

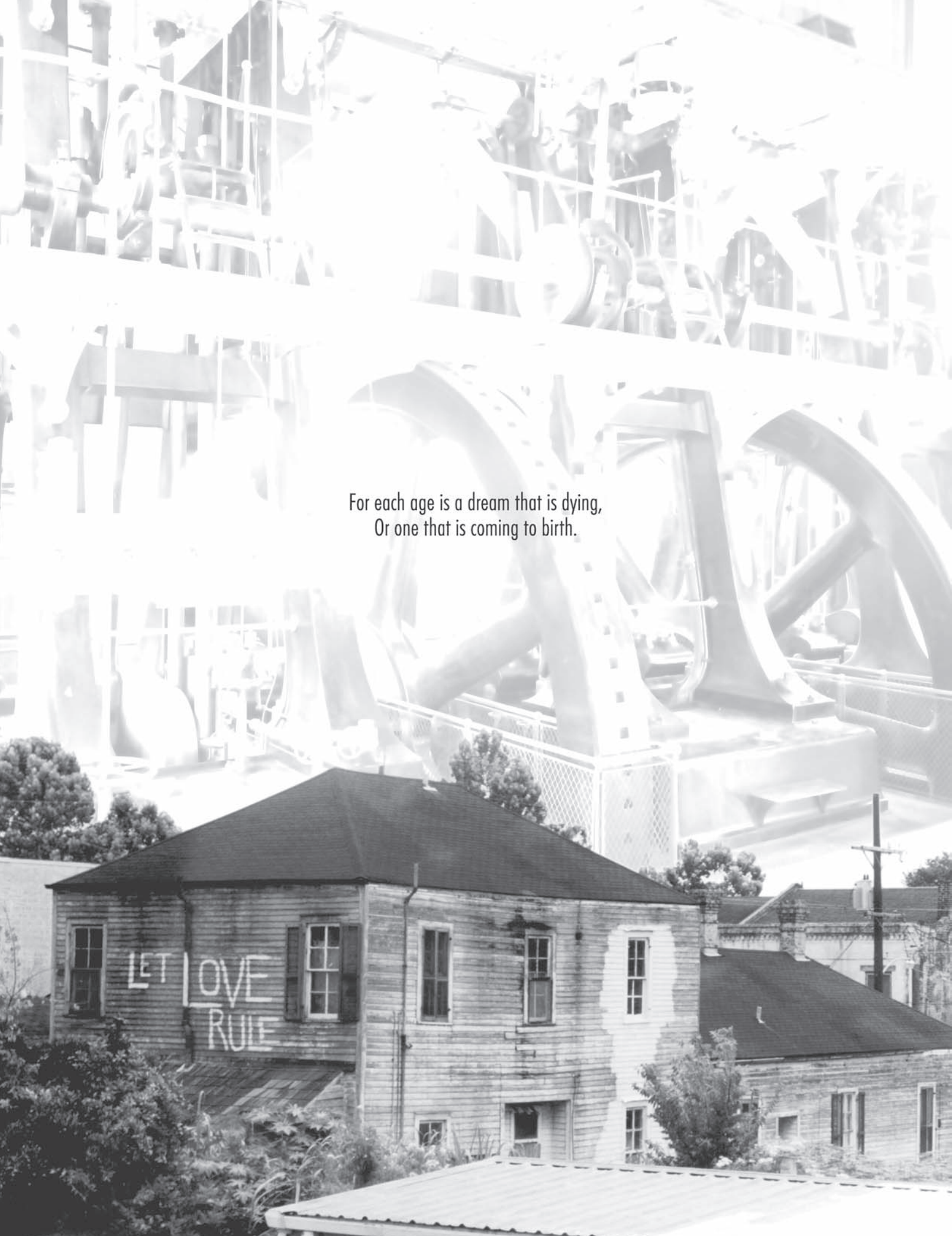
UNKNOWN
ARMIES

Statosphere

THE INVISIBLE CLERGY SOURCEBOOK



BY
TOM ADAMS, TIM DEDOPULOS, KENNETH HITE, DANIEL KSENYCH, ANDY LUCAS,
MICHAEL D. MEARLS, RICK NEAL, JAMES PALMER, JOHN SNEAD, GREG STOLZE,
TIM TONER, JOHN TYNES, CHAD UNDERKOFFLER & IAN YOUNG



For each age is a dream that is dying,
Or one that is coming to birth.

LET LOVE
RULE

ATLAS GAMES PRESENTS

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A STONE IN A SHOE

BY GREG STOLZE

THE OLD MAN looked at himself in his bathroom mirror and sighed, unhappy. In his many years—more years than he cared to contemplate—he had come to know himself well, as anyone might.

Though a proud man, he knew the importance of asking for needed help. Glancing down, surprised to see his hands shaking, he knew the time for help had come.

The police arrived as he left his apartment, but he expertly concealed his irritation as he answered their questions and made his statement.

“I heard some noise from their apartment, but I thought, ‘Well, perhaps they have their television playing loudly.’ Then it got quiet. What happened?”

The police assured him it was nothing serious. The old man nodded his head just the right amount, for the proper amount of time, then walked out into the warm night of Rio de Janeiro.

He had not needed to buy a live green snake for some time, but he was both resourceful and willing to pay top prices, which soon provided him with a small, robust serpent about eight centimeters long. Unwilling to return to his home, he stepped into a tiny, dark alley and crouched down in the shadows. His knees cracked with the effort, but he squatted with perfect balance. A Montblanc pen between his liver-spotted but perfectly manicured fingers covered a page in a small notebook with letters and words that no other human living had ever written, and that only four (or perhaps five) would be able to understand. All the time, the bag with the serpent moved restlessly at his feet.

When the ink was dry, he folded the paper into a complicated, convoluted form—an origami abstraction that seemed to have more points than could reasonably be yielded by a four-sided piece of paper. He dropped it into the bag with the snake, flicked open a gold Dunhill lighter and lit the bag on fire.



It burned instantly—far faster than a plain paper bag ought, and its contents were consumed in a dim green flame that yielded a thick, impenetrable fog.

The old man inhaled the fog, and then he knew how to find the wisest person within an area of, roughly, 260 square kilometers. He set out at a brisk walk.

As he walked, he wondered, as he always did, what effect the spell would have if cast *by* the wisest person in the area. Sometimes he suspected that he was, in fact, the wisest man in Rio (or Tokyo, or London, or whatever city he happened to be in), but he never felt that way when he needed the ritual.

He walked, and took a taxi, and walked some more until he arrived at a small and ramshackle church. No light showed under the front door, but he *knew*, and he entered nonetheless.

At the front of the church he saw candles flicker dimly as the door made a draft. A kneeling figure turned to look towards him.

“Who’s there?” It was a woman’s voice, her Portuguese accented with a touch he judged to be Panamanian.

“One who means you no harm,” he replied.

“The priest will come in the morning.” As she stood, he saw her nun’s habit.

“Please sister: Will you speak with me?” He walked closer, until the candlelight fell on his face. “In Spanish, if you prefer,” he added in that language.

“What is it you want?” she asked.

“Wisdom,” he replied. “Solace, perhaps. Please? I am deeply troubled.”

She nodded. Now, close, he could see that she was perhaps forty years old. Most would judge her older, but he had a keen eye and could discern the difference between the marks of age and the marks of hard work and hard life.

“I am Sister Isabel,” she said. “Your name is?”

“Gustavo,” he said, giving the name on this year’s driver’s license. She nodded and did not push for a last name.

“So, Gustavo, what troubles you?”

“I am the oldest man in the world.”

“Indeed?”

He sighed. “Look into my eyes.”

She did. She turned pale, and shrank back towards the corner of the pew, hands rising involuntarily.

“I am the oldest man in the world,” he repeated.

THE FIRST TIME the old man met Dr. Alvaro Ozorio, he had given little thought to his new neighbor. Since time began, the old man (whose name in Brazil was Gustavo, as it was Jerome in London and Hideo in Tokyo) had lived next to enough people to populate a small country. “Gustavo” judged Alvaro Ozorio to be a bit formal and defensive from his posture. By the creases of his face, Gustavo deemed him intent and passionate, but discreet about showing it.

They shook hands, explained their jobs (Dr. Ozorio, an oncologist at Rio’s most prestigious clinic; Gustavo, a purveyor and translator of obscure texts) and wished each other well in the superficial fashion of those whom class and accident have made proximate.

Within a few months, Gustavo had met Mrs. Xhana Ozorio and their daughter Ludimilia. They exchanged phone numbers in case of emergency. A month after that was the first time he heard Xhana being beaten.

Their apartment building was expensive and exclusive and the walls were very thick, but Gustavo had excellent hearing and a keen familiarity with the sounds of human unhappiness. The next day he found a way to watch, unobserved, as the Ozorio women left their residence. Xhana had no visible marks, but she moved stiffly and held her arms away from her body in a way that indicated (to him) painful bruises. Ludimilia had no look of physical injury, but her pale face told of a sleepless night.

He also watched as the doctor came home, shamefaced, with a dozen red roses.

That, the first time perhaps, had been three years ago. It had happened since, and more than once. At first, every eight or six months. In recent years, closer to every season. The cycle was not



perfectly predictable: It depended in part on how Ozorio's work at the clinic was going. When he had a particularly sad case—a young boy, a promising athlete, a pregnant woman—it would burden him for weeks. After that silent time, he would unburden himself upon his wife and, as she became a teenager, upon his daughter.

Gustavo found all this annoying. It troubled him. He concerned himself with larger matters, generally—individual people were not worth his time, unless they were somehow the focus of cosmic accidents or incipient mystic disasters. Neither was the case with the Ozorios. Their story was common as ants: the man beats; the woman cries; the man apologizes; the woman forgives. The couple lives in harmony until the man beats and the woman forgives again.

Nonetheless, it preyed upon his mind to a degree that concerned him.

A year before he met Sister Isabel, Gustavo had made an attempt to break the cycle. At the time, there seemed to be a lull in the general spate of mystic intrigues, and he had even had time to give thought to a sonnet he'd been working on, during calm times, since the 1920s.

"Don't beat your wife," he had told Dr. Ozorio in the elevator. The sentence contained, perhaps, the hundredth word that Gustavo had ever spoken to his neighbor.

"I beg your pardon?"

"You heard me."

There was a pause before Dr. Ozorio tried again.

"Sir, I take great offense . . ."

"Don't bother lying about it." Gustavo was facing the front of the elevator, as he had been when he said "Don't beat your wife."

"If you were a younger man, I'd be within my rights to thrash you!"

"Yes, yes, I'm sure. Don't beat your daughter either."

White-faced with rage, the doctor had gotten off at the next floor, presumably taking the stairs to the story they shared.

Two nights later, through the wall, Gustavo heard the doctor screaming terrible things at his daughter and his wife, but he refrained from strik-

ing them. Gustavo tried to tell himself it was a start, but he was not surprised at all when two weeks later, the doctor beat them both—this time leaving a bruise on his wife's face. It was the first time he had hit her some place visible.

Gustavo spoke to her.

"Don't forgive your husband," he told her, in the lobby of their building. He faced her as he spoke, a courtesy he had not extended to her husband.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Your husband: Do not forgive him for beating you."

She laughed a brittle, nervous laugh.

"Oh sir, I'm afraid you have made a terrible mistake." Her smile would have been perfectly charming on a face without bruises. "This? Oh, I'm so clumsy, I took a fall after the floor was polished."

Gustavo sighed.

"Come here," he said, pulling her into a secluded corner, between the stairs and the mailboxes.

"Look," he said. "I know. Your lies will not deceive me, so save your breath. Your husband beats you because he cannot strike at death, or illness, or some other untouchable sorrow. Hitting you gives him relief. Then he cries, begs forgiveness and professes his love for you. This gives *you* relief. So you forgive him, and he is trapped beating you, and you are trapped being beaten. I told him to stop hitting, and he has not stopped. Now I'm telling you to stop forgiving."

Her lower lip quivered. "The . . . the church teaches us to forgive," she whispered at last. He judged her unwilling to make the discussion personal, as yet. He clucked his tongue in annoyance.

"A saint might forgive a wolf, but still not let him in the sheep fold. Do you forgive him on your daughter's behalf as well?"

She began to cry.

"He is a good man . . . he loves me, loves both of us . . ."

"Yes, yes," Gustavo replied, rolling his eyes. "But many good men do terrible things."

"He works . . . very hard, at the hospital."

"I do not doubt it. If you were his patient, he

would not hit you. But you are not his patient.”

“He needs me. You have to understand . . . I’m, I’m a part of him. A part of his work. He needs to rely on me, no matter what, I have to be there for him, just as he has to be there for all those poor ones, all the ill . . .”

GUSTAVO RELATED THIS to Sister Isabel. Even months after the conversation, he recalled it word for word.

“Did you persuade her?”

“No,” Gustavo said with a sigh. “I did not. If I had tried harder, I could have . . . but not, I think, without taking something from her.”

Sister Isabel started to ask what he meant, then remembered the power of his gaze, and nodded.

“It would have been like forcing her,” she said. He nodded.

“And then what happened?”

“Tonight he beat her again.”

THE OLD MAN had been working on his sonnet when he heard the sounds. He sighed, and tried to ignore it once again, and then, when he could not, he rose from his desk and put on a pair of gloves. He left his apartment and went next door. The Ozorios had their door locked; he let himself in.

Ludimilia was in a corner, curled in a ball, hands protecting her head, wide eyes staring from between bruised forearms. She was sobbing.

The doctor was holding his wife by both shoulders shaking her. Her hair floated and spun in disarray. He was yelling at her, in a voice made hoarse from bellowing.

Gustavo had not been in their apartment before, but he saw they had a fireplace. He moved with quick confidence to it and picked up the poker. That action drew the doctor’s notice.

Alvaro Ozorio flung his wife aside. Her hip struck a heavy end-table, and a lamp crashed to the floor.

“Get out of here, old man!” The doctor’s eyes were wide, his nostrils flared, his lips drawn back from his teeth.

Gustavo stepped forward, holding the poker in

two hands like an axe. Alvaro reached in to take it away, and the old man raised it and swung it, blunt edged, at the corner of the doctor’s forehead. The point would have been a quicker kill, but would have also meant blood and Gustavo hoped to do this without having to make much of a mess.

The strike missed as the doctor danced back, hands up, eyes wide. Gustavo curved the poker around, down, and smashed the doctor’s knee. As the doctor crumpled, his daughter switched from sobbing to wailing.

The old man took a small step, picking his angle. Then he swung the blunt end of his weapon into the back of the doctor’s neck, breaking it. He let go of the poker.

A movement made him look up just in time to see Xhana Ozorio, blackened eyes wide and maddened, flying at him with a kitchen knife in her hand. He stepped, caught her arm and turned his body. Her inexpert attack was redirected. Her own momentum forced the weapon into her heart. With a frown, he folded her body forward, over the injury, so that less blood would spill.

The wailing had turned to screams. He looked over and saw the girl pick up the phone. There was a sigh on his lips, but also a curl of disgust as he bent down for the poker. He was too late to stop her from dialing the police.

“Help me! Help me! Help me!” she shrieked.

Then he killed her.

The sudden quiet was overpowering, broken only by a distant chattering from the phone. Gently, he put the receiver back in its cradle.

He looked around.

Neither Alvaro nor Ludimilia had bled. As for Xhana, the knife had been left in the wound, like a cork in a champagne bottle. Blood had spilled, yes, but looking down he could see none on his sleeves, his gloves, or his shoes. He figured he had five minutes until the police arrived, and that only if there was a car very close to the building.

He took one last look, but there was no evidence pointing to him. He’d done a good job. He locked the door on his way out.

AS HE FINISHED his narration, he looked at



Sister Isabel. Her wide eyes had tears falling.

"The daughter too?" she asked. He nodded.

"Why?"

He thought for a moment.

"The Ozorios had become unbearable to me," he said. "Not merely their presence, but knowing they existed. They were like a pebble in my shoe, or a poorly tuned string on a violin."

"People are not pebbles," Sister Isabel said. He shrugged, and did not appear convinced.

"You have lived . . . how long?"

"Long enough that the number of years has no meaning. Not 'forever,' in the strictest sense of the word; but close enough, for your purposes. Longer than this world. Longer than many worlds."

"How many times have you killed?"

"In the past hundred years, I have killed seventy-four people, but that does not really pertain."

"Why? Why so many?"

"The Ozorios were different . . ."

"Why must you kill so many people?" she demanded.

"In many cases, to save countless other lives. To insure the sanctity of the cosmic process. To protect myself, or to protect others from themselves."

"And the Ozorios?"

He was quiet.

"That, you see, is why I sought you out," he said at last. "I am quite aware that my behavior was unjust and unmerited."

"Unjust and unmerited'? Are you afraid to say the word 'evil'?"

The old man ran a bony hand over the loose flesh of his face.

"You are not only wise, but brave. Very well. What I did, was evil."

"And why?"

"Because . . ." He dropped his eyes. A face that had looked across the ages flushed red with shame.

"I did it because they annoyed me."

"Like a stone in your shoe."

"Yes."

They were silent.

"Do you know what happens when we die?" she asked. It was not a rhetorical question.

The old man shook his head. "I have never died. Probably I cannot. That mystery is one that is closed to me."

"Yet you took it upon yourself to send them into that place where you cannot go."

"I did."

"And with no better reason than 'They annoyed me.'"

He sighed.

"In my younger days," he said "I would have done differently. When the world was young as well. As a young man, I would have killed him, taken her to wife and raised the girl as my own. When a bit older, I might have made a project of them . . . spent a year, or years, trying to teach them the error of their ways."

"Why not do that now?"

"The last time I permitted myself the luxury of that much personal kindness, a thousand angry ghosts escaped into the lands of the Aztecs. The results were disastrous."

The nun nodded—following, not sure if she could believe him or not.

"Later yet in my life, I would have ruined him in public so that he could never practice medicine again and then, if his ways remained unended, found some other strategy to move them apart. But now, it all seems futile. Do you understand? I have been watching humanity since its infancy, and it now begins at last to feel utterly pointless. The Ozorios were, to me, the emblem and embodiment of all the banal wickedness and stupidity of the human condition. That, good sister, is why I killed them."

"Basically, the same reason that the doctor beat his wife in the first place—because he could not strike at his true frustration."

The old man slumped in the pew. For several seconds, he was silent.

"Sometimes I flatter myself that I am wise, but I have seen too much and too clearly for true wisdom," he said at last. "Those times that I realize my eyes have scaled over, when I can no longer see my own self clearly: those are the times

when I seek wisdom like yours, Sister.” He stood, and bowed to her. “Thank you for showing me that which I would not see about myself.”

He turned to go.

“Wait,” she said. Obedient, he stopped.

“Is that all?” she asked.

He turned around. In the dim candlelight, his face was unreadable.

“Is that all?” she repeated. “You come in here, confess this terrible crime, and leave?”

He did not speak. She began walking towards him.

“You know that what you did is wrong, though you do not seem remorseful. Now that you understand the source of your evil . . . are you simply going to leave? Because if you do, your happiness will be short-lived.”

She stopped, her face inches from his own.

“The deadness you struck at was your own, and it will creep back as surely as it crept back on your victim and motivated *his* evil deeds,” she told him quietly.

“So what am I to do?” he asked her.

“Stop beating your wife.”

The laughter of the oldest man in the world was sudden and loud.

“So be it,” he said, then turned to go.

Sister Isabel never saw him again, but she knew he had not forgotten her, for every now and again—perhaps once a year, or once every two years—a stranger would come to her church. Some of the strangers were rich, others poor. They came, women and men, from all over the world, with nothing in common but their pilgrimage to her and a deep, breaking fear in their eyes. Some brought extravagant gifts. Others, just a few *reals*, or yen, or pounds sterling. But they all said some variation of the same thing: “Gustavo sent me to tell you that he is still merciful.”

As for the old man, he returned to his apartment, feigned shock and dismay for the police officers, told them more effortless lies, and finally sat again at his desk. In the quiet, he wrote

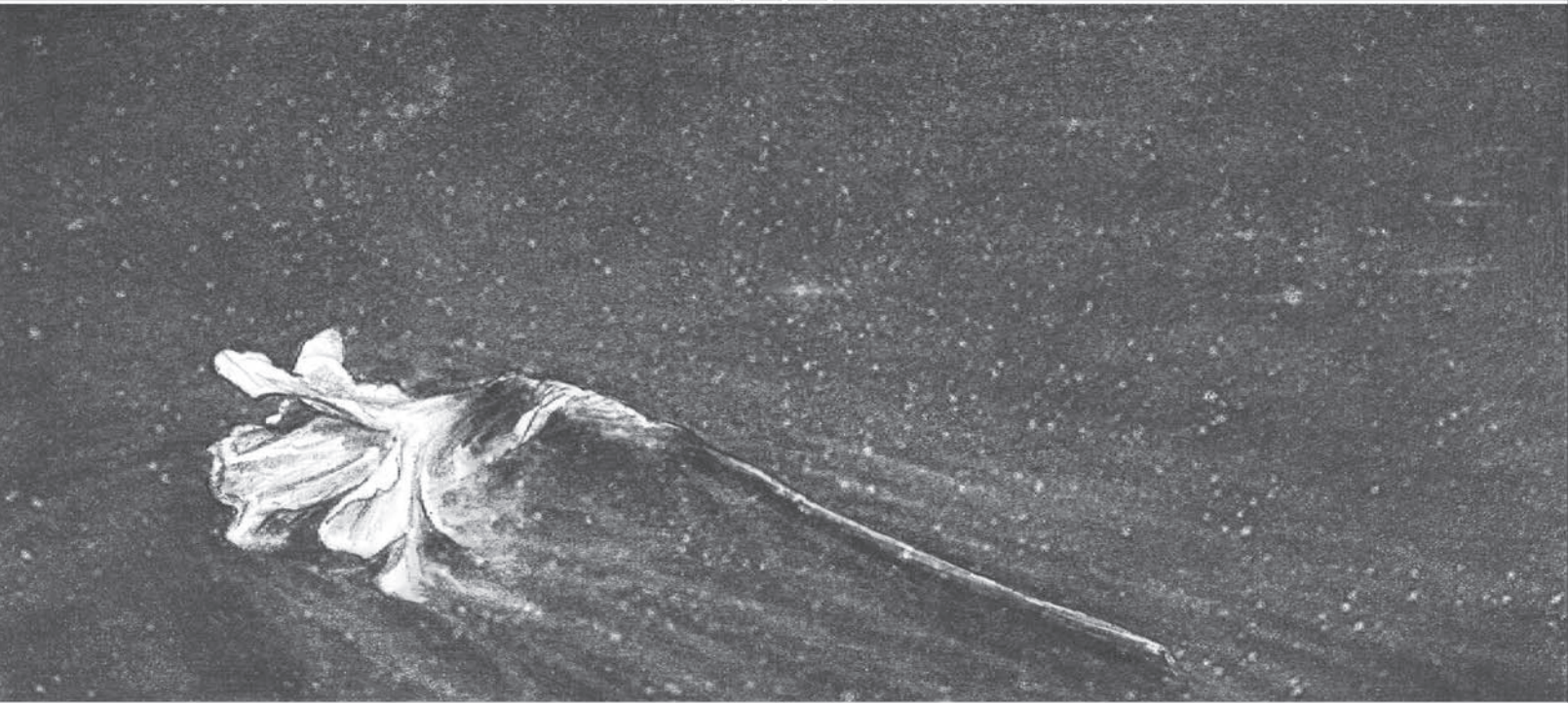
*The lettered clouds of suffering remain
But eye and hand turn past this page of rain.*

His sonnet completed, he went to bed.





8



CHAPTER ONE

THE INVISIBLE CLERGY

UNKNOWN
ARMIES



"NEVER IN OUR FULL LIFE COULD WE HOPE TO DO
SUCH WORK FOR TOLERANCE, FOR JUSTICE,
FOR MAN'S UNDERSTANDING OF MAN
AS NOW WE DO BY ACCIDENT."

—BARTOLOMEO VANZETTI

"FASTER. LOUDER. HARDER. HIGHER. NOW."

—THE NAKED GODDESS





It is an inevitable fact of the universe that

what has gone before determines what will happen next. Thanks to the principle of order, events accumulate like building blocks, piling up into a vast structure of cause-and-effect almost invisible to the human eye. Because you pushed the vase, it fell over. Because you were chewed out by your boss, you grumped at your spouse when you got home. Because you took a longer route to work Thursday, three women died in Stuttgart two hours ago. Because you teased your friend in primary school, he shook his baby to death twenty-three years later. These are chains of action barely comprehensible to human minds, but present nonetheless.

If order was the only guiding force of the universe, there would be no such thing as chance, chaos, or choice. We would live in a purely deterministic world, a thing of clockwork. However, another principle is at work: entropy. Entropy destroys the constructs of order, breaks the principles of cause-and-effect down, and allows what we refer to as “chance” and “randomness.” One of the major manifestations of this is that humans possess, at bottom, free will. The choices we make are, in the end, our own, and you can thank entropy for this. And so, the vase miraculously remains intact. You make an effort to be nice, instead of taking out your anger. The women escape their killer, because a door swings open at the right moment. Your friend vents his feelings on a crowd with an assault rifle rather than on his child.

The endless interaction of entropy and order, the everlasting routine of certainties built up and broken down again, the weaving patterns of probability: this strange domain is called the Statosphere. Human consciousness is a powerful force in its own right, and it can imprint itself upon the Statosphere, bending probability to its will. The most obvious examples of this are the Invisible Clergy: ordinary men and women elevated to divine status by coming to manifest a strong archetype within the collective unconscious of humanity. The Clergy are an integral part of the Statosphere, bending and tugging at the strands of possibility in order to impose their own desires upon the world—desires that the world itself has embraced.





Visions

How can any mortal really experience the Statosphere? How can a mind still trapped by flesh, time, and space know the wonders of whirling possibilities, the flow of chance and pattern through the world, the never-ending dance of the Invisible Clergy? How can mortal eyes see the burning glory and terror of the world, the galaxy, the universe, laid out before them? How can we describe it in mere words, however ridiculously purple?

Short answer: they can't, and we can't. Nobody who isn't a member of the Clergy can really perceive the Statosphere fully; it's simply not possible, just as the blind cannot see and the deaf cannot hear. But the human imagination is a more powerful thing than many in our deaf and blind age think, and the power of metaphor is greater than all the barriers between us and the divine. Humans, especially Avatars, can receive visions of the Statosphere, channeled through experiences they know. When mortals see the Statosphere in visions, they focus the overwhelming power of those visions through metaphorical forms familiar to them—forms of the great archetypes of place and power. Four of the most common visionary metaphors for the Statosphere are the chessboard, the palace, the ocean, and the sky. Of course, there are many, many more, and, just as in the mundane world, no two people will ever see the same sight. (Some hapless few don't manage to use a metaphor to filter the vision. Bad things happen to them. The lucky ones are incinerated in a flash of white flame, while the unlucky ones scream in asylum rooms, their eyes gouged out by their own thumbs.)

The Chessboard

The Statosphere is a life-size chess game of fiendish complexity, played in a huge hall. The board is a twisted, three-dimensional affair, full of ramps and crooks and spinnies, and pieces bear little resemblance to each other. One player is defending a baby, clutching a rattlesnake in a tiny fist. Another moves a swarm of carved wooden hamburgers across the board, as they insinuate themselves into other armies. Three seem to be combining their forces into an intricate pyramid, forming a new piece.

There are hundreds of players, who circle around and between the board. They wear long robes and masks of various materials. The masks represent archetypes: a long-haired, bestial face for the Savage, the glasses and inquisitive look of the Scholar, the bloody and screaming visage of War—or perhaps the Martyr? More than one player wears each mask, though some players seem to be only aspects of each other. Sometimes masks are exchanged, perhaps as part of the game. Rarely, they are removed, revealing all-too-human faces beneath. The players do not speak, but communicate via the movement of pieces.

The arbiters of the game sit in a great bronze cage, suspended far above the board. There are three of them and they also wear robes, concealing sharp claws that can occasionally be glimpsed. Their bodies beneath the robes seem alternately shapely and deformed. Their masks show beautiful but terrible female faces, magnificent in their just anger. When players violate the rules of the game, their iron wings unfold from underneath their robes and they swoop down upon the offenders, ripping them to pieces and leaving only bloodied but empty robes and masks behind.



The Palace

The Statosphere is a great palace, stretching to the horizon and beyond. There is nowhere outside this palace, no wilderness or farmland, though trees grow through some of the rooms, streams of water, blood, and wine run through the corridors, and there are many gardens both pleasant and not-so-pleasant. Every style ever seen on this Earth is represented there: Chinese pagodas tower beside Mayan ziggurats, a carved Indian gateway reveals a room walled in eighteenth-century English oak paneling. Sometimes you will find ruins that are made of no material in recorded history, but are of a breathtakingly alien style—remnants of civilizations that rose and fell before our own, perhaps even echoes of previous incarnations of the cosmos.

Although at first it seems to be nothing but a jumble, a wise eye can discern order in the palace. There are realms, each allotted to a member of the Clergy, and these realms reflect their owners. The realm of the Healer is largely Grecian in style: serpents play among its long

hospital corridors, and medicines line the shelves. Vines grow over rubble in the Savage's playground, War's hallways are carved with channels of blood, the Confessor hears everything said in his echoing corridors. Some realms have been abandoned, their rulers ousted by an ambitious rival. Oh, and the doors with the handles on the wrong side, that trick you into pulling when you should push—those lead to the House of Renunciation.

Although the palace is endless it has a center: the realm of the King where he sits enthroned, surrounded by his court. Wherever you are, you are never far from the center, and the laughter of the court can be heard echoing through the hallways. Look. There is the Fool, dressed in motley, at the King's side. A broken, weary man with the face of a soldier and a sword dulled through use talks to a small Middle Eastern woman who scribbles his words on a clay tablet. A beautiful woman in a black cloak moves through the gathering, one hand holding out honey, the other, behind her back, a dagger,



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while a slight, unassuming figure, standing just behind the King, eyes her warily.

This is where the Clergy pass their time. At the same time they are here, of course, they also hold court in their own realm, but they are always truly here. Around them, Avatars flicker and flame, entering and leaving the service of their masters even when they do not realize it. A conversation here can start a storm in Brazil, a *bon mot* can burn out the soul of an adept in Xian, an elegant dance save forty children from a fiery death. As always in the palace, no action is without consequence.

The Ocean

The Statosphere is a mighty ocean with no seabed, just an endless deep. The sky appears normal at first, a deep blue, until you realize that the sky is an ocean in itself, and that there is no sun: the light seems to be coming from beneath, not above. The ocean is filled with whirlpools, eddies, strange tides, and currents that can drag the unwary swimmer under. As you swim into a current or feel a wave splash over you, you will sometimes glance into the real world, seeing the magick that caused that movement—and vice versa.

Dolphins and whales dominate this vision, along with numerous multi-colored schools of fish. The frolic of the dolphins seems to have a deeply human element, weaving dances of intricate beauty that play against the deep songs of the whales. There are only a few sharks, and normally they pass peacefully between the actors. Occasionally, blood spurts inexplicably from a cetacean's back, and a shark falls upon it and tears it into bloody chunks. The deeper you go, the darker and more menacing the seascape becomes; the shadows of great beasts move over you, and terrible lights gleam in the darkness.

The Sky

The Statosphere is a vast dome, surrounding the dimly glimpsed earth. The dome is a dark crystal,

and no force in this universe can break it, although if you listen closely you can hear the sounds of conversation beyond, though in no language ever spoken on earth. The air is freezing cold, and there is no sign of the sun.

Set into the dome are blazing stars, revealing the real constellations in all their awful glory. The constellations move as real, giant beings, but at the same time the stars stay fixed. The constellations are not the petty creations of mortal fancy, but the true archetypes, engaged in endless and repetitive activity: the Trickster shifts his stellar form, the Hunter pursues his prey, the Merchant runs fiery gold through his fingers. Trying to approach these beings is futile; you would be consumed in an instant. All you can do is watch from afar, and marvel.

Granting Visions

Visions of the Statosphere are seemingly rare, though it may be that we glimpse it nightly as we sleep, forgetting what we have seen when we open our eyes. Some visions of the Statosphere, however, are not lost to mortal minds. In the right circumstances—or the wrong ones—such visions can variously help or hinder those who experience them.

No one can choose to have a vision of the Statosphere. Adepts and Avatars alike have sought them out through meditation and ritual, to no avail; the wildest peyote-induced imaginings of howling, sky-clad men and women fasting in the desert offer nothing more than disjointed glimpses of their own minds. True visions of the Statosphere come unbidden, blindsiding us when we least expect them. In retrospect, however, the circumstances always make a certain sort of sense—circumstances which, nonetheless, cannot be deliberately repeated.

In an *Unknown Armies* campaign, visions of the Statosphere are at the whim of the GM. There are game events which you might choose as trigger points, but they should not serve as a reliable, repeatable guide that set up player expectations. Choose your timing well, and keep in





mind that a vision should serve the agenda of one or more archetypes whose affairs the players are involved with in some fashion. All visions should have relevance to current events in the campaign, though that relevance may not be obvious. It is usually highly symbolic. If you are making use of themes and motifs (see UA, p. 119 & 139), visions are a good place to reinforce those elements. Ideally, you should jot down notes on a couple of visions that might occur in play, and have them ready to spring when the time is right. Some examples of trigger events follow:

- **Failed stress checks.** Instead of triggering the usual panic, paralysis, or frenzy, a failed stress check could induce a vision to which the player should roleplay her reaction. The vision itself may trigger another stress check when it ends.
- **Magick use.** A matched success or failure while casting a spell or using an artifact could trigger a vision for the character. In cases where the magick is working between the user and a target, especially if it involves a form of communication, both might receive the vision.
- **Avatars.** Avatars are a particularly likely target of visions, though they should still not be common. In these cases, the visions are going to be much more strongly tied to the agenda of the archetype the Avatar is channeling, and may even suggest desired courses of action. Visions might be helpful if they occur during a successful channel usage, or they could be a terrible mental punishment when the Avatar breaks taboo.
- **Clergy Meddling.** When the Invisible Clergy are particularly focused on an area, the chances of glimpsing the Statosphere increase substantially; even ordinary people might suddenly experience dramatic, if brief, sights of the clash of cosmic forces.

The visionary metaphor that you use to de-

scribe the Statosphere is heavily dependent upon both the character experiencing the vision and the circumstances in which it occurs. The Sky, for instance, is most suited to conveying the sheer awesome force of the Clergy, and is a common model for mortals accidentally seeing beyond. The Ocean is particularly suited to the ebbs and flows of magick, the Chessboard to the clashes between the Clergy, and the Palace for Avatars dreaming of their archetype. There are vast numbers of other possibilities, too: deep caves painted in ochre where the Mother rules supreme, psychedelic *2001*-style visions, or a stylized, intricate, moving mosaic.

Playing Visions

Obviously, the Statosphere is not a place you interact with in a normal fashion. Players should never be rolling dice to determine whether they can hide in the Palace's corridors, or wondering how they breathe in the Ocean. Instead, experiencing the Statosphere should have much the same qualities as a lucid dream. It should have a heightened, surreal quality, with the GM exerting a much higher degree of control over the PCs than normal. Actions declared by the player should be along the lines of "I try to move towards the center of the court," rather than "I walk to the end of the corridor, glance round the corner, and see if anyone's coming."

Any vision of the Statosphere should be overwhelming. Don't be afraid to use over-the-top language. Lay it on heavily, and make the player experiencing the vision acutely aware that, for these few moments, he is totally dependent on your will. The vision has to be simultaneously cosmic and personal, combining a sense of awe at the sheer scale of the affair with the PC's immediate surroundings. Weave the events surrounding the PC into the description of her vision. These glimpses of the divine must, necessarily, be short; the Statosphere is not a place you might linger in.



Ascension

There are two ways of joining the Clergy and incarnating in the Statosphere as an archetype: by accident or by design. Unsurprisingly, ascending by accident is by far the more common method. Opinions vary, but probably about ten percent of the Clergy deliberately attempted to get there. When you consider that perhaps one in a hundred thousand people, if that, are really aware of the Clergy, you can see why the percentage is fairly small—though it is larger than it should be by sheer numbers, given the innate advantage deliberate ascendees had in knowing what they were trying to do.

Ascending by accident has three main causes. Sometimes it is because a particular archetype has become so strong in the collective unconscious of humanity that the Statosphere demands a mortal soul to represent it, and the new Clergy member happens to best represent this at the time when the Statosphere, so to speak, reaches critical mass. Sometimes, too, a particular Clergy member no longer fulfills the needs of his or her archetype in the modern world and the cosmos picks out a replacement, booting the old one off to the House of Renunciation (as happened recently with the Hunter—see p. 56). How the ascending person is chosen is a mixture of his own personality and life history and his exposure to the masses. The starving child shown on a Red Cross poster is more likely to ascend as the Victim, for instance, or the Mother who appeared on *Oprah*. Occasionally the choice seems to be completely random, however, though this tends to be the case with more passive archetypes. Sometimes it is because a particular event has such significance that its enactor is swept

up into the heavens; these tend to be repeated between cosmic incarnations, such as the first human to kill another becoming War, and the first woman to give birth becoming the Mother.

Finally, sometimes people simply come to impose themselves so strongly upon the popular consciousness that they ascend naturally. This is rarer than you might think, as evidenced by the relative lack of mysterious vanishing among the famous. Perhaps their very popularity works against them; they are too solidly rooted in the mundane to become part of the divine. Sometimes they might even deliberately be enacting a particular role, even if completely unaware of the mystical implications—Elizabeth I as the Virgin (or Faerie) Queen, for example. Alex Abel was certainly playing the role of the Algerian Hero, even though he didn't know jack about the Clergy back then. A couple of early movie actors are also thought to have ascended through their screen roles, back when that form of notoriety was novel; the Cowboy may well be roaming the Statosphere as we speak. This age of instant notoriety is bound to produce more ascensions, especially given the way that today's fifteen-minute celebrities slip off the public radar so quickly, severing the ties to the public that keep career celebrities tethered to reality.

Ascending by design requires some serious dedication. To start with, you must find an archetype that you believe is strong within the collective unconscious but hasn't yet been filled—such as, say, the Girl Next Door. You then have to shape your life to fit that archetype—essentially behaving as an Avatar, without the side benefits of power—and hope you've guessed right.



So what you need to do is think of a role you want your character to embody. Discuss it with the GM before or after a game session. Figure out ways to mystically embody the concept, and have your character start acting those out. Taboos, symbolic actions, strictures—the whole nine yards. Finally, start spending experience points on a Soul-based skill in “Avatar: (your chosen Ascension role).” This skill has no effect on anything; you can’t roll it for any purpose. It just sits there sucking in your experience points until it hits 99%. (For the record, going from 0 to 99% in a skill is an investment of 544 experience points.)

When you’ve bought your potential Avatar skill up to 99%, you have to attempt to put yourself over the edge to 100%. This is a big deal: an entire session (or more) should be devoted to whatever symbolic action you take to cement your grip on the world’s idea of your role. An example of this sort of thing can be found in the scenario “Fly to Heaven” from *One Shots*. Briefly, an adept hijacks a 747 and symbolically makes it into a microcosm of both the human body and the United States. He then attempts to crash it into Chicago (the “heart” of the U.S.) while killing a bunch of white males (the “heart” of America) in the center (or “heart”) of the plane. All this rigmorale is meant to put him into the Invisible Clergy as the Terrorist.

Of course, that’s an evil man trying to ascend as an evil archetype, but you get the idea: think big. You only find out if your PC made it once the ritual is completed. If he didn’t, all those hard-spent points go swirling down the cosmic toilet.

(There’s another way to ascend by design. That’s by following an Avatar path until you become a Godwalker, at which point you can try to

throw down the current holder of your archetype. This is discussed later in this chapter.)

Some folks hold that the existing members of the Clergy choose who joins them. This doesn’t seem to be the case as such. What is true is that upcoming possible ascensions are generally very visible in the Statosphere, and that the Clergy battle fiercely to influence them. Some catch them completely blindsided, however—as in the case of the Naked Goddess.

And speaking of her, the Naked Goddess might have been kicked upstairs by any of these methods. It may be that her archetype was becoming particularly prominent in popular culture, and that a screwed-up porno actress simply happened to be the chosen exemplar of it. On the other hand, she might have been deliberately playing that role in her private life as well as on screen, for the side benefits it gave her. Add to that that she might—just might—have known what she was doing, and crafted her final film to give her the extra boost to ascend. Another mystery regarding her ascension is why her name vanished from reality, something that doesn’t seem to have happened in other cases. Who knows?

Becoming an archetype is a fairly overpowering experience to say the least, even just to watch. For a start, it’s accompanied by a dramatic flurry of supernatural events focused around the ascending person. Their whole body appears to be illuminated with a bright white fire, and after a moment they vanish.

Their immediate environment is sometimes dramatically transformed. The ascension of the Mystic Hermaphrodite, for example, caused nearby objects to fuse together and two people in the vicinity swapped gender. The events generally wash out over about a hundred yards, and vary wildly in intensity.



The Invisible Clergy

The general consensus of the Occult Underground is that when mortals join the Invisible Clergy, many of the more unessential elements of their original personalities are burnt away like chaff. Under this hypothesis, Clergy members don't have endearing personal quirks like a fondness for ice cream, or a favorite television program, or any of the other baggage that souls constrained by bodies accumulate. These things are simply too small for them to matter anymore. However, the bulk of their personalities, the big things like being kind or fearful or cruel or strangely detached, stays the same. For instance, if Simon from "Fly to Heaven" ascends to the Statosphere, he remains a petty, small-minded jerk at heart and the Terrorist, as embodied by him, will be much more given to random terror than ideological action; Avatars who attempt to channel the more positive side of the archetype—call it the Freedom Fighter—will have a difficult time of things.

Some take a more hardcore view. They hold that beneath everything else, the Clergy are *pure force*. The incarnating fire of the Statosphere strips away most, if not all, of those elements of their character that are inappropriate to their new status, leaving only the hard core of their archetype. They are personifications more than persons, ideas more than individuals. They can't be said to think in the same way that mortals do. Every fiber of their being, every strand of thought, is directed towards fulfilling the nature of their archetype. The Warrior is not a cunning if violent Neanderthal, as he was in life; he is the bloodlust that rises in all our hearts, the desire to slay, the

glory of combat, the hatred of the enemy, the wish to protect our loved ones, all the myriad elements that make up War.

Regardless of what the reality is, one thing is clear enough. When a deposed Clergy member emerges from the House of Renunciation, she once again has her old self intact—except, of course, for the inversion of agenda caused by her downfall. But what else does she retain? Ex-Clergy members are mortal humans again, without their powers of seeming omniscience and probability-warping. They remember their time in the Clergy and are fully aware of their status, but those memories are filtered through a visionary metaphor that strips away a lot of the unnatural knowledge they once possessed. As an archetype, she might have seen the minds of world leaders or known the life story of a claims adjustor in Quebec; as a renounced human, she simply recalls that she meddled in people's affairs but no longer clearly recalls what those affairs were. She has a knowledge of world events during her tenure roughly equivalent to what the average well-informed citizen would have for that period of time, but there are often strange gaps in her knowledge—and just as many jumbled, intimate details of people whose names she might not remember correctly. Stripped of her powers, the former archetype is a normal person once again, liable to be mistaken for a lunatic if ever she speaks about the lofty heights she once looked down from.

Clergy Powers

The prime power of the Clergy is the manipulation of probabilities, and much of their being is





A Strange Dichotomy

Given that the Invisible Clergy appear to be the masters of reality, it may seem odd that a single human's will is still so important to them, and may even stymie their agendas. The explanation for this is a simple one: above all else, the Clergy serve the will of the people.

After all, they are the ultimate elected officials. We give them their power, and we take it away. An archetype incarnates only because lots and lots of people want it to do so, even though they don't realize it; an archetype is deposed only because it has lost its relevance to us. It has slipped in the polls and a fresh young challenger is hot on its heels, backed by a grassroots campaign of the collective unconscious that any politician would kill for.

Of course, you don't incarnate an agenda and expect it to do nothing. We put an idea into motion because for good or ill we *like* that idea, and we want more of the same. You can't blame the Clergy for following our wishes. Nevertheless, our ideas are often in conflict with each other. Slaves to our aggregate will, the Clergy have to do battle the only way they can: by changing probabilities, not people.

Let's return to the governmental metaphor. An elected official may achieve her office because of an agenda, a popular platform that she pledges to follow. But once in office, she can't simply tell us to do what she says, even when she tells us what we want to hear. The politician has to work through a bureaucracy of rules and procedures that effect change.

In the same way, the Clergy have to work through rules and procedures of their own: the natural laws that govern the physical world. In other words, probabilities.

Their power comes from how we react to our physical world, the way our behavior changes when a politician enacts a new law that effects us. A fender-bender that delays a man from meeting his ex-wife for a custody negotiation can sour the situation and eventually place the couple's son in her care instead of his. A ring of keys falling from a dresser can distract someone from a decision that would have otherwise gone in a very different direction.

In short, the Clergy serve our will better than we might want them to. In serving our will, however, they have the power to change it in the process.

taken up in this. For the most part, they don't waste their power in creating dramatic, earth-shattering events; instead, they subtly manipulate things to fall one way rather than another. Through their perception of order's influence in the Statosphere, they can see the likely outcomes of their manipulation and they may work years or centuries in advance. A Clergy member could cause someone's head to explode or a tree to float in the air if they really wanted to—there is a *chance* that those things could happen, after all, no matter how miniscule—but they prefer to make a ball bounce to the left, or a clock run five minutes slow, or a President look at one picture rather than another: tiny events that blossom into huge consequences.

The one thing they cannot do is force mortals to do something directly against their will, because it is the will of mortals that make the Statosphere what it is. When mortals aren't really paying attention to their actions, just cruising along, they can be easily influenced one way or another, and that can have huge consequences. But if a woman is about to shoot the man she hates, and her whole mind is concentrated on what she's about to do, the Clergy can't make her stop.

Of course, they can make the gun jam.

Normally, the Clergy wage their battles subtly, and the battle to shape the world is an indirect one. However, sometimes two or more Clergy directly attempt to influence the same crux of possi-

bility, so vital is that one particular moment. This is extremely rare—it occurs perhaps three times a year, often far from civilization—but when it happens, reality starts to go a little askew, as described later. The victor in these conflicts depends on a myriad of factors too complicated for a human mind to fully comprehend, but chief among them are the current power of the relevant archetypes in the collective unconscious and the all-important influence of mortal will.

Signs and Portents

The Clergy influence events around us all the time, but this is hardly noticeable. It's just part of the natural way of things. Sometimes, however, a Clergy member particularly concentrates her influence upon an area. When this happens, things start to go a little strange. The normal balance of probabilities is thrown off. Wildly improbable events have been known to occur, from every player in a game of poker being dealt a Royal Flush, to cancer cells spontaneously rearranging

themselves into a healthy form. This skewing of probabilities can be neatly reflected within the game by increasing the numbers on which BOHICAs and OACOWAs occur: 01 to 05 and 96 to 00 is a typical range for situations of moderately heavy Clergy influence.

The patterns of order underlying most occurrences of chaos become suddenly more apparent. One traffic jam in a Clergy-influenced area was seen to arrange itself, when viewed from above, in the form of the opening of Beethoven's Sixth. The archetype begins to spontaneously manifest in popular culture. If the Martyr is around, for instance, the papers are running retrospectives on Tiananmen Square, documentaries about Martin Luther King are on the television, and there are a lot of kids wearing crucifixes as a fashion statement. When the Savage is in town, the local cinema holds a Tarzan retrospective, the library sends you the *Epic of Gilgamesh* along with whatever book you ordered from the archives, and everybody's wearing browns and greens this month.



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The really bad stuff, however, happens when two or more Clergy members clash directly over an event. Probability begins to go violently wrong; order has broken down and entropy is loose. Machinery explodes, dogs savage their masters, clothes fall apart, the fabric of society begins to collapse, and riots are dangerously likely to occur. The chance of BOHICAs and OACOWAs increases massively, and every skill roll is treated as a match. Both archetypes involved begin to manifest themselves directly in the area around the event, their faces appearing in the bark of trees or their names whispered by the wind. Supernatural events appropriate to the sides occur. In a conflict between War and the Healer, for instance, an entire rack of knives flew into the ceiling of a grand hotel, a man was run down by a street gang and eaten, curing the gang leader's injured eye, and no less than three cases of terminal illness spontaneously healed themselves in one ward while the sounds of battle echoed through the hospital corridors.

People keyed towards both archetypes involved begin to move towards the event. In the conflict just described, for instance, soldiers and doctors found themselves particularly drawn towards the scene—and even began to fight. Avatars begin to feel a strong urge to head towards the conflict, and it is often their battles that finally resolve the conflict. When the conflict ends, everybody tends to look a little embarrassed, not really certain what they're doing there.

Interacting with the Clergy

Fortunately for their old foes—and probably for their friends as well—the Clergy tend to lose track of their old mortal contacts when they ascend. They really don't matter anymore; the Clergy member now has more vital things to think about. However, it is possible to draw the attention of an archetype as an enemy. Really significantly damaging either their plans or the standing of the archetype in mortal consciousness might well do it—but you'd really have to piss them off something good *after* they ascended.

And if you do, you're dead without help. There's simply very little you can do when a being who can control possibility wants you gone. Whoops, that stone cornice happened to crumble above you. Looks like that guy's brakes failed. Oh my, unprepared *fugu* fish got mixed into your meal. What were the odds against that happening, I wonder?

Luckily, damaging one Clergy member generally helps another, and there's a good chance the other archetype will come down on your side. This is especially likely to be the case, of course, if you're already an Avatar of an appropriate archetype. In this case, you become the unfortunate magnet for a small-scale war between the two forces, probably for about a week before their attention is diverted elsewhere. What this means is that your life becomes a fun, fast, and quite possibly fatal rollercoaster ride. One moment you get the winning lottery ticket, the next your house is bombed by confused Mafia men. The best approach is almost always to ride it out, and hope that you come out on a favorable streak.

The Clergy don't really have buddies, either. It's not like you've got Ares on your side, and he's going to come down and help you kick some Greeks. Sometimes you might become particularly important to one Clergy member, however, and things will start to go your way, but they don't pick out mortals and ask them to do favors. Anything they want can be accomplished far more subtly than that.

On the very, very rare occasions where a Clergy member does speak to a mortal directly, he or she generally chooses to do so through the most potent local medium. In the U.S. this is normally television, but in many countries it's newspapers or, possibly, films. If there's no convenient form of mass media around, the archetype sculpts itself a form out of a handy local material—wood, mud, flesh—and addresses you that way, with little regard as to the consequences.

One thing Clergy members don't do is possess people's bodies, to speak through them or control them. They simply can't do it.



Avatars

Avatars are not adepts. Adepts have a strange way of viewing the world that they believe in so powerfully that they can work magick. Their worldviews are rarely shared by the public at large; examples of their behavior may be common, but those examples are usually the result of temporary crisis, not an ongoing obsession. A woman who finds herself making cuts in her skin during a turbulent romance doesn't cut herself under normal circumstances; for an Epideromancer, cutting himself *is* a normal circumstance.

Avatars, on the other hand, are behaving in way that makes sense to everyone. They might be unusual examples, but they're unusual examples of a commonly held idea. That's why they don't have to take their Avatar skill as an obsession: only those who act against a common worldview have to be obsessional to elevate their behavior into the realm of the unnatural. Where Avatars are concerned, they're buying into an obsession that humanity already has, and they're receiving the benefits of that unconscious obsession as if it were their own.

You can be an Avatar without being insane—and by normal standards, all adepts *are* insane. Following the path of an archetype is not much different from, say, being courteous because people respond well to courtesy, except you have to work at courtesy *all* the time, not just when you feel like it or you want to impress someone. It's a set of actions that produce expected results. This even means that an Avatar needn't be obsessively invested in the archetype he represents. Some people use courtesy even when they're jerks, because they know be-

ing courteous helps get them what they want; likewise, you can choose to follow the path of the Savage even if you'd really rather be surfing the net, because it helps you pursue your agenda. It's your external actions that matter, not your internal worldview. It's the way people perceive you that strengthens your connection to the archetype, not the way you perceive the world—the exact opposite of adepts.

Of course, there are insane, obsessed Avatars. But they are the exception, not the rule. Usually, they become Godwalkers.

Life as an Avatar

Properly conducting yourself as an Avatar is a tricky business. Most important, of course, is to behave externally in a fashion appropriate to your archetype. This doesn't mean simply not breaking taboo, but extends to almost all aspects of your life—the higher the Avatar level you're trying to climb to, the more you have to behave as your archetype. This means that a Merchant Avatar, for instance, should be trying to make bargains all the time if he wants to increase in power, and a Savage Avatar shouldn't be using cutlery.

For those Avatars aiming for eventual Godwalker status, everything in their lives has to be molded to the design of their archetype. Everything. They build their house on the right kind of soil, they marry suitable partners, they wear clothing in the right colors, and they drive the right kind of car—Masterless Men favor Jaguars, for instance. The more you *live* as your archetype, the greater the benefits it gets you. Of course, this sort of extreme behavior also tends



to cut you off from ordinary society—no one really wants to hang around with an Avatar of the Executioner, for instance—but the benefits are worth it. Aren't they?

There are also considerable benefits to be gained from following the agenda of the Clergy member who represents the archetype you're following. Finding out who they were in life and imitating them is generally worth brownie points, for instance, and many prospective Godwalkers try to shape their careers around those of their god. This is an unwise choice for an Avatar of the Masterless Man, though.

Avatar Behavior

Behaving in a particular way all the time, whether you truly believe in it or not, is hard to do. Many of us suffer from having to assume a particular persona for our jobs, or our friends, or even our lovers; it can be much worse when you have to play that part all the time. Even the most cynical Avatars find themselves affected by the archetypes they channel. Since archetypal roles are a natural part of our society, this isn't as hard on the Avatar as you might think—except for those channeling old, primal archetypes, whose behavior can be disturbingly out of synch with modern life.

Certain patterns of behavior—not “madness,” as such, but particular ways of thinking—are common among particular archetypes, and PCs may well find themselves behaving along such lines. When you act in a particular way all the time, you often find yourself looking at the world with different eyes. A Savage looks at a convenience store and thinks “food supply,” a Merchant looks at it and thinks “approximate value of \$125,695,” and a Flying Woman looks at it and sees the poor wage slave trapped within. GMs may want to emphasize this behavioral perspective in their descriptions of events, and encourage PC Avatars to respond more strongly to those elements of life which correspond with the needs and desires of their archetypes.

Chronicler Behavior

Those following the path of the Chronicler are rarely required to perform disturbing actions themselves, but witness more horrors than anybody should. Avatars of the Chronicler acquire a strong sense of helplessness, of being pathetically unable to cope with the horrors of the universe. Even worse, they cannot intervene in the events they witness—meaning that their sense of empathy, as a survival mechanism, often becomes deadened. A Chronicler may write a moving report of a child buried under mounds of rubble after an earthquake, but he won't lift a stone himself. It often seems as though Chroniclers see tragedies, not people.

Confessor Behavior

It's hard enough bearing your own sins, let alone taking on those of the people around you. The Confessor bears a great responsibility: he must not only hear but also attempt, at least in part, to absolve. Where does his responsibility end? When he is told of a murder by a repentant criminal, should he inform the victim's family? The police? The Confessor knows thousands of secrets, and they often begin to drive him mad—especially as Confessors normally have a high degree of empathy which drove them to become Confessors in the first place. It's hard for a Confessor to see anybody as good, pure, or innocent; he knows that beneath the façade of normality, devils lurk. Sometimes, the Confessor is darkly infected by the sins he hears recounted, and becomes driven to reenact them himself; more frequently, he desperately whispers his own secrets to a trusted friend—or sometimes a complete stranger.

Dark Stalker Behavior

Dark Stalkers are, with very few exceptions, clinical psychopaths. Sometimes a greatly damaged soul begins to walk the path of the Stalker, and, while at the lowest level, might still be saved by someone willing to put in considerable time and

effort on what is probably a lost cause. By the time a Stalker has pursued his career for a while, however, he is completely insane. He isn't a sociopath as such, because he still relishes the feelings of power that killing gives and the suffering of his victims, but he does sincerely believe that he is a god, or the chosen of a god, and that it is given to him to judge and kill mortals. Dedicated Stalkers are sick, twisted souls, and their chances of redemption are slim.

Demagogue Behavior

Demagogues normally begin walking their path with good intentions—at least, good to them. Helping the poor, fighting tyranny, spreading Islam, banning abortion, and kicking the Jews out of America are all typical motivations. As their influence grows, however, and they find it easier and easier to get people to do what they want, they often come to abandon their original goals and delight in power for power's sake. Some of them see the mobs they preach to as vast ravenous beasts which must be fed, no matter what the cost. Others come to see all authority as existing within themselves, and believe their word is law. After all, they never change their mind, do they? They begin to see things in black and white; you're either with them or against them. They are often surprised when their firm voice fails to stop a bullet.

Executioner Behavior

Avatars of the Executioner often begin as insecure people seeking a way to prove themselves to the world by faithful service to their government or their *capo*. Some don't even start with an authority figure, and have to seek out a master themselves; often this is merely the first strong-willed and magickally aware person who comes along. Murder is an Executioner's bread and butter, but she isn't quite as inured to it as the Dark Stalker. She justifies her killings by the fact that her controller knows best, and develops a simple-minded faith in authority. The more tender-hearted of

them are often unable to do any harm when not specifically ordered, as though to atone for their wrongdoing on assigned killings—but they are totally cold-hearted when on a mission. Some Executioners, of course, are just in it for the bloodshed and come to take almost anything as an order to kill, such as “Man, that guy really gets up my nose.”

Fool Behavior

Being a Fool is all about giving into madness. It isn't a destructive, obsessive madness, but instead a liberating flight into a world of the Fool's own. Fools have often come from very, very nasty backgrounds, and the joyous leap into chaos is what has released them from their dark pasts. Underneath the rejoicing, however, is often a bedrock of pain, and the mask of a Fool can occasionally slip and long-gone traumas reemerge. It's hardly easy for the families they leave behind, either; Fools usually have only temporary friends made along the road, not long-term ones. A Fool's friendship is taxing.

Flying Woman Behavior

Being the Flying Woman is the ultimate in personal liberation; the Avatar is set free from the chains of patriarchy, sexuality, and even gravity. Unfortunately, this sense of liberation often leads to the delusion that the Flying Woman is, quite literally, above other people. Flying Women have been known to use and discard other people, especially those they consider “bound,” without a thought. On the other hand, some Flying Women become convinced that it's their mission to release other people from the shackles of society; the methods they use to do this can be somewhat unconventional—like burning people's homes, or shooting oppressive husbands.

Healer Behavior

Healers have similar psychological problems to Confessors. An additional problem is the danger



of, literally, losing patients. The death of a patient—when it could have, perhaps, been prevented—is a terrible trauma. Healers are constantly straining to do more, to give a touch more time to that patient, not to have to follow the awful logic of triage. In the end, it can all become too much. Many Healers burn out. Blank-eyed and exhausted, some turn to chemical solutions to the overwhelming problems of the world. Others begin to take triage a touch too far, and begin to believe that the patient's consent is not a necessary factor in mercy killing—and even that there are some people who are nothing but cancers within the body corporate and should be removed. Saving a life, too, is a strange feeling; some Healers become convinced that it also provides an obligation—either that the person is now their slave, or that they have a permanent duty towards their patient.

Hunter Behavior

Hunting is a grim business, and it takes a hard toll on the mind. While the Hunter is in pursuit of his prey, everything else ceases to matter; the hunt is all. This exerts a grim price in terms of personal relationships, and many Hunters are lonely, isolated individuals. The mentality of the hunt informs all their acts, too; if looking for a friend they will track him like prey, and a far-gone Hunter in a convenience store is an unintentional comic masterpiece. Hunters never stop once they have their prey, no matter what evidence they're shown in their favor, and prey that breaks the rules of the game—begins to hunt the Hunter, or, perhaps worse, helps the Hunter in some way—confuses and disturbs them. The recent Ascension and Renunciation (see p. 56) has caused major problems for many Hunters who followed the archetype beforehand; tribal societies all over the world are suddenly coping with their best hunters developing strange bounty-hunting tendencies.

Judge Behavior

Being a Judge is a powerful responsibility, and not

everyone can carry that burden well. A Judge cannot hesitate over his decisions—but he can agonize over them afterwards, all-too-aware of the possible consequences of his choice. There is often a conflict for Judges between the Law (whether set by government, upbringing, or religion) and justice itself, which they cannot always resolve to their own satisfaction. Although never indecisive, they are often extremely careful about considering carefully even the smallest decisions in their lives, from the hiring of a new assistant to what tie they should wear this morning.

Martyr Behavior

Martyrs are perhaps the most obsessive of all the archetypes; they are willing to give literally anything and everything, their body and soul, to the cause. They are often extremely, somewhat dogmatically religious and tend towards being either extremely proud or extremely humble. They often self-injure, somehow feeling that their pain can redeem the ravaged world. Flagellation, in particular, is not unknown. They don't really care about their bodies, and push them to ridiculous limits. Nor, sometimes, do they really care about anything unrelated to the cause; some Martyrs would walk past a starving child if they were late for a cause-related meeting.

Merchant Behavior

Like the Plutomancer, the nature of modern society is such that the Merchant's state of mind is often applauded. Like some Marxist nightmare, Merchants come to value—and I mean, literally, value—everything in terms of what it can get them. Love, fear, talent: they're all commodities to Merchants. Even their own emotions can be traded for another's. They know that what really makes you you is less permanent than you might think, and their own sense of self—other than as Merchants—soon erodes. They find it harder and harder to enter into relationships based on mutual trust, acceptance, and love; they find the idea of selfless altruism almost incomprehensible.

Masterless Man Behavior

The Masterless Man is never dependent on others, and that's as much a burden as a blessing. Sometimes we all need to collapse, to place our head on somebody else's lap and bawl, to place ourselves in the power of another. Masterless Men find it hard to do that; the nature of the archetype requires them to be entirely, utterly self-reliant. Like some TV movie stereotype, they bottle up their feelings inside themselves until they suddenly break, collapsing in tears or bursting out in a fit of rage.

Messenger Behavior

Messengers tend to suffer from what might be described as the Bard's Tongue: the sudden and inescapable compulsion to tell the truth. At best, they are tactless; never ask a Messenger whether you've put on weight. At worst, they blurt out intimate secrets in public. Most Messengers derive vicarious thrills from seeing the reactions to the delivery of their messages, and some take especial pleasures in delivering bad news—even going so far as to create the bad news themselves. They often have jobs as process servers.

Mother Behavior

As many women will be only too happy to tell you, being a Mother is one of the toughest things in the world. The constant worry, the deep, primal urge to protect, the way it can take over everything else in your life—Avatars of the Mother are some of the most single-minded people on earth. The survival of their children is paramount, coming before any other considerations. Sometimes, too, when the cries of a baby become too much, or your teenage daughter slams herself in her room again, or the demands of your child just go on and on, the darker side of the archetype rises: the urge to take them back into yourself, to eat them all up. Only a few Avatars go the way of the Devouring Mother, but those few are quite disturbing enough.

Mystic Hermaphrodite Behavior

Mystic Hermaphrodites are often people with a great deal of gender confusion to begin with. The range of possibilities here is too vast to be easily covered, but among their number are pre-op and post-op transsexuals, genuine hermaphrodites, hetero and homo transvestites, both male and female. It's not uncommon for a Mystic Hermaphrodite to be, for instance, a male-to-female transsexual primarily attracted to women. Some are very well-adjusted, but others suffer from guilt, insecurity, and fear about their feelings and their orientation. Not a few are convinced they've been somehow damned by God, that they are an unnatural thing. Mystic Hermaphrodites often try to unite opposites in their personality, to be both cruel and kind, brave and cowardly, generous and miserly; the conflict caused by maintaining both aspects of themselves can be a tough one. Sometimes they develop a literal split personality, dividing themselves into male and female selves. They begin to see items as male or female, grammatical gender given an absurd reality, and more complex items, especially man-made ones such as plutonium, as a combination of both. Sometimes, they begin to see men as the women inside them and vice versa, and often start using pronouns interchangeably.

Necessary Servant Behavior

Necessary Servants tend to have one of two views of themselves. Some think of themselves as unworthy, as a tool, a cog, a mere part of a larger machine. Sometimes they become so caught up in the greater machinery of their organization that their own individuality disappears, and they become merely an extension of their work. The other type sees themselves as essential. They know that everything would fall apart without them, that they are the true power, and that seeming leaders are often empty figureheads. The more petty examples of this type can become amazingly, ridiculously obnoxious—the bureaucrat run amok. The ones in more serious positions tend towards the scheming vizier mode.



This can lead to a vast web of delusion, convincing themselves that they and their kind really rule the world and that the apparent masters, from the local manager to the highest of the Clergy, are nothing but empty toys controlled by their servants.

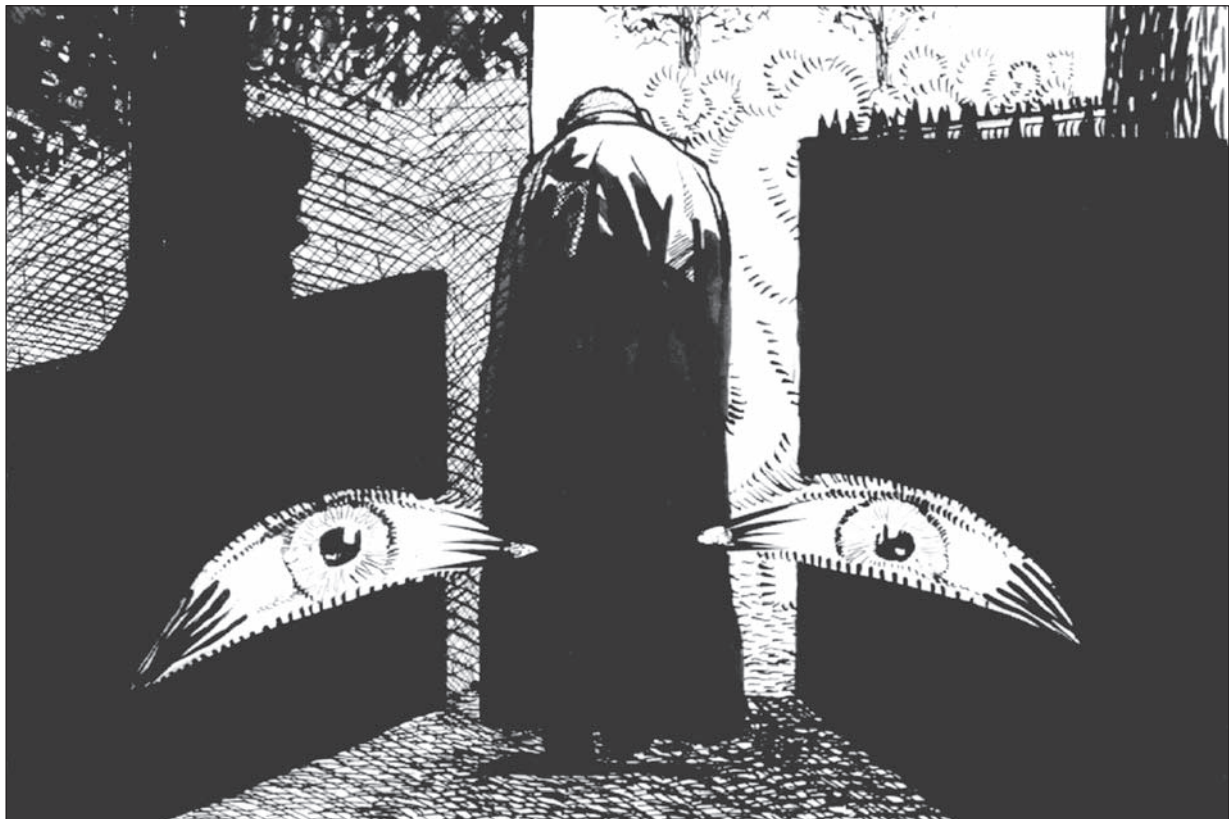
Outsider Behavior

Being an Outsider is to know, in every fiber of your being, that you are different, and that others are intimately aware of this. Outsiders experience a growing sense of paranoia, knowing that everybody is watching them, wanting them to make a mistake, wanting to let drop the veneer of civility and lynch them from the nearest tree. Even within their natural community they look upon others with fearful eyes, aware that those who are like them scorn them as a traitor and a sellout. An Outsider never really trusts anyone but himself; it's a lonely, lonely life. As always, there are two extremes to which they can go. Some try desperately to blend in, assuming the clothes and man-

nerisms of their community, pretending to themselves that they are not really different. Others accentuate their apartness, behave in an extreme fashion, and rely upon the need of the community to protect them.

Peacemaker Behavior

Peacemakers, ironically enough, often come from very, very violent backgrounds. Most of them have been the victims of violence themselves, whether as soldiers in a pointless war or victims in vicious playground bullying, and many used to use violence as a tool. Normally, they underwent some kind of dramatic conversion experience in which they renounced violence, but there is sometimes a simmering, dangerous undercurrent that might emerge if a Peacemaker is pushed too far. Peacemakers also tend to be extremely assertive, forceful people—you have to be, whether jumping between gang members or negotiating over the fate of nations—and their sense of their own importance and morality can



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be, to say the least, dramatically overrated. Peacemakers often seem to be under the delusion that whatever they propose is right, simply because it's not violence. A few Peacemakers also suffer from a more serious delusion: that action in itself is wrong, because it might lead to violence. They reluctantly act themselves, but they have a strange determination to prevent anybody else from doing anything.

Pilgrim Behavior

The Pilgrim walks a happier road than most Avatars: he travels, but without the loneliness of the Masterless Man. He is free, but not as madly free as the Fool. Most of the true Pilgrims are fairly well-adjusted souls; it's those that try to abuse their powers who get shafted. A Pilgrim should find his goal naturally, not try to adapt it to his seeming needs. Those Pilgrims who do this repeatedly find themselves remarkably fixated upon their goal, above and beyond the short term. If a Pilgrim chose "Gun down Daphne Lee," for instance, because he was a New Inquisition member and Alex Abel had told him to go after her, he might well end up fixated with taking down the entire Naked Goddess operation to the extent of discarding his own life.

Rebel Behavior

As everyone knows, it's not easy to be a Rebel. The weight of authority is against you, and this can lead to a remarkably paranoid attitude. Some Rebels are convinced that The Man is out to get them, a fear which stems from a greatly exaggerated sense of the threat they pose. Rebels often have problems dealing with authority figures such as teachers and judges, and are often unable to see beyond somebody's role to the person beneath. Their anger can sometimes spill over into ordinary life, making them remarkably bad-tempered folks. They are often overconfident, even cocky, their bravado concealing a deep-seated fear of failing and therefore breaking taboo.

Savage Behavior

Savages shed their humanity to gain wisdom, becoming closer to the beasts within all of us. Savages, like nature, are grimly amoral; they often care only for themselves and their kin, and they are prepared to commit acts which most of us would shirk from. Savages sometimes come to identify strongly with particular animals, taking on the aspects of their chosen beasts, walking on all fours and howling, their nails and fingers bent into twisted, inhuman shapes. Savage Avatars are responsible for many cases of clinical lycanthropy, the psychological condition whereby the victim imagines himself to be a beast. This is more degrading than empowering.

Scholar Behavior

It goes without saying that some Scholars are quite willing to kill—and worse—to acquire knowledge. Often, knowledge itself—and particularly secret, hidden knowledge—becomes important to them simply because it is knowledge, not because it serves any purpose. Many are under the illusion that knowledge directly equals power, and they feel that if they can acquire all the knowledge in the world, they will become as a god. If nothing else, Scholars typically derive great satisfaction in ruining the reputations of deserving colleagues while bolstering their own.

Trickster Behavior

Tricksters lie all the time, assuming a hundred different disguises and telling a thousand different stories. Sometimes they even fool themselves; it's not uncommon for a Trickster to forget who he really is, to get so caught up in his own prank that he deceives himself. Some old Tricksters have skipped from identity to identity, and have mostly forgotten who they were to begin with. Tricksters make friends easily, but are disastrous at forming long-term relationships; how can their partners possibly trust them? They very rarely had happy childhoods; their skill at charming and lying is normally a result of having had to learn to get out



of serious trouble—by which we don't mean being caught stealing apples, but rather abuse and abandonment.

True King Behavior

True Kings feel the weight of leadership every day. They cannot afford to be remote, aloof leaders; the connection to their Realms is much too strong to allow such distance. A successful True King is a well-known member of the community encompassed by the Realm. She might spend her free time picking up litter or helping neighbors repair broken windows; he might be a reliable fixture at the local bar where his followers can always find him. Leadership is a two-way street, and when True Kings aren't doing right by their Land or their Followers, trouble ensues. Some Kings become annoying meddlers, involving themselves in the minor disputes of spouses or businesspeople because they want to keep the peace; others develop xenophobia, and view everyone outside the Realm as the covert pawns of rival powers.

The Two-Faced Man Behavior

Constantly pretending to be something you are not is extremely disturbing, as all too many spies of one kind or another can well testify. They constantly lie, even to themselves—and sometimes they forget who they really are. Two-Faced Men can find themselves ironically subverted into truly believing in the role they were merely playing, leading them to lose their Avatar scores—but often resulting in them assuming another Avatar skill instead. It's even more common for a Two-Faced Man to stop believing in anything at all, to see the whole world as a deception, a lie, and morality as a petty mask covering the true sins of humanity.

Avatar Symbology

Archetypes are not fixed, unchanging things. Their role in society changes as time goes by; some grow stronger, some weaker, and the sym-

bolic attributes associated with them change. Knowing how to utilize the heraldry of a new age is vital for any Avatar, and being behind the times can be fatal. The old symbols still have power, writhing underneath the surface of modern life like snakes, but it's the new ones that really tip the balance in the power struggles of the Clergy and their Avatars. There are new words of power, new magickal incantations, and one of the most powerful of them is *Change Or Die*.

The following Avatar symbologies explore what each archetype means in the modern day, expanding on the basic symbols provided with each Avatar description in the rulebook and in the next chapter. The symbols herein may be used in rituals or other magick-workings by or against an Avatar; in particular, Tilts (see p. 40) are an excellent way to exploit these symbologies.

Chronicler Symbology

The main manifestation of the Chronicler nowadays is as the Journalist, and it is symbolically linked with all forms of media—except for film, whose power as a documentary medium has been rapidly stolen by TV. Newspapers are still the oldest and strongest source of power, but TV is rapidly acquiring a strong significance; a smart Chronicler nowadays will carry a handheld camera instead of a notebook, and form his mystic base in a tape archive, not a print one. As a result, the archetype is becoming increasingly associated with image, reflecting the carefully crafted personas of onscreen journalists. The internet is a new factor, and largely unpredictable; Chroniclers attempting to use it are having severe difficulties thanks to its currently transitory nature. Symbolically cutting tape or burning paper is a good technique if you wish to weaken a Chronicler, especially if it shows his or your image.

Confessor Symbology

The nature of confession is shifting. It used to be that you told your secrets to an individual, whether priest, doctor, or psychoanalyst, whose authori-

ty stemmed from the two great sources of religion and science. Nowadays confessions must be made to the people as a whole—whether Clinton’s apology to the nation or a cheating wife’s appearance on a confrontational talk show, guilt is now shouted to the world at large rather than to an individual. The postmodern Confessor must learn to be the channeler of these confessions, the overseer and questioner for the people, and to use the soft, often meaningless language of therapy instead of the old words of sin and penance.

Dark Stalker Symbology

It is a long, long time since the Stalker prowled the grove of Diana, or roamed the roads of India with a *Thuggee* cord. Now the serial killer fuels the archetype and, as inspired by film as by real life, the mask, power tools, cannibalism, sexual violation, and childhood abuse have become potent symbols of the Stalker. The Doors’ “Riders on the Storm” and Nick Cave’s “Red Right Hand” are their sacred hymns, and Hollywood fuels their fantasies.

Demagogue Symbology

The Demagogue is no longer as powerful as it used to be; in this age of a million different images and sounds, and with the increasing fragmentation of authority and citizenry, the words of one individual no longer have the same impact in the First World. Demagogues are instead turning to the less-developed nations, where speeches of hate—or love—can still have a powerful effect. The canny Demagogue wears the symbols and clothing of African nationalists or Hindu supremacists; many, though, still cling to the increasingly weakened national symbols of America and the U.K. The swastika and the hammer-and-sickle are strong tools to use against the Demagogue, as symbols of once-great movements driven by demagogues but (fortunately) washed away by history.

Executioner Symbology

As opposition to the death penalty spreads, the

Executioner is increasingly losing its associations with government and the military and becoming closely linked to organized crime. The handgun—preferably silenced—is a more powerful symbol today than the axe or the sword, and sunglasses, leather, and motorcycle, the uniform of South American hitmen, more potent than a mask. Forcing a victim into the classic street execution posture—on their knees, hands tied—is a good way to associate yourself with the archetype, and movies that focus around assassination—particularly *The Day of the Jackal*—can serve as a strong mystical defense, played continuously.

Fool Symbology

“Childish wisdom” is a strong symbol of the Fool nowadays, and more than one Avatar has walls plastered with *Family Circus* cartoons—and pictures of Homer Simpson. The archetype is also increasingly associated with physical, rather than verbal, foolery; Jackie Chan’s slapstick is stronger than “Who’s on first?” today. *Forrest Gump* strongly linked this archetype with the mentally handicapped, showing as it did the old idea of the fool who is truly—well, supposedly—wise, and savvy students of the occult have noticed an increasing tendency for care workers to get hurt when their charges do something stupid. In a curious linkup with commerce, the postmodern internet investment gurus known as the Motley Fools have built a reputation on perceptive truth-telling about the stock market—and most strikingly, they make a point of wearing jester’s caps in all of their public appearances. A Godwalker war is almost certainly in the offing.

Flying Woman Symbology

The Flying Woman is a relatively new archetype, and its symbols are still strong. Sexual liberation grew to be strongly associated with this archetype in the 1970s, as did female homosexuality, and many Avatars are lesbian or bisexual. For a while women’s magazines were surprisingly strongly linked to the Flying Women, but



they became overly associated with advertising and exploitation. The contraceptive pill is an astonishingly powerful symbol; condoms, bra-burning, and the mantra “You go, girl!” are also potent. Many of the symbols of the Flying Woman, however, end up becoming restrictive stereotypes in themselves, and can be exploited by the Avatar’s enemies.

Healer Symbolology

Medicinal drugs are strongly associated with the Healer today, especially those with a high public profile, such as Prozac and Viagra. Hospitals are, obviously, still a strong site for a Healer to work from, but the ambulance, more associated with salvation and less with death, is also powerful, as is the Red Cross. Leeches and maggots, newly in vogue but with an ancient history, are good symbols. Most critical of all is the title “Dr.” itself, an appellation which conveys considerable power and authority onto the Healer. Popular medical television series—such as *ER*—that glorify doctors are strong tools for the Healer, and provide a source of readily available symbolic items, such as bumper stickers, posters, and other gewgaws.

Hunter Symbolology

The trenchcoat is a strong symbol of the new Hunter, as are the tools of the urban pursuer, whether detective, bounty hunter, or skip tracer: miniature cassettes, concealable weapons, cameras. A slow, relentless pace marks the Hunter, as does mounds of papers—research being a greater part of the hunt than tracking spoors nowadays.

Judge Symbolology

The Judge is one of the more traditional archetypes, at least in terms of symbols. Anything that increases the sense of the elevation of the Judge from normal society is good—whether wig, dog-collar, or tribal headdress, they must stand out as somebody special, a decision-maker.

It is important, too, for the Judge to have servants, whether court secretaries or bailiffs, in order to increase his authority and enforce his decisions. The surging popularity of television judges, who have no legal authority but whose plaintiffs and defendants accept their rulings because of the authority of television itself, may represent an insurgent trend against the classical archetype; from that perspective, the triumph of telegenic O.J. Simpson over old-school judge Lance Ito may have marked the start of a new direction.

Martyr Symbolology

Modern Martyrs are as likely to die from stress as strangulation. Sweat, ulcers, and sores are all symbols of today’s Martyrs. All manner of torture and execution devices are also paradoxically associated with Martyrs, from the cross to the electric cattle prod. Since the death of Princess Diana and the shootings at schools, flowers have become strongly linked with Martyrs.

Martyrs are rarely well-groomed; they don’t have time for such things.

Merchant Symbolology

The mobile phone and business suit have been linked to the Merchant since the yuppie boom of the ’80s, but a really savvy Merchant today deals over the internet. eBay and similar online auction sites have become strongly associated with the Merchant, just as the auction houses of yesterday were. The newer the form of currency the Merchant uses, the better; stocks are stronger than gold, credit cards more powerful than checkbooks. Particularly strong investments, especially early on in a company’s history, are useful for the Merchant; an early share in Microsoft would be worth much more than its weight in gold, both financially and supernaturally.

Masterless Man Symbolology

The world is a tamer place these days, and the

need for the Masterless Man is diminishing. Film still provides a potent source of symbols for the Masterless Man, from the cowboy hat to the sweaty vest to the samurai sword, but his prominence even there is fading; witness the recent failure of *Waterworld* and *The Postman*, both of which featured classic Masterless Men as heroes. (Kevin Costner probably had something to do with it too, we admit.) Even the mercenary has dropped out of fashion, becoming more a business consultant than a warrior. A new role for the archetype has not yet really emerged—perhaps the tendency towards freelancing in business will mutate into something new and strange, such as the Free Agent—but fortunately part of the archetype is comprised of stubbornness and clinging to an old code of honor, so the old symbols are still at least somewhat potent.

Messenger Symbology

As discussed elsewhere in this chapter, Dermott

Arkane and the current archetype of the Messenger are fighting a fierce battle for control of this archetype. Its symbols therefore fall into two categories: the old, such as the sandal, the horse, and even the mail van, and the new, represented by popular slogans, television news, motorbikes, and email—the latter are Arkane’s weapons. Choosing symbols puts an Avatar in one camp or another, and he can find himself in deep trouble from either side.

Mother Symbology

Nothing really changes with the Mother; it is the oldest and deepest archetype of them all, and its core symbols are as strong now as they have ever been: pregnancy, the umbilical cord, warmth, and breast-feeding. In America, mothers have recently become associated with minivans and sport-utility vehicles, as these are seen as safe family transport, making them a good modern symbol to use. Feeding bottles are not, and indeed they weaken the Avatar’s connection, as they detach the child from



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the physicality of the Mother. The use of contraceptives, obviously, weakens the Mother—but surrogate motherhood, especially if the Mother already has her own children, is very powerful, as are fertility drugs.

Mystic Hermaphrodite Symbology

The relatively recent invention of sex-change surgery and drugs have been a boon for the Mystic Hermaphrodite. In the old days, the best that Hermaphrodites could really do was to change their clothing and perhaps get castrated. Now modern science has opened up a whole new box of symbols. Pre-op transexuality, testosterone and estrogen drugs, breast implants and constructed penises—all these are linked to the Hermaphrodite. Worryingly, however, the increasing breakdown of traditional gender roles makes the Hermaphrodite's role in some ways harder to play, especially the increasing acceptance of bisexuality. Flamboyant transvestism is still a powerful symbol, however—and the Avatar is, paradoxically, better linked to the archetype the more obvious the discrepancy between birth and assumed sex. Artificially created elements, such as plutonium, are good symbols of the Hermaphrodite, reflecting a modern version of the Philosopher's Stone.

Necessary Servant Symbology

Any common office tool is a link to the Necessary Servant: pens, paperclips, staplers, files. A personal computer, too, is almost vital, ideally a handheld PDA/cell phone. One of the most potent incarnations of the Necessary Servant is the self-employed secretary who serves multiple businesses, acting as a representative for several different individuals and giving an impression of wealth that isn't truly there, thus making the Servant truly essential.

Outsider Symbology

The increasing acceptance of diversity in the modern world, while a wonderful thing, is caus-

ing difficulty for Outsiders. In particular, the old divisions of race are no longer as powerful as they once were, and while reminders of a racist past—stereotypical figurines, photographs of lynchings—can be strong symbols, their utility is fading. However, this situation also provides Outsiders with opportunities; the need for quotas is a powerful force. Being the only black actor in a white sitcom, or the sole woman on a board, is very potent, as are any symbols of “passing”—a woman's business suit, or the skin-whiteners sold in South America. In India, the quotas of Untouchables in government posts have proved a strong source of Outsiders, and many of the old caste symbols are now associated with the archetype.

Peacemaker Symbology

The U.N. symbol is strongly associated with the Peacemaker, as are the baby-blue helmets of its soldiers—but thanks to the U.N.'s many recent failings, they can also be used as weapons against the Peacemaker, as can items from the old League of Nations. The black bag of diplomats is a strong symbol, as is anything associated with Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, or Gorbachev.

Pilgrim Symbology

The closest modern equivalent to the Pilgrim is really the Tourist, seeking out sacred sites as they do, and symbols from one role are blurring into another. The Hawaiian shirt, the big sunglasses, the camera—all these are increasingly linked to the Pilgrim. Vehicles themselves are not good symbols, but tickets to travel on them most certainly are, as are souvenirs from a wide variety of locations.

Rebel Symbology

The old image of the Rebel, at least in America, has been taken in and absorbed by Hollywood, depriving it of all true power. Sunglasses, bikes, leather jackets, a cool soundtrack—these no long-

er apply. The true symbols of the Rebel are threefold: the gun, the gas mask, and the word. Speeches are essential to the Rebel's power, and even if the media sucks some of the life out of them, getting them heard is highly important. The gun, especially the raised rifle, remains one of the most potent symbols of revolution, no matter where you are in the world. The increased police usage of pepper spray and tear gas against protesters in America has made the gas mask an especially eerie symbol; during the WTO protests in Seattle, spent canisters of gas munitions were sold as souvenirs, and local military-surplus stores sold out of gas masks within hours—allegedly to a single canny young man on a bicycle who sold them to protestors at a mark-up; you figure it out.

Savage Symbolology

Less than three percent of the world is wilderness. Almost all the people of Earth have been tamed, recognized as human, culturally subjugated to one extent or another. The Tasaday were fakes, the Yanonamo drink Coca-Cola, more people speak Klingon than Navajo. The myths of Bigfoot and the Yeti still have some power, and items linked to them—blurry photos, “yeti scalps,” large footprints—have a little strength, but not much. The true form of the Savage today is moving to the cities; the feared loner, the scary, long-haired homeless man. Concrete is slowly becoming more powerful than forest. Jungle music, although largely pretentious, is assuming a potent symbolic role in linking the old and the new Savage. Spontaneous urban dukes such as the Nomad Raphael (see *Postmodern Magick*, p. 188) also point to a new mindset on the rise.

Scholar Symbolology

Even academics move with the times, if a little behind everyone else. The rhetoric of postmodern-

ism and deconstructionism has become increasingly linked with this archetype, causing something of a problem as these ideologies claim to challenge the concepts of knowledge itself. The most common form of the Scholar, though, and the most widely seen, is still the Scientist, smug with authority. Lab coats, powerful computers, goggles, and a slightly superior attitude are therefore powerfully linked with the Scholar.

Trickster Symbolology

Conmen and comedians make up the most visible Tricksters nowadays. A good line of patter, a natty suit, faked documents, and nice hair are their symbols. Computer prankery, too, is quite strongly linked to the archetype; modems, hackers' websites, and numerous phone lines are useful symbols.

True King Symbolology

The True King's symbols reflect his land, just as he does. A King who rules over a small town in Russia wears a large fur hat, a rusted hammer and sickle, and strong boots. One who dominates part of the Outback dons kangaroo skins, aboriginal decorations, and carries sheep shears. There is as much variety of symbols as of land.

Two-Faced Man Symbolology

During the Cold War, the Two-Faced Man became more strongly associated with espionage than ever. Microscopic bugs, tiny cameras, locked suitcases, and hidden weapons became signs of the archetype, and the Double Agent was the great role that most Two-Faced Men played. These symbols are starting to decline somewhat with the drop in espionage of late, but the internet is proving a great source of Two-Faced Men: a fake identity and assumed username are powerful tools of deception.





Godwalkers

The ultimate prize for the seriously committed Avatar, short of ousting a sitting Clergy member (which we'll get to in a minute), is becoming a Godwalker: the mortal incarnation of an archetype. It's a fairly heady experience, and it comes with a healthy dose of power, but it's also pretty difficult to achieve. You see, there's only ever one Godwalker per archetype at any time, and they tend to defend their position with a certain vigor.

To even think about taking a Godwalker's place, you've got to have pushed yourself to the absolute maximum already; in other words, you have to have an Avatar skill of 98%. Once that's done, you either have to kill the existing Godwalker or ensure that they break taboo. This isn't an easy process. For one thing, Godwalkers are almost certain to be more powerful than you, and also ultra-paranoid about keeping taboo. Many Godwalkers, especially ones for hotly contested archetypes such as the Executioner and Merchant, surround themselves with mystical and mundane defenses; you might be going up against guard dogs, voodoo strings that cripple your feet as you step over them, a homegrown cult, or a ritually consecrated castle that blinds rival Avatars. You're going to need smarts to take one down, and probably allies.

The dangers of the battle apart, simply knocking them down doesn't necessarily put you there. If you shoot the Outsider in the back, or trick the Scholar into burning a book, you don't automatically become the Godwalker in their place. No, you have to ritually assume their position first: accomplish some significant symbolic act that marks you as a suitable candidate to represent the archetype on earth. Assumption is referred to by a

number of terms among those in the know: "putting on the Purple," "being crowned," and "taking the pot," for instance.

There are two types of assumption: closed and open. A closed assumption is where you successfully oust the existing Godwalker in such a way that the act itself causes you to assume his position. The most common form of this is a sacred killing, done under conditions blessed by the archetype. For instance, the Executioner has to be killed while helpless, preferably with an axe (though a gangland-style execution might work), the Masterless Man must be faced in a fair fight, the Dark Stalker must be strangled from behind with a consecrated *Thuggee* cord, and the Savage has to be beaten to death with your bare hands, then eaten raw.

It's a direct and simple method, but sadly unsuited to many archetypes. Stabbing the Chronicler in the neck with a pen just doesn't have the right ironic symbology, unfortunately, and doing it to become the Peacemaker is right out. There are other methods of mystically charging a confrontation, however. The most well-known example is getting the better of the Godwalker Merchant in a deal, which immediately causes you to assume his position, provided you're already at 98%. Fooling the Trickster is another way to make yourself an instant Godwalker.

Much of the time, however, the direct confrontation simply doesn't happen or isn't suitable. When a Godwalker breaks taboo or dies in a non-ritual fashion (and some of them do die simply by accident), an open assumption takes place. All the existing Avatars of the archetype who are currently at 98% become contenders (often referred to as "heirs") to become the new Godwalker. They

get a tickly feeling of urgency and a vague understanding that something big is going down, but they don't instantly know what's up; still, if they're at 98%, they should already be keeping tabs on who the Godwalker is and whether she's still drawing breath.

One way to win the open contest and become the Godwalker is simply to eliminate all your competitors. Like knocking out the Godwalker in the first place, this can be done by good old-fashioned murder, or by causing them to break taboo. There's normally anything from two to ten possible heirs, and the competition gets very, very hot. (In some cases, there is only one heir, who automatically fills the Godwalker slot.) You're also all symbolically linked to each other during this period, and it becomes much easier for you to divine the others via magick—though you still wouldn't recognize them if you just saw them on the street unless you'd already been introduced. To complicate things, the ex-Godwalker may well still be around to interfere in the competition. If he's still alive, he's probably lost several Avatar points for violating taboo or being ritually hosed; but he won't take long to catch up to the 98% level, and then look out.

The other way to win an open contest is by performing a ritual act that boosts you ahead of the other contestants. To assume the Chronicler, for instance, you have to witness and record an act of immense historical or magickal importance—the first stone being pulled off the Berlin Wall, for instance. To become the Executioner, you'd have to assassinate a President. To become the Fool, you'd have to be blithely carefree and cheerful in the face of immense danger.

As always, the more symbolic power you can work into this act, the more likely it is to let you assume the Purple. For instance, the Chronicler would want to write his record with the quill that Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet* with, and to publish it with an imprint with a powerful name—Element, say, or Rider, rather than the boringly mundane HarperCollins. The Fool would want to be surrounded by butterflies as she laughs at an Un-speakable Servant—and obviously, to do it on

April 1st. The Executioner's killing might be made with the Magic Bullet, and done on the anniversary of Lincoln's death, preferably in a movie theater playing the film *The Executioner's Song*.

Essentially, this is a great excuse for the players and GM to go hog-wild with occult fun. Pull out your books of astrology, geomancy, history, and dream symbolism, check Powers and Hite, and remember that *sounding* mystically significant is far more important than having any basis in fact.

Look to history, too, for examples of successful assumptions. Rasputin's staunching of the tsarevich Aleksei's bleeding, for instance, clearly allowed him to assume the Healer—which also gave him his remarkable resilience. The killing of St. Thomas à Becket before the altar was a failed attempt by one of the knights to assume the Executioner. The competing speeches of Brutus and Antony were part of a fierce competition to become the Demagogue, newly vacant after Caesar's death. Working this kind of thing into your campaign gives it a deep, dark background, and sparks ideas for the possibilities of assumptions in your game.

Life as a Godwalker

When an Avatar becomes a Godwalker, she briefly becomes one with the archetype and receives a vision of the Statosphere. It's been compared to the feeling of being a new father, or being burnt alive, or an orgasm times a hundred. The cosmos opens up before her like a map, and she knows that she is suddenly a significant player in it. It's in this moment, normally, that Godwalkers shape their new channel.

New channel? Yep. It's commonly believed that Godwalkers have unique abilities denied even to other closely aligned Avatars. This is true. A common misperception, however, is that every Godwalker of the Messenger has had the same special perk. In actuality, when you reach the top of the Avatar ladder, you get to *design* your own channel. By getting that close to the archetype, you have license to interpret it (within reason) and subtly distort the flow of reality in a fashion that, while limited, is somewhat like the distor-



An Avatar's Home is His Castle

The symbolic defenses described nearby, apart from being vital in the battle between a Godwalker and a sitting Clergy member, can also serve to defend the Godwalker against hostile magic in general. While a Godwalker is within her sanctum or territory, all magick and Avatar channels used against the Godwalker or any part of her sanctum suffer a negative shift of between 5% and 30%, depending on the time and effort that the Godwalker has spent to establish this sanctum. A smaller negative shift might even be inflicted on anyone trying to harm the Godwalker directly with mundane weapons.

tions of the Invisible Clergy themselves. For instance, here are some of the channels chosen by current Godwalkers:

- **Thorvald Drake**, Godwalker of the Merchant, has given himself the ability to deal in events that took place in the past. If the price is right, he can re-write history so that you not only don't have cancer—you never got it in the first place.
- No Israeli can kill **Ibrahim al Masrah**, Godwalker of the Executioner.
- **Lucy Watkins**, Godwalker of the Flying Woman, can free any willing female from an unwanted emotional entanglement. Tired of pining after your ex-boyfriend? Lucy can fix it.
- Everyone feels compelled to dance and drink when they hear **Dmitri Carnovski**, Godwalker of the Fool, play a musical instrument.
- **Toshishiro Yamamura**, Godwalker of the Masterless Man, has blessed himself for battle against other ronin. No other Masterless Man can channel the archetype when fighting against him.
- **Donald Ramses**, Godwalker of the Savage, prowls the Australian outback. No machine can operate within a mile of his presence. (Yes, that includes guns.)
- **The Freak**, Godwalker of the Mystic Hermaphrodite, has not yet chosen a climactic channel.

Once new Godwalkers come down from their vision, the whole world seems to be a different place. They have a mystical conduit into the Statosphere, and the veils that conceal the

unnatural from us are lessened for them. It's as though a whole new sense opens up to them; suddenly they can taste magick being used nearby, smell the spoor of the tenebrae, hear reality rip itself asunder. They are much more keyed to the manipulations of the Clergy than most, and have an inkling of the subtle patterns of probability alteration.

To people with Aura Sight, Godwalkers take on some of the aspects of their archetypes. The Working Man's fists look like great iron hammers, the Dark Stalker is a barely visible flitting shadow, and the Savage's hands have visible claws.

Interacting with Godwalkers

Godwalkers make much better friends and foes for PCs than the Clergy do. They're powerful, but not overwhelming, and they're reassuringly human at base. Godwalkers make friends and allies for all the normal reasons people do, but they also need more protection than most people, and they can often find it useful to have people around to break taboo for them. PCs acting as bodyguards to a Godwalker can make for an entertaining campaign. Godwalkers can also act as the wise mentor type—or the ambiguous, distant contact whom the PCs can never fully trust. The Merchant makes a particularly good choice for the second type; he might be dealing with you now, but tomorrow he could sell your location to your worst foe. The Savage, too, has a double-edged nature that means the PCs might seek him out for aid, only to find he demands more of them than they can cope with.

On the other hand, Godwalkers also often have Grand Plans: Dominating society, ousting Clergy, that kind of thing. The kind of plans that PCs frequently frustrate. Godwalkers make perfect enemies. They're frightening, more powerful than the PCs, and have neat supernatural schticks—but they've also got crucial weaknesses that your PCs can exploit. If nothing else, they're still mortal humans.

A PC going for Godwalker status also makes for a fantastic series of adventures. What happens if they meet the existing Godwalker and find they rather like him? After all, it may well be that they share a similar ideology.

The main thing to remember about using Godwalkers is to make them both rare and awe-inspiring. A limit of two or three Godwalkers in any one campaign is probably best, and the PCs should be trembling when they deal with them. A useful trick is to give them a particular motif that alerts the PCs to their presence or passing. For instance, the Two-Faced Man Godwalker might be particularly associated with the scent of roses. When the PCs first meet him, posing as a friend, the smell is pleasant—but when his plans come to fruition and a PC finds herself over the dead body of her lover, the scent of rotting roses hangs heavy in the air. On the other hand, it can be far creepier to never know when they're around, because they just look like ordinary people.

A PC attempting to get to Godwalker status makes for a great campaign, but what do you do with them afterwards? They've made themselves the center of attention, after all, and it's difficult to run a game when you have to take into account the people coming after the PCs. It might be best to semi-retire Godwalker PCs, bringing them into the game occasionally when it would be entertaining to focus on them.

Or, of course, they can go after the big prize.

Godwalker Ascension

Sometimes, being a Godwalker just isn't enough. You want the ultimate prize, the big one: you want to join the Clergy. But somebody else got

there first. Somebody's sitting in the throne you want. What's a Godwalker to do? Why, declare war, of course—as good old Dermott Arkane did. Let's use him as an example.

It's very hard to oust a Clergy member unless your approach to the archetype is different from theirs—and preferably more in keeping with the modern world. For example, the current Godwalker of the Savage is unlikely to ever attempt to seize the archetype, because his take on it is pretty much the same as it has always been: run around the wilderness and howl a lot. A Savage Godwalker who roamed the streets of Mexico City, surviving in the urban jungle, would have a much better chance. The act of ousting a sitting Clergy member, therefore, begins when the Godwalker throws down the gauntlet, so to speak, with a symbolic act that goes against the existing notion of the archetype and establishes the role that the Godwalker wants to inhabit instead. For Arkane, this was speaking to Alex Abel, causing him to fail to Ascend a couple of days later and thus empowering his role as the Heisenberg Messenger: a deliverer of uncertainty rather than fact (see p. 62).

Once this initial act has been performed, the battle begins. It's not a sudden conflict, but a long, drawn-out war—like a chess match, in many ways. The Clergy member you're attempting to oust can't stomp you outright, because by the time you've gotten to Godwalker status you're so closely linked to it that harming you directly would be like cutting out his own heart. Instead, he has to manipulate mortal agents into attacking the presumptuous Godwalker—preferably preparing a candidate of his own for the job. Enter the PCs, anyone?

Archetype-Godwalker battles vary in length and intensity, but the first stage in the war is to prepare your defenses. (These techniques also apply quite well to Godwalkers merely trying to shield themselves from ambitious Avatars, by the way.) One method of doing this is to construct a mystical sanctum. You have two choices for this: it should either be in a site of strength for you, or a site inimical to your archetype. If you choose a site of strength, your fortress should be built to cater to your particular take on the archetype. For instance,



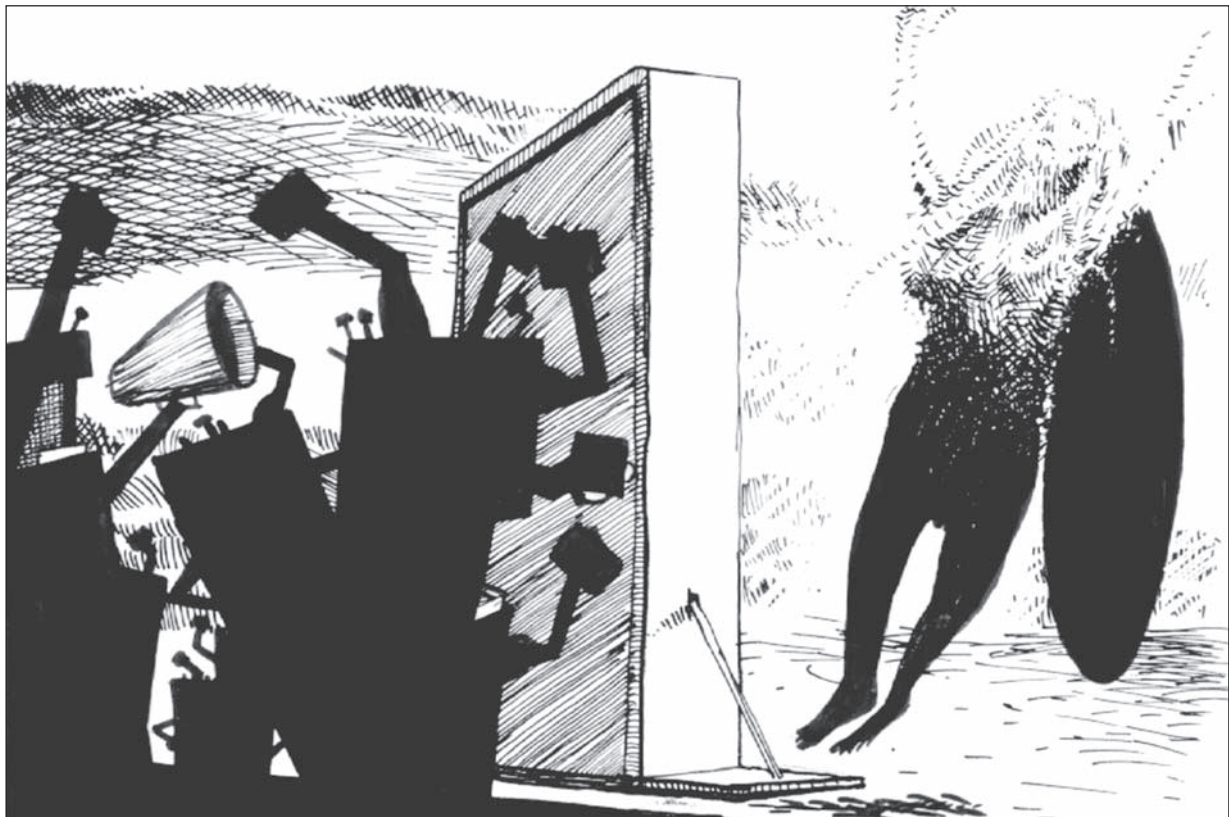
a Godwalker of War trying to key the archetype towards the frenzied ethnic killings of the 20th century might build a castle on an Armenian settlement destroyed by the Turks, while a Trickster trying to bend the archetype towards hacking might construct a maze that is one huge computer.

While castling in this fashion strengthens you personally, your main concern may be the danger posed by your archetype. In this case, your home should be designed to be deliberately inimical to it. This is best designed as an outer layer, keeping your inner sanctum as a place of strength—the hacker Trickster, for instance, could make the entrance to his maze a single large door with a big sign that says “I’m In Here,” baffling the archetype who is naturally expecting a trick. It’s possible to make your sanctum very hostile to your archetype—a Pilgrim who lives in a derailed train, for instance—but this also weakens you against other foes.

In general, though, the more symbols of your own power you can work into your sanctum, the better. Our putative urban Savage, for instance,

might establish a territory in a run-down area of Washington D.C. next to a very high-tech area, both strengthening himself and confusing the archetype with the surrounding technology. He may then mark out the area with the blood of other Avatars he’s slain and his own hair, spraypaint symbols of his cult on walls, and bury the Strength card from a Tarot deck underneath the sidewalk. More grimly, the old practice of burying a victim alive beneath a building can provide you, if you use the right ritual, with a demon capable of animating your sanctum—controlled, with luck, by you.

It may be, however, that you need to keep moving, and are unsuited to constructing a sanctum. So instead you turn to other sources of protection, such as constructing false images of yourself to deceive supernatural attackers. There are innumerable ways of doing this. Constructing a dummy of yourself and mixing your blood and hair into it, for instance, but one of the more common—if most callous—methods is the use of the Godwalker’s own children, as Arkane did with Renata Dakota by making her name an anagram



NATHAN FOX

of his. These methods are known as Proxy Rituals—see *Postmodern Magick*, p. 52.

Seeking out other supernatural allies goes without saying. The more adepts, Avatars, and artifacts you have, the better. The aid of a Room of the House of Renunciation (see p. 82) is useful, but can you get the Agents to help you without going through the door yourself? Establishing a cult is also a useful tool for you, not only for the benefits of loyal service but because the power of a group who intensely believes in you can be a useful boost in getting into the Statosphere. For this purpose, however, the cult has to echo the Godwalker's take on the archetype. Arkane's followers are people whose lives were fundamentally altered by what he told them, for example. The urban Savage might establish a street gang called the Wolves—though perhaps the Raccoons might be more appropriate, as a now often-urban animal.

All these defenses are necessary because the Clergy member you're trying to oust is doing his damndest to knock you down. As mentioned earlier, he can't hurt you directly, so he has to take recourse to other methods. Chiefly, he can send other Avatars after you. There's suddenly going to be a whole lot more potential candidates for Godwalker, and coincidence is on their side; except where you've set up strong defenses, fortune is going to favor them. This kind of synchronicity is how Eugene LaRue managed to find Renata, for instance. This is also where PCs tend to come into the whole affair: taking down a prospective archetype makes for a worthy campaign. The Clergy member starts subtly nudging them towards opposing the Godwalker; this takes the form of coincidences that put them on the right path, but he might actually turn to visions if he really needs to get them going.

The Clergy member's chief methods in attacking and harassing you are going to be to turn your own tools against you—or just to get you shot in the back, of course. To return to Arkane, Renata Dakota may well be the perfect weapon for taking him down. He's also suffering from a constant barrage of messages from various sources—the personal columns of newspapers, subliminal flickers on

television, graffiti—detailing every personal failing of his and attempting to weaken his self-confidence, and there's a barrage of process servers after him. An 18th century Executioner who tried to key the archetype towards judicial murder found himself a victim of the Terror, and a bold Mother in the 1920s was blown up by a bomb concealed in an Easter egg. Our urban Savage is going to find city beasts and beggars turning against him.

In response to the archetype's attacks, you should be trying to get your take on the archetype more firmly established in the popular mind. The mass media is an extremely useful tool here; some mystic battles have been fought around television series. (The recent spate of supernatural teen-girl shows such as *Buffy*, *Sabrina*, and *Charmed* could be the result of an attempted seizure of the archetype of the Magus. Or maybe not.) This is particularly important for Arkane, as his whole take on the archetype revolves around the media; he does his best to ensure that the news in the U.S. (he doesn't have the resources to influence things worldwide) puts his own spin on events rather than taking an objective stance.

You can also make more-direct attempts on the archetype you're trying to oust. Finding out who he was in life and obtaining items associated with him is quite effective, for instance—though this gets harder the longer ago the archetype ascended. Used properly, the items can remind him of his mortal life, weakening his ties to the archetype. If he still has living family, this can be amazingly effective as a weapon against him—as can his descendants. Blood ties go both ways, after all.

Obviously, you also have to live out your take on the archetype as strongly as possible. Arkane has become quite noted within the underground for his habit of showing up, delivering his version of important news, and then disappearing again; even if he couldn't care less about your particular agenda, he needs the publicity.

And as usual, the more squirrely symbolic logic you can use, the better—all the more so if it's strongly keyed to the modern era, rather than the past ages the current archetype represents. Arkane, for instance, always makes a point of wear-



ing Nike sneakers. Not only do these mirror the winged sandals of Hermes the Messenger, they are also keyed into one of the most successful advertising campaigns of our time—and through the JUST DO IT slogan and the connotations of Winged Victory he strongly asserts his hopeful triumph in the battle.

The battle between you and the archetype can last for anything from a week (if he gets you quickly enough) to twenty years or more—and there's no backing down. Once you're in, you're in. Assuming that you manage to avoid death or breaking taboo, your strength should eventually build up to the point where you have a serious chance of seizing the archetype.

Here, you are tested. The Statosphere bends itself so that some situation arises on earth in which your absolute, total dedication to your newfangled view of the archetype is tested. This is more a matter of will than anything. All your mystical allies,

defenses, and weapons can only get you to this point, not give you the final push. You can sense its coming, however, and prepare yourself—and so can others, who may attempt to screw things up. The impending test is heralded by subtle symbolic cues in popular culture that clued-in cabals may well pick up on, drawing interlopers into the situation. Just before taking the final step to ascension is often when a Godwalker is most vulnerable.

If you fail—if your will just isn't strong enough at that last moment, if you're not absolutely committed—then you disappear in white fire. But not to ascend: you're off to the House of Renunciation. When you reappear, your personality is flip-flopped and your Avatar skill is completely gone.

If you pass the test, you ascend—and a poor terrified soul falls from the Statosphere into the House of Renunciation, waking up cold and battered in a world that no longer needs him.

Of course, someday that might happen to you . . .



Tilting the Statosphere

As below, so above: ordinary humans can use the power of the Statosphere the way that Avatars and Clergy members do, manipulating the probabilities that affect their lives—but only if they've got the willpower to make it so. PCs or GMCs with a Soul stat of 60 or higher can **Tilt the Statosphere** at will, once someone teaches them how.

Similar to Proxy Rituals (see *Postmodern Magic*, p. 52), Tilting requires you to make a symbolic act tied to a desired outcome. A successful Tilt will shift the odds slightly in your favor within the context of your goal, or cause the odds to shift slightly against your enemy.

Unlike Proxy Rituals, Tilting does not require any charges; on the other hand, it isn't nearly as powerful.

Tilting is at heart a sort of freestyle version of ritual magick. It's the closest thing to simply creating a ritual that you can do. (Unlike rituals, however, a given Tilt isn't easy to repeat; this is covered later in this section.)

For example, let's say you want to put a whammy on an enemy. The appropriate Tilt is known as a Hex, and it can force the target to flip-flop an important roll if the result will be worse than the unmodified roll would have been.

To pull this off, you ideally want to have your target be a willing participant in the Tilt attempt.

Obviously, this works better with allies for whom you want to generate a useful Tilt. Short of that, you do what you can. A Tilt attempt is mostly comprised of assembling **symbolic elements** that represent the Tilt at hand. We'll cover those in more detail later, but for purposes of our example let's say that you want to Hex an Epideromancer so that the next time you attack him, the Hex goes off. You'll need symbolic elements that represent yourself, your target, the context in which it activates (your planned ambush), and the Hex itself. The more elements you have, the better the chance of your Tilt succeeding, and you can use up to five elements for each of the four categories you're working with. So you use the following:

Yourself: Your name, a photograph of you in a pose of strength, a lock of your hair, your credit card, and your favorite shirt.

Your Target: His name, a bit of his skin, a photograph you secretly took of him looking shocked when your accomplice spilled a glass of wine on him in a restaurant, a printout of an email he sent wherein he expresses his anxiety over your recent actions, and the corpse of his dog—whom you killed.

The Context: A videotape of the movie *The Most Dangerous Game*, the bear trap you killed his dog with, a shield made of tissue, an insoluble maze drawn on a napkin he left behind in the restaurant, and a written description of the place where you plan to ambush him, which you will read aloud.

The Tilt: A broken mirror, a three-leaf clover, a banana peel, itching powder, and a joy buzzer.

With your symbolic elements assembled, you work up plans for a ritual that uses all of these elements. Typically you set the items up into four distinct groups to strengthen their respective symbolologies, then perform actions appropriate to each group. A verbal component in which you intone your names and the description of the ambush site would also be part of this, along with general statements about how powerful you are and how your enemy is as nothing; talking smack WWF-style is entirely appropriate. In the course of the ritual you might want to piss on his dog's corpse, eat the bit of flesh, read the email aloud

in a mocking, derisive tone while your allies laugh heartily, play the hunting-humans sequence of the movie on a handy television set (preferably one with a big screen and a subwoofer), slice the tissue shield up with your credit card and wrap the pieces in your shirt, and so forth. Your every action should serve to reinforce and make explicit the symbolic links between your elements and what you want them to represent.

Needless to say, you better do all this in the privacy of your own home.

If all goes well, you're ready. When you ambush the fleshworker, hopefully his first attempt at getting off a spell is flip-flopped into a disastrous failure and you smear his brains across the pavement. Of course, he still might get away. But you've also done a Tilt that establishes a Bond with your allies, one that places a Boon on all of you, and for good measure you've put a Ward on your apartment so if he survives and comes after you he'll get whammied again. (If you really want to jack him up, use a Proxy Ritual to make yourself a proxy of your target so that it's like he actually *is* participating in the Tilt attempt.) In short, you've performed a bunch of ritual, symbolic actions that shift the odds of the conflict in your favor, just like those yahoos in the Invisible Clergy do every day—only they don't have to piss on a dead dog.

Congratulations! You've just Tilted the Statosphere. Is this cool or what?

There is, of course, a catch. Several, in fact.

Learning Tilts

Simply having a Soul of 60 is not enough to Tilt—you have to learn how to do it. It's not something you can pick up from reading about it, either. In fact, the only way to learn Tilting is to be Tilted by someone else. Specifically, you must be a consenting target for a Tilt, and you must be present for the attempt and participate in it. If the attempt is successful, congratulations: you're now ready to try a Tilt yourself. After you've done it yourself successfully one time, you can Tilt someone else and teach them to do it, too. (Although there are different kinds of Tilts, you don't have to learn each



Who Discovered Tilts?

Although Tilts have probably been around in one form or another for ages, their modern resurgence is due entirely to old-school Thaumaturgy. Thaumaturgy is not a school of magick in the postmodern sense—it's a way of performing rituals with more reliability. The problem with Thaumaturgy, of course, is that it's only as powerful as the rituals you have access to, which is darn few nowadays. In the late 1980s, a group of Thaumaturgists in Los Angeles discovered Tilting in the course of their experiments with ritual creation. They failed to create true rituals, but they did find something close that offered the versatility they desperately needed. Because they were swaggering braggarts who couldn't keep a secret, Tilting is slowly spreading throughout the occult underground. The teaching of Tilts is becoming a useful bargaining chip, and is sought by numerous clued-in cabals.

one; just getting the basic knack of Tilting is enough to allow you to perform any kind of Tilt, since they all function on the same principle.)

Generally speaking, however, normal people are not going to give much credence to Tilting. It involves a lot of ritual mumbo-jumbo and when you're done, nothing in particular occurs. Even when the Tilt goes off, the only result is a shift of probabilities, not a blast of sourceless light or a sudden, inexplicable injury.

The GM should think carefully before allowing Tilts into a campaign. They are not so powerful as to become unbalancing, but they can be time-consuming to deal with and you may not want to be bothered. On the other hand, they can be a lot of fun, and can introduce interesting subplots into your campaign. Tilts can also have different levels of power (minor, significant, and major), and you should determine which level you're comfortable with allowing. If you wish, you may decide that each level of Tilt power is a separate learning process, so that characters can only use the power level that they've been taught.

If you are just starting your campaign, you should generally not allow any beginning character to know how to Tilt. It's something that should be introduced in play, probably by a GMC patron.

Although some sample Tilts are provided, the GM should consider using them in unpredictable ways. A Tilt is essentially a symbolic connection between a human and the Statosphere, but one that the Clergy don't necessarily appreciate; estab-

lishing such a connection may attract unwanted attention, make the Tilter more vulnerable to magical detection or attack, or simply make things a little more interesting . . .

Common Tilts

There are four common types of Tilts. A Tilt can be used at three levels of power as noted above, each of which includes the effects of the lower levels in addition to their own. (So significant Tilt effects include minor ones, and majors include both minor and significant.) Only allow the power levels you are comfortable with for your campaign. A low-magick, street-level campaign should stick to minor Tilts, but a free-wheeling, Tim Powers-style campaign might ratchet up to major Tilts if you want to play things fast and loose.

Tilts do not produce Unnatural stress checks unless otherwise noted. They generally just seem like good or bad luck.

Bonds

You may form a Bond between yourself and one or more willing targets, but you may only belong to one Bond at a time; typically, a group of like-minded individuals forms a single Bond that unites them symbolically. You should choose a name for your Bond, though if your group already has a cabal name, that'll do fine. You cannot attempt a Bond for which you are not one of the targets.

To make the Bond, you must perform a Tilt ritual in which every desired Bond member is a target. This means you need a set of symbolic elements for each target, though you only need one set for the context and one set for the nature of the Tilt. Each target is rolled separately, meaning some may be Bonded and some may not be. Because a typical Tilt attempt takes an hour or more, be prepared to spend most of a day making the attempt if you have a lot of people to Bond.

A Bond must be renewed at the start of every quarterly season on an appropriate date chosen by the Tilter; solstices and the like are convenient, as are birthdays of Bond members if they're close enough to the start of the seasons. Once you choose a date, you need to stick to it in future attempts.

A Bond can be **shattered** in a number of ways:

- The Bond is not renewed.
- None of the target attempts succeed.
- Only one target is successfully re-Bonded.
- A Bonded member takes a direct, detrimental action against a fellow Bonded member.

If the Bond is shattered, every member suffers an Unnatural stress check equal in rank to the number of former members in the Bond, and any current Tilts affecting the Bonded group are renounced.

If a Bond is only partially renewed—that is, if at least two current Bonded members are re-Bonded but one or more other current ones are not—then it is not shattered, but excluded members may not be re-Bonded until the next season's attempt unless the Bond is shattered or renounced (see below) in the interim. Groups who really want to get everyone bonded may choose to abandon the Bond and try again from scratch.

A member may **renounce** the Bond at any time with no penalty; renouncing Tilts is described later.

Effects

If the Tilter desires, a Bonded group can be treated as a **single target** for other Tilts, in which case

the Tilt affects all Bonded members identically. For rules purposes, the Tilter simply uses himself as the target and the results are applied to all Bonded members.

Minor. Once a month, each member of a Bond may take a shift of up to 5% on a beneficial roll they make that is directed at a fellow Bonded member, such as treating injuries or casting helpful magick; the Bond must be activated before making the die roll.

Significant. Once a month, each member of a Bond may treat any single roll as a flip-flop if the roll is made in a combat that includes one or more Bonded allies fighting on your side; the Bond may be activated after you make the die roll.

Major. Once a month, each member of a Bond may **flash** another single member. A flash is a momentary vision in which the target sees through your eyes for about three seconds. The target knows the source and nature of the flash, but has no other knowledge of your situation except whatever he saw through your eyes. This is typically used when a Bonded member is in danger, but a clever usage would be to scrawl a short message on a napkin and then hold it in front of your face before triggering the flash. A flash causes an Unnatural stress check in the target equal in rank to the number of Bonded members.

Boons

You may bestow a Boon on yourself or on a single target. A Boon grants a one-time beneficial modifier to a die roll within the context of a specific situation described in the Tilt attempt. The trigger situation must be tied to the influence or action of another person, not a matter of happenstance; a Boon that helped the target when attacked by a particular person would be acceptable, but a Boon that aided the target the next time she was in a car wreck would not be allowed. Once activated or renounced, the Boon is gone. You may not grant another Boon until the current one is gone, nor may you have more than one Boon affecting you at a time. If your target is Bonded, the Boon affects all Bond members.



Effects

Minor. The target may take a positive or negative shift of up to 5% on any single die roll in the appropriate context. The Boon must be activated before making the die roll, but the target may choose the percentage she shifts (1%-5%) after the roll is made—to get a matched result, for example. The target must shift by at least 1% once the Boon is activated.

Significant. The target may flip-flop a single roll in the appropriate context. The Boon may be activated after the target makes the die roll.

Major. The target may convert any roll made for any PC or GMC, including herself, in the appropriate context into an OACOWA. The Boon may be activated after the target makes the die roll.

Hexes

You may bestow a Hex on yourself or on a single target. Hexes are otherwise identical to Boons in all respects except their effects.

Effects

Minor. The target's first tense skill check (see UA, p. 41) in the appropriate context receives a positive or negative shift of up to 5%; the GM will choose the amount of the shift based on what would be the worst result for the target.

Significant. The target's second tense skill check in the appropriate context may be flip-flopped by the GM to produce the worst result for the target.

Major. The target's third tense skill check in the appropriate context is automatically a BOHICA.

Wards

You may create a Ward on the physical location that is most sacred to you; for the vast majority of people this is their living space, but some might venerate a mystical site of some sort. The GM determines whether your desired location qualifies as the place most sacred to you. A Ward is designed to discourage a particular target from entering your

sacred space, or at least to weaken them while they are there. Once activated or renounced, the Ward is gone. You may only have one Ward in place anywhere at any time. A single location may not have more than one Ward. Although you need to symbolically represent the location for the Tilt context, it is the person you are Warding against who is the target of the attempt. If your target is Bonded, the Ward affects all Bond members.

Effects

Minor. While in the Warded space, the target's first tense skill check (see UA, p. 41) receives a positive or negative shift of up to 5%; the GM will choose the amount of the shift based on what would be the worst result for the target. If the target is a Bonded group, only the first tense skill check by any member of the Bond in the Warded space is affected, and then the Ward is gone.

Significant. While in the Warded space, all of the target's tense skill checks are flip-flopped by the GM to produce the worst result. The Ward expires once the target (or targets, if Bonded) leaves the location; she may then immediately re-enter the now un-Warded space if she's clever enough. (The minor effect still occurs, but only for the first roll; that roll may also be flip-flopped.)

Major. As soon as the target enters the Warded space, you receive a flash as per the Bond major effect. You see through the target's eyes for three seconds. If the target is a member of a Bond, you do not know which member you're seeing through unless visual cues reveal his identity; if multiple Bonded targets enter the Warded space, you get a separate flash from each of them. You do not suffer an Unnatural check for this flash. The targets are unaware of the flash occurring.

Other Tilts

Players may design other types of Tilts, subject to the approval of the GM. Gameplay effects of a Tilt should be similar to those given in the examples. Minor effects result in a +/-5% shift, signifi-

cant ones cause a flip-flop, and major ones either produce an extreme success/failure or may trigger an unusual unnatural phenomenon. Likewise, you should not be able to have more than one of a given type of Tilt active at any time.

Detecting Tilts

Characters with Aura Sight or similar abilities can magically see Tilts, but only if the Tilt relates to them. Tilts are too subtle to be obvious. Specifically, a character may see a Tilt on himself or on someone he is Bonded to; he may see a Tilt that he has placed on someone else; and he may see a Ward if he is the target or is an inhabitant of the Warded location.

At the GM's discretion, significant or major Tilts may be visible to anyone with the appropriate ability.

Renouncing Tilts

You may renounce a Tilt that is currently on you if you put it there. You may also renounce a Tilt on another target if you put it there, but only if the target is a willing and active participant in the attempt to renounce. Either way, renouncement removes the Tilt and its effects immediately. Renouncement takes only a moment and a simple focus of will.

To renounce a Tilt placed on you or another target against your will, or that you were simply ignorant of, you must counter it with an opposite Tilt; for example, renouncing a Hex requires you to grant a Boon on the Hexed target, the result of which is the renouncing of the Hex. Renouncing a Ward that you didn't create requires you to perform another Ward ritual with the intent of removing the current Ward; if successful, the Ward is removed.

Although a successful renouncement attempt usually removes the Tilt with no problems, there may be exceptions. Renouncing your own Bond, for example, is no problem; it's a matter of free will and the rest of the Bonded group may continue on without you. But renouncing the Bond of someone else in your group, which you may do since you all contributed to the Tilt, would qualify as a hostile action and shatter the Bond as described earlier.

Targeting Tilts

Choosing a target for your Tilt is similar to that of Proxy Rituals, but not identical. To select a target, you assemble a number of Connections; each Connection grants a cumulative percentage chance that the Tilt will work on that target. Valid connections and their percentages are:

- Informed consent from the target: 20%
- Physical presence of the target: 5%
- Participation by the target: 5%
- Symbolic elements: 2% each

Informed consent means the target understands that the Tilter is committing a symbolic act to effect a magical result, and knows what the result is. **Physical presence** means the target is in the same immediate area as the Tilter and witnesses the Tilt attempt. **Participation** means the target joins in the effort. **Symbolic elements** can include items, actions, or verbalizations that symbolically represent four different categories. No single category can contribute more than 10% to the Tilt, and no single symbolic element can contribute to more than one category. The four categories are:

- The Tilter.
- The target.
- The context in which the Tilt is to activate.
- The type of Tilt.

The Tilter assembles the Connections as desired, to a maximum chance of 70%. If the Tilter is an Avatar, she may also add the tens place of her Avatar score to the chance, allowing a maximum chance of 79%. The roll may be modified by magick, passions, or other game effects as normal. You must assemble a list of all the Connections and your GM must approve the list.

(There are circumstances in which the attempt can be higher than 79%, described later. No Tilt chance greater than 99% has any additional usefulness, however.)

Once all connections for the target or targets are assembled, you may attempt the Tilt. This re-



quires a number of minutes equal to the chance for the attempt; if there are multiple targets (as with a Bond), you must add all the chances together to determine the duration of the Tilt attempt. At the end of that time, you roll against your chance for each target. If you succeed, the Tilt is made. If you fail, you suffer an Unnatural stress check equal in rank to the tens place of your failed Tilt die roll; your targets are unaffected. If you are using a Tilt on multiple targets, it is possible for you to succeed with some but not others.

Optional: If you wish and the GM agrees, you may resolve a Tilt on multiple targets with a single die roll; use the lowest single-target chance to determine the outcome. Duration of the Tilt attempt is unchanged, however.

Tilts and Proxies

Tilts can be combined with Proxy Rituals to achieve easier results. By making yourself or an accomplice a proxy of your target, you get the benefits of informed consent, physical presence, and participation—that's 30% right there. Become a proxy of your foe, slap a hex on yourself, and then go after him.

The symbolic elements you choose, however, must still represent your target, not the proxy. If you use symbolic elements that represent the proxy, it makes the proxy the target instead, which is still useful for Boons and the like. But ritually distinguishing yourself from your target in this way threatens the strength of the proxy: your target gets an automatic resistance attempt to break or weaken the proxy relationship (see *Post-modern Magick*, p. 54).

About Symbolic Elements

Symbolic elements are the most important part of a Tilt attempt. Potentially, anything can qualify as a symbolic element if it would naturally make sense to both the Tilter and the target. They cannot, however, simply agree on an inappropriate element for a planned Tilt and thereby invest it with meaning.

The simplest symbolic element is a verbalization, such as speaking the target's name or de-

scribing the context of the Tilt. Actions usually include body movements such as walking in circles, shaking hands, or bowing. Items might be photographs of the target or his family, a cup that all targets drink from for a Bond, or blueprints of a location to be Warded.

Besides presenting each element to the GM, the Tilter must also symbolically present each element to the cosmos. This requires acknowledging each element in various ways, perhaps by naming elements aloud, incorporating them into gestures, or burning some in a fire.

All of these elements are combined into what is, in effect, a ritual. The presentation of this ritual should be carefully planned beforehand and then executed without interruption. If the attempt stops before completion, there is no penalty—but if you try again, you must begin from the beginning.

Invested Elements

You may increase the effectiveness of one or more symbolic elements, breaking the 10% barrier and increasing your chances of success. There are two ways to prepare an invested element: spending magick charges or investing elements with ritual acts. In addition, adepts and Avatars are particularly susceptible to invested elements.

Spending magick charges. You may spend a single charge to pump up an element. A minor charge increases the element's effectiveness from 2% to 4%, a significant charge pumps it to 20%, and a major charge pumps it to 100%.

Investing elements with ritual acts. With your GM's approval, you may increase an element's effectiveness through a ritual action. In our initial example, the photograph you staged of an ally spilling wine onto the target in a restaurant would be an invested element, as would killing the target's dog. Generally speaking, you ritually invest an element by doing something meaningful to the element before the Tilt attempt—and to qualify as meaningful, there must be an element of risk involved. Stealing an item from the target's home, clipping a lock of her hair while she sleeps, or getting her fired and snatching her termination letter

would all qualify, as would retrieving a bullet that wounded the target—but the bullet casing would only be worth the basic 2%. An invested element can be worth anywhere from 4% to 10%, though anything above 6% should be rare and would require both great risk and most likely some form of physical harm. Killing the target's dog, for example, might provide 6% if it's a cocker spaniel but 10% if it's a vicious guard dog. The more symbolically potent the investiture, the more potent the element. The GM is final arbiter on the strength of invested elements. A truly extreme investiture, such as kidnapping the target's son and sacrificing him during the Tilt attempt, could generate an element as high as 100%—but such mystically powerful actions are generally excessive given the limited benefits of Tilting.

Adepts and Avatars. Any element that has a strong symbolic link to a target adept's school of magick or a target Avatar's archetype is automatically considered charged, and is worth 4%. (For useful examples of the latter, check out the section on Avatar symbolologies earlier in this chapter.)

Combinations. You may use all three of these methods in combination on a given element. If you killed the Epideromancer's vicious guard dog, made ritual cuts into the dog's skin to spell out the target's name, and dropped a Significant charge on the dog, you'd have an invested element worth 34%: 10% for the ritual potency of the dog, 4% for the mutilation of the dog's flesh, and 20% for the significant charge.

As always, the GM is the final arbiter on the value of invested elements.

Limits on Symbolic Elements

A specific symbolic element used in a Tilt attempt cannot be used again by the same Tilter—ever. Each subsequent Tilt attempt must incorporate different elements never before used by the Tilter, even if the previous usage was failed or abandoned partway through. An invalid symbolic element does not sabotage the Tilt attempt in which it is re-used, but it does not contribute anything to it.

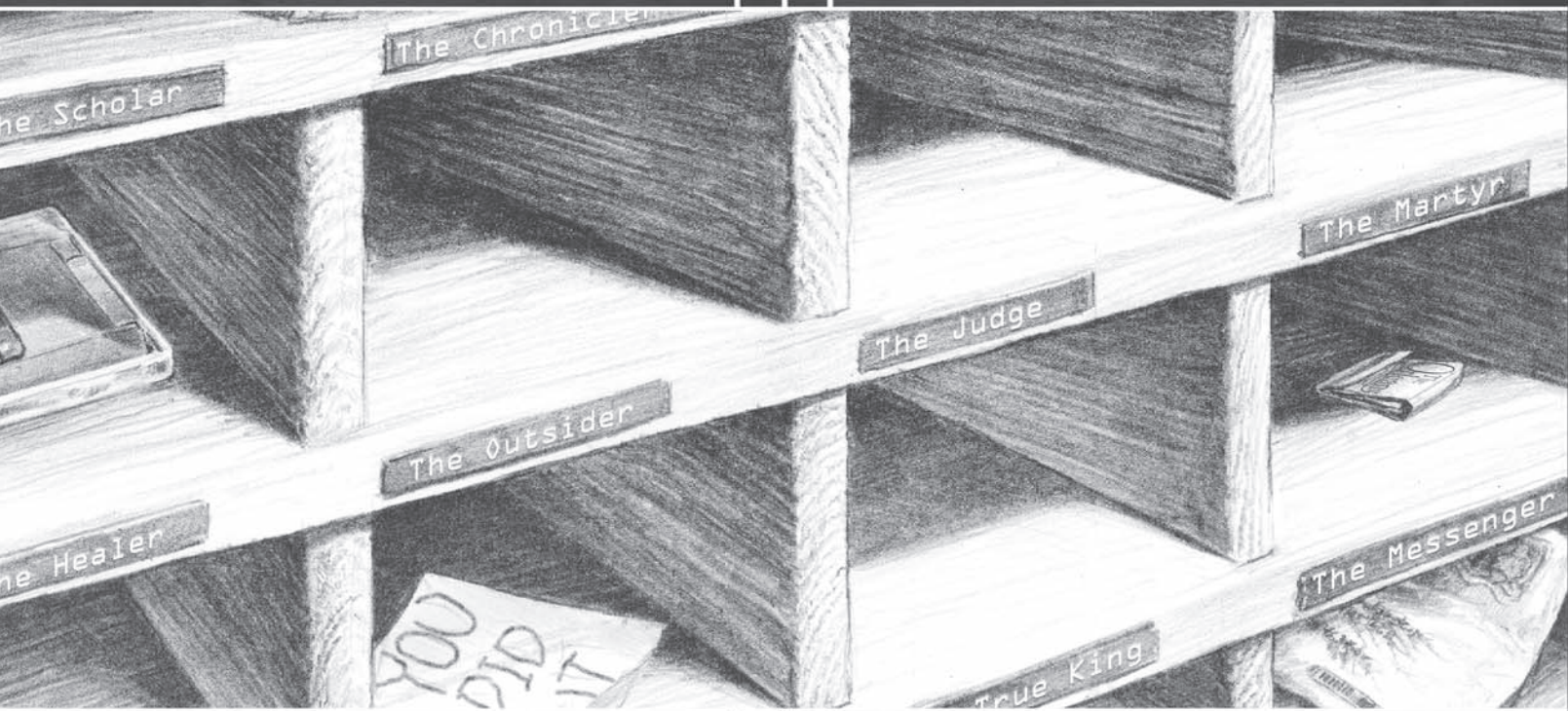
Tilts are, in effect, a sort of videogame cheat code for the cosmos—and the reality programmers of the Invisible Clergy are quick to purge such codes from the software of existence. You cannot magickally exploit a given element more than once because ongoing exploitation of a cheat in reality requires either the obsessional worldview of the adept or the dedicated behavior of the Avatar; lacking that level of passion and ability, you are limited to minor, restricted effects that get harder and harder to create the more you mess with them.

Target-specific elements are only restricted for use with that target, however. A photograph of a target's childhood home cannot be used again, but a photograph of a different target's childhood home will work for that other target. Note that multiple copies of the same photograph or item do not count as different elements. Similar items, such as different photographs of the same target, can only be used in multiple Tilts if they are both symbolically different and symbolically appropriate. One Boon that used a photograph of the target in his home and a later Boon that used a photograph of the target as a child with his mother would be acceptable, because they are different enough and appropriate enough to the nature of the Tilt that they qualify as distinct elements.

Elements that represent the Tilter, the context, and the nature of the Tilt may not be repeated no matter who the target is. If you use a knife to represent danger, you can never again use that element in any way, unless the new iteration of the element is symbolically distinct enough that the GM allows it. That same knife or any random knife could not be used a second time, but if you used that dagger to wound the target, you could once again use it in a Tilt against the target because now it is invested with new meaning.

This profound limitation requires careful work on the part of the Tilter. In play, the player should keep the Connection lists assembled for the GM on file, checking against them for each subsequent Tilt. Needless to say, this will very quickly become a cumbersome obligation—but after all, if Tilting the Statusphere were easy, we'd all be doing it every day . . . just like the Invisible Clergy.





CHAPTER TWO

ARCHETYPES

UNKNOWN ARMIES

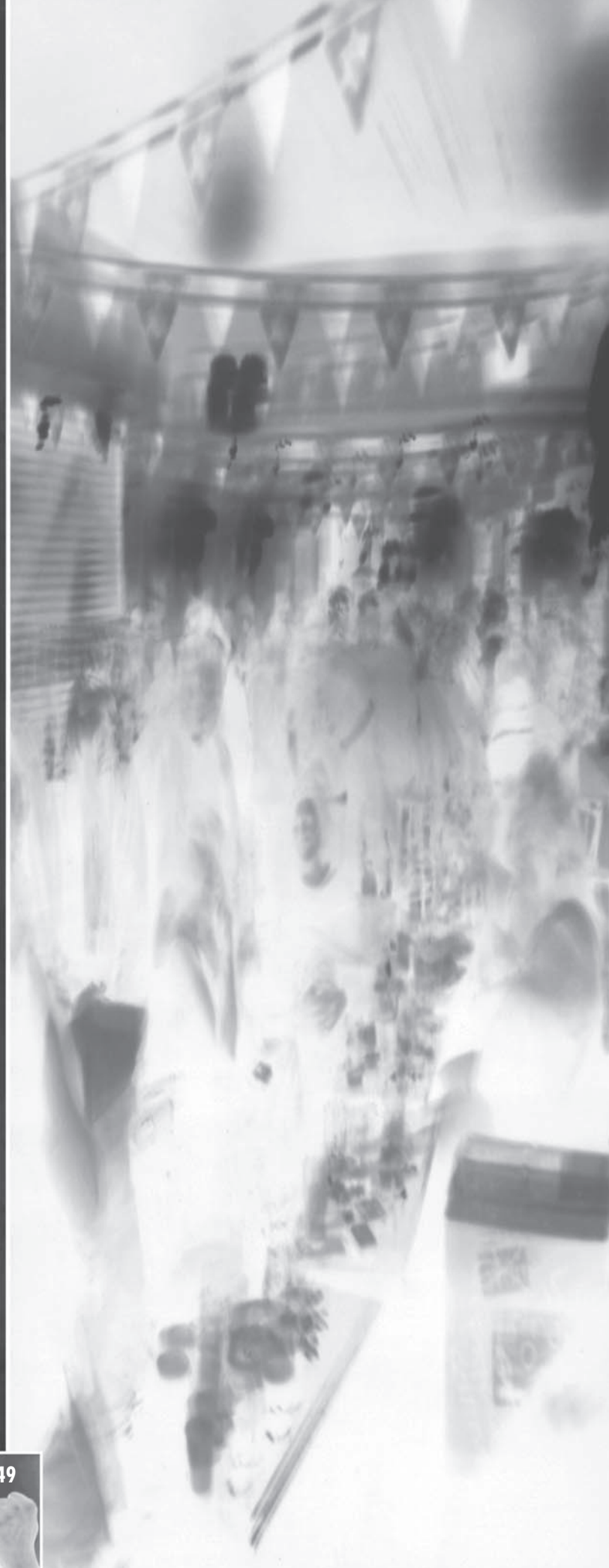


"THE AWFUL SHADOW OF SOME UNSEEN POWER
FLOATS THOUGH UNSEEN AMONG US—VISITING
THIS VARIOUS WORLD WITH AS INCONSTANT WING
AS SUMMER WINDS THAT CREEP
FROM FLOWER TO FLOWER."

—PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

"THERE ARE THREE KINDS OF PEOPLE:
PEOPLE, REAL PEOPLE, AND REALER PEOPLE.
THE FIRST TWO DON'T MATTER."

—EPONYMOUS





MATT HARPOLD

The Chronicer

Attributes: As people make choices their decisions are recorded, and these writings become histories, and these histories become fact. So reality is written. The Chronicer is the observer and recorder of the people of his time. He watches and notes, speculates and dramatizes, scripting his accounts of the actions, decisions, and deceptions that make the human world around him. These stories need not always be factually true; fiction is often more revealing of deeper truths.

Avatars of the Chronicer must be creatively expressive: writers, photographers, film-makers, or even musicians. Whatever the style or medium, her subject matter must be the people she observes. In the broadest range these could include the luminaries of pop culture and politics or the current works of prominent scientists and economists. Or they may be the specific occurrences, encounters, thoughts, and feelings of her daily life. Whether through poetry, journalism, art films, or rock operas, an avatar of the Chronicer must strive to capture something of the spirit of her times. Where the Scholar (see p. 74) is concerned with the impersonal knowledge of history and academics, the Chronicer wants to know what you had for breakfast and why you're cheating on your wife.

Taboos: Observation is the key to the Chronicer's insight and power. Avatars may be involved in events but if they ever willingly take center stage they risk tainting their perspective. If an avatar purposefully avoids witnessing a significant event within their reach they also weaken their connection to the archetype.

And finally, the avatars must record. If they take part in an event that is important to themselves or their world and do not make the effort to translate the experience in some way, they are turning their back on their primary motivation. The Chronicer must express what she witnesses in a coherent form for public consumption, and do everything in her power to bring her work into prominence. Few Chroniclers do not maintain a web site, at the very least.

Symbols: Pens and paper are key symbols for the Chronicer. More recently, cameras, tape recorders, computers, and celebrity magazines have also become associated with this archetype.

Suspected Avatars in History: The debate over who in history channeled the Chronicer successfully is as fierce as any in academic litcrit. Shakespeare (or whoever you think wrote those plays) is a good bet. James Boswell, Johnson's dutiful scribe, seems likely, as does WWII correspondent Ernie Pyle. Dickens and James Baldwin, writing in different eras, nonetheless might have walked the Chronicer road.

Channels:

1%–50%: You gain the Chronicler's keen sense of observation and insight into events and behavior. By making a successful Avatar: The Chronicler skill check you can flip-flop the next roll you make in the course of gaining information about a situation or person. This could be noticing an important detail about a room you're searching, persuading someone to reveal a secret, locating a hidden object, researching an event, hacking a database, or sifting through rumors on the street.

The degree of prior knowledge you have about the subject can affect your chances of applying your insight. The GM may assign bonuses or penalties to your roll to reflect this.

51%–70%: You acquire an intuitive sense of when and where important events are going to take place. These flashes of insight allow Chroniclers to be present for significant occurrences so that they might observe and record them. When attempting to forecast an event you must specify its type; if the category is too broad, you won't get a clear-enough picture. "I want to know when the next major development in American politics will occur" is too ambiguous. "Where will the next significant event development in Governor Fulsome's election campaign take place?" is more likely to get results. Inquiring about a particular person is almost always more effective. A successful Avatar: The Chronicler skill check must also be made.

This type of precognition is usually only effective for events occurring within the next few days. The intuition you receive will not reveal any of the content of the event, only when and where it will happen. There is always the possibility that no upcoming event matches your search criteria.

As with the Chronicler's talent for observation, this roll may be modified by the GM based on your prior knowledge relating to the upcoming event, or on the specificity of your inquiry.

71%–90%: The Chronicler's power of observation extends to events outside your immediate perception. You can gain knowledge—including images, sounds, and the basic "plot"—of things occurring elsewhere by making a successful Avatar: The Chronicler skill check. Again, the amount of information will depend on how much you already know about the event, such as its location or the people involved.

91%+: You have the power to read the life stories of individuals. Their internal, hidden selves become open books. This is the Chronicler's gift for perceiving the invisible patterns that generate events and the secret causes that drive history. It is the uncovering of the story behind the story. By closely observing a subject you will begin to see the events of their past, and

possibly future, manifest through their present behavior. The subject's mode of speech, style of dress, body language, expressions, and other more-subtle clues become an account of their inner life, where they've been, and where they are going. This form of study requires a full hour of in-person observation, although physical contact can greatly reduce the time needed; even a handshake would cut it in half. A successful Avatar: The Chronicler skill check is also necessary.

A wide range of information about a subject can be revealed under the Chronicler's gaze. Examples include—but aren't limited to—the following: the skills they possess under a specific stat and at what rating; the current status of one of their madness meters; their stimulus for rage, fear, or nobility; their current motivation or goal; specific events from their past; and facts about their daily life, such as job, hobbies, residence, and so on. Each piece of information requires a separate skill check. The knowledge usually reveals itself as a mental version of your preferred medium for recording; scenes from a movie, lyrics of a song, a printed page, a montage of photos. Note that game-stat information is not revealed literally; the imagery you receive might indicate that the target practices Kung Fu every day, not that he has a Martial Arts skill of 66%.

To "read ahead" in the subject's story, your skill roll must be under 30. The clarity of the future information tends to be vague. You will usually only sense if the person will take part in an event of some significance to an area that concerns you. This is one of the Chronicler's means for recognizing agents of history.

Any subject whose story you've read will always have a -20% penalty if they try to deceive you.

This power extends to the dead as well. In this case, physical contact is a necessity. Through meditative observation of a corpse, lasting at least an hour even with physical contact, any of the aforementioned types of information can be gained about the deceased. Your insight, however, stops at the point of their death; it doesn't include anything that happened (or is happening) to them afterwards.





MATT HARPOLD

mharpold

The Confessor

Attributes: The Confessor seeks to alleviate pain caused not by physical wounds, but by spiritual and emotional suffering. Such scars seldom heal completely, because by their very nature they remain invisible. Nevertheless, an untended emotional wound festers just as poisonously as a gangrenous physical one, consuming the soul of the afflicted and spreading its sickness to those who come too close. The Confessor understands that all injury has at its heart a cause which must be treated directly. For emotional suffering, this often takes the form of a secret that the afflicted is too frightened, ashamed, or overwhelmed to share. Such secrets often begin small and then build, layer after layer. With compassion and empathy a Confessor must peel away each lie, each comfortable illusion, to reach the rot at the core and to ultimately reach that primal secret from which all suffering flows.

Everybody has a story, and the Confessor must endure them all. The Confessor knows how hard it is to reach true, lasting healing, and a necessary part of that healing is to remove every trace of hurt. Unfortunately, the mind has inventive mechanisms to conceal its pains, so the Confessor must become adept at ferreting out every little detail no matter how insignificant it might seem to the afflicted. As a result, the Confessor can be relentless in his questionings, and must be patient in the extreme. He also tends to be curious to a fault, prying his nose into undesirable places, all for the sake of the “whole truth.”

Taboos: Once the afflicted begins to tell her story, the Confessor cannot and will not allow the person to pause unless he can offer something helpful. This can take the form of advice, a solution, or a direction in which to look. Such help must be what the Confessor genuinely believes is best, not just what he wants the afflicted to believe.

The Confessor must also keep a record of these secrets so that these pains are not lost. Forgiven is not the same as forgotten. Often, the Confessor uses a journal for this purpose.

Symbols: For many years, the symbol of the Con-

fessor was the priestly raiment, or the opened box, or even a whisper on the winds. Recently, the archetype has become muddled with the rise of the therapy culture and confessional talk shows. The future of this archetype remains unclear.

Suspected Avatars in History: Sigmund Freud is the model of a modernist Confessor, while the ruthless Inquisitor Torquemada may well have been channelling a negative aspect of this archetype. Most recently, oral historian Studs Terkel has demonstrated an unusual knack for drawing out the stories of people he meets—as has special prosecutor Kenneth Starr, by altogether different methods.

Channels:

1%–50%: The Confessor can see the emotional pains of the afflicted just as clearly as a doctor sees an injury. A successful Avatar: The Confessor roll activates an enhanced version of Aura Sight (see UA, p. 193) that provides visual representations of the target's Madness Meters, Passions, and Obsession—all the better for the Confessor to help them understand why they are unhappy. The effect lasts only for a moment and only applies to a single target, but it's enough for the avatar to start trying to help the person. The Confessor may use this ability a number of times per day equal to the tens digit of her Avatar: The Confessor skill.

51%–70%: One of the oldest applications of the Confessor was the Sin Eater, the one who unburdened the soul of the penitent and devoured the secrets that held them low. This channel allows the Confessor to remove failed and hardened notches in exchange for the revelation of secrets. Not all secrets are created equal, however, and the more severe the secret, the more psychic damage can be healed. Secrets should be divided into Minor (erase one Failed or one Hardened notch), Significant (erase two Failed or Hardened notches, or one of each), Major (erase three Failed or Hardened Notches, in any combination), and Mortal (completely remove all Failed or all Hardened notches in any one Stress category). Mortal secrets are those that can destroy the indi-

vidual if they are revealed, and not all people have a mortal secret to share. Once a secret has been determined and told (whether or not the channel works, the secret is out), the player rolls his Avatar: The Confessor skill to see if he was successful. A Confessor can use this channel twice a day.

71%–90%: People like you. Really. They tell you things that they wouldn't tell their closest friends, or their shrink. A successful Avatar: The Confessor roll means that you can wheedle out their deepest, darkest secret, from their PIN number to their unnatural lust for barnyard animals, usually without the target harboring any ill will towards the Confessor. Secrets revealed through the use of this channel are eligible for use with the Sin Eating channel. A Confessor may use this channel once a day.

91%+: At this level, the Confessor can help even the dead come to terms with their pain. When in the presence of a demon or revenant, the Confessor may converse with the spirit without the need for any other form of magick or summoning; this portion of the channel requires no roll. With a successful Avatar: The Confessor roll, the spirit will reveal the source of its torment, leaving it with nothing but gratitude for the Confessor and making it open to persuasion regarding its current agenda. If the roll is a matched success or is higher than the spirit's Soul stat, its misery is so relieved that it passes beyond the Veil, beyond the reach of the Cruel Ones, and achieves its much-delayed reward in the afterlife. This is, in essence, a compassionate form of exorcism.

A failed roll results in no penalty other than the entity ignoring the Confessor's entreaties to reveal its secrets. But a matched failure may anger the spirit to the extent that it attempts to possess the avatar, or harm her in some other way.





MATT HARPOLD

The Healer

Attributes: Injury and death have been the most immediate foes of mankind since the earliest times. The first mysteries were those of the functioning of the human body, and the maintenance of life. Knowing which roots cured and which killed, how to drain an infected wound, how to handle a difficult birth, how to remove a gangrenous leg—that was power. It was a knowledge that was passed from person to person, orally, with the obligation to use the knowledge for the good of the community passed along as well.

The Healer understands how people work. She knows how things can hurt, and she knows how to make them better. She has the knowledge and the temperament to cure your ills and ease your pains. She'll do whatever she can to help you, and she will help you, whatever it takes. Just tell her where it hurts.

The goal of the Healer is to keep the organism healthy. This sometimes means causing short-term pain for long-term gain. Sometimes the patient doesn't survive the healing process, and sometimes he does. The Healer does her best to bring the patient safely through the process, but sometimes only death will cure an injury. Sometimes you need to cut a little healthy flesh away to remove an infection. The Healer must be ready to do this without hesitation, for the greater good of the patient. And remember, sometimes the patient is the whole community, not just the person lying on the bed.

There is a deep vein of compassion in the Healer, for she cannot witness suffering and do nothing. Coupled with this is a foundation of pragmatism, for the world will never be perfect and she must always make do with the resources she has. The Healer feels the joys of success and the griefs of failure deeply, reveling in the ability to heal and despairing of her inability to help everyone. Many Healers develop a detachment to protect themselves from the pain they deal with every day, distancing themselves from their patients for their own protection. Anyone who interprets this reserve as coldness or lack of caring is greatly mistaken.

The Healer must maintain the distance to survive. She cares so deeply that allowing her feelings free rein would reduce her to inaction.

Taboos: The taboo of the Healer is to ignore a plea for help when she has the ability to render aid. She must not turn her back when she may make a difference. This doesn't mean that she must spend every minute of her life seeking out people in pain to help, but if she happens across someone who asks for medical aid that she can provide, she must act to help them.

Symbols: The caduceus is one of the oldest symbols of the Healer, still in use today. The mortar and pestle, the red cross, and white robes all feature in the mythology of the Healer. More recently, the stethoscope, surgical greens, and the thermometer have become symbols of the archetype.

Suspected Avatars in History: Florence Nightingale, Jonas Salk, and Mother Theresa are the people that come most readily to mind these days. In earlier times, Hippocrates practically defined the modern interpretation of the archetype.

Channels:

1%–50%: At this level, the Healer may re-roll any failed healing roll if the failed roll is less than her Avatar: The Healer skill. If the roll fails a second time, she may not roll again. Healing rolls are considered to be any skill dealing with medicine, first aid, surgery, herbalism, or pharmacology. Applying first aid to a gunshot wound would qualify, as would trying to identify a toxin in the lab, or making a poultice of herbs to draw out an infection. Note that, although holistic Healers and those who rely on modern Western may view one another's methods with scorn, this channel applies to both types of skills equally well.

51%–70%: One of the earliest lessons learned by the Healer is that she cannot save everyone, nor should she try. Sometimes, death is the only release from an illness or injury. With this channel, the Healer can offer a quick, painless death to a patient who wants it. The Healer must sit quietly with the patient for a few minutes and assure them that it is acceptable to rest, to give up living. With a successful Avatar: The Healer roll, the patient will die quickly and painlessly. Healers

refer to this channel as the Misericord, after the daggers used in medieval times to end the suffering of a wounded person.

71%–90%: By laying on hands, the Healer may now magickally heal wounds with her touch. The guidelines for damage healed are the same as for medical treatment applied (see UA, p. 62), substituting the Avatar: The Healer skill for any medical skill. This healing requires no equipment and takes only a few seconds of time. Laying on of hands may only be attempted once per patient per batch of injuries. For example, if someone is shot once in a gunfight the Healer may lay her hands on the injury and heal it. If the person is shot five times the next night, the Healer may once again lay her hands on the injury, but only once. If the patient is shot again five minutes later, the Healer may once again lay her hands on the patient to heal him.

91%+: With this channel, the Healer may lay her hands on a person suffering from a disease or permanent damage (see UA, p. 63) in an attempt to heal. To heal such a condition, the Healer must make an Avatar: The Healer roll. The GM may apply negative shifts based on the nature of the illness or the damage. For example, curing a cold would probably not require any shift, while curing diabetes may require a -20 shift, and curing cancer or AIDS might require a -50 shift. Blindness or deafness may be cured with this channel, with a shift applied to the roll based on how long the patient has been blind or deaf. The same type of shift is applied to attempts to heal permanent damage.





MATT HARPOLD

The Hunter

Attributes: Everyone has something he wants. Back in the early days of humanity, the most driving desire was food. One of the most important figures in the tribe was the one who could bring back food, as much as was needed, as often as it was needed. He was the Hunter. He would leave the circle of the fire and go into the dark and the wild, following the trail to the prey. He would follow the path without relenting until he stood face to face with his quarry and do his best to bring it down. He would either succeed and bring food back to the tribe, or he would fail and find a new trail, a new quarry, a new goal. In the end, he would bring back the food, or he wouldn't return. The hunt was life, not just for him, but for the entire tribe.

Most people don't have the determination to pursue their dreams, to follow where they lead, to read the signs that point the way to the prize. The Hunter does: his life is dedicated to the pursuit, following the trail until his quarry stands at bay. What happens next is of no concern; his task is complete, and the next hunt beckons.

In the modern world, the hunt for food has lost a lot of the mystic significance it once had. Supermarkets and restaurants are plentiful in the civilized western nations, and the majority of undeveloped people focus on agriculture and animal husbandry for their sustenance. Only in a few remote tribes in African and South American jungles and deserts does the spirit of the Hunter survive unchanged. The rest of the world looks differently at the hunt these days.

Not surprisingly, there has been a recent turn-over in the Invisible Clergy. The old Hunter, no longer relevant to the world, has been ousted by a new, younger idea. A skip tracer from New York, representing the modern ideal of remorseless pursuit, completed his most successful hunt: tracking down a man who turned out to be the Comte de Saint-Germain. As he stood face to face with the First and Last Man he realized whom he was seeing, comprehended the higher order of the Cosmos, and ascended, leaving his old life behind.

The new archetype now reflects more completely the common view of relentless and unwavering pursuit—and somewhere out there is an ex-archetype with some atoning to do.

Taboos: Sometimes the quarry eludes you. Not every hunt is successful, and losing the trail is a part of the hunt. Even running the prey to ground and having it escape does not violate the Hunter's nature. The only thing that moves him from the path is abandoning the hunt. Faced with a clear trail and obvious spoor, the Hunter must not turn his back or choose a new prey. Only if his quarry eludes him and he loses the trail may the Hunter choose a new goal. In addition, the Hunter may only pursue one goal at a time.

Symbols: Personal weapons (especially silent ones), disguises, camouflage, the pelts of your prey. After the recent ascension, sunglasses, cell phones, notebooks, and miniature tape recorders.

Suspected Avatars in History: Nimrod, who was a mighty hunter before the Lord according to the Bible, or Orion the Hunter may have been the first recognized avatars of the Hunter. In more modern times, lawman Pat Garret's search for Billy the Kid moved the ideal into the modern world, and Clifford Stoll's year-long chase of a hacker through the early days of the internet brought it up to date by western standards.

Channels:

1%-50%: Declare your quarry. This must be a concrete item, person, or being; abstracts are for the Pilgrim (see UA, p. 173). Any roll you make to locate, follow, or pursue your quarry may be flip-flopped, regardless of which skill is used. You may only have one designated quarry at a time, and it ceases to be your prey once you run it to ground or lose the trail. These are the only times you may choose a new quarry, and you may choose the same one again if you desire.

51%-70%: Any attempt to mislead, deceive, misdirect, or lie to the Hunter in pursuit of his designated prey will fail unless the deceiver's skill in the deception is higher than the Hunter's avatar skill. You can lie to the Hunter, but he will know it is a lie. You can hide your trail, but he will know that the trail has been hidden. Knowing

that a deception exists is not the same as knowing the truth, however. This channel will not reveal the truth, but will make the falseness of the deception obvious. This is only effective with respect to information about the location of the declared quarry: a lie about the quarry's location, a false trail laid, a clue hidden.

71%-90%: The Hunter is tireless in pursuit of his prey. While actively following the trail, the Hunter need not rest, sleep, or eat if he can make an Avatar: The Hunter roll each day. This not only allows the Hunter to ignore these stimuli, but it causes the stimuli themselves to stop. It's not just that you don't get hungry or tired, but that you don't need to eat or sleep. Spend three weeks on the trail without eating or sleeping and when you're done, you are no more tired or hungry than you would normally be if you had eaten and slept regularly during that time. An OACAWA will grant a week's time without respite, and a BOHICA will cause all the current missed meals and nights to catch up with the Hunter immediately. This channel helps to make the Hunter not only relentless, but also self-sufficient.

91%+: With his single-minded dedication to the hunt, the Hunter gains a preternatural ability to get inside the mind of his prey. When faced with a decision that the quarry would have faced, a successful Mind roll allows the Hunter to discover what choice was made. This allows the Hunter to choose which fork in the trail was chosen, whether the prey went upstream or downstream, which hotel the fugitive would pick to stay in, and what piece of information someone would use for a password. Note that in the case of the password, the Hunter would know that the person would use his birthday, but would have to find out what the birthday is on his own.





MATT HARPOLD

The Judge

Attributes: Every day, people make choices. What to wear, what to eat, what to say, where to go; every second of every day is filled with people choosing between options, deciding what is right for them. Most of the time, the choices make little difference for anyone but the people choosing, and often little difference to them, as well. But some choices are different.

The Judge is the embodiment of powerful choice. His decision carries the weight of law, and his choices can mean life or death for many. With full knowledge of the ramifications of his decisions, the Judge learns to read the nuances of the choices before him and to analyze their impact. The Judge must weigh the consequences of his choices and live with the results, because once he makes a choice his conviction and authority impose it upon the world. The decree of the Judge is final.

Taboos: Indecision is the bane of the Judge. It's one thing for him to defer judgement until he has more information, but if he is unable or unwilling to decide between options then he undermines the conviction and authority of the Judge. When faced with a need for a decision, the Judge must make it. Finding information is a part of the decision. Most Judges make decisions of import slowly, as they gather the knowledge they need to make the proper choice, but when confronted by options of equal merit or a need for haste, the Judge must not hesitate—and must especially not be seen to hesitate.

Symbols: The scales, robes, a sword, and the gavel are all deeply entrenched symbols of the Judge. Blindfolds may have been an attempt to weaken the Archetype, but have not had much of an impact.

Suspected Avatars in History: King Solomon, son of King David, may have been the first recorded avatar of the Judge, although the Archetype is certain to have existed previous to him. The Chinese have a wealth of tales from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries dealing with the magistrates of the time, both as heroes and villains; Judge Dee is a notable example. More recently, Oliver Wendell Holmes was possibly channeling the Judge while

he sat on the bench, and Lance Ito may have used the O.J. Simpson trial as a spectacularly unsuccessful bid for Godwalker (but see Judge Symbology on p. 30 for more on this).

Channels:

1%-50%: The Judge is discerning. If the Judge is trying to find information, whether using a Notice skill to look for clues, a Persuade skill to interrogate someone, or a Research skill to track down a written record, he can re-roll any failure whose result was lower than the Avatar: The Judge score of the character. A second failure cannot be re-rolled, regardless of the score.

51%-70%: If a Judge makes a successful Avatar: The Judge roll, he can tell whether some piece of information is relevant to the issue he is considering. A matched success reveals the exact relation of the information to the issue, and an OACOWA unveils an additional piece of related information, if it exists.

Example: A Judge is trying to determine the guilt of a man accused of murder. He is presented with a matchbook containing a telephone number. A successful roll tells the Judge that this is relevant to the case. A matched success indicates that the number is for a man who sold him an unregistered gun, and an OACOWA reveals the gun dealer's name and place of residence. The Judge may still not know if the suspect is guilty, but he now knows how the matchbook fits into the case.

71%-90%: With this channel, the Judge can predict the effect his decision will have on a situation. He requires a successful Avatar: The Judge roll to make the prediction, and the situation must be narrowly defined. A Judge could predict that not raising his hands when the police tell him to will result in them shooting and killing him, but could not tell how much money he would win or lose if he decided to go to Las Vegas for the weekend. These predictions are not set in stone; they reflect the most likely results based on the decision and what the Judge knows about the situation. The actions of the Judge and others may affect the situation in unforeseen ways. The GM should make an honest, reasonable prediction if the roll is successful.

91%+: At this point, the word of the Judge becomes law. If the Judge establishes himself in a position of authority of any kind over others, he may make a decree that has the force of law. Authority can mean many things: being someone's boss, being a police officer who pulls someone over, being the only one in the room with a drawn gun. It includes any situation that grants the Judge any sort of authority or power over others. His decree must be either an order or a statement of fact, true or not. If the Judge succeeds in an Avatar: The Judge roll, all who hear the decree must accept it as unequivocally correct. If the decree is a direct contradiction of fact, or an order that is manifestly impossible to carry out, it is automatically ineffective. Possible decrees include a statement that this room is neutral territory where no one may harm another, an order to lie face down on the floor and not move, a statement that no one is allowed to touch this bag of cookies, or a directive to execute a certain man. An order to die will be successful if the Judge rolls above the Soul stat of the target and below his own Avatar: The Judge skill. Once the Judge successfully makes a decree, only those with a Soul stat higher than the roll the Judge made in issuing the decree will be able to resist it, and they can do so with a successful Soul check. Characters can make one attempt each round that the Judge is present.





MATT HARPOLD

The Martyr

Attributes: The Martyr willingly dedicates his life to a greater cause. Any follower of this archetype must support a particular issue: religion, science, racism, humanity, freedom, and patriotism are all common calls for the Martyr. The nature of the dedication, too, can take many forms. Judicial execution is the best-known, perhaps, but rarely produces avatars, who tend instead to be those who devote their daily lives to a cause, sacrificing personal comfort and possessions.

Martyrs are a source of immense benefit to the world, and often the good done by a Martyr lives long beyond his death, inspiring many others. However, this archetype does have a strong negative side. The cause for which the Martyr labours is not necessarily a positive one; there have been martyrs for Nazism, militant religion, and Communism—although, in fairness, some Communist martyrs have been inspired by more general values of freedom and human rights. Also, the Martyr often hurts those close to him; family and friends find themselves ignored or rejected in favor of the greater cause.

Martyrs are rarely aware of being avatars, and this path is not often followed by those consciously seeking power—although a couple of ascension attempts have been made by astute occultists. Both have resulted only in the presumptive Martyr's death, as the pretenders lacked the burning sincerity that marks the true Martyr.

Taboos: The Martyr must never place his own well-being above that of his cause. Martyrs, as noted before, also rarely have close links to their family, as this weakens the tie with the archetype.

Symbols: The Martyr is commonly associated with both the lamb and the hare. Many forms of execution are symbols of the Martyr, particularly the cross and the bonfire.

Suspected Avatars in History: Too many to count. Speculation about Jesus aside, two random examples might be Giordano Bruno and St. Maximilian Kolbe. Modern examples are often found working in aid agencies, fanatical religious movements such as the Taliban, anti-corruption crusades, and democratic movements.

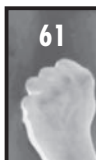
Channels:

1-50%: Whenever the Martyr is working in support of his cause, he gains almost supernatural endurance. You may add your Avatar skill to any Body skills involving resisting fatigue, going without sleep, ignoring pain, and so forth. Many Martyrs work 140-hour weeks.

51-70%: The Martyr may put extra effort into an action, throwing himself behind it totally at the cost of personal pain. You may reroll or flip-flop *any* failed skill roll, with the caveat that if you succeed you take a number of wound points equal to the sum of the dice. This only works for actions which would further the Martyr's cause; you can't use it to win at cards unless you need the money to print bumper stickers or post bail for a jailed protester.

71-90%: At this level, the Martyr may take on another's wound, so long as the wound was incurred directly from supporting or exemplifying the Martyr's cause. With a successful Avatar: The Martyr check, you may transfer any one injury from another being to yourself. The wounds on the healed individual seem to have never existed. If somebody is injured—even killed—within sight of the Martyr, this power can be activated straight away to allow you to take that injury, appearing to others as though you had leapt in front of the bullet, taken the sword blow, or whatever; reality rewrites itself as needed.

91%+: If the Martyr dies for his cause, his death will now automatically be recorded in some form—photograph, urban myth, video—and the incident will spread around the world, no matter how remote or hidden his death. Even if the Martyr's name is lost, his cause will flourish. Alternatively, he can choose to take his killers down with him, inflicting the same damage his death wound dealt to all his enemies present at the event—with the option to flip-flop if desired.





MATT HARPOLD

The Messenger

Attributes: The Messenger carries the news. Anyone who tells you something important, something you didn't know, is weakly echoing the archetypal Messenger. Banishing ignorance and spreading knowledge, the Messenger seems to be a one of the more positive Archetypes. But sometimes the Messenger is only as good as the news he brings. Is the man who tells you the love of your life used to turn tricks really your friend?

The current Godwalker of the Messenger is Dermott Arkane, who believes that the current version of the archetype is obsolete and needs to be updated. (The mechanism for this updating will, of course, be his Ascension and ousting of the current Messenger.) As Arkane sees it, the carriers of the news are beginning to eclipse the news itself. As media empires consolidate and media spin becomes more sophisticated, the givers of truth are increasingly involved with the interpretation of the facts. To Arkane, this is all well and good: He's paving his course to Ascension by anticipating and altering the course of world events. (It's quite possible that his meddling prevented Alex Abel from Ascending in 1990.) If all goes well, he plans to Ascend as the Heisenberg Messenger sometime before 2005.

Taboos: The one thing the Messenger must never do is deny the truth when confronted. He can passively conceal, he can lie by omission, but when faced pointblank with a fact he knows is true, the Messenger cannot deny it. (To some people, this is the secret meaning behind Peter's denial of Christ, and explains why Paul was the greater evangelist.)

Symbols: The symbols of the Messenger in antiquity were the scroll, the spur, a swift horse and a traveler's cloak. These days, it's more likely to be a mobile news feed and a hat with a press card stuck in the brim.

Suspected Avatars in History: Many believe that Paul Revere deliberately channeled the Messenger; perhaps coincidentally, he was also a Mason. There's more uncertainty about the Greek soldier Pheidippides who ran from Marathon to Athens

to announce Miltiades' victory over the Persians, but he was probably an Avatar—if not the initial Ascension.

Channels:

1%–50%: When the Messenger tells the truth, it is hard to ignore or deny. When an Avatar of the Messenger makes a true statement about something that's important to the listeners, the GM can call for an Avatar roll. If successful, the hearer must either consciously acknowledge that the Messenger is telling the truth, or make a rank 6 Helplessness or Self challenge. (The character's controller chooses between acknowledgement or stress check: The GM decides which type of check is most appropriate).

Note that the Messenger's statement must be objectively true, and the Messenger must believe it firmly. If the Messenger attempts to use this channel to communicate something that he believes is true, but which is false, the channel fails.

51%–70%: If the Messenger is delivering information to someone who is intimately connected to it, a successful roll can remove physical barriers between the Messenger and his audience. In this case, a "physical barrier" is a passive, inanimate problem. For instance, if the Messenger has been gagged, the gag falls out. If the Messenger's car breaks down, he can force it to work until he gets to the location. Locks open, drawbridges drop and bonds come loose.

Note that this channel does not work on active opposition: if someone is shooting at the Messenger with a scattergun, this won't do a lick of good. It also doesn't affect really big barriers: a Messenger can't use this to walk through walls or part a river to get to the other side. Weird, but true: there's an important difference between something that's holding you back, and something that's just in your way.

71%–90%: With a successful roll, the Messenger can learn an important fact about a person, place or thing. This is a powerful and versatile ability, but there are three important limitations. First, it can't be used for something trivial (GM decides). Second, the answer has to be something that can be stated in three words or less. Finally,

the Messenger has to be at the place, or in the presence of the person or thing.

To use this channel, the Messenger can use any of a variety of divination techniques—reading tea leaves, the I Ching, automatic writing or anything else that can choke out a few words.

91%+: At this level, the Messenger can get to any important event, as long as he knows it's occurring. He does not have to know where, or even what it is, but he can simply appear in the area, much like an Avatar of the Pilgrim. The limitation on this channel is that the Messenger can only go where an event is occurring—not where it's going to happen or has happened. There is also a gray area about what constitutes an "important" event. A presidential assassination, an act of war, an Ascension or the generation of a major charge all qualify, but for other events it's up to the GM to decide. (GMs should be lenient, of course: if it's important to a hundred people or more, this should work.)





MATT HARPOLD

The Mystic Hermaphrodite

Attributes: This archetype is one of the most difficult to embody because it's possibly the most difficult to describe. It is large, it contains multitudes, it contradicts itself—by definition. It represents the unity of opposites, the synergy of contrary combination, the power that comes from tension and conflict within a unified whole.

In some ways, the Mystic Hermaphrodite is the walking embodiment of magick. After all, every school is based on a paradox, because resolving a contradictory belief allows an adept to resolve the contradiction between “possible” and “impossible” or “cause” and “effect.” But where the adept merely holds or follows a contradiction, the Hermaphrodite *is* a contradiction.

The Hermaphrodite is woman and man both, but it represents other unities as well. The doctor who cuts you open or poisons you with radiation to heal you is taking a tiny step along this path. The jealous lover whose hateful accusations are an expression of twisted affection suffers the burden of contradiction. The masochist who loves her suffering, the general who conquers in the name of peace and the mercy killer could all be facets of the singular paradox. The difference is that these people are often fooling themselves—figuring out rationales to excuse them so they can pursue the “greater good.” The true Mystic Hermaphrodite isn't just engaging in pretzel logic and elaborate self-justification: he/she resolves those conflicts within the context of a larger consciousness.

Taboos: A lack of conflict conflicts with Mystic Hermaphroditism. Dedication to any unambiguous cause—other than the cause of the Avatar path—can weaken the connection. For example, a Hermaphrodite who dedicates him/herself to pacifism is in violation as much as one who follows an inflexible course of violent revenge. Your mind must be at war as much as your body is: absolute loyalty is as anathema as absolute treachery. Note that this doesn't preclude believing in a philosophy. But once you start to act on those beliefs, you could be in trouble. It is possible for

Mystic Hermaphrodites to also be adepts, but their obsessional worldview must be one of turmoil and mystery rather than crystal clarity.

Symbols: White garments and prisms (since white is really the unity of all colors), the yin-yang symbol, the serpent devouring its own tail, the cross, the lotus and the dot within a circle are all emblems of the Mystic Hermaphrodite, as are bearded women or actual, biological hermaphrodites. The most potent symbols of the Mystic Hermaphrodite are sexual symbols—transvestitism, bisexual-ity and contravening traditional gender roles.

Suspected Avatars in History: If the notorious “Pope Joan” actually existed as anything but an urban legend, she was almost certainly an avatar of the Mystic Hermaphrodite. The Enlightenment transvestite spy Chevalier d'Eon is a sure thing. Christine Jorgensen certainly was, along with Brandon Teena and Billy Tipton. You can make a case for RuPaul and the Lady Chablis as well.

Channels:

1%–50%: On a successful roll, you can get a sense of an individual’s gender identity. This goes beyond inclination (homo, hetero or bi) and general sex drive: it also touches on gender roles, allowing one to discern (for example) if someone is aggressive and macho or tender and nurturing. Note that people are complex and changeable: this channel is just as likely to detect how someone wants to appear at the moment as how they generally behave. There’s no way to predict.

51%–70%: You can sense it when people gain mystic charges in your area. The radius of this ability is a number of miles equal to the number in the tens place of your skill. (So, if you have a 70% skill, it has a radius of about seven miles.) Whenever someone in that area gains a charge, your GM can ask you to roll against your skill. A successful roll lets you know what type of charge was generated (minor, significant, major) and a very vague sense of the direction. A matched success could give you a sense of the charge’s “magickal flavor”—was it the rough savor of a Dipso-mancer sucking the worm out of a tequila bottle, or the relentless grinding of a Mechanomancer tinkering with her latest creation?

71%–90%: Once per day, with a successful Avatar: Hermaphrodite roll, you can change your biological gender. (No, you can’t do this to other people.) Be warned: if you roll the dread 00, you get trapped as a *literal* hermaphrodite—both sets of gear, breasts, facial hair and a set of truly berserk hormones. Someone who becomes a biological hermaphrodite in this fashion is stuck in that strange neither/both sexual gray zone until corrected with magick or surgery: the effects of this channel cannot rescue him/her from the results of the botch. (There is one exception: if the person was born a biological hermaphrodite, the condition is familiar enough to be repaired.)

Changing your biological gender is a rank 4 Self challenge. (If it happens to someone who isn’t pursuing the Mystic Hermaphrodite role, it’s a rank 7 challenge, but any avatar of the Hermaphrodite is a bit more prepared.)

91%+: Once per day, you can gain a charge from changing genders. If your gender change is only symbolic (such as cross dressing or switching gender roles) you get only one minor charge. If you literally, biologically change from female to male or vice-versa, you gain a significant charge. If you’re also a student of a school of magick, you can use these charges normally. If you aren’t, you can discharge them to create a random unnatural phenomenon. Minor charges produce minor phenomena, significant charges produce significant phenomena, but you have no control over which phenomenon occurs, or how. In the great pool hall of magick, this is like taking slop shots.





MATT HARPOLD

The Necessary Servant

Attributes: The Necessary Servant is never the commander, never the president, never the titled holder of a lordly domain. Instead, he is the secretary, the seneschal, the aide de camp. While the visible ruler commands respect and wields obvious power, the Necessary Servant acts in the ruler's name, applies oblique power, and makes the reign of the ruler possible. Though unknown and unnamed, the Necessary Servant is absolutely essential for the success of any large-scale operation.

To put it in the parlance of modern business, "You can't micro-manage success, but you *can* micro-manage failure." Where would Microsoft be if every expenditure, down to a box of donuts for a secretary's retirement party, had to be personally okayed by Bill Gates? Not on almost every computer in the U.S., that's for sure. Everyone with significant power has to delegate that power.

Necessary Servants are those people who loyally accept delegation. They do the detail oriented busy work that frees up executives to meditate on the Big Picture. (Or to take three martini lunches and bang their secretaries, depending on the Executive.) Not every middle manager or executive assistant is a Necessary Servant, however: only those whose actions and attitudes are sufficiently synchronized with the Archetype.

To go the extra mile into Necessary Servant territory, one must have a genuine interest in the power structure one serves. Skilled service is required, and it has to go above and beyond the call of duty. The wage slave who leaves right at 5:00 with the phone still ringing is ineligible for Avatar status. Obviously, the Necessary Servant has to be essential to the functioning of the business/church/club/whatever. Anyone who won't be missed or can easily be replaced is not "necessary," no matter how skilled or dedicated. This is perhaps the most critical element: While the Servant takes orders from "the boss" and labors in a subordinate position, it is crucial that the boss rely on the Servant more than the Servant needs the boss.

As with most Avatars, there are positive and negative elements of the Necessary Servant. When devoted to a benevolent structure, the Necessary Servant can make it far more efficient. Similarly, a Necessary Servant who selflessly serves can free "the boss" from minutiae and detail work, providing the space for a leap from "good" to "great." On the other hand, a good worker can do great harm when serving a bad master. Other Necessary Servants can come to utterly dominate their supposed master

(who is, after all, helpless without the aid of the Servant). The more typical “power behind the throne”—the conspirator who controls by suggestion and stoops to conquer—could be channeling the Necessary Servant. Most insidious of all are those Servants who mean only the best, but whose capabilities make them a crutch to their boss. Instead of learning to take charge, the leader fails to lead, letting the Servant do all the work.

Taboos: The Servant never leads directly. While great authority can be entrusted to him, he must always be acting in another’s name. (Even if the power is being used fraudulently or with malicious intent, it has to be another’s power.) Furthermore, the Servant *must* be efficient. Any task forgotten, or just done in a half-assed fashion, can sever the tie to the Archetype.

Symbols: The Servant often stands a half step behind the boss. Unassuming garb is favored, and sensible accessories. In the modern age, a multi-line telephone is a must.

Suspected Avatars in History: Conspiratorial historians with a sniff of the Archetype have identified everyone from Richelieu to Rasputin as avatars of the Necessary Servant. However, students of certain coded indications in Shakespeare’s plays point with grim significance to the decline of Elizabethan England after the death of her spymaster Walsingham, and more-paranoid occultists speculate feverishly on the “mysterious disappearance” of Hitler’s confidant Martin Bormann in 1945.

Channels:

1%–50%: All Avatars of the Necessary Servant recognize one another automatically. It’s not a conscious thing, as many of them are ignorant about the Invisible Clergy or unaware of their status as Necessary Servants. Nonetheless, when two people channeling the Necessary Servant meet, there’s an immediate connection and recognition, usually a vague but favorable impression. (“Oh, here’s a sensible person who’ll be good to work with.”) For one Avatar of the Servant to act directly against another, the aggressor must roll under his own Avatar: Necessary Servant score, but above the other Servant’s.

51%–70%: At this level, the Necessary Servant develops an uncanny grasp of social hierarchies. With a successful roll, the Servant can immediately intuit the structure of a corporation, organization, government bureau or similar collection of individuals. He could, for instance, walk into the headquarters of the IRS and, in fifteen minutes, find the right person to talk with in order to straighten out any “little misunderstanding.” Driving up to the US/Mexico border, he could get a sense of which bor-

der guard is drunkenly inattentive. Walking into an ad agency, he could sense which person he’d need to hire away in order to send the maximum shockwave throughout the entire company.

71%–90%: At this level, the Servant can (with a successful roll) belong wherever he is. If he’s in a posh society event, he appears appropriately clad and speaks with a flawless Yale accent. If he goes into a maximum-security prison, he speaks the lingo and spontaneously manifests homebrew tattoos. Furthermore, his face becomes absolutely unmemorable (something like a Nonentity). This chameleon channel turns off the minute the Servant does anything that would draw attention. So (for instance) if he walks into a hardcore biker bar, no one pays any attention until he goes up to the bar and orders a white wine spritzer.

91%+: By this point, the Servant is so useful to his organization that he can invest others within the structure with supernatural acuity. He can do this for his superiors by offering advice and suggestions. He can help out people who are lower than he on the structure, or who routinely receive orders through him—a police dispatcher passing orders to a patrolman, for instance. If that person follows his advice or orders, that person can add a bonus to one skill needed to carry out the Servant’s will. (The Servant picks the skill when making the assignment.) However, doing so temporarily weakens the Necessary Servant’s link to the Invisible Clergy. If the dispatcher gives a +30% bonus to a policeman’s Notice skill, any Avatar: Necessary Servant roll the Servant makes fails if it’s under 30. Similarly, if he cranks the boss’ Wow The Client skill by 50%, he fails any Necessary Servant roll that’s under 50. The Servant can only amplify one person at a time, and only for a maximum of one full day. If the Necessary Servant decides to terminate the effect before the 24 hours pass, his skill penalty ceases immediately, as does the bonus to his beneficiary.





MATT HARPOLD

The Outsider

Attributes: The Outsider is where he or she shouldn't be. An Arab child in an Israeli school, an Aborigine in a Sydney suburb, a female executive at *Hustler*—the possibilities are as varied as human prejudice. The Outsider must be both feared and needed by the community they dwell within. Originally, the need was generally to perform unwanted or distasteful duties, such as banking or leatherworking, or to satisfy a craving for the exotic. Nowadays, however, the Outsider is generally needed by enclosed societies trying to claim they're not prejudiced, such as the all-white golf club which points to its one black member to prove its tolerance. Those who embrace the Outsider can assuage their private guilt, even as their self-perceived superiority over him satisfies their private ego.

Taboos: An Outsider must live among those who do not fully trust him. True acceptance into a community breaks Taboo for the Outsider, as does living apart from a community.

Symbols: Boundaries are a powerful symbol of the Outsider, especially fences, and the Archetype is strongly associated with the color black. Symbolism drawn from *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello* is also common.

Suspected Avatars in History: Many individuals of the Renaissance courts may have been Outsiders, such as Elizabeth's Jewish physician Dr. Lopez and the popular court dwarfs. Ignatius Sancho, the 18th century African-English writer, was originally an Outsider but became too strongly integrated into English society to hold his role. James Meredith, the black student who integrated the University of Mississippi and who now works for the Republican Party, is the best-known living Outsider.

Channels

1-50%: The Outsider is both feared and sexually desirable, both monster and exotic lover. He may flip-flop rolls dealing with either terrifying or seducing those not of his Outsider-defining trait. A matched success results in the target fleeing or collapsing in terror (if a Helplessness-5 check fails), or conceiving a wild passion for the Outsider.

51%–70%: Prejudice creates monsters, and the Outsider can draw upon this power. At this level, the Outsider may reroll any failed Madness check against his Avatar: The Outsider skill, with success resulting in a Hardened rather than Failed mark. The incident that caused the check, however, must have resulted from the Outsider committing some wrong against his host community, or being perceived as doing so.

71-90%: The Outsider can now curse other members of his adopted community with what they most fear: becoming like him. To do this, he has to infect the target with his body fluids via sex, blood transfusions, saliva, *etc.* (The safe-sex movement has been a great help in increasing the strength of this channel, turning our very tissues into vectors of fear.) On a successful Avatar: The Outsider check, the target gains the defining trait of the Outsider for 24 hours, switching skin color, becoming circumcised, or finding himself attracted to his own sex. This typically results in assorted madness checks for the victim and those who encounter him.

91%+: At this level, the community needs the Outsider more than ever, and the Archetype reflects this. No member of the host community may physically attack the Outsider unless they make a Self-10 check for each attack. (Magick or emotional attacks are not blocked by this channel.)





MATT HARPOLD

The Peacemaker

Attributes: Violence and warfare are as old as humanity. However, there have always been those who work to end such conflicts and so transform fighting into harmony. The teacher who stops a playground fight by convincing the children to settle their differences constructively is channeling the Peacemaker, as is the diplomat who convinces two warring nations to lay down their weapons.

The heart of being a Peacemaker is stopping all forms of violent conflict. Devout Peacemakers believe that every act of violence harms all of humanity, and that violence is never the correct solution to a conflict. Unfortunately, while numerous heroic figures have channeled the Peacemaker, rational argument, passive resistance, and similar non-violent means sometimes fail when faced with insane horrors like serial killers or genocide. By preventing all forms of violence Peacemakers reduce bloodshed, but they also sometimes make it more difficult to solve certain problems.

Taboos: Peacemakers have only one taboo, but it is absolute. They must never use violence. Arguments, passive resistance, and even screaming or pleading are all acceptable options, but avatars who actually raises a hand against another person weaken their connection to this archetype. Even carrying weapons slightly weakens the avatar's connection to this archetype. Most Peacemakers will also attempt to talk their comrades out of using violence, but failing to do so will not seriously weaken their connection to the Clergy. Persistent association with violent individuals will, however.

Symbols: Doves, peace signs, and white flags are all symbols of the Peacemaker. Peacemakers typically stand with their hands out-stretched to prove they carry no weapons or harmful intentions.

Suspected Avatars in History: Dr. Martin Luther King, who preached passive resistance and non-violence as the path to attain justice and racial equality, was likely an avatar, as was Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, who believed that a policy of accommodation and negotiation with Adolf Hitler would preserve "peace in our time" and so keep Britain out of World War II.

Channels:

1%–50%: At this level, you may attempt to calm conflicts between individuals and small groups of fewer than a dozen people. You cannot stop a raging gun-battle. However, before a conflict starts or during any significant break in hostilities, you can plead for the combatants to cease their hostilities. If you make a successful Avatar: The Peacemaker roll then everyone involved in the conflict who can hear your unamplified voice will find the prospect of violence revolting. Anyone affected can choose to press on with the fight, but he or she suffers a Violence check with a rank equal to the tens digit of your Avatar skill. The conflict will start again if anyone does indeed attack, and once the conflict is restarted you receive a -20% shift to your chance to stop it again.

If the violence has stopped you can help negotiate a solution. Unless you help the participants work out a viable solution, the violence may begin as soon as you leave. Also, while you cannot convince the participants to accept your particular solution, if you make a successful Avatar: The Peacemaker roll you can get them talking among themselves so that hopefully they can work one out for themselves. If the problem has no solution both sides can agree on, then you cannot keep the fight from eventually erupting again, although you may be able to declare a temporary truce for purposes of further discussion.

51%–70%: Now all can see the truth and purity of your conviction. As long as you continue to act in harmony with your nature, everyone will find it almost impossible to attack you. Psychotic snipers will shoot someone else, and even slaving pit bulls will refuse to bite you. Guards can refuse to let you enter a building and the police may attempt to arrest you, but anything living will have great difficulty actually lifting a hand to injure you. Whenever someone is about to attack you, you may make an Avatar: The Peacemaker roll. Success on this roll means that the person or animal hesitates from attacking you regardless of the provocation, unless you're about to harm them; the would-be attacker can still press on with the attack, but suffers a Violence check with a rank equal to the tens digit of your Avatar skill. Automated systems and traps are unaffected by this power, since

you can only affect living creatures. This immunity will also not protect your companions, though you may shield someone from harm with your body and hope for the best. Unfortunately, if you ever use violence against another person this immunity to attack is unusable for the next full day.

71%–90%: If you can see a fight, you can stop it—whether it's two dogs fighting over a bone or a couple dozen gang members shooting each other. If you step forward, command that everyone stop fighting, and make a successful Avatar: The Peacemaker roll, all conflict will instantly cease. Unfortunately, this peace will only last as long as you are present. To stop the conflict in a more-permanent fashion you must actually suggest some form of resolution to the problem. Everyone will listen to this resolution and if it settles the dispute in a reasonably equitable fashion then everyone will abide by it. Unlike previous channels, the participants will listen and agree to any reasonable solution you suggest. However, an attempt to suggest highly biased resolutions, like solving a gang war by telling one gang to simply surrender to the other, will result in renewed hostilities. This ability cannot be used to resolve large conflicts involving more than fifty people.

91%+: All violence, both human or natural, is subject to your control. You can stand before a tornado, a raging bull, or a seething mob and attempt to calm it. This power only works within the range of your unamplified voice. You can completely calm a local phenomenon like a tornado or a pack of angry wild dogs, but you can only create a small island of peace within a hurricane, a battlefield, or a vast herd of stampeding wildebeest. To use this power you must speak to the subject or subjects that you wish to pacify and make an Avatar: The Peacemaker roll. If you succeed against a local target like a tornado or a gun battle, it swiftly dissipates. Groups of extremely hostile people will then begin to work out solutions to the conflict on their own. However, local regions of calm in larger disturbances like wars or huge thunderstorms last only as long as you continue to speak to the source of violence and concentrate on making peace. You can walk slowly or ride in an open vehicle while doing this, but can take no other significant action.





MATT HARPOLD

mharpold

The Rebel

Attributes: No one likes being told what to do, but we all realize that society needs rules. Some good, some bad. Most people appreciate the good ones, and we all complain about the bad ones. Few people have the courage to actually do something about them, but there are some that can and do challenge these rules. A few of these dissidents channel the Rebel archetype.

The Rebel acts to change the injustices that society takes for granted, but not for personal gain and not even to prove his worth to his fellow man. The Rebel's motivation is much more than simply righting wrongs: something in their being is fundamentally offended by oppression. To see oppression in action causes the Rebel pain on a spiritual level. He is moved to speak out when he sees even the simplest act of repression. This may be as simple an act as pointing out to a convenience store clerk that \$8.50 for shampoo is too damn much, or as involved as organizing an armed insurrection against a despotic government. The power of this archetype comes from the conviction it can inspire. Not only can the Rebel expose the unseen and sleeping injustice that the rest of society is too jaded to notice, but he can arouse the same level of moral indignation in you as well. Not only can he expose the inequities of society, he can mobilize a grassroots movement to right those wrongs—a powerful ability that can easily become as dangerous to the Rebel as it can his opponents.

This Archetype gains potency by exposing the corrupting influences that we all take for granted. Rebels are most often associated with armed insurrections and violent protests, but in fact most Rebels are anything but violent. Some Rebels push for social reforms, combating the bureaucracy of the government from within. Others strive to stem the tide of increasing militancy within the pro-life movement, recognizing the dichotomy of violent protest in support of life. When used selfishly the Rebel can foster a cult of personality which erodes the structure of society. It is surprisingly easy for the people channeling this archetype to lose their focus and create situations where they actually increase the oppression they fight against. As a Rebel's message is shared with others, more and more people will flock to the rebel's banner, recognizing the injustice they have been wallowing in for so many years, attracting the attention of oppressors themselves.

Cause: A Rebel must choose a Cause. (A Rebel without a Cause . . . well, he'll probably come to a bad end.) The Cause can be any reasonable agenda that has a clear opponent. "Fighting polluting corporations" is fine, but "fight unhappiness" doesn't have a recognizable foe. Once a Rebel chooses a Cause, he must stick with it; changing Cause will violate taboo. The only ac-

ceptable time to change a Cause is when a recognized opponent publicly grants a meaningful concession to the Rebel's Cause; credit must go to the Rebel in media reports of the concession, at which time the Rebel may declare victory and move on to a new Cause.

Taboos: Ignoring oppression will cause the Rebel's connection to the Archetype to weaken, but so will public failure at fighting that oppression or abandoning a Cause without victory. Selling out is the biggest hurdle for the Rebel to contend with. Everyone has needs and wants, and occasionally even Rebels have to sacrifice their convictions to some degree or another. The trick is to pursue the greatest evils while minimizing the perpetuation of the lesser ones—a perilous tightrope to walk.

Symbols: A megaphone and a broken chain frequently represent the Rebel. Another powerful symbol is a book containing the writings of an author who has channeled this Archetype in the past. Creating your own journal containing the Rebel's own thoughts and ruminations is a powerful symbol for this Archetype, but can be especially dangerous if it falls into the wrong hands.

Suspected Avatars in history: Mahatma Gandhi is generally acknowledged as one of the most successful Rebels of all time. Other less-successful Avatars may have included Karl Marx and David Koresh. Likewise, Charles Manson would be an excellent example of a Rebel avatar in the service of terrible goals. Most recently, John McCain and Bill Bradley may have been rival Rebels.

Channels:

1%–50%: The Rebel can make a believable warning about his Cause. A successful check will convince any target who does not have a firm opinion against the Cause to support the Cause for one week. The target will strive to adhere to the Rebel's code of conduct, offering vocal support in her daily life and aiding protests in her spare time. If the target acts against the Rebel's agenda, she suffers a Self check equal to the tens digit of the Avatar: The Rebel skill. At the end of the week the ideological fervor wears off, but the target may continue supporting the Rebel if her allegiance fits well with her personality. The Rebel may use this channel once per day. Only one attempt may be made on a target each month—if your targets don't come around to believing your Cause of their own accord, they won't help for the long haul.

51%–70%: The Rebel may rouse the rabble. With a successful Avatar: The Rebel check and thirty minutes of ranting, people who hear the entirety of this tirade may be inspired to take immediate action to bring those accountable for these atrocities to justice. The maximum number of people affected from those listening is equal to the Rebel's Avatar: The Rebel skill.

Those who have a firm opinion against the Cause cannot be affected, and those listening to your initial rant must do so voluntarily. If more people are eligible than you can affect, the GM chooses who succumbs. Action taken is as a group, and lasts for a maximum of three hours. During this time, the targets share the Rebel's Rage or Noble passion—the Rebel chooses which for the crowd as a whole. The Rebel may control the crowd and direct its actions as long as he can be heard by the crowd and can make an additional Avatar: The Rebel check every half hour after the first. The crowd engages in violence only if provoked through violent treatment of its members at the hands of the opposition. If at any point the check is missed, the crowd can no longer be controlled and will disperse peacefully within fifteen minutes; in cases of extreme opposition, however, a riot may ensue. The Rebel's name is known to everyone involved in the action on all sides, and will be credited or blamed for the result by the media and by law-enforcement authorities. A grossly unsuccessful action may violate Taboo.

71%–90%: Once a month, the Rebel may attempt to recruit fanatically loyal followers from those currently affected by the first or second channels. Make a successful Avatar: The Rebel check. From that roll you may choose one die to determine the number of fanatics you inspire; the other die governs how many days they will serve in that capacity. They will follow any non-suicidal orders which directly affect the opposition. Orders could include spiking trees, disabling construction equipment, or even assaulting opposition members. If their actions are in violation of their passions or obsession, Self checks should occur; a failure means the target will never again be affected by the Rebel's channels. If a follower makes a conscious choice to back out of the obligation, she may do so but suffers an Unnatural check equal to the tens digit of the Rebel's skill.

91%+: The Rebel cannot die quietly. If he is attacked because of his Cause, and if there is no one working for his Cause witnessing the attack, the attack automatically fails. An attack can be a physical attack, a Blast, or any magickal effect targeted at the Rebel with the intent to weaken or damage the Rebel or his Cause—such as spells that would control the Rebel or reveal something secret about his work. If the Rebel starts the fight, he gains no protection. If someone working for his Cause witnesses the attack, he still gains no protection—because a martyr is always good for the Cause.





MATT HARPOID

The Scholar

Attributes: For some, the lure of lost secrets and ancient knowledge is more important than riches, power, or sometimes even life itself. Scholars understand mysteries which elude others and always seem to know some fact that applies to the current situation. The primary drive of every Scholar is to study and amass knowledge. The purposes to which this knowledge is put are all secondary. Unlike the Chronicler (see p. 50), the Scholar has little interest in expressing his knowledge for public consumption, preferring instead to simply accumulate it for his personal edification.

Some Scholars have a particular area of knowledge they are obsessed with, while others are more ambitious and wish to understand all of human knowledge. In all cases, a Scholar's greatest joy is learning something new. However, Scholars are not merely human encyclopedias. They also correlate and synthesize knowledge. While ordinary mortals might miss such correlations, a Scholar can read a book about the activities of a specific esoteric cult and several articles on the fluctuations of the stock market and notice that periods where the cult is most active are also times when the stock market rises, and deduce that this cult performs numerological rituals which affect the stock market.

Taboos: Scholars exist to collect and amass knowledge. Merely refusing a chance to gain knowledge takes an avatar further from this archetype. Actually destroying any unique source of knowledge, even to keep it out of someone else's hands, is much worse and will have a significant effect on the avatar's standing.

Symbols: The Scholar's primary symbol is the book. Other common symbols are tweed jackets, libraries, eyeglasses, and writing implements, especially fountain pens.

Suspected Avatars in History: Heinrich Schliemann, the archaeologist who discovered Troy using the *Iliad* as a guide, and Jean Francois Champollion, the linguist who deciphered the Rosetta stone, were both likely Scholars. Marsilio Ficino, the 15th century linguist who translated the long-

lost and highly magickal *Hermetic Corpus* for Cosimo de Medici was almost certainly one.

Channels:

1%–50%: Any failed check against a skill related to academic knowledge can be flip-flopped if the changed result is less than the Avatar: The Scholar skill. No avatar skill check is necessary. Skills like Research, History, Academic Learning, or General Education can all be affected by this ability, but skills with direct, practical applications, including academically learned skills like Medicine or Law, are not covered by this ability. Only skills which relate directly to knowledge and learning can be flip-flopped.

Example: Melissa has an Avatar: The Scholar skill at 45% and a General Education of 55%. When asked a question about an obscure French noble she rolls against her General Education skill with a result of 83—a failure. She can flip-flop this roll to make it a successful 38, because the 38 is less than her Avatar: The Scholar skill.

51%–70%: Throw away your index cards and your notebooks. As long as you make a successful Avatar: The Scholar roll, you can remember anything you have ever read. This channel can only be used to remember actual text, charts, or diagrams which you examined. It cannot be used to remember people or events you saw or heard of. However, it doesn't matter if you read *Julius Caesar* or the Dead Sea Scrolls yesterday or three decades ago. On a successful roll you will remember every word and will be able to quote passages with ease. This applies to material read even before you became an avatar. Each successful Avatar: The Scholar roll recalls exact information equal to one or two pages of text, or a general idea of the information contained in a specific book. If desired, a Scholar could use this ability to completely memorize a phone book, but there are so many more interesting things to be reading.

71%–90%: If you make a successful Avatar roll you can read any language ever written. This ability does not allow you to speak a language or to write it. However, whether something is written in English, Latin, or Ancient High Atlantean, you can read it. This ability also allows you to de-

cipher any type of code or cryptogram. However, it does not work on computer languages. You can only translate languages which are used for communication between two sentient beings. On a successful roll you can read and understand any written language at the same speed and level of understanding that you read your native tongue. While you will remember the information you read, you will retain no knowledge of the language it is written in. Using this ability does not teach you a language. Some Scholars theorize that this channel involves tapping into humanity's collective unconscious.

91%+: At this level you can see deeply into anything you read. A successful Avatar roll: The Scholar will allow you to understand the true meaning of any text. Not only can you solve any riddle ever devised, you know for certain what James Joyce was trying to say in *Ulysses*. This same ability can also tell you information about the writer. Reading any document a paragraph or more long and making a successful roll allows you to understand both exactly how someone felt when they wrote something and what type of person they are. A note written under duress will be obviously different from one written without coercion, and a note emailed by a murderous psychotic will be clearly different from one written as a joke.

This same ability also allows you to correlate the details of what you are now reading with everything else you have ever read. If there are any significant correlations between something you are currently studying and any text you have previously read, you need only make a successful roll to understand this.

Example: Joseph is reading a biography of an Eastern European noble. The text mentions that the noble had a number of minor peculiarities like pale skin and the fact that he refused to see a dentist. Joseph's player wonders if this reminds him of anything he has ever read before. After making a successful roll, Joseph remembers that the oddities match very closely the information contained in a decaying book on vampire lore he read three years ago, and realizes that this noble was most likely a vampire.





MATT HARPOLD

The Trickster

Attributes: Back through the ages, stories told around the campfires follow certain themes. People love to hear about heroes, monsters, and villains, stories dealing with great deeds and great people. All this time, another thread of stories runs parallel to the heroic deeds, stories of cunning and humor, of tricky, lying deceivers who win your heart and run afoul of their own plans. Tales of the Trickster.

The Trickster is clever, sometimes too clever for his own good. He loves scheming and plotting, leading people astray and manipulating them for his own benefit. If there is a devious way to do something, he knows it, and chooses it over anything straightforward. Where's the fun in doing things honestly?

This tendency to plot and manipulate is often the downfall of the Trickster, as his schemes become more and more convoluted, quite often ensnaring him along with his intended victims. Tangled in his own web, his plans crumbling about him, he takes his medicine and begins a new scheme. A successful plan isn't the Trickster's goal. A clever one is.

Flash and flamboyance are his hallmarks, laughter follows him, and trust is his instrument. When he leaves the stage, the effects of his plans manifest themselves, the laughter stops, and the trust vanishes. Until the next time. You can't help but like the clever fellow, and you know he's his own worst enemy.

The Trickster is not out to hurt or destroy as such. He just likes being clever for clever's sake. His plans may bring about unfortunate results, but his goal is not to cause pain. He also tends to focus on targets who are ripe for a fall, whether it's due to pumped-up pride or recent success; the miserable and the mundane are rarely worth messing with.

Taboos: Deceit and manipulation form the core of the Trickster's approach to life. Given the choice between asking for a raise from the boss and setting up a get-rich-quick-scam on the internet, the Trickster fires up the ol' computer. The Trickster must not opt for the honest, straightforward way of doing something when an elaborate, deceitful scheme is possible. This doesn't preclude telling the truth; sometimes that's the last thing anyone expects. It just means that clever and sly is the way to go.

Avoiding the taboo leads to problems, as well. Schemes tend to escalate beyond the control of the Trickster, as he has to come up with new plots constantly to deal with problems that arise as a simpler plan unwinds. Eventually, the lies, tricks, and deceptions form such an unlikely construct that the slightest misstep by the Trickster brings the whole thing crashing down around him. This doesn't harm the Trickster's avatar score, incidentally; on the contrary, it tends to enhance

The Wile E. Coyote Effect

One of the trademarks of the Trickster is the tendency to unknowingly overextend himself. He gets so caught up in the trick that he often doesn't realize he's been found out until too late. To simulate this, the player should take note that the Trickster character does not know when he's failed his Avatar: The Trickster roll to activate a channel, and play any attempt to use a channel as if it were successful. The Trickster may still get away with a lot of what he's trying to do, because if a large black man with a painted-on moustache and a Hawaiian shirt tells you he's Tom Selleck then by God, most people won't argue with the poor lunatic. Tom Selleck's security guard, however, will have some pointed questions to ask.

The GM should keep in mind the circumstances and what the Trickster is attempting when trying to adjudicate how people will react to the bizarre behavior, and the player and character should go along for the ride. Remember that the Trickster likes to have fun. Sit back and enjoy yourself when your schemes go south. As long as you don't look down, you won't realize that you've run out of cliff. And if you do, well—you've still got that little umbrella, right?

it. Folktales are full of Tricksters' schemes getting away from them and putting them into trouble. Many a tale would end simply (and far less interestingly) if the Trickster had just done something honestly rather than using deceit to get his own way.

Symbols: The comedy mask is one of the oldest symbols of the Trickster, along with the Arlecchino mask from the *Commedia del'Arte* shows, and the motley clothes associated with Arlecchino and his later incarnation, Harlequin. In more recent times, natty suits and slicked-back hair have replaced the patches and mask, although clown suits and makeup still get associated with the archetype. Bugs Bunny has become a modern totem of the Trickster.

Suspected Avatars in History: Early Tricksters exist as primarily mythical or legendary beings: Coyote, Arlecchino, Hermes. Most accomplished Tricksters try to avoid any type of publicity or renown, and their cycle of success and disaster tends to keep them rather mundane in the eyes of the world. Two notable modern exceptions are P.T. Barnum and Andy Kaufman; the latter may well have ascended into the Invisible Clergy at the moment of his alleged "death."

Channels:

1%–50%: The Trickster is a likable fellow. Even when someone knows he's up to something, they can't help but like the guy. In fact, if a person's Soul score is lower than the Trickster's avatar skill, they will respond positively to the Trickster despite what he may have done in the past or what he plans to do in the future. Targets don't forget all the nasty things he may have put them through; they're just not as important as the fact that the Trickster is such a nice guy. Once a person is out of the Trickster's presence, they're free to feel any way they like about him. They can also escape the effects of this channel with a successful Soul roll if the Trickster asks them to do something that's not in their own best interest.

51%–70%: The Trickster gains the ability of the Perfect Lie. By making a successful Avatar: The Trickster roll, the Trickster is able to convince his target of the veracity of a single statement, no matter how outlandish the statement is. The lie will be accepted as true by the target until such a time as the statement is demonstrated to be false. Note that for obviously ridiculous lies, the proof may arrive with a few seconds of uninterrupted thought. ("Wait a second. I can too breathe! We're not underwater at all!")

71%–90%: The Trickster gains a great deal of insight into the way people think, feel, and believe. This greatly increases their ability to trick and manipulate them. The Trickster may flip-flop any roll against any skill being used to deceive someone, as long as the result is lower than his Avatar: The Trickster roll. This channel applies to any attempt at deception: disguise, forging documents, counterfeiting, magic tricks, telling a lie, getting out of speeding tickets, *etc.*

91%+: One of the standards of comedies from the *Commedia del'Arte* through Mozart operas all the way to Bugs Bunny cartoons is the Trickster's ability to disguise himself. With a successful Avatar: The Trickster roll, the Trickster may use any lame attempt at disguise to make himself perfectly unrecognizable. Want to look like Patrick Stewart? Pull on a skinhead wig and fake a bad British accent. Want to look like an attractive woman? Paint your lips red, shove oranges under your shirt, and drape the strings of a mop over your own hair. If the Avatar: The Trickster roll is successful, everyone is duped. This disguise extends even to magickally disguising the Trickster, preventing detection of the deception by scrying or aura reading. While the disguise is in place, no means can reveal that the Trickster is an imposter.





MATT HARPOLD

The True King

Attributes: The True King represents the unity of the ruler, the people, and the land. Since ancient times, kings and their realms have had a symbolic link—the royal “we” is a remnant of that belief, referring to the ruler and the realm. The Archetype of the True King makes that symbolic link actual. As the King’s fortunes go, so goes the fortune of his Realm, and vice-versa. The True King is a caretaker, protector, counselor, and leader of his Realm. In today’s world, the King may be more of a spiritual and secret ruler rather than a political and open one.

As a servant of Order, the True King could guide his people into a utopian paradise, supported by the unity of vision only he can bring. As a servant of Entropy, he could topple nations, aided by the power of a Realm blindly loyal and richly rewarded for its efforts. Although the archetype is referred to as the King, avatars can be of either sex.

Taboos: Avatars of the True King must have a Realm they protect and take responsibility for. A Realm can be an area of Land, a group or classification of Followers, or a combination of both. Thus you can have the King of 7th Street, the King of the Cops, or the King of the Road (Bikers and Highways). This Realm of Land and/or Followers can be of any size, although practical considerations must play some part in the decision—no fledgling avatar could possibly protect a Realm the size of Los Angeles or as numerous as the attendees of a Rolling Stones concert.

The King may never act against his Realm, cannot deny one of his Followers aid if they request it, and cannot stand idly by while his Realm is being harmed. He may send his Followers into danger, but not on a suicide mission unless the situation is dire. Protecting the Realm means doing whatever it takes to shield his Land and Followers from outside assault, whether from a gangland boss, the destruction of natural disasters, or even the crushing weight of simple poverty. He is also responsible for those people passing through his Realm, as well as those to whom he grants sanctuary. If the avatar ever loses all of his Land or Followers, his skill in Avatar: The True King drops to zero.

Symbols: The symbols of the True King are the sword, the crown, and the scepter.

Suspected Avatars in History: The quintessential True King is Arthur. Although previous sacred kings surely existed, Arthur has become the nigh-unshakeable incarnation of this archetype, and all would-be Western royal godwalkers from Queen Elizabeth I to Aaron Burr to Bugsy Siegel have followed his path, even through madness (like San Francisco’s Emperor Norton) or into implacable doom (as various adepts have hinted that JFK foresaw).

Realm Components:

Land: A King's Land can be as large as the radius of his Avatar skill in miles. A King with a skill of 43 could therefore have a Land with a radius of 43 miles. This is a maximum, however; in practice, the Land can only be as large as the King has the will and the influence to govern. Kings generally start with a small area and increase it over time as they move along the avatar path and gain Followers. If there are other Kings in the area, the King may challenge or treaty with another King to set borders. If he defeats a ruling King avatar in combat, he may claim part or all of the defeated King's Land, depending upon how much the GM believes the victorious King can hold. Claiming Land involves a triple sacrifice of the King's blood, sweat, and tears—three drops of each in a significant place is sufficient to mark the locale as part of the King's Realm.

(Lands used to be much larger. But the federation of smaller states exemplified by the rise of America overwhelmed the old-world notions of consolidated kingship; then when Chicago ward boss "Diamond" Joe Esposito—popularly known as the King of Little Italy—ascended as the True King in 1928, his belief that all politics are local sharply reduced the size of the True King's Land. A Godwalker, however, could challenge this.)

Followers: A King may have a number of Followers equal to his Avatar skill. To gain a Follower, the recruit must explicitly and knowingly offer their fealty and the King may choose whether or not to accept it. In the event of a battle between Kings, the defeated King's Followers still have a free-will choice to either offer their fealty, to remain loyal to their King, or to simply abandon their ties. The ceremonial nature of this offer should be appropriate to the nature of the Realm. People who live within the territory of a True King's Realm may be more predisposed to become Followers, but are not required to. The aura of a King's Follower shows indications of this bond.

Channels:

1%–50%: The avatar is linked to his Realm. If his Realm comes under attack, or one of his Followers calls for aid within the confines of the Land of his Realm, the King can sense it with an Avatar: The True King check called for by the GM. An active use of this channel allows the King to call specific Followers within his Realm to him. The King's voice will echo out of the shadows or call softly from nearby radios or televisions, letting the Follower know that his presence is desired.

51%–70%: The Realm itself strengthens the True King. While within the Land's borders or within line-of-sight of a number of Followers equal to the tens place of his Avatar: The True King skill, he gains a +10% shift on all actions.

71%–90%: The mystical link of King and Realm allows the transfer of Wound Points between King and Land and between King and Followers. For purposes of this channel, the Land of the Realm has exactly the same Wound Points as the King. The King may draw upon these Wound Points at his whim, using them to heal himself or others at the cost of the Land. The King may also drain himself to repair damages to or increase the fertility of the Land. The King may only drain the Land if he is standing within its borders. If the King keeps weakening his Land and not putting points back into it, he will violate Taboo.

Dealing with the Followers of the Realm, the King may only draw Wound Points from them with their consent. (How he gets that consent, whether by simply asking for aid or by placing the Follower under a compulsion like torture, is entirely up to the individual King avatar.) He may transfer Wound Points from himself to them as he chooses. He must be in physical contact with a Follower to drain or heal, but need not be within the borders of his Land to do so.

Finally, the King may transfer Wound Points directly from Follower to Land or from Land to Follower, acting as the relay point between.

At this level, the domain of the True King reflects his own state. If the King is wounded, spontaneous flaws or damage appears across his Realm. A gunshot could manifest as a gas explosion, the flu as Dutch Elm Blight, an orgasm as a spontaneous blossoming of flowers.

91+%: As the King protects his Realm, his Realm protects him. With a successful Avatar: The True King check the King can cause the Land to initiate unarmed combat at the avatar's own Struggle (or equivalent) skill level. Damage is done as for normal hand-to-hand damage, plus modifiers for "weapon type."

Example: A gang is terrorizing the King's Realm. He makes a successful Avatar: The True King roll and then rolls his Struggle skill. He succeeds and a piece of masonry falls off a building onto the gang's leader, doing hand-to-hand damage as if it were the King himself at +6 for being big and heavy.

Used with the King's Followers, a successful roll will grant all who can see the King a shift to any single skill equal to the sum of the Avatar: The True King die roll. Neither King nor Followers need be within the confines of the Land to gain this benefit. The King must choose the skill to be so enhanced, and if a Follower doesn't have that skill or a direct equivalent, there is no effect for that Follower. The shift lasts for fifteen minutes.





MATT HARPOLD

The Two-Faced Man

Attributes: Manipulator. Liar. Deceiver. Traitor. The Two-Faced Man pretends to believe in everything he truly hates, using the influence this lends him to work against the people he loathes. He pulls the strings that make others dance to his purpose—a quest for revenge, the desire to corrupt, some double-agent's subterfuge, or even just personal amusement.

Following the path of the Two-Faced Man is dangerous, and requires a delicate touch. By its very nature, it involves deceitfully winning the trust of others, generally people who would hate you or what you stood for to begin with, and using that trust to achieve ends that—at best—those others would disapprove of. Maintaining that level of pretense is hard, and can require the Two-Faced Man to assume an entirely new persona, living every moment within a shell of deception.

There are as many different reasons for deception as there are avatars of the archetype. Some operate just from basic hatred, wanting to weaken, compromise or destroy a person or organization because of an ideological difference, a real or imagined slight, jealousy, bigotry, or trauma; they simply love deception, and the professed rationale for their actions is merely what they like to think about themselves. Others have a special mission that they want to accomplish—effecting a rescue, gathering information, or otherwise engaging in covert espionage activity. A few attach themselves to a person or group as a path to riches or power, working as a team-member, lackey, or schmoozer to attain the things they desire. There are even a handful of Two-Faced Men who act from sheer caprice, causing trouble for reasons even they cannot identify.

There is no specific requirement for avatars of the Two-Faced Man to actually achieve anything through their deception. Although almost all work with a specific goal in mind, actually reaching it is not necessary. If circumstances change or the Two-Faced Man feels like moving on, changing focus is perfectly acceptable. There is no minimum time limit. Despite the name, there are as many women following the path of

the Two-Faced Man as there are men, with equal success. Known avatars of the Two-Faced Man are very unpopular, and, unsurprisingly, are always treated with extreme suspicion. Many are assiduously hunted by old victims and enemies.

Taboo: Openly working for a personal cause. The Two-Faced Man may aid others in a cause he believes in, and may even make plans with them or work directly for them, but may never acknowledge this fact to others or allow it to be recorded where others might have access to it. Similarly, his true beliefs and aims must never become open knowledge. Going on an open payroll or into membership records for a group he believes in, for example, is absolutely forbidden.

Symbols: Smiling masks, crocodile tears, a whispered aside, snakes with forked tongue extended, fool's gold, the color scarlet, and honey are all associated with this avatar.

Suspected Avatars in History: The first noted instance of this avatar is the god Loki in Norse mythology, who worked from within Valhalla to cause as much trouble and pain for the other gods as he could out of sheer malice. Iago, from Shakespeare's play *Othello*, may have been a depiction of the avatar; Oskar Schindler, Mata Hari, Blunt, Burgess and Maclean, Boris Yeltsin, and any number of deep-cover agents are thought to have been channeling the Two-Faced Man.

Channels:

1%-50%: At this level, the Two-Faced Man is able to appear as the right kind of person to fit in with individuals from or members of any social group except his natural one. His appearance, manner, and vocabulary seem to conform with the standards that would be expected of the sort of person he is claiming to be. Elements that do not fit are overlooked, or somehow seem to be innocent personal quirks. To use this ability, the Two-Faced Man chooses a social stereotype that he does not fit—banker, preacher, housewife—and makes an Avatar: The Two-Faced Man score. If he is successful, he will give off that impression until he uses this channel to pick a new stereotype. (A failure may not be re-rolled for a week.) Suspicious observers may attempt to roll higher than the Two-

Faced Man's avatar skill to throw off the effect, with a +30% shift if the avatar does something blatantly incongruous such as wearing utterly inappropriate clothes or using the wrong sort of language.

Note: The Two-Faced Man cannot deactivate the effects of this channel, so once it is activated he will never again be generally perceived as being from his own social group.

51%-70%: This channel gives the Two-Faced Man the ability to back up his demeanor with words. In conversation, he can give the impression of having the knowledge and experience to verify his claims of who and what he is. If he needs to display attitudes or knowledge he does not in fact possess but that would be commonly found in people from the social stereotype he has currently adopted, he can roll this channel and make some vague, meaningless assertions. If his roll is successful, anyone present will think that he has made a pertinent comment. This does not give any access to actual information—such as providing passwords or lending knowledge of a skill or procedure—but knowledgeable listeners will be satisfied that the Two-Faced Man knows the material concerned.

71%-90%: At this level, the Two-Faced Man seems trustworthy and honest to any questioner. Any suspicious activity seems reasonable if the Two-Faced Man can provide any sort of explanation that might fit within his current stereotype. (“I wasn't rifling your desk, sir, I was just looking for the Wentworth Report.”) On a successful Avatar: The Two-Faced Man roll, the target is completely convinced of the Two-Faced Man's innocence. Particularly weak or out-of-character explanations require a successful Lie roll as well.

91%+: The final channel allows the Two-Faced Man to persuade someone that a rumor, suggestion, or outright lie is true, providing that irrefutable evidence to the contrary is not at hand and that the statement is not blatantly self-destructive. On a successful roll, the target will believe the statement. Comments such as “Hawkes is the traitor,” “MilTech is a great investment,” or “You don't actually need to harm me” would be fine, but “The sun is blue” or “You could cross the freeway through that traffic” would be disbelieved.





CHAPTER THREE

THE HOUSE OF

RENUNCIATION

UNKNOWN
ARMIES



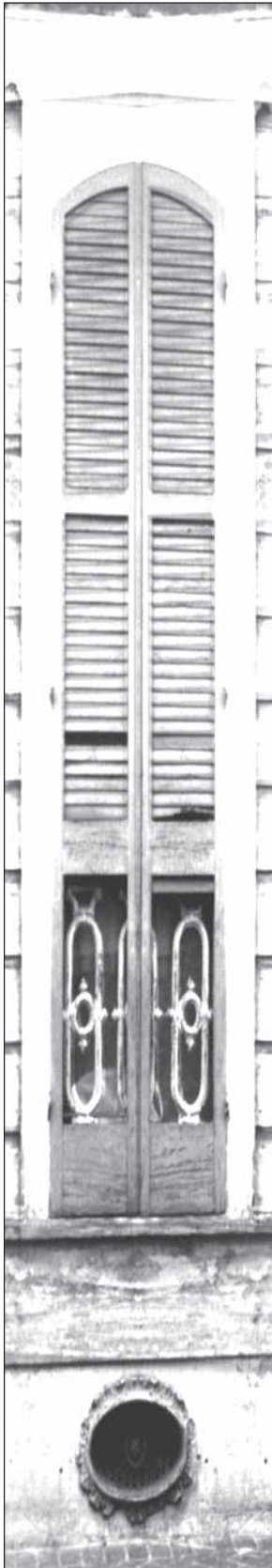
"IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE ARE MANY MANSIONS."

—JESUS OF NAZARETH

"I GO TO PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU."

—ELLISON BLANKE





In the theory of evolution, one of the key

concepts is that of mutation. Survival of the fittest is all well and good, but without mutation we'd still be anaerobic bacteria. Some of these mutations are environmental, like an ice age or the impact of a comet. But some are mutations in the genetic sense, spurs in the family tree that propel a species forward out of the status quo. Mutations are the influence of entropy, mucking around with order and preventing stagnation.

The trouble with evolution is that a species such as humanity can achieve a plateau that is largely immune to mutation, owing to advances in technology and birth rate. Certainly, a comet could strike the Earth and shake us all up again—but that's a drastic solution, and drastic solutions aren't easy to achieve when you're dealing with subtle, egoless forces.

There's a way to smash this plateau of achievement, however, a way to lift us out of the mire of stagnant order and bring us fully into mutable entropy. It's a mutation, one that has the power to alter the direction of human lives, causing unpredictable ripple effects in the mass of humanity.

This mutation is known as the House of Renunciation.

Origins

As with so many things in the occult underground, no one knows when the House first appeared. But it has only been known by that name since the 16th century, when a man named Hubert Roscommons began playing games with the political elite of Europe. He claimed to be of noble birth, ascribing his lineage to a family he called the House of Renunciation. Most people assumed that "Renunciation" (or Renunciación) was the name of the town his family was from, and ascribed its location to France, or perhaps Portugal. Hubert said he was the last of his line, and that it was his destiny to reshape the face of Europe. This would have sounded funny if he wasn't so successful.

In 1523, after meeting with Roscommons, Pope Adrian VI died, restoring the Medici to the



Papacy. Shortly thereafter the Constable de Bourbon, the greatest warrior of France, switched sides and commanded the Spanish armies. Roscommons stayed with de Bourbon's troops long enough to alter the allegiance of Genoese admiral Andrea Doria (also away from France and to the Imperial side). By 1527 he was in England, where Henry VIII had suddenly fallen out of love with his Queen and transferred his affections to Anne Boleyn. This affair sundered the Church of England and led to the birth of Queen Elizabeth. (Meanwhile, de Bourbon's troops were sacking Rome and ending the Renaissance.) Roscommons may have been the "Wandering Jew" who visited the alchemist Agrippa—regardless, by 1530 Agrippa had denounced both magick and science in print. In 1531 Roscommons returned to Florence, where Alessandro de' Medici inexplicably became a cruel tyrant, driving his half-sister Catherine into exile to eventually become Queen of France (and patroness of Nostradamus). It was possibly the sudden reversal of Pope

Paul III's opposition to the newly founded Jesuit Order that bestirred a much older Order to stanch the threat Roscommons posed.

On September 24, 1541, the Order of Saint Cecil murdered Roscommons in Salzburg, believing him to be an agent of supernatural evil. They weren't quite right. But the damage was done, and it wasn't too long before other people began to pop up who claimed the same lineage—and eventually the notion of the Roscommons lineage was abandoned, lost by the varied people and their agendas who followed him.

Hubert was something of an aberration. Few of his successors were so open about their allegiance, preferring to work more quietly, and on a scale that was more personal than political. But to the Order of Saint Cecil and the other members of what we now call the occult underground, the Roscommons lineage was never forgotten, and neither was the House of Renunciation. It didn't forget them, either.



Nature

The House of Renunciation is a magickal space that does not exist in the natural world. Like the Cardboard Palace (see *Postmodern Magick*, p. 146), the House simply makes the space it needs, drawing on the energy of the Statosphere to do its work.

In truth, there is no House as such. Even in the magickal space it calls into being there is no single structure that can be called the House, no garden of unearthly delights. It is known as the House because that's what Roscommons called it, and he was guilty of a basic misunderstanding about the nature of the force he served.

The House manifests as distinct Rooms. Each Room of the House is a separate entity, a magickal space that embodies a particular agenda of change. The Agents of the House each serve a different Room, and the Rooms serve both as their headquarters and as the space to which they bring their victims to work the change that Renunciation brings.

A given Room may in fact be a series of rooms, or a jungle, or just about any other terrain familiar to the minds of humans. The appearance of each Room is an embodiment of the Room's agenda, and each Room does its work in very different ways.



Each Room has a title. Although he never referred to it as such, Roscommons served the Room of Upheaval, whose agenda was the transmutation of stagnant political entities into dynamic, clashing combatants. The Room of Upheaval took the appearance of a magnificent series of courtly chambers, full of books and maps that showed the true story of history—as well as all the variant histories that never occurred, but might occur yet. Political leaders who entered the Room of Upheaval could not leave until they studied these works, memorized maps of worlds that might yet be, and resolved to embrace a diametric course of action that might make some of these unglimped histories come to life. Exiting the Room they did their best to bring these new visions to life, possessed of a fervor for change and leadership that led us to the shifting maps we know today. To Roscommons, the Room of Upheaval was simply the House of Renunciation, and he lived and died never knowing that there was anyone else like him in the world.

In fact, at any given time there may be dozens of Rooms in active existence, each served by one or

more Agents who further the agenda of the Room. Many more dozens of Rooms lie barren and neglected, their usefulness passed forever or just for a generation. The Room of Upheaval, for example, has been dormant since the death of Roscommons, but the changes it wrought are still with us today.

Giving lie to the notion of a true House, these Rooms are not connected. Each is an entity unto itself, pursuing its own agenda. Like Roscommons, many Agents are unaware that there are others like themselves. They typically believe that they have been chosen by destiny, or by God, or by simple chance, and that they are the chosen ones who can change the world, one person at a time. Many have not even heard of the House, and simply identify themselves with the Room whose title they learned from their predecessors.

Because the House has no core agenda save that of mutable change, the agendas of its Rooms are often contradictory. Agents sometimes come into conflict, resulting in battles that may lead to an uneasy truce or to the defeat of a Room, leaving it abandoned until the right person comes along to fire it up again.



Causes

This still begs the questions of where Rooms come from, why a particular agenda is empowered with the stuff of the Statosphere, and why Agents are called from the ranks of men and women to serve the goal of mutation. The answer, as with everything in the world, is simple. We did it.

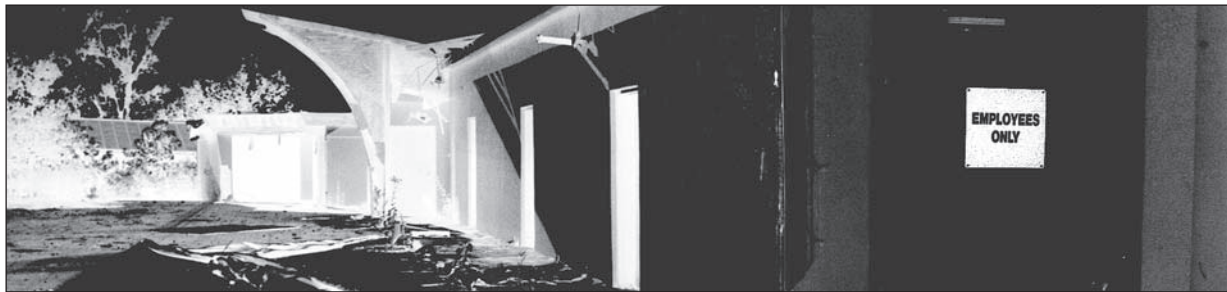
Just as the force of human will gives rise to archetypes who ascend into the Statosphere to govern us the way we unconsciously want, the

force of human conflict gives rise to the Rooms of the House who resolve our conflicts in the ways we want them dealt with. In the early days of life on Earth, conflict between species or groups were resolved along evolutionary lines: simple survival of the fittest. But the massive proliferation of humans and the plateau of stasis we have achieved makes such evolution difficult. To continue advancing, we need to be shaken up. We need our conflicts to be resolved in unpredictable ways, ways which may well spark fur-

ther conflicts—but they won't be the ones we would have otherwise chosen. The House can effect drastic change on a personal level, accelerating the mutations of human relationships and forcing us into new and more interesting ways of living . . . and dying.

It is this basic human friction that has given birth to the House, an intermediary who changes what we cannot, on a timetable far shorter than what unaided evolution could accomplish. Our basic human impatience means that we are

collectively no longer willing to wait for nature to move us forward; we want to be the agents of our own change, and to that end we need Agents to lead us into the House, turn our heads around, and kick us back into the commonweal to stir things up. As the slots of the Invisible Clergy fill up, our collective unconscious acquires a heightened sense of urgency, causing us to desire ever and more rapid change so that we may achieve our destiny as soon as possible—or change it altogether.



Methods

As an unnatural agent of human will, the House does its work through our fellow humans. A given Room draws to it Agents who serve its agenda. But there must be a line of succession. A current Agent must choose his or her colleagues or replacements, ensuring that the agenda continues on. When that succession is broken, the Room languishes.

Agents of a Room choose targets from everyday life. Guided by the abilities of their Room, Agents seek out people who are ripe for a particular brand of Renunciation. This is usually followed by a period of study, in which the Agents examine suitable targets and decide on a course of action. At its simplest level, this action consists of leading a target into the Room. Some Rooms ask more of its agents, however, requiring them to study their targets carefully and shape the abilities of the Room so that they may have the greatest affect. A premature attempt at Renunciation may lead to failure. Success is more common, however, and when the process is complete the target reenters the

world with a new approach to life. Their work done, the Agents move on to their next assignment.

However, Agents are not limited to simple Renunciation. Some Rooms adhere to an agenda so fervently that their Agents engage in actions and intrigues within the real world that do not result in Renunciation. They might commit assassinations or sabotage, found charities or clinics, or take mundane leadership roles that further their secret agenda.

Some Agents live in their Rooms, venturing out only on assignments. Others spend most of their time living normal lives, venturing into their Rooms when needed. Still others are so affected by their new agenda that they change completely, losing their old identities and even their old bodies in the service of their new master.

Individual Agents do not necessarily have any great knowledge of the occult underground, the Statosphere, or much of anything else. Many simply embrace their new mystical mission, ignorant of the larger scheme of things. Others are savvy and experienced players in the great game, inter-



acting with powerful cabals and cutting deals with dukes.

In all cases, however, Agents have individual worldviews that reflect their agenda, similar to adepts. They may laugh at notions of Ascension and the Statosphere, since those elements may not fit their personal beliefs. Or they may see themselves

as messiahs, chosen by an Invisible Clergy that they presume shares their agenda to the fullest. Few have a broad enough perspective to see that they are simply doing the work of oft-conflicted human will, without any shared cosmic sanction that would validate their extreme beliefs and methods.



Renunciation

It's no simple thing to review your life's work, question its validity, and then summarily chuck it in the waste bin to start anew. But that's what the House of Renunciation demands of you—once you've set foot in the House, you leave on a path different from the one upon which you arrived, with no dicker over the issue.

The impact that renunciation has upon a character is profound. Although this can vary from Room to Room, in general your personal obsession changes and you must choose a new one. In most cases the new obsession is diametrically opposed to the old one. While the change need not be the *exact* opposite of the previous obsession, it must work at odds with the old one. Some Rooms simply remove your obsession, placing you ever after on a path of quiet moderation.

If a character's obsession skill is closely tied to her personal obsession, then it too must change similarly. She may simply abandon that skill and began developing a new one, or only use

the old one in the service of her new beliefs. In the latter case, simply retitling the skill so that it does the same thing in a new way is acceptable; Beating People Up may become Protecting the Weak, which remains a basic combat skill but may only be used in the proper context.

Because an obsession is so closely tied with a person's identity, renunciation initiates a stress challenge of at least rank-5. The particular type and magnitude of stress may depend on the nature of the obsession and the method of renunciation, but it generally challenges either one's sense of Self or Helplessness. Additional stress checks are at the discretion of the GM.

In the right circumstances, renounced individuals may even become Agents. This may happen immediately, or they may be called on months or years later. Short of that, the renounced are often willing to aid their Agents when requested to do so—giving each Room a loyal force of dozens or hundreds of people in all walks of life, who take action in accordance with their new way of life.



Using the House

In an *Unknown Armies* campaign, the simplest use for the House of Renunciation is to introduce Agents into a situation involving the PCs. Like any cabal or duke, the Agents are pursuing their agendas and either aiding or opposing other interested parties. It may be that the Agents are pursuing a particular target for renunciation, or perhaps they are simply working to further their Room's agenda through direct action. Agents can represent most any philosophical agenda you can come up with, making them handy tools of passion, mystery, and violence.

Agents are not immortal or all-powerful. Like Avatars, they are normal men and women in the service of a mystical force. They can be injured or killed, though they often have unusual powers or artifacts at their disposal. They also cannot simply renounce someone who is interfering with their plans—only suitable targets may suffer that fate.

A more direct use of the House is for the Agents to target a PC for renunciation. Either the PCs stop them, permanently, or the Room succeeds and the PC is renounced. Because this directly meddles with a player's conception for his character, the GM should consider this course of action carefully. Ideally, you should discuss it in general terms with the player before launching the plotline, and choose a different option if the player is strongly opposed to having his character altered in this way. But if your campaign is a high-power, rough-and-tumble game, your players may simply be willing to roll with the punches—and after all, they still might win.

The most involved way of using the House is to try a campaign in which the PCs are themselves Agents and their allies; this corresponds to the Reality Cops narrative structure (see UA, p. 118). In such a case, the first step is to choose a Room. You might use one of the four presented in this chapter, or you and your players might collectively design one of your own using these as models.

A new Room should begin with an agenda. What is the core idea behind the Room, and how does it seek to enact that idea in the real world? From there, design the Room's appearance. Is it a series of courtly chambers like Roscommons' Room of Upheaval, or is it a wilderness like the Room of Ignorance? Then consider the Room's abilities. These are a simple list of unnatural effects the Room can generate within its confines, and includes the specific procedure that leads to renunciation in those who are brought inside. Finally, the players should design their characters around the Room's agenda, developing their obsessions and their backgrounds to tell the story of their life with the Room. PCs who are Agents of a Room should take the skill Agent of Renunciation (see UA, p. 187).

If you take this option, keep in mind that a given Room is never all good or all evil. A Room's agenda is typically so focused that its actions can result in what we would consider to be both good and evil consequences. The rippling effects of a Room's agenda are not as great a concern as the purity of the agenda itself, which the Agents, of course, see as a good thing.



Rooms

Four rooms are presented in this chapter for your use: the Room of Cold Reflection, the Room of Heart's Burden Lifted, the Room of Ignorance, and the Room of Rusted Things. A

fifth Room has already seen print, although we did not reveal it as such: the Library from the scenario "Joy & Sorrow" (see One Shots, p. 38) is also known, obviously enough, as the Room of Joy & Sorrow.



RICHARD PAGE

The Room of Cold Reflection

It's a dog-eat-dog world, right? We all do what we can just to get by—cutting a corner here, taking an unfair advantage there, maybe tripping up the competition if we have to. Still, it's just little stuff on the way toward accomplishing a more important goal. No one's going to remember any of the niggling details a day or two down the road . . . right?

There's no doubt about it—ambition carries with it a heavy toll, and many lives are disturbed in the wake of attaining those goals. Perhaps it's no coincidence, but the wake seems particularly turbulent behind those for whom the end justifies the means. We're also all given to moments when our past catches up with us, when feelings of guilt

or shame over how we've behaved stare us square in the eye for a moment before we can look away. Even the hardest of hearts faces these uninvited memories, however briefly, before they get pushed back down into the cellar of the subconscious. Most people don't spend a lot of time dwelling on such stark truths for too long. They know it's uncomfortable, or worse—counterproductive. Each of us has the potential to be our own worst critic, because no matter how hard we try to hide from the truth about ourselves, we've all seen what really happened first-hand. The truth of the matter is, however, that our pasts sometimes come back to haunt us all. If we run too hard from our pasts, the Room of Cold Reflection may be lying at the end of the path, up a

few short steps and through a door, waiting to show us the error of our ways.

Agenda

The Room of Cold Reflection exists for one very simple reason—to follow up on the trail of slights, errors, and outright wrongs that people commit and then leave behind like flotsam and jetsam on their path to success. In essence, the Room of Cold Reflection exists to reverse the pragmatic belief that a good-enough cause can wash your hands clean, even if you shed blood for it.

Now, that isn't to say this Room is solely the nemesis of every cold-hearted bastard out there who's deserved his comeuppance for too long—the House of Renunciation and its agents are seldom so righteously minded. We've all had our callow moments, after all, when our ambition overstepped our better nature. So potentially, we're all candidates for a visit to the Room of Cold Reflection. But in practice, the real root of the kind of callous ambition that draws the attention of the Room of Cold Reflection is obsession. When realizing one's obsession reduces the lives of others to little more than either mere resources or stumbling blocks on the way to success, it's like waving a red flag before a bull, and the Room comes for you.

The Room of Cold Reflection achieves its agenda by undermining the visitor's sense of self-identity, chipping away at the foundation of the individual's most prized goals. In so doing, it attacks the visitor's personal obsession, attempting to reduce its merits to naught by laying bare the suffering it has caused.

Contrary to how it may appear, the agenda of the Room of Cold Reflection is neither malign nor righteous. Many obsessions *are* awfully demented, and for all of the harsh reality they had to face, not a few visitors have emerged from the Room of Cold Reflection happier than they went in. But some of those who left happier did so because they were no longer compelled to fight so obsessively for the good of others. In 1966, for example, Dewey Klein was a freedom rider strug-

gling passionately for the sake of black Mississippi residents. His father was thrilled when Klein came home and said he'd rather live than fight—and as the situation down south worsened and the death toll mounted, Klein shook his head, hugged his new fiancé, and silently thanked the Room for leading him off the path of righteousness once and for all. Today he sells real estate and cheats on his wife. There are similar stories from Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Russia, and Amin's Uganda, occasions when the Room forced heroes and villains alike to reconsider their obsession and take the path of moderation. In the light of Cold Reflection, the road more traveled by begins to look awfully appealing.

Appearance

The portal to the Room of Cold Reflection may make its dimension-defying appearance potentially anywhere, but it has the curious tendency to manifest at the top of a flight of stairs. It needn't be a particularly long flight of stairs either—just a step or two will do.

Passing through the door, one finds one's self not in a room as such, but in a broad courtyard garden about two hundred yards square, covered in snow. Four walls of rough, whitewashed plaster surround the courtyard, each wall supporting the low, sloped roof of a covered walkway. Within the courtyard itself lies a tall, dense hedgerow maze that occupies most of the open space. The starless sky above is lost in dull, inky blackness—indeed, one really can't be certain that there's a sky at all, though periodically a light, silent dusting of new snow falls from high above in the unfathomable dark. From some indiscernible source, everything appears to be lit in a pallid, ambient light, like a full moon on a still night. The icy chill, the snow-muffled quiet, the night-like gloom, and the overall feeling of loneliness immediately begin to gnaw at the guest's self-confidence.

The walkway that travels the perimeter of the Room of Cold Reflection is bounded on one side by the white plaster walls and on the other by a colonnade of softly carved white marble pillars.



Each column features the vague form of a human being supporting the roof above. The flagstones of the pathway are a smooth, blue-veined marble, while the gently sloping roof about ten feet above is a dull, blue-grey slate. Following the colonnade, one can completely circumnavigate the courtyard without stepping into the dead-quiet snowscape, and ascertain that the garden is given over mostly to a dense, snow-laden evergreen hedgerow with entrances that periodically interrupt its façade. As one walks, soft, half-heard voices seem to come from the indiscernible faces of the carved pillars. Here and there, marble benches are situated between two of the pillars, inviting the weary to sit and contemplate the solitude—but the stone is far too cold for comfort, and the whispering from the carvings grows more urgent, though no louder and no more intelligible.

Climbing atop the roof of the colonnade is not an impossible task, though the snow-covered slate makes for slippery and hazardous work. Once atop the roof, one finds only an inky gloom that physically resists any attempt to pass beyond the walls. Looking into the courtyard, in the garden itself, an intricate maze of paths can be seen weaving through the hedgerow. Staring too long at the maze, however, leads to an uneasy sense of vertigo and the sensation that one may lose balance and slip from the slick slate shingles.

Hardly ten or fifteen feet from the roofline of the colonnade stands the dense, well-manicured evergreen hedgerow that occupies the expanse of the courtyard itself. The hedgerow is roughly ten feet high, forming a thick and impassable barrier from the ground to the top, where it is capped with a layer of fresh snow. One may enter the hedgerows from any of six entrances spaced at odd intervals about the outer hedge. The pathways between the hedgerows are covered with an ankle-deep blanket of soft snow that muffles any footsteps—beneath the snow, should anyone care to dig, are broad, greyish-white flagstones set in the earth. Once a person starts walking through the pathways, it doesn't take long to realize that the hedges do indeed form a contorted maze.

The hedgerow is a maze that doesn't play by the rules. First, even though one couldn't prove it, there's the distinct feeling that the hedges actually move, closing off paths behind the visitor or opening new ones ahead of him. There is also the overwhelming impression that the inside of the maze must be bigger than the outer perimeter of the hedgerow would allow. Perhaps most disconcerting is the fact that, in spite of the snowfall being only very light, backtracking around a corner or two reveals footprints already fading in the snow until they can no longer be seen. Occasionally, out of the corner of the eye, a visitor may catch a glimpse of what he thought was someone familiar, the fleeting impression of a human figure turning a corner ahead of him. The impression of this figure becomes more frequent and more pronounced as the visitor becomes more lost. The maze does, in fact, act upon a will of its own, purposefully disorienting and trapping anyone but its agents within the hedgerow until it deigns to release them. Sooner or later (generally later, as it tends to help soften people up) the maze herds the visitor toward the heart of the hedgerow—the Frost Garden.

The Frost Garden is a juxtaposition of startling, delicate beauty and cold, cruel reality. As the hedgerow opens upon a wide clearing, barren fruit trees stand about draped with sheets of silver ice, and fountains that have been frozen still cascade motionlessly into pools of ice. Statuary sculpted from ice and snow in the most lifelike of fashions stand about as if waiting for the garden to thaw. Any sense of awe and wonder the visitor might feel upon stumbling upon this garden is quickly diminished by the realization that every feature captured in ice is a mockery, an accusation of the weakest, most callow moments of his life. In the center—the only unfrozen water in the Room—is the Pool of Renunciation.

The exact nature and composition of the Frost Garden is inevitably different for each person visiting it, and the hedgerow maze prevents more than one person from standing at its heart at any one time, save for the possible company of an agent of Cold Reflection. Staring deeply into

the frozen pools and sheets of ice invariably reveals images of great shame for the viewer. The ice and snow sculptures, unlike the marble pillars of the colonnade, feature the distinct likenesses of those wronged by the visitor over the course of his life, their faces registering the poignancy and impact their brush with him has had on their lives. Regardless of a person's intentions in life, the Frost Garden surrounds the visitor with a virtual litany of transgressions, errors, and sins of omission.

Abilities

As stated previously, the purpose of the Room of Cold Reflection is to provide the visitor with the opportunity to reflect upon the more selfish and callous aspects of his nature, and thereby reject them in favor of a more generous perspective. However, a person can't be expected to simply set foot within the Room and instantly and magically forswear his previous way of life—he has to be coaxed and convinced that the way he had lived was wrong, and his behavior needs to change diametrically in fashion.

Cold Comfort. Although it is well below the freezing point in the Room of Cold Reflection, the visitor is in no danger of suffering hypothermia while within its walls. While the person's core temperature may drop perceptibly, the Room mystically sustains him, without comforting him in the least. It is important to bear in mind that the Room of Cold Reflection is not intended as an inescapable death trap, though it presents a fine occasion to require periodic Isolation stress checks.

That's not to say that a prisoner can survive indefinitely in the room. He won't freeze to death, and there's plenty of snow to prevent dehydration, but there is not a speck of food to be found. If he brought any in himself, that's fine, but it's only prolonging the choice between the Pool of Renunciation and a slow, lingering death.

The Pools of Ice. The frozen pools of the Frost Garden serve an interesting means toward the goal of renunciation. In essence, they are scry-

ing mirrors—they show not the reflection of the viewer, but reflections of the lives he has affected.

All scenes are displayed in the present tense, and are accurate and truthful images of someone else's current state of affairs, though admittedly chosen specifically for the negative impact the viewer has had upon the situation. The images seen may be as direct and obvious as a corrupt government minister and his wife getting lynched after you revealed his embezzlement. Or it may be as subtle as the straitened circumstances of a friend who was once close but who now has no one to turn to for a receptive ear. Any direct or tangential influence that the viewer's ambition and drive has had upon someone's life somewhere may appear in any of the pools or fountains. Viewing the pools of ice requires a Self challenge appropriate to the most powerful scene viewed.

The Rogue's Gallery. The ice sculptures present a pointed assault upon the visitor's sense of identity and purpose, depicting the various and sundry people who have suffered as a result of the guest's obsession. All of the figures are immediately recognizable, captured in a moment that conveys all the nuances of hurt, bitterness, betrayal, resentment, anguish, and accusation that they might bear toward the visitor. As with the pools of ice, viewing the ice sculptures can initiate a Self challenge.

Unlike the pools and fountains, the ice sculptures need not depict the current state of affairs, but may display the ugly cause-and-effect at the moment the event occurred. There's the wife you scorned, the children whose welfare you neglected, the childhood friend to whom you never write, the homeless man who starved because you wouldn't spare him some change, the date you once left in a lurch at a party to go off with someone else, the parents whom you told to go to hell and stay out of your business, a dog recoiling from a harsh beating you gave him. Not all of the possible figures are there at any given time, and the cast changes as the Frost Garden is revisited, but the undeniable expressions of disappointment and discontent are evident in their faces and pos-



tures, as is the cause of their suffering—you and your fixation.

The Pool of Renunciation. The center of the Frost Garden, the hedge maze, and the room itself is a small, low pool of water. Its stones are unmarked, and the water looks unusual only because it isn't frozen. Looking in this still fountain shows an ordinary reflection, unlike the others. But anyone who looks into the pool knows: drinking this means you give up.

That's really all there is to it. One sip and you can leave the room—with your previous passion extinguished, ready for a life free of obsession. Or you can refuse, cling to your passion, and stay for another day of bitter cold with a stone bench for a bed, snow for supper, and the exquisite tortures of the Frost Garden as entertainment.

Some people won't do it. That's their choice. They die a nasty, painful, lingering death, frozen and alone, but holding tight to their principles and their free will. They are never buried: their bodies just fade away.

Most drink.

Agents

Cesar Costello, Agent of Cold Reflection

Summary: Life seemed good to Cesar Costello. He was an up-and-coming Plutomancer—a solid duke in his own right—with money in the bank and his finger on the pulse of the occult underground. Sure, his personal life had suffered on the way up, and he had said and done some lousy things he regretted, but that was always the way for adepts and to him it seemed he hadn't lost anything or anyone he couldn't live without. But one evening, a seemingly harmless invitation from a beautiful woman to step up a flight of stairs led to a prolonged stroll through the hedgerow in the Room of Cold Reflection.

Now? Cesar is . . . nice. He sought out his ex-wife and abjectly apologized for his erratic and unconscionable behavior. She hasn't taken him back. She is, in fact, seeing a new guy who has never hit her up for huge loans, never asked her

to hide a gun, never crawled into their house at 3:00 a.m. with both eyes blackened and a blown-out knee, and who has never ranted incoherently about the mystic significance of the Indian rupee. Cesar sighed when she told him, nodded his head, and wrote her a check for the full amount of his loans. Now she's wondering if he really *has* changed.

Cesar has moved back to Los Angeles and returned to his old job as a stockbroker, but now he's working for an established firm and finally dressing like he *means business*. He's told his bosses that he's started taking SSRI medication, and that shuts most people up about his abrupt change of attitude.

On the surface, he looks perfectly normal. In fact, his newfound allies in the Sleepers have no idea that he's an Agent of Renunciation, which is fine with him. All they know is that he's got a very useful knack for turning off magick excesses without leaving distasteful dead bodies all around—and in his wake, the world is a more moderate place.

Cesar's approach is pretty gentle. He stayed in the room for twenty-one days before he took the drink, and he doesn't want to put anyone in there unless there's no other way. He still has enough rep that arrogant young dukes might stop and listen when he gives advice. Rapidly that's changing to a reputation for being washed up, but it doesn't take Barbara Walters to see that Cesar has suffered a *lot*. A few times his words have been enough to give pause to those who are blindly seeking magick or money at the expense of everything else. Other times, he's had to resort to the Room.

Recently the Sleepers have asked Cesar to check out a rather flamboyant woman named Alicia Chen. They know she has supernatural powers of travel, and that no prison can hold her. Currently Cesar suspects she's an avatar of the Pilgrim on some kind of weird and extreme mind-bent trip. He's started following her around, but he doesn't know he's been spotted.

Chen is actually an Agent of the Room of Rusted Things (p. 108). Cesar does not suspect

the true source of Chen's abilities, nor does she recognize him as a fellow Agent. It's likely to come as a rude shock to both, but working for the House of Renunciation doesn't always mean you're on the same side.

Personality: (Gemini) Sadder but wiser.

Obsession: Cesar no longer has an obsession.

Wound Points: 40

Passions

Rage Stimulus: Arrogance and conceit.

Fear Stimulus: (Isolation) Cesar is afraid that he no longer has the *cojones* it takes to deal with the more unpleasant aspects of the Occult Underground.

Noble Stimulus: Cesar wants to save arrogant shitbirds from their own hubris.

Stats

Body: 40 (Slight)
Speed: 45 (S) (Twitchy)
Mind: 70 (Razor sharp)
Soul: 70 (Charmed)

Skills

Body Skills: General Athletics 25%, Slippery Like An Eel 45%

Speed Skills: Drive 15%, Dodge 20%, Handgun 40%

Mind Skills: General Education 20%, Notice 25%, Play the Odds 30%

Soul Skills: Lying 40%, Charm 20%, **Agent of Renunciation** 50%

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
2 Hard	6 Hard	0 Hard	0 Hard	1 Hard
0 Failed	1 Failed	0 Failed	3 Failed	2 Failed

Equipment

While Cesar has eschewed the selfish pursuit of wealth and renounced the path of Plutomancy, it didn't suddenly make all of his hoarded wealth go away—he currently has just shy of a half-million dollars in the bank. Cesar typically carries a 9mm semi-automatic pistol in his briefcase, sometimes with a small .32 revolver in a shoulder holster as backup.





RICHARD PACE

Room of Heart's Burden Lifted

Life can be great. When things go well, it seems like nothing can stand in the way of some people. Their days and nights are filled with joy, and any obstacles become opportunities. Pain helps people grow, and wounds heal stronger than they were before. Even when things don't go well, there is triumph over adversity to strengthen the spirit, and doing without one's fondest dreams builds character. For some people, though, the fight has gone on too long. They are bowed and bent by the effort of standing up after every time they get knocked down, and the end is nowhere in sight. They find their situations miserable, but they can't seem to extricate themselves.

If they're lucky, they find the Room of Heart's Burden Lifted.

If they're not so lucky, it finds them.

Agenda

This Room offers the lost and beaten of the world a chance to exchange their current life for a

new and different one. It finds those who have given up any possibility of triumph and it gives them the chance of release. Dawn, the main agent of the Room, seeks out those that the Room has chosen and talks to them to find out if they are ready to renounce their victimhood. The Room seeks out abused spouses and children, neighborhood shopkeepers who have been robbed once too often, or policemen who feel that they're losing the fight. She offers three choices to them: they can travel to a new place and start fresh, they can undergo full renunciation and become a new person, or they can leave their life behind and die with dignity.

Each of these three options is a renunciation. Starting fresh is a renunciation of circumstance, becoming a new person is a renunciation of self, and dying is a renunciation of life. Dawn and the Room view each of these as a valid healing decision, and they offer the choice to each patient. For many, this feels like the only choice they've ever been given the power to make.

Dawn poses as a social worker, seeking out

the people the Room suggests are appropriate and talking to them about their situations. After an initial conversation, she invites the patient back to the Room for counseling, free of charge. Steve, Dawn's self-appointed protector, accompanies Dawn at a discrete distance on these forays. When patients agree to the counseling sessions, they are given the address of the clinic's current location. Arriving there, they find Steve acting as receptionist in the Waiting Area. After a brief wait, Steve ushers them in to Dawn for the session to begin.

The counseling sessions may continue for some time before Dawn offers renunciation. She is a skilled psychotherapist, and works with each patient to reduce the number of failed and hardened Helplessness and Self notches the patient currently has. The patients are not offered the choice of renunciations until they have one or fewer failed notches in each of Self and Helplessness, and three or fewer hardened notches in each of the other Madness Meters. Without this sense of self and empowerment, the choice is not a real choice; it's just a fear response.

Once the patients choose, they have a few days to prepare. On the designated date, they return to the Room and are granted their wish. Those who start over in a new place are led out the back door into a new city or town. Those who wish to become a new person are led through the Rebirth Ritual that allows the Room to work the renunciation on them. In these cases, physical changes often occur for the patient—usually just in their appearance, but sometimes reversing gender, replacing missing body parts, or, on occasion, removing them entirely. The new person is briefed on his or her “history” and role in life, then leaves the room and goes on his or her way. Finally, those who wish to die are taken to the Misericord Chamber to embrace death.

Appearance

The Room of Heart's Burden Lifted is a collection of several chambers, divided by archways and beaded curtains. It manifests in the world as a

storefront social work and psychiatric clinic in a poor part of whatever city or town it needs to be in. Coming in the door, visitors find themselves in the Waiting Area, with rows of plastic chairs around the walls, tiled floors, a table full of outdated magazines, and a number of posters featuring cute kittens in precarious situations with captions advocating perseverance. An archway leads from the back of the chamber; the sliding glass window beside it opens on Steve's post, where he acts as both receptionist and bouncer.

The magazines on the table always have an inspiring story about someone in a desperate situation, with a happy ending where the victim takes control of things and creates a better life. After reading the story, a patient who looks up at the posters on the wall will see one that offers a short piece of advice for whatever problems the patient is working through. The effect is subtle, and acts to make the patient more comfortable and ready for change. Steve has learned to let the patients sit long enough to finish a magazine article and think about it a bit.

Through the archway is a carpeted hallway that opens on the right into Steve's working alcove, and continues to the Therapy Chamber. This area has a deeper pile carpet than the hallway, in a rich earth-brown color, and soft, comfortable furniture. Included in the furniture is a chair or sofa of the same style that the patient associates with comfort and safety. Some find a recliner, some a leather couch, some a futon. The Therapy Chamber may also provide a pet of the type the patient finds most comforting, who is friendly and responsive but not at all intrusive. A cat will sit in the lap and purr, a dog will lie on the couch beside the patient and be petted, a parakeet will whistle softly in the background. A rosewood sideboard along one wall holds drinks. The wood-grain walls are bare except for diplomas certifying Dawn as a licensed psychologist, Neuro-Linguistic Programming Practitioner, and Ericksonian Hypnotist. Four doorways lead out.

The doorway in the back wall leads out of the chamber and into the world. It does not have



to lead into the same locale as the front door, and often leads to another city entirely.

The door on the right wall leads to the Misericord Chamber. This contains a single bed and is decorated in whatever fashion the patient would find most relaxing. Whatever the appearance, the chamber radiates the patient's idea of peace and security, allowing the freedom to leave life with calm acceptance.

One door on the left wall leads to Dawn's office, which contains a desk, chair, filing cabinet, computer, and sound system, as well as shelves of books on psychotherapy, communication theory, and hypnosis. The décor here is warmly professional, with wood-grain walls, cream carpet, and rich polished wood furniture.

The other door on the left leads to private apartments for Dawn and Steve.

Abilities

Rebirth Ritual: This is the hypnotic regression and rebirthing ritual that performs the full renunciation in the Room of Heart's Burden Lifted. It can only be used on a willing target. If Dawn enacts the ritual within the Therapy Room, she can flip-flop her roll. The better the success on her Rebirth Ritual roll, the more complete the change in the target, including a change in gender if desired. If the roll is failed, another counseling session is required before a second attempt can be made.

Patient Records: The filing cabinet in Dawn's office keeps track of patients. When the Room has found a new patient, a file folder appears on top of the filing cabinet containing all the records that exist for the person. Included are medical records, tax records, any police reports which feature the patient's name, case files from social workers or welfare services, and even school records from elementary school up through college. The first piece of paper in the folder is an itinerary for the patient for that day, allowing Dawn to find the patient and begin her work. Any action the patient takes within the Room of Heart's Burden Lifted is also recorded in the file

as it occurs. Dawn usually works with several patients at once.

Exits: The front door and the back door of the Room open into whatever place the patients are or need to be. The front door of the clinic is always at the address listed on the business cards that Dawn hands out, and the back door always opens into the place the patient most needs to go.

Housekeeping: The Room also provides all the daily needs for both Dawn and Steve. Their refrigerators are always full of good food, their favorite beer is always chilling, their television sets receive all the channels, and their video collection is always changing. When they leave the Room, they always have a couple of hundred dollars in their wallets and Steve always has ammunition for his guns.

Misericord Chamber: The Misericord is the final power of the Room. The Misericord chamber decorates itself in whatever manner the patient finds most peaceful, and, when the patient is ready, allows them to die painlessly and easily. Dawn and Steve leave the body in the Room and the Room moves it to a place where it's dealt with as the patient desired. If a funeral is required, the funeral home in question receives a cashier's check for the costs drawn on a numbered bank account.

Renunciation

On the surface, the Room of Heart's Burden Lifted seems to offer a great deal. You trade in your miserable life for a happy new one, right? Who wouldn't take that chance?

It's not quite as simple as it seems.

For one thing, the Room is not for everyone who has a miserable life. It is especially not for those whose misery is inescapable. (If it was, it would be most often found at battlefields and the sites of famine.) It appears, instead, to those who have mundane options for leaving their circumstances, but who have not taken them.

Many battered spouses freely *choose* to stay with their abusers. Maybe it's fear of being tracked down. Maybe it's out of continuing love

and hope. Maybe they just lack the gumption to leave behind everything they've known. They're the ones who get invited to the Room. Once Dawn's therapy has given them a clearer perspective, some return to their old lives, but with a newfound determination to change the situation instead of fleeing or enduring it.

Even for those who opt for more drastic changes, it's not simple. The Room holds out the promise of a new life. Most people who enter the Room assume that means "better" because their own lives are so unhappy. But this isn't "Queen for a Day." An alcoholic man who can't free himself from liquor might begin a new life in Saudi Arabia, where booze is prohibited by law; specifically, he might begin a new life as an impoverished foreign worker with few legal rights. A lonely farmer who lived in Appalachian poverty might begin a new life as a wealthy L.A. talent agent—moments before a car crash costs him both legs. More subtly, a woman imprisoned by the ties of an unloving husband and unwanted children might begin anew as a recent widow with no living relatives—and a hysterectomy. There are no guarantees in the Room, save one: your new life will certainly be different from what you left behind.

Agents

Dawn Miller, Renunciation Counselor

Summary: Dawn doesn't like to remember the early part of her life. A poor black girl in a New York ghetto in the 1950s, she didn't do well at school and always felt three steps behind when it came to getting the joke or figuring things out. She wasn't stupid, but the underlying logic that lets people understand the relationships of the universe was impenetrable to her. She couldn't see the patterns in people's actions, so they bewildered her.

She quit school in the tenth grade, becoming pregnant shortly after. She convinced her boyfriend, Arthur Tobin, to marry her and then settled into a life of caring for her daughter and try-

ing to get along with her husband. Sadly, it turned out that his interest in dating high school girls didn't end with his marriage, and he wasn't particularly secretive about it either. When she tried to leave him he dragged her back, saying that if she had wanted him badly enough to trap him, she would damned well stay. Her parents gave her no support, believing that marriage was a sacred union that should not be broken by divorce or abandonment. She lost all hope and resigned herself to being a live-in housekeeper for an immature, philandering man.

Eventually his factory closed down and Arthur was reduced to taking day labor jobs. Frustrated and ashamed, he began gambling with a large part of his paycheck. She started leaving their baby with her mother while she worked at a supermarket checkstand to make ends meet. One day a social worker came to see her, having learned of her situation when her husband applied for welfare. Malcolm Dreyfus was sympathetic and listened to her story, then offered her free counseling at his storefront clinic. She accepted.

After several months of therapy, Malcolm offered her the choice of renunciations. After long and solemn thought, she decided to leave her family and become an entirely new person.

When she emerged from the ritual, her first thought was to retrieve her daughter from her husband. Leaving the Room, she was shocked to discover that she was in California, a first-year student at U.C.-Berkeley with white skin, a trust fund, and a Liz Claiborne wardrobe. Eighteen months had passed since her renunciation.

Dawn—as she was now named—told her professors she had a family emergency and drove straight back to her hometown. She was desperate with fear, wondering what had become of her daughter while she was away.

The shock of her new life was compounded by the shock of seeing her husband—or ex-husband, she supposed—sitting on the front stoop with a chubby young lady. Dawn thought she remembered the woman as one of the other store clerks—a sassy, bossy woman with a chipped tooth and a name like "Anita" or "Aisha" or something like that.



The chipped-tooth woman was putting cornrows in the hair of Dawn's four-year-old daughter. Dawn tried to find out what had happened, but the three of them closed ranks against a well-dressed stranger. Arthur put his arm protectively around the woman and the girl and asked, "Why do you want to know how we're doing?"

Dawn had no answer.

Over the next few years she tried to keep track of her old husband and her renounced daughter. It wasn't easy, from California. He remarried, she grew up. Both seemed to be neither happy nor miserable, just ordinary.

Dawn eventually found that the ritual had given her an insight into people that she had never before possessed. The day after she got her Master of Social Work degree, she opened the door to her apartment and found herself in the Room instead. Malcom Dreyfus was nowhere to be found.

Personality: Dawn is a deeply caring, deeply committed psychologist, completely devoted to helping victimized people out of bad situations. She does not, however, get maudlin about it. She views behavior and relationships as choices and decisions that people make. She wants to help those who want to be helped, and won't waste her time on those who only want to be pitied or excused.

Obsession: The need for personal choice. Dawn sees that people choose to live their lives as they do because they feel they have no options. She is driven to explore other possibilities in every situation, to understand the power to make the choices that shape her life.

Wound Points: 45

Passions

Rage Stimulus: Users and abusers. Dawn hates the idea of people feeling that they have the right to treat others as objects.

Fear Stimulus: (Helplessness) Being forced into something. Being confronted with a lack of choices reminds her that she's never going to be as in control as she wants to be.

Noble Stimulus: Helping those who try to help themselves, but can't.

Stats

Body: 45 (Middle-Aged)
Speed: 40 (F) (Slowing Down)
Mind: 65 (Misses Nothing)
Soul: 80 (Trust-Inspiring)

Skills

Body Skills: General Athletics 15%, Struggle 15%

Speed Skills: Driving 25%, Dodge 35%

Mind Skills: General Education 50%, Notice 40%, First Aid 40%

Soul Skills: Lie 20%, Charm 40%, Rebirth Ritual 65%, Agent of Renunciation 50%, **Psychotherapy** 80%, Probing Question 50%

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
3 Hard	4 Hard	2 Hard	5 Hard	1 Hard
0 Failed	1 Failed	0 Failed	2 Failed	0 Failed

Equipment

When she leaves the Room of Heart's Burden Lifted, Dawn usually has a couple of hundred dollars in her wallet. The Room provides a beat-up Ford Taurus for her to drive which has a first-aid kit in the back. She always has a miniature tape recorder for notes and several blank tapes. Her business cards always have the correct address and telephone number for her clinic, no matter where it is that day.

Steve Davidson, Receptionist and Leg-Breaker

Summary: Steve was a tough case for Dawn. He wasn't the normal type of sad sack the Room gave her. He was an abusive husband and father. The Room, however, would not let her write him off as a simple victimizer; his was the only folder she received after clearing away several other patients. No other folders showed up for five days, so she took a closer look at Steve.

She found a pattern of abuse in Steve's life in which Steve was only the latest link. The history of fathers abusing spouses and sons went back a long way in Steve's family, and his thirteen-year-old son was showing signs of becoming the sort

of bully who continues to hurt people throughout his life. Steve's blue-collar job brutally crushed any assertiveness he might show, and socializing with friends tended to involve violent sporting events, violent conversation, and violent acts when the beer was flowing.

Then something caught her eye. Steve had completed no less than four anger-management classes, and his behavior always improved for a while before he slid back into the violence. He was making an effort to change, but nothing seemed to work.

He was harming himself, along with his family, and he didn't know how to stop.

Dawn found him and offered a new anger-management therapy, free of charge. He accepted and began visiting her weekly, working hard to bring his temper under control. One night, he showed up very late, in tears. A bad day at work, too much beer, a critical comment by his son, and all his work was undone. He had beaten the boy unconscious, maybe killed him. Dawn offered him his choice of renunciations that night.

Steve surprised her. He refused any of the options, saying he couldn't take that way out until he made amends for the damage he had done. When he had repaid the world for the harm he had done it, then he would think of the question again. But now he needed to set things right.

As she walked him out of the clinic, they both saw the sign in the window that advertised for a receptionist. Dawn surrendered to the will of the Room, and explained the nature of the work she did to Steve, offering him the chance to join her in it. The price would be leaving his life behind and serving the whims of the House of Renunciation, but he was guaranteed plenty of opportunities to change people and a chance to put his experiences to good use. Dawn had been beaten up by spouses and parents of patients before, and needed a strong protector. When Steve felt he was ready, Dawn would offer him the choice again.

Steve agreed, on the condition that he have a few days to clear up his affairs. He quit his job, signed over all his money and possessions to his wife and son, and started a trust fund for his

son's education to which he deposits every chance he gets. He picked up a packet of divorce papers at a book store, filled them out, and left them at home for his wife while she was at the hospital with his son. Then he went back to the clinic.

Steve gets a good feeling out of doing this job. He gets to help people, and the ones he hurts are the ones who try to hurt Dawn. He tries not to enjoy the job too much, because he knows that it's his penance, but sometimes he can't help it. Dawn is always respectful and friendly towards him, and grateful when he does his thing, but maintains a bit of distance that keeps him from falling back into old patterns with her. When he finds his rage building, he gets out of the clinic for a while, going to a gym to work off the frustration and anger.

They haven't spoken of his possible renunciation since the night he joined the House.

Personality: Steve is a large man with a lantern jaw and a brow like a bookshelf. He's worked hard in recent years to cultivate a demeanor of calm reliability and friendliness, but even in a fuzzy sweater he can be a bit intimidating. He knows that he will never completely control his anger, but does his best to make sure that others don't realize it's there.

Obsession: Penance. Steve is determined to prove to himself and the universe that he can change and be a good man. He feels he has a long way to go.

Wound Points: 60

Passions

Rage Stimulus: Frustration. Steve has never dealt well with being thwarted.

Fear Stimulus: (Helplessness) Hurting someone he cares about.

Noble Stimulus: Atonement. Steve will dare any danger to make up for the harm he has done.

Stats

Body: 60	(Powerful)
Speed: 65	(S) (Faster Than He Looks)
Mind: 45	(High School Jock)
Soul: 40	(Getting Better)



Skills

Body Skills: General Athletics 45%, Rough You Up 45%, Immovable 50%

Speed Skills: Drive 30%, Dodge 50%, Shoot You Down 30%

Mind Skills: General Education 15%, Notice 30%, Clinic Administration 25%

Soul Skills: Lie 20%, Persuade 15%, **Agent of Renunciation** 20%

Immovable: Steve's a big boy. If he doesn't want to be moved, he can roll against his Immovable skill to remain standing where he is if someone tries to move him.

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
5 Hard	1 Hard	3 Hard	5 Hard	4 Hard
1 Failed	2 Failed	2 Failed	1 Failed	2 Failed

Equipment

When he goes on a mission, Steve carries a three-foot piece of rebar wrapped in leather (+6 damage). He also carries a 9mm automatic pistol in a holster in the small of his back. The Room provides him an old Ford Mustang to drive, with a first-aid kit in the trunk. Steve keeps a loaded shotgun in his chamber for when he needs real firepower. When he's looking after Dawn on one of her initial contact appointments, he wears a bulletproof vest under his jacket.



RICHARD PRICE

The Room of Ignorance

Humanity has no need for advanced knowledge. Everything humans need to grow and thrive comes from within. Each advance drags humanity further and further away from its roots. Technolo-

gy merely interferes with the process of emotional development, a cheap surrogate that drives a wedge between the haves and have-nots and, not unlike an addictive drug, forces its users to become ever-more dependent upon it for their basic

needs with each successive generation. Time spent toiling away in a gray cubicle is not time spent truly alive. A modern life is not a life worth living. Life is measured not in the sum total of one's years, but in the quality of those years. Simplicity and acceptance of the natural world are the cures for humanity's ills.

Agenda

The Room of Ignorance exists to wash away the accreted layers of knowledge and dependence on technology that fundamentally disconnect many people from the hard truths of reality. Before the rise of factories, automobiles, toaster ovens, and supermarkets, people had to depend on each other to make it in the world. Community building, through the recognition of proper authority, was a critical part of the human experience. Now, instead of turning to each other to lend or receive comfort and support, people turn to a television program, a pill, or a video game. Those who are brought to the Room of Ignorance lose their faith in and dependence on knowledge, replacing it instead with a return to self-sufficiency and a more natural existence. A weapons researcher may destroy his work and join Earth First. An overworked Wall Street executive may quit his job and take up life in a secluded mountain cabin, living off whatever food he can grow or gather with his own two hands. The Room targets those who are eager to replace simple human contact in the human experience with machines, politics, and material distractions.

The Room of Ignorance fights a general war against all forms of scientific, technological, philosophical, and mystical advance. From burning rare books to sabotaging research efforts, the Room of Ignorance strives to keep humanity from losing touch with its primal roots. Each new technological or ideological advance drives humanity further away from its natural basis.

To this Room, humanity has a case of terminal hubris. Instead of being the proper subjects of nature, humanity has set itself as nature's master. This usurpation has hurt nature in any number of

obvious ways—oil spills, ozone depletion, played-out land, and extinct species—but it has also hurt humanity as well.

Thanks to medicine, the planet is crowded with decrepit, languishing wrecks who serve no purpose but to soak up unearned resources while doing nothing and producing nothing. Those too weak or old or damaged to procreate were formerly unable to pollute their species with inferior offspring, while the young and fecund did their duty whether they wanted to or not. No longer. Now drugs and *in vitro* fertilization allow anyone with the money, no matter how unworthy, to have a child, while the young and vital can use abhorrent contraceptives to thwart their reproductive destinies.

Worse yet, through sophistry and philosophy the weak are able to suppress the strong, enslaving the powerful and crippling them until they're no longer the finest examples of humanity but just another batch of stammering, flannel-clad bureaucrats. This perversion of the natural order is most clearly seen in the advanced cancer known as democracy. Instead of giving direction to the population like a majestic silverback, democratic leaders are hobbled by the whims of the mob, whipped into place with opinion polls, and unceremoniously ejected when they try to perform the essential functions of leadership.

It's time for an *old* world order.

Appearance

The Room of Ignorance opens into a sunny forest glade. Animals caper about and the weather is pleasantly warm. Ripe, succulent fruit grows from the trees surrounding the glade. The weather is like a clear, warm spring day. The air has the scent of a recent rainfall about it, and a general sense of calm permeates the area. Any who enter the Room get the sense that the Room of Ignorance somehow represents a proper, healthy living environment, while the world they are familiar with must be fundamentally flawed. For example, a life-long city dweller will notice how quiet the glade is, free of the constant background noise of



honking cars, lumbering trucks, and bustling crowds of people. Yet the unfamiliar quiet fills her with a deep sense of longing, as if this is the way things are supposed to be and the environment she is used to is choked with unnecessary, distracting noise.

The exact physical details of the Room change for each visitor, depending on his or her background. A visitor from the Hawaiian islands might see a jungle clearing and palm trees, with the scent of the ocean lingering in the air and mountains rising in the near distance. Someone who lived his life in a housing project might see a forest glade that looks as if it has sprung up in the decaying ruins of a once-great city.

The primary constant of the Room is that it is bounded by crumbling ruins overrun with vegetation, beyond which stretches the wilderness. A sparkling pure spring bubbles at the Room's center. The trees that grow within the Room bear a variety of fruits, such as oranges, apples, and pears, which are within easy reach from the ground. Oddly enough, none of the trees are identifiable as any known species; each is an amalgam of different bark, branch, and leaf types, and the trees each bear several different types of fruit. This phenomenon represents the Room's abhorrence of the scientific mind. The trees are all unique organisms, unclassifiable by modern science. Cracks in the walls reveal that the forest continues for an unknowable distance in all directions. Within the Room, compasses and other navigation tools simply do not function, and when night falls the stars—visible through gaping holes in the ruined ceiling—are always in different configurations. The entrance from reality into the Room is an iron gate set within a small cave tucked between two towering trees at the edge of the glade. The ground before the cave is hard-packed dead earth. No grass or plants, besides the two trees, grow within ten feet of the rock that forms the cave. None of the animals of the forest willingly go near it, and any animal that is forced near the cave panics, struggles mightily, and eventually dies if brought all the way into the cave. Fruit brought there quickly rots and disintegrates.

The Room has three permanent inhabitants: the Man, the Woman, and the Father. The Man is the Room's enforcer, while the Woman specializes in stealth and subversion. Those who are selected for renunciation are taken to the Room in one of three ways: seduction by the Woman, force by the Man, or with the Fruit of Sustenance, described later.

Abilities

The Embrace of Ignorance. The Room of Ignorance uses a simple, straightforward method of renunciation. Candidates are brought to the Room and thrown into the forest beyond the ruins alone. They face a simple choice: learn how to survive in the wilderness, or die trying. The victim may experience weeks, years, or even decades spent wandering the forest, living from meal to meal. Tools made from materials in the forest either break or fail to function; the victim must learn to survive with nothing more than his natural cunning. Despite all of the victim's wandering, she never comes across the Man, the Woman, the Father, or the gate back to reality. The Room warps space, ensuring that no chance encounters occur. This distortion effect extends to time. Regardless of how much time it takes a victim to renounce their dependence on technology, only a single week passes in reality. When the renunciation is complete, the victim awakens back in the ruined area. The emotional and mental changes inflicted on the victim have a limited physical counterpart. The victim does not show signs of aging, but may have a deep tan, a few scars, or any other reasonable repercussions from spending time away from medical or dental care. Those with poor luck hunting may show the effects of protein deficiency. Certainly he or she has developed a good colony of parasites—fleas, ticks, lice, and possibly a tapeworm.

Spring of Life. The spring that bubbles near the entrance to the Room has several magical properties. First, anyone who drinks from it is automatically healed to full health once per week. Unfortunately, the drinker loses two points from a random Mind skill each time he drinks from the

spring, whether he needed healing or not. Second, the waters corrode and damage technological items. Any piece of technology that is sprinkled with the water malfunctions for a twenty-four-hour period. The water retains its magickal properties for up to 48 hours after it has been removed from the Room. (An avatar of the Savage who drinks from the spring gains 1-10% to his avatar skill for one week. Multiple drinks do not give multiple bonuses.)

Fruit of Sustenance. The fruit that grows from the trees in the Room of Ignorance is an important source of sustenance for the Room's agents and the bane of its foes. An avatar of the Savage, or anyone who has renounced in the Room, or the Room's Agents, can pleasantly survive on a diet of one piece of fruit per day. To people in the process of renunciation, it's just ordinary fruit—no more, no less. However, anyone outside the Room who eats the fruit is entranced with its otherworldly taste. Unless the eater makes a successful Soul check, he is addicted to the fruit and obsessively desires it—until the eater finds the Room or until a month goes by, whichever comes first. Fruit taken out of the Room maintains its properties for twenty-four hours, after which it quickly rots. Only the Man, the Woman, or a person who renounced in the Room may take the fruit to the outside world. The fruit rots in the hands of anyone else who tries to remove it.

The Eye of Far Seeing. The Father possesses this item. The eye is a fist-sized human eyeball suspended in a purple, gelatinous medium. Whoever touches the eye and concentrates can see and hear everything the last person to eat a piece of the eye experiences. The Father usually feeds a slice to either the Man or the Woman and sends them out to scout potential targets. The eye is large enough to be divided up into five portions. The eye regenerates two portions worth of its mass per week. If the eye is completely devoured, it is gone and never regenerates.

Agents

The Man, the Woman, and the Father are the

Room's three primary agents. In addition, some of those who renounced here are willing to work to further the Room's cause. Typically, such Agents provide support to the Man and the Woman. Only rarely will they directly undertake missions for the Room.

The Man

Summary: The Man embodies the physical prowess of man. He exudes a sense of thick power that women either find attractive or utterly repulsive, and that men find intimidating. He does not know how to speak or write, and dislikes communicating even with gestures. Technology is a repellent aberration of the natural to him, and he is prone to react to it with brute violence rather than curiosity or understanding. The Man's primary role in the Room's plans is that of an enforcer and muscle man. He is surprisingly adept at infiltrating secure installations and sabotaging high-tech machines. He's also brutally efficient when it comes to killing those who defy the natural order. A biologist trying to keep illnesses from culling the weak, a developer bulldozing a forest to provide more housing for the unnaturally high population, a philosopher who tricks people into supporting and caring for those who have no blood relationship to them, a dentist, an animal trainer, a physicist, an abortionist—all these are valid victims for his righteous aggression.

The Man's mission is not restricted only to scientific progress. Adepts and occultists who have collected rare or unique magickal artifacts have been known to turn up dead, seemingly beaten to death with a rock, their treasure troves of artifacts destroyed.

The Man stoically endures the horrors of modern living in order to complete whatever objectives the Father gives him. In his view, murder and destruction are justified means to the Room's ends. Modern life is not worth living, and every blow struck in the name of Ignorance brings humanity one step closer to a natural Utopia. The Man prefers to stalk his targets as if he was hunting in the wild.



Personality: (Aries) The Man steadily moves through life towards his goal, letting little distract him.

Obsession: Liberation. The Man works towards throwing off the yoke of knowledge from humanity.

Wound Points: 80

Passions

Rage Stimulus: High technology, especially equipment that requires electricity or fuel to function.

Fear Stimulus: (Helplessness) Technology that he cannot physically engage and destroy, such as a hologram, the projected image of a movie, or a hostile helicopter.

Noble Stimulus: Preserving nature. The Man knows that virgin nature is a rapidly diminishing resource, and will drop his current mission if he sees it threatened.

Stats

Body: 80 (Brutally Powerful)
Speed: 60 (S) (Deceptively Quick)
Mind: 35 (Ignorant But Cunning)
Soul: 60 (In Tune With His Surroundings)

Skills

Body Skills: General Athletics 45%, Get Back Up 45%, **Hack and Smash** 55%

Speed Skills: Dodge 50%, Stealth 45%, Thrown Weapon 45%

Mind Skills: Notice 30%

Soul Skills: Animal Magnetism 40%, Agent of Renunciation 60%, Wilderness Survival 40%

Hack and Smash: All of the Man's cherries for this skill are Knock Downs (see UA, p. 60).

Madness Meter

Violence **The Unnatural** **Helplessness**

Isolation **Self**

6 Hard 6 Hard 0 Hard 0 Hard 0 Hard

0 Failed 1 Failed 0 Failed 0 Failed 0 Failed

Equipment

The Rock of Ignorance: The Father makes these minor artifacts from materials gathered within the Room. It can quite literally beat you stupid. Any-

one injured by this weapon must make a successful Mind check or lose 1% from a random Mind skill each time they are struck by the rock.

The Woman

Summary: Where the Man represents the brutal, physical fury of the Room of Ignorance, the Woman is the tool it uses when deception, trickery, and subtle methods are called for. The Woman appears as a lithe, six-foot beauty. Her dusky complexion and thick, dark hair are hard to pin down to any ethnic type, giving her a tantalizing hint of mystery. Any male with a pulse that sees her has the thought "prime breeding material" scream across his mind on some level. The Woman has cunning and guile to match her looks, and few of her targets are able to resist her advances.

The Woman is strongly in tune with the needs and desires that drive human thinking, and she's willing to indulge in modern perversions like clothing and soap in order to complete her mission. She prefers to thrust herself into an encounter with her target, relying on her quick wit and discerning eye to throw her target off balance and to quickly learn his weaknesses. Impatient, hot-tempered, and impulsive, the Woman is at her best when she's improvising a plan. Her targets often find themselves swept up into a wild ride of sex and debauchery that ends with their renunciation. She especially delights in watching the morally upright revert to lust-driven savages as a result of her ministrations.

The Woman serves the Room in order to free humanity from the suffocating grasp of Puritan morality. In her view, war, racial hatred, and greed are all direct results of modern civilization's tendency to either suppress or debase natural sexual urges.

Personality: (Pisces) If she isn't balanced on the line between success and failure, the Woman can't be moved to do much of anything.

Obsession: Manipulation. The Woman loves drawing out the primal animal that lurks beneath the thin veneer of civilized behavior.

Wound Points: 50

Passions

Rage Stimulus: Censors, moralists, and others who think humanity’s natural sexuality is something to be hidden away.

Fear Stimulus: (Helplessness) Violence. The Woman is all-too-aware that she is an unskilled fighter.

Noble Stimulus: Children. The Woman sees the uncorrupted potential in the young.

Stats

Body: 50 (Alluring)
Speed: 60 (F) (Graceful)
Mind: 70 (Manipulative)
Soul: 70 (Insightful)

Skills

Body Skills: Distracting Physique 45%, General Athletics 30%, Struggle 25%

Speed Skills: Dodge 25%, Thrown Weapon 25%

Mind Skills: Notice 45%, Survival 35%

Soul Skills: Lie 45%, Agent of Renunciation 60%, Seduction 50%

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
3 Hard	6 Hard	0 Hard	0 Hard	0 Hard
0 Failed	0 Failed	0 Failed	0 Failed	0 Failed

The Father

Summary: The Father serves as a spiritual and tactical leader for the Room of Ignorance. The Man and The Woman naturally defer to his orders. If asked, the Woman answers that this is simply the natural order of things. The Father never leaves the Room of Ignorance, and usually is found in the area that holds the Spring of Life. He appears as a toothless, forty-year old man with long, flowing, snow-white hair, and a beard that reaches to his knees.

The Father speaks in a slow, condescending tone. At his core, he is saddened that human society has drifted so far from what he sees as its innocent, fundamentally proper origin. While he toils relentlessly to staunch the flow of knowledge, he realizes on at least some level that his

cause is largely lost. Still, in his heart he holds a beautiful vision of a world in which all language, all learning, and all knowledge is forgotten. Perfectly innocent and free, humanity would live forever in a world of stable nature—and stable supernatural as well. After all, without any new knowledge, without abstract thought, how could any more people ascend to the Invisible Clergy?

In this Eden, humanity could live forever in harmony.

Personality: (Virgo) The Father brooks no compromise in the war against the advance of civilization.

Obsession: Ensuring that the Room of Ignorance fulfills its role in checking the advance of human understanding.

Wound Points: 30

Passions

Rage Stimulus: Scientists, mystics, and others who would replace wonder and acceptance with hard truths.

Fear Stimulus: (Helplessness) The assimilation of the organic by the inorganic.

Noble Stimulus: Protecting the Room of Ignorance. The Room is the beginning and the end of the Father’s existence. He can have loyalty to nothing else.

Stats

Body: 30 (Aged)
Speed: 40 (F) (Limps)
Mind: 75 (Wise)
Soul: 75 (Deep thinker)

Skills

Body Skills: General Athletics 30%, Struggle 25%

Speed Skills: Dodge 25%, Thrown Weapon 20%

Mind Skills: Naturalist 50%, Notice 60%

Soul Skills: Charm 50%, Lie 50%, **Voice of Ignorance** 60%

Voice of Ignorance: This skill represents the power granted to the Father by the Room of Ignorance. First, it allows The Father to force the Man or the Woman to obey his commands



with a successful check, though this is rarely needed. Second, it allows him to disable any tool or machine brought into the Room within his line of sight. Finally, if the Man or the Woman dies the Father can use this skill to call out to the world, forcing a man or woman who renounced in the Room to return and take up the mantle of the Man or the Woman after undergoing a process similar to their original renunciation. This process physically and

mentally remakes them into the Man and the Woman, as described above. Once this process is complete, the new Man and Woman have no memory of their previous lives.

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
8 Hard	9 Hard	6 Hard	10 Hard	6 Hard
1 Failed	0 Failed	0 Failed	2 Failed	1 Failed



RICHARD PACE

The Room of Rusted Things

An enemy has entered the scene, creeping in under the cover of darkness. No one noticed it come, and that's why it's here. Apathy. Rotting us away at the core, a disease of the spirit, all covered by shiny glass and chrome, brand names and dollar bills. Its reflection is coming to light, glimpsed in slums and poverty. More will come soon, more already exists, in corners we'd rather not see. No grand conspiracy has

generated this, no plot, no organization, no mastermind on a black throne looking down. The secretary has created it, the garbage man has tendered it, the steel worker has nurtured it, and the executive has slapped air into its newborn lungs. They must be grabbed by the collar and shoved face-first into this child of neglect they've raised if we're to do anything but spiral down into the sludge of the decayed apple, collapsing in on itself.

Agenda

The Room of Rusted Things is concerned with indifference. The Room would punish and reform the guy who walks by a group of Neo-Nazis beating a black man, not the thugs themselves. It exists as a sort of white blood cell for existence, attacking and removing toxic apathy in the social bloodstream. Apathy is one of the greatest dangers to the cyclic system of the karmic reincarnation since it halts progress and ascension, creating a stagnant, hollow society that does nothing but exist to exist.

To the Room, there is a huge difference between screwing someone over because you just don't care, and screwing them over because you're it suits your agenda. Alex Abel is not likely to fall victim to the Room because he *cares* about what he does. His actions, no matter how destructive or tyrannical, affect the universe through purpose and direction. The apathetic, on the other hand, are like bouncing radiation, influencing and changing the outcome of events in this cosmos through nothing more than happenstance, mutating the very nature of reality away from what it should be. They are the marbles thrown into a carefully-arranged pattern of dominos, crashed and destroying all that is built on their journey to a dead-end jumble.

The Room of Rusted Things achieves its agenda of giving direction to the directionless by confronting them with intolerable situations—the very type of situations their inaction has implicitly encouraged. Roles are reversed, and now the individual is stuck in a situation he can't escape and that no one else is willing to change. To know what it is to be left behind. To see all you missed, and which is now gone forever. This strikes directly at the core of what's wrong with the apathetic: that they simply do not care.

Appearance

The Room is a surreal junkyard beneath a hazy brown sky, full of items that come and go in response to the people it targets. Some of the items come directly from a target's life: the

wrecked car from a drunken accident, the mildewed invitation to a neglected daughter's school play, the welfare claim lost behind a filing cabinet. Others have a symbolic connection rather than a direct one. A given target is represented by only a few choice items; at any time the clutter of dozens of possible targets fills the space with detritus, interspersed with junk that simply represents the traditional paths of apathy on which humanity walks.

Coming into the room, one's eyes are usually drawn to the money. Money is everywhere, bills of every currency and denomination sticking out of the mucky ground or shoved into the crevices of rusted things. The faces on the bills are not those of leaders, but of people who were pushed aside in favor of the dollar, from the homeless man who died on the streets to the comatose wife whose insurance money sent her husband to the brothels of Thailand.

Everywhere are the useless husks of material possessions that seemed so important, the obligations ignored in favor of simply doing nothing. A television set with a kicked-in screen stands close by the entrance, an infant's skeleton curled up inside. The withered husk of a dog lies chained to a stake, out of reach of a food bowl brimming with locusts. A chalk outline takes up a corner, the kind police inscribe to mark how a body was found; inside the boundary is a rippling pool of blood, refilled by drops that endlessly appear out of thin air above it and splash down, built drop by drop for everyone who has died alone and loveless. The easy chair puffs up with dust when you sit down, and sharp springs stick you through the fabric. The effigy of a young woman kneels motionless beside it in her pajamas, her raven-haired bangs framing a fishbowl full of brackish water and dead, floating frogs. One wall is a perpetual sunrise, a dawn for each day a man in Omaha wastes as he reads the stock report over breakfast as his blind neighbor whittles out the remainder of his lonely life in darkness.

This is the place of the forgotten and the wasted.

When targets enter the room, they are briefly filled with panic. It's not that it's alien: rather, it's



because it's both alien and familiar. They've never been here, but they know this place. They can smell the disease they pass by everyday. They can sense what they've left here. The Room is only a reflection of their hollow selves.

Escape through the door is impossible. There's no lock to keep you trapped. You cannot leave because the hinges are rusted shut, the handle crumbles to dust under your touch, and the wood is petrified into unfeeling stone.

They are then drawn to the things they've left here, gravitating towards them even against their will. The moment of contact is electric. The target relives the moments encapsulated in their personal debris, seeing their actions from the viewpoint of the people they hurt, the things they left behind. From within a television, a man sees his son listlessly playing with blocks, his birthday forgotten. Through a mirror, a woman glimpses her estranged sister's haunted face as she gulps down an entire bottle of aspirin. In these moments the targets realize that not only has their inaction left them forgetful—it has made them forgotten in turn. Reflected in everyone they should have cared for but didn't, they see that they themselves have become immaterial, nugatory, emotionally untouched and untouching.

The release from this simulation of reality is cathartic. The desire to do *something* floods into the renounced. They will never again be forgotten. They will never again be unimportant. They will never again be a passionless drone trundling unseen and unimportant, under the radar and beneath the contempt of every passerby.

Passion blossoms in the rocky soil of their soul. They will make their mark. They will be loved or hated, admired or reviled—but they will never again be a *nobody*.

Most of these people simply wake up one day, often startled awake in the middle of the night. The trip to the Room is forgotten, remembered only as a bad dream. This moment is like seeing for the first time, and the world around them is so startling that it's hard for the newly renounced to calm down about whatever passion has surfaced. Some of their best work is done during these early hours.

Are they the same people? Yes, by and large. They retain the same opinions, beliefs, talents, and tastes. But where before they were passive, they are now driven. Most commonly, they focus on one element of their personality and pursue it with utter intensity; often this is one of their passions, which now comes to be an obsession as well.

A few, however, were so very lethargic and useless that nothing is big enough to occupy their new drive to have an impact—nothing except rewriting someone *else's* life, that is. These people become Agents of the Room, and they take on the mission of bringing the fullness of what they neglected most in life to the world. Dues have accumulated and now it's time to pay up.

Agents of the Room rarely appear to the target. They spend their time picking through the garbage of the Room, selecting the next guest. The Agents can read the clutter like a book of the target's life, choosing to summon up specific items to represent specific incidents. They also slip into the real world to observe the target first-hand. The kinder Agents may offer some aid and succor to victims of the target's neglect. Less-benign Agents have been known to rat out their quarry to skip tracers, collection agents, and bitter ex-lovers. Some are less subtle, and simply beat the crap out of their target to soften him up. When the Agent feels the target is ready, he or she arranges the summoned items to best effect and then shuffles away to let the Room do its work.

Abilities

Since the Room of Rusted Things acts primarily as a cataloging center of humanity's indifference, its powers lie mainly within material-gathering and replication. Its abilities are powered by shadows, bits of the ethereal potential of the Statosphere given shape and direction by the Room's agenda.

Soul Sweeper. Of more immediate use to the Agents' daily activities is scrying, using the items in the room to learn about a target so that the target may be brought into the Room. An Agent can increase the gathering efforts of the junk to cen-

ter on a specific person. When controlled this way, everything the target affects by his apathy appears in the room in a steady stream. The Agent could, for example, know where the target will be eating lunch on Tuesday by the garbage can he passes on the street moments before entering the restaurant.

An alternative way of scrying is more deductive than magical. By examining this flood of items from one target, the agent can figure out what kind of ruse he might find plausible, what they may be up to next, and what plans of action would likely succeed against them.

If desired, the Agent can even summon up shadow-constructs of people in the target's life and question them, then keep the construct in the Room to confront the target when the time comes.

Face Lift. It is sometimes necessary during an Agent's work to imitate others. A bit of shadow pulled over the face like a taut plastic garbage bag, the Face Lift grants the Agent the face and voice of whomever he chooses. It begins to crack and flake off like a clay mask after three hours, unless the Agent removes it first. This does not grant the Agent any knowledge of the identity, however; most often, the Face Lift is used to simply create a commonplace appearance for purposes of target surveillance.

Weaving Shadows. The Room's most powerful ability, this is a method of recreating space-time around the target like the weaving of a web. It plugs the target into this reality hallucination, resulting in renunciation. The recreation is indistinguishable from reality. Scenarios of loss and neglect impose themselves on the target repeatedly, inescapably. The outcome cannot be changed: it is an empathic replay, devoid of free will. The woman commits suicide, the forest gets bulldozed. That helpless feeling of finality is part of what it's all about, after all, and what gets across the message that immediate action is necessary.

Fevered Dreams. An alternative method of renunciation for the Room is a set of flash-forward consequences, known colloquially by the Agents as Fevered Dreams. This is where the room takes the past actions of the target and exaggerates

how they affect the future. The result is often an unnerving, surreal experience that could never exist in reality. A target who worked for a cigarette company might experience a world enveloped in thick gray smoke where humanity has retreated indoors. Their skin is thick, wrinkled, and yellowed. Everyone needs a tracheotomy, and today is the day for his. To use Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* as an analogy, think of Weaving Shadows as the Ghosts of Christmas Past and Present, and Fevered Dreams as the Ghost of Christmas Future.

The Big Empty. This is the climax of the Rusted Room treatment: nothing. After going through dreams and shadows, the target may think he'd endure anything to get away from the vision. At the first stages of the Big Empty, it seems like he's gotten just that wish. He finds himself back in the Room as he entered it, but nothing in particular is happening. No visions, no accusations, no torments. Just the stuff in the room. And him. And time.

Lots of time.

Subjectively, it feels like days and days, though there's no way to keep track. The target feels no hunger or cold. He can sleep if he wants, but after a few naps he notices something: stuff in the room is disappearing. Maybe the bloody outline is missed first. Maybe he realizes the chair is gone. Maybe it's all that weird money.

Nothing goes away while he's looking. But every time he sleeps, something gets taken. Eventually, the target is alone on the empty ground, beneath an empty sky, and surrounded by the walls of the Room. Next time he awakens the walls are gone, leaving him in the middle of a trackless plain. Then the ground vanishes, along with the sky.

Floating in inky blackness, the target has to touch his empty sockets to realize his eyes are missing. But the next time he sleeps, he won't be able to do even that—because his fingers disappear.

Eventually—not soon by any means, it can even feel like years—the target is reduced to nothing. There's no way to tell how long his consciousness spends naked in the void, because in the void there's no time to pass. But it's only after he's had a good freaking look at what “doing



nothing” *really* means that he wakes up in his old apartment—maybe a year, maybe only ten minutes after he entered the Room of Rusted Things.

Agents

Ellison Blanke, Agent of Solace

Summary: Ellison is one of those guys who always wanted to be somebody’s hero, but never felt like paying the price. In his mid-twenties, his off-and-on girlfriend of eight years contracted AIDS. Rather than stick around to support her, he simply broke off the relationship a final time. She killed herself a week later. He found her ten minutes after that when, across town, he stepped into a movie theater and wound up in the Room. A white tub with its thin curtain drawn awaited him, a limp hand dangling out from under the edge of the curtain. She lay inside naked, wrists slashed, water muddy red, her face pale and forlorn. Ellison took her hand and relived those last seven days in her body, moment by moment, feeling the twisting emotional agony and loneliness she went through. Finally he emerged from the Room. Now he works to be there for those in their darkest hours, while watching around him the parade of those who would rather look away, and selecting the room’s next visitor.

Ellison thinks of himself as a good, moral person, and most people who meet him would agree with that assessment. Unfortunately for him, he’s not living in a universe that gives a fig about “good” one way or the other. The powers of the House let him make his own luck to some extent, but he’s still done some things he’s not proud of. Yet he still believes it’s better to regret something you did than something you didn’t do.

The job of savior hasn’t been a particularly easy one for Blanke (as he now styles himself). He had a very ugly run-in with Alicia Chen (described later) early on in his tenure as an Agent. Despite his reluctance to hurt a woman, she left him no choice. (But she gave at least as good as she got: he’s got a nasty, mouth-shaped scar on his bicep courtesy of her in-your-face combat style.) Now

the two have reached something of a *détente*, and each stays out of the other’s way. He’d like to convert her passion to something more constructive, but for the time being he’s content to maintain an uneasy truce.

Personality: No-nonsense and tough on the surface, Ellison secretly harbors an idealistic center.

Obsession: Empathy with those around him, in their darkest hours.

Wound Points: 50

Passions

Rage Stimulus: People who pass by those in need.

Fear Stimulus: (Helplessness) Ellison is terrified of being as helpless as he was in that bathtub, without the ability to stop his girlfriend from the inevitable.

Noble Stimulus: He would die to save someone he cared for.

Stats

Body: 50 (Average)
Speed: 60 (S) (Wiry)
Mind: 50 (Clued-In)
Soul: 75 (Empathic)

Skills

Body Skills: Take A Lickin’ And Keep on Tickin’ 40%, General Athletics 30%, Streetfighting 40%

Speed Skills: Driving 15%, Dodge 15%, Firearms 40%

Mind Skills: General Education 40%, Notice 35%, I’ve Got Your Number 40%

Soul Skills: I Feel Your Pain 65%, Agent of Renunciation 50%

Take A Lickin’ And Keep on Tickin’: Immediately after taking damage, roll against this skill. If successful, add the dice and increase his Wound Points by that amount. At the end of the combat, all of the added Wound Points are removed; this doesn’t actually heal damage, it just lets him ignore it until the fight is done.

I’ve Got Your Number: Success lets him get to the core of an individual he’s watching, fig-

uring out what really motivates them. A target’s passions and obsession can be deduced this way, or lies seen through.

I Feel Your Pain: He has the ability to recognize pain and say or do just the right thing to comfort the afflicted. A successful check can erase one Failed notch on the target. This skill may only be attempted once on any given target.

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
0 Hard	3 Hard	9 Hard	5 Hard	2 Hard
2 Failed	1 Failed	3 Failed	1 Failed	0 Failed

Notes

Ellison is more than a missionary of the soul, wandering America to comfort and console. He also recognizes that, more often than not in these violent times, a person’s problems come from abuse by another individual. He’s prepared to fight to free others from their desperation and fear.

Possessions

Ellison packs a Glock-17 and drives a decommissioned Post Office jeep painted green. He usually wears tennis shoes, jeans, and a beat-up letter jacket from college. Every time he leaves the Room (which is often—unlike Chen, he doesn’t like to sleep there) the jeep is full of gas, the gun is full of bullets, and his wallet contains four twenties, two fives, and a two dollar bill.

Alicia Chen, A Woman Awakened

Summary: Alicia always had a gift for numbers, and it suited her well. Introverted and antisocial, she found a comfort in the cold reliability of numbers and equations and spent twenty years as a successful financial director for a property-development firm in Memphis. She cared nothing for the land bought and sold; only the numbers mattered. A couple months before her renunciation, she exploited a contractual loophole to purchase a large piece of federal woodland for use as a distribution complex. Alicia got a trip to the Room

courtesy of the bathroom in her firm, and spent a month wandering an endless expanse of concrete. There was nothing on the horizon but desks and couches containing her neighbors and co-workers, all of whom ignored her. The lighting was static and unchanging, blue and regulated florescence, from a sky that buzzed. That was bad enough, but then things started disappearing . . .

Now Alice has awakened to the power of change in every human being, and delights in the pure application of personal will to the world and to other people. But where Ellison Blanke is into random acts of kindness and thoughtless beauty, Alice tends more towards the purely random and thoughtless. Where Blanke interacts with people in order to “save” them (whether they want to be saved or not), Alice does it just to have an impact—preferably as much impact as possible. Positive or negative matters less than intensity. She’ll give hundreds of dollars to a beggar, then covertly follow him to see how he spends it. Or she’ll slash a stranger’s tires just to watch the reaction. Mainly, however, she looks for the most interesting people to take to the Room.

“Interesting” is a criteria very different from Blanke’s “damaged or damaging by neglect.” To Alicia, a severely apathetic individual is like an unlabeled seed: he could grow into just about anything, but the best way to find out is to start the growth process. So far her greatest successes include:

- A meek Tamil accountant in Birmingham who immolated himself in front of the Embassy of Sri Lanka to draw attention to the struggle of Tamil Eelam.
- A thirty-year-old man in Mexico City who has sold his family’s thriving fence-building business in order to become a full-time stalker of celebrity Rose McGowan.
- A suburban housewife in Kansas who has become tirelessly (and dramatically) involved with trying to get evolutionism back into the state’s core biology curriculum.

Alicia is still, in some substantial ways, the same woman she was before her renunciation.



She hasn't pierced her labia, started dressing like a hooker, or become a gas huffer. She still wears sensible shoes, listens to Paul Simon, and keeps her hair in a bun. Nonetheless, she treats every encounter as a confrontation: if you're not paying attention to her, you'd better start.

So far she has not made any connection to the Occult Underground. After all, adepts, avatars, and the rest of the weirdos certainly don't need her help being intense and obsessed. However, she is starting to suspect that someone is following her—someone who targets the enlightened people who are living life to its fullest and somehow robs them of their vital passion, turning them into numbed drones. This is intolerable to her, and if she ever catches the guy, she's going to play in his blood. What she doesn't know is this guy is Cesar Costello, Agent of the Room of Cold Reflection (p. 90).

Personality: Three parts Glenn Close in *Fatal Attraction* and one part Roberto Benigni at the 1999 Oscars ceremony.

Obsession: Freeing people from their self-imposed shackles of inaction.

Wound Points: 45

Passions

Rage Stimulus: Apathy.

Fear Stimulus: (Isolation) She does not want to go back to the Big Empty. Never ever. She's accordingly terrified of any kind of sensory isolation.

Noble Stimulus: She believes that "being a drone" is curable for anyone, and that it's better to be actively anything than passively nothing. Thus she la-

hors to snap people out of their various blues, funks, and moods.

Stats

Body: 45 (Wiry)
Speed: 55 (S) (Can't Sit Still)
Mind: 65 (Sharp)
Soul: 65 (Magnetic)

Skills

Body Skills: General Athletics 30%, **Struggle** 40%

Speed Skills: Driving 30%, Dodge 35%,

Mind Skills: College Education 60%, Notice 55%, Accounting 50%

Soul Skills: Agent of Renunciation 55%, Lie 30%, Charm 30%

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
4 Hard	0 Hard	3 Hard	2 Hard	6 Hard
0 Failed	2 Failed	2 Failed	4 Failed	3 Failed

Notes

Alice is not a trained fighter. She is, however, an extremely vicious one, of the crotch-kick, arm-bite, and eye-gouge variety. All her cherries are More Hurt.

Possessions

Alice has found herself owning a sporty '71 Ghia convertible, painted dark green over a few spots of rust in the wheel wells. She has a MasterCard with a \$5500 limit, and it never seems to get cancelled even though she doesn't pay the bills. She's generally unarmed except for a canister of pepper spray.

the mystery only has one solution



CHAPTER FOUR

THE FIRST AND

LAST MAN

UNKNOWN ARMIES

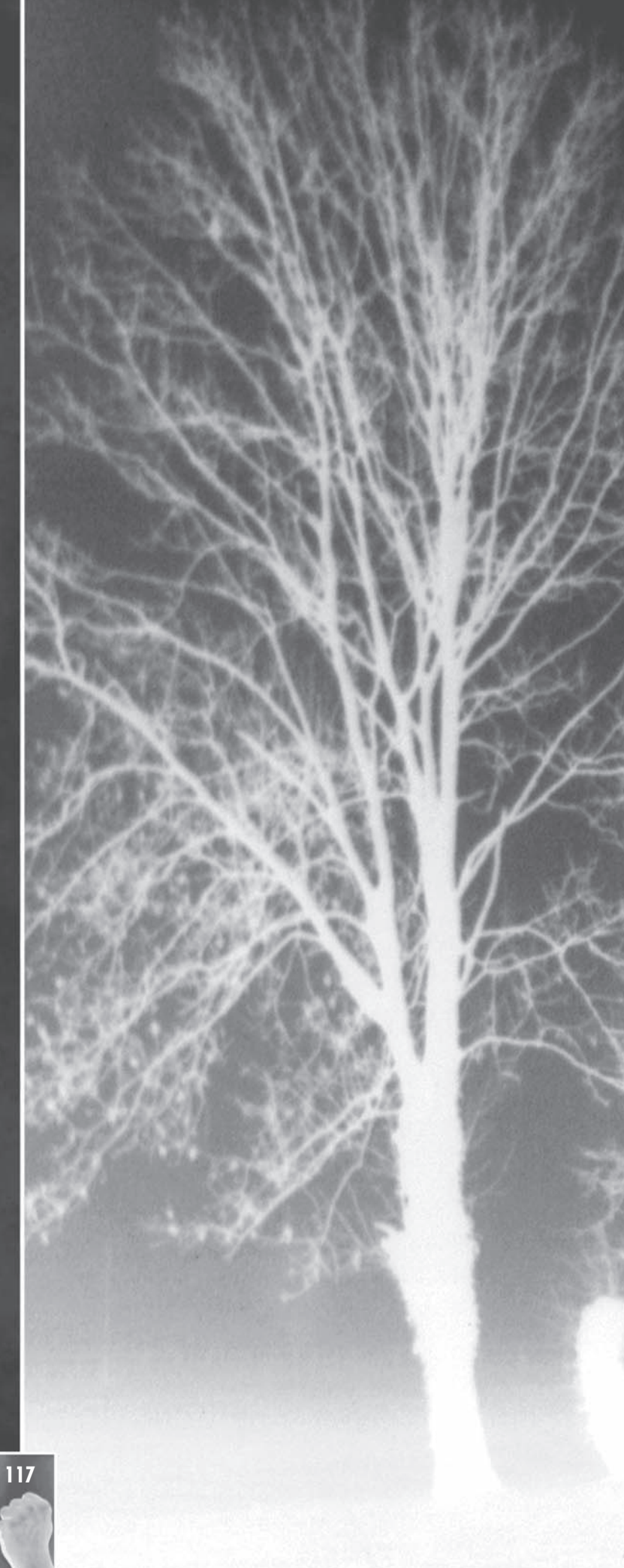


"I HOLD NATURE IN MY HANDS, AND IN THE SAME WAY IN WHICH GOD CREATED THE WORLD, SO TOO I CAN CONJURE FORTH EVERYTHING I WISH FROM THE VOID."

—LE COMTE DE SAINT-GERMAIN

"THE LAST TIME I PERMITTED MYSELF THE LUXURY OF THAT MUCH PERSONAL KINDNESS, A THOUSAND ANGRY GHOSTS ESCAPED INTO THE LANDS OF THE AZTECS. THE RESULTS WERE DISASTROUS."

—GUSTAVO





Who is the mysterious Comte de Saint-Germain?

A cosmic repairman? A wry observer of the latest iteration of hairless ape, remote and inscrutable? An aggregate everyman, serving the cosmos as a handy guide to the human condition? Or is he the sum of humanity, possessing all genetic potentials and shaped by his life in every century, every society?

Le Comte is all these things, or none, or some, or perhaps the answer varies. Portrayals of the First and Last Man will vary as widely as the UA campaigns that include him. However, we are going to present you with a statted-up version of Count Welldone to hopefully give you some guidance and inspiration.

In fact, we're giving you *three* versions.

Saint-Germain in Three Persons

Why three versions of Saint-Germain? Before you start guessing, it's not because three is the magic number or because we wanted to draw some blasphemous parallel to the Christian Trinity. Frankly, it struck us as a good number between too few and too many.

The First and Last Man is a complex figure, simultaneously human and alienated from humanity. He's unpredictable, powerful, and inscrutable. Consequently, he's hard to portray well as a GMC.

It's our hope that by giving you three options, you can pick one that best fits your campaign's themes and tone, and that best serves the purposes you need. On the other hand, there's no reason you can't use all three. It isn't that there are three different immortal men running around using the same name, though you could have some fun with that. Rather, we picture him meeting the PCs in different aspects at different times, always appropriate to the situation. While his behavior—not to mention capabilities, appearance, gender, and ethics—may be radically different each time, he retains his memories of previous encounters and is a continuous, though mutable, entity.



Universal Superintendent

The Comte de Saint-Germain's apparent age does not reflect his actual age, obviously. It depends, instead, on the maturity of humankind, as measured by the size of the Invisible Clergy. Every ascension ages him about a season. The first recognizable sentient being in every iteration of the universe is parent to the physical body of the First and Last, often ascending as the Mother or Father afterwards. By the time society is sophisticated enough that eighty recognized archetypes have joined the Clergy, the Comte appears as a twenty-year-old man. By the time of the three hundred and thirty-second ascension, he looks like he's in his eighties.

Other than age, the Comte fits in wherever he goes. Specifically, his ethnotype changes to match whatever region he inhabits. When he's in Japan, he looks Japanese. When he's in Sweden, he's blonde with blue eyes. This effect is gradual, and the determining region is fairly broad. Thus, if he was surrounded by six red-haired white men while in the middle of Africa, he'd remain black. It takes about forty-eight hours for the transformation to work, and it only occurs if he is willing to let it. Regardless of his race, he is never outstandingly handsome or ugly. Unsurprisingly, he looks average.

Sometimes, the Comte is a woman.

Reason to Exist

The Comte is a sort of a cosmic repairman. He straightens out misunderstandings of existence (like Bill Toge in the UA rulebook), manages mystic disasters, and, when the mood strikes him, does things "for the sake of humanity." In the latter case, his actions may seem good or evil; to him, they make perfect sense.

While it would seem that he would be unstoppable by any mere human agency, the Comte often prefers to work through mortal humans. These agents (or dupes) are obviously nowhere near as effective as the Comte would be in person, but he does so nonetheless. After all, they can be where he is not and, for all his knowledge and power, that's one trick he does not possess.

Thus, he finds it useful and necessary to manipulate others so that he can put people in place at smaller crises while he himself faces larger ones—or maybe he just goes to a museum.

Usually he picks his agents carefully and tests them strenuously to ensure that they possess the desired physical, mystical, and moral qualities. Quite often, he uses people whose outlook is very different from his own. If they're moral, they're easier to maneuver. If they're amoral, he feels better about getting them killed. It is rare for him to reveal his true nature to them.

Furthermore, he's made some enemies in the Invisible Clergy, who are willing and able to screw with him—though not, of course, kill him. These enemies are, for their own inscrutable reasons, often more forgiving towards his agents than they are towards him.

What He Knows

A lot, but not everything. He's never seen the Cruel Ones and has no idea what happens to souls who pass beyond the Veil. He could give you a complete list of the members of the Invisible Clergy, but he won't. On the other hand, he never met Jesus Christ (he was in China around that time) and has no idea what happened to Ambrose Bierce or JFK.

It's important to remember that the Comte can only be in one place at a time and consequently knows most of history the same way everyone else does: by hearing biased accounts from others. It's also important to remember that he sees little reason to answer pesky questions from people who are going to be dead soon—and when you're immortal, nearly everyone is going to be dead soon.

What He Can Do

The First and Last has just about every mundane skill at the maximum level allowed by his stats. He is intimately familiar with everything from astronomy and boxing through yeomanry and zen philosophy. More importantly, he has quite a few abilities unique to his condition and position.



Invulnerable. Here's the big one. He cannot be harmed. Bullets bounce off. Knives just stop. Blast spells feel like they worked (meaning the charges go) but produce no injury. It's possible to impede him—say, by chaining him up and burying him under two tons of stone—but lack of food or air only pisses him off. Eventually, he can escape from any trap.

Rituals. The Comte can't "create new rituals" in the sense of causing any effect from any set of actions. However, he can figure out a ritual for just about any reasonable effect. Think of it this way: Shakespeare was restricted to the 26 letters of the English alphabet, but with those letters he could describe just about anything. Thus it is with the Comte and his ability to produce rituals. Of course, the more powerful or elaborate the effect, the more symbolic rigmarole is generally required. (There are, however, a few scary exceptions.) A given ritual performed by the Comte could theoretically be performed by anyone else, as well—but he's not keen on teaching rituals.

The Comte rolls his Soul stat when trying to produce a ritual effect. If a ritual requires significant charges, assume he's attained them through other rituals. (Yes, he can do that.)

There are, importantly, several effects he *can't* produce. These types of rituals simply don't work, for the Comte or anyone else.

- A blast ritual. At his request, the last Clergy built this precaution into the fabric of this universe. Apparently he gave them a good reason to keep magical mayhem limited.
- A ritual that lets him be in more than one place at once.
- A major charge ritual.
- He can't bring anyone out of the Invisible Clergy.
- A suicide ritual that works on him.

Omnilingual. It's not quite the gift of tongues, though he has a ritual for that if he needs it. Rather, the process of learning literally *millions* of languages in the course of his many existences has made him rather good at it. He still needs to be exposed to the vocabulary, but if he was immersed in a completely unique and new

language it would take him about a month to become completely fluent. He'd have an adequate pidgin within twenty-four hours. Naturally, he's comfortable with every current language spoken by more than a thousand people on Earth.

The Benefits of Experience. Any time he tries to do something in a stressful situation (*i.e.*, any time he makes a roll) he can attempt to improve his chances, at the risk of failing magnificently. Specifically, any time the GM rolls for the Comte, he can opt to roll only a single die and read it for both places in the roll. Thus, it's always either a matched failure or success.

The Weight of the World. Any time he makes soul-to-soul contact with someone (including eye contact, or any spell he senses), he may impress upon them a part of his experiences. This takes the form of a mind-boggling sense of vast time spans, great losses, hideous violence, alien experiences, or all of the above, depending on what he opts to disclose. In game terms, he picks which gauge you take a stress check on, and he picks the severity. Isolation-10? Coming right up!

Stats

Body: 50 (Middlin')
Speed: 60 (S) (Spry)
Mind: 60 (Sharp)
Soul: 70 (Shrewd)

Skills

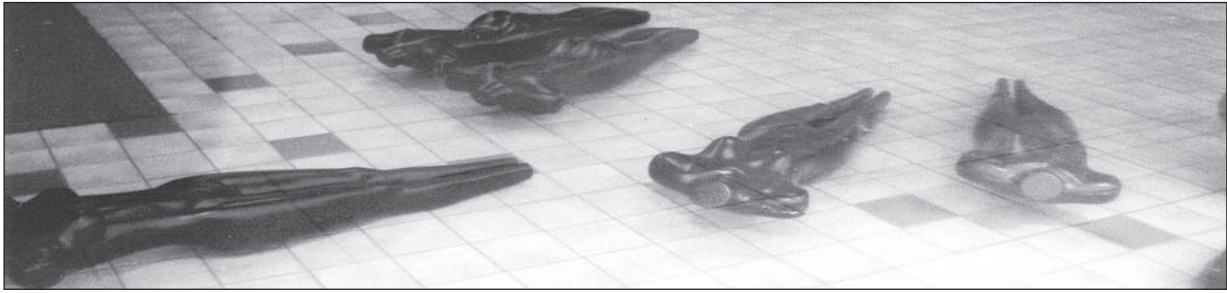
Whatever is needed.

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
6 Hard	6 Hard	4 Hard	8 Hard	6 Hard
2 Failed	0 Failed	2 Failed	2 Failed	1 Failed

Possessions

More than you can probably imagine. He can turn lead into gold and remembers technologies from a thousand forgotten universes, so liquid assets are not an issue. He's also made it his business to collect a number of powerful mystic artifacts. Generally he destroys them if he can, otherwise they're hidden or placed with trusted agents.



The Stormy Petrel of Apocalypse

Centuries ago, the Comte de Saint-Germain dressed, according to witnesses, in richly refined garments of black and white. That was centuries ago. Now, the Comte's suit is rumpled and frayed, a little shiny at the knees and elbows. People who see him walking along dusty back roads in Mississippi or leaning against peeling door frames in East L.A. might think it's the suit he wore to his father's funeral, and that his father died years ago and didn't leave much behind. Those people are closer than they know; it's the suit he expects to wear to humanity's funeral, and he doesn't expect humanity to leave much behind, either. It's still a black suit, though; the Comte hasn't abandoned tradition entirely, as much as he wishes he could. But black and white it must be, ancient symbols of duality passed down from the first priests of the Saharan grassland. So the Comte de Saint-Germain washes his black socks and white shirts in strip-mall laundromats, ties his black tie with a loose knot, and resigns himself to looking like a down-at-the-heels blues musician.

His dark hair, thatched with gray since 1792, falls lank over his sweat-stained collar. His expression speaks volumes of disappointment with humanity, a hangdog look that predicts disaster and is seldom wrong. This cycle's tragedies, massacres, famines, pogroms, and most of all its staggering stupidities are all inscribed somewhere in the lines scoring his cheeks and in the webwork of wrinkles around his dark, haunted eyes. Maybe the next one will be better, he thinks. His long, thin-fingered hands bear a faded signet ring, a souvenir of fleeting hope from the sixteenth century. Every few centuries, he gets a flash of what

it was all supposed to be like, of human promise and potential. That flash appears deep in his brown eyes, or in a fugitive quirk of his thin lips. If you see Saint-Germain look pensive, rather than pessimistic, if you see the creases at the corners of his mouth turn up in an unaccustomed, if ambivalent, gambler's grin—well, then, it's too late, because he's decided you might be able to help stave off disaster one final time.

Reason to Exist

He has to. It's the rules. The inner key of all magic, and most religion, is personification, the anthropic principle. Man is the intermediary between microcosm and macrocosm, between History and Destiny, between entropy and order. So the Cycle must have a man to bear witness; if the Universe falls in an empty forest, it doesn't make a sound.

All that is very well and good, very Heisenbergian, but what does the Comte actually do all day? Mostly he walks, following the flows of the statosphere in bus schedules and radio reception to where key events in human destiny unfold. Many of those events are Ascensions, but you'd be surprised how many weird little power-plays or shadowy seductions turn out to be of cosmic importance. That is, you'd be surprised unless you were the Comte. Sometimes, if he's feeling lucky, or the stakes are precisely balanced, or just to throw those smartasses in the Clergy a curve, he'll intervene.

Usually he does so at one or two removes; there's no sense in rippling the statosphere more than he has to. He'll drop a word to a cabal of adepts about the secret entrance to the mausoleum, knowing they'll steal something, which will



cause a magical feud, which will distract the Sleepers from his real goal in another town entirely. Or he'll steal a car somebody needed for a job interview, making sure that the landscaping company hires the avatar of the Gardener instead. Sometimes, when the stakes are immense (like now) or when he's got nothing to lose (like now), he'll actually tell his chosen tools most of what they need to know: "The thing in the trunk of the Buick cannot be allowed to escape. Drive it to Baltimore. Here's the keys. The address and access codes of the TNI safe house will be stapled behind the back bleachers at Camden Yard."

What He Knows

Humanity. He encompasses the Roman poet's injunction, "Nothing human is foreign to me." Most days, he wishes it were foreign to him, but he's killed enough innocent people in "good causes" to know it's not. The Comte knows all kinds of magical trivia, from the ritual for banishing plague demons to the lucky way to push elevator buttons. The Comte doesn't know for sure who the Cruel Ones are; up until about 1916, he had thought they were angels. Now, he suspects that either everything he's learned about angels was wrong, or that the Cruel Ones are some kind of collective projection of the Invisible Clergy. He doesn't expect this cycle to last long enough to figure it out. With such weighty problems on his mind, he generally doesn't bother to answer questions about trivia. He tried that in the 1660s, and it just got him jailed, which was a pretty unpleasant process even back then. Now, he usually just tells people whatever will get them moving in the direction he wants.

What He Can Do

Play music, read maps, and watch people die. There's more to it than that—he's seldom found anything he can't do that he really, really needed to—but that pretty much covers it in a nutshell.

He's a gifted artist, although his music is usually either formal and remote or heart-rendingly

sad. (His painting and poetry are merely adequate, though he tends to tinker with his verse for decades.) With the music comes gifts of talking to people, finding out their troubles, and persuading them (often as not) into new ones. He's been a superb con artist at times, and he still knows most of the old grifts; he had something of a reputation as a backwoods lawyer in the 1880s; and he's started enough riots and religions to fill several history books. (In game terms, the Comte can roll against his Soul to learn anything from any human, or convince any human to do anything even remotely reasonable-sounding.)

There's not a map on the planet that Saint-Germain can't read. He doesn't need to read maps much, since his sense of direction is perfect, but they hold a lot of information if you know how to look. The Comte knows how to look. Not only is he perfectly literate and fluent in all human tongues (part of that first gift, really), but he is the ultimate pattern-matching animal. A historian has to look at something like the Renaissance for decades before he can boil it down to ultimate causes. The Comte knew, four minutes after walking through Florence's river gate in 1403, which three people would have to die to bring it about. Fortunately, two of them were pretty nasty people, if you're worried. (In game terms, the Comte can roll against his Mind to figure out the "lay of the land" in any situation, be it magical, political, cultural, or physical. This lets him, among other things, come in the one unguarded door, show up at the precise psychological moment with just the right piece of information, and vanish in the split second while nobody's watching.)

This brings us to his third major gift: the Comte is very, very used to death. He knows that he can't be killed (bullets, *etc.*, don't bounce off him—he's just never standing where they hit), but he knows that everyone else will die. Some will die tragically, but when you walked through Jerusalem while the Crusaders sacked it, your threshold of tragedy is pretty high. When he's read the map (or the pattern of grime in a shop window, or the rhythm of the fluorescent lights in the 7-11) and figured out what has to be done, he'll do

it without hesitation. He will lie to a priest, rescue a murderer, steal from a blind man, or convince other people to do it for him. Sometimes, when he's feeling one of his rare bursts of optimism, he'll look for an elegant or more morally comfortable way to accomplish his goals, but the whirls of the stator sphere don't always give him the time he'd like.

Stats

Body: 40 (Nine Miles Of Bad Road)
Speed: 60 (S) (Deceptively Deliberative)
Mind: 80 (Intuitive Genius)
Soul: 90 (Human)

Skills

In addition to the gifts and knowledges listed above,

the Comte can ride horses, tame dogs, and keep bees.

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
9 Hard	7 Hard	3 Hard	9 Hard	3 Hard
2 Failed	0 Failed	1 Failed	1 Failed	3 Failed

Possessions

Surprisingly little; he usually knows where to find anything he really needs, and the few absolutely irreplaceable magickal artifacts or grimoires he hasn't used up over the millennia fit in his duffel bag along with his laundry. He has a ring of keys that fit any lock (when he uses them) and a never-empty pack of Lucky Strike Green cigarettes. Occasionally, he has a guitar case instead of a duffel bag.



The Diplomat

Magonia is a small country that never turns up in the news. You can't find it on any maps, but that's not surprising; many maps in use today still show the Soviet Union because few people bother to replace maps until they're worn out.

Most world leaders and the powers behind their thrones will say that they have met the Diplomat from Magonia at one time or another. Even if they haven't, they'll hardly admit to political ignorance. He's a familiar figure at state dinners and embassy receptions in a dozen countries, but even when he's not at some function or other people will still agree that oh yes, *of course* he was there, because they'll hardly admit to social ignorance.

They will concur on what he's like. The Magonian representative is an older, dapper, cultured gentleman with an indeterminate accent and complexion. He might be Prussian, or Muslim, or

Hindu; his eyes and his skin seem to catch the light differently at different times. The Diplomat occupies that hazy strata of internationalism where borders fade and ideologies mingle.

In his role as the Diplomat, Saint-Germain is free to move among the most politically and financially powerful people in the world. He can show up at any affair and gain entry because even when he's not expected—and he's never expected—he's still welcome.

People gossip about the Diplomat. His bedroom conquests would seem to beggar belief, and he is given whispered credit for behind-the-scenes mediation at every global flashpoint. Supposedly he has the ear of kings and presidents; and indeed, no king or president wants to admit that they *don't* consult him for advice on occasion, because all the right people do just that. Or so everyone says.

In truth, hardly anyone regularly meets the Diplomat. He is a phantom of rumor and innuendo. His favor is a symbol of status and power, like a cell phone or a new shipment of fighter jets, and is far easier to acquire: all you have to do when someone mentions the Diplomat from Magonia is wink and nod and perhaps whisper *yes, he is of course my friend, too*.

Reason to Exist

Generally speaking, Saint-Germain has better things to do than waste time smoking cigars with the leaders of planet Earth. He knows it is the dreams and desires of humanity that truly govern, not the petty intrigues of bureaucrats and inbred dynasties. The twists of fate that interest him are far more likely to occur in Phoenix than in Paris.

But Saint-Germain also knows that there are powerful forces shaping the lives of entire cultures, forces like war, poverty, famine, and scandal. The human face of these forces is oft-best glimpsed across an ornate ballroom in Monte Carlo, or over vodka and caviar in a well-guarded dacha outside St. Petersburg, or on board Air Force One. When he needs to check in on the big picture of globalism, not even a week of CNN can top an evening of laughter and insight with Kofi Annan.

Thus Saint-Germain needs a certain cachet, a reputation, a network of relationships. As the Diplomat from Magonia he appeals to world leaders' sense of elitism and mystery. He is classy without being snobby, knowledgeable without being didactic, and strong-willed without being obnoxious.

His persona changes over time—Saint-Germain only became the Diplomat from Magonia in 1974, a point when he foresaw a new capitalist globalism that required a touch of old-school class and erudition to appeal to the newly monied and democratized states that would emerge from the end of the Cold War fifteen years in the future. He spent the 1960s as the head of an intriguingly shady military-political think-tank based in France, and was supposedly a former CIA station chief

who had an affair with a Politburo member's wife. In the 1950s he posed as a freelance representative for defense contractors, jetting around the world on behalf of Boeing or Krupp or someone or other. In World War II he ran a café in Morocco and spy networks throughout Europe. Before that, and before that, and before that . . . well. He is simply the man his times require, or at least the man his times believe him to be.

In every persona, his rumored actions and allegiances are simply that: rumors. He spreads some himself, lets others happen naturally, and smiles enigmatically when pressed on one point or another. In truth, he never ran a think-tank or cashed a check from Smith & Wesson or smashed a bottle of Vichy water with a Free French commandant. When a given persona has outlived its usefulness, he retires it. The next time he bumps into the king of Saudi Arabia or a United Nations under-secretary, they recognize him by his new persona. His old one is forgotten before historians have time to jot it down.

Where is his nation? "Ah, sir, the maps today, they are so confused and Magonia is so very small. It is of course near Freedonia. Tell me, how is your magnificent air force doing?"

What He Knows

The history of the world, more or less. He's not omniscient, but he's seen a lot first-hand and has had ample time to study.

His knowledge of present-day geopolitics is probably unmatched. He can rattle off troop strengths of the Republican Guard as easily as the Gross Domestic Product of New Zealand. The Diplomat is a resolute internationalist, a man who believes the only true gnosis comes from the study of the entire world. He knows the leaders of every nation and can greet them warmly and knowingly at a moment's notice, asking polite questions about their daughter and whether the family dog got over that injury last summer. He knows the latest issues and scandals, has intimate knowledge of current flashpoints, and can debate the tactical merits of the M-16 or Ebola with aplomb.

Beyond the rarefied strata of global politics, the Diplomat is also a gentleman at ease in any social situation. He knows and appreciates fine foods and drinks, but his palate is not so snobbish that he can't enjoy a humble meal with peasants during a fact-finding excursion or a stop-off at the largest fast-food franchise in America with a jogging president. He is always cool and collected save for those occasional moments of passionate debate, during which he has been known to rise to his feet and denounce an important man in no uncertain terms—leaving the man decidedly less important afterwards.

He has an opinion on everything and everyone, but his opinions are generally tempered by compassion and pragmatism; he is more interested in getting people to talk than getting people to listen. When pressed, the Diplomat describes himself as a Meritocrat at heart, but nods his head sadly when a colleague reminds him there simply is no suitably impartial force who could decide what persons rule the world.

What He Can Do

The Diplomat can attend most any state or industrial occasion in any nation in the world, without an invitation or advance notice. (He cannot so easily gain access to official government or corporate meetings, but history has taught him that decisions are made over cocktails, not over maps.) He is treated as a friend and confidante by rulers of all nations, even if they have never met him before; they all *think* they have.

He can spread whatever rumors he likes about himself, but he rarely finds this necessary. Having established his reputation some years ago, the natural wheels of gossip turn just fine without his intercession.

He can also spread rumors about other people, and this gets more to the heart of his persona. Having the ear of the world's leaders does little good if you have nothing to say. Because there are times when the movement of a butterfly's wings causes fewer ripples than, say, the movement of troops in Bosnia, the Diplomat is willing

and able to manipulate the global community along lines that suit his agenda. He might encourage an insurrection if it will destabilize the True King of Sarajevo, or suggest a peace treaty if it will assist him in recovering and destroying the Ark of the Covenant.

His powers have limits, though they may be self-imposed. For example, he has found that using magick to compel the behavior of heads of state usually leads to disaster, as his experiment with Caligula demonstrated. Instead, he does what he can via rumors and subtle influence, often inserting whispers into the intelligence agencies of nations so that they funnel up the chain of command with the trappings of fact. After all, he can spread a rumor at a society ball just as easily as he can spread it to a CIA agent, and the best rumors are the ones people tell to themselves.

Stats

Body: 50 (Silver-Haired & Stout)
Speed: 40 (S) (The Dignity of Age)
Mind: 80 (Keen Analyst)
Soul: 60 (Policy Wonk)

Skills

Any he needs, but in particular those related to charm and grace.

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
2 Hard	4 Hard	1 Hard	0 Hard	2 Hard
0 Failed	0 Failed	2 Failed	0 Failed	1 Failed

Possessions

Classy formal clothing, a silver cigarette case, a black .32 Beretta for the sake of mystery, and a passport from Magonia.



you did it

W W W . U N K N O W N A R M I E S . C O M



The art of government
is the organization of idolatry.