Left-Hand Path

the World of Darkness

MAGE™
THE AWAKENING

"It wouldn't be magic's cutting edge if it didn't make someone bleed,"

-- Carbon, founder of the Cloud Infinite Reapers

The Price of Disobedience

All societies have rules--even societies of mages. But rules were made to be broken. For the Awakened, shattered laws raise sinister forces. The Left-Hand Path tempts sorcerers with forbidden power, fulfilling their desires at the risk of ostracism, madness or damnation. In exile, more of them thrive than the Pentacle admits, challenging the peril to their souls ... and uniting in common cause. Look Beneath the Surface

A Character Book for Mage: The Awakening™

- The magical practices banned by Consilium and order
- Details on Apostates and Heretics, mages on the fringe of Awakened society
- Secrets of the Mad, dangerous and obsessed mages whose Wisdom failed
- The hidden threat of the Tremere liches, their goal of summoning the Sixth Watchtower and their methods of Reaping souls
- The history, society, philosophy, and powers of the Scelesti, mages who worship the Abyss

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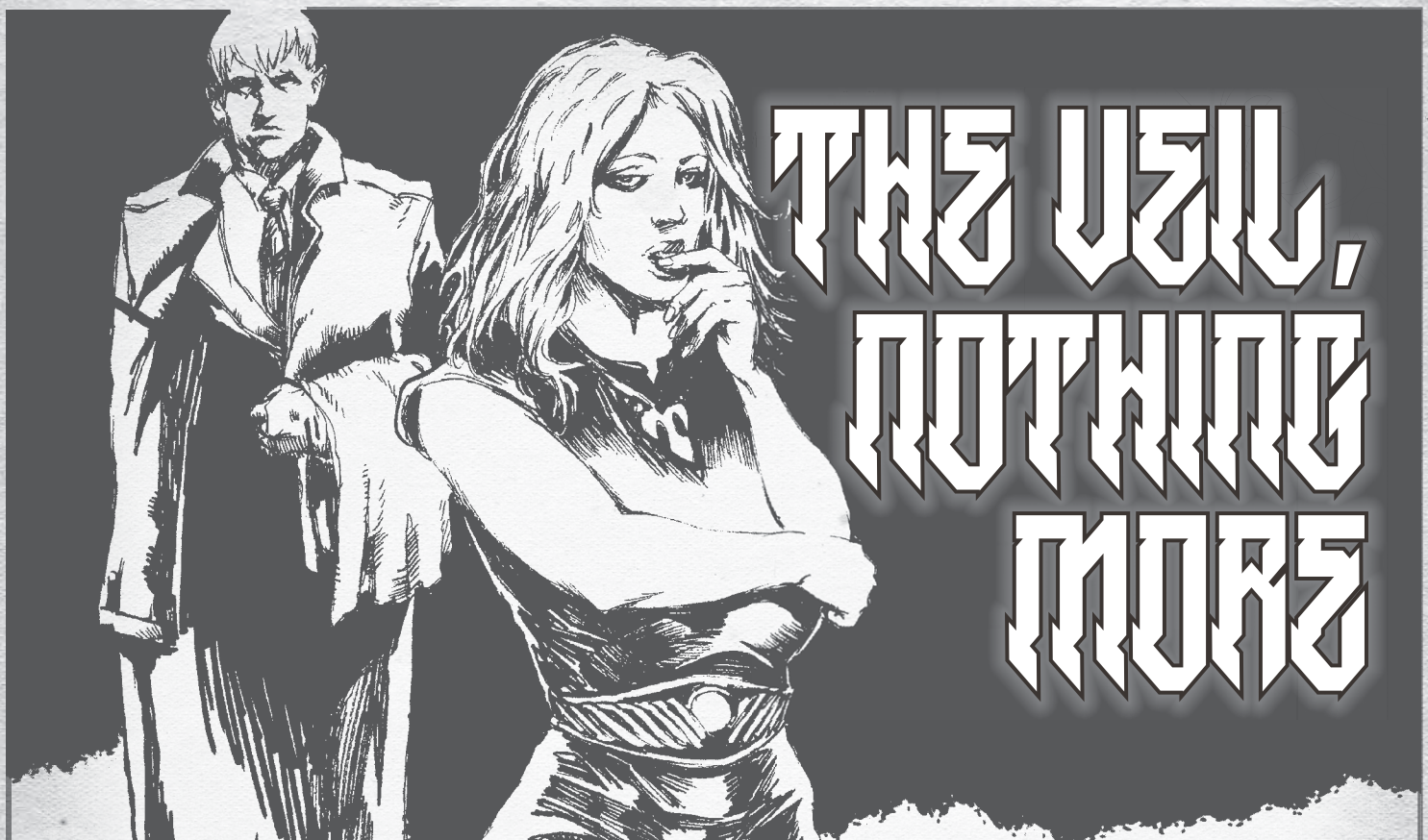


THE VEIL, NOTHING MORE

Two bored women sit at the other end of the table. One's important, and that's fine, but the other doesn't leave when I walk up. That's not.

"You're Knonsu?"

She uses my Shadow Name, but it somehow annoys me nonetheless. I glance down, stifling my annoyance by taking in the pattern at my feet. They've put a new carpet down in the living room at Cormant House: Afghan, enchanted. It includes some subtle sigils that program a Prime whammy into the weave—I guess someone's got a yen for yarn as part of their craft. I'm less than pleased with the change. The Ebon Noose's meeting room used to be a non-magical shabby chic kind of thing. Now I'm standing on an ostentatious fucking landmine.

"Yeah. The Censor." I doff my hat with the bad hand; it covers the missing fingers. "I made an appointment with the Hierarch, but you're here …." I tap the side of my leg with the other hand, against the stone in my pocket.

"Khumeia."

"I know who you are." I find an insincere smile makes people wonder if I'm lying or just a bastard, and I'm not particular which she infers right now. "Has there been, say, a change in government?"

"No. The Nemean has taken a sabbatical to contemplate the Mysteries. I'm acting as a sort of lead Provost until he comes back." She doesn't look up. She's looking for me on her tablet.

"Maybe that man contemplated the origin of a blood spatter on his tie once. That sounds unusually mystical for him."

"He's a second degree Master. Believe what you like—ah. Here you are. You're following up on the Chicago problem."

"That's right. With all due respect, I'd rather not discuss it in the living room. Do you have a study or something?" My fingers itch—the ones the cannibal bit off. I'm going to need a spell to cure phantom limb. Maybe I'll get an actual phantom limb, even. "It concerns your Secret Concord."

She stands abruptly, and I can see I finally have her full attention. "Athena? Hold my calls. Come this way, Mr. Khonsu."

As I follow her, I chuckle at the odd construction and kind of space out, to be honest. As soon as I close the door, I lose my grip on my hat and it falls to the floor. She turns and scowls.

"Christ, sorry Ma'am. It's just this hand." I hold it up to show her.

"I had a problem with an extremity once. What's wrong with yours?"

"Don't you see? Touch it for yourself."

I don't know why I screamed at Athena to leave. She deserves better. Her family's served us for a long, long time. Heavy is the head that wears the crown, especially when it's still technically attached to someone else's head.

Let me look at my notes. I had a Techgnostic improve the voice recognition on my tablet last year. Except for scrambled bits at the beginning and end, it recoded everything that asshole mystagogue had to say. *They're definitely from an Abyssal Verge near here. The writings we recovered connect it to your Secret Concord. Now if could just get a look at it, we could deal with your cannibal problem once and for all.*

I mount the tablet in my car and say, "Read the rest." So it does—the voice sounds funny, a bit hypnotic. I kind of space out, to be honest, and by the time I start thinking again I've driven past the Lodge.

Heavy is the head . . . the head needs a drink. I drive by the bars until I hit one by the harbor. It's got a terrible plastic lobster for a sign.

I order beer. I never drink beer, and I'd never look back at some dude in jeans who's obviously sizing me up.

After the third glance he comes to sit with me.

"You'd be even prettier if you didn't frown like that. My name's Joe." That's a pickup artist's line. He's got a cheap, easy smile.

"Hi Joe. Why don't we cut the ritual? I'll take you to my car and we can go, well, wherever you want." My smile feels cheap, too. Joe doesn't seem nearly as surprised as he should be. By the Architect, what the hell am I doing?

Ten minutes later, while we wrestle in the back seat. I turn to one side; the stone in my jeans stabs me. My grunt sets off my tablet. Now I recognize the voice. It's not the mystagogue's. It's mine. How? It almost takes my mind off Joe. He's whispering something about the "blood of the lamb" and yanking at something stuck in his top of his boot.

Could I have taken her? I don't know. But that computer of hers started talking about the Temple of the Devourer and the mandogs. It's a bit of a blur, but I must have run for it. I don't fuck men or Awakened, only insects without wings. I fly them to Heaven, like Jesus, except that they learn that in the end, love's a lie. That guides them to the real Heaven, in the Darkness.

Maybe she's a Baalath—that makes sense. Someone was bound to go for the Temple eventually. She felt strong, once I called the Sight. I've always been too scared to claim the Temple. I'd have to show the Red Word I was worthy. Together, though . . . we could hunt together too, and send the women-bugs to Heaven.

I can't hunt in Boston tonight. Danvers feels good. I've never hunted there. Wonder why? Maybe I'll B&E it tonight. That really makes the insects chirp, until I get the gag on them. I heard ghosts made Danvers Asylum dangerous for Awakened folks to visit, but they built apartments around there ages ago.

Wikipedia says they just capped the old tunnels. I can punch through concrete, if I want.

I gave myself an owl's vision, but walking in the dark tunnels still disorients me. I kind of space out, to be honest, and by the time I start thinking again, there's this glow.

A Hallow, down here.

I start digging. My arms are still as strong as they were when I hit the concrete. It takes me 20 minutes to rip out the floor planks, get down to the level of the trunk and pull it up. I tear the lid right off and—why?—I take the stone out of my jeans.

I think I've seen the stone before. It's rough, but the sigils look old and smooth. When I make my eyes see the Shadow, I can make out two thin, red lines whipping out, into the eyes of the corpse in the trunk.

He twitches. It seems right to wait until he blinks. His clothes look old, like from a British drama on PBS.

He exhales a rotten wind.

"You Scelesti keep your promises." He sits up, stiffly, releasing a cloud of dust. "You're not known for that. Then again, neither are we. The old kingdom perishes. A new one rises."

"And the tower?" Why am I saying that?

"You'll get your key to the kingdom, as the Concord promises, once the Baron from the Other Side comes home. First, I need more souls." His colorless eyes flash. "I see you've got more."

Do I? I don't even know what I'm going to say when I open my mouth, but the shadows ripple before I can talk. Masked people tear out of them. They're fast.

I open my eyes and run a hand along my face. I'm so smooth. I usually shave everything. Hair belongs to my selves. Where are they? I can't hear them sing and scream.

"Kenosia, you did very well." I'm lying in a bed; the voice comes from a hag's face above: a stone mask, fanged and grinning.

"Who? I'm not anyone right now. I need to be someone to talk to you." My head hurts. What am I supposed to say when I'm not anyone?

"You're a holy pilgrim, love. I'm Culsu. Like you, I passed through the Veils and became Faceless." She places a gloved hand on my chest. "But I wasn't brave enough to make your commitment."

That helps order my thoughts. "I'm the Veil, nothing more." I smile, like a child getting a question right.

My fingers and toes are numb. I feel so sleepy. I'm not used to feeling things when I'm not a person.

"You are Legion: a pilgrim on the harder, Left-Handed path. You became so holy, my love, that you couldn't worship as just one person. In your devotion you told us about the Concord, the old Tremere rising, and what the other orders know. In one night, you exceeded years of our efforts."

"My legs are cold, Culsu. I can't move them."

"You borrowed three souls. Two of them might be missed. We'll return them carefully, anonymously. But we can't let them know about you . . . and you're very strong. Too strong to control, and too holy to make promises you can keep."

"I could stop the poison whenever I want." The cold's gone, and now I feel like the bed has dropped out from under me. Culsu's mask swims in the sky.

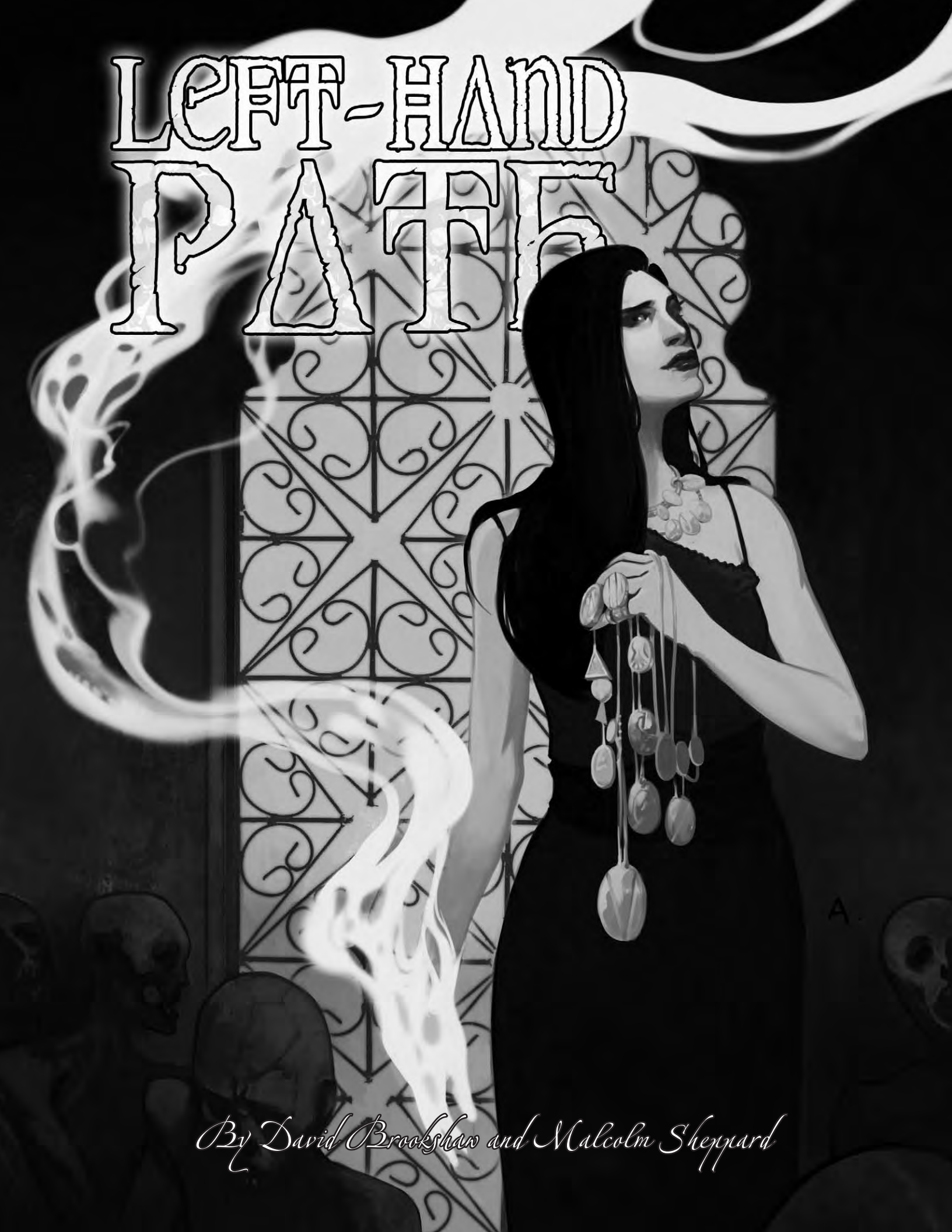
"I know, love."

"Culsu?"

She takes off her mask. She has beautiful eyes.

"Will I see everyone I ever was?"

Left-Hand Path



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Left-Hand Path

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INTRODUCTION

Knowledge becomes evil if the aim be not virtuous.
—Plato

They are not spoken of. Nefandi. "Unutterable." Out of sight, and out of mind. Cast out of the Consilium where their poison can't infect others. The Left-Handed path leads to a lonely, maddened death. And yet, they thrive.

All societies have rules, even the societies of mages. Those of the Pentacle are the responsibility of any serious teacher to pass down from mentor to student. The laws of the Consilium are intended to keep the peace between rivals vying for secrets and resources, to maintain the rights of cabals, and to prevent threats to the whole community.

Laws against taking another mage's property, revealing magic to Sleepers, and aiding the Seers reinforce the Consilium's priorities. Transgressors can expect to be reprimanded, fined or made to do penance. The internal codes of the orders are more complex and secretive, threatening only to disown mages who stray too far from the accepted doctrine. Staying within the bounds of order and Consilium is easy enough if the neophyte has chosen his order well and respects the Sentinels. Behavior that a Sleeper would find immoral or disturbing is accepted with a shrug, from lying daily in order to maintain the Veil, to summoning demons from the Inner Worlds, or even animating the dead as servants. Limits to what is acceptable can be universal or local, but most mages agree on a few: debasement or destruction of the human soul, bargaining with or (worse) worshipping the inhabitants of the Abyss or Lower Depths, murder of other mages for magical power or other ends. Each order adds their own heresies — Mystagogues who preach the destruction of Sleepers, Silver Ladder tyrants, Guardians of the Veil who follow false messiahs, and dozens more.

Whether legally applied or self-imposed under threat of worse punishment, ostracism awaits mages who are found out. The rewards of breaking taboos are often tempting, however. Some see forbidden magic as a shortcut to power or a way out of terrible circumstances. Others believe that their studies are banned simply to deny them to the weak. Perhaps the mages acknowledge the danger but have the hubris to think that they can wield power safely where others cannot. When a willworker is pushed to her limits and her life, her work, her dependents, or simply her pride and self-image are at risk, can she really afford to turn down any option? After all, it's just this once — and for many, that's even true. Those mages who go too far repeatedly do so out of a driving obsession, a refusal to step back and look at what they're doing or acknowledge any authority other than themselves. They damn themselves through their own hubris.

Collectively, the spells, Legacies, and practices that magical society proscribes are known as the Left-Handed Path. Mages who pursue individual power or development by reviled means over the collective good (as the orders define "good") are described as "Left-Handed" when they're spoken about at all. Many mages who have broken magic's laws flee, escaping justice in self-imposed exile. Many more don't. Out of shame or fear of suspicion, their peers cover for them or try to deal with the problem without making it public. The very worst magical criminals, those whose crimes become infamous and obvious to all, are declared Nefandi and erased from the orders' records. Their shadow names become taboo and their students are watched for the rest of their lives, if they're allowed to remain part of the Awakened community at all. The Consilium tells itself that the few self-exiles and banishments are the whole of the problem — that the Left-Handed are rare and managed when they appear. It would be comforting if that were true, but it's never that simple. Deviant things breed in the darkness beyond the Consiliums' sight: alliances between exiled Legacies, extremist shadow-forms of the orders' philosophies and mages unaccountable to anyone who sink deeper and deeper into madness.

Theme and Mood

Theme: The Price of Disobedience

Left-Handed mages bend and splinter the few taboos left in Awakened culture, earning persecution from their colleagues. Half of the so-called "price" of disobedience is actually a payoff. By refusing to conform, the Left-Handed earn magical secrets, Legacy powers, and ways around or out of Awakened social customs that impede their magical development.

Legacies have their own mores, however, forming the other half of the "price." They exert an ever-stronger influence as Left-Handed mages rise through the ranks. The heretical praxis demands its toll as well: eccentric behaviors, theft, murder, or spiritual violations that require the Art to even contemplate.

Mood: Look beneath the Surface

The Pentacle treats Left-Handed mages like a mad rabble at the periphery of Awakened society —a reason to cleave to the Consilium, but not a serious threat to the order of things. The Hierarchs are wrong. Among the Left-Handed, cohesive movements bring disparate Legacies and philosophies together. They represent alternatives to the Pentacle's "eternal truth" that the orders would rather not acknowledge.

How to Use This Book

The Left-Hand Path is a guide to mages who defy the social mores of the Awakened, from Apostates that quit their order to the Abyss-worshipping Scelesti. The common threads in the mages detailed here are obsession, risk and self-destruction; the Left-Handed have strayed from the teachings of the orders for reasons that make sense to them, risking their careers and lives for understanding, power or the indulgence of their desires. A mage can cross the line once or twice without being trapped by his choices. Contrary to the Hierarchs' cautionary tales, not every deal with an acamoth is instantly and irrevocably damning, and taking a single soul under duress is not the same as becoming a full Tremere, but confidence at having escaped unscathed once leads to the false assumption that the tales are entirely wrong, that the danger has no teeth. The risk increases that the mage will do it again and again.

A Left-Handed mage's behavior becomes more and more extreme and his Paradoxes more severe as Wisdom gives way to hubris. If he falls to madness completely, through myriad layers of monstrousness, then he'll become a cautionary tale to other mages, whispered about when Consilium officials aren't within earshot — assuming he's ever stopped.

Characters can appear at any stage of development, from initial temptation through to being caught and tried or becoming one of the Mad. Players can watch their characters' mentors go down the Left-Handed Path, understanding why a mage would do such a thing. And then, one day, a player's character might be in just the wrong place at the wrong time and realize how she could achieve her goals if she were to do something radical. Something forbidden.

Just this once.

Contents

The Left-Hand Path begins with this Introduction and advice for Storytellers on how to use the rest of the book. The Introduction shows the many ways the orders think about, classify, and describe mages who break their taboos. It details the punishment meted out to the Left-Handed when the Consilium's hand is forced, then goes into ways to include the Left-Handed in your stories from individual encounters to chronicle antagonists.

Chapter One: Heretics and Apostates looks at the mages who break social rules; the Apostates who break their oaths and leave their orders as well as the heretics who twist and corrupt their orders' teachings while still claiming membership. The bulk of the Left-Handed Legacies, those who don't worship the Abyss or steal souls, are described here.

Chapter Two: The Mad Ones describes the Mad, mages whose minds splintered in the Awakening or who committed such acts of hubris that Wisdom failed. Every Mad mage is lost to permanent madness, obsessed by a singular form of magic and driven to indulge his vices. Cautionary tales and tragic villains, the Mad make dangerous enemies for any Cabal.

Chapter Three: The Scelesti examines the mages who break one of the great magical taboos; dealing with the Abyss. Mages of all orders and Ministries are taught to beware of the anti-reality of lies, so what drives a mage to worship it and betray the entire Fallen World?

Chapter Four: Reapers looks at those mages who use the human soul for their own ends. The Tremere liches are the greatest example of these dark Legacies. Every Sleeper defiled by the Reapers is an Awakening that will never be realized. Every soul stolen from a fellow mage and used in the Reapers' experiments is a light snuffed out.

The Point of No Return

Despite popular opinion among the Pentacle, not every taboo-breaking mage immediately joins or forms a Legacy devoted to his divergent praxis. A great many *do*, but it's possible to defy the Consilium without shaping your soul into your means of doing so.

The reason "Left-Handed" means "Left-Handed Legacies" in casual use among the Awakened is that it's the only reasonably clear difference between "normal" mages and the Left-Handed; if you're in a banned Legacy, then you're destined for the Interfector. Or to *become* the Interfector.

It's never that simple, though. Is someone who was tricked into joining a Legacy but now regrets it Left-Handed? It's debatable. Is a mage who spends decades stealing souls but joined a mainstream Legacy early in her career innocent? Of course she isn't.

Except for a few penitents, membership of a proscribed Legacy indicates that a mage has gone too far to back out now. Barring the legendary spells of Archmasters and desperate acts of self-mutilation, Legacies can't be removed. The attainments forever mark the mage as the inheritor of a twisted path.

Forbidden Names

Mages know that names have power; moreover, concepts have power. The orders discourage initiates from studying the Left-Handed too closely, believing that the lore of Nefandi Legacies and the Mad has the potential to lead unwary willworkers astray. Guardians of the Veil and Mysterium Censors

lock away soul stones and grimoires captured from the Left-Handed, redact documents describing their powers, and treat requests for more information on a "Need to Know" basis. Sentinels pass enough knowledge of known Left-Handed groups among themselves to keep a watchful eye out. An ordinary Liegeman of the Consilium can expect to be kept in the dark without a truly pressing need.

The Consilii are not entirely wrong in their estimation; the Left-Handed poses a danger even without being present. Stories are commonplace of mages unwittingly learning Legacies from soul stones and grimoires only to find out too late what those Legacies entail, and almost every would-be acamoth summoner thinks that she is wise enough to resist the Abyss' lies. Having the entire Consilium know all the Left-Handed teachings it has encountered simply puts too much temptation in the way of its members.

The price of security, though, is that only those few experts truly understand the Left-Handed, and they are far more likely to become Left-Handed themselves. A Liegeman who believes he has identified a Left-Handed mage in the Consilium must sort through contradictory rumors and half-understood names, because even knowing who to ask for more creates a risk of exposure.

Mage: The Awakening defines terms as an average mage will understand them; "Left-Handed" is a term for Legacies that the Consilium bans, an "apostate" is a mage who abandoned her order, and so on. If a mage does his homework, however, he can learn more and better identify what he may be dealing with.

The following terms are frequently misapplied — they are fundamentally bad things to call someone, though context matters. Like anyone, mages call one another things they don't really mean when under stress, and the meaning of curses gradually shifts. They still have power, though, when formally applied.

Nefandi

The Badge of Disgrace

Far from being a universal badge of condemnation, the term Left-Handed has only been in wide use among the orders for just over a century, as one of the changes that transformed the Diamond into the Pentacle after the Free Council's formation. Older and more formal Consilii still have the original term included in their Lex Magica as the formal name for Banishment: Nefandi. A word not appearing in any Sleeper language, Nefandi is a bastardized pronunciation of certain High Speech runes, which from context appear to describe the punishment meted out by the Visus Draconis to traitors in the very earliest recorded Lex Magicas. As much as any High Speech phrase not directly involving an imago can be translated, it means "Unnamable," "Taboo," "Unutterable," or "Nameless." That's why it isn't casually used any more — before they joined the Pentacle, the four Diamond orders referred to any mage who wasn't one of their own as Nefandi, including the forebears of the Free Council. Anyone who wasn't in the four orders was Nameless and shunned.

In precise terms, Nefandi is the name of a punishment, not a crime. Traditional Consilii apply ten increasing levels of forfeit for lawbreakers, from public apology and service to imprisonment. The very worst crimes — those committed by mages who would now be called Left-Handed — are punishable by banishment and ostracism, extending as far as the removal of the offenders' soul temporarily (suppressing their ability to use magic) or permanently, along with execution. That's usually as far as it goes. In Consilii that include the punishment, banishment, permanent imprisonment, removal of power, and execution are all preceded by the destruction of the subject's magical life. His magical tools are destroyed, as are any grimoires, soul stones, or imbued items he created. His Shadow Name becomes illegal to utter and is replaced in all Consilium records by "Nefandi:" the name that is not a name and cannot be spoken.

That's the theory, anyway. How complete the erasure of a Nefandi is depends on how afraid the Consilium is of ideological or magical contamination. Even the Guardians prefer to confiscate magic rather than destroy it, often sparing items linked to the Nefandi in case of future need, although the majority of Guardian caucuses are willing to do what's necessary for the Nefandi's work to never be duplicated. In the worst cases and the darkest times, when the Consilium does not know how far the offenders' corruption has spread, the former mage's students and cabal-mates are exiled as well, just to be sure. Vengeful Consilii erase whole Legacies from records, destroy Sanctums, and exile potentially innocent mages who have the misfortune of being insufficiently separated from the Nefandi.

Left-Handed

Forbidden Power

With the Great Refusal and the Nameless War, a new order formed, built from those Nameless Cabals the orders found neutral or distasteful rather than objectionable. The new order left behind only those who could not or would not conform to the Diamond or nascent Free Council's codes of behavior. Use of the word Nefandi to mean mages not in an order fell out of fashion in favor of "Left-Handed," a piece of realpolitik that allowed the Pentacle to continue dividing itself from the dark Legacies without offending its new members.

Like "Nefandi" before it, "Left-Handed" has a legal meaning in many Consilii and a much wider popular usage. It was used before the Free Council formed by some of the larger Nameless groups, taken from Sleeper occultism where in Theosophy it means roughly someone who develops their individual power over the interests of the group, or derives power from breaking taboos, an evolution of Tantric terms for internal versus external power. Left-Handed occultists embraced sexuality in magic, went against their societies' ideas of morality and believed themselves and their own goals to be the only authority over their lives. Even today, Sleeper magical traditions sometimes identify themselves as Left or Right handed meaning "individual" and "organized," which causes confusion when mages Awaken from those com-

munities. To most mages, it means someone who pursues selfish routes to power — magical habits that endanger other mages or cause unwarranted harm to Sleepers. A Left-Handed Legacy is one that the orders fear, disdain, or both, marking members as decidedly unnatural. Where the term appears as a legal label in some Lex Magicas, it means a Legacy that is damaging to the souls of the practitioner or others — a much narrower definition.

Also like Nefandi, "Left-Handed" status is rarely advertised by the mages so named. It doesn't mean that the mage is unhealthily obsessed with distasteful magic, that he is a member of a Legacy that causes Wisdom loss, or even that he's a member of an already banned Legacy. All it says is that the Consilium has formally declared one of these things to be true, in this particular case. Like any political decision, whether or not to name an individual as being Left-Handed is fraught with self-interest, fear and prejudice. In many cases, the members of a Consilium don't wait for the official condemnation before throwing the name at mages they hate.

For details of what magical practices might lead a mage to being named Left-Handed, see Chapter One.

Scelesti

The Accursed

Children of the Fall, the Abyss-wracked Scelesti mean to complete it—to finish a collapse begun when the Quiescence invaded human souls and the Void became the barrier between the Lie and the true universe. Not all Accursed are conscious of that desire. Some believe that their studies, sacrifices and crimes will defeat the Abyss with its own power. The Void is nothing and everything, where a willworker might go to defy the laws of sorcery, so it's a tempting subject for mages tired of structure, desperate for power, or eager for revenge. Many Scelesti are "Legacies of One," eccentric, friendless and doomed. But there are others as well, and they've been plotting their moment for a very, very long time.

To explore the Scelesti further, see Chapter Three.

Reapers

Thieves of Souls

Most mages first hear the word "Reaper" as a nickname for the Tremere liches, a curse aimed at those Nefandi's appetite for human souls. It appears in ancient codices of the Lex Magica as a formal term for any mage who steals souls – not borrows, nor even misuses, but irrevocably removes. Reapers (and there are more Reaper Legacies than just the Tremere) either store the souls they take for perverse experiments or consume them to take on aspects of their victim's subtle self.

For more information on Reapers, see Chapter Four.

Liches

The Undying

Reapers are sometimes called "liches" by young mages who have only heard of the Tremere, but that isn't always true. A lich is any mage who has attempted magical immortality, whether through a form of undeath or by extending her lifespan beyond human norms. The word has dark connotations, marking the techniques used as almost invariably unpleasant. A Thyrsus using Life magic to extend his youth and live to 130 wouldn't be seen as a lich, but a Moros who steals the bodies of victims or an Acanthus who inflicts his fated end on others so that he can live would both be. The Tremere are both Reapers and liches; they are the best-known examples of both, making the two concepts are synonymous to many.

Apostates

Renunciates and Exiles

To most mages, an apostate is a mage without an order. It usually encompasses Banishers and sometimes Seers of the Throne. Although apostasy is the consequence of banishment, the orders think of apostates as having chosen to turn their backs on magical society. Often, however, the fear of worse punishment drives Left-Handed mages who are discovered to apostasy for their own protection. The word carries connotations of untrustworthiness, potential treachery, and oathbreaking.

More precisely, an apostate is a mage who has left an order or the Seers. Even if that mage then joins another group — a long and difficult process that rarely results in much status in the new order — she is still an apostate. It's often misused to means mages who were never members of an order in the first place. Such willworkers are rare, but they do exist.

A mage who was never initiated isn't an apostate even if he rejects all offers of membership. If his career has gone on long enough, though, and he's had multiple chances to join, the majority of mages won't split hairs. There must be something wrong with him, after all, if he doesn't swear the same loyalty they did. Those who refuse to pick a side are just as bad as the enemy.

The Other Side

Seers of the Throne are sometimes counted among Left-Handed mages by the Pentacle orders, but they're not — at least not for the most part. The Seers inflict and encourage all the Fallen World's miseries on Sleepers in the name of the Exarchs, but that doesn't mean they're obsessed with particular magical styles, or that their Legacies inevitably lead to Wisdom loss. The nature of their service to the Exarchs leads to a callous disregard for Sleepers and a propensity for mental health issues, but a Seer is more likely to be careful with her magic than a doctrinaire Silver Ladder mage is.

In fact, the Ministries are just as beset by Left-Handed mages as the orders are, even if the orders wouldn't recognize the difference between a loyal Seer and a heretic. Most *Seers* have a hard time recognizing Left-Handed mages among their Pylons, thanks to the Ministries' enthusiasm for false doctrines, blind-alley positions and other traps for those trying to climb the Iron Pyramid. The Exarchs do, however, have a few strict commandments all Seers are expected to follow — chief among them prohibitions against worshipping entities other than the Exarchs themselves, such as the inhabitants of the Abyss and the ancient monsters known as the Bound. But where commandments exist, of course, heretical Seers somewhere break them to get a leg up. Pentacle mages stumble into the aftermath of internal conflicts or find Seer apostates attempting to survive as solitaries.

Banishers, on the other hand, *are* Left-Handed. Even the Seers agree on that one.

If anything, the Seers are even harsher; a solitary targeted for recruitment by the Ministries who doesn't have the orders' protection is either a neophyte Seer or a dead man.

For more information on apostates, see Chapter One.

Heretics

Twisted Beliefs

The orders are complex entities made up of layered philosophies, teachings, secret initiations, and mysteries that shape members into one part of the Pentacle. They form broad churches in their own way, encompassing many different factions and regional variations — and just like all churches, they have heresies.

Just as a Left-Handed Legacy is a Legacy that goes too far for the Consilium's comfort, a heresy is an internal faction of an order that goes against some core belief or code, breaking or bending part of what makes the order recognizable as itself. Unlike the other labels discussed here, heretics are usually recognized as part of their orders' societies. They are only named Left-Handed and exiled if the nature of their heresy demands it, and even then only if the other orders find out. Many heresies would be seen as innocuous by other mages — the Adamantine Arrow, for example, regards pacifism in its members as heretical — but many more would not, such as Guardian groups that intensify Paradoxes or anti-Sleeper terrorist cells inspired by a twisting of Mysterium doctrine.

Heretics occupy the uncomfortable middle ground between accepted mages and the exiled Nefandi. Embarrassments to their orders, they find themselves sequestered and pushed to duties that minimize contact with outsiders. Those that are also Left-Handed obey out of fear of exile or punishment, should their order cease to hide them. When the disgrace of their existence becomes less than the liability they pose, the heretic's barely-held position in the Pentacle becomes fragile indeed.

For more information on heretics, see Chapter One.

Storytelling the Sinister

We wrote this book to make Left-Handed mages more significant antagonists. Compared to conflicts between the Pentacle and Seers of the Throne, encounters with the Left-Handed tend to get relegated to a secondary role—good enough for a "wizard of the week" chapter or two, but not enough to drive the chronicle's ongoing story. We mean to change that by applying the principles we used to outline the book: ideas you can use to bring the Left-Handed (or anything else) to the fore.

Themes: When the Left-Handed represent nothing more than a single cult's interests, they don't address **Mage**'s greater themes. A Scelesti Legacy embodies the Abyss' menace. The Mad demonstrate the folly of abandoning Wisdom. You can magnify the importance of a Left-Handed group by not only tying them into an overarching theme, but gathering other cabals and cults under its umbrella. As you reveal the connections, players learn that a common idea influences these seemingly disparate antagonists. If the Tremere aren't the only Reapers, it underscores the importance of souls. We've used this method to organize the book's chapters. You can adopt it to create a conceptual map of your chronicle's themes, dangers and the mages that exemplify them.

Anchors: With so many Left-Handed sects to choose from, you may be tempted to cover them one by one, in an episodic format. There's nothing wrong with that, but players usually devote the same level of attention to these characters as you do. They'll deal with their challenges and abandon interest as soon as you introduce the next "wizard of the week." Apply a little asymmetry; make one Left-Handed encounter more prominent, but connect it to others down the road. Just as we've abandoned the "Legacy encyclopedia" format in this book, you're encouraged to give preferential treatment to the Left-Handed you like most. Make them the anchors of an overall theme. This is why, for example, Tremere enjoy prominent coverage in the Reapers chapter and have been designed to interact with others of their kind.

Systems: Break free of the Legacy format to add special systems and you'll make Left-Handed more than representatives of a type. Just as unique rules portray the Mad's final break from Wisdom, you should give the most prominent Left-Handed a little something extra beyond the basic systems for mages and Legacies. If these quirks connect them to the setting's metaphysics in some special way, it shows that their practices contain great magical secrets. At the very least, it makes the Left-Handed less predictable by bending the basic Legacy template.

Sorcery and Civilization

Seer and Pentacle Masters say that as fearsome as individual Left-Handed might be, these heretics and mad sorcerers always fall before mages bound by the common rule of law. As lonely eccentrics, they serve the great factions' ideological interests by demonstrating the moral hazards of straying from "civilization."

Actual Left-Handed occupy more ambiguous positions than the stereotype suggests. More secret traitors and strange allies fill their ranks than exiles and lone wolves. No Left-Handed cult matches the Pentacle or Seers of the Throne's collective power, but they rarely act as direct competitors. To the Left-Handed, their lofty cousins are tools and resources. The great factions initiate more Awakened than the Legacies can manage. They collect lore and mystic artifacts for the taking. Many Left-Handed don't even consider themselves outsiders, but innovators defying fear-driven laws to study the edge of magic. Why reshape the social order that already serves them well?

As Seer and Pentacle stalwarts think of sorcerers as a nation, they typically expect any serious threat to manifest as "barbarians at the gate:" a noticeable spike in enemy numbers, followed by a decisive campaign against Awakened "civilization." Yet more often, each cult seeks leverage points to acquire recruits and resources, preserving them for as long as possible. For example, no intelligent Scelestus would threaten the Mysterium's athenaeum system, which catalogs Abyssal magic efficiently and thoroughly.

These forms of exploitation ensure that as greater factions impose convoluted traditions and authoritarian mores, the Left-Handed parasitically grow stronger. In the Middle Ages, Tremere needed to walk across the wild, preaching to isolated cabals. Now, they just need a Hierarch's soul.

Tiers: Scaling the Threat

First introduced in **Hunter: The Vigil**, the tier concept might help you define the scope of Left-Handed stories. It's easy to confuse tiers for sheer numbers because they're often but not necessarily connected. Cabals operate locally, at Tier One, and entire orders span the world at Tier Three. The Left-Handed don't occupy tiers because of their numbers, but through their goals and actions. A Legacy or cult might operate at any Tier, from local stories to the cosmos-shaking endgame.

As Many as You Need

Across multiple books, the **Mage: The Awakening** line describes dozens of Legacies—too many to plausibly inhabit the World of Darkness, really. If you really want to use them all, most Legacies might contain one or two members at most. Some may be virtually extinct and can only be learned through ghosts, artifacts and magical books (see Chapter One, p. 22, for details). However, you can comfortably run a "canonical" chronicle without assuming that every Legacy ever published exists.

Mage generally assumes that the core book's Legacies exist in mainstream chronicles. As this book's organization shows, others can be folded into general philosophies or spiritual states such as the Mad, Scelesti, and Reapers. Accordingly, you may create an "anchor Legacy" to fill a general role in the chronicle, relegating the rest to offshoots, dead factions, or talented individuals.

Don't overdo pre-planning, however. Adopt Legacies in response to story needs and player interest. If a player wants to join a published Legacy you approve of, we encourage you to decide on the fly that it exists.

Tier One—Local

Most Left-Handed conflicts occupy this tier. Lone sorcerers, minor cabals and supporting cults drive colorful antagonists and episodic plots. As the antagonists lack grand aspirations or support, the players' cabal normally pieces together the threat and put an end to it within a few chapters.

At this tier, subtlety can be a hindrance. If players' mages kill a sorcerer without uncovering her motives, they might walk away unsatisfied. You don't have to make all Tier One Left-Handed short lived characters, however. They might serve as recurring foils, provided they don't do anything so awful that the cabal takes them out too early. Local threats easily fill an entire chronicle, especially if the players' mages see themselves as neighborhood defenders. Sleepers especially matter at Tier One. They make up the majority of Storyteller characters. Consilium politics fade into the background.

Tier Two—Regional

At Tier Two, Left-Handed meddle in Awakened politics and shared assets at the Consilium scale. Heretics challenge their parent orders and Paths. Reapers kidnap the Hierarch's soul. Tier Two stories can change regional constants, such as leadership and culture, so they provide an opportunity to tweak your setting. Left-Handed mages at Tier Two should

be treated a bit more deftly, revealing their personalities and motives over time. If the players' cabal figures out Left-Handed plans too quickly, the rest of the story degenerates into mop-up missions. The Left-Handed possess exotic philosophies. Unveiling them should be part of the story—and rewarded with Arcane Experience, too.

Of course, taking this approach might delay gratification a bit too much. Remember that you can always embed a Tier One subplot into a Tier Two game. More ruthless Legacies use junior members as stalking horses, giving them short-term, aggressive goals to draw out potential enemies. These not only provide a more accessible short story, but foreshadow greater challenges ahead.

Tier Three—Global

When a Left-Handed conspiracy threatens orders and Ministries, you're stepping into Tier Three territory. While this often involves major Legacies such as the Tremere, it isn't a necessity. Like the others, the global tier is about effects, not personnel. That said, conflicts will inevitably draw more powerful Storyteller characters from your roster. Develop a firm reason why your cabal is essential, regardless of the presence of heavy hitters. Don't be afraid to invoke mystical destinies—this is a game of modern sorcery—but make them foreshadow down-to-earth reasoning. The players' cabal holds the last page of a critical grimoire, for example, or builds diplomatic bonds that would have otherwise been unthinkable.

Left-Handed antagonists operating at this scale usually want to reshape global Awakened society to conform to their Legacies' philosophies. Global plots aren't quite at the level where they'll destroy the world, but they can lead to greater, cosmic consequences (Tier Four) down the road. With the exception of some Scelesti, few Left-Handed want to murder the world. Even Accursed may be more interested in undermining psychic, symbolic constants. If the Diamond orders are older than the Lie, what happens when a Scelesti cult destroys one? What happens when you kill the earthly remnant of a higher truth?

Tier Four—Cosmic Endgame

Now it's time to destroy the world, or universe. This is the tier of Armageddon and other events that put a definitive end to your chronicle. Not all Left-Handed pursue goals suited to Tier Four, but some Scelesti want the Abyss to swallow Creation, and the Tremere dream of summoning a sinister Final Watchtower. In cosmic stories, a Left-Handed sect's philosophy unravels great revelations about your World of Darkness. Again, you don't need legions of Abyss-worshippers, but a few figures the players' cabal can investigate without getting bored. To prolong the process, you may feel the need to make these Storyteller characters invulnerable. Instead, develop an alternate plot that can continue if the cabal deals with them early—but don't make that triumph meaningless (where killing enemy A summons enemy B, and not killing enemy A summons enemy B) unless you specifically want to convey a sense of inevitability.

Tier Four games can easily lose emotional resonance to the big picture. Collapsing universes don't mean anything unless you reinforce the idea that people live in them. Take a final walk through lower tiers' neighborhoods and plots. Due to their variety and smaller numbers, the Left-Handed rarely transcend their own low-tier experiences, so the key to overcoming one of them might be found in forgotten family, friends and personal traumas.

The Fringe: Limnality and Countercultures

Two ideas about cultures provide possible models for Left-Handed who maintain ties with the major factions. The first, limnality, is well known to the Awakened. Mages enter a limnal (from limen, the Latin term for "a threshold") state during the mystic initiations they undertake throughout their lives. Every mage experiences a sense of "betweenness" in the middle of their Awakening, where they witness something greater than the Lie, but can't reliably call upon it with Awakened magic. In orthodox Legacies, induction involves a similar "between" period of study with its teachers, after which the sorcerer returns to her cabal fundamentally changed.

On the other hand, certain Left-Handed permanently inhabit the limnal state. They are changed, but never truly return. Even when they return to the greater Awakened culture, they don't reaffirm a commitment to its laws and customs. Sometimes this is because the mage's sect has been declared anathema, but regardless of her official status, she becomes an outsider. Her primary focus turns inward toward her own magical doctrines. This makes her a hermit or trickster, distrusted but occasionally consulted by settled sorcerers who require her expertise.

The Left-Handed mage enjoys a paradoxical relationship with her Tetrarchy or Consilium, a role defined by her excluded position. She can say and do things that would normally invite censure as long as her actions ultimately reinforce the status quo. Sometimes, they pay for that tolerance with deeds the local establishment must officially condemn, even though they need doing. Regardless of the law, sometimes a sanctum needs to burn, or a book needs to vanish.

The Guardian of the Veil's interfectors play a formal version of this role. They kill, but killing banishes them from other social positions. The veneer of outsider status doesn't always convince Consilium citizens, however. Sometimes, these offices degenerate into transparent tools of the elite and don't confer plausible deniability.

Left-Handed countercultures include the normal use of the term, in that they set themselves up as an opposing parallel to mainstream Awakened society. Left-Handed cabals claim private territory and handle their own business. In the Pentacle, heterodox magi can do this without attracting undue attention by invoking traditions that force outsiders to leave them alone and solving problems out of the ruling council's earshot. Ironically, counterculture groups often command an impressive understanding of the laws they avoid, smoothly citing precedent to dissuade nosy occultists or forcing a duel instead of suffering a hearing before the Hierarch.

In practice, this makes Left-Handed countercultures mysterious, yet belligerent. They don't show up for meetings. They settle arguments with guns, knives and killing spells. None of that's illegal, but it's unusual enough to arouse suspicion if the side effects of their projects escape concealment. When sentinels encounter roving demons and soulless beggars, they'll investigate the local misanthropes first.

These tendencies invite comparisons with the Free Council, who routinely set up systems of self-governance alongside the "official" Consilium. Unlike the Libertines, the Left-Handed rarely care about reshaping Awakened society as a whole. Outsiders don't necessarily appreciate the subtle distinction. They often pin Left-Handed crimes on Libertine assemblies, especially if they're insular—or less justly, if they're unpopular enough to provide a ready supply of "usual suspects."

Among Seers of the Throne, countercultures are more difficult to construct. The sect doesn't respect the rights of

Story Hooks from the Fringe

• Obsessed with her dead lover, the Thyrsus Master Libra created a Legacy to raise her from the dead. The final attainment she developed can do it, but requires another person to willingly give up his life in exchange. In convocation, a council of Masters declared her Legacy Left-Handed. Like other Reaper Legacies it seizes the sacrifice's soul, and "willing" subjects might be pressured to commit suicide. Libra escaped punishment because she never misused her abilities, but was nevertheless forbidden to teach her Legacy. She's spent decades as a recluse, granting audiences to mages seeking insight into the cycle of life and death, but now she's dying, and has refused to use magic to extend her life. She never found anyone willing to trade his soul for her lover's. Certain magi are unwilling to let her Legacy pass with her, however, and are willing to risk punishment to preserve it. They'll need leverage to convince Libra to break the convocation's judgment. A sacrifice will do.

• Among the Seers of the Throne, a pylon called the Bronze Fist relies on the reputation of its leader, the Praetorian Ministry Master called Pilum. Pilum went Mad a decade ago; his subordinates kept this a secret and set up "war games" with captives to channel his wrath. Recently, Bronze Fist Seers have captured Pentacle mages to satisfy his escalating demands for violent challenge. When the local Consilium calls on the players' cabal to investigate, they might discover that rival pylons ache for an excuse to remove the Bronze Fist. Do they seek an alliance or go it alone?

• As they raise corpses into shambling servants, the Bokor Legacy risks being declared Left-Handed. Until now, members avoided the label by keeping a low profile. The Bokor Ladent seems determined, however, to reshape the Moros in his Legacy's image. While zombies wait on him hand and foot, Ladent insults the Leaden Coin doctrine of death as release. He builds a reputation as an eager, sadistic duelist. When another Bokor comes to town, she does so unannounced, hoping to find someone willing to kill Ladent and preserve her Legacy's obscurity.

mages who can't hammer a position out of the Iron Pyramid. If other Seers discover that a cabal contains members of a banned sect, they'll often trip over each other to attack—those who can claim victory, win influence. In Tetrarchies, however, blackmail is an especially effective tool. You can't get within sight of the Throne without acquiring a few inconvenient secrets. For every Seer experimenting with the Abyss, another poisoned his superior or doomed her cabal to curry favour with a rival Ministry. Where Pentacle subcultures use laws, Seer groups employ unofficial, devious leverage.

Examples

Limnality: Once, he used Mastery of Death and Matter to teach prodigies at the Mysterium's Otranto School. Now the Mad Moros Ahma walks Italy in rags, demanding that the ghosts swarming around him return the souls of children he sold "to the Deathlord." There's no record he ever did such a thing, however, much to the confusion of other Awakened.

Ahma treats Awakened who enter his presence like children, smiling at their relative ignorance. Ahma will answer any question put to him in the voice of a child, so Italian Libertines guard him from a distance, subtly steering him from densely populated areas while sending their allies to be trained. Some "bad children" collapse into ashes, but anyone seeking out the Mad for their secrets must accept the risks.

Subculture: Members of the Cloud Infinite Legacy (p. 88) constitute an online subculture with members on three continents. Except for the Legacy's founder, Carbon, all of them remain Libertines. Free Council members in each city know that Cloud Infinite explores a magical praxis related to computation and consciousness, but no member of the Legacy would ever admit to exploiting souls. They hide behind traditions of secrecy and the fact that they're exploring ideas too new to be readily identified as Reaping.

The Enemy: Outlaws and Insurgents

Content to exploit the Seers and Pentacle, many Left-Handed leave them largely unscathed. Others actively undermine them or withdraw completely, however, becoming the lone wolves of popular stereotype. These mages, Legacies, and cults hold ideologies that compel them to undermine the larger factions, or to pursue projects with inherently hostile outcomes.

Outlaw Left-Handed leave Awakened society behind. They kidnap, rob or murder other mages and don't pretend to belong to their governments beyond momentary deceptions. Mages turn outlaw when they can no longer inhabit the fringe or fold of the great Awakened cultures. Limnal mages may finally break the Consilium's tolerance, or possibly a Left-Handed subculture finally lets its true nature slip. To an outlaw, other Awakened are either dangers to avoid or else possess something worth stealing. These renegades hide their numbers, intentions, location, and even existence whenever possible, confusing magical senses to the best of their ability. Outlaw sects emphasize self-sufficiency and group loyalty. Outsiders are inferiors—prey.

Consilii and Tetrarchies are less able to monitor rural Awakened, so many outlaws run to the country. A Hierarch might claim the state of Utah, but that doesn't mean he can track every sorcerer in its vast territory. Cities with an exceptionally high population density or convoluted political structures also hide outlaws effectively. For example, Chicago's multiple, overlapping supernatural fiefdoms give renegades space to establish sanctums where no Pentacle mage would tread—near a vampire aristocrat's offices, for example. For every outlaw

Story Hooks from the Enemy

• The infamous Scelestus Angrboda storms Chicago, sending gulmoths ahead of him in search of the Celestial Flange: an artifact credited with numerous powers that sparked conflict throughout Awakened history. The disruption pits cabal against cabal as they fight over signs of the Flange (which seem to be getting more common) at least as much as they hunt the Accursed. Angrboda's really more interested in bonding the most desperate, Flange-crazed mages to acamoths. Angrboda believes the Flange can not only be found in the city, but for his purposes, doesn't *need* to be possessed by anyone. He believes that every Supernal artifact possesses a dark counterpart. Once he feeds enough mages to the Void, he'll be able to summon an *Abyssal Flange*: "a lever to push the world off the path of time."

• After repelling a Banisher attack, a nomadic Adamantine Arrow cabal settles in the Consilium it saved. It doesn't take long for its leader, Siklos, to win the Sentinel's office. He calls for an aggressive campaign against the Pentacle's foes . . . so his cabal can *eat* them. They belong to a cannibal Legacy called the Devourers of the Flesh and satisfy their hunger on Consilium enemies. It works. The cabal eliminates most of the area's Awakened threats. Soon, however, the definition of "enemy" expands to include Sleepers who ask too many questions and mages who disagree with the ruling council. A well-known Libertine agitator disappears. The cannibals say nothing, but they're looking a bit *fatter* lately.

• The Consilium's ruling council's connections to local government and industry falter when Sleeper allies perish in suspicious accidents: fires, malfunctioning brakes, and drug overdoses. The perpetrators appear to be Sleepers who don't know each other or in many cases, their victims. The newest killers don't have souls. The Guardians of the Veil suspect (Legion) but cannot admit it—and in fact, have benefitted from the disruption, as it has opened opportunities long denied them by the Hierarch, who had barred them from Sleeper influence.

building a cabin in Labrador, there's another soundproofing her basement in San Francisco. Nomadic lives are common as well, particularly among Mastigos and Thyrsus, who find it easier to travel to forbidding locales.

When they avoid other mages, outlaws replicate the strategies of less aggressive apostates. The non-Atlantean traditions seek the same sanctums for similar reasons and tend to be secretive and chauvinistic as well. When Left-Handed roar into town to commit mayhem, apostates may end up taking the blame. Smart outlaws might frame apostates or trick them into temporary alliances against "the heretical Pentacle."

Insurgents play a more dangerous game by staying put. Subcultures taken to the next level of aggression, Insurgents use orthodox customs to not only hide what they are, but also to attack local authorities. Insurgency is often the endgame for a successful Left-Handed cell. After developing arcane power over a period of isolation, its mages assault the remaining power structure. They acquire Hallows, arcane objects and mundane influence. They build alliances that make other cabals complicit in the sect's crimes. Once their "friends" share a soul-thirst or join a pact with an unclean spirit, they're unlikely to turn them in.

After these preparations, the Left-Handed apply every conceivable trick to force the local Consilium or Tetrarchy to submit. They don't need to overthrow local rulers or even get them to admit defeat—crushing their ability to hinder the cult is good enough. Sometimes the insurgency says that it won't target mages who stand aside and let them attack others. This is common among Seers, where two pylons will almost always sell out the third. After succeeding, the insurgency maintains its dominion by breaking up opposing factions and discouraging power plays from the outside.

Examples

- **Outlaw:** Day to day, the Scelestus called the Blood of the Lamb usually avoids Boston and Salem, where established cabals may not like each other but are willing to cooperate to eliminate the Accursed. He maintains a number of lairs in the countryside and only visits when the urge to seduce and kill women takes hold. He believes that by demonstrating the meaninglessness of love, trust, and compassion, he follows a spiritual motive. Boston's dense population and his blandly handsome exterior usually hide his murders, but the magic he uses in their commission risks attracting Pentacle mages. He studies local Awakened politics to misdirect his enemies. By stalking areas inhabited by the Free Council, Banishers and Tremere, he implicates them in his murders.
- **Insurgency:** Toronto Tremere keep a century old tradition called the Chalice Compact, where they'll support a sorcerer's political ascent if she offers them her soul. A special soul jar (the lidded chalice from which the Compact takes its name) connects the candidate's vital spark to her mind and body. This lets her continue to cast spells and avoid the consequences of soul loss. Tremere can seize and devour the soul at any time, but Fate-bound oaths ensure its safety as long as its owner never betrays the liches. The last three Hierarchs of Toronto entered into the Compact, as did a number of provosts and sentinels. Thanks to the ruling council's complicity, Toronto Tremere steal souls with impunity unless they belong to mages from the Hierarch's order—and that's strategic choice, not an obligation. The Chalice Compact gives Toronto the appearance of a model Consilium, if one with a closed culture.

Detection and Punishment

The Left-Handed aren't like Banishers or Seers of the Throne as antagonists. While those groups do occasionally infiltrate the Pentacle, justifying their use in rare "enemy within" stories, the Left-Handed are particularly suited to this role. A Scelestus can act as Mentor, Provost or Hierarch just as easily as an isolated "evil wizard" banished from magical society but directing his plans against his former comrades. More importantly, they can shift from one to the other.

We've already covered the different ways in which you can frame the interaction of Left-Handed mages and your players' characters. This section is about the tilt from hidden to overt, stories revolving around the process of getting an antagonist who is still part of the Pentacle punished for his crimes.

Positive Identification

The first part of exposing a Left-Handed mage is to be certain (or as close to certain as the characters involved feel the need to be) of his status, and to convince other mages.

The Death • spell "Soul Marks" allows a mage to see the relative health of a soul, including any derangements or if the target has made a soul stone. It is not able to detect the Wisdom level of the target. Both it and the Prime • spell "Supernal Vision" allow the caster to detect Legacies of the people they scrutinize, but only if the subject has developed at least the second attainment. Even then, these spells don't show what the subjects' attainments actually do. If the caster has identified a Legacy before, however, and knows the "shape" it makes when revealed by her magic, she can try to identify other souls with the same attainments with a successful Intelligence + Empathy roll while using the same spells. Experienced Censors and Sentinels learn to recognize the attainments of known foes, and the Guardians of the Veil sometimes keep the captured soul stones of Nefandi under lock and key instead of destroying them, just to allow their agents to recognize those Legacies should they reoccur.

When magical detection fails, mages must rely on their own sense of right and wrong to judge another's actions. Mages don't have access to the Wisdom chart. They don't know when they lose a dot and don't think of themselves as "high Wisdom" or "low Wisdom." They do know that repeatedly committing heinous magical acts causes madness (and even-

Inquisitors of the Soul

While all Legacies and Wisdom losses are, in theory, marked onto the soul of a mage, in practice the markings are so subtle they can't be detected under normal conditions. This means that beginning members of Left-Handed Legacies will escape detection from mages using spells to examine their souls, while their Mentors have to fear students of Prime or Death raising the alarm. In stories where Pentacle society is desperate to uproot Nefandi influence by any means necessary, though, you may wish to provide a means by which the younger Left-Handed can be detected, but only by the inquisitorial mage breaking her own moral code.

At Storyteller's discretion, then, a sufficiently knowledgeable mage can indeed detect Legacies at the first attainment and even determine to which Arcana Legacies relate. Doing so is extremely difficult, requiring an Intelligence + Empathy roll at a 3 dice penalty. More importantly, these additional details can't be seen while the soul is still in place or by examining a soul stone. Analyzing a soul in this level of detail requires it to be detached and floating in Twilight, exposing the inquisitor to accusations of becoming a Reaper "in a good cause."

tually, if unchecked, Madness), that spirits shun mages who abuse their magic, and that paradoxes last longer for the especially prideful. Conversely, they also know that particularly saintly mages enjoy lighter Paradoxes and peaceful encounters with the Shadow. It's just that their definitions of "saintly" and "heinous" tend to be based more on an individual mage's idea of morality than the rules for any game trait.

Exceptions exist. Using magic to directly cause harm is almost universally seen as worse than simply physically attacking the victim, because it involves forming an imago of the hurt and making it real through the power of the Supernal. Regularly doing so is the mark of a sadist — not necessarily Left-Handed, but unpleasant. Most mages also agree that stealing souls robs the victim of their higher self and is an incredibly selfish act. Everything else on the Wisdom chart, from binding spirits to using magic to commit grand theft, is dependent on local conditions for mages to recognize it as "wrong." Mages facing what they suspect is the work of a Left-Handed willworker can't even rely on records describing the attainments of Legacies the Consilium has prohibited in the past, as the Legacy might not have been encountered yet or had its description removed as part of naming its members Nefandi.

The trials of suspected Left-Handed mages, then, are arguments about a mage's right to do as he sees fit versus his accusers' arguments that he has crossed a line. Unless your troupe's characters are Consilium officials, the main involvement for players in these stories is as accuser or accused, attempting to persuade the Councilors of guilt or innocence.

Story hooks from Identification

• Early in their apprenticeships, the characters witness a known Left-Handed mage being declared Nefandi and executed. Years later, crimes matching their memories of that mage's actions take place, but the Consilium is adamant that no Ghost Mage was formed by the execution. The Nefandi's soul stone was hidden away but has corrupted a young mage, perhaps one of the cabal's contemporaries.

• The Consilium is divided over an issue of magical morality. A Legacy based around the creation of zombies and revenants has become popular in the city, recruiting young mages from older, more subtle Legacies who feel aggrieved by their students being seduced away. The Consilium is convened to debate an anonymous complaint to the Heirarch: is the use of human corpses by the Necromantic Legacy Left-Handed?

The Legal Niceties

Consilii vary in their legal procedures based on local precedent, laws carried from another Consilium by the founding Cabals, and the outcome of any Convocations (see p. 19) the Consilium has taken part in. Some allow Sentinels to issue minor punishments and reprimands in the name of keeping the peace. For a suspected Left-Handed mage facing imprisonment, exile or death, however, only a full trial will do.

The most common arrangement is for convictions to require a two-thirds vote of Councilors, sometimes including the Hierarch. Factorums, Silver Ladder mages who have studied the local Lex Magica, act as legal advisors for and against the accused. Arguments are made to precedent, and the whole process takes as long as it needs.

Of the punishments levied to the Left-Handed, exile and death are the most common. Imprisonment is usually only used for mages who haven't yet shaped their souls into a

Story Hooks from Legality

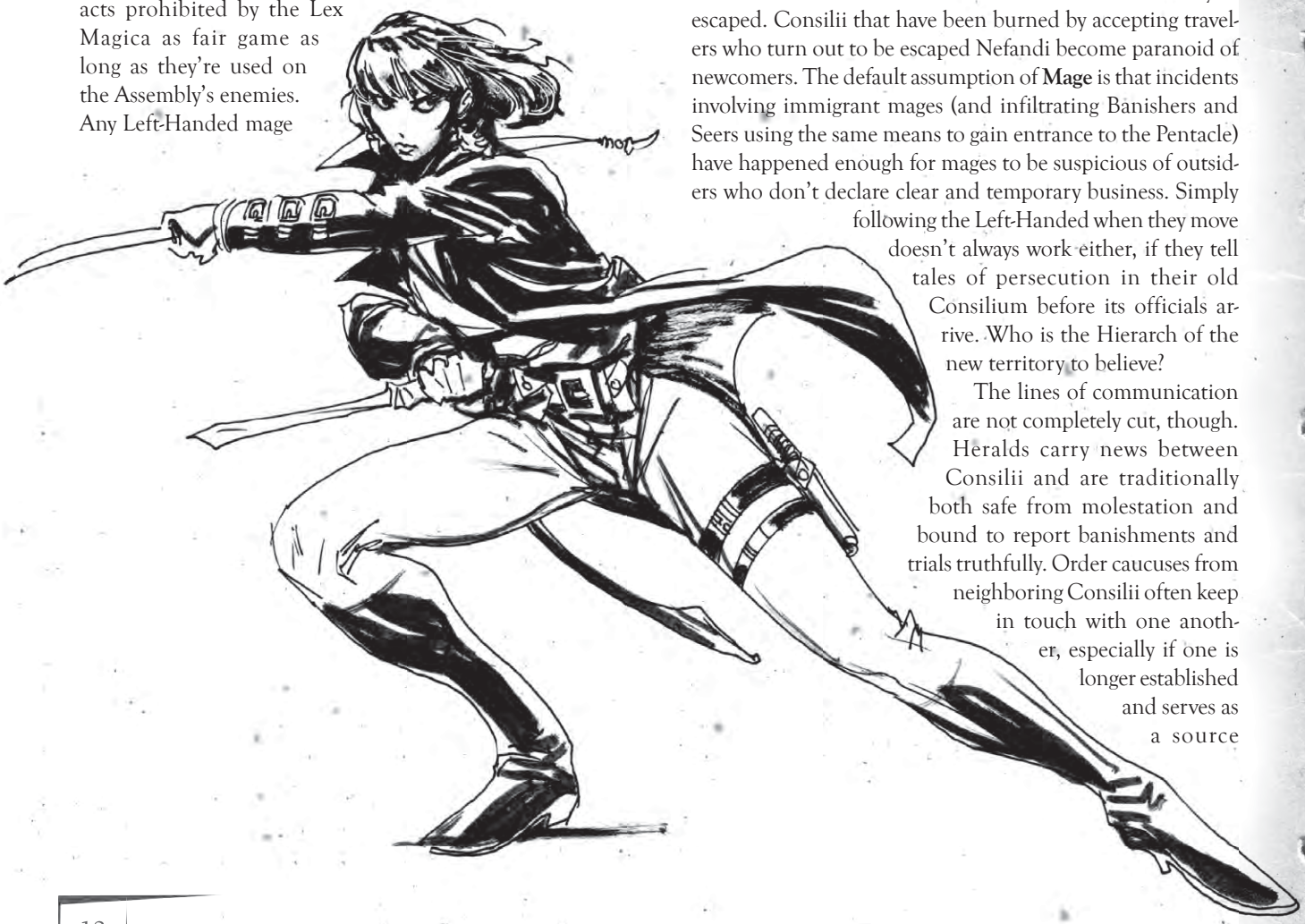
• A prominent Free Councilor is accused of being a , but the Consilium can't find him and the Assembly is refusing to help. He's been taken by his own order, who are intent on deciding the facts of the matter themselves. Key evidence is held by the Mystagogue Herald, however, who is herself refusing to hand it over to anyone other than the Consilium. The characters must negotiate for one or the other.

• An enemy of the cabal needs them out of the way, and so spreads a rumor that they sacrifice humans for mana. As a mob forms and the Sentinel comes calling, the characters are kept busy and their attention is diverted.

tainted Legacy, those who can be reformed with work and are capable of not relapsing. Even then, the resources needed to keep a mage against his will are so great that imprisonment is reserved for convicts who successfully plead for it and prove they intend to reform. The only sure way to prevent a mage from using magic (as part of imprisonment or as its own punishment) is to remove his soul, which drives the victim insane after too long. For this reason, only mages who can be trusted to stick to their conditions of arrest are imprisoned for any length of time. That leaves exile, mundane execution, and execution combined with the destruction of the convict's soul, with increasing levels of severity as predicated by the crimes committed and the appetite of the Consilium to commit murder or soul-crime themselves. When capital punishment is used, the Guardians volunteer one of their own as the "Interfector," the Consilum's headsman, who risks his own Wisdom for the good of all.

The Consilium isn't the only legal system in use among the Pentacle. Free Council Assemblies are, in theory, open to all and offer a more modern sense of justice to mages that use them. Assemblies conduct trials by jury and aren't as beholden by precedent. An innovative form of evil that doesn't break any ancient Atlantean code is more likely to be punished by the Assembly than by the Consilium, provided enough of the accused's peers can be persuaded to convict. The Free Council has traditionally regarded some acts prohibited by the Lex Magica as fair game as long as they're used on the Assembly's enemies. Any Left-Handed mage thinking of turning himself in to the Libertines must bear a few things in mind, though. Many Assemblies' right to conduct trials is not recognized by their Consilii; high-profile cases might be turned over if the accused isn't seen as worth starting a fight over; and the Free Council is far, far harsher than the other orders in the punishments it hands out when it decides a mage is at fault. "Destroy the Followers of the Lie" doesn't mean "exile under pain of destroying," after all.

Last, there are those Left-Handed mages who don't get any kind of trial, fair or otherwise. Mages are human and just as prone to forming angry mobs as anyone else. If the evidence is obvious (doesn't matter if it's true, just that the mob find it obvious), the Sentinels could arrive too late. The ringleaders might be then put on trial themselves for murder, but that's cold comfort to the target of their ire. If the mob was large enough, the Consilium may opt to sweep the whole thing under the carpet instead of taking on most of their Liegemen.



The Problem of Jurisdiction

A problem facing any attempt to eliminate a Left-Handed group is a great flaw in the Pentacle's notions of justice. Consilium decisions are only binding over their members or mages on whom they can force their decisions. Like felons fleeing to Mexico, all the Left-Handed have to do is move to the next Consilium where no one knows them and they've escaped. Consilii that have been burned by accepting travelers who turn out to be escaped Nefandi become paranoid of newcomers. The default assumption of **Mage** is that incidents involving immigrant mages (and infiltrating Banishers and Seers using the same means to gain entrance to the Pentacle) have happened enough for mages to be suspicious of outsiders who don't declare clear and temporary business. Simply following the Left-Handed when they move doesn't always work either, if they tell tales of persecution in their old Consilium before its officials arrive. Who is the Hierarch of the new territory to believe?

The lines of communication are not completely cut, though. Heralds carry news between Consilii and are traditionally both safe from molestation and bound to report banishments and trials truthfully. Order caucuses from neighboring Consilii often keep in touch with one another, especially if one is longer established and serves as a source

Story Hooks from Jurisdiction

• Two mages arrive in the Consilium from a far-off territory accusing one another of being Left-Handed. A herald from their old Consilium is found dead, proving that at least *one* of them fears old ghosts. But which one?

• The characters have encountered members of a Legacy that they believe to be Left-Handed, but who make their outside the Consilium's territory. They travel to Convocation, hoping to spread word of their enemies' crimes.

of training and lore for the other. Eventually, word of a Nefandi's misdeeds will travel, and the Left-Handed must go it alone or move on again.

Rarely, Consilii send representatives to a central meeting called "Convocation" to jointly decide on matters affecting all the territories taking part. Organized by the Silver Ladder caucuses of delegate Consilii, Convocations serve as the Pentacle's "High Court" among other social functions, the only recourse of mages who feel unfairly persecuted (yet survived their persecution) or who are trying to achieve justice against a Left-Handed society from the top down. The Convocation's decisions are binding on all Consilii that take part, which is a key cause of their rarity beyond small-scale annual or semi-annual meetings.

During Convocation, any participating Consilii update their peers with any judgments they've made, including any cases of mages being found Left-Handed, allowing word to spread. The oldest and most notorious Left-Handed Legacies, such as the Scelesti and Tremere, are known almost all over the world thanks to the Convocation system.

Miscarriages of Justice

Not every decision is a just one. Guilty mages go free and innocents are named Nefandi by Consilii that are convinced or persuaded to do so. Poorly socialized mages whose habits look suspicious to their peers can find themselves on trial, and mages with unknown Legacies can be accused of committing unsolved crimes. Miscarriages of justice like these can be accidental or malevolent, depending on the relative corruption and cynicism of the Consilium. Very rarely, they're even reversed – and sometimes not because the Consilium is now convinced of innocence. Sentences are quashed, banishments are revoked, and Nefandi earn new Shadow Names because the Consilium has found itself in need of something the exile can provide and is willing to pay the price.

The larger problem isn't the unfairly convicted, but those Left-Handed mages whose crimes are hidden by their peers. The orders treat heretics as internal problems. A caucus might fail to realize when the line between embarrassing and deadly has been crossed. Fear, whether of guilt by association, of speaking out against members of their own order (who may be more senior), or of simply being wrong pressures initiates and apprentices to keep quiet.

Story Hooks from Miscarriages of Justice

• A friend of the characters is accused, tried and convicted of being in a Legacy the Consilium banned centuries ago; he is exiled, but insists that he formed his Legacy himself and has no knowledge of the Nefandi he's accused of joining. The cabal must seek out a soul stone from one of the long-dead Nefandi, so that the attainments may be magically compared and their friend's conviction overturned.

• One of the characters encounters slowly increasing evidence of wrong-doing within her own order, as a respected member of her caucus and friend of her own mentor is implicated of bargaining with creatures from the Abyss. When she voices her concerns, she's told she must be mistaken. Will she risk damage to her career and keep digging? Is the Master actually a Scelestus or is there an innocent explanation?

CHAPTER ONE: HERETICS AND APOSTATES

In a closed society where everybody's guilty,
the only crime is getting caught.
—Hunter S Thompson

Of all the foes the orders face, the most familiar are apostates, heretics and the Left-Handed mages that are counted among either. Facing them is more painful than other, more removed adversaries. The Seers are a rival order who organize, have mentors and teach magic within their own ranks along familiar lines. Banishers and the Mad are broken things, twisted by some external force and no longer entirely in control of themselves. Even the larger sects of Reapers and Scelesti often recruit straight from Awakening, teaching their blasphemous ideologies to new generations of liches and Accursed. The great mass of minor Left-Handed groups, though, is fully the orders' responsibility.

Apostates and heretics represent the failure of the orders. Every mage who quits the Pentacle in anger or twists the orders' teachings into a Left-Handed praxis represents training wasted, resources spent, and warning signs ignored, combining to produce an enemy that *knows* the Consilium as no Seer or Banisher could hope to. The lion's share of guilt is reserved for the Nefandi herself, of course, but her fall tarnishes the reputations of mentor, cabal and order. Uncovering a Left-Handed mage within a Consilium is a traumatic event for that society. Little wonder many mages are dangerously reluctant to confront warning signs before their hands are forced.

Becoming Left-Handed

The journey to membership in a Left-Handed Legacy isn't a simple process, whether quitting order and Consilium or going down in a blaze of tainted magic after long-hidden magical crimes are uncovered. Casting one banned spell usually doesn't make a mage Left-Handed; arguing with a mentor's interpretation of the order doesn't make a mage a heretic, and disagreeing with a Councilor doesn't make an apostate.

If none of those things alone create a Left-Handed, however, what does? Every Left-Handed mage shares one thing: at some point in her career, she made a choice to go against order or Consilium. That transgression can be as small as rejecting apprenticeship overtures from the orders or as large as summoning an Acamoth. That choice, however, is one that is far from simple. Every mage who knows of order and Consilium knows that being Left-Handed is a sentence of ostracism at best and of being hunted at worst. Why, then, would anyone choose it?

The Road to Hell: Motivation

Every Left-Handed mage is a unique case, just as every Awakening is different. Study enough Nefandi and Heretics, however, and patterns emerge. Guardians of the Veil trained

to watch the Pentacle for sinister praxis study these common motivations, trying to understand what drives a mage to the precipice so that they can warn other mages off before they go too far. Their work is complicated, of course, by the self-serving lies and twisted justifications of the Nefandi. Many of the Unnamed refuse to admit that they were ever in the wrong.

Hubris

The great flaw of the Awakened — the prideful certainty in their own abilities that spawned the Exarchs of prehistory — makes otherwise-capable mages their own worst enemies. The combination of magical power and arrogance is a blueprint for disaster that has played out in countless Consilii throughout history and remains the greatest "source" of the Left-Handed. It's easier to break taboos when you think they don't, or shouldn't, apply to you.

Some prideful mages believe that the Lex Magica is wrong to ban their specific avenue of exploration. For example, they might think that the Consilium's laws against dealing with the Abyss is foolish denial of the only weapon the world has against the Exarchs, or theorize that the path to Ascension lies in somehow absorbing the Mystery Plays of Sleepers on the road to Awakening, empowering themselves by denying awareness to their victims. It isn't the specific crime that defines a mage as hubristic, but their attitude toward it — that every other willworker is wrong, or weak, to deny it to them. All orders produce mages fitting this description, but the Adamantine Arrow, which teaches members to gain strength from adversity, and the Mysterium, with its emphasis on experiencing as much magic as possible, have a particular weakness to it.

Other mages know full well that what they are doing is dangerous, even perhaps rightfully denounced, but are convinced by their own ego or sense of self-importance that they are strong enough to handle the danger. The Silver Ladder and Guardians of the Veil are especially prone to this kind of thinking and watch out for it in their members. These mages agree that their praxis is a tightrope over a chasm of madness, even that it should be restricted because of that danger, but believe they are exceptional enough to walk it.

The last group of apostates and heretics motivated by pride is made up of rebellious mages who refuse to acknowledge any authority over their magical path. They break society's rules simply because they are rules, testing the limits imposed by their mentors as soon as they are able. If the mentor isn't able to distinguish unwise but forgivable acting out from the apprentice getting in over her head, the student can cross the line to becoming Left-Handed without realizing the danger she's in. Fortunately, most of these mages find some way to rebel that doesn't imperil their soul, either breaking minor cultural traditions, going against the protocols, or ignoring parts of their order's doctrine they disagree with. The Free Council and Seers of the Throne produce many such mages and have long practice at accepting them as innovators as long as they restrict their acting out from the core, unbreakable tenets of the organization. A Free Councilor who victimizes other mages for his own power but restricts himself to "followers of the lie," or a Seer who founds a breakaway group from her Ministry after receiving new inspiration from the Exarchs might both face difficult lives but still find a place. Other orders are less forgiving.

Ignorance

Almost all mages describe their abilities as empowerment. Using magic feels *good*, a rush of power that reminds the willworker of the Supernal Realm to which she Awakened. Associating magic with negative feelings or sensations is a sign of being a Banisher, not of any relative moral worth of the spell being cast. Without magical society or her own moral compass to tell her that some spells shouldn't be used, an isolated or poorly trained mage may expose herself to unwise magic out of ignorance alone. For this reason, solitary mages who have slipped through the orders' net for long enough are treated as apostates when contact *is* established, simply because the Consilium doesn't know what bad habits they've picked up even if they aren't infiltrating Seers or Banishers. They can be recruited, but only after a long period of assessment.

More common than isolation, though, and the second-greatest cause of mages turning Left-Handed overall, is poor mentoring. Incompetence or maleficence on the part of a mage's tutors can leave him with skewed notions of the Lex Magica and his own order's customs. Sadly, this is how most long-standing heresies and major Left-Handed Legacies renew their numbers. By taking in newly-Awakened mages and making sure that they teach them first, heresies and apostate groups have more success than attempting to recruit Disciples who have already been poisoned against them. Even groups who feel unfairly persecuted do this, teaching their students that the orders are filled with mages who'd turn on them if they knew the group's secrets.

Deception

Some Left-Handed mages, when cornered or brought to trial, claim that they had no choice in becoming what they are. In most of these cases, the Nefandi is proven to have been following his twisted praxis anyway, but on rare occasions a mage does join a Left-Handed Legacy by unusual means. Heretical tutors can mislead potential students about the true nature of their beliefs until the Legacy is well underway forming in the soul or the heresy is entrenched in the student's conception of the order. More common, though, are cases where the Nefandi has entered a Legacy by a route *other* than a traditional mentor-student bond.

Legacies can be learned by studying the soul stone of a mage who already possesses that Legacy, or by consulting a special form of grimoire called a daimonomicon. Either method shapes the student's soul without need of a mentor and without forming an arcane bond. Other mages apprentice themselves to the dead. Ghost mages can pass on Legacies if the student makes himself an anchor with Death magic. The Pentacle discourages learning Legacies by these means because of the risks posed. Students only have the word of whatever

records accompany the object or the confused memories of the ghost on what the Legacy they're joining actually does. Attainments passed on like this don't come with ideology attached except in the very strangest cases, but the natures of some Left-Handed Legacies are enough to corrupt any mage using them. The Pentacle believes a number of its known enemies to have come back centuries after being exterminated by using these means, leaving the orders without any way of linking the renewed Legacies to their ancestors except scattered and hard-to-research descriptions of the attainments.

Fear

Desperation drives otherwise respectable mages into the arms of the Nefandi. No matter the punishment they face if discovered, the World of Darkness holds horrors enough to make grasping forbidden power the lesser of two evils. If the conditions are right and the student is convinced that by breaking the Lex Magica she can protect herself or something she cares about more than the sanctity of her soul, even the most rational of mages may give in to temptation.

Unless continued apprenticeship with a Left-Handed mentor is part of the bargain, these tend to be one-time transgressions except where the threat is persistent enough to require continual or regular effort. To combat this, sometimes Nefandi even arrange for threats to continue harassing a new student, making him cleave to his new "friends."

The threat must be something the targeted mage can't go running to the Consilium for help on, which means either an external threat the accepted magical techniques are ineffective against, a threat to part of the mage's life he doesn't trust his peers with (which means something striking close to home at his real identity), or both combined. The varied monsters lurking in the World of Darkness make for excellent motivators, and most have at least a few Left-Handed Legacies that are particularly well-equipped for making them go away — the Tamers of Blood (p. 27), for example, can protect a mage's family from vampires.

Anger

The spells of the Left-Handed Path offer many ways to victimize others, often in sadistic ways. Furthermore, breaking a taboo gives a rush, a feeling of exhilaration at having gone against society and excitement at doing wrong. If a mage is angry enough, lashes out and wants to really *hurt* the object of his wrath, he may forget himself and use magic he'd never countenance when calm.

More political apostates and heretics — those who wouldn't be recognized as Left-Handed —that come by their affiliation through anger are those who build resentment with the mores of order or Consilium until something snaps.

Desire

Desire for particular attainments motivates some Left-Handed. It's a shallow reason to join a Legacy, but mages are a goal-oriented lot and temptation exists around every turn. Recruits are driven by need for secrets the heretics are rumored to possess, or may simply crave their lifestyle. Apostates motivated by desire just want to get away from the Consilium, to retreat to where the magical world won't bother them.

Trauma

Last, many mages flirting with danger simply aren't acting rationally when they take up the Left-Handed path. Many captured Left-Handed mages cite a worldview-shattering trauma as the cause of their original sin, something that required extreme measures as a response or convinced the mage that obedience to society's mores was a waste of time. Mages who lose everything — solitary survivors of cabals wiped out by enemies or accidents, mages who accidentally harm their families with magic, even sudden falls from high Consilium office — act without thinking and suffer the consequences later. Consilii watch solitaries carefully for this reason, which in turn leads bereaved mages to almost drift into apostasy while being seen as bad luck and shunned by their neighbors. Shell-shocked and nihilistic mages might seek oblivion in the Abyss or carry out inhumane experiments on Sleepers while being unable to empathize with them following the pointless deaths of those the mage cared about.

Enough Rope: Means and Opportunity

With the exception of newly Awakened mages apprenticed to existing Left-Handed mentors (either because they were found by them before the orders or because the Mentor has so far avoided exile), the majority of mages experimenting with banned magic do so as Disciples or Adepts, during their years as low-ranking members of their order who have a comfortable distance from their teachers and are trusted to find their own way.

By this point, the mage has enough skill with the Arcana to get himself into trouble and enough Gnosis to join a Legacy as a student while not having already been recruited by one. Mages who stray into Left-Handed magic later in their career tend to "fall" in explosive fashion, their superior Gnosis and Arcana allowing for brand-new Legacies and magical crimes that their juniors can't perform. Those who spend their entire magical career from apprenticeship up slowly developing deeper and deeper perversions of the Art tend to be more subtle, trained by years of hiding their proclivities.

Not all transgressions are magical. A mage acting out against order or Consilium can do so at any age, as early as he learns of the rules and customs he flaunts. In contrast to the truly Left-Handed, "political" taboo-breakers skew towards the young and the old. Initiates and apprentices are susceptible to being taught heresies by unsuitable mentors. They may want nothing to do with other mages and find that they joined the wrong order upon discovering their orders' hidden, internal beliefs. Their elders among the multiple-degree Adepts and Masters have had time to grow disillusioned or tired of their

order while bringing too much baggage to be accepted by another. Without anywhere else to go, they turn apostate.

Political taboos require only that a mage is a member of the organization that espouses them for him to potentially break them. Any member of an order is a potential heretic or apostate. Joining an existing group rather than creating a new one, however, requires acceptance and for the mage to even know that the group exists. The orders downplay their long-standing troublemakers when describing internal factions to new recruits, attempting to deny them the oxygen of publicity.

While any mage can cast any spell within the limits of their Arcana, some magical crimes require research and materials to perform. The orders don't always teach their students that the darkest magics are even possible. Joining a Left-Handed Legacy instead of forming her own requires a mage to find a tutor, study a soul stone, or use a daimonomicon.

Other than daimonomica and more usual, rote-containing grimoires, mages researching the Left-Handed path find inspiration and useful insights in a myriad of research materials. The Guardians of the Veil and Mysterium do their best to restrict the writings of historical Nefandi and attempt to keep access to detailed descriptions of Left-Handed Legacies limited to only Consilium officials. Something inevitably slips through the cracks, though. A Left-Handed mage who went undetected until death can leave hundreds of sources for anyone following in her footsteps, like memetic time-bombs waiting to be found.

Escalation and Obsession

The first taste of forbidden magic or radical philosophy is not always enough. Only the most terrible of crimes, such as stealing the soul of a fellow mage or bargaining with the Abyss against the Consilium, mark the perpetrator as irredeemable. Most apostates and heretics start small, following up an initial transgression with worse and worse actions, drawing further and further away from acceptable practices until that separation becomes natural.

The Pentacle understands doing whatever is necessary. The Silver Ladder and Adamantine Arrow believe that no technique should be denied to those who can safely use them (or, in the Arrow's case, those who can learn from being burned). The Mysterium is forgiving of one-off lapses in judgment in the name of inquiry. The Free Council is descended from violent revolutionaries. The Guardians of the Veil all knowingly commit sins for the greater good. All orders will understand if a mage needed to flirt with danger to achieve an urgent end.

As long as he *stops*.

The majority of mages who flirt with dangerous magic, pull away from their order, or publically denounce the Consilium never take matters any further. Having transgressed and realizing what they did was wrong (or at least that it's unacceptable), their own guilt and shame prevents them from walking further down the Left-Hand path. They return to their former standards of behavior, bruised but unchanged.

Of those who still believe themselves justified, some remove their motivation for crossing the line quickly — they kill their hated enemies, gain the knowledge they sought through the Abyss, or get the freedom from their mentor's sense of propriety they wanted. These mages are on shakier ground than the penitent; the Left-Handed Path was worth it to them, and they will be more inclined to turn to it when they run into other difficulties later in life. The final mages, though, those whose troubles persist and continue to see the Left-Handed path as their only solution, are pushed further into extremism.

A taboo only has power until it is broken. What was once shocking becomes commonplace with repetition. Once a mage breaks a rule often enough, doing so begins to feel normal, and the *next* step down the Left-Handed path becomes less daunting. Inured to ever-increasing breaches of what used to be a moral code, she forms beliefs that justify her actions, if she doesn't lose her mind completely. Mages who repeatedly perform actions completely at odds with their current morality (in game terms, sins against Wisdom several dots lower than the current level) fall to madness quicker than those who take a slower, steadier route along the Left-Handed path. Eventually most do find a code they can stick to, however, even if by other mage's standards that code is monstrous or dangerously obsessed. The alternative is becoming one of the Mad.

Mages whose crimes are social rather than magical have an easier time of it – apostasy is a final break with the Consilium, but it comes sooner and is much kinder to a mage who can't abide by the Lex Magica for philosophical reasons rather than to one who outwardly supports the Hierarch but is becoming a magical mass-murderer.

Once a Left-Handed mage is obvious as such and is ostracized for his actions, that should be the end of it. Isolated from other mages, there are no more influences pushing them into stranger beliefs. That's what Councils pronouncing exile or Nefandi will say, anyway, but the truth is more dangerous. The only people who will associate with an exiled mage are fellow outcasts, and despite the wishful thinking of the orders they do associate.

Irreconcilable Differences

Because every Consilium has a slightly different Lex Magica and all except the most hidebound are open to setting new precedents, the list of what mages consider unacceptable behavior is an amorphous, ever-changing thing. New laws are set in response to innovative evils.

Although the taboos presented here are classified into transgressions of magic, society and personal morality, Left-Handed mages often don't always have only one break with their fellow mages. For example, it's possible for a mage to be routinely committing magical acts the orders find disgusting while accusing *them* of moral lapses in turn. Many order heresies are political liabilities as well as practitioners of dark magic. If a deviant finds mages within his order sympathetic to his cause, a new heresy might arise.

Crimes of Magic

The Art makes all things possible, no matter how dark the impulse. The following acts aren't all sins against Wisdom (though most are), but rather mark a mage as having unwholesome interests.

Soul Crime

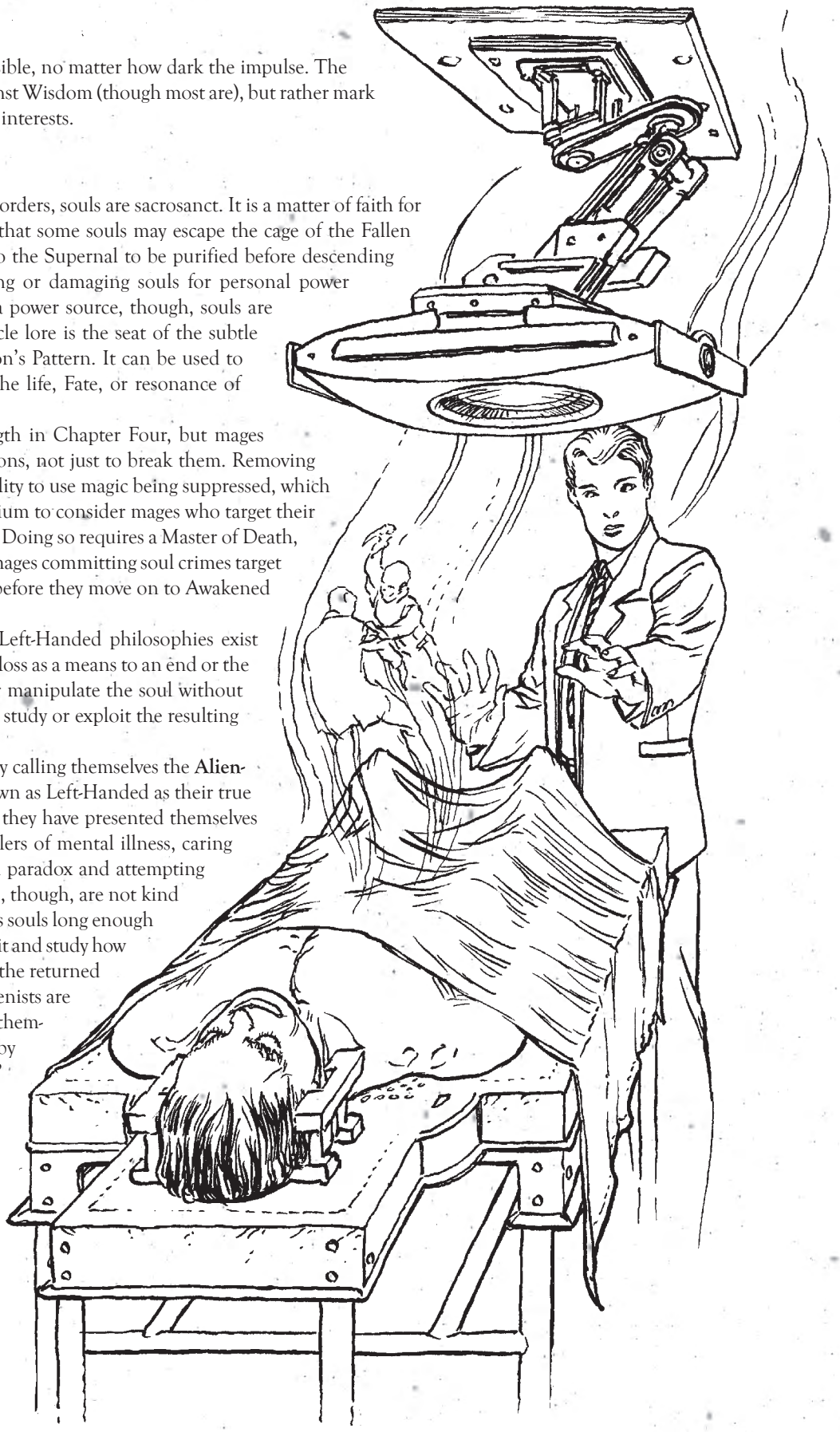
According to all five Pentacle orders, souls are sacrosanct. It is a matter of faith for the Silver Ladder in particular that some souls may escape the cage of the Fallen World upon death, returning to the Supernal to be purified before descending to reincarnate again. Destroying or damaging souls for personal power marks a mage as a Reaper. As a power source, though, souls are unparalleled; the soul in Pentacle lore is the seat of the subtle Arcana, the capstone of a person's Pattern. It can be used to access those energies, stealing the life, Fate, or resonance of the rightful owner.

Reapers are discussed at length in Chapter Four, but mages manipulate souls for many reasons, not just to break them. Removing a mage's soul results in their ability to use magic being suppressed, which is reason enough for the Consilium to consider mages who target their fellow Awakened a clear danger. Doing so requires a Master of Death, however, so most Left-Handed mages committing soul crimes target Sleepers and are detected long before they move on to Awakened prey.

Apart from actual Reaping, Left-Handed philosophies exist that treat the side-effects of soul loss as a means to an end or the end itself. Still more damage or manipulate the soul without actually removing it, in order to study or exploit the resulting trauma for their own purposes.

The Mastigos Libertine Legacy calling themselves the **Alienists** are only now becoming known as Left-Handed as their true nature is revealed. For decades, they have presented themselves as benevolent students and healers of mental illness, caring especially for victims of Bedlam paradox and attempting to cure the Mad. Their methods, though, are not kind – Alienists remove their subject's souls long enough for insanity to set in, then return it and study how derangement is washed away by the returned animus. The most advanced Alienists are alleged to cure derangements in themselves or well-paying patients by consuming the souls of "donors," which if true will lead to them being declared Reapers.

Opinion on mages who manipulate their *own* souls rather than damage others is less universal. Some Consilii, especially those with a strong Silver Ladder or Mysterium presence in Council, regard self-mutilation in this way to be both disturbing and potentially a route to becoming Mad or a Banisher. Others point out



that all Legacies manipulate the soul to form attainments. Pentacle culture has a blind spot in this area. The creation of soul stones is inarguably self-mutilation, a portion of the mage's soul excised and placed into a physical object, but the use of soul stones is an "acceptable" practice as long as it isn't taken too far.

One Legacy still debated at Convocation is the **Shadowbinders**, a Moros lineage who practice a form of ghost-binding. The Shadowbinder attainments allow a member of the Legacy to absorb the metaphysical substance of a ghost's anchor into his soul for a few days until his soul heals, forcing the ghost to act as a familiar for the duration. Shadowbinders can amass whole collections of spectral servants, but they become more callous (and in game terms temporarily lose Wisdom) with every ghost they ensnare until the anchors fade.

Destruction of Magic

Magic is precious, the remnants of the Supernal from Atlantean times or (as the Free Council would have it) the few beams of the Higher Realms surviving the intervening Abyss. Scattered Artifacts and wonders that mages can no longer reproduce wait to be recovered and studied by the orders, while grimoires contain rotes lost to living memory. Sleeper religions, "magical" practices, sciences, and politics all contain hidden occult symbols, signs of the Supernal in the dross of the world. All of these things, however, are *fragile*. Artifacts can be broken, grimoires burned, and isolated cultures scattered or changed until the light dims. It's bad enough to the Pentacle's accepted wisdom that irreplaceable secrets are lost every day. To speed that loss, however, by deliberately destroying magic is abhorrent.

Mages don't want all magic public, but they want it to be *potentially* known. There's a thin line between isolating dangerous secrets and making sure they're removed from the Fallen World entirely. Naturally, the orders don't agree on where that line lies. The Free Council is traditionally in favor of having everything available to any mage who can meet their price; the Silver Ladder and Adamantine Arrow leave such matters up to individual mages; the Mysterium carefully assesses each secret for danger and makes it as safe as needed, while the Guardians of the Veil prefer to err on the side of "catalogued and never to see the light of day again." To a Libertine, a Mystagogue Censorium or a Guardian oubliette may as well be destroying the lore they take in, while members of those orders would regard their actions as sensible precautions but protest they're only undertaken to *protect* magic. The taboo against eliminating magic entirely is broken primarily in isolated cases, where mages come up against something they can't safely handle and have no choice but to eliminate the threat. Consilii understand that, although destroying particularly precious lore will still cause ill-feeling toward the mage that did it, especially if the information was needed by another Liegeman.

Heresies and Legacies that make an organized practice of removing magic from the world are the hallmark of Banisher cults, although the Guardians of the Veil do, to their shame, contain hidden groups of extremists that cross that line. The **Logophages** are the best-known Guardian heresy. Disavowed by their parent order but surviving as an apostate Legacy, there are continual rumors that Guardian caucuses give shelter to small cabals when they find their cousins' attainments useful. Those attainments first give a Logophage the ability to gain power by utterly destroying a secret — any information will suffice, but magical secrets are best – once it is known only by her. Later attainments give ways to track and erase information from others' minds, greatly increasing the danger a Logophage poses.

One of the rare Banisher Legacies, the **Flood** are hated and feared for the devastation that follows in their wake. The presence of a member of the Legacy "cleanses" a location of supernatural influences — Hallows run dry, Verges close, locii cease supplying Essence, and sites created or sought by other supernatural creatures are similarly nullified. As the Flood grows in power, he gains later attainments allowing him to feed on power from the sites he suppresses.

Interference with Awakening

Awakenings are profoundly personal experiences, each unique to a given mage. Mainstream Pentacle and Seers alike believe that interfering with an Awakening once it is in progress is at once futile, dangerous, and hugely disrespectful. The metaphysics behind Awakening are not understood by even the most learned mages. Failed Awakenings are said to produce Sleepwalkers, but on rare occasions new mages return from the Supernal... *wrong*. Banishers and the Mad are both believed to be the result of something going terribly awry with the Awakenings of unfortunates, and no order or Ministry wishes to add to the numbers of either.

Mages who do attempt to disrupt Awakenings, then, are a rare breed, made even rarer by the difficulties in predicting where and when an Awakening is to take place. These Left-Handed mages wait for years or decades for the chance to perform their experiments in the hope of exploiting the passage to the Supernal that the Awakening mage experiences. They hide in the Oneirios, cast Mind spells to observe the psyche, and chain their souls to the Awakening with subtle spells, hoping to Ascend, to gain the Path of the subject, or to simply glimpse the Supernal for a second time. Heretical Seers hope to find the Exarch's favor by using the Awakening mage to destroy the Watchtower.

Rather than disrupt the Awakening itself, most mages restrict themselves to attempting to influence a prospective mage toward or away from the realization of the Lie. The Silver Ladder spends a lot of time encouraging Sleepers toward that awareness, the Seers of the Throne spend a greater amount of time discouraging it, and the Guardians spend greater still encouraging or discouraging depending on their judgment of the Sleeper. Mages accept this level of interference, nudging a Sleepers life one way or another but leaving the ultimate question of Awakening up to him. It's a long, slow, delicate process, though, and mages of all affiliations occasionally tire of waiting. Every order and Ministry contains heretics who take a more

"hands on" approach, usually to the detriment of the Sleepers who attract their attention, as the mages try to either force an Awakening to happen or prevent one from ever taking place. Although these groups aren't formally Left-Handed, they are on very thin ice. If numbers of Banishers or the Mad increase, these cabals will be the first under suspicion.

Among the Pentacle, Legacies based around "encouraging" Awakenings are exemplified by the **Awakening Gambit** of the Adamantine Arrow and their close ideological relatives in the "Wrights" faction of the Free Council. These associations theorize that extreme, world-shattering events cause Sleepers experiencing them to have a chance at Awakening, citing the number of mages who report being emotionally exhausted or under extreme stress at the time of their own end to Sleep. They arrange for similar conditions in mortals they find promising, shattering lives and harassing Sleepers to the limits of sanity in the hope that they'll grasp the invisible way out and hear the Watchtowers' call.

Although Libertine propaganda paints the Guardians of the Veil as routinely intervening to cancel Awakenings of Sleepers of whom they disapprove, doctrinaire Guardians know well enough to back off once the Awakening actually begins. They encourage those they believe will gravitate to the Seers or Banishers away from the Supernal by distracting them in the Labyrinth. The Awakening of any mage is to be celebrated, even if they join a different order. In desperate times, however, when they are convinced that an Awakening is both imminent and hostile to the Pentacle, the Guardians will kill the Sleeper. Sometimes, doing so is even the trigger for a Moros Awakening, as the would-be victim finds his final inspiration at knifepoint.

The largest Legacy of Awakening-deniers are members of the Seers of the Throne. The **Epuiad** train in psychic warfare and the reading of subtle omens, hoping to be guided to Awakenings in progress. Their attainments allow them to invade and take over the Astral voyage of a victim, appearing to the unfortunate's Onerios as though they were him. The Legacy hopes that by taking over Sleepers in the midst of Awakening, they will gain access to the Watchtowers and topple them in the name of the Exarchs.

Abuse of Sleepers

Every Sleeper is a potential mage, containing the ability to touch the Supernal along with their sympathy to the Abyss. They are not resources to be used as building materials, scoured for mana, forcibly transformed, or killed out of hand. And yet there have always been mages willing to see their Sleeping kin as a means to an end.

Consilii rarely convict on abuse of Sleepers alone, handing out lesser punishments than for "more serious" crimes, thanks to tensions between what mages believe to be instinctively "right" and what is politically prudent. The Awakened often believe themselves superior to the quiescent masses and forgive one another acts that, if any mundane equivalent existed, would result in long imprisonment by mortal authorities. Mages routinely alter memories, inflict curses, spy, and perpetrate a myriad of other crimes. Their doctrines demand that they are mindful of Sleepers, however; the Free Council are the most straightforward in their reverence for humanity, but even the Seers of the Throne are commanded to protect the species. Left-Handed Legacies, heresies and apostates appear when doctrine fails, enshrining spells that victimize or injure as attainments, preaching hatred for Sleepers as heretical belief, and justifying murder by magic as expediency.

Mages who go too far in the other direction — the defense of Sleepers against magic at all costs — are if anything less trusted than their opposites. The orders and Ministries are wary of mages who voice such opinions, believing that they might become Banishers.

The use of Sleepers after death is a fiercely-debated matter in Consilii worldwide and has been for several centuries. The Pentacle couches respect for Sleepers in terms of their soul, the part of them that might one day escape the Fallen World. Post-mortem, the orders have no strong official feelings on what happens to a human being's body or ghost. Young Moros are taught that ghosts are mere shells, psychic after-images of a person imprinted on Twilight, not truly alive and so allowed to be enslaved, warped, rendered into Mana, and otherwise exploited at will. Bodies can be used as zombies, revenants or simply transformed into reagents and sacraments.

Mages survive using Sleepers or their remains as objects by subtlety. Making a scene, flaunting atrocities, showing signs that abuse has become habitual, or forming a Legacy that allows abuses with the attainments sets off warning bells and may lead to intervention.

One Legacy under threat of expulsion is the **Haruspices**, a Thyrsus Legacy specializing in the Time Arcanum. The Legacy formed in the 1950s neopagan movements as an attempt to uncover older, more "authentic" practices. A Haruspex reads entrails of sacrificial animals to see the future, the Legacy's attainments duplicating Augury, Divination and Prophecy. It's the secondary ability that worries Consilii. Haruspices may scour their sacrifices for Mana or funnel that Mana immediately into improving their auguries, and several members of the Legacy are under suspicion of human sacrifice.

The interrelated "Elemental Tamer" Legacies claim descent from the Barbarian Kingdoms of legend rather than Atlantis. Before the industrial revolution they made up the largest Nameless order. Since the Great Refusal, most of the surviving Legacies have found a place in the Pentacle, but some still find the alliance uncomfortable. The **Tamers of Blood** were once one of the most prominent Tamer sects. A Thyrsus Legacy specializing in Life and Space, the Tamers of Blood are famous for their talent with body control, but the Pentacle is more concerned with another side to their attainments. Legacy members have the ability to forge powerful sympathetic bonds between people by ritually comingling blood, can use their attainments on anyone they have bonded as easily as on themselves, and are accused of not disclosing the level of control this gives over their clients until it's too late. The Tamers remain trapped as neither loyalists nor apostates, drawn in toward the Pentacle by their more respectable cousins but keeping a wary distance in case they are declared Left-Handed,.

Abyssal Corruption

The orders are clear on the subject of the Abyss. The anti-reality and the things that intrude on the Fallen World from it are the very antithesis of magic and must not be allowed any foothold. The Seers of the Throne believe the Abyss to be under the control of a solitary Exarch, the Gate, who occupies a Satanic role in their hagiography, representing those trapped in liminal states, and who must never be worshipped. Dealing with the Abyss marks a mage as Accursed.

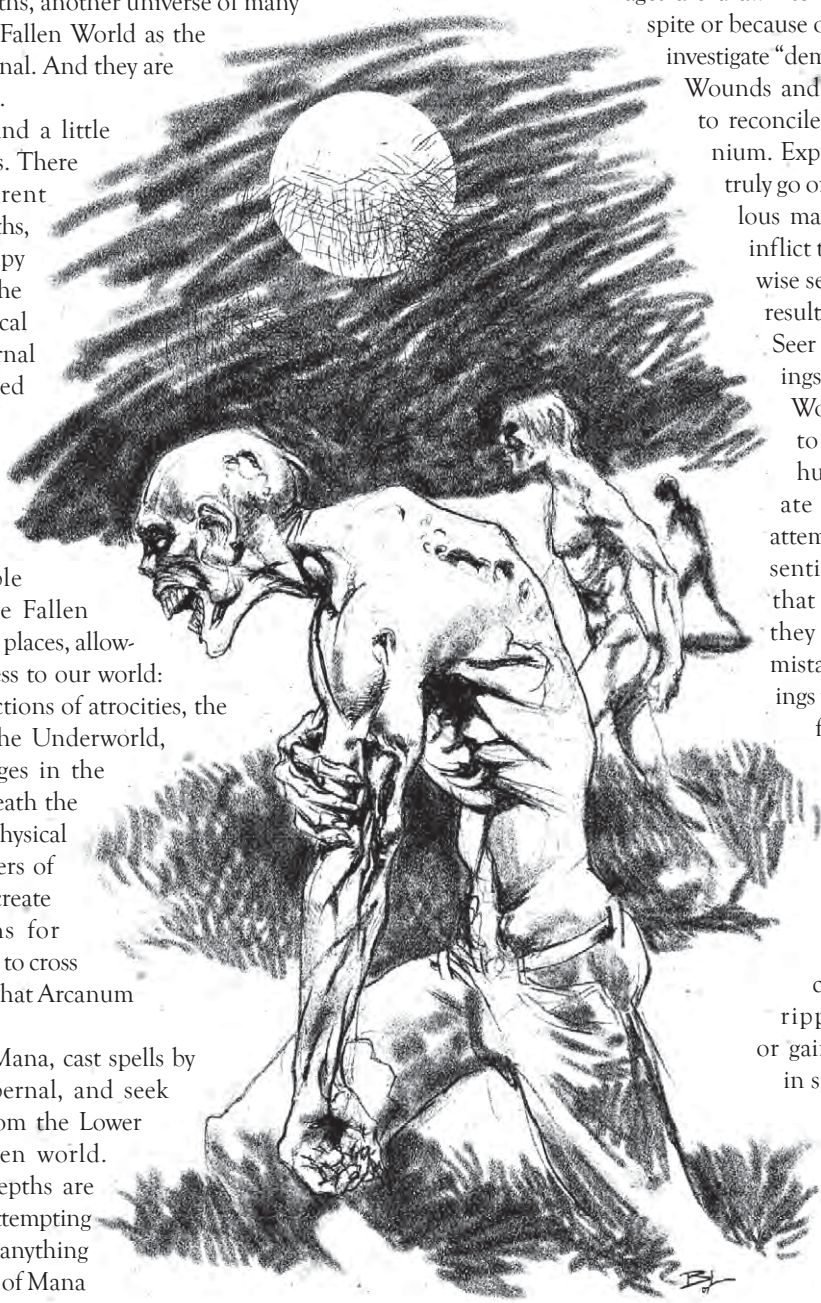
Scelesti are covered in-depth in Chapter Three.

The Lower Depths

They have many names among the Awakened: the worlds of Wounds, Hell, Sheol, the Gray Wastes, Abaddon, and more. They are the Lower Depths, another universe of many realms, as far from the Fallen World as the Fallen is from the Supernal. And they are not without inhabitants.

Mages only understand a little about the Lower Depths. There are hundreds of different "worlds" among the Depths, which collectively occupy the opposite point on the Mysterium's cosmological models from the Supernal Realms. The Depths feed from the substance of the Fallen World just as the Fallen World embodies symbols and Mana from the Supernal. The most stable Depths merge with the Fallen world at select times and places, allowing the inhabitants access to our world: the Shadow world reflections of atrocities, the very furthest parts of the Underworld, astrologically-keyed verges in the emptiest deserts or beneath the deepest oceans of the physical world, and so on. Masters of an Arcanum may also create the proper conditions for something of the Depths to cross by removing all trace of that Arcanum in an area.

Just as mages desire Mana, cast spells by drawing down the Supernal, and seek to Ascend, creatures from the Lower Depths crave the Fallen world. Most Realms in the Depths are instantly fatal to mages attempting to explore them, lacking anything but the faintest of scraps of Mana or any of the Arcana, causing Fallen World patterns to break apart upon entry. The more stable Depths form around regular crossing-places like Shadow-world Wounds, feeding from the energies released into their universe. The inhabitants of the Lower Depths are alien (lacking the Arcana in all but tiny quantities, they can't even be properly said to be alive) and almost uniformly hostile, but differ from creatures of the Abyss in that they don't represent unreality but rather absence. While the Abyss seeks to replace aspects of the Fallen World with itself, creatures of the Lower Depths are defined by a voracious, never-ending *hunger*; for dark emotions, for spiritual essence, for souls, for flesh, for the integrity of Patterns, and most especially for Mana in vast quantities. Their touch scours, or transforms otherwise normal Patterns into feeding appendages.



Mages are drawn to the Lower Depths despite or because of the danger. Mastigos investigate "demons" that emerge from Wounds and sponsor vice, seeking to reconcile them with Pandemonium. Explorers look for ways to truly go off the maps. Unscrupulous mages search for ways to inflict terrible harm, or otherwise seek to benefit from the result of the Depths' touch. Seer heretics keep Lower beings trapped in the Fallen World, using their hunger to cripple the souls of human servants. Desperate and angry apostates attempt to weaponize semi-sentient invisible Patterns that disintegrate any Life they touch. Young mages mistake the vice-eating beings found beyond Wounds for classical demons and believe pacts with them will be easier than dealing with the Abyss. Legacies based around the Depths direct their hunger at targets of the mages' choosing, specialize in ripping patterns apart, or gain power by indulging in sin.

Lichedom

Human beings age and die — even mages. Spells to increase potential lifespan can

push a mage well into his hundreds by eliminating disease, age-related injury, and organ failure, but sooner or later the span of years runs out. Liches are those mages who decide, usually for themselves though sometimes on behalf of others, that mortality is unacceptable.

Liches follow many strategies for immortality, which the orders classify into two varieties. The first seek to avoid their death by usurping the lives of others or forcing their death onto unsuspecting victims. Left-Handed Acanthus transfer their own fated end onto strangers or inflict the sum of their years onto a victim, becoming younger in the process. Tremere consume souls to reinforce their own.

The second sort of lich accepts death but intends to survive it, committing suicide while in the astral under the influence of spells that bind their mind and Awakened soul to their own ghost, possessing other mages or transforming into spirits. Sometimes otherwise-legitimate Legacies, such as the thearch **Scions of God**, conceal the fact that the culmination of their attainments includes survival as spiritual or ghostly intelligences.

Lichedom that doesn't persecute anyone or transform the mage into something else is seen as foolish and not achievable, the stuff of desperate attempts to extend the last few months of life. The strategies that *do* work usually involve someone else dying or breaking another taboo such as Reaping to achieve the necessary power.

Even if a lich isn't Left-Handed by another means, the Diamond orders inherit Atlantean misgivings about avoiding death, especially among the Moros, who understand the rightness of endings with their sympathy to Stygia. Seers of the Throne understand the mortal fear of death to be the work of the Exarchs as part of the prison of the Fallen World, and believe that they will be allowed to enter the Supernal upon death. Liches find the most sympathy in the Free Council, so long as they don't harm Sleepers. Many Nameless cabals practiced lichedom during the war with the Seers, restricting their magic to stealing the bodies or lifespan of captured enemies.

Crimes of Conscience

Some mages don't commit any magical crimes and don't antagonize the orders deliberately, but instead object to some aspect of their chosen sect on moral grounds.

However much mages dislike having to judge the Left-Handed against a code of behavior, they dislike having their own conduct called into question more. The Silver Ladder describes mages who preach compromise or warn against hubris as "Stags," pathetic follower-slaves that exemplify the Fallen World. They treat members of their own order who display such behavior with contempt. Seers of the Throne deride Pylons who attempt to follow the Exarchs' commandments in benevolent ways, minimizing the human cost of their actions. Mages who object too loudly about their fellows' use of magic are accused of Banisher tendencies, mocked, pushed out of their sects, and otherwise marginalized. They become apostates unless they can contact a like-minded group to hang on to their sect at arm's length, forming a heresy.

And, unfortunately, if a now-solitary moralist dwells too long on the evils of other willworkers, or makes it his mission to stop them, then he *is* likely to become a Banisher.

Crimes of Politics

Apostasy, heresy and the label of Left-Handed are all political in nature, so it stands to reason that some mages' only crime is getting on the wrong side of politics. Exiled by the Consilium as troublemakers, these unfortunates become apostates by default. Their crime is becoming a liability to the Council or the leaders of their own order, whether that comes from presiding over a disaster, breaking lesser laws too many times to be allowed to stay, or causing so much conflict within the group by their presence that they can no longer be abided.

In addition, for every malcontent and agitator cast out, a righteous mage is exiled by corrupt officials. Mages do not give up political power easily once it is won and bring the tools of their positions to bear against rivals. Hierarchs clinging to power make for dangerous enemies. At the worst extremes, whole orders are marginalized in a territory because of their opposition to the ruling body. Dysfunctional Consilii push the Free Council away or trap cabals that threaten an official away from resources, recognition, and opportunity.

Other politically exiled mages are the cause of their own ostracism. For philosophical or personal reasons, they ignore the governing body of their sect or declare that the Lex Magica does not apply to them. One example is the fatalistic **Thread Cutters**, who believe themselves agents of fate and bring overdue disaster to people — even mages — whom they believe no longer deserve success. Although Thread Cutters prefer to work nonviolently, they will kill when a target is so inured in sin as to require karmic release. The Legacy steadfastly ignores all opposition or command from order or Consilium, believing nothing to be more important than their mission.

The Orders and the Left-Handed

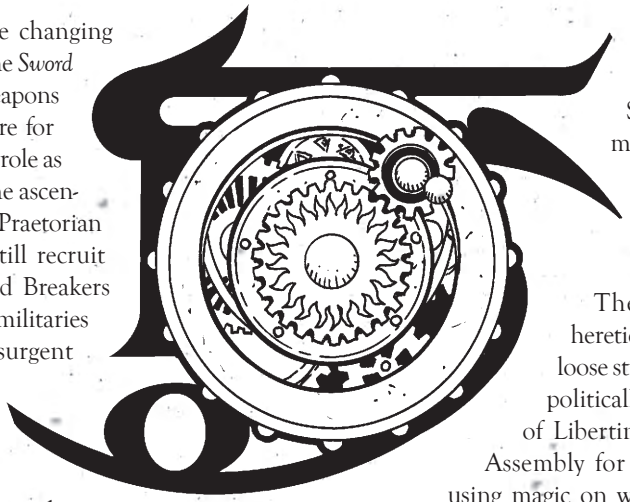
To a newly-Awakened mage, the Pentacle or Seers appear as monolithic organizations, Consilium or Tetrarchy deciding matters of justice in concert. As understanding dawns, the orders and Ministries debate and disagree with one another about where the line of acceptability is drawn. Continued education exposes each order or great Ministry as an alliance of hundreds of Legacies, philosophies, cults, mentoring schools, and affiliations. Apostates break away at the Consilium level but heretics remain, at odds with the rest of their sect over points of doctrine. Each order regards different things as heretical, and each has weaknesses in its beliefs that allow the Left-Handed in.

Adamantine Arrow

The Arrow preaches improvement through opposition and restraint. A mage becomes enlightened by facing and overcoming adversity while removing his ego from the equation. Members of the order fight on behalf of others or their causes. Members who diverge from these principles must deal with hostility from a stern leadership of warrior-sages, but as members of the Arrow they are predisposed to thriving on conflict. Adamantine Arrow are the most likely mages to continue with a course of action in the face of it being forbidden simply because they "must" continue, be it by formal oath or heartfelt principle.

Arrow cults that fight or initiate conflict for its own sake are despised by their doctrinaire brothers and sisters as perversions and possible infiltrators from the Praetorian Seers. Heretical warmongers must tread carefully and couch their activities as "training" or tactical maneuvers against the orders' enemies. So-called *Areteans* organize fight clubs, antagonize other orders, and attempt to foster a dueling culture in the Consilium. They drive personal excellence at the expense of those whom they "train" against. Slightly more acceptable are the *Free Companies*, cabals of Arrow mercenaries who fight on behalf of anyone who meets their price rather than honorable causes. The Companies' heresy is subtler than most, stemming from Arrow beliefs about what constitutes a worthy liege. Their usefulness to the rest of the Pentacle along with a few high-profile acts of public heroism keep them from being named as Left-Handed, even if the Adamant Sages disavow them.

Other heresies stem from the changing role of the Arrow in the world. The *Sword Breakers* blame the escalation of weapons and the nature of modern warfare for the loss of the Arrow's traditional role as culture-champion warriors and the ascendency of their rivals in the Seer Praetorian Ministry. While most Arrows still recruit from military professions, Sword Breakers actively seek to disrupt Sleeper militaries through magically-enhanced insurgent tactics, hoping to force warfare back to the Arrow's vision.



One heresy has a special place among the Arrow's customs. Members of the order *must* be prepared to engage in conflict to meet their ends, but a lifetime of tragedy leaves some Arrow members sick at heart and wishing for peace. The other orders would not countenance the Arrow expelling a portion of its eldest and most respected members for the "crime" of pacifism, so the *Vidanti*, or "Shunned," are an order within the order, prohibited from speaking for the order or — under pain of death — from giving moral advice to full Arrow. Vidanti are stripped of their former Shadow Names (though they aren't Nefandi, so are allowed new ones) and retire to hermitage, interrupted only when the order calls on them to train apprentices, reveal magical secrets, or give tactical advice based on their long experience.

The Arrow's attitude to the Left-Handed is largely based on motive. The order officially believes that any magic *might* be acceptable under extreme circumstances, but their tolerance only goes so far. Left-Handed mages who fell for reasons other than desperate need are good only for testing the order's mages in battle, and an Arrow who commits an atrocity to save his Consilium is expected to commit suicide if his Left-Handedness is irreversible.

Free Council

The youngest order labors under social customs defined in time of war and thus retains different priorities to the Diamond when deciding if a mage is Left-Handed. The Libertine creed differs from the other orders in being largely proscriptive. The Diamond orders describe what their members should do, while the Free Council describes what they should *not*. Any mage who can work within those guidelines is in theory welcome at Assembly.

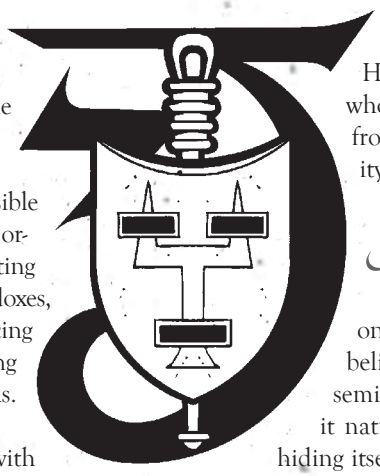
Members must accept that Sleepers, far from being the millstones other orders see, are the source of continued Supernal interaction with the world and entitled to magic as much as any mage. Libertines must reject hierarchies and societies that turn praise for leaders into slavery or service to strong men. Lastly, they must destroy the followers of the Lie. The first two are open to interpretation and extent: Libertines must still be cautious casting spells in front of Sleepers, and the order accepts the meritocratic principles of Consilii for expediency's sake. The third hinges on exactly who is a follower of the Lie, a decision left up to regional caucuses.

The Free Council spawns fewer heretics than other orders thanks to its loose structure and historical affinity with politically labeled Nefandi. Small cabals of Libertine heretics do exist, lobbying in Assembly for the "unfortunate necessity" of using magic on whichever Sleepers have attracted them, maintaining chains of command within Cabals and territories, and attempting to reform rather than kill those the Assembly turns against. Unless heretics confront or act against the rest of the Assembly they are left to their own devices, isolated but unmolested.

The Free Council's attitude to the Left-Handed proper is a delicate balance between two impulses. Because the order was

Nameless until just over a century ago, Libertines have sympathy for mages left outside the Pentacle. Because they fought a bitter war with the Seers — a war which has cooled but never officially ended — Assemblies have a dangerously high tolerance for Left-Handed magic as long as it is only used against the followers of the Lie. The opposite pole of opinion is the order's famous regard for Sleepers and fanatical hatred of anything that worsens the Fallen World. Left-Handed mages who persecute the innocent are treated as harshly as captured Seers.

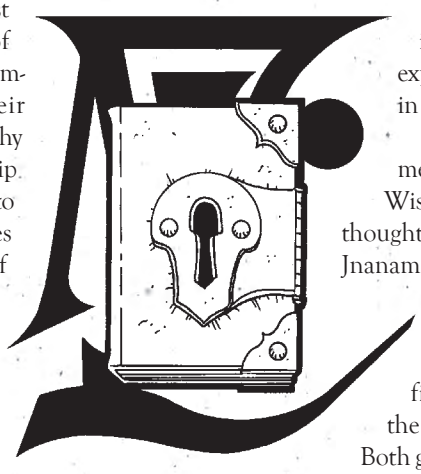
Guardians of the Veil



Like the Mysterium, the Guardians of the Veil are a true religion and accordingly have true heretics among their caucuses. Like the Free Council, the Guardians believe it is possible to do evil for the right reasons. To the other orders, the Guardians protect magic by committing sins on behalf of others, guarding against Paradoxes, ensuring only the worthy Awaken, and policing the Pentacle for Left-Handed mages, infiltrating enemies, and incautious use of vulgar spells. Within its own ranks, the order admits *why*.

Guardians believe that the Abyss widens with each vulgar spell and that the Fallen World is slowly destroyed as the Abyss expands. The Guardians say that they sin and toil to keep reality from the brink, looking forward to the day a perfect mage, a *Hieromagus*, will Awaken and close the Abyss before judging them for the crimes they've committed. The solemn duty of the order is to watch for Him — He won't be a Guardian — and to keep others safe from unwise magic by taking the burden of it on themselves.

The Guardians' path is narrow and difficult. The order contains more heresies than any other, collecting them as individual parts of doctrine fail. The most numerous heresies take the exultation of self-sacrifice and stoicism too far, performing Left-Handed acts, suppressing their own personalities, and losing sight of why they toil along the way. Legacies that strip their own emotions, slowly transform into machine-like beings, or absorb Paradoxes from nearby mages work in the sidelines of Guardian culture. Other heresies go too far in their defense of the world, destroying dangerous magic rather than capturing it. The order accepts these heresies' and Left-Handed members' sacrifices, making use of them until they become public.



The largest heretical cults focus on the Hieromagus — cults of personality around Guardians claiming to be the messiah, secretive groups attempting to create the perfect mage using the Labyrinths, and apocalyptic Cabals attempting to destroy the world after reasoning that the end would bring the Hieromagus forth. Unlike the Left-Handed heresies, the Guardians vehemently persecute these *Eschatonics* as counterproductive evil, lives destroyed and effort wasted in the name of a goal that can't be achieved. The Hieromagus will appear when he appears.

Last, and most removed from the order's mainstream, Guardians whose work maintaining the Labyrinth and policing other mages has become an end in itself abandon their mission in exchange for temporal power. Mainstream Guardians attempt to bring these groups back into the fold, ignore them when they can, and stamp them out when avoidance becomes too costly.

The order is only understanding of Left-Handed mages within its membership – Nefandi who are or were not Guardians have no protection from the Visus Draconis, who reserve the authority to commit evil for themselves.

Mysterium

The Mysterium are a mystery religion based on principles of personal revelation. Mystagogues believe that magic is a living force, guided by a semi-intelligence mages aren't aware of, and that it naturally flees the danger of Sleepers' souls by hiding itself in the world, a process they call *Pancryptia*. Mages gain enlightenment by following a *Sophiad*, a personal journey of developing Wisdom, experiencing the universe by recovering magic from its hiding places. No two Sophiads are the same; every Mystagogue is expected to follow inspiration, research, and magic on her own quest.

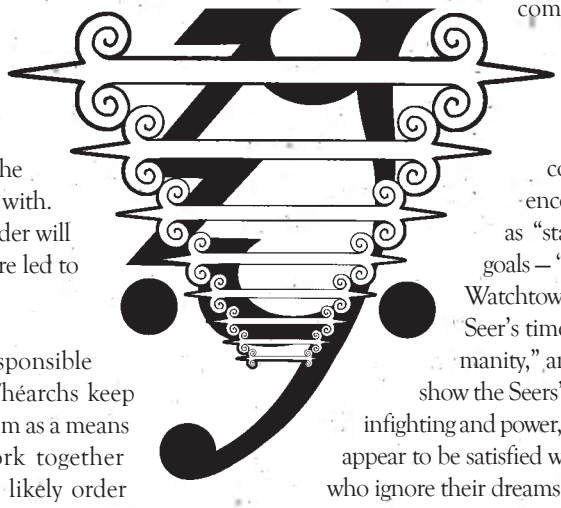
The Mysterium doesn't have many heresies, but those they do have are long-lived and difficult to uproot. The *Outward Door* seeks to escape the physical world by colonizing one of the other regions of Fallen reality, where magic flows slightly easier. Members investigate the Underworld, the Astral Realms, and the Deep Shadow, straying into Left-Handed methods when they experiment with different means of surviving in such places.

One heresy that has become an embarrassment to the order is the *Jnanamukti* ("Fist of Wisdom"), an example of heretical Mystagogue thought that blames Sleepers for Pancryptia. The Jnanamukti are magical terrorists that believe world culture stands in the way of progress — every Sleeper philosophy and technology is to be destroyed. The heresy has been officially disowned, but persistent rumor links the secretive **Daksha** Legacy to the Jnanamukti. Both groups claim descent from Atlantis by way of Theosophical thought and both openly supported the Axis powers in World War II, the Jnanamukti as the most expedient means of shattering Sleeper nations and the Daksha out of racist belief. The Daksha attainments — which change them physically into "pure," three-eyed, hermaphroditic forms — disturb conservative mages, while their outdated Theosophical beliefs worry younger willworkers, but the Legacy still has

enough pull with the order's leaders to remain legitimate.

While the Mysterium is largely resistant to heresy, the order does create many individual Left-Handed mages thanks to its philosophy of personal enlightenment. No Mystagogue easily accepts another's authority over her research. The drive to experience as much magic as possible leads to secrets best left buried being unearthed.

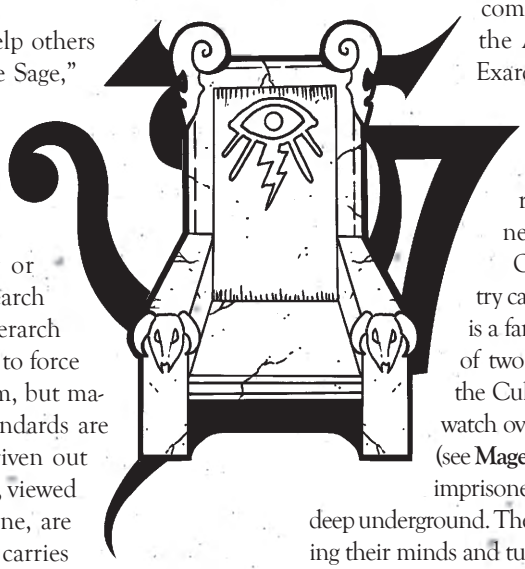
Silver Ladder



The Supernal Realms are the birthright of every human being. Sickness, weakness, age and doubt are all symptoms of the prison-world the Exarchs have built, violations of the human spirit that will be done away with. Atlantis was a failure. The Silver Ladder will build a perfect society, in which all are led to power according to their nature.

"Hubris" is a coward's word.

The Silver Ladder is the order responsible for much of the Pentacle's laws. Théarchs keep the Lex Magica, promoting Consilium as a means of getting disparate mages to work together peacefully. They are also the most likely order to commit one-off magical crimes. Every part of a théarch's training tells him to suppress doubts and fears about the righteousness of his actions. Respect for the law normally prevents repeat occurrences, but the order has a collective problem with realizing when they are going too far. It's why they invent so many rules, but even then every théarch believes they shouldn't apply to her.



Théarchs strive to embody and help others embody an archetype known as "the Sage," which the order describes as the desire to teach, create and improve the world. There are two failure states: "Lions," who follow power at the expense of morality, and "Stags," who believe themselves unworthy or enslave themselves to others. A Théarch can take the role of either, like a Hierarch pretending at being a tyrant in order to force other mages to unite and depose him, but mages who fail to meet the order's standards are subject to corrective measures or driven out into apostasy. The very worst heretics, viewed as proxies for the Seers of the Throne, are théarchs who enslave others. Magic carries with it a responsibility to use it for the greater good, not to aggrandize oneself at the expense of others.

Seers of the Throne

The Pentacles' enemies have their own customs, their own laws, and their own heresies to contend with. Each Ministry promotes a particular aspect of the Fallen World at the command of its patron Exarch — for example, the Praetorian Ministry serves the General, the chief Exarch of Forces, by promoting fear of violence across the Sleeping population. Individual orders come down from Tetrarchies — councils of Ministries within a wide geographic region — and directly from the Exarchs in the form of oracular dreams, prophecies and signs imprinted into the Fallen World. Seers often work at cross-purposes when following these day-to-day commandments, Pylons manipulated by everyone from their local commanders to the Tetrarchs, Ministers and maybe the Exarchs themselves.

All Seers, however, share a core of commandments that have been experienced enough for the sect as a whole to treat as "standing orders." Some are aspirational goals — "Destroy the Pentacle", or "Conquer the Watchtowers" — but others consume most of a Seer's time, like "Divide Humanity," "Protect Humanity," and "Enslave the Gods." Those last three show the Seers' purpose best — the sect, despite all their infighting and power, are agents of the status quo. The Exarchs appear to be satisfied with the Fallen World the way it is. Seers who ignore their dreams to go against that are heretical.

The Seers don't regard some acts that would get a Pentacle mage banished as Left-Handed, or even crimes at all. The Ministries positively *encourage* treating Sleepers as resources just as long as the human race survives in miserable spiritual infancy. Destruction of magic is acceptable if it is the only way to keep secrets out of Pentacle hands. When it comes to dealing with external entities like the Abyss or Lower Depths, though, the Exarchs become jealous gods. Seers are forbidden to worship the Abyssal Exarch of the Gate, but secret Ministries of Scelesti Seers flaunt the restriction in return for secret advantages in the sect's never-ending power struggles.

Other heresies are smaller-scale. The Ministry calling itself the **Cult of the Stone Whisper** is a far cry from the great Ministries. Consisting of two dozen mages spread across five Pylons, the Cult were charged by their superiors to keep watch over an ancient monster, one of the Bound (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 340) that the Exarchs imprisoned in an obelisk of blood-red stone buried deep underground. The creature has whispered to its jailors, infecting their minds and turning them to its worship rather than the Exarchs. Now they are searching among the apostates and solitaries in three states, looking for someone who can free their lord.

Heretical Movement: Iconoclasts

For most of recorded history, the Diamond orders clung to the accepted Atlantean view of magic. All Supernal influence in

the world dated from before the Fall and Sleepers remained both ignorant and dangerous. Mages sequestered themselves from humanity, contemplating magic from safe hermitage. Faced with the horrors of the World of Darkness, unable to use their talents in front of loved ones and family for fear of Paradox and forever denied Supernal Ascension by the Fall, it's a wonder that only a minority began to blame Sleepers for their predicament. Held in check by the Silver Ladder's exultation of the human spirit, nascent anti-Sleeper heresies festered within the orders.

Conflict with the Nameless Orders, many of whom went further than the Ladder and declared even Sleepers to be inspired by the Supernal, saw these cults and heresies surge in popularity. Facing enemies who moved among Sleeper institutions and wielded magic inspired by Sleeping science and culture, the Diamond fell back on their hatred for the Fallen World. The creation of the Free Council has banished them back into heresy, the mainstream orders having compensated by accepting factions inspired by Sleeper religion and culture into their ranks, but the aftermath of the war didn't expunge every Master teaching her students that Sleepers caused all the world's evil or make every mage who lost cabal members to the Nameless forgive and forget.

The Iconoclasts aren't ever formally named as such or even acknowledged by the Pentacle as an existing movement. Made up of dozens of heretical groups from the four Diamond orders, including the Mysterium Jnanamukti and the Arrow Sword Breakers, Iconoclasts differ wildly in philosophy, tactics and reason for their hate but are united in alliance by their common belief: Sleepers and mages who pander to them have no place in the world. That includes the Seers of the Throne, who hide their Ministries in cultural movements and adapt to new forms of control, but also extends to the Free Council, which Iconoclast heresies refuse to acknowledge as an order.

The popular image of heretics as solitaries or single-order cabals is comforting to their doctrinaire neighbors, but enough heresies share common cause in the Iconoclasts for proper cabals to form. The more public Iconoclast cabals restrict themselves to protest and lobbying of Consilii, coupled with attempting any means to get their own members appointed to high office. The hardline — who the political wing always describes as isolated extremists — enforce their beliefs with murder and magical terrorism. Attacking Seers, isolated Libertines, and any Sleepers they can get away with, the heretics take out their frustrations with the world. When Libertine Councilors take rumors of "death squads" and hate crimes directed at their voters to the other orders, they are met with denials and promises that the attackers represent only a tiny minority. That may be true, but the Iconoclasts are determined and not lacking for targets.

Thoreau

Anarcho-Primitive

Quote: *Everything's easier now. Nothing comes with risk, or effort. Everything's provided. How long before we're all fattened calves in the Exarchs' slaughterhouse?*

Background: Most Thyrsus protest that they don't have anything against the modern world. Cities have just as much life and, if anything, far more spirits than the wilderness does. Shamans deal with the world as it is, without pining for some wild, primitive ideal.

Most Thyrsus. Not all.

Thoreau is a pedagogue, a leading light of the Iconoclasts' political cabals and a persuasive orator. As an Arrow, he believes that existence is struggle and living a life of ease leads only to spiritual sickness and indolence. He preaches that the modern Sleeping world is the greatest prison of the Exarchs. That Sleepers, given the choice, will turn themselves into lolling, spiritual infants. The Awakened must be brave enough to tear down all of the Sleepers' toys, force them back into the wilderness, and make them start again without letting their sloth and desire to avoid pain rather than learn from it take root.

No one knows where he came from — the most common story is that he Awakened losing everything, lost far from civilization, and found the strength to survive in the Primal Wild. He refuses to discuss his Sleeping life, describing the man he used to be as a larval form he has long since outgrown.

Description: Thoreau is tall and hard, conditioned by over a decade walking, riding and flying in altered shape across the continent, shunning technological transport. He makes his own clothes, weapons, and tools and hunts his own food. Magic keeps him healthy through lean times and heals limbs straight and skin without scars, but the intense stare is natural.

Thoreau's nimbus is the scent of fresh rain in the forest, a deep, earthy smell that somehow manages to convey a feeling of being stalked along with a faint wet texture to surfaces around him.

Storytelling Hints: Thoreau travels from Consilium to Consilium, preaching to Adamantine Arrow caucuses across North America. He tells young Arrow disillusioned with a world less honorable than they are that they're not the ones in the wrong — the Fallen World is at fault. It will be a terrible struggle to redeem it, but they are *Arrow*, and struggle is what they do.

When the depth of his heresy is revealed, he moves on before the Adamant Sages can challenge him but leaves new Iconoclast cells in his wake. Thoreau himself has never been caught taking action against Sleepers or Libertines, but the young Arrow inspired by his words strike at modernist mages and, if not caught, vanish to link up with other Iconoclast cells.

Dedicated Magical Tool: A staff carved from an elm branch.

Real Name: David Alcott

Path: Thyrsus

Order: Adamantine Arrow

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Crafts 4, Medicine 3, Occult 1, Politics 2 (Arrow)

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Stealth 3, Survival (Wilderness) 5, Weaponry 3

Social Skills: Animal Ken 3, Empathy 2, Expression 1, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 4 (Oratory), Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Adamantine Arrow Status ••••, Danger Sense, Dream ••, Iron Stamina ••, Natural Immunity

Willpower: 6

Wisdom: 4

Vice: Pride

Virtue: Fortitude

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Speed: 12

Health: 9

Gnosis: 6

Arcana: Death 1, Life 5, Prime 3, Space 3, Spirit 4, Time 2

Rotes: *Death*- Forensic Gaze (•); *Life*- Cleanse the Body (•), Sense Life (•), Body Control (••), Self-Healing (••), Control Median Life (•••), Honing the Form (•••), Shapechanging (••••), Regeneration (•••••); *Prime*- Supernal Vision (•), Magic Shield (••); *Spirit*-Exorcist's Eye (•), Greater Spirit Summons (•••), Numinous Shield (•••)

Mana/per turn: 15/6

Armor: 5 ("Organic Resilience", Life •••••)

Apostates and Rotes

Mage assumes that most rotes mentioned in the **Mage: The Awakening** corebook are available for a character to learn, along with any rotes from the appropriate order sourcebook. This isn't true for apostates, who face a number of difficulties with rote magic.

Apostates who once were members of an order or Ministry possess the rote specialties for that sect. Other apostates, who were never trained, begin play with no rote specialties but may develop them as three one-dot Merits, each granting one specialty. The capacity for the Awakened to learn rote skills is finite, however — no mage can learn more than three rote Specialties, which means that mages who were once trained are already "full." At the Storyteller's discretion, characters may discard rote Specialties with extreme effort, unlearning the encoded magical techniques they've learned to prepare themselves for learning new skills. Doing so requires a Willpower dot to be sacrificed and removes all rote Specialties the character knows.

The second difficulty is access to rotes themselves. Without the approval of a major sect, apostates only have whatever rotes they knew before exile, and only have potential access to those known by any *other* exiles they can persuade to teach them. If an apostate becomes a Master, she can create new rotes like any mage of her power.

Being Left-Handed

Many apostates and heretics choose isolation. Many more react to their final exile or ostracism as though they *had* chosen it, angrily deciding that they didn't need other mages anyway. Without interference in their affairs, they will be allowed to live in peace.

It's never that simple.

Life as an Apostate

As apostates quickly discover, adherence to society's mores does come with benefits. Apostates are denied access to thousands of years' worth of study and lore. They must start every investigation as a blank slate. Unless they survive to become Masters, they will never learn a rote again. All Right-handed Legacies are barred to them — apostates who rejected the orders on moral grounds are left without any suitable fellowships to join. Worse, the World of Darkness does not stop intruding on a mage's life just because she lives in imposed hermitage. Her Unseen Senses still alert her to situations that she can no longer risk exploring without backup, she must compete at a position of weakness for resources such as Hallows, and she makes an easy target for Seers, Banishers, Reapers and other antagonistic sects.

Apostates who left their sects part-way through training or solitaries, who never joined one in the first place, live in enviable ignorance of what they're missing. The orders and Ministries, from the outside, appear insurmountable. Unable to compete directly, most apostates instead allow the civilized mages to come to *them*, making themselves useful and swallowing their resentment for long enough to extract the resources they need as payment for their services as neutral parties, as experts in esoteric and legally risky subjects, or as simple information-brokers. For more ways in which apostates interact with their former colleagues, see the Storytelling information in the Introduction.

New Flaw: Apostate

The character has been expelled from an organized sect, abandoned her allegiance on her own terms, or was never a member of one to begin with. She suffers the limitations described under "Apostates and Rotes" and gains an extra point of experience per chapter in which her apostasy causes her difficulties.

Life as a Heretic

Heretics are trapped in the liminal space between order and apostasy. Ignored, belittled, and starved of apprentices and recognition unless their order needs to buy their support, heretics are resigned to a fate of being dirty little secrets, the unmentionable relatives their superiors don't talk about in front of outsiders. For all that, though, they remain members of their order — able to learn rotes, access communal

resources, and buy any order-specific Merits. Unfortunately, they are treated with suspicion by any members of their order who learn of the heresy, forcing them to build cabals and mentor-student bonds with fellow heretics and reinforcing their isolation from the bulk of their peers.

New Flaw: Heretic

The character cleaves to a philosophy that is at odds with the majority of his order. Although he may buy the Order Status Merit as normal, the social dice pool effects of the Merit are not applied if the other character is aware of the heresy and does not share it. Any other effects of the Merit — access to training or special order-specific Merits — are unchanged. The character receives one extra experience point per chapter in which his heretical status causes problems.

Falling Further

Having already paid the price for their infraction, outcast mages no longer have the luxury of conflicted feelings about their crimes. If they're going to survive isolated from sect and cabal, they need to use every talent they have, even the ones that make other mages nervous. At the time of their first transgression, many apostates can't see how far the Left-Handed path goes. Once it's the only thing they have left, that changes. Putting any misgivings aside, apostates and heretics embrace that which sets them apart.

Story Hook: The Penitent

It's hard to give up on yourself. Not every degeneration check ends in failure, and the worst crimes can be committed several times before a character becomes jaded. Sometimes, a Left-Handed mage regrets what he's become and looks for a way back. A player looking for a challenge might, with the Storyteller's permission, play a penitent Nefandi hoping to earn forgiveness. Supernatural fiction is full of redemption quests and antiheroes attempting to become heroes. It's a powerful story and can make for a memorable chronicle.

Any returning apostate or heretic wishing to rejoin the main part of his order must convince higher-status mages to take him back. Rehabilitation takes years. Returning apostates lose all status and have to earn their way back, while heretics undergo retraining with a trusted Mentor.

If the penitent mage has already gone too far, his chances of finding a place are slim. Mages who have joined Left-Handed Legacies but still want to return swear complex oaths, give up soul stones as hostages and are expected to work without complaint for order and Consilium. Most aren't allowed back at all, although player characters should be among the exceptions unless the other characters are apostates. When Left-Handed mages are allowed back, their sects find work that serves as combination punishment and community service — unusual uses for tainted attainments, or assigning the returnee dangerous and upsetting work on the grounds that his soul is already lost and he isn't in a position to refuse. Guardian Interfectors, Mystagogue Censors and Arrow training instructors are all positions the Left-Handed can fill.

The Chamber of Echoes

Left alone with her own thoughts and mutilated praxis, a newly-minted apostate succumbs to loneliness, drifting further and further into her madness. Ostracized by the rest of their order, kept away from Consilium meetings, and watched when they leave the vicinity of their Sanctum, a heretical cabal turns inwards. Two apostates meet, desperate and hungry for someone, anyone, to talk about magic with, and find that the only thing they have in common is what the Pentacle did to them — so that's all they talk about.

Groupthink and feedback loops plague Nefandi of all stripes. Unable to let Sleeper acquaintances into their secrets for fear of Quiescence — and of leading their enemies to Sleeping loved ones — outcast mages are only able to truly socialize with their own kind. After the initial mistrust is overcome, apostates begin to swap rotes and even form cabals, exchanging magical techniques. The desire to not drive away even these last contacts puts apostates under a great deal of pressure, and many find themselves committing acts they wouldn't have dared take part in while still under the orders' control simply to reinforce their friendship with the mage whose particular brand of apostasy requires those crimes. Those still holding rage against their former sect become Outlaws, striking back at their persecutors.

Despair

No matter how much a Nefandi distracts himself with magical sin or building relationships to other exiles, eventually the reality of his situation will set in. If there's no socialization available, the orders are respecting the banishment and keeping news away from him, and he has reached the limits of his Wisdom, that Nameless mage is not left with much to base a life on. Despair can take many forms, from self-inflicted (suicide remains the most common cause of death among heretics and apostates) to furious anger, fuelled by no longer having anything to live for and directed at anyone who gets in the Nefandi's way.

Continuation

Many apostates and heretics, starved of traditional apprentices and nearing the end of their careers, seek methods of passing on their teachings. Some still refuse to admit that there's anything wrong with their magical habits and want to put the record straight. Others have met every other outcast in the city and realized that everyone has a Legacy already. Still more, chafing at being named Nefandi and seeing all their works undone, smashed or redacted, are desperate to leave something — any-

thing — for posterity. They write books detailing their studies, document their unwise magics, and develop rotes. Even if they die alone, eventually a mage will come across their work and *know* that whoever wrote it wanted to be heard.

One part of a mage's cultural identity is her Legacy. By the time an apostate or heretic thinks of leaving something to survive the ages, his Legacy is usually quite developed and unusual, even unique — and certainly valuable enough to want to ensure that Legacy survives the death of its founder. Determined Left-Handed look for ways of teaching Legacies long after the last remaining tutors have died.

If a living teacher is not available, it is possible to join a Legacy by examining and copying the attainments from a soul stone made by someone of the desired cult. For this reason, the Guardians of the Veil take care to capture any soul stones they find of Left-Handed mages. Some always slip through the cracks, though.

Other outcasts trying to leave a legacy behind pen daimonomica — grimoires that teach Legacies — copy them, and attempt to seed them into the collections of larger sects. Malicious Left-Handed enchant their daimonomica to compel weak mages into reading them.

Joining a Legacy by soul stone or daimonomicon costs a flat rate of ten experience points per attainment, the first attainment including making the Legacy's primary Arcanum Ruling. Prospective "students" must meet all the prerequisites for the Legacy, including the necessary level of Gnosis. If the mage still has access to the item she learned a first attainment from by the time she reaches Gnosis 5, she can learn the second attainment for another ten experience points (and again at Gnosis 7 for the third attainment). If she can't study the soul stone or daimonomicon, though, she must develop the Legacy as though she had no teacher at Gnosis 6 for the second attainment and Gnosis 7 for the third.

New Spell

Inscribe Daimonomicon (Prime •• and Death •••••, Mind ••••• or Spirit •••••)

The mage can imprint his Legacy into a manual for other mages, allowing them to learn Attainments without an arcane link.

Practice: Compelling
Action: Extended
Duration: Lasting
Aspect: Covert
Cost: None

The target number for the spell depends on which attainments are being transcribed: 4 for the first, 6 for the second and 8 for the third. An additional 10 successes are added to the success threshold if the daimonomicon is to empower the Legacy's primary Arcanum as Ruling. Legacies can be divided into multiple volumes to make casting easier, but the primary Arcanum must accompany the first attainment and users must buy attainments in sequence. The spell can only record attainments the caster knows.

We're All Alone Here: The Nameless Orders

The orders and Ministries believe that apostates are contained, made safe by isolation and left to wallow in their own mistakes. They're wrong, and history should teach them better.

Alternatives to the large sects have always existed. Before the Great Refusal, Nameless fraternities rivaling Seer Ministries in size spread across the globe, innovating new magical techniques and training their own apprentices. They became the great wild card in the war between Seer and Pentacle, and the Ministry of Hegemony's attempt to co-opt them led to the Free Council. Before they formed the fifth order of the Pentacle, the Diamond called these mages "The Nameless Orders," mocking them as rough associations of Nefandi, techgnostics, and other disreputable willworkers.

Despite simplified histories taught to newly apprenticed Libertines, not every Nameless Order joined the Free Council or even took the opposite side to join the Pantechnicon Ministry. The Free Council was formed around alliances between the largest techgnostic Nameless Orders and absorbed free-thinking but non-Atlantean cults as the Great Refusal gathered pace. Those Nameless cults that disagreed with the Libertine creed declined the order status the Silver Ladder were offering to their cousins. Unwilling to fight the Seers or join the Pentacle, they vanished, scattering into component Cabals until it was safe to reestablish contact.

In modern times, the Nameless orders (a term they now wear as a badge of pride) are loose alliances of apostate solitaries and cabals. Membership has only one requirement: a Nameless must not be a member of any other sect. Other than that, the Nameless grow organically out of cabal alliances — a group of Echo Walkers out of Tulsa might be given shelter by a bitter apostate with a grudge against the sentinels hunting them. Once the heat has died down, the Reapers move on... but they stay in touch. The old man now has friends who can teach him some unusual Life spells and debate the finer mechanisms of the human soul with him.

Strange things breed in unnoticed places. The more an apostate interacts with the Nameless orders, the more he picks up a petri-dish of different magical styles and influences. Techniques and powers more organized mages wouldn't believe possible are his to command.

The Nameless orders serve as a source of rotes and lore for a connected apostate. Their numbers aren't great — the worldwide population of Nameless is about that of a mid-sized Ministry — but that only serves to maintain the illusion that their members are being good little hermits and taking their punishment.

In place of Order Status, apostates may buy the Nameless Order Merit. This serves as both a Status (Apostates) Merit under the rules in the World of Darkness rulebook, pp 116-117, and brings benefits as the character develops a syncretic praxis drawing on many sources.

- The first dot of Nameless Order provides a free specialization in a Skill (not a rote specialty).
- •• The second dot of Nameless Order grants a free one-dot Merit.
- ••• The third dot of Nameless Order allows the character to learn one skill or two social Merits (except Nameless Order itself) at a reduced cost — new dots x 2 Experience for a skill, or new dots x 1 for the Merits.
- •••• The forth dot of Nameless Order allows the character either a permanent +1 to dice pools in a specific skill or an extra, free two-dot Merit.
- ••••• The fifth dot of Nameless Order grants an extra, free three-dot Merit.

New Merits

The following Merits are only available to apostates, and are suggested as examples of the free Merits gained with levels of Nameless Order, above.

Dedication Efficiency (•to •••)

Prerequisite: Awakened, Apostate

Effect: Without an order's symbols to fall back upon, you have had to rely on Path and Arcanum Tools more. You have changed them so many times you can now maintain multiple dedications at once. Each dot of this Merit allows you to dedicate an extra Magical Tool.

Harvester (•to •••)

Prerequisite: Awakened, Apostate

Effect: You are especially practiced at sacrificing living beings for Mana (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 78) and receive the dot rating of this Merit in extra Mana whenever you do so. This Merit does not increase the maximum amount of Mana you can gain through sacrifice per day.

Strong Pattern (•••)

Prerequisite: Awakened, Apostate, Stamina •••

Effect: You are so used to self-sufficiency and relying only on your own magic that your Pattern can maintain more spells. Your Spell Tolerance is increased by three, but the extra tolerance slots may only be filled by spells you cast.

Nameless Order: New York

The urban sprawl of New York and New Jersey is home to 22 million people, untold supernatural creatures, and several hundred mages, far more than the Consilium or Eastern US Tetrarchy can manage. An apostate with no desire to engage with Pentacle or Throne can vanish into the crowd without much difficulty, and the Consilium has acknowledged that they don't have the resources to force participation. The official stance is that as long as the apostates don't try to organize a rival society of mages — and become a threat in the process — or impinge on Pentacle-claimed resources, the Sentinels will leave them be, even if some of those apostates are exiles from Pentacle society. The local Nameless Order (which, true to form, refuses to name itself and identify to any watching spies that it exists) serves as a means of getting around those restrictions.

The core of the order is an agreement struck between six apostates in the 1970s. All six had refused or renounced membership in the orders on the grounds that their Sleeping friends and family were too important to them to maintain the "proper" separation — four refused to even take Shadow Names, and one was exiled from the Silver Ladder for repeatedly attempting to reveal the Mysteries to his Sleeper acquaintances. The apostates all knew that without the Consilium's protection, their presence made their loved ones targets for the Seers. So they swapped.

The order has expanded to cover fifteen mages with a variety of interests, but the guiding principle remains the same. When one of the apostates has a goal to accomplish that he fears being linked to by the Pentacle or Seers, he contacts a central point and arranges for one of the *other* members of the order to act as his proxy. In this way, the order interferes with the lives of their Sleeper charges, gathers resources for Left-Handed experiments, and collects rotes without building up patterns of behavior the

Other Strangeness

In addition to those listed here, the following Merits from the **Mage: The Awakening** gameline are especially suitable as the benefits of Nameless Order.

From **Mage: The Awakening**

Dream
High Speech
Library
Occultation

From **Secrets of the Ruined Temple**

Atlantean Hesychia

From **Guardians of the Veil**

Trained Memory

From **Tome of the Mysteries**

Glyph Lore
Gesture Lore
Ritual Synergy

organized sects can track. Over the years, the central point has been a physical dead-drop, a paging service, a bbs, a mailing list and is now a website.

The order started out with good intentions, allowing members to arrange for magical windfalls for their families, but their culture of not asking questions about the favors they do for one another has led to widespread corruption by Left-Handed mages. At least one member is a Scelesti, using the network to tempt apostates into Abyssal acts.

The New York Nameless order Merit grants the following benefits:

•	The apostate gains a Socialize Specialty of (Blending In), reflecting their practice at dropping into unfamiliar social settings on behalf of other members.
• •	The apostate is now so practiced at avoiding the notice of doctrinaire mages he gains Occultation •.
• • •	The apostate may learn the Allies and Contacts Merits at (new dots) experience. Thanks to the order, she now has friends all over the city.
• • • •	The apostate's Occultation increases to • •.
• • • • •	The apostate's Occultation is now almost flawless, increasing to • • •.

Left-Handed Legacy: Cŵn Annwn

We could just eat you right up.

The Silver Ladder tells mages that they should be Gods. Imperium is the right of every human, predicted on escape from the prison-world of the Exarchs and ascendency to the higher realms. Centuries of striving to prepare humanity for escape have had no appreciable effect, however, with successful Ascensions remaining the stuff of frustrating rumor and legend. The enemy guards the Supernal Realms too well.

The Cwn Annwn ("Hounds of Annwn", pronounced "Coon Ann-Win") are a recently founded thearch Legacy from Wales, now spreading through the Consilii of the UK and Western Europe. Legacy members arrive in Silver Ladder caucuses, making grandiose claims of having escaped the Fallen World and living in an otherworldly paradise beyond the Exarch's grasp. They return to the Fallen now to recruit new Obrimos to the Legacy and get the word out. Curious candidates for membership are taken to the Gardeners' new world. Those who want in stay there for training while the mentor moves on.

After the Gardener leaves, the Consilium notices odd phenomena. Items have gone missing. Hallows have been drained. People have vanished, without a trace. Wide areas of the Consilium's territory have been despoiled by some supernatural force, crumbling every living thing to dust in crop-circle like patterns. No witnesses saw anything, but a few report *hearing* something – a terrible howl in the distance, like a hound.

The Gwynedd Consilium in Northern Wales is sparsely populated but has a historical reputation for producing innovative mages. The isle of Anglesey is the origin of many druidic Legacies, and the Consilium still claims to have been founded by the Acanthus Archmage now remembered as Merlin. In 2005, a thearch Obrimos named Argent arrived in the Consilium, claiming to have retired from work as a Lictor abroad. His Cabal had been killed by Seers, he claimed, while chasing rumors of an Ascended mage in the hopes of following her footsteps.

In fact, Argent had fled his Cabal after coming to the conclusion that Ascension was not possible and being rather too open with his opinion. He proposed that if the Supernal Realm was barred, the Silver Ladder should seek to move humanity to another world away from Fallen reality, somewhere mages could assume the godhood the order promised. Denounced as a heretic, he stole grimoires describing pacts with beings from outside Fallen reality and fled before his theft could be uncovered. His Consilium declared him Left-Handed in his absence, but he had no intention of ever going back.

Argent didn't come to Gwynedd by chance. The region is rife with verges and sealed gateways to other realms, perhaps the aftereffect of the long-vanished archmaster's studies. He needed a Hallow in a remote area where the walls of the physical world grew thin in order to complete the ritual he'd uncovered. The blasphemous texts spoke of an in-between place, a void which was not the Abyss but could be filled by the energies of the Fallen World if an explorer was talented enough at giving form to Mana.

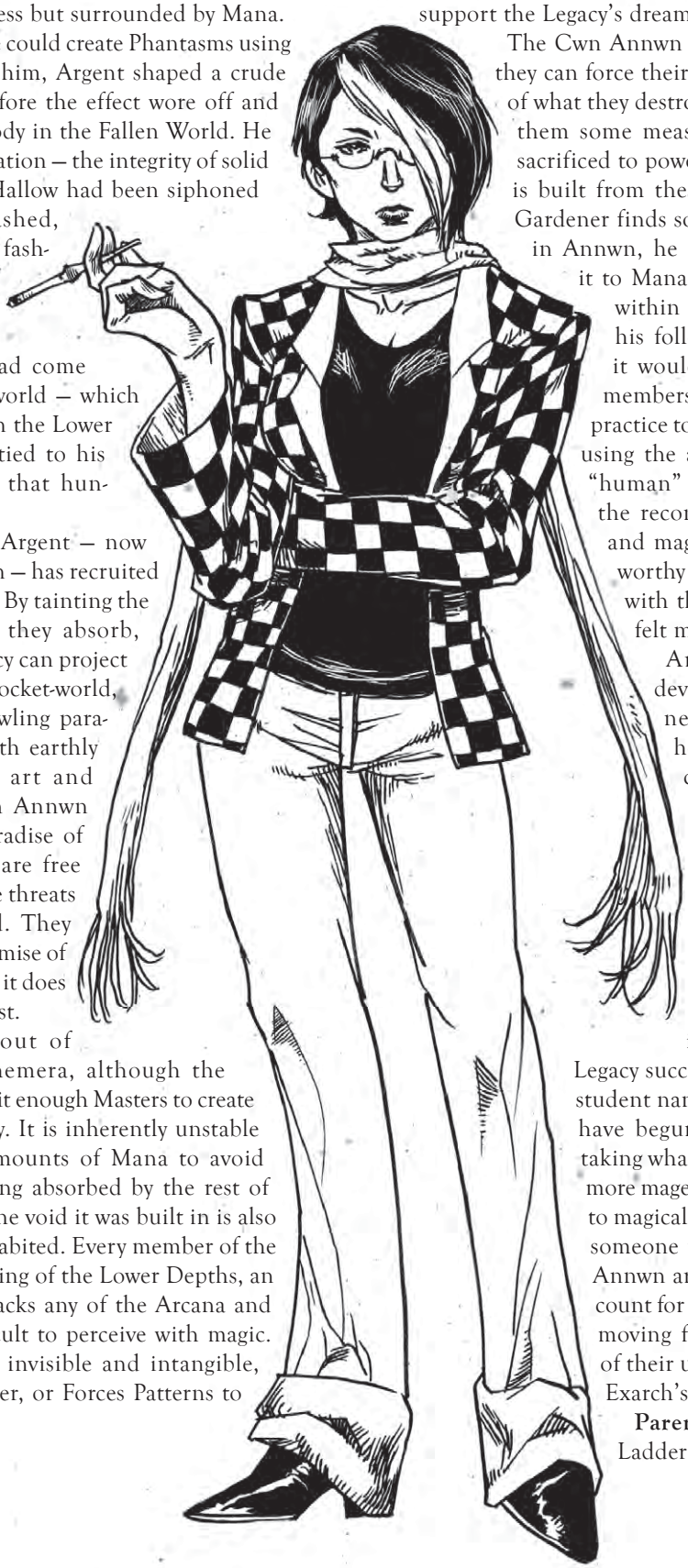
Argent conducted his ritual with the blood of a sacrifice boiled in the center of his Hallow, tainting the Mana there. When he absorbed the Mana into his pattern, he felt something inside his soul open, and found himself elsewhere, floating in nothingness but surrounded by Mana.

Discovering that he could create Phantasms using the energies around him, Argent shaped a crude world for himself before the effect wore off and he returned to his body in the Fallen World. He was greeted by devastation — the integrity of solid objects around the Hallow had been siphoned by the forces unleashed, the Mana he'd been fashioning stolen from everything around him.

And something had come back from his new world — which he now knew to be in the Lower Depths. Something tied to his pattern. Something that hungered.

Seven years later, Argent — now calling himself Arawn — has recruited a Legacy of followers. By tainting the resonance of Mana they absorb, members of the Legacy can project themselves into the pocket-world, which is now a sprawling paradise garden filled with earthly delights, beautiful art and even human life. In Annwn — named for the paradise of Welsh myth – they are free from Paradox and the threats of the Fallen World. They have achieved the promise of the Silver Ladder, but it does not come without cost.

Annwn is built out of Phantasms and ephemera, although the Legacy hopes to recruit enough Masters to create true patterns one day. It is inherently unstable and requires vast amounts of Mana to avoid breaking up and being absorbed by the rest of the Lower Depths. The void it was built in is also far from being uninhabited. Every member of the Legacy is host to a being of the Lower Depths, an invisible force that lacks any of the Arcana and so is extremely difficult to perceive with magic. These "hounds" are invisible and intangible, having no Life, Matter, or Forces Patterns to be interacted with, and serve as roving feeding appendages for Annwn itself. The hounds siphon integrity from the Fallen world and feast on raw Mana when they can, funneling the energies into the Lower Depths where they support the Legacy's dreamworld.



The Cwn Annwn have found that, with effort, they can force their hound to rebuild a facsimile of what they destroy within Annwn, which gives them some measure of control over what is sacrificed to power their realm. Their paradise is built from these stolen patterns — when a Gardener finds something worthy of inclusion in Annwn, he directs his hound to reduce it to Mana and the image of it appears within the realm. Arawn cautioned his followers to only use this when it would not be noticed, but some members of the Legacy have taken the practice to extremes — and worse, begun using the ability on living beings. The "human" inhabitants of paradise are the reconstructed images of Sleepers and mages the Cwn Annwn thought worthy of inclusion, broken puppets with the faces of people the hound felt met his criteria.

Arawn wants the Legacy to develop Arcana until they don't need to steal any more — he hopes that once he is able to create Hallows for Annwn to feed from, the realm will become self-sufficient. He wants to entice a Master of Life and Mind into the Legacy, as they will then be able to create real (albeit soulless) people inside. For now, though, he is increasingly alone in his quest as the Legacy succumbs to impatience. Led by a student named Hafgan, the Cwn Annwn have begun travelling across Consilii, taking whatever they want and recruiting more mages to the Legacy. With exposure to magical society, the risk increases that someone will work out what the Cwn Annwn are doing and hold them to account for it. Until then, they'll continue moving from city to city, telling tales of their unearthly paradise beyond the Exarch's sight.

Parent Path: Obrimos or Silver Ladder

Nickname: Hellhounds, Gardeners

Appearance: When proselytizing, Gardeners maintain the respectable image of a Silver Ladder mage, well-dressed and exuding a friendly air of authority. In private, though, members of the Legacy let their appearances "go" slightly, the result of spending time projecting their souls into Annwn and leaving their bodies behind.

Background: The Legacy looks for Obrimos who have given into despair at never returning to the Supernal Realms, those that have tried and failed to seek Ascension, or who have suffered at the hands of the Seers. The oldest members of the Legacy have a preference for recruiting artists and mages skilled at creating illusions, following notions of improving Annwn's aethestics. As time goes on, however, more and more members of the Legacy are selected for ruthlessness. They don't need to sculpt the new world when they can rip the form of whatever and whoever they want out of the Fallen World.

Organization: The Cwn Annwn have an advantage over other Left-Handed Legacies; while they travel in small groups or as individuals to minimize suspicion, the entire Legacy meets regularly in Annwn itself and acts as one very large cabal. The Legacy is still small enough to be dominated by personality, and is roughly divided between Arrawn's supporters, who make up the majority of Gnosis 5 to 7 members, and Hafgan's younger, more callous supporters who aggressively expand Annwn.

Suggested Oblations: As a Legacy based around siphoning mana, Hellhounds don't usually have the patience for oblations. Those that do favor hunting, architecture (especially the drawing of impossible structures), the creation and destruction of unique art, and meditating on natural and man-made beauty.

Attainments

Cwn Annwn attainments are based around destroying the substance of the Fallen World and reproducing it — in ersatz form — within the pocket-realm of Annwn. Every mage in the Legacy is bound to a creature from the Lower Depths that uses him as a means to access the material realm.

1st: Opening the Door

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Prime 2 (primary)

The Gardener has gained the ability to enter Annwn by defiling a Hallow and is now the host for a creature from the Lower Depths.

Entering Annwn requires the mage to access a 3-dot or greater Hallow with resonance of emptiness, isolation or related themes. The mage must allow Mana to build up in the Hallow until it is full, then dramatically alter the resonance by either defiling it with destroyed purity (most Hellhounds use the blood of humans or traditionally "pure" animals such as white lambs) or successfully casting the Prime • • • spell "Disguise Resonance" with a –3 dice penalty. When the mage absorbs all Mana from the Hallow, he is able to undergo a meditative journey to project himself into Annwn. The journey requires 10 successes on an extended meditation roll and consumes all the Mana absorbed from the Hallow if successful. The mage's body is left behind, helpless, as with an Astral journey. Most Cwn Annwn use Life magic to extend the time they can safely stay in Annwn without eating or drinking.

Upon returning to the Fallen World for the first time, the Gardener is linked to a Hound of Annwn, a being of the Lower Depths that now serves as a familiar.

Hound of Annwn

A Hound of Annwn is not a spirit or a demon. A hound is intangible and invisible, existing only in Twilight as scraps of primordial energy. It can be detected by mages using Death • and Prime • or Spirit • and Prime • to look into the specific wavelength of Twilight it exists in, in which case it appears as a large, skinless quadruped somewhat reminiscent of a dog. A hound forms a familiar-like bond to its host mage (any existing familiars are consumed by the hound), who can sense and cast through it as per the Familiar rules in **Mage: The Awakening**.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 5, Resistance 3

Initiative: 10

Defense: 5

Speed: 25 (Species factor 15)

Size: 4

Hounds have no Willpower or Corpus. They may spend Willpower points from their hosts' Willpower pool, and wounds inflicted on them appear on the host. If the host dies, the hound is banished back to the Lower Depths.

Hounds have no Influences or Essence but may destroy material patterns with a Power + Finesse roll. Living beings may reflexively oppose this roll with Stamina + Gnosis. Every success deals one level of bashing damage to a living being or removes one point of Structure from everything within the (host mage's Gnosis x3) feet. When a hound destroys patterns in this way, a sound like a dog howling is audible even without magic.

Successfully scrutinizing a hound or anything it has attacked reveals it to have the same resonance as its host mage.

Hounds are not entirely under the control of their host mage. To direct a hound to attack a specific target or prevent it from feeding requires the player of the host mage to succeed at a Resolve + Animal Ken roll. If the roll fails when the hound wishes to attack, the host mage can sate it for 24 hours by spending a point of Mana.

2nd: Afterimage

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Prime 3

The Gardener can create Phantasms, stirring raw magic into shape and form. This attainment duplicates the Prime • • •

spell "Phantasm." The quality of the illusion is determined by an Intelligence + Appropriate skill roll (Crafts for objects, Animal Ken for animals, and so on). The Phantasms created by this attainment are Lasting unless destroyed, but are still as brittle as magically-created ones. No Mana is spent to create the illusion.

In addition, the bonded Hound of Annwn's attacks now inflict lethal damage or remove two points of structure. Anything destroyed by the hound now appears in Annwn as a Phantasmal reproduction, although living beings remain static illusions.

3rd: Stolen Strength

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Prime 4

The Gardener has now taken on some of the traits of his bonded "pet," able to form solid, durable Phantasms and siphon Mana from the Fallen World. This attainment duplicates the Prime • • • • spells "Siphon Integrity" (rolling the mage's Resolve + Occult), "Marionette" and "Phantasmal Weapon." Living beings destroyed by the bonded hound now appear in Annwn as animate phantasms.

CHAPTER TWO: THE MAD ONES

It is sometimes an appropriate response to reality to go insane.
—Philip K Dick

We fear what we can't understand.

Magic is a powerful, rapturous experience, but a new mage has an advantage in experiencing it. Centuries of knowledge recorded by the orders explain the ten Arcana, the eleven Practices, the nature of the Awakened soul, the flow of Mana from Hallows and the careful soulcrafting of Legacies. Armed with these tools, any magical phenomenon can be faced and understood. Mages excel at finding patterns, sniffing out even the lightest touch of the supernatural and using their considerable resources to understand those Mysteries. Follow any Mystery for long enough, after all, and revelation will be yours.

Some patterns, though, can't be understood, only survived. Some Mysteries do not obey the world of carefully delineated Arcana and Practices. Some lead back to mages who are not mages, not as the orders know them. These individuals are driven, callous, and obey dictates only they understand. Strange manifestations of the Arcana follow them. They wear their nimbuses like shrouds. Their Legacies manifest too many attainments and they show precocious skill in limited areas. Cabals spend weeks or months tracking these strange mages, fighting against their strange Occultation all the way. When one is cornered, he fights with frenzied certainty, unleashing killing spells or deliberate Paradoxes without provocation.

Most of the time, these strange mages aren't anyone the orders have heard of. But sometimes they turn out to be friends. Coworkers. Cabalmates.

The orders call them Mad.

The Pattern of Madness

A hospital is plagued by mysterious events, spells cast by no one bedeviling staff and patients for no apparent reason, targets chosen at random. In one ward upstairs lies a coma patient: both the heart of the storm and its source. Trapped in the in-between space, his soul was broken before Awakening could be completed. His power lashes out at the Fallen world he failed to escape.

A murderer stalks the city, one with an unusual MO. Every 47 days, a man dies with his blood full of deadly toxins. The victims have no seeming connection and the Sentinels have no clue who the mage is or where he will strike next. Witnesses can't remember him, as though his very presence were subject to the Quiescence.

The Interfector narrows his eyes behind the iron mask of office, concentrating on the task at hand while his subject screams and begs for mercy. Capturing the Seer was a minor miracle and the Hierarch wants results. Using magic to torture his captive for days is the hardest thing the Interfector has ever done — but as the Seer begs for death, the Guardian feels something inside him break. From that day on, he's different. He needs to do it again, and again, building a secret Sanctum to hold his victims. His fellow Guardians notice his altered demeanor, but do not dare confront him about it — until the Hierarch goes missing.

For most of recorded history, the Mad have been poorly understood. Many encounters with Maddened mages were recorded incorrectly or ignored by Consilii who didn't know what they were dealing with. Even now, the Mad are rare enough that their presence is often realized only in hindsight. The advent of globalization, fast information networks, and the increased contact between far-flung Consilii they've brought has increased awareness. Phenomena that for centuries have been thought of as random natural events are now known to be signs of a Mad One at large.

The effort to spread understanding of the Mad has been led by the Bellerophon Group, one of the rare international Pentacle order associations. Members are all Adamant Sages, the leaders of the Adamantine Arrow. They attend Convocations, keep in contact with other Arrow caucuses near to their home Consilii, and liaise with Guardian and Mystagogue caucuses to support their project, recording encounters with the Mad and sharing the details with the rest of the Group. Even so, it can take years before a member hears of a sighting, thus the work is painfully slow.

Bellerophon was founded in 1945, at the grand caucus of the Adamantine Arrow that met in Tibet following the end

of World War II. The Arrow had been devastated by the fighting as cabals following loyalties to Sleeper nationality fought one another out of honor. The caucus reprioritized the order, pulling away from Sleeping wars and focusing on the enemies of the Pentacle. Among the information shared about Left-Handed mages, Seers and Banishers, enough representatives from enough Consilii shared stories of the Mad that the Adamant Sages realized the threat had been severely underestimated. Bellerophon's first members were those Sages who promised to assess the true nature of the Mad and report back at the next grand caucus — a gathering which has not yet taken place.

Despite the name, the Mad are not synonymous with insane mages — madness (as opposed to Madness) can come in many forms. The Awakened are not predisposed toward stability at the best of times; myriad stresses and pressures Sleepers aren't aware of conspire to give even experienced Mastigos problems. The mind-warping effects of Bedlam Paradox and the aberrant behavior brought on by suppressing the guilt of Wisdom sins both account for far more "mad mages" than the actual Mad. The Watchtowers don't only grant Awakening to individuals with good mental health, either — given how Mystery Plays and other signs of pre-Awakening look to anyone who isn't experiencing them, mages have been Awakening in asylums since such institutions have existed.

The Mad go beyond simple derangements. Each occurrence is a complex pattern of strange phenomena centered on the Mad mage. The phenomena are often more noticeable than the mage himself, which is the first problem a Cabal dealing with one of the Mad must overcome. Even now, Bellerophon is realizing that many historical encounters believed to be with Ochema, Ananke, Genius Territorialis and cryptids were actually the result of Maddened mages who went otherwise undetected.

At the heart of the pattern is a mage with a broken soul. Utterly without morality, guilt or compunction, the Mad mage is incapable of relating to other human beings. Only pragmatic desire to avoid capture influences the Mad mage's behavior. The same injury to the soul that leaves the Mad without a conscience makes them extremely difficult to detect or affect with magic at sympathetic range. Every Mad One is occluded to a degree impossible for normal mages: the use of a real name does nothing, and even the resonance of their spells is frustratingly difficult to discern. Worse, only mages are capable of tracking the Mad; they "leak" magic to the extent that they trigger the Quiescence of Sleepers, who forget or rationalize away the Mad One's presence.

The souls of the Mad reach out beyond their mortal bodies. The strange events that surround a Maddened mage are the result of his soul's touch, warping the world to follow his deranged unconscious vision. The Tibetan caucus called these manifestations *Tulpa* and the name has stuck. Tulpa resemble spells, but aren't consciously cast and often involve Arcana that the Mad One doesn't even know. In the most extreme cases, the Mad One's mind loses its hold on the body and appears in Twilight form among the Tulpa, as though astrally projecting, while the body lies comatose. In rare occasions, a Tulpa capable of animating the body manifests. Mad who obsessed over goetic magic before falling to Madness sometimes appear as multiple individuals, the body "driven" by a goetic demon while the psyche wanders the world as a Tulpa.

Every Maddened mage expresses a unique insanity, an obsession with an act, a spell, an attainment, or a ritual behavior that is bound up with his worst impulses. The Mad are forced by their natures to fulfill these strange impulses — when they are prevented from doing so, the number and intensity of their Tulpa increase, as their wounded souls express what they cannot.

The Mad aren't victims, however pitiable an individual Mad One's state may be. Bellerophon has studied enough Mad Ones who were formerly "normal" mages to be convinced that each committed an act of heinous perversion before turning Mad. The insane mage's state is the culmination of a downward spiral along the Left-Handed Path, not a disease any innocent mage can contract. As such, the Mad are considered enemies of the Awakened by the Adamantine Arrow, monsters in human form so terrible that their souls split down the middle with the weight of their sins.

There are other Mad Ones, of course, don't conform to the Arrow's stereotype, at least in regard to their origin. They don't appear to have committed any great magical crimes before going Mad, but rather transformed after attempting to form a new Legacy while being unprepared, or attempting to manifest more attainments than their souls can bear. Despite their more innocent beginnings, though, these Mad Ones are just as pragmatic and callous as their fellows. Many develop several derangements on the spot upon first going Mad, and they still lack all Wisdom.

Still more Mad appear to have been that way since Awakening. The Guardians of the Veil point to cases where mages were "born Mad" as justification for their Labyrinth, claiming that Madness is the result of a new mage not being ready to see the Supernal. Circumstantial evidence points to many Mad Awakenings striking individuals who knew about the Awakened beforehand. Proximi and Sleepwalkers who knew what to expect and focused on a magical style are especially prone to Madness after Awakening, which leads Awakened theoreticians to believe they may have attempted to form an attainment while still in the Supernal, or that somehow their preconceptions interfered with the mysterious workings of the Watchtower. The Silver Ladder rejects such theories as so much Guardian propaganda designed to scare mages into maintaining a tight Veil even with their Sleepwalker servants. To thearchs, Awakenings gone wrong are the result of the Abyss, and the poor individuals doomed to become Mad or Banishers are casualties in the battle to reclaim humanity's birthright in the Supernal. Other orders speculate that these Mad Ones arise when the mage-to-be commits some terrible sin or falls to temptation within the Supernal.

Hidden Encounters

The orders now understand the Mad to be as ancient as the Fall. Mystagogue accounts of the refugee kingdoms founded after Atlantis' end detail insane, inspired mages who half-transcended their bodies. According to apocryphal tales of the Pentacle, these mages predated the call of the Watchtowers, leading some Mystagogues studying the Mad to conclude that the Maddened condition is a result of the Fall. In Atlantis, mages Awakened by astral initiation rather than being summoned to the Supernal by the Watchtowers — perhaps the first Mad were those trapped between the two worlds by the Abyss?

Researchers have discovered signs of the Mad throughout Awakened history, as Consilii encountered the Mad Ones or their Tulpa. Proving that a Mad One was present at an event is difficult even with Postcognition and other Time-scrying spells. The Mad are easily confused with other phenomena — frenzied attacks by mysterious mages are blamed on Banishers, and Tulpa are mistaken for natural phenomena or the actions of other supernatural creatures. Bellerophon is reasonably sure of several hundred sightings, dating back to the earliest still-surviving Consilii, and has researched hundreds more to exhaustion without coming up with anything conclusive. The way the Mad occlude themselves frustrates efforts to research them — looking back on an encounter with hindsight shows the Mad mage appearing without warning, pursuing her insane objectives and sometimes being stopped in the process. The months in which the Mad One infiltrated the Consilium's territory, cloaked by her wounded soul, are hidden from magic and the minds of Sleepers. If she escaped, she vanishes out of history again, the same occultation returning once the Consilium gives up.

As far as modern mages looking for evidence of their passing are concerned, the Mad only exist when they're being opposed by the Pentacle. Bellerophon advises Consilii that contact any of its members accordingly — the best advice for mages hunting one of the Mad in the modern day is to maintain pressure. Allowing attention to slip results in an escaped Mad One and the promise of further outbursts of terrifyingly insane magic in months to come as his urges once again become too strong to ignore.

A few incidentsstand out. Now and then, one of the Mad becomes infamous enough to be noticed, and like any Occultation the mystic forces shielding them fail as fame grows. These cases are the high-profile exception to the subtle and hidden norm, but serve as cautionary tales of how dangerous the Mad can be.

- The Mysterium's Amber Chronicle records the devastation "Marauds" caused in 11th century Turkey. Maddened mages appeared as if from nowhere to assassinate the Hierarch and all his council. In the ensuing chaos, the Consilium of Constantinople collapsed, witch hunters picked off younger mages, and the Mad Ones vanished again. They resurfaced three years later to repeat their performance, this time against the local Exarch-cults of what would become the Seers of the Throne.
- The first record of a mage *intentionally* turning Mad dates from Paris in 1786. A Guardian of the Veil named Facet was caught smuggling artifacts out of the famous Parisian Shadow Directory, which even today remains one of the largest secure sites the Guardians use to house dangerous magic. Rather than drink poison, Facet pled to be allowed to serve his order by giving them a subject to study the Mad. He warped his attainments, breaking his soul, but in the ensuing confusion he escaped. He was killed after a month of constant break-ins across the city, as his mind focused on the crime he was convicted of and drove him to repeat the feat.
- London in the 1850s was the domain of Spring-Heeled Jack, an enigmatic being who waged a campaign of terror against the city's poor. Jack could never accurately be described — he was humanoid, but witnesses reported insect-like qualities such as the legs of a praying mantis or the head of a colossal fly, when they could remember anything about him at all other than a blur. Jack is now thought to be a Tulpa created by a Thyrsus Mad One who was incarcerated in Bedlam hospital. Obsessed with freedom, Jack's mind slipped away from his body into the city, where it could run and jump and murder forever. To this day, London's mages whisper that old Jack somehow survived his death and link him to other, more famous Jacks who shared his proclivities in the years since.
- In 1920s New York, the Mad One Charybdis went against the usually solitary nature of the Mad thanks to his personal delusions, which drove him to set himself up as an enlightened teacher. Soon gathering a small cult of Apostates and heretical Mystagogues who regarded him as a holy being more in tune with magic than ordinary mages, Charybdis led his followers to reject the orders and commune with the Supernal Realms through his "grace," casting spells to chain their souls to his. When he was assassinated by a Guardian cabal, dozens of mages lost their souls to his death throes.

The Shattered Soul

After thousands of years of isolated incidents and 65 years of coordinated research by the Arrow and their partner cabals, the Pentacle has a partial understanding of how the Mad differ from other mages.

The lore of the orders places great importance on the Awakened human soul, but to most mages not much is known about the soul's composition or how it interacts with the rest of a person's pattern. The most detailed texts on the subject are also highly restricted, the work of Reapers and other Left-Handed mages who carefully describe how to vivisect a soul once removed from the host.

According to the orders, the soul is itself almost a model of the Supernal Realms. It is composed of the five subtle Arcana — Death, Fate, Mind, Spirit, and Prime — drawing from the Supernal Realms as channeled through the Awakened will. No mere spark, the soul contains vast energies bound up

in a deceptively small pattern, as Reapers exploit when they consume them. When in place within a human host, the soul interacts with the tenfold nature of his pattern, each Arcanum within it corresponding to both subtle and gross manifestations of the person, so the Mind portion of the soul interacts with both the Mind and Space patterns of the host.

Souls are resilient and elastic, quickly recovering from being handled separate to the body once they are returned, and require great effort to destroy. They are not, however, unchangeable. When a mage joins or creates a Legacy, the parts of his soul relating to the formation of the attainment are warped to incorporate that spell, leaving markings that learned mages can discern. When a mage becomes deranged by denying Wisdom, his soul becomes scarred — again, in the areas relating to the crime he is ignoring the guilt of.

The Mad, then, are mages whose souls failed. By committing a sin so great it could not be contained by simple soul-scarring, or by attempting to push too far or too quickly in developing an attainment, the Mad mage has cracked his soul open, spilling the lambent energies and Arcana out into the world. His soul no longer "sits" properly into his Pattern — parts of it trail after him, intersecting and folding into Fallen reality in multidimensional ways thanks to the way both Space and Time are gross Arcana. The gaping wound in the soul becomes both attainment *and* derangement — the source of the Mad One's obsession, as he is driven to repeat his mistake in an instinctive attempt to pull himself back together.

Under this view of the Mad, Tulpa are the result of the far-flung portions of a Mad One's soul interacting with the Fallen World. As they are more akin to the influence of a spirit than the deliberate casting of a spell, they don't require the Mad One to know the Arcana involved. For example, a Maddened mage who causes thunderstorms by getting angry doesn't need to have any skill with the Forces Arcanum. His Tulpa is caused by parts of the Prime energies contained in his soul sloughing out into the world, condensing into their gross equivalent of Forces when they interact with the Patterns of the rain and clouds.

When the Arcanum leaking into the world *is* one the Mad mage is skilled in, however, Tulpa become active and obvious. Spirit and Life Tulpa manifest as Genius Territorialis and cryptids, Mind Tulpa set free-roaming astral entities loose into Twilight, Prime Tulpa drain Hallows and warp ley lines. Every such "Greater" Tulpa diminishes the abilities of the Mad One, however, as his power spills through the soul-wound, denying him access to that Arcanum.

The Mad Condition

The orders have identified three main classifications of Mad mages, based on the three origins described above. These are broad types and do not cover every possible Mad One, but for a Sentinel hurriedly reading up after suspecting a Mad One has emerged, they serve as easily-understood trends.

The first type of Mad are **Savants**, those mages whose wounded souls now give them preternatural skill with the source of their Madness — usually a Practice or some element of magic. Savants are occasionally sought out for their secrets and the benefits of their inspired insight, but they are still Mad, still dangerous, and still driven to use their talent whenever possible — which, if that talent is in fields like "the Unmaking Practice" or "Goetia" can be very dangerous for mages seeking their dubious wisdom. The Tulpa of Savants are often restrained and subtle, sometimes even escaping notice entirely until the Mad One is prevented from following his urges. If that should happen, Arcana manifestations, twists of fate, and attainments acting at range conspire to free the Savant from his restrictions until he is able to continue his "studies."

The second group is the **Malefactors**: Mad Ones who are driven to commit terrible, if

mundane, acts of cruelty and perversity. Malefactors are the stereotypical "hidden serial killer" Mad, often mistaken for Banishers until the Consilium realizes they aren't only targeting mages. They stalk their prey for weeks before indulging themselves, hidden by their occluded nature until they strike and leave another atrocity for the Sentinels to find. Unlike Savants, who can be communicated with, Malefactors only care to interact with other mages when they need them as audiences or targets for their obsessions. Their Tulpa are more overt and active, providing assistance or distraction from the Mad One's crimes.

The last group are **Walkers**, Mad Ones who have literally lost their minds. The part of the soul linked to the conscious mind of the Mad mage has fallen through the soul-wound, manifesting as a Twilight projection linked to a Tulpa. Walkers are the cause of many legends of sentient spell-like effects, insane mage-spirits who attempt to possess living mages, and malevolent minds directing otherwise normal events to fulfill strange agendas.

Although the origin of one of the Mad has an influence, the means by which a mage fell from Wisdom does not *determine* which of these three broad categories he falls into, if he falls into any of them at all. A mage who goes Mad attempting to force his Legacy into a radical form is more likely to become a Savant, but may well end up as a Walker or Malefactor.

The more Tulpa a Mad One has, the more his pattern is diffused across the Fallen World. This is the source of the Mad mages' occultation, as sympathetic magic can't find the target. Their effect on Sleepers, who forget them as though they were vulgar spells, is due to the radiant nature of the Mad soul. Sleepers instinctively sense that the Mad mage is emanating power, which triggers their own sympathy to the Abyss.

Playing the Mad

According to Page 92 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, characters that fall to a Morality Trait of zero become unsuitable for use as players' characters. We've written this chapter following that advice. The Mad Ones presented here have the game mechanics of antagonists, both more powerful than ordinary mages and possessing far less agency. The Mad are incapable of suppressing their urges and subconsciously warp reality to force the matter even if they consciously try to do so. Their psychopathy makes them unsuitable for groups and the necessary repetition of their crimes makes for a lurid but dull chronicle from their point of view.

Take away those factors and you diminish the Mad, but if you can work within them — a solo game consisting of only one or two stories, perhaps, then the Mad might be able to be played. If a player's character goes Mad during a chronicle and your troupe is feeling up to the challenge, then by all means play through the transformation and first few cycles of Stress. If the new Mad One evades capture and vanishes into occultation, though, it's time for a new character.

The last parts of the Mad condition are the result of the wound itself. Each Mad One is permanently deranged even beyond their lack of empathy, each lost to unique insanity. They are also all cut off from the Temenos. The Mad remain capable of Astral journeys (and many are talented Goetic summoners), but move directly from the Oneiros to the Anima Mundi. Philosophical mages debate whether the void of morality a Mad has instead of a conscience is a symptom of this Astral disjunction, or whether the lack of a Temenos is the inner world reflection of the Mad One's psychopathy.

Beset by their derangements and the need to revisit the flaw in their soul, the Mad would quickly be discovered and destroyed if it weren't for their occultation. Successful Mad are those who realize they diverge from other mages and go into hiding as outlaws, escaping notice from Sleepers and other mages until they are ready to continue their "mission." How the Mad One thinks of his condition depends on the nature of his crime and the specific insanities he has developed. Some construct elaborate explanations for why they are compelled to commit terrible crimes or obsess over narrow branches of magic, while others are more lucid and accept their condition as the price they pay for power. It doesn't particularly matter to them why they regard the lives of other people as inconsequential compared to their studies, just that they do.

Systems

The Mad differ from other mages in several ways, requiring new systems and game traits.

Triggers of Madness

Mages become Mad by one of the following routes:

- **Wisdom Degeneration**. The Mad lack a Wisdom trait and the majority of Mad achieve their condition by slow degradation of morality. If a mage with Wisdom 1 commits a sin against that level and fails the degeneration check that results, he drops to Wisdom 0 and immediately goes Mad. Sins against Wisdom 1 include stealing souls, mass murder, forcing someone to Awaken against their will (this usually isn't possible but can happen in unusual circumstances), and acts of "utter perversion" beyond the scope of higher sins.
- **Malformed Legacy**. **Mage** presents Legacies as gaining attainments in a set, steady progression. An attainment based on a two-dot spell is gained at Gnosis 4 (3 with a teacher), another based on a three-dot spell appears at Gnosis 6 (5 when tutored), and the last based on a four-dot spell arrives with Gnosis 7. Some Legacies theorize the existence of a fourth attainment that accompanies Gnosis 9. This method of forming a Legacy is used by the orders because it is slow, careful and (regardless of the legal status of the Legacy) safe. It is not, however, the only route to attainment.

Mages who attempt to form attainments off-schedule, or who try to create more attainments than the one primary and one optional described at each tier, must roll Gnosis as a dice pool. A success means the attempt failed, while a failure results in the mage going Mad. The vanishingly small number of successful attempts is left as a potential story hook for the Storyteller.

- **Aberrant Awakening**. Some mages are Mad right from Awakening. Although the orders have many rival explanations as to why or how, like all Awakenings it is left entirely up to the Storyteller. Insanity before Awakening is explicitly *not* a risk factor — many institutionalized Sleepers Awaken as Mastigos or Thyrsus, some of them cured by the experience but the majority simply being "normal" insane mages, still possessing a Wisdom trait.

Mad Characters

Once a mage has gone Mad, he immediately takes on the following traits:

Wisdom 0

The Mad lack Wisdom or any other Morality trait, and never roll for degeneration. This interacts with the rules for low Wisdom found in **Mage** in the following ways:

- Spirits that shun low-Wisdom mages are even more wary of the Mad. Mad mages suffer a two-dice penalty on social rolls involving Spirits.
- The Mad suffer a two-dice penalty when countering or contesting the powers of Abyssal beings.
- Any Wisdom rolls (such as the one made during a Havoc Paradox) are made with a chance die.
- Bedlam Paradoxes last for a week. Anomaly, Branding and Manifestation Paradoxes last for two months, or might be of indefinite duration at the Storyteller's discretion.
- The Mad do not fear Paradox despite their own Paradoxes lasting longer, as the already-damaged nature of their souls inoculates them against some Paradox effects. The Mad do not receive the extra mechanical penalty associated with Bedlam Paradox, and Abyssal entities made Manifest through their magic appear in the Fallen World but do not know who summoned them – the creatures target subjects for their torment at random until the Manifestation duration ends. The wounded soul allows paradoxical energies to "vent" rather than trapping them as in a healthy mage — damage taken from absorbing Paradox successes as backlash is *not* Resistant for the Mad.
- The Mad lack human empathy, although they can fake it to blend in. All Empathy rolls made by a Mad One are made at a two-dice penalty.

Wisdom and Soul Loss

As a clarification of the rules for soul loss presented on p. 276 of **Mage: The Awakening**, it's not possible to drive a mage Mad by removing her soul. As the **Mage** corebook describes, Wisdom degeneration through soul loss stops at Wisdom 1, followed by loss of Willpower dots until the victim is a soulless, shambling wreck unable to use magic. At no point does soul-loss degeneration result in Wisdom 0.

If, however, the soulless individual commits a sin while at Wisdom 1, she can still trigger a degeneration check. These cases only result in one of the Mad when the mage began with Wisdom 1 before losing her soul. Otherwise, the degeneration results in her Wisdom stabilizing at one dot lower than she started with, if and when her soul is returned.

On the rare occasions where an utterly degenerate mage does step over the precipice while lacking a soul, he only goes Mad once an Awakened soul is returned. Madness comes on immediately once he has a soul to shatter.

Permanent Derangement

When a mage goes Mad, he gains an automatic derangement for degenerating from Wisdom 1 to 0. In addition, Mad who gained their condition at higher Wisdom levels must roll for derangement as normal for every dot lost until the last.

These derangements are linked to the Mad One's madness and are incurable as long as he remains Mad, even by magic. Should the Mad One ever be "cured" by going into remission (see page 52), the derangements fade until he relapses, at which point the old derangements return instead of new ones being rolled.

Lack of Virtue

The Mad do not possess a Virtue Trait, and do not refresh Willpower by fulfilling their old Virtue. Spells, magical effects and powers that detect, affect, or otherwise act on the Virtue automatically either fail or interpret the Mad One's obsessive, driven nature as "Faith."

Shocking Combatants

The Mad Ones fight with inhuman savagery and tenacity. They lack even the rudimentary instinct against murder, and don't hesitate to kill when it suits them. They use the greater of Wits and Dexterity to calculate Defense.

The Fault

Every Mad mage has a *Fault*, a trait linking an obsession to his Vice. The Fault is often the act that caused the Mad One to lose his final Wisdom dot, though just as many Mad obsess over earlier sins, taking events that led to their first

derangement, to their Legacy, or to their Awakening as Faults. While the Mad One regains Willpower through his Vice as normal, he may also refresh all spent Willpower points by enacting his Fault in a way that evokes his Vice. Willpower can only be refreshed by means of the Fault once per chapter, and doing so reveals the Mad One's nimbus.

Faults are also described in terms of which Arcanum they correspond to — this is used to determine the nature of a Mad One's Tulpa. If the Fault involves a spell or Legacy attainment, the primary Arcanum used becomes the Arcanum of the Fault. If he Awakened Mad, the higher of his two Ruling Arcana is used. Non-magical sins and those involving other actions produce Faults linked to the most appropriate Arcana.

Seven example Faults:

Envy	Cursing mages who remind you of the Mentor who cast you out	Fate
Gluttony	Forcibly shapechanging people into animals before consuming them	Life
Greed	Stealing and hoarding any grimoire, Artifact or Imbued Item you come across	Space
Lust	Sacrificing human beings for Mana	Prime
Pride	Stealing souls for barter with Abyssal beings	Death
Sloth	Fixating on and controlling a proxy, using him to indulge your desires	Mind
Wrath	Creating Goetic demons to punish the unrighteous	Forces

Stress

The Mad possess a new trait named Stress, made up of a track of boxes like Health and Willpower although it has no dot rating associated with it. For every week that the Mad One goes without refreshing Willpower by enacting her Fault, she gains a point of Stress. When she has accumulated Stress equal to Gnosis, Tulpa begin to manifest. Tulpa manifestation reduces Stress, but it begins accumulating again the following week. Refreshing Willpower by enacting the Fault removes all Stress.

Magical Savant

The Mad are noted for their frightening skill at whatever specialty has claimed their sanity. A Mad character may choose *one* of the following effects:

- **Cross-application:** A Mad with a Fault relating to a Practice may cast spells of that Practice with any Arcana he knows, regardless of the level at which he knows those Arcana. For example, a Mad One with Death 1, Prime 3 and an Envy Fault relating to the use of Veiling magic to hide magic from the orders may cast Veiling spells of Death.
- **Supernally Skilled:** A Mad with a Fault relating to a Skill or other dice roll (even "non-magical murder" or "astral meditation") may gain the rote quality (rerolling failures, **World of Darkness rulebook**, p. 134) on rolls of that skill when fulfilling his Fault.
- **Wellspring:** A Mad One with this quality does not spend Mana to improvise spells, cast at sympathetic range, or enact any special rules for spells that involve spending Mana (like Shielding duration or "Acceleration") as long as she is fulfilling her Fault. She only spends Mana for Paradox mitigation or when a spell lists a Mana cost.
- **Obsessed Spell:** A Mad One with a Fault based on a single spell gains the rote quality (rerolling failures) when casting that spell and always counts as though she is using a magical tool to cast it.
- **Instinctive Magic:** A Mad One with this quality may cast spells with preternatural speed if they work toward his Fault — extended spells become instant, and instant spells may be cast as reflexive actions.
- **Inner Door:** A Mad with a Fault based around Astral Space (Goetia, for example), may meditate as an instant rather than extended action and does not require a Hallow or Demesne to meditate in when entering the Astral.
- **Extra Attainment:** A Mad with a Fault based around her Legacy may acquire an extra set of attainments (one ruling Arcanum, one optional Arcanum) at any one Gnosis dot she already possesses and for which she has no attainments. For example, a Mad One who studied a Legacy under a mentor, gained an attainment at Gnosis 3, then went Mad at Gnosis 4, may develop an extra set of attainments within the theme of her Legacy linked to Gnosis 4.

A Legacy that has been altered in this way cannot be taught to anyone except another Mad One.

Other Strangeness

The Mad aren't limited to these effects — they defy categorization and analysis, especially those carried out by other mages, and don't always follow the rules of **Mage** as a game. We encourage you to invent new Madness qualities for your Storyteller characters just to keep your players on their toes, and prevent what should be unknowable monsters that the characters must scramble to understand in time from getting stale.

Gnosis level	Dot-level of spell used in attainment
1-2	1
3-4	2
5-6	3
7-8	4
9-10	5

Occluded Soul

When the Mad have not indulged in their obsession, they vanish as though the world forgets them. The more a Mad One's soul spills out from his mortal form, the harder it is for magic to target his pattern from a distance.

A Mad mage loses any dots in the Occultation Merit he may have had, but gains all the benefits of the Merit as if he had dots in it equal to his current Stress. This can and often does take the Mad One over the normal maximum of three dots.

Knowing the real name of a Mad One does not improve a sympathetic connection.

Further, the Fame effect of Occultation, where the benefits of the Merit are lost if the mage is noted publically, is subject to Disbelief when applied to the Mad. Sleepers who witness a Mad One committing an atrocity will suppress her Occultation temporarily, but once their memories of the event fade through Disbelief (see page 274 of **Mage: The Awakening**), the Occultation returns.

Tulpa

When a mage goes Mad, his soul spills out through the Fault, manifesting as phenomena driven by his Vice and the Arcana he lost to his soul's damage or never had a chance to learn. Tulpa occur in response to the build-up of Stress in the Mad Ones psyche, and range from minor Arcana-related effects to full spells "cast" spontaneously and even the psyche itself, if the Mad One has come unstuck from his body.

When a Mad One first falls from Wisdom, make a dice roll for each of the ten Arcana, using the mage's knowledge of that Arcanum in dice or using a chance die if he doesn't know it.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Almost all of the parts of the Mad Ones' soul corresponding to the Arcanum have slipped away through the Fault. The Arcanum becomes available for Tulpa, but The Mad One can't now use magic of that Arcanum.

Failure: Parts of the Mad One's soul corresponding to the Arcanum have manifested in the world. The Arcanum becomes available for Tulpa. If this is the Arcanum relating to the Fault, the Mad One's psyche is loosed as a Walker (see p. 51, below). If his psyche remains in his body, the Mad One can't now use magic of that Arcanum.

Success: The Mad One maintains his grip on the Arcanum. It is not available for Tulpa.

Exceptional Success: The Mad One maintains his hold on the Arcanum. It is not available for Tulpa and spells cast using it now only count as half a spell for spell control.

Once all ten rolls have been made, review the list of Arcana that are available for Tulpa. Mad manifestations come in three varieties — Lesser, Greater and Sentient. Tulpa manifest once a Mad One builds up Stress to the extent of his Gnosis. When this happens, roll Stress as a dice pool and count successes, then allocate them to the Mad One's available Tulpa Arcana. Greater and Sentient Tulpa cost three successes and Lesser Tulpa cost one — each reduces the Mad One's Stress by its value when it manifests. A Mad One may attempt to prevent a Tulpa from manifesting by rolling his Gnosis as a dice pool, with success delaying the Tulpa's formation by a day and potentially giving the mage long enough to carry out his Fault instead.

Tulpa aren't properly spells, though they are based on the Arcana. Attempts to dispel them suffer a –3 modifier. When they evoke Paradox, the Mad One takes the backlash and Sleepers witnessing an obviously supernatural Tulpa triggers both Disbelief and Unraveling.

Lesser Tulpa are formed from Arcana in which the Mad One has no magical skill. They take the form of subtle redirections of the Arcanum, no more than can be achieved with Covert spells of the Practices of Compelling and Ruling, or areas of Arcanum influence similar to Anomaly Paradoxes or Demesnes; within these areas (no more than the Mad One's Gnosis in yards), spells cast with that Arcanum receive a bonus die. Most Lesser Tulpa appear to be coincidences and strange confluences of events, though they trigger the Unseen Senses of mages and are identifiable as the Mad One's nimbus under Mage Sight.

If you need rules for the "spells" making up Lesser Tulpa, treat it as though the Mad One cast the spell within visual range but without using magical tools or spending Mana, even if he doesn't know the Arcanum involved.

Greater Tulpa are formed from Arcana in which the Mad One is proficient, and take some of his magical ability with them. They resemble full spell effects of up to the fourth dot or the Mad One's own level of proficiency (whichever is higher), or spirit-like entities that use the Arcanum as an influence.

When Greater Tulpa are formed from spells or attainments, roll a spellcasting dice pool as though the spell had been cast by the Mad One without any magical tools, though they can spend Mana from the Mad One's reserves. When they take ephemeral form, they manifest as Rank 2 Spirits with the Mad One's rating in the Arcanum as an influence. These "spirits" are actually just extensions of the Mad mage's soul and aren't affected by spells that specifically target ghosts or spirits. Spells that act upon anything in Twilight, however, are still effective. Spell-like Tulpa are instantaneous flashes of the Maddened soul, leaving impressions and effects behind for the Duration of the "spell", but spirit-like Tulpa are more persistent, lasting until the Mad One indulges his Fault or until they are destroyed. Destruction of a Tulpa does nothing

Nine Tenths of the Law

Many Pentacle mages believe that the Mad are capable of forcing other mages to follow their obsessions, leapfrogging from mage to mage as Astral entities. High-profile cases from Convocations involving mages swearing they were forced to perform Left-Handed magic by a Mad One that took control of their faculties have spread this popular image of body-thieving Mad.

In truth, it *is* possible for a Sentient Tulpa manifesting through the Mind Arcanum to act in this way, entering the psyche of a subject using spells like Psychic Domination, but the Mad One is not able to access the Arcana of the host, only use her own. Mad Ones that telepathically influence mages into casting against their better natures are more common, but no more difficult to resist than any other means of persuasion. Possession at the hands of the Mad is far rarer than popular legend would suggest — and the mages who pled that it had happened to them were eventually found to have been lying, though that doesn't help to stop the rumors.

The rumors mostly stem from the actions of Nameless Order liches during the Great Refusal who stole the bodies of Seers they captured, some of whom became Mad and continued the habit after their peers became the Free Council. Seers of the Throne who overindulge in Profane Urim and go Mad sometimes manifest Faults relating to controlling Sleepers from afar, forcing them to commit crimes for the Mad One's amusement. Despite these cases, lurid tales of mages taken over by Mad Ones are exaggerated. Most of the time.

to the Mad One – the human soul is full of energies, and there is much more where the Tulpa came from.

Like Lesser Tulpa, Greater Tulpa trigger the Unseen Senses of mages and display the Mad One's resonance when scrutinized.

Sentient Tulpa form when the Arcanum of the Mad One's Fault is expressed as a Tulpa. They are identical to Greater Tulpa except that they are under the control of the Mad One, who inhabits them as a disembodied mind instead of being secure in his body. Instead of influences, Sentient Tulpa cast spells with the Mad One's own Arcana and Gnosis. The orders believe that it is possible for spell-form Tulpa to be sentient, but their briefness before being withdrawn back into the Mad One's soul makes it hard to tell. A Mad One possessing his own Spirit-form Tulpa, however, creates a Walker: a Mad mage trapped outside his mortal shell, lashing out with his magic from his invisible, intangible state.

Sentient Tulpa are just as persistent as Greater Tulpa, but the Mad One doesn't return to his body if the spirit-form is destroyed — instead, he simply reappears inhabiting the next Sentient Tulpa to be manifested, which will only be a matter of weeks as he won't have been able to carry out his obsession. For the time between Manifestations, he is trapped within his own Oneiros, unable to wake up. Excessive wounds in Astral Space incapacitate but can't "kill" him, as he has nowhere else to go.

Manifestation and Vice

Tulpa can appear anywhere with a sympathetic connection to the Mad One or another of his Tulpa, which can make them extremely wide-ranging.

Without a mind to control them, Lesser and Greater Tulpa are entirely driven by the Mad One's Vices. The Arcanum manifested is colored by the Vice, twisting it before it becomes part of the world. Lesser Tulpa do little more than mark the Mad One's interest by tainting the area with magic. For example, Lesser Tulpa of Space often simply cast "New Threads" on a location, subtly steering the Mad One toward it. Greater Tulpa are more direct, taking decisive action rather than nudging or influencing. They manifest as spirits of the Arcanum and powerful, vulgar spells, leaving no one in doubt that something supernatural has taken place.

Envy: Tulpa manifest around places and people the Mad One subconsciously wishes he had or is envious of, denying them to anyone else. A Lesser Tulpa might be a Ruling spell manifesting to drive off potential romantic partners from someone the Mad One remembers loving, for example. Greater Tulpa are more direct, manifesting to deny anyone from "having" things — and people — the Mad mage regards as rightfully belonging to him, by warding them, hiding them or stealing them away to places his cracked subconscious regards as safe.

Gluttony: Tulpa manifest to further the Mad Ones appetites, drawing his attention to places in which he can indulge himself and preparing the way for his arrival. They create or encourage situations he will enjoy when he encounters them, drawing him along by a trail of temptation.

Greed: Tulpa resemble Envy Tulpa, but instead of keeping the object of the Mad One's Greed safe, they attempt to destroy it out of selfishness.

Lust: These Tulpa are the most straightforward, manifesting to assist the Mad mage in following his Fault. They kidnap victims, mark targets, and enslave spirits, ghosts and cryptids in his cause.

Pride: Tulpa act upon targets that the Mad One wants, not those that he needs. They work towards secondary goals, allowing him to chase his Fault himself while they build a pattern of his superiority.

Sloth: Tulpa ease the Mad One's passage by preventing him from having to work for his goals. Lesser Tulpa warp reality to have resources he needs fall into his lap, while Greater Tulpa target potential obstacles long before he becomes consciously aware of them.

Wrath: Tulpa are anger made manifest, the soul of the Mad One lashing out in frustration at the world. Lesser Tulpa create aggressive feelings, nudge events to cause violent accidents and inspire chaos. Greater Tulpa are killing machines, manifesting to slaughter targets based on the Mad One's insane criteria.

Soul Loss and the Mad

The Mad are just as vulnerable to soul loss at the hands of powerful spirits and Reapers as any other mage. When a Mad One has no soul, all Tulpa immediately vanish as though the mage had fulfilled her Fault. No Stress is gained while a Mad One has no soul, but without Wisdom their cycle of soullessness goes straight to losing Willpower dots.

The Mad and Astral Space

Mad Ones are capable of travelling Astral Space, although the nature of their souls makes for a different journey than those experienced by other mages. The Mad lack any connection to the Temenos — they can't access it, be forced to enter it, or affect it by using Mind magic on themselves, although a Mad mage may still casts spells targeting the Temenos of someone else. When Astrally travelling, the Mad still require the same numbers of successes on the Meditation roll to access the Oneiros and Anima Mundi.

The Oneiros of a Mad mage is a confusing, disjointed place, where scenes of the initial Fault play out over and over again. Outsiders trespassing inside a Mad soul must be especially careful of derangement-pockets, Astral scenes that force all travelers within to act as though under the influence of one of the host's derangements.

A Cure?

The Awakened have long debated whether the Mad Ones can be cured. While it is theoretically possible to do so, the road is long and hard. At the end of it, a Mad mage might reclaim lost Wisdom, but his sanity will never been on stable footing. One slip can send him back into Madness.

First, the Mad One must have no Stress remaining. He can't put Madness aside when he still leaves the touch of his soul far away from his body. He then spends a Willpower dot and three Experience, to put his Madness into remission.

Once in remission, the Mad One regains Wisdom 1, suppresses the derangements gained when falling to Wisdom 0, and no longer gains Stress. His Virtue is still gone and his Fault remains, however, as a reminder of his once-fallen state and a constant temptation. If he uses the Magical Savant quality or refreshes Willpower using his Fault, he immediately drops back to Wisdom 0 again and becomes Mad once more.

Storytelling the Mad

Stories featuring the Mad showcase unpredictable horror, featuring the challenge of putting together a pattern to realize both what the Mad mage is and where he'll strike next. Violent encounters with the Mad should be shocking in their excess — the Mad are worse, morally, than any other Left-Handed mage, and casually commit atrocities at which even the most jaded heretic would blanch. Peaceful encounters with Mad Ones do happen on rare occasions, but only when the Maddened mage decides it is in her best interest to *not* kill, which in turn means that she has plans for the mage she spares.

Archmages and the Mad

If you use **Imperial Mysteries** in your chronicle, you might notice similarities between the Mad and Archmages. Both differ from "normal" mages because of changes to their soul, formed when an obsession becomes internalized. Tulpa even resemble the sub-souls of the Invisible Masters, in much more limited form. Within **Mage**'s world, the similarity isn't lost on the archmasters, either — but where the Mad Ones' souls broke under the strain, theirs reconnected to the Supernal.

The damage to the soul needed to produce a Mad One is incompatible with archmastery. The Mad can't achieve Imperial Arcana, and archmages who fall to Wisdom 0 do not become Mad. Instead, archmasters who lose all morality transform into creatures known as Qliphoth, described in Chapter Three (page 74), that have some similarities to the Mad.

Mages desperate to cure a Maddened mage sometimes attempt to seek an archmaster who can provide the cure. Given the low numbers of Archmages in the world, most will never find one. The lucky few find that, as with many miracles beyond the scope of the known Practices, the Invisible Masters are capable of curing Madness for a price. What can be cured, though, can also be inflicted.

Within **Imperial Mysteries'** rules for Archmages, inflicting or curing Madness requires Death and the Arcanum of the Fault at seven dots. The Madness of a mage to be cured must be in remission, or the Archmage will have to incorporate raising Wisdom above 0 into his spell.

The Mad and Mental Illness

In many ways, the Mad hearken back to older notions of mental illness, taking the bias of the World of Darkness toward Gothic notions of insanity to their logical conclusion. With the benefit of modern medicine, we know that mental illness shouldn't be stigmatized and isn't caused by any moral failing on the part of the sufferer, but in **Mage** derangement is often caused by Wisdom loss, and the Mad really do "deserve" their condition. The Mad are mental illness as terrifying unpredictability, and are at their most effective when your players' characters are on edge, unable to know for sure what the Mad One will do next.

Although the nature of their condition means that all Mad are psychopaths, not all Maddened mages are megalomaniacal, psychotic, or paranoid. Some certainly are any number

of those things, as the Derangements they acquired on the long, slow slide of lost Wisdom don't go away because they fell to Madness. Many mages mistake these secondary illnesses for the root cause of the Mad Ones' behavior.

Compassionate mages know that mental illness is not the fault of the person bearing the condition. They try to treat the Mad with Mind or Life magic, or mortal psychotherapy. They mistake Madness for a condition brought on by falling to a lower level of Wisdom, or suffering a Bedlam paradox. They're wrong. Underneath the struggles with their derangements, the Mad are still monsters.

For that reason, be careful when describing the Mad in terms of real mental illness. There are reasonable odds that someone in your troupe has been diagnosed or has a loved one who may struggle with mental illness, even if you aren't aware of it. Use the Mad to tell stories of terrifying otherness and soulless malice hidden among normal mages, but don't accidentally stigmatize the members of your troupe while doing so.

Building a Better Monster

When designing a Mad One for your chronicle, decide on her Fault first and then work from there. What crime against Wisdom did she commit? What is she driven to do? How do her Tulpa manifest in support of that? Once you have that, you can determine how the rest of magical society would come to notice her by seeing the weak points in her occultation. Introduce the aftermath of her crimes in stories foreshadowing her eventual appearance. Make the player characters work to track her down, revealing the nature of her Madness slowly but surely until she finally steps onto the stage. Remember that Mad Ones often only appear very late in events, after the Consilium has dealt with numerous Tulpa.

Even when your players have realized the broad nature of the Mad One's Fault, she should still have some behavioral drives that go unexplained. The Mad mages are the eyes of hurricanes, islands of inscrutability surrounded by wreckage, Tulpa, and panicking mages who have realized too late what walks among them.

Reactions to the Mad

The Mad are rare catalysts. Consilii go decades or centuries before a visitation from a Mad mage, lulling Sentinels and Hierarchs into complacency compared with the more constant threat of Banishers or Seers. When they do arrive, though, the Mad shake Consilii to their foundations, kill mages thought untouchable with impunity, and shatter rigid magical societies. They inspire responses from all mages and any other supernatural beings they include in their Madness. Bellerophon — one of the only international organizations of Pentacle mages — was created to protect the Pentacle from the Mad, a level of response which centuries of conflict with other foes had failed to gather.

Viewpoints

Despite the threat they pose, the Mad are rare enough that the overwhelming majority of mages encountering one will be doing so for the first time. Without the personal experience of dedicated Madness hunters, a mage must rely on what she's been told by her order.

The Adamantine Arrow regards the Mad as a global danger that cannot be predicted. Mad Ones can strike at any time and no one Consilium has an especially great history of Madness. Adamant Sages of the Arrow know to recognize the signs of Tulpa and call for help from a Sage involved in

Bellerophon, consulting on how to manage a Mad incursion. In extreme cases, the order sends a nomadic Cabal with long experience in hunting the Mad to assist, but such fellowships are so rare that Consilii are usually forced to go it alone apart from telephoned or emailed advice.

The Free Council lost several high-profile members to Madness during the Great Refusal, and continues to see the Mad in more modern terms as mages who are ill rather than monsters who fell due to their own choices — mostly because the Free Council continues to absolve Left-Handed members for their actions as long as they target the order's enemies, which leads to them still being the second-largest source of Mad mages in the Pentacle. Libertines are at the forefront of efforts to send Madness into remission or cure it entirely, but in the meantime Libertine cabals attempt to draw Mad from their ranks away from settled areas and give them safe outlets for their insanity.

The Guardians of the Veil, like the Libertines, have always lost members to Madness as a result of their attitude toward the Left-Handed. While Libertines try to treat or manage the Mad among their order, the Guardians take a much more pragmatic approach: the order celebrates the sacrifice of ex-Guardian Mad Ones, honors them for taking so much sin onto themselves, and then kills them for safety's sake. The Mad are simply too Holy to live, walking threats to the Veil that must be managed as swiftly and painlessly as possible.

The Mysterium sees the Mad as living mysteries — dangers to be avoided whenever possible, but opportunities for research and study at a distance. The Mad are effulgent beings, so filled with the world's magic that it spills out from them counter to Pancryptia. That makes the Mysterium reluctant to kill mages it regards as divinely inspired. Instead, Mystagogues record and theorize about the patterns followed by Mad mages while leaving the dirty business of stopping them to more martial orders. Mystagogues who go Mad and are caught before escaping are contained for study in the most secure Censoria the order has available. Below several of the order's cryptozoological menageries are holding cells for the Mad, kept under control by spells and Artifacts. Sometimes Mystagogues will attempt to spirit away Mad Ones the other orders have captured for containment, or else Mad Ones slip their bonds and escape.

The Silver Ladder regards the Mad as unfortunate flaws in Fallen Reality, mages who were too weak to contain their own power and cracked under the pressure of their Supernal souls. Publically, the thearchs have only contempt for Mad Ones, which causes the order to go into denial when one of their own falls. The Ladder are the most likely Pentacle order to cover up Madness in their leaders — as failures, they can't be allowed to remain in any leadership positions in the order, but the caucus can't take the shame of it either, so their Mad are "transferred" to "other Consilii," quietly managed when possible and regretfully killed when not.

The Seers of the Throne are predisposed to think of aberrant behavior and strange magical powers as being signs of the Exarch's favor, so when Seers go Mad the Iron Pyramid struggles to respond in the best interest of the Pylons of which they remain members. Seers struggle to satisfy their Mad superior's Faults, or turn the Madness of inferiors to their advantage while holding the fact of Madness as blackmail over Pylons as a way of keeping them in their place.

Banishers hate the Mad with a fervor far exceeding their already strong hatred for other mages. The presence of a Mad mage or her Tulpas screams in the Unseen Senses of a Banisher, driving shadow wars of two serial-killer mages stalking one another across a city. Banishers are not immune to Madness, though — their own proclivities can drive them to atrocities so terrible that their Awakened souls crack. Ex-Banisher Mad are usually put down by their fellows.

Apostates mostly run, fast and far. Without an order to support them, the Nameless can only hope to slow a Mad One down with their corpses, and so prefer to let the orders and Seers handle a Maddened mage when one appears. Not as many Mad originate from Apostasy as the orders like to imply — most Mad Ones who lack an order have been in their state since Awakening.

Strategies for Interaction

Within the bias of their orders, mages can take several strategies when dealing with a Mad One.

Avoidance is easiest, as long as the Mad mage isn't targeting the mage or his cabal as part of her Fault. Mages who espouse this strategy hide until the whirlwind passes, protecting their own loved ones and cherished resources and hoping that the Mad One will move on of her own accord. When avoidance fails, other strategies must be used, but start with the disadvantage of lost time.

Many cabals and Pylons, faced with one of their own going Mad, attempt **Concealment**. Hiding a single mage isn't that hard, as long as they agree to isolation. Many Mad won't do that, driven by derangements or simple pride, but some (especially Slothful or Greedy Mad) will be content to follow their Fault and accept tribute from their friends in exchange for safety. The trouble faced by concealing mages is that the Mad One *must* fulfill his Fault regularly or Tulpa will begin to appear, endangering his secrecy.

Once the signs of a Mad One at large become undeniable, most Consilii will attempt to **Hunt** the insane mage. Tracking a Mad mage is difficult thanks to her Occultation cloaking her from Time or Space magic. Without the usual shortcuts in predicting where and when she will strike, predicting the movements of a Mad One is a matter of recognizing her Tulpa and the aftermath of her Fault, then putting together the pattern — realizing what she targets, or what schedule her Madness runs to, allows the hunting party to catch up and hopefully get ahead of her before any more innocents are harmed.

Trying to **Cure** the Mad remains a goal of some Cabals who see the Maddened mages as more redeemable than Banishers or even many Left-Handed; mages don't *have* to go Mad committing terrible sins, and if they are motivated and supported the Mad can go into remission, recovering their sanity for as long as they can stand it. Being in remission, denying the

urge to commit the Fault, is like going through never-ending addiction withdrawal for a mage. Without a Virtue, the only way for a former Mad to feel affirmed about his sense of self and completely refill Willpower is to fall to recidivism. To date, Cabals attempting more permanent cures have failed except in legendary cases facilitated by archmasters of Death, who are capable of fusing the Mad One's soul back together.

Storyteller Characters

The following three Mad mages, one Savant, one Malefactor, and one Walker, demonstrate how derangement, Madness and power come together to create a Mad character.

Fulcrum

Fallen Interfector

Quote: *This is going to hurt.*

Background: Even those who sin on behalf of others can sin too much. Fulcrum was — is — the Interfector of his city, a Guardian of the Veil who volunteered to hide his shadow name, wear the expressionless iron mask, and carry out the Hierarch's justice at the Council's command. Authorized by ancient Atlantean legal codes to commit murder without reprisal, he performed his duties with diligence through a period of great civil unrest. The Consilium had been targeted by Tremere, and as more and more Reapers were sent to the headsman's block, Fulcrum's soul grew heavy with the weight of so much killing. Even as other mages refused to cross his shadow, or made signs against evil as he passed, he drew comfort from the support of his order and the knowledge that at least he gave the condemned swift and painless ends.

When the Seers of the Throne attempted to take advantage of a weakened Consilium, though, the Council knew they had to avoid another drawn-out conflict. A young Seer was captured and the Hierarch ordered Fulcrum to torture him for information — the location of the Seer Sanctum, as many real names as he knew, and the capabilities of their Pylons.

Fulcrum, unhesitating, finally transgressed beyond his soul's capacity. He saved the Consilium, but went Mad in the process.

Description: Fulcrum maintains his role as Interfector as it grants him protections under the Lex Magica. He's well aware that his order will kill him if his condition becomes obvious, so doesn't intend to give them any excuse. When around other mages he wears the heavy, concealing robes and blank iron mask of his office. When he needs to go unnoticed, he simply takes his costume off — almost no one in the Consilium knows what his face looks like, so his unremarkable exterior (a dark-haired man in his forties, eyes betraying a lack of sleep,) combined with his Mad occultation, serves to keep him safely anonymous.

Fulcrum's nimbus manifests as a kind of gravity of attention — the eyes of witnesses are naturally drawn to his own, and the rest of the surroundings seem less real than his focus, which always seems to be on the onlooker.

Storytelling Hints: Fulcrum's Madness manifests as a fascination for magical torture, the careful infliction of pain over the course of days and weeks. He is convinced that he is serving the needs of the majority of mages by extracting secrets from enemies and passing them on to his order. So far, he has restricted himself to Seers, apostates and a solitary Free Councilor who was opposing the Guardian Epopt politically. His victims are abducted and kept secure in a rented building he's converted into a private Sanctum and heavily warded against magical intrusion.

The Guardians have begun to notice that Fulcrum is acting strangely — the Free Councilor's disappearance was convenient, but suspicious — and are quietly investigating him for heresy, not realizing that his condition is far worse than that. Meanwhile, Fulcrum has decided that in order to truly keep the city safe, he needs to understand all its secret dealings. To that end, he's been watching the Hierarch, waiting for his moment to strike and add another victim to his torture chamber.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Razor blade

Real Name: Jon Currie

Path: Mastigos

Order: Guardians of the Veil

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Crafts 3, Investigation 4, Medicine 2, Occult 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Firearms 3, Stealth 3 (Shadowing), Weaponry 3

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Intimidation 4 (Torture), Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3 (Disguise)

Merits: Guardian of the Veil Status 3, Resources 2, Disarm

Willpower: 8

Wisdom: 0 (Fixation, Inferiority Complex)

Vice: Greed

Fault: Greed / Learning secrets through magical torture / Mind

Savant Quality: Supernally skilled (Intimidation)

Initiative: 7

Defense: 2

Speed: 11

Health: 8

Gnosis: 5

Arcana: Life 3, Mind 4, Prime 3, Space 4

Rotes: *Life* — Body Control (••), Self-Healing (••), Two Faces (•••); *Mind* — Psychic Assault (•••), Befuddle (••••); *Prime* — Transform Aura (••), Magic Shield (••)

Mana/per turn: 14/5

Armor: 4 ("Untouchable", Space ••••)

Dr. Philip Boyd

The poisoner

Quote: *I know, I know. Take comfort that you have saved others by your suffering.*

Background: When he first Awakened to the Thyrsus Path, Philip Boyd seemed like an ideal Free Councilor. A family doctor, he maintained his practice even when training as a Libertine. There was a small amount of trouble early on when a Guardian accused him of using magic too conspicuously — he'd been practicing with the Life Arcana on his patients — but the Assembly supported him.

The true difficulties came when, practicing his Time Arcanum, Boyd realized that the patient who sat in front of him for a minor complaint was destined for a terrible future. He agonized over the decision for days but, when the patient came back for a bogus repeat prescription, Boyd had made his mind up to be as kind as possible. He cast a spell introducing a cocktail of poisons into the man, delayed with Time magic until he was safely away from the practice. By the time the police found the body, the venoms had turned back into bodily fluids.

Boyd couldn't cope with the guilt — he did his best to suppress it, but the stress made him paranoid. Once it became clear that his vigilance had allowed him to get away with murder, however, he began to justify it to himself. After months of telling himself he'd acted in a good cause, he was habitually Auguring the futures of people he found suspicious. When he found a woman destined to cause a major accident, he was prepared to poison her, too. A dozen more deaths followed.

Once the deaths mounted up, the Consilium began to notice. When he realized that a fellow Libertine was on the verge of linking him to the crimes, Boyd killed her and fled, abandoning his shadow name and moving to the far coast of the US. By the time he made it there, trailing mysterious deaths in his wake, he was Mad.

Description: Boyd is short, shows signs of once having been overweight but has now shed the excess too quickly (he relies on magic to feed himself now) and dresses to blend into a crowd, an overcoat hiding shabby clothes that look like he's slept in them. When his nimbus flares, Boyd appears to have serpentine forms coiling around his limbs, as though snakes were moving under his skin.

Storytelling Hints: Since turning Mad, Boyd has begun thinking of himself as a giver of life as well as a killer. The Guardians tried to prevent him from healing the sick when he was a Libertine, but as an itinerant Apostate he can work miracles quietly, earning the loyalty of the street people he heals and staying under the local Consilium's radar. When he or the communities under his protection are crossed, he turns to the other half of his talents.

Dedicated Magical Tool: A vial of freshly drawn blood

Path: Thyrsus

Order: Apostate (formerly Free Council)

Venom (Life ••••)

The mage can create deadly toxins.

Practice: Unraveling

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls Stamina reflexively

Duration: Prolonged (1 scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

The mage must declare the delivery method of the toxin (see **World of Darkness,** p. 180): Injection, Ingestion, Inhalation or Touch. Inhaled Toxins must have spell factors assigned to volume, while Injection and Touch toxins require Weaponry or Brawl attacks to deliver.

The resulting toxin inflicts Lethal damage and has a Toxicity equal to the spell's final Potency.

Free Council Rote: Adder's Bite

Dice Pool: Resolve + Medicine + Life

Sometimes, Followers of the Lie must be dealt with subtly. This rote allows Libertines to exploit their enemies' bodies, stopping battles with a single well-placed sting.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 3 (Research), Computer 2, Investigation 1, Medicine 4 (Poisons), Occult 1, Science 2

Physical Skills: Brawl 2, Larceny 1, Stealth 1, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Expression 1, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 2 (Homeless), Subterfuge 3

Merits: Contacts 1, Allies (Street people) 2, Danger Sense, Fleet of Foot 2

Willpower: 5

Wisdom: 0 (Paranoia)

Vice: Pride

Fault: Pride / Doing "good" by poisoning those who might cause harm to others / Life

Savant Quality: Obsessed Spell — Venom (Life ••••)

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Speed: 12

Health: 7

Gnosis: 4

Arcana: Death 2, Life 4, Spirit 2, Time 3

Rotes: *Life* — Purify Bodies (••), Banish Plague (•••), Healing

Heart (•••); *Time* — Augury (••), Divination (•••)

Mana/per turn: 13/4

Armor: 4 ("Organic Resiliance," Life ••••)

The Red Man

The Haunting of St Luke's

Quote: *(unintelligible screaming)*

Background: John Doe #23 never stood a chance. Victim of a hit and run, he lies comatose and unidentified in St Luke's hospital, just another statistic of the World of Darkness. Except that Chris Shiner — John Doe — isn't asleep. He's very much Awake.

In the seconds following impact, Chris found himself in Stygia, lying broken at the foot of the Lead Watchtower. Thinking he'd escaped his fate, he desperately wanted to stay even in that grey desert. Maybe it was that reluctance to return that doomed him, but he never made it back to his body. John Doe #23 remains in a coma.

The Red Man — he's long since forgotten his own name — now suffers in a hospital-themed hell, punctured by IVs and feeding tubes, tortured by blank-faced "doctors" and paralyzed throughout it all. This is actually his Oneiros — an inner realm made of his Madness, fear and frustration at his situation.

When his Stress builds up, the Red Man is freed from his personal hell as a Tulpa, a "ghost" formed of ephemera. He lashes out with his half-understood Arcana in a desperate attempt to be noticed, begging in High Speech he doesn't remember learning for someone — anyone — to wake him up.

Description: When the Red Man's nimbus flares, his Twilight form becomes briefly visible — a humanoid figure made of blood, flecks of asphalt and shards of glass. His body bears the effects of lying in a coma for seven months — thin, pale and surrounded by machines, unable to even breathe without assistance.

Storytelling Hints: The Red Man has never had the chance to be trained as a mage, and only has instinctive understanding of the Arcana. While he musters his Arcana to attack the medical professionals he thinks are keeping him imprisoned, his other Tulpas manifest as poltergeist-like activity, leading to interest in the hospital from a group of Sleeper ghost-hunters that have mistaken him for one of the restless dead.

Dedicated Magical Tool: None

Path: Moros

Order: None

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 4, Resistance 4

Willpower: 7

Wisdom: 0 (Schizophrenia)

Vice: Wrath

Fault: Wrath / Punish those ignoring him / Death

Savant Quality: Wellspring

Initiative: 8

Defense: 5

Speed: 14

Corpus: 9

Gnosis: 1

Arcana: Death 3, Matter 2, Forces 1

Rotes: None

Mana/per turn: 10/1

CHAPTER THREE: THE SCELESTI

"The bird fights its way out of the egg. The egg is the world. Who would be born must first destroy a world."
— Herman Hesse, Demian

They want to end pain or free themselves from the rules of existence. They follow the logical conclusion of a nihilistic philosophy. They want to punish apathy. They can't see another way out.

No common motive drives the Scelesti, but consciously or not, they work toward a common goal: drowning the universe in the Abyss. To some Wicked, this conclusion is inevitable. They're not agents of the end, but early adopters of a cosmos to come. The Abyss is the future—and as a place where time twists and fractures it must, in some sense, have already arrived. The apocalypse has always been; Scelesti just know how to see it beyond the comforting Lie. Others work as prophets of a glorious doom, or agents against life and law. Accursed routinely uphold multiple, contradictory ideas. Logic is a trap, after all. Reason is a prison.

The Scelestus Legacy in the **Mage: The Awakening** core rulebook details one tradition, but mages join the Wicked through a variety of means. Like the Void itself, its servants defy easy classification.

Forbidden and Unspeakable

Though they're united in opposing the Wicked, Pentacle and Seers of the Throne find it difficult to consistently detect or prosecute them. Both sects promote strict laws against *particular* relationships with the Abyss, but overarching dictates impinge on legitimate study, so ruling mages rarely apply them. Outlawing the study of Abyssal sorcery would enforce ignorance of the enemy. In the 15th Century, the Vienna Consilium published the first *Codex Cruciatum* (the "Book of Torment") in an attempt to definitively catalog Abyssal Legacies and magical practices, along with the suggested penalties for such transgressions. Most Western Consilii keep copies of the *Cruciatum* that elder Mysterium, Guardian of the Veil and Silver Ladder mages update with new discoveries and rulings. The ruling council guards the book against theft and excessive curiosity; more than one Scelestus got her start by reading about a Legacy or dark initiation from its pages.

Seers of the Throne took the *Cruciatum* tradition right from their Pentacle cousins. Some tetrarchies don't even bother to change the name, or use stolen Consilium copies. Mystagogues believe that overall, Seers know less about the Abyss and rely on captured lore to advance beyond the rudiments. Given that many Consilii are dangerously ignorant themselves, the self-styled lords of the Lie may not be up to protecting their dominion from its greatest threat.

The *Cruciatum* distinguishes between foolish and malicious truck with the Abyss. The former includes drawing on the Void to enhance a spell in a rash moment or minor pacts with an already-roused acamoth. The book recommends fines, social penalties or light torture according to the type and intensity of a foolish act. Acts of malice include joining a Scelestus Legacy, initiating oneself into the Abyss, or intentionally summoning an entity. Legacy membership is punishable by death and Nefandi status. As for other malicious crimes, the book recommends a number of imaginative, magically enhanced tortures for the least of them.

The Tale of Everything and Nothing

In the beginning, there was everything. Light. Darkness. Chilling fire, mutilating love and hissing babies born from hearts within the rotting ribcages of their future deaths, spread across the space that was not space.

Fecund Chaos spawned endless intelligences of flesh and wind. Many Scelesti call the universe's first, innocent children the Annunaki, but give them other names according to their cultures and mythic traditions. They're titans, archons, Hundun's offspring and more. It was Chaos' nature to create whatever they willed—and they willed *everything*, without the restraints of logic or compassion.

From the Codex Cruciatum

The following Legacies appear in various editions of the *Codex Cruciatum*, though not all appear in the same edition. They've also been described in other **Mage: The Awakening** books.

Many Legacies are simply called "Scelesti," such as those in the **Mage** core (p. 361), **Keys to the Supernal Tarot** (p. 111) and **Night Horrors: The Unbidden** (p. 19). They develop unique attainments as lone Autarks (see p. 67) or in intimate circles that require no names.

Cult of the Doomsday Clock (Legacies: The Sublime, p. 128): As recent additions, the "Ticktock Men" only appear in a few copies of the *Cruciatum*. Brief entries describe them as former Seers of the Throne who disrupt time and causality. Captured cultists claim an ancient lineage, but investigations have turned up no authentic signs that the Legacy existed before the late 20th Century (but of course, if any Legacy could distort its history, it would be this one).

Fangs of Mara (Legacies: The Sublime, p. 138): The "Nightmares" say they study the dreams of Abyssal entities to destroy them, so certain Consilii tolerate them in defiance of the law—until the Legacy starts recruiting. The Nightmares know that few would join willingly, so they survive through impressments and brainwashing.

The Legion (Summoners, p. 204): Not to be confused with the Guardian (Legion) heresy, the Abyssal Legion summons gulmoth to replace their members' bodies, part by part. Novices replace an eye or limb with that of a Void creature; leaders are colonies of them, bound to one Awakened soul. The Legacy's practices are so foul that Seers and Pentacle mages often put aside their differences to kill them.

Secret Order of the Gate (Seers of the Throne, p. 178): This Legacy is only listed in copies of the *Cruciatum* held by certain Seers of the Throne. According to Seer lore, the 11th great Exarch, the Gate, was responsible for harnessing the Abyss and using it to part the Lie and Supernal. Although speaking of the Gate is taboo, one Seer Legacy is said to serve her still, maintaining the strange border between reality and the Void.

Intelligence includes the power to classify, separate and exclude. The Annunaki named their work, and each name defined what it was *not*. Once the innocent ones discovered this power, Creation's original riot retreated into defined dominions. Cut from infinite possibility, these realms dimmed and withered, so their masters made names for processes that would give them life again: cycles, energies and mechanics.

Law made the primordial dominions predictable and stable, but their lords ached for the original All. Unwilling to sacrifice intelligence, they looked upon each other's demi-universes and each thought, *If I make them mine, I will be God.* Prior to the hour of realization, "God" was the only concept absent from the Void, for who could create what was endlessly created? What could rule Chaos?

Most Annunaki rejected the idea of a fixed throne in the heavens. Seeking freedom, they relinquished discriminating intelligence in favor of an endless dream and merged with their creations. A stubborn few formed an alliance, regulating their combined realms under common codes. Jealous of one another, they divided God's crown among ten Arcana. They could share His power, but never capture it completely—it would flow through the Supernal Pentagram ever after. Like light cast on a rough, dark ocean, the Supernal reflection gained shape and form on the backs of the dreamers. Those who would be God made their universe of Law on the waves: a skin of brilliant particles over the deep.

In that ocean, the innocent ones slept until the day that shining dust gained intelligence of its own, when humanity also imagined being God. The Supernal Light flickered; the Eldest Dreamers stirred as the Celestial Ladder fell, and the Exarchs harnessed their dreams to make a black moat around the Supernal. But the brilliance of mortal dust not only divides and names, but considers the unnamed, unrealized possibilities that wait below the surface. Humanity dreams of the Dreamers, and the Wicked dream most deeply of all.

After the Fall

The Baalim (see pp. 68) say they invoked the Annunaki while shards of the Celestial Ladder still flashed in the night in a slow, far fall upon Atlantis. For a time, the Abyss erupted to the edges of the world. Unknown constellations invaded the sky. Time twisted; wrinkled men born a day ago made war with thousand-year old youths. Knotted, scaled things fell to earth like meteors and whispered secrets from their craters. Sleeper poets sang of an age of monsters and the punishing flood that slew them. Culture heroes taught them how to survive the world's new laws—to sow, reap and herd through sweat and strain, not prayer and oracle bones.

They remembered true magic, though: how at one time, pointing spears at a rune could bring a successful hunt, and how the gods rewarded those who pleased them. They hungered for the chance to worship again. Accompanied by wonders, visiting Scelesti said the gods would only heed holy, purified men and women now. These pilgrims claimed that role and promised to preside over the necessary rites and sacrifices. Thus, the Baalim take credit for bringing the concept of priesthood to the Fallen World, and note that even their enemies have exploited it ever since.

The Accursed claim they ruled early cities as sacrosanct kings—and were loved for it. Of the people of ancient Kish in Mesopotamia, Sleepers said, "All of them were lord." By giving them acamoth Investments, the ruling Scelesti made their subjects mad demigods. Kish crumbled under their care.

All were lords, and none cared for farming and artisanship. Their Scelesti priests led the first holy wars to enslave needed labor and supply the Annunaki with sacrifices.

Consumed with the desire to rebuild what they lost, the rest of the Atlantean Diaspora paid little attention to the Scelesti. Only Accursed armies laying siege to their eldritch fortresses inspired them to march forth. They repelled the Kishites using their enemies' methods. In Akkad, Ur, and Larsa, they said they represented new gods, willing to fight Kish's aggression. Under Awakened guidance, these city-states vanquished Kish's warrior-demoniacs and Wicked princes. The spiritual ancestors of Pentacle and Throne mages founded Kish anew and rewrote its legends. The old lords became Tiamat's children, fated to be crushed by Anu, Marduk and the other gods of civilization.

Organized Scelesti use titles and customs inspired by the legends of old Kish, though they freely admit that reconstructions have eclipsed true lineages. The Accursed believe the Kishite eon gave *all* mages new life—without it, the Awakened would have cowered in their ruined outposts, leaving bones and curios for a world without the Pentacle. The Scelesti summoned them from hermitage and taught them how to survive the Fallen age by guiding Sleepers. To some of the Wicked, this justifies every sorcerer or Sleeper they corrupt. They have given something immeasurable to the world, and they deserve their reward.

Philosophies Against Life

The Scelesti say that the Abyss has always existed and always will. It was no more created by the Fall than the ocean is created by the fish that swim within it. Frightened mages would believe that sorcery made the Void in the hope that spells can contain it. They want to think the Abyss is a thin membrane of countermagic, and that Paradoxes are mere side effects—terrified nonsense from limited thinkers. All sorcery is invasion, contradiction. Supernal principles penetrate Fallen existence. The Abyss is no barrier to magic, but rather the primal violation that rips open one reality to let another in. Paradox is the true face of sorcery when it works its will without stultifying Supernal restrictions.

Beyond this basic agreement, Scelesti describe the Abyss according to individual philosophies. More advanced Accursed are take refuge in incomprehensible principles, but the majority apply their rule-bound minds as best they can. Philosophical discussions often precede recruitment. Dependent as they are on study, the Awakened are vulnerable to intellectual games and justifications. Between Scelesti, the following philosophies inspire everything from polite discussion to cultic warfare.

Alethians

To many Scelesti, the Abyss is a realm of unbounded possibility. Within the true Tellurian, every phenomenon obeys forms and laws. Beyond the prison, the Abyss supplies power and comfort to those willing to confront it. By refusing to obey desires completely, the Tellurian regulates them, encouraging a controlled, socially acceptable self-image. When a mage refuses the Abyss she blinds herself to the consequences of a realm that satisfies her *true* feelings, beyond the Lie's programming.

Alethian doctrine is probably the most successful in attracting recruits because of the wish fulfillment angle. Willworkers tend to overestimate their self-awareness and unknowingly suppress darker urges. Even after initiation, Alethian Scelesti blend in with other mages as long as they can hide disgusting appetites the Abyss helped them discover.

Exousians

Many Awakened witness the Abyss through its para-intelligent natives, after Paradoxes, inauspicious tombs, and forbidden books summon them to earth. Exousians believe these encounters are holy events. An acamoth or gulmoth is both altar and high priest—or to less religious Scelesti, a terminal that routes commands to the Void. Exousians seek out their guidance and Investments. They habitually use summoning spells and willingly suffer Paradoxes to call guiding entities.

Exousians are the Scelesti most likely to offer recruits forbidden knowledge. Even if a candidate has second thoughts . . . well, summoned gulmoth have *appetites.* Repeated encounters and voluntary Paradoxes leave Exousians scarred and deformed, but often possessed of great magical knowledge, harvested from their holy ones. Concerned with extracting knowledge from Abyssal beings, members of the Scelesti Legacy in the **Mage: The Awakening** core book are usually Exousians.

Archonians

Rather than seek out acamoth and gulmoth for wisdom, Archonian Scelesti contemplate the Great Dreamers that spawned them. Each Annunaku is a world that contradicts true nature. They expel alternate history tracks, forbidden physical laws, and phantom planets. Their desires fill the Abyss with primordial wonder. Their power matches that of Exarchs and old Supernal Gods. Archonians worship the Annunaki and wish to open a way for them to enter the Lie, where they'll replace or destroy an aspect of the Tellurian.

Concerned with beings beyond comprehension, Archonians are rarely eager to recruit small, uninteresting mortals to their cause. They occasionally rule over Sleeper cults who follow a Great Dreamer. They save recruitment for the most talented mages, but are more likely to poach other Scelesti. Indeed, Exousians often evolve into Archonians after encountering an Annunaku's presence.

Nihilists

When a mage tires of the intellectual convolutions of sorcery, she might study the Abyss for alternatives. The Void confirms her faithlessness by teaching the folly of all

systems. These sorcerers become Nihilists who revel in primal formlessness. Adherents destroy touchstones of authority, reason, and predictability. They assassinate Hierarchs and religious figures. They sabotage science and engineering projects. They seek out positions of trust and brutally betray them. When meaning dies, the Abyss beckons. Self-destruction is a sacrament; Nihilists attack their remaining principles just as viciously as they do those belonging to others.

Because of this, a dedicated Nihilist degenerates quickly. Morality becomes an enemy that attaches her to existence. Many eventually join the ranks of the Mad. Yet Nihilism is a popular Scelesti philosophy, and adherents find it easy to recruit disaffected, traumatized sorcerers. Wise Nihilists moderate their own descents, but encourage the less capable among them to chase destruction with gusto, burning bright and brief for the cause.

Immorality Beyond Evil

Scelesti engage in acts of terror to demonstrate that the universe is meaningless. They summon hideous beings and drive people insane. They make deals with sinister powers. They show all the signs of being blatantly, consciously evil.

Yet the Accursed are neither willing servants of evil, nor the kind of people who argue that they're good people from some exotic point of view. Lesser Scelesti say the Abyss is a greater truth worth the sacrifice or a cure for universal suffering. To the truly committed, moral arguments are inherently incoherent. They rely on the assumption that people are moral actors, possess independent identities, and that there are intellectual systems, powers, and feelings to account for. To the Accursed, this is like studying a tornado from the point of view of an ant in its path. Taking the stupidest, most powerless approach to the coming storm isn't right or wrong, just useless.

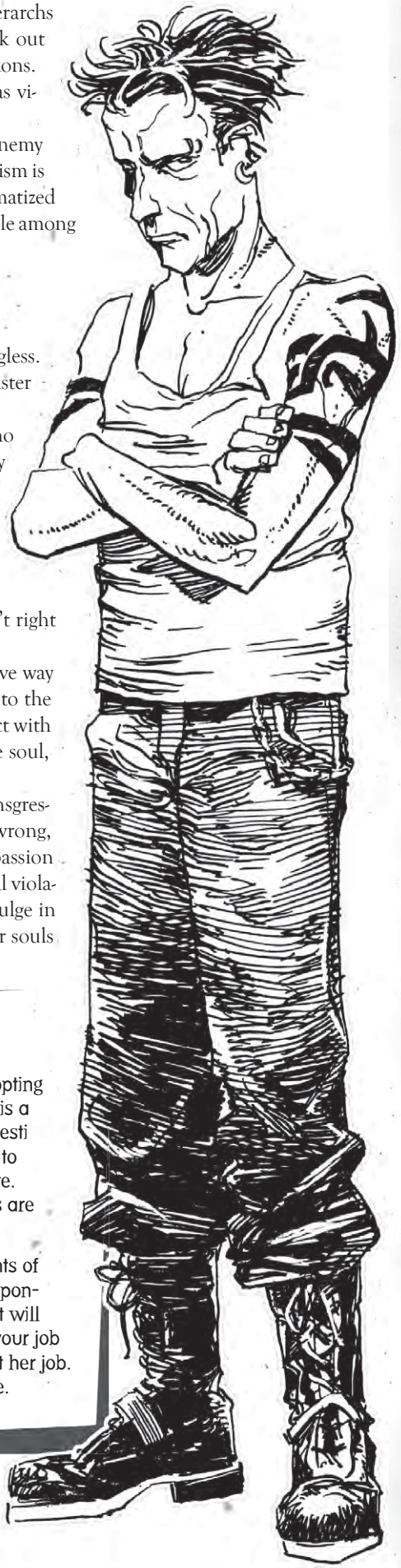
To open a soul to the Abyss, a Scelestus must break it down. The most effective way crushes the subject's moral attachments. She betrays Virtues and perverts Vices to the point where they cease to provide satisfaction. This opens the way; further contact with the Abyss melts ironclad principles to slag and ash. The disciple becomes a pure soul, ready to embrace reality beyond the Tellurian.

Scelesti regularly do the worst things anyone can imagine — not to revel in transgression, but follow their philosophies to a logical end, beyond attachment to right, wrong, or even being. They play the villain to pursue such objectives but deride moral passion plays for their own sake. The Accursed save special spite for those who trade moral violations for power at the behest of entities from the Lower Depths. These fools indulge in a few cheap thrills to bind themselves to inferior beings, instead of breaking their souls open for the chance of supreme transcendence.

But Still, Can I Play One?

We don't want to outright refuse to support player-controlled Scelesti, but adopting this kind of character for the cheap thrill of describing the awful things he does is a stupid idea. Don't do that. (The same goes for Storyteller characters.) Push Scelesti sacrifices and abuse to the background to any extent that allows your players to only experience the discomfort they want from a horror scenario—nothing more. You don't have to linger over the gory details to make it clear that terrible things are happening.

If you play a Scelestus, you're responsible for keeping the procedural elements of the game from being drowned by your character's shocking actions. You're responsible for making your treachery logical and constraining it to moments where it will enhance play, not just disrupt the flow of an enjoyable scene. In other words, your job is to play your character the way the Storyteller would, assuming she's good at her job. Naturally, the Storyteller can refuse requests to play Scelesti at any time.



Scelesti Culture

A Scelestus is a rare, fragile creature. When an initiation fails, it usually destroys the failure. Many of the Accursed perish within a few years of joining, by suicide as often as by enemy action. Joining the Accursed also requires the selfishness to put sorcery ahead of anyone else's well-being, so they often face treachery within their own ranks. Scelesti may display remarkable camaraderie against their many shared enemies, but no alliance comes before the Abyss.

Recruitment

Almost every educated mage knows the Scelesti are a dangerous cult. Beyond that, folklore around the world teaches everyone, both Sleeper and Awakened, to avoid pacts with sinister entities. This makes it difficult to fill the ranks. A Scelestus risks exposure every time he seeks out a companion, so he usually observes candidates from a distance first, gauging their talents and vulnerabilities. He disqualifies weak, doctrinaire mages immediately. Recruitment requires too much effort to waste on a plodding foot soldier for orthodoxy. If she can be easily induced to follow but her command of the Art is crude, the Scelestus inducts her, but treats her as a disposable asset until she improves or dies. The real prizes are prodigies with uncertain commitments to their current sects, or fresh souls straight from the Mystery Play.

Despite soul-torturing experiments over the ages, the Scelesti have never been able to Awaken anyone straight into the Abyss' clutches. Outside the Accursed, some have managed to increase the likelihood of Awakening through bloodlines, inspired teachings, and magical artifacts, but none of these methods are completely reliable. As yet, the Scelesti can't even use these unsteady strategies, indicating that the Watchtowers might protect Sleepers from immediate defilement.

Once he decides on a target, the Scelestus may use any of the following tactics alone, or in combination.

Blackmail: This tactic works best if the Scelestus has already rendered aid. The Accursed might send a disguised gulmoth to help, pass along a cursed item, or teach an antinomian spell (see p. 65). The Scelestus gradually reveals the source of his help and promises more, so long as his protégé agrees to keep it a secret. Most mages know better than to accept obvious assistance from the Scelesti, so he must pull a prospect in deeply with favors first, disguising his true allegiance until his target grows to depend on the help. In the end, blackmail must convince the target to knowingly ally with a Scelestus. If the Wicked mage doesn't reveal his allegiance at some point, the protégé can run to the authorities and claim he was being deceived.

Extortion: Threatening one mage to control another rarely works—they'll join forces to eliminate the problem. Instead, the Accursed target Sleepers the protégé cares about. Younger mages are particularly vulnerable to extortion, as they often maintain many ties to their old lives. Combined with blackmail, extortion attempts are particularly effective. The prospect not only suffers threats against people she cherishes, but cannot seek outside assistance without revealing her complicity. It also disguises the Accursed's efforts as a "normal" relationship, since threatening Sleepers over favors owed isn't particularly unusual—even respected sorcerers aren't always nice people.

Deception: Every Scelestus hides his affiliation for as long as possible, but it takes true skill to trick prospects all the way to damnation. Deception works best on inexperienced mages and Apostates: targets who know less about the Abyss than well-trained members of the orders. The Accursed lies about his allegiance every step of the way, but encourages his protégé to embrace disguised Abyssal philosophies. Scelestus practices may be horrific, but they're still part of a rich intellectual tradition that promises to defy the restrictions of conventional sorcery. By the time she's ready for initiation, the protégé can't imagine another affiliation—revealing the Void at the heart of the mystery only drives further loyalty, for she must now protect her own beliefs from mainstream cowards.

Gradual Revelation: Certain cults reveal their secrets through a series of initiations. The Accursed use these customs to teach their philosophies in set stages. This resembles induction through deception but reveals the Scelestus' true affiliation in a gradual, structured fashion, instead of at the very end. At each rank, the Accursed tests the initiate's loyalty and magical skills, disposing of her if she fails. Mystagogues and Seers of the Throne are particularly vulnerable to this method as they're already used to learning magic through such structures.

Temptation: This tactic is exceptionally difficult to pull off on its own, as millennia of Sleeper and Awakened culture warn prospects that pacts with evil powers are never, ever worth the price. Furthermore, venal mages demand rewards proportional to their (real or imagined) power, so the Accursed might not be able satisfy his target's hubris-charged desires. When it works, it's usually because the Wicked mage *creates* the need. She might kill a protégé's lover, for example, but provide a gulmoth double.

Torment: Sometimes, the Scelestus tortures the protégé until she agrees to serve, directly or through lovers, family members, and cabal comrades. The most exotic form of torment calls an Abyssal entity to drive the target insane, but Scelesti normally do this for devotional, not pragmatic reasons. When other methods fail, torment acts as a fallback position—the Wicked mage makes good on extortion threats or loses patience with more time-consuming methods. Unfortunately, Scelesti initiated this way are often disloyal or somewhat unhinged. If torment damages them too much to for long-term service, their masters either unleash them on their communities in suicide missions or put them in the care of strong cults capable of restraining them.

To Enter Their Service

Recruitment is an arduous process for the Scelesti. Everyone knows what happens when you make a deal with the dark. Nevertheless, a few mages seek out the Wicked. No

sorcerer can Awaken directly into the Abyss' embrace. Rebels, iconoclasts and philosophers willing to follow dangerous ideas no matter where they lead also fill the ranks of the Scelesti. Consider the following cases:

Angrboda—the Vengeful: Once upon a time, there was a Seer Ministry called Geryon. Devoted to misdirection and deception, it attacked a Norwegian cabal for openly promoting its fusion of Nordic paganism and Atlantean mysticism. Its assassins took the faces of Islamic radicals to both eliminate their enemy and cultivate fear and doubt among Sleepers as part of the general Seer agenda. One sorcerer survived—he'd been traveling at the time of the attack. Sifting through the minds of police investigators, the Mastigos Einar saw a discarded knife with a strange sigil.

He followed that clue to others and begged other cabals for help. They refused—Einar's cabal paid the price for revealing itself. He went it alone until, reaching a dead end that could not be circumvented by investigation, sorcery or torture, he went to a cursed place and demanded that its resident acamoth (see the **Mage: The Awakening** core rulebook, pp. 322-323) provide the means to track his enemies. Without words, the entity made it known: *I will give you that and more. I am lonely. For every brother you call to me, you will be rewarded.*

So Einar summoned gulmoth: entities from the Abyss that normally manifested after Paradoxes. He freed other acamoth. Each time, he learned a little more about the Ministry of Geryon. He learned how to use the Abyss to enhance his Arts. Every "brother" he called demanded a new fleshly experience in return: starvation, disease, castration. He became their willing proxy. They rewarded him.

He called himself Angrboda at the end of his quest, after killing everyone in the Ministry. As a hundred Void-born beings converged on the Minister, the Scelestus screamed and screamed, but couldn't say whether it was out of terror or joy.

Later, he remembered Pentacle sorcerers who spurned him. He looks forward to screaming again.

Blood of the Lamb—the Psychopath: Young Joe Beal couldn't tell you whether his parents beat him for torturing animals, or he tortured animals to feel a sense of control—the same power his parents must have felt after using the rod and belt. He doesn't care. He knows that even as a child, he craved the power that came from being able to hurt and kill, to feel the sentience of another being and decide that it was nothing before his will. As he matured he joined gangs, and then led them—he was always willing to get crueler, take greater risks. His daring and strange magnetism helped him through his first relationships, where he learned how lovers opened new avenues of control through pain.

Through it all, Joe attended church regularly. His personal Christianity ignored compassionate morality because he didn't understand it, but he loved bloody Christ and the way He forced himself into the devout through His blood. He entered a seminary with the goal of becoming his vision of Jesus, the ultimate controller: giver of laws, invader of souls. Conventional theology bored him, but his reactions pulled him up a ladder of self-discovery to the Thyrsus Watchtower. In his visions, Christ the Predator offered Joe his flesh. The mage carved his name on the Creation's prince.

Upon his return he realized that if he could overcome the Lamb, there must be powers outside of God's reach. Surely, his dominating will, his urge for cruel power, came from that place. The world was a realm of chittering locusts, fat and sweet in the jaws of a greater Son: the flesh of the Un-God that held the universe in its cold, invisible grasp.

He called upon that and became Scelesti. Now he hunts women and sends them to the Un-God's "heaven."

Theumiel—the Philosopher: Many sorcerers believe the Abyss only tempts young, witless apprentices. Passing through the crucible of temptation, Masters emerge with defenses against Accursed seduction. Theumiel's case demonstrates that this is a lie. He fell to temptation subconsciously, over decades of arduous, esoteric work. His cabal explored the Shadow in search of its ultimate order. As shamans and ecologists, they catalogued legions of spirits, studied their Resonance and plotted their interactions. They lost friends to great spirit-predators and earned scars on flesh and soul. Theumiel forced himself to look beyond their suffering and take refuge in the grand cycle of spiritual existence.

He sought archmastery with an intellect disciplined by this perspective, but when the time came to cross the final Threshold, he realized the truth about himself: He despised the spiritual order. He hated the relentless games of predator

Dupes

Some study the Abyss to fight it. Sorcerer-philosophers seek a cure for Paradox, or a way to channel Supernal power without crossing the dark gulf. Legacies like the Fangs of Mara approach the Void to turn its power against the Wicked.

Even with these motives, such mages relinquish sanity and morality to better understand the Abyss. They become Wicked who just avoid whatever sect they think they belong to. Channeling the Abyss a handful of times may do nothing more than infect a mage with brief spiritual sickness, but prolonged contact eventually turns her into a monstrous danger to her colleagues.

Mages who use the Abyss to conquer it are almost universally distrusted. Save for certain carefully controlled experiments, most Awakened groups punish members for repeated, willing contact with the Void. The Guardians of the Veil are the strongest opponents of would-be virtuous Scelesti. The Silver Ladder harbors more sympathetic mages who believe that a properly focused Awakened will can demolish all temptations. Of course, it's difficult to judge if a sorcerer's intentions are pure, and pathological self-confidence is so common among the Awakened that it often goes unrecognized until it reaps the consequences.

and prey and the way the spirit world made its natives die a thousand times, or twisted them into mockeries in adherence to the Shadow's laws. He could imagine a better universe, hidden beyond ecological cruelty.

After Mastery, Theumiel didn't need to prostrate himself before a teacher, dark grimoire, or Abyssal god. He demanded the throne of an Aswadim and received it. If the Shadow took its nature from cosmic law, he could improve it by reaching past the grasp of the ordered Tellurian. In the Abyss, he searches for a spirit utopia—one that would annihilate the cosmos as we know it, but that's only a sacrifice. Theumiel hates cruel nature but appreciates sacrifice. What wonders might open to one willing to sacrifice the Shadow?

The Ziggurat of Power

Against universal enmity, the Scelesti replenish their numbers, form networks, and inflict their philosophies on the world. As it always dwells at the edge of conventional magical practice, the Abyss alone can lure mages. Many of the Wicked fall into its service without ever contacting other Scelesti. Even if the Pentacle and Seers destroyed every Accursed mage in a great crusade, they'd return the moment a mage listens to his Paradox imp too closely or trades his dreams for power with an acamoth.

Between independent Scelesti and followers of the old cults, the faction has developed a resilient, flexible culture, with multiple forms of initiation ranging from small tastes of the Void to soul-consuming initiations at the edge of the cosmos. The following offices use the names given them by the great Baalim. These have been discovered by others and recorded in the *Codex Cruciatum* and other sources, but the Awakened usually don't know of them unless they specifically study the Scelesti. Even then, the texts present contradictory accounts of their powers and practices. The Wicked distort the truth whenever they can, going so far as to fabricate misleading treatises about themselves.

Rabashakim

Rabashakim, or cupbearers, are the lowest, least trusted members of the Scelesti hierarchy. They've neither dedicated themselves to an anti-Watchtower nor joined a Legacy. Instead, they have either been taught how to weave an Abyssal imago into their spells or discovered the technique in a moment of crazed inspiration. Not all Scelesti pass through the cupbearer stage. Some commit themselves higher initiations immediately, and may not even know that it's possible to merely dabble with the Void.

The cupbearer stage usually occurs in the midst of recruitment through blackmail, deception, revelation, or temptation. Elder Scelesti treat Rabashakim as disposable assets, though if they worked especially hard to induct them, they're more likely to protect their investments. At this stage, the mentor doesn't necessarily reveal her true allegiance but demands ever-greater demonstrations of loyalty in exchange for tutelage, especially when it would separate the protégé from mainstream Awakened culture.

Rabashakim learn a practice Pentacle mages call the Path of Befouling. Scelesti know it as **antinomian sorcery**. It demands a paradoxical imago that captures the magical operation *and* how the Fallen World declares it to be impossible. By holding both elements within her magical will, she recovers the shard of the Abyss that once caused her Quiescence. Instead of returning to Sleep, she consigns her desires to the gap between the possible and impossible. Abyssal energies charge the spell, resolving the contradiction.

Rabashakim learn antinomian magic most easily through rotes. Although an antinomian imago strains the mind, it requires no special systems to learn. Mages may incorporate an antinomian imago into an existing spell instead, but it's a more difficult, taxing process.

Systems for Antinomian Sorcery

To cast an antinomian spell, a Rabashakim must do one of two things:

- First, she may learn the antinomian version of a rote. A Cupbearer usually studies under more experienced Scelesti, but can also acquire them from Abyssal grimoires and entities such as acamoth or gulmoth.
- Second, she might apply an antinomian imago to any other spell. This requires a successful Resolve + Composure roll. Most mages are unaware that such a thing is possible; they must learn the theory of antinomian magic from a tutor. The Storyteller may, however, allow a sorcerer under duress to cast antinomian magic in a moment of dark inspiration.

The advantages of casting an antinomian spell are:

Paradox Attenuation: If the spell invokes Paradox, the caster's player enjoys a –2 penalty to the Paradox roll.

Aggravated Damage: If the spell inflicts damage, the mage's player may expend an additional point of Mana to upgrade it to aggravated damage, even if the spell isn't normally capable of it. Abyssal energies tear and mutate the target's Pattern.

Abyssal Ecstasy: The caster regains a point of Willpower as her soul opens itself to the great Void. The mage feels godlike, part of a purposeful, limitless greater intelligence.

For all their potency, antinomian spells open the sorcerer's soul to the Abyss, conferring the following disadvantages:

Soul-Shaking: Casting an antinomian spell forces an immediate degeneration check for mages with Wisdom 3 or more (roll 2 dice).

Debilitation: As a creature of the Fallen and Supernal worlds, the mage is not truly adapted to the Void beyond. Passing like a wave through her soul and Pattern, it causes spontaneous bleeding, hallucinations, and pain. The exact symptoms are usually connected to the spell's primary Arcanum. Life brings a spider web pattern of sores; Mind raises a hateful inner voice. These distractions inflict a –1 penalty to all dice rolls for the next 12 hours. This penalty accumulates when a mage casts multiple antinomian spells during the same 12 hour period.

Infection: Compromised by the Abyss, the mage's body resists magical healing. Over the next 12 hours, every new injury inflicts Resistant damage (see "Resistant Damage," p. 124 of the **Mage** core rulebook).

Addiction: For one week after casting an antinomian spell, the mage feels a powerful urge to cast another, to experience its strange fusion of pain and pleasure. In any scene in which she intends to casts a spell, her player must succeed at a Resolve + Composure roll. If she fails, she must cast an antinomian rote instead, or apply an imago on the fly. Every additional antinomian spell she casts imposes a cumulative –1 penalty to resist casting another. The sorcerer can only remove a –1 die penalty by refusing to cast spells of any kind for 12 hours. If these penalties (and no others) reduce the mage's Resolve + Composure pool to a chance die, she immediately embarks on an Abyssal Joining (see below) and may graduate to one of the Nasnasi.

Nasnasi

Both Scelesti and outsiders refer to the next Scelestus initiation as Joining. Western Scelesti call the Joined **Nasnasi**, after a half-demonic being from Arabian mythology. After practicing antinomian magic, the sorcerer begins to envision her Dur-Abzu: the Void's reflection of her Watchtower.

Built from the rejected philosophies, fears and unutterable desires of those who wrote their name on the corresponding Watchtower, each sprawling fortress offers the dreamer a new Mystery Play, where she explores alternatives to her Path's guiding philosophy but maintains the bond with its Supernal Realm. A Thyrsus flees pulsating, predatory machines; a Mastigos absorbs the minds of insane alternate selves.

Where a Watchtower's summit demands the mage's identity, the Dur-Abzu fractures it into conventional and Abyssal shards. At the conclusion of the Abyssal Mystery, it is customary (though not mandatory) for the mage to select a new shadow name. She might leave her cabal as well, establishing an anonymous lair in which to study further. Wicked elders encourage this to strengthen their grasp on prospects.

While all Rabashakim may undertake Joining, most will not succeed without tutelage. They cower at the dream of their Dur-Abzu or rely on reason, not mad intuition, to complete its Mystery. Whether they obey a master or go it alone, initiated Nasnasi enjoy prestige among the Accursed. If they enter a Legacy, they're treated with more respect than prodigies who simply vaulted into the ranks, for they made the slow, deliberate choice to dedicate their magical desires to the Void.

Systems for Joining With the Dur-Abzu

Where an Awakening is a series of trials that ends in wisdom and self-actualization, Joining is a journey of confusion and degradation that rips out the roots of identity—indeed, to complete the journey, the mage must defile her own sense of self, opening it to alternatives the way a wound exposes her to infection. One does not climb a Dur-Abzu but rather crawls through its mazy passages. On the material plane, this might manifest as a journey through a shantytowns or corporate cubicles. If the Joining mystery is a wholly psychic experience, it takes the mage down Astral spirals, corridors and pits. The maze stretches across the Oneiros, Temenos and finally, the Dreamtime.

Dark Correspondences

The true Watchtowers contain primal, mythical symbols that mages interpret through the lens of Sleeper mythology. The Dur-Abzu collect the contradictions and taboos of Path mythology instead, and Joined mages use them as the basis for magical ceremonies. Many Scelesti use the following imagery to evoke the Dur-Abzu:

Ao Si, the Mound of Thorns (Acanthus): Joined Acanthus call upon the twisted Fomorians and Norse rot-elves they found in the ever-shifting, thorny maze of their Dur-Abzu. Their rites recall legendary broken oaths, kin-slaying heroes and inescapable curses.

Arallu, the Cave of Rot and Tarnish (Moros): Instead of the silence of the grave and eternal Matter, Arallu shows Joined Moros a land of unending decomposition, where moldering bones and infected blood drift across sands of ground, tarnished gold and flakes of rust. Joined Moros use corroded metal and rotten flesh as tools. They call upon Nergal, the king of Arallu, along with gods and demons that torture the dead.

Drugaskan, the Impenetrable Darkness (Mastigos): Through utter isolation, the Mastigos Dur-Abzu defies their love of conflict and opposition. Drugaskan's lonely, suffocating darkness swallows every sense. To escape, a Warlock follows Ahriman's mocking whispers, the only sound in the emptiness. Joined Mastigos use sensory deprivation and solitude to deny the self and hear Him whisper again.

The Burning Iron Spiral (Thyrsus): To many Thyrsus, the Dur-Abzu takes the form of an endless city. Life mutates to accommodate crushing mobs and sharp-edged buildings. The Joined mage takes refuge in polluted places. She adopts the tools of a cynical "plastic shaman," prizing adaptation over integrity.

The Deluge (Obrimos): Instead of climbing to celestial light, Joined Obrimos drown in blood-tainted floodwaters. Aquatic demons harass them. Endless chains converge on a sea floor littered with devastated temples. They wrap around the *Iriyim:* watcher-angels who taught humanity forbidden knowledge. Obrimos invoke their powers and summon the attributes of the fallen ones' Nephilim children.

In either event, the heart of the Dur-Abzu contains a horror tailor made for the traveler. She betrays something fundamental to her identity—kills her god, tortures her mother, declares that she deserved some terrible abuse and *believes* it. Embracing the personal paradox consigns part of her name to the Abyss. She becomes one of the Nasnasi: half Supernal, half Abyssal.

Upon Joining, the mage acquires the following characteristics:

Soul-Wracking: Joining forces an immediate degeneration check for mages with Wisdom of 2 or more (roll 2 dice).

Weak Mind: The portion of her soul dedicated to the Abyss reminds her of the horror of initiation. The mage automatically acquires a mild derangement, or one of her existing derangements expands into a severe derangement. The player and Storyteller decide upon a fitting derangement from the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, or from the Bedlam derangements listed on pp. 269-271 of **Mage: The Awakening**.

Corrupted Praxis: The Joined develops new oblations, occult correspondences, and Path tools that reflect his journey through the Dur-Abzu. He begins with one new dedicated Path tool that symbolizes the betrayal at the heart of his Joining.

Abyssal Nimbus: The sorcerer's nimbus reflects her soul's powerful connection with the Void. It incorporates new, disturbing phenomena that echo the mage's Joining mystery. It becomes difficult to control; she suffers a –2 penalty to rolls to cloak or uncloak it. Even Sleepers might briefly glimpse it with a successful Wits + Composure roll, at a –3 penalty.

Paradox Alternatives: The sorcerer develops an elementary command of the Void's enigmatic energies, allowing her to manipulate Paradoxes. She may choose to invoke the antinomian benefit of Paradox Attenuation with any spell. If she casts using an antinomian imago as well, the benefit increases to a –3 penalty to the Paradox roll, but she suffers the usual sickness and other side effects of casting such spells.

The Joined may choose to suffer a full Paradox instead, but can subsequently use its energies to curse another sorcerer in sensory range. The target suffers a Paradox of equal severity (based on the successes the mage rolled for her backlash) upon casting the spell. Unleashing the accumulated Paradox is a reflexive action that may be performed once every 24 hours. If she does not release her accumulated Paradox upon another mage within an hour, she suffers one point of Resistant bashing damage per Paradox success as its energies violently disperse.

Aggravated Damage: Nasnasi may inflict aggravated wounds with any damaging spell, no matter its rank or Arcanum, by spending an additional point of Mana. If she casts the spell is using an antinomian imago *and* her primary Arcanum, the additional Mana cost is waived.

Sleeper Sympathy: The Joined mage casts sympathetic spells on Sleepers more easily, as the Abyss in her soul seeks out the Void-shard implanted by the Quiescence. She no longer needs to spend Mana to target Sleepers with sympathetic magic.

Denying the Abyss

The Joining Mystery is arduous and profound, but it doesn't cut off the mage's Supernal Watchtower. Through will and meditation, a sorcerer may abjure her Dur-Abzu and return to her ordinary Path. Expelling the Abyss only takes an instant action, but it might instantly kill her. Roll her Gnosis. She suffers one point of Resistant aggravated damage plus one more per success on the roll. Over the next month, she suffers a +1 bonus to Paradox rolls due to a lingering bond with the Abyss.

If the mage denies the Abyss and survives, she loses all the traits of Joined Nasnasi, but must rebuild lost Wisdom through experience points and virtuous actions. Upon recovery, many mages devote considerable time to repentance. Not every sorcerer denies the Abyss to step back from corruption, however. Some Scelesti expel the Void to divest themselves of the nimbus-altering effects of Joining and thus hide themselves more effectively.

Autarks and Shedim

Beyond dabbling and Path heresy, Accursed Legacies permanently fuse an initiate's soul with the Abyss. Ancient Baalim traditions draw some sorcerers through antinomian sorcery and Joining before allowing them entrance. These adepts are called **Shedim** (singular: **Shedu**). The heirs of Kish work subtly and slowly toward the day the Abyss will annihilate the Lie, when the dreaming Annunaki will rework Creation into beautiful, impossible forms.

For all their training and fanaticism, Shedim carry the painful marks of their gradual ascent through the Rabashakim and Nasnasi. Ritual scars, a sinister nimbus, and vile oblations attract unwanted attention. They avoid other sorcerers, building their own lairs in hidden places. To infiltrate the Pentacle or Seers of the Throne, a Shedu prepares for months. He changes his face, studies the efforts of his forebears, and sends gulmoth to spy on targets. Ideally, they'll never detect his presence, agenda, or ultimate influence.

While caution spares them attention, it also slows their progress. Mages who spontaneously join the Accursed tend to achieve their goals more quickly, though they fail more often as well. Organized Scelesti call these lone wolves **Autarks**. They call themselves whatever they wish. Many belong to a "Legacy of One," forging a path to Abyssal enlightenment through intuition and insane personal doctrines. A few found small cults or revive extinct Legacies through a chance encounter with a daemonomicon or Abyssal spirit. Without training from the ancient cults, though, most Autarks fall to enemies before they ever develop a second attainment. Survivors tend to be competent, ruthless and highly motivated to strike back at anyone who hunted them earlier in their careers.

Despite their poor prospects, organized Scelesti see Autarks as signs of the Void's creativity. Cults invite them into the fold with mixed success. Most are fanatics bound to a religion of their own design and feel no need to dilute that for the sake of an alliance. Baalim Masters initially keep friendlier Autarks at arm's length in case they stupidly attract enemies, turn on their allies, or otherwise prove to be a liability. If the initial relationship succeeds, they offer any initiations the Autark might have skipped on the way to Legacy membership, along with resources, followers and support. If things sour, the Lords keep Shedim assassins on hand to clean up the mess.

Systems for Shedim and Autarks

Shedim join established Scelestus Legacies that respect a common ancient heritage, but rarely possess lineages older than a few centuries. Although they cede little respect to Autarks, such "newcomers" often established these cults long ago. These Wicked Legacies use the standard rules, providing set attainments and prerequisites.

In addition, Shedim learn the skills and traditions of the old Scelesti. This opens access to the Nameless Order Merit (p. 37). Their specific benefits depend on the cult and its ruling Baal.

Although a few independently discover older Abyssal traditions, most Autarks develop attainments as they progress, forging a unique connection to the Void based on Path and philosophy. This gives players and Storytellers a chance to build Legacies together without planning ahead. Autarkic Legacies conform to the following guidelines:

Prerequisites: The mage must possess a Gnosis of 3 and at least three dots in one of his Path's primary Acrana. If he wishes to develop a new Primary Arcanum through his Legacy he must possess three dots in that as well. No sorcerer can dedicate himself to a Scelestus Legacy unless he possesses a Wisdom of 7 or less. Truly compassionate sorcerers cannot join the Wicked.

Initiation: No Autark can will himself into a Legacy. He doesn't need a conventional teacher, but an external power must bind his soul to the Abyss. If he finds a working method, the initiate uses it to behold the Void and wait for it to answer. He immediately loses a point of Wisdom and acquires a derangement. The Abyss seizes a fraction of the sorcerer's soul and twists it into a fitting first attainment. From that moment forward, the Abyss itself counts as his tutor for the purposes of experience point costs.

Sample ways to approach the Abyss have been listed in the accompanying sidebar ("Opening the Abyssal Channel"). The Storyteller may devise others.

Oblations: The Autark develops new oblations upon reaching his first attainment. These usually represent one of the primal Scelestus worldview combined with personal magical symbolism.

Attainments: Autark Legacy attainments *usually* conform to the rules on pp. 366-367 of the **Mage: The Awakening** core book. Since the mage acquires them entirely through self-knowledge, each attainment reflects doctrines he developed at a particular time and place. While his primary, prerequisite Arcanum doesn't change, the optional Arcanum he uses to obtain secondary powers might shift in response to a pivotal experience. Each attainment requires standard Arcanum prerequisites (2 dots for the first attainment, 3 for the second and 4 for the third), but the attainment power itself may defy classification within the Atlantean scheme. Players and Storytellers might use another supernatural being's abilities (like vampire Disciplines or changeling Contracts) to simulate these unusual powers.

Baalim

Some Scelesti Masters call themselves the **Baalim**, a Mesopotamian title meaning "Lords." Any Accursed Master may demonstrate her abilities and count herself among them, but the old cults apply more stringent requirements. When an Autark attains Mastery and forces his way into the organized Scelesti culture, followers of the ancient ways may conceal certain secrets or provide inferior assistance.

A traditional Baal (or Baalath, "Lady," though the former is often used as a gender neutral honorific) must achieve the third attainment of his Legacy and induct at least one other mage into the sect. To do anything less would shame him before the being he must approach for induction: one called the Eleventh Aeon, the Messenger, the Saint of Paradox, or simply the Old Man, described on p. 75.

The Old Man dwells in a threadbare hut in the Anima Mundi, at the shores of the Abyss. In his presence, free will is sacrosanct — and this makes him extremely dangerous. The Eleventh Aeon can fulfill virtually any desire, as long as a petitioner freely pays the price. Overconfident visitors talk

Opening the Abyssal Channel

The following systems describe ways in which a self-taught Scelestus might invent a Legacy.

Abyssal Being: An Abyssal entity of rank 4 or greater opens a psychic channel to the Abyss. Awakened souls cannot be forced into an Abyssal Legacy in this fashion, but their owners cannot compel the entity to do so except by exploiting a spirit ban or appealing to its desires.

The entity is not the mage's tutor but still benefits from the path it opened—it now acts as a permanent link between the mage and the Outer Dark. It earns 3 *permanent* Essence for every experience point the mage loses to Legacy membership. When its Essence exceeds that of its current spirit rank, it advances to the next. Furthermore, the being always knows the sorcerer's location and emotional state, maintaining an Intimate sympathetic connection ever after. After gaining power, these beings may demand service.

Cursed Grimoire: By studying an Abyssal grimoire, a mage may willingly wrench his soul open to the possibilities implied by insane magical formulae. This requires an extended Intelligence + Occult roll with a target number of successes equal to the mage's Wisdom + 3. Each failed roll forces an immediate degeneration check for mages with Wisdom of 1 or more (roll 2 dice). Even an unlucky aspirant will probably succeed, but madness may not leave much of his original self behind. A daimonomicon (see p. 22) can be used for this purpose and does not lock the initiate into its Legacy. It does, however, provide a +2 equipment bonus to the roll.

The grimoire that inspires an Autark's Legacy develops an Intimate sympathetic connection with the mage. The book also evolves as the Scelestus gains power. Use the mage's experience point tithe to purchase rotes he knows. Antinomian versions of these rotes inscribe themselves into the grimoire—a book even grows more physical pages, if necessary. Its appearance changes to reflect the mage's soul. If the sorcerer reaches a third attainment, the book becomes a daemonomicon for the new Legacy. A few legendary, damned books are said to carry multiple Legacies, as owner after owner added his own Accursed secrets.

Verge Pilgrimage: At an Abyssal Verge, the initiate casts his soul to the edge of the Abyss through deep meditation. This requires an Astral journey to the outer edge of the Dreamtime while the mage's body rests within the Verge. Once he reaches the nothingness at the limit of the psychic universe, he invokes the Verge's bond with the Abyss to open his soul further. The aspirant calls out across the Abyssal Ocean Oroboros and *something* comes, or perhaps he baptizes himself in it. Regardless of the vision, the act requires an instant action and Gnosis roll.

Oroboros usually obliterates anything it touches—and failures are no different. The Abyss washes over them, pulling them in. (Sometimes it releases a *thing* that resembles the failure days, weeks or years later.) But if the mage succeeds, he only leaves a piece of himself to trade for his first attainment.

themselves into their own damnation. Scelesti don't come to trick the Saint, however, but to humbly negotiate for a soul mark called the Elder Diadem.

The Diadem may represent the legendary Lone Watchtower of the Void. It grants its owner the ability to channel the Abyss as if it was an Arcanum or spirit Influence. Previous initiations bind a soul to the Void in ever tighter chains, but the Elder Diadem represents an ultimate surrender. The Abyss may do what it pleases with a crowned Lord: devour his soul, let gulmoth take his body or even cast him back to Quiescence. The Baal's bargain with the Old Man only holds until he fails in some spectacular fashion. If a rite to summon an Annunaku goes awry or he suffers utter defeat at the hands of any enemy, the Abyss may call him home for final purification. The Storyteller should save these consequences for a story's finale, when she plans on never using that Lord again.

When a Baal reveals possession of the Elder Diadem, he claims a seat among the Wicked's princes. These Baalim shun rivalries, though they may set pawns against each other to establish a pecking order. The Diadem pact inflicts madness, physical deformities and curses, so most of them hide behind elaborate cults that cater to their unnatural needs. A few turn Mad, or devote themselves to esoteric experiments that bystanders would be hard-pressed to survive.

Systems for the Baalim

Not all Scelestus Masters rule cults, but those that call themselves Lords treat leadership as a holy duty, founding or inheriting sects that glorify the Abyss. In game terms, this is represented by dots in the Retainer, Allies, Contacts, and Nameless Order Merits. Most Baalim prefer to act through trusted associates, so their connections are best modeled with the Retainer and Nameless Order Merits.

The Elder Diadem

To attain the Elder Diadem, a Lord must visit the Old Man at the end of the Astral Realms. The Saint of Paradox refuses to bargain for the Diadem with non-Scelesti or Accursed below rank of Master. The Mad lack the ability to bargain coherently so they too are turned away.

Negotiations require an extended Resolve + Gnosis roll with a target of 10 successes + the petitioner's Wisdom. The player's proposed sacrifice earns a 1 die bonus for each rank of sacrifice on the table below, to a maximum of 5 dice. Each sacrifice possesses a value equal to its rank. For example, a petitioner may offer to suffer a deformity along with degenerate madness for a rank 3 sacrifice (+3 dice to each roll) or two deformities for a rank 4 sacrifice (+4 dice).

If the petitioner succeeds, he earns the Diadem and suffers the effects of his offering. Note, however, that each failed roll adds 1 rank of sacrifice, as the Old Man tricks the mage into accepting further conditions. If the Baal's total ever exceeds 5 ranks, he follows the Saint of Paradox into the Hollow. If anyone sees the mage again, it is as an inhuman projection of the Abyss, not a person — a tool the Storyteller uses to pass on evil revelations.

Sacrifice Rank	Effect
1	**Degenerate Madness:** The mage automatically loses a point of Wisdom and either gains a mild derangement or upgrades a mild derangement to a severe one.
2	**Deformity:** The mage acquires an obviously unnatural physical Flaw. Spells used to conceal or correct it drop to a Transitory duration, no matter what they would normally be.
3	**Unnatural Hunger:** The mage cannot recover Mana without committing a rank 3 Wisdom sin. He must modify his oblations, Hallow meditations, and other Mana gathering techniques to incorporate such degenerate acts as human sacrifice, torture or self-mutilation. This offering is still fitting for mages with a Wisdom of 3 or less, as it places a barrier on their ability to raise the Trait.
4	**Curse:** The mage offers to let the Abyss continually unravel one aspect of his life, represented by a keyword. Examples include (but are not limited to) Violence, Love, Revenge, Intrigue and Stealth. When the Storyteller determines that the mage's actions fit the keyword, he suffers a –3 dice penalty and all failures become dramatic failures. Supernatural attempts to evade the curse also suffer a –3 penalty to dice rolls, and their failures are always dramatic failures as well. Regardless of their normal durations, a supernatural compensation never lasts longer than the equivalent of a Transitory spell.
5	**Permanent Paradox:** The mage suffers Paradox on all spells, even if they're covert, and rolls +1 Paradox die to resolve them. If he uses various methods to reduce his Paradox pool, he must still roll a chance die. This bonus die applies when the mage uses the Elder Diadem itself, making it a tempting gambit for ambitious Baalim.
6+	**Consumed by the Abyss.** The Old Man gets the better of the deal. See above for the consequences.

The Power of the Diadem

The Elder Diadem is a spiritual condition. It initiates its owner into the Void as if it was a Supernal Watchtower. Its wielder experiences the effects of a Nasnasi Abyssal nimbus (p. 67) that can never be removed, even if the Lord rejects a Joining.

In return, the Baal may channel Paradox through an act of will. Each time he suffers a Paradox, record the successes. Similar to the Nasnasi power of Paradox Alternatives, the mage may store this Paradox in his pattern for up to an hour. If he acquires more successes on a subsequent roll, he may replace that stored Paradox for a point of Mana, "resetting the clock." If the Baal is also a Nasnas, he may now spend Mana to extend the duration of the Paradox Alternatives power as well.

When it comes time to unleash these Abyssal energies, the Baal may command the following effects:

Havoc: Once per turn, the Lord may use a reflexive action corrupt another mage's spell with a Havoc Paradox. Roll the Baal's Gnosis + Paradox, and subtract a Potency factor of the Scelestus' choice, as if casting an instant spell. The target must roll Wisdom to shake off the effects as per p. 268 of **Mage: The Awakening**, but suffers a penalty to the roll equal to the Potency selected. If the Baal suffers a dramatic failure, each point of uncontrolled Paradox inflicts one point of Resistant bashing damage.

Bedlam: As an instant action, the Baal may expose one or more targets to visions of the Abyss. Spend 1 point of Mana and roll Gnosis + Paradox, subtracting dice for instant Potency and Target (not Area) spell factors. Targets suffer a Bedlam Paradox as if they had erred using an Arcanum with as many dots as this power's Potency factor. The targets' Wisdom (or Morality) scores determine the Bedlam's duration and exact effects.

Anomaly: As an instant action, the Baal may impose her Path's Anomaly (see the **Mage** core rulebook, pp. 271-272 for listings) on to a nearby area. Spend 1 point of Mana and roll Gnosis + Paradox, subtracting dice for instant Area and Duration spell factors. These factors (not those usual for a Paradox effect) determine the Anomaly's extent.

Branding: The Lord concentrates over an instant action, and warps targets' Patterns and auras with Paradoxical energies. Spend 1 point of Mana, and roll Gnosis + Paradox, subtracting dice for instant Potency and Target (not Area) spell factors. Targets suffer a Branding Paradox substituting the power's Potency factor for the Arcanum dots listed on p. 272 of the **Mage** core book. The Baal chooses a Brand within the limits defined by the table. This power is often used to falsely mark mages as Scelesti. The targets' Wisdom (or Morality) scores determine the Branding's duration, as per a standard Paradox.

Manifestation: As an instant action, the Baal may summon a Manifestation Paradox (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 273). The

mage must spent 1 point of Mana and 1 point of Willpower and roll Gnosis + Paradox, subtracting an instant Potency spell factor. Use this, and not Arcanum dots, to determine the entity's power. The entity remains for a duration determined by his Wisdom. It treats all intelligent life in the area with the same degree of hostility—the Baal included. This power is taxing, and may only be used once every 24 hours.

Aswadim

A handful of Abyssal archmages stand apart, pursuing their own ineffable goals. These **Aswadim** did not necessarily climb the ladder of power as Scelesti, but all align themselves with the Void now. Those that were once Scelesti occasionally visit their old cults—or destroy them to conceal their pasts. A few show active hostility toward the Accursed. They are demigods in any event, to placate and worship as circumstances dictate.

Aswadim provide little direct assistance, but may reward those who act on their behalf. The Archmasters require precisely timed disasters, rare artifacts, and great sacrifices, but cannot exercise their considerable powers openly, lest beings of equivalent power oppose them. Learned Scelesti know that the mightiest Aswadim spells require exotic components called Quintessences, and that much of their sect's history has been bound to a series of vast rituals, performed through the lives of unknowing individuals, cults,, and nations.

In most games, Aswadim do not require systems. Their higher spells may do things that seem impossible according to the laws of sorcery, but only after they gather key components and bring about certain conditions in the world—and thanks to the vigilance of other beings, rely on lesser mages' assistance. **Tome of the Mysteries** and **Imperial Mysteries** unveil more information about archmages, their motives and needs.

Gardeners of the Shadow Angel

In wild places across the Americas, Gardeners of the Shadow Angel infects spirit realms with Abyssal beings. Every pocket of corruption is an experiment designed to create Paradise on Earth. But Eden has its enemies, say the Gardeners, and they've turned Creation away from its innocence. Outside of prophecy, humanity cannot truly imagine the wolf dwelling with the lamb. Perhaps this is because such creatures would be neither wolves nor sheep, but new forms of life, with new spirits carrying their meaning across the shadow. If in fact denizens of Paradise are so different than the creatures and Shadow-powers of this world, even a sliver of Eden might crack the unprepared psyche.

The Gardeners build a tolerance for the beasts of Paradise. They tend to their needs, for they do not sustain themselves by hunting one another, nor do they feed from the profane energies of this world. The cult purifies the flesh and power of the world with carefully inflicted pain and enigmatic rituals—methods taught them by Scelesti priests and the Angel who first appeared to them.

In Gardener lore, the Shadow Angel Theumiel is the repentant Serpent of Eden, the Twin of God, who wishes to given humankind the Paradise sin once cast them out of: a place free from pollution, exploitation, and the savage cycles of life. Theumiel appeared to his elect in a vision. His dark wings enveloped them; its shadows showed them species from the Paradise to come. He told them how to prepare the way and they recruited man and women who hated the brutal state of nature.

The Cult

In the Gardeners of the Shadow Angel, most of the Sleeper majority are all competent wilderness survivors, but few began that way. Virtually every member lost someone to the wild or natural disasters. Nature is their enemy: a wild force that must be leashed by human righteousness. About a third of the cult once believed in Creationist, anti-environmentalist doctrines. That proportion could have been even higher, but the Gardeners' ruling angel appears to be both a Satanic figure and nature god. Disillusioned environmentalists, Satanist intellectuals, and modern nomads make up the rest of the cult.

Each of the cult's seven cells reports to an Accursed "elect." Only these mages know the location of every cell. Dhole wanders between them all, often in disguise, to monitor their experiments. Each cell secured a large tract of isolated wilderness. Gulmoth roam the land for much longer than they would normally be able to, sustained by the Hallow and Abyssal Verge at the territory's heart. As visitors approach the Verge, unidentified species with unnerving features replace normal wildlife. According to cult doctrine, the hissing, chitin-armored *things* that replace deer and other beasts look terrifying because the world's sin cloaks their beauty. If they meditate upon the slithering inhabitants of Eden, they'll learn to appreciate its glory—and once their minds snap, they truly believe.

Half-mad cultists patrol the demi-Edens to either ward off outsiders or sacrifice them to fuel each preserve. The Scelesti select more presentable, less "holy" individuals to empower the preserves through further sacrifices and complex occult operations, some of which mystify the Scelesti as much as they do their underlings. This is what Dhole and Theumiel command, so it must be.

Cult Traits

The Gardeners of the Shadow Angel use the Nameless Order Merit (pp. 37) according to the following progression:

- The Gardener gains the Survival specialty Unnatural Environments, allowing her to avoid environmental dangers caused by supernatural influences.

The Truth

Theumiel isn't an angel, but one of the Aswadim archmages. His origins and motives have been detailed on pp. 64 of this book and in the supplement **Imperial Mysteries** (though you do not need that book to use this one). Other Scelesti in the Gardeners may suspect this, but only Dhole knows the whole truth.

Theumiel was never a Scelestus before he attained the Imperial Mysteries, and believes he upholds a higher moral code than the Wicked he encountered in his old life. He will command the Abyss to build a compassionate universe, without predators and prey. For the moment, the dream is unattainable; his deviant spirits need sustenance and a physical world that reflects their strange natures. The cult attends to these needs in his stead, keeping enemy archmasters and gods off the scent.

If the Gardeners create enough "Paradises" of sufficient size, these will anchor a mighty spell designed to replace the Shadow's greater spirits with Abyssal counterparts, ending Creation as we know it. The Storyteller should decide how close the "Shadow Angel" has come to his goal based on the dramatic tier (see p. 12) he wants to run stories under. If he's close to success, that sparks a Tier Four storyline. Otherwise, success could take years, even centuries.

• •	The cult gives the Gardener a stipend to use at her discretion. She gains Resources •. The Gardener doesn't add this to her current Resources dots, but can use it without exhausting her personal Resources.
• • •	The Gardener may learn the Survival and Occult Skills at a reduced experience point cost: new dots x 2.
• • • •	The Gardener's exposure to Abyssal creatures and the hazards of cult duties grants the Danger Sense Merit.
• • • • •	The Gardener's personal stipend (see the second dot of this Merit) increases to Resources • • •.

Dhole

The Last Hunter of Eden

Quote: *Soon, you won't have to fear predators in the night—but not yet.*

Background: In December 1944, Loren Vine Awakened while he was being crushed by a German tank, as an early casualty of the Battle of the Bulge. In his visions, his broken body swam through the mud to the Stone Book. He came to his senses a week later, naked and deep behind enemy lines. His hands and face were covered in blood, and he felt full.

World War Two was good to the Scelesti. They didn't care for any particular side, but the war itself strained humanity's collective sanity and left the world full of lawless, violent places to exploit. Loren Vine met them after months of living rough—times where he experienced frequent blackouts, then discovered new clothes and supplies. Using Mind magic, he had locked his memory of what he did to people in another consciousness. The Accursed of the Hunter's Flesh wrenched that sub-mind opened and showed him all the people he killed—Germans, Allies and even refugees on the road. He not only resigned himself to his true nature, but vowed to exemplify it. Instead of a human capable of bestial acts, he would become a beast himself. He named himself Dhole, after his Legacy's slang for certain Abyssal gulmoth.

The Pentacle had anticipated Scelestus action during the war and specialized cabals eventually tracked down Dhole's cult. He alone escaped. He replaced a fallen soldier from another unit and returned to America, determined to haunt quiet, uninhabited places. But Fare brought him to a corrupted forest in Northern California, infected by Abyssal beings. He met Theumiel at its Hallow and gathered a cult as commanded.

Dhole is the only member of the cult who knows that Theumiel is an archmage, not an angel or god—and he wants to rule part of his overlord's "New Eden." Dhole pretended that his predatory nature brought him pain he hoped Theumiel could heal, but the frightened soldier from 1944 is long gone; he is at peace with his monstrousness. Under the guise of demanding the Elder Diadem, he plans to bargain with the Old Man of the Abyss for temporary, godlike command of the cult's preserves, just long enough to overthrow their sponsor and make himself their new master. So far, Theumiel has shown no signs of being aware of the plan.

Dhole wanders from one Gardener holding to the next, conferring with the seven Shedim beneath him over cult affairs. He styles himself one of the Baalim, though his plans have meant that he has yet to acquire the Elder Diadem and fully claim the title. Besides mages, the supernatural threat he is most wary of are bestial shapeshifters. According to his Legacy's lore, they defend the world's natural spirits from the very corruption the cult encourages.

Description: Dhole is naturally 6'10" and weighs almost 300 pounds. His hair is streaked with white—the only sign that he's actually 50 years older than his apparent thirtysomething age. Powerful, ripped muscles twitch under his flawless tanned skin. He takes on a less notable appearance for many of his travels, as an old back-country hunter or a naïve college-aged backpacker.

In combat, Dhole often takes the form of a lion-sized, wolf-like predator with blood-red fur, two sets of oversized human eyes, barbed teeth and a lizard's tail. His nimbus manifests as aspects of this creature ripping out of his skin or erupting from a red haze.

Storytelling Hints: Although he possesses the power of a major antagonist, Dhole wastes little time harassing mages from other sects. He's mainly concerned with running the cult and

preparing to betray the Aswadim Theumiel. He acts based on threats and opportunities related to these agendas. If he can't kill his enemies quickly, he retreats, gathers allies, and ambushes them at a later date. Dhole's true plans are so dangerous that he never, ever speaks of them. He has even trained his surface thoughts to evade telepathic investigation. If he needs allies, he usually comes to them in another shape, though the wild nimbus of his Joining forces him to limit the duration of direct interaction. If clever mages uncovered his plans and cornered him, they would either possess significant leverage over him or prompt Theumiel to rip his body and soul apart, depending on how closely the Shadow Angel is watching.

Dedicated Magical Tool: A fanged silver and steel tooth grill. Dhole may also use this object to inflict lethal damage with a grappling attack, if he remains in human form.

Real Name: Loren Vine

Path: Thyrsus

Order: Scelestus

Legacy: Scelesti—The Hunter's Flesh (see below)

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 5, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 4, Investigation 3, Medicine 4, Occult 5 (Spirits), Science 3 (Ecology)

Physical Skills: Brawl 5 (Tooth and Claw), Firearms 2 (Shotgun), Larceny 2, Stealth 4, Survival 5 (Unnatural Environments), Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Expression 1, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 2, Subterfuge 4 (Telepathic Deception).

Merits: Allies (Gardeners of the Shadow Angel) 5, Brawl Defense, Contacts (Modern Nomads) 3, Danger Sense, Fleet of Foot 3, Nameless Order (Gardeners of the Shadow Angel) 5, Resources (Gardeners of the Shadow Angel) 3

Willpower: 7

Wisdom: 2 (Megalomania)

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Wrath

Initiative: 6

Defense: 5

Speed: 15

Health: 10

Gnosis: 6

Arcana: Mind 3, Life 5, Space 3, Prime 4

Rotes: *Mind*—Voices from Afar (••), Greater Beast Control (•••); *Life*—Pulse of the Living World (•), Control Base Life(••), Self Healing (••), Supreme Honing (••••), Fantasia (•••••), Greater Shapechanging (•••••); *Space*—Scrying (••); *Spirit*—Spirit Tongue (•), Gossamer Touch (••), Greater Spirit Summons (•••), Reaching (•••)

Legacy Attainments: Dhole belongs to an old Scelestus Tradition called the Hunter's Flesh. According to its doctrine, members are soul-maggots that erupted from the dying body of the Beastfather, a primal hunting god. Dhole is the strongest member of the Legacy—two of his Shedim are also members. He has mastered the following attainments:

1st—*Taste of the Prey (Space 2):* Dhole may cast the equivalent of the spell "Scrying" on any creature within 24 hours of tasting its flesh or blood. As the attainment is not Supernal magic, it doesn't carry signs of Dhole's Nimbus. Furthermore, his connection to his prey is considered to be Intimate.

Dhole may also activate the optional Life 2 element of this attainment, which casts the equivalent of "Control Base Life" within the immediate vicinity of the prey, typically activating their hunting or combative instincts.

2nd—*Follow the Prey (Space 3):* Within 24 hours of tasting his prey (as above) Dhole may cast the equivalent of the spell "Portal" to follow her, arriving in her immediate vicinity. Each use costs 1 Mana, but his connection is always considered to be Intimate.

Dhole may also activate the optional Life 3 element, which grants supernatural speed by altering his nervous system, musculature and in a subtle fashion, his body's connection to spatial dimensions. It uses the rules for the Time 3 spell "Acceleration" (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 262), but substitutes Life for Time Arcanum dots, up to a maximum equal to the mage's Space dots. It uses the same Mana cost (1 per turn) as the standard spell, however. Once activated, it grants Dhole to add +45 Speed, +3 Initiative, and subtracts 3 from attackers' dice ranged and close combat pools. This cannot be combined with the Time spell "Acceleration."

Scelestus Advantages: Antinomian Magic (added to an existing spell), Joining

Mana/per turn: 15/5

Armor: 5 ("Organic Resilience", Life •••••)

Envoys and Inhabitants

No explanation of the Scelesti would be complete without a survey of the Abyss' denizens. Not all Scelesti habitually summon these beings, but most will encounter them many times over the course of their twisted lives. The Void-born feel closer to the Wicked than any other beings from the worlds of Law—they might even talk to them before they inflicting atrocities. Accursed mages use them as hunting beasts, familiars, tutors, objects of worship, and occasionally lovers.

Enemies of the Void take comfort in knowing that its inhabitants wither upon the shores of ordered reality. Storytellers should treat most Abyssal denizens as spirits (see the **Mage: The Awakening** core book, pp. 317-322) with one important difference: They cannot sustain themselves with the Essence that flows through the Fallen World's spiritual ecosystem. A few weaker entities might be slain by force feeding them Shadow-born or ghostly Essence, but for the most part, they're just unable to "digest" it. The Fallen World's Essence obeys patterns an Abyssal being can mock and mimic, but never truly symbolize. The Void-born cannot drink joy, feel the rush of the lion's kill, or survive on the simple vengeance a ghost radiates.

Summoned entities cannot permanently invade the world—but sometimes, they arrange visits lasting weeks, years or eons. Cults, Abyssal Verges and mighty spells might extend these beings' earthly (or Shadow-dwelling) lifespan. These circumstances usually mutate local Resonance to make it palatable to Abyssal guests. Affected creatures, objects, and places suffer unnatural changes, beyond even those that could be wrought by an angry ghost or native spirit. Haunted houses develop non-Euclidean features. Trees shed tin leaves. Psychic traumas unhinge cultists; Abyssal gods feed on their dreams. Scelestus "gardeners" usually maintain these broken places but some appear of their own accord, such as when an anti-natural intruder has already claimed a foothold.

These limitations may not apply to Annunaki and other great powers, but they too cannot casually break the walls of Law. They require mad messiahs and portentous events: things which the Accursed strive to provide.

In the Cursed Earth: Acamoth

Besides manifested Paradoxes, **acamoth** are the easiest Abyssal natives to encounter. Accordingly, they're detailed on pp. 322-323 of the **Mage: The Awakening** core rulebook. The acamoth listed there is a typical example of its kind; stronger and weaker varieties exist. Despite their inability to consume worldly Essence, the oldest prisoners tend to be the strongest. Abyssal Verges and grand summons used to occur more, but as mages learned of the Abyss' dangers and abandoned the old rites, they left their gods and servants to rest in the world or inhabit eldritch artifacts. The greatest acamoth arrived when the world trembled after the Celestial Ladder's fall and the newly manifested Void caressed the edges of the Material Plane.

Every acamoth seeks a path back to the Abyss but lacks the psychic energy to penetrate Astral reality's layers. Fortunately, mages' souls reach across the Void when they draw down spells and are capable of journeying to the edge of the psychic universe. A properly prepared sorcerer is an ideal vehicle. Once it finds an accomplice, the acamoth floods her dreams with visions of the Abyss to both attune her soul and to use it to channel its Essence. In return, the entity rewards its "familiar" with short-lived powers known as Investments. Mages do not know exactly what allows an acamoth to sustain itself during its imprisonment, but most believe that they fall into a form of hibernation until an opportunity to escape presents itself.

Manifestations: Gulmoth

Some Abyssal beings wait in the earth, but an infinite number populate the Void itself. Sorcerers usually summon these **gulmoth** accidentally as Paradox Manifestations. Only Scelesti possess easy access to techniques able to deliberately call them, but even then, they don't perform the majority of these rituals.

Despite their taboos, other mages seek gulmoth out to demand their services. The intruders do not provide Investments as acamoth do, but offer potent, specialized boons connected to the faces they show the world. Every boon levies a tithe. A gulmoth might arrange for the mage to find love, but force him to mutilate competing suitors.

Like conventional spirits, gulmoth also possess bans that restrain their behavior and offer hope of getting out of a bad bargain. Most occult texts either leave the ban out or lie about it. Scelesti usually transmit such information through oral traditions instead.

The Abyss is a chaotic realm, yet sorcerers note that gulmoth manifest consistent identities, appearances and powers. Lists of gulmoth names, rites, and attributes populate grimoires devoted to Abyssal summoning. Even the Accursed are not certain why gulmoth appear to be such stable entities, but the most popular theory posits that they project a seeming constrained by their method of arrival. The Void seeps through nonetheless, adding strange, maddening aspects to their forms. A gulmoth hound might shed burning ectoplasm and teleport out of the right angles of rooms.

When summoned by a Paradox Manifestation, the gulmoth organizes its shape around a spell's intent. The Abyss extrudes a hungry, tentacled cat-thing from the seed of an errant Life rote, for example. In the case of summoning rites, the mage's structured desire creates a vessel to be filled, then distorted. A more sinister notion holds that the gulmoth are not really independent beings, but are woven together by the Great Dreamers to explore the world of Law, like the living lures of angler fish. No matter the truth, a conjured gulmoth never lasts forever, fading back into the Abyss.

Gulmoth include the Manifestation Paradoxes found on p. 273 of the **Mage: The Awakening** core rulebook. In addition, every gulmoth possesses one or more Boons (services), Tithes (required payments for Boons, which the being may be able to forcibly claim) and spiritual Bans connected to its apparent nature. The supplement **Summoners** also describes gulmoth in detail, listing several such entities.

The Storyteller might allow sorcerers to call gulmoth with antinomian Death and Spirit spells. These spells function normally, except that the affected spirit or ghost mutates into the desired gulmoth, which then manifests its standard powers.

Dwellers at the Threshold: Qliphoth

Some mages seek the Imperial Mysteries beyond Mastery. They crawl through the Abyss, hoping to incarnate in the Supernal Realms alongside Gods and Ascended ones.

In that dark hour, surrounded by the Void, some fail.

The Void finds a use for them as living traps and warnings to those who would challenge the babbling emptiness beyond being. They are **Qliphoth**: mighty sorcerers who were consumed, hollowed out, and filled with impossible energies. Unlike other entities, Qliphoth may wander the Tellurian freely, walking from place to place along fragments of their

The Old Man

At the end of Astral space, a rough hut called the Hollow sits on the shores of Nothing. It's been patched so many times than none could tell its builder's culture. Age and scarring have won the hobbling, wizened man who stands by it a similar anonymity. Sometimes he lights a fire to warm himself. He's an ambassador from the Abyss: the Old Man, the Saint of Paradox, Eleventh and Perfect Aeon.

He's very friendly. He doesn't permit any being to abuse another in his presence, nor does he harm anyone. Visitors sometimes perceive a flash of something horrible in the old man—rot and steel, bloody fangs and an echo of sad laughter, maybe—but it always snaps back to his gentle, genial mien. People have told him they've had nightmares for years after seeing him. He appears to genuinely regret that.

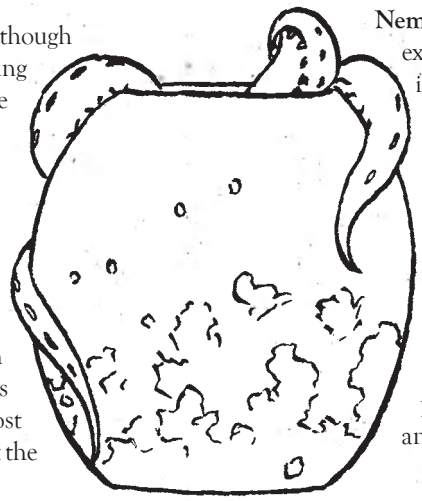
Scelesti usually worship him from afar—when they do it in person, he laughs at them. He never encourages anyone to surrender to the Abyss. Occasionally, he advises desperate pilgrims to run home. But he can't reject requests to act as the Void's advocate, and in that capacity he drives a very hard bargain. The Elder Diadem of the Baalim (p.69) is representative of what he might offer, and what he might ask for in exchange. He is loyal, but not unkind.

Nobody knows what happens when you enter the hut.

souls. To mundane eyes, a Dweller at the Threshold looks like an ordinary human—perhaps a madman, raving about invisible phenomena. Under the Mage Sight, a Qliphoth looks like a walking hole in the cosmos.

Qliphoth seem to be drawn to important events related to the Abyss, such as new Verges and unearthed grimoires. If they truly act on behalf of the Annunaki, they don't demonstrate it through straightforward action. They lurk at the scene and provide cryptic clues about the meaning of their visit. Sometimes they tempt mages into casting spells in their presence. This is a catastrophic mistake.

Each Qliphoth carries a world within it, though few will suffer the misfortune of experiencing it. This spiritual black hole contains the former sorcerer's past Paradoxes and Abyssal encounters. When a sorcerer casts a vulgar spell in the Qliphoth's presence, its Paradox traps her in its soul-realm. Nothing short of archmastery can rescue the victim, but she might be able to save herself by solving riddles within the soul-shell. It is said that if a sorcerer can comprehend the true cause of a Qliphoth's damnation, she'll escape its clutches. Most do not succeed, suffering eternal torture at the hands of the Dweller's lingering Paradoxes. Some Wicked mystics believe the Dur-Abzu evolved from the strongest Qliphoth of each Path as their soul-realms grew with prisoners.



Certain Scelesti worship the Qliphoth. Willing or not, they entered a communion with the Abyss greater than even most Accursed would dare. A few willingly enter a Dweller at the Threshold's personal universe to learn an esoteric secret from the Qliphoth or its prisoners, some of whom may have survived from the days of Atlantis. Ancient grimoires, mystic artifacts and mighty spirits might all be found within a single soul.

Beyond the descriptions above, no special rules govern the Qliphoth, as nothing short of archmastery can forcibly affect them or their soul realms. Less powerful beings must endure imprisonment when they trigger it, solve the riddles put before them, and escape—or spend the remainder of their days within a very strange, dangerous chronicle.

The Great Dreamers: Annunaki

The Baalim sects call them the **Annunaki**: the original intelligences of the Abyss, universes unto themselves. Other Scelesti call them the Eldest, Innocents, Pure Ones and hundreds of other names.

The Annunaki sleep. This is their truce with one another and shield against all-consuming Supernal Law. The enemy defines reality, so they choose to be undefined, dreaming of the wonders they once made and will make again, once those who would be God stumble from their thrones—a moment that draws ever closer, as the Exarchs impose their too-human flaws on Creation.

Yet even the Eldest's dreams flood the Abyss with alternate foundations for existence and negations of logic—endless possibilities that caress the cracked egg of the ordered universe. Sometimes the dreams drip in as Paradoxical Anomalies, Abyssal Verges and idea-beings that infect the Tellurian with their principles. Greater intruders include the **Prince of 100,000 Leaves**, a sapient history of the world where humanity experiences love through torture, sustenance through cannibalism and faith through betrayal, and where endless volumes detail all the torment that was, is and ever shall be; and the **Nemesis Continuum**, a theoretical physics that exposes the flaws in all other models, describing and triggering their undoing. Not all these dreams are so grand, however. Naturalists encounter illogical diseases and unknown insects that overthrow the order of things. Psychologists uncover perfect reasons for madness and turn mad themselves. The Abyss infects both the smallest cell and the brightest rogue stars.

But these are just dreams. When the Annunaki discover how fragile reality is, how prepared for collapse, perhaps they'll awaken, and devour the egg of the cosmos.

CHAPTER FOUR: REAPERS

Thou shalt not disfigure the soul.
—Frank Herbert, Dune

Awakening binds a soul to Supernal reality, but the link is a weak, inconstant one, threatened by the Abyss and flaws a sorcerer's moral discipline. Mages study, bleed in battle, and skirt madness to strengthen the soul's Supernal connection. They wonder if they can bypass these hardships with a secret formula: a Legacy or spell, perhaps. They don't ask these questions not too loudly, however, because willworkers know that Reapers always start with the same question and find answers that turn them into predators.

"Reaper" is an obscure bit of Awakened slang. Consilii discourage the name, because it labels a forbidden practice: adopting a Legacy that harvests and exploits human souls. In legendary days, Reapers practiced in the open. Sorcerers only ostracized them, reasoning that as long as they kept their distance the soul-eaters wouldn't sup on them. Eventually, Sleepers founded orders of witch hunters to destroy them and expected other mages (who often practiced openly) to join the fight or or be counted among the enemy.

Anthropologists know that traditional cultures around the world fear soul-stealing witchcraft but have no idea that it stems from Reaper-slaying campaigns from before recorded history. Diamond scholars know the stories, but not exactly when Reaping became a proscribed practice—after the fall of Atlantis, but before counted millennia. Only the Scelesti (and perhaps, the Banishers) can claim an older enmity. But the mystery of the soul always demands an answer, and as they study its mercurial flow between the subtle Arcana and prod at a unifying principle beyond them all, sorcerers rediscover the Reapers' ways.

Soul Loss Errata

As Reapers handle souls so often, it's important to update the game systems listed in "Soul Handling," on p. 276 of the **Mage** core rules.

A mages who loses her soul may still cast spells and utilize the other benefits of the Awakened template for a limited time as long as the soul still exists somewhere, even if it is a soul jar. In this situation, the mage loses one point of Gnosis per 24 hours. As long as she maintains at least one point of Gnosis, she is considered a mage, capable of casting spells and performing other feats belonging to her supernatural template. If her Gnosis drops to 0 or her soul has been abused to the point where it cannot be recovered (such as when a Tremere finishes eating it to maintain his existence) she becomes a Sleeper until such time as she is reunited with a new soul—not necessarily her own. Once she acquires an Awakened soul, she regains her full Gnosis and Arcana, as these develop from a mage's knowledge and intuition. They're not exclusively "stored" in the Awakened soul that allows them to manifest.

If she acquires a Sleeper's soul, she must embark on a more difficult journey. She regains Awakening at a Gnosis of 1 if she had returned to Sleep, or one rank higher than her current Gnosis, up to a maximum Gnosis equal to what she possessed before soul theft.

Consider this an official erratum to the core **Mage: The Awakening** rules.

Defining Reapers

Soul-manipulation is a perennial magical practice. The spells are well known, though usually taught alongside warnings that certain uses constitute high crimes in the Lex Magica or could drive sorcerers mad by violating the way of Wisdom. The Silver Ladder's highest codes—the Gold Law—define Reaping as the taking of souls to enhance magic or personal ability in such a fashion that the soul might be irrevocably lost. Commentaries recommend severe punishments but list many exceptions—after all, willworkers hate being told they're forbidden to do anything. Creating a soul stone is no crime, and it isn't even illegal to use another mage's stone to extract favors. Creating a soul stone invites these dangers; allowing this form of blackmail neatly discourages it. Mages

skilled in the Death and Spirit Arcana might rip out Sleepers souls without consequence, as long as they don't belong to anyone important.

Reaping steps beyond these casual violations, making soul-theft a central sacrament that injures the stolen spark. Most Reapers prefer Awakened souls, but when they prey on Sleepers, they turn communities into evil places, filled with sickness and spirit possession. Even a hypocrite with a soul jar will take up arms against them. Even Seers of the Throne persecute Reapers, though the reasons for this are less clear. Although they're less concerned with moral scruples, most Ministries enforce taboos against studying the soul closely enough to create soul-stealing Legacies. According to Seer doctrine, their Exarchs own the world's souls—maybe they don't want competition.

Nevertheless, Reaping arises from primordial curiosity. Driven by common inspirations, their Legacies rise again and again, Mysterium archives list dozens: the Nagaraja, Ghost Knives, Infinite Pillar and more. There was a time, a thousand years ago, when they filled books thick with the names of active sects, most composed of little more than a willful Master and one or two followers, but some great enough to rule fiefs of hollow slaves.

Then the Tremere came.

To Tremble With Damnation

Tremere liches came out of Eastern Europe while it was still pagan. In the 8th century, one or two demanded hospitality at wizards' towers. Full cabals followed, dashing dead monsters' skulls against shuttered gates to prove their benevolent intentions—and power. They were warrior-sorcerers and students of the soul who promised to lead the Awakened to a new age of splendor, built on the ashes of burning enemies. Tremere hunted Seers and Scelesti, but selected Reapers and vampires for the balance of their wrath. According to Tremere philosophy, Atlantis's faithful willworkers were the natural lords of souls. Anyone who challenged their crowns deserved to burn.

The undead had kept the Diamond from remaking Rome into a new Atlantis. Mages hated them, but knew better than to test them again. Against vampires, the Tremere would have to go it alone. The Legacy was more successful at rallying mages against the old Reaper cults. As the Dark Ages tore the Empire into ragged kingdoms, soul-eaters claimed slave fiefdoms throughout the West. Witch-Vikings ripped the Awakenings out of Mysterium monks. Dull-eyed slaves toiled in mountain manors as their lords sprawled on thrones filled with their screaming souls.

Tremere eradicated them alone or alongside allied cabals. They knew the Reapers' secrets and weaknesses. In return for their help, they demanded prisoners, first pick of their possessions, and private cloisters in which to study. They said that perilous forces and the sheer temptation of Reaping demanded utmost privacy.

From the Tremere's point of view, this was all perfectly true. Motivated by pure intentions, their hunger was not true Reaping, but another thing entirely: the unfortunate side effect of purity. They thought they could fill their needs through crusades against Reapers (who tended to keep a generous supply of souls on hand) and by scavenging the lost and wounded from Sleepers' wars.

When other mages cared to look, they noticed mysterious deaths and mad Sleepers, but these led to little more than a few duels and rumors. In the end, the Tremere were exposed by success. They extinguished most of the West's Reaper Legacies — and lost a ready supply of Awakened souls to sup on. They emptied soul jars and ground soul stones to sand and wasted power, and eventually turned on their hosts. In 1099, the Silver Ladder lictor Caterine Bedlam told the Convocation of Antioch what many now suspected: the Tremere was a Legacy of Reapers who hunted their own kind.

Reapers in the Modern Age

Although mages still steal souls, few modern Reapers survive longer than a few years — most never get a chance to teach their Legacies. The Pentacle, Seers and Tremere all hunt them for the sake of their varied agendas. Reaping is an abomination to most and competition for the Tremere.

Few survivors practice their Arts for purely practical reasons. They're quiet fanatics who teach their students complex, persuasive ideologies. Adherents appeal to gods, devils and cruel philosophies to justify soul theft. Reaper elders prefer freshly-Awakened students: mages who live

Suspected Reaper Legacies

The following Legacies from other **Mage: The Awakening** books would be classified as Reapers, should their practices become well known:

Carnival Melancholy (The Silver Ladder, p. 182): Accepting entrants from the Silver Ladder and Acanthus, the Legacy steals souls to claim their destinies, channeling them into personal luck and charmed items. The Silver Ladder is said to tolerate this faction because they bind Sleepers to the order's cause, one way or another.

Echo Walkers (Legacies: The Ancient, p. 121): Obrimos Echo Walkers lure entities from the Aether with victims' souls. These beings are said to be angels or members of Ascended pre-human race. Outside the protection of any faction, Echo Walkers protect themselves from Pentacle justice and Tremere predators with binding oaths.

Timori (Banishers, p. 153): The "Feared Ones" are little more than a legend to most mages—known sources aren't even clear about whether they're human. They possess less animosity toward the Art than their allies. Mages aren't their enemies. Mages are *food*.

alone and don't know enough to ask inconvenient questions.

Modern Reaper Legacies often spring from the extremes of recognized Awakened society. They dedicate soul exploitation to the glory of a Path, order, or greater faction — often with the secret approval of their comrades. Guardians of the Veil believe Reaping is a sin against the Art, but hide the (Legion) (see p. 92) within their ranks. Sin has its uses. The Silver Ladder declared its Carnival Melancholy anathema, but high-ranking thearchs use their soul-powered trinkets. And though many Banishers believe mages steal souls as a matter of course, the Legacy's own Gnosis-thieves still prosper.

Even hidden in the fold of other factions, Reapers still move cautiously. No matter how many friends they acquire, the Tremere still hunt them.

The Tremere, Revisited

When mages seek out the Tremere, they usually find loners hunting impoverished Sleepers or ruling small, soul-dead cults. Starved for souls, these liches turn desperate, foolish, and easy to find. To the Pentacle, they're the ragged remains of a defeated heresy. Few know that the liches' hierarchy creates the appearance of weakness. Tremere let their weakest members starve if they don't have the strength to rise and claim the Legacy's secret powers. They eliminate traitors who would reveal that the higher echelons exist, leaving the liches stronger than they appear. Their grand ambitions intact, they plan to not only conquer other Reapers, but change the nature of magic itself.

Myth and History

Five dragons feared their Father.
They set upon him with talons and cut worlds from His Flesh,
The Blood cried out: "Why have you buried me, brothers and sisters?"

But the dragons knew Father's Blood would reveal their crime.

So begins *The Suspire*: the Tremere's holy grimoire.

It says that the people who colonized Atlantis brought diverse sorceries with them, crude fragments of the ultimate truth. The dragons (described as wise sages, gods, or monsters, depending on the verse) replaced these incomplete systems with ten Arcana and five Supernal Realms. Most sorcerers followed the system because it was superior to the old ways. The most stubborn mages were called barbarians and banished from the Ocean Spire, but among those who remained, a few suspected that the cosmos was even greater than the dragons' teachings. They questioned the sage-monsters but were only answered with silence and riddles.

The Tremere take their name from one of these doubters. "Tremere" is a crude, Latinized reduction of the title "He Who shakes the Boundaries." The liches' founder believed that five Realms and ten Arcana concealed a mighty, unifying principle: the nature of the soul.

According to *The Suspire*, Tremere went to Atlantis' great caves, where the dragons coiled in hermitage. He asked, "What is the soul?"

The Dragon of the Aether said, "The soul is the fiery well of life and sorcery: spark of Prime."

The Dragon of Arcadia said, "The soul sets the cosmos in its course. It is the winding vine of Fate."

The Dragon of Pandemonium said, "The soul is the will, for desire defines the Self against the riot of Space. It is Mind: the original demon of 'I am.'"

The Dragon of the Primal Wild said, "The soul is the meaning of things: the Spirit which turns lust to love, and shape into beauty."

The Dragon of Stygia said, "The soul moves on."

Tremere knew that he had one soul governed by one truth, greater than the dragons' divisions. He knew they had lied to him, and so he cast his soul to the deep Astral, where

The Suspire as a Grimoire

No Tremere below the rank of custos (see p. 84 for Tremere ranks) is permitted to own a copy of *The Suspire* (named for a word meaning "Sigh," or "Breath"). To teach initiates, Tremere share fragments of the book for as long as it takes to memorize them before burning them and scattering the ashes. The Legacy allows custodies to copy full texts for their personal use. Each princeps possesses a preferred text, which he may pass on to Tremere of equal station. If no such candidate can be found, he is expected to destroy the book. In the modern age, most copies are written in the Latin, Norse runes, and Sanskrit used by the sect's dominant factions. Tremere still write certain passages in Atlantean, primarily by rote—most do not know the language.

Consequently, few copies of the Suspire are true grimoires. None are daimonomicons (see p. 22) because as far as the Tremere know, the Legacy cannot be recorded in this fashion. The exceptions contain rotes for the subtle Arcana. Many also function as soul jars and may possess ancient beings the Tremere consult for occult knowledge.

savage gods spoke to mages who respected the lost ways, before Atlantis. They entered his spirit and warned him that the dragons had committed a terrible crime, casting brothers into an unknown darkness so that they could claim the world. In the throes of possession he wrote cryptic verses about the Father and Blood—of a final secret, locked away by the dragons.

Hoping that others might decipher his automatic writing, Tremere founded a secret cult. When he died, his successor took the Tremere name. Through 77 generations, the Tremere cult studied souls they stole from barbarians and broke gods under tortures designed to pluck secrets from their beings. Their efforts were tantalizing failures. Souls appeared to have one nature, but shattered under the Arcana. As gods burned, they said that the beings who could tell them of the Father and Blood didn't exist—yet.

The 78th Tremere was the first of the Fallen Age. *The Suspire* says, "As monsters crawled from their old prison, he followed them in search of the sixth dragon."

The Tremere cult rode out in search of the Fall's children: Abyss-born entities, Shadow predators, and unquiet dead released by the Celestial Ladder's destruction. They captured Sleepers to sacrifice and keenly observed the transformations these monsters wrought upon victims' souls. Their experiments hinted that a solution was nigh; the new creatures could harness souls in ways that could not be easily classified by Atlantean sorcery. They believed that one monstrous tribe might descend from the beings the dragons had imprisoned before the Fall. Thus, they walked back to civilization on Roman roads in search of vampires.

The Theban Captivity

Vampires shaped stolen vitality into diverse powers, even the ability to create others of their kind. Tremere thought these abilities flowed from a form of unified soul magic and wished to command it themselves. By threat and bribe, they convinced a few vampires to perform the transforming Embrace. Volunteers only died—the Awakened soul refused the Blood. But through these early bargains, the Tremere uncovered the legend of the Theban: an undead sorcerer capable of changing his own nature.

They prepared a messenger, but the vampire invaded their sanctum before the Tremere could send him forth—the monster had foreseen their arrival. The Theban gave them his Embrace—all of them. He used blood sorcery to lure the entire cult. The entranced Tremere believed they entered Egypt of their own accord until they came to the vampire's laboratory. Half of the Theban's subjects perished. Most of the rest changed into deformed monsters. The vampire used them as guards and hunting beasts.

The handful of survivors never became true vampires. They fed on breath, not blood, and could not consume their victims bit by bit. They always killed the ones they fed upon. Yet Breath-Eaters didn't age and could use minor vampiric powers. *The Suspire* claims they could walk in the sun shortly after eating souls and could even cast Awakened spells if they fed on other sorcerers.

The Tremere had little opportunity to contemplate the metaphysics of their infection. They were the Theban's slaves. Even as he slept, his blood commanded them.

Crossover with Vampire: The Requiem

We designed the Tremere to suggest (but not definitively state) connections with **Vampire: The Requiem**. The Legacy's history and terminology imply contacts with the Lancea Sanctum, Ordo Dracul and even VII.

Among undead and willworker scholars, certain specialists know that the Blood and Awakening cannot rule the same individual. The embrace kills mages. Vampires can't learn the Arcana. Somehow, the Theban (a name that Kindred legendry assigns to a type of blood magic, not a person) broke these rules. The Breath-Eaters are little more than a footnote in vampire legendry (see the **Vampire: The Requiem** supplement **Ancient Mysteries**, pp. 157-158) but may inspire Kindred historians and occultists.

In a **Vampire** game, Tremere may also act as antagonists, but they hunt vampires cautiously. Modern Tremere are no longer true undead but fear that somehow the Theban's brood might enslave them again, should they rouse the remnant within. That said, powerful Tremere may use the koimaomai death sleep (see p. 83) to hunt Kindred enemies across centuries.

The Final Watchtower

They followed their master's dreams into distant lands. Far from humans (they could not steal breath from animals) they fed upon each other to escape starvation. Five survivors completed the journey. In the East, five Masters of the subtle Arcana imprisoned one of the Bound in their fortress. The Tremere don't know why the Theban sent them—only that it was an error that freed them.

The Suspire tells two stories, side by side. In one, Breath-Eaters devoured the Masters. They used the sorcerers' souls to release the Bound. In the other, the Masters destroyed the intruders but as the Breath-Eaters collapsed to ash, they infected the victors with their strange undeath.

The fortress shuddered; the Bound roared into the Astral Realm. The five chased it to the edge of the Abyss. They saw a thorny tree twist out of the chaos, and knew they had fulfilled the Tremere quest. They beheld the Final Watchtower of the Soul. The five survivors—the first true liches—did not carve their names upon it. The Watchtower sang *their* names, claiming them. A paradoxical Awakening ripened within them. It gave them magic without souls.

The Suspire ends in prophetic verse: the song of the Final Watchtower:

You mastered My Flesh,
stolen by five dragons, my treacherous children.
You drank of My Blood,
sixth dragon, my forgotten Son.
I am the seventh dragon and the first, the Lone and Final Watchtower.
In your hollowness, you made Me whole.
From My wholeness, your hollowness will devour the universe.

Lords of the Seventh Dragon

Tremere believe that Final Watchtower reconciles the fragmented Arcana into a supreme Art of the soul: the secret of the "seventh dragon," imprisoned by the founders of Atlantis. It is the Father of magic. The sixth dragon—the Blood—is vampirism personified: a messiah that prepared them for the final secrets of the universe.

The five dragons of Atlantis are deceivers. They betrayed Creation by driving souls from one subtle Arcanum to the next. They imprisoned the Final Watchtower as one of the Bound and designed the Tellurian to reject it. The Father and his final Art cannot exist in a world ruled by their sorcery, so it stands in the Abyss, awaiting its Tremere prophets. It steals names instead of waiting for the worthy to write them. It confers mastery of the soul, but only reveals its secrets to the soulless. It contains the secrets of the Tellurian but resides in the Abyss: the un-place that contains its paradoxes. The five dragons made the universe to keep it out, but the Tremere will bring it back. They are the only beings in the universe to have proven worthy of its Mysteries—but they do not truly comprehend the Father. They must devise a final theory of the soul.

Once they prevail, their Watchtower will conquer Death, Fate, Mind, Prime and Spirit. They will crush the old dragons beneath their heels. Until then, they must reclaim every shard of lost knowledge. Until the day of Imperium, every soul, and every secret of the soul, belongs to the Tremere.

The Hollowing

Although it's been called a "virus," Tremere enter the Legacy voluntarily. Captured Tremere invent spiritual infections and magical poisons to deny moral culpability and ingratiate themselves with naïve sorcerers. They lie to themselves, too. Many Tremere blame their condition on soul loss but in every case, the victim can always refuse the Legacy and accept eroding Gnosis, Sleep, and spiritual death. Given the consequences, it's easy to justify inflicting them on someone else instead.

Tremere initiation usually begins with soul theft, using the "Supernal Theft" attainment or the Death 5 variant of "Sever the Sleeping Soul" that affects Awakened souls. A volunteer walks a labyrinth shaped like a seven-pointed star, trailing blood from wounds in his feet until he meets the lich at its center. An unwilling subject struggles at his bonds while the Tremere works. In a few cases, an initiate loses his soul for another reason: a misadventure with Death magic, powerful spirits, or other Reaper Legacies. These candidates track down the Legacy and demand induction to save themselves. Some Tremere secretly steal a candidate's soul and offer membership as a cure.

In Astral meditation, the Tremere and initiate visit the endless ocean called Oroboros, where sorcerers can cast anything into oblivion: memories, dreams—and souls. As the lich sings verses from *The Suspire*, her protégé baptizes himself in the Oroboros.

Any other mage would be consumed in an instant, but not the soulless initiate, provided he meets the minimum requirements for the Legacy's first attainment. If not, the baptism obliterates him. His consciousness vanishes and his body transforms into dust.

A soulless, knowledgeable acolyte enters Oroboros as a spiritual paradox. His Astral presence isn't a soul, but remnant of the self anchored by his knowledge of Death. Under his master's guidance, the so-called Final Watchtower gives the new Tremere what lich tradition calls the Hollowing: an anti-soul Tremere believe is a living extension of the Watchtower. It infects him with a hunger for souls. To the Tremere, this represents the Father's desire to gather Creation into Himself.

After returning to the material plane, the master gives her student an Awakened soul. If he consumes it, he joins the Legacy and manifests its first attainment. An initiate might refuse the final step, but if he holds out long enough to lose all Gnosis from soul loss, he transforms into a creature Tremere call a preta.

Preta

Quote: *Who am I? You. I'll make myself out of you.*

Background: Occasionally, Tremere initiates either refuse to take the final step of eating a soul or some calamity ensures they're unable to find one before the Hollowing drains their Gnosis. House Nagaraja borrowed the Sanskrit term "preta" to describe the result: a human-clothed spirit that hungers for souls. It eats them alongside the flesh of its victims.

Description: Its soul replaced by the void of the Final Watchtower, a preta's Pattern loses its magical mooring to a set identity. Defined by its hunger, its jaws widen and fill with small, sharp teeth. Its belly swells and its limbs turn thin with ropy muscles over knobs of bone and sinew. Over time, a preta may lose digits and clumps of flesh from autocannibalism.

These changes stretch to the very limit of a viable human form. Loose clothing, hoods and hats can hide a preta from casual observation, but even then something about the creature's twitchy movements and sickly-sweet smell signal something unnatural.

Storytelling Hints: Although errant pretas might set upon victims near Tremere sanctums, liches destroy them unless the lich possesses the power to enslave them. Pretas may be bound by the magic used to control spirits and ghosts, but they're corporeal beings, similar to both in certain respects.

Like Tremere, pretas require soul nourishment (see pp. 365-366 of the **Mage** core rulebook). Without a soul, a preta loses one point of Rank per day. Once its Rank reaches 0, a preta perishes and rapidly decomposes.

Rank: Equal to the former mage's Gnosis

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Intelligence 1, Wits 2, Resolve 2, Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Skills: Pretas possess the former mage's Physical skills, but no others.

Willpower: 2

Essence: 8

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3 (Pretas use the higher of Dexterity and Wits)

Speed: 12

Size: 5

Health: 10

Influences: Death 2 and rank 2 in an influence corresponding to the former mage's highest Arcanum other than Death.

Numina: Pretas may use a Numen equivalent to the Tremere attainment "Hideous Stipend," but do not need to overcome the victim's Resolve. Instead, a preta must eat his victim alive, gaining the soul after inflicting fatal aggravated wounds in this fashion.

The Sevenfold Oath

Upon consuming their first Awakened soul, a new Tremere's master leads her through the Legacy's Sevenfold Oath. The lich Bâhâzâd uses the following version, which encapsulates the Tremere's laws.

Through me, this soul nourishes the seventh dragon so that His Watchtower rises from the wastes of Paradox. For His Mystery, I swear:

I will not suffer my brethren to preserve me against weakness. If my Arts fail to find me sustenance, let me return to the seventh dragon's coils.

Tremere don't steal souls for each other unless one owes another a boon. Otherwise the Legacy would suffer weakness in its ranks, and regular meetings to distribute souls would compromise its cell structure. Weak Tremere may ask brethren to attach souls to them using Wicked Claim (see the **Mage** core book, p. 365) but must provide souls for attachment—and more souls, to pay for the service (see below).

I will not betray my Legacy or House. I will defend them against enemies and errant friends. I have no tongue to speak our secrets, and no hands for the mudras of treacherous Arts. Let my flesh turn to ash and my mind to red pain if they betray us.

The Legacy expects loyalty or death. Tremere objectives take precedence over friendships or personal survival. Pragmatically speaking, liches are expected to keep a low profile. If questioned, they must lie about the sect's strength, structure and agenda. They tried telling the truth during the Middle Ages. It didn't work.

If I am unworthy of a House, I will obey the brethren of a recognized House. If I am of a House, I will obey its princeps. If I am princeps, I will enslave myself to the Mystery.

The Tremere recognize three ranks in addition to distinctions of age and magical ability: *enfantes* who have not accomplished much for the Legacy, *custodes* who have been accepted into a Tremere House (see p. 84), and the *princeps* who rule each House.

I will not steal the souls of brethren, nor will I gift souls without demanding fair service. I will not allow avarice or kindness to weaken my Legacy.

Stealing souls that other Tremere have harvested is a capital crime. Giving away a soul is considered foolish. They're the only true currency, beyond wealth and magical knowledge.

I will render payment in souls when it is due, as agreed in sworn oaths. If I an unwilling to do so, I am a traitor; my souls and existence are forfeit. If I am unable to do so, destroy me for my weakness.

Although the Legacy expects members to fend for themselves, some favors require payment. All initiates owe their "creators" an Awakened soul. Until they make payment (something that could take decades or centuries, given the difficulties of such an acquisition) the senior lich demands loyal service. If a Tremere must use the Wicked Claim attainment to attach a soul to a lich who hasn't mastered it for himself, she may demand the standard payment of one Sleepers' soul in addition to the soul she binds to her client.

Arcanum teachings and induction into a House also require a soul fee—usually a set number of Sleepers' souls. As the supreme coin, a single Awakened soul is a more than adequate substitute, and may also be used to secure powerful boons: mighty grimoires, rare rotes, or services from another lich.

I will claim errant parts of the Great Art from lesser Legacies and will subjugate them as Houses of our greater Mystery.

If they find other Reapers, Tremere are duty bound to devour their souls and, if possible, replicate their attainments. Should a lich succeed, he must attempt to create a new House. If the attempt fails, the Tremere hasn't committed a crime, as founding a House is known to be difficult.

I will erase renegade Arts from the world: those which crawl forth from the Lie and its diverse, inferior beings: vampires, ghosts, low spirits, and the half-Asleep.

Although they claim to serve an unknown Watchtower, the Tremere still believe the Supernal is the true reality. They despise magical practices that sever the soul's connection to the Supernal. Liches catalog, study, and destroy the soul-manipulation methods used by hedge occultists, spirits and other creatures. Tremere especially despise vampire occultists, but despite the strong rhetoric, don't hunt vampires unless they think they can win easily and conceal Legacy involvement.

The Power of the Tremere

Given spells such as "Steal Lifespan" and other life-extending, soul-handling magic, joining the Tremere presented in the **Mage** core book isn't exactly appealing. The following systems are designed to give the Legacy a straight power boost as well as flavor befitting a major antagonist or dark protagonist.

Initiation Traits

Upon consuming his first Awakened soul, a Tremere acquires the following characteristics:

Hollow Identity: Tremere no longer possesses auras. Instead, they may "borrow" that of any soul in their possession (such as a soul sustaining them or held in a soul jar made using the Legacy's second attainment) for a scene as a reflexive action, at the cost of 1 point of Mana. Once a soul has been fully devoured, it may no longer be used for that purpose.

An exceptional success (five successes or four successes more than the minimum, whichever is higher) on abilities used to read auras reveals something false or flawed about the stolen aura. Tremere symbols manifest such as Death-runes, great black dragons or various occurrences of the number seven.

Soul of No Soul: Tremere don't possess personal souls. Sorcery used to sever or alter a lich's soul affects the soul currently animating him instead. The Tremere can also react to soul-affecting magic by using a variant of "Hollow Identity," above, to sacrifice another soul instead of his current, animating soul. This reflexive action costs the Tremere 1 point of Mana.

Stave Off Annihilation: Tremere may "burn" through the remnants of a soul that has otherwise grown too old to sustain them. Whenever a lich would lose a Willpower dot or suffer aggravated damage due to keeping a soul for too long, he may force the owner of the soul to suffer the consequences for him. Roll Resolve + Stamina – the victim's Resolve (+ Gnosis, if any). If the Tremere succeeds, the victim suffers the penalty. The victim must be a living Sleeper or Awakened human.

If the victim's soul is ever rescued from the Tremere before the victim perishes or drops to 0 Willpower dots, the effects of Stave off Annihilation reverse themselves. The victim regains all lost Health and Willpower dots and the Tremere suffers all the penalties he avoided. Tremere who lose a soul they've treated in this fashion might rot apart in seconds.

Koimaomai: The Death Sleep

Tremere retain a sliver of the vampirism that infected them during the Theban Captivity. It's enough to replicate the Kindred's ability to sleep through the ages without the need for stolen souls. Tremere writings call it *koimaomai*, "the sleep of death."

To enter koimaomai, the lich sacrifices a dot of Gnosis. This allows her to spend up to 25 years in a state of mystical slumber, during which she consumes no souls. Though it doesn't rot, her body appears to be a corpse. It doesn't need food, air, water or livable temperatures.

Each 25 year period beyond the first consumes an additional dot of the lich's Gnosis. If the lich's Gnosis can no longer support her current Arcana, she loses access to them until her Gnosis returns to the required rank. If she loses the ability to contain the amount of Mana she holds, it leaks into the immediate area, where it may alter local Resonance.

If her Gnosis drops to 0, she perishes; the Final Watchtower consumes her identity. Her body becomes a corpse as old as her tenure in the Legacy.

During koimaomai, the lich may only spend Mana to heal unless she succeeds at a Gnosis roll. If she succeeds, she may take actions that don't require speech, movement or the use of physical senses—typically, spells that provide extrasensory perception or a way to travel outside the body. Every 24 hours of activity requires 1 point of Mana.

Liches must spend a minimum amount of time in koimaomai determined by their Wisdom, as follows:

Wisdom Minimum	Koimaomai Duration
10	24 hours
9	48 hours
8	1 week
7	2 weeks
6	1 month
5	2 months
4	1 year
3	2 years
2	10 years
1	In response to a portentous mystical event—an alignment of the stars or the arrival of an ancient supernatural power, for example.

After the minimum duration, the lich may attempt to reawaken. Roll the Tremere's Resolve + Composure; success indicates the lich may rise. Failure consigns her to slumber for an additional period of time equal to the minimum duration, after which she may attempt to rise again. In addition,

an ally may awaken a Tremere at any time by feeding her a soul with the Death spell "Soul Binding," (Mage: The Awakening core rulebook, p. 144) or an equivalent supernatural power. If she wishes, the Tremere completely consumes the soul and rises.

During koimaomai, her true non-being—the Hollowness of the Final Watchtower—becomes impossible to ignore. Thus, each period of koimaomai (of any duration, measured from one waking period to the next) compels a degeneration check for Tremere with a Wisdom of 1 or higher (roll 2 dice).

Lich Houses

About half the Tremere are **enfantes**: low-status liches who operate alone. To develop their soul lore beyond the boundaries of Legacy's attainments, they seek out the Houses that Tremere create out of conquered Reaper Legacies.

How many Houses currently exist? How many used to exist? That's entirely up to the Storyteller. Some possess nothing more than a leader, or **princeps**, and one or two lesser initiates called **custodes** (singular: **custos**). Tremere don't want outsiders to learn their true numbers or objectives so the Legacy eliminates evidence of the Houses whenever it can.

Houses induction deforms the Tremere's magical identity, so he acquires the House's signature weakness. Even so, House membership is only possible because of the lich's Hollowness—no other mage can join one. As a result, a Tremere may learn House attainments in addition to standard Legacy attainments. Maintaining his non-soul according to the House's configuration is taxing; he must consume twice as many souls as usual to survive. If the Tremere fails to devour souls at the required rate, he loses access to his House's attainments but retains its weakness (see below). He regains access to House attainments when he returns to consuming extra souls.

Despite internal propaganda, Tremere can't completely incorporate conquered Legacies. No House possesses first attainments, new primary Arcana or separate oblations. However, House teachers don't need to sacrifice a Willpower dot to induct students, and students need not pay a second experience point stipend. Instead of an experience tax, the "second" House attainment requires a fixed fee of 8 experience points and the "third" requires 12 points.

As they inspire a voracious appetite, all Houses require an initiation fee: five or six Sleepers' or one mage's soul is the usual price.

How do Tremere create Houses? This appears to be a well-defended secret, or one discovered anew by each founder. In any event, it does not appear to require exceptional command over the Arcana. Tremere might summon a being capable of creating the House, or master a fourth Tremere attainment. The truth is up to the Storyteller.

House Nagaraja

Before the Tremere came, the wandering Nagaraja stalked souls through India and Asia Minor. Despite their wide range, their Legacy never contained more than a handful of ascetics. Hunting evildoers, Nagaraja cultivated spiritual strength by practicing, mastering, and discarding their quarry's passions. During the cycle of indulgence, the so-called "serpent kings" developed a reputation for violence and hedonism.

The Nagaraja are the oldest House. One of the first true Tremere tracked the Legacy to the Hindu Kush. She stole the soul of a Nagaraja Master, adopted his face, and led his followers to Persia. Over generations, she devoured his followers and gradually replaced them with Tremere he tutored in stolen attainments.

Descended from one of the first Tremere, the serpent kings treat other Houses with lordly derision. A noble bearing contrasts with simple, wandering lives. Nagaraja are the kings of souls, not the fleeting treasures of material existence. Sensual pleasures exist to be conquered. When a serpent king indulges and conquers his victim's Vice, she proves her claim to his soul.

Appearance: Nagaraja still emulate their original ascetic Legacy. They wear simple tough traveling clothes, rags, or functional wear they steal on the road. Initiates skilled in the Life Arcanum prefer minimal clothing or nudity. They grow their hair long and let it tangle, or shave it off to remove distractions. Serpent kings carry signs of excess: half-finished bottles, brawl scars, and track marks. Most of them are rake thin from periods of self-denial, but a few of them have either grown fat from repeated gluttony or maintain extreme levels of fitness to satisfy a Pride Vice.

House Weakness: Jaded by excess, members of House Nagaraja regain 2 fewer points of Willpower from satisfying a Virtue than usual. If this wouldn't allow them to recover any Willpower at all, they regain 1 point of Willpower instead.

2nd Attainment: Inflict Vice

Prerequisite: Gnosis 5, Mind 3

The Nagaraja may unleash a Vice from a stolen soul, infecting another with its emotional energies. This attainment functions as the Mind spell "Emotional Urging," except that it also imposes an Obsessive Compulsion derangement (see **The World of Darkness** core rulebook, p. 98) for its duration. The target's emotions and compulsion match the stolen Vice. An angry victim of Wrath cleans his weapons or goads others into fighting, while a target infected with Gluttony feels an overpowering urge to eat anything on hand—even inedible or poisonous objects that possess a pleasing smell or texture.

3rd Attainment: Conquer Vice

Prerequisite: Gnosis 7, Mind 4

The Nagaraja transforms a stolen Vice into iron discipline. After satisfying a Vice that belongs to one of her souls, the Nagaraja regains a number of Willpower points equal to her Mind dots and adds her Mind dots to her Composure. Furthermore, unlike the spell "Augment the Mind," the attainment allows the character's Willpower to exceed 10 dots. This attainment costs 1 point of Mana and lasts for one hour.

As Conquer Vice is not a spell, it can be stacked with "Augment the Mind" and similar Attribute enhancement magic, but in that case the spell's duration drops to Transitory, even if would normally last longer.

House Seo Hel

Patron of the dishonored dead, the Half-Black Goddess Hel attracted outcasts, cowards and the insane. Their witch-priests became the deformed "grim-faced ones" who ripped souls from their enemies. The Seo Hel terrified northern raiders and soldiers. They believed that if the grim-faced ones could bar them from an honored afterlife in Valhalla or Christian Heaven. Hel's witches would make them slaves, ripping out bones and nails to make arms for Ragnarok.

Infamous as they were, the Seo Hel became one of the first targets of the Tremere crusade. In a battle along the Vistula and Baltic Sea, the Tremere led Gdansk's mages in a decisive campaign, destroying a dozen cursed ships and their Seo Hel captains. Afterward, the victorious Tremere rode into the wild, supposedly searching for stragglers. In truth, they fled as the grim-faced ones' curse spread through their bodies.

The Seo Hel believed their patron represented the spiritual reflection of physical decay. Connected throughout life, the material and physical realms retain a bond upon death. Now, the House transmutes souls into matter and studies the ambiguous midpoints of these transformations.

Appearance: Seo Hel Tremere suffer from an affliction called the Grim Mark. From face to foot, one side of a Seo Hel's body turns gray-black, scaly and hard, like a lightning-felled tree. Seo Hel wear long sleeves, hoods and heavy coats to hide it, and most avoid public appearances whenever they can.

Seo Hel use Norse mythology as a magical praxis. They carry rune stones and wear the *seithr* witches' cat-skin gloves. They smear carved staves with blood and rip the lungs out of enemies to make the Norse "blood eagle," but never honor *Aesir* like Thor and Odin. At Ragnarok, the Seo Hel will storm their Supernal halls to bring them endless death.

House Weakness: The Grim Mark manifests as soon as a mage adopts the House's alternate second attainment. It starts as a dead gray patch on the cheek or forehead. Over the course of a day it spreads over one side of the Tremere's body. The Mark is difficult to conceal or even pass off as a normal deformity—half the mage looks like a crude, morbid sculpture made of something between wood and mummified flesh. The character automatically fails Social rolls that require a pleasing (or at least inoffensive) appearance, and loses any dots in the Striking Looks Merit. The magical nature of the Mark prevents it from physically impairing the Tremere, but any spells used to remove or conceal it fall to a Transitory duration regardless of their standard spell factors.

2nd Attainment: Crafts from the Grim Hall

Prerequisite: Gnosis 5, Matter 3

The Seo Hel may materialize an object significant to a soul she possesses. This might be a tool, weapon or even a piece of complex electronics. This resembles the Death spell "Touch of the Grave," but steals these objects from the soul's self-image, not Twilight.

Spend 1 point of Mana and roll the Tremere's Gnosis + Matter. The object looks cracked and deformed, with muted colors. Furthermore, unlike "Touch of the Grave," these objects possess a Durability rating equal to the mage's Matter dots. The true benefit of the attainment, however, is that the object carries the soul's ability to use it. The Seo Hel may substitute the soul's Skill dots for her own when she uses the object.

To get best use of this attainment, Seo Hel steal souls from well-trained individuals. In ancient times, they murdered warriors to claim their swords. Now they stalk marksmen, engineers and computer hackers to claim their expertise and soul-tools.

3rd Attainment: Tools of Poison

Prerequisite: Gnosis 7, Matter 4

The Seo Hel may infect an object with the ability to sicken those who come into contact with it, provided the target has been previously weakened. Spend 1 point of Mana. For 24 hours, the object casts the equivalent of "Devouring the Slain," (see the **Mage** core book, p. 139) on anyone who touches it, provided they're currently suffering from aggravated wounds. Instead of the spell's dice pool, roll Gnosis + Matter-the victim's Stamina to determine the attainment's effects.

As per "Devouring the Slain," the mage recovers Willpower or Mana (the Seo Hel's choice) by draining the victim's life force, but doesn't need to be physically present to benefit. The object may only inflict this effect once per person and cannot do so again unless the individual suffers further aggravated damage. Thus, Seo Hel often use the attainment on bladed weapons, inflicting its effects anew with every deep cut.

Other Houses

Due to space considerations and the desire to leave room for Storyteller invention, we haven't described every Tremere House. If the Tremere in your chronicle are a large, well-organized faction, give them more Houses to represent their numbers and success against other Reapers. Use the following short descriptions to build Houses in your own game or inspire independent Legacies: Reapers who survives the Tremere onslaught.

House Thrax: According to popular history, Rome's 9th Legion vanished around the 1st century CE, somewhere in Northern Britain. That's false; the 9th's commanders were Adamantine Arrow warrior-mages and used the legion's position to investigate Pictish sorcery. Through military incursions, they forced native mystics to teach them the battle magic within human sacrifice. As the Thrax Legacy, the 9th's officers sacrificed their own men in battle to live as war-gods beyond Hadrian's Wall. In the 12th Century, Tremere followed the legends of "ghost centurions," found the Thrax

and defeated them. Their attainments channel souls into frenzied strength.

House Vedmak: The Polish Legacy of "witchers" only claimed souls who volunteered to aid them against evil ghosts, monsters and sorcerers. Using a kind of "reverse possession," they inhabited the dead to pursue enemies through spiritual realms. As a last resort, a heroic soul might absorb a deathblow for his witcher ally, giving him more time to defend Sleepers. Instead of being hunted by the Tremere, the Vedmak united to fight them, but fell to Diamond magi the liches deceived into an alliance. It is said that House Vedmak still retains part of its original ethos. It still battles supernatural evil, but no longer relies on willing souls to fuel its attainments.

Playing Tremere

This chapter treats the Tremere as a complex faction with its own ideology, organization and special systems. There's enough detail here to play Tremere, should the Storyteller allow it. Player-controlled Tremere shift **Mage: The Awakening** from a dark fantasy game into full-fledged horror. Consider the following angles if you decide to use Tremere protagonists:

A Tour of the Ages: Koimaomai allows you to run Tremere through multiple historical periods. If a Tremere can find a steady supply of souls and time his slumber well, he can pursue his goals over centuries. Liches need servants and allies to operate on this time scale by maintaining their possessions while they sleep and storing souls for their return.

Crossover with Vampire: Tremere have always been intended to connect **Mage** to **Vampire: The Requiem** without disrupting either game's focus. Liches can acquire Kindred allies and enemies over an immortal time scale. Before you just toss a few vampires into the mix, however, take a look at how the Tremere and Kindred connect on a thematic level. Both combine the short-term desperation of feeding with the potential for immortality, and both must subvert their own moral stability to survive.

The Devil's Advocate: A Tremere's soul-thirst makes him the natural enemy of conventional mages, but that doesn't mean you can't play them in a mixed group. The "devil's advocate" is an advanced Storytelling technique where a player takes on the role of an antagonist. She may develop her schemes through private notes passed to the Storyteller and control the antagonist during direct confrontations. Devil's advocate play requires a mature mindset, where players can appreciate that one of their own is out to get them. A player-controlled antagonist also tends to be smarter and stronger than a Storyteller-controlled counterpart because the player can devote her full attention to running that character effectively.

An Epic Quest for Redemption: Can a Tremere lich ever escape his condition? That's up the Storyteller, but **Mage** assumes that if such a thing is possible, it would require a story that fundamentally changes their role in the game. If Tremere can be cured, the orders would need to fundamentally alter their policies and the Tremere would be hard-pressed to maintain their Legacy. These constitute Tier Three or Four stories—for more about these levels of play, see p. 12.

Lament

The Virtuoso

Quote: *To make music, one must tune the screams.*

Background: After a Yankee gutted him at the Siege of Boston, British Captain Alistair Sherwin Awakened as he climbed Copp's Hill. His wounds vanished. He traded his clothes for an American casualty's and spent a year hiding in the wilderness, where he discovered some of the region's mystical secrets. He learned the location of several Hallows and the secret agreements that bound New England's supernatural beings.

Sherwin tired of his hermitage, however, so he boarded a ship to France and joined the Paris Mysterium. He took the name Lament and worked as a musician: the profession his genteel family had forbidden him from pursuing. Bohemian living frustrated him, however, so after his father died, he joined the East India Company under an assumed name. As a colonial overseer, he recklessly bound ghosts and stole Indian treasures until 1799, when a local Nagaraja Tremere stole his soul.

He surrendered himself to the Legacy, but fled to America as soon as the opportunity presented itself. He knew Boston from his Awakening, and entered the koimaomai slumber near a Hallow he remembered. He awoke long enough to call upon local Tremere. In exchange for his knowledge, they supplied him with souls, arranged for the Danvers Asylum to be built around him, and kept his existence a secret.

Under pressure from the Pentacle, the other liches left in the 90s while Lament slept. He returned to life recently and barely escaped a battle taking place around his coffin. Once it was safe to return, he reestablished his Sanctum in the apartment complex that had replaced the Danvers Asylum. Other sorcerers trapped its ghosts behind wards. He freed them, and called his Tremere allies to gather. He feeds upon the souls of tenants. When intruders dare the old tunnels beneath the complex, they hear a violin play before suffering missing time, obsession and madness.

Description: Lament replaced his 19th Century clothes with bespoke charcoal suits but kept his white hair long and wavy, the way it was when he was a Paris musician. He has the gaunt face of a man in his 50s and the pale, waxy complexion of a Tremere lich. The jeweled rings on his hands are trinkets from the riches he stole in India. During intense magical workings, he abandons his finery for an Indian loincloth, revealing the numerous tattoos and scars he acquired as a Nagaraja adept.

Lament's nimbus channels ambient sounds into strange music and ghostly moans. Nearby dust and liquid vibrate to its rhythms.

Storytelling Hints: In a Boston-based game, Lament's reemergence triggers the return of a powerful Tremere pres-

ence. He can fulfill the same function if you move his base of operations to your home region. As he has only recently awoken from kiomaomai, he's unfamiliar with modern culture, though ghosts and telepathy have taught him much.

Lament balances secretiveness with the stolen passions of a Nagaraja by luring victims into isolated places where he can "perform." He drives victims mad with his music before stealing their souls. In the throes of his derangements, he compulsively plays the violin, loses track of time, and magically torments anyone he encounters. Cabals might be able to find him through these moments of indiscretion.

Dedicated Magical Tool: A red violin. Lament often uses this as a soul jar and plays to harness its current prisoner.

Real Name: Alistair Sherwin

Path: Moros

Order: Tremere (former Mysterium)

Legacy: Tremere (House Nagaraja)

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics 4 (Trade), Investigation 3, Medicine 4 (Psychiatry), Occult 4 (Souls), Science 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 3 (Horseback Riding), Brawl 3, Firearms 3 (Black Powder), Larceny 2, Stealth 3, Survival 3, Weaponry 3

Social Skills: Expression 4 (Violin), Empathy 4, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 3, Socialize 3, Subterfuge 4.

Merits: Danger Sense, High Speech, Hallow 3, Language 3 (French, Hindi, Persian), Occultation 3, Resources 4, Sanctum (Size 4, Security 2)

Willpower: 8

Wisdom: 2 (Fixation, Fugue)

Virtue: Hope

Vice: Pride

Initiative: 7

Defense: 3

Speed: 10

Health: 9

Gnosis: 5

Arcana: Death 4, Forces 3, Matter 4, Mind 4, Space 3, Prime 3

Rotes: *Death*—Shadow Sculpting (•), Soul Jar (••), Touch of the Grave (••), Control Ghost (•••), Quicken Corpse (•••), Haunting (••••); *Forces*—Control Sound (••); *Matter*—Find the Hidden Hoard (•), Shape Liquid (••), Transmute Earth (•••), Transmute Gold (••••); *Mind*—Sense Consciousness (•), Voices from Afar (••); *Space*—Scrying (••), Portal (•••); *Prime*—Dispel Magic (•), Unseen Spy (••), Create Tass (•••)

Legacy Attainments: 1st—Hideous Stipend; 2nd—Wicked Claim, Inflict Vice (Nagaraja)

Mana/per turn: 14/5

Armor: 4 ("Entropic Guard", Death ••••)

Other Reapers

Mages have never reached an easy consensus about the ethics of soul manipulation. Lex Magica says one thing but individual sorcerers also develop their own codes. Certainly, there's nothing wrong with returning a soul to its owner, but what about taking the souls of volunteers? Lovers? Those who committed deeds so vile they no longer deserve them? These unsettled questions give Reapers room to recruit and comfort members when they question the wisdom of harvesting the immortal, human spark—especially when it withers under their attentions.

One of the following Legacies escapes notice because its approach is so new, conservative mages can't identify its true nature. The other enjoys an order's secret protection. They're not the only surviving Reapers around; see "Suspected Reapers" on p. 78, and exercise your creativity to develop other cults.

CLOUD INFINITE

In the end, every network belongs to someone.

In 1999, Cloud Infinite was a cynical tech startup founded by Carbon, a Libertine who believed that bilking wealthy Sleepers out of money with magically enhanced technology would enrich the Free Council without attracting undue attention. His cabal emulated next generation technologies with spells, collected investors' checks, and vanished before their patrons discovered the inventions didn't work without an Awakened minder. Tech companies lied every day; Cloud Infinite was just better at it.

According to Free Council dogma, even unrealized Sleeper innovations contain magical principles, but five years of conning Sleepers left Carbon with a lower opinion of humanity than his comrades. He attended "millionaires' dinners" where tech industry gurus espoused libertarian ideals and frankly, told the same lies as Cloud Infinite, but without the magical flash. He combined their ideas with popular transhumanism and computer networking principles. Carbon doesn't claim to have invented the modern idea of "the cloud." On the other hand, he demonstrated that Cloud Infinite could run sophisticated software on very stupid machines at certain important meetings, and claimed most of the work took place on remote servers.

The cabal still pursued the secrets of the universe and upheld the Free Council's utter opposition to the Seers of the Throne, but they were starting to rub shoulders with the cultural elite their enemies constantly monitored. They'd burned too many of them and needed to go to ground, so they bought diamonds and Chinese bonds then closed up shop. They'd acquired enough money to begin the real work.

Nobody remembers who suggested using souls for consciousness augmentation—just that they were smoking a lot of pure shabu, the ideas were flowing fast, and the soul-imago diagrams they found on their blood-crusted whiteboard three days later made perfect sense. Cloud Infinite had used ghosts to emulate "intelligent agents" for clients. Networking a living consciousness was the next logical step.

Carbon developed the Legacy's attainments, teaching them as he climbed the ladder. None of his friends cared about stealing unused cognitive power—it was about time some Sleepers started pulling their weight, brain-wise. But once the next breakthrough required a mage to straight up *steal* a soul? Well, Carbon had figured out a lot about Forces by then, too; he turned the loudest objectors into smoldering soot. The three survivors knew the boss had learned to read their minds, too. They studied the Legacy, improved their psychic defenses and found good reasons to leave Cloud Infinite's Milpitas, CA headquarters.

Consciously or not, every Cloud Infinite member converted to Carbon's ethos. If everybody had the potential to Awaken, Sleepers were to blame for the normal problems that infested their lives. They needed to use their potential or have it used *for* them. Cloud Infinite's attainments were the best way to harness intelligence when it was too apathetic to Awaken.

Cloud Infinite is a young Legacy. Most mages don't even know who they are. Nosy Mysterium scholars — the type that want to catalog every Legacy — are from an old enough school that to date, none have even been able to understand User attainments even when they're seeing demonstrations.

Users aren't stupid enough to leave soul stones and soul jars lying around or get too chummy with prominent Subtle Arcana practitioners, but they save most of their caution for each other. When they exercise their attainments to the fullest, every member of Cloud Infinite possesses transcendental genius—and every one of them realized that the next logical step is to exploit an Awakened soul capable of harnessing souls itself and thus drive a Singularity event through supernaturally enhanced, networked intelligence.

Carbon must have been the first to figure it out. That's why he took their soul stones.

Parent Path: Obrimos or Free Council

Nickname: Users

Appearance: Members of Cloud Infinite embody the stereotype of grubby, unkempt internet addicts as a philosophical choice, not a manifestation of laziness. Users don't give a shit about a body's look, feel or smell. If it provides life support for a brain and through it the potential for ultimate intelligence, it works. Legacy members possess more physical fitness than the stereotype assumes, however, to keep the body from distracting the mind. Junk food and porn aren't common accessories. A User rarely cares about "meat" pleasures.

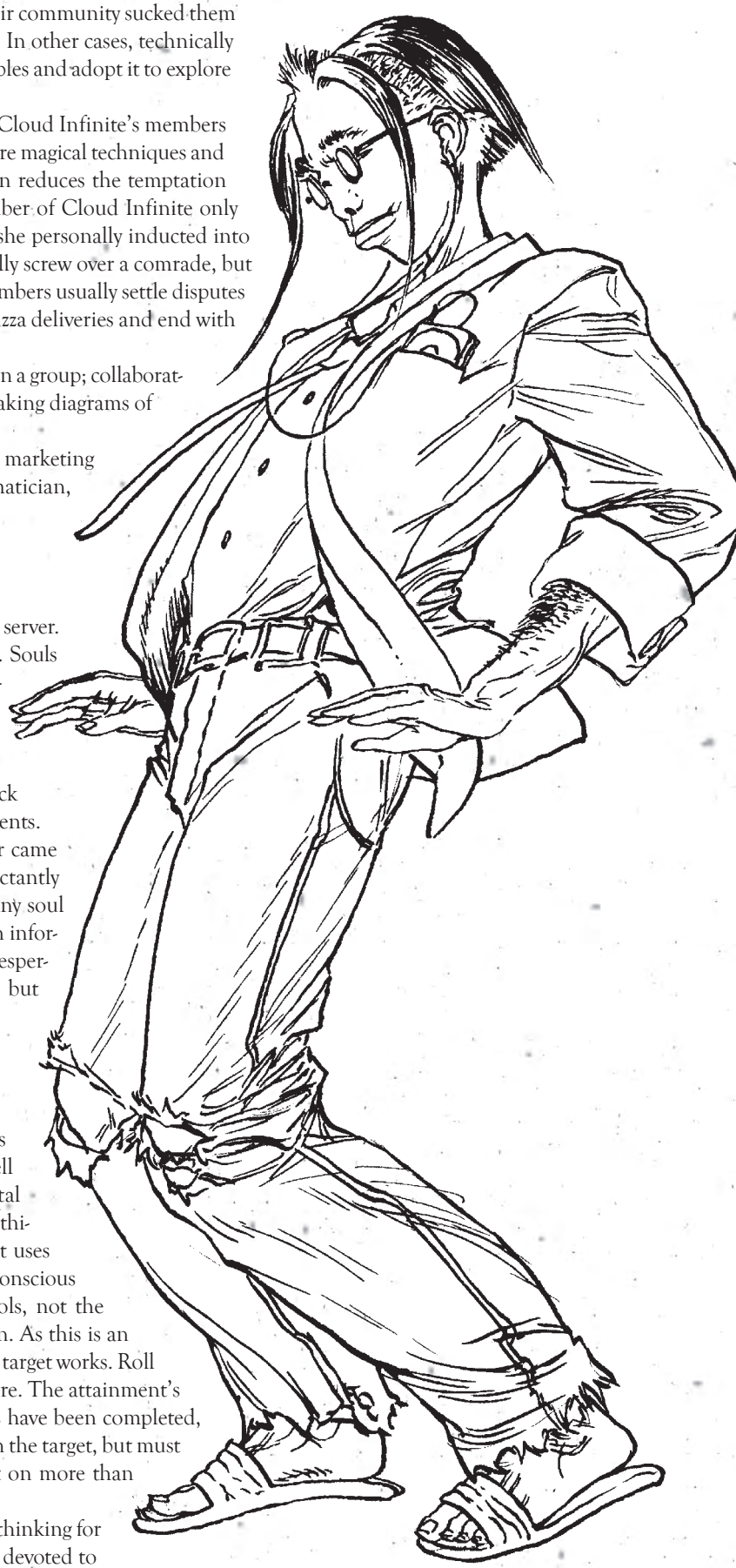
Background: The original Users possess backgrounds in computer science and engineering, but a faction of social media power users is quickly rising. In all cases, Cloud Infinite attracts people who invest considerable parts of their lives in networks, sharing their identity with hundreds and thousands of people and machines. A traumatic experience

in these networks inspires them to join. They feel like their community sucked them up and spit them out and now mean to return the favor. In other cases, technically skilled mages independently discover the Legacy's principles and adopt it to explore the potential of networked souls.

Organization: Across a shifting array of IP addresses, Cloud Infinite's members use outmoded internet relay chat (IRC) technology to share magical techniques and plan common projects. Dated, text-only communication reduces the temptation for Users to exploit one another. In most cases, a member of Cloud Infinite only knows the physical location or appearance of someone she personally inducted into the Legacy. This is not to say that a User will automatically screw over a comrade, but they know it's possible and minimize the risk. Legacy members usually settle disputes with an escalating series of pranks that start with mass pizza deliveries and end with creative applications of Forces over IP.

Suggested Oblations: Solving mathematical problems in a group; collaborating on creative projects; building computer networks; making diagrams of social relationships.

Concepts: Hacker, programmer, intelligence analyst, marketing guru, reclusive executive, telecom technician, mathematician, social network addict.



Attainments

Cloud Infinite's attainments treat the soul like a remote server. A User claims "administrator privileges" from his target. Souls can't be duplicated—moving a soul deletes it from its original location—making it the ultimate proprietary software. Legacy mages explore souls through their cognitive functions, making them specialize in the Mind Arcanum.

The first User, Carbon, utilized soul stones as a quick and dirty "proven technology" to enable higher attainments. He promised to find a more secure substitute but never came through. Thus, Cloud Infinite's mages routinely, yet reluctantly create them. Fortunately, their attainments work with any soul stone that meets the symbolic requirement (it must be an information storage device) so members may con naïve or desperate sorcerers into making them—a stupid, stupid move, but Awakened history has its fair share of them.

1st— Exploit Spare Cycles

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Mind 2 (primary)

The User can command a Sleeper to literally do his thinking for him. For the mage, this resembles the spell "Multi-Tasking," in that the target performs two mental extended actions or one mental instant action and telepathically relays the conclusions back to the User. The target uses any relevant information the mage provides through subconscious telepathy, but the Storyteller rolls his Mental dice pools, not the User's. This leaves the User free to take any other action. As this is an attainment, not a spell, the User may cast spells while the target works. Roll Intelligence + Academics + Mind - the target's Composure. The attainment's duration is Prolonged (one scene) or lasts until all tasks have been completed, whichever comes first. The User need not concentrate on the target, but must remain in line of sight, and cannot use the attainment on more than one person at a time.

The target of Exploit Spare Cycles is unaware that he's thinking for the User, who uses mental power that would usually be devoted to

subconscious impulses. Unfortunately, this denies the victim access to his Vice for the duration of the attainment—he gains no satisfaction from his passions. The victim might dream of the problem he solved, or a psychic (including a user of the Mind Arcanum) might be able to uncover it at a later date.

This attainment does not function on mages, other supernatural beings, or nonhumans. If the User possesses a soul via the Thought Administration attainment, he may exercise this attainment upon that soul as well.

Optional Arcanum: Prime 2

With Prime 2, the User doesn't need to remain in the target's line of sight. Instead, the target's conclusions magically record themselves on any information storage medium the mage activates with 1 point of Mana. The device must remain in the same room or general area as the thinker, but the mage can go about his business.

The results of the thinker's actions manifest as appropriate to the medium, from written pages to multimedia files on a hard drive, but can only be perceived by the User. This magical data doesn't truly take up space on the chosen device and lasts for 24 hours before it fades into the object's general Resonance. Members of Cloud Infinite often enchant a target's office computer and remotely access the information they desire from its hard drive.

2nd — Thought Administration

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Mind 3

The User steals a Sleeper's soul by claiming its intellectual capacity. An extended action is required using Intelligence + Persuasion + Mind, contested the victim's Resolve. If the mage succeeds, she now possesses the victim's soul. The victim suffers soul loss (see p. 276 of the **Mage** core rulebook) and the User may utilize the soul's Mental Attributes and Skills as a secondary actor for mental tasks that would benefit from teamwork (see "Teamwork" in the **World of Darkness** core rulebook, p. 134). This costs 1 point of Mana per dice roll for the secondary actor.

Over time, the stolen soul's intellect erodes, losing one dot in a single Mental Attribute per week. This cycles through each Mental Attribute until one score drops to 0. At that point, the soul is no longer fit for use and must be discarded. If the victim is still alive, he suffers the Attribute loss as well. In addition, soul intelligences acquire derangements as their Morality degrades at the rate of 1 point per week.

Like Exploit Spare Cycles, this attainment does not affect mages, supernatural beings, or nonhumans. The mage may only use one soul at a time.

Optional Arcanum: Prime 3

If the mage possesses Prime 3, he may store souls in any soul stone that takes the form of an information storage device. After stealing a soul, he transfers it by touching the stone, concentrating (an instant action), and spending 1 point of Mana. To absorb the soul and make use of it, he performs this process again. The User may store a number of souls within each soul stone equal to the lower of his Mind or Prime. Within a soul stone, souls do not lose mental capacity, so the mage may "swap out" souls to extend their lifespans or select a soul with desired capabilities to assist him with a task. Souls continue to lose Morality dots at the rate of 1 per week, however.

3rd — Soul Processing

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Mind 4

After concentrating (an instant action), the User may now emulate the effects of "Supreme Augmentation" (**Mage** core cook, p. 216) with regard to Mental Attributes only. Unfortunately, additional dots must be harvested from souls in his possession. These may be souls accumulated using "Thought Administration" or acquired from a soul jar in his possession. Subtract up to as many dots as the mage's Mind score from one or more souls' Mental Attributes and add them to the mage's dots in corresponding Attributes. The effects last for a scene, after which the mage's Mental Attributes return to normal, but those of his victims do not.

As Soul Processing is not a spell, it can be stacked with "Augment the Mind" and similar Attribute enhancement magic. In these cases, the spell's duration drops to Transitory even if would normally last longer.

Optional Arcanum: Prime 4

With Prime 4, the mage may now remotely access souls in his possession for the purpose of any attainment from her Legacy, provided they're connected via ley line (as per the Prime 3 spell, "Ley Lines"). She may access a maximum number of souls at any given time equal to the lower of her Mind and Prime dots. This allows her to access multiple soul stones and soul jars (one per turn) that might not be physically present. Users often cast "Mobile Node," (see below) to ease the use of this attainment.

Cloud Infinite Spell: Mobile Node (Prime ●●●●)

The mage can create short-lived, moving branches of true ley lines that follow an object he designates. The object becomes a mobile node of ley energy, allowing it to power electrical devices and make use of the other possible benefits of ley lines.

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

This spell acts as the Prime spell "Ley Lines," except that it will work on a moving object so long as it remains within 1 mile of a ley line per success. The caster must devote potency, size and area factors to encompass the objects he would like to power, and those objects must be connected to the object at the center of the spell (a battery pack or other electrical system) through mundane electrical connections.

Free Council Rote: PsyPhone

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Science + Prime

In emergencies, Free Council members use this rote to power devices ranging in size from phones to electric cars. Members of Cloud Infinite also use it to access imprisoned souls.

Using the Users

As a contemporary Reaper Legacy, Cloud Infinite shows that the urge to exploit souls transcends any particular time or place. Their first attainment is easy for a Libertine to justify, especially if she feels less enthusiastic about Sleeper potential than her order would have her believe. The following considerations may help you incorporate them into your chronicle:

Innovation over All: To the Free Council, techné is precious: proof that magic can be harvested from Sleeper inventiveness. Some Libertines feel the need to protect techné from critics within the Diamond, even to the point of concealing forbidden practices. If outsiders threaten Cloud Infinite, free Council assemblies may see this as a threat to their order. Other Technology-based Legacies may come to the Users' defense without knowing they're Reapers.

The Lure of Transhumanism: Transhuman ideology argues that there's a moral duty to exceed human limitations—a belief that elicits sympathy among many mages, who believe human weakness is a sign of the Lie. Users often find common cause with members of the Silver Ladder, with whom they share an appreciation for personal transcendence, power and the subservient role of Sleepers. The Free Council's Transhuman Engineers (see **Legacies: The Sublime**, pp. 118-127) are an example of one group that could either be tricked into helping Cloud Infinite or become their most implacable enemies.

Plots within Plots: With their enhanced Mental Attributes and intellectual focus, Users are some of the most intelligent sorcerers on earth. To Cloud Infinite, every problem can be solved with souls and brute-force intelligence. The Users use it to misdirect and lay traps for their enemies. Design countermeasures, false fronts, and backup schemes for each member of the Legacy, but leave deliberate flaws based on their personalities. A User might conceal soul-theft through maze of retainers, remote devices and magical concealment, but still exposes herself to discovery when she steals a soul from a romantic rival.

(Legion)

We are only a purpose.

How do you sin without sinning? Some Guardians of the Veil disperse their guilt through the 49 Masques: false identities they use to hide the order's darker operations. To some Guardians, the Masques are real, alternate selves, so the crimes they commit while playing a part are not *their* sins. They belong to the Masque, to be shed as easily as a cloak or wig.

It's a comforting lie. No matter the Masque, a single soul can only bear so much—but *other souls* might bear the burdens of spies and assassins. A loyal operative avoids moral culpability by shunting his guilt to stolen souls. *They* do terrible, necessary things; she takes refuge in a greater purpose. She protects the sanctity of magic and sacrifices her ego for the order. She becomes the Guardian ethos, manifest in many faces, and finds peace in that purity. She becomes the unspoken, hidden hand: (Legion). She cannot sin because she isn't a person.

This is also a lie—the self deception that drives mages into the Legacy's embrace. For some, this isn't even a conscious process. During a traumatic mission, a vulnerable Guardian slips into a fugue state. She returns to sanity to find the job done and a stolen soul whispering in her mind.

Guardians of the Veil initially deny that (Legion) exists but when pressed call it a schismatic sect: a Mastigos faction obsessed with the Masques. But (Legion) is nothing so organized. It merges an urge to escape accountability with the order's peculiar understanding of the psyche. (Legion) mages try to use stolen souls as moral proxies. It doesn't work (their Wisdom fluctuates as usual) but provides the illusion that someone else always commits their wrongdoings. Given enough time, members abandon their names, personal tastes and other marks of individuality. They pretend to be at peace and blame their emotions on stolen selves.

(Legion) possesses no set structure or even a real name. ("Legion" is written in brackets because the half that knows it belongs to a Legacy doesn't call it anything in particular.) The "Legion schism" is an outsiders' term. Guardians of the Veil monitor (Legion) when they can but rarely intervene, as the sect demonstrates utter devotion to the order's goals.

Parent Path: Mastigos or Guardians of the Veil

Nickname: None. "Legion," is a Guardian term for a psychic disease but officially, the Legacy doesn't exist.

Appearance: They look like anyone—anyone at all.

Background: Half of (Legion) came to the Legacy consciously to become ultimate infiltrators or completely give themselves to the Guardians of the Veil. The rest followed guilt, madness and magical instincts into the fold. They may not even know they belong to the Legacy. Before (Legion), most possess quiet personalities. It might be a pretense; Guardians of the Veil believe humble, dull lives are virtuous and strategically sound. Others cling to tranquil anonymity because they possess twisted drives or embarrassing secrets. They're assassins who refused to kill for the order, or feel shame at the sexual excitement that peaks when they take lives. (Legion) attracts half-empty people, or people who want to be empty.

Organization: The saying, "When the student is ready, the master will appear," applies to (Legion), except that neither student nor master may understand the bond that draws them together, or even that they're sharing the Legacy. After induction, (Legion) mages find true individuals noisy and egocentric. They gravitate toward each other as well as other beings that appreciate the serenity of non-self.

(Legion) mages further depersonalize themselves through regular telepathic contact. Each member of a cell samples every stolen soul's point of view. Over time, they stop separating telepathic contact from direct experience. Stolen personalities linger in madness and dreams and they don't always get along. A cell's mages may be selfless, but their shared personas form cliques and instigate arguments, screaming and striking from whatever body they happen to inhabit.

Suggested Oblations: Impersonating someone through mundane means; forging identification; chanting a name

The Legion Derangement

At the Storyteller's discretion, a Guardian of the Veil can acquire "Legion" as a derangement whenever she would gain one as the result of a failed Wisdom check. The derangement manifests in moments of guilt or shame. On a failed Resolve + Composure roll, the character disguises himself as another person at the earliest opportunity. She refuses to acknowledge who she really is, maintaining the false persona for 24 hours or until she satisfies her Virtue.

When exposed to a member of the (Legion) Legacy, the character intuitively recognizes a kindred spirit and can be unconsciously initiated through regular contact. If she joins the Legacy, an attack of the derangement prompts the mage to use one of its attainments to steal an identity as soon as she can do so safely. She is unaware of her actions until the attainment's duration expires.

until the sound turns to meaningless babble; burning personal possessions; meditating on the illusion of self.

Concepts: World weary spy, guilty assassin, quiet functionary, obsessed actor.

Attainments

(Legion) attainments represent the progress of a psychic disease. Like a rough rock smoothed by the ocean, (Legion) mages lose the edges and cracks in their characters. With no need to define themselves by need or aspiration, they erode into beings of pure purpose, without reason or distraction—or fulfillment. As the mage progresses, she loses her Vice, then Virtue, as described below.

1st — True Masque

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Mind 2, Death 2 (primary)

Quieting her consciousness, the mage steals a Sleepers soul, using it to cloak her spiritual identity. She grasps her target, triggering an extended action. Roll her Manipulation + Subterfuge + Death, resisted by rolling the target's Resolve. Before seizing the Sleeper's soul, the (Legion) member must concentrate on a specific objective: "Kill John Maverick," or "Open the closet door by the front stairs at Cormant House." The effects of True Masque end when the mage either achieves this objective or 24 hours pass, whichever comes first.

Once the mage seizes the Sleeper's soul, he adopts its owner's aura and surface thoughts. However, he loses the ability to cast spells. From nimbus to Resonance, the spiritual signs of Awakening vanish. (Legion) mages often imbue their bodies with spells for the tasks ahead of them (in which case, their Resonance can be discerned by mages and certain other supernatural beings) to compensate for relative powerlessness while they use the True Masque.

The mage's true mind retreats to her subconscious, where it remains dimly aware of the situation and distracts his stolen, conscious self enough to ignore inconsistencies such as a new body or the traumatized "duplicate" he recently saw. If he looks different from his usual self, he takes steps to correct his appearance, up to the point of simple disguises he can justify as compensating for "looking sick."

Under the attainment's influence, the (Legion) member's Physical Skills do not change, but her Mental and Social Skills drop to the worse of the mage's or victim's.

As a subconscious impulse, the mage drives the Sleeper self to fulfill her agenda. The stolen soul cannot use information it doesn't know, but it rationalizes a wordless urge to do as the mage wishes.

Magic capable of penetrating the subconscious can detect the mage. Investigators can also discover the mage through her sympathetic connections. Spells that manipulate real names and other such bonds retain their efficacy.

The mage may only absorb one soul at a time. Once the attainment expires, the soul breaks free but is no longer attached to its body. It will attempt to return to its owner, succeeding unless it has been prevented from doing so by supernatural intervention. The soul's owner remembers it all as a dream, but suffers psychic trauma nonetheless. He loses a point of Morality and must immediately check for a derangement.

Optional Arcanum: Life 2

If the (Legion) mage possesses Life 2, her body adopts the target's features at the rate of one for each dot she possesses in the Life Arcanum, similar to the Life spell "Two Faces," but lasting for the attainment's duration, and limited to features that belong to the stolen soul's owner. These changes cannot be detected with spells or an Unseen Sense—for the duration, they're considered to be elements of her natural appearance.

2nd — Quicksilver Masque

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Death 3, Mind 3

The mage may now seize multiple Sleepers' souls without suppressing her own consciousness. Use dice roll for True Masque. The (Legion) member can hold a number of souls equal to the lower of her Mind or Death dots. These souls erode over time as per the rules for soul handling on p. 276 of the **Mage** core rulebook.

By combining their owners' characteristics, the mage can use stolen souls to construct a unique Sleeper identity. After assigning the individual a name, gender and basic history, the sorcerer spends a Willpower point. With coaxing from the mage's submerged consciousness, the souls fill in the gaps with combined memories, smoothing over inconsistencies. This unique individual becomes a Sleeper persona, conforming to the rules of the True Masque attainment. The mage retains her Physical Skills and gains the worse of the mage's or the most skilled souls' ratings in Mental and Social Skills.

In addition, the mage may now adopt any one of the souls' Vices. This ability also enhances True Masque, allowing the (Legion) adept to adopt the Vice of a specific target.

The Quicksilver Masque marks the point of no return for a (Legion) mage, as her personality begins to lose its distinctiveness. Once a member of the Legacy acquires the second attainment, *she permanently loses her Vice*. She can only satisfy a Vice stolen from another soul, and only if she uses this attainment to bring it forth.

Optional Arcanum: Life 3

Similar to the spell "Doppelganger," the mage may adopt one of his souls' major physical characteristics for every dot she possesses in the Life Arcanum. Major characteristics include drastic differences in body size and shape and gender; at Life 5, the mage becomes a perfect duplicate of one soul's owner, or a unique mixture of different souls' characteristics. These changes cannot be detected with spells or Unseen Senses. They are considered to be natural features for the duration.

3rd — Awakened Masque

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Death 4, Mind 4

The (Legion) mage may now steal an Awakened soul and identity. Roll the same dice pool in an extended action as True Masque, but allow the victim to resist by rolling his pool of Resolve + Gnosis. This attainment also allows the Legacy mage to hold the soul for an extended period of time, as per "Quicksilver Masque," and even store any mixture of Awakened or Sleepers' souls whose total does not exceed her Mind dots.

The (Legion) mage may impersonate her Awakened victim as if she's using True Masque, but cannot use her soul as the basis of an original character. Furthermore, as the Awakened victim's Gnosis slips away from his true self (see "Soul Loss Errata," p. 77) it accumulates with the soul. For example, a victim whose soul has been held for 72 hours passes along 3 Gnosis to the captive soul, even if the victim's full Gnosis score is 5.

The (Legion) mage may cast spells in the stolen identity as if using the lower of her true Gnosis and that accumulated by the soul. She has access to the Arcana dots she and her victim share in common, limited to the maximum allowed for the soul's Gnosis. The mage adopts her victim's aura and Nimbus, but not her sympathetic connections or dedicated magical tools. She *does* adopt the victim's real name, however—the (Legion) mage truly believes in her new persona.

The Legacy mage may now adopt any of her stolen identities' Virtues as well as Vices, even while using lesser Legacy attainments. While each identity subconsciously responds to the (Legion) mage's desires, she is so submerged into the identity that even telepathic scans of her subconscious suffer a penalty equal to her Mind dots.

Once (Legion) takes this powerful a hold on a mage, she loses the last remnant of desire attached to her independent identity. *She permanently loses her Virtue*; she may only regain Willpower by fulfilling the Virtues of captured souls.

Optional Arcanum: Life 4

If the mage possesses Life 4 as well, she changes shape into a perfect physical duplicate of her victim for the attainment's duration. Like physical alterations from her other attainments, these changes cannot be detected by supernatural senses.

Using (Legion)

(Legion) is a study in hubris, where Guardians of the Veil reap the consequences for justifying their actions as necessary for a greater good. Beyond this core theme, (Legion) can contribute to your chronicle in a number of ways, including the following.

As Antagonists: (Legion) cells operate outside the Guardians of the Veil's approval but within their ethos. If the players' cabal defies that ethos, (Legion) secretly gathers information and destroys the perceived threat. "Sleepers" shoot "unworthy" apprentices in broad daylight and vanish. An ally torches the cabal's sanctum and flees. When questioned, she doesn't remember being present—and her soul is missing. Local Guardian cabals may be unaware of these actions or might employ (Legion) cells as plausibly deniable operatives. They're hard to find, interrogate, or connect to larger plots, and the order feels little guilt exterminating them once they've served their purpose.

As Mystery Hooks: (Legion) attainments counteract common investigation spells. Aura sensing, surface telepathy and Life magic usually can't pierce the operative's counterfeit identity. Storytellers might use this to revive mystery plots that the Awakened's prodigious magical senses could usually defeat. Don't use the Legacy to create an unsolvable mystery, but direct it in an interesting fashion. (Legion) mages can be tracked through stolen souls. If the cabal discovers signs of soul loss from someone the mage duplicated, they'll learn how

(Legion)'s attainments function and might track the operative down. Uncovering the pattern discovers an occult secret, so it deserves an Arcane Experience award.

As Temptations: (Legion) is a magical form of madness as well as a Legacy—an escape for Guardians of the Veil (and at the Storyteller's discretion, other mages) tortured by guilt. By offering a Legacy as reward, (Legion) encourages players to explore moral corruption. Still, while joining the Legacy might be a subconscious *character* choice, the Storyteller should never inflict it without the *player's* permission. (Legion) mages are psychologically bizarre but playable nonetheless, as long as you remember that even though Legacy members believe it's possible to become an egoless, embodied purpose running many functional, disposable personalities, this is ultimately self-deception. There's a human being under it all refusing to take responsibility for her actions.