

T R A D I T I O N B O O K :

DREAMSPEAKERS™



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DREAMSPEAKERS

THE DRUMBEAT OF THE WORLD

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DREAMSPEAKERS™



BY BRUCE BAUGH AND JOHN SNEAD

CREDITS

Authors: Bruce Baugh and John Snead
World of Darkness created by Mark Rein•Hagen
Storyteller game system designed by Mark Rein•Hagen
Development: Jess Heinig
Editing: Michelle Lyons
Art Direction: Aileen E. Miles
Interior Art: Ron Brown, Leif Jones, Alex Sheikman,
Drew Tucker
Cover Art: Christopher Shy
Layout, Typesetting & Cover Design: Aileen E. Miles

COMING SOON FOR MAGE:

TRADITION BOOK:
EUTHANATOS



735 PARK NORTH BLVD.
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USA

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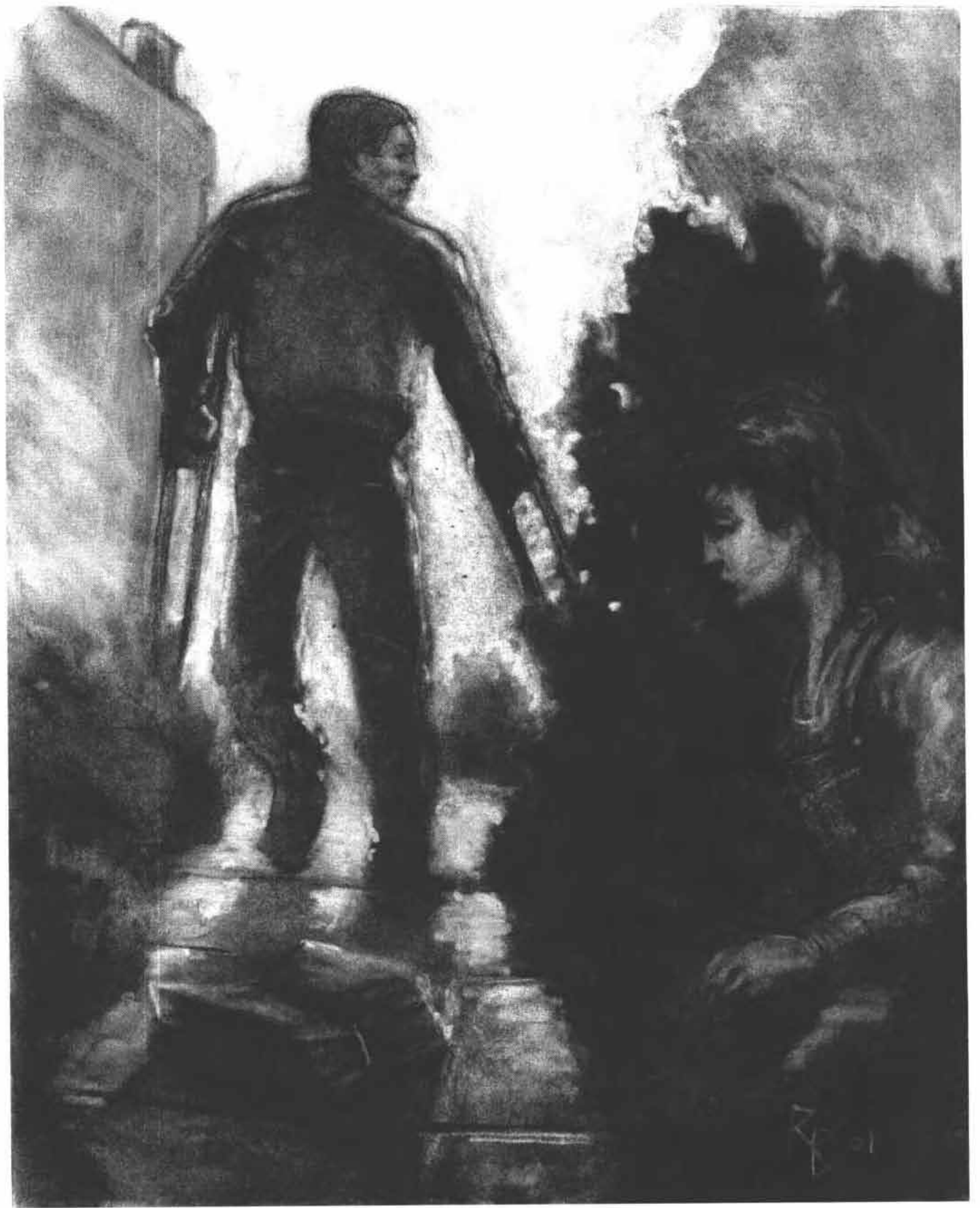
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PROLOGUE: THE PATIENT RETURNS

"Life's splendor forever lies in wait about each one of us in all its fullness, but veiled from view, deep down, invisible, far off. It is there, though, not hostile, not reluctant, not deaf. If you summon it by the right word, by its right name, it will come."

— Franz Kafka, Diaries, 1921



STEWARTSVILLE, ILLINOIS

"Hello!

"It's okay. I know you don't want to talk to me right now, and I'm not going to try to catch you. You've been following me for three days now, maybe four — was that you in the bus terminal, back.... Never mind. I know you won't tell me, and you want to have some private truths. That's fine.

"I didn't know the place would be like this. The last time I saw the old hospital home was back in the fall of 1999, when I made my escape. There was a little charring from the July fire then, but the rest stood intact.

"You were here then, right? You move your feet in a familiar way. I remember hearing your steps in the hallway late at night — Dr. Brooks called you and the others the 'night wanderers.' I always thought that sounded like something out of a black-and-white horror movie. Sometimes, when the medication went wrong, I'd imagine all of you gathering, ready to feast on me before I could even scream....

"By the way, if you really want to stay behind the hedges like that, you ought to just sit down. Squatting leaves you off balance if you don't know how to set your haunches right, and I can hear from the grass that you don't. Hey, don't get upset: See, I'm still standing here. It's just that I hear these things.

"You've been hearing things, too, haven't you? When I got off the bus, you felt something like a shout or an icepick in your brain? You see inanimate objects move around, and nobody else does. You know that it's not just the schizophrenia, but nobody else will help you. I'm here to explain that to you. I was there, too, and when I made my escape, Xoca — the crazy Indian who helped me — told me he felt like there might

be someone getting left behind. I'm sorry, whoever you are. I should have come back a long time ago to check.

"See, you're right. Those things you experience are true. Your inner eyes have opened just a bit, but you don't yet know enough either to focus them or to close them. Here, think of it like this. You know how the world looks when you start to open your eyes after a nap. It's all strange and distorted, right? Well, that's the way it is with your soul, too. Trust me, not everything is as bad as it looks. If we were different people, you'd be in line to become a shaman, a medicine man. You have the gift of seeing the spirits that live inside everything.

"Yes, really. I'm not making it up, I swear. I know you don't believe me yet: I can feel your skepticism washing along the ground, like waves of something thick and sludgy. Old motor oil, maybe. You're good with tools, aren't you? Did you work in the motor pool, maybe, before this whole place burned down? I don't recall hearing the moans of hunger spirits very loudly in the station, so you must have something you can do to feed yourself.

"It's an awful state to be in, not knowing what's going on. I came here to tell you that there's an answer. What I've done is write down a whole bunch of things that I hope will help. There's a little bit of autobiography, and some letters from people I... I work with, I guess you'd say. There's also some transcripts a friend made for me from visions I had, about what it was like for others to teach me things. Other spirits, that is, not other people. Some of the passages could even go in a training manual, if there were such a thing for prospective shamans.

"I'm setting it here on the ground, see? I'll be going soon, but I'll be back at the same time tomorrow. The clouds tell me it won't rain, even though it looks bad. You read it, and if you want to talk with me tomorrow, you can."



INTRODUCTION: VISIONS

"I am here by the will of the Great Spirit, and by his will I am chief. I know Great Spirit is looking down upon me from above, and will hear what I say..."

— Chief Sitting Bull



Dancing anachronisms? Schizophrenic prophets? Yes, and more. Dreamspeakers do not shirk from the titles other mages might give them. *We are as we must be*, the Dreamspeakers say. While the practitioners of potent arts either chortle at the Dreamspeakers' primitive ways and superstitions or dismiss the Tradition as pointless in the face of raw mystic power, the Dreamspeakers don't see their quirks as flaws. Indeed,

every hindrance or scar is a sacrifice made on behalf of magic. What do other mages know of sacrifice? The Dreamspeakers give of themselves so that they might serve. In knowing responsibility, they understand their own limitations and duties. It's not a matter of living morosely with handicaps and mental problems. It's about using one's powers in service — both to community and to the spirit world — and in how that power sets the individual apart.

THEME: MOVING IN CYCLES

Dreamspeakers sometimes struggle with their role in modern society. Some can't decide exactly how to mesh ancient ways with current imperatives. Others don't recognize the validity of emerging practices. Despite these troubles, however, the Dreamspeakers must (and do) recognize their brethren as part of a greater cycle. All Dreamspeakers share a common path and a bond with the spirit world. Whether this comes through technology or trance is immaterial — they all celebrate the cycles of nature. What is primitive comes again to the fore; what is nouveau looks back to history for inspiration. Dreamspeakers recognize the cyclical motion of history. There is not a single story, but rather the melange of every possible story.

Dreamspeakers know that the world must change. As intermediaries, or simply as witnesses, they live this constant cycle. Sometimes they offer comfort when painful new truths emerge. Other times they take up the mantle of war, when the world's progress goes awry or the spirits call for aid. Most of all, though, they know the old stories and learn the new ones. In doing so, they realize that the cosmos — good, bad and indifferent — will eventually turn out as it should with just a little help.

MOOD: DREAMS MEETING REALITY

The Dreamspeaker world is one where spirits constantly intervene. Anything could wake up and talk to the mage; any mundane chore could have hidden significance. To this Tradition, the world really is a waking dream.

Dreamspeakers can't ignore their calling. Spirits demand attention and the world spins on, heedless of whether the mage wants it to stop. Other mages plumb the depths of the Umbra to learn its mysteries — but Dreamspeakers have spirits coming to *them* to trade stories. In a sense, the separation of Umbra and Earth is artificial to the Dreamspeaker. The two realms aren't separate entities — they are one complete whole.

CONTENTS

The beliefs presented here show how Dreamspeakers might work to accomplish similar goals in dealing with spirits, but Dreamspeakers are more than just mages with spirit allies. Indeed, the many cultures from which Dreamspeaker practices spring would fill thousands of pages in detail.

Chapter 1: The Goal — The World paints “history,” such as it is for a disjointed group that works with entities outside the boundaries of time. The Dreamspeakers aren't major players in world affairs. After all, they've held to old ways that've remained unchanged for centuries — or longer. Instead, they move in and out of society, advising in one place and hiding in another, watching the ages play out.

Theirs isn't a struggle to impose some larger order. In dealing with spirits, the Dreamspeakers have, perhaps, learned to see the world a little as the spirits do. From that basis, the Dreamspeakers evolved their own belief in what makes a better world and a more wholesome form of humanity.

Chapter 2: The Road — The Mage explores what it means to be a Dreamspeaker. Whether serving or commanding spirits, working within a culture or subsisting on the fringes of it, the Dreamspeakers have a unique view of the interconnected spirit and material worlds.

Chapter 3: The Walkers — Shamans and Others delves into the members who've made the Dreamspeakers more than just a hodge-podge: rather a brother- (and sister-) hood. These spiritualists showcase not only the shamanic heritage for which the Dreamspeakers are best known, but also the others who show the myriad approaches to spirit. Technofetishists, scholars and warriors round out the Dreamspeaker Tradition, so they too have a home here. Hand-in-hand with different looks at the Tradition you'll find ways to incorporate the Dreamspeaker ethic into divergent character types and build a game based on the Dreamspeaker paradigm.





CHAPTER ⊕ ONE: THE GOAL — THE WORLD

*The soul knows only the soul; the web of events is the
flowing robe in which she is clothed.*

— Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Over-Soul"

THE DAY ⊕ OF THE WORLD: HISTORY



I am Robert's totem. I choose him as belonging to my tribe when the spark of vision burns through his eyes from the inside, letting him see what most people do not. He chooses me in that moment, the shape of his heart making a road I walk down, from the bright realm that is my home, through the storm around his world and into his soul.

He thinks of me as "The Rubbish" because his eyes harvest the essence of me and yield up a bouquet of images taken from his experience. He is not wrong, really. I am in myself a spirit of value discarded.

Standing next to him on the road of the heart, even though separated in what they think of as time and

space, Pu-abi sees me as a woman made of precious things from each of the little kingdoms her husband, the commander of archers, has helped sack for the glory of the Great King. The great almost-dragon, who has no name for itself but Blue One With Shiny Wings, perceives me as an animated collection of viscera from the meals he and his kin have made recently. Close even as they reckon it, Bonnie sees me as the smoking debris of books and videos destroyed on the order of the Demon King whom Robert meets at the twenty-year turning of his own road.

They all see something different; they all see the same thing. They like to ramble on sometimes about "paradoxical truths," and don't seem to understand when my brethren and I tell them that the truth is many,

not just one. But we love them anyway, and serve them as they serve us.

I feel Robert waking in the little apartment and know that it is time to show him the day of the world. I do not understand why he must know it now, but then I must follow as well as lead. I descend the bridge again and call to him in his kitchen. He doesn't hear me, so I take on a form. It is strange to wear a shape made of the world's stuff; it feels uncomfortable, even when I'm wearing mostly memories and reflections, barely poking out of the world's shadow into the world itself. This time he hears me.

In himself he's lame, of course. It's the mark of sacrifice on him. But when he hears me, his walking self comes to the fore, and it is whole. So he climbs out of the window and comes to where I wait for him, in the alley. "I dreamed of you last night. I was hoping it was just a dream. You said you had to show me the 'day of the world.'"

I smile broadly, forcing broken tires and jar lids into a grin. "I do!"

"Is there any particular reason it has to be today?"

"This is the day of the world!" I answer. He doesn't seem to understand the right questions. When it's a calling like this, I cannot tell them to him on my own.

We cross the barrier between flesh and spirit together. I wrap around him for protection, but even so a few shards of the wind at the world's edge cut his legs. It is a sign that his walking self must change too. There is another self inside him that he does not yet see.

Together we travel, and that is its own story, which I shall not tell you. It ends when we arrive at the pool of the Beached Whale, which my self tells me is the one to instruct Robert about the day of the world.

MORNING

I was the Beached Whale, the guardian of those things which sacrificed themselves without apparent gain: I lived in a pool above the north pole, in what had been a crater at the crest of the old Axis Mundi before a change moved it all outside. It was a quiet place, full of starlight and the quiet whispers of passing souls on their way to the gentler havens of the dead. As the Beached Whale, my skin was of course taut and black, and its sheen matched the polished parts of the heavens.

Sometimes an aspect of the world called on me to show things from my vista. The old axis had stopped being a channel of power two ages before this particular visit, but it retained a king's-eye view of the world. I learned, over many centuries, the names and natures of many of the great totems, and discovered that I made quite a good teacher despite the difficulties and misun-

THE WAY SPIRITS TALK

From Xoca's private journal

Man, being a teacher sucks sometimes. I don't want to have to tell the kid all this stuff. But, well, someone's got to, and if I don't, he'll just hear it from someone who'll load him up with a bunch of propaganda bullshit.

Today it was "How come the spirits talk funny?" I strung him on for a while, but I knew what he meant. It's hard to talk to the spirits sometimes. Some of them only talk in present tense. Some don't use any nouns, which is hard to figure out, or any verbs, which is worse. Some of them don't recognize "to be." I told the kid some things about human languages and how much they can be different from each other: Navajo and the way it builds up nouns as sets of verb; the whole agglutinative thing I had to learn in order to understand some of the old languages in the peninsula; my own peoples' thing with status markers.

Sometimes, I told him, spirits talk the way they do because that's the way the first people they encountered talked. Sometimes it tells you something about what the spirit is like, too. Robert's own totem seems to only talk about the present. It *knows* about the past and future, it just can't *say* anything about them. That's a big clue right there to the kid's mission as its chosen, about where the discarded go, and he hasn't figured it out yet. Eventually it'll hit him.

And sometimes, I think, the spirits talk that way just because they think it's funny.

derstandings flowing from our various languages. So this visit was something like routine for me — a pleasure, because I liked the Rubbish and the students it brought, and was glad to see it again before its funeral.

The young man seemed unimpressive, though I knew that looks were deceiving. I remembered him a few years later, and how he performed the rites of passing for his chosen ones. So I greeted him as if I saw that reality then. "Hello, Robert. Your guide said it was time for you to see the day of the world."

"Um. Yeah." I smiled, a big baleen smile. He had already learned one of the secrets of power: when you gave a noncommittal assent, you could draw out more.

I struggled to express myself around the barriers of his thought. "Before you departed, you have come here to look in the pool." He puzzled for a moment, then figured it out and walked over to look.

The pool's surface froze, then smoothed. Inside he could see the world as it had been, a smooth orb without features, without soul. "This was before dawn." A faint glimmer of sun appeared behind the ball. "Before the sun rose, there was only potential. There was no actual form, either matter or spirit, to grow or change or live or die." One of my flippers stirred the pool, and a single wave whipped across the surface. The sun in the pool rose. So did the sun behind the old axis.

The age's first part began as sunlight spread across the world. Life stirred in the seas and on the land. Birds rose from new treetops to fill the air. The Dragon Kings reared their great heads and founded an empire, while the first humans climbed down out of their trees and emperors united China and the Renaissance swept over Europe. The Demon Emperor set up his throne, casting shadows into the morning.

"Which of this came first?" Robert asked. I appreciated him asking in the tense I could understand, but the question itself couldn't be answered the way he thought.

"Dawn came before noon, which came before sunset, of course," I answered, trying to explain.

"But all this stuff happened at different times," he objected.

"That was how things got marked up in one calendar," I said. "This was another way to see things."

"Oh."

As we talked, he saw how souls entered the world. The great souls of the creative forces divided and divided again until everything had its distinct nature. At first there was no difference between matter and spirit, but that couldn't last. Day and night, alive and dead, male and female, thought and action...inevitably there had to be spirit and matter, and so there was. Once separated, the spirit of each thing retraced its journey back: from individual to family to kin to kind, the hierarchy of spirits sprung up at each level where flesh had divided on its way down.

"I thought that spirits shape the world."

"They did. But also matter shaped the spirits. The pool didn't lie to you."

"Oh."

Throughout the world, men and women (and others, but they were of less concern to Robert) moved to and fro. They held each new thing in their hands and saw its spirit as well as its matter. They climbed into the spirit realms and mapped the web of ties. Occasionally they spoke to each other and discovered that their maps were mostly different. Sometimes they fought over this, and sometimes they refused to speak about it. But sometimes they studied to see what was their perception



and what was in the web. They made homes for themselves, each one finding some place in the web just right for their souls to rest.

I turned to wave my tail at particularly prominent examples of this in what Robert thought of as the Middle East. "These were your kind," I said. "These were what you would call shamans. In the morning they learned what things were called and how they related to each other."

NOON

The sun rose higher; Robert watched the world's one day unfold. "I think I get it," he said at last. "There's an underlying pattern to all the world's different actual days, right?"

I shook my head, scattering drops of old water across my visitors. "What the pool showed you. What did you see..." I struggled to express thoughts of the present, which didn't come easily to me. "What did you see when you looked in, and when you kept looking, before you stopped looking later?"

Robert looked confused at that. The Rubbish whispered, "What do you see?"

"I see one day, with everything from different eras all happening at once. When I try to trace them out, things slide away from each other just enough to make some space for each other. They don't notice each other."

"And what made you think that that was less true than what you remember living through?"

Robert stopped. "Remembered...but I did live through it. Didn't I?"

"I'm not the one who doubted," I said. "You should have continued looking." I set the example by turning to peer into the pool, and after a moment's hesitation he did the same.

The sun shone brightly on Asia. Great empires flourished, some of them binding together the whole region. The light was patchier in Africa, with clouds hiding most of the lands away from the major rivers. Only scattered bands and clans walked much of the interior. In Europe, Rome and England and Prussia and a dozen other lands achieved their heights of glory. The architectural marvels of each century shone, though without glare, in the bright midday light. Shadows covered most of the Americas, breaking to illuminate many culturally sophisticated but technically primitive cultures hiding in the interstices of the American empire. In the deep recesses, the Demon Emperor's minions slaughtered all.

I sent more ripples across the pool. Each one froze in a little peak over the soul of one of Robert's kind. "See here, and here, and here," I said. "Wherever a society

listened to the spirits, your predecessors and your descendants spoke for their community. They taught and healed. And they fought — you see how many spirit magicians were great warriors? Understanding never made quarrels go away; sometimes it made them much sharper. Over here, where the society did not listen to the spirits, your kind worked quietly, speaking to the underclasses and outcasts or dressing up the spirits' messages in acceptable language. You knew something of that yourself, perhaps."

WHERE'S OUR HISTORY?

From Xoca's private journal

Another good one from the kid today, and he got more of an answer from me than he would have if we'd met on my turf. But our dreams took us to his place, and damn if those falling cars don't still freak me out sometimes.

This time he asked, in between the crashes, why we don't have a history as a Tradition or anything. Well, that's a good one, once you start talking to Hermetics and hackers and what-not, and listening to their litanies.

Several reasons, I told him.

First, we're not really about us, so to speak. Shamanism is about being part of a community. Being its healer and judge and advocate and teacher and a lot else. So the success or failure of a shaman is the story of his whole community. Sure, the shaman is an outsider; he does and sees things that the rest of the community can't experience. But he uses that on behalf of — or against — the community.

Second, we're not joining types because the spirits aren't. He's already seen enough to know that it's not just about bossing around everything that doesn't have a body to call its own. We take orders. And there's no uber-order to the spirit world, no matter how much others go on about jaggings versus gafflings and archangels versus thrones and this versus that. Stuff is what it is, in the spirit world. Get all the spirits everywhere to agree to a hierarchy and then it might make sense to talk about all of us as a group. Until then, no way.

Third, we've got a history that plays out in ways that don't make much sense to others. One of these days he'll meet the Beached Whale and hear some stories from after the world dies, even though it's telling them to him right now. And there's lots weirder than that out there.

So our history is spread all over and it's just local. Damn. Sounds like a campaign speech in the making.

AFTERNOON

The sun moved on, and we continued to watch. Robert didn't take his gaze off the pool, even as he started to ask more questions.

"I understand how there are different 'maps' of the spirit world, and I don't have a problem with that. Souls don't have mass..."

I coughed quietly.

"Um, I don't *think* souls have mass. Anyway. Bodies do. If what your pool showed is, er, was true, how come we never noticed it all happening at once?"

"At home you walked through dust all the time. How often did you ever notice or think about it?"

"When the light shone on it against a dark background."

"And what did you think of people who told you they'd seen things you didn't in a moment of illumination from outside the sky?"

"Um."

I gave him a friendly pat. "The worst finished already, Robert. You did very well. Lots of your colleagues never quite got the point, or got it so quickly. They kept thinking of the unseen world as outside the walls, not inside with them, too. It took getting used to, for each one that got it. You did fine later on assimilating it all."

"Um. I, um, I'm not sure I should ask this."

"This place didn't come with a list of forbidden questions."

"The way you talk. Are you in the future? My future, that is?"

"When you were born, were you just one thing?"

"I think so..."

"Your intestines were filled with little organisms on which you depended for digestion. Creatures with their own genetic heritage swam in your blood and tissues. Some of your cells' organs showed their own distinctive legacies. Were all those just one thing?" It was only one view, the view of the world most recently and fostered by some humans, but it made my point.

"I guess not."

"When you came here, you came to a place where 'present' meant as much as 'just one thing.'" I noticed flickers in the pool. "But look."

As the sun began to set in the west of the world, things fell apart. The great lords of the sun set to squabbling with each other, and their oppressed subjects rose against them. Kingdoms of inhuman powers succumbed to greed and envy, dismantling their own cities in the feverish pursuit of new gains. The Demon

Emperor devoured himself and his courtiers. Through-out time, empires crumbled. Barbarians raised up for the purpose gloried in the ruins.

This time Robert beat me to it, scouting out his cousins. "They're hanging on. I see a lot of efforts to record traditions one way or another, and a flurry of training successors."

"Yes," I answered. "Many of them didn't know consciously that the end of their peoples was coming, and many of the spirits they dealt with didn't, either. And yet something in them made them prepare so that as little as possible would be lost when the darkness came thicker."

"But..." This time I waited, and eventually he continued. "I know just from the other shamans I've already met that new things get started at the same time. It isn't the same time of day everywhere on a round world, either."

"You remembered about seeing the dust just sometimes?"

"Yes."

"You didn't see the other times of day, either, but they were there."

"Is there really time at all?"

"You looked around as you came in, and could have answered that one for yourself."

NIGHT

Robert looked back at the pool and gasped out loud. "This is awful!"

I followed the movement of his eyes. "Yes, it was."

"Was? Does this have to happen?"

"The day of the world couldn't go on forever," I said. "Every day as you saw it ended in night, and that was true for the day of the world, too."

He wept as he watched darkness creep over everything. War, plague, disaster and less comprehensible perils swept away every society, leaving behind monsters and scattered bands of survivors to wait for a dawn that, unknown to them, would never come. Gradually the world lost its definition, pieces blurring into mist or drifting off into the void. In the depths of the world's midnight, the innermost fires went out, and the world's story came to an end.

He groped for hope. "But... after each age, there's another age!"

"Not for those whose story was the end of theirs. The beginning of an age was a different story, belonging to someone else."

"Does it all just end in death, then?"

"Every birth marked the beginning of a story. Since the world wasn't stacked infinitely deep in stories, there had to be something at the far end. You used to know that: you accepted it in the hospital."

"That death of my old self led to something new, though."

"Look."

Robert peered into the pool, gingerly touching a finger to it in an effort to pull part of it in close to him. Obliging, a small mound of water with a reflection of his home rose to meet him. "I see myself dead in the

hospital. But I also see myself dead at the bottom of the sea, an old man."

"You didn't ask how many stories there were about you."

He wanted to ask something else, I could tell, but suddenly the wind from home tugged at him. He tried to gasp out another question, without success. Soon both he and the Rubbish were swirling around and around the pool, farther with each orbit, and then gone from my sight. I repeated all that had happened to myself, so that I could remember it when their visit began.

THOSE WHO GUIDE: GEOPOLITICS



Robert walked through the park down the street from his home when the vision came upon him. He realized dimly that his body fell over and entered convulsions, while his spirit fell into one of the holes in the world's wall and dropped into my home. The winds cut him lightly, bringing him back into awareness of himself as the shaman.

He recognized me, of course. Xoca painted me in one of their early encounters and the memory remained vivid in his memory. He greeted me with the proper deference. "Greetings to you, spirit of the moving bird, guardian of the ways of the old winds and illuminator of the chambers of the new winds."

I bobbed up and down in response, my wings flashing in the bright moonlight that always shines here. "Greetings to you, student of the Rubbish. 'Hummingbird' will do as a name, though I appreciate your attention to my role."

He stood upright again. "Very well, Hummingbird. Why ___ I here now?"

"I see a hole in your sentence, Robert. Please ask again."

"Ah. My apologies. What led you to bring me here at this time?"

"Much better. One of the new winds told me that you needed to understand the state of your cousins. Apparently you'll have to explain them to others soon, and I thought it better to show you than to just tell you. Hang on."

As soon as I felt him wrap his arms and legs around my body, just behind the wings, I took off from my perch. He gasped briefly as I grew, from the twice-man-height I'd held when he came in to something sturdy enough to move through the new winds safely.

NORTH AMERICA

We started with Robert's own land, circling from Pacific to Atlantic and back again. Sometimes we glided scarcely above the ground, sometimes so high that we'd have drifted into space if I allowed myself to see things that way. He could see the sparks of Awakened souls here and there, sometimes gathered together and sometimes all alone with the quiet fires that burn in all other hearts. Those of his cousins sparked briefly higher as we passed, like calling to like even though most didn't recognize my passage consciously.

"Tell me what you see about your cousins," I suggested.

"Well..." He looked more closely, shifting from side to side. "It looks to me like only about half of them ___ in places where I know there ___ a lot of native peoples. I looked up a map of reservation and off-reservation aboriginal population clusters, and I see some good correlations with areas that still have functioning cultural heritages. But..."

I interrupted. "Please choose your words carefully. I hear noise when you say things like 'half of them ___ in places...'" He flinched as I gave him back the static that my condition gave to me.

"Sorry, Hummingbird! I... I learn the rules still. I will make a special offering when I return."

"Thank you. Now, continue."

"Anyway, it seems that about half of my fellow Dreamspeakers do not associate with anything tribal at all. When we fly low, I can see a few of them just about anywhere. Ghetto, suburb, anywhere."

"Correct," I said. "And tell me, would you really expect otherwise? After all, if the spirits do exist, and of course we do, then wouldn't we care about the souls who live in cities and farms as well as in tribes? The truth of the world doesn't belong to just one people or to just

one kind of people. Even though we sometimes have to shout hard — as you know — we never stop trying to talk to all people.”

“I guess I didn’t think of it that way.”

“No, you didn’t,” I agreed. “You got a little too much early on from Xoca and the Salmon Falls brothers. They mean well too, but they keep thinking of your people as possessing some special darkness, which you don’t. Your ancestors screwed it up in some big ways... but so did theirs. Now, look more closely...” I paused for a quick spin and bank. “... Right down there.”

Robert looked, then laughed. “___ a televangelist’s studio!”

“True,” I said. “Didn’t you learn yet that people understand the spirits in more than one way?”

“Well, yeah, but...”

“So he thinks he hears angelic choirs. We do sing, making him not altogether wrong by it. Maybe you could doubt a bit, if you think too securely that nothing like his God actually exists?”

LATIN AMERICA

I dove into a narrow valley in the Rockies and followed it to its sister channel in the Andes. I pulled up to let Robert get a good overview before resuming the

up-and-down survey. The tumult of spirit speech rose and sank around us, some of the words carried by birds and other messengers and others winging themselves as shimmering constructions of raw essence, while still others passed merely as sounds. “Listen,” I told Robert.

“I don’t understand a word of this,” he said after a moment. “I thought that everything across the wall spoke one language. I mean, I know about regional variations just from the differences between the trees at home and the ones where Xoca hides out between missions, but...”

“Listen again.”

He did. “Wait... I can make out a word here and there. ___ hard, though.”

“Yes. The spirits here don’t always talk about the same things they do around you, and they talk in ways that show the influence of forces you don’t deal with at home. The world branches differently in different places. But remember both your initial confusion and that beginning of understanding. They’re both true, all the time, when you move into a new place. Now, tell me what you see of your cousins.”

“At first I thought they were just swirling around, but I think I see a pattern.”



"Maybe you do. What do you think you see?"

"First, a steady swirl inward. If I hear the snatches right, those — the shamans of surviving tribes, drawing away from the press of the West. Not just geographically, though. Some of them gather along the coasts and in the mountains, not just in the big jungles and plains."

"Right. They seek to hold on until something overthrows your people. Something comes to do that, as I think the Beached Whale showed you, but it won't do them any good. They do what they can to preserve the old ways. Some of them, you'll see, are shuffling around the edges of their people. They teach what they can to sympathetic outsiders as a substitute." I chuckled. "When the right people find the keys in TV documentaries or doctoral dissertations, strange things can happen. But that would tell another story. What else do you see?"

"I see a matching spiral out, into the farms and cities. I can't tell who they belong to, precisely."

"Indeed you can't. More mixing of the races took place under Spanish and Portuguese rule than further north. They came as conquerors and people out to get rich quick, not as settlers and self-proclaimed humble folk. You know from talking to your own ancestors how hard you have to look to find anything like a 'pure Anglo,' but the search takes much, much more effort for a pure Spaniard...or a pure Indian, most places. Now, what makes them move?"

"They think they go to where the people are. They hear needs, or the spirits show them needs, and they go to teach and heal. But..."

I waited.

"Yes, I see something else."

"Yes."

"I see new sparks in the cities. A lot of new sparks. None of them seem more than a few years old. Why?"

"Many spirits would like to know that, too, Robert. They started appearing not long after what some of your cousins call the Avatar Storm started. Something causes a whole generation of new spirit masters and mistresses to spring up here. The older ones seldom realize that these new cousins are calling them, along with the needs they know about so far. I expect a lot of interesting things in a few years, when the new souls come into their inheritance. Perhaps you'll have something to say to them, too."

HØLES IN THE WØRLD

I spun out over the Atlantic. We approached one of the birthplaces of the great storm, or rather the point where it touched the material world. The storm clouds

WHY WE DO IT

From Xoca's private journal

I have to admit, the kid is good sometimes. He's going to make a good ambassador, even if he doesn't have any idea what's coming and Butterfly made me promise not to let on. He sent me a letter, and got it to go in the regular mail as far as Bogota, then by a den of snake spirits to me here. Pretty slick. He wants me to write down why I do things the way I do. So here goes.

"I do what I do because someone has to, mostly.

"I know that I'm not fighting the way my ancestors did — any of them. This is not the Miskito or Sumo or any Chibcha way of fighting the enemy. If I were to be like them, I'd do myself up proud and march into the center of my enemy's home and start striking out with all the power the warrior spirits can give me until I die or all my enemies do. And then I'd go down to seek the hidden sun, and the enemy would still be there.

"Well, fuck that. I want my home back, for myself and for all the generations come. I'm offering up the heart of my ancient self on the altar of war because if I don't, all the courage in the world will mean nothing. I fight an enemy who uses magic like reason and reason like magic, who says there's just one truth — his — even as he stares into the face of another. Everyone with the true fire in their soul is at war with that lie, from the day it was first told until the day when nobody can remember what it was anymore.

"The war got harder when the winds blew through the walls again, but what the hell. We who talk to the spirits know about that kind of thing. All it really means is that I can leave my knives at home and still count on getting some good cuts when I go outside, still have some good fresh blood for the drinking spirits. The enemy didn't go away just because the wall's all messy now, and so I'm not going away either.

"And that's why I do it."

still billowed higher than the Moon around the open wound, more than two years later. The shrieks of shattered and shattering souls sounded louder and louder, until we could "talk" only directly from mind to mind. Physical and mental agony echoed all around us, ripping at our hearts, my feathers and his skin.

"This — awful!" he shouted, just before words failed.

"Yes."

"What made this?"

I didn't say anything much in reply, just pulled myself in tight to survive as we rushed toward the eye of the storm. Then we were through, into the Silence. The only sound was my wings' beats.

"Maybe it can get worse," he said at last.

"Always," I agreed.

Once they start hearing the spirits, his kind grow used to always hearing them. Even when they make no effort to pay attention, they hear a constant hum out of everything, organic and inorganic: the pulse of life that defines the world. None of that exists here. In the eye of the storm with a soul, there exists just dead water and below it the dead remains of an island snatched out of reality long ago to serve as a haven.

"Where did you take me?"

"No place you could find on a map. If you tried to sail here, you'd always find yourself a little off. It would always look natural, too: the compass a little off, wind stronger or weaker, current shifted a bit. This whole dead zone," I turned to let him see, "covers something like fifty miles here in the spirit world. In your world the whole thing stretches only a few yards. Even that much poisons currents and taints winds, but it might have deteriorated much, much further if fate went another way."

"How..." He choked, tried again. "How did it happen?"

"A lot of us would like to know that, too. We don't deal with the dead. We know that some sort of big explosion happened here, and then another one much deeper down among the dead. Then the winds started, and they still blow. It all hangs together, I feel sure, but how, I cannot see. If you ever find out, you'll have a potent thing to bargain with. In the meantime, none of your kind can go here, so nobody can lead the healing. Maybe someday."

"Can we leave now?"

"Yes."

EUROPE

We flew on quietly, Robert clearly recovering as the sounds of the world flooded in again. As we approached Europe, I said, "Time to show you something else again. Pay attention. I will quiz you as usual." I could feel him lean forward.

"I don't understand," he said.

"Tell me what it looks like."

"It looks like a bunch of other shamans out there, but half of them go around under little mirrored shrouds.

A lot of the rest carry some other kind of soul-spark over the one I recognize."

"Then you see correctly."

"What does it mean?"

"You remember how long you struggled before finding out what your soul wants?"

He shuddered. "Oh, yes."

"Insight comes no more easily to most of your cousins across the sea. Some of them, like you, spend their whole lives thinking themselves mad, and their sparks lie almost completely smothered. Many more come to a false but useful understanding."

"A what?"

"I mean to say that they find a way of putting their vision and passion to use even though they don't fully understand it. If they create art, they think of themselves as having a special eye for their work. As physicians and scientists, they just know that they have a particular insight for some field, never realizing outside dreams that they hear the spirits with their unAwakened ears. Some of them believe themselves mediums and other mystics; malicious spirits prey upon many of those, and particularly during this storm, the souls of the restless dead can do terrible things to your unwitting cousins. All of them maintain some fidelity to themselves, despite their ignorance. When they do fully awaken, they almost always evolve into what you call Solitaries, if not outright Orphans."

We circled more as he scrutinized the passing landscapes. I could feel him struggle to hold back tears as he grasped the magnitude of what I said. He understood how much hurt those brave men and women endured, how much good they tried to do and failed, how much misery went unaddressed around them for want of the right vision.

"What would it take to wake them up?"

"You ask a question many also ask. I don't know. It depends on each individual, really, just as it did with you."

A long silence ensued. Finally he asked his other question. "What ___ going on with those two-layered souls?"

I shook my head to clear the static from it, and Robert winced as he realized his mistake. "Some of your cousins do manage to Awaken, but drift for want of the right circumstances. Unlike you, promptly encountering people and spirits who could teach you correctly, something shocks them into enlightenment though they lack a mentor. So they seek, naturally. Some of them find magicians of other Traditions. Souls seldom come with labels saying 'Property of My Totem.' The



intended shaman may easily end up somewhere else. The adopted ones still have their underlying nature, but in general they'll never realize it."

"Does that *work*?"

I understood what he meant. "Sometimes. In some cases, the adoptee never makes a good practitioner of another art and drifts through mediocrity. A few of those end up making particularly powerful enemies, when they sell their souls for a grant of real power from one of the Forces Below. Mostly they just don't matter. But some find ways to combine their inner inclinations with the circumstances around them and grow into innovative, powerful practitioners of their arts. We think that many of the innovations in Western magic over the last three or four hundred years came from shamans who ended up elsewhere."

"What about...?"

"The Technocracy? Much harder for someone born to be a shaman. A very few do manage to make their way as futurologists or something else with a lot of room for speculation, but mostly the Technocracy interprets them as crazy and medicates them."

"So Europe has a lot more shamans than anyone realizes."

"Yes. If something ever happened to really cripple the coherence of the other traditions, you'd find many more shamans springing up in their own right."

AFRICA

South again we flew, hurtling up into clouds and gliding through the rain family to emerge high over the middle of the continent.

"I hear strange voices again."

"Yes."

But this time Robert listened carefully and managed to figure out more of it on his own. "I see. Different dialects?"

"In part. Some of those spirits speak trade jargons, and for the same reasons humans speak them in southern Africa, the Columbia River, and other places where lots of cultures meet. They develop synthetic labels to bridge the gaps between local experiences. This works fine as long as everyone remembers that the labels *do* follow individual reality, rather than vice versa. Trouble comes when people go on a kick like Joseph Campbell and assume that the overall averages matter more than individual cases. But I digress. Some spirits also independently invent new words to refer to changing circumstances.

"The last time I checked, I found more than two dozen separate terms for the spirits who lose their homes

when dams flood out river valleys. Gradually the spirits and their mediators like you will decide which terms work best, and others will slip away. Every change in the environment breeds this kind of thing. You hear the sound of life happening, and it happens messily all at once. Now, tell me what you see."

"It looks like South America."

"How so?"

"I see a lot of shamans — more here than there, I think — retreating from modern civilization, hanging to their tribes. And I see shamans in the cities and farms again, tied to the newer communities. Wait."

He paused while peering closer, sometimes motioning me down to look at particular cities, mostly in or near war zones.

"It looks like the urban shamans mostly belong to the last generation," he said at last. "The young ones seem to mostly head out to tribal areas. Do they?"

"Yes, they do, for two reasons. Some flee out of fear. They've seen genocide and attempted genocide, famine and all the other problems of modernity. The spirits of the dead torment them. So they go somewhere they hope will be quieter. Others go deliberately, the brave ones who'd rather stay but whose guides tell them that they must survive the troubles ahead so that they can participate in recovery."

"Troubles ahead?"

"You didn't think that all the African wars were over, I hope."

"Well, no." Silence. I could feel tears welling up again in him.

"Save the tears for now, Robert. Look on those ready for the future."

"Well, okay. Um, things look more tangled in Muslim areas, but I don't know how to make sense of what I'm seeing."

"You remember the preacher back home."

"I do."

"The same thing applies here. Someone who believes in one God and His prophet doesn't want to believe in spirits bent on telling him things, out of submission to God. So he interprets them as angels instead, or as with the European unknown shamans, simply as inspiration and intuition. The colors look different because of the overlap with Muslim and Middle Eastern traditions you haven't dealt with much yet."

ASIA

East and north, across storm-troubled seas, we went. "Watch carefully," I told him, "and don't expect any

generalizations you make to apply everywhere in Asia. When it comes to size and complexity, Asia has more than you do."

"Sometimes you really have to strain to get across a point without using the words banned to you, don't you?" he asked in a sudden digression.

"I only have to strain when I'm talking to humans," I replied. "No offense, but the real problem here comes from your lack of understanding. If you knew more of the spirit world, I could use more of my own language, including symbols in passion and feather, and say it with more nuance and less struggle. Maybe someday you'll hear me as myself, and glory in it."

"Sorry."

"No harm done." We flew in the now-familiar pattern of high glides and sudden dives.

"This looks simpler," he said.

"In some ways, yes, complications intrude less. Apart from the basic reality of a third of the world's population interacting as they have for more centuries than you have years of life. What makes the difference is that the hostile forces overlay and creep in, but manage to destroy less."

"In the big cities I see some of those orphans, though."

"Yes, and more of them all the time. The other traditions mostly neglect Asian cities, apart from the martial artists and a few other specific factions, and the Union sees them as labor pools of the unenlightened, not as a place to go looking for recruits except when particular individual prodigies catch their attention. So when your own people spread thin — as they must, in the face of such numbers and need — the safety net often fails. Stories of madmen and terrorists often begin with such orphans."

"I didn't expect to see so many of us there are in China. I would have guessed that the Cultural Revolution and everything else stamped out more."

"They learned to wear new hats. Literally, in some cases. Did you never notice how much a crusading Stalinist or Maoist sounds like an ecstatic trancer?"

"They just made themselves into communists?"

"Not always, obviously. But yes, dozens of your cousins hid themselves that way. Some of them now back movements like Falun Gong, emphasizing ways of evoking spiritual power in everyday life. They hope to train up a new generation of shamans out of the sea of curious seekers."

And with that we flew home.

SPIRIT DEALS AND CHITINAGE

Inexperienced mages assume that they can appease a spirit with an offering, make a little deal, and come out with a happy business relationship. Dreamspeakers are painfully aware that this isn't always true.

For starters, just as some rotten mages will strike deals and then try to break them, some spirits won't always honor the contracts that they make. Nothing really *forces* a spirit to uphold a contract, except perhaps pride, respect, compulsion magic or a long-standing agreement. Unlike the garou, who have a long-standing spirit pact, many mages have only their own wits and the good graces of the spirit courts to encourage cooperation.

Furthermore, a mage can use Spirit magic to force compliance, but there's always someone bigger. If a mage aggrieves too many spirits, they may take the matter to a higher authority — an Incarna or Celestine — which may then dispatch agents to deal with the presumptuous mortal. Relying solely on compulsion is a risky business (and a prime reason that so many Hermetics wind up carried off to the nether realms).

So, what are formulas for successful dealings with spirits?

- Choose a spirit whose area of expertise and duty overlaps with what the mage wants. If you want to start a fire, you pick an angry Fire-spirit to do it. If you want to heal someone, you call for a spirit of compassion. A mage can use Manipulation + Cosmology to determine a spirit's affiliations, if he can deal with it; otherwise you might run into a Trickery-spirit pretending to be something else. The difficulty of such a determination depends upon the spirit's power and how much time the mage has available. A good story-swapping or lengthy shared journey can help to feel

out a spirit's capabilities and interests. Spirits are naturally more inclined to do things that their own nature promotes.

- Deal from a position of strength. A spirit's more likely to uphold a bargain when it knows that the angry mage has the power to enforce the bargain if things go badly. Dreamspeakers don't meekly roll over to all spirit demands; if a spirit starts causing too much mischief or fails to uphold a bargain, a Dreamspeaker may go after it with a spiritual spear and pin it in some nasty part of the Umbra. While attacking spirits without volition is a quick way to ruin a reputation, seeking recompense is generally fair game. And remember — spirits have friends, too, so it's always best to have an ace-in-the-hole just in case the spirit calls in a few favors to try to wriggle out of its contract.

- Be consistent. A mage who always performs the same rites, always pays chitinage and always upholds bargains will draw attention from spirits who want to establish a long-term relationship with the mage. That way the spirit has a reliable, consistent source of power and a mortal ally. From such relationships come pacts that span lifetimes or even generations. The Dreamspeakers have more than their share of such pacts: A character with the *Spirit Ally* Background (see p. 61) may very well have a spirit companion that made a pact with a distant ancestor, and still keeps it in hopes of training the new Dreamspeaker into becoming a useful ally.

- Just as spirits can go to higher entities in the chain, so too can mages. While puzzling out the convoluted hierarchy of spirits can be a chore, it's also helpful if a spirit shirks a duty or obligation. Take matters up to the boss, and the spirit may have no choice but to comply — or the boss may offer compensation.

BYSTANDERS, INNOCENT AND OTHERWISE: EXTERNAL RELATIONS



"I've seen things you people..." I only get that far when he interrupts me.

"...wouldn't believe," he says, in a much better impersonation of Rutger Hauer than I can do. "Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion..." His normal voice returns. "Actually, I never went quite that far."

We laugh. It is our first fully relaxed moment together, a reminder that for all our differences, we do have some things in common. He lives and moves in a metaphysic almost totally unlike mine, and yet I share some things with him that I don't with any other member of my own "Tradition" that I've yet encountered. Not to put too fine a point on it, we're both geeks:

white, middle-class, educated men with a fondness for the not-quite-pop culture of our time.

"So," he says after we finish trading a few more *Blade Runner* riffs. "You were starting to tell me how your people tend to see the rest of us."

I take another sip of my wine and look out over the sunset vistas Paris offers me. The chatter of urban spirits is, in its own way, very French. They think highly of themselves here. When I perform the little routine sacrifices, they sneer at any deficiencies and talk about how in the old days, back when there were real manly (and womanly) spirit-singers in the land, they got only the finest food and wine. Still, somehow they manage to hold their noses, or equivalents, and take what I offer. The city itself is gorgeous, of course.

After Hummingbird gave me that grand tour of the world, I decided to set out on a physical tour to match it. I wanted to see the world from its great high places, feel the physical wind rather than the one beyond the walls, touch and taste as I went. My first stop didn't go so well. I arrived in New York just in time to help engage in funeral rites rather than to see the show. Eventually I moved on. Here in Paris I discovered a little group of magicians practicing all kinds of art. We'd taken to dining together and comparing notes.

This particular evening, it was just Jean-Christophe and me, and the subject was how we all saw each other.

THE TRADITIONS

"You have to remember," I told him, "that for the vast majority of my 'cousins,' the spirit magicians, there's no 'us' in the sense that you have with your Order and House, or Juliette with her monastic thing, or Raoul with that — uber-mailing list or whatever. We never come together all at once, and we don't even really have a sense of what that would be. I know that there's never going to be an all-hands chorus of the Divine's chosen instruments with Juliette and everyone who practices her sort of theurgy, but we can at least imagine it."

Jean-Christophe nodded. "That's the thing that took me a long time to realize, actually. My teachers at the House did a terrible job of conveying just how differently we do things."

"One consequence of that is that there's no particularly typical Dreamspeaker/Whoever interaction. Precisely because there are spirits to everything, and there's going to be someone among us who talks to any kind you can think of. I can show you someone who'll get along great with anyone else in the Council, and someone who'll get along terribly."

He nodded again, and was going to say something, but I kept going. "Even so, though, I can offer some generalizations based on what I've learned so far.

"It seems like shamans and the visionaries in the Celestial Chorus either get along really well or really badly. It depends mostly on the Choristers. If they're into there being one and only one spirit that matters, then fights break out. If they grant that there really are a multitude of spirits besides the one they're interested in, then some wonderful things sometimes follow. There's a cell that's half Dreamspeakers, half Choristers working in western Australia, trying to find ways to undo the mounting environmental damage there and accomplishing some good things. Small-scale so far, but they're getting results and winning support from locals. Very fruitful combination.

"You and I are very unrepresentative. The first non-shamans I learned about were Hermetics, and man did I hear bad things."

"Oh?"

"Oh, yes. Let's start with the fact that your whole approach to spirits is based on command and intimidation, rather than trade and negotiation. Your brethren, so I'm told, end up 'using up' their spirit ties, and need to research ever more complicated systems of control."

He smiled. "For my part, of course, I learned that shamans are weak-willed victims of the spirit world, giving up the crucial, distinctively human role of leadership."

"I think there's some truth to both stereotypes...and some falsehood. We'll have to see how the next generation turns out, I guess, with both of us having fewer old-timers around to make sure we keep doing things their way.

"Then there are some traditions that I just don't know much of anything about. The Euthanatoi and the Akashic Brothers are both working on forces that we don't deal with: inward mastery, and impersonal forces. I can learn something about those from my totem and his contacts and their contacts, but I can't actually work with them. Nor do they seem to have much of a feel for what my cousins and I do.

"Likewise for the Ether crowd and the Virtual Adepts. Oh, I know that the technoshamans in my community like them, and sometimes vice versa, though it gets really messy when spirits are simultaneously invoked and denied in cross-tradition ventures. Still, there's something about the enchantment of advanced (not to say downright divergent) technology that draws kindred souls together.

"In theory, I suppose, we could get along fine with Ecstatics, and I'm not really sure why it doesn't happen

more often. Maybe it's just that so many Ecstatics rely on practices that bind them into the framework of modern society, while we're mostly outsiders. A practical gap, that is, rather than a matter of principle.

"Oh, yes, the Verbena. Forgot them."

"I'm sure they'll appreciate that."

"Indeed. Please don't mention my lapse. Anyway, interactions with the Verbena go like with the Choristers: great or disasters. On both sides, there are some philosophically minded souls who think that the other tradition is really just a spinoff of the one on this side, and for their own good the others should submit to the philosopher's wide and benevolent instruction. That seldom wins many converts. Then you get the ones who insist that the other side isn't a spinoff but a horrible infernal distortion of the truth, and must be suppressed for its own good. That works even less well. Even when both sides agree on the principles that apply to a particular case, our styles are so different that cooperation is hard."

THE TECHNOCRACY

We finished our main course and watched the first stars come out. Low clouds ringed the horizon, but overhead it was gorgeously clear. I could hear the planets singing softly in their courses, and Jean-Christophe felt at least some of the same things. We talked about simple matters, saving our dissection of factions until the waiter cleared our plates and we considered dessert.

"The Technocratic Union, now, that's a straightforward proposition as far as we're concerned. You can't get much more directly anti-Dreamspeaker than them. I know that they have beefs with everyone who isn't them, but in their choice of materialism and styles of social organization they pit themselves directly against us. Every so often we manage to recruit an individual who somehow had a conscience stir and turn against her orders. If she breaks just right, her soul opens up and a totem comes in. Sometimes it manages to guide us to her or vice versa.

"When it doesn't work, there's one more suicide."

ORPHANS

"Orphans are a more interesting case. I don't think we've talked about this before, but there are a lot of people out there who would be members of our tradition if they awakened a little differently. They don't get the clue they need, though, and so end up having to construct their own system, consciously or otherwise. Some of them bloom into home-grown mystics, others don't realize they're working magic at all.

"Obviously, not all orphans are shamans waiting to happen. But anyone who spends time trying to help our lost ones find a home develops a certain sympathy for all the others without a place of theirs, even if the right place is very much not ours. Those of my cousins who work with any outcasts and strays seem to end up working with them all."

VAMPIRES

"Vampires..." I stopped to think. "What was it you called them?"

Jean-Christophe hoisted his wine glass and stared thoughtfully into it. "Parasites of the spirit, who corrupted our own masters only to fall to their command."

"That was it. 'Parasites of the spirit.' That's it precisely. I haven't encountered any of them myself, and I hope not to anytime soon, but from what I hear, that's just what they are. They're a blight on the order of things, and the healer's act must be to send them on their way."

SHAPESHIFTERS

"The wild things, the children of the moon...I understand that some of the other traditions say we have a special affinity with them. They serve spirits, we serve spirits, and so forth and so on. It's not true. From our side, there's a natural harmony of interests, and a great desire to learn. You may have noticed that we're pretty pragmatic about these things, and when you show us vastly powerful and experienced sources of wisdom, we'd love to go deal with them.

"But it's different from their side. They see themselves as specially chosen by Gaia (and more on that in a moment), bred and cultivated for the role of mediating and guarding. From their point of view, we're part of the herd that's gotten uppity. They don't think we're supposed to have the power to do what they do, and the fact that we not only have the power but do things very much like them makes our tradition in particular unpopular with most of them. So we try to stay out of their way.

The whole Gaia business is a misconception of theirs, of course. There's no single 'crown spirit' to the world nature. You know from your own studies how celestial hierarchies branch and loop, and it's the same with the Earth. There are lots of facets to the world, and they flow into and out of each other all the time. The changers have to ignore a lot of inconvenient details, or at least shovel them into an existing metaphysic as best they can."

GHOSTS

"No, really, Jean-Christophe, there are more ghosts around than you might think. And it's a terrible time for them. The winds that make it hard to move into what

you call the Umbra also mess up their home 'down below,' so to speak. It's not hell, but it's a place of darkness and decay, and 'down' is a good way of thinking about its relationship to the world. Anyway, storms are chewing the hell out of it. A lot of ghosts are perishing, and a lot of those who survive are permanently tainted by a stronger darkness within themselves. Pretty much every shaman worth speaking of at all has to spend more time than usual speaking to the dead, offering extra sacrifices, and otherwise keep them from taking out their pain on the tribe."

CHANGELINGS

"Changelings. Faeries. The Fair Folk. That last name is a good one, because it reminds us of what a con job all the sweetness and light is. We used to call the Furies the Kindly Ones so that they wouldn't take offense and eat us up. Something very much like that applies to the Fair Folk. They're at least as dangerous as anything else I've encountered. They feed on dreams, and sometimes they don't know when to stop. In the few weeks I spent in one of their strongholds last year, I saw them take active pleasure in stripping the vitality of precious works of art infused with the creator's passion. What remained were tired, broken things. Their spirits

were mortally wounded. As far as I'm concerned, it's just damn wrong to feed on anything in a way that takes a spirit out of vitality like that.

"Pardon? No, no, this isn't an argument for going vegan. The whole point of the rites of propitiation is to make it all right to hunt and kill. We release the spirit of the slain so it can go find a new home, or pass on and do something different. The Fair Folk's leeching is altogether different, and much worse.

"Keep the greedy bastards away from me, that's all I can say."

THE ITTBUED

"Beats the shit out of me, as we say in America. I've heard Juliette and others talk about people with new powers and something like God's own Avatars stuck on, who seem to regard us along with the vampires and all as perils to be struck down. I haven't run into any of them myself, and I've got enough experience sorting through accounts that I strongly suspect there are independent phenomena getting bunched together by, er, traditionalistic theorists. We all like to find patterns, so much so that sometimes we make them up.

"If I run into one myself, maybe I'll have more to say then."

A WORLD OF SPIRITS: DREAMSPEAKER PHILOSOPHY



Several of the people gathered at the table in the back of the Laughing Zebra Cafe turned as a woman dressed in a stylish gray three-piece suit folded her umbrella and approached. "Is this the Inner Visions discussion group?" she asked softly.

A weathered man wearing a tie-dye shirt and faded drawstring pants answered, "Well, sister, that all depends on who you are."

"Cut me some slack — I just got off work. I'm Naomi. I emailed someone named Morgan about attending."

"Naomi, good to see you. I'm Morgan." The speaker was a young woman wearing thick glasses and a rumpled sweatshirt. "We've been talking on-line for a couple of weeks — she's clued in."

The man in the tie-dye shirt looked her in the eyes and whistled a short tune. Watching her reaction, he also cocked his head to listen for a response no one else at the table could hear. "Yeah, you look right. Have a seat — we were swapping stories about learning to deal with spirits. Morgan here was about to tell her story."

Morgan broke in. "Hir story...."

"Sorry kid, I still haven't gotten used to that whole transgendered thing." The man with the ponytail proceeded to light up a cigarette.

SHANTIANISITI AND GENDER TRANSGRESSION

All over the world, shamanism is strongly associated with breaking or bending local gender boundaries. A great number of shamans are and have always been gays, lesbians, transvestites and transsexuals. There is even some debate that the word shaman may be more accurately translated as an intermediate term gender like "man-woman" or transsexual, than as a word for someone who works a particular type of magic. This isn't to say that all shamans practice beliefs outside their cultural "norms," but rather that it's been a long-established part of the role for many.

Morgan looked around at the other six people. "If it's OK, maybe I'll tell my story. I guess it's obvious I'm a techie geek. I like to build my own hardware — I'm always liked tinkering with new gear. A couple years ago, I got to know this weird guy who started teaching me different ways to repair stuff. He goes by Tinker Jack." She turned to look at the man with the ponytail. "Last time I saw him, he told me to tell you he wants his ironwood pipe back.

"Anyway, I didn't think much about what Tinker Jack was teaching me until a year ago, when this new box — um, computer — I built started talking to me. I hooked up the speaker and words came out, starting with 'Hey there, girl, fix this connection so I don't sound like a damned cartoon character.' I thought it was a joke someone had played on me, but once I checked the thing over, it was pretty clear that the computer was actually talking to me. Then it started introducing me to the other things in my apartment. I'd always hated my microwave, and I found out that the feelings were mutual — we parted on pretty good terms at the resale shop. Everything else was pretty nice; I sort of like having them all say 'Hi' when I get home. I can also fix things before they break, since they can tell me when they've got a problem.

"Things can get sort of scary sometimes when I run into big spirits outside, but at home we're all friends. That reminds me, I don't know about anyone else has noticed, but the spirit of the Willamette River seems really pissed. I can't blame it, with all the crap in it, but it seems more nasty than angry at this point. Last week I heard it muttering about drowning people — maybe we should do something."

"Me and AJ are on it," the man in the ponytail remarked. "Once we've done all our preparations, we'll head down from Seattle and beat some sense into the river — you folks can come along if you want. By the way kid, I know how you feel. I've been talkin' to things no one else could see for the last sixteen years — it keeps you from getting lonely, but you need to keep some perspective or you'll end up forgetting to talk to the human-type people."

"Anyway, I play sax, been a jazz musician since before anyone heard of Fusion. It all started with the music. I travel a lot, and I always picked up things from where I've been — key chains, nice lookin' feathers, a few shiny rocks, sometimes even junk like old playing cards folks have dropped, or half an earring. I keep all that in a box; that's one of the few things I always take along with me. Most of the stuff stays in the box, but sometimes I take it out and look at it to remind me of where I've been. I keep a few pieces sitting out to make wherever I'm stayin' feel like home.

"In LA around '85, I was crashing with some other music types I'd jammed with. I put out my stuff that night like I always do, and as I drifted off, I thought I could hear the things in this tiny chorus; every piece of it had this faint note. I'd likely never have thought more about that, but one of the band members must have seen that I had a good-sized wad of cash and decided to rip me off. She snuck into my room without waking me. She was good, but when she put her hand in my rucksack, she must've bumped my box. The sound in the room changed, and it woke me up. I raised all kind of hell and ended up hitting up an old friend for a place to stay. Once I got all settled again, I started thinking about just why I'd woken up.

"It was like learning a new number — you've got to listen really close until you can make out all the different parts you're hearing and how it all goes together. I spent a lot of time listening, and learned that everything had its own particular sound.

"The thing you've got to remember is that everything is alive. I hear lots of folks talkin' about animism, but they don't know what it really means. It makes sense that trees and cars and houses all have spirits, 'cause they're big and impressive. But what about each grain of sand, each pebble, and each spark plug in your car? They all have spirits too. That's tougher to make stick in your head. Heck, most of us that I've talked to never even thought about listening to little stuff like that.

"I guess that's what I haven't heard anyone else talk much about. Real magic is all about the little things. Every sound is made up of lots of smaller sounds. Even tiny stuff like beads, strings, and little bits of metal have their own particular note. Put lots of notes together and you get the song of a TV, a saxophone, or even a computer. The really small stuff can't talk, much less carry a tune, but without it, the larger songs just aren't complete. You've got to concentrate on the small stuff. Most everyone mentions all the big fancy spirits they've talked to. That's all well and good, but any damn fool can tell if a loud pop song is playing — if you want to know if it's worth listening to and what it really means, then you've got to break it down note by note.

"I do most of my own special mojo with music, make each individual note a part of what I'm wantin' to see happen. A while back on the TV, I heard some science guy catching on to what he called the 'butterfly effect.' He said that one butterfly flying around down in Mexico could change the weather we're having way up here. Anyone who works with spirits should have learned that lesson before they ever started jamming with them.

I'm not saying that you have to ask permission of every little spirit critter before you go doin' something, but you've gotta remember that the little stuff makes up

everything else. The best part is that the little stuff can be damn handy. Say you want to stop a speeding car from hitting someone. Talkin' the spirit of a battery

cable into letting go its hold on the battery stops that car just as fast as zappin' the whole damn thing. Less effort, same effect, works every time."

RELIGION AND THE DREAMSPEAKERS

Among traditional communities, shamans are holy people. They are not priests, because priests imply the existence of gods, and most shamans don't believe in or talk with gods. Instead, shamans deal with a myriad of spirits — driving out spirits of illness from the sick, propitiating the ghosts of the community's ancestors and making deals with the spirits of earth and water to ensure good hunting and bountiful harvests. Whether in isolated Amazonian villages, small ethnic enclaves in Los Angeles or Bangkok, or ordinary neighborhoods in Seoul or Jakarta, shamans serve as their peoples' spiritual leaders.

Many shamans in the First World, however, — including a good number of Dreamspeakers — no longer belong to traditional communities. Some were members of ethnic groups that have largely abandoned shamanism for more mainstream faiths. Dreamspeakers from such communities were either taught by the spirits of their ancestors, or by one of the group's few remaining shamans. Other Dreamspeakers are simply residents of First World countries who spontaneously Awakened, or who were been picked by an umbral or human mentor and taught the wonders of magic. In all of these cases, the Dreamspeaker can either find people in need of spiritual and magical aid or simply remain as a solitary shaman who has no defined social role. Many Dreamspeakers find both spiritual satisfaction and a sense of community by belonging to various religions. Because of the immense flexibility of this path, shamanism can be made compatible with almost every religion.

SHINTO

Unlike most major religions, Shinto is a faith that retains a great deal of shamanic influence. With kami (spirits) inhabiting both every sacred site and all spiritually important objects, Shinto is a natural faith for Japanese Dreamspeakers. It is the primary reason that the percentage of Awakened Japanese who become Dreamspeakers is surprisingly high. Even outside of Japan, most Dreamspeakers of Japanese or partly Japanese ancestry are followers of Shinto, primarily because the kami expect such individuals to revere them and actively attempt to recruit all Japanese Dreamspeakers. Effectively, the religion's ties to a specific culture cause it to become the de facto choice

for many Dreamspeakers of that culture — a self-propagating stereotype.

NEO-PAGANISM

Today many Dreamspeakers belong to various neo-pagan faiths. Most neo-pagan Dreamspeakers consider the pagan gods to be nothing more than large and powerful spirits. These shamans also deal with ghosts, elementals and a wide variety of other spirits.

Some Dreamspeaker stories assert that many of the witches and cunning folk who practiced powerful magics in pre-modern Europe were Dreamspeakers and not Verbena. While a number of Verbena would dispute these claims, most acknowledge that members of both Traditions have always been present among members of the European magical community. In essence, the Dreamspeakers and Verbena share many similar roots in their practices.

CHRISTIANITY

Mainstream Christianity has little place for animists who see spirits in every blade of grass. Christianity has a long tradition of fringe theology, however, that can be quite accepting of shamanic practices and beliefs. Although there is much debate on this point, several important Dreamspeakers claim that Saint Francis of Assisi was a Dreamspeaker, and that his reverence for all of creation was in part recognition of the spirits inherent in everything. Modern Dreamspeakers who hold similar forms of pantheism can find a place among Unitarians, Quakers, and even the Catholic Church as well as among various minor charismatic denominations. Some Dreamspeakers of Christian faith recognize spirit hierarchies as angels or even find little conflict in the reconciliation of spirits with Christian dogma — after all, the Bible does acknowledge the existence of seers and mediums.

ISLAM

Islam is surprisingly accepting of Dreamspeakers. While they often have trouble with traditional Muslim beliefs, the Sufi path provides a perfectly acceptable social role for Muslim Dreamspeakers. Muslims expect Sufi masters to be eccentric. Also, the essence of the Sufi path is achieving personal



unity with God and all of creation. Conceiving of the entirety of creation as many separate but interconnected pieces that all work together provides a cosmology that is acceptable to both Sufi pantheists and to shamans who have experienced the wondrous complexities of the Umbra. Mainstream Islam has a little more difficulty in reconciliation with the Dreamspeaker ethic; the submission to Allah and the word of the Prophet say only of spirits that they were not part of man's place in creation. Such a relationship often puts man and spirit at odds, especially when the spirits claim not to recognize the existence of Allah.

The man with the ponytail then turned to the woman in the suit and added, "So, Naomi in the fancy clothes, why don't you tell us your take on all this craziness."

"Well, I haven't been one of us for very long. I work as an urban planner in Portland — and let me tell you, that job really sucked before I started working with the spirits! You get into this line of work wanting to help and end up trapped in pointless meetings and useless plans. I was thinking of quitting when I met a strange woman who claimed to be Portlandia, the spirit of Portland. I thought she was crazy at first, but she showed me some of the things she could do, then topped it all off by vanishing before my eyes. Then I thought maybe I was crazy! But she came back and offered to teach me how to help her and the other cities in the ways they really needed. I've learned things I never dreamed were possible."

"Suddenly my work could really mean something. It's a tough job, since so many spirits dislike each other and some of them are diametrically opposed. I helped with a problem down in San Diego a while back, when I was called in as a consultant. The spirits in a canyon were unhappy about the developments being built nearby. They were causing accidents — several construction workers had been killed — and their unhappiness was bringing out incidents of depression and insanity in the local area."

"I had to go in and convince the Wyld spirits to leave the canyon. There were a couple of fairly sizable ones that didn't like this idea, so I had to fight. Having the spirit of San Diego behind me was likely the only reason I won."

The man with the ponytail broke in with, "You know sister, in cases like this most of us are on the side of the wilderness."

Naomi responded, "I understand, and I hated having to do it, but we have to be realistic. A development was going to get built somewhere around there, and this choice was the one that involved the least destruction of wilderness areas. This location would also encourage more positive energies in the whole city. It's a small comfort, but something had to go. I'm looking at the big picture. Those spirits suffered, but more wilderness was saved for the moment, and crime and insanity is down in San Diego. Besides... things have to change. The world has to keep moving. It's our role to keep it moving smoothly with the spirits. Can you imagine what would've happened if the spirits of the arroyos had decided to up and fight the burgeoning spirit of San Diego?"

"It's like predators and prey — some things have to suffer and die for others to live. This applies as much to the spiritual realm as to our world. Humanity lives in cities now, that's the way of the world. If the city spirits are peaceful, sane and happy, then the inhabitants are likely to be the same way."

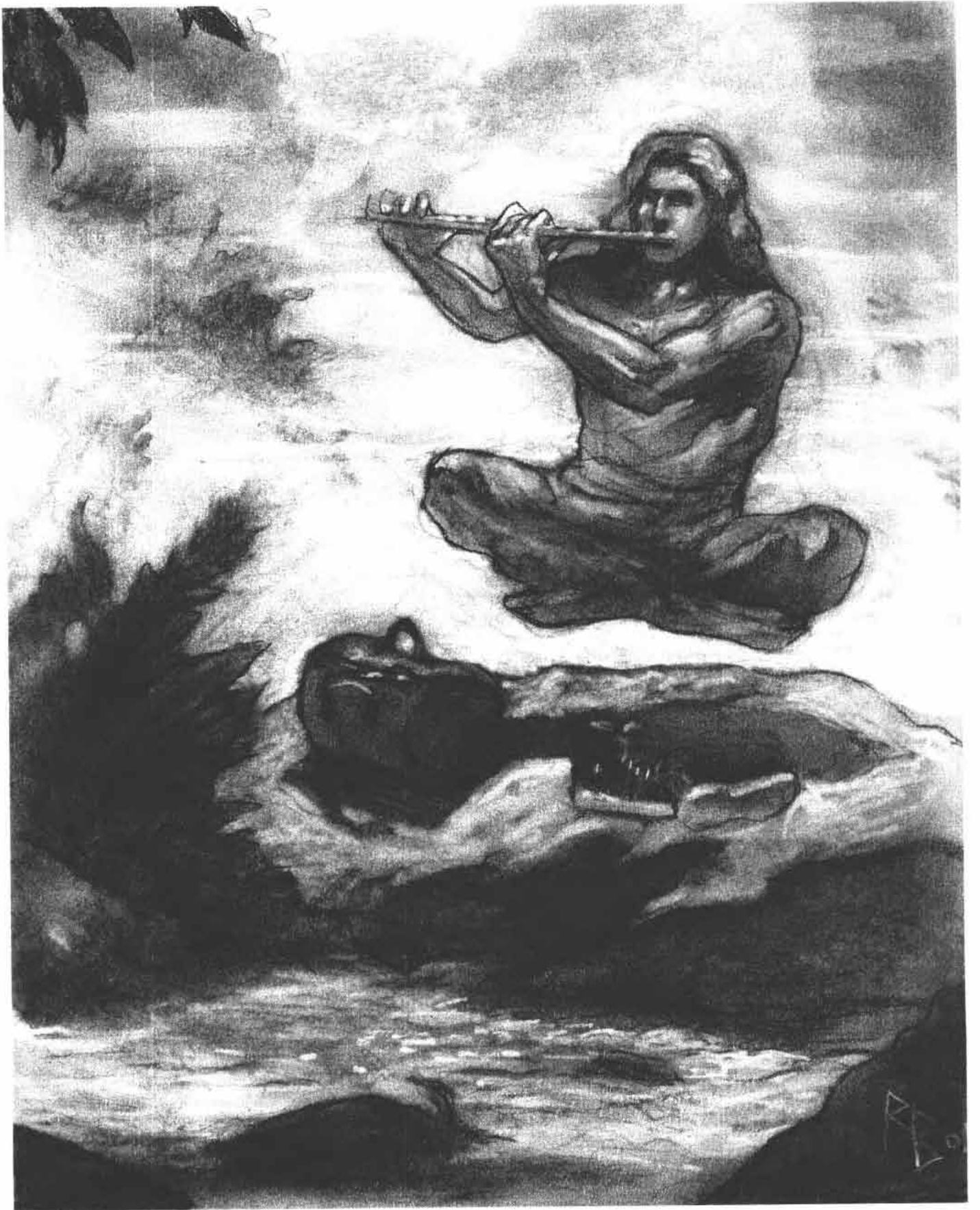
The ragged, distant-looking man who had previous been sitting quietly raised his head. "She's right, you know. Don't take no genius to realize that choices got to be made, and it's best if we're the ones making them. We walk between the worlds. The voice tells me we got to be the ones who stand between the spirits and the walkin'-around people. I heard some of us talk about how we're here to protect the spirits from other people. Well, I read some old books, and talked to some even older ghosts, and that ain't the way any of them tell it. We're here to make sure that everyone on both sides gets along. Like pretty Naomi says, sometimes folks can't get along without some sort of choice bein' made. Better for all concerned if that choice is made fast and certain than if lots of people on both sides of the world wall get hurt."

He leaned back in his chair and appeared to doze off again while the man in the ponytail spoke up again. "Fair enough. I don't much like it, but the tune has to play that way sometimes. I've seen some nasty ghosts in my time. Some of them you don't want to appease because all they're lookin' for is a pile of human hearts as tall as this table. There's more of those things around since the troubles started. They keep me fairly busy. Regardless, there's more to this job than just protectin' yuppies from nightmares. We're the oldest type of magic there is and as such we got a responsibility to keep to some of the old ways alive."

"I've worked with old timers like Tasygan at rallies and protests to help stop The Man from walkin' all over Native American treaties, drilling Alaska dry and stoppin' the damn WTO from putting every third world resident in a sweat shop or an early grave. This song is about more than just spirits, it's about helping the people who still believe in the likes of us, and the folks who generally get the short end of the stick. It's all about balance — we got to balance the spirits and the people, and one group of people against another. We're the ones that make sure that all the bars of the song balance out, and see to it that some goofball doing a drum solo doesn't drown out the entire guitar section."

"I don't know about any of the rest of you, but I've talked with folks in the other Traditions and we're mostly on our own here. The witches and even a few of the hackers and the priests are willing to help out, but most everyone else is too busy doin' their own thing to worry if the entire rest of the band is getting off key. We all know that the only way to tune this screwed up planet is by working with the worlds on both side of the Gauntlet. We're the only ones who are any good at that sort of thing, so these days that's our most important job."





CHAPTER TWO: THE ROAD — MAGIC

"If a man is to succeed on the hunt or the warpath, he must not be governed by his inclination but by an understanding of the ways of animals and of his natural surroundings, gained through close observation.

The earth is large, and on it live many animals. The earth is under the protection of something which at times becomes visible to the eye"

— Lone Man (Isna la-wic) (late 19th century) Teton Sioux



LAURA BARRINGER: ON BEING A SHAMAN

Not ten minutes ago, I was sitting on my couch and thinking... "I'm way too young to have a student! I've been Awakened for less than a decade, why did that kid have to find me? I guess with almost all the elders gone, I may be the best there is around here — now *that's* a really scary thought. Chris will be here in a few minutes. Chris, that's a nice safe name at least... what the hell sort of pronoun do I use for someone who is transsexual away?"

Now, a thin, short, androgynously dressed young person is sitting there on the couch, expecting me to be wise and eloquent. Oh hell.

"Chris, I've never done this before either — um, do you have any questions? That's silly, you've probably got

lots of questions. I mean, is there anything in particular you want to talk about?"

"I've been doing some reading about shamans like you asked — I've seen lots of different stuff and much of it contradicts itself. I'm wondering what being a shaman is all about." Chris is even calmer than I am. Some teacher I'm turning out to be.

"Well, being a shaman means that we see and hear things other people don't and can do stuff most people think is impossible." Hey, once I get going, this isn't too hard. "We talk to spirits — ghosts, elementals, big critters people used to call gods, and even the occasional talking idea. Unlike most types of mages — there are lots of different types, but we'll get to that later — there is no one way of becoming a shaman. Sometimes it runs in families, sometimes a spirit needs someone to do it a favor and so picks someone out and turns them into a shaman. Other times, someone just wakes up one day

and is one. Most often, that happens in the aftermath of something really serious like almost dying, losing a loved one or having a really intense drug trip.

"Most of the time, though, someone starts having some odd experiences like you did — hearing dead relatives talking to them, having their childhood imaginary friends show up once they're grown up, or simply seeing weird visions. Those people need training, and if they don't get it the voice or visions usually get worse. Most of them never learn to use them for any purpose or even to control them. Heck, even with training most of them never learn to control them.

"Before you ask, let me say that you're not like that. I asked the spirits, and you're definitely someone that can Awaken all the way, if that's what you want. People like you are why I work as a counselor.

"In the four years I've been doing this, I've run into lots of folks who have had brushes with spirits and almost a dozen who needed serious help. In most cases, I managed to get them back to normal. They were people who wouldn't or couldn't learn to control what

they could do. In one case, I taught her enough so that she could do minor work with spirits. I'll introduce you to her sometime soon — Trudy has a decent enough job working on a psychic phone line in Denver.

"You're different, though. I knew that as soon as I found out that you destroyed the spirit that was trying to possess you. You've got it in you to learn to do things that she could only dream of doing. If you work hard enough you could someday learn to cage a god in a bottle or to walk a thousand miles in an instant.

"But it all starts with the spirits. Nothing else is possible if you can't learn to see and talk to them. Once you learn to see them when you want, and not when you don't, the rest comes pretty easy. The most important thing to remember is that while there are many ways to get there the goal is always the same. If you can master the wonders of the spirit world and learn to work with its inhabitants, there is nothing that you can't learn to do."

Huh. Guess I could get pretty eloquent with practice. We'd find out about the "wise."

DREAMSPEAKER MENTOR-STUDENT RELATIONS

While other Traditions tend to have a strong mentor-student axis, with teachers seeking out and taking on apprentices from an early time, some Dreamspeakers aren't so lucky. A prospective Dreamspeaker taught by spirits may have many preconceived notions about the Awakened world, all without practical experience in Tradition politics or the realities of everyday life. Worse still, culture clash makes things even more difficult: Virtual Adepts, for instance, almost all have a background in science and computers, so they at least have some common ground to discuss. A recently-Awakened high school student in the big city has little in the way of common grounds with an aging shaman from the reservation. True, not all meetings of Dreamspeakers are so diametrically extreme, but the sheer *variety* of practices often causes some friction as the student and mentor have to settle on a point of contact.

Shamanism *does* have a long-standing heritage of taking on apprentices. The complexity stems from shamans who find themselves out of place with their communities. A shaman with no community has no pool from which to draw an apprentice — similarly, a spirit-touched individual in a community without a

shaman has nobody to go to in order to learn to deal with the spirit world's imperatives.

A few Dreamspeakers gain the majority of their experience solely from the spirit world. Because the majority of spirits couldn't care less about human mores or (more likely) exist in a conceptual framework in which human behavior is just a small quirk, these Dreamspeakers have the greatest difficulty in adjusting to the balance between Awakened and mundane life. Without exposure to other mages, they also don't understand the vagaries of the Tradition Council. Eventually such individuals come to the notice of other Dreamspeakers and learn, of course — otherwise they'd be spirit-taught Orphans — but the hindrance from the start is a big hurdle to overcome.

The worst early problems for mentored students stem from conflicts between spirit and mentor direction. A Dreamspeaker mentor often includes specific cultural directives — taboos, imperatives and rituals. The spirits that choose to deal with a newly Awakened Dreamspeaker, though, might not always agree about those directives, especially if the student comes from a wildly divergent culture. When there's nobody else to do the teaching, though, the student simply has to find a way to make things fit.



FACTIONS VERSUS CULTURES

Because Dreamspeakers must meld the conflicting directions of culture, personal identity, political bent and views on technology and modernization, factionalism is a prominent part of the Tradition. Even Dreamspeakers of similar cultures may have very different approaches. Some may be very aggressive, while others take a more “wait-and-see” attitude;

some accept the growth of technology-oriented spirits while others find such modern creations distasteful at best. After a Dreamspeaker has learned enough to make personal decisions and deductions about magic (that is, after finishing an apprenticeship), most individuals gravitate toward a faction that shares specific ideologies with the Dreamspeaker’s personal goals.

BARUTI

Names: Storytellers, Wanderers, Liars (derogatory)

History: The origins of the Baruti are lost in the mists of antiquity, but (as with everything else), the Baruti have a story about their origin. They say that many eons ago (or perhaps many millennia in the future) when the world was flat, the Gauntlet did not yet exist and there were wanderers who worked magic and shared tales of the past with any who would listen. When the world changed, a few of these ancients survived and continued telling stories of their lost age of glory to people who had suddenly forgotten that the world was ever vastly different.

They say that in the millennia since this event, the Baruti have grown in number and expanded over the earth. Everywhere they have gone, they spread stories of other lands and other times. Their initial mission to keep the knowledge of the Age of Sorrows alive was replaced by a more general charge to share and remember all of the tales of lost peoples and vanished places. The Baruti became the last repository of wisdom and knowledge for many hundreds of tribes, nations and cultures that were destroyed by invasions, internal conflicts, environmental changes or simply the inevitable march of time.

Once the "civilized" world abandoned shamanism, Baruti who lived in the many empires and kingdoms that arose took on the roles of storytellers, troubadours, messengers and wandering holy men. Everywhere they went, they shared stories and legends and learned all they could of the places they visited. As empires grew, many peoples were destroyed or assimilated and the Baruti's store of lost stories grew. Most Baruti were solitary, traveling either alone or occasionally with a single companion or apprentice. Whenever they met, they shared knowledge and expanded their range of stories. Every dozen years, most Baruti were expected to travel through the Gauntlet to their enormous umbral library, where these assembled willworkers would share stories and record their knowledge in the minds of the memory spirits built into the structure of this vast and ancient library.

The coming of colonialism and the Age of Reason began an era of cultural devastation, genocide, conquest and assimilation of unparalleled magnitude. Western expansion not only destroyed many indigenous cultures and all of their stories, but these cultures' beliefs were declared to be both false and unreal. As the Age of Reason spread over the globe, magic and the supernatural began to vanish.

The North and South American genocides and the other horrors that followed resulted in the loss of much history and many stories. In response, the Baruti summoned the spirits of the dead to acquire knowledge that was no longer to be found among the living. By the 19th century, the pace of this destruction had become so great that the Baruti were fearful that they would be unable to gather even a small portion of what was being lost. Also, the Order of Reason had begun to attempt to enforce their paradigm by bowdlerizing stories and occasionally killing traveling storytellers, claiming that they were dissidents, revolutionaries or anarchists. A number of Baruti attempted to directly fight the forces of reason. Joining resistance efforts ranging from the American Ghost Dance to the Chinese Boxer rebellion, these radical Baruti generally saw their efforts end in failure and death.

By the last decade of the 19th century, the remaining Baruti gave up these fruitless efforts at resistance and attempted to find other ways to survive and continue their sacred trust of sharing stories. Some retreated to the remaining traditional cultures. These Baruti lived among isolated peoples, helping them adjust to the coming changes and learning their remaining stories before the culture was destroyed or assimilated. Most of the storytellers, however, spread themselves throughout the world's civilized cultures, telling their tales where they could.

To gain greater control over the Sleepers, the Technocracy worked to replace individual storytellers with controlled and uniform mass media. They started with radio and attained near-victory with television. In response, many Baruti relegated their traditional oral storytelling to a small sideline and began writing their tales down. Soon there were many dozen Baruti working as anthropologists, novelists, screen writers and authors of pulp magazines. Some even found work writing for comic books, a media that was so successful in the United States that the Syndicate had to arrange for the restrictive comics code to restrain it.

By the last quarter of the 20th century, more than half of all of Baruti were authors of ethnographies, historical romances, fantasy novels, horror stories, American comic books and Japanese manga. Despite the Technocracy's best efforts, the old stories were still being told. The internet proved to be a great boon to more technologically inclined Baruti. It allowed them to share and spread urban legends with great ease, as well as helping them to create websites

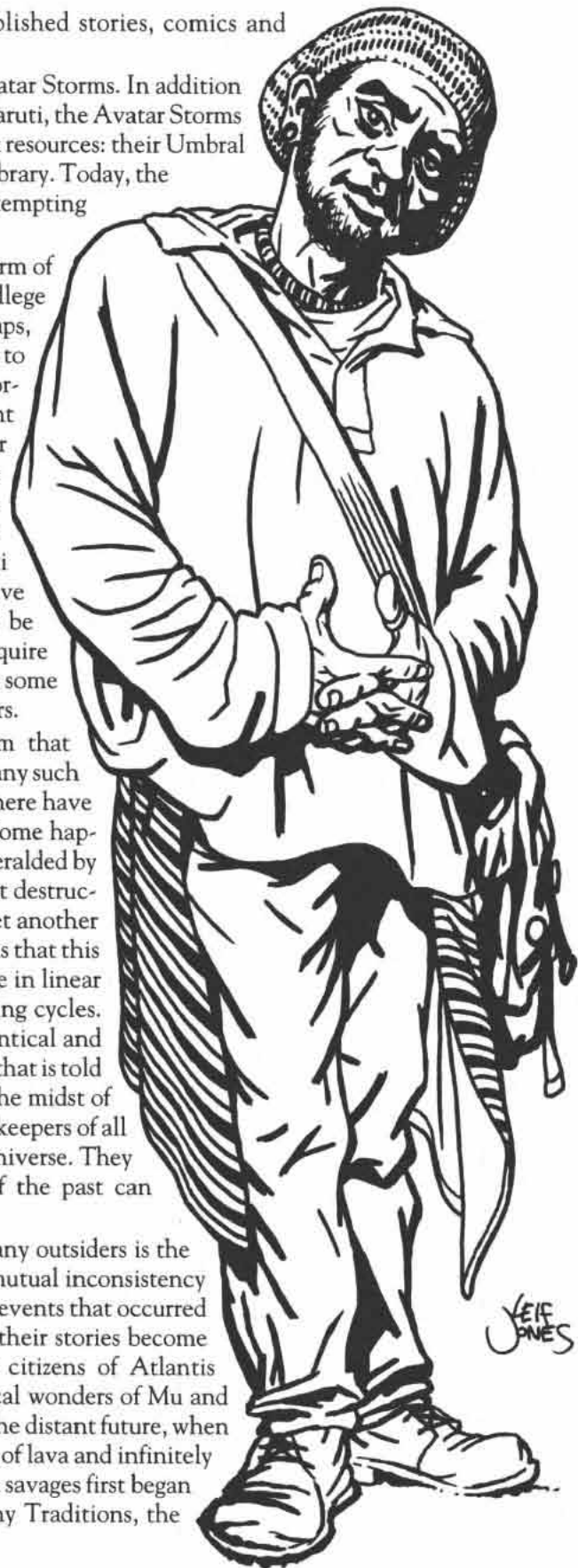
where anyone could read alternative histories, unpublished stories, comics and other forms of alternative media.

The turn of the millennia, however, brought the Avatar Storms. In addition to slaying or exiling the oldest and most powerful of the Baruti, the Avatar Storms cut most Baruti off from direct contact with their greatest resources: their Umbral gathering and, more importantly, their ancient spiritual library. Today, the Baruti are working to recover from this loss while also attempting to still spread their tales.

Training: A formal apprenticeship is the standard form of training among the Baruti. Using writers' workshops, college classes in anthropology or writing or informal story-swaps, Baruti look for suitable candidates. The mage then offers to help the student hone her skills. This apprenticeship normally takes many years. Over half of this time is spent helping the student perfect her skills at storytelling or writing. Only when the student has demonstrated that she is a skilled and powerful storyteller is she taught the true power of her stories. Using special myths that induce profound spiritual states in those who hear them, the Baruti sends the student's spirit into the Umbra to touch and live some of the most ancient and powerful legends. To be declared a full member of the Baruti the student must acquire a new story, either from the depths of the Umbra or from some people who have not yet told all of their tales to outsiders.

Spiritual Path: The Baruti say that the cataclysm that heralded the end of the Age of Sorrows was only one of many such changes experienced by the world. According to them, there have been other equally great catastrophes before and after. Some happened in an instant, others were more gradual and were heralded by numerous occult warnings. Almost all Baruti believe that destructions caused by the Age of Reason are the harbinger of yet another catastrophe, and that the start of the Avatar Storms means that this next change is imminent. Most Baruti also do not believe in linear time and accept that history moves in a series of repeating cycles. Some even claim that the far past and the future are identical and that the entire history of the cosmos is a single grand story that is told and retold countless times, without ending or break. In the midst of these great changes, the Baruti see themselves as the sole keepers of all of the many tales that make up the vast myth that is the universe. They claim that only by remembering all the knowledge of the past can humanity attain true wisdom.

The most confusing part of Baruti philosophy for many outsiders is the fact that the Baruti are not inclined to worry about the mutual inconsistency of many of their histories. While most Baruti agree about events that occurred since the beginning of the Age of Reason, further back their stories become increasingly inconsistent. Some tell tales of how the citizens of Atlantis regularly talked with extraterrestrials or about the magical wonders of Mu and Lemuria. Others speak of a strange time in the far past or the distant future, when the world was flat and its edges consisted of endless plains of lava and infinitely tall forests, while a few speak of how primitive pre-human savages first began telling stories more than 200,000 years ago. Unlike many Traditions, the



Baruti rarely argue about the validity of these differing legends. One of their most famous sayings is "All histories and stories contain both truth and lies."

Style of magic: Stories lie at the heart of Baruti magic. Baruti tell themselves stories to gain and internalize the powers of the heroes therein. Telling stories to other people or to the world at large allows the Baruti to affect both humans and the physical world. Baruti can call a thunderstorm by reciting a powerful poem about storms to the air spirits, or they can entrance an audience by using parts of a magical story in their performance. Of course, all stories do not require words. To influence other people, Baruti can use anything from a cat's cradle to a complex dance to capture the attention of an individual and so affect both their mind and their body. In addition to Spirit, most Baruti concentrate on the magics of Correspondence, Life, Mind and Time. Some of them also learn the stories that affect the spirits of the inanimate world, and so gain the ability to use Forces and Matter magics, while others pursue the most ancient and primal stories and so master the sphere of Prime.

Organization: Most Baruti continue to lead fairly solitary lives. Until the coming of the Avatar Storms, however, they continued to meet in their great umbral library every dozen years. Today, the Baruti are at the forefront of the Dreamspeaker effort to retain contact with the Umbra. Many now study Mind magics, while others are mapping Shallowings or learning rituals involving Correspondence and Spirit to at least send their perceptions into the Umbra. As a result, the majority of Baruti are still able to access some of the knowledge in

The Baruti Umbral Library: Many Baruti manage to forge an unconscious connection between themselves and their faction's Umbral library. In game terms, the *Dream Background* represents this connection. While some Baruti must use complex rites to visit the library, others need merely concentrate to obtain lost and esoteric knowledge. Actually visiting the library, whether in spirit or body, is a profound and valuable experience for most Baruti. The Baruti can ask the memory spirits questions about a wide variety of obscure topics and receive answers available nowhere else. Of course, each question must be paid for with a new story or piece of information for the spirits. Only Baruti who actually travel to this library in some fashion can ask such questions; having the *Dream Background* is not sufficient to ask detailed questions of the spirits there.

their Umbral library. Most Baruti hope to be able to attend the next gathering, which will be held in the Umbra in 2007.

Their present troubles have drawn the Baruti closer together. These same problems have also made an ancient but radical storyteller named Tasygan the current leader of the Baruti. Her political activism is spreading, and an increasing number of Baruti are telling and writing stories about the growing numbers of worldwide protests against environmental destruction, the horrors perpetrated in the name of groups like the WTO and the stark barrenness of modern life.

INDEPENDENTS

Names: Solos, The Called, Crazies (mildly derogatory), Spirit Pawns (very derogatory).

History: Shamanism is the oldest form of magical practice. It is also the only one of the nine Traditions where someone can become a fully functional mage without ever having a physical teacher. While no written records exist, communication with various ancient and powerful Umbrood indicates that Incarna have occasionally contacted people with the potential to Awaken as far back as anyone has been able to determine. Archeologically inclined Dreamspeakers believe that there have been independently awakened shamans for at least the last 25,000 years. These ancient mages had no one but themselves and their Umbral allies to rely upon. Most Dreamspeakers credit them with forging the first pacts and alliances between the Dreamspeakers and the various Incarna who most commonly act as Totems.

As time went on, these early Dreamspeakers began to look for others of their kind, especially people who have just Awakened or who have the potential to Awaken. Various lineages of training evolved out of this teaching, and in many regions these factions gradually replaced the Independents. Shamanism became something that was taught from mentor to student as well as being learned directly from the spirits. In most communities, Independent Dreamspeakers vanished or became a small minority. Most potential candidates were found and trained by existing Dreamspeakers. Today, this pattern remains true in most traditional communities. Independent Dreamspeakers are now found primarily among peoples that have no local tradition of shamanism.

When humans began practicing agriculture, they chose to rely more upon priests than shamans. Most of the organized Dreamspeaker factions retreated from such "civilized" regions, since the priests and their followers often persecuted anyone who followed other spiritual paths. Independents continued to appear, however, among even the most rigid cultures. Some were agents of spirits who attempted to accomplish various esoteric goals, but most were simply rebels, tricksters and eccentrics whose Awakening was a reaction to the limits placed upon them. As a result, most civilizations recognized the existence of holy hermits, seers and similar unconventional visionaries.

The greatest limit on such people was that in regions with few shamans, Independents could frequently live their entire lives and never encounter another Dreamspeaker. Their solitary nature meant that Independents were often unusually strong-willed.

Without access to a human perspective on magic and the umbral realm, though, most spent many years learning basic knowledge that Dreamspeakers belonging to other factions were taught in the first year of their apprenticeship. Others had totems with inhuman agendas that used their Dreamspeaker allies as pawns. Such Dreamspeakers often had remarkably distorted views on magic and the Umbral world, since their totems lied to them and distorted the truth in an effort to turn the Independent into a willing slave.

Because self-Awakening is often a very difficult and traumatic process, a great number of Independents have always been at least mildly insane. This fact is one of primary reasons for the nearly universal belief that madness, genius and magic are all closely related. Even rigidly monotheistic religions like medieval Christianity and early Islam recognized the existence of such people, and a number of the early ascetics, hermits, monks and Sufis are believed to have been Independent Dreamspeakers. Although these eccentric shamans were often regarded with distrust or disdain, their existence was an accepted part of life and many were allowed to deliver the messages given to them by their Umbral allies — as long as those messages were presented in a form that was not too heretical. While some Independents were killed or imprisoned for their beliefs, others managed to amass a considerable following.

The rise of the Technocracy was a great blow for the Independent Dreamspeakers. The early Technocrats challenged existing conceptions of madness and transformed it from being a divine curse or blessing, to an unfortunate illness that should be treated and cured. As Western Civilization expanded over the world, Independent Dreamspeakers began to lose their special place. Instead, many were locked up, while others were simply ignored. The asylums of the 19th and early 20th century were filled with Independent Dreamspeakers and with many others who might have Awakened had they not been imprisoned, and subjected to various horrific and damaging treatments. During this same era, some Independents joined various movements that fought for workers revolutions, freedom for colonized peoples and similar radical and unpopular causes. Others became artists and writers who attempted to spread their spirit-given messages with their art.

As the 20th century continued, the treatment of the insane became more humane and many non-dangerous insane people were released from asylums. Eventually, new tools like the internet allowed Inde-

pendent shamans to meet and organize. However, the greatest boost to their power and prestige was the beginning of the Avatar Storm. As the other Traditions and factions lost many of their best teachers, the numbers of Independents continued to increase. The spiritual stresses of the Avatar Storm caused more potential Dreamspeakers to spontaneously Awaken, while powerful Umbrood Awakened mortals to help them understand and overcome the vast Umbral turmoil. Today, the Independent Dreamspeakers are the fastest growing Dreamspeaker faction, and one of the most rapidly growing groups in all nine Traditions.

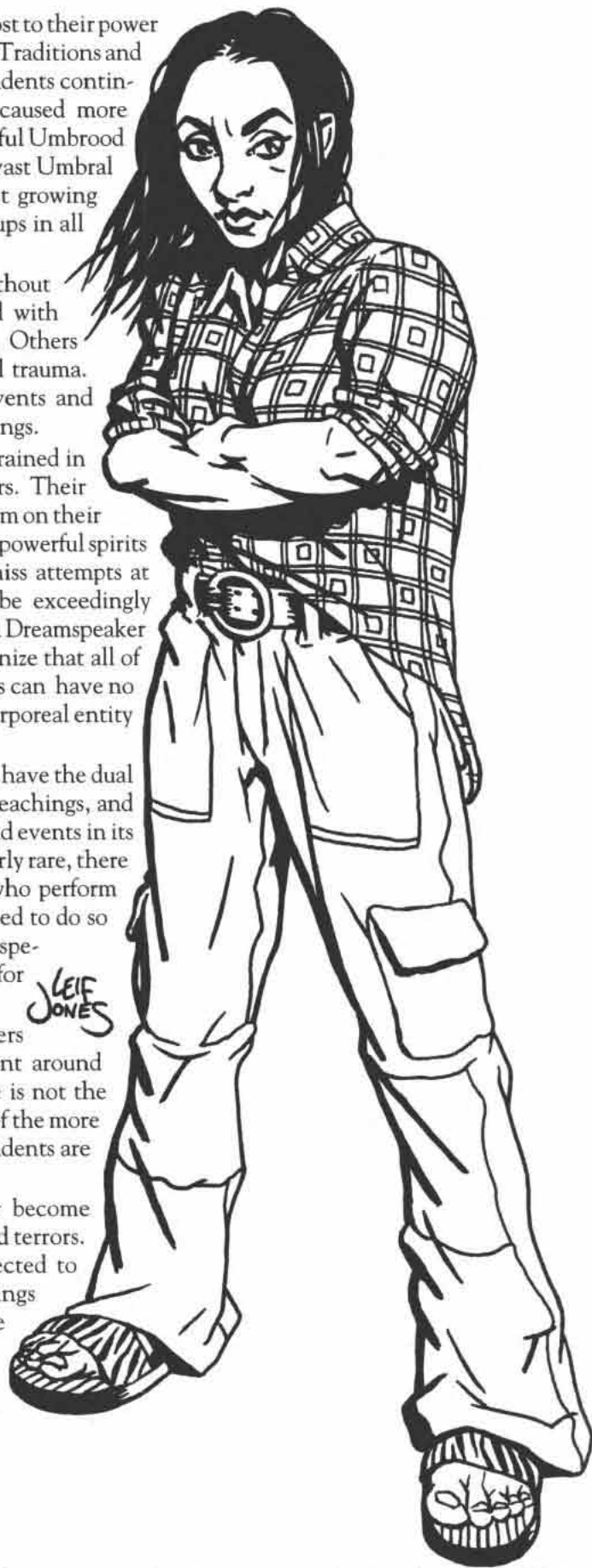
Training: All Independent Dreamspeakers Awakened without the aid of other mages. Powerful spirits who want mortal aid with specific problems sometimes “help” Independents to Awaken. Others Awaken spontaneously because of some emotional and spiritual trauma. Madness, serious illness, exposure to powerful supernatural events and severe emotional shocks can all produce such unaided Awakenings.

Independents who are Awakened by their totem are often trained in a manner similar to that experienced by other Dreamspeakers. Their teacher may lack a physical body, but it can still aid and guide them on their journey. In the modern day, however, many who are contacted by powerful spirits take the initial messages to be signs of insanity or simply dismiss attempts at contact as making no rational sense. Since Umbrood can be exceedingly determined, this sort of dismissal frequently results in the potential Dreamspeaker being literally haunted by her totem until she is willing to recognize that all of the strange dreams, disembodied voices, and bizarre coincidences can have no other explanation other than the fact that some powerful non-corporeal entity has taken an interest in her.

Independent Dreamspeakers who are trained by their totems have the dual risks of misunderstanding their mentor's complex and esoteric teachings, and of having a mentor who deliberately misrepresents individuals and events in its teaching in order to influence the student. While the reality is fairly rare, there are many legends and stories of Independent Dreamspeakers who perform extreme and sometimes horrific acts because they were convinced to do so by spirits they trusted. Weak-willed and isolated individuals, especially those who are mentally unstable, make excellent pawns for powerful spirits.

While Dreamspeakers are usually happy to meet new members of their Tradition, many Dreamspeakers are somewhat hesitant around spirit-trained Independents until the individual proves that he is not the violent and dangerous tool of an unscrupulous Umbrood. Some of the more paranoid members of other Traditions worry that many Independents are actually secret Nephandi who were trained by the Malfeans.

Independents who Awaken spontaneously almost never become pawns, but their isolated path holds its own unique problems and terrors. Such Awakenings always involve the individual being subjected to extreme internal or external stresses — their initial Awakenings are often quite traumatic. Some Awaken when they are on the verge of death and use their new-found magic to save their lives, others strike out in revenge or self defense as their first magical act, and some find their magic though a long and torturous journey into madness.



Members of many Traditions assume that insane Dreamspeakers who spontaneously Awaken will become Marauders in short order. In many ways, however, such mages are the most stable of the Independent Dreamspeakers. Often, the shock of Awakening cures the individual's madness, leaving their mind, sane, whole and far stronger than before. When a cure is not affected, the madness may become an integral part of their magic, but is never progressive. In some unknown way, Awakening strengthens the minds of these mages and enables them to avoid the progressive degeneration that accompanies many forms of untreated insanity.

Unlike Orphans, all Independents eventually gravitate to the Dreamspeakers, either because they're pushed by their spirit mentor or found by other members of the Tradition. From there, the Independent's instruction in the niceties of Dreamspeaker society begins. It's possible for a spirit-Awakened mage to wind up in another Tradition, but it's rare — most mages of other Traditions would pass such an individual off on the Dreamspeakers anyway.

Spiritual Path: Since each Independent's experiences are unique and no teaching or sharing of information occurs until after they have fully Awakened, details of Independents' spiritual paths can vary wildly. However, there are a number of accepted commonalities.

Becoming a shaman is seen as an inevitable spiritual calling. Many Independents struggle for months or even years to deny their Awakening. Doing so, however, can invite torment by angry spirits and uncontrolled outbursts of dangerous magic.

While many greatly enjoy their newfound ability to perform magic, most Independents see it as more of a responsibility than a gift. While some Independents have spiritual mentors who provide them with various spiritual and practical goals, many Independents search to find some reason that they were Awakened. As a result, Independents often find fulfillment by devoting their lives to some long-term project, like protecting a given community from magical threats, preserving a spiritual important building, neighborhood or piece of wilderness or eliminating some deadly umbral threat. Many other Dreamspeakers consider the Independents to be overly obsessive and mono-focused.

Style of magic: While there are almost as many different ways of performing magic as there are Independents, most of these techniques have much in common. The subtlety and attention to detail found in many formal shamanic factions are not usually available to mages who Awakened without such training. Instead, most Independent magical techniques are both forceful and dramatic. Sharp pain, loud music, electric shocks,

flashing lights, or the profound physiological changes produced by strong drugs, fasting or prolonged ecstatic dancing are all common magical practices. These types of foci forcefully break the Independent out of her mundane existence and into the realms of magic and spiritual power. In general, the only Independents who do not require exceedingly striking foci are those who are sufficiently insane that they no longer fully live in mundane reality.

Organization: Most outsiders would claim that Independent Dreamspeakers are a disorganized rabble. While this characterization has often been true, modern communications have transformed this faction. Today there are several private internet mailing lists, chat rooms and similar electronic forums where newly Awakened Independents can meet. Less technologically-inclined Independents can also find their fellows through cryptic ads in the back of various new age and occult publications.

As a result, the Independents are now more organized and unified than ever before. Since membership is exclusively based upon Awakening without mortal aid, there seems little likelihood that the Independents will evolve into more normal faction. Instead, many Independents take pride in the fact that they are the heirs of the most ancient form of magic. Some consider that Independent Dreamspeakers are superior to all other mages, because they did not require mortal aid to Awaken. The only qualification for membership as an Independent is Awakening without the aid or training of another mage. As a result, the Independents are accepting of both traditional shamans and technoshamans, and are the only group within the Dreamspeakers where both types of shaman regularly work together without friction.

Independent Shaman (1-2 pt Flaw): Shamans who Awaken without a mortal teacher generally possess little information about other mages or the practical realities of using magic in the World of Darkness. As a result, being an Independent who Awakened with no teacher or with help from a relatively alien but generally helpful spirit is a one-point Flaw. Being Awakened by a spirit who lies to the Dreamspeaker and attempts to use her as a pawn in its struggles is a two-point Flaw since this mage will have a very distorted picture of both magic and the World of Darkness. (This Flaw is a modified version of the Spirit Trained Flaw on page 106 of *The Spirit Ways*).

GHOST WHEEL SOCIETY

Names: Wheelers, Con Artists, Bohemians, Thieves

History: In the Stone Age, the first shamans presided over humanity long before the origins of cities, agriculture or the magic of gears and machines. Then, the age of agriculture and metal began and much of humanity turned away from the old ways, packed themselves into tiny walled cities and tilled their Earth for their food. Most shamans retreated to the fringes of civilization and the wastelands inhabited only by nomads and remote tribal peoples. A few early Dreamspeakers, however, traveled to these empires and learned the ways of the spirits that lived in cities, towns and farmer's fields. Most of these shamans were solitary individuals who lived apart from those around them. Some few found Sleepers who were seeking answers that their priests could not provide. Leading mystery cults and similar small sects, the early members of the Ghost Wheel Society whole-heartedly embraced the bustle and wonder of the urban centers in which they lived.

These shamans learned to summon urban totems and to work with the spirits that inhabited bronze, iron, wheat and corn. In time, they specialized in bargaining with spirits, especially spirits associated with humanity and its creations. As they became better at making profitable deal with spirits, the members of the Ghost Wheel Society also became more adept at bargaining with and conning Sleepers. By the time of the Hellenistic Em-

pire and the T' ang Dynasty these shamans had spread over the Old World as fortune tellers, con artists, prophets, cult leaders, musicians, actors and members of many other disreputable professions.

Many were rebels, bohemians, entertainers and eccentrics who associated themselves with new social movements, religions and cultural trends. Others were traveling peddlers who helped spread their civilization using the magical ties and alliances they had forged with various spirits. In both cases, their shamanic powers meant that they were always somewhat on the fringes of their culture and rarely obtained positions of direct power and influence. A few wielded great power, however, as the advisors, lovers, courtesans and gambling partners of their land's rulers.

Even more than other Dreamspeaker factions, the position of the Ghost Wheel Society completely changed with the advent and triumph of the Order of Reason. Previously the members of the Ghost Wheel had worked with urban totems, the ghosts of city dwellers and similar spirits of civilization. Suddenly, the Age of Reason spawned a host of technologically associated spirits. These clockwork Umbrood and ghosts in the Craftmason's machines became a new and wondrous source of power and influence for the willworkers of the Ghost Wheel Society.

The members of the Ghost Wheel Society did not create new technologies or craft wondrous items. Instead, they used existing items in new and unusual ways. As the Age of Reason spread across the globe, they neatly fit



themselves into various interstices of pre-modern society, becoming thieves, artists, actors, musicians, and members of the avant garde. When the Technocracy began to crack down upon Reality Deviants, the members of the Ghost Wheel learned to hide among the social fringe, using the eccentricities of various bohemian subcultures as a way to disguise their magics. As new technologies developed, the members of the Ghost Wheel society rapidly discovered how to summon and work with their associated spirits. In short order, they were using electricity elementals to help them forge fake telegraph messages, and spirits of entropy and chance to help them win at video poker.

The development of computers and the internet gave the members of the Ghost Wheel Society access to many new spirits. While the Spirit Smiths hand-built magical computers and the Virtual Adepts wrote programs and developed new computer technologies and encryption algorithms, the less ethical members of the Ghost Wheel Society used Pattern Spiders and similar spirits to covertly obtain others' passwords and commit numerous new varieties of fraud. While not all Ghost Wheel members worked on the wrong side of the law, most were members of traditionally disreputable professions and were watched carefully by law enforcement and the Technocracy.

The coming of the Avatar Storm has been a mixed blessing for this group. This catastrophe killed off and exiled a number the leaders of this faction. Also, the quick jaunts into the Umbra that so many Ghost Wheel members used to escape danger are now fraught with risk. Still, more spirits are now living in the mundane world. Many displaced spirits are interested in making deals with skilled willworkers. The chaos resulting from the Avatar Storms was also part of the reason that the Technocracy scaled back the Pogrom and turned its attention to other matters. As they always have when changes have come, the Ghost Wheel members are now adapting and regrouping.

Training: Members of the Ghost Wheel Society normally seek out like-minded individuals who appear to have potential for Awakening. Instead of any form of traditional apprenticeship, the student finds that an older con artist, musician, entertainer or criminal has taken an interest in her. The actual training generally consists of a mixture of lengthy conversations, often while drunk or high, combined with a series of dares and tricks. This "teaching" can even include the Dreamspeaker actually pulling cons on their student. On more than one occasion, students of Ghost Wheelers have Awakened in response to a desire to gain revenge on their teacher.

Some Ghost Wheelers prefer less volatile styles of instruction and simply take on an apprentice to their band, stage magic act or con game and mix practical instruction in the profession with increasing amounts of subtle instruction in magical thinking. A number of newly Awakened Ghost Wheelers have met and worked with spirits on several occasions before they realize that these beings are anything other than highly eccentric humans.

Spiritual Path: Today, most Ghost Wheel members surround themselves with the spirits associated with their own lives, spirits of electricity, information, metal, and plastic. While many Dreamspeakers cling to traditional ways, the Wheelers sees no practical difference between spirits of thunder and lightning and the Umbrood that inhabit a modern city's power grid. They don't worry about whether a spirit is "natural" or not, and instead concern themselves with how the spirit interacts with their lives and what it can do for them. As a result, while they are rarely technological innovators, Wheelers are premier technology users. Cell phones, PDAs, credit cards, and (when they can afford them) fancy cars are all regularly used in Ghost Wheel magics. They are experts at using their spiritual allies to help them perform wondrous and useful feats with such gadgets.

In addition to being deeply pragmatic about the spirits they choose to deal with, Wheelers generally prefer to negotiate with the spirits they contact. Most will only consider binding or forcibly controlling highly destructive and dangerous spirits — all other spirits are offered various bargains. The vast majority of Wheelers acknowledge that is both more effective and often simply more fun for a mage to bargain with a spirit than to attempt to forcibly compel it to do their bidding. Since the Avatar Storm prevents most mages from simply traveling into the Umbra to capture useful spirits, their emphasis on bargaining has caused the Wheelers to gain in power and influence. Some Wheelers are open and honest in their bargains, others are silver-tongued masters of deception who obtain the services of a powerful spirit and provide little in return. Of course, like the victims of many skilled con artists, the spirits rarely realize that they have been taken and are eager to work with the Wheeler again.

Style of magic: A good portion of Wheeler magic consists of making elaborate deals with spirits. Today, the Wheelers are especially well known for the Fetishes and Charms they create. Acting as brokers, some Wheelers will create a Fetish for any mage simply by working out a deal between the mage and the spirit, creating a potent object for the spirit to inhabit, and

then collecting a fee from both the mage and the spirit. Since they can convince most spirits to go along with their deals, Wheeler-made Fetishes are considered especially valuable. These Fetishes are usually quite expensive, since many spirits demand large services in return for their cooperation.

In addition to Spirit, Wheelers generally study Entropy, Forces or Correspondence magics, calling upon their mastery of the minor spirits associated with urban life and modern technology to enable them to manipulate the devices around them with great skill. Wheelers are experts at making minor deals with spirits, offering small services in return for numerous forms of minor but useful aid. Most Wheeler rites consist of making a small offering to some type of minor elemental in return for gaining the elemental's help in some task.

More difficult and potent magics generally involve actually bargaining with a spirit powerful enough to have an individual identity and its own set of peculiar desires and wants. While many of these bargains are one-time affairs, Wheelers often attempt to strike up mutual aid agreements — and even regular payment plans — with willing spirits. Most actual Wheeler rites consist of either the proper offering to make to a specific type of minor elemental in order to obtain a desired effect, or lasting bargains between an individual Wheeler and a single spirit, where the spirit provides a specific service in return for a previously specified reward.

Organization: Living on the fringes of society, the Wheelers are a particularly disorganized faction. In many cases, their closest connections are with the spirits with which they have allied themselves. Most

Wheelers work with some urban or technologically related totem. Wheelers who share the same totem normally keep in contact with each other and regard each other as allies. These totemic associations function as the only real organizing force within this faction. Members of these totemic associations are sometimes friends, and normally help other members who are in need, work together on mutual projects and generally look out for each other.

Some Wheelers are unwilling to sacrifice their autonomy to have a totem. Most of these willworkers have one or more Spirit Allies (see page 61). A few are hardened grifters who have no friends or allies, and take advantage of anyone who gives them the slightest opportunity to do so.

Despite the Wheelers' lack of overall organization, they do recognize their common heritage. Most maintain loose contact with other members. While there are rarely more than one Wheeler per city, almost every large urban area has some bar, club or cafe that Wheelers frequent. These locations are generally haunted by a spirit with which visiting Wheelers can share gossip and news. The spirit hears about the dealings of the Wheelers and in return shares the news it already has. These spirits are often the ghosts of dead Wheelers, making the Wheelers the only major Dreamspeaker faction that regularly associates with the shades of its deceased members. For more formal or more urgent messages, a different network is used. Every Wheeler knows the name and location of several other Wheelers, so that messages can rapidly be passed throughout the several hundred members of the convention.

KEEPERS OF THE SACRED FLAME

Names: Keepers, Recorders, Traditionalists

History: As with many other aspects of Dreamspeaker history, pinning down an actual origin for the Keepers of the Sacred Flame isn't easy. One master of spirit magic starts doing something. Independently, others do the same, and then still others start doing it because they've seen it done and want to join in. Sometimes the shared activity acquires a name and some organization, sometimes not. The history of the label is not the whole story.

The central idea of the Keepers — that the shamans of peoples who've lost their struggle against invaders and other outside influences can preserve at least some of their traditions while coping with the fact of the loss — is as old as cross-cultural encounters. Some of the spirits who often speak to Keeper shamans suggest that the practice may in fact predate *homo sapiens*, though it's hard to tell just how much and what sorts of magic Neanderthals and

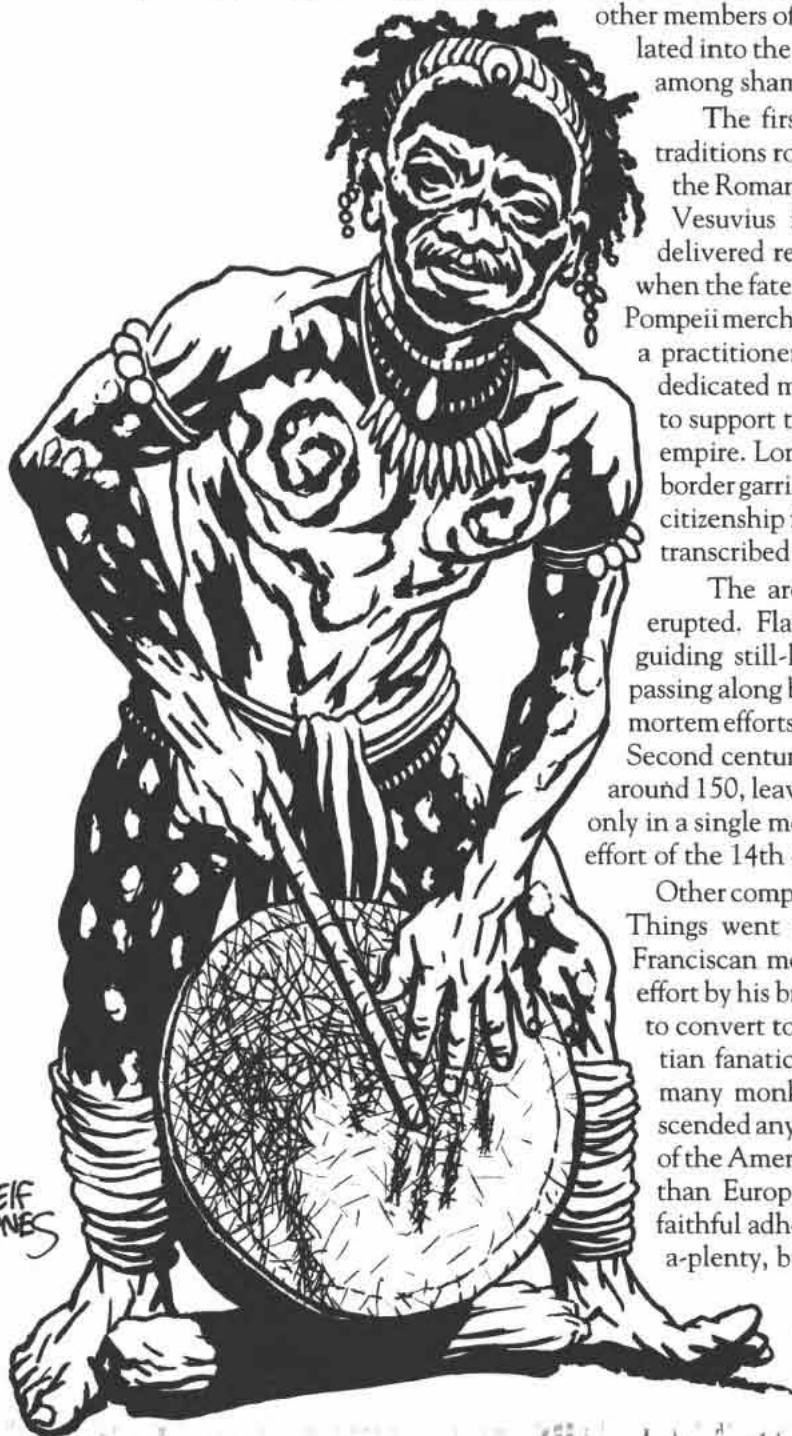
other members of the human genus practiced before they were assimilated into the modern species. Certainly the practice was common among shamans very early in the Stone Age.

The first organized effort to practice this conservation of traditions rose in the first century AD among spirit magicians in the Roman Empire. From about 50 AD until the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 AD, oracles in Pompeii and Herculaneum delivered repeated warnings that there would come a moment when the fate of the world hung on "the wisdom of those who fell." Pompeii merchant and amateur playwright Flavius Longinus Didacus, a practitioner of spirit rites within the bounds of linear magic, dedicated much of his family fortune to sending out fellow seers to support the shamans of peoples on the fringes of the growing empire. Longinus's money paid for the bribes necessary to keep border garrisons from harassing tribal elders too much, along with citizenship for particularly important shamans and an archive of transcribed narratives at the Longinus estate.

The archive perished along with Flavius when Vesuvius erupted. Flavius became a guardian spirit for the operation, guiding still-living associates to buried treasure and sometimes passing along blackmail-worthy information. Despite his best post-mortem efforts, however, the venture gradually fell apart early in the Second century. Flavius' spirit passed out of touch with the world around 150, leaving behind a set of gloomy prophecies. They survive only in a single medieval copy that most scholars misunderstand as an effort of the 14th century to produce a Nostradamus imitation.

Other comparably short-lived efforts followed over the centuries. Things went very differently in the early 16th century, when Franciscan monk and spirit guide Roberto of Aragon joined the effort by his brothers to chronicle the lives of the tribes they hoped to convert to Christianity. Contrary to the usual image of Christian fanatics bent on destroying every trace of native culture, many monks in various orders felt that Christian faith transcended any one way of life. Salvation did not require the peoples of the Americas to become just like modern Europeans, any more than Europeans had to live just like first-century Jews to be faithful adherents of the gospel. There were genocidal crusaders a-plenty, but they didn't have things all their own way.

Fra Roberto had always regarded the spirits he talked with as angels, the guardians of the world



order. When he found that the priests of some tribes talked with what were clearly the same spirits, he took this as proof of their worthiness to survive. He coordinated the exchange of information among his fellow scholars and scribes, engaging in a two-prong campaign of preservation. They made every effort to set down a faithful record of beliefs and practices, neither whitewashing nor demonizing, and to get this record publicized in Europe so that the people back home could understand the spiritual stakes. Simultaneously, they engaged in deliberate falsification of census, geographical and other data so as to create havens away from conquistador eyes.

Overall, Roberto's efforts failed. The press of greedy conquerors led to the genocide he'd hoped to avoid, and untold thousands or millions of American natives perished from disease, starvation, violence and other causes. But his work was not altogether a waste. His network of contacts lingered past his own death in 1560, and indeed by the time he died had stretched to include Jesuit and other observers in Asia as well as the Americas. In the 1570s, one of Roberto's correspondents came across Flavius' prophecies (in one of the copies since lost) and recognized the common spirit of the ventures. This anonymous monk dubbed the enterprise "the Keepers of the Sacred Flames," a label which remains in use, and even appears on the current textbook edition of Roberto's *The Identity of Angels Among the Americans and the Presence of True Spirits and No False Gods, Enumerated and Identified With Reference to the Holy Fathers*.

Over the next two generations, the informal brotherhood of cultural preservers became increasingly non-Christian in its makeup. The secularizing spirit of the Renaissance affected European spirit mages along with their neighbors, and of course most of the non-European mages joining the effort came from traditions that never had been Christian. The group's fortunes waxed and waned with the times — a series of escalating personal feuds nearly destroyed it altogether in the 1870s — but it's managed to endure. In the last twenty years, in fact, it's enjoyed a substantial renaissance of its own, drawing on renewed interest in many parts of the world in linguistic and cultural preservation.

Philosophy: Keepers argue passionately and constantly about the merits of two related ideas. Fra Roberto himself believed that there was intrinsic merit in every culture, since every culture had been initially established by God and must therefore have a place in the celestial scheme, even if it has since become debased.

This view prevails among shamans whose traditions teach a direct continuity back to primal creative forces. Other Keepers point out that all cultures evolve over time, and that whatever primal merits there may have been, they're gone forever. This approach says that there *may* be value in any culture, and that cultural preservation is a sort of prudent planning for the future, much like laying up food for lean times. But they do not regard all cultures as equally valuable, and they're quite comfortable making value judgments as they go.

Style: Keeper magic is, by definition, deeply formalized. Initiates spend many years learning their craft from masters, mastering a tremendous body of lore about the spirits and their roles. Almost all Keeper effects rely on extended rolls, and can achieve great power. Seekings always revolve around journeys into the Umbra, and any effect that is not primarily an exercise of spirit likely requires Umbral quest preparation as well.

Initiation: In cultures anywhere but the very brink of extinction, initiation is a matter of tribal legacy. The aging master shaman seeks for a disciple, and someone among the community's youth begins demonstrating the proper talent. (Fra Roberto speculated that the shaman himself induces this Awakening without realizing it; that's another thing Keepers argue about.) Access to the magical tradition is almost always segregated on the basis of sex, and often on the basis of class or caste as well, in addition to personal features — the wrong color of eyes disqualifies some shamans, for instance. When a shaman is dying without a suitable heir in his own tribe, the Keepers jointly mount magical searches for a suitable successor elsewhere in the world, and bring the suitably-souled student together with the master. Sometimes this works, sometimes not.

Organization: The Keepers maintain no formal hierarchy. In practice, the shamans of a region tend to know who among their ranks is doing well or badly and provide such deference as they think is earned. Keepers unfamiliar with each other negotiate temporary status based on their knowledge of mutual acquaintances and exploits in the spirit world, which is why Keeper gatherings begin with extensive storytelling (and equally enthusiastic efforts to poke holes in doubtful claims). Initiates of known masters usually receive the benefit of the doubt as presumably worthy heirs, but in time they'll have to stand or fall on their own merits. Likewise, more successful initiates of less successful masters do eventually get to distinguish themselves from their unfortunate legacies. All honor is personal among Keepers.

RED SPEAR SOCIETY

Names: Red Spears, World Avengers, Spirit Warriors

History: The Dreamspeakers aren't much of a Tradition, in the sense of a unified, organized group. Insofar as there is a Dreamspeaker Tradition, however, it's mostly the Red Spear Society.

The Seneca shaman Walking Hawk followed a vision to the convocation that produced the Council of the Traditions. He traveled widely, by both mundane and supernatural means, drawn by his spirit guides to fellow masters of spiritual communication and warfare. Some rejected his message of unity in the face of common enemies. Others accepted it with reservations. Some adopted the new cause eagerly, seeing through his eyes a unified world beneath all the masks of individual and cultural variety. These disciples of Walking Hawk called themselves the Brotherhood of the Unseen Face, their gathering places distinguished by ever-growing collections of all the totems and symbols they observed in multiple societies. They dreamed of gathering the definitive collection of the world's masks, and thereby creating a shamanic dictionary in which each practitioner of spirit mastery could read the same underlying truths.

The press of circumstances did not permit endless peaceful contemplation, of course. There was a war on, and whether or not any individual shaman felt himself part of any grand cause, there were both would-be rulers and would-be annihilators moving in the world, alike convinced that the collective entity dubbed "the Dreamspeakers" needed something done to it. Many spirit masters responded by drawing back away from any collective identity, into the privacy of their own peoples. The Brotherhood of the Unseen Face's members moved forward voluntarily to take up the challenges of leading the group of which they felt themselves a part, and seemed to move forward twice as rapidly since each of their steps forward was paired with others' steps backward.

The Brotherhood could reach no consensus about how best to respond to the various threats facing its members. Peacefully inclined scholars of the spirit world drifted into individual studies and alliances with other factions within the community of shamans. More confrontational spirit masters set aside the symbols of peace and tranquility to focus on the tools of war. If others insisted on war against those who stand between the spirits and the visible world, well, they would get war.

Those warlike masters became the Red Spear Society and adopted its current name. The iconography of bloody spears was also adopted in the 15th century, uniting several smaller war bands into a single cause.

The Red Spears acted in the name of the Dreamspeaker Tradition, and since they were willing to meet with other magicians, they colored outsiders' perceptions of the Tradition as a whole.

Philosophy: Michael Townsland, current Grandfather Spear, describes the Red Spear Society to his students as "like Joseph Campbell, except we know what we're talking about." The Red Spears believe that there is a single primal source for each element of warfare. They devote themselves to tracing the connections and applying them, surprising their enemies with syntheses of tool and style outside the grasp of any single culture.

Everything is fair game for the Red Spears, including the psychology and tactics of their enemies. Townsland again: "Our enemies are in massive denial, but that doesn't make them stupid. We take their ideas, then we go talk to the spirits they deny for the insights they won't get."

Style: Red Spear masters make a point of telling their students that weaponry isn't really the society's major point. *Destruction of enemies* is the point, and weapons are only tools to that end. The ideal Red Spear warrior should be capable of charging into battle with nothing but her own wits, will and spirit allies and winning the field against all adversaries. In practice this doesn't work so well against the newest Technocratic biotech and nanotech constructs, nor against demons, berserk elder shapechangers or other antagonists the Red Spears sometimes confront. It remains the ideal, nonetheless.

Red Spears engage in fewer extended rituals than most Dreamspeakers. They put a lot of effort into preparing suitable wonders and talismans, both offensive and defensive. They also try to boil down complex, difficult workings into separate easy and quick steps. The Red Spear emphasis on teamwork lets them get away with more of this than the typical, largely isolated, shaman can. If five warriors each work one simple rote timed to go off simultaneously, they can unleash powerful results through synergy while preserving freedom of movement and short response times.

Initiation: Most Red Spears come from the ranks of Dreamspeakers at large. The Red Spears travel a lot, and keep an eye out for fellow shamans who show interest in taking the war for survival back to the laps of their enemies. Dreamspeakers of other factions or who decline to affiliate themselves at all often complain about this poaching. A few Red Spears come into the society unAwakened, picked up by current warriors who notice someone fighting the battle against magical hegemony even without having Awakened. The Red Spears'

mentors guide these individuals into Awakening and help them put their anger to more effective result.

The Red Spears, unlike most Dreamspeaker factions, expel members who show themselves afraid, weak or otherwise unsuitable for a life of war. Very, very occasionally — perhaps once a century — a disgraced ex-member wins the right of reconsideration through particular acts of valor.

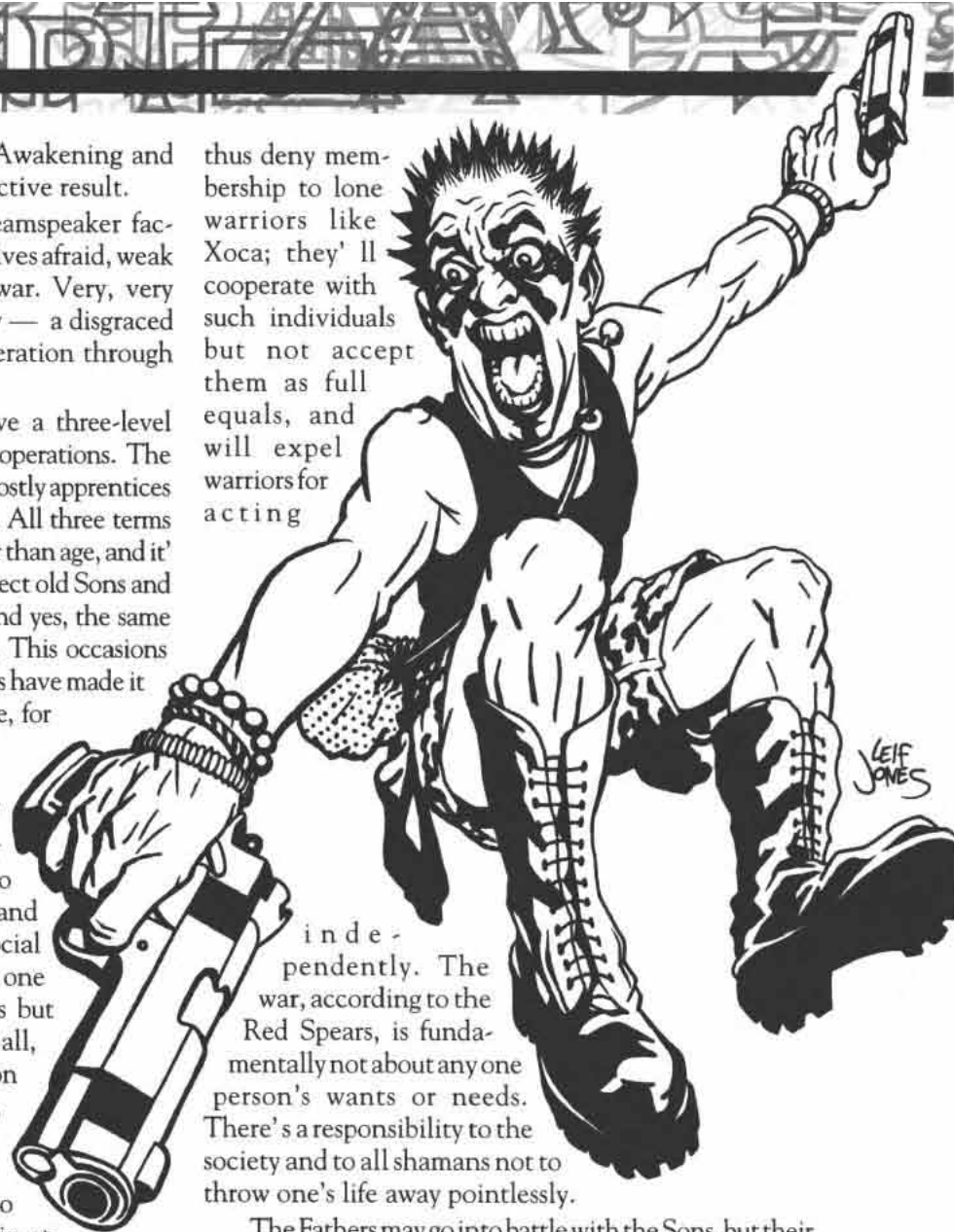
Organization: The Red Spears have a three-level hierarchy. The Fathers plan and direct operations. The Sons lead the actual fight. The Cousins, mostly apprentices and initiates, watch and provide support. All three terms refer to standing in the organization rather than age, and it's not uncommon for a young Father to direct old Sons and older Cousins on a particular mission. And yes, the same titles apply to women as well as to men. This occasions endless debate, but many mentoring spirits have made it clear that they see all Red Spears as male, for various reasons best known to the spirits.

Everyone begins among the Cousins. It takes time to master the habits of mind that make for effective Red Spear fighting, and more time for individuals to discover what their martial strengths and weaknesses actually are. There's little social stigma attached to the realization that one has a brave heart and magical prowess but little knack for combat. Someone, after all, has to keep the lines of communication open, scout out potential new initiates, heal the sick, provide for the widows and orphans of fallen warriors and perform all the other tasks that free warriors to fight. Red Spears maintain safe houses in at least one major city on each continent, as well as temporary residences close to the sites of their upcoming battles; Cousins tend these and keep their secrets.

Promotion to the ranks of the Sons takes place at the annual wintersolstice rites. Red Spear practice deemphasizes the equinoxes, the times when all things are equal, in favor of attention to the solstices and the moments of extreme tension. ("When it's darkest, we blaze brightest," the winter chant begins, while the summer chant begins, "As the sun triumphs, so shall we.") New Sons undergo a second round of training, emerging from the world's darkness into the harsh light of battle.

Groups of Sons form and disperse for particular operations. They are always headed by an Eldest Son and include a Youngest Son who must stay out of the battle to observe and record. Operations can range anywhere from two individuals up to (in very rare cases) dozens. The Red Spears prohibit solo operations, and

thus deny membership to lone warriors like Xoca; they'll cooperate with such individuals but not accept them as full equals, and will expel warriors for acting



independently. The war, according to the Red Spears, is fundamentally not about anyone's wants or needs. There's a responsibility to the society and to all shamans not to throw one's life away pointlessly.

The Fathers may go into battle with the Sons, but their primary responsibility is to prepare the plans. Most Fathers are veteran Sons sufficiently wounded to become liabilities in combat, though some simply do better laboring with their minds than with their hands. They tend to lead much more settled lives, taking the time to understand the life of a particular district, state or nation in great deal. It can take years to trace out lines of dependence, flows of resources, concentrations of assets and the other things that good warriors must know before they fight.

The Father with the best record of success becomes the new Grandfather, leader of the whole society, when the old one dies or steps down. Grandfather Townland brought thirty years' worth of devastating precision strikes against Technocratic operations in the American Midwest and Rockies to bear upon his accession in 1996, and under his leadership the Red Spears enjoyed renewed success. Small numbers suffice when the planning and execution are wise.

THE SPIRIT SMITHS

Names: Makers, Awakeners, Junk Dealers (derogatory)

History: The link between smithing and shamanism is extremely ancient. Spirit Smiths look to numerous legends, like the tales of the shaman Vainamoinen and his smith companion Ilmarinen in the Finnish Kalevala, as proof that shamans and smiths are often allied or one in the same.

In the most ancient times, the art of smelting ore to yield metal and the secrets of forging and casting metal into jewelry, tools and weapons were considered magical acts. Shamans spoke to the spirits of the rocks, coaxed the metal out and persuaded it to take on useful forms. When priests replaced shamans and instituted the worship of gods, smiths ceased to be revered, but they continued to perform their secret magics. Many smiths traveled, seeking better ores or new markets for their wares. As a result, smiths all over the world shared their knowledge and techniques. In some places smiths formed guilds, secret societies or even religious mystery cults to safeguard their knowledge.

While cultures transformed around them, the position of smiths rarely changed. Their valuable skills rendered them largely immune from the horrors of even the most repressive states. As empires rose and fell, they continued to practice their craft and refine their skills. All of this changed when the Craftsmasons joined the Order of Reason. This radical sect of Spirit Smiths discarded what they considered to be the foolish superstitions of the past. The Craftsmasons were no longer interested in creating handcrafted, spiritually awakened items. Instead, they sought ways to make radical improvements in their techniques and began a rigorous process of investigation, where they worked to determine and create regular rules of manufacture that had little to do with smithcraft's shamanic roots.

The Craftsmasons' early work eventually spawned Iteration X, the Industrial Revolution and mass production. Through all of that, in isolated villages, remote tribes and even in the heart of industrial cities, the Spirit Smiths continued to practice their ancient arts. As technology advanced, many of them ceased working as black, gold or silversmiths, and learned newer trades. While some Spirit Smiths have kept their old ways, today others have learned auto mechanics, become found-object sculptors or even creators of specialized homebuilt electronics.

The coming of the Avatar Storms was less of a disruption for the Spirit Smiths than for many, for few Makers spent large amounts of time in the Umbra. Still,

some of their oldest and most skilled shaman-crafters were killed or exiled beyond the Gauntlet. As a result of these changes, the younger and more innovative Spirit Smiths are now free to experiment with new technologies. Today, this faction is more active than ever. Recently, the leaders have even begun making open alliances with some of the younger and more flexible members of the Sons of Ether and the Virtual Adepts.

Spiritual Path: While their methods and crafts may differ, most Spirit Smiths are now passionately devoted to the re-enchantment of the world. By creating various spiritually awakened items, they hope both to help Sleepers to look beyond the gray industrial uniformity that surrounds them and to learn to see the many spirits that share their world. Most Spirit Smiths also want to bring benevolent spirits back through the Gauntlet by creating special shrines where they can live.

In addition to these long-range goals, almost all Spirit Smiths are also deeply devoted to crafting fine one-of-a-kind items, and to repairing and improving the objects that people will use and treasure. Spirit Smiths attempt to awaken any item that they create or repair. Also, most Spirit Smiths will only create items for specific individuals. Instead of simply creating beautiful handcrafted knives, component-built computers, or one-of-a-kind automobiles, Spirit Smiths make items that are designed for use by one specific person. As a result, going to a Spirit Smith to have something made can be a lengthy process.

First, a Spirit Smith must ascertain that the person coming to the smith is worthy; then the Maker must get to know the person well enough to be able to create an item that is perfect for the client. Spirit Smiths are not simply trying to create improved items, like the modern heirs of the Craftsmasons. Instead, they want to create items that are physical and spiritual allies to the owner. Spirit Smith weapon makers speak of how their weapons fight alongside their owners.

Spirit Smiths never rely on mass production to create the items they awaken. Instead, they craft all of their creations by hand forging and casting metal, carving horn and wood or blowing glass. Spirit Smiths who work with more modern materials handcraft their devices out of basic components. Most Spirit Smiths will also awaken items they repair and improve — the process of repairing a mass-produced device normally involves substantially rebuilding it with handmade components, and carefully modifying it so the device works better than it ever did before.



While most people know nothing of such hand-built items, a few Sleepers in specialized occupations treasure them. Although they normally have no idea that they are receiving spiritually active items from a powerful willworker, Sleepers ranging from fine chefs and skilled martial artists to assassins, hackers and drug runners have all learned that a few select people can build and repair fine specialty items that are far better than anything that can be bought commercially. Spirit Smiths who are masons and construction workers are much in demand by people who are looking for buildings created with proper Feng Shui or correct spiritual alignment.

Training: Becoming a Spirit Smith generally involves a prolonged apprenticeship, where the student must learn to work with, appreciate and love their chosen craft. While they generally only take on apprentices who seem on the verge of Awakening, learning to be a Spirit Smith is not a rapid process. Some students are trained for up to a decade before their master feels that they are ready to learn the true magic of what they are doing. Spirit Smiths believe that this long apprenticeship allows the student to learn the craft fully without becoming distracted by the wonders of willworking.

Once the student has Awakened, the apprenticeship continues. Most Spirit Smiths will not admit that their student is fully ready to become independent until she has complete a "masterwork" that proves her true skill with her chosen craft. In return for all of this work, Spirit Smiths usually maintain close contact with their former students. They are often willing to help out if the student runs into serious trouble.

Style of magic: Spirit Smiths often learn many Spheres, but most tend to emphasize Spirit, Matter and Forces. While some Spirit Smiths prefer to use their Talismans, Fetishes, and Awakened items instead of their magic, they are all fully capable willworkers. Most will not hesitate to use their powers.

Spirit Smith magic always involves the use of an item. Tinkering with guns or cars to entice them to perform better, throwing a rock at the rotor of a helicopter to cause it to fail catastrophically and even writing a short computer program designed to communicate with a web-spirit are all actions that can serve as foci for a Spirit Smith's magic. The only real limit on such magic is that unless a device is possessed by a malevolent spirit, a weapon of terrible mass destruction or in some other way inherently evil, Spirit Smiths generally try to avoid destroying well-made or unique items. Instead, most will attempt to take such devices from owners who misuse or mistreat them and either keep them or find them new and better homes.

Organization: In addition to being the smallest of the various Dreamspeaker factions, the Spirit Smiths are now also one of the best organized. They have fewer than 200 members, more than half of whom are static shamans (see page 64). While their organization is not particularly hierarchical, they all keep in regular contact with one an-

Being a Master Spirit Smith: Only Spirit Smiths with a Spirit score of 3 or higher (and corresponding Craft Skill) are considered Masters, since only they can awaken the spirits within inanimate objects. Any Spirit Smith character who does not possess a Spirit score of 3 must take the Mentor Background of two or higher. These Journeymen may not vote on issues concerning the fate of the faction and are considered by all Dreamspeakers to be subordinate to their Masters. All Master Spirit Smiths can be assumed to have awakened every important item that they regularly use. If they use such items in their magic, these items are considered to be Unique Foci.

Note that being a Master Smith is not the same as being a Master of a Sphere. This confusion occasionally results in problems when interacting with mages outside the faction. Most Master Smiths are careful to call themselves by the full title instead of just "Master," and to append their actual Sphere mastery as well — "Master Smith Horace Trebs, Adept of Spirit," for instance.

other, sharing new techniques and working together on their plans to reawaken the world. Everyone who can awaken the spirit within an item without aid and who has created a masterwork is considered to be a Master Spirit Smith. All Masters hold equal rank, and while elder Masters are honored and revered, they do not hold any more power or privileges.

Those Masters who wish to do so can vote upon all decisions. Using phone calls, email, secure internet chat-rooms and even Umbral messengers, votes and information can be easily shared between the Masters. While most Masters agree that important decisions should be settled by consensus, a simple majority is normally considered to be sufficient.

One major source of conflict among the Makers is the fact that the different crafts often form cliques — the practitioners of the same crafts band together and

THE BUILDERS

While the Spirit Smiths have traditionally concentrated on creating single items of spiritual power, recently a group of young crafters known as the Builders have begun planning a to use their magic to awaken entire buildings, neighborhoods, and eventually complete towns and cities. Now that they no longer have to worry about the Pogrom, these radical Masters have begun to recruit the majority of their faction into this grand project.

Using unusual construction techniques, elaborate rituals, special emplacements of tiny shrines, awakened plaques, carefully crafted ironwork and magical statuary, the most powerful Builders have already created several new Nodes. Concentrating their efforts in Minneapolis (the home of the head of the Builders), they are hoping to use new Nodes and awakened buildings to awaken an entire neighborhood. If this project succeeds, they hope to involve the entire faction in their efforts.

Some Builders are also looking beyond their own faction, and have convinced a number of members of the Ghost Wheel Society and the Baruti to help them. Shortly after the beginning of the Avatar Storm, Netsilak Raymond, the leader and founder of the Builders also became the head of this faction. Today, the influence of the Builders continues to spread.

support each other. Before the Avatar Storm exiled a number of the senior crafters, practitioners of the older crafts like blacksmithing and jewelry making were the largest group within the Spirit Smiths. The traditionalists who practiced these crafts often worked together to discourage the popularity of newer crafts like electronics and automobile mechanics. Today, many of these older crafters are dead or exiled past the Gauntlet. As a result, there has been a vast explosion of interest in crafting and modifying advanced technologies.

SOLITARIES

Names: Solitaries, Loners, Monks, Anchorites, Meditators, the Pure, Cowards

History: Some spirit mages began the practice of withdrawing from society as soon as there was a society from which they could withdraw. The practice appears in the oldest written accounts of shamans' social roles and is suggested by cave art from long before.

The urge to withdraw becomes more popular in times of general crisis and misery... and also in times of particular prosperity and happiness. The latter seems mysterious only to those who haven't yet stopped to consider things from the mystic's point of view. The shaman exists to bridge mortal and spirit realms, to mediate, adjudicate, instruct and sometimes even to govern the people around her. People who feel very well provided for, healthy and full and satisfied, feel less impulse to seek out wisdom or guidance—they're much more likely to think that they've got enough already, thanks, and don't need to put up with the difficulties. Angry or discouraged shamans sometimes choose to remove themselves rather than constantly butt heads with this obstinacy.

Philosophy: Shamanism is fundamentally not a magic one practices for oneself, but for and on behalf of a tribe or other community. Usually this means that the shaman must immerse herself in the affairs of her people, understanding and addressing their needs. Still, various motives can lead her out into the wilderness. All of the following have motivated Solitaries in the past and continue to do so today.

- Frustration with the tribe's lack of interest in spiritual matters.
- Too great a load of pain in the midst of a crisis, and a desire for time to heal inside before picking up more burden from others.
- Confusion in the midst of contradictory impulses from the rest of the tribe, and feeling the need to reduce the spiritual clamor long enough to sort through things and come to conclusions about the shaman's own outlook and priorities.
- Warning of impending doom descending on the tribe, and the desire to preserve the tribe's heritage even if the spirits say that other bodies and souls cannot be saved.

• A calling to adopt something other than a human community as one's tribe: all the living creatures of a region, for instance, or the spirit of a climate, or even the world as a whole.

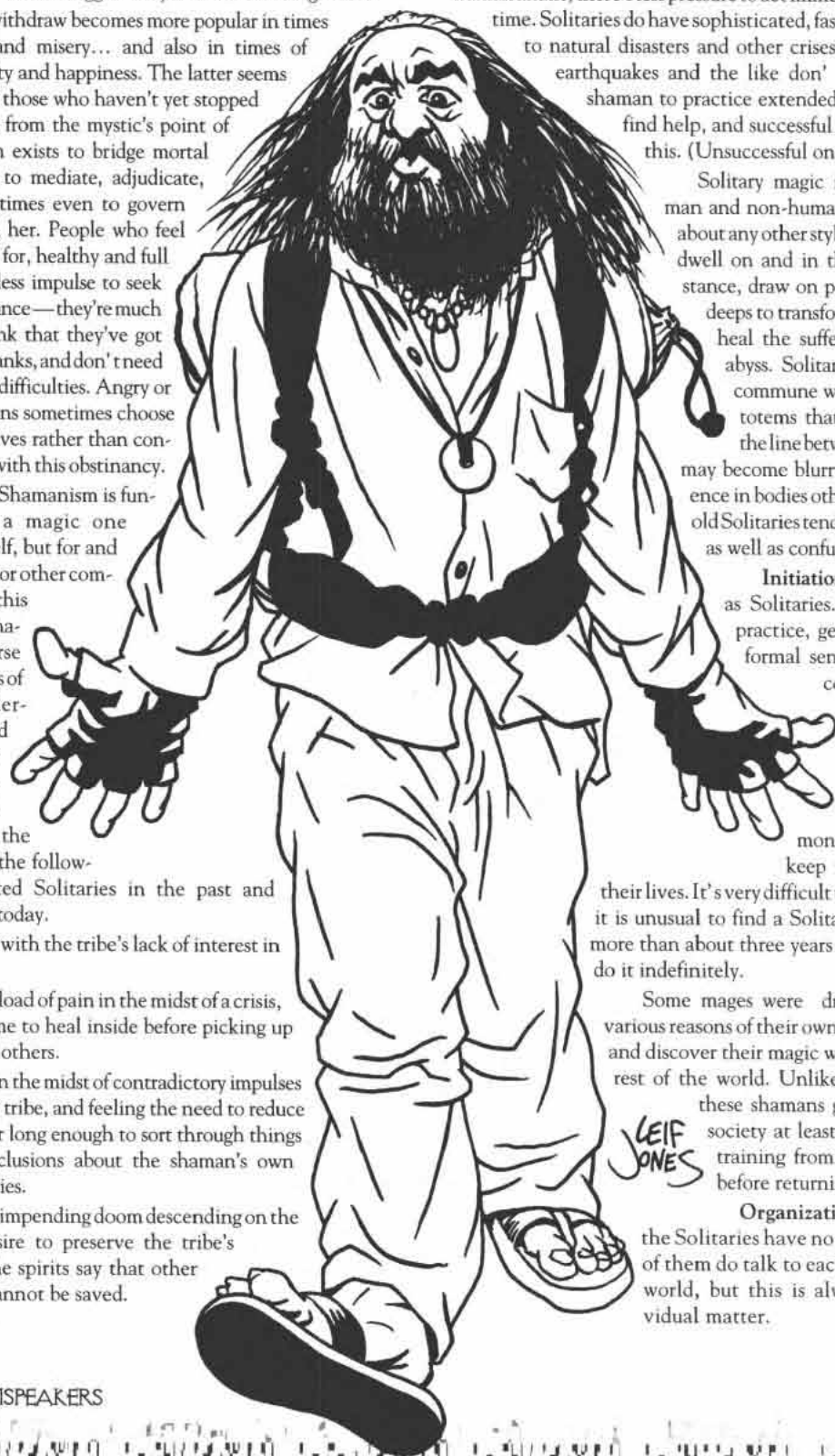
Style: Solitary magic tends to the slow and deliberate, with rites that may take months or even years to complete. Away from human affairs, there's less pressure to act immediately... most of the time. Solitaries do have sophisticated, fast rites for responding to natural disasters and other crises. Forest fires, floods, earthquakes and the like don't wait for a solitary shaman to practice extended meditation or to go find help, and successful solitaries prepare for this. (Unsuccessful ones perish.)

Solitary magic includes more inhuman and non-human elements than just about any other style. The Solitaries who dwell on and in the deep seas, for instance, draw on powers of the benthic deeps to transform themselves and to heal the suffering in the lightless abyss. Solitaries of the far forests commune with some of the same totems that guide animals, and the line between human and beast may become blurry after years of existence in bodies other than human. Very old Solitaries tend to scare other mages, as well as confuse them.

Initiation: Few mages start off as Solitaries. They move to the practice, generally without any formal sense that "I have become a Solitary," in response to one or more of the above impulses. Some practice solitary existence for a few months or years; others keep it up for the rest of their lives. It's very difficult to generalize, though it is unusual to find a Solitary keeping it up for more than about three years without going on to do it indefinitely.

Some mages were driven to retreat, for various reasons of their own, before Awakening, and discover their magic while cut off from the rest of the world. Unlike the Independents, these shamans generally do reenter society at least long enough to get training from established masters before returning to isolation.

Organization: By definition, the Solitaries have no organization. Some of them do talk to each other in the spirit world, but this is always a purely individual matter.



WALKING BETWEEN THE WORLDS: THE DREAMSPEAKER PARADIGM



Dreamspeakers perform magic as a natural consequence of their existence in both the physical world and the Umbra. Learning the ways of the spirits is the most important part of becoming a skilled and powerful shaman. The essence of being a Dreamspeaker is acting as an intermediary between the mortal world and the Umbra. Shamans can perform magic because they can see and manipulate both worlds, whereas ordinary mortals know only the mortal world and spirits know only the Umbra.

BEING AN INTERMEDIARY

In a very real sense, the land of the spirits is also the land of the dead. Dreamspeakers know that the Dark Umbra is where the shades of those who still maintain a connection to the mortal world reside. Since dying is the only way humans can normally become residents of the Umbra, becoming a Dreamspeaker always involves some form of symbolic death. While this can naturally occur during a serious illness or a life-

threatening accident, in most cases, shamanic initiation is a deliberate procedure where the candidate experiences some form of physical or psychological death and is then reborn into both the physical and Umbral realms. As a result, Dreamspeakers learn to be at home in both realms and many can constantly hear or see both worlds. Dreamspeakers who attempt to cut themselves off from one world or the other frequently suffer various spiritual, psychological and physical problems ranging from nightmares to life-threatening illnesses.

Their unique place between the two worlds means that Dreamspeakers have a special responsibility to help resolve conflicts and problems between humans and spirits. While this does not mean that Dreamspeakers need be especially sympathetic to either side, they should always be prepared to help resolve any serious conflicts or problems that occur when these two realms meet. Spirits who accidentally end up in the physical world need to be returned to the Umbra, captured or destroyed. Similarly, humans who have become lost in the Umbra or who are being plagued by restless or angry spirits require aid. Of course, that aid could consist of solutions



ranging from driving the spirits away to seeing that the individual is suitably punished and the spirits justly avenged.

The Dreamspeakers also consider themselves to be the gatekeepers and guardians of the Gauntlet. They are in charge of keeping it open, so that transport and communication between the physical and umbral world remains possible, as well as repairing any rifts or tears that could allow the two worlds to blend in an uncontrolled and dangerous fashion.

This intermediary function is also one of the reasons that so many shamans have an intermediate gender status that most modern Westerners would label as transvestitism, transsexuality or transgenderism. In recognition of the special status shamans possess by existing both between the mortal world and the umbra and between life and death, in many cultures shamans also exist between other important boundaries — such as the perceived boundary between being male and being female. In many shamanic cultures, those in the role of shaman typically lived outside local gender norms, including dressing as members of the other gender and often marrying members of their own sex. In some cultures, only people who violated local gender norms could be shamans.

ECSTASY

The key to all shamanic magic is contacting or visiting the spirit world. Dreamspeakers either touch the Gauntlet and call spirits into the mortal world, or they enter the Umbra and perform actions there. In either case, piercing the Gauntlet requires special techniques where the Dreamspeaker's mind and spirit are elevated beyond the mundane world and into a state where both worlds are open and accessible. Even Dreamspeakers who can normally see and hear Umbral beings must alter their consciousness so that they can perceive and manipulate the fabric of the Gauntlet itself. Although reaching this state becomes easier with experience, some change in consciousness is always required.

Unlike many Traditions, the Dreamspeakers are not terribly focused on the exact techniques — in general any foci that work will be used. Drugs, drumming, pain, fasting, flashing lights, prolonged dancing or strenuous exercise are all seen as equally valid means of achieving the proper ecstatic state. When they reach ecstatic consciousness, Dreamspeakers believe that they can potentially do anything, and that the only limits on their power are the ones that their own minds place upon them.

Individual Dreamspeakers, however, sometimes have extremely strong views about appropriate and inappropriate means of reaching ecstatic consciousness. Some believe that drugs pollute the spirit and the body, and only accept techniques like dancing or meditation that require no external aid. Others place great faith in drugs derived from plants but will have nothing to do with modern pharmaceuticals or technologically-dependant methods like

biofeedback. Discussions and disagreements about appropriate foci and styles of magic have been found at Dreamspeaker meetings for many centuries.

ANIMISITI

The other key to working Dreamspeaker magic is the fact that everything is alive and imbued with spirit. When using magic to affect something, Dreamspeakers must call upon the target's spirit. Every tree, cat, pencil, or CD player contains its own unique spirit. If you affect the spirit, you also affect the object. Aiding and channeling power to the spirit of some device can make this device perform better. Similarly, slaying the spirit of a car or a radio will harm it and, in most cases, will cause it to utterly fail.

All Dreamspeakers recognize that the easiest way to affect something is through its spirit. Techniques for calling upon spirits vary — they can be coaxed, commanded or threatened. In many cases, the simplest way to affect a powerful or elusive Umbral being is to affect some place or object to which it has ties. To heal a spirit, a Dreamspeaker might work to aid or repair a physical site in which that spirit is reflected. Conversely, the easiest way to destroy some spirits is to destroy their connections to the physical world. While the largest and most powerful spirits have physical connections too vast and durable to be affected in this fashion, Dreamspeakers can use these simple techniques to affect almost anything else.

Dreamspeakers can also use their mastery of spirit to talk to anything, even to individual parts of living beings of objects. A short conversation inducing a single circuit to open or close is often sufficient to turn a sophisticated alarm system off. This ability to affect the whole though the spirits of its parts allows Dreamspeakers to be extremely subtle in their magics.

While mages in other Traditions may believe that all Dreamspeakers are softhearted individuals who devote their lives to following the wishes of every stray spirit, the reality is far more complex. Although some Dreamspeakers certainly believe themselves to be representatives and advocates for all types of spirits, others see spirits as little more than powerful tools. There are numerous Dreamspeakers who capture and control spirits with threats and force, and who are seen as powerful tyrants by the Umbrood under their thrall. Similarly, many Dreamspeakers take definite sides in the unending power struggles that wrack the Umbral realms. The politics of the Umbra are complex and sometimes deadly. Dreamspeakers who ally themselves with a powerful totem spirit often work openly with various lesser spirits that also serve their totem. In many cases, these spirits can become the Dreamspeaker's friends and comrades in arms. This same Dreamspeaker, however, may happily harm, imprison or even destroy the totem's enemies.

KIN AND KIND: THE SPIRITS OF THE SPHERES



Spirit magic is all about working with the souled forces whose thoughts and actions produce observable material reality (and a great deal more). This is true even when, in terms of game mechanics, a particular effect does not call for the Spirit sphere. For Dreamspeakers, it's *all* spirits, of different kinds.

The traditions of separate parts of the world vary widely in their specifics. When developing the paradigm for any particular Dreamspeaker, feel free to modify or outright disregard the generalizations presented here in favor of the actual circumstances of the culture to which your character belongs. You should also feel free to modify as necessary for the sake of an individual paradigm.

CORRESPONDENCE: THE SPIRITS THAT MEASURE

Being a successful shaman is partly a matter of knowing what to ignore. Most of the time, shamans don't need to pay attention to the very simple spirits that define space and time by their movements, any more than a walker needs to think about the composition of the dirt underfoot. Correspondence magic requires the shaman to look at these neglected spirits and learn how to work with them. In some approaches, Correspondence makes it possible for the shaman to move herself, body and/or soul, by convincing a spirit of dimension to carry her across the gap between where she is and where she wishes to be. In other approaches, Correspondence involves speaking to the space itself, and convincing it to move or change to suit the shaman's needs. Sometimes, it's a matter of *ignoring* the rules of space and distance, and stepping "between" instead of "through" or "sideways."

There are few complex rites among Dreamspeakers for speaking to the spirits of dimension, partly because these spirits wouldn't understand or appreciate them. Rather, Dreamspeaker rites using Correspondence call for invoking the fetishes they use in dealing with *other* spirits, acknowledging how the spirits of dimension make all else possible. In effect, the Dreamspeaker makes connections with known spirits to show the importance of connection itself.

ENTROPY: THE ARCHITECTS OF LIFE

The use of this sphere sharply separates true spirit mages from wannabes of various kinds. Real spirit magic isn't always "nice" or safe: it requires confronting unpleasant truths as well as reassuring comfortable ones. Everything that exists has boundaries. It begins, grows, lives and will die. This is true of what physicists call atoms (and smaller creatures), of humans, and of gods and the universe itself. Entropy lies intertwined with everything else, and the spirits that mani-

fest luck, chaos, uncertainty and death make it possible for everything else to have their particular natures.

Dreamspeakers generally distinguish sharply between the spirits of luck and chance and those of death and decay. The latter is mostly the realm of necromancers and other specialized mages — not all of them evil, but all exposed to a special flood of temptations out of the lands of the dead. It's hard to deal with the dead without losing one's will to live, or one's joy in life, and Dreamspeakers tend to watch their death-dealing brethren very carefully. Luck, on the other hand, is a fundamental tool in many Dreamspeaker arsenals. Most shamans don't deal very much with spirits of luck as such; instead, they coax particularly fortunate or unfortunate behavior out of other sorts of spirits. What the rules describe as an Entropy effect may well strike a shaman using it as an effect of Life, Matter or something else.

FORCES: THE VOICES IN THE WHIRLWIND

Rites involving Forces make up a major percentage of all traditional shamanic practices. The power of nature unleashed in lightning, fire and other spectacular displays of energy threatens communities. The shaman stands in the gap, protecting his people by channeling the energy to some safer outlet. Likewise, the power implicit in natural energy can serve a community when there's a magician present who can tell it what to do, and keep it in line when it's inclined to rebel. "He commands the lightning" is a remark found in nearly every culture with active shamans, and points to particularly visible displays of the shaman's own power.

LIFE: THE SOUL OF EACH THING

Many modern Dreamspeakers object to the other Traditions' tendency to treat Life as a single sphere. Dreamspeakers experience the endless variety of spirits within every living creature and feel that lumping together the souls which stir in amoebas, cacti, whales, cats and people misses some very important truths. Dreamspeaker applications of Life almost always work only on the particular kinds of living creatures found within a particular climatic region, and require re-learning for different parts of the world. For Dreamspeakers this is no more remarkable or weird than the idea that one must learn different styles and customs of greeting when going to different cultures. The spirits all speak a single tongue, but they speak it as differently as the English heard in Edinburgh, Los Angeles and New Delhi.

The most common foci for Life magic, whatever the culture or climate, are totems of the beings with whom the shaman works. These may be small sculptures or paintings, massive totem poles carved from the best trees of the forest, or anything in between. Every culture has its traditions on this matter. Modern urban shamans and technoshamans are

developing their own traditions through a typically pragmatic shamanic process — make a totem and see if it works, and if not, try something else, all the while consulting with the spirits to see what pleases them.

MATTER: THE SOUL OF EACH THING

The sharp, clear division between Life and Matter is a matter of game mechanics rather than shamanic experience. Everything is alive for the shaman, and the question is only whether the particular shaman can work well with the particular spirit in question.

To do full justice to some real-world traditions, the boundaries of several spheres would need adjusting. Many shamans do not, for instance, distinguish between the crops and the soil in which they grow as wildly disparate things. Unfortunately for the sake of play, this could rapidly devolve into total anarchy and mutual confusion among players and Storytellers. Work within the existing categories where possible, and negotiate over particular points of boundary-pushing.

Matter is particularly important to technoshamans, particularly in conjunction with Forces. Other shamans usually regard their technophilic brethren as turning themselves into idiot savants, but technoshamans feel that the others are willfully ignoring whole new ecologies, which are springing up overnight and needing shamanic help as much as any other climate does.

MIND: THE SOUL AWAKENED

Everything a shaman does for the others in her community combines Life and Mind. There is no distinction between the two in most forms of shamanism, as they both influence the various parts of the single living organism that is a human being. (Or some other sort of sentient being, the same principle applying to yeti, sea bishops, and everything in between.)

Most shamanic Mind magic works through dreams. The mage gains information while dreaming, and affects the minds of others by preparing rituals to shape their dreams appropriately. As with most other spheres, art and sculpture provide foci for many shamans. So does music, arranged to evoke particular moods as part of an extended effect.

PRITIE: THE GREAT SPIRITS

The shamanic world contains indefinite hierarchies, rising from the lowliest mindless little beings up to the powers that other traditions call angels and gods. The great spirits themselves seldom act directly in the material world, but they can lend their power to spirits closer to the skin of things, strengthening or weakening the entities that more directly shape the world around the shaman. No shaman undertakes dealing with the totems and their superiors lightly, and many try to avoid it as much as possible. (Many Seekings for Dreamspeakers approaching Arete 4 or 5 begin with the great spirits seeking out the shaman, whether she feels ready or not.)

Prime magic comes hard for most shamans, and very nearly always requires conjunctive use of Spirit to keep the chain of being from breaking and dropping massive spiritual weights on the magician. Successful effects quickly become enshrined in rites and escape most of the constant tampering and experimental adjustment that befalls other Dreamspeaker rites. Dreamspeakers generally believe that other mages have insufficient appreciation of the forces they're messing with when they work Prime magic. They often believe that others' Paradox problems can be traced back to carelessness with Prime and associated Spirit effects.

Prime foci include the usual artifacts and also elaborate ceremonies, up to and including community-wide feasts in honor of the totems involved in a particular effect. It's not uncommon for the Prime effect to follow after one or more minor effects in other spheres, to help establish a good frame of mind and rapport between participants.

SPIRIT: ALL OF THE ABOVE AND BELOW

Shamanism begins and ends with spirits. What distinguishes Spirit for shamans is that it allows acting on the spirit world itself, as well as on individual spirits.

Note that while travel to the spirit world is indeed important for many shamans, it's *not* the only thing to do with Spirit. Spirit lets Dreamspeakers see spirits, and also lets them affect the spirit world and its inhabitants without themselves leaving material existence. Some shamanic traditions don't call for Umbral travel at all, while others confine it to specific ceremonial occasions. Nor is the Avatar Storm an unprecedented calamity for Dreamspeakers. They're used to the spirit world sometimes being very dangerous. Many shamanic practices require the mage to cut himself, take poison, or otherwise inflict significant harm to himself as an aid to separating his soul for a time. The cutting effects at the Gauntlet simply make it possible to pick up some wounds along the way as well as beforehand. Spirit foci commonly include representations of spirits the shaman has dealt with before or hopes to deal with now, along with elaborate dramatizations in speech, music and art of the shaman's prowess and the rightness of the intended effect.

TIME: THE SPIRITS THAT MEASURE

The concerns described above for Correspondence also apply to Time. For shamans, time is both the result of the spirits' actions and itself one or more beings, depending on the particular tradition, which can be worked with like any others. The vast majority of Dreamspeaker magic involving Time involves sensing outside one's own time; altering time or moving through it other than at the usual rate of one second per second strikes most shamans as abusive, a sort of necromancy on the wounded body of the world. Many totems frown on messing with time in this way, too, since they depend on time to pace their interactions with the material world.

SORCERY

Dreamspeakers don't generally draw a hard and fast line between the magic of the spheres and the magic of the linear paths. They're all related in practice and intent. Shamans know from experience that a powerful master of paths can readily trounce an arrogant or careless practitioner of sphere magic, and they give full honor to all successful practitioners regardless of the details. Success for oneself and one's community is proof of merit.

ATTITUDES TOWARD MODERN TECHNOLOGY

Dreamspeakers span the gamut from primitivist radicals, who would prefer if the entire human population gave up everything from electricity to agriculture, to technoshamans who regularly summon the spirits that inhabit the Digital Web.

Traditional Shamans: "We keep the old ways. Back before cities and farms, automobiles and agriculture, humanity was free. Look at how the few remaining hunter-gatherers live — 20 hours a week gets you everything you need — murder rates are low, there was no war and no one dies of the various stress-related illnesses that kill so many people today. Sure, their lives are sometimes difficult, but isn't freedom worth something too?"

"With all the insanity of modern life, all of the Sleepers — and almost all the mages — have forgotten what things once were like. We're the ones who remember — we keep the old tales alive, we maintain contact with the ancient spirits and we still know how to live using only tools we can make ourselves. Sure, anyone who claims that they can turn back the clock is crazy — the Sleepers will never voluntarily give up all that they have. But what if they have no choice? We're killing the whole damn planet and it's getting ready to fight back. When the oil runs out and the plagues and climate changes get worse, how long is this precious civilization going to last? At that point, we'll be here to help the survivors build a new and better world. Until then, we can at least provide living proof that mindless labor and soulless subjugation are not the only ways to live.

"That's why I don't use anything I can't make myself, in either my life or my magic. Examples are powerful things. The fact that me and the other primitivists can scratch out a living on this commune without all the gadgets other folks take for granted makes both Sleepers and mages think. Most of people simply decide we're all crazy, but a few wonder what life would be like if they weren't chained to their cell phone.

"I've been down to the Amazon, and some of the people there have a pretty nice life. They don't have everything that people in this country take for granted, but they also don't have mortgages, gang violence, air pollution, lung cancer, heart disease or crappy reality TV shows to rot their brains. Life would be far better if we could get rid of this damn

Technocratic paradigm, but I'm not expecting that to happen until things begin to seriously fall apart.

"In any case, I just can't see right-minded Dreamspeakers working with computer spirits, plastic elementals and similar horrors. Look who created those things? They're corrupt by their very nature. Making deals with them just makes them stronger. We're already killing the planet. Pure water and clean air are rare enough already, it's the spirits of nature that we need to be helping and working with. It's purely a matter of common sense and survival. If you work with monsters, everything you do will be tainted.

"Now, I can understand where some of the urban shamans are coming from, but that doesn't mean they're right. Cities are sick by their very nature. Working with urban spirits hurts humanity and the planet, because you are aiding and rewarding things that destroy us. Sure, they can be useful, but at what cost? The so-called Technoshamans are even worse; they're either dupes of the technocracy, or people who value personal power more than ethics or the health of the planet."

Urban Shamans: "Drugs are drugs, man; don't matter if you find the tobacco spirit in some fine leaves you cured yourself or in a pack of old cigs you lifted from a mini-mart, it's still the same spirit. So what if I live in Hollywood with this huge freakin' city stretched out for miles on every side of me? I'm as much of a shaman as anyone else, and this city is as much my home as some patch of wilderness was to the first shaman 20,000 years ago. I get high, talk to the local spirits and live my life just like she did.

"Thing is, I don't live in no cave. You deal with what you got around you — in my case that's Los damn Angeles. Don't bother me none if someone livin' someplace else is cutting' deals with other spirits, it only makes sense. If you're ignoring the spirits around you, then they think you're dissing them. That road leads to serious trouble.

"I guess that being an urban shaman is pretty much about learnin' to work with what life gives you. Livin' like folks do in LA ain't good or evil, but it's a whole sight different from how folk used to live. If you want to get things done, you got to learn to roll with all the changes.

"Now that's why I'm doin' what I am, but you also asked 'bout what being an urban shaman is all about. Well, I'm really no different from any other shaman. We've always been cuttin' deals with local spirits, talkin' to folks' ancestors, healing people, and similar stuff. Heck, my rituals ain't even that different. I may have bought my drum off of a this punk gal who made it out of an old oil drum, but it plays as fine as anything made of wood and leather. So what if I get the stuff for my fetishes from things other folks throw away? Shamans have been good at hunting and gathering for a good long time."

Technoshamans: "I'm sick of being called a traitor and a sellout by half the Dreamspeakers I run into. Get a clue — the Technocracy is here to stay. There are many other ways of being a Dreamspeaker, but if some of us aren't out on the



front lines making certain that we have an in with all the new tech coming out, then we're all screwed.

"We already know how to deal with healing spirits and water elementals, but there aren't any old stories about how to get a web spirit to help you track someone, or the proper offering to make to get a plastic elemental to cause someone's cell phone to fail before they can call the cops. There also aren't any rites designed to keep those new spirits from munching someone's mind or any old ways to stop the Technocrats from using these critters to destroy the world.

"Welcome to experimental shamanism, kids. We're just like those first shamans 20,000 years ago — we're learning to deal with the world around us. Lack of knowledge is no virtue. If we don't learn to work with these spirits, then we can't stop people from using them to cause harm.

"Any spirit you can talk to you can make deals with. I don't know about you, but I'd rather have the web spiders working on my side than allied with my enemies. That's the reason 'Speaker's like me aren't shaking rattles and dancing around chanting. The old ways don't work on new spirits. If you want to get in touch with a computer spirit, you got to sit in front of a computer. Playing ostrich and sticking your head in the sand doesn't do anyone any good. At least some of us need to know how to deal with the world as it is — web

spiders, electricity elementals and automobile spirits are where it's at these days."

RULES FOR AWAKENED ITEMS

Any Dreamspeaker or other mage with three dots or more in Spirit can awaken the spirit within any object or device, and as stated on page 55-56 of the *Mage Storytellers Companion*, even mages without that level of power can still own such items. The question is, then, what good does it do to have a spiritually awakened car or apartment? For devices like computers or handguns, the benefits are obvious. Since these devices are awake and aware, they will instantly know if there is some problem with their function. Well before an awakened gun jams, or a computer ceases to work, both of them will show signs that indicate the existence and the nature of the problem. A computer might briefly flash somewhat cryptic text indicating the nature of the potential glitch, while a car or gun will likely make an odd and obvious noise every time it is used. Anyone using such a device will notice these signs on a successful Perception + Awareness roll. Such information gives the Dreamspeaker, or anyone to whom they describe the symptoms, a one-point (or Trait, in MET) difficulty break on all rolls to fix the device.

Dreamspeakers with two or more dots in Spirit need not rely on such indirect means. Any Dreamspeaker with at least two dots in Spirit can easily talk to awakened devices. They can talk to awakened devices they own and with which they are extremely familiar without the necessity of making Arete rolls. In addition, such devices can initiate conversations with their owners if the owner possesses two or more dots in Spirit or the *Medium Merit*.

More than one Dreamspeaker has been awakened in the middle of the night by some chatty appliance asking for help or telling him that someone is trying to steal or vandalize it. In addition to giving the Dreamspeaker a bonus on all rolls to fix devices that are experiencing problems, such communication allows a Dreamspeaker to instantly know if anyone else has used the awakened device. If a Nephandus breaks into a Dreamspeaker's apartment, her computer may well use its webcam to photograph the intruder and will happily show the Dreamspeaker the footage as soon as she returns.

In addition, the owner of an awakened device decreases the difficulty of all rolls to use it by one. In contrast, anyone whom the device dislikes receives a +1 increase in difficulty to all rolls involving the device. Normally this means that Dreamspeakers use their own awakened devices with great ease and their enemies have trouble using such devices. However, Dreamspeakers who abuse or neglect their own awakened devices may find that their possessions have turned against them.

Perhaps the most obvious impact of using awakened devices are the numerous minor coincidences that accompany their use. The horn of an awakened car may honk when it is being stolen, an awakened computer may crash before a dangerous virus can harm it and an awakened gun may misfire if someone attempts to use it against its owner. In general, such coincidences only occur when the device is threatened with harm or if the owner is in serious danger. In all cases, such coincidences should be events that can occur naturally.

Having too many awakened items can be a burden, of course. In some ways, minor spirits can be like children: They get into trouble of their own, demand attention and don't always communicate effectively. Sometimes they'll even do strange things or hide their actions in an attempt to please the owner. While a Dreamspeaker *could* surround himself totally with awakened items, doing so has practical difficulties. (Storytellers who don't want to bother with role-playing out these problems, but don't want Dreamspeakers gaining a difficulty break on everything, might just limit a character to owning a number of awakened items equal to or less than the character's Arete.)

DREAMSPEAKERS AND MADNESS

Insanity and shamanism have always been closely connected. One of the easiest ways for mortals to gain the spiritual

perceptions necessary to Awaken as a Dreamspeaker is to go insane. As a result, a number of Dreamspeakers possess Derangements. Derangements are especially common among Independent shamans who Awakened without any external aid.

While sane Dreamspeakers can gain Derangements as easily as any other mage, insane Dreamspeakers almost never gain additional Derangements. In some way, their existing insanity seems to protect their mind from further harm. Dreamspeakers who were insane when they Awakened are either cured during their Awakening, or their Derangement becomes an intrinsic part of their magic.

In the second case, using Mind magic to cure the Derangement involves a grave risk of Gilguling the mage. Fortunately, such Derangements are so deeply tied to a Dreamspeaker's Avatar that attempts to remove a Derangement must be either performed by the Dreamspeaker herself, or done with her knowledge and permission. All other attempts to remove the Derangement automatically fail. Dreamspeakers who physically or mentally pass the Gauntlet and enter the Umbra are immune to their Derangement for as long as they are in the spirit world.

While Derangements often make interacting with Sleepers and the mundane world quite difficult, they also aid Dreamspeakers in their magic. Dreamspeakers with Derangements reduce the difficulty of all Arete rolls to cast magic by one while in the grip of the Derangement. Instead of resisting their madness and attempting to act in a socially acceptable manner, schizophrenic Dreamspeakers happily yell at the voices in their heads, while obsessive-compulsive Dreamspeakers engage in the compulsive behavior regardless of their surroundings. When in this state, all of their magic takes at least twice as long to perform, but the player automatically gains the bonus to performing magic. Because of the extreme nature of these types of behavior, Dreamspeakers who openly give themselves over to their Derangements in public settings will frequently either be arrested or forcibly restrained and taken in for an involuntary psychological evaluation.

NEW DERANGEMENT

Umbral Blindness: Shamans with this form of madness are unable to differentiate between spirits and mortals. Most shamans can easily tell the difference between living humans and ghosts or spirits, but this Derangement completely removes that ability. As a result, shamans who possess this Derangement often talk to beings that none of the Sleepers around them can see. Sleepers will generally consider Dreamspeakers who possess this Derangement to be delusional or schizophrenic. Some Dreamspeakers theorize that as many as a quarter of Sleepers who are diagnosed with these mental illnesses actually possess both some innate ability to hear or see the Umbra (like the *Medium* or *Sight Merits*) and this Derangement.

When roleplaying this Merit, the Dreamspeaker must openly talk to or otherwise acknowledge spirits who approach

her, even if the spirits approach the Dreamspeaker in a crowded room or during an evaluation by a psychiatrist. While the Dreamspeaker is free to tell spirits to go away, all such conversations and similar actions must be performed exactly as if the spirit were physically present. Many Dreamspeakers who suffer from this form of madness also possess the Medium or Sight Merit.

NEW BACKGROUNDS: TOTEMIS AND SPIRIT ALLIES

TOTEM

One extremely common ability among shamans of all sorts is having a close tie to some totemic spirit. Many shamans, including both Dreamspeakers and static shamans (see page 64), have totems. No Dreamspeaker can have more than one totem spirit. While it is possible for a Dreamspeaker to acquire a Totem later in life, most Dreamspeakers acquire their Totem spirits either during their Awakening, or shortly afterwards, while their Mentors are training them.

From a rules perspective, Dreamspeakers can take any of the totem spirits normally taken by Garou or any of the other changing breeds, as well as having some of their own. See *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, the *Werewolf Player's Guide*, and *Axis Mundi* for further information about Garou totems. In addition, Dreamspeakers have a few totems that are available only to them. An alliance with a totem spirit is somewhat different for Dreamspeakers than for Garou and the other changing breeds.

All Garou who are members of the same pack share the same totem. The essence of a shaman's relationship with spirits, by contrast, is being a solitary traveler into the umbra. Dreamspeakers have personal totems. The totem of a student may be entirely different from that of the master. Acquiring a totem is a complex and difficult process, where the mage enters or otherwise contacts the umbra and searches for a powerful spirit to be her patron. This relationship is sometimes extremely close, with the totem being the mage's teacher, friend or lover.

In addition to the ordinary bans placed on others allied with a totem, totem spirits sometimes ask Dreamspeakers for aid and assistance with various endeavors. If this aid is infrequent or only asked in return for specific services performed by the totem, then no points are gained for it. A more frequent requirement for service allows the Dreamspeaker to purchase the Spiritual Duty Flaw (see *The Spirit Ways* page 106).

In addition to specific abilities granted by each individual totem, the points spent in the Totem Background are also used to buy specific abilities for the mage's totem. It is important to remember that each individual totem spirit is only a partial aspect of the overall spiritual archetype. Any number of mages can share the same totem, but each spirit is a completely separate spiritual manifestation of the same archetype. In practice, this means that two Dreamspeakers

could each have the same totem, but each totem spirit could have completely different powers. The only constant are in the spirit's basic personality and motives, as well as the type of Innate Abilities they provide (special bonus powers automatically gained by bonding with the Totem).

All shamanic totems start out with 5 points to divide between Willpower, Rage and Gnosis, along with 5 points of Power. Also, all shamanic totems receive the Charms Airt Sense and Re-form, and the ability to speak with the shaman. Select the additional characteristics of the mages individual totem from the Totem Background Chart. The cost listed refers to the freebie point cost of the power.

Spirit Allies use the same chart. They start with the same base Willpower, Range, Gnosis and Power. They also start with two innate charms. One of these is always the Airt Sense Charm; the other is chosen by the Dreamspeaker's player. Spirit Allies also always possess the ability to speak with the shaman they are allied with.

| Cost | Power |
|------|---|
| 1 | Per 3 additional points in Willpower, Rage, or Gnosis |
| 1 | Per 5 additional points of Power |
| 1 | Totem can typically find the Shaman rapidly |
| 1 | Totem is respected by other Umbrood |
| 1 | Per Charm possessed (except Materialize) |
| 1 | Per Innate Ability the Totem grants to the Shaman |
| 1 | Totem can Materialize |

Totems can possess any of the Charms listed in *Werewolf: The Apocalypse* or one of its supplements, or in the *Mage Storytellers Companion*.

The number of Innate Abilities the Totem grants the shaman is listed with the Totem. When converting Totems from *Werewolf: The Apocalypse* disregard the listed Background Cost. Instead, total up the number of Innate Abilities or boosted Attributes granted by the Totem and add them into the cost of the Totem. There are several Totem spirits that are unique to Shamans.

Horse (2 Innate Abilities)

Horse is the trusty and fierce steed that carries the shaman into the Umbra and throughout its vast expanses. Unlike mortal horses, the shamanic Horse has eight legs. This totem is especially common among Dreamspeakers trained in Siberia and Central Asia, but it is quite widely known. In addition to being a tireless traveler, Horse is a fierce warrior and will attempt to defend its allies from harm. Horse grants some portion of its powers to its allies. Anyone with Horse as a Totem receives an additional dot of Intimidation, and is able to run as fast as a galloping horse over any terrain in the Umbra.

Ban: Horse is fierce and independent, and expects its allies to behave in a similar fashion. Shamans with Horse as their Totem may never act in a cowardly fashion and may never abandon their comrades or allies in battle. Also, while Shamans with this Totem may sacrifice or otherwise kill

horses if necessary, abusing a horse or treating one without respect will earn the wrath of this totem.

Bird Mother (3 Innate Abilities)

The Bird Mother is an enormous bird with long hooked claws, iron feathers, and a razor-sharp curving iron beak. The Bird Mother takes the spirits of the departed to the land of the dead. As part of his Awakening, the Bird Mother also takes her Dreamspeaker ally to the land of the dead and hangs his spirit on a tree, where it is devoured by spirits and then carefully reassembled by the Bird Mother. During the terrifying and lengthy ordeal the Shaman's body lies in a coma, while the shaman's spirit learns the mysteries of life and death. Shamans with this Totem gain a -1 difficulty modifier to all rolls to either heal the living or to summon, contact, or visit the spirits of the dead.

The Bird Mother is grim and unforgiving, as befits a spirit strongly associated with death and the dead. She is also compassionate, though, and will reward selfless acts that result in lives being saved or deaths being made more dignified. Shamans with this Totem are expected to act as intermediaries between the land of the living and the land of the dead. As such, many of them have spent a considerable amount of time in the Shadowlands. All shamans with this totem receive two dots in Wraith Lore. In addition, such shamans will be known to wraiths as mages they are inclined to trust.

Ban: Shamans with this totem must heal anyone sick or injured who comes to them for aid, comfort any dying person they encounter and aid Wraiths visiting the Skinlands if their purposes are moral and good.

Shaman (4 Innate Abilities)

This is one of the rarest and most powerful Totems available to Dreamspeakers. Many shamans assume that this Incarna is the spirit an ancient and powerful shaman. This shaman may be a revered tribal ancestor, or even a figure from legend like the Finnish shaman Vainamoinen. Regardless of this being's identity, their Dreamspeaker ally gains the equivalent of a 2 point Mentor (additional points spent on this totem can be used to raise this Mentor rating). Also, Dreamspeakers who have Shaman as their patron receive an extra dot in both Cosmology and Enigmas due to the vast wisdom imparted by this Totem.

Shaman is a very demanding totem, frequently asking services of the Shaman but offering much wisdom and many secrets in return. Dreamspeakers who take the Shaman Totem must also take the Spiritual Duty Flaw (see **The Spirit Ways**, page 106). The number of points in this Flaw can be no less than one below the number of dots in Mentor provided by this Totem. Depending upon the exact personality of the Shaman, this totem can be everything from a wise old master who asks much but provide commensurate rewards, to an eccentric Contrary who answers questions with riddles and requests that its ally perform seemingly meaningless tasks. In all cases, however, the more this totem gives, the more it will ask of its Dreamspeaker ally. While no one knows for sure,

some Dreamspeakers claim that many Dreamspeaker Oracles of Spirit ultimately become a part of this totem.

Ban: Allies of the Shaman totem must always aid other Dreamspeakers in need. Shaman also protects the world from evil and deranged mages of all types. Allies of Shaman must always oppose any Nephandi or Marauder they encounter. Shamans whose spirits have persisted long enough to become a part of this totem do so because of their unwavering dedication to their Shamanic duties. They will expect their moral allies to show a similar level of dedication.

For players without **The Spirit Ways**, the Spiritual Duty Flaw indicates that the Totem often makes specific requirements of its partner. While it grants abilities, it also makes demands. These could be anything from sending the shaman to help a comrade in need to as cryptic as requiring egregious and dangerous rituals without giving a reason. The more wisdom the Totem gives, the more it demands in return. Failure to comply results in loss of the Totem and perhaps even punishment.

City Spirit (3 Innate Abilities)

Every large and important city like Los Angeles, London, or Mexico City has its own Incarna. In addition, there is a powerful Celestine that is the spirit of cities in general. The spirit of a city is generally quite large, and appears as an anthropomorphic version of the city with features of various well-known locals and clothing with patterns reminiscent of the local architecture and style.

When choosing this totem, the Dreamspeaker has two choices. She can choose to be allied only to the spirit of her own city (assuming it has one) or she can make a pact with the Celestine of all cities. In the first case, she can only contact and gain benefit from her totem while she is within the physical boundaries of her city. Choosing the urban Celestine, however, allows her to gain benefits from this totem anytime she is within the boundaries of any large urban area (any city with a population of more than 25,000). The Celestine version of this totem is purchased normally, while the spirit of a specific city is purchased at half cost (round all fractions up). For example, if the spirit of Bangkok would normally cost seven Background points, the shaman would only need to pay four Background points, since the totem could only help within specific boundaries.

Shamans with this totem gain two dots in a special Knowledge ability called City Knowledge, which provides information about their chosen city (or about whatever city they are in, if they are allied with the urban Celestine). This Ability provides knowledge of the geography, history, folklore, and politics of the city. City Knowledge may be improved with experience, but each additional dot must be spent on knowledge of a specific city.

In addition, this Totem grants all shamans the ability to commune with various urban spirits to gain an overview of the magical and spiritual realities present in the city. Roll Perception + Awareness; one success provides the rough location of

the most powerful Nodes, and whether there are any other powerful spirits in the city. Additional successes provide information about powerful magics currently being used, descriptions of the powerful spirits, the location of lesser nodes, and general knowledge about any current large-scale supernatural conflicts. On a botch the shaman receives false information. This ability can be used no more than once a day.

Ban: This powerful Totem is also extremely demanding. Whenever the Dreamspeaker is inside her own city (or in the case of the Celestine, whenever the mage is in any city) she has at least two points of the Spiritual Duty Flaw (*The Spirit Ways* page 106). The mage receives no additional freebie points for this Flaw, but may purchase additional levels of it normally. In general, this Totem asks for favors relating to the general welfare of the city. Such favors can range from helping to catch a particularly destructive criminal like a serial killer or an arsonist, to stopping or promoting a specific urban renewal plan.

Television (3 Innate Abilities)

Followed exclusively by Technoshamans, this Totem is the spiritual embodiment of the most powerful and pervasive form of media humanity has ever created. The appearance of this totem is highly varied. However, the shaman can only communicate with it by turning on a television. At this point, some popular character will begin to talk to him.

This Totem aids all forms of communication, providing a -1 difficulty modifier to all Performance rolls designed to convince or con someone. In addition, whenever a television is on and visible, the character gains a -1 difficulty modifier to all Stealth rolls, because of the powerful distraction it provides. Finally, the difficulty of using all Mind magic on someone who is currently watching television is reduced by -1.

Characters with this Totem who also take Television as their Mentor can also gain all manner of minor trivia about the billions who watch it daily. Roll Wits + Awareness, difficulty 8, to gain an assortment of random personal information about a specific individual who watches at least 10 hours of television a week. Additional successes provide more information, but the Dreamspeaker cannot determine the exact nature of this information. This ability cannot be used more than once a day, or on a single individual more than once a month.

Ban: The Dreamspeaker can never turn off a television or even turn down the volume. In addition, he must watch at least several hours a day, paying homage to this powerful modern god. Anyone who has this Totem and wishes to venture into the wilderness must carry along a portable television.



The Wanderer (2 Innate Abilities)

The open road and the rootless wanderer are powerful images. Over time, they have spawned an Incarna who continually travels from place to place. Today, this totem generally appears as either a hitchhiker the mage picks up or as a dusty traveler with her own well-used car or motorcycle. Contacting or communicating with the Wanderer can only be done on a well-traveled road.

Anyone who takes the Wanderer as a totem will never become lost. Individuals who wish to find out where they are must make a Perception + Awareness roll. A single success can provide either the direction of true north or of a well-known landmark. Multiple successes will allow the character to retrace her path through a maze, or (with 4 or more successes) even retrace the route a car took while the character lay bound and blindfolded in the trunk. In addition, Dreamspeakers who are allied with this Totem receive a -1 bonus to the difficulty rolls for all forms of Correspondence magic.

Ban: Anyone who takes the Wanderer as a totem must always aid travelers in need. Also, while such characters can own a home, they must spend at least one month a year traveling.

SPIRIT ALLIES

The rules for generating Totems can also be used to create allied spirits. The only real difference is that spirit allies are, in general, far less powerful than totems. Instead of being Incarna, the majority of spirit allies are lesser spirits that are either independent or who also serve the Incarna. Ghosts, Jagglings, Majordomos, and Subordinates are all good candidates for being the spirit allies of a Dreamspeaker (see *The Book of Madness* pp. 105-131).

Spirit allies are created just like totems, except that they can be generated with no more than two points. Use these points to generate the spirit using the Totem creation table on page 58. The player cannot pay points for the spirit ally to have the respect of other spirits, however, and spirit allies can never grant the Dreamspeaker special abilities. Spirit allies are the equals or the subordinates of the mage, not superiors who can grant powerful gifts to those who serve them. Unlike totems, spirit allies are complete and individual entities, not small portions of a larger spirit.

Dreamspeakers can have as many spirit allies as desired, but few have more than two or three. While many Dreamspeakers with totems can have spirit allies who are servants of the same totem, Dreamspeakers who refuse to subordinate themselves to a totem are often happy to ally themselves with a spirit on a more equal basis. Each Spirit Ally has a separate cost, but they can all be placed on the sheet as one Background for simplicity's sake (so a Dreamspeaker with four dots of this Background could just have two two-point Spirit Allies).

NEW SPIRIT CHARMS

Mirage: A spirit can use this charm to produce a wide variety of insubstantial images. An aging and decrepit room can be made to appear newly cleaned and repaired, a hole in a floor can be made to seem sound or a hallway could be filled with ghostly fog and spectral cobwebs. This charm can only produce static images that are incapable of independent movement, but these images can be extremely complex and detailed. All images created by this charm are completely insubstantial. A mirage of a wall may seem solid, but anyone can walk through it without resistance. 10 points allows the spirit to alter the appearance of a room for a scene.

Poltergeist: The spirit can move physical objects without materializing. One point allows the spirit to move a few small objects like keys and pencils for a scene, four points allows the spirit to move or operate a single moderate sized object like a toaster or a large handgun, while 10 points allows the spirit to operate or move a large object like a car, motorcycle, or the entire contents of a room. This charm cannot be used to throw objects hard enough to do more than (at most) one die of bashing damage. Spirits who can throw things with deadly force must possess the Blast charm. The Poltergeist charm can be used, however, to drop large objects on people or to shoot firearms.

SAMPLE SPIRIT ALLIES

While Dreamspeakers have recruited innumerable types of spirits to act as their friends and allies, there are a few relatively common varieties. Rotes that allow the Dreamspeaker to safely summon and bargain with these spirits are widely known. Most Dreamspeakers will recognize these types of spirits on sight.

House Guardian (4 Background Points)

Willpower 3, Rage 4, Gnosis 3, Power 20

Charms: AirtSense, Poltergeist, Cleanse the Blight, Influence

House guardians are small, extremely loyal spirits that defend a single dwelling or other structure against harm. They also work to insure that the inhabitants are happy and content. Most house guardians appear as small decorative items that fit in with the dwellings basic decor. They normally watch a dwelling and help to subtly improve the inhabitants' moods with the Influence charm. They will converse with any resident capable of hearing hear them who seems lonely or who wants to talk. They frequently use their Poltergeist charm to perform minor cleaning.

House guardians are also very protective, and will defend the structure they protect against all intruders. Anyone who attempts to invade a house or apartment protected by one of these spirits will find bowling trophies falling on their head, electrical cords rising up to trip them and a host of similar strange but potentially deadly accidents. House guardians supplement these physical attacks by producing stark terror in intruders.

House Guardians can also protect their dwellings from magical attacks, removing any curses or malefic enchantments that are directed against the habitation that is their home. Unfortunately, they can only remove such curses from buildings — not from individuals.

In personality, these loyal spirits are quiet, friendly and house proud. House guardians who are magically coerced into protecting a dwelling do a remarkably poor job — almost all Dreamspeakers who work with these beings bargain for their services. Their needs are modest, but neglecting them brings dire consequences. House guardians normally require only a small altar where the inhabitants offer weekly sacrifices of incense, good food, and minor valuables. In addition they expect to be praised for their efforts, and for the inhabitants to treat the dwelling well and to repair any problems as rapidly as possible. Few house guardians ask for more than these modest payments, but failing to pay them results in the house guardian becoming annoyed and eventually turning vicious and hostile. Mages who are going to be away from their homes for more than a week are strongly advised to persuade someone to come in and make the proper offerings.

Some highly mobile mages build tiny shrines that can be carried in a handbag or backpack, and carry their house guardians with them wherever they go. Most house guardians will accept this sort of treatment, but will only protect a dwelling where the mage is spending the night. Also, only mages who are fairly wealthy are advised to bring their house guardian on their travels. House guardians expect to be asked only to guard hotel rooms and other spaces that are in moderately good shape. Mages who stay in flop houses, youth hostels, or cheap and dirty motels will find their house guardian either refusing to guard the room or asking excessive payments to do so.

Spirit Crow (2 Background Points)

Willpower 4, Rage 2, Gnosis 4, Power 10

Charms: Airt Sense, Re-form, Track, Mind Speech

Spirit crows are one of the weakest and most common of any of the spirit allies. Because of their low power, they normally work for mages and more powerful spirits in return from promises of protection and sustenance. To those that can see them, the majority are iridescently black crows with glowing eyes. However, some appear as crows that have other colors, white being the most common.

Spirit Crows normally work as spies and messengers. Their mage need only show them some personal possession or sample of skin, blood, or hair from the target and ask the spirit crow to either deliver a message to that person or to follow them around and observe them for a period of time. While spirit crows can see and hear the mortal world, they cannot read, and are unfamiliar with modern technology. They can only report descriptions of actions and conversations, not what phone number someone dialed or the password of their internet account. When spirit crows deliver messages to

Sleepers, their telepathy manifests as a hunch or the memory of a vivid dream that the Sleeper is inclined to believe.

In return for these services, the mage must give the spirit crow one point of Tass or Quintessence every Month. If the mage has no Tass, the spirit crow will attempt to drain Quintessence from her. If the mage has no Quintessence, the spirit crow will then begin to actively look for Tass or to drain Quintessence from any of the mage's periapts or Tass stores. In addition, the mage must honor them by agreeing never to harm living crows and by always wearing a piece of jewelry in the form of a crow. Spirit crows who are not paid desert their masters and occasionally offer their services to individuals they have been asked to spy upon.

Black Dog (8 Background Points)

Willpower 5, Rage 7, Gnosis 10, Power 20

Charms: Airt Sense, Blast, Materialize, Track

Black dogs are bodyguards, assassins and warriors. When they materialize, most take the form of huge mastiffs or other great attack dogs, but some appear as grim and deadly-looking humans. Their Blast can take the form of their bite, a large handgun or occasionally brutal weapons like great knives or sawed off shotguns. They most often accompany their ally into dangerous situations, guarding her, alerting her to the possibility of danger and providing a highly effective and obvious deterrent to anyone planning to harm their master. These services require the mage to pay the black dog with large amounts of raw red meat and offerings of expensive and well-made ironwork (including valuable weapons). Mages with fewer than three dots in Resources will need to use magic or other non-standard means to make these mundane payments. In addition, the mage must give the black dog at least one point of Tass every month.

While black dogs also make excellent assassins, their services are far from cheap. For each assassination on which the mage sends the black dog, the mage must give it both three points of Tass and make a blood sacrifice to the spirit. The amount and type of the sacrifice depends upon the power and status of the target. Killing an ordinary poor or middle class Sleeper might require the sacrifice of a single white goat. Killing someone with a moderate amount of power like a mayor or a police chief requires a healthy young bull (minimum cost of \$5,000), and killing high government officials, the heads of major corporations, supernatural beings like mages or vampires, or anyone under the direct protection of a supernatural being requires either a human sacrifice or the sacrifice of a large and highly endangered predator like a tiger. Black dogs require complex and bloody sacrifices that take at least half an hour to complete.

Ghostly Ally (6 Background Points)

Willpower 5, Rage 4, Gnosis 7, Power 20

Charms: Airt Sense, Poltergeist, Possession, Mind Speech

While most spirits are fundamentally inhuman and have no connection to the mundane world, ghosts are often more

familiar with the mortal world than they are with the umbral realm they now inhabit. Most Dreamspeakers who ally themselves with ghosts choose spirits who are either departed loved ones, valued mentors or revered ancestors. Frequently, a Dreamspeaker's dead teacher returns as a ghost to help her student. Dealing with ghosts is often far easier than with most other spirits. Although they are dead, most ghosts have comprehensible motives and desires. In general, Dreamspeakers' ghostly allies will want help looking after the rest of their family or students, and possibly aid in gaining revenge upon anyone responsible for their deaths. Also, most ghosts will also want occasional gifts of Tass or Quintessence. In return, ghosts can be extremely useful because they can be messengers, bodyguards, spies and confidants. Most relatively moral ghosts will possess only enemies, willing subjects and inanimate objects.

COPING WITH THE AVATAR STORMS

Both the Umbra and the Gauntlet are dynamic and ever changing. Dreamspeakers believe that stasis is the same as death and that they must adapt to the continual changes in the spiritual world. While the Avatar Storms are an unprecedented spiritual catastrophe, that merely means that nothing similar has happened for several millennia. The most ancient legends tell of disasters that were at least as bad, and the Dreamspeakers have always found ways to cope with the new conditions.

Most mages belonging to other Traditions assumed that the Avatar Storm would greatly reduce the power and effectiveness of the Dreamspeakers. Within days of its occurrence, however, Dreamspeakers began finding ways to safely travel to and from the Umbra. While they have not yet found a way to travel through the Gauntlet as easily as before, they have developed a number of useful techniques. The most effective has been the use of Shallowings. Around Nodes and other magically powerful places, the Gauntlet sometimes completely fades. When the Gauntlet is reduced to zero, mages, Umbrood, and Sleepers may all freely walk into and out of the Umbra without difficulty or risk of injury. While natural Shallowings are incredibly rare, both minor Spirit magic and a number of static magic techniques can raise or lower the Gauntlet by a small amount.

Dreamspeakers have already identified and secured a number of minor Nodes with this ability. This effort also uncovered a number of low power but previously unknown urban Nodes. Dreamspeakers who have sufficient connections within their Tradition can often gain access to a nearby Node to enter or leave the Umbra. Such Nodes are still rare, and only allow entry or departure from the Umbra at a few specific locations.

The Dreamspeakers have found several other methods of circumventing the Avatar Storm. They quickly discovered that not only were the risks of harm and Gilgul much greater

for more powerful mages, but also that the unAwakened are completely immune to these problems. As a result, the Dreamspeakers have stepped up their recruitment and training of shamans who use static magic (see pp 64 for information on Static Shamans, and page 105 of *The Spirit Ways* for information on the Lesser Shaman Merit).

Today, when an impromptu journey to into the Umbra is necessary, many Dreamspeakers attempt to send static shamans or other unAwakened individuals into the Umbra to accomplish the task. When such individuals are unlikely to be able to accomplish the task, many Dreamspeakers will look for one or more newly Awakened mages with no permanent Paradox and Arete scores no higher than two to undertake the journey. While such mages are clearly less powerful, they risk only minor damage from entering or leaving the Gauntlet. If possible, the person sending the new mages on the journey will also provide the travelers with Talens capable of sending them back through the Gauntlet and healing any damage caused the Avatar Storms.

A side-effect of this business is that the Dreamspeakers have something resembling a measurement system for magical torque. Some mages simply can't perform anything but a few minor tricks — linear mages — while others can bend magic to massive efforts of will. The Dreamspeakers are far from actually categorizing such phenomena, but realize that great magical power also seems to have the highest chance to risk injury from the Gauntlet.

The Dreamspeakers have found that a small number of exceptional mages are resistant or completely immune to the effects of the Avatar Storms. There are an even smaller number whose resistance to the Avatar Storm is so strong that anyone who travels with them is also protected from harm. Some powerful Dreamspeakers are currently using powerful Spirit and Correspondence effects to locate more individuals with these abilities. While most are members of other Traditions, many Dreamspeakers offer Tass, Fetishes and similar payments for such individuals to either act as umbral couriers or to safely transport small groups of Dreamspeakers to or from the Umbra. A number of these individuals have even been made honorary Dreamspeakers.

Some of the more magically adept Dreamspeakers, however, have found another way to bypass the entire problem. Mind 4 and 5 effects allow mages to enter the Umbra astrally. Since the mage's body, spirit and Avatar never passes through the Gauntlet, there is no risk of damage using this method of travel. Also, because an astral body can have as much substance as a physical one in the Umbral realms, this method of transport is in many ways superior to entering the Umbra physically. It is, however, more magically demanding.

Using this method, the Dreamspeaker cannot bring back objects from the Umbra or transport physical objects through the Gauntlet. Still, a number of powerful Dreamspeakers have begun studying the magics of Mind more intensely, and some have even forged close personal ties with Akashic Adepts. Less

skilled Dreamspeakers must make do with more limited methods that merely send their perceptions into the Umbra.

Finally, while many Dreamspeakers lack access to willing mortal couriers, every Dreamspeaker knows a number of spirits. Spirits can safely travel the Umbra and many can even pass through the Gauntlet without harm. As a result, most Dreamspeakers now send spirits on Umbral missions if at all possible. While communication with spirits can be inexact and such services can be costly in time or materials, such deals are increasingly common.

STATIC SHAMANS

Shamanism is widely practiced all over the globe. Naturally, only a small percentage of these shamans are actually Awakened Dreamspeakers. While many shamans are con men, skilled counselors and healers, some have actual spiritual gifts. Most non-awakened Shamans only possess the Medium Merit (**Mage: The Ascension** pp. 294-295). A few such individuals possess sufficient talent that Dreamspeakers or other skilled shamans can teach the individual how to make the most of their limited but powerful abilities. Such individuals can raise and lower the Gauntlet, summon spirits, and even make and use Fetishes.

CHARACTER GENERATION

Build a static shaman just like any other sort of linear magician: 6/4/3 Attributes, 11/7/4 Abilities, 5 Willpower, 7 Backgrounds and 21 Freebie Points (or, use the "Equal for All" option in **Sorcerer** and give them 7/5/3 Attributes and 15 Freebie Points). In either case, static shamans can have any of the mage Backgrounds (including the Totem background described on p. 58) except Avatar. All static shamans should have the *Spirit Sight* 4-point Merit (p. 105 of **The Spirit Ways**; causes the shaman to see ghosts, faeries and spirits normally and without the use of special powers). Many static shamans also possess the *Natural Channel* and *Oracular Ability* Merits (**Mage the Ascension** page 295), but they must pay for these Merits normally.

SHAMIANIC NUTIINA

Static shamans possess 5 dots in Shamanic Paths, which they can divide between any of their four different Paths. None of these paths require specific rituals, but all rolls made with any of these Paths require the expenditure of 1 point of temporary Willpower. Their four magical Paths are Spirit Awakening, Gauntlet Manipulation, Summon Naturae and Spirit Command. Unless otherwise specified, each Path requires at least half an hour of preparation, where the shaman chants, ingests drugs, dances, creates elaborate sand paintings, or otherwise places herself and the environment into a state where shamanic power can be invoked. Static shamans can also learn other forms of linear magic, and many learn Healing, Oneiromancy, Weather Control, and Summoning, Binding and Warding (see **Sorcerer** for information on these

Numina). Purchasing additional Numina costs 7 Freebie Points, or 7 Experience Points for New Paths and new rating x 7 to raise an existing Path.

SPIRIT COMMAND

Static Shamans can control all manner of spirits. All rolls to control spirits are made using Manipulation + Spirit Command. The difficulty of this roll is the spirit's Willpower Attribute. One success on a control roll allows the shaman to command the spirit to perform a single task lasting no longer than one scene. One success is sufficient to force an unwilling spirit to enter a completed one-shot Fetish. Each additional successes allows the shaman to either give the spirit one additional command, or to force it to obey a single command for another scene. If the shaman rolls three or more successes, he can give the spirit a single command that it must obey for a full day.

Commanding a spirit is considered a hostile act. A failure on a Spirit Command roll results in the spirit either attacking or departing, while a botch on this roll drives the spirit into a mindless berserk frenzy. If the shaman has previously controlled a spirit, the difficulty of the roll to control the same spirit again is reduced by -1.

While performing the two powers together requires the expenditure of two points of Willpower, shamans can perform a combined Summon and Command ritual that allows the shaman to summon a spirit and then immediately roll to control it. Each power is rolled for separately. Nothing happens if the Summon roll fails, and if the Summon roll succeeds and the Command roll fails, the spirit is summoned but free to do as it wishes.

Static Shamans can also use the Command ability to force unwilling Spirits into Fetishes. To do this, the shaman requires four successes on the Manipulation + Spirit Command roll. The shaman must then spend three points of temporary Willpower and one point of Tass for every point 10 points of the spirit's Power to force the spirit into the Fetish. Since totem spirits are fragments of much larger beings, this Path cannot be used to command them.

- The shaman can command spirits with a maximum Power of 10.
- The shaman can command spirits with a maximum Power of 20.
- The shaman can command spirits with a maximum Power of 30.
- The shaman can command spirits with a maximum Power of 40.
- The shaman can command spirits with a maximum Power of 50.

SPIRIT AWAKENING

Like Awakened Shamans, static shamans can use and create powerful magical items that make use of the powers of spirits. All rolls using this power use Intelligence + Spirit

Awakening. To create a Fetish, the shaman must either convince the spirit to agree or compel it with the Spirit Command power. Static shamans can also permanently awaken the spirits inside various items (see Using Awakened Items on page 56).

Creating a Charm (one-shot) Fetish requires the Shaman to perform a day long ritual that fuses the spirit into the object. This ritual requires a pawn of Tass and the expenditure of a point of temporary Willpower. The difficulty of this roll is 3 + the level of the Charm.

Creating a Fetish or awakening the spirit within an item both require the shaman to perform a week long ritual, taking up most of the shaman's free time for the whole week. (The shaman still has time to eat and sleep, fortunately.) This ritual requires a pawn of Tass and the expenditure of a point of permanent Willpower. The difficulty of this roll is 4 + the level of the Fetish or 6 for awakening items.

- The shaman can use all Fetishes created by mages and other static shamans.
- The shaman can use all Fetishes created by spirits or other creatures.
- The shaman can create Charm Fetishes (single-use Fetishes). At this level the shaman can also awaken the spirit within small items like jewelry, swords, or hand tools. The shaman must make all such items.
- The shaman can create Fetishes and can permanently bind a spirit to a single location. At this level the shaman can also awaken the spirit within small complex devices like radios, guns, or laptop computers. All of these devices must either be hand built or heavily modified or repaired by the shaman.
- The shaman can release spirits from Fetishes and other bindings. The shaman can also create Fetishes without Tass, if she personally makes the Fetish object and scores at least three successes on a Dexterity + Crafts roll. At this level the shaman can also awaken the spirit within large complex devices like cars, motorcycles, machine tools, large statues or mainframe computer. All of these devices must either be hand built or heavily modified or repaired by the shaman.

GAUNTLET MANIPULATION

Shamans with this ability can affect the strength and structure of the Gauntlet. Static shamans can raise and lower the Gauntlet by no more than the number of dots they have in this power, regardless of how well they roll. Also, no matter how powerful the shaman becomes, Shallowings last no longer than one scene. The Gauntlet can be reduced to one, however, for far longer periods of time, and shamans with the

Natural Channel Merit (Mage the Ascension page 295) can enter the Gauntlet at this level without rolls. All rolls to affect the Gauntlet use Wits + Gauntlet Manipulation. The difficulty of this roll is the region's unmodified Gauntlet rating.

- The shaman can increase or decrease the Gauntlet by up to one point. All changes last no more than three turns.
- The shaman can increase or decrease the Gauntlet by up to two points. All changes last for no more than one Scene.
- The shaman can increase or decrease the Gauntlet by up to three points. All changes last for no more than one day. At this level of power, the shaman can create artificial shallowings and walk through the Gauntlet.
- The shaman can increase or decrease the Gauntlet by up to four points. All changes last no more than one month.
- The shaman can increase or decrease the Gauntlet by up to five points. All changes last no longer than six months, unless the shaman crafts special items to mark the protected area, then the changes in the gauntlet will last until these items are disturbed.

SUMMON NATURAE

This power allows shamans to call all forms of spirits from beyond the Gauntlet. Static shamans can attempt to attract a single type of spirit, such as a healing spirit, ghost, or fire elemental. Alternatively, if the shaman knows the name of an individual spirit, she can attempt to summon it. All rolls to summon spirits are made with Charisma + Summon. The difficulty of the roll to summon a spirit is equal to its Gnosis. Having successfully summoned a spirit before reduces the difficulty of this roll by 1. One success forces the spirit to appear for a single turn, after which it can vanish. Two successes cause it to remain in the mundane world for three turns, and three or more successes forces it to remain in the mortal world for a full scene. Botches generally summon dangerous spirits.

In a sense, this works as a specific sort of Path of Summoning, attuned specifically to Umbral spirits.

- The shaman can summon a spirit with a Power of no more than 20.
- The shaman can summon a spirit with a Power of no more than 30.
- The shaman can summon a spirit with a Power of no more than 40.
- The shaman can summon a spirit with a Power of no more than 50.
- The shaman can summon a spirit with a Power of no more than 60.

SPEAK, AND THEY ANSWER: ROTES



THE CURSE OF CONSEQUENCES (••• MIND, • SPIRIT)

The Red Spears developed this rote early on as a tool of psychological warfare, refining many traditions' legacy of curses for a particular sharp effect. The shaman forces open the "inner eye" of the victim, letting the target see and hear all the spirits who suffer because of the target's actions. Close up, this includes the tiny spirits of dust motes and air currents crushed or shoved aside, the spirits of molds and insects crushed underfoot, the spirits of animals and plants raised and harvested cruelly and without proper sacrifice to provide food. The victim can also hear, far away, the anguished groans of earth and water spirits around landfills and anywhere else the victim's society marks the world.

Most Red Spear rites remain closely-guarded secrets, on the grounds that only proven warriors deserve them. This one the society teaches far and wide, regarding every spirit magician as deserving of the power to make the soul-blind suffer.

System: The victim must make a Willpower roll, difficulty 5 + the shaman's Arete, to do anything but suffer the misery of increased awareness each turn the curse remains in effect. Even on turns when this roll succeeds, the victim experiences a strong flood of unhappy emotions. On a botch, the victim develops a suitable Derangement. Standard duration, area and other restrictions apply; the curse is vulgar without witnesses in cultures that don't accept shamanism, coincidental elsewhere. After a number of turns equal to the shaman's Arete, the subject will at least be capable of acting in some manner regardless of Willpower, but will still take a two-Trait penalty on all actions (not reflexives) for the rest of the spell's duration.

MET: Disciple Mind, Apprentice Spirit. The victim must succeed in a static Willpower challenge against a Trait total of 5 + the shaman's Arete to act. Otherwise he's rendered unable to take any actions (except reflexives and self-defense) for a number of turns equal to the caster's number of Arete Traits, or until the effect ends; if the effect persists beyond this duration, the victim still takes a two-Trait penalty on the resolution of any challenge he initiated. The base duration is one turn. *Grades of Success:* Add to duration.

MOVING THE WORLD WALLS (•• SPIRIT)

This ancient ritual involves specially marking and preparing a region so that the Gauntlet can be locally raised or lowered. This ritual can be used to protect a house or even an entire apartment building against spiritual attack, or to lower the gauntlet sufficiently that even weak spirits and low-powered mages can leave or enter the Umbra.

System: Every success raises or lowers the local Gauntlet rating by one point. Since the Gauntlet is not normally perceptible to Sleepers, affecting it almost always counts as coincidental magic. Affecting a doorway is made at normal difficulty. The mage must allocate successes to area in order to determine the size of the alteration. Duration is calculated normally, but if the mage scores two or more successes above those necessary to alter the Gauntlet by the desired amount, the Dreamspeaker can tie the ritual to a set of physical objects, like carved wooden poles or specially decorated mirrors that mark the boundary of the altered Gauntlet. If this technique is used, the ritual remains in effect until the boundary markers are disturbed.

MET: Initiate Spirit. You can alter the level of the Gauntlet within arm's reach by one Trait for one turn. *Grades of Success:* Add to range, duration or Trait alteration.

WALKING THE OPEN PATH (•• SPIRIT, • PRITIE)

This ritual is a version of Moving the World Walls that is specifically designed to lower the Gauntlet at a Node to zero. At this point, a Shallowing is created, and the mage and anyone with her are all able to freely and safely walk into the Umbra. Since the Gauntlet is not being ripped or torn, but rather locally removed, no one entering the Umbra though a Shallowing takes any damage from the Avatar Storms.

System: Every success on this ritual reduces the Gauntlet by two points. Two successes are sufficient to penetrate the Gauntlet at any Node. At midnight or at other especially auspicious times, a single success will reduce the Gauntlet to zero. Because Shallowings are natural occurrences this ritual is coincidental. However, since the Gauntlet continues to thicken, an artificial Shallowing can never be made larger than the wall of a small room. Also, created Shallowings never last longer than a day, regardless of the number of successes rolled. Fortunately, this ritual can be used on both sides of the Gauntlet.

MET: Initiate Spirit, Apprentice Prime. You temporarily remove the Gauntlet from a Node. For the next minute/conflict or until you cease the spell, the Node has no Gauntlet and anyone can traverse freely between material and physical world. The area is no more than a circle 15 paces across. *Grades of Success:* Add to duration.

LESSER BINDING OF SPIRITS (•• PRITIE, •• SPIRIT)

While Adepts of Spirit can forge unbreakable Umbral chains around spirits, less skilled Dreamspeakers must rely upon other means of convincing Umbrood to do their bidding. This rote summons a single spirit and immediately surrounds this umbra visitor with a shining corona of fiery

quintessence. With the merest thought, the summoner can cause this unnatural fire to harm the spirit. While the damage caused is often not terribly severe, it is always quite painful. Also, the target cannot determine the amount of damage they will suffer beforehand. Most spirits, like most people, are loathe to suffer any harm.

While powerful and lordly spirits will often ignore the risk and attack the summoner for daring to cast such a spell on them, most weak and moderately powerful spirits will agree to perform minor services in exchange for the Dreamspeaker's promise not to harm them. Also, when bargaining with a difficult but not overwhelmingly powerful spirit, this ritual is a useful way to indicate that the summoner is not to be ignored or trifled with.

System: A single success on this roll will summon the spirit; additional successes empower the Prime energy that surrounds the spirit. One additional success surrounds the spirit with energy that will cause two levels of aggravated damage. This magical corona will last one scene before it harmlessly dissipates. Two additional successes cause the energy to last for a full day and can deal up to four levels of aggravated damage to the spirit. In either case, this damage can be inflicted at anytime during the duration that the mage chooses. This damage can only be inflicted once, however, unless the spell is cast a second time. As with most summoning spells, knowing the name of the spirit being summoned reduces the difficulty of this spell by 2.

Some mages also incorporate a Mind 2 effect into this ritual to produce a magical suggestion of the caster's power and of the uselessness of resistance. This rote can also be used on a spirit that is already present. In that case, all successes go towards energizing the magical corona of Quintessence surrounding the spirit.

MET: Initiate Prime, Initiate Spirit. You summon a spirit and surround it with Quintessential energy that can cause damage at your command. The corona persists for one scene/hour, and at your command, will inflict two levels of aggravated damage on the spirit target, at which point it dissipates. You must best the spirit in a Social challenge to use this rite on it, but if you win, both the summoning and the corona take effect and the spirit does not gain another challenge later to resist the damage. *Grades of Success:* Each grade either adds one to the damage you can inflict, or increases the duration.

SPIRITUAL PERSUASION (•• MIND, •• SPIRIT)

While compelling spirits with threats of imprisonment or harm can obtain their cooperation, such tactics can also breed resentment and hatred. Many Dreamspeakers avoid force and coercion and instead rely upon bargaining, alliances and friendship as a way to obtain various services from spirits. In addition, the most powerful spirits are far too strong for any but the mightiest Dreamspeakers to control. Therefore, Dreamspeakers who need the services of Incarna or

Celestines must use means other than force to obtain their cooperation. While payment in Tass, help defeating their enemies or pacts of mutual aid can all be used to pay for a spirit's aid, bargaining with spirits — especially with powerful spirits — requires great skill. To aid them in their negotiations, many Dreamspeakers use magical aid to help convince the spirit to accept their offer.

System: Success on this roll both summons the desired spirit and helps to place it in the desired frame of mind for accepting the Dreamspeaker's offer. Each success on this roll (including the first) reduces the difficult of rolls to convince the spirit of the summoner's wishes by -1. One success reduces the difficulty of the first suggestion the summoner makes to the spirit by -1. Two or more successes on this roll reduces the difficulty of all suggestions the summoner makes to the spirit during the next full scene by the number of successes rolled.

MET: Intermediate Mind, Intermediate Spirit. You summon up a spirit and try to influence it to help you. Since you're probably doing this to a spirit far more powerful than yourself, you don't directly fight it, but rather create a soothing environment for it. Success on the Arete challenge issues your plea to the spirit, but does not compel appearance or obedience (although you can still force the issue with a Social challenge, if you feel lucky). You can then use grades of success to improve your chance of negotiation. *Grades of Success:* Each grade of success translates into an additional Trait on your follow-up Mental or Social challenge to weasel cooperation out of the spirit.

UMBRAL VISIONS

(•• OR ••• CORRESPONDENCE, • MIND, •• SPIRIT)

While actually piercing the Gauntlet is now fraught with risk, extending one's senses through it is relatively safe. Using this spell, Dreamspeakers can perceive any point in the Umbra that they are familiar with, and can even communicate with the spirits there. This spell is almost always performed as a lengthy ritual where the caster goes into a deep trance and shuts off her mundane senses as she shifts her perceptions into the Umbra. In the most basic version of this spell, the caster can see and hear Umbral events at whatever locations she desires. While this spell does not allow the caster to form an Umbral body, she can use this spell to allow her to cast other spells at targets she can perceive within the Umbra. Doing so risks sending her magical essence across the Gauntlet, however, and thus attracts the damage of the Storm.

System: Using Correspondence magic, the caster can either send her perceptions to an already known location (using Correspondence 2), or she can use Correspondence 3 to search for objects or people within the Umbra. Mind 1 is necessary to allow her mind to deal with the unusual input. With an addition of Forces 2, the caster can even form an intangible, ghostlike Umbral body. The number of successes on this spell primarily determines how unfamiliar the caster can be with the location or individual within the umbra that

she desires to perceive. The same number of successes, however, also determines the maximum level of spell that caster can use on spirits or other targets that she can perceive using this spell. If the caster only scored one success, then she could only use first rank Sphere effects on targets perceived using this spell. As with all other spells designed to allow the caster to perceive the Umbra, this spell is normally coincidental. Effects projected into the Umbra will either suffer heavy Storm damage that degrades and warps the effect, or else cause Storm damage to the caster, as usual.

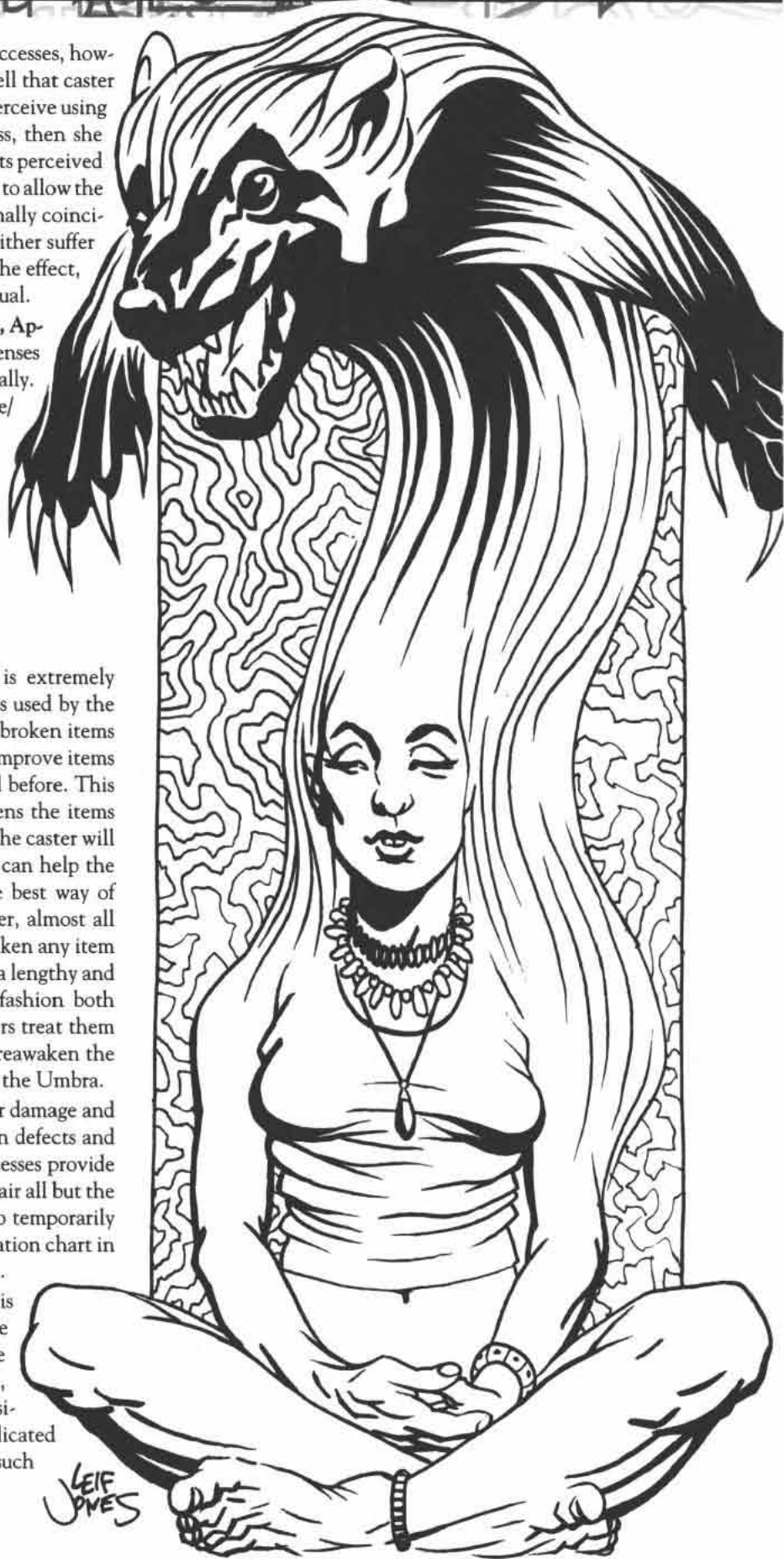
MET: Initiate or Disciple *Correspondence, Apprentice Mind, Initiate Spirit*. You cast your senses into the Umbra so that you can see there normally. Like most sensory effects, this lasts for a minute/ conflict on yourself, or a turn on someone else. You can use this point of view for casting other spells, but such spells can't score any grades of success beyond basic effects, and you may suffer Avatar Storm damage. *Grades of Success:* Add to duration or affect additional people.

SHAITIAN'S CRAFT (... MATTER, ... SPIRIT)

The link between smiths and shamans is extremely ancient. This is rote one of the primary magics used by the Spirit Smiths. This spell allows them to repair broken items of all sorts. In addition, Spirit Smiths use it to improve items so that they will function better than they did before. This spell also (temporarily or permanently) awakens the items the Spirit Smith is working on. In some cases, the caster will temporarily awaken the item so that its spirit can help the caster figure out both what is wrong and the best way of repairing it. If there is sufficient time, however, almost all Spirit Smiths use this spell to permanently awaken any item they are working on. Doing so is almost always a lengthy and extensive process. Awakening items in this fashion both improves their function (as long as their owners treat them well) and is part of the Spirit Smiths' plan to reawaken the world and reconnect the mundane world with the Umbra.

System: A single success will repair minor damage and gives the caster a clear idea of both any hidden defects and how its owner has treated the item. More successes provide greater levels of repair. Three successes will repair all but the most severe damage. Even a single success also temporarily awakens the spirit within the item; use the duration chart in *Mage* to determine how long it remains awake.

Prime 2 must be added to this spell if it is being used to repair objects or devices that have been so badly damaged that they now have large missing pieces. To make this spell coincidental, most casters actually perform some form of physical repair on the item. Some of the more dedicated Spirit Smiths use this spell merely as an aid to such



mundane efforts. Used in this fashion, each success provides a -2 modifier to the difficulty of any repairs.

MET: Disciple Matter, Disciple Spirit. You recreate a damaged item and simultaneously soothe its spirit. If you actually rebuild and repair the item, this is probably coincidental; otherwise it's awfully vulgar. The base effect can repair any object you can easily heft in one hand, up to about 10 pounds in weight. The repairs are mundane once finished and not subject to countermagic. *Grades of Success:* For one grade you can awaken the item's spirit. Or, each grade allows you to double the weight you can affect.

NIGHT BATTLE

(•••• MIND, •••• FORCES, •• PRITIE, •• SPIRIT)

This ritual is one of the most powerful and deadly attacks known to the Dreamspeakers. It allows the mage to separate his spirit from his body and to prowl both the astral planes and the mundane world hunting for victims. Traditionally, the mage's spirit takes on the appearance of a large and dangerous predator. While only mages using Spirit senses or individuals and creatures with similar supernatural perceptions can directly perceive this astral form, its effects can be seen and felt by everyone. Using her magic, the Dreamspeaker ventures forth to kill her enemies and destroy objects, while her body remains elsewhere in a deep trance. When the ritual is complete, the target will appear to have been the subject of an attack by a savage animal. No one without powerful magic can ever trace this event back to the caster.

System: The caster must roll at least two successes when casting this ritual, since it is not useful if it does not last at least a scene. Also, while the caster's spirit can move with the speed of thought, the caster must already know the target's location or use Correspondence magics to locate the target. Once the target is located, additional rolls are then needed for any attacks.

All damage using the Forces effects are made normally, and such damage will look like it was caused by a wild animal. Careful examination of the victim, however, will reveal no evidence of animal fur or other traces that always appear during real animal attacks. If desired, the caster can spend a point of Quintessence and make all damage done by this spell aggravated. Unless care is taken, this ritual is vulgar if used against targets in the mortal world. All attacks on Umbral targets, however, are fully coincidental. Because you must send your spirit out across the Umbra, you do risk the vagaries of the Avatar Storm if you're not at a Shallowing, but you do so only once.

MET: Adept Mind, Disciple Forces, Initiate Prime, Initiate Spirit. You send a projection of yourself outward and, using Forces, distantly recognize and attack a foe. While you must know or divine the subject's location, your astral self simply coordinates your use of strikes made to resemble those of an animal. In fact, your astral self seems to take on characteristics of the animal in question — not enough to

fool a determined observer, but enough to leave Resonance similar to an animal-spirit. Once you arrive at the target, you make attacks by pitting your Mental Traits against the target's Physical Traits (almost certainly by surprise). You have one turn to make your attacks at the base level. You suffer Storm damage once, immediately upon casting. *Grades of Success:* Add to duration.

SPIRIT SLAYING (•• PRITIE, •• SPIRIT)

This rote is commonly used by Dreamspeakers to slay or drive off malevolent spirits. With it, the Dreamspeaker infuses a weapon with raw prime energy and then strikes through the Gauntlet to inflict deadly damage on nearby spirits. This spell is most commonly used to empower swords, knives, clubs, and guns with the energy necessary to slay hostile spirits. It can also be performed using symbolic weapons like blunt swords or even crystals and rattles, to allow the Dreamspeaker to attack possessing spirits without harming the host.

System: Like all effects that channel Prime energy, this spell does aggravated damage to the target. If this spell is used on a spirit possessing a living host, a single damage roll is made for the attack. The physical weapon damages the target, but all of the aggravated damage affects only the spirit. Depending on the weapon being used, the weapon may do lethal, bashing, or even no damage to the target, but the spirit will bear the full brunt of the attack. To perform this spell, the caster must always expend a point of Quintessence. Since this spell only affects spirits, it is almost always coincidental.

MET: Intermediate Prime, Intermediate Spirit. You enable a weapon to strike across the Gauntlet. The weapon that you enchant can, for one turn, inflict aggravated damage on spirits by striking their physical locations or counterparts. You must expend one Trait of Quintessence to activate this effect. *Grades of Success:* Add to duration.

SPIRIT EATING (••• MIND, ••• PRITIE, •• SPIRIT)

Instead of merely slaying or driving off spirits, some Dreamspeakers seek to take the spirit's power and knowledge by consuming the spirit. Like the Spirit Slaying spell, the caster empowers a weapon and uses it to attack the spirit. In addition to harming or killing the target, the caster drains both Prime energy and knowledge from it. Killing a spirit with this spell destroys it forever and gives the caster considerable power.

Despite the temptation of power offered by this spell, many Dreamspeakers consider it to be too horrific to use. It is normally only used in desperation, or by Dreamspeakers who desire to command and rule spirits rather than working equitably with them. Dreamspeakers who regularly use this spell can intimidate spirits into working for them, but will rarely have spiritual allies or friends — the only exceptions being a few highly predatory spirits that engage in similar tactics. Regular use of this spell will cause most Dreamspeakers

to regard the caster as a violent individual who they would rather avoid.

System: The damage caused by this spell is identical to that caused by Spirit Slaying (see page 69). Every success rolled on damage also gives the caster one point of Quintessence. Each point of Quintessence drained from the spirit also reduces the spirit's Power by 5 points. Reducing a spirit's Power to zero using this spell destroys it forever. Spirits cannot provide more Quintessence than one-fifth their Power.

Successes on this ritual also allow the caster to steal knowledge and memories from the spirit. A single success on any attack will gain the caster a few random memories. Two successes on one attack give the caster access to most of the spirit's recent memories. Three successes give most of the spirit's memories to the caster, and four or more successes give the caster access to the spirit's most carefully guarded secrets.

Casters who roll two or more successes on an attack must also make a Willpower roll. Rolling a number of successes on this Willpower roll equal to the number of successes rolled on the attack results in the caster experiencing no problems. A successful Willpower roll that scores fewer successes than were rolled for the attack temporarily gives the caster some Mental Flaw or other personality trait possessed by the spirit. This trait remains until the caster next sleeps. A failed Willpower roll results in this trait remaining for the next week, and a Botched Willpower roll makes this new trait permanent or can result in the caster believing he is actually the spirit for the next week. An Additional Willpower roll must be made for every attack that does significant damage to the spirit. A series of failed Willpower rolls can easily result on the caster gaining a large number of severe mental problems.

MET: Disciple Mind, Disciple Prime, Initiate Spirit. You use an empowered weapon to strike at a spirit and take away some of its Power and knowledge. You must still strike the spirit, of course (typically using a Physical Challenge), but each time you do, you gain a follow up Mental Challenge to steal its energies. If you win, you steal one Quintessence (which costs the spirit five Power); if the spirit runs out of Power, it is destroyed. You may also, at the Spirit Keeper's discretion, gain some of the spirit's memories. If the spirit has any Abilities, you steal one each time you successfully drain Power. Abilities stolen in this way remain for a scene/hour or until used. If you steal away more Quintessence than you have Willpower in any given scene, you suffer a Derangement for each additional Trait of Quintessence stolen. Typically, the weapon remains enchanted for a single conflict. *Grades of Success:* Add to the duration of the weapon's power.

READING THE UMBRAL SKEIN (• MIND, •• SPIRIT, ••• TIME, SOMETIMES •••• CORRESPONDENCE)

This spell is a favorite for many Baruti. In addition to now being the only safe way that most of them can gain

access to their umbral library of lost tales and ancient memories, this rote also allows them to probe the history of the umbra itself. According to Baruti doctrine, the world has undergone numerous drastic changes. Whole lands and peoples have suddenly ceased to exist, the rules governing magic have changed, and even the shape and basic geography of the world has not been constant. In most cases, these changes have been so sweeping that they eliminated almost all traces of the previous world and replaced it with histories and artifacts that seem to consistently and inevitably lead to the new present.

The Umbra, however, is both more flexible and more enduring than the mortal world. Significant traces of these prior realities can sometimes remain in neglected corners of the umbra. Curious Baruti use this spell to cast their consciousness into the umbra and read its history.

While the validity of the truths gained using this rote are often questionable and impossible to prove, on a number of occasions Baruti using this spell have used the knowledge gained to lead them to strange physical artifacts in the umbra or the mundane world. They claim that these curious relics support the stories they have learned. Most other Tradition historians dismiss theories that artifacts like the Mayan crystal skull are proof of the existence of a vastly different world, but the Baruti rarely care about the opinions of others. Some Baruti also use this spell to attempt to divine the future of the umbra, but their results are even more confusing and inconsistent than ordinary divinations. A few Baruti claim that the odd results obtained using these divinations are further proof that the entire structure of the world will change in the near future and that the Umbra and the mundane world will soon be reunited.

System: This spell is functionally identical to ordinary Time magic divinations, except that it provides information about the past or the future of the portion of the Umbra that corresponds to the caster's location. Because all magic is easier in the Umbra, the amount by which the caster can look into the past (but not the future) is 21 times that obtained by corresponding divinations in the mundane world (see the table in **Mage: The Ascension** page 209). If Correspondence effects are added, the mage can determine the history of any portion of the Umbra that she is familiar with. The Mind portion of this rote allows the caster to clearly remember every detail of the odd and confusing information that was gained.

MET: Apprentice Mind, Initiate Spirit, Initiate Time, optional Initiate or Disciple Correspondence. You cast your senses backward or forward through time in the Umbra. What you see depends upon the whims of the Spirit Keeper; reality is mutable in the Umbra, so time senses there are even less reliable than divinations in the physical world. With *Correspondence* you can also cast your sight to other parts of the Umbra. Areas that are warded or have special entrance requirements, though, still keep you and your senses out. You

can look backward or forward an extended degree of time — in effect, pretty much any time in the same decade — with a minimum of trouble. You see a snippet of action from the time: about a turn's worth of history. *Grades of Success:* Extend the viewing distance or duration.

SHANTIANIC WONDERS

THE GUITAR OF THE SPIRITS

(6-POINT WONDER)

Created in the late 1960s by an American Dreamspeaker who spontaneously Awakened through a combination of drugs and music, this item is a superb-quality acoustic guitar that also allows the player to directly affect the fabric of the Gauntlet. In addition to having a truly wonderful sound and being unusually easy to play, this instrument also allows the user to play two special songs. The first is a soft, slow, and melancholy ballad that can be used to transport the caster and any nearby listeners through the Gauntlet. The second song is a rousing martial-sounding tune that strengthens the Gauntlet against intrusions by spirits. Both songs have no words, but users of this Wonder may add words without problem.

System: This instrument is so well-made that all Performance rolls using it are at -1 difficulty. In addition, it is fully Awakened and has been known to warn its owner of danger by loud creaking, or even suddenly breaking a string. The two songs, however, are its greatest gift. The music for both songs, as well as somewhat cryptic notes as to their use, are located inside the guitar's case. This sheet music is not strictly necessary, since the guitar itself will actually help the owner learn and play these songs.

For both songs, the performer must first spend a single point of Quintessence and then roll for the effectiveness of the spells using Dexterity + Performance instead of an Arête roll (the difficulty of this roll is equal to the local Gauntlet rating). Successes are calculated normally. When opening the Gauntlet, targets will be sent though at the conclusion of the song, which takes approximately five minutes to play. Each success above the minimum necessary to allow the performer to breach the Gauntlet can be used to send an additional target. All targets must be present for the entire performance, and must be within 10 yards of the caster and able to hear (or if deaf) feel the music. The caster can choose whether she will be one of the individuals sent through the Gauntlet. If desired, she can also use this song to open the Gauntlet and let nearby spirits or humans trapped on the Umbra back into the mundane world.

The musician can also play a shorter and simpler version of this song that lowers the local Gauntlet rating by 1 for every success rolled on the Dexterity + Performance roll. This effect

lasts for an entire scene after the song has finished. In regions with a low Gauntlet, this shorter song can be used to create a temporary Shallowing.

The other song requires 10 minutes to play. As soon as the song begins, the player wards the room the song is played in against spirits. If the song is played outdoors, or in a very large space, then only an area 10 yards in diameter is warded. This ward raises the Gauntlet to 10 for the duration of the effect. A single success on a Dexterity + Performance roll allows the performer to ward the room as long as she plays the song. If desired, the performer can restart the song at its conclusion without needing to reroll or spend more Quintessence. In this way, the performer can ward the room for as long as she can keep playing the song. Better rolls allow the warding to remain in place after the song is finished. Two successes allow the ward to persist for a full scene after the song is finished, while three successes allow the warding to continue for the next full day and four successes allow the warding to continue for a full lunar month. Additional successes on this roll have no effect.

UNIVERSAL ID (4 POINT WONDER)

This talisman consists of a spiritually awakened ID card that has been imbued with magics that allow it to be able to become any type of ID card. Depending upon the desires of the user, it can be a Driver's License with the user's picture and any name or state of origin, a private detective's license, an FBI badge complete with photo, or even a card-key ID for a high security firm. The caster need only have an example of the desired type of ID or even just a photograph or video image of such a card. After touching this item to the ID (or the image of the ID) to be duplicated, the user need only sign it with the name she wishes to use and it will reform so that it has the user's face and all relevant physical information. This ID will even operate card key readers.

In some high security installations, the user may also be required to punch in a special code into a keypad after running the ID card through a reader. Fortunately, while holding the card, the user will automatically know the correct key code for the card. Mages who combine this card with conventional or magical disguises can also use it as an aid in impersonating a wide variety of individuals.

System: No rolls need to be made to use this item. It works automatically as long as the mage has either an example or an accurate and detailed reproduction of the particular type of ID being imitated. If this ID contains a large amount of printed or electronic information, the user can simply write that information on the card and her handwriting will instantly transform into neatly typed or encoded information.

FETISHES

INHABITED CAR (4 POINT WONDER)

While the Sons of Ether and the Virtual Adepts attempt to create artificial intelligence using computers and similar technological tools, Dreamspeakers bypass such limits by binding spirits into objects or awakening the spirits within various devices. This awakened vehicle is typically a sports car or sporty compact that can respond to voice commands as effectively as an exceptionally well-trained dog. Statements like "Drive me home", as well as requests to evade pursuit, avoid obstacles while the driver shoots out the window, or cut off another car will all be understood and obeyed. To avoid Paradox, all of these cars are fitted with advanced car computers and GPS navigation systems. As long as no one performs a detailed examination of the car's electronics, the operation of this vehicle is fully coincidental.

System: This vehicle can be commanded by the owner as well as by anyone who the owner tells the vehicle to obey. When operating on its own, the vehicle uses a dice pool equal to its Maneuver rating (**Mage: The Ascension** pp. 223-224). When being driven by the owner, its responsiveness gives the owner a -2 to the difficulty of all rolls to operate this vehicle. The owner can even call the car on its cell phone and ask it to come to a specific location, or simply to home in on her own phone's signal. Of course, all such calls are best made late at night, since the sight of an unoccupied car driving down the street can attract large amounts of unwanted attention.

There are several limits on operating this vehicle. It will refuse to undertake any action that will destroy it and will be reluctant to risk serious damage unless the owner's life is clearly in danger. In addition, this spirit will become increasingly unresponsive and will eventually refuse to obey its owner if the car is not given regular care and maintenance. To cover both the cost of upkeep and the initial purchase of the car, owners of this Fetish must have a *Resources* Background of three or more dots.

INFO SPIDER (6 POINT WONDER)

While many traditional shamans scorn electronics, most technoshamans appreciate the power of the internet and other forms of electronic communications. Recognizing that information is power, a number of them have created Fetishes that allow them use monitor and affect such communications. The Information spider is a recent effort created by Blue Phreak, a technoshaman hacker living in Los Angeles. It was so successful that within the last year it has been copied by a number of other technoshamans.

The info spider is a Fetish that consists of a miniature palmtop computer with a digital camera and a wireless modem. This computer houses a minor but clever information spirit that can be instructed to search all forms of electronic communication for messages matching a specified pattern. The user can ask the spirit to search for all phone calls, email and faxes to or from a particular individual or address, all

information on a specific topic, or even highly specific information like every time a particular individual uses a specific phrase like "Roswell UFOs."

Since the info spider is wireless, the user can carry it anywhere and check up on it at any time. However, care must be used in selecting search parameters to avoid a vast deluge of irrelevant information. Also, this device can carry out no more than one search at a time. To use this device to monitor a particular address or individual, the mage must allow the info spider to scan some physical connection to the place or individual with its webcam. A piece of recently worn clothing, a hair sample, or a chip of brick from a wall are all sufficient magical connections. While it can only collect information that is sent electronically, the spirit is moderately intelligent and will only collect information about a single specific individual, even if that person has a relatively common name.

System: This device has a Gnosis Rating of five and makes a Gnosis roll (with a difficulty of 5) when performing any search. Use the Correspondence Range table on page 209 to determine if the info spider can obtain information about a specific target. Success allows the device to collect all relevant non-encrypted electronic communications on the topic. The speed with which the device accomplishes this task is determined by how many additional successes are rolled. No additional successes means that the search requires between two and three days, depending upon the quantity of information desired. One additional success allows the device to acquire all of the desired information in 12 hours. Two successes allow the info spider to collect the information in three hours. Three successes allow the caster to collect the information in a single hour. More successes do not allow it to collect the information any faster.

While individual pacts differ, most info spiders are obsessively curious creatures who wish their "owners" to gather various sorts of non-electronic information for them in return for their services. Such information can range from the shoe size of a particular individual to details of the contents of a room located in a magically important location (such as a Chantry or Technocratic Laboratory).

MASK OF THE WARRIOR

(4 POINT WONDER, 6 POINTS WITH *BERSERKER*)

Dreamspeakers often make masks that house powerful spirits who can partially possess the mage when she wears and activates the mask. Warrior masks are one of the most common types of these Fetishes. These masks contain the spirit of a powerful warrior who combines his skill and martial prowess with that of the wearer when the mask is activated. Warrior Masks are relatively common Fetishes and have been made in a wide variety of styles. All of them must contain some token from a dead warrior.

Warrior masks created by traditional Dreamspeakers are often carved from wood and contain some piece of a great warrior's weapon inside them. Arrowhead inlays are particularly common.

Urban Dreamspeakers and those who follow non-Traditional paths often make warrior masks out of the ski masks and bandanas used by violent criminals, or from pieces of the military uniforms of fallen soldiers. While such cloth masks are far less out of place in modern urban environments than fierce-looking masks carved from wood, they sometimes mark the wearer as someone who is involved in violence or criminal activities.

System: Traditional warrior masks add three dots to the wearer's Melee score, two dots to Dodge and one dot to Brawl (up to a maximum of six dots in each of these three Abilities). While some modern warrior masks have the same effect, most add three dots to the wearers Firearms score, two dots to Dodge and one dot to Brawl. In all cases, the mask also gives the wearer the *Short Fuse Flaw* (**Mage: The Ascension** page 294).

A few of these masks were made using the spirits of truly great but highly dangerous warriors. These masks also give the wearer the *Berserker Merit* (**Mage: The Ascension** page 291) when they are activated. These masks are the most powerful, but the older ones have often been used to commit truly heinous acts, sometimes unintentionally. In return for their services, most warrior masks require the wearer to either live by a warriors code of honor (never fleeing from combat, always accepting a request for single combat, etc.), or sometimes simply to kill a minimum of one foe every season. A few warrior masks demand that the wearer regularly destroy certain types of beings like vampires or werewolves, or to help it gain revenge over some enemy.





CHAPTER THREE: THE WALKERS — SHAITIANS AND ⊕ OTHERS

The most spiritual human beings, assuming they are the most courageous, also experience by far the most painful tragedies; but it is precisely for this reason that they honor life, because it brings against them its most formidable weapons.

— Frederick Nietzsche, *Twilight Of The Idols* (1889)

⊕ NOTABLE DREAMSPEAKERS



While many of the greatest shamans have now been forced beyond the Gauntlet, a few notables remain. Also, since the coming of the Avatar Storms a number of younger, and in some cases more radical, shamans have moved into positions of power and influence. While the current structure of the Dreamspeakers is still very much in flux, all shamans who desire to keep track of their fellows know several important individuals.

TASYGAN

Background: Tasygan is widely believed to be the oldest and most powerful Dreamspeaker left on Earth. She is far too powerful to safely travel though the Gauntlet. Most Dreamspeakers agree that the only

reason she is still alive and on Earth is that for many decades she has preferred to enter the Umbra mentally.

Born in Siberia in 1767, she grew up among an isolated band of Siberian nomads. She became a shaman before she was 20 and did not see any outsiders until 1798, when a Russian trader visited her tribe. In these early days she was the spiritual intermediary for her people, healing the sick, calling the game, protecting the members of her tribe from mundane and supernatural dangers, and — most importantly of all — keeping the ancient stories of her people alive and teaching them to each new generation. Changes came in the mid 19th century, when Russian traders and missionaries began invading Siberia in increasing numbers. She knew the old days were ending forever when the Russians began constructing the Trans-Siberian railway in 1891.

Fearful of the changes foretold by her visions, she led her people ever further from the encroaching Russians until missionaries converted her tribe in 1913. At this point, she abandoned her stark homeland and traveled south and west to learn more of the invaders that were destroying her people's way of life. She fought to help her people during the Russian revolution, but was eventually overwhelmed by the horrors perpetrated by Stalin. Shortly before World War II, her dark visions of the future convinced her to give up on her homeland. She traveled to Canada, seeking a place where she could help other northern peoples live free from outside interference.

In the decades since she came to Canada, Tasygan has been working for native rights. She has become increasingly important in local fights for environmental protection. By the 1990s she was both one of the foremost Dreamspeakers and a leading figure in the Canadian environmental movement. As a result, she has been called upon to give speeches at several universities and at various rallies and protests. In addition to the fees she makes from such appearances, she also earns money as a professional storyteller. She has even taught classes on myth and folklore at the University of Toronto and was recently awarded an honorary Ph.D. there.

An eloquent speaker, she continues to tell her stories to all who will listen. Along with the traditional tales from the Siberian and Inuit peoples, she also creates her own stories, often cautionary tales derived from the darkest and most terrifying of her visions. When the Avatar Storms came, she suddenly found herself the leader of the Baruti and one of the most senior Dreamspeakers. She did not want this position, but knew that her aid was required. As her visions of the future grow ever darker and more threatening, she has become increasingly militant. She sometimes uses her magic to subtly attack Sleepers who threaten the health and safety of the world.

Image: Tasygan appears to be a Siberian woman in her late 40s. Her long black hair is streaked with white, and she wears it up using a pair of mammoth ivory hair sticks. She prefers simple dresses adorned with large amounts of traditional Siberian jewelry, including wide bracelets and necklaces of large beads.

Roleplaying Hints: You are a soft-spoken, thoughtful but extremely passionate speaker. You firmly believe that the stories you tell hold the only real hope for humanity's future. You care deeply about the various environmental causes you support because you know that the alternative is death and horror on a scale you find difficult to imagine.

Despite these dark visions, you remain proud and sometimes even a bit hopeful. You are filled with rage at governments and corporations that harm the places and



peoples you love though greed and negligence, but you know better than rant and rave against them. Instead, you speak clearly and intelligently to any who will listen and then work powerful magics to help ensure that the destroyers will meet swift and unpleasant ends. You have recently taken on new responsibilities, but look forward to the day when you can step down and let others shoulder your burdens.

Faction: Baruti

Essence: Primordial

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Caregiver

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3, Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 2, Awareness 3, Expression 5, Intimidation 3, Leadership 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Crafts 2, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Meditation 3, Survival 4, Technology 1

Knowledges: Academics 3, Cosmology 5, Enigmas 4, Linguistics 4, Occult 4

Backgrounds: Arcane 3, Avatar 4, Dream 4, Influence 2, Resources 2, Totem 3 (Horse: Willpower 5, Rage 6, Gnosis 5, Power 20, Totem can find the Shaman rapidly, Airt Sense, Re-form, Dream Journey, Possession)

Arete: 7

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Life 3, Mind 5, Prime 4, Spirit 4, Time 5

Willpower: 8

Quintessence: 9

Paradox: 3

NETSILAK RAYMOND

Background: Netsilak was the head of a radical faction of the Spirit Smiths known as the Builders. When the previous head of the Spirit Smiths died at the beginning of the Avatar Storms, Netsilak Raymond's bold and decisive leadership allowed him to take control of the entire faction. Since this time he has expanded his power base and is now widely acknowledged as one of the most powerful and influential Dreamspeakers alive.

Born in Greenland in 1963, his father was a US Air Force radio technician and his mother a native fur trapper. When Netsilak was nine years old, his family moved from Greenland to Minneapolis, Minnesota. Distressed at the loss of his starkly beautiful homeland and his mother's extended family, Netsilak became withdrawn, preferring long walks alone to the company of others. He rejected Western education and learned to work with his hands instead. He became a construction worker after he finished high school. Netsilak excelled at this demanding trade and rapidly became known as one of the most accomplished high iron workers in Minneapolis.

Although he remained quiet and withdrawn, his career continued to grow until a construction accident in 1988 left him badly injured. Doctors saved his life, but he remained in a coma, unresponsive to the most advanced treatments. In desperation, his mother had her uncle back in Greenland persuade the greatest shaman-crafter he knew to create a charm designed to help Netsilak. The charm managed to touch Netsilak's spirit and draw it back into his body.

While creating the charm, the shaman sensed great potential in Netsilak. In exchange for returning him to



consciousness, this shaman sent her spirit to talk to Netsilak and asked him to become her student. Shortly after his recovery, Netsilak went to Greenland and studied with her for three years. When he returned to the United States in 1992, he was almost a different person.

Although he was still reserved in his personal life, he now had a mission. Out on the windswept ice of Greenland, he had experienced numerous visions where the grandfather of all shamans told him that the world was in grave trouble. Only a reawakening of its slumbering magic could save humanity. He took up his construction job again and learned to incorporate the magic he had learned into his building. Not content with working alone, he began contacting other Spirit Smiths and recruiting them into his grand project.

By 1996 he had managed to gather a small but devoted following of younger Spirit Smiths. The elders, however, including the shaman who trained him, refused to help with his attempts to awaken entire city blocks. A few of these older shamans actively worked to keep his influence from spreading. Believing in his vision, Netsilak Raymond was content to bide his time.

When the Avatar Storms came, a number of the senior Spirit Smiths were killed or forced beyond the Gauntlet. Netsilak's message of hope and change appealed to most of the remaining members of this faction. For the last several years, he has been working on making connections with the members of other Dreamspeaker factions, especially the Baruti and the Red Spear Society but also including technoshamans in the Sons of Ether and Virtual Adepts.

Image: More than 20 years of construction work has given Netsilak Raymond a strong, heavily muscled body. His wide face, dark eyes, and straight dark hair reveals his Inuit ancestry, just as his jeans and old flannel shirts clearly show his blue-collar background. These days, he wears his hair in a long ponytail and always wears a wide silver bracelet embossed the image of with a fierce polar bear. A gift from his mentor, this bracelet acts as a periapt that holds 5 pawns of Quintessence.

Roleplaying Hints: You are quietly driven. You don't talk much, and when you do you are inclined to make a speech. A man of actions more than words, you are happiest when you are working. You have also learned how to lead, however, and can now inspire your followers with a hopeful look or a stern glance.

Faction: Spirit Smiths

Essence: Pattern

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Architect

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Expression 3, Leadership 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Crafts 3, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Meditation 1, Survival 3, Technology 2

Knowledges: Academics 1, Computer 1, Cosmology 3, Enigmas 3, Linguistics 1, Occult 4

Backgrounds: Avatar 3, Destiny 4, Influence 1, Mentor 2 (his Totem), Resources 3, Totem 4 (Shaman, Willpower 5, Rage 5, Gnosis 6, Power 20, Respected Totem, Airt Sense, Reform, Influence, Cleanse the Blight, Call for Aid, Dream Journey), Wonder 2

Arete: 4

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Life 2, Forces 2, Matter 4, Mind 1, Prime 4, Spirit 4

Willpower: 7

Quintessence: 5

Paradox: 0

XOCA

Background: Some people just refuse to let things die. So it is with Xoca.

Nobody in the Traditions knows Xoca's real name, or even if "Xoca" is a pseudonym. He has no desire to correct this. The anonymity, Xoca claims, is more useful even than claiming not to have a name. Namelessness just makes people search harder for your name: Confusion keeps them from discerning the real from the false, the spirit from the flesh.

What is known about Xoca is that he comes from Central America, probably from a Mayan heritage. He makes liberal use of multiple Central American cultural techniques in his magic, which lends credence to this observation. Never staying in one place for long, he gives the impression that he has no close family or strong ties to any single location or person.

Xoca's most striking and constant trait is his crusade against the Technocracy. While other Dreamspeakers content themselves with working in a community setting or dealing with spirits that the Technocracy doesn't want to accept, Xoca takes the battle to the Union's doorstep... literally. His actions have resulted in the destruction of numerous projects and devices, the injury or death of two dozen Technocratic agents and the collapse of at least one Central American Progenitor experimental facility. The fact that hundreds of otherwise innocent people lost lives, families and money in the wake of these disasters seems lost on Xoca — or, rather, he acknowledges that he's destructive, but cheer-

fully asserts that he's taking the only route left, or the only one he knows. (His exact description varies.)

As something of a "bomb-throwing terrorist," Xoca doesn't fit the usual Dreamspeaker image in the Traditions, nor does he find much positive reputation within the Tradition itself. Nevertheless, many cabals have at least *heard* of his reputation — when you take down a Technocratic operation by yourself, with nothing more than a twenty-year-old Jeep, some camping gear and the help of the spirits, you win some fame. He's considered a dangerous but necessary evil. Some elements of the Council still support his activities, although almost nobody ever lends him actual material aid; it's too dangerous to be seen consorting with such an extremist.

For his part, Xoca doesn't care. He goes about his demolition work fervently, almost like every victory is an offering. He doesn't chant about crusades or payback or reclaiming a lost heritage; he simply shrugs and asserts that he's "sticking it to the enemy." When the heat turns up, he lies low in the deserts and jungles for a while, only to emerge a few months later with powerful spirits and Wonders in tow. So far, his luck hasn't run out, but Ascension Warriors like him never live to a ripe old age.

Image: Of indeterminate age, probably just below middle age but certainly past his 20s, Xoca has the look of a hardened Mayan warrior. His hair is stringy and long, his eyes deeply set and piercing, his nose long and sloping. He typically dresses in functional clothing for wilderness survival, including heavy boots and light, sturdy pants, but tops off the ensemble with a cracked leather breastplate studded with small gemstones — a potent Wonder from an earlier age. If not for his



occasional maniacal grin, he would seem the very image of a somber spirit warrior.

Roleplaying Hints: You're an utter madman, dedicated to the absolute destruction of the Technocracy. You firmly believe that only with their defeat is there any hope of the Traditions establishing a new foothold in the world. Conversely, you are a *congenial* madman, fully aware of how strange your actions and crusade seem to others. From time to time you even caricaturize yourself: If people don't take your actions seriously, they'll be less likely to think deeply about what you do and the consequences that result. In discussions with spirits, you settle into a deeply serious mood as you were properly taught so long ago.

Faction: Solitaries

Essence: Primordial

Nature: Rebel

Demeanor: Trickster

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 4, Awareness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Crafts 3, Drive 1, Etiquette 1, Survival 5, Technology 1

Knowledges: Academics 1, Computer 1, Cosmology 3, Enigmas 3, Linguistics 3 (English, Spanish, old Mayan and Aztec dialects), Occult 2

Backgrounds: Arcane 4, Avatar 1, Contacts 2, Destiny 1, Dream 2, Resources 1, Wonder 5

Arete: 4

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Entropy 3, Forces 2, Life 2, Mind 2, Spirit 4, Prime 2

Willpower: 7

Quintessence: 1

Paradox: 0

THE SPIRIT AND THE FLESH: DREAMSPEAKER CHRONICLES



The answer to almost every question about "Is this appropriate...?" with regard to some aspect of Dreamspeakers in play is "Yes, somewhere." The tradition's diversity makes it possible to do just about anything you want, from the desperate (or triumphant) struggle of an oppressed native people against their distant exploiters to the science-fiction exploits of technoshamans awakening

the soul of the technocratic order and turning it to new ends. In between, there's room for a great many kinds of stories about shamans and other spirit magicians working with their tribe, however defined, to deal with all the diverse challenges life presents.

The crucial question for a Dreamspeaker is, "Who is my tribe?" It may be an actual tribe, as it has been throughout most of history. It may be all the people of a town or a neighborhood in a big city, or even the city as a whole for spirit mages with ambitions and big visions. It may be a particular subculture, and either all the people of that type in a particular area or something wider-ranging. Whatever the tribe, it may be geographically concentrated or dispersed, like scattered ethnic groups in exile and subcultures found throughout the fringes of the First World. The spirit mage's first duty is to know her people and their needs. Once she understands the hurts, she can see about healing.

Keep in mind that the vast majority of Dreamspeakers are psychically scarred by their experiences. They have been subjected to pressures most people cannot understand and under which most people would break. Spirit mages are tough, but they need healing themselves. They are exemplars to their communities of the costs as well as the benefits of membership in that community; they heal partly because they must as well as because they want and are able to.

Shamanism is a very practical art. It usually has roots deep in tradition, but it's concerned with what happens right now. It calls for constantly fresh responses to changing circumstances, including the individual whims of significant spirits.

Dreamspeakers who grow complacent find themselves out of luck in a rapidly changing situation. They do not have the luxury of being detached from their work. They may seem detached from mundane realities, but that's only because the rest of the universe presses in on them. Likewise, shamanism need not make one nice or kindly. The spirit world is a dangerous place, and it takes great force of will to make the spirits cooperate. Some spiritual realities are deeply unpleasant: in an animistic universe, disease and death and corruption and despair must all receive just as much acknowledgement as fertility and joy and hope.

THE ALL-DREATTISPEAKER CHRONICLE

The Dreamspeakers are well suited for a game in which the PCs are the only recurring magical element in an otherwise mundane society. Whether it's the Third World, the First or somewhere in between, the spiritual reality of a community's need can make a great focus for extended play.

Some crossovers are possible. In particular, communities near wilderness may naturally encounter the Garou and other changing breeds, either directly or through kinfolk. Keep in mind that most Garou regard human mages as heirs to stolen power and often regard the Dreamspeakers with particular hostility for their "mockery" and "distortion" of truths the werewolves claim for themselves. On the other hand, all generalizations may break down in specific cases, and it's certainly possible for a specific Dreamspeaker cabal to make common ground with a particular pack of werewolves. Lasting allies are possible as well as lasting antagonisms.

Keep in mind, too, that mundane challenges don't have to be boring. There's nothing supernatural in film noir chronicles of urban corruption and the efforts of the righteous few to bring justice to the wicked, and yet there's a lot of fodder for epic adventure there. Dreamspeakers can easily take on the mantle of Sherlock Holmes and Sam Spade in their independent pursuit of justice, combating superior physical force with supernatural resources.

Take, for instance, the problem of rampant drug use in poor neighborhoods. On the most superficial level, the dealers are the bad guys. But they can't deal without buyers. What makes people buy? Partly curiosity, partly an irresponsible desire to escape, but also a sense of helplessness and frustration. In turn, many dealers deal in part because they can't readily get any other work. The networks of distribution run outside the neighbor-

hood, ultimately to circle the world. Really making drug use go down requires stamping out the chains of distribution *and* addressing the needs that drugs answer in other ways. The whole life of the community hangs together, in jobs and law and hope.

There's a spiritual reality to all this for shamans. Everything has its spirit. The allegorical confrontations common in newspaper editorial concerns are pragmatic realities for shamans. There is a spirit of the most popular drug, which infects or devours the souls of the drug's users and taints the landscape. There are spirits of despair and apathy and violence which gather to feed on the ensuing turmoil. Simply removing the physical signs without also binding the spirits is inevitably doomed to failure, because the spirits make the world (as it makes them at the same time). Thus even the most straightforward task calls for magic, and quite possibly for Umbral adventure. (See p. 63 for more about Dreamspeaker options in dealing with the current chaos of the Umbra.)

Keep in mind that the diversity of Dreamspeaker practices can also generate quite a few story hooks all by itself. In the sample cabal below, there are two practitioners of essentially independent approaches to spirit magic: one Voudoun traditionalist and one Christian theurgist. To put it mildly, they don't agree on everything. They have different rotes and foci, and they analyze the world in wildly different terms. The same can be true of any other Dreamspeaker cabal. The struggle to reach agreement on the next step can fill whole sessions with mutually satisfying roleplaying, once players get into the groove. (It can also degenerate into self-indulgent excess, which is one of the reasons there's a Storyteller, to rein things in when necessary.) "What shall we do?" is not a trivial question given the diversity of spirits and means of dealing with them.

HIGH WINDS EDUCATIONAL SERVICES



There's a longstanding tradition in the West of people banding together to address the multiple needs of suffering communities as best they can. In the days of the "Wild West," circuit-riding preachers often practiced medicine and law as part of their efforts to minister to far-flung congregations. More recently, Peace Corps volunteers, medical missionaries and others reaching out with healing intentions regularly find themselves called upon to provide all sorts of services.

There's also a shamanic tradition in many parts of the world of serving as a wandering healer, traveling to commu-

nities who lack anyone among their own ranks to intercede with, fight with, and command the spirits, to judge fairly and to initiate individuals into new stages of life. The wandering healer stays long enough to raise up a worthy disciple from within the community, then moves on.

High Winds Educational Services draws on both traditions. For thirty years, its members have traveled together to places that lack good schools, from native American reservations in the United States to war-torn districts of Colombia and New Guinea. They set up a temporary installation built around their light-weight cargo planes and provide schooling, medical examinations and treatment, analysis of soil and water impurities

or deficiencies, and a great deal more. Thanks to mil-spec portable satellite uplinks, they can tap into the world's supply of information about emergencies and long-term problems, and they divide their attention between addressing immediate needs and training locals to carry on with better knowledge after the outsiders go.

They also deal with the spiritual needs of their community. Where there's a spirit singer or medicine man or other resident magician, they try to work in partnership. Where there's no one on the scene trained and awakened for the task, they look for anyone with potential and provide basic instruction. They aim to leave behind a community better equipped than many of its members may realize to deal with the challenges of the future.

HISTORY

Contrary to the stereotype of later generations, the late 1950s was an era of tremendous social tumult in the United States. School desegregation, underway by the mid-1950s, was just the tip of a vast and looming iceberg of social problems coming to light. Unfortunately for the established order, people in many fringe and minority communities became aware of the legitimacy of their grievances and the possibilities for change long before it was actually feasible to make significant political or economic improvements. The counter-culture of the 1950s included many bright, ambitious, deeply frustrated minorities looking for something to keep themselves together in the face of the ever more painful gap between theoretically obtainable progress and ossified institutional reality.

This was the world in which Mary Looks-Fair Hemingford came of age. Her parents were assimilated members of the Sammamish tribe in western Washington state; they gave her a traditional name without much concern for the rest of traditional practice. She watched a war — sometimes almost literally a war — for social justice and equal treatment unfold on the family television while at home her parents went on blithely accepting second-rate standing in their own community, neither anchored in a tribal identity nor really accepted among whites. Although she tried, she was unable to awaken their concern.

In the end, she left and became part of nomadic Beat society. Traces of her passage remain in the collected letters of Jack Kerouac and Brion Gysin, and she's a footnoted reference in some Ph.D. dissertations on the era. As the Vietnam War heated up, though, she gradually faded from sight.

Mary withdrew out of fear that she was going insane. That was a sensible enough response to hearing the voices of dead relatives and dead women of the tribes whose homelands she cruised through in her

notorious customized Mustang. On the day JFK was shot, she had what she thought was a full-blown psychotic breakdown, as *everything* around her in a little Northern California diner began speaking to her. She never remembered being hustled out of the diner by an old Shasta man, or him driving her to his cabin in the Sierra Nevada mountains. She always remembered how he came to her in her dreams and taught her the right way to address the spirits, and then how he taught her the same lessons again once she woke up.

Old Man Jenkins died in 1972, leaving Mary alone again and looking for a fresh purpose. It wasn't the world she'd left almost a decade before. This was the world of conflict made manifest, just as she and her buddies had called for in endless coffee-room talks fifteen or twenty years before, but it wasn't anything like what she had wanted. She remembered the preacher at the family church, saying, "My people perish for want of knowledge," and as she put it in her memoirs, she said to herself, "Damn straight." And she set out to fix that. As she saw it, a lot of her old comrades' struggles had ended up as pitched battles because they hadn't defined the field of engagement right. What did her people, and a lot of other needy people, need? "Everything," she thought, and she decided to do her best to get it all to people who had nothing.

Word got around to friends she'd assumed lost in a haze of addiction and despair that "Mary's up to something interesting." In fairly short order she had teachers who were also doctors and farmers, engineers who were also teachers and psychologists, and other more exotic combinations at her beck and call. The first dozen people working for her held twenty-one doctorates and thirty-nine master's degrees among them. They made their way in old vans and refurbished sedans from the Jenkins cabin, which Mary adopted as her home, over the Sierras and into the desert with books, art supplies, army medical kits donated by friends who'd deserted, WW2 surplus film projectors, and everything else they could find to improve the lives of children in off-reservation hovels. Over the course of a few weeks or months, they'd teach what they could, try to help promising teachers from within the community make connections to colleges in the mainstream, and above all train their students in the arts of self-sufficiency. Mary told her new comrades, "We aim to make ourselves obsolete."

With time, High Winds got more sophisticated. Its gear is constantly being overhauled and updated, as are the techniques used by its operatives. High Winds maintains a permanent staff of about forty — ten to fifteen people at home base, coordinating the flow of resources and information about needs, and three to six field teams of four to eight members each. The organi-

zation enjoys a small measure of fame in the alternative-education scene, though Mary's thorough-going eclecticism has always drawn as much controversy as admiration. Her willingness to use any idea that could work, regardless (as she put of it) "of what scumbag came up with it," alienated more doctrinaire rivals on all sides. "I guess we'll have to be satisfied with actually doing good for people in need," she answered when staffers passed along the newest complaints.

The magical side of High Winds remained secret. Any stray allusion to the group's concern with the spirit world would disappear into the vast bubbling haze of alternative education interest in non-Western traditions. Mary experimented a few times with being more overt about it, but found that the hassles weren't worth it. There was some interference from Christian groups, but more from self-proclaimed champions of tribal identities who wouldn't accept any view but their own as authentic, even in the face of demonstrated success and support from tribal spirits. She quickly went back to requesting that her shamans and sages be discreet about the ministry.

Mary herself died after a series of heart attacks in 1994. She'd known it was coming, thanks to warnings from her ancestors. For several years she remained available to High Winds through her favorite fetishes. They went silent the day the Avatar Storms began to blow, and her successors fear she's lost. Her old Beat friend Michelle Rhodes now oversees High Winds, carrying on in the usual manner. Michelle isn't Awakened, but practices some minor linear magic and knows enough to let the strong-souled on her staff proceed. A company tradition of consensus and debate remains alive and well, and Michelle keeps the company small enough that it should remain feasible into the new millennium.

PRACTICES

After they finish an assignment, field team members get three months of leave. They're encouraged to take two months for purely personal time, renewing contacts with people outside High Winds and doing something fun for themselves. The third month traditionally goes toward travel in places new to the traveler, to see what needs there are that High Winds could address (and also to review the results of past missions).

The team members reassemble after their sabbaticals. If any of them want to retire, they get their farewell party now. (Mary set the pattern of not formalizing the resignation until *after* the leave. More than half of those planning to quit change their mind by the time they return.) New team members come in at this time, usually one or two newcomers to a team. In consultation with the High Winds permanent staff at Mt. Shasta,

California, the team members decide what their new venture will be. Headquarters keeps a roster of interesting possibilities, and members can bring up their own idea. Together they travel to evaluate the most promising candidates, and then work on getting equipment, permits, and the other necessities all lined up.

High Winds looks for a combination of needs, including:

- Nobody else is addressing the situation in an organized way. High Winds doesn't intrude on the Red Cross, tribal self-development ventures, and the like.

- There are multiple needs: not just education, but health care and/or poor nutrition and/or environmental contamination and degradation and/or lack of social cohesiveness, and preferably more complications at the same time. Where there's only one major thing wrong, High Winds prefers to yield to more specialized relief efforts.

- There is a magical component to the community's need. The community must lack a currently reliable intercessor, and generally must also face spiritual challenges as well as physical ones.

Actual field work takes, according to High Winds policy, "as long as it takes." Missions seldom succeed with less than six months' effort, mostly because of the time spent instructing locals in both specific techniques and the skills they'll need to teach themselves more when High Winds members leave. Missions that run more than two to three years also risk failure, primarily by becoming a counted-upon feature that locals make into an institution, killing the drive toward long-term self-sufficiency. The average mission takes about a year, but this varies wildly depending on the specific circumstances.

High Winds criteria for success include:

- At least one resident capable of teaching kindergarten through sixth grade classes, as well as basic curriculum and supplies for those classes.

- At least one resident in training, either locally via remote-learning or attending college elsewhere, to teach high school or equivalent classes, and basic supplies or a financial reserve with which to acquire them later.

- At least one resident capable of treating all the common medical problems of the community that don't require major hospital equipment or particularly expensive drugs, with an emphasis on combining folk remedies and cheap solutions with current medical knowledge. Either this person or another in the community must be capable of providing midwifery as well.

- At least one resident with Spirit 2 and one or more successful Seekings leading to favorable relations with local spirits, and the capacity for further study under spirit mentorship.

- At least one resident with demonstrated success in negotiating with relevant government and corporate bodies whose actions influence the community.

It's possible for one person to fulfill several of these roles, though High Winds prefer that they not *all* be the same person because of the consequences of that one person dying or becoming incapacitated.

Post-mission analysis generally takes from one to three months. Each member writes their own observations, with supporting data, and then the team compiles a shared report. There's very little pressure to get everyone to agree; dissent gets noted and included. When the final summary goes to the permanent staff at Mt. Shasta, the team members go on leave again.

USING HIGH WINDS

Dreamspeaker characters can work for High Winds, if they're so inclined. The permanent staff keep in touch with a wide variety of spirits, looking for people with the talents and inclinations the organization needs. (UnAwakened individuals with useful skills can also work for them, of course, and High Winds has a reputation as a place to come to do socially constructive, technically challenging work.)

High Winds can also show up anywhere there's a community in need, from post-industrial blighted districts of the United States to famine zones in Africa or Asia. While High Winds' workers definitely mean well, they may not always agree with PCs about what's wrong with a situation or what to do about it, even if PCs share the inclination to try and salvage a community from its wreckage. High Winds veterans tend to regard mages of other traditions as ill-informed dabblers, comparing them to early boosters of pesticides who didn't take the time to investigate secondary and tertiary effects on ecosystems. They have understandable pride in their successes and little inclination to risk their efforts failing because of others' bunglings.

Tensions can run particularly high when the new mages they discover in a community prove fit for other paradigms. High Winds doesn't actually coerce or intimidate initiates into becoming Dreamspeakers, but they have been known to leave other initiates more or less on their own, and to try to postpone those initiates' training until after the High Winds mission leaves. Good intentions do not lead to outright villainy or anything close to it, but do provide the Storyteller and players with plenty of potential for conflict.

ROBERT "OLD BOB" MILLS

Old Bob is the oldest member of High Winds who still regularly puts in field time. He was a teenager with



a head full of painful visions that he tried to suppress with heroin when he first encountered Mary; now he's a well-worn man who's looked into the face of many horrors and survived, and who knows that he can stand in the gap when others need it.

He has no aptitude at all for electronics, and has learned from bitter experience that he's mostly good for breaking high-tech gear. His expertise is in dealing with people: he's quick with languages and with the nuances of etiquette. He leaves the hardware to others, and focuses on negotiations. (When necessary, he can also be very, very intimidating.)

Magical development has always come slowly for Old Bob. He made his first few steps quickly under Mary's tutelage, but has had to fight for each bit since then. The spirits work with him readily to help him sense the world around him in magical ways, but seem slow to grant him power to affect it with anything other than normal human means. He sometimes worries about this, and whether it presages a terrible fate if he presses on.

Image: Old Bob looks like the ex-hippie he is, with long graying blond hair and a face tanned and cracked by years of exposure to the elements. His pale blue eyes readily show amusement, though he seldom smiles broadly because he's less than proud of his many missing teeth and decayed gums. When he's on his own time, he favors chambray shirts and blue jeans, but when in the field he makes an effort to dress like a concerned member of the local community.

Roleplaying Hints: You're doing the most important work in the world; it's an honor as well as an awesome burden. Furthermore, it's fun — you get to see

things happen. You take your duties seriously, and because you genuinely want to win the support of others, you're very careful to avoid offending them. You want to understand how they see the world, so that you can show how your goals fit with some of theirs.

Essence: Questing

Nature: Judge

Demeanor: Architect

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4 (Energetic), Charisma 3, Manipulation 4 (Empathetic), Appearance 2, Perception 4 (Fascinated), Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Dodge 2, Expression 3, Intimidation 3, Leadership 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Crafts 3, Drive 2, Etiquette 4, Meditation 2, Survival 2

Knowledges: Cosmology 3, Enigmas 3, Investigation 4, Law 3, Linguistics 4, Medicine 2, Occult 3

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Avatar 2, Contacts 5, Library 2, Resources 2

Arete: 3

Spheres: Correspondence 1, Entropy 1, Life 2, Matter 1, Mind 1, Spirit 3

Willpower: 7

Quintessence: 5

Paradox: 5

Resonance: (Dynamic) Inventive 2, (Entropic) Harvesting 1

ELIZABETTE JONQUERS

Elizabethette is the team member most grounded in an actual continuous magical tradition. Her family has practiced Voudoun in Haiti for more than a century and a half, since one of her great-great-great-grandmothers showed a great aptitude for communing with the spirits. Elizabethette grew up surrounded by the demonstrable reality of her paradigm, and awakening was difficult but not traumatic or unexpected. She showed a particular affinity for acting as a "horse" for Yemanja, a goddess of the great waters; Elizabethette was an accomplished rainmaker and water purifier by the time she finished puberty.

Her talents were not enough to preserve her village from famine in the late '80s, not even in conjunction with the other favored horses among her relatives and kin. When High Winds' team lead by Old Bob came, the outsiders worked with the established practitioner to modify their rituals so as to cope with modern problems. Pesticides aren't precisely like personal poisons fused with water or soil, but they're somewhat like that, and horses ridden together can purify traces that

they cannot remove separately. When the team's mission finished, the loa suggested (but did not order) Elizabethette go with High Winds to apply her gifts to people who had never known the loa or their power.

Elizabethette entered the outside world with little in the way of practical skills. She became interested in the making of tools — and the tools to make tools — and developed a real flair for it. She draws on her own experience as a recipient of High Winds help to translate First World concepts into locally obtainable practical means, in addition to encouraging devotion to the loa (often in their role as patron saints, where a Christian approach works better than straight Voudoun).

Image: Elizabethette is a homely young black woman, somewhat overweight, who wears nondescript dresses and heavy silver images of her most favored loa. When she's being ridden, she adopts a much more assertive personality and displays much greater than usual energy.

Roleplaying Hints: You're a woman with a mission. There's an entire world out there, billions of people, who have never heard the most fundamental truths of reality. You get to tell them the first clues. You go gently, knowing that it can be confusing, and you remember that bodies and souls must be helped together for lessons to stick.

Essence: Pattern

Nature: Traditionalist

Demeanor: Caregiver

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 4 (Passionate), Manipulation 4 (Earnest), Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 3



Talents: Alertness 2, Awareness 2, Dodge 2, Expression 2, Leadership 1

Skills: Crafts 4 (low-tech), Etiquette 3, Meditation 2, Performance 2, Survival 2

Knowledges: Cosmology 2, Enigmas 2, Linguistics 1

Backgrounds: Avatar 3, Dream 2

Arete: 4

Spheres: Spirit 4

Willpower: 6

Quintessence: 7

Paradox: 1

Resonance: (Static) Resilient 2

DILIP KHATRI

Dilip grew up believing that he was often possessed by demons. His family members are Lebanese Christians with a history of immoral behavior, from arms trafficking on up to serving on hit squads. As a devout boy, he believed that he was being punished for the sins of his father and brothers. He did his best not to listen to the voices and felt frequently tormented when they seemed to offer wise and kind words, since he knew that horror lay beneath them. Whenever he spoke to someone else about the problem, he met with only skepticism and dismissal as “just a phase,” if not actual accusations of pulling a prank. Thus he grew up miserable.

High Winds came to his part of Lebanon in 1982, helping repair damage from the Lebanese civil war and ensuing calamities, as well as contributing to international efforts to monitor the sources of civil disturbance. Dilip watched as his older brothers were arrested, tried... and released, because other relatives intimidated witnesses into silence, but the arrested brothers nonetheless went into more legitimate trades out of fear of future arrests. And one evening, as the sun set on the Mediterranean, Dilip felt the demons speak to him again, then heard one of the outsiders speaking back to them, calming them. He didn't go with the stranger, but he learned what lessons the mage could teach him. When he went to Caltech a few years later and met Old Bob again, they both accepted it as a sign that his place was with High Winds.

Dilip remains true to his Marionite upbringing. Let the others call what he does “spirit magic.” Dilip understands that he is commanding infernal powers. It is a dangerous calling, but it seems to be the challenge God has set before him, and he's glad to work with others who can help in it, no matter what their particular deficiencies of insight and piety may be.

Image: Dilip is a short, lean Arab man, with close-cut black hair and thick corrective lenses. His hands are



scarred from childhood encounters with broken glass and barbed wire, and contrast sharply with his preferred immaculate suits. Even in the field, he almost always manages to produce well-pressed and clean outfits.

Roleplaying Hints: You love God, but you are deeply aware of the mysteries of creation. You have no simple answers for your condition, or for the situations to which God has called you. Grace and sin are tangled together everywhere, and experience tells you that rushing to any hasty conclusions only fosters evil. So you watch carefully, do the good you see, and wait for clear signs about the rest.

Essence: Questing

Nature: Martyr

Demeanor: Director

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4 (Glamorous), Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 2, Awareness 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 2, Leadership 2

Skills: Firearms 2, Technology 3

Knowledges: Academics 3, Cosmology 3, Linguistics 2, Occult 2, Science 3

Backgrounds: Avatar 1, Library 2, Resources 2

Arete: 3

Spheres: Forces 2, Spirit 1

Willpower: 6

Quintessence: 9

Paradox: 0

Resonance: (Static) Healing 1



ROBERT "YOUNG BOB" TOOLE

Like many nascent Dreamspeakers, Young Bob grew up schizophrenic, tormented by not-quite-comprehensible voices. His search for relief led him from his family's home in suburban Belfast into the drug culture, then into smuggling, and finally to terrorism. He found moments of peace after acts of destruction. The mid-1990s weren't the best time to be an Irish terrorist, but his zeal brought him "loaner" assignments in Africa and South Asia.

He encountered High Winds in Sri Lanka in 1996. It was not a planned encounter: he was there to bomb the irrigation system Old Bob's team was renovating and decontaminating. The bombs went off perfectly, then Young Bob's world fell apart. The explosions spoke to him, drawing together scattered phrases from his years of madness into a coherent denunciation of his fears and obsessions. Furthermore, he saw what seemed to be angels around the sleeping bodies of the High Winds team, speaking the same denunciations. He felt he had no choice but to waken Old Bob and make a full confession, and submit to whatever punishment might follow.

Old Bob saw great potential and even greater misery in the young man, and took him with them. Young Bob

got started on his penance by helping clean up the damage he'd made, while Old Bob misdirected official investigators toward other terrorist cells. Back in America, Young Bob learned systematically about the magical world he'd entered. He continues to specialize in destroying things, he just chooses his targets differently: now he removes the detritus of past failures to make room for a better future to arise.

Image: Young Bob spent his whole adult life looking like a punk, and he hasn't bothered to change. He shaves his head so as to display his tattoos to best effect — a phoenix on one side of his head, a rose and thorns on the other. He dresses practically, with sturdy trousers and leather jacket over lightweight shirts, and carries a wide variety of tools (some of them even legal) in a duffel bag.

Roleplaying Hints: Deep inside, you're scared stiff. This is all very strange, and you've still got big debts to pay. Can you handle it? You cover up the fear with equally honest enthusiasm for your work. You get to do the things you're best at in the service of a cause that doesn't make your heart bleed. That's the best a man can ask for. You'd give your life for Old Bob and his friends... and you know it may yet come to that.

Essence: Primordial

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Rebel

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4 (Improvisational Flair)

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Crafts 2, Drive 1, Firearms 3, Stealth 3, Technology 4 (Demolitions)

Knowledges: Computer 2, Linguistics 1, Science 3

Backgrounds: Avatar 2, Contacts 2, Destiny 2

Arete: 3

Spheres: Entropy 2, Spirit 1

Willpower: 6

Quintessence: 6

Paradox: 0

Resonance: (Entropic) Explosive 1

URBAN TECHNOSHAMAN

Quote: *Trust me, I have connections — crime is bad here because the building spirits are angry.*

Prelude: You grew up in a large city and loved it. Being a shy and somewhat withdrawn girl, you took long walks through various neighborhoods and read tales of other cities and other times while your peers were playing with their friends. You grew up seeing both the advantages that can be found in US cities and the fact that even here, homeless people sleep in alleyways and hunger and hopelessness can be seen on the faces of far too many residents in poor neighborhoods.

You went to college in a far off city and found you enjoyed living there too. You did well at social science, but were not interested in working directly with people. Eventually you decided upon urban studies. You wanted to learn to make cities humane and wonderful places that could accommodate all residents. After getting a graduate degree and a well-paying government job, you found that you still weren't satisfied. Your life had become a maze of bureaucracy and endless, often pointless meetings. Your grand dreams were replaced by a gnawing fear that you would accomplish nothing and that your life would be lived in vain. In despair you once again started taking long walks, often walking all night, coming to work exhausted but with the sense that you might be getting nearer to your goal.

Then, one night it happened: a tall, strong woman walked up to you and said that she had been waiting until you were ready to talk to her. You were confused at first, especially since you noticed that her face and clothing kept subtly changing, like an endless series of masks and costumes. She told you that she was the spirit of the cities. She offered you a chance to work for her. At first you thought she was mad; then she made the streetlights blink in patterns and you realized you were in the presence of something beyond your wildest dreams. You agreed, and in that instant your life changed. With magical aid, you are rapidly becoming an important figure in city politics. You have recently met other shamans and realize that you have finally found the purpose you were seeking.

Concept: You're out to change the world. Mixing magic and a skilled manipulation of politics, you want to make cities better and more humane places to live. Part of these changes involves reawakening the magic that has slept for so long, allowing spirits to work with humanity to bringing hope and meaning into people's lives.

DREAMSPEAKERS

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|------------------------|--|
| NATURE: Architect | | FACTORY: Independents | |
| PLAYER: ESSENCE: Pattern | | CONCEPT: Urban Planner | |
| CHRONICLE: DETREASUR: Perfectionist | | CABAL: | |

ATTRIBUTES

| PHYSICAL | | SOCIAL | | MENTAL | |
|-----------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|
| Strength | ●●●●● | Charisma | ●●●●● | Perception | ●●●●● |
| Dexterity | ●●●●● | Manipulation | ●●●●● | Intelligence | ●●●●● |
| Stamina | ●●●●● | Appearance | ●●●●● | Wits | ●●●●● |

ABILITIES

| TALENTS | | SKILLS | | KNOWLEDGES | |
|--------------|-------|-------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| Alertness | ●●●●● | Crafts | ●●●●● | Academics | ●●●●● |
| Athletics | ●●●●● | Drive | ●●●●● | Computer | ●●●●● |
| Awareness | ●●●●● | Etiquette | ●●●●● | Cosmology | ●●●●● |
| Beast | ●●●●● | Ferocity | ●●●●● | Enigmas | ●●●●● |
| Dodge | ●●●●● | Meditation | ●●●●● | Investigation | ●●●●● |
| Expression | ●●●●● | Melee | ●●●●● | Law | ●●●●● |
| Intimidation | ●●●●● | Performance | ●●●●● | Linguistics | ●●●●● |
| Leadership | ●●●●● | Stealth | ●●●●● | Medicine | ●●●●● |
| Streetwise | ●●●●● | Survival | ●●●●● | Occult | ●●●●● |
| Subterfuge | ●●●●● | Technology | ●●●●● | Science | ●●●●● |

SPHERES

| | | | | | |
|----------------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|
| Correspondence | ●●●●● | Life | ●●●●● | Prime | ●●●●● |
| Entropy | ●●●●● | Matter | ●●●●● | Spirit | ●●●●● |
| Forces | ●●●●● | Mind | ●●●●● | Time | ●●●●● |

ADVANTAGES

| BACKGROUNDS | | ARETE | | HEALTH | |
|---------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|---------------|------|
| Dream | ●●●●● | ●●●●● | ●●●●● | Bruised | -0 □ |
| Influence | ●●●●● | ●●●●● | ●●●●● | Hurt | -1 □ |
| Resources | ●●●●● | ●●●●● | ●●●●● | Injured | -1 □ |
| Totem (City Spirit: All others) | ●●●●● | ●●●●● | ●●●●● | Wounded | -2 □ |
| | ●●●●● | ●●●●● | ●●●●● | Mauled | -2 □ |
| | ●●●●● | ●●●●● | ●●●●● | Crippled | -5 □ |
| | ●●●●● | ●●●●● | ●●●●● | Incapacitated | □ |

RESONANCE

| | |
|----------|-------|
| Dynamic | ●●●●● |
| Entropic | ●●●●● |
| Static | ●●●●● |

WILLPOWER

●●●●●

QUINTESSENCE

●●●●●

EXPERIENCE

PARADEIX

●●●●●

CIBTIBAT

| Propose | Efficiency | Damage |
|---------|------------|--------|
| | | |
| | | |



Roleplaying Tips: You dress the part of a skilled professional bureaucrat and expect people to listen to your ideas. You love your totem and regard it as your closest and most important ally. You like knowing other mages, but your own plans and your totem's wishes come well before any agenda they may have.

Magic: You have an uncanny feel for cities; you can find the heart of the troubles that even the best statistics could never reveal. Your magic allows you to gradually awaken entire objects and buildings so they can better serve their inhabitants and the city as a whole. Best of all, your Mind magic means that you can cut through many layers of bureaucracy by convincing people to go along with your plans. Most of your magic involves intensive meditation. When you seem to be staring abstractedly at a computer screen, you may actually be manipulating the structure of the Gauntlet.

Equipment: Power suit, cell phone, luxury compact car

ROTTEN CHILD OF THUNDER

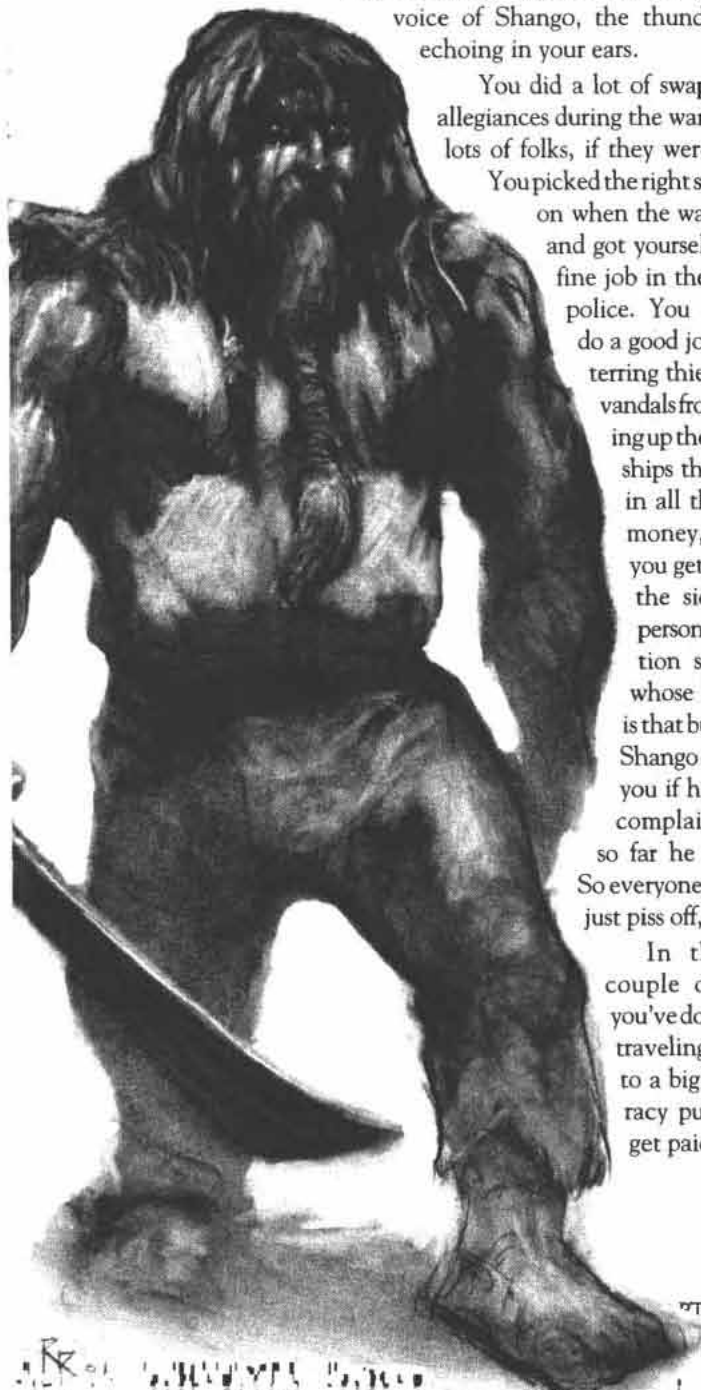
Quote: "Your money or your life" isn't always just an idle threat, you know.

Prelude: Look, life was hard when you were growing up, and you grew up hard in response. Is that any big surprise? Liberia is a little country with a lot of people and not all that many resources. There's a reason it makes such a big deal of being the "flag of convenience" nation — shipping makes money without requiring all the support that inland industries do. You lost half your family in the wretched civil war, and swore that you wouldn't go down alone. Sure enough, you didn't. It was close there when a gang of rival militia set on you one night, and you still don't really remember just what happened. You do know that you found yourself standing on their bleeding, battered bodies with the voice of Shango, the thunder god, echoing in your ears.

You did a lot of swapping of allegiances during the war. So did lots of folks, if they were smart.

You picked the right side to be on when the war ended and got yourself a nice fine job in the harbor police. You actually do a good job of deterring thieves and vandals from messing up the foreign ships that bring in all that nice money, and if you get rich on the side from personal extortion schemes, whose business is that but yours? Shango can tell you if he's got a complaint, and so far he doesn't. So everyone else can just piss off, right?

In the last couple of years you've done some traveling, thanks to a big anti-piracy push. You get paid to ride



DREAMSPEAKERS

| | | |
|---------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| NATURE: Bravo | | FACTION: |
| PLAYER: | ESSENCE: Primordial | CONCEPT: Rotten Child of Thunder |
| CHARMICLE: | DETENANOR: Competitor | CABAL: |

| ATTRIBUTES | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| PHYSICAL | SOCIAL | MENTAL |
| Strength: ●●●● | Charisma: ●●●● | Perception: ●●●● |
| Dexterity: ●●●● | Manipulation: ●●●● | Intelligence: ●●●● |
| Stamina: ●●●● | Appearance: ●●●● | Wits: ●●●● |

| ABILITIES | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| TALENTS | SKILLS | KNOWLEDGES |
| Alertness: ●●●● | Crafts: ●●●● | Academics: ●●●● |
| Athletics: ●●●● | Drive: ●●●● | Computers: ●●●● |
| Awareness: ●●●● | Etiquette: ●●●● | Cosmology: ●●●● |
| Brawl: ●●●● | Fierceness: ●●●● | Erigenas: ●●●● |
| Dodge: ●●●● | Meditation: ●●●● | Investigation: ●●●● |
| Expression: ●●●● | Melee: ●●●● | Law: ●●●● |
| Intimidation: ●●●● | Performance: ●●●● | Linguistics: ●●●● |
| Leadership: ●●●● | Stealth: ●●●● | Medicine: ●●●● |
| Streetwise: ●●●● | Survival: ●●●● | Occult: ●●●● |
| Subterfuge: ●●●● | Technology: ●●●● | Science: ●●●● |

| SPHERES | | |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Correspondence: ●●●● | Life: ●●●● | Prime: ●●●● |
| Entropy: ●●●● | Matter: ●●●● | Spirit: ●●●● |
| Force: ●●●● | Mind: ●●●● | Time: ●●●● |

| ADVANTAGES | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| BACKGROUNDS | ARETE | HEALTH |
| Contacts: ●●●● | ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● | Bruised: 0 □ |
| Destiny: ●●●● | ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● | Hurt: 1 □ |
| Resources: ●●●● | ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● | Injured: 1 □ |
| | ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● | Wounded: 2 □ |
| | ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● | Mauled: 2 □ |
| | ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● | Crippled: 5 □ |
| | ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● | Incapacitated: 0 □ |

| RESONANCE | QUINTESSENCE | CERTIBAT |
|----------------|---------------------|----------|
| Dynamic: ●●●● | ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● | Weapon: |
| Entropic: ●●●● | ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● | Effort: |
| Static: ●●●● | ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● | Damage: |

EXPERIENCE:

along and keep an eye on the cargoes. It's fun, too — you're making a good profit selling salvage from the gear of pirates so unfortunate as to mess with your ships. It's a big world out there, with lots more opportunities for an ambitious, strong guy to make his pile. The sky's the limit.

Concept: You're an amoral thug, or at least that's what conventional society would say of you. You use physical and magical power to get rich, and give precisely zero attention to the ethical consequences of your actions.

Roleplaying Tips: The only obligations you recognize are the bonds of contract and your own duty to keep your hide intact. When other mages try to talk to you about how magic brings with it all these other responsibilities, you just laugh. That's not the spirits, that's just their own weak consciences holding them down.

Magic: It's all about the thunder and the lightning. Shango lets you see his mindless children scurrying to and fro in the wires; that's Spirit. And he lets you call them out to spite your foes, or just anyone who gets in your way; that's Forces. Hair-splitting complexity is for people who aren't paying attention to the demands of survival.

Equipment: Guns (lots of them), knife, cell phones, portable radio, whatever goods recently defeated pirates had with them

LOST MEDICINE WOMAN

Quote: *You can't just lose a whole tribe... can you?*

Prelude: You grew up in middle America, the adopted child of infertile parents. They gave you a genuinely good upbringing, full of love and support. When you started to wonder about your heritage, they encouraged you in the search, and they were as shocked as you were to learn that the adoption agency had flat-out lied to them. You discovered that you'd been bought from somewhere in South America and passed along, part of the lucrative market in attractive infants, and shuffled off under false pretenses to your adoptive family. Appalled and disappointed, you turned back home and tried to reinforce your identity as a successful American.

In college, the struggle got worse. After your first experiment with hallucinogens, you kept seeing auras and visions. The outside reality of the spirit world pressed in on you. You also began to hear the cries of your birth family and their tribe, needing a medicine woman and not having one. You somehow managed to finish your degree, so as to satisfy your American family, and then joined UNESCO so as to have an excuse to travel in search of your lost tribe. You haven't found them yet, and no spirit you've talked to yet knows anything about them. Recently you've begun spending time with mages of other sorts, in hopes of getting help approaching the problem from another angle.

Concept: You were born to be a medicine woman, and you're ready to be one...but you don't have your tribe. The search defines your life, and you're willing to build up allies wherever you may find them. This makes you a useful if sometimes distracted compatriot in others' causes.

Roleplaying Tips: In many ways you remain a typical middle-class American woman. You went through a period of trying to be ultra-



DREAMSPEAKERS

NAME: _____ NATURE: Traditionalist FACTOR: _____
 PLAYER: _____ ESSENCE: Questing CONCEPT: Lost Medicine Woman
 CHARACTER: _____ DETRAINER: Survivor CABAL: _____

ATTRIBUTES

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|-------|--------------|--------|--------------|-------|--------|--|--|
| PHYSICAL | | | SOCIAL | | | MENTAL | | |
| Strength | ●●●●● | Charisma | ●●●●● | Perception | ●●●●● | | | |
| Dexterity | ●●●●● | Manipulation | ●●●●● | Intelligence | ●●●●● | | | |
| Stamina | ●●●●● | Appearance | ●●●●● | Wit | ●●●●● | | | |

ABILITIES

| | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|-------|-------------|--------|---------------|-------|------------|--|--|
| TALENTS | | | SKILLS | | | KNOWLEDGES | | |
| Alertness | ●●●●● | Crafts | ●●●●● | Academics | ●●●●● | | | |
| Athletics | ●●●●● | Drive | ●●●●● | Computers | ●●●●● | | | |
| Awareness | ●●●●● | Etiquette | ●●●●● | Cosmology | ●●●●● | | | |
| Brawl | ●●●●● | Firearms | ●●●●● | Enigmas | ●●●●● | | | |
| Dodge | ●●●●● | Meditation | ●●●●● | Investigation | ●●●●● | | | |
| Expression | ●●●●● | Melee | ●●●●● | Law | ●●●●● | | | |
| Intimidation | ●●●●● | Performance | ●●●●● | Linguistics | ●●●●● | | | |
| Leadership | ●●●●● | Stealth | ●●●●● | Medicine | ●●●●● | | | |
| Streetwise | ●●●●● | Survival | ●●●●● | Occult | ●●●●● | | | |
| Subterfuge | ●●●●● | Technology | ●●●●● | Science | ●●●●● | | | |

SPHERES

| | | | | | |
|----------------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|
| Correspondence | ●●●●● | Life | ●●●●● | Prime | ●●●●● |
| Entropy | ●●●●● | Master | ●●●●● | Spirit | ●●●●● |
| Forces | ●●●●● | Mind | ●●●●● | Time | ●●●●● |

ADVANTAGES

| | | | | | |
|--------------|-------|-------|---|---------------|------|
| BACKGRIBUNDS | | ARETE | | HEALTH | |
| Avatar | ●●●●● | ● | ● | Bruised | -0 □ |
| Dream | ●●●●● | ● | ● | Fat | -1 □ |
| Destiny | ●●●●● | ● | ● | Injured | -1 □ |
| | ●●●●● | ● | ● | Wounded | -2 □ |
| | ●●●●● | ● | ● | Mauled | -3 □ |
| | ●●●●● | ● | ● | Crippled | -4 □ |
| | ●●●●● | ● | ● | Incapacitated | -5 □ |

| | | | |
|-----------|-------|--------------|--|
| RESONANCE | | QUINTESSENCE | |
| DYNAMIC | ●●●●● | ●●●●● | |
| ENTROPIC | ●●●●● | ●●●●● | |
| STATIC | ●●●●● | ●●●●● | |

| | | | |
|------------|--|---------|--|
| EXPERIENCE | | PARADOX | |
| ●●●●● | | ●●●●● | |

| COMBAT | |
|--------|----------------|
| Wound | Critical Wound |
| | |
| | |
| | |

ethnic, but realized that it was silly to do that until you knew what you actually were. You approach the quest for your tribe with a certain confident optimism that comes from your adoptive parents. You're frustrated and often grieve about your lack of success so far, but you press on.

Magic: You practice an archetypal form of vision questing, entering the spirit world and paying the price in pain and blood for knowledge from local spirits. You can't range far beyond the Gauntlet, nor go deeply, so you have to move from one locale to the next and talk to the spirits there. You're acutely aware that some of your practice will change when you find your tribe; what you do now is partly based in anthropological reconstructions as well as the truth of your own experience.

Equipment: Camping gear, medical supplies

CULTURAL COUNSELOR

Quote: *I'm confident that we'll work through this problem — what do these pictures remind you of?*

Prelude: You were a morbid and strange child, fascinated by death, pain and the occult. You had few friends, and the popular kids always picked on you because you were “the weird girl wearing black.” Eventually, childhood ended and you went off to college where you wanted to learn to be a famous writer. At first, life was good — you finally found others who shared some of your eccentricities. Then, the voices started. At first you tried to ignore them. You just wanted voices that no one could hear to go away. Then, the voices began to keep you up late at night and became angry and abusive.

When you began screaming back at the voices, people moved away from you and exchanged uncomfortable glances. Eventually, you were so lost in your madness that you dropped out of school and could barely afford to pay for your tiny apartment. When the police found you wandering around at 5:00 AM begging the voices to leave you alone, you were taken in for psychiatric evaluation.

The drugs they gave you never made the voices stop, but at least you didn't care anymore. While you couldn't think very clearly, at least you could hold down a minimum wage job and you no longer screamed at invisible tormenters. Then, one day you forgot to take your medicine and the voices came back worse than ever before —

ghosts begged you to avenge their deaths, spirits asked you to perform incomprehensible tasks and demons described horrific tortures. A few seemed to be honestly friendly and curious, but their voices were drowned out by the others. You could take it no longer. You told them all to go away and they did. You had Awakened, and you suddenly felt better than you had in years.

DREAMSPEAKERS

| | | | |
|------------|--|-------------------|----------------------|
| NAME: | | NATURE: Caregiver | FACTION: Independent |
| PLAYER: | | ESSENCE: Pattern | CONCEPT: Counselor |
| CHRONICLE: | | DETERRER: Judge | CABAL: |

| ATTRIBUTES | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| PHYSICAL | SOCIAL | MENTAL |
| Strength: ●●●● | Charisma: ●●●● | Perception: ●●●● |
| Dexterity: ●●●● | Manipulation: ●●●● | Intelligence: ●●●● |
| Stamina: ●●●● | Appearance: ●●●● | Wits: ●●●● |

| ABILITIES | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| TALENTS | SKILLS | KNOWLEDGES |
| Alertness: ●●●● | Crafts: ●●●● | Academics: ●●●● |
| Athletics: ●●●● | Drive: ●●●● | Computer: ●●●● |
| Awareness: ●●●● | Etiquette: ●●●● | Cosmology: ●●●● |
| Brawl: ●●●● | Firearms: ●●●● | Enigma: ●●●● |
| Dodge: ●●●● | Meditation: ●●●● | Investigation: ●●●● |
| Expression: ●●●● | Melee: ●●●● | Law: ●●●● |
| Intimidation: ●●●● | Performance: ●●●● | Linguistics: ●●●● |
| Leadership: ●●●● | Stealth: ●●●● | Medicine: ●●●● |
| Streetwise: ●●●● | Survival: ●●●● | Occult: ●●●● |
| Subterfuge: ●●●● | Technology: ●●●● | Science: ●●●● |

| SPHERES | | |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Correspondence: ●●●● | Life: ●●●● | Prime: ●●●● |
| Entropy: ●●●● | Matter: ●●●● | Spirit: ●●●● |
| Force: ●●●● | Mind: ●●●● | Time: ●●●● |

| ADVANTAGES | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|---|
| BACKGROUNDS | ARETE | HEALTH |
| Arcane: ●●●● | ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● | Bruised: -0 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Avatar: ●●●● | ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● | Hurt: -1 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Dragon: ●●●● | ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● | Injured: -1 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Resources: ●●●● | ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● | Wounded: -2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Spirit Ally: ●●●● | ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● | Mauled: -2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | Crippled: -3 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | Incapacitated: <input type="checkbox"/> |

| RESONANCE | QUINTESSENCE | CERIBAT |
|---------------|---------------------|--|
| Dynamic: ●●●● | ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● | Weapon: <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Entropy: ●●●● | ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● | Enthral/Trance: <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Stance: ●●●● | ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● | |

| EXPERIENCE | PARADOX | CERIBAT |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● | ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● |

With practice, you learned to keep the spirits away or to only talk to the few that seemed friendly. Meditation helped you learn to control your own mind and body. Along the way you also found a few spirits who needed a friend as much as you did. You also became fascinated with insanity and went back to school to become a counselor. Now you help others work through their own personal demons, and try to teach those unfortunates whose madness is actually torment from angry spirits.

Concept: You have been insane and now you want to help others recover from their insanity. You like meeting other mages and are always eager to share information on insanity, magic and similar topics. Having been a mental patient, you don't approve of giving the mentally ill drugs and have worked cures with talk, patience and magic that some of your colleagues consider almost miraculous.

Roleplaying tips: Freed from years in the darkness of your mind, you are now cheerful, happy, and generally very calm and positive person with a strong personality. You can also be extremely firm and have no trouble telling people to shut up, or using magic to make a spirit flee in terror.

Magic: Unlike most Independent shamans, your magic is quite subtle — you never again want people look away from you. Complex doodles and words spoken under your breath can affect the people and spirits around you, while quiet meditation can expand your mind.

Equipment: Comfortable but stylish clothes, a large collection of meditation tapes, a recent model compact car

ELECTRONIC TINKERER

Quote: *I can build you a really sweet system, way better than anything you can buy.*

Prelude: You were always bright, and you loved tinkering with things. When you managed to rewire your parent's phone in fourth grade, they bought you some electronics kits to keep you busy. By the time you finished middle school you had built your first computer. Naturally, you went to tech school, where you studied electronics repair.

Your life changed when you took a class in automobile repair during your last year of school. You enjoyed the change of pace, and the instructor began paying special attention to you. At first you thought it was because he wasn't used to seeing a girl fix cars. Then, he asked you to stay after class and showed you a number of unorthodox—and frankly weird—repair techniques. You had never known that chicken blood could be used as an engine additive, or that bits of specially carved deer antler could help electronic ignitions work better. Once you graduated, you kept in touch with this guy and he began to discuss some tricky automobile electronics problems with you, while also talking a lot about how engines felt and how everything you worked on had a life of its own. These talks started sounding pretty philosophical, until you began to see that he wasn't talking philosophy at all

You're still not certain when, but somewhere along the line you Awakened. Once you realized that everything really *was* alive you enjoyed your work even more. The thrill of creating the ideal computer for a certain person or job, or fixing someone's computer so that it was perfect for them became even greater when you thought about it as helping the computer and its owner learn to live and work together. Also, being able to wake up the spirits sleeping inside dull factory-made electronics gave you a sense of making the world a better and more wonderful place. Eventually, you showed your teacher the latest version of your own computer and he told you that he had nothing more to teach you. You were now a free and independent Spirit Smith. Now you do only custom orders and your clients praise your work, unless they mistreat your creations.

Concept: You know the joy in building beautiful, highly efficient electronics. Not only do your systems work better than any commercial hardware, yours are practically works of art, with fine wood and brushed steel. Nothing else is a suitable housing for the spirits you awaken.

Rolplaying Tips: You talk to pieces of technology almost as readily as you talk to people. Of course, Sleepers rarely notice that inanimate objects tend to listen when you talk. Your dress in a casual jeans and t-shirt style, but the electronics and other items you carry are always custom models. If you didn't make them, you saved up the money to have someone else build them to your specifications. You are friendly and outgoing, but you get angry when you see

DREAMSPEAKERS

| | | |
|------------------|---|---|
| NAME: CHIRIBICLE | NATURE: Perfectionist ESSENCE: Dynamic DETERRMIN: Celebrant | FACTORY: Spirit Smiths CONCEPT: Tinkerer CABAL: |
|------------------|---|---|

| ATTRIBUTES | | |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| PHYSICAL | SOCIAL | MENTAL |
| Strength: ●●●● | Charisma: ●●●● | Perception: ●●●● |
| Destiny: ●●●● | Manipulation: ●●●● | Intelligence: ●●●● |
| Stamina: ●●●● | Appearance: ●●●● | Wits: ●●●● |

| ABILITIES | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| TALENTS | SKILLS | KNOWLEDGES |
| Alertness: ●●●● | Crafts: ●●●● | Academics: ●●●● |
| Athletics: ●●●● | Drive: ●●●● | Computry: ●●●● |
| Awareness: ●●●● | Etiquette: ●●●● | Cosmology: ●●●● |
| Brawl: ●●●● | Firearms: ●●●● | Engines: ●●●● |
| Dodge: ●●●● | Mediation: ●●●● | Investigation: ●●●● |
| Expression: ●●●● | Melee: ●●●● | Law: ●●●● |
| Intimidation: ●●●● | Performance: ●●●● | Linguistics: ●●●● |
| Leadership: ●●●● | Stealth: ●●●● | Medicine: ●●●● |
| Streetwise: ●●●● | Survival: ●●●● | Occult: ●●●● |
| Subterfuge: ●●●● | Technology: ●●●● | Science: ●●●● |

| SPHERES | | |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Correspondence: ●●●● | Life: ●●●● | Prime: ●●●● |
| Entropy: ●●●● | Matter: ●●●● | Spirit: ●●●● |
| Forces: ●●●● | Mind: ●●●● | Time: ●●●● |

| ADVANTAGES | | |
|-----------------|------------|-----------|
| BACKGROUNDS | ARETE | Willpower |
| Avatar: ●●●● | ●●●●●●●●●● | ●●●●●●●● |
| Dream: ●●●● | | ●●●●●●●● |
| Resources: ●●●● | | ●●●●●●●● |
| | | ●●●●●●●● |
| | | ●●●●●●●● |

| RESONANCE | QUINTESSENCE |
|----------------|--------------|
| Dynamic: ●●●● | ●●●●●●●●●● |
| Entropic: ●●●● | |
| Static: ●●●● | |

EXPERIENCE:

PARADOX: ●●●●●●●●●●

someone hitting or kicking a device that isn't working properly. You know that it is sometimes necessary to damage or destroy pieces of technology, but harming even factory-made items bothers you. Having to destroy a beautiful but dangerous handmade weapon can upset you for days.

Magic: In your hands, all manner of devices work better than they work for anyone else. Locks seem to open at your touch, and no one can retrieve data from a computer faster than you. Also, attempting to use devices against you is often futile. Guns misfire, cell phones are suddenly outside their calling area and cars pursuing you have an alarming tendency to stall.

Equipment: Small, kit built and heavily modified awakened laptop computer, awakened Motorcycle, awakened cell phone.





DREAMSPEAKERS™

NAME: _____
 CHARACTER: Tinkerer
 CHRONICLE: _____
 FACTION: _____
 ESSENCE: Dynamic
 CABAL: _____
 NATURE: Perfectionist
 DETEANOR: Celebrant

PHYSICAL
 Agile x2 Quick
 Dextrous _____
 Enduring _____
 SOCIAL
 Charming _____
 Genial _____
 Witty _____
 MENTAL
 Attentive x2 Insightful
 Disciplined x2 Wise
 Intuitive _____
 ABILITIES
 Awareness _____
 Computer _____
 Cosmology _____
 Enigmas _____
 Science _____
 Technology x2 _____



DREAMSPEAKERS™

NAME: _____
 CHARACTER: Spirit Spook
 CHRONICLE: _____
 FACTION: _____
 ESSENCE: Pattern
 CABAL: _____
 NATURE: Architect
 DETEANOR: Thrillseeker

PHYSICAL
 Dextrous _____
 Nimble _____
 Resilient _____
 SOCIAL
 Diplomatic _____
 Eloquent _____
 Persuasive _____
 MENTAL
 Attentive _____
 Creative _____
 Insightful x2 Wise
 ABILITIES
 Alertness _____
 Awareness _____
 Computers _____
 Cosmology _____
 Firearms _____
 Enigmas _____
 Etiquette _____
 Investigation _____
 Technology _____



DREAMSPEAKERS™

NAME: _____
 CHARACTER: Spirit Spook
 CHRONICLE: _____
 FACTION: _____
 ESSENCE: Pattern
 CABAL: _____
 NATURE: Architect
 DETEANOR: Thrillseeker

PHYSICAL
 Dextrous _____
 Nimble _____
 Resilient _____
 SOCIAL
 Diplomatic _____
 Eloquent _____
 Persuasive _____
 MENTAL
 Attentive _____
 Creative _____
 Insightful x2 Wise
 ABILITIES
 Alertness _____
 Awareness _____
 Computers _____
 Cosmology _____
 Firearms _____
 Enigmas _____
 Etiquette _____
 Investigation _____
 Technology _____



DREAMSPEAKERS™

NAME: _____
 CHARACTER: Tinkerer
 CHRONICLE: _____
 FACTION: _____
 ESSENCE: Dynamic
 CABAL: _____
 NATURE: Perfectionist
 DETEANOR: Celebrant

PHYSICAL
 Agile x2 Quick
 Dextrous _____
 Enduring _____
 SOCIAL
 Charming _____
 Genial _____
 Witty _____
 MENTAL
 Attentive x2 Insightful
 Disciplined x2 Wise
 Intuitive _____
 ABILITIES
 Awareness _____
 Computer _____
 Cosmology _____
 Enigmas _____
 Science _____
 Technology x2 _____



DREAMSPEAKERS™

NAME: _____
 CHARACTER: Spirit Spook
 CHRONICLE: _____
 FACTION: _____
 ESSENCE: Pattern
 CABAL: _____
 NATURE: Architect
 DETEANOR: Thrillseeker

PHYSICAL
 Dextrous _____
 Nimble _____
 Resilient _____
 SOCIAL
 Diplomatic _____
 Eloquent _____
 Persuasive _____
 MENTAL
 Attentive _____
 Creative _____
 Insightful x2 Wise
 ABILITIES
 Alertness _____
 Awareness _____
 Computers _____
 Cosmology _____
 Firearms _____
 Enigmas _____
 Etiquette _____
 Investigation _____
 Technology _____



DREAMSPEAKERS™

NAME: _____
 CHARACTER: Spirit Spook
 CHRONICLE: _____
 FACTION: _____
 ESSENCE: Pattern
 CABAL: _____
 NATURE: Architect
 DETEANOR: Thrillseeker

PHYSICAL
 Dextrous _____
 Nimble _____
 Resilient _____
 SOCIAL
 Diplomatic _____
 Eloquent _____
 Persuasive _____
 MENTAL
 Attentive _____
 Creative _____
 Insightful x2 Wise
 ABILITIES
 Alertness _____
 Awareness _____
 Computers _____
 Cosmology _____
 Firearms _____
 Enigmas _____
 Etiquette _____
 Investigation _____
 Technology _____

JUDGE, JURY, EXECUTIONER

Quote: *This one will rest in peace, just as soon as you do.*

Prelude: Your family is Armenian, which means that they've been touched by tragedy: the Turkish genocide a century ago, Soviet tyranny, then war with other ex-Soviet states. You always felt something deep within you echoing with each account of senseless slaughter. On the brink of adulthood, you decided that you needed to get out of the cycle of endless violence, and you took the vows at one of the newly reopened monasteries on the shores of Lake Van. For a few years you knew peace, praying and laboring for the good of your people rather than carrying on old wars.

The dead didn't give up their hold on you that easily. You began hearing whispers; first in the monastery graveyard, then everywhere you went. Louder and louder, the voices spoke of souls ready to pass on to final judgment — except that they were not yet set free thanks to the cycle you thought you'd escaped. They described in ever more explicit detail how wretched their condition was without an intercessor to see that justice was done, on the individual level even if it wouldn't happen between nations. In the end, you had no real choice but to take up the burden of being the avenger. So here you are, learning the arts of war from your uncles and brothers, then going off on your own to smite the wicked.

Sometimes you travel, partly to get the war materiel your family and their allies need and partly to seek out others who wrestle with the spirit world in search of advice or help. It at least brings you in contact with different ghosts.

Concept: The dead surround you constantly, competing for your attention. You know now that when you can punish an otherwise-escaped murderer, the souls that person ripped from life do pass on to final judgment, and a little bit of peace returns. Unfortunately, you live in a land steeped with unavenged murders, and there's no end in sight for you with this dark burden.

Roleplaying Tips: This is awful. "Let this cup pass from me," you've prayed again and again, but God does not see fit to spare you. So you try to do the best you can. You fear that your own soul will be forfeit for others, and you'd love to find some honorable way of getting out from under it all. You constantly scrutinize and second-guess yourself between "missions" so that you can act decisively when the moment calls for it.

Magic: You see and hear the ghosts of the wrongfully dead. They're strange, describing things more in terms of emotional states than concrete identities. You also hear echoes from living minds, and can sometimes match their patterns to the ones ghosts describe; that's how you identify your targets.

Equipment: Soviet surplus weaponry, monk's cassock, heavily used prayer book

DREAMSPEAKERS

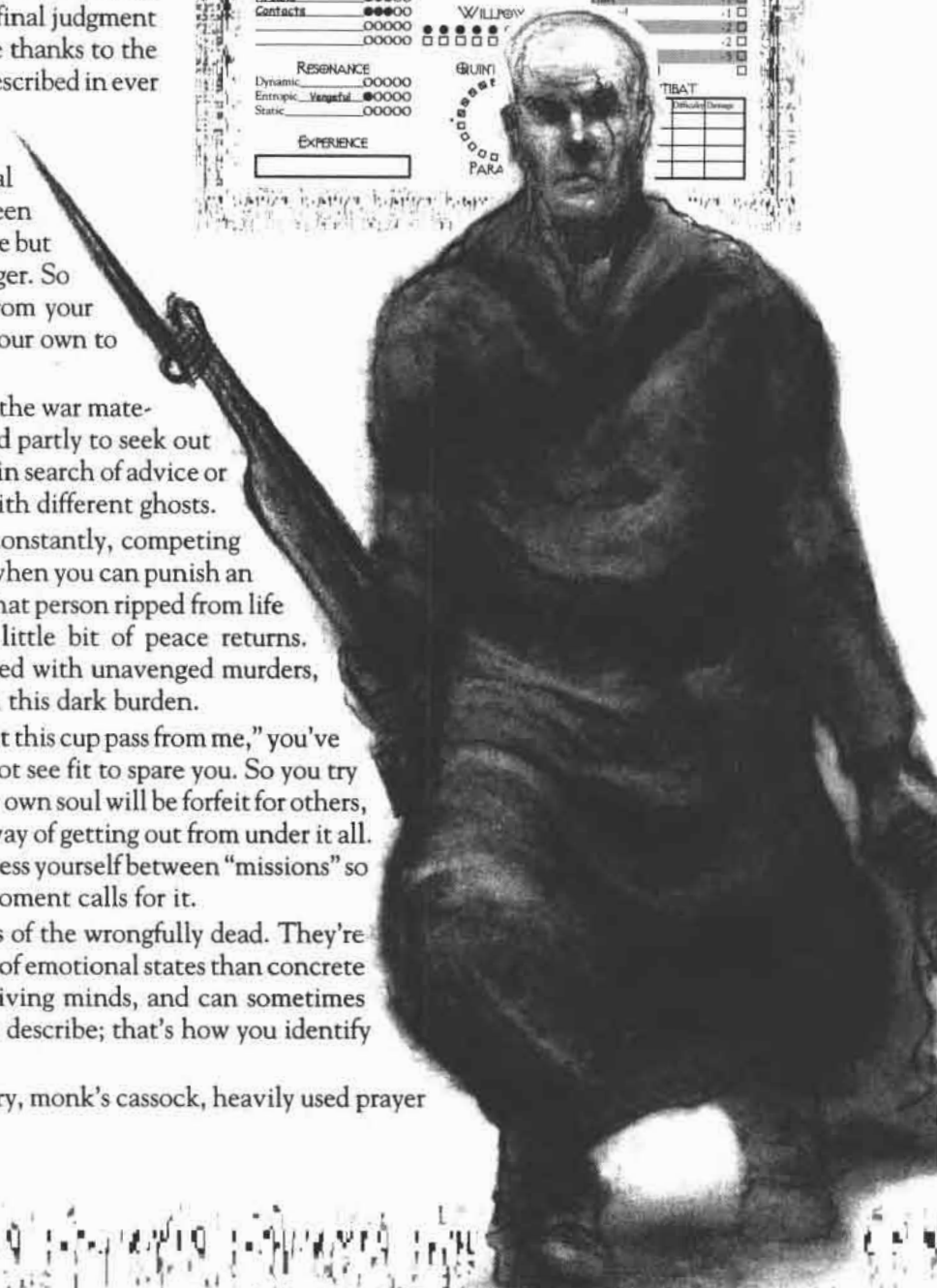
| | | |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| NAME: _____ | NATURE: Caregiver | FACTORY: _____ |
| PLAYER: _____ | ESSENCE: Questing | CONCEPT: Judge, Jury, Executioner |
| CHRONICLE: _____ | DEFINER: Martyr | CABAL: _____ |

| ATTRIBUTES | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| PHYSICAL | SOCIAL | MENTAL |
| Strength: ●●●● | Charisma: ●●●● | Perception: ●●●● |
| Dexterity: ●●●● | Manipulation: ●●●● | Intelligence: ●●●● |
| Stamina: ●●●● | Appearance: ●●●● | Wisdom: ●●●● |

| ABILITIES | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| TALENTS | SKILLS | KNOWLEDGES |
| Alertness: ●●●● | Crafts: ●●●● | Academics: ●●●● |
| Athletics: ●●●● | Drive: ●●●● | Computer: ●●●● |
| Awareness: ●●●● | Etiquette: ●●●● | Comology: ●●●● |
| Brawl: ●●●● | Firearms: ●●●● | Enigmas: ●●●● |
| Dodge: ●●●● | Meditation: ●●●● | Investigation: ●●●● |
| Expression: ●●●● | Melee: ●●●● | Law: ●●●● |
| Intimidation: ●●●● | Performance: ●●●● | Linguistics: ●●●● |
| Leadership: ●●●● | Stealth: ●●●● | Medicine: ●●●● |
| Streetwise: ●●●● | Survival: ●●●● | Occult: ●●●● |
| Subterfuge: ●●●● | Technology: ●●●● | Science: ●●●● |

| SPHERES | | |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Correspondence: ●●●● | Life: ●●●● | Prime: ●●●● |
| Entropy: ●●●● | Matter: ●●●● | Spirit: ●●●● |
| Forces: ●●●● | Mind: ●●●● | Time: ●●●● |

| ADVANTAGES | | |
|--|--|--|
| BACKGROUNDS Allies: ●●●● Arcane: ●●●● Contacts: ●●●● _____: ●●●● _____: ●●●● | ARETE ●●●●●●●● WILLPOWER ●●●●●● □□□□□□ | HEALTH Bruised: -0 □ Hurt: -1 □ Wounded: -2 □ Injured: -3 □ Critical: -4 □ |
| RESONANCE Dynamic: ●●●● Entropic: Vengeful ●●●● Static: ●●●● | GRINI ●●●●●●●● PARA ●●●●●●●● | TIBAT (Detailed Damage) _____ _____ _____ |
| EXPERIENCE _____ | | |



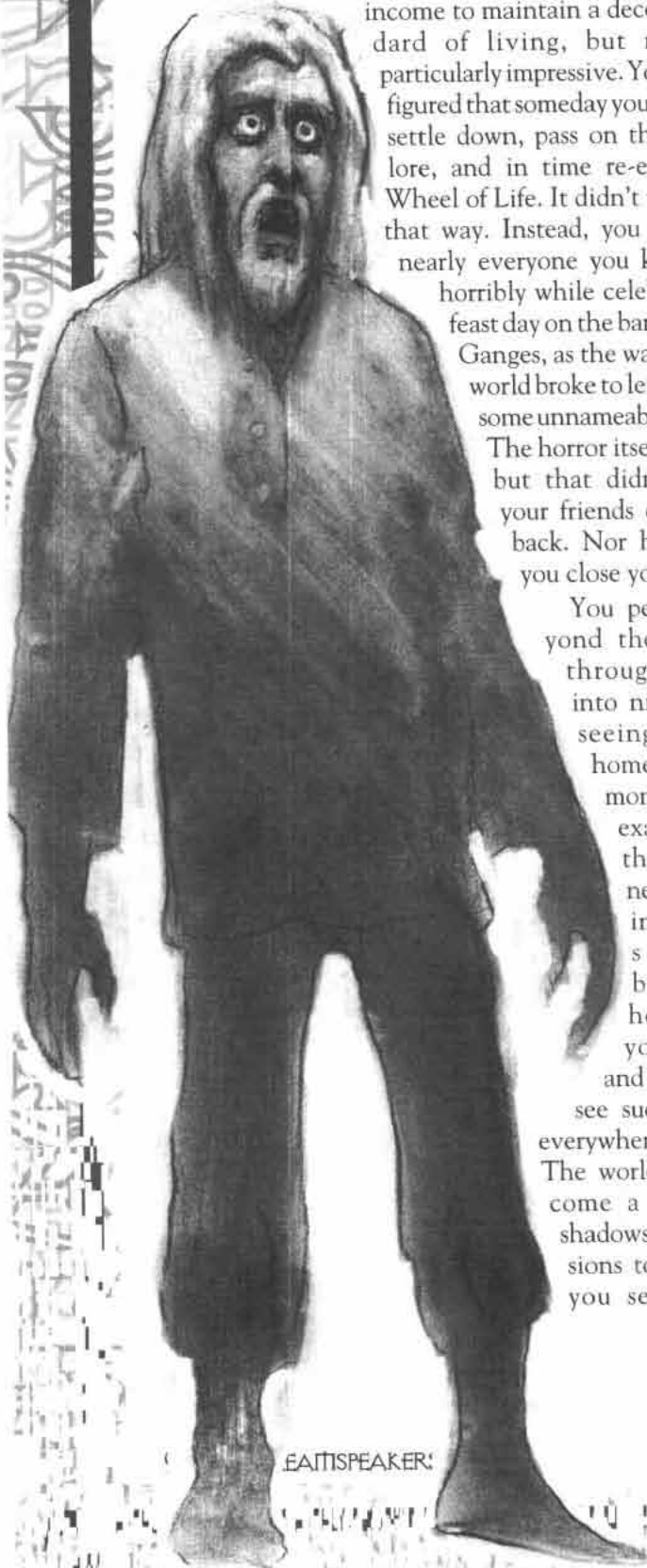
WITNESS TO APOCALYPSE

Quote: *I too see dead things. And things never alive. And more. Be thankful for your lack of vision.*

Prelude: Until the summer of 1999, you were a simple tailor in Calcutta — more fortunate than many, since your family's traditional designs were popular with the tourist trade. It gave you enough

income to maintain a decent standard of living, but nothing particularly impressive. You always figured that someday you'd marry, settle down, pass on the family lore, and in time re-enter the Wheel of Life. It didn't work out that way. Instead, you watched nearly everyone you knew die horribly while celebrating a feast day on the banks of the Ganges, as the walls of the world broke to let through some unnameable horror. The horror itself passed, but that didn't bring your friends or family back. Nor has it let you close your eyes.

You peered beyond the visible through holes into nightmare, seeing the homes of demons and the exalted and things you never imagined. The sight burned holes in your eyes, and now you see such things everywhere you go. The world has become a place of shadows and illusions to you, for you see every-



SEATISPEAKER

DREAMSPEAKERS

| | | | |
|------------|--|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| NAME: | | NATURE: Conformist | FACTORY: |
| PLAYER: | | ESSENCE: Questing | CONCEPT: Witness to Apocalypse |
| CHARMICLE: | | DETECTABLE: Gallant | CABAL: |

ATTRIBUTES

| PHYSICAL | | SOCIAL | | MENTAL | |
|-----------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|
| Strength | ●●○○○ | Charm | ●●○○○ | Perception | ●●○○○ |
| Dexterity | ●●○○○ | Manipulation | ●●○○○ | Intelligence | ●●○○○ |
| Stamina | ●●○○○ | Appearance | ●●○○○ | Will | ●●○○○ |

ABILITIES

| TALENTS | | SKILLS | | KNOWLEDGES | |
|--------------|-------|-----------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| Alertness | ●●○○○ | Crabs (Warning) | ●●○○○ | Academics | ○○○○○ |
| Athletics | ●●○○○ | Drive | ○○○○○ | Computers | ○○○○○ |
| Awareness | ○○○○○ | Etiquette | ●●○○○ | Cronology | ○○○○○ |
| Brawl | ○○○○○ | Firearms | ○○○○○ | Enigma | ●●○○○ |
| Dodge | ●●○○○ | Mediation | ●●○○○ | Investigation | ○○○○○ |
| Expression | ○○○○○ | Melior | ○○○○○ | Law | ○○○○○ |
| Intimidation | ○○○○○ | Performance | ○○○○○ | Linguistics | ●●○○○ |
| Leadership | ○○○○○ | Stealth | ○○○○○ | Medicine | ○○○○○ |
| Streetwise | ●●○○○ | Survival | ●●○○○ | Occult | ●●○○○ |
| Subterfuge | ○○○○○ | Technology | ●●○○○ | Science | ○○○○○ |

SPHERES

| | | | | | |
|----------------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|
| Correspondence | ○○○○○ | Life | ●○○○○ | Prime | ○○○○○ |
| Entropy | ●○○○○ | Matter | ●○○○○ | Spirit | ●○○○○ |
| Force | ○○○○○ | Mind | ○○○○○ | Time | ●○○○○ |

ADVANTAGES

| BACKGROUNDS | | ARETE | | HEALTH | |
|-------------|-------|-----------|--|---------------|-----|
| Contact | ●●○○○ | ●○○○○○○○○ | | Brused | 0 □ |
| Dream | ●●○○○ | WILLPOWER | | Hurt | 1 □ |
| Resources | ●●○○○ | ●●●○○○○○ | | Injured | 1 □ |
| | ○○○○○ | ●●●○○○○○ | | Wounded | 2 □ |
| | ○○○○○ | ●●●○○○○○ | | Mauled | 2 □ |
| | ○○○○○ | ●●●○○○○○ | | Crippled | 3 □ |
| | ○○○○○ | ●●●○○○○○ | | Incapacitated | 4 □ |

RESONANCE

| | |
|---------|----------------|
| Dynamic | ○○○○○ |
| Entropy | ○○○○○ |
| Static | Defining ●○○○○ |

EXPERIENCE

PARADIX

●

CONTRIBUT

| | |
|-------|-------------|
| Score | Info/Advice |
| | |
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where the stirring of the powers which make the world out of their dreams and wishes. Which is to say, you're hopelessly mad.

You closed the shop, sold the family's patterns, and set out in search of explanations. Now, a few years later, you understand much that you did not, but each answer brings more questions.

Concept: You're a latter-day Walking Hawk, circling the world in search of your fellow visionaries and seeking answers. It's hard, since they all speak in different frameworks, but what do you have except time?

Roleplaying Tips: Very well, your family's religion is at best incompletely true. Very well, you are a sort of mystic seer. But what more is there? What is your duty in this life? Where is the caste for one given to see through all things? You don't yet know, and you want desperately to find some new place for yourself.

Magic: It's all in the eyes. Indeed, you must work not to constantly sense all the spirits just beneath the skin of the world. You cannot command them, or even cajole them; you can only see, and try to act as a mortal individual of normal means based on what you know.

Equipment: Suitcases with a few favored heirlooms, sewing kit, voluminous journals

EPILOGUE: THE FIRST STEP



Robert stood on the front lawn of the burnt-out hulk of the mental hospital. Today it would rain, the clouds said. They were building up in massive dark columns, framing charred brick and twisted metal beams. The grass' vibrant green contrasted starkly with the remains. Someday, Robert knew, every work of humanity would one day stand like this against nature, and then in time there'd be something else.

He stood patiently, reviewing chants he'd learned from the old women in the Pyrenees to calm the troubled in mind. He kept his elaborate fetishes in his knapsack, fearing that the sight of overtly magical tools would scare off the man or woman whose aching soul called out for guidance.

There. Stirring in the hedges, same place as last time.

A woman came through. She was older than Robert—forties, he guessed, though of course one couldn't be too sure with the weathering she'd had to endure. Her complexion was a rich medium brown, the legacy of a great deal of racial mixing over the generations, and remarkably clean under the circumstances. Her hair

was close-cut and bleached by years in the sun to a very pale blond. Tinted glasses didn't quite hide angry, pained brown eyes. Her mouth, when she opened to speak, showed rows of rotted and neglected teeth. Whatever her figure might have been, it lay masked beneath loose, oil-stained coveralls. Robert saw he'd been right about her mechanical aptitude.

She took a single step toward him and froze. One hand clutched the bundle of writings and pictures he'd left for her, squeezing it over and over again. "Is..." She choked, short of breath and unsure of how to proceed. "Is it true?"

Robert nodded gravely. "It is."

"Show me."

"I'm going to get something out of my bag. Please don't be frightened." He kept his eyes on her as he swung the knapsack around and drew out a leather cup with a silk feather attached. "Now I'm going to set the bag down, and just hold onto the cup." He did that. Tension racked her frame: she didn't trust him, wanted to flee, but hurt badly enough to give him a chance at explaining.

He knelt and ran a hand through the grass, drawing up an old cigarette butt and a gum wrapper. "These will

do. My totem — the Rubbish, you read about it — likes these things.” With a single continuous gesture he dumped them into the cup, put one hand over it, and swished it up and down half a dozen times. “Listen.”

As his hand came away from the cup, the butt and wrapper looked up at him and smiled. “You are a friend of our father’s!”

Robert nodded as solemnly to them as he had to the woman. “I am. I have a guest here, who has never heard your voices clearly. Will you sing for her?”

They spoke together. “Will it make our father happy?”

“I think it will. She may not be one of his, but she’s certainly part of the family.”

“Then of course we’ll sing for her.” Robert tilted the cup toward her, and a strange music leaked out of it. The spirits of the discarded sing in styles that have also been discarded, combining last year’s pop music with tonalities abandoned before writing was invented. It was strange, yet not unpleasant, and it stirred something more in the woman.

“Is it true?” she asked again.

“It is,” he told her again.

“I want to do that.”

“Then you can. We’ll go see friends of mine who can help you get started. They’re not far away.”

Left to their own devices again after the people went away, the rubbish slept, happy in having done a good deed.

BIBLIOGRAPHY



Books

Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches Sabbath. Historian Carlo Ginzburg makes an interesting case that at least some of the people tried in the witch trials of Renaissance and early modern Europe were actually practicing a form of shamanism. His book *Night Battles* goes into greater details about a rural community where many people engaged in shamanic rites.

The Kalevala: This collection of Finnish legends describes the adventures of that shaman-mage Vainamoinen and his partner the smith Ilmarinen. It provides an excellent picture of a truly legendary and heroic shaman.

Out of this World: Otherworldly Journeys from Gilgamesh to Albert Einstein. Religious Historian I.P. Couliano looks at all forms of spiritual and visionary experiences, many of which could provide excellent inspiration for umbral journeys.

Shaman. Sandra Miesel has written a wonderfully fun and fascinating novel where the protagonist is a woman on a totalitarian alternate earth who learns to become a shaman.

“Shaman”, by John Shirley. After being out of circulation for a time, this story is back in print thanks to a recent bout of reprinting Shirley’s short fiction. This is a tale of shamanic awakening in another cyberpunk future America.

Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy. Mircea Eliade wrote this book almost 40 years ago, but it is still a classic and provides a wealth of detail about shamanism all over the globe.

Svaha, Charles de Lint. Back in print after years in obscurity, this is a science fiction/fantasy tale about a Native American shaman in the traditional style in the midst of a cyberpunk future America. De Lint shows options for urban shamans who are not techno-shamans.

The Way of the Shaman. Michael Harner, the same person who started the wonderful magazine *The Shaman’s Drum*, describes both how one can become a shaman, and provides much information about being a shaman.

Video

Serial Experiments Lain. There are shockingly few good, and not even that many that are non-offensive, portrayals of shamanism in film and video. This excellent anime series, however, does a truly amazing job portraying the technoshamanic awakening of a young Japanese schoolgirl. This series is a must see for anyone who wishes to play a technoshaman.

The Last Wave and *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, films by Peter Weir. In *The Last Wave*, Richard Chamberlain plays a white Australian lawyer defending a group of aborigines accused of murdering another aborigine. During the course of the trial, he begins experiencing visions. The unfolding revelations about his own destiny and the apocalypse waiting for his society are absolutely perfect for this purpose.

There is no shamanism in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, but there is an abiding sense of mystery and suppressed magic. A group of Australian schoolgirls go on a picnic on Valentine’s Day, 1900, and some of them disappear for good. The film presents the sense not just of puzzles that go unanswered, but of mysteries that cannot be answered in any terms comprehensible to the seekers.

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