

# SIGNS OF SORCERY Ψ



A Sourcebook for  
Mage: The Awakening  
Second Edition

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Dave Brookshaw, Meghan Fitzgerald, Danielle Lauzon, Lauren Roy,  
Malcolm Sheppard, John Snead, Travis Stout, Stew Wilson

## Signs of Sorcery Credits

**Writers:** Dave Brookshaw, Meghan Fitzgerald, Danielle Lauzon, Lauren Roy, Malcolm Sheppard, John Snead, Travis Stout, Stew Wilson

**Developer:** Dave Brookshaw

**Editor:** Carol Darnell

**Artists:** Michael Gaydos, Luis Sanz, Alex Sheikman

**Layout & Design:** Tiara Lynn Agresta

**Layout Production Assistant:** Tracy VanTilburg

**Art Director:** Michael Chaney

**Creative Director:** Richard Thomas

**Development Producers:** Rose Bailey and Dixie Cochran

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Theme: Hidden Complexities</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>Active Mage Sight</b>	<b>26</b>	Demons	41
<b>Mood: Close to Home</b>	<b>12</b>	<i>Merit: Supernal Taxonomy (••)</i>	27	Beasts	42
<b>Contents</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>Focused Mage Sight</b>	<b>27</b>	Shades	43
<b>Advanced</b>		Arcana	27	<i>Merit: Supernal Watcher (••or ••••)</i>	43
<b>Supernal Cosmology</b>	<b>13</b>	Tools	27		
<b>Higher Powers</b>	<b>14</b>	Teamwork	27		
<b>The Exarchs</b>	<b>14</b>	Time	27		
<i>The Iron Seals</i>	14	<b>Spells</b>	<b>28</b>		
<b>The Defeated and Defiant</b>	<b>15</b>	Camera Obscura ( <i>Prime •••</i> )	28		
<b>Lexicon</b>	<b>16</b>	Light Under a Bushel ( <i>Prime ••</i> )	28		
		Path to Jerusalem ( <i>Prime ••</i> )	28		
		Shared Sight ( <i>Prime •</i> )	28		
		Supernal Translation ( <i>Mind •••, Prime •••</i> )	28		
<b>Chapter One:</b>		<b>Building a Mystery: Expanded</b>	<b>29</b>		
<b>The Supernal Worlds</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>Opacity</b>	<b>29</b>		
		Basic Opacity	29		
<b>Visions of Truth</b>	<b>20</b>	Modifying Opacity	30		
<b>Arcadia:</b>		Example Mysteries: Opacity	30		
<b>Supernal World of the Acanthus</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>Surface Information</b>	<b>31</b>		
<i>Other Arcana in Arcadia</i>	21	Arcanum Purview	31		
<b>Pandemonium:</b>		Resonance	31		
<b>Supernal World of the Mastigos</b>	<b>21</b>	Age	31		
<i>Other Arcana in Pandemonium</i>	22	Power Level	31		
<b>Stygia:</b>		Example Mysteries: Surface Information	32		
<b>Supernal World of the Moros</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>Deep Information</b>	<b>32</b>		
<i>Other Arcana in Stygia</i>	22	Distributing Deep Information	32		
<b>Aether:</b>		Examples of Deep Information	32		
<b>Supernal World of the Obrimos</b>	<b>23</b>	Example Mysteries: Deep Information	33		
<i>Other Arcana in the Aether</i>	23	<b>Supernal Ecologies</b>	<b>34</b>		
<b>Primal Wild:</b>		<b>Supernal Environments: Aedes</b>	<b>34</b>		
<b>Supernal World of the Thyrsus</b>	<b>24</b>	Origins	34		
<i>Other Arcana in the Primal Wild</i>	25	Nature	34		
<b>Mage Sight</b>	<b>25</b>	Systems	35		
<b>Peripheral Mage Sight</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>Gifts of the Supernal: Boons</b>	<b>39</b>		
<i>Merit: Keen Periphery (••)</i>	26	Systems	39		
<i>Merit: Piercing Glance (••or ••••)</i>	26	Angels	39		
<b>High Speech</b>	<b>26</b>	Fae	40		
<i>Merit: Second-Person High Speech (•••)</i>	26				
<i>Merit: Fluent High Speech (•••)</i>	26				
<i>Merit: Hidden High Speech (•)</i>	26				
<i>Merit: High Speech Perception (••)</i>	26				
				<b>Chapter Two:</b>	
				<b>The Mage's Tools</b>	<b>46</b>
				<b>Correspondence and Symbols</b>	<b>46</b>
				<b>Path Tools</b>	<b>46</b>
				<b>Ars Novum</b>	<b>48</b>
				<b>Obligation</b>	<b>48</b>
				Laws of Obligation	48
				The Law of Significance	48
				The Law of Transaction	49
				<b>Example Vows</b>	<b>49</b>
				Abstinence	49
				Assumption	49
				Chance	49
				Honesty	50
				Identity	50
				Indulgence	50
				Pacifism	50
				Poverty	50
				Silence	51
				<b>Storytelling Vows</b>	<b>51</b>
				<b>Dedication</b>	<b>51</b>
				<b>Dedicated Tools</b>	<b>51</b>
				Signature Nimbus	52
				Soul Stones	52
				<b>Yantras</b>	<b>52</b>
				<b>Expanded Yantras</b>	<b>52</b>
				Mudras	52
				Patron Tools	52
				<b>New Yantras</b>	<b>53</b>
				Basilisk	53
				Cleansing	53
				Investiture	53
				<b>Oaths</b>	<b>53</b>

Situation	54	Primary Subject (Prime ●●●)	72	Daimonomikon (● to ●●●●)	87
<b>Storytelling Yantras</b>	<b>54</b>	Steal Mana (Prime ●●●)	72	Legacy Pedagogue (●)	87
<b>Ritual Magic</b>	<b>55</b>	Forced Sympathy (Space ●●●)	73	<b>Fingerprints</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Coordination</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>Alternate Relinquishments</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>Soul Stones</b>	<b>88</b>
Ritual Focus (Mind ●●)	55	Sacrificial Relinquishment (Death ●●)	73	Drawing the False Nimbus	88
Nimbus Imprints	55	Broken Relinquishment (Mind ●●●)	73	Soul Stones as Yantras	88
Exhaustion	56	Reaping Relinquishment (Death ●●●)	73	Annulities	89
Interruption	56	<b>The Crafter's Role</b>	<b>73</b>	Souls of the Rapt	89
<b>Conditions</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>Reputation</b>	<b>73</b>	The Soul Trade	89
<b>Merits</b>	<b>57</b>	The Crafter's Mark	74	<b>New Spells</b>	<b>90</b>
Broad Dedication (●)	57	Reveal Marks (Prime ●●●+ Time ●●)	74	Soul Grafting (Death ●●●●+ Prime ●●●)	90
Inheritance (●●)	57	<b>Item Trade</b>	<b>74</b>	Soul Windows (Mind ●●)	90
Profligate Dedication (●●)	57	<b>Crafters Among the Orders</b>	<b>74</b>	Goetic Evocation (Mind ●●●)	90
<b>Materials of the Craft</b>	<b>60</b>	Adamantine Arrow	75	Transfer Soul Stone (Prime ●●●)	91
<b>Perfected Metallurgy</b>	<b>60</b>	Guardians of the Veil	75	<b>New Merits</b>	<b>91</b>
Hone the Perfected Form (Matter ●●●)	61	Mysterium	75	Astral Intruder (●●●)	91
<b>Alloys</b>	<b>62</b>	Silver Ladder	75	Dominant Soul (●to ●●●●)	91
Forge Thaumium (Matter ●●●)	62	Free Council	76	Echo Chamber (●●●)	91
Forge Sophis (Matter ●●●)	62	Seers of the Throne	76	Epiphany Stone (●●●)	91
Forge Dumanium (Matter ●●●)	62	<b>Magic Items and Sleepers</b>	<b>76</b>	Potent Soul (●●)	91
Amalgams	62	<b>New Merits</b>	<b>76</b>	Soul Dealer (●to ●●●●)	91
<b>Other Perfected Materials</b>	<b>63</b>	Enriched Item (●●or ●●●)	76	Soul Stone (●or ●●)	92
<b>Living Materials</b>	<b>63</b>	Imbued Ally (●+, Special)	76	Stalwart Soul (●or ●●)	92
<b>The Enhanced and Enchanted</b>	<b>64</b>	Mana Battery (●+)	77	<b>The Nimbus</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>Spell Caster's Arsenal</b>	<b>64</b>	Perfected Item (●●)	77	Lasting Impressions	92
Death Touched Item (Death ●●)	64	<b>Chapter Four:</b>		<b>New Spells</b>	<b>93</b>
The Right Tool (Fate ●●)	64	<b>The Wealth of Knowledge</b>	<b>81</b>	Supernal Signature (Prime ●)	93
Perpetual Motion (Forces ●●)	65	<b>Rotecraft</b>	<b>81</b>	Sustain Nimbus (Prime ●●+ Time ●)	93
Data Hog (Forces ●●)	65	<b>Master</b>	<b>81</b>	Nimbus Forgery (Prime ●●)	94
Contact High (Life ●●)	65	Modus Operandi	81	Narcissus' Mirror (Mind ●●)	94
Endless Bounty (Matter ●●●)	66	<b>Apprentice</b>	<b>81</b>	Nimbus Tuning (Prime ●)	94
Give Me That (Mind ●●)	66	Modum Mutationis	82	Unnaming (Space ●●●)	94
Optimal Container (Space ●●)	66	Altering Rotes	82	<b>New Merits</b>	<b>95</b>
Spiritual Tool (Spirit ●●)	66	<b>Warped Rotes</b>	<b>82</b>	Imposing Nimbus (●●)	95
The Nature of Enhancements	66	<b>Grimoires</b>	<b>83</b>	Persistent Nimbus (●)	95
<b>The Magical</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>Media and Technology</b>	<b>83</b>	Shadow Self (●●)	95
<b>The Nature of Imbuements</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>Stratified Secrets</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>Order Archives</b>	<b>95</b>
Imbuing Others	68	Imbued Grimoires	84	<b>Requisitioning</b>	<b>95</b>
Unliving Vessel (Death ●●●+ Prime ●●)	69	Palimpsests	84	Determining Availability	96
Rapid Access Memory		<b>New Spells</b>	<b>84</b>	Caucus Assets	97
(Forces ●●●+ Prime ●●)	69	Fracture Grimoire (Prime ●●)	84	<b>New Merit</b>	<b>97</b>
Living Vessel (Life ●●●+ Prime ●●)	69	Scribe Palimpsest (Prime ●●)	84	Order Archive (●to ●●●)	97
Imbue Room (Prime ●●●+ Space ●●)	69	<b>Anima Mentis</b>	<b>84</b>		
Spirit Vessel (Prime ●●●+ Spirit ●●)	69	Vital Knowledge	85	<b>Chapter Five:</b>	
Limited Use Items	69	Knowledge Invisible	85	<b>The Manifest Supernal</b>	<b>100</b>
Energize Object (Forces ●●●+ Prime ●●)	69	Indoctrination	85	<b>Artifacts</b>	<b>100</b>
Spell Potion (Matter ●●●+ Prime ●●)	70	<b>New Spells</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>Astras: Panoplies of the Gods</b>	<b>101</b>
Stored Spell (Prime ●●)	70	Astral Grimoire (Mind ●●●+ Prime ●)	85	Sample Astra: The True Hand of Glory	102
<b>Mana Batteries</b>	<b>70</b>	Living Grimoire (Life ●●●●+ Prime ●●●)	85	<b>Eidoforms: Ideal Objects</b>	<b>102</b>
Mana Battery (Prime ●●)	70	Haunted Grimoire (Spirit ●●●●+ Prime ●)	86	Plastic Eidoforms	103
<b>Letting Go: Relinquishing</b>		<b>Daimonomika</b>	<b>87</b>	Sample Plastic Eidoform: English Literature	103
<b>Spell Control</b>	<b>70</b>	Scribe Daimonomikon (Death, Fate, Mind, or Spirit ●●●●+ Prime ●; or Prime ●●●)	87	(9-Dot Artifact)	103
Primal Transfer (Prime ●●●)	71	<b>New Merits</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>Sariras: Relics of Ascension</b>	<b>103</b>
Time Limit (Time ●●●+ Prime ●●)	71	Cognoscente (●●)	87	Sample Sarira: The King Who Is a Throne	104
<b>Left-Handed Crafting</b>	<b>71</b>			(10-dot Sarira)	104
<b>Cursed Items</b>	<b>71</b>			<b>Places of Power</b>	<b>105</b>
Steal Life Force (Life ●●)	72				

<b>Symbolic Places</b>	<b>105</b>	<i>Powers of the Ananke</i>	117	<i>Detection</i>	131
<b>Manteions</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>At the Threshold: The Aeons</b>	<b>117</b>	<i>The Adyton</i>	132
<i>Sample Manteion: Hisarlik, the Ruins of Troy</i>	106	<i>Eleven Mighty Ones</i>	118	<i>Entering the Adyton</i>	132
<b>Hallows</b>	<b>106</b>	<i>The Power of the Aeons</i>	118	<b>Awakening's End</b>	<b>132</b>
<i>Every Hallow Has a Story</i>	106	<b>In the Interstices: Secret Beings</b>	<b>119</b>	<i>Failure to Awaken</i>	132
<i>Hallow Features</i>	107	<i>Cryptids</i>	119	<i>Signing the Watchtower</i>	133
<i>Nigissu</i>	107	<i>Sample Cryptid: Cat Sith</i>	119	<i>Aftershocks</i>	133
<i>Schisms</i>	107	<i>Root Peoples</i>	119	<b>The Newly Awakened Mage Template</b>	<b>133</b>
<i>Sample Hallow: House of the Dolorous Twins (Two Four Dot Hallows)</i>	107	<i>Sample Root People: The Rmoahals</i>	120	<b>Awakenings and the Awakened</b>	<b>134</b>
<b>Verges</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>Reign of the Exarchs</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>The Diamond</b>	<b>134</b>
<i>Verge Features</i>	108	<b>Subtle Signs and Direct Commandments</b>	<b>121</b>	<i>Adamantine Arrow</i>	134
<i>Sample Verges: The Church of the Black Angels</i>	110	<b>Those Who Serve</b>	<b>122</b>	<i>Guardians of the Veil</i>	134
<b>Emanations</b>	<b>110</b>	<i>Supernal Entities</i>	122	<i>Mysterium</i>	135
<i>Rogue Watchtowers, the Courts of the Iron Seals and Islands in the Abyss</i>	110	<i>The Willing: Seers and others</i>	122	<i>Silver Ladder</i>	135
<i>Emanation Features</i>	111	<i>The Unwilling: Servitors</i>	123	<b>The Free Council</b>	<b>135</b>
<i>Legacies and Emanations</i>	111	<i>New Servitors: Hive Souls</i>	123	<b>The Seers of the Throne</b>	<b>136</b>
<i>Sample Emanation: Mars, Realm of Forgotten Might (Prime)</i>	111	<i>The Unknowing: Dupes and Thralls</i>	124	<b>Observation and Interference</b>	<b>136</b>
<b>Forgotten Wonders</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>Rewards for Service</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>Metamorphic Awakenings</b>	<b>137</b>
<b>Traces of the Archmasters</b>	<b>112</b>	<i>Miracles</i>	124	<b>Known Metamorphoses</b>	<b>138</b>
<i>Imperial Sorcery</i>	113	<i>Fallen Rewards</i>	124	<i>Restorative</i>	138
<b>Atlantean Works</b>	<b>113</b>	<i>Artifacts</i>	125	<i>Acquisitive</i>	138
<i>Temples and Tombs</i>	113	<i>New Merit: Profane Tool (•)</i>	125	<i>Internal</i>	138
<i>Temple Guardians</i>	114	<b>Chapter Six: Awakening</b>	<b>122</b>	<i>Tyrannic</i>	138
<i>Sample Temple Guardian: The Red Castellan</i>	115	<b>The Mystery of Awakening</b>	<b>128</b>	<i>Successive</i>	139
<b>Living Magic</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>Prospects and the Three Pillars</b>	<b>128</b>	<i>Transportive</i>	139
<b>From the Apex: Ochemata</b>	<b>115</b>	<i>An Inquiring Mind and a Prepared Soul</i>	129	<i>Sympathetic</i>	140
<i>General Traits</i>	115	<i>A Confrontation with the Lie</i>	129	<i>Expressive</i>	140
<i>Ascended Ochemata</i>	116	<i>The Intercession of a Watchtower</i>	130	<i>External</i>	140
<b>Harbingers of Destiny: Ananke</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>Prediction</b>	<b>130</b>	<i>Harrowing and Enraptured</i>	140
		<b>The Lustrum</b>	<b>130</b>	<i>Entangled</i>	140
				<b>Roleplaying and Storytelling Awakenings</b>	<b>141</b>
				<i>Designing the Awakening</i>	141



# LONG DISTANCE

By Lauren Roy

HELLO FROM OHIO! PASSED A  
SIGN FOR THE PAPER AIRPLANE  
MUSEUM ON THE ROAD AND  
THOUGHT OF YOU. HOPE I WILL  
GET HOME TO YOU BEFORE  
THIS ARRIVES  
LOVE, GLEN



The mailbox clanging shut sounds like a judgment, like it read the words he wrote and knows them for the lies they are. He hasn't passed any such sign, first of all, just grabbed the first postcard his hand landed on. He won't beat it home, either; he's got at least another half day of driving ahead of him — in the opposite direction. At least the name is only half a lie. It was his name. Still is, as far as Sam's concerned. It's the name on the bills, on his license, on their marriage certificate. But for going on seven years now, it hasn't fit him at all.

He leaves the too-bright rest area just in time, returning to his car as a busload of road-weary tourists pulls in. He can't help but feel the miles radiating off them, not just in the way they knuckle their backs or breathe in big gulps of non-recycled air, but also in how each one yearns a bit towards home, wherever that might be. He could look with the Sight, if he wanted,

see the blue and red strands radiating out from tired travelers like lines on a map, but then he'd have to see his own as well, the golden one leading back to Sam.

Instead, he switches on the shortwave radio on the passenger seat and sits back, listening. Tessa taped a note to the back of it when she lent it to him; instructions, mostly, and a gentle "I want this back in one piece, Nax." Nax is the name he can't tell Sam. He can't tell him about Tessa, either, or any of this.

Before he can get too far into the guilt spiral, the static dies down and the chimes begin. Two bars of a song he almost recognizes but can never quite place. That's not the important part, anyway. What matters is what follows the tune.

The voice is vaguely feminine, inflectionless, reciting a handful of numbers. Batches of five, repeated twice, then a new set. Nax copies them down dutifully even though they're useless to him in this mundane form. If they're a cipher, he doesn't have the key. What they'd translate to is only a mild curiosity for him; he records them in case anyone back at the Athenaeum might want a look. But underneath that dull, dry voice, hidden within the litany, woven around it, shimmers true meaning. He closes his eyes, and his soul thrums to the tinny sound of High Speech emanating from the shortwave's speaker.

Much as he'd like to simply sit and let it wash over him, the transmissions are short. If he doesn't act now, he'll need to wait another hour before it repeats, and he wants to be well on his way before then. Nax digs the spiral-bound atlas out from under the passenger seat and draws his compass from inside his coat pocket. The needle swings wildly as he utters his spell, grasping at the voice coming from the radio and

riding its waves back to the source. He's been chasing it for three days now, knows he must be close. Last time he looked it was...

It's moved.

"Son of a bitch," he mutters.

The signal's origin is somewhere off to the southwest. More highways, more miles, more time spent away from Sam.

He considers going home. Drive through the night, goose the laws of speed and distance a bit, and he can be back before Sam leaves for work in the morning. He imagines the look of joy on his husband's face, thinks they of how they'll read his postcard together when it arrives in a couple of days.

Nax pinpoints where he is on the map, traces his finger up to the next exit and finds the cloverleaf that'll get him headed back east. He's going to do it; he's made his mind up to go home, and—

The broadcast stops. Static fuzzes in, fills the air.

*I can't lose the thread.* Twelve extra hours is all he needs. Sam will understand. He always does.



"Hey, you're probably in your Tuesday meeting. I wasn't paying attention to the time zones. Sorry I missed you. I just wanted to let you know I'm going to be a couple more days. The audit hit a snag, and they're sending me to one of the other locations to... I can feel your eyes glazing over and you haven't even listened to this yet. Anyway. I'll check in when I get to the hotel tonight, okay? I'm sorry. I love you."

The time zone thing is bullshit. Nax knows exactly what time it is back home and waited until ten minutes after Sam's weekly team meeting had started to make sure he'd miss him at his desk. It's easier than hearing the disappointment in his husband's voice.

The job's another half-lie, of course. He was an auditor, back before he Awakened, and if you squint a little, what he does for the Mysterium is a type of auditing, too. Which means he can sling about the buzzwords well enough to make Sam believe he's still at it, and field the what-do-you-do questions at parties like it's nothing. It's an excuse to be on the road, one that his gas and hotel receipts will bear up to any scrutiny Sam puts to them.

Except Sam wouldn't suspect a thing. Nax loves him for his trust and hates himself a little for taking advantage of it every time.

He drives all day, catching rush hours in two different cities. Breakfast is the sludge the gas station calls coffee. Lunch is a beef stick and a packet of crackers and fake cheese. Dinner is a fast food burger with a side of fries and regret.

Funny, how he always knows exactly where he is, but in all these in-between places he feels like he isn't truly anywhere.

His only companion, every hour on the hour, is the woman's voice, reading off her numbers. She begins to sound lonely to him, or sad, probably both. Or maybe he's projecting.

When he stops for gas, cheap food, or a chance to stretch his legs and walk some feeling back into his numb backside, he double checks his spell. The signal's source is holding steady, and the encouragement that brings — supplemented by enough energy drinks to keep a college dorm awake for a week — means he drives until nearly two in the morning.

For the first time in four days, he leaves the interstate. His GPS leads him to a cornfield, and when he shuts off the car's engine, the only sounds are the rustling of the wind through the stalks and the static of the open station on the shortwave. It's 1:58, and Nax gets out, peering into the corn, hunting for a shape in the dark. Must be a transmitter out there, right?

Two minutes take two years to pass. For a horrible moment, as the clock flips, he's sure he won't hear anything, that he's just barely too

late, and the station has played its last. Then comes the heartbeat of silence, the song, and the compass is out of his pocket before he even registers it, the spell tumbling from his lips. He makes the place within that first row of stalks by the edge of the road and the spot in the middle of the cornfield the same spot, and steps into it.

Her voice falls away as Nax lets the magic fade, the shortwave radio suddenly too far for him to hear. Now it's just him and the corn, and he's casting about for the transmitter. He doesn't need to hear the broadcast to feel the resonance of High Speech all around him. It's here somewhere. It has to be. He's casting about for other minds, but he's the only person around for acres. He's scrabbling for soundwaves, but they're not where they were a moment ago.

It's moved again. God *damn* it.

Nax sinks to his knees in the sandy soil. He gropes for the signal, scrawling runes in the dirt to boost his awareness, humming the bars of that odd little tune as though he can call the voice back to him. But it's gone. The High Speech hidden beneath-within-around the numbers still buzzes against his consciousness, but even that's fading — the echo of magic done. He almost wishes Tessa were here; his familiarity with Time is shaky at best. She'd know what to do.

Instead, he will go back to the car and wait until the clock strikes three, triangulate again, and get back on the road. He doesn't need his Witch friend here to spin out that particular tale.

*I could give up*, he thinks. He's tired, wrung out, half a week of crap food and unfamiliar beds taking their toll. He could get on the road and head toward home, like he'd almost done yesterday. Get there mid-morning if he's conservative with the magic or call Tessa and have her scope out an unlit corner of a rest stop parking lot he can teleport right into, Paradox be damned. Shit, he could step right into his own backyard at this time of night. Tell Sam the car broke down and he caught a ride home from the towing company.

He could do it, but as he stands and brushes off his dirty knees, he checks the time and sees it's just after two-thirty. No matter what he does, he'll be in the car when the next broadcast starts. The need to know surges, and Nax tells himself he'll keep the idea of going home in his pocket, that if the next signal is more than four hours' drive away, he'll let some other sucker solve this one.

Okay, more than six.

By the time he gets back to the car, he's feeling better. Every good journey has its crisis-of-faith moment, right? He needs a good night's sleep and a decent breakfast. This isn't the kind of decision to make in the dead of night. Besides, he's so close to figuring it out. He's sure of it.

It's only later, as he tumbles into bed in a chain motel (fully clothed, dirt in his shoes and strands of corn silk in his hair) that a terrible pun comes to him, something about being surrounded by all those ears and not being able to hear the broadcast. Sam would get a chuckle out of that, he thinks, but he can never tell Sam the truth behind this strange quest of his. Maybe he can turn it into a funny work anecdote. Maybe—

*Shit. I forgot to call home.*



"Sweetie, you look like shit."

"This is why I hate FaceTime, Sam. It was a late night, is all."

"Are they going to let you come home anytime soon?"

"..."

"You're making the Bad News face."

"I fucking hate FaceTime. Have I mentioned that?"

"How much longer?"

"I don't... I don't know yet. Every time I think I'm near the end, something changes. I can't get a handle on it."

"Tell your boss you need a couple of days to step back from it, see it with fresh eyes. Or, hell, I'll tell him."

"If only it were that easy."

"I miss you."

"I miss you, too, babe. I'm trying real hard to get home to you, okay?"

"Okay."

Sam doesn't call him on his lying face, though if he can make out the Bad News one, he can definitely make out the lying one.

Four hours turned into six turned into twelve turned into another three days. Another three stops where the signal fizzled out before Nax could get to its source. He's thought about 'porting straight to it, cut across all those miles in an eyeblink and be done with this, but it feels wrong. Like he's cheating if he does that.

So he takes the long way around, the Sleepers' way, the way that — he fears — reinforces the lie so he can get to some kind of truth. He hopes it will be worth it, in the end.

The images the High Speech conjures in his mind all have to do with liminality and transition. He wonders if that's why he can't shake the feeling of not being anywhere. He's moving, always moving, and even the times he shuts the car off and walks away awhile, he's figuring out where he's heading next.

Sometimes, especially on long, unlit stretches in the dead of night, Nax is certain he truly isn't anywhere — as though the darkness on either side of the road is endless void rather than the absence of light. Other times, he's sure the highways he's cruising along aren't on U.S. soil anymore, maybe not even on Earth. Maybe he's on Mars, in another galaxy, another universe, another dimension. Perhaps, rather than pavement, the road beneath him is composed of abstract concepts: bravery, free will, pride.

Calls home are tense. Rather than fight, Sam's refrained from picking up the last couple of

times. Nax knows he's there, listening to the machine. Checking on your husband when you're a Mastigos is as easy as breathing. Easier than, maybe. But rather than keep scrying and see the hurt on his husband's face, he pretends Sam's simply not home. That's easier, too.



9:32 A.M. I'm almost done here. If I don't have what I need by Friday, I'm coming home no matter what.

2:14 P.M. Babe, are you okay?

8:52 P.M. Are *\*we?\**

The restaurant has four thousand locations across the country, strung along the interstates like the kitschiest pearls. The food's good, though. Coffee's strong, wait staff's friendly. It's disconcerting how alike they all are. It's more than the building's layout; every item in the gift shop is the same, displayed in the same spot no matter if he's in Iowa or New Jersey. He wonders if they're identical down to the inch.

The waiter keeps the coffee coming, brings him a slice of pie free of charge because "you look like you could use a little kindness." Maybe it's because he's alternating between staring at his phone and fiddling with the shortwave radio, its volume turned low. He missed the signal by seconds last night, but it's nearly Friday, and he can't break another promise to Sam. But he's so close.

His phone buzzes, but it's not Sam. It's Tessa. *Fill up early*, she's texted. *Just a feeling*. Like Witches ever "just" have feelings.

Before he goes, the waiter gives him a to-go cup for his coffee. "You remind me of someone," the waiter says. "Guy who used to come around here once a month or so. One of those guys who lived on the road, you know?"

"I have a home. I'm from Maryland."

"You're a long way from Maryland."

Nax grunts.

"Anyway, I put you in his booth because I thought you were him at first. He was nice. Used to say how he never liked being anywhere. Or, wait, no. He liked never being anywhere. There's a difference. He had a radio like yours, except he had a microphone."

That makes Nax peel his eyes from his phone. "Does this guy have a name?" Now that he's paying attention, he sees how the other man's eyes have glazed over, the slight furrow of his brow that says something's eluding him. Nax lightly taps a rhythm on the table, reaches out to see what's going on in the waiter's mind.

It's slippery. Like he's trying to latch onto a thought, but his brain keeps sliding off it. It's not a spell, but neither is it entirely of this world. "I don't remember his name. It's been a long time since I saw him."

"You said he had a circuit. Do you know where he usually went from here?"

The waiter struggles with it. When he finally spits out, "North. Through the mountains," he sags like he's just run a marathon.

Nax leaves him a 20-dollar tip.

Half an hour later, he's tearing along the highway, barely slowing down when the road curves. The broadcast starts, the song he finally recognizes as an older version of his and Sam's wedding song. As the numbers start, the car sputters to a stop. Too late, he remembers Tessa's text. Nax turns on the hazards and guides it to the shoulder, cursing the whole time. When he gets out, he brings the shortwave with him, pops out his compass. Except, he doesn't need either. He can hear the numbers without the radio. Just ahead, coming out of the dark.

The scenery around him is gone. Before, the mountains were dark shapes against a darker sky. Now it's all blackness, except the flashing of the hazards. The light catches a shape on the ground, not a radio, but an antenna, stuck into the dirt at the edge of the road. As Nax comes

closer, he realizes it's not metal, but crystal. He plucks it from the ground, feels the words settle around him. Into him. Nowhere. Everywhere. In-between.

Standing in this no-place, Nax understands at last. The numbers, the Speech, they're echoes of an Ascension. He's not sure whose — not yet — but that's a Mystery for another day. The highway returns as he trudges back to the car, clutching the length of crystal. It's quiet now, the broadcast over. He hears an 18-wheeler approaching, sticks his thumb out.

He's tired of not being anywhere. He wants to go home. He wants to sleep for a week. He wants to see Sam.



"Babe?"

"Where are you calling from this time?"

"Look outside."

"You aren't... Oh my god, you are. I thought you were still two days away!"

"I took a lot of shortcuts. I missed you."

"I missed you, too."

They're on the couch, curled around one another, when the shortwave squawks. Different frequency. Different song. Different voice. But the numbers are there, and woven around them, words in High Speech. Sam frowns. "Bad recording?"

Nax — Glen, now that he's back home — reaches over and switches it off. He only hesitates a moment. The pull will come back again, he knows, and he'll go chasing it. Unlike his Ascended predecessor, Nax likes being somewhere just fine. Especially right here, with Sam.

# INTRODUCTION

*The universe is full of magical things patiently waiting for our wits to grow sharper.*  
— Eden Phillpotts, *A Shadow Passes*

The world is a Lie, but the Awakened have glimpsed Truth. In every Mystery, every supernatural creature, every spell, mages see the signs of sorcery. The Supernal World is everywhere, hidden behind the Fallen Worlds of material reality and ephemeral realm alike. Once Awakened, all a mage must do is call on her Sight and the Supernal is there, revealing the symbols around everything from the most mundane human life to the strangest Mystery. The Awakened know full well almost none of the Mysteries they explore are caused by the Supernal, but their insight blesses them with the tools to examine almost anything. A tree that raises anything buried in front of its roots from the dead is covered in symbols of the Primal Wild and Stygia, but the mage who found it knows it probably wasn't the result of Awakened magic. An Obrimos tracks the shining trail left by ball lightning in the Aether, but knows he's seeing a symptom, not a cause. From their first studies with the Orders, mages learn that their tools are not responsible for everything.

This book is about the exceptions to that rule.

## Theme: Hidden Complexities

As every initiate learns, the Supernal Realm is hidden behind the Abyss; it only manifests when mages use their Sight to see its shallows, or their spells and summoning circles to bring it fully into the Fallen. Each of the five Supernal Worlds is the world-shaped manifestation of a deeper Supernal Realm, each one made of two Arcana. Easy. Logical. Makes sense. You can draw a diagram of it and relax, knowing that the Tellurian is an orderly place.

Except, of course, that Emanations and Verges exist. Mana pools in Hallows. Artifacts have crept into Fallen reality far beyond the numbers explicable by the gifts of summoned entities and the product of archmasters. Like a student entering postgraduate study and learning that his lessons so far have been vastly simplified for his level of understanding, mages quickly realize that the interaction of Supernal and Fallen is not as predictable as their first teachers described.

This book is about the nails that stick up, the things working in defiance of the Orders' theories. The enigmas that draw mages in, tempting them to Obsession and hubris. Some mages specialize in these Mysteries and understand them more than their peers: devoted crafters, mages who explore the depths of their Paths, Curators and Lorehouse Keepers who spend lifetimes cataloging Grimoires and studying Artifacts. Though some things elude even them, they're the professors and doctors to other mages' postgrads.

## Mood: Close to Home

Supernal Mysteries are personal to mages. It's their metaphysical backyard. An Obrimos can accept she doesn't know anything about vampires far more readily than she can face a manifestation of the Aether that doesn't make sense. Not only do the things in this book challenge mages in their area of expertise, but they're the only ones who can confront them. Any Sleeper with an abundance of bravery and a deficit of common sense can hunt ghosts, but only a mage can confront a Stygian Mystery.

# Contents

This **Introduction** sets the scene, discusses the finer details of Supernal cosmology, describes the ruling Exarchs of the Supernal, and defines some of the specialist terms mages have invented for the Mysteries described in this book.

**Chapter One: The Supernal Worlds** covers the five Supernal Worlds, expands on **Mage's** rules for Mage Sight and Supernal Entities, and describes the Mystery of High Speech.

**Chapter Two: The Mage's Tools** expands the Yantras from **Mage** into new uses of time, place sacrament, and tool.

**Chapter Three: The Crafter's Trade** covers the persistent magical effects created by magic within the known Practices; the Perfected metals, Enhanced Items, and Imbued Items; and the social aspects of magical-item creation among the Awakened.

**Chapter Four: The Wealth of Knowledge** is about the vast legacy of past Obsessions a modern member of an Order inherits; rites and advanced rotecraft, Grimoires, soul stones, the Nimbus, and the storehouses of magical resources the Orders hoard.

**Chapter Five: The Manifest Supernal** is about those Supernal Mysteries that do, in defiance of beginning mage's lessons, sit in the Fallen World. Artifacts, Hallows, Verges, Emanation Realms, the creations of archmasters, ruins of the Time Before, living expressions of magic, secret peoples, and the tyrannical reign of the Exarchs.

Finally, **Chapter Six: Awakening** is about just that; the great Mystery all mages have experienced. The lore surrounding Awakenings, how mages might observe and follow an Awakening in progress, attempts to trigger or discourage them, the terrible consequences for one gone wrong, and advice for Awakening existing Sleeper or Sleepwalker characters in play.

## Advanced Supernal Cosmology

Chapter Two of **Mage: The Awakening Second Edition** describes the Fallen and Supernal Worlds as mages regularly encounter them; the material or ephemeral realms of phenomena making up the Fallen World, and the Supernal World of meaning mages see when they look on those phenomena through their Mage Sight. Dedicated students of Supernal Mysteries among the Orders soon find the explanations they learned as Initiates and Apprentices fall short, and the full extent of the Orders' knowledge about the Supernal is both more and less than the version most mages use for convenience. That version is useful for mages in the manner of scientists using Newtonian physics — it's good enough for most day-to-day purposes, but the truth is more convoluted.

Getting a full picture of the Supernal Realm has one major complication: no human mind or soul can experience it without suffering annihilation. The only direct sources the Orders have for the Supernal Realm are the recorded Awakening experiences

of those members who had a Supernal Journey Awakening, and no two are alike. Supernal researchers mix those with prized secondary sources. These include interviews with unusually talkative Supernal entities and the accumulated evidence of over two thousand years' Mysteries. The Orders also cling to the few times archmasters have spoken or written about their ability to enter the Supernal Realm temporarily, foremost among them the *Corpus Mysteriorum*, the foundational text of the Mysterium. The Corpus was penned by an anonymous archmaster in the Middle Ages and — among its rites and reflections on magic — contains a detailed description of cosmological workings lesser mages cannot even perceive. Last, much to the chagrin of the Pentacle, are the Exarchs themselves. The tyrant-symbols of the Lie never leave the Supernal Realm, not even appearing in the Supernal Worlds, but they do send Ochemata, lesser servant entities, and dream-visions to Seer Prelates. A persistent rumor speaks of Emanations linked to the Iron Seals, and sometimes Pentacle mages witness Exarchal miracles or acquire accounts after the fact.

Put all that together, argue about it at Convocations for a few centuries, and the Orders' model of the universe looks like this:

The first thing to realize about the Supernal Realm is that it isn't a Realm at all. It's easy for a beginning mage to think of her power coming from a place like the Shadow or Underworld, but the Supernal isn't really a place. It's a way of looking at the universe. A mage can be lost for years in the Underworld, at the very edge of the Astral, or as far as she can go in the Shadow's unmapped sky, but her Mage Sight will always reveal the Supernal World of her Path, waiting for her behind everything.

Just as it isn't a place, the Supernal isn't an idea or a concept either. Mages are well used to traveling inside ideas thanks to the Astral Realms, and Shadow-born spirits gorge on the essence relating to their concepts. Clearly, the Supernal is something else.

Think of a triangle. A simple polygon, three edges and three vertices. Everyone knows what a triangle is, everyone can point to a triangular object or pattern and recognize it. But within the scope of "a triangle," an infinite number of triangles exist of different sizes and angles. Even then, no perfect triangle exists anywhere in the universe. Every single one will have a flaw, no matter how infinitesimal.

Now extend that to a cat. Or a human being. Or love.

The Supernal is the truth; in the example, it is the true, perfect triangle existing nowhere in Fallen reality, but it acts as the definition for its infinite imperfect reflections. The Fallen World is named for its Abyss-damaged and Lie-clouded state, but it could also be called a World of Phenomena. It is where things exist, while the Supernal is how they are defined. The two are locked together, relying on one another. Mages argue passionately about which takes precedence — change the Supernal, say the Diamond and Seers, and everything defined by the symbol you change must then change in turn. Change the phenomena, say the Free Council, Tremere, and Scelesti, and the definitions must follow.

Mages often speak of one Supernal World and five Supernal Realms defined by Path. Others of five Worlds and one Realm. In truth, there's as many Worlds as mages and only one Realm,

but both can be divided into five parts. The Supernal **Realm** is all the symbols of everything that can exist. Each of the five Paths reveals a large set of those symbols, which are then experienced by a mage looking into the Supernal **World** with her Sight and viewing phenomena they define. It's easy to think of Pandemonium as separate to the Aether, Arcadia, Primal Wild, and Stygia based on the experiences of mages in the Fallen World, but there's absolutely no evidence to suggest that the Supernal Realm is so subdivided, and lots of implication from archmasters and Exarchal sources that it isn't. Those sources instead refer to individual symbolic landscapes classed by barely-understood criteria; *Dhatus*, *Exarchates*, *Cintamani*, and other, rarer terms. The best known, thanks to the *Corpus Mysteriorum* using it, is *Lustrum*, defined in its pages as the translation of a single Supernal symbol into a phenomenon a Fallen being can interact with. Awakened theoreticians describe Lustrums as the reverse of more familiar things like Shadow Names and Yantras – while the Awakened spend great effort putting themselves and their work in Supernal Terms, a Lustrum is the Supernal Realm putting on a mask of being a place, thing, or being. The only ones most mages will ever encounter are their Watchtowers, during their Awakenings. Outside of bizarre Mysteries involving deep Emanation Realms, mages only glimpse other Lustrums in Awakenings gone terribly wrong or in the actions of extremely powerful Supernal Entities.

Upon learning about the Awakened, other supernatural beings often assume mages must want to leave the Fallen for the Supernal, but an educated mage knows that's suicidal. Nothing survives unprotected contact with the Supernal Realm. Entering it is not as difficult as many assume – every Emanation Realm has an Iris to it as its heart. Everyone and everything that has ever gone through, however, vanishes, and in many cases suffers additional effects; memory of the ill-fated voyager becomes subject to Quiescence, or history quietly rearranges so they never existed beyond subtle Mysteries of time. Awakened scholars theorize that travelers into the Supernal conflict with the symbols of themselves, damaging them and erasing themselves from existence in the process. The way that ruins of the Time Before persist despite having impossible histories, and the strange effects suffered by a small minority of mages upon Awakening, point those scholars to a concept the *Corpus* calls *Aponoia*; whether the Supernal creates the Fallen or the other way around, interacting with the raw symbols of creation without a Watchtower's protection alters the Fallen World, irrevocably and often retroactively. Entering the Supernal safely involves somehow becoming a symbol oneself; the definition of Ascension. For a mage seeking to leave the Fallen, no shortcut is safe.

## Higher Powers

The Temenos contains Goetia of every deity imagined by humanity, and of every other primordial concept. The siblings Luna and Helios rule over Earth's Shadow from its sky, and ghosts huddled in the riverside cities of the Underworld whisper of Chthonic Gods. In strange places, gears pierce the skin of

the world watched over by metal “angels,” and long-dead cultists from a vanished desert kingdom return again and again from a Lower Depth, driven to sacrifice to their hungry patrons. The Fallen World has an abundance of gods whose individual power must not be underestimated. To the Orders, however, these beings are worthy of respect, even obedience in extremis, but not worship. The true gods are in the Supernal, but to most mages that isn't a comfort.


## The Exarchs

God-Tyrants of the Lie, hidden chiefs of the Supernal Realm, symbols of human oppression. Whether they're the enemy, the symbol of humanity turned against itself, or the objects of worship and devotion, all three sects collect lore on the Exarchs and watch for their machinations – the better to oppose or serve them. The Seers have the overwhelming advantage in this area of Awakened study, but enough captured or defected Seers have been debriefed by Pentacle mages for basic knowledge of the Exarchs – the Iron Seals' titles, the existence of Prelacies and Ochemata – to be widespread. More dedicated researchers collect individual omens, incident reports, and evidence, chasing the never-ending Mysteries of the Tyrants' plans. Most Diamond Orders restrict access to quantity of Exarchal lore, not quality. A cabal might have genuine need of an intercepted prophecy but asking the Mysterium for all such prophecies leads to a cabal being suspected of Seer loyalties, at least until they prove they can be trusted.

Contrary to many a young Libertine's wish that they turn out to be mythical, the Exarchs' existence is not in dispute, and any reasonably experienced mage has seen some signs of their Supernal reign. As a rule, the Exarchs are neither blatant nor silent. For whatever reason, they prefer to operate in the Fallen World by indirect means – reserving direct communication for favored Seers of the Throne and other supernatural servants – and the missions those immediate slaves carry out reinforce the Lie oppressing everyone else. Most individuals, even those who've made opposing the Tyrants their life's work, are beneath the Exarchs' notice, but when direct intervention does happen, it comes swiftly, without warning, and with apocalyptic brutality. An individual Pentacle mage might be the sworn enemy of a dozen Pylons for decades without Supernal incident, unknowingly cross a line one day that makes a true nuisance of herself, and be murdered by hostile Supernal entities within hours.

## The Iron Seals

Seers of the Throne construct elaborate hagiographies of Exarchs, describing thousands of Ascended masters in a celestial Iron Pyramid of subservience and power, but the true number of the Exarchs is unknowable, if indeed they have what a human mind can comprehend as individual existences at all. Where the Exarchs touch the Fallen World directly – the Oneiroi of Prelates, Exarchate Emanation Realms, the presence of their Ochemata – the Supernal World warps, imprinting with complex High Speech runes visible under Mage Sight. The Seers traditionally render these runes in iron, taking them as the



Exarchs' names and using what small portion can be translated into human speech as informal titles. Many Pentacle mages suspect that the Seals are like Lustrums or Shadow Names, roles the Exarchs take on to communicate with their servants.

The Seers record ten major Iron Seals, one for each Arcanum, and prohibit worship of an eleventh. Each Exarch is a complex Supernal symbol of a form of human oppression and control, open to interpretation, and the Ministries and Pylons often disagree about finer details or list additional Exarchs. Although grouped by Arcana, the Exarchs transcend Path. An Obrimos Seer seeing an Exarchal Mystery of Space would still describe it as the work of the Eye.

- **The Chancellor (Matter):** Queen of numbers and measures, the Chancellor symbolizes the commodification of all material things, even people. Everything has a price. Everyone can be bought. Everything is owned. He is served by the Mammon and Pantehnicon Ministries.
- **The Eye (Space):** Symbol of omniscience and acting from afar, the Eye symbolizes scrutiny by authority and authority through surveillance. She knows your secrets, and he is always, always watching. She is served by the Panopticon and Phemian Ministries.
- **The Father (Prime):** Judgement. Authority. Dogma. The Father symbolizes blind faith and obedience to ironclad rules and commandments in all forms, especially religious, and is one of the most worshipped Exarchs as a result. He is served by the Paternoster and Dolusian Ministries.
- **The General (Forces):** Symbol of control through violence, division by bloodshed, and oppression through the threat of physical force, the General teaches that might makes right, and commands his Seers to stir hatred into action and hurt into retribution, ripping humanity apart. She is served by the Praetorian and Herodian Ministries.
- **The Nemesis (Spirit):** The law of unintended consequences. Calamity from hidden events. Control through secrets. The fear that your life is determined by forces you cannot comprehend. The Nemesis represents not so much the Shadow World as the Gauntlet, keeping humanity ignorant of the monsters their actions breed in the Shadow. He is served by the Orphean Ministry and was served by the recently-destroyed Geryon Ministry.
- **The Prophet (Time):** Great Man of History, the Prophet instills hopelessness in the face of progress, the idea that only a handful of chosen individuals can shape events and everyone else must follow or be crushed. She is served by the Horologian and Kyrian Ministries
- **The Psychopomp (Death):** Symbolizing the fear of death, the Psychopomp is every guardian of every afterlife from Anubis to St Peter; the idea that only an elect may enter heaven, and that flouting the Exarchs' rules on earth

## Other Exarchs

The chief Exarchs of each Arcanum are not the only Iron Seals. The Seers recognize an eleventh major Exarch called the Gate, who symbolizes Paradox and the Abyss, but the other Exarchs are very clear that their servants must never worship him or accept Mystery Commands from her. Nevertheless, worship of the Gate is rife among Left-Handed Seer Legacies and former-Seer Scelesti.

Other Iron Seals encountered by Pentacle mages or recorded in captured Seer libraries include the Monarch, the Rani, the Stranger, the Traveler, the Mother, the Cannibal, the Destroyer, the Tutor, the Judge, the Progenitor, the Surgeon, the Hierophant, and the Predator. It is unknown how many of these are aliases or alternate translations for the major Seals. At least two (the Rani and the Progenitor) are thought to be Ascended Seers of the Throne.

leads to punishment or destruction. He is served by the Rhadamantian Ministry.

- **The Raptor (Life):** Symbolizing the subordination of free will to instinct, the Raptor teaches that humans are mere machines of meat following natural law. He encourages people to think of themselves as "alphas" or couch business dealings as predator and prey, to act on their impulses and resign themselves to being "sheep" preyed on by the strong. She is served by the Sycorian Ministry.
- **The Ruin (Fate):** Symbol of control through hopelessness, the Ruin is the Exarch of entropy, decay, and cynicism. They direct Seers to crush the dreams of Sleepers and make it seem their mistake was dreaming at all. He is served by the Kyrian and Peirasmon Ministries
- **The Unity (Mind):** Symbol of conformity and uniformity, fear of the other, and control through nationalism, xenophobia, and fascism, the Unity promotes impersonal authorities from banks, to corporations, to nation states, and teaches humans to shackle themselves to the will of the crowd. He is served by the Hegemonic and Logothetes Ministries.

## The Defeated and Defiant

The Exarchs aren't the only Supernal gods, but they're by far the most active. Seer legend speaks of a great titanomachy during the Time Before, when the Exarchs-to-be waged war on the Supernal and destroyed or imprisoned most of the gods. Modern mages take the most powerful Bound to be among the

defeated gods, exiled from the Supernal and imprisoned by the victorious Exarchs. Other Supernal gods survive by accepting the Exarchs' rule, or by simply not conflicting with them, which means not contacting the Fallen World or answering the entreaties of desperate mages. Still, Artifacts linked to Supernal gods do find their way into the Fallen World on occasion, and some mages claim to have been contacted by Supernal entities acting as the representatives of still-defiant gods.

Other Supernal actors have more recognizably human origins. Archmasters may enter the Supernal Realm and deal directly with the gods, and their manipulations of other mages can be hard to tell apart from those of native entities.

The main opposition to the Exarchs, though, are the Watchtowers. The Exarchs have commanded their Seers to conquer and control the Watchtowers since the first Exarch cultist developed a Prelacy, without any appreciable success. Doctrinaire Silver Ladder mages (and believers in other Orders) describe the Watchtowers as the creation of Oracles: Ascended mages from the Time Before who chased the Exarchs into the Supernal and built the Watchtowers to guide those who came after out of the Fallen World. If the Oracles still exist, however, they are silent, and no summoned Supernal entity or archmaster has acknowledged their presence in the Supernal Realm. Their existence is a hypothesis based on a noted absence in the Orders' understanding of the universe. According to archaeomancers, mages did not Awaken to Watchtowers in the Time Before, so something changed during the Fall. Only Supernal beings equal or greater to the Exarchs' power could build the Watchtowers, and the Diamond are not so pessimistic about human nature to assume that every mage who Ascended in the Fall joined the enemy. The Oracles, then, are the missing "good Exarchs," the wise Kings of Atlantis who made it possible for humans to Awaken even through their counterparts' Lie.

The Silver Ladder names the five Oracles with symbolic titles, developing elaborate allegorical tales about them as teaching tools for new théarchs. Other Diamond mages don't usually buy into the myth to that extent and state more clearly to their apprentices that the Oracles are a theory. The other Orders reject the myth; the Free Council see the Watchtowers as symbols of human inspiration, no creator necessary other than Fallen civilization, and the Seers assume that the Watchtowers are simply the Exarch's own creation or pre-existing Supernal Realms brought forth in the Fall as counterweights to the Abyss.

The Ladder's names for the Oracles are;

- The Youthful King of Thorns (Acanthus)
- The King of the Burning Voice (Mastigos)
- The Sorrowful King in Gray (Moros)
- The Star-Cloaked King of Thunder (Obrimos)
- The Throneless King of the Heart (Thyrus)

## Lexicon

**Adyton:** The symbolic journey, challenges, and entities encountered by someone undergoing an Awakening. The "narrative" of that Awakening. Many Pentacle mages will observe an Awakening given the chance, but the Orders frown upon actively becoming part of the Adyton.

**Aedes:** A symbol-environment based entirely in one of the Supernal Worlds, only experienced by mages of the correct Path using their Mage Sight. *e.g.* Arcadia's thorns.

**Alethian:** A mage whose focus of obsession is the study of Awakening itself.

**Ananke:** A living spell of Time and Fate, created by an archmaster, that encourages a specific vision of the future to come about by persuasion and alterations to destiny.

**Annullity:** A negative demesne that suppresses the inferior Arcanum associated with its soul stones' Path rather than enhancing the Ruling Arcana.

**Aponoia:** Alteration to the Fallen World caused by interfering with the Supernal Realm, most often accidentally during a metamorphic Awakening.

**Ars Novum:** The principle of substituting modern symbols for Path and Order tools by experimental mages exploring Yantras.

**Astra:** An Artifact tied to a Supernal god as part of its panoply.

**Basilisk:** A form of High Speech runes used as a Yantra to trigger the start of a spell, not the end of one as in more orthodox casting.

**Boon:** A supernatural ability possessed by a Supernal entity above and beyond its Arcana, used on behalf of a summoner who succeeds at the entity's trial.

**Daimonomikon:** A specialized Grimoire that teaches a Legacy instead of rites.

**Defiler:** A mage guilty of damaging another's Awakening via intrusion into the Adyton.

**Eidofrom:** An artifact which draws on the perfect Supernal symbol of its nature rather than cast spells.

**Iron Seal:** The High-Speech name of an Exarch, manifesting as an Aedes in locations under its direct interest.

**Lucid:** The unique state of being found in someone undergoing an Awakening, neither Sleeping nor Awakened.

**Lustrum:** A single symbol of the pure Supernal Realm manifesting as an environment or creature, such as the Watchtower in a mage's Awakening.

**Manteion:** A Fallen World location which is also a Supernal symbol, acting as a Yantra to spells following its legend.

**metamorphic Awakening:** An Awakening in which the new mage returns to a changed Fallen World or is herself changed beyond becoming a mage.

**Ochema:** an avatar-form projection of a higher Supernal being, usually an Exarch, into the Fallen World. Plural *Ochemata*.

**obligation:** a behavioral taboo or oath that a mage upholds for symbolic purposes, serving as a Yantra

**Oracle:** the legendary Supernal beings (often said to be Ascended mages in opposition to the Exarchs) who built, revealed, or transformed into the Watchtowers.

**Palimpsest:** A Grimoire written over the remains of an earlier Grimoire, resulting in twisted, unpredictable rites.

**Perfected Material:** Purified Fallen World substances that reflect the Supernal truths of those substances, used for making Imbued Items and for their own properties. *e.g.* Orichalcum, the Perfected form of gold.

**Pneuma:** The raw, undifferentiated power of the Supernal, counterpart to the Fallen World's Mana.

**Profane Form:** The recurring symbolism behind Exarch-granted Artifacts, thought by Seers to represent the magical tools of the Time Before. Rings, Robes, Scepters, Crowns, and Thrones.

**Prospect:** Someone being tracked by an Order as a possible future Awakening.

**Sarira:** The crystalline, Tass-like substance left behind after a successful Ascension, formed from the vanished mage's Nimbus.

**Tripod:** Also called the *Trimurti*, the "three pillars" of causing an Awakening; a prepared soul, a confrontation with the Lie, and the intercession of a Watchtower.





Cheiron was dead, and his killer left behind a song.

It was a city song, that much was obvious: all traffic noise and buzzing wires, and whoever killed him had managed to hide their signature in that urban susurrus. That meant it was one of us, and that was as good a place to start as any.

I left Hunyadi to tend to the body and set out to run the song to ground. Whoever made it was good at covering their tracks. I nearly lost the tune at St. James, but I picked it up again heading south on Wabash. It led me through the financial district and into back alleys, places that stank of greed and desperation and the choking, crushing pressure to be more. One by one, the false strands fell away, leaving nothing but a shrill, atonal wailing note that made my eardrums ache and my heart seize up. A killing curse, then. Odd — Cheiron was meticulous (Hunyadi said “paranoid”) about keeping himself warded against magical attack. Poured water over the image of Horus and used Four Thieves Vinegar every day.

I kept running. Kept picking at that last note, looking for what it was hiding. I sang till my throat was raw, danced till my bare feet bled on the pavement, beat time on my own bones. Beasts came, drawn by my exertions. Crow watched me from Dumpster’s lip, perched lightly in case Dumpster got hungry for more than the discarded and forgotten. The song twisted like a snake and I thought I’d lose it, maybe have to go crawling to Noaidi and ask her to help me crack it, when all at once like a key turning a lock my perceptions shifted and I knew. That atonal shriek resolved into a frantic, arrhythmic beeping and a synesthetic smell of disinfectant and ozone.

Stillheart. The Stopped Metronome. Nasty little heart attack from the Other Side. That explained the how — Cheiron never had much knack for spirit-wards — but not the why. We had no beef with Stillheart. Hell, as far as I knew, Cheiron didn’t even know it existed, and I couldn’t see Stillheart leaving its cushy spot at St. Joseph’s cardiac ward to kill some random sorcerer.

No, this had all the stink of an inside job. Who did I know who could bind something like Stillheart? It was a depressingly long list. Leaving myself aside as a suspect for the time being, I could think of at least seven, including two Councilors and the Adamant Sage. Not, in other words, people you go around accusing without damn solid evidence.

I turned my feet toward the hospital and started walking. I knew Stillheart’s song now, and that gave me power over him. And whatever asshole killed my friend?

Well, they had a song too.

# CHAPTER ONE

# THE

# SUPERNAL

# WORLDS

*The use of travelling is to regulate imagination by reality,  
and instead of thinking how things may be, to see them as they are.*

– Samuel Johnson

To be Awakened is to see the world with opened eyes, to hear with unstopped ears, to touch the sublime truth behind the Lie. The Wise call it Mage Sight, but that can't do it full justice. A man might put out his own eyes and lose his vision, but the Supernal remains, imprinted on the dark. It is the one universal commonality that binds all the Awakened, no matter their Path, Order, or personal magical style.

It is also an experience unique to every individual mage. Path influences it, but the subtle perceptions of the hidden Truth are as individual as a mage's Nimbus. Two Acanthus seldom see Fate's working in the same way, let alone an Acanthus and an Obrimos, and the libraries of the Mysterium are full to bursting with treatises on Supernal lexicography.

This individuality means it's impossible for mages to learn how to use the Sight from a book or a lecture; a master telling you to listen for strains of discordant music when analyzing a Compelling spell does no good if the Supernal reveals itself to you in the acrid, chemical smells of a laboratory. Like any Mystery, one can only fully comprehend Mage Sight by experiencing it.

## Visions of Truth

Every mage walks her own road to enlightenment, but those roads follow five Paths through five Supernal Worlds. Each Path leaves its mark on the soul differently, and filters truth through its own metaphors. **Mage: The Awakening Second Edition** describes how mages perceive the influences of their Ruling Arcana on the world; here we'll talk about the deeper truths of each Realm, and how mages of each Path might perceive the other eight Arcana.

### Semiotic Arguments

It's worth calling out here that while the experience of using Mage Sight is unique to individual mages, the results are not. Two mages examining the same Mystery, even under wildly different Mage Sights, are perfectly capable of comparing notes on what they've learned; it's only when they start talking about *how* they learned it that the difference becomes apparent.

## Arcadia: Supernal World of the Acanthus

The world is a story, and like any narrative it's made of choices and their consequences. In Arcadia, all that is or might be is spun from the loom of Fate, woven into the tapestry of Time.

Acanthus see the world as an infinite fractal stretching forward and back from the present, a maze of *Thorns* representing decisions deferred or long-since made that pin everyone to their current self. Shining quicksilver cracks, jagged lightning or shimmering trails mark paths not taken or the ripples from future decisions. Their extent depends on the import of the decision at their center, and how far they branch on the range of possibilities; an unavoidable, life-altering event leaves a single, snaking, jagged line, while an apparently insignificant event that has far-reaching consequences splits Arcadia like a bullet through glass, Thorns spreading for-

ward and backward like a lightning strike. Touching the Thorns is painful, (seeing roads not taken always is) but allows glimpses into myriad alternate worlds. Navigating the Thorns is difficult, especially around people and places of great portent who shape the world with their choices, but where the Mastigos see mazes as a trap, a labyrinth of dead ends and false enlightenment, Acanthus know that, no matter how tangled the path, every road through the Thorns leads to the same destination. Every Path leads from or to the eternal, ever-changing now.

Arcadian truth is not restricted to consequence. Where choices bear distinction beyond their before and after, where Fate plays a part, the Mists arise, snaking in wisps from the destined to settle around the moments destiny comes into play, enveloping them with Arcadia's touch and shielding them until the event has passed, when the Mists rend apart with newly-formed Thorns. Whether an Enchanter describes them as quantum foam or the fog of possibility, breathing the Mists allows an Acanthus to become part of that Destiny. The Mists ebb and flow governed by strange tides. On the cusp of momentous events, the fog rolls in, and the Witches know it's time to cast their auguries and shape the future they desire.

## Other Arcana in Arcadia

"And they lived happily ever after," the fairy tales end. But that's a truncated modernization: it used to be "and they lived happily ever after *to the end of their days.*" That's **Death** through the lens of Arcadia — the end of the story, the ultimate destination of everyone's fated path. A natural death is a gradual narrowing of the path, so subtle it's easy to miss, leading to a tomb or a grave. Unexpected, premature deaths are like a trail that suddenly leads off a cliff. Ghosts and other phenomena under Death's purview often seem to be made of chill mist and have torn-off chunks of Arcadian thorn twisted around them in lieu of the traditional chains; they're things frozen in time that have torn themselves away from the end Fate had in store for them.

**Forces** confuses Arcadian sight. Fire, lightning, thunder, and cold signify narrative truths in Arcadia: the wrath of gods, the chill of despair at the hero's lowest moment. Acanthus trying to scrutinize a Mystery of Forces find themselves going in circles, looking for meaning where there might not be any. Especially violent Forces phenomena (raging storms and the like) sometimes throw false positives that momentarily confuse Fate Sight; a mage caught out in a downpour might get a vague sense of love's ending, or of someone's soul hitting rock bottom and beginning its cleansing.

To be alive is to stumble, blindly, through the Mists. Living things grow and change, and who you are today is not who you were yesterday, last week, or last year. **Life**, in the Arcadian view, is the eddies and whorls in the Mists. Living beings are shapes in the fog, constantly churning, sloughing off past and future natures just as their bodies' cells rejuvenate. Spells that manipulate health skewer bits of that Mist, pinning it in place and forcing the rest of the Pattern to revolve around it: cancer changes your fate just as much as it changes your body.

By contrast, **Matter** is inert, unchanging, a tool of Fate rather than a thing of Time. Think of all the stories of objects that

brought their owners weal or woe: all the swords of kings, the cursed diamonds, the nail that lost the shoe that lost the horse. In the Arcadian view, everything that appears in the story must have a purpose in the story, and because all the world's a story, everything has its purpose. That's how Acanthus see Matter: every manipulation of material property is, fundamentally, moving the subject either closer to or farther from its destined purpose.

An Acanthus understands **Mind** as the emotional core of the tale. Fate and Time describe the *what* of the story, but without Mind to provide the emotional content, the whole thing falls flat. Glimpses in the thorns reveal the subject's memories in symbolic terms: a photograph in a cracked frame to symbolize a broken relationship with his father, or cold, drizzly rain on black umbrellas for mourning. Lunargent Thorns shine with images of the subject's deepest desires, making her motivations plain to see or manipulate.

Arcadian logic is based on free will. Fate and Time are the engines that drive reality, and they follow the decisions of the characters, not the plot of the story. **Prime**, then, is the imposition of the authorial voice, setting events in motion and fueling the engines. A story where nothing changes is a dull story, and Acanthus see Prime in every breeze through the Mists, in every shoot of moonsilver thorn that sprouts off in an unexpected direction. Prime dictates the terms of the story as surely as Fate dictates the events; it reveals the truths that drive the tale forward, clears away the obstacles put in place by enemy mages, and provides the blessed artifact that brings the story to its climax.

Both Fate and **Space** deal with the interconnections between things, but to the Acanthus, Space operates on principles of simile and symbolism rather than predestined intersections. Where Fate's Mists surround the subject's destiny, sympathetic connections are more like Chekhov's gun: facts that, once established, will come into the story later, usually thanks to the Witch's tinkering. Acanthus see sympathetic connections and spatial anomalies as reflections, warped or otherwise — the classic witch's magic mirror. Mists obscure them or make them plain; distance is meaningless when the fog is so thick you can't see your hand in front of your face.

All the old stories had their forbidden places: the dark woods full of wolves, the wastes where monsters dwell, the place beyond the safety of the firelight. Those places are the domain of **Spirit**, and the Witch who masters them calls up the powers of beyond. Mists part to reveal alien vistas, and collars of Thorns bind the denizens of the Shadow to her will.

## Pandemonium:

### Supernal World of the Mastigos

The world does not exist. All that is the self, or rather, an infinite multitude of selves that are in truth *one* self. This is the Truth of Pandemonium: we are not beings of flesh wandering through a world of inert matter, we are *Auras*, cloud-shells of Pandemonic entities, creating individuality out of aggregates, pulled apart by *Chains* of sympathy. To the Mastigos, people are less real — or at least no *more* real — than the thoughts, impulses, and desires that make up their Astral landscapes.

That's how Warlocks see us, when they look with the Sight: an indistinct cloud of a thousand, a million, demons, all clashing and battling for dominance. When they sharpen their gaze, they pick out specific demons, and by their conformation do the Warlocks know us.

Once, the Psychonauts say, we were all part of a single, vast Aura, our identities merely momentary dalliances between the demonic hordes that were all of existence. But when the world broke and the Lie fell upon it like a cage, the Exarchs snared us with barbed hooks and lashed us around with chains that tied us to the world and stopped our demons from dancing free. Under Pandemonium's Sight, the whole world is lashed by chains: some taut and groaning, others hanging loose, jangling in the psychic wind. All but the most enlightened are pierced and bedecked with iron links, and to a Warlock we seem scarcely able to move for all our connections.

## Other Arcana in Pandemonium

It's no accident ghosts are often depicted as wrapped in the chains they forged in life. **Death** in Pandemonium is an absence, a cessation of self that can be Nirvana or hell, depending. Mastigos see death in the gaps between the Chains, in places where connections should be. Ghosts are strangely clear to a Warlock's Sight; lacking an Astral connection, ghosts are frozen, fixed in the form of whichever of their demons had control at the moment of death. Manipulating a ghost, then, is a matter of exploiting its connections and rattling its Chains.

**Fate** kinks the Chains, twisting them into arcane knots and twining them around symbols of the subject's destiny. Mastigos manipulate Fate by pulling on those chains like marionette strings, or else cutting the Gordian knots like Alexander.

Pandemonium isn't a Christian Hell, but it does boast its share of howling winds, raging storms, and lakes of fire. Mastigos understand these not as punishments for the damned, but as crucibles in which the soul can be scoured of its weakness. This is the Pandemonic view of **Forces**: neither mechanistic energy nor the wrath of God. Mastigos conjure Forces by feeding their own sins to the fire, purifying themselves to purify the world.

**Life** is the force that binds and contains the Mind; it is the visceral counterpart to the cerebral. Pandemonium understands Life in much the same way it understands Mind. Each "individual" being is really a composite of its innumerable parts, symbiotes, and parasites, down to the mitochondria, and up to "superorganisms" of crowds, acting as one. Living things can thus be dissected, analyzed piece by piece to understand and manipulate the greater whole.

**Matter** has only a limited place in Pandemonium. It is inert, lacking agency or ego, and thus is the foundation of the Lie. Only by the attachments thinking beings form to it can one really understand Matter, and Mastigos find it difficult to manipulate Matter unless they first frame it in the context of desire for material things (or the abjuration thereof). Absent the human connection, iron bars are merely iron bars.

**Prime** is the energy of the First Movement, the catalyzing force that sets all things in motion. To Mastigos, that energy is *will*, desire turned into action. Even more so than Obrimos,

Warlocks anthropomorphize the Arcanum of Prime; those under its influence seem purposeful and determined, often garbed in some form of royal regalia. Working directly with the energies of Prime is less like coaxing the power to bend to the mage's desire and more like opening the gate before a champion greyhound. The magic wants to act upon the world, all the mage must do is set it free.

Pandemonium readily accommodates **Spirit**; according to its mysteries, spirits are those Goetia the Lie never ensnared and bound into discrete individuals. Cut off from their Astral siblings, they were forced to anchor themselves to lesser beings, to the dead matter of the Lie. Some flit about the mass of humanity, drawn in by the resonance of thought and deed, but until the Lie once again dissolves, they cannot rejoin the whole.

Mastigos understand that no mind is static, they change and grow with **Time** as different Goetia rise to dominance in the struggle of existence or fall away to the depths of the subconscious. They see the Time Arcanum, then, less as an absolute principle of existence than as the spectrum of an individual's entire existence. Mastigos who employ the Time Arcanum see people stretched out in four dimensions like a vast, segmented snake, or a cloud of darting Goetia that the sorcerer may read like an augur.

## Stygia:

### Supernal World of the Moros

The world is a distraction. All the things we accumulate, the possessions, the passions, the triumphs, and the sorrows, they'll all fade away and be lost. This is the Realm of Matter: Moros often see afterimages of destroyed items or corpses or look on the world through a lens of entropy and decay. They see the things we cling to set aside, abandoned, broken: nothing but *Shells* devoid of meaning or purpose.

To the Moros, the Supernal is a still, silent place; often the world seems to move slowly, muted sounds no more than whispers, even the strongest scents are more like dim memories from childhood. This is the realm of Death. Our destiny is to die, to be washed clean, and to return in an endless cycle of unceasing change. Until we pay the Leaden Coin and lay down our burdens, we cannot move on, and so the Moros see us trapped in the *Crypts* of our own lives; the trappings of our day-to-day existence taking on an air of solemnity, of memoriam, as though we're dead before our time. Our every action is an epitaph, our every legacy a monument. Others may remember us when we are gone, but memory is not immortality.

## Other Arcana in Stygia

Much as Acanthus see Death as the ultimate expression of Fate, Moros see **Fate** as the ultimate expression of Death, or rather the journey to it. Fate spells appear to Stygian Mage Sight as the conveyances of the dead: ferrymen and hearses, black dogs and owls, herding the subject toward her ultimate destiny, however indirectly. The binding laws of the Underworld appear here as well, from pomegranate seeds to the hooks Inanna hung

from. Moros working Fate magic often invoke imagery of figures from Anubis to Yama, judges of the dead who hand out reward or punishment as befits the subject's deeds.

In the Stygian philosophy, **Forces** are a tool for change and little more. Storms tear down buildings, fire clears forest and carries away grave goods, even light corrodes and ruins ink. Moros studying Forces Mysteries can't help but see them in terms of what they can unmake or change, but to attribute meaning to the storm is to seek wisdom in the alembic. It's the process, not the tool, which brings enlightenment.

Unlearned mages often suspect Moros of having difficulty with **Life**, but nothing could be further from the truth. Life and Death are not opposites at all, but two halves of the same whole. Moros see Death as the active force, stripping away the attachments of the world and rendering the soul ready for reincarnation, and Life as the passive, resisting detachment and stubbornly clinging to the phenomenal world. Life magic stands out sharply to Moros Sight; it is the bright splash of color in the world of gray, the bright, brassy tune that mocks the funeral dirge.

**Mind** is a burden to Moros. It is the weight of memory binding us in Marley's chains, the nostalgia we cling to, the brooding weight of history pressing down upon us. It's called up by sense memory, twisted by the inexorable decay of years, compelled by haunting visions of past mistakes. To Stygian Mage Sight, Mind might be a host of phantoms surrounding the subject, each representing a memory or an emotion. It is sometimes an epitaph, carved above the Crypt that traps the subject.

**Prime** is the universal solvent, the ultimate catalyst of dissolution and transmutation. Stygian Prime does not burn with celestial fire, it bubbles and hisses, coursing along ley lines and pooling in Hallows, leaving nothing it touches unchanged. Moros working with Prime imagine it like manipulating the tides, as an ebb and flow of formlessness into form and back again. The mage pulls that energy into the Fallen World at the proper moment of its cycle and thereby enacts the change she desires.

To Moros, **Space** is the chief symptom of the disease their Path seeks to treat. Like their Pandemonic cousins, Moros often see Space in terms of chains and manacles, but where Mastigos envision those chains stretching between people and their attachments, Necromancers are more likely to see them as the trappings of Dickensian ghosts, wrapped around their unfortunate prisoners, weighing them down and preventing them from moving on. Less esoteric applications of Space rely on the truth that death is a journey. Moros often open portals by paying two obols to their own personal ferryman or bind a location by calling up the rivers of the Underworld to make an island of it.

**Spirit** undercuts the core of Stygian philosophy: that material things are dross that serve only to weigh us down. Many Moros can only interact with spirits by treating them as though they were personifications of alchemical philosophy. Old Gray King is not the "soul" of the mountain, merely an anthropomorphization of the properties of the element of earth.

If Fate is the ultimate expression of Death, then **Time** is the ultimate expression of Matter; no substance, not adamant

nor granite, not air nor water, can survive the passage of time. Moros perceive Time as the ravages of history played out upon the subject: not just in the sense of rot and erosion, but in the sense of being forgotten, buried, and abandoned. Timepieces also feature prominently in Stygian imagery of Time. Hourglasses and doomsday clocks, countdowns toward zero, and church bells are all common parts of Moros Imagos when Time is involved.

## Aether:

### Supernal World of the Obrimos

The world is a complex system. From the smallest movements of the atoms to the flow of raw Supernal truth, a guardian angel—bedecked with signs and seals of power—watches over everything. Every angel is governed by laws, whether those be the 99 names of God or the principles of quantum mechanics. Those laws are not written in dusty tomes or legal texts, but in the very structure of the universe. Obrimos who examine these *Mandalas* see the substance of reality laid bare. Complex equations and sacred symbols of the divine mingle: P vs. NP scribed around the border of Solomon's Triangle, Fermat's Last Theorem in the blazing Eye of Horus. By these words and signs are the thunder made to bow.

Power without hierarchy is chaos. Action without purpose is waste. The Aether resounds with power exercised and reveals its use through the *Dominions*. Those with authority are crowned in glory, their subordinates seem to bow before them. The truth of Prime reveals executives as queens, head offices as castles, the sun as a god's holy chariot. The mage herself extends the scepter of her Awakened will and issues commands in the name of God, and the universe obeys.

### Other Arcana in the Aether

**Death** has small hold in the Aether. The end of all things is the purview of the Silent Angel, who yields his secrets only grudgingly to mages. Obrimos seldom look for his shadow in the glory of their realm, and his seal is a mere empty ring, easy to overlook and difficult to glean information from. And though many know his name, God gave no dominion over him to mortal mages; even calling on him feels faintly blasphemous to the Obrimos.

**Fate** is the machine-code of the Aether, the conductor that keeps the music of the spheres in time, the word of the Gods made manifest. Obrimos see it as a pulsing rhythm or the mark of God upon the subject. They manipulate its power by beating time, singing hymns, or rotating the Mandalas into a more auspicious position. Blessings take the form of anointings or coronations, while curses are envisioned as investment and usurpation.

The human body is a wondrous miracle, a microcosm of the universe. **Life** is far more than human life, of course, but most Obrimos still see it through this Vitruvian lens. The Mysteries of Life are made manifest by analogy to this microcosm: stars out of alignment, warped reflections, and so on. Obrimos manipulate Life by calling on Paracelsian symbolism or speaking the secret names of the plague angel.



In the beginning, God separated the heavens and the earth. It's the root of innumerable creation myths, and to Obrimos, **Matter** is the firm place to stand from which to move the earth. Its angels are powerful and unsubtle, its signs are the altar and the foundation stone. It is base and profane, yes, but that does not mean it is to be shunned. It is through the base Matter of the world that unbalanced energy is filtered and purified: lightning arcs to earth, fire does not burn stone, and poisoned resonance drains away.

In Aetheric philosophy, the **Mind** is envisioned as a vast engine, a decision-making tree not unlike a computer program. Fiery wheels and gears like halos spread from subjects of an Obrimos' Sight, and by studying the way they are put together, the mage can predict how a subject will react, or even what he's thinking right now. The secret names of the guardian angels set to watch over all thinking beings unlock the ability to manipulate those engines directly, reprogramming the mind's Enochian source code directly.

**Space** arrays the world in its hierarchies, placing thrones above powers and ensuring that the order of heaven is maintained. Obrimos see Space's sympathetic connections as golden Thrones presiding over their hosts and slip through the cracks in reality on the chariots of the Ophanim.

What is a **Spirit** if not a Fallen angel? Obrimos often perceive spirits as holy beasts and angels brimming with power, but somehow lesser, cut off from the Prima Materia that roils in the Aether. Some ascribe this to sins on the part of the spirits themselves, echoing tales of Grigori and gods forced to dwell beneath the hills. Others lay the blame at the feet of the Exarchs and minister to the trapped angels, offering what succor they can in this Fallen, divided reality. In either case, they entreat spirits by their secret names and construct elaborate charts of correspondence and authority, seeking to know which spirit to summon for which task, and when.

Every hour, day, and month has its angel, and so to do the signs of the zodiac that mark the turning of the years. Hymns to these angels are the primary expression of **Time** in Aetheric philosophy, and mages seeking to manipulate it often chant their names in sequence (or out of sequence, depending on the desired effect) to invoke the power of the Arcanum. Time, to an Obrimos, is orderly: cycles and calendars, the tick of a clock. Manipulations of Time are broken seals, mandalas that rotate out of sync with the rest of the world.

## Primal Wild: Supernal World of the Thyrsus

The world is a living thing. It hums with resonance, it pulses with life, it sings a song that only the wise can hear. By listening to these *Singing Paths*, Thyrsus learn how to not only navigate the land, but deal with the spirits who dwell there. By seeking out new Paths, they add to the body of shamanic lore and come to greater accord with the spirits of the world. For Thyrsus, the study of a Mystery is more likely to be a ramble across the countryside or down forgotten streets, listening for that elusive song, than a staid, static examination. A Shaman runs Mysteries to ground like a lion stalking prey.

To a Thyrus, the Supernal World is not an external phenomenon to examine and study, but a part of the magician's soul. The Supernal resounds with life, and Thyrus experience it as *Ecstasy*; they feel it in their blood and in their bones and know its truths as surely as they know the sound of their mother's heartbeat. A Thyrus Scrutinizing a killing curse feels her heart gripped by a vise, feels sight dim and limbs grow cold. An Ecstatic who wishes to inspire fear with her magic must make herself feel that fear, then cast it out and inflict it upon her quarry. Magic must be lived to be understood.

## Other Arcana in the Primal Wild

The world is alive, and it feeds on **Death**. From the apex predator to the lowest bacterium, for a thing to live, another must die. Even autotrophic plants receive nourishment from their spirits, and those spirits must consume spirits of earth and sunlight. A Thyrus' experience of Death is not tinged by dread, but an understanding that Life always ends. Death is an absence — of life, of light, of warmth — but not an unnatural one. Shamans make little distinction between ghosts and spirits; both are part of the invisible world that must be appeased, lest they vent their wrath on the living, physical world.

What is **Fate**, but instinct honed to the point of inevitability? Thyrus see the Arcanum less as the skein of destiny and more as the natural course of action. A Thyrus does not wield the loom of Fate to ensure her subject finds his way to her by happenstance; she stokes his instinct and drives him to her as a hunter drives the buck with brushfire. She acts in concert with her animal self, free of self-doubt and thus with extraordinary skill, she slips the bonds of oaths and curses with a snarl of dominance. When she scents Fate in a Mystery, it often comes as a sharp need: pangs like hunger, an imperative rooted at the base of Maslow's hierarchy.

While many Thyrus are more comfortable appealing to spirits of storm and fire directly, **Forces** has its place in the Shaman's repertoire. Forces follows Life, whether on the scale of a single cell or the movements of tectonic plates. It is the life force of the universe; storms are the world's breath, earthquakes its heartbeat. Thyrus see Forces as the spoor of some vast, unseen beast, knowable only by the signs of its passage.

**Matter** sings a slow, sonorous song, but it's one the Thyrus know well. The spirits of inert matter are often sleeping, or else they operate on geological time scales that make it difficult for mages to interact with them. Mastering the Arcanum of Matter allows a Shaman to glimpse the dreams of these spirits, and to coax them into action in accordance with the mage's desires without waking them.

The Primal Wild has no room for deliberation or debate. **Mind** stands out as an aberration, a sense of wrongness that pricks the hairs and warns of hidden danger. Thyrus can only come to even a limited understanding of the Arcanum by thinking of the mind as a trapped spirit, especially in humans. To others, it's a vestigial organ, an appendix. Why bother touching a subject's Mind when Life makes it trivial to kick his adrenal glands into overdrive, or a spirit's compulsion is just a Ruling spell away?

The Primal Wild's truths are simple, but no less powerful for that. **Prime** is the endless dance of predator and prey, of mountains rising and falling, of species dying off and new ones being born. Where the Obrimos see this cycle as one of ordered mechanisms and arcane but understandable laws, Thyrus know it is a raw, red thing, and that the only way to master it is to become a part of it. Thyrus experience Prime as an overwhelming torrent of experience: at once the taste of blood and the feel of nutrients drawn from the soil, a low-pressure zone building behind the ribs, sensations at once familiar and wholly alien to human experience. Manipulating that torrent is like trying to channel a flash flood: it's physically exhausting, but it comes with an exhilarating sense of having done the impossible.

**Space** is very real in the Primal Wild, but Thyrus see it in terms of territory and spoor. A Shaman tracking someone's sympathetic connections scents them like a hound following a trail, while warding a space involves displays of ownership and a powerful possessive urge. Stepping into a Mystery of Space brings the cold dread of a predator entering a rival's hunting ground, or a sense of a fresh game trail and the urge to run it to ground.

Most Thyrus live purely in the moment, but those who study **Time's** Mysteries understand the Singing Paths have innumerable branches stemming from a single root, many futures branching off from the past. Shamans often envision Time as the World Tree, and they explore its many boughs to find a deeper understanding of the world's song. They walk back along its trunk when they need to go from complexity to simplicity and venture perilously high into its branches to comprehend the fractal patterns of the future.

## Mage Sight

Supernal awareness gives mages an uncanny ability to perceive the Mysteries. To the Wise, the supernatural is not only omnipresent, it is *obvious*.

The basic rules for Mage Sight begin on p. 90 of **Mage: The Awakening Second Edition**. This section expands, clarifies, and provides additional advice for incorporating Mage Sight into your chronicle.

## Peripheral Mage Sight

As described on p. 90 of **Mage**, Peripheral Mage Sight automatically detects the presence of any active, unconcealed supernatural effects: the casting of a spell, activation of a vampire's Discipline, a ghost Manifesting, and so on. Peripheral Sight does not give the mage insight into the nature of the phenomenon, but the location of the effect is apparent. If a vampire activates one of her Disciplines, for example, any mage watching would know that there was something supernatural about her. If the source of the effect is invisible (such as a ghost in *Twilight*), the mage knows where it originates from even if she cannot see the ghost. A mage can even see the presence of a Mystery in a photograph or a video, or through a scrying window or reconstruction of the past via Postcognition or the like.

Peripheral Mage Sight only functions within the range of a mage's senses; if she can't perceive the effect's point of origin

or area, her Peripheral Mage Sight isn't triggered. Another mage casting a spell in the next room behind a closed door doesn't register — but if the spell's area of effect encompasses the whole house, the mage will sense it. Likewise, if a ghost in the same room uses a Numen, the mage knows that something supernatural happened, but without a spell or Attainment to let her see things in Twilight, the effect would seem to originate from empty space.

Events of major mystical significance, like the arrival of a Supernal being or the Manifestation of a high-Rank spirit, sometimes cause disturbances that trigger the Peripheral Mage Sight of any mage in the general vicinity, sometimes even an entire city.

### Merit: Keen Periphery (●●)

**Prerequisites:** Wits •••

**Effect:** Your character's Peripheral Mage Sight is unusually perceptive. When she senses an effect via Peripheral Mage Sight, she also senses the Arcanum under whose purview the effect falls.

### Merit: Piercing Glance (●● or ●●●●)

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis ••

**Effect:** Your character may undertake a Clash of Wills to sense a concealed effect with Peripheral Mage Sight. For two dots, you suffer a -2 penalty on the roll. For four dots, there is no penalty on the roll.

## High Speech

One facet of Awakened life that transcends Mage Sight, Yantra, and Mystery is the High Speech, the Supernal symbol of language that all Supernal entities "speak." As described on p. 66 of *Mage*, all mages are capable of understanding, reading, speaking, and hearing High Speech from the moment of their Awakening. To a Sleeper or Sleepwalker, a mage speaking in High Speech seems to be speaking in tongues, and a message written in it is nonsense. When a mage encounters the Speech, however, her Peripheral Mage Sight somehow translates it, and she instinctively understands its meaning. By concentrating on the message she wishes to convey, she can blurt out brief messages in the Speech or write them down. As *Mage* notes, as a means of communicating direct truth, High Speech has no capacity for metaphor or lying but is particularly good at conveying mood and describing spells.

The Orders teach all prospective members how to use High Speech as a Yantra by describing the imago of the spell aloud in the Speech, as represented by the High Speech Merit on p.102 of *Mage*. A few mages, however, have experimented further.

### Merit: Second-Person High Speech (●●●)

**Prerequisites:** Awakened, Presence •••, Expression •••, High Speech

**Effect:** Your character is so adept in the High Speech that she can provide it as a Yantra for other mages, not just her own spells. By chanting during the turns during which another mage

accesses Yantras prior to spellcasting, or on the turn he casts, your character allows him the +2 dice Yantra effect as though he had used the High Speech Merit. Your character must, however, possess all Arcanum dots used in the caster's spell.

If your character does not meet the Arcanum requirements for the spell but does have at least one dot in its primary Arcanum, using this Merit allows the caster a one-die Yantra bonus instead of the usual two dice.

In addition, if your character activates an imbued item or Artifact, she can use High Speech and gain the bonus dice even though imbued items and Artifacts normally can't use Yantras.

If the caster uses High Speech to intone his own Imago, the effects of this Merit do not stack.

### Merit: Fluent High Speech (●●●)

**Prerequisites:** Awakened, Presence ••••, Expression •••

**Effect:** Most mages are limited to short, direct messages or commands in High Speech when not using it as a spellcasting aid, but your character has practiced to the point of true fluency. She may converse at length in the Speech, secure in knowing only the Awakened can understand her, and is sought-out by mages wanting to deal with Supernal Entities.

When using High Speech for a Social Action against mages and Supernal entities, she gains a +2 dice bonus to Persuasion and Intimidation rolls and does not reduce Expression rolls to a Chance die. She also reduces the successes needed to summon a Supernal entity by 2 if she participates in the summoning.

### Merit: Hidden High Speech (●)

**Prerequisites:** Awakened, Manipulation •••, Expression •••

**Effect:** With effort, your character may use mundane language to conceal a message in High Speech, so that Sleepers and Sleepwalkers hearing or reading it do not hear glossolalia or read gibberish. This has no cost for writing High Speech, but to use it in the spoken form is taxing, requiring you to spend a Willpower point.

### Merit: High Speech Perception (●●)

**Prerequisites:** non-Awakened

**Effect:** Even without Awakening, your character may perceive and read High Speech as though they were a mage, and write or speak short, direct messages in it.

## Active Mage Sight

Active Mage Sight allows a mage to study her surroundings through the lens of her Path and the Arcana she knows. It makes plain supernatural beings and phenomena and reveals the nature of things under her Arcana's purviews. It does not offer insight into the nature or function of the Mysteries a mage observes — that's the role of Focused Mage Sight — but if the mage has encountered the phenomenon and successfully Scrutinized it before, she can recognize it with Active Mage Sight. A mage who has previously Scrutinized the victim of spirit possession,

for example, recognizes the telltale signs when she sees someone else possessed by a spirit.

Assume any mage can recognize the effects of any supernatural ability common to mages: Mage Armor, Focused Mage Sight, Pattern Scouring/Restoration, and so on.

Unlike Peripheral Mage Sight, Active Mage Sight requires direct observation of the phenomena in question: it doesn't work on recordings or a live television feed. A mage *can* use Active Mage Sight through a scrying window or visions of the past from Postcognition or similar effects.

## Merit: Supernal Taxonomy (••)

**Prerequisites:** Intelligence ••, Occult •••

**Effect:** Your character possesses a deep, intuitive understanding of Active Mage Sight. When she observes a phenomenon similar in either effect or origin to one she has previously Scrutinized, she can recognize the similarity. For example, a mage who has previously Scrutinized another mage's Psychic Domination spell, upon seeing the victim of a vampire's Dominate Discipline, would recognize the effect as some sort of mental control. If instead she saw someone under the effects of the Augment Mind spell, she would recognize the signature of Awakened magic. If she's Scrutinized the Signature Nimbus of another mage, she can now see it with Active Mage Sight rather than having to Scrutinize.

## Focused Mage Sight

The final, and most mechanically complex, aspect of Mage Sight is Focused Mage Sight. By plunging deep into her Path's Supernal World, a mage can dissect nearly any supernatural phenomenon she comes across.

## Arcana

- While Active Mage Sight allows a mage to observe the effects of multiple Arcana at once, Focused Mage Sight requires the mage give all her attention to one Arcanum.

**System:** The Mage may use Focused Mage Sight to study Mysteries under the purview of any Arcanum she has as part of her Active Mage Sight. See **Mage**, p. 93 for information on including multiple Arcana in Focused Mage Sight's dice pool.

- To understand a subject with Focused Mage Sight, a mage must have Mage Sight in at least one Arcanum under whose purview the Mystery falls. Life Sight, for example, is no use for Scrutinizing a ghost's tombstone Anchor. However, since all the Supernal Realms are comprised of all the Arcana, a mage can examine the "gaps" in her perception to infer the correct path forward.

**System:** If a mage does not have the appropriate Arcana active in her Mage Sight, she may still attempt to Reveal the Mystery. If she succeeds, however, the only Surface Information she receives is under which Arcanum's purview the Mystery falls. An exceptional success reveals one additional piece of surface information.

## Tools

An Acanthus peers through a hag stone to study the Mysteries. A Moros sees the Supernal through the distortions of a cracked crystal ball. A Guardian of the Veil gazes out from the eyes of the mask of Sophia and thereby gains understanding.

Just as an ordinary crime scene investigator employs sophisticated tools in addition to her scientific knowledge, a mage has tools at her disposal when Revealing or Scrutinizing phenomena.

**System:** Path and Order tools, so long as they can be semiotically linked to divination, understanding, or revelation, can be used with Focused Mage Sight. They add their Yantra bonus as an equipment bonus to any Revelation or Scrutinize rolls. The mage can only use one such Yantra, regardless of Gnosis.

## Teamwork

The normal Teamwork rules (**Mage**, p. 214) apply to Focused Mage Sight. However, too many investigators run the risk of trampling evidence: every two teamwork rolls count as one Scrutinizing roll for determining when Nimbus contamination begins.

## Time

Too many Scrutinizing rolls in too short a time risks contaminating a Mystery with the investigator's Nimbus (**Mage**, p. 93.) Sometimes it's better to take what information you have, explore other avenues of investigation, and hope that new leads turn up. A mage *can* abandon her Scrutiny and come back to study it later with no ill effects, assuming the Mystery remains

### Optional Rule: Long-Term Investigation

The rules for Scrutinizing presented in **Mage** are geared more toward a single scene's worth of investigating a Mystery, rather than long-term research projects. If you want to mechanically enable mages to spend months or years investigating a particularly thorny Mystery, consider the following rule: by spending a point of Willpower per roll and increasing the interval per roll to a number of days (or weeks, if you want really long-term investigations) equal to the Mystery's Opacity, the mage removes the risk of her Nimbus contaminating the Mystery. Likewise, Scrutinizing a Mystery becomes an action the mage can abandon and come back to later without losing her progress.

If this rule is in play in your chronicle, most Consilia will consider a mage allowing her Nimbus to contaminate a Mystery a crime, one they may redress by paying a fine or, in extreme cases, forfeiture of the right to investigate the Mystery.

relatively unchanged. If something dramatic happens surrounding it, such as the resonance of the local ley lines changing or the vampire's thrall receiving new orders, the Storyteller may increase the Opacity or even restore it to the original value to represent the change.

## Spells

Over the centuries, mages have developed numerous spells to aid in the dissection of Mysteries. The following are just a few examples.

### Camera Obscura (Prime ●●●)

**Practice:** Weaving

**Primary Factor:** Duration

**Cost:** 1 Mana

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Craft, Expression, Science

Mysteries tend to arise in inconvenient or even dangerous places. This spell enchants a camera, video recorder, or similar device, allowing it to record Supernal energies. This allows a mage to study the recordings made while the spell is active with Active or Focused Mage Sight as though she were present at the site of the recording. The magic fades from the recordings when the spell's Duration expires, and only one recording (a single photo, a continuous video shot, etc.) per Potency can retain the Supernal information, and only the original image retains the information.

The spell has two drawbacks compared to studying a Mystery in person. First, the spell's Potency caps the mage's base dice pool for Revelation or Scrutiny'. Second, instead of the observing mage's Nimbus contaminating the Mystery itself, rolls in excess of the mage's Gnosis + Arcanum reduce the spell's Potency by half her Gnosis. If the Potency is reduced to 0, the studied recording becomes useless. This Potency reduction only applies to the specific recording studied; it does not affect others not yet reviewed.

**+2 Reach:** For 1 Mana, the magic is Lasting for recordings produced by the subject. The camera's ability to record Supernal information ends with the Duration, but the recordings retain their Supernal information until they're degraded.

### Light Under a Bushel (Prime ●●)

**Practice:** Shielding

**Primary Factor:** Potency

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Empathy, Investigation, Subterfuge

Contaminating a Mystery with one's own Nimbus is an ever-present danger when Scrutinizing. By means of this spell, the mage dampens the subject's Nimbus and gives her more time to study the Mystery. Add this spell's Potency to the number of rolls allowed before the subject's Nimbus leaks into the Mystery (Mage, p. 93.)

If this spell's Duration expires while the subject is still Scrutinizing, immediately apply all accumulated penalties to the subject's Scrutiny rolls.

### Path to Jerusalem (Prime ●●)

**Practice:** Veiling

**Primary Factor:** Potency

**Withstand:** Opacity

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Expression, Larceny, Subterfuge

This spell, named for the labyrinth at the Cathedral of Chartres, has been the choice of mages for distinct reasons, including attempting to conceal their involvement in illicit activities, frame their rivals, or simply stymie other occult investigators. Add the spell's Potency to the Opacity of the subject Mystery.

**+1 Reach:** Every Reach spent allows the mage to plant one false piece of Surface or Deep Information in the Mystery, either concealing a true piece of information or adding an entirely new falsehood. This can include placing another mage's Signature Nimbus on the Mystery, if the caster has studied it. Recognizing the falsehood requires a Clash of Wills while examining the Mystery with Focused Mage Sight.

### Shared Sight (Prime ●)

**Practice:** Unveiling

**Primary Factor:** Duration

**Cost:** 1+ Mana (see below)

**Withstand:** Resolve

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Expression, Investigation, Occult

Few mages have even a rudimentary understanding of all the Supernal Mysteries, but mages often find it useful to pool their investigative efforts. This spell grants the subject, who must be a mage or under the influence of the Prime ●●●● spell Apocalypse (Mage, p. 169), Prime mage Sight. Mages still perceive granted Arcana under their own Path, not the Path of the caster.

This spell costs 1 Mana per Arcanum per subject, unless the additional Arcanum is one of the caster's Ruling Arcana.

**Add Any Other Arcanum ●:** Instead of or as well as Prime Sight, the spell may grant Mage Sight in the included Arcanum. Including multiple Arcana allows the spell to grant Mage Sight in a number of Arcana equal to the spell's Potency, so long as any Mana cost is paid.

### Supernal Translation (Mind ●●●, Prime ●●●)

**Practice:** Weaving

**Primary Factor:** Duration

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Empathy, Expression, Occult

This spell allows the subject to comprehend High Speech, translating any they hear or read as though they had Peripheral Mage Sight. It does not, however, convey the ability to speak or write High Speech back, or offer any protection from Quiescence or Dissonance if they encounter High Speech used as a spell-casting Yantra, spoken by a Supernal entity, or as a spontaneous Mystery. For this reason, the Orders frown on its use on Sleepers, but for a mage with Sleepwalker or inhuman companions, the ability to pass secure messages can come in very handy.

## Mage Sight and Investigation

The **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook** presents a new system for investigating mysteries (**Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 77). While it's geared toward investigating the secrets of the Fallen World, the system can interact with Mage Sight in a few different ways.

The following rules are optional if you're using the Investigation rules in your chronicle.

### MYSTERIES AS CLUES

The Hierarch is dead, and the only lead is the rapidly-fading remnant of the spell that killed him. People are compelled to fling their most prized possessions into a deep pool where some forgotten god slumbers. Murder rates have spiked, but is it the summer heat wave or poisonous Loci?

In situations where a Mystery is one component of a larger investigation, exposing the Mystery simply counts as a clue. Revealing a Mystery's Surface Information without reducing its Opacity to 0 gives the mage an Incomplete clue with one element. Fully Scrutinizing a Mystery removes the Incomplete tag and grants an extra element.

### CLUES AS MYSTERIES

When a Mystery's Opacity proves daunting, it's sometimes better to approach from a different angle. The Storyteller may treat a Mystery as the heart of an Investigation, determining the number of clues the characters can find and the scope of the information to be uncovered – in this case, how much of the Mystery's Opacity to remove upon completion of the Investigation.

Clue elements can be spent on Scrutinizing rolls or saved up to complete the Investigation, as normal. If the investigators attempt to complete the investigation without the requisite number of clues, use the following list of complications instead of those on p. 81 of the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**:

- The Mystery's architect is obscured or has deniability.
- A hidden effect within the Mystery reveals itself at the worst possible time.
- One of the investigators falls under the Mystery's sway.
- A relevant party (rival mage, Supernal entity, Seer servitor, etc.) becomes aware of the investigation.
- The Mystery suddenly and dramatically increases in power, size, or duration.

### Both

Of course, nothing prevents you from building a complex web of intrigue in which smaller Mysteries serve as clues for the unraveling of a larger Mystery. If you do take this approach, it replaces the linked Opacity rules below.

## Building a Mystery: Expanded

The Mysteries a mage studies with Mage Sight are broken down into three parts: Opacity, Surface Information, and Deep Information.

### Opacity

**Mage** provides some guidelines for devising the Opacity of a Mystery. This section expands on that advice and provides more guidance for Opacity ratings for Mysteries other than Supernal spells.

### Basic Opacity

If the source of the Mystery is something with a dot rating: a spell, a Discipline, or an ephemeral entity's Influence, that's a good place to start. More powerful Mysteries are more complex and require more study... most of the time. Sometimes a power is rated at a high level for raw power rather than complexity, and sometimes a low-level power is subtle enough that it's easily missed. If it doesn't feel right that a four-dot effect that blasts its target with a lightning bolt is more complex than a one-dot effect that slightly influences subtle emotional cues, feel free to ignore this advice.

If the Mystery is a living being rather than a magical effect, consider using its Rank (for ephemeral entities) or half its Supernatural Tolerance, rounded up. Likewise, if it could be reflected as a Merit, you can use that rating as the base Opacity.

If none of those guidelines apply, consult the following chart for benchmarks:

Opacity	Example
1	Barely a Mystery to anyone with the Sight; a routine haunting, active Hallow, or minor psychic ability.
2	A curiosity, but one easily explained; an old magical relic, a minor cryptid, a locus with unusual resonance.
3	The sort of thing a mage might become obsessed with; a Supernal artifact, a Verge that only appears on an unknown calendar, the Daimonomikon of a forgotten Legacy.
4	A hotly contested Mystery; Places That Aren't, Abyssal incursions, the secret library of a third-degree Master.
5	A Mystery famous throughout the Awakened world; the principal Mystery around which a Consilium forms, an archmaster's tomb, a potent Supernal artifact, an Abyssal Verge.
6+	A Mystery that's withstood Scrutiny for thousands of years: ruins of the Time Before, archangels and Shadow gods, a vast and intricate destiny spanning decades and thousands of people.

## Modifying Opacity

Once you have an approximation for your Mystery's base Opacity, consider the following adjustments, in addition to those described on pp. 93-94 of *Mage: The Awakening Second Edition*.

- Is this Mystery the central plot of the current story? If so, consider increasing its Opacity by 1-2 so the players can't immediately brute force their way to understanding. Conversely, if the Mystery's main purpose in the story is to provide a clue toward bigger and more interesting things, drop the Opacity by 1-2 so they don't waste a bunch of time on it.
- Abyssal Mysteries and those from similarly alien realms (the Lower Depths, splinter timelines, and the like) almost always have a higher Opacity than those that originate in the Supernal or Fallen Worlds.
- Even if the Mystery isn't Supernal, if it falls under the purview of multiple Arcana, increase the Opacity by 1 for every additional Arcanum that applies.
- If the Mystery is an example of a well-catalogued phenomenon (for example, an instance of Astral possession in Los Angeles), lower the Opacity by a point or two.

## Permutation: Linked Opacity

Sometimes a Mystery is the confluence of several smaller Mysteries; a strange, Twilight tower of bone and wire built by the stolen souls of dreamers can be better understood by examining those souls and understanding how they were ensorcelled, for instance. When multiple Mysteries are Linked in this manner, fully Scrutinizing and Revealing the Linked Mystery reduces the Primary Mystery's Opacity by 1. Use this approach to present an intimidatingly Opaque Mystery to your players while still giving them a way to progress.

If you use this rule, one piece of Surface Information for the Primary Mystery should be a general direction for finding the Linked Mysteries.

## Permutation: Locked Opacity

Sometimes a mage simply cannot progress in her understanding of a Mystery until she has some other information; the functioning of the Guardian of Kal-chak-mul cannot be understood until the mage has deciphered the Pyre Codex, perhaps. In this case, choose an Opacity level for the Locked Mystery, usually half its base value is a good start. Until the mage solves the Key Mystery, she can't make further Scrutinizing rolls against the Locked Mystery.

If you use this rule, one piece of Surface Information for the Locked Mystery should be a hint toward the Key Mystery.

## Example Mysteries: Opacity

*Cameron has handed her Storyteller a backstory for her character, Belladonna, with a large gap that says, "insert plot hooks here." The Storyteller takes her up on this generous offer by deciding that her character is linked somehow to the fate of an ancient archmage who was written out of existence by the Exarchs. He decides that a Mystery will represent this connection: a locked door deep in Belladonna's Oneiros that leads to the archmage's Chantry. The spell that created the door is a Mind •••• spell, but the fact that the archmage no longer exists in this continuity means the Mystery also incorporates Time, which increases the Opacity by 1. He knows the Opacity needs to be high enough to sustain the Mystery over at least the first part of the campaign, so he gives it another 2-point boost, for a total Opacity of 7. That should keep Belladonna from unravelling the Mystery too quickly – but so she doesn't feel completely blocked, he creates a few Linked Mysteries to knock the Opacity down a bit: maybe a couple of relics of the archmage's erased life or someone with a sympathetic link to someone who never existed. She also Locks the Mystery's final Opacity behind solving the Mystery of the erased archmage: Belladonna will have to figure out who he is and how he was erased before she can solve her own Mystery.*

## Presentation

Mage Sight can quickly become a dull, rote process if reduced to clues dispensed in exchange for dice rolls. Remember that mages are diving into the truth that underlies this Fallen reality. Look to the descriptions of how each Path perceives the Supernal and its Arcana beginning on p. XX, to the Nimbus (or other aura) of the Mystery's creator, and to the themes and motifs you've devised for your chronicle and use those to color the information delivered via Mage Sight.

*Stephanie is creating a Mystery involving a powerful, alien spirit that is creating servitors by unravelling people's Patterns and stitching them together in bizarre ways. The actual spirit remains in the Shadows for now, but Stephanie expects her players to get their hands on one of its servitors in the next session. Since this isn't the result of Awakened magic, she can't fall back on Arcanum level as a guideline. The spirit that created this unfortunate wretch is Rank 3, though, which will work as a baseline. Since it's a non-Supernal Mystery, the base Opacity should be increased by roughly 1.5 times, which brings it to 5. That would work, but the whole reason Stephanie is putting this Mystery in the players' path is to get them interested in hunting down the big bad spirit, so she drops the Opacity by 1, for a final total of 4.*

## Surface Information

Surface Information represents the fundamental nature of the Mystery. It can be a high-level overview picked up first, before delving deeper into the Mystery, or it can represent the foundation of the Mystery not fully understood until it is partially or wholly dissected.

Mage, p. 94 describes the Surface Information that should be available for Supernal Mysteries. Here, we'll expand that to talk about Mysteries less easily classified than Awakened magic.

## Arcanum Purview

The first and most consistent piece of Surface Information that should be available when investigating a Mystery is under which Arcanum's purview it primarily falls. In fact, this Surface Information is available before the mage even engages her Focused Mage Sight. Active Mage Sight reveals the presence of an abnormal configuration of Arcanum energies. This is an extremely high-level overview, however. Active Mage Sight only reveals the most prominent Arcanum involved, usually the one most strongly associated with the effect of the Mystery rather than its cause. A faerie's death curse, for instance, initially registers as a Death effect rather than a Fate effect.

Revelation should always reveal the whole suite of Arcana under whose purview the Mystery falls. But what constitutes belonging to an Arcanum when the Mystery isn't a Supernal spell? The fundamental effect of the Mystery is your first and most obvious:

a convergence of ley lines that makes those in the vicinity more prone to anger echoes with Mind, while a storm that rages without end roils with Forces. The source of the Mystery also contributes; whatever other effect it has, a vampire's powers are always tinged with Death, and a spirit's influence with Spirit.

For most Mysteries, that will be enough, but just as Awakened spells can combine multiple Arcana for more complex effects, so can a non-Supernal Mystery. If that convergence of ley lines makes people more violent *and* makes them stronger in proportion with their anger, it would resonate with both Mind and Life. If the souls of the unquiet dead fuel the endless storm, it would resonate with Forces and Death.

What this Surface Information *doesn't* provide is how the Mystery uses those Arcana; for that, a mage must Scrutinize the Mystery or perform other experiments. Surface Information only provides the form, not the function.

## Resonance

The Surface Information of a spell includes its caster's Nimbus, assuming the spell wasn't cast as a rote. Mysteries with other origins instead reveal the resonance of their source. This might be the aura of a creature like a vampire or werewolf, the flavor of Essence stemming from a locus or spirit, or the resonance of a ley line. Just like a mage's Signature Nimbus, the information revealed should allow a mage to identify the same resonance if she encounters it again. Without Scrutinizing the Mystery fully, though, a mage can't always tell the difference between a Signature Nimbus and some other form of resonance.

However, if the source of the Mystery is obscured or hidden, whether by deliberate occultation or just by being the result of a long, intricate cascade of supernatural phenomena, make the Mystery's resonance part of its Deep Information. Consider making one or more Linked Mysteries to represent the root causes of the Mystery, and give leads pointing to them in the Surface Information.

## Age

This piece of Surface Information is unchanged for non-Supernal Mysteries. Unless the Mystery involves unusual application of the Time Arcanum, Revelation should discern its approximate age.

Mysteries from the Time Before, whether Supernal or not, never reveal their age as part of their Surface Information. Or rather, attempting to Reveal them yields confusing, contradictory information that seems impossible, the magical equivalent of attempting to divide by zero.

## Power Level

Revelation can expose the Practice used to cast a spell, or the Practice that most closely resembles the effect of the Mystery. It's worth noting that mages understand this in terms of Awakened magic, which doesn't necessarily translate into raw power. For example, a spirit's ability to Control its Influences is a ••• effect, but most closely corresponds to the Practice of Ruling, a •• Practice.

Even taking that into account, Surface Information only reveals the power level of the Mystery itself, not whoever or whatever created the Mystery. Getting a sense of the power behind the Mystery requires deeper investigation.

## Example Mysteries: Surface Information

*Cameron's Storyteller has an easy job of it: The Mystery of the archmage's door is, despite its creator no longer existing in this timeline, a Supernal spell. Revealing it uncovers the following information:*

- *It resonates with the Arcana of Mind and Time (due to the temporal editing that removed the caster from reality).*
- *Its age is best described as "not applicable;" the Supernal semiotics that illustrate age variously point to the door having existed from the moment of Belladonna's birth, six years in the future, and never having existed at all.*
- *The door is most closely linked to the Practice of Patterning.*

*The Storyteller briefly debates whether being removed from reality altogether is enough to obscure the archmage's Nimbus but decides it's more interesting to give Belladonna the Signature Nimbus of a mage who doesn't exist anymore as a plot hook.*

*Stephanie's warped spiritual experiment, meanwhile, requires a bit more adjudication. The Mystery clearly resonates with Spirit and Life, and Stephanie decides it also includes a bit of Fate as the victims' destinies get tangled up in odd ways. The alien spirit's resonance, a sense of numbing cold and inchoate fury, provides a nicely evocative fingerprint for her players to go hunting for. This hybrid was created about a month ago, and the mingling of two Patterns most closely resembles the Practice of Patterning.*

## Deep Information

Scrutinizing a Mystery pays dividends of information. Deep Information goes beyond the surface, moving from the *how* of Surface Information into the *what* and *why*. Understanding Deep Information is vital to getting Arcane Experiences from exploring a Mystery, and mages with an Obsession don't consider it resolved until they've unearthed every scrap of it.

## Distributing Deep Information

As described in **Mage**, p. 94, you have essentially three options for distributing Deep Information: all at once after a successful Revelation once the Opacity is reduced to 0 or parceled out automatically as Scrutiny lowers the Opacity. Finally, you can combine the two, doling out some aspects of Deep Information with each drop in Opacity but saving the key pieces for the final Revelation.

### All at Once

Holding off all Deep Information till the Mystery's Opacity is reduced to 0 can be risky, particularly if the Mystery has a high Opacity (which discourages players from trying to Reveal the Mystery straightaway), you might be looking at a large number of rolls with minimal new information being conveyed. Not only is that frustrating for the players, it undercuts the sense of

discovery and limits players' ability to follow up on other leads to help unravel the final mystery. This approach is best saved for low-Opacity Mysteries, but it can also work well with the optional Long-Term Scrutiny rule presented on p. XX.

Mysteries like this are like intricate puzzle-boxes, offering no hint as to their contents but allowing investigators to gauge their progress. For this reason, they make excellent McGuffins or vehicles for the deployment of a mid-chronicle plot twist. They're less well-suited to being the Mystery that drives play over the course of a chapter or story, but with liberal use of Linked Mysteries they can serve that function.

### Even Distribution

Distributing Deep Information at each reduction of Opacity gives a much stronger sense of progress and encourages players to engage with the Mystery as part of the overarching plot; upon hitting the threshold that reveals the Signature Nimbus of a spell's caster, the players might go and dig into the culprit's life to gain greater understanding (and a bonus to future Scrutiny rolls). It works best with higher-Opacity mysteries and those with Locked Opacity. When the investigator hits the Locked Opacity level, the associated Deep Information can point toward the Key Mystery.

While you should decide on the order in which the Mystery's Deep Information will be revealed when you build it, you're under no obligation to reveal information in the same order every time; tailor the information revealed to the needs of the story and to the investigative habits of your players. If they're easily distracted by fresh clues and tend to go haring off after new lines of investigation at the first opportunity, offer tantalizing but potentially misleading or dangerous information early in the process.

Consider also the nature of the Mystery you're designing; the story of the Mystery will often dictate which Deep Information is more readily apparent and which you should bury deeper.

### Trail of Breadcrumbs

Handing out some clues over the course of the investigation while saving major revelations for the end of the process provides a good mix of the previous options but relies on the Mystery having a major revelation to be impactful. Exactly what constitutes a major revelation depends on the chronicle: the kindly old Mysterium Councilor's Signature Nimbus on the jar full of stolen souls might qualify, as might the pre-Fall temple's wards being designed to keep things *in* rather than keep looters out. If you don't see one or more pieces of Deep Information that will dramatically shift the course of the story when it becomes known, you're better served with even distribution.

## Examples of Deep Information

**Mage: The Awakening Second Edition** presents a small selection of possibilities for Deep Information a mage might learn. This section expands that list.

Unlike Surface Information, which generally yields the same broad categories of data, Deep Information is less uniform. Some Mysteries might have only a single piece, while others can yield up a half-dozen or more. It's the Storyteller's call how much

Deep Information a Mystery should reveal. However, remember that Deep Information represents the total understanding of the Mystery; it's no fair introducing a surprise twist in a Mystery that's been fully Scrutinized. It is fair to hide Deep Information behind a Clash of Wills (as described in the Path to Jerusalem spell on p. 28), but not to withhold information outright.

- If the resonance of the Mystery is too obscure to be revealed as part of the Surface Information (see p. 31), Deep Information should reveal it.

- The specific nature of the Mystery, including the effects it has on the world around it. Even a self-contained Mystery like an esoteric grimoire or a fracture point in the fabric of Time, often has some influence on its surroundings, and many deep, powerful Mysteries come to someone's notice due to innocuous weirdness. "Specific nature" and "effects on the world" can be a single piece of Deep Information or two separate pieces. A mage might investigate a seemingly-minor "Mystery Spot" and discover that liquids flow uphill and perspective distorts in odd ways, but only realize on deeper investigation that this is because the Spot sits atop an Abyssal Verge of anti-Forces.

- A detailed analysis of the scale and general strength of the effect: how much longer the Mystery will last (assuming it has a finite duration), how large its sphere of influence is, and how powerful its effects are. This could be expressed in terms of damage inflicted or healed, penalties or bonuses levied, or any other game-mechanical effect. Its expression could also be more abstract, as in the intricacy of manipulated probabilities or how many of the dead will rise and devour the living when the planets align.

- In addition to recognizing the unique resonance of a Mystery, the mage can learn whether the Mystery is connected to a Mystery the mage has already Scrutinized. A case of spirit possession might link to a Locus by virtue of the spirit having crossed over from the Shadow there, while a potent magical item might be linked to the soul-theft that empowered it.

If the mage *hasn't* Scrutinized a connected Mystery, she might instead discover a hint that leads her in its direction.

- Whether the source of the Mystery is more or less powerful than the mage herself, as measured against her Gnosis, and by roughly how much. Mysteries that derive from characters with a Supernatural Advantage Trait measure that value against the mage's Gnosis, while Loci, Hallows, or Mysterious environs use the dot rating, or the level of any Environmental Tilt the Mystery creates. Supernal Mysteries, including Supernal Verges, entities, or Environments, always read as vastly more powerful than the mage.

- If the Mystery is related to, or caused by, one or more of the Realms Invisible, or if it has its origins in the physical reality of the Fallen World.

- How the Arcanum used relates to the Mystery; for example, using Death Sight to scrutinize a vampire's ghoul will reveal Deep Information relating to the undead blood in the subject's system, and any powers the ghoul has gained from it. Using Fate Sight to assess a changeling's powers will reveal that they are formed by mystical bargains.

- Actions involving the Mystery can be unlocked as part of Deep Information: An Iris that resists attempts to open it with Space magic, for example, might yield up the key to opening it.

## Example Mysteries: Deep Information

*Cameron's Storyteller decides he'll be doling out Deep Information about the Mystery Door successively, with each reduction of Opacity. He decides on the following information, in the following order:*

- *The origin of the Mystery is significantly more powerful than Belladonna (or pretty much any mage short of multiple-degree Mastery who Scrutinizes it).*
- *The Door connects to another Mystery, which the Storyteller will detail later.*
- *The Door connects Belladonna's Oneiros to someplace not a part of the Astral Realms (its impact on the world, and the Realm from which it originates).*
- *Another Mystery connected to the Door.*
- *The Door is permanent, and once opened will allow any Astral traveler to pass through to whatever lies beyond.*
- *A third and final Mystery connected to the Door.*
- *How to open the Door; prior to uncovering this piece of Deep Information, the Mystery Door Withstands any attempt to open it via sorcerous means with an effective Potency of 10.*
- *Finally, fully understanding the Door reveals that it means Belladonna's soul is intimately linked with that of the archmage whose Signature Nimbus the door bears: she is a part of him. The nature of their connection, as well as the archmage's identity, are further Mysteries to be developed as the chronicle progresses.*

*Since the Mystery has an initial Opacity of 7 and eight distinct pieces of Deep Information, the Storyteller decides to hand out one piece of Information each time the Opacity drops a level.*

*Stephanie's hybrid servitor will reveal the following Deep Information. Because this is a new and strange type of being, the Storyteller decides to withhold all the Deep Information until the Opacity is reduced to 0.*

- *The Source of the Mystery is roughly equivalent to a mage of middling power.*
- *The Mystery has partially unraveled the victim's Pattern and that of a spirit of wrath, then combined the two like a weaver merging two pieces of cloth. Despite outward appearances, this is not the result of simple spiritual possession or even Claiming.*
- *The interweaving is permanent and far more powerful than most spirit Manifestations.*

- *The Mystery originates from the Shadow, but it has a tinge of strange, alien Essence about it. (This is because the spirit that created the hybrid is one of the Moon-Banished, a spirit that spent aeons trapped on the Shadow reflection of the moon.) Discovering what that strange Essence means is another Mystery.*
- *In addition to fusing the unfortunate victim's body with spirit ephemera in a manner unlike Claiming, the Mystery causes the victim to "leak" Essence. This causes dormant Loci nearby to flare up and attract curious spirits, and possibly werewolves.*

## Supernal Ecologies

The Supernal World is more than a convenient metaphor for the Truth underlying the Fallen World. It has its geographies, its inhabitants, even its own weather – all of which are symbols of the Truth in their own right, and which can influence the Phenomenal World.

## Supernal Environments: Aedes

No mage has ever mapped a Supernal World; such a task may be impossible given human understanding of geography. Nevertheless, mages are aware of certain "environments" within the Supernal: places where the symbols of a given Path lie thick and its Realm exerts a stronger pull on the Phenomenal World. Some are permanent, or at least seem to be. Others arise only briefly or appear and vanish at auspicious times. Mages call them *Aedes*, after the Roman name for the dwelling place of a god. The Orders have catalogued many Aedes: the Tangled Road of rural Kansas, the Empty Shul in Krakow, the Queen of All Flesh who incarnates once a generation somewhere in Madagascar. Doubtless many more lie in forgotten places and discovering and mapping a new one is the sort of Mystery that can make an archaeomancer's career.

## Origins

Aedes (the term is both singular and plural) arise in places where the presence of a particular Arcanum is unusually strong. They are almost always natural occurrences; even the repeated casting of Master-level magic would require centuries to build up enough metaphysical weight to create an Aedes. Imperial magic

### Aedes vs. Supernal Verges

The difference between an Aedes and a Supernal Verge is small but significant: A Verge is a place where Supernal Reality intrudes directly upon the Fallen World. An Aedes is a place wholly within the Supernal which, while it has some influence on the Fallen World, has not "broken through." Many Aedes are found within Supernal Verges, however, which only serves to muddy the waters further.

### Aedes vs. Supernal Phenomena

The Supernal phenomena described beginning on p. XX are not all Aedes. An Aedes is a specific place with exceptional power within the Supernal. An Obrimos perceives every manifestation of Forces as a Mandala, but only Mandalas of exceptional power and influence can be labeled Aedes.

may be able to create them and given the preponderance of Aedes in ruins of the Time Before it's likely that pre-Fall mages could do so as well.

Some Aedes appear at the site of momentous events: the place where an Exarch's Ochema entered the world, or a decisive battlefield that changed the course of history. Others arise in places that seem innocuous, perhaps following the resonance of local Ley Lines or other occult geography. Still others are, as the name implies, the domains of powerful Supernal entities. Some aren't even fixed to particular places in the Fallen World but can be called forth much like a Supernal summoning.

## Nature

Every Aedes is unique, a singular manifestation of one of the Paths, with its own inhabitants, purpose, and symbolic truth. The Briar Garden in Oxford and the Forge of Dead Hephaestus on Lemnos are both Mists, or Aedes of Fate, but where the Briar Garden is a riotous maze of roses, acacias, and hawthorns where a magician once called her faerie lover into this realm, the Forge of Dead Hephaestus is a vast junkyard of rusted machinery and broken wonders where a dead god once forged artifacts that lead heroes to their destinies.

Aedes are wholly within the Supernal World; as such, only mages who have Active Mage Sight attuned to the appropriate Path can see them or interact with them. That's not the same thing as a mage including an Arcanum in her Mage Sight by paying Mana; an Obrimos who adds Fate to her Active Mage Sight still perceives the Aether's interpretation of Fate, not Arcadia's. The Obrimos in question can see Aetheric Aedes but remains blind to Arcadian Aedes.

Aedes rarely have a noticeable impact on the Fallen World directly. Some, particularly Aedes of the gross Arcana, cause minor strangeness like witch-lights or odd fluxes in probability, but their influence is more often felt in the resonance of the surrounding ley lines and their influence on Awakened magic.

Aedes are seldom uninhabited. As the name suggests, many are home to a powerful (Rank 5+) Supernal entity, and these ancient gods often have lesser servitors that dwell with them. These beings are far more active and engaged with the Fallen World than their kin; this makes them both easier to summon and more likely to notice a mage Scrutinizing a Mystery in the vicinity.

## Aedes as Mysteries

Every Aedes is also a Mystery waiting to be solved: deciphering its Truth unlocks a more potent or useful effect of its Environmental Tilt. You can use the guidelines for Building a Mystery beginning on p. XX to construct an Aedes' Mystery, but here's a guideline to get you started:

**Opacity:** 4

**Surface Information:** Arcanum Purview (obvious even without a Revelation), Age, Theme, Vastly Powerful.

**Deep Information:** Effects of the Environmental Tilt (Opacity 4), any secondary Arcanum associated with the Aedes (Opacity 3), Resonance of the most powerful inhabitant (Opacity 2), Conditions of the Aedes' appearance (if any) (Opacity 1), Full Understanding effect of the Tilt (Opacity 0).

## Systems

Aedes are represented mechanically by a pair of Environmental Tilts. The first, simply named Aedes, reflects the closeness of the Supernal to the Fallen and the increased activity of the Aedes' denizens. The second is a specific Tilt representing the environ the Aedes reflects. This Tilt includes an additional "Full Understanding" effect, which applies to mages of the appropriate Path who have fully Scrutinized the Aedes.

In both cases, the Tilts only affect mages of the relevant Path who are using Active or Focused Mage Sight, or who are actively engaged in a Supernal summoning (see **Mage: The Awakening Second Edition**, pp. 94-95). Mages of the appropriate Path can sense the presence of an Aedes with Peripheral Mage Sight, and the spells and Mage Sight of mages belonging to the appropriate Path behave strangely within the bounds of an Aedes.

Every Aedes has a Theme, a specific expression of its Arcanum's themes and purviews to which its effects apply. The Briar Garden's Theme is the concept of fated love; its effects apply to magics that ensure lovers will cross paths, romantic Destinies, and so on. The Workshop of Dead Hephaestus, on the other hand, has a Theme of tools of destiny; its effects apply to Fate magics that enhance tools or bring artifacts together with those meant to wield them.

One kind of Aedes is the sole exception to their Path-linked nature; the prolonged attention of the Exarchs on a place creates the complex, oppressive High Speech patterns of an Iron Seal. Seers take Iron Seal's appearance in all Supernal worlds simultaneously as a sign of their masters' Supernal dominance. Pentacle mages theorize it's more likely to be the result of multiple Exarchs, and note that other Exarchal manifestations, especially Ochemata, give rise to more usual, Path-Specific Aedes as well as the generalized Iron Seal.

The Aedes Tilts presented here are examples only: feel free to use them, along with the advice for creating Tilts on p. 290 of **Mage: The Awakening Second Edition**, as guidelines to construct your own.

## AEDES ENVIRONMENTAL

**Description:** The Supernal Realm is unusually close to the Fallen World here, and its denizens are more alert and receptive to the Fallen World. Mages of the appropriate Path can see the Aedes with Active or Focused Mage Sight and can sense it with Peripheral Mage Sight.

**Effect:** Any mage of the appropriate Path attempting to Scrutinize a Mystery within the Aedes is more prone to attracting Supernal attention. If the player has already made a number of Scrutiny rolls equal to the unmodified dice pool, a Supernal entity of the mage's Path takes note of the mage and may affect him with its powers as long as he maintains his Mage Sight.

If a mage attempts to summon a Supernal entity that dwells within the Aedes, subtract 4 successes from the total required (see Supernal Summoning, **Mage**, p. 94).

**Causing the Tilt:** Momentous events related to the Arcanum's purview, direct contact between the Supernal and the Fallen, or the presence of a powerful Supernal entity can all create an Aedes. Certain Imperial Practices can as well.

**Ending the Tilt:** Barring the use of Imperial Practices or Exarch-level magic, Aedes fade in their own time, appear and vanish according to Supernal alignments or conjunctions, or simply last forever. Destroying the Supernal entity that calls the Aedes home might also destroy it.

## THORNS ENVIRONMENTAL

**Description:** A decision has split time like shattered glass, silver lines marking the distinction between real and not real. Breath, flesh, love, time, reality itself – the edge of the Thorns cuts everything.

**Effect:** Time spells cast by Acanthus receive one free Reach, as long as the caster is using Active or Focused Mage Sight and the spell falls within the Aedes' Theme. In addition, any Acanthus whose player rolls an exceptional success while Scrutinizing a Mystery within the Thorns gains Connected Temporal Sympathy to the event that caused the Aedes until her Mage Sight ends.

**Full Understanding:** An Acanthus who fully comprehends a Thorns Aedes gives an Acanthus a deep awareness of the possible futures and now-rejected pasts within the Aedes' Theme. By spending 1 Mana, the mage gains the Informed Condition related to the Aedes' Theme. She must be within the Aedes and employing Active or Focused Mage Sight to gain this benefit and cannot benefit from more than one such vision per chapter.



**Causing the Tilt:** A place where many possible futures intersected (such as the site of a decisive battle or world-altering decision), a place where the Prophet altered the timeline, or the presence of a powerful Anachronism can all create a Thorns Aedes.

**Ending the Tilt:** Thorns may be unmade by undoing the event that caused them with Time magic, or by the destruction of the Anachronisms that call them home.

## MISTS ENVIRONMENTAL

**Description:** Fate lies heavy in the air, and the portents of doom are everywhere. The Mists rise from and around the destined, marking their import and shielding the moment of decision from prying eyes.

**Effect:** Fate spells cast by Acanthus receive one free Reach, as long as the caster is using Active or Focused Mage Sight and the spell falls within the Aedes' Theme. In addition, any Acanthus who rolls an exceptional success while Scrutinizing a Mystery within the Mists may gain a dot of the Destiny Merit – along with its doom – that lasts until the end of the Chapter.

**Full Understanding:** Full understanding of the Mists puts an Acanthus completely in tune with destiny as it flows from and through her. As long as she has a Destiny related to the Aedes' Theme, she may spend a point of Destiny to turn a successful roll into an exceptional success. She must be within the Aedes and employing Active or Focused Mage Sight to gain this benefit.

**Causing the Tilt:** The fulfillment of a powerful (•••••) Destiny, the manifestation of an Ochema of the Ruin, the appearance of an Ananke, or the presence of a powerful Moira can all create a Mists Aedes.

**Ending the Tilt:** The Mists can be driven away by the deliberate breaking of a great prophecy, or the destruction of the Moirae that call it home.

## CRYPTS ENVIRONMENTAL

**Description:** All is still and cold and silent, the world a vast mausoleum, a prison of attachments and broken dreams. The dead are all around, though they do not know that they are dead. Every house is a tomb, every city a necropolis.

**Effect:** Death spells cast by Moros receive one free Reach, as long as the caster is using Active or Focused Mage Sight and the spell falls within the Aedes' Theme. In addition, any Moros who rolls an exceptional success while Scrutinizing a Mystery within the Crypts gains the Steadfast Condition as she internalizes the need to detach from the physical world.

**Full Understanding:** Full understanding of the Crypts releases a Moros from her attachment to her physical body. By meditating within the Aedes, she may step outside her body and roam the world as a ghost. This functions as though the

mage had stepped through a Ghost Gate (as per the spell on p. 130 of **Mage: The Awakening Second Edition**) but counts as an Attainment rather than a spell.

**Causing the Tilt:** Places where many people died suddenly, where an Ochema of the Psychopomp manifested, or the presence of a powerful Specter may create a Crypts Aedes.

**Ending the Tilt:** The Crypts can be broken by the laying to rest of a powerful (Rank 4+) ghost, or the destruction of the Specters that call it home.

## SHELLS ENVIRONMENTAL

**Description:** Possession is an illusion. Consumption a cornerstone of the Lie. The things we love will break, be lost, die, and we will set them aside. The world is a garden of monuments to forgotten things, and all the treasure vaults are empty.

**Effect:** Matter spells cast by Moros receive one free Reach, as long as the caster is using Active or Focused Mage Sight and the spell falls within the Aedes' Theme. In addition, any Moros who rolls an exceptional success while Scrutinizing a Mystery within the Shells receives any and all Deep Information that falls under Matter's purview.

**Full Understanding:** Full understanding of the Shells reveals to the mage the power of letting go. By sacrificing an object she cares about, the mage gains the benefit of Soft Leverage on a Social maneuver whose intent matches the Aedes' Theme. It doesn't matter whether the target of the Social maneuver wants the object sacrificed; the mage's own detachment gives her the improved Impression level.

**Causing the Tilt:** Places devoted to the creation, destruction, or interment of precious objects, the site where an Artifact or Ochema of the Chancellor entered the Fallen World, or the presence of a powerful Apeiron may create a Shells Aedes.

**Ending the Tilt:** The Crypts can be broken by the claiming possession of a powerful (•••••+) Artifact, or the destruction of the Apeirons that call it home.

## AURAS ENVIRONMENTAL

**Description:** Thoughts and emotions echo endlessly in the void. Half-seen demons lurk in the corners of reality, hissing and gibbering, while a woman's best and worst natures literally wrestle over her. This is the mind externalized, the universal solipsism shorn of all its self-deceptions.

**Effect:** Mind spells cast by Mastigos receive one free Reach, as long as the caster is using Active or Focused Mage Sight and the spell falls within the Aedes' Theme. In addition, any Mastigos who rolls an exceptional success while Scrutinizing a Mystery within the Auras regains all her spent Willpower the next time she indulges her Vice.

**Full Understanding:** Full understanding of the Auras allows the mage an intuitive understanding of her own Mind. Within

the Aedes, she may meditate to enter the Astral as though she were in a Demesne. This additionally allows her to summon Goetia from the Astral (see the Mind ••• Goetic Summons spell on p. 162 of **Mage**). Finally, she may spend 1 Mana to grant any Goetia she summons the Materialized Condition for the Duration of the spell, even if she doesn't have Death •• or Spirit ••.

**Causing the Tilt:** Places perceived as having "minds of their own," where the Unity has touched the world, or the presence of a powerful Wraith may create an Auras Aedes.

**Ending the Tilt:** Auras may be stilled by completing an Astral journey of self-discovery, or the destruction of the Wraiths that call it home.

## CHAINS ENVIRONMENTAL

**Description:** A vast and intricate spiderweb of iron links connects everything. From each of those links, smaller chains spring, and from those emerge yet finer ones, on and on, a Mandelbrot fractal of sympathetic bindings. Something lurks at the center of the web, plucking strands that reverberate throughout the cosmos.

**Effect:** Space spells cast by Mastigos receive one free Reach, as long as the caster is using Active or Focused Mage Sight and the spell falls within the Aedes' Theme. In addition, any Mastigos who rolls an exceptional success while Scrutinizing a Mystery within the Chains also learns a piece of Deep Information for a Mystery sympathetically linked to the one she's studying.

**Full Understanding:** Full understanding of the Chains lets a mage know exactly which links to pluck to send her magic resounding across the world. When she casts a spell whose effect matches the Aedes' Theme, she may spend 1 Mana to have the spell also affect one of the subject's sympathetic connections. She does not need a Sympathy Yantra (or, indeed, the Sympathetic Casting Attainment) to do this, but the spell is still Withstood by the connection's strength as normal.

**Causing the Tilt:** Places where the three-dimensional reality of the Fallen World breaks down, places where the Eye has observed the world, or the presence of a powerful Imp may create a Chains Aedes.

**Ending the Tilt:** Chains may be broken by a mage shedding all her sympathetic connections within the Aedes, or the destruction of the Imps that call it home.

## MANDALAS ENVIRONMENTAL

**Description:** The energy of creation is not a wild and chaotic force, but a clockwork of unimaginable precision and intricacy. The secret names of nuclear fire, the angels of thunder and wind, the formulae by which atoms are bound together are all made plain.

**Effect:** Forces spells cast by Obrimos receive one free Reach, as long as the caster is using Active or Focused Mage Sight and the spell falls within the Aedes' Theme. In addition, any Obrimos who rolls an exceptional success while Scrutinizing a Mystery within the Mandalas may remove an Environmental Tilt such as Blizzard, Earthquake, Heavy Rains, or Heavy Winds within the Aedes' area.

**Full Understanding:** Full understanding of the Mandalas gives the mage an understanding of the signs and countersigns that govern the energies of the cosmos. As long as she is within the Aedes, she gains a +3 bonus to Counterspell Forces magic.

**Causing the Tilt:** Earth-shattering storms, places where the General's wrath has scorched the earth, and the presence of a powerful Seraph can create Mandalas Aedes.

**Ending the Tilt:** The Mandalas may be stilled by bringing a great storm to an end, or the destruction of the Seraphim that call it home.

## DOMINIONS ENVIRONMENTAL

**Description:** Power and authority are revealed by the signs of rulership. Glory is given to those who rule and reflected upon those who serve well. The crown, the scepter, the chain of office: these symbols reflect the raw Supernal Truth of magic.

Dominions are unique among Aedes because, while they are still Environmental tilts, they manifest around a single authority figure (or, more rarely, a group of authority figures) and those in her orbit. The Dominion often chooses a single individual in each generation in whom the Aedes' power is invested, and the Tilt spreads along that character's Sympathetic ties.

**Effect:** Prime spells cast by Obrimos receive one free Reach, as long as the caster is using Active or Focused Mage Sight and the spell falls within the Aedes' Theme. In addition, any Obrimos who rolls an exceptional success while Scrutinizing a Mystery within the Dominions gains a deeper understanding of the ties that bind. She gains the use of a single favor from the subjects of the Aedes, equivalent to one she could request with Status •••.

**Full Understanding:** Full understanding of the Dominion gives the mage insight into the authority that is hers by right of the Golden Key. Whenever she casts a Prime spell whose effect is in-line with the Aedes' Theme, she scores an exceptional success with three successes instead of five. She must be in the presence of the Aedes and use Active or Focused Mage Sight to gain this benefit.

**Causing the Tilt:** Extremely potent mystical anointings, the word of the Father, or the presence of a powerful Cherub can create Dominion Aedes.

**Ending the Tilt:** A Dominion may be ended by ritually sacrificing a potent symbol of leadership, or the destruction of the Cherubim that call it home.

## SINGING PATHS ENVIRONMENTAL

**Description:** A song heard in your bones, reaching up from the depths of the earth and down from the vaults of the sky. A sense of being pulled, drawn along an invisible road by the powers of the unseen world. The resonance of the whole world laid out just for you.

**Effect:** Spirit spells cast by Thyrsus receive one free Reach, as long as the caster is using Active or Focused Mage Sight and the spell falls within the Aedes' Theme. In addition, any Thyrsus who rolls an exceptional success while Scrutinizing a Mystery within the Singing Path gains the Aedes' resonance as a new Virtue. This extra Virtue lasts until the mage uses it to regain Willpower, or until the end of the story, whichever comes first.

**Full Understanding:** Full understanding of the Singing Path puts the Shaman in tune with the invisible world. As long as she is within the Aedes and is using Active or Focused Mage Sight, she can perceive and interact with both the Shadow and the physical world simultaneously.

**Causing the Tilt:** The actions of Shadow Gods (Rank 6+ spirits), Ochemata of the Nemesis, or the presence of a powerful Totem can create Singing Path Aedes.

**Ending the Tilt:** A Dominion may be ended by banishing a Shadow God to the Deep Shadow, or by the destruction of the Totems that call it home.

## ECSTASIES ENVIRONMENTAL

**Description:** Your heart hammering against your ribs. Adrenaline-bright pinpricks of panic, of hunger, of lust. Your muscles screaming, bones twisting like flags in the wind, pleasure and pain in equal measure.

**Effect:** Life spells cast by Thyrsus receive one free Reach, as long as the caster is using Active or Focused Mage Sight and the spell falls within the Aedes' Theme. In addition, any Thyrsus who rolls an exceptional success while Scrutinizing a Mystery within the Ecstasies becomes inured to pain. Until she next sleeps, she suffers no wound penalties and does not fall unconscious when her Health boxes are filled with bashing damage.

**Full Understanding:** Full understanding of the Ecstasies puts the Thyrsus in tune with her own instincts. She is so attuned to her body's signals that, as long as she is within the Aedes and is using Active or Focused Mage Sight, she applies the higher of her Dexterity and Wits to her Defense and scores an exceptional success on any perception actions with three successes instead of five.

**Causing the Tilt:** Places where the laws of nature are more powerful than those of reason, the Raptor's hunting grounds, and the presence of a powerful Beast can create Ecstasy Aedes.

**Ending the Tilt:** An Ecstasy may come to an end by deliberately and ritually rejecting instinct in favor of reason, or by the destruction of the Beasts that call it home.

## IRON SEAL ENVIRONMENTAL

**Description:** You are an insect, insignificant, a tiny mortal life who will live and die in the soul cage. This place has drawn the gaze of those who rule from the outside, whose design built your reality and from whom you will never escape. See their will written in the world and obey.

**Effect:** Spells cast in the Aedes that meet with its Theme receive one free Reach, as long as the character is using Active or Focused Mage Sight. In addition, any mage who rolls an exceptional success while Scrutinizing a Mystery within the Iron Seal understands the intent of the Exarchs' design. She learns what the Exarchs want in the form of a potential Mystery Command (**Mage**, p. 103) and may replace an Obsession with the Command as though she had the Prelacy Merit if she chooses to.

**Full Understanding:** Full understanding of the Iron Seal allows the character to invite the Exarchs into her Oneiros or remove their influence from her soul — she either gains the Exarchal Dreams Condition (p. 56) or removes it, her choice.

**Causing the Tilt:** Places where the Exarchs especially focus their attentions, exceptionally large Seer Demesnes, the Oneiros of Prelates, and the manifestations of Ochemata may all cause Iron Seals.

**Ending the Tilt:** An Iron Seal ends when the Exarchs demand it, and no sooner.

## Gifts of the Supernal: Boons

Supernal entities are powerful creatures, with command of the Arcana that match or exceed even gifted mages. But it's not only for their magical prowess that Supernal entities are summoned and bound. Each entity, whether Manifest or Recondite, possesses at least one power that ties to their symbolic truth, but which falls outside the purview of their Arcana ratings. Mages call these abilities Boons, and their libraries are filled with books of names and descriptions of the denizens of the Supernal, each with a description of their Boons and how they might be invoked.

### Systems

All Supernal entities possess at least one Boon. Entities of Rank 4 or greater possess an additional Boon per Rank above 3, and lesser entities may trade one dot of their primary Arcanum to gain an additional Boon.

Boons' effects are largely narrative, but some can be employed directly against mages and other beings. Unless otherwise specified, a Boon that directly targets another being becomes a contested action, with the entity rolling Power + Finesse contested by the subject's Resolve + Gnosis (or Power + Resistance if the subject is an ephemeral entity).

To use its Boons, a Supernal entity must be physically present in the Fallen World, usually as a result of a summoning (see **Mage: The Awakening Second Edition**, p. 94). The summoner must first pass the entity's trial (**Mage**, p. 96), and it can only invoke a Boon once per summoning.

Entities that have noticed a mage employing Focused Mage Sight are an exception and may use their Boons on the mage in question. Reports of them doing so are rare, however — Boons tend to be large-scale actions once an entity has been appeased via trial.

The following Boons are examples only, grouped by the types of entities (and their Secondary Arcana) likely to possess them.

### Angels

Angelic Boons are forthright, direct actions. They rarely take the form of blessings or gifts, but rather revelations of hidden truths or the excoriation of the wicked with fire and storm.

- **Death of Magic (Death):** The Angel may completely dispel any magic with a dot rating (i.e. Merit rating, Arcanum level of a spell, etc.) equal to or lower than its Rank. Its touch can also remove a dot of Gnosis from a mage if it succeeds in a contested action. If the mage is reduced to 0 Gnosis, she becomes a Sleepwalker.
- **Grace of the Sword (Fate):** The Angel may raise (or lower) the dot rating of an Artifact by a value equal to its Rank. A given Artifact may only benefit from this Boon once, though a second application can restore its original rating.
- **Scouring (Forces):** One of the most terrifying Boons, this power allows an Angel to unleash a divine storm of such magnitude and ferocity that it effectively destroys an area with a diameter equal to the being's Rank in miles. The destruction takes at least a day (40 days and nights is more traditional), during which time the area suffers whatever Environmental Tilts the Storyteller deems appropriate. Those within the area have a chance to escape, but even with a large-scale, concerted evacuation effort, many people will die. Angels reserve their most arduous Trials for those mages who would ask them to invoke this power, and never do so for any reason they deem unvirtuous.
- **Living Mana (Life):** The Angel may grant dots in any Physical Merit or create or cure a number of Conditions or Tilts relating to physical health (including Blinded, Deafened, Poisoned, or Sick), equal to its Rank. It may mix and match these effects; a Rank 3 Angel might cure Blinded, inflict Arm Wrack, and grant a dot in a Physical Merit, for example.
- **Sword of Righteousness (Matter):** The Angel may craft an Artifact that falls under its primary Arcanum's purview. The Artifact has a Merit rating of 3 + the Angel's Rank. A mage can only receive one such Boon from the Angels, and if she uses it in any way that contradicts her Virtue or the tenets of Wisdom as she understands them, she earns the wrath of the Aether. Any angel can perceive her and affect her as though she were using Focused Mage Sight. Only by undertaking a significant ritual of purification can she return to Heaven's graces.

- **Tutinary Wisdom (Mind):** The Angel may grant a number of Mental Skill dots equal to its Rank to a mage with a single touch. These Skill dots last until the end of the story.
- **Revelation (Prime):** The Angel may make visible to any mage with Active Mage Sight all ley lines, nodes, and Hallows within a number of miles equal to the entity's Rank. Any Mystery related to the flows of magical energy has its Opacity reduced by the Angel's Rank; if this reduces a Mystery's Opacity to 0, the Mystery is obvious to any mage who cares to Reveal it.
- **The Scepter of Heaven (Space):** The angel may grant a mage a scepter of authority which may act as a representational sympathy Yantra for any Space spell. The mage must still have a sympathetic connection to cast a spell at sympathetic range. The scepter may act as a Yantra a number of times equal to the Angel's Rank before it returns to the Supernal World.
- **Word of Binding (Spirit):** The Angel may levy a new ban on any spirit present, or on any spirit whose name it knows. For purposes of this Boon, a spirit's name is the appellation it's known by in the language of spirits. The new ban's severity is based off the Angel's Rank, not the spirit's (a Rank 4 Angel levies a severe Ban, even on a Rank 2 spirit). If the spirit is higher Rank than the Angel, this provokes a Clash of Wills.
- **Angel of the Hours (Time):** The Angel may send a number of individuals equal to its Rank through time to a specific hour (e.g. 6 in the morning on October 23, 1874). Each Angel has dominion over a single, specific hour; when that hour is up, the subjects return to the present. Any changes made in the past are permanent.

## Fae

The Boons of the Fae are subtle and fickle. Often, they come in the form of a token that one may redeem for a single great favor, but only once. It's on the summoner to know the right moment to use it.

- **Endings Unwoven (Death):** The Fae restores a dead person to life, either by rewriting her Fate or snatching her from Time before she died. Unfortunately, the Fae have no facility with the soul, which is *not* restored. The dead person returns with the Soulless Condition.
- **Weaving (Fate):** The Fae weaves a token given to a mage. As long as the mage wears or carries the token, she rearranges her dots in a number of Skills equal to the Fae's Rank + 1. The rearranged values are set when she invokes the Boon. For example, a mage summons a Rank 2 Moira to craft a Weaving that will redistribute her dots in Occult, Firearms, and Larceny. If the mage has Occult 3, Firearms 0, and Larceny 5, she now has 8 dots to distribute between those three Skills as she sees fit. The token unravels at the end of the story.

- **Yallery Brown (Forces):** The Fae grants its summoner an invisible helper, equivalent to the Retainer Merit with a number of dots equal to the Fae's Rank. However, the Retainer is not under the mage's direct control; it does whatever it deems necessary to help its master in whatever way the bargain specified. It doesn't care if Sleepers see it or indeed anything except accomplishing its tasks. In addition, when creating the Retainer, the Fae specifies a taboo that will deprive the mage of its service. Usually this taboo is thanking the Retainer. Should the mage violate the taboo, the Retainer either vanishes immediately or turns on its master, gaining a new purpose of making her life a living hell. Either way, the Retainer lasts until the next Solstice.

- **Pied Piper (Life):** The Fae gives the summoner a musical instrument – flutes and fiddles are the most common – which, when played, exerts a powerful pull on a particular kind of living thing. It might compel them to follow the player or provoke some other biological response. The instrument works perfectly for a number of uses equal to the Fae's Rank (the control is a contested action of the player's Presence + Expression vs. Composure + Gnosis). Thereafter, the kind of creature the instrument affects come to despise its owner, who must play simply to keep them from attempting to rip him limb from limb.

- **What's Old Is New (Matter):** The Fae can perfectly repair a broken or otherwise inactive object (including Artifacts and other unique items) by simply plucking it from a point in the time stream before it was damaged. The repaired object may only be used a number of times equal to the Fae's Rank, and then it's gone forever, beyond even the ken of an Anachronism.

- **The Gift of Gab (Mind):** The Fae replaces the mage's tongue with one of silver (though the change is only visible to Mage Sight). This adds dots equal to the entity's Rank to the mage's Subterfuge Skill but reduces any Social action that relies on honesty to a chance die. The Gift lasts until the mage successfully tells the truth three times.

- **The Well of Eternity (Prime):** By drawing on all the magic that ever has or ever will exist, the Fae may pay the entire Mana cost of a single spell whose highest Arcanum rating is equal to or lower than its Rank.

- **Babylon Candle (Space):** The Fae gives the summoner a candle which, when lit, transports the mage in the blink of an eye. A Moira's Babylon Candle can transport the mage to the location where any Destiny the mage names will be fulfilled, while an Anachronism's can send the mage anywhere in time. The Candle may be lit a number of times equal to the Fae's Rank before it burns out.

- **Thorn in the Side (Spirit):** The Fae may levy a new bane on any spirit present, or on any spirit whose name it knows. For purposes of this Boon, a spirit's name is



the appellation it's known by in the language of spirits. If the spirit is higher Rank than the Fae, this provokes a Clash of Wills.

- **Hourglass (Time):** The Fae gifts the mage with an hourglass which, when inverted, undoes a number of hours equal to the Fae's Rank. The mage may then dictate how events actually played out; she does not need to roll dice but can only describe actions she might possibly have taken. She could say "and then I solved the Mystery of the Blood Carbuncle" assuming she was able to study the magical gem, but not "and then Angrboda died of a heart attack."

## Demons

Demons' Boons expose weakness and make it into strength, they reveal secrets and destroy (or create) relationships.

- **Impostor (Death):** The Demon brings a single person back from the dead: sort of. This Boon requires a living, human sacrifice; the Demon touches the mage and plucks her memory of the dead person from her mind, then touches the sacrifice. The personality of the dead individual overwrites the sacrifice's mind, as constructed from the mage's memories. After a number of weeks equal to the Demon's Rank, the simulacrum turns spiteful, mocking the mage for her weakness and reminding

her of the magnitude of what she's done. Eventually the simulacrum becomes violent and devotes itself to killing the mage. Once the simulacrum dies, the mage's memories of the deceased go with it.

- **Everyone Cheats (Fate):** The Demon grants the mage a monkey's paw or similar animal appendage with a number of fingers equal to the Demon's Rank. If the mage bites off one of the fingers and swallows it whole, she may choose to move the result of a single action — hers or another's in the scene — one "step" in either direction along the roll results scale (failure to dramatic failure, failure to success, etc. — assume any basic success result scores a single success). The catch is that every shift is visited back on the mage in the following scene: if she turned her enemy's success into a failure, one of her successes in the next scene becomes a failure as well. Her own guaranteed successes become successes for her rivals, and so on.
- **Wisdom's Scourge (Life):** The Demon flays the flesh from the mage's bones in a long, agonizing process that inflicts no damage but debilitates the body. The mage shifts a single dot of a Physical Attribute to a Mental Attribute per level of the Demon's Rank. The effect lasts as long as it would take the mage to completely heal from having all her Health boxes filled with lethal damage (normally two days per Health box).

- **Into the Pit (Matter):** The demon lays hands on both the mage and another subject (who is entitled to a contested roll). If the Boon succeeds, both subjects are thrown into an extradimensional oubliette, a prison-Emanation of Pandemonium on this side of the Abyss. The two are locked in a cell together with no other company or stimulation for a number of years equal to the Demon's Rank; no matter what they do to each other, every "morning" both prisoners rejuvenate to the precise state they were in when they arrived. At the end of the sentence, the summoner may undergo the Trial again to extend the sentence.

- **Seek the Tutor (Mind):** The Demon points the mage to the location of the nearest mage capable of inducting her into a Legacy she names.

- **Will to Power (Prime):** The Demon blesses the mage with a pure clarity of purpose. As long as she is following one of her Obsessions, she adds a bonus equal to the Demon's Rank to all Mental actions. This Boon lasts until the Obsession is resolved or the mage turns away from its single-minded pursuits. In the latter case, she suffers the Demon's Rank as a penalty to all Mental actions until the Obsession is resolved.

- **Borrowed Lies (Space):** The Demon may grant the mage a sympathetic connection with anyone she names. The connection's Strength is equal to the Demon's Rank.

- **Awaken Ephemera (Spirit):** The Demon may raise a single ephemeral entity (ghost, spirit, Goetia, even angels of the God-Machine) to full, human-level sapience. The entity can truly reason and gains traits associated with a human mind like empathy and the ability to put other needs above its own. The effect lasts a number of days equal to the Demon's Rank.

- **Sins Revisited (Time):** The Demon casts the mage's perception back to the last time she committed an Act of Hubris and failed the detachment roll, forcing her to relive her actions over and over again. While the mage cannot change what happened, each time she relives the deed she may roll Resolve + Composure. If she accumulates a number of successes equal to 10 minus the Wisdom level of the Act of Hubris before the journey is over, she regains the lost point of Wisdom. She may relive the scene (and thus roll) a number of times equal to the Demon's Rank.

## Beasts

Beasts' Boons are simple, direct, and most often physical. They teach simple, profound truths and shear away the illusions of humanity.

- **Carrion Eater (Death):** The Beast consumes something dead or broken (a corpse, a drained Artifact, even a shattered belief system) and in so doing, reveals a new

purpose for it. The Boon transforms a number of Merit Dots equal to the Beast's Rank into some other Merit. A dead Retainer's flesh might be stripped from the bones and its skull dipped in the waters of Mimir's Well, turning it into a Library, or an Artifact's function might change completely.

- **Beast Brand (Fate):** The Beast brands the mage with the image of a totemic beast: a rat for treachery, a fox for cunning, a serpent for wisdom, and so on. The Mage gains Destiny dots equal to the Beast's Rank, which she can use when she acts in accord with her brand. The Brand lasts until the next Equinox.

- **Cleansing Storm (Forces):** The Beast unleashes a terrible storm that scours an area with a diameter equal to the Beast's Rank in miles. The devastation is not total, but it is severe: crops are drowned, animals die, structures less sturdy than solid stone are washed away. However, when the storm passes, the area will grow back twice as verdant as before; crops double their yield, animals are exceptionally large and healthy, and any source of disease or corruption (magical or otherwise) does not return.

- **Flesh of the Prey (Life):** By ripping the Beast apart (preferably with her bare hands), the Mage acquires hunks of meat of vials of blood equal to the Beast's Rank. Consuming a vial restores one to the peak of health. All wounds, diseases, Tilts, Conditions, etc., are immediately healed and resolved. If the consumer is a mage, her Mana pool completely refills. Even illnesses magic normally cannot cure are undone by this Boon.

- **Bolthole (Matter):** The Beast constructs a den, hive, or similar living area that exists within the Gauntlet itself. This bolthole is the equivalent of the Safe Place Merit with dots equal to the Beast's Rank and a specific entrance from the physical world. The bolthole lasts until the next Equinox.

- **Unleash the Beast (Mind):** Every human being within 100 yards x the Beast's Rank is transformed into the animal their soul most closely resembles. (Only roll the contested action for important characters in your chronicle; assume it automatically affects nameless extras.) The transformation wholly subsumes their minds, and at the next dawn, any survivors transform back with no memory of what happened outside unsettling dreams.

- **Supernal Evolution (Prime):** The Beast transforms the mage into pure Mana, allowing her to achieve her perfected state, before returning her to flesh. Mark all the Mana currently in her pool with an X; until she's spent all the marked points the mage gains the rote action quality on any non-spellcasting action whose unmodified dice pool is 8 or greater. However, for any action whose base dice pool is 3 or less, her failures are automatically dramatic failures.

- **Eagle Eyes (Space):** The Beast grants the mage the ability to see the solution to a single problem: where to find the answer to a Mystery or an enemy in hiding, for example.
- **Gauntlet Inversion (Spirit):** The Beast rips a section of the Shadow (about 10 yards x the Beast's Rank) and moves it into the physical world. The corresponding area of the physical world is transferred to the Shadow.
- **Reclamation (Time):** The Beast causes an area roughly the size of a large apartment building to suddenly be impacted as though it had been neglected for a number of centuries equal to the Beast's Rank: plants grow wild, stone erodes, animals move back in and reclaim the land, and so on.

## Shades

Stygia's Boons seldom give so much as they take away. The Leaden Coin is payment, and what it buys is freedom from attachment.

- **Forgotten Names (Death):** The mage may cast the name of a dead person into Stygia. Within days, memory of that person is erased entirely from the earth. This Boon does not "fill in" the gaps in anyone's memory, nor does it rewrite reality to undo the forgotten person's deeds.
- **Death Curse (Fate):** The Shade may speak a curse against a single target (it must have a Sympathy Yantra for the subject if he isn't present). Within 10 days minus the Shade's Rank, that subject will die. However, so will someone the summoner has an Intimate sympathetic link to. Only the initial target gets to contest the Boon; if the intended subject dies, there's no cheating the price.
- **Crucible (Forces):** The Shade bathes an object in the transformative fires of the dead forges of Stygia, removing its impurities and rendering it into a perfected version of itself. The transformed object grants the rote action quality on any actions made using it for a number of sessions equal to the Shade's Rank. Once this duration expires, it crumbles to dust — as does the summoner's most prized possession.
- **Abiogenesis (Life):** The Shade bestows life on inorganic or dead matter. While this can restore a human corpse to life, it will not be the same person that died (nor will it have a soul). The newly-created Life functions as a Retainer with dots equal to the Shade's Rank.

- **Built to Order (Matter):** The Shade creates one cubic meter per Rank of any Matter the mage specifies. This does not have to match any known form of matter; the Shade can create a material as soft as cotton and as conductive as gold, for example.

- **Let Go (Mind):** The Shade may take away a single Obsession from the mage.

- **Transubstantiation (Prime):** The Shade may transform inert matter into Tass; the Tass created holds 3 Mana per Rank.

- **Door to Hell (Space):** The Shade may open an Avernian Gate to anywhere in the Underworld: any location the mage names, or the vicinity of a particular ghost.

- **Omen Cleansing (Spirit):** The Shade may remove the Resonant, Open, or Controlled Condition on an area, provided the source of that Condition was an event that took place in the past. It can remove the murder resonance in a former serial killer's lair, for example, but not the forest resonance of a mountain glade or the sickness resonance in an active hospital.

- **Heals All Wounds (Time):** The Shade dims the memory of a recent tragedy. The death of a loved one, a personal failing, whatever it might be seems to be just a distant memory. This can resolve Mental Conditions, including those associated with Wisdom/Integrity loss.

## Merit: Supernal Watcher (●● or ●●●●)

**Effect:** Your character has drawn the attention of a Supernal entity from her Path Realm. This entity, while not precisely friendly, is invested in your character and wants to see her reach her full potential.

When you purchase this Merit, work with your Storyteller to design the entity using the rules on pp. 253-258 of **Mage: The Awakening Second Edition**.

At two dots, your watcher is a Rank 1 entity. At four dots, it's Rank 2.

When you attempt to summon your Supernal watcher, the summoning only requires five base successes instead of 10.

In addition, your watcher often appears to you in your Active Mage Sight. When you activate Active Mage Sight, you may spend 1 Mana to have your watcher appear. You can't communicate with it short of a full summoning, but if it's there and your Active Mage Sight is up, you can treat its presence as a Path Tool Yantra for spells using its main Arcanum.



Freezing rain rattled against the glass of Pete Quire's third-floor office, and a gust of chill wind through the ill-fitting sash window scattered student papers over the floor. Just one of the pains of working for a sixteenth-century Scottish university headquartered in eighteenth-century buildings. He sighed, gathered the papers, and rested a gold letter-opener on top of the pile. The clock on his ancient computer told him it was half past eight, well beyond time that he should leave the building lest security intervene. Beyond the window, lightning flashed and thunder rumbled. *Hell with this*, he thought. *Pub time.*

A low-ranked job in academia is one of the easiest places to observe a vow of (relative) poverty while maintaining access to the basic needs of humanity: food, shelter, research papers, and internet pornography. For Pete, that vow came with several drawbacks, not least of which was the need to afford rent, bills, and high-functioning alcoholism. He huddled down in his raincoat, but the weather knew better than to bother him as he walked. Damp but not soaked, he aimed for light, warmth, and the chance that someone else was buying.

He didn't make it. A cyclist ignored a red light on an otherwise empty street and slammed into Pete as he crossed the street. He fell hard against the curb, legs tangled in the bike, pain blooming in his chest. The cyclist was quick to her feet, running back as though the crash hadn't thrown her ten feet down the road.

"What the fuck do you think you're doing?" She tried pulling the bike, but it wouldn't budge. The movement made his legs hurt.

"Me? You're the idiot who jumped a red." He reached down to extract himself. Something about the bike felt odd, symbols welded on to the steel. His vision blurred, and he saw Truth. This wasn't just a bicycle. Someone was playing silly buggers, and for once it wasn't him.

She saw the electric blue sparks in his eyes and recoiled. Water plastered her hijab to her head and dripped off her chin as she looked down at him. "Do we have a problem, angel-fucker?"

He stood, hands still on the bike. "The Fool trusting chance instead of the rules of the road? Do you think I'm a lucky find?"

"You wish." The threads of gold in her headscarf writhed. "Give me back my bike and you'll forget you ever saw me."

He felt the surge of magic around her and flicked his fingers dismissively. Lightning flashed across the sky and fire crackled around his left hand, fed from the power his self-enforced vow had gathered. "You're trying a Jedi mind trick on an Obrimos in a storm?"

She at least had the good graces to look scared as he kindled fire around his hand. "I know I didn't look where I was going, but you want to fight over it?"

He cracked a smile. "Just showing off." He took out a battered pack of cigarettes, lit one with the flame, then extinguished his hand. "I'm in no mood for a fight, especially in this weather. Look, you're obviously running from something, and I don't like knowing that this city has something worth running from. Buy me a coffee and tell me the story; we'll call it even."

# CHAPTER TWO

# THE

# MAGE'S

# TOOLS

*Never underestimate the ridiculous things that have been done  
in the name of religious-semantic obscurity.*

— Kate Griffin, *A Madness of Angels*

A magician's tools are semiotic in nature, using the meaning and symbolism of the Fallen to manipulate the Supernal. As below, so above. The Yantras, Instruments, and Chains of the Awakened are but the most common mystic instruments. Mages draw power from vows and obligations, combine individual tools into rituals far beyond the capacity of a single mage, draw on the symbols and practices of science, philosophy, and religion, and even use their very Nimbus to provide sympathetic echoes from the Fallen.

While magical tools are enhancements to a mage's will rather than empowered acts of magic themselves, that doesn't make any given tool superfluous. A physicist may be able to solve a time-dependent Schrödinger equation with no more than a pencil and paper, but a calculator — or a computer — makes the process faster, easier, and more reliable. Yantras and their ilk perform the same function for a magician. Unlike a calculator, most magical tools aren't universal. An Obrimos cannot take a Thyrus' ritual knife and use it as the Thyrus does; a knife has a different meaning for both mages, and the materials, shape, and form all affect how an individual mystic uses a given tool.

This chapter explores the rich tapestry of magical tools, re-examining the mystical uses of place and time, sympathy and sacrament, and adding new items to a magician's toolbox. Some mages aren't organized enough to reinforce an obligation, others never master the careful planning necessary for a grand ritual, but the options remain open for those willing to use them.

## Correspondence and Symbols

**Mage: The Awakening Second Edition** offers a brief look at Path, Order, and Patron tools starting on page 119, but it does not tell the full story. Certain symbols so resonate in the Supernal that they have become part of Fallen occultism. Coins, cups, mirrors, rods, and weapons show up in the lore of many cultures and mystical traditions, though they may not have the forms that a sleeper knowledgeable in Western occultism might recognize.

A mage, however, draws meaning from her cultural milieu — at least when she first wields magic. In time, she comes to understand the symbols' Supernal meaning, and she grows proficient in using any symbols and signs from Fallen occultism that draw on the same semiotics. In that way, she cuts away the flesh of the Fallen World to reveal the Supernal bone within.

## Path Tools

The path tools detailed in **Mage** give an overview of the most common ways in which each path adorns or creates its magical tools. Not to be constrained, the five tools — coins, cups, mirrors, rods, and weapons — may take on other forms, either made of new materials, forged into new shapes, or adorned with Path-appropriate decoration.

Path tools expand beyond the classical five. Some places call to the semiotics of the Paths, allowing a mage to treat being in that place as an environmental Yantra. A mage may surround herself with items representing classical elements or wait for times when her Path's planet is ascendant. She may grow plants and keep animals appropriate for her Path or decorate her magical tools with images of said animals.

Many mages accept modes of transport as an 'unofficial' Path tool. While not as cemented in the Fallen World as the original

five, their usage over the centuries has become so ubiquitous that many find it hard to argue with their inclusion. When used in magic, vehicles represent both motion and freedom from restraint. Whether she's pedaling a bicycle through a busy city or soaring above in a police helicopter, the mage hasn't anything holding her back.

The chart below presents an expanded list of possible path tools. Any of these tools count as a Path-related magical tool when working out a character's Yantras.

CLASSICAL TOOLS	ACANTHUS	MASTIGOS	MOROS	OBRIMOS	THYRSUS
<b>MATERIALS</b>	Glass, crystal, silver	Iron, brass, leather	Lead, bone, gems	Steel, petrified wood, gold	Wood, copper, stone
<b>TOOL QUALITIES</b>	Reflective	Worked	Buried	Perfected	Natural
<b>TAROT</b>	The Fool	The Devil	Death	Strength	The Moon
<b>PLACE</b>	Waterfall	Forge	Mausoleum	Spire	Cave
<b>CHINESE ELEMENT</b>	Wood	Water	Metal	Fire	Earth
<b>WESTERN ELEMENT</b>	Air	Void	Earth	Fire	Water
<b>WEAPON</b>	Bow, rapier, precise weapons	Curved sword, whip, cruel weapons	Hammer, mace, crushing weapons	Double-edged sword, spear, noble weapons	Axe, sling, hunting weapons
<b>COLOR</b>	Green/Blue	Black	Gray	White/Yellow	Red/Brown
<b>JEWEL</b>	Emerald	Topaz	Diamond	Ruby	Sapphire
<b>PLANT</b>	Bramble	Nightshade	Yew	Oak	Vine
<b>ANIMAL</b>	Bird	Snake	Moth	Dog	Cat
<b>MYTHIC BEAST</b>	Unicorn	Manticore	Basilisk	Hippogriff	Minotaur
<b>FRAGRANCE</b>	Cedar	Sulfur	Cinnamon	Saffron	Musk
<b>FABRIC</b>	Wool	Silk	Linen	Fleece	Fur
<b>VEHICLE</b>	Ship	Palanquin	Wagon	Chariot	Mule
<b>PLANET</b>	Venus	Mars	Jupiter	Saturn	Moon
<b>FOOD</b>	Fruit	Meat	Vegetable	Bread	Wine

# Ars Novum

In addition to broadening the scope of magical tools, some mages deliberately try to find mystical meaning in objects thoroughly grounded in the modern world. So many of the Path tools that a mage uses have gone unchanged through the centuries, yet the Fallen World has moved on. Surely the tools of magic have moved on as well? These tools, part of a fiercely modernist technostic way of magic called the Ars Novum, draw on items from the last hundred years that resonate with the Paths.

Though some believe that the Ars Novum is the primary – or sole – practice of the Free Council; in truth, most of its adherents come from the Diamond Orders. Techné grounds Libertine magicians in the magic to be found in the Fallen World already. They're more likely than other mages to use classical magical tools simply because they work in the ways and means of sleeper occultists who believe those same tools bear power. The Diamond, however, have no such ties.

	ACANTHUS	MASTIGOS	MOROS	OBRIMOS	THYSUS
COINS	Defaced silver dollar, poker chips	Coinage from oppressive regimes, souvenir penny from a famous prison	Small semi-precious gemstones, spent bullets	Computer processors, SD cards	Bottle caps, dog tags
CUPS	Plastic novelty cup, whiskey glass	Prisoner's tin cup, Soviet-era vodka glass	Cup of a dead person's last drink, china coffee mug	Religious chalice, souvenir mug	Survival canteen, homemade cup
MIRRORS	Make-up compact, silver hand mirror	Polished brass plate, two-way mirror	Surgical light fixture, polished grave markers	Self-facing camera, steel shaving mirror	Reflective glass, polished copper plate
RODS	Minute-hand of a clock, halogen flashlight	Bar from a jail cell, set of scales	Gravedigger's shovel, ivory-headed cane	Radio antenna, depleted uranium	Length of copper pipe, wooden staff decorated with urban detritus
WEAPONS	Switchblade, blackjack	Brass knuckles, machete	Scalpel, improvised weapon	Explosives, taser	Survival knife, poison
VEHICLES	Bicycle, classic Beetle	Motorcycle, sports car	Ambulance, hearse	Helicopter, black sedan	ATV, classic Land Rover

## Obligation

Vows and obligations allow a mystic to draw power down from the Supernal by accepting limits in the Fallen. By drawing the Lie close to herself, she exposes tiny fractions of truth, through which she can extract Mana. Whether a character chooses a life of poverty or studiously avoids violence, she must limit herself to draw on power.

A mage taking on an obligation must do so voluntarily: a mystic doesn't gain power just for living on the poverty line. She must choose to do so, deliberately avoiding what chances the universe offers her (if any) to change her lifestyle. Some mages think of vows and obligations as contracts with the Supernal, and in a way they're right – and as contracts, they come with penalty clauses. While violating the vow by mundane means costs the mage its benefits, using magic to cheat her way around a hardship she has agreed with the universe invites magical retribution in kind.

A mage who chooses an obligation must do so consciously and of her own free will. She must live within its terms for a week before she gains any benefit. After a week – timed down to the minute – she gains the Obligation Condition. At the end of each week that she maintains that Condition, she gains a point of Mana. Giving up a vow cuts her off from power but allows her to relax, in the same way as an alcoholic falling off the wagon, or a smoker lighting up after a month. On resolving the Condition, she regains a point of Willpower.

The mage's actions have consequences. Should she use magic to break her vow, or to skirt the letter of the law, she resolves the Condition but does not gain Willpower. Instead, she loses all her stored Mana – though the rush of breaking a vow sworn between Fallen and Supernal is enough that a mage can use it as a Yantra (see p. XX for more).

## Laws of Obligation

The universe has laws that even the Wise must obey. When a mystic swears a vow, she must hold to the rules, or she will face the consequences. A mystic does not know these rules instinctively, but her teacher or mentor will inform her in due course. Only those who have no mentor can plead ignorance, but the Supernal is a harsh master and ignorance of the law is no excuse.

## The Law of Significance

The first universal law governs the nature of a vow. The Law of Significance states that any vow must have a significant effect upon the mage's life. A mage born mute, who has not used magic to restore his ability to speak, gains no benefit from a vow of silence – and even were he to do so, he would first have to become so used to speech that it was second nature.

Further, a magus cannot burden himself with a restriction based on his mystic capabilities. A vow must handicap the mage in the Fallen; merely limiting his ability to draw on the Supernal is not enough. As such, many mages take on vows that resonate

with a particular Fallen culture — that culture says, “this is a vow you take or an oath you swear that has a significant impact on your life,” and the mage agrees.

The universe does not, however, gradate significance. To one wizard, a vow of poverty means giving away her possessions, wandering the world with only the clothes on her back — and perhaps a way to beg enough money for the basics, so as not to fall foul of the Law of Transaction. To another it means having a job and possessions but earning so little that he can’t afford to pay bills and to eat more than a couple of times a week. While each mage has a different view of poverty, each faces significant hardships, and that’s all the universe cares about.

## The Law of Transaction

The second universal law governs the interaction between Supernal and Fallen in the nature of a vow. The universe abhors a cheat and will strike down a hubristic mage who decides to circumvent her vow through mystical means. While a mage can stop upholding a vow at any time through mundane means — such as a pacifist landing the first punch — she cannot use magic. To do so implies that the mage is happy to use her connection to the Supernal to avoid the hardship that the Law of Significance requires.

Her presumption faces a simple and direct punishment: she loses all her stored mana. As the decision to take a vow is entirely voluntary, it is not a true Act of Hubris to break the vow, but mystic legerdemain is still a betrayal of both the letter and the spirit of the vow.

The Law of Transaction doesn’t have strictly-defined limits, for then legalistic mages would game the edge cases. It applies to each mage depending on the vow she swore and how she interprets it. Almost any mage who, having sworn an oath of silence, uses Mind magic to make people perceive her to speak is breaking this law, but one mage who instead uses a spell to force comprehension of sign language on her audience can get away with it as her vow is sworn in the sense of quiet contemplation rather than avoiding communication. Another, who swore his vow in the sense of separating himself from the world, finds that the same spell breaks his vow.

## Example Vows

While some obligations are common to members of a certain Path — many Acanthus take on a vow of chance at some point in their lives — a mystic’s choice of vow is ultimately a personal decision. She makes the vow based on her life so far and her understanding of both magic and her place in the world. An Obrimos who takes on the vow of chance may make bets that he believes rely on skill as much as chance (such as poker or sports betting) to demonstrate that he is better than the random nature of the world.

## Abstinence

While the modern world defines a vow of abstinence as a vow of chastity, it applies to deliberately avoiding a situation or substance in such a way as to limit the mage’s life. Some

wizards try to use this vow to break their addiction to alcohol, drugs, or nicotine, though in that case the obligation only remains until the mage no longer feels the burning need in her gut. For some, maintaining sobriety is a serious challenge for years, while another feels no need to take another drink after a couple of months.

Whether a mage goes without sex, quits smoking, or becomes vegan, her vow applies while it causes her some amount of hardship — per the Law of Significance. Once the mage is used to her abstinence, her vow becomes meaningless. Some take the chance to indulge once again, to renew their vow. Others feel that the benefit of abstinence is such that they have no need to backslide.

## Assumption

Some mages deliberately choose to take on a vow of social or physical hardship, often using Life magic to alter their bodies into a form less accepted in their broader culture. The mage might change her skin color or gender, make herself very old or take a body below the age of majority, or taking on a physical disability — anything that limits her ability to interact with the Fallen World. The change must be one that would negatively impact her life; a white mage who takes on an African-American body only satisfies the Law of Significance if the culture around him is racist against African-Americans (though that’s true for much of the “developed” world.) Some go so far as to change their gender because of their mystic preconceptions of transgender people.

Almost all mages who take on a vow of assumption are straight, able-bodied men of the most privileged racial groups of their culture. They overwhelmingly either do not realize or do not care that what they take on by choice is an inherent part of other peoples’ identities. The number of mystics who spend time as tourists among the less privileged has dropped precipitously as the younger generation of mages point out that mystic cultural appropriation is bullshit. A handful of mages who are born outside the dominant social identity play up their outsider nature, embracing the social taboos that they break in order to take on this vow. A black rights activist who speaks out, making himself a figurehead for racial tensions in his locale, takes on a vow of assumption — but even that plays into the idea that the status quo is somehow natural, and challenging it is a mystic act.

## Chance

A mage who takes on an obligation to chance takes risks and accepts whatever fate has for her. She may gamble compulsively, making bets with cabal mates on trivial matters and playing online poker in her spare time, or she may live her life by omens and signs rather than making rational choices — buying a car based on the birds sitting on the roof rather than any practical concerns. While some Acanthus take on vows of chance, many consider such a vow too dangerous, as it can limit her most useful Arcana — many uses of Fate breach such a vow.

The Law of Significance means that the mage has to leave serious parts of her life up to chance. It’s not enough to wager

ten bucks on a ball game unless that money's all he had to afford dinner that night. He also can't go out of his way to avoid taking a chance or seeing an omen — staring at the ground as he walks to avoid seeing signs in the movements of clouds.

## Honesty

A mage under a vow of honesty cannot lie. The exact parameters of the vow vary — one mystic will not utter a false statement, even a true statement out of context, but can lie by omission all she likes. Another counts even lies by omission as outright falsehoods but has no problem with using double meanings to deflect and avoid questioning. Still others practice radical honesty, not only refusing to tell a lie but directly voicing their feelings without holding back. The *Mysterium* encourages devout members seeking to rise in the *egregore* to take a vow of honesty regarding magical matters in the same way as a Catholic priest taking a vow of chastity, and the popular image of a high-ranking *Mystagogue* among the Orders includes that honesty to the point that one not practicing it comes as a surprise.

The significance of obligate honesty most often manifests in strained relationships and awkward social encounters. Most social interaction relies on at least some amount of falsehood, even if it's just ducking out of meeting someone because of "scheduling conflicts." For mages, illusions and other spells that manipulate a victim's senses cheat the oath — and being unable to deny that a given effect was the result of magic only causes more problems.

## Managing Appropriation

Of all the vows in this chapter, a vow of assumption is the one with the greatest chance of causing real problems for the players at the table. Any mage who uses magic to live as a less privileged member of society in exchange for mystic power has a real chance of rubbing people the wrong way. Whether the character means it to be or not, just taking the vow is bigoted against the group in which the mage is a tourist. Even for a mage who is born poor, a vow of poverty is a choice, but a female mage doesn't choose to remain female except in the most misogynistic sense, and a deaf mage's lack of hearing is not some "mystic handicap" but a part of who he is at a fundamental level.

Whether you're a player or a Storyteller thinking of introducing a character who has used magic to change himself to take on this vow, think very carefully about what that says about the character's attitude towards the group he appropriates. Talk to the other players at the table and make sure that they are okay with introducing such a character — and if they're not, don't include the character. Never just assume it's okay.

## Identity

Sometimes called the Oath of Masks by the Guardians of the Veil, an identity vow requires the mystic to take on a specific identity — cutting all ties to her previous identity and living an entirely new life. The start of the vow involves creating the new identity — finding or forging new documents, acquiring a new place to live, and severing ties with his previous life. Because this is part of the vow, she cannot use magic to help create the new identity.

Most mages don't maintain a vow of identity for long, instead using it as a time to disconnect from the occult world and gather mystic power for a ritual working. Those who invest too much in an Oath of Masks can have a hard time maintaining relationships with other mages, sometimes allowing their different identities to draw them to different cabals.

## Indulgence

The opposite of a vow of abstinence, a character who takes on an obligation of indulgence cannot pass up a chance to indulge a specific vice. The Law of Significance applies as ever — even if the vice isn't actively destructive, it has to have a significant impact upon the wizard's life. Some turn to alcoholism or drug use, others compulsively gamble, while still others commit serial adultery.

One mage taking on this vow can't walk past a bar without a quick shot, while another maintains a gentle buzz all day with the assistance of a hip-flask. Another mage can't miss a back-room poker game, though unlike a wizard taking on a vow of chance he can use magic to fix the results — at least until the mob take notice of his winning stream.

## Pacifism

A pacifistic mage swears an oath against violence. One forswears all violence, seeing it as giving in to humanity's baser state, but can happily use magic to make it harder for opponents to hit him. Another can defend herself if she does not strike the first blow, but holds that magic stopping her attacker from striking is in and of itself an attack.

Pacifist vows only benefit those mages who regularly find themselves in dangerous situations — though given their addiction to mystery, that's the base state of most of the Wise. Many *Obrimos* attempt a vow of pacifism for a time, to test themselves in a situation where they cannot bring their full power to bear. Of course, when they break their vow with magic these *Theurgists* go loud, blowing their gained *Mana* in incredible displays of power.

## Poverty

Obligate poverty doesn't mean that the mage does without possessions entirely, or even that she divorces herself from the burdens of capitalism. She may be on welfare or working an under-paid job, without enough money to keep a roof over her head and food on her plate. The exact point where magic is a sleight of hand against her obligation varies with the vow.

A mystic who gives up all her possessions to remind herself of the transience of material goods can likely use spells to abate hunger but not to guarantee shelter or to find a specific item. One whose idea of poverty is grounding himself among the working classes cannot use magic to provide food or shelter — while he may convince friends by talking, he can't use magic to enhance his attempts — but he can own possessions.

Some mages, especially Thyrsus, take a specific form of the vow that focuses on self-sufficiency, growing and hunting their own food, making their own clothes, and building their own shelter. Though they can reinforce all these activities with magic, any time they rely on others for their basic needs or use magic to replace their own efforts they are in breach of the oath.

## Silence

Mages swear oaths of silence for many reasons, mostly around mindfulness and contemplation. One mage may swear the oath so that he pays greater attention to the world around him, only communicating through sign or writing on a pad when necessary to force him to consider whether speaking is strictly necessary. Another uses the vow to enforce a separation from the world, allowing him to focus his thoughts on the Supernal, so cannot communicate with any kind of language. While those who take a former vow can still make themselves understood, the latter is much harder to uphold in the modern world. Those who intend to hold to the vow for long often sequester themselves as hermits, in convents or monasteries, or in cloisters with other mages who have sworn similar vows. Mages of a less-focused bent find it hard to maintain any vow of silence, as it's so easy to break even without magic.

## Storytelling Vows

Players and Storytellers need to be on the same page where vows and obligations are concerned: a vow isn't a source of free Mana. By taking a vow, the player accepts that the Storyteller will challenge her character's choice. As a rough guide, the Storyteller should ensure that the character faces a situation where breaking her vow would be beneficial at least once per session. Some vows don't need this limitation — vows of pacifism, for example, will usually turn problematic as the story progresses, while a vow of silence causes problems even for a mage who can sign when she's dealing with the mundane world. For all that she can communicate, she must either use the other characters as interpreters, or magically provide her audience with the ability to comprehend her.

Storytellers need to be careful with the Law of Transaction. It is explicitly not an excuse to punish players. When taking a vow, the player needs to describe what the character is trying to achieve, so both she and the Storyteller have an idea of the thinking — and the symbolism — behind the vow. In return, the Storyteller should warn the player when he believes that a character's actions or her magic will breach the vow. The player can then either re-think the action, explain (briefly) why it fits within the constraints of the vow, or take the action and damn the consequences. That way, she always makes a conscious choice when casting a spell that will strip her character of all his mana.

# Dedication

A mage creates a dedicated magical tool when she synchronizes one of her existing magical tools to her nimbus, but that is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to dedicating magical tools. Some mages are so in tune with their nimbus that they can use the residual traces of their own magic on a person or object as a magical tool, though using their own magical fingerprint has its own risks. Others enmesh more than one tool with the power of their nimbus, dedicating them both though losing a measure of power when casting with only one. Others go so far as to use soul stones (usually but not always their own) as a dedicated magical tool.

## Dedicated Tools

A Dedicated tool is more than just a magical tool that synchronizes with the mystic's Nimbus. It is part of her Nimbus, and a mage who Dedicates a tool but does not use it often can feel hollow or otherwise troubled, like she is ignoring a part of herself. Worse, losing her Dedicated tool or having it fall into the hands of another mystic is like stripping a tiny piece of her link to the Supernal, and she will not be whole until she recovers it — or Dedicates a new magical tool.

Dedicated tools are not magical in and of themselves, unless the mage chooses to make it so. A Botswanan Libertine whose Techné is the magic of the Sangoma does not create magic just by tapping her drum. Instead, the sound of the tapping and the feel of that drum form part of her Signature Nimbus, the conduit that directs the power of the Supernal into the Fallen World. As such, Dedicating a magical tool is akin to finding a piece of a puzzle that the mage did not know was missing — but will notice every time she does not have it.

To create — or recreate — a Dedicated tool, the mage must use it as a Yantra in every single spell she casts over the course of a month. A cocky mage who tries to game the requirements, only casting one or two spells over that period, finds that it is not enough. The tool needs time to fit into the mage's Nimbus, to synchronize with her soul and find its place in her magic. In the meantime, while she gains the benefit of her chosen tool as a Path or Order tool it gives her no bonus for being Dedicated.

Some mages attempt to Dedicate more than one magical tool at the same time. This provides her with greater power when using more than one tool, but it limits her abilities when she has only one — or none — of her Dedicated tools to hand. She must use both magical tools in every spell she casts for a period of at least a month. Once that is complete, using both magical tools when casting a spell reduces the Paradox pool by three dice instead of two, and she can use one or both as Path or Order tools as appropriate, though each Dedicated tool takes up a Yantra slot. Most importantly, if a spell using both Dedicated tools has its Paradox pool reduced to zero or fewer dice, it cancels the Paradox instead of rolling a Chance Die. If she is only able to use one of her Dedicated tools, she can either use it to reduce her Paradox pool or as a Path or Order tool, but not both. Should she cast without either Dedicated tool, she has more

of her Nimbus unavailable than other mages and increases her Paradox pool by two dice on spells that already risk Paradox.

Multiple dedicated tools do come with another drawback — if another mage steals both Dedicated tools, spells cast by the thief with her as the subject at sympathetic range aren't Withstood by sympathy.

## Signature Nimbus

Some mages invert the power of Dedication, using the traces of their own Nimbus upon the Fallen World as a Yantra in and of itself. Effectively, such a mystic uses the item's connection to his Nimbus to synchronize it with his magical nature, forcing it into a role similar to a Dedicated magical tool.

A mage can use any item touched by her Signature Nimbus as a magical tool in the same fashion as a Path or Order tool, as long as the touch of her magic still lingers, as long as she has a basic understanding of the Supernal truths in question. She might have deliberately imprinted her Signature Nimbus into the object, or perhaps it is the detritus of a working by a powerful mystic. Using such an object as a Yantra burns the residual energies out in a flare of power.

Using an item bearing the mage's own Nimbus as a Yantra adds one die to the spellcasting roll. All traces of the mage's Nimbus evaporate from the item after the casting.

## Soul Stones

Items imbued with a fragment of a mystic's Awakened soul make for powerful Yantras indeed. She can use her own soul stone in place of a Dedicated magical tool in any working, though she does not gain the bonus for using multiple Dedicated tools unless she expends further time and effort to Dedicate her own soul stone. A handful of mages go so far as to Dedicate another mage's soul stone to their own Nimbus, synchronizing the power of two Awakened souls into an incredibly powerful magical tool.

Systems for using a soul stone as a Dedicated magical tool are on p. XX. If a Mage Dedicates a soul stone in addition to another magical tool, she gains the Chance Die cancellation for using two Dedicated tools but does not reduce the Paradox pool beyond the -3 modifier for using a Dedicated soul stone. If she can only use the soul stone, she reduces the Paradox pool as normal, but does not cancel Paradox Chance Dice — the soul stone is powerful, but she is still casting with a part of her magical self missing.

A hubristic mage may try to Dedicate two soul stones at once. This is an Act of Hubris for Falling Wisdom — she is effectively forcing both two souls into her mystic identity. It also doesn't work. The attempt destroys both soul stones at the point that the mage tries to cast his first spell with them as Yantras, and he suffers two points of resistant lethal damage.

# Yantras

The Yantras included on p. 119 of **Mage: The Awakening Second Edition** reflect the most common mnemonics a mystic might use to help bring an Imago to mind. They are by no means a comprehensive list; in addition to the options presented elsewhere in this chapter this section presents a range of expanded magical tools a mage can use to focus her will.

Some of these Yantras require a mage to be proficient in specific Arcana before she can use them. Without them, she lacks the knowledge of how to tie the action of the Yantra to the formation of her Imago.

## Expanded Yantras

The following Yantras expand on those presented in the **Mage: The Awakening Second Edition** rulebook.

## Mudras

Most mages think of mudras as part of a rote, specific actions that go hand-in-hand with the magic involved. They never stop to think how the actions specifically intersect with forming the Imago needed for the rote, or how they specifically encode the structure of the spell. Some mages, either those with patient teachers or those who experiment with the fabric of magic itself, may draw realization from their research. A given mudra only applies to a single rote, but quick-thinking mystics can work out how parts of the mudra encode broader concepts that she can then work into a new Imago.

This sort of experimentation isn't easy; most mages who attempt to decode mudras do so over time, working them into new rites. In spontaneous casting, the mage must deconstruct one Imago while simultaneously constructing another.

**Effect:** A mage may attempt to use a mudra on a spontaneous spell, if she knows a rote of the same Arcanum and Practice. If she has more dots in that rote's Skill than in the required Arcana dots, she adds one die to her roll.

## Patron Tools

Even those mages who do not belong to the Seers of the Throne know of the Ministries' power. Those ex-Seers who have cut all ties to the Exarchs still retain the knowledge of their ex-masters' nature, and so the knowledge of how to use the Tyrant's symbols lurks at the edge of Pentacle academia, taken up by a handful of mages attempting to use it against the Ministries. This practice is a closely-guarded secret among users. The Pentacle regard using the Exarchs in spellcasting as a violation of Gold Law, and punish mages caught doing it harshly; none so much as the Free Council, who kill offenders and form lifelong grudges at the mere suggestion of using the Enemy's methods. The most common use of this Yantra, of course, is by Seers wishing to become Prelates themselves.

While an Exarch's tools are powerful, using them does draw their attention from across the Supernal. Once or twice may be

enough to avoid their attentions, but more than that leads the Tyrants back to the mage, opening hitherto-unnoticed doorways in the mage's Oneiros. When that happens, it is only a matter of time before her new Patron drags her through a series of Supernal tortures that lead to her eventual Prelacy – or death.

**Effect:** A mage who does not possess the Prelacy Merit can attempt to use the symbolism of an Exarch as a Yantra, adding a die to her spellcasting pool. The player spends a Willpower point during spellcasting, which allows the use of the Yantra. The bonus increases to two dice when using magic against servants of that Exarch. She must choose which Exarch's symbols she is using with each spell. If she uses this Yantra more than once per story, she gains the Exarchal Dreams Condition (p. XX.)

## New Yantras

The following Yantras present new semiotic keys that help a mage realize Supernal truth.

### Basilisk

**Prerequisite:** Fate ••

A basilisk is a specialized form of runic spellcasting inverting the ability of Fate to place conditional durations on spells, developed by the Cambridge IV. As with a rune, it begins with describing the spell's Imago in High Speech. Unlike runic casting, the mage incorporates fragments of the description into an image – anything from a painting to a design that she can spray on a wall. Though it does not make it easier to cast the spell, anyone who takes the time to examine the resulting basilisk is affected by the spell. As such, basilisks provide a way of holding on to a spell and using it against a number of targets even when the mystic is not present.

Many mages bind runic Yantras into their basilisks, perfecting the description of their Imago in written and constructed High Speech, though it is by no means necessary. Street-mages plaster the outside of their hideouts with basilisks designed to ward away prying eyes. A Guardian crafts a basilisk onto a business card and uses it to wipe the last five minutes of a witness' memory.

**Effect:** A basilisk Yantra allows the mage to delay the activation of a spell. She must cast the original spell with Advanced Duration and spend a Mana and gains two levels of Duration for free. The first person to witness the basilisk is affected as though the spell had a Duration of 1 turn. If nobody witnesses the basilisk before the end of the duration, the spell fizzles into nothingness. The spell cast through the basilisk counts against her active spells until someone sees it, and basilisk casting is incompatible with Conditional Duration.

### Cleansing

Ritual cleansing is a common mystic tool in many forms of Sleeper occultism, and some mages draw upon its symbolism in a number of spells. Cleansing bears semiotics of cleanliness and purification – useful for spells that heal, purge disease, or otherwise remove negative traits from a mage – but the Awakened also use a ritual cleansing as a means of drawing them closer to the Supernal.

Cleansing comes in many forms, from the ablutions of the Bahá'í faith to Christian baptism to the Nordic sauna. One mage may immerse herself in a river, another bathes in water mixed with spices, another anoints key points of her body with the waters of the Yangtze, and a fourth cleanses her hands and face with dry sand.

By metaphorically washing the Fallen World from themselves as part of the process of spellcasting the mage brings herself closer to the Supernal, making her a better conduit between the two realms. Divesting themselves of some of the trappings of the Fallen World allows a mage to use cleansing as a Yantra when drawing down beings from the Supernal.

**Effects:** A cleansing Yantra is normally performed right before the mage casts a spell. If she spends more than her ritual interval on the Yantra it adds +2 dice, otherwise it grants only a single die to the casting roll. When summoning a Supernal entity, subtract three successes from the total required.

### Investiture

Some mages seek out membership in secret societies and mystery cults out of their inherent love of the unknown, desperate to find out the truth behind anything from the Skull and Bones Society to the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Others recognize that becoming part of something greater than they are – a key component, rather than a mere cog in the machine – allows them to call on their position as a magical tool. Naturally, investiture is one of the main Chains of the Seers of the Throne, who attain positions in society for both political and personal power, but they are by far the only mystics to use investiture in their casting; some Libertines use the trappings of Fallen sorcery, including their position in mundane secret societies, while Guardians of the Veil who infiltrate those same societies may find themselves invested with rank. The Silver Ladder may also take on formal positions in society, putting them in conflict with the Seers of the Throne.

Investiture requires an otherwise mundane organization to recognize the mage with a specific rank, title, or honor. This does not need to come from a secret society – willworkers who become politicians and peers can use that position as a Yantra. As long as she maintains that position, the mage can use it as a Yantra on any spell that directly reflects her position, either through the nature of the society or by reinforcing her position over her lessers.

**Effect:** A mage can use investiture as a Yantra if she possesses the Status or Mystery Cult Initiation Merits; it provides bonus dice equal to half her dots in the appropriate Merit, rounding up. While a mage with Mystery Cult Influence (**Mage**, p. 103) is still attached to an organization, she is too far removed to have the formal status necessary.

### Oaths

Many mages swear oaths, knowing that the universe will reward them for upholding a vow and punish them for breaking it; greater punishments apply for breaking their vow by mystical means. Some mages channel the rush of breaking an oath,



making it into a Yantra in and of itself. It's a dangerous thing to attempt too often, as the mage must put time and effort into maintaining an oath, only to scour her body and soul of the accumulated Mana as part of a great working. On the other hand, the sudden rush of freedom, of breaking a taboo that itself has mystic significance, is incredibly empowering.

Breaking an oath as a Yantra has to be a deliberate mystical act. A mage can gain the benefits of this Yantra only on a spell that breaks an oath (see "Storytelling Vows," p. XX). A pacifist who lashes out with fire, or an ascetic who turns lead into gold can use this Yantra, while one who has taken a vow of silence cannot use it to entrance someone who hears her words — the magic itself has to break the vow, not just enhance a mundane action.

Oath-breaking is inherently self-limiting. Taking on an obligation is a slow process, and even the most headstrong mage must observe a vow for two weeks before breaking it offers any benefit.

**Effect:** A mage who has gained at least one point of Mana from the Obligation Condition who chooses to break her vow by mystic means makes her casting roll twice and chooses the better result. Breaking an oath is always a reflexive action and does not count towards the number of Yantras a mage is using on the spell.

## Situation

Many mages use Yantras based around places and times in the Fallen World — casting spells in the middle of a stone circle or drawing on the semiotics of the rising sun. Others reach for the symbolism inherent in more transient phenomena, drawing power from a raging storm or from a place of absolute silence. Others draw on the underlying symbols hidden in everyday life

to reflect the Supernal. While such transient situations aren't as reliable as casting a spell in a suitable environment, needs must when the Devil takes the wheel.

Huddled down in a cardboard box beneath an overpass, freezing beneath the sodium glow of a streetlight, a mage calls on the sense of loneliness and isolation experienced by everyone in his situation to isolate his target from her family and friends. Soaked to the bone in a raging storm, a théarch focuses her frustration with the idiot who tries to mug her and calls lightning from the sky. Giddy from the pounding bass and the contact-high of people enjoying themselves in a club, a Thyrsus steps into the bathroom and steps out of the bathroom of another club somewhere else in the world.

The mage must remain in the situation long enough to cast the entire spell; if the raging storm peters out to drizzle halfway through her ritual, she struggles to contain the magic. Some mages go so far as to ensure that the environmental conditions will last throughout any casting, using their magics to summoning strong winds, extreme heat, or sudden silence before using that very situation as a Yantra.

**Effect:** Casting in an appropriate situation grants a +1 modifier, though if the conditions change during the spell add one die to the Paradox pool. A mage using a situational Yantra on a spontaneous spell does not benefit from 10-again, 9-again, 8-again, or rote factors on the casting roll.

## Storytelling Yantras

Yantras provide the trappings of magicians both ancient and modern. From the ritual items of Hermetic mysticism to the crystals of the New Age and the urban detritus of

the techn-pagan. As such, they present ways to make what the characters do feel like magic, rather than some outright miracle-working.

Players will undoubtedly come up with some ideas for Yantras not detailed here, and that's a good thing. It shows the player has thought about how his character sees magic, and what tools she takes from the Fallen World in order to reflect the power of the Supernal. As Storyteller, choice of Yantras tells you a lot about the character.

Most Yantras provide a one- or two-dice bonus to the spellcasting roll. One-die bonuses typically come from things that the mage can find fairly easily, while Yantras that add two dice require the character to put in some serious leg-work to find and keep hold of. They have some ramification in-game, being items or locations that the characters have to find or taking precious time that the character might better spend finding cover.

Some Yantras do not give dice bonuses. Their form or function is such that they instead work by modifying the spell in some other way. After all, while Yantras can cancel out all manner of penalties to the casting roll, they can only provide up to five bonus dice. A mage who uses too many Yantras for their dice bonus can soon find himself bumping up against the maximum and may seek out new ways of casting to enhance his effects.

The form of a Yantra may naturally tie in to an Attainment that the mage already possesses, allowing him greater freedom with how and when he releases a spell. While that's potentially powerful, it does limit the number of other Yantras the mage can use on that spell.

A few Yantras may give free Reach or increase a specific spell factor. Again, this is a function of the specific Yantra, reflecting its applicability to one given spell. Be very careful when using such effects; as with Attainment-related Yantras, making a spell more powerful doesn't make it more likely to succeed, but as the character's Gnosis increases, so does the utility of free Reach or spell factors.

Especially apt and powerful Yantras (such as breaking an Oath) might let the player roll the spellcasting pool twice and take the best result, or even turn the spellcasting roll into a rote action. The benefit of such a Yantra increases as the mage's dice pool increases, making it more likely she will score a large number of successes. Such Yantras should only come up once or twice a story, and certainly not more than once per session, lest the characters become too reliant on them. They work best as long-term things, shackles the mage deliberately removes for a great and powerful spell.

## Ritual Magic

While mages sometimes need to spin spells as immediate reactions, when they have time to concentrate, the Wise prefer to use that time to focus on their magic and weave an Imago over a matter of hours — or minutes, for the most proficient mages. Some rituals are intensely personal to the mystic, intimate

acts of magic that she may never perform in front of another person. Others are grand workings, involving carefully dedicated ritual spaces, other mages, and acolytes who all help craft an intricate Imago.

## Coordination

Grand invocations often require many mages to work together. The mystic leading the ritual draws power and focus from having others who can coordinate on forming the Imago and drawing the will of the Supernal into the Fallen World. Mages working in concert are a powerful and dangerous thing, but the key is "in concert."

Before working together in a ritual, the participants — at least, those capable of contributing to the spell — must know what the lead mystic needs them to do and when. That way, they can properly contribute their part of the Imago and form an intricate mandala that conveys the totality of the spell. If the mages have time enough to rehearse the ritual (which must be at least as long as the lead mage's ritual interval) before starting, the secondary actors all gain +2 dice to their pools for the ritual. If the participants have successfully cast the same spell before, but do not have time to rehearse this specific instance of it, the bonus is only +1. If the spell is a rote and all involved know it, that counts as rehearsal.

Without any chance to plan — the mages simply gather together and begin the ritual immediately — each secondary actor suffers a -2 penalty, which stacks with the penalty for those who do not meet the Arcanum requirements.

The mystic leading the ritual may get around the need for planning by using the Ritual Focus spell to network the minds of all involved. As long as all the participants are willing, she can direct them as needed without the need for any planning at all.

## Ritual Focus (Mind ●●)

**Practice:** Ruling

**Primary Factor:** Duration

**Withstand:** Composure

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Empathy, Leadership, Persuasion

A variant on Telepathy, this spell links the minds of the mage and his subjects, allowing him to guide them as they work in unison on a particular spell (see "Teamwork," *Mage* p. 119). The mage must cast the spell with enough Scale to affect every other Awakened participant in the ritual. Secondary actors in the ritual add the spell's Potency to their dice pool.

## Nimbus Imprints

A mage's Nimbus leaves its mark on the subject of every spell she casts, but great expenditures of power can also mark the mystic's ritual space — especially when the space itself is part of the symbolism worked into her spell's Imago. When a mage takes longer than she needs to cast a ritual spell, her Signature Nimbus burns into the area around her — whether she wants it to or not.

When a mage spends at least twice her ritual interval casting a spell to gain bonus dice on the spellcasting roll (**Mage**, p. 114), she leaves her Signature Nimbus in the area. Each additional ritual interval (after the first two) adds a bonus die to Revelation rolls regarding the mage's Nimbus. If the mage used the area as an Environmental Yantra, anyone scrutinizing the ritual site is affected as though the caster had the Potent Resonance Merit; if the caster already possesses that Merit increase the strength of the Tilt by 1.

## Exhaustion

Some mages push themselves beyond their normal limits to work rituals. They might need to spend a lot of time to offset the burdens of a particularly onerous working, or because they do not have access to Yantras that would otherwise benefit the spell. When all else fails, a magus can always spend more time – at least in theory.

Some mages, especially inexperienced ones, can push themselves too far. Short of Life magic, a mage still has to eat, and sleep, and use the bathroom: activities most rituals do not allow for. Rituals are also mentally taxing, as the mage must focus on building an Imago above everything else. An inexperienced mage may find herself engaged in a ritual spell for anywhere up to eighteen hours, and the amount of focus required is beyond many people.

After every six hours of casting a ritual spell, the mage's player rolls Stamina. On a failure she must release the spell then, casting with any bonus dice she has accrued. If she is successful, she can continue to build power as she refines the spell's Imago. The Body Control spell, with enough Duration to cover the total ritual time, negates this factor entirely.

This only applies when a mage spends multiple ritual intervals casting the same spell. While she may move from ritual straight into another, the release of moving from one Imago to another and of seeing the Supernal made manifest is enough to clear her mind for the new ritual.

## Interruption

Sometimes, a mage doesn't have all the time in the world to work her magic. Maybe he forgot to set his cellphone to silent, or maybe someone bursts through his door with a gun in her hand. These more pressing concerns can break a mage's concentration, shattering his Imago. If he's lucky, he can maintain enough presence of mind to not have to start entirely from scratch. If he's unlucky, the woman with the gun puts a hole in his head and he never has to worry about an Imago again.

When events interrupt a mage's ritual casting, he has two options. He can leave the spell to deal with the interruption, which allows him to focus on the new problem but leaves his previous time wasted; he must start over from the very beginning.

Alternatively, he can try to keep at least a part of his mind on his mystic goal, which doesn't take time out of the ritual, but does penalize his focus. Doing so levies a three-dice penalty on any actions taken to resolve the interruption. Further, every minute spent away from the ritual – or every turn in combat or

a similarly threatening situation – applies a -1 penalty to the spellcasting roll. When the penalty would reduce his spellcasting pool to 0, he permanently loses his Imago, and must start the spell over.

# Conditions

## Exarchal Dreams (Persistent)

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Your character has come to the attention of the Exarchs, usually by calling upon their symbols in her own magic or by encountering them during her Awakening. A black iron doorway has appeared in her Oneiros, and it's only a matter of time before it opens and something drags her through. Each time your character uses an Exarch as a Yantra she risks opening the door.

When she gains this Condition, make a note of which Exarchs your character has used as patrons or seen in an Iron Seal and record one point of Notice. Each time she uses patron tools as a Yantra, she gains a point of Notice. If she has already used that Exarch as a patron before, record another point of Notice.

When her Gnosis + Notice reaches 10 or more, she is dragged off into a Supernal harrowing the next time she sleeps or enters the Astral Realms. For a Pentacle mage, this is almost certainly a death sentence, unless he "repents" and swears loyalty to the angry Supernal entities torturing him. If she survives, she will likely return as a Prelate of the appropriate Exarch.

Seers have already sworn themselves to the Exarchs, and as such add their dots in Seers of the Throne Status to their Notice upon gaining this Condition. A Seer or a character who had a Tyrannic Awakening (p. XX) can never reduce his Notice below his dots in that Merit.

At the start of each chapter, subtract one point of Notice, and another two if the character did not use magic during the previous chapter. At the start of a new story, the character's Notice resets to 1.

**Possible Sources:** Using Patron Tools as a Yantra without Prelacy, Full Understanding of an Iron Seal Aedes, a Tyrannic Awakening.

**Resolution:** The character reduces her Notice to 0 or goes through a Supernal harrowing. This Condition does not resolve at the end of a story, but her Notice resets as above.

**Arcane Beat:** The character gains a point of Notice.

## Obligation

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Your character has taken on a vow or obligation, burdening herself with limitations in the Fallen such that she may draw mana from the Supernal. She must take on the vow voluntarily and cannot overcome it with magic; a fasting mage cannot remove her need for food nor undo the deleterious effects of hunger.

Each week that the character has this Condition, she gains one point of Mana. When resolving the Condition via mun-

dane means she regains a point of Willpower, however, should she resolve this Condition with magic, she instead loses all her stored Mana the turn after she starts casting. As such, she can only spend Mana on instant cast spells, and only up to her maximum Mana per turn.

**Possible Sources:** The mage chooses to take on an obligation.

**Resolution:** Take any action that violates the vow, either mitigating its effects with magic or directly contravening it by mundane means.

**Beat:** n/a

## Ritual Interruption

While the Storyteller might have good reason to interrupt a character's ritual, she should keep in mind the dramatic needs of the story – and of the player. Capriciously interrupting a ritual only serves to rob the character of the chance to cast a powerful spell, stealing away some of the player's agency and control of the story. Worse, if the Storyteller makes a habit of interrupting rituals, or interrupts a ritual early in the story, players will be less likely to use ritual casting in future.

As a Storyteller, you should have a good reason to interrupt a ritual. If the story has stalled, and the ritual is the players' way of trying to figure out what to do next, having a bunch of thugs with guns burst in on the ritual both brings some action and is a chance to give the players more clues. When doing so, give the player a Beat for the disruption to his character's plans.

# Merits

## Broad Dedication (●)

**Prerequisite:** Prime •

**Effect:** The character instills his Nimbus into a specific Yantra that particularly aligns with his spellcasting. His Dedicated magical tool can be any kind of Yantra, including environments, investiture, mantras, and runes instead of a "normal" magical tool. In this way, a Thyrus can imbue a place of power with his Nimbus, and a Mastigos can Dedicate the witching hour itself to his magical practice.

## Inheritance (●●)

**Prerequisite:** Fame •

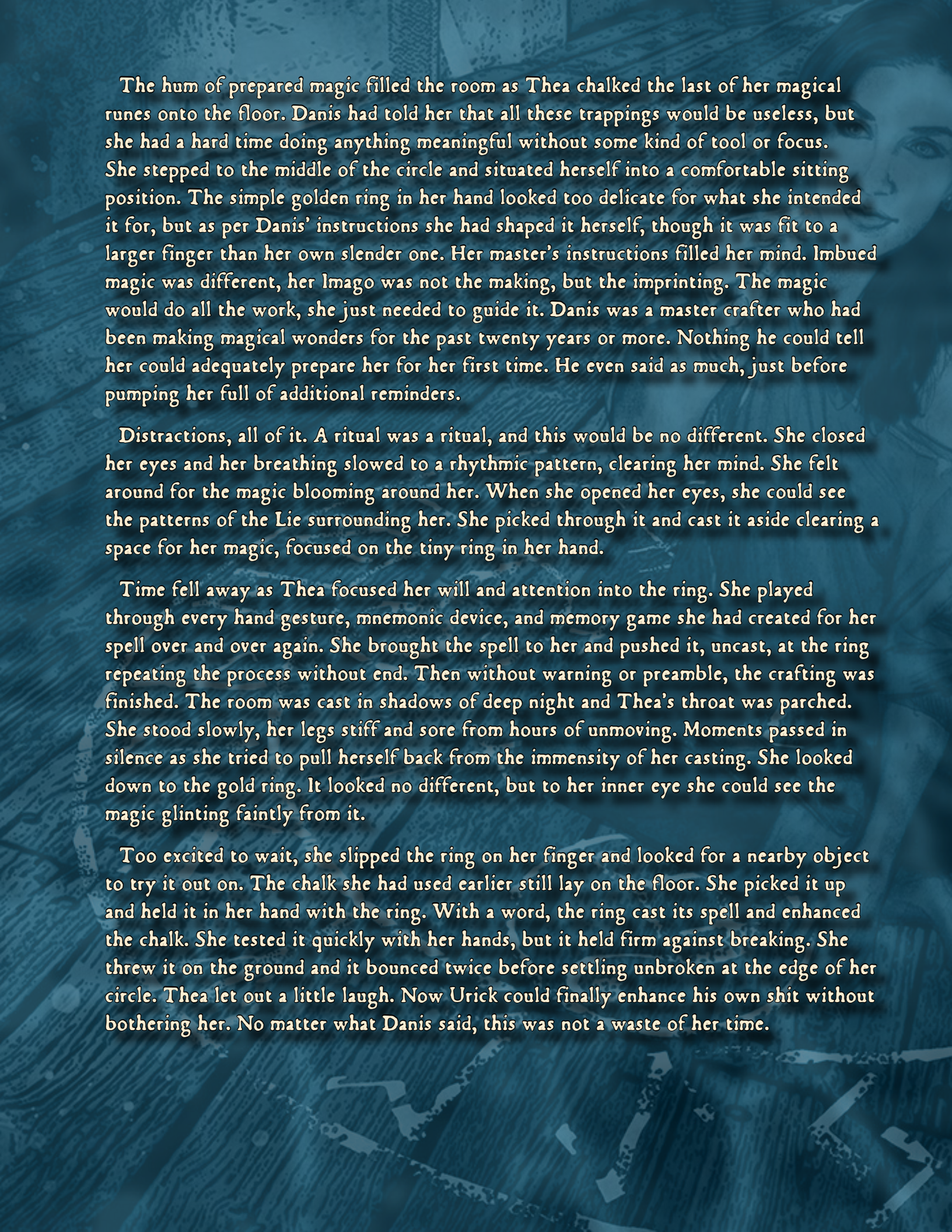
**Effect:** Blood is power. While being the child of a monster or the seventh son of a seventh son is no prerequisite for being a mage, some mages put great stock on their history among the Fallen – or among magical society. The daughter of a powerful Thyrus may call on her father's heritage when binding spirits to her will, while a Mastigos can twist people's minds by calling upon an ancestor who had a tryst with a Devil. A mage may advertise his bloodline, using his reputation and name to draw mystic power. Though this grants him power over those who know of his history, it also makes him a greater target for Banishers, witch-hunters, and other mystics.

The mage can use her bloodline as a Yantra on any spells appropriate to her ancestor's reputation, gaining a +1 bonus. The son of a succubus can charm others with ease, while the daughter of a legendary Obrimos can call forth lightning from a clear sky. If she casts a spell on someone who both knows of her heritage and who is aware that she is casting a spell upon him, the bonus increases to +2.

## Profligate Dedication (●●)

**Effect:** Your character has extended his Nimbus to the point that it can include more than one magical tool, but rather than complementing his Nimbus directly the tools also reflect one another, granting him more freedom when he has only one to hand. The mage can Dedicate up to three magical tools, though he can only benefit from using two on any given spell. Further, he suffers no penalty for using one (or none) of his Dedicated tools when casting a spell.





The hum of prepared magic filled the room as Thea chalked the last of her magical runes onto the floor. Danis had told her that all these trappings would be useless, but she had a hard time doing anything meaningful without some kind of tool or focus. She stepped to the middle of the circle and situated herself into a comfortable sitting position. The simple golden ring in her hand looked too delicate for what she intended it for, but as per Danis' instructions she had shaped it herself, though it was fit to a larger finger than her own slender one. Her master's instructions filled her mind. Imbued magic was different, her Imago was not the making, but the imprinting. The magic would do all the work, she just needed to guide it. Danis was a master crafter who had been making magical wonders for the past twenty years or more. Nothing he could tell her could adequately prepare her for her first time. He even said as much, just before pumping her full of additional reminders.

Distractions, all of it. A ritual was a ritual, and this would be no different. She closed her eyes and her breathing slowed to a rhythmic pattern, clearing her mind. She felt around for the magic blooming around her. When she opened her eyes, she could see the patterns of the Lie surrounding her. She picked through it and cast it aside clearing a space for her magic, focused on the tiny ring in her hand.

Time fell away as Thea focused her will and attention into the ring. She played through every hand gesture, mnemonic device, and memory game she had created for her spell over and over again. She brought the spell to her and pushed it, uncast, at the ring repeating the process without end. Then without warning or preamble, the crafting was finished. The room was cast in shadows of deep night and Thea's throat was parched. She stood slowly, her legs stiff and sore from hours of unmoving. Moments passed in silence as she tried to pull herself back from the immensity of her casting. She looked down to the gold ring. It looked no different, but to her inner eye she could see the magic glinting faintly from it.

Too excited to wait, she slipped the ring on her finger and looked for a nearby object to try it out on. The chalk she had used earlier still lay on the floor. She picked it up and held it in her hand with the ring. With a word, the ring cast its spell and enhanced the chalk. She tested it quickly with her hands, but it held firm against breaking. She threw it on the ground and it bounced twice before settling unbroken at the edge of her circle. Thea let out a little laugh. Now Urick could finally enhance his own shit without bothering her. No matter what Danis said, this was not a waste of her time.

# CHAPTER THREE

# THE

# CRAFTER'S

# TRADE

*It's still magic even if you know how it's done.*  
Terry Pratchett, *A Hat Full of Sky*

Crafting includes everything from simple magical enchantments on items to creating an item from its raw materials or pure magic. Mages who engage in crafting spend a great deal of time and effort to change mundane items into useful magical tools. Some mages craft an item from scratch building component parts into a finished product enhanced by magic. Others take a mundane item and either enhance or imbue it with magic. No matter which path a crafter takes, her trade is one of patience and dedication to a respected art form. The most common ways to enchant an item are through the Matter Arcanum for enhancements or Prime for imbuelements, though other Arcana have their uses as well.

## Materials of the Craft

For many mages, the act of instilling magic into an item is the craft and everything else is inconsequential. Certain crafting traditions view crafting with an eye toward a whole-system approach starting with a base material and forging the object both physically and magically at the same time. The end result is often the same, but the process is more involved. This crafting tradition can be used to create any imbued or enhanced object as long as the mage has the wherewithal to create the object in question. Few mages chose to go this route unless the forging comes with a clear benefit over using a standard item. The true benefit comes from using nonstandard materials to make otherwise mundane objects. Certain materials lend themselves to magical enhancement more than others, especially materials supernatural in nature such as ephemera or Mana.

## Perfected Metallurgy

In antiquity, humankind identified and found uses for seven different metals. These metals are not by any means the most abundant elements found on Earth, but their inherent properties made them extremely useful, and they have a symbolic weight that renders them useful in magic. Just as a tiny percentage of humans Awaken, precious samples of these metals approach the perfection of their analogous Supernal symbols, taking on wondrous properties. While naturally-occurring samples of these Perfected metals are extremely rare, usually the result of the metal becoming tawny in a highly potent Hallow that is also a Manteion (p. XX,) or found in an emanation realm, dedicated crafters among the Orders have developed ways to “cleanse” mundane metals to produce the Perfected equivalents.

In the past, mages used a laborious process of passing the metal into and out of Twilight or carrying it between different realms several times over many days to cleanse and perfect the metals. Eventually, the metal would start exhibiting its Supernal properties. Impatient Libertines developed a spell to create the same effect. The slower process is still used by mages who do not wish the risk of the spell perfecting their creation being Dispelled.

Perfected metals are not inherently magical and do not provoke the Sleeping Curse, though they have properties that make them ideal for use when creating magical items. If scrutinized with Mage Sight, the material appears Supernal, and examination of sympathetic links reveals a strong relation to the Path Realm it is associated with. An item created with a Perfected metal still functions as its mundane counterpart, though it is

created from partially-Supernal material. It has the same properties and equipment bonuses as any other mundane object of the same kind.

Scholars argue that every substance found in the Fallen World should have a Supernal analog, though research into finding the Perfected form of the other elements has met with limited results. This research has led to a greater understanding of why these metals seem to have easily accessible Supernal forms. Each of the seven metals is associated with at least one of the five Paths. In some cases, a metal is associated with more than one Path. Despite these apparent associations, the materials do not seem to have any particular affinity to those Path's Ruling Arcana when it comes to imbuing or enchanting. The resonance between these perfected metals and the Supernal World associated with them is stronger than the normal imperfect version of the metal. When used as a Magical Tool for the appropriate Path, the mage gains the 9-gain quality on her spellcasting.

- **Orichalcum** is Perfected gold. Its luster and color are like that of gold, except it presents more red and warm hues than gold in even its purest forms. Like gold, it can be spun out to fine, thin threads or hammered into thin leaves. It is completely impervious to corrosion and is considered chemically inert. As gold is associated with the Aether, so is orichalcum. Orichalcum offers a +2 tool Yantra for spells cast upon itself, and its Durability cannot be reduced by nonmagical means.

- **Lunargent** is Perfected silver. It has a bluish color not normally associated with its mundane equivalent and has a mirrored surface. Like silver, it can be spun into thin threads. It is sturdier than silver and can be forged into weapons that do not lose their edge easily. As silver is associated with Arcadia, so is lunargent. Lunargent offers a +2 tool Yantra for spells associated with seeing such as other places, other times, and across the Gauntlet. Additionally, it reflects things in Twilight.

- **Hermium** is Perfected mercury. It has a silvery sheen and appears more lustrous than its mundane counterpart. It is more fluid than mercury as well, sharing superfluid properties with liquid helium. It can flow frictionless through the smallest of opening and creeps along surfaces seeking to recombine itself if separated. When it comes into contact with any of the other perfected metals, it forms amalgams (see below) without any other magic, but otherwise will not react with other non-perfected metals. Hermium is associated with both Arcadia and Pandemonium. Hermium offers a +2 tool Yantra for shapeshifting and transformation spells.

- **Brontium** is Perfected copper. It shines brightly and is fiery red in color. Brontium is a perfect conductor of heat and electricity and is chemically inert. As copper is associated with the Primal Wild, so is brontium. Brontium offers a +2 tool Yantra to spells that deflect, protect, or redirect magic. Additionally, items crafted of Brontium grant the user a +2 bonus to defend against debilitating effects.

- **Kassiterum** is Perfected tin. The metal has a glossy, almost wet, look and is nearly white in color. It can be melted and formed easily and never has any inclusions or weak points. Once set, the metal is incredibly hard and resistant to breakage. If sharpened it can cut through diamonds and the strongest of worked steel. The only stronger metal is siderite. Kassiterum is associated with both Stygia and the Primal Wild. It has a special association with summoning entities, not just from Stygia and the Primal Wild, but any realm and even the ephemeral worlds. Kassiterum offers a +2 tool Yantra on summoning spells and drains one Essence per turn from any ephemeral being it touches.

- **Apeiron** is Perfected lead. Apeiron does not oxidize the way normal lead does, always keeping its shiny blue-white color. It is not chemically inert, though it absorbs ions perfectly. At any thickness, apeiron works as perfect shielding to radiation and heat. As lead is associated with Stygia, so is apeiron. Apeiron offers a +2 tool Yantra to spells concerning plasticity, tool use, and crafting. It can be shaped by hand and provides 8-gain on mundane rolls when made into a tool.

- **Siderite** is Perfected iron or steel. Siderite is the least lustrous of all the perfected metals and appears the same as normal worked iron. It is the hardest and strongest of all the Perfected metals and always holds an edge that never dulls. It can cut through diamonds, the finest mundane steel, and even Kassiterum. Siderite is so strong it cannot be melted, even with magical heat. It must be hammered into a desired shape through heating and cooling. As iron is associated with the Realm of Pandemonium, so is siderite. Siderite offers a +2 tool Yantra to spells concerning strengthening or protecting materials. It can cut through anything, ignoring the Durability of an object.

Mages can locate naturally-occurring Perfected metals by searching for them with spells like Detect Substance, but they are seldom in large enough quantities to be of use. To create a Perfected metal, a mage has two options. She can cast the Matter 3 spell Hone the Perfected Form (below) or she can repeatedly convert the base material to ephemera and back again, either by passing it into and out of Twilight or carrying it into and out of the Shadow or Underworld. This is a slow, exacting process requiring dozens of "passes;" at least 10 times Durability multiplied by Size, and requires an object made entirely out of the intended Perfected metal's mundane counterpart. Additionally, the metal must be "rested" for at least a day every 10 passes.

## Hone the Perfected Form (Matter ●●●)

**Practice:** Perfecting

**Primary Spell Factor:** Duration

**Cost:** 1 Mana

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Crafts, Persuasion, Science

The mage takes an ordinary piece of metal — iron, gold, silver, mercury, copper, tin, or lead — and transmutes it into its

Perfected metal. The spell affects a single continuous piece of metal that fits within the spell's Scale factor.

**+2 Reach:** The spell may Perfect another substance, such as glass or gemstones (see p. XX.) If the spell also includes Forces •••, it may Perfect fire. Other, stranger substances may be Perfected with additional Arcana at the Storyteller's discretion.

## Alloys

The Perfected metals are inert and do not react or alloy with other metals or elements without magical assistance, except in the case of Hermium, which can alloy with any of the others. Perfected metals to create amalgams. After experimenting with Hermium, ancient mages developed spells to artificially alloy the Perfected metals as well, although these alloys are distinct from Hermium-based amalgams. Magical alloys of Perfected metals have distinct properties and lose the base properties of the metals that go into creating them. Because Hone the Perfected Form can be dispelled, mages prefer using naturally-occurring or Twilight-phased Perfected metals to form Alloys. Unlike the base Perfected metals, these substances are affected by the Sleeping Curse.

### Forge Thaumium (Matter ••••)

**Practice:** Patterning

**Primary Factor:** Duration

**Cost:** 1 Mana

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Crafts, Occult, Survival

This spell combines Perfected metals into a single metal which is resistant to magic. Called "thaumium" (from the Greek word for "wonder" or "marvel"), this material is forged from an alloy of orichalcum, lunargent, and hermium. The object created by this spell is Durability 1 and can hold one point of Mana, which it spends to shield against magic. Potency may be allocated, one for one, to increasing Durability or Mana capacity. For purposes of the spell's Scale factor, the alloy has the same Size as the three component metals combined.

As long as a thaumium item has Mana stored in it, it protects its wielder from Supernal magic. Any spell cast at the wielder provokes a Clash of Wills, unless the wielder chooses to allow the spell. The dice pool for the Clash of Wills is equal to the item's creator's Gnosis + Matter at the time of casting this spell. Whenever used to Clash, the object expends 1 Mana. Mages can refill the item's Mana supply using the Prime spell "Channel Mana." (Mage, p. 168.)

**+2 Reach:** The spell's effect is Lasting but relies on the constituent metals remaining Perfected. If any of them revert to mundane form, the alloy will collapse into its separate ingredients.

**Add Any Other Arcanum ••:** The thaumium object can protect against other kinds of magic, provided they fall under the Arcanum's purview. For example, Death can protect against ghostly Numina and Manifestations.

### Forge Sophis (Matter ••••)

**Practice:** Patterning

**Primary Factor:** Duration

**Cost:** 1 Mana

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Crafts, Occult, Science

This spell combines Perfected metals into a single metal which scavenges Mana. Called "sophis" (from the Greek word for "wisdom"), this material is forged from an alloy of apeiron, brontium and hermium. The object created by this spell is Durability 1 and can hold one point of Mana. Potency may be allocated, one for one, to increasing Durability or Mana capacity. For purposes of the spell's Scale factor, the alloy has the same Size as the three component metals combined.

The first time someone holding the object forged with sophis spends Mana in a scene, the item absorbs one point of spent Mana. This does not change Mana costs, but instead scavenges the spent Mana before it dissipates. Mages can absorb the item's Mana supply using the Prime spell "Channel Mana."

**+2 Reach:** The spell's effect is Lasting but relies on the constituent metals remaining Perfected. If any of them revert to mundane form, the alloy collapses into its separate ingredients.

### Forge Dumanium (Matter ••••)

**Practice:** Patterning

**Primary Factor:** Duration

**Cost:** 1 Mana

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Crafts, Expression, Persuasion

This spell combines Perfected metals into a single metal which scavenges Mana. Called "dumanium" (from the Greek word for "power" or "strength"), this material is forged from an alloy of kassiterum and siderite. The object created by this spell is Durability 1 and has the ability to hold one point of Mana. Potency may be allocated, one for one, to increasing Durability, Mana capacity, or equipment bonus (to a maximum of +5). For purposes of the spell's Scale factor, the alloy has the same Size as the three component metals combined.

If the dumanium object is a weapon, the wielder can use the item's stored Mana to make the weapon's damage aggravated for a single attack. This is a reflexive action requiring one Mana from the dumanium weapon's stores. Dumanium must be Size 3 or more to act as effective armor. The mage can allocate Potency into armor made this way for 1/1 armor, instead of equipment bonus (to a maximum of 5/5). Mages can absorb the item's Mana supply using the Prime spell "Channel Mana."

**+2 Reach:** The spell's effect is Lasting but relies on the constituent metals remaining Perfected. If any of them revert to mundane form, the alloy will collapse into its separate ingredients.

## Amalgams

Hermium can form an amalgam with any of the other perfected metals. The resulting amalgams retain the Supernal properties of both combined metals. As the amalgam forms, the metal transitions to a liquid state, then hardens into a firm state.

Softer metals, such as orichalcum and apeiron become harder than normal when formed into an amalgam with hermium. In many cases, these amalgams are formed for the sole purpose of shaping one or both metals.

## Other Perfected Materials

Of all the Perfected materials, the Orders hold the most lore about the seven classical metals and their Perfected forms, but these are not the only semi-Supernal substances the Awakened have attempted to create. Despite many attempts, attempting to Perfect an alloy fails without a subject mostly composed of one of the seven metals, and then the process simply yields that one metals' Perfected form. Centuries of research have revealed that other compounds associated with the different Paths have their own Perfected forms but are harder to create. These Perfected materials are better than their mundane counterparts like the Perfected metals, but they do not carry the same benefits to enchanting, though they also give the 9-again quality to spellcasting when used as a Path Tool. The following are only a few examples of Perfected materials. The Storyteller should feel free to invent others.

**Acid** Perfected acid is completely corrosive. Mundane containers cannot contain it in aqueous form, as its protons dissociate even the most stable substances. A single drop of Perfected acid can create explosive effects with normally reactive substances.

**Fire** Perfected fire is pure white in color and super-heated, though the size of the fire does not increase with perfecting. This intense fire burns oxygen rapidly and burns for under a minute when in an enclosed space, removing all oxygen from the area, then going out. If touched, the fire deals aggravated damage that ignores armor, and counts as a fire of twice its actual size.

**Gems** Certain Perfected gemstones look no different than the mundane variety. Most contain a perfect color and clarity not found in nature. The stones are harder than their mundane counterparts.

**Glass** Perfected glass, or "Adamant," is perfectly translucent and does not refract light passing through it at all, making it nearly impossible to see. It is extremely hard and resistant to impact. Weapons made of mundane materials do not even scratch the surface. Diamonds can cut it, and so can many of the perfected metals.

**Leather** Perfected leather is soft and pliable, but extremely sturdy. Items made of the material absorb shock perfectly granting immunity to crushing or bashing blows. The material can be punctured with enough force from a bullet, though.

**Mirror** A Perfected mirror reflects images perfectly without distorting the image or the color.

**Stone** Perfected stone is more durable and denser than mundane stone. Structures built of perfected stone have a +1 Durability.

**Water** Perfected water, or "Alkahest" serves as a true universal solvent, able to dissolve any other substance, except other perfected materials.

**Wood** Perfected wood is both supple enough to carve easily and hard enough to prevent breakage or scratching from most mundane weapons. It does not burn easily, requiring extremely high temperatures to combust.

## Perfected Materials as Banes

Many supernatural beings – including all ephemeral, Supernal, and Abyssal entities – have weaknesses to substances or forces. From a ghost unwilling to touch salt, to a high-Rank spirit of corruption that may be slain by a consecrated, silver dagger, to vampires' legendary allergy to sunlight, mages have long experience of using materials, sometimes formed with magic, to fend off monsters while pursuing the Mysteries. And sooner or later, every young mage dealing with a werewolf wonders what a *lunargent* weapon would do. The result is both more and less than most apprentices imagine.

Perfected materials count as their mundane counterparts with regard to if a creature counts them as its bane. They don't do extra damage or have any other greater effect beyond any special rules for the material, but they do discard all other qualifiers a bane might have. If a spirit is only vulnerable to a consecrated, silver, dagger, any *lunargent* object affects it as a bane. This extends even to when a creature's bane specifies that a material must be produced without magic – the Perfected material overrides that – and goes beyond simple weaknesses of monsters, too; if an artifact can only melt in dragon's fire, Perfected flame will do the trick.

## Living Materials

The concept of using a physical piece of a person in spellcasting is one from ancient times. The best way to establish a sympathetic link to someone is to use magic like "Borrow Threads" (*Mage*, p. 174) to take that of a physical representation, such as some of their blood or a piece of their body. Physical forms hold power for many reasons, and not just because of the sympathetic ties involved. Blood, bone, and flesh have more than a sympathetic tie to their donors, and have long been incorporated into ritual castings, usually in the form of sacrifice.

Once an organic material has been separated from the body, it is no longer a part of the person, but its own substance. A tooth is no more the person it came from than a strip of leather is the cow. Yet, somehow the tooth of a human carries more significance in a magical ritual than that of a bovine. Scholars believe that because the human mind is sensitive to the Lie and feels the pull of the Supernal that it carries more magical weight than any other creature. It could simply be a matter of higher intelligence; the truth is inconsequential to the outcome.

The most potent organic substances are those imminently separated from the host. A spell or ritual is more likely to call for a blood sacrifice, a burned body, or a ritual dismemberment than a long dead bone. This kind of magic is gruesome and not for the faint of heart. It is often relegated to Left-Handed groups, the work of Enraptured mages or liches. Despite the taboo of ritual sacrifice, mages have a large body of research on the various uses of organic materials. Experiments on

substances after death, or donated for research have led to a few discoveries, mostly reinforcing the idea that the use of these materials should be shunned.

Organics have a tie to the Supernal giving them a potent quality on their own, but they can also be Perfected much like other materials. The problem lies in the fact that the substance cannot be separated from a person for more than a few minutes before they become dead, symbolically speaking, and the Perfecting spell results in Perfected bone, leather, or wood. Other substances such as hair and blood don't have a Perfected form at all once dead; at least, not one known outside specialist Legacies. The only way to get perfected blood or flesh is to cast Hone the Perfected Form at the exact time of separation of these substances from a living host, which is an act of hubris against Falling Wisdom. For this reason, the use of Perfected living materials in crafting is limited. Few mages are comfortable knowing the Imbued Item they are using required someone to be flayed alive to make. Even fewer are willing to do the deed necessary to make the item.

Despite the gruesome implications, Perfected living materials hold a wealth of uses in the crafting of magical items. Perfected living material offer a +1 tool Yantra on spells to enhance or imbue themselves, and if incorporated into Yantras grant the 9-again quality on the spellcasting roll. More importantly, the material does not die unless reverted to its mundane form; a grimoire bound in Perfected skin registers as alive to Life spells and Mage Sight. All items crafted with a Perfected living material gain a +1 to the Durability, regardless if it holds any magical enchantments. Ritual casting times for rites cast from Grimoires written in Perfected blood, or recorded on Perfected flesh, are normal instead of doubled. Despite the best efforts of many liches, whole life forms (including mages) cannot be turned into Perfected flesh, only parts carefully excised.

Bone as a material is connected to Stygia and does not follow the same rules as the other organics. It is the only organic material that can be Perfected well after the death of the donor. For that matter, there is no need for the bone to be of human origin. Old or non-human bone has properties more akin to other materials with connections to the Supernal Realms and is not inherently magical. It is harder than normal bone and holds an edge much like steel.

## The Enhanced and Enchanted

A mage's version of reality and what is in the material world is vastly different. Mundane objects are imperfect impressions of their supernal counterparts and everything is shadowed by lies. Mages put truth to those lies all the time through their spellcasting, and in much the same way they can alter an object to be a truer representation of its supernal state. Mages refer to this as **enhancing** an item, but in reality, these spells alter the item's physical properties. The item does not become inherently magical, though the spell cast upon it remains in place for its Duration. Anyone

who uses an enhanced item benefits from the change, even if he does not understand the Mysteries surrounding it.

Enhanced items are the work horse of the magical world. A mage can enhance an item for a short amount of time for relatively little cost. She uses the object for a specific purpose and she ends the spell when her project is complete. For simple use, this kind of short term enhancement is common. The mage may fortify a tool before a strenuous task, change an item's consistency to make it easier to work with, or make her body armor stronger before a fight. The mage ensures the enhancement lasts for the time necessary and then kills it when she is finished.

Some mages rely heavily on enhancements, designing perfected forms of objects for various situations and relying on them in the heat of the moment. This kind of enhancing requires complex castings with multiple spells weaved together at once to reduce the number of spells under the mage's control. The mage prefers to make these enhancements permanent and relinquishes the spells to increase the number of enhanced items she can carry around. Enhancing objects has its limitations, and making superfluous enhancements is a mistake only the newly initiated make.

## Spell Caster's Arsenal

Most enhancements come from the Matter Arcanum, as they deal with an inanimate object as the subject of the spell. From a spellcasting standpoint, any practice of Perfecting spell with a long-lasting effect is considered an enhancement. Few would deny a frictionless knife created through the Forces Arcanum is an enhanced item. A few clever mages have learned to alter more than just the physical components of an object using higher level practices or different Arcana to achieve their effects.

### Death Touched Item (Death ●●●)

**Practice:** Perfecting

**Primary Spell Factor:** Duration

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Crafts, Occult, Subterfuge

This spell turns an ordinary object into one capable of affecting objects of Death-attuned ephemera and shadow. After casting, the object is simultaneously an item of the material world, of Death-attuned Twilight and of shadows cast from the absence of light. It can interact with anything in Death-attuned Twilight or even with items crafted of shadows via the Death Arcanum. It can deal damage to a ghost's Corpus or to a shadow item's Structure or prevent harm to the wearer from such things. The item retains its normal equipment bonuses. If the item is brought into Twilight, it does not lose its material form while under the effects of this spell.

### The Right Tool (Fate ●●●)

**Practice:** Perfecting

**Primary Spell Factor:** Duration

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Crafts, Expression, Stealth

Those who understand the intricacies of Fate know that much of fulfilling a destiny involves being in the right place at the right time. Another well-known factor is to have available



the right tool for the job at hand. With this spell, the mage takes an ordinary object and perfects it into the right object, making it a lever of destiny. The object's form and function do not need to be related to its Fate-granted purpose; a gum wrapper may become the key necessary for opening a locked door in front of the mage, a pipe may become the weapon that brings the downfall of a hated enemy, and a coin may become armor that stops a fatal bullet that would end the caster's life. What constitutes the right object is completely dependent on the situation. The mage casts the spell on an item, and for the Duration of the spell's effect if the item could be conceivably used in a certain situation, it can be used as the right item. When used for its new purpose, the item's equipment bonus is increased by Potency depending on the situation, up to a maximum of five dice. Items that could not normally be used for the intended purpose are assumed to start at a "bonus" of 0 before the spell's effect is added. In certain cases, determined by the Storyteller, the item may become an unexpected life-saving tool or quick escape.

### Perpetual Motion (Forces ●●●)

**Practice:** Perfecting

**Primary Spell Factor:** Duration

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Expression, Science, Survival

Those who have knowledge of the Aether know that the laws of physics only apply to the mundane and uninitiated. The subject can function for the Duration of the spell without the need for energy input. If the device has batteries installed or is plugged into an electrical socket, it does not pull power

from these sources while functioning under the auspices of this spell.

### Data Hog (Forces ●●●)

**Practice:** Perfecting

**Primary Spell Factor:** Duration

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Computer, Larceny, Persuasion

The mage alters a computerized device's capability to process, accept and transfer data. For each level of Potency of the spell, the subject's equipment bonus is either increased by +1 or decreased by -1.

### Contact High (Life ●●●)

**Practice:** Weaving

**Primary Spell Factor:** Duration

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Medicine, Occult, Science

This spell causes its subject to extrude a powerful drug that targets the nervous system of anyone who touches it. Anyone whose skin comes into contact with the subject is affected by the drug for one scene. The mage who casts this spell determines if the drug is a nervous system enhancer, which grants a bonus to Initiative equal to Potency, or a nervous system antagonist, which inflicts a penalty to Initiative equal to Potency instead. The drug affects a living subject as well as anyone touching it.

**+1 Reach:** Living subjects are immunized from the spell's effect, but still transfer the drug to anything they touch.

## Endless Bounty (Matter ●●●●)

**Practice:** Patterning

**Primary Spell Factor:** Duration

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Crafts, Science, Streetwise

The mage can ensure that she never runs out of small expendable items. She enchants a single item that contains a smaller expendable item, such as a bullet clip with ammunition inside or a billfold of singles. For the Duration of the spell, the item never runs out. The value of the expendable item can be up to what could be obtained with Resources equal to the Potency of the spell, so a mage could have an endless supply of hundred-dollar bills in his wallet. The object must have at least one unit of the expendable item inside it when the spell is cast to function properly. Her purse always has dollars, her pistol always has bullets, and her car's tank always has gasoline.

## Give Me That (Mind ●●●)

**Practice:** Perfecting

**Primary Spell Factor:** Duration

**Withstand:** Composure

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Crafts, Empathy, Persuasion

The concept of possession and ownership can spark powerful emotions in people. This spell weaves an emotional aura around an item that evokes the concept of ownership in anyone who sees it. Anyone who encounters the object and does not Withstand the spell gains the Persistent Condition: Obsession, with the object as their focus.

**Add Space ●●●:** Individuals with the Obsessed Condition associated with the object gain a Strong sympathetic link to it for the Duration of the spell.

## Optimal Container (Space ●●●)

**Practice:** Perfecting

**Primary Spell Factor:** Duration

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Larceny, Science, Subterfuge

This spell expands the dimensions of a container making it capable of holding objects larger than it normally would. The subject must have some kind of pocket or internal space. The mage enhances the subject to be able to contain objects of a combined total Size equal to its own Size plus Potency.

## Spiritual Tool (Spirit ●●●)

**Practice:** Perfecting

**Primary Spell Factor:** Duration

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Empathy, Occult, Survival

The mage enhances an object to be more attuned to the Shadow and spirits in general. The object becomes both an item of the material world and of Shadow, able to interact with spirits both in Shadow and in Twilight. The item retains its normal equipment bonuses. If the object is carried into either other realm, it retains its material form when the object returns to the material realm while under the effects of this spell.

## The Nature of Enhancements

An enhancement on a magical item is more complex than just an item with a spell cast on it. While the outcome is functionally the same, the item has its essence and fundamental reality changed by the enhancement spell. Some items accept these enhancements better than others, and a few rare objects exhibit better than mundane properties all on their own. Mages are aware of the perfected forms of base and composite materials, and objects made of those metals exhibit enhanced properties that the material does not normally have. Some mundane items not perfected through magic exhibit properties that make them extremely receptive to certain kinds of magic. Mages referred to these as naturally occurring enhanced items because they are so easy to work with and are highly prized.

Naturally occurring enhanced items never seem to start out average. An item forged of pure metal, an item carefully created by the hands of a master in her craft, or an item meeting certain criteria of chance and fate may exhibit enhanced properties on its own. The object is not a magical device, nor do all magical effects work similarly. Usually, the item works a little better than an average item of the same type, making casting a spell to take advantage of the property more effective. The items are only ever receptive to a single enhancement, and usually that enhancement is one that falls in line with the items most general function. It is easier to cast a spell to improve a knife to cut better than it is to make it lighter or store a spell, casting a spell to make a car handle better is easier than making it fly, etc.

The reason behind the effect is unknown, but hotly debated. Scholars argue that some items are simply closer to the supernal, much like how many items are connected to each of the Supernal Realms and can improve a mages casting if used as a magical tool. In essence, these items function as a limited magical tool for the express purpose of casting a single spell. Others contend that the effect cannot be natural, and that the items must have magic infused in them during creation or at some point afterward to function in this manner, as the objects which have been found so far seem to have no common connection to any Supernal Realm. Free Council experimentations reveal they may create these items through repeated use of a single enhancement spell over time, but the effect is inconsistent and rare.

## The Magical

The act of imbuing an item does not just place a spell into it for later use, the item is fundamentally changed into a magical spell storing vessel. Unlike enhancements, imbuing an item does not perfect the item into a more Supernal form of itself. The object retains whatever imperfections or functionality it had before the process and continues to function in the same capacity as a mundane object would, but now has an additional magical function.

Creating an Imbued Item takes time and effort on the part of the crafter. The mage must prepare the item to hold the spell as well as prepare the spell to function independently of herself. To some cabals, creating Imbued Items is the truest of magical craft forms.

# IMBUED ITEMS: RULES CLARIFICATION

The rules for creating Imbued Items in **Mage: The Awakening Second Edition** are split between their creation (p. 195) and the Merit for characters to own them (p. 102). How the spells cast by Imbued Items differ from those cast by mages was confusing to many readers. This section clarifies and expands on their rules.

- **Prime Attainment:** Imbued Items may be created by any character with four dots in Prime.
- **Eligibility:** The mage creating the Imbued Item must be capable of casting the spell to be Imbued, and it may only use Attainments that modify the casting of a spell; e.g. a spell using sympathetic range may be Imbued, but Mage Armor may not.
- **Imbuement Process:** Creating an Imbued Item requires Mana equal to all Arcana dots used in the spell being Imbued, and an extended action of one hour per roll with a target number of successes as follows
  - **Base** = Arcana dots used in all Imbued spells x2. Spells already Imbued into an item count for this if a mage attempts to Imbue more.
  - **Extra Mana Capacity** = 2 Mana per success added to the target number
  - **Flexible Reach** = double successes needed.

On a dramatic failure, the Item is cursed (see p. XX for examples of cursed items). On an exceptional success, the item is relinquished from the creator's spell control without spending Willpower dots or points if the creator wishes.

- **Persistent or Contingent:** Chosen by the creator on Imbuement. Persistent Items are always active until their spell's duration expires, unless dispelled. Contingent Items are triggered by a word, gesture, or condition set by the creator. Only one spell in an Item may be Contingent.
- **Mana Capacity:** Imbued Items may hold one point of Mana plus any added as Extra Mana Capacity.
- **Merit Cost:** Imbued Items bought in character creation cost one dot per dot of the highest Arcanum used in each spell Imbued, plus one for the use of any Attainments and one per extra 2 Mana capacity.
- **Activation:** Any character that knows the trigger method may activate an Imbued Item, causing it to cast.
- **Casting Spells:** Imbued Items cast their spell as though they were mages, directed by the user.
  - **Dice Pool:** The base spellcasting dicepool of an Imbued Item is the spell's Arcanum rating plus the user's Gnosis (unAwakened users only roll the Arcanum rating.)
  - **Mana Cost:** The Mana cost for an Imbued spell is that the creator would pay if improvising that spell herself at the moment of the Item's creation. If that would be zero, the Imbued spell costs one Mana instead. Mana is removed from the Item's own Mana points, but Awakened users may choose to spend their own instead.
  - **Reach:** The base Reach of an Imbued Item is set by the creator; it always defaults to the same (if any) advanced

spell factors and Reach options in the spell. If the creator paid extra successes for Flexible Reach (see above,) and still has spell control over the Item, the user may reduce Reach used for a casting of the Item's spell, changing Advanced spell factors to basic and forgoing Reach options on the spell as desired. This does not reduce any Paradox Risk the Item has.

- **Spell Factors:** The spell factors of an Imbued Item are decided by the user upon activation.
- **Yantras:** Imbued Items do not gain any dice bonus from Yantras. Items using sympathetic range or temporal sympathy still require a sympathetic Yantra.
- **Paradox Risk:** Imbued Items may Risk Paradox if the spell Imbued exceeded the creator's free Reach when the item was Imbued, or if another effect adds Paradox dice (e.g. an obvious spell witnessed by Sleepers). The Paradox dice per Reach is based on the user's Gnosis, not the creator's, and is 1 for unAwakened users.
- **Paradox Mitigation:** Awakened users may spend the Item's Mana to mitigate any Paradox dice pool for the Item's spell but use the per-turn limit of their own Gnosis.
- **Paradoxes:** Paradoxes arising from an Imbued Item cannot be contained, but automatically release.
- **Paradox Duration:** Imbued Items use the Wisdom of the user for purposes of determining Anomaly Duration or the Paradox Condition from an Exceptional Success on a Paradox roll. Treat unAwakened users as Wisdom 0.
- **Sympathy:** If an Item uses sympathetic range, the Item uses the connection between the subject and the Item, not the subject and the user.
- **Nimbus-Free:** Imbued Items do not have a Nimbus.
- **Persistent Effects and Dispellation:** If a persistent Item's spell is destroyed, through Dispellation or other means, the Item may be reactivated with the Prime 1 spell "Word of Command."
  - **Spell Control:** Upon creation, an Imbued Item takes up one "slot" of its creator's Spell Control, no matter how many spells it contains or if it is activated. This Spell Control may be relinquished as normal, but while it remains the creator has extra abilities regarding the Item;
  - **Reach reduction:** A creator with spell control over an Item has the benefit of Flexible Reach, above, even if the Item was not Imbued with it.
  - **Factor reduction:** A creator with spell control over an Item may reduce its spells' Spell Factors as though she cast it, even if she did not activate the Item.
  - **Cancellation:** A creator with spell control over an Item may cancel its spells as though she cast them, even if she did not activate the Item.

# The Nature of Imbuements

Imbuing an item is a complex and involved process that only the most knowledgeable mages fully understand. While the application of the process is fully documented and understood, the basics behind the magic – the how and the why – are still under investigation. Each spellcaster draws upon various aspects of her own will and desire to create magic, but the fundamental laws of magic remain the same for everyone. Without an Imago, the spell cannot happen. Every time a mage casts a spell, she calls into mind the Imago, even when using a Rote or Praxis. Spells imbued into an item have already been cast, allowing anyone to use the item, even if the person is normally incapable of casting the spell contained within. One would think that because the item is created using an Attainment, no Imago is necessary, but the spells cast through the item are patently not Attainments. They can be dispelled or countered just like any normal casting with an Imago.

Mages have two theoretical camps on the issue. The Xoristos theory suggests that the mage imprints the Imago into the essence of the item. When the spell is called upon, the item itself holds the Imago of the spell, allowing its casting. While the Memias theory holds that the imbued spell is the only spell cast and that all subsequent spells cast through the item are continuations of the original spell. The act of imbuing creates the conditions necessary for all other castings.

Both theories have evidences in their favor. Xoristos followers hold that when a mage imbues her item, she must call up the Imago of the spell she wishes to impart into the item. Though she does not cast the spell, it is an intrinsic part of the preparation. Spells cast through the item later act as unique spell instances. The mage can alter the spell's factors at each casting as though she did it herself and can even cancel the effects prematurely no matter who wields the item. If countered or dispelled, the spell can be cast again later. This indicates that each instance of the spell utilizes an Imago. Persistent spell effects imbued into an item lend credence to the Memias school of thought. The spell's effect is permanently on and needs no additional Imago or trigger from the user. Those spells that do require triggers simply have an additional layer, but fundamentally work the exact same way as a persistent spell effect. The spell is laid into the item at the beginning and its use is part of the initial magical change. A mage with control over the Imbued Item's spell can affect the spell even if she wasn't the one who activated the item, as though she cast it, and can destroy the Imbued Item by spending Mana. Essentially, she retains power of all aspects of the spell.

The debate on how imbuing a spell into an item function on a fundamental level is hypothetical, as the result is the same. The resulting research and investigation have led to only to more questions. For instance, the Xoristos camp has discovered ways to imbue items with more than one spell at a time, though the resulting items are chaotic at best. Other experiments with imbuing sentient creatures have yielded promising results. Those who follow the Memias school of thought have learned how to imbue items for shorter periods of time with less effort. These castings are the result of many failed attempts to set conditional

modifications to the spell such as giving the spell Sympathetic Range, but only with specific triggers.

## Imbuing Others

Those who follow the Xoristos theory have tested imbuing subjects that are not completely inanimate. A mage can impart her truth on any aspect of the Fallen World's Lie. Her subject may be an item, a person, a room, or any number of other creatures both mundane and supernatural. It stands to reason that if she can mold an item into a magical vessel for a spell, then she can mold anything she has purview over in the same way. This has proven to be true, though it does nothing to prove that the spell's Imago is imprinted on the imbued subject any more than the Imago of the spell is designed from the start.

To Imbue a subject other than an inanimate object, the mage must first cast a Weaving spell of an Arcanum associated with the subject on the subject to attune him to the magic of imbue, and then she uses the normal Prime Attainment. The imbue process is lengthier and harder than normal, as even a willing subject naturally resists the magic placed into her life pattern.

Mages who imbue spells into a sapient creature usually only do so with a trusted ally, or someone she doesn't mind damaging if necessary. The likelihood that the subject will fall into the wrong hands is lesser, but that doesn't prevent the subject from turning the spell's casting against the crafter once the spell is relinquished. Sometimes, the mage keeps the spell under her control to ensure she can always destroy it if it looks like the subject has been compromised.

Just like imbuing an item, a mage can imbue her vessel with any spell she is capable of casting, and Attainments may only be included if they modify a spell. Anyone can gain the benefits of the spell if she is in contact with the vessel, even if she didn't cast it. See the Imbued Ally Merit, p XX. If the mage imbuing the vessel retains control over the spell, she may cancel it at any time. Just like with an Imbued Item, the mage may spend a Mana and damage the vessel no matter where it is. If the vessel has Health levels, this destruction of the magic inside them deals Aggravated damage equal to the imbued spell's level. If the imbued vessel is a location, the destruction deals Structure damage instead.

A living vessel withstands the imbue with Stamina, even if she is willing. Since the imbue takes many hours, a mage may want to contain an unwilling subject, or render them unconscious. The vessel gains a Mana pool just like an item might, and a living vessel gains the ability to spend the Mana for the purposes of activating its own imbued spell.

A vessel which normally contains Essence can spend its own Essence to cast the imbued spell, but someone triggering the spell must use Mana. If the vessel is a living creature, the creature cannot spend the Mana for any purpose other than casting the imbued spell.

The spells cast from a vessel are subject to Dissonance. If a Sleeper vessel casts the spell, or her spell is cast by someone else, she risks a Breaking Point or degrading the spell's effects.

## Unliving Vessel (Death ●●● + Prime ●●●)

**Practice:** Weaving

**Primary Spell Factor:** Duration

**Withstand:** Resistance

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Crafts, Occult, Expression

This spell prepares a subject under the purview of Death for the Imbue Item Attainment. The mage can use the Attainment to imbue subjects found in Ghostly Twilight. This includes the ghostly items found in Twilight as well as ghosts themselves, which automatically Withstand the spell's casting. She can also imbue items made of ectoplasm, such as those created with Ectoplasmic Shaping, or corpses. To cast on a ghost, it must be in the ghostly Twilight, or Manifested. A mage can summon a ghost with the Death Arcanum.

## Rapid Access Memory (Forces ●●● + Prime ●●●)

**Practice:** Weaving

**Primary Spell Factor:** Duration

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Expression, Larceny, Science

The mage can imbue a spell into software which can later activate on a computer. The caster imbues the software on item that can interface with a computer (an external hard drive, a USB memory stick, or even just a dongle) per normal. Once imbued, the software can trigger the spell via interfacing with a computer into, based on criteria set by the mage at the time of casting. This may include a password, or a specific set of software interface conditions. The software uses the Mana stored in the object to cast the spell, as can anyone using the item. If the object runs out of Mana stores, the software cannot cast the spell.

## Living Vessel (Life ●●● + Prime ●●●)

**Practice:** Weaving

**Primary Spell Factor:** Duration

**Withstand:** Stamina

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Academics, Medicine, Persuasion

This spell prepares a subject under the purview of Life for the Imbue Item Attainment. The mage can use the Attainment to imbue any living subject.

## Imbue Room (Prime ●●● + Space ●●●)

**Practice:** Weaving

**Primary Spell Factor:** Duration

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Larceny, Occult, Science

This spell allows a mage to prepare a room or space for the Imbue Item Attainment. The mage must apply the correct Area Spell Factor to her casting while imbuing the room. Anyone inside the defined area is affected by a persistent effect or can activate the spell if she knows the trigger. Unlike an object, the space does not hold Mana, and any Mana necessary for casting the imbued spell must be spent by the user.

## Spirit Vessel (Prime ●●● + Spirit ●●●)

**Practice:** Weaving

**Primary Spell Factor:** Duration

**Withstand:** Resistance

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Academics, Intimidation, Occult

This spell prepares a spirit for the Imbue Item Attainment. The mage must either be able to cast her spell through the Gauntlet, or the spirit she is imbuing must be Manifested. The subject automatically Withstands the casting. The mage can summon a spirit to her or assist one to Manifest before casting this spell.

## Limited Use Items

Research into the nature of Imbued Items has led to a few discoveries on how to do so for a short amount of time, or for a single use. The effects utilize the concept behind imbuing a spell into an item. When the spell triggers, it is cast once, and the item is no longer imbued. The function of these spells is related to the Fate •• Attainment, except the Conditional Duration does not end the spell's effects but allows the spell to be cast. Memias researchers have found combining the imbue process with simple spellcasting has led to interesting results.

Creating such items is less intensive than permanently imbuing an item, but by nature the items do not last. As such, the process focuses on the efficacy of the spell in the immediate without any regard to longevity. Cabals often make these items to pass around to their members giving temporary access to unknown Arcana.

## Energize Object (Forces ●●● + Prime ●●)

**Practice:** Weaving

**Primary Spell Factor:** Duration

**Cost:** One Mana

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Expression, Larceny, Science

This spell primes an object with the potential for activation to hold a spell. The mage casts this spell on a subject which alters it in a way that allows it to hold a spell until a kinetic force is applied. Once the object is primed, a mage may spend a Mana to cast any other spell on the object, which does not activate until an appropriate force necessary for activation is applied. Appropriate force is determined by the type of object: A bullet must be fired from a gun, a stationary object must be thrown, a weapon must be swung with striking force, and a switch must be flipped from the off to on position. Energize Object may store up to its Potency in spells into the subject, which remains in their caster's control but does not take effect until activated. Anyone may cast the spell by activating the object. If the controlling mage cancels Energize Object, or its Duration ends, any stored spells end.

## Spell Potion (Matter ●●● + Prime ●●)

**Practice:** Weaving

**Primary Spell Factor:** Duration

**Cost:** One Mana

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Crafts, Medicine, Subterfuge

This spell magically alters an ingested item, making it act as a storage vessel for another spell. The mage casts this spell on an ingestible item, which changes the item from mundane food or drink to a magical potion, primed for holding and storing another spell. Once the item has the Spell Potion spell cast on it, a mage may spend a Mana to cast any other spell on the item if it uses touch/self range. The cast spell does not take effect until the item is ingested. If the subject of this spell is ingested before another spell has been stored in it, it has no nutritional value and the Spell Potion has no other effect. Spell Potion may store up to its Potency in spells into the subject, which remains in their caster's control but does not take effect until ingested. Anyone may activate the stored spells by ingesting the subject but are then used as the subject of the spells stored. If the controlling mage cancels Spell Potion, or its Duration ends, the contained spells end.

## Stored Spell (Prime ●●●)

**Practice:** Weaving

**Primary Spell Factor:** Duration

**Cost:** One Mana

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Academics, Occult, Subterfuge

With this spell, the mage can make an item capable of holding a spell until later activation, much like the Prime Attainment, Imbue Item. Once this spell is in effect, a mage may spend a Mana to use Stored Spell when casting another spell with touch/self range, which is contained, unactivated. Stored Spell may imbue up to its Potency in spells into the object, which remain in their caster's control but do not take effect until a mage spends a point of Mana while touching the item. Anyone who can do so can spend a point of Mana to release the spell from the item while she is touching. Spells released from Stored Spell use the person touching the item as their subject. If the controlling mage cancels Stored Spell, or its Duration ends, any contained spells end.

## Mana Batteries

When imbuing an object, a mage may store Mana inside it as well as the spell. Usually, this Mana is reserved for casting the imbued spell, but not always. Anyone holding the item may pull upon the Mana reserve for any casting, as long as the item still contains Mana. Later, the mage may refill the Mana reserve up to its capacity using the Prime Arcanum. The ability to pull Mana from an item at any time is an invaluable resource for many mages, especially those incapable of channeling Mana on their own.

The idea is that crafters create items specifically to house Mana to increase their stored pool. These items are easy to

hand off to cabalmates as anyone can utilize the Mana stored in the item. In its unrefined form, a mage imbues an item with a simple spell and invests large amounts of Mana into the item. This process is inefficient and time consuming, and often not worth the crafter's effort to maintain spell control or later relinquish the spell. Most crafters who imbue items with both spells and large Mana pools choose useful spells and keep these items for personal use.

The next logical step is to imbue an item with Mana but no spells. Some crafters are content to channel Mana into a physical form to create a tassel. This kind of storage is short term, as when all the Mana is used up the physical form crumbles away. Some mages trade created tassels, knowing the spell under their control will be used up shortly and, if not, she can always prematurely end her spell to regain her spell control "slot."

Longer term options lead back to imbuing the item. Mages have designed a spell to refine the Imbue Item Attainment to allow for only imbuing Mana into an object. The process is easier than imbuing a full spell into the item and requires the mage to have less mastery over the Prime Arcanum.

## Mana Battery (Prime ●●●)

**Practice:** Weaving

**Primary Spell Factor:** Duration

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Academics, Occult, Subterfuge

The mage primes an item to hold Mana, which she can then access or refill as she desires. The mage casts this spell on a subject prior to using the Prime Attainment, Imbue Item. The subject is primed to accept a Mana pool, but not a spell. The number of successes necessary to imbue the item is equal to the Mana pool imbued into the item.

An item created through Mana Battery does not hold or contain a spell like an Imbued Item, but it can store Mana in a similar fashion. The item can store up to this spell's Potency in Mana. Anyone who can utilize Mana may pull Mana into her pattern by touching the item. Alternatively, while in contact with the item, she can use the Mana stored in the item instead of her own for casting spells. A mage may use the Prime 3 spell Channel Mana (**Mage: The Awakening Second Edition**, p.168) to replenish its stores.

## Letting Go: Relinquishing Spell Control

The magic placed into an item or creature is not the only kind of magic a mage may want to last indefinitely. She may just as well want to preserve the wards she put in place to protect her home or keep a spell to keep track of her possessions. Casting any spell to last indefinitely requires a lot of effort on the part of the mage, and often takes quite a bit of time. Unless relinquished, these spells remain under the caster's control, taking up valuable concentration for other spells later. The mage is left with the decision to prematurely end her spells, possibly

destroying an Imbued Item, or relinquishing the spell from her control. Often a mage casts her enhancements with an eye towards an indefinite duration and Imbued Items will retain their magic as long as the mage retains her spell. Few mages want to go through the process of imbuing a new item with a spell they use often or recasting complicated enhancements due to spell control issues. Instead, they choose to relinquish the spells ensuring the item will remain intact without diminishing their spellcasting abilities. The act of relinquishing spells with an indefinite duration is taxing in its own way, as relinquishing the spell without spending a Willpower dot could lead to the item's eventual demise.

As with any other aspect of crafting, mages have spent a great deal of time researching how to relinquish their spells safely without paying such a high price. Some mages are content to allow their spells to go awry by expending as little energy as possible, but others have developed spells that allow them to get around the normal cost. In many cases, these spells do not have the same weight or accuracy as simply spending a Willpower dot, which remains the most effective way to relinquish a spell without any adverse side effects.

### Primal Transfer (Prime ●●●●)

**Practice:** Patterning

**Primary Spell Factor:** Duration

**Cost:** One Mana

**Withstand:** Composure

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Crafts, Empathy, Subterfuge

This spell allows a mage to transfer spell control of a spell she has already cast to another mage. This spell transfers up to its Potency in spells from the caster to her subject. Once the spells are under the new mage's control, she can do with them as she pleases. Once the Duration of this spell ends, control of the transferred spells returns to the original caster.

**+2 Reach:** If Primal Transfer is imbued into an item with this Reach effect and Potency equal to any other spells included in the item, those spells are transferred to the spell control of the user when activating the item, allowing them to reduce Reach and reassign spell factors. However, the item now only works for Awakened users, and adds a die of Paradox Risk if the user is already at their spell control limit.

### Time Limit (Time ●●● + Prime ●●)

**Practice:** Weaving

**Primary Spell Factor:** Duration

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Expression, Science, Survival

The mage instills a time limit on the effects of an imbued spell as she relinquishes it. The subject is a mage who then deliberately utilizes this spell's effects while casting the Prime Attainment: Imbue Item. At the end of the imbue, this spell relinquishes the Imbued Item from the caster's control.

The relinquished spell has a finite duration in which it works for a user, and then it ceases to function. If a new user attempts to use the spell, it works again, but only for the length of time as dictated by this spell. The spell's time limit is one week per level of Potency of the spell. Time Limit's Duration must last for the entirety of the imbue process, or it fails to take effect.

**+1 Reach:** The spell's time limit is increased to one month per level of Potency.

## Left-Handed Crafting

Order mages are not the only ones who engage in magical item creation. Any mage can craft an item if she has the Arcana required and the will to do so. A mage outside the Orders who takes up the role of crafter for her small group, or just for herself, is rarely as careful or as dedicated as mages beholden to large social organizations. An Enraptured mage creates an item in the pursuit of her Fault only to relinquish it unsafely when she no longer has a use for it, leaving a trail of dangerous and unpredictable magical items in her wake. Banishers intentionally create cursed items or imbue harmful spells into items to hand off to other mages in hopes of bringing about a downfall. Scelesti pull the Abyss into their magical item creation hoping to harness Paradox through each casting. Reapers create items to steal, store, and harness the power of souls. Liches bind their own souls into vessels hoping to cheat death.

## Cursed Items

Mages may create items that have a useful spell inside with a negative side effect to relinquish the spell safely into the world. While these items are technically cursed, the benefits outweigh the consequences of use. Some mages create items which have no benefits, and only cause problems with use. This is especially popular with Banishers who are organized enough to have clear plans on how to take down other mages by seeding false Mysteries. Some Left-Handed Legacies engage in cursed-item creation simply to sow chaos among the Orders.

Items can become cursed either as a result of a dramatic failure during creation, or through intentional use of magic. An enhanced item can incur equipment penalties or reduce the item's Structure and Durability causing it to break shortly after use. An Imbued Item may have a persistent spell which deals damage to those nearby or spells which turn harmful effects upon the user. As harmful spells never target the caster, the item's creator must go through extra effort to make the imbued spell target the user, especially against her will. Other insidious curses make the item seem beneficial at first but harm the mage in ways that outweigh any benefits. Usually, these curses come in the form of hexes or damage to the user.



### Steal Life Force (Life ●●●)

**Practice:** Fraying

**Primary Spell Factor:** Duration

**Cost:** One Mana

**Withstand:** Resolve

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Crafts, Medicine, Persuasion

This spell is cast on a mage and alters her imbue-ment process, causing the resulting item to damage the user. If a mage uses the Prime Attainment, Imbue Item, before the Duration of Steal Life Force ends, the resulting Item is cursed. The Item appears to function as a normal Imbued Item, except it requires life force to function. The Item steals life force from the user dealing one Lethal damage for each point of Mana which is spent to cast the imbued spell. If the Item runs out of Mana, it automatically replenishes itself by inflicting a point of Lethal damage to whomever next comes into contact with it.

### Primary Subject (Prime ●●●)

**Practice:** Weaving

**Primary Spell Factor:** Duration

**Cost:** One Mana

**Withstand:** Resolve

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Intimidation, Occult, Subterfuge

This spell alters the imbue-ment process, creating an Item that

always targets the user. The subject of the spell must be a mage. If the subject uses the Prime Attainment, Imbue Item, before the spell's Duration ends, Primary Subject causes the subject of the imbued spell to always be the Item's user. Meaning, anyone who attempts to trigger or use the Imbued Item is the subject of the imbued spell, regardless of who or what the wielder attempts to target.

### Steal Mana (Prime ●●●)

**Practice:** Fraying

**Primary Spell Factor:** Duration

**Cost:** One Mana

**Withstand:** Stamina

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Expression, Occult, Subterfuge

This spell must be cast on a mage to alter her imbue-ment process resulting in an Item that siphons Mana from whomever is in contact with it. When the mage under the effects of Steal Mana imbues an item with the Prime Attainment, she gives it a Mana capacity. Instead of infusing the item with Mana, the item steals that much Mana from whomever is in contact with it. Whenever the Item's spell is cast, it immediately siphons Mana from the user. If the Mana would bring it above its normal storage capacity, the Mana instead dissipates into the atmosphere. If the user does not have as much Mana as the Item attempts to siphon, it deals Bashing damage for each Mana it cannot siphon.

## Forced Sympathy (Space ●●●)

**Practice:** Weaving

**Primary Spell Factor:** Duration

**Cost:** One Mana

**Withstand:** Composure

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Empathy, Stealth, Subterfuge

This spell must be cast on a mage to alter his imbue process resulting in an Item that always targets a subject with sympathy to the user. This spell must be cast in conjunction with the Space Attainment, Sympathetic Range. Whenever the subject of this spell uses the Prime Attainment, Imbue Item, Forced Sympathy automatically imbues the item with Sympathetic Range. Whenever a user casts the item's imbued spell, it always targets the subject with the closest sympathy to the user. Closest sympathy is determined by the best sympathetic Yantra on the user at the time of casting. If the user has multiple items which could be used as a Sympathetic Yantra, the spell's effect occurs on the one in closest physical range. At the very least, the spell targets the closest person the user knows by name.

## Alternate Relinquishments

Left-Handed mages rarely care to relinquish their spells in a safe manner, especially the Rapt and Banishers. Other groups care to have their items endure for long periods and so pay the costs to relinquish the spell in a safe way. Like Order mages, these mages have developed ways to reduce the cost to themselves via the use of spells. These spells tend to put the onus of expenditure on others keeping the cost to the mage low.

## Sacrificial Relinquishment (Death ●●)

**Practice:** Ruling

**Primary Spell Factor:** Potency

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Intimidation, Medicine, Streetwise

This spell allows the mage to sacrifice a life instead of a dot of her own Willpower to relinquish a spell safely. The next time the subject relinquishes a spell while this spell remains active, she may make a blood sacrifice to relinquish the spell as though she spent a Willpower dot. To work properly the sacrifice must be valuable, such as dozens of small unintelligent creatures, a few intelligent animals, or a single human sacrifice must be made to satisfy the requirements of the spell.

## Broken Relinquishment (Mind ●●●)

**Practice:** Fraying

**Primary Spell Factor:** Duration

**Withstand:** Composure

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Intimidation, Occult, Subterfuge

This spell creates a breaking point for the subject as a way for a mage to relinquish her spell. The next act of hubris, breaking point, or similar roll by a subject of this spell suffers a penalty equal to the Potency of this spell, at which point the next subject (who may be the same subject but doesn't necessarily have to be)

who relinquishes a spell does so safely as though she spent a Willpower dot.

**+1 Reach:** A subject of this spell immediately suffers a Breaking Point.

## Reaping Relinquishment (Death ●●●)

**Practice:** Fraying

**Primary Spell Factor:** Potency

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Intimidation, Medicine, Occult

The mage destroys a soul to relinquish a spell safely. The next time the subject of this spell destroys a soul — either in her power through a different Death spell or contained in a Soul Jar — she may relinquish another spell safely as though she spent a Willpower dot.

**Add Prime ●●:** The caster can destroy a soul stone instead for the same effect.

# The Crafter's Role

Mage society has mixed views on magical items. They are undeniably useful, and mages collect and use them as much as possible. At the same time, some items can be powerful and dangerous in the wrong hands and certain mages want to destroy them or hide them away. Dangerous or not, most mages want access to magical items and having a large quantity is impressive and a sign of success and power. Those who create such items are held in the highest regard and esteem, unless they have somehow earned a poor reputation.

## Reputation

Crafting a magical item is a time-consuming and exacting process. While any mage with the Prime or Matter Arcanum can craft an item with magic, many prefer to let someone else do the work. Some mages are content to simply use an item already in her cabal's possession or one her Order has for loan. Others have specific requirements and want the item created new. A mage with the desire to craft can carve out a good living within mage society.

A crafter's reputation is key to her survival. A good reputation means acceptance into nearly any Consilium or Assembly and goodwill from cabals seeking out her craft. A new crafter must suffer through a great deal of scrutiny and rejection until she develops a working relationship. Once established as a competent crafter, a mage may find herself highly sought after within ever widening circles. Reputation and rumors spread quickly in the magical world, and a mage with a gift for crafting can find herself rising in popularity faster than she can fulfill commissions.

Mages seeking out magical items must be careful who they purchase from. Unscrupulous or sly crafters may attempt to trick a buyer into purchasing a cursed item or one with a time limit she wasn't expecting. Mages are wary of unknown crafters, as the item they purchase could have any number of hidden pitfalls. Some buyers insist on sitting in on crafting sessions for important commissions. Any mage with sufficient levels of

Prime or Matter can make an item magical, but casting failures and shortcuts can result in subpar items. A true crafter creates items whose benefits outweigh any consequences of use.

## The Crafter's Mark

After an item is crafted or created, the mage's Signature Nimbus only remains on the object for a short amount of time unless she wills it to stay longer, regularly replenishes it, or casts a spell to make it permanent. Among Awakened crafters, knowing who made an item is as important as knowing what an item does. Mages with a reputation for excellent work can command a higher price for her goods, and her product must have some kind of mark of authenticity. The use of the Signature Nimbus is the most efficient way to ensure authenticity, though just as with anything of value, mages have ways to forge, obscure, or lie about an item's authenticity. An item without any traces of a Signature Nimbus attached are considered suspect, as they could be stolen goods.

As much as having her Signature Nimbus on an item can help an established crafter sell her wares, it can be a detriment as well. A mage may not want to be associated with an item for any number of reasons. She may not wish to give another mage an easy way to identify her Nimbus or she may want to protect an item from too much attention if she is particularly famous. Of course, a crafter may have less-than-noble reasons for not wanting an item associated with her. A mage who sells a hexed item without proper warnings or gives away an item relinquished unsafely is bound to have someone seeking her out to exact payment. In these cases, it is much better for her to make her item anonymous, preventing anyone from tracing it back to her.

It is possible for a mage to forge a Signature Nimbus onto an item she created in an attempt to pass it off as something created by a crafter with a better reputation. This kind of forgery is more common than most mages assume. The belief is that those adept enough at creating quality items want to create a name for themselves instead of giving credit to other. Instead, those who create forgeries often do so to bring another crafter's reputation down, or to claim a master's work as her own.

Due to a budding underground market for items considered "clean," or with no traces of a Signature Nimbus, master crafters and guilds are pushing for Consilia to enforce buying and trading only items with identifying marks. This leads to even higher incidents of forgeries entering the market. While no one Order actively polices these activities, the Guardians of the Veil have devised a spell to find out who really made an item.

## Reveal Marks (Prime ●●● + Time ●●)

**Practice:** Weaving

**Primary Spell Factor:** Potency

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Crafts, Expression, Investigation

A mage may discern all the Signature Nimbuses associated with the subject. This spell reduces the difficulty to Focused Mage Sight to scrutinize the subject for a Signature Nimbus and reveals all Nimbuses ever associated with the subject. The spell adds a bonus equal to Potency to the roll to reveal them. If more

than one Signature Nimbus is associated with the subject, either because a mage infused her Nimbus into the item, or because of a spell, the mage can determine the age of each Nimbus.

**+1 Reach:** Add a bonus equal to Potency to Clash of Wills to reveal an obscured Signature Nimbus.

## Item Trade

Few crafters go through the entire process of crafting a magical item and then just give it away for free. Some may do so for trusted cabal members, but even that comes with some expectation of a favor in return. Most mages desire magical items, even if she can't make one on her own. Supply and demand dictate a robust market for magical items. Most Consilia contain a well-known market for magical items with dealers and traders seeking to buy and sell on a constant basis. For some mages, monetary exchange is enough as even mages need money to live. Otherwise, the most common form of payment for a magical item is magic. Maybe it comes in the form of a different magical item or Artifact, it may be a promise of a complicated spell casting later, or political support within the Consilium on a specific topic, or just an unspecified favor saved for later. Some mages prize special crafting materials, such as perfected metals or alloys and accept these as payment for their services.

Not all items are created equal and placing value on crafted items has become something of an interesting conundrum for many crafters and potential buyers. Creating a standard is not easy with so many factors going into an item's creation such as function and how its relinquishment affects its usefulness. Many mages use what is considered the soul standard. A single Imbued Item safely relinquished by the crafter spending a Willpower dot constitutes two favors (one for the crafting and one for the relinquishment method). An enhanced item relinquished in the same way is also two favors. Anything that limited the functionality of the item reduced the item's value to a single favor.

In theory this works, and for commissioned magical items, mages stick to this method or trade items of equal value. When dealing with magical items simply on the market, the value of an item is completely up to the buyer, and this standard rarely works out perfectly. A more bitter truth reveals that a dark underbelly of magical item trade often exchanges well-made magical items for complete soul stones, though such trade is tacitly forbidden in most Consilia.

Mages who make a living buying and trading magical items have learned to recognize how a spell was relinquished or what kind of problems may be associated with the item. A dealer enjoys the ability to set prices and facilitate exchanges allowing her to get proverbially rich on trade without engaging in crafting herself.

## Crafters Among the Orders

Individually, mages know and understand the value of having a few magical items within their arsenal. In groups, the differing opinions on how to deal with them, when to make them, and how to use them differs greatly. Few Consilia take up the task of dictating magical item use other than laying out sanctions

against unsafe use or creation. They tend to leave the intricacies of up to individual cabals. Some Orders, such as the Guardians of the Veil and the Mysterium have strong opinions on how to handle magical items, and as such, the other Orders have been forced to form opinions as well. In some cases, those dictates are simply that no other Order can tell them what to do with their own magical items.

## Adamantine Arrow

The Adamantine Arrow carry a practical view on magical items. If it can be used in war or to further the mage's ability to provide and protect, then it should be used. Otherwise, it is useless, and someone else can bother with it. The Adamantine Arrow have no designs on how to handle magical items they find little use for, but instead leave that to the other Orders to deal with. Crafters within the Order focus primarily on weapons and modes of defense, with a secondary focus on items of utility. Arrows prefer to enhance weapons and armor to complement their physical training and imbue items with offensive spells.

Arrow crafters view their trade as part and parcel with defending the Awakened community. The crafter is likely to make and distribute items to her entire Order as well as her cabal, and not just the individuals who can pay her. Based on this, the Adamantine Arrow gives their crafters a great deal of respect and support, often finding and providing space and materials for the crafter. Arrow crafters are often dedicated to their art, taking pride in their work, only using the best materials or perfected materials, and never shirking the effort of relinquishing spells safely. Over any other Order, Arrow crafters are most likely to enjoy the status of master crafter.

A lesser-known resource for the Adamantine Arrow is crafters who are forced into the role for heretical noncombatant ideals, as a way to support and redeem themselves. These crafters support the Order by mass producing single-use or limited-use items. Few other than important members of the Order even know of their existence or the role they play for the order.

## Guardians of the Veil

The Guardians of the Veil have an interesting relationship with magical items. They seek them out, hoarding them for use amongst their Order, but caution other mages against their use. Casting spells wantonly leads to hubris and hastening the Fallen World's demise. Magical items give a false sense of security to many mages who feel the degree of separation in casting makes it somehow safer. The Guardians view this a logical fallacy, since a Paradox incurred by casting a spell through an Imbued Item cannot be contained, making them much more dangerous to use. The Guardians caution against complacency in such matters, hoping to prevent overuse of magical tools or Paradox related accidents. Yet, when it comes to their own members, they use any item that may facilitate their own goals.

The apparent hypocrisy would offend the other Orders, so Guardians of the Veil outwardly oppose the use of all magical items. A Guardian rarely engages in the magical item trade, unless it is to procure a dangerous item to remove it from general circulation. If an item should fall into her hands, she quietly

makes it disappear. Members may demand the destruction or containment of magical items when discovered, causing fights with some of the other Orders. Crafters within the Guardians focus on creating items of subtle magic to facilitate spying or keeping secrets. The crafter lives a life of anonymity to any but her fellow Order members, who come to her in secret.

## Mysterium

The Mysterium is populated by mages seeking answers in every corner of magic. They delve into the theoretical side of magic, experimenting with new methods, materials and magic at every chance. Whenever a Mystagogue comes across an unknown magical item, she wants to study it, learn its secrets, determine a way to replicate it, then put it to use. Other Orders view the Mysterium as greedy towards magical items, and they are not wrong. A Mysterium wants her hands on everything she finds so she can study it. She will even go so far as to request visitation rights for studying an item with unique characteristics. This usually ends in the item landing into a safely secured library deep within the Mysterium's sanctum.

Crafters with the Mysterium are more akin to researchers than anything else. They rarely craft normal or simple items, seeking new ways to enhance, imbue, and eventually relinquish their spells. This kind of research can lead to both extremely useful items for the Order, and dangerous items that would be better off destroyed. The Mysterium have a policy about destroying items though, which is never. They instead have high security vaults for containing dangerous items. The only agreement the Mysterium may have with the Guardians of the Veil about how to handle items is that dangerous creations should stay out of the hands of mages. Yet even how to accomplish this task is hotly debated, as the Guardians would rather just destroy an item and be done with it.

## Silver Ladder

The Silver Ladder see magical items as nothing more than tools. Sometimes these tools have a social value, something another mage may want or need, something to seal a deal or ensure a treaty, or simply something given as proof of patronage or competence. Other times, the item is useful, and therefore should be used. If someone else wants it, then it should be sold, for the right price. When working as a leader, the Silver Ladder realize that giving up a slight power advantage can go a long way in winning allies. Danger and misuse are rarely in the mind of a member of the Ladder when making decisions about a magical item. She is instead considering how she can use it for her own goals, either by keeping it or giving it to someone else. A thérarch does not care about the implications of a dangerous item, but she does care about the political power she can gain from giving the other Orders what they want. Members of the Silver Ladder generally side with whichever Order has the strongest presence within nearby Consilia when it comes to dealing with dangerous items. Otherwise, she holds on to whatever is useful to her and only deals with the highest bidder.

The Silver Ladder rarely bother to craft magical items for more than personal use, knowing that much more dedicated

and skilled crafters are willing to spend the time and effort to produce quality goods. She is willing to pay for that service instead of wasting her own time. Some who do craft magical items look for shortcuts and ways to decrease her time, often enhancing items for a short time and then letting the spell expire rather than spending the effort required to make it indefinite.

Rarer are the théarch crafters who create exquisite examples of mage artisanship taking a pride in their work unprecedented by any other. These items sell for more than just money or items in trade among mages, requiring political favor and personal services in return for elite commissions. These crafters are highly sought after and the Order practices apprenticeship programs for skilled crafters and young Order members. Teachers for this style of crafting are rare, making apprenticeships competitions within the Order, with an entire crafting guild dedicated to managing applications and praiseworthy deeds among applicants.

## Free Council

Much like the Mysterium, the Free Council view magical items with a scholarly eye. Instead of pursuing the Mysteries inherent in the item's creation, they seek to find new ways to employ magic in human welfare. A libertine seeks out magical items not only to use them for her own purposes, but to experiment with incorporating their use into mundane systems. The Free Council are most likely to arm their Sleeper and Sleepwalker friends with magical items of all sorts, using the magic to increase quality of living.

Some Free Council crafters engage in experimentation with creation methods, time reducers, and ways to trigger their creations. Her ultimate focus is creating a magical item with a low barrier to use, allowing any and all to enjoy the item's functionality. Where the Mystagogue focuses on the how and why of the magic involved in item creation, the Libertine focuses on the what and how much of the item's final functionality. She is unlikely to create an item just to ease her own burden of casting in the future, though if her item helps a Sleeper community, all the better.

A Free Council crafter seeks to produce items that reflect her personal techné, resulting in a fantastical suite of items useful as both mundane and magical items. She seeks to incorporate science, art, and other forms of human culture into her magic, marrying the two sides into one item with unique functionality.

## Seers of the Throne

Seers of the Throne use magical items as a means to an end. A magical item in their hands is not in the hands of the Pentacle mages and can further their goals. The Iron Pyramid regulates item usage and creation in much the same way it regulates all other aspects of a Seer's life. Powerful magical items are reserved for those in the upper echelons of the Order. Much like the Adamantine Arrow, the Seer's use of magical items is one of practicality. They are not enamored with the magic that goes into crafting such items, but instead view them as a way to gain more functionality.

Crafters within the Seers of the Throne make items to make their lives easier. They do not care about safety so much as longevity, preferring not to waste time and resources on improperly made items. Many items crafted by Seers have a dark purpose, used to subjugate humanity or carry out their Exarch's will.

## Magic Items and Sleepers

The spells that go into enhancing an item or imbuing an item are not obvious themselves, that is until a seemingly fragile item appears bulletproof, or a normal item casts a fantastical spell. When a magical item goes from innocuous and mundane seeming to obviously magical, it triggers Quiescence in Sleepers. Spells cast on items that last for any length of time suffer from Dissonance just like any other spell.

Magical items trigger Quiescence and Dissonance in similar ways to other persistent spells. Obviously magical items or magical effects created via items cause a breaking point and Quiescence as normal. Enhanced items are themselves spells and therefore are subject to Dissonance, while Imbued Items are spell vessels protecting them from Dissonance. The spells cast by an Imbued Item are subject to Dissonance as per normal, and if the effect is obvious, adds a Paradox die when used to cast in front of Sleeper witnesses.

Sleepers rarely come into direct contact with magical items, though some Orders may outfit their Mystery Cults with basic enhanced items for a short period of time to assist with a special project. Mages rarely hand over items with persistent spells, as items left with them slowly lose their magic to Dissonance. Some mages give their Sleeper allies Imbued Items with persistent effects, though these too lose magic over time. Scelesti and a few Banishers sometimes give Imbued Items with triggered spells to their Sleeper allies to use. If a Sleeper activates an Imbued Item, she suffers a breaking point. Quiescence forces her to rationalize the effect she created, as she rarely forgets her own actions.

## New Merits

### Enriched Item (●● or ●●●●)

**Effect:** Your character owns an item with a natural enhancement or one permanently altered through multiple uses of the same enhancement.

When purchasing this Merit, choose an item and a spell. Anytime the chosen spell is cast upon the chosen item, the item offers a +1-die tool Yantra. The item always has a +1 bonus over its normal equipment bonus (or 1/1 armor rating) for a mundane item of the same type even when not enhanced. With four dots in this Merit, the item offers a +2-dice tool Yantra bonus, and its equipment bonus is increased to +2 dice.

### Imbued Ally (●<sub>+</sub> Special)

**Effect:** Your character has imbued a spell with an indefinite duration into a person or a creature who is bound to her using the Prime Attainment, Imbue Item. The living creature has a

single spell imbued and Mana with which to cast it. She may always trigger the spell and use the Mana, or its own Essence in the case of a spirit or ghost. Anyone who can spend Mana can trigger the spell if they know how and are touching the ally. The spell always requires at least one point of Mana; if the spell would require Mana, use that amount. If it would normally not require Mana, it requires one point. When a user triggers the spell, the player rolls to cast it with a dice pool of the spell's Arcanum rating plus the user's Gnosis (if Awakened).

This Merit modifies another Merit such as Retainer or Familiar. Each dot purchased reflects one dot worth of spell contained in the person. If a spell uses multiple Arcana, use the highest to determine the cost for this Merit. The imbued ally has a single point of Mana, but their Mana pool can be increased during casting, which increases the cost of this Merit by one for each point of Mana. While the person may only possess one triggered spell, the Merit is not limited to the normal five dots, because of this battery effect.

This Merit can be combined with the Retainer or Familiar Merits.

### Mana Battery (•-)

**Effect:** Your character has an item imbued with a Mana pool in which she can use instead of her own pool to cast spells. She may pull Mana from the item into her own Pattern at any time or replenish the item with Mana with the use of the Prime 3 spell, "Channel Mana." (*Mage*, p. 168.)

Each level of this Merit represents two Mana capacity in the item. This Merit can be combined with the Enhanced Item or Enriched Item Merits.

### Perfected Item (••)

**Effect:** Your character owns an item crafted from a perfected metal, amalgam, or alloy with a permanent Duration. This Merit can be combined with the Enhanced Item, Enriched Item, Mana Battery, or Imbued Item Merits.



I step inside and right away, I know I gotta hurry. All the wards are crumbling, like somebody took a torch to a tapestry. That means I don't have to dick around taking them apart, but it also means whatever's keeping the Temple stable might be crumbling too. Too many people lost too much to get me the relic I needed for sympathy to this place. The least I can do is make sure I don't promptly get myself erased from the fucking timeline.

The Mysterium would pay through the nose to get their hands on half of this, but I'm only here for one thing. I find it curled up in the skeletal hand of the corpse sitting on a throne of silver. It looks like a key, but I know better. She sacrificed her ultimate potential for this, her final gift to us, or else her last "fuck you." What was she thinking, at the end? You hear the stories but it's not the same. From here I could look back, watch her last moments, but I don't have the — ha — Time. Clock's ticking.

Just one problem. As soon as I take the key, something takes shape between me and the door. I don't have the first idea what it is, my Sight's coming up with a big fat *nada*, but it sure doesn't look friendly. I waste three whole seconds deciding it's too dangerous to co-locate with this thing on my tail, and then I run.

I shoot it a few times and it doesn't care. When I start chanting, the High Speech pisses it off, which is great for concentrating on an Imago, let me tell you. Finally, the key in my hand hums as something else takes shape. She's there, in Twilight, tall and glorious like a goddess. She looks me up and down. "You dare summon me, child of Pandemonium?"

"Not quite," I say, leveling my Colt at her. "I made you. You're just an echo. But I bet you remember how to call off your dog."

She glances at the guardian, getting closer way too fast. Then back to me and my gun. "You think a mere weapon sufficient to sway me?"

"Nah," I tell her, looking down the barrel and letting it jumpstart my spell. Like a bullet ripping through flesh, my will punches through her defenses and puts its boot to the neck of her volition. "I think you're gonna do exactly what I tell you because I fucking said so. Call it off."

She smiles. Lifts a hand without taking her eyes off me, and the guardian just stops, like she flipped a switch. Then she bows. "As you will it. All that I once was is yours."

"More than you even know." This time my High Speech is measured and flawless, and as she disappears into my Oneiros to become a part of me, she looks satisfied. Guess she decided I'm a worthy successor.

Not gonna lie, I'm flattered.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# THE WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE

*"It doesn't matter what you do, he said, so long as you change something from the way it was before you touched it into something that's like you after you take your hands away. The difference between the man who just cuts lawns and a real gardener is in the touching, he said. The lawn-cutter might just as well not have been there at all; the gardener will be there a lifetime."*

—Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*

One mage toiling alone learns through her Sight, through her otherworldly journeys and the mistakes she makes. A hundred mages toiling together in Consilium learn through their joint experiences and the conversations between them. Thousands of mages toiling over millennia learn through the perpetuation of knowledge. While some mages jealously hoard the fruits of their labor, most understand the value of preserving them for those who come after. The metaphor of the dwarf standing on the shoulders of giants rings false for mages, though, since each of the Awakened is a giant in her own right. What, then, can the Awakened legacy produce from a tower of giants standing atop one another across history?

"Quite a lot," is the answer, but the scholarship of magic is wrought with even more complexities, inconsistencies, and unanswered questions than Sleeper academia. For one thing, most magical knowledge is protected one way or another from eyes deemed undeserving by its keepers. For another, no mage ever reached his full gnostic potential by relying solely on dusty tomes and relatively safe research deep in the bowels of a warded Athenaeum. A mage can learn a lot in a library, but ultimately the heart of any Mystery lies out in the world. For a third, the intrusions of Paradox, other realms, vanished timelines, and

traces of people who both did and did not ever exist make tracking down foregone knowledge a Herculean task truly worthy of the Awakened.

Masters teach their students to cast the way they do in shortcuts they call rotes, perpetuating their magical styles and practices by channeling Imagos through symbolic mudras and the lens of Fallen pursuits. When word of mouth isn't enough, mages transcribe rotes into Grimoires to preserve them for the future. Those who become their magical careers by reshaping their Gnosis to fit can teach others to do the same and can record those lessons in Daimonomika to ensure a Legacy's continuation. The Awakened soul itself is a form of knowledge, too, crackling with Supernal insight that spills over into the Fallen World through a mage's Nimbus. It brushes her metaphysical fingerprints onto everything she touches, leaving clues and trails behind for her successors to follow. A mage can even portion out her own soul, crafting soul stones that manifest her Gnosis materially. These can dilute the barrier between worlds Fallen and Supernal and serve as substitute Legacy tutors or barter for knowledge and favors.

These are the repositories and means familiar to the greater Awakened community, but the wealth of magical research

available to an enterprising mage far surpasses a few well-documented avenues. Grimoires don't always follow customary rules. Soul stones don't always act predictably. Sorcerers of great power and imagination color outside the lines all the time, frustrating novices to no end when they find a relic of the past and can't explain how it could exist in the first place, much less how it might work. Even mages who try to erase what they've learned to prevent it from falling into someone else's hands inevitably leave hidden vestiges behind to dance in reality's periphery. In this way, the Awakened themselves and their myriad discoveries become new Mysteries all their own.

## Rotecraft

Perhaps the oldest known way to preserve magical knowledge is to design and codify Imagos as rites. A rite is a constellation among the scattered stars of spellcraft. It traces a known pattern through the infinite possibility of one or more Arcana, forging a path for other mages to follow. Passed down individually from master to apprentice, a rite is part of an oral tradition of magic that keeps an Order's sacred practices from fading and lends cohesion to its histories. A rite's signature Imago marks its practitioners as kindred spirits; two mages who notice one another using the same rite can be assured that they have studied in the same circles or read the same Grimoires, or perhaps even sat at the feet of the same tutor. Such an encounter can spark conversation between strangers, or cause consternation if a rite was meant to be carefully guarded.

## Master

Primarily, a mage chooses to record a spell as a rite so that other mages can benefit from it. Vast stores of Awakened lore are predicated upon the idea that few mages want their magical knowledge to be lost when they die; every spell or scrap of insight that slips into obscurity takes the Fallen World one step away from its sublime counterpart. While the potential of an Arcanum is theoretically limitless within its domain, in practice, the spells a mage can cast are limited by her imagination and those workings she can glean from other sources. Thus, rites are a way to keep possibility alive.

Awakened who choose to mentor younger, greener willworkers find it easier to help their students through the difficulty of constructing complex Imagos with rites, especially in Arcana that don't come as easily. Teachers use rites in a student's Inferior Arcanum as incentive for the student to step outside his comfort zone and tackle new challenges. A master who labors doggedly to invent a powerful, intricate spell may methodize it as a trophy to show off or a prize to offer in trade. Rites give masters the opportunity to put their personal signatures on their magic, even spinning off entire schools of thought and practice based on the individual Imago styles of influential mages. Secret societies, sects of the Guardian Labyrinth, and underground Left-Handed Legacies use specialized rites as subtle signals of membership. Theorists propose that rites inch the Supernal Realm closer one spell at a time, crystallizing the union of symbols Fallen and divine.

## Modus Operandi

A rite relies on encoding Supernal symbolism in sympathetic mundane techniques. It requires that touch of familiarity to translate ineffable magic into a repeatable schema. The Skill that resonates with a given set of symbols differs from master to master, depending on her Path, Order, Legacy, and experiences with the spell. A mage who knows how to express herself in poetry can tie a spell to the Platonic ideal of poetry, thus allowing another poet-mage to walk the same steps and reach a similar understanding. The choice could be a conscious decision on the master's part, or it could spring from her subconscious and surprise her. Of course, not every Skill has any sympathy with a given spell, and only those with some appropriate connection work.

Take the spell "Scrying" (**Mage: The Awakening Second Edition**, p. 174) as an example. The Mastigos master of Space who views interaction as the penetration of illusions and wraps herself in layers of pretense feels most at ease encoding the "Scrying" spell with Subterfuge, perpetuating the lie of privacy. The Libertine master of Space instead encodes it with Computers in a scrying-as-hacking metaphor that she doesn't even consciously consider. A member of the Aurora Auricalcinae Legacy, steeped in the trappings of traditional hermetic divination, encodes the spell with Occult, drawing on the imagery of crystal balls and tarot cards. A mage who regularly uses "Scrying" to gain insight into people from afar encodes the rite with Empathy, associating the spell and the motive by habit. Each choice gives the rite and its practitioners a slightly different style. When a player character creates a rite, the player and Storyteller should work together to decide what influences most affect the character's choice of rite Skill and what kinds of associations resonate best.

## Apprentice

An Order or mentor rarely gifts a mage with knowledge of a rite unless he first performs some service to pay for it, although that service may just be living up to the Order's expectations for business as usual. Silver Ladder initiates earn their rites by acting as messengers and assistants for their superiors, while those in the Mysterium learn them in exchange for uncovering new Mysteries or artifacts. Some dole out rites based on how well a student can prove his mettle in a duel or demonstrate acumen in a particular philosophy. Apprentices are only too happy to jump through these hoops, not just for the potent magical benefits, but for the social and political currency rites provide. Recognizable rites are marks of membership, belonging, and accomplishment.

Memorizing a rite operates on the same principles as creating one does. The encoded Skill helps the mage build arcane muscle memory, like learning the choreography of a dance one move at a time, or learning a martial art one kata at a time. Repetition is the key; a student must carve the Imago stroke by stroke into his mind until it's fully committed. Impressing an imagined scenario onto reality is one thing; breaking the scenario down into partial symbols and projecting how those symbols will combine to create the full spell effect is altogether

more painstaking, like translating spoken language into writing for the first time, until the trick of it clicks. Mages liken that moment to opening their eyes onto forbidden vistas, sneaking a peek at secrets they shouldn't yet know, or solving an unsolvable mathematical equation. A rote grants a glimpse into the insight of someone with a stronger connection to the Arcana, like a rush of adrenaline or an intense pleasure trip.

Apostates, Nameless Orders, and other outliers don't have countless generations of Order tradition to fall back upon when it comes to teaching rites. They can craft Grimoires like anyone else, but without the advanced compression techniques that mudras afford, they must invent less expedient pedagogical approaches for memorization. The rites that result from these clumsier methods can sometimes make use of unconventional Yantras. One master conducts Pavlovian experiments, forcing various stimuli upon her apprentices while they cast until they learn to associate pain, pleasure, the sound of a bell, or intense cold with the steps of the Imago, turning these stimuli into Yantras once the rote is learned. More subtle masters instill a rote in the notes of a melody or the hidden flash of subliminal messages, teaching without the students ever knowing it until one day they wake up to the knowledge and wonder where it came from. The tune or phrase becomes the Yantra then. These alternative Yantras still use the rote's encoded Skill as their bonus value, although the Skills encoded in rites like these can follow more esoteric logic than traditional ones. Without mudras, however, these techniques don't consolidate the Imago enough to allow for instant spellcasting. A mage who learns a rote this way may not use Reach to cast it in a single turn.

## Modum Mutationis

Although rites are structured magic, they're not written in stone. The form and style of a rote are imagined by the master who created it. Willworkers can re-imagine rites they've learned, linking the Imagos to different Fallen symbols to better match their unique talents, although it takes persistence and the new set of symbols still must resonate with the spell. The mage conditions herself to identify the rote with a new Skill, going through the motions and bringing the Imago to mind repeatedly while doing something else until the spell and the action become subconsciously entangled.

Sometimes a mage does this by accident, as she comes to associate the rote with her own ordeals or changing circumstances. The Libertine who learns to scry via hacking metaphor is captured and held by Seers for days, relying on the rote to eavesdrop on her captors until she hears the one thing that can free her. Afterward, she more strongly associates the spell with Investigation or Stealth than with Computers, and her Imago's pathways of meaning shift unbidden to reflect that.

## Altering Rotes

Disciples of any Arcanum can alter the Skill encoded into a rote of that Arcanum that they know. Rites that use multiple Arcana require three dots in all of them. If the character chooses to change a rote's encoded Skill, the player must succeed on an extended action using a dice pool of Arcanum + desired

Skill. The character must have at least one dot in the Skill to attempt the action and must have already learned the original rote. Each roll represents one hour of conditioning, and the player must accrue three successes per dot of Arcana involved in the spell. A two-die penalty applies to each roll if the new Skill is in a different category than the original; for instance, substituting a Mental Skill for a Social one. Once the player has succeeded, she spends one Arcane Experience. From then on, she can cast the rote using the new Skill, but no longer the old one. The Storyteller is the final arbiter of whether the new Skill is appropriate for the spell in question.

If the player and Storyteller agree that a series of events has changed a rote's Skill without the character's intent, eschew the extended action — the player simply spends the Arcane Experience after the fact and changes the rote from then on.

## Warped Rotes

Occasionally, rote creation doesn't take quite right, building alien shapes and nonsensical lines into the Imago. Mages disagree on what warps the design of a rote. Some blame Abyssal encroachment, while others think a dearth of wisdom or gnosis is at fault. Some suggest it's the limitless Supernal lashing out against the marriage of pure magic with the Lie, or a Supernal entity meddling for its own enigmatic reasons. Any or all of these could be true. Regardless, cases of warped rites that carry curses are documented and no one disputes their existence, rare though they are.

Whenever a warped rote is cast or memorized, it causes strange phenomena the Awakened call "hitches" when cast. Hitches reflect the Arcana of the rites that cause them. A Time hitch might cause three seconds to repeat for the mage alone, while a Death hitch might sap its caster of his strength.

The Awakened consider warped rites a Mystery because neither the causes nor the methods for repairing them are consistent or well-known. A solution that works once may not work again, and a mage who creates or learns a warped rote is stuck with it until he discovers the means to restore it, unable to devise or memorize another one for the same spell. Whole cabals get caught up in such quests.

**System:** When a player experiences a dramatic failure during an extended action to create or modify a rote, he may choose to accept the warping of the rote in lieu of the usual options. A character can learn an already-warped rote from a Grimoire or an exceptionally cruel mentor. Whenever such a rote is learned or created by a character, he gains the Hitch Condition (see below). As usual, he can only have one instance of the Condition at a time, unless he's unfortunate enough to learn more than one warped rote.

## Hitch (Persistent)

The character's warped rote puts a wrinkle in his spellcasting, causing hiccups in reality. Every failure to cast the rote becomes a dramatic failure, the effects of which should be appropriate to the Arcana used in the spell. Every exceptional success grants one automatically increased spell factor which the player *must* accept; the factor he chooses moves up one level on the chart

or moves from the standard chart to the advanced one for Scale if the spell was already at the maximum standard level. Either of these occurrences counts as a “hitch.”

**Possible Sources:** Create or learn a warped rote.

**Resolution:** Repair the warped rote.

**Beat:** The player earns Beats from dramatic failures that result from this Condition, as normal. In addition, the player earns a Beat every time an exceptional success on the rote’s roll results in unintended consequences the character didn’t want. Finally, once per scene, the Storyteller can offer a Beat to the player in exchange for a magical misfire on another spell of the same Arcanum; if the player accepts, treat the non-rote spell as though it were the warped rote for the purposes of triggering the hitch. This can include the spell the rote is based on, when improvised instead.

When a hitch occurs, Active Mage Sight of the spell’s highest Arcanum can sense that the magic malfunctioned but not why, while the appropriate Focused Mage Sight can identify the nature of the hitch and reveal its relation to the rote as surface information. Scrutiny can recognize that a rote in a Grimoire is warped – the Mystery has an Opacity of the highest Arcanum used in the spell +1, by default.

Discovering the means to repair a warped rote requires research and investigation. The restoration itself usually requires venturing into the mage’s Oneiros to locate and symbolically smooth out or purify his subconscious’ representation of the rote. Doing so is complicated, however, by the rote’s Goetia fighting every step of the way. Attempts always require contested rolls based on the symbolic action taking place, such as grappling and dragging a mud-covered Goetia out of a bog.

If the characters happen to encounter more than one warped rote – perhaps the topic becomes an Obsession, or perhaps they’re just unlucky – the Storyteller should feel free to devise other methods for repairing each one. Such endeavors should never become commonplace or predictable.

## Grimoires

The stereotypical image of a willworker casting from a Grimoire involves gesturing over a massive leather-bound tome, illuminated with gold foil or written in elaborate, bloody calligraphy. Many mages do scribe Grimoires this way – some say the trappings of book and pen, scroll and quill, invoke potent Supernal symbols. Others just like the feeling of power it conjures.

Grimoires can take any material form, though. Sometimes resources are lacking, and a mage must improvise. The Free Council has made an art out of crafting digital Grimoires of all kinds. Athenaea contain Grimoires on stone and ceramic tablets, inscribed in High Speech before human systems of writing existed. A mage can hide a Grimoire as some ordinary object or in a piece of popular media. Some can even scribe Grimoires into living beings. The only requirement is to make the Imago tangible somehow, in a form others can understand.

If the form of a Grimoire greatly enhances the symbolism of the rotes it contains, anyone casting the rote from the Grimoire

gains a bonus die. For example, a sword Grimoire engraved with spell runes provides a bonus to direct damage rotes.

## Media and Technology

As media platforms have evolved over time, the Grimoire has evolved with them. Any transmission of information that’s recordable for repeated use can constitute a Grimoire. Today, libraries of magic contain just as many media types as any other, including strange formats invented by experts in Matter and Forces that can’t be played back or replicated by Sleeper technology at all. Audio-only format Grimoires are especially valuable for mages with visual impairments. They tend to hold fewer rotes than their video counterparts, since scribing an audio Grimoire requires recording High Speech aloud one symbol at a time, painting the Imago in spoken words instead of runes.

A mage can use “Scribe Grimoire” (**Mage: The Awakening Second Edition**, p. 166) to transfer a Grimoire from one medium to another, just as she would create a copy. Adding Forces •• allows her to do so without having the equipment necessary to re-record it normally. For instance, she can transfer a Grimoire from vinyl to book form by listening to it on a record player and writing down what she hears; with Forces, she can simply run her fingers over the grooves in the record and copy down the Imago she hears.

The digital revolution among Sleepers reinvigorated the creativity of modern-minded mages to devise new ways to scribe Grimoires. Peculiar phenomena have cropped up around digital Grimoires, though, particularly when the device used to access one is connected to a network. The sheer speed and ephemeral nature of transmitting and storing digital information plays oddly with the permanence of a rote Imago, causing some e-Grimoires (as techné practitioners call them) to generate extraneous data by themselves, corrupt a drive into something with bizarre properties, spawn magical computer viruses, or even develop rudimentary artificial personalities.

## Stratified Secrets

A mage can layer other enchantments onto a Grimoire’s carrier, making it both a teaching tool and a vessel of magic in its own right. He can recycle an old Grimoire into a new one, creating what scholars call a *palimpsest*. He can disguise a Grimoire as something else, hiding its runes from anyone without the proper credentials, or create puzzle texts that require solving to access.

Hiding the rotes in a Grimoire involves combining “Scribe Grimoire” (or a variant) with the “Supernal Veil” spell during the initial transcription process, concealing the runes or their magical significance from notice. A mage can use Fate’s Conditional Duration Attainment to specify a password, ritual, or other condition to gain access to the concealed rotes. If he combines “Scribe Grimoire” with the Mind spell “Hallucination”, he can instead make anyone who looks at the Grimoire think it’s something else. With the Matter spell “Transubstantiation,” the Grimoire can be something else, requiring dispellation to reveal the Grimoire’s true form.

## Imbued Grimoires

Scribing a Grimoire into an already Imbued Item costs +2 Reach, or +1 if every rote in the Grimoire aligns with the Imbued Item's Arcana. Layering symbols on top of other symbols without causing an inextricable muddle requires a certain finesse. By the same token, Imbuing an item that's already a Grimoire requires extra successes equal to the highest number of Arcana dots involved among the rotes in the Grimoire; so Imbuing a Grimoire in which the most complex rote is a Life 3 spell requires three extra successes, while Imbuing one in which the most complex rote is a spell that uses Mind 3 and Life 3 requires six. The above rules also apply to Grimoires that are fetishes.

A spell bound into a Grimoire needn't be related to that function, but a mage could imbue spells like "Cloak Nimbus" "Supernal Veil" or "Gain Skill" for use while casting rotes out of the Grimoire. He could also imbue spells that trigger whenever someone reads or casts from it, such as "Memory Hole" to stop anyone from learning the rote permanently, or "Stealing Fire" to protect the Grimoire from Dissonance if a Sleeper reads it. Some mages set harmful or self-destructive spells to trigger when someone without the right passphrase or qualities tries to cast from a Grimoire, which is why the Orders have strict policies about who can study a newly-discovered Grimoire and how it's done.

## Palimpsests

Mystical knowledge given physical form is more than simply writing it down for posterity. It brings that physical form closer to the Supernal World, elevates it to be a purer version of itself. Even if the words and runes are erased, the knowledge remains deep in the Grimoire's bones, remembered glory that won't easily fade. Attempts to scrub such magic from existence led to the invention of the palimpsest, a recycled Grimoire inscribed on top of an older one after the first is wholly or partially effaced. Older palimpsests tend to be products of reusing tomes half-destroyed in disasters or mistakes made by those who tried to wipe out forbidden rotes. Some have made a career out of hunting down Grimoires written on top of traces of impossibly old texts, hoping to uncover glimpses of magic from the Time Before. Over time, willworkers learned to create palimpsests on purpose to reap the weird benefits they provide.

A mage can glean scraps of the rotes inscribed previously in a palimpsest through the echoes of their Pattern, though she can never learn them with Experiences. Once she's figured out how to cast these echoes, she can develop her own rotes based on those spells. Each rote echo is its own Mystery with Opacity equal to the total Arcana dots used in the rote + 1 for every century that has passed since its original inscription, to a maximum of +5. Once she has fully scrutinized the echo with Focused Mage Sight, she may cast it from the Grimoire with a two-die penalty to her spellcasting roll.

## New Spells

### Fracture Grimoire (Prime ●●)

**Practice:** Ruling

**Primary Factor:** Potency

**Cost:** 1 Mana

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Crafts, Investigation, Occult

The mage copies one whole Grimoire into two or more disparate parts that individually mean nothing. Only someone who gathers all the parts together can cast or learn any rotes, even if one part seems to contain rotes within itself. Using the pieces in conjunction requires Scrutiny with Focused Mage sight; add the spell's Potency to the Mystery's Opacity. By default, the Grimoire can be broken up into a number of pieces equal to the spell's Potency.

Mages use the Conditional Duration Attainment to specify a ritual to perform, a puzzle to solve, or a game to win that ends the spell and reassembles the Grimoire.

**+1 Reach:** The mage may fracture the Grimoire into as many pieces as she wishes.

### Scribe Palimpsest (Prime ●●●)

**Practice:** Weaving

**Primary Factor:** Potency

**Cost:** 1 Mana

**Withstand:** Total Arcanum dots used in the rote + 1

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Crafts, Expression, Occult

Like "Scribe Grimoire," this spell gives physical form to a single rote's symbols. A mage can cast it multiple times to fill one vessel with many rotes. She does so using a previously-scribed Grimoire with its contents erased, scrubbed, scribbled out, painted over, or otherwise made unreadable. The Storyteller chooses one Arcanum when the character casts this spell. Whenever a character later casts the rote from the completed Grimoire, it acts as though it incorporated dots of the chosen Arcanum equal to this spell's Potency, creating unpredictable blended effects. If the Storyteller chose an Arcanum already included in the rote, grant the casting one free Reach instead. Rotes learned with Experiences from a palimpsest carry these extra Arcana effects with them.

**+1 Reach:** For one point of Mana, the spell's Duration is Lasting.

## Anima Mentis

The art of crafting Grimoires doesn't end at the edge of unfeeling inanimate substance. The writings of the Mystagogue philosophical society known as the House of Stars put forward the theory that by fixing magic into stagnant insensate forms, the Awakened lay the Supernal low; that even Stygian ideals want mystical knowledge to breathe and move as the raw universal elements do, not to calcify in the Lie's dust. Taken to heart, this idea inspires mages to create Grimoires that live, think, and grow in countless ways.

## Vital Knowledge

The spell "Living Grimoire" (below) can transform a plant or creature into a vessel for rotes. A living being that carries these Fallen incarnations of Supernal knowledge within it suffers a constant intrusion of untamed magic coursing through its veins. A mage can brand, carve, or tattoo runes into a plant or animal, but the Imago can live under the skin, so to speak, if the author wishes. Mages can access rotes in the whorls of tree rings, the patterns of a honeycomb built by Grimoire bees, or the strands of a spider's web.

Human Grimoires hold up better than their less complex brethren, but the intensity still wears on them, weakening their bodies or putting stress on their minds. Sleepers thus transformed become pawns and commodities for willworkers. A mage might turn someone else, or even herself, into a Grimoire to hide her secrets in plain sight or transport them safely. If a mage can cast rotes from her own body, her enemies can't take her Grimoire away from her without significant effort. Some human Grimoires have become such out of desperation, a last-ditch effort to save knowledge that would otherwise be lost.

Willworkers can combine various Grimoire-crafting spells with spells that create life forms, consciousnesses, golems, or other creatures from nothing to conjure servant Grimoires that can pull double duty.

## Knowledge Invisible

Ethereal realms and ephemeral beings play a role in perpetuating mystical knowledge too, whether drawn into it by deft Awakened hands or acting as invaders in a world they ill understand. Spirit, Death, and Mind can haunt a Grimoire with otherworldly creatures. Mind can also pen an Astral Grimoire, tucking the rotes away in the Astral Realms for safekeeping or later discovery. Other Arcana can produce similarly esoteric repositories. The urban explorers of the House of Ariadne use Fate to encode rotes in the windings of a city's thread, requiring their initiates to follow paths of meaningful events and resonant places in mystical scavenger hunts. Forces can generate Grimoires that manifest in audible melodies, which a mage can transcribe in notation and later play or sing to cast the rotes therein.

Occasionally, mages insist that their Grimoires weren't products of their own scholarship, but instead of magic channeled through them directly by possessing Supernal entities, or alien Mana from lost lands infecting their minds, or primordial cries echoing across the Anima Mundi into their meditative ears. These eerie books often contain rotes no one has seen before or since, or languages that only magic can translate. Travelers to the Shadow and other realms have brought back strange copies of known earthly Grimoires that are all but identical except for an added rune here, two switched lines there... Mysteries that mages try to solve before they dare to cast blindly out of such uncanny tomes.

## Indoctrination

Beware, ye who delve too deeply, who seek too eagerly. Those who know the inexorable pull of the Mysteries and have a bone

to pick with fellow mages can craft Grimoire traps that lure in the unwary with false rotes and strike when the time is ripe. Mystagogue Censoria reserve special high-security corners for these malevolent Grimoires that compel mages to read, infest them with contagious all-consuming ideas, or hide Abyssal messages inside ordinary-seeming symbols. A Grimoire can be enchanted to wait until a mage is knee-deep in memorizing or casting what she thinks is a rote before it yanks her consciousness, her soul, or even her entire body into the book, never to be seen again. Decoy Grimoires can foist extra unwanted Obsessions onto a mage, tricking her into thinking she's solving a Mystery when in reality she's tumbling down a rabbit hole that ends in death, insanity, or conversion to a Scelestus cult or Banisher Legacy.

## New Spells

### Astral Grimoire (Mind ●●● + Prime ●)

**Practice:** Weaving

**Primary Factor:** Potency

**Cost:** 1 Mana

**Withstand:** Total Arcanum dots used in the rote

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Crafts, Expression, Occult

Scribing an Astral Grimoire is much like scribing an earthly one, except the vessel which holds the symbols exists only in the subject's Oneiros. An Awakened subject can cast the rotes from the Grimoire without having to meditate into the Astral, but if she does cast with the Astral representation of the Grimoire in hand, it grants a two-die Equipment bonus to all casting rolls. Summoning the Goetia that represents the Grimoire has the same effect.

**+1 Reach:** The mage can scribe a Grimoire into the Temenos, making it available to anyone who travels to that Temenos realm. The rotes can only be cast directly from the Astral representation or with its summoned Goetia, neither of which grants an Equipment bonus.

**+1 Reach:** For one point of Mana, the spell's Duration is Lasting.

**+2 Reach:** The mage can scribe a Grimoire into the Anima Mundi. Such Grimoires manifest not as books and scrolls, but as vast constellations of stars or rock formations. Figuring out how to read one constitutes a Mystery unto itself.

### Living Grimoire (Life ●●●● + Prime ●●●●)

**Practice:** Patterning

**Primary Factor:** Potency

**Cost:** 1 Mana

**Withstand:** Total Arcanum dots used in the rote and Stamina

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Crafts, Medicine, Occult

The mage scribes a single rote per casting of this spell onto a living being, either from memory or copied from another Grimoire. The symbols could be represented as tattoos covering the body, brands burned into flesh, runes carved into bones to be discovered after death, or any other method the mage devises



that utilizes the physical body of the being. It's even possible to inscribe the rote into nucleic acid sequences, requiring highly specialized equipment or magic to access and possibly passing it down through a bloodline; or to write it into neural pathways such that the knowledge lives in its behavioral patterns, accessible through observation or particular stimuli.

Raw Supernal symbols carved directly into a being's Pattern are a lot to handle for an organism born of the Lie. Animal and plant subjects tend to live shorter lives. If the subject is a character, his player must choose a Persistent Condition for the character to labor under so long as he remains a living Grimoire. This Condition reflects a difficulty imposed by the intensity of the magic he houses. Common Conditions include Obsession, Blind, and Addicted.

An Awakened subject can always cast the rotes within, regardless of whether they're visible. Becoming a Grimoire doesn't protect Sleepers from Quiescence or breaking points.

Casting this spell constitutes an Act of Hubris against Understanding Wisdom.

### Haunted Grimoire (Spirit ●●●● + Prime ●)

**Practice:** Patterning

**Primary Factor:** Potency

**Cost:** 1 Mana

**Withstand:** Total Arcanum dots used in the rote and Rank

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Crafts, Intimidation, Occult

The mage binds a spirit into a Grimoire, writing its Essence into the vessel's Pattern. Unlike a fetish, a haunted Grimoire doesn't host the spirit's Numina or Influences, nor does it have an Essence pool. Instead, the spirit is a part of the words and runes themselves, trapped inside the Supernal symbols. The Grimoire gains the Resonant and Open Conditions for that spirit, which is a Lasting effect of the spell until resolved as usual.

Whenever someone casts a rote from the Grimoire, she automatically increases the rote's primary factor by the spirit's Rank instead of by her own Arcanum rating minus one, but the spirit has the chance to escape by riding the vessel's Mana out into the world. It rolls its Power + Finesse in a Clash of Wills against the caster. If the spirit succeeds, the spell ends, and the spirit is released into Twilight, although multiple spirits can be bound into a Grimoire with separate castings of this spell.

Whenever someone memorizes a rote from the Grimoire, the spirit has an opportunity to possess her, again rolling Power + Finesse in a Clash of Wills. The mage learns the rote regardless, but if the spirit succeeds, it transfers the Resonant and Open Conditions from the Grimoire to the mage and may immediately use the Possession Manifestation even if it normally couldn't, at no Essence cost.

Casting this spell constitutes an Act of Hubris against Understanding Wisdom.

**Substitute Death ●●●●:** The mage may bind a ghost or unattached soul into the Grimoire instead. Souls can't possess

readers and don't cause Conditions, but they can escape as normal.

**Substitute Mind** ••••: The mage may bind a Goetia into the Grimoire instead.

## Daimonomika

The word *Daimonomikon* is derived from the concept of the daimon: the Goetia inside every soul that represents the drive to become one's higher self. A Daimonomikon is a tool for shaping Gnosis into a more idealized form. It's a specialized Grimoire that gives physical manifestation to the practices and mystical pathways of a Legacy. Since mages must learn the Attainments of a Legacy in order from least powerful to most, they speak of Daimonomika in terms of a range from least advanced to most. An Initiate level Daimonomikon teaches only the Legacy's basics: its primary Arcanum, its Yantras, its Oblations, and its first Attainment. An Apprentice level Daimonomikon teaches up to the second Attainment, and so forth, using the same language mages use to describe their own ranks. A Holistic Daimonomikon is advanced enough to contain an entire Legacy within its pages.

Daimonomika can take on any of the strange and varied forms that other Grimoires can, but experienced Legacy scribes urge care; a form too ephemeral might leave traces of the scribe's Nimbus trailing behind it like a leak, while a form bursting with enchantments or symbolic power might prove dangerous to the scribe herself. Mumbled cautionary tales tell of Legacy masters who tried to scribe Daimonomika so potent they managed to write their own souls into the books instead, although some dismiss these stories as Guardian or Seer propaganda meant to dissuade anyone from crafting one.

### Scribe Daimonomikon (Death, Fate, Mind, or Spirit •••• + Prime •; or Prime ••••)

**Practice:** Patterning

**Primary Factor:** Potency

**Cost:** 1 Mana

**Withstand:** Rank of Attainment + (10 - caster's Gnosis)

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Crafts, Expression, Occult

A Daimonomikon plays host to the secrets of a Legacy, allowing those who study it to join the Legacy without a tutor. Each casting of this spell scribes a single Legacy Attainment; initiation itself, including the primary Arcanum, the Yantras, and the Oblations, are included with the first Attainment. This means a mage can cast this spell between one and five times on a single vessel, which can range from teaching initiation only to teaching the entire Legacy, or anything in between.

In addition to the Arcanum requirements, the caster must have at least Gnosis 2 and meet all prerequisites for the initiation or Attainment he's inscribing. He must also possess the requisite Arcanum dots for any optional Attainment effect to include that effect in the scribed Attainment.

Anyone initiated into a Legacy by a Daimonomikon must spend one Arcane Experience. Anyone who learns additional

Legacy Attainments from a Daimonomikon uses the Experience cost listed for learning without a tutor.

A Daimonomikon serves as a sympathetic Yantra worth +2 dice for members of the Legacy inscribed.

**+1 Reach:** For one point of Mana, the spell's Duration is Lasting.

## New Merits

### Cognoscente (••)

**Prerequisites:** Prime •••, Academics or Occult ••

**Effect:** Your character has perfected the art of scribing Grimoires and is well-known for his famous tomes. Anyone who casts a rote from a Grimoire he crafted may do so without doubling the ritual casting time.

He may also choose to imprint his own Signature Nimbus into the rote Imago when he casts the "Scribe Grimoire" spell (or a variant). If he does, the rotes therein carry his Signature Nimbus instead of simply hiding the caster's own. Once per story, he gains a +2 dice bonus on any Social roll that relies on his fame as a Grimoire scribe and enjoys the benefits of Occultation 3.

**Drawback:** The latter effect of this Merit doesn't function if the character has the Occultation Merit.

### Daimonomikon (• to •••••)

**Effect:** Your character possesses a Daimonomikon for a particular Legacy and may use it to initiate herself further into the Legacy as long as she meets the prerequisites for what's inside.

Each dot in this Merit corresponds to a particular level of Daimonomikon:

**Initiate (•):** Initiation only, including the first Attainment.

**Apprentice (••):** Up to the second Attainment.

**Disciple (•••):** Up to the third Attainment.

**Adept (••••):** Up to the fourth Attainment.

**Master/Holistic (•••••):** Up to the fifth Attainment.

If the Daimonomikon contains *only* a particular Attainment and nothing that comes before it, reduce the cost of the Merit by one Experience, to a minimum of one Experience.

### Legacy Pedagogue (•)

**Prerequisites:** Prime •••, Gnosis •••+

**Effect:** Your character's connection with his Legacy is so forceful that when he scribes a Daimonomikon, it remains a part of him even if he parts with it. Whenever another character initiates herself into his Legacy using a Daimonomikon he crafted, you gain an Arcane Beat as though your character had tutored her himself. Only characters learning the first Attainment trigger this Merit.

**Drawback:** The Daimonomikon functions as a Connected sympathetic link to your character.

# Fingerprints

Iconoclastic souls touched by the Supernal, woken to a higher reality but walking still on Fallen paths, leave their marks wherever they force the truth to shine through the Lie. Millennia of magical culture and tradition are built on this foundation: that what comes before shapes what comes after, that by seeking clues to the past we elevate our future, that what has been lost may be found again, and that though we may die, we grasp immortality in what we pass on to our successors.

Even so, no unbroken lines to the first generation of Awakened exists, thanks in part to the Fall and in part to the simple vagaries of history and human nature. Deliberately cultivated collections of mystical tomes and carefully tended lineages from master to apprentice are imperfect time capsules as people are imperfect beings, capable of treachery, hubris, and mistakes. Dissonance and Paradox swallow the buds of the tree of knowledge even as they bloom. The Exarchs' faithful toil to keep the secrets of enlightenment to themselves, granting it only to their loyal worthies.

Where inheritance and annals fail, hunters for truth turn to more subtle traces. The Nimbus, where Supernal force spills into the world through the channel of the Awakened soul, lingers like fingerprints where a mage works her will, gleaming breadcrumbs dropped in the forest of Fallen banality. It's the neon sign that announces a mage's presence at a site of Mystery, the fading dye on an excavated tapestry of past deeds, and what's between the lines in all the bits of herself a mage leaves behind. The Nimbus is the expression of her gnosis that lives without, shifting reality in a thousand little ways, while her soul itself is the expression of her gnosis that lives within, though she can shatter even this into pieces that bear the shape of her Supernal self.

## Soul Stones

The full breadth of what a soul stone truly represents and what it might be capable of is ill-understood even now. Mages know how to tear their souls into fragments, but fragments of a Mystery are just as mysterious as the whole. The origins and nature of the soul remain elusive, and every so often a willworker discovers something new about a soul stone that defies common knowledge or has never been recorded in any known text. Mages who work often with soul stones discover their lesser-known properties and use them to gain advantages over their peers or train students in the unique magical styles they develop as a result.

## Drawing the False Nimbus

A mage with at least one Arcanum corresponding to a soul stone's Path can tease the creator's Nimbus out of the object, flaring it as though the creator were casting a spell or showing it off for its Tilt. He can use it to throw off pursuit or implicate the creator in some magical crime, or simply to see what the Nimbus of a long-dead willworker was like. He can also *combine* his own Nimbus with that inside the soul stone, creating an anomalous

blended Nimbus that reflects both individuals' Paths, Legacies, and Shadow identities.

The character holds a soul stone created by someone else in hand and concentrates.

**Dice Pool:** Gnosis + either Arcanum from the creator's Path - creator's Gnosis

**Action:** Instant

**Cost:** 1 Mana

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** The character draws out an incomplete Nimbus that reacts convulsively to his Mana, warping into a potential Paradox. The player rolls Paradox dice equal to the stone creator's Gnosis.

**Failure:** The mage cannot perform the delicate manipulation necessary to draw out the Nimbus.

**Success:** The mage may flare the soul stone's Immediate Nimbus either subtly or obviously, causing its Nimbus Tilt, or place its Signature Nimbus on any magical phenomenon nearby. By default, doing this doesn't overwrite the mage's own Nimbus, although he can use other magic to do so.

**Exceptional Success:** The character may seamlessly combine his Nimbus with the soul stone's, causing both Tilts at once for the Immediate Nimbus and leaving Signature traces of both on any magic he performs for a number of actions equal to the sum of both Gnosis ratings. Active Mage sight reveals both as though the mage and the soul stone's creator used teamwork on the magic in question. Deep information obtained with Focused Mage Sight can pick up traces of the deception. Combining Nimbuses this way too often can cause the effects of the stone creator's long-term Nimbus to bleed into the character's own.

## Soul Stones as Yantras

Using one's own soul stone as a Yantra in spellcasting counts as a Dedicated magical tool, but what happens when a mage Dedicates her own soul stone? Doing so uses the same process as Dedicating any other magical tool, but she only needs to use the stone as a Yantra in every spell she casts for two weeks instead of a month. Once it's Dedicated, it penalizes Paradox dice pools by -3 dice rather than -2. If the stone is ever lost, stolen, or otherwise separated from her, she can feel its general direction and distance instinctively, guided by subtle manifestations of her Nimbus that only she can sense. If she ever does suffer a Paradox while using the Dedicated soul stone as a Yantra, however, she cannot contain it; for better or worse, she's irrevocably exposed part of her soul to the spell and *all* its consequences.

Synchronizing someone *else's* soul stone to her Nimbus as a magical tool creates a haunting Supernal intimacy between the characters, as long as the stone's creator is still alive. The stone's wielder gains the usual mechanical effects of using another's soul stone as a Yantra and using a normal Dedicated tool. In addition, the pair's sympathetic link increases by one level, even if that creates one from nothing or pushes it to Connected. The wielder knows whenever the creator is the subject of any spell from a subtle Arcanum, and the creator knows whenever the wielder casts such a spell, even if she's not using the stone as a

Yantra at the time. Using Mage Sight on either end can reveal details about the spell as though the character were there in person. The wielder has the undeniable upper hand, though: If she contains a Paradox while using the soul stone as a Yantra, she may shunt its effects onto the soul stone's creator instead of taking them upon herself. The Orders count doing so as one of the three services the creator must perform for the wielder. Only Paradox Conditions may be transferred, not released Paradoxes or the resistant damage from containing Paradox with Wisdom.

Each soul stone is a physical manifestation of a soul that's heard the call of a Supernal Watchtower and expresses its Path in every aspect. The stone's Path abhors what it doesn't understand, denying the existence of what offends it. Using any soul stone as a tool Yantra in a Prime dispellation spell not only grants the usual bonus, but also reduces the Withstand Trait of the subject spell by one if that spell belongs to the Inferior Arcanum of the stone's Path.

## Annulities

Similar to a soul stone's ability to aid in dispelling the Arcanum it shuns, a mage can use soul stones to create special kinds of Demesnes called *annulities*. An annuity is a space that defines itself by its soul stones' Inferior Arcana, suppressing their effects within its borders as a sort of anti-Demesne. Spells belonging to any of the Inferior Arcana represented by the Paths of the stones that make up the annuity take a two-die penalty when cast within it, or on a subject within it. An annuity also has a special effect on each Inferior Arcanum, as follows:

**Forces (Acanthus soul stone):** No Environmental Tilt can gain purchase within the space. Any created by supernatural or mundane means end immediately with no detrimental effects.

**Matter (Mastigos soul stone):** The Durability of all inanimate objects within the space (except the soul stone itself) is reduced by two, to a minimum of one for magical objects. If this would reduce a mundane object's Durability to zero, it holds together until someone interacts with it, at which point it falls apart or crumbles.

**Spirit (Moros soul stone):** Any Resonant Condition that exists in or passes into the space immediately ends, and any non-Supernal attempt to create one takes a two-die penalty as though it were a Spirit spell. In addition, the Gauntlet becomes impervious in the location, and spells cannot affect it or cast through it.

**Death (Obrimos soul stone):** Any supernatural creature that falls under Death's purview, such as a ghost, vampire, or mummy, must spend a Willpower to take any action that requires dice within the space.

**Mind (Thysus soul stone):** Characters can't spend Willpower while within the space, as the annuity denies the concept of individual consciousness. Mundane dreaming here is impossible.

Creating an annuity uses the same rules as creating a normal Demesne (**Mage: The Awakening Second Edition**, p. 99).

A few rare tomes speculate upon methods to create Annulities for the other five Arcana, but no two agree on a definitive way. The feat may only be possible for archmasters.

## Enraptured?

This section (as well as a few other places in this book) refers to "Enraptured mages" or "Rapt" for short. These wisdomless mages are what Mage Second Edition and earlier first edition books refer to as "Mad Ones."

## Souls of the Rapt

The willworker who chances working with the soul stone of an Enraptured mage takes his sanity into his hands, although the rewards can be powerful. Such a stone crackles with power to Mage Sight and provides free Reach equal to the Rapt's Gnosis in place of the usual free Reach based on the caster's Arcanum rating to any spell that uses it as a tool Yantra. If the spell aligns with the Enraptured mage's Fault, it grants an *additional* Reach beyond that. Using it as a Yantra for more total spells than the caster has Wisdom, however, bestows the Soul Cracks Condition:

## Soul Cracks (Persistent)

The character has relied once too often on a soul stone created by an Enraptured mage, subjecting her own soul to the barrage of uncontrollable magic leaking from the stone. Whenever she goes a full day without using it, she experiences Tulpa appropriate to the Rapt's Path and Fault. Whenever she uses the stone as a Yantra in a spell that doesn't align with its Fault, she risks Wisdom degeneration at the Understanding tier. Failing a degeneration roll this way results in such Conditions as Madness or Obsession. Finally, the mage replaces one of his Obsessions with the stone's Fault.

**Resolution:** Regain or lose a dot of Wisdom or achieve an exceptional success on an Act of Hubris.

**Beat:** Whenever the character uses the stone as a Yantra in a spell that aligns with the stone's Fault, he earns an Arcane Beat.

A Demesne that uses the soul stone of an Enraptured mage generates Tulpa constantly, but *all* spells cast there benefit from free Reach equal to the creator's Gnosis in place of the Reach granted by the caster's Arcanum rating. Anyone who spends more total hours than he has Wisdom there gains the Soul Cracks Condition, above. Casting within the Demesne counts as using the stone for the purposes of the Condition.

Such soul stones used for other purposes may have equally unpredictable and dangerous effects.

## The Soul Trade

Souls and soul stones are potent resources, and less scrupulous folks know how to profit from the high demand and relatively low supply. Almost any place where mages gather boasts a small but vigorous black market for souls and soul stones, usually coordinated by Nameless since officially, the Pentacle and even the Seers of the Throne crack down hard on such business.

Unofficially, members of every Order find reasons to slip past the mandates of the Lex Magica and pick up a soul stone or two on the sly, if they don't get caught — especially if they're in the market for a *specific* person's soul stone. Such merchandise has no Availability rating, since it's effectively priceless and dealers are rarely in the market for money anyway. They demand Artifacts, Imbued Items, favors, and access to forbidden vaults in exchange for their wares. Desperate willworkers create soul stones for the express purpose of trading them away for things they can't find anywhere legitimate.

## New Spells

### Soul Grafting (Death ●●●● + Prime ●●●●)

**Practice:** Patterning

**Primary Factor:** Duration

**Cost:** 1 Mana

**Withstand:** Composure

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Crafts, Empathy, Occult

The Pentacle frowns upon this spell, as it appropriates the soul or soul stone of another mage to provide an artificial boost in power. The caster grafts an unattached soul or a soul stone's fragment onto the subject's own soul, which must be integrated with him. Grafting a soul stone onto its creator's soul simply reverts the stone back to a mundane object, returning the lost Gnosis potential from making the stone to the creator, and this spell ends immediately. Casting this spell on a Sleeper triggers Quiescence and breaking points, and has unpredictable and disastrous effects, ranging from catatonia or madness, to violently ejecting both souls, to Paradox.

Grafting doesn't increase the subject's Gnosis, despite what rumors say, but it allows him to act at an effective +1 (for soul stones) or +2 (for complete souls) Gnosis for purposes of spell-casting time, determining range bands for Aimed spells, Clashes of Wills, Mana expenditure per turn, spell control, combining spells, and Yantras per spell.

The marriage is incomplete and fraught with danger, though. The subject has an effective +2 (for soul stones) or +3 (for complete souls) Gnosis for purposes of calculating Paradox dice due to Reach, and he *always* risks Paradox even if he doesn't Reach at all. He risks Wisdom degeneration whenever he or the owner of the soul or soul stone would roll for an Act of Hubris. Grafted soul stones are effectively mundane objects until this spell ends.

Soul grafting is an Act of Hubris against Falling Wisdom. The Orders consider using it on a soul stone to count as one of the three services the stone's creator must perform for the caster.

### Soul Windows (Mind ●●)

**Practice:** Ruling

**Primary Factor:** Duration

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Empathy, Investigation, Stealth

The mage splits her senses to experience whatever her soul stones experience as well as what's in front of her. By default, she chooses one of her soul stones and either sees its surroundings

from its perspective with a 360-degree view or hears the sounds in its vicinity. Since the mage has a Connected link to her own soul stone, this spell doesn't require sympathetic range to cast. Anyone in the soul stone's vicinity using Active Mage Sight can detect the spell.

Combining this spell with another that improves her senses allows her to use her enhanced senses through the stone.

**Add Forces ●●:** The mage may project her voice through the stone to speak to anyone in its vicinity, and even project a light-based hologram of herself for others to interact with.

**+1 Reach:** The mage experiences the soul stone's surroundings with all her senses at once.

**+1 Reach:** For each Reach she spends, the mage may split her senses again to view one more of her soul stones simultaneously.

### Goetic Evocation (Mind ●●●●)

**Practice:** Patterning

**Primary Factor:** Duration

**Withstand:** Rank of entity evoked

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Intimidation, Occult, Persuasion

While a soul stone doesn't contain any particular piece of a person's psyche, the Mind Disciple can extract the bit of souls-tuff inside a stone and convert it into a Goetia that manifests in Twilight. The Goetia has a Rank equal to half the Gnosis of the soul stone's creator. Its Numina, Influences, and Manifestations should reflect the Path, Legacy, and Shadow Name of the creator. It acts as a flat echo of its originator, embodying the platonic ideal of his most recognizable aspects rather than his true personality, and has only a few of his memories. Which memories they are depends on the form of the soul stone, the circumstances of its creation, and its importance as an object.

Mages use this spell to speak with long-dead masters, trying to glean nuggets of their vanished wisdom and secrets lost to time. If the mage studies the soul stone to learn a Legacy with the Goetia's aid, he may learn it as though he had a tutor.

When the Duration of this spell ends, the entity is immediately destroyed, absorbed back into the soul stone wherever it is.

The mage may combine this spell or follow it up with "Goetic Summons" (**Mage: The Awakening Second Edition**, p. 162) to further affect the evoked Goetia.

**Substitute Death ●●●●:** Casting a similar spell using Death on a soul stone created by a now-dead mage results in manifesting a ghost with the same properties, rather than a Goetia. A ghost can't be extracted into the mage's Oneiros using Reach. Whether the Death spell truly calls up the ghost of the dead mage or simply crafts an ectoplasmic re-creation is up for debate.

**+2 Reach:** The mage may extract the Goetia directly into his own Oneiros and benefit from its memories and Legacy tutoring effect without interacting with it. The Storyteller or player of the soul stone's creator chooses a number of appropriate Skills equal to this spell's Potency; the caster benefits from an effective extra dot in each of those Skills for purposes of casting rotes, as long as the Goetia remains within him. If the spell endures for longer than a week, the Goetia integrates itself with the caster's psyche and becomes a true part of him for the Dura-

tion of the spell, influencing his attitudes, behaviors, and even mannerisms. This is dangerous if the soul stone's creator was at the Falling Wisdom tier — the mage suffers a one-die penalty to all degeneration rolls from Acts of Hubris and adds one to the Withstand Trait of the "Goetic Summoning" spell to remove the Goetia from his Oneiros.

## Transfer Soul Stone (Prime ●●●●)

**Practice:** Patterning

**Primary Factor:** Duration

**Withstand:** Resolve of soul stone's creator

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Crafts, Occult, Persuasion

The mage transfers a soul stone from its original vessel to another of up to Size 2. The previous vessel retains the Signature Nimbus of the stone's creator for one week longer than usual.

Mages use this spell to change the semiotic meaning of a soul stone for purposes of using it as a magical tool, or to confuse enemies seeking the stone.

+2 Reach: The spell's Duration is Lasting.

## New Merits

### Astral Intruder (●●●)

**Prerequisites:** Astral Adept, Resolve ●●●

**Effect:** Your character has mastered the relationship between soul and Astral and may follow the trail of a soul stone back to its origin. If he possesses another mage's soul stone, he may use it to meditate into her Oneiros rather than his own using any method with which he would gain access to the Astral. This provokes a Clash of Wills using a dice pool of Gnosis + Resolve. If he wins with an exceptional success, he Withstands any attempt to force him out with a bonus equal to his Resolve. If he dramatically fails, he still enters the Oneiros, but the subject is immediately aware of his presence and all attempts to navigate, interact with the environment or Goetia there, or leave suffer a dice penalty equal to the *subject's* Resolve.

### Dominant Soul (● to ●●●●●)

**Prerequisites:** Composure ●●●

**Effect:** Using a soul stone against its creator in spellcasting is a classic threat in mage society, although some are better at it than others. With this Merit, a character can Counterspell spells from *any* Arcanum cast by the creator of a soul stone she possesses, so long as she fulfills the other requirements of the Attainment. Each dot of this Merit acts as one Arcanum dot for the purposes of doing so, although she may substitute her own dots of any Arcanum she knows.

If she uses the stone as a Yantra in a Prime dispellation spell, she reduces the Withstand Trait of the subject spell by one per dot of Dominant Soul she possesses.

### Echo Chamber (●●●●)

**Prerequisites:** Empathy ●●

**Effect:** A living soul holds onto its memories, but they disperse in death, allowing lingering soul stones to catch at their wisps. Your character is particularly receptive to the echoes of Gnosis left behind by the dead. If he possesses the soul stone of a dead willworker, he experiences flashbacks to that mage's life as visions, which give him insight into her Path. Whenever he uses Focused Mage Sight to investigate a Mystery based on the Path Arcana of the soul stone, he achieves an exceptional success on three successes instead of five for Scrutiny rolls. The Storyteller should provide a brief description of the vision whenever he gets an exceptional success on such a roll.

Once per story, your character may spend a Willpower and take an instant action to meditate with the soul stone, delving more deeply into the visions to search for the answer to a question dealing with a Mystery. The question must have a yes or no answer, but the vision imparted can include other minor clues at the Storyteller's discretion.

### Epiphany Stone (●●●●)

**Prerequisites:** Dream or Astral Adept, Mind ●●

**Effect:** The soul is the closest thing to real Supernal truth the Fallen World has. Your character's easy connection to his personal Astral Realm makes him sensitive to false shifts in his soul. He may spend a Mana while using Active Mage Sight and take an instant action using his soul stone to immediately enact a Clash of Wills with a dice pool of Gnosis + Resolve whenever he suspects that he may have fallen prey to an illusion, a hallucination, a forced Astral journey, or any other supernatural experience that separates him from reality. The Clash goes up against whoever was responsible for the supernatural effect and, if successful, ends the effect immediately, as he watches the flows of his Mana interacting with the piece of his soul and notices any irregularities. The instant action he takes depends on the form of his soul stone; he might roll a stone made from a six-sided die, while he might fire a stone made from a gun into the air. If an effect to Clash with *does* exist, strange phenomena occur, such as the die landing on its edge, or the bullet zooming off in the wrong direction.

### Potent Soul (●●●)

**Prerequisites:** Awakened, Presence ●●●

**Effect:** Your character's soul burns with such force that, when given power over another, it imposes its will undeniably. If your character possesses another mage's soul stone, any Social roll you make against that mage gains the 9-again quality, and in Social Maneuvering against him you always open one extra Door when you succeed on a roll.

### Soul Dealer (● to ●●●●●)

**Prerequisites:** Streetwise ●●●

**Effect:** Your character has contacts in the black-market soul trade or is herself a dealer. Once per story, you may use the requisitioning rules (p. XX) to obtain a soul stone as though your character were a member of any Order, even if she's an apostate or Nameless. Dots in this Merit correspond one-to-one

to Consilium/Order Status dots for the purposes of determining how easily she can obtain a stone, but rolls take a one-die penalty and the character may never requisition a stone of more than one Availability higher than her Merit rating. Complete souls can't be obtained this way, too rare and coveted for such cavalier business.

If you dramatically fail any roll while using an illegally obtained soul stone, your character automatically gains the Notoriety Condition for the Order she tried to swindle, as her actions lead to the exposure of her racket.

### Soul Stone (• or ••)

**Effect:** Your character possesses a soul stone created by another mage. One dot of this Merit grants a soul stone from someone of equal or lesser Gnosis than the character, while two dots grant one from someone of higher Gnosis. Decide which Legacy the stone's creator belongs to when you purchase this Merit.

According to Order tradition, the character is entitled to demand three services from the soul stone's creator (or the Order itself, if the creator is dead) before he must return it. In the meantime, he may use the stone however he likes, including as a tool Yantra with a bonus of two (•) or three (••) dice, as the core of a Demesne, or to learn its creator's Legacy. The soul stone has a Connected sympathetic link to its creator.

### Stalwart Soul (• or ••)

**Prerequisites:** Composure •••

**Effect:** With this Merit, any soul stone your character creates gains a bonus to its Durability equal to twice her dots in Stalwart Soul and enjoys the same as a bonus to Withstand any spells (such as Death or Matter spells) that would directly harm or destroy it.

## The Nimbus

She doesn't write for the Times anymore but she's still a journalist at heart, even with the light of the Aether in her soul. Exposing lies and conspiracies is what she does, and the marriage of storm and technology is how she does it. She's a Tamer of the Wind, riding the currents of air and information, and those who watch her cast see her eyes crackle with lightning as she stands in the center of a tempest. Her Signature afterward smells of ozone and feels like static electricity. All around her, data flows freely and broken machines spark back to life.

He's a Warlock city boy who walks the thread for the House of Ariadne, bringing swift justice to an unjust world. He sees the Supernal World as a sun that perpetually rises but never quite sheds its light on dark and twisting Fallen streets. When he casts, mages feel the thrill of paranoia and hear the whispers that want them to act on it. In their wake, the Signature his magic leaves behind feels like bloodshed and resolve, like one job finished and the next begun. As he passes through the city, people glance in the mirror and glimpse who they are without the false light of day, who they would be if they listened to the whispers.

Sie calls himself Bacchus and dances the Spiral with the Sodal-ity of the Tor, calling down his inner divinity. Sie's an Ecstatic and believes the Supernal lives in giving himself over to forces beyond his control, letting spirits possess his body and emotions guide his actions. The taste of wine and the flush of excitement live in his Immediate Nimbus, and once it's past, its traces are pleasurable and warm. Over time, the world conforms to his desires, as people free themselves from inhibition and expectation.

A mage's Nimbus is the clearest depiction of who she really is without the interference of the Lie, the way she thinks of herself as a pure magical being. Her Path informs her Nimbus by its connection to the Supernal, the lens through which she sees her journey to Ascension. Her Legacy informs her Nimbus by its sculpting of her Gnosis into a shape that reflects her idealized dreams and obsessions. Her Shadow Name informs her Nimbus by its unique symbols that resonate for her alone, the shortcut to a mystical identity she wears like a second skin. Other things can inform her Nimbus too, like strong impressions left by a close mentor, powerful bonds forged with cabalmates, Mysteries that take over her entire magical career, or elements of a potent destiny.

### Lasting Impressions

Since every willworker is unique, her Signature Nimbus is how others follow the trail of her deeds and learn about her even after she's gone. Normally the Nimbus fades quickly, but Prime practitioners can make it endure, spawning generations of Mystery-seekers who comb the world for traces of their forebears' Signatures in ruins, objects, and lingering spellwork. A Mystagogue who discovers a fascinating Artifact in her Censorium finds hints of a prideful, golden Nimbus in its Pattern and scours ancient libraries for descriptions of masters who fit the bill. A cabal that stumbles across a still-functioning Iris notices the scent of sulfur at its edges and recognizes it from the cursed temple they nearly died in; it drops the pieces into place for them to find out who's been gunning for them.

The Long-Term Nimbus can be a source of clues as well; a mage hunting remnants of a great Awakened figure can search history books and old newspapers for accounts of strange patterns that fit what he knows to supplement his search, especially if the master in question was high enough Gnosis for the Long-Term Nimbus to be obvious.

A Dedicated tool in the hands of the same master for years can absorb her Signature to such a degree that it picks up aspects of her personality and magical style. A wand belonging to an impatient master of Time knows what spell she'll cast before she casts it, helping her prepare her Imago faster. A chalice belonging to a stubborn master of Matter refuses to be destroyed, no matter how much force is brought to bear. Mages who recover tools left behind by masters of old can re-Dedicate them and learn more about how those luminaries worked their wills, benefiting from their long journeys to enlightenment by inheriting the properties of their most treasured instruments.

A rare phenomenon called a "Nimbus knot" by texts on the topic occurs occasionally when a mage dies in the middle of casting a spell, or while inside a Supernal Verge or other

otherworldly realm. Such knots also appear as Anchors for the ghosts of mages, or as real objects or places in the Astral Realms. A Nimbus knot is like fuzz gathering on a snag: wisps of Nimbus that detach themselves from the mage when she dies and carry strong memories from her life wrapped inside them. The knot is visible to Active Prime Mage Sight and can be scrutinized with Focused Sight to experience the memories within. These memories usually reflect the moment of the mage's death and important events leading to it. They can also reflect other significant moments of magical revelation, such as achieving mastery of an Arcanum or reaching the final Attainment of a Legacy. Characters who experience the memories in a Nimbus knot earn an Arcane Beat.

The longer and more seriously a mage uses his Shadow Name, the more his Nimbus changes to conform to its legend, and even work to perpetuate it. The Obrimos whose Immediate Nimbus is an aura of light and who calls himself Gabriel eventually finds that the aura has shifted shape to become *wings* of light. The Thysus who views himself as a Supernal predator and takes on the name of the Nemean sees his Nimbus adjust to give him a majestic mane and cruel claws, or to project a feeling that all opposition to him is futile.

## New Spells

### Supernal Signature (Prime ●)

**Practice:** Compelling

**Primary Factor:** Potency

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Expression, Intimidation, Politics

The mage flares her Immediate Nimbus to imprint her Signature upon a subject — a person, place, object, or phenomenon — more strongly than usual. The Signature reflects her Shadow Name and lasts for the Duration of the spell. Anyone who uses Focused Mage Sight to study her Signature Nimbus on the subject can not only sense the details of the Nimbus but see an idealized vision of the caster's Supernal identity. Seeing this vision moves whatever impression the viewer had of the mage up one level on the chart for Social Maneuvering unless the viewer succeeds on a Resolve + Composure roll, penalized by the Potency of this spell.

### Sustain Nimbus (Prime ●● + Time ●)

**Practice:** Ruling

**Primary Factor:** Duration

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Expression, Investigation, Survival

The mage casts this spell on a Signature Nimbus that he has studied with Focused Mage Sight. Rather than fading at its usual rate, the Nimbus persists for the Duration of this spell. After the spell expires, the Nimbus resumes fading at its usual rate.

Mages use this spell in conjunction with “Temporal Summoning” (*Mage: The Awakening Second Edition*, pp. 189-190) to restore a spell's subject to an earlier state before its Signature Nimbus faded and then keep the Nimbus from doing so.

+2 Reach: The spell's Duration is Lasting.



## Nimbus Forgery (Prime ●●)

**Practice:** Veiling

**Primary Factor:** Duration

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Expression, Larceny, Subterfuge

Once a mage has Scrutinized an Immediate or Signature Nimbus with Focused Mage Sight, she may cast this spell to disguise her own Nimbus of the same type as that of the one she studied. If she forges an Immediate Nimbus, she generates the false Nimbus Tilt instead of her own. If she forges a Signature Nimbus, the false one is left behind by any magic she performs until this spell's Duration ends; any previous Signatures remain as they were. Once this spell expires, all false Signature Nimbuses she created revert to her own. Any attempt to pierce the deception with appropriate magic provokes a Clash of Wills.

**+1 Reach:** The mage forges all three types of Nimbus with a single casting, even if she has only Scrutinized one. For the duration of the spell, every aspect of her Nimbus is effectively replaced with that of the mage she's impersonating.

## Narcissus' Mirror (Mind ●●)

**Practice:** Shielding

**Primary Factor:** Duration

**Withstand:** Composure

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Intimidation, Occult, Subterfuge

The mage can reflect the mental and emotional effects of a Nimbus Tilt back onto its source. Whenever the mage is subjected to a Nimbus Tilt that affects a Mental or Social Trait, or has other effects that aren't purely physical, this spell provokes a Clash of Wills. If the mage wins, the Tilt affects the instigator instead, forcing her to apply her Resolve. The Tilt still affects everyone else normally.

If the mage is *already* suffering from the effects of a Nimbus Tilt, he may cast this spell to immediately provoke the Clash of Wills as above.

**Substitute Life ●●:** The spell affects Nimbus Tilts that involve Physical Traits or have purely physical effects instead.

**Add Life ●●:** The spell affects all types of Nimbus Tilt.

**Add Prime ●●:** The spell also affects other types of supernatural auras with the appropriate kinds of effects (Mental and Social, or Physical, depending on Arcanum). These prompt their usual resistances from the source.

## Nimbus Tuning (Prime ●)

**Practice:** Knowing

**Primary Factor:** Potency

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Empathy, Investigation, Occult

The willworker can tune in more attentively to any Signature Nimbus he scrutinizes with Focused Mage Sight. For each level of Potency, he learns one of the following additional pieces of information about the Nimbus' owner:

- Gnosis
- Wisdom
- Virtue or Vice
- An Act of Hubris that resulted from the magic that left the Nimbus behind
- An Obsession related to the magic that left the Nimbus behind
- Whether the magic resulted in Paradox and whether it was contained or released

## Unnaming (Space ●●●●●)

**Practice:** Unmaking

**Primary Factor:** Duration

**Withstand:** Composure

**Suggested Rote Skills:** Empathy, Expression, Occult

The mage erases the subject's sympathetic name from existence. The excised name is immediately replaced with one that matches whatever most Sleepers would use to refer to her. Any sympathetic connections the subject had based on identity or name cease to exist as well. Anyone trying to cast at sympathetic range on the subject takes the penalty for lacking a sympathetic name until she learns the new one.

**Add Prime ●●●●●:** The spell can erase an Awakened subject's Shadow Name and Nimbus instead. The Shadow Name isn't replaced immediately; the subject needs to rebuild a new Supernal identity from scratch. The subject's player must fashion a new Nimbus for the character and design a new Nimbus Tilt. Since a mage's Nimbus is based on Supernal symbols that reflect her view of her perfected self, the new one is likely to lie along the same thematic lines as the old but should be different enough to distinguish it clearly. Think of it as a rearrangement or new interpretation of the symbols and ideas.

## New Merits

### Imposing Nimbus (●●●)

**Effect:** Your character's Immediate Nimbus is a true force of nature. Whenever someone succumbs to her Nimbus Tilt, she may spend a point of Willpower to convert the Tilt into an appropriate full-blown Persistent Condition for that person. That Condition gains an extra resolution option of successfully defeating your character in a contested roll or causing her harm of some kind.

### Persistent Nimbus (●)

**Effect:** Your character's Nimbus effects linger for longer than most. Her Long-Term Nimbus continues to affect an area after she's left it for a day per dot of Gnosis she has. When she flares her Immediate Nimbus without casting, it lasts for a number of turns equal to her Gnosis. Her Signature Nimbus persists on the subjects of her magic for an extra week per dot of Gnosis as well.

### Shadow Self (●●)

**Prerequisites:** Shadow Name Merit ●●●●●, Mind ●

**Effect:** Your character's Shadow Name is not just a persona or even an identity, it's a legend of its own. Anyone who succumbs to his Nimbus Tilt recognizes the dread portents in it and reacts accordingly, taking a -2 penalty to contested rolls against him for the rest of the scene as long as the contested action aligns with his Shadow identity. If he travels to an Astral Realm or projects mentally, he appears more grand and terrible than usual, effectively increasing one of his Social Attributes by one (not to exceed his usual maximum).

If your character's Shadow Name reflects a mythological or divine entity that is well-known enough to have a presence in the Temenos, he enjoys a +2 dice bonus to attempts to summon or interact with that Goetia, as long as his behavior aligns with his Shadow identity. Other Astral travelers and Goetia may mistake him for the entity if they meet him in the Temenos.

## Order Archives

Membership in an Order confers benefits that mages who strike out on their own rarely enjoy. A Mystagogue has access to vast collections of Grimoires and restricted items housed in Censoria. A Guardian is privy to classified intelligence on the Consilium's activities and dangerous objects confiscated in the line of duty. A théarch can request legal advice pertaining to the Lex Magica and the services of Proximus retainers. An Arrow can requisition munitions, armor, and Artifacts for

defensive maneuvers or strike operations. The Free Council keeps comprehensive, cutting-edge libraries and laboratories and provides equipment and transportation to places that resonate with a Libertine's techné expertise. Seers of the Throne who impress their superiors and prove their loyalty gain access to rare Artifacts, Servitors, and secret rites that help them carry out their orders.

Beyond this, belonging to an Order usually grants membership in a larger Consilium and Caucus as well, and those too can provide resources unavailable to apostates and the Nameless.

## Requisitioning

Each resource that a mage can requisition from her Order has an Availability rating, just like mundane equipment and services. These can't be bought with the Resources Merit or acquired with most Social Merits, however. A character needs dots in Consilium/Order Status to requisition resources, and this requisitioning is usually temporary. Characters are expected to give resources back at the end of the Story where it makes sense or make restitution for those lost or destroyed. A character can requisition resources as follows:

- Items with two or more Availability lower than her Status are available without limit.
- Items with Availability equal to or one lower than her Status are available once per chapter.
- Items with Availability higher than her Status require successfully rolling her Status rating as a dice pool and are available once per story; the Order always requires a service in exchange.
- Items with Availability more than two higher than her Status may not be available at all, at the Storyteller's discretion, or may require significant services from the character and her cabal.
- If a character requisitions resources from her Order more times in a single story than she has Status dots, each time that exceeds her Status requires a service in exchange.

Cabalmates who belong to the same Order count their combined Status as the highest rating among them +1, regardless of their number, for requisitioning purposes. Characters who pick up the Notoriety Condition regarding their Order may not requisition resources or add to their cabalmates' Status ratings for that purpose until the Condition resolves. Orders don't grant resources without asking questions by default, so a character must woo her superiors with Social Maneuvering if she wishes to keep secrets or be evasive.

## Order Availability Ratings

Resource	Availability	Notes
Casting of a single spell	Arcanum rating of spell	
Training for a single rote	• + Arcanum rating of rote	
Location of unrestricted Iris, ruin, etc.	• •	
One-time access to a restricted location (Iris, ruin, etc.)	• • •	
Grimoire*	Merit rating	+1 for Imbued Grimoire, fetish Grimoire, or palimpsest
Daimonomikon*	Merit rating (p. XX)	+1 if uncommon or secret Legacy
Magical tool*	•	+1 if also a Path tool
Imbued Item*	Merit rating	
Artifact*	Merit rating	
Soul stone*	Merit rating (p. XX)	Character must return it after three services rendered to creator, if alive, or Order if not; +1 if stone from higher Gnosis mage
Hallow*	Merit rating	
Alternate Identity	Merit rating	
Safe Place*	Merit rating	+1 if Sanctum; +3 if contains Demesne
Familiar*	Merit rating	
Library*	Merit rating	+1 if Advanced
Mentor*	Merit rating	+1 if Infamous Mentor
Retainer*	Merit rating	+1 if Proximus
Resources*	Merit rating	

\* = temporary resource; add • • to Availability for permanent requisition

## Determining Availability

The chart above gives a baseline for determining the Availability of Order resources, but many factors can adjust that baseline up and down, as follows:

- Members of the **Adamantine Arrow** reduce Availability by one for weapons, armor, bodyguards, and combat rotes/spells.

- Members of the **Guardians of the Veil** reduce Availability by one for Familiar, Safe Place and Sanctum, Alternate Identity, and intelligence on other Orders and mages.

- Members of the **Mysterium** reduce Availability by one for Library, Grimoire, Daimonomikon, and access to forbidden or restricted items and locations.

- Members of the **Silver Ladder** reduce Availability by one for Retainer, Mentor, Soul Stone, and any favors or information pertaining to the Consilium or Caucus.

- Members of the **Free Council** reduce Availability by one for all mundane Merits and resources that pertain to Sleeper cultures or organizations, and for any magical resource that relies on technology, such as an Imbued mobile phone.

- Members of the **Seers of the Throne** reduce Availability by one for Artifacts, Imbued Items, Retainers, and any resource that directly furthers the goals of the character's Ministry.

- Members of Nameless Orders, Legacies, and other organizations with access to magical resources can use their Status or Mystery Cult Initiation Merits to requisition things but add three to Availability for everything that isn't directly relevant to the organization's function (such as a Daimonomikon for the Legacy's Attainments).

- The character treats her Status Merit as one dot lower if she requisitions the resource from a Caucus not her own but within her home Consilium or Assembly, two dots lower if from a Caucus within the same Convocation, and three dots lower if from a Caucus unrelated to her home one.

- Add one Availability if the resource type is not a Caucus Asset for the repository in question (see Order Archive Merit, below).

- Add one Availability if the character needs something very specific – for instance, not just any Grimoire but the *Chiliadal Rose Codex*, or the soul stone of Enmerkar the third-degree Moros master.

- The Storyteller can apply Availability increases from +1 to +3 if the resource is particularly rare, obscure, powerful, or coveted.

- Orders often have waiting lists for access to particularly coveted or valuable resources or can put in requests with sister Caucuses which take time to fulfill. A character can reduce Availability by one per chapter she waits after putting her request in to the Order, to a maximum of -3.

- Availability can only be reduced to a minimum of one.

If the characters request a more general resource that doesn't appear on the chart above, such as information about a topic, or miscellaneous favors, the Storyteller should assign an Availability rating based on rarity, impact, power, popularity, and any other circumstances based on the story. These can be framed as choices or deals for the character, such as accepting a Condition like Leveraged in exchange for reduced Availability if the character's primary Order contact is trying to court her support for a conspiracy.

Baseline Availability is one, with the following potential adjustments:

- +1 for rare or restricted-access resources, +2 for completely unique or forbidden ones.
- +1 for low impact on Order operations, +2 for medium impact, +3 for severe impact.
- +1 for oft-requested items, +2 for items that are constantly out on loan.
- Add Availability one-for-one for resources with measurable power Traits, such as a bodyguard with a Gnosis rating or other supernatural power Trait.

## Caucus Assets

Most Order Caucuses have an archive or vault of knowledge and Mysteries available to its members. The Mysterium has its Athenaea, the Free Council its Lorehouses, the Silver Ladder its law libraries and soul stone caches, the Arrow its armories, the Guardians their intelligence files, the Seers their Nexii.

If a player purchases dots in the Order Archive Merit (below), the Storyteller should build that Caucus' repositories based on the player's choices and dot rating. For any other repository she wishes to build, she should assign dots to the Order Archive Merit for that repository based on how powerful and influential she wants that Order to be in the area. Choose a one-dot Archive for Orders with few members or a poor reputation in the Consilium. Choose a two- or three-dot Archive for average Orders. Choose a four- or five-dot Archive for Orders bursting with membership, Orders that have good relationships with the rest of the Consilium, or Orders that blackmail and intimidate their fellows to gain advantages.

The Storyteller can also use the Order Archive Merit as a basis for building repositories unaffiliated with the six main Orders. For Nameless Orders, cults, and Legacies, the Merit's maximum dot rating is three. For ancient libraries found in ruins, forgotten databases restored from deleted hard drives, and other collections of magical resources characters find in their travels, the Merit has no maximum dot rating, but anything that's not a "Caucus Asset" simply doesn't exist there.

## New Merit

### Order Archive (● to ●●●●●)

**Prerequisites:** Consilium/Order Status ●+

**Effect:** Your character has access to a particularly significant archive of information and resources belonging to her Order Caucus. This Merit doesn't reflect the character's ability to requisition these materials; instead, it's an indication of what her Order Caucus has available to its members.

Like the Safe Place and Sanctum Merits, an Order Archive's dots contribute to its security and the efficacy of members using it. Anyone with at least Consilium/Order Status ● utilizing the Archive may add number of rolls to the maximum of any extended action using its resources equal to its Merit dots. Efforts to breach the Archive's security take a dice penalty equal to its Merit dots, and such security measures can inflict up to the dot rating in lethal damage; this may represent traps both mundane and magical, but also Order members taking action.

Breaches of security can also include characters releasing Paradox, the materialization of otherworldly beings, and casting spells that alter or harm the Archive's contents in any way. Choose a number of Arcana equal to the dot rating of this Merit and use the same rating to determine the Potency of Shielding spells in place for the chosen Arcana.

Also, like Safe Place and Sanctum, multiple characters with Status in the same Order can contribute dots to a single Order Archive.

The Archive has an Assets Trait equal to its Merit dots. For each dot of Assets, choose one type of resource. These count as Caucus Assets for purposes of determining Availability (see above).



"Look on my works ye mighty, and despair." I swung my arm at the big stone head for dramatic effect.

"Really?" Slip flipped her lead coin again, smirking. "I didn't think you were a huge fan of the Western Canon, Garfield."

"Call me Khonsu. I got into Keats before I Awakened. Besides, it's not as if I have Achebe at the bedside table. I only read trash for pleasure now."

Her left hand joined her right, holding her coin in a dowser's grip. It twitched. "I thought you Mysteriousians were all bookworms," she said. "I can see the hidden door now. It's the block under the left eye. Doesn't it look like an Olmec head or something?" She walked to it stepping heavily, a woman distracted.

I followed. "No. It doesn't look anything like an Olmec head. For one thing, we're in Italy. No, it's 'Mystagogue.' Or 'Khonsu.' Yes, we're all bookworms, but not fun, reading club-type bookworms. To get us here I read four different translations of the same chronicle, and cross-referenced it with — Slip, are you even listening?"

She tapped the bottom edge of the block six times, in a particular pattern. The sound of hollow, grinding stone filled the valley as the block sank into its face, leaving a negative space under the eye: a tear made of air. There was a doorway inside. Slip did a sort of half pull-up to test her ability to climb, then turned around.

"Actually, when you get that tone I mostly tune you out," she said. "You're trying to sound like what you think my Dad sounds like."

"Bad blood there?"

"No. I'm thirty years old. You're just being a sexist prick."

I wanted to apologize. I didn't, because I saw white fire with my sorcerer's eye. She opened the door and the place's power answered. And with that power, a presence.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# THE MANIFEST SUPERNAL

*Leave them, O Muse! For thou anon wilt find*

*Many a fallen old Divinity*

*Wandering in vain about bewildered shores.*

*— John Keats, "Hyperion"*

Distilled into pure symbols, Supernal existence should shine through the shadowed Abyss and across the mirrors of occult perception, distorted into the dim, ordinary phenomena of the Fallen World. The Awakened know that the Lie's an imperfect prison, however, and that in certain circumstances, the Supernal bypasses distortions, yoking itself to potent symbols in the Fallen World. They crackle with the highest power, but you can touch them. Invoke them. *Steal* them. Oh yes.

## Artifacts

The **Mage** core rules describe Artifacts: items from the Supernal World (p. 99). This isn't to say that every Artifact crashes to some obscure corner of the Fallen World. Consider the following origins and note there can be others.

**Atlantis:** Believers in Atlantis say that before the Fall, mages made Astral journeys to the Supernal threshold and bargained with the gods for Artifacts. Many are said to have been created this way, and left in temples, tombs, and forgotten outposts after the Celestial Ladder's collapse. Such legends drive the Awakened to break the sealed doors of these ancient fortresses. Artifacts from the Time Before are especially valued because they often have straightforward, useful powers, coming as they did from an age (real or ideal) where mages used them as mere tools. Then again, the meta-mythic ancients may have acquired

them to satisfy desires incomprehensible to modern sorcerers.

**Imperial Practices:** Mages cannot create Artifacts with the known Practices, but the hidden levels of archmastery evidently allow it. Seers of the Throne collect the most, because the top of the Iron Pyramid hides Imperial mages in plain sight. Imperial Artifacts are often mistrusted or treated with caution, especially when their creator is known to still be active in the Fallen World. Some gifts come with strings attached.

**Last of its Kind:** Some mages believe that when a tool or other object grows less common, the symbolic importance it once had doesn't fade, but concentrates in the last remaining examples of its type. When an object is truly the last of its kind, its uniqueness turns it into a palpable Supernal symbol. It acquires spells related to its function. For instance, the last *thyxur* (an ancient tool, lost to history, used to enhance human magnetoreception) might be enchanted with Fate and Forces spells.

**Out of Legend:** Not all Awakened believe Sleeper fancy can transform an ordinary object into an Artifact, but it's a popular idea in the Free Council. Libertines say that when an object acquires a powerful enough story, it either invokes a Supernal symbol or (if you believe that Fallen humans shape magic) creates a new one.

**Passionate Work:** Some Artifacts were built as ordinary objects, but in extraordinary conditions. The maker's supreme skill created the epitome of its type or did so to give her powerful feelings and ideas a shape. This requires something more than

an Exceptional Success, and more than the feelings most people have ever experienced. Only the Storyteller can determine when this has occurred. An Artifact created this way possesses spells related to the aims and character of its maker, who might be a Sleeper, Sleepwalker, or Awakened. (Other supernatural beings usually can't create Artifacts this way.) Note that in no case does the maker intend to create a magical Artifact. It arises as an emergent effect.

**Sign of Awakening:** Sometimes a mage returns from Awakening with an Artifact in hand, plucked from the Watchtower or manifest in some humble object acquired during the Mystery Play. Players can use this origin to justify purchasing the Artifact Merit at character creation. These always contain spells from the mage's Ruling Arcana and may begin as dedicated magical tools without the character actively making them so.

**Supernal Enchantment:** Some Supernal beings are capable of conjuring Artifacts out of thin air or ordinary objects. In a classic scenario, the entity rewards the Awakened for carrying out some arduous task. Less common are the tales where a being gives the willworker the Artifact first and nudges its owner toward some great or horrific end. Some Supernal beings are said to possess or guard particular Artifacts. These sword angels and so forth might lend their possessions to the worthy, and almost always pursue anyone who steals them. In rare cases these Artifacts are Astras such entities bear on behalf of Supernal Gods.

## Astras: Panoplies of the Gods

The rarest Artifacts are Astras: fragments of Supernal Gods or other Ascended entities. These extraordinarily potent objects never accompany a mage back from Awakening, are never created through acts of singular inspiration, and never appear anywhere by happenstance, though it might appear that way from a superficial point of view. They're kingdom-slaying swords and apocalypse machines.

Astras possess these properties because they're not mere matrices of Supernal power, but active parts of their Supernal creators. Their limits aren't based on the power invested in them, but the capacity of the Fallen World to contain what it manifests. Thus, mages seek them out with a greed tempered by fear. Nobody knows what inspires a god to leave his thunderbolts behind, but it's never an accident. Ochemata, insistent Archmasters and potent curses typically plague mortal users, but if a mage ignores these hazards, she might wield one of the greatest Artifacts to grace the mortal plane.

Astras are Artifacts, but have no Merit dot value and thus, cannot be purchased and are never protected by the Sanctity of Merits rule (**Mage: The Awakening Second Edition**, p. 99). They possess the following characteristics.

**Artifact:** Every Astra contains at least two spells that can be activated as they would be for a lesser Artifact and may contain more. At least one of them is a 4-dot or greater spell. Calculate its effective Gnosis as usual but add 10 points to the usual Mana score. Astras regenerate 1 point of Mana per day unless magically recharged. The Astra's Ascended master can manipulate its Mana however it desires.

## Artifacts, spell factors, and Yantras

To clarify the rules for Artifacts in **Mage**, Artifacts have their own Gnosis and Arcanum ratings, and Reach (but never to the point of risking Paradox) with those ratings. Spell factors for an Artifact's spell are decided by the user upon activation, penalizing the Artifact's spellcasting dice pool.

Like Imbued Items, Artifacts cannot usually employ Yantras beyond any necessary use of symbolic Yantras to identify a subject. Unlike them, however, Artifacts use the sympathetic connection or temporal sympathy of themselves or their user to the subject, whichever is most advantageous. For an extra dot added to an Artifact's cost, the Artifact treats itself as a +1 Tool Yantra, which it incorporates into all its spells.

**Sublime Power:** Every Astra performs one task *perfectly*. This is not a spell and is defined in primarily narrative terms. The definition of "one task" is a narrow one. For instance, a weapon could automatically hit a target or automatically destroy it, but not both. A book might contain any mundane inscription ever written, accessible with a thought, but no means to translate it or place it in its proper context.

Each use requires 2 points of Mana and might require a further command word or ritual. The wielder doesn't need to be Awakened to use the Sublime Power. If she can't channel Mana, the Astra does it for her.

If this perfection requires measurement in successes, subtract resistance and roll contesting dice pools as usual. Instead of rolling dice, score every die in the Astra user's pool as 1 success. Against a contested roll, the wielder scores these successes or the contested roll's successes +1, whichever is greater.

If the power doesn't require a success measurement, it *just works*. An arrow that kills any living creature simply slays the target it strikes. A mirror that reveals someone's greatest desire in visual form just does it.

**Godcraft:** If the Astra would act as mundane equipment, it provides a +5 equipment bonus. In addition, the wielder can spend 1 Mana to give actions using the Astra as equipment the rote quality (re-roll failed dice).

**Divine Rule:** The Astra's Supernal master can modify its powers and characteristics at any time. This includes its size, weight and shape. For unknown reasons, the gods either cannot or choose not to directly meddle in an Astra's location, and typically pattern their responses according to certain rules, which might be revealed through studying its legends. These legends also describe the (usually weird and difficult) means by which the Astra might be destroyed — otherwise, it cannot be so much as scratched. In all cases, the symbolism and intent behind the Astra's manifestation takes precedence. A clever sorcerer might use it against its Ascended owner's wishes once, but never twice.

**Winnowing Self:** Using an Astra's Sublime Power exposes the user to the will of a Supernal god, either a Rank 6+ native of the Supernal Realms, or an Ascended figure. The presence erodes the user's sense of self. Each use is considered to be a Wisdom 1 Act of Hubris or an always-applicable Morality breaking point. Astras may inflict additional deleterious effects on their users. The Storyteller should design these ahead of time.

## Sample Astra: The True Hand of Glory

### Indestructible, Size 1, Gnosis 4, Mana 24

Mages have cataloged hundreds of Hands of Glory — thousands, once you count perfectly ordinary corpse hands, wax duplicates, and preserved mandrake roots (the French word for the plant is popularly supposed to be the origin of the name). The classic Hand of Glory is a murderer's hand, cut while his corpse hangs from its noose. The creator manufactures candles from the killer's fat and hair and mounts them in the hand's fingers. A tap of the hand is said to defeat locks and bars. Lighting the candles paralyzes a dwelling's inhabitants or puts them to sleep. Many Hands of Glory are perfectly serviceable Imbued and Enhanced Items, or occult relics of diverse origin that perform some or all of these tasks.

Mystagogues say the True Hand of Glory inspired all of them, but Libertines believe the True Hand is simply the epitome of these, crafted by binding centuries of myth into a symbol. Mages posit that it once belonged to an arch-demon of Pandemonium. Certainly, its seven deep maroon fingers (including an opposable thumb on each side) don't belong to a human hand. Seven stark white talons taper to the thickness of a wick. They can be lit like ordinary candles, but never burn down.

Was the True Hand severed by an Exarch? Was it created to aid a Mastigos' Ascension? One legend says that the Hand was originally designed not to aid a thief but subdue a being of tremendous power that couldn't be killed but could be entranced by its power.

**Artifact Traits:** The Hand allows its user to cast "Amorality" (Mind •••••), "Detect Substance" (Matter •) and "Teleportation" (Space •••••).

**Sublime Power:** The True Hand of Glory unfailingly causes any being who sees its lit fingers or smells the acrid smoke drifting from them to fall into an unnatural trance. Victims

cannot move, exercise their mundane or supernatural senses, or detect the passage of time. This state is not sleep and doesn't require the physical capacity to sleep. Only the individual holding the hand and those responsible for lighting the fingers (a maximum of one per finger) are immune.

Victims snap out of the trance if injured or violently interfered with but can be gently moved about. Otherwise, they return to normal after all the fingers have been snuffed out, even if the True Hand has moved out of sight or smell. Every ten minutes, one of the lit fingers goes out, and may not be lit again until the Hand has gone entirely dark. Thus, the fully lit True Hand provides the effect for 70 minutes. Flames from the Hand glow purple with green centers, but are lit and snuffed out by normal means, accidentally or intentionally. Lighting the True Hand automatically expends the Mana required to activate it, no matter how many fingers are lit. (Tossing the Hand into a long bonfire would cause it to light and re-light until it runs out of Mana but would not destroy it.)

## Eidofoms: Ideal Objects

Some greatly desired Artifacts don't contain spell-like powers of any kind, but readily accept enchantment because they're strongly connected to the object's Supernal symbol (or "Platonic form"). Mages often call these Platonic Exemplars, but recent literature refers to them as "Eidofoms." An Eidofom four-door sedan is *the sedan*, bearer of eternal sedan-ness. Compared to it, ordinary counterparts seem hacked together: four doors cut into cleverly painted cardboard. When a Sleeper sees an Eidofom, the next time anyone describes an object of that type she'll imagine the Eidofom. It's the default. Eidofoms definitively reveal this nature to mages who utilize Prime and Matter Knowing spells but even without magic, they trigger a willworker's Periphery.

Eidofoms possess one simple but strong property in common: A mage can permanently relinquish a spell into one of them for 5 points of Mana instead of a Willpower dot. An Eidofom's Artifact rating indicates how many dots of spells (based on the rank of the highest Arcanum requirement of each spell) can be relinquished into it. For instance, a six-dot Eidofom could contain one five-dot spell and a single one-dot spell, three two-dot spells, and so on.

## Astras in the Chronicle

The easiest function of an Astra is to act as a MacGuffin: an object whose location or disposition drives the plot because various characters want to possess, use or eliminate it. Any object can do the job, so Astras should be reserved for major stories that take several game chapters to unfold. No character should hold on to one for long, and they should be rare; your goal should be *not* to equip each character with one.

But don't bring Astras into the game when they don't have intrinsic importance. They're **Mage: The Awakening's** Holy Grails and mighty, cursed rings; take their powers into consideration. Astras are also Mysteries, fragments of Supernal beings with strange legends, cults that have guarded or sought them out for millennia. Make it clear to players that as extensions of Ascended beings, Astras are "above" the rules in the sense that they operate through pure narrative. That isn't a license to screw with players indiscriminately, but there's always a limit to how much even ironclad planning can help a character exploit an Astra without being drawn into its owner's plans.

Spells relinquished into an Eidofrom must invoke the material and symbolic nature of the object. For example, the four-door sedan mentioned earlier could contain Space spells that ease travel or increase passenger capacity, and Matter spells to keep it fueled, but not Life spells that make trees grow. Once relinquished, the spell continues on, bound to the object until its Duration expires. When a stored spell ends, that frees up space for a new spell. Spells can also be “cleared” through dispellation.

Like other Artifacts, Eidofroms aren’t created, but discovered. Yet they’re often “manufactured” in the sense they manifest in truly inspired works of art and craftsmanship. Their makers have no way of knowing that their creations edged so close to perfection that they bonded with the Supernal Realm. There’s no way to predict when an Eidofrom will occur, either. The flexible nature of time in the Supernal defeats attempts to discover an occurrence via precognition. Eidofroms can be tracked normally in time and space after they manifest, however.

Even though some masterworks are Eidofroms, others that appear equally well-made aren’t. Some Eidofroms are outright pieces of junk. Nobody knows why. Eidofroms aren’t materially any different than their mundane counterparts. Their Supernal connection makes them tougher than comparable objects, but that has nothing to do with their material properties. They’re just more *real* than everything else. Consequently, unless they’re destroyed, they regenerate 1 point of Structure during any 24-hour period they avoid the attention of Sleepers, whose Curse weakens their Supernal connection.

Some Eidofroms possess additional powers. These have the same cost as they would for any Artifact, added to the cost for the Eidofrom’s capacity. They work like standard Artifact powers and cannot be swapped for the Eidofrom’s stored relinquished spells. (For obvious reasons, “Platonic Object” is an extremely common power.) Mages can spend the Artifact’s Mana capacity to relinquish spells into the Eidofrom, however.

## Plastic Eidofroms

Some Eidofroms represent broader symbols than others. One Eidofrom laptop might represent the Form of a Laptop, but another could be an emanation of the Personal Computer. In these cases, the Eidofrom can change shape into other manifestations of its root symbol. Eidofroms with this property are called *Plastic*, noting a property that adds four dots to the Artifact’s base cost. The Storyteller devises a key phrase that defines the Eidofrom’s symbol, which determines how it can be transformed. Note that as this phrase describes an ineffable Supernal Form, the Storyteller isn’t bound to its wording, and can tighten it up whenever she wants.

Plastic Eidofroms sometimes spontaneously change, but an Awakened individual can trigger the transformation by spending 1 point of Mana and concentrating, as a reflexive action that may be performed once per turn. The mage must be able to directly perceive (through touch or line of sight, for example) the object and understand its root symbol. Mages possess this innate ability as a side effect of their ability to form magical Imagos and channel Mana. In situations where multiple mages wish to reshape an object at the same time, each participant

rolls Gnosis + the highest of Prime or Mind (these Arcana aren’t required and aren’t being used but provide an advantage in knowing them) and spends Mana. The highest result chooses the Eidofrom’s manifestation. On a tie, nothing happens, except that all contestants lose the Mana they invested.

Unfortunately, this ability is limited by the fact that the Eidofrom can only transform into other examples of its type that have been manufactured by mundane means. The mage should also possess some knowledge of the manifestation she desires. The Eidofrom possesses a base Size appropriate for a common manifestation and can only transform into manifestations ranging from half to double that. Otherwise, manifestations possess standard game Traits. Plastic Eidofroms can never duplicate items with supernatural powers, or even copies of them, though they can be used to copy extant, mundane counterfeits of magical items.

## Sample Plastic Eidofrom: English Literature (9-Dot Artifact)

**Plastic, Structure Variable; (Base) Size 1, Relinquished Spell Capacity 5**

**Key Phrase:** Printed-book fiction in modern English.

Beloved by bookish Mystagogues, the often-underestimated English Literature Eidofrom usually takes the form of a slim A4 size hardcover with around 300 pages. Mages can transform the book into any work or collection of English fiction that’s ever been printed in modern, “dead tree” book form. The mage must know a line or two of the work and its title. To the disappointment of pedants, it doesn’t discriminate against American or British English, and its contents may or may not employ the Oxford comma. It’ll provide Shakespeare or porn. English Literature won’t judge you.

English Literature’s been through a surprising number of adventures. It’s killed two people. One Mystagogue transformed it into an obscure metal-bound collectible volume to bludgeon an intruder. Another died when a Scelestus willed it to become a miniature KJV New Testament, shoved it into the victim’s throat and switched it into a deluxe hardcover of David Foster Wallace’s *Infinite Jest*. Mages have used its relinquished spell capacity to send messages through Mind spells, some of which can only be decoded by referring to certain works. One sorcerer discovered it was possible to will the book into specific copies, making it possible to hide and recover marginalia. (Bookmarks and similar inserts vanish for good, however.)

## Sariras: Relics of Ascension

Some willworkers believe that when a mage Ascends, her soul discards her body for the Supernal Realms, but dedicated scholars know that Ascension takes body and soul. An Ascension might appear to leave a body behind, but it’s actually a “Sarira”: a duplicate made of solidified Resonance and traces of the departed mage’s Nimbus.

A Sarira doesn’t look exactly like a corpse. Its bones turn to crystal. Its former Path or strongest Arcanum influences its

appearance, so that an Ascended Obrimos might faintly glow, and an Acanthus' hair turns into thorny metallic vines. Jewels decorate its chakras. A Sarira might take the form of a weathered granite statue or humanoid tree. Tellingly, it doesn't decompose and can't be affected by Death or Matter spells. Despite its solidity and appearance, it registers as a bundle of potent Resonance, not a corpse or inanimate, material object. Many believe Sariras explain myths about crystal skulls, incorruptible saints' relics, and Atlantean "dragon bones."

A complete Sarira possesses the powers of a 10-dot Artifact as well as the following systems, which may change or override the usual rules.

**Supernally Incorruptible:** No spell, Attainment, or supernatural power can directly affect a Sarira or its Resonance. The sole exception consists of spells that can siphon Mana. These can withdraw Mana from its tass-like matrix but can't replace it. Supernaturally triggered or enhanced external phenomena function normally. You can conjure a ball of fire to throw at it but can't make it spontaneously combust.

**Divisible:** Despite their resistance to supernatural powers, Sariras can be chopped into pieces and even destroyed with steady hands and sharp tools. An intact Sarira possesses Structure 50, Durability 5. Each dot of Artifact power maintains the same Durability, and 5 Structure; a 3-dot portion possess Structure 15, for instance. A piece's power and relative toughness isn't related to its Size, but its symbolic importance. A leg might be less potent than a petrified pineal gland.

Every 5 points of damage reduces a Sarira's Artifact powers by 1 dot and releases its Mana portion per dot (see below) back to the Supernal Realms.

Separating a Sarira into pieces in any methodical fashion requires a successful Dexterity + Occult roll, with a risk of Dramatic Failure, for a process that requires one hour of careful work. Dramatic Failure inflicts 5 points of damage, with the aforementioned consequences. Successes scored indicate the maximum Artifact dots that can be separated, with an absolute limit of 5, though the mage can opt to cut away something with a lower rating of her choice. Having at it with an ax, a prayer and no dice roll, automatically inflicts 5 points of damage and the attendant consequences over the course of an hour and separates a piece as powerful as the Storyteller wants it to be. (By default, roll a die and halve the result, rounding up. The piece has that many dots.)

Chopping up a Sarira is a Low Act of Hubris. The mage mars a physical sign of Ascension and risks destroying it.

**Dynamic Artifact:** As noted, an intact Sarira possesses the powers of a 10-dot artifact. If divided into portions with lesser dot ratings or damaged, the Sarira's powers change to accommodate the new dot rankings of each surviving portion. The altered Sarira will manifest powers as close to their original forms as possible. For example, a Sarira with two five-dot powers split into two five-dot parts might transfer one power to each part. If one of those parts is damaged and reduced to three dots, the power might change to one from the same Arcanum. The Sarira's powers usually emulate the personality and magical specialties of the Ascended one who left it behind.

Calculate the inherent Gnosis of a Sarira separately for each component part, based on its current state and powers.

**Body of Mana:** A Sarira resembles tass, and its matrix binds Mana. Use the following guidelines instead of the **Mage** core's rules for Mana in Artifacts. Each Sarira dot encompasses 10 points of Mana. An intact Sarira accumulates 1 point per dot per century. Once the Sarira has been divided or damaged to the point where it loses 1 dot or more of value, this process ceases. Spending an Artifact dot's "share" of per-dot Mana eliminates the dot permanently, and part of the Sarira crumbles or evaporates. Dot loss halts Mana accumulation permanently. Mages interested in preserving a Sarira avoid using its stored Mana.

**Resonance:** Each dot value in the Sarira possesses one Resonance Trait linked to the Nimbus and character of the Ascended mage it represents. This Resonance can't be magically suppressed or altered but can be used when the mage siphons Mana from the Sarira or makes bare-skinned contact with it.

**Supernal Tool:** A Sarira provides the benefits of dedicated magical tool for any mage who belongs to the same Path as the Ascended but doesn't require attuning or impose a closer sympathetic connection. Consequently, as the manifestation of another willworker's Ascension, it cannot be dedicated for any additional benefit.

## Sample Sarira: The King Who Is a Throne (10-dot Sarira)

### Structure 50, Durability 5, Size 5, Gnosis 5, Mana 200

One of the few intact Sariras known to exist, the King Who Is a Throne sits beneath an apartment complex in Ordos City, China. Before that the King stayed in Nepal, in a cave reserved for ascetics who practiced body-warming yoga. The Mysterium explorer Yang Zenli sensed its mighty Resonance, gathered a team to acquire it and overcame...nothing. It was just sitting there. That scared the shit out of him, so he dumped it in a place he figured nobody would look, in a neighborhood built by real estate speculation but devoid of inhabitants except for security guards and maintenance workers. He now owns that corner of Ordos. Most days, he tells himself he'll build an Atheneum there, and develop a community where the Awakened can study in peace. Of course he can't, because he doesn't know what to do with the fucking King. He's read the right scrolls. He's interrogated monks and archeologists at length. They say that a thousand years ago, the King decided to take the path the Buddha refused and become a *Chakravartin*, or universal ruler. He became the power behind the Pala Empire but vanished after promising to return with divine weaponry and a plan to bring the world to heel. After 108 days, his servants found his Sarira, seated on a stone stool.

Yang worries about the many, many people who'd kill him for the intact King, but he's also terrified of attracting the interest of the Ascended being itself. For all he knows the King is an Exarch, or plans to come back, just as he promised.

But he found the King performing a humble service, as a seat for the odd yogi to relax in between periods of exercise. The King

Who Is a Throne has fused with his stool. He sat up straight, hands on his knees but elbows out, and he was a big man, too. Throw a cushion on there, and he'd be quite comfortable to sit on. Yang's research uncovered a history of petty occultists and feudal lords who used the King this way for special occasions. Many of them burned to death. So did their palaces. So did forests and farms surrounding the palaces.

The King has a skull face with sapphires for eyes but he's a muscular man. Lines of iron trace yogic *nadi* (energy channels) across his body. This flows into the black scale armor covering his torso and thighs and a spiked crown unlike anything an Asian potentate would wear.

The King Who Is a Throne possesses the following Resonance Traits and their associated keywords: Ambitious, Bright, Burning, Crackling, Domineering, Martial, Raging, Terrifying, Tempestuous, and Thunderous. It possesses the power to cast "Celestial Fire" (Prime ••••), "Psychic Domination" (Mind ••) and "Transform Energy" (Forces ••••). The King was an Obrimos and lends his Supernal Tool benefit to members of that Path.

### Sariras in the Chronicle

As material evidence of Ascension, Sariras assure mages that it's real, attainable – and mysterious. They also signify the fleeting nature of truth in the Fallen World. Use one, and it diminishes, eventually vanishing forever. The fact that they can be split up tempts sorcerers to compromise them for selfish or politically-driven reasons.

## Places of Power

Sometimes the Sleeping Curse misses a place, and part of the Supernal Realms makes its presence known. Mages know some of them well. Awakened culture has formed around the existence of Hallows, regulating these valuable territories through Great Rights and other customs. Most well-connected mages eventually meditate at one, but this common experience hasn't deprived them of Mysteries to explore. Verges, Iris and the Emanations beyond promise their own secrets, but they're all founded in the power of the symbols that connect them to the Supernal Realms.

### Symbolic Places

Even without a Hallow, some places hum with symbolic power. In most cases these utilize the Environment Yantra rules, granting a +1 die bonus to spells with a symbolic connection to the environment. These benefits are usually matters of basic mystical correspondences, known even to Sleeper students of the occult. A clear, calm pool of water is almost always conducive to scrying and other vision-calling spells, for instance.

Nearby ley lines may offer appropriate Resonance to draw on as well. An applicable Trait adds another +1 die bonus. See the Prime Arcanum description and other systems for ley lines in the Mage core for full details.



## Complex Places

**Mage** provides the tools to greatly customize particular locations by making them non-exclusive, and in fact suggesting that you stack these features in one location. For instance, a **Hallow** is often a **ley line Node**, might be part of a **Verge**, and might even grant passage to an **Emanation**. The stories that grew up around it could produce a **Manteion**.

A common theme and story should tie them all together, but don't get caught in the trap of front loading your preparations. Storytellers, don't be afraid to collaborate with players on the lore of places, especially when players invested in them with **Merit dots**. Otherwise, add to or elaborate on a place whenever you feel the need. Maybe the **Verge** has a **Hallow**, but the stars aren't right yet.

## Manteions

A few places connect to Supernal symbols through specific stories. Greek mages associated these with the supposed dwellings of the gods, where oracles (the Greek variety, not Atlantean kings) tapped into the power of their legends. Modern willworkers also call these places *Manteions*, but don't raise temples or install would-be prophets to preach. Nowadays, it's better that a manteion's story remain obscure. The legend acts as a passcode, preventing mages who don't know it from harnessing the place's power. Manteions can exist on their own, or as part of another magical place, such a **Hallow** or **Verge**. Unlike **Aedes** (see p. XX), Manteions are physical places that resonate with the Supernal, usable even without **Mage Sight**. However, many contain embedded **Aedes**, waiting to be revealed by a thorough investigator.

Mages know that for a place to become a Manteion it must bear witness to an event with symbolic importance. These are ancient or modern instances of primordial legends. The hero might be Achilles or an enforcer for an outlaw MC, witnessed by Hermes or a loquacious cabbie. Although they fit age-old patterns, these incidents are exceptional for their time. They need to inspire stories. Perhaps legends counteract the **Sleeping Curse** in the souls of those who hear them, and as they imagine that time and place its Supernal connection deepens. Perhaps Supernal gods and heroes pay attention when earthly counterparts replicate their battles. The mechanism is a **Mystery**.

To use a Manteion, a mage must re-enact its legend in the process of casting the spell. The spell must relate to the legend in some fashion. Cast near the ruins of Troy, a spell that improves a thrown spear or conceals the sorcerer inside an object would qualify. This makes the **Environment** and **Action Yantras** available, but it also acts as an **Oblation-like** gesture, awarding a point of **Mana** that can be retained or immediately used to strengthen the spell. The symbolic connection also blunts the strength of **Paradoxes**, providing a -1 die penalty to the **Paradox dice roll**.

## Sample Manteion: Hisarlik, the Ruins of Troy

Nowadays mages hide manteions, but some legendary places are too famous for that. Hisarlik, Turkey contains the ruins of Troy—well, several candidates for Troy, since people throughout history have built cities there. It's the most famous Manteion in the West, but that makes it uniquely difficult for mages to use. Sleepers are everywhere: archaeologists, tourists, police and the rest, rubbernecking around the remnants of history's greatest siege. Thus, while taking advantage of the Manteion should in theory be as simple as chanting a few lines of the *Iliad* and playing at being one of the Ajaxes, a mage stands an excellent chance of being tackled by Turkish police and yelled at by other locals.

Between the fall of Rome (before which it openly hosted pilgrims) and the 19th century, Troy's location was kept secret by the local Convocation, with the notion that in an emergency, willworkers in the know could lure enemies here and obliterate them with myth-channeling magic. For obvious reasons, Troy amplifies foe-smiting spells. If this tactic failed, the winners would take over until they either exercised the emergency option themselves or were discovered by mages who found Troy through research. This continued until the **Priamids**, **Proximi** who claimed descent from Trojan royalty, bought the land through an intermediary and opened it to excavation. Nobody knows why they did this, and they can't find out because the **Priamids** are cursed to always tell convincing lies about certain supernatural phenomena.

Hisarlik's Trojan ruins run at least 13 layers and five millennia deep, but a few archaeomancers believe the ruins sink below the reach of mundane chronology itself, into Atlantean remnants Sleepers can't find. For centuries, the conventional Awakened point of view was that the Trojan War was a distorted account of the **Time Before** that at best, was unconsciously emulated by a few rude tribes later on. Troy was at least an Atlantean outpost of some importance. Recent evidence lends more historicity to Homer than even mages used to believe, so **Mystagogues** who searched for "primordial Troy" have been eclipsed by the **Libertine historians** who think the **Fallen** legend earned its power from the bottom up. They also believe the ruins might naturally produce **Artifacts** based on some occult principle of **Fallen/Supernal** symbolic exchange. Troy makes it easy for these belligerent contenders to destroy each other through epic verse and heroic combat, but again: those Turkish cops.

## Hallows

Star-shards, antennas to Heaven, fractures in the Lie—mages think of **Hallows** in innumerable ways to guide their meditations and absorb their **Mana**. These images imply certain origins for **Hallows**, with no consensus as to which is correct. Mighty feats of magic and astrological phenomena have both heralded the arrival of new **Hallows**, though some willworkers believe every **Hallow** already exists, and isn't born, but reveals itself.

## Every Hallow Has a Story

The Awakened use **Hallows** to acquire most of the **Mana** they can't get from **Scouring**. Mages build **Sanctums** near them,

play politics for access and search for hidden ones regularly enough that it's easy to gloss over the fact that even though the Awakened are familiar with them, Hallows are never ordinary places. Resonance, history and unrevealed secrets influence their characteristics and who lays claim to them. Around a Hallow, the world seems especially intense, as Mana connects local objects to their Supernal symbols.

As per "Complex Places" above, be prepared to give each Hallow an interesting backstory, but not to the point of slowing the pace of your game. While there's nothing wrong with just saying, "You all share access to a four-dot Hallow," never give the impression that this is the place's whole story. You're just assuming that characters are used to their home Hallow's eccentricities.

Hallows can change over time in response to nearby magical or symbolically significant mundane events. A Hallow with a long history of Awakened management may have been tampered with. Lingering spells trace anyone who performs an Oblation or inflict curses on intruders who harvest tass without performing a secret ritual. Guardian spirits, Space-twisted paths and other features tend to accumulate around powerful Hallows.

## Hallow Features

Some Hallows enjoy long, slow lives, sufficient to carry them forward from prehistory, until corruption and magical meddling shut them down. Others appear in a flash and vanish again, leaving mages to puzzle over their cycles and triggers. Tass manifests as spring water or uranium, depending on the place. For simplicity's sake, we'll refer to the numerous ways a Hallow can manifest as its *features*. Beneficial features increase the Hallow's dot rating; less welcome ones provide a Beat award whenever they inconvenience a player who invested Merit dots in them. A few features do both. Invent your own based on the following examples.

**Addictive Tass:** The character feels a judgment-twisting rush whenever she uses Mana stored in the Hallow's tass. (Performing an Oblation and using Mana acquired from the Hallow that way doesn't inflict this feature.) The first time she does it, she acquires the Addiction Condition, earning a Beat whenever she goes out of her way to use this particular tass at the expense of efficiently her goals or safety. Sometimes the tass takes the form of an actual addictive substance, but it can appear to be perfectly innocuous (ordinary looking apples) or utterly strange (apple sized homunculi one cooks and eats to release the Mana within – see Volatile Tass, below).

**Cyclical:** The Hallow's output varies according to a predictable (but not necessarily well-known) pattern. Many Hallows follow seasonal or lunar cycles, but a few change according to constellations in the sky or the migration habits of certain birds. Some respond to strange events: "When the one-eyed man drinks of the sacred pool." Cyclical Hallows only operate at full strength during a peak period. At other times they either generate Mana at half strength (in dot value, rounded up) or not at all. When this inconveniences a character with Merit dots invested in the Hallow, award a Beat.

**Plentiful Tass:** The Hallow can produce a maximum of five times its dot rating in tass instead of the usual three times. This

adds one dot to the Hallow's cost.

**Volatile Tass:** The Hallow's tass is gross, toxic or too weird to cart around in public. When this inconveniences a character with Merit dots invested in the originating Hallow, award a Beat. Don't make Volatile Tass so dangerous that there's no point in harvesting it – odd curses are in, loads of aggravated damage are out.

## Nigissu

Cracks in the skin of existence, Abyssal Nigissu (from the Sumerian for "crevice") are to Hallows what the Scelesti are to other mages, their Mana corrupted by the Abyss.

Nigissu often spring from an Abyssal Verge, but they can manifest without one. A Nigissu provides Mana as other Hallows do, but Abyssal corruption increases Paradox rolls in its vicinity by half of its dot rating, rounded up. Scelesti adept at Paradox manipulation benefit from this property.

Called *Feotidia* by learned mages, a Nigissu's tass contains materialized, immanent Paradox. Every two points of Mana expended from Feotidia (whether directly or after being absorbed into personal Mana) adds +1 to Paradox rolls (maximum +3) to any spells they power. Clever Scelesti shape the resulting Paradoxes or infect enemies with its foulness. Unfortunately, all Feotidia is Volatile Tass, since it reeks of the Abyss' anti-reality.

## Schisms

Where reality erodes into the Lower Depths, "Anti-Hallows" called *Schisms* siphon Mana from anyone or anything drawing near. Schisms aren't powerful enough to scour Mana out of Patterns, but they can drain mages, tass and other supernatural collections. Each Schism possesses a dot rating just as a Hallow does. This determines the maximum amount of Mana it can absorb per day, at the rate of one point per turn. This doesn't look like much, but a Schism absorbs Mana spent on spellcasting *first*, as soon as it is spent. If the spell required that point of Mana, it automatically fails. This effect also strikes Artifacts and other supernatural powers invoked by spending Mana, the moment it is spent. If this doesn't happen over the course of a day, drain a point of Mana from the largest concentration present.

When a Schism absorbs triple its rating in Mana, it becomes satiated, and for a time, no longer hinders sorcerers, but this is a dubious benefit, as the drained Mana gives entities from the Lower Depths enough reality to manifest as more than a whisper. The Schism vomits forth an akathartos and opens a Scar (Iris) to one of the Lower Depths that persists until the entity withers away or is banished. Treat the akathartos as an ephemeral being with Rank equal to the Schism's rating. This gives Schisms reputations for being devil-haunted, cursed places even for Sleepers. Schisms don't produce tass.

## Sample Hallow: House of the Dolorous

### Twins (Two Four Dot Hallows)

Off a patchy gravel road north of Albany, New York, the House of the Dolorous Twins radiates a power born of its owners' strange destinies. The mansion was built to emulate

an English stately home, but the workers cut corners, and as facades collapsed and beams sagged, it aged prematurely, and looks older than its 200-odd years. On paper, the house belongs to the Askwith family. Three related families farm an adjacent plot and live in prefab cottages within sight of the house's rotting balconies. The Askwiths do just enough to keep the place from collapsing, and patrol the land with shotguns and large, well-trained dogs.

In Awakened circles it's an open secret that the Askwiths work for two mages: twins who were born here at some point in the 1970s. Nobody knows their full identities, and the Askwiths have been magically compelled to keep their mouths and thoughts shut. The House of the Dolorous Twins manifested its Hallows when they were born. Prophecies and Supernal informants say that the Hallows reflect the mages' dispositions. One of the Hallows is a Nigissu, indicating that one of them is a Scelestus. It is also said that should the twins meet in the house, they'll kill each other.

Access is a convoluted process where a mage asks one of the Askwiths, who passes the request up to one of the twins, who sends the answer back down the line. Visitors must treat the place as neutral ground – a challenging request, given that Scelesti may also be present, harvesting Feotidia.

**Systems:** Both Hallows are Cyclical in that their outputs depend on the physical or mental wellbeing of their corresponding twins. When one twin is injured or exhausted from Willpower expenditure, their Hallow's Mana flow reduces to a trickle. In cases of grave injury, utter exhaustion or soul loss, the corresponding Hallow won't provide Mana at all.

The Hallows sit in libraries at opposite ends of the mansion. Tass manifests in the form of moldy books that appear on their shelves. The conventional Hallow's books are Gnostic literature; the Nigissu's volumes cover logic and utilitarianism. Both are Addictive Tass. Even though these books' contents aren't magical or even particularly well-written, mages grow obsessed with reading them and thereby harvesting their stored power. They invariably claim that "reading between the lines" will unveil special insights. In the case of the Nigissu's books, their Volatile nature causes readers' eyes to shed tears of blood for an hour after reading or harvesting them.

## Verges

Some places bask in the Supernal, manifesting the power of one Realm or another. Other Verges lie close to the Abyss, or act as vestibules for the Exarchs' palaces. Mages create Demesnes to emulate Verges, but their efforts lack the features of the genuine article. Basic systems for Verges can be found in the **Mage** core rulebook. The following notes apply to these, not Demesnes.

Every Verge manifests for a reason, though it might be a Mystery Awakened visitor's need to discover. Although many persist from prehistoric times or have a reputation exalted in old legends, Verges can erupt at any time. Powerful spells, alleged Ascensions, Supernal Visitations and tumultuous mundane events have all corresponded with a Verge's appearance. Once they appear, Verges rarely vanish, but almost every Verge hides

itself from mundane attention. Build a city around one, and it sinks into the sewers or slides into nearby parkland.

## Verge Features

Like Hallows, Verges possess properties beyond those featured in the **Mage** core. A Verge isn't a Merit and hazardous features don't provide Beats for inconveniencing characters, but their embedded Mysteries and challenges might inspire Beats and Arcane Beats like other story elements. A common history and set of symbols determines a Verge's exact features. In that context, use the following features to inspire your own designs. Remember that Verges are often complex locations with embedded Hallows and other elements.

**Boundaries and Passages:** Every Verge occupies a physical region in the Fallen World. That space is three-dimensional and can take any shape, from a sphere to a spider's web of connected corridors. A Verge's Fallen footprint might not match its true spatial interior (see "Distortions," below) and it might not be accessible from all directions or means of transport. Some Verges can only be entered through certain doors or paths, at certain times, or after performing particular actions. A Verge the size of house might sit inside an architect's closet but drilling into the closet's space from the other side leads to nothing more than a closet. Not every Verge possesses these properties.

**Cryptids:** Flora and fauna around a Verge adapt to its conditions, acquiring magical abilities and physiological changes. See "Cryptids," p. XX for details.

**Distortions:** As above, Verges might be larger or smaller than their Fallen footprints. This can occur in any Verge but is especially common in those linked to Pandemonium. Mages don't know what the practical limits of a Verge's internal size are. If Verges that compress human-scale spaces to the size of pinholes exist, they've probably crushed visitors. Known Verges have never demonstrated internal volumes larger than a modest-sized city or a stretch of wilderness a determined explorer can map. Mages believe that a Verge that deforms the Fallen World too much prompts the Lie to sever the material bond. They might become Emanations or Astral Realms or collapse into Abyssal chaos.

**Lie-Shade:** Ordinary equipment has trouble recording magical phenomena within a Verge. Mystagogues believe this is a manifestation of Pancryptia: their belief in magic's tendency to conceal itself. Cameras catch nothing but odd colors. Files get corrupted. Phone reception sucks, and audio files pick up static. In most cases, the so called "Lie-Shade" manifests in plausible ways, but tantalizing exceptions may hint at something more than failed technology. Some Verges are full blackout zones (see "Temples and Tombs," p. XX), particularly when they're linked to remnants of the Time Before.

**Paralocations:** A Verge may contain places that manifest the properties of its Supernal Realm. Walking huts stalk a Verge of the Primal Wild. Rivers flow toward the calmest thoughts in a Verge of Pandemonium. These paralocations can only be seen from inside of the Verge; from the other side they're conveniently obscured by fog, look and act like ordinary places, or vanish. The Lie conceals them through the most plausible, expedient

means. If the Verge is destroyed or a paralocation somehow strays from its bounds, it degrades into ordinary phenomena. Sky castles fall to earth as Gothic follies.

**Supernal and Abyssal Beings:** Entities from the Verge's Supernal Realm (or the Abyss, for Verges of that aspect) may visit the Verge without being summoned. (If they're not around, summoning them benefits from a +2 dice bonus, as mentioned in the core rules.) An entity might even take up residence as caretaker. Supernal beings can't leave the Verge without aid from a summoner.

**Thurae:** A few Verges possess Thurae: gates to Emanations that represent an aspect of the Verge's Supernal Realm, or the Abyss. These can be found in the heart of the Verge, near phenomena that strongly evoke its power source. This often corresponds to the location of a Hallow, should the Verge possess one.

**Vergent Laws:** Some Verges possess natural laws fitting their source realms. In many cases these require no special systems and evoke a cosmetic effect, as per "Paralocations," above. In a place connected to the Aether, flames might leap higher when you look upon them in anger. In some cases, the Verge might provide all visitors access to a few spell-like abilities. These typically function like Legacy Attainments, requiring no dice roll (and subject to the benefits of Legacy Attainments), but some sort of mundane action, presence at a particular location, or a simple act of will. Attainments that require Mana automatically draw from a mage's Gnosis-based supply, Scourge their users, or draw Mana from the Verge's Hallow, if one exists.

**Vergent Objects:** Strange objects in a Verge take on forms connected to its originating realms. A Stygian Verge might be littered with coins that were never cast by human hands. Some of these objects function as Artifacts within the Verge but are

## Black Angels

**Quote:** *You breathe. This must be corrected.*

**Background:** Despite the name a Black Angel is a Stygian Shade, not an Aetheric Angel. Black Angels represent the inevitability of death, and ardently pursue beings who've evaded their proper doom. This can prove quite dangerous for mages and other beings who've had their lives saved through supernatural means. Confused by the Fallen World, the Black Angels do not accept that supernatural aid should be used to cheat death. If informed that a person evaded doom through supernatural means, they step forth to correct the "mistake." Fortunately, the Lie prevents Black Angels from discovering "mistakes" unless someone informs them, or they witness it through one of their statues' eyes and ears. Black Angels instantly know if informants are lying, unless their falsehoods use Fate to give their statements a Supernal aura of truth.

The rule against supernatural lifesaving only applies to living humans; vampires, werewolves, mummies and similar creatures lie outside their jurisdiction. (Sin-eaters do *not*, and all of them have cheated death supernaturally, making Black Angels especially vexing for them.) Once a Black Angel accepts an assignment it pursues it implacably, but with one restriction: If an Angel's target repels it by causing it to disincorporate or getting it to halt its mission, this constitutes a symbolic confirmation that the target *isn't* supposed to die. The Black Angels can never hunt it again.

**Description:** A Black Angel manifests as a three-dimensional shadow with outstretched wings. It often carries an object that represents the circumstances under which its intended victim should have died: a sword for the violent, for example. Those slain by them have their corpses transformed to fit the way they "should have died."

They speak in a chorus of the voices of the dead, but not often. They usually say nothing more than the names of their targets and the way they should have perished. They find interactions with other living beings confusing, and contribute halting, short replies and periods of contemplative silence to such conversations.

**Rank:** 4

**Attributes:** Power 10, Finesse 8, Resistance 12

**Arcana:** Death 4, Forces 2, Matter 3, Prime 2, Space 4.

**Mana:** 25

**Virtue:** Dispassionate. Black Angels act without pity, joy, sadness or spite.

**Vice:** Legalism. Black Angels are attracted to technical arguments over the spirit of ideas.

**Ban:** Black Angels are forbidden from killing any being who should not have died in some other fashion. If they somehow kill anything more complex than a plant or insect, they solidify into statues barely distinguishable from their human-made representations and come crashing to the ground. Non-living creatures including the undead are exempt from the Ban.

**Corpus:** 19

**Willpower:** 20

**Initiative:** 20

**Defense:** 8

**Speed:** 28 (Species Factor 10; capable of flight and levitation)

**Size:** 7

powerless anywhere else. Fortunately, true Artifacts that *can* be taken out of a Verge sometimes appear among them. Telling the two types of item apart is tricky business, and some Verges have even manifested twin Artifacts where one can leave the region, and the other can't. Ordinary objects that appear as a function of the Verge's symbolism (such as the aforementioned strange coins) can often be removed intact, though a few oddities corrode and break. These items may provide critical clues about an unknown Verge when they appear in pawn shops, personal collections, or in the pockets of interesting people.

### Sample Verge:

## The Church of the Black Angels

In Peterborough Canada, they say the Black Angel of Little Lake Cemetery marks an evil grave. Ghosts hang from its wings at night. Idiots light candles hoping for an audience with "the Devil." The conspiracy-minded say they've seen convoys of luxury cars drive up when the moon is full. At the very least, goth kids take pictures of it and hang out... just not after sundown. Half believing the legends is enough. It's a typical small-town myth.

They've got a similar legend in Iowa City for another statue, the Black Angel of Oakland Cemetery. They say this one punishes infidelity, and kissing anyone in front of it dooms you to die. Across the prairie in Council Bluffs Iowa, the Black Angel of Fairview Cemetery supposedly calls benevolent ghosts to inspire visitors. In Cleveland, they call it the Haserot Angel, a representation of Death Triumphant, and only the streaks down its face are black, marking where tears might fall.

Others stand in England, Spain and France. The easternmost one lies on its side, in a burnt out Siberian compound that once belonged to an oil magnate. He was obsessed with immortality and the end of the world.

The statues are all bronze, grown black with age, and were all cast at different times by a number of perfectly ordinary artists. But they all drew their models from dreams of Stygia, where Death's winged triumph is a Supernal species. And when they sculpted enough of them they came, bringing their home with them.

The Church is an unusual Verge in that it doesn't occupy any specific place but can be accessed through the first purpose-built house of worship one enters within an hour of looking deeply into a Black Angel's eyes. Regardless of the building's appearance, its interior extends to eight radiating wings, each the size of Westminster Abbey's nave. The interior reproduces the doors of the source building, however, ensuring that visitors exit normally, after which they must gaze into a statue's eyes again to re-enter. It's possible for multiple people to enter from different source locations and leave together, providing a way to traverse great distances without magic.

The interior mixes the styles of many eras and religions. Its calligraphy and images depict the Black Angels and the unconquerable nature of death. That is, after all, why knowledgeable people visit the Church. They beg the Black Angels to bring death or hold it back.

**Systems:** The Church of the Black Angel is a Stygian Verge. Its chief attractions are the Black Angels that reside in the Supernal symbol-region of which the Church is an extension.

## Emanations

In the heart of some Verges, the Material Realm gives way to planes between the Supernal and Fallen. These are *Emanations*: heavens, hells, elemental planes, Olympian god-realms and the cloud cities of self-styled jinn. Some of them look and feel just like the myths, but others either deviate in significant (and sometimes dangerous) ways, or manifest in ways Sleepers never recorded. Each Emanation flows from a specific concept and symbol set, favoring an Arcanum, though multiple Emanations manifest for each Arcanum. Space might create a claustrophobic maze or an endless city, accessible as distinct realms.

Scholars of the Invisible Worlds believe Emanations surround the Supernal Realms like coruscating haloes or waves, rippling into the Abyssal deep. A fraction of this current crosses into the Fallen World, connecting them to Thurae (Emanation Irises, as per the **Mage** core, p. 243). Many Thurae exist deep inside Verges whose conditions evoke the Emanation's theme, but they can arise anywhere.

A few believe the Shadow, Underworld, and Astral Realms are Emanations that evolved into distinct states through the unknown laws of magical cosmogenesis, but true Emanations distinguish themselves from the other Invisible Realms in several respects. Unlike the Shadow, an Emanation doesn't necessarily reflect the Material Plane, but stands as separate dimension. Emanations aren't immanent in dreams or the human soul. Traveling to one is an embodied, material act. Unless she possesses special Legacy Attainments or other powers, a visitor must open a Thura and step through.

## Rogue Watchtowers, the Courts of the Iron Seals and Islands in the Abyss

Fringe Grimoires describe Emanations said to have been created by Ascended beings: god-realms, Exarchs' palaces, and even new Watchtowers. Rumors of Watchtowers beyond the known five are permanent fixtures in Awakened lore, but for an Emanation to qualify it would need to be able to manifest two favored Arcana, not one, and weave its path through the Astral to properly connect to the human soul. None are confirmed to exist, though it is said that one Emanation or another is the embryonic or failed form of a Watchtower, waiting to rise through some epic act of sorcery.

Each of the Iron Seals is described in the Seers' lore as commanding personal Emanations: dystopias symbolizing rule over the Fallen World. The evidence for these is stronger, but the truth may be that the Iron Seals have only reshaped existing Emanations for their own use.

Half-sunken into the Abyss, some Emanations act as a midpoint between the Supernal Realms, Material Realm and one of the Abyssal anti-gods called Annunaki. At least, that's the

theory. These realms follow the usual rules for Emanations, but in addition to a signature Arcanum and theme, they possess the properties of an Abyssal Verge. Their Paragons (see below) include Gulmoths.

## Emanation Features

Basic rules for Emanations can be found in the **Mage** core rulebook (p. 250.) The following systems expand and supersede them.

**Access and Egress:** Most Emanations are only accessible through their Thurae. As noted, each Thura is an Iris with a particular key. These keys are usually objects and acts connected to the Emanation Realm's dominant symbolism. Characters with special Legacy Attainments may be able to visit an Emanation in another fashion. Some Emanations possess particular spatial and symbolic relationships with other Realms that allow for alternative forms of travel. By default, however, an Emanation is an entirely separate plane of reality. This means visitors cannot use Space to forge connections between an Emanation and another realm. (A sly mage might bridge a connection through an open Thura, but once it closes the spell ends.) Emanations are disconnected from the Shadow. Astral journeys *are* possible, on the other hand, because characters carry the Astral within them. Comparable supernatural powers from other beings are similarly restricted. These features make Emanations excellent prisons for beings who might otherwise teleport away.

**Magic in an Emanation:** An Emanation provides the benefits of a Verge (+2 Yantra bonus, no Paradox risk) to spells for its key Arcanum. Furthermore, if a spell strongly evokes the Emanation's core symbols, add +1 to the spell's Potency after successful casting, even if the spell belongs to another Arcanum. For instance, in a fiery Emanation of Forces, a Mind spell benefits from the bonus when it makes its target hallucinate flames or believe she's burning up.

**Laws and Objects:** Like Verges (see p. XX), Emanations can possess special natural laws and items of power. Attainments granted by the realm's natural laws may be the same as those harnessed by certain Legacies that visit it, but Legacy powers usually extend beyond these capabilities. Strange and magically active items usually turn into ordinary, powerless things outside the Emanation or a related Verge but again, the Storyteller might set exceptions, which use the systems for Artifacts and always possess a power that uses the Emanation's signature Arcanum. Emanations also possess fantastical properties that either don't need special rules or can be modeled however the Storyteller prefers.

**Paragons:** Known as *Paragons*, an Emanation's native inhabitants can usually be classified as Supernal entities, each with dots in the realm's defining Arcanum. Some Paragons possess the traits of ordinary material beings, and in some cases might be little more than ordinary organisms (including humans) who've adapted to survive as natives. See "In the Interstices: Secret Beings," later in this chapter, for hints about what they might be like. Paragons might form nations and ecologies, heed native god-kings and recall eons of history. Mages can summon Supernal Paragons as if they were beings aligned with the Ema-

nation Arcanum's native Supernal Realm and enjoy a +2 bonus to such attempts. Living Paragons cannot be summoned in this fashion. Most living Paragons can survive in a related Verge (and theoretically Demesnes of the appropriate Watchtower) but rapidly sicken if taken anywhere else. Exceptions exist at the Storyteller's discretion. Indeed, it is rumored that some Proximus Dynasties emigrated from Emanations, retaining powers acquired in their native realms.

## Legacies and Emanations

Some Legacies draw their distinctive powers from an Emanation. They learn to impose the Emanation's metaphysics on other realms to perform various feats. A few learn to travel to an Emanation without a Thura. Sometimes a Legacy practitioner simply channels a power anyone dwelling in the realm could use, but most of their Attainments spring from an understanding of the Emanation that only fellow initiates possess. Legacies that bond to Emanations include:

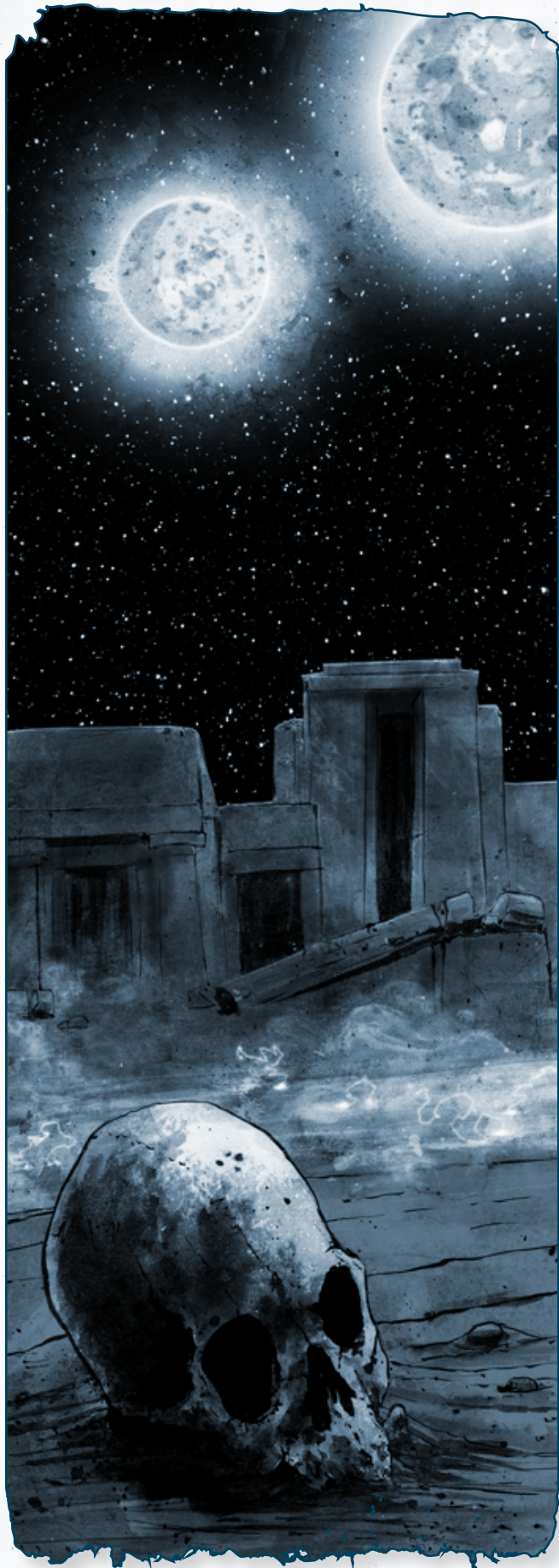
- The Emergent, who dream of impossible technologies and mind-expanding memes from the Singularity, realm of Progress. The Emergent summon magical technologies and travel through the Singularity as digitized soul-information, to command electronic devices around the world.
- The Lords of Mars, who claim to have learned their art from Atlanteans who established a colony on the Red Planet. Fallen Mars is lifeless, but the Emanation of Mars remembers its Mana canals, Adamantine towers and sand demons. The Lords summon relics and servants from the tombs of Mars.
- The Secret Order of the Gate, Seers who travel to the Place Between, a borderland of the Abyss. Following the Mystery of the forbidden 11th Exarch of Paradox, they use the Place Between for stealth and rapid movement, and to command Abyssal entities.
- The Walkers in Mists, who traverse the Mists: the natural superstructure of unrealized destinies. Walkers peer through the Mists to see distant times and places, and step through to move from one part of the Material Realm to another.

## Sample Emanation:

### Mars, Realm of Forgotten Might (Prime)

It's not that Schiaparelli's canals were an illusion, but that they were too real for the Fallen World. The Lords of Mars believe he, Percival Lowell and others saw parts of the true planet thanks to an oppositional alignment with the Sun. As scientists, artists, and writers learned of the canals, they made furtive contact with the Emanation's symbolism, but the Lie distorted everything, and fiction filled in the gaps.

Like its Fallen reflection, the Emanation of Mars is a red world with lighter gravity. Visitors see strange stars, including



the distant blue orb of Earth. Sometimes the skies are pink with dust, but when it settles the sky turns blue, marking a breathable atmosphere. The Emanation's climate ranges from an autumn chill to Arctic temperatures, depending on the place and season. Great canals crisscross the world, cutting through jagged mountains and desert plains. But there's no native life and the canals aren't filled with water, but a gaseous, liquid tass that blazes with Resonance. Martian Tass is impractical to store, since it only yields one point of Mana over dozens of cubic feet of volume, but it can be readily harnessed straight from the canals. The Red Planet doesn't provide anything to eat and water is hard to come by, so visitors should be prepared to use the tass for survival spells.

Ancient structures attributed to Atlantean colonists exist at some of the intersections between canals. Most of them lie in ruin, offering little more than shelter from the keening Martian wind, but a few contain intact tombs and temples, built of Adamas-girt stone. These structures possess the characteristics of terrestrial ruins of the Time Before but are built in a style unlike anything seen on Earth. Some believe they represent examples of pure Atlantean construction, untouched by Fallen history. Inside, a visitor might find the fossilized skeletons of humans, giants and strange beasts. Grave goods, ritual implements and objects that defy interpretation lie within. Some of them are Artifacts with Prime-based powers. The grandest tombs also house the Emanation's Supernal Paragons: devils made of animated Martian dust; angels of crackling static and pillars of light. They refuse to provide straight answers about the places they haunt.

Mars' rare terrestrial Thurae arise in a few places dedicated to watching or worshiping the planet and can only be opened through a three-part key. The traveler must speak the planet's name in the High Speech while brandishing an object from Mars' Fallen or Emanation aspects, and the Red Planet must be visible to the naked eye.

## Forgotten Wonders

Even if they could refer to the knowledge of every willworker dwelling in the Fallen World, the most dedicated cabals would find that some Mysteries stand off the path, manifesting in arcane phenomena that cannot even be theoretically reproduced. This category includes the sublime works of archmasters, whose mighty, dangerous knowledge exiles them from the mundane world; and the remnants of Atlantis, its dream of a secret history given form in ruins and bizarre wonders.

## Traces of the Archmasters

Archmasters inspire paranoia in some of their less accomplished brethren, but most Awakened barely think of them. The Magisters of Convocations and Seer Tetrarchs sometimes act as if beholden to greater powers. They've heard legends of a second Awakening and a Golden Road to supreme power, but that sort of thing just isn't very important for mages struggling with Adept-ranked sorcery and local dangers. Still, Archmasters

leave behind traces to educate and threaten less powerful mages. Some are accidents, others are components of grand plans beyond the grasp of human intelligence.

## Imperial Sorcery

Gnosis and time alone cannot win a mage archmastery. She must withstand an initiation called a Seeking, which is said to destroy the unprepared. This difficulty obscures knowledge of the archmages' Imperial Practices and Attainments. These mighty Arts supposedly allow an archmage to perform feats their lesser can scarcely dream of as long as she has the means. Every Imperial spell is said to require a Quintessence, a unique Yantra symbolizing the spell. Archmasters often build spells to last, so other mages might encounter them. Feats attributed to Imperial magic include:

- Spells that evolve in response to surrounding phenomena. **Example:** A form of "unobtanium": a material perfectly suited for whatever purpose it is used for, because it changes in accord with its intended use.
- New forms of supernatural beings, who may propagate their kind and manifest novel abilities. **Example:** Archmages might have created certain Proximus Dynasties to serve their interests or distorted the nature of other supernatural beings to make those who inherit it suitable catspaws.
- Spells that selectively remove natural or supernatural abilities or phenomena. **Example:** An archmage might remove the ability of a target to be affected by sympathetic magic without knowledge of a specific key: an image, sound, emotion or object. Awakened folklore calls this key the "True Name," distinct from the subject's sympathetic name, Shadow Name, or other aliases.
- New realms in the Invisible World. **Example:** Archmasters are said to create personal "pocket realities" resembling Emanations called Chantries. Inside one an archmage is a virtual god, but the realm cannot help but reflect her true nature.

## Atlantean Works

Is Atlantis a collective magical dream? Is it a world that was, or will be? No matter the truth, it's left remnants in the Fallen World, hinting at an age of power beyond the Lie. Mystagogue archaeomancers believe the Fallen World taints most purported Atlantean remnants, in that their material manifestations absorb properties from world's history. Therefore, it's a mistake to say that an Atlantean temple with Greek architectural features suggests a historical connection. In China, Atlantean remnants have ancient Chinese features. This tendency exists around the world. Nevertheless, all Atlantean artifacts possess ahistorical, weird features as well, and a few can't be definitively traced to any known culture.

## The Imperial Practices and legendary Artifacts

Space in this book precludes systems for archmasters, and knowledge of the Imperial Practices isn't included in the Orders' lore. Archmasters go out of their way to prevent their secrets from falling into lesser hands. Our advice for handling an archmaster Storyteller character is simply to leave their Imperial works in the realms of plot device. If you want an archmaster to be able to accomplish something in your story, they can do it with an appropriate Quintessence.

The only place in **Mage's** rules where the dot-rating of 6+ Arcanum spells matters is in the cost of Artifacts incorporating them; when calculating the dot rating of a legendary Artifact, it must have a minimum Gnosis of 6, add four dots as an Imperial surcharge, and then Arcanum rating as follows. Self-modifying imagoes and other adaptive spells are worth 6, altering or granting supernatural templates, altering a realm (including the Fallen World, if the Artifact does something like create a verge) are 7, self-aware, thinking Artifacts, Ochemata, and the creation of Emanation Realms are 8.

## Temples and Tombs

Ruins of the Time Before can be found anywhere, including places with no history of human habitation. Verges often surround them, Hallows glow within, and ley lines tend to be drawn to their locations. A few ruins exist outside the Material Realm, in Emanations, hidden Astral Realms or the Shadow. Mages seek them out to uncover Artifacts hidden within, claim them as sanctums, and study their secrets.

Mages often call them "temples" but in many cases, the intended purpose of a given structure is either a mystery, or a matter of barely-supportable conjecture. Archaeomancers prefer neutral terms ("ruin," "structure") and detailed hypotheses that fit the evidence. Their written accounts are useful, but not always accurate. Guardians of the Veil are notorious for introducing errors to these writings, and Mystagogues themselves employ allusions, puns, personal ciphers, and critical omissions to protect their work. Thus, explorers should analyze their sources carefully, with an eye toward uncovering the following features.

**Adamas:** Genuine Atlantean ruins are at least partly made of *Adamas* materials. *Adamas* enhances ordinary materials, rendering them immune to rot, erosion, and other forms of slow degradation, and very, very tough against other assaults. Identifiable by a subtle crystalline sheen, *Adamas* is solid in any realm or reality state in which a representation of it exists,

including Twilight and the Shadow, and adds +5 or more to the Durability of its base material. Adamas doesn't possess any Resonance or other sign of its magical origins, and although mages have been able to duplicate its individual features, they know the genuine material was created through a single process they've yet to comprehend.

**Blackout Zones and Veils:** Many ruins are surrounded by "blackout zones" that disrupt modern technology. Some believe that the most sophisticated modern tools lean heavily on the corrupted laws of the Fallen World, and objects that predate the Fall interfere with their ability to function. Blackout usually affects all electronics and any technology that relies on complex chemical processes. Cars won't start. Film and digital cameras fail. This may reveal as much as it conceals, however, since mages will often investigate areas prone to plane crashes and rumored electronic dead zones. In addition, ruins are often enchanted with spells designed to discourage visitors. The nature of these spells may hint at other features. For example, a temple that diverts anyone not "meant to come" through Fate magic may possess an Acanthus aspect (see below).

**Caste Function:** In some respects, the modern Orders only aspire to an imagined Atlantean culture, but they don't approach in total ignorance. A combination of revelation and evidence created the modern Diamond, and these insights have also seen use in deciphering the social functions of ruins. The traditional approach assesses a structure's symbolism and properties to connect it to one of the theoretical Atlantean castes:

- Structures linked to the scholarly Alae Draconis (supposed ancestors of the Mysterium) contain supposed areas for experimentation and storage, and the remnants of extensive libraries.
- Fortifications and armories feature in ruins dedicated to the militant Ungula Draconis, from whom that Adamantine Arrow claims descent.
- The watchful Visus Draconis supposedly built concealed structures with prison cells, pools used for scrying. Their purported heirs, the Guardians of the Veil, still use these facilities.
- Archaeomancers link the priestly Vox Draconis to structures with altars and rooms that seem dedicated to high rituals. The Silver Ladder designs new ceremonies for their chambers.

An Order might claim certain features mark a ruin that belongs to them "by right of descent," so these assessments may provoke political conflicts. Many structures don't have an apparent caste alignment, and most possess elements that escape analysis.

**Defenses:** All relatively unspoiled ruins possess magical defenses. Many are surprisingly prosaic or use magic to enhance a mundane threat. Bracing oneself for a soul-stealing enchantment doesn't guard against thick walls, pit traps and thrusting spikes, particularly if the ruin's magic is only used to reset the trap, or nullify magical countermeasures so that, for instance, when a pit

opens, it exposes a sigil that snuffs out Forces magic; no levitation allowed. Purely magical defenses often utilize Arcana from the ruin's Path aspect, if any. Protective spirits, Temple Guardians (see below) and other autonomous defenses are especially feared.

**Means of Entry:** No worthwhile ruin stands with the door unlocked. Most are designed to accept some literal or symbolic key, typically related to the structure's other characteristics. Doors open to those who sing an ancient song, spill blood, knock during moonless nights while carrying a mouthful of dirt, and so on.

**Path Aspect:** Some ruins are seemingly dedicated to a particular Path and employ the appropriate symbolism and Arcana in their features (though they are not limited to these). This arouses a certain amount of debate among the Awakened, since many believe the Watchtowers were created in response to the Fall, to replace an alternate method of Awakening via Astral Journey in a world before the Abyss. Perhaps these structures honor one of the five Atlantean god-kings that became the Oracles, or one of the "dragons" said to be entombed in the Awakened City in Diamond myths. A Path aspect provides the Environment Yantra bonus to the Path's Arcana. Some of them are Demesnes or Verges for the associated Path as well. In the former case, the benefit comes from a soul stone hidden within the ruin. Atlantean soul stones are highly sought after because some possess special powers and the keys to lost Legacies. Some of them have been known to possess their bearers, transplanting a personality from the Time Before, so cautious mages leave them alone.

## Temple Guardians

The most famous Atlantean defenses are Temple Guardians: synthetic, spirit-like beings bound to material bodies. A Temple Guardian's home structure determines its body's appearance, which influences that of the ephemeral being within. A Stygian-aspect structure's Guardians might be corpses stitched together with leaden threads. Adamas Stone is a popular material for Temple Guardians from any sort of ruin, however.

All Temple Guardians use the following game systems.

**Countermagic:** All Guardians possess the ability to sense the presence (though not the nature) of spells that target them and can spend a point of Essence to attempt Countermagic against any spell. Their Clash of Wills pool for the countermagic is Power + Finesse. This power doesn't work on Legacy Attainments.

**Matter Bound to Ephemera:** A Temple Guardian consists of an ephemeral being and material body. The Guardian requires no Essence or special conditions to enter or leave its body. An instant action will do, no matter their distance apart, as long as both inhabit the same realm and an unimpeded (though possibly twisty) corridor through Twilight exists.

If the Guardian's body is destroyed but its spirit survives, its body reforms at the rate of 1 level of Corpus per week. If the Guardian's spirit is annihilated and a Size 2 or greater fragment of its body remains, that fragment will recreate the spirit at the rate of one Rank per month (after which the spirit will finish repairing the body, if necessary). Reducing the body's Corpus to

Only inflicts half of the total damage to the ephemeral entity's Corpus. If the ephemeral entity had no Essence when it was destroyed, it acquires one point upon being recreated.

The Temple Guardian's ephemeral self exists in a state of Twilight while it inhabits its material form and is capable of touching other beings in a Twilight state. Thus, a Guardian can strike and grab at targets in Twilight even while it's embodied.

**Purpose:** Temple Guardians are utterly loyal to whatever purpose their creators set them to. Spells cannot sway them from their duty without altering their ephemeral nature, though they might slow or deceive them.

**Signs and Words:** Instead of a Ban, all Temple Guardians must absolutely obey anyone who uses certain gestures and command words. These are unique to each Guardian and don't change. Mages assign great value to a Temple Guardian's command techniques.

**Synthetic Entity:** Lost magic gives Temple Guardians traits common to both spirits and Supernal entities. A Temple Guardian possesses one Influence equal to its Rank and twice as many Arcana dots, of which as many as half may be allocated on a single Arcanum. Some Guardians possess additional Arcana and Numina.

Temple Guardians may convert Mana to Essence on a 1 for 1 basis. In the presence of a Hallow or while touching tass, they may absorb as much Mana as their rank per turn for this purpose. Temple Guardians do not spend Essence to remain anchored to the Material Realm.

## Sample Temple Guardian: The Red Castellan

**Quote:** *So much inside you flowing, screaming to get out.*

**Background:** Hidden behind rough stone ruins on an unmapped island in the Hibernian Sea, an enormous colony of yew trees twist together to create an Atlantean ruin whose aspect empowers the Thyrsus Path. The Red Castellan patrols both the hollows in the trees and the network of root-lined tunnels beneath. One mage visited the place in 1974. She escaped after three days of torture at the Castellan's hands and refuses to describe anything else she discovered.

**Description:** The Red Castellan's body is made of a clear, glass-like substance with a featureless humanoid shape. It contains roiling blood that forms into leering faces to speak, if necessary. Its exterior is seamless, but it can bend its joints like a human. In ephemeral form, the Temple Guardian is an amorphous cloud of blood, liberated from its glass body.

**Rank:** 2

**Attributes:** Power 5, Finesse 5, Resistance 5

**Arcana/Influence:** Blood (Influence) 2, Life 1, Space 1, Spirit 2. The Guardian's Blood Influence is particularly dangerous as it can cause targets to faint, bleed profusely from minor wounds, or create painful swelling in engorged tissues.

**Numina:** Countermagic, Regenerate

**Essence:** 15

**Virtue:** Cruelty. The Castellan has been instructed to make intruders bleed.

**Vice:** Boredom. The Castellan will change tactics and behave strangely for no other reason than a change of pace.

**Ban:** The Red Castellan must obey anyone who draws two fingers across the skin over each brachial and femoral artery while chanting the word for blood in High Speech.

**Corpus:** 13

**Willpower:** 10

**Initiative:** 10

**Defense:** 5

**Speed:** 15 (Species Factor 5)

**Size:** 8

## Living Magic

*Magic is alive* say the Mystagogues. They must be partly right because Supernal magic nurtures life, transforms it, and even gives its properties to inanimate things. Convulsions in the Supernal Realms and deliberate workings both create magical beings, but the Lie limits how they manifest in the Fallen World.

## From the Apex: Ochemata

Exarchs, Archmasters, high Supernal entities, and Ascended beings create sub-souls called *Ochemata* (singular: *Ochema*). Some sorcerers prefer the Vedic religious term *avatar*, denoting a god's particular earthly manifestation. Ochemata assume countless forms: animals, plants, duplicates of their creators, or their makers' families, friends and lovers. Ascended Ochemata disguise themselves as innumerable beings and objects in the Fallen World, but others retain fixed shapes they can only change with supernatural aid.

## General Traits

Ochemata use the following game systems.

**Arcane Being (Archmaster Only):** Archmage-spawned Ochemata can use Yantras, magical tools, Oblations, and Pattern scouring as mages do, and they suffer Paradoxes too. An Ochema possesses an effective Wisdom of 1 for Paradox assessment purposes but can neither degenerate nor improve the Trait. An Ochema's effective Gnosis is its Rank, and it doesn't possess a Path. Ochemata created by other beings possess Arcana and use them as Supernal entities.

**Sub-Soul:** An Ochema possesses the same Virtue, Vice, Nimbus (though at a strength appropriate for its effective Rank-based Gnosis) and Obsessions as its creator. Furthermore, when an Ochema and its creator dwell in the same metaphysical realm (Material Realm, Astral Realm, Shadow, Emanation, archmage's Chantry or Golden Road, Supernal Realms) or are magically considered to occupy the same realm (via a conduit created with Space and other Arcana, for example) the Ochema cannot disobey its creator's intentions. When separated, an Ochema can usually be trusted to be faithful, but given time it strays out of

error even if it doesn't want to disobey. An aspect of its creator's true self, an Ochema doesn't always adhere to conscious wants, and may act on deeply submerged desires. An Ochema possesses Connected-level sympathy with its creator.

**Supernal Being:** Unless otherwise specified, Ochemata use the rules for Supernal entities in the **Mage** core, including the use of Arcana and Mana. Ochemata must always start at a Rank of half their creator's Rank or Gnosis (treat Ascended beings such as the Exarchs as having Gnosis 10) with Arcana among the set of those their creators know, with fewer dots in all but one of them. Ochemata can evolve from this starting point, however.

**Avatars in the Fallen:** Ochemata do not lose Corpus over time as Supernal entities do and are not linked to a summoning circle. If an Ochema dies in the Fallen World, it returns to its creator rather than be consumed by the Abyss.

**Vital Autonomy:** Ochemata learn new ordinary and magical abilities. If separated from their creators for an extended period, they might gradually come to resemble natives of their current realm. Some have even forgotten they were Ochemata at all. An Ochema whose Rank increases beyond its creator's Rank or Gnosis is no longer governed by the Sub-Soul trait and becomes a free-willed individual.

**Lesser and Greater Ochemata:** Rank 0 (flora, fauna, and somewhat lifeless, unconvincing "people") to 2 (stronger, livelier beings) are considered Lesser Ochemata. These usually inhabit environments ruled by their creators, such as the personal realms of Archmasters. Given time they may reproduce, prey on one another, form an ecology and even develop a culture. Greater Ochemata (Rank 3 to 5) represent significant investments by potent beings. They're often employed as ritual partners, supervisors for an important project, or guardians for Artifacts and places of power.

## Ascended Ochemata

The inhabitants of the Supernal Realms create servants with powers no others possess. These Ascended Ochemata can possess any Rank, but even the least enjoy special privileges. The Exarchs employ the most Ascended Ochemata, as high functionaries in the maintenance of the Lie. Gods have their avatars, too, and rare Ochemata identify their creators as Ascended Pentacle mages.

Ascended Ochemata usually hide their natures with Fallen Guise (see below). Without this mask, they assume forms that ripple with power, and embody their creators' natures. They're swarms of Platonic solids, machines of bone and brass, or writhing holes to *elsewhere*. As far as anyone knows, Abyssal entities are incapable of producing comparable servants. Sensing their presence in Peripheral Mage Sight and looking at them in Active Mage Sight causes pain: a sensation of being *twisted*. This imposes no special difficulties when the mage uses Peripheral Mage Sight, but Active scrutiny is agonizing, inflicting the Sick Tilt (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 323).

Ascended Ochemata possess the following Traits.

**Fallen Guise:** The Ochema can take the shape of anything (animal, vegetable or mineral) that could exist without super-

natural intervention within the realm it currently inhabits, limited to Size 20 or less. The Fallen Guise can create clothing or secondary objects, including ordinary equipment, as long as they match the chosen "role." Changing shape requires a reflexive action (maximum one per turn) and expends 1 point of Mana. The Fallen Guise doesn't prevent the Ochema from moving or using any of its abilities but doesn't alter any game Trait except for Size.

**Supernal Perfection:** The Ochema's mundane actions manipulate the world's symbols as much as its gross objects. When it swings a sword, doesn't just move an object in space, but programs the narrative of bladed murder into the Fallen World. The Ochema gains the rote quality on ordinary actions, but not magic or any of its special powers.

**Supernal Portal:** The Ochema may use this power to travel to any realm of existence except those ruled or created by individual souls, such as archmage Chantries and personal Oneiroi. It concentrates for a full turn and spends 1 point of Mana. This creates an Iris to the appropriate realm on the following turn, which the Ochema may step through. The Iris remains for one additional turn, offering hope for pursuers. Irises created with Supernal Portal don't have keys.

## Harbingers of Destiny: Ananke

Often mistaken for Anachronisms, Moirae, or Ochemata, the enigmatic Ananke are the purest living magic; each one is a spell, the product of high archmastery in Time and Fate. To mundane eyes, an Ananke is a humanoid figure — usually feminine, though exceptions exist — that appears seemingly at will anywhere in the world, imparts messages and issues guidance to a select individual then vanishes without a trace. To Mage Sight, the Ananke is clearly a spell, not a person, and her presence causes ripples and aftershocks in Time and Fate. Those an Ananke imparts her wisdom to come away bearing destinies they didn't have before, their futures irrevocably changed. At the moment of her creation, every Ananke embodies an Imago of a desired timeline, assesses the future to determine how best to bring about the events her creator desires, and jumps forward in time to critical points, influencing, cajoling, and threatening anyone she has to until her mission is complete. Their missions are often preventative. The best-known Ananke are those whose desired outcomes are like "this Bound must never be released," which results in them appearing to warn off whoever the ever-changing future points to as a likely culprit.

As signs of archmasters' meddling, the Pentacle has mixed feelings regarding Ananke. They gained their name from Greek mages who noticed them appearing in unusual numbers in the century preceding Alexander the Great's birth. The mages thought the Ananke representatives of the goddess of time, imparting heroic destinies befitting their culture. Only with hindsight did their mission become clear — encouraging the creation of the Diamond Orders in the following decades from Greek, Egyptian, Persian, and Indian Awakened societies. Ananke, to the Orders, are the most maddening Mysteries; a mage can carefully record everything an Ananke says and does, but her goal can take lifetimes to become clear, if it ever does at

all. And, no matter how benevolent her individual appearances are, an Ananke ultimately represents an archmaster desiring an outcome or legacy but wishing to keep the means of achieving it at arm's length, which should make any sorcerer nervous.

Ananke almost never only have to make a single adjustment to destiny to achieve their goals; they represent an investment of time, effort, and unknown reality-shaping Imperial Practices, and as a rule archmasters are not in the habit of over-engineering. Some early Diamond theoreticians believed all Ananke to have been created in the Time Before, but the Pentacle has encountered several bearing the Nimbus of mages known to have achieved archmastery since. While most Ananke are anonymous thanks to the sheer difficulty in recognizing a being that leapfrogs millennia as easily as entering a house, some are storied, celebrated, or feared. The Ananke Cassiopeia appears in the childhood of every mage who has ever led the Archimandrite Legacy, shaping their lives with kindness as a friendly stranger or even family friend. The Ananke Nimue, creation of the famous Silver Ladder archmaster Myrddin Emrys, ensures that all Camelots fall. The Ananke Grey Woman appears whenever anyone threatens the seals on the Bound sleeping beneath Minsk, to warn them from their disastrous course.

## Powers of the Ananke

As living Imperial spells, Ananke resemble Supernal Entities; treat one as a Rank 4 entity with the following adjustments.

### Ananke, Apsaras, and the Law

The most common forms of the *Lex Magica* forbid archmasters from holding positions of authority in the Pentacle, but also enshrine pronouncements from the Time Before as *Gold Law*, that overrides all others. How, then, does a loyal Pentacle mage interpret an Ananke telling him to do something and throwing her considerable magical weight behind persuading him? According to the strictest interpretation of the *Lex*, following the demands of an Ananke created by an archmaster in Fallen history is a crime, while not following the instructions of one created in the Time Before is a worse offense.

A Convocation of South-East Asian mages meeting in Cambodia in the 1990s proposed reclassifying Ananke of the Time Before as a separate phenomenon, named *Apsaras* after the Buddhist and Hindu Muse-like divine figures. Obeying an Ananke could therefore face a lesser charge of mistaking one for the other, a tactic immediately used by the Adamant Dragon of the Ankor Arrow Caucus to escape charges. In the years since, the distinction has proven popular, but it's ultimately a fiction; no sure-fire way to tell an Ananke from an Apsara exists unless she tells her latest student about her maker.

**Unbidden:** Ananke are not summoned, do not suffer from being away from a Summoning Circle and do not impose a trial, nor do they provide Boons (see p. XX) as true Supernal Entities do

**Limited Mana:** Ananke always appear with full Mana pools but may not regain Mana (or have it stolen) by any means. When an Ananke reaches 0 Mana, she vanishes, until the next time something triggers her manifestation.

**Imperial Spell:** As living spells, Ananke do not cast spells as supernal entities do but instead adjust their own imagoes to produce secondary effects. By spending one Mana, an Ananke can reproduce any spell of the known Practices in Time and Fate but has no other spellcasting abilities and must also pay any other Mana costs the spell has. An Ananke has eight dice as her base "spellcasting" dice pool and does not accumulate Paradox dice for Reaches in her spells but is incapable of casting if she would gain Paradox dice for any other reason (such as casting an obvious spell in front of a Sleeper.) She has no other Arcana. Both the Ananke herself, and her spell-like effects, are immune to dispellation and countering, and automatically win Clash of Wills rolls against non-Imperial beings. An Ananke and her spell-like effects share the Nimbus of the archmaster who created her in a muted form; she has no Nimbus Tilt.

**Unshakeable:** Ananke can be persuaded and are good enough facsimiles of human beings to bleed when injured. They even register to mind-detecting powers. However, an Ananke is a spell, not a person, and cannot be affected by spells and supernatural powers that would rely on her being a living, thinking being. By spending a Mana, she may remove all Conditions, Tilts, injuries, and other effects by resetting herself to an unaffected state, which takes a turn.

**Bearers of Destiny:** As a separate power from her spellcasting, an Ananke may spend Mana to alter the Destiny Merit in a subject, one Mana per dot raised or lowered (she may remove the Merit by reducing it to zero and grant it to those who did not have it) and one Mana each for changing the nature or doom of the Destiny.

**Messengers and Persuaders:** Ananke always have a human-seeming form, and a limited shapechanging ability to alter their clothing and appearance to blend into any time and place. They appear without warning, although the aftershock of their manifestation can be seen in Time or Fate Active Mage Sight for hours afterward and triggers mages' Periphery, as does their presence. An Ananke typically focuses her attentions on a single person (a small group, such as a cabal, at the most) and employs Social Maneuvering to encourage her desired behavior. She will utilize her spellcasting abilities and Destiny-alteration powers to provide soft leverage and persuade her "student" if necessary, but Ananke only resort to hard leverage in last resort when running low on Mana. If she succeeds in her Social Maneuvering attempt, she vanishes, purpose fulfilled.

## At the Threshold: The Aeons

At the edge of the Astral Realms even the never-human thought forms collapse into Oroboros: The Astral Abyss. Five strange citadels stand upon its shores, and a little hut sits in

their shadows. These are the homes of Aeons: Astral personifications of the Arcana. The Aeons' forms have changed over time, reflecting their interest in the scrambled occult symbols mortals use to understand them. Two Aeons dwell in each palace: one for each of the Path's primary Arcana, in a pairing called a Syzygy. Sometimes an old man steps out of the tattered hut, alone. He represents the Abyss.

## Eleven Mighty Ones

The Aeons and their homes assume any form they please, though for Western Awakened they usually abide by the descriptions below. They always carry a shadow of corruption born of their place outside the Supernal, close to the Abyss. Their attendants are usually lesser Ochemata, but the Aeons can summon other servants at a moment's notice.

**The Fallen Tree of Arcadia, Citadel of Gloriana and Medraut:** The Fallen Tree is an enormous rot-hollowed log, half-submerged in Oroboros. Its lesser inhabitants are *svartalfar*: pale rot-elves (they're named for their underground homes, not their appearance) who ride enormous grubs, corpse-eating insects and rats. Gloriana of Time, Queen of Recurrence, evolved from Norns and other triple deities, from Three in One to a succession of quanta: slices measured in Planck time, instantly cut and stitched in any order. She slows the succession of faces for visitors who'd otherwise see a blur. Medraut of Fate, the Ruinous Prince, appears as a handsome, dark-haired man with a wicked grin; Mordred in the mind of someone reading Arthurian fantasy, with a few variations that amuse him.

**The Orchid of Pandemonium, Citadel of Dahhak:** Dahhak is a single being with two aspects, heads of a great dragon that's grown from the body of a king. (The king is vestigial. His head lolls and his mouth drools, though his crown is bright.) Dahhak claims to be the son of Ahriman, the enemy of truth; the dragon's heads lie so well that no visitor can tell which rules Mind, and which Space. Dahhak's heads say distance is perception anyway, and all thoughts occupy a cunningly folded universe inside the mind. Dahhak's palace is an enormous metal orchid. Its petals form a great maze and threaten visitors with rusty, razor-sharp edges. Goetic doppelgangers of visitors populate the citadel, acting out suppressed desires.

**The Unquiet Mansion, Citadel of Typhon and Echidna:** Seekers encounter a mountain-sized giant frozen in fetal position, mouth open. Approaching closer, they notice the giant's made of carved bones, stone panels and arrays of semi-precious stones. This is the Citadel of Death and Matter, which may be entered through doors made of lead and gold: two of the giant's clenched teeth. Unlike other Aeons, Typhon barely acknowledges mortal symbols of his Arcanum. He's Death as inhuman destruction, a cluster of serpents made of bone, metal and jewels. He almost never speaks. Echidna of Matter is usually a woman covered in scales of polished gemstones with flashing diamonds for eyes. Animated statues and the avatars of destruction called Typhonides (they resemble their father) crawl across their citadel.

**The Copse of the Primal Wild, Citadel of the Snake and Stag:** Visitors enter a tangled forest, an oasis in a rocky fissure

beneath a beating sun, an untamed tropical island and other wild places. The Spirit Snake and Stag of Life are enormous examples of their kind, capable of speech, but are two among countless beasts, walking plants and monstrous cross-breeds that could never mate in nature. Thyrsus mages say Snake and Stag are intertwined ecologies, not individuals. These Aeons manifest as different species regularly, to the point where "Snake" and "Stag" serve as occult designations more than literal descriptions.

**The Immanent Temple of the Aether, Citadel of Lilith and Azazel:** A great temple combines the symbols of every religion that ever posited a transcendental Above or enlightened Within. At its heart, the Syzygy of the Aether sit on either side of a great altar. Azazel of Forces was once chief of the *grigori*, rebel angels and culture heroes. He taught humanity to harness fire. Lilith of Prime rules the urges that conquer any civilization Azazel's pupils can build. She is *anima*, the Awakened "true will."

**The Hollow Hut and the Old Man:** On the black beach off Oroboros, the Old Man, called the Other, the Saint of Paradox and other things, rambles around a round hut made of skin and cloth. When he opens the hut's flap you can never see inside, as the shadows defeat all perception. The Old Man is friendly, but a bit tired. He never uses force except to defeat violence in his presence, which he cannot abide by. He represents the Abyss, but not the mad-god majesty dreamed of by some Scelesti (for whom he, too is a god), but the void with all illusions shorn, that one turns to out of desperation, ambition or gnawing curiosity. Nobody who ever goes in the hut comes out again, but nobody's ever forced to go, either. As for the Other himself, age and dust conceal all signs of any particular ethnicity, but there's something *wrong* with him, at the edges: monster's footprints, screams echoing in his yawns, and teeth that look like tusks from the corner of your eye.

## The Power of the Aeons

Aeons are Rank 8 ephemeral entities who defy categorization, and who are powerful enough to render game systems irrelevant. They may be finite compared to Archmasters, Supernal Gods and the truly Ascended but as far as most cabals are concerned, they're omnipotent.

Each Aeon possesses nearly complete command over the Arcanum it represents. It casts spells as if it were an archmage (automatically winning Clash of Wills rolls), never risks Paradoxes, and never requires any amount of Mana (or for Archmaster-level spells, Quintessence). The Old Man presumably commands Paradoxes themselves and can shape anti-reality at need. They can reflexively dispel, modify or force the relinquishment of any spell using their signature Arcanum as well. Aeons don't use these powers for trivial purposes, but sometimes in answer to petitions from visitors. Nothing's free; the Aeons impose onerous, weird repayment terms when they agree to such requests at all, and mages may unlock Mysteries by simply investigating why they might (for example) be asked to ensure that no roses grow in a particular spot for a thousand years.

Mages also visit an Aeon to request *Auctoritas*: a temporary special power over its Arcanum. Each *Auctoritas* costs the willworker the agreed upon price in services, plus one *dot* of Willpower, which she cannot regain until after she expends the power but does regain for free. That's the price of accepting an alien will into your own. Known *Auctoritates* include:

- The power to completely, reflexively and automatically dispel any magic that requires the Arcanum once, no matter how potent it is.
- The power to cast a single spell of the Arcanum with no Paradox risk, no matter the spell or surrounding circumstances.
- An additional dot in the Arcanum for the purpose of casting a single spell, even if that dot would violate Gnosis and Path limits.
- Initiation into a Legacy that grants the Aeon's Arcanum as a new primary Arcanum. This does not replace Experience costs. Once the initiation process is complete (which takes at minimum, one chapter), the initiate regains the lost Willpower dot.

The Old Man is said to grant special powers over Paradoxes, including a permanent "gift" for certain Scelesti that usually cracks their minds.

## In the Interstices: Secret Beings

Refugees from Emanations, mutants changed by ambient magic, and things the Fallen World simply forgot lurk out of popular view, in weird places Sleepers avoid but mages explore. They come in such variety that any account is bound to be incomplete, but many share common features and origins. Most can be divided into *incarnates*, which possess true material forms (and the same game Traits as humans and ordinary animals), and *ephemerals*: spirits, Supernal entities and other creatures of that class, as described in the **Mage** core rulebook.

## Cryptids

Yeti? Stray mammoths? The Loch Ness Monster? They're Cryptids and they're all real, from a certain point of view. Mages have caught several Loch Ness monsters. Are they aspects of a greater ephemeral being which eludes discovery? Does Nessie just have a lot of children? Even famous Cryptids resist easy explanations. Cracking one case, a mage discovers new Mysteries, begging to be solved.

Incarnate Cryptids occupy two categories. The first consists of ordinary species that Sleeper scientists believed were extinct, or never discovered. This interests the Awakened because these "mundane Cryptids," often survive for magical reasons. A relic population of cave bears might exist because a Verge to the Primal Wild makes food plentiful and hunters scarce.

The second category contains magical creatures that depend on magical environments. They live in Verges, stray from Emanations, or haunt ruins of the Time Before. Some are ordinary

creatures that changed in a magic-drenched area. Some acquire spell-like powers linked to their homes. These typically use the creature's Resolve + Composure as a dice pool, and don't cost Mana to use. Like cave fish, some evolved from predecessors to depend on their abilities. They can't survive anywhere else. Fire-breathing "hellhounds" might be formidable in a Verge of the Aether, but on the outside weak jaws and poor digestion (they're used to cooked food) sicken them. Truly fantastical creatures are ephemeral beings: spirits and Supernal entities too offensive to the Lie to assume permanent material form. Perhaps they once possessed true material forms.

## Sample Cryptid: Cat Sith

**Quote:** (A howling meow echoing across the hills.)

**Background:** A harbinger of death and calamity, the cat sith, or "fairy cat" comes to Sleeper folklore from Scotland, but to the Fallen World as a whole from Arcadian Verges, where wild and feral domestic cats formed colonies and transformed into creatures with a reputation for stealing souls and causing accidents. (Partly right: they don't steal souls, but they do cause accidents.) Shapeshifting Acanthus and Arcadian Fae have both been known to take a fairy cat's shape, but the original article is an animal shaped by magic, and is cunning for a cat, but not truly intelligent. Rumors persist of an intelligent "king of cats" who rules cat sith and feline Fae and stalks the Astral Realms.

**Description:** The classic cat sith is black with a white spot on its chest, shaggy, and the size of a thick-bodied mastiff. It avoids humans except to hunt and is easily agitated, often appearing with bristling fur and an arched back. It hunts by startling prey repeatedly and inflicting minor wounds, which it aggravates using its "Grave Misfortune" power, before feeding with "Devouring the Wounded." It will often visit a victim to feed on it just before it dies, giving rise to the myth that it steals souls.

**Attributes:** Intelligence 1, Wits 4, Resolve 3, Strength 3, Dexterity 5 Stamina 3, Presence 4, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

**Skills:** Athletics 3 (Jumping), Brawl 3 (Bite, Claw), Intimidation 4 (Make the Prey Run), Stealth 5 (Stalking), Survival 3 (Moors)

**Merits:** Fighting Finesse (Bite, Claw)

**Willpower:** 6

**Initiative:** 8

**Defense:** 8

**Size:** 4

**Speed:** 18 (species factor 10)

**Health:** 7

**Attacks**

**Bite:** 9 dice; +0(L)

**Claw:** 9 dice; -1(L)

**Special Abilities**

**Devouring the Wounded (6 dice):** As the Death spell "Devouring the Slain," except that the cat sith can choose to replenish Willpower or heal lethal damage. This also satisfies a fairy cat's need for food.

**Grave Misfortune (6 dice):** As the Fate spell. The cat sith uses this power to cause terrible accidents to anything they find threatening or tasty.

## Root Peoples

Theosophist texts talk about the “root races”: giants, blue-skinned mystics, and stranger beings who evolved into modern humanity. Archaeomancers know that these beings actually existed, but usually believe the Theosophical narrative arose out of racism, ignorance and pure guesswork. Racist theories of the root peoples used to be held in higher regard, and a few arch-conservative cabals still cling to them, but the dominant view nowadays is to regard the root peoples as parallel groups of humanity.

All known root peoples are spirits, leading theorists to believe that they’re Shadow remnants of species from the Time Before, or a solution to one of the central problems of spirit ecology: the lack of a spirit choir that reflects humanity. According to the latter theory, human consciousness distorts and destroys the representations they might otherwise project into the Shadow, leaving the root peoples as Shadow-forms of various states of consciousness. Mages occasionally claim to have discovered incarnate root peoples, but these usually turn out to be Proximi or the subjects of long-lasting magical experiments. Some root peoples, such as the Rmoahals (see below) defy the ephemeral/incarnate divide. They’re spirits, but seem to be Materialized by default, as if the Shadow found them unfit and exiled them.

## Sample Root People: The Rmoahals

**Quote:** (Atlantean) *Leave, or serve with us.*

**Background:** According the Theosophical-Atlantean lore, Rmoahals, Atlanteans and other peoples evolved from a common African ancestor. Atlanteans founded their Awakened City and other peoples created rival kingdoms, but the Rmoahals rejected civilization, using their martial skills and innate self-sufficiency to work as bandits and mercenaries. To avoid distrust, they developed the art of magical oaths to a high degree, to the point where their promises to guard Atlantis’ outposts and items of power defied the Fall, allowing them to survive. Modern mages generally reject the notion of Atlantis as literal prehistory and say the Rmoahals were historical peoples transformed by oaths and ambient magic. The Adamantine Arrow takes special interest in the Rmoahals, who represent the Order’s ideal of faithful service taken to such extremes that it compromises their humanity.

Although they’re highly intelligent, Rmoahals don’t care about history and don’t retain long-term memories beyond what they need to survive and carry out their duties. They live in an eternal present, free from ambition, curiosity and the fear of death. Rmoahals don’t need to eat or sleep. Heat, cold, or exposure to the elements don’t bother them, so their camps consist of little more than bolt-holes to store weapons, hide and quietly socialize.

In spite of their single-minded natures, they still raise families, love one another and possess distinct personalities. Children



inherit their parents' duty: to protect a Verge, Artifact, or Atlantean ruin. Their oaths define this in a precise fashion, which usually involves expelling intruders and preventing the place or thing from destruction, alteration or removal. Some clans have different oaths however, and might relinquish their protectorate under specific conditions, such as when a prophesied individual or event arrives. Deprived of the ability to fulfil their oaths, Rmoahals automatically violate their Bans, sicken, and die.

**Description:** As muscular, eight-foot-tall indigo giants, Rmoahals find it impossible to blend into the mundane world. Avoiding attention is usually the only reason they ever enter Twilight. They don't need clothes for protection, so they only wear minimal clothing for the pockets and a dash of self-expression. Rmoahals grow shaggy black hair on their heads, but nowhere else. They speak a language euphemistic Mystagogues call "high Atlantean" in a growling monotone.

**Rank:** 2

**Attributes:** Power 5, Finesse 4, Resistance 5

**Influence:** Feats of Arms 2. This Influence not only enhances the Rmoahal's combat ability but makes her familiar with all forms of personal weaponry. A Rmoahal who's never seen a weapon more sophisticated than a stone ax can use and maintain the first modern assault rifle she's ever seen as if she's a trained soldier.

**Numina:** Implant Mission (typically forcing others to perform their duties), Incarnated (New: Materialized by default, Rmoahals can assume a Twilight state or return after a full turn of concentration. Spend 2 Essence and roll Power + Finesse. Success allows a change of state. Failure delays it and wastes the Essence. They can stay Materialized for an unlimited period of time.), Stalwart, Wilds Sense. (New: Can sense activity within the vicinity of the place or thing they've sworn to guard. 0 Essence cost, roll Power + Finesse. This power is reflexive in cases of threats to themselves or their protectorate, making them impossible to surprise while on duty.)

**Essence:** 15

**Virtue:** Duty. Satisfying ancient oaths in the face of adversity provides the greatest fulfillment in a Rmoahal's life.

**Vice:** Stoicism. Suppressing outward signs of pain and emotion is an egotistical act for Rmoahals, who believe it makes them superior beings. Some Rmoahals possess different Vices.

**Ban:** Rmoahals cannot place any objective above guarding the objects of their oaths, and must always be meaningfully guarding such objects, or working to recapture them. If they can no longer do these things, they sicken and die.

**Corpus:** 11

**Willpower:** 10

**Initiative:** 9

**Defense:** 5

**Speed:** 15 (Species Factor 5)

**Size:** 6

## Reign of the Exarchs

From their hidden palaces in the Supernal Realm, the Exarchs shape and oppress the Fallen World. Working by subtle miracles, devoted servants interpreting direct (if confusing) commandments, and rare blatant manifestations, the Tyrants further the cause of their great Lie. Humanity must be preserved, divided, and subjugated. All will serve.

### Subtle Signs and Direct Commandments

While the direct, focused attention of an Exarch produces an Iron Seal Aedes (p. XX) as the Supernal World imprints with the will and intent of the Tyrant, the entire Fallen World is touched by their reign. According to Seer metaphysicians, the simple fact that the Exarchs pay attention to the Fallen while in the Supernal means every atom and mote bears their mark and cannot help but reflect their wants. Seers employ a thousand divinatory methods to search for omens and signs, pore over prophecies, chase rumors of Ochemata and lesser servant-monsters, and attempt to interpret their own dreams, all to the end of understanding their masters. These methods are usually non-magical in nature or employ Sleepwalkers with minor supernatural powers at most.

Beyond the confines of looking at the Fallen World to see its makers' fingerprints, Seers of the Throne are prone to assuming that any Mystery of proven Supernal origin that doesn't have another explanation is the Exarchs' work, especially spontaneous manifestations of High Speech. Their rival Orders are more skeptical, but Seers obsess over and collect any Mystery that can be construed as a message or commandment. Before a Seer develops a Prelacy, such Mysteries are their personal link to the Tyrants.

Although the Pentacle sometimes give apprentices the impression that all Seers hear the voices of their gods in their dreams, Prelates are a distinct minority among the Exarchs' servants. Not every Seer rises enough in the Pyramid to draw their attention or can study an Iron Seal first hand, and a significant portion of those that do don't survive the "tests" the Tyrants put would-be Prelates through. Being a Prelate in the Iron Pyramid is like being Made in the mafia; Prelates have rights and responsibilities further than those of common foot soldiers. A Prelate can be assured that the Exarchs have noticed her existence and approved. Even once she is a Prelate, a Seer will keep up her divination with a change of emphasis, looking for assistance interpreting the confusing images pouring into her Oneiros.

**Systems:** Most Seer divinatory efforts are extended actions involving research rolls interspersed with actions dependent on the kind of divination the Seer is attempting. Success might grant a new Obsession or a temporary dot in the Dream Merit for the rest of the story.

## New Prelacy Crown Attainments

The rules for Prelacies on p. 103 of **Mage: The Awakening Second Edition** list the Crown Attainments gained by Prelates of four Exarchs; the Eye, General, Unity, and Father. These are the patron Exarchs of the four greatest Seer Ministries (Panopticon, Praetorian, Hegemony, and Paternoster, respectively) so are the best known to the Pentacle. Minor Ministries devoted to other Exarchs exhibit rarer powers.

The Chancellor (Mammon and Pantechnicon) grants the **Crown of Scarcity**. The player may substitute the Availability of equipment or services for any dice or damage bonus she would normally receive from that source. Also, by spending a willpower when regaining Mana, the mage renders that individual source of Mana inert, preventing anyone else from gaining Mana from it for her Matter dots in days.

The Raptor (Sycorian) grants the **Crown of Instinct**. The character may ignore surrenders without spending Willpower, is immune to the Beaten Down Tilt and wound penalties and increases his own Doors in Social Maneuvering by his Life dots.

The Prophet (Kyrian and Horologian) grants the **Crown of Agency**. When she or another character uses Temporal Sympathy on a spell with her as the subject, the character counts as having a Strong Temporal Sympathy to any point in her own past. If a supernatural effect (including Time spells) alters history such that the character's past is changed, she does not change immediately but only after her Time dots in turns, allowing her the opportunity to do something about it.

## Those Who Serve

The Exarchs rule all the Fallen Worlds of matter and ephemera from their Supernal thrones, but only naïve mages make the mistake of thinking of the Seers as their sole servants. This isn't true, and too many cabals have suffered defeats at the hands of unexpected Exarchal influence.

The Adamantine Arrow's Grand Tibetan Caucus of 1946 spent great effort enumerating the enemies of the Awakened, and the modern Order now defines the Exarchs' servants into four tiers – Supernal Entities, Willing Servants, Unwilling Slaves, and Unknowing Thralls. Many Free Council Assemblies define what a "Follower of the Lie" is according to similar principles; the Libertine Creed mandates the destruction of willing Followers, but what of creatures born into the Tyrant's service that never chose it and, in many cases, would rebel if they could?

## Supernal Entities

As tyrants of the Supernal, the Exarchs command legions; choirs of recording gods and lesser Exarchs spoken of in Seer mythology and assumed to reside in the deep Supernal Realm, but also the lesser, more understandable Supernal entities mages encounter in the Supernal World of Mage Sight or summon forth for boons. Pentacle tutors caution Disciples contemplating summoning for the first time to be ever-vigilant of the entity's loyalties, but for the most part entities loyal to the Throne simply won't accept a summoning from a rebel mage. Pentacle mages Scrutinizing Mysteries relating to the Exarchs' symbolism or near Seer strongholds often find that entities attracted to the disturbance (**Mage: The Awakening Second Edition**, p. 93) are notably hostile, and Demesnes created by Seer Prelate soul stones attract Exarch-aligned entities as a matter of course. When an entity is loyal to an Iron Seal, or Summoned by a Prelate of that Exarch, it almost always has the Iron Seal's Arcanum as its secondary Arcanum and Boon (p. XX) if it is not of the Path associated with that Arcanum. For example, an Acanthus Seer Prelate of the General still summons Moirae and Anachronisms, but the Fae that respond to her Summoning will grant Boons of Forces.

The Lex Magica still regards the destruction of a Supernal Entity as a crime even if that entity is hostile, and almost all Consilia advise mages to retreat in the face of Supernal aggression, or to neutralize the entity without destroying it. The exceptions include Consilia that have come under protracted attack by Seer-summoned entities; the Budapest Incident of 1997, for example, led to that Consilium's members having their right to self-defense enshrined.

The Tibetan Caucus advised Arrows to treat Ochemata and Seer archmasters similarly to Supernal Entities: retreat and counter their efforts if possible. Direct assault on one of the Exarchs' avatars or an archmage is suicidal without some rare advantage, and despite their being in the minority, the Pentacle tends to assume all Tetrarchs or Ministers are potential archmasters. Arrow and Guardian caucuses in regions known to the Pentacle as the seats of such high-ranking Seers dedicate members to the task of gathering as much intelligence as possible, to confirm when those individuals have achieved the Imperial Mysteries or are attended by Ochemata. Tetrarchs and Ministers habitually imply they have the Exarchs' ear and unheard-of powers as a survival tactic for the deadly politics of the Iron Pyramid's apex, but if the Pentacle learns that a Minister's supposed archmastery is a bluff, she becomes a high-value target.

## The Willing: Seers and others

This tier of the Iron Pyramid encompasses both the Seers of the Throne and other supernatural beings in the Fallen World who know the Exarchs exist and, like the Seers, do the Iron Seals' bidding in exchange for temporal and magical power. These range from small Exarchal cults hiding in the societies of ex-human creatures such as vampires and changelings, to whole monstrous, never-human species lurking in the dark corners of the world giving praise to the Tyrants. These beings maintain

their own customs and interpretation of their patrons' symbolism and mythology, separate to the Seers' hierarchy, though they and Seers are often ordered to work together despite mutual distrust. Service — and the rewards it brings — outweighs any disgust a Seer has for her monstrous "allies."

As far as mages can tell, the Iron Seals vary in their interest in monstrous servants. The Nemesis and Psychopomp are the most common patrons, to the point of preferring them to Seers, while the Prophet and (Seers whisper) the Gate are almost exclusively concerned with the Awakened.

Every Exarchal cult has three aspects — a way to receive instruction from their Patron, the demands their Patron Exarch makes, and what members get in return. Without access to Mage Sight (and therefore the ability to scrutinize Iron Seal Aedes and eventually develop Prelacies) most non-Seer cults resort to the divinatory methods Seers employ, though those with supernatural powers that reveal information or cast prophecies sometimes develop Prelacy-like adaptations. Rewards tend toward temporal power and influence, supernatural powers adapted by the Iron Seal to further its agenda, and for greatly favored servants the lessening of supernatural banes or curses.

**Systems:** Exarchal cults are best represented with the Mystery Cult Initiation Merit (**Mage: The Awakening Second Edition**, p. 106), which grants a supernatural Merit at the third and fifth dot. That Merit may ignore the "Awakened" restriction, although if its effects require the use of Awakened spellcasting or other mage mechanics it has no effect for unAwakened members. Examples of suitable Merits include Astral Adept, Dream, Unseen Sense, High Speech Perception, Omen Sensitivity, and Occultation. Cults within the societies of supernatural beings may substitute unique powers of the Storyteller's design based on their mechanics; for example, many vampire Exarch cults teach *Auspex Devotions* that reveal High Speech and Mystery Commands.

## The Unwilling: Servitors

This tier encompasses those servants of the Exarchs who know of the Iron Seals' existence, know what they represent, but have no choice but to serve, either through individual or group coercion or because the servant is supernaturally compelled in some way. The Pentacle does not consider mages recruited by the Seers before they knew all the facts Unwilling except when the Awakening was very recent, and the mage hasn't been ordered to further the Lie yet. To the majority opinion, if a Seer doesn't have the moral character to defect to the Pentacle, she's Willing. Most Unwilling servants are the so-called Servitors; the myriad enslaved Proximus dynasties, near-human creatures, secret peoples, and the victims of supernatural processes who are as part of the Seers of the Throne sect as the free Proximus dynasties and Sleepwalker members are of the Pentacle Orders. Most Servitors owe allegiance to one Iron Seal and any Ministries worshiping him. Examples include the Myrmidion Proximus Dynasty, cursed to obey orders in a secret language the General teaches favored Prelates, and the Hollow Ones and Grigori described on p. 310 of **Mage**. Most Cabals in conflict with Seers avoid killing servitors as a first response, but the *Lex Magica* ultimately regards it as a kindness even if wisdom disagrees.

## New Servitors: Hive Souls

According to legend, the first Hive Souls were created by a Hegemonic Minister and archmaster they know as the "Progenitor," who the Unity ordered to create a new form of human being better suited to the Iron Seal's purpose. Upon their creation, she was rewarded with Ascension to join the Exarchs within the Unity, and to this day the Ministry treats Hive Souls with a reverence other Seers do not extend to their own servitors. Hive Souls are a true species, physically indistinguishable from humans but only able to reproduce among their own kind. Pregnancies are rarer but always multiple, and the children always identical. Once they grow into infancy, the difference between them and humans becomes clear. Each Hive Soul "cluster" is actually one person, simultaneously inhabiting all of their bodies regardless of distance. In adulthood, Hive Souls enter the Hegemony's service; they collaborate with one another seamlessly, even between multiple clusters, and make excellent coordinators, managers, overseers of slaves and personal assistants. In combat, Hive Souls move with unspoken, perfect coordination; a fire team of Hive Souls can easily outmaneuver unprepared opponents.

The bodies of Hive Souls aren't just identical at birth: physical changes to one appear on all the others, and their Supernal connection is strong enough that if one body eats, drinks or even breathes, it sustains all the rest. This unbreakable bond is also their one weakness; if one body is killed, the rest of the cluster rapidly sicken and die.

**Systems:** All members of a Hive Soul cluster are the same character, with a single set of traits. A cluster has two to five members, with three being the most common, and they treat the number of bodies in their cluster as a Supernatural Tolerance Trait called **Cluster**. The connection between a cluster's bodies may be perceived with Space magic or Mage Sight as a constantly-updating Connected sympathetic link which can't be altered with magic. A Hive Soul is always aware of what is happening to all of her bodies, although if some are asleep or unconscious she is only aware of what they are dreaming about.

Hive Souls can perform a different action with each body even in a single turn, even entirely mental actions, and if they coordinate their efforts in Teamwork (**Mage: The Awakening Second Edition**, p. 214) they add the number of bodies taking part as automatic successes to the dice rolls of the assisting selves.

Wound penalties, Conditions, and supernatural effects (including spells) affect all of a cluster's bodies simultaneously — mentally controlling one to perform a task will see all of the others pantomime it — but Hive Souls may use their cluster to spread pain or privation out. By spending a Willpower, a Hive Soul's player may ignore Wound Penalties up to the character's Cluster or Tilts and physical conditions based on physical deprivation — hunger, tiredness, thirst, even suffocation — as long as one body is not suffering them. Physical Tilts are considered individually, but injuries suffered by one body spread to the rest of the cluster at the rate of one point of damage per hour, worst damage first. If one body dies, the rest of the cluster suffer one point of aggravated damage per hour until the Hive Soul dies.

Finally, the complex souls of clusters are the creation of Imperial magic; Hive Souls are immune to effects that would steal or injure their souls.

## The Unknowing: Dupes and Thralls

The Iron Pyramid rests on a great base of cults, conspiracies, compacts, and individuals both supernatural and mundane that do the Exarchs' work without knowing, usually with a Willing or Unwilling servant pulling their strings. The Pentacle advocates restraint except for self-defense when facing these dupes and thralls, but cabals have successfully argued the case for eradicating these groups when they are especially dangerous to mages and their interests. The Unknowing range from Sleeper social, criminal, and political groups subtly steered by Seers, to victims of Profane Urim, to "Hunters" fed targets by the Iron Pyramid, and supernatural beings tricked into thinking the Exarchs' commands come from beings in their own mythologies.

## Rewards for Service

*Magic is Payment*, say the Seers, but the Exarchs pay with double-edged coin. The Tyrant's gifts are never benevolent, no matter how desired by the recipient. Every Artifact, every Miracle, every Servitor cements an Iron Seal's symbolism in the Fallen World. The Seers compete to the point of murder for the right to bear Artifacts the Exarchs invest far more into than the lives of the bearers. Ask a Seer, though, and she'll tell you it was worth it. She has seen wonders, held the Supernal in her hand, and all it took was the horrors the Tyrants demanded.

## Miracles

As Ascended, Supernal beings, the Exarchs could in theory make deep, sweeping changes to the Fallen World at such a fundamental level that its inhabitants never know anything has changed, targeting miniature Falls at their enemies. Particularly fervent Seers even argue that they do, that history, geography, and the nature of the world are in constant flux, but the Pentacle and the majority of Seers acknowledge that if the Exarchs were capable of such feats, the Pentacle wouldn't exist, and the Lie would be much worse than it is. Even so, Seers have followed dreams and omens to caches of magical items or secret peoples lurking in Emanation Realms that seem suspiciously convenient. The first Shroud of Observation (**Mage: The Awakening Second Edition**, p. 210), for example, was uncovered by Seers directed by the Eye to breach a carved stone chamber buried in undisturbed bedrock deep beneath London. Seers believe that such caches do not exist until the Exarchs rearrange the Fallen World to include them, at which point they have always existed (tenses get complicated when discussing Supernal retro-causality). Some go further to preach that the noted mundane resources of the Seers as a sect are not simply the result of careful manipulation of Sleepers and steady amassing of power; the Ministries don't amass such temporal power through their own hard work, but by living literally charmed lives, the Exarchs gilding their part of the Fallen World's cage.

**Systems:** Exarchal Miracles are entirely outside the bounds of the Storytelling system; if the Tyrants alter some aspect of the

## Suitable Servants and Lesser Divinities

The Exarchs target groups with the potential to further the Lie. That means a combination of the capacity to make human life in the Fallen World more oppressive and hopeless through the means symbolized by the Iron Seal involved while simultaneously being subtle enough to hide their existence from the masses. Obviously inhuman monsters do have a place in the Exarchs' design, but it's hidden deep in Emanation Realms and ruins of the Time Before, or the depths of ephemeral worlds. As a rule, if it can't pass for human or go unnoticed, the Exarchs don't want it in the material world and won't sponsor a Mystery Cult supporting it.

Additionally, the Iron Seals aren't above exploiting or actively causing mistaken identity where supernatural beings believe the Exarchs' commands to be coming from their own deities, but they avoid usurping control of creatures that directly serve those godlike entities. This includes Arisen mummies and their Shuanksen rivals, Huntsmen, and the angels of the God-Machine.

Relations between the Exarchs and godlike beings are the stuff of myth, legend, and pure speculation among mages. What dealings, for example, the Nemesis has with Luna and Helios or how the Psychopomp deals with the unseen Chthonic Gods of the Underworld are unknown, with one curious exception. To the consternation of both sets of servants, Pentacle mages, and Unchained demons, the Exarchs appear to have mutually beneficial agreements with the so-called God-Machine. Seers sometimes receive commands to assist the God-Machine's cultists or angels or receive such assistance unasked.

Fallen World it can't be countered, undone, or even noticed by those in it except by inference. The Exarchs restrict themselves to unseen changes their servants may later take advantage of; if a blatant show of power is needed, they send an Ochema (p. XX.)

## Fallen Rewards

Most of a successful Seer's reward comes to them by Fallen means: Seers trickle temporal resources and influence down to their inferiors in the Pyramid, a Prelate's Servitor bodyguard comes via Ministerial allocation, and Seers produce as many (if not more) Imbued items and Perfected Materials as any other Order. Scratch the surface, though, look at them through the eyes of the faithful, and even these impressive but Fallen rewards are gifts from the Exarchs. Exarchal Miracles ensure the Ministry has resources to spend, the Seer in charge of deploying Servitors received a Mystery Command to send the bodyguard, an upsurge in Imbued Item creation was dictated by an archmaster near the top of the Pyramid. Therefore, the self-serving nature of the Exarchs' gifts applies even when the gift in question isn't an Artifact. Seers are just as free to innovate Imbued Items for themselves, for example, but those explicitly awarded for

service inevitably reinforce the recipient's part in maintaining the Lie. Imbued Items that grant the Seer authority, influence the emotions of Sleepers, or provide illustrative "lessons" in an Iron Seal's ideology are common. Devotees of the General often receive Imbued weapons that assert their dominance or spur the strong into cruelty over the weak. Numerous priests of the Chancellor find small imbued tokens that make any attached object irresistible to Sleepers included in their "bonus package."

## Artifacts

Pentacle mages think of Artifacts as unique Mysteries; each one has a story and symbolism all its own and must be understood alone. Over the millennia the Mysterium and its predecessor Order the Keepers of the Word have proposed dozens of rival taxonomies for Artifacts, but ultimately the only successful ones revolve around the Arcanum used in the item's spells. By contrast, while Seers can find unique Artifacts as much as any mage, those granted by the Exarchs do fall into recognizable types, and even repeating functions; no two Profane Urim look alike, but they are both Profane Urim, casting the same spells, and fit into the larger category of Profane Robes. The Paternoster Ministry has made the greatest study of reward Artifacts, thanks to both their status as priests of Prime's Iron Seal and their habit of confiscating Artifacts from politically-weak Seers whenever they can. According to Ministry doctrine, Artifacts made by the Exarchs for their mortal servants fall into five **Profane Forms** because the Exarchs were once human mages. The forms represent the magical tools of the Time Before; where Fallen World Awakened deal with coins, cups, mirrors, rods, and weapons, the Exarchs-to-be used rings, scepters, robes, crowns, and thrones. The Ministry further divides reward Artifacts into **Profane** and **Sacred**: a Profane Artifact in Seer parlance is an imitation of an Exarch's own regalia created for a lesser servant's use, the kind of Artifact a moderately successful Pylon with several Prelates might receive. Profane Artifacts are always "just" Artifacts, not Eidoforms, Sariras, Astras, or other rarities. A Sacred Artifact, however, is one that is personally linked to an Exarch, part of that Tyrant's own regalia and far more powerful than a Profane example: these are the legendary Sariras of Exarchs from their mass Ascension in the Fall, Astras linked to Iron Seals and

Artifacts that cast spells requiring archmastery, the province of Ministerial collections and lifelong obsession.

**Rings** are the most variable Profane Form, encompassing prayer wheels, lingam, singing bowls, actual rings, and even rosaries. In the Time Before, according to Paternoster, these were magical tools of meditation and opening oneself up to the Mysteries. In the Fallen World, Profane Rings cast spells enhancing Mage Sight, granting unusual senses, revealing the Iron Seal's influence in the world, and imparting Mystery Commands to the user. Sacred Rings summon Ochemata, place users into the Supernal World of a different Path or reveal symbols not of the known Paths.

**Scepters** exert an Exarch's authority and dominance over magic. In the Time Before, they were combination weapons and badges of office for Atlantis' rulers, magical tools for the command of magic itself. In the Fallen World, Profane Scepters dispel and counter magic, banish ephemeral entities, and control Mana. Sacred Scepters command Supernal Entities, prevent victims from casting spells, and create Demesnes or even Emanation Realms.

**Robes** are the most familiar reward Artifact, subsuming a wearer's identity and turning them into an extension of their patron while allowing her to command others in return. In the Time Before, they were tools of identity and investment. In the Fallen World, Profane Robes control the minds of Sleepers (such as the infamous Profane Urim described on p. 310 of **Mage: The Awakening Second Edition**), alter the Nimbus, warp Sympathy, and conceal the user. Sacred Robes allow access to powerful, magical Shadow Names, project the user into ephemeral or Emanation Realms, or allow the user to take unusual Familiars.

**Crowns** signify the wearer as ruling directly over a phenomenon, distinct from Scepters in that they command elements of the world rather than raw magic. In the Time Before they were tools of instantaneous, one-on-one, at-hand command. In the Fallen World, Profane Crowns contain Ruling, Weaving, or Patterning spells that allow the wearer to shape, reform, and direct their Arcana's purview. Sacred Crowns enhance instant spellcasting, grant extra Reach for an Arcanum, or contain Making and Unmaking spells... or higher, Imperial Practices.

**Thrones** display the user as a symbol of tyranny from afar, making them the center of a setting. In the Time Before, they were tools of ritual, remote command. In the Fallen World, Profane Thrones create spells over a wide area, allow the user to scry or gain remote knowledge over a subject, or enhance ritual spellcasting. Sacred Thrones project their user into strange realms, allow all present to see the user's Supernal World, or create demesnes or annulities.

## New Merit: Profane Tool(●)

**Prerequisite:** Prelacy ••

**Effect:** Although the Profane Forms do not precisely correspond to the magical tools used by mages in the Fallen World, your character has developed an aptitude toward one of them. Choose one of Scepters, Robes, Crowns, Thrones, and Rings; your character may use and Dedicate them as though they were a Path tool. This Merit may be purchased multiple times.

### Gotta Catch Them All

Even with the Seers' greater access to magical items, even a successful Pylon can only expect one Profane Artifact. To horde more without being able to defend it is to invite challenge from other Pylons, who might even see the hoarder's murder as a necessary task to fulfil their own destiny of bearing their prize. That said, popular stories among Seers tell of Artifacts coming as sets, with hidden powers only revealed when brought together. The highest echelons of the Pyramid have similar Obsessions with multiple Sacred Artifacts linked to the same Exarch. If anyone has ever united the Ring and Scepter of Ahriman or located all five Sacred regalia of the Dethroned Queen, they aren't telling. Maybe they've already joined the Exarchs thanks to the feat.



## Awakening Record of Obrimos, Shadow Name "Elizabeth," Boston, USA

You want to know what it's like? I don't belong here. This world is wrong. Imagine if the apocalypse happened, but only you remembered it. That's what it's like.

The world I'm from was dying and no one knew why. About five years ago, electronics stopped working in certain places, then people started getting sick in the Zones; that's what we called them. Everyone evacuated from these areas, but they kept growing and getting worse. Nothing could live in the oldest ones, just barren dirt. It wasn't even safe to fly over the larger ones. Some people saw strange lights hovering in many of those places; there were stories of demons, angels, and aliens. I started dreaming about walking through one and healing it. Every night I had the same dream. After my brother died when a large Zone expanded suddenly, I decided to try it. I walked into one of the smaller ones, where I should have been able to spend a few hours in before it started killing me.

I remember collapsing less than a minute after I crossed the border and stood amid the grey plants. I thought I was dying, but voice called to me, asking if I was ready. I said I was, and suddenly I was standing on a narrow long narrow spit of barren rock surrounded by brilliantly white flames. In the center of the rock was a slender tower made of gold, surrounded by white fire. I knew I had to get to the tower.

I pulled my coat around me and tried to run through the flames. They were larger and hotter than I could have imagined. My clothing burned off, and so did all my hair. My flesh burned next, I was in agony and I'll never forget the smell. Getting through the flames seemed to take hours, but eventually I reached the tower. Instead of a charred husk, the flames refined me, somehow, turning my flesh to polished brass.

There were names written all over the tower, some in tiny letters, others taller than I am. Many were in alphabets I'd never seen before, but I knew they all were names. I tried to write my name, but I had nothing to write with. I cut myself on a rock and used my finger to write my name in my own blood. I watched the blood soak into the gold and my name appeared in perfect script.

I fell again and woke up in the middle of the Fens, where that Zone had been, but it was green and alive. I was wearing the clothes I'd had on when I collapsed.

The Zones never existed. The world never died. My brother never died. I came through that fire Awakened, but I can't stop dreaming about home. And wondering — what if it happens here, too? Will you do better than the people where I'm from? Will I?

## CHAPTER SIX

# AWAKENING

*If we pursue a spiritual path in depth, then it changes who and what we are. There is no turning back. We can only move forward.*

— Vivianne Crowley, *Wicca and the Spiritual Quest*

It is the great Mystery all Awakened share, the maddening, unanswered, uncertain questions that every mage has faced, from the earliest Paleolithic shamans to the most modern Libertine. What happened to me? Why did it happen to me? Why does it not happen to everyone?

As the only time, short of archmastery or Ascension, that mages directly experience the Supernal Realm, Awakenings provide almost all the Orders' understanding of it and the Watchtowers. Everything else, from the basic lessons in Forms and Patterns taught to apprentices to the most esoteric theories of Supernal metaphysics, has its foundation in thousands of years of recording and considering the Awakening experiences of new willworkers. By their nature, Awakenings are intensely personal, and the mage-to-be (Mages call people undergoing the process of Awakening neither Sleeper nor Awakened, but *Lucid*) is not equipped to fully understand what's happening to them. The grand irony of the Awakened experience is that by the time a mage has the tools to analyze the process of Awakening, it's too late. All that's possible is to gain what understanding is possible from hindsight, pick over the stories of others after the fact, or look on as best one can from the outside... and, at great risk, possibly interfere.

Mages who devote themselves to the study of Awakening — who the Orders call *Alethians* — understand that they belong to a long line of enquiry that did not start and will not end with them. Their observations and insights are valuable in aggregate, slowly chipping away at the greatest Mystery. In the 21st century, the Orders have made significant progress; a working model of what happens, Supernally, during an Awakening, how that informs the experience of the Lucid in Waking World Dream or Supernal Journey, what can influence a Sleeper toward or

away from the moment of revelation that is Awakening's spark, and even how to detect Awakenings-in-progress and a litany of unusual effects that a minority of Lucid experience. The true prize depends on the researcher. Some study Awakenings to understand the Supernal, or to more accurately predict or even cause Awakenings in the future, or to attempt to contact, study, or control the Watchtowers themselves.

## The Mystery of Awakening

Chapters One and Two of *Mage: The Awakening Second Edition* describe Awakening from the point of view of characters going through it, how the five Paths manifest in different ways, and the difference between a Waking World Dream and Supernal Journey. *Mage* assumes that players' characters have already Awakened some time before a chronicle starts and have received basic training and guidance from their Orders. This section describes the metaphysical process of Awakening as the Orders' specialists understand it, along with systems for characters going through it during an existing game.

## Prospects and the Three Pillars

What makes someone a candidate for Awakening? The Orders, especially Guardians, spend great effort tracking those magical society calls *Prospects*; people the Orders are keeping tabs on as potential future mages. Some Orders try to encourage Prospects toward Awakening, others against it or refuse to

interfere but only observe from a distance. To identify Prospects at all, mages need to understand what makes someone more or less likely to Awaken.

As far as the Orders can tell, Awakening has three fundamental prerequisites. The early Diamond Orders called these the *Tripod*, after the seat of the Oracle at Delphi, or the *Trimurti* after the triple Hindu divinities. Modern mages use both interchangeably or simply refer to three *Pillars*.

## An Inquiring Mind and a Prepared Soul

The first Pillar is the one the Orders are most familiar with and where they put most effort, but also where the greatest amount of their own biases and beliefs gets in the way. Simply put, Awakenings are successful if the Prospect is the kind of person who can both stir fitfully in Sleep and succeed in the tests and trials of the Awakening itself. Most mages, if they're honest, admit to having exhibited obsessive tendencies long before they shook off Quiescence, or to a lifetime knowing that something was wrong with the world before they realized it was a Lie. The Prospect must need Truth in her life, need to chase it, however fleeting it may be.

Many mages observe individuals who they consider both appropriate choices based on their Order's biases, and who seem more likely to Awaken than other Sleepers, then work to channel their interests and feed their obsessions in ways that leave them hungry for more information and uncertain of the truths of the world around them. To give someone the best chance of Awakening, he must come to understand that the world around him is larger and stranger than he has previously believed and that he can find answers to these mysteries, or at least proof that the mysteries are real, if only he searches long enough and is sufficiently dedicated to the quest.

As well as a burning curiosity, a Prospect requires basic spiritual health for an Awakening to begin; this doesn't mean they have to be moral or saintly, but the bar for entry is set at a human soul that has not been corrupted by an external force. Sleepers, Sleepwalkers, and Proximi all qualify for the Supernal to greater or lesser extents, but ex-human monsters, supernatural beings that were never human but look like it, and those bound to other entities and forces don't. Mages know that spiritual possession, soul loss, and other corrupting influences all prevent Awakening. Minor supernatural powers as exhibited by many Sleepwalkers do not prevent Awakening but most vanish should the Sleepwalker ever Awaken.

The Orders have investigated many other potential factors, finding that some aren't hard limits, but do make Awakening more or less likely. One that does have a limit is extreme youth. Awakening can occur at any time from young adulthood to old age without issue, but the younger a teenager is the less chance she has and Awakening simply doesn't happen before puberty. Mages who claim to have Awakened as very young children or even in the womb are lying.

Awakening is blind to religion, race, sex, gender, orientation, illness, infirmity, intelligence, education, morality, class, and wealth. Groups like the Guardians and Seers who believe only certain people *should* Awaken have to carefully steer Prospects

## "Can X Awaken?"

As a rule, no. Although supernatural creatures do count as Sleepwalkers for mages' spells, the vast array of monsters presented in other Chronicles of Darkness games are all disqualified from Awakening. If a character has supernatural abilities that go beyond Merits, especially if she has a Supernatural Tolerance Trait, the Watchtower won't accept her so the Awakening *Lustrum* (described later) never forms.

The Storytelling System doesn't have a hard delineation between "supernatural" and "not," however, and some games model characters that might Awaken with templates and unique mechanics, while other games use Merits to represent near-human beings that certainly won't. Hunters with Endowments representing equipment, for example, could Awaken, while ghouls could not. Wolf-blooded can (though they lose their Wolf-Blooded Merits and tells when Awakening), while Stigmatics cannot.

We can't give a definitive list here — it would quickly be out of date if we did — so the edge-cases and uncertainties are ultimately something your troupe will have to decide for yourselves.

they disapprove of away from Mysteries or find them new preoccupations to fill their lives.

Proximi, the Sleepwalker dynasties bearing truly Supernal abilities, are more likely to Awaken to the Path linked to their abilities than other people, though exactly how much more is debated among the Orders.

**Systems:** A Prospect for Awakening must be teenaged-or-older human, either Sleeper or Sleepwalker, use Integrity instead of any other trait, and have a soul. Players' characters should have a long-term Aspiration related to uncovering the truth, obsession, or a questioning nature.

## A Confrontation with the Lie

The second Pillar is familiar to any mage who thinks back to her personal story; the Prospect must confront the Lie. For some Prospects, this takes the form of removing themselves from the world to focus on their obsessions, for others overcoming obstacles in their quest for understanding in a way that shows them the truth of the world. For many, the confrontation is sudden and jarring: an encounter with a supernatural creature, catching sight of a spell, or a split-second matter of life and death.

Alethians understand that the confrontation needs to be symbolic as well as Fallen, in keeping with the Prospect's nascent obsessions, and that what shocks one Prospect into Lucidity does nothing for another (at best). They also know that the confrontation must be new to the Prospect, which poses difficult questions *Consilia* still grapple with. Put simply, a Sleeper who remains ignorant of the magical world has a much wider breath of potential confrontations compared to a Sleepwalker raised in the Orders' service, as the existence of magic in the world is

a surprise to her. By keeping Sleepwalkers close to the Orders, mages damage those Sleepwalkers' chances of joining them.

While some mages (especially Mystagogues) refrain from forcing confrontation before a Prospect comes to it naturally, a great many specialize in it. Arrow mages interested in Prospects are especially prone to throwing calamity their way, hoping to jolt the unfortunates Awake. Only a desperate mage uses obvious magic as a confrontation, for fear of provoking the Abyss into smothering the spark of awareness in the Prospect.

**Systems:** In play, the confrontation with the Lie should be a breaking point against Integrity in which the player gains an exceptional success. If the event sparks an Awakening, do not grant a Condition for the exceptional success. See **Mage: The Awakening Second Edition** p. 299 for a condensed form of the Integrity rules, or the **Chronicles of Darkness** rulebook, pp. 73-75 for full systems.

## The Intercession of a Watchtower

Inquisitive people confront the Lie in their tens of thousands every day and come off failures, dead, or suffering Quiescence without so much as a ripple in the Supernal World. If they survive, they might do so repeatedly, never achieving the third Pillar. No matter how much a mage manipulates a Prospect's life, she can't force an Awakening.

It isn't up to her. Not entirely.

The final prerequisite of Awakening is for one of the five Supernal Watchtowers, symbol-realm-talismans representing the five Paths, to bring the Prospect into contact with the Supernal Realm. As an external force the Awakened have no control over, the Watchtowers represent the hard limit on their population, so mages have obsessed over what criteria the Watchtowers use for choosing candidates since the first Nameless Orders realized their existence. Countless mages have experimented with means of attracting a Watchtower's attention onto a person, without success.

The Orders debate how much the stereotypes of mages belonging to each Path come from the Watchtower only choosing people who fit with that Path, how much comes from behavior driven by access to that Path's Ruling Arcana and

### Before the Watchtowers

If, as the Diamond and Seers teach apprentices, the Watchtowers appeared after the Fall, then how did mages in the Time Before Awaken? Scattered evidence from ruins of the Time Before indicate that something like the Paths did exist (p. XX) but that instead of the random chance of Awakening in the Fallen World, would-be mages of that vanished universe entered the Supernal via meditation and pilgrimage and formed the Lustrum themselves. Popular theory has it that the Ocean at the edge of the Astral Realms (**Mage**, p. 248) was not present in the Time Before, and that by meditating at Astral Irises aspirants could challenge the Supernal for the right to Awaken.

Supernal World, and how much might be natural selection of only some Prospects succeeding at the challenges posed by that Path's Awakenings. No one has a definitive answer, and among Alethians it resembles the nature/nurture question for biologists. It's even difficult to say whether the final confrontation with the Lie that triggers Awakening must fit with the Path-to-be's Symbolism, because if it didn't it will as soon as the Awakening begins and the newly Lucid Prospect's world fills with symbols.

**Systems:** As part of the Supernal Realm, mages can't affect the Watchtowers at all, and no force in the Fallen World can deliberately trigger an Awakening in someone that doesn't meet their inscrutable criteria. Some archmasters and beings of comparable power such as the Aeons and Ochemata (see Chapter Five) can force Awakening onto a subject by linking a mortal soul to a Watchtower, but the results are often tragic; almost all such Awakenings result in Banishers.

## Prediction

Eventually, every Acanthus interested in Awakenings wonders why she can't just divine who will Awaken or forge a Destiny in someone to attract a Watchtower. Unfortunately for the millions of mages who've made coaxing others Awake their lives' endeavor over history, it doesn't work like that. Look into the future of a Prospect even minutes before their Awakening starts, and it will show only the life of a Sleeper or Sleepwalker. Cast a Knowing spell to pick out those in a crowd fated to struggle against the world and it won't grant knowledge of which one will succeed. Conversely, mages who go back in time and view the future of Sleepers who will be Awakened in the present do see the Awakening on their subjects' timelines. In fact, Awakening usually reduces a person's temporal sympathy with her Sleeper past to Weak or, in some cases, breaks it entirely.

According to the Orders' understanding of Supernal metaphysics (see p. XX) Awakening's unpredictability is because of the Watchtower's "location" in the Supernal Realm itself, and because successfully Awakening involves changing the Supernal so that the new mage was always going to Awaken at this point. From the moment a mage Awakens, her entire future changes, the new possibilities of magic rewriting her destiny.

## The Lustrum

After they become used to their powers, many mages (especially those who went through Waking World Dreams) think of their Awakenings as forms of especially vivid and uncontrolled Mage Sight, but the truth is that even when the Lucid is wandering around the material world having conversations with Supernal entities only she can see she's experiencing something much more profound than the Supernal World of her eventual Path. She's in a *Lustrum*, a translation of a symbol of the Supernal Realm into a form comprehensible to an inhabitant of the Fallen World. The symbol in question is her Watchtower itself, protecting her from meeting the raw power of the Supernal Realm head-on and being obliterated in the process.



Uneducated mages place great stock in the difference between Waking World Dreams and Supernal Journeys, often assuming that the one they personally experienced must be more special, common, rare, or superior, but as far as Awakening metaphysicians can tell the difference is a result of the Watchtower reshaping the Lucid's experiences into the Lustrum; if it's possible for the Lucid's current activities or obsessions to play out with Supernal meaning, he has a Waking World Dream. If it isn't (often because he's unconscious or incapacitated while Awakening), he has a Supernal Journey instead.

In a Waking World Dream, the Lustrum reshapes the Lucid's experiences of the Fallen World until the symbols of her Watchtower's Path drown out Fallen Reality around her. To an outside observer, she rants, raves, and reacts to things that aren't there, or suddenly focuses on entirely unremarkable people or things that to her have taken great significance. In a Supernal Journey, the Lucid finds himself in a landscape entirely divorced from physical reality and the entire Awakening can be over in a split second from the point of view of the Fallen World.

While in the Lustrum, the Lucid's Pattern rapidly fills with power; not Fallen Mana but Supernal *Pneuma*, the symbol of energy which Mana descends – and, mages say, all other sources of power such as the essence of ephemeral entities. The *Pneuma*, the Lustrum, or the combination of the two grant a form of Mage Sight deeper and richer than a mage focusing on a Mystery.

**Systems:** Lucid can't control what the Watchtower shows them so can't scrutinize or reveal the things they see, but the special form of Mage Sight they're in acts like Active Mage Sight of

the Watchtower's two Ruling Arcana without the penalty to mundane actions or the need to spend Willpower. If a Lucid encounters something that should be revealed by the Arcana of her Watchtower, she perceives it, and she automatically wins any Clash of Wills rolls relating to her Sight.

Once in the Lustrum, the Lucid gains an Obsession of "Awaken" and may begin earning Arcane Beats.

## Detection

Whether Waking World or Supernal Journey, the formation of the Lustrum as the Awakening begins cannot be ignored; all mages and Supernal entities of the appropriate Path sense an Awakening within their Gnosis or Rank in miles at minimum, though the maximum distance varies according to Supernal factors the Awakened can't observe, and in some cases is much, much further. The sensation is not the same as Peripheral Mage Sight but is best described as "directed nostalgia;" for a split second, every mage of the Path within range feels the way they did when they Awakened themselves and called in the direction of the Lucid.

The presence of a Lucid – no matter which form of Awakening he's in – triggers the Peripheral Mage Sight of all mages within range of their own senses. Active Mage Sight of any Path or Arcanum reveals the *Pneuma* within the Lucid's Pattern as a shimmering, golden light. For the four Paths that do not share a Watchtower with the Awakening in progress, that's as much as they can observe. Mages who did once sign the Watchtower creating the Lustrum, however, have a better view.

Mages of the correct Path that use Active Mage Sight on the Lucid still don't see the symbolic landscape she's encountering, but instead a coruscating aura around her, which spreads to anything she's particularly engaging with as part of her Awakening. Some mages theorize that the aura is a "blank" Nimbus, that will take shape should the Awakening be successful, others that it's the Watchtower's Nimbus, and still others that it's the Lustrum itself seen within the Lucid's Pattern. Many, especially Mystagogues, question why it can't be all three at once.

## The Adyton

If the Lustrum is a stage set for the Awakening, the Adyton is the drama played out within it. The Orders borrowed the word from the ancient Greek term for a sacred, prohibited space for a reason. For all their enthusiasm for encouraging Awakenings and gathering priceless information about the Supernal by observing them, most Diamond mages regard interfering with the psychodrama of the Awakening itself to be both incredibly dangerous and blasphemously intrusive. The Lucid must succeed or fail to pass the Watchtower's tests on her own merits.

The Adyton is the narrative, the quest, the creatures, objects, and symbols the Lucid encounters during her Awakening. Awakenings always involve striving, searching, or questing for something, and the goal always symbolizes her Gnosis. The obstacles and roadblocks she must work past teach fundamental lessons about the nature of the Path. Rarely, the Adyton focuses an obstacle on a particular Arcanum, though most mages find when looking back on their own Awakenings that their tests were more couched in terms of the unified symbology of their Path: For example, Acanthus recall making choices about the future and facing the consequences, or tracing an event back to its cause, more often than they experience time paradoxes or warps in destiny.

**Systems:** Look to the descriptions of sample Awakenings in Chapter Two of *Mage: The Awakening Second Edition* and the Supernal Worlds in Chapter One of this book for inspiration regarding each Watchtower's symbolism, and the advice later in this chapter (p. XX) for how to design the scenes within the Adyton. Events within the Adyton grant Arcane Beats, not regular ones; once the character has the five Experiences and/or Arcane Experiences needed to buy Gnosis 1, the Awakening moves on to the signing of the Watchtower.

## Entering the Adyton

The Pentacle cautions against it, some individual Orders outright prohibit it, but a mage of the correct Path with more obsession than Wisdom may go beyond simply encouraging an Awakening's start or finding one in progress.

Many supernatural beings, including mages with the Mind Arcanum, can share in a person's senses, read surface thoughts, or otherwise link themselves telepathically to a subject. Others mistake a Supernal Journey Awakening for the Lucid being in a dream-state and attempt to use dream-entering magics. These powers don't reveal the Adyton, but rather what's there without it; the Fallen, mundane world without a Mystery Play or simple emptiness instead of a Supernal Journey.

To enter an Adyton and share an Awakening experience, the Lucid must be in the process of a Mystery Play Awakening and the would-be intruder must be of the correct Path and scrutinize the Lucid using Mage Sight of both Path Ruling Arcana. With enough effort, and a dose of luck, the scrutinizing mage becomes sufficiently in-synch to perceive the Adyton himself — and in perceiving it, become part of it. To other observers, the aura denoting the Adyton's influence on things, people, and places spreads to the intruding mage, and his Pattern fills with Pneuma.

Mages have tried countless times to intrude on Supernal Journey Awakenings without success; the technique requires the Lucid's journey to be externalized, so that the intruder may follow along.

**Systems:** Synching up to an Adyton to intrude into it requires Mage Sight of the correct Path and both Ruling Arcana, and an exceptional success on an attempt to Reveal a Lucid character undergoing a Mystery Play Awakening. For purposes of Mage Sight, an Awakening is an Opacity 6 Mystery. Once this is achieved, the intruder becomes part of the Awakening until it finishes and must tread very carefully. See "Observation and Intrusion," starting on p. XX for details of what he could potentially gain and what can go wrong.

## Awakening's End

The Lustrum, and the Adyton within it, lasts as long as it has to, until the Lucid has either conclusively failed one of its tests (refusal to participate counts as failure) or beaten them all. In theory, an Awakening could take years, but in practice a Mystery Play Awakening going on for longer than a month is almost unheard of. Supernal Journey Awakenings are more likely to take longer subjectively than passes in the Fallen World, or for the Lucid to remain effectively comatose for extended periods while he faces the challenges of the Supernal.

## Failure to Awaken

It's an unpalatable truth for mages who dedicate their lives to encouraging Awakenings, but most Lucid fail. The majority of people who enter the Adyton don't Awaken, but instead return to the Fallen World as Sleepwalkers. Memories of what happened during the Awakening rapidly fade, as though waking from a dream, though no one who undergoes an Awakening, even a failed one, suffers from Quiescence any longer. Failing an Awakening is traumatic; on a deep, metaphysical level the ex-Lucid had a chance to see Truth and failed to grasp it. She might feel like the chance of a lifetime has passed her by without being able to articulate how, or that her choices and obsessions leading up to the Awakening were worthless.

**Systems:** In a failed Awakening, the Lustrum and Adyton simply end. The Lucid (and any intruding mages) find themselves back in the Fallen World. All Pneuma vanishes cleanly from the Lucid, but mages who successfully stole it retain it until they use it, as described on p. XX. Any Arcane Beats gained by the Lucid during the Awakening immediately convert into regular Beats. Sleeper characters who undergo a failed Awakening immediately gain the Sleepwalker Merit for no cost.

Failing an Awakening causes a breaking point against Integrity with a -5 dice penalty.

## Signing the Watchtower

For the minority of Lucid who pass the Adyton's tests, one last task remains: The final act of every Awakening sees the Lucid symbolically accept her new Path by identifying herself as part of it. For some, this takes the form of an investment or declaration — swearing an oath, being crowned by a Supernal entity, declaring allegiance, accepting an offer — but for most Lucid, it involves marking the Supernal with her identity. Some mages who underwent Supernal Journeys report seeing their Watchtowers covered in names, to which they added their own. Others, and those on Mystery Plays, sign documents, leave hand prints, paint portraits, carve walls, or simply give their name when answering a phone.

According to the Orders' theories, The Lustrum is in some sense the Watchtower, and the Watchtower is the Supernal symbol of its own Path, that defines it in the Fallen World. The names upon a Watchtower are those of every member of that Path, defining them as mages, and by adding her own the successful Lucid includes herself in that definition.

The instant the signing takes place, in whatever form it takes, the Adyton ends and the Lustrum vanishes. The Lucid is now an Awakened mage. Those who were in Supernal Journeys immediately wake up back in their bodies, while those in Mystery Plays realize where they are. Those who were Sleepwalkers with minor supernatural powers find those powers gone, burned up by the Watchtower, but Awaken with greater power than their former-Sleeper peers.

**Systems:** The new mage's player must now spend 4 Experiences or Arcane Experiences (in any combination) to buy Gnosis 1. The character gains the Newly Awakened Mage Template. While they have a Mana capacity, mages don't have any Mana immediately upon Awakening, although the Pneuma still in their Pattern rapidly becomes Mana as described below.

Any templates, Supernatural Merits, and supernaturally-caused Conditions and Tilts a character had are removed by Awakening, as are any spells including her as the subject and even any other long-term effects such as a vampire's blood bond or a spirit's Influence. The Sanctity of Merits applies in a modified form; instead of Merit dots, a character who loses Merits or other traits representing supernatural abilities to an Awakening gains their Experiences cost in Arcane Experiences, which may be spent on the initial Gnosis dot or saved for later.

## Aftershocks

Where an Awakening in progress is a nagging call to mages of the Watchtower's Path, a successful Awakening is like ringing a bell. All mages within sensory range of a successful Awakening suffer the Stunned Tilt for a turn. All mages of the new willworker's Path suffer the Tilt if within the range the Awakening could be detected. The Supernal World of the new mage's Path is marked by the Awakening for the rest of the Story; mages may Scrutinize the marks left behind to uncover Deep Information about the new mage's Adyton and what triggered the Awakening.

The new mage begins her Awakened life in Active Mage Sight of both Ruling Arcana, which does not impose dice penalties or require Willpower but fades at the end of the scene unless she wills it off sooner. Although she only has rudimentary, instinctive ability with her Path Arcana, she does have one advantage: The Pneuma of her Awakening Lustrum is still within her Pattern. When a newly Awakened character first attempts to use Mana, she accesses the Pneuma instead; all Mana costs for the ability or spell are reduced to zero, and all Paradox dice for a spell cancelled (including those for Reach, and do not roll a chance die). In addition, she automatically wins any Clash of Wills rolls incurred by the effect she spends Pneuma on.

Whenever a character uses Pneuma, the Storyteller rolls as many dice as points of Mana she would have spent as a dice pool, plus two dice for every time she has already used Pneuma.

**Dramatic Failure:** The character retains Pneuma, and this and any previous uses do not add bonus dice to subsequent rolls to check if she has expended it.

**Failure:** The character retains Pneuma.

**Success:** The character's Pneuma sublimates into Mana. She loses the Pneuma, but gains Mana equal to successes.

**Exceptional Success:** The character's Pneuma sublimates into Mana. She loses the Pneuma but gains her full Mana pool.

## The Newly Awakened Mage Template

The character creation rules in **Mage: The Awakening Second Edition** represent a mage who Awakened several months ago at least, and who has received basic training from an order. To represent a new Awakening during play, or to begin a chronicle with an utterly inexperienced mage, apply the following changes.

- **Arcana:** The character has one dot in one of her Ruling Arcana and two dots in the other.
- **Resistance Attribute:** The character gains one extra dot in Composure, Resolve, or Stamina.
- **Gnosis:** The character has Gnosis 1.
- **Wisdom:** The character replaces Integrity with Wisdom. Her initial Wisdom rating is eight dots, no matter what her Integrity rating was.
- **Mana:** The character has the Mana Capacity granted by Gnosis but no Mana until she gains it through oblation, magic, exceptional success on spellcasting, or the sublimation of Pneuma.
- **Praxis:** While Gnosis normally grants a Praxis whenever a character gains a dot, the first dot initially comes with the ability to have a Praxis and not the Praxis itself. While the Praxis remains unassigned, the player may spend a Willpower point during spellcasting to declare that spell the character's Praxis.

- **Magical Tool:** The character does not have a dedicated magical tool, though she may dedicate one using the rules on pp. 122-123 of *Mage*.
- **Orderless:** The character does not have a dot in Occult, a dot in Order Status, rites, rote skills, or the High Speech Merit.

## Awakenings and the Awakened

Obsession with Awakening – trying to cause it, trying to discourage it, or just trying to understand it – is best pursued in groups. A lone mage might get lucky and witness one or two Awakenings in progress during her career, but by banding together with like-minded willworkers, she can cast a much wider net.

### The Diamond

For two millennia, the Orders of the Diamond Precept have based their magical practices on the principle of emulating the Supernal. From their magical tools and Shadow Names up to the structures of member Orders based on emulating symbolic ideals, the Diamond are institutionally pre-disposed to think of the Supernal Realm as something Fallen mages approach through the Art. Accordingly, while individual Orders bring their own biases and focuses, the Diamond as a whole concentrates efforts to find, track, encourage, discourage, and protect Prospects on assessing what makes them resonate with the five Paths. The Watchtowers are uncontrollable, but by encouraging a Prospect to think and act as a mage (whatever the Order believes that to be) she gets the best chance of Awakening.

Once an Awakening is in progress, Diamond mages are the least likely of the three Sects to intrude into the Adyton, instead preferring to observe and protect Lucid from the outside. Some Orders are stricter about the prohibition than others. The reluctance to intrude comes partly from the four Orders' shared belief that magic, and Awakening in particular, is a personal revelation that connects a mage to the Supernal on an individual level, granting both rights and responsibilities. To interfere with that – to deny another person the right to grasp magic for themselves – strikes many Diamond mages as blasphemous. Deliberately disrupting an Awakening is a serious crime in the Pentacle's *Lex Magica*, with culprits branded as *Defilers* and facing harsh punishments.

### Adamantine Arrow

#### Awakening is a prize

While doctrinaire Arrows have the same beliefs common to the Diamond about approaching the Supernal through symbolic actions in the Fallen, which the Order sums up as “The Supernal is the Self,” Arrow Alethians stereotypically concentrate the least on the first Pillar compared to their colleagues in other Orders.

Yes, mastery of oneself through service and discipline over one's self aligns a mage to the Supernal, but those are challenges for mages. Instead, Arrow Alethians concentrate on the second Pillar, the struggle against the Lie. Arrows find the process of Awakening, with a Lucid first shocked by something outside their worldview and then tested by the Watchtower, strongly resonant with their belief that magic is a struggle, a contest, a confrontation, and that Awakening is a prize the Lucid wins by passing those tests.

Arrow mages hoping to encourage others to Awaken don't try to improve their lives or guide them to suitability – if a Prospect isn't worthy by himself, he isn't worthy – but do encourage them into situations where the Arrow hope the Prospect will face the Lie. Other Orders often bring Arrows in as consultants for Prospects that have been stuck nearly Awakening for extended periods, though Guardians typically make sure any approach sticks to the veil.

The **Awakening Gambit** Legacy (Acanthus, Mind) typify the Arrow Alethian approach. Members approach attempts to Awaken Prospects through the metaphor of chess or other strategic games, carefully arranging events around the subject in more and more challenging confrontations with the supernatural in the hope that one will trigger an Awakening. The Legacy's Attainments allows member to micromanage the thousands of variables and rewind time should the worst happen.

### Guardians of the Veil

#### Awakening is a responsibility

The Guardians of the Veil are the most devoted Order to the study of Awakenings. From a certain point of view, every Guardian is an Alethian, as the tracking, guidance, and evaluation of Prospects is the Orders' most obvious preoccupation. Most Guardians, especially younger members still rising in status, have a role in the Order's great project to maintain its Labyrinths and lead people to or from understanding. The network of cults, groups, religions, organizations, and informants making up the Labyrinth is so pervasive that Guardians famously locate the most Prospects and Lucid of all Orders, and absent any other factors are the first to the scene when an Awakening does occur, spiriting newly-Awakened mages away to secure sancta where they may learn what just happened and the Guardians on hand may deal with any lingering aftereffects of their Awakening experiences. This doesn't always mean magical containment: The Order is quite happy to help cover up mundane incidents that the new mage caused while in the Lustrum, smooth over the memories of Sleeper loved ones or quietly remove threats to the new mage's life. Once safe, the Order presents most new mages to other Diamond Orders, based on their preferences. The Guardians know that most mages wouldn't meet their entry requirements, and the title of new recruits keeps the other Orders constantly in the Guardian's debt.

Secretly, the Guardians are also the most invested Order in the study of souls, as the religion that is the Order teaches members of a hierarchy of souls being slowly perfected through reincarnation. While the Order outwardly focuses vast efforts on whether their Prospects merit Awakening according to their lives,

personalities, and actions, Guardian Alethians quietly attempt to track reincarnations and watch for unusual soul marks, hoping to find some hint of who might Awaken.

Finally, while they revile defiling an Awakening as much as any Diamond Order, the Guardians do — in extreme cases where they are sure an Awakening is imminent and that the Prospect will misuse magic — kill Prospects to prevent them meeting the Watchtower. This is a controversial tactic among the Epopets, as in some cases it causes the very Awakenings the Guardians are trying to prevent. Once an Awakening is in progress, however, the Order's doctrine is to closely observe and wait to see what happens. A newly Awakened mage might have undergone spiritual and mental transformations in the Adyton that make her suitable from the Guardian's point of view. And if she didn't, they can always kill her afterward.

## Mysterium

### Awakening is a revelation

Out of all the Diamond Orders, the Mysterium make for the Alethians with the best grasp of Awakening's metaphysics, thanks to their vast collections of lore and the *Corpus Mysteriorum*. They are equally interested in the first and second Pillars and are the Pentacle Order with the best grasp of the third. They are also the most hard-line about never interfering in Awakening, demanding strict non-intervention from members.

To the Mystagogues, personal experience of the Mysteries is everything; a person can't experience a true revelation if he has the answer handed to him. A phenomenon an experienced mage would shrug at could be the life-changing Mystery that sparks the fire of Gnosis in just the right bystander. Even among themselves, Mystagogues restrict information and initiation in the layers of the Orders' mystery religion until a member is ready for it and look down upon the practice of "gifting" younger mages knowledge they haven't earned. Why should the first, most foundational Mystery of another mage's life be any different?

Faced with an Awakening in progress, the policy of most Mystagogue Caucuses is to observe, and call on a fellow Mystagogue of the Lustrum's Path to help if necessary. Mystagogues only intervene if the life of the Lucid is threatened by something not currently part of the Adyton, based on the tell-tale aura surrounding events absorbed into the Watchtower's scenario. If a threat bears the aura, then to the Mysterium it's part of the Lucid's challenge, and removing it risks damaging the Awakening.

A handful of exceptionally-trusted Mystagogue Alethians join a society within the Order (it has a name in High Speech, but members only refer to it in code) that specializes in observing Awakenings from within the Adyton without interfering in its events. Members scrutinize Lucid to enter Mystery Plays and make their observations of the Supernal Realm, knowing that if they do alter the Awakening they face the punishment given to all other Mystagogues found guilty of defiling an Awakening; exile from the Order until they have repaid their debt to the new mage if the Awakening was successful, and death if their actions prevented it.

## Silver Ladder

### Awakening is salvation

As the Diamond Order with the clearest vision of a human society that follows Supernal ideals, many mages expect théarchs to be preoccupied with encouraging Prospects toward suitability for Awakening in a similar manner to the Guardians. In fact, the Ladder's Cryptopolies are intended for the benefit of all humanity, not just an elect few, and the oft-quoted Order motto that magic is humanity's birthright does not mean that everyone needs to Awaken. In general, théarch Alethians leave the business of uplifting people's lives to their Cryptopoly-managing colleagues, while they focus on the other two Pillars. In addition, while Sleepwalking represents a failure state to the other Orders, the Silver Ladder regard Sleepwalkers as a legitimate and worthy branch of humanity; enlightened enough to be Awakened, but satisfied without magic, one rung down on the great Ladder of being. The Ladder has the most time for Sleepwalkers and Proximi, finding them positions in the Order, and Ladder Alethians prefer Prospects who are already informed, consenting Sleepwalkers as candidates for their experiments in forcing confrontation with the Lie or attracting a Watchtower. Sleepwalkers have the advantage of not being subject to Quiescence or causing Dissonance, allowing théarchs to use direct, even brutal methods; bombarding candidates with spells, taking them into other worlds, summoning Supernal entities in their presence and so on.

The Mysterium have the unfair advantage of having been founded by an archmaster when it comes to metaphysical understanding, but the Ladder have the most interest in and collected lore on the Watchtowers themselves and the symbolism of the five Paths. The Ladder is also the most tolerant Order regarding intruding into the Adyton, believing that the gradual understanding of the Watchtowers' Lustrums is worth the risk. They are also notably lax compared with other Diamond Orders when it comes to punishing mages who defile an Awakening. To the other Orders, a metamorphic Awakening is the wound left behind by a terrible crime. To the Ladder, it's proof that Fallen Reality is created by the Supernal, and the promise that if they could only understand how the Watchtowers work the Order could rewrite the World to undo the Exarchs' reign. Hubris, after all, is a cowards' word.

## The Free Council

### Awakening is inspiration

The Free Council reject the Diamond view of Awakening as a Prospect growing ever more in line with a Path until she sees past the Abyss and allows a Watchtower to reach down and contact her. Instead, Libertine Alethians follow their Sect's view of the Supernal being shaped by Fallen human inspiration, not the other way around; to a Libertine, an Awakening is not an otherworldly force contacting a hapless Sleeper like a ray of light from the heavens, but an act of human inspiration so strong it

cracks the Lie and allows the Prospect to reach “up”, reshaping the symbols of her intended Path to claim magic. Their emphasis is on the agency of the Lucid, and the Supernal entities and tests of the Adyton matter only so much as they are important to her. A Sleepwalker has failed only to maintain his grip on magic, not failing to meet the standards of some external authority. The Watchtowers are important as the symbols of the five Paths, but many Libertine Alethians enjoy provoking their Diamond colleagues by suggesting that reoccurring symbolism does not mean continuity, and the Watchtowers might be created anew for every Lucid.

Libertines investigate all three Pillars when attempting to encourage Awakenings, seeing them as a single continuing process couched in their preferred viewpoint. Libertines track new discoveries, inventions, forms of art, scientific theories, and any other kind of new accomplishment in the hopes of finding Prospects, then help those individuals follow their growing Obsession until (with luck) Awakening begins. A small subset of Libertines follow Arrow- or Ladder-like methods of forcing the issue, throwing calamities at a Prospect until they Awaken. Once a Prospect becomes Lucid, Libertines are more likely than other Orders to enter the Adyton, and Assemblies do not regard assisting the Lucid with her tests as interfering. They do, however, punish mages who wreck Awakenings for their own selfish purposes as harshly as the Diamond’s Consilia.

## The Seers of the Throne

### Awakening is investiture

Pentacle mages tell themselves that every Awakening is a blow against the Exarchs, and imagine the Tyrants shaking in fury as each new mage slips their grasp, but on the handful of occasions Seer of the Throne Alethians have dealt peacefully with their counterparts, the Seers are quick to correct them. To Seers, Awakenings must be an intentional part of the Lie; perhaps they serve as a necessary pressure release for Quiescence, keeping the billions under control by releasing the tens of thousands. Perhaps the Exarchs – as Ascended mages – require mages to keep existing. Or perhaps it’s the Paths themselves the Exarchs need, and the existence of Awakenings are a side effect.

The Exarchs command prelates to “conquer the Watchtowers” so often that it’s one of the Sect’s founding principles. Seers note that the command isn’t “destroy;” the Exarchs don’t want mages to vanish entirely. They want all mages to be Seers, by means of the Seers controlling who does and does not face the Adyton. Seers agree with the Diamond that Awakenings are imposed by the Supernal onto suitable Fallen individuals, but don’t see it as a right. Instead, Seers view their own Awakenings in terms of an investment; the Exarchs allowing them magic in expectation that they will then serve. Seers judge Prospects on how likely they are to join the Sect given Awakening, wreck any nascent signs of Awakening in the majority they find unsuitable, and cast themselves as benefactors (in the manner of the Exarchs in their own Awakenings) to the bare handful they encourage. Seers cast the Confrontation with the Lie, wherever possible, as a revelation of the world’s true state and purpose and are

## The Tremere

Before they were a banished Nameless Order of Reapers, the Tremere were a Diamond Order, and Alethians digging into the oldest records of Awakening soon find that a surprising amount of modern mages’ understanding of the process came from them. When they went into exile, the Tremere wrecked vast amounts of stored knowledge, and surviving records are patchy at best, but as far as modern mages can tell, the historic Tremere specialized in the human soul and its health, taking it as a fourth Pillar rather than including it in the first. Tremere famously hated and hunted supernatural creatures that damaged Sleepers’ chance of Awakening by injuring the soul and were exiled when an Arrow Caucus discovered that they were absorbing the Reaper Legacies they so diligently hunted.

As for what the Tremere thought of Awakening itself, a few Alethians have found texts from the dark ages indicating that the lost Order considered the Paths a mirage, an imposition blinkering a mage to only a subset of the Supernal Realm until ready. They also believed that the Oracles and Watchtowers were one and the same, and some ancient Grimoires describe the Path Lustrums as living beings rather than inanimate edifices. The closest English translation for the Tremere’s word for a Watchtower/Oracle is “Dragon,” and Awakened historians believe the Latin *Draconis* names for the Orders’ pre-Fall equivalents are a lingering sign of Tremere influence in the Diamond’s creed.

quickly on hand to explain to a new mage how the status quo is to her benefit. Seers interfere in Awakenings whenever possible, hoping to gain intelligence on the Watchtower or trigger a Tyrannic metamorphosis by attracting entities loyal to the Thrones. Rather than owing a great service to the new mage as in the Pentacle, new Seers who were “guided” by their superiors owe them undying loyalty.

## Observation and Interference

Through accident or design, a mage has entered a Mystery Play Awakening by scrutinizing the Lucid at its heart. Now what?

The safest thing to do, and one that Alethians recommend in the event of accidental intrusion, is to retreat to somewhere the Lucid won’t encounter the intruder. The symbolic people, creatures, objects, and places that overlay the Fallen World in the Adyton center on the Lucid and fade back into normalcy outside the limits of his senses. Even waiting an Awakening out brings great benefits; while within the Adyton, every spell of the Watchtower’s Ruling Arcana may use the Adyton itself as a +4 dice Yantra, and the first time the intruder would gain Mana instead fills her Pattern with Pneuma. This removes Mana costs, Paradox dice, and wins Clash of Wills contests as per p. XX but while in the Adyton the intruder doesn’t roll to see if the Pneuma leaves. Instead, every spell cast powered by Pneuma causes the intruder one point of resistant aggravated damage as she tries to channel the raw Supernal energies.

Some intruders, especially Seers, attempt to summon Supernal entities while in the Adyton. This is wonderfully, unpredictably easy; the Adyton reduces the target number of successes for the Summoning by five, and summoned entities don't have finite lifespans as they do in the Fallen World. Unfortunately, entities summoned into the Mystery Play immediately join the existing "cast," adding their own symbolism and trials to the Lucid's tests, and any Boons they have to grant they provide to the Lucid, not the summoner.

Most mages who enter the Adyton aren't content to lurk at the fringes, however. Most Orders censure those who interfere with the Lucid's tests, but surely there's no harm in passive observation? Simply watching the Lucid deal with her tests can provide Arcane beats through the intruder's Obsessions, or inspiration for new Legacies. The problem intruders find is that if they're close enough to experience the Adyton's symbols, they're close enough to become caught up in them; the Lustrum responds to their already-existing Path by "casting" them as part of the Awakening. An intruding mage might do her best to avoid the Lucid only to find Supernal entities directing him to seek her out, or even find herself presented as one of the obstacles the Lucid must overcome. Playing along can be extremely dangerous, as the Awakening's narrative is under no restriction to keep the intruder safe, and she is surrounded by uncontrolled Supernal entities. Not accepting one's role, though, is worse — refusing to take part in the Mystery Play alerts every Supernal entity within the Adyton to the mage's status as an intruder, and they move quickly to separate her from the Lucid — by deadly force if necessary.

In extreme cases, an intruder may damage the Adyton so greatly that the Awakening fails outright. A handful of actions are well-known to Alethians as destructive, principle among them releasing a Paradox, failing a summoning, and attempting to take the Lucid's place in the Mystery Play. If an intruder disrupts proceedings to the point that the Lucid cannot complete his tests, the Awakening fails. Otherwise, the Awakening proceeds until the Lucid passes or fails. The intruder returns to the Fallen World the instant the new Sleepwalker or mage does.

After the Awakening ends, the former intruder has Mage Sight without Willpower cost or dice penalty for a scene and Pneuma for her first spells the same way a newly Awakened mage does (p. XX)

### Awakening and the Oneiros

Rather than entering a Lucid's Mystery Play, some mages attempt to hitch a ride into the Supernal within her soul, instead. This doesn't reveal the Adyton and proves a dangerous strategy; the Oneiros of a Lucid undergoes rapid, violent shifts as she reacts to the Adyton's tests and obstacles.

The Oneiros of a Sleeper undergoing an Awakening still causes Paradox for all spells except for members of the Watchtower's Path. All Lucid Oneiroi count as Verges to the Watchtower's Path. Whenever the Lucid gains an Arcane Beat due to the Awakening, Astral travelers within her Oneiros gain the Soul Shocked Condition.

Intruding into an Awakening vastly increases the chance of a metamorphic Awakening (see below) for both the new mage if it was eventually successful and for the intruder even if it failed. The risk increases the more an intruder disrupts the Awakening but is almost certain if the intruder's actions caused the Awakening to fail. Storytellers should consult the list of metamorphoses and choose the most appropriate one for the intruder's actions. The risk to reality itself through Aponoia is not entirely a deterrent to intruders, many of whom deliberately try to turn their own Awakenings Acquisitive or Internal during their intrusion.

In most Consilia, the punishment for Defiling depends on what damage the intruder's actions did to the Lucid; if they Awakened anyway without ill effects, the intruder owes him a life-threatening service to be called in at the new mage's discretion. If he suffers a debilitating metamorphosis or — worse — failed his Awakening, most Consilia will name the intruder a Defiler and execute her.

Finally, entering an Adyton, disrupting an Awakening, and causing an Awakening to fail are all acts of hubris against Low Wisdom.

## Metamorphic Awakenings

Ask a hundred mages for the story of their Awakening, and between 90 and 95 will describe experiences falling into the Orders' standard model. The Watchtower created a Lustrum and an Adyton within it, they faced challenges, marked the Supernal to identify themselves and returned to the Fallen World Awakened. Awakening is not, however, a certain or flawless process. It can go wrong, especially when an established mage intrudes, and the consequences are wildly unpredictable and potentially cosmic in scope. Ranging from the Lucid reappearing in the Fallen World holding an Artifact to being catapulted into an alternate universe or suffering a broken, malformed Gnosis, individuals who have experienced so-called *metamorphic Awakenings* are the objects of curiosity, Obsession, and study for the Alethian community, who have catalogued dozens of different metamorphoses.

As diverse as they are, metamorphoses only have a few root causes as far as Alethians can tell.

- The majority come from the Lucid failing, resisting, or refusing the Adyton's challenges or signing the Watchtower. According to some Alethians, technically becoming a Sleepwalker instead of a mage is a metamorphosis as the Lucid must have been capable of Awakening for one to even begin.
- The most unusual metamorphoses come from the Lucid accidentally slipping the Lustrum's control during the Awakening, interacting with Supernal symbols other than those provided by the Watchtower. Mystagogue Alethians point to descriptions in the *Corpus Mysterionum* of what it calls *Aponoia* (p. XX) and say these metamorphoses are a related phenomenon; touching the raw Supernal Realm like this changes the symbols the Lucid interacts with and alters the Fallen World in response, like haphazardly editing the code of a computer program while

it's running. New mages return to a Fallen World where they, the people around them, or the entire world are very different to when the Awakening began; worse, the changes are retroactive. Only the new mage remembers the world being any different.

- While it's well understood that other mages intruding on an Awakening greatly increases the chance of a metamorphosis, the Orders recognize some Awakenings as being interfered with by Supernal beings. From a new Obrimos gifted an Artifact by an angel while approaching the Watchtower to a Seer of the Throne who caught sight of the Eye while in Pandemonium, these encounters mark a mage as unusual, notable, Destined, or just plain lucky.
- Finally, mages do not understand exactly what the Watchtowers are or the precise laws they follow. Sometimes, through no apparent fault of the Lucid, the Awakening simply goes tragically wrong at the last second, leaving their Gnosis malformed, their sense of wisdom uncertain, or driving them to Rapture immediately.

## Known Metamorphoses

The following are the metamorphoses the Orders have discovered, in rough order of rarity. The great majority of metamorphic Awakenings are Restorative or Acquisitive, while anything below Successive on the list is so rare as to be legendary among the Orders.

### Restorative

The power of Awakening to erase supernatural curses, afflictions, and effects is well known, but in many cases the Awakening also erases physical or mental aspects of the new mage, because of the Lucid struggling against those aspects in symbolic form during the Awakening. Sometimes, the elements removed are long-standing ones from well before the Awakening (e.g. a Thyrsus Awakening to find his legs, crippled since a childhood accident, healed). Other times, the Awakening undoes the effects of a particularly drawn-out or traumatic Adyton (e.g. a Mastigos Awakening to find the mental illness that finally sparked her Awakening gone). The line between Restorative and Internal Awakenings is arguable, and usually decided by Alethians using scope and whether the Awakening undid something that happened to the mage or changed something she was born with.

The best-known Restorative Awakenings are the cases of Moros, Thyrsus, or rarely, other Paths who report having been killed by their confrontation with the Lie, only to succeed at a Supernal Journey Awakening and arrive back in the Fallen World fully healed.

**Systems:** When removing magical and supernatural Conditions, Tilts, etc., from the character at the end of the Awakening, choose any other physical or mental effects to remove as well. Mages who were killed by their Awakening but had a Restorative Awakening do not leave ghosts and are metaphysically alive to powers that sense the dead.

### Acquisitive

The Lucid acquires something during an Awakening — he wins a prize, picks something up, meets a companion, or is imbued with a destiny — and despite being part of the Adyton's Supernal World, when the mage Awakens in the Fallen World, whatever he acquired translates into the Fallen with him. The Lex Magica is inconstant on whether a mage who brings an artifact back from the Supernal has the automatic right to keep it. Some Consilia regard such artifacts as the mage's inviolable property, while others (and almost all Seer Tetrarchies) will confiscate it for study, given the chance.

**Systems:** This metamorphosis is an excuse to buy the Artifact, Imbued Item, Grimoire, Destiny, Familiar, Supernal Watcher (p. XX), Perfected Item (p. XX), or other Merits that the character did not have before Awakening.

### Internal

The first metamorphosis to involve Aponoia, an Internal Awakening changes something fundamental about the Lucid when she Awakens. In most cases, the changes are retroactive in the Fallen World, such that no one remembers the mage being any other way. Internal Awakenings are restricted to aspects of the mage herself, not the world around her, e.g. her gender, age, appearance, health, destiny or personality. The Orders record far more Thyrsus undergoing Internal Awakenings than other Paths but believe that they aren't skewed to any one Path; it's just harder to tell that something has changed for the other four Paths.

**Systems:** This metamorphosis may change any trait, persistent Condition, or even Attribute and Skill dot ratings for the Awakening character. If changing dot ratings, move them rather than discard or add them, so that the character's total number of dots in Attributes or Skills remains the same. Consider giving the character the persistent Aponoia Condition (p. XX).

### Tyrannic

Since the formation of the Orders, long before the Exarch-worshipping Nameless Orders split from the nascent Diamond, Seers and their forebears have claimed to have seen the Exarchs' Thrones or Awakened with the Exarchs' blessing. Alethians investigating Seer records and traitors to the Throne taking up with the Pentacle both report that sometimes the Seers are telling the truth. In a Tyrannic Awakening, the Lucid encountered a Supernal servant or Ochema of an Exarch during the Adyton or slipped the Lustrum and accidentally interacted with one of the symbols making up the Exarchs' Supernal palaces. The metamorphosis is not restricted to mages destined to become Seers, though does make eventual membership in the Order more likely, as they begin magical life with the Exarchs already having gained a foothold in their souls. Members of other Orders watch mages known to have had Tyrannic Awakenings carefully, and the constant suspicion drives many toward the Seers anyway.

**Systems:** A Tyrannic Awakening inflicts the persistent Exarchal Dreams Condition and bestows a dot of Order Status: Seers of

the Throne, whether the mage is a member of the Order or not. It also reduces the other Order Status Merits to a maximum of three dots if known.

## Successive

As rare as Awakenings are, anyone who fails an Awakening then later experiences another one and succeeds is especially notable. Successive Awakenings come in two types; those who had multiple attempts at the same Path, and those who failed at one Watchtower's tests but succeeded later at another's. Failure to Awaken clouds the memories of the new Sleepwalker's Adyton, but a Successive Awakening returns them, such that mages who have experienced them are the only willworkers to potentially have experienced more than one Path.

**Systems:** A Successive Awakening grants an extra two dots of Arcana on top of the newly-Awakened mage template, one of which must be spent on a Ruling Arcanum. No Arcanum may be higher than 3 dots at Awakening. Mages who have experienced more than one Watchtower do not gain a third ruling Arcanum but do lower the Gnosis requirements for novel Legacy Attainments (**Mage: The Awakening Second Edition**, p. 199) to the same as orthodox ones.

## Transportive

On very rare occasions, mages tracking a Lucid are frustrated by the new mage simply vanishing upon completing her Adyton's tests, whether she was in a Mystery Play or lying comatose in a Supernal Journey. In these metamorphoses, the Lucid has interacted with symbols of a time or place and linked herself to them, such that when she returns to the Fallen World she is now there. Transportive Awakenings are easily classified by Path; Mastigos ones are the most common, and involve the new mage simply reappearing in whatever place she was thinking of during her Awakening. Moros and Thyrus

### Metamorphic Awakenings in the game

In system terms, each of the metamorphic Awakenings is an alteration to the mage template, chosen either at character creation (if the character is already a mage), during an Awakening while playing through one, or at the Storyteller's discretion after a character intrudes into and disrupts an Awakening. Metamorphoses are not strictly exclusive — you might play a Seer who had an Acquisitive Throne Awakening, for example — but any metamorphic Awakening happens only at the approval of the whole troupe. They are also intentionally not "balanced" against one another or characters without one. Use them at your own risk to add a twist to a character's backstory or justify a modification to the rules.

Metamorphic Awakenings have no cost and cannot be altered once decided except by intruding on another mage's Awakening.



Transportive Awakenings are rarer and return the new mage not to the material world but to the Underworld or Shadow, which for a neophyte mage can be extremely hazardous. Obrimos Transportive Awakenings are rarest but most celebrated, as the mage appears in an Emanation Realm, Verge, Hallow, or Manteion. Acanthus Transportive Awakenings, however, are the most keenly studied; the new mage displaces in time, appearing days, months, or even years before or after she Awakened.

**Systems:** Most Transportive Awakenings don't need special rules; the new mage is simply somewhere different and must react to her new circumstances. Acanthus who have been displaced in time are an exception to Mage's metaphysics regarding the past, present, and future (*Mage*, pp. 185-186;) the mage's new time, where the chronicle is set, is the present as far as Time magic is concerned. If the displacement covers a considerable period of time, consider using the persistent Aponoia Condition to represent difficulty adapting to the new time.

## Sympathetic

Exclusively Acanthus or Mastigos when discovered, (though Alethians theorize about other Paths) Sympathetic Awakenings don't change the mage or the Fallen World as many metamorphoses do but does radically alter sympathetic ties or temporal sympathy. Once the new mage returns to the Fallen World, she immediately feels the effects of sympathy being different.

**Systems:** The Sympathetic Awakening alters any sympathetic links and temporal sympathies, even Connected ones. It may entirely remove some or add others that did not exist. The characters affected immediately feel the effects, as detailed on p. 172 and p. 186 of *Mage*. The metamorphosis rewrites sympathy as of the moment the mage Awakens; with time and effort, she can rebuild a shattered link, and new links fade if she never interacts with their subjects.

## Expressive

Expressive Awakenings are among the most sought-after by Alethians; they create magical effects rather than altering existing details of the Fallen World. These Awakenings create Aedes instead of the usual markings where they took place, punch Irises through reality, bring forth Hallows, or reveal Verges. Even rarer Expressive Awakenings create spell-like effects or unique Supernal Mysteries, a lingering aftereffect of the Lustrum's touch on the Fallen World.

**Systems:** Expressive Awakenings need no mechanics beyond those for whatever strange place or Mystery the Storyteller adds to the setting as a result.

## External

The most unpredictable and hardest to prove metamorphoses, External Awakenings result in the Lustrum nearly failing, such that the Lucid accidentally disrupts the Supernal Realm and radically alters reality as a result. When the Awakening concludes, something about the world is different to when it began, but only the new mage realizes it. From their point of view, they're now trapped in a parallel universe.

**Systems:** External Awakenings impose the persistent Aponoia Condition and allow the Storyteller to make any changes to her established setting she wishes.

## Harrowing and Enraptured

The most-feared metamorphoses, Harrowing and Enraptured Awakenings represent something going wrong with the signing of the Watchtower. Perhaps the Lucid hesitated at the last second. Perhaps her soul was not ready for Awakening, but too-eager mages manipulated her life until one began anyway.

In a Harrowing Awakening, the new mage's Mage Sight is malformed, and she lacks the spiritual resilience to Mysteries that typifies willworkers. Experiencing her own Peripheral Mage Sight as agonizing pain and suffering trauma instead of curiosity when witnessing the Mysteries, she is almost certain to become a Banisher if a mage doesn't do her the kindness of killing her first.

In an Enraptured Awakening, the new mage is overwhelmed by the flood of mystic awareness and her Gnosis ruptures, making her Awaken as one of the Rapt.

**Systems:** Both of these metamorphoses remove a character from playability; Harrowing Awakenings produce the subset of Banishers (called *Harrowed*) that retain Integrity instead of Wisdom and experience their Mage Sight as pain. Enraptured Awakenings produce Rapt.

## Entangled

For a long time, Alethians thought that Entangled Awakenings were a myth, or a rarer variant of the Sympathetic Awakening, but since the first proven cases came forward in the Paris Convocation of 1845 there have been a handful every century, gradually increasing with the global human population. An Entangled Awakening results from two mages Awakening to the same Watchtower at exactly the same time. While in the Adyton, they encounter the symbols of one another's lives and may even meet one another no matter how physically separated they are. When the pairing return to the Fallen World they find aspects of their lives have switched from one to the other, and that in some senses they are now one person, magically speaking. Entangled changes – family members becoming the family members of the other mage, injuries moving across, even which city the mages live in swapping – are subject to Aponoia's retroactivity. In the last recorded Entangled Awakening, of the Acanthus Pyramus and Thisbe in San Francisco and Wellington, respectively, at the turn of the year 2000, the pair actually swapped bodies.

**Systems:** An Entangled Awakening creates a Connected Sympathetic link between the two mages (who must be of the same Path) that cannot be removed by any means. The characters share a single Mana pool made up of both mages' individual pools and may spend a Willpower to access the others' senses for a scene. While doing so, they can cast spells with the other mage as the origin point, as though they were a Familiar.

Any other trait or background element of the characters may transfer from one to the other during the Awakening. Use the

persistent Aponoia Condition to represent Entangled Awakenings that disrupt the character's lives.

## Aponoia (Persistent)

Your character underwent a metamorphic Awakening or damaged the Fallen World while intruding into another mage's Awakening. The Fallen World has irrevocably changed in some way and only he remembers it being any different. Magic to look at the past reveals that it has always been this way, despite his protests, and he frequently makes incorrect assumptions about the world that get in his own way.

**Beat:** gain a beat when your character's divergent background prevents her from fulfilling an Aspiration or Obsession.

# Roleplaying and Storytelling Awakenings

Roleplaying a character Awakening is inherently difficult. No one wants to decide to play a mage, create a character and then have that character end up dead or simply to remain a Sleeper simply because of a failed die roll or two. Also, Awakenings are by their very nature confusing and disjointed experiences where the character is at best half-sane. To help avoid these issues, playing out an Awakening calls for a somewhat different sort of roleplaying than normal.

The first step is for the Storyteller to design the Awakening. Since it is such a deeply personal experience, the player should have significant input, especially when deciding what the central conflict will be and what Path the character Awakens on. Even if the Storyteller has watched the player play the character who will be Awakening for many sessions, talking with the player about the nature of her character's Awakening is important, and it's essential if the Storyteller is less familiar with the character.

The Storyteller should also ask if the player has any other requests: specific sorts of imagery, a message from a dead relative, a visitation by angels, demons, or gods, or even a vision of the past or the future. The player must also tell the Storyteller if the character is going to have any sort of metamorphic Awakening. If the Storyteller agrees that this sort of Awakening makes sense for her chronicle, then the events leading up to this transformation will also be included in the Awakening. Using all this information and his own ideas, the Storyteller then creates the Awakening and decides whether she would prefer to run a Waking World Dream or a Supernal Journey. A player is free to request either sort of Awakening, but some Storytellers will find that they are more comfortable with one option than the other. Once the Storyteller has designed the Awakening, she plays it out with the player. If there are any important characters in the Awakening, the Storyteller can play them, or she can ask one or more of the other players to play these characters, after explaining what this character's role in the Awakening is.

Playing out the Awakening is cooperative endeavor, where the Storyteller sets the scene and plays any characters who are

not being played by other players. The player whose character is Awakening then takes part in the scenes the Storyteller has created, but no dice are rolled for any action that is part of the Awakening. If the character attempts any task that is part of the Awakening — from searching a room for a key to a lock, to having a fistfight with a hideous monster — the character automatically succeeds if success is possible. If it isn't (if for example, the key to the lock is not in the room the character is searching) the character instead automatically uncovers a clue that helps her learn where she must go to find what she requires. If the player does not know where to go next, the Storyteller should provide various hints. When running an Awakening in this fashion, the character's biggest challenge is whether he choose to confront his fears, demons, or weaknesses or to flee from them and return to Sleep. If the character continues moving forward and attempting to solve the difficulties before him, he eventually succeeds in Awakening.

However, the Awakening need not be a short and simple linear journey, and if it is to be a truly memorable event, it shouldn't be. If the player wishes for the character to spend more time with portion of the Awakening, investigating people or locations that the Storyteller did not expect her to, then the Storyteller should permit this, if these activities do not eliminate the possibility of the character eventually reaching her Awakening. When the character interacts with events that are not directly necessary to the Awakening, the player rolls dice as normal, and so does the Storyteller. Failure, or success in these rolls, should never preclude the Awakening itself, but it can provide interesting insights to the character about her journey and can also result in the character gaining information about supernatural mysteries that will appear later in the chronicle.

## Designing the Awakening

The actual structure of the Awakening is always that of a journey or quest. Supernal Journeys usually involve the character eventually making her way to some sort of symbolic Watchtower and asserting her identity and dedication while there, but the method by which the character gets to the Watchtower and the appearance and nature of the Watchtower should be deeply personal and relate to both the character's background and her Path. Walking world dreams are even more varied. Like a Supernal Journey, all waking world dreams are magical quests, but exactly what the character is questing for depends upon both the character and her Path, but in all cases should involve a quest for something in or closely related to the Fallen World. A musician who is becoming an Acanthus might well be searching for inspiration for a song, a better instrument, or the perfect venue to play. Similarly, a tormented heroin addict who is becoming a Mastigos could simply be desperately searching for a Path that leads him away from his addiction.

Every Awakening should consist of at least three scenes. The first scene presents the character with the nature of her quest and her surroundings. Even if the character is undergoing a waking world dream, she perceives the world around very differently than she normally would. Cars might become packs of wild animals or strange mechanical beasts, while police and security

personnel might become knight in armor or war robots armed with built-in lasers. The people around the character could appear to be almost anything, including medieval peasants, hungry shambling zombies, or a diverse group of aliens that would be at home in a high-budget SF film. The Awakening's setting should be a mixture of the character's passions and her chosen Path. An Awakening where the character flees a zombie apocalypse might make sense for a fan of horror films who Awakens as a Moros but wouldn't work for a mathematician who is addicted to gambling and Awakens as an Acanthus.

This opening scene also establishes the focus of the Awakening. Is the character on a quest to speak with her dead mother, attempting to kick his heroin addiction, or searching for answers to a seemingly inexplicable mystery she recently uncovered and has become obsessed with? The focus of the Awakening and the nature of the character's quest or the goal she is attempting to attain should always be deeply personal. The Storyteller should ask the player about the character's passions and obsessions and craft an Awakening that focuses on one or more of them. A heroin addict might need to face a personification of his addiction, defeat it, and take charge of his life and his body. A conspiracy theorist seeking to uncover the concealed horrors perpetrated by the government but feeling helpless to actually attempt to right any of these wrongs might catch a glimpse of the Lie that underlies the entire fabric of reality and the eldritch horrors that lurk in the Abyss. This revelation might render her fears of the government largely moot but could also show her that she has the means to fight against both the Lie and the Abyss.

The next scene or scenes are where characters embark on their quest. Perhaps they are following a trail of clues to the whereabouts of their mother's ghost or they might find a book purporting to give them the secrets of contacting the dead. Alternately, the character may have come out of a heroin-induced daze to find a hideous creature with a beak that looks exactly like a huge needle feeding from his arm. Moments after the character sees it, the creature runs off, promising to return. Now, the character searches for a way to track and defeat this creature before his addiction devours him.

It is the Storyteller's responsibility to provide clues for the character to follow, and if the first clues prove too confusing for the player, then the Storyteller should provide additional ones. As in any sort of mystical or initiatory experience, the character should encounter at least a few guides who seek to aid her, as well as opponents who seek to stop him, either with violence or by using distraction, temptation, or threats. Even a friendly and helpful character could actually be an opponent.

One opponent might attempt to convince the character that she needs to let go of her desire to speak with her dead mother and attempts to get the character to talk about her feelings

about her mother. Another offers to hide and protect the character from his addiction and warns him that seeking it out and destroying it will just result in him dying from an overdose. Both are as much of an opponent to an Awakening as a huge animate bronze statue who blocks the mage's path and says that she shall not pass.

The final scene is the climax and end of the Awakening. If the character is on a Supernal journey, the final moments are often fairly similar; the character reaches her Watchtower performs an act that asserts her identity and dedication, which could be signing her name on a wall of bones which is covered in countless other names or plowing a barren field and coaxing a seedling to sprout. After the character does this, he returns to consciousness in the Fallen World, but now he is a mage. The steps leading up to this moment and the climax of a waking world dream are all far more variable. Part of the final scene should involve some sort of journey or test, where the character makes use of the clues, tools, or allies he gathered in the previous scenes and attains what he was questing for.

This journey need not be one the character goes on willingly. A character who was overly proud and distained the aid of others might be dragged down into Stygia by a powerful death god and stripped of her name, clothes, and face. Then, just before she is cast among the other shades to wander forever, an ally who befriended the character in the previous scene, or perhaps a vision of someone dead who once loved her gives the character a drink of water and a bite of food. This small touch of life allows her to reclaim both her face and name and depart the Stygia in triumph, knowing that she could only have done so with the aid of someone who cared for her. However, a straightforward quest can also work exceedingly well. A drug addict might have learned the location of his addiction's lair in the previous scene and either alone, or in the company of allies, he journeys forth to slay his addiction and proclaim his ownership of his body and his soul, to wake up a mage who shows no sign of ever having been a heroin addict.

Even though most Sleepers who confront their fears and obsessions in this manner either flee from them or fail to overcome them, if the character's choices fit the situation and seem like an appropriate way for her to overcome the obstacles facing her, she automatically succeeds. If she chooses a method that the Storyteller believes has no chance of success, such as attempting to use physical combat to defeat a personification of violence, instead of failing, the character should swiftly see a symbol or omen that directs her towards a more correct path. Instead of wondering whether the character will succeed or fail, the point of running an Awakening is learning how the character chooses to succeed and to understanding the details of her Awakening.

Did they tell you magic is sealed away by the Abyss?  
That the Supernal Realm can't affect the Fallen?  
That you'll never see the Watchtower again?

Nothing is ever that simple.

The curse keeps Sleepers from seeing it  
but we are Awakened.  
We see past the Lie with our Sight every day,  
grasp the Supernal with our spells  
and seek the Mysteries.  
And what Mysteries we find!

Artifacts of the true gods.  
The machinations of Exarchs.  
The denizens of the Supernal World.  
Two thousand years of soul stones,  
grimoires, and scholarship.  
The Perfected Metals. Awakening itself.

Where will you begin?

— Halcyon Mastigos

An in-depth look at Supernal Mysteries for Mage: The Awakening Second Edition, this book contains:

- Expanded rules for Mage Sight and Supernal Entities.
- New Yantras and advice for ritual magic.
- The Perfected Materials, and expanded rules for creating magical items, soul stones, grimoires, and more.
- Artifacts, secret beings, symbolic places, and other manifestations of the Supernal Realm.
- Advice and rules for encountering an Awakening in process, playing through one during a chronicle, and for the effects of an Awakening gone wrong.
- Dozens of spells and Merits.

