

for EABA™

Altar of Reason™

madness has many guises...

 **BTRC**

greg porter

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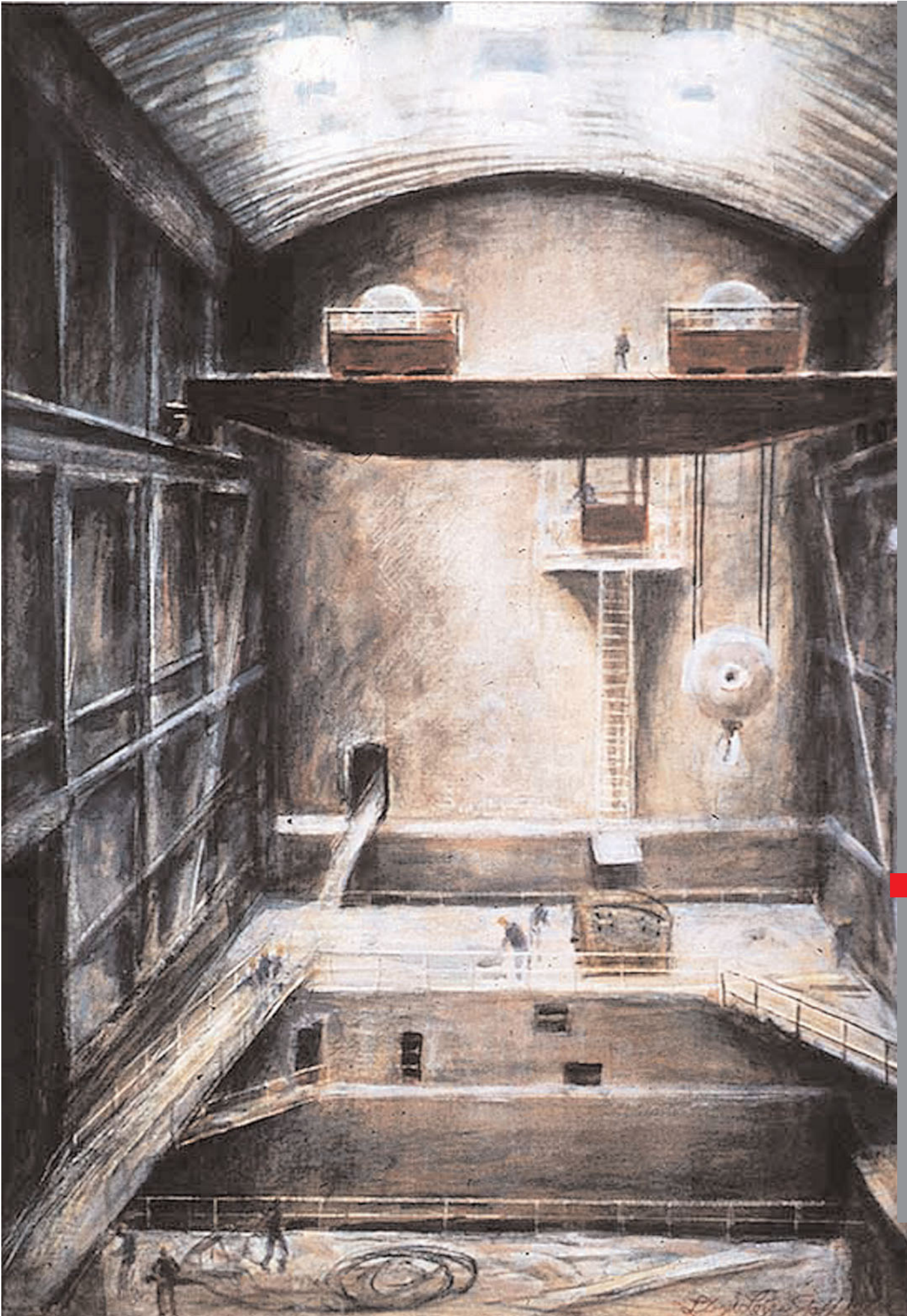
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ALTAR OF REASON

Wish I'd died instead of lived

A zombie hides my face

Shell forgotten

with its memories

Diaries left

with cryptic entries

And you don't need to bother

I don't need to be

I'll keep slipping farther

But once I hold on

I won't let go 'til it bleeds...

- from **Bother**, by Stone Sour

▼ **THE PAST** - Sometime a very long time ago, before the dreamtime, before men had learned to speak and draw and think about what existed beyond their limited senses, before they consciously understood the difference between "today" and "tomorrow", before they started piling rocks on top of each other and sacrificing animals to the gods, there was a war in the ether.

Not the sedate, civilized war-by-proxy that the Causes engage in now, but full-blown, bloody, nasty war. Violence, betrayal, atrocity, the works. When the fires of hatred and greed and every other deadly sin had burned themselves out, the Causes were fewer in number, and the survivors were exhausted, battered, bloodied and afraid. Afraid of each other, afraid of what they had become, or worse, had always been capable of. While the wounds on their bodies and psyches were fresh, they resolved to never let such a thing happen again.

They buried their losses.

Not an exact term for the non-material world of the ether, but even a dead Cause has ethereal remains, and you have to do *something* with the bodies. And with their dead, they also buried part of themselves. They voluntarily stripped from themselves those parts of what they were that most frightened them.

They left unto themselves only what they considered an "acceptable" level of such traits as ambition, aggression and so on. Everything they wished to forget about the past and themselves, they buried with the dead Causes.

Not everyone agreed that this was the best course of action. The Causes never unanimously agreed on *anything*. But, those who could not be swayed by reason to follow this course of action faced the still-bright wrath and violence of the remainder. Those uncooperative Causes that survived this difference of opinion were stripped of most of their power and banished to the dark and cold spaces far from the Sun and life. They became the Unspoken. The rest of the Causes buried their dead and part of themselves, and sealed it away, not only out of sight, but out of mind. The place of burial is something that they chose to forget, a magical weaving in the ether the Causes are blind to, and the horrible events of their past are now only remembered vaguely and with distaste.

▼ **INTRODUCTION** - This adventure has its origins in the ancient past, and its appearance in the mundane world in the first minutes after the Warp, but the details of what is going on will not become apparent for a number of years, and the final resolution of the situation (one way or the other) is likely to take place in the year 30 adventure segment of a **WarpWorld** campaign. Serious elements of the plot and sub-adventures are possible anywhere from the year 1 point forward, but most things before then are going to be hints of a larger whole that will resist being revealed too soon. The basic plot of the thirty-year story arc will only take a few pages of space. The details, the complications, permutations and potential adventures will take up the rest of the book. This is *not* a "gamemaster by numbers" adventure, with pins to be set up and knocked down in a particular order to get a desired result. It will require some work on the part of the gamemaster to incorporate it into their own particular **WarpWorld** campaign, but it does tie into plot threads and adventure ideas presented in the main book. Successfully solving the puzzles and defeating the antagonists is desirable, but failing to do so is not necessarily fatal nor world-ending. However, failure *will* have some consequences that last a century or more, *seriously* affecting the year 300 campaign.

If you're a player in a **WarpWorld** campaign, put this down now and step away from it. We're going into "gamemaster eyes only" material right from the start.

They do remember that there was a war in heaven, and that it was terrible. But who tore whose throat out, or who raped or betrayed whom, those details are lost. They remembered enough to not make the same mistakes again, and these memories consciously or unconsciously affect all their later works. When they lifted humanity to true sentience, they gave us some of these attitudes, near-universal "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not" commandments and stories that resonate down through the ages.

Thou shalt not eat thy dead

Thou shalt honor thy progenitors

Invoke not a holy name without good reason

And so on. And so things went for some tens or hundreds of thousands of years. Men rose, the age of wizardry and Atlantis began, and no mortal ever knew that the Causes had ever been anything other than they appeared to be. Even after the Warp that removed the Causes from our reality and caused the fall of Atlantis, men still remembered these commandments, for they were part of what we are, how we were shaped, how we differ from the animals we once were. Legends long forgotten are remembered again in new religions. Cain is doomed to wander the earth in eternal loneliness for killing his brother. Those who reject the will of the divine are cast into the outermost darkness, and so on. And so things went for another ten thousand years.

Until the Warp cycled in in 2010CE.

The wave of change that blasted through the ether blasted apart the sepulcher of the gods. What was buried there remained buried and still forgotten, but the lid of the sepulcher was blasted from the ether into this world. It was not *truly* a sepulcher, nor a lid, but that is the closest possible translation to mortal terms. The manifested concept of the lid crashed to earth, clipping the top of a hydro-electric dam and sending waves a hundred meters high up and down the length of the reservoir.

Millions of tons of water sloshed over the top of the dam and killed hundreds, if not thousands, in the towns or cities immediately downstream of the dam, killing most of the possible direct witnesses to the event.

As the slab of something not-quite-stone and the size of a soccer field settled into the muck at the bottom of the reservoir, rockslides poured in on top of it, ruining the reservoir (though the dam held), burying the slab under a much shallower lake and millions of tons of dirt and rock. But one piece, one tiny chip of this immense slab went *somewhere else*. When it clipped the top of the dam, a splinter the size of a melon flaked off a corner of the slab and ricocheted several kilometers in another direction. It was a tiny piece of that immense lid, but like the slab itself, what was more important was what it *represented*. It was a flaw in the lid of the sepulcher, a crack in its integrity.

The lid of the sepulcher is not truly a lid, but a physical representation of a far larger concept. It is both gateway and barrier, a separation between what was and what is, between the dead and the living, between what we fear and what we know. It holds in and *holds back* what the Causes fear in themselves. It is not alive, nor sentient, but for something as powerful as the Causes, that does not mean it is without personality. It has no thought, but it *does* have emotion, and even the remains of a dead Cause are a thing of terrible power.

*And this sepulcher holds **all** the dead Causes.*

▼ **THE PRESENT** - The time: Warp plus 1 minute. The place: Somewhere mountainous. It doesn't have to be large mountains, but it has to be enough to support at least a medium-sized recreational or hydroelectric dam. The home of Jeremy Steele, carpenter, divorced, twenty-eight years old. He comes out of his post-Warp daze, gets up off the floor and sees two things: A hole in his living room ceiling, and a lump of worked stone, the broken-off corner of a larger, unseen piece. Its surface is dead and black, but is covered with patterns that look like writing, yet squirm and cannot be focused on long enough to read.

He picks up the melon-size stone and dies.

He touched the Stone, and it consumed him utterly. *Jeremy still lived*. He continued to think, to retain his identity and sense of self, but everything in him that was *not* thought was replaced with *something else*. Something from what was on the other side of an impossibly large slab that he somehow knew with absolute certainty was only a few kilometers away.

His only ambition became to unearth and open that door. *Why, he didn't know or care.* It was his Reason. Neither he nor anyone else would ever be able to articulate why they did what they did in the name of the Reason. Not wanting to open that Door would be like not wanting your heart to beat. Even if you were foolish enough to desire your heart to stop, wishing would not make it so. The Reason was...the Reason.

The Stone did not prepare him for the post-Warp world, nor grant him any special knowledge save for the location of the Slab. So, he packed himself a sack of food and began to walk. Only upon reaching the dam did he realize the absolute immensity of the task and the futility of him doing the task alone. He also gained his first appreciation of the destruction wrought by the Warp.

Warp plus 1 week: Jeremy turned his intellect towards the problem. Obviously, he had to survive to do this, and while the Stone and Slab were always in his thoughts, it did not obsess him to the detriment of finding food, shelter and so on. He would not stray too far from the Stone, though, and kept it hidden. Eventually, he knew he would need help. *Lots of help.* He threw in his lot with another group of survivors, one of which he knew from the freelance work he did for local building contractors. They did not seem to understand Reason, though perhaps it was because he was not able to explain it properly. The others did not understand Reason when he passed the Stone around, though some seemed slightly more receptive to his ideas afterward.

Warp plus 1 month: The first mages of the new world are beginning to come to a glimmer of understanding of their powers. *Jeremy and his companions are not doing too well.* They are not getting enough to eat, despite their best efforts. Jeremy refuses to give in, the Reason will not permit it. He convinces the others that perhaps the Stone has the powers that other people are exhibiting, or maybe it can impart them. The notion is odd, but stranger things than that walk the streets. Each night someone lays hands on the Stone for an hour or two, hoping that something will happen to turn their situation around. Something *does* happen. They all see the Reason and understand that Jeremy is the one who was Chosen to lead what they soon call the Great Work. This does not put food on the table, but it does remove all doubt that survival is a necessity, at any cost. Doubt and all inhibitions removed, they *do* survive.

Warp plus 3 months: Jeremy is now in charge of a passably skilled and equipped group of several dozen survivors. His original handful kidnapped stragglers from other groups, exposed them to the Stone until they saw Reason and then released them. They in turn brought others to see Reason, until Jeremy had a silent majority in several other groups of survivors. His coup to gain leadership of all these groups was quick and mostly bloodless. Some of the dissenters quickly left, while a few remained to see Reason, and some of the others simply vanished. Winter was harsh, and the followers of Reason needed to survive, at any cost.

The followers of Reason now had reasonable numbers, but still far short of the thousands or tens of thousands that would be needed for the great task. And to convert people to Reason one at a time would be too time-consuming and too likely to arouse suspicion.

Warp plus 6 months: With the aid of diamond-tipped tools and months of work, Jeremy chipped off tiny flakes of the Stone and made them into jewelry, noting with some wonder that each was an exact copy of the full Stone, and despite the fistful of oddly shimmering chips he had painstakingly extracted, the original remained undiminished and unblemished.

Magic was now real and everyone knew it, and most had accepted that there was no way to know if the old world would ever come back. The chips of Stone, worked into bracelets, rings and necklaces, were clearly magical, though no one knew how. Jeremy, now the High Priest of Reason, and his clan profited greatly from the sale of the flecks of the Stone. Desirable and rare, they also made their way to leaders of other survivor groups as gifts and diplomatic offerings. Those who wore the jewelry all saw Reason. Sometimes in a few weeks, sometimes in a few months. And once they had received the gift of Reason, they sold the jewelry or gifted it to someone else.

Even those sworn to another Cause fell under the sway of the Stone, and the Causes did not seem to notice, or care. *And so the Temple of Reason was founded.*

Warp plus 1 year: At this point, we're maybe a year into the Warp. Reason is not an unstoppable power, in fact it probably only has several hundred followers, a core in the immediate area of the dam (regions not hit by the flooding), and individuals or small groups that follow Reason scattered about within perhaps a hundred kilometers of the dam. Adventurers may have encountered followers of Reason and come away favorably impressed with them. They are at peace with each other, they work hard, and they are not pushovers. Even if poorly skilled, they will fight to the last for what they believe in. Of course, they *do* ask that others see Reason, but are not pushy about it. They will sell or if need be, give away a chip of Stone if they think it best serves Reason to do so.

Over the next few years the cult will begin to collect followers for its unique little religion. It does not follow any particular Cause, in fact it follows none, but it is not the Forsaken. They embrace technology *and* magic, anything that will advance pursuit of the Reason. They do have temples, a main one near where Jeremy first saw Reason, and smaller ones elsewhere. These temples are not so much places of worship as they are places where those who see Reason can meet and talk and generally be thankful at how fortunate they are. Outsiders are of course welcome to enter, provided they are not disruptive.

The overall plot that will develop from here is that the temple of Reason *needs* to unearth the Slab, which will take millions of man-hours of labor, perhaps assisted by magic or some primitive steam shovels. The labor will be the willing labor of the faithful, slave labor, or both. Second, once the Slab is unearthed, they need someone with sufficient strength to open it. Not physical strength, but magical strength. Since the "lid" to the "sepulcher" was "lifted into place" by several Causes, no mortal is likely to have this strength. This leaves two possible options.

One is to somehow get a Cause to manifest and then trap them in the mundane world and force them to open it. The other is to generate the power through an absolutely *massive* human sacrifice upon the Slab itself. We're talking tens of thousands of people. The followers of Reason are willing to sacrifice themselves if needed, but would much rather sacrifice someone else. And the more magically powerful, the better. Mages and priests would be ideal. Imagine a slab of painful to look at stone, the size of soccer field and over ten meters thick, with every square centimeter carved with runes previously unknown to man, each one linked to the other in a several thousand square meter pattern of blood grooves, each of which has to be filled with the blood someone still living yet mortally wounded...

What would happen if the slab is opened? A literal Pandora's box of woes. Every old hatred, grudge and bad memory the Causes had will return to them with interest. A metric assload of violently aspected mana will pour forth into the world, making the area very Mordor-like, raw magic, mutated monsters, vegetation and people, all traces of law, order and civilization wiped away by barbaric and primitive impulses that turn the population into little more than tribal animals. The Causes will remember all their ancient hatreds and grudges. War may erupt in the ether again, and the Causes will exhort their followers to purge the earth of those who follow their mortal foes. Any rebuilding of civilization that has occurred will be torn down in bloody conflict that will last for centuries before burning itself out again.

Do the followers of Reason know this? No. *Would it matter to them if they did know?* Nope. This is going to take years of work, so while hints of what is going on can be in year 3 (or even year 1), the biggest problems are not going to happen until year 10 or year 30. The Temple of Reason will start off as good neighbors. They trade for what they want, have good relations with their neighbors, sufficient force to dissuade aggression (and the will to use it). They also work to convert others to the Reason by means of the cursed jewelry. This turns the wearer slowly but surely to Reason, a process that is reversible, up to a certain point. Once converted, a person is permanently in thrall to Reason, has no further need of the jewelry and will seek to pass it on to someone else.

The only way to end the threat of Reason is to repair the Slab, to reunite the Stone and Slab where it flaked off the corner. This of course means the plot has to advance at least to where the Slab is uncovered, itself a major undertaking. The Slab and Stone will fuse, sealing the leakage of energy, and the Slab itself will over a period of weeks become insubstantial and revert to the ether, though for dramatic purposes it can also vanish quickly, causing the excavation around it to collapse in true dramatic form, mandating a hasty retreat by any victorious adventurers.

Reunited Stone and Slab will not repair the damage done to people, but it will render the cursed jewelry inert and it will vanish away. The followers of the cult will no longer have a Slab to open, and no means of getting obsessed converts. As they die of old age, the problem solves itself, though of course they may hold a grudge and attempt to kill those who thwarted the grand design.



Jeremy Steele

"Other faiths have reasons. Ours is the Reason..."

- Strength: 2d+2
- Agility: 2d+2
- Awareness: 3d+1
- Will: 3d+0
- Health: 3d+0
- Fate: 3d+1

Notable skills:

- Firearms: +0d
- Brawling: +1d
- Short blade: +0d
- Scrounging: +1d
- Leadership: +1d
- Diplomacy: +1d
- Carpentry: +2d

Notable Traits:

- Adult age
- Sees Reason(8 levels)
- Status, leader of Reason(4 levels)

Jeremy received little from being blasted by the Stone except an overwhelming sense of Reason and a boost to his Fate. He is not a seriously powerful mage, but his unique and original link to the Stone means he can manipulate mana at a 3d+1 level more or less at will (any spell effect he wants). This ability only slowly developed over the course of the first year or two after the Warp. Despite his position, Jeremy is still very much a "man of the people" and is not above getting his hands dirty or putting in some hard physical labor if it is needed for the sake of Reason.

Inside info - We weren't *completely* accurate when we said that the information on the war between the Causes was completely unavailable to adventurers. There is theoretically *one* source or rumors and *one* for accurate information of this ancient time. But getting it in unbiased form could be difficult, and who you have to get it from could be even more of a problem.

Rumors come from the best divine source of the same, tricksters. When the Causes chose to strip some of their memories and selves, it was not a thing that anyone would trust someone to do themselves. *The Causes wove the arcane spells on each other.* Even the tricksters had to submit, or face the fate of the Unspoken. But, they are not called tricksters for nothing. By various means, they managed to retain just a fragment of forbidden knowledge. Not ancient hatreds, not knowledge of the sepulcher or its location, but simply that after the war between the Causes there was another bloodletting, a secret pact, a burial and a binding. Where, when and how was lost, and only the hint of forbidden knowledge remained as an inkling of what went on.

This meager information was perhaps available to the most diligent of Atlantean scholars, but it did not survive them in any tangible form. All that remains is elements of mythology from millennia after the fall of Atlantis. Tales of being expelled from Paradise for possessing the fruit of forbidden knowledge, or the tale of Pandora opening a box that released all the world's evils, to a far more modern line that rings disturbingly close to the truth:

*That is not dead which can eternal lie,
And with strange aeons even death may die...*

The more accurate version of events comes from those banished to the outermost wastes. The Unspoken did not have their memories stripped from them, just their power. Banished to the cold and dark upon pain of death, they exist in lonely exile. Time passes slowly for them, but they know that nothing lasts forever, not even their exile. They hope that *someday* they will be invited back into the warmth. Some could not wait, and slowly faded into nothingness. Others squandered their meager power and suffered the same fate. A few preyed upon others, but most hide from the rest to prevent this from happening.

One had something entirely different happen to him. See the main **WarpWorld** book. In the **Warp plus 10 years** part of chapter 6, there is an outline for an adventure called "The Long Now". In this, part of an Unspoken winds up in the soul of a lich lord. This Unspoken has lost part of himself beyond recovery, so his memories are not complete, but he does know quite a bit of the war between the Causes, and what the Causes did afterwards. He knows nothing of the details of the sepulcher and is blind to the earthly presence of the Slab as anyone else.

Another thing worth noting is that while this Unspoken is insane from his exile, his cruelty and bloodthirst is an indication of what all the Causes once had within them, and a scary glimpse of what the mortal world would be like if all the Causes had their ancient hatreds rekindled.

The Long Now can be used as a tie-in to **Altar of Reason**. The Burnout who originally held a godspark of this Unspoken wrote quite a bit to keep his inner demon at bay. Some of those writings are central to The Long Now, but others could be historical snippets, tales of divine conflicts that do not match any known mythology, with Causes whose names and descriptions are completely unknown to even the most expert scholars. This at first simply makes them look like the writings of a madman, which they were. However, when you consider his madness came from holding more of a Cause within him than any mortal could bear, you have to look *past* the madness and think that maybe someone was telling things that were either unknown, or were not meant to be known to mortals. This would make these pages very valuable, provided you could find the right buyer.

This tie-in to **Altar of Reason** could start as early as Warp plus 1 year, with some of the historical manuscript pages coming into the hands of the adventurers, not as part of an adventure, but rather as a side effect of circumstance, something found while scrounging, thrown in as part of a barter, or among the personal effects of someone an adventurer knew.

These pages will not have any *direct* references to the Stone or Slab, but in the crabbed script of a madman, they might find passages like:

Mummu, slain and forgotten, dead but not unfeeling, this cursed human tongue lacks the words, this shell lacks the thoughts. I am unmade, yet more than this carrion can bear, this walking corpse my living tomb. His thoughts forever extinguished by betrayal, uncorruptible body rotting eternally, no resurrection yet never truly dead. O for the blessing of the worms that gnaw, that there might be an end to him at last, entombed without honor like all the rest, shrouded in castoff greed and rage, unloved, unmourned, forgotten by all except those who have lost their voices in the cold and dark. Aiii.

For those who have the skill or reference texts, Mummu is a Cause who was slain by Ea before the time of men. Mummu was an advisor to Apsu, and was either killed or imprisoned when the Causes overthrew Apsu and Tiamat. At least that's what the pre-Warp scholarly texts say. Post-Warp sages suspect that some of what Mummu was, was used to enhance humanity from mere animals to truly sentient beings.

This is a Heroic(15) Religion task to know it from memory, and merely a Challenging(11) task to find all the known information from one or several reference texts in about fifteen minutes. There is a little more embellishment, but there are only a handful of pre-Warp archaeological sources that reference Mummu, and maybe a few oblique references in the recently written texts of various post-Warp faiths. The main thing to be gotten from all this is that Mummu was a Cause who died (was killed) beyond any hope of recovery, yet something of him remains. No Cause would be willing to offer any more information or hints on the matter, and most would take it as a very personal affront that a mortal would even be prying into such matter.

▼ **Note** - If part of dead Mummu is truly a spark in all humanity, the breach in the Slab might explain some of the affinity of people to Reason, the spark in all of us and the eternally entombed remnants of Mummu, like calling to like. So, the call of Reason will only apply to people. Animals will be totally unaffected by the Stone or flakes of it, though they will still be spooked and intractable anywhere near the Slab itself.

▼ **THE STONE** - The Stone and the chips of it are fragments of the Slab. In particular, the Stone is a melon-sized piece off of one of the corners of the Slab, and the chips are exact copies of the Stone no bigger than your smallest fingernail. The Stone is for all practical purposes, indestructible. It is not of this world, and is the partial embodiment of a concept. By everything that anyone knows about magic, it should not be possible for it to exist (provided they were aware of its origin to begin with). While it can be chipped or with enough force, blasted to bits, you will simply end up with one piece exactly identical to the original Stone, and a bunch of different sized pieces that are exactly identical in shape to the Stone.

The Stone is blackest black, and carved on its flat faces with runes that can be focused on only with difficulty (a Challenging(13) Will task, with +1 difficulty each time level of study). A person with Runelore as a skill will recognize that at least one of the runes is currently unknown to practitioners of this type of magic, and fragments of at least two other runes also do not match with any known types. Copying these runes in a usable form would be a monumental task because of the sheer concentration needed to focus on the task long enough to do an accurate copy. The Stone (and Slab) are effectively immune to magic. While chips of the Stone can be teleported, the Stone itself cannot, nor magically manipulated in any way.

Research purposes aside, the most important feature of the Stone and the chips of it is that they represent a flaw in the Slab, and something of what is on the other side leaks through in the immediate vicinity of the Stone or its fragments. It is not something as simple as physical contact. Rather, it is a function of proximity and desire. Simply being near it is enough, given enough time. Being near it and wanting to be near it is better, and being in contact with it and wanting that contact is best.

In general, the Stone slowly makes you see that Reason is the best possible course of action for you, and that the ultimate goal of Reason is open the path that is blocked by the Slab.

The Stone and its chips are a blind spot in the sight of the Causes or their Priests and Priestesses. It is *not* "invisible" to a Priest or Priestess, they just give it no notice or significance. However, a person in possession of a chip or in the presence of Stone or Slab is effectively invisible to any observation from the ether. All magic done by someone who sees Reason while in possession of a chip of the Stone is at +1 if they are outside the zone of influence of the Slab, but it has no effect on the magic of someone who does not see Reason.

The way a piece of the Stone works on the psyche is simple. The Stone will eventually cause the person exposed to it to make a Will roll at a difficulty of 30 minus their Fate.

EXAMPLE: A person with a Fate of 5 would eventually have to make a Difficulty 25 Will task.

Clearly, this is going to be impossible except for high Will, high Fate individuals, and even then it can take a bit of luck. Fortes or Weaknesses on Will apply if they affect the ability to resist outside influence, and those on Fate if they affect the power of magical effects. Personality Traits do not adjust the difficulty, nor does allegiance to a Cause (unless the gamemaster wishes to allow this for adventurers who are exposed to the Stone's effects).

The difficulty starts at zero and slowly increases. The Will roll is only made once, when the difficulty reaches its maximum, or when the person becomes unable to make the roll.

EXAMPLE: A person with a Will roll of 2d+2 cannot make a Difficulty 15 Will roll, so when the task reaches this point, the conversion is automatic.

When it is made depends on the contact with the Stone and desire to be close to it. If you are close to it on a regular basis (carrying it on your person), the difficulty increases 1 point each 2 days. If you are in close contact on a regular basis (like wearing jewelry) it is 1 point each day. If you are ambivalent towards Reason, double this time interval, and if you are interested in exploring Reason or the Stone, the time interval is halved. If you stay in proximity to it (but are not wearing it) for something like research purposes, the difficulty increases 1 point each 4 days. "Proximity" would be in the same room with it for at least a few hours each day, like if it was in a cabinet in a lab. Storing a chip in a pentagram or other magical ward might reduce or negate the proximity effects.

There are a few very important aspects of exposure to the Stone or a fragment of it. It is not onerous or conscious. One never feels coerced, one is never aware that their attitudes are slowly shifting. *You just slowly see Reason.* Others may notice a person is having more sympathy towards Reason as time goes on, but if others are openly hostile towards Reason, the person being exposed may unconsciously conceal their increasing sympathies for Reason.

The other aspect of exposure is that the slow changes in a person's attitudes are permanent. Each 3 points of difficulty in the Will roll from exposure is a one level shift in Personality towards belief in or sympathy for Reason. When a person is completely converted, they go from whatever sympathy they had to eight levels of Personality in support of Reason (+16 difficulty to do anything against the needs of Reason). A person who is not completely converted can, in time, buy down any Reason-based Personality they have gained.

It is quite possible that an adventurer may get a hold of a chip of the Stone and want to study it. The gamemaster needs to handle this carefully. Neither the adventurer nor the *player* should be aware of the subversion. As far as the *player* is concerned, the actions of the adventurer should seem normal. The gamemaster should portray Reason in more positive and sympathetic terms, deliberately but subtly trying to convince the *player* that Reason is something worth joining. On the other hand, when the *player* is out of earshot, the other players should be just as subtly informed of the adventurer's slow change in opinion.

"Yep, (player name) didn't think much of Reason when he first heard of it, but it seems to be growing on him. It does have quite a bit to offer adventurers in the post-Warp environment, you know..."

It is the nature of Reason that those being seduced by it are never aware of that fact. They will always think they are moving towards Reason by choice. Only those of their companions who are perceptive enough to notice the slow changes will be in a position to stop the process. Naturally, those whose personalities would seem to be radically opposed to Reason would arouse more suspicion from a change of attitude, but the changes can be seen in *anyone*, provided there is someone close enough to see them.

Someone whose access to a chip of the Stone is lost before conversion simply remains at the level of sympathy they had at that time. They do not feel compelled to find another piece of the Stone, nor to travel to Reason territory, but their increased sympathy towards Reason and its followers will remain and may influence decisions in such a way as to improve their eventual chance of fully converting to Reason.

A Stone that is subject to analysis yields little. Scientifically, it is composed of no known element, has no unique spectrographic signature, and has no anomalies if X-rayed. It is not quite hard as diamond, but scratches in it disappear as soon as they are made. If a chip of the Stone is damaged, it simply vanishes, leaving nothing behind, it is merely a shadow of the concept embodied in the Stone and Slab and does not fragment into smaller pieces. Magical analysis confirms that it is not a natural item, it has no intelligence or life, but neither is it completely dead or without intent. That is, every magical test generates ambiguous results. There are no thoughts to probe, yet there is *something* there. It is not alive, but neither is it dead. Material, but not of this world, it is neither organic nor inorganic, neither good nor evil. Magically speaking, it has no mana, infinite mana and every value in between. *Simultaneously*. It, like the Reason, simply "is".

▼ **Note** - If the Temple of Reason needs a little more "kick" to maintain itself in a hostile world, consider that Reason mages might be able to read and use some of the runes on the Stone and Slab with far more ease than a non-Reason mage ever could. These runes are complex and may embody far more precise and detailed concepts than normal runes. In particular, a rune from the Stone or Slab might do the work of three or four regular runes. Plus, whatever rune or runes are available on the chips of the Stone can be invoked as with using any other rune stone, the chip of the Stone is never used up or damaged by botches, and might even provide a bonus to the effect.

▼ **REASONING THE UNREASONABLE** - Reason is a misnomer. There is no rationality, logic or argument behind Reason. Rather, Reason is merely an overwhelming but unconscious impulse, emotions and desires that have no name and which only poorly translate into human terms. This makes it a thorny challenge for players who seek to investigate it. No amount of physical interrogation can divulge details of Reason, though it can with great difficulty (+16 to the task) pry loose operational plans an individual member may know. The Slab and the plans to uncover and open it is never a part of any convert's conscious thought. Rather, it is just one of the overwhelming but unconscious needs that Reason engenders. The closest anyone can come to mentioning it is referring to "the great work". Even this is defined in a convert's mind as simply "the Great Work", and there are no mental images that accompany the concept. Spells cannot pry the secrets of Reason loose from a convert's mind, since there is no intelligent or articulable thought behind Reason.

Reason is justification for itself. People follow Reason because it is Reason. *If you see Reason, you understand. If you do not see Reason, you cannot understand it. The only way to see Reason is to want to see Reason, and once you see Reason, you'll know Reason.* It is an infuriating, circular logic that makes *total* sense to its adherents, made worse by the fact that they have nothing but sympathy or pity for those that refuse to see Reason. The flawed logic that if something cannot be disproven, it must be true, is something that humans have fallen prey to since time immemorial, and in a world where the gods are real, this belief in the unknowable is very seductive for those who *need* to have *faith* in something.

What can readily be discovered is that one can accelerate one's understanding of Reason by wearing or meditating upon the copies of the Stone, and that once one's acceptance of Reason is secure, the Stone should be passed on so that others can similarly reach enlightenment. It is never said that a Stone is *required* to see Reason, but this is the case. Converts will quite convincingly say otherwise and even lie about their own conversion (*all is fair in the name of Reason*).

Those who follow Reason do not have any secret way of recognizing each other. They have no special aura that can be spotted by themselves or anyone else (though this could be allowed if necessary for a good plot). Rather, they judge each other by their adherence to Reason. One who puts personal matters ahead of the Great Work, or who questions the decisions made by the High Priest is clearly suspect, and one thing that *everyone* who truly sees Reason knows is that one can always "bypass the chain of command". If you think your boss is just faking Reason in order to skim some profits off the Great Work, you immediately go over his head and have someone else verify it. If he truly sees Reason, he'll understand. If he is actively working against Reason for his own selfish goals...well...let's not get into that.

Similarly, if someone tells you to do something for Reason, but not to tell anyone else who sees Reason about it, that person is *clearly* suspect, for those who follow Reason are inherently trustworthy in all things related to Reason. This is not that they expect someone else to blab, it is that someone who sees Reason *inherently* understands the security necessary for a task they need to perform or knowledge that they possess. Having it pointed out to them is an indication that the person pointing it out does not *truly* see Reason.

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It is easy enough to fake being part of Reason for casual encounters. But the more and deeper one tries to interact with the Reason community, the more likely a person will make a subtle slip-up that nonetheless arouses someone's suspicion. As a long-term thing, just assume a Difficulty 0 Awareness or skill roll is needed at first contact, with +1 Difficulty and a new roll required each 3 time levels after that.

EXAMPLE: A time level of +30 (8 hours of interaction) would require a roll at a Difficulty of 10.

No actual roll is needed until the difficulty reaches a level where the person can actually fail it, and the time level is for actual interaction, not merely being in the area. If you only interact with other Reason members for an hour each day, then the "eight hour" threshold would not take place for eight days. The gamemaster should just make a judgement call on the time spent under possible scrutiny rather than meticulously keeping track of it.

This is of course for someone trying to pass themselves off as a Reason member, in an area where they are not known by other followers. Those who are openly and obviously not part of Reason are treated as such. As time passes, odds are that someone will ask a question the imposter is unable or unprepared to answer, or that they will say something that is just a hair off what they should have. And Reason members are perfectly tuned to *any* deviation from Reason, and only the most astute observer would notice their reaction to such a slip-up by an imposter (Difficulty 15 Awareness task).

Of course, if there is already a heightened level of suspicion, random queries of a given difficulty can show up at any time, even at the very first greeting.

▼ **POWERS OF REASON** - Those who follow Reason have a few special "powers". First, any attempt to sway them from Reason likely fails (it is at +16 to Difficulty). Second, for generating magical effects, they get a bonus based on their proximity to the Stone or Slab. And last, they simply do *not* fail any Will roll related to their duties in the service of Reason. Any situation that requires a Will roll and where failure would cause them to fail Reason, they *automatically* make the roll. They could have the inhuman endurance needed to deliver a message in a record-breaking marathon run, or walk through fire or swim underwater an impossible distance. They might also drop dead the instant their task was complete, but nothing short of catastrophic brain damage or destruction of their body will keep them from doing something that they *know* is in the cause of Reason. In time, they get a reputation as people you do *not* mess with in matters of faith, and quite frankly, their ability and willingness to martyr themselves scares a lot of people.

Otherwise, their attributes and skills are the same as any other extra in that particular role, and their personality, desires and such are the same as before they saw Reason. A compulsive gambler might fritter away his wages, but would *never* consider betraying Reason to pay off a gambling debt. A Casanova would still chase the ladies, but would *never* give away a Reason secret as pillow talk. *Not even in his thoughts.* Even suggesting it is a sure way to brusquely end a conversation and an immediate end to any interaction the person may have had with adventurers who suggested it.

There is one special category of those who see Reason: the Children of Reason. Anyone conceived of two parents who see Reason will automatically see Reason from birth. These children automatically get a level of Godtouched, a +1 bonus to all their Attributes over a comparable person, and one special talent. They are unconsciously linked to every other Child of Reason. They do not hear each other's thoughts, but they can sense when one of their number has been hurt or killed, and some general idea of their proximity and direction. This particular ability is a secret that adventurers are unlikely to be aware of, and which only becomes important in the year 30 segment. For instance, if a pair of Children of Reason are on sentry duty in two places, and one of them is silently eliminated, the other will still know when it happens, and that it was their companion. Similarly, the nearest other Child of Reason will know, and know about how far away it was, and can alert anyone who needs to know.

In year 30 some of the people infiltrating the nearby governments may be Children of Reason. If captured and kept incommunicado because their cover is blown, they have one sure way to get a message to the Temple of Reason: kill themselves. All the other Children of Reason will know that one of their number in that city has fallen, and simple elimination will identify who it was. *Keep the possibilities in mind.*

▼ **CATECHISMS OF REASON** - Those who follow Reason have their own quasi-religious devotions. To the extent that they are not inefficient or detract from the Great Work, they are accepted as part of the way the overall community works.

"Reason be with you": A common way of saying "good-bye". *"May Reason be with him(her)"* is also a common blessing when mentioning someone on a difficult undertaking.

"Reason is reason enough": When referring to any hardships that may have to be accepted in the name of Reason. *"Reason is its own reward"* is also used.

"Reason conquers all tribulations": Even those who see Reason still grieve when their loved ones die. This statement offers hope that dedication to Reason will restore a sense of purpose.

"Only Reason is eternal": Often used when referring to outside pressures or seemingly intractable situations. There is no problem that can never be solved, for *"only Reason is eternal"*. A variant is *"Reason will prevail."*

"Pity those who are beyond Reason.": When describing those who refuse to consider Reason. Also used in genuine sorrow if Reason requires the execution of a non-believer, for Reason would wish all to embrace it rather than see a single person lost.

"Test not the strength of Reason.": If someone pushes a member of Reason on a matter of faith. Reason members do not back down in the face of persecution, and back each other one hundred percent, one hundred percent of the time. You tangle with one of them, you tangle with *all* of them, and they do *not* forget those who have harmed them. There will be times and places in the campaign where simply hearing that phrase will cause people to start looking for the nearest exit.

▼ **THE SLAB** - This is a quasi-physical representation of a boundary between here and someplace in the ether. An actual way to physically cross into the ether it is not, but neither is it *not* a way to physically cross into the ether. To try to clarify it, it is a doorway between concepts rather than places. It just happens that one of those concepts is "here" and another is "somewhere else". Just as Pandora's Box contained and constrained a vast array of evil concepts, so does the Slab act as a wall to hold back and hold in certain aspects of Causal personality. Its massive physical size in the mortal world is proportional to the magical power that went into creating it.

The Slab is perhaps a hundred meters long, sixty meters wide and ten meters thick. Each face is flat past the limits of human measurement, and engraved with countless runes, that if examined, form one continuous, seamless pattern, broken only by the chip off one corner.

Anyone who is not converted to Reason and has the misfortune to make skin contact with the actual Slab is blasted into a deep coma by the experience, and if they ever wake up, is going to be as permanently converted as you might expect. This experience requires actual contact of flesh with the Slab, however, being in simple proximity to the Slab is much like being in proximity to the Stone. Attempting to open one's magical senses to get an aura from the Slab is not likely to end well. If done anywhere within sight of the Slab, a 4d+0 non-lethal blast straight to the brain is probably the best that can be hoped for. Someone attempting such an aura reading would probably crumple like a boneless sack without a sound or a single indication of hostile magic. Someone with an ability to sense future danger would feel that touching or arcanelly sensing the Slab would be a very, very, very bad idea, but their power would grant them no details at all as to exactly why.

The Slab is a total blind spot in the sight of the Causes, and this blind spot extends for several kilometers in each direction, with areas of "lowered visibility" that extend several more kilometers. As is the case with blind spots, the Causes do not realize they have it, furthermore, nor can they be made to see that it exists. This blind spot also exists for their High Priests and Priestesses. The region around the Slab is simply a spot they never have any interest in travelling to, and if they did travel there, they would be remarkably unconcerned with anything they saw there, nor would they want to set up temples there.

In addition, the Slab affects all use of magic around it in subtle ways. It does not grant abilities to those that do not have them, but for a mage who knows Reason, their spells get a bonus to effect without adding to spellcasting stress. Mages who do not see Reason have their spells decreased in effect by the same amount. This bonus or penalty ranges from ± 1 at the fringes of the region, to $\pm 2d$ on or around the actual Slab. The immediate vicinity of the Stone also has this sort of effect, but it is a maximum of $\pm 1d$. The primary Temple of Reason (where the Stone is displayed, clutched in an oversized bronze hand) would be considered to have the $\pm 1d$ effect anywhere within its walls.

Once any part of the Slab is exposed, anyone except Reason followers whose Fate for spell effects is *less than* the penalty on their spellcasting feels a nearly unbearable emotional heaviness and depression, like the weight of the world and its woes are pressing down on them, like everything good and positive in their life is being sucked into a black hole. This is felt even by non-mages. It is not a gradual thing, but a sudden threshold. A person could be fine, take one more step towards the Slab and suddenly be overcome by all of their flaws and past misdeeds, untempered by anything good they have done or accomplished.

Overcoming this emotional trauma is an Average(7) Will roll, but the difficulty is increased by the penalty on spell effects (each full 1d being a +3). On a success, the person can pull through it in a minute or less, and keep going. Otherwise they are a total emotional wreck and simply *cannot* continue, and are out of it enough that they would probably die of thirst with a waterskin in their hands. But, pulling them out of the area of effect ends the effect. They will not snap out of it immediately, but will recover, somewhat shaken after a minute or two. It will take the same, modified Will roll for them to ever voluntarily go into that area again, and if they do enter, their roll is at a cumulative and *permanent* +1 difficulty.

EXAMPLE: An adventurer with a Fate of 1d+0 crosses the 1d+1 threshold area (which is probably within 1 kilometer of the Slab). The adventurer has to make a Difficulty 11 Will roll to fight through it and keep going (base Difficulty of 7, +4 for the spell effect penalty). If they fail and their friends drag them out, they can be persuaded to try again if they make a Difficulty 11 Will roll. If they fail the roll, nothing in the universe will persuade them to step into the area where they knew they were affected. If they make the roll, they can voluntarily step through and try again, at a Difficulty of 12. And if for some reason they failed the roll to try again and crossed the threshold somewhere else, the Difficulty of the Will task would also be 12.

Technically, the blind spot and magical affects are circular, which would make the center of the area pretty obvious to anyone trying to quantify it. However, it is possible that the boundaries of the region could be affected by natural features. A particular ridgeline might attenuate it a little, as might a river or some other magical blind spot or mana-adjusted area. So, someone trying to map the extent of the region controlled by Reason would find an area centered on the dam, but with borders matching rivers, ridgelines or other natural boundaries, like many human-delineated territories have. Only a detailed analysis of information collected in the field would show that if not for those natural barriers, the effects *would* be a perfect circle. This would be a clear indication of some force emanating from the reservoir, rather than a merely symbolic center for the Temple of Reason. That the dam or something in/under the dam is a central feature of the Cult of Reason should not be difficult in any case, especially after Reason has enough resources to begin digging down to expose it and make it accessible.

▼ **CAMPAIGN NOTES** - The following are snippets of information or outlines of adventures that you can use to incorporate Altar of Reason into any part of your campaign.

▼ **WARP PLUS ZERO** - Add this to the description of what people feel during the first few moments of the Warp:

And you knew that whatever you had been feeling at the time, everyone else in the world felt a little of it as well. And just as reality begins to return to you, or maybe a moment afterwards, you feel the shadow of death pass over you, blotting out the sun, moon, stars and life itself, and you felt the terror of seven billion souls, and the unmeasurable joy when the light returned and you realized that the specter of death was someone else's death, not yours. At least for today.

▼ **WARP PLUS 1 MINUTE** - As adventurers are dazed and confused, trying to make some sense of their surroundings and the chaos, interject this:

All of a sudden, you hear, no, feel something passing overhead. Something huge, fast, or both, displacing air in an erratic subsonic whoof-whoof-whoof rumbling that you feel in your guts. A window behind you shatters, and you are startled by the sound. The rumble overhead keeps going and fades away, and just as you start to focus again on more immediate concerns, there is a small earth tremor, and some seconds later, a long low pulse of sound like the sigh of a dying titan, somewhere far to the north.

The gamemaster should substitute whatever direction the dam is in for "north", and the location should be at least a hundred kilometers off and have some sort of natural barrier just to keep it from being explored or the followers of Reason from early interaction with the adventurers. For instance, having all the road or rail bridges to the area collapse or be washed out, making a trek there a difficult walk or a long trip through more passable terrain by horse or bike. And even if adventurers do go there in the immediate days or weeks after the Warp, all that can be seen is the flooding and landslide-choked reservoir, which should naturally tie in to their post-Warp vision of death passing overhead and passing them by. The natural (and correct) assumption is that something huge crashed into the reservoir.

▼ **WARP PLUS 3 DAYS** - Add to the known/rumored information available:

Known: *Something huge whizzed overhead in the minutes immediately following the Warp.*

Rumored: *Someone said that someone told them a meteor crashed into a lake a ways north or here, destroying the dam and causing a massive flash flood that killed several thousand people.*

There is likely to be little knowledge or real interaction with the main plot for quite some time after this, which is appropriate. There is no need to add elements of the plot that adventurers have to respond to. At this point in a **WarpWorld** campaign, the immediate concerns of survival, local threats and learning to adapt to the new nature of reality are more important (and more interesting) than a rumor of something unusual that happened some unknown distance away.

Warp plus 100 days - This is the low point in the desperate first days after the Warp. In the northern hemisphere, the worst winter in memory is raging, supplies of just about everything are running low, buried under snow or both. Priests and priestesses are still pretty thin on the ground, and information still flows slowly and unreliably. As the gamemaster gives out information or players acquire it through asking, make sure that less comes from the direction of the dam, and that no High Priests or Priestesses have come to this area through the territory around the dam. This is *not* something overt and obvious. After all, the flash flood from the dam *did* wash out a lot of roads and bridges, making it easier to travel around rather than through the area. Plus, the main town in the area was washed off the map and there are no major population centers to generate trade or support a temple there, just a few small towns that even before the Warp were just wide spots in the road.

▼ **WARP PLUS 1 YEAR** - This is the point where the first true elements of the plot appear in the vicinity of the adventurers. By this time, there is erratic travel and trade between areas, with people seeking opportunities, economic or otherwise. A travelling merchant's wares catch the eyes of an adventurer, in particular a shimmering stone in a handwrought silver necklace. It simultaneously draws the eye, yet is hard to look at. It is clearly magical, though what if anything it does is still unknown. The merchant is not a follower of Reason. He simply bought the necklace for resale when he passed through the area a month or so back. He is interested only in getting a return on his investment, though he does have some level of sympathy for Reason from his continued but not close exposure to it. He has a fabricated tale to go with the necklace, which overstates the risk and the price he paid to acquire it, which greatly exaggerates the starting point for his haggling. In truth, he is proud of the fantastic deal he got for it and hopes to turn a great profit on the item.

Even so, the necklace should be priced beyond what any of the adventurers can pay or what the merchant is willing to accept after haggling, and if he is criticized on this account, he will simply shrug and say that this is not the wealthiest community he trades with, and if they have anyone else willing to sell them a magic necklace, they are free to spend their money elsewhere.

For adventure purposes, there are a few possibilities here. If adventurers are ludicrously wealthy, the merchant can say that this *particular* necklace has already been bought, but he might be able (at great difficulty and price) to acquire another. Another possibility is that less wealthy adventurers might find a way to come up with the asking price. In this case, the gamemaster has to decide whether to sell it to them and risk the possible complications, or to have the necklace be sold to someone else by the time they scrape up the money or barter for it. Or, the merchant might have already left town.

▼ **Note** - Whether or not adventurers get a chip of the Stone at this point is *not* a matter of disrupting the plot, but a question of their own safety. If they are smart and observant enough to figure out what is happening to whoever wears or studies the jewelry, then what they learn can be of great benefit later on. *If they are clueless, they could end up part of the problem instead of the solution!*

In the event that someone else in the area bought it, then the buyer asked for anonymity as part of the condition of sale, and the merchant will keep his end of the bargain, though he is not immune to telepathic probing, should anyone decide to pry to that level. The buyer will, over the course of the next month, see Reason, and then find a new home for the necklace. Note that such a buyer has to be wealthy (wealthier than the adventurers), and is likely to have a position of influence in the community. After seeing Reason, they might convert their family or friends, or pack up and move north to be part of the Reason community there.

The Cult of Reason is still perhaps a year or two from having a complete lock on power and resources in the area around the dam. While the dam itself is ruined for its original purpose, whether it was power, flood control or recreation, it is still a large, shallow lake with a lot of swampy parts. The Cult of Reason knows that it would be nearly impossible to dig through and hold back that much muck, so the plans they are making regarding the dam involve what they would need to drain it. At this point, their best guess is that a large hole needs to be blown into the dam, preferably at an elevation of less than the Slab, and that the river that feeds the dam needs to be diverted around the Slab. There are tunnels already in existence around the dam, which were used for that purpose during its construction and then sealed up. So, in order to drain the area sufficiently, they will need to unplug the bottom of the dam and then make an artificial river channel to the existing drain tunnel. And *then* they can begin to excavate the Slab.

At the Warp plus 1 year point, they are simply collecting expertise, trying to recruit to Reason people with the talents they think they will need, what industrial explosives they can lay their hands on, and the industrial chemicals and machinery they think they will need to manufacture their own in dangerously large quantities. For the recruiting part, once they have people in positions of leadership, they can spread the word that they want to hire someone to help them with their clogged dam, as a full-time job. Of course, in addition to the excellent pay, the applicant will need to at least pay lip service to Reason and wear its symbol... At the same time, they are looking ahead far enough to see what the best skills usable *against* them are, and may try to recruit people with those skills as well. They are not in a position to eliminate potential opposition yet, but they *will* be planning for it.

For the industrial explosives and chemicals, adventurers who are well connected or hear a lot from different traders and merchants will be able to piece together that the folks in the area of the dam are looking to make a *lot* of explosives. Tons and tons of dynamite-quality explosives. Blowing a large hole through tens of meters of steel-reinforced cement is hard work, as is blowing apart building-sized boulders that are part of the debris in the dam. While the Cult of Reason is not making this desire for explosives manufacturing public, neither is it a true secret. If confronted, they will put forth the quite reasonable explanation that they are trying to get some use out of the old dam, and that's going to require blowing up part of it. *Simple as that*. No conspiracy, no great secret, and any suspicion is negated by their complete admission of what they are doing and why. Of course, they are not giving the *full* reason why. Anyone finding that out *would* be a threat to be dealt with, but finding it out is quite impossible at this point.

Adventure seed - Someone who is a Friend or an Enemy of one of the adventurers becomes involved with the Temple of Reason. If it is a Friend, it should be one that the adventurer has been slack in maintaining the friendship with. That is, one where the gamemaster could downgrade or eliminate the Friend because of the adventurer's actions. If it is an Enemy, it might be one that an adventurer is paying to downgrade the intensity of. The Friend might remain so, but with one glaring blind spot. If it comes to a choice between Reason and a friendship, Reason wins. And, a Friend might also want a person they have a relationship with to see Reason, and use this avenue of trust to try to influence the adventurer. On the other hand, if at this early state, an adventurer has suspicions about Reason, they can use their friend as a potential way to get closer to what is actually going on.

From the standpoint of an Enemy, the petty grudge against the adventurer pales in comparison to the needs of Reason. If pursuing an agenda against an adventurer helps Reason, then it will be pursued with *more* vigor. If the vendetta or hatred is counterproductive to Reason, it will be dropped entirely, and if it is neither a gain nor loss to Reason, they the Enemy will remain as before, though perhaps the tactics might change. For instance, estranging someone from their friends, family and community by having them see Reason might be considered a form of vengeance for a perceived wrong, and kills two birds with one stone.

Adventure seed - At the Warp plus 1 year point, life for the survivors is still very rough, but most of those who have made it this far have the skills or cunning to *continue* surviving. For many people one or both of these survival traits involve aligning themselves with a group or power structure of some kind. Some of these are normal post-Warp religions, others are aberrations like Identity, but most groups that actually control a region will be some kind of reconstituted government. Town councils, military dictatorships, gang-like oligarchies, consolidated farming communes, etc.

At the Warp plus 1 year point it is autumn again, and with memories of the previous terrible winter still in people's minds, preparations are under way for the one to come. Among the preparations are getting any communications done or trade deals finalized with areas that may be unreachable in the winter months. The local group that the adventurers are part of (or under the jurisdiction of) has a good sum of the trade chits that Reason has been issuing. Or, they heard that after Reason's consolidation of other groups, it is going to devalue the trade chits from those groups. However, they can be traded in for the newly created Reason "currency". A lot can happen over the winter, and these chits could be worthless by spring. So, the adventurers will be tasked to transport a small fortune in trade chits to Reason territory and either trade them in for Reason chits, or preferably, buy something for their community as a whole (and which adventurers may get occasional use of).

What the community is looking for will depend on the region. In countries with stringent gun laws, a small fortune might buy a couple rifles and a few hundred rounds of ammunition, while in places like the United States it might get you an old artillery piece. Other possible purchases could be something like an old and marginally serviceable pickup truck, an old vacuum tube transceiver, vaccines and antibiotics, or other items that simply are not being manufactured anymore. For instance, there is a very strong vote from about half the population for contraceptives and obstetric supplies.

The adventure involves getting to Reason territory, negotiating for and getting the goods, and getting home with the goods and themselves in one piece. Adventurers will not be the only ones doing this, and there will be those in the area out to cheat or rob the incautious. And, adventurers will have their first exposure to a Reason community, and will no doubt be preached to in a low-key and non-pushy way. As trusted representatives of their community, Reason might also gift them one of their chips of the Stone, "symbolizing the friendship between our communities".

▼ **WARP PLUS 3 YEARS** - By this time, barring a major unforeseen setback, the Temple of Reason should have absolute government control of the area around the dam, including all areas that can actually see it, and will have the force of law and government and social influence to the edges of the area affected by the Slab. In total, several hundred square kilometers. Not everyone living in this region sees Reason, but it is the only "religion" there. There are no temples to any Causes, nor any High Priests or Priestesses living in this area, and there seems to be no interest in founding any such temples. Even if adventurers are High Priests or Priestesses, this is not a matter of concern to them. They see no reason to ever travel in that direction, and if anyone asks why no temples have been founded there, they will give a reply to the extent that no one there is interested, and then they will quickly forget about the matter. That is, because of the way the blind spot works, the *player* should not even be aware that the *adventurer* has this blind spot. This does not prevent Priests or Priestesses from passing through the area in question, just that they will never initiate such a trip that has the area as the destination, and will show little interest in the surroundings if passing through on the way to somewhere else. Remember that a High Priest or Priestess has a tiny spark of that Cause's energy in them, and this spark is their moral guide. If their link to the Cause is *not* concerned, then the Priest or Priestess is *not* concerned.

The Temple of Reason is largely peaceful, but they defend themselves fiercely, and will exact retribution for their losses without thought for the personal cost. The occasional bandits or other armed groups that thought to make the area their home quickly learned it was a *bad* idea. One small but highly armed community tried to extort them for some of their explosives and explosive-making gear by kidnapping one of their key personnel. The Temple of Reason responded with everyone in the community that had a gun, plus half a dozen suicide truck bombs, the last parked outside the other community leader's fortress-home. When the kidnap victim was released, the driver of the last truck bomb detonated it anyway. And the Temple made sure that everyone who was a neighbor to those people knew that chunk of territory was to remain unsettled and untouched, to serve as an example to anyone else who would threaten the Temple of Reason.

This does make some of the Temple's neighbors nervous, but since they otherwise seem totally peaceful and non-expansionist, they are left alone. Local governments *do* have contingency plans in case the Temple of Reason decides to change their policies, and there are standing warnings to stay out of the region that was made an example of. Not because they are worried about the Temple of Reason declaring war on any neighboring territory for such a trespass, but because the Temple of Reason uses it as a hunting preserve for wild game for their own dinner tables, and their hunters have orders to kill intruders on sight and leave their bodies to rot where they fall. Of course, people *do* still go into this forbidden territory of about thirty square kilometers, and most of them survive. Criminals fleeing authorities, teenagers on a dare, scavengers looking for something to carry off, or just people from other regions who took a wrong turn somewhere. Three or four unlucky or imprudent people get killed there each year. High-level complaints are made, but the Reason policy has not changed nor shows any likelihood it will change in the future.

▼ **Note** - In game terms, any travel into this small region (about 6km across) will result in a hostile encounter on a 3d+0 roll of 7 or less. If this happens, make a 3d+2 skill roll against a difficulty of 13. On a success, one of the intruders is shot with a 3d+1 rifle, and will be shot again if they survive. If there are multiple intruders or a large hostile force, the first shot will be against the apparent leader, after which the shooter will withdraw to get backup. If that is not possible, several quick shots from a revolver will alert the nearest other followers of Reason that there is a problem, and a well-armed response force will be on the way within minutes. *They take this very seriously, and they play it smart.*

By this point in time, they have or are close to actually getting a sufficient hole blown in the dam. They do not want to destroy the overall integrity of the dam, and each blast has to be followed by structural checks and cutting the exposed steel reinforcement bars out of the way. These bars are then recycled and made into tools or other needed items. They have probably improved or adapted the local infrastructure. Any roads to and from the dam have probably been restored, and while the dam may no longer fully serve its original purpose, it still has a good supply of falling water, which can power generators or stationary power tools, even if the original dam facilities are no longer usable for that purpose.

Because of the seven year gap between this adventure segment and the next, quite a lot can happen. Enough so that the gamemaster might want to run a mini-adventure just to keep players in the loop, or to foreshadow events in the next segment, if a major confrontation is planned for the Warp plus 10 years segment. If not, then such an adventure should take place between Warp plus 10 years and Warp plus 30 years.

Adventure seed - Reason has the capability to make more explosives than they can use, and is willing to trade their surplus for things they cannot make on their own. However, Reason chooses to make explosives with a fairly short "half-life". That is, they are making dynamite that is only *partially* stabilized. This is quick and easy, and fine for their immediate industrial uses. It is safe to use and store for a few months before the nitroglycerine starts to weep out of the sticks and make them dangerous to move or expose to sudden shocks. This makes the dynamite no less useful for other communities who need to clear debris, knock down unstable buildings and so on, but it renders the dynamite useless as a filling in high-explosive shells, and it cannot be stockpiled for military use later.

Adventurers need to buy a quantity of Reason dynamite. They could be buying for their own use, for their community, or possibly hired by Reason because of a shortage of their own people familiar with the area the explosives are to be transported to. Adventurers working for their community might also be given money for a short course in blasting techniques and safety practices, sufficient for a 1S familiarity in Demolitions skill, enough to know what *not* to do, how to do one *particular* task, and enough to build towards a full +0d skill later.

While in or passing through Reason territory, adventurers will see something "suspicious". Not a thing that they will feel compelled to investigate immediately, but one which will give them a feeling that all is not right with Reason, and which will give them something to consider later. For instance, after 3 years, it would be odd to find an area with no worship of a post-Warp deity, or to see a temple to Reason and no apparent Cause worshipped there. Someone with magical talents trying to do a little mental probing will find *nothing* of use, which is also unusual. The Children of Reason are a bit more than 2 years old at this point, and adventurers may encounter the oddity of one toddler falling down and hurting themselves, and another simultaneously crying out and clutching the same body part the first one injured. Questions asked about this will be uncharacteristically rebuffed, and the toddlers moved indoors. *Reason considers this important enough to record the names of those seeing it...*

▼ **WARP PLUS 10 YEARS** - By this time the Temple of Reason has become *the* economic powerhouse in its region, and profit and prosperity draws attention and adherents. Also, by this time the Temple of Reason is well underway towards excavating the Slab. They have gotten the river rerouted, the construction spillway re-opened, and the hole in the bottom of the dam fully open and finished. The river may have only been re-routed for a year or two, and it took a full year for enough water to drain for excavation to be "safe". So far, one cement-lined caisson several meters across has been sunk to the Slab (at the cost of several lives), and boreholes to find the edges of the Slab have been drilled in numerous spots. From the air, the site looks like a miniature oil field. All the test boreholes have small steam engines turning grasshopper pumps, pulling out groundwater and pumping it to the diverted river channel. The old spillway has been tapped to run a substantial generator capacity, which runs a cement-making plant that creates a constant plume of dust and smoke, visible for several kilometers. It would show for a far greater distance, but for the sake of their own people who live downwind, a great deal of water is used to wet the cement plant's emissions. This cuts the air pollution, but does not do much for the water quality downstream of the dam (which goes through the empty territory the Temple of Reason was responsible for back in year 3).

This is the first point where an organized group of adventurers could be expected to get involved with the plot in a meaningful way. That *something* is going on in Reason territory is public knowledge. Not that is a daily topic of conversation, or that conspiracy nuts have a newsletter on the topic, but it would be hard to find any group of four or more people where someone hadn't heard *something* about Reason. Most of the known rumors have some truth to them, but most will have some element wrong or greatly exaggerated.

For its part, Reason has a quite reasonable explanation for their activities (this is one of their talents). They intend to rehabilitate the old dam to make themselves an industrial and economic superpower (at least in a local sense). They've rerouted the old river, drained the muck from beneath and are pumping out more. Soon they will have their first steam-powered excavating shovel ready, and they are building a rail spur to a neighboring valley to dump the debris as it is excavated (they later abandon this idea and just use the river for disposal). Once the reservoir is clear of debris, they will refill the dam, rehabilitate the old generators and be able to provide (i.e. sell) reliable, old-fashioned electrical power to meet the needs of every community within a hundred kilometers. And you would be hard-pressed to find anyone who thinks this is not a good thing.

For all of this, there is a sense of unease about Reason. There is of course an undercurrent of envy from the less-recovered regions, the worry that each little kingdom, collective, democracy or whatever will be overrun by the sheer success and influence of Reason. Reason is not *that* successful, yet. They just have the advantage of a unifying goal and a remarkable lack of internal conflict in its power structure. If the governing council led by the High Priest wants to get something done, they simply order it to be done, and everyone works to make it so in the most efficient means possible. These means are subject to the vagaries of the individual personalities of those involved. Being in Reason does not make you a complete drone. Someone who acquires things through back channels will still do so when in Reason. Someone who is a leg-breaker will be a leg-breaker after they see Reason. So, Reason government is not one hundred percent efficient and occasionally trips over its own shoelaces, but by and large it is still an improvement over the systems in place by everyone else.

The other sense of unease is purely at a grass roots level, and could be where adventurers come into the picture. Both local governments and religions, have over the last several years, shown a remarkable lack of concern about their increasingly powerful neighbor. In more than a few cases this is because the most powerful and influential people in the government secretly support Reason. And Causes, High Priests and Priestesses do not seem to be interested either. And enough average people have noticed this that a few small groups are trying to investigate what is going on, on their own.

These groups are just now finding out about each other, and making fumbling first attempts at communication and cooperation. And these groups have *already* been infiltrated by Reason. Not as a whole, but some of the individual groups certainly have, and the more the groups talk to each other, the more information Reason has, and the greater their ability to infiltrate the other groups. However, this has not happened yet, and most of these grass-roots groups are making their first amateurish attempts at espionage against Reason. To further complicate matters, the Forsaken have probably infiltrated (or started) these groups. While the Forsaken are still in their infancy, they have a bit more experience with keeping things secret and covert actions, even if only in minor details like passing messages. The Forsaken would be better at spotting any infiltration in their ranks, but finding such infiltration is only part of the problem.

Any grass-roots group attempting to investigate the Temple of Reason is likely to be going against the diplomatic and/or official policy of their local government. This means that any "outing" or expulsion of a Reason infiltrator is likely to result in the local government being given the full details of what is going on. Plus, if the local government or law enforcement has been co-opted by Reason, any action by citizen groups is likely to be fruitless, suppressed or result in those taking the action ending up seeing Reason.

In any case, at the Warp plus 10 year point, the Temple of Reason is looking for is what is needed for their ultimate goal, the full exposure of the Slab, and determining exactly what it will take to open it. This is an interesting matter, since no Cause will tell anything, there are no written records anywhere, and the Unspoken, with one exception, are not accessible. But, there is part of one Unspoken on Earth right now, and possible adventures involving this Unspoken are likely to be happening about now. It could be that other pages written by the original burnout in the "Long Now" adventure have made or are making their way to the Temple of Reason, or it might even be that the spell in question in that adventure is what is needed to open the Slab! The result of opening the Slab would certainly be the vengeance the insane Unspoken wants, and the chaos it would cause would certainly be to the advantage of the Lich Lord the fragments of the Unspoken currently reside in.

Another possibility is that uncovering the Slab would allow reading and deciphering just enough of the shifting runes upon it to allow the Temple of Reason to figure out how to open it. This reading and deciphering will take at least a decade, and uncovering enough of the Slab to make this possible will take this long as well, which brings the climax of the adventure at the Warp plus 30 years point, a fitting final victory (or defeat!) for the adventurers, and one whose outcome could also affect the Warp plus 300 year campaign world.

Adventure seed - The adventurers, who are well established in the local area and have some sort of reputation to recommend them, are approached in a very melodramatic, secret yet amateurish way with an offer of employment, or something of possible interest, based on what is known of their likes, dislikes, friends and enemies. For instance, a child is paid to give them a written message of vague but interesting import, and indicates that the adventurer is to go to a particular spot at a particular time for more details. And that location has another written message, sending them somewhere else, enough times to be really annoying. Or, they are handed a message, and if the child is asked who gave it to them, the child blurts out the person's name, since the person neglected to choose a messenger who could not identify them. Or, the child might answer "that guy sitting there on the corner", at which point said guy notices being pointed at and the adventurer seeing them, and runs off.

This particular opening phase should last just long enough to put the adventurers (and players) in a bad mood, just to add a little tension to the first meeting. Regardless, after getting through all the preliminaries, it seems that some group of private citizens is worried about the Temple of Reason, and wants someone with some talent to investigate. They aren't sure exactly what information they want, save that they want more than they currently know. This group, like most such groups, has a common interest, but a wide divergence when it comes to what should be done, how much they are willing to pay for it, and so on. Odds are that any opening meeting will involve the important people in the group, and they will not see eye to eye on these matters. *Play it to the hilt*. Then, if there is a Forsaken involved, he or she can approach the adventurers quietly afterwards and make their own proposal, just to complicate things a little.

In addition to anything else they want to argue about in front of the adventurers, the group does agree that they *do* want photographs of the work being done at the dam, from as many useful angles as possible (the diverted river, the hole at the base, the spillway, the boreholes, etc.). It is expensive (relatively speaking) and only black and white, but photographic film *is* available again, and it is made in sizes to fit antique 35mm cameras, and a few of the newly manufactured cameras as well.

▼ **Note** - Photography is very much a rich person's hobby at Warp plus 10 years. A good camera, antique or otherwise will cost 1,000 Credits, which is a lot in the post-Warp environment. A 36-exposure roll of film is about 100 Credits, and developing it would cost another 50 Credits in supplies. And a home developing setup is required unless someone in the region already has one (and you don't mind them seeing your pictures). Such a developing lab will probably cost at least 2,000 Credits in gear and require a room dedicated to its use. A city (not a town) might have one photography studio, which uses an expensive and bulky tripod-mounted camera, and possibly one or two portable cameras for any major newspapers in the city. And, anyone absurdly wealthy and with that interest might have their own camera and developing studio. Assume that 5S for a +0d skill in Photography is going to be required in addition to the hardware, and that a +1d specialization on an existing Chemistry skill (or a 4d+1 overall Chemistry skill roll) will be required to actually manufacture the film and developing chemicals.

The other means of visual recording is through magic. While the Guardians of the Clock are working on an information spell to read CDs at this time, they probably already have one that takes what a person sees and burns it onto something like vellum or wood, and a more complex one that uses special trays filled with resin and colored sand to take permanent (albeit bulky and fragile) images. In the latter case, it is a magical adaptation of pre-Warp concepts. Particles of red, green and blue sand are trapped under a pane of glass. The spell makes a color image using these three colors just as a computer monitor would, and then the resin is set to fix the image in place.

WarpWorld^{v1.0}

The spell (Imager) is more or less as below, and is in the same pre-requisite level as the Radar spell (**WarpWorld**, page 4.11):

Type	Requirements	Cost
-	Framework base	-50
♦	Conveys information	+15
■	Alters form of item	+15
■	Acts as an Attribute	+30
●	Increased 1d effect	+10
●	Requires total concentration	-10
●	Requires focus	-10
■	State-based duration	+15
	Adjusted cost	15
	Activation difficulty	8

The resin in an imaging sheet is heated by the casting of the spell, and the image is fixed when the resin cools and hardens. This makes the expensive imaging sheets reusable. The quality of the image is based on the Fate of the caster, and gets a +1d bonus. The total level is the equivalent "Awareness" of the picture, the level of detail that a third party could use a skill roll with.

EXAMPLE: A picture taken with 2d+2 resolution could have a maximum skill roll of 4d+2 applied to it, since an "Awareness" of 2d+2 can only have +2d added to it for skill purposes.

Individual plates for the Imager spell cost about 100 Credits and are about the size of one of the pages you are reading, about 1 centimeter thick, and weigh about half a kilogram. They have an Armor of 0d+1 and 2 Hits. Non-catastrophic damage simply ruins part of the image. For travel purposes, a ruggedized case that holds several plates is used.

The Guardians of the Clock *will* happily sell the knowledge of this spell, either as in-house training or having a tutor come to you (either of which could take a few months), but this could be experience spent in between the year 3 and year 10 segments if desired. Or, a Guardian "photographer" could be hired if needed, at the cost of no less than 100 Credits per day, plus room, board and travel expenses each way (and 100 Credits per imaging tray you want to keep). *Hazard pay is extra.*

With all of that in the background, adventurers have the information they need to decide to take on the job, or if they decline, they at least know a little more than they did before. And if they hear news in a few weeks of arrests for "terrorist" activity, or that some of the locals have disappeared after "illegally entering Reason territory", then they might start having their own suspicions. Suspicions which could either be enhanced or reduced if or when the locals return a few weeks later with a story that "it was all just a misunderstanding". Or, they could just disappear, or their bodies might be returned after they were shot "while attempting a terrorist act against a strategic Reason facility".

If adventurers do take on the task, it will involve some preparation and travel, as well as negotiation for any compensation for their expenses. The grassroots group is concerned, but is probably not all that wealthy. They will want more from adventurers than they can really afford. You could always have a semi-secret wealthy benefactor who wishes to remain anonymous (and can provide a camera and film), but this loan would by itself likely identify the benefactor, even if they are never seen. On the other hand, by year 10, adventurers should be passably well-off in terms of money and gear, and if they are interested in the job, take it for an amount that would barely cover their expenses. Which to be honest, is all that the hiring group is likely to have, barring the aforementioned anonymous benefactor.

The territory of Reason is *not* sealed. Travel and trade go in and through it quite a bit. Much of Reason's influence and wealth comes from the safety of its territory and its strict but corruption-free legal and economic systems. Reason adherents live efficiently, sometimes to the point of austerity, but this efficiency is often expressed by a small number of high-quality items rather than many inexpensive ones. They are a large consumer of high-quality pre-Warp goods and materials, as well as for high-quality items of new manufacture. The government of Reason is much the same, and has the wealth to invest in or commission big ticket, experimental goods like steam shovels. Reason exports its own manufactured or processed goods, including cement, explosives, liquor, specialized iron castings and small stationary steam engines, and has a rail hub which facilitates the warehousing and shipping of both imported and locally produced goods. Their own local currency is also rock-solid and has never suffered any untoward devaluation.

While the territory is fairly open, many aspects of Reason society are closed to outsiders. One has to join Reason to fully gain the benefits, which will include more favorable taxes or import/export duties and so on. And of course, simply paying lip service to Reason to get the benefits will get you caught in the end, with stiff penalties, the least of which is a permanent bar from entry and trade with the territory, though this can be waived for a *genuine* conversion to the cause of Reason...

While the bulk of Reason territory is not sealed, the area around the dam is barred to outsiders. This happened gradually, sometime around year 6. Roads are limited to Reason vehicles and Reason members. The security is not extremely tight, but it is clearly posted as an "economic security zone", with small print saying "deadly force authorized". *And they mean it.* For spotting both infiltration and exit, the Reason observers have a 3d+0 Awareness roll against a default Difficulty of Challenging(9). Anyone in the infiltrating group with Stealth can try to figure a path that avoids the handful of observation posts, giving the observers +1 difficulty on an Average(7) Stealth task, and +1 difficulty for each 2 points the roll is made by. The default difficulty of the Stealth task is +1 for each extra person in the group, -3 difficulty if pre-Warp topographical maps are available, and -2 if an undetected entry and exit had been made within the past few months. Adventurers with Fading do not affect the overall skill roll unless they are operating alone, in which case the default difficulty is reduced by their Fate. Sneaking in or out at night would appear to be easier, but the use of magical night vision is difficult this close to the Slab. A party composed entirely of those with a Gifted sort of night vision might get a significant bonus.

EXAMPLE: A party of four led by an adventurer with pre-Warp maps and a Stealth roll of 3d+1 would have a default difficulty of 7 on their Stealth task (+3 for extra party members, -3 for maps). If they roll an 11, the Reason spotting roll goes from a Difficulty of 9 to a Difficulty of 12.

Note that the extra -2 for previous success is turned into a +2 if someone else entered via the same route in that interval and was detected, *and* the adventurers *do not* know that someone else was caught using "their" route. That is, adventurers *think* they have a safe route, when in reality it is a former hole in security that is now being observed with *more* scrutiny than normal.

Failing the task means that someone will open fire on them with deadly intent, *after* notifying someone else of the incursion. Assume the towers are equipped with an early version of the Gatling Gun, 4d+0 damage, autofire, unreliable (jams on a roll of 7 or less), and the *first* burst of shots will be fired with an Accuracy of 4 (later bursts with an Accuracy of 0 or 2, depending whether or not the shooter chooses to aim for a turn). The skill of the shooter will be 3d+2 and the Difficulty of the task (*before* Accuracy bonus) is going to be 1d+14, since the path of entry or exit will vary in how close it gets to an observation point. If you make up a map of the dam area with guard towers shown, you can just use the approximate range to one if the sneaking in or out roll is failed.

Being spotted on the way in pretty much aborts the mission, unless the Reason spotters have orders to hold their fire, like if the adventurers had their cover blown and Reason wants to capture them. Escaping from a botched entry can either be roleplayed or just be a roll on some sort of Stealth or evasion-related skill or power to get them safely out of Reason territory, which is going to be at least a 15 kilometer trip. Escaping if spotted on exit is much the same. The more that the Reason spotters make their roll by, the earlier the adventurers were spotted, and the easier their escape task. If entry is successful, adventurers clearly took a good route, and their Stealth roll for exit is at -3 to Difficulty. The more that Reason spotters make their roll by to detect exiting adventurers, the closer to the dam they are spotted, making the exit task harder.

Ground troops and tower guards will have the equivalent of AK-47's, retooled for black-powder firing. A handful will have heavier single-shot rifles or possibly grenade launchers. It is important to remember that the dam area is *not* a heavily fortified zone crawling with soldiers. It is lightly guarded and mostly unpatrolled, but those who are there take their task seriously. If they call for reinforcements, those reinforcements are likely to be anyone in the area, civilians and dam workers taking up arms and using their area knowledge to block likely avenues of escape. They will be more numerous than adventurers, but far less skilled.

The gamemaster has to determine how to handle things if it goes seriously south. Obviously, deciding on capture, interrogation and conversion of the adventurers gives adventurers more options than a losing fight to the death. In particular, it gives them a chance to learn more and hopefully escape with their lives. This would make an Enemy of Reason for all of them, a powerful, fairly close force that is willing to use any means necessary to silence potential threats...

Adventure seed - Another possible adventure and introduction of local resistance to Reason can result from Reason's co-opting of local authority figures. If the local leader is elected, then an election cycle is coming up and a serious challenge to what is seen as "complacent and conciliatory" policy towards Reason looks to be gaining a lot of support. If the local leadership is by rule of arms (like a self-styled king), then a genuine local resistance may form, with the intent of overthrowing the current leader. In both cases, the *current* leader is secretly part of Reason, or is highly influenced by someone who is secretly part of Reason.

Democracy and autocracy are two radically different adventure directions, but they share some common elements. In both cases, "acceptable" levels of official force can be brought to bear, *will* be brought to bear against opposing figures. In addition, extra-legal means like hired killers (not traceable to Reason or local government) may be hired to eliminate opposition. Infiltration of any opposition will be attempted, and if the possibility to abduct and convert an opposition leader arises, it will be taken. Reason is also willing to supply money and equipment to the incumbent local leadership to cover unusual expenses to help sway the popular opinion, without being overt about it.

EXAMPLE: A long-overdue rebuilding of a local bridge could suddenly find the funding it needed, due to an unforeseen "budget surplus". And of course, the contracts for this would go to local businessmen who have a great deal of influence in the community, and so on...

This would put adventurers in the position of bodyguards and intelligence agents, or possibly even becoming the opposition candidate or resistance leader. Success might mean that one of the adventurers starts the Warp plus 30 year segment as the local mayor, governor or king!

There is no reason that both of these adventure seeds could not be happening at the same time. The full cycle of events could easily take a year or more, during which other adventures and plots could be unfolding, intertwined or completely unrelated to the ongoing Reason question.

▼ **WARP PLUS 30 YEARS** - There has been a nearly twenty year hiatus between the last adventure segment and this one. Adventurers could have married, raised families and had grandchildren in this interval. Plus, they could have gained a very significant amount of downtime experience, and will have likely crossed an age threshold, further changing the allocation of their skill and attribute points. Before players get into this, the gamemaster should give them a breakdown of any important events that have happened in the interval, split into four parts of equal length. Players have to decide how to *fully* allocate any experience gained in *each* interval before they can do anything with points from the next interval. That is, they do not have to spend their points blind to outside events, but neither can they spend all their points with complete hindsight. Remember that things like positions of Status may have to be bought, or could be improved in this interval. Maybe the job of mayor got a significant pay raise (a level or two of Wealth), or the adventurer's reputation has gone up (an extra level of Status).

EXAMPLE: If the downtime is 18 years, then this is four sets of 4.5 years, or about 18 experience per interval (assuming 1 point per 3 months). The gamemaster might discuss the eventual fallout of the year 10 segment, after which this 18 experience is spent. Then, the gamemaster gives three bits of local, regional and overall news that foreshadows the final adventure segment, and players have to allot their experience after each bit of news, until they have all their downtime and age-related experience spent, just as the year 30 segment begins.

And of course, players should be reminded that this is going to be the *final* adventure segment for the adventurers. After whatever major plots are unfolding resolve, the adventurers will be retired. So, if there is still some unresolved issue or challenge in the adventurer's life, this is the *last* chance to do something about it in play. If there is some destiny the adventurer is meant to have, this is when it *has* to happen.

The year 30 segment opens with a lot of turmoil. Reason has always been insular and peaceful (for the most part), but their policy and pacifism is taking a turn in an unwholesome direction.

Slavery has *always* been a touchy subject in the post-Warp environment. Aside from the past cultural connotations for some ethnic groups, there has been constant and often heated argument of the ethicality versus practicality of the practice. Remember, in the immediate post-Warp environment there were a *lot* of mouths to feed, and virtually zero mechanization to produce or transport food for these people. In many areas, farming was dropped to subsistence (i.e. labor-intensive) levels for several years, and there were far too many people who considered easy, economical access to food a kind of birthright, rather than a fortunate side effect of high technology.

For one reason or another, many people in the post-Warp environment had nothing to offer for food, clean water and protection except for the ability to do hard labor. In a coercive situation like this it was a short trip from an informal "work or starve" situation to a more formalized one where someone would "rent out" their labor supply to someone else, or even sell it. These arrangements soon dropped to an individual level, and those governments, warlords or other groups that had "taken in" refugees (and worked them half to death) wanted a return on their investment, and were willing to make their own laws on the practice. *Laws that the new slaves of course had no say in.*

And so, formal slavery has existed in many parts of the world, including some that trade with the campaign region, ever since the first month or so after the Warp. The various religions are split on the matter. Some prohibit it, others disapprove but do not forbid it, some allow it by their members, but if the slaves convert to that faith, they must be freed, and some faiths have no problems one way or the other on the matter. It is up to the gamemaster to decide how any Causes the adventurers follow have ruled on the situation.

How this relates to the current situation is that the Temple of Reason has been buying a lot of slaves in the past year or two. And by "a lot", we mean thousands of them, enough to drive up the price considerably and actually increase the slave trade in and around the area, since the profit margins for slavers are now up by at least a quarter. Questions to Reason officials about the need for these slaves are answered with the diplomatic equivalent of "none of your business". Members of abolitionist groups trying to agitate in Reason territory have been routinely arrested and expelled, as well as being completely unsuccessful in their efforts. Repeat offenders have simply been locked up unless punitive fines are paid. Abolitionists lacking such funds do not languish in Reason cells for long. They get put on chain gangs and either work, or die. *Sometimes both.*

Because of policies like this and other changes, over the past twenty years, there has been some more interest in what is going on in Reason territory, some of it by far-away regions the adventurers might not even have heard of. This is because these areas may have heard of Reason, but they can get very little useful information from the neighbors of Reason, and this is starting to worry them. By this time, depending on the previous adventures, Reason may have several of its neighbors completely in its pocket, able to use them to influence the outside situation without actually appearing to be responsible. For instance, if one region does not allow passage of slave caravans or trains, then one more friendly to Reason will.

Reason has just about finished the excavation of the Slab. Within the highest reaches of governments that are Reason-free, and among a few of the Forsaken, there are long-range photographs or fixed images from scrying devices, showing the massive and clearly artificial Slab, surrounded by retaining walls a hundred meters high, dwarfing the second-generation steam shovels that are still excavating it. And while slave labor is clearly in use around the perimeter of the excavation, those actually at the lowest level seem to be dressed different, and margin notes on these pictures imply that only Reason followers are allowed on the Slab itself.

The Slab is a quandary. No Cause knows what it is, or even seems to care or can even be made to care, which is both worrying and frustrating. Going over the sparse historical records of the immediate post-Warp era does make it clear that the Slab appeared, perhaps even fell from the sky at the time of the Warp, and that the first glimmerings of Reason happened within a few months of the Warp. The implication is that Reason has been working towards unearthing this Slab for the past thirty years, and that everything they do and everything they have done is towards reaching this goal. What will happen or what they intend to do when it is fully unearthed is unknown, but if the information cannot be gotten from Reason, the only possible interpretation is that it is *not* going to be good.

And this is where year 30 opens. Governments far away have some seriously talented espionage operatives in the nations adjacent to Reason (individuals or groups equal to or even more skilled and powerful than the adventurers). Neighboring countries are either extremely worried about Reason, or defending Reason's "ideological freedom of expression and self-determination", to the extent of threatening to come to Reason's aid if any action is taken against Reason. Already, there have been restrictions at the borders between formerly friendly nations. Credentials are being required, certain commodities are restricted for import or export, and all of a sudden some governments have pretty accurate lists of just about every mage within a hundred kilometers, and those who have certain spells or abilities are not even allowed within the borders of certain countries. Or worse, they find that their travel rights within their own country are being restricted "pending an analysis of threats to national security" (or similar language). In this case, a full and free travel permit is easily acquired, provided one is willing to take a short "training course" in the new government policies and security practices (which really just involves forced exposure to a fragment of the Stone until one is converted to Reason).

Known members of the Forsaken are going underground or otherwise disappearing, and even Arch-mages in the region are getting vexed. They more than anyone else sense there is *something* that interferes with normal magic in Reason territory, and while it has gotten no stronger over the years, it has somehow become more obvious, or perhaps "eager". The "feel" of the effect has changed, even if the effects have not.

Those Arch-mages that have survived this long are pretty much unassailable. Even with a lot of technological weaponry out there, Arch-mages with thirty years of experience under their belts are really clever and well-prepared. Nothing short of a nuclear weapon is going to catch one by surprise, and most of them are vindictive enough to already have triggered retributive spells in place. As pieces on the board, Arch-mages are a wild card that Reason is attempting to keep in check with some intimidation against people, places or things the Arch-mages value but cannot necessarily protect. Their friends, their children or grandchildren, places of natural beauty, the source of some good or service they highly value, and so on. This is *never* going to be as overt as a direct threat. *Arch-mages are after all, insane in one way or the other and do not respond well to direct threats.* Reason is smarter than that, and the Arch-mages are quite adept at reading subtle signals. A grandchild who is bumped down a flight of stairs by a stranger and breaks an arm, and is found with a Reason tract in her pocket later. A shipment of a favorite delicacy delayed by the suspicious death of the supplier, or a toxic spill that disrupts supply of a key ingredient. Things that say *"we know what you value, don't make us destroy it utterly."*

And Reason, as best as it can, has taken precautions against direct action against its key people or facilities by an angry Arch-mage. Enough that they would likely win any direct confrontation (though it would be with a lot of casualties).

This gives several avenues for adventurers to be drawn into things, even if they are not concerned enough to act on their own. If they are part of or connected to the higher levels of an uncorrupted government, they might be tasked to operate outside of official channels, because their government contacts suspect a Region mole in their midst. Adventurers from far away might be one of the espionage teams sent into a nation adjacent to Reason to see what is going on, and *"do something about it, if possible"*. Adventurers in a country whose government is secretly controlled by Reason might find themselves under undue government scrutiny. If they are on good terms with an Arch-mage, they might be contacted by a seething Arch-mage who calls in past favors to see if adventurers can do *something* to give the Arch-mage some more freedom of action (investigate and stop whoever is locally responsible for the intimidation, without leaving tracks that lead back to the Arch-mage). And last, a government where *some* parts are under Reason influence might try to stage a coup to prevent some other part of government from taking a serious anti-Reason action or revealing some potentially damaging information about Reason and its plans.

There might even be a military buildup in a nearby Reason-controlled government to threaten, intimidate or merely delay action by a neighboring country that has managed to avoid any Reason influence within its borders.

And all of this isn't even the main focus of the adventure! It will take several months for Reason to fully finish the excavation and preparations. This involves the physical excavation, of course. They may also need a few thousand more slaves, some obscure and rare components, and perhaps some astronomical or metaphysical conjunction, perhaps some similar lunar and planetary alignment to how things were when the Slab was first put into place eons ago. Among other clues that something unusual is going on, there is a gold shortage in the region. Anyone who digs for information will find that Reason is buying up or otherwise acquiring as much gold as they can get their hands on. For instance, they have adjusted their exchange rates to be more favorable for gold coinage, to the extent that gold decas are becoming scarce and causing problems for those engaging in high-value transactions (paper or other fiat currency is still regarded with more suspicion than precious metals, and is still devalued outside its area of issue).

As mentioned far earlier, there are probably two ways to open the Slab. The first is to bind and sacrifice a manifest First Cause, a very difficult task to say the least. The other is to sacrifice some *thousands* of unwilling humans and use their blood to power the opening. We're not going to go into the actual spell, since it is merely a plot device, save that organizing everything required is going to take time, work and be pretty obvious to anyone who is in the region of the dam.

And we also mentioned how to short-circuit the process. The Stone and Slab have to be re-united to seal the rift. And just as the Causes have a blind spot concerning the Slab, Reason has a blind spot concerning the Stone. They do not realize that simply reuniting the pieces will undo everything that they have worked for, but if this notion is explained in detail to them, they can be made to understand the peril and would make the Stone inaccessible. *Fortunately, that has not happened yet.* The only people who have an idea of the importance of a reunited Stone and Slab are a few of the Forsaken and Arch-mages, and they are keeping that information very much to themselves.

▼ **Note** - The capture by Reason of someone who knows this could be the focus of a extraction or rescue adventure.

There are other means to at least temporarily halt Reason's armageddon countdown. Anything that covers the Slab will make the final sacrifice impossible until it is uncovered again. Of the ways to do this, perhaps the easiest is to breach the thick cement levees that are used to divert the river, allowing it to pour over the retaining walls down into the Slab excavation. This would set things back a few weeks while repairs were made, perhaps longer if some astronomical conjunction was required for when the final spell is to be cast. The amount of mundane or magical energy required to breach the levees is significant. It would take tons of well-placed and tamped explosives to make a large enough breach, or a transformational magic on an immense scale to alter the cement over a wide enough area (at least a 4d+0 "alters form of item" effect over at least an 8 meter radius, noting that non-Reason mages have to do this while taking a -5 to their Fate for spell effects).

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An outright invasion of Region territory would require Reason to divert some manpower towards its defense, and a thorny and vicious defense it would be. Poison gas, no quarter asked or given, atrocities committed with bodies left as a warning, suicide bombers, shelling their own positions to do more damage to an enemy, tactics that normal troops would be aghast and demoralized by, but which faze Reason not in the least.

Killing the High Priest of Reason and all of his subordinates who have learned the spell required to open the Slab would set them back a few months while someone else learned it. Taking the original copy of the spell would not work, since exact duplicates have been made and stashed away.

▼ **Note** - While a Reason member would never deliberately allow such a document to fall into non-Reason hands, it is always possible that bad luck and circumstance could cause one of these copies to go astray. Which would result in a very prompt and aggressive Reason response to try and get it back or destroy it.

▼ **GUARD TOWERS** - The average guard tower surrounding the dam is a wooden affair about ten meters tall, accessed by a ladder. The lower three meters of the ladder are hinged and pulled up to make it inaccessible when occupied, and there is also a trap door that can be latched. A tower usually has two guards, each of whom has their personal rifle, plus the tower has one Gatling gun. The Gatling gun is mounted on a pivot at the end of horizontal arm that goes through a central pivot in the tower, allowing the gun to be brought to bear in any direction with a few seconds of preparation. The tower is made of fairly heavy wood, which provides 2d+0 armor against primitive weapons and 1d+0 armor against gunfire. In the year 30 segment, this armor is upgraded with metal sheathing to provide an Armor of 2d+0 against all attacks. The tower has four legs, it can stand with any three intact, and each leg has an Armor of 3d+0, 10 Hits and a Damage Limit of 5, noting that gunfire and simple penetrations do no damage.

These guard towers are not meant to be forts. They are merely armed observation posts. Their main way of spotting things is with binoculars, and their main way of signaling there is trouble is by shooting their weapons. They do have heliographs for signaling during the day, and signal lanterns for use at night.

▼ **THE DAM** - The dam is a key location for the climax of this setting, but the exact drawing of it is up to the gamemaster, as it has to fit into the real world area in which this part of the campaign takes place. You need to find a map, even a poor one of the region where the dam is in your campaign, and then apply the descriptive text to it as needed. In the end, the reservoir is only partially excavated, since Reason needs the Slab, not a fully restored dam. For annotating your own drawing or map, use the following information:

One end of the excavation is bounded by the dam itself. The road to the base of the dam forks here, with one side going to a cement works that makes the blocks used for the retaining wall. A road from the cement plant zig-zags up the side of the valley to the top of the dam, and there is also a set of tracks on the side of the dam and a large freight lift pulled by a winch that the top of the dam. The other fork of the road goes to the ten meter round hole bored through the dam's base as a drain. Now that the water has been drained, it is also used as the most convenient entrance for Reason members who have clearance to be there. Pretty much anyone in Reason can get clearance, if they have a justification for it. Plenty of Reason members have been given tours of the Slab. They are in thrall to Reason, but they are also delighted that the Great Work is coming to pass, and seeing and touching the Slab is like a holy pilgrimage. And more than one imposter has had their psyche blasted into nothingness by its touch... So, the Temple of Reason actually encourages its members to make at least one pilgrimage to see and touch the Slab. *Those who pass up opportunities for this are suspect...* However, regular visitors who can come and go undersupervised are far fewer in number, a hundred individuals at most. These include a number of mages, linguists, scientists, and the crews and fuel deliveries for the heavy equipment that trundles around the still buried perimeter of the Slab. The twenty-ton steam shovels are dwarfed by the Slab, and their leather-shod steel treads leave not a mark or scuff on the slab, even when the leather peels loose and the contact is steel-on-Slab.

This hole in the dam is accessed by a road that runs up one side of the river channel. This follows the course of the pre-Warp road, but is of post-Warp construction, since the old road was completely wiped out by the flood that poured down the river channel when the Slab sent millions of tons of water sloshing over the top of the dam.

The parts of the Slab that have been totally excavated have about ten meters clearance, and then a retaining wall made of cement blocks rises at a steep angle anywhere from fifty to a hundred meters high. The Slab came to rest at a slight angle, and the shoreline of the reservoir varies a bit, so in some places the retaining wall goes all the way up, while in others it blends into a natural rock face. This wall is scalable without special tools. The blocks are small enough and have large enough cracks between them to make it a time-consuming but not particularly difficult task. However, doing it without safety equipment means that any missed step is going to be your last.

Wooden stairs have been built in several places at the edges of the Slab, allowing people to get to the vertical, 10 meter high sides of the Slab. Two sets of these stairs also allow you to get to the top of the Slab from the hole in the base of the dam. It has been excavated just down to its base. The underside of Slab has no runes on it. A few tunnels have been dug completely under the Slab to check for any hidden features, but there do not appear to be any, and oddly, those who see Reason are *intensely* uncomfortable when under the Slab, a sort of religious claustrophobia. The closer they get to the center of the Slab's underside, the more they begin to feel what is *truly* on the other side and what will be released when they complete the Great Work. But, as they return to the light of day, these feelings fade and are forgotten except as vague but terrible nightmares. As a result of these un-Reasonable fears, these tunnels have been blocked up a few meters in. Because of the near-impervious nature of the Slab, these small cul-de-sacs are used for storage of the dynamite used to blast apart particularly large boulders. Assume each of these storage areas holds up to 40 kilograms of low-grade dynamite (about a 10d6 half-lethal explosion, more if tamped so it can only go in one direction).

On one side of the reservoir, about fifty meters from the top of the retaining wall on that side is the rerouted river. This flows through a channel that is bounded on one side by the natural geology of the reservoir, and on the outside by a cement levee about ten meters thick at the base and two meters thick at the top. In normal rates of flow the channel is about twenty meters wide and six meters deep, and flows quite rapidly to the diversion spillway cut through the rock at the side of the dam. In severe flood situations, Reason engineers have a floodgate several kilometers upstream that they can open to flood some local farmland, but in most situations the river channel is only about half full and can handle most seasonal variation in water level without such extreme measures.

At one side of the excavation, the horizontal clearance from the Slab to the retaining wall has been increased to make a channel several meters deep, an indent in the retaining wall. This has a noisy and dangerous bucket lift, powered by an adjustable waterwheel in the river channel. The dirt and rock excavated by the steam shovels is dumped here and fed into the buckets, where it is lifted to the top, fed into the river channel and flushed downstream. For the last several years this constant influx of mud has made the river brown for several kilometers downstream. Rocks or debris too large for the buckets is broken or cut into smaller chunks at the bottom of the bucket lift, and then hoisted up. The large debris is either hauled off via a rail spur or broken into smaller chunks for flushing away.

The most dangerous part of the area around the Slab is the area still being excavated. The steam shovels here started at the top and worked their way down, with each area temporarily reinforced as the digging progressed, and the full retaining wall built in front of the temporary holdbacks as the bottom was reached. In the final area still being excavated, the height of this timber and cable reinforcement is fifty meters or more, a marginal safety net on a slope ready to slump a little with a heavy rain or small earth tremor. The crumpled remains of one steam shovel attest to this having happened at least once without sufficient warning to clear the area. A landslump here would be annoying and possibly fatal to a few people, but would only be a temporary setback to the excavation.

At the very highest point of the excavated Slab, far from the dam, is an altar, made of normal stone, but carved on its top with many of the same runes that flow across the Slab. Blood grooves run off this altar in a precise pattern into the runes of the Slab, and this altar is clearly meant to be the focus of some sort of blood sacrifice.

At the second highest corner of the slab, on the same edge as the altar but close to the dam, is the damaged corner of the Slab. It has no special marking or significance. It is about seventy meters from the hole in the base of the dam (twenty from the hole, up ten meters of stairs, and then another forty meters of uphill walking on the slightly tilted Slab).

The last feature of note is the spillway. Originally cut into the side of the valley to divert the river while the dam was completed, it now is the main channel that the river flows through. The river's flow is much reduced from pre-Warp levels, as an earthquake far upstream diverted one of the major feeder streams, but the flow rate is still significant. In the early years, generators were mounted in the spillway, but with the debris poured into the river channel now, these generators are now externally mounted and fed by pipes drawing water from upstream of the bucket lift.

If flow from the river dried up, one could conceivably get from the base of the dam to the top through this spillway, but trying to fight one's way up through the rock and dirt-laden flow of several hundred tons per second is going to be impossible. Granted, there is *technically* room to climb this tunnel while avoiding the water flow, but there are far easier ways to get from the base of the dam to the top, and far less fatal ways of getting from the top of the dam to its base.

Security around the dam area is *significantly* higher than in year 10. There is a clearcut path at least ten meters wide on the entire ridgeline around the dam, with a 3-meter tall fence of narrow wooden slats and solid wooden posts. Reason did not have the resources to make a wire or metal fence that high and that long, so they settled for a barrier that would delay entry, yet allow anyone attempting entry to be seen. Watchtowers can now see the *entire* perimeter, though there are two spots where watchtowers cannot see each other (but are manned by Children of Reason). In the late stages of preparation, Reason will also launch an observation balloon, which will fly a pair of binocular-equipped observers in twelve-hour shifts. The night observers have magical night vision capability, but at a -1d penalty on their normal Awareness rolls. Sneaking in (or out) thus requires a roll to get to the area, another to cross the fence, and a third to get anywhere within a hundred meters of the retaining walls or edge of the excavation. Sneaking out requires the same. In addition, the aerial observers will get an extra roll to spot intruders once for each full hour any intruders remain lurking about.

Remember that anywhere inside the perimeter is probably a -5 penalty on magical effects by non-Reason mages. Magic will likely be the *least* powerful tool in the arsenal of adventurers, unless they have a friendly Arch-mage in tow, and even then he or she will have their hands full, considering that any opposing mages will have spells running at a +5 bonus in effect! And of course, keeping rein on an angry and marginally sane Arch-mage is probably more difficult than infiltrating an enemy military-magical complex!

▼ **Note** - If magic is the only real edge the adventurers have, then the gamemaster can say that the preparations for the ceremony are drawing the radiated power of the Slab back into itself, and the level and radius of the effects on spell-casting is decreased to near-zero until one is right at the Slab.

▼ **THE CEREMONY** - It is possible that adventurers could simply snag the Stone, infiltrate the dam site with it and seal it back onto the Slab with no one being the wiser until it is too late. Of course, this requires actually getting a hold of the Stone, which is a central and clearly visible feature in the primary Temple of Reason, and doing so in a way that will not increase security levels at the dam. It is *possible* that highly skilled infiltrators with a magical forgery of the Stone could steal the original from the bronze fist wrapped around it, substitute the fake and then get to the dam site unopposed, but there are a *lot* of ways this could go wrong, and very few ways in which it could go right.

The other (more dramatic) way would be to wait until the ceremony and spell is about to be cast, and *then* steal it. For the final act of the Great Work, virtually everyone who can see Reason and is capable of making the trip *will* be there. Only a very few have to remain at their posts in the name of the greater Reason. People are going to the Slab for two purposes. One is to be there to witness the completion of the Great Work. The other is that the ritual sacrifice of several thousand bound and drugged slaves requires a lot of arms wielding a lot of sacrificial knives.

In the wee hours of the morning on the day the Great Work is to be complete, every slave in Reason territory is drugged into a stupor, bound tightly and stuffed into a sack with breathing holes. This is both for convenience, and because the followers of Reason do not feel it would be "right" to have them touch the Slab and see Reason, only to be sacrificed. Not that anyone who sees Reason is unwilling to die for Reason, it is just seen as better that someone else does the dying if possible. Caravans of trucks will convey groups from distant parking lots to the dam, where like stadium seating, everyone has a particular coordinate on the Slab for themselves and their offering. Spare slaves are stacked to one side like cordwood in case they are needed. Thousands of sacrificial knives with fine steel blades and solid gold hilts are made ready with a small taste of blood, and despite the throng, the only sounds are the rustling of cloth and the moans of semi-conscious slaves. The humidity from the sweat and warmth of this many people raises the temperature of the excavation, and it rises into the cooler air above, it condenses into a fog that blocks out all sight of the Slab from above. Anyone observing this fog from above might imagine they see untold giant faces form, writhe in anguish and then sink again into the mist. If anyone is doing a form of magical scrying, this would be a good image to give them.

The preparations will take most of a day and well into evening. Generator-powered electric lights (with battery backups) will drive back most of the darkness, but shadows still abound. Even in this final hour, Reason is relatively well-prepared. Water and sewer lines have been installed through the hole at the bottom of the dam, and there is even a buffet, information kiosk and first aid station.

Provided there is no interference, the final aspect of the ceremony will involve thousands of people with sacrificial knives sitting on thousands of semi-conscious victims. After an intoning of the opening spell by the High Priest of Reason that takes upwards of an hour, he will raise his knife high, and his followers will do likewise. With a final arcane syllable, he will plunge it into the heart of his victim, driving it through the body so the tip comes out the other side and touches the altar his victim lies upon. Like a string of dominoes falling, the followers of Reason will do the same to their victims. The Slab will greedily suck the blood from the victims, draining them dry in a matter of seconds, filling every rune on the slab with a sickly crimson light. This will fade after a few seconds, and all will be silent and still just long enough for people to wonder if they did it right. And then, everyone within the excavation and for maybe a kilometer in every direction will have their soul and body blasted into nothingness, as thousands upon thousands of powerful godsparks fly free, find new homes, blast those poor mortal bodies to bits like tiny nuclear explosions, and then depart the mortal sphere into the ether and the Cause they originally came from. *And hell is released on Earth.* War will erupt between the Causes, and their Priests and Priestesses on Earth will declare bloody war in the name of ancient feuds in the heavens.

▼ **AFTERMATH** - If the ceremony is successful, the remainder of the adventurer's lives, however long they are, will be a violent struggle to survive, and to try to preserve even the tiniest shred of everything they have worked for in the past thirty years. The Causes eventually come to their senses after about a century of conflict that lays waste to recovery efforts worldwide, and which destroys most of the surviving pre-Warp knowledge, despite the best efforts of the Forsaken and the Guardians of the Clock. The Warp plus 300 years campaign will begin at a much lower level of civilization. Tech advances at the edges of Industrial Era tech will be absent or rare. This would include steamships capable of oceanic travel, vacuum-tube radios, aircraft and zeppelins, and steam power in general will be rarer. Not so much because the knowledge is lost, but because so much of the heavy tooling for making them was ruined, and the people with the practical experience in making them were killed.

Plus, the concerns of everyday survival have made rebuilding them a low priority. Civilization and culture in year 300 will be more authoritarian and centralized. There will be more kingdoms than democracies, more walled cities than open towns, more areas in between cities and towns where it is wisest to travel armed and in groups.

By year 300, the Causes have once again forged a truce amongst themselves and resealed their inner demons. But human memory lingers, and the religious differences on Earth are far more pronounced. What would have been simple rivalries are now open hatreds. Nationalism and racism are strong, and wars are still fought over things that happened two centuries before. Disputed territories are common, one side claiming it by right of conquest, the other demanding its return as part of its ancient heritage and so on.

On the other hand, there are ways to interfere with the final ceremony, either in a temporary or permanent fashion. The big trick is to disrupt the ceremony *and* live to brag about it. Killing the High Priest of Reason will abort the ceremony, but only for as long as it takes to restart the invocation with a backup speaker.

Killing or disabling at least one thousand of the knife-wielders during the bloodletting will mean that there were not enough sacrifices, and the opening spell will fizzle. This will result in backup slaves being used, and if necessary, the followers of Reason will lie on the Slab and sacrifice themselves at the proper moment. As a mass slaughter note, an airburst 10d+0 lethal explosion would do the trick, as would a 12d+0 normal (half-lethal) explosion. This corresponds approximately to a 60kg frag or 250kg conventional bomb. Not something readily carried, and attempting to invisibly move or teleport something that close to the Slab might also be a problem.

Causing a landslide sufficient to cover part of the Slab will prevent the sacrificial blood offering from covering the whole Slab, and this too will cause the spell to fail.

All of these delaying tactics have the extremely unfortunate side effect of angering some several thousand people with knives, several hundred of which are undoubtedly armed with conventional firearms, and at least a hundred of those there are spellcasters whose effects are all increased by +2d.

If adventurers (or anyone else) manages to reunite Stone and Slab during the ceremony, things will happen differently. The runes on the Slab will all glow brilliant white for a moment and then fade. All will be still for a moment, and then everyone on the Slab will be blasted into a fugue state much like the one people went through during the Warp (any adventurers on the Slab should be encouraged to jump, as a ten meter jump onto soft dirt (1d+2 half-lethal damage) is much to be preferred to the alternative). Those within sight of the Slab but not in contact with it merely suffer 1d+0 Hits of damage that burns through all forms of protection like it wasn't even there, and leaves arcane scars in a fine fractal tracery that never quite fades away, a tracery which will glow like fire anytime the person uses or is targeted by mana at any point in the remainder of their lives.

Those who see Reason and are on the Slab will mostly be killed by the effects, those with more Fate suffering disproportionate casualties. Those who do not see Reason and are on the Slab are knocked unconscious for several minutes. Survivors will suffer a gamut of effects. Some will be fine, while others will be horribly burned, deformed, driven insane or some combination of the above. Mercifully, only those who suffer the least effects are likely to survive the next few minutes.

In addition, the Slab shudders and begins to gain a sort of translucency and insubstantiality at its very surface, an effect which creeps towards its core at a slow but visible rate. The retaining walls around the Slab were never meant to withstand an earthquake, and chunks of cement and rock ranging in size from golf balls to city buses start coming loose and falling into the excavation. Even the smallest of these could be fatal, so staying in the area is *not* an option. It is clear that several large sections of retaining wall are on the verge of failing, and in fact the Slab is completely buried within several minutes, burying most of the followers of Reason, and sadly their slave victims as well. Fortunately for any adventurers there, the stunned state of the followers of Reason means there is *not* a mass stampede for the exit, allowing them to flee while they still can, while the house of evil crumbles in grand melodramatic style.

Over the next few minutes, the chips of the Stone will vanish away (fading at the same rate as the Slab). Over the next few weeks, the Slab will vanish, the rubble on top of it slumps, and the Slab's absence will further destabilize the remaining retaining walls and cause more landslides, including one which fractures the levee, allowing the river to pour down into the reservoir again. The waterfall into the reservoir may be given a name fitting to someone or some event that is appropriate to the situation. The water from the river will percolate down through the debris and exit through the hole in the base of the dam fast enough to keep the reservoir from refilling. A small lake will form at the bottom of the reservoir, but because of the several thousand bodies just beneath the muck, it is a toxic place that will be avoided for decades, especially since some of the bodies apparently did not have sufficient sense to stay dead. Fortunately, they lack the wits to climb out, and they eventually rot away.

Over the next few centuries, the stigma of the place subsides, but it is *never* going to be a popular destination and will probably remain uninhabited. Real or imagined ghostly and terrible events are told about the region, and regardless of what is or isn't true, mages are found dead there once or twice a decade, usually with some sort of arcane artifact or spellbook in their possession, looking like they were struck dead in the middle of spellcasting. Once every couple years the water pouring out the bottom of the dam spits out a battered, gold-hilted knife. Some say the blades are cursed, some say the metal itself is tainted with something unwholesome. The blades *do* fetch prices far beyond the content of their gold, but as to who is buys them and why, there is no solid information.

Of Reason, perhaps a few hundred adherents survived, virtually none of them from the site of the final ceremony. Following Reason, but now forever bereft of it, many took their own lives. A few carried on as best they could, secretly and forlornly hoping for a return of Reason, and some secretly swore vengeance against those who thwarted Reason. At least one hero of that night was shot in the back in a crowded bar on their birthday. Another lived to see all their children die of slow poison. And one was haunted and driven insane by the ghosts of the thousands of innocents that died because of their actions that dark night, though whether those demons came from within or without, no one ever knew. But despite their fates, good or bad, they were remembered well and honored for their deeds, even those deeds in the service of others that proved their own eventual undoing.

Unlike in the fairy tales, the best possible ending is not necessarily a happy one...

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