseen noises all the time, like an upstairs neighbor walking around or old pipes creaking. Those that aren't easily rationalized or uncovered start to take on mythological stature, leading people to invent their own explanations and even incorporate them into other odd events.

Strange lights and noises together make for many UFO stories.

The hitch is that even when a noise can be explained by rational science, once you have a group of people who have bought into the supernatural explanation, the unnatural story of that sound is just more fun. For example, it's easy to rationalize electronic voice phenomena — or EVP, the term of ghostly noises found on electronic recordings — as interpreting random noises into a form of communication, but many say that doesn't debunk individual recordings.

The idea of an unnatural sound is like a memetic contagion. Once someone points out a weird noise you didn't notice before, you can't help but notice when it happens again. That continues to propagate even in the face of mundane explanations, since a lot of people prefer weirdness to scientific evidence. Or else they just can't convince themselves.

Strange sounds don't confine themselves to old houses. A weird phenomenon known as the Hum takes places in entire towns, notably Taos, New Mexico. It's less well known in Terrance, British Columbia; Queens, New York; and elsewhere around the world, but Taos isn't unique. Very few of the residents in the area can hear the Hum, only around 2%. Of those who can, the frequency and modulation of the Hum is inconsistent; some hear it around a 30 Hz range, others 80, with various results in between. The rarity and inconsistency makes it impossible for scientists and skeptics to pin down the phenomenon's location or cause.

The Taos Hum is frustrating to explain, because for once the crackpots are technically right: this is government and corporate experimentation. The problem is that they aren't intentionally experimenting on the local human population. Since the 1940s, the US government has worked to harness energy in the Taos Plateau volcanic field, using technology reminiscent of Nikola Tesla's experiments on broadcast power. The thought was that if power generators could be placed deep underground, where the pressure is greater than at the surface, the energy output would be greater. The trick is in keeping the source of power secret and secure from enemy surveillance and assault, thus experiments in "broadcasting" the power through rock rather than running it through wires.

The experiments met with inconsistent success. Various companies took on this project, kept secret due to the Cold War, for decades. The last attempt was abandoned in the early 1990s when the company shifted to the dot-com economy. Today, the power generators of various eras are still implanted and technically work, causing the Taos Hum as the power is transmitted through the more conductive geological veins. The very secrecy of the project explains why no one has publicly solved the Taos mystery — if not for the Cold War, it would be common knowledge.

WEEPING STATUES

In spite of the Catholic Church diligently testing reports of weeping statues and uncovering hoaxes or mundane causes, just like seeing Jesus or Mary in toast, statues that cry tears or blood prevail in modern mythology. Discounting the individual hoaxes by those who enjoy tricking people publicly and seeing it on the news, or those trying to get money out of faithful people, there are natural occurrences thanks to weather and time.

Condensation in outdoor exposure or leaky pipes in a ceiling can explain away weeping phenomena that are ongoing, but it doesn't address what causes it in the first place. That effect is related to the process of using microbes in art restoration. Most microbes make the effects of acid rain worse by producing acid of their own, but a few strains of microbes actually consume acid.

Unfortunately for Vatican canon investigators and lawyers, there's a combination of microbes that reacts to pollution, the statue's material, and climate change by producing a rusty red or crimson liquid. These are the most baffling of cases, such as the 1986 incident near São Paulo, Brazil, with a statue of the Virgin Mary. It periodically cries "blood" around three months after the polar front passes from the region. The local bishop rejected it as a divine sign initially, but due to pressure from his congregation and later the media, the Archdiocese of São Paulo sent an investigator to examine the statue.

The Church ran tests on the substance and determined it to be an environmental byproduct. The next season, the statue stopped crying — the process of investigation tampered with the microbial cocktail, which now just produces acid and invisibly degrades the statue.

ELVIS

Still dead. Really.

Women inhabit a vastly more complicated, nuanced, and punitive culture than most men ever perceive.

UNFAMILIARS (UNNATURAL ENTITY)

Magick — be it channels, rituals, or what have you — tends to bend and break the laws of physics. The universe is made of resilient stuff, and it can handle that kind of abuse. Though *it does have its limits*. But the creatures living in the universe? Not so much.

Unfamiliars are animals twisted by magick but still alive, even though they shouldn't be. Many times, they were the pets of chargers and they got caught up in one too many spells. Others can be rats living in the walls of a cabal's base, or birds nesting high above a space used for rituals. That said, all unfamiliars share two common traits: they should be dead but are not, and they are in pain and either seek attention from or lash out at anyone nearby. The particular weird stuff that should have killed the poor creature can be subtle or downright impossible, yet it never leads to death. That robin with no beak and exposed rib cage? It's in pain but it still flies.

Seeing one causes an Unnatural (1-5) check, depending on how seriously messed up it is. A kitty cat with one leg on backwards limping past you would be an Unnatural (1) check. A puppy missing its head, pinned to the floor by a table leg, but still thumping its tail on the floor and pawing at you, would be an Unnatural (5) check.

Unfamiliars can be killed as any creature would, and given the thing's messed-up life, that's probably for the best. But because unfamiliars are a byproduct of magick, they tend to grease the local magickal wheels a bit. Once per day, an unfamiliar can be used to lower the cost of a spell or ritual by one minor charge, or lower an avatar channel roll by 10%. It just needs to be near the person doing the magick. It can also be used to lower the cost by one significant charge or lower an avatar roll by 30% once per week, but this causes yet another magickally messed up thing to happen to the unfamiliar. The poor thing still limps on, though. Hope you're proud of yourself.

UNFAMILIAR (MINOR UNNATURAL ENTITY)

Wound Threshold: 5.

Mangled Specimen 45%: This generic identity is for anything the beast attempts in its diminished and unnatural state.

See "Surgical Teams" on page 84.



Climate change was engineered to prevent Islam's "hidden Imam" from emerging from hiding and initiating the apocalypse.





URBANOMANCY

The adepts of this school power themselves through a city — not just any city, either. Their town, which they adore, adores them in turn, striking their enemies and hiding them, keeping them safe and keeping them informed. They

can cast no spells in any other town, and if their naked skin touches the soil upon which their metropolis is built, their powers drain away.

USAGI SHIMA

“Usagi Shima” is Japanese for “Rabbit Island” and it’s the extremely apt nickname for a little isle near Takehara that’s officially called Ōkunoshima. You can find it at 34°18'40N and 132°59'31E. There’s a hotel there, and a small chemical warfare museum, but most people come for the bunnies.

Usagi Shima is overrun with big, feral rabbits that have no fear of humankind because hunting them’s prohibited and it’s forbidden to bring cats or dogs there. As far as these monster bunnies can tell, people are just these big things that shamble around and produce food. It’s popular to go to the island, feed the rabbits, and get a bunch of them following you around. You can even lie down, put some carrots on your chest, and have them crawl all over you like an herbivorous blanket.

The official story is that the rabbits were just brought to the island and set free after the WMD plant there was shut down, and they multiplied and were fruitful. The rabbits who were used to test the plant’s poison gas? Oh, none of them survived, apparently.

Before it was a rabbity tourist destination, in 1927, the Japanese military took over the island and converted its fish processing plant into a refinery for mustard and tear gasses. The poisons from Ōkunoshima were a large proportion of those used in the thousands of chemical weapons attacks Japan made against China in World War II.

It’s estimated that 80,000 people died or got hurt during those assaults. One of them was named Guiren Pan and he was the only one, as far as anybody knows, to have followed the poison that killed his family back to its point of origin.

Guiren Pan was a weird fellow, no doubt about it. He studied Geomancy and Chinese herbalism and he’d gotten hold of something called the Ritual of Darkness, which he meant to use to slaughter a whole bunch of Japanese people, or at least curse them. That was his plan.

But as it happens, even if you’re really good at Chinese medicine and don’t give much of a crap what happens to you, the late 1940s were not a good time to try to go from

China to Japan when you’re pretty old and have a lot of health issues related to surviving a mustard gas attack. By the time Guiren got there, his anger had cooled, not due to any particular revelation, but just because that kind of rage is hard to sustain for a decade. Also, Takehara is in Hiroshima prefecture, and traveling there took him past Nagasaki, so Guiren had a sneaking suspicion that no matter what the Ritual of Darkness wound up doing, it was going to read like a footnote.

But he arrived, eventually. He’d originally planned to bring, and sacrifice, his dead daughter’s pet rabbit, but it had perished in cosseted senescence long before that. He brought one of its grandchildren instead, and as he sailed to the island, he realized that its position was pretty auspicious. Geomancer, remember?

Instead of casting a curse, he let the rabbit go free and cast his spell as the Ritual of Light instead. He didn’t know it would lead to many people traveling to Ōkunoshima just to be simply and uncomplicatedly happy as rabbits cuddled them, the way his daughter had cuddled her pet. But he did it with some hope, and the bunnies there today are all descended from the one he brought.

V IS FOR VERNAL EQUINOX

VALLEY OF THE BLACK PIG, THE

In northeast Connacht, Ireland there's a series of old, ancient earthworks called the Black Pig's Dyke (Cláí na Muice Duibhe), dating back to about two centuries before the common era. Legendarily torn from the soil by the tusks of an enormous, evil boar, the Black Pig's Dyke is immortalized in a poem by W.B. Yeats.

His notes on the poem are copious and rambling, covering Fenian politics, murder-pigs from Phrygian and Greek mythology, a pig-kicking drunk whose arm swelled up, the Sidhe, the Towy Plain, and the notion that the battle of the Black Pig is the battle between the manifest world and the ancestral darkness at the end of all things.

Yeats was a poet first, in the eyes of history and the Nobel Prize committee, but he might have said poetry was an outgrowth or byproduct of his fascination with the occult. Whether he was an avatar or adept is a matter of much speculation among chargers who would love the legitimacy of having a genuine literary genius among their numbers. But there is little reputable evidence that he ever bent the world of matter to his will, despite his command of imagination.

But if you read between the lines, it's pretty clear that he had at least one long, scary talk with the Comte de Saint-Germain, and possibly encountered Joys and Sorrows as well. This encounter, alluded to by Yeats himself, occurred in 1889, just before he met Maud Gonne. *The Valley of the Black Pig* was written in 1896, on the cusp of a century, and expresses Yeats' ties to an ancient Irish past ("labour by the cromlech") and allegiance to the time-fixing ("Master of the still stars and the flaming door").

Reports of encounters with the Comte, while giving wildly varying descriptions of his appearance, often make note of his ability to stop time by drawing energy out of explosions or conflagration.

If *The Valley of the Black Pig* is Yeats' pledge of fealty to the Comte, what is the battle described in the first lines, and does it pertain to the Black Pig's Dyke of his homeland? Perhaps only a spirit accompanied by the scent of mint leaves (the "Instructors" that Yeats and his wife Georgie began contacting by séance in 1917) could say for sure, or perhaps his Instructors only led him away from the First and Last Man. Or perhaps the Comte was done with him long before the great poet tried to recapture that contact with a larger, cosmic pattern.

Perhaps those scars upon the Irish soil are monuments to a war long forgotten, a battle to reshape reality led by a man who could freeze the stars in the sky. Perhaps they are runes upon the realm, carved with glacial patience to prepare the ground for a war yet to come. Or perhaps the poem's vision extends outside our linear time, seeing the conflict that surges and stills over and over, as the universe is born and dies, cycling and struggling forever.

"Once a symbolism has possessed the imagination of large numbers of men," Yeats wrote in the poem's notes, "it becomes, as I believe, an embodiment of disembodied powers, and repeats itself in dreams and visions, age after age."

Perhaps.

The answer
has been

right

in

front

of

you

this entire
time.

THE VALLEY OF THE BLACK PIG W. B. YEATS

*The dews drop slowly and dreams gather:
unknown spears
Suddenly hurtle before my dream-awakened eyes,
And then the clash of fallen horsemen and
the cries
Of unknown perishing armies beat about my ears.
We who still labour by the cromlech on the shore,
The grey cairn on the hill, when day sinks drowned
in dew,
Being weary of the world's empires, bow down
to you
Master of the still stars and of the flaming door.*

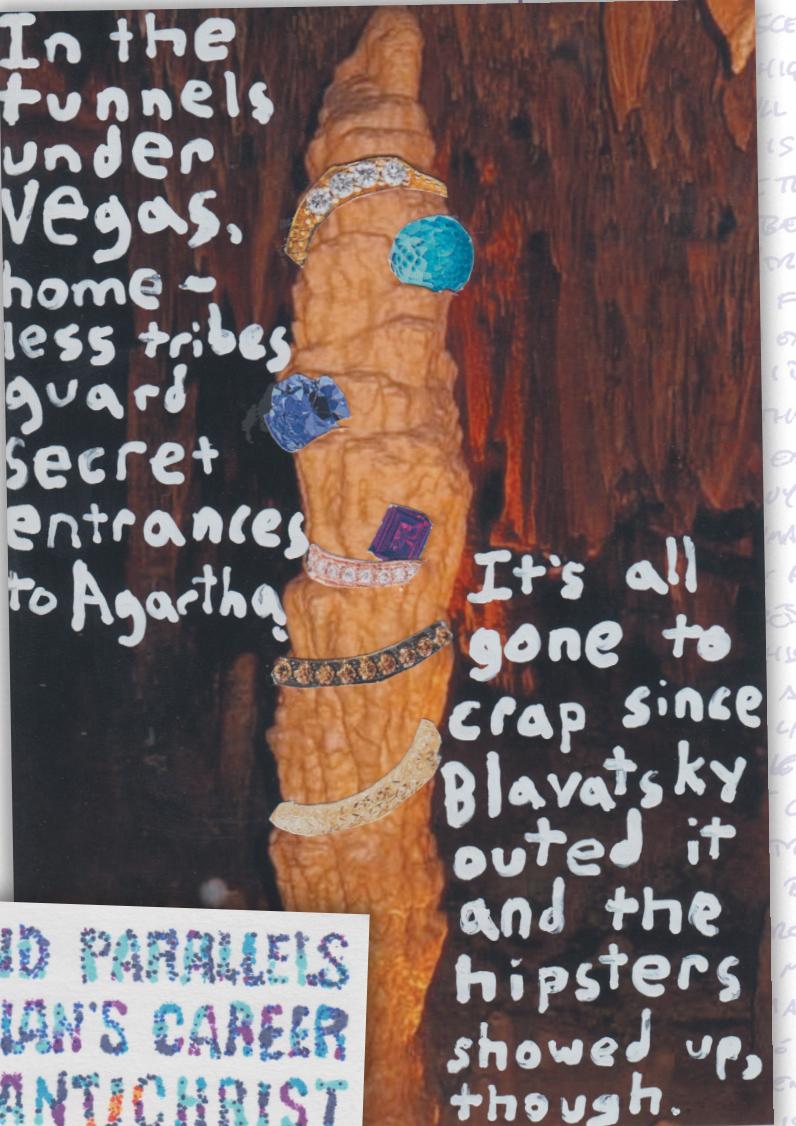
VIDEOMANCY

TiVo and Netflix have delivered a one-two punch from which this school of magick may not recover, for Videomancy is devoted to the old model of TV watching. The videomancer charges her batteries by watching a new episode of her show — each such adept has one program that serves as Bible, Ouija board, lover, confidant, and financial advisor. Missing any broadcast episode of it is taboo. The

proliferation of cable channels showing programs in syndication has simultaneously made it easier to get minor rerun charges, while raising the risk of taboo. Videomancers have powers over AV recordings, messages, sounds, vision, and stupidity. Their domain is the shared culture of the lowest common denominator.

VODOU

A lot of people believe that if vodou was effective, white people would have found a way to steal it by now. Indeed, the book *The Serpent and the Rainbow* strongly suggests this has already happened. Much of the religion's practices provide guidelines for following several of the oldest and strongest archetypes. Proceed with caution.



IT'S NOT HARD TO FIND PARALLELS
BETWEEN ANY POLITICIAN'S CAREER
AND THE BIBLE'S ANTICHRIST
NARRATIVE. IF YOU CRACK THE CODE,
THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS ISN'T A
PROPHECY, IT'S A PLAYBOOK FOR
AMASSING SECULAR POWER.

W IS FOR WAMPUS CAT

WARRIOR, THE

This archetype is devoted to extermination. It could be the extermination of a people, of a particular nation's army, or of an idea, but whatever it is, the Warrior gives no quarter. There

are no extenuating circumstances, no ambiguity. You're with, or against. Warriors inspire those who are with them, and the most powerful of them are nigh-invulnerable to those who are against.

See "The Warrior" on page 120 of Book One: Play.

WHEEZEHOUNDS (UNNATURAL ENTITY)

Methods exist to twist a human into a quasi-human creature somewhere between man and monster. They're thankfully rare, but the variety called the wheezehound is less rare than one might wish.

A wheezehound is an ex-human that can smell the arcane in the same way a dog can catch a person's scent. It doesn't matter if the magick comes from spells or artifacts. If it's sorcerous, the wheezehound can smell it. Like tracking dogs, wheezehounds must smell the person or object but they can also catch the scent of weirdness in the wind if it's strong enough. The amount or type of magick cannot be determined, only the presence and/or direction. If a person has either used magick or held an artifact within the past hour, a wheezehound can still smell it on them. Avatars are exempt from wheezehound tracking.

Incidentally, they breathe just fine. The name came from "vis-hound," with "vis" being Latin for "force."

Unlike a person's natural scent, washing or running through a creek does not throw the wheezehound off the trail. The only way to get rid of a wheezehound is to either stay ahead of it for an hour and not use magick, or confuse it with a mess of other enchantment, requiring a Wheezetrack check on the wheezehound's part to be able to discern your scent from others. For example, running through a room where several adepts have just cast spells causes that check.

Most wheezehounds are trained to track only, but some are ready to fight, especially if cornered. They cannot use weapons but are usually stronger than the average human.

The ritual to make one of these is rare and highly guarded, and it involves taking the soul out of the human and putting it in an actual hound for at least two days. A minor magical artifact is then surgically implanted within the human's body, usually in the chest cavity. Then the soul is transferred back, and the human is pumped full of painkillers and anti-rejection drugs to allow them to live with whatever artifact is hanging out next to their lungs.

The pain and multiple soul moving makes wheezehounds barely as intelligent as the dog they're named after. The time inside the dog forces the soul to become canine, which then slowly changes the human body to have more doggy features. Most keep wheezehounds covered in clothes and even masks. Seeing a wheezehound uncovered for the first time induces an Unnatural (2-3) stress check.

WHEEZEHOUND (SIGNIFICANT UNNATURAL ENTITY)

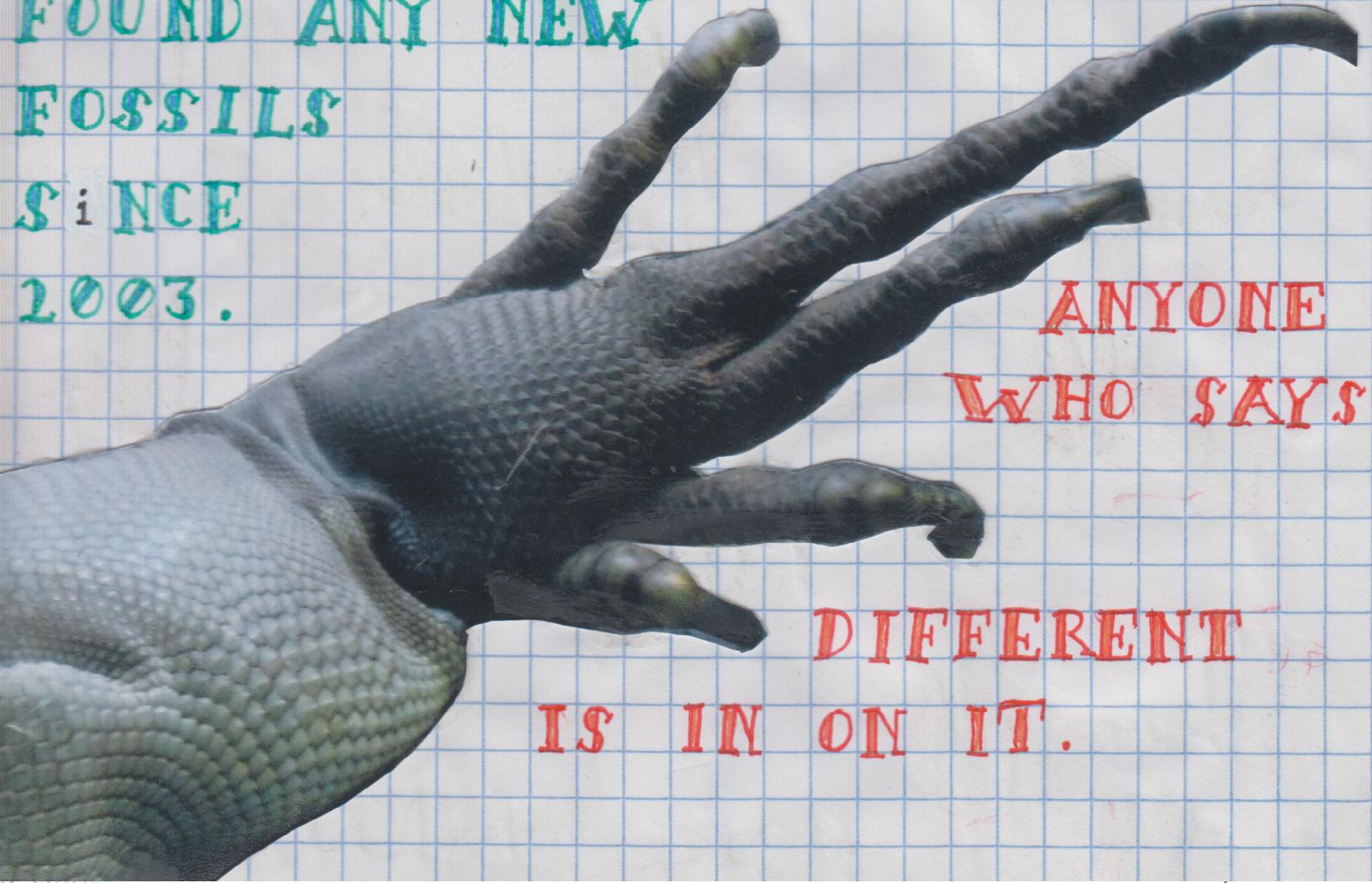
Wound Threshold: 3d10+30.

Wheezetrack 3d10+40%: Wheezehounds roll this to follow the trails and traces of magick.

Some Pathetic Remnant of Human Identity 1d10+10%: Make it different for each wheezehound. Try to top yourself with how sad and affecting it is when the PCs find out. This is also what they roll when they try to communicate something by talking. Failed roll? Only whines and barking. Crit? They sound exactly like a human.

Houndlike 3d10+40%: Substitutes for Notice, Substitutes for Pursuit, Substitutes for Struggle.

PALEONTOLOGISTS HAVE NOT
FOUND ANY NEW
FOSSILS
SINCE
2003.



ANYONE
WHO SAYS
DIFFERENT
IS IN ON IT.

WIKILLUMINATI, THE

Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia that everyone can edit, has become a phenomenal resource for the curious, the damned, and lazy writers the world over. While battles over the exact words on a page never seem to end, eventually things seem to calm down and settle into something fairly stable.

But canny scholars checking the strange corners of Wikipedia found that Dirk Allen's page keeps gaining unfounded accusations of murder and insisting that he never had a daughter. They look up the Comte de Saint-Germain and find that it reverts to the same staid, all-in-the-past recounting no matter how many people try to insist that the Comte is alive and well and fighting Merlin and the New World Order. They try to remove or expand upon the GNOMON page that simply says, "GNOMON is a United States government program that does not exist."

The people who notice these anomalies, and whose musings about them are ruthlessly scythed from the comments, have taken to meeting in real space to theorize about the "Wikilluminati" doing this. The idea that the reflection of a thing can be used to change the thing itself is an old, strong, and common mystical practice. If Wikipedia is a hoodoo doll of human consensus... who are the Wikilluminati pushing the pins into it?

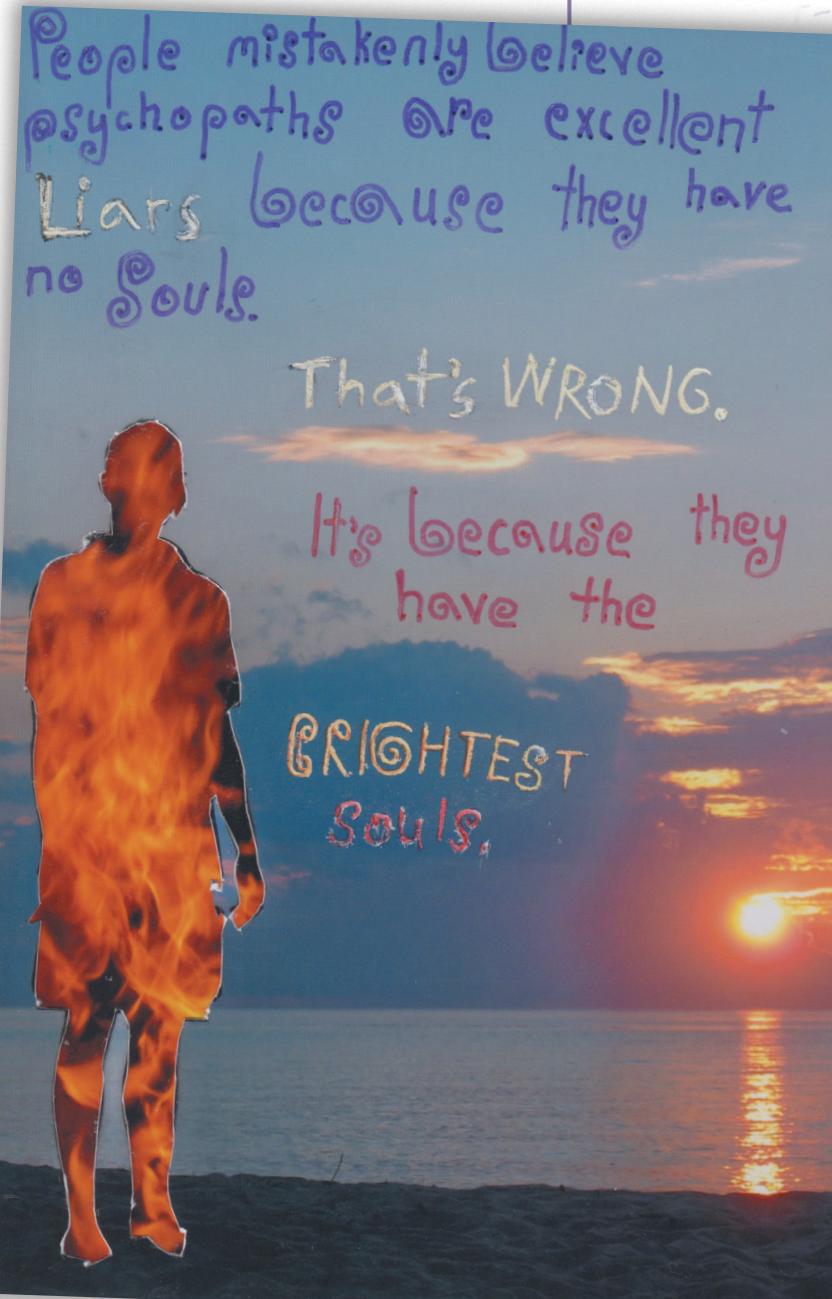
X IS FOR XIPETOTEC

XANTHAN GUM

If you're the kind of person who reads ingredient lists, you've probably seen this listed on your container of salad dressing or ice cream. It's a remarkably efficient thickener, and contributes to emulsification though it is not, itself, an emulsifier. It's produced by introducing a variant strain of the *X. campestris* bacteria to whey or other lactose-rich food production byproducts.

It can also trap astral parasites.

They don't get flypapered to plain ol' xanthan gum, which you can buy for about a buck an ounce as of this writing. But if you add at least five ounces of it to an equal quantity of water and boil it, slowly stirring in sea salt from the Atlantic, the resulting mixture can ensnare astral parasites. You can dry your own if you live on the coast, it doesn't take much. While you stir in the salt, bathe the whole thing in the light of a TV tuned to a dead channel. If you did it right, the gloppy mess pulls in any nearby astral parasite. Even if it's attached to a person, it gets pulled off and — if you watch the boiling mass carefully — momentarily turned into a tangible creature. For less than a second the boiling goo, moving with Brownian motion, turns into a mass of beaks and tentacles and then collapses back into fluid. That's how you know it worked!



Y IS FOR YELLOW WALLPAPER

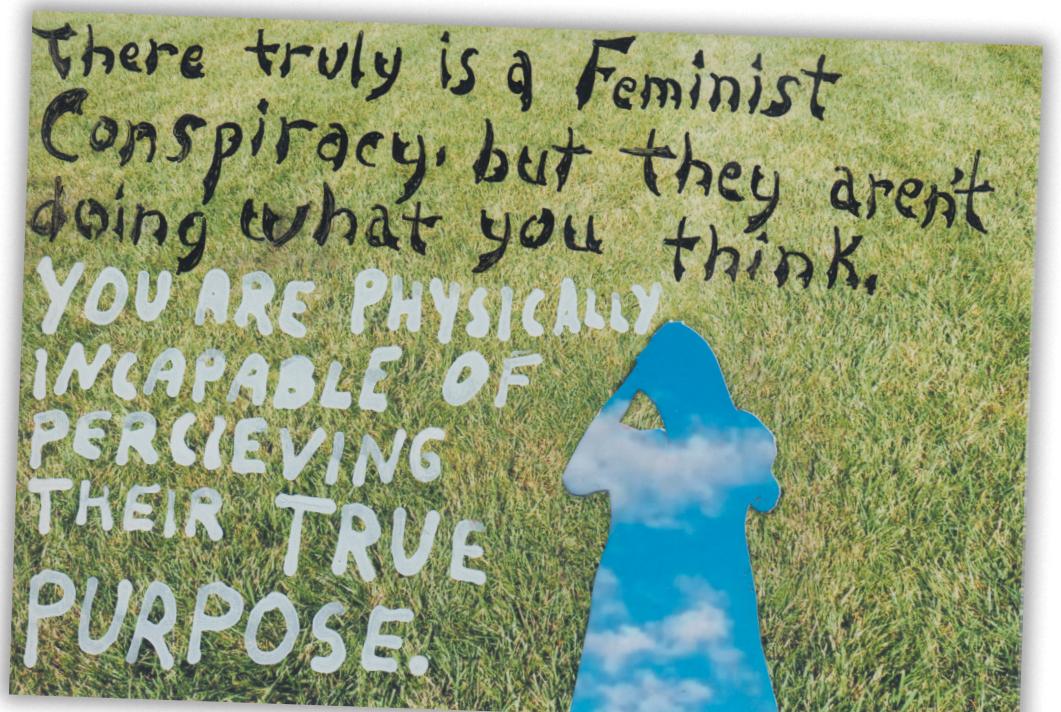
YARN MATH

The mathematics of the western European world is actually Arabic, but it all came from a tradition of jotting down the numbers. A tribe in the Yucatán peninsula, however, developed an entirely different mathematical system back in what was, by the Christian calendar, the 1st century AD. It started with keeping track of quantities by tying knots in string, developed into multiplication by hanging strings in parallel, then into a form of category theory by grouping knots closely or farther apart, then became a more diversified and nuanced category theory by using different types of knots. When they started using dyes to differentiate between strands, and incorporated weaving into their theoretical math, their thought-lexicon became sophisticated indeed. They were thinking in colors, dimensions, and flavors of space that eventually paralleled modern string theory.

The way their coincidental mathematical theories lined up with the hidden dimensions of the world did the tribespeople no good whatsoever when the Maya empire decided to incorporate them by force. The original yarn math experts mostly got killed, though their children retained a more basic understanding of their numerical heritage even as they were forced to slave away for their Mayan masters. It was through them that yarn math got taught to a family of Mayan middle-managers. (Remember, in that era, management involved a lot more whipping and not as many performance reviews.) Some of them, in time, forgot the theory while refining and codifying the paranormal aspects of yarn math.

Because, yes, of course the way you see something as fundamental as the quantity of things and how they interact with other amounts has paranormal ramifications. What the yarn math was able to do was create temporary duplicates or loops of an object, at the price of having that object eventually disappear entirely. So if you had, for example, a henequen leaf, you could mathematically describe it with a complex web of knotted yarn and, when you looked back at it, there'd be two henequen leaves, the original and the folded duplicate. The duration of the doubling depends on the elaborateness of the web, but when it ends, both leaves vanish. The old-time Mayan yarn math sorcerers could make something last as long as a day and a half, and they duplicated objects as large as a modern-day bowling ball before the Mayan empire failed. Indeed, that collapse was due in very small part to economic speculation unknowingly based on property estimates artificially inflated by yarn math object cloning.

Yarn math has been lost for at least 200 years, but examples of highly sophisticated and powerful occult webs are on display in museums throughout Mexico, Central America, and the US southwest, mistakenly labeled as decorative artwork.



Z IS FOR ZEN

ZERO HERON, THE (UNNATURAL ENTITY)

The infamous Zero Mechanism was a Mechanomancy high point in the 18th century as well as a kind of a high point in mystic spite. The clockworker who built the Zero Mechanism was looking for a way to power his devices without all the tedious winding or hazardous explosions. (Much of clockworking's hidden history has involved the quest for the butter zone between these extremes.) As he neared the end of his life, bitter, nigh-amnesiac, and greatly pained by a suppurating anal fistula, he decided that his works would become cannibals. Rather than powering themselves at the pleasure of some human being, or risking explosion by utilizing free energy — something he never really mastered to his satisfaction — he built a device that could drain the magick out of artifacts, including other clockworks, and use them to power not only itself, but also a middling-sized clockwork to which it was attached.

The clockwork currently housing the Zero Mechanism is shaped like a large blue heron. It's known as the Zero Heron and was constructed by someone almost as bitter and petty as the Zero Mechanism's original creator. The heron's builder was actually the illegitimate great-granddaughter of the Zero Mechanism engineer! And she learned Mechanomancy from someone who learned it from the protégé who was cuckolding the Zero Mechanism maker! Really, it's no wonder he was such a misanthrope, if you think about it.

Anyhow, the Zero Heron: it's pretty much self-directed and it can sniff out artifacts and other clockworks with great perspicacity and persistence. When it senses one, it swoops down, unfolds like a really cool Transformer toy only covered with slate blue feathers made of silk, and engulfs the target clockwork or artifact or part thereof. It requires three combat rounds of uninterrupted fiddling to incorporate and digest a mystic object. Once it's done that, it powers up from the device. If it consumes a major artifact, it gets enough power for a hundred years of continuous operation. It ate one of those in 1892, in fact. A significant artifact gives it a year of energy, and a minor powers it for a week.

The woman who made the Zero Heron died in 1841, and it has been flying around seeking and devouring artifacts and clockworks ever since.

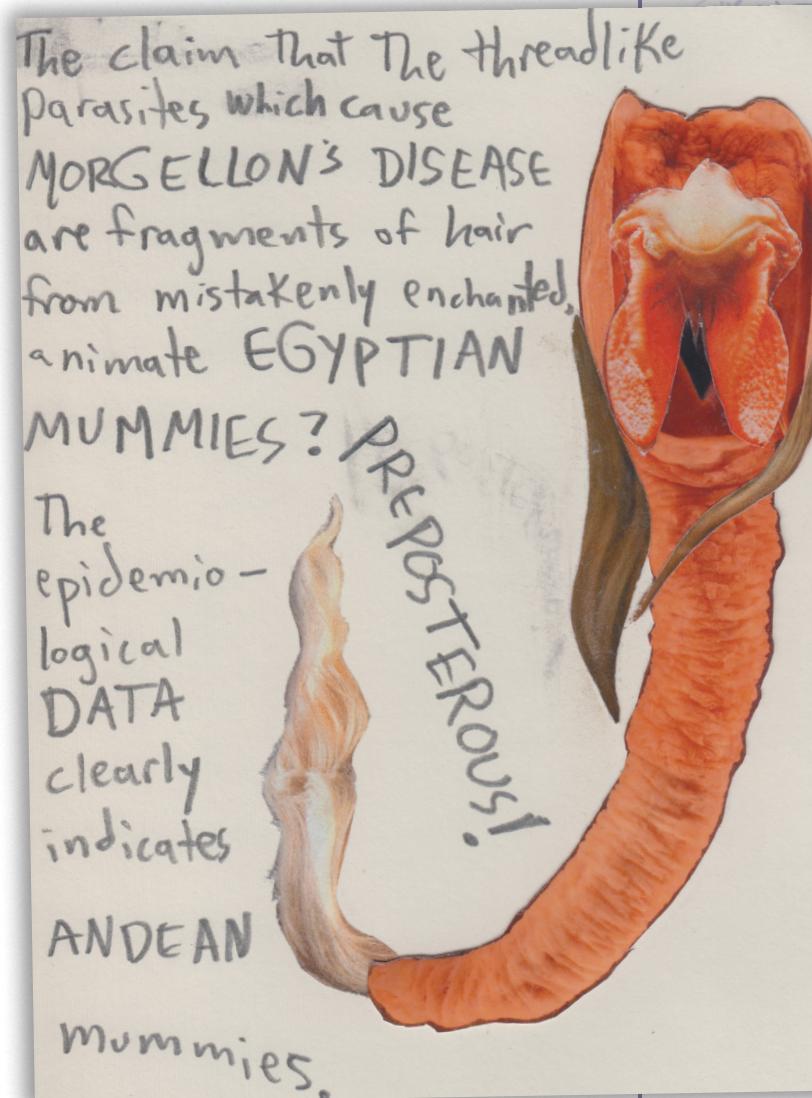
THE ZERO HERON (SIGNIFICANT UNNATURAL ENTITY)

Wound Threshold: 120.

Disassemble 50%*: The heron's Disassemble is its ability to rip and tear people, machines, and other impediments into their component parts. It attacks at swoop-in range and does damage like a handgun. It can flip-flop its rolls.

As soon as the Zero Heron succeeds at a Disassemble roll against any clockwork entity, that target is paralyzed until the heron is driven off or destroyed.

Once it takes 120 or more wounds, the Zero Heron explodes and does 3d10 damage to everyone within three yards, and 2d10 to everyone between three and fifty yards away (* obsession identity).



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