
Grimoire of Grimoires™
GRIMOIRES
the World of Darkness
MAGE®
THE AWAKENING

"If you love me at all, Conium, immediately close that book and look no more into its pages! Do you not recognize the danger, into whose hands you have so willingly placed yourself? By God, man! I depart at once for Hamburg. I pray that you heed my advice, and that I will find you there still hale of mind. But if this book is as you describe, I cannot but fear the worst."

— From the letters of Palatinate, Mysterium scholar

This book includes:

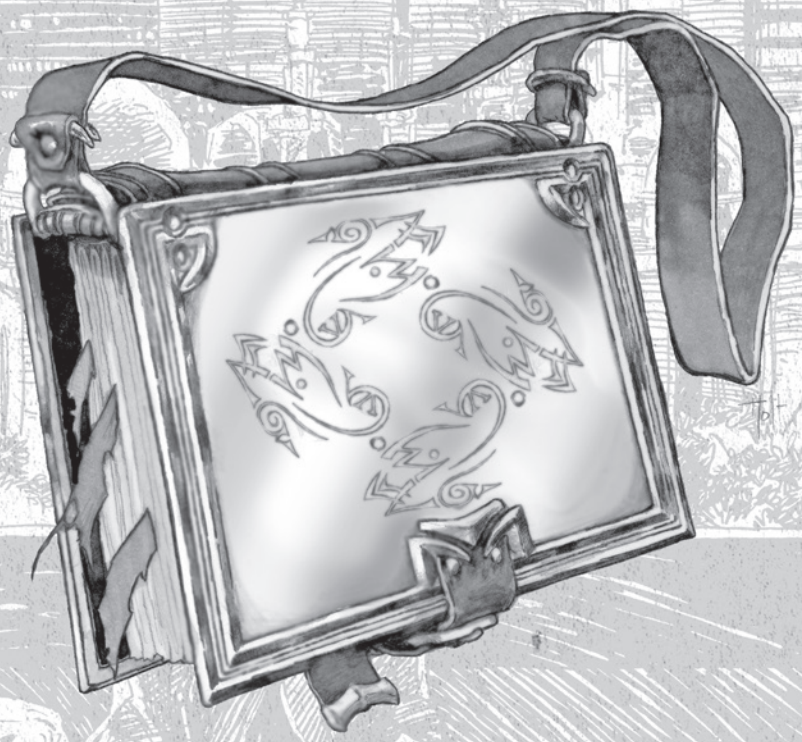
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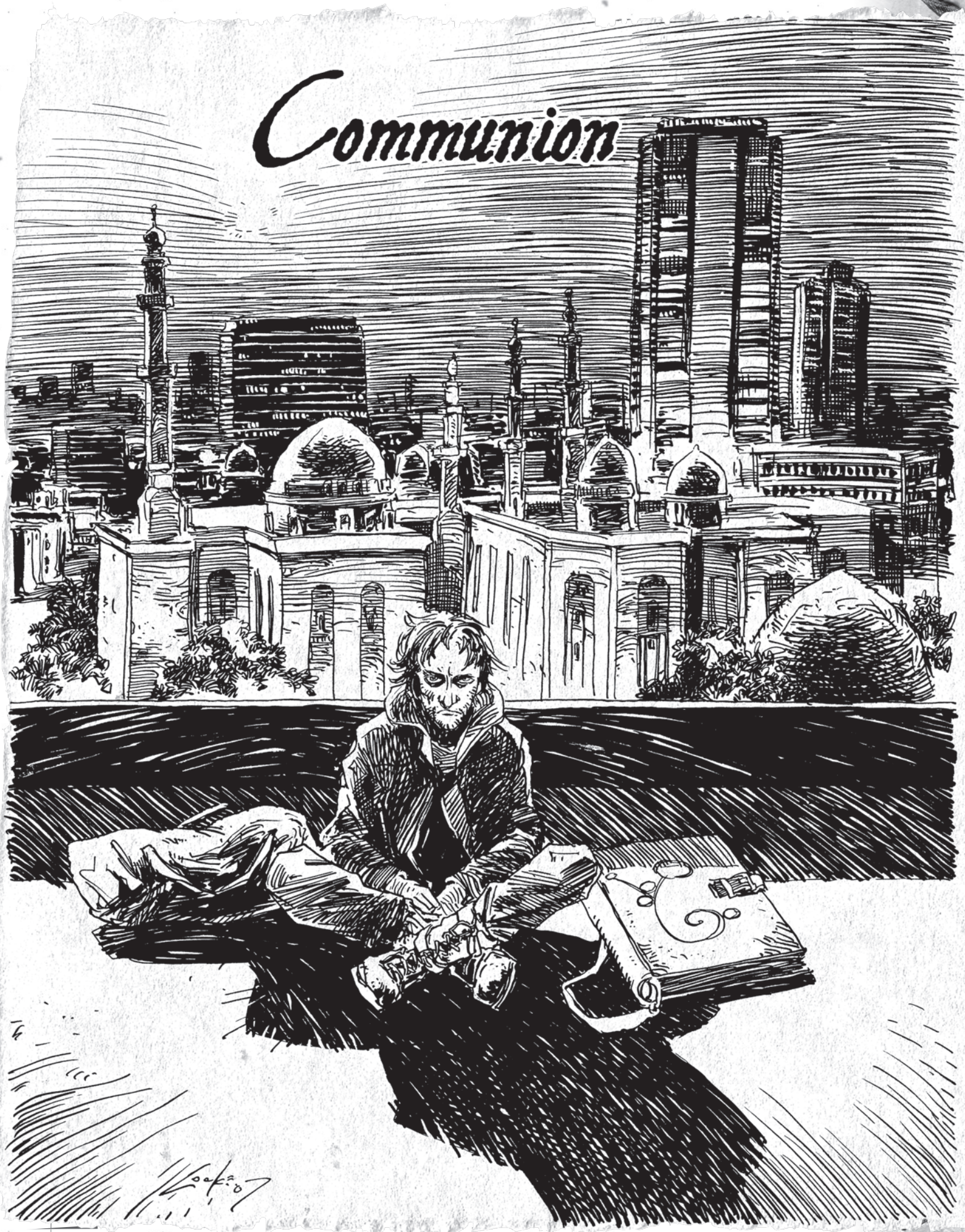
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MAGE® THE AWAKENING

Grimoire of Grimoires™



By Joseph Carriker, Jackie Cassada, Matthew McFarland, Stephen Di Pesa, John Newman, Malcolm Sheppard and John Snead


Communion

Honored Censor —

Please find enclosed the Ialdabaoth Codex, wrapped and warded as you requested.

Additionally, we are enclosing photocopies of Therios' journal. I know you requested the original journal itself, but after taking the time to read it, we realized it included far too much personal information about all of us, to say nothing of bits and pieces of Therios' own life and family. Additionally, our cabal is unified in agreement: the journal could provide too much sympathy for Therios himself, necromantically, spatially and temporally. He deserves the peace in death that his own naively curious nature denied him in life.

I apologize for being unwilling to accede to those terms, and hope it does not damage future dealings between us. I hope you can understand our feelings on the matter.

Respectfully,
Amerghin,
Lorekeeper, Cabal of Willow & Bone
Adeptus, 2°
Ordo Mysterium

April 19

Don't have much time to write. I'm exhausted, and I'd rather not fall asleep writing in my journal here. We just got back from the job the Chicago Athenaeum asked us to take care of. They were right to do so – those Seers used some kind of fucked up mixture of necromancy and goetia, summoning goetic manifestations and sticking them into corpses.

You haven't been scared shitless until you've had to fight corpses animated by howling gluttony demons that really, really want nothing more than to take a bite out of your fucking face. Custos actually lost two fingers and part of his hand to one of the fuckers. Cybele healed it up for him, but she can't repair the damage. I have to admit I'm worried about him.

You know, it's weird. I've pretty much been by myself for most of my life. Typical loner bullshit, I guess, growing up in foster care, taking off once I hit eighteen and just pretty much wandered. Once I Awakened, I still did plenty of that, until I found these guys. They're more than just my family – I've got enough experience to know that lots of people can't stand their families. I feel like I could be around these guys for the rest of my life, and not really get tired of them. Sure, we fight, but we're all still friends. Better than, I think.

Anyway, we got that load of books from the Seers all safe and sound. The Censor is going to be around in the next couple of days to paw through the material and make sure that *Understand, then, the importance of the immanent eschaton. With this gnosis comes the capacity for greater immersion within the permissive demiurge. The rites outlined within this section should be practiced only with the greatest of care around this damned place.*

Anyway. Bed time for Bunky.

April 20

Okay. So, I opened up my journal around midday to give a bit more detail on what we did last night, and I see that shit staring at me. Honestly, I'm not sure what to make of it. I took it out to Syrah to see what she thought.

Didn't make much sense to her, but she said that she's heard of Awakened using automatic writing sometimes. Receiving messages from... somewhere. The Supernal, hopefully, maybe like little love notes from the Oracles. Considering who we just interacted with, though, they could very well be from the Exarchs. While she was going on about how the Exarchs supposedly contacted the Seers through visions and omens, I absent-mindedly picked up one of the books she was going through and opened it to a random page.

There it was in the middle of the page — the exact material I wrote last night. I slammed it shut and she just looked up at me, annoyed. Syrah doesn't like being interrupted. I apologized and told her I'd let her get back to work, retrieving my journal and taking the book with me.

Looking through the rest of the book, it looks like a bestiary of some kind. Probably of Abyssal entities, but whenever it was written they apparently didn't actually use the term "Abyss" to describe them. The entry that I... copied, I guess... into my journal is from a section called the "Saklastic Archons."

You know, I always told myself that I'd never be one of those "nose in a book" types of mages, and yet here I am, planning a night of cracking an old dusty tome. Jesus. I swear to God — tomorrow, I will go and get laid.

Only the fortuitous can possibly grasp the relevance of the three qlippothic echoes, given the tightness of their weave into fate itself. Destiny forestalls the intention to learn anything about the echoes, leaving the transmission of this lore to happenstance and possibility.

Randomest chance manages this transmission, and though this author finds the lack of surety in this method, I am also compelled to admit that it possesses a sort of esoteric elegance. A mystery, the hierophant of which is luck and luck alone.

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which is luck and luck alone.

April 21

Shit. There it is again.

This is getting weirder. It's one thing to zone out and do some "automatic writing" while you're journalizing, I suppose, especially when you're tired. But I finished that entry and put the damned book away last night. I fell asleep reading the Codex.

I woke up with ink on my fingers this morning.

From what I can tell, it's definitely a bestiary. It doesn't radiate magic in the least, so I worked up the most potent Supernal Vision I could muster this morning, ritually. I should be able to see God's aura with this fucking spell. I hit the jackpot, though – I found a handful of various rotes sprinkled into the text, with the Atlantean components of the text woven into the illumination on the facing page.

I'm guessing here, but I think there might be some kind of effect on the book that I don't know how to look for. It seems to happen only when I'm tired or asleep so far, so it might be tied to my Oneiros – or the greater Astral as a whole. I've heard of things that can act as "receivers" to Astral beacons. Basically, someone sets up a repository of lore in the Astral, and then "programs" that beacon to send information to a real-world token. I still don't understand how it works; I just know that it does. The "TV station" on the Astral sends its signal through the Astral, and the message is received by the "television" that is the token. In this case, this book, I figure.

It also looks like – if that last entry "I" made is any indication – it's not something you can choose to receive. It's got to happen accidentally, and in ignorance. That's an interesting way of doing that. Sounds like the sort of crazy shit an Acanthus might dream up. Maybe that's why I'm the one getting the messages. Or maybe it's because I was the one least interested in the books.

Maybe I should talk to Kara about it.

April 22

Union within the self. This is called by the ancients the syzygos bythos.

The meaning of this phrase is undoubtedly obvious to one properly initiated. The deep knowledges that await union with the core self are not for the uninitiated, and can have catastrophic results in such instances. It is for this reason that the wise brotherhood must guard the access to this lore, while themselves partaking of it.

Through the syzygos bythos, the wise might cross the triune divine, uniting

pretty sure they know I have the book. I didn't volunteer that information, of course.

I can't fucking believe I forgot that the Censor was coming by today. While he was here, Kara said something about thinking that there might have been another book. Things got really tense in there. At least, I think they did. They seemed to, but I might have been imagining it.

I'm pretty sure the Censor suspects I have it — probably because my fucking cabalmates told him I do. They're all so anxious to suck the Athenaeum's cock at every chance, currying favor and shit. They'd totally sell me out, I think, and I'll bet the Censor has already offered them a reward for doing so. Fuck those guys.

I just made up my mind. I'm leaving tonight. I'll call them from the road and tell them I needed a vacation after that last project.

April 24

I'm pretty sure I'm being followed. I'm not sure how, really — I don't think I left much in the way of sympathetic links just lying around, after all. I also made sure to sever all my connections with them. They were really strong between us, like we were the best of buds. Sure, I used to think we were, but looking back I can see what a sucker they've played me for. I guess an orphan is pretty easy to manipulate when you pretend to give him that family he's always wanted. Fuck those guys. I bet they used magic to strengthen the sympathy, and there's only one reason you do that.

I hit the Tribune Building in Chicago. Crazy bastard that had it built back in the day incorporated a whole bunch of pieces of rock from places all over the world, and in each of the fifty states. He must have been a mage, or known someone who was, because that damned place is like Grand Central Station for the Space Arcanum. It's got sympathy with places all over the world, and the locals work to keep that sympathy strong. Now, I don't know much about the Space Arcanum, but I know just enough to follow in another space mage's footsteps. So, I hit Chicago, whipped up the biggest Time magic I could to keep anyone from past-scrying me and following where I'd gone and hit the Tribune. I found an out-of-the-way puncture in space where someone else had passed through a couple of weeks previously and pushed it back open.

I'm in Cairo now. I've never been here before. I'm catching a bus out of here tomorrow, so I'm just kind of squatting on top of a building here until tomorrow. I've got magics running to keep people

from really noticing me, so it shouldn't be too much trouble. The moon is full tonight.

I looked for that last entry by moonlight. I hunted and hunted, going over each of the pages painstakingly, looking for phrases like "Syzygos Bythos" and "Wise Brotherhood." Nothing.

I think I can say with some certainty that message isn't anywhere in the book.

I'm now more sure than ever this book is sending me messages from the Astral, most likely. Or possibly from another instance, possibly temporal in nature. Messages through time. Or given the first message, maybe the messages are woven into Fate itself, and just waiting for someone to pick them up. I have to admit half the reason I'm writing right now is just hoping for more of the It is in the proper conjunction of will and desperation that the holy communion comes.

When the self is merged with the deep knowledges that lie beneath the surface, that is the holy communion of the syzygos bythos. This transcends sympathy – there is no above and no below in that moment when microcosm and macrocosm are one and the same.

You know the rite, Therias. Perform it before it is too late.

April 26

I understand now. It has led me here because something comes from out of the desert. The ancient purpose of this Codex is once again brought to bear, and one of the Wise will do battle with the forces of the Abyss.

The Syzygos Bythos is transcendent. Ineffable. I understand so much more now than I ever did. It is almost as though I were Awakened anew. Atop the crumbling building in downtown Cairo I touched something, and it touched me in return.

My foe comes with the dawn. I must prepare.



Fellow Censors —

Please find a set of photocopies attached. Now that you have read them, allow me to enlighten you as to what you are reading specifically.

The originals of the above material were found approximately six months after some of my agents discovered the remains of the Cabal of Willow & Bone utterly slaughtered on the outskirts of Chicago. A month before, I'd employed them to retrieve a number of books from a pylon of Seers of the Throne. Among those books, apparently, was the Ialdabaoth Codex.

One of their members was taken by the Codex, and fled them. They realized what was going on, followed him to Cairo and tried to free him of the book's influence there. Unfortunately, he fought back with lethal force, believing them to be some kind of Abyssal entity from out of the Egyptian desert, killing one of them and forcing the others to kill him. I had a message that they were returning to Chicago immediately, and made plans to send people to pick up the book that evening.

By the time my agents arrived, all members of the Cabal of Willow & Bone were dead, slaughtered by some unknown entity, and the only one of my agents to try and scry the scene through postcognition was driven insane by the attempt. Their sanctum was declared a threat by the Hierarch of Chicago and sealed off.

The above letter and photocopies were found six months later in Guadalajara, Mexico.

Consider yourselves warned of the dangers of this Ialdabaoth Codex. I am offering a substantial reward for its seizure, and have a spatial vault prepared for its safe storage.

Deepest regards,

Anoxides,

Anoxides

Acting Censor, Chicago Athenaeum

Ordo Mysterium

Credits

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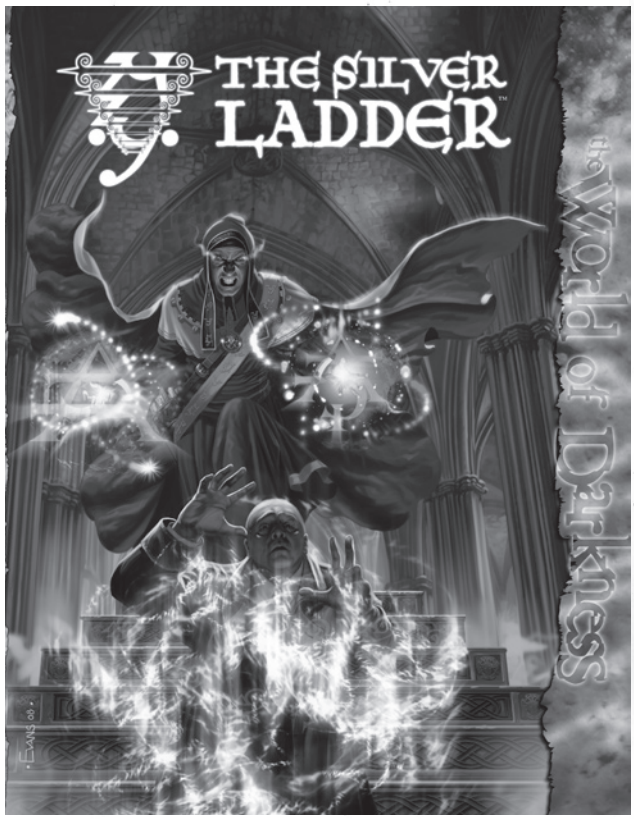
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Coming Next for Mage: The Awakening



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Grimoire of Grimoires™

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INTRODUCTION

For the last two decades of his life
Amos Tuttle had lived in increasing seclusion
among books collected from all parts of the world:
old, worm-eaten texts,
with titles that would have frightened away a less hardened man...
— August W. Derleth, *The Return of Hastur*

It's a rare and peculiar mage with no interest in books. Even Sleepers have produced reams of philosophy concerning the power of the word, particularly as written down. A book preserves the wisdom of those who have come before in ways an oral tradition cannot; a multitude of books contains an entire people's worth of knowledge. And of the many books available in the World of Darkness, some contain a power that goes beyond simple knowledge. Some hide the Supernal in their pages.

They're waiting out there, in old libraries and rarely visited bookstores, in attics and car trunks.

And they want to be read.

Theme and Mood

The motif of the occult book goes hand in hand with a theme of hidden and sometimes forbidden knowledge. This is certainly the case with grimoires. The knowledge found within them is not marked for just anyone, and in many cases it is a direct threat to the reader (or listener) who doesn't have the skill and wisdom to use it wisely. What should a mage do with the knowledge contained in a rare and dreaded grimoire? Does she have a responsibility to use it well or a responsibility to refuse to use it at all?

As variable as the grimoires contained in this book are, it's difficult to predict a consistent mood. *The Ialdabaoth Codex* is a work of Abyssal dread that is quite unlike the reassuring presence of *The Book of Life*. If anything, the question of what a grimoire contains, for good or for ill, reinforces the overall mood of mystery that permeates **Mage: The Awakening**. It may run just a touch more to the suspicious in some cases, as there is always a certain level of uncertainty about an author's true intentions; in others, a more fervent curiosity may take hold. There is just so much that can be learned.

How to Use This Book

Grimoire of Grimoires is a modular book containing eighteen different grimoires of varying forms and natures. Some of them are fairly straightforward repositories of rotes, but many have some particularly distinct form and many more have certain safeguards that make them dangerous to their owners. Each one should be ready to be dropped neatly into the chronicle of your choice, perhaps as a goal for a character searching for new enlightenment and power, perhaps as the tool of a dangerous antagonist.

Some grimoires masquerade as other books entirely, such as *The Ancient Lands Pentalogy* (known as a massively popular five-book fantasy series) and *The Book of Transformation* (which changes its own appearance from time to time). Some are not books at all, such as the infamous *Hildebrand Recording* or the black-metal album *Dark Revolution*. Some grant particular blessings to the mage who owns them, such as the uncanny navigational ability of *Lark Demonde's Travels*; others will even teach the reader a Legacy, although the gift is not always entirely benign. And, of course, many have dangerous effects on the world around them; *Le Livre Rouge*, for instance, can cause all manner of trouble for a cabal of mages who never so much as crack its cover. The variety ranges from a peculiar dreamlike

wonder to psychological struggle to outright horror; it's our hope that you will find many different uses for the works contained herein.

Researching Grimoires

Grimoires don't appear in a vacuum. Most appear as books or other repositories of information that might be of interest to a curious Sleeper. As such, a grimoire might have been mentioned in various documents or other books, even mundane ones. It's difficult to tell whether a reference actually denotes something touched by the Supernal, of course, but you never know just where the critical clue to a grimoire's location or history might be found.

The research rules on page 55 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook** present some basics for performing research, but this is generally research of the mundane sort. This book makes use of the advanced research guidelines that first appeared in **Intruders: Encounters with the Abyss** as an alternate means for players to research the appearances and natures of the works found within. This ruleset is quite optional, but may provide more roleplaying meat for a session if the group is interested.

Each entry in this book is accompanied by a sidebar entitled "Researching the [Grimoire Name]," with the following format:

Capping Skill: Though this research roll uses the basic rules presented on page 55 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, it possesses a capping Skill. In essence, the researcher's player (and those of any assistants, when using Teamwork) rolls Intelligence + Academics or Intelligence + the Skill listed here, whichever is less. If the researcher does not possess the Skill, his player rolls Intelligence –3, for an unskilled roll.

Action: All research rolls are Extended Actions. This section elucidates many total successes are necessary to discover the appropriate information.

Few libraries will have all the information necessary to provide the full details on any grimoire. A researcher seeking information about any particular grimoire may make only the number of research rolls equal to the rating of the Library Merit +1 before needing to seek another source.

Research Time: Normal research rolls are made once every thirty minutes, but researching the backstory of a grimoire is rather more difficult. Sleeper sources rarely mention the key details that would make one stand out, and some grimoires seem to enjoy a kind of anonymity similar to the Occultation Merit, making it difficult to identify them even by magic. This listing indicates the time between such rolls. Most times vary between an hour and a day per roll. The time listed is the basic time; the time after the semi-colon is the research time for those mages who are doing research in a library they themselves own through use of the Library Merit.

Appropriate Libraries: Grimoires tend to be referenced only in works of a specific nature. This category lists the areas of focus a library must have (see the Library Merit, **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 85, or **World of Darkness: Second Sight**, p. 113) in order to allow research on that topic there.

At the Storyteller's discretion, a bit of information may be found on some manifestations that are usually noticed by mortals. In these cases, a mage might begin researching among more mundane sources of information, but these rapidly dry up. Each such roll is made at a cumulative –1 penalty, usually forcing the researcher to abandon a fruitless Internet or mundane library search and go seeking the specialized lore kept by his cabal or other mages.

Possible Modifiers: Potential modifiers to the research roll are listed here.

Information by Successes: Playing through research as an extended roll allows the characters to uncover general information, which then leads to more specific references, and receive that information as they find it. To aid in this, this section lists bits and scraps of information, revealing what the researcher may be discovering by accumulated successes.

THE ANCIENT LANDS PENTALOGY

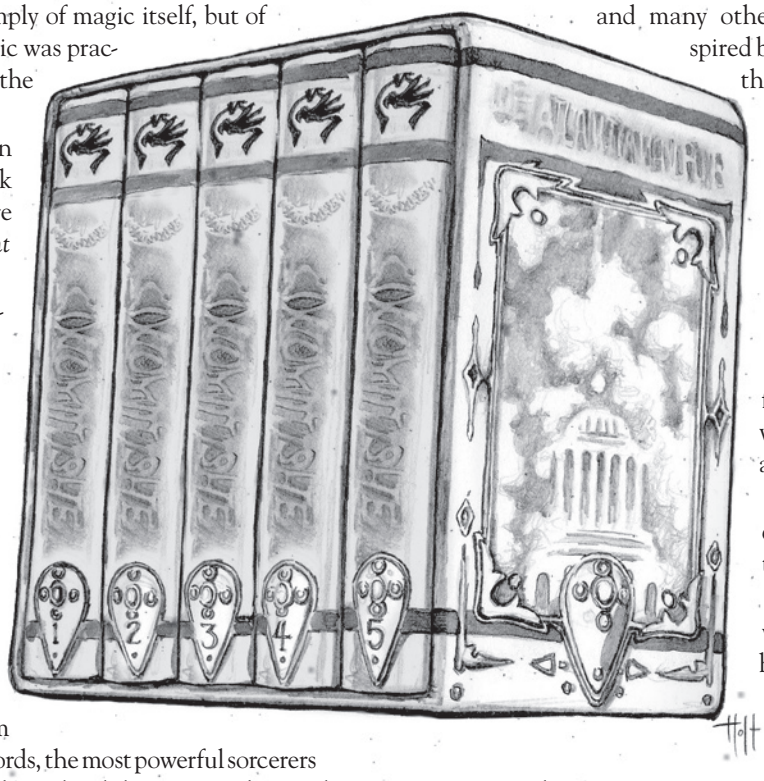
"Don't you understand? Magic isn't yours. It doesn't belong to you, and you have no right to try and keep it for yourself. It belongs to everyone. Every person that can dream, that can hope, that can feel — magic is the birthright of every person, in every nation of the Ancient Land, and to try and keep it from them makes you worse than any mad god or demon you claim to be protecting them from."

— Soter, confronting the Regent in Silver, *A Blinding Light*

Some grimoires are ancient, changing the history of the Awakened as mages bargain, cajole and outright steal them from one another. Such relics of the past grant a glimpse into the nature not simply of magic itself, but of the ways in which magic was practiced during the time of the grimoire's creation.

If this is true, then many hesitate to think what mages of the future will make of *The Ancient Lands Pentalogy*.

To Sleepers, *The Ancient Lands Pentalogy* is a best-selling five-book fantasy series. It follows the young commoner, Soter, who discovers that he has inexplicably gained magical powers, while hard at work in his father's workshop, with nearly disastrous results. In short order, he finds himself on the run from the agents of the Four Lords, the most powerful sorcerers in the Ancient Lands, who jealously keep magic the privilege of the upper classes, forcing commoners who demonstrate magical talents to swear fealty to them.



The struggles of Soter against the Four Lords span five books, each broadening the history of the Ancient Lands, and telling the story of the Great Emperor, the first sorcerer, whose return the Four Lords await. The novels, written by an American truck driver, are fantastically successful, spawning toy lines, comic books, roleplaying games and even two movies (with movie adaptations of the last three books already contracted).

Each of the novels has hit bestseller lists all over the world, and fans of the series have formed something of their own subculture within fan circles, producing stories, artwork and many other creative endeavors inspired by Soter's journeys through the Ancient Lands. Gaming and science fiction/fantasy conventions run exhaustive roleplaying game scenarios using, and discussion panels about, the setting and characters, and the distinctive garb of the characters in the series makes them a favorite inspiration for fans wanting to dress in costume at such gatherings.

The Awakened, however, see something else in the *Ancient Lands* series.

Those who read the story within the book cannot help but draw connections. The past of the Ancient Lands is shrouded in the fog of history, though everyone knows it was a magical utopia of blissful prosperity and joy ruled by the powerful and wise Great Emperor. Because of the pride and foolishness of the nobility, however, the Great Emperor died to preserve magic, though not before prophesizing his own messianic return.

The Silver Ladder cannot help but find something of themselves in the grasping, jealous Regent in Silver, who sets the great chair directly in front of the Emperor's throne. Though he reassures the people of the Ancient Lands that the works of the Great Emperor survive in him and his

house, he greedily snatches up every magical trinket and talented young magician to serve the Four Lords.

The Master of Tomes is too much like the archetypal Mysterium magus, insisting that all tomes of magic and lore — indeed, all learning at all — become the property of his Great Library, the keys to which he guards jealously. His brother, the Lord of Assassins, governs the tyrannical secret police of the Ancient Lands, using terror and assassination to uphold the regime of the Four Lords, its agents going about in concealing veils and masks. What the Lord of Assassins cannot accomplish for the Four Lords, the Imperial Headsman and his terrible sorcerous armies can, wielding frightening battle-sorceries with impunity.

Into this place of tyranny comes the young hero Soter, who refuses to allow his talents to be manipulated and controlled by the Four Lords. He is a tinkerer and brilliant public speaker, and during his time in exile he aids the common folk, who teach him the little bits of lore they have created for themselves and hide him from the agents of the Four Lords, even though doing so costs many of them their lives. In the end, young Soter is revealed to be the reincarnation of the Great Emperor, though the Four Lords would rather kill him than admit the young charismatic rebel who publicly flouts their authority is the rightful ruler of the Ancient Lands.

As aggravating as the near-satire of the Atlantean Orders is, however, there is something else to these books. Certain copies — those that come from the original author — contain more than simply well-written scenes of dialogue and interesting descriptions of magic. Some copies of *The Ancient Lands Pentalogy* actually contain rotes. While the majority of the rotes in these books are distinctly Free Council rotes, some of the descriptions of spells are actually rotes of the other Orders. These books are easy to identify: they contain illustrations.

Each such illustration is surrounded by a border and depicts a scene from the book in lavish detail. The strange border of the page itself is clearly marked with Atlantean writing, and the illustration demonstrates the mudra used to perform that rote, although such gestures are often cunningly concealed (in at least one case performed by a statue nearby rather than any of the actual characters).

Needless to say, this fact not only antagonizes the members of those Orders, but has actually negatively impacted relations between the Free Council and other Orders in some areas where *The Ancient Lands Pentalogy* grimoires have passed among members of the Council.

⟨A Letter, circulated among the Epopts of the Guardians of the Veil⟩

Please find enclosed five softcover novels. I advise becoming familiar with the content of these novels, as it potentially constitutes a breach of the Mysteries — or at the very least the beginning of one. Though published as fiction, these novels are written by one of the Awakened, specifically, one or more members of the Free Council. Though they contain archetypes clearly meant to satirize and criticize the Orders of the Atlantean Diamond, they do not in and of themselves present a threat so much as a slap in the face.

All Epopts should be aware, however, that versions of these novels are circulated among the members of the Free Council as grimoires. Of interest to us is the fact that at least three of these grimoires are inscribed with rotes stolen from other Atlantean Orders, acquired through defection in at least two cases, and flat-out espionage in at least four others.

Those responsible for the theft of these rotes are unknown, but our primary concern at the moment is preventing the wide dissemination of these Order secrets. Their willful spread constitutes a strike at the peaceful coexistence of the Free Council and the Atlantean Orders, and though the Council cannot be held responsible as a group for these works, any individuals possessing or most especially passing them on to others must be considered actively antagonistic toward our respective Orders.

At this point, two of the original manuscripts are in the hands of the Censor of Oxford's Athenaeum, while a third rests in my care. Despite this, copies of these books — generally created through simple Prime and Matter magics — have been spotted all over the world. Members of the Free Council often conceal the grimoires mundanely within the bookcovers of mundane editions of the book, and magically through the use of Resonance-concealing Prime magics.

Please keep an eye out for any grimoire versions of these novels.

Ever vigilant,

Fidelitus,

Epopt, Fenswick Caucus, Guardians of the Veil

An Ancient Secret

Book One of The Ancient Lands Pentalogy

The first book, *An Ancient Secret*, details the coming of age story of young Soter. It starts with the young man hard at work in his father's workshop when disaster happens. Rather than injuring him, however, he reacts magically, preventing harm from coming to himself. He cannot prevent injury to his father, however, who is badly burned. Shortly thereafter, the Minotaur, the black-clad, veiled secret police whose symbol is an elaborate labyrinth design, visit his house, following divinations that reveal the emergence of a new magician. Soter insists that they use their magic to help his father, but the Minotaur captain arrogantly refuses to do so, killing Soter's father out of spite when the boy becomes too insistent.

This precipitates Soter's flight from the Minotaur, aided by his neighbors. The rest of the book details his continued attempts to escape the wrath of the Lord of Assassins, evading ever more potent agents of the Minotaur, finally culminating in an encounter with the Lord of Assassins in the center of the Labyrinth citadel of the Ancient Lands' secret police force. There, Soter meets the Apostate, an old, rebellious wizard imprisoned and tortured for his secrets for many years by the Lord of Assassins. For days they evade the Lord of Assassins by hiding in the terrifying Labyrinth itself, concealing their passage while the Apostate teaches Soter ancient magics.

At the book's climax, the Lord of Assassins finally tracks them down as they stand at the Imperial Vault that holds the Regalia of the Great Emperor. The Apostate is killed by the Lord of Assassins, but the young magician-hero defeats the Lord, who launches one final spell he believes will kill them both. Fortunately, the secrets of the Apostate allow Soter to survive. It is revealed that the Imperial Vault does not actually contain the Imperial Regalia as believed. Instead, Soter is able to retrieve from the wreckage its only content: the Tomekey of the Emperor.

Aside from the obvious unflattering parallels between the Lord of Assassins and the Guardians of the Veil, this book contains no less than five rotes considered by the Guardians of the Veil to be utterly proprietary. In the original book, each major spell used by either the Lord of Assassins, one of his pet hired killers or the mage-captains of the Minotaur is accompanied by an illustration.

A Forbidden Lore

Book Two of The Ancient Lands Pentalogy

The second book, *A Forbidden Lore*, follows on the first, with Soter undertaking his search for the Great Library of the Emperor. In the opening chapters of the book we find Soter among the common people, helping them with his magic while they hide him in gratitude (and more than a little rebellion against the arrogance of the Four Lords). Of course, this leads to more and more trouble, as the agents of the Minotaur are given squads of Imperial Archermen, the soldier-mages of the Ancient Lands, in order to try and find him.

Led by an unlikely alliance between the Labyrinth-Walker, a Minotaur Captain and the Glass Devil, an important figure within the Archermen, these squads follow Soter's path, torturing those who have clearly benefited from his use of magic. They hound him at every turn, while he travels to old libraries, consults with spirits in the wilderness and seeks out the ghosts of ancient scholars, unraveling the mystery of the Great Library. Early in the book, he is joined by a young peasant girl whose family aided him but were then killed for doing so by the Imperial Archermen.

This girl, Sophia, comes to act as the voice of the common folk for Soter; in many ways, she holds him responsible for the harm that came to her family, though she doesn't directly blame him. She encourages him toward subtlety and wisdom in his use of sorcery, not because overt uses of it anger the Four Lords, but because he is powerful where other people are weak, and he doesn't have the right to lord it over those without magic. In fact, she often encourages him to find ways to help people without taking credit for doing so.

At the book's climax, Soter discovers the passage to the Great Library: the strange doorways that stand in every city, marked with a specific rune. With the Spell of Seeking, taught to him by the ghost of one of his own ancestors, Soter and Sophia journey into the Great Library, which exists "in the place between night and day." There they battle the Sacred Bibliomancers, the librarian-sorcerers of the Great Library, before they meet the Master of Tomes. Strangely, he seems friendly at first, offering Soter lore and information, dazzling his intellect with the possibilities that lie at his fingertips. It is only because of Sophia's efforts to make him remember his duties and the sacrifices so many others have made on his behalf that he returns to his senses. The Master of Tomes puts up a mighty struggle, but seems to be slain in the end.

Sophia and Soter raid the library, finding the Imperial Grimoire, which can be opened only by the Tomekey of the Emperor, and flee the Great Library with the artifacts and books they acquire, just before the Labyrinth-Walker and the Glass Devil arrive, who find the Master of Tomes' form bound under a spell to make him appear dead. The book ends with the two pursuers reporting to the Imperial Headsman in the Diamond Citadel, the massive prison that serves to contain some of the most notorious outlaw magicians in the Ancient Lands. He discovers what happened, and then contacts the Master of Assassins and the Regent in Silver, assuring them he is taking a personal interest in the matter now.

Seeming at first to shy away from the risky use of other Orders' proprietary rotes, *A Forbidden Lore*'s final chapter presents five whole rotes belonging to the Mysterium, all depicted as being used by the Master of Tomes — several of them used as part of the temptation of Soter.

A Sorcerous Blade

Book Three of The Ancient Lands Pentalogy

The third book, *A Sorcerous Blade*, begins with an encounter between Soter (still accompanied by Sophia) and the Storm Outlaw, a notorious "levincaster" (magician who wields lightning) who leads an outlaw gang in the wild mountains of the Ancient Lands. Though he and Soter fight at first, the Storm Outlaw calls off the fight, claiming he simply wanted to test the prowess of the young renegade before offering him sanctuary.

The rest of the book details the Storm Outlaw teaching Soter battle magics and tactical knowledge, while the Imperial Headsman seeks him. The Master of Assassins comes to the Imperial Headsman and offers him the spell that will allow him to track Soter, though he does not indicate how this works, precisely — it simply utilizes a magical sword with which the Master of Assassins gifts the Imperial Headsman. It is clear the Imperial Headsman doesn't trust the Master of Assassins, but he agrees. He gathers a large army of the Walking, stone golem-like creatures into which the generals of the Imperial Archermen bind spirits under their domination to serve as shock troops.

The spell to track Soter works, and in the middle of the novel, the Stone Army finds the band of the Storm Outlaw and a slaughter ensues. The tactics and use of war-magics allow the Stone Army to win the day easily, while the Imperial Headsman himself meets Soter and the Storm Outlaw in battle, and bests them easily. Soter and Sophia escape alive only through the sacrifice of the Storm Outlaw, who crystallizes a piece of his soul into a gemstone and throws it to Soter at the moment of his death.

The outlaw mage's death triggers a final, deadly spell, bathing the mountaintop in terrible reaving sheets of lightning that kill off a significant portion of the Stone Army's mage-generals, causing them to lose control of the angry spirits. Their stone soldiers go on a rampage, allowing the dregs of the outlaws, Soter and Sophia to escape while the Imperial Headsman turns his attention to dealing with the rampaging golems.

The outlaws eventually find Soter and Sophia again, and while some of them are angry, Soter begs them to help him free the Ancient Lands from the tyranny of the Four Lords. His appeal to the common man's sensibility and the desire of all thinking beings to be free wins their hearts, and they side with him. The last half of the book involves Soter and his band fleeing from the soldiers of the Imperial Headsman, who seems to have an uncanny ability to find them thanks to the spell given by the Master of Assassins.

Finally, in desperation, Soter uses a spell from one of the tomes he took from the Great Library, and the soulstone of the Storm Outlaw to call up his ghost. The ghost warns him that in his last moments of life he detected a spell on Sophia that the Imperial Headsman was using to track them. Just as they complete the removal of the spell, the Imperial Headsman and a small band of glass soldiers animated by air elementals arrive for the final confrontation. The combination of the Storm Outlaw's experience and the sheer magical power of Soter prove to be too much for the Imperial Headsman, who is forced to flee, leaving Soter's band victorious.

The people of a nearby town watched the battle, and celebrate Soter as a hero. That night, after a heady celebration, Soter and Sophia consummate their love, and he asks her to marry him. She agrees, and the book ends on a particularly positive note. In the epilogue, however, the Imperial Headsman brings his defeat to the Regent in Silver, apologizing for his failure. The Regent in Silver immediately notices the blade the Headsman carries, and demands it.

Like the two books before it, *A Sorcerous Blade* contains quite a few rotes from one of the other Orders: in this case, the Adamantine Arrows. The spells wielded by the Imperial Headsman and his mage-generals are almost all rotes of this sort — a total of five rotes throughout the book. The spells of the Storm Outlaw, however, and those taught to Soter are interesting examples of Free Council magic: where the Storm Outlaw uses magics of thievery, stealth and weather, Soter's own magical style, drawing together technological pieces into a sort of "steampunk" feel, begins to solidify quite strongly in this book.

A Blinding Light

Book Four of The Ancient Lands Pentalogy

The fourth book, *A Blinding Light*, opens with the Regent in Silver entering the Gardens of the Well, where he keeps a sibyl named Jhess. She is shackled to the scrying-well there, and guarded by a tall, powerful Northern Reaver who prevents her escape. There she is forced to use her insights for the Regent in Silver's benefit. The Regent gives her the sword he took from the Imperial Headsman, telling her he's seen the shard of a soul within it and wishes to know to whom it belongs. Submerging the blade within the well, taking a drink of the water and entering a trance, the shackled sibyl tells him it belongs to a young girl who is great of spirit and filled with joy.

The Regent correctly deduces this soul-shard to belong to Sophia, Soter's beloved. When he leaves, Jhess speaks to her guardian, saying, "Things begin to come to a head. He comes soon." It is revealed that though the Northern Reaver was originally placed there to guard and imprison the sibyl, he has fallen in love with her over the years, and she with him. She dispatches him to deliver a message to another servant in the palace, "to prepare the way."

The scene then shifts to the wedding of Soter and Sophia in the small village of Ascension, where the Great Emperor rose to the heights and transcended his mortality, promising to return again when the need was greatest, according the legends of the Ancient Lands. Just before they seal their

marriage, however, Sophia turns to Soter and coldly tells him she cannot marry him. The young hero is stricken by this, and Sophia simply turns — still clad in her wedding gown — and walks out of the city, dropping her veil at its outer edges.

Later that evening, as Soter drinks heavily, members of his band come to find him, telling him they saw her get into a carriage in a clearing about a mile from Ascension — a carriage marked with the Regent in Silver's crest. Soter reacts poorly to this, rushing out the door to the clearing, where he finds a trio of mage-courtiers of the Regent in Silver's court, who deliver an ultimatum to Soter: give himself over to arrest, or they will execute Sophia.

The scene shifts to the three courtiers leading Soter before the Regent, who sits with Sophia on the step beneath him. After some verbal sparring (in which Soter comes out ahead), Soter suddenly attacks the Regent, dropping the illusion over the three courtiers, who are revealed to actually be members of Soter's band of rebels, Soter having defeated the three mage-courtiers and concealed his own men. The Regent's magic is impressive, but Soter is quite capable. The true moment of his defeat comes when Soter, Sophia and the rebels are fleeing the court, only to be surrounded by Archermen. Before Soter can fight them, Sophia jabs him with a poisoned needle, knocking him unconscious.

The middle part of the book touches on Soter's despair at Sophia's betrayal amid the sorcerous experiments and divinations the Regent performs, culminating in a startling revelation: according to his tests, Soter's destiny is identical to that of the Great Emperor. This is the Great Emperor reborn. He leaves the palace, with orders for Soter to remain imprisoned, to meet with the other Lords to discuss this revelation, and while he is away, Jhess makes her move. Her Reaver arranges to free Soter, telling him Sophia's actions are not her own. The Regent has a shard of her soul within the blade he carries, and uses that to influence and dominate her actions.

With that knowledge, Soter's determination to escape returns, fired by the desire to free Sophia's soul from the Regent's control. The final scenes govern a daring breakout, interrupted by the Reaver's insistence that they free Jhess as well, to which Soter agrees. Ultimately, they flee the palace, Soter tearfully glancing back to see Sophia watching them from a tower window, and he swears an Oath to free her from the Regent's control, the reverberations of which echo through the world to the attention of the Four



Lords, who were in the middle of debating the possibility of his actually being the Great Emperor.

The Oath manifests in their vision as a sudden, powerful bright light that nearly blinds them. The power of this Oath is unlike any other; only the Great Emperor's Oaths resound across the Ancient Lands in such a fashion. This last revelation convinces the Four Lords, who realize that if he ever ascends the Ancient Throne, their lives are forfeit. It is at this point the narrative reveals that the Master of Tomes was not, in fact, destroyed in the Great Library, though he is now an undead abomination trapped in his own moldering corpse. They make a pact to destroy him with everything they have at their disposal.

The book closes with Jhess explaining to Soter his destiny: the fact that he is the Great Emperor reborn, and must come into his Legacy by finding the Imperial Regalia and ascending to the Ancient Throne. Soter asks whether such an attempt will draw out the Regent, and Jhess smiles, assuring him that such an event will do it as nothing else will. Soter agrees, and the book ends with Jhess and her Reaver joining Soter's band.

A Blinding Light's renegade rotes are all from the Silver Ladder, presented in places where either the Regent in Silver or his mage-courtiers use magic. There are five in total, scattered throughout the text. The Free Council rotes that feature in this book are a bit subtler than those in previous books, notably the spells of concealment and illusion Soter uses to hide his band, and Jhess' oracular magics.

A Great Emperor

Book Five of The Ancient Lands Pentalogy

The fifth and last book of the Pentalogy opens in a workshop where Soter is hard at work on an automaton of some kind. Crafted of copper and brass, driven by magic and steam, the automaton is a wonder of human craftsmanship and the inspiration of the magical Will. Laying the very last spell upon it, Soter takes up the soulstone of the Storm Outlaw and nestles it deep in the chest of the automaton, returning the Storm Outlaw to life as an automaton. Soter explains what has happened, and the Storm Outlaw indicates that he knows where the first of the Imperial Regalia, the Blade of Adamant Stars, is. Soter, the Storm Outlaw, Jhess and the Reaver set out to retrieve it.

Meanwhile, the Four Lords gather and perform various divinations, discovering that Soter's goal is nothing less than the Imperial Regalia. Not knowing which he will seek, the Four Lords separate, each to go and protect the piece of Regalia he has hidden from the others. The remainder of the book concerns the efforts of the Four Lords to stop Soter from finding the Regalia, which serve only to lead Soter to the hiding places. Though he does not kill any of them, Soter and his allies put to flight each of the Four Lords and retrieve the Regalia.

They storm the mage-prison headquarters of the Imperial Headsman, the Diamond Citadel, to retrieve the Blade of Adamant Stars held there. In the process, Soter frees the many mage-outlaws, absolving them of their former crimes if they will follow him and aid him in his search. The Imperial Headsman is defeated and forced to flee.

The assassins come fast and quick after that point, and Soter and his allies follow them back to the depths of the Labyrinth and battle the Lord of Assassins. Though Soter wounds him grievously and plunges his hand into the bloodied belly of the archmagus to retrieve the Supernal Pentacle hidden there, the Lord of Assassins turns into a cloud of black greasy mist and escapes.

Following his trail, the band arrives at the Imperial Palace. There they face down the Regent in Silver and his mage-courtiers, defeating them. In the battle, the automaton-bodied Storm Outlaw tricks the Regent into stabbing him with the soul-blade that holds Sophia's essence. Crying out in victory, the Storm Outlaw unleashes a spell that causes his own soul to be imprisoned in the blade, freeing Sophia from the Regent's hold. The Storm Outlaw's Will is too much for the Regent to command, and he is forced to abandon sword and palace both. Jhess guides Soter, now reunited with his beloved Sophia, to the Gardens of the Well, where he finds the Gracious Chalice at the very bottom of the well there, and draws it up by commanding the waters of the well to bring it to him.

Drinking deeply of the Chalice, Soter knows where the last piece of Imperial Regalia lies: in the heart of a tree that stands in the center of the Ancient Lands. The book's climax is there, in a terrible battle between Soter's band and all Four Lords, including the undead Master of Tomes. The battle is terrible, and many of Soter's allies — including the Northern Reaver — die in the conflict. Finally, though, it is Sophia, unnoticed by the powerful magicians in the midst of the terrible mage-battle, who sinks her hand into the tree itself and retrieves the Wand of Emperors. Though she is nearly killed getting it back to Soter, when he lays hands on it, time stops. All the people of the Ancient Lands suddenly stop and turn their faces toward the center of the land, somehow able to see and hear what is playing out, even though they are miles away.

A great throne, seemingly crafted of mirrors and diamond, appears over the direct center of the Ancient Lands. Soter is suddenly on the throne and the Regalia leave Soter's grasp, impressing themselves into the Throne of Mirrors in their rightful places: the Supernal Pentacle at his feet, the Blade of Adamant Stars at his right hand, the Wand of Emperors at his left hand and the Gracious Chalice set into the back of the throne, above his head. His first act is to heal Sophia and return the Northern Reaver — who died defending his beloved — to life, pronouncing those who sacrifice themselves for another always to be granted resurrection.

The Four Lords he punishes, stripping the undead existence from the Master of Tomes, but sparing the lives of the others. He does, however, neuter their ability to wield magic, declaring their punishment shall be to discover how to be

but normal humans, to find their way through the world on the strength of their bodies, minds and spirits alone. He tells them this is not, in truth, a curse, but a blessing: now they must learn to be beings defined by their actions, thoughts and words rather than beings defined simply by the power they wield. He wishes them long life and happiness, and sends them from his sight.

The final chapter details the Epilogue, the great marriage of Soter and Sophia in the little town of Ascension. At the moment of their kiss they disappear in a flash of light. The reader is left with the impression that they rule for many years thereafter, but do so separated from the mortal coil in some fashion.

The final book, *A Great Emperor*, contains potent magics of all five Orders, scattered among the various epic battles between Soter and the Four Lords themselves. All together there are a half dozen different rotes encoded in its text and images, all of them stolen from other Orders, as well as another half dozen Free Council rotes.

History

There are, in actuality, two histories of *The Ancient Lands Pentalogy*: the very popular, well known mundane history, and the secret history.

The Phenomenon

Sleeper society knows *An Ancient Secret* was first published in the summer of 2001, and very quickly rose to the top of genre fiction bestseller lists. Within six months of it hitting those lists — and staying there for months on end — it began to climb in general fiction lists after a couple of tabloids photographed popular stars reading copies of it, and popular blogs made a point to uncharacteristically mention it. In a flash it became a pop culture phenomenon, and its author, Michael T. Carson, celebrated the anniversary of its release with the public signing of a deal with a major motion film company securing the rights to make movies of all five of the novels.

The series has been released like clockwork, with one book every 18 months or so, all to great acclaim. Fan clubs and websites have sprouted all over the internet and beyond, and all manner of science fiction/fantasy and gaming conventions feature panels, fan meetups, games and other themed events using the Ancient Lands and its young heroes as inspiration.

More than this, however, Michael T. Carson himself has become quite the celebrity. Shortly after he signed the deals with his publishers to print all five books of the series, an interview with a major New York magazine brought his story to light. A single father of three sons, he was employed as a truck driver while he created the books, using a small handheld recorder to record his ideas while on the road, intending the stories for his boys, who stayed with his mother while he spent sometimes weeks at a time on the road. His oldest son, Michael Jr., took the tapes and transcribed them for his father into his computer, at his grandmother's suggestion, as practice using the family's word processing program. Once he had the full story for *An Ancient Secret* composed, Michael Sr.'s mother encouraged him to find someone to edit it and perhaps send it to a publisher.

Women's magazines have featured the story of the soulful storytelling dad, and Michael Carson has been besieged with marriage offers from women all over the world. He has also been featured on various television programs that focused not only upon his books, but upon the difficulties he's gone through as a single father trying to raise three boys. Today, Michael T. Carson and his sons, Michael Jr., Craig and Robert, are all quite comfortable, living well off the proceeds of the book and movie sales, as well as their shares of the extensive merchandising.

The Truth

Of course, the Awakened know there is more to this story than what it seems initially. Guardians of the Veil agents researched the background of everyone involved quite extensively. Ultimately, they discovered the culprit: Lenore Carson, Michael Sr.'s mother.

Lenore Awakened in the 1950s to the Watchtower of the Lunargent Thorn and immediately joined the Silver Ladder, seeking to use her newly discovered talents for the good of the people around her. Under the Shadow Name of Amalthea, who bore the cornucopia of legend, Lenore did her best to make the lives of those Sleepers around her better, bestowing blessings and magical aid where she could. Eventually, though, her attempts were judged by the local Guardians of the Veil to have gone too far, and they brought her efforts before the local Consilium. The Orders agreed, and they attempted to bring her to justice in the 1970s. She was quite a potent magician by that time, and fought off the Sentinels sent to bring her before the Consilium, took her son and fled. Her skill in Fate magics proved potent enough to allow her to disappear beneath a veil of coincidence and bad luck.

She ended up on the West Coast under another Shadow Name — Fortuna, another figure associated with the cornucopia. She remained there for another 10 years or so, until her indiscretion attracted the suspicion of the Consilium once more. She formally renounced her ties with the Silver Ladder at the Consilium gathering where they sought to address their concerns; unfortunately, there was another surprise waiting for her at that gathering: the Sentinels of her old Consilium. Many of her current Consilium, including several former apprentices she'd trained to use their magics for the good of people, refused to allow them to take her away, and the tense stand-off erupted in spell-battle. Once again she disappeared and did not resurface.

To the best of anyone's ability to determine, she spent the next several decades in hiding, raising her son. The Guardians of the Veil believe she inspired her son's stories magically and is using him as a shield. The Silver Ladder,

however, believes it is far likelier that she never concealed what was going on in her life from her son, and that he wove the difficulties his mother had with mages from a variety of cities into the tales for his sons — perhaps half out of warning and half out of spite for those Orders. However it happened, though, there is no doubt: the original manuscripts of these books, printed off on the family word processor, possess secrets of all the Orders who pursued Lenore.

It is known that at some point during the time after her second flight she joined the Free Council. Over the years she'd put together an interesting collection of grimoires from a variety of sources. This still doesn't account for the incredible number of non-Silver Ladder rotes to be found in *The Ancient Lands Pentalogy*, however. Some mages believe she undertook a period of infiltration after that, hunting for the rotes of other Orders during that time. Others believe the answer is far simpler and less sinister: she simply combed through the Lorehouses of the Free Council, trading her own extensive knowledge of Silver Ladder praxis lore for that of the other Orders.

Pursuit

The existence of the grimoire-manuscripts didn't truly come to light until after the second book was published. A member of the Free Council was seen using a signature Guardian of the Veil rote. Very quickly, this member of the Free Council was snatched up by the Guardians and interrogated. He revealed that he'd learned it from a hand-bound manuscript of *A Forbidden Lore*, one he'd since lost. Over the next year or so, other incidences of Guardian secrets falling into the hands of the Free Council came to light, followed swiftly by Mysterium secrets.

In short order, the Guardians placed Michael Carson under close scrutiny, but by then it was too late — he was already incredibly famous. Anything strange happening to him would draw unwanted attention, and so the Guardians satisfied themselves with simply watching him from afar. Michael Carson is clearly aware that his family is under close scrutiny, and has gone out of his way to make things difficult for those Guardians who watch him. Definitively a Sleepwalker, Carson has even come face-to-face with someone tailing him once through some unknown means — he made it very clear that should anything happen to him, his mother and her allies would wreak a particularly bloody revenge on everyone responsible.

So, the Guardians of the Veil have made a point of pursuing the grimoire-manuscripts themselves. This seems to be fairly difficult, however — Free Council members who get their hands on them tend to be very careful, disguising their hand-made cover with the dust jackets of hardcover editions of the published books. Additionally, the books themselves seem to simply disappear and reappear from time to time; in at least one instance, a book thought to have been incinerated reappeared in a neighboring city, and then vanished from view there.

Disturbing Implications

There is one other aspect that has come to light among those who hunt for the grimoire-manuscripts that almost no one seems interested in talking about: the so-called Ancient Lands Awakenings. The grimoire-manuscripts have found their way into the hands of more than a few individuals on the cusp of Awakening, providing the push they needed to complete the Awakening. Each one of these individuals undergoes a Mystery Play style Awakening, imagining themselves undertaking some quest in the Ancient Lands. At the end of their Awakenings, these individuals seem to have a tremendously simple time grasping the nuances of the rotes in the book that acted as their catalyst, often coming back to their senses from the Mystery Play with multiple rotes firmly comprehended. Additionally, their books have always disappeared by the time they emerge from this Mystery Play.

Merit: Ancient Lands Awakening (••••)

Prerequisites: Charity or Hope Virtue. This Merit can be taken only at character creation.

Effect: Your character underwent an Awakening spurred on by one of the grimoire-manuscripts of *The Ancient Lands Pentalogy*. All your beginning rotes must be chosen from the grimoire-manuscript that triggered that Awakening. You do gain 3 additional dots of beginning rotes, however.

Additionally, the grimoire-manuscripts often find their way to those who have experienced Ancient Lands Awakenings. Generally speaking, the destiny of the books will arrange for them to come into the hands of those who were Awakened by one of them when they gain an additional dot of Gnosis. Once play begins, Storytellers are encouraged to arrange for other manuscripts to coincidentally come into the hands of characters with this Merit every time such characters increase their Gnosis by 1 dot. Characters with this Merit pay 1 less Experience point to learn rotes from *The Ancient Lands Pentalogy* grimoire-manuscripts.

Finally, because all who are Awakened by these books seem to possess the same generosity and desire to help others that characterize both Lenore and the protagonist Soter, any mage who underwent an Ancient Lands Awakening who fulfills his Virtue by helping Sleepers using his magic also gains a point of Mana in addition to recovering all his Willpower.

Contents

Unlike many highly sought-after grimoires, *The Ancient Lands Pentalogy* offers only one thing beyond the rotes it contains: insight into the Free Council's perspective on not simply the four Atlantean Orders, but also the responsibilities of the Awakened to Sleepers and one another. The following is an excerpt from a report submitted by a Censor of the Mysterium, after a detailed study of mass-media versions of the books:

I would like to suggest to my esteemed colleagues that they take a deeper look at this series of novels. Certainly, the rote content of these works is tremendously worrying, but I think there is more going on here than a simple means by which stolen rotes might be surreptitiously transferred from one member of the Free Council to the next.

In many ways, these works serve as a codification of the Free Council philosophical and occult praxis. In them, we have the "common man" origins of the protagonist, a clear reference to the central belief of the Free Council that magic originates not with Atlantis (here represented by the bureaucratic remnants of the Great Emperor's reign), but with the everyday, average human experience. All throughout the books, the protagonist is assisted by the common people around him, who see him as a savior-hero. (It should be noted that the name "Soter" itself is originally a title for the heroized leaders of Hellenistic dynasties, the center of hero cults generally hailed as "Liberators," and gained even further messianic connotations when it was used as a title for Christ.) Another common theme throughout these books is the squabbling between the Four Lords — who obviously represent the Atlantean Orders in this symbolic narrative — who work together only to keep magic from the grasp of the common man and to preserve their own power base.

In *An Ancient Secret*, we are introduced to the above concepts initially. Interestingly enough, the ending of this novel touches on a common practice among members of the Free Council: the suborning of Guardian Labyrinths for their own purposes. In the narrative, Soter encounters the Apostate, who is old and wise but imprisoned by the Lord of Assassins. Understanding the history of the Free Council gives us insight into this: the Free Council essentially began as a gathering of Apostates and magi who rejected the Atlantean ur-praxis.

The Guardians' use of Labyrinths has long been an established means of disseminating just enough Atlantean lore to Sleepers to cause the occasional Awakening. The Free Council believes the occult traditions of human culture are capable, in and of themselves, of somehow spontaneously "discovering" Supernal connections that have no connection with Atlantis. In this narrative, the Apostate and Soter actually hide from the Master of Assassins within his own Labyrinth, while the Apostate teaches Soter the use of magic, a clear reference to the subversive tendency of the Free Council to take over certain occult organizations originally established by the Guardians of the Veil and using them to its own ends, such as with Boston's branch of the Order of the Golden Dawn in the early years of the Free Council movement.

A Forbidden Lore introduces us to the character of Sophia — a young common woman of great empathy and maturity whose name means "Wisdom." She frequently holds Soter responsible for the harm his magic and crusade cause, though does not blame him. She simply requires him to embrace his responsibilities. In nearly every instance, Sophia's role is that of the voice of Sleepers and those without magic. She frequently reins in Soter's most caustic and overbearing impulses by simply reminding him that he must not become like the Four Lords (who, by implication, ignore the protests of the peasant populace, and are thus deaf to the voice of Sophia, or Wisdom Herself), an insulting condemnation of the Atlantean Orders, to say the least.

Additionally, placing the Great Library in the "place between night and day" is an interesting choice of phrasing. I believe this represents a cautionary bit of advice when dealing with Athenaea: many of our repositories do indeed bear defenses or even vaults that do not exist in the physical frame, but in Twilight. I believe this information is included as a reminder for those Free Council members who might seek to raid Athenaea and undo our work. Additionally, the Free Council opinion of the Mysterium is laid bare here, in the form of the Master of Tomes seeking to seduce and entice Soter through the offering of lore and knowledge, though Sophia/Wisdom warns him of the danger of doing so at the last moment. It should be clear to even the densest reader that this is supposed to form some sort of warning against working with our Order; apparently there are factions within the Free Council that fail to appreciate any of our efforts to convert its membership to our goals.

A Sorcerous Blade is far simpler, on some levels, serving mainly as a rise in the narrative action and a repository for Adamantine Arrows rotes. The Storm Outlaw in this part of the tale embodies the rebellious urges of members of the Free Council, portraying them in a fashion that invokes a Robin Hood-like figure championing the common man. In contrast, the Imperial Headsman is portrayed as the hatchetman of the Four Lords, a figure of military savagery willing to kill even the innocent to achieve their ends.

Interestingly enough, this portion of the narrative teaches of the use of soulstones, and perhaps points to an interesting trend: the creation of soulstones by Free Council magi as a means of ensuring their information and knowledge isn't lost, even in death. Clearly the Free Council has mastered the various uses of the soulstone as well as any other, understanding the necromantic and temporal sympathy that comes from the soulstone of a dead magus as surely as they understand its use in spatial and essential sympathy. Finally, this book also includes an interesting concept: the union of Soter and Sophia, from which Soter not only finds tremendous happiness and healing, but also learns new and potent magics somehow. Clearly, this is meant to serve as an encouragement for Free Council magicians to cleave to the path of Wisdom — a suggestion in which I can hardly find fault, even if I question their definition thereof.

In *A Blinding Light*, the Regent in Silver imprisons the peasant seeress Jhess, reflecting the Free Council's propaganda accusing the Silver Ladder of ferreting out the best insight of Sleepers and stealing it away for their own use rather than allowing it to work for the good of humanity as a whole. Perhaps the most interesting bit of symbolism in this novel, however, is the marriage of Soter and Sophia in the village of Ascension, which is prevented from occurring by the manipulations of the Four Lords. This condemnation, presenting the Atlantean Orders as interfering influences that prevent the union of the magician-as-savior with Wisdom and thus from achieving Ascension is staggeringly bold. When Sophia is taken from him, Soter begins to act rashly and harshly, even allowing himself to become drunk and use magic frivolously, a warning against working magic without the guidance of Wisdom.

The revelation of Soter as the reincarnation of the Great Emperor is not only an obvious direction for this narrative, surprising no one, but a clumsy symbol of the common man's magician as Atlantis itself. I've read more than one Free Council dissertation on the concept of Atlantis as a goal of the future rather than something of the past, which is, if I might say, a stunning example of missing the point entirely. The peasant seeress Jhess and her barbarian lover rescuing Soter from the clutches of the Four Lords is also an enlightening development: the Free Council is being effectively told to "look to the common people" for salvation from the temptations of the Atlantean Orders.

I am also going to take this opportunity to decry one final detail, although I suspect I am simply preaching to the choir in this instance. I find the portrayal of the Master of Tomes as an undead thing to be insulting in the extreme — the suggestion that the Mysterium might best be symbolized by an abomination that is old, withered and decrepit, kept alive only by the lore we've accumulated rather than as something vibrant and alive is a gross misrepresentation, in my opinion.

Finally, in *A Great Emperor*, we find Soter creating a mechanical body for the soulstone of the Storm Outlaw, the very soul of rebellion housed in a framework of technology. Has the Free Council's tendency to use cutting edge scientific advances for its own subversive ends ever been more clearly symbolized, or more pride apparently taken in the fact? More relevant, however, is the author's portrayal of the Imperial Regalia: the symbols of magic itself, and how the Four Lords defend them. In each case, these symbols are used as criticism against the praxis and traditions of the Atlantean Orders.

The Blade of Adamant Stars, imprisoned in the Diamond Citadel, is an excellent example. The blade has long been symbolic of the magician's Will, and yet it is here locked away. The Free Council has never been subtle in its criticism of the Adamantine Arrows' praxis of oaths and hierarchy, claiming it subsumes its own Will in a network of oaths and leader/minion relationships — clearly an affront to the Council's own democratic praxis. Likewise, the Guardians of the Veil often attract the Free Council's criticism for hiding away Supernal wonders beneath layers of veils and lies, reflected by the concealment of the Supernal Pentacle within the very body of the Lord of Assassins, as though he had consumed it somehow.

The hiding of the Gracious Chalice in the Garden Well is a bit more subtle, perhaps an implication that the Silver Ladder conceals true compassion, healing and empathy within the confines of an ivory tower, using it to gain insight into Sleepers rather than to their benefit, symbolized by Jhess, the peasant seer, shackled to the well rather than allowed to roam free and use her talents to help others. Obviously, the Wand of Emperors — a potent symbol of the knowledgeable and potent magician — is hidden away in a tree at the center of a confusing forest filled with winding paths, guarded by an undead abomination of a Master of Tomes. The implication, once again, of the Mysterium as a withered husk hiding away valuable knowledge rather than making it free for everyone, as the Free Council would have, has never been more blatant.

An Ancient Secret

An Ancient Secret contains rotes from both the Free Council and the Guardians of the Veil. The Guardians rotes are generally represented in the text as spells cast by the Lord of Assassins, one of his assassins or by the mage-captains of the Minotaur.

• **The Ancient Mask:** "Incognito Presence" (Mind ••); *Dexterity + Stealth + Mind*; Used by the Minotaur and his men to move unseen through the streets as they hunt for signs of the newly-made magician, this is a tremendously old Guardians rote that relies upon physical stealth to overshadow the minds of viewers.

• **Traces of Wonder:** "Supernal Vision" (Prime •); *Composure + Investigation + Prime*; Another spell used by the Minotaur and his mage-hunters, this rote is a favored one of Guardian investigators, divining clues about Supernal emanations from small discrepancies in the world around them.

• **Tumbler-Shatter:** "Alter Integrity" (Matter •••); *Intelligence + Larceny + Matter*; A Free Council rote, this spell — used by Soter to gain the Apostate's freedom — draws upon the larcenous principles of magic, "stealing" the strength of objects. Though its Imago relies most often upon the degradation of object Durability, it can also easily be reversed to use the spell to increase it.

• **Plumb the Labyrinth:** "Multispatial Perception" (Space •••); *Wits + Occult + Space*; Used by the Lord of Assassins to seek Soter and the Apostate as they hide within his Labyrinth, this is actually an old Guardians rote involving a pendulum and representation (generally a map) of the area to be searched.

• **The Hidden Presence:** "Ward" (Space ••); *Presence + Persuasion + Space*; This spell, which relies upon the persuasive powers of the magician to convince his surroundings to hide him from detection by scrying and similar magics, is a regular defense in the Free Council arsenal.

• **Shining Aegis:** "Armor of the Soul" (Prime •••); *Resolve* + *Crafts* + *Prime*; This Free Council rote, taught to Soter by the Apostate, weaves a protection around the caster's very soul, using the Imago of filling one's soul with clockwork mechanisms that help "root" it in place and defend against offensive magics.

• **Unholy Theft:** "Sever the Sleeping Soul" (Death •••); *Presence* + *Subterfuge* + *Death*; The means by which the Lord of Assassins disables the Apostate before killing him, this Guardians of the Veil rote is steeped in deceit. This rote's magics convince the soul of its target of a most horrible lie: that the body has passed into death, unmooring the soul from the target in the process.

• **Becoming One with Shadows:** "Twilight Shift" (Death ••••); *Wits* + *Stealth* + *Death*; Used by the Lord of Assassins to escape from his first confrontation with Soter, this old Guardians rote is a simple one: through knowledge of incredibly potent techniques in hiding oneself, the magician simply ceases to be present in the physical world at all.

A Forbidden Lore

A *Forbidden Lore* contains rotes from both the Free Council and the Mysterium. Free Council rotes are sprinkled liberally throughout its text, while the Mysterium rotes are all presented in the final chapter of the book, used by the Master of Tomes. Several of them are used in the temptation of Soter.

• **Still the Plague:** "Banish Plague" (Life •••); *Intelligence* + *Science* + *Life*; Soter uses the first Free Council rote of A *Forbidden Lore* to aid poor villagers who cannot afford magical healing or medicines, teaching them concepts of sanitation and the humane treatment of illness through hygiene and nutrition.

• **Ghost Plate:** "Ephemeral Shield" (Spirit ••); *Composure* + *Occult* + *Spirit*; Protective magics used by Soter when he first encounters the Imperial Archermen, this Free Council rote garbs the caster in an armor of ephemera, invisible and intangible to normal contact, but solidifying in the resonance of violence and harm.

• **Perfected Blade:** "Armor Piercing" (Matter •••); *Dexterity* + *Crafts* + *Spirit*; Though Soter restrains himself from using his magics to harm the Archermen who pursue him, he does use this rote, incanting the spell to the rhythm of his sharpening stone as he hones his blade so that it cuts armor like butter.

• **Anointment of Primal Speech:** "Spirit Tongue" (Spirit •); *Wits* + *Persuasion* + *Spirit*; An increasingly common rote among the Free Council, this spell uses a glib tongue to convince a spirit to speak in the speech of the caster — or perhaps, to convince the caster himself to speak in the ancient tongue of spirits.

• **Invocation of Ash and Wormwood:** "Ghost Summons" (Death ••); *Manipulation* + *Occult* + *Death*; With a clever tongue and knowledge of the bindings applied to the spirits of the dead, Soter uses this rote to call up the spirits of the dead so that he may learn from them.

• **Spell of Seeking:** "Spatial Awareness" (Space •); *Wits* + *Science* + *Space*; Soter uses the Spell of Seeking to find the openings into the Great Library, observing the effects that natural spatial distortions have in his surroundings to divine the locations of the sealed portals.

• **Walking Between Worlds:** "Follow Through" (Space ••); *Stamina* + *Survival* + *Space*; Soter watches as one of the Sacred Bibliomancers crosses the threshold into the Great Library and learns this spell, allowing him to navigate the instantaneous wasteland of the soul that lies between the mortal world and the Great Library, which exists between day and night.

• **Walls of the Great Library:** "Twilight Temple" (Mind •••••); *Intelligence* + *Occult* + *Mind*; A truly ancient Mysterium rote used to construct architecture and traps within Athenaea that exist only in Twilight, Soter immediately divines its nature upon crossing into the Great Library.

• **The Master's Temptations:** "Trigger the Lizard Brain" (Life ••••); *Manipulation* + *Survival* + *Life*; The temptations the Master of Tomes lays into the natural impulses of Soter are attributed to this Mysterium rote, capable of causing endorphin rushes, focused distraction and similar elements of brainwashing and physiological manipulation in its targets.

• **Blade of Fire:** "Influence Fire" (Forces ••); *Presence* + *Crafts* + *Forces*; During his battle with the Master of Tomes, Soter seizes hold of the magical flame in a torch, using his force of personality and craftsman's skill to instantaneously craft a sword from the flame that burns there.

• **Unending Torment:** "Hallucination" (Mind ••••); *Intelligence* + *Occult* + *Mind*; Used by the Master of Tomes once Soter throws off his influence, this Mysterium rote inflicts terrible suffering on its target, though it is entirely hallucinatory. The Free Council generally agrees that the inclusion of this spell is one of the main reasons the Mysterium objects to the Pentalogy as strongly as it does: its existence flies in the face of the "harmless academic" façade the mystagogues seem to create for themselves.

• **Flirting with Mortality:** "Suppress Own Life" (Death •••); *Wits* + *Investigation* + *Death*; A Mysterium rote of some potency, this spell was used by the Master of Tomes to feign his death, though the fact is not immediately apparent in the text.

A Sorcerous Blade

A *Sorcerous Blade* contains rotes from both the Free Council and the Adamantine Arrows. Free Council rotes are often presented in contexts of outlawry, and the levinmagics of the Storm Outlaw, or in the steampunk magics of Soter. The Adamantine Arrows rotes are all examples of sorcery wielded by the Imperial Headsman and his mage-generals.

• **Levinspears:** "Call Lightning" (Forces •••); *Presence + Persuasion + Forces*; The first spell used by the Storm Outlaw is a fairly uncommon Free Council rote, used to literally talk lightning from the sky.

• **Bandit's Veil:** "Personal Invisibility" (Forces •••); *Wits + Science + Forces*; This Free Council rote — another used by the Storm Outlaw — requires knowledge of how light works, and how best to foil its normal fall, effectively outwitting the light itself.

• **Steelweave:** "Unseen Aegis" (Matter ••); *Dexterity + Crafts + Matter*; In his sudden conflict with the Storm Outlaw, Soter utilizes a spell that reweaves the cloth of his garments into the weave-patterns of steel.

• **Trace Outlaw:** "Forge Destiny" (Fate •••••); *Presence + Intimidation + Fate*; Used by the Imperial Headsman to track Soter (though it is later revealed he was actually tracking Sophia), this Adamantine Arrows spell reweaves the fate of the target. It has a variety of uses; establishing the target's fate as "someone who is constantly found by those who pursue her" is only one of many uses.

• **Golem-Body Genesis:** "Raw Creation" (Matter ••••); *Composure + Athletics + Matter*; One of the martial spells of the Adamantine Arrows, this one uses a complex fighting form and stern meditational control in order to summon an object (generally a statue or other human-form item) out of nothingness. As the kata progresses, the form of the imaginary opponent ceases to be imaginary, and once the form is completed, the item stands there, perfectly real.

• **Invoking the Golem Soul:** "Greater Spirit Summons" (Spirit •••); *Manipulation + Intimidation + Spirit*; Used by the mage-lieutenants of the Imperial Headsman, this Adamantine Arrows spell can actually be applied to summon spirits of any sort, not just those who will possess a golem body.

• **War Wound:** "Rotting Flesh" (Death ••••); *Strength + Medicine + Death*; An Adamantine Arrows rote that sees fairly common use, it permits its wielder to strike an opponent in a vulnerable spot, disrupting his bodily humors and causing incredible decaying wounds immediately.

• **Obedient Soldiers' Ward:** "Grant Fortune's Protection" (Fate •••); *Presence + Intimidation + Fate*; The threatening speeches uttered by the Imperial Headsman, urging his soldiers toward success upon pain of death, serves to actually protect them magically, through use of this Adamantine Arrows rote.

• **Silence of the Heavens:** "Transform Energy" (Forces ••••); *Stamina + Science + Forces*; A Free Council rote used by the Storm Outlaw at his death to transform all sound on the battlefield into reaving sheets of lightning, this spell can actually transform any energy into any other kind.

• **Plumb the Blackest Depths:** "Summon the Dead" (Death •••••); *Manipulation + Persuasion + Death*; Trickery and a smooth tongue are used in this Free Council spell to call upon the dead who have passed even beyond the ken of normal necromantic spells, reaching into the depths of the Underworld, as Soter did when he called upon the Storm Outlaw.

A Blinding Light

A Blinding Light contains rotes from both the Free Council and the Silver Ladder. Jhess' oracular magics and Soter's spells of concealment and illusion feature prominently among the Free Council examples, while the huge number of Silver Ladder rotes — used by the Regent in Silver or his mage-courtiers — lay testament to Lenore Carson's past among the théarchs.

• **Soul-Reading Divination:** "Soul Marks" (Death •); *Wits + Subterfuge + Death*; This Silver Ladder rote lays bare the deceptions of the flesh to reveal the truths of the soul beneath. The Regent in Silver is depicted using this spell in order to detect the soul of Sophia within the Headsman's blade.

• **Vision of Revelation:** "Supernal Vision" (Prime • + Mind •); *Composure + Wits + Prime*; This Free Council spell — a rote for the optional casting of "Supernal Vision" that includes a Mind component in order to read the whole aura — is used by Jhess, who falls into a trance in order to read the nature of the spirit within the blade.

• **Reading the Ripples in the Well:** "Divination" (Time •••); *Intelligence + Science + Fate*; Understanding that the ripples in the well reflect the fate of the world, Jhess uses this Free Council rote once the Regent in Silver leaves to read the future, and sees change coming.

• **Spiritual Domination:** "Telepathic Control" (Mind ••••); *Presence + Persuasion + Mind*; Through sheer force of dominating personality, the Regent in Silver commands Sophia to leave Soter at the altar and come to him in the Imperial Palace. This is a potent Silver Ladder rote, and quite prized by that Order.

• **Regent's Bearing:** "Augment the Mind" (Mind •••); *Manipulation + Expression + Mind*; The silver tongues of the mage-courtiers sent by the Regent in Silver very nearly overwhelm the senses and will of Soter, as they use this Silver Ladder rote to augment their personal charm and wit.

• **Subtly Crafted Disguise:** "Imposter" (Mind •••); *Wits + Crafts + Mind*; Soter, the consummate craftsman, creates camouflage of purest will and magic to disguise his bandit companions as the mage-courtiers sent to retrieve him through use of this Free Council rote.

• **Imperial Aegis:** "Shield of Chronos" (Time ••); *Resolve + Subterfuge + Time*; According to the Regent in Silver, this defensive spell — in actuality, a Silver Ladder rote — was a favorite of the Great Emperor, whose subtlety was so great that even time itself flowed cautiously around him, wary of what he might do.

• **Eldritch Invocation:** "Celestial Fire" (Prime •••); *Wits + Expression + Prime*; A terrible crawling invocation in a strange language that calls down heavenly flames on the heads of its

target, this Silver Ladder rote is depicted in use during the conflict between the Regent in Silver and Soter.

• **Absence of Regret:** "Shifting Sands" (Time •••); *Composure + Subterfuge + Time*; The Regent in Silver is always depicted as being utterly without regret, for this Silver Ladder rote allows him to reverse time itself, to go back and make decisions that he will not regret.

• **Reading the Bloody Paths:** "Interconnections" (Fate •); *Intelligence + Medicine + Fate*; By spilling the blood of the target and reading the patterns therein, the caster of this Silver Ladder rote may understand the nuances of destiny that Fate holds in store for him. The Regent in Silver uses this spell to sense Soter as the heir of the Great Emperor.

• **The Imperial Path:** "Portal" (Space •••); *Presence + Persuasion + Space*; In the Pentalogy, the extra-spatial places of the world are called the "Imperial Demesne." With this Silver Ladder rote, the Regent in Silver convinces the pathways of the Imperial Demesne that he should be granted access to the means of rapid travel that are the Emperor's due.

• **Convocation of the Four Lords:** "Network" (Mind •••••); *Composure + Subterfuge + Mind*; The Regent in Silver uses this Silver Ladder rote to contact the minds of the Four Lords to discuss his findings, and gather them together for convocation.

• **Soter's Great Oath:** "Swearing an Oath" (Fate ••); *Presence + Intimidation + Fate*; This rote, unlike so many in these books, is apparently an entirely new spell created solely for the Pentalogy. Encoded with Free Council mudras, it is used to sanctify an oath with fierce words and intimations of vengeance.

A Great Emperor

A *Great Emperor* contains rotes from all five Orders. Six rotes of the Free Council are scattered throughout its pages, depicting the magic of Soter, Jhess and the Storm Outlaw, while another half dozen rotes of the Adamantine Arrows, Mysterium, Guardians of the Veil and Silver Ladder are depicted as the sorceries of the Four Lords.

• **The Clockwork Body:** "Haunted Shell" (Death •••• + Matter ••••); *Intelligence + Crafts + Death*; Incorporating the Storm Outlaw's soulstone into a clockwork automaton, Soter uses this Free Council rote to craft a strong body for the ghost of his friend and mentor.

• **Gazing Through the Mists:** "Divination" (Time •••); *Presence + Expression + Time*; A mystic poem of such beauty and resonance that it can cause the mists of time to part, rewarding the poet with a vision of the future, the Regent in Silver uses this Silver Ladder rote to determine that Soter intends to seek the Imperial Regalia.

• **Impassioned Plea:** "Supernal Dispellation" (Prime ••••); *Manipulation + Persuasion + Prime*; The charismatic power of the future Great Emperor is such that magic itself cannot resist his desperate pleas. Soter uses this Free Council rote to call out to the magics in the Diamond Citadel, imploring them to release their prisoners.

• **Kiss of the Airborne Razor:** "Ranged Blow" (Space •••); *Strength + Athletics + Space*; The martial strength and surety of the Imperial Headsman's sword blows are so potent that even the impediment of distance is no limit to his ability to kill. The Imperial Headsman uses this Adamantine Arrows rote during the conflict with Soter in the Diamond Citadel.

• **Preternatural Cunning:** "Acceleration" (Time •••); *Wits + Science + Time*; In his battle against the Lord of Assassins, Soter uses this rote to outwit not simply the tactics of the cunning Lord of Assassins, but that of time itself.

• **Flight of Infernal Flame:** "Fiery Transformation" (Forces •••• + Life ••••); *Resolve + Stealth + Forces*; With this Guardian of the Veil rote, the Lord of Assassins flees his conflict with Soter, transforming into a mass of acrid, black-burning flame that leaves a trail of greasy smoke in its wake.

• **The Storm Outlaw's Gambit:** "Soul Jar" (Death ••); *Manipulation + Crafts + Death*; The Storm Outlaw uses this Free Council spell — an entirely new rote, apparently — to imprison his own soul within the Regent in Silver's blade, forcing Sophia's soul out of the weapon.

• **Rote Name:** "Shape Liquid" (Matter ••); *Presence + Persuasion + Matter*; The Great Emperor reborn can convince even the inattentive waters of the Garden Well to obey him, using this Free Council rote to draw up the Gracious Chalice from its depths.

• **Blade of Eternity:** "Worlds Collide" (Space •••••); *Intelligence + Occult + Space*; This wicked Mysterium rote is the last spell the Master of Tomes casts before he is destroyed. With its casting, a shimmering, strange blade of pearlescent, vibrating power at least a story in height manifests in the vision of all those present, and the targets of the spell are drawn into a singular existence in the heart of the blade, wounding one another horribly before returning to their normal existence.

• **Numinous Arrow-Ward:** "Turn Projectile" (Forces •••); *Composure + Intimidation + Forces*; During the final confrontation between the Four Lords and Soter's allies, the arrows of Soter's outlaw band fail to strike the Imperial Headsman, who turns them aside with merely a calm scowl.

• **Scathing Deceit:** "Psychic Assault" (Mind •••); *Presence + Subterfuge + Mind*; During the final battle between the Four Lords and Soter's allies, the Regent in Silver's lies sear themselves into the brains of those who hear him, thanks to his use of this Silver Ladder rote.

• **A Denial of Death:** "Healing Heart" (Life •••); *Composure + Science + Life*; Summoning both a deep calm and his own transcendent understanding of the universe, Soter heals his dying love, Sophia, with this Free Council rote.

The Roaming Grimoires

According to knowledgeable Free Council members and those Guardians and Mysterium who have had the chance to study one of the grimoire-manuscripts in depth,

Haunted Shell (Death •••• + Matter ••••)

This spell invests an object with a ghostly entity, allowing the ghost to not only use its Numina freely, but to move any moveable parts on the object, effectively animating the item within its normal physical limits.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls Resistance reflexively

Duration: Prolonged (1 scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

The targeted ghost enters the object to which it is bound as though the object were an anchor, save that the ghost continues to be aware of its surroundings and capable of using its Numina. The object Durability becomes the Resistance of the ghost, if the ghost's Resistance is higher than its original Durability. In objects capable of moving and taking actions, all rolls use the ghost's normal attributes. The item must in some way contain or incorporate one of the ghost's anchors or be located in a place that is the ghost's anchor.

the original manuscripts are under a very potent destiny, clearly woven by a Master in the Fate Arcanum.

Similar in nature to the "Gift of Fortune" spell (**Mage: The Awakening**, p.157), this effect causes destiny to warp and twist, arranging to move the book toward a specific end. Unlike that spell, however, these books keep on the move, constantly finding their way into the hands of Free Council members who may need a given rote, a bargaining chip of some kind to help them get ahead or something similar.

This magic is obscenely potent, though as with "Gift of Fortune" it is not something cast onto the book itself. Rather, it is woven into the Fate of the world; as such, there is nothing to dispel or overcome. This magic also extends to keeping the books clean and in good shape: nearly every one of them has been through firefights, escapes through sewers and all manner of other travails, but the only lasting damage fated to stay with them is that which comes over any book that is well-read. Even intentions to destroy the book outright are answered with sudden and utterly improbable events that prevent it, up to the Guardian who seized the book from a Free Councilor and was about to tear it in half, only to have an earthquake bury him beneath the roof of the building in which they stood, leaving only his hand holding the book untouched by rubble.

There is a second enchantment on the book, a simple permanent Prime magic that conceals the emanations of the rotes within them at a Potency of 15. Only Mage Sights and similar magics cast at a Potency of 16 or higher can detect the Resonance of the rotes — to all others the books are completely mundane in appearance.

Researching *The Ancient Lands Pentalogy*

Capping Skill: Academics

Action: Extended — 13 successes

Research Time: 4 hours; 1 hour

Appropriate Libraries: Pop Culture, Fantasy, any Library owned by a member of the Free Council

Possible Modifiers: Status: Free Council, Guardians of the Veil or Mysterium (+1), Using the Library of a member of the Free Council, Guardians of the Veil or Mysterium (+2)

Successes	Information
0—2	Nothing, except mass market references to the successful series.
3—7	An excerpt from an online bookseller regarding a handwritten edition of *A Forbidden Lore*. It mentions that, unlike the mass market editions, it contains a variety of illustrations. The excerpt includes a somewhat blurry image that clearly shows Atlantean writing hidden in the illustration.
8—9	A letter, circulated among various Epopts of the Guardians of the Veil, by Fidelitus, Epopt of the Fenswick Caucus, regarding the Pentalogy. (See excerpt, above.)
10—12	A summary of the rotes contained within *A Blinding Light*.
13+	An excerpt of a dissertation by an unnamed Curator of the Mysterium regarding his theories behind the symbolism of the books, as they pertain to the Free Council praxis for magic. (See excerpt, above.)



Dangers

The danger that comes of possessing these books lies not with the books themselves, but from those who seek them. More than one Consilium has placed a bounty on the books, and at least one European caucus of the Guardians of the Veil has assigned an agent the responsibility for hunting down the books in order to protect the lore they contain. Though no one has admitted that these orders include the death of those who have learned the rotes therein, given the sheer number of deaths that tend to surround appearances of the original Pentalogy, it is a fair assumption that — as in any espionage endeavor — the agents are more than willing to kill to protect their secrets.



THE BOOK OF LIFE

The Book of Life is a leather-bound grimoire written more than 400 years ago. It contains a series of rotes all relating to life and health, including the rare and powerful rote "Vital Balance," which allows for indefinite life extension. This last spell has rarely been recorded and is difficult to safely cast as an improvised spell. This book also makes this spell easier to use.

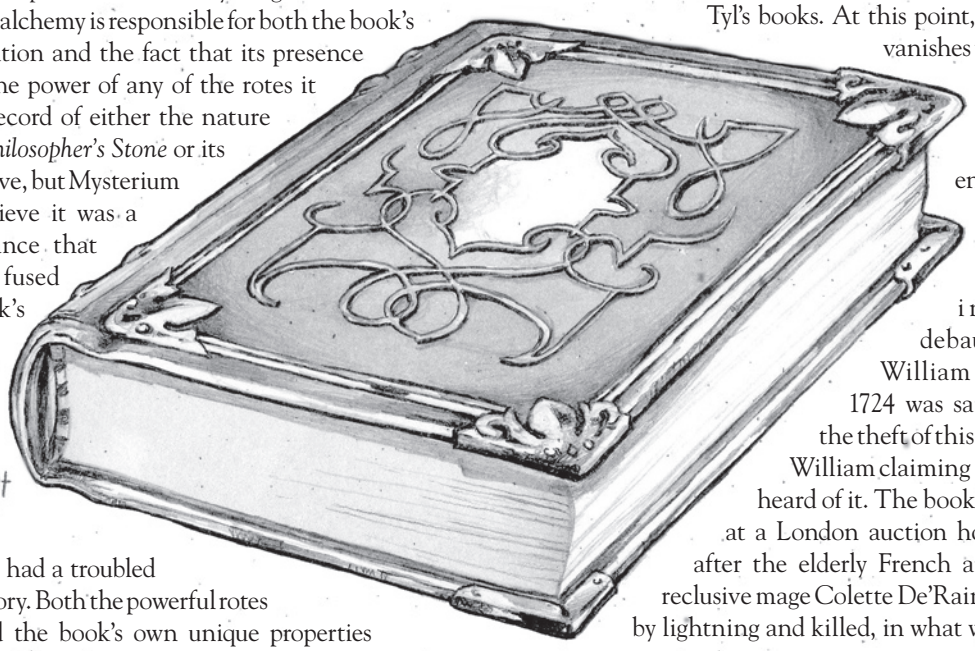
The Book of Life appears as a large tome bound in thin and exquisitely prepared doe hide, dyed forest green and chased with silver. Its age is not at all apparent; the pages are still flexible, the ink has not faded, the silver is untarnished and, most impressively, the leather of the cover is fresh and flexible, and almost still feels alive. Mortal scholars and appraisers who have studied this book have all pronounced it to be a product of the late 16th century, but are somewhat puzzled by its excellent state of preservation. To both mages and Sleepers alike, when the book is closed, it appears to be a mundane, if also large and beautiful leather-bound book. However, whenever and as long as it is opened, it seems almost to radiate the warmth and presence of a living being, instilling a vague sense of peace and joy upon everyone within a half dozen yards.

(Report filed in the Guardians of the Veil Archive, May 17, 1956)

The review of the 1931 murder of the mage Blau Nacht in his apartment is now believed to be associated with *The Book of Life*. The runes that were burned into his dying body were clearly designed to prevent him from returning as a ghost. This, combined with the strong evidence that the purpose of the break-in was clearly to both steal some item of great value and kill Blau Nacht, strongly suggests the book was the reason for the theft and murder. The identity of his assailant remains unknown, but we are currently investigating leads that mages associated with the Nazi party may have been involved in his murder, especially because of Blau Nacht's outspoken communism.

History

The Book of Life is attributed to Nicholas Kollar, an Obrimos mage belonging to the Mysterium. Kollar was known to have worked as both an alchemist and a physician, in Prague in 1572. He had a keen interest in magics for both healing and prolonging life. His surviving papers also contain claims that he perfected something he called *The Lesser Philosopher's Stone*. Many mages now believe Kollar's work in alchemy is responsible for both the book's excellent condition and the fact that its presence can enhance the power of any of the rotes it contains. No record of either the nature of *The Lesser Philosopher's Stone* or its properties survive, but Mysterium researchers believe it was a physical substance that was somehow fused with the book's pages or ink.



Despite its origins as a grimoire designed to preserve life, *The Book of Life* has had a troubled and violent history. Both the powerful rotes it contains and the book's own unique properties can literally make the difference between life and death. As such, many mages have considered it worth killing for. Kollar wrote *The Book of Life* when he was 67, supposedly for his dear friend and fellow mage Jan Tyl, in order to enable him also to avoid the ravages of old age. Jan Tyl died in a duel 36 years later, and at this point Kollar vanished from all mundane and magical records. He is rumored to have lived for several centuries after this, and some mages believe he is still alive. *The Book of Life* was missing when other Mysterium mages came to collect Tyl's effects. The rumor at the time was that the unnamed duelist stole it and several other of Tyl's books. At this point, the grimoire vanishes for more than a century.

Although never proven, the break-in and fire at the estate of the infamously debauched mage William of Lyon in 1724 was said to involve the theft of this book, despite William claiming to have never heard of it. The book next appears at a London auction house in 1791, after the elderly French aristocrat and reclusive mage Colette De'Raine, was struck by lightning and killed, in what was presumed

to have been a magical attack by an unknown assailant. The book was purchased by Lady Jane Leopold, the wealthy widow of Cornish mine owner and Mastigos mage Geoffrey Leopold who was known to have a keen interest in old and exotic manuscripts.

The time the book spent in Lady Leopold's possession forms several of the most mysterious decades of its long history. Lady Leopold was known to be a Sleeper, but she steadfastly refused to sell the book to any of the several buyers who attempted to purchase it. In addition, mages from the Mysterium made three separate attempts to steal the book, but were always blocked by an impressive series of coincidences that several of the mages involved ascribed to exceptionally well-concealed Covert magic. To further this impression, Lady Leopold is known to have lived to an age of at least 98. In 1839, her London townhouse burned down, and she is presumed to have died in the fire, although her body was never found. Rumors speak of her having a mysterious companion, who is widely assumed to be an unknown mage, and who a few people identify as Nicholas Kollar.

The book was found undamaged in a chest located in the basement of Lady Leopold's townhouse. In the auction that followed, a London chapter of the Mysterium purchased the book, which it immediately placed in its Athenaeum. The book remained there for almost 50 years, where it was carefully studied by several dozen mages. This was the only time that copies of the "Vital Balance" rote were known to have been made, but all of them soon vanished into various private libraries. The Athenaeum was located near the London docks, and during the chaos caused by the massive dockworker strike of 1889 was broken into, and several items including *The Book of Life* were stolen.

The book next resurfaced in Germany in 1946 in a cavern containing a variety of other Nazi treasures. Nothing certain is known about the history of the book from 1889 to 1946, but some mages assume that at least some of the attacks on mages that were common in post WWI Germany were due to attempts to acquire this book. The most infamous of these incidents was a series of three gas main explosions under the house of a mage believed to own this grimoire. The presumed owner survived all these explosions, but the attacker did not. She was found on the floor of her nearby house by the police, an apparent victim of spontaneous human combustion. The local Guardians of the Veil investigated and discovered she was killed by a powerful being from the Abyss, apparently summoned by the vast backlash.

Brought back with him to the United States by a soldier with an interest in old books, the fate of the tome remained unknown until the soldier died in a car accident in 1959 and his wife sold it at an auction in New Jersey. At this point, the many mages who had been searching for the book since it vanished shortly before WWII now redoubled their efforts to acquire it. For the rest of the 20th century and the first years of the 21st the book remained in the United States.

Between 1978 and 1992, the book was owned by the Mysterium and stored in its New York headquarters, where it was regularly used by the leadership of this branch. A small and exceedingly wealthy cabal known as the Country Group, located in the wealthy New York suburbs of Westchester County, stole *The Book of Life* and several other valuable grimoires from this Athenaeum in 1992. The thieves managed to do so in a manner that left no evidence of their identity.

With the increase in the ease of both global communication and international travel, the members of the Country Group have also done their best to keep all hints of the book's whereabouts a secret, knowing that mages from all over the globe are attempting to find it. Part of this effort involved obtaining a 19th century copy of the book and using it to make a modern copy. Both copies contain all the rotes that are found in *The Book of Life*, but provide none of the other benefits of owning the original.

Using these two copies, they attempted to conceal their ownership of the book behind the same sort of complex web of lies for which the Guardians of the Veil are so well noted. In 1995, several members of the Country Group leaked a few discreet rumors about owning *The Book of Life*, and then allowed one of the thieves who showed up to attempt to steal it to discover the location of the heavily guarded 19th century copy. Thinking this was the actual book, the thief stole it. Since that time, the owners have kept track of the thief and leaked information about the location of the copy she stole to other prospective thieves. Then, they let it be known they still possess a modern copy of *The Book of Life* and charge mages high prices, including both tass and copies of valuable rotes, to be able to study it and learn the rotes. As a result, almost no one suspects they also possess the original.

Contents

The book contains several relatively common Life rotes from **Mage: The Awakening** that are all related to health and healing. These rotes are: "Body Control" (p. 182), "Self-Healing" (p. 183), "Self-Purging" (p. 183), "Banish Plague" (p. 185) and "Healing Heart" (p. 186). Unlike the versions listed in **Mage: The Awakening,** for each of these spells the Medicine skill is the one used when performing the rote. In addition, *The Book of Life* contains the spells "Body Mastery" and "Vital Balance."

Body Mastery (Life ●●●)

This spell enhances the mage's health, boosts the speed of his healing and lengthens his lifespan.

Practice: Ruling
Action: Instant
Duration: Prolonged (1 scene)
Aspect: Covert
Cost: 1 Mana (optional)

The mage can also use this spell to cause all forms of damage to heal more rapidly. Each success allows the mage to halve the time (round down) it takes to heal bashing, lethal and aggravated damage. 2 successes allow a mage to heal 1 lethal wound in 12 hours and 1 aggravated wound in a little over a day and a half. To gain this benefit, the mage must either cast this spell with the required duration or recast it whenever the duration expires. This healing is compatible with the Quick Healer Merit. Each success also acts as 1 automatic success on all extended and instant rolls to resist diseases, poisons or drugs. Finally, characters who spend most of their time (at least 75%) under the influence of this spell lengthen their life spans by 25 years for every dot of the Life Arcana they possess. Decrease this latter bonus proportional to the amount of time the character spends using this spell. By spending 1 Mana, the Duration of this spell can be made to last for 1 day. Most mages who use this spell cast it at the beginning of the day, as part of their morning rituals.

Mysterium Rote: Enduring Body

Dice Pool: Stamina + Occult + Life

One of the greatest and most profound limitations of the life of all scholars and experimenters is the unavoidable combination of ill health and mortality that cuts short their ability to continue their research. Although no form of magic can avert these universal problems, this spell can certainly postpone them.

Vital Balance (Life ●●●●● + Death ●●●●)

This spell slows down aging. The mage ages far more slowly and thus can live much longer than normal.

Practice: Ruling

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (1 scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana

By precisely balancing the forces of life and death within the target's body, the caster slows the rate by which the target ages by a factor equal to her level in the Death Arcanum + her Gnosis. A mage who has 4 dots in Death and a Gnosis of 3 who uses this spell on herself ages 1 day for every 7 (4 + 3) days that pass while she is under the influence of this spell. Mages who use this spell regularly often live for several centuries. Unless the mage learns 6 dots in the Life Arcanum, she cannot use the advanced prolongation table to cast this spell, and even then the maximum possible duration of this spell is only 1 week.

Rolling a Dramatic Failure on this spell causes the mage to automatically age 1 year, which serves as a great disincentive against attempting to prolong this spell without using ritual casting. Most mages use ritual casting to allow them to cast this spell with a duration of several days. In addition, many mages who regularly use this spell mark themselves with a small tattoo or scar in the shape of the appropriate Atlantean runes needed to prolong the spell. If the mage rolls an Exceptional Success when casting "Vital Balance" she does not age at all for the duration. There are rumors of mages many centuries old who manage to regularly manage this level of success with the "Vital Balance" spell.

The slowed aging due to this spell is compatible with the Death spell "Steal Lifespan." It is also compatible with the "Body Mastery" spell described above, but the additional years granted by either of the aforementioned spells are not affected by the slowed aging provided by the "Vital Balance" spell; they are simply added to the mage's lifespan. In addition, this spell cannot be cast by or on a Tremere Liche; attempts to do either automatically fail. All other mages can cast this spell on both themselves and others with equal ease.

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Life

Nicholas Kollar was a skilled and brilliant occultist who was also nominally a member of the Mysterium. As a result, he designed this rote to make the best use of his prodigious intellect and his occult studies.

Other Benefits Provided by The Book of Life

In addition to containing the above rotes, this grimoire also contains special diagrams that provide the mage with a +2 bonus when casting any of the rotes contained within the book, if she casts the rote while looking at these diagrams. In addition, being within a half dozen yards of the book while it is open allows the mage to cast all these rotes as if her score in Life was 1 dot higher than it is. The most potent bonus provided by this book is the fact that having it present when casting the "Vital Balance" rote allows it to be cast as a Covert instead of a Vulgar spell. All these bonuses are part of the inherent nature of the grimoire and cannot be duplicated by any known means.

In addition, study of *The Book of Life* can provide a feeling of contentment and joy at the wonders of life. This feeling lasts for the next 24 hours. Studying the book for at least an hour once a day makes the reader immune to the effects of the Depression and Melancholia derangements. However, if present, these derangements return 24 hours after the mage last studied the book.

Dangers

The book is perfectly safe to use, but it is also exceptionally desirable to both the living and the dead. Gaining access to this book or one of the few copies allows the mage to learn the "Vital Balance" rote, which is one of the only spells that can both greatly prolong life and does not require the mage to perform one of a variety of immoral actions. Unfortunately, this spell is also fraught with risk, and eventually the dangers of regularly casting a Vulgar

spell will catch up with the caster — unless the caster has easy access to either a Demesne or this book. Then, the spell is exceptionally safe and can be repeatedly cast for decades or centuries without risk of failure. Many mages lack Demesnes, and the book itself also provides other benefits for casting these spells. As a result, many mages who learn of this book will do almost anything to obtain and keep a copy of it. As a result, this grimoire has been stolen at least 22 times during the last four centuries, and is directly responsible for more than 15 murders.

The Country Group

The current owners are just as determined to keep this book as any of its previous owners, and plan to use it to attain lifespans measured in centuries instead of decades. In addition to constructing elaborate ruses to distract seekers from learning they have the book, the members of the Country Group have also already killed two mages, one Seer of the Throne and one member of the Free Council who both suspected they had the actual book. The Group killed the libertine Lisa Nguyen through the use of powerful Fate magic; nobody is even certain the auto accident in which she died one year ago was actually murder. However, members of the Country Group attempt to keep track of any later efforts to look into Lisa's death. As a result, several members of the Country Group have become increasingly paranoid and so are likely to be even less restrained when confronted with someone else who is inquiring after *The Book of Life*.

This small cabal consists of five wealthy mages who are all members in good standing of various Orders. Two belong to the Mysterium, one belongs to the Guardians of the Veil, and the remaining two belong to the Silver Ladder. All members of this cabal are between 31 and 47 years of age and are somewhat conservative mages who are mildly contemptuous of the Free Council. Two members of the Country Group are capable of using the "Vital Balance" rote, and perform it with a prolonged, weekly duration on themselves and the other members once a week. Because of the bonuses provided by the book, and the fact that each of the members of the Country Group bears a small tattoo of the appropriate duration-prolonging Atlantean runes, the two mages who can perform this rote do not bother using ritual casting to do so; each of them rolls 10 dice when performing this rote.

Since obtaining *The Book of Life* in 1992, the Country Group has met weekly, on Sundays, so that the members who are capable of using the "Vital Balance" rote from the book can use it on themselves and each other. The mages meet at a mansion owned by one of the members, and the book is stored in a large, magically protected sub cellar under his house that is the group's collective Sanctum.

Ghosts Created by the Book

In addition to the many mages interested in it, the book also possesses spectral guardians. Occasionally, mages who possess the book turn up dead, or simply find that the book has vanished or that enemies from whom they have been hiding mysteriously find them. This is especially true of mages who acquire the book by murder or similarly violent and underhanded means. While most mages simply attribute such events to the complex webs of crime and betrayal that surround this book, a few claim the book is protected and watched over by Nicholas Kollar. However, the true source of these incidents remains unknown to all but a handful of mages who suspect the truth, but have so far kept silent about it.

A number of mages have noticed that the book is often associated with ghosts. Most correctly assume it attracts existing ghosts because of the soothing influence it has on them. (See below.) However, in addition to this effect, the "Vital Balance" spell draws upon the powers of both Life and Death magics and prolonged use does not just lengthen the mage's lifespan, it also makes any mage who casts it regularly more likely to return as a ghost after he dies. In addition, this ghost will always have *The Book of Life* as one of its anchors. Since the book remains when many other anchors die or are destroyed, for several of the ghosts, the book serves as their sole anchor. Today, four ghosts are associated with *The Book of Life*. Three were killed by someone who stole it and one died from a massive backlash that occurred when using the "Vital Balance" spell because she was deprived of the book.

One of the ghosts who use this book as his only anchor attacks anyone who attempts to steal the book or murder the owner. The other three occasionally haunt anyone who uses the book. Because of the nature of the magic involved, the ghosts of mages who regularly used both this rote and the book itself are exceptionally long lasting, enduring far longer than most ordinary ghosts. Like many ghosts, their memories of being alive grow dim and faded after a few decades and they grow increasingly strange and distant.

However, despite their fading memories of life, every mage who used this book was a magician skilled in the use of powerful Death magics, and so their ghosts retain a dim awareness of how easily mages can detect and repel ghosts. In addition, most can still tell the difference between Sleepers and mages. As a result, these ghostly guardians attempt to avoid drawing magical attention to themselves, and either act only when mages are not around or only use Numina that are exceedingly subtle and not instantly identifiable as the actions of ghosts. Typical actions include everything from using animal control or telekinesis in a manner that won't be instantly noticed, to possessing or manipulating Sleepers.

The Book as Ghost Lure

In addition to people who use the "Vital Balance" spell being more likely to become ghosts (especially if a mage casts it with the book nearby), if there are any ghosts within a few dozen yards of the book, it attracts their attention and

their interest. The book is as soothing to ghosts as it is to living beings and many of the more tormented spirits benefit greatly from its influence. It even attracts and soothes ghosts when it is closed. Unfortunately, some of these ghosts grow very used to the book's influence and react negatively if it is moved too far away. Many ghosts either cannot or prefer not to leave a fairly small area, and while moving the book from one room to another rarely causes them any problems, trying to take it out of the building in which it is housed can cause many of these ghosts to become extremely angry. Unlike the ghosts of mages, who often attempt to be subtle to avoid being banished or destroyed by magic, ordinary ghosts usually have no understanding of the powers and capabilities of magic; they know only that the book is a source of comfort and that it is being taken away from them.

When ghosts become angry at the book being moved, they typically react with fairly dramatic Numina, like Animal Control, Telekinesis, Terrify, or occasionally Compulsion or Possession. However, many ghosts also react somewhat slowly to changes in the mundane world, and so do not notice until after the book has been moved out of range. Once they notice the book is gone, some of these ghosts react with furious displays of anger, others howl in despair, and some do nothing at all because they can find no way to retrieve it. However, if the book is returned to this location, even those ghosts who previously did not react to its loss become very protective of it, and react violently if anyone moves it further than across the room it is in.

Many mages have noticed the effect *The Book of Life* has on ghosts. Some use Spirit magics to keep all ghosts more than 50 yards from it, thus removing the temptation for ghosts to cluster around it, because ghosts that far away cannot feel the book's presence at all. Other mages accept the ghostly activity and attempt to convince or compel the ghosts to act in a civil manner in return for free access to the vicinity of the book. A few mages use the book as a tool with which to bargain and compel the obedience of ghosts, taking it away or warding ghosts away from it if they do not obey the book's owner. Sometimes this last effort ends quite badly. In 1969 a mage intent upon stealing the book dispelled the protections against ghosts on the book's owner and his house while the owner was sleeping. The remains of the book's owner were found strewn across most of the upstairs of the house. The thief was able to make off with the book while the ghosts were ripping the owner limb from limb and driving hordes of rats to devour what was left.



The Federation of Immortality

The Federation of Immortality is a cabal within the Free Council whose goal is to provide access to life-prolonging

rotes to all mages, and to make a solid profit while doing so. When the members of the Country Group killed Lisa Nguyen, they had no idea that she was an important member of the Federation of Immortality. Since her death, the Federation has become larger and more prominent, and it has redoubled its efforts to acquire both *The Book of Life* and at least one complete copy of this grimoire.

The Federation has already obtained several copies of the "Body Mastery" rote. Its next and most important goal is to acquire copies of the "Vital Balance" rote, and then *The Book of Life* itself. The leaders envision placing this book in a large accessible city, in a highly secure facility guarded by members of their cabal. They would then charge other mages a moderate yearly fee to gain access to the book to both learn the rote and to cast it in the vicinity of the book. Eventually, they also hope to create Demesnes containing copies of this rote, where it can also be cast without risk of Paradox.

This cabal is made up of a mixture of idealists who wish to help all mages extend their lives and more practical mages who wish to greatly extend their own lives, but also understand the inherent difficulties in attempting to maintain possession of a grimoire as much in demand as *The Book of Life*. Also, all these mages see the possibility for making a stable long-term profit by selling access to it to everyone willing to pay their relatively modest price. The first obstacle to be overcome, however, is that no one outside the Country Group has seen *The Book of Life* for more than 15 years. Lisa Nguyen was a high-ranking member of the Federation of Immortality, and the rest of its members know she died approximately 110 miles north of Manhattan. The leaders of the Federation strongly suspect her death was related to the book and have redoubled their efforts in this region.

The leaders of the Federation are willing to share the information they have collected about the book with anyone who seems both competent and willing to work with them. Their knowledge of the book largely consists of details of its appearance and contents and most of its history up until it vanished in 1992, as well as a few facts and suppositions surrounding Lisa Nguyen's death. To ensure they will not be betrayed by mages intent upon keeping the book for themselves, the Federation leaders insist that the cabal's single Master of Fate be allowed to freely cast a *geas* of indefinite duration upon everyone wishing to work with them. This *geas* inflicts dire punishments upon anyone who does not turn over either the book or any significant information about its location or current owners to the leaders of the Federation. In return, the Federation promises both free

Researching *The Book of Life*

Capping Ability: Occult

Action: Extended (10 successes)

Research Time: 4 hours; 1 hour

Appropriate Libraries: Occult, European History

Bonuses: Mysterium membership (+1),

Penalties: No dots in either Knowledge or Occult (-1)

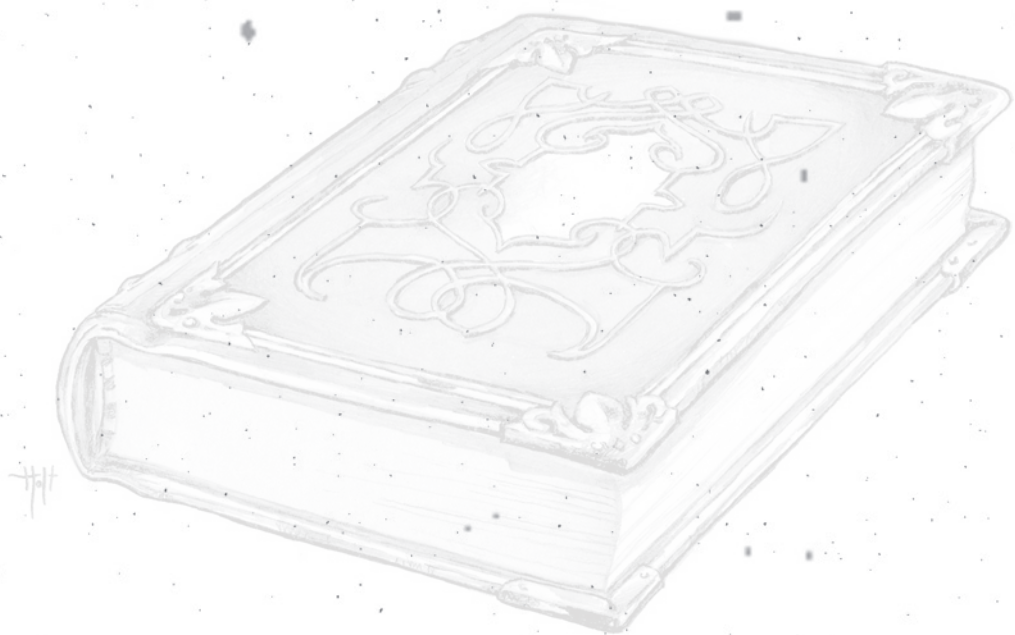
Successes	Information
0-4	Nothing.
5-10	*The Book of Life* contains powerful spells that aid health and longevity and was written in the 16th century. Possession of the book itself gives substantial bonuses to use these spells.
11-15	The most powerful longevity spell in *The Book of Life* drastically slows aging but is Vulgar. Looking at or touching the book allows this spell to be Covert and to be cast at a longer duration. Copies of this book do not have these properties. The book was written in 1572 and has changed hands many times since then. More than 15 people have been murdered in efforts to obtain it. The book was brought to the US in 1946 and was stolen from a New York branch of the Mysterium in 1992. There are also many rumors that the author, Nicholas Kollar, is an archmaster of Life and is still alive.
16+	A cabal inside the Free Council known as the Federation of Immortality is actively seeking to acquire the book and ensure that every mage has access to it. It is willing to pay a substantial reward to anyone with information about the book. The Mysterium has at least four copies of this grimoire and guards them all carefully. The original book attracts ghosts, who find it very pleasant to be around and sometimes react violently to it being moved.

access and a share of any profits from dues to see the book to any individual or group who obtains the book. Although they are careful to avoid saying so directly, the leaders of the Federation are aware that committing all manner of crimes may be necessary to obtain the book and make it clear they will take the book without asking any uncomfortable questions about how it was obtained.

Other Seekers

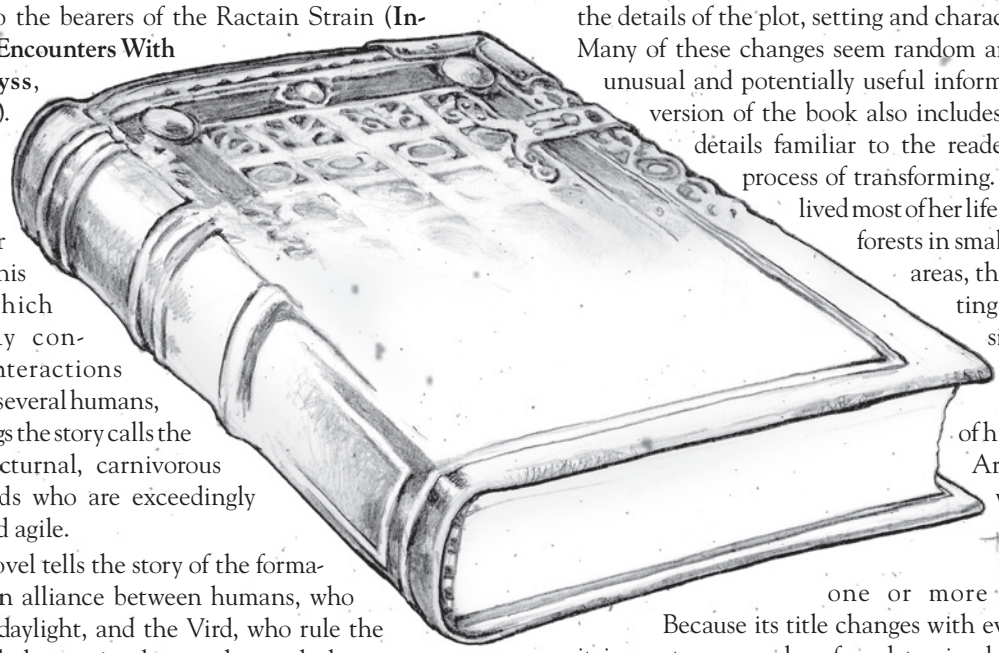
There are more than a dozen other mages who have spent years attempting to acquire the book and will gladly ally themselves with anyone who seems to have an actual lead about its location and then betray and likely kill the mage who aided them. If they cannot kill their former ally easily or without raising problematic questions, those mages capable of doing so will block or alter the ally's memories about the book for as long as possible. Other mages often attempt to frame their former ally for some serious mundane or magical crime.

One of the members of the Federation of Immortality is secretly a member of another rival cabal, hoping to obtain *The Book of Life* and use it as a tool to gain power by allowing only his allies to obtain access to the book. Another member of the Federation of Immortality is a Mysterium mage who plagiarized significant sections of one of her most prominent articles on magic. Another cabal interested in acquiring the Book of Life discovered her plagiarism, and it is currently blackmailing her into revealing all the information the Federation discovers about this book.



THE BOOK OF TRANSFORMATION

This volume is one of the few grimoires that is also an artifact of a particularly unusual nature — its primary power, other than inducing transformations in the reader, is transforming itself. A "sleeper" grimoire like *The Ancient Lands Pentalogy* (see above), the tome is presently written in the form of an engaging but somewhat clichéd and trite fantasy novel about an exotic land where humanity lives alongside two other, semi-human species. Because of various similarities of appearance and capabilities, several Mysterium scholars believe one of these species is in some manner related to the bearers of the Ractain Strain (**Intruders: Encounters With the Abyss**, pp. 160-6). These beings are only a minor part of this story, which primarily concerns interactions between several humans, and beings the story calls the Vird: nocturnal, carnivorous humanoids who are exceedingly quick and agile.



The novel tells the story of the formation of an alliance between humans, who rule the daylight, and the Vird, who rule the night and who previously preyed upon the humans. In the novel, a young Vird woman rescues a young human man, who is the oldest son of the human king. He became lost and was far from shelter when night fell, and the Vird woman prevented him from being killed by her fellows. The two then fall in love and their marriage serves as a way of making peace between humans and Vird. Currently, the book appears to be a thick hardcover fantasy novel with a somewhat lurid cover. The current title is *NightAngyl: The Chronicles of Keriwiess* (the name of the book's female protagonist), by Cadillac DeVille. The author's name is itself an anagram of the most recent reader's name. The book has a publication date of 2005 and except for the fact that the publishing company and ISBN listed are both fictitious, it appears to be a perfectly ordinary, somewhat generic-sounding fantasy novel. The only thing unusual about this volume is that it is a bit more durable than a normal book. *The Book of Transformation* has a Durability of 3, a Size of 1, and a Structure of 4.

However, appearances are most definitely deceiving. This volume is at least several thousand years old. It changes its form, the structure of the text and even the language in which it is written regularly. Over the centuries, it has had many titles and many forms. Periodically, someone learning its rotes transforms into a Vird, and at the same time the book transforms into a new form. Every time a reader transforms, the book transforms into a well-made book of a type most familiar to the individual being transformed, and in this mage's native tongue. During these transformations, the details of the plot, setting and characters also change. Many of these changes seem random and some contain unusual and potentially useful information. Each new version of the book also includes a host of minor details familiar to the reader who is in the process of transforming. If the reader has lived most of her life in cool temperate forests in small towns and rural areas, then the book's setting will be somewhat similar, just as, if the last reader has lived most of his life in Phoenix, Arizona, the book will be set in a desert that contains one or more large cities.

Because its title changes with every new version, it is most commonly referred to simply as *The Book of Transformation*.

History

The history of *The Book of Transformation* is understandably unclear. The first verifiable reports of this book date from France in 825, describing it as a beautiful leather-bound manuscript written in Medieval Latin. Because of the book's unique nature, Time magics used on it cannot reveal any information prior to its most recent transformation. Mages are left having to piece together old accounts, in some cases attempting to use Time magics on the descriptions and drawings of the book.

Some scholars have discovered a few fragmentary scrolls from the city of Alexandria in the 1st century CE that almost certainly refer to the same book. According to these records, it was said to have been in the library since shortly after its founding 300 years before. The book was originally

(From Argentine's Notes on the previous titles of The Book of Transformation, 1927)

1591: *The Romance of the Sun and the Moon*

1634: *Night and Day: A Romance in the Caves and Mountains of the Mysterious East*

1737: *A Voyage to the Lost Island of Eternal Night*

1831: *Dark Romance: Stories of the Magical Burmese Night*

1893: *The Gentle Arms of Unsavory Night: A Horrific and Inspiring Tale of Unnatural Beings, Laden with Great Moral Appositeness and Spiritual Merit*

1904: *The Island of Haunted Night*

1921: *Tales of the Lost Kingdom of Night*

found as a handwritten papyrus scroll sealed in an ancient-looking copper cylinder covered with unknown glyphs or runes. This cylinder was found floating in the ocean near Alexandria, where it was picked up by a passing ship. Most scholars of Mysterium who have studied this work believe this book is either a relic of Atlantis or from the mythic time long before the founding of Atlantis.

Knowledge of this grimoire became somewhat more widespread by the middle of the 15th century, when a mage in Florence discovered it amidst a collection of books previously acquired before the fall of Byzantium. For the next 400 years the book alternated between being an object of much study and interest, and occasional periods when it was regarded as inherently corrupt or exceptionally dangerous. To its detractors, the fact that it occasionally transformed readers into Vird and that several of its rotes were Paradox-free versions of otherwise Vulgar spells were both evidence that this book was inherently tainted by the Abyss. This belief became most fervent when the book was stolen by the Seers of the Throne in 1802. For the next 34 years it was at the center of a small cult of Seers of the Throne who sincerely believed the book was written by the Exarchs and offered hidden wisdom that would further the Seers' cause.

However, other than the fact that one third of the Seers who studied it transformed into Vird, and all of them benefited from the power of the rotes contained within this work, later investigators uncovered no evidence that this book was of any additional use to the Seers' cause. In fact, the cult was revealed and the book recovered because one of the Seers inadvertently transformed into a duplicate of Frederick Drayer, one of the Adamantine Arrows who was hunting the group. The Seer was unable to drop this appearance before he was recognized by one of Frederick's Sleepwalker assistants. By the late 1840s, belief that *The Book of Transformation* was corrupt and tied to the Abyss had largely fallen out of favor, and members of the Mysterium began its more organized and careful study.

During the last four decades of the 19th century, Mysterium archeologists carefully examined the various cryptic hints found in the changing versions of this book. Most scholars hoped they would eventually be able to "crack" some secret code hidden within the book's lurid text and thus learn the full meaning of the secrets hidden within this volume. Unfortunately, like many similarly ambitious 19th century efforts, this one failed.

There are clearly secrets within *The Book of Transformation*, but there seems to be little rhyme or reason to them. Efforts involving assembling and carefully examining all the various descriptive passages from the various versions of this grimoire yielded no further information. In addition, none of the many scholars who devoted decades of study to the work managed to uncover any reliable methods of determining which of the many descriptive passages of unique wonders within the various versions of the book were descriptions of actual wonders that could be found in similar locations in the mundane world and which were merely fiction.

By the end of the first decade of the 20th century, efforts to understand the secret nature of *The Book of Transformation* were largely abandoned. The fact that the efforts and expectations of the scholars who spent several decades working with this book so vastly exceeded their results has meant that since that time most members of the Mysterium regard any claims to understand more about its nature with great skepticism. As a result, study of this book has languished since the First World War. However, interest in the contents of every new version remains strong. The Mysterium requests that anyone who encounters a new version of this book record any descriptive passages, and if possible the entire text so that Mysterium archeologists can attempt to compare them with any known locations and phenomena that are similar. However, beyond this effort, which continues to occasionally provide useful results, the book mostly ceased to be a major object of study until 2005.

In 2005, the book transformed into its current form, *Night-Angyl: The Chronicles of Keriwiess*, when it was read by a Los Angeles-based archeologist who had both grown up in and spent many years searching for artifacts in southern Mexico. A passage in this version of the book describes a series of caves very similar to those found in dense jungles within the Yucatan. Exploration of one of these caves revealed a deep inner chamber that was marked with a series of strange designs and drawings identical to those described in the book. Time magics reveal that these cave drawings are at least 40,000 years old and are of completely unknown origin. They are currently being investigated by mages from both the Free Council and the Mysterium. While far less spectacular than

some of the most notable discoveries derived from *The Book of Transformation*, these cave drawings are unique in that Doctor Patricia Watkins, a mage who works as a geologist, had explored and photographed these caves in 1992, and her explorations had revealed neither these drawings nor even the small cavern they decorated. While some mages maintain that Dr. Watkins must have overlooked the room or that some minor geological event must have uncovered the room in the 13 years between her visit and the discovery of the cave drawings, Dr. Watkins visited the cave in 2007 and reported there was no way she could have overlooked the room described in the book.

Current Debate

Most mages believe Dr. Watkins' statement. Current opinion as to the nature of the change is divided. One theory holds that the room was previously hidden by powerful magic and some magical effect connected to the most recent transformation of the book revealed the cave in the mundane world, just as the passage in the book revealed the cave to readers. However, some mages believe the cave literally did not exist before the book revealed it, and that the transformation of the book transformed the mundane world in minor and subtle ways. Naturally, mages who support this latter theory are excited by the possibility of literally rewriting the world, and *The Book of Transformation* is currently a popular topic among some members of the Free Council.

A few mages even claim that the book actually creates all the details described in all its many different versions, but that it does so in a variety of parallel universes. As a result, only a few of the details appear in each parallel universe, and so only a fraction of the locations described in the book appear in the mundane world. Because this last theory is essentially unprovable until someone manages to both prove the existence of parallel universes and finds a way to travel to or observe some of the other universes, this theory is largely ignored by all but the most eccentric and theoretically-minded mages.

Current Location

The book is currently held by the Mysterium in offices in Los Angeles. However, because the book requires someone to study it in order for it to transform, it is one of a limited number of grimoires the Mysterium shares with outsiders. Any mage who is not specifically forbidden from the libraries of the Mysterium can study the book in its Los Angeles Athenaeum.

Contents

The book's age and unusual properties are reason enough for some mages to assume it has an antediluvian origin. Another reason is the fact that the story contained within

The Truth About *The Book of Transformation*

The more eccentric theories about *The Book of Transformation* are indeed correct. It creates the details described within its pages and places these details in some location that is known to (although not necessarily ever visited by) the person whose transformation was responsible for the book's most recent transformation. Just as the book borrows that person's native language and some knowledge of his world and incorporates both these into its new version, it also places the changes it makes in reality or the Astral Realm within regions known to this reader. Sometimes the location of the change is something the transformed person only briefly saw a picture of in a magazine she read in a doctor's office seven years ago or heard about from a grade school teacher, and so discovering this last fact can be exceptionally difficult. However, the fact that the book transforms external reality as well as its reader can be proven if a mage ever used magic to examine an area before it was transformed by the book, and can thus conclusively say there was nothing magically hidden in this location before the book transformed.

However, the actual transformations produced by the book have no relation to the reader. Most often they consist of added rooms, caves, cubbyholes, ledges or other well defined spaces that contain odd markings, small and exotic trinkets or, on rare occasions, unique magical artifacts. The nature of the symbols or artifacts produced by the book are all completely unknown, although most are assumed to be of Atlantean origin. Time magic can determine nothing about these items or symbols beyond their approximate age, and even the most powerful Mind rotes can do nothing beyond obtaining the vaguest understanding of the symbols' meaning. Most mages believe the places and things produced by the book are either clues to some vast puzzle or more likely remnants of some previous, presumably antediluvian, reality that is now utterly lost except for a few fragmentary traces.

it sometimes contains hints and cryptic clues related to discoveries in both the mundane world and the Astral Realm. Descriptive passages in the book occasionally lead to discoveries ranging from finding ancient and mysterious archeological artifacts to locating a previously unknown portion of the Astral Realm. The most difficult and also the most interesting part of these discoveries is that every new version of the book is at least somewhat different. Every time the book transforms, major details shift, including the professions and genders of the protagonists, the overall landscape and climate of the setting and almost everything except the descriptions of the Vird and the overall structure of the plot. Some of these changes involve the text modernizing, both in terms of language and details; others are seemingly random, but also occasionally meaningful.

Within each new version of the book there are often small details containing hints about ancient settlements, strange temples or bizarre ritual sites in locations whose names or prominent features hint at corresponding places in the mundane world, or on rare occasions in the Astral Realm. Most versions contain at least one such piece of information and a few have contained as many as a half dozen. Unfortunately, the book is always quite long and filled with a multitude of details, so determining which of the many details in the book may be hints about possible discoveries in the mundane world or the Astral Realm can be exceedingly challenging. The vast majority of the locations and artifacts described in the book are completely meaningless. The only way to use the book to make discoveries is to check all the possible references in the latest version of the book, which typically involves examining dozens of descriptions in the text and then attempting to see whether anything in the text is at all similar to anything that might have some real or Astral existence. Because few versions of the book contain more than one or two real clues, most of these efforts are in vain.

The rewards gained from carefully examining each version of the book can be exceedingly great all the same. Several prominent artifacts have been discovered through hints revealed in *The Book of Transformation*, including the Metachronal clock (**The Mysterium**, pp. 209-10), which was one of the first major discoveries based on studying this book, as well as the disturbing Eye of Ahriman (**The Mysterium**, p. 208) and the first Dreamstones (**The Free Council**, pp. 114-5) discovered in the Astral Realm. However, discovering actual artifacts is quite rare. More often, what are found are either odd inscriptions in unknown languages that even magic has difficulty translating or strange relics like oddly carved figurines or tools made of exotic, or sometimes unique materials. Dating these strange relics reveals them all to be more than 20,000 years old, and some are as much as 30 or 40,000 years old. Most seem to come from either a single culture or a handful of cultures that are both similar and closely related. This culture or group of cultures had advanced metalwork, including the ability to work both aluminum and platinum, as well as the ability to carve exceptionally hard stones like jade and rubies in intricate detail.

The Rotes

All the rotes contained within *The Book of Transformation* involve personal shapeshifting. Regardless of how the plot and setting details of the book change, it always contains the following Life rotes from **Mage: The Awakening**:

"Organic Resilience" (p. 183), "Transform Self" (p. 187), "Two Faces" (p. 188), "Doppelgänger" (pp. 188-9), "Shapechanging" (p. 190). With the exception of "Organic Resilience," all these rotes are normally Vulgar. However, by using versions of these the rotes found within this book, a mage can cast them as Covert magic. The one limitation is that these rotes are Covert only if they are used upon the mage who learned this rote and if they are not subject to Disbelief. If used on others or performed in the presence of Sleepers, these rotes again become Vulgar. The rotes are only Covert when performed on the mage who learned them, away from the eyes of Sleepers.

Transformations

Mages who merely read this grimoire do not necessarily transform into Vird. This transformation requires the mage to actually learn at least some of the rotes contained within it. Each time the mage learns a spell she must make a Stamina + Gnosis roll with a -1 penalty for every rote she has learned after the first. Success allows the mage to avoid the transformation. However, failure means the mage will gradually transform into a Vird over the course of the next month. Use of the "Doppelgänger" spell or other equally powerful Life magics can temporarily reverse this transformation, but the mage's natural form becomes that of a Vird and magical attempts to return to her previous form are as inherently temporary as all other Life magics.

In addition to a mixture of changes that range from problematic to beneficial to simply odd, the other potential benefit from the Vird transformation is both fleeting and fraught with risk. Immediately after his transformation, the character begins having dreams that consist of scenes from *The Book of Transformation*. Alone, these dreams are harmless, and while they are a nightly occurrence for the first week or two after the transformation, they soon fade to no more than once a week. Within two or three months after the transformation they cease entirely. These dreams are always unusually vivid and enjoyable, but not particularly informative. However, if the character ventures into the Astral Realm on any day when he had one of those dreams within the last 24 hours, he feels pulled toward the portion of Temenos that is the source of these dreams.

If desired, the character can take others along on this journey. Anyone going along on one of these Astral journeys makes a Wits + Expression + Gnosis roll, and gains a number



of Arcane Experience points equal to the number of successes rolled. Characters who have not had one of these Vird dreams within the last day cannot enter or even find this realm on their own; it cannot be found by ordinary humans or by anyone who has not recently dreamed of it. In this realm, the characters can fight battles, help people in distress, and otherwise act like the protagonists in trite fantasy novels.

The end of this Astral journey is always the same: The Vird suddenly passes through a doorway and none of his companions can either follow or contact him in any way. The Vird ends up in a barren but elegantly fitted room with the doorway he just passed through on one side and a window the size and shape of a doorway on the other. In this window, the Vird can see an exceptionally appealing scene he can never remember or describe with any clarity, but that some mages believe to be a portion of the Supernal Realm. After staring into the window for some indeterminate period of time, the Vird automatically awakens, and any companions who ventured into this odd realm with him either awaken or find themselves in some familiar portion of the Astral Realm. (Each of the other astral travelers has the choice to awaken or remain in the Astral Realm once the Vird awakens.)

Vird can travel to what is commonly called the Vird Realm more than once, but doing so is exceptionally risky. At the end of all visits to this realm, the Vird eventually finds himself alone in the room, and on either the second or the third time there, he does not return. No Vird has managed to return from three journeys and none have vanished at the end of their first journey. More than two thirds return from the second journey into this realm, but one third who travel to this Astral realm twice never return. Vird who have returned from their second journey report that the window into what may be the Supernal Realm feels less solid, as if they can almost pass through it. However, none of the Vird who have returned from this journey report trying to force their way through it.

Vird who disappear into the Astral Realm in this fashion utterly vanish. Their bodies not only vanish, but reality rewrites itself so that they never existed. Their parents do not remember having a child of that age and all their official records cease to exist. Only Supernal mages remember them. Also, any imbued items or grimoires they created still exist, but every mundane item they made either ceases to exist or now came about through some other means. As a result, very few Vird are willing to visit the Vird Realm more than once, and a fair number avoid visiting it altogether.

Involuntary Transformations

In addition to the changes and potential risks of transforming into a Vird, learning the rotes contained in *The*

The Vird Transformation

If the character succumbs to the effects of the book, over the course of the next few days the character gradually transforms into a being very like the Vird in the novel. Also, until it is paid off, she must spend all her saved and future XP to purchase the 2-dot Vird Merit. As a result of this transformation, all the character's hair falls out, leaving her utterly hairless, including the loss of all eyelashes and eyebrows. In addition, her skin becomes slightly paler than normal. This transformation is sufficiently unusual that it also removes 1 level of the Striking Looks Merit, if the character previously possessed this Merit. Also, the character can no longer possess the 4-dot version of the Striking Looks Merit. The character's teeth become slightly pointed and she now prefers all her meals to contain moderately large amounts of raw or rare meat that is at least somewhat bloody. The character must regularly include moderate amounts of rare meat in her diet in order to remain healthy. In addition, she gains a -1 penalty to perception rolls involving vision in bright sunlight or similar conditions unless she wears dark sunglasses.

The Vird transformation also has some compensations; the transformed gains 2 dots of the Increased Speed Merit and she can now see as well on a well-lit night as most people can see during the day. This last ability negates up to a -2 penalty to Perception rolls due to darkness. Finally, the character ages somewhat more slowly than normal, living on average half again as long as other humans (typically, an additional 40 years).

Book of Transformation carries an additional risk because of the magical affect learning them has on the mage. After a mage learns any of the rotes for spells that are normally Vulgar, he begins to have vivid dreams of using the spell he just learned. For example, a mage who learned the "Two Faces" rote will have dreams of his appearance shifting and changing, often in a fairly dramatic fashion. These dreams can be quite disturbing and sometimes result in the mage having difficulty sleeping on nights they occur. More importantly, anyone who watches the mage sleep sees that these transformations occur in both dreams and reality. The mage physically transforms because his unconscious uses the spell in his sleep. In most cases, the mage returns to normal upon awakening, but occasionally these transformations remain after the mage is awake. While this sort of transformation can occur anytime within the first two or three weeks after a mage learned one of these rotes, it is especially likely if the mage is awakened unexpectedly.

The most problematic part of these transformations is that they are especially powerful and persistent. These involuntary spells always last between 2 and 24 hours (or between 1 day and 1 week if the mage is powerful enough to use advanced prolongation for the spell) and have a Potency equal to the number of dots in Life possessed by the Mage.

The Duration of Involuntary Rotes

The Storyteller can either choose how long she wishes the effect to last, or she can roll a single die. A roll of 1-5 means the rote lasts 2 hours (or 1 day with advanced prolongation), a roll of 6-9 means the rote lasts 12 hours (or 2 days with advanced prolongation), and a roll of 10 means the rote lasts for 2 days (or 1 week with advanced prolongation).

Because the spell was effectively cast by the mage's unconscious, he cannot simply cancel it, but it also does not count against the number of active spells he can maintain at one time. There are many humorous and a few terrifying stories of mages who awoke from a particularly vivid dream to discover they had transformed into a particularly disturbing or problematic shape. Because the mage's unconscious casts this rote, the shape the mage assumes is rarely random. Instead, the mage is most likely to transform into a form that he is also likely to dream or daydream about, which means a mage who secretly loves or hates someone might well transform into the object of that emotion, just as a mage who is terrified of large aggressive dogs might awaken as a particularly fearsome-looking Rottweiler.

Although no one understands the nature or properties of *The Book of Transformation*, the mages who have studied it are certain these involuntary transformations are intimately connected with the fact that the rotes being dreamed are only Covert if they are learned from this book. A few mages have learned these rotes while using powerful Mind magics to control their dreams. These mages managed to suppress all the involuntary transformations that normally occur during sleep, but in doing so they also caused the rotes they learned to remain Vulgar. In short, to gain access to the advantages provided by this grimoire, mages who study it must be willing to risk these side effects. Several of the mages who have spent the most time examining this grimoire believe these dreams help the mage's psyche internalize these rotes to a sufficient extent that the portion of every mage's psyche believed to be sensitive to the Abyss ignores these particular rotes.

Most mages who have studied *The Book of Transformation* know of both the dreams they will have and the risk of involuntary transformation. However, what most do not know is that on rare occasions these dreams and transfor-

mations can recur years or decades after reading the book. The recurrences of these dreams are almost always linked to some sort of encounter with powerful magic, such as serious Paradox, the character nearly dying because of a magical attack or accidental exposure to some sort of powerful and unusual form of magic, such as the magics associated with many of the oldest artifacts. Most mages who have studied this book never experience any dream transformations more than a month after learning a rote from this book, and almost none have ever had more than three or four, but they can occur.

Researching *The Book of Transformation*

Capping Ability: Occult

Action: Extended (16 successes)

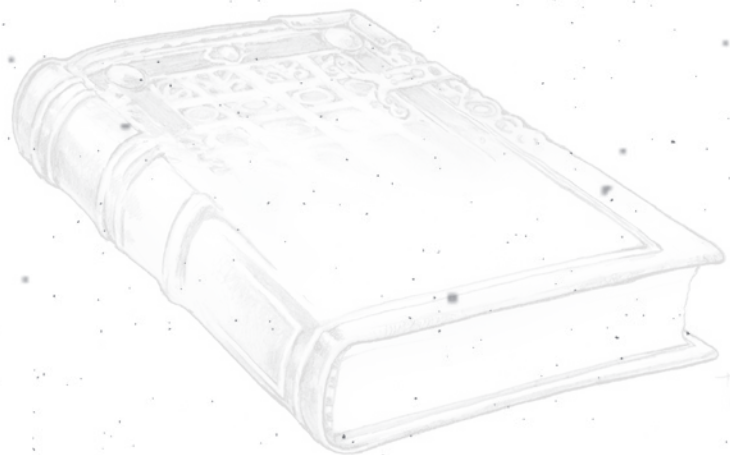
Research Time: 8 hours; 2 hours

Appropriate Libraries: Occult, Cryptids

Bonuses: Mysterium membership (+1),

Penalties: No dots in Occult or Knowledge (-1)

Successes	Information
0-4	Nothing.
5-10	*The Book of Transformation* is written in the form of a trite-seeming fantasy novel, but contains several powerful spells of self-transformation. However, studying these rotes risks permanently transforming the reader into a human-like being that is called a Vird in the novel.
11-15	The book is very old, and has had a number of forms predating its current guise as a fantasy novel. The Vird transformation gives the subject both advantages and disadvantages. Some mages suspect the book dates back to Atlantis, which is one of the reasons normally Vulgar spells in the book are Covert. Also, studying the various descriptions of location in the book can sometimes provide insights that can lead to exotic archeological discoveries or the discovery of new portions of the Astral Realm.
16+	After the transformation, some Vird vanish mysteriously and are never seen again. Some mages believe they vanish into unknown corners of the Astral Realm or even the Supernal Realm. However, most adapt to their new state and their odd dreams eventually fade. Reading the book does not cause the Vird transformation, only actually learning the rotes does this. Also, some descriptions in the book are similar to locations in the mundane world or the Astral Realm. These locations can contain everything from strange inscriptions to invaluable artifacts.



THE CODEX OF LIES

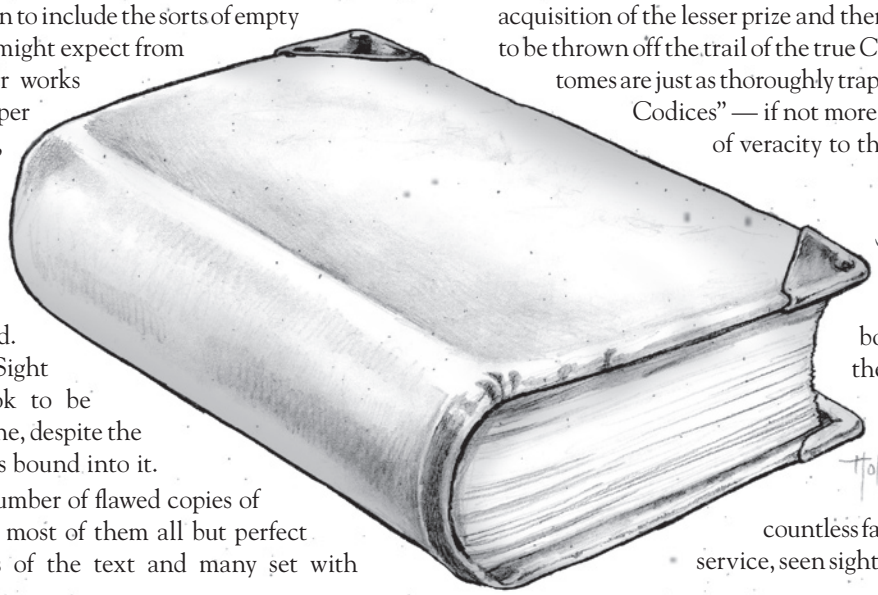
(From the private notes of Winter, Epopt of Halifax, circa 1967:)

…It was at this time I realized exactly what it was that had fallen into our hands: *The Codex of Lies* itself. To think, Plures' great work, somehow washed up, more or less, on the shores of Nova Scotia, and delivered, purely by accident, into the keeping of our Labyrinth. The circumstances were so suspicious as to warrant deeper investigation, but all magical inquiries into the book led nowhere. It was at that point I began to suspect, the stories of the *Codex* being what they are. After consultation with Order authorities in Germany, where the book was last known to have been, we pieced together a rough chronology of its travels here, which seem almost too fanciful to be true, and which I shall not record here — or anywhere else, for that matter.

Whatever the case, we are now in possession of what I can only determine to be the genuine *Codex* and I mean to start the process of unraveling its mysteries. Plures' magics are legendary in many parts of the Order, and my mentor spoke to me at length about one such spell. I'm curious to see whether the reality lives up to the myth. I expect we shall be entertaining visitors soon, if this is truly the text I believe it to be. Of course, if this really *is* Plures' *Codex*, then I need to get to work quickly. There's no telling how long it'll be before the book decides to disappear on us…

Also known as *The Book of the Serpent*, *The Manacle of Whispers*, and *The Wisdom of the Masque*, this grimoire is an old treasure of the Guardians of the Veil. The book has slipped out from under the watchful Eye of the Dragon from time to time, but always manages to find its way home. While it has no proper title, this tome is most commonly referred to as *The Codex of Lies*.

The Codex of Lies is a relatively nondescript book as occult texts go, perhaps 12" in height, 9" in width, and 3" thick. Its covers are a bit battered, bound in burgundy leather, with patina on the plain bronze fittings. The pages are yellowed parchment, and the characters penned in an ever-so-slightly faded black ink. Set down by a precise hand in nine different languages — varying from passage to passage — and illustrated with simple occult imagery, the grimoire is written to include the sorts of empty generalities one might expect from one of the lesser works of esoteric Sleeper society. All told, it is the kind of tome one could easily overlook in a library of the strange and the unexplained. In fact, Mage Sight reveals the book to be perfectly mundane, despite the numerous magics bound into it.



Naturally, a number of flawed copies of the *Codex* exist, most of them all but perfect physical replicas of the text and many set with mystic traps for the unwise and the unwary. One or two of these "false Codices" are believed to be imbued with fatal enchantments, though this may just be Guardian propaganda. If there exists a formula for discerning a false *Codex* from the real thing through cursory examination, that is a secret closely kept by the Guardians of the Veil, though any who study a given copy for its magical lore are apt to detect the forgery in time, whether through the gradual realization that the copy at hand is no grimoire or by the unhappier possibility of triggering some manner of deleterious spell incorporated into the book.

Two or three of these "false Codices" are actually grimoires in their own right, each containing at least a few Guardian-specific variants of more common rotes. Would-be thieves of the Order's lore are often sated through the acquisition of the lesser prize and thereby allow themselves to be thrown off the trail of the true *Codex*. Naturally, these tomes are just as thoroughly trapped as the other "false Codices" — if not more so — lending a sense of veracity to them.

History

The Codex of Lies was penned in Lisbon, Portugal, between the years 1723 and 1728, by an aged Guardian of the Veil known as Plures ("Many"). Plures had worn countless faces over his decades of service, seen sights unfit for human eyes

and performed deeds that scarred his soul in ways too deep to be purged by any act of penitence, and, at the end of his days, he resolved to record his awful wisdom for those who followed after him, so that they might learn something by his travails. Putting to use his prodigious linguistic knowledge, Plures drafted his text in nine different tongues, writing of the sorts of platitudes that even the most banal Sleeper could quote and call himself wise: "In falling upon the Path, you learn the strength to stand," "The mystery is solved by the knowing of the question that encompasses its own answer," "Who turns the journey of ten thousand steps inward has taken the first step." He then modestly illustrated his work, incorporating the elementary symbolism of various occult fellowships into his writing.

And so it was that the cipher was concealed in plain sight, with each image pointing to one of the most basic elements of Guardian training in the matters of the Labyrinth. The 67 visible bricks in the pyramid on page 126, for instance, dictated which letters should be picked out on a given page, while the Latin inscription on the Grecian column indicated that the words to be assembled were understood by using Latin spelling and Classical Greek grammar. Plures went through over a score of permutations in the course of drafting his magnum opus, occasionally going back to the start of a chapter as he realized that a given passage was too easy — or virtually impossible — to untangle. At last, however, he had a work worthy of the Eye of the Dragon, something that would engage the mind even as it instructed and challenged the spirit. Content with his finished product, Plures lay down on his rough pallet, closed his eyes, and never woke again.

From Plures' hands, the book passed into the keeping of his three apprentices, whose names have been deliberately struck from any single source; at best, an enterprising Guardian will find the name of only one recorded in any given place — and then only after weeks, months, or even years of painstaking searching — so as to best confuse the issue of where the grimoire went in the decades following Plures' passing. Some believe it went north, to Denmark, while others say it went south, to Egypt, and still others maintain it went east, to the Mongolian steppes. Whatever the case, the *Codex* did not surface again for nearly 40 years, when it showed up in the hands of a Seer of the Throne in Singapore, who claimed to have deciphered its secrets and offered to ransom it back to the Guardians of the Veil in exchange for five artifacts she had been seeking for years. No sooner had she offered the exchange than intrigues within the Seers of the Throne resulted in her murder at the hands of a rival faction and loss of the book. While the fate of the *Codex* at this point is unknown, it is presumed it returned to the Guardians' keeping, as the number of mages of the Order in the area thinned considerably and inexplicably over the following months. The grimoire then vanished from all scrutiny and knowledge until shortly into the 19th century.

At that time, Tycho, a powerful and prominent member of the Adamantine Arrows, called for a conference with the leaders of the Guardians of the Veil in and around northwestern France, to return the grimoire, which he said had been passed onto him by a dying Guardian in Normandy, with a specific request to return it to the keeping of her Order. While he could have requested heavy favors from the Guardians of the Veil for his largesse, Tycho instead asked only that the young, nameless Guardian be remembered for her courage and her conviction, and that such a promise was reward enough for him. To the end of his days, Tycho enjoyed the friendship of many Guardians of the Veil, and, it is said, in a sanctum somewhere in Rouen, in Upper Normandy, a plaque commemorates the sacrifice of the unnamed woman who gave her life to see *The Codex of Lies* home.

Allegedly, the *Codex* was moved between Epopts for several decades after this in an attempt to confound the unknown effect that occasionally caused even the most elaborate of protections to fail at some critical moment, allowing the grimoire to slip away. It was also at this time that the first "false Codices" were introduced into the Awakened world so as to confound the growing (though still exceedingly small) number of outsiders who knew of its existence and understood enough of its nature to hunger after its secrets. Unfortunately, the advent of the "false Codices" was as much a problem for the Guardians as it was a boon; occasionally more than one Epopt would report having received the genuine *Codex*, and by the time the truth of the matter was sorted out someone was often injured by a trap in a false grimoire or else the real tome had already managed to slip the confines of its resting place. Upon further examination of the matter, some of the "false Codices" could not be traced to any particular willworker, Guardian or otherwise, leaving the question of just what sort of secrets Plures may or may not have mastered that he chose *not* to share.

By the mid-19th century, even the most astute Guardian scholars of the *Codex* could no longer be certain when and if the book came into their possession. Only through careful study — *extremely* careful, given the occasionally fatal nature of some few of the "decoy" grimoires in circulation — could the truth of the matter be discerned, and then usually just in time for the Guardian in question to learn a rote or two, and perhaps one of Plures' unique spells, before the tome went on its way, borne on the tides of uncertain fortune. Whenever the real *Codex* ended up in the hands of an outsider, Fate conspired to take it away and whatever lore might have been learned died out due to any of a wide variety of reasons, not all of them harmless. Eventually only the unwise, the uninformed and the overly proud sought the grimoire if they were not Guardians of the Veil.

In the past century or so the book has traveled more extensively than at any point in its past, if the rumors are to be believed. Of course, even Guardians of the Veil are

hard-pressed to spot the few kernels of truth regarding the grimoire's migrations from among the multitudinous threads of hearsay, speculation, and outright lies. Further confounding the situation is the fact that, even within the Order, there exists no "true" version of events; some Labyrinths maintain mutually contradictory and yet perfectly credible accounts of the movements of the *Codex*, with no "magic formula" for sorting fact from fiction. While some — perhaps many — of these differing accounts are the result of deliberately flawed records, many are not, and simply go to show the difficulty inherent in keeping tabs on the willful grimoire.

At present, the *Codex* is believed to be out of the hands of the Guardians of the Veil. Reports on the subject are, as is to be expected, few, though a nagging rumor asserts that the grimoire has been missing from the Order's keeping for as long as a decade now; longer by far than any previous absence. Perhaps it is that some outsider has found a way to actually keep the *Codex*? Or, maybe, Plures' unknowable enchantments have grown and evolved in response to the Guardians' comfort with the book's unusual migrations?

Contents

The Codex of Lies, when properly translated, is a veritable treasure-trove of Guardian magic. Among its pages can be found the Guardians of the Veil's Order-specific rote variants of the following spells (see **Mage: The Awakening**): "Decay" (Death 2, p. 136), "Destroy Bindings" (Fate 4, pp. 156-7), "Emotional Urging" (Mind 2, pp. 207-8), "Ephemeral Shield" (Spirit 2, pp. 246-7), "The Evil Eye" (Fate 2, pp. 151-2), "Hallucination" (Mind 4, p. 215), "Opening the Lidless Eye" (Mind 2, pp. 209-10), "Quicken Ghost" (Death 5, p. 146), and "Self-Healing" (Life 2, p. 183). Deciphering these nine rotes — or the three others inscribed in the grimoire — is a reasonably simple matter for a Guardian of the Veil, who is able to call upon her training in the real meanings behind the "secret wisdom" of various bogus Sleeper occult societies and can piece the scattered clues together with a few days' study and an Investigation roll or three. Others who wish to discern the hidden magics, however, must engage in long weeks (at least) of extended Academics, Investigation, Occult, and even Science rolls, and find that magical aides (whether in the form of spells, enchanted items, or something else) are, for whatever reason, of no use in untangling layer after infuriating layer of meaningless metaphysical drivel. No spell has ever been found on, or in, or around the *Codex* to explain this occlusion, but the effect persists, regardless.

In addition to the nine rotes above, the *Codex* contains three examples of unique magic, the true expression of Plures' mystical genius. Each of these three spells is a valuable addition to the Guardian's repertoire and demonstrates the depth of Plures' devotion to the Order's ethic of endless sacrifice (as well as the vast and diverse magical power at the old willworker's disposal in the years leading up to his death).

The spells unique to *The Codex of Lies* are:

Channel Paradox (Life ●●●+ Prime ●●●●)

Every manifestation of Paradox widens the great gulf of the Abyss, or so the Guardians of the Veil teach their neophytes. By accepting the hurts of Paradox into one's own flesh, however, Plures believed the Abyss could be denied greater purchase in the Fallen World. This spell enables just that, allowing the Guardian to draw Paradox into his own living pattern, thus preventing the taint of the Abyss from further infecting this world.

Practice: Patterning
Action: Reflexive
Duration: Lasting
Aspect: Covert
Cost: None

Upon successfully casting this spell — which can be done reactively in response to any form of Paradox in the mage's vicinity, save backlash, so long as he has not yet taken his action for the turn — the Guardian draws the force of a Paradox into his own body. He then rolls the Paradox successes as a Backlash dice pool, suffering its effects, if any, as normal. Note that the Guardian *may*, if he wishes, use Mana to mitigate the Paradox before rolling for backlash. (See **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 123.)

Note that this spell *may not* be cast on another, whether willingly or otherwise.

Guardians of the Veil Rote: Taming the Void
Dice Pool: Stamina + Occult + Prime

Reaching out with this magic, the Guardian seizes hold of the power of the Abyss and, through personal suffering, defies and negates it. Guardians who make use of this spell often look to it as a real, quantifiable means of striking back at the Void.

Precognitive Ordeal (Time ●●●●)

Guardians of the Veil know and understand that they must suffer for the good of many. Those that master *this* magic, however, truly take to heart this axiom, looking forward to the pain that will befall them and drawing strength from an awareness of the trials to come. Though the knowledge that comes to the Guardian takes the shape of a nebulous sense, she nevertheless takes comfort in the certainty that she will and must endure.

Practice: Patterning
Action: Instant
Duration: Prolonged (1 scene)
Aspect: Covert
Cost: 1 Mana

Upon successfully casting this spell, the caster regains a point of Willpower (up to her normal maximum) each time she suffers an attack that results in at least 1 point of lethal or aggravated damage, has her soul directly targeted by any kind of hostile effect, or is the subject of any effect intended to usurp control of her mind or body, whether magical or otherwise, out to a maximum number of times equal to the successes accrued in the casting. The caster regains only a single Willpower point per "attack," but may regain Willpower points multiple times in a single turn if targeted by more than one effect meeting the criteria above. If the character is already at maximum Willpower when subjected to a trigger for this spell's effect, one use of the spell is wasted, without benefit.

Guardians of the Veil Rote: Agonies of the Prophet

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult + Time

Religion, myth, and history alike are filled with examples of those who knew of torments to come and found courage in the face of inevitable suffering. Guardians of the Veil who master this magic willingly embrace the path of martyrdom for the greater good, learning how to recover a sense of purpose through the many slings and arrows the Fallen World casts.

Sin Eating (Mind ●●●●●)

One of the foremost responsibilities of the Guardians of the Veil is to take on the burden of sin so that others need not. But, when Guardians fail to execute this heavy burden, others must sometimes sully their own hands with ugly necessities. Accepting the price of his failure, however, a Guardian can assimilate the wickedness of others and purify it in the crucible of his ongoing sacrifice, redeeming the virtuous and embracing his own damnation thereby. This spell enables the Guardian to do just that, drawing out the sins of others and taking their weight upon his own soul, so sparing them the pain of wickedness and nudging them back toward virtue.

Practice: Making/Unmaking

Action: Extended (successes = subject's current Wisdom)

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

Upon successfully casting this spell, the Guardian takes on the spiritual burden of the *most recent* sin against Wisdom for which another mage suffered degeneration. (Use the Duration factors given for prolonged spells on p. 120 of **Mage: The Awakening** to determine how far back the caster can reach in his attempt to consume the subject's sin.) There exist certain interesting complications to this process, however.

First, the subject must be willing and desirous of sincere repentance. Of course, part and parcel with a failed degeneration check is a feeling of vindication in one's improper actions, so this true longing for redemption is often easier said than done, and usually works better with either those who are, by nature, intensely virtuous or, conversely, those who have perceived an overarching pattern of wrongful behavior in themselves and wish to turn back from the path of hubris. Whatever the case, it is only a genuine commitment to self-betterment that empowers this spell's soul-mending effects.

Second, the spell isn't a guarantee; merely a chance. The subject receives the opportunity to re-roll the degeneration check, automatically subject to a +1 die bonus for sincere remorse. If this check succeeds, though, the subject regains the lost Wisdom without cost and loses any derangement gained *through that particular instance of degeneration*. (derangements from other sources — including other instances of Wisdom degeneration — remain.)

Third, the Guardian can cast this spell only once on a given subject between instances of degeneration. (In other words, no "going back" to the next instance of degeneration and trying to undo that one as well, thus enabling another willworker to potentially skyrocket in Wisdom.)

Fourth, the Guardian must pay the piper, as it were, by accepting the burden of sin upon his own soul (and regardless of whether or not the subject actually succeeds in his "second chance" to feel regret for his prior actions). In the case of any act at least 2 dots *above* the Guardian's present Wisdom score on the hierarchy of sins (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 79), this entails no degeneration check: his soul is simply too scarred already to suffer appreciably on account of this new burden. In the case of sins within one step of the Guardian's present Wisdom score, in either direction, this involves a degeneration check for the Guardian, as normal, subject to all the customary consequences for either success or failure. In the event of a sin at least 2 dots *below* the Guardian's present Wisdom score, this entails an *automatic* loss of Wisdom and the customary subsequent check to resist gaining a derangement.

Guardians of the Veil Rote: Devils' Feast

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy + Mind

By consuming the iniquity of others, a Guardian of the Veil demonstrates the courage of her conviction, accepting the burden of not only her own sins, but also the sins of those around her.

In addition to the spells and rotes concealed within *The Codex of Lies*, the grimoire itself bestows certain interesting benefits upon its possessor. First and foremost, the *Codex* grants a +1 modifier to all degeneration checks made by its current owner, as well as a +1 modifier to the roll to avoid gaining a derangement in the event of an unsuccessful degeneration check. Whether this is on account of metaphysical proximity to Plures' ideology of eternal sacrifice or some other reason is unknown; some Guardians have spent years researching the seemingly enhanced moral and psychological resiliency of an owner of the *Codex*, but to no avail.

Further, regular study of the *Codex* grants a Guardian of the Veil (or any that manage to decipher its many tiers of hidden meaning) a +2 modifier to any rolls to influence, infiltrate, or otherwise interact with the structures, policies, and procedures of nearly any Sleeper occult society wholly or partially of Western European origin, with traditions (whether legitimately handed down, pilfered, or acquired by whatever other means) spanning back to at least the early 18th century. This insight is the result of regular perusal and contemplation of the symbolism integrated into the text, and so functions only for one who has reviewed the grimoire within the past month. This bonus drops to a +1 in dealings with more modern societies deliberately cast in the mold of more antiquated fellowships of this sort, since many of the prominent symbols and ideals of such organizations have entered into the common consciousness and are thus co-opted by such groups.

Dangers

The Codex of Lies is a perilous text to pursue, on many different levels. The book is deliberately concealed by what is arguably the most treacherous and morally expedient of the Atlantean Orders, a group that uses lies, theft, espionage, torture and murder with the same facility — and long familiarity — with which its members use magic. This grimoire is hidden behind levels upon levels of elaborate ruses, cruel traps, base deceptions, and agents willing to do very nearly *anything* in order to preserve, protect and (in the not-infrequent case that it is not presently within the possession of the Guardians of the Veil) recover it. Even when the Guardians are not in possession of the book, the many-layered security protocols associated with the grimoire remain as potent and far-reaching as when it is safely in the Order's hands.

No one is rightly sure of why it is that circumstances occasionally conspire to steal the *Codex* out from under the stewardship of the Guardians of the Veil, though some members of the Order speculate that this, too, is the result of some unknown trick of Plures' devising, intended to keep them on their toes. Almost without exception, the events leading up to the Guardians' loss of the *Codex* are harmless to any living thing, but nevertheless result in members of the Order having to track down the grimoire, sometimes over the course of years. Occasionally, during such times, the tome will effectively fall into the lap of a Guardian unaffiliated with the search (often, one who does not know the *Codex* is missing or, indeed, that it even exists), leading to further speculation on the book's yet-unknown properties. Some members of the Order believe Plures might have concocted a unique Legacy that allowed for these untraceable manipulations of destiny, while others say he



may have pacted with powerful gods. None, however, have been able to satisfactorily explain the reasons behind the *Codex*'s movements.

Outsiders who manage to stumble upon the *Codex* are well advised to leave it be or, better still, to turn it over to the Guardians of the Veil, though most Awakened *within* the Order know little to nothing of it, let alone non-Guardians. Thus, the book has, at times, wound up in the libraries of willworkers belonging to other Atlantean Orders, the Free Council, Apostates and even Seers of the Throne, but the book *always* manages to get free of such hosts, irrespective of any protections intended to hold it in place. In certain rare instances the grimoire has ended up in the private collections of Sleepers, though never for long. While a handful of Awakened outsiders have managed to decipher the magics contained within *The Codex of Lies*, events have always prevented them from spreading such lore on any wide scale, and the secrets have died out within a generation or two, only to return to the proprietary control of the Guardians of the Veil. In some cases (especially as regards Libertines, Apostates and Seers of the Throne), the circumstances that took such lore out of the hands of the uninitiated were unpleasant in the extreme. Again, though, no spell of any sort has ever been detected as being attached to the grimoire that would bring about such results.

Researching *The Codex of Lies*

Capping Skill: Investigation

Action: Extended — 20 successes

Research Time: 3 days; 1 day

Appropriate Libraries: Grimoires, Guardians of the Veil, Mysterious Relics

Possible Modifiers: Researcher interviews someone who once owned the *Codex* (+1), researcher presently has a "false Codex" (+1), researcher presently has a "false Codex" that is also a grimoire (+2)

Successes	Information
0-9	Nothing.
10-13	*The Codex of Lies* was created by a Guardian of the Veil named Plures in the early to mid-18th century, though the grimoire's value is uncertain; some claim it holds no mystic secrets of any worth whatsoever, and is merely a ruse to distract other Awakened.
14-15	Allegedly, numerous copies of the *Codex* exist, and there is no sure way of discerning the real book from the fakes. There may be unique magics in the true *Codex*, though these might also just be Guardian-specific variants on commoner sorts of rotes.
16-17	The Guardians of the Veil have seeded misinformation and deadly traps out into the Awakened world so as to dissuade outsiders from pursuit of *The Codex of Lies*. Some of these Guardian agents may be assassins specifically tasked with killing any uninitiated individual — Sleeper or Awakened, whether a Pentacle mage, Apostate or Seer of the Throne — who comes into proximity of the grimoire. The *Codex* is written in a number of different languages.
18-19	The *Codex* contains more than one unique spell, each of which resonates with the Guardians' philosophy of sacrifice for the greater good. For whatever reason, though, the book always seems to eventually be lost no matter what precautions are put in place to safely keep it. The tome is cloaked in elaborate and many-layered symbolism that must be translated before the text makes any sense.
20	*The Codex of Lies* moves of its own accord, through no spell any willworker has ever been able to detect. It contains both unique magics and Guardian-specific versions of more commonly known rotes, but none of these have ever been successfully passed down to those outside the Order for more than perhaps a generation, before some circumstance — only occasionally benign — severed the line of the knowledge. The occult symbols that conceal the secrets of the *Codex* are drawn from numerous schools of Sleeper mysticism and knowledge of these symbols is requisite to comprehension of the text.

Perhaps the most pressing danger for one who would seek *The Codex of Lies*, though, is the existence of the "false Codices," most — perhaps *all* — of which come with magical traps of various sorts. Attempting to quantify all the myriad perils of these fake grimoires (and, in at least a handful of cases, lesser grimoires) is futile. The Guardians occasionally cycle old "false Codices" out of circulation, as enemies learn their tricks and new advances in mystical counter-espionage are developed. Some such books are intended to confound and confuse, some to injure, and some few to kill, with no apparent rhyme or reason as to which is which. As many Guardians reason it, fear of the unknown is the most powerful and consistently useful fear, so it's far better to keep the interlopers and would-be thieves of Plures' lore guessing.

Lastly, at any given time at least a few Guardians of the Veil around the world are devoted to hunting down the *Codex*, sowing misinformation about it, pursuing the trails of outsiders seeking it, putting "false Codices" where they'll do the greatest possible harm to enemies of the Order and otherwise making miserable the lives of those who would steal this knowledge from its rightful owners, knowingly or otherwise. Most of these Guardians are trained in the standard intelligence techniques of the Order, though at least a few are somewhat more zealous in the matter of protecting the grimoire from outsiders, and have been known to go considerably further than might otherwise be called for, and to injure or kill as necessary (as such operatives define the word, anyway) to safeguard its secrets.



DARK REVOLUTION

Schattenbahn is the band. *Dark Revolution* is the album: a Libertine experiment designed to turn teenagers into radical occultists. It's the record fundamentalists warned you about. It *really is* designed to teach you magic, get you to worship Satan and turn you against authority figures.

Dark Revolution came out in 2006. It was released in two formats: a CD with a thousand presses in circulation and a limited edition of 10 vinyl LPs. The vinyl edition is the grimoire. Schattenbahn hopes that even the ordinary CDs will inspire Sleepers to study magic and attack what it calls "slave institutions."

Despite their style and name, Schattenbahn members are neither impulsive Satanist wannabes nor German. The band and the album are calculated efforts to draw restless young people into the occult and set them up with a philosophy that will likely put them at odds with any Diamond Order mages they come across. They have middling popularity — enough to make *Dark Revolution* a collectors' item in any form.

Dark Revolution's sleeve or case art is Schattenbahn's symbol: a shattered pentagram with a menacing human shadow beneath. This has appeared on all the band's albums. Matte-finish outlines of Atlantean runes overlay the glossy silver cover. The band isn't named (a true fan can identify whose album it is immediately) but the album title appears in very small, red letters.

The CD is the same deep red, stamped with five glyphs: highly stylized symbols for each Watchtower. The vinyl album — the true grimoire — is transparent except for the Schattenbahn pentacle, which looks like it's made of rusted iron that's been embedded inside. The trademark shadow looks like some kind of solidified smoke. The whole thing's a little thicker than a standard LP. The center has the album's title and the phrase: "Awaken and revolt."



Line notes are sparse. They list the following tracks and play times:

Side A: Angels of Malice: 13:01, Blade Broken: 8:08

Side B: Bleeding Leviathan: 9:44, Evil/Truth: 10:00, No Trap: 5:33

The text is red on black. As far as anything else, the liner says only the following:

Schattenbahn is Blixa Dark (Guitar), Hellson (Vocals), Lyla Regenfeuer (Keyboards, Vocals), Doktor Kultur (Sampling) and Andy (Bass).

Produced by Schattenbahn.

Contact: publik@schattenbahn.de

Awaken and revolt.

That's it. Interested parties who visit schattenbahn.de are redirected to Schattenbahn's fan club, The Forbidden Army. The domain is registered to an entity called SBMusik based in Hamburg, Germany, but anyone who actually visits Hamburg will find a post office box that nobody remembers anyone ever visiting.

History

Schattenbahn gives every appearance of being a black metal/industrial fusion group from Hamburg. Its sparse promotional material says as much, but it intersperses that with a bunch of bizarre statements. It claims to have a recording studio made from a converted black basalt church in the ruins of Chorazin, to have traveled in time in search of inspiration for its albums — even that Blixa Dark is a 1,000-year-old vampire. Pictures of the band show three young, thin, pale men in torn black formal wear, an older gentleman in a

devilmusicradio.com
Mini Review by Peter Dis — ★★½

Dark Revolution has all the trademarks of a Schattenbahn album: hard driving black metal/industrial beats, uncompromisingly hostile lyrics and a continuation of the quasi-operatic "Against Atlantis" storyline. Unlike previous offerings, *Revolution* features deeply layered arrangements — but they're not always successful. "Evil/Truth's" strange, abstract backing vocals provide a haunting counterpoint to the triphammer rhythm and Hellson's growling chorus, but the same effect disrupts "Blade Broken's" momentum. The rumors were right: five long tracks, spiraling into complex sonic textures. Sometimes this lets the lyrics slip past your conscious mind, but breaks your reverie with startling imagery. Sometimes it's just boring.

It's a spotty album with brilliant moments. Nevertheless, the limited run means that fans will want it regardless (especially the rumored vinyl version — you heard it here first!) so consider this review more of an "I told you so!" once you pick it up (or for naughty, naughty people, when you grab the tracks from a file sharing service).

battered leather jacket and a bald woman in military fatigues. They describe themselves as "a collective devoted to the destruction of ignorance and therefore, civilization."

As a matter of fact, they come from rural Ontario. Four of them were the teenage hellions of the unfortunately-named town of Dummer: a hunk of farmland a stone's throw from a handful of ramshackle factories. When they weren't working for minimum wage making plastic widgets or gun parts they got drunk in the bush and worshipped Satan. They didn't sacrifice any local pets and, for a bunch of kids, pursued the rites with surprising sophistication, honoring the Adversary as the eternal rebel instead of the "evil one."

The Devil answered the call in 1998. They shared a Mystery Play where they fended off ghosts, spirits and monsters before each of them entered one of four caves: paths to their respective Watchtowers, where each swore allegiance to an aspect of Satan.

Soon enough they attracted attention. John Bargeld was a Cultural Studies professor from the nearby city of Peterborough. He was an amateur musician, a member of the Free Council and the only other mage in the area. He found the kids, took them under his wing and taught them about Awakened society and the true potential of the magic within them. Bargeld was a fan of old-school industrial music; the kids went for black metal. They started jamming and found a common magical style through their work. The results served them well. Not only did they manage to hook a few shows at dive bars, but they came together as a team and neatly repelled scouts from the Toronto Consilium who came to take the countryside under their "protection."

It was time to take it to the next level. Bargeld used his Free Council connections to get their music out. They took the Schattenbahn ("Shadow Road") name and faked a German origin because they knew nobody would take a band from hick Ontario seriously, but that their target audience would eat up the idea of obscure Satanic anarchists from Hamburg. After spreading a few demos around, the band put up the money to get CDs pressed in Germany, starting with *Hail Appolyon* in 2000 and following up with the critically acclaimed Atlantean Albums: *Night in Atlantis* (2002) and *Fire Column Burn* (2004). Each was self-produced through SBMusik, a privately held corporation Bargeld (by this time he'd fallen into the Doktor Kultur name) created to keep the band in full control of its output.

Its fan base doubled after each release, but the band only performed live at a few small festivals. This increased its mysterious ambiance and kept its audience begging for more recorded material. The band released a few singles to keep people interested, but in truth it was working on its greatest achievement: *Dark Revolution*.

Schattenbahn as a Cabal

Schattenbahn is a Free Council cabal with five members, each of whom follows a different Path, but who all share a devotion to what they call "Philosophical Satanism." To them, Satan is rebellion incarnate: a spirit of Nietzsche's Will to power that encourages them to live honest, passionate lives. They also believe that Satan is the spirit of magic as it existed before the Fall, untamed and able to overturn any obstacle.

Use the following descriptions to flesh out Schattenbahn. Storytellers should assign game traits based on their expected role in the story. In addition to the minimum Arcana necessary to cast *Dark Revolution*'s rotes, each member also knows the first rank of Prime and is a professional-level musician.

Blixa Dark: Gord Latournier grew up copying speed metal fingering from music videos and spending every spare cent on the "ultimate ax." His Mystery Play ended in a classic musical duel at the crossroads. He didn't beat the Devil, but got a tie. That won him admission into the Acanthus. Gord's a natural musician who sees the band as a musical outfit first. He chafes at Bargeld/Kultur's control and wants future albums to feature his own arrangements. As a matter of fact, he wouldn't mind if the band put more effort into succeeding musically. Sorcery is cool, but he wants to be a rock star.

Hellson: Dave Macdonald is Gord/Blixa's cousin. He was always the most extroverted member of the Dummer gang thanks to his natural, muscular good looks. As Hellson, he's less a singer than a screamer, but he's refined that into a powerful vocal style that he occasionally enhances with Forces magic. When he became an Obrimos he drank the bright tears of Lucifer, most beautiful of the angels. When he performs he channels that memory into an arrogant yet seductive stage presence.

Lyla Regenfeuer: Lyla Markowic (Regenfeuer — "Rainfire" — is her stage and Shadow Name) was always the hardest working member of the Dummer crew, supporting Blixa and Hellson in on again, off again relationships when they shacked up with her. Awakening into the Thyrsus smashed the personality traits that let her tolerate slackers but, fortunately, the boys had stopped being useless themselves. Her Satan is the embodiment of natural law, merciless yet balanced. Lyla's keyboard skills started with half-remembered childhood piano lessons but she's improved greatly since. She has a militant, hostile stage personality that's not too far from her normal habits. She's used her time as a mage to master her own body and instincts, so she's the best combatant in the group.

Andy: Andy Klassen's the weak link in the band. He deals with props and repairs. His bass playing is mediocre, so Blixa often tries to find ways to keep him offstage. That's fine with Andy, who's a shy electronics geek and industrial artist. Andy's big secret is that he did *not* have a vision of Satan when he became a Moros, but of a walking shadow (the figure in the band's logo) that told him it was the counterbalance for the being his friends would meet on *their* Awakenings. He doesn't know what he's supposed to do with that knowledge, so the rest of the band scares the hell out of him, though he still considers them friends.

Doktor Kultur: John Bargeld is effectively the manager, though he wouldn't admit it; he doesn't like hierarchies and views the band as a collective. All the same he's the most educated, business savvy member, so he has the most pull on band decisions. He also has about a decade of Awakening over the rest of the band, having become a Mastigos shortly before joining the Cultural Studies department (where he still holds a seat) at Peterborough, Ontario's Trent University. He is a Master of Mind. John adds industrial textures to Schattenbahn's sound by looping everything from Mozart to the sounds of TV war journalism.

Worst Fears Come True

The band had toyed with the idea of an instructional CD ever since the Atlantean Albums, but waited until its popularity was enough to get a few rumors into the mainstream music scene.

Bargeld drew upon his academic background to create the plan. He studied this history of Satanism in music not so much for factual connections but for the mythology. He learned the critical signs, analyzed the rampant conservative paranoia of the '80s and turned it all into a blueprint for the archetypal "evil album." The mere idea of Satanic music was enough to fuel the entire black metal genre. What would happen when somebody released a record that *fulfilled* those expectations? Parents would panic but their children would buy it, share it online and, best of all, listen to it as closely as possible. They'd be primed for the occult lessons within, all taught within a framework that valued individuality and readied them to defy anyone who'd lull them back to Sleep.

Each member contributed a rote to provide a balanced look at the five Paths, but Bargeld cast the finishing touch: an enchantment that would help the album's students rain chaos on authority figures both magical and mundane.

They decided to press in a smaller volume than usual. When it came to the CD release, this would inflate demand and motivate owners to distribute the album through file sharing networks. The vinyl version would be an ultra rare collectors' item. This would jack up the resale price but would ensure it would be profitable to sell in the secondary market. That way, people who didn't understand the record would have a motive to pass it on. In truth, the LP's rarity was also a practical matter; it takes time and effort to create one grimoire, much less 10 of them. The band didn't know any magical shortcuts that would let them make copies easily.

Schattenbahn sold exclusively through its fan club, taking payments electronically. Bargeld sent the LP to select fans who sounded as if they were ready to try for Awakening. In addition, the band hit 30 venues throughout North America and Europe where it played the entire album, allowing easy bootlegging. Tracks from bootlegs, the CD and the LP have found their way to every major file sharing service and, in the time since release, *Dark Revolution* has become something of a legend in the black metal and industrial music communities.

Contents

Dark Revolution contains five rotes: one for each song. Each was designed to be representative of one Watchtower by combining its signature Arcana. The rotes are hidden in the songs — specifically in three backing vocal tracks. These contain instructions for each rote in English (courtesy of Lyla), German (Kultur) and the High Speech (both, in

Researching *Dark Revolution*

Capping Skill: Expression

Action: Extended — 13 successes

Research Time: 3 hours; 1 hour

Appropriate Libraries: Modern Music, Free Council, Satanism

Possible Modifiers: Musician (+1), Industrial or Black Metal fan (+1)

Successes	Information
0	Nothing.
1-3	A web search turns up the review at devilmusicradio.com
4-6	Schattenbahn is an industrial/black metal band from Hamburg. *Dark Revolution* is its rarest album, and its rarest version is the limited edition vinyl LP. Only 10 were made.
7-9	Schattenbahn is actually from Canada. It just does business from Germany. Its music incorporates Atlantean symbolism and occasional fragments of High Speech.
10-12	*Dark Revolution* is Schattenbahn's attempt to bring Libertine magic to the masses. Some copies of the album are grimoires with rotes representative of each Watchtower, linked to a healthy dose of rebellious ideology.
13+	The vinyl LPs are the only true grimoires. They not only teach magic, but magically promote the band's anti-authoritarian stance. Listeners have been known to behave strangely, abandoning jobs and committing acts of vandalism.

harmony), but you need to play the LP backward, because that's how they were recorded. Unlike many backward sequences in recordings, this is not immediately obvious, because the vocals have been performed and digitally tweaked for consistency with each song's harmony. When played backward, listeners notice the odd cadences and inflections that result.

The LP is designed this way for two reasons. First of all, this makes the record act as a sort of rock and roll Rosetta Stone for aspects of the High Speech. Sleepers will still find the High Speech portions to be gibberish (or in some cases, totally silent — see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 84, to read how Sleepers perceive the High Speech) and can't identify correspondences in each language. Even so, Schattenbahn believes exposing them to this material might help kick them out of Sleeping stupor. Secondly, it helps solitary mages learn rudimentary High Speech forms, but still gives them the option of learning the rotes through ordinary language. Playing the LP backward is a matter of style: a calculated homage to urban legends about Satanic "backmasking." Not only does this mean owners are more likely to try and play it backward, but it connects the record to the myths. If listeners discover the legends are true, they're more likely to be receptive to the band's message.

On the CD, reversed versions of the songs can be found in hidden tracks 91-95. Tracks 1-5 are the standard play versions. 6-90 are silent one-second tracks. Unfortunately, the Lie has corrupted the CD versions of the rote descriptions. Odd static sounds and recording errors make it impossible to learn these rotes as one would from a true grimoire. On the other hand, any sorcerer can easily understand that these are supposed to be rotes and can understand most of the High Speech.

Sorcerer's Retribution (Song: Angels of Malice; Forces ●●●, Prime ●●)

This spell creates a matrix of kinetic and magical energy around the caster that's sensitive to invading magic. This whirling shard of bound force orbits him, avoiding nearby objects and leaving nothing other than a slight breeze to indicate its existence. When anyone casts a damaging spell on the caster the matrix lashes out, intercepting the intrusion and following it back to strike the source.

Practice: Shielding

Action: Fraying/Shielding

Duration: Prolonged (1 scene, but see below)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: Special

Once cast, this spell acts like the spell "Magic Shield," providing 1 point of armor per dot of the caster's Prime Arcanum. In addition, the spell strikes the source of the magical attack with a bolt of kinetic energy, inflicting 1 point of bashing damage per success. However, the same energy that shields the mage is used in the attack, like a sort of "point defense" against the spell that blows through to hit the enemy caster as well. Reduce the number of successes calculated for the attack by the armor rating provided by the spell. For example, if the caster scores 8 successes and has Prime 3, the counterattack is only treated as if it had 5 successes. The caster may voluntarily reduce the armor protection granted by the spell to increase its counteroffensive ability. The counterattack does not use one of the caster's actions. If the spell came from an artifact or imbued item, the kinetic energy strikes that instead.

By spending 1 Mana, the caster can make the spell last 1 day. However, once the spell delivers its counterattack it is expended, whether the caster spent Mana or not. It must be cast again.

Free Council Rote: Angels of Malice

Dice Pool: Presence + Expression + Forces

Hellson designed this rote to strike down sorcerers who would dare attack him. He visualizes his voice coalescing into a serpent-shaped coil of energy, lying in wait against magical assault.

The Metal Dead (Song: Blade Broken; Death ●●●, Matter ●●●)

This spell causes a corpse's bones to flense their way out of the flesh, for they've been transmuted into razor sharp iron and wire: metal servants with a dim spirit capable of obeying the mage's commands.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (1 scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

This acts as the spell "Quicken Corpse," but it converts the zombie's Health into Structure (base points equal to its Size). It gains no Structure from its Resistance. The caster may also spend successes on Durability on a 1 for 1 basis, which increases its Structure normally (1 per point) and acts as armor. The zombie can inflict lethal damage in close combat but can't perform tasks that require fine motor control. It can carry or drag large objects, for example, but can't turn a doorknob. It has the same intellectual capacity as a normal zombie.

Like any object, anyone trying to damage it barehanded suffers a point of bashing damage per strike.

The "zombies" are actually metal skeletons, lashed together with alchemically altered, reconfigured sinews, festooned with sharp flanges and bits of sticky flesh that didn't fall off when the things cut themselves out of their bodies.

Free Council Rote: Blade Broken

Dice Pool: Resolve + Crafts + Death

Andy designed this rote as a work of art. He wouldn't dream of using it on a human corpse and usually casts it on animal corpses. The rest of the band was duly impressed, with Blixa going so far as to declare it "fucking metal."



Hone the Pack Spirit (Song: Bleeding Leviathan; Spirit ●●●, Life ●●)

The mage summons the spirit of a base life form's pack or swarm to enhance the abilities of a group. This makes the pack receptive to more sophisticated commands and especially skilled at instinctive actions. This spell works only on base life forms with powerful social instincts. It works on lions, but not leopards; ants, but not houseflies.

The pack accepts sophisticated commands because its ruling spirit is intelligent enough to interpret them, but it always resolves ambiguous instructions in a way that would allow the pack to act as it would in nature. Additionally, the mage cannot instruct individual pack members. Instead, she delivers orders to the pack as a whole. The pack spirit uses its own intelligence to carry out commands through pack members, assigning them individual tasks.

Practice: Ruling

Action: Instant and contested; targets rolls Stamina reflexively

Duration: Prolonged (1 scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

The mage affects all targets of the same species within a defined area based on the number of successes scored. The spell must affect at least 2 targets or a swarm to work at all.

Successes	Targets
1 success	No effect, except on swarms (where it affects a one-yard radius swarm)
2 successes	2 (or a 2-yard radius swarm)
3 successes	4 (or a 4-yard radius swarm)
4 successes	8 (or an 8-yard radius swarm)
5 successes	16 (or a 16-yard radius swarm)

The creatures under her thrall are more competent at instinctual tasks. Each level of Potency adds 1 die (maximum 5) to dice pools associated with these tasks. This benefits only actions that the base life form would perform in nature. Wolves get better at biting targets, but not at navigating their way through drain pipes.

Free Council Rote: Bleeding Leviathan

Dice Pool: Wits + Survival + Spirit

It might seem that this rote encourages conformity, but it's designed with the opposite intent, symbolizing a "rogue pack" within the body politic — the "leviathan" of the song's title. Lyla created this spell to symbolize the power of a committed cadre to prey on the "sheep" that do what society tells them.

Disinhibiting Sympathy (Song: Evil/Truth; Mind ●●●, Space ●●●)

The mage not only makes it difficult for his target to avoid indulging his Vice, but makes that condition affect anyone to whom the target is close. The victim is Patient Zero of a memetic infection that destroys the inhibitions of people she knows.

Practice: Ruling

Action: Instant and contested; targets roll Resolve + Gnosis reflexively.

Duration: Prolonged (1 scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

Targets who fail to resist the spell must make a reflexive Resolve + Composure roll to avoid acting on their Vice when an opportunity presents itself, regardless of whether it would be ethical or socially appropriate to do so. If the victim fails the Resolve + Composure roll he must act within a few turns of the opportunity arising. He may use this time to minimize the possible consequences.

The spell affects not only the initial target, but a number of people indicated by the spell's Target factor within its sympathetic range factor. The spell affects targets in order of their sympathetic connection. This is based on the *target's* sympathetic bonds, not the caster's (unless the caster inflicts the spell on himself).

It is difficult for this spell to provoke truly heinous acts. If indulging the Vice would force a Morality (or the equivalent for mages and other supernatural beings) check, the victim gains bonus dice on the Resolve + Composure roll equal to *half* the difference between the character's Morality and the minimum Morality required to force a check, rounded down. For example, a character with a Morality of 7 who's in danger of committing a Morality 4 sin adds a die to his roll, while a character with a Morality of 5 who's tempted to commit the same sin because of the spell gains no bonus.

Free Council Rote: Evil/Truth

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Expression + Mind

Doktor Kultur wove this rote into the lyrics of the song, which is a long, seductive digression on the nature of passion, how authority holds it in check and how indulgence is the true path to self-mastery.

Alternate Scenario (Song: No Trap; Fate ●●●, Time ●●●)

The mage splits across multiple time streams, coalescing into one person at the most favorable version of events.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant

Duration: Transitory (1 turn)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana

If the mage successfully casts the spell, he acts within a number of alternate-reality versions of the next turn equal to the spell's Potency factor, but no more than the lowest of his Time or Fate dots. He acts at the same time during each turn in the same situation, but may perform a different action (with

the player rolling the appropriate dice pools to determine its outcome, where applicable) in each alternate version. The mage can even try the same basic action in two different timelines, counting on one to provide a better result. He cannot, however, perform the same basic action in three or more realities.

The mage experiences the outcome of the turn in each reality, but no other participant in the scene may change their actions except in reaction to the mage. Other participants' dice rolls are constant for the same actions across all realities.

The mage experiences each reality simultaneously; the player must declare all his actions *before* resolving them. He cannot use information from one reality to influence his actions in another.

Once the mage experiences all alternate turns, he chooses one. The outcome of that turn becomes the true outcome and all participants feel the effects of what happened in that version of events — no other.

Example: *Blixa casts the spell using his Arcana ratings of Time 4 and Fate 3, opting for the maximum allowed Potency of 3. He shoots at a Guardian of the Veil in two realities (the maximum number in which he is allowed to take that action), but opts to run away in his remaining alternate turn. In one reality he misses his enemy completely, but isn't injured. In another, he hits his enemy but is shot for 4 lethal wounds. In the last, he manages to run down a flight of stairs, out of the line of fire. Blixa chooses to shoot and be shot. That reality's events occur during the turn. The rest never happened.*

Free Council Rote: No Trap

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult + Fate

Blixa Dark considers this spell to be "an occult symphony of the self." He visualizes each reality as a string on a sublime instrument, combining to create one glorious sound.

Dangers

Doktor Kultur enchanted each LP (but none of the CDs) with a version of the Mind 5 spell "Psychic Reprogramming." Each record started with a reserve of 11 Mana. He doesn't believe he's subjugating people with mind control. He thinks the enchantment is a cure for society's pervasive influence on human thought — what he calls "the received fallacies of the modern, ascetic slave mentality."

The spell is encoded within two hidden vocal tracks. One runs forward through every song; the other runs backward. The tracks aren't audible to the unaided human ear as anything more than a hiss. The spell affects only those who listen to every song forward and backward. Only then will the subject be exposed to the full performance: a lecture on Kultur's Satanic philosophy. Although most people can't hear it, the German-language performance is supposed to transmit the spell based on the scientifically discredited (but still effective for occult purposes) principle of subliminal influence.

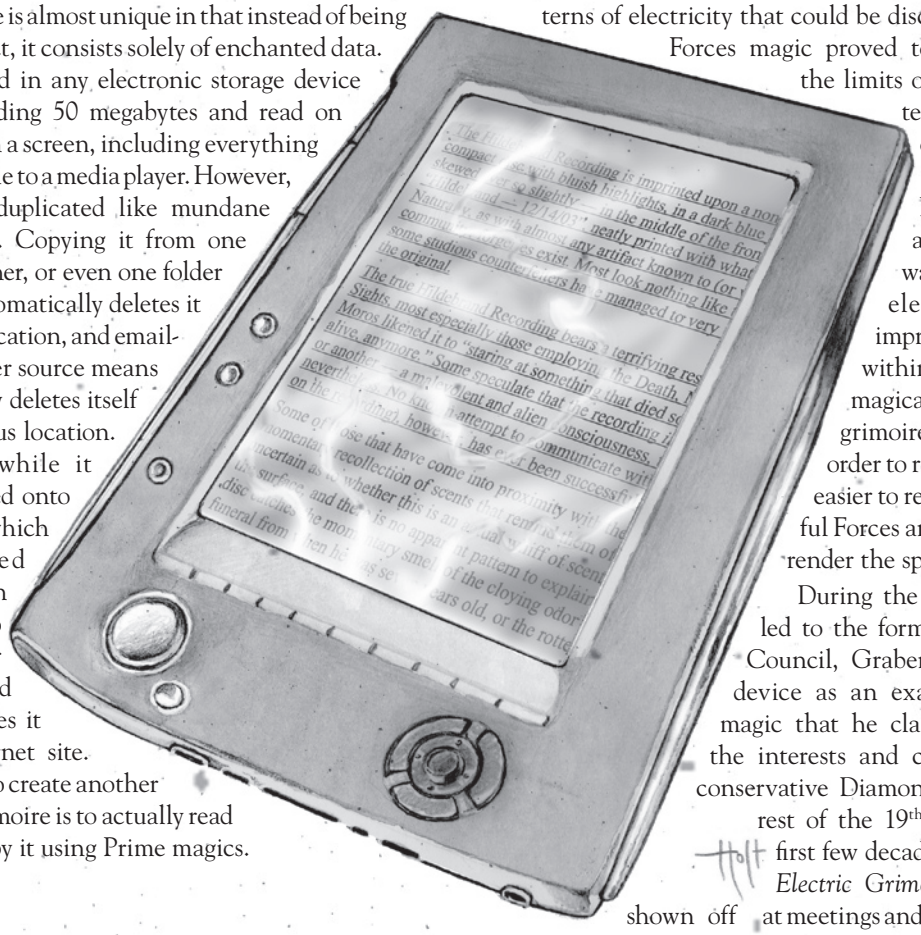
The long lecture draws from Crowley, Nietzsche and their successors. It owes more to academia than poetry and frankly, would be something of a chore to listen to if it was audible. The Doktor draws upon a number of historical examples to argue that humanity has willingly enslaved itself to "religions of passionless compassion." Healthy human spirituality is the process of mastering one's own passions not out of guilt, but the desire to work one's Will effectively. Invariably, this sets humanity against forces that try to contain its passions — the "enslaving doctrines" of a judgmental God and official moral enforcers like judges, priests and politicians. The honed Will destroys anything that opposes it. It is not cruel, but kind out of a genuine desire to be so. To Kultur, this opposing force is Satan; it's the duty of every human being to take up his banner and overthrow the moral enforcers of the world.

Roll 10 dice for the "Psychic Domination" effect after someone has listened to the entire LP forward and backward. (This need not be in a single sitting.) The magical components of the performance change the listener's psychic makeup. Each success adds the listed feature and all those listed before it.

Successes	Effects
1	He despises institutions that claim moral authority (such as churches, police) and feels compelled to undermine them. He would burn down a church if he could get away with it, or mislead police in pursuit of a criminal (though if he thought the criminal was immoral he might dispense vigilante justice instead).
2	He considers himself a saboteur within any hierarchical organization to which he belongs and acts accordingly. He would never willingly help a Consilium maintain its grip on power and if the opportunity arose, might lead its overthrow.
3	He refuses to obey formal codes of behavior unless there is a clear, immediate benefit to doing so or it would offend his moral sense to do otherwise. If he has a high Morality he'll shoplift from a chain store in a strip mall, but he wouldn't necessarily pick an individual's pocket.
4	He seeks revenge against anyone who thwarts his Will in the safest, most practical fashion he can manage within his overall moral makeup. If he has a low Morality he might kill enemies if he thinks can get away with it.
5	He never passes up an opportunity to satisfy his Vice when it would be reasonably safe for him to do so. This effect resembles that of Kultur's "Disinhibiting Sympathy" spell except that the character can't make a Resolve + Composure roll to resist taking advantage of the opportunity.

THE ELECTRIC GRIMOIRE

This grimoire is almost unique in that instead of being a physical object, it consists solely of enchanted data. It can be stored in any electronic storage device capable of holding 50 megabytes and read on any device with a screen, including everything from a cell phone to a media player. However, it cannot be duplicated like mundane electronic files. Copying it from one device to another, or even one folder to another, automatically deletes it from the first location, and emailing it to another source means it automatically deletes itself from its previous location. In addition, while it can be uploaded onto the internet, which has happened several times in its existence, to read it, a user must download it, which deletes it from the internet site. The only way to create another copy of this grimoire is to actually read it and then copy it using Prime magics.



History

One of the more recent of the famous grimoires, this work is all the more unusual for the fact that it changed form dramatically around 30 years ago. The book was originally created in 1889 as an experiment with the newly popular media of electricity. It was made by Aaron Graber, who was known to mages as Galvinus, an eccentric electrical experimenter who 10 years later was one of the founders of the Free Council and authors of the Great Refusal. The original grimoire was titled *An Illustrative Manual On The Application of Electrical Magics*, and was a unique masterpiece of design. While most other mages were quite impressed at Galvinus' achievement, they were less impressed with his name and within a few months almost everyone was referring to this unique grimoire as the *Electric Grimoire*, a name that remains with it today.

In form, it was a leyden jar, an early form of capacitor consisting of a glass jar and gold foil. However, the glass jar was made essentially unbreakable using Matter magics, just as the gold was rendered more durable and more conductive than normal. As a result, this leyden jar would hold an electrical charge indefinitely. Galvinus then crafted a grimoire out of electricity. His initial effort to create patterns of electricity that could be discerned using 1-dot Forces magic proved too difficult given the limits of late 19th century technology, until he captured a minor electricity spirit he found haunting an apparatus he was using to study electricity. Graber imprisoned this spirit within his leyden jar and magically imprinted the grimoire upon it. Then, in order to render the grimoire easier to read, he used powerful Forces and Spirit magics to render the spirit quiescent.

During the negotiations that led to the formation of the Free Council, Graber showed off this device as an example of modern magic that he claimed was beyond the interests and capabilities of the conservative Diamond Mages. For the rest of the 19th century and the first few decades of the 20th, the *Electric Grimoire* was regularly shown off at meetings and exhibitions by the Free Council as an example of the potential of magic that fully embraced the power of the latest technology. However, by the late 1930s, advances in technology had far surpassed leyden jars as methods for storing and experimenting with electricity, and the *Electric Grimoire* began looking sufficiently archaic that it was deemed suitable only for exhibitions of historical curiosities.

The *Electric Grimoire* languished in the archives of the Free Council for most of the next 40 years. A few curious scholars and students examined and studied it; however it was largely ignored until the late 1970s. At this point, a pair of young Free Council members named Jessica Perez (Shadow Name of Polara) and Gordon James (aka Digitalman) ran across references to this grimoire. Both these mages were computer hobbyists living in Silicon Valley. After studying the rotes it contained, these two mages became both fascinated with the strange amalgam of spirit and grimoire this work represented and aware of impressive possibilities inherent in having the entity that was also the grimoire be able to actually interact with individuals studying it. They regarded the leyden jar as a vastly limited and archaic method of containing such a creation and instead began working on a way to store the entity as

(Transcripts of two emails from Kepler to Digitalman)

Date: July 11, 1996

Merely offering congratulations seems a woefully insufficient response. I had absolutely no idea that this was even possible, but your new version of the Electric Grimoire arrived in my email box this morning and it works perfectly on my computer. I had no idea that such an achievement was possible, much less that someone had already managed it. This development could revolutionize grimoires everywhere.

Date: July 13, 1996

Digitalman, I have been studying your grimoire and while it remains an unparalleled achievement, I have also discovered a problem, either with it or at least with my use of it. I accidentally dropped a small paperweight onto my keyboard while using the grimoire and the computer immediately turned off and I was not able to turn it back on. Examining it revealed there was no damage to either the keyboard or the computer. Also, everyone except me can use the computer perfectly well. However, it now powers off immediately after I touch it. I am uncertain as to the nature of the problem and would appreciate any advice you might have.

patterns of magnetic data inside a computer. Because of the limitations of the available hardware, they needed to magically enhance a refrigerator-sized minicomputer to make it capable of holding a creation as complex as the *Electric Grimoire*. Then, they spent the next year finding a way to transfer the creation from its static form in a leyden jar into a dynamic and interactive program.

Several of the oldest members of the Free Council objected to these efforts and petitioned the leadership of the Free Council to forbid tampering with what these mages saw as both an important historical artifact and one of the Free Council's symbolic treasures. However, Galvinus, while exceedingly elderly, was still alive at the time (dying finally in 1982). After having seen his grimoire collecting dust for the last 40 years, he was excited by the possibility it might remain as a useful legacy of his work. With his approval, the two computer hobbyists spent the next two years working with the grimoire, while also learning it was simultaneously a spirit and a grimoire. Much of their work involved making the two halves of this creation fit together in a way that entwined their natures more fully. Polara and Digitalman finished this project in 1980, and the meeting during which it was displayed was Galvinus' last public appearance, where he praised the two mages' skill and brilliance. At the same time, several of the mages who had objected most strenuously to it being tampered with spent the next few months creating a new rendering of the original leyden jar version of this grimoire, under the personal tutelage of Galvinus. Today, a fully functional replica of the original *Electric Grimoire* sits in the Free Council Lorehouse in Los Angeles.

The newly computerized *Electric Grimoire* was somewhat less portable than it had been before, and required a power source to function. However, it could now be used by mages without training in the Forces Arcana and once again served as a symbol of the dreams of the Free Council of melding unconventional magic and advanced technology into a whole greater than the sum of its parts. However, while successful, the result was also fairly limited. The *Electric Grimoire* was now a searchable database, but it was as much a part of the computer as it was data on the computer and the only way to move it to a new machine was to physically transfer both the processor and the massive hard drive to that machine. The two young mages had made the grimoire work on a new medium, but they were not satisfied with their results, and continued to tinker with it. By this time, Galvinus had given them permission to do so, and so they continued their private tinkering for the next three years. The results were simultaneously impressive and problematic. The two mages managed to make the *Electric Grimoire* editable. In addition to any mage now being able to add his own rote into this grimoire, the user could also edit particular rotes so as to optimize them for their own use. (See p. 61.)

Unfortunately, these changes also caused the electrical spirit that was part of the grimoire to become somewhat more active than before and resulted in users suffering a variety of potential problems. (See below for details.) Nevertheless, the Free Council hailed their achievement as both proof that the union of technology and magic can produce a whole greater than the sum of its parts, and also a fitting transformation of one of the Order's most important symbols.

A little over a decade ago, in 1996, the now middle-aged Polara and Digitalman took advantage of the burgeoning growth of the internet to make another major revision to the *Electric Grimoire*. By recompiling the code, they were able to transform it into a file format that could be read

on any computer and that could even be sent over the internet. By this time, both mages were members of the Transhuman Engineers and performed this revision of the *Electric Grimoire* as proof that this sort of grimoire can be far more durable, portable, and useful than an ordinary physical book. Since their first success in the late 1970s a few other mages had created digital grimoires, but like the previous version of the *Electric Grimoire* all of them were tied to a specific storage device and could not be copied, because the grimoire was the device itself. This latest version of the *Electric Grimoire* was nothing more or less than pure data.

They created this version of the *Electric Grimoire* in complete secrecy. The two mages shocked and amazed their fellows in the Free Council by emailing the grimoire from their Palo Alto-based Sanctum to the New York City Lorehouse. Although a somewhat unwieldy amount of data by the standards of the time, the ability to email a complete grimoire earned them both instant acclaim.

The most important incident in the book's recent history occurred when a reclusive mage known as 00Rule, who was also a noted computer hacker, hacked into the computer the grimoire was currently on and downloaded it to his computer, thus vividly demonstrating the dangers of this form of grimoire. In an effort to avoid similar problems in the future, Perez and James worked with several colleagues to incorporate a form of magical password protections into the grimoire so that only its designated owner could safely use it. Unfortunately, like their other, previous revisions, this last change made the electrical spirit touchier than ever.

Today, the *Electric Grimoire* is simultaneously famous and infamous. On the positive side, it is exceedingly useful and very impressive, its history is intimately tied to that of the Free Council, and it is vivid proof of how combining magic and technology can produce wondrous results. Unfortunately, it is also somewhat erratic and temperamental, and a great many of the people who have used it have various amusing or annoying stories about acquiring or studying it.

The *Electric Grimoire* is available for the use of any member of the Free Council. Members can gain access to it for sufficient time to learn the rotes within it by either agreeing to place one new rote within it or by paying the Bay Area Lorehouse 1 point of tass. Jessica Perez and Gordon James also placed another condition on adding rotes to the *Electric Grimoire*: all rotes placed into it should in some way be related to technomagic.

Once a mage has either paid the tass or sworn to write a rote in the book, she is given the address for downloading the grimoire and the administrators use sympathetic connection to this mage to create her password. Then the mage is free to either download the file onto her own computer or to come and use it at one of the Free Council's Lorehouses. Members of other Orders can gain access to this grimoire only by making special arrangements, which typically involve paying 2 points of tass or giving the administrators a minor imbued, and then accessing the file only at a computer located in one of the Free Council's Lorehouses.

Although this grimoire appeals only to a small subset of mages, it is both well known and popular among mages with an interest in modern technology. Most members of both the Transhuman Engineers and the Threnodists have either studied this grimoire or plan to do so sometime in the future.

Current Research on the *Electric Grimoire*

In addition to regular attempts to debug it, currently more than a half dozen mages with an interest in combining magic and technology are working on ways to easily duplicate the *Electric Grimoire*. The most promising avenue of research involves treating duplicates as imbued items that require both 1 dot of permanent Willpower and at least 1 point of tass to duplicate.

This technique has not yet proved successful, but several mages working with the *Electric Grimoire* believe, or at least hope they will manage to eventually duplicate it as a whole rather than having to recreate it by first creating a new grimoire and then fusing it with an electricity spirit. Of course, these researchers admit that duplicating the *Electric Grimoire* is also certain to duplicate both its advantages and its bugs. Several prominent Transhuman Engineers are at the forefront of this effort. Their hope is that if they can succeed in this project, their next project will be to develop some sort of mind-computer interface to allow them to download a debugged version of the grimoire directly into their brains. Few mages outside the Transhuman Engineers find this idea either likely or desirable.

Contents

The ability to edit the rotes in this grimoire means when users study the grimoire, they can customize what Attribute and Ability any particular rote is based upon. Quite literally, the mage enters strings of information into various blanks and thus sets precisely how the rote works. However, this combination must make sense. The Attribute and Ability must go together and must also have at least some vague relation to the purpose of the rote. Using Wits or Intelligence and either Computer, Science or Crafts as

the Attributes and Ability pair that is rolled for the "Transmission" rote (**Mage: The Awakening,** p. 167) make sense and can be used without problem. However, using a pair of traits like Stamina and Firearms for this rote does not. In addition to the program not accepting this Attribute and Ability as a valid pair of variables, attempting to use invalid variables causes the *Electric Grimoire* to behave erratically. (See below.)

The Rotes: The following rotes are in the *Electric Grimoire*. These are only those currently in the work. While rotes put into it are protected against being erased or changed, anyone with access to this grimoire can write new rotes into it. As a result, over time many of the rotes common among the Free Council can find their way into this book. Some mages also fear that a mage corrupted by the Abyss will someday insert one or more rotes that are intrinsically tainted by the Abyss. (See *The Tome of Power*, p. 143, for details on tainted rotes.)

One tradition Galvinus started and that has so far been respected is that no Spirit rotes are placed in this grimoire, despite it containing almost all the other rotes that were involved in its creation. In addition to Galvinus' wishing to downplay the role the Spirit Arcana played in an endeavor he tried to present as largely technological, some later users also worry that placing spirit rotes in this grimoire might either anger the grimoire, since it is part electricity spirit, or might in some way be useable by the spirit. No one knows whether this theory is likely or even possible, but so far no one has been willing to test it.

Forces: "Tune In" (**Mage: The Awakening,** p. 164), "Influence Electricity" (**Mage: The Awakening,** p. 165), "Transmission" (**Mage: The Awakening,** p. 167), "Control Electricity" (**Mage: The Awakening,** p. 168), "Electromagnetic Pulse" (**Mage: The Awakening,** p. 177), "Electronic Eye" (**Free Council**, p. 108), "Invisibility to Machines" (**Free Council**, pp. 108-9) "Invoke Password" (**Free Council**, p. 109)

Matter: "Alter Conductivity" (**Mage: The Awakening,** p. 194), "Alter Integrity" (**Mage: The Awakening,** p. 198), "Jury-Rig" (**Mage: The Awakening,** p. 198), "Reconfigure Object". (**Mage: The Awakening,** p. 201),

Mind: "Virtual Voyage" (**Free Council**, p. 112)

Other Benefits

In addition to a collection of technologically oriented rotes that can be adapted for the mage's personal psyche and knowledge base, if everything goes well, the grimoire also has beneficial effects on the computer it is on. For as long as a mage has this grimoire on his computer, the computer acts as if it is under the affect of the "Platonic Mechanism" spell (**Mage: The Awakening,** pp. 152-3). In addition, the computer is self-powered. It doesn't need to be plugged in and its batteries (if any) never run out of power. The origin of these effects is not fully understood, but most mages who have studied the *Electric Grimoire* believe they are a result of the spirit's efforts to make the computer into a better "dwelling." Once the *Electric Grimoire* has been transferred elsewhere, these effects vanish, except on computers owned by mages who have treated the *Electric Grimoire* especially well. Such mages often find their computer is now blessed by a Permanent version of the "Platonic Mechanism" spell.

Dangers

The most obvious dangers are those to anyone who attempts to hack his way into this grimoire. When the current owner gives this grimoire to someone else, she must state the new owner's name and use a sympathetic connection that counts as at least a *Known* connection (**Mage: The Awakening,** pp. 114-5). Then, when the new user first opens the file the grimoire is on, the grimoire displays a prompt asking the user to type his name. The program can recognize both the name and the identity of the person typing it though sympathetic resonances. If the name is correct and matches the person typing it, then the grimoire functions normally. If the name is not correct, nothing happens except that the file cannot be opened and the grimoire displays an error message, asking the user to retype his name.

If the name is correct, but does not match the person typing it, the grimoire displays the previous error message the first two times it occurs. The third time someone other than the correct user types in the user's name, or immediately after any unsuccessful attempt to hack into it, the *Electric Grimoire* begins to fight back. If the grimoire is in a computer or other electronic device that is connected to the internet, it sends itself (naturally deleting the copy on the current user's machine) back to its previous owner's last known email address. In doing this, the grimoire also sends all the current user's data on that same machine to this address and irretrievably deletes all this data from the user's current device or destroys the drive it was on. If the computer or other device is not connected to the internet, the *Electric Grimoire* uses the "Transmission" rote to allow it to do so. Anyone attempting to access this grimoire can make 3 attempts in any 24-hour period. Any attempts after this trigger the grimoire's anti-hacking protections.

Unfortunately, transferring the grimoire into purely digital form and later installing the password protections caused the electricity spirit that is an integral part of this grimoire to become considerably more active. This spirit is now responsible for checking the password and responding to hacking attempts or incorrect passwords. This spirit is in no way intelligent and it either cannot or will not communicate with any mages. However, this spirit responds to external stimuli and reacts quite negatively to actions that it perceives as threats or ill-treatment. Several mages who have used it have remarked that the grimoire is similar in personality to a particularly temperamental cat and

almost everyone who has used this grimoire has at least one story about the grimoire's various "bugs" and quirks. Any mage who discovers a way to eliminate some of these problems would earn significant praise and status within the Free Council.

The presence of the grimoire causes the computer it is in to work exceptionally well, but this grimoire reacts negatively to actions that would normally cause the computer problems. The grimoire reacts if the mage using the computer performs careless actions like turning off the antivirus or firewall software, accidentally downloading viruses, attempting to install incompatible hardware or software, improperly shutting down the computer, typing illegal variables into the rotes (see above) or performing commands that would normally cause the computer or one of its programs to crash. In response to these actions, the *Electric Grimoire* produces various annoying but not particularly harmful effects. Sometimes, simply making too many typing errors or attempting to open too many programs before the computer has completely finished booting up can cause similar negative reactions.

The *Electric Grimoire* responds to minor problems in a wide variety of ways. It can do everything from deleting recently used files to causing the user to experience painful but non-damaging static electric discharges when he touches the computer, or occasionally when he touches any piece of electronics. These minor shocks impose a -1 penalty to all rolls involving using electronic equipment. Other possible results include emails, text messages, and similar electronic communications going to unintended targets or simply mysteriously vanishing or opening the *Electronic Grimoire* automatically, costing the user 1 point of Mana. If this cost is not paid, the grimoire will not open. These effects typically last between 1 and 24 hours, and continue longer if the mage continues to demonstrate his electronic incompetence.

Users who strike, roughly handle, knock over or spill a beverage on the computer or a connected peripheral like the keyboard or monitor anger the grimoire, as does anyone who attempts to hack the computer. Instead of merely causing the mage minor annoyances, the *Electric Grimoire* strikes out violently at the mage causing these problems. In addition to the normal result of hacking attempts, possible reactions include the mage suffering shocks that cause 1 point of bashing damage every time she touches the computer or a peripheral connected to it. In more serious or repeated cases, these shocks can occur when the mage touches any electric or electronic appliance, including light switches. Other potential results include all electronic devices the mage attempts to use immediately turning themselves off or reacting in a random or problematic fashion or disruption of wireless transmissions of all sorts within 10 feet of the mage. Sometimes these effects directly affect the mage,



producing problems like the mage's nerves beginning to randomly fire, causing distracting and uncomfortable muscle spasms that reduce both her Manipulation and Dexterity by a –1 or –2 penalty. These penalties last for between 12 hours and 2 days, depending upon the severity of the problem that caused them.

Examining the *Electric Grimoire*

Any mage examining the object currently housing this grimoire with either Spirit or Forces magics sees that the computer or storage device contains and is surrounded by a complex and changing structure of magic. If a mage simultaneously uses Forces and Spirit to scrutinize the object holding this grimoire, she sees this structure in considerably more detail. It has both the organic and continually changing characteristics of a spirit and the rigid and formal structure of an enduring rote, as well as the focused magic of a grimoire. The first time a mage studies this grimoire in this fashion, she automatically gains 1 point of Arcane Experience. However, she must also make a Gnosis + Forces roll — failure means she has angered or disturbed the grimoire and suffers one of its minor negative effects.

Interacting with the Electric Grimoire from the Shadow Realm

Since this grimoire is melded with a spirit, it exists in the Shadow Realm even more vividly than it exists in the mundane world. Mages who enter the Shadow Realm can touch and move the grimoire. Should they desire to do so, they can also destroy it most easily here. This grimoire is a Rank 2 spirit (**Mage: The Awakening,** p. 317). Because the grimoire is half spirit and half enchantment, it has a fixed Size of 2 in the Shadow Realm and is incapable of changing size or shape or moving on its own.

Rank: 2
Attributes: Power 4, Finesse 4, Resistance 5
Essence: 15 (15 Max)
Initiative: 9
Defense: 4
Speed: 0
Size: 2
Corpus: 7
Influences: Electricity and Electronics 3

Numina: This strange conglomerate being no longer possesses any Numina; instead it can use several of the rotes found within the grimoire.

Researching the *Electric Grimoire*

Capping Ability: Computer

Action: Extended (5 successes)

Research Time: 5 hours; 1 hour

Appropriate Libraries: Software databases, Electronic security

Bonuses: Free Council membership (+1)

Penalties: No dots in Computer (-1)

Successes	Information
0-4	Nothing.
5-10	The *Electric Grimoire* is a fully digital grimoire that exists only as information in some form of electronic storage. Only one copy of it can exist at a time and it contains various password protections preventing unauthorized users from gaining access to it. This grimoire once had the form of a leyden jar containing a grimoire that could be read only by Forces magic. Its history also parallels that of the Free Council.
11-15	This grimoire is protected by password protections. The grimoire also has a few bugs that can cause a variety of problems for the user. The grimoire can also improve the computer it is on, sometimes permanently, and users can both add rotes and personalize rotes.
16+	The various problems with this grimoire are all the results of the fact that its electronic structure has been melded with that of a spirit of electricity. The spirit is constrained from doing serious harm to anyone, but can cause all manner of minor problems to users who are not especially careful with the book. This spirit is not intelligent, but it reacts badly to anything it finds annoying or threatening.

Ban: The spirit is permanently melded with the book and cannot exist outside it. It must go wherever the book goes and cannot move unassisted.

Even in the Shadow Realm, it remains a simple-minded and temperamental entity. However, it enjoys tass, and feeding it 1 Mana point of tass in the Shadow Realm causes it to cease reacting to any minor problems like poor typing. Feeding it additional Mana points worth of tass renders it quiescent for 1 hour per point. In this state, it will ignore minor problems, although it will react normally to hacking attempts, physical damage, or similar serious problems. As a result, mages with significant stores of tass can safely study this work. Unfortunately, the process of feeding the grimoire in the Shadow Realm can be risky because significant amounts of tass attract other hungry spirits.

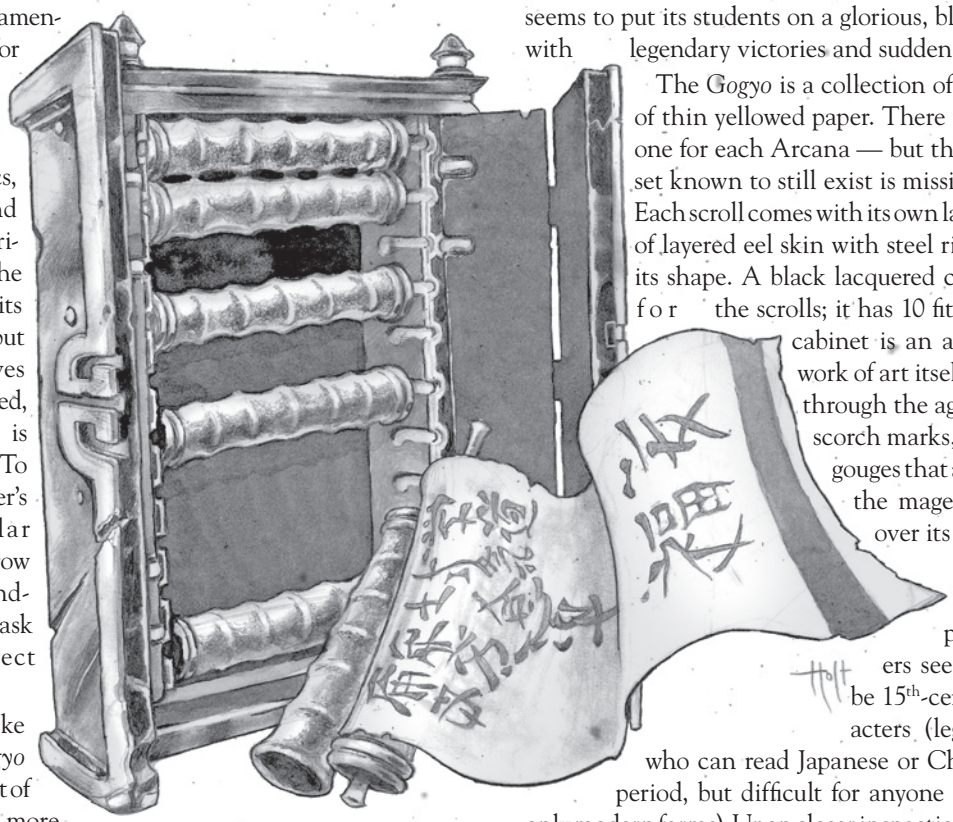
If the mage causes a more serious problem, such as spilling a small amount of water on the keyboard, the mage can attempt to use tass to calm the grimoire. However, doing so is considerably more difficult. When it is reacting to something it considers a threat, this entity is both angry and scared. Simply tossing a bit of tass at the spirit usually results in the spirit ignoring it. Instead, the mage must dangle it before the spirit, tempting it, in much the same way a snake owner tempts a snake to strike at a dead mouse. Doing this requires the mage to make a Manipulation + Occult roll with a penalty equal to 5 minus the number of points of tass present. So, the roll to attempt to cause the spirit to devour 3 points of tass is made at a -2 penalty.

Safely feeding this entity when it is angry is both expensive and dangerous. Failure on this roll means the spirit grows restless. It will strike at the mage and then all penalties on rolls for the next 3 hours are doubled. A Dramatic Failure results in the spirit attacking the mage both physically and with a major magical attack. If the mage is hit by the spirit's physical attack, then it is able to use its magical attack with great effect, and the mage cannot resist the effect in any fashion.



HIDEN GOGYO BUJUTSU

The Adamantine Arrows created many grimoires about supernatural martial arts. Most of them are written in clear, matter of fact language. They're constantly updated to include notes on effectiveness, field studies and informal tips. Some are fundamental textbooks for a particular sect, laying out its approach to tactics, hand to hand combat or spiritual battle. The Order keeps its secrets well, but it also believes that an informed, trained cadre is a strong one. To learn the Order's most popular rotes, an Arrow in good standing need only ask for the correct manual.



Grimoires like the *Hiden Gogyo Bujutsu* are part of a rarer set of more esoteric sources. In every culture, elite warriors have hoarded the most effective lessons they've learned, concealing them with metaphors whose meanings reveal themselves to initiates. The right knowledge can make an army invincible, but knowledge knows no allegiance. Powerful techniques work for the enemy, too. So the *Gogyo* and its cousins are jealously held by a few, only shared when a master believes his student will carry on his values — and when he trusts that she won't stab him in the back.

The *Hiden Gogyo Bujutsu* ("Secret Transmission of Fivefold Elemental Martial Arts") is a treatise on powerful Awakened martial arts techniques systematized according to the Chinese theory of five elemental energies. The modern grimoire is actually Japanese: a copy that made its way from the mainland at least 400 years ago. The *Gogyo* is a comprehensive work, covering everything from unarmed fighting to the relationship between omens and siege warfare. The latter reveals one of the grimoire's flaws: It covers many topics a modern sorcerer wouldn't find particularly useful, limited as they are to the concerns of premodern warfare. But when it comes to the spells and techniques that *do* apply, its contents have proven to be quite potent. Its efficacy can be as dangerous to the owner as to her enemies. Not only have Arrows and renegades alike killed to possess its secrets, but the grimoire itself seems to put its students on a glorious, bloody path, filled with legendary victories and sudden doom.

The *Gogyo* is a collection of six scrolls made of thin yellowed paper. There used to be 10 — one for each Arcana — but the most complete set known to still exist is missing four of them. Each scroll comes with its own labeled tube made of layered eel skin with steel rings to maintain its shape. A black lacquered cabinet was built for the scrolls; it has 10 fitted shelves. The cabinet is an austere, beautiful work of art itself but it's suffered through the ages. It now sports scorch marks, dents and thick gouges that are testaments to the mages who've dueled over its contents.

The scrolls are written in dark purple ink. Readers see what appear to be 15th-century *kanji* characters (legible to anyone who can read Japanese or Chinese from that period, but difficult for anyone who's literate in only modern forms). Upon closer inspection it looks like the author's made several odd, but consistent choices with his calligraphy. In fact, these stylistic marks reveal Atlantean runes masterfully blended with mundane writing. Consequently, any member of an Atlantean Order can read the *Gogyo* if she takes the time to research the variant writing as she reads. (See **Tome of Mysteries** for information about variant Atlantean script.)

At various points the text is interrupted with paintings of deities, diagrams of the human body and plans for archaic objects such as including weapons, fortifications and siege engines. The current version of the *Gogyo* freely mixes Ming period Chinese content and counterparts from Warring States Japan. One section describes *tachi* sword techniques; another has plans for Chinese-style siege weaponry.

History

Arrows historians ascribe the original *Gogyo*'s creation to Sun Bin ("Sun the mutilated"), a historical figure who's known to Sleeper historians. They remember that in the 4th century BCE Sun had his kneecaps removed thanks to internecine treachery within the state of Wei. After that,

Historical Context

Rest assured we know that China and Japan are two different countries. There's always been a robust cultural exchange between them, even during times of war. Japanese *kanji* was adapted from the Chinese writing system. In some cases, people fluent in one language can still read the other, even though the spoken languages have far less in common. During the period in which the *Gogyo* was transmitted, the writing systems had more similarities, but the writing systems have changed and diverged since then.

The *Hiden Gogyo Bujutsu* is based on the real-world legendary origins of many Japanese martial arts texts. Scrolls for old Japanese martial traditions (called *koryu* — literally "old flow") often mention a Chinese origin. In some cases, entire texts were taken wholesale from Chinese sources. Many of these martial arts and strategy manuals were, like the Art of War, standard texts in both cultures. Others were edited from multiple source texts, altered by the compiler and kept secret within different traditions. While not strictly Japanese, the *Bubishi* is an example of such a text, as it was secretly copied and recopied from several Chinese sources by early karate practitioners. In **Mage: The Awakening**, many grimoires have similarly convoluted origins. They pass through multiple cultures and undergo additions, revisions, omissions and legendary embellishments that can launch many different stories.

Storytellers who want to do further research should be aware that the Yagyu clan was a real samurai family that rose to prominence as the shogun's sword teachers. Yagyu Jubei was also a real person who has since become a popular subject for fiction. Reaching further back, Sun Bin might have been a real person. His *Bing Fa* is real (and distinct from Sunzi's version) and really was rediscovered recently.

Sun wrote his *Bing Fa* ("Art of War" — not to be confused with Sunzi's book). Sleepers know that the *Bing Fa* was said to have 89 chapters, but when archeologists recovered scrolls from a tomb in 1972 the resulting work contained only 16 chapters.

The Adamantine Arrows contends that the missing chapters were actually a secret work, derived from material Sun Bin discovered in the ruins of a fortress built by the legendary Yellow Emperor — or an outpost of Atlantis, depending upon the teller's point of view. An accomplished Arrow, Sun Bin copied the material from 108 thaumium columns. He rewrote it with an eye toward applying its secrets to the primitive methods available to the state of Wei. This new text was called the *Wuxing Bing Fa* ("Five Elements Art of War") to indicate that it drew upon the secrets of the five Supernal Realms. The results were highly effective, but came at a steep price. Sun Bin was mutilated, his kneecaps removed when courtiers trumped up charges against him.

It's difficult to tell what happened after that. Despite a disability that would normally cause him to be shunned by society, Sun Bin was employed as a military strategist until he retired into a hermitage, indicating that his incomplete knowledge was still more than sufficient to the task of defending an ancient kingdom. The *Wuxing Bing Fa* disappeared for a century. The Arrows says first emperor Qin Shihuangdi had a copy — even that he burned books and buried scholars to keep anyone from using it against him. While a more sober analysis would certainly detect some hyperbole here, the story is several centuries old, demonstrating the high regard warrior-scholars held for the *Wuxing Bing Fa*. Other legends say the manual forged empires and broke them, even that owning it was a physical sign of the Mandate of Heaven. The grimoire gained a reputation for bringing ruin to anyone who studied it fully. Warriors who mastered the *Wuxing* burned bright in the annals of heroism, but burned briefly.

In order to minimize the destructive effects of the text, by the 10th century CE it became the custom to study only parts

(From the Memoirs of Ajax the Duelist)

Once they knew that I'd studied the *Gogyo* they got their excuses for losing. It wasn't that I was faster, stronger, smarter or more determined. They took solace in the idea that I must have used a rote or some other kind of trick to score an unfair advantage. I guess some of them even kept their dignity whole while they bled to death. I don't care. I always fought to understand myself, not them.

Still, I wish they knew this: The *Hiden Gogyo Bujutsu* is a test — a war of its own. You don't just sit back and read it, then work it out in your backyard. You storm it like a fortress, batter down its gates, defeat its guards and then — if you're lucky and you don't die — you have to protect it against the next invader.

of the *Wuxing Bing Fa*. Wudang monasteries (specifically, the mages who practiced within them) used the book to great effect, pioneering *neijia* or "internal" martial arts.

Nobody knows exactly how the book got to Japan. One story says the Mongols acquired the book when they conquered China. They used its secrets in their attempted invasion of Japan, but the *kamikaze* destroying most of their ships was a sign that they'd outlived the apex of glory. A copy washed to shore, where an order of warrior monks spirited it into the mountains. Another theory says the book appeared in Korea first and that acquiring it was the true treasure Toyotomi Hideyoshi sought when he invaded the peninsula.

Whatever the cause, the surviving edition took the *Gogyo* name and characteristics. It supposedly passed into the hands of the Yagyu clan long enough for it to found a school of supposedly-invincible military strategy called the Yagyu Shinkage Ryu. The clan supported the Tokugawa shogunate and in victory (and a generation after its last surviving mage died) lost any real need for the book. The *Gogyo* became a meaningless antique, lost within the family's collection of heirlooms. But mages remembered it still, and by the 19th century the book had vanished.

The grimoire's resurfaced on several occasions since. Mages who've studied it tend to be remarkably successful in one or more martial endeavors. Then they disappear or die in obscure circumstances. A wandering English Arrow named Ajax was the last known mage to credibly study the *Gogyo* but he claimed he never actually owned it. He said it belonged to a Master who wished to remain nameless. After he studied it, he never lost a fight. In 1980, a friend found his decapitated body sitting upright before his memoirs. The corpse was covered in numerous superficial wounds and the bullet-ridden room was strewn with broken furniture, but he appeared to have suffered the killing blow without a struggle. The *Memoirs of Ajax the Duelist* is a minor grimoire itself. Mages often study it for clues about the contents and location of the *Gogyo*.

Researching the *Hiden Gogyo Bujutsu*

Capping Skill: Academics

Action: Extended — 16 successes

Research Time: 6 hours; 2 hours

Appropriate Libraries: Martial Arts, Japanese Occult, Chinese Occult

Possible Modifiers: Language Merit: Japanese (+1), Mandarin/Putonghua (+1), Adamantine Arrows member (+1)

Successes	Information
0-1	Nothing.
2-4	One of the Adamantine Arrows' great lost grimoires is a martial arts text that migrated from China to Japan over the course of centuries. It is called the *Hiden Gogyo Bujutsu*.
5-9	An Arrow named Ajax used magic from the grimoire to become an unbeatable warrior. He died under mysterious circumstances, but left behind his own grimoire. (Share the excerpt quoted at the beginning of this section.) The only known surviving set of scrolls is in complete. Those who master the *Gogyo* live out glorious destinies but usually come to an unhappy end.
0-13	The known history of the *Gogyo* as recounted in this chapter, as well as its reputed material form. Furthermore, someone who studies it deeply can learn special, innate supernatural gifts.
14-15	All known spells and Merits, recounted in general terms. Students take on powerful destinies and dooms in proportion to their depth of study.
16+	A hint as to the current owner of the Yagyu clan *Gogyo*, a clue as to the whereabouts of a missing scroll, a lead on a heretofore unknown copy as comprehensive as the Yagyu version or another exceptional bit of knowledge, selected by the Storyteller.

Contents

The complete *Hiden Gogyo Bujutsu* is divided into five sections of two scrolls apiece. Each section is named after the elemental energies of Chinese metaphysics. In the *Gogyo*, these are linked to the five Supernal Realms and their Arcana using the following correspondences:

Wood: The Primal Wild (Life, Spirit)

Fire: The Aether (Forces, Prime)

Earth: Arcadia (Fate, Time)

Metal: Stygia (Death, Matter)

Water: Pandemonium (Mind, Space)

Each scroll discusses the tactical and strategic lessons to be learned from a particular Arcanum. These include mundane logistics, strategy and tactics. The magical

content includes an assortment of common Adamantine Arrows rotes. Some of these used to be less common, but the age and fame of the *Gogyo* has ensured they're fairly well known. The grimoire's valuable secrets are the Shinden Hyoho ("True Strategies"): Merits that provide permanent advantages to dedicated students.

The Yagyu family's copy is the best preserved version, but its Metal and Water scrolls are missing. The Fire Scrolls are severely damaged and have no Shinden Hyoho. The others are in surprisingly poor condition considering that they're made of magically reinforced parchment. Fragments of other copies make the rounds, but most of these include only a handful of now-common spells that were part of one scroll or another. These excerpts are relatively common; they're used to teach Adamantine Arrows apprentices basic magical techniques, but are unexceptional grimoires by themselves. Ironically, the surviving Yagyu scrolls are actually quite resilient, as some nameless mage used magic to make them difficult to burn, cut, tear or smudge.

The Wood Scrolls

The first of the Wood Scrolls (Ki no Maki) delves into the nature of living things. *Ki* — "breath" flows through everything and is the basic energy of life. Remarkably, the scroll integrates this magical belief with an almost modern understanding of biology. Various terms allude to cellular anatomy and even genetics, though these might be charitable interpretations of difficult to translate words. This is merely a preamble; most of the text discusses herbal medicine and human performance. Combined, they lay out a course of study — a form of *kiko* (Mandarin: *qigong*) — designed to make warriors tough enough to bend knives with their skins. The course mandates studying the following rotes: "Cleanse the Body," "Body Control," "Self-Healing," and "Self-Purging." The first scroll includes them.

Once the mage learns these rotes along with the specific postures and herbal preparations, she can learn the Tetsujin Undo Hyoho ("Iron Person Body Strategy").

The second scroll elaborates upon the nature of spirits. Heaven — or at least the Spirit Wilds — have an implicate order. Before entering unknown terrain, a wise general inspects the local spiritual landscape. To that end, the scroll lays out proper scouting methods and combines them with shamanic divination. A shaman should accompany outriders, negotiate with local gods and offer them the honors they desire — within reason. The scroll details a series of standard rites. Performed properly, they do more than appease the Shadow. They alter the psychic characteristics of the battle space itself.

The specific advice in this scroll is somewhat dated because it doesn't cover modern urban environments or transportation, so it's not the best reference for military scouting. Its magical advice is a bit more enduring. This section instructs readers in the following rotes: "Coaxing the Spirits," "Spirit Tongue," "Peer Across the Gauntlet," "Greater Spirit Summons," "Numinous Shield" and "Living Land," below.

Merit: Tetsujin Undo Hyoho (••••)

Prerequisites: Awakened, knows the rotes "Cleanse the Body," "Body Control," "Self-Healing," and "Self-Purging" as taught by the *Gogyo*.

Benefits: The mage constantly benefits from the equivalent of the rote "Organic Resilience," except that it adds armor based upon the lower of the character's Strength or Stamina. It is not a magical effect; it doesn't count toward the mage's spell tolerance or as a spell for the purposes of stacking magical effects with the exception of Life Shielding spells.

Drawbacks: The mage can never again benefit from "Organic Resilience" or other Life spells that bestow armor. Furthermore, his internal energies run "hot." His body consumes a point of Mana every sunrise. If the mage doesn't have any Mana on hand his body automatically scours itself of a point of Stamina.

Living Land (Spirit ••••, Fate ••)

Practice: Patterning
Action: Extended
Duration: Prolonged (1 scene)
Aspect: Covert
Cost: None

This spell is an advanced version of "Coaxing the Spirits." Instead of targeting a specific object, the mage affects an area. Within that, he may designate allies, neutrals and enemies. Inside the area of effect, each ally adds bonus dice equal to the spell's Potency to 1 roll of the caster's choosing. Each enemy suffers a dice penalty to 1 roll equal to the spell's Potency. Neutrals experience no special conditions. Debris, local wildlife, wind, light and other ambient environmental effects benefit the mage's friends and harass enemies.

The mage determines when and how each person experiences the effects of the spell. He can also spend extra levels of Potency to modify an additional roll for 1 set of allies or 1 set of enemies within the spell's area of effect and duration.

Adamantine Arrows Rote: Ryutora no Jutsu
Dice Pool: Intelligence + Intimidation + Spirit

Ryutora means "Tiger and Dragon," or colloquially, "two powerful rivals." The *Gogyo* also calls the rote by this name to evoke the principles of *feng shui*. The mage uses ritualized threats and orders to array half-slumbering spirits in service to his cause. Trees, stones, clouds, insects — all of them hinder foes and help allies.

The Fire Scrolls

The Fire Scrolls (Ka no Maki) hold forth on "Heaven," defined here as the overarching structure of Creation. A long discourse on astrology and weather lore follows, with an emphasis on how to predict weather patterns and currents of Supernal energies to help a general win the battlefield. It offers practical advice on how to conduct surprise attacks during a storm, how to rally troops on muddy ground and even how to use positioning to blind an enemy with bright sunlight.

The second Fire Scroll is burnt; several articles about refining *ki* in the form of Mana appear to have been destroyed. The surviving material contains little information about the Prime Arcanum or the general principles of Mana. It discusses the metaphysics of violent natural forces like fire, lightning and wind using the microcosmic/macrocosmic principles of Daoism to explore the role of these energies in the human body. Illustrated instructions teach a set of 54 postures designed to channel ambient natural energy. This teaches practitioners rotes for "Kinetic Blow," "Kinetic Shield," as well as rotes for "Floating Step" and "Optimize Kinetic Attack," below.

Floating Step (Forces ●●●)

This spell manipulates wind currents and kinetic energy around the mage to improve her balance and jumping ability, all while reducing her effective weight.

Practice: Weaving
Action: Instant
Duration: Prolonged (1 scene)



Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

Once cast, the spell provides the 8 again advantage to Dexterity + Athletics rolls to maintain balance, making it easy for a well-trained mage to run across tightropes or jump from one narrow post to another. The mage also adds her Forces dots in feet for every success scored whenever she succeeds at a Strength + Athletics roll. For example, if she scores 4 successes to make a standing broad jump and has Forces 3, she jumps 20 feet (2 per success as usual, + 3 per success using the spell).

Adamantine Arrows Rote: Karumijutsu

Dice Pool: Resolve + Athletics + Forces

The "body lightening art" gives practitioners the ability to leap incredible distances and balance on the most precarious surfaces.

Optimize Kinetic Attack (Forces ●●●)

This spell channels wasted kinetic energy from a mage's movements into the speed and force of an attack.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (1 scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

Divide successes between the number of future attacks this spell benefits, and its primary effect, adding dice to any Brawl or Weaponry-based attack. Each success devoted to this advantage adds a die to the mage's attack dice pool. There's a limit: no attack can have a combined spell + weapon damage dice bonus of more than 5, or 1 higher than the weapon's damage bonus if the mage already wields a 5 damage weapon.

If the mage would gain a combined bonus 1 higher than this, he instead gains the 9 again advantage. (If the weapon provides 9 again already, this becomes 8 again.) If the mage would gain a combined 3 higher than the limit, he gets the 8 again advantage — the maximum benefit the spell can provide.

For example, if Zeno casts this spell while using a sword that inflicts 2 damage and scores 4 successes, the sword + spell adds 5 dice to the attack, which benefits from the 9 again advantage. If Zeno had cast the spell to augment an unarmed attack it would add 4 dice.

This spell can't enhance ranged attacks of any kind.

Adamantine Arrows Rote: Arashi Waza

Dice Pool: Wits + Brawl + Forces

A master of the "storm technique" sees the chaotic currents of the wind reflected in his physical movements. He uses his mind and body to smooth the frayed lines of motion in his movement without sacrificing raw power.

The Earth Scrolls (Chino Maki)

The Earth Scrolls are dominated by a discourse on the Mandate of Heaven. The scrolls describe the signs of a foreordained ruler and the omens that say when even an emperor's time has passed. Fate's mandate also overturns generals, captains and even individuals when they fail to adapt to new conditions. This sometimes happens because the victim turns immoral, but just as often they've become set in their ways while the world, battlefield or even an individual opponent changes.

Heaven has a formal order that must be respected. Gods of the hearth and land gather information for the great powers: the sages and *Okami* who dwell in the Supernal Realms. On the other hand, a clever mage can bribe lesser gods (here described as embodied principles, not spirits per se) by entering into special contracts — or using bribes. They outline a course of rituals that "gag" the watchers of Heaven. This allows anyone who follows these instructions to purchase the Tendogakure Hyoho ("Hidden Divine Providence Strategy") Merit.

Merit: Tendogakure Hyoho (•••)

Prerequisite: Awakened, studied the *Gogyo Hiden Bujutsu*

Effect: The mage's destiny is shielded from others as if he is constantly affected by the "Occlude Destiny" spell (**Mage**, p. 156) with a Potency equal to his Composure. This conceals and shields his mundane destiny as well as any Destiny Merit he might possess. Much like a Legacy Attainment, this is not considered to be Awakened magic.

A virtuous ruler or effective warrior needs to adapt to every new situation. The first scroll focuses upon Fate through the metaphor of Earth. The mage is stability personified, able to contain the most chaotic situations. Earth also appears stable and unchanging, but it actually changes very subtly, reacting to wind, supporting growth and swallowing the ashes of a fire. The section teaches passages from classics attributed to the Yellow Emperor, though in truth they probably come from Sun Bin's transcriptions of the 108 pillars.

The second scroll teaches the ways of Time by listing the omens that foretell military victory, changes in government or important natural phenomena. After that, it devotes attention to smaller issues, descending from the signs that an enemy squad will break to how to guess which way a swordsman will strike. The principle at work is that omens exist in all phenomena. Common patterns predict the actions of one person as surely as they do ten thousand.

These scrolls have suffered smudging and shredding. Some sections are illegible. Others mention spells that are presumably described in the destroyed portions. Only two spells remain: "Strike in the Perfect Moment" and "Sense Strength and Weakness."

Strike in the Perfect Moment (Time ●●●)

This spell gives the mage a supernatural sense of fighting rhythm. She can sense moments when her opponent isn't prepared to defend against an attack.

Practice: Perfecting

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (1 scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None during casting; 1 Mana per use after casting.

If she spends a point of Mana while attacking with a weapon or unarmed strike during the duration of the spell, reduce her opponent's Defense by her Time dots. This benefit does not affect the benefits of armor or Shielding Practice spells *except* for Time-based protection. It *does* reduce the defensive benefits of supernatural powers that provide increased speed or raw agility, but not those that protect the user by virtue of increased toughness, mental misdirection or any other means.

This spell doesn't benefit ranged attacks.

Adamantine Arrows Rote: Shikake

Dice Pool: Composure + Weaponry + Time

An Arrow who uses this rote learns how to strike when opponents are unprepared to respond. Every fight has a rhythm; the warrior breaks it, attacking in the moments between an enemy's movements.

Sense Strength and Weakness (Fate ●●●)

This spell gives the mage an intuitive understanding of the most and least competent members of a group within a specific context. To provide meaningful results, the spell must affect at least 2 targets. The mage may visualize her search for information in any number of ways, but for game purposes it boils down to this question: "Who is the most and least competent at (a specific activity)?" To arrive at an answer, the mage reads the threads of destiny, following them to specific scenarios.

Practice: Unveiling

Action: Instant

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

The Storyteller responds by providing an answer based on the current, relevant dice pools of the targets. He doesn't reveal the target's game traits, only that a target would be the best or worst based upon those traits. For instance, if the mage is facing off against three marksmen, this spell usually reveals the shooters with the highest and lowest dice pools, but would not reveal that the worst shooter had a Dexterity + Firearms pool of 6. If the best and worst in the group are equally competent, the spell reveals this as well. Special circumstances affect the result. These include equipment bonuses, wound penalties and magic; the caster isn't privy to this information. The spell reveals only relative competence based upon what might happen in the immediate future, so a gunman suffering temporary blindness would be considered worse than one who is usually an inferior shooter even if the blind marksman is due to recover his vision.

For each additional level of Potency the mage can expand her understanding of the hierarchy of competence to add the next best or next worst targets, up to the limits of the spell's Potency or the number of targets, whichever is less/fewer.

The Missing Scrolls

The Metal and Water Scrolls are lost. There are a few fragments in circulation that teach unexceptional spells. They do provide hints about the lost scrolls, however. The Metal Scroll deals with ancestor worship and logistics. It was supposed to give its students the ability to create weapons that "cut down the gods" by infusing smiths with the skills of dead smiths. The Water Scroll was a treatise on the sword as a symbol and practical weapon. Students were capable of winning duels and coordinating armies using the same techniques.

Nobody knows what happened to the remaining Yagyu scrolls. Most mages believe they've been destroyed, but some say the legendary Yagyu Jubei scattered them to prevent anyone else from studying them in depth and taking on the burdens they impose. Whatever the truth, Arrows mages still look for them. A few seek out the Atlantean ruin that supposedly contains the inscriptions upon which the *Gogyo* is based. There is a legend that says the grimoire will be collected only in a complete form when the Order's need is dire. It will give warrior mages the Mandate of Heaven and teach them how to lead a world-conquering army. It sounds like so much hyperbole, but copies of the book appear in myths whenever an emperor or general seems poised to conquer the world — they always fall short, cut down by an unexpected doom.

This spell can be combined with another to specifically target the best or worst member of a group. For example, it could be combined with "Call Lightning" to direct the spell at the target most likely to survive electrocution, or the one least likely to successfully counter the spell.

This listing describes the instant version of the spell, but in ages past, mages cast extended ritual versions to find the weak and strong points in entire Consilii and battle formations.

Adamantine Arrows Rote: Tenshin Heiho

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Investigation + Fate

Adamantine Arrows who've studied the *Gogyo* deeply use this rote to help plan an attack against a group of enemies. The mage studies subtle omens and the enemy's habits to expose weakness and avoid meeting strength head on. He is said to have the quality for which the rote is named: "divinely inspired strategy."

Danger — and Glory

The most famous aspect of the *Gogyo* isn't a spell or Shinden Hyoho Merit. It's the grimoire's association with powerful destinies — its reputation as a symbol of the Mandate of Heaven. The grimoire's been credited with everything from the rise of the Ming Dynasty to the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate. None of this can be traced back to a specific spell or easily-defined power. Instead, studying the scrolls seems to impose a special fate commensurate with the mage's dedication.

The *Hiden Gogyo Bujutsu* infuses its students with the Destiny Merit (**Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 81-2). The mage gains 1 Destiny dot for every 2 dots of rotes Merits learned from the scrolls, or 1 dot per Gnosis point — whichever is less — up to a maximum of 6 Destiny dots. If she already has the Merit, don't stack new dots with the old. Use the highest rating of the two. This Destiny Merit has a bane like any other, tailored to the mage's fate.

The mage's destiny is always a violent one. He's fated to train a Consilium to conquer its rivals, fight a series of duels that culminates in a battle with an Abyssal demon or even overthrow a Sleeper government. His new Merit dots can be used only to further that destiny, not his general interests. It's part of the nature of the grimoire to push the student toward his fate. He meets mysterious strangers, picks up bizarre artifacts — anything to get him on the path. The *Gogyo* doesn't have any way of directly informing a mage about his destiny, but "The Sibyl's Sight" other prophetic magic or equivalent powers might uncover it. Even clever, mundane observation can go a long way, as the new destiny strongly affects the mage's life.

Unfortunately, the *Gogyo*'s mandate is fickle. If the mage ever fulfils his destiny or irrevocably fails to do so, the mage suffers bane penalties (-1 die per Destiny dot) to almost *every* nontrivial action, including but not limited to: combat, spellcasting in risky situations and other dangerous, memorable situations. He won't get into odd car accidents (or suffer Dexterity + Drive penalties) when he's driving home his groceries but he might wipe out during a high speed chase, or if he's driving to the Hierarch's office with an important message. Like the Mandate of Heaven, the mage's heroic fortune lasts only for so long, and those who rise the highest, fall the hardest.

The mage can divest himself of the Destiny Merit (and the curse that comes with it) by getting another mage — a successor — to study its contents and purchase its rotes and Merits. Once that happens the mage is freed from the grimoire's curse *unless* he studies it once again, in which case he builds a new Destiny rating, a new heroic Fate and a new, disastrous end once that Fate reaches its conclusion. Fate 5 magic can also undo the *Gogyo*'s curse, but never without undoing the linked Destiny Merit.



THE HILDEBRAND RECORDING

A Different Perspective

Because of its unique nature and the sort of company it seems to "prefer" to keep (see below), the *Hildebrand Recording* can make for an interesting challenge for a group of ordinary mortals who travel in the occult, criminal, or even law enforcement or intelligence communities. While such characters cannot actually make use of the grimoire's spells, that's not really the point of the exercise; rather, such a chronicle focuses more upon the nature of the recording as a horrific unknown, a sort of "Devil's Bible" of the modern paranormal.

This sort of chronicle likely follows the globetrotting exploits of the characters as they pursue legends of the *Hildebrand Recording* and start to discern the forces, both mundane and supernatural, aligned against their search. Occult scholars may be expecting this sort of thing, but what about the average underworld thug or intelligence operative? A journey of this sort represents a wildly divergent perspective on the nature of grimoires in the World of Darkness: that of the object as a perilous treasure unto itself, irrespective of the mystical abilities it unlocks for the Awakened.

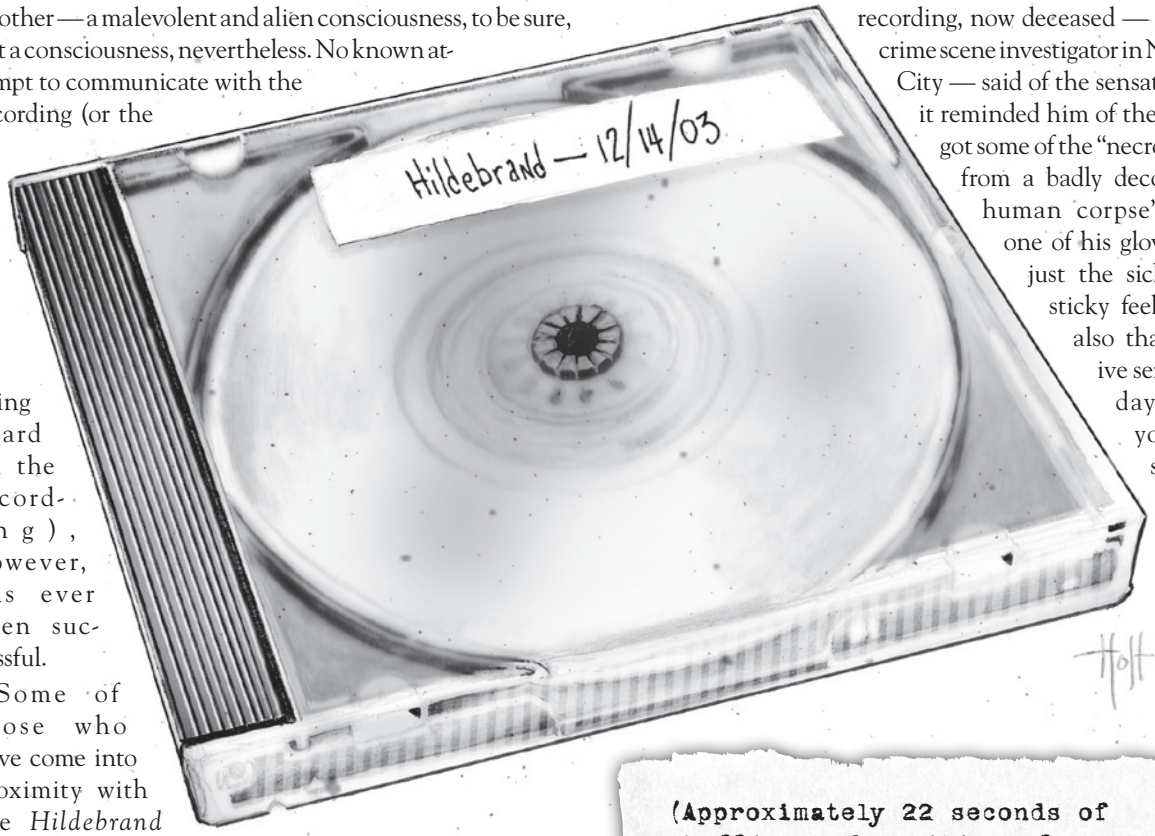
> ...As you suspected, it was in my possession. For just about a week, actually. That's right; I had it, if only briefly. You must understand, however, why it is that I chose not to share it with you as I promised, Josephine. It's...unhealthy. Dark. The sounds are not words, though they are language. I can't explain. I shouldn't even try, except to say that it's not meant for this world. Whoever William Hildebrand was, I pity him. He was there for it all, and I shudder to think of what it did to him at the end. You should have heard his screams. I'm glad you didn't have to. You can feel free not to forgive me for that, but I'll go to my grave feeling justified in my choice, happy to have spared you the knowing of what was on that disc.
>
> What I can't, for the life of me, figure is why Hildebrand never removed his headphones when that... whatever it was... started to communicate with him. I can't put together why he didn't turn off his equipment, or even just run. I just - I don't know, Josephine. It's haunting, and terrifying. I used to look for reasons to believe. Now, all I want is cause to doubt...
>
> - Excerpt from a transcription on the Hildebrand Recording, speaker unknown

An "unholy grail" of modern paranormal investigation, the so-called *Hildebrand Recording* is a digital audio recording that runs for 15 minutes, 36 seconds. It is one of the most profoundly convincing examples of electronic voice phenomenon (or, more succinctly, EVP) known to the occult community, though fewer than a dozen parapsychologists, metaphysicians, and other "experts of the unknown" have credibly claimed to have listened to it.

The *Hildebrand Recording* is imprinted upon a nondescript golden-hued recordable compact disc with bluish highlights, in a dark blue jewel case, with a plain white label — skewed ever so slightly — in the middle of the front cover, bearing the characters "Hildebrand — 12/14/03" neatly printed with what was obviously a black gel pen. Naturally, as with almost any artifact known to (or widely believed in by) the occult community, forgeries exist. Most look nothing like the actual *Hildebrand* disc, though some studious counterfeiters have managed to very closely replicate the appearance of the original.

The true *Hildebrand Recording* bears a terrifying resonance when viewed with Mage Sights, most especially those employing the Death, Mind, Prime or Spirit Arcana. One

Moros likened it to "staring at something that died so long ago it's forgotten that it isn't alive anymore." Some speculate that the recording *itself* has a consciousness of one sort or another — a malevolent and alien consciousness, to be sure, but a consciousness, nevertheless. No known attempt to communicate with the recording (or the thing heard on the recording), however, has ever been successful.



Some of those who have come into proximity with the *Hildebrand Recording* report the momentary recollection of scents that remind them of dark times from their pasts. It is uncertain as to whether this is an actual whiff of scent or just a sense memory rising to the surface, and there is no apparent pattern to explain why one person standing near the disc catches the momentary smell of the cloying odor of the bouquets at his father's funeral from when he was seven years old, or the rotten breath of her would-be rapist from that rain-soaked country road two years ago, and another smells only plastic. Still, the phenomenon is common enough to have entered into the legendry of the *Hildebrand Recording*, and has, once or twice, been used as a "blind test" indicator of the veracity of the disc. Why the recording appeals to scent, in particular, is uncertain, though modern scientists generally agree that smells trigger the deepest and most emotionally telling memories in the human consciousness, and perhaps the recording is simply inspiring powerful gut reactions in its own unpleasant way.

Also, certain accounts relate that the physical vessel of the true *Hildebrand Recording* sometimes feels inexplicably "tacky" to the touch, as though stained with some kind of drying liquid. Those that have experienced this sense almost invariably report that they got the distinct impression the "phantom substance" was somehow organic in nature. While no trace of any such material has ever been reported as staining the disc, the accounts often liken the feeling (and, perhaps, the unconscious association) to that of drying blood, pus, phlegm or bile. A former owner of the recording, now deceased — a retired crime scene investigator in New York City — said of the sensation that it reminded him of the time he got some of the "necrotic soup from a badly decomposed human corpse" inside one of his gloves; "not just the sickeningly sticky feeling, but also that reflexive sense that, days later, you were somehow still 'dirty.'"

(Approximately 22 seconds of shuffling and rustling of papers and soft banging of equipment.)

"For the record, I am William Hildebrand, and I am preparing to commence with the invocation that will, hopefully, enable me to contact the entity that allegedly haunts this place..."

History

While accounts disagree as to the individual to whom the recording first came, almost all those with more than a passing interest in the disc are in accord that Edinburgh was where it first surfaced, in February of 2004. Some say it was Amalia Gardener, the widow of an American expatriate occultist, who came to possess the recording; while others assert it was John Welker, a distant relative of the ill-fated William Hildebrand, and still others hold it was a man who identified himself only as Frater Dis. Regardless, though, it is commonly held as fact among the seekers of the recording that it spent only a single night in the possession of its new owner before a calamity of some sort — a fire in the Gardener estate, John Welker's fatal third heart attack, or the brutal murder of Frater Dis — caused the recording to

move on. (Those who have researched the matter, interestingly enough, report that all three of these events occurred within 48 hours of one another in Edinburgh, though the killing of Frater Dis never made the mainstream media, and his true identity remains unknown to this day.)

Three months later, the *Hildebrand Recording* resurfaced in Barcelona, Spain, and it was at this time that the first counterfeits began to circulate through the occult community, as well as what are believed to be two or three unsuccessful attempts to copy the disc, at least one of them incomplete by four or five minutes. It is a matter of record that it was Enrique Vargas, a wealthy entrepreneur with a keen interest in the paranormal, who acquired the recording after it came to Spain. Vargas kept the *Hildebrand Recording* for only three days before shipping it to an old college friend (and much more knowledgeable occultist) in Perth, Australia. The package never arrived, however, and the recording disappeared for nearly a year. As to his time in possession of the *Hildebrand Recording*, Vargas will say nothing, and he refuses all inquiries into the matter.

In late March of 2005, the *Hildebrand Recording* resurfaced in or around Phoenix, Arizona, in the United States. By this time, at least nine distinct counterfeit recordings were in circulation, each one of which had been copied at least once and some of them up to a dozen times. Current research indicates that the disc ended up in the possession of one Allison Lees, a wealthy recluse with a chronic immunodeficiency. If the story of Geraldo DeJesus, a security guard in Lees' compound, is to be believed, she never so much as played the recording once, instead vacuum-sealing it up in a case on a pedestal in her expansive library of the paranormal. Three months after acquiring the recording Lees sold it to an unknown buyer for an undisclosed price (though the rumor, for whatever reason, is that she parted with it for a ridiculously small sum).

In August of 2005 the recording turned up in the collection of one Asløg Madsen, an international drug smuggler who claimed, in an offhand comment to a seeker of the *Hildebrand Recording*, to have acquired it "in payment of a debt." Madsen held the recording for six months and, according to a former enforcer in his entourage — now under protective custody in a mental institution in Sweden — is known to have played it for the amusement of friends and associates. During an attack by a rival criminal organization, Madsen lost the recording (as well as his right eye and the ring and little fingers of his right hand; the bodyguard who took the brunt of the shotgun blast, on the other hand, was killed instantly).

Immediately after recovering from his injuries, Madsen launched a retributive strike against his enemy, only to discover that the other kingpin had never been in possession of the recording and that it had simply vanished on the night of the attack. In addition to the extensive search for the disc Madsen has organized, he has offered a 10-million Euro bounty for the safe recovery of the *Hildebrand Recording*, no questions asked. Of course, rumors have already begun to circulate throughout Europe's underworld as to the fate of three young men who tried to pawn a fake off on the ruthless criminal; after three weeks of starvation they were simply thankful for a meal and never thought to ask what had been done with their limbs after they were sawed off. Allegedly, at least one of them is still alive, now nothing more than a head and torso, in a hospital in either Germany or the Netherlands — accounts disagree as to which.

Since disappearing from Asløg Madsen's keeping, the *Hildebrand Recording* has surfaced here and there throughout the world. Most of its owners manage to hold onto it for a matter of only days or, at most, weeks, before they either willingly part with it or else lose it through various sorts of unfortunate circumstances. Occasionally evidence will point to someone keeping the recording for up to a month or two, but these accounts are rare and, often, suspect. Widely considered to be the only truly believable such claimant, Dorian Wheeler of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, a small-time dealer in paranormal artifacts, alleges that, after 39 days in the house, the disc drove his wife to murder their two children with a carving knife, to attack him, and then — when he fled, badly wounded, and locked himself in the bathroom — to eviscerate herself in the parlor. While Wheeler was (barely) cleared of any suspicion in the murder-suicide, the recording could not be found anywhere among his possessions afterward.

As to the *Hildebrand Recording*'s present location, none can say for certain. Some believe it is currently the property of a small cadre of bankers in the Caribbean, while others believe the Catholic Church has acquired (and is studying) the recording, and still others maintain the disc is in the hands of one DJ Atropos, believed to be somewhere in Los Angeles, California. (but recently vanished, seemingly without a trace) after several brief samples of William Hildebrand's speech from the first two and a half minutes of the recording were heard in one of her last known club mixes.

"...I'm having trouble understanding you. Please, if you are here, give me a sign: move an object, tap on the pipes, speak to me. Just give me something to let me know that you're here. I mean you no harm."

(Pause.)

"I'm going to put on my headphones and attempt to listen for your communication there. If you have something to say to me, please do so, and I'll see if I can hear you through this medium..."

A Bit Nonstandard

Needless to say, the *Hildebrand Recording* is unlike most other grimoires out there. First of all, it doesn't take the form of a series of written symbols, but, rather, an audio recording. This is a significant distinction unto itself. Some mages wonder how it is that the *Hildebrand Recording* can be a grimoire *at all*, given its unusual medium. Second, none of the few Awakened who've ever set eyes on the recording can determine exactly how it was that the disc became a grimoire. Since experimentation with the Prime Arcanum spell used to craft grimoires doesn't seem to be able to create this sort of effect with respect to recorded sounds, the strongest remaining possibility is that the *entity* communicating with Hildebrand — which, it is generally agreed-upon by the recording's Awakened self-proclaimed scholars, could not have been a willworker — somehow did so, whether intentionally or otherwise. Attempts to record the disc's contents to another storage medium always fail, as the garbled noises made by the entity are somehow completely lost in the process (though all other sounds, including William Hildebrand's horrific screams of agony and terror, transfer perfectly). No amount of magical or mundane manipulation can overcome this limitation, and so the grimoire, like others of its kind, remains unique. Third, one or two willworkers out there claim to have destroyed the *Hildebrand Recording*, only for it to pop up again somewhere else in the occult underground. No spell can be detected on the recording that would allow for this regeneration and spontaneous transport, and many reflexively doubt the word of any who've claimed to have destroyed the disc, though others wonder whether there are deeper mysteries still at work in this matter. Fourth, and perhaps most interestingly, the *Hildebrand Recording* has moved almost exclusively through the hands of Sleepers during its time in this world. While the Awakened have sometimes managed to hold onto it for a fleeting instant here and there, the disc somehow seems to *want* to be in the possession of ordinary people — for a little while, anyway, before moving on to the next owner (or host, or victim).

Whatever the case, all these facts, rumors and suppositions only go to prove that magic is not a thing that can be readily confined to simple categorizations; *some* detail hanging raggedly from the edge of the known and quantifiable always manages to elude the boundaries of "established lore." Ultimately, the *Hildebrand Recording* is an enigma — for the Awakened just as much as for the Sleeper occultists who track its movements and aspire to unravel its significance — and therein lies its allure.

Contents

The *Hildebrand Recording* is of especial interest to the Awakened, given the unique magics said to be concealed within the "speech" of the entity; decipherable only through the Mind 3 "Universal Language" spell (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 213) or an effect like it. Note that the mage using the spell knows what the entity is "saying," but cannot in any way — not even with other magic — articulate, translate or transcribe this communication. She can learn the spells it teaches, but cannot meaningfully record such knowledge or impart it to others; only the recording itself can bestow its unclean lore.

The spells hidden within the *Hildebrand Recording* are as follows:

Abyssal Perception (Death ●+ Prime ●+ Space ●+ Spirit ●)

This spell enables a mage to perceive the presence of Abyssal phenomena, though it is not properly a Mage Sight. Rather, this sense manifests as a powerful awareness of the pressing "wrongness" of the Abyss as the willworker closes on it (or, conversely, as *it* closes on the willworker…).

Practice: Knowing
Action: Instant
Duration: Prolonged (1 scene)
Aspect: Covert
Cost: None

After casting this spell, the mage becomes attuned to the alien emanations of the Abyss, detecting them through feelings and images of fear, pain, horror and otherwise skewed awareness of the world around him. Ordinary scenes and occurrences take on a malevolent cast, as inhuman whispers circulate through the crowd at a train station, deformed faces leer from shadowed corners (and vanish the instant the character looks back), moans of suffering and ecstasy well up from manhole covers and other images of the gruesome and nightmarish transpire just at the edge of perception. Characters unprepared for the experience (think of the title character's glimpses of the bizarre and the terrifying in the 1990 film *Jacob's Ladder* for an idea of just how this sense manifests) are likely to develop 1 or more derangements.

Even when Abyssal phenomena are not at hand, light seems a little cold and thin through the lens of this magic; everything looks a little more rundown, the eyes of living things are flat and unreflective, wind seems a bit too still, while normal noises sound muffled and whispers are a bit too loud. Any mage who uses this spell on too regular a basis will almost certainly find that all sense of reality begins to wear thin, as an *expectation* of Abyssal intrusion takes hold of her. Eventually, she might become afraid *not* to have this magic active — who knows when the Abyss will come calling, after all?

Rote: Gazing into the Abyss

Dice Pool: Resolve + Occult + Prime

Pain and fear such as the human mind cannot ken await those who look long into the Abyss. Still, to some Awakened, the power to know the presence of that which must not be is worth the cost, or, at least, so they believe.

Call Shadow Person (Death ●●● + Mind ●●● + Spirit ●●●)

"Shadow People," as they are known by the Sleeper occult community, are, allegedly, entities from another layer of reality. It is uncertain whether they are demons, ghosts, spirits, astral beings or something else. Often connected to the sites of particularly potent hauntings (not necessarily ghostly in origin), these beings are usually accompanied by feelings of dread and are sometimes reported as chasing or even harming people.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (1 scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

Shadow People, apparently, will *always* consent to be summoned into a place rife with what they consider a pleasing resonance, and are often known to linger long after the Duration of the spell elapses, as though somehow feeding on the darker ambient energies of the Fallen World. As Shadow People are not normally present anywhere in this reality, no Space component is necessary to call them to the caster's present location; they simply arrive when called, though the willworker enjoys no particular protection from the entity's attentions, unless she has taken such preparations in advance. Otherwise, this spell is in every way similar to the "Lesser Spirit Summons" and "Greater Spirit Summons" spells of the Spirit Arcanum (**Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 247 and 249).

Rote: Call to Darkness

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Intimidation + Death

Some believe the Shadow People are dark powers called up by hurtful magic and sent to afflict one's enemies with fear and suffering. By way of this spell, a willworker can do just that, sending a hateful darkness to torment her foes, or those who otherwise offend against her.

Shadow Person

Shadow People (also known as Shadow Men, Shadow Folk, and by other such titles) are often-malevolent entities originating in another layer of reality, quite possibly one "near" (or even within) the Underworld, the Abyss, the Astral Realm, or somewhere between the three. These beings tend to be drawn toward sites saturated with negative resonance: pain, fear, madness, violation, and the like. Sometimes, they simply observe human beings and, sometimes, they frighten, chase, or even attempt to hurt them. These intelligences usually conceal themselves from the scrutiny of corporeal creatures, however, revealing themselves only according to the dictates of their inhuman logic. Shadow People do not verbally or telepathically communicate — not even with magics that allow (or compel) communication; it seems to be an inherent limitation of their "species."

Shadow People register as "inconclusive" to the "Abyssal Perception" spell, above, though they are clearly spiritual entities of dark and unwholesome purpose. They may be Abyssal in origin, and they may not; that is up to the individual willworker (and, of course, the Storyteller) to decide. The template below describes a "default" Shadow Person. A mage could, with the proper preparation, presumably summon a more (or less) powerful entity.

Rank: 2
Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 6, Resistance 5
Willpower: 8
Essence: 15 (max 15)
Initiative: 9
Defense: 6
Speed: 29 (species factor 20)
Size: 5
Corpus: 10
Numina: Discorporate, Harrow, Materialize
Influence: Dread 3
Ban: Shadow People cannot enter areas of bright light (anything stronger than a flashlight or candlelight) and must flee from such illumination with the greatest possible haste, up to and including moving through the Gauntlet, if such proves to be the most expedient means of escape.



In addition to the spells concealed within the *Hildebrand Recording*, the disc bestows another, significant perk upon an Awakened owner, who need not be in the object's presence in order to reap said benefit: any Paradox roll the mage is called upon to make, for *any* reason, is lessened by 2 dice. No explanation can be found for this Paradox-dampening effect, but the few mages who've ever held the recording, however briefly, have reported that it feels more like a displacement than nullification, like the Paradox went *somewhere* else, but no spell or other paranormal sense has yet been able to discern where, or how.

This benefit lasts for as long as the mage in question remains the owner of the *Hildebrand Recording* (inasmuch as *anyone* can be said to "own" this horrific object), fading instantly when it is stolen, traded, given away, thrown away, or else meanders off, seemingly of its own independent will. As to what becomes of this thwarted toll in Paradox, none can say, though the aid the recording renders is almost assuredly, in the greater scheme of things, not worth the price.

(Garbled sounds of uncertain origin.)

"...Please, you're scaring me. I know that you want to talk. I sense that you're in pain. That you…no - oh, God. Please."

(Pause. Garbled sounds increase in intensity and continue.)

"No."

(Pause. Garbled sounds continue.)

"Don't."

(Pause. Garbled sounds further increase in intensity.)

"I - I... can't. Please, don't..."

Dangers

The dangers of the *Hildebrand Recording* are abundant, and not all of them are best expressed in terms of systems and dots. If the supposed history of the grimoire is to be believed, it is perilous merely to possess, let alone to actually *use*, and largely on account of phenomena not easily interpreted by ordinary investigation or even magical senses. No discernible curse clings to the recording, but many of its alleged owners, nevertheless, die horribly or otherwise suffer terribly relatively shortly after acquiring it. Some of those who come into contact with the *Hildebrand Recording* develop an unhealthy preoccupation with it, and no few have gone mad, seemingly by way of nothing more than mere proximity to it. Those that have resisted the tempta-

(Screaming, lasting approximately 31 seconds.)

"...I'm so sorry. I d-didn't mean. Not for me. Not for me."

(Garbled sounds move from left speaker to right speaker. Hildebrand's voice falls to a whimper.)

"I don't want to see. Please, I beg of you. I don't want to see. Not again..."

(Screaming resumes.)

Researching the *Hildebrand Recording*

Capping Skill: Occult

Action: Extended — 12 successes

Research Time: 12 hours; 4 hours

Appropriate Libraries: Electronic Voice Phenomenon, Grimoires, Occult Crimes

Possible Modifiers: Researcher interviews one or more individuals connected to the *Hildebrand Recording* (+1), researcher visits one or more of the sites at which the *Hildebrand Recording* was known to have been held (+1), researcher is in possession of an actual copy of the *Hildebrand Recording* (+2)

Successes	Information
0-4	Nothing.
5-8	The *Hildebrand Recording* is allegedly a recording of the interactions of something nightmarish and otherworldly with a man named William Hildebrand. The entity in question is of uncertain origin, but the contents of the recording seem to make it clear the being killed Hildebrand, though it is not known whether the killing was done out of malice or simply a lack of understanding as to the fear and pain the man endured on account of the contact. For the Awakened (in addition to the above): The *Hildebrand Recording* is, against all known rules regarding the creation of such, a grimoire of some sort.
9-10	Almost everyone who has come into contact with the *Hildebrand Recording* has suffered one manner of misfortune or another while in possession of it. Often these individuals lose the recording by way of such catastrophes, and several of them have died in this manner. For the Awakened: Despite the obvious mysticism surrounding the *Hildebrand Recording*, few mages have ever held the grimoire, no matter how briefly.
11	The *Hildebrand Recording* was once in the possession of the leader of an *extremely* dangerous international criminal cartel, a man named Asløg Madsen, and he lost the disc in an attack by a rival organization, an attack that cost him an eye and two fingers. He wishes to recover the recording and no deed is too low or foul in the course of his search for it. For the Awakened: The magic revealed by the *Hildebrand Recording* has something to do with the Underworld, or perhaps the Abyss.
12	The *Hildebrand Recording* may be more than merely a recording of an otherworldly encounter; it might constitute a portal to some other plane, or perhaps just a window through which something inimical to life can peer into our world. For the Awakened: The *Hildebrand Recording* may *itself* be an Abyssal intruder, a consciousness native to the Underworld, or something from another, similarly alien, plane of existence.

tion to play the recording and those with the wisdom (and, perhaps, the willpower) necessary to part with it have found that they can, apparently, escape its siren song, but even they are, if only in some small way, almost always scarred by their time with it.

Shadow People (see above) occasionally manifest where and when the true recording is replayed, though these incidents are rare. Other similarly dark powers, however, are also sometimes drawn to the *Hildebrand Recording*, and it seems to act like something of a magnet for the worst human (and inhuman) impulses in the Fallen World. Tremere, Scelesti, acamoth, and who knows what else can easily be attracted by the rarified siren song of the disc, whether or not it has recently been played. While such beings cannot manage to long possess the recording, they may well inflict many atrocities in the pursuit of it.

Of course, some of the dangers inherent in the *Hildebrand Recording* are entirely more mundane, but no less urgent: Asløg Madsen, for instance, longs for the recording with a passion that borders on madness, and is ready, willing and able to do very nearly anything to anyone who stands in the way of his quest to reacquire the disc. While still a Sleeper, Madsen has allegedly come to own a gemstone Imbued Item with which he has replaced his missing right eye and which grants to him one or more persistent mystical sights. He may well be beginning to penetrate the Veil in the course of his obsessive quest for the *Hildebrand Recording*, though he likely has no idea just how much information he actually possesses or what its true significance might be. Willworkers who wish to find the recording will almost certainly have to eventually clash with Madsen's forces and the considerable power he can bring to bear.

One final potential danger — and a persistent theory among scholars of its nature — is that the *Hildebrand Recording* may, itself, be some manner of hateful, otherworldly intelligence. Perhaps it was impressed with a sliver of consciousness by the unfathomable entity heard on the recording, or maybe something seeped out of the portal that it and William Hildebrand collectively opened between two realities and into plastic and metal foil? No one is sure, but the disc is certainly an unclean thing and many of those who are near it, let alone those who play it, come to suffer for its closeness. Certainly this could simply be coincidence, but the pattern of calamity that follows in the recording's wake would seem to indicate that some other, darker force is at work. Some of those Awakened who know of its existence believe the *Hildebrand Recording* is an Abyssal intruder of one sort or another, or perhaps something dredged up from the Underworld or some similarly alien plane of existence.

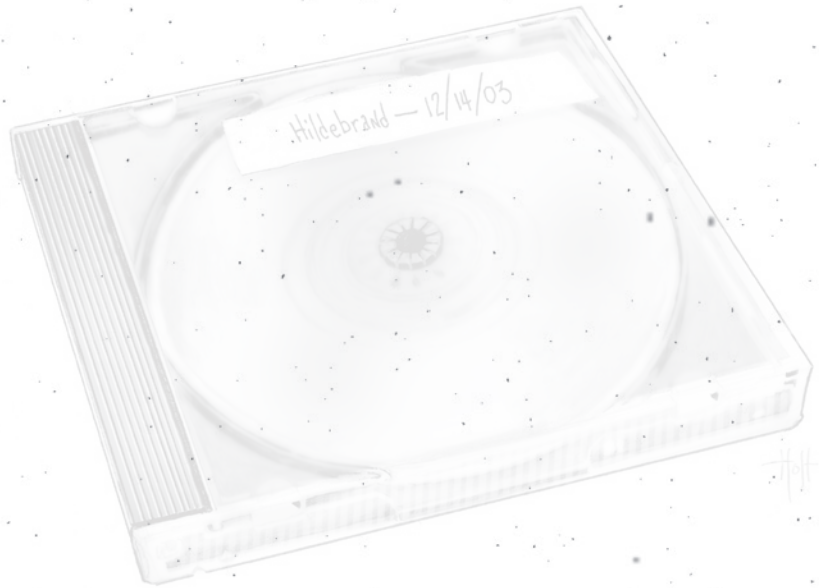
(Mostly incoherent mumbling.)

"I dun... I..."

(Crying. Garbled sounds intensify.)

"No. No m-more..."

(Garbled sounds suddenly crescendo. Screaming resumes, punctuated by sobs, for the next 2:13 of the recording, accompanied by the garbled sounds, until the last 12 seconds of the recording, when everything falls silent. Then, with nine seconds remaining, the sound of tearing flesh, splintering bone, and wet, ragged screams. Recording stops at 15:36.)



THE IALDABAOTH CODEX

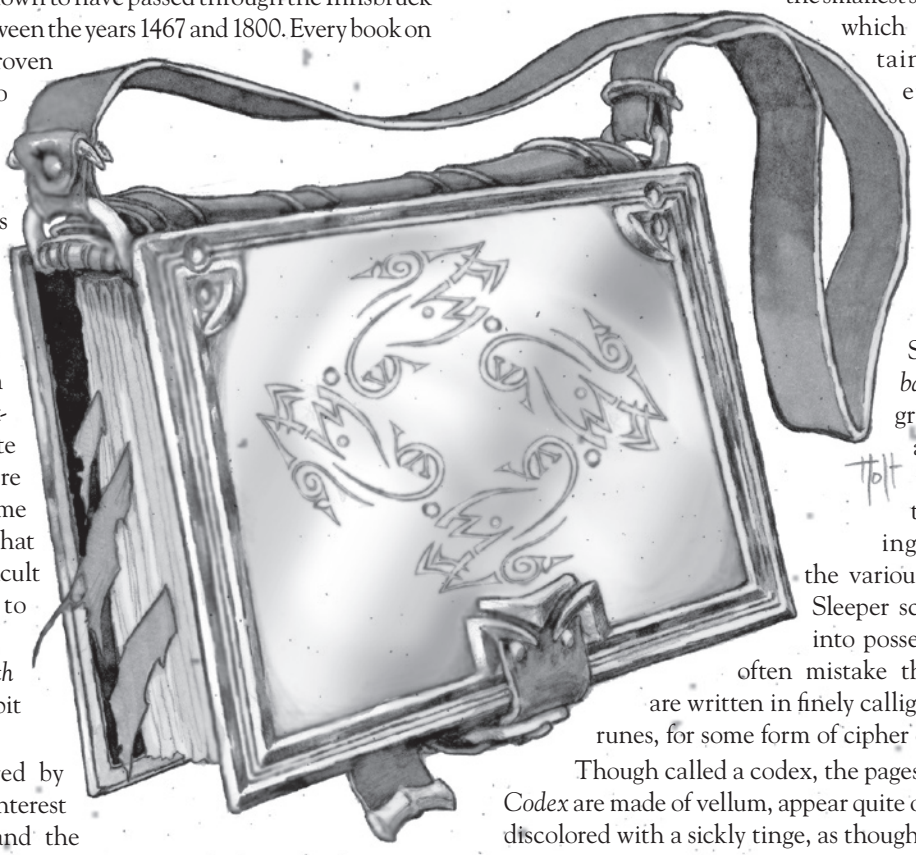
Know that within these Pages are found Horrors unheard of by Mortal men,
and this is the Right and Proper way of things.
For it is our Holiest of Endeavours
— our Most Sacred of Causes —
to Shield Away the Mortal world from the Deepest Abysses,
and those Pneuma that are Touched by It.
To peruse these Pages is to Take Up this Sacred Duty, unto your Mortal End.

— Translation of the opening pages of *The Ialdabaoth Codex*, translated in 1730 by a Mysterium magus permitted to peruse the work in the possession of the Hierarch of Innsbruck.

The bibliomancers, arcanarchivists and grimoire-scholars of the Mysterium have long kept a list of valuable books and tomes, works sought out for a variety of reasons. *The Ialdabaoth Codex* is one of these books, one of the seven tomes on the so-called Innsbruck List, a list of precious and unique books known to have passed through the Innsbruck Athenaeum between the years 1467 and 1800. Every book on that List has proven to be difficult to acquire; some of them are merely valuable, and most individuals who come into possession of the books are simply unwilling to hand them over to the mystagogues to secrete away. Others are protected by some form of magic that makes them difficult or dangerous to acquire.

The Ialdabaoth Codex is a little bit of both.

Greatly desired by those with an interest in the Abyss and the myriad ways in which its influence is felt in the Fallen World, *The Ialdabaoth Codex* is perhaps one of the most complete Abyssal bestiaries ever circulated among the libraries of the Awakened. The Codex is divided into three sections: "Pleromaic Outcasts," a section on Abyssal intrusions and manifestations into the Fallen World, "Saklastic Archons," a section on acamoths and other Astral phenomena tainted by the Abyss, and "Ptahilistic Unquiet," the smallest section of the book, which deals with ghosts tainted by Abyssal emanations, and the ghost-mages of Scelesti mages.



Though it is difficult to ascertain this without potent applications of Mage Sight, *The Ialdabaoth Codex* is also a grimoire, containing a variety of rotes useful in battling, trapping or defending oneself against the various entities therein. Sleeper scholars who come into possession of the book often mistake these rotes, which are written in finely calligraphed Atlantean runes, for some form of cipher or coded content.

Though called a codex, the pages of *The Ialdabaoth Codex* are made of vellum, appear quite old and are slightly discolored with a sickly tinge, as though the animals from which the skin was taken were of an unhealthy pale color most often seen in subterranean creatures. The book itself is of Atlas folio size (approximately 25 inches tall). It is

(From Levindale Rare Books Auction Inventory, circa 1911, Washington, DC:)

Lot 124: Untitled Book. A medieval bestiary written in scholastic Latin; most likely dating from the Twelfth Century, A.D., based on paper quality, ink type and binding techniques. Bound in copper or brass plates, with thick black stitching at the spine that shows signs of weathering, but not of wearing, weakening or fraying. Clearly written by multiple authors, with different handwriting styles. Illustrated and illuminated in painstaking detail, most of which is in excellent shape and well preserved. Multiple authors, based on analysis of handwriting; identities of authors unknown. Book is interspersed with groups of blank pages at random intervals, purpose unknown, as well as some form of coded tallying system, also at random intervals.

bound between two sheets of beaten brass, with Atlantean sigils burnt into its surface by what appears to have been a stylus heated red-hot. The sigils themselves are unknown to modern magi, though they bear some resemblance to wardings and the kinds of runes used to extend the duration of various Death or Spirit magics. The cover itself closes through the use of a thick leather strap and buckle, and is incredibly chilling to the touch.

Three silk ribbons are sewn into the spine of the book. Having seen years of use as bookmarks, they are now tattered, threadbare and faded. At the top and bottom of the spine are set brass D-shaped rings. Throughout the ages, lengths of chain, robe, silken cord and other similar devices have been attached to these rings, allowing the book to be carried bandolier-style across the chest, or hung from a belt or saddle for easy transport and quick access.

The name *Ialdabaoth Codex* does not appear anywhere on or in the book, it should be noted. This is simply the name given it by Mysterium scholars through the years.

Resonance of *The Ialdabaoth Codex*

The book itself radiates absolutely no magic, or anything out of the ordinary to most Mage Sight spells. It seems to be simply an old book, although normal sensory magics also seem to fail when used to peruse it: Matter magics don't tell what it is made of; and Time magics are useless when trying to determine its age.

Only when a Mage Sight spell of at least Potency 12 is used will the magics of the book be revealed. Even then, all that is revealed is the presence of various rotes scattered throughout the text. Its other magics and the fact that it imprisons entities of the Abyss are to date impossible to ascertain through any methods modern Awakened have available to them.

History

The history of this Abyssal bestiary is a difficult one to follow. So much of it seems to be shrouded in tragedy and freak bloodshed. One mystagogue has noted in a presentation on *The Ialdabaoth Codex* that it seems those most capable of relating its history are also those most likely to find it, and those most likely to die unexpectedly from its possession. In many ways, *The Ialdabaoth Codex* has gained a reputation as an item under some sort of curse — it has been called the Hope Diamond of the Atlantean Orders, though no one really knows why it presents such a danger. Most accounts of its victims agree: all too often, they take an interest in some creature or another detailed within its pages, go hunting that entity, and pay a terrible price for their curiosity.

What follows, however, is the full history of the *Codex*. For the most part, someone would require actually possessing the book to put the entirety of these details together.

The Gaolers of Ialdabaoth

The story of *The Ialdabaoth Codex* begins in Syria, in 1252, with the founding of the Gaolers of Ialdabaoth. This Legacy was the outgrowth of the philosophies and goals of the Thunder-

Perfect Brotherhood, a cabal of Mysterium and Guardians of the Veil personally interested in the Supernal Truths to be found within Egypto-Syrian Gnosticism. The Brotherhood used its revelations to protect the Mysteries, establishing several small heretical cells dedicated to the study and practice of Gnostic thought, despite the presence of Frankish overlords who ruled the so-called Principality of Antioch.

The Brotherhood found itself often forced into conflict with a variety of strange, twisted creatures, eventually discovering these entities served a covey of Scelesti who called themselves the Ialdabaoth Concord. Though the Brotherhood often dispersed the entities sent against them by the Concord, the myriad tainted spirits, horrors and acamoth often returned, as very little could actually destroy them permanently. One of the Brotherhood, a Thyrsus named Qasfah, sought the means to imprison those horrors forever.

To that end, he shaped his soul into the first of the Gaolers of Ialdabaoth, and created *The Ialdabaoth Codex*. When his cabal battled these spiritual entities, he used his spells – and eventually attainments – to trap the horrors within the very pages of the Codex itself, where the beast's secrets and weaknesses were laid bare for any of the Brotherhood to read.

Within 20 years, the Thunder-Perfect Brotherhood had dissolved, its members separating to pursue their own inter-

The Great Vault of the Wise Brethren

Somewhere, deep in the Temenos, is the Great Vault of the Wise Brethren. Its walls are crafted of lead, and Atlantean sigils are melted, as though from great brands, into its surface. The edges of these symbols bubble and smoke, the lead seemingly still hot and newly seared. Each room in this great three-chamber Vault is decorated with ten thousand of these symbols, and the only feature in each of the chambers is a single seat with no back, allowing a visitor to sit and contemplate them. The few magi who have discovered this place by sheerest accident can wrest no understanding from its walls. They are not those for whom its secrets are intended, however.

Those who have read *The Ialdabaoth Codex* and fallen prey to its wicked influence (see "Dangers," below) can begin to understand the sigils, the pattern by which the symbols are read playing across the inner lid of his mind's eye. By simply sitting and contemplating, such a magician may unlock the true secrets of the Gaolers of Ialdabaoth, or the Wise Brotherhood, as they called themselves.

In truth, these symbols will teach the magician to initiate himself into the Legacy of the Gaolers. This is treated as though it were a daimonica. (See the Introduction for more information on daimonica.) This ancient sect of magi is long-lost, its traditions and true beliefs lost to history, save those clues parsed throughout *The Ialdabaoth Codex*. Thus, this Legacy is not given the full treatment, with the exception of its oblations and its three attainments:

• **Oblations:** Studying *The Ialdabaoth Codex*, performing interviews with other magi who have been in contact with the *Codex* to ensure they are not falling to its influence, imprisoning an Abyss-tainted creature within the *Codex*.

• **First Attainment:** *Prepare the Canopic Jar:* Gnosis 3, Spirit 2 (Primary), Death 2, Occult 2; This attainment granted the ability to prepare a vessel for the imprisonment of spirits, as though through the use of a "Soul Jar" spell, requiring a Wits + Occult + Spirit roll. The Gaolers most often used this power to imprison entities in order to return them to the *Codex*. If the Gaoler also possessed Death 2, the vessel could be used to imprison either ghosts or spirits.

• **Second Attainment:** *Compel Pneuma:* Gnosis 5, Spirit 3, Death 3; This attainment granted the Gaoler mastery over spirits he encountered, as though he were using the spell "Control Spirit" with a Presence + Occult + Spirit roll. Though the Gaolers had strong taboos about using this ability against spirits untainted by the Abyss, there is nothing intrinsic in the attainment itself that prevents doing so. A Gaoler with Death 3 could also use this attainment on ghosts.

• **Third Attainment:** *Stilling Spiritual Flight:* Gnosis 7, Spirit 4; Perhaps the single most difficult problem the Gaolers found in their battle against Abyssal entities was not defeating them. It was keeping them around long enough to defeat. But the hierophants of the Gaolers had no such limitations, for their first act was usually to bind their prey in place through use of this attainment. It functions as the spell "Bind Spirit," using Manipulation + Occult + Spirit. A Gaoler with Death 4 could also use this attainment on ghosts.

ests in the wake of the Ialdabaoth Concord's destruction. By that time, however, Qasfah had initiated a handful of apprentices in the Legacy, and his Sanctum became the prison-library. Calling his Legacy the Wise Brotherhood, Qasfah led his initiates in the capture and study of entities touched by the Abyss, from ghosts and spirits tainted by its presence to full-on Abyssal incursions.

The Wise Brotherhood continued Qasfah's work into the early 1500s. It is suspected that the Wise Brotherhood's sanctum was invaded by witch-hunters. Deadly battle broke out in the Vault of the Codex, and the Wise Brotherhood fell to a man. By the time the hunters had the chance to look around, however, *The Ialdabaoth Codex* was gone, spirited away by one of their own. By the time they caught up with the man, his mind was utterly broken, and the *Codex* nowhere to be found.

The Codex Throughout History

The *Codex* has resurfaced multiple times throughout history, each instance invariably heralded by the appearance of odd creatures or phenomena, and ending in tragedy. The best-known of these appearances is the so-called Innsbruck Incident, where the tome came into the hands of the Hierarch of Innsbruck in the 1700s. The book's denizens drove the Hierarch and his advisors to nearly destroy the city — it was only by the intervention of two cabals that the city was saved. These heroes, a cabal of three Clavicularius named for the three Wise Magi from the Christ story, and the second cabal consisting of a pair of Theurgists, fell to infighting when they couldn't agree what should be done with the book. Most mystagogues familiar with the story generally agree that they fell victim to the book as well. It disappears from the narrative at that point.

Its next known appearance was in northern Africa in the early 1800s. The magi of Marrakesh found themselves dealing with some kind of horror that defied all research — it seemed utterly unique and never before encountered. Eventually, it was discovered that the creature was bound to a cabal of Scelesti in the wildernesses near the city. They fled before they could be destroyed, however, taking the "Devil of Marrakesh" with them, and faded again into ignominy.

Its last noteworthy appearance is wholly unsubstantiated. Mystagogues generally agree the book was present in London, England, in the mid-1890s for one reason: the city suffered a rash of strange cats seemingly made of fog. Though the magi of the local consilium called them "malkins in the smoke," they conformed to the behaviors and powers of the *innya-shahai*, strange Abyss-tainted spirits of fog and mist known to be imprisoned in the *Codex*. A concerted effort by the Adamantine Arrows and the Mysterium found the den of these entities in the Shadow and cleansed it. The creatures never returned, though the book was never actually seen either.

Researching *The Ialdabaoth Codex*

Capping Skill: Occult

Action: Extended — 13 successes

Research Time: 2 hours; 1 hour

Appropriate Libraries: Abyssal Lore, Ancient Legacies

Possible Modifiers: None

Successes	Information
0—4	Nothing.
5—9	Vague references of such a book come up in various booksellers' logs and library inventories throughout multiple centuries (such as the Levindale Rare Books Auction Inventory excerpt, p. 83).
10—12	References in Mysterium journals and correspondence to a book by the name of *The Ialdabaoth Codex*, thought to be a bestiary.
13+	A series of photocopied letters and journal entries. (See "Communion" at the beginning of this book.)

Contents

The Ialdabaoth Codex is divided into three distinct sections. The edge of the pages in question are tinted to Supernal Vision — "*Pleromaic Outcasts*" seems to radiate a strange green-black hue, "*Saklastic Archons*" a deep brick-red color and the pages of the "*Ptahilistic Unquiet*" emanate a luminous grey-green that looks like nothing so much as seeping, tainted ectoplasm.

Pleromaic Outcasts

The section entitled "*Pleromaic Outcasts*" is first in *The Ialdabaoth Codex*. Taking up just shy of a third of the book, "*Pleromaic Outcasts*" details the strange manifestations from beyond the borders of the Fallen World - the things made up of the Abyss. Unholy horrors that have ripped their way into the world, the things detailed in this section differ from the creatures in the rest of the *Codex* in that they have never been of the Fallen World. As such, these sections focus strongly not only upon the means by which

such intrusions happen, but how they can be prevented and how such horrors can be banished from the world.

Every entry begins with a description of known such intrusions, detailing as much about the events as possible. Most entries detail multiple such events and historical occurrences, followed by as much as is known about each such event. A few such entries even detail spells used to either detect, imprison or banish such intrusions, presented as rotes. Some of the entities within this section include the following:

• **The Archon Anaro:** A strange creature of forgetfulness that comes to relieve troublesome memories at first, these archon-spirits eventually consume all the memories of those they prey upon, driving them mad. The Archon Anaro can be freed only on the grounds of an old Coptic monastery where the mad were cared for hundreds of years ago, and releasing it requires the destruction of a relic of Coptic Christianity.

• **The Sanguine Scourge:** A disease of some kind, the Sanguine Scourge causes horrific nightmares in mages, a bleeding of the gums and tears and saliva to become slightly tinged with blood. Moreover, the illness draws other Abyssal entities who sense the power of the Abyss in the one thus infected. The Sanguine Scourge can be freed only in the city of Jerusalem, and it can be released only on the Friday before Easter, an act that inflicts terrible stigmata on the one who liberates it.

• **The Black Shepherd:** An intrusion without body physical or spiritual, the Black Shepherd causes strange behaviors in groups of animals first, and then men. Those it enthralls mindlessly shamble in strange, unholy patterns meant to strengthen the power of the Abyss in an area, and murder those who attempt to disrupt their design. The Black Shepherd can be released only in the countryside of eastern Sicily near a strangely bare hill. It can be released only through the sacrifice of a shepherd by drowning him in the well found on the hillside.

• **Zahak-Favartin:** Fat and bloated, the Zahak-Favartin is a thing that lives only to consume the spiritual sustenance of the Shadow and then suckle other spirits, feeding them the taint of the Abyss along with that power. It takes the form of a great, corpulent serpent, its jaws dripping with a poisoned, greasy bile. Zahak-Favartin can be released only in a small glade in the Black Forest region of Germany, and doing so requires the murder of an entire pack of wolves as part of the rite.

The "Pleromaic Outcasts" section contains the following rotes:

• **Unwinding Fleshly Bonds:** "Spiritual Ascension," (Life •••• + Spirit ••••); *Intelligence + Occult + Life*; This spell works like the Forces spell "Fiery Transformation," save that instead of turning the caster into a creature of fire, it allows the caster to turn his physical body into spiritual ephemera. Unlike with the spell "Spirit Road" or similar magics, this is not simply transferring the body into Twilight or Shadow. This actually changes the form into spiritual essence. At Life •••••, this spell can be used on other physical creatures by touch, and was most often used by Gaolers to transform Abyssal intrusions with physical bodies into spiritual entities in order to imprison them within the *Codex*.

• **Mortal Veil:** "Transform Aura," (Prime •• + Mind ••); *Wits + Occult + Prime*; This quick ritual, which involves the donning of a veil and the smearing of ash on each of the wrists, disguises the Awakened soul from the perusal of Abyssal entities.

• **Humble the False Leviathan:** "Enfeeblement," (Life ••••); *Intelligence + Academics + Life*; By reciting Gnostic verses abjuring creatures of the demiurge, the Gaolers used this spell to weaken the physical bodies that some Abyssal entities created for themselves.

Saklastic Archons

A magician unlearned in the ways of the Abyss or the Astral Realms will find this section difficult to understand. It seems to detail a variety of different individual creatures rather than types of creatures the way the "Pleromaic Outcasts" section does. Each of these creatures is ascribed a personality, motivation, weaknesses and strengths. In every instance, they are avatars of sin and despair, clearly dedicated to bringing the horrors of the Abyss into the Fallen World one psyche at a time.

Modern magi who are familiar with the dangers of the Fallen World will have no difficulty understanding what is described herein, however, for this section outlines what is known of individual acamoth. Though this book never uses that term to describe these so-called Saklastic Archons, their traits are frighteningly familiar: tempter entities from the deeps of the Astral Realms who undertake pacts with magi, reshaping their psyches into monstrous scenarios and mindscapes in their eternal quest to ease their agony by returning to the Abyss.

"Saklastic Archons" begins with an extensive essay describing the tendencies of these horrors and the nature of the various boons and pacts they make with magi. Interspersed throughout this opening essay are a few rotes intended to be used as tools for magi forced to deal with the Saklastic Archons. The essay closes with these words:

I shall not say that the danger of the Saklastic Archons lies in accepting their pacts and deals. This is not the case. The danger of the Saklastic Archons lies in underestimating them, and assuming they are so crass and unsubtle that one will be safe merely by refusing their temptations and fighting them at every turn. In more than one instance, the investments granted to a magus by one of the Saklastic Archons have been used for great good indeed. The difficulty, then, as with all such things, lies in understanding when to risk one's own psyche for the greater good. Only a fool denies temptation at every turn, for no one is so resilient that he will always win out against such temptation. Eventually he shall fail, and his fall will be

one not of his own choosing. The wise magus chooses the time and the place of his fall to temptation, choosing the most good for the least harm.

The "Saklastic Archons" section contains the following rotes:

• **Vision of the Wise:** "Exorcist's Eye," (Spirit •); *Wits + Occult + Spirit*; The Wise Brethren knew that Saklastic Archons frequently visited mages in their dreams, and could use this spell to detect such visitations, as well as the presence of unclean pneuma hiding within hapless mortals.

• **Devil Scourge:** "Harm Spirit," (Spirit •••); *Strength + Weaponry + Spirit*; Spirits who knew of the Gaolers knew to fear the mendicant's staves they carried with them, for with this spell they could inflict terrible agonies on the twisted entities they battled.

• **Embodiment of Evil:** "Materialize Spirit," (Spirit •••••); *Presence + Intimidation + Spirit*; The Gaolers used this spell to force the Saklastic Archons into physical manifestation in order to enable others to help deal with them.

Then, the book describes more than 20 individual acamoth, most taking up between three and four pages apiece. Some of the noteworthy examples follow.

• **Suzamil, the Bloodier of Warriors:** An acamoth with a blood-spattered visage and the armored body of a Roman gladiatorial warrior, Suzamil comes only to those magi who fancy themselves warriors. He challenges them to battle, and flees if they defeat him. If he defeats them, he does not kill them, but instead offers to make them better warriors, often offering the Regeneration and Attribute Enhancement (Strength, Dexterity or Stamina) Investments. He creates dreams of terrible bloodshed and battlefield atrocities when he shapes the dreamscape of the mage he haunts. Suzamil can be freed only on an ancient Mesopotamian battlefield in modern-day Iraq, and his sacrifice requires the rape of a war widow.

• **Vahooshan, the Scourge of Sages:** An acamoth that appears as an ancient, white-bearded sage clad in vaguely ecclesial robes, Vahooshan comes to old mages who have begun to feel the years catch up with them, and their minds losing the tight grip on knowledge due to age. He offers them his Respite from Aging, Skill Lore or Uncanny Knowledge Investments, and the dreams he crafts involve strange, sudden bursts of unclean insight and glimpses into the accumulated lore the Abyss has consumed through the ages. Vahooshan can be freed only in a monastery in central France that once housed a massive library. Freeing Vahooshan requires the sacrifice of ignorance, revealing a terrible secret to someone who would have been happier in ignorance.

• **Fandruil, the Unholy:** This acamoth has the appearance of a terrible angel, with great white wings the tips of which are dipped in blood, and with burning eyes that cast its face into terrible brilliance. Fandruil comes to mages of a fidelitous bent,



particularly those who adhere to one of the three Abrahamic faiths. To these magi, it offers Break An Addiction, Skill Lore and Mana Investments, and in return crafts terrible visions of faith gone wrong: fanatics torturing heretics, men committing atrocities in the name of their God and the other wounds that poorly-placed faith might inflict.

Finally, it should be noted that some of the pages of this section - entire groups of pages, three to twelve at a time - are completely and utterly blank, with no trace of any markings having ever been on them whatsoever.

Ptahilistic Unquiet

The last sort of entity described in *The Ialdabaoth Codex* are the Ptahilistic Unquiet: spirits of the dead tainted by contact with the spiritually corrosive powers of the Abyss. These ghosts become maddened things whose ghostly desires are twisted into wretched horror. This section, like "Saklastic Archons," begins with a short essay describing the phenomenon. It notes one of the great ironies of this transformation: that where most ghosts can be called aware only in the rarest of instances, the Ptahilistic Unquiet are actively malevolent and vicious, bringing to bear a low cunning in the fulfillment of their twisted goals. It is rare that normal ghosts transform into these things. Far more often, however, ghost mages give in to the siren call of the Abyss, becoming twisted things of nearly unprecedented evil.

The section following this essay presents a handful of example creatures. Like the Saklastic Archons, the Ptahilistic Unquiet described herein are all unique creatures, with full histories and the means by which they were captured and dealt with. Also, like the previous sections, there are a few rotes herein detailing the spells most useful for dealing with such potent foes. Finally, there are a few blank pages scattered through this section as well.

• **The Sorcerer of Araneth:** A ghost mage (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 327) of an ancient Arabic Obrimos known as a master of djinn and terrible fires, the Sorcerer of Araneth wielded Influences of Forces 4, Prime 3, Spirit 3, and Space 2. He can be released only in the city of Sanaa, Yemen, in a set of catacombs beneath the city's center. This sorcerer (whose name is unknown) was a terrible heretic; thus, only the destruction of a copy of the Koran suffices to release him.

• **The Shrieking Widow:** The ghost of the widow of an important Italian dignitary, the Shrieking Widow's original taint by the Abyss transformed her into a ravening monster that haunted newly-made widows and drove them insane, often driving them to suicide. She can be released only in the city of Florence, and doing so requires the sacrifice of a newly-married groom.

The "Ptahilistic Unquiet" section contains the following rotes:

• **Wisdom's Discernment:** "Soul Marks," (Death •); *Wits + Occult + Death*; The Wise Brethren knew how to tell ghosts tainted by the Abyss from other Unquiet. With this potent spell, the marks on such scarred souls stand out clearly.

• **Deny the Spectral Panoply:** "Destroy Ephemera," (Death •••); *Composure + Crafts + Death*; Many of the Ptahilistic Unquiet seek out the treasures of grave goods and other ghosts, arming themselves with the strange weaponry of the Underworld. With this spell, the Gaolers denied their prey such armaments.

• **Unquiet Arch:** "Ghost Gate," (Death •••); *Resolve + Occult + Death*; With this spell, any archway serves as a passage into Twilight, that the dead may be dealt with on more equal footing. When the passage opens, there is no visible show save a light mist that swirls into existence in the archway, but a horrible howling shriek suddenly echoes through the area where the portal stands.

• **Inquisition of Shades:** "Quicken Ghost," (Death •••••); *Presence + Persuasion + Death*; Sometimes the most valuable informants when hunting the Ptahilistic Unquiet are other ghosts. This spell enables the Gaoler to imbue the mindless dead with the understanding to relate the things they have seen or heard.

Dangers

There are a number of dangers attributed to *The Ialdabaoth Codex*. Most commonly, it is agreed that possession of the book is dangerous in the way possessing any book of tremendously useful and potent lore is — others will want it. In particular, certain individuals and groups of Scelesti are known to seek the *Codex*, seeking to learn the secrets of the Abyss that studying the creatures of this bestiary may reveal. It is also highly sought after for the potent rotes to be found within it.

In truth, however, the dangers of *The Ialdabaoth Codex* are far, far greater. The *Codex* is not simply a bestiary: it is a prison for the creatures it describes within. In fact, each instance of an entity described within the pages of this book is an individual creature imprisoned within the vellum that makes up its pages. Qasfah determined that a stationary prison for these entities was foolhardy — it must be something that could be moved should the need develop. So he created the potent *Codex*, imbuing it with spells of imprisonment, and causing it not only to read the nature and mind of the things it imprisoned, but to lay bare those secrets on the pages of the book itself.

Of course, no such plan is without its dangers. The entities within *The Ialdabaoth Codex*, if they remain within its pages long enough, invariably seem to discover a secret: they can turn the magics of the *Codex* to their own ends, twisting its psychic power to allow them to subtly influence those who come into contact with the book, allowing the entities to speak to the victim through automatic writing and deep-seated dreams.

For some reason, only one entity ever seeks to influence an individual at any given time. Scholars who are aware

of these influences have a variety of theories why only one such entity exerts such control at a time; the most prevalent of these theories postulates that only a given entity is capable of controlling the magics of the book at a time, and that only the strongest in the book is capable of doing so. Others think that control over the book can be achieved only through the combined effort of the book's entities, which explains why they act only in situations where success seems assured.

Influence of the Codex

The influence exerted by the prisoners of the *Codex* is subtle, overcoming their victims in distinct stages meant to ensure the victim retains possession of the book long enough to potentially free one of its denizens.

Stage One: Automatic Writing

The Ialdabaoth Codex attempts to influence those with whom it comes into contact. The Storyteller should roll 8 dice for the *Codex*, in an opposed roll against the target's Composure + Gnosis. Not only is this roll completely reflexive, but it is so subtle the target is not aware of the attempted influence. Those with Mind • or other mental powers must make an exceptional success on a Wits + Composure roll to even be aware of the attempted influence, and even then it is so subtle that they become aware of it only on a subconscious level. This awareness usually manifests as dreams of strange creatures lurking in the darkness just beyond vision, and occasional waking hallucinations where normal writing twists itself into dark, threatening runes of unknown origin for just a few seconds.

If a target fails this roll, the *Codex* may attempt to exert subtle influence over the target in times of exhaustion or weariness. Any time the target has a –2 or greater penalty to rolls due to fatigue, or has spent at least half of his points of Willpower, the *Codex* may influence the target. This influence is simple: it instills in the target a desire to write or otherwise communicate with written language. While this often takes the form of journaling or report-writing, it may also take the form of sudden urges to write email or letters to friends, text message a contact or compose poetry, fiction or one's memoirs. The method chosen is whatever is most appropriate to the target's personality and natural tendencies.

The connection between target and book is very subtle at this point. Though the *Codex* has achieved a foothold in the target's psyche, it does not create a permanent link between the two, so reading the target's aura reveals nothing at this point. Anyone viewing the target's Resonance while he is engaged in automatic writing, however, can see that it is being influenced by an outside source, but this source cannot be ascertained with Mage Sight of less than Potency 12. If the Mage Sight is sufficient, the viewer can tell that the *Codex* is the source of the automatic writing. This stage can be applied to Sleepers, Sleepwalkers and Awakened alike.

These writings are passages from *The Ialdabaoth Codex* itself, generally random pieces of information and blocks of text. If the target is writing by hand, the script is distinctively not the target's own. The intent behind this is simple: to motivate the target to handle the book further, and read its content. The text always comes from one of the three sections of the book, generally relating to the entity seeking freedom from its pages. Thus, if the target is being influenced by an acamoth imprisoned in the *Codex*, the automatic writing quotes sections from "Saklastic Archons," while one of the ghosts imprisoned in the book influences the target to write passages from "Ptahilistic Unquiet."

Stage Two: Possessiveness

Once the target receives a number of automatic writing messages equal to his Composure and has found those passages within the book (either one at a time, or all at once), he enters this stage of interaction with the *Codex*. The *Codex* instills in him a possessiveness of the book that seems entirely natural — after all, he's been receiving messages from the book, and there is clearly something going on. The target quickly begins to justify any fears or concerns he or others may have about the book using the best of his social and reasoning skills.

At this stage, the target is treated as though he has the Paranoia derangement based around the book. He will go to extensive effort to dissuade others from taking an interest in the book, and will make sure to take steps to keep the *Codex* safe from others. How he does this is entirely dependent upon his personality; some may hide it away in a safe location, replete with traps to keep others from getting it, while others may choose to carry it with them everywhere they go.

The target continues to perform automatic writing at this stage, but the content has changed. No longer does he simply quote the book — he now begins receiving wholly new messages, though written in the archaic and baroque style he has come to associate with the text of the *Codex*. Through this writing, the entity influencing the target continues to lure him on, tempting him with lore, warning him of threats and promising him the fulfillment of a great destiny. The entity plays to the target's ego and ambitions. At this point, the automatic writing may even address the target directly. Additionally, the target need not be exhausted or otherwise limited to perform the automatic writing — the *Codex* can communicate with him any time he writes, though it will never do so while others are around.

At this stage a change in the target's Resonance can be detected by those studying him using a Potency 12+ Mage Sight spell. This does not connect to the *Codex*, however, unless the target is performing automatic writing. Of course, the *Codex* avoids using this influence when others are around, but it is only as aware of watchers as the target is; thus, if the target does not know he is being watched, the *Codex* doesn't either.

This is as far as Sleepers and Sleepwalkers advance under the influence of the *Codex*. While Awakened at this stage are influenced to protect the book and study it further, Sleepers and Sleepwalkers feel a compulsion to seek out someone who can better understand the book, who can access its secrets, and to protect them while they do so. The only known instance of the *Codex* influencing multiple targets at a time is when it gives a Sleeper or Sleepwalker a compulsion to seek out one of the Awakened; the *Codex* will cease actively influencing the Sleeper as it attempts to influence the mage, though the compulsion to protect the book (and now, the mage) remains in the mind and soul of the original target.

Stage Three: Delusion

This stage, reached only by Awakened targets, involves obsessive tendencies and flat-out delusions. The target's paranoia becomes nearly consuming and constant, and he sees enemies everywhere. The target begins to despise those around him, suspecting them of plotting against him, and his affection for friends and family is replaced by fear and suspicious resentment.

At this stage, the *Codex* makes the target aware of the Holy Communion of the Syzygos Bythos. The target understands this ritual to be a means of gaining the wisdom of the Codex, of coming into his own and fulfilling the destiny that lies before him. He understands the ritual as a means of achieving what is most important to the mage: power for the power-hungry, repentance for the guilty, occult ecstasy for the hedonist and communion with Godhead for the faithful.

Once the target has been made aware of the Holy Communion, the *Codex* ceases to communicate with him at all. The target knows what he must do, and arranges events to enable him to perform the Holy Communion. These details vary from entity to entity, but all serve one purpose: to free the imprisoned entity influencing the target through the *Codex*. The target pursues these ends with a single-minded obsession: finding the materials necessary, arranging the presence of individuals who must be there, going to the correct location and anxiously awaiting the proper alignment of stars or a certain season.

Then, when everything is in place, he performs the Holy Communion of the Syzygos Bythos.

Stage Four: The Holy Communion of the Syzygos Bythos

Each instance of performing the Holy Communion is different, for one simple reason: each entity imprisoned within the *Codex* can be freed only under individual circumstances. The following are the guidelines for constructing the Holy Communion for individual entities.

• *Place:* In every instance, the Holy Communion of the Syzygos Bythos must be performed at the site at which the entity was originally imprisoned within the book. Because of the original location of the Wise Brotherhood, this is most often in the areas of the Middle East, Eastern Europe and northern Africa. However, the Brethren magically followed their prey wherever they attempted to flee, and these sites could conceivably be anywhere in the world.

• *Sacrifice:* There is always some kind of sacrifice involved. Many instances of the Holy Communion involve nothing more than being in the proper place and the performance of some form of sacrifice. These sacrifices are always appropriate to the nature of the entity influencing the target, and vary widely from the burning of unique incenses to the destruction of precious works of art or archaeological significance to the murder of one's friends, family or persons symbolic of the entity's power.

• *Time:* Some Holy Communions must be performed at a specific time. Most often, this is a day in the year that corresponds to the time of year when the entity was imprisoned. Other examples include the day of death for one of the Saklastic Archons, or a specific occult timeframe "programmed" into that entity's imprisonment by the magi who sealed it away within the *Codex*.

Once all these conditions are met, the target may perform the Holy Communion. This is a Gnosis + Occult roll, and he must have the book with him to perform it. This is an extended roll with a target number of 20, with each roll taking the same amount of time it takes for the mage to make an extended spellcasting roll, as determined by Gnosis.

If this target number is not achieved within a number of rolls equal to the target's Gnosis + Occult dice pool, the target may weaken or eventually kill himself to keep going. For each roll beyond the normal limits, the target must sacrifice a Willpower dot, eroding his sense of self and soul in order to power the magics to free the entity. Should this prove insufficient, the target that reduces himself to a single dot of Willpower may then sacrifice dots of Health in a similar fashion, allowing the ritual to consume his life force to break the bonds of the *Codex*. Only once all his Health is eroded to nothing, with the mage literally continuing to live only to complete the ritual, will he sacrifice his last dot of Willpower. He then falls to the ground dead, his body rapidly aging and decaying and his soul utterly consumed. He does not form a ghost of any sort and is utterly gone beyond recall.

Most entities freed by this ritual immediately seek to flee the area. If the ritualist who freed them yet survives, their influence over that mage is broken, unless the entity has the ability to control him independently of the *Codex*. Most entities capable of doing so will likely simply try to kill the ritualist, particularly if he is exhausted or wounded from the effort of performing the ritual.

Using Intruders: Encounters with the Abyss

The entities imprisoned within the pages of the "Pleromaic Outcasts" section are an excellent example of the sort of horrors detailed in the **Intruders: Encounters with the Abyss** sourcebook. If the Storyteller has access to that book, he may use the following entities from that resource as creatures within the pages of the "Pleromaic Outcasts" section.

- **The Lethean:** The Archon Anaro immediately flees the scene, although it quickly finds someone in need of its dubious mercy to whom to attach itself.
- **Red Worms:** The Sanguine Scourge, when released from the book, immediately infest the one who freed them, though the victim has no knowledge of this.
- **The Swarmer:** The Black Shepherd immediately alters something in its environs, establishing the Abyssal geomancy necessary for it to manifest.
- **Umbragos:** *Zahak-Favartin*, should it be released from the *Codex*, immediately flees into Shadow, and travels as far from its site of release as possible.



THE KEY OF BRASS AND FLAME

(From Zoroaster's *Otherworldly Esoterica*, 1889 ed.)

...though the so-called "Key of Brass and Flame," also known as "The Book of the Inmost Temple" and "The Scrolls of the Seventy-Third," is purported to reside at the center of a fortified monastery, concealed within the astral plane. Those who have studied the supposed history of this legendary work allege that contained within are secrets of daemonic sorcery unknown to the modern world; penned, perhaps, by the very hand of Solomon himself.

As to whether this grimoire truly exists, however, none can say with certainty. My own research bore me to distant shores of western Europa, to a sanatorium the name of which I shall not here recount. Contained within was a lunatic of singular distinction, watched over in secret and his magics rendered impotent by the Dragon's Eye, and who claimed to have beheld the *Key* "resting upon a pedestal of gleaming iron." A member of several Oriental societies and a dabbler in the poppy's seductive smoke, his incoherent ramblings were readily dismissed as the gibbering of an opium-fiend and would-be mystic by his physicians and attendants, though I discerned in them a kernel of deeper truth and resolved to hear more.

I departed from that fateful encounter shaken — not merely by the deranged willworker's shabby and degenerate state, but also by the manner in which his chaotic account hinted at connections between the sparse tales of the *Key*, deranged murmurs that drew faint lines from one possibility to the next. I am no closer to that book than I was before undertaking that journey, though I remain convinced of its existence, nonetheless.

Among the practitioners of the esoteric (and dangerous) Mind Arcanum magic of goetia, *The Key of Brass and Flame* is an elusive legend, half-believed by some, dismissed outright by others, and sought out with a passion that borders on obsession by a handful. As with many things involving goetic magic, the *Key* is politely ignored by the majority of willworkers who know even the barest myths of its existence, seen as something too dangerous to pursue. Those who push past the boundaries of the safe and the known, however, discover that the truth may well be more fantastical than the stories.

Being an astral construct, the strange grimoire has allegedly appeared in many forms throughout the ages. It is most consistently described, however, as a heavy tome with covers of brass, bound in iron and lightly accented with silver and gold, wrapped around an eternally burning fire that roughly conforms in its writhing to the covers' rectangular shape. Upon opening the grimoire, its pages are revealed as vaguely translucent, paper-thin sheets of reddish flame, upon which the characters of the pages currently being viewed are picked out in subtly undulating lines of brilliant, golden yellow fire, with new letters flaring to life and the old ones fading into invisibility as pages are turned. These flames burn without heat and do not inflict harm.

The *Key* appeals to other senses, as well. It is said to be surrounded at all times by the odor of saffron or myrrh, depending upon the observer. Some willworkers hear the sounds of soft, seductive chanting or singing in a language unknown and unable to be translated even by magic, in the vicinity of the grimoire. Others claim to feel almost electrified, every nerve taut and engaged, as though the body is somehow more *alive* in the presence of the *Key*. Lastly, of the mundane senses, the accounts of some of the few Awakened who have beheld the book tell of some momentary taste upon the lips, usually appropriate to the Vice of the character in question: blood or burnt flesh, for example, for Wrath, sumptuous food and drink for Gluttony, or bland bread and stale wine for Envy.

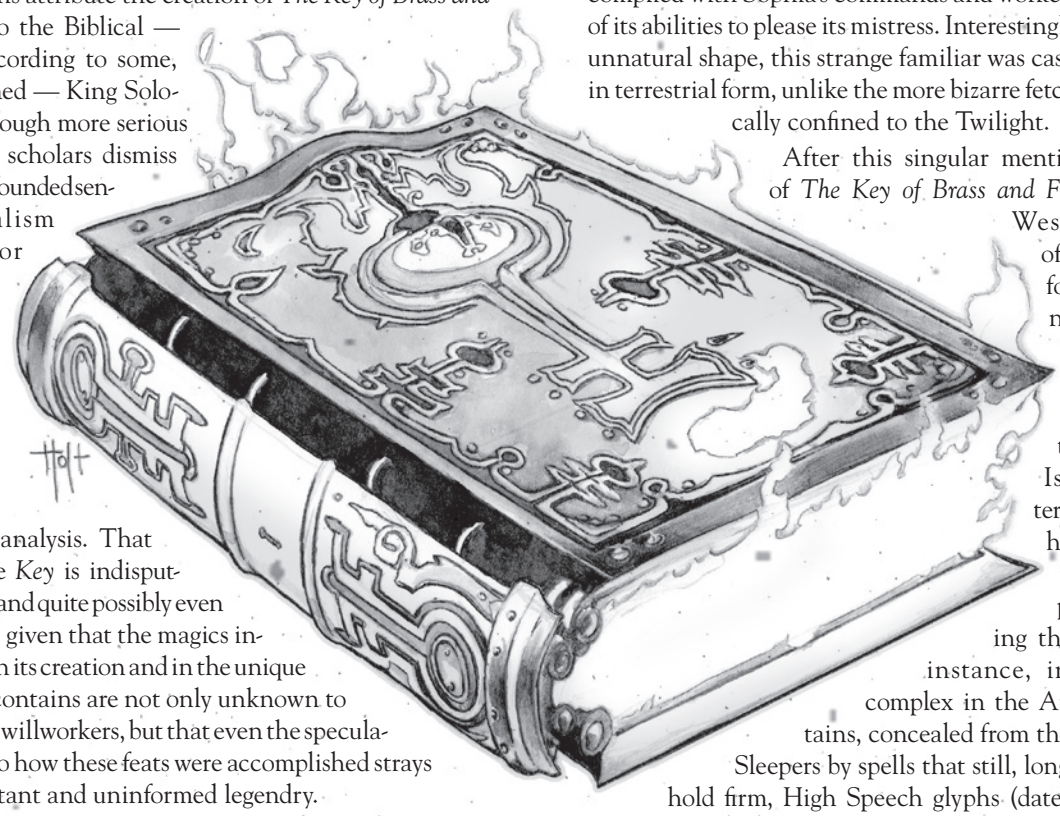
As to magical senses, the *Key* seems to display no consistent pattern. Some reports tell of a bleak and horrid resonance clinging to the tome, while others attach no especial mystic perceptions (beyond those one expects in Astral Space, anyway) to the book. Perhaps it is that *The Key of Brass and Flame* changes with time, conforming to the expectations of the observer, or maybe different mages have discovered different versions of the same grimoire? The few records on the subject are decidedly inconclusive, leaving willworkers little more to go on than hunches and half-formed theories.

Numerous reports throughout history seem to indicate the existence of what serious scholars of the grimoire can only assume to be false *Keys*. Sometimes, these faulty tomes are indicated by one or more serious deviations from the established appearance, contents, or location of the text, and, sometimes, the question as to whether or not a given book is a fake is much more nebulous and left to the inter-

pretation of the researcher. As an astral construct sought after passionately, even if only by a handful, however, it is certain that *The Key of Brass and Flame* has spawned imitations within the Astral Realm, reflections of the consuming desire of its seekers.

History

Certain overzealous and, perhaps, gullible Awakened historians attribute the creation of *The Key of Brass and Flame* to the Biblical — and, according to some, Awakened — King Solomon, though more serious modern scholars dismiss such unfounded sensationalism in favor of more critical analysis. That said, the *Key* is indisputably old and quite possibly even ancient, given that the magics involved in its creation and in the unique spell it contains are not only unknown to modern willworkers, but that even the speculation as to how these feats were accomplished strays into blatant and uninformed legendry.



The first (strongly suspected) reference to the *Key* is found on a badly-defaced clay tablet of uncertain age (though assuredly from remote antiquity) that defies all attempts, either mundane or magical, to date it, save that Time Arcanum perceptions reveal it was inscribed "under different stars." Those who have painstakingly translated the surviving fragments of odd cuneiform, which bears more than a passing resemblance to the glyphs of the High Speech, note that it references "words of flame, bound in brass and iron and precious metals, whispering secrets of daimonic lore." The tablet has moved from place to place, always in the hands of the Awakened, and was last known to be in the possession of the Mysterium of Budapest, under the careful scrutiny of local Censors, and guarded in conjunction with one or two powerful goeticists of the Guardians of the Veil.

A later reference to the *Key* — and the first to directly assign a name to the work — emerges in the 4th century AD, in the writings of a Greek or Roman willworker identifying herself only as Sophia. In them, she claims to have studied the text "in the fiery confines of the Temple Invisible" and to have successfully deciphered its unique magic. Thereafter, she alleges to being accompanied by an imp or other such baleful spirit, drawn up from the confines of her inmost self, her darkest impulses and most abhorrent desires. This creature, Sophia claimed, acted as helpmeet and familiar, in the same manner in which other Awakened were known to bind spirits of Shadow to service. While inclined to tempt her toward the indulgence of sin, the being nevertheless complied with Sophia's commands and worked to the best of its abilities to please its mistress. Interestingly, despite its unnatural shape, this strange familiar was cast inherently in terrestrial form, unlike the more bizarre fetches intrinsically confined to the Twilight.

After this singular mention, all lore of *The Key of Brass and Flame* in the West falls out of circulation for centuries, no doubt due to the rising influence of both Christianity and Islam. Scattered accounts, however, crop up in other places during this time. For instance, in a cavern complex in the Andes Mountains, concealed from the scrutiny of Sleepers by spells that still, long years later, hold firm, High Speech glyphs (dated to the 8th century AD) for the Path of Scourging and the Dragon's Talon, as well as an uncertain mark — presumably a mage's personal seal — surmount a jumbled narrative inscribed in a strange cipher, telling of a quest into the "realms of thought," at the end of which the willworker in question "entered into a holy place, woven of fragrant smoke, with dark, gleaming pillars," and there encountered "leaves of flame, wrapped up in metal, and which spoke of the magics of the shadows of the innermost self." Other accounts exist from this time as well, scattered around the Awakened world. In a ruin buried under the sands of the Taklamakan Desert in northwest China, a similar record — dated to the 9th century AD — can be found, and another, found in an underground complex concealed by magic not far from Great Zimbabwe, dated to somewhere around the middle of the 11th century.

As to why accounts of *The Key of Brass and Flame* are somewhat sparse outside the geography claimed by the Abrahamic faiths, scholars of the grimoire are divided. Some allege the book appeals more to willworkers descending

from Judaic traditions, while others maintain that many more accounts of the tome are almost certainly yet lost and undiscovered, given that many of the records found are in remote, inaccessible locations. In either case, much of the history of the *Key* centers upon the Near and Middle East, as well as Europe and, later — to a much lesser extent — North America, though enterprising seekers may well uncover unknown lore of the *Key* by following its trail into other lands and other cultures.

The next verifiable mention of *The Key of Brass and Flame* in the worlds of Christianity and Islam is in the city-state of Acre, during the period between the Crusader conquest of 1104 and Salah al-Din's re-conquest of the city in 1187. Many of the experts on the subject of the grimoire place the account somewhere around 1140, though the records detailing such are a treasured possession of the local Mysterium Athenaeum and gaining access to those writings is a difficult prospect for even the most respected Awakened scholar. The account, written by one al-Ramadi ("the Gray"), describes the *Key* in what has become its most familiar form and placement, and is considered to be the template for the overwhelming majority of subsequent mentions of the grimoire in the Western world. Somewhat less certain, however, is the persistent rumor that al-Ramadi concealed within his narrative specific directions that, if properly interpreted, lead to *The Key of Brass and Flame* in a manner somewhat more direct than the customary near-aimless wanderings most pilgrims to the Astral Realms must endure.

Perhaps inspired by al-Ramadi's writings, other willworkers first began concerted efforts to locate and study the *Key* sometime in the early 13th century. Some scattered records among goeticists indicate that small movements within different schools of thought on this dangerous magical practice slowly developed, revolving around the grimoire and speculation upon its origins and significance. Some came to believe *The Key of Brass and Flame* had its genesis within the Abyss and descended into the Astral Realm as a trap for unwary mages, leading them far astray of the path of Wisdom. Others held to the notion that the grimoire, while perilous, was created by the Awakened of old as a sort of crucible in which willworkers might test their convictions and the strength of their spirits. Still others maintained the tome was made simply as a different expression of goetic magic by an anonymous mage and that there was no deeper meaning than an innovative way to use established magics. The last of the factions upheld the idea that the grimoire was a spontaneous creation of the astral plane itself, and thus was not *intended* for any purpose; it simply was.

Of the various ideologies, scattered and hidden, that grew up around the mythology of the *Key*, many came to embrace the trappings of the darker occult societies of the age, and some few mages were accused of complicity with the goals of the Accursed, or were themselves suspected of being such, and treated accordingly. Rumors of diabolism ran rampant wherever such willworkers wandered and some of the cells and cabals seeking the magics contained within *The Key of Brass and Flame* became like cults in their fervor and their intellectual and spiritual isolation from established Atlantean mystical practices. Many of the worst images of Medieval Satanism came to cling to these pilgrims and no few of them fell from the narrow road of Wisdom, stumbling into the ways of the Scelesti in truth rather than merely in the supposition of suspicious neighbors and cabalmates. Others grew strong by the tests of the spirit they endured, though only a few ever discovered the book itself. By the onset of the Renaissance in Europe, spreading from the Mediterranean to the north and west, a fascination with the works of ancient cultures — especially works of a magical or spiritual nature — had established enough of a foothold on the outer fringes of the culture of the Atlantean Orders to ensure the pursuit of the grimoire would survive as a pastime for some willworkers, a driving goal for others, and a lifelong obsession for still others.

While those who hunted for the text were (and remain) few, those few began to exchange correspondence, haltingly at first, but then with greater conviction and confidence. Slowly, the body of legendry surrounding *The Key of Brass and Flame* began to coalesce. Myths and rumors that might have otherwise been lost were traded between pilgrims and were thus preserved from the ravages of time and the vicissitudes of fate. Differing perspectives on the nature of the grimoire were, at times, put aside — even between bitter rivals — for the sake of assembling scant shreds of lore into something coherent enough for a dedicated willworker to pursue to the steps of the "Temple Invisible." As the New World opened to Europe, some of the seekers of the text looked to the west, for a land wherein they might, perhaps, enjoy greater intellectual freedom in the search for a thing that was equally difficult to find in *any* earthly locale.

In modern days, the hunt for the *Key* continues in the same low-profile manner in which it has persisted for long centuries. Those most truly knowledgeable in the *Ars Goetia* speak of it with everything ranging from incredulity to wonderment to disgust. Some few claim to have beheld its splendors and its terrors also, though the overwhelming majority of these willworkers are shown to be frauds in the end. As to those whose claims are somewhat stronger, none can say, save for the occasional whisper of something otherwise inexplicable: a ghost-white cat with eyes like smoldering embers and claws forever wet with blood, or a handsome attendant, hairless, with skin as black as coal and a voice that could seduce an angel.

Contents

The Key of Brass and Flame contains elaborate formulae outlining the following spells: "Goetic Struggle" and "Goetic Evocation" (**Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 324-5), "Psychic

Reprogramming" (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 218) and "Shape Spirit" (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 255). For the purposes of the two goetic spells above, merely being in the presence of the grimoire allows the mage to cast such magics as though her Wisdom were 3 dots lower (thus potentially allowing her to avoid outright the degeneration check for the hubris inherent in spells that tamper with one's inner demons). Of course, these spells, while useful, are not the *true* allure of the text. The reason for which mages have hunted and searched, forsaken years of their lives, and even gone mad and died, is the secret of binding one's own demon into the form of a familiar.

As it is an astral construct, *The Key of Brass and Flame* confers no known additional benefits upon willworkers, as no one has managed to extract it from its hiding place, thus assuming "ownership" of the text. Were some willworker to prove capable of seizing the tome and drawing it into the physical plane (see below for speculation on how such a thing might be accomplished), the *Key* might bestow some other, yet-unknown blessing (or curse) upon its possessor.

Goetic Manifestation (Mind ●●●●● + Spirit ●●●●●)

This spell withdraws an aspect of the willworker's demon, the personification of her Vice, out of her mind and spirit and manifests it in a physical shape, fettering it to service as a familiar.

Practice: Making/Unmaking

Action: Extended (successes required = mage's Wisdom)

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana, 1 Willpower dot

Upon successfully casting this spell, the mage draws a reflection of her Vice out of herself and incarnates it into the same sort of stabilized ephemera that comprises familiars. This spell uses the advanced prolongation Duration factors. The mage must spend experience to cement the bond with this familiar, as normal, though the costs for doing so are slightly different. (See the Goetic Familiar Merit, below.)

The Willpower dot spent in the casting of this spell may be bought back at the cost of 8 Experience points.

Rote: The Face of Sin

Dice Pool: Presence + Occult + Mind

Some cultures believed in the notion of an invisible and otherworldly devil at one's ear, whispering dark counsel. Those who make use of this magic have the opportunity to be somewhat more directly guided toward wickedness by the devil within. For the price of such sinful inspiration, however, they enjoy the assistance of their inner demons in ways more meaningful than an occasional shred of advice that runs counter to conscience.

Dangers

As would be expected for any work of Awakened goetia — especially unique and bizarre goetia — *The Key of Brass and Flame* is a perilous read, dangerous to a mage's adherence to the path of Wisdom, if nothing else. Those who pursue the book often stray from the narrow road of Wisdom simply in the hunt for the elusive text, accepting more and more deplorable methods in the search for its powerful lore. Others, more psychologically and spiritually stable, perhaps, hold to their principles in the pursuit of the grimoire, only (if rumors and legends are to be believed) to fall from grace after finding the subject of their long quest. Some few, of course, manage to hold to their principles and some even emerge stronger in their ethical convictions than when they began the search, but it is certain that *all* are tested, in one way or another, by the quest.

Of course, as it is concealed somewhere within Astral Space, the *Key* is dangerous to seek for reasons beyond the purely moral and ethical. Strange guardians are sometimes attributed to the *Key*. Though these accounts are inconsistent at best, some Awakened are said to find its resting place only after besting beings of mind-shattering power and horror. Even the mere process of seeking out *The Key of Brass and Flame* is perilous, as the realms of the mind — of the dreams and imaginings of things terrestrial, otherworldly, and in defiance of all such categorization — are often wild and unpredictable. Just as one might come to harm on account of wholly unaffiliated circumstances while searching for an earthly relic of power, so, too, might seekers after the grimoire fall under attack by forces unconcerned with the *Key*, victims of being in the wrong place at the wrong time on a plane of reality in which human beings are the interlopers.

According to certain accounts, the so-called "Temple Invisible" in which the tome rests is occasionally a source of danger unto itself. Sometimes sentinels patrol its halls; often goetic demons of one sort or another, though other, stranger entities are attributed to the astral edifice. Some are there merely for violence, while others test the seeker in different sorts of ways: riddle contests, puzzles that must be solved to advance (or merely to survive) and evaluations of the mage's ethics are among some of the more popular alternate trials to be recorded. Some stories tell that merely wandering the corridors of the Temple can have a corrosive effect upon a willworker's Wisdom, as though the place itself attacks a mage's moral center, though these tales are few and may well be the result of delusional minds. And, unfortunately, that latter fact is perhaps the single most dangerous thing about the *Key*: resting as it does within the Astral Realms, *nothing* can be said about it for certain, and every fact, no matter how firmly established, may simply melt away on the unpredictable tides of thought and imagination.

Merit: Goetic Familiar (•••• or •••••)

Prerequisite: Awakened; successful casting of the Goetic Manifestation spell

Effect: Your character has a bond with a spirit drawn, in part, from within his own consciousness; specifically, from within the part of himself driven by wickedness and iniquity. This familiar, like an ordinary familiar, may exist in either Twilight (for 4 Merit dots, making it a goetic fetch) or in the physical plane (for 5 Merit dots, making it an embodied goetic familiar).

Except as noted below, the demonic familiar is created using the base familiar creation rules given on p. 83 of **Mage: The Awakening**, and the caster may build her demon in any way she likes (Attributes, Skills, Numina, etc.), save for the entity's Influence, which is automatically set to correspond to the character's Vice, and its Ban, which is never to pass up any opportunity to guide the mage (and anyone else it can) toward indulging in the willworker's particular Vice.

Because some part of the character's baser nature is drawn out of him and incarnated in an external form, the mage benefits from a +2 modifier to all rolls to shrug off mundane or supernatural manipulation through appeals to his Vice. If a power used to attack the character through his Vice is resisted rather than contested, then the +2 bonus to contesting the effect instead becomes a -2 penalty to the aggressor's dice pool to use said power against the character.

Note that, unlike other familiars of its type, an embodied goetic familiar may take on a wholly human shape or one only subtly different from human. No self-proclaimed scholar of the *Key* knows why this is, but speculation is that the small quantity of human spiritual essence within the familiar grants it the ability to incarnate in a human shape. Small deviations tend to be archetypically "demonic" in nature; red (or otherwise abnormally-colored) eyes, nubs of horns upon the brow, too-sharp canine teeth, reddish or slightly metallic skin tone, the faint smell of brimstone or burning incense, etc. A familiar marked with these characteristics is (at any time other than Halloween or a costume party, anyway), naturally, a threat to the Veil, unless disguised through other means.

Similarly, as a creation of Vice, even an embodied goetic familiar may take on a genuinely demonic appearance, such as that of a twisted little imp, a hellhound, or another such clearly unnatural shape (to a maximum Size of 5). Wise goeticists are advised to keep these entities well out of the sight of Sleepers (and, if they don't wish to be branded as Scelesti, probably out of the sight of other willworkers, as well), lest the Guardians of the Veil come calling. While subject to the limitations of its form (a scaled and tusked mastiff, though certainly intimidating, cannot use a pen to write, for instance), a goetic familiar in the shape of a human or a demon does not enjoy any especial benefits on account of its shape beyond those normally possessed by an embodied familiar.

The same as normal familiars, goetic familiars may be improved with Experience points (subject to the normal limitations and trait caps of rank 1 spirits, unless otherwise noted):

Trait	Experience Point Cost
Attribute	New dots x8 (fetch) or x5 (embodied familiar; capped at 5)
Skill	New dots x3 (embodied familiars only; capped at 5)
Skill specialty	3 (embodied familiars only)
Numen	25 (up to 4 Numina for fetches or 5 for embodied familiars)

Note that changes to a spirit's Attributes may alter other characteristics, such as Health or Speed, and adjust those traits accordingly. Goetic familiars may not have their Influences increased.

A mage who already has a familiar (Twilight or embodied) may still acquire a goetic familiar of either sort, but may only ever have *one* goetic familiar, regardless of type.

Can *The Key of Brass and Flame* be destroyed? Certainly there exist willworkers who would see this legendary work obliterated and its magics forevermore erased from the Fallen World, but the question persists as to whether a work concealed within the Astral Realms can ever truly be unmade. (Indeed, some Awakened scholars speculate that the resiliency of ideas — and the commensurate difficulty inherent to truly destroying *anything* in Astral Space — is the very reason the *Key* was placed there.) Those who reflect upon the possibility of annihilating the grimoire generally agree that extreme measures are required. While no two supposed authorities agree on the exact steps to be taken, the theories range from the destruction of every mention of the *Key* in the material realm (and, perhaps, every shred of *knowledge* regarding the text), to the location of an artifact or other sort of enchanted item (sources disagree) specifically designed to unmake the book, to the use of a spell intended to collapse the temple in which the *Key* is housed in upon itself. Unfortunately, all these speculations are just that, and if there exists one who might speak with genuine knowledge upon the matter of the *Key*'s destruction, she isn't talking.

Into the Real

Given that *The Key of Brass and Flame* exists in the Astral Realm, some mages doubtless wonder whether it is even possible for the text to be drawn into the material sphere and given terrestrial substance. These willworkers, a handful of them driven to the point of mania through such speculation, occasionally develop elaborate theories on how such a deed might be accomplished. Of course, so far as any of the grimoire's seekers can tell, no one has yet achieved this feat of surpassed mystic artifice. This, however, is unsurprising when one takes into account how few mages have (allegedly) managed to locate the *Key* in the first place.

Perhaps it is — as the majority of the scholars of the *Key* postulate — truly impossible to bring the book into this world, and those who dream of doing so waste years and untold effort in pursuit of a fool's errand. But, then, perhaps it *can* be done, through the use of magics not yet contemplated (or, failing that, at least not yet attempted). Likely, such willwork would be, at best, extremely unsafe



Researching *The Key of Brass and Flame*

Capping Skill: Occult

Action: Extended — 20 successes

Research Time: 3 days; 1 day

Appropriate Libraries: The Astral Realm, Goetia, Grimoires

Possible Modifiers: Researcher is a practitioner of goetia (+1), researcher interviews one or more astral entities regarding the *Key* (+1), researcher extensively traverses Astral Space in search of clues regarding the *Key* (+2)

Successes	Information
0-9	Nothing.
10-13	*The Key of Brass and Flame* is, allegedly, a grimoire detailing powerful secrets of goetic magic, including at least one spell completely unknown to even the most powerful and studious goeticists.
14-15	The *Key* exists only in the Astral Realm, and it is reported to have taken on many shapes throughout time, though it is most commonly described as a book of fire bound in brass, iron and other metals. Accounts of the book — or, at least, a very similar tome — date back centuries, and perhaps even millennia.
16-17	*The Key of Brass and Flame* can be used to create a demonic familiar, similar but some how unlike that incarnated by more familiar Spirit Arcanum magics. The source of this demon familiar, however, is uncertain.
18-19	The unique spell contained within the *Key*, conjuring up a demonic familiar, uses esoteric principles of goetia to do so, drawing up the spirit from within the darker impulses of the mage himself and granting physical form to this echo of Vice. According to a scattered handful of accounts, the spirit is as helpful and obedient as a normal familiar, though it tends to show a decided inclination toward inspiring the specific sin it embodies in both the mage and in those around him.
20	*The Key of Brass and Flame* is concealed within a temple somewhere within the Astral Realm. Regardless of all other myths and legends associated with the grimoire, it is always recorded as being located within a temple, though the specific description of said temple varies, quite possibly according to the era and culture of birth of the individual viewer. The most common motifs, however, involve smoke, fire, burning metal, fragrant oils and incenses, as well as other substances normally symbolically linked to Pandemonium, the Realm of Nightmares.

and, at worst, abhorrent to the tenets of Wisdom in ways too terrible for most mages to ponder even momentarily. This is a text that makes physically real the demons of the inner self through a process that many rightly consider to be hubristic in the extreme; who can say what cost must necessarily be attached to the act of making manifest its awful secrets in this world of flesh and blood?

Some of those who have dared to reflect upon the potential means for drawing the *Key* into this layer of the Fallen World have put forth the following (by no means an exhaustive list) as theories:

• Using some number of goetic demons (popular theories are three, five, seven, nine, and thirteen) as a sort of "lens" through which the *Key* might be summoned into this world.

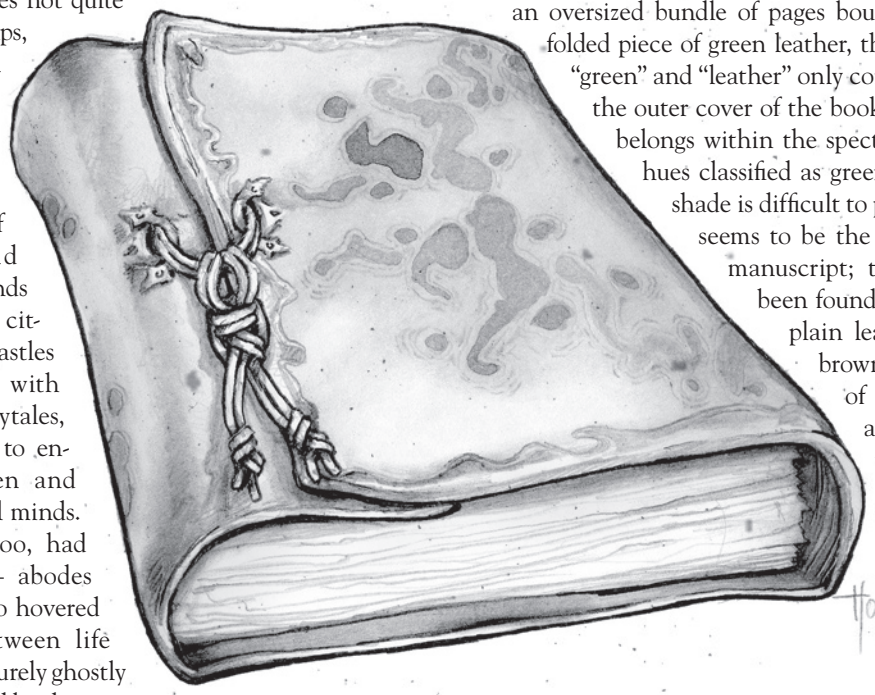
• Using a human soul in the process of the Awakening as the vehicle for magics intended to capture the grimoire and draw it back into this world. Advocates of this theory debate as to whether the new mage would physically acquire the *Key* or, instead, somehow *become* the vessel for the text. Indeed, some wonder whether the unwitting courier could even survive the process.

• Engaging the services of strange astral entities and making use of incredibly dangerous spells to the intended end of creating an "Astral Verge" through which the *Key* might be seized.

Lark Demonde's Travels

or, A Survey and Chronicle With Detailed Maps of the Various Reaches and Domains Visited by the Archmagus Lark Demonde as Inscribed by His Apprentice Calentrinius

The lore of the Awakened suggests that the world was a very different place before Atlantis fell crashing into the sea, forever mingling its magic with the waters of the earth, with the aether or higher air and spilling its power into the dark places that surround the Fallen World. Strange lands existed then, places with names like Lemuria and Mu and Xanathala. Races not quite human or, perhaps, a bit more than human also existed in these now forgotten lands, leaving only rumors of monsters and fairy folk. Legends of underwater cities and cloud castles became mixed with folklore and fairytales, now used only to entertain children and those of fanciful minds. Dark realms, too, had their places — abodes of creatures who hovered somewhere between life and death and purely ghostly realms inhabited by the spirits of those who had nowhere else to go.



Most mages believe these places disappeared when Atlantis died, their existence anchored to the powerful magic that gathered and rooted itself in Atlantis. But some places took longer to fade than others, moving slowly further away from human perception until only those with Awakened sight could find them, and then as the centuries wore on without the lifegiving magic of Atlantis not even the Awakened could recognize the paths that once led to these lost lands.

One mage, whose name has come down to us as Lark Demonde, though perhaps it once had a different spelling or inflection, chose to devote his life to tracking down as many of these places as possible before they faded into antiquity. Accompanied by his student and chronicler, Calentrinius, Lark Demonde braved unknown lands and undertook strange voyages in search of the places that soon would no longer exist. The journal known familiarly as *Lark Demonde's Travels* contains his discoveries and his failures as well as the secrets of his methods of travel.

Packaged for Travel: The Physical Book

Lark Demonde's Travels appears as a collection of maps, an oversized bundle of pages bound together within a folded piece of green leather, though both the words "green" and "leather" only come close to describing the outer cover of the book. The color definitely belongs within the spectrum of pigments and hues classified as green, though the precise shade is difficult to pinpoint. At least this seems to be the cover of the original manuscript; the copies that have been found seem to be bound in plain leather, either black or brown in hue. The texture of the original's cover, again, classifies it as the cured hide of some animal, though the markings and overall appearance of the cover does not call to mind any animal existing at the present time. Speculations have ranged from mammoth to dragon to unicorn to some non-human bipedal race native to one of the lands mentioned within the book.

The binding material consists of a heavy twine-like substance that, when analyzed by either magical or scientific means, proves to be partly organic and partly inorganic (some have even gone so far as to suggest synthetic) materials. One binding cord is attached to the shorter flap of the cover, which closes over the body of the book from left to right. The cord is then drawn through a slit in the longer flap of the book. The longer flap wraps entirely around the book once more until it almost meets the place where the shorter flap's cord protrudes. The cord attached to the end of the longer flap can then be tied together into a knot (or even a simple knot and bow) which can be untied only by the person who originally tied the knot or by a mage possessing both Life •• and Matter •• or who knows the rote "Unbind the Twisted Tress" (included within the grimoire itself).

Master Plautorian,

After much research, I can present you with the following transcript from a portable recording device recovered by Council Master Chronos. (See below.) The voice appears to be that of Alis Bliss, missing since 2005:

The transcript begins at this point with a female voice, a rich contralto matching the vocal patterns of Magistra Bliss:

"Truly, this land that lies beyond the carpet of stone matches the description in Lark's Travels exactly. The sky appears unreal, or perhaps surreal, since nothing of its clarity and luminosity has been seen since before factories spouted their fumes into the air. Once past the stony expanse, I can almost feel a difference in the weight of the air, as if entering another dimension, one purged of…what is it purged of, Trenton?"

[Here the voice changes to a masculine tenor, presumably that of Bliss's husband and traveling companion; though not himself Awakened, he served his wife as a Sleepwalker bodyguard and sounding board.]

"…mmm, corruptive influences, m'love? Abyssal fumes? "

[Alis] "Perhaps just excessive materialism."

[Trenton] "You are the expert, Alis."

[Alis] "At any rate, this land reeks of the Supernal."

[Trenton] "Perhaps 'reeks' is not the correct word…"

[Alis] "I'll pretty up the language when I present this to the Mysterium Council."

[Trenton] "Will they let you keep the book, do you think?"

[Alis] "How can they not? This is a guide to the past and a way to find some of those places that could tell us how to reestablish the link between the worlds."

[Trenton] "Ummm…my dearest…where exactly are we? The map we've been following shows an island continent, much like Atlantis but different in so many ways. I'm thinking we've rediscovered what's left of the continent of Mu-"

[Some noises follow as of feet breaking through high greenery, with murmured phrases such as "Careful!" "Mind your head."]

[Trenton] "Alis, something is going on behind us. That crackling sound!"

(Alis] (A gasp is heard.) "I think we have figured out what periodic and erratic entry mean in this section of the map notes. The stone carpet is crumbling away!"

[Trenton] "Leave the baggage behind, we might just make it-"

[Alis] "It's useless, Trenton. I'm going to send this device back to the Council. (Background noises are heard, Alis's voice incanting some sort of rote. From here on in her speech is garbled until it stops altogether, presumably when she is separated from her recording device.)

Here the transcript ends.

Shortly thereafter, Council Member Chronos notes in his journal of the sudden appearance of Alis' personal recorder in his office. The device was cracked and cold as if it had been in a very cold clime and had to be magically repaired and warmed before the above transcript could be extracted from it. Magical enhancements have been used on it to hear past the silences and gaps in the recording. Rumors persist that those who have carefully studied the enhanced reconstruction of the recorder have heard sounds that give them nightmares and have, in at least one case, resulted in a magical technician's sudden and overpowering fear of airborne objects.

Although Alis' copy of the book is presumed lost, along with her and her husband, some half dozen copies reputedly remain in existence, though not within ready grasp of anyone. Three are held with the Mysterium in their innermost libraries, or so they claim.

One is reputedly in the Vatican Library's restricted books section, though the Vatican consistently denies it has such books.

Two more are unaccounted for and, presumably, at large. We believe one of the two is the original, while the second is the first copy. We should attempt to acquire at least one of these copies, preferably the original manuscript.

At your bidding,

Certius

Inside, the book consists of a series of loose pages of different sizes, folded to stack neatly together within the binder. Each page consists of a hand-drawn map, expertly colored in with magical dyes that are apparently resistant to time and the elements. Notes are written throughout, both on the front of the map itself, noting discoveries or pointing out potential hazards, and on the back, often describing spells or rotes. This fact has led some to believe that Lark deconstructed an earlier grimoire to make this book of maps to lost places. But that is a matter of speculation.

Sensing the magical attributes surrounding this grimoire indicate strong infusions of both the Time and Space Arcana. The book also responds positively to Prime, Matter and Fate. Minor influences of Life, Death and Mind can be detected by thorough magical examination. Some Forces energy also surrounds the book, presumably of a protective sort against damage from the elements.

Though several copies remain in existence, those that are accounted for are just that — copies. The original manuscript has not been traced as yet. Some experts on ancient grimoires concede that the original book may, in fact, be lost. Others maintain that if the original no longer existed, its copies would fail to function. Still others claim the "real" grimoire possesses powers that its mere copies lack.

History

The origins of *Lark Demonde's Travels* predate the existence of its namesake, who first came into prominence in the 17th century, as the Age of Exploration sent adventurous

men around the world in search of new places or new routes to old places. A talented member of the Mysterium and a follower of the Path of Ecstasy, Lark never felt at home in the crowded, reeking cities of pre-industrial Europe. Feeling the call of the wild lands that had been described by some of the earliest explorers, Lark set off on his own travels in search of lost places.

The year was 1766, 10 years before the start of the American Revolution. Empires were still expanding, new routes were sought to distant places now separated not only by miles but by religious and national differences. Much of the world had been mapped, its main continents and land masses delineated, at least insofar as their shorelines. Much of the interior places had yet to be filled in. Settlements hugged the coasts of the Americas and Australia, yet the center of these vast land bodies had yet to be described, much less seen by agents of the world's political powers.

Mages were particularly keen on exploring some of these unmapped regions before the humdrum observations of Sleepers could "describe away" any true magic. If traces of the Supernal world or even portals to other places lay in areas of the earth as yet unexplored, they hovered in a fragile state of Twilight, easily visible to those with magical sight yet just as easily destroyed by the clumsy observations of Sleeper explorers whose crude senses of discernment would only map some of these places out of existence.

It was with this mission firmly in mind that Lark Demonde and his companion/pupil Calentrinius set out to find as many remnants of magical places as they could before the onslaught of human history caught up with and overran them. Starting from the port of Le Havre in France, Lark first sailed east across the Atlantic, as so many earlier sea-travelers had in the centuries following Columbus' fortuitous mistake. His destination, however, was not anywhere in the Americas — he was searching for pieces of far-flung Atlantis, which supposedly sank into the ocean that bears its name.

All extant copies of the grimoire begin thusly, with a page describing Demonde's first discovery of the island within the Sargasso Sea. Lark named the island Shard, for his belief that it was an actual remnant of Atlantis. A carefully drawn map follows the description.

Those who have tried to follow its directions, however, have encountered only a wistful sigh of fading magic. Indeed, Lark Demonde warned that his discoveries might be thought of as eulogies to what was lost rather than a set of directions to what could still be found.

Nevertheless, Lark continued to travel for the next 34 years, following leads his precursors had left and discovering his own ephemeral places. The Pacific Ocean between the languid isles of Hawai'i and the coast of China was the source of several other discoveries he referred to as Lemuria and Mu, in honor of those ancient places and despite the fact that he did not know for certain he had stumbled upon those very places.

Not all his discoveries were made at sea. The heart of the Amazon gave him the gateway to a jungle land he called "Ixatlan," and here he seemed to find a vital yet hidden civilization of thinkers, artists and builders — their materials, the jungle canopy, their work hidden to all except those with magic sight. Some disagreement, reported by the faithful Calentrinius, resulted in their premature departure and only a partial map. It seems that the wise woman who ruled the small territory did not wish a written or drawn accounting of Ixatlan, lest others with ruder ambitions should find and exploit the land and its people.

The African continent drew Demonde to its heart repeatedly, and maps of ancient realms that seemed to have "dropped" entire and out of place in the Ethiopian volcanic lands and near the ruins of Great Zimbabwe provide a wealth

14 June

My master tells me we have reached the Sargasso Sea and that what we seek lies somewhere within these stagnant, steaming waters. He chants now in the High Speech and periodically rings a bell, listening for its resonance on the water. It seems as if he has continued in this fashion for many hours, yet only minutes have passed. The sun drips down upon us like a sodden ball and a thin film of moisture covers our bodies at the slightest motion. The sea beneath our ship is a sickly green and writhes about it as if to slowly suck it down into its depths, transforming everything it touches into a mass of tangled strands of sea moss and floating grasses. Yet the chant continues: "Edenes ah na, Idenes o. "Edenes ah na, Idenes o. "Edenes ah na, Idenes o." Three times the chant and then the bell. This he repeats endlessly.

Now the bell sounds deeper, more sonorous. My master straightens, his form tense with excitement. There is a closeness to the air as if it had suddenly grown too heavy to breathe. The ship crashes through — something indefinable, some shimmering barrier — and my master cries, "There it be. An island where none is thought to exist."

of information about two lands that politics and hostile environments have made practically inaccessible.

Another map depicts an island in the Caribbean where no such land form exists in today's topographical and geographical renderings. The so-called Bermuda Triangle (though it did not then bear that name) is hinted at as a place of "old land masses," though Demonde never managed to make his way there and no map exists of that section of supposedly open sea.

The final maps depict Lark's trips to the world's extremities, the Arctic and Antarctic poles. Both Lark and his original grimoire disappear from history shortly before his second Antarctic trip, on the first day of the year 1800. Since that time, various Orders have sent expeditions in search of the original grimoire. At best, they have returned with fair copies; at worst, they have disappeared from the world.

It is known that a few copies were made of this grimoire and that those copies lacked the full potential of the original. They served as guides for mages wishing to recreate Lark's travels as well as study the rotes contained within.

Contents

This grimoire contains information describing a number of rotes concerning travel and exploration, primarily from the Fate, Prime, Space and Time Arcana. In addition, Lark added a few rotes that constituted unique contributions to his Order and his Path.

Fate: "Quantum Flux" (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 148), "The Sybil's Sight" (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 149), "Fortune's Protection" (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 152), "Occlude Destiny" (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 156), "Gift of Fortune" (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 157) and "Probable Cause" (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 157).

Prime: "Discern Phantasm" (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 220), "Inscribe Grimoire" (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 220), "Supernal Vision" (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 221), "Create Tass," (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 224), "Disguise Resonance" (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 225) and "Ley Lines" (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 226).

Space: "Correspondence" (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 232), "Spatial Awareness (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 233), "Follow Through" (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 234), "Portal" (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 238), "Portal Key" (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 240) and "Hide Space" (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 242).

Time: "Temporal Wrinkles" (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 258), "Shield of Chronos" (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 261), "Shifting Sands" (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 263) and "Temporal Pocket" (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 265).

In addition, the following unique rotes, attributed to Lark Demonde, may be learned from careful study of the grimoire.

Concealing the Dragon's Paths (Prime ●●●●●)

This spell enables the mage to hide ley lines from the view of another who might otherwise be able to see them. This may be used as a way of protecting valuable sources of power from rivals or to preserve a path of power for the caster's use.

Practice: Unmaking

Action: Extended

Duration: Lasting (permanent)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana

The mage must first know where the particular ley line or node of ley lines is. The spell itself puts up a powerful masking barrier that only a caster with greater power or who possesses the ability to see through strong illusions can penetrate. The ley lines, or dragon lines as they are sometimes called, are said to lead back to Atlantis, if one knows the proper sequence of paths to take. The spell can, therefore, be used to protect what's left of proud Atlantis from prying eyes and nosy Sleepers. It can also be used to cover one's path once a mage has traversed the lines to their destination.

Mysterium Rote: Vigilant Safeguard

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Survival + Prime

The Mysterium uses this rote to make precious and rare locations or objects "disappear" from the sight of Sleepers or even other mages. The number of successes on the dice roll indicates how well concealed the object or place is.

Loosen the Threads (Matter ●●)

This spell opens locks, unties knots or otherwise enables the mage to gain access to the contents of something that has been locked away. It also unsticks swollen doors or windows and allows rusted shut locks to be manipulated normally.

Practice: Ruling

Action: Instant

Duration: Lasting (until object is closed and locked or tied shut again)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

Only 1 success is necessary for most locks, knots, stuck doors or rusted locks. Occasionally the Storyteller may require more than 1 success for particularly difficult or complicated examples of the above. This spell does not confer silence, so any noise inherent in springing a lock or forcing open a door that is swollen shut occurs naturally unless the mage by some means masks or negates the noise. Professional locksmiths or burglars or mages with other appropriate skills may simply state they are taking precautions against unwanted noise. The object will remain

unlocked, untied, etc., until it is locked or tied again (or until the door is shut, etc.).

Mysterium Rote: Unbind the Twisted Tress

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Larceny + Life or Matter

In their constant search for lost magic and due to their tendency to come up against odd combinations of materials that do not always respond to magic from a single Arcana, the Mysterium has devised this rote for handling objects that blend together unusual materials, such as living plant matter with monofilament wire, etc.

Merits

The original copy of the grimoire also confers upon the book's user the following Merits, which provide both security and confidence to one who desire to see the world(s) and avoid many of the pitfalls involved in traveling to new places. These Merits are gained upon taking possession of the original copy of the grimoire, but are lost immediately after spending at least an hour more than five feet away from the grimoire, or upon losing possession of the grimoire (such as if giving it to a friend so that he might benefit from its auspices).

Homeward Bound (●●●)

Effects: You have an unerring sense of how to get "home" from any place on earth or in any other dimension. While this Merit confers pinpoint accuracy, whether the character is across town, across the universe or across the Gauntlet, it does not guarantee safety from dangers encountered along the way.

Once per session the character may use this Merit, though it may not always be necessary to do so. The number of successes in a Wits + Survival roll determines the general safety of the path home.

Dramatic Failure: The path you sense is misleading, taking you directly into the way of some hazard, living or not, that is immediately threatening. Only when it is dealt with (fought, overcome or avoided) may you attempt again to locate the way home.

Failure: Something blocks the attempt. You must wait and rest for at least 2 hours before trying again.

Success: You know which direction to go. The dangers along the road are not removed, and your sense of direction won't help you avoid them, but you know a reliable path home.

Exceptional Success: The path you sense is particularly choice, perhaps free of some dangers that would otherwise be expected, or with an opportunity for an interesting gain along the way.

Drawback: This Merit works only in one direction. Having come home using this Merit, your character may not use this ability to backtrack and return whence he came.

Stranger No More (●●●●●)

Effects: No society or civilization is too strange for you; within a matter of minutes you can adjust to your surroundings so that you cannot be distinguished from a "native." The language comes fluently to you for as long as you remain within the society, though your facility with the language is only average; in an environment where the majority of people are illiterate, this Merit provides no literacy. This Merit also grants no retention of language; the ability to understand a language fades as soon as you leave an area where that language is spoken by the majority of people. The Merit also confers some instinctive mimicry of clothing, mannerisms and demeanor of those around you; you may not understand the reasoning behind a particular local gesture or be able to explain it to a friend, but you use it reflexively when it would be expected. This provides distinct advantages when trying to hide from someone by blending in with the local culture or when visiting a place where the "natives" are hostile to outsiders.

Dangers

The original grimoire is protected by a number of wards that make its location difficult to track down, since it never appears to be in the same place to any two people. The grimoire seems to read "intent" and allows itself to be found only by those who wish to continue the mission of Lark Demonde.

The copies are not protected in this fashion. They have some protective wards, but can, theoretically, be used by anyone who can use a magical book.

Trapped

Many of these places recorded in the *Travels* are difficult to find, and even more difficult to leave. Even though the original grimoire confers the Homeward Bound Merit, the copies do not and so the chances of a traveler being stranded in a twilight realm, particularly in places where shifting paradigms cause a fluctuation in reality, are great.

For every day a mage using a copy of the grimoire remains in a "half-way" place, the Storyteller rolls the character's Wits + Fate.

Anything short of a dramatic failure has no effect on the character's relations with his surroundings. A dramatic failure indicates that the barriers of the world are either shifting or closing and the character is in grave danger of being trapped unless he makes an immediate and successful attempt to leave.

Trapped characters may still attempt to find an alternate route home or seek to communicate with potential rescuers, something that is up to the Storyteller to decide.

Creature Discomforts

When a character is wandering around in a strange environment, such as on an island that was once part of a greater ancient civilization, she runs the risk of drawing down the attention of the local fauna — and in some cases, the local flora. Some of the dangers here are half-shadows, savage beasts or degenerate humans that have *faded* somehow over the years, becoming less flesh and more shade. Some are all too solid, but still without familiarity or even reason. Mythical man-eating plants or flesh-eating vines or trees are among the tamest of dangerous vegetation in some worlds. Storytellers whose players seek out these atavistic realms have all manner of options available to create the wonders and horrors of places that no longer feel sympathy for the mortal world.

Destroying Lark Demonde's Travels

The copies of Lark's grimoire can be destroyed in much the same way as any mildly protected magical book can be destroyed. Fire and magic in combination usually wreak havoc on paper products.

The original grimoire, however, does not readily respond to such physical attempts to destroy it. Still, it is not indestructible. Massive assaults with the energy of Prime magic will unmake the book. Separating its components — the various maps — and delivering them to different times and/or places will at least keep the grimoire from being effective until the pieces manage to bring themselves together again.

The single most effective way to destroy the grimoire is to unmake the maps, using magic and chemicals to erase the pages. Of course, doing so carries the danger of likewise erasing the places portrayed on the maps, to the detriment of all the Atlantean mages. As above, so below.



Researching *Lark Demonde's Travels*

Capping Skill: Survival

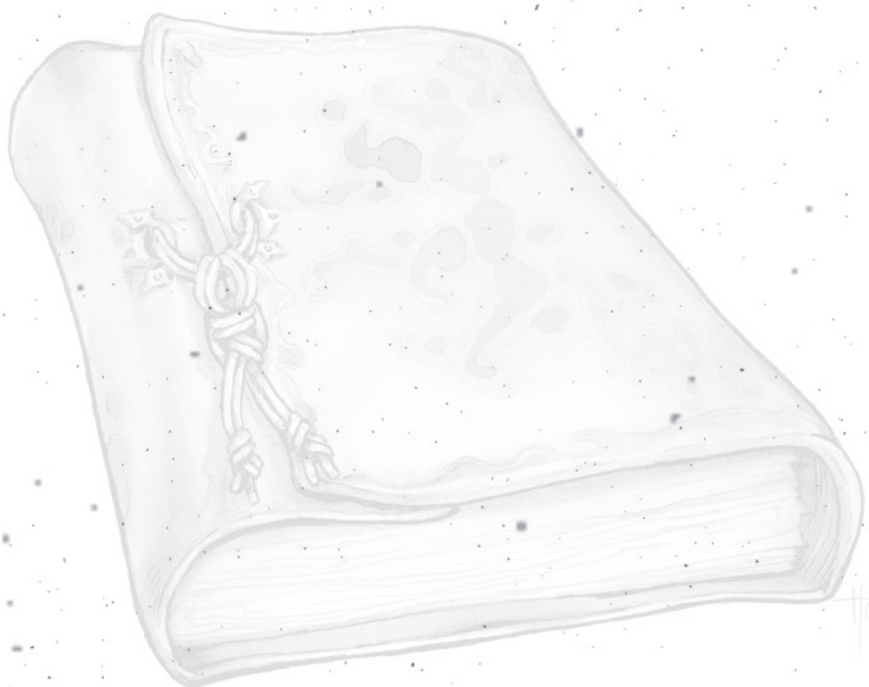
Action: Extended — 17 successes

Research Time: 5 hours; 2 hours

Appropriate Libraries: Archaeology, Ancient History, Myth, Occult, Travel

Possible Modifiers: Exploration or Orienteering Survival Specialty (+1), Contacts in Ancient History, Occult or Archaeology (+2)

Successes	Information
0-3	No Information.
4-8	Mention in Mysterium-owned journal of myths of the last journey of Alis and Trevor Bliss, leading to the transcript mentioned above.
9-12	Series of letters from Lark Demonde to his mentor, referred to only as Master J. The letters describe some of Lark's early voyages and his discovery that his theory of slowly diminishing places is true. He expresses his sense of urgency in finding and mapping these lands before they disappear entirely.
13-16	Reference in an archaeological journal to a "curio" discovered by Professor Finneus Langstadter in his travels to the Ivory Coast of a very strange folio of maps in the possession of a book dealer in the bazaar in Abidjan. No matter how hard he tries, he cannot purchase the book for any price. Attempts to acquire the book by less than honest means fail. Inquiries by a third party indicate the book has been sold.
17+	Obscure notice in a newspaper from Abidjan about an auction at the Museum of Civilizations in order to raise money for more accessible cultural artifacts. One of the items being auctioned is a folio of maps wrapped in a green leather binding and secured by a peculiar knot that has yet to be undone. Only speculation puts the contents as a book of maps. The date of the auction is far enough in the future that the characters may arrange to attend and bid on the book.



LAST DAYS OF ATLANTIS

(From Bellerophon's Mysterium Omnibus, 2001 ed.:)

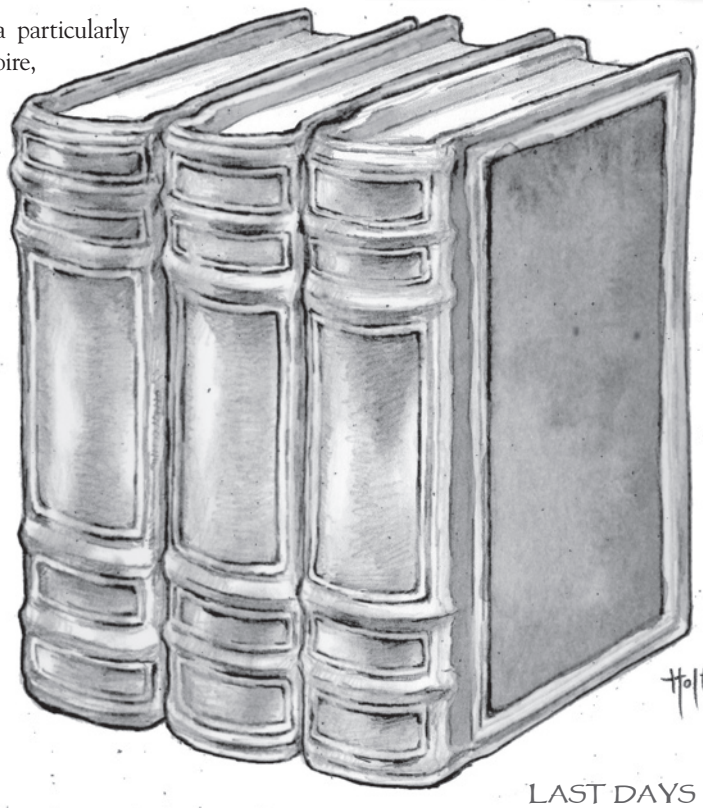
…Victoria Sharpe's *Last Days of Atlantis* is entertaining speculative fiction, but it is by no means a scholarly work. The author makes many leaps of logic regarding the lifestyle and customs of the Atlanteans, and more on the specific subject of the battle between the Oracles and the Exarchs. For example, Sharpe's analysis of the Atlantean "pantheon" (if the body of idealized godforms that she claims were consulted, studied and reflected upon — though never worshipped — by the people of Atlantis could be called such) is, at best, a work of Jungian oversimplification and, at worst, the product of pseudo-scientific hoodoo.

When confronted for evidence on such topics as the specific names of Atlanteans, the titles of boroughs in the capital city, and the use of words of the High Speech unrecorded in other known sources, Sharpe claimed to have no proof beyond what her spells revealed to her. Of course, none save the most unschooled of neophytes require any elaboration upon the unknown and insurmountable safeguards set against any work of magic intended to breach the veil of mystery that shrouds the truth of Atlantis. Certainly, Ms. Sharpe does not expect us to take on faith the outrageous notion that she has somehow blundered upon the esoteric formula that has eluded the most puissant of willworkers for millennia?

If only we Mystagogues had been quicker to embrace the notion that truth is revealed simply by wishing harder!

I urge all rational scholars of the Mysterium — and in other Awakened circles — to reject this slapdash "research" and to instead seek the knowledge of our lost civilization through more established and reputable channels. Shame on you, Ms. Sharpe, for encouraging sloppy scholarship in apprentices already far too much inclined toward such by the atrocious state of modern education. While the three volumes of *Last Days of Atlantis* may be digested over the course of several weeks' leisurely reading, the damage they inflict upon the academic standards of our Order might well take *years* to reverse…

Last Days of Atlantis is a particularly interesting example of a grimoire, because it is not one book; rather, it is a set of three volumes, all of which must be possessed and studied for a willworker to make use of the spells they conceal. Naturally, most of the three book sets *are not* grimoires, but five of them — the first five sets, all of which were penned directly by author Victoria Sharpe's magic — are. These books contain three spells, perhaps inspired by Atlantean willwork or perhaps merely the product of an ancient spirit's delusions and realized through the author's own mystic capabilities. (See below.)



All five of the original sets consist of three dark brown leather-bound volumes, though one or more may be damaged or destroyed by this point. All five sets contain the same three spells. The books are otherwise unexceptional in appearance and reveal their magics only to true believers in their veracity or else those who scrutinize them with extraordinarily potent Mage Sights. Numerous lesser copies of *Last Days of Atlantis* exist, though none of these are known — or even believed — to possess any exceptional qualities.

History

Begun in the late 1980s as a scholarly inquiry into the factual "final age" of the lost empire of the Awakened, the three-volume set now known as *Last Days of Atlantis* gradually grew into something other than its intended purpose. Even as its author, a Mystagogue archaeologist, sociologist and historian, worked to assemble scant facts on the subject, her mystic inquiries met at first with the expected resistance and then, suddenly, with ease unprecedented in the Fallen World. To this day, Victoria Sharpe, the writer of *Last Days of Atlantis*, cannot think of any reason why it is that she, of all the willworkers who have ever pursued magical solutions to the problem of unraveling Atlantis' murky history, should have chanced upon some subtle, overlooked possibility that enabled her spells to uncover genuine *facts* about the fallen empire. But she knows, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that the revelations she experienced are real. Despite the utter annihilation of her scholarly reputation, she stood by that knowledge, until, at last, she had no more esteem to lend to her stance.

Sharpe began to experience scathing criticism for her work well before its completion. Much of it was valid skepticism regarding her inexplicable claim to have found ways to employ known spells to accomplish an end no mage before her had quantifiably been known to manage: the exploration of Atlantis as a living, breathing nation-state. Of course, just as much of the resistance was the product of scholarly jealousy, reflexive naysaying, and, in a few cases, the long-ingrained sexism of academia. Still, despite these slings and arrows, Victoria Sharpe toiled on, knowing in her heart that what she was learning was real and true, that her magics were showing her things no living being, either Sleeper or Awakened, had beheld for millennia and since the shattering of the world.

When *Last Days of Atlantis* was, at long last, completed, just after the millennium, Victoria Sharpe offered the first five sets to various Mysterium Athenaeums around the world. Of the five, only two were accepted: by the Mystagogues of Amsterdam, in the Netherlands, and those in San Francisco, California. The other three sets were refused by the first three (respectable and well-established) Athenaeums to which they were offered, and by all the second choices as well. After six months of trying to find others willing to accept her writings, Sharpe was finally able to give one set away to a modest Athenaeum, just starting out, in rural New Zealand. By one year later, subtle political tensions within the San Francisco Mysterium caused one prominent local willworker to threaten to "stuff Sharpe's fairytale in the bin where the rest of the garbage around here goes," prompting the theft of the entire three-volume set by a young and well-meaning Mystagogue who then promptly fled for the East Coast of the United States. Not long afterward, the set in Amsterdam was quietly relocated from its display case in the main library to a bottom shelf in a quiet, musty side room of the basement stacks.

In the meanwhile, Victoria Sharpe turned one set over to a seemingly friendly théarch, who promptly brought the volumes to friends in his own Order and allies among the Guardians of the Veil to study the text for "heresy." Feeling betrayed and exasperated that no one would just believe her, Sharpe hid the last original set in her sanctum, determined not to part with it. Naturally, several copies of the three books were made, and ended up in the private collections of Awakened Atlantis enthusiasts who were long on eagerness and short on scholarship, as well as Pentacle conspiracy nuts, historical fiction buffs and the like, leaving the author to wonder why it was that she was now being lumped in with the crackpot malcontents of Awakened academia. Faced with strong pressure from many quarters of the Mysterium, Victoria Sharpe simply shut down and went into seclusion, cutting herself off from contact with all save the most trusted of her contacts in the Awakened community.

The books moved hither and yon in the months that followed. At least one original set was broken up between members of a cabal and another may have been destroyed — or at least badly damaged — by a perfectly mundane electrical fire in a sanctum library. Eventually the brutal criticism began to relent; Victoria Sharpe, a vanquished foe of "reputable scholarship," was soon referenced only by those who sought to gain a little recognition by striking at an easy and socially acceptable target. Those who supported Sharpe's theories were long since silenced, and had returned to their theories on "Atlantean aliens," and their wild claims of being the direct descendants or even reincarnations of the royalty of that lost empire.

And then, in late 2006, everything changed. Shamaddah, a willworker from the New Zealand Athenaeum to which one of the original sets had been sent, claimed that the three volumes, taken together, acted as a grimoire. (Shamaddah herself was once known by the Shadow Name of Mary Archer, before renaming herself for one of the individuals mentioned in *Last Days of Atlantis*, a skilled huntress and shaman.) Furthermore, she alleged, the books revealed heretofore unknown magics, perhaps even Atlantean in origin. Believing this to be a cruel hoax, however, Victoria Sharpe (who certainly had no recollection of ever having made grimoires out of her original five volumes of *Last Days of Atlantis*) simply refused to answer Shamaddah's correspondence and went deeper still into her self-imposed exile. Some speculated that Sharpe's reluctance to speak out on the subject within the Mysterium was clear evidence that Shamaddah's outrageous claim was as spurious as it sounded, while others wondered whether the silence was, instead, intended to conceal dangerous truths. A number of the bookish tyrants of the Order, fearful of a resurgence of interest in the "fanciful work," reflexively attempted to shut down all inquiries into the texts. In some cases their efforts worked, but just as often they backfired, inspiring a new round of questions as to the potential legitimacy of the research.

Shortly thereafter, a foreign cadre of Guardians of the Veil took custody of the three books of *Last Days of Atlantis* in New Zealand, using tactics that could politely be described as "bullying" and sparking a serious diplomatic incident with a number of Censors and Curators of the Mysterium that persists to this day. Around this time, the complete set in Amsterdam was stolen, likely out of fear of further interference from outsiders. Several members of the Silver Ladder declared the matter to be one of their Order's purview, while the few Arrows mages who knew of the matter scratched their heads in wonderment at the entire mess and a scant handful of Libertines felt smugly vindicated at this display of the so-called unity of the Atlantean Diamond. In the end, the row within certain lofty circles of the Mysterium and the Silver Ladder, as well as particularly vigorous proponents of Atlantean orthodoxy within the Guardians of the Veil, was considerable, but the hubbub died down, and the matter was, by mid 2007, effectively swept under the Pentacle's collective rug.

Hidebound and respectable Mystagogues still look askance at those who inquire after the original Sharpe editions of *Last Days of Atlantis*, shaking their heads at the naiveté of children too eager to believe. Some make trouble for these "mavericks," stymieing their advancement within the Order and otherwise punishing them for interest in Sharpe's work. Victoria Sharpe herself continues to shun all contact with other mages, *especially* those who ask after what was supposed to be the crowning achievement of her academic career. The remaining sets of *Last Days of Atlantis* (two to five, depending upon whom one asks) are, presumably, still out there; however, their secrets waiting to be unlocked by those who have the fortitude to seek them and the courage (whether wise or foolish) to believe.

Contents

All five of the original Sharpe editions of *Last Days of Atlantis* are grimoires, but this fact is occluded behind a Potency 10 cloaking effect (created with Prime 2), with a Fate Arcanum exception of those who sincerely believe these volumes encompass the truth of the end of Atlantis. Naturally, even most of the readers who do come to this conclusion do so only after a period of study and reflection upon these three works, so just acquiring a "Sharpe original" doesn't necessarily convey automatic access to the magics hidden within. Of note, though, is the fact that Victoria Sharpe herself is unaware of the nature of the original five sets as grimoires; her unknowing contact with the ananke (see below) has somehow skewed her ability to perceive the magics concealed within the texts.

While the same three spells are contained within each three-volume set of *Last Days of Atlantis*, they are not each inscribed within a single book; rather, the formulae describing each spell are scattered throughout *all three* texts, meaning any willworker who wishes to learn them must peruse the entire series. Furthermore, it is only by way of sincere belief — or the use of exceptionally powerful magic to penetrate the Prime cloak concealing the spells from unbelievers — that these secrets are revealed.

Ownership of a complete set of the Sharpe edition of *Last Days of Atlantis* conveys one other, small benefit to its possessor: when in the presence of all three books (not necessary in-hand; being in the same room is easily sufficient, for example, or anywhere within one's sanctum, so long as the books are also presently there), a willworker gains 1 additional point of Mana from meditating at a Hallow or performing either a normal oblation or one associated with a Legacy.

The spells concealed with *Last Days of Atlantis* are:

Activate Spirit
(Prime ●●●● + Spirit ●●●●)

There is a story of Jascei, a holy man who gained wisdom by studying the motions of the stars from atop the highest mountain on the island of Atlantis. This sage often had cause to call upon the small gods of the world in the pursuit of his sacred task. On occasion, he would borrow their miraculous abilities directly rather than trusting in such beings to interpret the will of a man of Atlantis. While his ability to direct the powers of the otherworldly could not save him from the Fall, it is said that he called upon many spirits at the end, even as his temple fell down around him, to scatter his decades of compiled lore to the far corners of the Earth that they should be discovered again in time.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls resistance reflexively

Duration: Transitory

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana

By channeling a point of Mana into a spirit, a mage may use one of its Numina or its Influences (rolling the spirit's normal dice pool for doing so, though to an end of the willworker's choosing). This *does not* constitute the spirit's action for the turn and the dice pool for this spell is penalized by the spirit's rank, just as though the mage were attempting to forcibly bind it (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 317). Using a Numen or Influence in this way does not generate Paradox for the mage, even if the casting of this spell does. Note that spirits almost invariably resent having this sort of magic cast upon them; it is, in a very real way, a violation of the spirit's personal sovereignty, as the mage reaches into the entity's fundamental nature and, metaphysically speaking, starts pushing buttons to achieve the desired result.

Silver Ladder Rote: Mantle of the Gods

Dice Pool: Presence + Expression + Spirit

By channeling her Will through a spirit, a mage might

direct another of the powers concealed behind the reality known to Sleepers. Often more narrow in focus than the Ten Arcana, these powers sometimes sacrifice flexibility for raw power or utility in a single sort of endeavor.

Deathless Oath (Death ●●●● + Fate ●●)

Last Days of Atlantis tells of Khadarmas, a valiant warrior of the Dragon's Talon, who even unto the very crumbling of the high towers of Atlantis, refused to relent in the pursuit of his sworn duty. He escorted many people to the shores, to an awaiting craft that ferried the refugees to safety. It was the potter, Seddu, who first noticed the shard of stone, clearly from the shattered remains of the ziggurat upon which rested the Ladder to Heaven itself, embedded in Khadarmas' side, and the trail of blood that had long since stopped flowing from the wound. So great was the soldier's devotion to his people, however, that even his death could not prevent him from saving lives, until at last, Khadarmas, too, was swallowed by the waves, bidden a tearful farewell by those he had given his life to rescue from Atlantis' doom.

Practice: Ruling
Action: Instant
Duration: Prolonged (1 scene)
Aspect: Covert
Cost: 1 Mana

Successfully casting of this spell enables a mage to swear an oath (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 153-4) that persists even after her death. In effect, she instantaneously arises as a revenant (**Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 143-4) with a driving passion to see the oath fulfilled. Depending upon the Duration assigned to the spell (which may be set with Fate to trigger only in the event of the willworker's demise), the reanimated mage may be free to pursue her vow for quite some time. If the Potency of this spell is overcome by another mage's efforts, then it might be nullified (potentially destroying the revenant), the oath altered, or otherwise manipulated, so those Awakened who learn this spell and who ever have cause to employ it are well advised to cast it in ritual form, with as great a Potency as can reasonably be managed.

Adamantine Arrows Rote: Vow of Souls
Dice Pool: Resolve + Expression + Fate

Death itself is no bar to the service of those whose promises are more than merely words.

Ghostly Archive (Death ●●●● + Spirit ●●●)

The account of Asharna in *Last Days of Atlantis* tells of her studies in the Cenacle of Sighs, as well as the means by which she, as a librarian, bound the shades of the dead to service. Through the efforts of Asharna and those like her, the lore of the Cenacle of Sighs continued to grow and thrive, even unto the ending of Atlantis.

Practice: Patterning
Action: Extended (target number = Merit dots)
Duration: Lasting
Aspect: Vulgar
Cost: 1 Mana

Upon the completion of this spell, the willworker may invest in dots of the Library Merit specifically tied to the shades of the dead who serve as the storage medium for the information in question. These ghosts must actually be experts on the information to be bestowed, unless the mage wants knowledge of ghosts, hauntings or the like — in which case, *any* ghost will do — meaning the mage may need to do some hunting around to find restless shades possessed of the appropriate knowledge (a difficult proposition, at best, if one wants to archive the lore of, say, Atlantis or the Abyss). The account given in *Last Days of Atlantis* indicates that such ghosts were typically bound to their own mortal remains, though one could, presumably, anchor them to any physical object.

In the event that the mage already possesses dots in a "conventional" Library, these dots stack on top of those (to the customary limit of 5 dots), and cost the normal amount of Experience for raising the Library Merit. Typically, the shades in such a "ghost library" should be built as rank 1 spirits, but substituting the supernatural powers of ghosts for those of spirits, and subject to the normal restrictions of ghosts. One of each such ghosts' Numina (1 per dot of the Library Merit) *must* enable it to communicate with corporeal beings in some manner that does not necessitate possession. (See **World of Darkness**, pp. 208-16, for information on ghosts, and **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 317-22, for information on spirits.)

Mysterium Rote: Counsel of the Departed
Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Death

While the great wisdom once gathered in the legendary Cenacle of Sighs is forever lost, modern mages can call upon powers similar to those used in the Cenacle's creation to archive the knowledge of the dead, creating an interactive library of ghosts.

Dangers

The first danger to be found in *Last Days of Atlantis* is purely social in nature. Mystagogues (and other "serious scholars" of the Awakened world) often look unkindly upon those who aspire to own one of the five "original Sharpe editions" of the set. Some such mages are inclined to see the seeker as all too eager to buy into a mythical history penned by a historian who grew sloppy in her desire to believe she had discovered the truth of Atlantis. This pressure falls particularly heavily upon Mysterium mages who go looking into the *Last Days*, as many traditionalists view

Atlantean "History"

So, the big question is: does Victoria Sharpe's *Last Days of Atlantis* contain factual information regarding the end of the empire of magic, the shattering of the Celestial Ladder, the sundering of the world and the descent into Fallen ages?

Maybe.

Ultimately, that answer is up to *you*, as a Storyteller, to determine for yourself. Given the difficulty inherent in saying anything "true" about Atlantis (due to magical interference, as well as the metaphysical and logical Paradoxes that were reconcilable in the prior incarnation of the cosmos — using omnipotence to create stones so heavy they couldn't be lifted, any the like — and the ways in which these Paradoxes now invariably clash in the Fallen World), any of the passages, in any of the three books may be simultaneously correct and false.

Did a fisherman named Karsai, for instance, truly eke out a meager living on the northern shores of Atlantis only to find a cache of black pearls in the latter days of his 21st year, and so meet the bride-price of a young noble sorceress? Perhaps it is so. But, just as likely, Karsai's story is merely a metaphor for looking to where the grass is greener, only to realize that all one ever needed was always right in front of one's eyes. Atlantis' fall is a cautionary tale, and the very tenets of Wisdom as a universal ethical constant echo down through the millennia as the reflection of both the righteous and wrongful thoughts and deeds of that lost world.

The point is this: given the mysterious ways of magic, even if Victoria Sharpe's writings are fiction (and nothing says they must be, if that's the story you want to tell), that does not mean they cannot also be fact and — perhaps most importantly — that they cannot also be *meaningful* for modern willworkers. History, like all other intellectual pursuits, is colored by bias, opinion, and personal experience, and the Awakened, for all their supposed enlightenment, are often still very much human with respect to strongly-held convictions, scholarly or otherwise.

pursuit of the original volumes as tantamount to agreement with Victoria Sharpe's "wild theories" and react accordingly. Athenaeums may close their doors to such a willworker, audiences with important members of the Order may be refused, and research grants may be revoked.

The most pressing concern, though, by far, is the ananke attached to the five Sharpe edition copies of the *Last Days*, which desires, above all else, that the truth of the fall of Atlantis be known. Of course, given the descent of the years, the metaphysical ruin inflicted upon the Fallen World and the restrictions that may or may not have been put in place by the Oracles, the Exarchs, or both, the spirit can now only hint its way around "truths" that may or may not now be anything of the sort. Also, as it grows increasingly frustrated with its fragmented and uncertain memories, the metaphysical hurdles put in place to thwart its purpose and the fear and skepticism of the Awakened, there is no telling to what lengths the ananke will eventually go.

The Voice of the Dragon

Quote: "I come to you bearing the Word of lost Atlantis; hearken and take heart, Dragon-child. The time of revelation is at hand."

Background: This ananke's master raged against the dying of the light of Atlantean civilization, aware of the writing on the wall. Though she did not know what manner of doom the island nation would meet, she was keenly aware that one manner of looming destruction or another was most certainly at hand. It was her wish that the lessons of Atlantis be passed down to later generations of the Awakened in a factual manner so that all should know the truth of what transpired: how the Atlanteans lived, what they believed, why they did as they did and how they met their end. Unfortunately, the shattering of the worlds and all that followed did not permit this ananke to fulfill its mandate in so precise and ordered a manner. Now it is a being filled with endless frustration at the purpose that eludes it, searching desperately for the wholeness (and, thus, closure) it can never obtain.

Acting initially through Victoria Sharpe, the ananke helped to create the five original editions of *Last Days of Atlantis* in an attempt to convey factual knowledge about the sorcerous island nation. The spirit simply "hijacked" Sharpe's divinatory spells and subverted them to reveal the fragments of (now highly questionable) lore that it remembered, patched out and strung together as a coherent narrative. With no pressing need to do otherwise, the ananke influenced Sharpe's subconscious mind rather than appearing before her in glory and splendor, figuring as it did that the Awakened would be ecstatic to receive factual information on Atlantis and, in the customary manner of spirits, unwilling to commit more energy to the process than was absolutely necessary.

Now, however, the spirit *will* manifest in a more direct and forceful manner, but only to those it believes will take



to heart the writings in *Last Days of Atlantis* and know them for what they are: perfected truth, free of the degradation of a much-diminished age. Because of its nature and its purpose, the ananke can easily follow those who pursue the *Last Days* grimoires (provided they don't take extraordinary measures to dissuade the attentions and thwart the Numina and Influences of spirits), though it will appear to them only to guide and inspire, and then only if it must; if the mages keep on the "correct" path without any outside interference, then so much the better. The ananke has already manifested once or twice, though its appearance incited far more fear than trust and the spirit was unable to successfully convey its desired message. Still, it will continue to try: the truth *must* be known no matter the cost.

Description: The Voice of the Dragon is regal, imposing and even a little bit frightful. It stands an impressive seven feet in height, and is garbed in elaborate, richly-hued layered robes and filigreed metal breastplate that are, presumably, Atlantean in style. A diadem of precious (and unearthly) metals rests upon the Voice's head, the features of which are intimidatingly striking and sharply masculine. At its hip rests a sword both remarkable in its craftsmanship and surpassingly plain in design, and, in its right hand is a scepter crowned with seven stars that orbit slowly above the blazing, golden-white gemstone that caps the tip of the rod.

Storytelling Hints: This spirit of destiny knows only that it must propound the true history of Atlantis. Unfortunately, its memories are spotty and fragmented at best, and, while it may get the occasional name, title or word of High Speech correct, much of what it communicates is the result of mangled cosmology, the long uncertainty of ages and the immutable mystical laws that prevent any save the most cursory of "fact" about the lost nation of the Awakened from creeping into the Fallen World. Sometimes even the Voice of the Dragon wonders whether there ever truly *was* a place called Atlantis.

Rank: 4
Attributes: Power 12, Finesse 10, Resistance 12
Willpower: 24
Essence: 25 (25 max)
Initiative: 22
Defense: 12
Speed: 28 (species factor 6)
Size: 6
Corpus: 18
Influences: History 5

Numina: Fate 5. As an avatar of Fate, this spirit's Numina resemble spells from the Fate Arcanum. 1 Essence is spent and Power + Finesse is rolled to "cast a spell." When using one of these abilities, the ananke does not risk Paradox.

Countermagic (dice pool 22). The ananke can use this Numen as reflexive countermagic against Fate and Spirit magic (including Covert spells) targeted on it or used to interfere with its mission. 1 Essence is spent and Power + Finesse is rolled. If its successes equal to exceed the spell's, the spell is countered.

Ban: This spirit is now intrinsically tied to *Last Days of Atlantis*, the vehicle through which it has chosen to advance its appointed task. Now the spirit must engage — whether subtly or overtly — any Awakened audience that will or might prove receptive to its objective of revealing the "true history of the end of Atlantis." While the ananke may choose to act through Covert means, it may not shrink from any opportunity to illuminate the truth (as it understands such, anyway) to willworkers, irrespective of the consequences to itself (or any other) for doing so.

Researching *Last Days of Atlantis*

Capping Skill: Academics

Action: Extended — 8 successes

Research Time: 12 hours; 4 hours

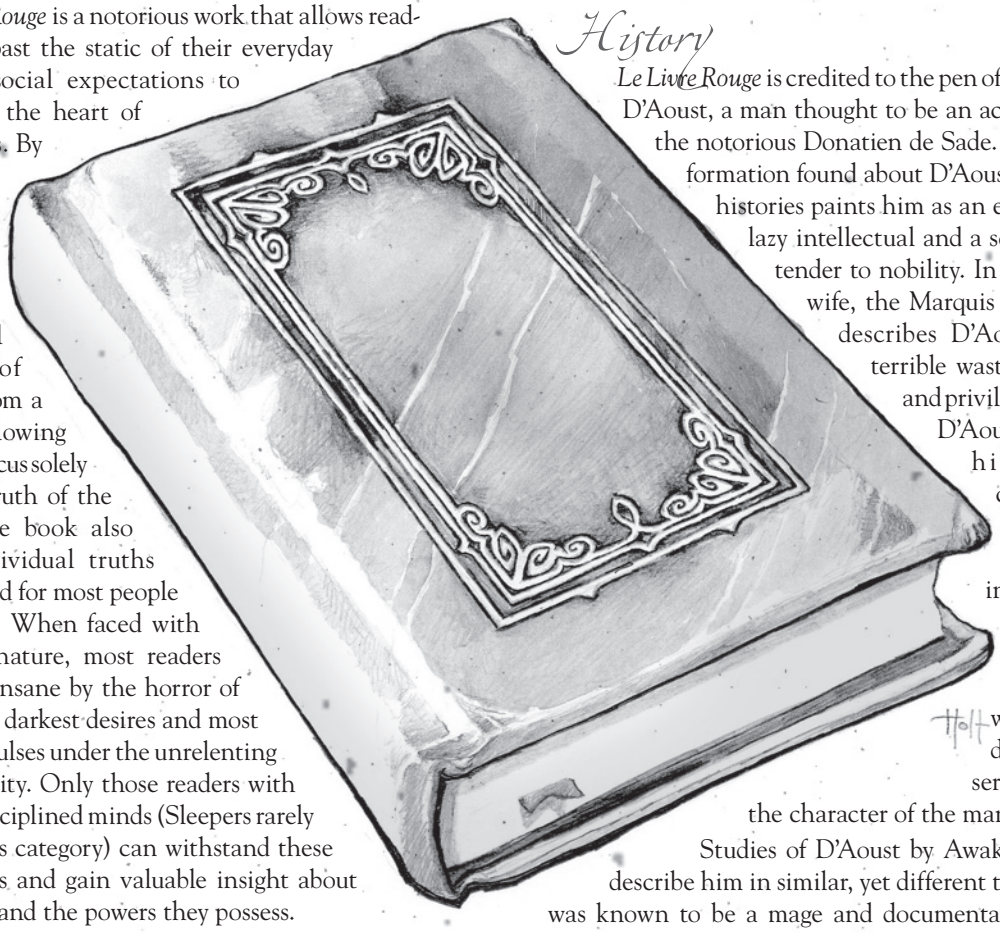
Appropriate Libraries: Atlantis, Grimoires, The Mysterium

Possible Modifiers: Researcher is a member of the Mysterium (+1), researcher is a Mysterium Censor or Curator (+2; not cumulative with the previous bonus), researcher has visited one or more allegedly Atlantean ruins or Atlantean Diaspora sites (+2)

Successes	Information
0-2	Nothing.
3-4	*Last Days of Atlantis* is the work of a Mystagogue named Victoria Sharpe, once a renowned historian of her Order and now something of a pariah in the Mysterium's social circles. Her exile from the halls of Awakened academia is largely the result of her three-volume chronicle of the Fall, which she once vehemently alleged was revealed to her through divinatory magics, despite the fact that such spells have *never*, to the best of anyone's knowledge, been able to reveal factual information about Atlantis.
5-6	*Last Days of Atlantis* is believed by some, both within and without the Mysterium, to contain Atlantean secrets, possibly intentionally concealed by Victoria Sharpe, though the author has denied such a claim on more than one occasion.
7	Those who put stock in the supposedly Atlantean lore concealed within *Last Days of Atlantis* say that the three-volume set is, in fact, a grimoire of some sort, passing on its secrets to those who believe in the truth of the Fall, as revealed to Victoria Sharpe.
8	Some scattered accounts, buried deep by the most prestigious and influential Mystagogues, tell of a spirit bound to the original copies of *Last Days of Atlantis*, which may or may not be an entity itself dating back to before the Fall. Its agenda, if any, however, remains unknown.



LE LIVRE ROUGE



Le Livre Rouge is a notorious work that allows readers to see past the static of their everyday lives and social expectations to understand the heart of their desires. By stripping away the values of society, *Le Livre Rouge* removes all question of morality from a problem, allowing readers to focus solely upon the truth of the matter. The book also reveals individual truths that are hard for most people to stomach. When faced with their true nature, most readers are driven insane by the horror of seeing their darkest desires and most brutish impulses under the unrelenting light of clarity. Only those readers with the most disciplined minds (Sleepers rarely fall into this category) can withstand these harsh truths and gain valuable insight about themselves and the powers they possess.

Unlike goetic sorcery, the sins of thought and character revealed aren't wrapped into tidy mental packages that wait to be recognized and rebuffed. Instead, *all* readers' very worst fears, hatreds, petty vanities and hidden lusts are presented as a sum whole. Readers must acknowledge, even embrace, the darkness in them as part and parcel of their entire beings.

Because of the way it was written, or just as a result of so much emotional energy directed toward it, *Le Livre Rouge* has a tangible presence in the Shadow. Spirits of lust, greed, wrath, hatred and other unpleasant human emotions follow the book wherever it travels and exert their influences on the people near the book. Not all the blame for the effects of the book can be placed on spirits, however. It has a disturbing presence all its own. Simply being in the vicinity of the book wears away at the consciences of people without the means to close their minds to its power. *Le Livre Rouge* has inspired acts of great cruelty and hatred as it divorces the minds under its baleful influence from standard concepts of morality.

History

Le Livre Rouge is credited to the pen of one Stèphane D'Aoust, a man thought to be an acquaintance of the notorious Donatien de Sade. The scant information found about D'Aoust in mundane histories paints him as an effete artiste, a lazy intellectual and a sometimes pretender to nobility. In a letter to his wife, the Marquis de La Fayette describes D'Aoust as, "... a terrible waste of ambition and privilege. This man, D'Aoust, surrounds himself with companions that display the very worst in human motivations. His claims of friendship with the lunatic de Sade further serve to illustrate the character of the man."

Studies of D'Aoust by Awakened scholars describe him in similar, yet different terms. D'Aoust was known to be a mage and documentation from the time period shows he was an apprentice of several different French masters. It is thought that D'Aoust was unable to find a subject, either magical or mundane, of which to apply himself to the study, until he witnessed the unbridled passions of the French Revolution. D'Aoust was intrigued at how different layers of society perceived ideas of right and wrong and how individuals, regardless of station, allowed themselves to be controlled by those ideas.

Finally finding his personal muse, D'Aoust set forth to study the concepts of societal control in the form of morality. He studied the works of various philosophers on the subject and began to experiment with magical means of freeing the individual from the artificial constraints of accepted morality. D'Aoust reasoned that only by denying the rigid structures of an imposed morality could individuals truly come to understand themselves and achieve their full potential. The final product of his studies was the untitled book that came to be known as *Le Livre Rouge*.

D'Aoust commissioned a small print run of his book, which was bound in red leather. Shortly after the book

It was during my travels in France, in the year 18—, that I first became acquainted with the name —— of Chantilly. —— was said to have the most extraordinary collection of original texts and manuscripts of works that have, in the main, been lost to the ravages of time and the perditions of man. Since I was traveling in the general vicinity of Chantilly, I thought to impose myself on the hospitality of — and thereby discern for myself the substance of this collection.

Bypassing that aberration of architecture that dares to call itself the Château de Chantilly, I made my way to the house of a fellow scholar, a Moros named Bullant, with whom I had frequently corresponded on various shared topics of interest. I hoped to receive, from Bullant, a letter of introduction to —— and also to question Bullant as to the source of his regrettable lapse in judgment in not earlier referring me to the man, ——.

I was received with great courtesy and admirable enthusiasm by Bullant and, after we had dined on an admirable pair of capons, we retired to his study to fortify ourselves with brandy and scholarly debate. After a seemly interval of discourse I brought up the subject of —— and his aforementioned collection.

"Ah. As to that," said Bullant. "I had not thought to trouble you with ideas that could have no happy resolution."

"No happy resolution?" said I.

"Indeed," said Bullant. "The man, ——, is widely known for his eccentric behavior and his reticence to allow any hand but his own to attend to his possessions. It is even whispered," and, indeed, Bullant leaned toward me and lowered his tone. "That he possesses the original manuscript of Stèphane D'Aoust."

"*Le Livre Rouge*?" I cried out.

"The very same," said Bullant.

"But the thing is cursed," said I. "Surely if —— were to own such a work the evidence of said possession would be obviously manifest in his manner and environs."

"My dear fellow," said Bullant. "Have I not already described the man as an eccentric? You, above all, should know I don't bandy such words without cause."

"All the more reason for a visit," said I. "I cannot, on my very life, imagine why —— would be allowed to keep such a thing. Has the Consilium nothing to say in such matters?"

"Alas!" said Bullant. "—— is a valued confidant of the Hierarch here in Chantilly. Accusation, without proof thereof, is considered ill-founded gossip and no weight is given to it."

"It is fortunate, then," said I, "that I am not bound by such convention in this place. If you will kindly provide me with a letter of introduction, I shall ascertain, with my own eyes, the truth of this matter."

"Against my better instincts," said Bullant, "I shall provide you with such a letter. I urge caution, however. I should hate to lose such a valued confidant to the clutches of the madness of D'Aoust. I beseech you; if, at any time during your visit, you perceive yourself in peril, flee straightaway. There is no honor to be found in the fever dreams of insanity."

Armed with the letter provided, under protest, from Bullant, I approached the abode of —— possessed of no small amount of trepidation. I shall further record my findings upon the morrow.

— *Excerpts taken from a partially burned journal found in the ruins of a house in Chantilly, France. Author unknown.*

was published, the mages of Paris, where D'Aoust had set up shop, began to notice strange happenings in their city. The first sign of trouble was the burning of a small business that owned several printing presses. The fire was so intense that the mages had to work subtle spells to keep an entire district of the city from going up in flames. Investigation of the incident led to the arrest of the owner of the business who was found holed up in his house with the mutilated remains of his family. When questioned, the man, obviously insane, would say only, "I have printed the truth and it has set me free. My family couldn't see the truth so I set them free."

A spate of riots, murders, arson and orgiastic debaucheries followed the initial incident at the printing press and the mages began to see a pattern in the chaos. A copy of *Le Livre Rouge* was found at or near the scene of each incident. Not only did the book itself seem to cause madness in those around it, spirits of vice seemed drawn to the book and magnified its effects by exerting their influences on the inhabitants in the vicinity.

Researching *Le Livre Rouge*

Capping Skill: Academics

Action: Extended - 15 successes

Research Time: 4 hours; 1 hour

Appropriate Libraries: History or Behavioral Science Academics Specialties (+1), Contacts in Rare Book Dealers or Mysterium Archivists (+1)

Successes	Information
0-3	Nothing.
4-8	Mention of an untitled, red leather-bound book being stolen in an insurance claim filed after a brief spate of riots in Boston. The claim was filed by a rare book dealer named Tom Fletcher.
9-12	Copies of a journal entry (see main text) with accompanying footnotes, noting historical correspondences between the journal entry and local Chantilly records of an inferno that ripped through the wealthy part of the city during the late 1800s. The footnotes go on to say the sole survivor of the blaze packed up his remaining belongings, mainly books that had miraculously escaped the fire, and moved to Paris.
13-14	A receipt of sale. Much of the receipt is illegible, but the word "Paris" can be made out as well as the words "book untitled," "red leather" and "Boston, USA."
15+	A Guardians of the Veil report that names a Free Council mage, one Tom Fletcher, as the culprit behind an insurance scheme that threatened the security of the Consilium in Boston. Fletcher was officially warned and the goods he falsely claimed as stolen were confiscated and handed over to the Hierarch in Boston. The report also mentions that Fletcher exhibited signs of possible mental illness and was to be closely monitored.

With this knowledge in hand, the Consilium began a city-wide sweep for the book, destroying every copy it could find. A few mages disobeyed the direct order to destroy the book and attempted to study it. Most went insane, but the few who did not reported they gained insight and power by sifting through the mad genius of the grimoire. *Le Livre Rouge* stripped away all pretension from the mages who resisted its power, allowing them understand their true motivations and goals and helping them to focus upon those goals.

When the work of collecting or burning the books in Paris was finished, the Consilium wasted no time in tracking D'Aoust back to his chateau on the outskirts of the city. When the mages arrived they discovered D'Aoust had become one of the Mad. Babbling about freedom from the chains of society, D'Aoust attacked the minds of his assailants with rotes of his own devising and, after a fierce struggle, D'Aoust was killed.

Regardless of the efforts of the Parisian mages, a very few copies of *Le Livre Rouge* survived the purge and began to circulate around the world. Most of these copies have been destroyed over the years, but there are still rumors of surviving copies and, even more disturbing, the possibility that the original manuscript escaped destruction.

The history of the grimoire after Paris becomes less clear. Because of the nature of the thing to inflict chaos and ruin on the people around it, tracking the movements of the book is problematic at best. A determined researcher might be able to tie common symptoms associated with the effects of the book to specific outbreaks of insanity, but this would be a monumental task. A less daunting challenge might be to speak with Mysterium or Guardians of the Veil sources to attempt to track mages who have had dealings with the grimoire.

Contents

For those with sufficient strength of will to resist *Le Livre Rouge's* siren call to insanity, the grimoire proves to be a valuable source of arcane knowledge mixed with a few unique spells of D'Aoust's devising.

Power in Darkness

Studying the book with the intention of unlocking its secrets requires a series of extended Research (see p. 40 of **World of Darkness**) rolls. The grimoire contains seven chapters, each of which requires 10 successes on the Research roll to fully digest. Teamwork rolls will not work in conjunction with this particular tome. The act of reading the grimoire is far too personal a venture for others to help with.

The chapters of the book, in order, are entitled "Lust," "Sloth," "Wrath," "Envy," "Avarice," "Gluttony" and "Pride."

Whenever the reader completes a chapter he more completely understands his relation to the Vice named by the

chapter. If the reader's Vice matches the chapter studied, for the next 24 hours the character regains 2 points of Willpower for engaging in his Vice. If the character has a different Vice, he may choose to immediately change his Vice to the matching Vice of the chapter studied. Characters may not switch Vices in this way more than once a day, but by giving themselves over to different sensations, the reader gains further insight into his true self. When the reader completes his study of the book (successfully reading all seven chapters) he may select any Vice to serve as his specific sin of choice.

If a character manages to complete his study of *Le Livre Rouge* without going insane (see below) he rolls Intelligence + Occult + Gnosis to see how well he was able to interpret the philosophical, psychological and metaphysical ravings of D'Aoust's "masterpiece." Once this roll has been made, successful or not, the character can gain no more useful insight from the grimoire and it becomes nothing more than a mildly useful (yet dangerous) research text to be added to an occult library.

Suggested Modifiers: -1 die for each derangement (even temporary derangements) gained during study, -1 die if Area Morality has dropped to 3 (see below), -2 dice for each dot of Wisdom lost during study, +1 die for every change in Vice that led to a meaningful experience (i.e. Willpower gain), +2 dice if study of the grimoire was completed in 7 days or less

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: No useful information is gained and the character becomes depressed, even surly about his failure. The character gains the Fixation derangement. (See p. 97 of **World of Darkness.)**

Failure: No useful information is gained and the chance to learn from the grimoire is lost.

Success: For each success gained on the roll the character gains 1 Arcane Experience.

Exceptional Success: The character gains Arcane Experience as above and also gains a greater understanding of himself. Once per chapter the character may regain all lost Willpower from fulfilling a Vice, just as if he had fulfilled a Virtue.

Shackled Morality (Mind●●●)

It has been said that virtue is its own reward. Performing an act of kindness or compassion, because one can rather than because one should, promotes growth of character and spirit. This spell forces people to think about why they are acting so generously and negates the altruistic nature of a virtuous deed.

Practice: Fraying

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls Resolve + Gnosis reflexively

Duration: Prolonged (one day)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

The mage must cast this spell while touching his target. In combat situations this requires a successful Strength + Brawl roll. Once the mage has achieved physical contact he may cast the spell as an instant action in the following turn. With Mind 4 this spell may be cast at sensory range.

If the casting roll is successful, for the next 24 hours the target may not regain Willpower from fulfilling a Virtue. The target may still regain Willpower through other means, such as sleeping or fulfilling a Vice.

Abuse of this spell may be considered an act of hubris (at Storyteller discretion) requiring a degeneration roll for mages of Wisdom 7 or higher (roll 4 dice).

Le Livre Rouge Rote

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy + Mind

Goetic Doppelgänger (Spirit●●●● + Mind●●●●)

Once a mage has accepted the dark side of his own nature he gains an understanding of how to release the inner demons of his enemies. For a mind untempered by exposure to *Le Livre Rouge*, facing one's foulest desires and inner corruption is unsettling at best.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Extended (target number = target's Wisdom)

Duration: Prolonged (one hour)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 2 Mana

By casting this rote, a mage calls into being a goetic demon of her target, similar to the manner in which the spell "Goetic Evocation" (see p. 324 of **Mage: The Awakening**) functions. This spell may be cast at sensory range.

The demon is an ephemeral entity that initially exists only in Twilight. The ephemeral demon is Rank 1 and begins play with Essence 4 (10 max). The demon's Attributes are determined by the Attributes of the target. Power is equal to half the target's highest Attribute rating (round up) in either Intelligence, Strength or Presence. Finesse and Resistance are calculated in the same manner based on Wits, Dexterity and Manipulation, or Resolve, Stamina and Composure, respectively. The demon possesses Influence: Sin 2 (the Vice of the target) and the Numina: Materialize and Fetter.

While in Twilight, the demon lurks nearby the target it was created from and uses its Influence to tempt the target into giving in to her Vice. Each time the target gives in to her Vice she gains no Willpower; instead the demon gains 3 Essence. When the demon reaches full Essence it uses its Materialize Numina to punch through the Gauntlet and its Fetter Numina to anchor itself. If the demon is unable to anchor itself to a Fetter before the duration of this spell ends, it discorporates and is unraveled.

If the demon succeeds in anchoring itself to a fetter it begins to Materialize as a near-clone of the target. Close associates of the target may realize the demon isn't who it is mimicking with a single success on a Wits + Empathy roll. While materialized, the demon attempts to cause as much havoc as possible (paying special attention to its target's Vice), before retreating to the area of its fetter. The target of the spell then has to deal with the consequences of the demon's actions, which can range from annoying to deadly serious.

Demons can maintain themselves indefinitely in Twilight (long after the duration of the original spell has lapsed) after they succeed at creating a fetter. As a result, the only sure way to be rid of the demon is to destroy its fetter. When the fetter is destroyed, the demon is unraveled just as if it had failed to fetter itself during the initial duration of the spell. If attacked, demons reform after being violently discorporated in the same way as normal spirits. (See p. 320 of **Mage: The Awakening.**)

Le Livre Rouge Rote

Dice Pool: Resolve + Empathy + Mind

Casual Brutality (Mind●●●●●)

Behavioral science studies suggest that the ways in which people interact with one another, with regard to morality, are based equally on societal notions of propriety and personal ideals. If either part of the equation is removed, either societal perception or personal values, the morality of an individual will likely begin a downward spiral.

Practice: Unraveling

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls Composure + Gnosis reflexively

Duration: Prolonged (1 scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

For each success gained on the casting roll, the Morality rating of the target is temporarily reduced by 1. Individuals with lowered Morality will act in accordance with their new perceptions of right and wrong, without regard for their old beliefs. A mage with Wisdom 7, for example, who has his Wisdom reduced to 3 by this spell will feel no remorse for draining another mage's Mana against her Will. Targets of this spell who have their Morality reduced to 0 or less become raving, murderous lunatics for the duration of the spell.

Any Morality sins committed while under the influence of this spell have no effect on the permanent Morality rating of the target. Characters who perform particularly brutal acts while their Morality is artificially lowered may develop derangements based on their experiences, at Storyteller discretion. This spell doesn't *force* the target to commit atrocities, it simply increases the chances that the target will behave in more vicious and callous ways than normal.

Use of this rote (or voluntary participation as the target) is an act of hubris that requires a degeneration roll for mages of Wisdom 3 or higher (roll 2 dice).

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy + Mind

Dangers

A Study in Red

One of the reasons *Le Livre Rouge* is so very dangerous to read is a result of the psychoactive nature of the book. The grimoire reflects the emotions, thoughts and nature of the individual reading it. The result of this reflection is a highly personal experience that can lead to a greater understanding of the self. Not only is such an experience perilous in its own right (naked truths are hard to bear), but it can also form a sort of feedback loop in which the reader stares too long into the abyss and begins to empathize with what he sees staring back.

Whenever the total number of Research rolls made to comprehend a chapter exceeds the reader's Resolve + Composure ratings combined, the reader must check for degeneration on 3 dice. If this roll is failed, the reader *automatically* gains the Obsessive Compulsion derangement (see p. 98 of **World of Darkness**) with *Le Livre Rouge* as the focus of his obsession.

Failing the degeneration roll also grants the reader a moment of mad genius. For the briefest of seconds, the reader sees the world without the bindings of morality and with this flash of dispassionate clarity comes understanding that had previously eluded him. If the reader is able to harness the power of his insight he can gain knowledge from the experience, but if the truths revealed are too horrible for the reader to bear he will succumb to madness.

When the degeneration roll is failed (readers may not choose to fail) the reader immediately rolls Resolve + Composure - the number of chapters he has read. Willpower may be spent on this roll.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The reader gains a second permanent derangement of the Storyteller's choice.

Failure: The reader gains a temporary (1 scene) derangement of the Storyteller's choice that will manifest itself the next time the reader regains Willpower from his Vice.

Success: The reader manages to ride the wave of insanity and profits from his experience. The character gains 1 Arcane Experience point for every 2 successes gained on the roll (minimum of 1).

Exceptional Success: The reader gains Arcane Experience as explained above and also regains a point of Willpower.

Infectious Insanity

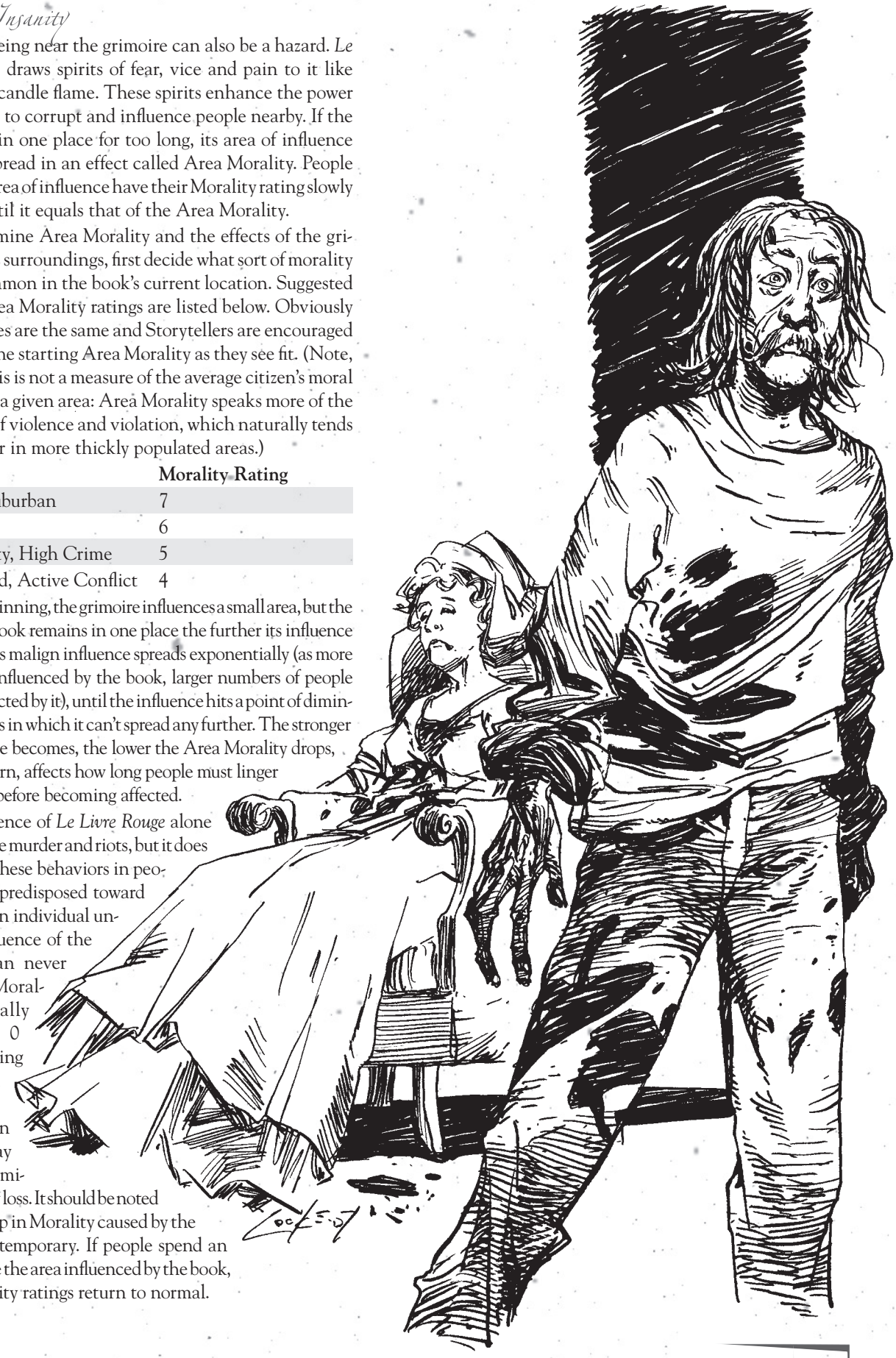
Simply being near the grimoire can also be a hazard. *Le Livre Rouge* draws spirits of fear, vice and pain to it like moths to a candle flame. These spirits enhance the power of the book to corrupt and influence people nearby. If the book stays in one place for too long, its area of influence begins to spread in an effect called Area Morality. People inside the area of influence have their Morality rating slowly reduced until it equals that of the Area Morality.

To determine Area Morality and the effects of the grimoire on its surroundings, first decide what sort of morality is most common in the book's current location. Suggested starting Area Morality ratings are listed below. Obviously not all places are the same and Storytellers are encouraged to modify the starting Area Morality as they see fit. (Note, too, that this is not a measure of the average citizen's moral compass in a given area: Area Morality speaks more of the frequency of violence and violation, which naturally tends to be higher in more thickly populated areas.)

Setting	Morality Rating
Rural, Suburban	7
Urban	6
Inner City, High Crime	5
Battlefield, Active Conflict	4

In the beginning, the grimoire influences a small area, but the longer the book remains in one place the further its influence spreads. This malign influence spreads exponentially (as more people are influenced by the book, larger numbers of people become affected by it), until the influence hits a point of diminished returns in which it can't spread any further. The stronger the influence becomes, the lower the Area Morality drops, which, in turn, affects how long people must linger in the area before becoming affected.

The presence of *Le Livre Rouge* alone doesn't cause murder and riots, but it does encourage these behaviors in people already predisposed toward violence. An individual under the influence of the grimoire can never have his Morality artificially reduced to 0 simply by being in the area of influence, but his own actions may result in terminal Morality loss. It should be noted that the drop in Morality caused by the grimoire is temporary. If people spend an hour outside the area influenced by the book, their Morality ratings return to normal.



Stage 1

Le Livre Rouge first appears in the area and begins to spread its influence. At this stage, influence is minimal and contained within a 100-yard radius of the book. If the book isn't moved further than one mile (outside the area of influence) in the span of a month, proceed to Stage 2.

Stage 2

The grimoire begins to draw spirits to it and its influence spreads to 500 yards. Area Morality drops to 6, unless it started at 6 or less, in which case it remains unchanged. At Area Morality 6, petty theft becomes more common and people are more likely to argue and brawl (fist fights). People must spend an hour in the area of influence before their Morality is reduced to 6, unless it was already 6 or less. If the book isn't moved further than one mile (outside the area of influence) in the span of two weeks, proceed to Stage 3.

Stage 3

The grimoire attracts more powerful spirits to it and its influence spreads to a half mile. Area Morality drops to 5, unless it started at 5 or less, in which case it remains unchanged. At Area Morality 5, burglaries and grand theft become more common and people are more likely to have heated disagreements and confrontations that result in significant consequences (serious injuries, grudges held). The Morality of people moving into the area of influence drops to 6 in an hour, then to 5 after spending a total of two hours in the area. If the book isn't moved further than one mile (outside the area of influence) in the span of one week, proceed to Stage 4.

Stage 4

The book has now gained the attention of the most powerful spirits in the area and its influence spreads to one mile. Area Morality drops to 4, unless it started at 4 or less, in which case it remains unchanged. At Area Morality 4, arson and other intentional mass property damage become more frequent and people begin to quarrel over the smallest slights, real or imagined. The sight of ambulances and the sound of gunfire become common. The Morality of people moving into the area of influence drops to 6 in an hour, to 5 in an additional half hour, then to Morality 4 after spending a total of two hours in the area. If the book isn't moved further than one mile (outside the area of influence) in the span of 5 days, proceed to Stage 5.

Stage 5

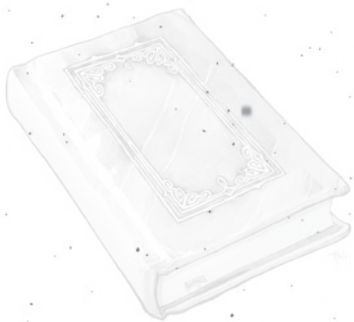
At this final stage *Le Livre Rouge* has attracted as many spirits as the area can sustain. The influence of the tome remains at one mile and Area Morality drops to 3. At Area Morality 3, crimes of hate and passion (such as rape and murder) become more common and people are likely to riot. The Morality of people moving into the area of influence drops to 6 in an hour, to 5 after an additional half hour, to 4 after two hours, then to Morality 3 after spending a total of three hours in the area. At this Stage, *Le Livre Rouge* also draws protectors to it, which will fight over the book leaving the strongest and most ruthless individuals in the area in possession of the grimoire.

If the grimoire is removed from its location, Area Morality recovers at a rate of one stage for every week that passes. Characters who travel into the area of influence of the book may attempt to resist its Morality draining effects once they realize what is happening to them. Each time a character loses a dot of Morality he may roll Intelligence + Occult to guess that something is messing with his head. With a single success on the roll he may then attempt to resist the corrosive effects of *Le Livre Rouge* by rolling Resolve + Composure. Each success gained on the roll protects the character against the loss of 1 dot of Morality for the remainder of the scene.

Solutions and Complications

The simplest solution to the problem of *Le Livre Rouge* is to destroy it. The book is just paper and ink and a judicious use of flame will put an end to its menace. If the desire is to learn from the book rather than to destroy it, obviously some precautions will need to be taken. Although the book includes no instructions on how to do so, there are surely ways to protect innocent people against its insidious effects. One possible solution is to place the grimoire in a pocket dimension when it isn't being studied, à la the Space 4 spell, "Pocket Realm" (see p. 239 of **Mage: The Awakening**), but creative characters are sure to come up with alternate ideas.

The ideas for *Le Livre Rouge* listed in this section deal only with copies of the grimoire, but it is possible that the original manuscript still exists. If it does, its power to influence and corrupt would be far greater than that of the lowly copies. Storytellers who decide to include the original manuscript in their games are encouraged to ratchet up the effects of the book, especially on people in its area of influence. The original might also possess additional rotes and personal effects of D'Aoust (letters, notes in the margins, etc.).



THE LOQUACIOUS GRIMOIRE

While there have been many stories of grimoires and other books that contain some trace of their author's mind or personality or otherwise seem intelligent, this legendary text is one of the few that is widely acknowledged to be an intelligent being capable of communicating with its reader. Unfortunately, it is also equally capable of rendering itself completely illegible to those it does not wish to read it. This book has a slightly dubious reputation because many have spent years and small fortunes to obtain it and have then found themselves completely unable to make any use of it. It allows some to read it immediately, it requires various services from others, and a few will never learn its secrets.



Unlike most grimoires, instead of rotes, this book contains all the information necessary to learn a particular Legacy — *The Path of the Book*. This rare Legacy can be learned only directly from this grimoire; it cannot effectively be taught by any mage. Without access to the grimoire and the ability to read it, a mage must meet the prerequisites for creating the Legacy herself to learn this Legacy, even if she has a teacher who already knows *The Path of the Book*.

The book was originally written in 18th-century French, but the text can appear in any desired language. Most often the text either appears in the reader's native language or as a series of unknown characters from whom even the most powerful Mind magics can obtain very little meaning. From the outside, the book appears in excellent condition and as if it has been subject to both great care and status as an object of much pride to its owners. It is bound in the highest quality reddish brown leather that appears to be almost 70 years old, but in excellent condition. The corners of the cover are protected by triangles of hard, finely polished low karat gold, and the end papers are hand marbled. Anyone who knows books or who examines it using Matter or Time magics will instantly realize that the book has been rebound several times and that its current cover has been given additional decoration on several occasions. Inside, the pages are made of fine but old paper that is also in excellent condition and that remains flexible and easily legible. The entire book has been reinforced with the "Alter Integrity" rote (**Mage: The Awakening,** p. 198), which has added 5 points to the book's Durability. Today, the book has a Durability of 5, a Size of 1 and a Structure of 6.

Further magical examination reveals that the small amounts of wear the book has suffered have been regularly removed using the "Repair Object" rote (**Mage: The Awakening,** pp. 199-200). In short, the book has been

(Excerpt from a letter by Wandering Lantern to Foxfire, the mage who loaned him *The Loquacious Grimoire*.)

My dear Foxfire,

I have received the volume and am most grateful that you have sent it to me. However, I also now understand far better the meaning of your earlier letters regarding your troubles with it. It is a brilliant conversationalist, but seems completely disinclined to do anything other than show me all manner of bad poetry and ask if I have yet managed to arrange for a pair of red-headed clerks who both walk to work past my book shop to meet and discuss the current political tensions with Germany. I will trust you that the rewards it can provide are as impressive as its unique capabilities, but for now, it remains exceedingly frustrating.

both lovingly cared for and also the object of much decoration and adornment. The title on the spine appears in exquisitely formed gold letters and is *Le Chemin Du Livre* or *The Path of the Book*. However, the book is widely known as *The Loquacious Grimoire*, a name that started out as a mid 19th-century joke about the volume's personality, and which has now become so widespread that when many mages actually encounter this book they are surprised this is not its actual title.

History

The Loquacious Grimoire was written in the last decade of the 18th century by Angelique Doran, who was known to other mages as Juge. She was a prominent French author, a well known bibliophile, and a devoted follower of Robespierre. During the French Revolution she worked closely with the infamous Committee of Public Safety. Juge was a member of the Silver Ladder, and her diary remains in its archives. In it, she first records her passionate belief in the cause of the revolution and then her growing disillusionment with the events that led up to the Terror. Despite having provided information to the Committee that resulted in the execution of more than three dozen individuals whose writing demonstrated supposedly dangerous anti-revolutionary sympathies, Juge was denounced by the Committee in 1794. Mysterium historians believe her accuser was almost certainly a Banisher who suspected she was a mage. Between the horror of being accused by a government to which she had been so committed and the fact that this accusation helped her realize just how corrupt it had become, she returned to her home and instead of using her magic to avoid capture, she completed the unusual grimoire on which she had been working and then gave it permanent consciousness by means of a still-unknown magic that also resulted in her death. Given the last notes in her secret diary, the Silver Ladder considers her death to be suicide.

Because no other mage knew she was working on a grimoire, the book was not discovered until one of her colleagues tracked down the remains of her vast library more than a decade later. At this time, several mages who studied the book wondered whether Angelique Doran had somehow transferred her consciousness into this volume, but mages who had known her confirmed that the book did not react as she did and was a different entity.

At the beginning of the 19th century the book was a celebrated curiosity among mages, and many of them sought to understand the mysteries found within it. The book occasionally communicates in poetry and short and cryptic fragments of text that appear randomly on pages and at the time many mages believed this book could reveal important magical secrets far beyond the Legacy it taught. As a result, the book was much in demand for the first half of the 19th century, as scholars and cryptographers attempted to find meaning in its odd marginalia and in its many unusual requests. Unfortunately, after more than 50 years of study, several of the Mysterium's foremost scholars announced there was no evidence of hidden meaning within the book's prose or poetry. In addition, while some of the book's requests seemed to be aimed at making minor but potentially important changes in the world, these changes seemed to have nothing to do with Atlantis or the Supernal Realms. However, individuals who studied the book could not say what its goals were.

For the second half of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th, the book gradually faded from interest, although some suspicious mages maintained that either the Mysterium scholars who studied the loquacious tome missed important clues about it or they uncovered great secrets about it that they refused to share with anyone else. Unfortunately, these mages failed to uncover evidence for their claims.

This book's fame then reached a peak in the summer of 1904, when an Adept of the Spirit Arcana named Joseph McCauley, who was also a noted spiritualist, studied *The Loquacious Grimoire* and proclaimed that in addition to mastering its Legacy, he also had obtained the clues he needed to become an Archmage of Spirit. After making his announcement before a group of mages assembled in Chicago, he demonstrated a few feats of Spirit magic that some mages still believe were evidence of his newfound knowledge and power. Then he opened a doorway into the Shadow Realm and stepped through, promising to return in 10 minutes with even greater wonders. Unfortunately, he never returned, and a few minutes after he departed everyone present heard horrible and somewhat unearthly screams echoing out of the Shadow Realm. Reports of finding some trace of his passage in the furthest reaches of the Shadow Realm continued well into the 1940s. The details of his fate remain a mystery, but several reliable mages skilled in Death magic declared that their scrying revealed he died less than five minutes after he entered the Shadow Realm. In the winter of 1906, mages who were exploring the Shadow Realm found half of McCauley's now-misshapen skull attached to the flank of a predatory hunger spirit.

Although the events of 1904 briefly rekindled interest in the book, by 1906 proof of McCauley's death served to largely end widespread interest in the book. Since WWI, the book has been monitored by both an alliance of Mysterium scholars who wish to study and understand the book and a group of former students of this grimoire who do not wish to see it locked up in one of the Mysterium's Athenaeums. The two groups cooperate in order to make certain neither one gains complete control over the book. As a result, the book is widely circulated, but both the Mysterium and the group of former students, who are known informally as the Friends of the Book, make an effort to keep careful track of its movements.

As a result, the book's movements and the people who have studied it during the 20th century are largely known. During the years before WWII, it remained in the United States, with a few brief forays into both Canada and Mexico. In 1952, an American mage took it to Germany when she went over to help with the rebuilding efforts. For the next 39 years, the book was carried further East and remained behind the Iron Curtain, until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990. There are reports that several Soviet mages worked in the KGB, using their magic to allow them to perform feats impossible for other agents. Two of these mages learned the Legacy of the Book in order to become even more effective spies, and after the collapse of the Soviet Union one of them left the KGB and has become a highly successful freelance intelligence consultant. In 1991 the book again made its way West when a Russian mage immigrated to the United States. For the past 17 years it has mostly been found in large cities on the East and West Coasts.

Contents: The Path of the Book

This Legacy is open to any mages with the correct Arcana who can also convince *The Loquacious Grimoire* to teach it to them.

Nickname: Bookworms

Appearance: Both because this path attracts such people and because *The Loquacious Grimoire* is willing to teach only mages who truly love books, everyone who sets foot on this Legacy is a serious bibliophile. Many conform to some of the stereotypes concerning such people. Students of this Legacy are often somewhat retiring individuals who are often noted for their slightly outdated or slightly unkempt appearance, a distracted air and a passion for books. They can be young or old, but most outsiders expect bookworms to be at least middle-aged.

Background: Almost all bookworms are well educated. Most have college degrees, often multiple degrees, but a few are formidable autodidacts with large personal libraries and little formal training. Although most outsiders expect bookworms to prefer aging and dusty books and to ignore or even actively dislike modern technology, there are at least two professional archivists in this Legacy who understand and are fascinated by both books and modern information technology.

Attainments

Students of the book learn secret ways of interpreting text denied to others.

1st: Secrets Decoded

Prerequisite: Gnosis 3, Mind 2, Fate 2

The mage gains the benefit of the "Reveal Enigmas" spell (**Mysterium**, pp. 193-4) for any book, drawing, or other piece of writing or two-dimensional image at which he is looking. By making a successful Wits + Investigation roll, the most complex symbolism, the most intricate code or the cleverest riddle is immediately obvious. Discovering any of these hidden truths requires only a few moments, although the most complex computer-generated cryptography occasionally requires two or more successes. These difficult tasks can be solved using an extended task, where the character can make 1 roll every turn.

Optional Arcanum: Time 2

The mage is sufficiently connected to the world of text and symbols that she can gain glimpses of the immediate future by looking around any location where there are significant amounts of text or two-dimensional images visible, such as on any even dimly lit city street. In such a situation, the mage can know the outcome of any action with two outcomes, as per the "Flip of the Coin" spell (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 259). The mage can use this ability no more often than once per scene.

2nd: Gift of Tongues

Prerequisite: Gnosis 5, Mind 3

The mage can continuously use the "Universal Language" spell (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 213). He can read, write, speak and understand any language as if it were his own, even profoundly alien languages.

Optional Arcanum: Time 3

The mage's ability to decipher information from the images and text around him increases to the point that he can perform the equivalent of the "Glimpses of the Future" spell (**Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 259-60), cast reflexively. As before, he can use this ability only once per scene and only in an environment in which significant amounts of text are visible.

3rd: Flights of Imagination

Prerequisite: Gnosis 7, Mind 4

Using a variation of the "Dream Traveler" spell (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 214), the mage can visit any portion of the Astral Realm simply by reading about it. Reading someone's dream journal, or even a recounting of one of her dreams in her blog, allows the mage to visit that person's Oneiros. Similarly, reading a novel or historical account allows the mage to travel to an equivalent realm of Temenos, and reading accounts of deeply spiritual visionary experiences, profound drug trips involving powerful hallucinogens or similarly esoteric writings allow the mage to visit a similar portion of the Anima Mundi. Mages fortunate enough to read written accounts of another mage's journey to Temenos or the Anima Mundi can also use this account to visit the same location.

The mage must read this account immediately before sitting down to meditate. This mediation can be performed anywhere; all the mage needs to do is roll at least 1 suc-

cess on a mediation roll. He does not need to meditate at a Hallow or spend a point of Mana. Once he succeeds at the mediation roll, the mage instantly appears in an astral location closely connected to the work he just read. The only way the mage can take others with him is using the "Telepathy" spell (**Mage: The Awakening,** pp. 212-3), and casting it as a prolonged spell. However, each of the individuals with whom he is in telepathic contact when he begins meditating must also roll at least 1 success on a meditation roll or they will not be able to accompany the mage on his astral journey. In addition, either the bookworm or the person he is bringing along into the Astral Realm must spend 1 point of Mana to allow this additional person to enter the Astral Realm. If desired, the mage can spend the additional Mana himself and bring non-mages along into the Astral Realm.

Optional Arcanum: Time 4

The mage can now gain a wealth of information about the immediate future from the visual symbols around him. He can now duplicate the effects of the "Present as Past" spell (**Mage: The Awakening,** p. 264). However, he can perform this ability only once per scene, and only where he can see at least moderate amounts of text.

Challenges and Dangers

In and of itself, the book is almost never dangerous, but it can be moderately troublesome to interact with and some of its former students can be extremely risky to deal with.

The Students of the Book

The Legacy taught by this book is specifically focused around the magic inherent in books, language and in written and drawn symbols. As such, it appeals most strongly to people who are fascinated by writing and language, which is precisely who the book wishes to teach. Unlike some Legacies, students of *The Path of the Book* have little formal organization, since there is no necessity, or even possibility of any of them teaching this Legacy to students. However, most of the book's former students maintain loose contact with one another to discuss both the Legacy and any other insights provided by the book, and also to help them keep track of the book. This loose and highly diverse organization has existed since the middle of the 19th century. In addition to keeping track of its movements, the Friends of the Book regularly publish a newsletter containing the poems and other pieces of text that the book regularly reveals to its readers. This newsletter also regularly contains theories about these works and about the book as a whole.

Many of the people who have convinced the book to teach them both admire and genuinely like *The Loquacious Grimoire* and wish to make certain it is used only by people who will truly appreciate it. As a result, some of the book's former students regularly check on its present location and current owner and report any information they obtain to the other members of this group. When someone acquires the book and is having trouble convincing it to teach him, one or more members of the Friends of the Book may contact the mage with various suggestions, which typically range from useful advice to occasional insults implying that the student is unworthy of the book's attentions. Also, when a mage has mastered this Legacy the other members of the Friends of the Book are likely to wish to discuss theories and opinions about the book and its teachings with her.

The members of the Friends of the Book are highly protective of this volume, and a few actually worship or revere it. If the book refuses to teach someone, but the person attempts to keep the book, one or more members of the Friends are likely to contact this mage and attempt to persuade him to give the book to someone else. Members of the Friends of the Book are also likely to contact mages who have studied the book but now refuse to pass it on. If the mage refuses to relinquish the book, these requests often escalate to personal visits and veiled threats, and occasionally into actions ranging from carefully watching the mage in an attempt to find some bit of information with which they can blackmail him to attempts to steal the book.

In addition, while most of the book's former students wish to avoid discussing this fact, the book is occasionally willing to teach students ranging from Seers of the Throne to mages who deal with the Abyss or who have at best a tenuous grasp on both sanity and morals. Being taught by the book means the student loves words and symbols and is a devoted bibliophile who is willing to put up with *The Loquacious Grimoire*'s odd requests. However, having a close relationship with this book means absolutely nothing about the mage's morals, ethics or sanity; the book cares nothing about the morals of its students.

Some of the individuals keeping track of the book's movements and eagerly discussing the book with other mages are highly unstable or otherwise potentially dangerous. As a result, some individuals seeking to learn from the book occasionally find themselves being threatened by angry mages who consider them to be unworthy of the book's teaching. In addition, in the past 15 years, several of the Seers of the Throne who have been taught by this book have attempted to either steal the book from Pentacle mages who are studying it or to kill any Pentacle mages who are learning from it in an effort to restrict the book's knowledge solely to the Seers.

Acquiring the Book

The Loquacious Grimoire is usually bought, sold, traded or given as a gift, but occasionally it simply shows up to a mage. The Legacy associated with the book involves the use of both Mind and Fate magics, and the book can also independently use minor magics associated with both Arcana. Specifically, it can duplicate the effects of the Fate rotes "Shifting the Odds" and "Winds of Fate" and

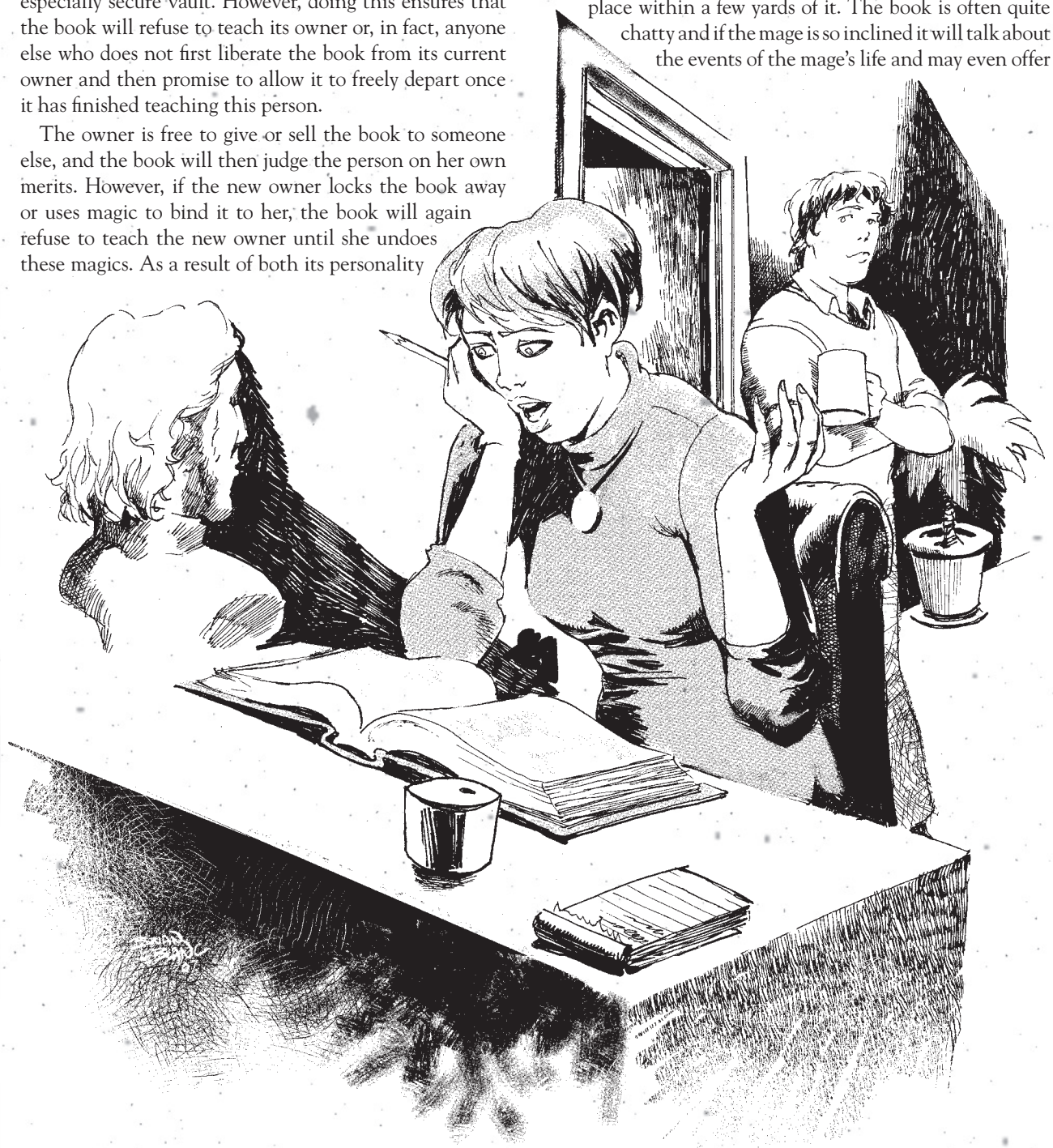
the Mind rotes "Emotional Urgings" and "Incognito Presence." It cannot and will not use these rotes on demand or to aid its current owner, and many mages believe it is incapable of consciously using these rotes. Instead, these are magical effects that simply occur when it is time for the book to find a new owner.

The Loquacious Grimoire typically begins using these effects once it has finished teaching someone its Legacy or if it has refused to teach someone at all. At this point, a skilled and powerful mage can easily keep it through the use of more powerful spells or by simply locking it in an especially secure vault. However, doing this ensures that the book will refuse to teach its owner or, in fact, anyone else who does not first liberate the book from its current owner and then promise to allow it to freely depart once it has finished teaching this person.

The owner is free to give or sell the book to someone else, and the book will then judge the person on her own merits. However, if the new owner locks the book away or uses magic to bind it to her, the book will again refuse to teach the new owner until she undoes these magics. As a result of both its personality and magics, the book is continuously on the move. Some owners have kept it in their libraries for several years by regularly allowing a wide range of people to study from it, but eventually even these efforts fail and the book will ask to be free to go to another owner.

Communicating with the Book

The book cannot speak, but it is clearly intelligent. The words on its pages change as they are read, and it responds to speech in all languages that anyone has used to try to communicate with it as well as to any writing that takes place within a few yards of it. The book is often quite chatty and if the mage is so inclined it will talk about the events of the mage's life and may even offer



advice, which is typically no more or less useful than advice he might receive from a well meaning colleague. However, most mages seek this text to learn from it.

The book is as vulnerable to most magic as any other object. However, the unique nature of its consciousness means it is completely immune to all Mind spells. Mages cannot read or even detect the book's thoughts, nor can they effectively translate text that it deliberately garbles.

The book loves to show the way to the Legacy contained within it, but it is also an exceedingly capricious and mercurial teacher. When some mages open it, it immediately takes a liking to them and is eager to teach them all it knows. Most of these mages are bibliophiles who love both books and learning, but having all these characteristics does not guarantee the book will react positively to someone — the book reacts this well only to a small fraction of those who open it. To others, often but far from always people who are rude to it or rough with it, the book shows only gibberish and refuses to ever teach them. However, the majority of mages who wish to learn from *The Loquacious Grimoire* must work to gain the book's friendship and eventually its teaching. This effort always involves being willing to read and give honest but polite opinions about the odd pieces of poetry and short stories the book shows them. These works range from excellent to dreadful to simply eccentric.

However, in the vast majority of cases the book also asks for several more unusual favors. Some involve caring for it. It is a moderately vain being and regularly requests some bit of ornament for its cover. The book's demands can include everything from asking to be professionally re-covered in the finest virgin lambskin dyed a particular shade of color, to more eccentric requests, like wishing to have a thin and intricately carved metal bookmark that clips to the pages and to have this bookmark made of solid thaumium. Alternately, the book sometimes wishes public acclaim. It sometimes asks the owner to give (or arrange for someone else to give) a public reading of some of its stories or poetry to a large number of Sleepers. Naturally, the book is far more cooperative if the Sleepers react at least somewhat positively to the performance — the latter requirement usually results in some mixture of finding a talented reader, a receptive audience and the correct Mind rotes to influence the audience's opinion of the reading.

However, many of its requests are far less comprehensible. The book sometimes asks its current owner to perform one or more seemingly random actions. These actions can range from uttering a cryptic phrase to a particular stranger at a specific time or bumping into a specific person and causing that person to spill his or her coffee, to handing out religious tracts to every person with grey eyes the mage passes on the street on a particular day. While sometimes quite easy to perform, equally often these requests can be exceedingly challenging and can involve stealing a seemingly trivial item like an old souvenir from the house of someone with an expensive alarm system or obtaining a specific costume jewelry ring from a bank's safety deposit box.

Because of the book's inherent connection to the Fate Arcana, most mages who have studied it assume these requests are an effort to cause subtle but meaningful changes in the world. No one has discovered the purpose behind its requests, but mages in both the Mysterium and the Free Council regularly study the records of these requests and the outcomes produced by them. In general, the book asks most people who come into possession of it to perform between three and five tasks, which usually consist of a mixture of the various types mentioned above.

Connections to Previous Students

Mages understand that attaining a Legacy permanently reshapes the student's soul, but what is far less widely known is that learning *The Loquacious Grimoire*'s Legacy also creates a lasting bond between the book and every student who has ever studied it. The book will reveal this bond if asked directly about it, but almost never volunteers the information. To use the book in this fashion, the reader must first ask it to cause a picture of the desired student to appear on the page. This picture can be used as a close sympathetic connection to the target, just like a normal photograph.

Usually, the only way to learn about this capacity of the book is to be on good terms with the book, and to ask about its previous students, and to continue to ask the right questions. However, mages can also obtain this information if they ask the book what else it can do and offer it some object or service that it wants very much. In both such cases, the book reveals its connection to former students, but before the book produces a sympathetically accurate picture of a previous student, it requires a fairly significant service from its owner. Each new picture requires a new service, performed in advance. Only a handful of mages have uncovered this capability of *The Loquacious Grimoire*, and almost all of them have performed an equally major service for it in return for a promise that it will never reveal any information about them, including the fact that they ever studied the book. However, even with this protection, if someone knew or suspected that one of these individuals learned the book's Legacy, a sufficiently impressive bribe would convince the book to serve as a sympathetic connection to this person.

Researching *The Loquacious Grimoire*

Capping Ability: Occult

Action: Extended (16 successes)

Research Time: 30 minutes

Appropriate Libraries: Occult, History

Bonuses: Mysterium membership (+1),

Penalties: No dots in Occult (-1)

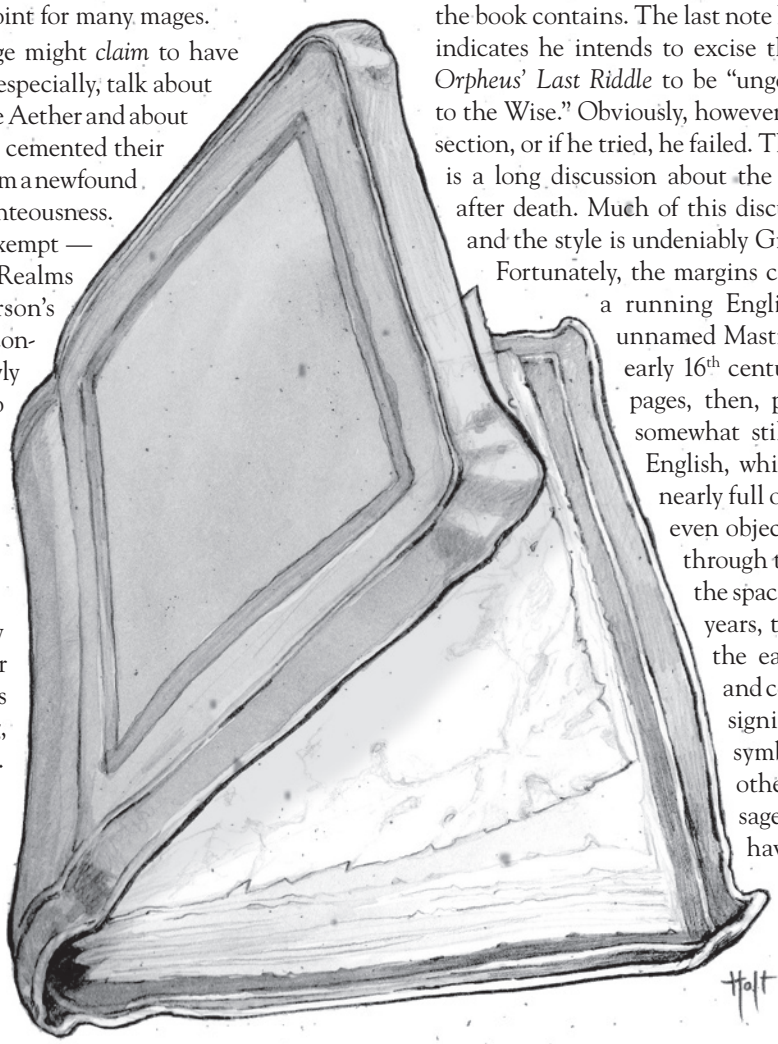
Successes	Information
0-4	Nothing.
5-10	*The Loquacious Grimoire* contains no spells. Instead it teaches a powerful and unique Legacy that can be learned only from the book. The book is also an intelligent being and teaches this Legacy only to those mages it likes or who are willing to do services for it.
11-15	This grimoire immediately likes some readers and teaches them without reservation. It also dislikes a few and will never teach them. However, most readers must perform various services for it in order to obtain its cooperation. Attempting to read the book with out its cooperation is useless. In addition, the book enjoys being read by new readers and will request to be given to someone else once the mage has finished studying it. Previous students of the book often keep in touch and are willing to provide suggestions on how best to deal with it. However, some of these students can become angry at anyone they think is mistreating the book.
16+	Many of the book's requests are quite eccentric, as are many of the snippets of writing it reveals. Also, it does not teach only sane and rational mages. It has also taught servants of the Abyss and occasionally even Seers of the Throne. Some of these mages attempt to steal the book or harm any non-corrupt mage who studies it. There are many as yet unproven stories that the book can do more than simply teach a Legacy, including one well documented account of someone who claimed to use it to become an Archmage of Spirit.



Orpheus' Last Riddle

Faith is a sticking point for many mages.

Oh, certainly a mage might *claim* to have faith. Obrimos mages, especially, talk about their experiences in the Aether and about how those experiences cemented their belief, or instilled in them a newfound sense of purpose or righteousness. Other Paths are not exempt — any of the Supernal Realms might confirm a person's religious or spiritual convictions, or lead the newly Awakened person into belief.



But to draw upon memory, upon objective experience — is that truly faith? Faith must allow for uncertainty, for the possibility that one is wrong or that one's convictions are based on nothing, but believing anyway. Awakened life has its share of uncertainty, but mages who claim faith usually have factual basis for their beliefs. Even so, some events seem to be truly miraculous, impossible even by the laws of the Supernal Realm, and yet achievable. One such miracle is *Orpheus' Last Riddle*. If the *Riddle* could be unlocked, it supposedly holds the key to thwarting death — or perhaps even the Abyss.

Orpheus' Last Riddle is only one part of a larger grimoire (though the name is used to refer to the entire book rather than just the relevant section). The grimoire is a loosely bound book, the ink faded but still legible, the cover made from thin leather. The binding of the book is thin hair, and the pages are made from leaves and thin bark. The greatest miracle of *Last Riddle*, more than one mage has remarked, is that it holds together at all. And yet it does — there is not so much as a tear in the paper nor a flake of ink that falls from it, no matter how roughly it is treated.

The first two thirds of the book have occasional notes in the margins, most of them in Latin and in the same handwriting. These notes are allegedly from a 9th-century "magus" who felt the need to codify the rotes this section of the book contains. The last note he makes in the grimoire indicates he intends to excise the final third, declaring *Orpheus' Last Riddle* to be "ungodly" and "a temptation to the Wise." Obviously, however, he did not tear out this section, or if he tried, he failed. The final third of the book is a long discussion about the soul and its disposition after death. Much of this discussion is in poetic form, and the style is undeniably Greek (as is the language). Fortunately, the margins contain enough space for a running English translation, and an unnamed Mastigos provided this in the early 16th century. The left sides of the pages, then, provide a translation in somewhat stilted but understandable English, while the right margins are nearly full of commentary, ideas and even objections from readers down through the centuries. As more of the space has been eaten over the years, the notes have crept into the earlier parts of the book, and contributors have taken to signing their notes with tiny symbols and ordinals so that others can follow their messages. As it is, the messages have grown so convoluted that only a dedicated researcher would even bother.

History

The history of *Orpheus' Last Riddle* is more mythology than established fact. The story of Orpheus himself is one with which most mages are familiar. Orpheus, in Greek legend, was the son of Calliope, the muse of epic poetry and eloquence. His songs were so beautiful that the rocks themselves would uproot themselves to move close enough to hear them, and the beasts and birds would tamely sit at his feet. Orpheus fell in love with a woman named Eurydice, and on their wedding day she stepped on a venomous serpent. She died from its bite and her soul fell into the Underworld, but Orpheus wasn't about to let his love go.

Orpheus ventured into the lands of the dead to reclaim his wife. Cerberus, the three-headed guardian dog of the Underworld, lay down at Orpheus' song. Hades himself wept at his song, and agreed to let Eurydice return — on one condition. Orpheus had to lead her out of the darkness, never looking back to make sure she was there. And so Orpheus began his ascent, but could hear no footsteps

From personal correspondence between Rosemary (Acanthus of the Mysterium) and her mentor

Every time I read it, I cry. I can't help it. Somewhere in those pages is the answer, a way to bring peace to all of the people that I — that we — sing for and remember. It's there in the Riddle, locked behind language and old terms, I know it. How many of us have to try? How many more theories scratched out in the margins?

I think, maybe, that in those pages is Orpheus himself, writing his last testament to the world before he went down into the Underworld to find his beloved. I wonder what he would have written if he'd come back with her, what kind of joyous words we'd see set down. I wonder if we'd still be arguing over whether the Gateway is in Asia Minor or Antarctica.

I'll return it next week, I promise.

— Rosemary

behind him. He could see the gateway to the living world, but he lost faith and turned to see his bride. And he did… for one brief moment before her soul fell back to Hades.

Back in the land of living, Orpheus fell to despair. He sang, but his songs were so sad that the land itself wept with his grief. Eventually he crossed paths with the Maenads, berserker women who called him to join their revelry. When he would not, they took offense and tore him to pieces.

The Truth Behind the Legend

This is the version of the story most students of mythology know. The Awakened, of course, believe there are aspects to the story Sleepers do not see. Orpheus, they claim, *did* descend into the Underworld to reclaim his bride, but he did not reach the afterlife of Greek myth. Instead, he Awakened, and so found himself in the Kingdom of Crypts, the Supernal Realm of Stygia. There he searched for his bride, but instead found a deep and abiding truth — death is forever. Once a mortal dies and her soul has passed on, she cannot be reclaimed. A mortal's soul can be stolen or consumed, it can be Awakened or remain Asleep, it can linger as a ghost or suffer any of a number of terrifying fates in the World of Darkness. But once it has moved on, it is beyond the reach of any mage. Orpheus returned to the Fallen World, wiser but heartbroken, and began a career as a solitary mage that ended in bloody violence. (At whose hands is a point of contention among Awakened historians, but the question is academic, as there is no way to verify an answer.)

During his wanderings, Orpheus made a point of seeking out beings who had witnessed, experienced or otherwise encountered death. He sang for the ancient vampiric conclaves, and in return for his voice he recorded their musings on the nature of death (and undeath). He met a man from an island called Paphos, a man who claimed to have died and seen the River Styx but returned unharmed. He met the Awakened from Crete, Athens and even strange foreign lands, and when he spoke with Masters of Death he recorded their magic in his book.

The Orphic Circle

The power of the Orpheus myth to inspire or symbolize certain notions (love conquers all, the power of faith, etc.) is undeniable. Several factions in the World of Darkness take Orpheus as their banner or namesake, and the Orphic Circle is one such. The Circle is a group of scholars who seek out a way to cast their souls into the "Underworld" (they use the term, but recognize that death doesn't necessarily conform to the ancient Greek ideal) and then return to their bodies. Thus far, they have not managed to accomplish this feat. The Circle is composed primarily of Sleepers, but a few mages claim membership or association with it — mages are by no means exempt from fascination with death.

The problem, though, is that the Circle has attracted more than its share of supernatural attention. Several of the artifacts the group has accumulated over the years are anchors for ghosts (see p. 209 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**), and so their headquarters is haunted by a number of shades. Spirits that never wore human form also stalk the building, wandering in and out of Twilight seemingly at will — the Gauntlet is extremely thin. Mages, werewolves and even vampires take notice of the place and visit, but never find the Circle up to anything particularly vicious. The Guardians of the Veil occasionally seek to use the organization as a labyrinth, but find, despite its relative ignorance, it has too much of the supernatural about it.

This is relevant to the *Last Riddle* for two reasons. First, the Circle would *love* to get its hands on the book. It is aware of the book's existence, and continually looks for leads on it, but has no concrete data. The Circle isn't violent by nature, but the things that occasionally follow it might be

(and they might include rogue mages, Banishers, hostile spirits and other supernatural beings).

Second, a passage in the *Last Riddle* mentions "my children, of my blood and my name," and warns that they would "use my words as a key, but in the wrong lock" and bring "black fire and white ash" to the world. Scholars of the *Last Riddle* have occasionally come to the conclusion that this passage refers to the Circle, and conspire to keep it far away from the unsuspecting occultists.

The Grimoire's Creation

The grimoire now known as *Orpheus' Last Riddle* (Orpheus himself never gave it a name) began a true grimoire, a collection of spells. But over his life, Orpheus stopped recording "simple" magic and instead mused on the nature of death itself and, more importantly, the soul and its disposition. He had come to understand that Stygia was not the Underworld of which he had been taught, and that humanity had a way of simplifying (or, conversely, overcomplicating) Supernal truth. But then, what *was* the fate of the human soul? When it "passed on," and ascended (descended?) beyond the reach of the Awakened, where did it go? Was "where" even an appropriate question? And although the Awakened could not call back a soul from this place (state?), might there be beings in the world who *could*? Awakened magic was not all-encompassing, after all, so was its inability to retrieve a soul a function of the nature of souls or a merely a limitation on the magic?

Orpheus never answered these questions, but that was (and remains) the riddle: Is the human soul ever truly lost?

The book was created from magic Orpheus never recorded (and, indeed, many modern mages suspect beings other than the Awakened were involved). The pages do not wither or fall apart not because of superior craftsmanship or magical enhancement of their durability, but because they *agreed not to*. Orpheus' songs were of such superlative quality as to induce gods to weep and rocks to move. Persuading pages of papyrus to retain their form and ink its shade for thousands of years, then, isn't so surprising. Interestingly, while additions to the book seem to share this quality, attempts to excise portions of the book or deface certain sections are doomed to fail, as though Orpheus knew (knows?) the difference between contributors and vandals or censors.

Orpheus' Death and the Book's History

Orpheus knew of his fate before it happened, but that isn't so surprising. He wrote a few short lines in the grimoire about it, the last lines found therein:

Tomorrow, I shall be rent apart. I shall die in blood and pain. The sunset I see now is my last. I take joy in my failure, and I go forward to my doom with a song on my lips.

Students of the *Last Riddle* continually argue about how to interpret these lines. The most popular interpretations are discussed under "Modern Arguments," below.

After Orpheus' death the book disappeared for many years, eventually appearing in Bulgaria in the mid-7th century. The grimoire then began its travels, passed from mage to mage. At the time, the book was considered sacred, and writing in it was taboo. As such, mages who could read it without magic were highly prized, but if no one who could read it was available, a mage with sufficient command of the Mind Arcanum had to be convinced to do so.

This continued for nearly 150 years, after which the taboo on writing in the book faded and the Latin translation appeared. At this point the book arrived in Constantinople, where it remained until the early 13th century. When Constantinople was sacked in 1204, Venetian soldiers took the book home with them. It wasn't long after the grimoire's arrival in Venice, though, before it was in Awakened hands again. The book then began to travel again, passed between Consilii (but usually in the hands of a Moros, in deference to its author). This continued for several centuries, until a Mastigos (who refused to provide even a Shadow Name) translated the book into English in 1710. Since then, the book has been to North America, South America, the Middle East, and back to Europe.

The Tomb of Orpheus

In Tatul, a village in modern-day Bulgaria, lies a Thracian edifice marked as the "Tomb of Orpheus." Historians interested in the *Last Riddle* note that the book first surfaced near this tomb, and wonder whether the tomb is, in fact, the resting place of the true Orpheus. Of course, most legends say that after the Maenads were finished with Orpheus there was nothing left but a head, so the tomb might be monument to the Greek mage without actually containing his earthly remains.

Whatever the truth of it, one fact remains — the area is a dead zone for magic. Any spell, no matter how powerful or subtle, ends whenever the caster comes within 200 feet of the tomb. The effect seems to be caused by a spell similar to Quell the Spark (p. 145 of **Mage: The Awakening**), but since it cancels magic in the area, scrutiny is impossible. Current Awakened theory states that Orpheus might be a ghost mage (see p. 327 of **Mage: The Awakening**), and the magic-deadening effect an offshoot of his powerful Death magic. And common explanation is that the tomb sits on an Atlantean temple, but again, no magical study has yet been possible. The grimoire, of course, might contain the secret, but if so, no one has discovered it.

Modern Arguments

What was Orpheus truly trying to accomplish by writing the grimoire? Mages across the centuries have come up with many, many theories, but they tend to fall into one of the following general groupings:

• **Orpheus learned his lesson:** Some mages feel that after his long career searching for the "answers" to death, Orpheus learned death doesn't have an answer. Death is immutable, and trying to conquer it is hubris of the highest order. Some proponents of this theory maintain that Orpheus committed suicide by throwing himself to the Maenads (whatever they truly were) in penance. These mages often use the *Riddle* as an example of what *not* to do.

• **Orpheus died on the cusp of victory:** Orpheus was on to something big when he died, according to some mages, many of them Moros or Mysterium historians. The last few lines in the book were edited, probably by the same party (variously assumed to be an Abyssal creature, the Seers of the Throne, or even a cabal of Order mages) who killed Orpheus. But most of the book's content remains viable, so Orpheus' work *could* be completed. The problem is that advocates of this theory can't agree on what they're looking for in the text.

• **Orpheus is playing us all for fools:** Some Awakened feel that Orpheus actually came to terms with the loss of his wife following his journey to Stygia, and although he remained distant thereafter, he wasn't without humor. His "riddle" is ultimately one without an answer, but Orpheus knew as much. He constructed the grimoire to encourage acceptance of death, so as to help mages enjoy and fully appreciate life.

• **Orpheus never found his answer:** Romantic mages feel that Orpheus never stopped searching for a way to return Eurydice to life, but at the end of his own time on Earth, found solace in the belief that he would see her again in the hereafter. (Pessimists among this faction sometimes posit that his ghost is the stifling force around Orpheus' tomb in Bulgaria; see the sidebar.)

Contents

As mentioned, the first two-thirds of *Orpheus' Last Riddle* contains inscribed spells. Students of Orpheus' life wonder about his motives in inscribing so many spells into the grimoire, and whether one of the spells he inscribed might have saved his life (but since he apparently foresaw his own death, he might not have *tried* to protect himself). The last third contains ruminations on the nature of death and the soul, and wisdom awaits a mage willing to study these lessons.

Spells

The following spells from **Mage: The Awakening** are inscribed as rotes into *Orpheus' Last Riddle*: "Alter Oath" (p. 154), "Geas" (p. 160), "Ghost Gate" (p. 139), "Ghost Summons" (p. 137), "Quell the Spark" (p. 145), "Read the Outmost Eddies" (p. 149), "Soul Marks" (p. 135), "Speak with the Dead" (p. 135), "Summon the Dead" (p. 146), "Swearing an Oath" (p. 153), "Touch of the Grave" (p. 138), "Twilight Shift" (p. 145).

In addition, the grimoire contains three spells created by Orpheus himself.

Orpheus' Lament (Death ●●●)

The mage creates an ambiance of death so profound that sentient beings are driven to tears (or driven away) by it. The rote as written in the *Last Riddle* requires the caster to sing or otherwise create music in order to achieve this effect, and the grimoire even includes lyrics (in Greek, granted) that speak of love lost, light extinguished and the inevitability of death.

Practice: Perfecting

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls Composure + Gnosis reflexively

Duration: Concentration

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

Casting this rote as described in the grimoire requires that the mage sings or plays an appropriately depressing song. A mage who improvises this spell doesn't have to provide a musical component, but the player suffers a -1 to the casting roll. The song engulfs any sentient being within earshot with a feeling of depression and hopelessness. Any listener whose player fails to exceed the mage's casting successes on a Composure + Gnosis roll suffers a penalty to *all* deliberate actions equal to the mage's successes. A "deliberate" action is one into which the character must put conscious effort. Attacking an enemy, searching for an exit and driving a car are all deliberate actions, but a reflexive roll to resist another power is not. Perception rolls are not necessarily deliberate, but noticing one's surroundings does require a degree of involvement with them, and so such rolls receive a negative modifier equal to the mage's Expression rating.

Obviously, characters who cannot hear are exempt from the effects of this spell. Also, the caster has no ability to choose targets — it affects everyone within earshot. He can warn any allies in the area, of course, enabling them to prepare themselves (casting a Mental Shield, using earplugs, spending Willpower on the resistance roll), but beyond that, the song saddens everyone who hears it. The effect lasts as long as the mage keeps singing.

Orpheus' Last Riddle Rote

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Expression + Death



True Love (Fate ●●●●●)

This rote doesn't see common use, especially in modern times, but it is nonetheless one of the most frequently cited and quoted sections of *Orpheus' Last Riddle*. The spell is buried in a long, moving poem written to Eurydice by Orpheus. Part of the poem remarks upon her beauty and her grace, but much of it is a collection of moments — descriptions of how sunlight played on her hair on a particular day, or the sound of her laugh or of something she whispered to him while they made love. The spell itself does not create love, but gives it a supernatural depth. Lovers who undertake this spell must be very, very careful — if love sours, this spell becomes a curse.

Practice: Making

Action: Extended

Duration: Special (see below)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana, plus 1 Willpower from each party affected

The mage must join the lovers' hands as she completes the spell, and the lovers must make a declaration of their ardor for each other. This can be an elaborate vow or a simple "I love you," but when the spell is complete, the love takes on a *geas*-like quality. From then on, the lovers enjoy the following effects:

• Each can sense when the other is in pain or in danger, from any distance. No information about the particular reason for the distress is granted, only a sudden feeling of fear.

• Each of the lovers can spend Willpower for the other. This enables the lovers to enjoy the effects of 2 Willpower points (for a total of +6) on a given roll.

• If the lovers are together, any reflexive resistance rolls made to counter supernatural mind- or emotion-controlling powers are made jointly. For instance, if a spell is contested against Composure + Gnosis, both lovers make this roll and the successes are totaled. The aggressor must beat this total in order to affect the target. If the power subtracts a Resistance trait instead of calling for a resistance roll, the aggressor subtracts *both* lovers' traits.

This spell is always cast with a conditional Duration. (See p. 150 of **Mage: The Awakening.**) The condition is this: If one lover betrays the other, the spell's effects immediately

end and each party becomes unable to regain Willpower by *any* method while the other lives. This is, of course, a fairly easy situation to remedy…

Orpheus' Last Riddle Rote

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Expression + Fate

Eternal Object (Time ●●●● + Matter ●)

This spell allows the mage to "freeze" an object in time, preserving it in its current state. Despite the name, though, the spell isn't necessarily permanent. Students of the *Last Riddle* feel that this spell was a precursor to whatever magic currently enchants the grimoire, since that magic is considerably more potent than this spell.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (1 scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: Special (see below)

This spell functions on any single object up to Size 10. While this spell does function on machines, it renders them inoperable for the duration of the spell. (See below.) The target number of successes is equal to twice the Size of the object, and the mage must expend Mana equal to the object's Structure.

When the ritual is complete, the object remains in its current state for 1 scene. It cannot be altered, damaged, defaced or repaired, though it can be moved. A gun imbued with this spell could not be fired, since no part of the object can be removed (and so the bullet could not leave the chamber). A car using this spell would not function, as doing so requires gasoline to be consumed, though a bicycle would function normally. A painting could not be marred or damaged even if tossed into a bonfire. Any attempted change to an object won't "take" — fire ignores the painting, the magazine on the pistol won't eject.

At Time 5, this spell can be cast with advanced Prolongation factors, allowing an Indefinite duration.

Orpheus' Last Riddle Rote

Dice Pool: Resolve + Occult + Time

The Lessons of the Riddle

Aside from the spells, a mage who deciphers the *Last Riddle* accumulates centuries of philosophy about death, the soul and the magic affecting both. In game terms, reading the *Last Riddle* only (see below) bestows a free Occult Specialty in Human Souls or Death & the Afterlife. Reading this book might also be justification for purchasing dots in Academics, Occult, Expression (poetry), the Fate, Time or Death Arcana, the Merit: Language (Greek or Latin), or appropriate Skill Specialties.

Reading the mage commentary throughout the book is a daunting task, but it has its rewards. If a character manages to do so, and to analyze what she finds, the character gains 5 points of Arcane Experience. This experience can be applied toward Gnosis, as usual, or toward the Fate, Death or Time Arcana.

And, of course, a mage reading the *Last Riddle* might learn any of the rotes inscribed therein.

Researching *Orpheus' Last Riddle*

Capping Skill: Academics

Action: Extended — 15 successes

Research Time: 6 hours; 2 hours

Appropriate Libraries: Greek Mythology, Awakened History, Death & Afterlife, Tragic Romances

Possible Modifiers: Language Merit: Greek (+1)

Successes	Information
0-3	Nothing.
4-8	A dissertation on the Orpheus myth as a metaphor for true love and why it doesn't exist, written by an extremely nihilistic philosophy doctoral candidate. The dissertation mentions *Orpheus' Last Riddle* as a classical Greek work, "unique in that it has attracted attention from occultists across centuries."
9-12	The letter from Rosemary (quoted at the beginning of this section) to her mentor, asking for a little more time with *Orpheus' Last Riddle*. The letter quotes the *Riddle*, but mentions nothing specifically magical.
13-14	A snippet of correspondence between Consilii regarding the "path" of the book — where it was last, who had it, and where it is going next (or where it was *supposed* to go next, anyway).
15+	A detailed description of the *Last Riddle* recovered from the wreckage of a mage living in Chicago at the time of the Great Fire. This description helps to make sense of the many annotations, granting a +2 bonus to interpret the book when it is found.

Dangers

Perhaps the greatest "danger" of *Orpheus' Last Riddle* is that it is extremely difficult to read. The many contributors have taken up almost every available bit of space over the years, using numbers and symbols to redirect readers to their particular "threads" of conversation. Trying to following these threads and make sense out of them, all while reading the text of the grimoire itself, is a nightmare.

In order to read and understand the *Last Riddle*, a reader's player needs to accumulate 20 successes on an extended Intelligence + Academics roll. Each roll requires two hours of work. If the character reads ancient Greek, this roll receives a +3 modifier. If the character reads Latin, the roll receives a +2. (These modifiers are cumulative.)

Reading and parsing the commentary, however, is much more difficult. This requires an extended Intelligence + Investigation roll. Each roll requires 4 hours of work, and 40 successes are necessary to figure out the whole book. (A Storyteller might decide a given "thread" — one contributor's notes — constitutes a smaller number of successes, allowing a character to decipher a portion of the book relevant to an immediate concern without it taking months.)

Another potential danger of the *Last Riddle*, though, is that it seems to attract ghosts. The book emits a low, haunting melody at all times, audible to ghosts and anyone with active Grim Sight. While the book doesn't empower ghosts, it often intrigues them. This isn't always a problem, of course, but whenever a ghost is around, there's always the chance that something is going to remind her of the man who killed her and set her into a telekinetic fury.

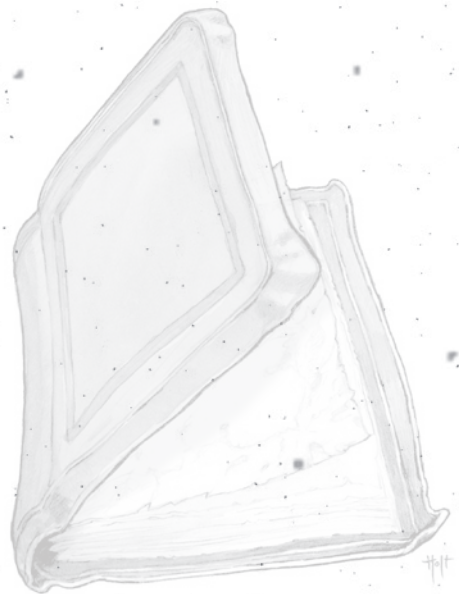
Creatures who have had a brush with death, too, feel the pull of the *Last Riddle*, though not as strongly. Vampires, Moros mages and any other being that has died, symbolically or literally (including mortals who have suffered brain death and have been revived) can hear the book's song if their players succeed on a Wits + Occult roll. The book's song is faint, and so ambient noise almost always imposes heavy penalties to this roll. A dramatic failure on the roll does not indicate any special effect; the character merely does not hear the song. Characters who *do* hear the book's song are at a loss to explain it.

Destroying the Last Riddle

Orpheus' Last Riddle has a powerful enchantment upon it, similar to the Eternal Object spell (see above), but much more potent. The book *cannot* be destroyed by normal means. It does not age or decay with time. If submerged in water, it remains dry. If cast into a fire, it does not burn. The book's pages accept ink, but only if the writing doesn't cover up existing writing. Some mages have even postulated that when the current pages are filled, new ones will appear.

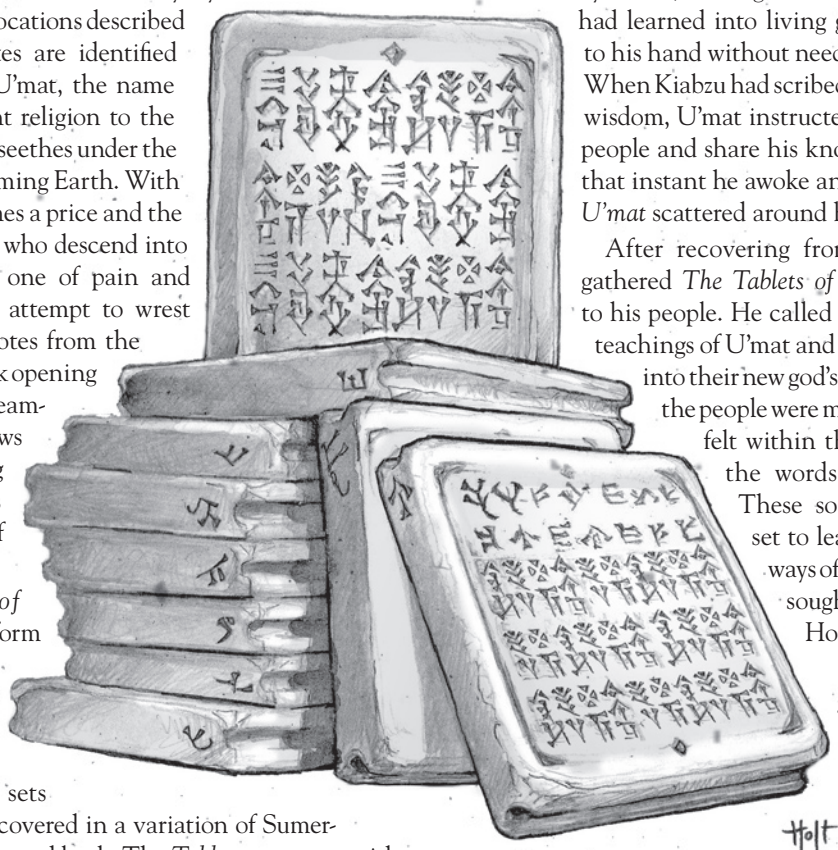
That isn't to say that the *Last Riddle* is indestructible. Below are three potential methods for destroying the book, should a cabal find it necessary to do so:

- **Solve the riddle:** If a mage ever solves the riddle, conquering death and learning the true disposition of souls (without dying himself), the book crumbles to nothing. This is, of course, an ambitious undertaking, and not a little hubristic.
- **Break the contract:** Orpheus forged an agreement with the pages and ink of the *Riddle* — they were made eternal in exchange for the songs he sang for them so many years ago. If a mage could find a way to break that bargain (and there *must* be a way to do that), the book would immediately become no different and no more durable than any other ancient text.
- **Orpheus' Tomb:** The "dead zone" outside Orpheus' Tomb in Bulgaria might dispel the magic on the *Riddle*. It doesn't normally destroy magical objects, of course, but in this case, it just might.



THE TABLETS OF U'MAT

The Tablets of U'mat is an ancient grimoire that grants its owner easy access to the Anima Mundi. For those with the capability to decipher the script engraved thereon, the *Tablets* is also a guide to rotes found in places of power in the Dreaming Earth. Each of the four rotes outlined in the *Tablets* can be learned only by visiting one of the locations described therein. These rotes are identified as the wisdom of U'mat, the name given by an ancient religion to the consciousness that seethes under the surface of the Dreaming Earth. With any knowledge comes a price and the price paid by those who descend into the Dreamtime is one of pain and terror. Those who attempt to wrest the power of the rotes from the Dreaming Earth risk opening a portal into the Dreaming Earth that allows its ever-hungering inhabitants access to the realms of flesh.



The Tablets of U'mat takes the form of 10 granite slabs, each measuring a foot tall and a foot wide. There are four identical sets in all. Each slab is covered in a variation of Sumerian cuneiform, front and back. The *Tablets* resonates with power and it may be this very aspect of the grimoire that draws the attention of a mage.

History

Myth

The Tablets of U'mat is said to have been carried out of the Dreamtime by Kiabzu, the first High Priest of the cult of U'mat. Cult legend states that Kiabzu sought power and knowledge and partook of sacred plants and scourged his flesh to bring on visions. In his visions, the High Priest descended into the Anima Mundi and made his way to the Dreaming Earth. Kiabzu was awed by the power of nature ascendant and sensed a vast consciousness governing the behavior of the flora and fauna. After many days of fasting and bloody sacrifice, the High Priest managed to connect with that consciousness and was moved to ecstasy at its touch.

He named the consciousness U'mat, which meant multitudinous in his tongue. U'mat spoke to Kiabzu in the tongue of beast, the slither of serpent and the rustle of vines. Kiabzu followed the voice of U'mat to the four Holy Places and learned the secrets contained therein. In each of the four Holy Places, the High Priest scribed the secrets he had learned into living granite, which yielded to his hand without need for hammer or chisel. When Kiabzu had scribed the last of his gleaned wisdom, U'mat instructed him to return to his people and share his knowledge with them. In that instant he awoke and found *The Tablets of U'mat* scattered around him.

After recovering from his ordeal, Kiabzu gathered *The Tablets of U'mat* and showed it to his people. He called for them to follow the teachings of U'mat and promised to lead them into their new god's very presence. Some of the people were moved by the power they felt within the *Tablets* and heeded the words of the High Priest. These so-called Favored Ones set to learning the path to the ways of the Multitudinous and sought visions of the four Holy Places of U'mat.

The priests of lesser gods were angered by this new religion, jealous of the power of U'mat. They named Kiabzu heretic and blasphemer and drove the followers of U'mat into the desert, Undaunted by their exile, the cult continued to study the *Tablets* and grew in strength and numbers as members began to receive visions of the four Holy Places and heard the voice of U'mat. The priests of lesser gods began to grow fearful of the cult and so raised a mighty army to slaughter it and smash the holy *Tablets*.

When the army arrived at the gates of the temple to U'mat, Kiabzu met them.

"U'mat is strong. We do not fear your swords, your arrows, your spears. Come then and kill us, but know that the Multitudinous will spring forth from every drop of blood we shed."

Laughing at the High Priest, the soldiers attacked the temple and killed every man, woman and child within its bounds. They desecrated the altars and cast *The Tablets of U'mat* from the towers of the temple. Their laughter turned to fear when they saw the *Tablets* smash into the ground. From each broken piece of slab, a new tablet sprang

into being bearing the words of the old. Again and again they smashed the *Tablets*, thereby increasing the words of U'mat. Finally, the priests of lesser gods told the soldiers to gather the *Tablets*.

"If we cannot destroy these abominations, we will bury them from sight. Let the name U'mat and the blasphemies contained on these rocky slabs be hidden from the eyes of man for all time."

So they buried the *Tablets* deep in a pit and covered it with the bodies of the Favored Ones and the rubble of the temple. The soldiers were forced to swear terrible oaths that they would never reveal this hiding place. So it was that the words and wisdom of U'mat were covered in darkness. But U'mat is patient.

U'mat in Darkness

Filled with the terrible knowledge of the looming fate of U'mat's Favored Ones, Kiabzu had sent a third of the cult members to hide in the desert. From their hiding places they wailed and gnashed their teeth as they watched their loved ones killed, their home destroyed. When the army led by the priests of lesser gods left, the Favored Ones in hiding marked well the placed the *Tablets* had been hidden. Then they scattered to the winds to settle new lands and multiply.

In this they followed the words of the High Priest when he said to them, "Go from this place with the words of U'mat in your hearts. Mark you well the resting places of

07/13/07

The museum received an anonymous shipment today consisting of a large wooden crate. There was no return address on the label and the shipping company had no record of where the crate was shipped from. We scanned the crate for signs of explosives or biological agents and, upon finding neither, opened it. Inside were 10 stone tablets, each measuring 1' x 1'. I didn't immediately recognize the writing on the tablets, but it reminds me strongly of Sumerian cuneiform.

07/14/07

We have begun work on translating the tablets. My initial impression was correct. The writing on the tablets is a derivative of Sumerian cuneiform. The word U'mat appears with high frequency on the tablets, as well as the words Kiabzu and Favored Ones. Perhaps the tablets are the remnants of some long vanished religion?

07/18/07

I haven't updated recently. Most of my spare time has been given over to translation of the tablets. I've become increasingly fascinated with them to the point I have begun dreaming of the places described. Horrid dreams of a world overrun by nature in which man is a hunted beast.

07/20/07

They aren't dreams. I set Aiden to watch me as I slept and he used magic to determine I was in fact astrally projecting. I have determined to set aside the tablets until I can control these visions.

07/22/07

The dreams won't stop. Last night I traveled to one of the "Holy Places" of U'mat mentioned in the tablets. I felt as though I was being watched the entire time, but I did come away with a spell hinted at in the tablets.

07/23/07

I've resumed study of the tablets in the hope I can find a solution to my unwanted excursions. Horrible growling sounds outside the sanctum; they remind me of the dreams.

07/24/07

Aiden is dead. We found him with his throat ripped out and partially eaten on the back lawn. Dear god, is it my fault?

07/27/07

I'm going to die. I can hear them prowling outside my windows. There is no escape from the dreams.

(— From the diary of Bo Tyra of Cleveland. Entire cabal found dead, as though ripped apart by wild animals. No tablets or research relevant to same found on site.)

the Tablets of U'mat, but do not seek to rescue them! Divide your numbers and travel to new lands. Recite to each other the wisdom of U'mat. You will know the day to return has come when U'mat is lifted from the darkness."

The Favored Ones did as instructed and, for a time, kept the words of U'mat alive by speaking them to each other. As more time passed and the Favored Ones prospered, they began to forget to speak the words until, eventually, the name U'mat was remembered by only a few. Still U'mat waited.

The Darkness Lifted

In 1920 a British archaeological team traveling through southern Turkistan heard rumors from a local source about an ancient set of ruins nearby in the desert that had never been excavated. Although the team was intrigued, plans were already in place for work at a different site. The information was noted down and nothing more was done until 1922 when Howard Carter's discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb set the world ablaze with curiosity about the past. A team was assembled to ascertain the veracity of the rumors and in early 1923 it began its initial digs.

From the outset, the camp suffered a number of calamities that set the local workers to whispering about the place being cursed. The problems at the site ranged from simple misunderstanding about the location of the dig, which resulted in a week-long delay, to several cases of men walking in their sleep, one of whom died when he fell down a shaft. Ignoring the superstitions of the natives, the British pressed forward with their plans and almost immediately began to uncover ancient masonry piled like rubble.

Excavation slowed at this point and it wasn't until mid-1924 that the archaeologists discovered the first skeletons buried beneath the rubble. Time and the natural forces of decay made it impossible for the archaeologists to determine the exact number of skeletons disinterred, but the British put the number at somewhere over 100. Discussions about the probable cause of such a mass graveyard were lively in the camp, especially when it was discovered that every skeleton bore the unmistakable signs of violence.

When the last of the skeletons had been removed, the archaeologists resumed digging and recovered the first in a series of stone tablets. The slabs were uniform in size and appearance, each one a square measuring a foot high and a foot wide. Remarkably, none of them had broken over the ages and every one was covered in an ancient script. The last of the tablets was removed from the site in late 1925 and preparations had begun to ship them back to England when the camp was attacked during the night.

Confused reports from survivors of the assault place the numbers of their attackers at anywhere from 20 to 30 well armed men, all wearing turbans, with scarves covering their faces. When morning came, the survivors crept warily back into camp to find that all the tablets had been stolen. The

Researching *The Tablets of U'mat*

Capping Skill: Academics

Action: Extended — 15 successes

Research Time: 4 hours; 1 hour

Appropriate Libraries: Nazi Occult Practices, Academics, Archaeology, Astral Projection

Possible Modifiers: Language Merit •••• or higher (+1), Archaeology Academics Specialty (+1), Contacts in British Museums (+2)

Successes	Information
0-3	Nothing.
4-8	Declassified British World War II era document of a set of stone tablets recovered from the vaults of Nazi Germany. Document records measurements of the tablets.
9-12	Mention of the name U'mat in an old archaeological research journal published in England. Passing reference to etchings made of stolen stone tablets.
13-14	Copy of one of the etchings made by British archaeologists of stone tablets discovered in southern Turkey. Original etchings preserved at a British museum. The copy is of about half an etching and, when translated, describes Kiabzu and his vision quest to gain knowledge and power. Accompanying letter notes the last request for copies of the etchings came from an American museum. Records of exactly which museum were lost.
15+	Copy of the diary of Bo Tyra (see main text) from a Mysterium Curator in Cleveland.

British lodged a formal complaint with local authorities then returned to England to study the etchings they had made of the tablets before their theft.

The Favored Ones

Unknown to the archaeologists, their camp had been infiltrated and spied upon by descendants of the Favored Ones who had remained true to the words of U'mat. When they saw the words of their god lifted from the darkness they knew the time had come to reclaim their heritage.

By this time the numbers of the Favored Ones had dwindled to only a few families that kept in contact with each other, forming a secret society dedicated to the recovery of the *Tablets*. When word came to them that archaeologists were digging in the ruins of their lost temple, the Favored Ones watched with mounting excitement as the lore that had been passed by word of mouth over the centuries was proven to be true. When, at last, all the tablets had been removed from the ground, they attacked the camp and took the set for themselves.

Over the following decade the Favored Ones worked at translating the words written on the stone slabs at their motherhouse in western Poland. The language proved to be a variation of Sumerian cuneiform and the Favored Ones had just begun to experiment with resurrecting the ancient forms of worship so described when Poland was invaded by Nazi Germany. Located as they were in western Poland, the motherhouse was attacked by the Germans before the Favored Ones had a chance to move the *Tablets* to a more secure location. A few of the Favored Ones escaped to safety, but the majority stayed to defend the *Tablets* with their lives, their blood sacrifice stirring the grimoire's slumbering power. U'mat waited no more.

Modern Era

The trail of the *Tablets* becomes confused after the fall of Nazi Germany in 1945. It is known from the records of the British archaeologists that as many as four complete sets of the *Tablets* existed, each set consisting of 10 tablets. It is likely that the troops of the nascent Soviet Union looted some of the tablets from their resting place in Berlin, but it also seems possible that the Americans and the British managed to obtain sets of them as well. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the *Tablets* were likely among the treasures sold by the Russians to fund their new government and it has been long suspected that the fourth set of *Tablets* is in the hands of private collectors.

Contents

The grimoire itself is nothing less than a guide to the Dreamtime, specifically the Dreaming Earth. Through study of the *Tablets*, a researcher follows a road map to specific sites within the Dreaming Earth named as places of power by the worshippers of U'mat. Each tablet must be studied individually, requiring 10 successes on an extended Research action (see p. 40 of **World of Darkness**) to fully translate. The *Tablets* relates the story of the worshippers of U'mat (called Favored Ones), directs the reader to the locations of their Holy Places and provides instruction on the actions required to gain the wisdom from each place. The grimoire itself includes only partial explanations on how to learn and cast the rotes listed below. Only by visiting the Dreaming Earth can a mage gain the knowledge necessary to claim the power of U'mat.

Places of Power

Without some idea of a destination it is literally possible to travel the Dreaming Earth forever. In this place of nature ascendant, the works of humans are humbled; vine, tooth and blood rule all. Without the directions provided by the *Tablets*, finding the Holy Places of U'mat would be next to impossible. Travel to the places of power is also made easier by the nature of the *Tablets* to draw the reader to them. (See Dangers, below.) It is possible to find the first of the Holy Places by means of normal astral travel, but a traveler might waste days doing so.

The Source

The first of the places of power is called the Source by Kiabzu. The Source is the epitome of all earthly rivers and it lies on the border of the Dreaming Earth. Kiabzu traveled along the banks of the river for a long time, searching in vain for a crossing. Eventually he abandoned his search and prepared himself to swim the waters. The waters of the Source were swift and deathly cold. Kiabzu struggled to reach the far shore, slowly losing all sensation in his extremities. When at last he reached the opposite bank he collapsed in exhaustion. As he lay huddled on the shore, shaking from the shock of exposure, U'mat spoke to him and Kiabzu scribed the words into the rocky face of the bank.

"You have swum through the Source of all life and paid the price of your crossing in pain. Look now and see the way the waters travel bringing life and energy to all things. Follow the greatest line of power and, if you prove worthy, I will speak with you again."

Kiabzu raised his head and found he could see lines of energy flowing away from the river like tributaries in reverse. One particular line surged from the river like a great shining road and it was this line Kiabzu followed.

In order to learn the following rote, a mage must follow in the footsteps of Kiabzu and swim the Source. This requires an Extended Strength + Swimming action. Each roll represents 5 minutes and a total of 5 successes must be gained to successfully swim the river. If a character is unable to garner 5 successes in a number of rolls equal to his Stamina rating he suffers a cumulative -1 die penalty on each additional roll from exposure to the icy water.

Paths of Power (Prime ●●)

This rote allows the mage to see ley lines and to sense the direction of the nearest.

Practice: Knowing
Action: Instant
Duration: Prolonged (1 scene)
Aspect: Covert
Cost: None

With a single success on the casting roll the character sees ley lines as streams of bright greenish-blue power flowing through the earth. If no ley line is within the immediate line of sight of the mage, he can sense the direction of the nearest as a reflexive action.

Tablets of U'mat Rote
Dice Pool: Wits + Occult + Prime

Vale of Harmony

Kiabzu followed the glowing path as commanded by U'mat. As he traveled he was repeatedly attacked by the ever-hungry creatures of the Dreaming Earth. Kiabzu fled from these attacks when he could, hid from them when he was able and fought when given no other option. At last he made his way into a peaceful vale where he sat on a stone and tended to his many wounds.

As he rested, Kiabzu noticed the creatures in the vale behaved in ways similar to his own during his travel to the vale. Weaker creatures hid or fled from stronger ones and fought only when necessary. Even the strongest of predators shied away from conflict that didn't lead to prey or protection of its own kind. To behave in any other way was to risk precious energy that could be better expended on finding food or shelter. While he pondered this idea, the voice of U'mat spoke to him.

"Every creature understands its place in the harmony of nature. Hunted or hunter, prey or predator. Only the thinking creature that is man can place himself outside this order. With this understanding comes the power to choose whether one is predator or prey."

Kiabzu inscribed his observations and the words of U'mat into the stone upon which he sat and named the Holy Place the Vale of Harmony.

In order to learn the following rote a mage must follow the strongest ley line from the Source to the Vale of Harmony. Along the way the mage will be attacked by a variety of dangerous native creatures (perhaps resolved in narrative fashion, perhaps played out as combats). Before reaching the Vale the mage must have hidden, fled and fought at least once during her trek, as well as dripped a blood sacrifice from her wounds onto the ground of the Dreaming Earth.

Scent of Nature (Life ●●●)

This spell alters the chemical composition of the mage's scent. To predators, the mage will smell like a stronger hunter and to prey the caster will smell non-threatening, like a member of its species.

Practice: Weaving
Action: Instant
Duration: Prolonged (1 scene)
Aspect: Covert
Cost: 1 Mana

With a single success on the casting roll the mage simply becomes part of the background to natural creatures. The mage's scent changes depending upon what animal smells it and discourages it from attacking or fleeing. Animals will fight in self-defense, but otherwise take no hostile action toward the caster.

Tablets of U'mat Rote
Dice Pool: Wits + Animal Ken + Life

The Verdant Grove

The third Holy Place described in the *Tablets* is named the Verdant Grove. The story describes how Kiabzu wandered the Dreaming Earth, waiting for the chance to prove himself to U'mat once more. By this time Kiabzu had spent several days traveling the Anima Mundi and his earthly body had begun to suffer from deprivation. Even in his Amnion, his astral form, Kiabzu could feel echoes of the pain suffered by his flesh. In his hunger, Kiabzu's senses were heightened and he followed the smell of apples to a lush grove fed by a stream. All around him were trees hanging low with fruit he could not eat. In desperation, Kiabzu called out to U'mat for aid and the voice of U'mat spoke to him once more.

"Why do you cry out to me in weakness? If you are hungry, eat. If you are thirsty, drink. Take from the trees the essence of their bounty to fuel the weak flesh you left behind. Take from the water the essence of its cool flow to restore your waking self."

As the words of U'mat rippled through his mind, Kiabzu was filled with wisdom. From the trees he took his meat and the stream his drink, weaving them into the Pattern of his sleeping body.

In order to learn the following rote the mage must first succeed in an improvised casting of the rote. The power of U'mat that lingers in the Verdant Grove provides a +2 dice bonus to the improvised casting roll. Understanding the theory of *how* to cast the spell is also important. If the mage has a Gnosis rating of less than 3, she hasn't gained enough magical knowledge to even attempt the improvised casting.

Sustenance (Life ●● + Spirit ●●)

This spell allows the mage to sustain her physical body with food and drink consumed while in the Dreamtime.

Practice: Weaving
Action: Extended
Duration: Lasting
Aspect: Vulgar
Cost: 1 Mana

The rote is cast on food and drink gathered in the Dreamtime and will affect enough material to provide the caster with one meal. Too much time spent in the Anima Mundi without consuming food and drink will lead to deprivation. (See p. 175 of **World of Darkness.**)

Tablets of U'mat Rote

Dice Pool: Resolve + Survival + the lowest spell pool of either Life or Spirit

The Great Hive

The last place of power visited by Kiabzu is named the Great Hive. After he had eaten his fill at the Verdant Grove, the voice of U'mat became a buzzing in his mind. Kiabzu followed the sound until he came to a beehive that stood higher than any tree he had ever seen. The High Priest watched fist-sized bees move in and out of the hive, each acting in perfect accord with the other, as though they were all controlled by a single mind. Kiabzu knew this idea to be true when the voice of U'mat whispered out to him from the droning buzz.

"The strength of the community is in the will of the hive mind. Bees share a single consciousness and work as a single entity. Your kind is no different. Man is made up of senses, organs and flesh that all obey the command of a single intelligence. Watch the bees and learn how you might divide yourself, yet still remain whole. Only when you have succeeded at this fear will you come close to understanding U'mat. Take your understanding to your people so they may recognize that many bodies may serve one purpose."

After studying the movements of the bees, Kiabzu came to understand how he could divide his body, yet remain whole. When he succeeded in doing so his understanding of U'mat was complete and he returned to the material realms to bring the wisdom of U'mat to his people.

In order to learn the following rote the mage must spend time studying the bees of the Great Hive and touch the hive mind with her own. This requires an extended Intelligence + Animal Ken roll. Each roll represents 15 minutes; a total of 10 successes must be gained to identify the presence of the hive mind. Once the mage has succeeded in identifying the mind she must reach out and connect with that single driving Will through use of the Mind 3 spell, "Telepathy" (see p. 212 of **Mage: The Awakening**) or a similar casting. Only when the mage has looked through the eyes of many parts of the same mind can she truly understand how to cast the rote.

Multitudinous Form (Life ●●●●●)

This spell transforms the body of the mage into a swarm of insects, all driven by the mind of the caster.

Practice: Making
Action: Instant
Duration: Prolonged (1 scene)
Aspect: Vulgar
Cost: 1 Mana

Like the Life 5 spell "Greater Shapechanging" (see p. 192 of **Mage: The Awakening),** the caster of this rote changes form without the possibility of becoming lost in his new shape. While in the shape of the swarm, the mass of the insects must stay within a 10-foot area of each other or the spell will unravel.

In combat situations, the swarm suffers little damage from conventional weaponry. Against stabbing, shooting or bashing types of attacks, the swarm is considered to have Armor 10 and any wounds suffered (regardless of source) are considered bashing. Only weapons that deal area damage (grenades, explosives, fire) have any chance of causing significant damage to the mage-swarm. Weapons of the area-effect variety deal normal damage for their type. The swarm has equal Health to that of the caster.

Offensively, attacks by the swarm ignore any mundane Defense or Armor ratings of living targets. The caster rolls Intelligence + Animal Ken + Gnosis for each attack, dealing 1 bashing damage per success.

Tablets of U'mat Rote

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Animal Ken or Survival + Life

Dangers

Although travel to the Dreamtime can be hazardous, the dangers involved with the study of this grimoire aren't limited to the reader. The curse of U'mat follows those who would plunder its secrets back to the material realm and the Favored Ones search tirelessly for the *Tablets* they believe belongs to them alone.

Dangers Within

Study of *The Tablets of U'mat* is far from a typical research exercise. Translation of the cuneiform runes that make up the grimoire is a relatively simple task for most mages, but the power of the *Tablets* is more than words. By studying the *Tablets*, the reader/group of readers opens himself/themselves to travel in Astral Space. (See pp. 283-6 of **Mage: The Awakening** for a full description astral travel.)

After the first two tablets are successfully translated and studied, each night when the reader sleeps he slips deeper



into himself, journeying to the Dreaming Earth. This journey is undertaken whether the reader wills it or not and ignores the normal rules for such travel. The reader may not voluntarily end his journey, though he may awaken if violently disturbed or shaken vigorously. With assistance, a mage may roll Resolve + Composure to awaken. Only a single success is needed to stir him, but the roll is modified by -1 die for each tablet studied.

Each dream picks up exactly where the last left off, as though the reader had stopped to rest for a moment. In game terms, for every two tablets successfully translated (past the initial two), the reader will move through the Dreaming Earth to arrive at one of the places of power.

These nighttime excursions cease only when the grimoire is fully studied and all its secrets uncovered. The reader must follow in the footsteps of Kiabzu and transverse the landscape of the Dreaming Earth. A reader who successfully completes this journey can then exert his Will over the *Tablets*, gaining a +2 dice equipment bonus to any future attempts to enter Astral Space.

The Dreaming Earth

Deep within the Anima Mundi lies the Dreaming Earth, the place of nature ascendant. Here the dreams of humans have little power and the dreams of nonhuman life reign supreme. The creatures found within this realm are pure examples of their kind, Here the lion is only a predator, with no hint of the mantle of kingship placed on his kind by humans.

The Dreaming Earth is a wilderness where the works of man seem diminished. It is a mirror of the world in which metropolises are dwarfed and engulfed by plant life and smaller cities are barely recognizable as more than features in the terrain. The creatures of the Dreaming Earth are always hungry and the smell of blood draws them near. Even the dreaming form of man seems to dwindle and the astral traveler must contend with insects many times his normal size.

The consciousness called U'mat by the Favored Ones is made up of every plant, animal and insect in the Dreaming Earth and travelers here always feel as if they are being watched. The howl of a wolf to its pack is U'mat speaking to those in its domain, the blinking eye of a toad is U'mat watching and the thorns that tear at clothing are U'mat searching for weakness.

The Curse of U'mat

The secrets of the Dreaming Earth were never intended for wholesale distribution. The consciousness that Kiabzu named U'mat granted its wisdom only to the High Priest

and his followers after Kiabzu had made a bloody sacrifice of himself to the Dreaming Earth. Mages who study the grimoire also make sacrifices to gain the knowledge contained in the *Tablets*, but U'mat views them as interlopers nonetheless.

Each time the reader reaches one of the places of power, U'mat curses him for his hubris. The curse marks the soul of the mage and draws the creatures of the Dreaming Earth to the reader. When the mage returns to the material realm, the creatures cling to the mage, drawing power from their Pattern to manifest in the flesh. The vagaries of time and space that result from such unusual manifestations mean the creatures will rarely manifest in the reader's immediate vicinity. The creatures are drawn to the soul that led them to the material realm, but they are easily distracted by meat.

Nature is red of tooth and claw and the creatures of the Dreaming Earth are perpetually hungry. In the material realm food is abundant and easily had. Though the purpose of U'mat drives the creatures to hunt the mage who trespassed on holy ground, these are pure beings with no fear of man or his devices. The trail of corpses left in the wake of these creatures will lead directly to their target, which may result in other difficulties for the mage involved.

Manifested creatures of the Dreaming Earth can be represented using the rules for spirits found on p. 317 of **Mage: The Awakening**. The creatures should be the idealized form of specific animals, most likely predators, no higher than Rank 3. Creatures have no Influences or Bans and creative use of spells as Numina is encouraged. Unlike normal spirits, creatures from the Dreaming Earth may not be bound, banished or controlled in any way. Neither will the creatures reform after being discorporated. Generally, only one creature at a time follows a mage to the material realm, but entire packs of predators may be used to challenge more powerful cabals. Other possibilities for more dangerous creatures include animals that no longer exist on earth. U'mat has a long memory and the Dreamtime contains creatures that have been extinct for thousands of years. Below is an example of a manifested creature from the Dreaming Earth.

Smilodon

Description: The *Smilodon* is an extinct animal species that flourished in North and South America around one million years ago. The "sabre-toothed cat" weighed approximately 450 pounds, was four to five feet long and stood about three feet high. The *Smilodon's* most distinct feature was its seven-inch pair of canine teeth used primarily for slashing rather than biting.

Storytelling Hints: Rather than running down its prey like wolves or other large cat species, the *Smilodon* was an ambush hunter that surprised its prey from camouflage. When attacking, the saber-toothed cat would use its canines to slash the throat of its prey, crushing the windpipe and severing the jugular.

Rank: 3
Attributes: Power 9, Finesse 8, Resistance 7
Willpower: 14
Essence: 20 (20 max)
Initiative: 15
Defense: 9
Speed: 22
Size: 6
Corpus: 13

Numina: "Pulse of the Living World" (p. 181 of **Mage: The Awakening**); "Honing the Form" (p. 186 of **Mage: The Awakening**).

Dangers Without

The final danger that confronts mages who wish to study *The Tablets of U'mat* is the group of Favored Ones. Robbed of the *Tablets* by the Germans in World War II, the Favored Ones investigate any rumor of the grimoire. Little is known about the Favored Ones, but circumstantial evidence suggests the surviving families are rich and well connected. A mage in possession of the *Tablets* who comes to the attention of the Favored Ones will receive polite offers to buy the grimoire, which will be followed up by grisly threats and violence. The families will stop at nothing to acquire what they consider to be theirs by right.

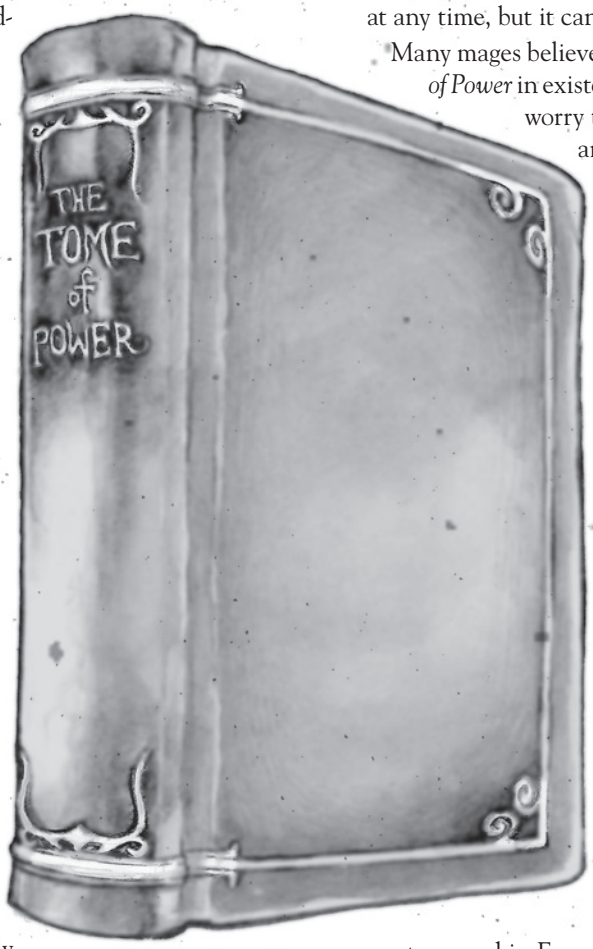
It is unknown whether or not the Favored Ones were mages. The stories in the grimoire suggest Kiabzu, at least, was a mage. Whether he was an outcast from Atlantis or whether the *Tablets* derive from a time before the city grew to power is hard to determine. If other Favored Ones have also Awakened, they become more dangerous by degree and it is more likely they will hear about the discovery of a stone tablet grimoire by other mages.

Other Resources

Players and Storytellers with access to the **Astral Realms** book may use the rules presented there for travels in Astral Space. In this case, a mage who is studying *The Tablets of U'mat* simply bypasses all the layers of the Anima Mundi and arrives directly in the Dreaming Earth. Study of the *Tablets* also serves as additional protection against the Ecstatic Wind by strengthening the Amnion. Mages who are currently studying, or have completed study of, *The Tablets of U'mat* may withstand an additional two intervals before needing to renew their Amnion.

THE TOME OF POWER

The Tome of Power is a book containing a series of rotes specifically designed to destroy their targets. All are quite powerful, and most are considerably more powerful than they otherwise should be — they derive their power from the dangerous and forbidden practice of Abyssal magic. (See **Tome of Mysteries**, pp. 181-4.)



The Tome of Power very much looks the part; it is an old book bound in perpetually dusty and slightly faded black leather that is as large as some of the largest modern coffee table books and almost three inches thick, with silver edges on the pages. On the spine, in tarnished silver letters, the title reads *The Tome of Power*. The book is printed in archaic English of the sort used in the 16th century. Also, everything except the introduction is written in a series of increasingly complex ciphers. Like everything else about the book, these ciphers are resistant to magic and must be solved by mundane means. Despite the apparent age of the cover, the pages are new and supple. In addition, the book is exceptionally resistant to harm. It completely resists the effects of both ordinary flame and water. Even the strongest and most determined person cannot tear so much as a single thin interior page.

The origins of this book are unknown. However, it is known to be many centuries old and to typically show up where easily tempted mages can find it and then disappear if the mage rejects the temptations of the Abyss.

History

This legendary book is said to be not the only one of its kind. There are records of similar texts dating back as far as the Pentacle mages possess records. Documents of the appearance of this book are all very similar, except some indicate that before the 16th century the book was handwritten. Other than that, all descriptions of this book are identical. There are a few records of the book being destroyed, but then subsequent copies turning up a few decades later. Some mages assume this book eventually repairs itself and reappears; others believe certain types of Paradox manifestations spontaneously produce it. No one knows how many copies of the book there are in existence at any time, but it can't be many.

Many mages believe there is only one copy of *The Tome of Power* in existence at a time. However, other mages worry that accurate copies of this grimoire are as powerful and dangerous as the original. If this theory is true, then the problem with destroying the book is simply that several corrupt Abyssal mages have made complete copies of the work. This theory has gained some level of acceptance, but no one wishes to test it by becoming corrupted by the Abyss and then attempting to copy a work of which no uncorrupted mage wishes to see more copies. Mages who study the history of this work are at least pleased there are at most a handful of copies. However, all have a dark and terrible history.

Because it can vanish and reappear on its own and many mages do not announce that they possess this book, records of the history of this book are woefully incomplete. Before the 16th century, records mention it on only three occasions, in 2nd century Alexandria, in Moorish Spain in the 12th century, and in France in the 14th century. After the 16th century, records are somewhat more complete, but there are regularly periods of several decades when there is no record of the book's history. Nothing at all is known of the book's whereabouts from 1751, when it was associated with a Francine Dermont, a mage who was also a rather infamous British Satanist with ties to the so-called Hellfire Club, to 1856, when it was owned by a wealthy and politically powerful mage living in New Orleans. For the remainder of the 19th century the book made several appearances, always associated with various infamous events. The most (in)famous of these was the assassination of President James Garfield in 1881, where one of the book's rotes was allegedly used to make certain Garfield died of his otherwise non-fatal injuries. During this time, the book was also rumored to be used in the killings of several mages, including both Seers of the Throne and Pentacle mages.

The most infamous period of the book's recent history came in the 1980s, when a pair of mages, Judith Washington

(Letter from Pale Garden to her superior in the Guardians of the Veil, May 17, 1882)

Once again, I just missed finding this cursed book. The solitary mage whose existence we suspected is now dead, along with his wife, mother, and two of his three children. He was clearly far gone in his corruption; he killed all but one of his relatives in an elaborate ritual. In his diary, he describes performing the ritual to release "his glorious mistress".

I found his seven-year-old daughter hiding in a bedroom closet. At the last minute, he spared her from the blade, set her free, and slit his own throat. I can detect no presence of the Abyss in this house, so clearly his last-minute act of humanity spoiled the ritual. However, when he rejected the Abyss, the book vanished. Despite the profound risks, when I find it, I am certainly going to destroy it. In any case, I wiped the daughter's memory and burned the house to the ground, making certain that no traces of the horrors within remain. The Sleepers don't need to learn the truth, and the child does not need to remember it.

and Harold Thomas, known to other mages as Orisha and Silent Onyx, secretly acquired *The Tome of Power.* These two mages worked for the Adamantine Arrows hunting down Banishers and Seers of the Throne. Despite knowing of its close connection to the Abyss, they used its most potent and deadly rotes to dispatch more than a dozen Banishers and Seers of the Throne who were considered a major threat to the safety of Pentacle mages in the northeastern United States. This pair of mages knowingly used the power of the Abyss to slay dangerous enemies and until their corrupt methods were discovered, they were widely acclaimed as two of the most dedicated and effective members of the Adamantine Arrows. Unfortunately, in their zealousness to rid the world of their enemies, in July of 1989 these two mages killed Craig Hutton. Hutton was a member of the Seers of the Throne who was cooperating with members of the Guardians of the Veil who had infiltrated the Seers. He was in the process of defecting to the Guardians of the Veil at the time of his murder.

This unfortunate incident prompted a careful investigation by the Guardians of the Veil, wherein the investigators discovered both the true nature of the magic these two mages were using and the fact that they had both "joined" with the Abyss. When confronted about their activities, Orisha turned on her accusers and in a fit of rage and madness attacked them with powerful tainted rotes. In addition to attempting to destroy people she considered unworthy of all the hard work and many risks she had taken for them, she also used this tactic to enable her partner Silent Onyx to escape.

Orisha was killed in the ensuing magical battle, which also caused a massive power blackout that covered two square miles of Detroit. However, Silent Onyx escaped and remains at large. He is an Adept of both Prime and Spirit magics and is considered exceedingly dangerous. A month after Orisha's death he attempted to kill two of the people he considered to be her murderers, and since that time he has continued to kill Seers of the Throne and Banishers, and has been briefly encountered by mages in possession of *The Tome of Power.* Time magic revealed he killed one mage who attempted to destroy this book, and verbal reports indicate he attempted to convince at least one mage studying this book to join him in his crusade against both the external enemies of the Pentacle mages and weakness within them.

When Silent Onyx vanished, the book vanished with him and there was no further record of it until 1994, when a newly Awakened mage reported finding a "most unusual book" at a yard sale next door to her house. Once again, the Guardians of the Veil took possession of this book. In addition to examining it closely, they also allowed approved representatives from the Mysterium to study it. Unfortu-

nately, one of the mages studying it began to have dreams inspired by the Abyss and was unable to stop himself from resolutely denying the Abyss. He awoke to find the book had vanished. It next surfaced four years later, when it was found among the effects of a solitary and unaffiliated mage who killed herself in remorse for killing her lover and child. Since 1999 there have been many rumors of the book and one report in 2003 by a mage who admitted to having it and then rejecting the Abyss.

The Guardians of the Veil who are attempting to keep track of this book believe it is currently in the process of moving rapidly from one mage to another. They are carefully watching for any signs that it has ended up in the hands of a mage who is simultaneously powerful enough to be dangerous and fully susceptible to the book's temptations.

Contents

This book contains a useful assortment of powerful destructive spells that are all specifically designed to harm objects and beings in mundane reality. The rotes in this grimoire are not subtle, but they are useful for a wide variety of purposes. However, learning them is fraught with risk and using this book can permanently twist and taint a mage who studies it.

The most insidious aspect of *The Tome of Power* is that there is nothing to distinguish tainted from non-tainted rotes. Recognizing the danger that the Abyss befouls every tainted rote requires a successful Wits + Occult roll with a -3 penalty. In addition, this taint is so difficult to detect that only mages actively looking at the rote in an effort to attempt to understand whether there is something unusual or dangerous about it have any chance to learn of the taint. Merely reading and learning the rote does not provide this information. Instead, mages using these rotes discover that the tainted spells can easily do aggravated damage and also have reduced Paradox, without knowing the reason for these benefits.

To make matters even more difficult, the entire book is written as a puzzle. Information about the rotes is encoded in a mixture of complex and allegorical diagrams and deliberately obscure text. Learning any rote in this book first requires the mage to decipher it. This process cannot be aided by magic. Instead, it requires an extended Wits + Investigation roll, with a number of successes equal to 5 x the number of dots of the spell's primary Arcanum. For example, learning the "Celestial Fire" rote (Prime •••) requires 15 successes on an extended roll. Because of the complexities of the puzzles that must be solved, the character can make only 1 roll every 30 minutes. In addition, the rotes must be learned in order, since many of the clues for deciphering the later rotes are contained in the diagrams and allegories used to encode the earlier rotes. So, until the mage has deciphered the earlier rotes, she will be completely unable to decipher the later, and often more powerful rotes.

Researchers who have studied this book theorize that the process of solving these puzzles helps align the rote with the particular details of the mage's psychology and learning style. As a result, none of the rotes in this book have pre-defined Attributes or Abilities. Instead, all are listed according to the type of Attribute (Power, Finesse, or Resistance) and Ability (Mental, Physical, or Social) they use. In all cases, the mage uses the Attribute or Ability in which she is most skilled as the pair of traits to cast the rote. For example, the "Celestial Fire" rote is listed as Finesse + Mental, which means the mage learning the rote uses the highest of her three Finesse Attributes (Dexterity, Wits or Manipulation) and her highest Mental Ability. The only limitation on these rotes is that this pair of traits is fixed when the mage learns a particular rote and does not change if the mage later raises any other Attribute or Ability in the same category higher than the one used for the rote.

Spells in The Tome of Power

The rotes appear in this book in the order in which they are listed, and they must be learned in this order, since solving the puzzles and ciphers necessary to learn a rote provides essential clues needed to solve the following rote. The first two rotes and the fourth rote are all perfectly normal, untainted rotes that merely use the mage's best Attribute and Ability combination within the three categories of Attributes and Abilities. However, the remaining rotes in the Tome of Power are all tainted by the Abyss.

The corruption of the Abyss is an intrinsic part of the tainted rotes in *The Tome of Power*, so that learning a tainted rote from this tome not only automatically teaches the mage how to cast the rote as a befouled spell, but the mage cannot cast this rote as a non-befouled spell. If the mage already knows a non-befouled version of this rote, then studying the rote merely teaches him how to use the power of the Abyss to befoul the spell in question. However, if the mage has learned only the version of the rote found in this grimoire, then he must spend 1 Experience point per dot (half the cost of learning a normal rote) in order to learn a non-befouled version of this rote.

For Storytellers without access to the rules for Abyssal magic in **Tome of Mysteries**, what this means is all tainted spells that directly damage the target do aggravated damage if the mage spends 1 point of Mana, regardless of the number of dots the mage has in that particular Arcana. In addition, 2 dice are subtracted from the Paradox rolls of all Vulgar tainted spells. Casting a tainted spell gives the mage a rush of positive feelings that lasts for 1 hour and allows the mage to regain 1 point of Willpower (up to her maximum). Once the mage has used any tainted spell, she also instinctively learns how to taint any other spell she casts.

However, using any tainted spell means the mage also suffers negative consequences. An hour after casting a tainted spell, the mage experiences various negative physical symptoms like nosebleeds, headaches or crushing depression that subtracts -1 from all rolls for the next 12 hours. However, casting another tainted spell immediately cancels this penalty, but only for the next hour. Also, any damage the mage takes for the next 12 hours is automatically resistant. (See "Resistant Damage," **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 124.) Finally, using Abyssal magic is addictive. For 1 week after casting a tainted spell, the mage must make a Resolve + Composure roll to resist adding Abyssal taint to the first spell of any sort she casts during a scene. Every time during the week the mage fails this roll, her next roll suffers a cumulative -1 penalty. Spending 12 hours without using any magic negates -1 worth of penalties.

Death Rotes:

"Decay" (Resistance + Social, **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 136, not tainted), "Destroy Object" (Resistance + Social, **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 139, not tainted), "Rotting Flesh" (Power + Social, **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 144, tainted).

Matter Rotes:

"Alter Integrity" (Resistance + Mental, **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 198, not tainted), "Annihilate Matter" (Power + Mental, **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 201, tainted), "Annihilate Extraordinary Matter" (Resistance + Mental, **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 203, tainted).

Prime Rotes:

"Celestial Fire" (Finesse + Mental, **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 224, tainted), "Siphon Integrity" (Resistance + Mental, **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 229, tainted)

Dangers

Because of the cryptic nature of this grimoire, mages studying this book can easily learn tainted rotes without having the slightest clue as to the rote's true nature. Although most mages eventually realize these rotes' true nature once they have cast them a few times, some mages remain completely ignorant (sometimes deliberately so) of the rotes' true nature and attempt to convince other mages of the wonderful magical breakthroughs the writer of this grimoire made.

This book also sets the user on the path of Abyssal corruption. Once a mage has begun to use these tainted spells, she will begin to dream of Abyssal Watchtowers and will be offered a chance for "Abyssal Joining" (**Tome of Mysteries**, pp. 183-4). Unlike other opportunities for this joining, merely ignoring the offer is not sufficient to reject it. As long as the mage remains in possession of *The Tome of Power*, these dreams recur until the reader either actively and deliberately rejects the Abyss or accepts its offer. Mages who reject Abyssal Joining find that *The Tome of Power* has vanished when they awaken from their dream or vision. In addition, a mage who has rejected the Abyss can no longer use any of the tainted rotes he learned from *The Tome of Power*. However, he remembers enough of the rotes that he can relearn normal versions of these rotes at half cost. The mage suffers this same result if he later renounces the Abyss after previously joining with it.

Although any mage who uses spells befouled by the Abyss may have dreams or visions of the Abyssal version of their Watchtower, such things occur only after extensive use. However, any mage who learns and uses the tainted rotes from *The Tome of Power* and has access to this book experiences these visions no more than three days after she first uses one of these spells. However, if the mage gives *The Tome of Power* away or disposes of it in some other fashion that removes her ability to access it, the extra temptations of the Abyss vanish.

Even if the mage continues to use the tainted rotes or to befoul other spells, he is no more likely to be tempted to join with the Abyss than any other mage who has dealings with it. More importantly, once the mage has relinquished the book, the Abyss no longer pursues him quite so actively. If he again dreams of the Abyssal Watchtowers, and does not sign his name to them, even if he does not actively deny them, the visions end and the mage's ties with the Abyss (including all ability to befoul spells or use the tainted rotes he learned from the grimoire) end.

Merely ceasing to use this book does nothing to prevent these dreams and visions — a worried mage who simply locks away *The Tome of Power* in a drawer continues to be tempted by the Abyss. In addition, a mage who has learned and used at least one of the book's tainted spells and has not yet learned all the rotes within it, disposed of the book in some fashion or renounced the Abyss feels pulled to continue to study the book. Whenever the mage does not have some pressing commitment, he must make 1 Resolve + Composure roll once a day to avoid studying the book and learning a new rote.

If the mage accepts the Abyss' offer, then the book remains with him. Within no more than a month or two he is approached by an entity from the Abyss that offers to teach him a Left-Handed Legacy in return for the mage performing various services. The nature of the entity, its desires, and the particular Legacy it offers vary from one reader to the next and are always what the reader would find particularly tempting. An elderly mage who fears death will be approached by an entity offering the Legacy of the Tremere Liches, while a mage interested in the Shadow World and commanding spirits would be offered the Scelesti Legacy. These Abyssal beings eventually approach any mage who yields to the book's urgings to write his name on the Abyssal Watchtower, even if the mage gives up the book immediately after doing so.

Disposing of the Book

Giving the book to someone else, throwing the book away, or simply leaving it for someone else to find are potentially safe ways of freeing oneself from the book's influence, as is rejecting the Abyss. However, keeping others from being tempted by the book is considerably more difficult. The book vanishes and reappears in a location where another mage is likely to happen upon it if the current owner renounces the Abyss. As a result, the owner cannot simply lock the book up and reject the Abyss. No amount of magical protections can keep the book from vanishing — it disappears into the Abyss, and Supernal Magic has little power over this realm. Alternately, keeping the book around while not rejecting the Abyss leads to perpetual temptation, and given sufficient temptation many mages eventually succumb.

Several mages who understood this book cannot be safely kept have attempted to destroy it. Unfortunately, this is a notably dangerous course of action. Attacking the book with magic is both exceptionally risky and utterly useless. All magic, both Vulgar and Covert, used against the book automatically generates 1 point of Paradox for every dot of Gnosis the caster possesses. In addition, the magic also affects some nearby target instead of the book. Magic is incapable of harming the book. A wave of Celestial Fire may destroy the table the book is on, but the book remains completely unharmed.

Destroying the book by mundane means is difficult and very risky, but possible. Despite being exceptionally tough, a determined character with an axe, chainsaw or welding torch could eventually destroy this book. However, each individual attacking the book, regardless of whether or not he is a mage, suffers the effects of Paradox from attacking the book. Treat each point of damage done to the book as 1 success on a Paradox roll (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 124). As the attack is not an actual spell, characters do not have the option of either suffering backlash or using any method to mitigate this Paradox.



In addition, the Paradox generated by attacking the book can be especially damaging and harmful, since a local manifestation of the Abyss is literally fighting back against the attackers. If the attacker already suffers a mild derangement, the first Bedlam produced by the book automatically increases the severity of this derangement. If the attacker either has no derangements or is already suffering a severe derangement, then the severity of the derangement depends upon the character's Gnosis instead of his number of dots in any Arcanum. Sleepers suffer only mild derangements. The book most often causes a phobia of or hysteria about the book or avoidance of or fugue about the entire situation surrounding the book.

The nature of any Anomalies produced by the book are utterly random but are also universally destructive. The magnitude of both Branding and Manifestation is entirely random. Roll 1 die to determine the severity of the Branding or Manifestation. A roll of 1-2 on this die results in a Branding or Manifestation equal to that produced by the Paradox from a spell using 1 dot of an Arcanum. Similarly, a roll of 3-4 is equivalent to the Paradox from a 2-dot spell, a roll of 5-6 is equivalent to the Paradox from a 3-dot spell, a roll of 7-8 is equivalent to the Paradox from a 4-dot spell, and a roll of 9-10 is equivalent to the horrible Paradox caused by a 5-dot spell.

No matter how long it has been between attacks on the book, each new attack is treated as having a number of dots of Paradox equal to the total number of points of damage the book has suffered. Once the book has suffered 5 points of damage, any attacks that further damage the book produce a Manifestation. To make the entire process even more difficult, the book heals 1 point of damage every 24 hours.

Others Who Want the Tome

Owning this book also produces another form of danger — Scelesti and other mages with an unhealthy interest in the Abyss are always eager to locate it, since it can serve as an excellent tutorial in all the various methods of gaining power from the Abyss. Also, anyone known to have this book will attract the interest of both the Mysterium and the Guardians of the Veil. Both groups are eager to keep track of this book, but also know that attempting to destroy it is exceptionally dangerous and attempting to keep it is either useless or similarly risky.

The Mysterium has a standing offer of three month's free access to any grimoire of its many libraries to anyone who discovers a way to safely store this tome. In addition, the leaders of the Guardians of the Veil promise to both assist and reward anyone willing to attempt to destroy it. However, given both the risks of destroying it and the possibility that it might simply reform and return to the mundane world a short time later, the leaders of this Order will not order any Guardian to attempt to destroy this book.

The Guardians of the Veil are also deeply suspicious of anyone in possession of this book, assuming (often correctly) that the owner is corrupted by the Abyss and possibly in league with either Abyssal beings or other Scelesti. Before making contact with the book's latest owner, both the Guardians of the Veil and the Mysterium watch the owner and her close associates in an attempt to uncover any activities relating to the Scelesti. Meanwhile, the Scelesti may learn of the book's locations through their moles in both organizations, and either attempt to recruit the owner or steal the book.

Quite apart from any risks inherent in this grimoire, owning it attracts a great deal of attention and places the owner in no small amount of danger. Of course, since both the Mysterium and the Guardians of the Veil keep knowledge of this book secret from all but their most trusted members, most owners know nothing of this work and simply believe they have found an unusually useful old grimoire. In many cases, the Mysterium and the Guardians of the Veil learn of the book's current location when the owner begins asking questions about an unusual grimoire that matches the book's description.

One final danger surrounding *The Tome of Power* comes with the continued efforts of Silent Onyx to keep track of the book and to attempt to recruit anyone who studies it. Although he still maintains an interest in destroying the external enemies of the Pentacle, for the last five years Silent Onyx has been building up a small organization of a half dozen Pentacle mages who share his interest and fervor in ridding the various Orders of weakness and corruption. His followers also share his willingness to use the Abyss to further these ends. Harold and most of his followers now believe high-ranking members of the various Orders who refuse to act in a decisive and autocratic manner and admit no dissent are leading the Orders into the hands of their enemies. They also believe the Abyss offers an unprecedented path to wisdom and power and that any who refuse it are merely too corrupt and weak willed to handle the power being offered them.

Unsurprisingly, one of Silent Onyx's current goals is to regain possession of *The Tome of Power*. He hopes to use a combination of Fate and Mind magics to help persuade other mages to study this work and thus allow the book to corrupt them. So far, the renegade Arrow has managed to recruit only mages who found the Abyss on their own or those who have finished with *The Tome of Power*, at which point it had already moved on. Although the Guardians of the Veil know he is still a danger, they do not suspect the current nature of his plans.

Researching *The Tome of Power*

Capping Ability: Occult

Action: Extended (16 successes)

Research Time: 4 hours; 2 hours

Appropriate Libraries: Occult, The Abyss

Bonuses: Guardians of the Veil membership (+1), Left-Handed Legacy (+1)

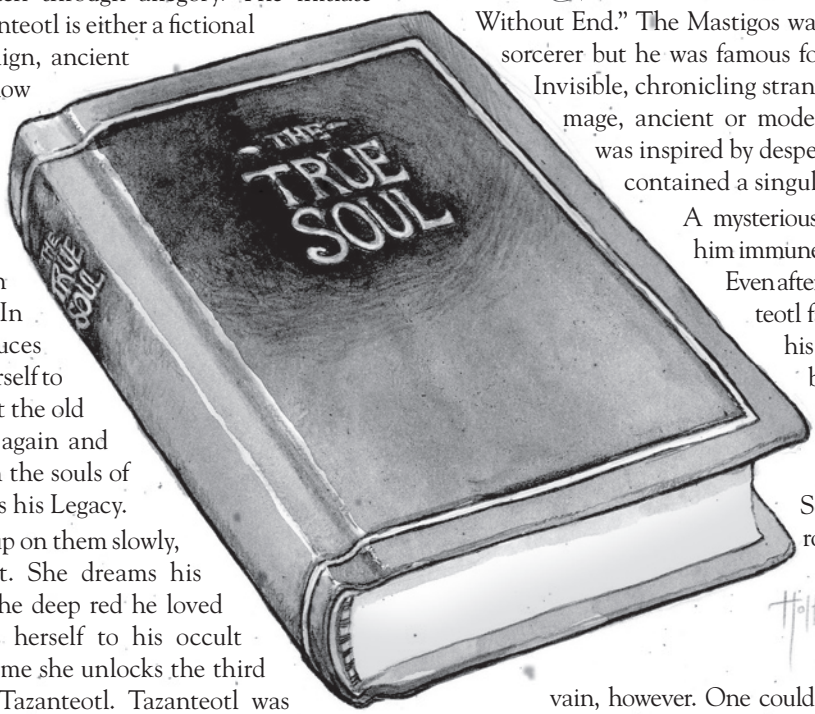
Successes	Information
0-4	Nothing.
5-10	*The Tome of Power* contains extremely powerful Death, Matter and Prime spells, most of which are destructive. The spells are in a difficult code, which is different for every reader. The only way to learn the spell is to break the code. The book has a bad reputation and is sought after by the Guardians of the Veil.
11-15	All the rotes in *The Tome of Power* are unusually powerful, but the book is tainted by the Abyss. The book is also ancient and very difficult to destroy. A few of the spells are perfectly safe and very useful, but most are inherently corrupt and casting them both corrupts the mage and draws the attention of the Abyss and its inhabitants.
16+	Renouncing the Abyss causes the book to vanish and the mage to become unable to use any of the book's corrupted rotes. Continuing to use the book draws the continued attention of the Abyss. The book cannot be harmed using magic and attempting to destroy it via mundane means causes the Abyss to strike back against the attacker, as if she suffered Paradox.



THE TRUE SOUL

The True Soul is a trap: an Atlantean mage's bid for immortality, encoded into a seductive Legacy. This daimonomicon teaches readers how to alter their souls so that, over time, they become avatars of the grimoire's creator.

At first, students believe the memoirs and parables within are designed to teach through allegory. The initiate thinks the sage Tazanteotl is either a fictional role model or a benign, ancient teacher. Exercises show her how to think and act like the dead archmage, but she assumes the imitation is meant to expand her own Awakened powers. In fact, the book seduces her into believing herself to be Tazanteotl so that the old Atlantean will live again and again, reproduced in the souls of everyone who adopts his Legacy.



The truth creeps up on them slowly, thought by thought. She dreams his dreams, dresses in the deep red he loved in life and devotes herself to his occult obsessions. By the time she unlocks the third Attainment she *is* Tazanteotl. Tazanteotl was — and is — no fool, and hides the true nature of the Legacy from other mages. Subverting the soul of another was a high crime even in the most decadent days of Atlantis. Every one of Tazanteotl's "clones" describes the Legacy as a spiritual fellowship, recruiting new members from the ranks of the insecure and easily led. Tazanteotl feared death greatly and believes that to survive he must multiply, so the Fellowship of the True Soul's "good work" never ends. Its book survives into the modern day and members share it freely.

The True Soul was created using Master-ranked Death magic and can't be duplicated without it, so despite the Followers' evangelical zeal, copies are hard to come by. In 1990 one Tazanteotl (all mages with the third Legacy Attainment take the name) became powerful enough to translate the medieval edition. He made 10 copies.

At a glance, the grimoire looks like the sort of book people buy to decorate their studies with, not read. It has a superficially antique look, but the binding and materials are thoroughly modern. Bound in red leather, the book is written in plain contemporary English, broken up with Atlantean runes whenever a concept with no easy translation appears. Readers can use the built-in cloth bookmark to mark the thick, gilt-edged pages. The title is stamped in gold lettering on the front cover and spine.

History

The lords of Atlantis called Tazanteotl the "Walker Without End." The Mastigos wasn't the most inventive sorcerer but he was famous for traveling the Realms Invisible, chronicling strange dimensions no other mage, ancient or modern, could discover. He was inspired by desperation, because his soul contained a singular flaw.

A mysterious spiritual flaw rendered him immune to life-extending magic. Even after mastering Death, Tazanteotl failed to find any cure for his condition. Magic kept his body strong, but he could feel the threads that bound it to his soul fray with every passing year. So he looked for a secret road that might take him to the Supernal Realms to be exalted, perfected and saved from death. All his travels were in vain, however. One could not reach the vaults of the gods through stealth. His failure was one of many that persuaded the Awakened princes to build the Celestial Ladder. It would be built over generations; Tazanteotl would never live to see it pierce the Supernal Realms' gates.

The Walker Without End looked vital in his last days, but he could feel the embers of his spirit cooling, leaving a great, hollow darkness that he feared reflected true death. He hid within his tower, closing his windows against the growing foundations of a mocking Celestial Ladder. He studied the exotic philosophies he'd recorded in his travels. Barbarians had told him there was no soul and that life was like a flame, passing from torch to torch with no essential substance. He met ghosts dwelling in secret Astral colonies of Stygia; they said they were bound to grave goods and rituals in the material world. Some were little more than dumb reflections, idiotically repeating passionate acts from their lives. In the mazy hedge around Arcadia, twisted slaves told him life was but a contract between the elements, holding until one part disobeyed its obligations. These ideas, which pained him so much while he quested for a door beyond death, suddenly pointed the way to a solution. He burned his writings to keep anyone from making the same discovery and began work on *The True Soul*.

(From the Codex Genii of Potestas, Hierophant of Boston)

Followers of the True Soul: Of the 13 Legacies recorded herein I find the Followers of the True Soul to be the most problematic from a scholar's point of view. The adherent I interviewed said that the sect was devoted to an "Atlantean saint" but revealed little else. He was vague about the cult's purpose, describing a rough theory that a mage's personality — not his soul — must be made immortal, and that the sect teaches members how to accomplish this. It might be compared with Buddhist doctrines about life after death, but with the opposite goal — to increase attachments to the mortal world, instead of making peace with them. My informant made few moral arguments and seemed to be unaware of the comparisons I've noted. Instead, he tried to appeal to my self interest and fear of death. Therefore, I can say little about the group except that it is devout, readily accepts new members but in my opinion, offers little of substance to anyone seeking the higher Mysteries, where wisdom goes hand in hand with power.

Tazanteotl relinquished the spells that kept him youthful seeming. A bent old man, he strode from his tower with the finished grimoire in hand, seeking out students for his new Legacy. This was not unusual; Atlantis had a thousand cults, fraternities and lodges crying for new adherents. He stood out from the crowd only in that he didn't ask his apprentices to live like slaves. It was enough that they listened and practiced.

Three young mages answered the call and learned *The True Soul*'s Legacy. Each attained the highest rank on the day Tazanteotl died — and each *became* Tazanteotl. That is, each shared the old man's memories and believed themselves to be him. The doctrine of the flame, passing from torch to torch, was fulfilled.

One Tazanteotl survived the fall of Atlantis, carrying the original *True Soul* with him. He felt the original's drive to survive and established a cult that venerated his former self as a god. This set the pattern for the ages. A Tazanteotl establishes the faith, making whatever changes he deems necessary to render it palatable to the locals. He freely teaches mages the Legacy and if he attains Mastery of Death, copies the grimoire. If the cult falls, the book might survive, drawing Awakened readers down the path that ends with them assuming the founder's identity once more.

In the modern era, the cult is almost extinct. Contemporary mages aren't as powerful as their ancestors and rarely master their Legacies. The last full Tazanteotl died in 1995. Six disparate cliques are devoted to the "saint." Each one has a copy of the grimoire; the other four are missing. They visit Consilia to preach, hinting of magical secrets and Mysteries available to the elect, but they aren't exceptional mages themselves. The original Tazanteotl never intended to be a spiritual guide, leaving them bereft of any doctrine beyond a belief in spiritual survival. It's easy to mock these dull evangelists, but easier still to get roped in by their generosity. Mages willing to sit through the tedium of a directionless sermon can avail themselves of cultists' rotes and Mana. Of course, if a mage wants a bigger favor she has to read the book…

Contents

The True Soul is a daimonomicon: a special grimoire that can teach Awakened readers a Legacy. The original Tazanteotl developed it to create copies of his personality, memories and soul. Whether the result *is* Tazanteotl is metaphysically… tricky. The original convinced himself that whether or not the soul has some inviolate essence, his memories and personality were what really mattered. This philosophy creates problems in exchange for those it solves, because it follows that if experience is all that really makes a person, forcibly altering someone's attitudes or memories is a kind of murder. Tazanteotl realized how fragile this would make future incarnations, so mages who adopt his Legacy feel a powerful compulsion to teach it. If one copy falls, another can survive. If they all die, *The True Soul* waits to convert another reader so Tazanteotl can live again.

Modern editions are divided into three sections: the Chronicle, the Mystery and the Path.

The Chronicle

The book begins with a romantic and partly fictional account of Tazanteotl's life. It says, "The Walker Without End journeyed to the edge of Creation to save the Awakened from Death," and that's among the less laudatory passages a reader might find. Mages with the patience to endure this sort of prose can actually mine interesting information from the biography. Tazanteotl's voyages were exceptional among even the mighty wizards of Atlantis. Studious readers can legitimately learn an Occult skill specialty related to one of the following accounts. Storytellers can also use the Chronicle as an excuse to reveal ancient secrets related to their own stories, but remember that it's as much fiction as fact and can't be trusted to provide straightforward facts.

The River of Thorns: The Walker Without End confronts his mortality after an epic battle with an entity from Arcadia. The demon storms Atlantis to take slaves, but Tazanteotl drives it off. Before it flees, it mocks him

by saying, "I'll swim to a new bend in the River of Ages and return. It will be a moment for me, but your bones will be dust, your powers forgotten." Tazanteotl chases the creature into the chaotic plane some call the Hedge. (See **Changeling: The Lost**.) He captures one of the demon's slaves and learns it was once a man, but has no memory of its past. Even its body is a thing built of Arcadian pacts. Tazanteotl comes to the conclusion that even an immortal soul cannot ensure true eternal life because it is possible to destroy all its ties with the person it was. He decides to explore other realms in search of immortality.

The Paths of the Sun and Moon: Tazanteotl journeys across the world in the Atlantean Age, crossing between matter and Shadow often enough that readers aren't sure whether the modern Gauntlet even existed. This account describes strange tribes, shapeshifters and the totems they worship, describing the names, appearance and properties of 48 spirits. This section ends when Tazanteotl discovers the "Chasm of Light," where the sun resides at nightfall. He discovers that the pit extends to the other side of the world. The sun never truly ceases its course. Tazanteotl learns nature is always in motion from life to death; it can be slowed, but never stopped.

The Ocean of Dreams: Tazanteotl explores the Astral Plane. **Astral Realms** details its domains in the modern age, but this account includes places modern mages can't identify. This section also describes a grand city of ghosts who live in an Astral domain by the grace of the pious Atlanteans who offer them sacrifices. The ghosts believe they're the nobility of the dead, but Tazanteotl observes the empty, ritualized nature of their lives. They are the unwitting slaves of their heirs. Therefore, life after death is no life at all.

The Uttermost Palaces: Tazanteotl visits the palaces of the Aeons: 10 mighty beings that guard the threshold of the Supernal Realms. To get there, he "walks across the Dome of Night" — the outer reaches of the Astral Plane where time and space break down. He petitions each Aeon to pass beyond, but they refuse. The account veers into pure propaganda at this point. The Aeons intimate he has some higher purpose to fulfill before he can Ascend and imply he's some kind of messiah, destined to enlighten Atlantis — "or all who are fit to survive it."

The Mystery

Tazanteotl comes to the conclusion that the secret of immortality is to preserve one's identity against any force that would violently change it. The Mystery explains this philosophy in detail. It superficially resembles Buddhist beliefs by saying that a human being's true self is her continuity of experience: memories, emotions and habits carried across time. Unlike the Buddha, Tazanteotl argues that it's virtuous to *defend* these attachments, not outgrow them in a quest for greater enlightenment. Drawing on his adventures in the Hedge, he says the Supernal Realms are too capricious a place to preserve a mage's consciousness. Their demons and gods shape souls like clay.

The Path

Lastly, the grimoire reveals the secrets of the Legacy. Tazanteotl doesn't give it a name. He says only that by studying his Chronicle, memorizing his writings and performing special meditations, an adept can buttress her personality against unwanted change, even allowing it to survive without a body after death. The meditations are complex visualizations, like mystic imago, that force the mage to imagine herself as Tazanteotl in various scenarios. Most of these put a student in his shoes as he journeys through the realms mentioned in the Chronicle, but a few defy attempts to define them as symbolic forms of spiritual growth. One of them tells the mage how to drink a glass of water as Tazanteotl would. Another instructs her to carry a small stone in her hand and squeeze it whenever she's angry — another one of his affectations.

Of course, these exercises serve no useful purpose at all — at least not for the student. They subvert her personality so that as she progresses through the Legacy she slowly sheds her former identity. Over time, the Legacy infects every thought and act. She uses Tazanteotl's body language, dresses in the red he prefers and takes to wandering, just as he did.

Dangers

The grimoire is enchanted to captivate anyone who reads it. This is the equivalent of the spell "Emotional Impulse." It doesn't force the mage to study the book, but makes these studies feel especially fascinating and worthwhile. Storytellers shouldn't force players' mages to study the book, but should describe its contents in very attractive terms without actually lying.

The True Soul's Legacy is its real danger. Once a mage adopts it, she's bound her spiritual development to the template of Tazanteotl's identity. As she gains Gnosis she becomes more and more like him until at the highest levels she believes she is him, sharing his memories, beliefs and obsessions. Followers of *The True Soul* think they're on the path to strengthening their psyches by following Tazanteotl's example. This is true from a certain point of view. By taking "refuge in the sage," as they call it, they open a subtle but devastating weakness in their own personalities, allowing the grimoire a foothold to work Tazanteotl's Will.

Parent Path: Mastigos

Nickname: Red Preachers

Appearance: Tazanteotl was a tall, thin man with a proud mien, his face framed by wild, black hair. He wore deep crimson and heavy boots (an affectation from his traveling days). Followers can be identified by their red clothing — part of their "private spiritual practice," they'll say — and



hiking boots. Senior members dye their hair black. If they have pale skin, they'll get a tan to match Tazanteotl's skin tone. Women ditch the specifically feminine clothes in their wardrobe as they unconsciously adopt Tazanteotl's gender identity (and if they have the magic or surgical staff on hand, might follow up with a physical sex change).

Background: Red Preachers can come from any walk of life. Anyone who studies *The True Soul* can be roped into the Legacy. When an organized cult springs up around Tazanteotl it usually recruits confused novices whose willfulness is not yet matched by self-knowledge. It's easy to bring such people under the sway of a cult of personality. *The True Soul* paints Tazanteotl as a nearly-divine role model, but unlike most such figures, he doesn't set down ethical rules. He doesn't judge anyone.

Organization: Followers of *The True Soul* meet in small, informal groups. A full avatar of Tazanteotl meets them occasionally whenever he isn't busy with his own quests. Most meetings begin with group practice, miming Tazanteotl's habits, discussing what he would eat and drink and studying *The True Soul*. After that, matters turn to conversion. The Followers believe they're saving people from death so they approach their mission with zeal. They're willing to use bribery and a bit of deception to bring other mages into the fold. Saving lives is worth it.

A small number of Followers realize they're being slowly converted into copies of an Atlantean archmage. Orthodox Followers are reluctant to harm the renegades because even they are capable of "finding refuge" in the end. Committed Followers have been known to imprison rogues, or more rarely, ensorcel them to hold their tongues about the Legacy (a difficult process, given how the first Attainment confers resistance to just this sort of thing). Rogues who manage to escape usually travel alone, looking for a way to throw off Tazanteotl's influence for good. But even in the midst of denial, some of them practice the Legacy's ways out of habit or because they're afraid of losing the power they do have.

Suggested Oblations: Traveling via the Shadow. Wearing deep red clothing or heavy boots. Squeezing a stone when agitated. Introducing *The True Soul* to someone who isn't familiar with it. Carving a walking stick. Speaking key Atlantean phrases that Tazanteotl used habitually. There are many other oblations, all tied to Tazanteotl's habits. Followers of *The True Soul* even practice these when they don't have access to a Hallow, to the point of compulsion.

Concepts: Atlantean scholar, wandering preacher, community activist, trader in rotes, raving hermit.

First Attainment: Soul Gauntlet

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Mind 2

The mage learns how to protect his mind from intrusion. She constantly imagines herself to be Tazanteotl, taking refuge in his identity and sublime mental discipline. This provides protection equivalent to the spell "Mental Shield" (**Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 208-9) constantly, for no Mana cost — even while the mage sleeps.

Optional Arcanum: Death 2

If the mage also possesses the second rank of Death, he can subtract his Death dots from any magic that targets his soul, such as Death 5 spells that might steal them.

Drawback: The mage's Vice changes from whatever it once was to Pride. She also feels compelled to practice one of the Legacy's signature oblations (Tazanteotl's personal habits) daily, even if she isn't anywhere near a Hallow. If she fails to do so she loses a point of Mana (at 0 Mana, this has no effect) for every day she misses. She has intense dreams of living another life, exploring strange places like those written of within *The True Soul*.

Second Attainment: Return to the Diamond of Self

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Mind 3

The mage's consciousness tries to reset itself after any major change. If the mage is subjected to a spell, supernatural power or mundane condition that would impose a derangement, alter her memories, change her Virtue or Vice or alter Mental or Social Attributes (Experience expenditure is exempt from this), she returns to her original state at the end of the scene if her player succeeds at a reflexive Mind + Gnosis roll. If the cause is supernatural in origin, she must score more successes than the power used to create the condition.

Wisdom loss is not affected by this Attainment, but derangements caused by Wisdom loss can be avoided by employing this power.

Optional Arcanum: Death 3

If the mage also has Death 3, she can eject entities that try to possess her body, or regain her soul if it is somehow severed from her body. The player must roll more successes in a Death + Gnosis roll than those scored by the relevant power.

Drawback: The mage's Virtue changes from whatever it once was to Fortitude. She also acquires the Multiple Personality derangement. It cannot be cured by the Attainment. In fact, if suppressed or removed, the Attainment will attempt to reestablish the derangement. It is now part of the character's default, "normal" personality.

The derangement manifests itself as a partial fragment of Tazanteotl's personality. It has only vague memories of its Atlantean past, but is fully fluent in the Atlantean language. When caught in the throes of Tazanteotl's personality, reduce the character's Stamina and Composure dots in exchange for increasing Resolve Intelligence on a one for one basis, up to 3 dots (minimum Stamina and Composure 2, maximum Intelligence and Resolve as dictated by the character's Gnosis). Tazanteotl's personality has full access to the character's memories, but the reverse isn't the case. The personality's chief agenda is to survive and propagate the Legacy by teaching it or sharing *The True Soul* with likely candidates. Tazanteotl abandons the character's other obligations in favor of these goals.

Third Attainment: Soul of Tazanteotl

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Death 4, Mind 4

The character becomes a complete psychic clone of Tazanteotl. She retains her former memories, but also remembers traveling through bizarre realms, gazing over the impossible towers of the Awakened City and bargaining with gods and demons in his quest for immortality.

Tazanteotl is obsessed with survival and has no patience for anything else. He (whatever the mage's former gender, he now considers himself male) returns to searching for physical immortality. If possible, he bargains with other mages to restore his original sex and gaunt, Saturnine appearance. Unfortunately, the transformation infects the mage with the same inexplicable flaw that prevented the original Tazanteotl from conquering age and death. No form of magic can extend his lifespan. It can make him appear youthful and keep him strong, but he will age rapidly and die no later than the age of 80. Tazanteotl never found an alternate solution before the Fall, so if a supernatural power that might extend his life exists it must be exceedingly rare.

Tazanteotl is willing to sacrifice his host's former friends without a second thought for even the slightest chance at true immortality. He is the Walker Without End once again, searching the world for life-extending secrets. Sometimes, Tazanteotl seeks out Atlantean ruins only he remembers, or stranger corners of the material realm, Shadow or Astral Reaches he discovered long ago.

Tazanteotl is pragmatic; he realizes his best chance to survive comes from spreading his Legacy as much as possible. Different incarnations have approached the balance between questing and converting according to prevailing circumstances. The mage often plans to update *The True Soul* to include memories from his current incarnation, but the original Tazanteotl created it during an act of delirious inspiration, assisted by texts he later destroyed. Until a testament to the contrary is unearthed, it appears his incarnations have succeeded only at translating the grimoire, not adding to it.

When Tazanteotl isn't pursuing these goals he tries to regain his former abilities. He was a Master of Death, Mind and Space, an Adept of Life and had at least Initiate-ranked ability in every other Arcanum. He wasn't a great mage by Atlantean standards but in the Fallen Age he'd be a force to be reckoned with if he had full command of his powers. Each incarnation comes with powerful memories, but many of them seem too distant, dreamlike or vague to translate into real aptitude. The incarnation is stuck with the character's traits, with the following exceptions:

Attributes: Permanently adjust Attributes as if the character was consumed by the alternate personality listed in the second Attainment — she is.

Innate Knowledge: Tazanteotl speaks, reads and writes Atlantean with native ability. (See **Secrets of the Ruined**

Temple for information on the Atlantean language.) Reduce the character's dots in Computer, Drive, Firearms and Streetwise and use them to increase Occult and Survival, up to the dot limits imposed by the character's Gnosis or until he runs out of dots to exchange. He also knows many things about the world as it was before the Fall of Atlantis. The Storyteller should use this to trigger stories as Tazanteotl searches for eternal life.

Tazanteotl learns Death, Mind and Space rotes for 1 Experience point per rote dot, not 2. In most cases, he's simply refreshing his knowledge.

Reduced Wisdom: Remove a dot of Wisdom. Tazanteotl is a moral degenerate who twists the souls of others to survive.

Is the mage truly Tazanteotl? It's hard to know. Orthodox magical doctrine says no. Each mage has but a single soul, distinct in nature, and though magic can damage, twist and at rare times improve it, simply changing it to resemble another person's soul doesn't make any essential quality transfer from one to another.

Buddhist philosophers and modern neuroscientists have both provided alternative explanations: perspectives that emulate the doctrines Tazanteotl employed to write *The True Soul*. According to these, the nature of the soul is irrelevant when it comes to discussing identity. All that matters is continuity of experience: knowledge flowing continuously from one moment to the next. It doesn't matter whether there's continuity inside a single soul or between a hundred of them, jumping from one to another. If a mage has Tazanteotl's memories, beliefs and the benefits of his experience she *is* the archmage, in every way that matters.

Rejecting The True Soul

Most Followers of *The True Soul* don't know they're being transformed into spiritual clones of their sage, but if someone told a senior cultist the truth it's likely he wouldn't care — he'd see that as a glorious fate. Few initiates object to the slow changes that creep into their habits. Legacies are *designed* to change a mage's innermost being, so new attitudes are nothing to worry about.

Once a mage joins the Followers of *The True Soul* it's hard avoid the process that changes her into Tazanteotl. Legacy initiation changes her soul in a subtle, pervasive fashion.

Tazanteotl and the Nature of Atlantis

This grimoire's description accepts the reality of Atlantis and implies it was a literal, prehistoric place — something not every mage storyteller wants to present as gospel truth. Compounding this situation is Tazanteotl's "rebirth" within those who've acquired the Legacy's higher Attainments. Storytellers might not want him recounting what Atlantis was really like.

Fortunately, there's no need to take the grimoire's history at face value. Several possibilities exist, including the following:

Pancryptia: Pancryptia is a Mysterium doctrine that says given enough time, the Fallen World naturally obscures and twists true knowledge. It might be part of the nature of the Fallen World to "translate" the sublime reality that existed before the rise of the Abyss. Tazanteotl might have been a man who lived in a realm that cannot even be described within the conceptual limits imposed by the Lie. He might be a symbol: a Supernal principle that embodies itself within the story, and whose very nature compels it to reproduce itself again and again. Or he might be man *and* myth: an ancient personality, bound to a meme of ruthless survival who is willing to capitalize on any legend to live again.

Atlantis Out of Time: Atlantis is not necessarily a realm from the past. Libertines speculate it exists in the future. Some say the Fall shook Time itself, reaching back to ruin the world, so the last lords of Atlantis sent psychic messages back in time to guide mages to a better destiny. Others say Atlantis isn't a part of linear history. It is eternal, always rising and falling. The Awakened are its living spiritual emanations. Mages who believe in cyclical time think Atlantis existed in the past *and* future, in a sliver of the Wheel of Ages that always comes around at a certain point in human evolution. Tazanteotl might be of Atlantis, but which incarnation?

Lies: It could all be a lie, concocted by Tazanteotl to make *The True Soul* more appealing. If this is true, the book might be of much more recent origin — perhaps no more than 200 years old. Tazanteotl would have to have an impressive command of Atlantean lore: signs that he might once have been a member of the Mysterium. Alternately, the book could be a tool of the Exarchs, either written by their hands or composed by Seers of the Throne. In the latter case, "Tazanteotl" could be a complete fabrication. His psychic clones could be sleeper agents, easy to command with certain signs and phrases.

Simple magic can't undo the change. Even after learning the truth about the Legacy the mage can't reject it with a simple act of Will. It changes her instinctive perceptions of the world, including magic. Her soul's been structured in such a way that she understands magic best when she looks at it the way Tazanteotl would. Her first, instinctive reaction is to act as he would. This gets stronger and stronger as she rises through the Attainments.

The simplest way to avoid becoming Tazanteotl is to avoid the Legacy's Attainments. The sorcerer ends her occult studies just short of their requirements. She avoids learning Mind magic, or makes a conscious effort to avoid cultivating inner wisdom, truncating the development of Gnosis. This is easier said than done. Legacy members are Mastigos, and to them, the Mind Arcanum is fundamental magic. And no mage, regardless of Path, easily turns her back on basic enlightenment. Gnosis is the spiritual heart's blood of Awakening: the instinct to strive higher and perfect one's understanding — even the road to Supernal Ascension. Finally, the idea that learning magic would inherently create problems is something few mages are willing to admit. There are Abyssal tomes, spells that call dark entities and so on, but the basic Mysteries themselves? The very idea calls into question a mage's right to exist. Consequently, sorcerers caught in the grip of *The True Soul* aren't necessarily willing to do what it takes to save their souls.

Understandably, few mages are willing to cripple their development. Unlike mage players, characters have only a rough idea of how powerful they are. While the ranks and Practices of the Arcana are well known, there aren't any objective measurements for Gnosis. Mages who regret joining the Legacy convince themselves *this* round of meditation won't open the door to Tazanteotl, or *this* philosophy will teach them a way to undo the archmage's influence. These mages stumble into the second Attainment and their alternate personality takes them the rest of the way.

There might be a spell capable of undoing the changes wrought by the Legacy, but it has never to anyone's knowledge been formulated as a rote. Affecting an Awakened soul typically requires the fifth rank of Mind, Spirit or Death. A complicated operation might require two or more of these Arcana. The Storyteller should determine these requirements.

There is one more option. The afflicted mage can cast the Legacy away at the shores of Oroboros: the ocean of chaos at the end of the Astral universe. A mage can consign anything she possesses into its oblivion. Getting there is a difficult quest because to reach Oroboros, one must climb through the rest of the Astral Reaches. (See **Astral Realms** for more information about Oroboros and the Anima Mundi in which it lies.)

Researching *The True Soul*

Capping Skill: Occult

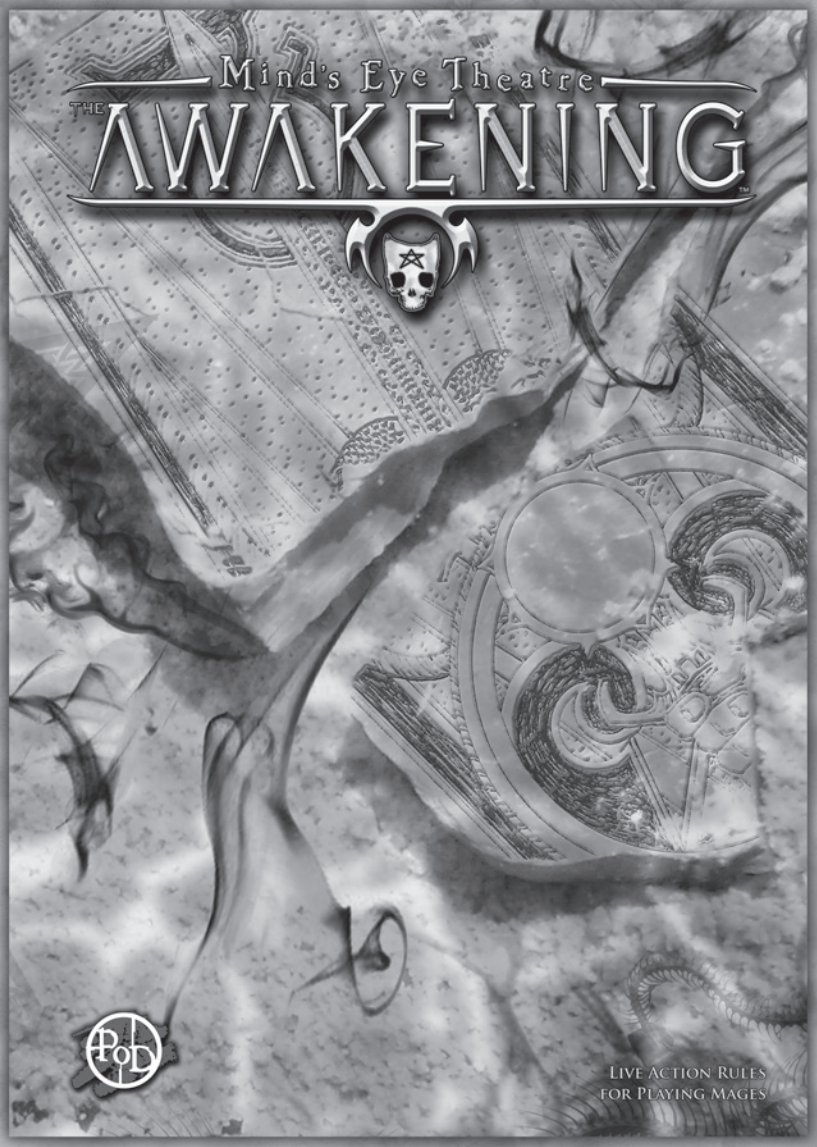
Action: Extended — 15 successes

Research Time: 6 hours; 2 hours

Appropriate Libraries: Atlantean Mythology, Awakened Culture, Awakened Religion

Possible Modifiers: Mastigos (+1)

Successes	Information
0-3	Nothing.
4-8	*The True Soul* is the "bible" of an Awakened religious sect. Its members want converts and are willing to give away rotes and Mana if you can make them think you might join.
9-12	*The True Soul* teaches followers a Legacy that helps them resist magical coercion with methods initiates believe will help their personalities survive death itself. Followers of *The True Soul* worship the memory of an Atlantean archmage. They wear red.
13-14	An Atlantean Mastigos named Tazanteotl wrote *The True Soul* after searching the cosmos for the secrets of immortality. He devised his Legacy after coming to the conclusion that a mage's identity, not his soul, is what constitutes his true being. Followers worship him by imitating him in rituals and in everyday life.
15+	High ranking members of the Legacy call themselves Tazanteotl. They dress, act and speak in much the same way. Some even use magic to take on a certain appearance or change from women into men. The cult of Tazanteotl has apostates. The Storyteller might provide a way to contact one of them.



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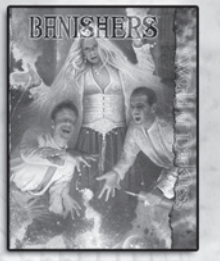
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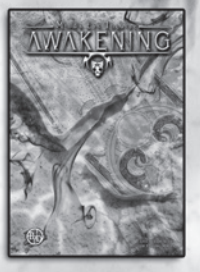




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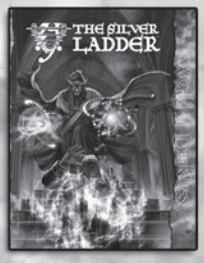
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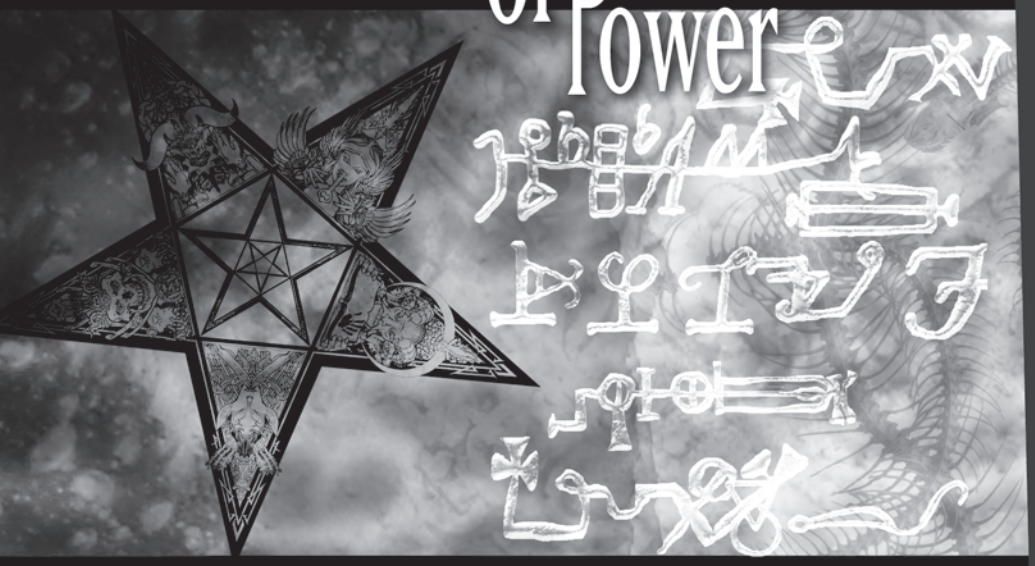
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