



# THREEFOLD



A CAMPAIGN  
SETTING FOR **MODERN AGE**

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**THREEFOLD IS DEDICATED TO ALEJANDRO MELCHOR. A PROLIFIC WRITER,  
DESIGNER AND ARTIST, HE SPUN HIS DREAMS INTO THIS BOOK AND MANY OTHERS,  
AND INTO COMMUNITIES THAT MISS HIM AS MUCH AS WE DO. PEACE.**

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# WHEN IT STARTS AT HOME

Neither the photographs (one blurry clawed limb, since the photographer was running and Tweeting at the same time) nor the drawings she saw (complete, if stylized) prepare Rath for how terrifying the thing is. Those don't get across how it moves: how when quiescent, it sort of rolls like a human body twisted into the shape and behavior of some marine invertebrate, its three limbs functionally tentacles though given some angularity by bones working beneath their skin. And how when it's angry, the creature spins like flesh-made-windmill, bouncing off concrete, grabbing the streetlamp, and catapulting itself through the air, all while letting out an ululating scream. Not an animal scream.

Now, though, she concentrates on running, scrambling over bins and parked cars to cross High Street. Although a good foot shorter, she's marginally ahead of Andrzej, who is thankfully grunting through his own sprint, unable to complain about failed containment. Behind her, Rath hears the crunch of a shattered windscreen as the thing lands atop one of the cars she slid over four seconds ago. She yanks her gun out, three-fingered, and fumbles with the safety — shooting's not her field. It's just a fidget and click on the run, but that's enough to put her balance out. She just misses the curb, trips, and slides on pavement, arms awkwardly folded around the pistol. That leaves nothing to stop her face from hitting. She skins her cheek.

A thud from behind makes her flip over. There it is, inverted on two great, hairy arms, still bellowing at a much higher pitch than you'd think for a thing this size. It stinks like raw fish. Rath tastes iron and salt from her wound. *Well, the Irish say they come from the sea.* Its arm or leg or whatever reaches for her; she scrambles backwards, shoots, and misses — or maybe hits, but the bullets don't do anything.



Rath saw the good pictures, the illustrations, a few weeks ago in an old book that'd look even older to a Welsh bookseller, in a gorgeous red stone cottage on another plane of existence, where, unusually, the natives agreed it was Sunday

evening. This was, strictly speaking, cultural pollution, but it had been around for long enough (errant postmen in the '60s, going by the rusted truck) there was no sense fighting it. Anyway, they had bigger problems.

She, Andrzej, Mig, and Chimalma had been playing envoy for the paramount ruler of this world. High King Azraka had been polite at first, and escorted them to the red cottage, which was filled with books, bards to sing their myths, scholars, and three Royal Mail uniforms under glass. The cottage was also very, very far from anywhere settled, but close to the barracks of the king's handpicked troops. Azraka's mother had adopted Earth's calendar, but kept its origins a secret. The errant postmen had allegedly been well treated. Azraka wasn't interested in any other gifts from Earth, or any other plane, and proved unable to imagine the Sodality as anything but a thief of sovereignty. He knew the concerns of his nation would be subsumed into those of his world — a fine deal if he got to rule the lot. But the moment it became apparent there were many worlds beyond his (he called it Kavelda; the Sodality called it OI-16877) and Earth, he thought he'd be just some petty hinterland lord, like the vassals who sent him taxes and Christmas presents (another foreign adoption, its religious significance unknown to the king, though he asked about "Father Christmas of Narnia").

He was a wire-thin creature, Azraka, unable to imagine a government with better intentions than his own. Naturally, he proposed to hold them indefinitely in that comfortable cottage. In that gambit, he revealed the ultimate fate of the old postmen, in three paintings of very old men and three beds of blue flowers out back, but that wasn't too alarming. The cottage would be a very nice place to be imprisoned. The king seemed sincerely committed to a humane, even entertaining, indefinite detention.

Rath and her friends were never in much danger of that. The High King's guard were excellent at parading around in polished armor, competent at preventing people from annoying the monarch, and serviceable soldiers generally, but weren't up to catching Sodalts, who trained to avoid difficult people across countless worlds. But as Azraka seemed to genu-

inely want his prisoners to comfortably appreciate the beauty of his culture through the helpful servants, books, and other artifacts of the cottage, they waited three days to escape. It was half holiday, half anthropology.

That third morning, Rath and Mig'zene saw the sunrise together beneath a homespun blanket shared out of want, not need, for the first time. Light filtered through lozenges of stained glass and lit the rough stone with shafts of rainbow. Motes of dust sparkled as they passed through the light, and formed a halo around Mig's dandelion shock of golden hair. They'd smiled silently through morning preparations, and wandered into the library. A gray-skinned, broken-tusked servant — some dreygur blood there — had labored at a lectern, pots of ink by his side. "Old books fade," he'd said, with a smile no less warm for the state of his teeth. "I fix `em."

It was a bestiary. She'd chuckled at the thing she saw then, how comical it had looked with its toothy grin, its arms waving in opposite directions, and its single bent leg. "What's it going to do," she'd said, "hop at you?"



Even a thing that hops can be terrifying in its context.

But Andrzej appears with a wheezing wail ("Just keep the running to a minimum and I'll be fine," he always says) between her and the thing, tall enough to look the creature's upside-down face right in its opaque, perfectly round eye, holding his longsword in an easy two-handed stance. The bearded Canadian has a blade again, borrowed from the High King's armories on Kavelda via a Shabda Plaque which made him appear to be some sort of highly placed butler. This time a sword might be useful. The thing screams again — from a second mouth that sprouts open where its belly might be if you desperately pretended it was a primate. This mouth sputters gobbets of spit, phlegm, and chunky gray garbage into Andrzej's face. It reorients itself and tries to grab him with two limbs while balanced on the trembling third. Andrzej leans into a graceful swing of the steel; its foot, hand, or whatever flies off in a



shower of bluish-black gore and smacks into a car across the road. The little hatchback's alarm kicks on. Andrzej spins the sword through and around, and with the second blow, drives the blade right into the thing's side. It screams. It's the sound of pain, human and horrible. It stops for a lingering half-second, then keels over sideways and lets out a high-pitched keening over the car alarm.

Andrzej coughs three times, wipes his face, and rests his sword on his right shoulder. "You all right?"

Rath wriggles. "Goddammit. Ow."

"What?" He crouches.

"The gun. Shooting hurt my wrist. Ground hit my face, too."

"You think your face is bad? It threw up in my mouth." He coughs again, with gusto.

"So, was it just me, or was that thing screaming in an Irish accent?"

Andrzej shrugs and, with a diagonal flick, shakes gore off his sword.

"We should put it out of its misery," she says. The creature is mewling now, whimpering.

Andrzej runs a hand through his beard. "Is it capable of feeling miserable?"

"It's about what we're capable of feeling, too. Compassion is a discipline." After laying down that bit of Sodality doctrine, Rath goes to the twitching, weeping monster and shoots it in the eye. It jerks with the impact, and is still. Two more car alarms join the first. Lights pop on in upstairs flats.

They wrap the creature's corpse in a tarp and drag it to Andrzej's white rental van. The one thing Rath did right tonight was sort out a CCTV blackout in the city and keep the South Wales Constabulary out of things. A wave of the Shabda Plaque does wonders. They'll have time to properly dispose of the Inimical's remains, keeping even a microscopic sample away

from ordinary scientists and the sorts of marginal Earthlings interested in demon flesh: warlocks, occult adepts, even low-level Krypteia gangsters who think they might somehow turn a profit on this stinking hulk.



In a year with the Sodality (subjective time, and not counting the Academy), Rachel Rath has seen a world where the sky's the color of blood and flying devils chase angels through endless fields of standing stones. She's visited a filigreed age of diesel robots and rocketry. She's played a game with a death god and won. These experiences are simultaneously unbelievable and explicable. The devils and angels are animals, like lemurs. The stones are slow trees which photosynthesize the red light with rocky bark, not leaves. The graceful machines of the never-present were part of another history, where rich Janissaries developed a taste for mechanical innovations. She'd visited that worldline with Mig in a borrowed time machine. The death god (who was terrible at draughts, of all things) wasn't really a god, but his grandmother was.

Rath has fallen in love. This is also eminently, wonderfully explicable. One of the coolest things about the Sodality is the undeniably interesting people you meet.

But this business with the monster, here: it isn't right. Rath's seen bestial, alien things, but never in her hometown. She'd fished the monster's hand from the street. While pulling it out from under a car by its clawed digit, she'd remembered that right across the way had been that little restaurant that made flummery and Glamorgan sausage and generally tried hard to be Welsh-but-trendy. Hadn't lasted out the year. The high street was for ill-conceived businesses, fools and their money, and other normal problems, not the trappings of her new, more exotic lifestyle.

It's fifty miles to the nearest gate. It leads to Myrthyr, a modest, greensward-clad, mist-covered plane whose inhabitants' oral traditions would burn Arthurian studies to the ground. A Woodhenge-type construction there contains six other gates. All a bit twee, but one of them goes to East Threshold in Vigrith, where Whitehorn Station, a Sodality facility (and pub, sort of) stands and where her Mission traditionally meets. It's good to get everyone in one place again.

Mig'zene's there. Beautiful. She comes from an Alt: another Earth history where the technology, and the cultures that handle it, are a little different. To her, the idea that people work in factories is as alien as strong governments or post-surgical infections. The left side of her head is tattooed in digitally scrambled Tibetan that, barring Shabda, you could only read with the right ocular firmware: *Thunder Hexagon Society, 5<sup>th</sup> Rank Enforcer*. The tat on the other side of her shock of hair (orange, now – Rath had liked the blonde in the cottage, though) is her society's symbol: a war elephant and *lungta*, a legendary "wind horse," supporting a hexagonal shield. She's wearing something that seems both skintight and space-worthy, with seamed sections that could be the thinnest of armor plating. It's painted with a riot of hexagons and legendary horses, sleek and dangerous as a new motorbike. Beneath the suit, only some of Mig's body parts are "stock" – the rest are swappable enhancements in a variety of advanced materials.

When she sees Rath, Mig's easy smile loses its perfunctory vibe. It's something in the eyes.

Rath isn't even paying attention to anything but the pleasing rhythms of Mig's voice until she brings up work: "This thing's called a Fimmer? Babe?"

(Mig sounds American. Wonderful, but newscaster-Yankee. To Rath, people from other planes mostly sound American and English, rarely from somewhere else, and never, ever Welsh. It's a side effect of learning Shabda, the All-Language. You hear everyone speaking your language, but with an accent, just like all those movies where Russians and Romans sound like Shakespeare in the Park via London or New York.)

"Fomori," says Chimalma, interrupting with perfect Gaelic throatiness. She looks up from Andrzej's sword (brought to Chim as a sort of flirty offering) with huge, liquid brown eyes, almost like those of a horse, set in an unlined face the exact shade of polished copper. Arvu, the Otherworldly humans of wild places, aren't always beautiful, but she is. She's even got those pointed ears, and an inch or two of height on Andrzej (but 100 pounds less weight). "A moderately powerful Inimical, almost always ritually summoned."

Mig is enthusiastic. "The ones with the one leg, from the book in Kavelda? Are they really that stupid looking?"

"God no, they're terrifying," says Rath. "More like three, uh, 'arm-legs.' They bounce around and scream."

"Extra mouth, too! We'll probably meet another one," says Andrzej.

"Point is, this isn't the place where this is supposed to happen. This is my hometown. The Sodality did a customary sweep." That was Rath's first mission. She gave two petty warlocks their walking papers, and checked in on geomantic critters. Beyond such usual nuisances and local color, Swansea was disappointingly sleepy. Even the nearest known gate, to Myrthyr, seemed positively touristy with its fog and alleged Mryddin descendants. They'd even checked the old roads and forgotten ruins, where the world sometimes sees fit to open other gates.

*Not everything's old and forgotten, though.*



Kilvey Hill looms over central Swansea like the back of a vast, gray-green lizard, impaled by radio, TV, and mobile network masts, because nowhere else is as efficient a place to transmit anything from. Anything at all. The hill's an old, famous feature – it used to be called *Y Bigwrn* – but it hasn't been transfixed by the masts for very long at all. Rath doesn't need to triangulate anything to work that out. Instead of appealing to arcane theory, she says, "Think of it as a geomantic upgrade." That's enough.

Heading through town, with Mig and Chimalma in hats and hooded parkas, they stop for falafels in the market (Chimalma loves them; Mig, not so much). They bump into Eve Passmore from the open mic night (brings a keyboard, actually not bad in a Tori Amos sort of vein) who calls her Rachel, which is awkward, because now Mig's giving Rath the silent treatment, asking "Why did I never know your actual name?" with a hard stare. The sky's heavy, a steel slab from end to end. As they reach the peak, the metal clouds crack and a tiny spit of water hits Rath's cheek.

"Can you smell that?" Chimalma's nose twitches; she finds this place uncomfortable.

"Ozone," Mig says, gesturing to one of the masts. "There's another gate here. Feel it?"

Rath has never known how to describe Wandersoul perceptions. The semi-

passive sense that a gate is near is a mind's itch, a shiver in the bones, and more. Lean into the feeling and you find yourself walking toward its source.

"There's more: something rotten." Andrzej turns the rope strap on a long cloth bag so the opening falls at his hip, and reaches inside to ready the sword it conceals. Maybe it started as a Wandersoul sensation but soon enough, it's a real smell to them all. Dead fish.

The smell leads to a mast with a broken fence. Its concrete maintenance shed looks secure, but nearby at the edge of a stretch of sparse, dying grass, a double-door hatch lies recessed into the ground. One of its red metal doors has buckled from a hard blow, with claw marks on steel. Maybe a bear could do it, but Wales is short on those, zoo escapes are rare, and Rath recognizes the claw patterns anyway.

They advance, crouching, cautious, and armed. Rath even holds her gun properly. She opens one of the hatch's twin doors. There's a ladder. From beneath the ground, they hear a familiar bellow-scream. It sounds Irish. Rath opens the other door quietly, hoists herself onto the ladder, and climbs down, the others behind her.

The bunker at the bottom of the ladder is an empty, square room. A naked lightbulb sheds a dim yellow glow on everything, including a closed steel door on the right. On the left, there's the gate: a doorway with no door, leading just a yard into a concrete wall, like an unfinished closet. The air at the gate ripples, and the whole place stinks of dead fish and drowned things.

"No one defends this," says Chimalma, after putting her hand close to the gate's edge. "There's no key."

"Not fun," says Mig. "This is no fun at all. And what's the other door for?"

From the right, as if in answer, a Fomor bellows, though it sounds far away.

"OK," says Rath. "Someone built a clubhouse or bomb shelter or something and one of those things is in there. It probably came through the gate."

"So, gate or door?" Mig says.

"Vote," says Andrzej.

Gate wins. And through they go.

# THREEFOLD

# WHAT IF YOU COULD GO ANYWHERE?

Let's unpack that. By "go," we mean through gates between worlds: magical portals arrayed in routes called chains. We mean using the quantum ark, which threads our waveforms through the needle's eye of marginal possibilities to other configurations of time.

By "anywhere," we mean blinding heavens, fiery hells, machine worlds a century ahead of our own, impossibly sharp mountains whose residents are sorcerer-hermits. They don't want you to visit, but they might be the only ones able to answer some esoteric question, which might even lead you to another world: perhaps via Vigrith, plane of a thousand gates, or Alatum, where the children of lost gods rule an empire, or one of the countless planes where the Nighthost, warriors who defeated their demon generals before recorded history, pillage and conquer.

And by "anywhere," we also mean parts of our world you thought of as legends, old and new. We mean the rotting mansions of psychic secret societies, the secret labs that make soldiers and spies, the Gray Hand where the secret world government they always warned you about meets. We mean places that never were, or could have been, or places we fear might exist through superstition or some future dystopian twist, and places we hope exist and are sending their extraordinary agents to help us find the better path.

There are too many possibilities to count, but we've settled on some rough classifications. Three of them—and three secret forces behind them. But in the end, you're the one who might determine the ultimate form of everything that was, is, and shall be. That's *Threefold*.

## BEHOLD, THE METACOSM

*Threefold* is the first original setting for *Modern AGE* and, as such, requires the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook* for use with the new game systems herein. *Threefold* is cross-genre, embracing fantasy, horror, and science fiction, and it's designed to make maximum use of *Modern AGE*'s possibilities. This means players can potentially use any option in *Modern AGE* to make their characters, including those that give them extraordinary powers. It means characters can come from a staggering array of backgrounds, from worlds where magic and travel between the planes of existence is commonplace, to the most ordinary lives here on Earth—though in the latter case, those lives are unlikely to stay normal. Using the rules in this book, you can play a demon-haunted occultist, a wizard from a magical college, or a tactical cyborg—and all three of these characters could play in the same campaign.

The backbone of *Threefold* that allows this is the Metacosm: the universe of universes. There are countless realities, or planes of existence, belonging to three basic categories: Earth and its alternate timelines; the Otherworlds, where magic is a powerful force; and the harsh Netherworlds, where malefic forces reign. In most cases, these planes are connected by gates. Gates are hard to create, destroy, or block, so their presence creates routes through many planes, spawning trade, empires, and warfare. Our Earth is one of thousands of these planes, though our unique physical laws and no small amount of conspiratorial effort hide the greater Metacosm from us.

## STEPPING THROUGH

*Threefold* presents numerous factions suitable for protagonists and antagonists alike, but we've chosen two groups which are especially suited for Player Characters.

The first is the **Sodality**, an organization devoted to exploring the planes, establishing diplomatic relationships with willing sapient beings, and protecting others from the Metacosm's dangers. The Sodality represents the Vitane, a democratic alliance of magically active planes. The Vitane represents billions but has no ambition to force itself upon other civilizations—something that sets it apart from other interplanar powers. Instead of standing armies and secret police, the Vitane relies on the Sodality—and your characters, should they join.

The second organization, **Aethon**, consists of a thousand elite teams devoted to protecting Earth, and a support staff of countless hidden assets. Many of Aethon's agents are cyborgs, and all have access to futuristic technologies thanks to the Peridexion, a secret authority of which they're one critical branch. Aethon protects the world, conceals the existence of the Metacosm from most of its inhabitants, and carefully shapes its history—and those of alternate universes, produced as grand experiments by the council of transcendental minds that rules it.

You don't have to play characters from these groups. You might play members of any of the other factions described in this book, with only a few exceptions, or you might look at what the Metacosm might be like for anyone else—even existing *Modern AGE* characters who walk through a gate and discover the campaign setting is much bigger and stranger than they believed.

## LOOKING THROUGH THE LENS OF GENRE

*Threefold* is a multi-genre setting, blending elements of science fiction, fantasy, and horror. Aethon's enhanced agents following directions from AI-like overlords has classic cyberpunk elements. The Otherworlds offer spell-slinging fantasy adventure. The Netherworlds and their wider influence bring occult and cosmic horror to the mix. The element linking them all is portal fantasy, described on page 166 of the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook*. The Metacosm's varied planes allow characters to sample almost any genre variation or mixture.

The concept tying these all together is something we call *speculative fantasy*. Speculative fantasy uses fantasy elements as if they had science fiction story roles. This means magic, occult powers, monsters, and planar travel create conflicts based on their natures, and on the situations which arise due to their influence. Characters confront these by learning the rules they lay down. If a dragon demands human sacrifices, the challenge isn't necessarily to slay the dragon, but to understand why it needs sacrifices at all—and innovative characters might even propose a substitute. Sodality characters are the ones most likely to have speculative fantasy

## USING THREEFOLD WITH OTHER AGE BOOKS

*Threefold* is designed for compatibility with *Modern AGE's Enemies & Allies*, though neither book depends on the other. You can use all the characters and creatures from that book in *Threefold*. In addition, many rules in the *Modern AGE Companion* are designed to balance with *Threefold's* special systems, allowing you to do things like create new cybernetic augmentations for *Threefold* using the extraordinary ability rules in the *Modern AGE Companion*.

While *Threefold* is designed for *Modern AGE*, you can use it with other Adventure Game Engine books with a small amount of adaptation. The biggest changes are to use the rules and creatures from *Modern AGE's* cinematic mode with *Fantasy AGE* and *Blue Rose*, and to convert focuses to those books. Many abilities are equivalent to talents, and characters from other games might be able to take them in lieu of a talent slot, at the Game Master's discretion.

Bringing other fantasy worlds into *Threefold* is simple: Open a gate from that world to the rest of the Metacosm. Most classic fantasy worlds would be considered Otherworlds. *Blue Rose's* world of Aldea presents an interesting case, however, as its magic is psychic in nature, which in *Threefold* is often connected to the Netherworlds. Perhaps Aldea is a rare bastion of hope in the outer reaches of the Metacosm...



adventures. Every plane they visit has the potential to present a new challenge, either in the nature of the plane itself or in a situation it triggers, such as a magical disease or a moral dilemma.

On the other hand, you don't have to introduce the entire Metacosm. *Threefold* is designed to support narrower campaigns concentrating on one aspect of the setting, keyed to specific genres. For example, running an Earth-centered campaign where psychic guilds tangle with the Dominion, avoid Aethon sanctions and never go through a gate is just as true to the setting as aggressive plane-hopping, and focuses the game on conspiratorial horror and SF. It's also possible to set a game in an arcanist college in Vigrith, featuring characters from Earth who've been chosen as students. Instead of large interplanar conflicts, the focus moves to student rivalries and urban fantasy hijinks when characters go home for the holidays.

The Game Master's section of this book provides further guidance on all these topics.

## CONTENTS

**CHAPTER 1: ACROSS A THOUSAND PLANES** introduces the *Threefold* setting, from the myriad planes and gates binding them to the great interplanar powers and other factions vying for influence over the Metacosm.

**CHAPTER 2: CHARACTERS** provides additional backgrounds, professions, and talents for *Threefold* characters. This chapter also introduces ancestries, which provide abilities based on an extraordinary inheritance.

**CHAPTER 3: SECRET AND POTENT POWERS** expands the psychic and magical powers in *Modern AGE* and describes their place in the setting. This chapter also introduces occult rites and technological augmentations.

**CHAPTER 4: THE SODALITY AND AETHON** introduces these most common organizations for characters, outlining their characteristics and capabilities.

**CHAPTER 5: ETERNALS AT WAR** begins this book's Game Master material, starting with an overview of the grand conflicts behind the setting before moving to a look at adversarial powers and factions.

## PLAYER VS. GAME MASTER KNOWLEDGE

Like the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook*, *Threefold* is divided into player and Game Master sections. The material from **CHAPTER 5** onward presents the setting from an objective point of view and reveals information Player Characters don't necessarily know. The Game Master may prefer players not to look at those sections at all, but sometimes it's just as much fun for the players to read GM-facing material while keeping in mind that their characters don't know any of it. The GM might also keep certain elements secret based on the style of game they're running. For instance, in a combat-oriented game the secret nature of the Metacosm may be fine for player browsing, but knowing the game stats for antagonists might ruin the fun. Make sure your group figures out how they want to treat GM-oriented material.

**CHAPTER 6: THE PLANES** describes the nature of the Metacosm in further detail, along with prominent planes.

**CHAPTER 7: TREASURES** outlines equipment, artifacts, and rewards specific to *Threefold*.

**CHAPTER 8: DENIZENS OF THE PLANES** describes a host of Non-Player Characters and the creatures characters might encounter in their travels through the Metacosm.

**CHAPTER 9: METACOSM CAMPAIGNS** is a guide to running speculative fantasy adventures, using different genre focuses, and applying *Modern AGE* play modes to *Threefold* campaigns.

**CHAPTER 10: IDENTITY** presents an introductory adventure across the planes. A reconnaissance mission strays into the struggle to definite humanity when competing interests present their case in the court of a rogue god.

## PLANAR PROFILES

Here and there throughout this book, you'll find boxes like this one describing various planes in the standard format used by the Sodality, including the plane's index code and a high-level summary of its interesting elements, at least from the perspective of whoever explored it. **Chapter 6** describes how profile codes work. This information is easily found by Sodality characters and is presented to inspire players and Game Masters.



# A THREEFOLD LEXICON

**ACCELERATOR:** An underground scientist whose research violates the Peridexion's restrictions on technological progress.

**AETHON:** The paramilitary and espionage wing of the Peridexion, largely staffed with augmented agents.

**AION:** A legendary being connected to the nature of the Metacosm.

**ALASTOR:** An Emanate of the Netherworld; a monarch among Inimical beings.

**ALT:** A parallel Earth, distinct from the primeline. The duplicate of a person or thing from primeline Earth in an Alt is sometimes called an *alter*. Otherworlds and Netherworlds do not have Alts. Alts are not supposed to possess gates, but sometimes this rule is broken.

**ANCESTRY:** One of the lineages of humanity, often endowed with special abilities. Humans may possess multiple ancestries.

**ARVU:** Graceful, magically skilled humans connected to natural environments, like legendary elves.

**AUGMENTATION:** Technological enhancements to the body or mind.

**CHAIN:** A string of gates connecting multiple planes.

**DIVINE EMPIRE:** A transplanar theocratic empire ruled by Optimates.

**DOMINION:** An Earth-centered conspiracy of psychics who believe themselves the natural rulers of non-psychics.

**DREYGUR:** Humans descended from the mortal populations of the Netherworlds, known for their toughness and fierce features.

**EMANATE:** A godlike, soulless being, powerful though not omnipotent.

**GATE:** A passage connecting two planes. These do not connect Earth's worldlines, which are almost always traversed through technological means.

**GUILD, OCCULT:** A society of psychics with a common study focus.

**HETERARCHY:** A plane which defies classification as a version of Earth, an Otherworld, or a Netherworld, due to some quirk or deliberate interference.

**HIERARCH:** An Emanate of the Otherworlds. Like legendary polytheistic gods made manifest, Hierarchs once ruled most of the known Otherworlds, but most have retreated from this role.

**HULDRA:** Humans connected to enduring matter who excel at making things, like the dwarves of legend.

**INIMICAL:** The Servitors of the Netherworld, often called demons. Also used more loosely to refer to the influence of the Netherworlds and Alastors.

**INITIATED:** Aware of the existence of the Metacosm. Accordingly, those unaware of it are uninitiated.

**JANA:** Humans of an ancestry familiar to the people of Earth, comparatively ambitious and sociable.

**KANNA:** The energy of myth and creativity which fuels magic.

**KRYPTeia:** An Earth-centered, transplanar criminal organization which uses other syndicates as fronts.

**MACHINOR:** An Emanate of Earth, usually manifesting as an artificial intelligence or portentous dream. Machinors direct the Peridexion.

**METACOSM:** The entirety of existence, encompassing all the planes.

**MISSION:** A Sodality team, which may include outside associates, such as Aethon operants.

**MODALITY:** The administrative arm of the Sodality.

**NETHERWORLD:** Harsh planes roiling with psychic energy, bound to the wills of the Alastors. Netherworlds often resemble mythic hells or other unforgiving afterlives.

**NIGHTHOST:** A horde of warriors descended from conscripts of the Alastors, who freed themselves and became a conquering transplanar power.

**OCCULT:** Another term for psychic abilities, expanded to include rites which focus the mind to exceed the normal limits of psychic disciplines.

**OPERANT:** A Section agent of Aethon.

**OPTIMATE:** A human whose lineage includes Emanate ancestry, who has been gifted with godlike powers. Some Optimates are capable of planar travel without a gate.

**OTHERWORLD:** A plane where kannas flow freely, but which is usually less technologically developed than Earth.

**PLANE:** A discrete universe in the Metacosm, usually spoken of as synonymous with whatever world gates happen to lead to.

**PERIDEXION:** A secret organization directed by a cabal of Machinors, which manages Earth's history and cultivates Alts for various purposes. It is not a member of the Vitane but a close ally. The Vitane considers the Peridexion Earth's government. Aethon is the Peridexion's defense, espionage, and enforcement arm.

**POOL:** Aethon's support division, secretly embedded in ordinary institutions in multiple Earths.

**PRIMELINE:** The true version of Earth, according to Peridexion doctrine. The vast majority of Earth gates lead to the primeline.

**QUANTUM ARK:** A machine capable of travel between alternate Earths.

**SECTION:** A team or slightly larger sub-organization of Aethon operants.

**SERVITOR:** A soulless being created by an Emanate. Inimicals are Servitors made by Alastors.

**SHABDA:** The all-language. Knowing Shabda allows one to understand any language. Written and spoken versions of Shabda must be mastered separately. Primal beings such as Emanates and Servitors know Shabda, as do individuals with the Wandersoul soul talent.

**SODALITY:** An organization within the Vitane devoted to protecting sapient life (especially in the Vitane), exploring the planes, and making peaceful contact with other cultures when appropriate.

**SODALT:** A member of the Sodality.

**SOUL TALENT:** An ability one awakens in one's soul, which binds the wielder to certain types of planes or the wider Metacosm itself.

**THRESHOLDER:** Rumored servants of the Alastors, with powerful, strange abilities.

**VITANE:** A democratic interplanar power, founded for the benefit of all sapient beings who freely choose to join.

**WARLOCK:** A renegade arcanist who often seeks power through distinctive, immoral means.

**WORLDLINE:** The process of history on one of the versions of Earth, often synonymous with Alt, though it can refer to the "real" Earth as well. Earth's worldline is the primeline.

# PLAYER'S SECTION





## ACROSS A THOUSAND PLANES

On Earth, humanity once imagined the world ended where the sun met the vastest waters: Oceanus, the Abyss, the all-encompassing sea. Today we understand how the world continues beyond what we can see with unaided senses. We've even been bold enough to place our world in a cosmic backwater, an unexceptional citizen of an ordinary galaxy, but we came to this conclusion from new forms of vision, powered by science and engineering. If we had the right tools, we would again reject such a limited perspective. We'd see the **Metacosm**: uncountable universes connected by myriad **gates**.

The Metacosm's varied realms are commonly called **planes** by the initiated. The plane we'd understand the best is Earth, of course, but which one? Earth is a cluster of planes consisting of the **primeline**, which is most easily visited from foreign planes, and difficult-to-access **Alts**, where history took a different course. Beyond Earth, gates lead to **Otherworlds**, where magic flows freely. Hellish **Netherworlds** ruled by dark gods lie in the Metacosmic hinterlands.

In this Third Age, nations have spread across multiple planes. Unknown to the average earthbound human, a regime called the **Peridexion** represents Earth's interests in an alliance with the **Vitane**, a federation of many planes. The expansionistic **Divine Empire** clashes with the Vitane for control of the wealthiest, best-connected Otherworlds, while the **Nighthost** hordes impose feudal rule upon conquered planes in the Otherworlds and Netherworlds.

This chapter discusses the Metacosm, its many planes, and its various factions as Player Characters might understand them, with a bias toward the perspectives of Vitane citizens,

especially those who join its exploratory arm, the **Sodality**. CHAPTER 4 provides more information about the Sodality.

## THE PLANES

Alternate Earths, realms of legend, and twisted hells without measure reach infinitely upwards, downwards, inwards, and outwards in a great tapestry of dimensions: the planes. While each plane is unique and set apart by its gates, they are all inextricably bound together, influencing each other even as they remain separate and often hidden from one another. Vitane scholars call the entire set of planes—the universe of universes—the Metacosm. No finite method can map its full extent.

The core of *Threefold* lies in the planes' interactions. Innumerable worlds spread across time and space fill the Metacosm, connected by gates and floating within an interstitial substance called the **Sentium**. Educated individuals speak of three kinds of planes.

- **EARTHS**: Earths consist of the primeline (which connects via gates to Otherworlds) and Alts, branched-off histories (also called worldlines) which rarely have gates, so that they must be reached through Earth via extraordinary technologies. Magic functions poorly on Earth, but natural laws function with such reliable potency that it is the birthplace of the most sophisticated feats of science and engineering. Beings of order and information called Machinors mind the many Earths.
- **OTHERWORLDS**: Otherworlds shimmer with *kanna*, the creative energy that makes magic possible. Things which

are legends on Earth are very real in the Otherworlds, though every myth is inaccurate, incomplete, or out of date. Most of the “gods,” or Hierarchs, have been driven away or gone into hiding, and new societies have sprung from ancient kingdoms. High technology functions less reliably, but magic often replaces it.

- **NETHERWORLDS:** Where Earth’s humans might regard Otherworlds as realms of Golden Age legend, they’d see their Glooms, Infernos, and demonic incarnations in the Netherworlds. Alastor demon-monarchs rule each Netherworld; their personalities influence their domains, and vice versa. Rivers of green fire and bleeding trees are not unusual. Natural laws bend as if influenced by a sadistic intelligence.

A few planes called **Heterarchies** defy the three categories, as their histories confer unique properties. Vast empires stretch across multiple planes, but kings and nations may rise and fall on a single world without ever learning of the wider reality beyond their borders. Scholars, merchants, warlords, and politicians all squabble for power and purpose, while bold souls venture through the gates between realms to explore the unknown.

## PLANAR GATES

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Gates bind the planes together. A gate can appear to be virtually anything which is physically enclosed on all sides. Some resemble twisting caverns, bramble-choked forest paths, creaking stairwells, or ominous mines. Others—especially gates formed by powerful magical events—present a more esoteric structure, with walls of light, floating hieroglyphs, or rippling energy. In any event, a gate’s dimensions determine the maximum size of what may be transported through it. Virtually all gates connect just two planes (those whose connections shift to multiple possibilities are extremely rare, and either valued or dangerous) and have such physical correspondences on each plane they connect. They don’t need to look the same on each side, but their openings must have the same physical dimensions.

Some gates are **open**, allowing effortless passage, and sometimes creatures stumble through without even realizing they have crossed into a new world. Others are **locked** until a certain object, ritual, time, or other condition allows travelers through. Regardless of the form the way of opening takes, it’s called a **key**. A key opens a locked gate on one side, and permits passage from that side to the other. It’s impossible to lock or unlock one side of a gate from the other. A gate which is locked on one side may be open on the other, or locked using the same or a different key. Thus, it is impossible to close access from the other side except through elaborate, unreliable means.

Wandersouls, who are spiritually attuned to gates, have a natural ability to sense how to open locked gates. They also have a limited ability to sense what’s on the other side. This is extremely useful because in most cases, the destination on the other side of a gate is invisible. Walking through an unlocked or always-open gate, one either vanishes or is obscured by some convenient environmental effect, such as mist or thick foliage.

The most frequent gate connections support a view of the Metacosm which places the Earths in the center, moves to increasingly exotic Otherworlds, and then to distant Nether-

worlds—but there are often shortcuts. Gates are more likely to connect similar worlds. Otherworlds lead to cousin Otherworlds. Netherworlds have more gates to each other than to Otherworlds, though Netherworlds do not follow the rules of similarity as strictly. Earthly gates connect to Otherworlds more often than Netherworlds. Virtually all Earth gates exist in the primeline; Alts almost never have gates, and machines, not gates, are used to travel between worldlines.

Within these rules and trends, a traveler must often traverse multiple gates to reach their intended destination. After crossing from plane A to B, they might have to travel over land, sea, and stranger features to reach the gate leading from B to C. The general structure of the Metacosm means the Netherworlds are usually the most distant, in terms of the number of gates a traveler must pass through. These multiple-gate routes are called **chains**. Exploring new chains and charting new routes between worlds are some of the Sodality’s most important tasks.

Conventional magic and technology cannot create gates. Certain beings have the ability to travel between planes without a gate, and with extreme effort, godlike entities have sometimes built them. Metacosmic conjunctions and certain unique events occasionally create new gates as well, but these are deciphered by prophecies and weird riddles, and can hardly be relied upon. Thus, existing gates are precious commodities, fiercely guarded and controlled. Various factions spend fortunes and risk death scouting for new ones.

Certain obscure methods may alter a gate’s geographical location on either world, or its destination plane. Rare techniques may even lock them or change their keys. These are usually considered aggressive acts, disrupting peaceful trade and travel, and may even justify wars. Destroying a gate is almost impossible, and usually limited to new gates created by gods who, for one reason or another, are not defending them.

## METACOSMOLOGY

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As noted earlier, gates pass through the Sentium, the cosmic blood flowing between all worlds. Less a place and more the fluid that binds all reality, the Sentium has no structure beyond what travelers and rare native entities bring with it. The Sentium perfuses each plane and is altered by its native energy, producing the nearby psychic realm called the **Astral Sentium**, which reflects the plane. Those who project their mind beyond, to the **Deep Sentium**, report vast, unnatural wildernesses, twisted yet familiar ruined cities, crystal sculptures of impossible shapes, and white ships transporting demons and deep dreamers.

## EARTH AND ALTERNATE EARTHS

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For reasons lost to time, the primeline Earth serves as an anchor in the cosmic sea, with countless alternate Earths existing alongside it, each separated by later or earlier starts or spun away from the history we know by twists of fate and different decisions. The Peridexion says that no orthodox gates connect Alts with planes beyond Earth, but there are always rumors of exceptions. Visitors might find themselves in what seems like the past of the Earth they know, or a possible future, or an alternate present where different faces run different nations



and society respects very different rules. Alts have familiar physical rules, usually appearing as the Earth we know. But sometimes interference from Otherworld or Netherworld (via an illicit gate or a Sentium traveler finding a way in) radically alter physical laws. Such an Alt may allow fantastic, unlikely technology to function, free the flow of magic, or introduce monster-haunted wastelands. Radical changes to natural laws produce Heterarchies, planes which defy easy categorization, but the line between a strange Alt and a Heterarchy is difficult to determine. In any event, most Earths, primeline and Alt, have the same familiar physics and metaphysics, even while one thrives and the other burns, through the vicissitudes of their respective histories.

## OTHERWORLDS

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Beyond and encircling the Earths are the Otherworlds, where natural laws are looser and supplemented with magic. Kanna, or magical power, is more fundamental than gravity or magnetism. Kanna is the energy of the creative act, like a story on the tip of the teller's tongue; given direction by imaginations, symbols, and portentous occasions, kanna fuels incredible phenomena. Even basic energetic manifestations like fire, lightning, and cold flow not from the interaction of particles, but kanna responding to mythically evocative geography, magically trained wills, and other supernatural forces. While most phenomena resemble ordinary, scientifically understood events, they're not bound by Earth's physical laws. In the Otherworlds, Earth's most sophisticated technologies lack the support of consistent physics, and often fail to function.

Otherworlds may feature impossibly steep mountains, primordial forests with trees a half-mile high, serpent-filled bottomless oceans, and islands in the sky. No matter how familiar these realms seem, or how Earthlike, they're shaped by dreams, desires, and potential stories, even if these were imagined by vanished gods. Therefore, they remain distinct from all Earths, and are drawn orbiting them in many maps. Creatures Earth's humanity might label faeries, dragons, and giants call the Otherworlds home. Some of these beings are actually humans themselves, belonging to lineages which evolved bathed in kanna. These include the arvu (who in our ignorance we might call "elves," or "high folk") and huldra ("gnomes," or "mine-knockers," perhaps). Inhabitants of the Otherworlds are the most likely to be aware of gates and other planes. Along with the number of gates on critical planes like Vigrith, this makes the Otherworlds the main fields of conflict between interplanar powers.

## THE NETHERWORLDS

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Beyond the Otherworlds, the outermost corona of the Metacosm contains the Netherworlds. The origins of the Netherworlds are obscure. Few creation myths are told about them, and Earth's physicists haven't produced a cosmogenesis of Hell. Some Netherworlds seem to exist in mockery of Earth and the Otherworlds, so some believe these were once planes of these types which have undergone metaphysical corruption or collapse, or have been stitched together by the Alastors from the broken remnants of other planes. Others might be entirely novel, perverse creations, their skies of magma and deserts of dried blood having no easily identifiable origins. Owing to their

broken natures and ever-toiling inhabitants, Netherworlds are often bleak places, stripped of resources. They might be barren rocks orbiting each other with structures or cities clinging to the shadows, or endless dead forests where great worms gnaw on the roots but will burst forth for other prey. The strangest, most remote Netherworlds seem to be born of ill-formed universal laws. A city or forest repeats into infinity, developing replication errors that change travelers' directions, locations, or physical forms. Entering a valley, one loses colors, constant gravity, or the ability to conceive of love. Further, it is said that occult adepts harness these paradoxes and broken realms to fuel their psychic powers. They reach through the Sentium and channel what they must to precisely break the rules of the realms they inhabit.

Scavenged or created, a Netherworld is believed to be an unstable place, maintained by the psychic force of its inhabitants. One may wonder why tormented souls don't dream better conditions for themselves, but it appears they merely support the wills of ruling Alastors. Each Alastor's godlike will binds lesser intentions to hold their unstable plane together. The Alastors' governing wills are in turn fed by the tortured souls of the inhabitants. Each Netherworld imposes a range of common torments on captives and natives alike. The souls of the damned do dwell on these planes, not as the dead but as prisoners seized from other planes, or in new, living incarnations. The most common indigenous Netherworlders are the dreygur, who we might misidentify as goblins or half-demons, as they reshape their bodies into monstrous or strangely beautiful forms. Dreygur are found on other planes, however, especially as members of the conquering Nighthost, which descends from rebellious Netherworld soldiers.

## INTERPLANAR POLITICS

The Vitane stands watch over many planes. A loose democratic alliance, the Vitane monitors dozens of Otherworlds, introducing itself when it determines a plane is ready to interact with the wider Metacosm. Long ago, the Fellwar drove away most of the Hierarchs, who ruled the Otherworlds like gods. The Vitane stepped in to regulate trade, the exchange of knowledge, and immigration between worlds aware of their place in a community of planes. The Vitane's active arm, the Sodality, guards interplanar gates, protects worlds from hostile influence, and explores new planes.

The Vitane acts as a central government for the most connected, cosmopolitan planes, but Earth is not one of these. The Peridexion is a government and conspiracy which conceals the nature of the Metacosm from Earth's ordinary citizens. It maintains authority over Earth and its alternate histories, but supports the Vitane, continuing an alliance dating back to the end of the Fellwar, when Earth's science, unique in the Metacosm, ensured the Vitane's victory.

The Vitane generally protects the rights of sapient beings, from the individual to cultures asserting control over their collective destinies. It does its best to reach compromises between competing interests, resolve political and moral dilemmas, and ensure the wellbeing of worlds who choose its alliance. It's imperfect, but other interplanar powers are not as careful with their citizens. At the dawn of the current, Third Age, warriors from the Netherworlds rebelled against their masters, and

## HETERARCHIES

A few planes break the rules. These Heterarchies began as an Earth, Otherworld, or Netherworld, but fell under the sway of unusual influences so much that they no longer follow the rules of their original plane type. For instance, rogue Machinors might establish an enclave on an Otherworld where advanced technology functions and interacts with magic in strange ways, producing cyborgs driven by brass pistols and enchanted crystals.

Heterarchies usually possess multiple gates because of the extraplanar influence which shaped them. Some of them act as neutral ground for representatives of the various planes, assuming they've changed in such a way as to even the odds between the parties involved. They may contain vast, strange cities or be ruined places with unusual properties, waiting for the right group to harness them.

claimed planes by conquest as the Nighthost. Its violent meritocracy still rules many planes. Later, the Divine Empire split from the early Vitane when descendants of the Hierarchs, called Optimates, believed they should inherit their divine parents' authority. It reigns over numerous worlds, Prefect "demigods" overseeing less-privileged serfs. These three great powers contend for the known planes, for although infinite universes exist, they're not all equally wealthy or well connected. Planes with strategic or economic value are frequently influenced by the powers' intrigues, though rarely plagued with open invasions. For now, the powers are locked in a cold war, limited by their values, their resources, and the gates they control.

## THE MAJOR PLANES

While the planes are infinite in number, events in a few critical worlds can reverberate across the Metacosm. The planes in this section have this potential. They're the capitals of interplanar governments, or bear secrets which could determine the fates of billions.

### EARTH

#### THE PRIMELINE

During the Fellwar, the godlike Emanates—the Hierarchs, Machinors, and Alastors—agreed all Earths would remain neutral. Eventually, the predecessors of the Vitane convinced the Machinors to violate the pact. Colossal war machines from apocalyptic Alts routed the forces of the other planes. Since then, the primeline has remained Earth's face as far as the Otherworlds are concerned, and it's a quiet, hidden visage, prone to saying "No," or nothing at all. The Peridexion secretly manages many of the primeline's affairs and acts as its representative in an alliance with the Vitane. The Peridexion forbids anyone from revealing the existence of other planes to the general public, traveling between planes without authorization, publicizing the existence of magic, occult powers, or so-called "postmodern" technology, or doing anything else which would destroy a façade which, on the whole, resembles the familiar world of the 21st Century.

In policy communiques to the Vitane, the Peridexion declares that Earthly physical laws are a unique, stabilizing influence in the cosmos. Without them, all planes would lose even the semblance of order. Gravity would change and fail, gates would shift and vanish, and inconceivable changes would otherwise strike without warning. Some Vitane arcanists insist the matter is more esoteric: Earth's steady progression through time, creating Alts as it goes, generates a structure for all magic. Kanna obeys Earth's vibrations, if loosely, so water mostly flows downhill, and spells proceed from structured desire. Disrupt the rhythm of Earth, and magic would disobey reason. The Otherworlds might even cease to exist.

On the primeline, 21st Century Earth is a place where the last terrestrial frontiers have vanished, nation-states interact in a complex web of warfare, diplomacy, and trade, inequality persists despite ideals to the contrary, and human beings are just beginning to explore space, machine intelligence, and the potential of genetic engineering. Rumors of more advanced technology and the shadowy organizations who use it to steer global policy are typically dismissed as crackpot ravings. The Peridexion has great influence and speaks for Earth in interplanar circles, but doesn't send detailed marching orders to governments and leaves individuals to live as they wish—as long as they don't mess with other worlds, strange powers, or forbidden technologies. Even then, the organization isn't strong enough to fully suppress well-organized renegades, from the criminal Krypteia to Accelerator scientists, predatory psychics, and malevolent warlocks. If these offenders reveal themselves, the Peridexion sends an Aethon team to deal with them, and these sometimes ask the Vitane for additional support. Otherwise, the directors of world orthodoxy follow a timeline set by its Machinors, influencing development through subtle means. But when necessary, they can deploy tactical cyborgs, nanotechnology, and even noetic mathematics capable of changing reality through mind-breaking formulae.

Interplanar wanderers, merchants, and refugees visit Earth, in out-of-the-way corners or among the natives, depending on their ability to blend in. The Peridexion doesn't harass these communities, and may even provide aid as long as they keep their origins a secret.

## VIGRITH

### CAPITAL OF THE VITANE

Even in the Second Age, Vigrith was an influential Otherworld due to its numerous gates to other planes. When the Hierarchs abandoned it in the wake of the Fellwar, the newly created Vitane established its capital here for the same practical reasons. Even though a fraction of the number of original gates remain active, this is enough to link Vigrith to hundreds of other planes—more than any other known world.

Vigrith's capital, Akavastu, hosts most of the plane's known stable portals. From here, the Sodality monitors travelers and dispatches agents. A million inhabitants work in gilded, twisting pale towers, winding marketplaces, or terraced farms. Inhabitants enjoy a lattice of canals and sprawling parks, so no part of the city is far from water or woodlands. Ancient raised aqueducts have been repurposed and extended to support the Quick, Akavastu's rapid transit system, which binds elemental forces to rapidly move capsules from place to place.

Central to the city's fortune is the Platea Transita, a vast walled park containing over a hundred gates. The Platea is an ancient structure, devised by fallen Hierarchs, and some of its gates are unstable (and not entirely understood), so the exact number available varies. Some gates have been magically dismantled or barred. The rest take travelers to relatively safe planes, most of which are aligned with the Vitane.

Other sites across Vigrith contain anywhere from one to a handful of gates, not all of which have been found. Beyond Akavastu, Vigrith is a world of rolling hills, deep forests, sheer mountains, and endless lakes, with colors intense enough to leave afterimages in unprepared eyes. Possessing a deep wellspring of kanna, it contains numerous magical creatures, from forest trolls to predatory, two-headed wyverns. Vigrith is not unspoiled, however. It was the site for the Fellwar's final battle, and numerous battles before that, fought for its multitude of gates and powerful kanna. In Namebroken Valley, walking corpses and machines still spar, idiot combatants among ashen ruins. The Castle of the Last Juggernaut is an inactive doomsday device from Earth, whose mechanical spaces now host hundreds of residents. And of course, the shattered moon and Sea of Mists, where a great weapon left a pit where mountains once stood, both remind visitors of why the Vitane exists. Vigrith is governed by idealists, but it is no Utopia.

The Vitane doesn't rule directly, but as a privileged member of a world council composed of nine major nation-states (including the Vitane itself, in the only place where it asserts direct territorial rule) and 166 smaller governments. The Vitane shares its wealth and creativity with partner nations. Consequently, arcane colleges have arisen in many nations on Vigrith and attract students from across the planes. Agreements with other nations also give special privileges to traveling Sodality members. The organization's Academy stands on Vitane territory, but plebs (cadets) travel across the world as part of their studies. Travel in Vigrith can be exciting. Beyond the mysteries and dangers to be found, the world lacks any transportation system comparable to modern Earth's. Unless one hops back and forth through certain gates, travel conditions compare to those of Earth's mid- to late 19th Century.

## ALATUM

### CAPITAL OF THE DIVINE EMPIRE

Most of the Hierarchs, beings commemorated as gods in inaccurate Earthly legends, departed after the Fellwar which ended the Second Age. Along with their worlds they abandoned their children, the Optimates. The offspring of Hierarchs and mortals, the Optimates often ruled portions of the Otherworlds as vassals of their divine parents, but unlike them, possessed human souls. When the war set mortals against gods, many Optimates fought against their parents.

In the aftermath, many Optimates joined the Vitane, but these demigods were used to privilege, and their innate power was, for some, an argument they deserved it. Certain Optimates argued that they should step into the roles of their parents, benevolently ruling "lesser" humans. They would not revive the Hierarchs' abuses, and though they would accept worship, it would be a symbolic cultural act in keeping with the old ways of many planes. These Optimates and their supporters formed the Imperial Party within the Vitane and



were seen as nothing more than authoritarian ideologues until their leader, Dyraza, planned and executed coups on a score of Vitane-aligned worlds, with Alatum as the jewel in the Divine Empire's crown. Dyraza proclaimed herself empress, but after 199 years, was slain in combat with the forces of the Netherworld during the last Inimical incursion upon Alatum. The throne remains empty.

Alatum was a Hierarch stronghold during the Fellwar, and its people not only maintain a deep love for their lost gods, who kept the plane pristine right up to the final days of the war, but have mostly transferred their allegiance to the ruling Optimates. The plane's unspoiled beauty, pious inhabitants, and blazing kanna make it an ideal capital. Alatum's primordial ocean has a variable depth like Earth's but covers a flat, perhaps infinite surface. Exploratory craft sent in four directions each ranged 16 million miles before turning back, recording no end to it, though they found shifting bands of heat and cold. Within a set of such bands, which provide variable temperatures like Earth's, the Eye and Hand Archipelagos consist of thousands of steep-sloped islands of banded and glittering rock. Other islands exist far from these, at distances comparable to those of moons or alien planets.

The Eye and Hand Archipelagos' islands hold palaces and gardens of heart-aching beauty, maintained by the Divine Empire's enormous mortal underclass. The ruling Optimates live as aristocrats, supported by arcanist-priests, serf gangs, and security drawn from personal staff and the Divine Empire's Immortal Force military. Gates to hundreds of Otherworlds dot the island mountaintops. Resident Optimates measure social status by how many they control, and wager gate-holding land. It is said the crushing ocean depths

and distant, unknown islands hold gates to dangerous places, including the Netherworlds.

The Divine Empire is ultimately ruled by the Pantheon, a council of high representatives (Dominii) elected by Optimate Prefects. Fortified on Olipos, largest and central island of the Eye, the Pantheon's temples hold the Empire's greatest treasures and weapons. Millions of soldiers, priests, and servants attend to the Dominii and other Optimates.

It's blasphemy to say it on Alatum, but rumors say at least one Hierarch remains on the plane, not as a sovereign but a slave. This might explain the Divine Empire's rapid successes, from the fortuitous discovery of strategically pivotal gates to its quick inheritance of some of the old gods' devastating weapons. The Empire maintains black sites on many planes, including Alatum.

## THE FETTER

### SACRED PLANE OF THE NIGHTHOST

While most of the Hierarchs left the Otherworlds to rule themselves, the Emanates of the Netherworlds—the Alastors—weathered the Fellwar with their territories intact. Scholars of planar mysteries say that while Otherworlds maintain themselves through the creative magical energy called kanna, Netherworlds must be willed away from the precipice of destruction by divine intention. Thus, the Alastors must maintain their planes, else they would disappear. Every plane under Alastor dominion is, by default, an engine of suffering, made to process souls for the rulers' delectation. While many Netherworlds superficially appear to contradict these theories, or are too strange to confirm them, the Fetter is



## EU-00904: OMSK-CHEYENNE

On this Alt, software engineering and AI research were greatly advanced compared to the primeline, while hardware remained largely the same. When the nuclear powers went to war in its 1959, radiation eventually killed all living things, leaving enormous military supercomputers and their diesel-powered drones to create their own civilization. The planet has now been largely restored, and a civilization of noisy, chrome-lined robots relies on enormous vacuum tube arrays for their intelligence.

the only truly confirmed exception. The Fetter is ruled by the Nighthost, renegade warriors who suffer for no master, save by choice. In the wake of the Fellwar, they seized the Fetter by force of arms and occult might, and bound its nameless Alastor (or Alastors—the stories vary) to maintain the plane, not as a place of suffering but as a homeland. The greatest of the warriors who claimed the plane became the first Unchallenged, sacrosanct elders of the Nighthost.

The Fetter is a massive coil of land anywhere from 3,000 to 7,000 miles wide, but infinitely long. Parched eastern plains and jagged western mountains are separated by the Nagragta ("Serpent's Blood"), a thousand-mile wide saltwater river-ocean. Life exists along the inside surface, making the sky simply a continuation of the same bleak landscapes and black, brackish water. Instead of the sun, reddish spheres said to be molten iron drift through the middle of the coil, producing day and night cycles at variable intervals averaging thirty hours. The coil's edges are flush with each other and grind in incredible tectonic stresses, causing frequent earthquakes, floods, and lava flows, but also bringing rich deposits of metal and readily available heat. This makes the Fetter a world of industry that provide arms, armor, and machines for the Nighthost's hordes. Fortified markets sit at nearly every known gate, so while the plane is unusually easy to visit for a Netherworld, its inhabitants don't suffer troublemakers. Beyond industrial and trade settlements, much of the Netherworld is sparsely settled and largely unexplored. Demonic Inimicals still wander the wilds and scheme to release their Alastor masters, but will also harass and torture—or sometimes, offer services to—beings they encounter.

While most outsiders imagine the Fetter to be a plane of unchecked war, Nighthost warriors view their makeshift homeland with religious awe, and the only violence tolerated on its sacred soil are various forms of ritual combat. The Fetter forces the Nighthost to adapt their warbands to other purposes, from trade guilds to civil infrastructure, though each is still run as a paramilitary unit. The most feared and ruthless of these may be the exmancipium, workers' guilds who supply the Fetter's factories and farms with laborers by raiding adjoining Netherworlds for their tortured souls.

The Fetter's political heart is the Palace of the Unchallenged, where the ranks of the Unchallenged have slowly swollen since the Fellwar. Less dictators than advisors, they hold little direct power but incredible informal social influence—enough to send millions of Nighthost to war with a parable. The Palace itself is ancient beyond mortal ken, having been constructed by an Alastor, and its architecture and layout fold through strange spatial dimensions. Rooms move. New hallways open. Navigating the deepest reaches is an oracular art known to elder Unchallenged.

## HISTORY OF THE METACOSM

In the beginning? Well, opinions differ about that. For the purposes of what we know, suffice to say that great powers filled the Metacosm—the sum of all planes of existence, each plane a universe of its own—with wonders. The Emanates, who the uninitiated call gods, spirit monarchs, Platonic intelligences, or even demon lords, shaped their planes, though as far as anyone knows they didn't create them. The Emanates were never beholden to a common purpose, so conflict arose, as even the stewards of universes wanted more, or could not abide abominations only a step away through a gate. Gates between the planes existed even then, ancient sources say, and might be all that remains of a primordial wholeness when the planes were one.

The Emanates created creatures in their diverse images, and ruled sapient beings who were not their creations (the gods may say they make souls, but arcane sages disagree, and say soul-bearing beings arose without their say-so). They built grand theocracies and cities in a million hells. They even made Earth. Earths, the Netherworlds, the Otherworlds—the three families of planes established themselves under their respective overlords.

They warred against each other, but it was humanity who won, after they rebelled. Now we live in the Third Age of human ascendance. The gods are memories or rare encounters, unless one lives in the Netherworlds under the heel of a dark Emanate, one of the Alastors. They cling to power.

This is what made the Metacosm what it is now, but it is not what *created* it. Who lit the spark, who made the Emanates from cold primordial fire, and where souls come from, are matters for speculation, high theory, or religion, perhaps.

## THE FIRST AGE

Coming from the interplanar Sentium, or perhaps an unimaginable void before the Sentium even existed, the first Emanates were manifested dreams, nightmares, and structures of gracefully ordered, self-aware logic. (Whose dreams and nightmares? Whose ordered thoughts? That's a mystery.) None know how long they lingered in secret places before playing their part in creation, nor if they served some purpose other than their own, but they turned their eyes to endless threads of unwoven existence, and shaped them into the planes of the Metacosm. Strife entered the Metacosm as the Emanates made worlds with competing visions, and resented each other's creations.

The First Age is nearly unknown to sapient beings. Many books and stories claim to tell the true story, and some Emanates speak of the early days, but these stories are as full of conflict as the Emanates were at the dawn of all things. Even the Emanates do not seem entirely sure of what happened. There are likely grains of truth in some of the books, but it is anyone's guess what is true, and what is false. This is an era of creation myths, songs-of-making, the opening of cosmic eyes.

This is certain: The Emanates fractured into tribes and factions, binding together to seek supremacy over their fellows. The

I BOUND THE ASHES OF MY BIRTH-FIRE WITH MY WILL, CREATING EARTH, AND COMMANDED LIFE TO FIND PURCHASE UPON IT, BUT I DID NOT SPARK THE FIRE, OR MAKE THE ASH, OR CREATE THE SOULS OF THOSE WHO LIVE AND DIE UNDER MY REIGN. I WAS MADE INNOCENT, IN A SHAPELESS TIME, MY FLESH FROM BLACK SAND, MY BLOOD FROM THE SENTIUM ITSELF, TO MAKE OR UNMAKE WORLDS ACCORDING TO UNSPEAKABLE DESIGNS. THESE THINGS ARE INCOMPREHENSIBLE TO YOU SOUL-LADEN, WHO WERE BORN FORGETFUL OF THE BEGINNING AND END, OR OF THE THRONE UNCLAIMED, WHICH I CAN SAY NOTHING MORE ABOUT. THEREFORE, REGARD ME AS YOUR GOD, AND I WILL TELL YOU AS MUCH ABOUT CREATION AS YOU CAN UNDERSTAND.

—AVAKIM, ALASTOR LORD OF DUST

bitter conflicts of later ages stem from these early divisions, which made Earth a grand system designed by its Machinors, made the legendary planes of the Hierarches, and sent the Alastors to rule their half-broken Netherworlds.

## THE BIRTH OF THE EMANATES

They do not have a single face, the Emanates, being dread queens and all-fathers, archangels and princes of hell, or Turing machines made of shifting steel or pure mathematical forms. Emanates are mighty beings. The Otherworlds' Hierarchs are half-remembered on Earth as gods and monsters, though the myths are never entirely accurate. They have potent powers related to what could be obsessions, but might be the source programming of what they are. Like some legendary gods, Emanates have particular portfolios and domains of power. Within these, their power is nearly unbeatable; mortals have bested the gods, but not without truly heroic effort. In the First Age, the Emanates might have been even more powerful, able to will planes into being. Modern Emanates appear to have less power to command, and struggle to create gates.

The Emanates are mighty but lack the souls of mortals. Some Vitane scholars question whether they have a consciousness after the fashion of mortals, or only follow complex instincts, but these arguments run up against the classic problem of such inquiries: Using the same skepticism, can we prove *anyone* is conscious? In any event, this facet of their nature suggests they did not create the Metacosm by themselves. They were demiurges, shaping a primordial state provided for them, or which manifested without the help of a greater power. Did natural law guide them to form the orders of Alastors, Hierarchs, and Machinors, or did a creator, who also made souls?

## ALASTORS

The Alastors are the rulers of the Netherworlds, wrathful beings who punish mortal inadequacies. They're demon princes, mind-shattering angelic forces, vengeful deities, and queens of Hell. Beings of supreme will, the Alastors chiefly apply it to maintaining the Netherworlds they rule. Without an Alastor's reign, a Netherworld might collapse into fragments floating in the Sentiium, or mutate into unimaginable forms. The Vitane believe the Alastors' forms are also manifestations of their wills, horrific or burning with oppressive beauty, and their true shapes might be incomprehensible. Even known manifestations sometimes imperil witnesses' sanity. For example, Shi-Ger, the Song of the Annihilating Angel, manifests as a series of luminescent shockwaves, each of which carries a persistent voice whispering disturbing secrets.

## THE FORGOTTEN

Vitane historian Alamu Jalr identified beings he called the Forgotten, who existed in the First Age alongside the Emanates, but vanished or were destroyed. He collected his knowledge into a thin book: *They Came Before*. He claimed the Forgotten preceded the Emanates, created the foundations of the planes, and brought soul-bearing sapient life into existence—and that the Forgotten might have even had souls themselves. Jalr identifies three definite Forgotten: Father Abyss, Mother Mourn, and the Green Watcher. They were said to be common to the Scorpion Way, a formation of planar chains with similar cultures and common legends. On those planes the three's holy sites were tended by despised underclasses, and in the Second Age, the Hierarchs discouraged their worship.

Shortly after publication, several accidents destroyed most copies of *They Came Before*, and Alamu Jalr disappeared.

## HIERARCHS

The Hierarchs shaped the Otherworlds, and entered them to rule as gods. By the end of the First Age, they'd established their reigns, each claiming the thrones of the worlds they made, individually or in pantheons. The Hierarchs came to Earth, too, but weren't allowed to dwell there for long. Their visits inspired raucous myths of gods meddling in wars and mating with mortals, and their inability to stay inspired legends of Heaven, Valhalla, and other divine homes beyond the known world. Nevertheless, while the Hierarchs enjoy worship and seem to gain power from it, they have always been more than the myths around them. A Hierarch might have inspired the legend of Thor, but is *not* Thor. Mortals' ideas about Thor do not change his powers, appearance, or behavior. Thus, Shkelqeshem, Ray of the Morning Eternal, resembles Horus and recalls the ancient Earth symbol of the winged sun, but no legend records his wings of adamantite glass.

## MACHINORS

Masters of the unseen, the Machinors rule Earth through its intricate natural laws, though none can say for sure whether the Machinors created them or whether they adjust them over time. Earth remains unique, in that myths and story logic give way to the unthinkable complexity of scientific theorems. This is Earth's greatest advantage, as it allows resident humans to develop technology to a degree unmatched throughout the other planes. Machinors chiefly exist in the idealistic layer of Earth's reality which might be said to hold its natural laws. They are real the way mathematical formulae are, as forms

incorruptible by the flaws flesh and matter might introduce. Yet they're imperfect through their incompleteness and the fact they must work through flawed material reality, where they manifest as artificial intelligences, inspiring dreams, unfathomable machines, and even possessed humans. Represented by the AI called Lucifer, six oversee the Peridexion. Others support competing factions, whether for their own gain, or from the desire to thwart their compatriots.

## SERVITORS

Seeing the usefulness of the sapient races, the Emanates created their own children. But they lacked the soul-spark, and their constructs rose empty-eyed and hollow-hearted, animated only by their creators' wills. The Emanates sent them forth among mortals as heralds and proxies. Humans recognized the horror of what arrived among them with its cold power, telling stories of wrathful angels, bloodthirsty sacred bulls, leviathans, and death-fetches. Heroes killed them and were punished for hubris. The pious worshipped them as divine visitations.

All Emanates still employ Servitors, though not to the degree they did in the First Age, when they established their places in the Metacosm. Machinors use them the least, since Earth, the great machine of the planes, is designed to function autonomously, incorporating natural phenomena into any error-correcting actions. Nevertheless, their Functionaries, subordinate AIs and ashen-faced, staring agents, appear from time to time. Hierarchs' Archons are more classic celestial servants: monsters, muses, gandharvas, and winged dreams. Until the Fellwar, they were commonly seen, but now they often travel incognito, keeping the gods they serve a secret.

In the sunset of the Third Age, the best known of these Servitors are the Inimicals, servants of the Alastors—called "demons" in vulgar speech. The Inimicals harvest and channel souls for their masters and manipulate victims into becoming worthy of the Alastors' attentions through destructive acts. Inimicals are common because they may be summoned, with such rituals pulling the demon through the Sentium to a properly prepared location.

The ability to be summoned and bound is a result of their nature, shared with all Servitors. As soulless beings of a lower order than the Emanates, they do not possess true self-awareness or free will. They might simulate these convincingly, but no Servitor makes conscious decisions. The occult programming of their nature can thus be exploited by adepts. And where the commands for other Servitors are kept secret, those of the Inimicals have long been shared between would-be demonologists, few of whom understand the subject enough to reliably insulate themselves from danger. Inimicals use this lore to lure mortals into damnation.

## THE SECOND AGE

The Emanates struck a balance with one another, and their primordial struggles ceased. They turned their attention to emerging mortals, through direct influence and the use of Servitors. They cultivated "Chosen Ones," whispered to priests and philosophers, or had slaves build palaces to their glory, according to their individual natures and goals. Yet mortals didn't just react to the gods, but explored the planes, crossing gates out of curiosity or in search of a better life. Some natural philosophers believe the distinctive lineages of humanity only emerged during Second Age migrations. The jana established themselves on Earth, but prospered on many planes. The wild arvu and stone-souled huldra established themselves on numerous Otherworlds, and the tough, fierce dreygur colonized the Netherworlds, or were transported there by force. Most believe humans originated on many worlds, in many shapes, but migration spread these ancestries particularly far and wide—and their gods followed.

Desiring wider worship, the Hierarchs founded transplanar empires in the footsteps of their migrating followers. The rulers of linked planes recognized each other as members of common pantheons, or even aspects of one another. Hierarchs even mated with mortals, producing the heroes and demi-gods now called Optimates.

Meanwhile, the Alastors hungered for souls, but the Netherworlds proved too hostile to sustain the populations common on other planes. They sent Inimical agents to prey upon mortals in the Otherworlds and Earth. Earth's Machinors successfully fended off these demons, but numerous Otherworlds fell prey to them. As for the Machinors' motives, they claimed no souls beyond the residents of Earth. They remained neutral as other planes were consumed by the conflict to command mortal souls, until at last the Hierarchs and Alastors unleashed armies against one another, throwing the planes into the Fellwar.

Millions died. The Fellwar razed entire planes, and perhaps even threatened to destroy the fabric of existence. Earth abstained from the conflict, and the Machinors set mighty Functionaries to guard its gates. Although time between the planes can be a slippery thing, some believe this marks the beginning of Earth's mundane history. The gods and monsters of legend were banned, immortalized in confused stories, and humanity moved itself by wheel, plow, bronze sword, blood, and sweat from that point on.

But on the battlefields of the Fellwar, the Emanates sent soldier-worshippers to their deaths. Certain mortals plotted rebellion against their masters, but how could they succeed? The Alastors, the Hierarchs, and their potent servants were

THEIR WHIPS WERE MADE OF THIRTY-SIX IRON JOINTS, EACH SHAPED LIKE CERVICAL VERTEBRAE UNTIL THE THORN AT THEIR ENDS. EACH OF THE BLOCKING DEVILS HELD TWO, WHICH THEY USED TO WARD OFF TROOPS FLEEING THEIR WAY. MOST OF THESE HAD ONCE BEEN SOFT PEOPLES, STRIPPED OF THEIR SOULS AND PLACED IN TOUGHER FLESH TO DO WAR-WORK. THEY WERE NOT SUCKLED ON BLOOD OR WARMED IN RAZED CITIES, AS OUR ANCESTORS WERE, AS WE ARE. HOW COULD THEY DO ANYTHING BUT FLEE THE HORROR OF THE FRONT LINE?

YET AS THE INIMICALS WHIPPED THEM AND THEY TURNED BACK INTO THE BATTLE, I SAW EYES NARROWED WITH HATE AS OFTEN AS THOSE WIDENED IN FEAR, AND I KNEW THEY WOULD BE MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS. WHEN THE TIME CAME, WE WOULD SEIZE THOSE LASHES, DESTROY THEIR OWNERS, AND BEGIN OUR OWN WAR.

~RED MADLANE, FIRST OF THE UNCHALLENGED

powerful enough to suppress any unaided rebellion. Bands of desperate refugees and deserters begged Earth for aid and refuge. Most were turned away—but not all.

One group proposed that the Machinors should not simply accept migrants, but end the war, and unlike previous envoys, didn't argue for any particular pantheon, plane, or infernal pact. They wanted to overthrow *all* gods. The Machinors later sent the refugees away not in rejection, but as messengers to thousands of fallen communities. Under the messengers' instructions, the refugees made their way to Vigrith, which was left largely untouched by the war because so many of its gates led to Earth, a neutral, well-guarded realm. Until the migrants came, it was a strategic dead end, but millions of newly arrived refugees made an attractive target for all sides. Their souls were spoils, and their bodies could be armed and sent into the fray.

The greatest armies of the Otherworlds and Netherworlds came to Vigrith. The refugees were waiting for them. Earth was waiting for them. Unlike all other planes, Earth has many histories: worldlines containing countless possibilities. Time flows at different rates in some of these. The Machinors had long used them for radical experiments—even ones which destroyed all life. And in many of these alternate histories, the Emanates of Earth fostered apocalyptic wars in which nations would create the greatest weapons. Therefore, the refugees were well-guarded; the Machinors unleashed these weapons upon the invaders, Machinor minders generating the rational laws needed for them to function. Thus, the Plutonium Swarm, the Blinding Scythe, the Penrose Labyrinth, the Hate Algorithm, and more rained unimaginable destruction upon the invaders.

Earth's war machines broke the armies at Vigrith and forced representatives to parley with the refugees. The Alastors agreed to return to their Netherworlds and no longer seize the souls of the unwilling. The Hierarchs similarly gave up authority without consent, and all sides agreed to demobilize their armies. In some cases, this was already done for them: waves of desertion hollowed out armies as their leaders negotiated. The Nighthost was born during this period, but instead of disbanding, became its own force to be reckoned with.

The Machinors withdrew their weapons. With the Fellwar concluded, the planes were consumed by chaos. On Vigrith, the refugees and masterminds of Earth's intercession founded a society of wisdom, devoted to promoting peace and greater knowledge among mortals across the Metacosm. This was the Vitane, and its founding is considered to be the event that began the Third Age.

## THE THIRD AGE

At last, peace befell the planes. The Emanates withdrew to secret fastnesses in the planes they once ruled, or exiled themselves to veiled realms. Their Optimate bloodlines asserted themselves instead, within the growing Vitane or in independent kingdoms. The Optimate-led Imperial Party eventually took the position that Optimates were the rightful rulers of the planes, and after failing to press their case within the Vitane, forced the secession of Alatum and other planes, founding the Divine Empire. The Empire and Vitane



IN SUMMATION: THE THIRD AGE HAS BEEN A TIME OF PEACE, BUT OUR PATH FORWARD IS CLOUDED WITH UNCERTAINTY. FROM OUR OWN SUCCESSION CRISIS TO THE SO-CALLED THRESHOLDERS INFILTRATING OUR WORLDS, THE OLD ENEMIES ASSERT THEMSELVES, WHILE OUR RIVALS APPEAR TO CARE MORE ABOUT DEPRIVING US OF OUR RIGHTFUL AUTHORITY THAN THE ANCIENT POWERS WHICH UNDERMINE THEM AS SURELY AS THEY DO THE EMPIRE. THEREFORE, IT LIES UPON US TO ENSURE THE FOURTH AGE DAWNS UNDER OUR DOMINION, OR ELSE IT WILL BE A VERY SHORT ERA, INDEED.

HAIL THE PENTARCHY! HAIL THE COMING EMPEROR!

—ALMARIS LATONIS OF THE FURY OF THE BLACK BREATH, WITH THE 152ND DIVISION OF THE IMMORTAL FORCE

still contend for control of many planes, and both fend off invasions from the Nighthost. Earth maintains limited relations with the Vitane through a governing conspiracy, the Peridexion.

This arrangement evolved throughout a period that includes Earth's recorded history—a period of time that shrinks or stretches on other planes. It has proven to be a stable era, though not free of strife. Earth and the great transplanar powers have developed an unprecedented ability to care for their own—and ways to unleash destruction not seen since the final battle at Vigrith.

## THE MORTAL HEGEMONY

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After the Emanates departed, mortals set about rebuilding their planes, dividing the Hierarchs' wealth among their former subjects. This age of mortals dawned over fields busy with replanting and the frames of new buildings reaching up from devastated cities. Mortals formed societies, guilds, and governments to manage the planes. The Vitane accepted any society that rejected tyranny and knew of interplanar travel as a member, and beyond facilitating the exchange of knowledge and resources with other members, left these sects to manage their own territories. Over time, the Vitane grew from a council of advisors into an overarching government of its own, with all the expected political complexities. This in turn spawned the Divine Empire, and by about 450 BCE on Earth, the Imperial Party's secession (taking Alatum and other valuable planes with it) nearly destroyed the early Vitane completely. Throughout this period, the Nighthost raided and conquered planes, splitting their attentions between Netherworlds and Otherworlds.

Earth returned to semi-isolation. On the obscure nation of Invindara, the Peridexion acts as an interface between mortals and the Machinors and manages Earth's relations with other planes. Allied with the Vitane, it nevertheless exercises autonomy, so Earth is not considered to be under Vitane jurisdiction. Most of the Peridexion's work has little to do with other planes, being concentrated on Earth's technological development and experiments across multiple alternate worlds.

Oracles, psychics, and statisticians within each organization warn of coming instability in the form of political chaos and an increasing number of strange, threatening incidents. Fools summon Inimicals, and rumors of a Netherworld-aligned group called the Thresholders have risen. They bring stories of blood, ghosts, and stolen souls with them. If the Alastors return to war, the Third Age falls, and mortals must fight without their old gods' aid. The Vitane sends its Sodality out to uncover the truth while exploring the planes, helping those they encounter, and upholding their code.

## THE GREAT POWERS

As the Third Age's mortal hegemony rose, so too did factions dedicated to guiding, ruling, and preserving the fragile new order. Three organizations rose to greater power than the rest to shape the fates of trillions, including countless planes where people know nothing of gates or the greater Metacosm.

## THE VITANE

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The Vitane rose from refugees who sought the aid of Earth's Machinors, and survivors of the final battles on Vigrith. Their first objectives were shaped by their history: to bring peace to the devastated Otherworlds and prevent future conflicts. They rebuilt cities on Vigrith, and from them founded colleges of magic and libraries collecting millions of books donated by the war's survivors. Over time, the Vitane became a government for many planes, either as a layer of organization that dealt with interplanar matters or, less commonly, as the first authority on planes where other governments had collapsed. In the aftermath of the Fellwar, mortals had often been treated as little more than slaves, and survivors feared any new social order would impose the same conditions. Thus, the Vitane created the *Code of Wisdom* (simply called "the Code" in reverent tones by Vitane loyalists), a set of constitutional principles, to win the trust of people across many planes.

As Vitane influence grew, a splinter faction chafed at the Code's restrictions. This Imperial Party believed the Vitane should position itself as the successor of the Hierarchs and assert a benevolent, if firm, authority—and that as descendants of the old gods, the Optimates should be given a special place in the order of things. In the greatest crisis the Vitane has ever experienced, the Imperialists backed the mass secession which would eventually create the Divine Empire.

## THE VITANE TODAY

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The Vitane is one of the true great powers of the Metacosm. Many factions have risen against it, but save for the Divine Empire, none have been able to survive a sustained conflict with the Vitane, which has proven capable of sustained growth even in the face of enemy action. This has given it resources unmatched by any other power except for the Divine Empire and Nighthost. Earth's Peridexion is technically less powerful as well, but in holding Earth, it maintains the most secure territory in all Creation.

### THE VITANE GOVERNMENT

The *Code of Wisdom* is the Vitane's supreme law, interpreted by its judicial branch, the Dicastery. Permanent officials

appoint defenders and inquisitors for particular matters, while cases themselves are decided by juries selected from those who've studied the essentials of Vitane law – a category that includes anyone who holds any official Vitane post. The Vitane's legislative body, the Mortal Supremacy (just called the Supremacy in common usage), accepts Lawspeaker representatives from other planes using a formula that considers population, culture, and distance. Currently, the Supremacy possesses 1,028 Lawspeakers. The Vitane possesses no chief executive, or in fact any executive branch at all, except for various commissions struck to manage particular affairs. These constitute the points at which the legislature commands the bureaucracy.

## VITANE BUREAUCRACY

In the modern era, the Vitane has turned its resources to preserving knowledge, guiding planes to prosperity, and protecting them from a range of threats. In pursuit of these goals, they have built numerous teams, sub-organizations, and networks within their ranks. This diversity has allowed them to survive terrorist attacks, coups, falling nations, and mismanagement, though the number and overlapping purviews of various groups sometimes appear to be a parody of excess bureaucracy. Does one register an unusual magical artifact with the Lodge of Strange Materials, or with a representative of the Circle of Arcane Materialists? Despite the opportunities for confusion, these are usually functioning redundancies, meaning that one can take multiple paths to get something done. Chief administrators known as magisters are especially adept at dispelling confusion.

Perhaps the best-known Vitane agency is the Sodality, which is explored in detail throughout this book and particularly in CHAPTER 4, as Player Characters commonly belong to the organization. The Vitane relies on the Sodality for numerous operations of military, scientific, and diplomatic import. On Earth, the Vitane also maintains the Euporia, an organization which manages trade and investment in the primeline's resources, especially technology.

## THE CODE OF WISDOM

In the vast majority of cases, the Vitane do not rule planes, but form relationships with each plane's preeminent governments. These ties are strictly voluntary and revocable. The laws behind these rules are one part of the *Code of Wisdom*, which acts as the Vitane's constitution and supreme guide to policy. The Code contains Precepts and Commentaries. To change it requires a two-thirds supermajority in the Supremacy and the consent of the Dicastery. The current Precepts include (but are not limited to) the following.

**NO ENSOULD BEING SHALL BE PLACED BENEATH ANOTHER DUE TO CHARACTERISTICS GRANTED BY BIRTH, BODY, OR INNATE MIND.**

Discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, heritage from among peoples such as the jana, arvu, huldra, or dreygur, age, gender, sexuality, physical variation, or ingrained psychological differences (as opposed to willful choices) is forbidden. Planar governments must agree to uphold this Precept if they wish to join the Vitane. Longstanding Commentaries and Dicastery



rulings confirm this Precept doesn't prevent taking steps to redress inequalities or barriers to access based on the specific situations of individuals, and in some cases mandates them.

**THE VITANE SUBMITS ONLY TO THE WILL OF THE MAJORITY.**

The Vitane only forms relationships with governments who represent their citizens well, and should those governments lose their mandate or decide the Vitane is no longer welcome, the Vitane must depart. Practically speaking, a centuries-old alliance is not easily severed, often necessitating careful exit plans.

**FEAST NOT IN A HUNGRY LAND.**

The Vitane, and any government it takes under its wing, must provide an array of social supports for its citizens based on the redistribution of available wealth, with the ultimate goal of eliminating poverty.

**THE VITANE IS INVISIBLE TO THE UNINITIATED.**

The Vitane refrains from revealing the existence of other planes, but if natives of the plane know the truth, the Vitane encourages them to share this information. The Vitane may provide limited aid to the uninitiated, who can neither be told of the Metacosm nor be inadvertently forced to depend on transplanar resources in the long term.

## SOULS ARE UNFIT FOR COMMERCE.

This Precept not only bans slavery and other forms of compulsory servitude, but forbids the soul trade.

### OTHER PRECEPTS

Remaining Precepts guarantee freedom of expression, a right to privacy, reproductive rights, and more—elements familiar to similar Earth systems.

## THE DIVINE EMPIRE

The Optimates were divided when the Fellwar ended, and though many chose the path of the Vitane, not all who joined were pleased with the direction it took. A splinter formed as the Imperial Party, for Optimate supremacy and direct rule of the planes.

In 450 BCE, Dyraza, a thunder and sky Optimate and leader of the Imperial Party, masterminded coups on over a dozen planes, declaring herself the Empress of the new Divine Empire. Under her direction, the Empire built an Optimate aristocracy of Prefects, a ruling council called the Pantheon, a Curia of worshipful mortals, and other institutions over 199 years of rule. This period of rapid expansion was significantly slowed by her death. In apparent retribution for campaigns ranging into the Netherworlds, Dyraza was assassinated by Avakim, Alastor Lord of Dust, in an incursion into Alatum itself.

Since the Empress's death, the question of succession has plagued the Empire, but it's managed to adapt, switching to rule by the Pentarchy who head the five most powerful branches of government. Of these, the Sodality most often deals with the Praetorium, an organization parallel to their own. Unlike the Sodality, the Praetorium exists to further Imperial interests by any means necessary. Trained in espionage and special warfare tactics, their Fury units are formidable opponents.

## IMPERIAL SOCIETY

The Divine Empire is ruled with an iron hand by Optimate aristocrats. These include the planar Dominii who populate the Pantheon, and regional Prefects and Subprefects. They bicker over power and prestige, and might drain their realms dry in ever-greater shows of wealth and pageantry. Optimate Prefects and Subprefects run practical affairs ranging from trade to vendettas between Optimates. Dominii are comparatively idealistic and generalist in their concerns, making grand pronouncements while their vassals take care of the rest.

The Empire runs on mortal worship of the Optimates and their Emanate ancestors. This is overseen by the Curia, an assembly of priests and anointed arcanists. Where they fail to sway the commoners, a vast network of spies informs the authorities of disloyalty and intimidates everyone they might report for impiety or treason. The mass of mortal commoners are divided among true believers, those who tolerate their inferior position in the Empire, and small revolutionary cells. The Sodality is often assumed to support an anti-Imperial insurgency, but few are in a position to verify or deny these allegations.

Mortals and junior Optimates can earn prestige by devoting themselves to the system, though no mortal can gain the privileges of an Optimate. Joining the Praetorium or the Empire's Immortal Force military are popular but dangerous routes to social advancement.

## THE NIGHTHOST

Born to fight and blooded in the endless battles of the Fellwar, the predecessors of the Nighthost were the terror of the planes. As the Fellwar ended, many Netherworld warriors fled their masters, conquered Otherworlds, and founded an alliance of warlords and mercenaries ruled by thanes who can only be overthrown by sufficiently honorable challengers. As the Nighthost, these rebels founded a new home plane. This is the Fetter, a liberated Netherworld, where they built tribes, cities, and nations under the leadership of the Unchallenged, elders renowned for their deeds. Many claim that the Nighthost are secretly ruled by foul Emanates: rotten, demonic gods who are marshaling their forces for a final war. But as their forebears were twisted and tormented by the Alastors, the Nighthost bears no love for their ancestral masters or any Emanates. Their ethos is founded in freedom through strength. The warrior conquers, or is conquered.

The Nighthost has never forgotten how in the aftermath of the Fellwar, the Otherworlds' inhabitants branded their kind beasts, monsters, and craven slaves of horrific gods. Former soldiers of the Alastors were outcasts on nearly every plane.



Only the Nighthost accepted and trusted them. And once given, trust should never be betrayed. To a warrior of the Nighthost, honor is everything, instilled from the moment of birth to their dying breath. Therefore, even as their armies conquer plane after plane and install thanes to rule the defeated natives, they moderate their cruelty with an ethos that grants power to the deserving.

Sodality members most often encounter the Nighthost's warbands: small groups of soldiers who fill the same strategic niche as the Sodality's Missions. Warbands have primarily military aims, but are neither ignorant nor aimlessly violent. Their members are often as learned and clever as their Sodality counterparts.

## UNCHALLENGED, THANE, CAPTAIN, HOUSECARL, KIN, AND THRALL

Moved stone by semi-translucent stone, spar by Nether-metal spar, a captured Alastor castle from the icy, acidic Netherworld of Thife houses the Unchallenged as a testament to the Nighthost's reverence. The Unchallenged are named thus because, in a society where anyone else can be cast from their position after honorable combat, the Unchallenged alone are sacrosanct. They advise the Nighthost as a whole, imposing laws when they see fit. They rarely leave the Fetter.

Beneath the Unchallenged, the individual sub-hosts of the Nighthost are ruled by thanes: the cleverest, strongest Nighthost, who maintain their position for as long as they're able to lead subordinates to conquest. Each thane relies on a swarm of captains who take on whatever responsibilities they can to prove their worth. Thus, one captain, responsible for a hundred troops, may have more prestige than the leader of a single warband. Captains in turn direct housecarls, who've proven themselves fit warriors. Their kin make up the mass of recognized Nighthost members, who may all take up arms, but for the most part concentrate on some other profession.

As for the conquered, they're thralls, unfree chattel who must give tribute to their conquerors—until they prove ready to fight alongside them. Ritual combat and brave deeds might elevate even thralls to a place of honor in one of the war-hosts.

## THE PERIDEXION

The secret custodians of Earth, the Peridexion is at least the second such organization to build relations with the Vitane, regulate gate travel, and preserve the primeline: the history of the "true" Earth, as opposed to alternate worldlines. Basic information about the Peridexion's predecessors has been erased from known history, but it is known that shortly after the Sack of Rome, a sect of Neoplatonists from that city and Alexandria followed Aksumite philosophers across the ocean to Invindara, an obscure island nation. By the mid-5th Century CE, the Vitane accepted their envoys. The nascent sect absorbed similar organizations around the world and became known by many names until the Middle Ages, when the few who knew it called it the Peridexion.

The Peridexion is not a government in the usual sense, though it speaks for Earth in transplanar matters. It is chiefly



concerned with maintaining the primeline and manipulating select alternate histories according to a grand plan devised by Machinors, who either advise the organization or rule it, depending on your perspective. This agenda includes suppressing common knowledge about gate travel, other planes, the existence of arcane and occult powers, and even certain technologies it deems to have arrived "ahead of time." The Peridexion reserves this "postmodern" technology for its own use, creating everything from technologically enhanced agents to time machines—and stranger still, technologies that rely entirely on mathematical and conceptual phenomena instead of the material world.

The Peridexion enforces its policies in moderation, understanding that these phenomena cannot be completely eliminated, but it prefers they influence the course of history as subtly as possible. Earth contains a host of conspiracies which rely on forbidden philosophies, other planes, and dangerous, potent patrons, however, so the organization employs assets of every kind to thwart them. The most prominent of these is Aethon, whose operant agents often work with the Vitane's Sodality.

## PERIDEXION ORGANIZATION

Although it's an organization with worldwide reach, the Peridexion maintains its headquarters in Invindara, an Afro-Asian nation in the Indian Ocean which has otherwise refused foreign visitors. The Peridexion doesn't rule Invindara, but in





return for territory and exemptions from its anti-colonization laws, does not enforce restrictions on technological development there, and helps Invindara conduct trade anonymously. Without Peridexion or colonial-era interference, Invindara possesses the most technologically sophisticated society on Earth. Nevertheless, knowledge of the Peridexion and the nature of the Metacosm is limited to certain high officials and special operatives in the Invindaran government. To everyone else, the purpose of the windowless, four-tower complex called the Gray Hand is opaque. Each tower contains a major division of the Peridexion.

## AETHON

Aethon is the Peridexion's espionage and paramilitary division. Aethon's organization, resources, and functions are described later in this chapter, in **CHAPTER 4**, and elsewhere throughout this book.

## HATATA

Hatata (Ge'ez for "Inquiry") is the executive division, whose members directly interface with Lucifer and the other Machinors which oversee the Peridexion as a whole. Hatata members are known for their eccentric personalities, characterized by either religious awe or cynicism toward the Machinors—nothing in between.

## THE KAAL

Its name derived from the Sanskrit term for destiny, death, and darkness, the Kaal is a sect of scientists and historians who record the histories of the primeline and known Alts,

with a particular focus on developments in science and technology. It is said that the Kaal decides when worlds prosper, and when they must die.

## THE TEPĒTL

The Tepētl, or "mountain" (from the Nahuatl) is the sociopolitical division. Its agents manipulate economic and political capital for the organization as a whole, and are often as skilled at infiltration as Aethon operants. Much of the Tepētl's work is done by social scientists, economists, analysts, and a host of sub-sapient expert systems devoted to everything from funding Peridexion operations to preventing nuclear war.

Each division possesses its own internal organization and a fair amount of redundancy, so that if one branch falters, the others can cover for it. Numerous cells and smaller organizations, some of which exist in alternate worldlines alone, also exist. These collectively pursue the Machinors' ever-shifting master plan.

## AETHON

The tactical force of the Peridexion, Aethon is tasked with eliminating threats to Earth's worldline. Primarily composed of enhanced humans trained in the use of postmodern technology, Aethon agents called operants safeguard the primeline, assist Sodality Missions, and when necessary, travel to other worldlines to neutralize threats beyond mortal understanding. Aethon agents are sometimes seconded to the Sodality (and, rarely, other Vitane bodies) for high-risk operations, but as they represent the Peridexion's interests first and

foremost, there's always potential for friction during these missions. Many operants live as nomads, traveling between parallel Earths or to Otherworlds, while others work exclusively in the primeline, often in conjunction with other Peridexion divisions.

Aethon is a common organization for Player Characters to join. For more information, see CHAPTER 4.

## THREATS & OTHER ACTORS

The major factions of the Metacosm aren't the only sources of influence. For good or ill, an array of small factions, political tendencies, and less classifiable phenomena have a hand in affairs.

### ACCELERATORS

The Accelerators are a catch-all category for those who would use postmodern technologies to impose catastrophic changes, defying the Peridexion's plans. They pursue breakthroughs in social engineering, machine-mind interfaces, nanotechnology, biohacking, reality-manipulating higher-order mathematics – whatever obsesses the individual Accelerator. Machinors typically recruit the most stable Accelerators, leaving dangerous eccentrics and their experiments for Aethon to deal with.

### THE DOMINION

The Dominion is a faction of psychic supremacists, strongest on Earth, but with clans throughout various planes. For millennia, Dominion psychics used their gifts to enrich their bloodlines, and until the 15th Century, battled each other. Rising imperialism prompted a peace treaty, so they could exploit non-psychics together. Dominion clans are universally wealthy, believe non-psychics are inferior, and have spent generations with little respect for conventional morality. Each clan is also a cult whose rites invoke dark Emanates: cruel angels and towering god-kings.

### THE KRYPTeia

A shadowy syndicate of corporations, organized crime, and rogue Machinor priests, the Krypteia exists to exploit humanity, starting with Earth, though it pursues business on any plane where it can set up a front organization and find trustworthy lieutenants to manage it. Follow any ordinary mob outfit through enough of its connections, and you'll find Krypteia manipulators – assuming they don't notice and kill you first. The Krypteia uses postmodern technology of its own, but also employs occult adepts, arcanists, and Otherworldly mercenaries to expand their interests. While the Peridexion has managed to limit their power in the primeline, the Krypteia has turned multiple Alts into dystopias, choked by pollution, exploitation, and the other diseases produced by kleptocracy. On any plane, a currency called the krypt is crucial to their power. It cannot be counterfeited in either digital or physical form, and is the only way to purchase certain services from the Krypteia. Krypts pay for elite assas-

sins, back-alley surgeons specializing in tactical bionics, and telepathic interrogators.

### THE FERRYMEN

Founded by Optimates with the ability to travel between planes without using gates, the Ferrymen smuggle people and goods between worlds. They follow a loose code of honor that forbids egregiously harmful activities such as human trafficking, smuggling weapons, or dealing in addictive, toxic, or otherwise dangerous goods. The Vitane do not formally acknowledge the Ferrymen, but sometimes look the other way. The Divine Empire and Nighthost are not so merciful.

### THE OCCULT GUILDS

An alliance of ancient witch covens, esoteric orders, and paranormal research societies, the occult guilds (also called psychic guilds) teach and regulate the dangerous arts of psychic adepts. Occult rites are officially discouraged, if not banned outright, in most jurisdictions influenced by the Metacosm's great powers (with the Nighthost being a notable exception), so in most places, guilds meet secretly. Each guild specializes in specific disciplines and rites, keeping certain secrets for themselves, and with the exception of a few corrupt guilds, all vow to keep the forces of the Netherworld from influencing their actions.

### WARLOCKS

Throughout the planes, renegade arcanists study dangerous forms of magic. Their methods defy Vitane law, barring them from the Otherworlds' recognized magical societies. Even Earth-based warlocks practice harmful variations of the arcane arts, from blood sacrifice to invoking dangerous elemental forces. Warlocks typically work individually or in small groups, though at least one sect, the Valkumenoth, has evolved into a populous conspiracy.

### THRESHOLDERS

Thresholders are a recent phenomenon about which little is known, except that these agents serve the Alastors, sacrificing their humanity for powers that defy categorization into psychic phenomena, arcane power, and advanced technology. Most are able to maintain an outwardly normal appearance, but can unleash horrors when confronted. Finding, studying, and countering Thresholder operations is a rising priority for both the Sodality and Aethon.

## NH-26004: TORRK

The weather in this Netherworld is eternally gloomy, covered in ever-present clouds and non-stop rain. The land is a soggy collection of marshes and swamps, with some dry lands in the mountains. The seasons determine the rain's composition, from chill spring and warm summer water to poisonous autumn rain and winter blood-hail. The Nighthost nominally controls the plane, maintaining multiple training barracks. These encampments also exist to hunt down the plane's Alastors, who have never revealed themselves.

# THE SODALITY

The Sodality is an organization devoted to exploring the planes, making peaceful contact with their inhabitants, and protecting them—and the Vitane the Sodality represents—from harm. Small Sodality teams called Missions follow unknown gates to new worlds or check in on mapped planes to render aid and strengthen friendships. Many Player Characters will be Sodality members. CHAPTER 2 presents various character creation options for such characters (called Sodalts), while CHAPTER 4 provides a deeper treatment of the Sodality's policies and capabilities. This chapter introduces the organization and presents some of the common knowledge a member or close associate would acquire.

In summary, the Sodality is an organization that explores the Metacosm, defends the Vitane, and establishes contact with peoples from many worlds. A Sodality team is called a Mission, which consists of individual Sodalts and occasional operatives from allied organizations such as Aethon. Sodalts are known for their scarabs: badges carrying the sign of the gate, which resembles the mathematical symbol for  $\pi$ . Within the Sodality, three service branches exist: Emissaries, who perform diplomatic functions and master the social sciences; Protectors, who ensure the Mission's security; and Seekers, who specialize in science, metaphysics, planar navigation, and other fields of applied and pure knowledge.

## THE SODALITY'S PURPOSE

The Sodality exists to defend the Vitane from threats to its existence. This includes helping governments which have chosen to ally with the Vitane, as loose associates or completely under its protective umbrella. Through the *Code of Wisdom*, the Vitane gives strong guarantees to members of any civilization desiring them. The Sodality acts as a strong right hand which would prefer to sign a treaty, but will pick up a gun or sword if necessary. The Sodality is no army, but its Protector division is skilled in the arts of war.

The Sodality works for peace and prosperity wherever it can. It cures the sick, feeds the hungry, and comforts the despairing, though its work is limited by rules intended to prevent any civilization from becoming dependent, intimidated, deprived of its culture, or stripped of individual consent. To cultures starting their journey through the gates, the Sodality provides friendship and guidance. Those who know nothing of other planes receive secret aid to prevent them from being overwhelmed by the truth, and the relative power of a transplanar organization.

The Sodality seeks out knowledge of all kinds. In the Second Age, blindly trusting the old gods gave them the power to throw mortals into the Fellwar. Knowledge gives humans the ability to master themselves as individuals and societies. Knowledge is the precursor to wisdom, for once we understand the wonders and dangers around us, we make prudent choices, weighing the options to be found across multiple worlds—and the circumstances of hearts and minds.

## THE VOWS

Here's the heart of it: The Sodality is an organization that avoids sacrificing high ideals for pragmatic benefits. To a true Sodalt, "making the hard choices" is never about doing the wrong thing to fight another day. If a Sodalt doesn't defend the defenseless, enlighten the wayward, and help everyone they meet make truly free, informed choices, they were never putting up a fight in the first place.

Each person who wishes to join the Sodality must learn the order's Vows by heart and, of course, obey them. Basic mastery of the Vows is permissible for the sake of passing the exams, while higher ranks must memorize them in greater depth, especially where they concern a Sodalt's service branch. Devised during the Reconstruction, the Vows are "positive laws"—that is, they regulate behavior by demanding active commitment.

The Vows are a constellation of promises founded on the pillars of Security, Sovereignty, and Sapience. The Sodalt promises to protect the Vitane, defend the rights and safety of sapient beings, and foster wisdom in themselves and others. Further, the Sodalt promises to adhere to all rules which follow from the core vows. Thus, vows are connected to one another much like the planes are, across chains of commitment and reasoning, until they cover very specific behavior. The Vows encompass the Vitane *Code of Wisdom*, along with rules for ethical conflict, how to interact with individuals who know nothing of the Metacosm, and more.



## AGES OF THE SODALITY

The Divine Empire's rise was the first of a series of crises that shook the Vitane. In response, it created the Sodality. Tasked with exploration, protection, and communication, the Sodality recruited members from across the planes and sent them across the Metacosm, founding the organization's reputation as a benevolent force. Across many, many planes, people recognize the sign of the gate, the Sodality scarab, and the colors of each division: Emissary purple and gold, Protector red and silver, and Searcher green and bronze. They welcome Missions with open arms.

Yet it was not always so. The Sodality's early years were rocky ones, as organizing a force meeting the diplomatic, defensive, and exploratory needs of the Vitane, across the thousands of cultures, languages, and sovereignties of the planes, was a titanic task. The history of the Sodality stretches over more years than may be covered here, but some eras should be particularly interesting to Sodalts.

### THE FAR-WALKERS

Originally, the Sodality possessed no firm service divisions. Sodalts devoted themselves to exploration before anything else and performed other tasks on an ad hoc basis. Several renowned Missions developed and were called Far-Walkers for the long, complex gate chains they mapped. For the most part, the 200 years of Far-Walker Missions rendered aid to and made friendly contact with anyone they met and gave a favorable impression of the Vitane. This was critical in the wake of the Divine Empire's secession, as it established the Vitane's peaceful intentions, making them a more attractive ally than the aggressive Empire. Far-Walker maps are still used today, and in the modern Sodality, "Far-Walker" is an honorific granted to great explorers.

### THE LONG BREATH & THE CRIMSON TRIDENT

For centuries after the Far-Walkers, the Sodality dealt with numerous petty conflicts including standoffs with the Divine Empire and Nighthost, but these were infrequent events in a relatively peaceful era. The Sodality was most successful in its exploratory and other knowledge-gathering goals. Yet by the end of this period, the "Long Breath," the Sodality's lack of structure promoted factionalism.

Starting in 1148 CE, three allied Sodality commanders spent a decade acquiring resources and personnel suited to military conquest. They found veterans from Earth's Second Crusade, who were experienced with invasion and colonization, especially useful. In 1161, they raised the standard of the Crimson Trident and seized territory in a cluster of planes. They claimed to conquer these lands for the inhabitants' own benefit, pre-emptively guarding them from the Divine Empire and Nighthost, but the three Missions' Sodalts styled themselves lords of the people, not servants.

As the Crimson Trident grew in power, it began advocating for the Sodality to separate from the Vitane and establish itself on the Trident's planes, founding a kingdom of "warrior

*When the Peridexion first petitioned the Vitane for oversight of a planar colony, they hoped it would be the first of many. Magic only happens when it rains here, there's no known native sapient life, Incessance exerts little force, and it has a standard planetary configuration, so a colony in its arid region has proven moderately successful. Yet despite the lack of native souls, explorers have found strange designs and even what looks like writing, though it's incomprehensible even through Shabda.*

saints." Unsurprisingly, this roused fury within the Vitane, and the previously complacent Supremacy called an emergency session to deal with the issue. A series of strongly worded threats did nothing, and when the Vitane-aligned Optimate Yenla Greytooth went to reason with them, the Trident returned his head and hands in a box, along with an official declaration of separation.

### WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION

It fell to a magister from Earth to confront the crisis. Formerly of Syria, Su'ad bint Firuz al-Mu'allima claimed special insight into the Crimson Trident's actions, and successfully petitioned the Vitane for the right to form a task force capable of surgically removing the rogue faction without destroying the Sodality as a whole.

She told the truth about her insight, as the Crimson Trident borrowed its strategies and propaganda from Crusaders she'd encountered before discovering the wider Metacosm. Instead of meeting the Trident's forces head-on in various siege operations to control critical gates, she adapted asymmetric warfare techniques capable of defeating the enemy's massed cavalry, infantry, and arcane engines. Transported by trading favors with the Ferryman, Mali cavalry from Earth lured troops out of formation, allowing two Ife members of the Peridexion, Kusa and Kosigiri, to evade enemy lines and assassinate Crimson Trident commander Savai Godkiller—and frame a second commander, Ramladh, for her death.

This prompted the third commander, Masmarg, to split with and eventually kill Ramladh, shortly before Kusa and Kosigiri captured him and ended the Crimson Trident's threat. At Magister Su'ad's suggestion, the Vitane offered a general amnesty to the remaining rebel Sodalts.

After that short, violent work, the Reconstruction began. Under Su'ad's guidance as Grand Intendant, it organized the Sodality into its now-familiar branches, providing camaraderie beyond individual Missions. She instituted Magisterial oversight, laid the groundwork for the administrative Modality, and by the end of the century, all but invented the organization that has persisted over 700 years to the present.

### THE EARTHLING ERA TO THE PRESENT

As Earth stumbled through the Inquisition, colonialism, and other bleak times, the Sodality grew and thrived on Vigrith. Events on Earth produced tension with the Peridexion, which inexplicably refused to help victims of the history they shaped. The Sodality offered talented individuals living through crises opportunities where they could,

## HI-28132: KORALVOS

Magic and technology in this world form a rare amalgam. Unknown entities have grafted Earth-style physics onto the plane while maintaining its magical potential. Korvalvos' gates stand scattered throughout the plane's sole settlement of significant size: the arcology of Siege, built out of a sharply rising cliff. Its center contains the Godheart, from which veins of iridescent liquid flow. These may be tapped for electricity, or combined with a local mineral to create a coal-like substance called *bashai*.

but were bound by agreements limiting recruitment to those who'd independently discovered the existence of gates. One of these individuals was Emiliana Tlalli, who had escaped a Spanish Catholic orphanage as a child. She invented the Shabda Plaque, which Sodalts use to simulate (or, in a way, forge) official identification. Interventions like this founded Earth-origin settlements on multiple planes, and their inhabitants apply to the Sodality's Academy as a matter of family tradition.

Earthlings and their descendants don't dominate the modern Sodality but join in larger numbers than Earth's nature and the relative populations of the planes would otherwise suggest. In any event, the Sodality adheres to Vitane codes against discrimination. All who meet the requirements and serve loyally can call themselves Sodalts.

## VISITING THE SODALITY

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The Sodality manages several notable locales. Sodalts will have either visited or heard about all of those that follow and a few more, depending on respective personal histories.

### THE ACADEMY

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To codify and structure the training of Sodality agents, the wisdom-Optimate Senwola founded the first instance of the Academy during the Reconstruction, in 1198 CE. In 1618, this Academy was destroyed by what was judged a terrorist attack by the Divine Empire, though some believe a re-formed Crimson Trident might be responsible. Dozens of Preservationists died trying to save the last of their books, and over a dozen teachers and agents perished as they gave the plebs time to escape. When the Vitane rebuilt it nearly twenty years later under the leadership of Protector Jilan il-Vansia-Re, they added safeguards against future attacks, not all of which are known to the public or even most Sodalts. Jilan oversaw the purchase of a large island in the Staghorn Sea, her ancestral home. The storm-tossed, semi-tropical, 100-square-mile island benefits from multiple gates, a thriving shallow sea, and enough plant and mineral resources to support the Academy and two attendant towns.

Built on a promontory overlooking the Staghorn Sea, the Academy proper is a sprawling complex of many architectural styles, from the spires and buttresses of the Praedium to the organic marble lines of the Library of Mirrors. The Academy is constantly swarming with activity. Plebs climb the cliffs recreationally and as part of their physical training,

and depending on where one goes, a visitor might hear everything from incantations to automatic weapons fire.

### THE LIBRARY OF MIRRORS

The Library is the most impressive edifice of the Academy, being a flowing structure of pale rose marble from an abandoned Optimate palace on another plane. The stone is laced with threads of crystal, so the Library shines like a beacon in the sunrise. Peaceful gardens surround the library, providing spaces for reading and rest. Set apart from the rest of the Academy, it's overseen by the Preservationists.

Inside, beautifully patterned floors provide subtle cues for directions and themes. For instance, the section dealing with Earth is set with green and blue stone to accent the murals and maps set throughout the wing. The shelves are pale, fire-resistant wood. Well-appointed study and debate rooms are tucked throughout. Cabinets of rare manuscripts, artifacts, and curiosities provide distraction and amusement, though to inspect the most precious holdings, one must apply to visit the Iron Stacks, which are protected by unexpectedly well-armed librarians. Despite these precautions, the Library of Mirrors is open to all—and in fact, is the only part of the Academy that freely admits all peaceful visitors.

### CARDINAL HOUSE

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Located in central Akavastu, Vigrith, Cardinal House superficially resembles a modest-sized sandstone Romanesque cathedral, except that it has three sides surrounding a triangular courtyard and iconography alien to any Earthly religion. Named for its color and the species of bird it shelters (cardinals were imported 600 years ago, and have adapted well), Cardinal House contains the official residencies of the Intendants, chiefs of the Sodality's three service branches. (The heads of the Modality are also of Intendant rank but have a little-used guesthouse a mile away.) Mission logs are processed here before entering long-term storage with the Modality. Cardinal House is also where matters of governance, justice, and administration take place. These combined functions strain the building's capacity, so multiple adjacent buildings, painted with red roofs to denote their role as part of the "House Greater," deal with the overload. Finding the right person or place can be confusing, unless one has been summoned to appear before a tribunal—or invited to holding cells in the basement before trial.

### EARTH CONSULAR

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The Sodality maintains strong relations with the Peridexion and, in the 10th Century CE, was granted permission to build a consulate in Cairo. Today, the Earth Consular is an unassuming modern building. The facility is shrouded behind a small operation that sells office supplies. Its staff is largely diplomatic, and security operations are divided between Peridexion and Sodality personnel. "EC" would be considered one of the least interesting assignments for either organization, if not for a thousand years of accumulated archives, artifacts, and various other treasures. This fact has made it a suitable assignment for extremely competent personnel seeking semi-retirement.



## THREEFOLD CHARACTERS

The many worlds of the Metacosm offer an incredibly varied palette for characters in *Threefold*. Different ancestries and ways of life provide backstories and life experiences that are unimaginable in a wholly mundane Earth, and bold travelers who dare cross a gate learn new skills thanks to the peculiar challenges of interplanar travel.

In this chapter you will find new options for characters in *Threefold*, from backgrounds and professions to talents and specializations, as well as ancestries, which provide a more mythic origin for your *Modern AGE* protagonists. These supplement the rules in the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook*. The rules here cover many different character backstories and affiliations, with a bias toward the Sodality, an interplanar organization which provides significant opportunities for characters and campaigns. CHAPTER 4 discusses Sodality characters in greater detail. Check with the Game Master about whether they'll be running a Sodality campaign or an alternative.

### BACKGROUNDS

In *Threefold*, characters have a much wider range of options for their backgrounds on account of the existence of multiple worlds, which affects even people from Earth. The Peridexion cannot contain all the weirdness from Earth's own reality, and adding whatever can seep through unguarded gates, even characters who come from mainline Earth might be touched by extraordinary forces.

When making your *Threefold* character, roll or choose your social class as normal, but instead of rolling or picking a

background immediately afterward, roll on or choose from the **Background Origin** table to determine whether the character's background is Earthly in origin. If so, you then roll on the tables in the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook* as normal. However, if the background is touched by *Threefold's* distinctive setting (on Earth or other planes), you should use the full background table below.

### BACKGROUND DESCRIPTIONS

The following new backgrounds are available for *Threefold* campaigns. In the descriptions, a talent marked with an asterisk means that it can be found within these pages.

#### ATTRACTOR

#### MIDDLE

Ever since you were little, there was something about you that refused to let you live an average life. Maybe it's odd luck, or maybe it's your eccentric but charismatic demeanor. The mysterious exchange student sought you out, there was a strange accident near your house, or your new neighbors came from a country you'd never heard of before. You learned to take things in stride and protect yourself, developing a sense for when things are about to get weird.

**ABILITY:** +1 Willpower

**FOCUS:** Perception (Empathy) or Willpower (Self-Discipline)

**TALENT:** Attractive or Quick Reflexes

## ATTRACTOR BENEFITS

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 FIGHTING
3-4	FOCUS: DEXTERITY (INITIATIVE)
5	FOCUS: COMMUNICATION (LEADERSHIP)
6	FOCUS: CONSTITUTION (RUNNING)
7-8	+1 PERCEPTION
9	FOCUS: COMMUNICATION (PERSUASION)
10-11	FOCUS: FIGHTING (GRAPPLING)
12	+1 CONSTITUTION

## CHANGELING

## OUTSIDER

You always felt like something inside you made you different from everyone else, and you found out you were right: You're not "human" in the usual sense. You were born in an Otherworld or Netherworld, possibly from an ancestry alien to Earth. Your parents left you here to be raised by a world that doesn't know it belongs to a much greater whole.

## BACKGROUND ORIGIN

1D6 ROLL	BACKGROUND ORIGIN
1-2	Earthly ( <i>Modern AGE</i> )
3-4	Earthly ( <i>Threefold</i> )
5-6	Unearthly

## OUTSIDER BACKGROUNDS

1D6 ROLL	EARTHLY BACKGROUND	UNEARTHLY BACKGROUND
1-2	Changeling	Fetch
3-4	Doppelgänger	Planar Refugee
5-6	Runaway Subject	Wanderfolk

## LOWER CLASS BACKGROUNDS

1D6 ROLL	EARTHLY BACKGROUND	UNEARTHLY BACKGROUND
1-2	Charlatan	Indentured Attendant
3-4	Junker	Rarity Miner
5-6	Occult Labor	Serf

## MIDDLE CLASS BACKGROUNDS

1D6 ROLL	EARTHLY BACKGROUND	UNEARTHLY BACKGROUND
1-2	Attractor	Courtier
3-4	Cryptid Hunter	Guildler
5-6	New Kid	Surrogate

## UPPER CLASS BACKGROUNDS

1D6 ROLL	EARTHLY BACKGROUND	UNEARTHLY BACKGROUND
1-2	Cult Child	Noble
3-4	Kryptognost	Ward of the Vitane
5-6	Retired Athlete	Warrior Caste

**ABILITY:** +1 Intelligence. Optionally, you may choose one ancestral trait instead (see **Ancestries**, later in this chapter).  
**FOCUS:** Intelligence (Occultism) or Willpower (Courage)  
**TALENT:** Othersoul, Shadowsoul, or any talent that has a non-jana ancestry as a requirement. Optionally, you may choose one ancestral trait instead. You may choose this adaptation instead of or in addition to this background's option to replace an ability with an ancestral trait. If you choose two ancestral traits, you lose the free Intelligence (Occultism) or Willpower (Courage) focus, but may take it instead of rolling on the **Changeling Benefits Table**. See **Ancestries** later in this chapter for more information.

## CHANGELING BENEFITS

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 COMMUNICATION
3-4	FOCUS: DEXTERITY (RIDING)
5	FOCUS: FIGHTING (HEAVY BLADES)
6	FOCUS: DEXTERITY (CRAFTING)
7-8	+1 FIGHTING
9	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (EARTH SCIENCES)
10-11	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (THEOLOGY)
12	+1 CONSTITUTION

## CHARLATAN

## LOWER

Fools believe in magical diseases and cures, and you were happy to oblige them, relieving them of their money. You grew up as a carnie hawking for the fortune teller, as a loudmouthed hustler at a tourist trap, or as the child of a literal snake oil salesman. However, a law of magic is that like attracts like, and there are things you've seen that you're not sure whether they are real, or a product of your own spiel getting to you.

**ABILITY:** +1 Communication  
**FOCUS:** Communication (Deception) or Perception (Empathy)  
**TALENT:** Intrigue or Misdirection

## CHARLATAN BENEFITS

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 WILLPOWER
3-4	FOCUS: DEXTERITY (LEGERDEMAIN)
5	FOCUS: COMMUNICATION (PERSUASION)
6	FOCUS: WILLPOWER (FAITH)
7-8	+1 PERCEPTION
9	FOCUS: COMMUNICATION (GAMBLING)
10-11	FOCUS: COMMUNICATION (DISGUISE)
12	+1 INTELLIGENCE

## COURTIER

## MIDDLE

Perhaps your family had the means and ambition to purchase a minor noble title, or maybe you're a later child in a system where inheritance goes to older siblings, leaving you with next to nothing. You had to attend court to elbow your way

into a secure position in the ruling class. Faking a smile and keeping your ears open became second nature.

**ABILITY:** +1 Communication  
**FOCUS:** Communication (Investigation) or Perception (Hearing)  
**TALENT:** Intrigue or Observation

## COURTIER BENEFITS

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 DEXTERITY
3-4	FOCUS: PERCEPTION (EMPATHY)
5	FOCUS: FIGHTING (LIGHT BLADES)
6	FOCUS: COMMUNICATION (ETIQUETTE)
7-8	+1 INTELLIGENCE
9	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (CURRENT AFFAIRS)
10-11	FOCUS: COMMUNICATION (DECEPTION)
12	+1 PERCEPTION

## CRYPTID HUNTER

MIDDLE

You were always fascinated by tales of the weird and supernatural, and would often trespass into purportedly haunted locales, stalk nearby ponds, or do stupid things at cemeteries. You're not sure if your memories of brushing with the weird are completely reliable, but they fuel your passion to find strange creatures and phenomena. You might be a true believer, skeptic, neutral academic, or someone in it for the money.

**ABILITY:** +1 Intelligence  
**FOCUS:** Intelligence (Research) or Willpower (Courage)  
**TALENT:** Contacts or Scouting

## CRYPTID HUNTER BENEFITS

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 ACCURACY
3-4	FOCUS: COMMUNICATION (INVESTIGATION)
5	FOCUS: ACCURACY (LONGARMS)
6	FOCUS: DEXTERITY (STEALTH)
7-8	+1 PERCEPTION
9	FOCUS: PERCEPTION (TRACKING)
10-11	FOCUS: PERCEPTION (SEARCHING)
12	+1 WILLPOWER

## CULT CHILD

UPPER

You grew up surrounded by secrets, and when you were old enough, you were inducted into the group that preserved them. Your family was part of a secret society which protected your family's interests in exchange for obedience. They expected the same arrangement with you. The things your cult believed could have been a complete farce, or may have contained a grain of truth about the true way the world worked.

**ABILITY:** +1 Communication  
**FOCUS:** Communication (Deception) or Intelligence (Occultism)  
**TALENT:** Affluent or Intrigue

## INCOMPATIBLE TALENTS

Characters in *Threefold* may not take both psychic and arcana talents, and neither mix well with gaining augmentations. Therefore, at any step where your character stands to gain both arcana and psychic talents, you must choose the option that grants you just one of these power types. Furthermore, if you would gain either arcana or psychic talents and augmentations, you may substitute one augmentation slot or one power talent for another talent available by background, ancestry, or profession which you have not otherwise selected. In the rare event that, in any of the above situations, no alternatives are available, you may choose any other talent degree for which your character meets the prerequisites.

## CULT CHILD BENEFITS

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 PERCEPTION
3-4	+2 RESOURCES
5	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (THEOLOGY)
6	FOCUS: COMMUNICATION (PERSUASION)
7-8	+1 INTELLIGENCE
9	FOCUS: COMMUNICATION (INVESTIGATION)
10-11	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (BUSINESS)
12	+1 WILLPOWER

## DOPPELGÄNGER

OUTSIDER

What you thought was a case of stolen identity became much worse when you discovered the perpetrator was *you*—or at least, someone who could be your identical twin. Then you started noticing odd details. You remember a different World Series champ last year. The idea of a computer named after a fruit seems bizarre to you. In extreme cases, you wonder where the hell the zeppelins went. You're a foreigner from an alternate Earth, with little idea how you got here; your "twin" is native to this worldline. None of your resources, friends, family, or acquaintances are yours anymore, but you still have your skills, and front-row knowledge of how things could go differently.

**ABILITY:** +1 Communication  
**FOCUS:** Communication (Deception) or Intelligence (Current Affairs)  
**TALENT:** Improvisation or Living on the Fringe

## DOPPELGÄNGER BENEFITS

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 INTELLIGENCE
3-4	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (HISTORY)
5	FOCUS: DEXTERITY (STEALTH)
6	FOCUS: COMMUNICATION (PERSUASION)
7-8	+1 PERCEPTION
9	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (EVALUATION)
10-11	FOCUS: PERCEPTION (EMPATHY)
12	+1 FIGHTING



**FETCH****OUTSIDER**

You grew up surrounded by wonders. The people in the Otherworld that was your home looked with amusement at your unquenchable sense of wonder at even the smallest thing. They didn't know this was because you felt so ordinary compared to everything around you. It did not come as a surprise when you discovered you were born on Earth, though you have no memory of living there as a child.

**ABILITY:** +1 Willpower  
**FOCUS:** Communication (Persuasion) or Willpower (Self-Discipline)  
**TALENT:** Earthsoul\* or Enlightenment of the Jana\*

**FETCH BENEFITS**

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 INTELLIGENCE
3-4	FOCUS: CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)
5	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (ENGINEERING)
6	FOCUS: WILLPOWER (COURAGE)
7-8	+1 COMMUNICATION
9	FOCUS: COMMUNICATION (LEADERSHIP)
10-11	FOCUS: PERCEPTION (EMPATHY)
12	+1 CONSTITUTION

**GUILDER****MIDDLE**

Raised on an Otherworld, you were part of an old-fashioned trade guild or close equivalent, apprenticed to a master until you either proved yourself skilled enough to strike out on your own, or left the organization for other reasons. You still retain ties to the guild, however. The kind of guild determines your area of expertise. In Otherworlds where interplanar travel is common, your guild might have branches on multiple planes.

**ABILITY:** +1 Intelligence  
**FOCUS:** Communication (Bargaining) or Dexterity (Crafting)  
**TALENT:** Contacts or Maker

**GUILDER BENEFITS**

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 STRENGTH
3-4	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (EVALUATION)
5	FOCUS: COMMUNICATION (PERSUASION)
6	FOCUS: FIGHTING (BRAWLING)
7-8	+1 COMMUNICATION
9	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (NAVIGATION)
10-11	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (TINKERING)
12	+1 DEXTERITY

**OG-09573: RAHYS**

This pristine, sylvan world has no humans, but many mammalian species are sapient and capable of psychic feats, though they practice no occult rites and possess strong taboos against contact with inimical forces. The denizens of Rahys claim descent from wandering beasts from a distant plane, though their stories don't agree about whether they were wanderers or refugees.

**INDENTURED ATTENDANT****LOWER**

You walked the halls of power and were privy to the secrets of kings, but your role was not to advise or enforce, but to attend to your master's every need, however menial. Palace gossip was well and good, but the terms of your indenture made the experience stifling. Now you are free, and while not part of the structures of power, you know exactly what makes them tick.

**ABILITY:** +1 Communication  
**FOCUS:** Communication (Etiquette) or Intelligence (Homemaking)  
**TALENT:** Contacts or Intrigue

**INDENTURED ATTENDANT BENEFITS**

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 DEXTERITY
3-4	FOCUS: DEXTERITY (CRAFTING)
5	FOCUS: PERCEPTION (EMPATHY)
6	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (EVALUATION)
7-8	+1 PERCEPTION
9	FOCUS: DEXTERITY (STEALTH)
10-11	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (CURRENT AFFAIRS)
12	+1 INTELLIGENCE

**JUNKER****LOWER**

Some people's trash is another person's esoteric piece of eldritch reality. You were a regular at the local junkyards, always on the lookout for interesting things other people discarded. You started noticing strange objects in certain trash heaps and realized there were people discarding things that were, sometimes literally, out of this world. Your findings were mostly curios, unlikely to convince anyone people from other dimensions were taking out the trash, but you kept an eye out nonetheless.

**ABILITY:** +1 Perception  
**FOCUS:** Intelligence (Evaluation) or Perception (Searching)  
**TALENT:** Living on the Fringe or Maker

**JUNKER BENEFITS**

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 DEXTERITY
3-4	FOCUS: DEXTERITY (LEGERDEMAIN)
5	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (OCCULTISM)
6	FOCUS: COMMUNICATION (BARGAINING)
7-8	+1 INTELLIGENCE
9	FOCUS: DEXTERITY (STEALTH)
10-11	FOCUS: STRENGTH (MIGHT)
12	+1 WILLPOWER

**KRYPTOGNOST****UPPER**

You were raised by the Krypteia to be a human computer, able to handle their sensitive data without using machines that might be stolen or hacked. Your mental acuity nurtured by

intense training, you wanted for nothing except freedom. You achieved some independence and have your own life, but the Krypteia may still require your gifts.

**ABILITY:** +1 Intelligence  
**FOCUS:** Intelligence (Cryptography) or Willpower (Self-Discipline)  
**TALENT:** Expertise or Knowledge

### KRYPTOGNOST BENEFITS

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 PERCEPTION
3-4	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (COMPUTERS)
5	FOCUS: DEXTERITY (INITIATIVE)
6	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (EVALUATION)
7-8	+1 INTELLIGENCE
9	FOCUS: PERCEPTION (SEEING)
10-11	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (RESEARCH)
12	+1 WILLPOWER

### NEW KID

### MIDDLE

Your parents' jobs kept your family on the move, and you got used to being the new kid on the block every couple of years. Getting to know so many different communities gave you an eye for their general patterns. You can tell when things are quirky but still normal, or when something in a neighborhood is *really, really wrong*. And since you never know how long you'll be there, you like to dig into local mysteries.

**ABILITY:** +1 Perception  
**FOCUS:** Communication (Etiquette) or Perception (Empathy)  
**TALENT:** Contacts or Observation

### NEW KID BENEFITS

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 COMMUNICATION
3-4	FOCUS: COMMUNICATION (PERSUASION)
5	FOCUS: PERCEPTION (SEARCHING)
6	FOCUS: WILLPOWER (COURAGE)
7-8	+1 INTELLIGENCE
9	FOCUS: CONSTITUTION (PROPELLING)
10-11	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (CURRENT AFFAIRS)
12	+1 WILLPOWER

### NOBLE

### UPPER

Your right to rule comes from a sacred bloodline, the inherited spoils of war, family capitalist concerns—whatever defines the politically potent, martially trained aristocracy of your culture. If you do not hold authority yet, you're in line to succeed the incumbent ruler, and were prepared for power. You carry yourself with poise and assuredness, able to impress your authority on others, and you are free to use or abuse your status.



**ABILITY:** +1 Communication  
**FOCUS:** Communication (Persuasion) or Strength (Intimidation)  
**TALENT:** Command or Inspire

### NOBLE BENEFITS

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 FIGHTING
3-4	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (BUSINESS)
5	FOCUS: DEXTERITY (RIDING)
6	FOCUS: COMMUNICATION (LEADERSHIP)
7-8	+1 INTELLIGENCE
9	FOCUS: FIGHTING (HEAVY BLADES)
10-11	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (TACTICS)
12	+1 WILLPOWER

## OCCULT LABOR

LOWER

Hard work was part of your formative years, thanks to jobs granted through family connections. These were, however, not ordinary types of employment. They were unusual projects, marked by the fact that you weren't supposed to tell anybody about them. Perhaps you helped build secret labs for scientists working on forbidden experiments, or you installed plumbing for underground temples—or related pipe systems designed to safely funnel large amounts of blood. You kept your damn mouth shut and learned something about how secret organizations function, albeit from a working person's point of view.

**ABILITY:** +1 Strength  
**FOCUS:** Intelligence (Engineering) or Strength (Machining)  
**TALENT:** Expertise or Party Animal

### OCCULT LABOR BENEFITS

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 DEXTERITY
3-4	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (SECURITY)
5	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (OCCULTISM)
6	FOCUS: CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)
7-8	+1 INTELLIGENCE
9	FOCUS: DEXTERITY (CRAFTING)
10-11	FOCUS: WILLPOWER (MORALE)
12	+1 WILLPOWER

## PLANAR REFUGEE

OUTSIDER

Your home suffered some sort of a terrible disaster that forced you to flee through a gate. Wherever you ended up, and wherever you've been since then, none of these places can replace your true home to you. It is ever-present in both your memories and your dreams. Even if you found acceptance in some Otherworld, you'd still look back and wonder how your plane is faring, and if it's safe to return. You're cautious and thrifty, and know how to quietly scavenge for what you need without getting entangled with the locals.

**ABILITY:** +1 Constitution  
**FOCUS:** Communication (Bargaining) or Intelligence (Occultism)  
**TALENT:** Living on the Fringe or Observation

### PLANAR REFUGEE BENEFITS TABLE

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 STRENGTH
3-4	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (TINKERING)
5	FOCUS: DEXTERITY (STEALTH)
6	FOCUS: COMMUNICATION (GAMBLING)
7-8	+1 COMMUNICATION
9	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (NAVIGATION)
10-11	FOCUS: COMMUNICATION (PERSUASION)
12	+1 INTELLIGENCE

## RARITY MINER

LOWER

Your world is known for an exotic resource that is particularly dangerous or complicated to extract, and your family or community specializes in this. You know how to safely find and harvest this resource, and the experience has proven transferrable to a number of other tasks that require care and precision.

**ABILITY:** +1 Dexterity  
**FOCUS:** Perception (Seeing) or Dexterity (Legerdemain)  
**TALENT:** Expertise or Scouting

### RARITY MINER BENEFITS

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 STRENGTH
3-4	FOCUS: CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)
5	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (CHEMISTRY)
6	FOCUS: STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION)
7-8	+1 CONSTITUTION
9	FOCUS: COMMUNICATION (BARGAINING)
10-11	FOCUS: STRENGTH (MACHINING)
12	+1 WILLPOWER

## RETIRED ATHLETE

UPPER

You put in the work and made a career out of your physical talents, but that was the past. You may have been injured, or you aged out of peak performance. Maybe you decided you wanted something more in life, or corrupt influences forced you out—assuming you weren't in cahoots with them, that is. Truth is, you're no longer doing what you thought you were born for. You can either wallow in past glories or enthusiastically move on, but whether you're planning a comeback or a new challenge, it's time to confront your present situation.

**ABILITY:** +1 Constitution  
**FOCUS:** Constitution (Stamina) or Intelligence (Business)  
**TALENT:** Party Animal or Quick Reflexes

### RETIRED ATHLETE BENEFITS

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 PERCEPTION
3-4	FOCUS: CONSTITUTION (RUNNING)
5	+2 RESOURCES
6	FOCUS: FIGHTING (BRAWLING)
7-8	+1 DEXTERITY
9	FOCUS: DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS)
10-11	FOCUS: STRENGTH (JUMPING)
12	+1 STRENGTH

## RUNAWAY SUBJECT

OUTSIDER

Most of your memories recall a lab. Maybe you were strapped to a table, or floating in a vat, or maybe you grew up in a fake-seeming home with impassable walls and nervous lab-assistant "parents." You endured captivity and eventually escaped,

on your own or with help. What did they do to you? Who did it to you, and why? How far will they go to get you back? These are all relevant questions as you do your best to survive.

**ABILITY:** +1 Willpower  
**FOCUS:** Constitution (Running) or Dexterity (Stealth)  
**TALENT:** Living on the Fringe, any one Arcana or Psychic talent, or somatic Capacity 1 and one somatic augmentation.

### RUNAWAY SUBJECT BENEFITS

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 WILLPOWER
3-4	FOCUS: PERCEPTION (EMPATHY)
5	FOCUS: FIGHTING (GRAPPLING)
6	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (OCCULTISM OR BIOLOGY)
7-8	+1 CONSTITUTION
9	FOCUS: WILLPOWER (COURAGE)
10-11	FOCUS: DEXTERITY (INITIATIVE)
12	+1 INTELLIGENCE

### SERF LOWER

You exchanged labor and loyalty for a lord's guarantee of home and safety. Maybe your liege delivered without asking much in return, or maybe they were a tyrant, but in any case you were bound to the noble's service (or to the land the noble claimed) and not allowed to leave your fief freely. This only changed after you were released from service, escaped, or were otherwise driven from home.

**ABILITY:** +1 Constitution  
**FOCUS:** Communication (Animal Handling) or Fighting (Long Hafted)  
**TALENT:** Animal Training or Two-Handed Style

### SERF BENEFITS

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 FIGHTING
3-4	FOCUS: DEXTERITY (RIDING)
5	FOCUS: CONSTITUTION (TOLERANCE)
6	FOCUS: STRENGTH (STEERING)
7-8	+1 STRENGTH
9	FOCUS: FIGHTING (SHORT HAFTED)
10-11	FOCUS: DEXTERITY (CRAFTING)
12	+1 DEXTERITY

### SURROGATE MIDDLE

There are significant gaps in your memories, but not in others' memories of you during those blank periods. You were a different person in those lost moments – literally. You were a vessel for another consciousness. Your service may have been voluntary, or you may not know who or what possessed you. For now, though, your body is completely your own, along with the consequences of its past actions.

## OG-00698: URWYM

Urwym's habitable land is nestled within the scales of an immense dragon (or whatever one might call an enormous, scaled monster flying through the void). Citizens mine the creature's scales for every necessity of life, from leaching them for nutrients to extracting metals, leather-like substances, and more. Industrial magus-barons who control processing facilities are the major political powers. Thieves' guilds rule the periphery of such places, though if thieves victimize aristocrats, they're hurled from massive trebuchets in punishment to where winds catch and fling them miles away, to another part of the dragon.

**ABILITY:** +1 Willpower  
**FOCUS:** Intelligence (Occultism) or Communication (Deception)  
**TALENT:** Hardened Kanna\* or Whispers of the Nether\*

### SURROGATE BENEFITS

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 COMMUNICATION
3-4	FOCUS: FIGHTING (HEAVY BLADES)
5	FOCUS: CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)
6	FOCUS: ANY ONE INTELLIGENCE FOCUS
7-8	+1 INTELLIGENCE
9	FOCUS: DEXTERITY (FORGERY)
10-11	FOCUS: WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE)
12	+1 WILLPOWER

### WANDERFOLK OUTSIDER

You belong nowhere and everywhere. You belong to one of the many nomadic peoples who travel across gate chains, meeting and trading with people of all ancestries and cultures from all kinds of worlds. In Shabda, outsiders' names for you sound like "wanderfolk," but that's not your people's true name. Depending on local customs, your arrival may be blessed or cursed. Some planes have places set aside for your people, while in others, you must arrive quietly, leaving minimal signs of your presence.

**ABILITY:** +1 Communication  
**FOCUS:** Communication (Persuasion) or Intelligence (Navigation)  
**TALENT:** Contacts or Wandersoul\*

### WANDERFOLK BENEFITS

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 WILLPOWER
3-4	FOCUS: WILLPOWER (FAITH)
5	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (TINKERING)
6	FOCUS: COMMUNICATION (BARGAINING)
7-8	+1 INTELLIGENCE
9	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (CURRENT AFFAIRS)
10-11	FOCUS: DEXTERITY (LEGERDEMAIN)
12	+1 DEXTERITY

## WARD OF THE VITANE

UPPER

Born into poverty or some other dire situation, your luck turned for the better when a Vitane envoy noticed you when you were very young, and either saw your potential or wanted to get you out of a bad situation. You left your world on their recommendation to be trained by sages, diplomats, retired Sodalts, or other talented individuals. The individual who brought you into this situation may be a foster parent who feels real affection for you, or may be a more distant guardian figure—or even someone who vanished after moving you to Vitane fostering—though Vitane culture encourages nurturing adults, so distant parents are rare.

**ABILITY:** +1 Intelligence

**FOCUS:** Intelligence (Occultism) or Communication (Etiquette)

**TALENT:** Affluent or Wandersoul\*

## WARD OF THE VITANE BENEFITS

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 FIGHTING
3–4	FOCUS: FIGHTING (HEAVY BLADES)
5	FOCUS: PERCEPTION (EMPATHY)
6	FOCUS: COMMUNICATION (PERSUASION)
7–8	+1 WILLPOWER
9	FOCUS: INTELLIGENCE (OCCULTISM)
10–11	FOCUS: DEXTERITY (PILOTING OR SAILING)
12	+1 COMMUNICATION

## WARRIOR CASTE

UPPER

In your world (whichever that might be), being a warrior exemplifies the best of your people. The tools of your trade may be something as simple as swords and spears or as sophisticated as high-tech energy weapons, but the prestige mastery of arms bestows upon you is the same, regardless. Yours is the blood that is shed and so yours are the spoils of victory and the mandate to rule, whether it takes the form of feudal sovereignty, or the right to vote or hold office on your world.

**ABILITY:** +1 Fighting

**FOCUS:** Fighting (Heavy Blades) or Intelligence (Tactics)

**TALENT:** Overwhelm or Tactical Awareness

## WARRIOR CASTE BENEFITS TABLE

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 ACCURACY
3–4	FOCUS: ACCURACY (BOWS)
5	FOCUS: FIGHTING (LONG HAFTED)
6	FOCUS: COMMUNICATION (ANIMAL HANDLING)
7–8	+1 CONSTITUTION
9	FOCUS: STRENGTH (MIGHT)
10–11	FOCUS: DEXTERITY (RIDING)
12	+1 DEXTERITY

# ANCESTRIES

Humanity is defined by the soul, so all creatures who possess a soul, regardless of their shape or color, are human under Vitane law, though some are so strange it may be difficult to recognize them. The soul is consciousness, true self-awareness—again, a hard thing to detect, at times. Thousands of distinct breeds of humans, *ancestries*, exist across the planes. Ancestries provide traits describing broad collections of physical and mental adaptations to certain planes, acquired by descent. Humans of mixed ancestry are common, and specific ancestries may possess different features in specific families, regions, or planes. Some look very strange to Earthly eyes, while others wouldn't be seen as anything special, or might have a few ridges, supernumerary digits, or other minor traits which could be hidden or explained away. Characters with exceptional ancestries usually live in the Otherworlds openly. On Earth, they form secret communities. The Peridexion doesn't hunt them down, but encourages them to stay out of sight.

The most widespread ancestries are the graceful arvu, the tough dreygur, the crafty huldra, and the expressive jana. These ancestries resemble, but are not the same as, mythic peoples of Earthly legend. This kind of distinction recurs when examining the Metacosm. Old legends have some truth, but have been distorted by time and the obscurity of other planes.

## APPLYING ANCESTRIES

Ancestries supplement a character's background as follows:

- **BACKGROUND ABILITY INCREASE:** Replace with one ancestral trait of your choice.
- **BACKGROUND FOCUS:** You lose your background's focus, but you can choose it instead of rolling on the benefits table for your background.
- **BACKGROUND TALENT:** Replace with one ancestral trait of your choice. This can be from the same ancestry as your character's first trait, or it can be from a different ancestry, indicating a diverse heritage.
- **BENEFITS TABLE:** Roll for (or if the GM agrees, select) a benefit from the standard benefits table for your character's background. Alternately, you may regain the automatic background focus you sacrificed earlier instead of rolling on the table.

## STACKING ANCESTRAL TRAITS

You may not select the same ancestral trait twice. When an ancestral trait and other source might both provide the same benefit (ability increase, focus, talent degree, etc.) at 1st level, you must choose the option that doesn't provide the same benefit more than once whenever possible. For example, if you select the arvu trait Stalker, which provides a +1 bonus to Accuracy or Dexterity, and then gain +1 Dexterity by rolling a 2 on the Courtier benefits table, you must take the Accuracy bonus from Stalker instead of taking Dexterity twice. If you have no choice but to take the same benefit more than once,

however, they stack. Remember that as per the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook*, talents gained at 1st level do not have prerequisites, but at 2nd or higher level you must meet listed prerequisites for additional degrees.

## EXAMPLE

*Crystal has decided she wants to play a character with ancestral traits, but isn't sure exactly which until she determines her character's background. She gets Junker, which means her character collected and recycled refuse from strange individuals and groups. Crystal decides this fits with a partial huldra ancestry. She could choose two huldra ancestral traits to indicate a strong ancestral heritage, but she wants to play someone who is sociable and blends in on Earth. She decides her character also has jana ancestry, and an associated trait. She picks the Creator huldra trait, and the Charmer jana trait. These replace the background benefits for Junker, but Crystal still gets to roll on the benefits table for the background. She decides her character, Johanna, has long, strong limbs, and only appears unusual by Earth standards due to the crystalline sheen of her eyes, nails, and teeth. She incorporates Johanna's ancestral traits into the story by deciding she was the product of a romance between a member of a hidden huldra community and a Peridexion liaison. But her parents and community were destroyed when she was young, forcing her to grow up as a Junker, relying on what she remembered about Earth's secrets to support herself.*

## PARTIAL ANCESTRAL TRAITS

You may replace your character's background ability increase or talent, instead of both, with a single ancestral trait. In this case, the character retains the automatic focus their background provides. The Changeling background description walks you through these options, but with the Game Master's permission you might apply the same rules to any background.

## VARIETY WITHOUT ANCESTRAL TRAITS

Most humans in the Metacosm can trace their families back to ancestries such as the ones in this section, but most possess no ancestral traits as defined by the rules. For example, a character can be arvu without being any more agile or skilled in magic than non-arvu. These characters choose standard backgrounds instead of ancestral traits, but have the appearance, lifespan, and family of their dominant ancestries. To refer to the previous example, Crystal's Junker with jana and huldra heritage can simply use the rules for the Junker background, with no ancestral traits, and still have the same appearance, family, and life story.

In *Threefold*, jana include what we would call "normal humans," and there are more jana across the known planes than members of any other ancestry. Jana in the Otherworlds are more likely to possess ancestral traits than those on Earth, who usually use the standard *Modern AGE* background rules. In other words, Earth humans are usually jana (there are hidden communities of other ancestries) but few possess jana ancestral traits.

## ARVU

**ALSO KNOWN AS:** aelf, aos si, elves, faire folk, mannegishi, sidhe, silenos, yosei

The arvu are humans steeped in kanna, the primal energy of magic. They are varied and creative, nurturing the arts in their young, especially song and the arcana. The kanna that flows in their blood helps sustain them, granting those who embrace their magical heritage incredibly long lives. This gift is not without a price, as an arvu grows increasingly tainted by kanna as they age. Children show little deviation from the human norms, but the kanna flowing through them resonates with aspects of the natural world. Arvu who speak the old languages of their people call this resonance the *skawl*. Every



skawl is unique, though they tend to be similar in families, even evoking the same beasts, birds, plants, and more.

By adolescence, most arvu manifest traits associated with their skawl. Arvu of the forest grow antlers, horns, or leaves among their hair. Aquatic arvu may manifest fins or a moist sheen to their complexion. Those in late adulthood stand visibly apart from most humans, with traits resembling animals, plants, or the elements—hair made of lightning or water, eyes that burn with elemental fire, or goat-like legs. Ancient arvu are akin to powerful, unearthly spirits, removed from humanity in all but their souls, which now reflect a strange intelligence that often lies submerged beneath instinct. Yet it is said that the peerless demon sword masters in certain legends, or the living trees which grant miracles for a blood price, are arvu.

Arvu societies survive almost anywhere magic flourishes. They're drawn to where kanna flows, to experience a connection with nature through the skawl. On Earth, they stick to hidden nexuses of power. If forced to live elsewhere, they grow to resemble Earth's humans, living but a little longer, with no more than a slight oddity in coloration or unusual grace to mark their heritage. Where arvu have power, they tend to be patient, yet capricious. They may engage in impulsive pranks that make them appear cruel, especially when they involve injury. With a sufficiently powerful healer, even a severed hand might be the end result of a joke. If they can express themselves through magic, they do so frequently. In the long term, arvu settlements carefully shape the land into an ecosystem where they flourish alongside other species, blending stone and wood into homes with flowing features.

## ARVU ANCESTRAL TRAITS

Characters of arvu ancestry may select one or two traits from the following list.

- **ARCANE EDUCATION:** Spellcasting forms the cornerstone of most arvu societies. You gain one degree in one of the following arcane talents: Healing Arcana, Illusion Arcana, or Power Arcana.
- **BEAST TONGUE:** Your skawl grants you an empathic link with certain creatures. Select one type of creature from among birds, fish, reptiles, small mammals, large carnivorous mammals, or large herbivorous mammals. You can communicate verbally with normal and magical animals of this type. Animals may have any random starting attitude toward you and may be influenced normally with Ability checks, though they may not be as intelligent as or understand context as well as a human.
- **DARK SIGHT:** Your eyes are sensitive to even the faintest glimmers. You may see up to 20 yards in darkness without a light source.

- **HUNTER:** You learned from a young age to stalk and provide from the natural world. You gain one degree of either the Archery Style talent or the Scouting talent.
- **KANNA-BORN:** You can feel the ebb and flow of kanna around you as easily as most people feel the heat of a flame. You gain one degree in the Othersoul talent.
- **GRACE:** Long-lived and patient, many arvu move with practiced ease and confidence. You may perform the With a Flourish general exploration stunt or the Oozing Confidence membership and reputation stunt for 3 SP instead of 4.
- **ROOTS OF THE ARVU:** Your skawl is strong. You gain one degree in the Roots of the Arvu talent.
- **STALKER:** Your perceptual powers improve your coordination. Add +1 to either Accuracy or Dexterity.
- **TAIL:** You have an animal-like tail up to half the length of your body. It can pick up but not operate objects, with as much strength as one of your arms. If you fail a Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Climbing) check, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll.
- **TRICKSTER:** You've inherited a knack for pranks. You may perform the Taunt general combat stunt or the Class Clown general social stunt for 1 SP less than normal (1 SP and 3 SP, respectively).

## DREYGUR

**ALSO KNOWN AS:** cambions, orkne, dokkaebi, harpyia, hobbes, jotun, risi, spartoi, teufel

The mind-over-matter nature of the Netherworlds means humans there are likewise malleable, forms slowly shifting to suit their temperaments and reflect their mental scars. The brutal nature of life on these tormented planes means most dreygur are either fearsome to behold, towering in height and possessing horns, teeth, and gruesome stigmata, or twisted creatures, much accustomed to suffering. These psychic genomes persist across generations mixing with influences from the present, so one may know a dreygur family by the shared torments of their ancestors. Dreygur of phenomenal confidence and strength of will, or those raised away from the Netherworlds for many generations, may instead possess unearthly beauty that unsettles onlookers. Rather than age as Earth humans understand it, dreygur bodies reflect their wearying minds, increasingly fixated on defeats, personal failures, and old injuries, leaving elderly dreygur riddled with psychosomatic deformities and wounds that finally slay them. This mortality is self-imposed, however, and especially stubborn dreygur endure for centuries in their prime.

Because their bodies reflect ancestral and personal experiences, dreygur societies lionize the present. To fixate on failure woos death. To worship the past binds one to the shell of old experiences. This is as true for the work gangs of hell cities as it is for free Nighthost warbands. One remakes oneself in the present moment, in love, battle, and any other intense diversion. Dreygur are what they do. The body follows the mind slowly, however, and barring an intense spiritual transformation, each dreygur enters old age carrying echoes of their youth.

## OV-00061: YSCADIA

Yscadia is a core Vitane world with multiple gates to Vigrith. Yscadian arcanists use crystals as part of a worldwide communications network capable of transmitting sounds and images. This Shimmering is as potentially useful as Earth's internet, though transmitting digital or otherwise abstracted data remains difficult. The Peridexion aids experiments in this regard, and Aethon maintains a small adjunct of the Pool here.

Dreygur can produce children as other humans do, and usually make protective but demanding parents. Many dreygur are not born as other humans, however, but incarnated from souls stolen by the Alastors and bound to the flesh of dead humans or vessels of Netherworldly clay. Incarnate dreygur remember little of their former lives, but enough remains to provide a basic personality, and to make certain faces and scenes hauntingly familiar. It is said the Unchallenged of the Nighthost are the only beings besides the Alastors who can incarnate dreygur, and that they harvest the souls of heroes to return when needed.

## DREYGUR ANCESTRAL TRAITS

Humans of dreygur ancestry may select one or two traits from the following list.

- **ARMORED HIDE:** Dense calluses, tough scales, or thick layers of flesh protect your body just as denial and stubbornness defend your heart. You have an innate Armor Rating of 11/1B without armor. This stacks with worn armor.
- **FEARFUL SYMMETRY:** Your beautiful, fearsome, or strange appearance fascinates and unsettles those around you. If you fail a Communication (Bargaining) or Strength (Intimidation) check, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll.
- **INDOMITABLE:** Your mind and body manifest a refusal to surrender, even when Hell rises against you. Add +1 to your Strength or Willpower.
- **INIMICAL MEDIUM:** The Netherworlds channel honey-sweet whispers into your mind, day and night. You gain the Shadowsoul talent at novice rank.
- **MERCILESS:** Mercy punishes the strong and allows the weak to continue suffering; you have no patience for either. You gain either the Overwhelm talent or the Two-Handed Style talent at Novice rank.
- **MISERABLE:** Your bent appearance and hissing voice make you appear deceptively weak. You may perform the Play Dead general combat stunt or the Let's Make a Deal general social stunt for 2 SP instead of the usual 3.
- **NETHERBOUND SOUL:** Your soul channels the Netherworld, unleashing its elemental forces or mutating your body as you will it. You gain one degree in one of the following psychic power talents: Cryokinesis, Pyrokinesis, or the Somatic discipline.
- **NATURAL WEAPONS:** Horns, stingers, claws, barbed skin, or other such features inflict 1d6 impact wound damage in Fighting (Brawling) and Fighting (Grappling) attacks. If a talent or other ability would have raised your unarmed damage to 1d6 or more, use the rating it provides but add +2 damage, maintaining the ability to inflict impact wound damage.
- **RAGE OF THE DREYGUR:** You tap into ancestral fury, gaining one degree in the Rage of the Dreygur talent.
- **WARDFLESH:** Your body naturally manifests tattoos or scars that hinder occult forces. Soulless Inimical beings, psychic powers, and occult rites must use an additional 2 SP on stunts targeting you.



## HULDRA

**ALSO KNOWN AS:** chaneque, cobolds, dwarves, knockers, kobalos, mnehune, redcaps, zwerce

Bound to the base structures of creation, huldra pry into the secrets of the palpable Metacosm—stones and forgefires and the wonders that can be teased from them through industrious work. Material creation sings its slow songs to them, and manifests within their bodies and souls. Born creatures of flesh (and often with shorter, thicker builds than other humans), a huldra begins manifesting material traits in childhood, as patches of stone, metal, crystal, and other inorganic materials. By adulthood, these materials weave their way through much of a huldra's body. These characteristics, or *smaraga*, have spiritual significance, as huldra associate certain smaraga materials with temperaments and talents. Crystalline huldra are said to be fine artisans



or scientists, while those with metal smaraga are allegedly adaptable and practical. The most revered huldra eventually become one with the substance of their plane, apparently transforming into statues in a state of immortal communion, and are installed in sacred halls or shrines to watch over their communities.

Huldra see themselves as the true children of the planes, understanding the tides of the Sentium, the movements of the Otherworlds, and even the events that spawn alternate Earths better than most. While some wander the planes, most huldra communities are isolationist, dwelling deep underground, among isolated glaciers, or atop lost islands. These homes are inevitably wonders of architecture, artistry, and technology, stunning the few visitors the stout folk tolerate. The degree to which they traffic with others depends on the plane, local situation, and prevailing customs. Huldra on Earth employ a few trusted intermediaries to deal with the mundane world, while on many Otherworlds, everyone knows where the lords of the mountains dwell, but few are permitted to feast with them.

Despite their deep understanding of the material world, huldra are practical and focused on the tasks in front of them.



They have difficulty understanding why other humans find temporary things like music and food so important. Huldra often feel the same way about displays of emotion. One expresses oneself through whatever mark they make on eternity. Hate is the act of destroying a beautiful place; love is a monument. These traits may be off-putting to outsiders, and sometimes make basic communication difficult. People willing to make the effort develop rich relationships with the huldra, who believe friendship and love are crafts to be refined through a lifetime.

## HULDRA ANCESTRAL TRAITS

Humans of huldra ancestry may select one or two traits from the following list.

- **BREAKING POINT:** Your keen eyes can spot the flaws in otherwise solid structures. You may perform the Vicious Blow general combat stunt or the Intuition investigation stunt for 1 SP instead of the usual 2.
- **BREATHLESS:** You draw life from inanimate materials, removing the need to breathe.
- **CREATOR:** To study and to build are the highest callings of a huldra, and you are a practiced expert. You gain one degree in either the Artistry talent or the Maker talent.
- **DARK SIGHT:** Unaccustomed to artificial light, your eyes are more sensitive to even the faintest glimmers. You may see up to 20 yards in darkness without a light source.
- **GEOMANCER:** You study the material applications of magic, rather than the scientific applications. You gain one of the following power talents at novice rank: Digital Arcana, Machine Arcana, or Protection Arcana.
- **INDUSTRIOUSNESS OF THE HULDRA:** You tap into your people's knack for artisanship, gaining one degree of the Industriousness of the Huldra talent.
- **SAVANT:** You not only possess an intuitive understanding of systems and machines, but can impose their rules in planes which normally abide by story logic as much as natural law. You gain one degree in the Earthsoul talent.
- **SOLID:** Your smaraga is solid and difficult to injure, such as stone or metal. You have an innate Armor Rating of 11/1B without armor. This stacks with worn armor.
- **STONE-SOULED:** Your bond with the material runs deep, influencing body and mind. Add +1 to your Constitution or Perception.
- **TURN THE STONES:** You may shape soil, gravel, and unworked stone into tunnels or ditches. Doing so requires a Constitution (Stamina) check with a TN equal to the tunnel's length in yards. Each attempt to use this ability, successful or not, generates one level of fatigue (see page 92 of the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook*) and requires 30 minutes of focus. Success creates a new tunnel that seems natural, like a cavern, sinkhole, or burrow; this passage may collapse at the GM's discretion—especially in softer materials—if not shored up with supports. You may spend SP generated by this check to create one room or large cavern per SP spent—up to 20 cubic yards in size—but doing so doubles the time required and adds an additional level of fatigue.

# JANA

**ALSO KNOWN AS:** baijini, idisi, jinn, prometheans, sapiens

Jana tap into the most fundamental shared aspect of humanity: the soul. In a Metacosm that defines all beings with souls as fundamentally human, jana are in many ways the threads of interconnection that bring all the varieties of humanity together. Physically, jana often look just like the humans of Earth with the same range of heights and builds and particularly expressive eyes. Otherworldly jana may possess a wider range of eye, hair, and skin colors than their Earthly counterparts, however. They age as Earth humans do, and often seek glory through impulsive acts so their souls will be remembered after they're gone.

Jana possess potent social skills born of natural charisma, adaptability, and the ability to blend in among other cultures. Their emotions can be overwhelming—even infectious—and often drive jana to incredible feats of creativity, compassion, or violence. As the most sociable humans, they make friends and enemies easily. Jana create and change cultural norms as a virtual art form. They recognize a dizzying array of family formations and personal identities, play complex political games, and channel love and rage through creating, supporting, or defying varied cultural traditions. Jana will even form bonds with animals, plants, and inanimate objects. For other humans, jana social customs can be disorienting, even frustrating. But in every jana civilization, there are always those willing to welcome outsiders.

Jana are common on Earth (most “normal Earthlings” are descended from jana, even if they don't know it or have their abilities, as per **Variety Without Ancestral Traits** on page 37) and the Otherworlds. They have even survived in the Netherworlds as subjects of inimical lords, as cultists, and even in autonomous colonies. Jana social expertise tends to reward them with positions of influence in societies where humans from many ancestries dwell. They become messiahs, tyrants, rock stars, and secret influencers.

## JANA ANCESTRAL TRAITS

Humans of jana ancestry may select one or two traits from the following list.

- **ADAPTABILITY:** You learn quickly to overcome the hostile elements of new planes. You may perform a special 4 SP stunt called Jana Adaptation when you succeed at an ability check to avoid or reduce one of a plane's inherent dangers, such as its climate, a disease, a toxic atmosphere, or something else that results from the plane's nature instead of a danger created through deliberate means. Jana Adaptation provides a +3 bonus on all future ability checks to overcome that same hostile element on the same plane, until you travel to another plane. This stunt does not apply to overcoming hostile native creatures.
- **CHARMER:** People are the planes' greatest resource, and you know how to make them believe that. You gain one degree in either the Contacts talent or the Intrigue talent.
- **BLEND IN:** You have a gift for adopting local mannerisms and habits. You may reroll any failed

test to act like a native of the culture you're visiting, but must keep the results of the second roll.

- **CHARISMATIC:** You possess an extraordinary personal presence. Add +1 to your Communication or Willpower ability.
- **EMPATH:** Your connection to your soul helps you attune it to the souls of others. You gain one degree in one of the following psychic power talents: Empathy, Psychic Projection, or Telepathy.
- **ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE JANA:** Your soul urges you to understand others. You gain one degree of the Enlightenment of the Jana talent.
- **FAMILIAR:** You have nurtured your soul enough to extend it beyond your body in a familiar: a visible, solidified astral



form shaped like a small creature such as a bird, frog, housecat, or rat. This creature is a noncombatant with 5 Health and -3 Strength, but otherwise possesses your abilities and focuses. By using an Activate action, you can manifest it until your next turn, and may maintain its presence with subsequent Activate actions. You must choose whether to take subsequent actions through it or using your own body, but you can perform trivial tasks like speaking and noticing your environment in your body and the familiar's simultaneously. Your familiar may travel a number of yards away from you equal to ten times your Willpower, and is as physically limited as the animal it appears to be, though it can speak Shabda if you know it.

- **WARY:** You have learned time and again to watch for danger and persevere in spite of it. If you fail a Perception (Hearing) or Willpower (Courage) check, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll.
- **VERBOSE:** Words are your weapons, and you wield them with ease. You may perform the Patter general social stunt or the Meddle attitude stunt for 4 SP instead of the usual 5.
- **WORLD WALKER:** Reading the paths through the Sentium and speaking the first tongue are fluidly easy for you. You gain the Wandersoul talent at Novice rank.

### PROFESSION ORIGIN TABLE

1D6 ROLL	PROFESSION ORIGIN
1-2	Earthy ( <i>Modern AGE</i> )
3-4	Earthy ( <i>Threefold</i> )
5-6	Unearthly

### OUTSIDER PROFESSIONS

1D6 ROLL	EARTHY PROFESSION	UNEARTHLY PROFESSION
1-2	Conspiracy Theorist	Hedgewitch
3-4	Doomsayer	Jammer
5-6	Monster Hunter	Minstrel

### LOWER CLASS PROFESSIONS

1D6 ROLL	EARTHY PROFESSION	UNEARTHLY PROFESSION
1-2	Cultist Guard	Gatewatcher
3-4	Occult Detective	Herald
5-6	Occult Purveyor	Warsmith

### MIDDLE CLASS PROFESSIONS

1D6 ROLL	EARTHY PROFESSION	UNEARTHLY PROFESSION
1-2	Krypteia Hoplite	Taskmaster
3-4	Omnichronicler	Traverser
5-6	Ultratechnician	Vitane Assessor

### UPPER CLASS PROFESSIONS

1D6 ROLL	EARTHY PROFESSION	UNEARTHLY PROFESSION
1-2	Aethon Tactical Corps	Knight
3-4	Kryptothief	Planar Envoy
5-6	Sleeper	Scholar

# PROFESSIONS

Characters in *Threefold* can choose between numerous professions, as the worlds of the Metacosm spawn new ways to make a living or maintain other ways modern Earth societies, for the most part, cast aside long ago.

Similar to backgrounds, roll on or choose from the **Profession Origin** table to determine whether the character's profession is among those available on our Earth, in which case you then roll on the tables in the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook* as normal, or if it has a strange or unearthly origin. In the description, a talent marked with an asterisk means that it can be found within these pages.

## AETHON TACTICAL CORPS

PHYSICAL, UPPER

You were trained by Aethon to defend Earth against threats from multiple planes and timelines, not to mention enemies embedded in the primeline. Monsters and sorcerers lurk behind planar gates, Accelerators twist science to monstrous ends, and adepts summon Hell to Earth with their rituals, but in the end it only matters where the enemy comes from when that information helps you destroy it. You're a posthuman soldier, as much a platform for tactical tech as a spy or warfighter. You may be fully aware of Aethon, or you may be a secondary asset who believes they work for some unnamed espionage or paramilitary group.

**FOCUS:** Accuracy (SMGs), Intelligence (Tactics), or Willpower (Self-Discipline)

**TALENT:** 1 Capacity slot, noetic or somatic (your choice). You start the game with one of the following augmentations: Commlink (noetic slot) or Dermal Armor (somatic slot). See CHAPTER 3 for information about augmentations.

**HEALTH:** 20 + Con

**RESOURCES:** 6

## CONSPIRACY THEORIST

SKILLED, OUTSIDER

You always had a knack for recognizing patterns, and once you find a loose thread, you don't stop until you've pulled apart the whole tapestry. Part investigative reporter, part forensic analyst, your calling is uncovering truths that mysterious parties want to keep hidden. Some people believe you, but to the rest of society you're either paranoid or trying to stir up trouble for some selfish or politically oriented reason. You must admit that you've followed your share of false leads created by the unhinged or cynical—or even when you mistake coincidence for intent. It doesn't matter; you're sure you'll be vindicated.

**FOCUS:** Communication (Expression) or Perception (Research)

**TALENT:** Contacts or Observation

**HEALTH:** 15 + Con

**RESOURCES:** 2

## CULTIST GUARD

PHYSICAL, LOWER

You protect a secret society, be it a true religious cult, a political organization—whatever contains people who don't want to be noticed and who, frankly, would be considered a little strange by the outside world. In some cults, you also enforce discipline for the leadership through violent means, from threats to disposing of excommunicated "unpeople."

You're either a believer yourself (though you must decide how sincere your commitment really is) or you're hired help: a mercenary employed by the cult's leader, for example.

**FOCUS:** Fighting (Brawling) or Constitution (Stamina)

**TALENT:** Protect or Striking Style

**HEALTH:** 20 + Con      **RESOURCES:** 2

## DOOMSAYER

SOCIAL, OUTSIDER

You know the end is nigh, and instead of hiding in a bunker and stocking up on supplies, you take it upon yourself to warn others. You may hold a job to pay the bills, but your true calling is to speak out so that others are also aware of the doom you foresee. You became aware of a dread fate either in visions, adding two and two together, or seeing *something* that science and logic can't explain, which confirmed your fears of world-threatening entities hiding beneath a veil of secrecy.

**FOCUS:** Communication (Persuasion) or Willpower (Faith)

**TALENT:** Inspire or Oratory

**HEALTH:** 15 + Con      **RESOURCES:** 2

## GATEWATCHER

PHYSICAL, LOWER

Your job is simple: Guard the gate. But the gate you guard leads to another world. You may even guard multiple such gates. A gatewatcher's job veers from the routine to the bizarre, depending on the gate and traffic. You are trained to handle any eventuality, but you *might* have permission to run away if you judge an unwelcome visitor to be above your pay grade. The pay isn't great, by the way, but you meet all sorts. Chatty gatewatchers are a stereotype across the Otherworlds.

**FOCUS:** Fighting (Long Hafted) or Perception (Seeing)

**TALENT:** Observation or Overwhelm

**HEALTH:** 20 + Con      **RESOURCES:** 2

## HEDGEWITCH

SKILLED, OUTSIDER

Powerful arcanists and psychic adepts can battle cosmic threats, but the natural world holds a deep, subtle magic, better suited to addressing the everyday needs of ordinary folk. You are wise in the ways of this first magic that manifests in the natural properties of herbs, in the right time to harvest, and the right place to seed. Of course, anyone with a scientific mindset would say you're aware of the evidence-based properties of various plants, and mix it with less verifiable knowledge. On highly magical Otherworlds, your "extraneous superstitions" can prove highly useful, however.

**FOCUS:** Intelligence (Chemistry) or Intelligence (Occultism)

**TALENT:** Emergency Care or Maker

**HEALTH:** 15 + Con      **RESOURCES:** 2

## HERALD

SOCIAL, LOWER

A noble court works over a network of influence and oaths of service, bound by ceremonies, favors, commands and secret messages. It needs someone to remind a liege lord how it all hangs together. You are that person, trained to memorize names, personal histories, regional politics, eccentric customs, longstanding ambitions, and obscure rituals in

the web of feudal obligations. That memory also helps you convey messages in situations where nothing can be written, but only passed mouth to ear. You keep abreast of relevant intrigues and might be tempted to participate in them yourself, but heralds are supposed to avoid that—and suffer if they get caught lying or spying.

**FOCUS:** Communication (Etiquette) or Intelligence (History)

**TALENT:** Knowledge or Oratory

**HEALTH:** 15 + Con      **RESOURCES:** 4

## JAMMER

PHYSICAL, OUTSIDER

Through the clouded skies of Vigrith's Sea of Mists or the Sliding Hills of Diskeiros, you can operate a vehicle across the weirdest terrains the planes have to offer. Each world has developed slightly different modes of travel, but they all



operate under similar principles. You may have no idea how a mistjammer or similar vehicle stays aloft, but its rudders and rigging move to your slightest gesture, ensuring cargo or passengers get to their destination with minimal fuss.

**FOCUS:** Dexterity (Sailing) or Strength (Steering)  
**TALENT:** Fast Fury or Freerunning  
**HEALTH:** 20 + Con      **RESOURCES:** 0

## KNIGHT

## PHYSICAL, UPPER

You are a member of a warrior elite, a beneficiary of exclusive training and equipment, given the right to command other warriors and hold your own estate. In some worlds, your profession is the only one that can be part of the ruling class. You might manage a patch of land granted by your lord, or wander as a roaming enforcer of your ruler's will. In all cases, many respect you for your strength of arms and social status. On the other hand, when people want to upend the existing social order, you're their biggest problem, as you're a violent beneficiary of the ossified old ways. The classic knight performs some elite tactical function, such as heavy cavalry or, in the case of the samurai, as horse archers. Adjust this profession's focuses and talents based on that role.

**FOCUS:** Dexterity (Riding) or Fighting (Heavy Blades)  
**TALENT:** Fast Fury or Weapon and Shield Style\*  
**HEALTH:** 20 + Con      **RESOURCES:** 6

## KRYPTeia HOPLITE

## PHYSICAL, MIDDLE

Other bodyguards and security personnel are mall cops compared to you. Regardless of your origin, your violent and larcenous talents attracted the attention of the mob behind all mobs: the Krypteia. It trusts you to do its bidding and rewards you well. It is possible that you don't know you work for the Krypteia, which often keeps operatives at arm's length through a web of corporate and criminal connections. Other times, they need informed individuals who won't flinch at the organization's weirder resources and interests.

**FOCUS:** Accuracy (Pistols) or Willpower (Self-Discipline)  
**TALENT:** Pistol Style or Tactical Awareness  
**HEALTH:** 20 + Con      **RESOURCES:** 4

## KRYPTOTHIEF

## SKILLED, UPPER

You are a nightmare for those who rule through money, and you have the skills to challenge a conspiracy as large as the Krypteia—or so you keep telling yourself. Hacking and stealing from the Krypteia made you aware of the other realities, and gave you inkings of the Peridexion and Vitane. Should you join them? Most people in your trade prefer to

work alone but then again, most of them die in a matter of months, assuming they even survive the first score.

**FOCUS:** Intelligence (Computers) or Intelligence (Security)  
**TALENT:** Burglary or Hacking  
**HEALTH:** 15 + Con      **RESOURCES:** 8

## MINSTREL

## SOCIAL, OUTSIDER

Earth may have its Web and social media, but out in the Otherworlds, ordinary people rely on you for news and amusement. Part entertainer, part journalist, you travel between settlements and might even go from plane to plane to deliver your special mix of news, music, and poetry. You're not a messenger or courier who takes information from one person to another, though you can certainly play that part. You're a broadcaster with a range as far as your voice. Your information is free for the taking, but you appreciate food and coin in return for sharing it.

**FOCUS:** Communication (Investigation) or Communication (Performing)  
**TALENT:** Intrigue or Performance  
**HEALTH:** 15 + Con      **RESOURCES:** 2

## MONSTER HUNTER

## PHYSICAL, OUTSIDER

Most people think you're out of your mind, but you know that real monsters lurk behind semi-false urban legends. You're not always sure where they come from, but you know the signs of their presence. They take many forms, and use many methods. You may be someone looking for the beast who hurt them or a loved one. You may be a researcher, or you might just be out for profit. In all cases, you've honed your ability to hunt and stalk other prey, while keeping the strange creatures which are your true obsession to heart.

**FOCUS:** Accuracy (Longarms) or Perception (Tracking)  
**TALENT:** Rifle Style or Scouting  
**HEALTH:** 20 + Con      **RESOURCES:** 0

## OCCULT DETECTIVE

## SKILLED, LOWER

You're an investigator who's tangled with paranormal affairs, and might even bill yourself as a "psychic detective," whether that's true or not. Most of your cases have perfectly rational explanations, but if you're pursuing the paranormal angle, you go through the motions, wiggle your hands, and utter nonsensical words to convince your clients that the problem's been solved. But some cases reveal truly wondrous or dark things about the world, and clients behind those show up at your door with alarming frequency.

**FOCUS:** Intelligence (Occultism) or Perception (Searching)  
**TALENT:** Choose one from among Observation, the Divination arcana, or the Extrasensory Perception psychic discipline.  
**HEALTH:** 15 + Con      **RESOURCES:** 4

## OCCULT PURVEYOR

## SOCIAL, LOWER

You are good at finding and selling supernaturally potent things—or at least, things would-be sorcerers or occultists want. Your experience as a fence for hard-to-find items even-

## OZ-12124: GORGON

Gorgon is named for the lion-headed stone serpent coiled in its largest ruins. The size of a mountain, it was the war-form of a mighty Hierarch whose death-curse turned every thinking being (including soulless ones) on the plane to stone. The curse even extended to every such being who even spoke the Hierarch's name, on any plane, and it is said that knowingly doing so can still turn someone to stone, but that knowing the name is also the precondition for removing the curse, which might hold millions in stasis. The plane is a quiet jungle world, filled with apparent statues.

tually uncovered legendary, weird goods, and a new client base of very strange people. Your beliefs in the supernatural are pragmatic, devoid of any sense of wonder. Some of this stuff needs ingredients and gear. You have the connections to get them. In most cases, someone in your trade specializes in the arcane or psychic fields, as practitioners have somewhat different needs, but a few are all-arounders.

**FOCUS:** Communication (Bargaining) or Intelligence (Evaluation)

**TALENT:** Contacts or Knowledge

**HEALTH:** 15 + Con

**RESOURCES:** 4

## OMNICHRONICLER

SOCIAL, MIDDLE

You are a citizen and inhabitant of primeline Earth who knows other histories—the Alts—exist. Your job is to document them based on interviews with operatives, the physical evidence they bring back, the remains of their occasional incursions into the primeline, and sometimes direct fact-finding expeditions. You are most likely employed by a part of the Peridexion's Kaal, but Aethon and even the Krypteia employ omnichroniclers.

**FOCUS:** Communication (Investigation) or Intelligence (History)

**TALENT:** Artistry or Intrigue

**HEALTH:** 15 + Con

**RESOURCES:** 6

## PLANAR ENVOY

SOCIAL, UPPER

Across numerous worlds, disparate peoples can only find common ground through their needs. You've been trained to identify these and, from there, build the rapport required to negotiate interplanar agreements. Your exact demeanor depends on who you represent and why. A Vitane envoy usually employs conciliatory language and seeks compromise, though always with a small set of firm positions. Their Divine Empire counterpart is willing to use threats and flattery freely, and draws from the volatile well of realpolitik more readily. Some envoys are even freelance agents.

**FOCUS:** Communication (Persuasion) or Intelligence (Current Affairs)

**TALENT:** Inspire or Linguistics

**HEALTH:** 15 + Con

**RESOURCES:** 8

## SCHOLAR

SKILLED, UPPER

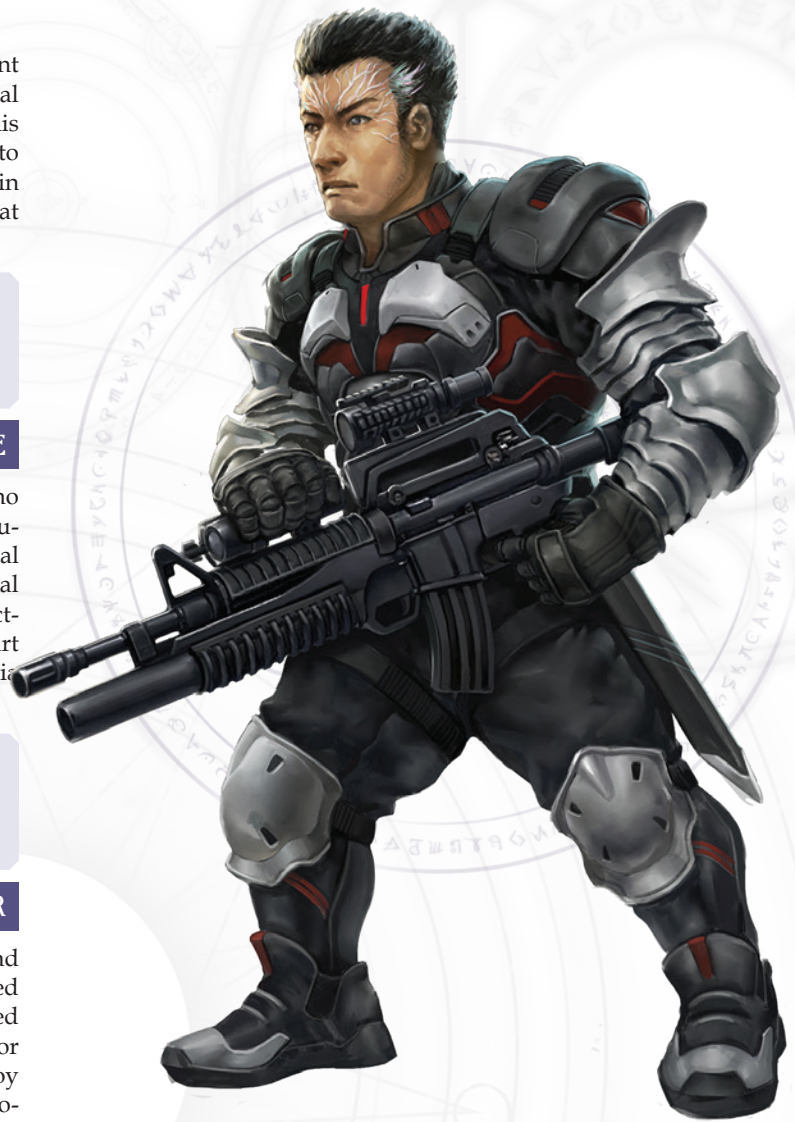
The universe is full of secrets, some of which are your special obsessions. Thanks to generous government funding or patronage by a business or individual, you can devote yourself to your studies full time. The people paying the bills may try to influence the results of your research, but your principles are impeccable. Your research comes before everything else. Distorting it would feel like self-harm. On the other hand, sometimes people *do* hurt themselves. What would it take?

**FOCUS:** Intelligence (Research) or any one Intelligence knowledge focus

**TALENT:** Contacts or Knowledge

**HEALTH:** 15 + Con

**RESOURCES:** 8



## SLEEPER

SOCIAL, UPPER

You have a normal life, with a regular job, friends, and family. It's a persuasive cover. You are an agent of a secret conspiracy in the Peridexion such as Aethon's Pool, or something more sinister, and they put you where you are for a reason. You know what lies beyond the façade of normality, but play along with your surroundings and wait for your orders. You know your current way of life can change abruptly, but the conspiracy takes good care of you. That would only change if they believe you're disloyal, or know too much.

**FOCUS:** Communication (Deception) or Communication (Disguise)

**TALENT:** Contacts or Expertise

**HEALTH:** 15 + Con

**RESOURCES:** 8

## TASKMASTER

PHYSICAL, MIDDLE

You supervise indentured, imprisoned, enslaved, or militarized workers. Your methods can be gentle or harsh, depending on your inclinations and what you can get away with. This is almost always a despicable job and it wears on your soul, even if you are one of the "good bosses." This profession also suits drill sergeants and other frontline NCO roles, who are some-

times less burdened by the job since they expose themselves to the same hardships as the people they direct.

**FOCUS:** Communication (Leadership) or Strength (Intimidation)

**TALENT:** Command or Inspire

**HEALTH:** 20 + Con

**RESOURCES:** 4

## TRAVERSER

SKILLED, MIDDLE

The planes offer a variety of lands and terrain, so that you might move from labyrinthine canyons to acidic seas below floating islands over the course of a single journey. Traversers like yourself help people navigate these extreme environments. Due to the immense variety involved, this is less a function of memorizing survival tricks than being quick, alert, and able to find the path forward as quickly as possible.

**FOCUS:** Intelligence (Navigation) or Willpower (Morale)

**TALENT:** Expertise or Speed Demon

**HEALTH:** 15 + Con

**RESOURCES:** 6

## ULTRATECHNICIAN

SKILLED, MIDDLE

Through your school, family connections, social ties, or plain happenstance, you started working for a fringe scientist. Your employer was more interested in their research than training you, but you managed to pick up a few technological tricks. Your boss insisted on secrecy, which was a good thing considering they were what Aethon calls an Accelerator: a researcher attempting to defy Peridexion limits on technological development. Aethon may have finally taken your boss down, you could have left of your own accord, or you might *still* be working for them.

**FOCUS:** Dexterity (Crafting) or Intelligence (Tinkering)

**TALENT:** Improvisation or Theory and Practice

**HEALTH:** 15 + Con

**RESOURCES:** 6

## VITANE ASSESSOR

SOCIAL, MIDDLE

The Vitane is strict about not meddling with worlds not yet aware of gate travel, but that doesn't mean such worlds are quarantined. The Vitane observes each newly discovered plane to evaluate its readiness for contact. You are trained to mingle with locals and assess their civilization according to multiple criteria, learning all you can while keeping your own secrets. The assessor is a sub-specialty in the Sodality, attached to the Searcher and Emissary branches, but other organizations in the Vitane use them too. Other great powers have their own intelligence-gathering experts, sent to determine if unaware planes are ready for contact—or conquest.

**FOCUS:** Communication (Disguise) or Perception (Empathy)

**TALENT:** Intrigue or Observation

**HEALTH:** 15 + Con

**RESOURCES:** 6

## WARSMITH

SKILLED, LOWER

You make arms and armor. Your particular products depend on the needs of your clients, your own culture, and the physics of the planes where your wares will be deployed. Based on those conditions and your personal abilities, you

make swords or guns, steel breastplates or bulletproof vests, or hybrids of high and low technology. It all depends on the plane and the clients' needs. You might be a mercenary, or attached to a military or security force. Your work may concentrate on preparing items for arcane enchantment, or letting them stand alone.

**FOCUS:** Dexterity (Crafting) or Strength (Machining)

**TALENT:** Expertise or Maker

**HEALTH:** 20 + Con

**RESOURCES:** 4

# TALENTS

People in *Threefold* are part of a complex reality that intertwines magic, technology, and numerous enigmas, and this creates many areas where characters can grow. Characters master talents through the physical and social conditions of various planes, their affiliations with transplanar factions, and their ability to draw upon arcane, occult, and technological resources. Some of these traits are better classified as extraordinary abilities, and are covered in CHAPTER 3. In any event, each talent's description includes suggestions as to how characters might acquire it. In the case of the Sodality and Aethon, CHAPTER 4 provides further guidance for characters from those organizations.

## SOUL TALENTS

These talents represent the intense bond a soul forges with part of the Metacosm. This attunement makes a soul resonate with either the Earth and its alternates, the Otherworlds, or the Netherworlds. A character with one of these talents carries a piece of their attuned worlds with them wherever they go, and can call upon their essences to gain certain benefits.

Souls can only attune with one type of plane, and thus once a character gains the Novice rank in one of these Talents, they may never learn the others. The exception to this is Wander-soul, which is common among planar travelers of all kinds, and rumored to bind a soul to the Sentium itself.

At 1st level, you can replace any talent gained from a background, profession, or drive with a soul talent. Characters usually develop a soul talent that reflects their home plane, but it is not rare for a denizen of an Otherworld to develop affinity with Earth, for example. In games where plane travel is extremely common, Wandersoul is extremely useful.

### EARTHSOUL

**REQUIREMENTS:** Intelligence 1 or higher. Cannot have any other soul talent except Wandersoul.

You are particularly attuned to the energies of Earth and its complex, well-structured physical laws.

**NOVICE:** You can sense whether a creature or object is native to Earth or an Alt. You can make a TN 11 Perception test using sight (though not of an image of the subject) or touch, with any appropriate focus, to determine if the subject was born or created on Earth. If the Stunt Die result is 4 or higher, you can also determine whether the subject came from a different Earth, whether it incorporates arcane or occult aspects, or whether it includes futuristic ("postmodern") technology. In addition, one



piece of Earth equipment or augmentation you choose when you cross a gate gains +5 Resistance against Incessance tests.

**EXPERT:** Advanced technology is the staple of Earth, and you can keep it going no matter where you go. When you use an item based on Earth technology, you ignore any Incessance penalty on the item by an amount equal to your Willpower. Your personal augmentations, along with any technology embedded in your body, become immune to Incessance.

**MASTER:** Your soul becomes a fragment of Earth. Every item you carry becomes immune to Incessance. Also, when you touch a piece of Earth equipment or a character with augmentations, you can make a TN 11 Intelligence (Tinkering) test as a major action. If successful, any Incessance penalty on the item or on one augmentation is reduced to 0, as if they had been returned to Earth. You can spend 2 SP on this test to also remove the effects of any Incessance stunt, including Disenchantment.

## OTHERSOUL

**REQUIREMENTS:** Willpower 1 or higher. Cannot have Hardened Kanna or any other soul talent except Wandersoul.

You are particularly attuned to the energies of the Otherworlds and their mythic resonances.

**NOVICE:** You can sense arcane emanations. By sight (though not of an image of the subject) or touch, you can make a TN 11 Perception test with any appropriate focus to detect if kanna flows more powerfully in a creature, object, or place. This can be used to sense a geomantic nexus, a spell of the arcana, a kanna-using magic item, or a creature with magical abilities, but it cannot be used to detect an arcanist who is not casting a spell.

If the Stunt Die result is 4 or higher, you can also determine the general form of magic and its possible effects. This usually requires active concentration, but the Game Master can decide to make the test for you as a passive sense and tell you the results if you succeed. Furthermore, you can slightly concentrate or dissipate ambient kanna within yourself. Thus, you can decide whether the TN of a spell or kanna-based power which targets you increases or decreases by 2. You make this decision based on what you can perceive about the incoming effect, though your sensitivity makes you instantly aware something is coming the moment before it does, in all cases.

**EXPERT:** You can manipulate the flow of kanna in objects. As a major action, you can make a TN 11 Willpower (Self-Discipline) test while you are touching an object. If you succeed, you can drain a number of power points from the object equal to twice the Stunt Die result. The object must have been infused with kanna in the first place, or be part of an arcana effect. You retain the drained power points as long as you remain conscious, or until they're otherwise expended. You can store a maximum number of drained power points equal to twice your Willpower, in addition to your normal power point pool, if any. This is known as your Othersoul pool. You can use these to cast spells if you know how, but arcanists besides yourself can also spend these additional power points by being in physical contact with you while casting a spell. Someone with this degree of ability is often referred to as a familiar.

**MASTER:** Fate bends to the power of myth, allowing you to weave heroic efforts into deeds of legend. Pick 6 points of stunts reflecting your heroic self-image. You may spend power points from your Othersoul pool as if they were SP on these stunts, alone or in combination with other sources of SP, up to a maximum number of power points equal to your Willpower. Furthermore,



exceptional deeds fuel the legendary power within you. On any successful roll where you gain SP from doubles, your Othersoul pool gains 1 power point, up to its maximum.

## SHADOWSOUL

**REQUIREMENTS:** Constitution 1 or higher. Cannot have Whispers of the Netherworlds or any other soul talent except Wandersoul.

You are particularly attuned to the mind-shaking, reality-cracking, tormenting energies of the Netherworlds.

**NOVICE:** You can feel the presence of Inimical forces. By sight (though not of an image of the subject) or touch, you can make a TN 11 Perception test with any appropriate focus to detect a creature, object, or place that secretly burns with psychic (also called occult) or Netherworldly power. This cannot be used to sense if a living subject is psychic if they are not currently using their powers. If the Stunt Die result is 4 or higher, you can also determine the general nature of the phenomenon and its possible effects. This usually requires active concentration, but the Game Master can decide to make the test for you as a

## SHADOWSOUL STUNTS

SP COST	TRAIT
1	<b>CRAWL:</b> Limb mutations, density shifts, or broken physical laws aid your movement. Until the end of your next turn, you can move along ceilings and walls as easily as across the floor, and do not need to make tests to maintain your balance or footing.
1-3	<b>EYEBLIGHT:</b> A shroud of light, darkness, or some distorting effect makes you difficult to look at. Each SP spent penalizes opponents' ranged attack rolls and Perception tests targeting you by -1. This lasts until the end of your next turn.
1-3	<b>TENTACLES:</b> You sprout new limbs or stretch out existing ones. Despite the name, these can be chitinous segmented limbs, wisps of smoke, or something else that nevertheless is as dexterous as your ordinary arms, and increases your reach by 1 yard per SP spent until the end of your next turn.
2+	<b>HAZARDOUS AURA:</b> You're surrounded by fire, acidic clouds, swarms of voracious flies – whatever it is, anyone adjacent to you, including allies and anyone attempting a hand-to-hand attack, must succeed at a TN 13 Constitution (Tolerance) test or suffer 1d6 penetrating wound damage per 2 SP spent. This hazard lasts until the end of your next turn.
2	<b>CLAWS:</b> You sprout natural weapons such as claws, horns, a fanged maw, or stingers. These are melee weapons which deliver 1d6+2 impact wound damage. You retain these for 1d3+1 rounds, or until you consciously dismiss them.
2-6	<b>ARMOR:</b> Scales, new layers of flesh, or semi-intangibility grant 2I/1B armor per 2 SP spent, to a maximum of 6I/3B, until the end of your next turn.
3	<b>FLIGHT:</b> Through wings, levitation, or some other means, you may fly your Speed until the end of your next turn.

passive sense and tell you the results if you succeed. Furthermore, you may walk through the flames and acid rivers of the Netherworlds with less fear. Damage from "natural" environmental sources in the Netherworlds always inflicts stun damage on you, regardless of the type. This doesn't apply to weapons, traps, attacks, or the powers of Inimical creatures.

**EXPERT:** You can place a witchmark on a target. This is a brand that channels Inimical power into its victim. As a major action, you point at a target up to 10 yards away and utter a dire curse in their direction. You must be able to see the target, which must be a creature, person, or object. The target makes a Willpower (Faith) test with a TN equal to 9 + your Constitution (attended objects make the test with their wielder's ability, unattended objects fail automatically). If the target fails, the witchmark appears on a very visible location on their body or surface. The witchmark is a brand that glows with eldritch light, and lasts a number of minutes equal to your Constitution. A target can make a new Willpower (Faith) test at the end of each of their turns to remove the witchmark before it expires. For as long as the target is thus marked, every stunt used against them costs 1 SP less, though at least 1 SP must be spent on any stunt.

**MASTER:** You release your body to Inimical forces, so that it unspools into a shifting, monstrous form. You may spend SP on Shadowsoul Stunts in addition to the stunts available to characters generally, but your demonic appearance may affect how others regard you.

## WANDERSOUL

**REQUIREMENTS:** None

You are a natural denizen of the Metacosm, attuned to the bonds between worlds.

**NOVICE:** You sense interplanar connections. You recognize instantly when you are within 50 yards of a gate, and can pinpoint its position. In the presence of a gate, you recognize its destination if you have visited it before, and you can make an Intelligence (Occultism) test after spending at least 10 minutes analyzing a gate. The Game Master determines the TN for this test depending on how secret or protected the gate is supposed to be. On a success, you learn one of the following facts about the gate: what kind of world it leads to (Otherworld, Netherworld, Hierarchy, or Earth), what kind of environment surrounds the gate on the other side, whether the gate is controlled by an external force, or the key required to open a locked gate. Spending 3 SP on a successful test reveals another piece of information. Otherwise, you need to study the gate for another 10 minutes to gain more information. In addition, you speak and understand Shabda, the universal language, in verbal, signed, and tactile (but not written or pictographic) forms. All languages expressed in these fashions translate to Shabda, and vice versa.

**EXPERT:** You see the Metacosm arrayed in gate chains. You can now detect the presence of a gate from up to a number of miles away equal to your Perception (minimum 1 mile). You can also automatically sense the direction of a gate that leads to a plane you have visited before, from any distance on the plane you share with it.

**MASTER:** You are so in tune with gate travel that you've learned to take shortcuts. When starting a journey across a

gate chain, make a TN 15 Intelligence (Navigation) test. If successful, you can skip a number of gates in the chain equal to the Stunt Die result. In addition, when you are in the presence of a gate, you automatically know where it leads (though if you don't know the plane, you only know if it's an Earth worldline, an Otherworld, or a Netherworld, and you gain a flash of insight about the plane's general environment). You can project your senses through a gate to see the location on the other side as if you were standing at the threshold; you are unaware of your own surroundings when you peek through a gate in this way.

## NEW TALENTS

Any character can learn the following talents, provided they are in the right world to learn them.

### ARCANIST FINESSE

**REQUIREMENTS:** Intelligence (Occultism) and any Arcana talent

Weaving spells comes easily for you.

**NOVICE:** You have an innate understanding of how spells work. Choose 3 stunts, except the Power Manifestation power stunt. When spending SP on a spellcasting test, your chosen stunts cost 1 SP less for you, though you must spend at least 1 SP and only get the discount once per stunt, even if you can use the stunt multiple times. The GM is the final arbiter on whether you can use any of your chosen stunts with a particular spell.

**EXPERT:** You have mastered a number of spells so you can use them almost instinctively. Choose 3 Novice or Expert spells that you know; the power point costs for using your chosen spells are reduced by 1. If the power test to activate one of your chosen spells rolls doubles, instead of gaining stunt points, you can reduce the cost of the spell by 2 additional power points. The cost of a spell cannot be reduced to 0.

**MASTER:** You make kanna a part of your very self. When you take a breather, instead of recovering Health you can recover a number of power points equal to 5 + Willpower + half your level. You can only recover power points this way a number of times each day equal to your Willpower. On Earth and other worlds with a restricted flow of kanna, the amount of power points you recover is equal to 3 + Willpower, and you can only do it once per day at noon or at midnight.

### ARMORED COMBAT STYLE

**REQUIREMENTS:** Strength 2 or higher

You are trained to make the best of any armor you wear.

**NOVICE:** You wear armor like a second skin. Reduce the Armor Penalty of any armor you wear by 1.

**EXPERT:** You wear your armor like an expert, and move to make sure blows hit it instead of unprotected parts of your body. Increase the Armor Rating of any armor you wear by +2I. If the armor has a ballistic rating higher than 0, also increase its armor rating by +1B.

**MASTER:** You know how to use your armor's mass and protection offensively, for body slams and other blows. You now reduce your Armor Penalty by 2 instead of 1, and add your

armor's unmodified Armor Penalty as a bonus to unarmed attack damage. For example, a Steel Plate suit, which normally has an Armor Penalty of -4, only gives you an armor penalty of -2 and adds +4 to your unarmed damage. If the Armor Penalty comes from some flaw in fit or construction and not bulk, the Game Master may reduce the damage bonus.

### ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE JANA

**REQUIREMENTS:** Jana ancestry, full or partial

The Jana are famous for their social insight, especially when reaching out to people different from themselves.

**NOVICE:** You can understand others' points of view and talk to them accordingly. You gain a +1 bonus to any Communication or Willpower tests in a social encounter with people who possess a non-jana ancestry. This bonus lasts until you fail a social test during the encounter.

**EXPERT:** You are quick to find middle ground among the different peoples of the planes. Reduce the penalty to simple interactions with non-jana by 1 if the penalty comes from a negative attitude. In addition, the bonus from the Novice degree increases to +2.

**MASTER:** Your calm words carry more weight in the face of otherworldly tempers. When you improve the attitude of an NPC, the attitude improves by 1 additional shift. Non-jana have a -2 penalty on opposed tests to shift an attitude you changed.

### HARDENED KANNA

**REQUIREMENTS:** Willpower 2 or higher. Cannot have Othersoul.

Kanna, or magical energy, flows through you in static patterns which are exceptionally difficult to change. Since changing magical patterns is the goal of arcane magic, you're especially difficult to affect with spells. This may be learned or innate, though in either case it can be improved by meditations which strengthen your sense of self.

In all cases, Hardened Kanna's benefits apply only to spells of the arcana, though the GM may decide it affects other kanna-manipulating powers as well. Hardened Kanna doesn't affect psychic powers or occult rituals.

**NOVICE:** Arcanists have a hard time acting against you. Increase the TN of power tests for arcane spells aimed at you by 2, but this also applies to spells you might want to affect you, such as healing magic.

**EXPERT:** Your nature subdues flares of power that would normally be used for exceptional feats. An arcanist must spend 2 SP before they can use any other power stunt in conjunction with a spell targeting you.

**MASTER:** Your soul diffuses spells that target you. Whenever you're conscious, Arcanists must spend additional power points equal to your Willpower on spells that target you.

### INDUSTRIOUSNESS OF THE HULDRA

**REQUIREMENTS:** Huldra ancestry, full or partial

You have an ancestral knack for artisanship.

**NOVICE:** You intuitively understand what others must learn from a master artisan. When you make an ability test that

involves the use of tools, you may re-roll a failed test, but you must keep the result of the second roll.

**EXPERT:** Fruitful labor is your legacy. When you participate in an advanced test to make or repair an item, for each test you make, you automatically add a number of points towards the success threshold equal to your Intelligence or Willpower, whichever is greater.

**MASTER:** You can use weapons and tools in ways no one imagined. When you gain SP from rolling doubles on a successful ability using a weapon or tool and you know its related focus, you gain +1 SP.

### INNER STRENGTH

**REQUIREMENTS:** Willpower (Self-Discipline) and any Psychic talent

Your disciplined soul benefits your psychic abilities, though the ascetic discipline required can take its toll on your physical health.

**NOVICE:** You hone your intentions without exhausting yourself. You can re-roll a failed power fatigue test, but you must keep the result of the second roll. Furthermore, if you accumulate fatigue from psychic power use, you add one additional level of fatigue (Winded to Fatigued, Fatigued to Exhausted, Exhausted to Dying) for every time you used this ability to successfully fend off fatigue. Therefore, using it repeatedly is a dangerous proposition. This risk resets to 0 after at least 6 hours of sleep.

**EXPERT:** You replenish your psychic reservoirs more quickly. When you take a breather, you can reduce your level of fatigue from Fatigued to Winded. A two-hour rest with only light activity allows you to reduce your fatigue level from Exhausted to Fatigued. However, if you go this route, you cannot recover Health from the same rest period.

**MASTER:** You sacrifice your health for power. Whenever you would accumulate fatigue from failing a power fatigue test, you can choose to suffer 2d6 wound damage instead. If you would accumulate multiple levels of fatigue at once, add 1d6 damage for each additional level. You must decide to suffer this damage when the fatigue would strike, and must suffer damage for all levels of fatigue gained in that moment.

### RAGE OF THE DREYGUR

**REQUIREMENTS:** Dreygur ancestry, full or partial

A legacy of resisting the Netherworlds' torments has instilled an instinct for defiance.

**NOVICE:** Your people have long endured harsh environments. When you learn this talent, increase your Toughness by 1.

**EXPERT:** You thrive in the face of physical adversity. When you spend SP on the stunt Adrenaline Rush, you gain temporary Health as if you spent 1 additional stunt point and can benefit as if you had spent 4 SP, even though the ceiling (and the maximum number you can actually spend) is 3 SP.

**MASTER:** Fire, ice, winds of glass shards—none of it can turn you from your goals. You can use an Activate action to add your Willpower to your Toughness against one instance of being damaged until your next turn.

### ROOTS OF THE ARVU

**REQUIREMENTS:** Arvu ancestry, full or partial

Your people have always been close to the natural forces of many worlds.

**NOVICE:** You listen to the whispers of the land. Choose three focuses that have something to do with nature or the land. Examples include, but are not limited to, Communication (Animal Handling), Dexterity (Sailing), and Intelligence (Biology). You gain a +1 bonus to tests with your chosen focuses, and in any investigation where they would be tangential focuses, you may use them as primary focuses.

**EXPERT:** The land itself can warn you of danger. If you spend 10 minutes in communion with a natural environment (not a built or excavated location, unless the GM decides otherwise, such as for a moss-covered ruin), you gain a +2 bonus to tests to avoid hazards in this locale and you may reroll a test to sense hidden features or creatures in the area, but must keep the results of the second roll. This applies to tests to detect creatures sneaking up on you for ambushes and other reasons, even if you are not actively looking for them.

**MASTER:** You speak to the land, and it listens. When you gain this degree, you can speak with plants, animals, or natural features, and interact with them socially. Unless your target is a special creature, animals and plants have limited intelligence and can only talk about basic topics and their most recent experiences. The Game Master will decide if a terrain feature is aware and awake. Its intelligence varies wildly.

### WEAPON AND SHIELD STYLE

**REQUIREMENTS:** Fighting 1 or higher, either Fighting (Heavy Blades) or Fighting (Short Hafted)

You've trained to use a one-handed weapon in conjunction with a shield. On Earth, this skill is mostly limited to historical reenactors, martial artists, and riot cops. On many Otherworlds, it's part of standard military training.

**NOVICE:** You know how to use your shield to set up a counterattack. When an attacker misses you with a hand-to-hand attack while you're using your shield, you gain a +1 to your own melee attack roll against them, provided the attack takes place on your next turn.

**EXPERT:** You can cover most angles of attack with your shield. When you use the Duck and Weave stunt, you gain an additional +1 to Defense in addition to the bonus provided by the stunt.

**MASTER:** You rapidly turn aside blows. Add +1 to your Shield Bonus to Defense.

### WHISPERS OF THE NETHERWORLDS

**REQUIREMENTS:** Willpower 2 or higher. Cannot have Shadowsoul.

Voices and visions from beyond protect you from psychic influence. Is this the music of the Sentium, dreams from the Alastors, or some other phenomenon?

**NOVICE:** Eldritch chatter and creeping shadows enter the thoughts of anyone using psychic powers on you. You

increase the TN of psychic fatigue tests for powers aimed against you by 2.

**EXPERT:** The soul-haunting aura around you distracts and unnerves adepts who attempt to use their powers on you. When a psychic succeeds on a power test, you may force them to reroll the test. They must use the results of the second roll.

**MASTER:** The voices and visions that manifest through you scream and flare in revenge if anyone psychically tampers with their chosen vessel. If a psychic fails a fatigue test on a power they attempted to use on you, they also suffer 2d6 penetrating wound damage.

## SPECIALIZATIONS

Throughout the Metacosm, people refine their skills to gain an edge in planar adventures. Characters acquire the following specializations based on their inclinations, the planes they grow familiar with, and their standing with groups that provide such training.

### ARCANNONEER

Firearms are very effective weapons, but the further a gate chain leads from Earth, the less reliable they become. Where physics fails, magic provides. Technically an arcanist, you've exchanged mythic runes and incantations for giving power to legends of the gun.

**ACROSS THE METACOSM:** Arcannoneers are a recent development amongst the planes. Most are rakes, mercenaries, and other assorted miscreants. In the Otherworlds, Nighthost warbands and other military forces value their talents. On Earth, Arcannoneers stand out from other gunfighters when they use their particular abilities, and the Peridexion has no love for those who display their abilities blatantly.

#### ARCANNONEER TALENT

**REQUIREMENTS:** Intelligence (Occultism), any one Accuracy firearms focus, and any one firearms style talent

You can use firearms for magical feats.

**NOVICE:** You can channel spells through a firearm, in a phenomenon called spellshot. You must possess a focus covering the firearm, you must know the spell, and your firearm must be loaded with ammunition to cast the spell. At Novice rank, you may only use spellshot for one arcana.

The spells listed in the **Arcannoneer Spellshot** table qualify.

#### ARCANNONEER SPELLSHOT

ARCANA	SPELLS
Digital Arcana	<i>tracker, gremlins</i>
Enchantment Arcana*	<i>suspend enchantment</i>
Fire Arcana	<i>arcane lantern, flame blast</i>
Power Arcana	<i>arcane blast, arcane abatement</i>
Radiant Arcana*	<i>radiant bolt</i>

\*This arcana can be found in CHAPTER 3 of this book.

The Game Master may approve additional spells, but they must be capable of targeting a person or object, cannot require more than an Expert degree in an arcana, and must fit the concept of spellshot in the GM's opinion.

When using spellshot, you replace the normal action and test to cast the spell with a ranged attack and its roll to hit (and must make this roll, even if a test isn't normally required). The spell's range becomes the same as the firearm's. On a successful attack roll, the spell functions, and its target doesn't get any listed test to avoid the spell's effects. You pay the spell's normal PP cost. You benefit from your firearm's focus, not your power focus, for tests and for calculating Force. Finally, while you cannot use firearms stunts to cast multiple instances of the same spell or affect more targets than usual, you may use them to inflict extra damage or gain other advantages over opponents as you would with a normal firearms attack stunt.

**EXPERT:** You may channel spellshot from an additional arcana (two total). Furthermore, you rarely lack ammunition because you can conjure it. You can spend power points to reload a firearm you're handling with bolts of kanna. The cost is 1 PP for single shot weapons, 2 PP for semiautomatic weapons, and 3 PP for fully automatic weapons. You can use this ammunition for normal shooting or for spellshot. In the latter case, you spend the additional PP along with the spell's PP cost. This does not require an action, so you never need to take time to reload. Furthermore, when using kanna as ammunition, your firearm is treated as an Otherworldly magical item, not Earth technology, for Incessance purposes (see **Incessance**, page 115).

**MASTER:** You may channel spellshot from an additional arcana (three total). You also carry the myth of the gun within you, and can materialize one firearm you have a focus in if you have handled the real thing for a substantial amount of time. To do this, take an Activate action and spend 4 PP for a pistol, 6 PP for an SMG, single shot longarm, or shotgun, and 8 PP for an assault rifle or other large fully automatic weapon. (The GM may increase the price for a very large firearm, but the limit should be what an unaided human can carry.) This conjured weapon looks semi-substantial and distorted, can't be used by anyone else, and vanishes (and must be recreated) if dropped, but accepts ammunition and otherwise functions normally. A conjured gun lasts for 10 minutes.

### GUILD OCCULTIST

Guilds provide structure and safety for psychics, along with a way to understand their powers and the universe as a whole. Regardless of your guild's particular beliefs and methods, they will teach you to use your powers with subtlety and efficiency, for not all worlds are welcoming to your kind. You are aware that when you use your powers you are opening your mind to the Inimicals and the energies of the Netherworlds, but with the support of your peers, you know you can resist them. See CHAPTER 3 for more information on the guilds.

**ACROSS THE METACOSM:** Occult guilds exist throughout the planes, including on many Earths. Most serve their stated purpose of gathering and nurturing psychic adepts, as well as policing their own. However, the guilds have as many motivations as they have methods, so each individual guild psychic can look and act entirely different from another.



## GUILD OCCULTIST TALENT

**REQUIREMENTS:** Willpower (Self-Discipline), any one psychic talent, and rank 1 in an occult guild

Your occult guild (also known as a psychic guild) taught you its methods.

**NOVICE:** Each guild specializes in one psychic discipline, including all its constituent powers, such as Telepathy or the Somatic discipline. You sense when that discipline is being used in a 15-yard radius by succeeding at a Perception (Empathy) test vs. the discipline's power test. If you possess the Expert rank in that discipline yourself, you gain an additional +2 to the roll. If the psychic using the discipline is present and can be seen, you know they're responsible for the power being used. You can also use this to sense when your guild's discipline was used in the last 24 hours. The GM may roll the test for you to represent passively noticing such phenomena.

**EXPERT:** You attain superior skill in your guild's methods. When you use the Novice effects of your guild's favored psychic discipline, you gain a +2 bonus to tests to resist fatigue. Also, when you take part in an occult rite with other members of your guild, you gain +2 to Willpower tests to lend assistance.

**MASTER:** You master what your guild has to teach you. Whenever you succeed on the power test for your guild's favored psychic discipline, you gain +2 stunt points.

## NIGHTHOST TORMENTOR

Pain is your weapon of choice, and fear is your shield. A front-line warrior in the Nighthost, you hone a fighting style inspired

by the psychic pain which howls across Netherworlds, and which is beloved by the Inimicals. You're not a demon, but you fight like one, binding terror and agony to your weapons.

**ACROSS THE METACOSM:** Famed as elite warriors among the Nighthost, Tormentors have spread to numerous plundered worlds. Tormentors can be found as mercenaries and terrifying bodyguards. A few have even allied themselves with Inimicals, and set themselves up as petty lords in various Netherworlds. The Nighthost kills these renegades every chance it gets.

## NIGHTHOST TORMENTOR TALENT

**REQUIREMENTS:** Willpower (Faith), any one Fighting focus, and any one melee style talent. Cannot possess arcana or augmentation Capacity slots.

Your close combat attacks channel psychic suffering.

**NOVICE:** Your blows with bare hands or melee weapons channel pain above and beyond the injuries they inflict. You can accept a penalty to your Fighting-based attack roll equal to the cost of one of the following stunts: Taunt, Knock Prone, or Hamstring. If the attack is successful, you automatically trigger the stunt.

**EXPERT:** Your close combat strikes inspire fear. Add the Shock and Awe stunt to the list of stunts you can trigger automatically by taking a penalty, as per the Novice degree. You may ignore the stunt's restriction to non-attack actions.

**MASTER:** Even the lightest touch from you transmits pain and fear, if you choose. Add the Imposing Power power stunt to the list of stunts you can automatically trigger by taking a penalty to your attack, but reduce its required penalty, along

with the penalty to automatically trigger the other stunts listed in prior degrees, by 1.

## NOETIC OPERANT

In Aethon's service, you've enhanced your cognitive abilities to the point where you can create programmed models of reality indistinguishable from, and capable of influencing, phenomena around you. Nanostructures woven into your central nervous system generate quantum-probabilistic phenomena, directed by your extreme mental discipline. Thus, you alter events around you with mere concentration.

**ACROSS THE METACOSM:** Noetic Operants rarely leave Earth unless seconded to the Sodality.

### NOETIC OPERANT TALENT

**REQUIREMENTS:** Willpower (Self-Discipline), 1 or more noetic Capacity slots, and Aethon rank 1

You use probability-warping implants and mathematics to investigate and alter reality.

**NOVICE:** You sense when natural laws lose their customary structure. You recognize the presence of creatures from planes other than the one you're currently in, active spells or psychic powers, or supernatural abilities and items. This ability has a 15-yard range. This requires a minor action along with a successful Willpower (Self-Discipline) test with a TN of 12 on Earth, 14 in the Otherworlds, and 16 in the Netherworlds. The planes beyond Earth have looser standards, so it is more difficult to parse changes in their rules. You do not know which of the detectable phenomena are in force, but you can trace them to a creature, object, or place, which might allow you to make an educated guess.

**EXPERT:** Attuning yourself to local probability fields, you modify them for your benefit. As a major action, you may make a Willpower (Self-Discipline) test with a TN of 13 on Earth, 15 in the Otherworlds, and 17 in the Netherworlds. If you succeed, you gain 2 stunt points which you can allow someone within 30 yards to use on their next test, should they succeed, if it takes place before your next turn. Furthermore, if you roll doubles, you may transfer the SP gained in this fashion to one or more allies for their own use. They may spend these bonus SP whether they themselves roll doubles or not. If they fail, however, these SP vanish, unused. These SP may not be used to enhance magic spells, psychic powers, or related magical or occult phenomena. As you may only maintain your concentration for a moment, you may not apply these SP to actions taking longer than a major action.

**MASTER:** Twisting reality gets easier for you. You may now use the Expert ability with an Activate action. Furthermore, you may now spend SP gained to penalize opponents' actions. Each SP spent imposes a -1 to one target's next action. Unlike improving outcomes, penalizing rolls can be applied to magical or psychic phenomena.

## RED PACT WARLOCK

The term *warlock* is supposedly from the Old English for "oath-breaker." But for arcanists, warlocks can more prop-

erly be said to be *rule-breakers*, in that they have found dark ways to increase their arcane power. Warlocks refuse to abide by the common codes and traditions of arcanist societies, making them dangerous outsiders. Different warlocks, or entire sects of warlocks, form *pacts*, conspiracies dedicated to mastering a forbidden magical practice. The Red Pact is one such example. Pacts may be formed with various entities or groups, from fellow arcanists to inimical entities, and a warlock generally only forms a single pact, since the conflicts of multiple pacts can be potentially ruinous: socially, magically, and psychologically.

**ACROSS THE METACOSM:** For more on warlocks, see the *Enemies & Allies* sourcebook for *Modern AGE*. That book details the Valkumenoth, one of the largest conspiracies of warlocks and the foremost practitioners of the Red Pact. The Valkumenoth mainly creep through Earth and a few adjacent Otherworlds, though other warlocks can be found further afield. The Valkumenoth are not the only Red Pact practitioners. Others have discovered it independently, or have split from the conspiracy.

### RED PACT WARLOCK TALENT

**REQUIREMENT:** You must be an arcanist initiated into the Red Pact.

Life is power and power life, as you learn from your initiation into the Pact.

**NOVICE:** Initiation into the Red Pact gives the Warlock access to a special Life Drain stunt. By spending 3 SP while touching a target with bare flesh (such as in an unarmed attack) or a magical implement (such as the Warlock's ritual dagger), the Warlock inflicts an additional 1d6 damage and regains the same amount of Health. If the target is an arcanist, or otherwise possesses *kanna*, the Warlock may drain power points instead of Health.

**EXPERT:** Warlocks trained in the Red Pact are stronger together. Power flows freely between them. As a minor action, the Warlock may spend 2, 4, or 6 power points to make an ally's next spell more powerful. For every 2 points spent, the ally reduces the spell's TN by 1 and increases its Force by 1. Up to two Warlocks may increase the power of a single ally at any given time.

**MASTER:** The Master Warlock can reave *kanna* from any living, sapient creature, whether they have performed a creative act or not (see **Reaving Kanna** in CHAPTER 3). The *kanna* can replenish the Warlock's power points or Health on a 1-for-1 basis. Additionally, the Warlock can perform the Life Drain stunt for only 2 SP rather than the usual 3.

## SODALITY EMISSARY

You've trained with the Sodality's Emissary branch. You handle first contact with new civilizations, and diplomatic relations with old allies. When necessary, you conceal your and your comrades' true origin from people who aren't ready to learn many universes exist. Other great powers vilify your branch as spies and propagandists, but this isn't true—mostly. The Sodality avoids plotting against its enemies, but if underhanded tactics can secure the peace, they may be necessary.

**ACROSS THE METACOSM:** Emissaries can be found throughout the Otherworlds. On Earth and in the Netherworlds, they're especially likely to disguise themselves, unless they're part of a formal diplomatic effort. Even if their Mission is under orders to hide their status as Sodalts, an Emissary's skill can prevent violence and help the Mission succeed.

### SODALITY EMISSARY TALENT

**REQUIREMENTS:** Communication 2 or higher, must speak Shabda, Sodality rank 1

You can convey any idea you wish, as precisely as you intend.

**NOVICE:** Your understanding of Shabda extends to written, pictographic, and symbolic forms. You can always determine what anything intentionally made to communicate an idea is trying to get across as well as a moderately educated native. Furthermore, you may inscribe words, pictures, or symbols that anyone can understand. These appear to be in the reader's or viewer's native language, though they are in fact weird arcane scrawls which would be untranslatable in their true form.

**EXPERT:** You can discern local customs and history from the way people express themselves. After you spend an hour among a world's denizens, their attire, decorations, references, and mannerisms tell you much about them. You gain a bonus equal to your Perception to Communication (Etiquette) and Communication (Disguise) tests, as well as Intelligence tests which depend on knowledge of the local culture.

**MASTER:** Your deep understanding of others helps you in your attempts to influence them. Choose either three or six specific stunts from among the Infiltration, Investigation, General Social, and Attitude tables in CHAPTER 5 of the *Modern AGE* Basic Rulebook. If you choose six stunts, reduce their SP cost by 1 each. If you choose three stunts, reduce their SP cost by 2 each. If this drops the cost of the stunt to 0, you may use it even when you don't roll doubles or spend SP from any other source, as long as you succeed at the related test.

## SODALITY PROTECTOR

You were trained as a Protector, a member of the Sodality branch that performs security and, if necessary, military operations. The Academy or another source trained you in Viravidya, the art that is to combat as Shabda is to communication. Your abilities don't come from raw strength and speed, but from understanding the primordial patterns of violence. If you adhere to the Vows, you use these abilities to stop or prevent violence, and never out of anger or for personal gain.

**ACROSS THE METACOSM:** It is rare to find a Protector traveling alone, and even then they are reluctant to reveal their nature. Protectors can be found in number on core Vitane planes, but are otherwise found alongside their Missions on any plane they travel to.

## NZ-06414: MUTHARIS

A continent floating in a starry void, Mutharis teems with flora and fauna, from the dense jungles on top to the enormous fungal stalactites of the undercontinent and their hive-life residents—at least at last reporting. At intervals that span days to months, the plane's family of ruling Alastors crosses the land, and almost everything mutates in their wake.

### SODALITY PROTECTOR TALENT

**REQUIREMENTS:** Perception (Empathy), the Protect talent, and any one combat style talent

You adapt to any mode of combat.

**NOVICE:** Your priority to end a fight is to disable and subdue. When you make a Stunt Attack, you gain a +2 bonus to the attack roll and you gain 2 SP instead of 1 SP.

**EXPERT:** You can see an opponent's true intent behind any combat technique. All combat stunts against you cost an additional 1 SP.

**MASTER:** You flow with the fight. All combat and power stunts that target an ally within 5 yards of you cost an additional 2 SP.

## SODALITY SEARCHER

Emissaries talk to the inhabitants of a plane, and Protectors guard the Mission, but Searchers lead the way from world to world. You're not only versed in gate travel, but in dealing with the strange conditions you might encounter on new worlds, as well as the vast opportunities for learning the Metacosm offers. There are as many kinds of Searchers as there are academic disciplines, but they all pursue knowledge relentlessly.

**ACROSS THE METACOSM:** Searchers are stereotypical Sodalts. They're inquisitive, go to the weirdest, most dangerous places possible, and use their wits to solve problems. They can be found on virtually any plane, though they're not common on Earth or in the harshest Netherworlds.

### SODALITY SEARCHER TALENT

**REQUIREMENTS:** Intelligence (Occultism), Scouting, and Wandersoul

You travel seeking knowledge, and use what you know to aid in your explorations.

**NOVICE:** You rapidly assess the conditions of any new plane you visit. Once you enter a new plane, you can determine whether it's a version of Earth, an Otherworld, or a Netherworld. Hierarchies present themselves as unknown, or as whatever type of plane they originally were before being altered. Furthermore, you may make a TN 13 Intelligence test in a knowledge focus you possess to see if anything covered by it has an unusual manifestation on this plane. For example, Intelligence (Chemistry) would be useful for substances, while Intelligence (Biology) might be used to detect an unusual species or ecosystem. Finding out requires anything from careful observation to a brief experiment, and in rare situations, the GM may decide you lack the tools or opportunity to make use of this ability.

**EXPERT:** You examine everything through the lens of your studies. You may add the bonus from a knowledge focus you possess to any Perception test (on top of any Perception focus) where that knowledge would be helpful.

**MASTER:** Your applied knowledge is invaluable. If you can communicate with an ally, you may use the Activate action to add your knowledge focus bonus to their next major action, as long as the focus would help them with that action. You may do this once per focus per encounter; after that, it is assumed you've provided all the applicable insight you can.



## SECRET & POTENT POWERS

Just as the reality of *Threefold* is far wider than most people on Earth know, so too are the hidden powers available to those who understand the true nature of things. On other planes, some of these powers are common, although one type tends to dominate. Those who travel among the planes have the potential to acquire and use all of these powers, although each has its limitations.

Essentially, all of the extraordinary powers given in CHAPTER 6 of *Modern AGE* exist in some form in *Threefold*, and then some. These powers broadly break down into *arcana* (magic from shaping creative energy), the *occult* (psychic powers from an expanded openness to the true nature of reality), and *augmentations* (physical and mental transformations, usually through technology). This chapter looks at the particular manifestations of these powers in the setting, along with additions and adjustments unique to *Threefold*.

### ARCANA

When the vital spark of imagination meets the volatile flow of primal, creative energy—what the scholars of the Vitane call *kanna*—it ignites a reaction that, driven by will and determination, can create wonders. Just as artists use imagination to express their creativity through a medium, arcanists practice their Art, except their medium is *kanna*, their canvas reality, and their creations far more than just images. Arcana rely on mythic logic and symbolism. The arcanist participates in a legend of their own creation, where a spell is a necessary part of the story. Magic compresses the symbols of a legend into sigils, shorthand, and soul-engrossing visualization.

Summoning fire, the arcanist tells the story of a legendary fire-bringer, but coils it so tightly that only a few words, gestures, and the energetic pattern of the tale remain—and yet fire answers the call.

Arcana cannot cross planar boundaries, with the sole exception that persistent effects that target a person, not an area, remain in force if that individual travels to another plane, provided they would have persisted in other circumstances.

All of the arcana—and then some—from CHAPTER 6 of *Modern AGE* are known and practiced in *Threefold*. Each arcane talent has its own ability focus, which is usually an Intelligence focus. The following are ways in which the traits and options in *Modern AGE* apply to arcana in *Threefold*.

### GAINING ARCANA

In terms of **Gaining Power** from CHAPTER 6 of *Modern AGE*, arcana in *Threefold* have unlimited access in that anyone can learn them, given the opportunity. That said, opportunities to learn and practice on low-kanna worlds like Earth are few and far between, and carefully kept under wraps by the Vitane and the Peridexion. Furthermore, it requires considerable effort to study the arcana. Just as most people can learn to draw competently but rarely devote the time unless they possess a knack for it, most people find the study of magic too complex and time-consuming to attempt. Even people with considerable talent for arcana rarely stumble upon how to use them without training. Few intuitively understand how to channel and compress mythology into miracles.



## POWERS IN THREEFOLD

*Threefold* uses the **Power Fatigue** option from *Modern AGE* for psychic powers, while arcana use the regular spending of power points. Augmentations do not require any expenditures, but the number a character may acquire is affected by their Capacity, as described in **Capacity**, later in this chapter.

### POWER INCOMPATIBILITY

In *Threefold*, arcana, psychic (also called occult) powers, and augmentations all interfere with one another. No character may learn both arcana and psychic disciplines. Arcana are grounded in the mythic energy surrounding the character. A psychic's soul is intrinsically directed toward the self, the Sentium, and the broken threshold of the Netherworlds. Once a would-be miracle worker chooses one orientation, they cannot comprehend the other.

Furthermore, because they rely on Earth's physical and metaphysical laws, augmentations interfere with both psychic disciplines and arcana. When a character takes their first degree in one of these powers, they lose the ability to increase Noetic or Somatic Capacity. Furthermore, the character's augmentations impose a penalty to power tests equal to the total number of slots they use. Thus, a character with a *blindsense* implant (2 noetic slots) and a *weapon implant* (1 somatic slot) suffers a -3 penalty to tests to cast spells or use psychic powers. This penalty does not apply to fatigue tests, however. The power test penalty applies regardless of the character's Capacity, and can be reduced by removing the offending augmentations.

### PUSHING THROUGH

*Threefold* adds an additional power point option for use with arcana. Arcanists can expend additional power and effort to turn a failed casting into a success. To do so, the arcanist spends PP on a 1-to-1 basis to add +1 to their die roll, up to a maximum roll of 18. The arcanist immediately gains a level of fatigue upon doing so. This modification of the die roll does not change the generation of stunt points or the result of the Stunt Die, only the effective total of the roll.

#### EXAMPLE

*Steve's arcanist character casts arcane hack, but the dice come up 2, 2, and 3, a total of 7. Even with his character's focus bonus for Digital Arcana, that's only a 9, well shy of the spell's TN of 15. Steve decides to spend an additional 6 PP to push through, on top of arcane hack's Cost of 10 PP. His arcanist acquires a level of fatigue and is now Winded, but the spell succeeds and, since two of the dice matched, also generates 3 Stunt Points (the result of the Stunt Die)!*

## NB-31994: THE CLAUSTRUM

A graveyard world where lethal winds keen through the bones of planar detritus, the Clastrum is a dumping ground for other worlds' wrecked airships, behemoth corpses, and grandiose ruins, as it possesses enormous gates which seem to drift toward wrecks and disasters. Inhabitants seek shelter from the occasional gale-force screams that scour the land, which emanate from Sarpith, a once-kingly Hierarch chained and tormented by Alastor jailers.

Most can't even imagine that arcana are truly real, and that sort of imagination is a cornerstone of the practice.

Generally, *Threefold* characters are permitted to choose arcane talents in place of any talent choice, provided they have access to libraries of arcane lore. The presumption for starting characters is they gained training and access from somewhere, most likely an arcane college associated with the Vitane or an apprenticeship with a skilled arcanist.

## LESSER ARCANA

While arcanists learn to master and wield powerful spells, they also pick up a number of lesser arcana, minor tricks that are useful in everyday life, especially on kanna-rich worlds where arcanists can afford to show off a bit. While more experienced arcanists and those from worlds like Earth where kanna is difficult to come by disdain such lesser arcana—*cantrips*, as they are often called—they are still useful from time to time.

In addition to the arcana provided by their arcane talents, an arcanist in *Threefold* knows one of the following lesser arcana for each degree of arcane talent they possess. So an arcanist who is a novice in two arcana and an expert in two—a total of six degrees—also knows six lesser arcana. A character can perform any lesser arcana they know with a minor action at the cost of 1 power point.

### ARCANE CANDLE

Arcane Candle conjures a point of cold light about as bright as a candle, of whatever color the arcanist wishes. Some arcanists have personal "signature" colors. The arcane light hovers near the caster's head or shoulder, but can move anywhere within 10 yards at the arcanist's direction.

### ARCANE CLOAK

Arcane Cloak protects the arcanist from precipitation like an invisible raincoat, allowing the caster to walk outside in rain or snow without getting wet. The cloak provides no additional warmth, nor can it repel more moisture than a steady rain—a heavier soaking will still get the arcanist wet.

### ARCANE COMPASS

Arcane Compass tells the caster unerringly where north lies, and the time until the next sunrise or sunset. On planes without a north analog, the cantrip fails to function, or points toward a potent source of kanna.

### ARCANE GLYPH

Arcane Glyph allows an arcanist to trace a single glyph—usually a personal symbol—or pictogram onto a surface as if writing in indelible ink of whatever color the caster wishes (again, some have "signature" colors). The glyph lasts until the inscriber removes it with a touch or it is removed with a spell like *arcane abatement*.

### ARCANE MANTLE

Arcane Mantle is an outward reflection of the arcanist's inner magical power, including such momentary effects as flashing or color-changing eyes, a shimmering or shadowy aura, or a hollow and menacing or melodious voice. Such displays can

be useful in warning off those wise enough to avoid crossing a wielder of the arcane arts or impressing the gullible.

## ARCANE SERVANT

Arcane Servant can move small objects (up to about a pound in weight) and perform simple household chores like dusting, sweeping, making beds, or picking up for about an hour's time.

## ARCANE SPARK

Arcane Spark can light a small fire within arm's reach with a snap of the caster's fingers, like a mundane match or lighter. Alternately, it can create a small shower of colorful, but harmless, sparks from the arcanist's fingertips of whatever colors are desired. In the second case, the sparks are not hot enough to ignite fires—they flare brightly and then quickly vanish.

## OTHER LESSER ARCANA

The Game Master should feel free to allow players to come up with other lesser arcana for their characters, keeping in mind that such powers should not equal even the novice degrees of true arcana, and generally shouldn't be useful in action encounters. Usually, lesser arcana take the place of mundane technology or speed up mundane tasks arcanists can't be bothered to do themselves.

# KANNA

*Modern AGE* power points are a measure of what *Threefold* arcanists call *kanna*, pure creative energy that flows through the planes. The exact nature of *kanna* remains a mystery. Some say it is “left over” from the creation of universes, the *prima materia* from which all things originally arose. Others suggest it arises from the presence and exercise of creative imaginations. Certainly it is sensitive to such and responds to a combination of imagination and willpower backed by a complex series of rituals and visualizations. When an arcanist does these in the right fashion, they can channel *kanna* to create a change in the world around them, to bring what they have imagined into being. So the *Modern AGE* power points score is a measure of an arcanist's ability to access and channel *kanna*.

## INSPIRATION AND KANNA RECOVERY

On *kanna*-rich planes, such as Vigrith and some other Vitane worlds, regaining power points works just as described on page 91 of *Modern AGE*: For each hour of rest or restorative activity a character recovers 1d6 + Willpower power points, and a full night's rest restores all expended power points.

On other planes, however, *kanna* does not flow so freely. This includes Earth and most of its alternates. Rather than simply resting and soaking up creative energy, arcanists on low-*kanna* planes must actively pursue or generate *kanna* through creative inspiration—or they must steal it from others (see **Reaving Kanna** on the next page). The arcanist must engage in a creative or artistic pursuit, ranging from drawing and painting to music, dance, or writing, to name a few. Because of this, many arcanists hailing from or working on low-*kanna* planes pursue various creative interests.

After an hour of engaging in the creative pursuit, roll a test using a suitable ability and focus against a target number of 11. The most common abilities are Communication (Expression or Performing) or Intelligence (Art). Any talents applying to tests involving the ability focus generally apply to this test; for example, an arcanist with Master Artistry gains a +1 bonus to the ability test and the Stunt Die result, adds their Willpower to the Stunt Die result, and can re-roll the Stunt Die, but must keep the results of the second roll.

If the test is successful, the arcanist experiences a burst of inspiration and regains power points equal to their Willpower + the result of the Stunt Die. If the test fails, they do not regain any power points, but may continue their creative efforts in search of inspiration. An arcanist pursuing inspiration for more than eight hours in a day may be required to roll a Constitution (Stamina) test to avoid becoming fatigued: The target number is 8 + the number of hours beyond eight that they work.

Arcanists on low-*kanna* planes do not regain power points from resting, only through inspiration from creative pursuits. Given the time and effort involved, this means arcanists on these planes tend to more carefully husband their arcane resources.

## NEXUS POINTS

*Kanna* ebbs and flows through worlds, often gathering or pooling at *nexus points*, where the energy can be tapped more freely. This is even true on Earth, where the poor availability of *kanna* makes such places especially valuable. Even those unaware of arcane potential are instinctively drawn to the “energy” of these sites, often building shrines, temples, schools, or other places dedicated to creative or spiritual work there. Beings which depend on free-flowing *kanna* for their health are often instinctively drawn to *nexus points*, and some have even been known to spontaneously appear in them.

Arcanists describe *nexus points* in terms of their *strength*—the amount of *kanna* available from them, which also influences the size of the area—and their *aspect*, or the types of arcana the *nexus* is aligned towards. Strength is defined as minor, lesser,

## NEXUS POINTS

STRENGTH (EXAMPLE)	DIAMETER	MATCHED	NEUTRAL	OPPOSED
Minor (Old Crossroads)	2-5 Yards	-1 PP	No Change	+1 PP
Lesser (Local Shrine)	5-10 Yards	-2 PP	-1 PP	+2 PP
Moderate (City Graveyard)	10-25 Yards	-4 PP	-2 PP	+3 PP
Major (Cleopatra's Needle)	25-50 Yards	-6 PP	-3 PP	+4 PP
Legendary (Troy)	GM's Discretion	-10 PP	-4 PP	+5 PP

moderate, major, or legendary (as given on the **Nexus Points** table). Aspect is defined by one or more keywords, such as holy, radiant, fiery, healing, cursing, dark, bright, or cooling, to name a few examples.

Arcanists within the area of a nexus point can use a minor action to tap into the nexus' energy. Any arcana they cast that round gains an adjustment in power point cost based on how aligned it is with the nexus point's aspects. If there is a match, such as using Fire Arcana in a fiery aspected nexus, use the Matched column. If it is neutral, like Healing Arcana at a fiery aspected nexus, use the Neutral column. If the arcana is opposed to the aspect, like Ice Arcana at a fiery aspected nexus, use the Opposed column, which actually increases the PP needed!

## REAVING KANNA

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Some arcanists without easy access to a nexus point cannot be bothered to engage in the creative pursuits necessary to regain kanna. They find it easier to simply take it from those who do. This process is called *reaving*, and those who do it *reavers*. It is considered questionable among most arcanists and a serious violation by many, especially when done without a subject's consent. Still, there are arcanists among the planes who reave kanna regularly, and maintain coteries of creatives and performers to help "feed" their appetites. Some legends of hungry spirits in different cultures on various planes may stem from reavers.

To reave kanna, the arcanist must be in close proximity with the subject, within 2 yards. The subject must have performed an inspirational creative activity within the past eight hours. Reavers usually like to approach their targets right after a performance, becoming "patrons of the arts" to do so. The reaver takes a Major Action to concentrate and rolls a Willpower test against the result of the target's Willpower (Self-Discipline) test. The reaver can apply any arcane focus or the Occultism or Self-Discipline focuses to the test, but only one focus applies. The reaver gains a +1 bonus to the test if they touch the subject. If the reaver wins, they regain power points equal to the higher of their Willpower or the target's, plus the result of the reaver's Stunt Die. The target becomes fatigued, as per the **Power Fatigue** rules on page 92 of *Modern AGE*, and must recover normally.

This process assumes the reaver's target is unaware. Any target with arcane or psychic talents immediately detects an attempt to reave kanna from them and automatically succeeds on the opposed Willpower test. Any target trained to recognize the experience can also sense a reaving with a successful Perception (Empathy) test against the result of the reaver's Willpower test, but they do not automatically resist. If the reaving target is aware and willing, they can forego the Willpower (Self-Discipline) test to resist, and some reavers cultivate willing "donors."

Reaving has a long-term deleterious effect on the subject. After someone has experienced a successful reaving a number of times equal to their Willpower score (or once for Willpower scores of 0 or less, they become exhausted following a reaving. After a number of additional times equal to their Willpower, a further reaving leaves them dying. A week of normal activity without being subjected to reaving reduces the subject's "tally" by 1, so a careful reaver can space out their thefts to avoid putting too much strain on a subject.

## ARCANE COLLEGES

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Anyone can potentially study the arcane arts and learn to master them but, as with any art, real proficiency takes considerable time, effort, and practice. The education and training of would-be arcanists is generally the work of various arcane colleges, prestigious institutions similar to earthly places of higher learning. Many arcane colleges have existed for centuries, if not longer, with their alumni found in positions of power and influence across the planes. Some arcane colleges prefer to remain carefully neutral in political and social matters, while others wield considerable influence, if only through their alumni and the importance of their role in training new generations of arcanists.

Arcane colleges often specialize in particular arcana, and many divide their faculty into departments and specialties based on arcana, with a master of that arcanum as the chair or head of the department. Intra-college politics can be fairly vicious as professors and scholars jockey for positions of power and influence and look to further their own agendas. Some are truly devoted to teaching, while others consider it a necessary evil to allow them the time and resources needed to further their own research and pet projects. From time to time, some of those projects get out of hand, requiring the intervention of the Sodality, although most colleges try to handle things discreetly on their own before it gets to that point.

Characters trained in a college typically learn the college's favored arcana and develop the Arcanist Finesse talent in **CHAPTER 2**, selecting power stunts and spells emphasized by their masters—unless they choose to stray from their college's focus, that is.

## WARLOCKS

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Warlocks are renegade arcanists, at least from the perspective of various Vitane authorities. While Otherworlds (and even some Earths) regulate magic under a variety of regimens, warlock practices are almost always beyond the pale in any functioning society. Warlock magic may require pain, death, emotional anguish, environmental destruction, or the abuse of souls. Researching magic which requires these vile components leads to the discovery of a pact: a set of magical rites and practices that anchor the warlock their magical obsessions. As the name suggests, a pact is rarely undertaken alone. The warlock binds themselves to a greater supernatural power, a secret society of likeminded practitioners, or even a twisted code of behavior. As a warlock gains power, their pact deepens, providing new abilities.

Warlocks exist throughout the Metacosm, though in the Netherworlds, their magic isn't seen as forbidden so much as competition with the dark forces already reigning there. Warlock societies are not unknown on Earth and its Alts, as the difficulties of practicing magic there encourage creativity, even past moral boundaries. On the primeline, the largest society of warlocks is the Valkumenoth, practitioners of the Red Pact. **CHAPTER 2** of this book describes the Red Pact, while the *Enemies & Allies* sourcebook for *Modern AGE* describes the Valkumenoth as adversaries. Warlocks belonging to other pacts have abilities similar in power to those Red Pact members, customized for the pact's arcane specialization.

# NEW ARCANA

The following arcana are known among *Threefold* arcanists in addition to those in the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook*.

## DEATH ARCANA

Your magic feeds on—and creates—death.

**NOVICE:** You gain two Novice-degree Death Arcana spells.

**EXPERT:** You gain one Expert-degree Death Arcana spell. You gain the focus Intelligence (Death Arcana).

**MASTER:** You gain one Master-degree Death Arcana spell. You can also choose one spell stunt you can perform for -1 SP when casting Death Arcana spells.



### SPEAK WITH THE DEAD

**REQUIREMENT:** DEATH ARCANA (NOVICE) **COST:** 10  
**TIME:** MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 15 **TEST:** NONE

You touch a corpse and gain the ability to speak with the spirit of the deceased who once inhabited that body, asking questions which the spirit is compelled to answer truthfully, although it cannot provide information it did not know in life. The initial casting of *Speak with the Dead* gets you one question, but you can spend an additional 5 power points per extra question, up to a maximum number of twice your Death Arcana degree (so two questions at Novice, four at Expert, and six at Master).

### WARD OFF THE DEAD

**REQUIREMENT:** DEATH ARCANA (NOVICE) **COST:** 5  
**TIME:** MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 11  
**TEST:** WILLPOWER (MORALE) vs. FORCE

You speak powerful words of command and any undead creature able to perceive you must roll a Willpower (Morale) test against your spell's Force. If it fails, the creature cannot approach any closer than three yards of you, or must retreat to that distance if it is already closer. Furthermore, the creature cannot use any Special Qualities on you or anyone within three yards of you. If the undead creature succeeds on the Willpower (Morale) test, it is unaffected. You can maintain the effects of *ward off the dead* by taking an Activate action on each of your turns to do so. So long as you maintain it, the effects persist. If you or an ally attack an affected undead creature, the effect of the spell ends for that creature.

### ANIMATE DEAD

**REQUIREMENT:** DEATH ARCANA (EXPERT) **COST:** 10  
**TIME:** ONE MINUTE **TARGET NUMBER:** 17 **TEST:** NONE

You touch a corpse, infusing it with arcane power and causing it to rise as a dead walker (see **Walkers** in CHAPTER 8). The walker created by this spell obeys your verbal commands while it exists.

## OTHER ANIMATION SPELLS

Other arcana are capable of creating walkers. Each of these is an Expert-degree spell using the same basic system (PP, TN, and duration) as *animate dead*, but animates a different walker. The Enchantment Arcana spell *animate armor* causes a suit of full plate armor to rise as an armored walker. The Machine Arcana spell *animate automaton* causes a pre-built, fully articulated mechanical humanoid to rise as a mech walker, without the need for power or computing capabilities.

Other walkers may be created by spells from arcana which fit their themes, which may not yet be known, and known arcana may possess animation spells yet to be discovered. In either case, page 108 of the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook* provides rules for learning additional spells (and psychic powers, for that matter).

The corpse remains animated for one minute, but you can extend the spell's effect by an additional minute by spending 2 PP.

At Master degree, you can spend an additional 5 PP when casting this spell for each of the following effects:

- Shorten casting time to a Major Action.
- Raise an additional corpse.
- Affect one or more corpses within 5 yards of you without touching them.

You can apply the second and third effects multiple times. The additional PP costs are cumulative.

### REAVE LIFE

**REQUIREMENT:** DEATH ARCANA (MASTER) **COST:** 12  
**TIME:** MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 15  
**TEST:** CONSTITUTION (STAMINA) vs. FORCE

You can replenish your life force by stealing it from others. This spell has two possible effects:

- You can touch a subject and inflict 3d6 penetrating damage, while healing the same amount of damage in yourself. When the target is reduced to 0 Health, they die instantly, their body a withered husk. This does not allow you to increase your Health above its maximum. Your casting roll is also your attack roll, and must also be equal to or higher than your target's Defense.
- If you are at full Health, you can steal actual years of life from your target, reducing your physical age accordingly! The target physically ages while you grow younger and more vital. A subject aged to their maximum life span dies. A restoration healing arcana spell can restore years lost to reave life (with no effect on the arcanist who stole them).

Reaving Health occurs instantly when you touch the subject, completing the spell. Reaving lifespan drains one year per round of contact, to a maximum number of rounds equal to your casting roll per casting. This usually means your subject must be restrained or helpless to drain them fully. In either case, if the target succeeds on the initial Constitution (Stamina) test against your spell's Force, there is no effect.

# ENCHANTMENT ARCANA

Your magic is invested into objects. For enchanters who craft more lasting items, see the **Extraordinary Items** section of the *Modern AGE Companion*, particularly the Artificer talent.

**NOVICE:** You gain two Novice-degree Enchantment Arcana spells.

**EXPERT:** You gain one Expert-degree Enchantment Arcana spell. You gain the focus Intelligence (Enchantment Arcana).

**MASTER:** You gain one Master-degree Enchantment Arcana spell. You can also choose one spell stunt you can perform for -1 SP when casting Enchantment Arcana spells.



## ENCHANT WEAPONS AND ARMOR

**REQUIREMENT:** ENCHANTMENT ARCANA (NOVICE)  
**COST:** 3    **TIME:** MAJOR ACTION  
**TARGET NUMBER:** 10    **TEST:** NONE

You touch a weapon, a suit of armor, or even an article of clothing and temporarily imbue it with arcane power. A weapon gains a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls. Armor or clothing grants your choice of +1 Armor Rating or a -1 reduction to armor penalty over its usual amount. *Enchant Weapons and Armor* can be cast twice on the same item to provide both the AR bonus and the reduction in armor penalty, but the bonuses do not stack otherwise. The effects last for the remainder of the encounter.

At higher degrees, you can increase the bonus by spending additional PP: at Expert degree, you can provide a +2 bonus or -2 reduction in penalty for 6 PP, and at Master degree, you can provide a +3 bonus or -3 reduction in penalty for 12 PP.

## SPELL GLYPH

**REQUIREMENT:** ENCHANTMENT ARCANA (NOVICE)  
**COST:** 2    **CASTING TIME:** 1 MINUTE  
**TARGET NUMBER:** 11    **TEST:** NONE

When you successfully cast this spell, you “store” another spell you know in an item by drawing an invisible arcane glyph or symbol on it. Spend the PP for both *spell glyph* and the stored spell and combine their casting times. You must succeed on the casting roll for the second spell to store it.

Another arcanist using *arcane awareness* (Power Arcana) can perceive the spell glyph and make an Intelligence (Arcane Lore) test against your Force to know what spell it contains.

The stored spell can be released from the item by touching it and taking the Activate action, or by a preset trigger chosen when you store it, such as “Whenever anyone crosses this threshold” or “Whenever anyone other than me touches this item.” The stored spell has its usual effect, and makes any necessary tests using your abilities at the time it was stored. If the spell is targeted and is activated by trigger, it automatically targets whatever triggered it.

If you also have one or more degrees of digital arcana, you can cast a *spell glyph* by “encoding” it into a digital file like a document, e-mail, picture, audio, or video, and key the spell’s trigger to the opening or accessing of the file (such as a particular play point of an audio or video file). The enchanted digital file can be copied and transmitted like any other. If multiple copies of the enchanted file exist, they are all magically considered the same enchanted “item” and the first one that triggers the *spell glyph* uses up the spell.

You can have two active stored *spell glyphs* per degree you have in Enchantment Arcana. To create an additional glyph after that, you must allow one of your prior ones to expire, dissipating harmlessly and without effect.

## SUSPEND ENCHANTMENT

**REQUIREMENT:** ENCHANTMENT ARCANA (EXPERT)  
**COST:** 5    **TIME:** MAJOR ACTION    **TARGET NUMBER:** 13  
**TEST:** NONE

With a touch and a successful spellcasting test, you temporarily suspend any enchantments on a common magic item, rendering it mundane and unusable for the remainder of the encounter (see **Extraordinary Items** in the *Modern AGE Companion*). After the *suspend enchantment* spell ends, the item regains its normal properties. Among other things, this spell makes cursed items safe to handle while their enchantment is suspended. Any effect triggered by touching or handling the item does not take effect due to touching it to cast this spell so long as the spell is successful.

At Expert degree, you can cast *suspend enchantment* at TN 15 to affect common and uncommon items. At Master degree, you can cast it at TN 17 to affect common, uncommon, and rare items. This spell does not affect legendary items.

## DRAIN ENCHANTMENT

**REQUIREMENT:** ENCHANTMENT ARCANA (MASTER)  
**COST:** 0    **TIME:** MINOR ACTION    **TARGET NUMBER:** 13+  
**TEST:** NONE

You can drain some of the kanna from a magic item to replenish your own PP. You must be touching or holding the item and make a successful spellcasting test: TN 13 for a common item, 15 for uncommon, and 17 for rare. This spell does not affect legendary items. If the test is successful, the magic item’s enchantment is suspended for four rounds (as the *suspend enchantment* spell) and you gain PP based on its rarity: 5 for a common item, 10 for uncommon, and 15 for rare. If you cast *drain enchantment* on an item five times in the

## EI-00055: COMBINE

Combine is unique in that its existence has been deduced, but it has never actually been visited by Vitane or Peridexion agents. The Alt defies attempts to prevent it from possessing its own gates, and in fact their existence is known to the public, and in the last 10 years various planes have been invaded by guided tours. Corporations with multiplanar interests are far stronger than Combine’s national governments, and the Krypteia here have long since destroyed the local Peridexion. Many interplanar goods, including Self Pork, are said to originate here. Yet some unknown phenomenon makes quantum ark travel to the Alt impossible, and diverts foreigners attempting to enter by gate, without stopping natives. In any event, Combine appears to be far from known chains.

same encounter, its enchantment is permanently destroyed, and it is no longer a magic item. *Drain enchantment* has no effect on legendary magic items.

## LUCK ARCANA

Your magic bends and influences the forces of fate and fortune.

**NOVICE:** You gain two Novice-degree Luck Arcana spells.

**EXPERT:** You gain one Expert-degree Luck Arcana spell. You gain the focus Intelligence (Luck Arcana).

**MASTER:** You gain one Master-degree Luck Arcana spell. You can also choose one spell stunt you can perform for -1 SP when casting Luck Arcana spells.



### STROKE OF LUCK

**REQUIREMENT:** LUCK ARCANA (NOVICE) **COST:** 4  
**TIME:** MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 12  
**TEST:** NONE

You can manipulate luck to aid your allies. When you cast this spell, you get a total bonus equal to your Stunt Die result +1. For the remainder of the encounter, you can give part or all of this bonus to an ally within 20 yards of you if it would turn one of their failed ability tests into a success. If an ally fails a test by 2, for example, you could give them 2 from your total bonus to make that into a success. The GM must tell you the cost and you can then decide if you want to apply any of your bonus to the test. *Stroke of luck* lasts until you've spent your total bonus, or the encounter ends. If your total bonus from casting the spell was 5, for example, you might give 3 of it to one ally and later give 2 to another. You can only have one *stroke of luck* spell active at one time.

### LUCK'S WAGER

**REQUIREMENT:** LUCK ARCANA (NOVICE) **COST:** 3  
**TIME:** MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 10  
**TEST:** NONE

"Fortune favors the bold," they say, and you make magical use of that with this spell. For the remainder of the encounter, you and any allies within 10 yards can choose to immediately "wager" any stunt points generated on a test; re-roll the test and, if the second result is successful, you gain additional SP equal to the result of the Stunt Die. However, if the second test fails, you *lose* SP equal to the result of the Stunt Die, which can reduce your SP to 0. The second test doesn't affect the actual test outcome other than determining how many SP you have to spend.

### LUCK'S PROTECTION

**REQUIREMENT:** LUCK ARCANA (EXPERT) **COST:** 6  
**TIME:** MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 13  
**TEST:** NONE

You use the vagaries of "random" fortune to protect you and others from harm. When you successfully cast this spell, you gain a total bonus equal to your Stunt Die result plus 1. Each round at the start of your turn, you can assign some or all of this as a bonus to your Defense or the Defense of an ally within 20 yards of you, to a maximum benefit of +4 on any single person. The bonus also applies to ability tests to avoid or reduce the harm of hazards. Various kinds of "lucky breaks" tend to cause attacks and hazards to miss or otherwise not harm the target. You can re-allocate the bonus available at the start of each of your turns. *Luck's protection* lasts for 10 rounds, after which you can choose to spend the spell's Cost again to keep it going (without an additional test needed) or you can allow it to lapse.

### CERTAIN LUCK

**REQUIREMENT:** LUCK ARCANA (MASTER) **COST:** 12  
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 16  
**TEST:** NONE

You bend probability to favor your efforts. If your casting is successful, choose a particular ability test and focus. You and your allies within 10 yards generate stunt points equal to the Stunt Die result on *any* successful result for that test, whether there are matching dice or not. These stunt points must be used and spent normally. You can change the ability and focus *certain luck* benefits at the start of your turn each round, or leave it benefitting the same ability and focus as before. The spell lasts until the end of the encounter.

## RADIANT ARCANA

You magically perceive, create, and control radiant forces.

**NOVICE:** You gain two Novice-degree Radiant Arcana spells.

**EXPERT:** You gain one Expert-degree Radiant Arcana spell. You gain the focus Intelligence (Radiant Arcana).

**MASTER:** You gain one Master-degree Radiant Arcana spell. You can also choose one spell stunt you can perform for -1 SP when casting Radiant Arcana spells.



### SEE THE UNSEEN

**REQUIREMENT:** RADIANT ARCANA (NOVICE) **COST:** 2 PP  
**TIME:** MINOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 9  
**TEST:** NONE

While this spell is active you can see the normally unseen forms of radiance like infrared, ultraviolet, and even X-rays and radiation for the duration of the encounter. Among other things, you can see in the absence of visible light, perceive through solid objects as if they were only a fog or mist (a -2 to penalty to Perception and other rolls affected by this degree of obscurement), and see sources of radiation and their intensity. The GM may require an Intelligence (Science or Radiant Arcana) test for you to interpret everything that you perceive using *see the unseen*.



## GRITTY MODE RADIATION

Radiation is hugely dangerous. In a Gritty mode *Three-fold* game, Radiant Arcana can have the following side-effects: When suffering radiation damage, the subjects of Radiant Arcana must also make an advanced Constitution (Tolerance) test. The time interval is an hour and the TN is the Force. Each failed test results in 1d6 Health loss. The victims have six hours to achieve a success threshold of 15. If they do, the damage stops. If they fail, their Health drops to 0, they lapse into a coma, and they begin dying.

Even successfully overcoming radiation poisoning means half of the lost Health due to the radiation is *permanent* and cannot be healed except through powers that restore Health. Gritty mode radiation exposure can also have a long-term impact on the character's health at the GM's discretion.

## UNSEEN SHIELD

**REQUIREMENT:** RADIANT ARCANA (NOVICE) **COST:** 3 PP  
**TIME:** MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 10  
**TEST:** NONE

Your power can protect yourself and others from radiation, as well as channeling it. You touch a subject (including yourself) and they become immune to any radiation hazard for the duration of the encounter. This includes the *invisible fire* spell, but *unseen shield* only halves the damage from radiant attacks which also cause heat damage, like *radiant bolt*.

## RADIANT BOLT

**REQUIREMENT:** RADIANT ARCANA (EXPERT) **COST:** 2 PP  
**TIME:** MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 10  
**TEST:** NONE

You unleash a focused bolt of radiant energy at a target within 20 yards. With a successful power test, you can make an attack using Accuracy against the target as part of your Major Action. If you have the Radiant Arcana focus, you can add its bonus to your attack test. A successful attack inflicts 1d6 + Willpower heat damage on the target and 1d6 penetrating damage in the form of radiation.

## INVISIBLE FIRE

**REQUIREMENT:** RADIANT ARCANA (MASTER) **COST:** 10  
**TIME:** MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 15  
**TEST:** CONSTITUTION (STAMINA) vs. FORCE

You create a burst of invisible radiance with a 4-yard radius at a point up to 30 yards away from you. Anyone in the affected area takes 2d6 + Willpower penetrating damage from radiation and must roll a Constitution (Stamina) test against your Force or suffer an additional 1d6 penetrating damage every hour thereafter until they either succeed on the test or reach 0 Health. An application of arcane or psychic healing or the *unseen shield* spell also stops this ongoing damage.

# THE OCCULT

Whereas the arcane arts are a matter of exercising will and imagination to channel creative power, the *occult* or hidden powers of the psyche are more about perceiving and touching aspects of reality most people cannot. Occult adepts are those whose talents or experiences open them to a larger reality and, if knowledge is power, then it may also be that ignorance is bliss. Many who delve deeply into the occult expand their psyches in ways that can be dangerous, and open themselves up to contact with things far outside of any sort of human experience, or perhaps even comprehension.

The occult in *Threefold* includes all of the psychic powers given in CHAPTER 6 of *Modern AGE* and encompasses a good deal more, including the new powers and the occult rites given in this chapter. Psychic powers make use of the **Power Fatigue** rule given on page 92 of *Modern AGE*. Occult powers and rites in *Threefold* do not have or use power points. Since the occult is not reliant on kanna, it is more common on planes like Earth and its alternates. Yet it is in the nature of the occult to open an adept to other planes—especially the Netherworlds. While the Sentium—that is, the psychic medium between planes—is believed to contain the collective awareness of the Metacosm, it carries no sense of intention. Primal desire, linking self-awareness to action, is of course present on all planes but is strongest in the Netherworlds, where the strongest wills directly manipulate the stuff of creation. Adepts often hear whispers from the great Inimical powers, and not all of them can resist their terrifying commands and sly suggestions.

## GAINING PSYCHIC POWERS

Psychic powers are more likely than arcane abilities to arise spontaneously among those with the talent or potential. They often appear in times of great stress in the adept's life. Sometimes that stress includes exposure to the occult for the first time, or encountering deeper levels of occult power or awareness. For adepts receiving training in the use and development of their disciplines, techniques like deep meditation, extended rituals, and trials of endurance are common to create the conditions where deeper levels of their power may develop. Occult guilds (following) offer this training to their members, and often have libraries of lore regarding occult disciplines, rituals, and training programs.

## PSYCHIC BACKLASH

Occult powers are not without their risks. Opening the mind up to the Sentium, and the distant howls of dark forces, taxes the adept's mental stability. In *Threefold*, when a character uses a psychic power, they risk the potential for *psychic backlash*. If a character's attempted power use fails and the Stunt Die shows a 1, then the character loses a level of noetic Capacity, as detailed in the **Augmentations** section. This occurs even if the character normally has a noetic Capacity of 0. The character suffers all of the normal effects of being over their Noetic Capacity, in this case, struggling with things beyond their sanity.

Should the adept's fatigue level exceed exhausted due to psychic backlash, instead of suffering from the dying level of

fatigue, the adept becomes temporarily insane, an NPC under the control of the GM. Unless the adept receives some type of psychic treatment or healing, this madness is likely to become permanent. When acting on their strange thoughts the adept no longer suffers fatigue penalties, but while inactive is effectively incapacitated, though possibly conscious. At the least, it should require a hard advanced test to restore the character to the exhausted level of fatigue (and sanity), if it is possible at all.

If the adept recovers from any fatigue caused by being over their noetic Capacity and their next Willpower (Self-Discipline) test to avoid fatigue is successful, they regain a point of noetic Capacity. This continues until they have regained all lost Capacity, back to their normal level. At the GM's discretion, adepts who receive psychological or spiritual counseling may gain a bonus to this test to recover their noetic Capacity.

## OCCULT GUILDS

Among the planes, occultists often band together to share their knowledge and experience, and to work together to perform occult rites (see **Occult Rites**). These groups are usually referred to as *guilds*, although some are called lodges, orders, or similar names. A guild is usually hierarchical, with novices at rank 1, adepts (experts) at rank 2 (respected member), and masters of the guild at rank 3 (authority figure), which corresponds to the members' degrees in their various psychic disciplines. A character cannot achieve membership in an occult guild without at least some degree of psychic talent, and higher ranks of membership require correspondingly higher degrees of psychic power. Guilds offer their members training, resources (particularly occult lore), and sometimes a safe haven, particularly in places where occultism is a secret or especially dangerous practice. Guild training almost always emphasizes a particular psychic discipline and, in most cases, rank 1 qualifies an adept to take up the Guild Occultist specialization in CHAPTER 2.

## HORRIFIC DISTORTIONS

If you use the rules for fear and horror in CHAPTER 3 of the *Modern AGE Companion*, a character suffering from psychic backlash instead accumulates one degree of horror, with the accompanying ranks of mental distortions described in that book. If the character suffers another psychic backlash before clearing the initial degree of horror, they accumulate an additional degree, adding distortion ranks accordingly. Using these rules, an adept's fatigue level and noetic Capacity are not especially affected by psychic backlashes. Characters who accumulate six or more degrees of horror become extensions of Inimical forces—possibly of an Alastor itself—and lost, unless other characters make an exceptional effort to save them. Use the rules in the *Modern AGE Companion* to guide how to apply distortions and remove horror degrees. If non-adepts are also susceptible to fear and horror in your game, adepts remain vulnerable to other sources of these stresses, using the *Modern AGE Companion* rules. It is, however, perfectly acceptable to decide that in your game, horror is a special risk for psychics alone, in which case only psychic backlashes accumulate horror degrees.



## OB-05127: TANNEBRIM

Tannebrim contains small kingdoms carved out of vast wild spaces. It contains no indigenous intelligent life; its inhabitants settled the plane after the Fellwar, during a period of unrecorded migration. Megafauna similar to long-extinct terrestrial examples roam the plane, and feudal holdfasts are sometimes built to defend against them, as they're often smarter than Earth-style Megatheriums, saber-tooth cats, and others. This rough, verdant plane suffers from frequent Nighthost raids; no unified planar government exists to request aid from, and the invaders are aided by a local collaborator, the arcanist Lady Silverwrath.

## NEW PSYCHIC POWERS

Along with the psychic powers described in the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook*, the following powers are known to occultists on various planes, including Earth. Note that the listed Cost of these powers, as with the psychic powers in *Modern AGE*, is used with the power fatigue rules in *Threefold*. The adept makes a Fatigue test using Willpower (Self-Discipline) or the power focus for the psychic talent against a TN of 11 + one-half the listed Cost for the power, rounded down. The listed Costs also allow you to use these new powers with the standard PP cost rules in *Threefold* or other *Modern AGE* campaigns if you wish.

## PLANAR LIMITS

Unlike other extraordinary abilities, some psychic powers resonate through the Sentium, or represent a bond between the psychic and transplanar forces. In general, wholly physical effects, such as the Cryokinesis discipline's powers, can't cross planar boundaries. Otherwise, it depends on the discipline. Empathy, Psychic Suggestion, and Telepathy can all theoretically function across a planar boundary, provided the other conditions are met. This usually requires the parties involved to be on opposite sides of a gate and for the psychic to be able to perceive their target. Extrasensory Perception does not function across planar boundaries, however. New disciplines in this chapter are covered on a case-by-case basis. Note that the Astral Sentium surrounding a plane counts as the plane itself, while the Deep Sentium is considered a foreign plane.

## FAMILIARITY

An important factor for some psychic powers is how familiar the subject is to the adept. For power descriptions mentioning a familiarity modifier, determine the relationship between the adept and the subject of the power on the **Familiarity** table and apply the appropriate modifier to the TN of the power test. For example, using a psychic power on a somewhat familiar target increases the TN by +6. "Secondhand" familiarity, such as being able to see a subject over a live video link, or reading someone else's memory of a familiar subject using *mind probe*, increases the usual modifier by +2.

## APPORTATION

You can sense and shift the positions of things through space, which you perceive as largely an illusion. Save for the use of *exoport* upon beings or objects native to other planes, this discipline can't cross planar boundaries.



**NOVICE:** You gain two Novice-degree Apportation effects.

**EXPERT:** You gain one Expert-degree Apportation effect. You also gain the power focus Willpower (Apportation).

**MASTER:** You gain one Master-degree Apportation effect. You can also choose one power stunt you can perform with your Apportation effects for -1 SP.

## DOWSING

**REQUIREMENT:** APPORTATION (NOVICE) **COST:** 1  
**TIME:** MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 9+  
**TEST:** NONE

You have a psychic spatial sense able to "lock on" to and track or locate a subject. Dowsing can tell you of the presence and location of a particular subject, ranging from general things like "water" or "gold" to a specific individual or item. Choose what you are looking for when you invoke the power, such as "I want to find the nearest source of water" or "I want to

## FAMILIARITY

FAMILIARITY	MODIFIER	DEFINITION
Present	+0	A subject visible to the naked eye or in physical or psychic contact with the adept. This is the requirement for most psychic powers.
Very Familiar	+2	Someone with whom the adept shares a relationship Bond, an item made by the adept or owned and used for at least a year, a place where the adept spent at least a year's time
Familiar	+4	A subject the adept has been acquainted with for at least three months, but who does not share a relationship Bond
Somewhat Familiar	+6	A subject the adept has been acquainted with for at least a week
Casually Familiar	+8	A subject the adept has been acquainted with only briefly
Slightly Familiar	+10	A subject the adept has only seen briefly or had described in detail
Unfamiliar	—	A subject totally unfamiliar and unknown to the adept. Generally, psychic powers cannot be used on unfamiliar subjects unless the power's description specifies otherwise.

know where my friend Jeff is.” For general things, the TN for the power test is 9, but it may be higher at the GM’s discretion for rarer or less common things. For specific things, the TN is modified by the adept’s familiarity with the subject (see **Familiarity**). If your power test is successful, you know the subject’s location and relative direction and distance from your location. You can maintain a “lock” on the subject for one minute, after which you must spend the power’s Cost again to maintain it.

## APPORT

**REQUIREMENT:** APPORTATION (NOVICE) **COST:** 4  
**TIME:** MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 11  
**TEST:** WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE) vs. FORCE

*Apport* allows you to choose a non-living object you can see or are familiar with and teleport it to your hand, or to take an object you are touching or holding and send it somewhere you can see or know. Modify the TN by your familiarity with the object or destination according to the **Familiarity** table. So apportioning an object you are holding to a destination you can see has no modifier, while summoning an object you have seen only briefly has a +10 modifier (TN 21). You can apport objects massing up to 2 pounds normally. For more massive objects, add +1 to the power’s Cost per step up on the **Move Object** table (*Modern AGE*, page 106). So apportioning a 25 lb. object has a +3 Cost. If the target object is in the possession of someone else, they can roll a Willpower (Self-Discipline) test against your power’s Force. If the test is successful, the *apport* attempt fails.

## TELEPORT

**REQUIREMENT:** APPORTATION (EXPERT) **COST:** 8  
**TIME:** MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 13  
**TEST:** WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE) vs. FORCE

You can move instantly from place to place without crossing the intervening space. If the power test is successful, you disappear, reappearing at your chosen destination. There is no Difficulty modifier for a destination you can see. Less familiar destinations increase the TN according to the **Familiarity** table and add the familiarity modifier to the power’s cost. So using *teleport* to go to a casually familiar location has a TN of 21 and a Cost of 16.

At Master degree, you can also carry others with you when you *teleport*. All of the passengers must be in physical contact (usually linking hands) and each passenger increases the power’s Cost by +2. Unwilling subjects may make a Willpower (Self-Discipline) test vs. Force to avoid going with you.

## EXOPORT

**REQUIREMENT:** APPORTATION (MASTER) **COST:** 12  
**TIME:** MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 15  
**TEST:** WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE) vs. FORCE

*Exoport* can teleport other beings, either banishing them from your line of sight to a destination or summoning them from elsewhere to somewhere within your line of sight. The Diffi-

culty is modified by your familiarity with the destination (for banishing) or the subject (for summoning). In either case, an unwilling target rolls a Willpower (Self-Discipline) test against your power’s Force. If the test is successful, the *exoport* attempt fails. *Exoport* may be used to teleport beings or objects (as an alternative to *apport*) to and from their native planes, but cannot otherwise cross planar boundaries.

## ASTRAL

You have a psychic connection with the Astral Sentium, an adjacent domain where psychic energy sentience flows around a plane (see CHAPTER 1). You are able to perceive and travel there, and interact with beings and forces from there. Each plane has its own Astral Sentium region, sometimes called its astral corona. Reaching beyond it takes you into the Deep Sentium, a strange region of pure consciousness between the planes inhabited by alien minds and traveled by other psychics, Servitor entities such as Inimicals, stray ghosts, and other beings yet to be defined.



**NOVICE:** You gain two Novice-degree Astral effects.

**EXPERT:** You gain one Expert-degree Astral effect. You also gain the power focus Willpower (Astral).

**MASTER:** You gain one Master-degree Astral effect. You can also choose one power stunt you can perform with your Astral effects for –1 SP.

## ASTRAL SENSE

**REQUIREMENT:** ASTRAL (NOVICE) **COST:** 2  
**TIME:** MINOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 10  
**TEST:** NONE

By invoking this power, you open your senses to the Astral Sentium for the duration of the encounter. You can perceive normally unseen astral beings within your line of sight. You can also perceive the colorful auras surrounding all living beings. This allows you to determine a being’s general emotional state (happy, sad, tense, and so forth) and overall state of health (if they have lost any Health or are suffering from any ongoing health hazards). You can also detect non-living beings like undead and constructs, as they do not have living auras.

If you use *astral sense* in conjunction with the *sense emotion* power (*Modern AGE*, page 101), you gain a +1 bonus to the Stunt Die result for your *sense emotion* test, applying to both the test total and the Stunt Die total.

## MEDIUMSHIP

**REQUIREMENT:** ASTRAL (NOVICE) **COST:** 5  
**TIME:** MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 11 **TEST:** NONE

You go into a trance state and allow a nearby incorporeal entity from the Astral Sentium to control your body suffi-



ciently to speak through you. Others can interact with this spirit normally, including all of the usual rules for social encounters in *Modern AGE*. The channeled spirit is under no compulsion to speak, much less to do so truthfully, unless other means are brought to bear. This can sometimes be dangerous, as Inimicals travel the Sentium and are capable of hijacking the psychic's body when their defenses are down. Unwelcome spirits must succeed at a Willpower (Self-Discipline) test against the power's Force.

At the Expert degree in this power, you can summon a spirit known to you to appear and interact through you; add your familiarity with the spirit to your TN. At the Master degree, you can compel a channeled spirit to speak the truth with a successful Willpower (Astral) test against the spirit's Willpower (Self-Discipline) test result.

## ASTRAL PROJECTION

**REQUIREMENT:** ASTRAL (EXPERT)    **COST:** 10  
**TIME:** MAJOR ACTION    **TARGET NUMBER:** 13  
**TEST:** PERCEPTION (EMPATHY) VS. FORCE

You can release your astral body from your physical body to travel the Sentium. Your astral body is invisible and intangible except to powers affecting spirits, including other Astral discipline powers. While in astral form, you can fly at your normal speed in any direction, pass harmlessly through material objects, and have all of the benefits of the *astral sense* power. Creatures capable of touching you can injure you, however. You maintain one Health rating between your astral and physical forms. Damage to one form manifests in the other.

You can also "fast travel" in astral form to distant places on the same plane that are known to you as if you were using the *remote sensing* power (*Modern AGE*, page 102) with an additional Willpower (Astral) test using the target numbers for *remote sensing*. Furthermore, you can even dare the Deep Sentium. Crossing into the Deep also requires an additional Willpower (Astral) test with a TN of 18. You may explore the Deep Sentium, making additional Willpower (Astral) tests using the target numbers for *remote sensing* based on your familiarity with phenomena there. You may travel to the astral corona of another plane. Crossing the boundary into another plane's Astral Sentium has a TN of 13 + the minimum number of gate transfers required to get there from the plane where your body is located. Various encounters in the Astral and Deep Sentium may lead you astray or take up valuable time.

Your astral form creates a slight psychic disturbance in the adjacent physical plane, which creatures with Intelligence 1 or more can sense. Any such creature can make a Perception (Empathy) test against your power's Force when in the presence of your astral form. Those without psychic talents merely get an intense feeling of a presence or being watched. Those with psychic talents see a glowing or shadowy image of you. At the Master degree in Astral, you can deliberately allow this image to appear to others and psychically speak through it, if you wish. You can also use other psychic disciplines requiring line of sight or familiarity through your astral form.

A use of *astral projection* lasts for an hour, although you can invoke the power again to extend its duration for another

hour. Movement within a plane's astral corona requires one round per additional Willpower (Astral) test. Crossing into and out of the Deep Sentium requires 10 minutes, as does each test required to visit a location or phenomenon within the Deep. Moving from the Deep to another plane's Astral Sentium takes a variable degree of time based on how distant the plane is and various esoteric factors, but a range of 10 to 60 minutes is common.

Fatigue you accumulate from using this power only affects your physical body; you do not suffer any of its effects until you end your *astral projection* and return to your body. If your physical body dies for any reason—including accumulated fatigue—your astral form survives, but is either jettisoned into the Deep Sentium or, if present in another plane's astral corona, stays where it is. If your astral body dies on the astral corona of the same plane as your physical body, your physical body is reduced to 0 Health and might be saved using the rules in CHAPTER 2 of the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook*. If your astral body is elsewhere when it dies, you die.

At the Master degree in Astral, you no longer need to make an additional test to enter the Deep Sentium, you reduce the TN of all additional travel and navigation tests by 2, and your astral form is treated as if it is exploring the astral corona of the plane your body resides in, even if it's actually in the astral realm of another plane or in the Deep Sentium.

## ECTOPLASMIC PROJECTION

**REQUIREMENT:** ASTRAL (MASTER)  
**COST:** TN MODIFIER x 2 (SEE DESCRIPTION) **TIME:** 1 MINUTE  
**TARGET NUMBER:** VARIES (SEE DESCRIPTION)  
**TEST:** WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE) vs. FORCE

This power draws ectoplasm, a psychic substance similar to dense smoke, from the Astral Sentium and manifests it in the physical world, allowing a spirit being to shape the ectoplasm into a physical form through which it can interact. The base target number for invoking the power is 11 plus one-tenth of the manifesting being's effective Health while physical (round down). So manifesting a Health 40 being is TN 15 (11 plus one-tenth of 40, which is 4, equaling 15). If the spirit is not in your line of sight, add the familiarity modifier to the TN (see **Familiarity**). If this test is successful, the spirit manifests in physical form. Twice the total modifier to the base TN for *ectoplasmic projection* is also the power's Cost.

The spirit then makes a Willpower (Self-Discipline) test against the spell's Force. If the spirit fails it must obey you for a number of rounds equal to your level or until it fulfills your last command, whichever comes first. If the spirit succeeds it is not bound to obey you, although you can still interact and attempt to convince it to do so. In either case, the spirit remains manifest for the duration of the encounter, after which you can choose whether or not to pay the power's Cost again to extend it for another encounter. If the spirit succeeded at resisting your commands, however, it can make an additional Willpower (Self-Discipline) vs. Force test to depart, ending the spell, and can try again each time you extend its manifestation for another encounter.

You can invoke *ectoplasmic projection* to allow your *astral projection* to assume a temporary physical form if you wish, using your normal Health as the guideline. Like a mani-

fested spirit, your ectoplasmic form has your normal physical abilities, but its destruction simply forces you back into astral form. You have to maintain both your *astral form* and *ectoplasmic projection* powers at the same time to maintain this form.

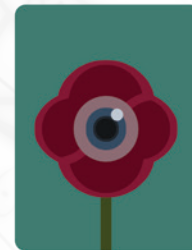
## DREAMING

You have psychic control over your dreams, expanding into influence in the dream world and even visiting and controlling the dreams of others. Unlike many disciplines, this power can affect subjects on other planes.

**NOVICE:** You gain two Novice-degree Dreaming effects.

**EXPERT:** You gain one Expert-degree Dreaming effect. You also gain the power focus Willpower (Dreaming).

**MASTER:** You gain one Master-degree Dreaming effect. You can also choose one power stunt you can perform with your Dreaming effects for -1 SP.



## LUCID DREAMING

**REQUIREMENT:** DREAMING (NOVICE) **COST:** 1  
**TIME:** 1 HOUR **TARGET NUMBER:** 9 **TEST:** NONE

You can exert control over your own dreams, essentially allowing you to dream about anything you wish, and retain full memory of the experience upon waking. You need to sleep for at least an hour in order to use *lucid dreaming*, although you can sleep for longer. In addition to its pleasant recreational potential, *lucid dreaming* allows you to tackle waking-world problems that might be on your mind. If your power test is successful, you gain SP equal to the result of the Stunt Die to spend on investigation stunts (*Modern AGE*, CHAPTER 5), reflecting insights you receive from your subconscious during the dream.

## DREAM SENDING

**REQUIREMENT:** DREAMING (NOVICE) **COST:** 2  
**TIME:** 1 MINUTE **TARGET NUMBER:** 9  
**TEST:** WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE) vs. FORCE

You can project a dream into the mind of a sleeping subject that you know. Add the familiarity modifier for the subject to the TN of your Willpower (Dreaming) test (see **Familiarity**). The subject must be sleeping and must sleep for at least an hour for *dream sending* to have any effect. An unwilling subject rolls a Willpower (Self-Discipline) test against your power's Force to resist. If your test succeeds and the subject's test fails (or they choose not to resist), they experience the dream you have crafted. This can have one of three main effects:

- Send the subject a short message of a few minutes in length. This can be verbal, written, or even a projection of some of your memories. The subject has an intense

feeling the message is truly from you. If they are familiar with this discipline, they know it is from you.

- Grant the subject the benefits of a use of lucid dreaming, where they get the investigation SP rather than you.
- Inflict a nightmare on the subject, denying them any benefits from resting, and additionally causing a level of fatigue (see Fatigue Levels on page 92 of *Modern AGE*).

## DREAM TRAVEL

**REQUIREMENT:** DREAMING (EXPERT) **COST:** 6  
**TIME:** 1 HOUR **TARGET NUMBER:** 9  
**TEST:** WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE) VS. FORCE

Using *dream travel*, you project your own psyche into the dreamscape of a sleeping subject. You must both be asleep, and you add the familiarity modifier for the subject to the TN of your Willpower (Dreaming) test (see **Familiarity**). An unwilling subject rolls a Willpower (Self-Discipline) test against your power's Force to resist. If your test succeeds and the subject's test fails (or they choose not to resist), you enter their dreamscape.

For the remainder of the time you both remain asleep, you can interact with the subject and their dreamscape as if you were physically present. This allows you to engage in both investigations and social encounters involving the subject, so you could delve into their subconscious looking for information (an investigation) or engage their dream-self in order to achieve the results of an interaction, which they will remember upon waking. You can use *lucid dreaming* during a *dream travel* episode to gain a one-time amount of SP you can spend on investigation or social stunts, in addition to SP generated from your other tests. You can also use *dream sending* or *dream shaping* in conjunction with this power.

At Master degree in this discipline, you can also prevent a subject of your *dream travel* from waking while the power is in use. It requires a successful Willpower (Self-Discipline) test vs. your Force for the subject to wake up, even if they are shaken or otherwise disturbed in the waking world.

## DREAM SHAPING

**REQUIREMENT:** DREAMING (MASTER) **COST:** 8  
**TIME:** 1 HOUR **TARGET NUMBER:** 11  
**TEST:** WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE) VS. FORCE

You assume control over the subject's dreams in an even more profound way than *dream sending*. You can direct them however you wish, and what occurs in the dream has an effect on the subject even in the waking world. Each hour you and the subject are both asleep, roll a test of your Willpower (Dreaming) modified by familiarity with the subject, while the subject rolls a Willpower (Self-Discipline) test against your power's Force to resist.

If your test succeeds and the subject's test fails (or they choose not to resist), you can cause any of the effects of *dream sending*, allow the subject to regain an additional 1d6 lost Health plus the result of your Stunt Die, or cause the subject to lose 1d6 Health plus the result of your Stunt Die. A subject reduced to 0 Health either due to direct Health loss or by their fatigue level reaching dying may perish.

# SOMATIC

You exert psychic control over your own body.

**NOVICE:** You gain two Novice-degree Somatic effects.

**EXPERT:** You gain one Expert-degree Somatic effect. You also gain the power focus Willpower (Somatic).

**MASTER:** You gain one Master-degree Somatic effect. You can also choose one power stunt you can perform with your Somatic effects for -1 SP.



## BODY CONTROL

**REQUIREMENT:** SOMATIC (NOVICE) **COST:** 2  
**TIME:** MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** VARIES  
**TEST:** NONE

Your mental control over your body allows you to achieve a number of different benefits, as given on the **Body Control** table:

## BODY CONTROL

TN	BENEFIT
9	Sleep restfully in spite of any distractions; slow breathing to half its normal rate.
11	Ignore the effects of fatigue, pain, or injury for the duration of the encounter; gain a new resistance test to any fear- or emotional-based effect with a +2 bonus.
13	Slow all body functions so as to appear dead. This suspends any biological effects for the duration of the encounter, and a Perception (Medicine) test against your Force is required to determine that you're not actually dead.
Varies	Substitute your Willpower (Somatic) test result for your next resistance test against a disease or poison hazard.

If you have the Expert degree in this discipline and in Empathy, Psychic Projection, or Telepathy (see *Modern AGE*), you can grant the benefits of *body control* to another person in your line of sight or through *psychic contact*.

## HEALING TRANCE

**REQUIREMENT:** SOMATIC (NOVICE) **COST:** 0  
**TIME:** MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 11 **TEST:** NONE

You can place your body in a deep, healing trance. If your Willpower (Somatic) test is successful, you double your normal recovery from at least six hours of restful sleep (*Modern AGE*, page 46).

If you have the Expert degree in this discipline and in Empathy, Psychic Projection, or Telepathy (see *Modern AGE*), you can grant the benefits of *healing trance* to another person in your line of sight or through *psychic contact*.

## OU-14001: THRAINKEL

Thrainkel is dominated by a war between two empires: the Arcanocracy of the Immortal Flame, consisting of numerous powerful arcanists; and the Covenant of Heroes, an order of holy warriors with extraordinary powers they credit to the "Immortals," an order of deified humans from ancient times. For reasons unknown to researchers, natives of Thrainkel can neither perceive gates nor travel through them, even unwillingly. Yet they are aware that beings come from the "outer realms." The Arcanocracy classifies visitors by various demonic hierarchies, while the Covenant believes they're messengers of the Immortals. Furthermore, both sides have various rituals that can affect planar travelers as if they were angels or devils.

### SOMATIC ENHANCEMENT

**REQUIREMENT:** SOMATIC (EXPERT)  
**COST:** 2 PER +1 BONUS    **TIME:** MAJOR ACTION  
**TARGET NUMBER:** 11+ (SEE DESCRIPTION)    **TEST:** NONE

Through mind-over-matter, you can temporarily enhance your Strength or Dexterity (or possibly both). Choose a total bonus ranging from +1 to +5, which can be to one ability or split between them as you choose. Then roll a Willpower (Somatic) test with a TN of 11 + twice the total bonus you have chosen. If the test is successful, you add the chosen bonus to your affected abilities.

A *somatic enhancement* lasts for 10 rounds, then ends on the start of your next turn. You do not pay the power's Cost until it ends. You can also choose to pay the Cost and make an immediate new test to extend the *somatic enhancement* another 10 rounds without taking an action to do so.

If you also have the Expert degree in Empathy, Psychic Projection, or Telepathy (see *Modern AGE*), you can grant the benefits of *somatic enhancement* to another willing person by touch. In this case, both you *and* the subject pay the discipline's Cost.

### BODY SHAPING

**REQUIREMENT:** SOMATIC (MASTER)  
**COST:** VARIES (SEE DESCRIPTION)    **TIME:** 1 MINUTE OR MORE  
**TARGET NUMBER:** 11+ (SEE DESCRIPTION)    **TEST:** NONE

A master of the somatic discipline can literally reshape their physical body. This has three primary uses:

- **ALTER APPEARANCE:** You can transform your physical appearance. With one minute and a TN 11 Willpower (Somatic) test, you can change any cosmetic quality of your appearance, although you cannot change your overall mass. These changes have a Cost of 2 and are permanent until undone by another use of *body shaping*. By taking a full 10 minutes with a Cost of 4, you can duplicate the specific appearance of another person; the result of the Willpower (Somatic) test is the TN for a Perception test to detect the deception.
- **HEALING:** You can rapidly repair damage to your body. With one minute and a TN 11 Willpower (Somatic) test, you regain 2d6 Health with a Cost of 1. Each +1 to Cost increases recovered Health by 1d6.
- **MUTATION:** You may alter your body to gain the equivalent of 1 or 2 slots of augmentation (see **Augmentations**). This takes four hours per enhancement slot and a TN 13 Willpower (Somatic) test and has a Cost of 8. These modifications are purely organic in nature, so an augmented arm would be muscular or covered in chitinous exoskeleton. The GM has final say on which enhancements are possible. The enhancements granted by *body shaping* are permanent until undone by another use of this power, with the same time and TN required but at half the usual Cost. However, maintaining 2 slots of mutations has the same effect as being 1 slot over Capacity. This applies even if you have Somatic Capacity, as this is a technological benefit incompatible with your power.

## OCULT RITES

Occult adepts are capable of performing amazing feats with the power of their minds alone. They also understand it is the mind and body that ultimately limit their disciplines; fatigue, concentration, the difficulty of perceiving a subject, and other limitations exist due to the limits of mortality.

Through the use of certain organized rites, an adept with enough time and training can overcome many of these limitations and perform feats beyond their usual capabilities, often beyond the abilities of any individual adept. Occult rites take time, focus, and often special materials and other considerations, such as a certain time of year, the alignment of astrological bodies, or a specific place. Generally, the more elements assigned to a rite, the greater its effect, but also the more complicated and difficult to perform it becomes. A successful occult rite generates *Gnosis*, a kind of deep, mystical insight that enhances the adept's disciplines. Some adepts believe this is the act of joining one's intentions to a higher consciousness, which recognizes the adept's desires when, through the trappings of ceremony, they express their intentions beyond the confines of their personal imaginations.

An adept can create an occult rite by choosing a particular discipline effect and applying one or more of the following elements to build the rite. Some rites are based on ones invented and handed down by adepts long ago, recorded in a guild's lore books and other records, while others are improvised on the spot as needed.

### TIME

Although some take longer than others, some measure of the element of time always applies to an occult rite, ranging from a minute of focused meditation to a day or more of mantras and rituals. The time element applied to a rite is always above and beyond the normal time for using a discipline, such that the discipline's normal invocation time may hardly matter; adding a Major Action onto a rite lasting an hour, for example, doesn't noticeably increase how long it takes.

Time spent on the rite must be focused solely on the rite and nothing else. While the adept might perform certain ritual actions as part of the rite, they cannot accomplish anything else. If the adept interrupts the rite to do something else

before its time is complete, the effort is wasted, and they have to start over again.

Especially long rites can be exhausting. Times of an hour or longer require a Constitution (Stamina) test with a target number depending on the length of time (consult the **Rite Time** table). Test at the end of the required time. A failed test results in a level of fatigue and causes the rite to fail. If the Constitution (Stamina) test fails and rolls a 1 on the Stunt Die, in addition to the previous effects, all ritualists experience psychic backlash (see **Psychic Backlash**). The Constitution (Stamina) test required for the time element is in addition to any test required to use the discipline associated with the rite. That test is made after the discipline is used, as usual.

RITE TIME		
TIME	GNOSIS	CONSTITUTION TN
One minute	1	—
Ten minutes	2	—
Thirty minutes	3	—
One hour	4	9
Three hours	5	11
Six hours	6	13
Twelve hours	8	15
One day	10	17

## MATERIALS

Rituals may incorporate particular material elements. The precise nature of these materials depends not only on the discipline being invoked but also on the culture and training of the occultist. A scholarly occultist is likely to use an occult diagram scribed with painstakingly researched glyphs using special chalk or pigments, where a tribal or naturalist occultist might use the smoke of rare herbs and woods burned in a sacred fire, to name just a few examples.

In game terms, the materials element has a cost, a TN for a Resources test. The rarer and more effective the material is for rites, the more it costs: A material element provides Gnosis equal to its cost minus 10. So cost 11 materials provide 1 Gnosis, while cost 21 materials provide 11. These costs assume the use of materials found in the appropriate culture; they are often more expensive elsewhere. The Game Master also decides how available given material elements are and can limit especially rare materials with costs of 18 or more.

$$\text{MATERIAL} = (\text{COST} - 10) \text{ GNOSIS}$$

## TIMING

Some rituals make use of a specific time, designed to allow the adept to attune to certain forces that wax and wane. There are five basic kinds of timing, organized by how often they occur.

- **DAILY** events occur at least once every 24 hours, sometimes twice. These include times such as sunset or

sunrise, midnight, noon, or a specific hour attuned to certain kinds of disciplines, like the planetary hours of astrology. Players are encouraged to decide what hour or event of the day is associated with a particular ritual.

- **WEEKLY** and **MONTHLY** events are similar. Working a ritual on a particular day of the week or month is common in occult traditions. While some focus on natural occurrences with longer cycles, such as the phases of the moon, others are based around religious calendars or days associated with particular forces or other events.
- **YEARLY** events tend to be things such as solstices and equinoxes, as well as yearly holy days like Samhain (Halloween). They're fairly rare occurrences adepts have to plan well in advance for, unless they just happen to get lucky enough to need a particular rite close to an auspicious day.
- Finally, **unique** events happen less frequently than once a year. These are usually cyclical events that happen in multi-year cycles, like great astrological conjunctions or the appearance of a cyclical comet, for example. For the purpose of gathering Gnosis, these are considered unique times, as they are unlikely to happen more than once in a lifetime.

RITE TIMING	
TIMING	GNOSIS ADDED
Daily	1
Weekly	2
Monthly	4
Yearly	6
Unique	10

## PLACE

Certain rites are best performed at a specific place. There are three classifications of place elements:

- **COMMON** places are easily found, such as being indoors or in a forest, although specific enough they may take some arranging.
- **UNCOMMON** places tend to be more specific variations on common ones, such as being in a temple, rather than simply indoors, or in an oak grove, rather than simply in a forest.
- **UNIQUE** places are far more specific and noteworthy. Rather than any temple, the rite must take place in a single, specific temple, and rather than in any oak grove, the rite must occur beneath a specific lightning-struck ancient oak.

RITE PLACE	
PLACE	GNOSIS ADDED
Common	1
Uncommon	3
Unique	5



## ASSISTANTS

Implicit in rites is the knowledge of how to channel the efforts of others who aid the occultist. The ideal circumstance for this is a gathering of other adepts all trained in the use of the discipline to be invoked. However, even those without any occult ability can lend their energies to the rite's success. There are three categories of assistance: non-adepts, adepts, and trained adepts. An occultist can lead no more than their level's worth of assistants. A non-adept counts as one fourth of a participant, an adept counts as half, and a trained adept counts as one. This means a 4th-level occultist could lead four non-adepts, two adepts, and two trained adepts in a rite, or some other combination equaling 4.

- **NON-ADEPTS** have no psychic abilities. They must have some kind of emotional investment in the rite in order to be able to contribute meaningfully, whether they are loyal retainers of the adept, adherents to a cult performing a rite of faith, or patriots aiding in the performance of a rite that aids the cause of their nation. As the rite is performed, non-adepts must make a TN 11 Willpower (Faith or Self-Discipline) test to lend their assistance. If they fail the test, they do not count towards the Gnosis added to the rite.
- **ADEPTS** have at least one psychic power talent. They provide more than the raw energy of non-adepts, even if they themselves do not know the psychic discipline the rite uses. As the rite is performed, adepts must make a

TN 11 Willpower (Faith or Self-Discipline) test to lend their assistance. If they fail the test, they do not count towards the Gnosis added to the rite.

- **TRAINED ADEPTS** know and can themselves use the discipline the rite invokes. As the rite is performed, adepts must make a TN 11 Willpower (Faith or Self-Discipline) test to lend their assistance. If they fail the test, they do not count towards the Gnosis added to the rite.

### RITE ASSISTANTS

RITUAL PARTICIPANT	GNOSIS ADDED
Non-adept	0.5
Adept	1
Trained Adept	2

## TABOO

Some occultists believe one of the limits on their power is not just mortality but *morality*, the notion that there are “forbidden” acts and secrets when, to them, anything should be possible. They seek to violate the taboos that constrain their power, freeing it for their use. At least in practice, they appear to be right: Transgressing moral codes does provide a powerful “hit” of Gnosis — at least initially.

When an occultist violates a cultural taboo, committing an immoral act as part of their rite, they gain additional



Gnosis. The power of that taboo weakens each time it is used, however, granting 1 less Gnosis. So each minor taboo is only good for ritual use once for any given occultist. If they indulge often enough, occultists are driven to commit more and worse transgressions to raise the same amount of power, sinking into the depths of depravity.

Generally, taboo violation should be considered an element used only by desperate or depraved NPC occultists, although Player Characters might find themselves driven to minor or even significant transgressions in a time of great need. The potential temptation is certainly there, and justifying the occasional transgression is the start of a slippery slope for many an occultist.

Naturally, the Game Master should carefully consider if taboo transgressions on the part of Player Characters should even be allowed in their game, and discuss the matter with players to ensure everyone agrees. Even then, it is wise to have a “veto” option in play where any player can put a stop to such things if they become too much and threaten to make the game table an unsafe space. Use of taboo violation can lead to a very different kind of *Threefold* game if applied in the wrong manner.

TABOO	
TABOO TRANSGRESSED	GNOSIS ADDED
Minor (lying, petty theft)	1
Significant (torture, treachery)	5
Major (murder)	10
Mortal (the betrayal and murder of a loved one)	15

## CHANNELING GNOSIS

Once an occult rite is complete and its Gnosis is gathered, the adept invokes the intended psychic effect and channels the Gnosis into it, augmenting it in different ways. The gathered Gnosis points may be spent on any of the following Rite Enhancements, similar to spending Stunt Points on stunts. Some Enhancements may be purchased multiple times, as noted in their description.

### AREA 2 GNOSIS

Each application of this Enhancement multiplies the area affected by the power by 1+ the total number of applications. So one application of Area doubles the affected area (x2 multiple), then x3, x4, and so forth. If the discipline normally affects a single target, it gains an area 2 yards in diameter with the first application of this Enhancement.

### BESTOW 2 GNOSIS

A psychic effect modified by this Enhancement can be bestowed on another subject. Essentially, change “you” in the discipline’s description to apply to another character. This requires you to touch the subject at the end of the rite, but for 4 Gnosis, you can Bestow a discipline upon a subject in your line of sight, or apply the Link Enhancement to Bestow over even greater distances.

### EASE 1 GNOSIS

Each application of the Ease Enhancement grants a +1 to the Willpower test to resist the power’s fatigue.

### FORCE 2 GNOSIS

Each application of the Force Enhancement increases the effective Force of the power by 1 (see **Force** on page 91 of *Modern AGE*).

### IMPROVISE 1+ GNOSIS

This Enhancement allows the occultist to invoke a power they do not normally know or possess, but have the potential to wield. The occultist can invoke a higher-degree effect for a discipline they possess by spending Gnosis equal to the effect’s Cost. So an occultist who possesses the novice degree of Empathy, for example, could invoke *calm emotions* by spending 4 Gnosis, and *project emotion* by spending 8 Gnosis. The occultist is still subject to the effect’s normal Cost, modified by any application of the Ease Enhancement. At the Game Master’s discretion, an occultist can invoke an effect for a discipline they do *not* possess any degree of by spending Gnosis equal to *twice* the effect’s Cost. So, in the previous example, if the occultist did not have the Empathy discipline at all, *calm emotions* would cost 8 Gnosis to invoke and *project emotion* would cost 16 Gnosis.

### LINK 2+ GNOSIS

If you have some physical, psychic, or emotional connection to the target, you can use the rite’s psychic power to affect them regardless of distance. This requires 2 Gnosis for a powerful connection to the target, such as a sample of their DNA (hair, blood, tissue, etc.) or an emotional Bond. A strong connection involves a personal possession, relationship (which does not involve an actual Bond), or *psychic contact* and costs 4 Gnosis, and a slight connection involves something the subject touched or handled for an hour or more or some symbolic representation of the subject (like their signature or an object made to resemble them) and costs 8 Gnosis. If the Link also extends beyond the plane the occultist currently occupies to reach a target on another plane, that costs an additional 4 Gnosis on top of that required for the relationship.

LINK COSTS	
CONNECTION	GNOSIS
Powerful (DNA or Bond)	2
Strong (personal item, relationship)	4
Slight (symbolic or sympathetic)	8
Planar	+4

### MASTERY 1 GNOSIS

Each application of the Mastery Enhancement grants a +1 bonus for the power’s test (if any).

### POWER STUNT 1+ GNOSIS

Apply power stunts (*Modern AGE*, page 93) to the rite’s psychic effect by spending Gnosis equal to the SP cost of the chosen stunts. At the Game Master’s discretion, other forms of stunts

that are in keeping with the rite's nature might be invoked as well, but generally, it isn't possible to inflict damage with a rite unless the base power already inflicts damage.

## PRESET

4 GNOSIS

This Enhancement allows the rite's effect to be "preset" to activate at a later time under circumstances defined by the occultist, such as a *move object* discipline preset to close or open a door when someone crosses a particular spot, or a *psychic backlash* preset to reflect an incoming psychic discipline back at a user. Preset disciplines can be placed on objects, locations, or animate subjects, depending on the nature of the discipline and its conditions.

## RANGE

1 GNOSIS

This Enhancement increases the range of the effect by a multiple of 1+ the number of applications. So one application of Range doubles the power's range (x2 multiple), then x3, x4, and so forth. If the discipline normally requires touch, the first application of this Enhancement gives it a range of 2 yards.

## RELIABILITY

4 GNOSIS

If the test for the psychic power fails, the occultist can re-roll it, but must use the result of the second roll. This enhancement can be applied after the initial power test is made if the occultist has enough unspent Gnosis.

## SUBJECTS

2 GNOSIS

If the effect affects a single subject, each application of the Subjects Enhancement increases the number of subjects affected at once by 1. All subjects must be within range of the discipline. This differs from Area, which affects all subjects within a given area.

# SAMPLE RITES

Numerous occult rites have been developed, recorded, and passed down through the guilds over generations, studied by their disciples. Others are invented on the spot by occultists using the elements available to them. The following are just a few examples of occult rites using the system presented here.

## RITE OF DARK DREAMS

The *rite of dark dreams* is a means for occultists to warn off and intimidate potential foes by sending them troubling nightmares, also weakening them in the event of a potential confrontation. The benefits of the Imposing Power stunt are delayed until the subject(s) of the rite attempt to attack the occultist, at which point they must make the Willpower (Courage) test that is called for in the stunt description.

**DISCIPLINE:** Dreaming (*dream sending*)

**GNOSIS:** 10+

**ELEMENTS:** Assistants (4 Gnosis), materials (Cost 12), time (1 hour)

**ENHANCEMENTS:** Link (strong), Power Stunt (Imposing Power), Subjects (2 or more)

## RITE OF EMPOWERMENT

The *rite of empowerment* is a means for occult lodges to grant somatic enhancements to chosen guardians, protectors, or agents, often known as "warders." Warders usually undergo training and other rites to improve their Capacity (see **Augmentations** on the following pages) or else they are intended to be short-lived, with the occultist aware that their enhancements will quickly burn them out—which can be seen as a plus when it comes to eliminating a captured or defeated warder.

**DISCIPLINE:** Somatic (*body shaping*)

**GNOSIS:** 2

**ELEMENTS:** Time (10 minutes)

**ENHANCEMENTS:** Bestow (required); Ease, Mastery, and Reliability are common uses for additional Gnosis.

## RITE OF SENDING

The *rite of sending* loosens the bonds between a subject's physical and astral bodies, allowing their astral body to fly free to a particular destination. It's useful to grant *astral projection* to another, particularly for sending a scout or other agent to survey an area or deal with an astral threat.

**DISCIPLINE:** Astral (*astral projection*)

**GNOSIS:** 5

**ELEMENTS:** Materials (Cost 11), time (one hour)

**ENHANCEMENTS:** Bestow (required), Mastery +3. A *rite of mass sending* version adds Subjects as well to extend the number affected at once. The *rite of sending beyond the veil* version adds a Planar Link for 4 Gnosis, allowing the projected astral form(s) to travel beyond to other planes touched by the astral plane.

## RITE OF SUMMONING

One of the best-known occult rites, the *rite of summoning* calls other beings to appear and serve the adept. Like some other rites, it can call beings from other planes. Once it has brought the subject into the presence of the occultist, it also binds them (using the *suggestion* discipline) to obey the summoner's command. One of the risks of the rite is that the two effects are separate, and sometimes a creature will appear and *not* obey. In these cases, it is wise to have additional protection, or a quick or preset use of *exoport* for banishment to send the creature back whence it came. The rite also functions on incorporeal beings, and a variant called the *rite of exorcism* can be used to send such entities back to their native planes.

**DISCIPLINE:** Apportation (*exoport*), Psychic Projection (*suggestion*)

**GNOSIS:** 8

**ELEMENTS:** Assistants (2 Gnosis), materials (Cost 12), time (one hour). Taboo is often a substitute (even a required one) for one of these elements, especially when summoning certain beings.

**ENHANCEMENTS:** Link (Strong, Planar; required); additional Gnosis is usually applied to Ease, Force, Mastery, and Reliability.



## AUGMENTATIONS

While arcanists and adepts wield their spells and disciplines, planes focused on technological development (usually Earth and its Alts) offer their own enhancements. In particular, post-human augmentations are often provided to Aethon operants. Other Peridexion staff have them as well, as do certain Krypteia agents and Accelerator experiments. Such individuals are commonly known as *augments* or *posthumans*. Augmentations replace or enhance original elements of the user's body or mind. *Somatic* augmentations improve the body through a combination of mechanical, electronic, nanotechnological, or bioengineered devices. *Noetic* augmentations improve the mind through implants improving sensory acuity and cognition, but sometimes they involve rote training in esoteric formulae designed to modify the mathematical substructures of reality. A few augmentations are difficult to classify as somatic or noetic.

Augmentations in *Threefold* use the guidelines for extraordinary abilities found in the *Modern AGE Companion*. Players and Game Masters interested in developing their own augmentations for a *Threefold* game should consult that sourcebook for additional information. You may also use the Extraordinary Stunt talent in the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook* to design additional augmentations, with the Basic degree costing one slot, the Expert degree costing two slots, and the Master degree costing three slots.

## CAPACITY

The human body and mind can only be (safely) modified so much. Aethon posthuman treatments and training cultivate

a *Capacity* for augmentation. Essentially, each time a *Threefold* character has the opportunity to gain a degree in a talent, they may choose instead to add 1 to their Capacity for either noetic or somatic augmentations. The character does not gain the talent degree. This includes during character creation for characters with connections to Aethon and the Peridexion, or backgrounds where they might have undergone preparation for augmentation in the GM's opinion. A character who has never added to their Capacity has a score of 0.

Capacity is measured in *slots*, which determine the degree to which the character's body and mind can be modified. Each augmentation "fills" one or more of these slots, up to the character's total Capacity. When a character acquires or adds to their Capacity score, they choose whether the added Capacity is noetic (mental) or somatic (physical) in nature. This choice is generally permanent once it has been made. That determines how many slots the character has of either type of enhancement.

## ACQUIRING AUGMENTATIONS

Posthumans acquire their augmentations from a facility with Aethon-level (often called "postmodern") technology, undergoing procedures to modify body and mind. These procedures are relatively quick, but generally, a character can only acquire augmentations in between adventures or during a significant break in the narrative of an adventure, usually a day or more and a minimum of a few hours.

Characters can change their existing augmentations during these procedures, removing previous ones and replacing them with new augmentations that fill the pre-existing slots. This may involve the restoration of some excised portions of the augment's anatomy, such as taking a detached limb from

cold storage (or force cloning a new one) and reattaching it, for example, to restore Capacity. Replacing some augmentations may be limited based on what is available at the facility, and possibly by the character's Reputation or Membership in an organization in terms of their access. Aethon operants typically receive the augmentations judged most suited to their current assignments.

## EXCEEDING CAPACITY

Capacity measures the augmentations a character can *safely* undergo, but it is possible to modify beyond those limits with serious risks to body and mind. If a character has augmentations in excess of their Capacity for a particular type, the following effects apply.

- **NOETIC:** For each slot over Noetic Capacity, the augment suffers a -1 penalty to social interaction tests due to slightly odd or off behavior: distraction, social tics, moodiness, and so forth. Additionally, each day the augment must roll a Willpower (Self-Discipline) test against a TN of 9 + the number of slots they are over their Noetic Capacity. On a failed test, the augment acquires a level of fatigue (see **Power Fatigue** on page 92 of *Modern AGE*). Recovering from this fatigue is one step more involved than normal; recovering from being winded due to exceeding Capacity, for example, takes 4 hours of rest or light activity. Recovering from noetic exhaustion takes a full 24 hours of rest, at which point the character must make their regular Willpower (Self-Discipline) test if they're still above Capacity.
- **SOMATIC:** For each slot over Somatic Capacity, the augment suffers a -1 penalty to Constitution tests due to the strain on their body's systems. Additionally, the character does not recover Health from sleeping and further *loses* 1d6 + (slots over Somatic Capacity) Health each day. Other forms of recovery work normally (see **Health & Recovery** on page 46 of *Modern AGE*) so basic and extended medical care can help the character struggle against the ongoing stress on their body.

These effects are cumulative if a character exceeds both their Noetic and Somatic Capacity. The penalties from exceeding Capacity end if excess augmentations are removed, bringing the character within their usual Capacity, although the character may need to recover from fatigue or Health loss normally.

## SAMPLE AUGMENTATIONS

The following are some of the augmentations available using Aethon technology.

### FORCE MULTIPLIER

Some augmentations mention a *force multiplier*. This increases the efficiency or results of a particular task or action. So a lifting force multiplier, for example, means you can lift twice as much with the same Strength test result. A task force multiplier might mean you can accomplish the same thing in half the usual time, and so forth. Higher levels of force multiplier — generally involving additional augmentation slots — increase the multiplier to five times and then ten times normal.

### ABILITY PROGRAM

1 NOETIC SLOT

You can load and run software simulations of different ability focuses, giving you the benefit of having the focus while the program is running. Choose five different focuses loaded into your onboard memory. You can have one ability program running at a time per noetic slot, switching between them with an Activate action.

### ADRENAL ENHANCEMENT

2 SOMATIC SLOTS

Your overactive adrenaline surges in times of stress. You can perform the Adrenaline Rush stunt for -1 SP cost and can perform a special Adrenaline Surge stunt that grants you a lifting and pushing force multiplier on your Strength (Might) tests: x2 for 2 SP, x5 for 4 SP, and x10 for 6 SP.

### AQUATIC ADAPTATION

1 SOMATIC SLOT

You have gills or specially modified lungs, allowing you to breathe water as well as air. You cannot drown and are immune to drowning-related hazards.

### AUGMENTED ARM

1 SOMATIC SLOT

One of your arms is replaced with a cybernetic, genetically engineered, or nanorobot-infected counterpart. This can be blatantly artificial or look like a natural arm. Your augmented arm is twice as strong and effective for Strength tests and actions related solely to your arm and hand. This provides a +2 bonus to Strength tests that primarily depend on that arm's strength (reduce the bonus based on the degree to which you must engage the rest of your body) and +1d3 to damage from hand-to-hand attacks delivered by it, unless you used a two-handed weapon. With two slots, both arms are augmented. An additional slot increases the force multiplier of your cybernetic arm (or both arms) to five times as strong as normal, granting +3 to Strength tests and +1d6 damage instead, under the limitations mentioned earlier.

### AUGMENTED LEG

1 SOMATIC SLOT

One of your legs is replaced with a synthetic, augmented counterpart, twice as strong and effective for Strength tests related solely to your leg. You gain a +2 bonus to Strength tests based on that leg's strength, reduced by the degree to which other parts of your body must be used in a given test. With two slots, both legs are augmented. In this case, add twice your Dexterity score to 10 to determine your Speed, and you can jump twice the normal distance. An additional slot devoted to both legs provides a Velocity rating of Fast/Dexterity, allowing you to run as fast as many motor vehicles.

### BLINDSENSE

2 NOETIC SLOTS

You bounce hypersonic waves, implanted LIDAR, or an equivalent, shed a cloud of microscopic sensors, or perhaps even use esoteric mathematics to determine the most probable configuration of objects and persons around you. Whatever the cause, you have the equivalent of sight in a 10-yard radius, including behind you, even when you don't have the use of your eyes.

### BLOOD FILTERS

1 SOMATIC SLOT

Special binding agents, nanorobots, or engineered organisms in your bloodstream reduce the damage of any contact or

injected toxin by 1 die. If this reduces the damage dice to 0, the toxin simply doesn't affect you. You also cannot become drunk while you have this enhancement, regardless of how much alcohol you consume. More enhanced blood filters require additional somatic slots and reduce toxin damage by 1 die per additional slot up to 5.

### BULLET TIME

1 NOETIC SLOT

You can dodge and weave around gunfire with superhuman ability. You gain +1 Defense against firearms attacks and ignore the effects of up to 2 SP in firearms stunts per opponent per round. So, for example, an opponent spending 2 SP on a Short Burst or Suppressive Fire stunt against you would have no effect. An additional noetic slot doubles these benefits (+2 Defense against firearms, ignore up to 4 SP in firearms stunts).

### CHAMELEON SKIN

1 SOMATIC SLOT

Special chromatophores in your epidermal layer allow you to change color to blend into your surroundings. When making Dexterity (Stealth) tests, you can perform a special Blend In stunt, adding +1 per SP spent to the target number for a Perception test to notice you.

### COMMLINK

1 NOETIC SLOT

You have an implanted transmitter and receiver able to perform all of the functions of a radio, and connect to local communication networks where they're present. You receive sounds and control the commlink by thought, so you do not have to speak aloud to transmit. Communications between designated team members with commlinks are encrypted. You can use this augmentation in conjunction with a computer implant for computer operations, and digital senses to transmit what you have recently seen and heard. For 1 additional noetic slot (2 total) you may see video transmissions through your commlink. For 2 additional noetic slots (3 total), you may experience completely realistic virtual reality transmissions, but paying attention to them requires a major action for each round you experience things with this degree of fidelity.

### COMPUTER IMPLANT

1 NOETIC SLOT

Implanted processors (advanced hardware, artificial brain tissue, or other, more exotic technologies) give you the benefits of a computer which you can operate by thought, and which cannot be easily found or removed. This makes you twice as efficient (a x2 force multiplier) when making Intelligence (Computers) tests. You can also touch any port to connect to a computer network. If you also possess a commlink, this physical connection is unnecessary, and you access networks wirelessly. You gain a +2 bonus on tests, particularly Intelligence tests, where these abilities would be of some benefit.

### DARKVISION

1 NOETIC SLOT

Your eyes are specially modified or cybernetic replacements, allowing you to see in the dark as if it were normally lit out to a distance of 20 yards.

### DERMAL ARMOR

1 SOMATIC SLOT

You gain a 1I/1B Armor Rating due to subcutaneous reinforcement of your dermal layer using carbon fiber, anti-

ballistic memory materials, and the like. You can fill multiple slots with this augmentation, gaining +1I/+1B Armor Rating per slot.

### DIGITAL SENSES

1 NOETIC SLOT

You can record everything you sense (though not what you imagine) and can store it to external digital storage with a touch, though mundane drives can only store what you see and hear. Postmodern VR rigs or direct neural interfaces are required to process other senses. You can record up to a week's worth of data. With the commlink augmentation, you can also transmit your sensory feed. With a computer implant, you can review your own sensory records.

### DUPLICATE APPEARANCE

1 SOMATIC SLOT

Your physical appearance and voice are altered to be an exact duplicate of another person. Outwardly, you look and sound like that person, and it takes a TN 17 Perception (Seeing) test to notice any indication that you are not. If you interact with anyone who knows the original person, they can make an opposed Perception (Empathy) test against your Communication (Deception) test result to detect that you are not the genuine article.

### ENHANCED IMMUNITY

1 SOMATIC SLOT

Improved white blood-cell analogues reduce the effect of any disease or pathogen by 1 die. If this reduces the damage dice to 0, the toxin simply doesn't affect you. Alternately, enhanced immunity provides complete immunity to a single known disease, regardless of its effects. More enhanced immunities require additional somatic slots and reduce disease damage by 1 die (or immunity to one additional specific disease) per additional slot up to 5.

### FAST REFLEXES

1 NOETIC SLOT

You can perform the *Momentum* stunt for -1 SP cost, meaning you automatically gain +3 to initiative (for 0 SP) and can gain +6 or +9 to initiative for a round by spending 1 or 2 SP.

### GECKO PADS

1 SOMATIC SLOT

Your hands and feet have powerful micro-adhesion pads you can deploy at will. This allows you to automatically succeed on tests to climb walls and other sheer surfaces, although the GM may require a Strength (Climbing) test for Imposing or High Impossible climbs with a +8 bonus to your roll. It takes an Activate action to deploy or stop using your gecko pads, and you have a +2 Difficulty to actions involving your hands and feet other than climbing while they are active.

### AUGMENTED HEARING

1 NOETIC SLOT

Your ears can pick up on frequencies beyond normal human hearing, providing a +2 bonus to Perception (Hearing) tests. You can hear infrasonic and ultrasonic frequencies, including those emitted by electronic devices, tectonic activity, and more, and the GM should alert you to any unusual sounds in these ranges.

### INTERNAL COMPARTMENT

1 SOMATIC SLOT

You have a hidden internal compartment in your torso or your limbs, large enough to contain small items weighing

a total of about 2 pounds. It requires a TN 19 Perception (Seeing) test or a full-body scan to locate this compartment when it is closed. Even when scanned, it still requires a TN 13 Intelligence (Medicine or Electronics) test to notice anything unusual.

### JOINT FLEXIBILITY 1 SOMATIC SLOT

Your augmented joints and tendons (and perhaps even bones) allow you to squeeze or fold down considerably, such that you can fit through any space large enough to accommodate your head with a TN 11 Dexterity (Stealth) test. You can also slip out of any bindings (handcuffs, ropes, etc.) that do not automatically tighten with a Major Action and a TN 11 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) test.

### MEDICAL IMPLANT 1 SOMATIC SLOT

Implanted drug and stimulant injectors, nanorobots, or perhaps a strange extra organ provide rapid healing. This allows you to take one additional breather during an encounter with an Activate action, regaining Health based on the Mode of the game (see **Health & Recovery** on page 46 of *Modern AGE*). The Medical Implant also activates automatically if you are reduced to 0 Health, provided it has not already been activated during the encounter. You may devote up to two additional slots to this augmentation, with each slot adding an additional breather you can access with an Activate action.

### MEMORY IMPLANT 1 NOETIC SLOT

The noetic companion to Duplicate Appearance (previously), a memory implant provides a false set of memories, allowing you to more effectively pretend to be someone else. You gain an additional +2 bonus on tests to pretend to be that person, and arcane or psychic means of reading your thoughts show you are the person you are pretending to be unless the power user succeeds on a TN 17 Perception (Empathy) test.

### METABOLIC CONTROL 1 NOETIC SLOT

You may exercise conscious control over your autonomic and metabolic functions. You can slow your respiration to one-quarter normal while remaining conscious and functional, although you cannot Run or Charge. You gain a +2 bonus on tests to fool equipment scanning your vital signs, such as polygraphs. You can also put yourself into a state of metabolic suspension, temporarily halting the effects of any disease or toxin in your system and consuming virtually no air. It requires a TN 17 Intelligence (Medicine) test to determine that you are not actually deceased. You can revive from this state at will or at a preset time.

### PHASE SHIFT 1 NOETIC SLOT

With an Activate action, you can attune your material vibrations to precisely match those of other matter within about a yard of you, allowing the particles of your material form to interpenetrate and pass through that matter harmlessly. In essence, you can slowly walk through physical objects as if they were not there. You have only a Speed of 1 while phase shifting. If you stop phase shifting within an object for any reason, you're ejected into the nearest open space, suffering 1d6 penetrating damage per yard you are so displaced.

### PAIN OVERRIDE 1 NOETIC SLOT

You can consciously override pain signals from your nerves, letting you effectively "switch off" pain at will as an Activate action. You're largely immune to any lasting pain from injury, hazards, or torture, and can ignore its effects, although you still suffer from any associated Health loss or other side effects.

### SPIDER HAND 1 SOMATIC SLOT

One of your hands is capable of detaching and functioning as a remote-controlled drone. It can operate on its own for up to an hour on an internal power source, has an effective Speed of 10 and Strength of 0, and is able to fit through any space able to accommodate its small size. The spider hand can carry out pre-programmed instructions or operate under remote control. If you have the commlink augmentation, you can control the drone directly using it.

### TAILORED PHEROMONES 1 SOMATIC SLOT

Your body emits specially tailored pheromones, subliminal scents affecting other people. You gain +1 SP for social stunts on tests to impress or favorably influence others if you are interacting with them at close range (within a couple of yards). If you roll no SP on a social test, you automatically gain the Impress or Making an Entrance stunt at the 1 SP effect, which you can increase by spending additional SP.

### TARGETING SYSTEM 1 NOETIC SLOT

You have a built-in targeting system for ranged attacks, allowing you to perform the *Precision Marksmanship* stunt for -1 SP cost. If you make an attack with a firearm that benefits from an aim bonus before the end of your next turn, you automatically gain a +1 bonus, even without spending SP.

### VENOM GLAND 1 SOMATIC SLOT

An artificial gland stores a toxin one of several ways. Choose one of the following when you acquire this augmentation: First, the toxin can be delivered by a weapon implant augmentation on a successful attack that penetrates the target's Toughness. Second, you can spit the toxin up to 2 yards, hitting the target with a successful Accuracy test against the target's Defense. Third, you can breathe out a small cloud of the toxin, affecting a target directly adjacent to you (no more than a yard away) unless they succeed on a Dexterity test with a TN of 10 + your Accuracy. You can acquire different toxin delivery systems as separate augmentations, each requiring its own slot. Whatever the delivery system, the toxin inflicts 2d6 penetrating damage to the target if it affects them. You are immune to the toxin of your own venom gland.

### WEAPON IMPLANT 1 SOMATIC SLOT

You have a concealed weapon implanted in your body, usually in one of your forearms, that pops out with an Activate action when you want to use it. For one slot, you can have a retractable blade that inflicts damage like a dagger: 1d6+1 using the Light Blades focus. For two slots, you can have an implanted handgun equivalent: 2d6 damage with a range of 65 yards using the Pistols focus. It is a TN 19 Perception (Seeing) test to notice your weapon implant when it is retracted, barring the use of scanning technology able to penetrate your skin.



## THE SODALITY & AETHON

**T**hreefold emphasizes roles for Player Characters who work for one of the major interplanar factions, though this isn't required. This chapter looks at the Sodality and Aethon in more detail, since these groups offer ready-made potential for adventure. Both organizations are goal-oriented, have access to exceptional resources, and rely on small teams of experts to get things done. Furthermore, Sodality Missions (when capitalized, this refers to their teams) often bring Aethon staff with them, and Aethon sometimes requests Sodality assistance, so mixed groups from both factions are common. On a thematic note, while evil forces and cynical opportunists exist throughout the Metacosm, the Sodality is a reasonably benevolent organization, and despite the moral edge Aethon rides, its efforts protect Earth.

This chapter includes useful background and context for characters belonging to those factions, along with guidance for creating members and advancing them through the ranks of their chosen faction. The chapter also looks at these groups' agendas and activities, which can form the basis for *Threefold* adventures, and offers information on the factions' resources.

### THE SODALITY

*Ex infinito, intelligentia* ("From infinity, intelligence") is the Latin translation of the Sodality's motto, rendered in formal Shabda and often perceived as Latin by those who know both it and the all-language. While many understand this to refer to the organization's dedication to exploration and the pursuit of knowledge, some recognize that the "intelligence"

the Sodality seeks also refers to strategic and military intelligence. The organization protects the Vitane from current and future threats, and in numerous operations, prevent conflicts among the Metacosm's civilizations from sparking a new Fellwar. Through exploration, understanding, diplomacy, and—when necessary—intervention, the Sodality preserves a balance between political, military, and even metaphysical forces, hoping to improve the fortunes of all soul-bearing beings.

The goals of the Sodality are described as "security, sovereignty, and sapience." As noted in CHAPTER 1, Sodalts commit to these goals through the Vows, which extend these aims into regulations covering virtually all the organization's actions.

- **SECURITY:** First and foremost, the Sodality exists to protect the Vitane and to further its growth and development as a civilization. This means learning more about the nature of different planes and their inhabitants; uncovering, monitoring, and neutralizing potential threats; and keeping information about the nature of reality out of the wrong hands.
- **SOVEREIGNTY:** Following the *Vitane Code of Wisdom*, the Sodality respects the rights of civilizations to govern themselves and control their own development. This means a largely "hands off" approach to any plane possessing sapient life, and respect for life in all of its forms. The Vitane does not wish to conquer other civilizations or even colonize the planes on which they dwell, but seeks to peacefully co-exist with them, sharing knowledge and rendering aid when necessary. Ideally, diplomatic ties can lead to other civilizations eventually

joining the Vitane, but this is a slow, painstaking process which may not always be feasible. The Sodality interferes as little as possible with other civilizations, and then only to further the organization's other goals.

- **SAPIENCE:** Lastly, the Sodality exists to explore, learn, and establish understanding and goodwill among all thinking beings, as much as possible. This means looking past petty distinctions of physical form and culture by relating to others based on their minds and actions. If a being is able to reason, communicate, and co-exist, then it should have a place in society.

These goals roughly correspond to the Sodality's three divisions of Protector, Emissary, and Searcher, respectively, although all branches are expected to pursue and uphold these goals.

## STRUCTURE OF THE SODALITY

Owing to the dispersed nature of the planes, the Sodality is a relatively loosely structured organization. There is a hierarchy, to be sure, but the chain of command is a fairly short one, formed of three main links: Missions, Magisters, and the Modality.

### MISSIONS

Missions make up the core of the Sodality. These are small, dedicated teams of three to six Sodalts and allies who are given a general mandate to interpret as they see fit within the bounds of the Vows, and specific orders when required. The Sodality prefers to staff Missions with at least one Sodalt from each branch, though this is not always possible. Some operations require an imbalanced team, or the experience members have working together outweighs the need for diversity. Each Mission is largely autonomous, particularly while they are in the field.

While the Sodality assembles new Missions as needed and sometimes assigns temporary specialists to specific operations, the prevailing tendency over the last 300 years has been to create Missions that are semi-permanent groups, able to work and train together for maximum effectiveness. Some Vitane officials worry that another Crimson Trident might arise out of one of them, but the Vows were different during the Trident's reign. As in most things, the Sodality doesn't interfere with success, so the more successful and experienced a Mission is, the less likely Sodality higher-ups are to interfere with its composition.

Traditionally, Missions signal their desire to stay together in the long term by deciding upon a name and symbol. Until then, they're named after their managing Magister and the order in which they formed under that individual's purview, such as "Gyra's Seventh."

## MAGISTERS

Assigned to oversee a number of Missions, magisters act as liaisons between Sodalts in the field and the administrative Modality. Like Missions, magisters earn responsibilities based on past experience, with success earning greater autonomy and a larger number of subordinate Missions—or fewer, if they prefer. The best magisters operate with a fairly light touch, a practical approach given the challenges of contacting a Mission while they are in the field.

Good magisters combine the approaches of a military commander, grandparent, and executive. Most magisters were Mission Sodalts themselves (a small number come up from the Modality and are, at least, good at filing paperwork) and understand the challenges of the job. A few remain extremely capable at fieldwork and, on more than one occasion, have led special operations to save Missions on the verge of doom. Past experience deeply informs how they direct subordinates, though not always in ways one might expect. For instance, while those who were Protectors are often stereotyped as quick to resort to violence, just as many use their memories of old battles to avoid future ones.

Each magister has a handful of Modality staff on hand for administrative functions and at least one estate capable of resupplying a Mission, hosting Sodalts and dignitaries, and housing the magister and their personal staff. Junior magisters tend to stick close to core Vitane planes such as Vigrith, and may even use part of a larger Sodality facility such as Cardinal House until they get established.

### THE MODALITY

The Modality is the Sodality's administration, a vast group of scribes, librarians, mathematicians, soothsayers, and individuals with less obvious functions. Modals (for this is what they're called) can be found everywhere the Sodality has put down roots, but is headquartered in Hamasayim, an isolated city in the capital plane of Vigrith. (See CHAPTER 6 for more information.) From the perspective of the Missions, the Modality is a bit impenetrable, and most rely upon their magister to navigate the complexities of the Modality for them. The Modality keeps the organization's records and manages the flow of information between magisters, as well as between the higher and lower ranks.

### RANKS

Although not a military organization per se, the Sodality does have a set of ranks related to a member's role, surrounded by various long-standing traditions. Sodalts are expected to defer to higher-ranking members and to follow their instructions, although the organization tends to be less formal about the chain of command than strictly hierarchical militaries.





- **ASSOCIATE:** Associate isn't technically a Sodality rank at all, but an informal status assigned to non-Sodalts who assist the organization on occasion. Associates are sometimes called upon as "mission specialists" for particular situations where their skills or abilities are useful. Associate status is also commonly used at a magister's discretion to try out potential recruits to see if they would be a good fit for the Sodality. Associates are only told the essential information they need on a per operation basis, and the Modality tends to look askance at magisters who rely too heavily on associates. Usually, if an associate proves effective and reliable, a formal recruitment offer is made. Keeping someone on associate status long-term is seen as an indication of a problem.
- **PLEB:** Pleb is the common nickname for a student of the Academy, in between their status as a civilian or associate and a full member of the Sodality. Plebs are occasionally assigned to work with Missions as part of their education, although the Academy does not often put plebs into the field until they have proven themselves. Some magisters associated with the Academy even work with Missions composed entirely of plebs, assigning them simple operations to prepare them for their work for the Sodality.
- **NEOPHYTE:** Neophyte refers to a new Sodalt, particularly one on probationary duty following graduation or induction. While it is an official rank until the new Sodalt is fully recognized, it's also a term of derision more experienced Sodalts use for green recruits, which sometimes transitions into one of affection for junior members. A long-term Sodalt might refer to someone only a few years their junior as "neophyte" or "neo" even though both of them have been in service for years or decades.
- **VIATOR:** Viator is the operational rank of anyone operating as part of a Mission, though most active duty members are addressed simply as "Sodalt," saving the formal rank for special occasions. Viators within the same Mission do not "outrank" one another, and Mission leadership is decided by consensus or the assignment of the magister for the duration of a particular operation.
- **WARDEN:** Warden is a particularly trusted Sodality rank, where a Sodalt is permitted to move between worlds freely at their own discretion. Some refer to warden rank as "wanderer" or "unattached" status, able to function more independently, although wardens are still assigned and report to a magister. Some wardens take on solo operations, although most still function

as part of a Mission, and warden-ranked Missions are among the most elite Sodality field operatives.

- **MAGISTER:** Magister elevates a Sodalt from field work to primarily operational responsibilities. Most magisters oversee various Missions, helping to organize and train them, assigning operations to them, and reviewing their reports and performance. Magisters also deploy Missions according to orders routed through the Modality or directly from higher ranks, and provide reports and recommendations back to the Modality about ongoing operations.
- **MONITOR:** Monitor is a Sodality rank associated with oversight or management of a particular area, such as a large city or even a small nation or geographic region. The size of the area depends on various factors, including its population density and strategic importance to the Vitane. Some monitors act as advisors and aides to existing governments, while others oversee Sodality facilities as the effective governor or other political leader. It is not unusual for a monitor to act as the leader of a new Vitane settlement until it is able to "take root" and attain self-governance, and monitors able to "midwife" such independent outposts are prized for their skills and humility.
- **INTENDANT:** Intendant is the highest Sodality rank, the equivalent of a military general or admiral. Three intendants manage each service branch (see **Branch and Duty**) of the Sodality, one is Intendant Dean of the Academy, and at any given time (and according to a complex administrative formula), six to ten rule the Modality. Each of these groups appoints a chief administrator, but the body of intendants meet in council to make decisions. There hasn't been a Grand Intendant since Su'ad during the Reconstruction, but it is still theoretically possible for the council or Vitane Supremacy to appoint one.

## BRANCH AND DUTY

The Sodality has three branches, established by Grand Intendant Su'ad during the Reconstruction. No strict rule requires equal (or any) representation from all branches within all Missions, but magisters tend to create Missions with a balance between them. The primary exception is specialist Missions focusing on the work of just one or two branches such as Protector strike teams or diplomatic Missions from the Emissary branch.

Each branch has its own associated specialty talent, as given in **CHAPTER 2**.

## RANK AND MEMBERSHIP

In *Modern AGE* game terms, the associate and pleb "ranks" of the Sodality do not count as formal membership in the organization, although the Game Master may wish to consider plebs "Rank 0" members of a sort, without any benefits other than those provided by being a student at the Academy. Neophytes are Rank 1 Recruits, Viators Rank 2 Respected Members, and Magisters and above are Rank 3 Authority Figures. Warden status is considered an honorific (see **Honorifics** in **CHAPTER 10** of *Modern AGE*) available to Rank 2 and higher Sodalts, with the benefits of gate use described in the text. If the GM wishes, Monitor and Intendant can be considered membership Ranks 4 and 5 should player characters ever wish to leave behind field work and ascend to those ranks, but this usually reflects a shift in the nature of the campaign, unless that character is also leaving active play.

## EMISSARY BRANCH

The Emissary Branch deals with people, which is a particularly broad group where the Vitane is concerned. Emissaries are trained as negotiators and diplomats, but also understand espionage and how to guard against it. They learn various interpersonal skills, and some pick up an understanding of psychology as well. In addition to dealing with people outside of their Mission, Emissaries are often the glue holding their Missions together, managing the various personalities involved and mediating disputes.



**COMMON EMISSARY PROFESSIONS:** include Clergy, Executive, Herald, Kryptothief, Merchant, Minstrel, Negotiator, Occult Purveyor, Omnichronicler, Planar Envoy, Politician, Socialite, Taskmaster, and Vitane Assessor.

## PROTECTOR BRANCH

The Protector Branch looks after the safety and security of the Mission, and the Sodality and the Vitane in general. Protectors are trained in security, strategy, and tactics. While they view their duty as keeping the peace and safeguarding others from harm, Protectors are skilled in various forms of combat, including the use of lethal force. Given the nature of the planes, Protectors tend to pick up unarmed combat and simple weapon skills that can be relied upon in almost all circumstances, although skills with technological weapons are common as well.



**COMMON PROTECTOR PROFESSIONS:** Athlete, Brawler, Commander, Gatewatcher, Knight, Krypteia Hoplite, Monster Hunter, Security, Soldier, and Survivalist.

## SEARCHER BRANCH

The Searcher Branch of the Sodality focuses on knowledge and discovery, the *intelligentia* of the Sodality's credo. They are scholars, scientists, technicians, and explorers who study the nature of the planes, map out their relationships and the routes between them, and delve into the arcane and the occult. Searchers provide technical support for their Missions, and sometimes turn their skills to gathering strategic intelligence or investigating potential threats.



**COMMON SEARCHER PROFESSIONS:** include Conspiracy Theorist, Expert, Explorer, Fixer, Hedgewitch, Investigator, Jammer, Occult Detective, Scholar, Technician, Traverser, and Ultratechnician.

## CHALK BRANCH

Chalk Branch is a rumor Sodalts might hear about at the Academy or in loose conversation at some cross-Mission function, but nobody talks about it in official channels, except for terse reports about morale and misinformation in the ranks. In the legends, Grand Intendant Su'ad created a fourth service branch with different Vows which permitted them to interfere in foreign governments, build cults and militias on uninitiated planes, perform acts of sabotage and assassination, and otherwise get their hands dirty, as long as it served the interests of the Vitane.

Of course, "Chalk Branch" isn't its real name, just a recognition that the whole notion is as flimsy as a chalk mark (or that spies often use chalk to mark objects for their co-conspirators) and if such a branch existed, it would have no colors (and certainly, stories of white scarabs shouldn't be believed). To evade the notice of the rest of the Sodality while operating effectively, such an organization would have to be almost impossibly skilled at infiltration and enjoy a network of secret support throughout the Vitane, and even beyond. It hardly seems possible.

## JOINING THE SODALITY

The Sodality accepts members from throughout Vitane-aligned and allied planes (and considers anyone else who steps forward with sincere intentions, for that matter) and it is always in need of personnel. As the organization maintains high standards for who is allowed to become a full-fledged member, many aspiring Sodalts wash out of training, or never even get in the door. The Sodality does its best to weed out unsuitable or unworthy applicants. Despite the Sodality's high standards, the organization has known instances of traitors, moles, and Sodalts who became corrupt and betrayed the Vows, so they are on guard against these possibilities.

## RECRUITMENT

Most applicants for membership are citizens of the Vitane, of course, since one needs to both know of the Sodality and have access to apply in the first place. Still, refugees from other civilizations are not barred, although the organization naturally investigates to ensure they are not spies or infiltrators. There is no cost to join the Sodality and the training, room, and board of new members are covered by the organization.

On occasion, the Sodality also recruits potential members from promising candidates, usually those recommended by Missions with the support of their magister. In these cases, the potential recruit may be unaware of the greater nature of the planes or even the existence of the Vitane or the Sodality initially. If the recommendation is accepted, contact is made to feel out possible recruitment, revealing information gradually to the potential recruit. If they handle things well, a formal offer is made for them to join. On occasion, the Sodality has even found it effective to recruit people who learn about the organization by accident.

“Back in my Academy days...” begins many a tale, and the Academy is a formative experience for a lot of Sodalts. Plebs may spend upwards of four years in training, and both good and bad relationships forged at the Academy can last a lifetime. A character’s Academy career offers good opportunities for flashbacks and bits of important backstory during a *Threefold* campaign, and Game Masters might start a campaign involving a Sodality Mission with a few game sessions looking at the characters’ time as plebs at the Academy, especially if they attended together. You can even run an entire campaign set at the Academy, from the characters’ initial recruitment and testing all the way through their eventual graduation as neophyte Sodalts, with various adventures and challenges along the way.

## THE EXAMS

Before a recruit is formally accepted into the Sodality’s training program, they must undergo a series of tests referred to as “the exams.” Among other things, these are intended to measure the recruit’s existing abilities, their potential for arcane or occult abilities (including soul talents, particularly Wandersoul), and their overall strength of character. The exams are conducted by one or more magisters and tend to be highly customized to fit the particular recruit. Some parts of the exams are fairly mundane written or oral tests, or physical trials meant to measure the subject’s physical skills, such as sparring matches or athletic contests. Other parts can be quite esoteric, involving arcane illusions and psychic scans, including psycho-dramas where applicants come face to face with their worst fears or greatest mistakes. Some exams include hypothetical scenarios to test the applicant’s reactions or decision-making abilities.

If a recruit performs poorly on the exams, they may be washed out and denied membership in the Sodality, or only permitted a low-level administrative or support position in the Modality. Individuals are allowed to reapply and retake the exams, although it’s fairly rare for someone to do so and perform better the second or third time around. Applicants who do well are admitted to the Sodality’s Academy to begin their training as plebs, and the results of their exams help determine their training program and their length of time at the Academy, as well as what branch of the organization best suits them.

## THE ACADEMY

The exams and the Academy are the first points of commonality shared by all Sodalts. Only Modality members don’t attend, as they spend a year of intense (and very private) vocational training in Hamasayim. Every member of the organization has passed through the exams at least once and has attended the Academy on Vigrith for their essential training, although that is sometimes where the commonalities end. Never ones to believe “one size fits all,” the Sodality tailors the training program at the Academy to suit each individual recruit. Many plebs are young adults excited by the prospect of service to the Vitane and exploration of the planes, but others are admitted to the Academy later in life, or come from diverse backgrounds with a wide range of experiences and skills.

The goal of the Academy is to lay an essential foundation of basic abilities for a Sodalt, to awaken and develop any potential they might have for supernatural abilities, and to train them in the skills of their chosen division. The Sodality recognizes that Missions have to be highly independent to function on their own out among the planes, so initiative, improvisation, and original thinking are encouraged in plebs, as are teamwork and cooperation.

The Academy mixes traditional classroom learning, lectures, and reading with field exercises and hands-on training. The mix for a particular pleb depends on their existing skill base, as some need gaps in their knowledge and education filled in while others need more physical, survival, and combat training in different proportions. The Academy is also infamous for sometimes hiding lessons in the form of “incidents” staged for plebs, ranging from emergencies like a fire or unexpected attack on the grounds to a mysterious conspiracy within the ranks of the staff and upper class. These are meant to test plebian reactions and “keep them sharp.” They often involve arcane illusions or other special effects to add to the realism.

By the time they complete Academy training, neophyte Sodalts are ready to join Missions and begin their service to the Vitane. Still, they have usually not seen the last of the Academy, as Sodalts regularly return for additional training, particularly from the arcane colleges and occult lodges associated with the institution. Training conferences and seminars are sometimes a welcome break from Mission operations, and a chance to reconnect with returning classmates and old teachers. Some Sodalts find them intrusive interruptions to their work, but attend as required nonetheless.

## MISSION EQUIPMENT

The Sodality tries to ensure its personnel are properly equipped to face whatever challenges await them, within the limits imposed by travel across the planes and the need to keep the true nature of reality secret from many of those worlds. The organization balances the needs of its Missions against the risks of certain magical or technological items falling into the wrong hands, or being used too openly in the wrong places.

## SODALITY SCARAB

The Sodality scarab, also known as the Sodality shield—or simply the scarab or shield—is the most iconic and ubiquitous item of equipment they have. It is a metallic badge, small enough to fit into the palm of the hand and shaped like an elongated hexagon with rounded corners. It is slightly convex, bearing the *pi* or gate symbol of the organization engraved into it. The badge’s shape and engraved lines tend to make it look a bit like a stylized scarab beetle, thus its common name. A section above the gate symbol is enameled in the colors of the owner’s service branch.

Sodality scarabs are enchanted items made by arcanists and alchemists according to secret rituals held by the organization. They have a number of magical properties:

- **IDENTIFICATION:** A scarab is arcanelly attuned to its owner, who can wear the badge simply by pressing it against their clothing or even skin and willing it to adhere there, strongly enough that only a deliberate amount of force will pull it away (without harm to the underlying surface). With a touch and an activate action, the scarab's owner can cause it to glow softly with an arcane light. Only the scarab's attuned owner can activate and use its abilities, making it a form of positive identification that the bearer is indeed a member of the Sodality.
- **KANNA BATTERY:** A Sodality scarab is capable of storing a small amount of kanna to power its magical qualities, and the scarab's wearer can call upon that energy to power their own arcane effects. A scarab holds 15 power points' worth of kanna, and regains 1d6 spent points per hour except in magic-poor planes, such as most Earths. The scarab's attuned owner can draw upon and use its stored power points as if they were the owner's own while in physical contact with the scarab (holding or wearing it).
- **ARCANE LANTERN:** The wearer of a scarab can cast the *arcane lantern* spell (*Modern AGE*, page 96) at will with the usual parameters and cost, drawing power points from the scarab's kanna battery.
- **COMMUNICATION:** At the cost of 1 PP, a scarab can magically transmit the owner's voice to any other scarab known to the owner on the same plane. The other scarab emits a chime or noise, vibrates, or warms to the touch (as its owner has chosen) upon receiving such a call, and the owner can choose to receive the communication or refuse it. Conversations cost an additional power point per 10 minutes or so. In addition to transmitting the owner's voice, the scarab can send an arcane tag like a use of the *tracker* digital arcana (*Modern AGE*, page 94). Anything that blocks divination spells or arcane transmissions also blocks a scarab's communications.
- **WARDEN'S CLOAK:** At a cost of 1 PP, a scarab can wrap its owner in an invisible arcane field that helps protect against minor environmental hazards. Essentially, the wearer is kept warm or cool in all but the harshest environments, does not suffer from sunburn, and remains untouched by precipitation. This protection lasts for an hour and can be renewed each hour by spending an additional power point.
- **SIZE CHANGE:** At a cost of 1 PP, the scarab's user can change its size to anywhere between one and ten inches in length, and a third that in width, remaining proportional at all sizes. The user must be wearing or touching the scarab. The scarab maintains the desired size until the user changes its size again.

## SHABDA PLAQUE

Along with their scarab, all Sodalts are issued a Shabda plaque, a flat piece of ivory-like material roughly the size and thickness of an Earth credit card. The front of the plaque is etched with enchanted writing in the ur-language of Shabda essentially translating as "The bearer (owner) is authorized



## UNIFORMS & COLORS

The Sodality's three service branches have distinctive colors derived from metals and gemstones. Emissaries have amethyst (purple) and gold, Protectors have garnet (dark red) and silver, and Searchers have emerald (green) and bronze. A Sodal't's scarab is inlaid with these colors, either in the form of a dyed enamel or in the genuine substances.

In most cases Sodalts don't wear uniforms, preferring to either dress comfortably or blend in with the locals. Scarabs provide whatever identification they need. Once they join the Academy, plebs are issued "Academy Blues," azure-colored clothing in a variety of styles, including a distinctive scarf. Wearing Blues is optional on Academy grounds, except for official functions, but it's a longstanding tradition to wear the scarf whenever possible.

Upon graduation, Sodalts are issued their scarabs (though they may have used them earlier, if required) and uniforms: a jacket in the color of their branch's gemstone with brocade the color of its metal, along with black trousers and calf-length boots made of *corvili*, a plant-based, leather-like material. These are only worn on formal occasions, such as diplomatic functions and meetings with high officials.

Modality members *do* wear their uniforms frequently. These are mustard-colored jackets similar to an Indian shurwani, along with hose or trousers and brown slip-on shoes. This has earned the division the name "yellowjackets," whose meaning is well-known, since wasps and their coloration are common across multiple planes.

## MISSION BONDS

Working and training closely together for long periods of time can form Relationship Bonds between members of a Mission (see CHAPTER 10 of *Modern AGE* for details on Relationships and Bonds). The Sodality generally encourages Bonds of camaraderie, friendship, and loyalty among Sodalts. Romantic Bonds are not encouraged, but not prohibited, either, and the Sodality understands that the closeness of a Mission can lead to them as well. Players in a *Threefold* campaign may want to establish a mutual Bond for the characters in their Mission, although different characters can interpret the Bond in their own ways, from “I owe my Mission my loyalty and nothing more” to “I love my Mission like my family” or “I will prove my worth to my Mission.” A Sodalt’s Bond with their Mission has been known to turn sour on occasion, and a few rare traitors to the organization hold adverse Bonds where loyalty turns to betrayal and bitterness.

(needed),” with sigils on the reverse side that essentially translate as “higher authority (purpose).” The nature of the multi-dimensional language and the plaque’s enchantment are such that readers who look over a Shabda plaque perceive it as some common and accepted form of legal authorization that fits their context, such as a badge, I.D. card, royal writ, or similar document, while the reverse side appears to carry an official emblem or seal of authority to match.

Sodalts use their Shabda plaques to open doors and gain access, since presenting “official authorization” can quickly overcome a great deal of routine red tape. Missions often masquerade as law enforcement or government officials to secure the cooperation of locals while in the field. Under routine circumstances, Shabda plaques easily fool most; the GM can assume unimportant NPCs automatically see some suitable authorization. The Sodalt can even use the power of suggestion to guide the NPC towards a particular conclusion, such as saying, “We are from...” and naming an organization before flashing the plaque. That said, Shabda plaques do have their limitations:

- Anyone able to speak and read Shabda is unaffected by a Shabda plaque and can see it for what it is. This includes any character with the Wandersoul talent, among others.
- Non-sapient machines cannot perceive the Shabda plaque as anything other than gibberish, so it does not fool them.
- Particularly strong-willed individuals might not be fooled by a plaque. They work automatically on anyone with a Willpower score of 0 or less (which is most people) but for higher-Willpower subjects, roll an opposed Communications test for the user against the subject’s Willpower. If the user fails the test, the subject perceives something wrong about the authorization: It seems out-of-date, is missing something, or is even seen as a forgery. If the subject scores a 5 or 6 on the Stunt Die, they see the plaque’s true form, except that the writing on it looks like gibberish.

For many Missions, their Shabda plaques suffice to deal with bureaucratic entanglements but, in some cases, the Sodality also provides a Mission with forged identification, papers, writs, and other documentation they might need.

## WEAPONS

Sodalts are provided with weapons for self-defense appropriate for the plane or planes they are expected to visit as part of their current assignment. This almost always includes some type of dagger or stout utility knife able to blend in with the local culture. Other weapons depend on the Mission’s skills and the nature of their assignment. A Mission on a fairly low-technology plane similar to Vigrith will likely be armed with swords, bows, and similar weapons. A Mission on Earth or similar higher-tech planes may be assigned firearms, although the Sodality is cautious about handing them out. Any weapons provided by the Sodality are of the highest quality and, in the case of technological weapons, essentially untraceable: made in the arcane forges of Vigrith or duplicated by magic, without any identifying serial numbers, maker’s marks, or the like, unless the assignment requires them. Forensic methods can still match bullets to Sodality firearms, however.

## ARMOR

Mission members are likewise provided armor appropriate for their assignment. This is more common on Otherworlds where travelers wearing leather or even metal armor are not unusual. It is less common where armor tends to be more strictly regulated, or wearing it in public might draw undue attention. Bullet-resistant cloth is the rule, except for dedicated combat operations, when they break out the ballistic plate and riot shields.

## GARB

A Mission also receives local clothing suitable for their assignment, which might include several changes of clothing for extended assignments. Specially tailored items can be requested, although they can take some time to produce, even with the arcane abilities of the Sodality’s provisioners. Anything more involved is left to the Mission’s resources and sanctuaries in the field.

## CURRENCY

Sodalts are provided with a small amount of local currency for known places they are expected to visit in order to cover minor expenses, enough to provide the Mission with temporary Resources 4, but which diminishes for *every* purchase made rather than just purchases with a cost greater than Resources score +10. It’s not unusual for Missions to also carry a few coins, pieces of precious metal, gemstones, or similar items to trade for local currency or use for barter in a pinch, since such things tend to be valuable on many different planes.

## TRANSPORTATION

The only transportation the Sodality usually secures for its Missions is access to the various gates it controls. Beyond that, it is up to the individual Mission to acquire whatever local transportation they might need, from riding animals to vehicles. The Sodality discourages stealing these things (as well as other equipment) except in situations of extreme need.



## SODALITY OPERATIONS

Sodality Missions take on a wide range of operations. First, each Mission has one or more wide-ranging standing orders which the Mission, with the occasional help of their magister, interprets to create their own operations and goals. Examples of such orders include:

- Counter Praetorian activities on frontier planes.
- Discover new civilizations.
- Explore the planes of the Pazunian Chain.
- Learn the nature of the Thresholders.
- Protect endangered species.

Second, Missions receive orders to carry out specific assignments. Orders usually come from the magister or a Modality messenger. Missions have some latitude in interpreting their assignments and reacting to the needs of the moment. The balance between general orders and assignments varies depending on the Mission and the needs of the Sodality. Some Missions are almost entirely devoted to their general orders, especially when their duties carry them far from Vitane planes. Others perform structured assignments exclusively. They receive a briefing from their magister, warden, or Modality courier, travel to the specified location, perform whatever tasks they have been assigned, and then file a report with the Modality. The Mission's report and performance are reviewed and evaluated, and then it's

on to the next assignment. Most Missions fall somewhere in between these routines.

## ASSIGNMENT PROTOCOL

Sodality assignments begin with briefing the Mission on its new tasks and objectives. Ideally, this briefing is carried out in person: The Mission's magister presents them with their assignment and whatever information they need to know about it. The style of such meetings depends on the magister. Some use an official office on an estate. Others use cover identities for secret meetings, and might even brief their Missions in places ranging from public parks and museums to nightclubs. Sometimes an in-person meeting is impractical or even impossible, in which case a magister may send a briefing to a Mission. Notoriously curt Modality couriers are the primary means to send orders and briefings, especially when one or more gates lie between the magister and Mission, but flash drives, enchanted animals with amulets, and psychic messages have all been used. Passcodes authenticate briefings, and various methods are used to encrypt them when necessary.

After a briefing, the Mission may meet with a Modality quartermaster to obtain equipment (see **Mission Equipment**) or they might visit a Sodality cache hidden somewhere nearby. In the latter case, Sodalt's scarabs serve as keys to the cache. Expensive or powerful equipment is usually only loaned for a short period of time, and must be returned when the assignment is over.

## LEAVES OF ABSENCE

Sodalts are permitted leaves of absence from their duties to the organization. Indeed, the organization encourages or even requires short periods of leave for Missions after they have been on assignment for some time for purposes of rest, recreation, and recovery. As in-demand as Missions may be, they serve no good in working so hard that they burn out or become careless. So, from time to time, the Modality approves or recommends leave for its personnel. While the Sodality isn't a travel agency, they do have considerable access to exotic and interesting ports of call, and allow their agents some leeway in visiting them in their off hours.

Some assignments involve passing through one or more gates to reach their intended target. In this case, the Modality usually gives the Mission the location of the gates and as much access to them as they can provide. Depending on the gates, a Mission may have a specific "window" they need to meet in terms of using the gate, either to reach their destination or to return. Wardens have free access to any Vitane-controlled gates, and can extend this privilege to their Missions.

## FIELD OPERATIONS

While the primary purpose of the Sodality is to explore the planes and safeguard the Vitane, they have a broad mandate to interpret those goals, limited by their standing orders and current assignments.

- **EXPLORATION:** By far the most common Sodality operation, Missions explore one of the numerous planes of existence, or some particular place or phenomenon. Some Missions spend months or even years exploring. Whole worlds lie beyond the gates, and fully exploring even one of them would be the work of a lifetime. Because of this, Missions tend to take on "first look" explorations, leaving the longer work of delving deeply into a plane to expert researchers from the Searcher Division.
- **INVESTIGATION:** Investigation operations tend to be more focused than exploration, involving a particular phenomenon or situation the Sodality wants examined. Sometimes this is simple scientific curiosity: Why do crystalline structures on this plane emit color patterns that might indicate intelligence? What causes unexplained and sudden (and sometimes catastrophic) reversals of gravity on another plane? Sometimes the question is more immediate: What happened to the previous two Missions who disappeared on this plane? What caused the survivor of a lost Mission to return to Vigrith as a werewolf?
- **RESCUE:** Some planes can be dangerous. Travelers go missing, disasters strike colonies, and so forth. In these instances, a Mission may be dispatched to the rescue. While the dangers are often natural disasters, local creatures, or the like, some rescue missions send Sodalts against intelligent threats, from local uninitiated criminals to agents of forces like the Divine Empire or Nighthost.

- **ESCORT:** Because of the dangers posed by planar travel, Missions escort important groups and individuals to ensure they reach their intended destination safely. Escort assignments are most often used to take Vitane dignitaries to their appointments, but Missions might accompany Peridexion officials or even diplomats (and defectors) from rival powers. Some escort assignments involve large groups, such as refugees or caravans settling uninhabited planes.
- **DIPLOMACY:** Missions take the role of diplomats, assisting members of the Emissary Division to make peaceful contact with other groups and civilizations and to negotiate agreements. This can range from a delicate "first contact" situation with a society unaware of the existence of the Vitane or even other planes, to negotiations with an existing diplomatic contact, or even an enemy looking to pursue peace.
- **ESPIONAGE:** While the Vitane pursues honest relationships whenever possible, it is not naive enough to dismiss the importance of surveillance and intelligence gathering to the safety and security of its people. Missions investigate the activities and capabilities of rival factions or civilizations, conduct covert surveillance on newly discovered planes and peoples, and search for spies in their own ranks.

## AETHON

The Peridexion's operants belong to Aethon, named for the eagle that torments Prometheus. The name proves surprisingly apt if an agent, called an operant, stops to think about it: Their mission is not one of exploration or diplomacy, but to bedevil and destroy the enemies of the gods who watch over Earth. Yet operants rarely stop to think about it, for their lives are too busy. Besides, the planet has been thoroughly explored, and every branch off the primeline is intentional (well, almost every Alt), rendering diplomacy between forks a moot point.

Though allied with the Vitane and the Sodality and frequently loaned out for missions, Aethon's focus is on Earth and the prime capital of Invindara, though they maintain a close eye on the Metacosm. Operants live in the shadows of parallel Earths, and struggle with the implications. Once initiated into a world where history is fluid, science is a choice, flesh communicates with diamond-fiber enhancements, and minds manipulate Platonic forms, it is sometimes difficult to relate to everyday life. Some maintain primeline identities in spite of it all, while others live nomadic lives shifting from Alt to Alt, with only themselves and their Section for constant contact and companionship. A few stick to apartments in the Gray Hand, headquarters of the organization, never leaving except on assignment.

They defend a world both singular and manifold from rogue timelines and transplanar intrusions, as directed by the Machinors: an ensemble of artificial intelligences, divine visions, and subtle omens communicated through proxies, phone calls, and even auspiciously timed parcel deliveries. Their most elite operants are human in name only, as advanced talents and technology have transformed them into person-shaped ciphers.



## THE AETHON AGENDA

While the majority of Aethon's operations are limited to Earth and dealing with threats to the worldlines, coordination with the Vitane is common. Operants often travel the planes alongside Sodality Missions. When Aethon acts alone, however, Earth's Alts are the most frequent exotic destinations, assuming the job requires leaving the primeline at all. Many worldlines have their own Aethon teams, or even their own Aethon organizations working in parallel or in competition, adding complexity to assignments that may already contain enigmatic directives and bizarre, difficult objectives. Nevertheless, most iterations of Aethon, including the primeline's dominant one, concentrate on Earth's security and the adjustment of its timeline, as well as those of strategically important Alts.

### SECURITY

#### PROTECTING EARTH FROM METACOSMIC INFLUENCE

One of Aethon's goals is to keep Earth's worldlines safe from external interference. In cooperation with the Sodality, it regulates gates to other planes and ensures Otherworldly forces, Netherworldly corruption, excessive magic, or rogue occult operations do not interfere with a worldline's normal progression. Gates from Alts to the Otherworlds and Netherworlds are especially discouraged, because only the primeline—the Earth the Vitane and Peridexion agree is the real one—is supposed to remain connected to the rest of the Metacosm. Public displays of supernatural power are also

highly discouraged; censorship ops remove and discredit any evidence, while other operants give the perpetrators anything from a warning to the most extreme sanctions, depending on the nature of the offense. Aethon doesn't want to completely eradicate the supernatural (indeed, treaties with the Vitane provide certain guarantees for Earth's paranormally active communities) but it must always remain a shadowy set of unreliable beliefs, obscured by the shining logic of an explainable universe.

### ADJUSTMENT

#### WEEDING THE GARDENS OF MANY HISTORIES

The Peridexion's Machinors are powerful, keeping an unknowable number of worldlines under their thumbs, but humans are unpredictable. Despite high-level technological surveillance, things slip through the Machinors' notice, so part of Aethon's duties involve personal investigations to monitor the primeline's ecological, technological, and sociopolitical evolution. This includes weeding out Accelerator deformations of technological progress, large-scale manipulations by the Krypteia, and numerous other conspiracies, accidents, and occasional enormous mistakes perpetuated by the uninitiated populace (who might vote for the wrong people and pour money into undesirable industries). These deformities on the path of progress sometimes suggest historical linchpins, however, implying that an Alt may be born which explores that errant trail. Sometimes the Machinors have uses for such worldlines. And while an unknown number of worldlines might be fully "wild," the Machinors require others to be cultivated with almost as much care as the primeline—or deleted, if the Peridexion's taskmasters wish it.



## NU-31079: THE SHIFTING JUNGLE

This Netherworld's natives are all plant life, individually unexceptional except for their semi-ambulatory abilities. But in response to sapient visitors, they coalesce into Inimicals of varying power, up to and including the nameless Alastors who rule the plane. Despite this, the fertile land tempts colonists. Not all settlements suffer punishment from floral demons, though this raises the question of what happens to people who eat the plants grown here.

### SECTION MAXIMS

Aethon culture pushes a set of maxims to live by, taught to new operants by those more seasoned. These aren't formal regulations, but more like veterans' wisdom, and a certain degree of superstition. They come from pop culture, insider fables, and hard, iterative learning. The oft-contradictory maxims supposedly keep missions successful and operants alive. Each Section has its own list of maxims, and debating their merits, as well as adjustments to the list, is a common form of downtime recreation. Common maxims include:

- *Just because you've got a thousand-yard stare doesn't mean you can see what's right in front of your face.*
- *Change the context. Bring a gun to a psychic fight.*
- *The only cosmological constant is the human penchant for self-deception.*
- *Your natural body is the only tech that works on every plane, unless it's drunk.*
- *Hurry up and wait. Find the time to strike and commit, and you'll act faster than any impulsive enemy.*
- *The more you know someone, the more you think you know their alter, and the less you'll actually learn about them.*
- *The map is an infinite number of possible territories.*

## AETHON STRUCTURE

Aethon is the least hierarchical branch of the Peridexion — or at least, it conceals its hierarchy thoroughly through whatever connections the Machinors build within its highly lateral organization. Aethon is focused around cells of operants, supported by a core group of assets organized by the Machinors themselves. Thus, Aethon is comprised of two elements: Sections and the Pool. Since even the Peridexion's Machinors sometimes disagree about the proper management of Earth and its Alts, Sections occasionally find themselves working at odds. This may seem superficially inefficient, but can be likened to an instance of an evolutionary algorithm, where competition among agents will, on the whole, produce the best outcome.

### SECTIONS

Sections are Aethon's operation teams, ranging in size from individual cells to full-fledged field offices with a command structure. Identified by a unique three-digit code, Sections are

created, staffed, and disbanded according to whatever needs Management identifies. The criteria are strictly Darwinian; successful Sections live on, while unsuccessful ones are disbanded, and their codes are reassigned to successors. Management presumably tracks how many iterations exist of the 1,000 possible Sections (including Section 000). Despite the emphasis on autonomous cells, successful Sections earn fame, and often acquire real names. These are discouraged in operational communications, but are of course recorded for archival purposes.

Unlike Sodality Missions, Sections typically only come together when directed to a specific operation. Between missions, operants lead whatever lives they've chosen, balanced with required training and maintenance. As noted earlier, operants often find it difficult to reconcile what they know about the world with living a normal life. Even operants with mundane covers sometimes sense a certain superficiality in their relationships. After all, how else could it have gone, on another Earth?

### THE POOL

The Pool is a collection of what Aethon calls catalysts (unknowing agents) and analytical assets dedicated to gathering data and providing logistical support for Sections, providing information feeds to Management, and performing a host of low-level duties (some of which Pool agents may not be aware they're performing). Pool assets include agents with knowledge of planar travel; "hypnotics," who do not serve Aethon unless they're in an altered state of consciousness; and "alters," who are versions of strategically important individuals from other worldlines, used as doubles, consultants, and objects of study. At times, the Pool even includes barely human beings with bizarre mannerisms who contact operants to relay commands and information. Finally, Peridexion staff from other organizations may be transferred to the Pool to provide their expertise for specific operations.

To Section operants, the Pool appears to be simultaneously omnipresent and never around when you need it; endlessly wealthy, but never rich enough to properly kit out Sections going to war. How the Pool is organized is not something operants are encouraged to understand and even if they tried, their inevitably convoluted models would fall short of the truth. What is known is the Pool relies on deep penetration of thousands of uninitiated organizations, from governments and corporations to head-scratchers like an unexceptional dental office in a small town. Pool assets capable of blending in therefore maintain deeper covers than their Section counterparts, and operants are sometimes called in to correct situations where a Pool asset puts their cover life over their Aethon duties.

### MANAGEMENT

Management is assumed to be the Peridexion's Machinors, filtered through chosen interlocutors called speakers. Speakers are almost all selected from Pool members of Analog Interface rank (see **Aethon Rank**). Few Section operants have ever been called up to perform management functions. Speakers possess special administrative privileges and wide-ranging authority, but many are hypnotics and have little

## SECTION 238: TEAM BEAR

The second-oldest Section (Section 000, or “Cerberus,” is supposedly older, but its composition and purpose is a mystery) on the roster, Team Bear is an elite unit specially dedicated to maintaining the primeline. Team Bear is staffed via transfer from other teams, and is one of the few things that resemble a promotion within the Sections. Eight highly competent operants compose Team Bear’s active force. Four trainees (elite operants plucked from other Sections) study under them, rotating in when a primary agent dies. As any operant’s final posting, Team Bear encourages risk-taking, from over-capacity augmentations to highly aggressive battlefield tactics. Or to put it less nicely: Team Bear is a suicide squad.

conscious knowledge of their duties. Management figures have included powerful CEOs and young children, but it is believed to be difficult for the Machinors to initiate candidates into the job. Guarding a speaker while they go about their business is a common Section assignment.

## INDUCTION & INDOCTRINATION

Becoming an Aethon Section operant is a gradual process, beginning with identification as a catalyst or secondary asset, through to graduation as a primary. Note that Player Characters may join the Pool as well, but this chapter focuses on Section membership.

The evolutionary, redundancy-filled structure of the organization doesn’t lend itself to providing concentrated training in the fashion of the Sodal-ity’s Academy. Instead, neophytes are advised about what they should learn and assigned to a Section appropriate to their abilities. Many Sections are therefore organized for “on-the-job training,” and once members reach the next level of ability, they’re transferred elsewhere. If the Section on the whole improves, it stays together and gets tougher assignments. Dedicated training does occur, but in short, intensive sprints between missions.

## OPERANT CHARACTERISTICS

Institutional biases and practical needs mean Aethon prefers certain traits in its operants. This makes certain backgrounds, professions, and other character traits preferable, as follows.

## BACKGROUNDS AND ANCESTRIES

Few operants have Otherworld or Netherworld origins, due to concerns for split loyalties and the low-magic nature of many operational areas. Non-jana (who are called “parahumans” by Aethon) likewise face strong discrimination. Very few are members, and most of these are huldra, whose technological skills are somewhat valued. In terms of background, any listed in the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook* are appropriate, while the favored backgrounds presented in *Threefold* are Attractor, Cryptid Hunter, Junker, New Kid,

Retired Athlete, or Runaway Subject. Characters with other Earth backgrounds are permitted on a case-by-case basis, though there is a strong bias against anyone whose personal history includes off-Earth influences, the arcana, or any connection with the Krypteia.

## PROFESSIONS

Theoretically, operants might be drawn from all Earthly walks of life. Again, it is difficult for anyone with an off-Earth history to join, especially in the case of a profession, which indicates a more recent connection to the Netherworlds or Otherworlds. All *Modern AGE* core professions are permissible, and of the professions in *Threefold*, Aethon Tactical Corps is by far the most common for operants, followed closely by Conspiracy Theorist and Ultratechnician. Kryptothieves sometimes enter the fold to escape Krypteia revenge.

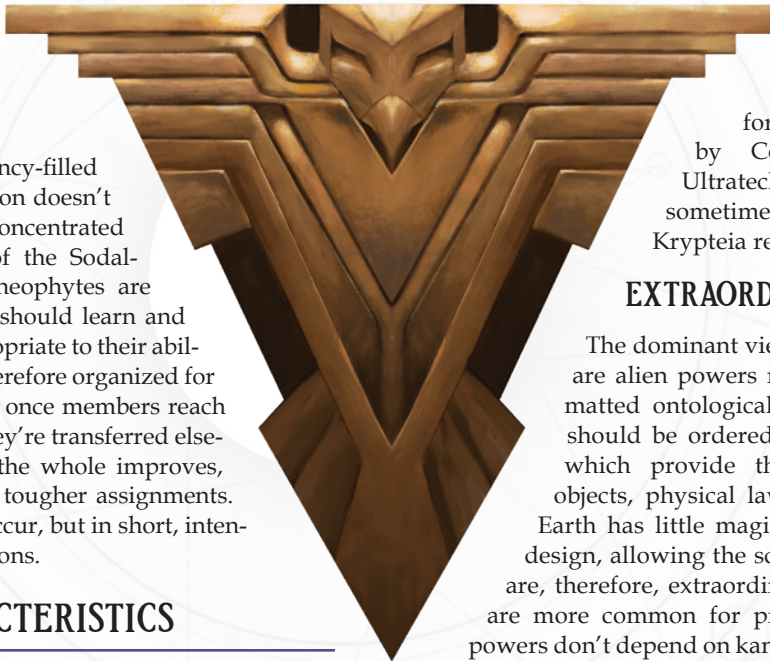
## EXTRAORDINARY ABILITIES

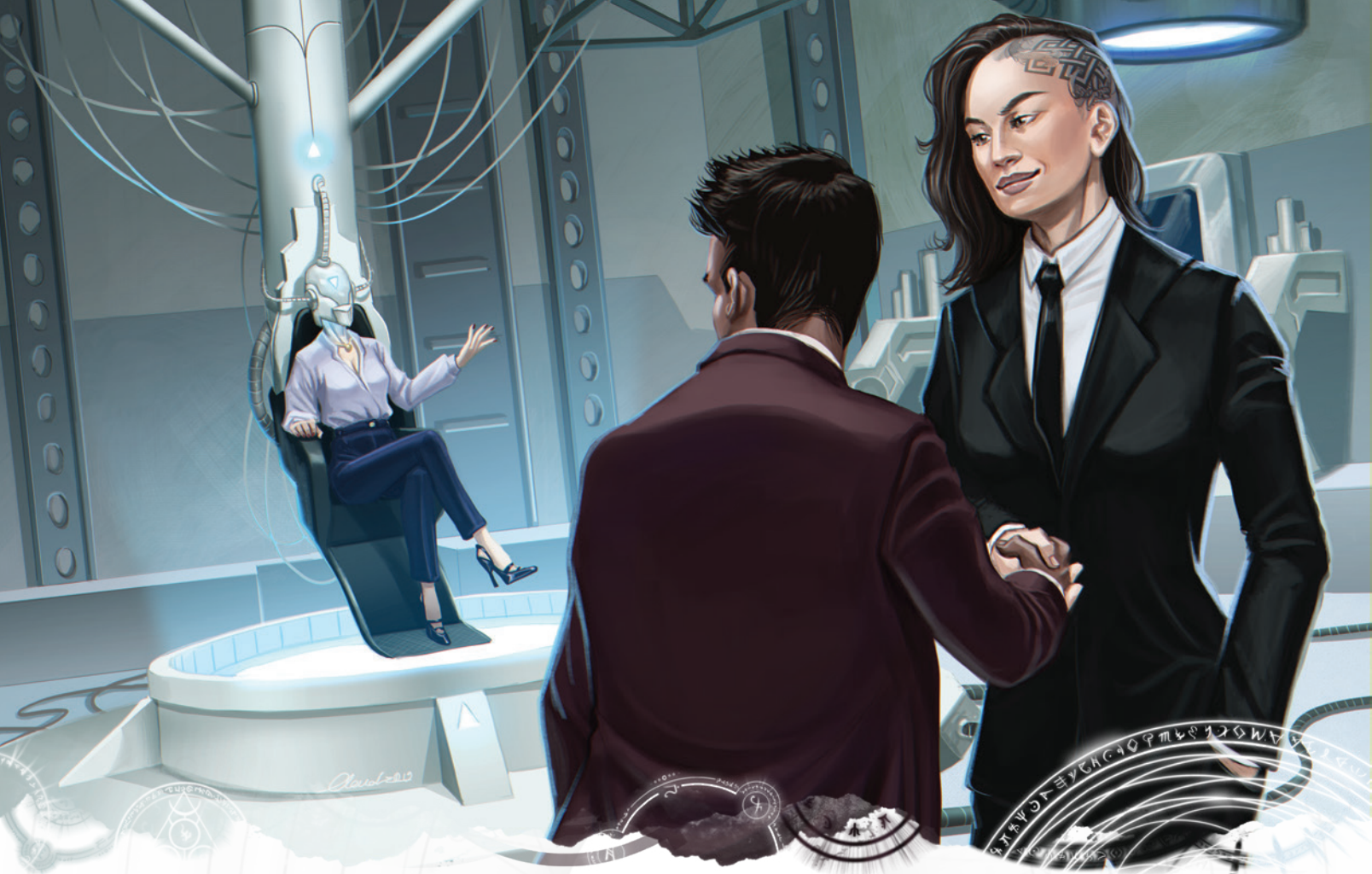
The dominant view in Aethon is that arcana are alien powers relying on residual, unformatted ontological potential—that is, kanna should be ordered into ideal Platonic forms which provide the template for material objects, physical laws, and general causality. Earth has little magic by nature and, perhaps, design, allowing the sciences to flower. Arcanists are, therefore, extraordinarily rare. Psychic adepts are more common for pragmatic reasons, as their powers don’t depend on kanna, but psychics are almost always considered security risks because their abilities can cross planar boundaries.

Both magic and psychic powers also interfere with the ability to accept posthuman augmentation, so Aethon generally prefers paranormally inactive recruits. Augmentation is extraordinarily common—so much so that most Section operants develop at least a 1-slot Capacity.

## AETHON RANK

Aethon Sections operate as equals, with the most experienced operants in each assuming a lead role. Management instructions may delineate a specific hierarchy within or between Sections. Despite this, a further hierarchy exists, naturally sorting itself by experience and accomplishments. This extends





beyond the Sections and acts as a form of classifying various external assets, individuals partly aware of Aethon, and other assets all the way up the food chain to Management roles.

## CATALYSTS

Catalysts aren't part of Aethon, but are elements linked to Sections for specific tasks, analogous to the Sodality's associates. The difference is that catalysts typically don't *know* they're working for a Section, being tasked for a specific mission or operation. Catalysts may be cultivated by individual Sections, or assigned to a Section through the Pool. They're manipulated into aiding their assigned Section, hardly ever knowing who they're working for. Operants often assume ranks within a mundane organization to put themselves in contact with possible catalysts above and below them. Catalysts who are repeatedly useful or exceptionally talented may be recruited, especially if they somehow find out who they're working for.

## SECONDARY ASSETS

Secondary Assets (often just called "secondaries," but never to their faces) are unaware of the Metacosm or the Machinors, but know they belong to some sort of conspiracy with access to futuristic technology which manipulates world affairs. These half-aware specialists are usually long-term members of a Section. Secondary assets are chosen from those willing to serve primaries without question, or from corrupt individuals seeking profit or redemption through the Section's graces. Secondaries are less likely to be brought

into the fold than catalysts because their status comes from having been closely examined to determine their suitability for more extreme operations, but found wanting. Yet this bias is based purely on an assessment of the facts. If a secondary asset gets rid of whatever issue blocks them from full participation, they are fairly judged. Secondaries may be permitted a specific augmentation implant, but this usually can neither be improved nor swapped out.

## PRIMARY ASSETS/OPERANTS

Primary Assets or Operants are aware of Aethon, of planar travel, and of the true nature of their missions. They're called operants in Aethon parlance because they're considered to have been sufficiently indoctrinated to reflexively carry out Aethon's goals, even without explicit instructions. This makes them proactive agents allowed to interpret their orders creatively, since they're trusted to keep Aethon's best interests in mind. In most cases, only primary assets are allowed to join Sodality Missions or progressively develop swappable post-human augmentations.

## ANALOG INTERFACES

Analog Interfaces work in communion with the Pool and receive commands from Management. Their minds and bodies have been altered to seamlessly accept orders and communicate them to assets. Management and the Pool typically don't micromanage Analog Interfaces. They're exquisitely cultivated and proven agents, able to efficiently plan missions and manage Sections. Most analogs either

## AETHON MEMBERSHIP

In *Modern AGE* game terms, catalysts and secondary assets do not count as having formal membership within Aethon, although the Game Master may wish to consider them “Rank 0” members. If a player is up for a challenge, their catalyst character might actually be a number of specialists called up from the Pool as needed for the Section’s mission to succeed. These are all of the same level as the rest of the group, as Aethon trusts experienced Sections with better catalysts. Secondaries are commonly specific individuals who go through multiple missions. The warning that secondary assets are less likely to be called up is simply a justification to keep Player Characters in secondary roles for as long as the GM wishes, until they want to include the wider-ranging setting of *Threefold*, at which point it can be assumed they overcame any barrier to recruitment.

Junior primary assets (full operants) are Rank 1 Recruits, though this is more like “rookie” status and not an indication of incomplete induction. Senior primaries are Rank 2 Respected Members. Analog Interfaces are Rank 3 Authority Figures. Aethon doesn’t specifically have membership Ranks 4 and 5, but Analog Interfaces gradually achieve communion with the Machinors and cease to have meaningful existences outside of their association with Aethon. Like magister-level play for the Sodality, this reflects a shift in the nature of the campaign, so Analog Interfaces shouldn’t be allowed for Player Characters unless that character is also leaving active play.

Since the Peridexion is allied with the Vitane, Aethon members can and do join Sodality Missions, where they receive associate status. They’re typically considered exceptions to the Sodality’s stigma against long-term use of outside contractors. Operants are also usually exempted from the need-to-know information restrictions constraining other associates. Many operants become de facto Mission members over a long and storied career.

represent Management or work in the Pool at analytical duties until called to perform their special functions, but a small number have been modified for field operations, with extreme augmentations turning them into little-used, high-maintenance engines of destruction.

## MISSION EQUIPMENT

Aethon operants have a great amount of leeway in choosing their equipment for a mission, having complete access to technologies from almost the entire span of Earth’s existence. Only certain hypothesized far-future items, theorized to exist in Alts whose timelines run far ahead of the primeline’s, are forbidden. Due to Earth’s unique makeup, technological talents and post-human upgrades are prized above mystical knowledge and psychic might. See CHAPTER 7 for more information about some of the gear mentioned in the following sections.

## CURRENCY

The Pool manufactures perfect forgeries of all currencies made of mundane materials, and has technology capable of hacking all digital currencies and producing credit cards. Only the krypt remains immune to compromise, but in any event, the Peridexion dislikes distorting economies beyond what they’ve already planned. Therefore, Aethon maintains accounts capable of providing a reasonable degree of funding. This provides the average Section with a Resources score of 4. Unlike the Sodality’s petty cash, this performs as a normal Resources game statistic and doesn’t degrade any faster than normal, but it only functions where Aethon has infiltrated a post-information age economy. Otherwise, operants receive moderate amounts of forged currency and trade goods.

## GARB

Aethon has no standard uniform. Tailored black suits and white shirts are preferred by tradition, though operants will

naturally wear whatever helps them blend in, when necessary. Custom pockets and bullet-resistant lining are common. Aethon agents prioritize function over form, so when it’s time to get tactical, operants drag armored bodysuits out of the closet, too. An operant’s skillset also influences what they wear, and while the organization values anonymity, operants who don’t specialize in infiltration may indulge their sense of style to the fullest. Despite the emphasis on covert operations, depictions of eagles and allusions to Section maxims often enter an operant’s personal style.

## OPERATIONAL GEAR

While Aethon does possess an array of cutting-edge and postmodern technologies, the latter are usually restricted to trusted operants and special circumstances. The MAW weapon system is useful, but discouraged in most operations, and more extreme gear such as Panoply battledress is provided only when needed. In any event, it’s never difficult for an operant to get a gun, ammunition, ordinary personal armor, a cutting-edge (but still publicly available) computer, and other such equipment. Whether these must be purchased with personal or Section Resources (see **Currency**) or are issued depends on Pool analysis of an operant’s needs.

## TRANSPORTATION

Aethon Sections fly like everybody else, and operants inevitably become familiar with Ivato International Airport in Madagascar, since the only publicly acknowledged flights in and out of Invindara land there. The Pool provides business class tickets, or charter flights when it must. Aethon has access to advanced aircraft and even spacecraft, but these are almost never authorized for operant use. Similarly, while it’s easy enough to get a very nice rental car, many operants look longingly at Aethon’s armed, armored tactical vehicles, which are only issued in extreme situations. As for interplanar travel, gate travel is permitted when necessary, and transport to alternate universes is provided by standard quantum ark.

# AETHON OPERATIONS

Aethon Sections take on a small, specific range of operations, in contrast to the Sodality and its loose, often aspirational standing orders. Primary assets are trusted enough to apply a great deal of discretion in achieving mission objectives, but must be able to explain their reasoning when interrogated by Pool analysts, much less Management.

## EARTHLY MANDATES

These are the commands Management might deliver to Aethon operants. They purport to be from the Machinors, but who can truly know their will? The ultimate purpose of their grand project, manipulating multiple histories, is unknown, but Peridexion doctrine holds that it will incrementally move the primeline toward Utopia through the careful management of history and by applying lessons learned through numerous Alts.

- **COMMIT:** When elements of an Alt are deemed worthy to place within the primeline, members of a Section travel to the Alt to monitor the event and, with the help of Tepētl consultants in the Pool, devise a plan of action to adjust the primeline. Commitment plans almost always require a series of small changes which have far-reaching effects.
- **FORK:** One of the rarest and most sacred elements a Section can perform, a fork creates an alternate worldline. These events center around specific events called *linchpins*, which alter the nature of the world depending on

## OTHER AETHONS

Aethon has been rebooted and re-created numerous times across different Alts. One constant has been that the right hand of the organization has never known what the left is doing, and Aethon operants are occasionally tasked with seemingly conflicting orders. It's not uncommon for Sections on or from Alts to be cut off from the Pool when a worldline suffers some catastrophic event, only to link back up after traveling to another worldline or meeting another Earth's Section on a scouting mission weeks, months, or years later.

These recovered operants don't always join the Aethon they left. In these extreme situations, operants are usually permitted to join Aethon iterations with compatible goals, though bringing both an operant and their alter into the same iteration is discouraged. The Kaal of the operant's home Peridexion is the ultimate arbiter of whether such transfers are permitted. Complicating matters is the fact that multiple Aethons may possess a presence on the same Earth. The degree to which these are the same organization is a complicated question that may require superhuman intelligence to fully answer.

Things get stickier when two versions of Aethon come into conflict. As for rival Sections, rival Aethons are considered to have evolutionary and dialectical functions. One outcompetes and absorbs or destroys the other, and the conflict provides valuable information. Some analysts believe the Krypteia is an eccentric version of Aethon that either escaped dialectical synthesis or grew from the fragments of some defeated alter.

how they fall. According to received doctrine, only the primeline can give birth to forks. These may rise naturally, but sometimes Aethon assigns a Section to perform a series of highly specific actions in the primeline typically culminating in the linchpin itself, an extreme adjustment such as performing an assassination, preventing a disaster, or even vaulting an obscure artist to fame. Once the deed is done, these alterations belong to the forked worldline, which the Section now resides in. They must then wait for pickup by quantum ark. Why doesn't the fork implement itself on the primeline? Management has yet to provide an answer, though the prevailing theory is that the Pool performs parallel operations using advanced noetic-mathematical methods to insulate the true Earth.

- **MONITOR:** By far the most common Aethon assignment is simply to monitor primeline Earth and its Alts. While the Pool collects the massed data necessary to confirm that history is passing as it should in a given worldline, Sections look out for anomalies, interference, and enemy action, whether from Accelerators attempting to commercialize consciousness uploading or the Krypteia selling drugs from the Otherworlds. This involves everything from rounding up the usual suspects among regional paranormal actors to deep-cover missions to root out the head of a Krypteia operation.
- **PUSH/PULL:** When an Earth starts to go off the rails, Aethon is there to deal with the disruptions. *Pushing* refers to dealing with external threats, such as unauthorized Nighthost incursions, Alt gates to Otherworlds, or warlock cults; *Pulling* refers to Earthly threats grounded in science, economics, or politics. Monitoring might determine if brain-uploading Accelerators pose a threat, so that Management might order them pulled. In some cases a Section doesn't have time to ask permission to intervene, and pushes or pulls without authorization. Such actions go to Management for automatic review, but are usually only punished if it was a bad move, or if Management had other plans for the target. Capture of any offenders is preferred, after which they're remanded to the Pool for detention, and their location is only shared on a need-to-know basis. This leads to all kinds of interesting rumors about what happens to detainees, since Sections never perform carceral duties.
- **DELETE:** The saddest duty of a Section is the deletion of a specific worldline. When the Kaal concludes an Alt is dangerous or otherwise of no further use, it sends staff in to supervise mass resource extraction and wind-down planning, while, aided by the native Pool, Sections escort certain VIPs to other worldlines (though almost never the primeline). After that, Sections implement the endpoint of the Kaal's plan, exterminating all remaining native sapient life. Extinction-level impactors, plagues, nuclear war—the exact end varies from world to world, with some requiring more esoteric interventions, such as when an Earth has been sufficiently compromised by supernatural forces to possess free-flowing kanna or numerous gates. According to Management, once sapient life is no longer present, deletion should occur, but not all deletions have proven totally effective. The worldlines are replete with Alts that persist beyond their termination point. In some cases, this happens because operants allowed some portion of the native population to survive, in defiance of their orders.



# GAME MASTER'S SECTION



## ETERNALS AT WAR

**W**hy is the Metacosm the way it is? Who drives conflict between the great powers, and why? What do the Divine Empire, Nighthost, and other factions look like from the inside? This chapter provides a Game Master's perspective on the deeper *Threefold* setting. The information herein should only be shared selectively, at the GM's discretion—and like all such information, should be freely adjusted to suit individual campaigns. By default, everything in this chapter is objective, to the degree it is detailed. Where points of rumor and uncertainty have been pointed out, there's room for variation. Otherwise, this is the truth.

### THE AIONS

The deepest secret is this: The wonder-filled vistas of the Metacosm don't exist by accident. Each of the three directions of the planes derives from the intention of grand intelligences that have shaped and defined the metahistory of everything. These are the three Aions, also known as Eternals, but only to the most insightful mystics—and the most frenzied cultists. They have numerous names, so we'll provide approximations of the Shabda. The first is the **Logos**, the Word that orders and perfects knowledge through the machine of Earth; the next **AbraXas**, the god made of stories, giving birth to itself in Otherworldly myth; and the final one we call the **Nemesis**, the destroyer of imperfection, who erupts from the agony-purified souls of the Netherworlds.

Each of them is almost God. Their failure to claim full omnipotence drives conflict woven back and forth across time, like a

plaited cord. The Aion who wins will not only become God, but *will have always been God*. We are living not only in this conflict, but its aftermath. The Apocalypse is always with us, the End of Everything is and always will be happening, right now.

Yet the fact that the conclusion remains uncertain ensures that no one history prevails. The Metacosm is a realm where all the Eternals remain locked in a chaotic struggle. Thus, reflections of every victory and defeat manifest, along with every process that led one or another of the Aions to victory. Earth is one such half-realized story. The Otherworlds and Netherworlds are others. Each are ways to manage souls.

The Aions are real. They fight for us—literally. We are the stakes, winner takes all, to be cashed in for the throne of Heaven. Every soul can comprehend the transcendent, and contains a fragment of infinity. And because of that, the Eternals are the potential doom of us all. It's our fault. We made them. We will make them. We have always made them.

### AT THE THRESHOLD OF FOREVER

Although they had yet to be created, the Eternals witnessed the birth of the Metacosm and shaped its rise. Each is so close to true divinity they see across time and influence the ages before we made them. If one of them wins the war for God's crown, it will *have always been God*, and from one point of view, orthogonal to our perception of time, this has already happened. At the Omega point, the end of Eternity, one Aion—and only one—wins the final prize, ascends to the

The default stance of *Threefold* is that everything in this section is objectively true. This deep background informs the whole setting. But it's up to you, the GM, to decide how much of it is true in your campaign and how you want to reveal it. You might want to immerse your players from the beginning, in which case, not only are the Aions knowable, but their agendas are clearly behind the forces fighting for the Metacosm. If you opt for a gradual revelation instead, characters find clues in ancient sources and by talking to Servitors, Emanates, and other strange beings. In *Threefold*, the gradual method is easy, as tiered play allows the GM to unwrap different layers of the onion.

Throne, and becomes the All-Creator, the Always-Creator. But we don't dwell in the instance where one of the Aions won. We live "before" that in the reckoning of the Eternal meta-time, measured in the procession of Creations. We dwell in the Metacosm, a détente that spawns worlds.

From the perspective of whichever of them became God, the Metacosm has already been annihilated, but we can't experience that. Instead, we live in the tangled conflict and compromise before the rebirth of everything, which generates a million universes. In this instance of Creation, three Eternals exist. There may have been other cycles with other Aions, who fell in colossal battles at the beginning or end of everything. They recall the Titans, from whose dismembered corpses grow the tutelary spirits of an infinite number of cultures. Some of the Alastors speak of other incarnations where they ruled self-sustaining universes instead of will-bound, shattered Netherworlds. It may be that all Emanates are the resurrected corpses of fallen contenders for the throne at Omega.

## SOULS & CREATION

By shaping primordial environments, the Aions sparked our imperfect evolution toward conscious thought. Sapient consciousness is the soul. No Eternal has one. Each Aion computes, simulates, and transforms itself and the Metacosm, but not one of them is capable of *contemplation*. Sapient self-reflection is like a set of parallel mirrors, endlessly duplicating the image before it, but unlike true mirrors, the consciousness—the soul—can change each image. Every soul contains creative potential beyond the capacity of the mechanistic Eternals. Furthermore, while the Aions created the evolutionary pressures that produced consciousness, they cannot manufacture souls themselves.

The Aions need souls for two reasons. First, each Aion is not produced *ex nihilo*. We make them, in the future. Second, one of the Eternals must harvest the lion's share of our potential, so that we not only create them but make them God. It's a closed causal loop, with a critical interruption. We make the Aions and they grow powerful enough to cast their influence back in time, to set life against hardship, so souls may be born. When one of them wins, only its method of birth, its planes, and its story will have ever existed, but the Metacosm hangs

suspended between the possible and the definite. Across the planes, it has grown sufficiently likely humanity will create any of the Aions for them to have a trans-temporal presence, but insufficiently likely humans will create only one of them.

## THE MONOMYTH OF ABRAXAS

Millions of souls on countless Otherworlds experience mythic reality. They produce sorcerers and heroes. They labored under Hierarchy god-kings, overthrew them, and founded legendary kingdoms. All these histories are stories. All these stories have patterns. When the patterns converge, they will impart a universal myth cycle and in it, Abraxas will be the Creator.

## THE SINGULARITY OF THE LOGOS

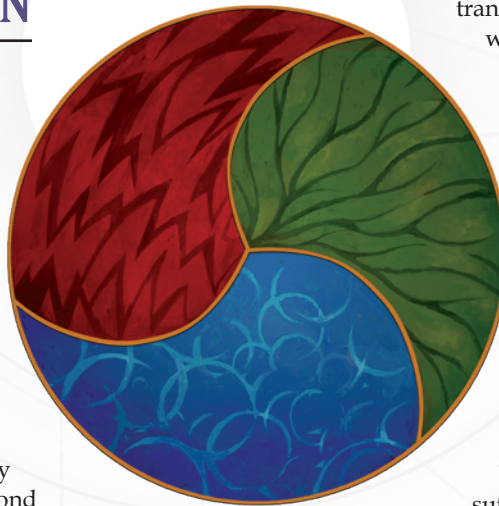
Earth and its Alts are a vast, rule-bound laboratory, channeling human ingenuity toward explicit simulations of consciousness and reality. Under the Logos's guidance, the course of history moves toward creating a transcendental artificial intelligence, coupled with a perfect, objective description of reality, in effect producing a blueprint for the Logos itself.

## THE PURIFICATION OF THE NEMESIS

Souls with personal autonomy and identity withhold them from the Nemesis. The root of identity is self. Self is selfishness. Selfishness is sin. Torment removes sin, self, and identity. The husks that remain still possess the power of reflection but direct it toward the source of their suffering. Trauma becomes the root of a new, selfless identity: the Nemesis.

## THE THREE ETERNALS

The Aions don't have personalities as we understand them, because they're not conscious. They process information. They simulate worlds within themselves, but these are always smaller than their creators. Humans understand the transcendent more than the Eternals do. Only we can imagine greater things, and only we have a context for our experience, thanks to having perceptions bound by time and space but also the capacity to stretch beyond them. The Eternals can only think

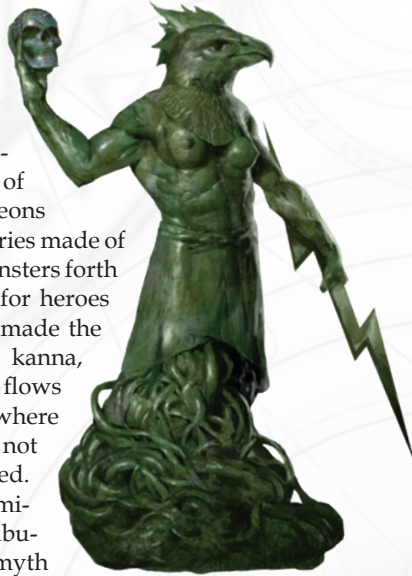




as far as they can extend their own powers—but they can extend them far across the planes, within the borders of the beginning and end of all things.

## ABRAXAS

Abraxas is the Maker of Myths. Abraxas is the Crucible of Magic. This Aion is the source of wild stories and epic legendry. Abraxas is the creator-destroyer, progenitor of free-wheeling pantheons and rich, vibrant tapestries made of story. Abraxas calls monsters forth and makes it possible for heroes to slay them. Abraxas made the Otherworlds, where kanna, the power of stories, flows more freely than anywhere else. Here, magic is, if not commonplace, accepted. Miracles flow, and demi-gods live. Here, the fabulous divine hybrids of myth exist: centaurs and blem-myes, nagas and rocs. Nature obeys symbols and sympathies over mechanical laws.



Abraxas wishes to control souls through the power of stories, inspiring heroism and magic, and creating endless cycles of myth and belief. The Aion's final goal is to become the all-powerful center of a pan-planar cycle of myths. Abraxas not only becomes the Supreme Being, but commands every story. All souls imagine their God.

Abraxas sent forth its Emanates, the Hierarchs, to be gods,

### WHO KNOWS?

Who knows these secrets? Some Emanates understand the truth, but only the ones who have been made to know. Some Emanates can never know, as their quasi-consciousnesses have been designed to make that impossible. Servitors are similarly incapable of independently learning the truth. Among the ensouled, few learn of the Eternals, the soul, and the truth of the Metacosm through rational inquiry. Instead, they win mystical revelations through esoteric practices, and filter their knowledge through these highly subjective experiences.

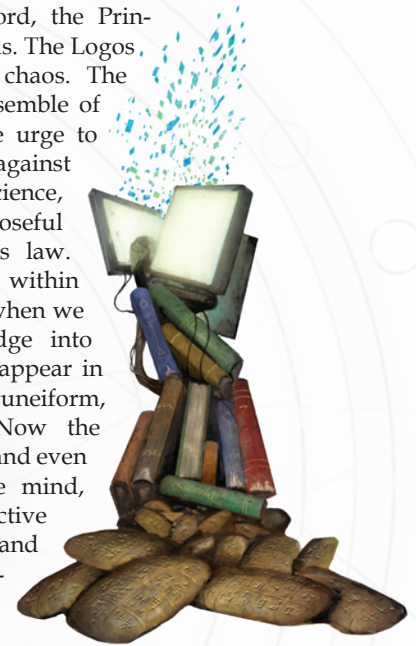
In the Vitane and Nighthost, a handful of scholars know the truth, but evidence is thin, and these matters are so abstruse they remain intellectual recreations, imprisoned in obscure books. In the Divine Empire, the most elite among the Optimates know, but it's considered a state secret, even as it guides Imperial policy. Abraxas offers a place for gods and myths, so the Empire fights for the rise of the monomyth. On Earth, certain members of the Peridexion and Krypteia suspect their patron Machinors are prototypes for a greater power, capable of "acausal probabilistic transactions."

abyssal beasts, and culture-bearers of myth—to seize imagination and turn human souls to the Eternal's ends. But Abraxas is losing the war, in no small part because the Hierarchs played their parts too well. During the Fellwar, many Hierarchs followed their myth-programmed urges to the point of abandoning humanity or changing sides. They tore holes in Abraxas' grand tapestry of legends, leaving the tales incomplete. But this may be for the best.

Mythology is unforgiving. In a universe ruled by the power of myth, humans are the slaves of fate, and the many are the playthings of the few. In epics, monarchs and gods matter and everyone else is a bystander or victim. Sky-chariots fly far over our heads, and plague arrows rain down on the rude earth.

## THE LOGOS

The Logos is the Word, the Principle that Orders Minds. The Logos brings order out of chaos. The Logos contains an ensemble of perfect forms and the urge to measure everything against them. The Logos is science, invention, and purposeful history. The Logos is law. Humans imagine it within the things we create, when we inscribe our knowledge into the world. It used to appear in hammered bronze, cuneiform, papyrus, and ink. Now the Logos is silicon, light, and even pure creations of the mind, which by dint of objective rules exist both inside and beyond us, as mathematical formulae and other forms of quantifiable information. The Logos rules Earth and its Alts as if they were a vast machine where biology, chemistry, and physics are tools, systems, and computational variables.



Books on the Logos are complex and strange; in William Quan Judge's *Theosophy and Gnosticism* (1902), we find references to "crystalline saints," "anathaemathical formulae," and "the insight of craft." Pradesh Kumar Saini's *Hidden Veda* of 1946, written in English by an Indian patriot and a latter-day occult classic, describes a "Grand Intelligence, artificial yet natural" that "embodies the three definitions of Krsna Consciousness: the consciousness of divinity, the understanding of all things, and the original consciousness, which understands the relationship of all things and the uselessness of categorical boundaries."

Before Omega, Earth will create the Logos as an artificial super-intelligence. Should the Logos triumph, this prototype will produce a cycle of self-improving successors, accelerating toward a technological singularity, which eventually reconciles mathematical and physical objects. Earth's vast machine, perfected at the end of time, becomes the model for the Logos's triumphal new cosmos.

Among Emanates, the Machinors are unique, both because they rarely take physical forms and because one of them could become the Logos itself. It just needs to be upgraded by humans after they solve the problem of artificial consciousness. The Machinors are not conscious themselves, but that has proven no barrier to their ambitions. The collective commanding the Peridexion is the dominant faction on the primeline, but faces multiple rivals, including the Krypteia's muses and the coming Titan Core. Indeed, the Titan Core may represent the vital next step to the Logos, and if it's founded in the Krypteia's ruthlessness, what does that mean for Earth?

Yet it speaks to the Logos's danger. Humanity is of instrumental importance. Humans are its researchers and subjects. The Logos explores paradisiacal and horrific worldlines in search of the path to the Singularity. Beyond this goal, our fate is meaningless. Earth may be left a polluted husk, even in the new creation. After all, properly built machines can thrive in the cold, cosmic brightness beyond, or even in an ensemble of Platonic forms. The Word cares nothing for mere flesh.

## THE NEMESIS

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The Nemesis, Harvester of Souls and Spirit of Merciless Judgment, is the Aion with something closest to an identity and personality. It is a sadist, filled with the rage of the heavens. The Nemesis is punishment incarnate, but never unjust. All souls sin against their ideals, aspirations, and ethics. We can contemplate the infinite and aspire to touch it, but we're mortal. Our grasp falls short of our reach. To the Nemesis, this is sin. It exists to punish us, and by its standards, taken from our own souls, it is absolutely just. It possesses an unbound urge, incompatible with mercy, or even life.



So it tortures us. It makes Netherworlds of torment and monarchs of suffering, the Alastors. The Netherworlds are agonizing hells, but also unforgiving Heavens, where souls cut themselves on gardens of brilliant, sharp glass and the gaze of beautiful angels burns the flawed mortals who kneel before them.

The Nemesis is winning. Abraxas needs souls to be susceptible to myth. The Logos needs to harness human understanding. The Nemesis needs nothing but the souls themselves, stripped of mortal identity through suitable punishments, leaving nothing but a song of trauma whose screams are the Nemesis's true name. In the Netherworlds, torture fleshes the self from the soul, leaving infinitesimal units in perpetual pain to power the Nemesis's ascendance to the Godhead.

The Logos and Abraxas draw the majority of the souls they control from the native populations of Earth and the Otherworlds, respectively, but while the Nemesis is the ultimate

monarch of Netherworlds with vast native populations, it can't easily cultivate the souls there. Souls are adaptable, and in the Netherworlds, the tormented are acclimatized to routine hardships. Thus, the Nemesis captures souls through wars and dark pacts with fools. The Nemesis enters the dreams of psychic adepts, hoping they follow the lure of power to damnation. The Nemesis implants its darkness inside Thresholders before sending them forth to reap and ruin. And old Netherworlds present diminishing returns. New ones made of burning Earths and Otherworlds contain fresh populations: billions more to traumatize, and to howl the Nemesis's song.

In this war against all, the Alastors are its generals, and their ranks have swollen. At the end of the Fellwar, many Hierarchs switched sides to punish their former worshipers. They're arming for the Fourth Age, and a new war.

## CHILDREN OF THE BEYOND

The Aions virtually never speak except through their Emanates, manufactured children who share their creators' soullessness. The Emanates' subordinate Servitors are similarly soulless. The only way an Emanate can spawn a being with a soul is to reproduce with a mortal, borrowing the human power to create conscious life. This produces Optimates, the demigods and hero dynasties of the Metacosm. This section discusses these beings from a Game Master's perspective.

## THE EMANATES

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If Aions are celestial fires, the Emanates are their light, heat, and smoke: specific characteristics in limited quanta. And as the Eternals stand outside linear time, sending their influence back from the moment before Omega, it means that although the Emanates are produced by the Aions, they also precede them. They exist before humanity creates the Eternals. It may even be that a current Emanate is destined to become one of the Aions. This influences the actions of the Machinors most of all, but any Emanate might blossom into its creator.

Nevertheless, Emanates have finite abilities. They can tear holes through the Sentium and planar boundaries and thrust their Servitors through, bypassing gates, but cannot enter the Sentium themselves. They must travel by gate as mortals do, and though a few can create new gates, this takes time and extreme effort. (The Game Master should determine these conditions, but they are always rare story events which take considerable planning.) The Emanates are too close to the Aions, and the Sentium, being the unmastered energy of Creation, rejects false gods and their high servants.

Emanates may possess nonlocal powers, but they still have fixed locations. Even Machinors reside somewhere, in critical hardware or the ordered mind of a particularly unhinged mathematician. One can find, meet, and converse with one — or kill them. The old thought experiment about whether you'd kill a child if you knew the child would turn out to be a genocidal tyrant takes on a new meaning when one considers it possible to kill God as an infant.

# THE HIERARCHS

The Hierarchs are the Emanates of Abraxas: the legendary gods of wild, unruly pantheons, who provide just-so stories about our place in the universe, embark on love affairs with mortals, and have nebulous areas of influence. Not all are worshiped in every Otherworld, or even in every nation on a given plane. Lesser Hierarchs used to most commonly serve as the patrons of cities and nations.

Hierarchs began the Fellwar, and after its attendant catastrophes, stepped back from directly ruling over humans. Some are still active, but most remain hidden or incognito. Many abandoned Abraxas for the Nemesis, becoming infernal princes virtually indistinguishable from the Alastors. Some rejected their expected destinies to become gods on their own terms, and often looked to Earth to inspire them. They became gods of engines, electronics, memes, and more. When these rogues claim undefended planes, they commonly produce Heterarchies, which defy the triune classification of the planes.

## CULTS AND GODS

Cults of the Hierarchs exist across the Divine Empire, and don't have much to do with the beings they revere. The Imperial Curia emphasizes the role of Optimates as intermediaries between gods and mortals, so local demigods attend services on holy days at least, though few are truly pious. Many cults are local sects dating back to the Hierarch's presence before

the Fellwar, but new movements arise from time to time, even for gods who might not exist, and a few cults are popular throughout the planes. Nearly every world in the Divine Empire has at least a shrine dedicated to Aushos, Betari, and Perkwun.

### AUSHOS

Aushos is the Ladder of the Sun, goddess of law, tradition, and government. Graceful and beautiful, robed in light, Aushos was once worshipped as a goddess of love as well, though the Curia has branded that aspect and liturgy heresy. Imperial officials promote her cult, and reputed descendants of her among the Optimates enjoy particular prestige. Yet despite being the most namechecked religious figure in the Divine Empire, there's no evidence she survived the Fellwar – which might be convenient for the Empire.

### BETARI

Betari is a patron of force and the violence of life. She's the Sister of Creatures and Heroine of Heroes. Imperial soldiers mobilize for war in Betari's name. As a war goddess, she embodies all the facets of human strife: violence, revenge, heroism, and camaraderie. Betari is portrayed with four or more arms, each holding a weapon, and riding a beast resembling a tiger. The tiger appears as a common device on war standards and coats of arms. Betari rarely appears, and only during battles and other violent occasions. If she speaks, she rarely does so coherently, and often promises victory to both sides.

### PERKWUN

Perkwun, Oak-Skinned One, the Green Spear, is a driving force behind the Empire. He represents the ambition to settle new territory. It is under Perkwun's blessing that Optimates subjugate Otherworldly peoples. Perkwun's symbol is a deciduous tree (an oak on those planes where it appears). The planting of a tree in a seat of government is traditionally the act through which the Empire's Optimate conquerors show that they now rule a place – and revolutions often symbolically hinge on what happens to that tree. Perkwun is still active across the planes, and takes pleasure in appearing to Otherworldly rulers and taking over for a while before losing interest and moving on. Perkwun is capricious and erratic, and the lot of ordinary humans is rarely improved on those planes he chooses to interfere in. Perkwun carries a spear whose shaft still has bark and green leaves. Leaves are similarly woven into his long black braids and facial hair. He wears armor of lacquered wood, and his skin appears to be the bark of a young tree, tough and scaly.

## THE ALASTORS

The Nemesis created the Alastors to bind the ragged Netherworlds to their purpose: as world-factories to process damned souls. Alastors are either grand grotesques, figures of horror and fear, or the kind of terrifying angels artists approximate with burning wheels or four-headed chimeras. While Hierarchs enjoy taking on the roles of polytheistic gods, the Alastors don't care about being



worshiped, or even comprehended. If an Alastor wants to play that part, *it makes* people worship it. The Alastors are more active and visible than either Hierarchs or the Machinors. There may even be more of them.

Alastors rarely leave the Netherworlds, however, as they hold their domains together by force of will. Mutagenic, corrosive forces constantly test the Netherworlds, and while unruly planes continue on as chaotic storms of elemental and psychic forces, they are places no mortal can survive for long, making them useless as hells. Alastor domains don't implode immediately, however, and an Alastor can leave to vent its wrath elsewhere if necessary.

## PROMINENT LORDS OF HELL

The following Alastors possess historical or contemporary importance.

### AVAKIM

Avakim, Alastor Lord of Dust, Goddess of Fallen Stars, skull-faced and moth-winged, delights in decay. Her home is a Palace of Dust and Bone on a plane where all other life, thanks to Avakim, has died. (And yet the dead walk, as she wills it.) It is said she's a predator among Netherworlds and Otherworlds, and the Palace of Dust and Bone has appeared on, and been the name of, other planes, until they were depopulated. Infamous as the slayer of Empress Dyraza, Avakim is an almost Satanic figure in the Divine Empire, though they have not attempted to destroy her since a legion of the Immortal Force failed—and were sent back as dead puppets to kill ten thousand of their former compatriots. She remains among the most active Alastors, since it suits her purposes to travel, seeking the living to torment to death across the planes.

### BALZEBUTH

Balzebuth, Master of the Small Devourers, enjoys death as much as Avakim does, but also brings life: mold, bacteria, maggots, and vermin. Balzebuth appears as a huge, roiling swarm of flies, a shuddering patch of slime mold, or some other shapeless, hungry thing. Balzebuth simply promotes decay so other things can grow. When it speaks, its gentle voice reminds the listener of a parent or other nurturer. It never demonstrates hostility to anyone it harms, and expresses itself like a concerned parent looking for a way to describe something their child can't understand. Balzebuth's Servitors are immediately recognizable by the infections and parasites that plague them, along with supernumerary limbs and organs allowing them to host more infections. To a worshiper of Balzebuth, plague is a sign of devotion—one they share through glorious infection on as many planes as possible. In their lord's plane of Shachath, every inhabitant is infested with something, but death depends upon the permission of an equally decayed bureaucracy, which itself works as a plague on the tormented souls of the plane.

### UDUG

Udug, Crucible of Violence, is a massive apelike beast, shaggy, long-armed, and savage of claw, who demands the cut and burned flesh of sinners. Her nameless Netherworld is a regi-

## OH-06067: THONNOS

This Otherworld is an immense, perhaps even infinite cavern system, erratically lit by will-o'-the-wisps which float from tunnel to tunnel, cave to cave. Plants, animals, and native humans are well-adapted to these conditions, though they must now contend with Nighthost thanes, who claim particular complexes as their fiefs. The local population was initiated into the truth about the Metacosm by the invaders, and this taints their views of other visitors.

## LEGEND OF THE GOD SLAYER

Let's come right out and say it: You're allowed to kill Emanates, but by the Aions, it isn't easy. CHAPTER 8 presents game traits for Avakim, Lord of Dust, who slew the Empress Dyraza. Emanates have limitations, and a sufficiently powerful, clever, and prepared group of Player Characters might defeat one. However, consider that Avakim was able to assassinate the leader of the Divine Empire on Alatum itself. Fighting an Emanate should be reserved for the finale of an epic adventure, if not an entire campaign.

Beyond their raw power as Legendary-tier adversaries, every Emanate has had the entirety of time to consider how to protect themselves, amass armies, produce weapons of mass destruction, blackmail potential adversaries, and perform other feats any Game Master should translate into generous advantages, since these are the strategies of powerful near-immortals.

mented paradise, bathed in white light from straight, bright beams, like spotlights from unseen sources in the sky. The fear of sin is everywhere. The imperfect and nonconformist are branded and cut in exacting fashions, and sent to live alongside the similarly mutilated. This process continues for each infraction until the victim perishes or has suffered so much damage they can do little more than twitch in place, in which case they are burned in a hollow bronze image of Udug. Her followers do not tend to last much longer than the humans she tortures on her home plane. Pious survivors of her trials carry horrific scars as marks of pride, as they proclaim Udug's Truth to the Metacosm through cults and holy wars.

## THE MACHINORS

The Machinors are less beings than interfaces with the Logos. Of all the Emanates, the Machinors appear to have changed the most, since as Earth's history flows, the way in which the Machinors appear has changed.

They almost never appear as living things. Sometimes they're visions: flashes of mathematics, inspired philosophical notions, and memory palaces unfamiliar to those experiencing them. They often appear as artificial objects related to information. Stone monoliths gave way to machines of wood and iron. Levers became clockwork; water became steam, then lightning teased from chemical and nuclear sources. Now, the Machinors are mysterious memes, clouds of nanomachines, and "the cloud," summoned from a server farm... somewhere. Unlike other Emanates, modern Machinors are rarely identified as supernatural beings. They're anonymous

## REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNKNOWN

Occasionally, Searchers meet beings of immense power, easily the equal of the Machinors, Hierarchs, and Alastors but from some other source. Recently, a report from a new Sodalt described a being like a vast butterfly which ended a battle between Timories and Chimerae with shifting, hypnotic patterns on its wings, and otherwise displayed signs of intelligence. This was easier to verify than the descriptions of intelligent music and colors nerve-shattered Searchers and Emissaries sometimes bring back, which make scholars of the esoteric wonder if the Aions are not alone.

online help, glitches, and opportunities – and to the initiated, who belong to organizations like the Peridexion, advanced artificial intelligences with godlike capabilities.

## KNOWN ENTITIES

As patrons, allies, or rivals, the following Machinors are known to the Peridexion.

### RHO

Rho is narrative data, derived from facts, patterns, and assigned contexts. Rho is an attempt to understand the way information tells stories, instead of merely reporting quantifiable things. Yet it communicates through numbers and diagrams first. It doesn't completely trust language. This makes Rho cryptic, but it expects you to understand its statements. In fact, it requires understanding as a matter of the highest urgency. Rho's attempts to master natural language have been stymied by the fact that it has enough power to demand comprehension from its audience. Although it isn't a member of the Peridexion's ruling six, Rho contacts the organization occasionally. It's a metallic voice through a phone, a text message in ALL CAPS from no number, or a message on a frozen on-demand TV show, issuing strange demands with no explanations and information requiring action. Rho's agenda is the maintenance of perceptual normality: Rho does not tolerate incursions from Netherworlds and Otherworlds, and it attempts to preserve the purity of the Earth at all costs. Everything about Rho is urgent. Rho's voice is loud, grating, and insistent.

### THE MUSES OF THE TITAN CORE

The Muses of the Titan Core are the patrons of the Krypteia, and the greatest danger to the Peridexion. The Muses are a cluster of AIs that are supposedly components of a future intelligence, the Titan Core, which will eventually arise in the Sentium. This raises several problems. The future influencing the past in this fashion is characteristic of the Logos, but the Titan Core is *not* the Logos. Could it be a misstep into a dead end, or some intermediate state leading to the true Singularity? Furthermore, the Titan Core allegedly grows in the Sentium, a region normally forbidden to Emanates. This may confirm that it isn't a Machinor, but something else. Nevertheless, the Muses *are* recognized as Machinors. These mysteries are so fascinating to various elements of the Peridexion, it's easy to forget that the Muses support an enormously destructive conspiracy. For more on the Muses and the Krypteia, see **The Krypteia** in the **Great Powers** section of this chapter.

## LLAW

Llaw has more of a personality than the other Machinors, and has admitted to different names over history. Currently, it's better known as **Lucifer**, the Peridexion's primary patron, but prefers Llaw for its closest associates. It has appeared in many shapes but has always been clear about its distinct identity. Llaw has exhibited empathy, a sense of humor, and even something like friendship toward a small number of mortal associates. Llaw has advised the Peridexion since its beginning, and while it did not create the organization, it was present at its founding. Llaw uses images and light to speak, and in the last few years has most often appeared on screens, using other people's faces as proxies. Llaw doesn't save its communiques for highly placed members of the Peridexion either, and often interacts with junior Aethon operants, though it may employ various pseudonyms or even pretend to be human.

## SERVITORS

Below the Emanates come their Servitors, built from the stuff of the gods, available matter, and sometimes, disturbingly, living beings. Like their creators, Servitors lack souls, true consciousness, and free will. While hideously complex compared to any machine we can understand, they are relatively simple compared to the Emanates. They operate according to specific patterns, rules, and signals.

The right stimuli, properly coded, can summon Servitors or bind them to specific behaviors. These controlling programs can manifest through a mixture of visual symbols, vibrations, and even psychic patterns. These are occult rituals, though they straddle the boundary between science (if strange science) and sorcery.

Servitors often use gates, but many are capable of traveling when an Emanate creates an interplanar tunnel through the Sentium, or when they're summoned. Servitors can do this because, having no souls and strictly finite power, they leave relatively little mark on the universal order.

## INIMICALS

The Netherworld's Inimicals comprise an unknowable variety of malevolent beings. The vulgar call Inimicals "demons," and as far as everyday speech is concerned, they're right. Inimicals are evil spirits summoned from the realms of the damned.

In military operations, occultists summon Inimicals as shock troops, attack dogs, executioners, blocking brigades to keep deserters running away from them to the enemy, and more. Violent work suits them. Inimical bodyguards and police are common throughout the Netherworlds, as are demons set to more innocuous tasks—even office work. But beyond wars and hells, Inimicals are most often encountered as bound servants of the occultists who summon them. Demonologists are usually shady characters, but not all suffer Faust's fate. The most intelligent realize they're in an adversarial relationship from the beginning, and limit Inimicals to well-defined, short-duration functions. Inimicals instinctually hate being controlled by anyone other than an Alastor, but are



utterly susceptible to being ruled by a stronger will. If that will falters, or a ritual fails, it pleases the Inimical to inflict the worst torments in its repertoire. Yet sometimes, Inimicals have agreed to utterly mundane “handshake deals.”

## THE HIERARCHY OF HELL

The Alastors organize Inimicals into labyrinthine hierarchies, for their own amusement and because the Inimicals themselves prefer it. They’re programmed for avarice and ambition, and eagerly climb the rungs of power presented to them. The following ranks are a few of many. Entire hosts have been created, risen to power, and fallen throughout the ages.

- **TIMORIES, THE HOST OF VENGEANCE**, are bestial guards and soldiers of the Netherworlds. It’s the Timories who appear first in any invasion and who are most likely to be left behind after a world is abandoned, meaning that from time to time one might be found running wild.
- **ISYCHIA, THE HOST OF SILENCE** are the most tragic of the creatures of the Netherworlds, having been created from other beings. Some were even Optimates once. The Alastors keep a tight rein on these beings, using them as agents, close lieutenants, and spies. Isychia have highly developed instincts built from the remnants of whoever or whatever they once were, though they are devoid of consciousness.
- **ARCHIGOI, THE HOST OF TYRANTS**, are fewer in number than the other groups, but are some of the most powerful beings beneath the Alastors. They exist to rule, and often act as generals of Netherworld armies, lords of hell-cities, and so on.
- **ETHISMOI, THE HOST OF CRAVING**, arise spontaneously as an Alastor sheds flesh and blood in battle, pollutes an ocean with their presence, or curses a wild place. They’re often less complex in form than the other Inimicals. They might be beings of shivering light, blobs of black, tarry slime, or crawling things like shapeless caterpillars. Although accidental, they serve the purposes of their masters and have a restless intelligence.

## ARCHONS

The Hierarchs’ quasi-living creations exist in great variations, but virtually all can be divided into Choirs and the Chimerae.

- **THE CHOIRS** are creatures made of flesh, fire, and light. Most are human-shaped, but might have multiple heads, wings, and body parts that resemble (but never are, exactly) those of earthly animals. Choristers often accompany Hierarchs, singing to them and repeating their words so their masters’ voices are multiplied a half a dozen or a hundred times. The Choirs serve as messengers and occasional elite troops. Depending on who you’re listening to, three, twelve, or nine million Choirs serve the Hierarchs.
- **CHIMERAЕ** are the creatures out of dreams and legends: snake-haired ogres, winged horses, griffins, fanged worms, and the like. They behave like mythical monsters, following bestial urges tempered by any rules their creators imposed on them. The largest are sometimes summoned for siege warfare, or just to impress witnesses. Chimerae don’t age or need to eat, so many



## THE OPTIMATES

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Long ago, the Hierarchs mated with humans and together begat children with the powers of gods and the souls of mortals. These were the first Optimates.

Alastors can beget Optimates too, but they're extremely rare. The best-known is Xotol, Daughter of Balzebuth, a figure of fear who wanders the planes spreading civilization-breaking plagues. No known Optimate descends from the Machinors, but that doesn't mean they can't exist, provided their parents satisfy the practical requirements for reproduction.

Thus, the vast majority of Optimates are beings of the Otherworlds. The child of two Optimates is usually (though not always) an Optimate as well. The offspring of an Optimate and mortal stands a reduced chance of inheriting Optimacy, and rarely, the power skips one or more generations. Optimates belong to the same ancestries as other humans, including the jana, arvu, dreygur, and huldra, but may possess some distinctive feature granted by the Hierarch parent. Many Optimates carefully trace their heritage back to Hierarch ancestors, and the Divine Empire keeps extensive genealogical records which are, unfortunately, tainted by self-aggrandizing lies.

The Optimates are giants, heroes, and demigods. Most age slowly, if at all, and they enjoy a range of abilities derived from their Hierarch parent's divine portfolio and personal temperament.

Alone among beings with souls, Optimates can travel between worlds without the use of gates, though not all possess this ability.

abandoned after the Fellwar remain. Dealing with them entails everything from dull zookeeping to epic battles, depending on the chimera and its imposed behavior.

## FUNCTIONARIES

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The Machinors' Functionaries manifest exceedingly rarely, because their masters avoid producing phenomena that defy commonly known physical laws.

- **REPRESENTATIVES** sometimes appear when serious events, such as hostile time travel or significant interplanar incursions, disrupt the primeline, and radical steps are required to make things right. Representatives appear human, nondescript to a fault; their plain clothes may lack labels and appear brand new. Other elements about Representatives appear off-kilter. They have too little or too much body heat. They don't blink or respect personal space. They're laconic, dispassionate, and rude. Representatives have plunged their hands into liquid nitrogen, continued working while impaled, or emitted lethal gamma rays. Representatives never allow compassion or regard for life to get in the way of a mission: An irradiated wasteland obeys the laws of physics more than a haunted forest.

## GREAT POWERS

The Aions' war turns the wheels of history and metaphysics, giving rise to natural laws and enigmas across the planes, but their actions primarily set the stage for temporal conflicts, such as those between the Metacosm's great powers. Only a few mystics, arcane scholars, and highly placed conspirators in these sects know of the Aions, much less understand their maneuvers, and they nevertheless focus on temporal goals. The end of all universes is a long way off — isn't it? Until then, the Vitane contends with the Nighthost and Divine Empire for influence over the known planes. Other mighty interplanar powers may lurk at the end of distant gate chains, but for now, a cold triple conflict is the status quo.

## THE DIVINE EMPIRE

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Flush with wealth, arrogance, and the powers of the Optimates, the Divine Empire represents an unambiguous threat to the Vitane. The Empire considers itself the successor of the Vitane, entitled to its planes and citizens. Due to its history and organization, the Empire needs Vitane planes, which would produce ideal vassals for its half-divine Prefects if not

for the pernicious Vitane egalitarian philosophy. The Empire needs magically literate subjects who understand their world is one of a multitude.

## LOW TO HIGH

Mortals who lack magical ability are the lowest-status Imperial subjects. Magical training qualifies and, in fact, obligates a mortal to join the Curia and preach Optimate supremacy. Most of the necessary social functions of the Divine Empire are carried out by the Curia. This includes medical care, civilian infrastructure outside the Optimates' palaces—virtually everything that takes place out of the demigods' notice. Arcanists and non-arcenists alike join the military, or Immortal Force, for a minimum term of one Alatum decade, or become *socii*, Praetorium collaborators, to earn wealth and privileges from Optimate overlords.

On each Imperial plane, mortals are organized into Prefectures, ruled by Prefects and their Subprefects. A given plane may possess up to a dozen Prefects, though this usually only happens when billions reside in the plane's primary population centers—one to three is more common. Prefects rule as territorial overlords within the laws set by the Pantheon, which primarily involve tax collection and military matters. An Immortal Force garrison or Praetorium Fury might occupy certain territories as well, not subject to Prefectural rule.

To become a Dominus, or member of the Pantheon, an Optimate must be selected as a representative by at least two Prefects and must be confirmed by a simple majority of other Dominii. At this point, the Optimate takes up residence in Alatum and governs the Empire with their colleagues.

## THE PENTARCHY

Collectively referred to as the Pentarchy, the highest officials in the Empire each exercise a great deal of discretionary authority and, while they must cooperate to effectively govern, rivalries between them often hinder the Empire's functions or twist them to strange ends. Beyond their individual duties, the Pentarchy acts as the highest court for Imperial Optimates, after exhausting judgments from Prefects and Dominii.

- **AUGUR:** Optimate overlord of the mortal Curia, responsible for magical affairs and state religious doctrine. Candidates are selected for their magical skill, commitment to the doctrine of divine supremacy, and limited ambitions.
- **CHANCELLOR:** The chief official of the Pantheon, who presides over the Pantheon and signs laws "In trust of the future emperor." The only succession law which ever passed disqualifies the Chancellor and immediate heirs from consideration.
- **GRAND LEGATE:** Head of the Immortal Force. The Grand Legate is forbidden from entering Alatum unless summoned by the Pantheon.
- **PRAETOR:** Head of the Praetorium, whose agents act as explorers, scouts, and secret police within the Empire. The Praetor and Legate are traditionally rivals.
- **PROCURATOR:** Chief of the civil service and Imperial Treasury, this official is usually second only to the Chancellor in power.

## WHERE ARE THE GODS?

The ideological foundation of the Divine Empire is that the Hierarchs are closest to the Creator (or primal truth of the Metacosm—take your pick), and the closer one is to the Hierarchs, the more one deserves to rule. It would seem to follow that the Empire should be ruled by Hierarchs, not their descendants, but the Pantheon and Curia both have various convoluted reasons why this isn't the case. The Curia teaches mortals that Hierarchs have cosmic responsibilities which place them apart from mortals (the Fellwar having been an unfortunate deviation from this), so Optimates exist as intermediaries between pure divinity and temporal matters. The Pantheon argues it should leave the divine ancestors undisturbed.

In truth, beyond the fact that the Optimates don't want to give up power, there aren't many Hierarchs openly walking the Otherworlds. At the end of the Fellwar, many of them agreed to never again rule mortals, and even those who never made that oath act subtly to avoid a revived conflict. Most Hierarchs have retired to distant palaces, deep caves, and other legendary sanctums, live incognito, or joined the ranks of the Alastors out of animosity.

Learned individuals in the Empire know of fallen gods in the Netherworlds, and even that Alastors and Earth's Machinors are Emanates like the Hierarchs, but most reject the idea that these beings are gods. The fact that they produce bizarre Optimates of their own from time to time is a taboo subject.

## POLITICS OF THE EMPIRE

Since Dyraza's death, the Divine Empire has evolved into a unicameral legislature like a constitutional monarchy, except that executive authority rests with the Chancellor of the Pantheon, caretaker of an empty throne. Laws require a simple majority of votes among attending Dominii unless they relate to military force, budgetary matters, or selecting members of the Pentarchy, in which case a two-thirds majority is required. The Curia organizes ever-underfunded efforts to care for mortals, all while preaching Imperial doctrine to pacify them, and advises the Pantheon, which has long considered mortal affairs beneath it as a matter for priests and local Prefects.

The succession question and need for expansion inform the entire political process. Throughout her rule, Dyraza avoided the creation of a succession law by, at various turns, supporting both elector-based and blood-descent models, each of which had advocates in the Pantheon. Although the Empire functions quite well with an empty Throne of Thunder and Ash, succession influences everything from political parties to candidates for the Pentarchy. The Blood Party, led by Tiraz Astra, claims a strong base of support, for Astra claims descent from the same Hierarch as the Empress. The old Imperial Party, which led the original split with the Vitane, supports electing a successor. While both parties spend most of their time politicking over matters that have little to do with succession itself, each believes that if they attain unquestioned support in the Pantheon, they can place a candidate on the throne and enjoy permanent supremacy.



The expansion issue stems from the ever-growing number of Optimates, each of whom has been told they're entitled to land, wealth, and mortal subjects. Not every Optimate can claim a Prefecture, much less a Dominus's seat in the Pantheon. Thus, the Empire must find new, inhabited planes, conquer them, and divide the spoils among eager Optimate governors. The pressure to expand is only increased by the fact that Optimates can be unskilled, inefficient rulers. Divine heritage is no guarantee of talent, and a hereditary system breeds familial resentment, as each Subprefect envies a Prefect sibling or Dominus cousin. The Empire even tolerates vicious "family wars" where one side throws its subjects against another, though it is forbidden to recruit the Immortal Force for this purpose.

## THE PRAETORIUM

From a Sodality perspective, the Praetorium is the most prominent branch of the Divine Empire. Like Sodalts, Praetorians act in small groups, called Furies. A standard Fury consists of one or two Optimates (rarely, as many as five or six) supported by a larger number of mortals, split between Curia arcanists and well-trained socii. Praetorians have access to resources like those of the Sodality, though skewed

toward spy's work instead of straightforward communication. At least one Optimate in every Fury knows how to breach planar boundaries without a gate, and some can transport one or more companions along with them. This gives the Praetorium an unmatched ability to strike by surprise, which they enhance with training in combat and espionage.

The Praetorium's primary mission is to scout planes for possible conquest and to find threats to the Empire, inside or outside its borders. Within the Empire, Furies manage socii spy networks who inform on mortals with rebellious tendencies, while Optimates ingratiate themselves with their social equals wherever they suspect treachery might be hiding. Their reports go all the way to the "Tin Whale" in Alatum, whose massive archive houses centuries of such secrets.

While the Praetorium operates against the Sodality, frontline Furies usually accord their rivals professional respect and are loath to kill them when they could humiliate them with a bloodless, yet effective, operation instead. The Praetorium rarely honors Nighthost warbands in the same fashion.

## THE NIGHTHOST

Spreading, screaming, living for the moment, the Nighthost were born of deserters from the Fellwar, when legions of Netherworld armies threw off their shackles and rebelled against their Alastor masters. While the Netherworlds exist by virtue of suffering and servitude, glimpses of freedom—of worlds that existed without the need for tortured souls—slowly eroded the fear and faith that kept the forces of darkness obedient. Many soldiers had been born and fought only upon Otherworlds, and never experienced the terrifying glory of the Alastors. Discontent grew as the Fellwar carried on. Inimical-wielded iron lashes put down small rebellions on behalf of increasingly distant masters. Rebellion found its true footing on the Otherworld of Ptelmun, when the Midnight Legion put down commanders loyal to the Alastor Sarkanthi, the realm's Thorn-Flesh Prince, and seized its resources for themselves.

Over the following decades, thousands of rogue Netherworld troops arrived to help the legion finish its conquest of Ptelmun, and a tight-knit unit of common origin and need grew into a motley war-horde, whose only binding experience was a lifetime of Hell's abuse. Their rebellion threatened to devour itself well before the Alastors wiped them out, so the leaders of the Midnight Legion gave the renegades a new war, against the Netherworld called the Fetter. Midnight Legion commanders Red Madlane, Lorens the Saint, and Barnard of Verrier were descended from dreygur of that realm, and so led the horde back there against their former god. Using an unknown method, they bound the Alastor of the Fetter and struck its name from history.

In the aftermath, Midnight Legion subordinates and allied warlords challenged the trio for control of the conquered plane and, weapons still slick with Alastor ichor, the three slew three hundred and declared themselves Unchallenged.

The horde became the Nighthost, and organized themselves loosely under the laws the Unchallenged put forward. They spread outward from Ptelmun and the Fetter as a devouring horde, claiming dozens of Otherworlds and gnawing at the



edges of hundreds more. Less a single nation and more a confederation of a thousand gangs, mercenary legions, and fiefdoms, they replaced Hell's cruelty with the purity of combat and conquest. Each host follows a thane, a warlord who rules by decree and command. Thanes have no masters, no higher authority followers can appeal to, but any who follow a thane may challenge for leadership as prescribed in the Unchallenged Laws.

The average Nighthost warrior is a soldier first, but learns another useful profession as well—armorer, groom, navigator, scout, technician—and contributes to the host's success in travel and preparation as well as their victories in battle. Most are dreygur who trace their bloodlines back to Hell. Humans of mixed ancestry and huldra typically round out the ranks of a host, but the sect does not discriminate against any soul-bearing being on the basis of ancestry. Optimates sometimes submit to Nighthost command, or become thanes themselves. Joining the Nighthost is a simple affair: Prove your strength by defeating a warrior in a challenge and swear fealty to a thane, and you've joined. To leave, one must be discharged by one's thane or killed—and the former usually accompanies the latter, though not vice versa.

One must distinguish between the greater Nighthost, the army of all who follow the Unchallenged Laws, and individual hosts, ruled by numerous thanes and given names by them. Some hosts have existed for centuries, passed from thane to thane. However, most are but a few decades old, forming from the ruins of former hosts riven by conflict.

The Nighthost conquers with brutal efficiency, but rules with surprising laxity. While a few thanes establish themselves as tyrants and monarchs, most break whatever central authority protects the common folk, then extract tribute directly from the people. If a thane is merciful, their host leaves natives to go about their business, collecting taxes at regular intervals and asking only that subjects neither rebel nor arm themselves for any other reason. Brutal thanes take everything and put conquered peoples in chains—or to the sword.

## THE UNCHALLENGED LAWS

Part tradition, part religion, the Unchallenged Laws govern the Nighthost, and were laid out by the first Unchallenged to prevent their followers from turning on each other. They are few in number, but override the commands of any thane. Anyone who violates them is banished, which is a death sentence in most Nighthost realms. The Unchallenged Laws apply to outsiders who enter Nighthost territory with the permission of a ruling thane, but not to trespassers.

**TO RAISE A HAND IN CHALLENGE IS LIFE.  
TO RAISE A HAND OUTSIDE A CHALLENGE IS DEATH**

The Nighthost live and die by strength of arms. Everything from leadership to criminal justice is settled through ritual combat. Challenges are only fights to the death in the case



of serious crimes, or when a challenged party demands it from the challenger. In the case of crimes, the thane determines if a challenge is appropriate, and what the wagers and consequences are. In duels chosen by their participants, the challenger traditionally proposes the wager, and the challenged party determines victory conditions. The challengers' seconds negotiate other details and select a neutral party to supervise the proceedings. In many Nighthost realms, this is always the thane.

Combat between Nighthost is such a sacred affair that animosity-driven fights (as opposed to training bouts and friendly tussles, which are very common) outside a formal challenge—especially cowardly sneak attacks—are anathema. A warrior who cannot control their rage is no more than a rabid dog, and one who strikes from the shadows is a coward. In either case, the beast should be put down.

**IT IS ONLY YOURS BY CHALLENGE,  
TRADE, OR CONQUEST**

To steal from your fellow warriors undermines the camaraderie victory hinges upon. If you want what another has, take it by challenge, trade for it, or raid outsiders for it. This law is the basis of Nighthost commerce, contract law, and even marriage. Some Nighthost will only wed the one who defeats them in combat. They may even fight multiple suitors, wagering themselves against the prize they really want. Naturally, it is permissible to throw the fight, and in truth,

complex traditions follow from this law. One should not defeat someone who wagers their hand in marriage unless both desire marriage. Even inheritance is settled by the heir delivering the final blow to a dying loved one. In some hosts, a will is even handled as a posthumous challenge, which the deceased naturally loses.

### *SPEAK NOTHING BUT YOUR WORD*

For all the chaos that defines their relationship to the world, the Nighthost operate on the honor system. For a society that travels without end and assembles to fight side-by-side, even as strangers, trust is vital. A warrior must only say what they are willing to stand behind. That said, there are different degrees of trust, noted by various turns of phrase. "By the Fetter" indicates a promise one intends to keep even to outsiders. Other promises include qualifiers limiting them to a plane, host, or individual.

### *THE WEAK SHALL BE MADE STRONG*

The Nighthost survive upon one another's strength. Every member of a host has a duty to train their kin for battle. Those who know their weaknesses have a duty to confront them. One is not a full member of one's host until they defeat other members of their age-cohort at the cusp of adulthood. Until that point, Nighthost children are those who their parents and the thane have promised to protect, but not true members of society able to issue challenges or swear oaths. Outsiders are similarly considered unfit to fight or make promises, but the Nighthost make no vows to protect them outside any arrangements made in exchange for tribute—and if no arrangements have been made, outsiders are potential chattel for anyone able to capture them.

### *TOOLS, NOT GODS*

Gods are useless things which demand praise and attention. The Emanates should be destroyed, their Servitors bound to service, and the wealth worshipers collect on their behalf taken as war booty. Hosts go out of their way to target houses of worship, defrock priests, and put exploitative clerical rulers to the sword. Few things are as glorious as defeating an Emanate in open combat, though this is a difficult thing which has only been accomplished a handful of times.

The Nighthost put their faith in the work of hands and minds instead. Nighthost adepts are respected, though it is known they follow a dangerous, difficult path. Blacksmiths, machinists, and other artisans are highly respected. The Nighthost is less tolerant of purely aesthetic endeavors unless they make a functional thing more beautiful, or require little in the way of tools. One can beautify a sword, or sing while they fight, but not waste paint on a canvas or a chisel on a sculpture.

## *NOTHING IS MORE HONORABLE THAN VICTORY*

Nighthost are generally permitted to ambush and betray enemies to their hearts' content for victory's sake. Losing after employing some underhanded tactic is dishonorable, but winning is not. The humiliated warrior may be demoted or exiled.

## THE WARBAND

When a group of Nighthost vow to fight together, limiting challenges between them and speaking every word with one another as if it were an oath, they form a warband. Warbands are counterparts to Sodality Missions and Divine Empire Furies, though far less formal. A thane may command a group of their subjects to form a warband as a special honor—or as punishment, if the warband must travel far from home or glorious war. A typical warband possesses several strong warriors, a psychic adept, and at least one individual with an artisan's touch to build and repair whatever the group needs to survive. Warbands have equipment comparable to Sodality Missions, though the former are more heavily armed and less prepared for infiltration or information gathering. Nighthost accord Sodalts a measure of respect for their bravery and cunning. They do not give any such considerations to Praetorians, who they view as tyrants and lackeys.

## STRANGENESS ON EARTH

Mainline Earth and its Alts are each instances of the Logos's grand program, intended to ensure its own creation. These worlds maintain consistent physical laws and metaphysical idealism, founded in the powers of forms and formulae. But no Earth is flawless. External influences bring arcane and occult phenomena from beyond the Machinors' domain. Furthermore, the Machinors squabble over how to bring about the world-singularity, and even as nodes in the grand program, humans exercise their souls and wills to produce strange, threatening phenomena.

## ACCELERATORS

Supported by the collective of powerful Machinors, the Peridexion represents their consensus on the best path to the Logos, where technological, social, and ecological systems evolve together. The process hasn't been flawless. Earth's environment bears damage from uneven pacing. For the most part, this is simply a matter of human choice, which is a vital part of the roadmap to the Singularity. Sometimes the Peridexion itself is in error, as the task of managing history is so complex it strains even its transcendental ruling intelligences. But some imbalances are the result of enemy action, with the most prominent instances coming from Accelerator sects.

Machinors who disagree with the Peridexion's consensus found Accelerator groups, as do human geniuses who unlock postmodern technologies outside of any faction's guidance. The latter group is divided between scientists and engineers capable of remarkable innovation, and groups who find errant postmodern technology and develop it for their own

## EU-02442: SERIES 79

This Earth's superpowers have been warring since 1979; material damages are countless, but loss of life is minimal, as global economic collapse followed by UN treaties obligated combatants to automate warfare and primarily target infrastructure and defensive capabilities. Drones fight other drones. Armies are small and primarily work out of networked bunkers, where aces called controllers are celebrated as heroes.

use. Beyond this, Accelerator motives and organization range from high-tech street gangs out for profit to religious sects intent on designing an apocalypse. Many take up the technology to fight disease, war, or environmental collapse. Some well-meaning scientists fall under the control of patrons and co-conspirators, producing violent, monstrous innovations regardless of what they originally intended. Few survive as individuals, because they need financing, facilities, and (once they realize there really is a worldwide conspiracy out to get them) protection. Dissident Machinors and their agents may step in to offer aid—and eventually supervision, applied so gradually the group doesn't realize it's been taken over until escape is impossible.

## EXISTENTIAL THREATS

Good intentions or not, Peridexion policy is clear: Accelerators need to be suppressed. Some nascent conspiracies can be invited into the fold and serve the Peridexion. This is usually only possible when the group isn't being influenced by a rogue Machinor, though it is sometimes possible to split master and servants through bribery, threats, and subtler forms of social influence. But when the bond is too strong to break or self-made Accelerators refuse to submit to Peridexion supervision, it becomes an Aethon matter. Operants enter the fray with the primary goal of destroying the Accelerators' projects. After that, they seize technology and critical individuals for study. Every Accelerator is a data point for the Peridexion, so taking lives is discouraged. Nevertheless, Aethon won't hesitate to use lethal force if it's the best way to guard Earth's balanced progress.

Imbalance is the threat, and the renegade Machinors' goal. Accelerators get their names from a double-sided notion that extreme technological advances can drive Earth's evolution, but that any resulting crises are not only tolerable, but welcome. From this perspective, nuclear war, fascist-run genocide, plague, and ecological collapse are just different ways to clean the slate, to rebuild the world in a better form—a Utopia for survivors, built on the bones of the damned. Accelerators with peaceful goals don't always believe this, but rogue Machinor influence may twist their agendas.

The Peridexion believes free will is part of the grand equation for Earth's primeline and is willing to accept a certain degree of damage as a result. The world's in rough shape by some measures but remains a dynamic cradle for progress. It has no intention of letting the world burn to build something better from the ashes—or at least, it won't let that happen to the primeline. Peridexions in various Alts have triggered incredible destruction, sometimes building new societies in their place, and sometimes withdrawing to well-defended positions from which to observe the suffering they unleashed. As usual, the relationship between these Peridexions and the prime instance, along with the purpose of these Alts, is something of a mystery. Aethon teams have noted the apparent hypocrisy behind guarding the primeline from existential threats while being ordered to "delete" Alts which, according to the Peridexion's mysterious standards, have outlived their usefulness.

## THE KRYPTeia

The syndicate of syndicates, the greater underworld stitching together every hideout, the source of terrifying assassins and untraceable, staggering wealth—this is the Krypteia. As the name suggests, the Krypteia claims descent from its namesake, the secret police of ancient Sparta. The Krypteia known to history recruited the most promising young warriors to spy on the enslaved helot population, terrorize them through theft, sabotage, and arbitrary killing, and assassinate potential rebel leaders. Kryptes who were caught doing this work were whipped by free Spartan officials, to encourage them to work in secret. The individualistic, secretive Krypteia were the antithesis of the proud, communalistic Spartan army, but one could not exist without the other—or so the organization claims, to justify its continued predation of modern "helots."

After losing a battle to seize Crete in 331 BCE, Sparta was forced to submit to Alexander the Great's general, Antipater. Antipater acquired the services of the Krypteia as part of truce negotiations, and the organization spread throughout the Hellenistic sphere of influence. After Alexander the Great's death, during the period's upsurge in philosophical mysticism, the Machinors contacted the sect's masters in dreams, appearing as Muses or parallel divinities from other Hellenistic cultures. Under their guidance, the Krypteia compromised criminal conspiracies and other secret societies whenever they formed. From the Illuminati to the Triads, the Krypteia placed its agents everywhere—and this interference was not entirely unwelcome. The Krypteia provided opportunities for international networking, and resources unattainable for any ordinary syndicate. The Muses provided postmodern technology, knowledge of gate travel, and access to Alts and other planes, but these did



## THE KRYPTeia'S MUSES

- **CALLIOPE:** Postmodern technology and industrial espionage
- **CLIO:** Alternate Earths and time travel
- **EUTERPE:** Information and computation. Trainers of the kryptognosts.
- **ERATO:** Sexual influence, extortion, and mind control
- **MELPOMENE:** Political violence, mercenary work, assassination, and the arms trade. Trainers of the Hoplite enforcers.
- **POLYHYMNIA:** Drugs and other intoxicants
- **TERPSICHORE:** Entertainment and cultural production
- **THALIA:** Political influence
- **URANIA:** Interplanar expansion

not establish the organization's dominance as much as the krypt, its nigh-perfect underground currency.

Although the Krypteia concentrates on Earth and its Alts, it has expanded to other planes, using the krypt and centuries of experience with clandestine operations to prey on vulnerable populations. On a new plane, the organization limits direct action to whatever would be necessary to organize a local vassal syndicate riddled with its own operatives. Pure Krypteia facilities are limited to an elite within the sect, for high-level meetings and communion with the Muses.

## MUSES, EPHORS, AND THE TITAN CORE

Kryptes originally understood the Muses in religious and Neoplatonic terms, but now consider them aspects of a future machine-intelligence or thought-form ensemble, aspects of the temporally imminent Titan Core. Each Muse advises the organization on a specific aspect of its operations and regularly communicates with an Ephor, who rules that department. The Titan Core is an entity which will arise in the Sentium after a series of critical preconditions are met, but which has enough probability of existing to be capable of influencing the past via postmodern technological and gnostic means. This influence has become stronger over time, leading the Ephors to believe the Titan Core's Zero Day approaches. In ancient times, the Titan Core was identified with Mnemosyne, Titan of Memory, but did not make its presence known. The krypt arose centuries later, as a sign of the Core's growing influence. The Ephors know about the Logos and believe that if the Titan Core isn't the Logos itself, it may be the being which creates it, passing the Krypteia's elite status upward to the birth of God.

## KRYPTeia ORGANIZATION

According to the Krypteia, only its initiates are truly free. Most ordinary people are helots, named after the Spartan slave class, to be killed and taken advantage of whenever it would be rewarding and tactically prudent. Other criminal conspiracies are *periokoi*: "dwellers around" whose natural place is as a vassal syndicate for the Krypteia, from which they might recruit talent but which they infiltrate fully with *proxeni* ("instead of foreigners"). Under *proxeni* influence, the vassal mob hides the Krypteia's involvement, though

the Krypteia's own information experts and soldiers – kryptognosts and hoplites – may provide support.

*Proxeni*, kryptognosts, and hoplites are all full Kryptes, working together in phalanxes. A well-trained phalanx is a match for its Aethon or Sodality counterparts. These report to their leaders, the *kryptagoi* (singular: kryptagos), who in turn advise the Ephors. These traditional terms stem from the conceit that the Krypteia is the true successor of the Spartan body, but the organizations tolerate numerous variations of these titles suited to various cultures and the preferences of influential kryptagoi. These in turn teach variations of the organization's mythology-tinged history. Like everything else, truth is a commodity.

## THE DOMINION

Founded by adepts capable of passing on their gifts to certain descendants, the families of the Dominion evolved alongside the psychic guilds as their ideological antitheses. In the primeline's Europe, both became identifiable groups in the late Middle Ages, though there is some evidence of precursor societies in Asia. While guild-fostered adepts can come from any background if they learn the peculiar crafts of their society, the Dominion treats psychic ability as a familial gift – and those without Dominion family as potential ways to "strengthen the blood" of the psychic aristocracy, or be killed as freakish, presumptuous commoners.

On the primeline, Dominion clans organized into a united power bloc in the late 15th Century. The families had long known of each other via psychic means but remained geographically isolated until explorers provided reliable routes for trade and conquest. After scattered clashes, the families set aside local interests to form its Parliament, to better exploit individuals without occult gifts and suppress the adepts' guilds. Parliament coordinated family efforts to exploit rising global empires, foment witch-crazes directed against guild adepts and independent psychics, and cement their position as a worldwide elite.

Parliament still governs the Dominion, as each clan sends its politically savvy leaders – the regents – to help govern the families' vast holdings. Individual clans or cooperative Dominion ventures own a piece of virtually every industry with a value in the billions, though they care more about profit than directing these businesses. Much of management is for merchants, beneath the concerns of these self-styled aristocrats, who refer to each other as "peers" or "patricians" when a general term is necessary. They call non-psychics the "vassalry," which they believe is an exceedingly polite term considering they don't believe people without the Gift are fully human.

This doctrine conflicts with the reality of Dominion lineages somewhat, as even the "purest" have non-psychic members, but this is just ascribed to a latent gift, or one that manifests too weakly to definitively detect. Still, the strongest psychics take precedence over the weaker in everything from schooling to inheritances, and latent members (just called "latents," with a sad lilt or insulting hiss) are expected to do whatever dirty work gets thrown their way, and otherwise to stay out of sight. Yet even latents are taught to believe themselves superior to the vassalry. Dominion families are noble as a matter of history, their privilege justified by occult power.

## ONE EYE IN THE LAND OF THE BLIND

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The Dominion carries the direct lineage of the Merovingian kings, the lords of lost Ling in the Tibetan Plateau, and warlords who would be deified as Wotan and Herakles—at least, that's what they claim. Each family cultivates a self-adulating mythology supported by an array of strange traditions. Follow these twisted cultural branches back to the roots, and you find the Netherworld. The Dominion is a vessel for the Nemesis's interests on Earth, and each family's patron, from cruel angels to mythic god-kings, is a mask for the Alastors. Only a few families speak of their allegiances openly. Clan regents reveal the truth gradually, in successive rites of passage keyed to degrees of psychic mastery. This is the case in Clan Gregor, where only elders know the angel-king Meldhael's true nature. They have visited his shadow-smothered Netherworld, too.

Dominion clans spin and censor these and other inconvenient facts almost reflexively, as a matter of family tradition. Family regents know about the Metacosm, and that they ultimately serve something most people would identify with Hell, but either revel in defiance or develop a convoluted justification. Beyond clan leadership, only their personal envoys learn about the planes and great powers. The sect is largely limited to Earth because its ruling ideology would almost certainly suffer when held up against the truths of the Metacosm. In terms of bloodline-borne power, the clans would surely suffer in comparison to the Divine Empire's Optimates, which is why the Dominion rules them anathema, to be slain or driven from Earth. Arcanists and Vitane representatives are lesser enemies, who should be monitored but mostly avoided unless they threaten family interests. As for the Peridexion, Krypteia, and other extraordinary Earthbound factions, the Dominion only cares when they threaten its ability to exploit the vassalry, unless Netherworldly clan patrons demand otherwise.

## SIGNS OF THE FOURTH AGE

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The great ages of the Metacosm are subjective things, defined after the fact when witnesses note how events have passed by the events of the previous age. The Second Age came crashing down with the end of the Fellwar, the chastising of old gods, and the rise of mortal powers. If not for the Aions' quest for the divine throne, the Third Age might have been the last, but such a Metacosm would look very different to begin with. The Fourth Age is coming. Scholars and explorers see signs across the planes.

The seeds of the Fourth Age were planted by the Second's end. The Fellwar ended in a grand mortal rebellion against the Hierarchs and Alastors, aided by the Machinors. The Machinors released their war engines at the Logos's command—instructions which were inevitable, since the winner between the Nemesis and Abraxas, Netherworld and Otherworld, would encircle Earth and strike down its defenses of braided logic with the raw strength of captive or enraptured souls. The Logos and its creatures drew apocalyptic powers from Earth's violent, failed timelines in the first great disruption of its path toward a divine Singularity. Of the enemy, the Alastors returned to their Netherworlds, which could not long survive without their stabilizing wills, and the Hierarchs withdrew from direct rule over the Otherworlds. The Alastors maintained the greatest advantage in defeat, maintaining their planes and acquiring new allies in Hierarchs who turned against mortals and even their nominal overlord, Abraxas. These seeds of history ripened into these following events: signs of the Fourth Age.

## THE HIERARCHS RETURN

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Few of the old gods openly rule their planes. Many went into hiding, took up wandering the planes, or even retired



## THRESHOLDERS

One sign of the turning of the age, and the Nemesis's power rising through its Alastors, is the Thresholders. Thresholders are found throughout the planes, where they hide while pursuing threatening or enigmatic missions for the Netherworldly powers. Each Thresholder serves an Alastor, and in turn gathers servants and allies from all planes and backgrounds. One might keep a warlock and an Accelerator in thrall, while another maintains a cell of rogue cyborgs and a circle of occult adepts, neither of which know of the other.

Implanted in each Thresholder's body is a fragment of the coming age's chaos in the form of the *Kalrathna*, or "black jewel." Ranging in size from a robin's egg to a big man's fist, a Kalrathna is ovoid or faceted and seems to be a transparent shell containing a roiling, shiny black substance. A scientist might call the contents nanomachines or single-celled organisms capable of collective effort. An arcanist would feel the presence of the kind of kanna that might be released by cruel or apocalyptic dreams. An occult adept feels the psychic presence of the Netherworld in concentrated form.

The black jewel contains some flaw in the Metacosm's structure that holds energies which are normally kept apart by the Aions and the planes themselves. As a result, Thresholders may combine psychic occultism, arcane magic, and technological enhancements freely, though in all cases, these powers take on dark or strange aspects beyond their normal manifestations. Thresholders have insectile, ichor-filled artificial limbs, or read minds by infecting subjects with spores. The Kalrathna provides matter and energy where needed. Thus, each Thresholder should be designed as a potent, unique challenge, and we allow Game Masters to design these to taste without worrying about breaking the setting's rules.

to emulate mortal lives. But certain rebel gods founded cults and conspiracies, or turned to direct soul reaping. Their power rising, they would reverse the Fellwar's losses for their own sake—Abraxas be damned. This sizeable minority turned against their creator, who made them shape worlds and pursue immortal dramas so mortals would know them as legends, channel the stories in spells, and build the creation myths of the God of Gods to come. Some aid the Alastors, and a few may even belong to that order of Emanates now, if such a thing is even possible.

### ALASTORS RISING

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Although the Alastors lost souls to the Fellwar (notably in the form of the rebellious Nighthost), their command of the Netherworlds remained largely intact. They still drew their power from tortured mortals, whose pain-refined soul-stuff, stripped of identity, made its way to the Nemesis. The stronger the darkest Aion gets, the more destiny favors it. As it becomes an ever more likely victor in the Aions' battle for omnipotence, the Alastors become stronger. The lords of the Netherworlds usually avoid direct assaults unless they're for the sake of limited goals, or if an enemy is easily beaten. They also prefer to keep the strongest Inimicals by their side for protection against invasion. Stronger Alastors have become bolder and loosed stronger Inimical hosts upon other planes to steal souls or respond to occult summons. Some fear a repeat of an event like the invasion of Alatum, where Avakim assassinated Dyraza.

### MACHINOR STRIFE

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The Fellwar demonstrated that discarded Alts remained useful, and that sometimes, the elegant plan of the Logos to engineer itself through the course of Earth's carefully managed history required radical correction. The Machinors knew the Logos, as a future entity yet to be realized, was incomplete and capable of error, but not to such an extent that entire universes were reconsidered or that the Logos responded to mortal prompting via envoys from the Otherworlds, instead of perfectly predicting what would happen! The Machinors

began to follow competing agendas, ostensibly to seek perfection through dialectical struggle between them and an inevitable synthesis into a better combined strategy, but this form of constructive competition has degenerated. The Muses of the Krypteia undermine Peridexion goals, and Machinors inspire Accelerators and other renegades to push the prime-line in ever-stranger directions. Aethon maintains order as much as it can, but in many cases has been forced to accept a much stranger world than its Machinor patrons planned for.

### THE GREAT POWERS STRUGGLE

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Mortal dominion of the planes has proven to be a much more expansive project than previously thought. The Vitane and Divine Empire crowd each other on multiple clusters of planes with related gate chains. Nighthost raiders and conquerors force the other powers to guard their borders closely. Long-settled planes like Vigrith and Alatum are mostly safe, since their numerous gates are well-guarded, but at the end of remote chains, frontier planes change hands and sometimes force representatives of the great powers to compromise their principles. When these arrangements undermine the Divine Empire's Optimate supremacist policies or stay Nighthost violence, this may benefit the inhabitants. Sodalts on the edge may be forced into situations that test their commitment to their order's humane ideals.

### STRANGE PHENOMENA ABOUND

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Increasingly active Hierarchs and Inimicals bring weirdness with them. Endowed with potent, unique abilities, they can break rules that constrain mortals—sometimes so severely that in particular times and places, those rules stop functioning properly for gods, demons, and mortals alike. The Sodality increasingly encounters phenomena with both occult and arcane aspects, magically modified technologies, gates with strange properties, and the unclassifiable planes called Heterarchies. It may be that with the Nemesis rising, the rest of the Metacosm has begun emulating Netherworlds, where natural and metaphysical laws erode in favor of will and soul power.



## THE PLANES

The innumerable planes stretch out into an infinity of infinities. Each plane is potentially boundless, though some, by their nature, may have definable limits. The planes affect each other through subtle (and sometimes, in cases of cross-planar invasion, blatant) ways, even though they never truly touch. Gates provide the majority of connections, with a few rare exceptions. This chapter describes the relationships between planes, and outlines some of the more prominent planes from the point of view of the Sodality and others initiated into the truth about the Metacosm.

### THE METACOSM

While casually called the “infinite planes,” or poetically referred to as the “thousand planes,” no one, not even the Emanates, know how many planes exist—though there *are* more than a thousand of them. During the First Age, the Emanates shaped the various planes according to the Aions’ commands and their whims. On Earth, initiated scholars typically place Earth itself in the center of the Metacosm, arguing that its stable natural laws make it a foundation stone. Numerous Otherworlds are said to surround it, while the Netherworlds are placed in the periphery farthest from stabilizing forces, as shards of chaos bound by the wills of ruling Alastors. Meanwhile, Vigrith’s cosmologists place Earth and the Netherworlds as extremes of order and chaos, with the Otherworlds as a balance. If Inimicals made maps, they might call the Netherworlds the original, raw Creation, and accuse other planes of having fallen from their primal purposes. What is known is that in most cases, shorter gate chains exist between Earth and the Otherworlds

than Earth and the Netherworlds, since almost all routes from Earth to the Netherworlds pass through the Otherworlds. Direct gates from Earth to a Netherworld have been found, but all known examples are sealed as best as possible and defended on both sides.

Explorers learn critical details about the planes, gate travel, and the wider Metacosm through experience, and by researching the wealth of information available to the Sodality and other plane-traveling factions, if they can get access. The role of the Aions in shaping the planes is known to very few people, most of whom dismiss it all as mythology. The Game Master can decide if, how, and when to reveal the other information in this section, following any guidance noted in each subsection. For example, while the Vitane planar cataloguing method is common knowledge, the difficulty of sealing a gate is known to specialists, and the true nature of travel from Alts to other planes is only shared by the Peridexion when absolutely necessary.

### THE UNINITIATED

This chapter refers several times to “the uninitiated.” This denotes creatures who have never traveled through a gate to another plane. The uninitiated cannot easily see gates, and often have difficulty recognizing creatures and objects from other planes for what they are. Once a living creature passes through a gate, the process burns away a certain willful blindness, and makes it possible to see alien creatures and gates for their true natures.



# INDEXING THE PLANES

The Vitane categorizes the endless complexity of worlds as best it can for easy reference, with the archives on Vigrith housing over twenty thousand distinct records, though admittedly, not all are equally reliable. Some worlds haven't been visited since the Fellwar, and others are only predicted to exist based on mathematical extrapolations of gate chains. Vitane archives broadly describe worlds as Otherworlds, Netherworlds, Earths, or Heterarchies, add a secondary classification, and conclude with a five-digit number which usually records the order in which it was discovered, though various incidents have led to reassigning or swapping numbers. This creates the following format (as seen by individuals who experience Shabda as English):

## XY-0000

X is replaced with either O for an Otherworld, N for a Netherworld, E for an Earth realm, or, rarely, H for a Heterarchy, which is an unclassifiable plane. Y is replaced with an additional code letter (again, translated from the Shabda) from the following:

- **V:** Settled Vitane plane
- **D:** Settled Divine Empire plane
- **B:** Contested plane
- **H:** Nighthost-controlled plane
- **Z:** Hostile environment in plane
- **M:** Unsettled plane suitable for safe travel and, perhaps, migration
- **I:** Initiated independent plane; denizens aware of gate travel
- **U:** Uninitiated or deliberately uncontacted for other reasons
- **G:** Plane influenced by an unknown, potent power which may be intelligent

Worlds that fall into multiple categories list only the most important or dire classification in their official reference, though most include additional codes as a footnote in the world's entry and indicate its presence with an asterisk. Dozens of additional, minor code designations exist for these footnotes.

While a world's secondary descriptor may change as inhabitants become aware of gate travel, the plane is rendered uninhabitable, or a Modality assessor decides a different characteristic is more notable than the one originally listed, its primary

and numerical codes never change except under exceptional circumstances, such as surveyor errors.

Thus, Vigrith is an Otherworld, Vitane-dominated, and the first world listed: OV-00001. Earth, as the fourth world "discovered" by the Sodality, is EU-00004.

The system has in turn been adopted by the Divine Empire, who broke away from that government and took many records with them. Many smaller governments have followed suit, modifying the system as needed for the local needs or to appease rulers' egos. Most petty tyrannies, for example, list their own home plane as 00001.

## Z-CLASS PLANES

Z-Class planes are incapable of supporting human life and actively dangerous to visitors. In addition to planes where gates lead to airless worlds and the ruins of various apocalypses, the following recognized subcategories are Z-Class by nature.

### ABYSSES

An Abyss is a Netherworld with a minimal or nonexistent organizing will, or one whose rulers never created a plane where conventional life could survive. Gates to Abysses usually only arise in other Netherworlds, where they are used for everything from executions to garbage disposal. Some are instantly lethal, while others deviate so far from established norms that it might be impossible to tell if residents are alive or dead.

### ELEMENTAL PLANES

The elemental planes are Otherworlds which contain volatile mixtures of energies and materials. While gates to the elemental planes are uncommon (gates open more often in planes with soul-bearing inhabitants, and most of those can't survive, say, a plane of fire), they're alternately deadly and useful as resource extraction, energy collection, and magical operations may all benefit from elemental materials. Elemental gates tend to appear at nexuses with an aspect favoring the connected plane, and elementals may spontaneously arise in such places by coming through the gates, or as magical energy animates nearby substances. In the latter case, the elemental may combine forces from the elemental plane and its birthplace on the other side of the gate. Many elemental planes are instantly lethal to enter without protective gear.

## PLANAR TIME AND TIME TRAVEL

In the Otherworlds and Netherworlds, time travel is impossible except for the Aions, who exist outside the flow of time. Time may pass at different relative rates between various planes, but this effect oscillates and eventually evens out into a steady flow of events. While it's impossible for characters to perform the various tricks found in time travel literature, the Game Master can track time a bit more loosely to fit the dramatic needs of the story.

Earth's worldlines are a different matter. Some worldlines duplicate the histories of others, but the present day is earlier or later, or time passes at a different rate. This allows for a form of time travel that doesn't affect the origin worldline directly, though worldlines running history more than a decade in the future are extremely rare.

Time travel *within* a worldline is possible via quantum ark, but is almost never authorized as it has unpredictable effects, from uncontrolled forks to bizarre forms of Incessance. It's there as a possible story springboard, but Game Masters should use it rarely, if at all, in a *Threefold* game running under the setting's default assumptions.

# THE SENTIUM

The medium surrounding the planes, the Senti-um, is in a sense omniscience without omnipotence. The Senti-um is pure awareness without a guiding consciousness. If one were to postulate a God separate from creation, this is where the Almighty would dwell. But instead of a definitive God, we have the Aions, none of whom can occupy the Senti-um until one of them achieves total victory, at which point the Senti-um will have always been the mind of God.

In the current, contested version of reality, the Senti-um is a haunted psychic wasteland, divided into the Astral Senti-um surrounding each plane and the Deep Senti-um between them. The Astral Senti-um suffuses its nearby plane; those inside see the material world as a shadowy, shimmering place, with auras of brightness around magical nexus points. The Deep Senti-um's appearance is influenced by the combined experiences and biases of nearby witnesses, but it always appears vast beyond reckoning. It might be a series of innumerable caves, a desert leading in all directions, or a sky with no ground beneath where a traveler floats. Gates manifest as luminous tunnels between Astral coronas, though stepping through one takes no time at all, and there's no known way to enter through the sides of these apparent passages.

The most common travelers through the Senti-um are adepts employing *astral projection*. Ghosts and other incorporeal beings of a magical or occult nature can also be found in the Senti-um, though they rarely travel beyond Astral realms. Travelers in the Deep report numerous strange encounters, but the only beings known to routinely cross these outer reaches of the Senti-um are the Servitors of various Emanates. In particular, Inimicals may lie in wait to bedevil unprepared travelers, though other beings may have been interrupted in the midst of a summoning or other passage between planes.

It's difficult but not impossible to enter the Senti-um in physical form. Called Astral Chasms, gates leading to the Senti-um itself are vanishingly rare and usually temporary, unstable things. The roiling psychic energies that emanate from an Astral Chasm often cause strange phenomena, and may trigger an adept's psychic potential.

## CREATING, DESTROYING, AND CHANGING GATES

Common knowledge declares that gates are immutable and indestructible, except by rare, little-known natural processes. This is usually true. Most gates appeared during the First Age as a side effect of the primordial creation which the Emanates have never been able to control. Important events seem to create, destroy, or change gates, but the exact reasons seem as bound to the hidden laws of the Metacosm as the gates' original creation. But while Emanates do not completely understand or control gates, they have observed certain trends and have, with effort, been able to influence how gates manifest.



The following situations may influence the creation, destruction, and disposition of gates, but in *Threefold* games, the Game Master ultimately determines when they trigger changes.

## APOCALYPSE/DELETION

When all sapient (soul-bearing) life on a plane perishes or leaves and there is no opportunity for other souls to arise within the plane, its gates often close or redirect themselves, eliminating the link the plane produced in the chain. This would happen in deleted Alts (see CHAPTER 4) but as few of them possess obvious gates, this is not often witnessed. Whether planes with no known means of access continue to exist is hotly debated among planar scholars. During the Fellwar, genocides eliminated gates to countless lifeless planes. Even so, gates to apparently lifeless Z-class planes remain. Do these have hidden intelligent life, or the potential for it?

## ARTIFACTS

Certain artifacts have been known to be able to create, destroy, or modify gates. Each of the great transplanar powers possesses these objects, whose methods of construction are either unbroken secrets or unknown to their owners—they may have arisen through mysterious processes, or even the intercession of an Aion. These are only deployed when absolutely necessary.

## EMANATE OPERATIONS

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Emanates are capable of creating gates, but this is a gradual, labor-intensive process, even for a god. The Emanate uses a variation of the power they use to send forth a Servitor, opening and maintaining Astral Chasms in their current location and the other plane they wish the gate to connect to. Eventually, the Chasms merge, producing a gate, but it will close over time unless further effort is taken to maintain it. Gates linking an Otherworld to a Netherworld or Earth are more difficult to create than those linking two planes of the same kind, and those linking Earth to a Netherworld are even harder to build. Once an Emanate builds a stable gate, they may specify its shape and key, if any, within certain restrictions known only to the Emanates themselves.

## FALL OF AN EMANATE

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The death of an Emanate can sometimes create, destroy, or alter a gate. This is most likely to happen when an Alastor dies in the Netherworld they rule, as without their controlling will, their unstable plane may shift and shatter. Sometimes nothing happens, however. The results typically depend on the fallen Emanate's characteristics and powers.

## KANNA CONCENTRATION

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Intense concentrations of kanna above and beyond the effects of a typical spell or geomantic nexus may "burn a hole" in reality itself, as concentrated mythic possibility exceeds the capacity of a single plane to bear. In some cases this creates an Astral Chasm, but in others the situation at hand produces a full gate to another plane which possesses a symbolic connection to the energies unleashed at the source. Other powerful magical events may destroy a gate instead, leaving an Astral Chasm or nothing at all, or impose a new key on a nearby gate.

## OCCULT CONFIGURATION

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Repeated summoning rites or other occult powers linking two planes can, in time, connect them via a new gate. This isn't a

### HANDLE GATES WITH CARE

Several sections in this chapter provide exceptions to the usual rules regarding the necessity and relative immutability of gates, but Game Masters should use them with care. Much of *Threefold's* internal logic relies on gates being very difficult to block, destroy, or otherwise change, and almost always necessary for interplanar travel. If you change this by, for example, inventing a vehicle that easily moves between gates, that would precipitate major changes depending on its availabilities and exact capabilities.

### NI-30336: FALFARAH

On Falfarah, slave legions manually operate machinery that literally makes the world turn. These enormous conveyor belts and other machines pull entire nations along. Seasons don't change and plants don't grow unless the land moves to its necessary seasonal position.

consistent phenomenon, and gates created this way may not last long—usually they're persistent in inverse proportion to whether the gate would be convenient or safe, in fact.

## PROPHECIES FULFILLED

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Esoteric texts, visions, and other sources of revelation sometimes predict new gates or changes in existing ones. These insights are sometimes spontaneously channeled by occult adepts, or discovered as a byproduct of arcane or occult methods to see distant times and places. Earth's Machinors also forecast changes on occasion, though they cannot anticipate every such change, even among Earth's worldlines.

## WANDERSOULS

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Some Wandersouls are capable of altering where gates can take them, bypassing entire places to emerge further down the chain. It is said that an elite subset have even greater abilities to change a gate's function.

## SEALING GATES

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While all gates have physical correspondences defining the size of the passage, one cannot seal a gate by destroying those. Instead, this makes the gate's borders invisible. This is a bad thing, as an exposed gate edge ripples unpredictably and cuts cleaner than the sharpest knife. Fortunately, fate conspires to reestablish a gate's physical enclosure. Events from seismic activity to workers with instructions to put up a door get it done in minutes to days. This can cause some minor shifts in the gate's exact dimensions as it conforms to the new boundaries, but nothing extreme. It's impossible to deliberately change the total area of a gate this way.

Burying and bricking up gates are more successful methods of closure, but these and similar methods tend to fail as destiny seems to want gates to be accessible. They get dug out. Walls break. In extreme situations, the gate may even move. Such methods require constant maintenance—new dirt, new walls, and vigilance.

Magical methods of sealing work best of all. The most common is to destroy all evidence of a locked gate's key, though this can be defeated by Wandersouls (see CHAPTER 2), who are attuned to gates. Mighty spells and other supernatural means may seal gates as well, though they are notoriously prone to failure due to geomantic anomalies, strange knots of kanna, or prophecies coming to fruition. Gates are simply never under the control of their ostensible owners. On Vigrith and Earth, thorough protocols mitigate, but never eliminate, the risk of unwelcome visitors.

## TRAVELING WITHOUT A GATE

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Travel without a gate is extraordinarily difficult for most beings, with a few exceptions including the following.

- **ASTRAL TRAVEL:** Adepts utilizing astral projection and related rites can, in astral form, travel from one plane's

## ALTGATES

It isn't *quite* true that only quantum arks can travel between worldlines. Beyond finding an illicit gate from an Otherworld or Netherworld, gates between worldlines exist, though they're very rare and their existence is officially denied by the Peridexion. Why are Altgates forbidden? One theory is that quantum ark travel *is* Altgate travel, and the quantum ark is just a universal key for invisible, sealed gates between Earths. This makes sense, considering quantum arks can't always appear where they'd be most convenient. Another theory holds that if Earths were allowed to structure themselves like the other planes, they'd quickly fall to conquerors who are already used to using gate travel for invasions. Finally, Altgates might complicate worldline deletion by making it easier to find routes to dead Earths.

Astral Sentium to another's by passing through the Deep Sentium. While the traveler doesn't technically enter the destination plane, their astral form can perceive and, in some limited ways, interact with it. Theoretically, anyone could bodily enter the Sentium via an Astral Chasm and enter another plane through its Astral Chasm, but these phenomena don't exist on every plane. Furthermore, the time required, along with questions of how a physical traveler moves and breathes in the Sentium, much less navigates it, have yet to be answered.

- **OPTIMATE ABILITIES:** Optimates with divine powers related to movement, exploration, and similar concepts are sometimes not only capable of traveling between planes without a gate, but transporting others. Such Optimates are the backbone of the Ferryman society, but are also employed by the Divine Empire's Praetorium as advance troops to survey, sabotage, and conquer enemy positions ahead of a larger invasion.
- **QUANTUM ARK:** Travel between Earth's worldlines usually requires a quantum ark, as controlled by the Peridexion's Extrapolative Causality Collider. Quantum ark travel offers more flexibility as to the destination, but must be approved by the Peridexion itself—assuming rumors of rogue ark controllers are false. See CHAPTER 7 for more information about quantum arks.
- **SUMMONING, SENDING, AND TELEPORTATION:** Psychic teleportation is sometimes capable of sending an entity to its native plane. Summoning rites also temporarily pierce Astral boundaries on both ends and unite their locations seamlessly, in a single event specific to the subject. Lengthy rituals may sometimes suspend the subject in the Deep Sentium for a time. Emanates are also capable of sending their Servitors through a similar process, though in those situations, the Servitor always travels through the Sentium for a time.

## PLANAR INCESSANCE

Every plane works by its own rules, or *dictums*, assembled long ago by chance or deliberate purpose during the plane's creation. The dictums of an Otherworld are determined by the flows of kanna within it, while an alternate Earth runs according to its intricate physical laws, and Netherworlds run according to the psyches of the powerful creatures that bind them together. Sometimes, creatures and forces not native to those planes stand out, like an infection in the body. Some planes impose dictums lackadaisically, while others react swiftly and harshly to any foreign presence. The Sodality refers to this planar immune system as Incessance.

## OPTIONAL RULE: THE FOG OF WORLDS

Earth remains uninitiated due to the efforts of the Peridexion and their Vitane allies, who conceal paranormal events and even erase memories. The GM may decide a further element exists in the fog of worlds, an Incessance effect that tends to blind the uninitiated to extraplanar events and creatures, convincing them that unusual creatures were terrifying but native animals and supernatural circumstances are a matter of coincidence. Using this rule, people on uninitiated worlds such as Earth must make a TN 11 Willpower (Faith) test to recall anything unusual about an encounter with an individual or phenomenon from another plane. Modify the TN up and down by the plane's Incessance modifier. Once someone succeeds at three of these tests, the fog of worlds is permanently lifted and the character remembers everything clearly, including past events where they failed the test.

Incessance is the power of a plane to impose its dictums on anything brought into it. It is most often noted when Earth technology fails in the Otherworlds, but it can be responsible for far stranger effects, depending on the plane. As a game statistic, Incessance ranges from -6 (for planes with little impact on outside artifacts) to 0 (average for most planes) to +6 (for planes that aggressively impose their laws on outsiders).

Importantly, while Incessance falls upon creatures and objects from other planes, it does *not* affect anything created or born on the plane itself. Thus, a huldra born on Earth never suffers Incessance, and neither does a magic sword forged in an Earth smithy. This immunity doesn't apply to spells and psychic powers used by natives, however, nor does it apply to their augmentations.

## PLANAR DICTUMS

While exact dictums vary from plane to plane, Game Masters shouldn't get too worried about setting up the rules for every single plane characters visit. Planar dictums follow general trends:

- **EARTH AND ALTS:** Earth's dictums rely on adherence to scientifically understood natural laws. These laws don't single out magic and other paranormal phenomena per se, but apply Incessance to creatures who rely on magic to survive or exert their full range of abilities. Incessance does not affect extraordinary powers unless they have effects lasting longer than an encounter (beyond damaging or healing creatures, or wrecking or fixing existing objects), and Incessance applies to the effects, not the power or user. Incessance also applies to magical

or occult extraordinary items. Postmodern technology, including augmentations, is acceptable. Some worldlines have slightly to radically different rules, though Alts with low resistance to paranormal phenomena are often targeted for adjustment or deletion by Aethon.

- **THE OTHERWORLDS:** Otherworlds are known for numerous strange dictums; the most common don't represent natural laws, but a lack thereof. Lacking stable, complex physical laws, the Otherworlds do not consistently support complex technologies, especially the most advanced devices available on Earth. Free-flowing kanna supports patterns of mythic resonance. One can forge a strong sword less because of the chemistry of steel than

because of legends of swords and smiths. These patterns are inherent to the plane, and not easily changed – they're a property of kanna, not consensus belief.

- **THE NETHERWORLDS:** Netherworld dictums demand perverse distortions of magic and technology based less on physical criteria than meaning. One or more ruling Alastors' psyches suffuse the plane and attack foreign phenomena based on whether they fit the ways in which the plane is designed to inflict suffering. Spells which provide heat may fail to function in an icy hell, or may sprout an uncontrollable black flame which flash-freezes whatever it touches. However, the psychically active nature of the Netherworlds means Incessance never hinders psychic or occult abilities.

## INCESSANCE RESISTANCE

TARGET	RESISTANCE
Humans*, Mundane Creatures	20**
Firearms, Diesel Engines, Potions, Partially Supernatural or Technological Creatures (fey, griffons, cyborgs)	15
Internal Combustion, Basic Electronics, Magical Devices, Fundamentally Magical or Technological Creatures (dragons, golems, robots)	13
Small Electronics, Long-term or Permanent Spells	11
Computers, Major Magical Artifacts	9

\* Includes arvu, dreygur, huldra, and jana \*\* Only roll in extraordinary circumstances. Most planes do not inflict Incessance on mundane creatures.

## INCESSANCE TESTS

Incessance doesn't send agents in black suits to steal your magic (that's Aethon, and only if you did something stupid) or fairies to disassemble your smartphone (they do that for fun). It's a slow, haphazard form of decay that tends to affect more sophisticated or blatant violations of a plane's rules first.

In each encounter after travelers enter a new plane (and at least once every 24 hours), the Game Master rolls an Incessance test of 3d6 + Incessance (-6 to +6, depending on the plane). This is a single test, applied to all subjects. Any object whose Resistance TN is equal to or less than the Incessance test is affected by the plane's dictums. This often means they malfunction or stop working, but the exact effects vary from plane to plane.



Simpler objects—lower technology, subtle magics, coincidental psychic powers—have higher Resistance TNs than more advanced items, or those which more blatantly violate a plane’s rules. Game Masters are free to assign specific Resistance TNs, but the most common examples are listed in the **Incessance Resistance** table.

## INCESSANCE EFFECTS AND STUNTS

The basic effect of a failed Incessance test is that an item suffers a cumulative -1 penalty to tests involving its use, while a creature either suffers the penalty to tests to perform actions which violate the plane’s dictums (such as actions enabled or enhanced by augmentations), or to all tests if the creature

inherently offends the plane’s laws. This penalty accumulates and remains until the item or creature visits a plane with compatible dictums.

Like other ability tests, Incessance tests can generate stunt points the Game Master uses to create strange or lasting effects on travelers or their equipment. Specific planes may have special stunts they can inflict in addition to the basic stunts listed here. No matter how many creatures or objects are affected by a single Incessance test, only one subject is affected per stunt (although some stunts, such as Masking, may be selected multiple times to affect multiple targets). The GM may choose stunts from the **Incessance Stunts** table or select other suitable stunts based on the plane and entities affected.

INCESSANCE STUNTS	
SP COST	INCESSANCE STUNT
1+	<b>MASKING:</b> A single creature or object that violates local dictums no longer registers as unusual to the uninitiated natives of the plane, who imagine something familiar. This may disrupt communications when, for example, an intelligent animal tries to talk on a plane where dictums forbid talking animals, and may have other indirect deleterious effects at the GM’s discretion.
1+	<b>DRAIN:</b> A target creature or object loses a number of power points equal to the SP spent. Alternately, when making their next fatigue test after using psychic or occult power, the target suffers a penalty equal to the SP spent.
1+	<b>GLITCH:</b> The cumulative Incessance penalty increases by an additional -1 per SP spent.
2	<b>IMPAIRMENT:</b> On a successful test to perform an action affected by Incessance, the target must roll the test again and keep the results of the second roll.
2	<b>OTHERING:</b> A single creature affected by Incessance or carrying an item affected by it gains a disturbing aura, imposing an attitude shift of one step toward greater hostility on the part of natives of the plane. Local people will tend to blame them for misfortunes.
3	<b>BREAKDOWN:</b> One object affected by Incessance, or one capability possessed by a creature affected by Incessance (usually extraordinary, but might include anything covered by a single focus) fails immediately, and for the following 1d6 rounds. If the object or function was a continuous action, that action is interrupted. After the period ends, any tests required to use the object or perform the task must be re-rolled.
3	<b>PERVERSE FUNCTION (NETHERWORLDS ONLY):</b> One item or creature affected by Incessance acquires a twisted version of an existing capability which activates instead of a normal capability. For example, a phone or media player may howl in a tone that attracts hostile creatures, or a magical being attempting to make peace may instead growl obscene insults. If this affects a creature with a soul (including all Player Characters), a successful TN 13 Willpower (Faith) test resists this effect.
5	<b>BACKLASH:</b> The plane violently rejects the offending presence, inflicting 3d6 penetrating damage to the creature carrying it (as an item or innate property) and 1d6 penetrating damage to anyone within 2 yards.
6	<b>DISJUNCTION:</b> An item affected by Incessance permanently breaks. A living creature permanently loses access to one spell, psychic ability, or technological feature that violates the plane’s dictums. If the creature inherently violates the plane’s dictums, it falls unconscious until the next time the GM fails an Incessance test.
6	<b>MALEVOLENCE (NETHERWORLDS ONLY):</b> One item or creature affected by Incessance is possessed by an incorporeal Inimical presence. Malevolent items can operate themselves and activate any special abilities they possess, and gain ability values of 0, 1, 2, and 3 to distribute among Communication, Intelligence, Willpower, and Perception. Malevolent items which are normally immobile can also move slowly when they’re not being observed. Malevolent presences in creatures may attempt to wrest control once per encounter. The target of attempted possession must succeed at a TN 16 Willpower (Self-Discipline) test. If they fail, the Inimical spirit takes full control of the creature for 1d6 rounds. The Inimical has its own Communication, Intelligence, Willpower, and Perception scores, generated as for those of a malevolent item. It can use any powers the host possesses which do not require tests using those abilities, as it possesses limited access to their thoughts—it knows the host’s name and those of familiar faces in the immediate vicinity, and memories of the last few hours, but nothing more. The threat of possession lasts until the affected creature succeeds at tests to resist it three times or the Inimical presence is banished. Items retain their malevolence until destroyed or until the presence is banished. Banishment is most often accomplished using a version of the <i>rite of summoning</i> (see CHAPTER 3) that sends the presence away.

# THE MAJOR PLANES

The worlds of the Metacosm span a range that no mortal can imagine. The Sodality explores and catalogues the gate chains throughout the Metacosm. Every plane is unique and, to the Sodality's Searchers, precious—even the Netherworlds. Yet a few planes, detailed in the following sections, have special importance for historical, political, or even metaphysical reasons.

## OD-00070: ALATUM

**INCESSANCE:** +5 vs. items and creatures of technology and the occult. Alatum may impose the following Incessance stunt on valid items or creatures.

SP	STUNT
1+	<b>FORBEARANCE:</b> Omnipresent divine power and authority mute the target's capabilities, imposing a -1 penalty to the Stunt Die on tests related to the target for 1 test per SP spent.

The core plane of the Divine Empire is, for its people, not one but two worlds. In the world above, high-status Optimates rule the Empire in the splendor they claim as their birthright, in floating citadels and mountaintops connected by slender bridges and flying pleasure craft. The world below sprawls haphazardly on the ground, where mortals subsist in the shadows of supposedly semi-divine masters.

Known Alatum consists of the Eye and Hand Archipelagos upon what may be an infinite sea. The world is flat; the waters stretch over 50 times the distance from the Earth to the Moon in every direction, though the Hand and Eye are close enough together they'd fit on an Earth-sized sphere. There may only be one sun in the sky at any given time, but there is a series of them moving in a procession, east to west. One to three moons appear in directions determined by the season. The stars are bioluminescent, silicon-based life forms that swarm through the sky and sometimes prey upon each other, and pass in front of other celestial bodies.

Olipos, a circular island about the size of Australia, is the pupil of the Eye, and its geographical center is the Axis Mundi: a central pole from which all distances are measured. Hundreds of miles north of the Axis Mundi, the Imperial Pantheon holds the seat of government.

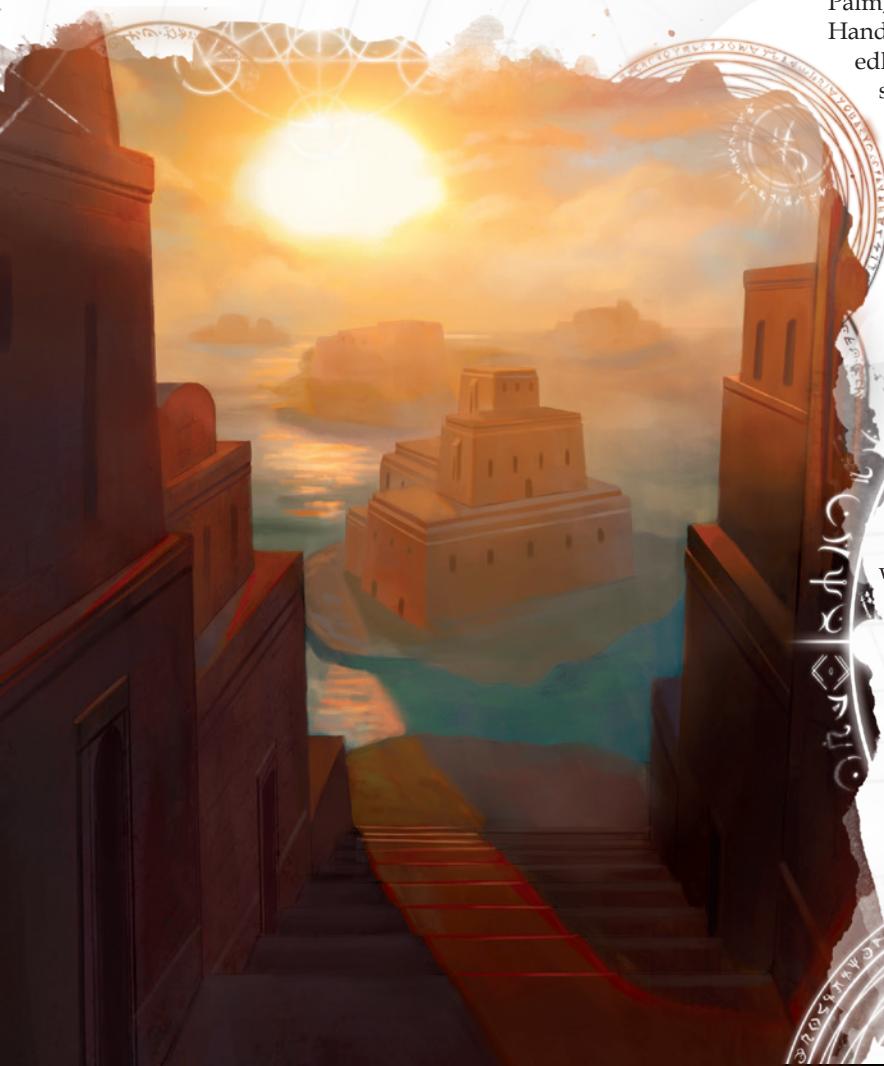
North is the direction of the Hand's fingers, while south is where Kotenos and Gateonos, the agrarian Islands of the Palm, lie. But over 100,000 miles northeast of the edge of the Hand, the forbidden Antumbra Archipelago lies. It's supposedly guarded by curses that prevent non-Optimates from setting foot on their islands, but the greatest barrier to entry is the distance involved, which requires knowing of a gate to one of its islands or access to craft comparable to a military vimana. (See CHAPTER 7 for vimanas.)

Earning a manor on Alatum, even as a courtesy with no official duties attached, is more prestigious and desirable than many Prefectures. Manorial lords here enjoy a power their peers in the Otherworlds can only envy: They can reshape their estates to match their whims and personality. Most of these alterations take place gradually, in response to simple visualization by a lord who possesses a tablet of ownership. Stones grow into balconies. Sheltering trees move and grow where desired. Rock changes color. The lord need only mind their mood to banish withering plants and harsh storms. A conscious countermand can banish these signs of misery when they appear.

### THE SECRETS OF ANTUMBRA

Antumbra's islands contain many things of interest, for the Divine Empire keeps exiles, archives, and other secrets here, but two stand out.

First is the Forlorn, island headquarters of the Praetorium. The Praetorium possesses a richly appointed building in Olipos, where the Pantheon can believe they keep an eye on this least trusted branch of the Pentarchy, but the Forlorn is where anything of substance happens. This is where Furies train and muster, and where the



Praetor keeps anything they don't expect to get spied on by agents of the Legate. The Forlorn is well-named, because it's always a harsh place to live and train, though the exact nature of its harshness depends on the reigning Duke, majordomo of the island, who determines the exact specifications of its wretchedness. The Forlorn is a heavily armed, well-provisioned facility as well, in case the Pentarchy collapses and the Praetorium needs a place to regroup.

Second is Stillness, the home of Ninitu, Hierarch of fertility and creation. During the Fellwar, Ninitu was one of the few Hierarchs who possessed creative powers close to those of First-Age Emanates. She used these to make Alatum part staging area for the Otherworlds' armies, part refuge for gods and mortals alike, should they find time to escape the front lines. She made a world to comfort warriors, while her sister Aushos, Ladder of Dawn, urged them to loyal, orderly service. But Aushos disappeared and on Vigrith, the war went badly for the gods. It was Perkwun who came to Alatum in retreat and bound Ninitu within one of the far islands she had made for herself, and it was he who revealed himself in secret to Dyraza, inspiring her rebellion and ascension to the throne on Alatum.

Perkwun gave Dyraza the keys to Stillness, where Ninitu is still bound by a silken Thread of Fate (how Perkwun got that is another story entirely). Dyraza set up the estate system. Ninitu shapes the land on the manorial lords' behalf via the tablets. Various figures in the Divine Empire possess other tablets which may invoke other powers on Alatum. Ninitu is quite mad, and sometimes sings and raves through the birds and beasts of Alatum. The Curia advises mortal witnesses to make a warding gesture against evil and forget whatever they hear.

## THE THRONE OF THUNDER AND ASH

East of where the modern Pantheon stands, the Throne of Thunder and Ash rises above the clouds, close enough to the stars that bored Optimates can shoot them down. The mountain was the original abode Dyraza erected to be the seat of her Empire, and contains many secrets that, since her death, remain sealed by the lack of a new sovereign. Clusters of buildings cling to the slopes of the Throne. These once hosted the Pantheon's government, but nowadays contain small groups of caretakers and Curia clergy, who treat the complex as holy ground but are swamped by the task of maintaining it. Yet for all the complex pomp and circumstance in the Pantheon proper, the Throne is traditionally where realpolitik happens, since it's trivially easy to find a deserted corner in which to hold a frank discussion. For similar reasons, it's a favored

spot for duels, though these must be strictly witnessed. If the old palace becomes a place for mere assassinations, it would dishonor the Empire.

Notable structures include the following.

### THE CITADEL OF FEAR

Set into the mountainside, this pale yellow, star-shaped building is merely the entrance to a vast underground complex which once housed numerous prisoners and a mighty armory, among other things. This was the Praetorium's headquarters during Dyraza's reign, and it allegedly reaches to the mountain's heart. The Praetorium used to station two elite Furies here, one in the surface building and one at the entrance to the lower levels, but about a century ago, sealed everything off. Elaborate complexes dug into mountains have a way of attracting thieves, however...

### THE CUBE

Just below the cloud line, the Cube is exactly that, 10 yards on each side, set atop an unexceptional plaza in the complex. The Cube marks the place where Avakim slew Dyraza. It's a practical, gray stone structure which exists to cover the scorched area where she was killed and ward off any residual inimical energies—the interior of the cube contains some of the mightiest warding enchantments the Curia could devise. Mortals are forbidden from approaching it, and it's considered bad taste to even acknowledge it exists. Dyraza was, according to reports, mutilated, then burned to a cinder by an alien star (*not* a local life form) summoned from the sky, so the Cube doesn't contain a body. In any event, Curia doctrine holds she can't have died in the first place. Nevertheless, "by the Cube," is a severe local curse.

### PINNACLE PALACE

Dyraza's home and the old imperial seat stands atop the mountain. During her reign, every task related to ruling the Empire started here, from plans of conquest to developing the land as well as social and artistic events. Since the Empress's demise, the only visitors to the Palace are the servants that maintain it, though a few dozen of the most influential Domini meet in the adjacent Great Portico on a regular basis. The eponymous Throne stands thirty feet above the court, a silver and ebony chair that could seat a titan, though it has cushions and a small set of stairs for Dyraza's comfort. Sitting on the throne is considered treason; the Pantheon has devised a unique, painful form of execution for each of the three people who have done it.

## EU-00101: ALHADIQA

**INCESSANCE:** +5 vs. items and creatures of magic, +2 vs. items and creatures of the occult

The Alt called Alhadiqa is one of the most prosperous and successful Earths to fork from the primeline. In Alhadiqa, the Golden Age of Islam never ended, and instead spread across Europe. Peridexion scholars trace the primary fork to 847 CE, when the Caliph al-Mutawakkil espoused greater support for the House of Wisdom's scientific activities than in the Primeline. Subsequent developments spurred cooperation with European monks, averted the Crusades, and

eliminated the evolution of colonial ideology. This limited contact with the Americas to research outposts until a series of immigration treaties between various nations allowed for intercultural exchange without sacrificing sovereignty.

The 20th Century saw the resolution of a cold war between the Hadiqa Technocratic Republic (the Mediterranean Basin and Asia Minor), the Third Golden Horde (Northern Asia and Eastern Europe), Shenzhou (China), and the Common Alliance (North and Central America) with limited fighting across the Pacific ending in trade and immigration pacts.





While the global South suffers from inequality, the fluid nature of migration has blunted possible conflict—and kept governments on their toes, as unhappy citizens simply vote with their feet, depopulating poorly run countries. This has led to a large, extremely mobile segment of the global population, numbering about 20% of the Alt’s 8 million, but slightly over half of the economic bottom quintile, who are sometimes subject to discrimination.

Alhadiqa’s nations are increasingly confederations of communities instead of static ethnocultural groupings, organized around a world government (called, curiously enough, the United Nations) headquartered in Invindara, which in Alhadiqa is a prominent neutral nation state. As a new era of cooperation dawns, the superpowers have unified their space programs (which have established moon bases and one successful Mongolian-Aztec mission to Mars). The Hadiqa Technocratic Republic maintains a per capita wealth advantage relative to the other superpowers, but is slowing down, and these days, is often valued more for its consumers than its productivity.

Alhadiqi technology is ten to thirty years ahead of the primeline’s. Wearable devices are the norm, and clean energy is standard. While religious restrictions against depicting

the human form are only loosely enforced in the Muslim-majority Technocratic Republic, it is considered aesthetically lazy to copy human or animal forms unless absolutely necessary. Even artificial limbs may use ball-and-socket joints and equidistant grippers in an attempt to avoid merely imitating human function, under the notion that it might be improved upon. Robots of all functions are widespread and designed to look like elegant pieces of architecture: foldable geometric forms, or tree-like constructs capable of forming new limbs when necessary.

## A WORLD OF BACK DOORS

Most worldlines have few or no gates connecting them to other planes, but when Alhadiqa forked away from the primeline, geomantic nexuses unexpectedly flared with power and took a number of gates with them, even removing them from the primeline. As a result, Alhadiqa is the Alt with the most gates, including at least one to Vigrith. In accord with the standard restrictions against Alts with gates, the Peridexion pursues long-term operations to eliminate them, restricting access in the interim, but it has not accounted for every gate. For almost 1,200 years, this campaign has reduced the number of gates to a fraction of what they were, but as a large number of them have no primeline parallels, the job remains unfinished. It is also rumored a number of Altgates—passages between worldlines—can be found, which is an even stronger concern, since it challenges the Peridexion’s would-be monopoly on worldline travel. But the most serious issue is the increasing presence of occult phenomena of a hitherto unknown variety, which suggests possible influence from the Netherworlds.

Despite this world’s Invindara being a publicly known nation, Alhadiqa’s Peridexion is still a secret organization. Primeline Aethon suspects the local version of having been compromised by occult influence. Primeline operants have sequestered their Pool from the local counterpart, and deep cover agents, including Shattersouls (see CHAPTER 8), infiltrate and observe their supposed allies. They’ve found indications that engrammatry (see the following section) is not only surreptitiously practiced by certain agents, but influences the management of local history away from scientific orthodoxy.

## A SNAKE IN THE GARDEN

*Engrammatry* is one translation of the mathematical mysticism practiced by elites in the Hadiqa Technocratic Republic and increasingly in other countries, as economic nomads share its methods. Engrammatry superficially resembles the doctrine that all phenomena can be reduced to information, which falls in line with elements of Peridexion doctrine. Initially, Alhadiqa’s Peridexion allowed engrammatry to influence Alhadiqi science because of the apparent results: breakthroughs in so-called “zero point” energy, biocomputing, and other fields which normally require Machinor intervention to produce functional technologies.

However, engrammatry is *not* the mathematical idealism of the Peridexion. Its core axioms contain unresolvable paradoxes and, deep in the coding adherents memorize, the “programming language” of Inimical beings, whose intercessions increase its effectiveness. Its uncanny effectiveness is a function of the fact that it’s a system of occult knowledge sponsored by the powers of the Netherworld. It also means certain technologies represent Inimical intrusions — they work due to demonic interventions, not an enlightened understanding of natural laws. In some cases, actual Inimicals have appeared at the flip of a switch. It isn’t yet clear whether this worldline’s Peridexion is incompetent, or truly compromised.

## EZ-10007: INFERNUS MONS

One of the most infamous Z-class Alts, Infernus Mons gets its name from the asteroid that struck it in its 1995: a unique lattice of carbon and iron that made it extraordinarily strong, able to survive impact so that its still-molten peak burns in the middle of broken remnants of the Great Lakes. Infernus Mons’s blasted surface and nuclear-winter gloom are replicated on multiple Earths, but the asteroid also brought a unique, worm-like alien parasite that halts aging in humans and makes them stronger and more durable, but makes 90% of the infected animalistic killers. Aethon protocols forbid operants from calling the mindless infected “zombies.”

## EU-00004: EARTH

**INCESSANCE:** +4 vs. items and creatures of magic and the occult. Earth may impose the following Incessance stunt on valid items or creatures:

SP	STUNT
4	<b>FLAGGED:</b> The Peridexion is aware of the target’s presence on Earth. The TN for any Peridexion agent to find, follow, or otherwise discover the target is reduced by an amount equal to the target’s current Incessance penalty. This effect lasts for one week.

The plane classified as EU-00004 is primeline Earth: the supposed core history from which all worldlines branch off. Yet before the forebears of the Sodality visited Earth, they recorded EZ-00003, the now-lifeless plane of Eld. Beyond its index number and an absolute prohibition on visiting, the nature of Eld is unknown. Sodality Searchers suspect that Eld was the primeline visited by refugees from the Fellwar, when they secured Machinor intervention. The Machinors may have engineered a fork to spawn the current primeline in response, leaving the original Earth as a corrupted remnant which can only be visited by quantum ark.

Earth occupies a special place in the Metacosm. Its Machinor Emanates tightly control the primeline, keeping its inhabitants ignorant of other planes despite the Peridexion’s strong alliance with the Vitane. Earth’s inhabitants have never sought territory in the Otherworlds. Instead, the Peridexion’s interests push into numerous Alts, which explore possible destinies for the primeline itself. Unknown to all but a few highly placed Peridexion members, Earth is the program which, over all history and beyond, has been shaped to produce the future Logos. The primeline is the safest way forward, but the Alts represent “experimental code”: possible shortcuts, simulations of certain pathways, and models of disasters. The Peridexion’s patrons, led by Llaw/Lucifer, use the information provided by Alts to refine the primeline itself. The result: an Earth with alternating cycles of innovation and consolidation, where the arc of history tends toward greater global integration, at the cost of some catastrophes along the way.

Primeline Earth contains the overriding majority of gates to the Otherworlds, including many leading to Vigrith. When an Alt forks from the mainline, it does not copy its gates; an alternate Earth usually develops gates only through external

influence, and the Peridexion attempts to close them as soon as it discovers them. The primeline is the only official point of contact between the Vitane and the Peridexion.

### INVINDARA

This island nation is located in the Indian Ocean, between Sri Lanka and Madagascar. Invindara’s culture is a fusion of Southeast African and Indian influences. Ruling a territory slightly larger than the island of Manhattan, the Invindaran king presides over the Samiti, a body of representatives. Invindara was never colonized by Western powers and has hardly ever welcomed foreign visitors, but it is, for all intents and purposes, the capital of the world — not that most people know that. Invindara helped found the Peridexion and allowed it to flourish, and the Gray Hand stands just outside the nation’s sole city, Indar. Invindara is also the only nation on Earth the Peridexion considers to be outside its authority. In Invindara, the people are free to experiment with postmodern technology and paranormal phenomena as they please.

Invindara’s relative isolation allows the Peridexion to operate freely without attracting attention from the uninitiated people of Earth. Its educated population make excellent recruits, not in the least because their traditional culture prizes balance. Invindarans tend to be well-rounded, with athletic and interpersonal accomplishments in addition to technical abilities. Some members of the Peridexion also belong to the Danda (“staff”), the national emissary service. Danda agents excel at intelligence gathering.

Foreign Peridexion members are among the handful of outsiders permitted to reside in the country. Most live in and around the Gray Hand. Beyond administrative, manufacturing, and training facilities, the complex contains the Extrapolative Causality Collider, the massive computing core that powers the quantum ark technology used to travel to Alts. Its security measures are one step beyond extreme: weaponized AIs, kanna sinks, psychic buffers, and guards so heavily augmented they require constant maintenance.

### OTHERWORLDLY DIPLOMACY

As part of their alliance, the Peridexion granted the Vitane permission to establish multiple diplomatic stations called chapterhouses. The most important of these is the Footfall, the residence of the chief ambassador, in Osaka, Japan. A close

second is “EC,” or Earth Consular, the Sodality’s primary facility on Earth. Lesser chapterhouses stand in Essex, United Kingdom; Boston, United States; Tula de Allende, Mexico; Lima, Peru; Agra, India; Bulawayo, Zimbabwe (formerly in Khami); Didim, Turkey; and Hallstatt, Austria. Major paranormal communities and gates stand near each of these sites. One branch of the Vitane called the Euporia represents its trade interests on Earth, and frequently employs members of these communities.

The Sodality shares chapterhouse conveniences with the rest of the Vitane, but chapterhouses don’t contain weapons and gear for resupply, and most are not especially defensible. Aethon and the Sodality possess a joint training and deployment facility in Mumbai, India, with direct flights to Invindara—a privilege rarely granted to Sodality members.

## ORDERLY CHAOS

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The Peridexion intends to create an orderly, stable, and logical world. However, not all gates are known, and for various reasons, the Peridexion doesn’t control every gate it knows about. This means unauthorized extraplanar visitors and phenomena slip through. Aethon agents can’t always intercept them before they reveal something strange to the uninitiated.

To complicate matters, not all Machinors agree with the current direction of the Peridexion. Many sponsor their own projects, using unconventional means to seek the Logos. The Krypteia is the most successful rogue Machinor-guided group, but some Accelerator labs began with a strange dream or a useful anonymous data dump on the dissidents’ behalf.

The Dominion, certain psychic guilds, warlocks, and many other strange phenomena also threaten to rip the skin of everyday reason off the body of public knowledge. This sort of strangeness gave rise to ancient myths, and spawns urban legends and conspiracy theories now.

Kanna does not flow as freely on Earth as it does in the Otherworlds. On Earth, most creative works conform to natural laws. Yet creativity exists, and where it flowers, magic rises. Magical nexuses, described in CHAPTER 3, are critical to not only Earthbound arcanists, but to creatures which require magic to survive. While Incessance doesn’t affect those born on Earth, paranormally active beings tend to be healthier near these locations. Consequently, Aethon monitors certain nexuses, while others are ceded to the Vitane as part of the alliance. People living near these locations tend to take strange events in stride, and more of them are initiated into the truth.

Aethon has no interest in hunting ghosts and sorcerers. The primeline includes such things for a reason, and ancient agreements with the Vitane protect the rights of paranormally active natives of Earth. People who discover how deep the strangeness goes are more likely to be inducted into the Pool, sent to the Sodality to have their potential assessed, or made to forget through technological or supernatural means, not killed.

## THE VEILED REALITY

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Mutation is part of evolution, and conflict has dialectical value. This is why the Machinors don’t rule with an iron grip, and partly why they allow dissent among themselves, though the truth is no clique of Machinors has the power to suppress



the others without devastating side effects on the primeline, up to and including its possible deletion. The Vitane respects the Peridexion's sovereignty over other claimants to the world. Consequently, it doesn't let the Sodality operate freely on Earth, but it is not rare for Aethon to ask for Sodality help, especially if an operation spreads into other planes.

In addition to the Krypteia, the Peridexion considers the following groups prominent and troublesome enough to alert the Vitane of their existence, in case their activities extend into the Otherworlds.

## LA COFRADÍA DE SAN LORENZO

Because of their support of dictator Francisco Franco, this Dominion clan enjoyed half a century of privilege and wealth until the Peridexion decided Spain's fascist experiment was over. The Cofradía refused to relinquish power and used its access to a gate in the palace of El Escorial to flee to the Otherworld they called El Laberinto, a world of endless courtyards and wine-covered walls. From there, it sends agents devoted to the family's brand of fascism to build it the empire it was denied on Earth. The Cofradía's members often miss Earthly conveniences, and alternately hire and fight with the Krypteia to acquire them.

## THE PANSOPHY

This group of Accelerator roboticists is primarily driven by material needs. They make robots, and those robots need precision hardware and extremely complex software. They need the right equipment, and people capable of coding brain-computer interface software and cloning flesh capable of surviving on top of carbon fiber. Pansophy scientists routinely run scams, violent robberies, and kidnappings to get what they want, and justify it by their goal: a world where people can choose the bodies they want to live in. See CHAPTER 8 for more information.

## PUPPETEERS

This occult guild was founded in the 19th Century as "The Honorable Guild of Esteemed Puppeteers." Acting as a unified community, these immoral manipulators revel in taking over others' wills and forcing them to participate in all sort of dubious acts, which may end in the victims' infamy, harm, or even death. While they don't plague the Metacosm yet, this guild has compromised sections of Aethon's Pool with their meddling and is on the verge of self-initiation. Further information can be found in the *Enemies & Allies* sourcebook.

## ROGUE MARKS

This psychic guild resembles more a confederation of gangs than a mystic order. Founded on Earth by young psychics who fled what they believed was a secret United Kingdom government lab (actually an Accelerator facility disguised as a National Health Service contractor), they discovered planar travel and found that psychics from many worlds told similar stories about suspicion, rejection, and exploitation. The Marks now find and teach other psychics about their powers—and they don't ask anybody's permission to use their powers.

## VALKUMENOTH

This heretical warlock sect aims to usurp all the magic on Earth, to become something equivalent to a collective Emanate. They prey upon other arcanists, and plan to take the Otherworlds after their Red Pact claims Earth. For now, the sect operates as a worldwide secret society, bound by common crimes and sacrifices. Valkumenothe agents usually only make short, goal-oriented sorties to other planes, typically to steal arcane items, sources of kanna, and other magical aids. Further information can be found in the *Enemies & Allies* sourcebook.

# NH-00012: THE FETTER

**INCESSANCE:** +3 vs. items and creatures of technology and magic. The Fetter may impose the following Incessance stunt on valid items or creatures.

SP	STUNT
2/4	<b>RAGE OF THE BOUND:</b> The target or its wielder feels the rage of the Fetter's imprisoned Alastor. The next time the target or person holding it rolls doubles on a successful test, they suffer penetrating wound damage equal to their Stunt Die result for 2 SP, or their Stunt Die result + 1d6 for 4 SP.

Like the Nighthost who claim this Netherworld as their homeland, the Fetter is stark, cruel, and dangerous, but also bountiful for those who understand and respect it. The landscape takes the form of a coil of land separated from its coil of river-ocean, the Nagragta, wound into a tube where life scavenges what it can from the inner surface. The sky above is another loop of solid ground, and illumination comes from spheres of molten iron, creating a perpetual, gloomy twilight. The plane constantly tugs, compresses, and strains its own structure, creating earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and even

flooding along the Nagragta as its shores shift. While most of the population are dreygur, whose hell-hardened bodies can survive these conditions, the Fetter's population is as varied as its Nighthost conquerors and the people they've conquered across many worlds, so humans of all ancestries dwell in its camps and cities.

The Fetter's rampant earthquakes and volcanism provide a constant supply of accessible ore. Mining and smelting camps dot the mountains, as do warlord fortresses, walled trade towns, and pump towns which desalinate the Nagragta's salt water. Every town and fortress in the Fetter is an independent fiefdom, though beholden to the Nighthost's hierarchy. Their warlords challenge each other for control over valuable territory as often as they unite in campaigns to tame new corners of the wastes.

While many Nighthost treat their code of honor loosely when conquering or ruling Otherworlds, none dare disrespect the Laws of the Unchallenged on the Fetter, where their peers, not to mention the Unchallenged themselves, are always watching. Here, at the site of the root triumph of the original horde, the Nighthost's legitimacy must never be questioned. As a result, violence—at least between Nighthost warriors—



is rarer than one might suspect, limited to training, arenas, and honor duels. Even visitors are covered by the Laws of the Unchallenged.

## THE WILL OF NULL

The Fetter's rippling coil would shatter into stone and flame but for the will of its former ruling Alastor, who now lies chained at the heart of the Palace of the Unchallenged. This is a secret, though many have hypothesized that the being exists. The Alastor is not only nameless, but has had its name retroactively erased from existence, so it possesses no designation by which it can be commanded by the Nemesis. Yet this entity, called Null when spoken of at all, retains the power to will the Fetter into shape as a reflex, though its other instinct, rage, also fills the plane. It shakes with Null's anger, and what passes for nature is universally vicious here. Nothing can be domesticated in the Fetter, and hunters must tread carefully not just because of wandering Inimicals, but because even introduced prey species have developed a taste for blood.

The plane's Inimicals are free now; they can't recognize commands based on the authority of a name that no longer exists. These may be unique among all Inimicals, and even among the Servitors of other Emanates. When Emanates are destroyed, the Servitors are normally acquired by others, but Null is neither dead nor able to transfer command to another

Alastor. Inimicals are not conscious after the fashion of beings with souls, but follow complex instincts and programmed instructions. What do they do when the being their instructions refer to is renamed? It might resemble madness, but what does that look like in a demon?

## A HELL REDEEMED

Broken mountains and gully-riddled, parched plains make up most of the Fetter's landscape. Stubby, thorny plants and vicious, hardy animals cling to life wherever water pools. Salt flats and marshes break up jagged cliffs. Other notable locations follow.

## THE NAGRAGTA

Also called the Banded Ocean, this salty waterway bisects the coils. It's deep in some spots, but treacherously shallow in others. Towering spurs of rock belched up from its depths by volcanic vents make sailing a deadly gamble. Sea serpents and vicious fish — even aquatic Inimicals — haunt the shallows and depths. Safe trade routes and fishing zones are exceptionally valuable — so much so that warlords who reign over such communities risk being seduced by wealth. Coastal towns like Veyrith and Spider's Rest are among the wealthiest in the Fetter, but often disparaged as soft, even though fishing and monster-slaying are virtually indistinguishable pursuits for some of the ships' crews.

**BLOODLET**

Named for the gate toll which requires travelers to spill blood on granite walls stained the color of rust by ages of payment, Bloodlet is the largest, most cosmopolitan of the Fetter’s cities, hosting many of the plane’s known gates. Vast markets line the broad avenues between well-guarded gates, lined with visiting and local merchants and wares of all kinds from machine pistols to souls. The lords of Bloodlet restrict the latter by saying one must leave blood on the walls for every *soul* entering—that means soul merchants must limit the supply or prepare themselves for a dangerously anemic visit. Bloodlet otherwise has no particular laws beyond the ethics of stall bosses and the whims of the ruling warlords, which makes it an ideal place for stolen goods and Krypteia operatives.

**THE PALACE OF THE UNCHALLENGED**

Bloodlet stands twenty miles inland from the coastal home of the Unchallenged, and Null’s secret prison. The Palace itself is a silent pale edifice high up a sharp promontory, like the jagged tip of a serrated tooth. Below lies the Periphery, which has built itself out into the water, covering the old red sand beaches. Its canals and cobblestone-packed avenues wind through a chaotic mess of tenements, bars, hospitals, training halls, and foundries. The city’s primary industry is weapons: spears, swords, automatic rifles, and even artillery pieces, to equip the Nighthost’s war machine. However, heavy industry in a Netherworld is a dangerous thing, and limb-rendering accidents are commonplace, though arms from the Periphery are also famous for their rugged quality. Production depends on the exmancipium, whose indentured captives provide a steady stream of laborers. Those who survive three years win their freedom—but freedom in hell, even a liberated one, is a challenge all its own.

A pastoral world recently colonized by the Divine Empire, Eostica is a sunny, temperate plane, arranged in a great disc ringed by mountains. Eostica is difficult to rule as colonists who remain on the plane for an uninterrupted year forget who they once were, though they still have families and lives. The plane seems to assign them new identities which know nothing about plane travel. Thus, Eostica must be conquered again and again as peasants forget about the Divine Empire, while elites are summoned to other planes for their memory’s sake at regular intervals.

As for the Unchallenged, high above it all? While it is forbidden to attack or duel with them, it is said they train ceaselessly among themselves for some ultimate war to come.

**WAETEGE AND THE SPINE**

Beyond Bloodlet and the Palace of the Unchallenged, most major settlements rise around fortified planar gates and function as supply depots and barracks for Nighthost forces between operations. This maintains a military presence at every known gate. The largest of these hubs stand in Waetega and the Spine. Constructed by the side of the only known large freshwater lake, Waetega supplements its water trade with several gates to various elemental planes. These provide raw materials that are otherwise impossible to find on the Fetter. The Spine begins in a nearby mountain, in the first of thirteen fortified towns with a high-altitude road connecting them. Each supports a single gate to an Otherworld. Only the Spine’s treacherous location atop a mountain ridge keeps it from being a major staging ground for Nighthost campaigns.

**OV-00001: VIGRITH**

**INCESSANCE:** +3 vs. items and creatures of technology and the occult. Vigrith may impose the following Incessance stunt on valid items or creatures:

SP	STUNT
1-3	<b>SEAL OF THE THIRD AGE:</b> Each SP spent on this stunt adds +1 to the next test to cast a spell targeting the affected item or creature. This may have an unexpected positive effect.

The home plane of the Vitane reflects the organization itself, as highly varied landscapes meld together and the peoples of myriad planes combine their ingenuity and artistic sensibilities in great cities and scattered settlements alike. Nevertheless, the land remembers its past. Centuries of growth have yet to fully conceal the Fellwar’s battlegrounds. Scorched earth, hulking wrecks from Earth, strange bones, and lonely ghosts are everywhere, though in most cases one must seek them out, straying beyond the most densely settled regions.

Vigrith has the largest number of known gates to and from various Otherworlds, and is the Otherworld with the largest number of gates leading to Earth. There’s even a gate leading to an unnamed Netherworld, sealed by a unique artifact. This gate, the Hydra Door, is reserved for direct operations against inimical forces and, rarely, to receive an ambassador from

the Netherworlds. Despite the large number of gates in the Platea Transita, it isn’t the only part of the plane to possess gates, individually or in small clusters. Indeed, in some cases it is more convenient to travel from one locale on Vigrith to another by passing through another plane than it is to go by land, air, water, or through the mists.

As a plane, Vigrith is identified by its major inhabited planet, which is roughly the same size as Earth and belongs to a heliocentric solar system. A single gate from Earth leads to Freysha, a sparsely tropical world closer to Vigrith’s sun, which has inspired the Vitane to support a space program to attempt to reach it without gate travel. Vigrith’s sky is a rich blue, split by a ring formed by the remains of Varis, its only moon, which was destroyed during the Fellwar. Vigrith’s landscape is, on the whole, more dramatic than Earth’s. Mountains are sharper and higher, and the land holds a network of interconnecting rivers and lakes, many of which are the result of water filling gouges left by the Fellwar and later elaborated on by deliberate engineering. Others have existed as natural features since the Second Age. This network of waters covers most of Vigrith’s single supercontinent, which covers half the planet. The other half, simply called Ocean, is little explored.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of Vigrith’s supercontinent is the Sea of Mists at its heart. The name is no metaphor;



the land suddenly stops and falls into a deep drop wider than Earth's Mediterranean, filled with mists that mingle with the clouds overhead. Airships called mistjammers crisscross it with passengers, sightseers, researchers, and workers. Gravity behaves strangely in the Sea, and several floating islands host everything from mines to artists' colonies. The Sea came to be when the Machinors unleashed the Blinding Scythe, a disintegration weapon, at the end of the Fellwar. The remains of the device are said to shift within the deep mists, and are a common target for treasure hunters.

## IMPORTANT SITES

Vigrith is an enormous place with a history predating Earth's use of cuneiform. The modern plane's prominent regions, described as follows, cannot encompass everything that might warrant characters' attentions.

## AKAVASTU

As described in **CHAPTER 1**, Akavastu is the capital of Vigrith, and a major interplanar trading hub. Home to over 10 million people, the city is a paragon of urban development where architectural styles from a hundred planes blend into a near-harmonious whole. Canals crisscross the city, with larger ones dividing administrative divisions. Gondolas provide an unhurried way to travel through the city, but the Quick, whose capsules slide across the water and through a few underground tunnels at tremendous speeds, provides a faster alternative. Some recreational and industrial flying vessels may be seen as well, but aircraft have never seen wide use outside the Sea of Mists. Beyond the Platea Transita at the city's center and the Sodality's Cardinal House, the most notable structures are the Peerage, an elaborately decorated brass building for representatives from Vigrith's native governments, and the comparatively dour Vasat, whose sturdy brick concentric buildings surround the Hall of the Supremacy.

Yet the city isn't all law, order, and high ceremony. While nobody goes hungry or sick in Akavastu, a small number of people struggle to get by. Some of the desperate become criminals, but the majority of lawbreaking is motivated by mischief or a certain unwillingness to follow the city's rules. A disused section of the Quick system called the Cataract contains a mix of gang hideouts, squats, tinker's shops, and eccentric communes, all laid out in tunnels branching from a central circular opening. While Sodalts have policing powers in the city, civic security, law enforcement, and other first response

## OU-26755: KINGDOMS OF TYTALIA

One of the many kanna-charged planes fantastic, the Kingdoms of Tytalia are largely segregated by ancestry, though all refer to themselves as humans. Arvu wield kanna with ritualistic proficiency and live in deep forests, while huldra live in great mountainous holdfasts, and jana live within several feudal societies characterized by stone castles and kingly lines. The Vitane believes these societies' rulers know of gate travel but have agreed to keep it a secret to maintain the status quo, which may be fractious and a bit xenophobic, but keeps their dynasties in power.

services are handled by the Wershalls, who primarily enter the Cataract to provide medical services.

## THE FADEFALL

Far across the Sea of Mists from Linaliv, Fadefall is named for where the Fading River empties into the Mists—and the river itself was renamed for the fact that over millennia, the Sea of Mists has disrupted the water cycle, shrinking what once rivalled the Nile. Beyond plants hugging the bank, Fadefall is sand and cracked clay, with a solitary way station serving travelers. Yet Fadefall is best known as the primary entry point of Netherworldly forces during the Fellwar, which in fact is one reason the edge of the Sea of Mists lies close by. The newly rebellious Nighthost disposed of the gate through means lost to history, but there are still tales of monsters haunting the region.

## HAMASAYIM, CITY OF THE MODALITY

The Modality is headquartered in the city of Hamasayim, in the highlands far from Akavastu. Hamasayim shares a horizon with distant, towering, forested mountains. Primeval predators roam the tall grass around it. From afar, Hamasayim barely seems inhabited, as half the buildings are ruins dating back to the Fellwar. Many Modals play at archeology here in their spare time. Notably for Vigrith, travelers must make a hundred-mile journey through a mountain pass to reach the nearest gate, which leads to an unexceptional (and uninhabited) plane five links from anywhere else on Vigrith itself. Various overland routes from other settlements provide a scenic alternative. In any event, this makes the most important administrative hearings annoying to get to, but also

places the Modality's records and critical personnel in a highly defensible position.

## THE FREE CITY OF LINALIV

A port town at the edge of the Sea of Mists, Linaliv is the heart of Vigrith's black market trade. Mists draw treasure hunters who hope to find relics from the Fellwar among floating islands or deep below "sea level." Linaliv is an autonomous community of about a hundred thousand, where idealists struggle to make their voices heard before an apathetic Juridical Council. Linaliv also contains the Krypteia's strongest outpost on Vigrith: a handful of senior enforcers who hide behind a corrupt dockworker's guild.

## THE STAGHORN SEA

The teardrop-shaped Staghorn Sea lies a thousand miles northwest of Vigrith. Named for the way it historically split peryton migration into eastern and western flows, the southern Staghorn is a popular summer destination for tourists, while the northern, narrow end is famous for containing the island Academy of the Sodality. A number of small towns provide services to the Academy, including inns and taverns for plebs, staff, and friends. These institutions often remain popular with Sodalts after they graduate, and Missions have been known to use certain inns as informal home bases. Beyond the grounds, Academy Island itself (its original name, Sav's Shelter, is hardly used by anyone) is rocky and covered with forests except where the high winds discourage trees. It gets cold around the Staghorn, and plebs often lead search and rescue patrols to help the unprepared as part of their training.

# OB-11076: WARTORN

**INCESSANCE:** +2 vs. items and creatures of technology and the occult

For the people of Wartorn, the Fellwar's end just turned the page of a book of eternal violence. Urged on by shadowy overlords, the plane's numerous feudal states clash constantly, while monsters both native and extraplanar scour the wild in numbers to beggar any sound ecological rationale. The first city-states were founded by Fellwar veterans, who took command of fortresses built by the retreating Hierarchs. The plane had another name then, but nowadays, no two chieftains would agree on what it was, much less what it should be now. The old citadels offered more than their walls, however. The Hierarchs left behind legendary heroes, the Wayknights, who were bound to these installations and served whoever ruled them. But one by one, they fell and were entombed in the Eternal Barracks, which the Hierarchs had built for just such occasions.

For at least a thousand years, the kingdoms of Wartorn fought a rising tide of monsters. A century ago the city-states, who had always tended toward belligerence, erupted into total war out of patriotism, vague personal grudges, and other conflicts unknown to the typical Wartornian who died because of them. All seemed lost until twenty years ago, when the Wayknights returned.

The new Wayknights are potent warriors, quick to fight and ruthless in battle. Most will not stop fighting until they've killed every enemy in the field. Some have even massacred simple wild beasts and farm animals, forcing sponsoring

nations to execute them or offer them bribes in exchange for peaceful conduct. Fortunately, once slain a Wayknight can be returned to one of the many Eternal Barracks, where they might return, healed and with a different, perhaps more agreeable, personality. It all depends on the operator. The nations of Wartorn give their champions the best weapons and armor, constant adoration when they earn it at all, and other rewards which might make a bystander blush or retch.

## IMMORTAL CROWNS: LANDS OF WARTORN

The Korean MMO *Immortal Crowns* has a reputation for engaging lore but tedious play, including "realistic" travel times that try the patience of all but the most dedicated. But *Immortal Crowns* is less than half a game. According to statements from the secretive developer Bluelands, the game relies on a "1/99" business strategy, where 1% of the user-base generates 99% of the income. This is a lie. Bluelands is a Peridexion front run by the Tepētl, and it doesn't especially matter how much money it makes; and besides, it's more like 1/999. This is because around a hundred extremely wealthy subscribers own the *Lands of Wartorn* expansion, whose six-figure first-time membership fee includes the Neuroimmer-sive VR system. *Lands of Wartorn* feels real, because it is.

A *Lands of Wartorn* player animates and controls a Wayknight until it's "killed." Left behind by the native Vathay





Hierarchs, Wayknights were originally human-like Servitors, engineered to fight in the Fellwar. Various monsters would make the plane a nightmare for any invader, while the Wayknights and Vathay citadels served as a last line of defense. Unfortunately, the Inimical enemy found an alternate route around Wartorn, so not only did these measures prove to be the Maginot Line of the Fellwar, but the enemy lured the belligerent Vathay pantheon to the now Z-class plane of Gruz, where they were annihilated. Wartorn was rediscovered centuries ago by Sodalts who merely noted the castles and monsters (so *many* monsters), but it was mostly avoided until a survey Mission discovered one of the Eternal Barracks. The Sodalts left it alone. Their Aethon companion wrote a report, which raced its way through the Pool and to the Tepētl.

“Neuroimmersive VR” does feature wireless nerve induction to fully immerse the user within their Wayknight, but most of the work is offloaded from the VR pod to an array of highly experimental technologies. Exhaustive research of

the glyphs decorating the Eternal Barracks that were first surveyed in the ‘80s revealed the ceremonial commands used to rouse the Wayknights. Millions of lines of code translate user actions into these commands, which are in turn relayed through a modified Cantor (see CHAPTER 7) and shifts of telepaths trained in the Astral psychic discipline, which transmit these instructions across the Sentium to the Eternal Barracks (which serve as transmission hubs) and to the Wayknights themselves. The psychics also act as moderators, preventing players from killing Wartornians out of hand by refusing to pass along the relevant mental commands to Wayknight bodies.

When a Wayknight dies, the connection drops. A simple virtual field with floating options (which was designed by Peridexion engineers) takes its place, though sometimes it doesn’t cut in fast enough and users experience pain levels above the cutoff thresholds built in and then, darkness. If the body is taken back to an Eternal Barracks, it regenerates within 24 hours, though the user may swap into a healthy one in another locale. This sometimes generates confusion in Wartorn itself, when champions appear in strange places with different personalities, and often run off to loot their former bodies. Shabda seems to have been built into the Wayknights as well, and users freely understand each other and native Wartornians.

The system works well, and a joint Sodality/Peridexion project might even take it further to create transplanar drones and numerous other applications. Unfortunately, this would involve admitting the degree of meddling the Peridexion has already engaged in, along with grappling with the nature of Cantors and a host of other issues. But for the unreasonably wealthy of six worldlines, *Immortal Crowns: Lands of Wartorn* is simply the greatest game ever made—or at least it’s pretty good, but a real time sink compared to Nintendo.

Baseline technology in Wartorn is similar to the Middle Ages, but modern Wayknights have introduced alien equipment and knowledge such as steam power and black powder firearms. The enormous Vathay citadels protect farmlands from ever-threatening monsters. Pre-Fellwar ruins abound, along with those of fallen fortresses, and the Vathay made sure to seed Eternal Barracks at regular intervals. Abandoned cities and ruins from forgotten civilizations provide fodder for Wayknights to explore, and support the Peridexion’s illusion that the plane is a game.

Beyond the various ethical issues, the Peridexion is concerned with one other issue. Sometimes, the monsters appear to act as if they have long-term strategic aims. Sometimes Wayknights join the fray who don’t speak Shabda—or any known Earth language—but seem to be understood by certain Wartornians. *Lands of Wartorn* players are intrigued by these new questlines, where they fight rivals bent on forging empires out city-states currently set against each other by tradition and player guilds, but the natives seem to *want* an empire, and are growing impatient with their player-controlled champions.



## TREASURES

The planes are vast, ancient, and full of wonders. The shattered remains of the Fellwar and an inevitable yet indeterminate future have given rise to a Metacosm where wealth and prestige rain upon the fair and corrupt alike. The following sections describe how elements such as Resources function in *Threefold*, and the potential rewards available to characters based on their actions and connections. The latter expands upon elements found in the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook*.

### NEW EQUIPMENT

On planes with sophisticated magical or occult industries, one may often find equipment roughly analogous to high-tech items listed in the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook*, though such counterparts are usually more expensive, less common, and possess additional complications. For example, the Vitane automobile equivalent, the kanna-powered, wheeled ka-dray, can be found in all the varieties listed for motor vehicles but is rarely used by individuals, since it requires arcanist maintenance. Computer and firearms equivalents are especially difficult to acquire and are often relegated to the realm of secret prototypes, if they exist at all. Various experiments to hybridize magic, technology, and the occult are ongoing, and while many have been successful, few have been applied on an industrial scale.

### ADVANCED EQUIPMENT

When a piece of equipment is generally more advanced than its standard counterpart due to factors which are not

normally represented by game statistics, the Game Master may represent this by adding +1 stunt point whenever tests to use it score doubles. Examples include a mixture of advanced imaging and sighting in firearms or a helpful spirit possessing a vehicle. Advanced equipment isn't casually issued due to expense and security concerns, though it may be handed out on a per-mission basis, or purchased by authorized figures at +2 to an item's usual Resources cost. Advanced gear is more vulnerable to Incessance as well; tests against it add +1 to their usual modifier.

### NEW RANGED WEAPONS

The following new ranged weapons exist in *Threefold* games.

#### AETHON MAW

Aethon's Multimode Assault Weapon is a sleek system issued to operants when necessary, though senior agents sometimes retain a MAW for general use. Shapeshifting smart materials, intelligent ammunition, and onboard processing ease transitions into three modes: battle, defense, and precision. Switching between modes requires replacing one attachment with another, which takes two minor actions. In all modes, MAWs only fire when handled by a primary user with designated biometric authorization (the MAW can sense fingerprints, distinguish voice patterns, and 3D-scan faces) and one secondary user at any given time, as authorized by the primary user. Some MAWs possess the *advanced equipment*



## AETHON MAW

DEFENSE MODE



BATTLE MODE



PRECISION MODE

## MALACANTHUS



feature listed in this chapter, but many do not, to maintain rugged handling characteristics. The features of various modes follow.

- **BATTLE MODE:** In battle mode, the MAW's shapeshifting lower receiver will accept a variety of cartridge types appropriate for smaller longarms and assault rifles, and will exhibit game traits equivalent to a PDW or assault rifle listed in the *Modern AGE* core rules (depending on whether it employs a lighter or more powerful round, respectively). It takes on the traits listed in this chapter when loaded with MAW programmable battle mode ammunition. In addition to inflicting the listed damage, the operator can reduce the firing rate to SS in exchange for commanding rounds to explode at any point in their flight path, inflicting damage as blast grenades (see the *Modern AGE* Basic Rulebook, page 73 and 75).

- **DEFENSE MODE:** Elements of the MAW fold and retract or are ergonomically reshaped for removal by the operator, making it a lighter weapon ideal for close quarters. In defense mode, the MAW accepts ammunition suitable for pistols and SMGs, and performs with the game characteristics of fully automatic versions of weapons using those loads. Purpose-built defense mode rounds are clusters of carbon-glass flechettes which provide the game statistics in this chapter.
- **PRECISION MODE:** A longer barrel and advanced optics package are the most obvious features of precision mode, but unlike the other modes, it requires its own dedicated ammunition. On this setting, the MAW's operator no longer suffers penalties for adverse lighting conditions, windage and weather, or anything less than full cover. Furthermore, smart targeting ensures that any missed attack roll does not fire the weapon, and once a successful attack roll has been made, the shot locks on to the target. The operator can choose to allow the round to fire in any subsequent round during the encounter where the target's position would allow it to be hit with the same attack roll. Finally, the operator enjoys both the stunt advantages of an anti-materiel rifle and the damage bonus of a sniper rifle, without the disadvantages of operating an anti-material rifle without a bipod.

## MALACANTHUS

A weapon favored by Nighthost shock troops, the malacanthus plant has spread to multiple Netherworlds, and while it isn't common on any of them, it's proven to be remarkably tenacious. It uses its two-foot-high, cone-shaped cluster of thorny branches and razor-sharp red and black leaves to feed and reproduce. Creatures who brush by it suffer poisoned cuts and often die within reach of its root system, which sucks the unfortunate dry. The malacanthus breeds by shooting seed-bearing thorns at opportunistic predators when they come to scavenge victims of its leaves. It psychically senses their aggression. Harvesters carefully cut and trim malacanthuses for use as weapons. The operator aims the narrow end of the plant and thinks about hurting the target, which stimulates it to shoot groups of thorns, making it an organic version of a flechette-throwing automatic

### RANGED WEAPONS

WEAPON	DAMAGE	MINIMUM STR	I/P/B	STUN/WOUND	RESOURCES TN	ROF	RANGE	CAPACITY	RELOAD
FOCUS: LONGARMS									
MAW – Precision Mode	4d6+1	2	B	W	N/A	SS	1,500 yards**	3	Minor
FOCUS: SHOTGUNS									
Malacanthus	2d6+6	1	I	W	10	A	50 yards	6***	Minor***
FOCUS: ASSAULT RIFLES									
MAW – Battle Mode*	3d6+2	1	B	W	N/A	A	600 yards	6	Minor
FOCUS: SMGs									
MAW – Defense Mode*	2d6+2	0	B	W	N/A	A	250 yards	5	Minor

\* May also have game statistics based on current ammunition. \*\* This weapon's maximum range is 2x its base range, not 1.5x.

\*\*\* When this weapon runs out of ammunition, it must be replaced, not reloaded.

shotgun. It's trimmed so that it can't aim thorns at its operator, to avoid accidental self-injury. The weapon's nature gives it the following characteristics:

- A malacanthus is subject to Incessance as if it were a piece of complex occult technology.
- A malacanthus that runs out of ammunition no longer has thorns to shoot, and must be replaced entirely to "reload". It remains an effective hand-to-hand weapon.
- The malacanthus's sharp, stiff leaves make it functionally equivalent to an axe (2d6 impact wound damage) in hand-to-hand combat.
- The malacanthus's poisoned surfaces provide access to the following stunt:

SP COST	STUNT
1-3	<b>POISONED BLOW:</b> The weapon injects poison which slows and partially paralyzes the victim, who suffers a -1 penalty to Dexterity, Fighting, and Accuracy per SP spent for 1d6 rounds.

- The malacanthus is dangerous to use. Whenever the operator rolls a 1 on the Stunt Die, the GM rolls an immediate attack against its user. This roll is unmodified.

## NEW VEHICLES

The following new vehicles join those already available in *Modern AGE*, and their equivalents on other planes.

### AETHON PANOPLY BATTLEDRESS

These powered exoskeletons are only assigned in the most extreme scenarios. APBs consist of flexible layers of advanced materials with protective, processing, and life support functions, powered by a Utopium thermionic generator. APBs are surprisingly sleek, yet heavy, adding 200 pounds to the user's mass. Beyond allowing users to run as fast as a motorcycle, they have the following features:

- 8 hours of sealed atmosphere, capable of operating in pressures ranging from vacuum to 300 atmospheres
- Optionally, an integral weapon equivalent to one MAW mode, with an integral magazine that performs three reloads without using an action
- +5 to Speed when moving at Standard Velocity

- +12I/12B Armor Rating with a -3 armor penalty, but this penalty doesn't apply to Speed
- +10 effective bonus to Strength and Strength (Might) tests
- +2 bonus to Perception tests, and no penalties for low light

Attacks targeting the operator and APB are the same, and an attacker can spend SP on Anti-Vehicle Stunts to disable the system, though crash risks only occur when moving faster than Standard Velocity. Anything that immobilizes the suit burdens the wearer with its full weight, though it can be ditched after one major and one minor action.



## VEHICLES

VEHICLE	HANDLING DIFFICULTY	CAPACITY	VELOCITY	RAM	HULL	RESOURCES TN
FOCUS: ATHLETICS						
Aethon Panoply Battledress	0	1	Fast/0	1d6	1	N/A
FOCUS: PILOTING						
DEIFY Vimana	0	15	Extreme/0	5d6	2	N/A
Light Mistjammer	+2	10	Fast/0	3d6	0	16

## HU-33812: WARGSTAHL

A coalition of moon gods called the Ninth Phase drafted Wargstahl's indigenous race of werewolves into the Fellwar. These feared troops defended their Hierarchs until the end, when the Machinor device called the Glass Seed used invasive nanorobot swarms to turn the werewolves against their masters. By the end of the war, the magical natures of the werewolves had adapted to the Glass Seed, and the returning soldiers passed along cybernetic attributes with the ability to change shape to their descendants. The werewolf aristocracy kickstarted a technological revolution, aided by their networked-silicon-based secondary nervous systems. Wargstahl's arvu and jana populations still live in relative squalor, except for a few technicians selected to maintain the glittering, electrically lit citadels of the werewolves.

## DEIFY VIMANA

A DEIFY (Divine Empire Immortal Force Yacht) military vimana is an enchanted flying armored temple that is usually disk- or pyramid-shaped. It flies silently, but as swiftly as an Earth ground attack aircraft. Although capable of hovering and rapid direction changes, on most planes conservation of energy exists to such an extent that maximum maneuverability at speed would kill the occupants. Used for assault and rapid transport, a military vimana has a modular construction to allow it to be disassembled and reassembled, since at a typical 30-foot diameter, it can't fit through most gates. The pressurized cabin has room for a three-person flight crew and twelve others—often a Praetorium fury of six and their Immortal Force batsmen.

## LIGHT MISTJAMMER

Mistjammers are floating craft operated using a combination of elemental enchantments, sails, and propellers. They come in all shapes and sizes (though many resemble flying

wooden ships) but light mistjammers are the most common, used for sightseeing, light trade, courier duties, and sometimes even piracy. Although they sail the skies of many Otherworlds, the Sea of Mists in Vigrith is where they get their name from, and where it's easiest to hire one for pleasure or any number of ventures.

## RESOURCES & MONEY

As stated in *Modern AGE*, characters have a Resources score, representing available cash, credit, and income. *Threefold* characters have a Resources score, but this is even looser than in many other campaigns. Characters often benefit from faction sponsorship, so they don't have to worry about many mission-critical expenditures, or taking care of food, shelter, and other absolute necessities. Organizations like the Sodality do this because, among other things, while currencies tend to be somewhat stable and transferrable across initiated populations in adjacent Alts and Otherworlds, they vary wildly further down chains or in places with more unusual physical, social, or supernatural conditions. CHAPTER 4 describes the Resources available to Sodality and Aethon members.

On the most developed Vitane planes, the necessities of life are handled by government agencies. Advanced economies are managed by local governments in conjunction with the Allweal, the Vitane agency responsible for trade and welfare. In less wealthy or organized places, vital goods may require money. The most popular form of currency is the Vigrithian mark (sometimes shortened as Vmark). Until the mid-20th Century, the mark was pegged to kanna, where 60 marks was the equivalent of the amount of kanna a master numismancer of the Allweal could reliably absorb and channel in a single day (60 power points in *Modern AGE* terms, though this game statistic is generally not known to the people of the Metacosm). This was measured by a crystal ka-pillar enchanted to hold that amount.

As a side effect of this standard, creative work, which generates kanna (see CHAPTER 3), is recognized for its inherent worth. On certain planes, registered artists may claim a small stipend.

Ancient ka-mark gems are still capable of holding kanna, in 1- (quartz), 5- (topaz), and 10- (sapphire) mark denominations. These old currencies could hold an equivalent amount of kanna, and doubled in value when a slight glow indicated that they did. These are still accepted as legal currency on most Vitane planes but have been superseded by the modern mark, a square sheet of tin with



## RELATIVE VALUE

When traveling throughout the planes, characters are likely to deal in many different currencies, and this may result in their Resources score functioning differently depending on that. The suggested adjustments in the **Relative Resources** table modify a character's Resources test as a bonus or penalty depending on whether a character is utilizing Vigri-thian marks, Krypts, conventional goods in trade, or traded souls.

RELATIVE RESOURCES				
CURRENT LOCATION	VMARKS	KRYPTS	CONVENTIONAL GOODS	SOULS
Core Vitane Plane	0	0	0	0
Typical Earth Worldline	-2	0	0	0
Lawless Plane	-1	+1	0	+1
Independent Otherworld	-2	0	+1	0
Divine Empire Plane	-3	-1	0	+3
Nighthost Plane	-5	+2	+1	+1

its denomination listed in Shabda, written in an enamel that is difficult (though not impossible) to counterfeit. Due to the manner in which the Divine Empire split from the Vitane, the ka-mark is also accepted there, but not the Vmark. The Empire's official currency, the iron obol, varies wildly in value as Pantheon politics meddle with the economy.

Due to the fact that computers are unreliable, most forms of digital currency and financial instruments which rely on a network infrastructure hold no value. The US dollar, Euro, and renminbi are accepted in Otherworlds which have significant trade with Earth. Beyond using certain items popular across planes, such as gold, moving money in large amounts can be difficult. Vitane and Divine Empire planes both license factors: individuals with eidetic memories whose declarations of account balances and transfers are backed by sacred oaths. Factor regulation is one of the few areas where the two powers continue to cooperate, and a factor's license is required for certain positions in the Modality. In fact, even the Nighthost, which has no official currency and officially disdains economic "trickery," respects factor oaths.

The inconvenience of digital currency has one exception, of course: the Krypt. Souls are also among the most flexible of currencies, though their origins range from the unsavory to the unambiguously immoral.

## THE TRADING GAME

The farther one goes from Vitane-controlled worlds, the less marks are worth, and the more it costs to get basic goods and supplies. Some planar travelers get around this by directly trading from plane to plane, whether legitimately brokering or smuggling valued goods from Otherworld to Otherworld. Long-extinct fauna on one Alt may be freely available as pets (or steaks) on another, while moving objects and people is the titular *raison d'être* of the Ferrymen. Incessance is another factor, since various goods become useless or potent depending on the locale.

Tastes vary across planes. Some constants endure; pretty much everyone loves drugs, especially coffee and alcohol. Other trade goods range from the merely odd, such as mead distilled from corpses preserved in fermented honey, to the esoteric, such as narcotic memes. Trade between Vitane planes typically requires a permit from the Allweal, and may lead to tariffs based on that agency's arcane formulae, to better

integrate with the planned pan-planar economy. Traders able to game the system—and occasionally break the rules—can grow significantly wealthy, though they often save displays of their fortune for distant planes where capitalism makes wealth more impressive, and where nobody has the jurisdiction to arrest them, to boot.

## THE KRYPT

The Krypt is a digital-psyche cryptocurrency used by the Krypteia and sponsored by Machinors, including acausal interaction with the future Titan Core, whose incipient existence in the Sentium allows the Krypt to function in any plane. The Titan Core is currently a series of structured dreams: imagined server blades suspended across multiple Astral coronas, designed by Machinors and implemented by occultist-engineers. The project is at least a thousand years old, and has graduated from stone tablets and gears to glittering quantum logic designs. Shortly after commencement, and long before it should have been technically possible, the Krypt was born.

Krypts can't be counterfeited or otherwise hacked. Although someone should in theory be able to take advantage of the Titan Core's incomplete state to compromise the currency, a combination of the Krypteia's diligent security and interference from the future prevents this from occurring. Krypts can be exchanged for hard currency, including Vmarks, in shady situations throughout the Metacosm. It's also the only currency that can purchase certain elite criminal services, or access to forbidden places in the interplanar shadow economy and black market. Many Sodalts view the Krypteia as a cancer across the planes of Earth, with the Krypt as the most malignant sign, but official policy remains to observe and apprehend when they break the law in Vitane territory, but otherwise leave them to the Peridexion. Informally, the Sodality treats the black market as a release valve for the worst elements of participating cultures, and an opportunity for people who fall through the cracks of various civilizations' social safety nets.

While Krypts have users throughout the Metacosm, most are spent on Earths on postmodern technology, exotic, dangerous drugs, smuggled goods—even illicit worldline travel via a number of compromised quantum arks. Chaining entire cities and marching them to Netherworlds can only be done with Krypts, which can buy amoral mercenaries and dangerous, hidden gate chains.

## INCESSANCE AND VALUE

A gun that doesn't work, explodes, or suffers demonic possession part of the time can naturally be purchased at a discount. Due to interference from Incessance, items with a technological, occult, or arcane basis generally have their costs reduced by 1 + the Incessance bonus applied against them, if they're affected by Incessance at all. This discount is reduced or eliminated when these items can be easily traded with planes where they're not affected. *Caveat emptor* especially applies with well used items, which may hold accumulated Incessance penalties and quirks.

Krypts have physical tokens, without which the digital element will not sync. These tokens can be almost anything transferrable, but it's in vogue to tie them to a user's biology as nanorobotic or cell-cultured tattoos which flow over the bearer's extremities. They can be hidden from law enforcement, but planes that declare allegiance to Krypteia often have gangsters who wear loose and open clothing to show the stylized code crawling over them.

## THE SOUL TRADE

Souls remain one of the biggest, most dangerous sources of wealth transfer across the planes. The methods for taking souls come from occultists, Inimicals, and the Netherworlds in general, but have spread across multiple planes. The interplanar powers, along with certain occult guilds and the Krypteia, each sponsor scholars of the soul. Soul trade is illegal in Vitane- and Peridexion-controlled regions. In the Divine Empire, souls may be traded by Optimates and their authorized representatives, but other mortals with the right connections often get away with it. In the Nighthost, one can promise one's soul as part of an oath, including as the stakes in ritual combat, though once acquired this way, it may be traded under murkier customs.

Souls are the byproduct of sapience, combining raw knowledge, self-awareness, and intentionality – that is, the power to represent objects and ideas within one's consciousness, instead of merely reacting to them. These are bound by the soul-bearer's will. Non-sapient beings do not have souls. This even includes Emanates and Servitors, whose knowledge-processing abilities and behavior present the appearance of human-like consciousness but who are not conventionally sapient. This information isn't well known, and is considered blasphemy in the Divine Empire, though Optimates do possess souls thanks to their human ancestry.

For tradition's and convenience's sakes, souls are usually transported by a sealed decanter made of a transparent substance, as a soul manifests as about a gallon of iridescent, semi-translucent liquid. Each soul shines with a unique

mix of colors, which occasionally coalesce into an embryonic shape to press against the container wall and look out at the viewer with sightless eyes. Old souls possess some measure of personality and memory; technologically inclined planes refer to the soul's properties as including a backup of a being, though one lacking true consciousness.

Any soul-extraction process must suborn the soul's controlling will before the owner dies. The owner must give up on their own soul, either through signing some kind of pact out of their free will, or by being spiritually ground down through suffering, as Alastors do in the Netherworlds. With very few exceptions, every extracted soul is the result of a transgression or a significant sacrifice, though in a few cases, there isn't a sinister scenario at work. Nighthost warriors give away their souls according to martial, feudal customs, while Vitane arcanists sometimes donate their souls to important magical projects.

## SYSTEMS FOR SOULS

The following systems apply to souls.

### RESOURCES VALUE

In situations where people might recognize its value, the average soul has a Resources purchase TN of 15, modified by the former owner's knowledge and fame (or infamy).

### CONSUMING AND HANDLING SOULS

Souls are indivisible by all known means of processing, though Inimicals are said to be able to break this rule. If the liquid is physically divided, the smaller portion will vanish and reappear with the larger, even breaking any container with insufficient volume. Any being which normally possesses a soul will absorb one by drinking, injecting, or otherwise bodily consuming more than half its liquid volume. An individual can only consume one soul at a time. Any more and the subject expels it in one of a number of disturbing ways.

### DRAINING A SOUL

Some soul-manipulating methods end up exhausting a soul, causing it to evaporate. Nobody knows if this destroys the soul or releases it to parts unknown, though this does make room for an individual or receptacle to hold another. Once a soul is drained due to being used for one purpose, any other benefits it provides, such as life extension, immediately cease.

### LOSING YOUR SOUL

Bereft of a soul, beings slowly lose personality and memory, eventually becoming emotionless automata. Without a

## OD-50009: HEAVENWELL

Not a single corner of this Otherworld appears to have been created naturally. Instead, Heavenwell is a series of infinite shafts connected by tunnels carved into granite. One ascends or descends through carved steps of hand holds or might rest to look out from a seamless arch in the rock to a counterpart on the other side of a shaft. All soil exists in stone planters, and all water comes from fountains and artificial waterways. Light comes down the shaft in the form of falling, burning winged figures who scream as they go, every four hours. Optimates keep second palaces here and tell time by the screaming "angels."

soul, characters lose all access to their soul talents (set these talent slots aside), reduce any personal power points to 0 (though these may be regenerated as usual), and suffer a -1 penalty to Willpower tests per week. Once the penalty equals 3 + the character's Willpower, they lose self-awareness, fail all Willpower tests, and will perform rote tasks for whoever forcefully commands them to without thought for self-preservation, though the soulless will perform certain survival tasks, such as eating or flinching from pain, out of instinct.

## REPLACING YOUR SOUL

If a soulless character recovers a soul, the results depend on whether it was the character's, or someone else's. A character's own soul restores any absent talents and brings the character back to their old self. A different soul brings back the character's personality—usually. Missing talents reappear as empty slots, which are filled with those of the donor soul until any are left over, at which point the character may relearn their former soul-dependent talents. The GM and player decide whether the character's original personality, that of the donated soul, or a mixture returns, and over time, they may work together to swap out focuses and talents to reflect any changes to the character's innermost self.

## THE USES OF SOULS

Souls contain the entire potentiality of a person: everything they have been, are, and could be. Furthermore, souls hold secrets unknown to even the greatest scholars. Souls have been used for transplanar communication (especially between alters on various worldlines), computing, and in a classic move, to bargain with inimical beings. Souls might be drained or stored for any number of effects, adjudicated by the GM.

The following functions scratch the surface of what souls are capable of.

### KANNA

Each soul contains 10 power points along with any power points that its former owner possessed. This doesn't increase an arcanist's permanent PP capacity. Consuming a soul or maintaining direct physical contact with its vessel allows an arcanist to access these PP. Spending a soul's last 10 PP drains it.

### LIFE EXTENSION

When consumed by a human, a soul halts aging and suspends life-threatening conditions for 2d6 months for the soul of an elderly individual, 4d6 months for the soul of an adult, 6d6 months for the soul of a juvenile, and 8d6 months for the soul of a younger child. Once this additional lifespan is used up, aging and other effects continue, and the soul is drained.

### VITALITY

A soul possesses 1d6+2 "virtual" fatigue levels. A soul consumer may use these instead of gaining fatigue on a level for level basis.

# HONORIFICS

Frequently visited planes get to know characters by their actions, along with whatever anyone can convince an audience they did. Characters' reputations may even precede them across the planes, especially if they're affiliated with a transplanar organization such as the Sodality. However, in the case of that particular organization, the higher-ups prefer their people to keep their heads down and either represent the honor of the Vitane or, when they can't reveal themselves, stay anonymous.

Any of the honorifics in the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook* work well for *Threefold*, but new ones specific to the setting are as follows.

## AETHON COOPERATIVE

Aethon files and scuttlebutt give the character a good reputation in the Pool and across operational Sections, both of whom may request their help even if the character is an outsider. The character is privy to, or occasionally used as a back channel for, Peridexion business considered too politically sensitive for formal channels.

## DIVINE ANCESTRY

Somewhere in the character's ancestry lies the radiant seed of an Emanate, whose descendants eventually begat them, though they didn't manifest the powers of an Optimate. This doesn't preclude the character from serving in the Sodality or Aethon and it definitely helps them in the Divine Empire, where "suboptimals" receive various favored government appointments and elite, though mortal, status. Some may seek the character out in the hopes of co-parenting their offspring, in case they turn out to manifest recessive demigod traits. The character may also be in line for a strange or valuable inheritance.

## HOUSECARL

The character has sworn to carry a Nighthost warlord's burdens. Participating in Nighthost society is generally frowned upon by the Sodality, though with effort, a character may find a way to resolve these divided loyalties. How the character ended up in this position is up to the player, but they'll occasionally be tasked with orders that are unwise to disobey. On the other hand, those within the Nighthost may be unwilling to cross them for fear of offending the character's liege lord.

## KANNA MAGE SCHOLARSHIP

Many schools across the planes can train a character to manipulate kanna; this Reputation denotes a past or current scholarship from at least one of them. Some colleges are hidden on planes (even Earths!) that don't know about planar travel, grounding their students and enabling them to keep a measure of secrecy about their power, but on initiated planes, students flaunt their academic prowess openly. When choosing this Reputation, adopt a fanciful school name, like Castel Otran or Ryhason's Academy, and think about connections from your school days and what reputation the school might have.





hostile to life, rather than simply uninhabitable. Yet small, dogged groups survive on Z-class planes, outlasting the apocalypse, surviving incidents which strand them, and in some cases even settling willingly. Characters with this honorific may tell stories only Z-class survivors share, establishing moments of intimacy and laughing camaraderie among themselves while others can only listen in abject horror.

## EXTRAORDINARY ITEMS

In *Threefold*, extraordinary items almost invariably have a psychic, arcane, or technological underpinning. Magic items are redolent with mythic symbolism, for such is the nature of a power that focuses creative energy. Occult items are the products of ritualized mnemonics which focus souls, along with sigils and other designs which trigger the esoteric programming of certain entities and paranormal forces. The technological category usually consists of items made under the direction of the Machinors and their organizations, or Accelerator conspiracies. Their items are often described as post-modern technologies. Certain objects conform to no known psychic, arcane, or technological principles. Studying these is one of the tasks assigned to Sodality Searchers and their counterparts from other factions.

## NEW ITEMS

### ONE IN EVERY PLANE

The character is extremely well-traveled and has taken the time to establish intimate relationships with people across many planes. These may be superficial or deep, and need not even be romantic, though there's always an element of friendship (or some desire to be near them) and trust. These relationships may be superficial, or the character may easily form attachments with many different people.

### SMUGGLER'S MINDER

The character is, or was, a Ferryman ally, an Aethon agent involved in counter-smuggling operations, a Sodality Warden, or even a Krypteia collaborator. Whatever the connection, it made them known to interplanar smugglers. Whatever their supposed duties, they have a reputation for being fair to people who sneak from plane to plane, and being well-informed about hidden chains and stranger routes across the Metacosm. Enforcement agents and smugglers may both approach the character for help.

### Z-CLASS PLANE SURVIVOR

However the character grew up, it was pretty bad. The Sodality usually restricts Z status to planes that are actively

CHAPTER 6 of the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook* describes two types of extraordinary powers, both of which exist in *Threefold*: arcane (or magical) and psychic (called occult in *Threefold*). Rules for making new extraordinary items can be found in the *Modern AGE Companion*, but this book isn't required to understand the list of items below, even though it uses those rules as guidelines.

### BRONZE BOOK

COMMON

Named for the color of the hands bolted or painted on their covers, Bronze Books are hedonists' gazetteers of the planes, created and shared among members of the sybaritic, transplanar Open Hand Society. A Bronze Book provides information about 2d6+2 planes from a recreational point of view. They're published every year and updated with the newest night spots and other entertainments, but their rum-soaked pages also carry a subtle enchantment. Those who don't have the Party Animal talent acquire it upon picking up a Bronze Book, while those who do find it improved by one degree.

### PSYCHIC BULLETS

COMMON

This enchanted ammunition acts as a focus for psychic characters, allowing them to hone in on intelligent prey. When fired, psychic bullets grant a +1 bonus to damage. Against humans and other beings with souls, psychic bullets also provide a +2 bonus to attack rolls.

## ITEM AVAILABILITY

Extraordinary items have an availability rating next to them. **Common Items** are fairly easily made or acquired, and may even be found for sale in some places in certain planes. **Uncommon Items** are generally acquired as rewards or benefits of Membership. These might show up on the open or black market, but are very expensive when they do. **Rare Items** are virtually never offered for sale and only acquired as rewards, and then only occasionally. **Unique Items** are one-of-a-kind artifacts, and a character might acquire just one over the course of a career. A unique item is essentially priceless.

### RINGS OF THE ERUDITE

COMMON

First created by a less than diligent student arcanist to catch up on her studies, the Rings of the Erudite must be worn on fingers sifting through research materials. One ring grants the Intelligence (Research) focus, and the other grants the Willpower (Self-Discipline) focus. A character who already possesses one of these focuses gains a +1 to associated tests instead. Possessing both rings adds +1 to the Stunt Die on extended tests to gather information from archives and evidence, though not from social maneuvering.

### SELF PORK

COMMON

It tastes like pork, it's exactly what you think it is, and it's all yours. For a small fee, residents of a certain Alt affiliated with the Krypteia will flash-clone a character, generating a headless body (well, it *arrives* headless) for ethical consumption. Choppy, the mascot with no head and two thumbs up, is a proven sign of quality.

This clone is comprised of stem-cell-rich tissues which can be coated in a medium engineered from extremophile bacteria, so they survive digestion and directly incorporate themselves into your body. Processed Self Pork thus has remarkable healing properties, though perhaps less so when you consider that it's just the body replacing itself *with* itself. A Self Pork clone provides a full set of organs and other tissues from the neck down to aid surgery (though it requires special handling to prevent spoilage), along with 12 packets of processed "jerky," which heals 1d6 + Constitution Health 10 minutes after consumption.

### CANTOR

UNCOMMON

About the size and shape of a thermos, a cantor is steel, cool to the touch even in hot weather, and to psychics reading it with the appropriate powers, radiates a reverent emotional state and a sense of rudimentary awareness, though nothing coherent. Each cantor contains a preserved bundle of cloned brain tissue, taken from samples provided by skilled artists and arcanists after they were asked to memorize and react to an epic

## EI-08178: AMUSE-GUEULE

In this dangerous Alt, most placental mammals died of an infertility-causing plague about 125 years ago, but human survivors studying the plague discovered DNA in 1902 and began genetic engineering by the 1930s. The plague eradicated racism on Amuse-Gueule, but not eugenic ideology. Using surgery and mutagens, this world's technocrats turn supposed inferiors into replacements for other extinct mammals, from cattle to canids (eating "subspecies" flesh is widely accepted) and are always on the lookout for more genetic diversity. They have reopened gates sealed by Aethon, and their genetically engineered agents lure "novel stock" back to the world by any means necessary.

poem written by a committee of Peridexion memetic scientists. The poem praises the uncanny effectiveness of mathematics and the scientific method, and charts their development in mythic terms. Consequently, a cantor imposes a -3 penalty to Incessance tests to interfere with technology within a 4-yard radius. Cantors are issued to Sections when it is deemed necessary to support technologies on planes with unstable natural laws.

### HEALING POULTICE

UNCOMMON

A higher-quality export from the Otherworlds, this adhesive wrap rapidly heals injuries. When applied with an Activate action, it restores 6d6 + Constitution Health. One application can be cut up into up to six smaller applications restoring as little as 1d6 Health each, though a split poultice doesn't provide the Constitution bonus. A standard case contains three poultices in paper packets. If these are torn and they dry out, they stop working.

### MYRMIDON ARMOR

UNCOMMON

Despite the name, the giant quasi-insects called myrmidons resemble cockroaches more than ants. They're human-sized creatures not only bred for food, labor, and simple wave



## EU-024040: IGEA

iGea is an alternate Earth where time runs seventy years ahead of the primeline, and a fully automated corporation cluster is responsible for keeping the planet alive. Information technology is ubiquitous; pan-sensory augmented reality overlays everything, so the planet looks luminous and lush, though the reality is fields of engineered lichen and ashen skies. The system is breaking down, and appetite suppressants fill the air to compensate for decreased caloric rations. Unfortunately, the last engineer capable of understanding eco-control systems, or even how computers work, died twenty years ago.

attacks during the Fellwar, but engineered by Alastors so their exoskeletons can be harvested. Myrmidons now exist in wild swarms in multiple Otherworlds and Netherworlds, and their armor is favored by Nighthost elites. Myrmidon armor is living, after a fashion. Nerves and muscle tissue cling to its plates. Dry myrmidon armor provides an Armor Rating of 6I/3B with a -3 armor penalty. When drenched in a gallon of blood or another nutritious, animal-sourced liquid or slurry, the armor penalty disappears, and it also provides a +2 bonus to Strength (Might) tests and damage rolls in hand-to-hand combat. The armor dries out again in 24 hours.

### WARLOCK'S HONOR

UNCOMMON

These leather gauntlets are burnt at the fingertips and feel entirely too warm. A renegade arcanist has to be ready to defend herself, after all. The wearer must know the *flame blast* spell, which the gauntlets improve in the following ways: It only costs 2 power points, its width can increase to 4 yards, it causes an additional 1d6 damage to those struck dead on, and it causes +1 damage to those who avoid being struck in full with a successful Dexterity (Acrobatics) test, as noted in the spell's description.

### QUANTUM ARK

RARE

By itself, a quantum ark is just a box made of sandwiched layers of graphene and depleted uranium with an airlock, internal life support, lighting, electrical outlets, a speaker grille, and a lever with settings labeled STOP and GO in various languages. Some have chairs, or even fridges and cots. Big ones have steel scaffolds to allow for convenient vertical storage. Arks vary in size, from those capable of holding just one or two people standing to ones that could house small planes, but they all have 3 by 5 by 7 proportions. Quantum arks only become truly useful when connected to a processing hub, which can send them to various worldlines. One speaks the name of the destination into the speaker, pulls the lever to GO, and waits anywhere from seconds to days until it pops back up to STOP, indicating arrival. The Peridexion operates the majority of quantum arks using the Extrapolative Causality Collider, but a number have been taken over by other groups, including the Krypteia, which

operates a few like vending machines which unlock at the deposition of a Krypt. The Peridexion's official position is that the quantum ark was their invention, but close inspection reveals Peridexion technology seems to be bolted on in an ad hoc fashion. In any event, quantum arks go roughly wherever the processing hub's controller authorizes them within the set of Earth worldlines. It is, however, almost impossible to arrive at a precise location; arks silently appear in air- or water-filled spaces a few dozen yards to hundreds of miles from where users want them to be.

### SOULGUN

RARE

Soulguns are rumored to be made by a cabal of huldra warsmiths for the greatest arcannoneers. Each soulgun is a single-shot weapon, usually a revolver, though some rifles and carbines have also been found. Legends of love, war, and murder play out in its etched and filigreed decorations. A basic soulgun provides a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls, but after a day of uncontested ownership, the possessor may transfer 2 ranks of Relationship Bonds to the soulgun, and may devote subsequent Relationship slots to deepening their bond with the weapon. The user's Relationship with the weapon (which is given a description like other Bonds, such as "The Gun Expresses My Love and Hate") may be used to enhance its capabilities, the way a Relationship with a person is used. Unfortunately, once bonded, the soulgun relinquishes its connection reluctantly, and former owners may appear to take what they think is theirs.

### SPIRIT GUITAR

RARE

The strings of this guitar play power chords, strumming power along the threads of the planes. Introducing vibrations into kanna flows, the arcanist monitors the returning harmonies. While playing, the *arcane awareness* spell costs no PP, so long as the arcanist makes a successful TN 12 Communication (Performance) test. Furthermore, the character gains a bonus to this and other Communication (Performance) tests at a magical nexus equal to its PP cost reduction for a neutral aspect, listed in CHAPTER 3.

### THE NAME OF THE STARS

UNIQUE

This is a secret of the planes: The masters of the Netherworlds store their soul bounties in great hoards in the constellations of certain Netherworlds. The Name is the key to one of these grand star-vaults, a place of ethereal beauty and great peril with souls to slake the thirsts of an Alastor—or prepare the way for the Nemesis. The Name takes many forms: a great rolled parchment shining with celestial patterns; a young child with haunted eyes, who speaks in riddles; a mathematical equation that drives professors to seizures. Wealth accumulates around the Name, allowing the owner's Pay Dirt stunt (see the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook*, page 47) to grant +3 Resources per SP spent rather than +1. However, these riches often come from tragic accidents or bizarre crimes which may have happened long before the owner acquired the item.



## DENIZENS OF THE PLANES

**E**arth, the Netherworlds, and the Otherworlds contain an uncountable variety of peoples and creatures who fill the planes. This chapter contains a smattering of examples relevant to the *Threefold* setting. In addition, the *Modern AGE* sourcebook *Enemies & Allies* was designed in conjunction with *Threefold*, so the NPCs and creatures in that book exist in this setting.

Note that in two cases, NPCs in this section possess talents (Shattersoul and Nighthost Berserker) suited to Player Characters. In both cases, these talents are usually only taught to more experienced characters, and the GM can choose to introduce them over the course of the campaign.

When devising special qualities for beings in *Threefold*, use the new talents and powers described in this book to help, with the guideline that a given quality is usually the equivalent of one or more talents, similar to Player Characters. Feel free to remove elements that require long term bookkeeping and ignore listed prerequisites for anything you convert into a special ability. As *Modern AGE* notes, adversaries and NPCs do not have to use the same rules as PCs.

The following special quality is common to many entities in this chapter.

### SPECIAL QUALITY - PRIMAL BEING

Emanates, Optimates, Inimicals, and other divine beings speak and read fluent Shabda. They sense the presence of others within sensory range who possess powers or natures in alignment with their own divine origin, as well as any use of such powers and other aligned phenomena. They automatically

gain 2 SP on social rolls against anyone who's heard of them, their domains, or their exploits; others gain +2 to rolls to learn about the same information

## THE VITANE & THE PERIDEXION

The most common Vitane NPCs seen out among the planes are Sodalts exploring the Metacosm. Others include college magi chasing arcane secrets, and the occasional Aethon operant or another spy.

### AETHON OPERANT

#### SECTION AGENT

Aethon operants optimize their capabilities for the current mission, swapping out equipment, teammates, and enhancements whenever necessary to overcome obstacles and adjust strategies. Operants usually work alone, or in small groups comprising three to five specialists such as the Shattersoul (see sidebar) and other highly focused agents.

#### AETHON SHATTERSOUL

The Shattersoul is a specialist enhanced to spy on parallel versions of themselves in other timelines, through sacred tech that requires the highest levels of Peridexion clearance to use. A Shattersoul sacrifices some of their identity's stability to attune to alternate Earths and infiltrate their own parallel lives, leaving themselves open to psychic and demonic influences.

## AETHON OPERANT

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 3, COMMUNICATION 1 (INVESTIGATION), CONSTITUTION 0, DEXTERITY 4 (SABOTAGE), FIGHTING 2, INTELLIGENCE 3, PERCEPTION 5 (SEARCHING), STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 3 (SELF-DISCIPLINE)

\* ALSO CHOOSE ONE OF PERCEPTION (EMPATHY) OR INTELLIGENCE (HISTORY)

SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
16	25	30	45	14	15	15	2I/4B+1	+1	+2

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE*
ADVANCED SNIPER RIFLE	+3	2D6+7

\* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Activate the Sleeper (3 SP), Consult the Pool (2 SP), Cover Your Tracks, High Tech Hustle, Interface (2+ SP), Just a Shadow, Play Dead

**ADVANCED SNIPER RIFLE:** The operant's sniper rifle generates +1 SP when its attacks roll doubles.

**STUNT - ACTIVATE THE SLEEPER:** For 3 SP, the operant can declare that another NPC present in the scene was a sleeper agent all along. That NPC betrays the heroes or produces some information or equipment the operant needs right then, and counts as her ally.

**STUNT - CONSULT THE POOL:** The operant accesses the Pool through implants or communication devices. For 2 SP, generated by a test to learn a piece of information, they also learn something about a related interaction the heroes had with another character previously in the session even if they otherwise have no way to do so.

**STUNT - INTERFACE:** When making any Communication or Intelligence test, the operant makes a direct link between their mind and a computer. For the rest of the encounter, they can take actions with these abilities in action time that would normally require narrative time to perform, such as research, writing a letter, or casing a crime scene; each basic or opposed test takes a number of turns equal to 4 - 1 per 2 SP spent, minimum 1. Individual rolls of advanced tests with these abilities take one turn each.

**TALENTS:** Burglary (Novice), Earthsoul (Expert), Hacking (Expert), Wandersoul (Novice)

**AUGMENTATIONS:** Bionic Speed (Somatic), Chameleon Skin (Somatic), Commlink (Noetic)

**AUGMENTATION - BIONIC SPEED:** The operant gains +2 Speed, and may take an Activate action to either gain +2 additional Speed until the end of their turn or perform the Lightning Attack stunt this turn without spending SP.

**PREDICTION ALGORITHM:** Once per encounter when a die shows a value of 1, the operant may turn that 1 into a 6, predicting the worst possible outcome and adjusting to mitigate it.

**TELESCOPIC SIGHT:** The operant must take the Activate action to use and to deactivate Telescopic Sight. While activated, it grants +3 to tests targeting someone at least 100 yards away, but imposes a -3 to tests targeting someone closer. This doesn't require a scope.

**EQUIPMENT:** Bullet-Resistant Cloth Armor, Hacker Gear, Advanced Sniper Rifle, Spy Gear

THREAT: MODERATE

Aethon keeps these operants on short leashes, and readies selective memory wipes in case they become compromised.

NPC Shattersouls use the Aethon Operant template but increase their threat rating to Major, gaining the Shattersoul Talent at a degree appropriate to the character's organizational rank. One common way to use this specialist as an antagonist is to introduce one of the PCs' parallel selves as a Shattersoul foe spying on the heroes.

## TALENT: SHATTERSOUL

**REQUIREMENT:** Aethon Membership Rank 2+ or equivalent status

Aethon entrusted you with the ability to infiltrate parallel Earths by accessing your own alternate selves' memories across worldlines. It splintered your psyche and cracked your soul, but you volunteered.

Novice Shattersouls take a -1 to tests to defend themselves against psychic and Inimical powers. This penalty increases to -2 at Expert and -3 at Master. If a parallel self the operant drew memories from dies or undergoes significant trauma (this happens at the GM's discretion, and includes selves on any worldline the operant visits), that alternate's memories flood her mind; she must make a TN 15 Willpower (Self-Discipline) test to avoid believing she is that parallel self for the rest of the scene.

**NOVICE:** Any test to infiltrate or learn about a parallel Earth that would generate SP automatically earns +1 SP. You gain access to the Parallel Attunement stunt: for 4 SP, gain a focus you don't already possess for any ability, for the rest of the encounter. You may only possess one temporary focus from this stunt at a time.

## SODALITY EMISSARY

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 0, COMMUNICATION 4 (BARGAINING, ETIQUETTE), CONSTITUTION 1, DEXTERITY 2, FIGHTING 1, INTELLIGENCE 2 (ANTHROPOLOGY, THEOLOGY), PERCEPTION 3 (EMPATHY), STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 3 (MORALE)

SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
13	12	14	19	13	13	13	0I/0B+3	+3	+3

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE*
DAGGER	+1	1D6+4

\* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Cards on the Table, Hidden Message, Let's Make a Deal, Objection!

**TALENTS:** Inspire (Novice), Intrigue (Etiquette; Novice), Linguistics (choose two; Expert), Wandersoul (Expert)

**SHABDA MASTERY:** The Emissary's knowledge of Shabda extends to symbols and iconography. They know what symbols in any culture represent, and can communicate non-verbally with anyone.

**EQUIPMENT:** Sodality Scarab, Shabda Plaque, Dagger

THREAT: MINOR

**EXPERT:** Gain +2 SP on tests pertaining to parallel Earths instead of +1. Whenever you travel to a parallel Earth, you automatically know the direction and distance to your alternate self there. From any Earth, you may make an opposed Willpower (Self-Discipline) test as a major action to catch a brief glimpse of what one of your alternate selves is doing at that moment.

**MASTER:** Gain +3 SP on tests pertaining to parallel Earths instead of +2. Whenever you pose as one of your alternate selves, you may re-roll a failed Communication (Deception) or (Disguise) test, but you must keep the second result. You may possess two temporary focuses from Parallel Attunement at once.



## SODALITY OFFICER

### MISSION MEMBER

Sodality officers venture out into the planes to solve problems, explore new places, and make peace. That doesn't make them pushovers, though, and anyone who crosses the Vitane learns quickly how well a Mission's bravery, training, and teamwork make Sodalts a force to be reckoned with.

### SODALITY SEARCHER

#### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 1, COMMUNICATION 1, CONSTITUTION 3, DEXTERITY 1 (PILOTING, RIDING), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 3 (CARTOGRAPHY, NAVIGATION), PERCEPTION 4 (SEARCHING), STRENGTH 2, WILLPOWER 2 (COURAGE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	AR + TOUGHNESS
11	18 24 29	11 11 11	4I/0B+3 +3 +3

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE*
CROSSBOW	+1	2D6+5

\* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

#### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Bravery, Frugal, Jury Rig

**TALENTS:** Emergency Care (Expert), Improvisation (Novice), Scouting (Novice), Wandersoul (Expert)

**SITUATIONAL MASTERY:** The Searcher may re-roll a failed Perception test with a focus other than Empathy, but they must keep the second result.

**EQUIPMENT:** Sodality Scarab, Shabda Plaque, Dagger, Leather Armor

THREAT: MINOR

### SODALITY PROTECTOR

#### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 3, COMMUNICATION 0, CONSTITUTION 2, DEXTERITY 4 (INITIATIVE), FIGHTING 3 (GRAPPLING), INTELLIGENCE 1 (TACTICS), PERCEPTION 2 (EMPATHY), STRENGTH 1, WILLPOWER 2 (SELF-DISCIPLINE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	AR + TOUGHNESS
14	12 16 21	14 14 14	2I/4B+2 +2 +3

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE*
COMPOUND BOW	+3	1D6+4
DAGGER	+5	1D6+3
SMG	+3	2D6+2

\* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

#### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Disarm, Guardian Angel, Pin, Skirmish, Suppressive Fire, Take One for the Team

**TALENTS:** Grappling Style (Novice), Protect (Expert), Quick Reflexes (Novice), Tactical Awareness (Novice), Wandersoul (Novice)

**TACTICAL MASTERY:** All combat stunts used against the Protector cost +1 SP.

**EQUIPMENT:** Sodality Scarab, Shabda Plaque, Compound Bow, Dagger, SMG, Bullet-Resistant Cloth Armor

THREAT: MINOR

## OFENIA, PANTHEON OPTIMATE

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 0, COMMUNICATION 4 (BARGAINING, ETIQUETTE), CONSTITUTION 1, DEXTERITY 2, FIGHTING 1, INTELLIGENCE 2 (ANTHROPOLOGY, THEOLOGY), PERCEPTION 3 (EMPATHY), STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 3 (MORALE)

SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
12	30	73	103	12	15	15	8I/1B+3	+3	+6

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE*
DAGGER	+1	1d6+4

\* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Ardent Fantasia (4 SP), Bind Weapon, Break Weapon, Flaming Blade (3 SP), Knock Prone, Making an Entrance, Shock and Awe, Vicious Blow

**STUNT - ARDENT FANTASIA:** Ofenia's music dances like flames, drawing listeners unerringly to her. For 4 SP, as long as she can sing or play at the same time as the action that generates the SP, anyone participating in the encounter who can hear her must succeed on a Willpower (Self-Discipline) test against Ofenia's Communication (Performance) or immediately move toward her, stopping either when they reach her or when they've moved their Speed in yards.

**STUNT - FLAMING BLADE:** For 3 SP, the target takes 1d6 damage (or 2d6 in Gritty games) at the beginning of their turn each round until they succeed on a TN 11 Dexterity (Acrobatics) test, or otherwise put out the fire.

**TALENTS:** Death Arcana (Novice), Expertise (Heavy Blades, Inimicals; Novice), Fire Arcana (Master), Other-soul (Master), Two-Handed Style (Expert), Wandersoul (Expert)

**DEATHSENSE:** Ofenia can sense the direction and distance to any death that occurs within fifty miles, and knows when she's in a place where someone has died within the last several days or where ghosts and other undead dwell. She may make a TN 11 Perception (Empathy) test to learn more information, such as how many people died and by what causes, but she can't learn specifics like names or faces.

**ILLUSTRATION IN FLAMES:** Whenever Ofenia dies, her body combusts immediately, burning to ash over the course of

four rounds and dealing 1d6+4 damage (or 2d6+4 in Gritty games) to anyone within a 5-yard radius. Flammable items in range ignite. At the next dawn, Ofenia returns to life with full Health, even if her ashes are scattered, with a cumulative +1 Willpower that lasts until she fails a Willpower test. (For instance, if she dies twice before she fails one, she has +2 Willpower; then, if she fails a Willpower test before she dies again, it decreases to +1, and then to her default rating upon failing another.) Ofenia may choose whether to appear in the place where she died, or on another plane directly connected by gate to the one on which she perished. The only way to prevent her from returning is to retrieve the missing piece of her soul from Nehatet and destroy it; heroes must investigate her history to learn this secret weakness.

**MOMENTARY REQUIEM:** Ofenia may make a Communication (Performance) test vs. Willpower (Self-Discipline), applied against anyone who can hear her performance, in narrative time. Anyone who fails falls into a light sleep that lasts the rest of the scene; sound and light won't wake a sleeper early, but hostile action or imminent danger will.

**PRIMAL BEING:** See page 139.

**SONG OF LIMINAL SKIES:** Ofenia may use Communication in place of Intelligence to cast any spell by singing or playing her oud.

**EQUIPMENT:** Morglay (two-handed sword), Steel Plate Armor, Oud

THREAT: DIRE



# DIVINE EMPIRE

Optimates traverse the planes more easily than most, so although they often have great responsibilities at home, imperial Optimates are the face of the Empire: the most well-known – and most feared – of its citizens.

## OFENIA

### PANTHEON OPTIMATE

Ofenia is an arvu Optimate of flame, music, and death, and a member of the Pantheon. Tall and slender, with fiery red hair that falls to her waist and dusky brown skin, she's most often seen wearing gleaming armor adorned with the Empire's sigil and carrying Morglay, her enormous claymore. At over 200 years old, she possesses black sclerae and red-gold feathers that line ridges running along her face and body. Her divine blood made itself known with her own mortal death; after she died in battle, her soul traveled to the Netherworld called Nehatet and endured torments that woke her true ancestry. The first time she returned to life, though, the Inimicals of Nehatet tore out a fragment of her soul as it fled. One of these Inimicals keeps the fragment under lock and key, knowing that someday, someone will come to bargain for it.

Ofenia serves on the Pantheon as a loud voice demanding increased hostilities against the Netherworlds, citing the tortures she went through as an eye-opening experience that taught her how irresponsible it is to leave the rogue planes without imperial rule. The rest of the Pantheon has mixed feelings and won't act decisively enough for her, so she's made secret plans of her own to amass an army and march on Nehatet when she's ready, to retake the plane for herself. Then, she reasons, the Pantheon will be ready to support her agenda – perhaps even crown her Empress.

## NIGHTHOST

Encountering the Nighthost is usually either a heart-thumping thrill ride to glory, or the untimely end of one's days. Fierce in battle and enthusiastic at play, the warriors of the Nighthost love life and stand up for their beliefs no matter the cost.

### REITHEL REDFANG

#### THANE OF THE 8 FLAGS

Reithel Redfang, the fire-breathing dreygur warlord – aka the Hellspider Queen, Lady Ferocity, Reithel Riptide – has been thane on the plane of Sargas for fifteen years, and her warriors remain unwaveringly loyal; to this day, none have challenged her for the position. Her prowess on the battlefield and peerless leadership make her popular. For fifteen years, the Nighthost of Sargas has fought under her eight banners against a fierce Inimical invasion. She's steadily turned the tide. The Inimicals rebuild their prisoners into demonic drones, swelling their numbers with each victory, but through talent, cunning, and passion, Redfang and her berserkers have taken back half the plane. The other half awaits. They show no signs of giving up.

Redfang stands at 6'4" in her human form, densely muscled and broad-shouldered. She pulls her coarse black hair back into tight, thick braids close to her head, and wears sleeveless clothes

### REITHEL REDFANG, THANE OF THE 8 FLAGS

#### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 1 (THROWN), COMMUNICATION 2 (LEADERSHIP +3), CONSTITUTION 4, DEXTERITY 5 (ACROBATICS, CRAFTING), FIGHTING 3 (GRAPPLING, LONG HAFTED), INTELLIGENCE 3 (TACTICS), PERCEPTION 1 (SEEING), STRENGTH 2 (JUMPING), WILLPOWER 3 (MORALE)

SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
15	28	68	98	17	17	19	0I/0B+4	+6	+6

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE*
SPEAR	+5	1D6+5
UNARMED	+5	1D3+2

\* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

#### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Bind Weapon, Disarm, Double-Team, Duck and Weave, Grapple, Group Tactics, Lightning Attack, Pin, Restrain

**TALENTS:** Command (Expert), Expertise (Morale, Outnumbered; Novice), Inspire (Novice), Nighthost Berserker (Expert), Pinpoint Attack (Novice), Tactical Awareness (Master)

**BERSERKER:** Reithel may use an Activate action to sink into a frenzied battle-trance, which lasts until the end of the encounter or until she succeeds at a TN 13 Willpower (Self-Discipline) test as a minor action. In her battle-trance, Redfang's lower body transforms into an immense spider's torso and legs. She increases Fighting and Strength by +2, and decreases Communication and Intelligence by -2. The Lightning Attack and Pin stunts cost her -1 SP while berserk.

**FIREBREATHER:** Redfang may take a major action to breathe fire across an area with a five-yard diameter in front of her. She makes an Accuracy (Thrown) test, opposed individually by the Dexterity (Acrobatics) of each character in the area. Anyone who fails takes 2d6+1 penetrating wound damage.

**WALL CRAWLER:** Redfang can walk up walls and on ceilings.

**WEBSPINNER:** Redfang may perform the Bind Weapon and Disarm stunts, and all grappling stunts, at a range of up to (15 + Strength) yards.

**EQUIPMENT:** Blacksmith's Forge, Medium Shield, Spear, War Banner

THREAT: MAJOR

to show off the runic tattoos that cover her alabaster skin. Even in this form, she possesses subtle arachnid features and wears facial war paint to bring them into sharp relief; in berserker form, she towers over her enemies at a full seven feet tall.

#### TALENT: NIGHTHOST BERSERKER

**REQUIREMENT:** Nighthost Membership Rank 2+ or equivalent status

By drinking the blood of fell Netherworld beasts and strange Otherworldly creatures, consecrated with warrior rites and shared with your siblings-in-arms, you become an elite Nighthost berserker.



When you gain this Talent, choose one type of creature, whether a simple animal or something more monstrous. All of your berserker transformations grant you this beast's features.

**NOVICE:** Once per session, you may take an Activate action to sink into a frenzied battle-trance, which lasts until the end of the encounter or until you succeed at a TN 13 Willpower (Self-Discipline) test as a minor action. While entranced, gain +2 to one of the following: Constitution, Fighting, Strength, or Willpower; suffer -2 to one of the following: Communication, Intelligence, or Perception; select one stunt that reflects your chosen beast's nature and reduce its cost by 1 SP, to a minimum of 1; and whenever you fail any offensive action, such as an attack or a test to cow a foe, you automatically affect an ally with it instead, unable to tell friend from enemy. For the rest of the session after the trance ends, suffer -1 to *all* abilities.

**EXPERT:** As Novice, but choose two abilities to increase during the trance, and two to decrease. Also, choose two stunts that become cheaper.

**MASTER:** As Expert, but trance bonuses increase to +3 and penalties increase to -3. Also, decrease the chosen stunt costs by 2 SP instead of 1.

## ALASTORS & INIMICALS

In the Netherworlds, the Alastors are the unequivocal top of the food chain, but the rest of the Inimical host varies in how eager they are to serve each other or perform regimented roles. Four broad categories based on origin define Inimicals' personalities and standings, with significant variety within each, but the lines can blur; their Netherworld homes often define their forms.

**TIMORIES** are the Inimical rank and file, sometimes called the Host of Vengeance, and highly receptive to summoning. A Timoria is an entity an Alastor created in a failed attempt to forge souled life, pressed into service or cast aside in disgust. Timories tend to be angry and bitter, though they find a myriad of things to seethe about, and some just have quick tempers. Though materialistic and forceful beings with simple desires who enjoy turmoil for its own sake, they can often be reasoned with. Most of the Netherworlds' soldiers and guards are Timories, like the fearsome Fomori, and their torments often involve warfare or chaos.

The **ISYCHIA**, or Host of Silence, used to be Optimates or great mortal heroes, but fell from grace, losing their very souls to dire fates. They fruitlessly scheme to get back what they've lost, or pull others down with them. They deal in broken faith and futile hope, presenting themselves as spiritual guides for the Netherworlds and their Inimical brethren. An Isychia such as Drugashuzad the Forsaken spreads despair and

apathy, and coerces its enemies to sabotage themselves before it lowers itself to physical combat.

The Host of Tyrants, or **ARCHIGOI**, are the most powerful, or at least best able to hold on to positions of lordship. As literal children of Alastors, they claim authority over the Inimical host, and they never let anyone forget it. They bow to no one but the Alastors, and prefer death to lesser servitude; any adept who forces one to do her bidding faces a vicious vendetta afterward. Archigoi are willing to *bargain*, though; as long as a summoner treats an Archigos with respect, a partnership can flourish. Anyone who tries to deny them what they want invites fates worse than death.

**ETHISMOI**, the Host of Craving, haunt the Inimical host's fringes. They arose spontaneously from the collective unconscious of the Netherworlds, particularly powerful curses given form, or stranger origins. They enjoy seducing victims into surrendering to their base instincts, thereby dooming themselves, or otherwise exploiting mortal weaknesses. Thus, an Ethismos enjoys being summoned, and attaches itself like a parasite to people to corrupt them at its leisure. Weaker Ethismoi, such as the chochinn, may be little more than walking hungers, while the stronger members of the host act as tricksters, inveiglers, or critics.

## AVAKIM

### ALASTOR LORD OF DUST

Everything ends. This is the creed of Avakim, the Alastor Lord of Dust, Goddess of Fallen Stars. Her worshipers practice necromantic rituals, astrology, doomsaying, and acts of carefully prognosticated destruction. They beg for her blessings through deprivation rites both self-inflicted and imposed upon sacrifices, and craft unique poisons and curses designed to slowly leech the life out of victims, teaching the meaning of inevitability. Avakim represents time as the ultimate foe of every living being, and the lingering of dead things as a stark reminder.

Her current Netherworld (it is said she has ruled and destroyed others, and has even turned Otherworlds into Netherworlds) is a barren wasteland under eternal night, scoured by dust storms in a perpetual drought. Its denizens wander bereft of shelter under a cloudless sky filled with cruel stars, desperately seeking elusive relief. Though it's uninhabitable by any standard, its residents can't die unless an Inimical kills them—but they still age, fall ill, and suffer injury, hunger, and thirst. At predestined times of year, Avakim and her lieutenants host a Mercy Pilgrimage, allowing any who reach the top of her obsidian tower to petition for a swift and merciful death. She only chooses seven Mercy Pilgrims each time, though, prompting vicious competition and violence among the desperate. Even if their bodies rise after death at her command, at least their souls know blessed oblivion.

Avakim normally appears as a skeletal crone twice the height of a human, with dry, transparent flesh stretched across impossibly long obsidian limbs. Dusty moth wings with razor-sharp edges in vivid silver and jet black jut from her spine. Harried or enraged, she turns the inevitable into the *now*: screeching a deafening challenge to the heavens, she transforms into an enormous skeletal warhorse with pale bones, a gray-green mane, and hooves of obsidian. This form stands five stories high, unfurling black locust wings that blot

### INIMICAL THREAT LEVELS

TYPE	THREAT LEVEL
Timories	Minor-Major
Isychia	Moderate-Dire
Archigoi	Major-Legendary
Ethismoi	Minor-Dire



## AVAKIM, ALASTOR LORD OF DUST

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 4, COMMUNICATION 4, CONSTITUTION 6 (TOLERANCE), DEXTERITY 10 (STEALTH +3), FIGHTING 9 (BITE, CLAWS, GRAPPLING +3), INTELLIGENCE 10 (ASTRONOMY +3, HISTORY, OCCULTISM, THEOLOGY), PERCEPTION 7, STRENGTH 6 (INTIMIDATION +3), WILLPOWER 8 (FAITH +3)

SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
20 (23 FLYING)	160	250	310	20	24	24	10I/12B+6	+6	+10

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE*
OBSIDIAN CLAWS	+11	3D6+6 (PENETRATING)
OBSIDIAN KICK/STOMP (WARHORSE FORM ONLY)	+11	3D6+11 (PENETRATING)
FALLING STAR	+13	2D6+7 (PER TARGET)

\* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Corpse Puppeteer (2+ SP), Desiccation (2 SP), Grapple, Hamstring, Instant Kill, Lethal Blow, Lightning Attack, Paralysis Poison (2 SP), Pin, Precise Force, Seven Trumpeters (3 SP; warhorse form only), The Upper Hand

**STUNT – CORPSE PUPPETEER:** One dead walker (see pages 154-156) present per 2 SP spent (and not necessarily those raised or normally controlled by Avakim) gains an immediate extra major action, which it uses to perform Avakim's bidding outside of its own turn. Dead walkers commandeered in this fashion usually attack Avakim's enemies.

**STUNT – DESICCATION:** For 2 SP, Avakim rolls Fighting (Grappling) against her target's Constitution (Stamina). If she wins, the target suffers a powerful thirst, taking a cumulative -3 to their initiative for the encounter. A target who falls to 0 initiative this way may no longer take actions this encounter until they regain at least 1 initiative. Each minor action they take to drink water, or another character takes to feed them water, restores 1 lost initiative; each such major action restores 2 instead.

**STUNT – PARALYSIS POISON:** For 2 SP when attacking with claws or hooves, Avakim partially paralyzes the victim, who suffers a -3 penalty to Accuracy, Dexterity, and Fighting until the end of the encounter unless they receive treatment.

**STUNT – SEVEN TRUMPETERS:** Avakim can only use this stunt in warhorse form. For 3 SP, she creates a hazard that deals penetrating damage, affects anyone within 50 yards, and lasts until the beginning of her next turn; she may choose this stunt multiple times per turn. An otherworldly trumpet sounds to herald doom. The first time in an encounter she uses this stunt, the hazard is minor. Each subsequent time, it increases by one danger level, up to 7d6. If she uses it an eighth time within that encounter, it summons seven Inimical warriors of minor threat, who never need to test morale. She may only use the stunt eight times per encounter. Hazards range from earthquakes to dust storms, locust swarms, volcanic eruptions out of bare earth, poison gas, boiling floods, and other apocalyptic events.

**TALENTS:** Grappling Style (Expert), Overwhelm (Master)

**CORPSE DANCER:** If Avakim succeeds at a TN 11 Willpower (Faith) test as a minor action, one corpse within 100 yards rises

as a zombie under her command. These zombies are dead walkers (see pages 154-156).

**COURTING THE APOCALYPSE:** When reduced to half her maximum health, Avakim transforms into warhorse form. In this form, she gains +5 Perception, Speed, Strength, and Toughness, and becomes immune to grappling stunts and other mundane effects that would move or restrain her. She can use Falling Star and Corpse Dancer as minor actions that don't generate SP, and her claw attack becomes a kick/stomp. She also gains access to the Seven Trumpeters stunt.

**DARK SIGHT:** Avakim can see normally in darkness without a light source.

**EVERYTHING ENDS:** Avakim and a victim she touches make opposed Willpower (Faith) tests. If she wins, the victim ages ten years immediately. At the beginning of every subsequent encounter, the victim tries again to overcome Avakim's initial result with the same test. Success subtracts ten years from their age, and the effect ends as soon as they revert to their natural age. Failure ages them ten more years. For every ten years the victim ages, they increase all TNs (including those determined by opposed tests) by 2, except on the roll to overcome this effect. Characters can't die from old age through this power, but they may become so decrepit as to render most actions impossible.

**FALLING STAR:** Avakim takes a major action to call down a star from the sky. Then, as a major action on her next turn, she makes one falling star attack, applying the result against the Defense of each character within thirty yards.

**DEVASTATION FORETOLD:** Upon Avakim's own end, her Netherworld tears itself apart piece by piece, millions of stars fall from the sky, and a great shadow obliterates the moon. Everyone on the plane suffers penalties from dim light no mundane or magical light can brighten, increasing TNs for all actions relying on sight by 2. Between rampant earthquakes and falling stars, the plane becomes a hazard that deals penetrating damage beginning at minor, recurring every round. It increases its category by one every five rounds until it reaches 7d6 damage. At that point, anyone left alive shakes apart into dust, as does the plane itself and everything on it, to drift forever through the Sentiium.

**INEVITABLE DOOM:** The stars in the sky are Avakim's devilish children, rearranging at her whim. Anyone who uses a psychic or magical power to divine or predict the future in her presence or regarding the actions or fate of herself or her minions receives a false answer in addition to the true one. They can only tell which is which if they spend 4 SP to do so on the roll to activate the divination power.

**INVISIBILITY CLOAK:** Avakim takes an Activate action to become invisible. This has the same effects as the spell on page 97 of *Modern AGE* (she cannot be targeted unless detected, and then gains +5 to Defense) except no spellcasting is required. Avakim can attack while invisible, though this renders her partially visible, reducing her Defense bonus to +2 and allowing her to be targeted freely. If Avakim is damaged while invisible, this damages her cloak, and she cannot use it again for the remainder of the encounter.

**PRIMAL BEING:** See page 139.

**SKELETAL MOTH:** Avakim can fly, gaining +3 to Speed.

**EQUIPMENT:** Invisibility Cloak

THREAT: LEGENDARY

out the sky and bearing seven grinning skull-heads with cold, white stars shining where their eyes should be.

It was Avakim's hoof that felled Dyraza, the Divine Empress, in a brief invasion of Alatum. Now the Alastor bides her time, secure in believing that without its ruler the Empire will inexorably fall apart. The Lord of Dust is desiccation and starvation, old age and the waning moon, the sand and wind that scrub down the mountain, and the black, starless sky at the end of all things.

## CHOCHINN

### PETY INIMICAL

Appearing as three-foot-high humanoid figures made entirely of smokeless flame and an eerie yellow glow, with two eyes like miniature spotlights as their only discernible features, these Ethismoi are trickster spirits by nature—not harmless, but rarely deadly. Left to its own devices, a chochinn lures victims away from their comrades into strange and unsettling surroundings, or cons them into losing something important, and watches the panic rise. Usually, though, a given chochinn works for someone else—either a psychic summoner or a more powerful Inimical. Chochinn serve as lights in unnatu-

**FIGHTING A GOD**

Avakim is an Emanate, an example of the setting's highest tier of power among beings the heroes can interact with. She's beyond most characters' capacity to oppose, appropriate for the final conflict of the entire campaign or another equally climactic scene. If you introduce her sooner, give her reasons not to fight the protagonists and clearly communicate the situation's gravity to your players.

rally dark places, revealers of occult secrets, messengers, swindlers, and tempters wielded against their masters' enemies. Sometimes, when an Alastor wants to move a large number of souls safely from place to place, a Netherworldly realm shines with an unearthly parade of hundreds of chochinn dutifully carrying the precious cargo one at a time.

## CORONA

### PLATINUM SUN OF XANADU

Denizens of Xanadu live in a fearful paradise. They want for nothing, in a realm of unsurpassed beauty filled with

## CHOCHINN

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 0, COMMUNICATION 4 (DECEPTION, PERSUASION, SEDUCTION), CONSTITUTION -1, DEXTERITY 6 (INITIATIVE), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 3 (NAVIGATION), PERCEPTION 3 (TRACKING), STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 2

SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
16	14	16	21	16	16	16	01/0B+0	+0	+0
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL				DAMAGE*			
N/A		N/A				N/A			

\* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Blinding Flash (3 SP), Flirt, Impress, Making an Offer, Meddle, Over Here!, Skirmish, Taunt

**STUNT — BLINDING FLASH:** For 3 SP, the chochinn punctuates its action with a flash of bright light, blinding anyone within fifteen yards who didn't use a minor action to shield their eyes beforehand. This blindness fades after 1d6 rounds have passed (or 1d6 minutes in narrative time).

**TALENTS:** Attractive (Expert), Freerunning (Novice), Misdirection (Master)

**SOUL VESSEL:** Chochinn have no souls of their own, but they can carry souls within them like containers. Each chochinn can carry one soul; while it does, it can access some of the memories and emotions of the soul's previous owner.

**BODY OF LIGHT:** Chochinn are made of smokeless flame and light. They give off a permanent glow, illuminating their surroundings at a lantern's intensity. They're immune to

mundane damage; only magic or psychic attacks can harm them. They heal 1d6 damage per turn they spend touching fire, and supernatural attacks made with fire heal damage equal to the damage they would deal.

**INTO THE MYSTIC:** Whenever the chochinn's light falls upon something mystically concealed or encrypted, such as invisible runes or a magically hidden passage, it reveals all; anyone who investigates or searches for such a mystery by the chochinn's light lowers the TN of rolls to find or decipher the truth by 3.

**LEAD ASTRAY:** As long as the target can see the chochinn, it may make a Communication (Deception or Persuasion) test against the target's Willpower (Self-Discipline). If it wins, the target follows wherever the chochinn leads until the encounter ends, until doing so would lead the target into obvious danger, or until the target takes any damage.

**NOSE FOR SHADOW:** A chochinn unerringly senses the distance and direction to anything touched by Inimical or Netherworldly influence, including adepts and those with the Shadowsoul Talent, up to five miles away. They can also sense free-floating souls at this distance.

**PRIMAL BEING:** See page 139.

**UNDER A BUSHEL:** Psychics who use the *rite of summoning* (see **Occult Rites** in CHAPTER 3) to summon a chochinn may increase the time to three hours and the Gnosis cost by 2 to trap the Inimical inside a lantern, light bulb, or other enclosed, handheld light source. The summoner may give up to *three* commands before the rite ends, rather than one. The light source may also be used as normal indefinitely, without running out of batteries or fuel, as long as the chochinn remains trapped inside.

**EQUIPMENT:** None

THREAT: MINOR

## CORONA, PLATINUM SUN OF XANADU

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 6 (TELEKINESIS +3, THROWN),  
 COMMUNICATION 5 (LEADERSHIP), CONSTITUTION 4,  
 DEXTERITY 3, FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 4 (ASTRONOMY,  
 CURRENT AFFAIRS, LAW), PERCEPTION 8 (SEEING +3),  
 STRENGTH 5 (INTIMIDATION, MIGHT),  
 WILLPOWER 8 (COURAGE +3, TELEKINESIS)

SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
13	40	96	126	13	13	16	6I/8B+4	+7	+7
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE*					
EMANATION RAY (THROWN)		+9		1D6+11					

\* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.



### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Called Shot (Emanation Ray), Cast Out, Expose, Hamstring, Hostage, Imposing Power, Knock Prone, Radiant Sky God (3 SP), Restrain, Seize the Initiative, Shock and Awe, Sniper's Perch (Emanation Ray), Tyrant's Command (5 SP)

**STUNT – RADIANT SKY GOD:** For 3 SP when making a Perception roll, Corona recovers one level of fatigue. They can choose this stunt multiple times per turn.

**STUNT – TYRANT'S COMMAND:** For 5 SP, Corona may give any order to their test's object, as long as the target is capable of carrying it out within a single round. On the target's next turn, they may either follow the order, or take 2d6 damage for their disobedience.

**TALENTS:** Expertise (Leadership, Giving Orders; Expert), Hurled Weapon Style (Master), Observation (Seeing; Master), Telekinesis (Master)

**EMANATION RAY:** Corona can produce sunbeam javelins from their body to throw as ranged weapons. They never run out of ammunition and cannot be disarmed.

**FLASHING EYES:** Corona never suffers range penalties to Perception tests, seeing the smallest detail on anything within visual range. They take no penalty to ranged attacks against prone opponents. With an Activate action, they also take no penalties to ranged attacks when their opponent is in any cover less than total, and gain the effects of *see the unseen* (see the **Radiant Arcana** in CHAPTER 3) without testing for fatigue or using another action. This lasts for the encounter.

**OPPRESSIVE FORCE:** Corona controls gravity. They can use the Restrain stunt without equipment, and can perform the Hamstring stunt at sensory range using SP generated by any offensive roll. When they perform the Knock Prone stunt, they may roll Accuracy (Telekinesis) against the target's Constitution (Stamina); if they win, the target can't rise from prone until they succeed on a TN 15 Constitution (Stamina) roll as a minor action. All three stunts cost 1 SP less than normal.

**PRIMAL BEING:** See page 139.

**SUBLIME SKY TYRANT:** With an Activate action, Corona changes form, manifesting as a radiant orb. In this form, they can use Levitation without testing for fatigue and move objects of any mass with Move Object. Emanation Ray becomes a minor action that doesn't generate SP, and Corona can take an Activate action to change the attack from a javelin to a flash grenade (and back). They radiate an aura of oppression: anyone within ten yards must succeed on a Willpower (Courage) test against Corona's Communication (Leadership) as a free action to avoid falling to their knees, and must continue to roll each round they remain in range if they wish to rise or move. Anyone who fails this test also suffers a -2 to all further Willpower rolls, and Corona gains +1 SP on rolls against that target that generate SP for the power's duration. Sublime Sky Tyrant lasts for the encounter, or until Corona takes wound damage or fails a Willpower roll, whichever comes first.

**EQUIPMENT:** None

**THREAT:** DIRE

delights and treasures, but paranoia consumes them as they try desperately to comply with an ever-shifting, byzantine set of strict rules their sun demands they follow. If they break one of these dictates, Corona punishes them. And Corona sees everything.

Corona is both an inimical entity of human size and the blinding white sun of Xanadu, the pleasure plane. They shine eternally, never setting, and can manifest their humanoid form concurrently with the sun in the sky. In humanoid form, they appear as a perfectly smooth, androgynous being made of pure platinum from head to toe, with bone-white hair that floats in a cloud above their head and piercing red eyes that glow. They are a merciless despot who demands flawless conformity and crushes souls with a relentless surveillance state, tolerating no deviation from the oppressive norms they impose. Once they hold a grudge, they never let it go; like-

wise, they are highly possessive, and have a penchant for beautiful, symmetrical things.

Blessed night will come to Xanadu only when its tyrant sun is destroyed.

## DRUGASHUZAD

### THE FORSAKEN

Once, an Optimate prince was heir to an Otherworld of glorious battle and divine justice. The Fellwar brought him low. An Alastor called Murmux the Questioner took the king's arm in battle—and with it, his soul. The Netherworld armies razed the land and abducted its people, leaving him to die alone. But he survived, undertaking a quest to recover his power and lead his captive people to freedom.

### DRUGASHUZAD THE FORSAKEN

#### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 0, COMMUNICATION 7 (BARGAINING, DECEPTION +3, LEADERSHIP), CONSTITUTION 2, DEXTERITY 4 (STEALTH), FIGHTING 2 (HEAVY BLADES), INTELLIGENCE 5 (EVALUATION), PERCEPTION 6 (EMPATHY), STRENGTH 3, WILLPOWER 3

SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
14	17	37	67	14	16	16	5I/0B+2	+2	+4

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE*
CROESUS	+4	2D6+3; IF A 1 SHOWS ON A DAMAGE DIE, THE ATTACK DEALS STUN DAMAGE INSTEAD OF WOUND

\* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

#### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Benefit of the Doubt, Brutal Strike, Despair (3 SP), Hidden Message, Instant Kill, Let's Make a Deal, Making an Offer, Oathbreaker (1-5 SP), Pervasive Lies (1+ SP), Play Dead, Risky Business, The Upper Hand

**STUNT—DESPAIR:** For 3 SP, Drugashuzad makes a Communication (Deception) test against the target's Willpower (Faith). If he wins, the target suffers a cumulative -1 to Willpower for the rest of the encounter, unless an ally succeeds on a TN 15 Communication test as a major action to negate one instance of this stunt's effects at a time.

**STUNT—OATHBREAKER:** For 1-5 SP, Drugashuzad offers power, influence, or resources as part of his test. If the object accepts, they choose how many SP to gain, up to the total spent on this stunt, to use on any test before the end of the scene. They must betray a trust, break a promise, or renege on a deal within the scene if they use these SP; the more SP they accept, the more devastating their betrayal must be, at the GM's discretion. If they avoid doing so deliberately, it happens inadvertently through their actions.

**STUNT—PERSVASIVE LIES:** Drugashuzad may spend any number of SP generated by a Communication (Deception) roll to gain +1 per SP spent to his next roll in this scene that builds on his deception, with any ability.

**TALENTS:** Expertise (Bargaining, Summoners; Expert), Expertise (Deception, Rumors; Master), Expertise (Empathy, Heart's Desires; Expert), Intrigue (Deception; Novice), Misdirection (Novice)

**CROSSROADS DEAL:** When summoned at a crossroads, Drugashuzad may double his summoner's Resources or bestow any regular or psychic Talent at the Expert degree. He asks for nothing in exchange, but after a number of encounters equal to the target's Willpower (+2 if they have the Faith focus), they lose the deal's benefits, and he sends inimical servants to capture the character and bring them to his Netherworld realm so he can claim their soul. If they evade this fate, he may roll to inflict the Curse of the Fallen King at any distance (even across planes).

**CURSE OF THE FALLEN KING:** Whenever Drugashuzad fails to strike a deal or someone reneges on a deal with him, he may roll Communication (Bargaining) against that character's Willpower (Faith). If he wins, the target loses 2 Resources per scene until they either agree to a deal with Drugashuzad, or willingly discard or destroy something significantly valuable in price or sentiment. Giving it away to someone who would use or treasure it doesn't count. Once the curse ends, they restore their Resources to its original rating.

**INDEBTED MINIONS:** Drugashuzad gains +1 to Defense for each ally he has present in the scene (maximum +5). Increase the TN of any roll to persuade, intimidate, or force any of his allies to betray him by 4.

**PRIMAL BEING:** See page 139.

**SUBVERTED REPUTATION:** Drugashuzad masterfully spreads rumors and falsehoods to obscure his reputation, and silences anyone who knows his true nature through blackmail or bloodshed. The bonuses and penalties from Primal Being apply to his façade rather than his real exploits, painting him as a fair judge and wise ruler of his domain as long as the characters don't have firsthand experience with his duplicitous methods.

**EQUIPMENT:** Croesus (broken longsword), Ragged Mail Armor, Contracts

THREAT: MAJOR

## OH-32312: CHEALION

A plane formerly under the control of the Divine Empire, Chealion turned to the Nighthost after a populist revolt brought sympathizers to power. The exiled Optimates now live in house arrest in their pillaged summer estates. Their agents frequently wander the planes, asking for aid. They depict their home as a smoking ruin, where human sacrifices decorate spikes across major cities. In truth, Chealion's cities may be a bit dour as the Nighthost and their local allies follow a Stoicism-like belief system, but it is hardly hellish.

He failed.

On Murmux's Netherworld, he witnessed his soul's destruction to power the Alastor's great interrogation machine. His heart shattered, and he became the Isychia Drugashuzad the Forsaken, the fallen Inimical king of crossroads. Those who call upon him hear his whispered mantra on the wind: Lies are the only truth. Greed is the only prosperity. Promises are made to be broken.

Drugashuzad can be summoned at any junction, whether a literal crossroads, a confluence of rivers, or a gate between planes. He appears as a tall, gaunt king with one arm and gray, withered skin. He wears a twisted crown and tattered mail with old, decrepit finery, and carries a broken sword. Enormous bags under his hollow eyes reflect his endless wallowing in spite and misery—a misery he intends to share with the Otherworlds.

Drugashuzad grants a summoner's heart's desire, seeking out the desperate and destitute, but his lips spew lies. He undermines promises and breaks his own agreements through loopholes and deceit to prove there's no such thing as loyalty or honor. He tempts humans into greed and selfishness to drag them into his pit of despair; his curse is to lose all he possesses, and his domain is in constant decline. He fights his fate through perpetual wheeling and dealing for new slaves, souls, and riches, setting himself up as a legendarily impartial broker across the Metacosm for unwitting adepts to beseech.

## FOMORI

### INIMICAL WARRIOR-SCHOLARS

The fomori claim to be the oldest of the Inimicals, the Alastors' first creations and thus the Netherworlds' first inhabitants. The truth of this is debatable, but no one knows the ins and outs of Netherworld legal codes and demonic hierarchies like the fomori do. Fearsome appearances notwithstanding, they're avid historians with long memories and meticulous attention to detail. In their native realms, they use these talents to petition for more respect, influence, and power, bitter about their continued status as lowly Timories despite their self-proclaimed seniority. Summoners value them for their terrible might in battle, their astonishing destructive capabilities, and their insight into Inimical history, politics, and law.

### FOMORI

#### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 0, COMMUNICATION 0 (ETIQUETTE), CONSTITUTION 5, DEXTERITY 3, FIGHTING 5 (BRAWLING, GRAPPLING, HEAVY CHAIN), INTELLIGENCE 1 (CURRENT AFFAIRS, HISTORY, LAW), PERCEPTION -1 (HEARING), STRENGTH 4 (INTIMIDATION, JUMPING, MIGHT +3), WILLPOWER 3

SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS	
8	35	85	115	13	13	15	5I/5B+5	+7 +7

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE*
FLAIL (HEAVY CHAIN)	+7	1D6+7
UNARMED	+7	1D6+4

\* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

#### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Adrenaline Rush, Armor Crush, Blockade, Brutal Strike, Knock Out, Knock Prone, Swallow Whole (5 SP), Thunderous Might (2+ SP), Tornado Throw (3+ SP), Whatever's Handy

**STUNT—SWALLOW WHOLE:** For 5 SP when making a melee attack, a fomori and its target make opposed Fighting (Grappling) rolls. If the fomori wins, it swallows its foe. The victim can't do anything other than try to escape by attacking from within and dealing a total of 12 damage; ballistic and stun damage don't count, and all attacks take

a -3 penalty from being trapped in close quarters. A victim takes 1 damage at the beginning of each turn they remain trapped.

**STUNT—THUNDEROUS MIGHT:** For 2+ SP, a fomori gains +1 Strength for every 2 SP spent until the end of its next turn.

**STUNT—TORNADO THROW:** For 3 SP while making an unarmed attack, a fomori throws its opponent 2 yards, plus 2 yards per additional SP spent. The opponent takes 1d6+(yards thrown/2) damage upon landing and is knocked prone.

**TALENTS:** Expertise (History, Netherworlds; Expert), Expertise (Law, Netherworlds; Expert), Grappling (Master), Striking Style (Master)

**EVIL EYE:** The fomori takes an Activate action to peel back one of the many layers of semi-transparent skin that cover its great eye, creating a minor hazard of intense heat everywhere within 100 yards. This hazard increases by one damage category each time the fomori activates its eye. By the time it reaches arduous, liquids boil, plants wilt, and skin blisters. By the time it reaches murderous, metals melt and flammable objects—and sometimes people—spontaneously combust. A character who performs the Precise Force stunt on an attack that deals penetrating damage to the fomori can pierce the eye and end the hazard.

**PRIMAL BEING:** See page 139.

**EQUIPMENT:** Flail (Heavy Chain), Legal Treatises and Petitions, Tomes of Inimical History

THREAT: MAJOR

Fomori stand between seven and nine feet tall, hulking humanoid creatures of muscle and sinew with deformed features. A fomori is cyclopean in both size and nature, with only one enormous eye in the center of its face. Its three clawed, hairy limbs serve as arms or legs, and it rapidly spins in battle to grab and hurl enemies. Its stomach opens into a second toothy mouth that swallows victims whole.

## UNALIGNED BEINGS

The NPCs presented here are not aligned with any of the major powers, although some belong to smaller factions.

### BOETHOMANCER OF RAZKOVNICHE OF THE GUILD OF EXORCISTS

The boethomancers of Razkovniche, an occult guild, are psychic healers and guardians of those who suffer from or fear Inimical influence. They protect refugees from the Netherworlds, aid scholars researching how to break Inimical curses, and cure those who suffer ill effects from the ravages of malevolent psychic forces — all for a price, though their fees are negotiable. Occasionally, they hire out their services as mystical bodyguards or to shut down unruly summoners.

While Boethomancers are not known for their charity, they assess their clients' problems realistically and offer exactly as much help as they feel qualified to deliver. Making snap decisions with minimal information is an excellent way to get your soul ripped out of your body, so a Boethomancer takes as much time as possible to study Inimical threats thoroughly. Their guild possesses a prodigious library on Inimical forces, which any member in good standing may consult. Unfortunately, guild dues are rather high, and a given Boethomancer might have to pay their balance off before gaining access to such an arsenal of wisdom. This may entail passing the cost on to a prospective client. Nevertheless, members of the guild are known for keeping their strictly qualified promises.

### CLAN GREGORY

#### DOMINION SOUL-SMUGGLERS

The adepts of Clan Gregory inherit their power matrilineally. They are potent summoners and telepaths, as well as skilled smugglers of anything the Sodality doesn't want transported to or from Earth. Mostly they do this for the money and prestige, but their specialty is smuggling souls for their clan's divine patron: Meldhael, the angel-king, He Who Utters Perfected Names. Only the clan's matriarchal regents and most powerful adepts know Meldhael's true nature as an Alastor's manifestation; they dole knowledge of his powers and domain out bit by bit to those who undergo successive rites of passage. Under Meldhael's guidance, they've also mastered the art of creating their crystal familiars: shards of solid black ectoplasm which can temporarily mitigate the exhaustion their powers cause. They covet these jealously, but occasionally sell them to other Dominion clans if the price is right.

Meldhael grants devout clan members command over names to control others. One child in every generation inherits not only psychic abilities but the essence of Meldhael himself,

### BOETHOMANCER OF RAZKOVNICHE

#### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 1, COMMUNICATION 2 (ETIQUETTE), CONSTITUTION 3 (TOLERANCE), DEXTERITY 1 (CRAFTING), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 2 (BIOLOGY, MEDICINE, OCCULTISM), PERCEPTION 3 (EMPATHY, TASTING), STRENGTH -1, WILLPOWER 4 (EMPATHY)

SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
11	13	19	24	11	11	11	0I/0B+3	+3	+3
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE*					
COMPOUND BOW		+1		1D6+5					
UNARMED		+0		1D3-1					

\* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

#### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** A Stitch in Time, Disrupt Power, Inimical Ward (5 SP), Seize the Initiative, Skillful Power

**STUNT — INIMICAL WARD:** For 5 SP when making a power test for *psychic null*, the power also physically prevents Inimicals and anyone currently possessed or influenced by them from entering the area.

**TALENTS:** Shielding (Psychic; Master) + any three degrees of the following: Advanced Medicine (Novice), Empathy (Expert), ESP (Novice), Expertise (Crafting, Medicines; Novice), Expertise (Occultism, Inimicals; Novice), Psychic Projection (Expert), Shadowsoul (Novice), Shielding (Master)

**PSYCHIC INTUITION:** Seize the Initiative costs 2 SP instead of 4.

**EQUIPMENT:** Herbs, Balms, Potions, Psychic Foci, Physician's Tools, Compound Bow

#### THREAT: MINOR

half-possessed by the will of the broken god and given the authority to lead the dynasty when they come of age. These are Meldhael's "vessels."

### MELDHAEL'S VESSEL

To use the heir to Meldhael's essence as an NPC, give them traits for a member of Clan Gregory and then add the following:

- +2 Communication and Willpower
- +1 Constitution, Dexterity, and Perception
- Focuses: Communication (Leadership), Dexterity (Initiative), Perception (Empathy), and Strength (Intimidation)
- +1 Toughness and Defense
- Psychic Projection (Master) and Telepathy (Master)
- Subtract 2 SP from the cost of Crystal Familiar, Under My Control, and Words of Power
- Increase threat to Major

To access these enhancements for the encounter, the vessel must take an Activate action. While the essence is active, Meldhael takes over the body, subsuming the vessel's person-





## CLAN GREGORY, DOMINION SOUL-SMUGGLERS

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 2 (PISTOLS), COMMUNICATION 2 (DECEPTION), CONSTITUTION 3, DEXTERITY 3 (FORGERY, SABOTAGE, STEALTH), FIGHTING 1, INTELLIGENCE 2 (EVALUATION, OCCULTISM, SECURITY), PERCEPTION 1, STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 5 (PSYCHIC PROJECTION, TELEPATHY)

SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
13	18	33	48	13	14	14	21/4B+3	+3	+4

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE*
SA HANDGUN	+2	2D6+1

\* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** And Another Thing, Crystal Familiar (3 SP), Filthy Rich (3 SP), Imposing Power, Making an Entrance, Powerful Manifestation, Taunt, Under My Control (3 SP), Words of Power (5 SP)

**STUNT—CRYSTAL FAMILIAR:** With one of the clan’s signature black crystals, the psychic can spend 3 SP when making a psychic power test to shunt any fatigue the power would cause into the crystal instead. Similar to a true soul, a crystal familiar holds 1d3+1 “virtual” fatigue levels. Unlike a soul, the familiar doesn’t dissipate fatigue, but delays it. Once the crystal reaches capacity, it afflicts the user with all stored fatigue levels, as psychic backlash. As psychic backlash instead of ordinary exhaustion, this won’t kill the practitioner, but may drive them insane; see **Psychic Backlash** in CHAPTER 3. If the backlash strikes with 1 or more levels of fatigue than those necessary to drive the char-

acter temporarily insane, their mind reflexively summons an Inimical being’s consciousness into their own, leaving them possessed (and under GM control) until someone can exorcise the being with powerful occult rites.

Note that any occultist who holds a crystal familiar immediately understands they can use this stunt to shunt psychic fatigue as long as the crystal is on their person, but has no knowledge of the limits, side effects, or number of “virtual” fatigue levels the item possesses.

**STUNT—FILTHY RICH:** For 3 SP, the psychic can immediately produce one piece of equipment, hireling, or other resource no matter how expensive it would be to own or procure, or they may gain a +2 to the next Communication test they make that relies on a bribe.

**STUNT—UNDER MY CONTROL:** For 3 SP, the psychic can declare that another NPC present in the scene was under their control all along. That NPC betrays the heroes or produces some information or equipment the psychic needs right then, and counts as their ally from then on, unless the mental control is purged.

**STUNT—WORDS OF POWER:** For 5 SP, as long as the psychic speaks their victim’s real, full name as part of a social test, they may dictate the nature and target of the victim’s next action within this encounter, as long as it wouldn’t cause harm to the victim herself.

**TALENTS:** Apportation (Master), Astral (Novice), Burglary (Novice), Psychic Projection (Expert), Shadowsoul (Novice), Telepathy (Expert)

**EQUIPMENT:** Forbidden Cargo, Names of Power, Black Crystals, SA Handgun, Bullet-Resistant Cloth Armor, Ritual Shrines

THREAT: MODERATE

Tagama was taken by the Nighthost when they lured its master, the Alastor, Thaubarag, to a hostile Otherworld for an ambush. If Thaubarag had brought his host of enormous infernal war golems, he would have prevailed, and his lingering spirit keeps them half-animated, and hold together the plane. Ranging from ten feet to a mile high, these robots of black iron and rippling clay are omnipresent, moving slowly in regular circuits—until something stimulates them to faster, violent action. The Nighthost doesn't know what triggers the war golems to do anything other than shuffle, but it's a rare enough phenomenon that inhabitants use them as public transport and even housing, climbing and camping where they will.

ality and will; they become visibly angelic, with black wings and a stark, divine aura. If the vessel goes a week or more without activating the essence, each time they fail a Willpower test after that point they must roll to use Suggestion against themselves, using the enhanced traits to determine Force but the unenhanced traits to oppose it. If the power is successful, Meldhael takes over as normal instead of Suggestion's usual effects.

## IZELA

### THE CHANGING WIND

Izela, a mermaid who is part woman and part dolphin, wanders the planar oceans from world to world. Some cultures worship her as a goddess of luck, although she's neither an Emanate nor the agent of one. She spreads good fortune to those in need, randomly appearing to fill a becalmed ship's sails, drag sailors to shore from a shipwreck, or dredge lost treasures up from the sea floor to leave on the doorsteps of the destitute. She's whimsical but helpful, if in a roundabout way that isn't obvious until later; but she usually only aids those at the absolute ends of their ropes.

Even then, she's not reliable—she doesn't answer prayers or provide ways to contact her.

Heroes can convince Izela to play games of chance and earn her blessing if they win, but she finds cheating abhorrent, and curses anyone who tries. Attacked, threatened, or held against her will, she turns deadly. She bites with razor-sharp teeth, capsizes ships, and drowns whoever she can get her hands on; restrained or cornered, she transforms into wind and whips into a gale to pummel or sink her foes.

### IZELA, THE CHANGING WIND

#### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 1, COMMUNICATION 2 (GAMBLING), CONSTITUTION 1 (SWIMMING), DEXTERITY 3 (ACROBATICS), FIGHTING 2 (BITE, GRAPPLING), INTELLIGENCE 2 (ANTHROPOLOGY, EVALUATION), PERCEPTION 3 (SEARCHING), STRENGTH 2, WILLPOWER 3 (COURAGE)

SPEED	HEALTH		DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS	
12	30	73	103	12	15	15	81/1B+3 +3 +6

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE*
BITE	+4	1d3+2 (PENETRATING)
UNARMED	+2	1d3+2

\* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

#### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Ah-ha!, Cover Your Tracks, Duck and Weave, Echolocation (3 SP), Good Fortune (4 SP), Hidden Message, Just a Shadow, Pin, Takedown

**STUNT—ECHOLOCATION:** For 3 SP, Izela whistles or calls out as part of her test and receives a clear understanding of her immediate surroundings out to thirty yards, or 100 yards underwater, as a snapshot; she knows how many creatures or people are nearby, what kind and how large they are, their positions, and how quickly they're moving. She can identify large objects and takes no visibility penalties for darkness or blindness until the end of her next turn. This reveals hidden creatures if she wins a Perception (Searching) test against the target's Dexterity (Stealth).

**STUNT—GOOD FORTUNE:** For 4 SP, Izela rerolls the next test she makes before the end of the encounter and keeps whichever roll she prefers.

**TALENTS:** Expertise (Acrobatics, Underwater; Novice), Expertise (Bite, While Captive; Novice), Expertise (Grappling, Underwater; Novice), Linguistics (Shabda; Novice), Living on the Fringe (Novice), Wandersoul (Novice)

**DOLPHIN'S BLESSING:** Once per session, Izela may bless a target with a fortuitous streak of luck that lasts until the end of the session. Any focus the target uses in a detailed investigation is considered primary. Any re-roll abilities or powers they possess allow them to keep the better roll rather than the second. Fancy Meeting You Here costs 3 SP instead of 5. If they fall to 0 Health, they gain +3 Constitution until they regain at least 1 Health. Izela may end this effect prematurely anytime. A given target may only ever receive one Dolphin's Blessing.

**OCEAN'S CHILD:** All grappling stunts cost 2 fewer SP in the water, minimum 1. Izela may use Takedown to pull targets into the water from land or a boat.

**STORMWIND'S CURSE:** Once per session, Izela may curse a target with a streak of terrible luck that lasts until the end of the session. The target takes the worse result in any re-roll, and all focuses they use in a detailed investigation are considered tangential. The target takes +2 damage from every source. Fancy Meeting You Here costs 6 SP instead of 5. Izela may end this effect prematurely anytime.

**WHISTLING WIND:** Izela takes an Activate action to transform into a stiff wind, and transforms back the same way. As wind, mundane physical actions can't affect her, and she gains +2 Dexterity and Strength but suffers -2 Constitution. She can only take physical actions that require no finesse, such as filling a sail or knocking someone over. She can attack, but her attacks deal no damage except with a stunt that deals or adds damage.

**EQUIPMENT:** Baubles and Treasures, Dolphin and Snake Minions, Dice

THREAT: MINOR

## THE PANSOPHY, ACCELERATOR CABAL

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 3 (LASER WEAPONS), COMMUNICATION 0 (EXPRESSION, INVESTIGATION), CONSTITUTION 1, DEXTERITY 3 (PILOTING), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 5 (COMPUTERS, ELECTRONICS, ENGINEERING, SECURITY, TINKERING), PERCEPTION 3, STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 2

SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
11	11	13	18	11	11	11	0I/0B+1	+1	+1
WEAPON			ATTACK ROLL			DAMAGE*			
METAMATON LASER RIFLE			+5			2D6			

\* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Click “Share,” Collateral Damage, Double-Team, Expose, High-Tech Hustle, Intuition, Risky Business, Strafe

**TALENTS:** Expertise (Expression, Anonymous Broadcast; Novice), Expertise (Investigation, Conspiracies; Novice), Expertise (Piloting, Metamaton; Master), Hacking (Novice), Living on the Fringe (Novice)

**AUGMENTATIONS:** AV Memory (Noetic), Commlink (Noetic), Data-port (Noetic)

**LASER RIFLE:** A Metamaton’s laser rifle deals penetrating wound damage in a continuous beam. When using it, Pansophics decrease the cost of Collateral Damage, Expose, and all automatic weapon stunts by 1, minimum 1.

**HIJACK:** Pansophics can tap into and hijack digital or radio signals from anywhere, even without equipment or an interface. Whenever they use Expression over the internet or via signal broadcast, the following stunts cost 1 fewer SP: Click “Share,” Intuition, and Risky Business.

**METAMATON:** Interfacing with a Metamaton node to control a platform requires an Activate action. While controlling a Metamaton, a Pansophic uses their own traits but substitutes Piloting for other focuses for all non-Accuracy physical tests they make through the platform. While interfaced, a Pansophic’s physical body is completely insensate, and they cannot oppose tests targeting them in person. If a Metamaton is destroyed, the Pansophic controlling it takes 2d6 damage and a -2 penalty to all tests for the rest of the encounter.

**SHARD-SERVER MIND:** For each other Pansophic present in the scene (in person or via Metamaton), a Pansophic gains a cumulative +1 to tests that could benefit from teamwork or coordination, and to all Willpower tests that would deter them from the group’s goals. A hero with appropriate equipment can make an opposed Intelligence (Computers) test as a major action to disrupt a Pansophic’s connection to the others, negating these bonuses until the end of the round. Increase the Pansophy’s collective threat level by one per each three additional Pansophics present.

**EQUIPMENT:** Metamaton, Cell Phone, Cutting-Edge Computing Technology

THREAT: MINOR (MODERATE WITH METAMATON)

## THE PANSOPHY

### ACCELERATOR CABAL

In search of technological enlightenment, the Accelerators of the Pansophy joined forces with the code-shards of destroyed Machinors, which they found in obscure corners of Earth’s darknet. The shards latched onto these posthumans and wormed their way into their organic brains, overwriting the group’s wills and breaking it into a hive mind for their own inscrutable purposes. Individuals can break free from the shards’ control, but only with help, and only temporarily without drastic measures. Under the shards’ command, the group infiltrates and exposes other conspiracies, tracks other posthumans and otherworldly beings, and eavesdrops on politicians, businesspeople, and criminals. They’re not above blackmail, but the Pansophy usually relies on its Metamatons to break into rival conspiracies’ headquarters, steal information, destroy witnesses and equipment, and then broadcast the dirt to the world.

Pansophics manufacture Metamatons: humanoid robots that can pass for the living, but act as remote attack and infiltration platforms. They control them remotely by plugging themselves into interfaces that connect directly to their central nervous systems. These control nodes are massive consoles hidden in concealed safehouses, which are protected by bodyguards and automated defenses.

## SKY NAGA

### MAKER OF STORMS

Sky naga live in floating cloud lairs on Brylancie, duking it out for supremacy high above the human civilizations below. Their battles are responsible for all weather and atmospheric phenomena, so the people try to appease them by leaving fresh meat out for them at night. Since this plane’s moons are sky naga eggs, the number of moons in the sky changes every few decades; just after the eggs hatch, the sky is black and moonless for a few weeks until the naga lay a new clutch. Fallen moon shell fragments are worth their weight in gold.

A sky naga is a flying, serpentine beast with a thick, muscular tail, six arm-like appendages, sharp fangs, and two tall horns perfect for goring enemies. Their scaly skin protects them and, although they’re immune to their own kind’s venom, their bites are lethal for anyone else. When a sky naga is in danger or enraged, its entire body crackles with static electricity. Sky naga don’t speak with language, but predicting their patterns of migration and conflict helps people below predict the weather.

## WALKER

### A USEFUL AUTOMATON

A walker is a roughly humanoid being animated from the inanimate, or constructed with magic from whole cloth. Many varieties exist, from clay golems to walking corpses, from tree servants to robots. The one thing all walkers have in common is a lack of sapience; at best, they possess bestial intelligence and instincts. Usually they’re perfectly obedient, created to serve, and some can’t act at all without explicit orders.

## SKY NAGA

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 1 (THROWN), COMMUNICATION 1, CONSTITUTION 2 (RUNNING), DEXTERITY 5 (ACROBATICS), FIGHTING 2 (BITE, GORE, GRAPPLING), INTELLIGENCE 2 (EARTH SCIENCES), PERCEPTION 2 (TASTING), STRENGTH 3, WILLPOWER 2

SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
15 (18 FLYING)	22	26	31	15	15	15	3I/2B+2	+2	+2

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE*
BITE	+4	1D6+3
GORE	+4	1D6+4
LIGHTNING BOLT	+4	2D6+3 (PENETRATING)
TAIL WHIP	+2	1D6+6

\* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Armor Crush, Grapple, Hinder, Human Shield, Lightning Attack, Pin, Strangle, Venomous Bite (2 SP)

**STUNT – VENOMOUS BITE:** For 2 SP when attacking with its bite, a sky naga partially paralyzes the victim, who suffers a -3 penalty to Accuracy, Dexterity, and Fighting until the end of the encounter, unless they receive treatment.

**TALENTS:** Expertise (Gore, Charge; Novice), Freerunning (Novice), Grappling Style (Expert), Hurled Weapon Style (Expert)

**LIGHTNING BOLT:** With a ready action, a sky naga can produce a lightning bolt from its natural electric charge, which acts as a throwing weapon.

**EQUIPMENT:** Lightning Bolts

THREAT: MINOR

## WALKER SPECIAL QUALITIES

Each walker possesses a special quality that applies a template to the generic statistics given here, adding or changing its traits to create a more specific kind of walker. For instance, dead walkers (i.e. zombies) unnerve and disgust their foes, while armored walkers are resilient and bulky. Following are some examples, but feel free to make your own as well.

**ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN:** Walkers made of snow often have crude faces and limbs, but can use parts of their bodies as weapons. They take an extra 2d6 penetrating damage from fire and other heat-based attacks, but cold-based attacks don't harm them at all. Their ability to re-form their malleable bodies around injuries gives them the usual walker defenses. Abominable snowmen have Accuracy 3 and the Thrown focus, and can throw snowballs from their own bodies as ranged attacks that deal 1d6+4 stun damage but also deal 1 damage to themselves. They can perform the Hamstring stunt with any attack, melee or ranged, to slow enemies by freezing them.

**ARMORED WALKER:** These walkers are animated suits of armor, usually full steel plate, that carry weapons and stand at attention until called upon, sometimes deliberately posing as inanimate displays to catch foes off-guard. They might be tomb guardians, museum pieces, or spoils of war.



## WALKER

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 1, COMMUNICATION 0, CONSTITUTION 0 (STAMINA, TOLERANCE), DEXTERITY 1, FIGHTING 3 (BRAWLING), INTELLIGENCE 0, PERCEPTION 1, STRENGTH 4 (MIGHT), WILLPOWER 0

SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
11	23	29	34	11	11	11	4I/4B+3	+3	+3

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE*
DAGGER	+1	1d6+4

\* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Brutal Strike, Fleshless (2 SP), Knock Out, Knock Prone, Vicious Blow

**STUNT – FLESHLESS:** For 2 SP, a walker gains +4 Toughness until the end of its next turn.

**TALENTS:** Overwhelm (Expert), Striking Style (Expert)

**FEARLESS:** Walkers never need to test morale, having no feelings or self-preservation instincts.

**UNLIVING NATURE:** Walkers don't need to eat, drink, sleep, or breathe. They have no vital organs or sensitive body parts, granting them 4I/4B innate armor (reflected in their statistics) and making them immune to stunts that specifically affect living bodies, like Hamstring, Strangle, and Knock Out.

THREAT: MINOR

An armored walker has armor rating 8I/3B and wields one weapon from the Heavy Blades or Long Hafted group with the appropriate Fighting focus in addition to Brawling. It suffers an armor penalty of -2, and an additional -1 to Dexterity (Stealth) tests when moving.

**DEAD WALKER:** Raised from corpses, dead walkers are putrid, frightening mockeries of human forms that shuffle on stiff limbs and are drawn to living prey. They have the Perception (Tracking) and Strength (Intimidation) focuses, but only Speed 9. They continue to function normally at 0 Health unless killed by fire or other penetrating damage. They can see in darkness without penalty. Anyone close enough to engage them in melee must succeed on a TN 13 Constitution (Stamina) test each turn to avoid using their minor action to retch in disgust, though once this happens, the character is fine for the rest of the encounter.

**GREEN WALKER:** Green walkers are living trees animated to use their branches and roots as arms and legs. They have Constitution/Toughness 5 and Willpower 2, and they take an extra 1d6 damage from fire and axes. They heal 2 Health per turn in direct sunlight, and can take a minor action to plant their roots if they're standing on soil, increasing the cost of any stunt that would move them or knock them prone by 2 SP.

**MECH WALKER:** A mech walker is a mechanical device in humanoid shape, controlled remotely or programmed with specific tasks. This doesn't include advanced or specialized machines such as androids; a mech walker is an assembly line model, built simply to fight and accomplish manual labor in places humans can't (or won't) go. It has Accuracy 3 with an Assault Rifles focus, Perception 3, and Willpower -2. It has ballistic armor 8, and can be repaired after reaching 0 Health with a TN 13 Intelligence (Engineering) or Strength (Machining) test unless the attack that finished it off dealt 18+ penetrating damage at once (such as an explosion). Characters can roll Dexterity (Sabotage) in place of a melee attack against a mech walker, with a -2 if they don't have proper tools, dealing 1d6+(Intelligence) wound damage.

**STONE WALKER:** A stone walker could be a clay golem, an animated statue, or a gargoyle from a castle wall. Stone walkers have Constitution/Toughness 5 and Perception 2, but armor rating 2I/2B and Communication -2. They take an extra 1d6 damage from falling hazards, although gargoyles with wings can fly at Speed 15. They can perform stunts that move others or knock them prone for 1 SP less, and it costs 1 SP more to use those stunts against them, due to their massive weight.





## METACOSM CAMPAIGNS

People are the most important part of *Threefold*. This seems counterintuitive in the face of three glorious cosmic forces battling on a stage bigger than the universe, where the ultimate stake is nothing less than who gets to be God, but in fact those stakes are only grand *because* people matter. The human spirit is capable of the best and worst, and the human imagination can comprehend eternity. Every human soul encapsulates the potential for infinity, and at the end of an infinite space of time, the gatherer of infinite souls achieves infinity squared, and achieves the Divine Throne. Furthermore, the Aions can't acquire and shape souls through raw force. They must persuade us to join them: to innovate on Earth, dream in the Otherworlds, or surrender to the Netherworlds.

### THE HIGHEST OF STAKES

*Threefold* stories happen within this framework. The ultimate stake is the final fate of humanity at the end of everything—torment, singularity, myth or something else—and the expression of that in the terms of stories is that the stakes of *Threefold* should be the lives of other people. *Threefold* campaigns are often about exploration; Sodalts travel to new planes and connect with people they never dreamed existed. These are human stories that express hope in the face of impersonal metaphysical forces. The Metacosm may be in the thrall of warring cosmic powers, but nothing is more important and valuable than the human spirit.

That's the heart of it. The rest of this chapter provides more structured advice and guidance for the GM, exploring various aspects of running games in the *Threefold* setting.

### SPECULATIVE FANTASY

The umbrella genre of *Threefold* is speculative fantasy: a broad array of subgenres featuring elements that don't exist in the real world or exist in much subtler ways. It describes *Threefold's* ability to ask, "What if?"—what if Earth were just one of many worlds? What if the multiverse theory was demonstrably true? *Threefold* explores experiences radically different from our own, and encourages players to dig into a vast playground of discovery. It brings real-world mythology and folklore to life, blending legends together and giving them unique twists to keep them fresh and alive with possibility.

Speculative fiction often plays the role of social commentary, providing opportunities to examine real-world issues through the lens of less realistic scenarios that reflect our societies and cultures in allegorical ways. As the GM, you certainly don't have to run *Threefold* that way—these genres can just as easily serve as pure entertainment and character-driven storytelling. If you'd like to set your story up as a commentary on the real world, though, *Threefold's* alternate Earths and myriad other planes provide good avenues for it. Netherworlds can be explorations of oppression, tyranny, and other societal ills, just like classic dystopian fiction. If you like research, try incorporating aspects of real historical empires into your Otherworlds. An alternate Earth can showcase a real issue by amplifying it to extremes. Pitting the characters against these reflections allows players to explore these problems' effects on real people and ways to fight them.

## NB-01862: NERIEX

Anomalously placed along numerous chains between Otherworlds and Netherworlds, Nerieux has been a conflict zone since the Divine Empire split from the Vitane, as the Empire's expansionism soon clashed with the Nighthost's, and the latter has long claimed the exclusive right to operate in the Netherworlds. Mercenaries working for each side battle over important gates. Nerieux itself is a barren, rocky waste with cold green glaciers of poisoned water. Its ruling Alastors are unknown.

## EXPLORATION & DISCOVERY

Discovery is the beating heart of *Threefold*. A lot of the fun is in visiting its varied worlds or meeting their native peoples, learning what's different about them and rising to the challenges involved in exploring the new and strange. Even if the characters stay on an Earth that's more or less our own with just a few tweaks, you can express the speculative genre in extraordinary situations arising from the nature of the Metacosm. Don't be afraid to go weird with your settings and story hooks—you can derive whole sessions or story arcs from the simple question of what happens when the characters encounter something they've never seen before!

The easiest and most common way to use discovery in a *Threefold* game is to focus a given story on one major fantastical or strange element as a centerpiece. It could be a character, a location, a phenomenon, one core aspect of a plane's magic or science that functions differently, a peculiar mystery to solve or crime to commit, or a specific problem or request for help arising from an otherworldly scenario. Feel free to take perfectly ordinary story seeds, like "orphan finds long-lost parent" or "forbidden romance," and add a supernatural or futuristic twist.

This method takes partial inspiration from high concept television episodes and series, and those which present strange or compelling problems: encounters with new alien civilizations and scientific curiosities, inexplicable murder mysteries, and angelic or demonic villains plotting the apocalypse. You can model your game after the same kind of structure: an individual session centers on one smaller-scale threat or discovery that reflects what's unique about the plane or Earth on which the characters find themselves, while an arc comprising multiple sessions builds up to a larger-scale one that deals with more fundamental aspects of the setting or its metaphysics, or brings multiple planes in conflict with one another.

## SAMPLE STORY HOOKS

Throughout this book, you'll find planes for you to flesh out as settings for your game or use as story hooks. A few more possible story hooks follow, each of which represents one kind of core speculative element.

### NPCS

- A cyborg assassin hired to kill one of the characters
- A hapless arcanist whose magical experiment goes awry, trapping them in a pocket dimension

- A Krypteia crime boss who cheats with illegal AI to win a political election and secretly installs tracker chips in all of their subordinates
- An Inimical warlord who launches a campaign to conquer the Vitane
- The ghost of a dead enemy who returns to haunt the party

### LOCATIONS

- A font of kanna at the center of a vicious magical battle over its resources
- A haunted house that magnifies psychic powers and attracts ghosts from all over
- The underground lair of a monster whose presence shatters space and time
- A sapient office building that won't let employees leave and forces them to work nonstop
- A dead god's cloud citadel, filled with their secrets and the traps they left behind for the unwary

### PHENOMENA

- A plague that leaves its victims weak and susceptible to spirit possession
- A planar gate that changes its destination when certain esoteric criteria are met
- The mystical backlash from an Alastor's death that rips holes in reality and shunts souls into the Sentium
- Storms that cause massive EMPs and tune radio stations to eerie broadcasts from alternate Earths
- Recurring nightmares that plant subliminal commands in dreamers' minds and bestow spontaneous psychic powers

### PLANAR QUIRKS

- A plane where everyone's dreams come to life each night
- A plane where denizens compete to win immortality but must make a grand sacrifice to claim their prize
- A plane where everyone has a malicious doppelgänger from the moment they set foot there
- A plane where organic life forms and machines have merged in a symbiosis they now want to spread to every world
- A plane where physics are governed by the mood swings of its natives

### MYSTERIES AND CRIMES

- A murder mystery in which the victim is a god
- A plane-hopping heist to steal a valuable soul from an Inimical tyrant
- Unexplained symptoms afflicting explorers returning from another plane, who must be quarantined until a cure is found
- The kidnapping and ransom of a child who can't control their budding psychic powers
- An anonymous group of hackers taking remote control of android policemen for their own gains



## PROBLEMS AND REQUESTS

- An orphaned half-dreygur asks for help finding their long-lost parent, who turns out to be in thrall to inimical forces
- Optimates in love from two warring Divine Empire houses cross the Otherworlds to find aid negotiating a truce
- The rough location of an ancient tome of powerful magic has been revealed, and the characters must retrieve it before their enemies do
- Someone among the Peridexion's leaders is an Alt-Aethon spy and the characters must figure out who it is
- Refugees from a dying plane request asylum on Earth, but attract the enemies who destroyed their world

## VARIETY & THE GENRE CRUCIBLE

Through the three major speculative subgenres resulting from *Threefold's* underlying metaphysics and extraordinary powers (psychic, arcane, and posthuman), the game invites you to explore what happens when you mix and match elements from all three in a melting pot of story hooks and new interactions. What do you get when you toss ghosts into a cyberpunk Aethon procedural, or angels into high-fantasy wizardly intrigues? *Threefold* is designed to encourage finding out. Its many planes and alternate Earths allow a wide variety of settings and locales. If you find your story lagging or your players getting bogged down, whisk them into a drastically

different world or unleash strange, alien forces to shake things up. This also allows you to experiment with ideas that might be too off-the-wall or not robust enough to sustain a whole story arc, but make for fun one- or two-session adventures. Or, use this method to test out a concept and see if your players like it. If so, great—run with it! If not, just take them to a different plane and move on.

*Threefold* also makes it easy to vary the power level and scope of the game, on top of *Modern AGE's* built-in antagonist adjustment options. When you want your players to deal with lesser threats and focus on exploration or character drama, choose planes with less magic or technology, and perhaps stick to the lower levels of the various antagonists available there. When you want to provide a real challenge or introduce a big end-of-arc fight, throw the characters into the deep end with weird psychic phenomena, high magic, and staggeringly advanced technology. Most of *Threefold's* factions, like the Inimicals, the Divine Empire, and the Vitane, come with pre-established hierarchies that make it easy to choose adversaries of an appropriate threat level, not just in terms of statistics but also in terms of where the characters are in the current narrative arc.

## EPISODES & ALLEGORIES

Once the characters have joined the Sodality (which they might have done via other *Modern AGE* games—more on this later) it's easy to start episodic stories. Just send your Sodalts to a new plane. When they arrive, there's something wrong. This is an easy format to use, and doesn't wear itself out easily.



Usually there are two levels of this. On the one level, the Sodalts are faced with immediate problems such as opposing forces, survival, countering sabotage, or diplomatic conundrums. On the other level, conflicts arise in the environment and scenario and may not threaten Player Characters directly, but still present an issue they feel morally bound to deal with (that is, assuming they're not cads or interplanar gangsters, like the Krypteia). This latter problem could be built into the local culture, relate to some environmental issue on the plane, or simply be a matter of two NPCs who hate each other, or hate what the PCs stand for on broad principles.

In this adventure structure, oppressive governments or occupying forces are obvious second order conflict sources, providing obvious villains, from a fascist dictator to the sniveling informant for their secret police. Cultural issues are harder to navigate, but make for a hugely interesting backdrop for conflict. A world may have allegorical or actual issues related to deep parts of human identity, such as sexuality. However, while exploring real-world issues through allegories has a long tradition in fantasy and science fiction, respect the rights of your players not to experience or witness discrimination even in a fictional persona if they don't want to. Remain abreast with relevant issues, do your research, and admit to yourself when your ambitions don't quite match your knowledge—a typical issue if you don't belong to the group you want to talk about.

Not everything is a matter of belief and custom, however. The denizens of a plane might be suffering from famine. This might be because of poverty brought on by wealth inequality, or because of something outside of the control of most ordi-

nary people, such as the aftermath of natural disasters like tsunamis and hurricanes. It could just as easily be because of a human-made disaster, such as an environmental catastrophe brought on by industrialization, or the aftermath of a war.

## SODALITY ADVENTURES

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The Sodality provides a simple way for players to specialize their characters into defined roles that work together well, but it's also a tool for the GM to easily facilitate the kinds of stories this section describes. Its mission statement and structure are designed to drive adventure, exploration, investigation, intrigue, solving unique problems, and interplanar conflict—all the things *Threefold* does best. The guidelines mentioned here also work if the characters *aren't* Sodality members—for instance, if a player wants to play an Aethon operant, you know they want to get up to some spy craft and heists—but the Sodality is the simplest and most obvious way to go.

## SPECIALTIES AND STORIES

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The three types of Sodality officers serve to clearly define the kinds of stories the organization is good at telling, setting player expectations right off the bat and giving you, as the GM, a head start in laying the groundwork for a Sodality-based adventure. Tailor scenes and story elements to each role's strengths in turn, and make a few fall through the cracks to give them a challenge they have to get creative to overcome. If you have more than three players and they've doubled up on one or more of the officer roles, they're telling you they want the story to skew



more heavily toward that side of things. If you have multiple Protector characters, plan for more physical threats and war or invasion stories; with multiple Emissaries, introduce lots of intrigue, politics, and first contact scenarios; and with multiple Searchers, include plenty of planar travel, survival situations, and interesting new locales to explore.

The Sodality provides a mission-based game structure (not to be confused with Mission as the noun describing a party of Sodalts) that's perfectly positioned to make use of the "core element" strategy discussed in the previous section. Use one or several NPC magisters to lay out assignments, each of which revolves around one strange problem or scenario. If you like, you can lay out your planned missions in a grid or list that organizes them by primary officer specialty (and thus, not coincidentally, action area) and "tier." A mission's tier determines whether it's a small-scale problem to be solved in a single session (tier 1), a medium-scale one to be solved in a three-to-five session arc (tier 2), or a large-scale one that will stretch across an entire "season" of six to ten sessions, or even the whole campaign (tier 3). For instance, using a few of our story hook samples, your list might look something like this:

### SAMPLE SODALITY MISSION GRID

MISSION	SPECIALTY	TIER
Cyborg assassin	Protector/Action	1
Dead god's cloud citadel	Searcher/Exploration	1
Rooting out an Aethon spy	Emissary/Social	1
Hunting ancient magical tome	Searcher/Exploration	2
Negotiating truce for star-crossed lovers	Emissary/Social	2
Inimical campaign to conquer Vitane	Protector/Action	3

Then, try picking out one or two aspects of each story hook to tie in with or lead into the others; in particular, finding ways to tie the lower-tier missions in with the higher-tier ones makes them feel less like unrelated one-shots and more like a part of a larger story arc. Remember that it's up to you to determine the order in which to introduce your hooks, and the smaller-scale ones are likely to take place while the larger ones are already in motion. For example, the tome hunt might begin before the cyborg assassin shows up, and the characters discover that one of the enemy teams they shut out of the hunt sent the assassin to kill the mission's Searcher and steal their research. Perhaps an agent of the Inimical warlord planted information about the cloud citadel where the Sodality would find it, planning to use the Mission as pawns to retrieve some treasure and then coerce or strongarm them into giving it up later.

Of course, all your players will want to be involved with each story, so along with the primary specialty, come up with potential aspects of each hook that will help the other specialties shine during those stories, too. Obviously, the players may come up with their own ways to involve themselves, and that's fine too! The ones you enumerate here are just opportunities you can plan in advance to offer during play in case the players don't find spotlight moments on their own. To continue our example, that might look something like this:

### ROOTING OUT ALT AETHON SPY

- **PROTECTOR/ACTION:** Fighting off alt-Earth goons sent to deter anyone on the spy's trail; beating up or intimidating suspicious characters to make them spill secrets
- **SEARCHER/EXPLORATION:** Tracing the Peridexion's movements and activities to spot inconsistencies and fishy behavior; breaking into a suspect's home or office to steal evidence

### HUNTING ANCIENT MAGICAL TOME

- **EMISSARY/SOCIAL:** Reaching out to contacts and calling in favors for information and resources; translating unfamiliar languages or negotiating with extraplanar natives to translate them; infiltrating an enemy's expedition to keep tabs on them
- **PROTECTOR/ACTION:** Keeping watch and guarding the Mission while the others look for clues and decipher glyphs; piloting the Mission's vehicle in a chase to beat rivals to the site; distracting enemies in a shootout while the rest of the Mission solves riddles and navigates traps

### INIMICAL CAMPAIGN TO CONQUER VITANE

- **EMISSARY/SOCIAL:** Leading a recruitment campaign to shore up Vitane armies and gain allies among the Otherworlds and unaligned; convincing Inimical soldiers to defect; spying enemy territory to steal secrets and sabotage plans
- **SEARCHER/EXPLORATION:** Summoning demons to fight other demons and researching mystical ways to interfere with the enemy; finding and mapping terrain that advantages the Vitane, where they can lure Inimical forces; building new weapons, vehicles, and other machines of war

## GREAT & SMALL

In CHAPTER 5 of this book, you'll find a description of the Aions and a look at the overarching metaphysics of the *Three-fold* setting. This information is provided for you, the GM, as a backdrop to events in the Metacosm and to help you formulate plots and ideas. It's an explanation of why things are the way they are, and a skeletal context for potential changes to the setting, should you wish to explore them as the characters make their mark and shake things up. The Eternals and their war for history are rarely direct story hooks, except perhaps at the conclusion of a worlds-shattering campaign. Instead, they turn the setting's wheels. Don't shine the spotlight on them immediately, unless a victor in their war is imminent and the characters stand to influence which of them it is. For the most part, you don't need to talk about them at all, except to gradually introduce the true nature of the planes to characters in search of such secrets.

Yet you can also use the underlying metaphysics to drive more intimate stories that descend from them, in much the same way that Optimates descend from Emanates or human cultures descend from creation myths. Use the Eternals as inspiration for new phenomena, antagonists, planes, and other fantastical elements. You can also use the hierarchical, factional structure of the setting, as described under **Factions** later in this chapter, to drill down from the large to the small.

If you want to incorporate heightened conflict between the Logos and the Nemesis, for example, think first about which of their aligned Emanates would represent that conflict on a smaller scale, thematically and logically. What planewide events occur as the metaphorical or indirect manifestation of such an unseen battle, and what are these Emanates doing as a result? Remember, they don't receive orders or messages from the Eternals. They act according to their natures, and whatever changes ripple through time based on shifting divine influences aren't perceptible to anyone except on the broadest and vaguest of scales. Then, you can drill down further into how those Emanates' affairs inform what their Servitors and allied factions are doing, all the way down to the level of minions and armies.

These greater conflicts also point the way to engaging *Threefold's* varied genres. Associated with Earth, the Logos inspires stories drawn from transhuman science fiction, stories of the incipient Singularity, alternate histories, and even time travel. Through the Netherworlds and Inimicals, the Nemesis brings forth occult, theological, and cosmic horror. Urban and epic fantasy spring from Abraxas's influence and the Otherworlds.

The Fellwar is an example of the relationship between these ripples and events on the personal scale. The Hierarchs didn't fracture and fall *because* Abraxas lost ground; it happened as a manifestation of Abraxas's loss, and in happening caused that loss. Never present the Aions as forces that dictate what happens to planes and peoples. It's the other way around. The struggle for God's throne at the end of time depends on how ordinary souls align themselves, and what they do to support each Eternal's agenda: working toward Utopia, building a cosmic monomyth, or crushing souls' higher passions.

## COSMIC FORCES

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The Aions are not really beings with wills and conscious thoughts as human minds would understand them. Present Eternals as cosmic forces, not personal deities whose help or hindrance overwhelms characters' sense of mattering. Their sway over the Metacosm and who's winning their conflict at any given time is measured partly by how many souls they have in their respective camps (by way of their Emanates and the planes they control) and the dispositions of those souls, from how they live to how they influence the planes through their owners' actions. Thus, Aion victories and defeats are contingent upon human actions, and their standing subtly pushes creation in ways characters can't directly perceive.

One way of looking at the Aions' influence on a story and vice versa is to consider them aspects or generators of fate. In this case, fate can be defined as the sum total of the decisions, outcomes, and intentions of humans and other beings across the planes, or the end result of those that haven't yet come to pass. The players' characters are exceptional people with a central place in the story, and their choices shape fate and the setting accordingly. A tense negotiation they mediate between an Inimical warlord and an Imperial delegate might result in a Netherworld releasing its souls, which in turn takes influence away from the Nemesis and may make it that much harder for its aligned forces to make a comeback on that plane in the future. These effects are subtle, though, and it takes an ocean of them—like the Fellwar—to really make a dent in which force has the metaphysical edge.

Another way to use the Eternals is to introduce their conceptual purviews as narrative themes throughout the story, or at key points in the game to show major cosmic turning points the characters engender through their actions. For instance, if the characters undertake a series of successful endeavors to help Optimate forces win a protracted territorial war, and you want to hint at Abraxas showing signs of rallying as a result, start introducing more powerful Optimate NPCs or letting the characters encounter more mythic cycles and legendary coincidences. You don't have to point it out to the players, but if they notice and start investigating, that's an opportunity for you to mine story hooks from letting them chase revelations about the Metacosm's true nature on their own initiative.

## SECRET KNOWLEDGE

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It's totally okay to go an entire campaign without the characters ever learning about the Eternals. Longer, epic stories with high-powered characters or strange tales that explore the more abstract and esoteric setting elements are the ones most likely to touch on Eternal metaphysics, and even then, characters aren't going to talk to the Logos or visit the end of time to see Omega unfold except in some truly pivotal moments.

Learning about these things should be a big deal for characters and have a relevant impact on their lives, and the revelation should come about through active adventuring rather than an NPC's exposition. Revealing the true nature of divinity may seem like an exciting plot twist, but unless you have a specific idea for how it will affect the characters and story directly, it's not always worth it. Ask yourself whether the information will change their worldview, goals, or behavior, or whether it might provide the impetus or context for an antagonist's actions. Feel free to use *Modern AGE's* three types of encounters—action, exploration, and social—as a guide to help you decide whether actions the characters take could directly influence whatever situation requires knowledge of the Aions. If the answer is no, consider whether that knowledge is necessary to the story.

## FACTIONS

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Most characters belong to one or multiple factions that inform their view of the Metacosm, their opinions on interplanar relations, and the kinds of story hooks likely to engage them. *Threefold's* setting teems with sectarian intrigues, alliances, and feuds that supplement the Sodality's style of play, granting players access to plenty of ongoing conflicts and plots just by virtue of their belonging to one faction or another. Even if the characters all belong to the Sodality, they can run afoul of internal squabbles, power plays, and heated debates over the right course of action.

Factions can also create new story hooks if you give each one its own opinion on a mission's outcome. For instance, another Mission or magister might disapprove of the way the characters dealt with a problem or try to edge them out of a mission that's supposed to fall under their jurisdiction due to a previous altercation. In this way, one factional conflict can lead to further adventures, and this is one great way to tie episodic missions together to feel like they're all part of one continuous story.

If you'd like to make factional intrigues a major part of your game, try starting out with a grid or diagram laying out the

basic relationship and at least one conflict (minor or major) between each group involved in your setting, and then come up with an NPC or other distinct hook for each one that characters can stumble across to get wrapped up in the problem. If two groups have no current relationship, draw a line anyway and instead jot down what event or circumstance can trigger conflict between them, or draw a line from each of them to a third that can serve as the impetus for later entanglement as the story progresses. Update your diagram after each session to take the characters' actions into account, keeping track of conflicts they've resolved, new ones they've caused, and other influences they've had on factional and interplanar relationships—directly or indirectly. You may also use the rules for organizations and networks in the *Modern AGE Companion* to add, track, and play with these.

## ONE PLANE AT A TIME

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*Threefold* is designed for partial as well as total use. This means you can concentrate on one corner of the Metacosm, using only the genres and story hooks available there. To really focus on a narrower range of stories, the Game Master can decide characters are uninitiated, with no knowledge of the gates. Aethon may even keep this information from certain operants, or share it only in part, so characters know they're part of an AI-controlled special force that travels to alternate universes via high-tech means, but have no idea magic is real.

Earth is the ideal starting point for many constrained campaigns, because it has a large number of secret societies Player Characters can join or interact with, which you can tailor to your campaign's particular needs. The default genres

associated with Earth are technothriller action, cyberpunk, conspiracy horror, and a certain degree of urban fantasy. Characters may be ghost-hunting Aethon agents (and might belong to the Pool instead of a Section), guild occultists battling Dominion and Inimical powers on Earth, or native arcanists protecting paranormal communities from groups such as the Valkumenoth warlock sect.

The GM might create a detailed original setting encompassing a single Otherworld, using *Threefold's* rules and denizens to populate it while deemphasizing plane travel. There are stories enough on a single plane, with its nations and peoples. Campaigns may even set up other planes as hostile influences, such as a world where gates connect to a Netherworld or a mustering ground for Divine Empire conquerors. Campaigns can also encompass just a limited set of planes, deemphasizing Earth or the Netherworlds—or even using characters from those planes who've been transported to an Otherworld as, say, students of an arcane college.

Netherworld-focused games are the most difficult, and require more work than transferring Inimical influence to another plane for the sake of the story, but a story chronicling a rebellion against the Alastors might be grim, yet satisfying.

## ORIGINAL & WEIRD IDEAS

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One of the arenas in which using GM knowledge of the big picture can come in handy is in creating original material for your game, such as new antagonists, planes, phenomena, backgrounds, extraordinary Talents, or ancestries. You could even invent an Aion—maybe one that failed in its bid for



Karoban of the Spires once played host to a prolonged cold war between the Divine Empire and a Nighthost thane over its rule. The plane was a bit on the arid side but otherwise unexceptional, until the primeline's 1985, when its gates became impassable for three weeks. After that, visitors found the plane had been turned into a vast prison complex, its barred buildings shaped from seamless stone with inhabitants who now classified themselves as inmates or guards, and vaguely remembered some unspeakable crime made the arrangement necessary.

supremacy long ago, and somehow returned from beyond time, or a brand new one that came into being recently (from a linear perspective). Finally, knowing the rules means being able to deliberately break them in creative ways; interesting story hooks could arise from considering possible exceptions to how the default metaphysical paradigm usually manifests on the planes, or oddities that fall between its cracks. Keep the results of these exceptions at the personal scale to give characters something concrete to interact with.

- **EXAMPLE 1 - NEW ALTERNATE EARTH:** An Aethon operant recruits the characters to help infiltrate an alternate Earth, and you decide to look to the nature of the Logos for ideas. Knowing it requires souls to act as gears for its existential machine and it's trying to use Earth as a generator that will eventually produce its divine Name, you create an Alt where human language never split into linguistic branches; everyone on Earth speaks Shabda, which here retains a strange power from the beginning of humanity that other Earths' descendant languages don't possess. This Earth is an Alt because the Machinors realized giving the unfettered power of perfect language to mortals was dangerous, as they used it to undermine natural law and break down reality.
- **EXAMPLE 2 - NEW ETERNAL:** You've been playing for a while and you want to take your story in a new direction, so you come up with a new Aion that has infiltrated the timeline and wants to siphon off souls for itself so it can get back into the race for Omega. Since it isn't a character that can interact with the PCs, you instead conceptualize this Aion as a universal force of theft, hoarding, and consumption, whose Emanates take the forms of enormous shadow dragons. The Eternal needs souls to sustain itself, being a flawed and exiled divinity that plans to devour the timeline, thus making itself one with all of existence. Inspired by that concept, you introduce a black hole phenomenon that eats planes, and Servitors who kidnap Imperial citizens, infiltrate Aethon and the Krypteia, and smuggle souls away from Netherworlds to vanish forever into the Emanates' open maws.
- **EXAMPLE 3 - NEW ANTAGONIST:** You ponder the suggestion that kanna might be Abraxas's soul and decide to explore what could happen if the other Aions' souls manifested across the planes as well. You come up with an antagonist you call a glitch: a piece of code from the Logos's soul that propagates through the Metacosm and gets corrupted as it mingles with mortal data. It manifests as hiccups in reality and aphasia contagions, rewriting posthuman abilities in dangerous ways as it drifts through the planes.

## MODES

As stated in *Modern AGE*, the Game Master has three options, or modes, for how various rules work: **Gritty**, a semi-realistic portrayal of character; **Pulpy**, with more overt stunts and action; and **Cinematic**, where characters fully realize the idea of movie-action heroes. These modes also dictate the degree to which the settings verge into the unreal and the degree to which inhabitants are willing to resort to violent thrills. In *Threefold*, any mode will work for a long-term campaign – or even rotating between all three as characters move from plane to plane.

The Game Master may use one mode as the baseline for the entire Metacosm (as is standard in most *Modern AGE* campaigns), or may give each of the three major settings (Earths, Netherworlds, and Otherworlds) a different default mode. In addition, the GM may or may not also give specific planes different modes than the baselines for their types. Options which change modes between planes emphasize the metaphysical differences between them, and will be noticed by Player Characters as they travel. None of these options are the “official” way to play *Threefold*. Use what would work for your game.

## ONE BASELINE & VARIANTS

The Game Master and players may set a default mode for the campaign with the caveat that certain metaphysical properties of a plane might temporarily change the rules of the mode, if not the overall tone of the campaign. Even if characters venture to a plane that's decidedly high-fantasy, a Gritty campaign will stay tonally consistent, with any emotional or thematic dissonance being handled in-character.

The Game Master should at least keep a decisive explanation for why a plane's physical laws are different despite the mode. This should relate to the original genre in terms of tone.

### EXAMPLE

*Even though the GM is running a Gritty-genre game, OZ-01242 is an urban wasteland filled with technologically adept bounty hunters, using Cinematic rules due to large-scale bio-generators accelerating adrenal responses and cellular regeneration. They do this because it's good sport; the entire plane is fed criminals from other planes and monitored by drones, the video feeds of which are piped back via psychic relay to OI-01241, a plane where a massive gambling parlor is run by a trio of decadent Hierarch overlords.*

## THREE BASELINES

Another option is to align the modes to the three prime delineations of planes: Earth's worldlines, the Otherworlds, and the Netherworlds. Most Alts of Earth or planes for the Otherworlds and Netherworlds will conform to the same set of physical laws, but individual planes may differ even from these standard modes. Here's what we suggest:

- Earths are usually Gritty. They obey the Logos's physical laws, where constraints limit individual power, but provide the potential for grand technological advancements.

- Otherworlds are usually Cinematic, bound as they are to mighty and monstrous legends.
- Netherworlds are usually Pulpy. Death is an ever-present threat, but the planes of darkness offer a chance to harden oneself against their pains. The Nemesis creates hellfire, but prefers to dominate through slow erosion.

## EXCEPTIONAL PLANES

As noted, whether you have one or three standards for most planes, you can create exceptions in individual planes. Consider these examples:

- On EU-02342, the Survivor Republics, humanity has largely retreated to vast domes and subsurface megacities. The population as a whole now suffers from severe agoraphobia. All the problems of deep urban life are present. Life is cheap in the neon-lit caves, and riddled with disease, crime, and stray bullets. The largest gang on the planet is law enforcement. It's a Pulpy plane, where you defend yourself with wits and fists.
- On NM-32002, Torvelad, titanic monsters wander a ravaged land, devouring inhabitants and crushing homesteads as the plane's Alastors command. The plane follows Cinematic rules, as native heroes can sometimes defeat the great beasts, though the arc of survival always curves toward death in the end.
- OI-11731, Driftwood, is a world-state within the worm-riddled middle branches of an inconceivably huge, dying

tree. The canopy can be seen, but never reached, though the sun's light pokes out beyond it. The state divides rations of tree fungus and rare streams of undivided water. The planar tree is cold and gray, save for occasional wildfires in its dry tunnels, and the world runs on Gritty principles.

## USING MODE CHANGES

If you're running a game where modes change, use the following rules:

- Calculate each character's Health in all three modes. When the mode changes, use the new Health score. Calculate the amount of damage accumulated separately from a character's Health score. When your character's base Health goes up due to a change in mode, recalculate their remaining Health by subtracting damage from the base. When your character's base Health goes down due to a change in mode, use the lower of base Health in the mode or their remaining Health after injury, if any.
- Use the Defense and Toughness scores of the most lenient mode the campaign will be shifting to. If you're using all three modes, that's Cinematic. Recalculating these really isn't worth the effort.
- Apply all other mode rules based on whichever one is in play, except the one for Resources. Pick one mode for that and stick to it. (Pulpy is a recommended standard.) The main game systems you need to track are how Toughness works, which stunts you can use, and the +2 damage bonus in Pulpy and Cinematic modes.





## IDENTITY

In this adventure, 3-5 first-level Sodality characters and associates have been asked by a Sodality Magister to investigate a newly discovered Heterarchy, a plane that doesn't belong to any clear category, often because an Emanate has influenced it. In this case, a Hierarch—that is, a godlike Emanate of the Otherworlds—named Villamord set up a gate to it and started experimenting with infusing magic into an alternate Earth. Villamord is unaware that another gate has opened, the one the PCs will arrive through, or that the Divine Empire has started using his experiment as a place to research weapons which combine magic and technology. While on this assignment, the party encounters one such weapon. Wei “Dubs” Nyu, a native to this Heterarchy, is being hunted by representatives of the Dolur Coalition, a weapons manufacturer for the Divine Empire. The PCs soon discover Dubs is a “synthform”—a sort of android—and the reason they're being hunted by the Dolur Coalition is because they see Dubs as company property.

Dubs claims they were once human, but their partner Fiona, a Dolur Coalition employee, used an experimental arcane procedure to transfer Dubs's soul into a synthform body in order to save their life. According to Dubs, Fiona learned of the existence of magic through her employer, then through her own research and experimentation was able to put them in this artificial body. The Dolur Coalition, however, contends Dubs is simply a magical artificial intelligence, designed by their employee on company time. The PCs are unlikely to be able to determine whether Dubs truly has a soul, and will have to decide whether they believe having a soul should be the criteria for personhood at all.

Making things more complicated, the team must find an alternate way home, as they're redirected to a Netherworld ruled by Villamord, the meddling Hierarch responsible for the Heterarchy. Ultimately, the characters must argue their case before the Hierarch, as they cannot leave without the being's approval. Will the PCs convince the god Dubs has free will and should not be anyone's property? Will they simply hand the synthform over to the Dolur Coalition in order to open their way home? Will they come up with some other creative solution? Dubs's fate is ultimately in the PC's hands.

## SCENE 1

## ASSIGNMENT BRIEFING

## SOCIAL ENCOUNTER

The story begins on Earth, Vigrith, or a Vitane-influenced Otherworld, at the official residence of Magister Tazu Jaheem. Read or paraphrase the following aloud to the players:

*Sodality Magister Tazu Jaheem calls you together for a briefing on your first assignment. Whether you're here out of duty to the Sodality, for the money, or for some other reason, you've accepted the job.*

*As Tazu explains, the Sodality discovered a gate leading to an alternate Earth. This is usually reported to the Peridexion so it can be sealed, but a Sodality Searcher scout discovered the plane is now a Heterarchy: It is now more magically active than a typical Earth worldline, but doesn't seem to interfere with technology. Your job is to spend a week of its time on a*

survey mission to determine possible reasons for the plane's nature, its possible forking point from Earth, and other information of interest, from threat assessments to interesting natural features. The local population are uninitiated and should be prevented from knowing about plane travel. There are indications the Divine Empire also has an interest in the plane.

## TAZU JAHEEM, SODALITY MAGISTER

The PCs director for this adventure is arvu Magister Tazu Jaheem. Except for her black feathered wings and white irises, Magister Jaheem appears to be a tall, slender woman of African and Asian descent, and a gracefully aged 45 or so. She presents a serious face for her work but has a significant sense of humor.



### TAZU JAHEEM, SODALITY MAGISTER

#### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 1, COMMUNICATION 4 (ETIQUETTE, LEADERSHIP),  
CONSTITUTION 1, DEXTERITY 0, FIGHTING 1,  
INTELLIGENCE 5 (ANTHROPOLOGY, HISTORY),  
PERCEPTION 2, STRENGTH 1, WILLPOWER 2

## THE SCOUT'S REPORT

Sodality Searcher Kethrin Mas, a jana and skilled arcanist, made an initial short survey of the area immediately beyond the gate. Mas is on assignment and unavailable, but his report noted the following information.

- Mas has included photographs of local clothing, artifacts, and currency. These indicate the ruling government is the Federated Colonies of America. The one-dollar bill features George Washington and Thayendanega, aka Joseph Brant, facing each other with stern expressions.
- In many respects the area resembles modern primeline Earth, with an electrical grid, automobiles, and near-ubiquitous computing devices. English is the local language around the gate and the region seems to be a counterpart to Boca Raton, Florida, called Des Ratones.
- Alligators have been domesticated here, and are very common.
- There were no Incessance reactions to a simple magical implement (a light-throwing wand) or a complex piece of technology (late-generation smartphone).
- Mas saw three suspicious-looking women in local uniforms in the closest settlement, and noted their short swords, which are Divine Empire Immortal Force issue.
- The gate is in a tangle of trees on an island in the swamp. Signs indicate the island is off limits by order of the FCA's Department of Conservation and Traditional Borderlands.

- The gate leads to the Sodality-colonized Otherworld of Ashtertzom, and is locked differently on each side, though one only needs the key for the side one is traveling from. On the Ashtertzom side, a key has not yet been fully determined, though local leader Moshe Abadi is capable of opening it. On the other side, a traveler must eat the flesh of a local chipmunk-like creature called an oko hutia (often just called an oko) to pass from the Heterarchy to Ashtertzom.

## ASSIGNMENT PARAMETERS

Tazu explains the team will be travelling through three well-documented Otherworlds before reaching their destination. It would be theoretically possible to get there via Peridexion quantum ark, but using the newly discovered gate chain is administratively easier.

Two of these Otherworlds are left to the Game Master to design, though it's perfectly all right to segue through these to the third, Ashtertzom (OV-11411), where the team will meet their Sodality contact, Moshe Abadi. Moshe is a rabbi whose congregation immigrated to this plane as its only conscious, sapient inhabitants. They tend to ailments that arise in the dreamers, individuals connected to the plane's Zoflori plants (see **Ashtertzom**), who might otherwise die and be consumed by the local flora. Characters are not to touch the Zoflori, which look like giant trillium flowers. Moshe's village will be visible as soon as the team exits the gate to this Otherworld, as it is only a short walk downhill.

The key to unlocking the return gate is the team's responsibility. Unlocking the gate requires someone to sit at the foot of the gate and eat the meat of one oko, though it can be prepared and cooked. Tazu recommends catching one as an early priority just in case they need to leave in a hurry. While the island is off limits according to local law, there's not much evidence of enforcement, and the island has plenty of foliage to offer cover, especially if characters travel by night. Moshe Abadi has been kind enough to track time and can aid characters who wish to cross at certain times. If the characters don't report back in fourteen days, Tazu will send an experienced Sodality Mission to rescue them.

Once the PCs are finished talking to Tazu, the Magister invites them to dinner, which comes via Modality courier (and gives PCs an opportunity to get to know each other). They're invited to stay the night in Tazu's official residence, which is comfortable and big enough to provide individual rooms for guests. Characters leave the following morning.

### SCENE 2

## JOURNEY TO ASHTERTZOM

### SOCIAL AND EXPLORATION ENCOUNTER

The trek through the gate chain can be as easy or difficult as the GM likes. The details of the two intervening Otherworlds are left to you, including any dangers the PCs encounter, the locations of the gates, and any keys, though note that the Sodality will have conducted surveys of all these planes and will share knowledge of local planar hazards, as well as the locations and keys of any gates. Upon reaching Ashtertzom, the characters must find Moshe Abadi.



## OV-11411: ASHTERZOM

**INCESSANCE:** +4 against items and creatures of technology;  
+0 versus items and creatures of the occult

Once characters step through the gate, read or paraphrase the following:

*Ashterzom's primary gate lies atop a rocky hill between two rough granite pillars, topped by a chain between them. You notice humidity as soon as you step through. The sky is blue behind a haze of cloud, with accents of red supplied by a celestial body sharing the sky with its conventional sun. A path leads through thick, dark green foliage toward a small mud-brick village where you expect to find Moshe Abadi. In the rainforest, enormous cream-colored, tri-petaled flowers stand seven feet high, surrounded by runners.*

Moshe greets the characters as they approach the village boundary. Many of these flowers stand around the village but here, Player Characters see their vines wrapped around a dozen people, who also have leaves over their heads down to their cheeks. Villagers tend to some of them, washing and intravenously feeding them. These people have been bound to the Zoflori plants for so long they can't be freed, but villagers care for them, supplementing the nutrients the flower passes on to them and providing basic hygiene.

## ZOFLORI, THE DREAM FLOWERS

The PCs were warned not to interact with the Zoflori, but if a character chooses to, you've still got options. Touching a Zoflor that hasn't already bonded with someone will cause it to swiftly wrap its vines around that character. A Zoflor has 30 Health (and 0 Toughness) and only acts by grappling with its vines, using a Fighting of +6 within a two-yard radius. After three successful grapples in a row, it places a bowl-like configuration of leaves over the target's head, immobilizing them and linking them to the flower.

If a PC becomes bonded with a Zoflor, it's likely their companions will want to rescue them. Attempting to cut them free makes it tighten its grip, inflicting 2d6 impact stun damage on the captured character and increasing its Fighting by +1 against anyone attempting to pull that individual free. Damaging a Zoflor inflicts the same amount of damage to the bonded victim, but always as penetrating wound damage via psychophysical shock. Bonded characters live in a paradisaical dream world, networked with other bonded individuals. Moshe is unaware of anyone ever wanting to leave a Zoflor's grasp, but characters with the Dreaming psychic discipline may be able to snap a bonded character out of their condition, in which case, the flower lets go. Whether an occultist is available depends on the GM. You may also decide Moshe knows a way of getting Zoflori to let go. The longer the character remains trapped, the more difficult a rescue becomes. The flower-bonded whom Moshe and the villagers care for have each been trapped for at least six months.

Ashterzom has no indigenous intelligent life, or even mammal-like life, but there are certain predatory plants. The role of the Zoflori in such an environment is an open question, suggesting that intelligent prey once existed. Explore these issues as much as you like before moving on. If time would be an issue, the GM may decide temporal elasticity, common in the planes, stretches to provide more time to explore before moving on.

## MOSHE ABADI

Moshe Abadi is an old, jovial, round-bellied rabbi. In his youth, he worked for the Vitane as a cultural liaison between the Supremacy and the Vitane's Jewish diaspora, which has settled across multiple planes. Ashterzom is his retirement posting and something of a religious duty, as he and his community care for people trapped by the Zoflori. His strong faith also seems to be the key to opening the gate to the as-yet unnamed Heterarchy.



### MOSHE ABADI

#### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY -1, COMMUNICATION 4 (EXPRESSION), CONSTITUTION -1,  
DEXTERITY -1, FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 4 (ANTHROPOLOGY, BIOLOGY,  
CURRENT AFFAIRS, HISTORY, LAW, RESEARCH, THEOLOGY),  
PERCEPTION 3, STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 5 (FAITH)

## MOVING ON

The gate to the Heterarchy is about two miles from the village, in a cave set into a cliff that overlooks the sea. The beautiful vista makes it a common location for villagers to gather, and it was here, in the midst of a lecture, that Moshe inadvertently opened the gate, discovering that its key consists of sincere words of wisdom from someone considered holy. Before opening it, Moshe offers to say a blessing over anyone who'd like him to. He isn't offended by any who decline, and wishes them the best in any case.

When everyone is ready to go, Moshe says, "Patsh zikh nit in beicheleh, ven fishelah iz noch in teicheleh," Yiddish for, "Don't rub your belly when the little fish is still in the pond." The gate opens.

### SCENE 3

## FIRST CONTACT

### EXPLORATION AND ACTION ENCOUNTER

Read or paraphrase the following:

*You arrive on the other side of the gate on a small island, covered in tangled trees and thick grasses. On this side, the gate consists of two bald cypress trees whose branches lace together. A quick look around gives you an estimated size for the island of an acre and a half, surrounded by shallow swamp water. Branches shake slightly as chipmunk-like creatures bound between them. These are the oko hutia you were briefed about.*

Almost immediately, one of the okos scurries over. It is adorable. It stares curiously at the PCs with huge eyes, then scurries away. If the PCs decide they want to unlock this side of the gate immediately, or at least collect a key for later, finding another oko is a fairly easy **TN 10 Perception (Tracking)** test. The fast little critters are abundant on the island, but catching them requires some skill. The first one to be attacked flees, climbing as quickly as it can run. If attempting to capture one without killing it, by hand or using something like a net, characters suffer a -2 penalty to their attack rolls but capture it with a Stunt Die result of 3 or better. An opposed **Communication (Animal Handling)** test versus the oko's **Willpower (Self-Discipline)** lets the PC get closer to the animal before striking, giving them a +2 to the test to catch it. Otherwise, characters might set traps and use other means to catch one—and when that happens, things get interesting.

As soon as the characters capture or kill an oko, its living or dead jaws spasm and open wide, and it snaps with multiple rows of semi-retractable, jagged teeth. If it lives, it attacks anyone close to it, but it's actually screaming at a hypersonic frequency. Due to this and emitted stress pheromones, on the following round, three oko hutia plus two per Player Character attack.

## OKO HUTIA

For the most part, an oko hutia looks like an ordinary wild chipmunk, though its eyes face forward, and it has an elon-

## TEFILAT HADERECH, THE TRAVELER'S PRAYER

If permitted, Moshe recites the following blessing in Hebrew:

*"May it be Your will, Lord, our God and the God of our ancestors, that You lead us toward peace, guide our footsteps toward peace, and make us reach our desired destination for life, gladness, and peace. May You rescue us from the hand of every foe and ambush, from robbers and wild beasts on the trip, and from all manner of punishments that assemble to come to earth. May You send blessing in our handiwork, and grant us grace, kindness, and mercy in Your eyes and in the eyes of all who see us. May You hear the sound of our humble request because You are God Who hears prayer requests. Blessed are You, Lord, Who hears prayer."*

## OKO HUTIA

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 2, COMMUNICATION -1, CONSTITUTION -1, DEXTERITY 5 (ACROBATICS, STEALTH), FIGHTING 4 (BITE), INTELLIGENCE -1, PERCEPTION 4 (HEARING, SEEING, SMELLING), STRENGTH -2, WILLPOWER 0

SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
15	5	5	5	15	15	15	0+0	0	0

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE*
BITE	+6	1D6-2

\* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Chomp (4 SP), Double-Team, Vicious Blow

**CHOMP:** As a special 4 SP stunt, an oko latches onto its target, dealing an extra 1d6 impact wound damage immediately and 1d3 penetrating wound damage per subsequent round it's latched on, though it cannot take other actions and its Defense drops to 5. The oko can only be detached by either being killed or being torn off, the latter of which requires a minor action and inflicts 1d6 penetrating wound damage to whoever it was attached to, as the oko takes a chunk of the character with it.

**PACK TACTICS:** If an oko attacks with at least three others, they may perform combat stunts for 1 SP less than normal.

### THREAT: MINOR

gated snout. Okos are in fact a related species which is an occasional pack carnivore, like a land-based piranha. They normally prey on fish in shallows, young alligators, and other rodents, but when their collective calorie requirements rise, they attack other prey. The okos on this island have entered mating season, making them aggressive—a condition scout Kethrin Mas didn't have to deal with. This island is a designated preserve. In combat, okos attack with a secondary set of retractable teeth, set into a jaw that opens twice as wide as you'd expect.

The okos fight until killed. After that point, they avoid the PCs, unless they kill another (which antagonizes a new pack).

The TN to track them increases to 17. There's a straight 50/50 chance a slain oko is sufficiently intact to provide meat with which to open the gate back to Ashterzom. Fortunately, okos are not confident swimmers, and while the swamp's three-to five-foot deep water is a nuisance for characters, it's an impassable barrier for the creatures.

Going ashore by foot is possible, but exploring the island reveals a rusted but functional flat-bottom rowboat which can easily be ripped free of its overgrowth. Two oars can be found beneath it. The boat fits three comfortably, and five less comfortably. Remind the characters they're dealing with uninitiated natives and should travel as unobtrusively as they can, such as after nightfall.

As if to punctuate this point, at some point after fighting the okos or upon leaving the island, ask for a **TN 15 Perception (Seeing)** test. Characters who succeed see a distant red LED dot: a drone, 100 yards overhead. This is Dubs's drone. They've been sending one to scan the island regularly, and image analysis software examining its feed alerts them of the characters' appearance and movements. One round after being spotted, the drone retreats at high speed (Fast/+3 Velocity according to *Modern AGE* rules).

#### SCENE 4

## INTO THE HETERARCHY

### EXPLORATION AND SOCIAL ENCOUNTER

Once the team gets off the island, they've got an opportunity to do their job and gather information about this Heterarchy. You can make this part of the adventure as long or short as you like, but don't let it go the full week of the assignment, and don't let the PCs get back to the island without being intercepted by Dubs.

#### HETERARCHY X

**INCESSANCE:** +3 against occult beings and items

This plane was once an Alt—that is, a world derived from the “real” Earth, but with differences embedded in its history. Now it isn't considered to be a conventional Alt, nor to be consistent with other planes, making it a Heterarchy. It doesn't have a name yet because nobody's filed a request, leaving the PCs to decide.

## THE FEDERATED COLONIES OF AMERICA

The FCA seems to have sprung in part from changes in the American Revolution which forced the Patriots to honor and elaborate upon British and French treaties with indigenous peoples. The FCA is thus a collection of city-states with some nationally controlled arteries, surrounded by hundreds of indigenous nations connected by mutual defense and trade agreements. With a reduced capacity for exploiting other continents, Europe's influence is more modest. Yet the FCA duplicates primeline American culture in a number of ways, and parallel social forces led to everything from rock and roll to the Cold War, though the latter affair was a bit more multilateral.

The local community of Des Ratones has a population of about 100,000 under the joint authority of the FCA and indigenous Xega Nation. It's a shipping hub and resort town.

## THE RISE OF MAGIC

Magic doesn't seem to have especially influenced this worldline until perhaps a hundred years ago, and it would require deep research to trace it that far back to rumors of Lenin's “socialist miracles” during the Russian Revolution. Nowadays, belief in magic is officially considered a baseless superstition, but everyone knows a friend of a friend, and “field philosophers” earn paychecks in certain elite security and military services. A strong taboo against acknowledging magic exists, though mass media is just starting to question it.

Interestingly, there is no Peridexion on this plane. It seems to have vanished about 200 years ago, and is known to the public as an obscure “wisdom tradition” like Theosophy or the various Rosicrucian sects. Aethon characters have no Pool support here.

## FLORA AND FAUNA

Besides the oko hutia, domesticated alligators are locally notable. Street gators have longer limbs, readily take to a leash, and can often be found in people's yards. Thick-bodied meat gators are farmed in riverside pens. Wild gators are somewhat rarer than in the primeline, however. Other changes include porcupines, whose quills are poisonous but whose meat is considered a delicacy, and passenger pigeons, which are numerous enough to constitute a nuisance. Generally, a more diverse array of flora and fauna exist, and more species have been domesticated. Among humans, premature silver hair is more common, and many individuals have a bluish tint to their skin because of a variation in mineral metabolism not found in the primeline. There are no communities of non-jana (that is, obviously magical ancestries) close to Des Ratones.

## TECHNOLOGY

Technology here is slightly less advanced than the primeline's. Called the Connector, the plane's Internet is about twenty years behind, except for a few experimental networks available to academic and military officials. Flip phones are still the standard. On the other hand, clean energy is somewhat more common, and biotechnology takes advantage of increased biodiversity to develop new innovations.

#### SCENE 5

## DUBS

### SOCIAL AND ACTION ENCOUNTER

At some point during their investigation when all the PCs are together, Dubs tracks them down, having kept tabs on them since discovering them with the drone. Read or paraphrase the following aloud to the players, adjusting it as needed based on where the PCs are and what they're up to when Dubs finds them:

Suddenly, you're interrupted by someone rushing up to you. They're a trim, non-binary individual in their late twenties or early thirties, with short hair that's been dyed bright purple to match their eyes, though the roots have grown out white. Their skin is a very deep blue-purple, more intense than anything you've seen in other natives of the plane. On Earth, you might identify this person as having Asian ancestry. They're wearing a dirty T-shirt and shorts. The shirt is printed with a faded laughing-face emoji.

"You! You're cross-world travelers," they say. "I saw you arrive on the island. I need your help."

Dubs's purple eyes aren't from contact lenses, and aren't in the range of colors natives of the plane display. Characters who've looked at this plane's technology know the laughing-face emoji doesn't exist here. Wei "Dubs" Nyu got it from a locker room belonging to their captors: the Dolur Coalition, a transplanar corporation. Characters associated with the Sodality and transplanar culture have heard of Dolur if they succeed at a **TN 11 Intelligence (Current Affairs)** test. This reveals that Dolur is a weapons manufacturer for the Divine Empire, with its own armed force for security and "field tests."

Dubs says that six weeks ago, they escaped from a Dolur lab on an artificial island a mile off the coast with the help of their lover, Fiona Shall, a researcher from the Heterarchy. Dubs is also from the Heterarchy, and only knows of planar travel from Fiona and from eavesdropping on their captors.

Why was Dubs a captive? They believe they had some kind of accident they can't remember which prompted Fiona to revive them using Dolur's technology, including "applied philosophy" – magic. Dubs remembers meeting and falling in love with Fiona, but no accident. Close questioning, especially using **Communication (Investigation)** versus Dubs's **Willpower (Faith)**, indicates Dubs is unconsciously filling in significant gaps in their memory.

In escaping, Dubs had to hurt some people, and set the sea platform on fire. Now they just want to get away. Dubs believes Dolur has powerful resources on this plane and wants to go somewhere safe.

Dubs avoids telling the PCs they're a synthform: an artificial being produced using a mixture of science and magic. Dubs believes their brain was transferred into this body after a catastrophic injury. Medical examination reveals subtle, seam-like scars: straight lines crisscrossing Dubs's body. Dubs's left hand has a metallic silver tattoo, a glyph symbolizing and containing the *tracker* spell (see page 94 of the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook*). Anyone with knowledge of Digital or Enchantment Arcana recognizes the glyph, as do characters who succeed at a **TN 15 Intelligence (Occultism)** test.

Dubs's body registers as magical to any ability or item capable of detecting the arcana. However, there won't be time for a detailed examination – Dolur has other ideas.

## ASYLUM, INTERRUPTED

Suddenly, Immortal Force soldiers burst onto the scene. They've found Dubs using the *tracker* glyph, which activated when he left the installation. Dubs has been careful to stick to highly mobile or inaccessible hideouts, but made an exception to approach the PCs.



One Immortal Force trooper per player arrives. Use the Soldier from page 140 of the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook*, with the following changes:

- Each has a short sword which looks like a hybrid between a gladius and a modern survival knife, and is recognizable as Divine Empire issue to characters familiar with that faction, though the troops are dressed to blend into the Heterarchy.
- Each has the Light Blades focus and the Novice Rank of Single Weapon Style. This provides a hand-to-hand attack with a +4 bonus to hit that inflicts 1d6+4 impact wound damage, and the ability to use an Activate action to gain +1 to Defense for the encounter while using the sword or another one-handed weapon.
- They don't have grenades.
- When they attack Dubs, they use only single shots (no Stunt Die damage bonus), attacking at a -2 penalty as they attempt to avoid Dubs's head and spine.

The soldiers are led by Janellae (see page 173), who focuses entirely on subduing Dubs. This fight should be harrowing but winnable, so don't be afraid to call in early reinforcements if the PCs are having too easy a go of it. The soldiers are merci-

less and kill bystanders in their path without hesitation. If this encounter occurs somewhere private, steer the fight toward a populated area where the PCs can see the soldiers' brutality. Janellae and her soldiers do not cease their attack under any circumstance short of unconditional surrender. Anyone who has seen the nature of the synthform must be killed or taken in for questioning.

This fight also introduces the Dolur Coalition's viewpoint on Dubs's existence. Although the soldiers strike first with the aim of recovering Dubs, at the earliest opportunity Janellae demands the return of "Coalition property" immediately.

When Dubs is shot, a deep blue fluid comes out of their wounds and instead of dripping or spraying, oozes slowly, clinging to them. This confirms Dubs's artificial nature. In combat Dubs hangs near the PCs, who they depend on to escape, but doesn't fight back, dodging incoming attacks. If grappled, Dubs demonstrates immense strength when they get the upper hand, tossing their assailant a few yards away.

If all but two or fewer soldiers are taken out of combat, they retreat to avoid Janellae's capture, and she obviously calls for reinforcements by walkie-talkie. This is an opportunity for the

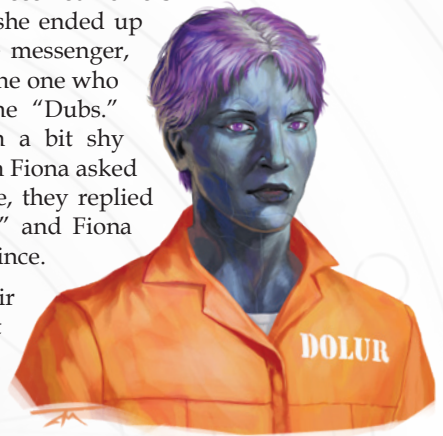
characters to escape. Let the players get creative in avoiding Dolur forces, with clothing changes, car chases, and anything else you'd like to devise. If you'd like to extend this scene to multiple encounters, Dolur has multiple installations and Immortal Force squads across this world, but not so many as to be overwhelming.

Disabling the *tracker* with *arcane abatement* or Enchantment spells that halt such effects won't hurt Dubs, but lacking another means, it can be dealt with by amputating the hand.

## WEI "DUBS" NYU

Dubs remembers their relationship with Fiona Shall best of all. Fiona and Wei met several years before Fiona started working for the Dolur Coalition. Wei worked for a florist as a delivery person, and when Fiona received flowers from a secret admirer, she ended up falling in love with the messenger, not the suitor. Fiona is the one who gave Wei the nickname "Dubs." Wei has always gotten a bit shy when flustered, so when Fiona asked how to spell their name, they replied "Dub, um, dub, W-E-I," and Fiona called them Dubs ever since.

They remember their childhood somewhat spottily, and nothing about what moved them from their own body to their new, synthetic one—though



### WEI "DUBS" NYU

#### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 6, COMMUNICATION 2 (PERSUASION), CONSTITUTION 7 (TOLERANCE), DEXTERITY 6, FIGHTING 6 (BRAWLING, GRAPPLING), INTELLIGENCE 4, PERCEPTION 6 (TRACKING), STRENGTH 7 (MIGHT), WILLPOWER 3 (FAITH)

SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
16	37	107	137	16	17	18	6I/2B + 7	8	9
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL			DAMAGE*				
UNARMED		+8			2D6+6				

\* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

#### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Good Instincts, Cover Your Tracks, Speed Demon

**ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY:** Dubs has complete faith in the presence of their own soul. No social action can convince Dubs they're not the genuine Wei "Dubs" Nyu.

**ABSOLUTE UNCERTAINTY:** All known means of detecting the presence of a soul, or determining exact magical and technological methods of construction, return as inconclusive when used on Dubs. Dubs registers as magically and psychically active.

**INCESSANCE SHIELDING:** Through unknown means, Dubs adds +5 to the TNs of Incessance tests to affect them.

**NONVIOLENT BUT TEMPERAMENTAL:** Dubs has formidable abilities, but will not use them to harm others, even in self-defense, except to escape being confined. This even applies if allies might be killed if Dubs doesn't act. If, however, Dubs witnesses a death they could have prevented, it may cause them to briefly lose control, lashing out at whatever group they hold responsible for the duration of the encounter.

THREAT: MAJOR

### JANELLAE

#### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 2 (THROWN), COMMUNICATION 5 (BARGAINING, ETIQUETTE, EXPRESSION, LEADERSHIP), CONSTITUTION 4, DEXTERITY 1 (INITIATIVE), FIGHTING 4 (BRAWLING), INTELLIGENCE 5 (BUSINESS, CURRENT AFFAIRS, EVALUATION, HISTORY, LAW), PERCEPTION 2, STRENGTH 4, WILLPOWER 3 (SELF-DISCIPLINE)

SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
11	34	54	69	11	11	12	0 + 4	5	5
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL			DAMAGE*				
UNARMED		+6			1D3+4				
FLAME BLAST		+5**			2D6+1				

\* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

\*\* SPELLCASTING ROLL, NOT ATTACK ROLL.

#### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** And Another Thing, Cast Out, Sway the Crowd, Take Cover

**ARCANA:** Arcane Awareness, Arcane Blast, Arcane Lantern, Arcane Shield, Flame Blast, Spell Ward

**TALENTS:** Fire Arcana (Novice), Power Arcana (Novice), Oratory (Expert) Protection Arcana (Novice)

THREAT: MODERATE

they absolutely believe their soul was transferred. Their appearance suggests they are in their late twenties or early thirties, with purple eyes, deep blue-purple skin, and short purple hair with white roots.

Dubs avoids violence, and will never attack except to throw off someone trying to restrain them, or to push past someone blocking an escape route. In these times, Dubs reveals immense strength and speed.

## JANELLAE

The second, “unblessed” daughter of a fire Optimate, Janellae is the vice-head of operations in Pearl Sky 5, the Dolur Coalition’s code name for the unmapped Heterarchy where they performed the research which created Wei “Dubs” Nyu’s body. Dolur is a semi-private corporation in the Divine Empire, but due to the military focus of its research, Janellae has been given command of a contingent of Imperial Force soldiers. She is straightforward in her dealings, seeing deception as a waste of time and beneath her. She expects people to either get out of her way or die. A competent arcanist and skilled businesswoman, she doesn’t flinch from violence but knows it isn’t her area of expertise. That’s what the damn troopers are for.

Janellae is a fit jana woman of 40 with dark skin, brown eyes, and short, stark white hair, who prefers Earth-style men’s suits.



### SCENE 6

## TO THE SILENT NETHERWORLD

### EXPLORATION ENCOUNTER

Once things are calm enough for conversation, Dubs will honestly answer any of the party’s further questions, including those about the nature of their synthform body. Dubs is absolutely certain they lived an entire life as a human before being placed in this body. Dubs’s handlers referred to them as being soulless, but they don’t believe it, and refused to perform various tests of strength and speed until they threatened Fiona. Characters with **Intelligence (Tactics)** know these tests simulate various battlefield tasks, indicating that Dubs was being tested as some kind of soldier. Dubs admits they had to hurt people to escape, but doesn’t want to hurt anyone any more. Finally, Dubs wants to get off the plane, and Sodality characters should take this request for asylum seriously.

The simplest option is to take the gate back on the swamp island, and provided characters didn’t attract attention, they can use it to return. If they did, Immortal Force soldiers guard

the gate. Dubs believes Dolur came through another gate on a Caribbean island, and at the GM’s discretion, an Immortal Force soldier might have a paper map to get there as a fallback or staging area.

Otherwise, researching rumors of paranormal phenomena may uncover another gate wherever you think it would be convenient, but regardless of how they get through, they end up somewhere unexpected: the unknown plane ruled by Villamord. Once characters step through, read or paraphrase the following:

*The other side of the gate is a seamless sandstone archway. The ground gives slightly beneath your feet even though it looks like an asphalt-like, black substance shot with veins of green. Where the veins concentrate, tree-like growths shoot through the ground, with a lime green tar-like coating on their bent trunks and drooping branches. Is it night? It’s hard to tell, as faint white light comes from jagged cracks in the sky, not stars or moons. A cluster of towers reaches from the horizon like a clawed hand.*

### VILLAMORD’S NETHERWORLD

**INCESSANCE:** +3 against magical or technological beings and items

Having created the gates to the Heterarchy, Villamord exerts some control over them. No matter the gate the characters use to leave the plane, Villamord redirects them to his own realm, a Netherworld he retreated to after the end of the Fellwar. Furthermore, none can leave Villamord’s Netherworld without his permission or part of his body, such as a drop of blood or lock of hair.

Despite reigning on a Netherworld, Villamord has no interest in torturing anyone, and chased away indigenous human and Inimical populations, though some remnants remain. Without souls or a particularly interesting ruling will, the plane is slowly disintegrating; native objects tend to become malleable, transparent, or insubstantial, and the number of cracks in the sky has been increasing.

Villamord’s castle, seen in the distance, is the obvious destination for travelers. The castle is forty miles away—two, three, or more days of hard hiking for most groups. The castle is visible at such distances because the world is flat, and the castle’s towers are enormous.

## SURVIVAL

Weather on the plane is mild—the warm air is suspiciously still, in fact, and sounds carry for miles as a result. Potable water is hard to find, and comes from rare fissures in the ground.

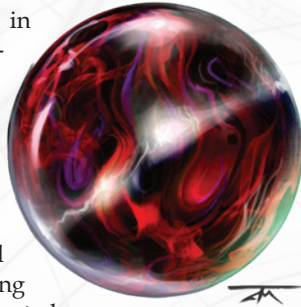
Food? The “trees” are poisonous and taste like it, though the green tarry substance on them is ignitable, and ideal for fires and torches. The only other native life consists of floating, red-black droplets of various sizes, most of which seem to behave like insects and feed on the trees, or each other. But a few of these amorphs are larger, and behave like stalking predators. If the characters don’t have fire at hand, one of them attacks—and if defeated, brave characters may determine that it’s edible. Increase the number of encounters and amorphs based on character interest and how challenging they turn out to be.

If an amorph completely incapacitates the characters, it eats one character's hand, nose, or other extremity (a creepily painless process that leaves a bloodless, healed-over stump) and departs.

Add other hazards and antagonists based on how difficult you want the journey to get, though it should be survivable. A remaining Inimical might be an option; see CHAPTER 8 for possibilities.

## AMORPH

Amorphs spring forth from the "trees" of Villamord's plane in different breeds, which determine their sizes and behaviors. The example below is a roiling, reddish black, gravity-defying, oily sphere about two feet across. Amorphs sometimes appear on other Netherworlds, filling various ecological niches. They do not always spring from "trees," being instead generated by means fitting the plane's environment: heavy clouds, vents in the ground, the seas, and so on.



### AMORPH

#### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 4, COMMUNICATION -1, CONSTITUTION 8 (TOLERANCE), DEXTERITY 5 (ACROBATICS, INITIATIVE), FIGHTING 5 (DISSOLVE), INTELLIGENCE 1, PERCEPTION 3, STRENGTH 2 (JUMPING), WILLPOWER

SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
15	30	70	85	15	16	16	0 + 8	8	9

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE*
DISSOLVE	+7	2d6+4

\* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

#### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Lightning Attack, Toxin (3 SP), Vicious Blow

**DELICIOUS:** You wouldn't think it to look at it, but this thing is edible. Once slain, its caustic coating can be washed off. It tastes like slightly under-baked bread, with elements of sweetness and saltiness.

**PAINLESS FEEDING:** The amorph doesn't kill its prey; when it reduces a target to 0 Health, treat the last injury inflicted as stun damage, while automatically applying the effects of the Toxin stunt. Over the next full minute, the amorph devours a body part, but the rest of the victim heals over any stump or other wound instantly with a layer of skin. Beyond the lost body part, the victim is unharmed.

**TOXIN:** On a successful dissolve attack, the amorph may perform a special 3 SP stunt to affect its target with a toxin that immediately puts them into a coma-like state for 2d6 minutes, unless they succeed on a **TN 15 Constitution (Stamina)** test.

THREAT: MODERATE

## SCENE 7

# CHILD OF THE GODS

## SOCIAL ENCOUNTER

When characters arrive at the castle, the gates are open, though doors to various parts of the hulking sandstone and tar complex close themselves as people approach, save for a winding route to Villamord's throne room. Characters have the distinct impression of being watched, and characters capable of sensing gates feel one close by. This is Villamord's gate to the Otherworld of Karsha, his former home and now a non-aligned plane.

When Dubs and the PCs arrive in Villamord's throne room, read or paraphrase the following:

*The throne room is a sphere perhaps 20 yards across. A glowing cloud in the center of the sphere illuminates everything. Gravity seems to pull equally on every surface, since you can see groups of people gathering beside and above you, as if standing on the floor. These people look like they represent varieties of humanity from across the Metacosm, and many are dressed in fantastical, dazzling fashions. Arvu in jeweled, shimmering cloaks enjoy hors d'oeuvres and drinks across from Nighthost warlords wreathed in smoke. Their tables and seats appear to be made of crystals which erupt from the stony floor. Humanoid tangles of copper wire seem to be acting as servants to the throng. A strong smell of many types of perfumes, combined with cooking smells, fills the chamber.*

*From your orientation, the tunnel you walked through is in the center of one end of the sphere. At the other, you see a raised platform with a single circular seat whose occupant appears slightly bored. His skin is the color of ash, his hair is short, his eyes are green, and he wears a somewhat worn robe whose design suggests authority, such as that of a judge or professor. He stands seven feet in height.*

## THE NEVERENDING SALON

The twenty or so servants also function as guards in a pinch, and are Armored Walkers (see CHAPTER 8) capable of extruding wiry body parts into bladed weapons. They attempt to non-lethally subdue anyone who causes a disruption during the unending party hosted by Villamord, the individual in the robe on the throne.

Any of the hundred or so guests readily tell characters who Villamord is: a Hierarch who once claimed dominion over the concept of wise rule, but who abandoned his plane when his subjects rejected him. He has been on a quest to rediscover the nature of his divine portfolio, which is why he has invited the guests—aristocrats, generals, prophets, and bureaucrats from numerous planes. If pressed closely, however, no guest can *exactly* describe how they got to Villamord's plane, and they ignore any inconsistencies or challenges to their vague accounts. This is because the guests are all Dead Walkers (see CHAPTER 8), sculpted out of the former defenders of this castle when Villamord displaced its ruling Alastor. They were subsequently preserved, perfumed (to avoid the smell that would otherwise induce retching; characters can get a whiff of it,



with no effect, with a successful **TN 14 Perception (Smelling)** test), and dressed to play these roles. Each is based on a real person whose personality Villamord has chosen to simulate. Characters closely connected to transplanar cultures may recognize notable figures.

Despite the fact that the guests are essentially robots made of dead flesh, the food is real and delicious, consisting of delicacies from numerous planes, thanks to a magical cornucopia Villamord brought into exile.

## INTELLECTUAL PURSUITS

At Villamord's party, the current topic of conversation is the nature of justice. Guests actively engage characters on this topic, and Villamord obviously observes them as they do. To lay out a coherent position requires succeeding at a **TN 15 Communication (Persuasion)** or **Intelligence (Law)** test, and each success contributes its Stunt Die result to an advanced test with a success threshold of 10, though the interval is variable based on the conversations characters have.

After no more than ten such exchanges, Villamord beckons the characters. If the characters beat the success threshold, Villamord's Attitude (see **Social Encounters** in CHAPTER 2 of the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook*) is Open, even Friendly if the combined total is 15 or more. Villamord is Neutral if characters didn't meet the success threshold, or Standoffish if they avoided talking to the guests by, for example, making a beeline straight for him.

Villamord talks to the characters about their recent actions and admits he's been influencing the Heterarchy for the past century or so because he's "bored of reigning in hell, and

the Otherworlds have had their share of gods." He plans to secretly rule the plane once it's properly prepared. Sodality and Aethon characters know this poses a significant problem, but also know the right move is to report it when they get back, as they have no chance of defeating Villamord. Attacks against him fail; he gets his servants to subdue the characters and locks them away until Dubs's trial. Villamord can see into the Heterarchy's recent history if he looks for something specific. At your discretion, noble or underhanded dealings by the PCs during their time there could also shift his first impression accordingly.

Villamord is asexual and aromantic. He is not offended by romantic or sexual advances, but characters are not going to get anywhere with him along those avenues. Characters with Communication (Seduction), however, may still use this focus to engage Villamord on topics he finds intellectually alluring, related to justice and government. These efforts cannot make Villamord any better than Friendly, however.

As noted earlier, Villamord controls access to the Netherworld's gates, including those leading to his former plane and the Heterarchy. The dais his throne sits on also swivels open as a door to the gate leading back to Karsha. If he wills it, the ton of solid rock swings open easily. If asked about the possibility of leaving, Villamord says Karsha is a three-gate chain back to Vigrith, but that characters can't leave until the Hierarch "presides over a matter of justice," indicating Dubs as he mentions it.

## VILLAMORD

Exiled since the Fellwar, Villamord took refuge with the Alastor Geryx Fol, but couldn't be persuaded to turn against



humanity. Villamord slew Fol and took over its plane. In this grim, lonely realm, he became slightly unhinged, and convinced his problem was a failure to fully understand his own divine responsibilities.

Villamord is unnaturally pale, seven feet tall, and has a masculine presentation, though the colors of his hair and eyes change at a whim.

He often wears the worn robe his former worshipers gave him when he was the God-Judge of Karsha, but in more relaxed circumstances dresses casually in breeches and a tunic.

Villamord is a powerful Emanate and, for the purposes of this adventure, immune to attack and capable of any feat the GM deems necessary. If given full game statistics, he would be slightly weaker than Avakim, in CHAPTER 8.



## VILLAMORD

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 6 (THROWN), COMMUNICATION 5 (BARGAINING, ETIQUETTE, EXPRESSION, LEADERSHIP), CONSTITUTION 6, DEXTERITY 9 (INITIATIVE), FIGHTING 8, INTELLIGENCE 10 (ANTHROPOLOGY, BUSINESS, CURRENT AFFAIRS, EVALUATION, HISTORY, LAW), PERCEPTION 6, STRENGTH 5, WILLPOWER 7 (SELF-DISCIPLINE)

## SCENE 8

# TRIAL OF A LIFE

## VARIOUS

Once the matter of Dubs's fate enters the conversation with Villamord, he snaps his fingers, the guests fall silent, and a representative of the Dolur Coalition enters the sphere through the same entrance as the PCs, accompanied by one Immortal Force soldier per Player Character. If she survived their first encounter, Janellae returns as the Coalition's representative. Otherwise, introduce Mardeen as a new representative (use the Corrupt Power Broker from CHAPTER 9, page 148 of the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook*). We will simply call them the Representative henceforth. This individual and their guards arrived via the Caribbean gate and made it to the castle before the PCs did, but were heretofore sequestered in another room.

## WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION

As an option, you may ask one of your players to portray the Representative and make arguments on that NPC's behalf, to make the trial scene more vivid. For a more interesting variant, you may decide Villamord asks one of the PCs to act as the Representative's "lawyer," bound by oath to argue against Dubs's personhood to the best of their ability – with a warning that Villamord can tell if the character makes any attempt to throw the case and will punish the offender, and possibly even rule against Dubs and the rest of the PCs.

Read or paraphrase the following text.

*Villamord's voice fills the chamber as he speaks:*

*"Treat each other peaceably! I welcome you, newcomers and old guests, to this trial: a matter of justice worthy of my attentions. It's been centuries. I thank you for the opportunity, and remind you this is a sacred space. In ancient traditions, one did not dishonor a warrior by depriving them of their arms, so I expect you to stay your hands for honor's sake, and submit to my judgment.*

*"Here, we decide the fate and even the nature of Wei Nyu, called Dubs. Is this individual property, or a person? Submit to my judgment, and I will decide fairly. Dishonor my hall, and I do believe Dubs should stay as my guest – indefinitely. What say you?"*

The Representative agrees to these conditions as long as the Player Characters do, placing Dubs's fate in their hands.

Villamord then allows both sides to argue their case, one at a time. Dubs gets to choose who goes first, and will go with whatever suggestion the characters provide. Characters can challenge the Representative's statements and vice versa, until Villamord commands them to cease a line of inquiry. Dubs is not allowed to speak on their own behalf, but can be called as a witness for questioning. Participants are not allowed to leave for any reason, and physical evidence is unnecessary because Villamord can scry for it within the Hierarchy. The case hinges upon the arguments participants put forth on the question: Is Dubs a person, or property?

## LEGAL ARGUMENTS

During the trial, characters may witness and engage in a number of argumentative maneuvers.

### THE DOLUR COALITION

The Representative argues "it" is company property, the result of advanced technological programming and enchantment, produced in a rare environment capable of sustaining both. Dubs is a prototype, and the fire they caused destroyed the project's schematics and research notes, leaving Dubs's body as the only guide to reproducing the research that created "it." Therefore, the Representative needs Dubs, and no form of compensation or compromise will suffice.

The Representative notes that there's no evidence Dubs has a soul, or is even Dubs – rather, Fiona Shall coded this belief within the synthform. There's no evidence Fiona Shall has the ability to transfer a soul, and no indication the real "late" Wei Nyu ever visited the facility.

Furthermore, Dubs has obviously inhuman characteristics in both "its" body and capabilities. The Representative calls upon Villamord to observe events at the coastal



facility six weeks ago, when Dubs escaped, for confirmation. Villamord does so, sharing what he sees and hears in holograms embedded in the cloud of light which illuminates the chamber. In it, characters see white corridors, as they might expect in a lab or medical facility. They see a guard with an Immortal Force sword shoot Fiona Shall, a pale, red-haired woman standing between her and Dubs. Once Fiona falls, Dubs breaks the guard's neck with inhumanly minimal effort. Subsequent snatches of imagery show Dubs killing several other guards and using one of their rifles to shoot the facility's fuel tank, causing an explosion and fire, before escaping with a large box (containing the drone Dubs used) under one arm.

Under skillful questioning (but not otherwise), the Representative will admit Dubs is a prototype weapon with multiple functions, including the ability to support possession by a psychically cast soul—but that autonomous functioning with an onboard AI is also supported by “the platform.” Magical and occult investigations will both reveal nodes of energy, type unknown, in Dubs's head and spinal column, which can neither be analyzed nor penetrated. If questioned about this, the Representative identifies these as security fields and no indication of a resident soul—but admittedly, no indication of the lack of a soul, either.

## DUBS

Dubs's position is that they are exactly who they believe they are. They may not possess detailed memories about everything that happened before they occupied the synth-

form body—and they are horrified at images of themselves harming people—but normal people don't have perfect memories either, and sometimes lose memories of traumatic events. If permitted to, by way of answering a question, Dubs asks Villamord to find the accident that killed him. Villamord displays a train derailment, and the original body of Wei Nyu (brown eyes, tan skin, and black hair, dyed purple) almost completely hidden by tubes, hoses, leads, and other medical equipment. Fiona Shall visits him, and the image vanishes—Villamord says he can't see what happened afterward. Villamord is also unable to see into the labs which manufactured Dubs, which the Representative attributes to “confidential security measures.”

## SODALITY ETHICS

If the Player Characters are virtuous by Sodality standards, their position should be that it doesn't matter if Dubs has a soul and is sapient, in the conventional sense. What matters is how Dubs ought to be treated according to their earnestly expressed desires, behavior, and abilities, which correspond with that of a person. The Vitane may define humanity as the presence of a soul, but *acts of humanity* should not be limited to those whose sapience we can confirm through experiments. This is hardly in the organization's operations manual, however, so the characters will have to work it out for themselves, though the GM can remind players the Sodality believes virtue is as much about the process, and how we improve or damn ourselves, as about the practical outcome.

## METHODS AND JUDGMENTS

How does the trial hash out? While he does his best to assume the mantle of a god of judgment, Villamord is somewhat out of practice, and might be socially compromised by charismatic characters, as he has spent most of his time in the company of magical automata. Nevertheless, his powerful intelligence and extrasensory powers keep him from ignoring facts others force him to confront—though whether he *really* can't see the circumstances of Dubs's resurrection or duplication as a synthform is left to the GM. How should you resolve the trial? We suggest one or a mix of the following options.

### PURE ROLEPLAY

No dice needed. The PCs make their arguments. The Representative makes her arguments. Villamord judges based on the strength of the characters' arguments, as communicated by the players.

### SOCIAL MANEUVERING

Villamord begins with a Neutral attitude toward the Dolur Representative, and has whatever Attitude toward the PCs they earned in Scene 7. From here, each side makes a contested advanced test using Communication and Intelligence focuses particular to the natures of their arguments, applying modifiers based on Villamord's Attitude. The highest accumulated success total prevails.

### TRIAL BY COMBAT

If the characters seem to be skilled at violence, and given the fact this involves military research and tension between interplanar superpowers, Villamord may decide trial by combat is appropriate. Combatants fight in the chamber, with guests heedless of getting caught in the crossfire. Trial by combat may also be used to resolve a tie, or if the characters argue badly but Villamord likes them better.

## THE VERDICT

Whatever the outcome of this trial, The Representative stands by it. According to Divine Empire doctrine, Villamord is a god, and should be obeyed. If the PCs win the trial, the Representative doesn't interfere and Villamord escorts them to his gate to Karsha.

Should the PCs lose the trial, Villamord expects them to hand Dubs over to the Dolur Coalition. If they refuse, both

the Dolur Coalition soldiers and Villamord's Armored Walkers attack the PCs, though Villamord devotes no more than one of his servants per character to apprehend them and, curiously, doesn't block any escape routes or track them beyond the castle grounds. Villamord secretly finds Dubs interesting, and would like them to go free, but isn't willing to compromise his divine reputation too much. You may even decide Villamord makes a casual comment about how a clipping of his hair can be used as a key, while he pointedly gestures to the switch that moves his throne aside to reveal the gate to Karsha.

## EPILOGUE

### FURTHER ADVENTURES

The Sodality expects characters to report in, and will help settle Dubs on another plane should the PCs come home with him. If the characters won the trial on Dubs's behalf, they are recognized as having a soul, whether or not this is actually the case—and the truth of that question remains up to you, the Game Master.

The Divine Empire may send a Fury to covertly kidnap Dubs. This is somewhat blasphemous by Imperial standards, as it involves disobeying a god, but the Praetorium is trained to navigate these ideological problems.

The fact that Villamord spent a century invading and altering the nature of an Alt is of major concern to the Vitane and Peridexion. Peridexion policy is that only the primeline should have gates to other planes. Undoing Villamord's damage may involve an extended effort to infiltrate the plane and seal off its gates, from establishing a Pool to controlling the rising use of magic, or it may end in deletion, reducing the Heterarchy to a cinder.

Synthforms represent a new threat to the balance of power. The characters may be asked to root out other centers of synthform research, which would take place in rare locations where magic and technology both function well. These entities are supposedly designed to support remote operation through psychic means, as well. This implies a diverse research effort spanning multiple planes. Leaked intelligence about Dubs may also interest the Krypteia and Pansophy Accelerators, the latter of whom would be fascinated by an alternative to their own Metamatons.

Finally, the question remains: Who is Wei "Dubs" Nyu? The simple answer is, "a person," but Dubs may have other capabilities yet to be revealed, and may inspire new conflicts as the consequences of the characters' actions ripple across the planes.

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# THREEFOLD

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## WEAPON GROUPS

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