THE MYSTERIUM™

the World of Darkness

MAGE®
THE AWAKENING

THE MYSTERIUM

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Prologue: Censorious

"Have you ever eaten a human heart, Garfield?"

"No, Hierarch." He uses my real name. Where I come from, that's like mocking a Sicilian's momma.

"Neither have I, but your incompetence is making me positively *famished*." He grins that big, old lion's grin of his, the kind where you half-expect a femur to come jutting out of his teeth.

"Yes, Hierarch."

"Cannibalism is unfortunately topical today, Garfield." He gestures at the thing in the cage. If you inspect the lines of its body and squint a bit, it almost looks human. "I'm glad this creature's with us instead of prowling the docks, but you only caught it because it's stupid. We wanted its handlers. And they wanted this." He holds up the book again: Kendall Hart's *Dark Musings II*.

"We tried." My mouth opens to say more, but I shut it. What am I going to say? This is the Nemean, Hierarch of Boston, supreme cat-herder of the joint. I slouch in deference, throw on my coat and think, *call me, Khonsu, you bastard*.

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Kendall Hart: A nerd's nerd with a talent for occult trivia. He's the most successful author you've never read, unless you know what a d12 is or that the late James "Scotty" Doohan only had nine fingers. In that case, you might have run across articles in a few, sparsely populated corners of the Net. Trapezoid Online and Recreational Forteana are good bets. If you belong to that acne-sprinkled demographic, you've probably read things such as "Queen Cthulhu," or "Da Vinci's Robots."

You could call my cabal (Ophidian Logic's our name) Kendall Hart's fan club. We buy all of his books. By "all," I mean every single copy. Having been in the book trade before my Awakening, it fell on me to pretend to be various distributors, independent bookstores and giggling fans. We've managed to corner the market on Mr. Hart because he knows too much.

Most of his articles aren't dangerous. They mainly explore burning questions about what dinosaurs in Renaissance Italy would be like or whether L. Ron Hubbard's aliens could beat up Grays. But when he compiles a book? *That's* when it gets interesting. He starts out with collected articles, but he likes to pad them with nifty little extras like bits of coded text and strange allusions. Then he tops it all off with a couple of new essays and sends the book to his publisher. Those extras are the good stuff — and the dangerous stuff.

Crowley's Bathroom describes the Temple of Chthonic Emanations perfectly, and better than some rather aged Mysterium records. We only dug up the Room of the White Well after *he* mentioned it in a sidebar.

Martians Ate My Brain includes about half the instructions you need to activate the Viridian Astra. Five copies of that got loose once, and that earned us a violent little trip to Mumbai.

He's a ticking time bomb — and a goose laying golden eggs by the basket load. I couldn't accept the situation at first. I'm a Censor, after all. It's my job to stare at the rusty spigot of Truth in search of rogue drips. To stretch the metaphor, I keep the leaks discreet; I divert them to certain reservoirs where the right people can drink.

We know a lot about Hart. He's a happily married bibliophile and doesn't use the least spark of sorcery. I've spied on him a couple of times. As far as we can tell, he likes to pull all-nighters for his books. My theory is that this sleepless, creative frenzy pushes him into an autonomic state, rendering him a fit host for certain cacodemons. (I explored the technical details in a paper on the subject; give me the right code word, and I'll let you read it.) I don't know for sure, because we're afraid that if we cast spells to close to him, we'll cut him off from the source. Magic often screws up these anomalies, or makes them more dangerous than they already are. They don't even let me scry his all-nighters.

I'd have loved to have been in his head when he wrote *Dark Musings.* He sandwiched in a description of an Imperial spell between bits on Islamic superheroes and brains in a vat. That was a major coup for Ophidian Logic. All we had to do to keep the book safe — and keep Hart alive — was shoot a Guardian of the Veil in the face and give a Libertine a solid beating. My arm still hurts when it rains.

Hart's done it to me again. My bags are tagged, and I'm on a bus to Chicago, all to save Kendall Hart from cannibals who want his latest work — and lunch.

• • •

Every mage in Chicago is a crazy bastard. Let me ask you: If you felt your spirit soar to the heavens and managed to write your name in stars, if you broke the shell of the Lie to grasp the lightning of Creation in your hand, would you come back and think, That's *why I should be in a baseball team?*

I don't have time to complain about this to the Awakened Chicagoan at hand. Instead, I manage the following:

"Hey, ugh!"

"Ugh" is the sound I make when an aluminum bat hits me in the gut. Or any other kind of bat, really.

The unknown god that poured this dude into his Cubs shirt had a fine appreciation for the male physique. I double over to an excellent view of his six-pack, straining against the cotton. A jarring bat-smack on my back treats me to a close-up of his shoes.

"Didn't you see our tags, Mysteryman?" His voice is an octave too high for his body.

"Ugh." I go fetal. It hides my hands.

"You're *supposed* to ask permission before you enter our territory."

I mumble; the mudra's almost done. I smell ozone; I always do. My eyes roll back, and I remember *the Throne of the Presence. I never believed until Dad died. We scattered the ashes, but it was windy. They blew back and stuck to my hand. And then the ashes were gray clouds and the clouds held the Throne and there were a thousand wings, and God's face — and it was mine, my face, burning my eyes, leaving the afterimage of the Shape. It falls to earth like an angry star and lights up my ashen hands.*

So when the bat comes down again, I catch it in both palms. The lightning in my fingers arcs through the metal nicely.

I swallow back a bit of puke and dust myself off. Mister MVP is lying on the pavement, twitching adequately.

"Let's start this conversation again. My name's Khonsu. I am indeed a 'Mysteryman.' You're a member of the Game of Geometric Perfection. Your name is Grand Slam. Your *name*, on the other hand is…"

"Okay man, I'm listening!" Bo 'Grand Slam' Dodson grips the edge of the curb and looks up.

"I represent members of Ophidian Logic. Your partner, Lefty…"

"Southpaw."

"Whatever. We've dealt with her before. We're not interested in the South Side except for access to one particular city block. Through her, we paid you people a lot of money for the privilege of visiting from time to time. This leads me to wonder *why the fuck* this courtesy just manifested as a base hit to the ribs."

"Two murders in the 'hood, man. We usually tip off the cops, but these ones don't leave any psychic residue. That means one of *us* is responsible. You come in all lit up, and I don't know your face, man."

"Right, right. Okay, Slam, you need to know three things. First of all, the killers probably aren't Awakened, but they are some pretty dangerous guys. Second, I can't find my cabal. Third, we've now established that I can kick your ass, so don't get any ideas re: Point the Second. But as you did violate a sworn agreement between our cabals, I thank you."

"How's that?"

"You're going to work off your debt by helping me. By the way, how'd you know my order?"

"I had a kickass prophetic dream last night, where I met a man carrying a black book. He turned my sword east, and we journeyed to a tower there to rescue a blind man — kind of like Homer." Grand Slam shakes his head like one of those shaggy dogs fresh from a swim and rises to a crouch.

"The poet? That is indeed, uh, kickass. The place we're going is actually east of here. If you figured me out, why'd you hit me with the bat?"

"Nature of prophecy, man." He grabs the bat a bit warily. "Things might have unfolded badly if I second-guessed proximate causes. Anyway, what's the plan?"

"We're going to kidnap an obscure speculative fiction writer to save him from a cannibal cult bent on destroying the world."

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In the elevator to Hart's apartment, it occurs to me that my old plan revolved around Smooth Rex, who uses beguiling spells about as liberally as his cheap cologne. Without his winning charisma (since he's missing along with the rest of my cabal), I have to think of another way to get Hart out of there. *Kendall Hart? This large man with a bat and I want to take you out on the town! Mr. Hart, as your biggest fan I'd like to treat you to your first stalking. I know you're nervous, but I'll try and make sure the experience helps us both grow.* My mind soars through dump mode and entertains various facetious and dumb ideas until Slam and I turn the corner to his door. It's decorated with a Popsicle stick sculpture of Cthulhu. It rattles when I knock.

"Who is it?" echoes through the door.

"Uh, Kendall Hart? I'm Rory, uh, Ganzfeld. I've got a check for you from your agent."

Click. The door opens. Kendall Hart's eyes are framed by big, practical glasses. He's wearing a Hawaiian shirt and khakis. "Ganzfeld? Like the psychic experiment? That's unlikely. Did Steve put you up to this? He —"

Slam's supposed to grab Hart at this point, but he doesn't. He points down the hall instead. I follow his lead and see a stringy-haired woman. She's leveling a shotgun. Right before my eyes roll up behind my head and the angels come to serve me again, I notice that she salivates like a hungry junkyard dog.

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Ms. Hart is a formidable woman, or maybe she just wears shock well. She deftly chain smokes my cigarettes as she thrusts a rolled-up towel under Slam's head. Slam's lying on her dining room table, unconscious but breathing. The cultist's corpse is lying in her tub. She says the fresh burns on my arm look like alchemical symbols. That's a hell of an observation from a Sleeper.

In a traumatized monotone, Hart says, "Well, honey, I think they also bear some resemblance to Enochian characters, huh?"

Melanie Hart glares at her husband. He gets up and starts a pot of tea.

"So what you're saying then, Rory, is that Ken's books are all true?"

"Not every word. Just some of his late-night output. The main thing is that you should visit family somewhere out of town for a while. Three weeks sounds good. *Dark Musings II* has a section that this cult wants."

"Why don't they just *buy* the thing then?"

And that's it. I have to explain it all. I *want* to explain it all. I tell her that Kendall Hart's total readership is five people, plus whoever visits Milwaukee's Athenaeum and pulls his stuff from the shelves. I tell I tell her what an Athenaeum is in the context of the Mystery and that I, Khonsu of the Bronze Tripod of Ophidian Logic, am a *dadouchos*-Censor, first-degree adept and keeper of forbidden lore.

"And that lore just happens to include your husband's supposed fantasies. I know you think I'm just some crazy guy, Ms. Hart, just like I know that you've tried to call 911 with both of your phones. I'm the reason they don't work.

"Plus, your husband saw me set a woman on fire with my mind."

Slam comes around while she packs her bags. Kendall Hart doesn't offer me any tea, but I pour some anyway.

"These guys are after me? You've been watching me?" Hart's eyes dart around. I know he's thinking of ways to run for it. Best to keep him interested.

"Yes. In the Vast Egyptian Weirdness chapter, you quoted what you said was an Old Kingdom inscription. We originally thought you got it from the University of Chicago archives, maybe through your wife, but I had a contact of mine come up empty looking for it."

He shrugs. "Well, I made it up. I thought this Scribe of Blasphemy figure you see in a couple of coffin inscriptions was kind of interesting. When it's time to weigh your heart in front of the gods, he tries to switch the papyrus that contains your sins with a forgery full of terrible things. I thought it was reminiscent of the *King in Yellow*. You could have some fun extrapolating it into…"

"…an Ancient Egyptian version of those Chambers stories. I know, Mr. Hart. But you ended up with something else, didn't you?"

"Yeah, it never seemed like it really hit my goal for the piece."

"Well, instead of creating a compelling fictional document, you created… well, not actually a 'real' bit of Egyptian scripture. Think of it as a possibility, like one of your 'alternate universes.' Think of the worst of all possible worlds, where torture begins at birth and where the only miracles that exist serve to keep the victims alive and suffering long enough to breed and continue it all, forever. Think of a world where the only god is composed of every story of suffering in its universe, and its thoughts are processed in a loop of time that plays back every horrific permutation, like a computer that calculates its instructions with formulae of pain.

"Somehow, you found that god, Ken. You wrote a bit of its prayer book. That makes it more *real* than it was when it was just a shell, cast into the darkness when this world was born. There are some crazy people who want to make it real enough to replace our world."

His eyes stop darting, and the rest comes along quickly. I tell him about the Red Word: the cult that worships the Scribe and collects fragments of its unspeakable history. They're cannibals; they believe that the act steals the victim's place in Earth, opening a tear in the world-narrative that their master might be able to seep through, one sentence at a time.

"And that's where I come in, Ken. You've seen what I can do — the pyrotechnic end of it, anyway. That was a simple trick from a vast body of knowledge — the same knowledge that sometimes hits you when you're writing at 4 AM. These are flashes of the Mystery, as potent as a bolt of flame. It's my job to keep the fire that frees people, and snuff out anything that might rage out of control and burn them, or burn us all."

• • •

Mel and Ken Hart cry on the corner, under yellow city lamplight. Fear as well as the sorrow of parting lends a desperate tightness to their embrace. Melanie Hart didn't see the fire in my hands, but she believes him because she loves him. A wavy line of October chill whips my spine, and I grab Kendall Hart's shoulder. Mel's with Slam, on the way to his cabal and then to relatives in Indiana. Ken's with me, through the border of the street light and into the deep blue Chicago evening.

Later, Kendall Hart's starting to push the fear down. It gives his natural sense of curiosity some breathing room.

"What's going to happen to that woman's body?"

"She's going to look like she had a heroin overdose. Slam dropped her behind a little buttressed nook around the corner from you."

"You burned her to death."

"Yeah, but I fixed that. Pick up the pace, will you?" He's trundling along in front of me, and I like to walk fast.

"Where are we going?"

"Not telling. Don't worry Mr. Hart — Ken. I don't want any harm to come to you or your wife. You've really helped us over the years, and we don't want that to stop."

"Okay. You're part of some secret society, right? Some sort of what, Hermetic rite?"

"The Golden Dawn and all that? Nah. They're jackasses, Ken. You were absolutely right when you wrote about them being dodgy old men's clubs with questionable politics. Actually, we got a chuckle out of it around the local caucus.

"In English, we call ourselves the Mysterium. We think the real name is [illegible]."

He grimaces and clutches his ears. "I don't know what that was, but it hurt."

"It's the language of magic — the language of knowledge itself. Other languages are approximations. They're mediated by your own prejudices and your natural tendency to accept the world at face value."

"It sounds Gnostic." Kendall Hart frowns. I know he thinks Gnosticism's as silly as old men babbling in Enochian.

"In part. We call the world the Lie, but think of it as a place where the signal of knowledge is obscured by a hell of a lot of noise. You were born into it, so the static of the Lie sounds so familiar to you that 'clean' knowledge sounds scrambled. But the Lie is *beautiful*, too. It's the source of metaphor, poetry, artful approximation. You have to respect it. Magic — the true world — is the stark skeleton upon which we hang the flesh of our lives. Magic describes things as they really are, like a form of mathematics that *also* describes the numbers that compose it. Does that make sense?"

"The map is the territory."

"That's a good way of putting it." I stop. There's a small red smear in my mind's eye. Back at the apartment, I sampled that cultist's particular disease — indigenous Americans called it the *chenoo* sickness – and bound it to a Space spell designed to detect other afflicted. I place the red smear of sickness within the great shape of Space and read numbers and distance from threads and spots of crimson.

There's an old door to my left. I turn, take a lunging step and bind the wind and snapping fabric of the move to the first two knuckles in my hand. The door flies open, splintering at the deadbolt, and I've broken my hand.

"Get in, Ken. They're coming for you."

I tug at his sleeve with my good arm. The alarm sparks, electricity yearning to course to its bells and warnings, but I kill it fast. I follow him in, and we explore a dark, messy storage room together. My head brushes against hanging, ragged fabric; faint blue light catches arabesque patterns in its folds. Kendall Hart sits on a table and leans against a box full of mannequin arms.

The cultist's shotgun is wrapped up in my coat. I knock it out of my armpit with my bad hand and cradle it, ambling toward Hart. "You still know how to shoot? There are three slugs left in this thing." He takes the gun.

The door creeps open. Three shadows leap out, framed in city light. I can't see them, but one of the cannibals has a precise mid-Atlantic accent. He says, "I can smell your wounds. It's quite attractive, but we're willing to forego our usual proclivities. You know we want Mr. Hart."

"Just a couple of little burns. Say — how'd you find out about our author friend, anyway?"

He sighs. "I think you're probably too injured to work one of your tricks under so much *public* scrutiny, Khonsu, so I'll play. Besides, it's funny. Mr. Hart's publisher is *very* impressed with his sales. He showed me the first half of *Dark Musings II*. If you hadn't been so diligent in buying his books, we would never have found Mr. Hart. He'd be safe in mid-list obscurity. But you know how authors always moan about the death of the mid-list, don't you?"

"Cannibals in the book trade, eh? Not surprised."

"You and I share a certain passion for the written word. That's what you Mysterons…"

"I like Mysterymen." *Keep talking.* Ken's hands are shaking, thank God. Breathing magic, I steal the little vortices built by every tremor and channel it back to his gun. *Air to fire, air to fire.*

Another, rougher voice says, "Eat?" That's it. I signal to Hart: shoot.

A roar. Hart lands on his ass, and his glasses go spinning. That spell always generates one hell of a recoil. Air turns to fire, and the first slug explodes into an angry, orange tongue. Three men scream. Two run inside. The first one lopes in like a gorilla in burning, dirty overalls. Hart's hands go steady. His second shot splits the cannibal's sooty forehead.

I hit the second guy chest to chest. He's wearing a blackened, cream-colored suit; his tie flashes cerulean in the fire. I grab his face with both hands and batter the back of his head off a table corner once, twice. *I Awakened in front of the Throne of Heaven and gave its occupant my name, and He gave me the names of all things. Every name has a sign. All Forces are a few simple arcs, brushstrokes of a cosmic rune.* (Down in the Lie, in this burning room, the man in the cream suit bites off two of my fingers.) *I draw the wind across my right hand, casting it to the target like an arrow.*

Knucklebones grind and shift, but my ensorcelled hand smashes his collarbones like dry sticks. Left, right.

The cannibal doesn't scream. He smiles and says, "I ate your friends, motherfucker."

My right hand takes both eyes, three knuckles deep.

• • •

"Take me to my wife."

Metal taps my head. I smell fire extinguisher foam and open my eyes. It's the same room, but darker now, and blurry. Kendall Hart brushes the tip of my nose with the shotgun.

"Ow. What? How long have I been out?"

"Twenty minutes. I bandaged your hand. There's still one shell left, so take me to my wife."

"I can't do that yet. Are you going to shoot me, Ken?"

"Maybe. Why can't I see her?" He adjusts his grip and squints.

"You have a knack for knowing things. I don't know where you get it from." I sit up very, very slowly. He tracks my face with the gun. "Your wife's with people I can trust to keep her safe, but I can't trust them not to use you."

"*You* used me! You bastards have been using me for most of my goddamn career! I don't care about your secret world, and whatever mob or cult you represent. But let me tell you something, now that I finally have an opportunity to direct the fucking conversation."

"I'm listening."

"I bet you think you're enlightened. You said it wasn't Gnosticism, but when it comes right down to it, you talk the same way, about some kind of capital-T Truth that excuses running roughshod over 'lower' things like, me, Mel — like our whole lives. But you're much more dangerous than some guru or fanatic, because, for some reason, this life-hating belief system of yours actually gives you some kind of power."

I nod, whisper, "I see," and quietly organize that power around me.

"Down here in the so-called Lie, power *isn't* knowledge. It's just a tool, brute force that has nothing to do with right or wrong."

"I agree." I fold my legs under and push up to a stand. The shotgun slides across my face and chest.

"Stop! Don't make me shoot you!"

"You're absolutely right, Ken. Magic's a trick. Magic's what you can do when you understand the structure of things, but not *why* the structure exists. I thought I saw God once, but He never told me to be kind to children or keep my nose out of the lives of nice men who happen to learn the secrets of the universe when they stay up too late."

I grab the barrel with two fingers and thumb, and my stumps weep blood through the gauze a little faster. "When I Awakened and witnessed God, I saw in Him a pattern that unfolds into worlds. I did *not* see anybody who loves us or wants to be our Big Daddy. Just the Presence, the pattern, the Mystery that gives us everything and owes us *nothing*. We can seize all the knowledge of the universe; God trusts us to manage it for ourselves. That's what I do, Ken. I keep tyrants from building the Bomb, and I sell allies fancy reactors. I support your right to bear arms as long as you take a fucking safety course first. I moderate knowledge. I protect it from bastards who want to *eat the world*. And if I thought there wasn't any alternative, I'd shoot you, feel bad about it for a week and then sell your final work to other occultists."

So he shoots. It sounds like an anvil hitting a shop floor and feels like Slam's baseball bat, but the spell holds. Ken's eyes widen; he drops the gun.

I cough seven times. It's an awkward silence.

"I'm not really going to do that, Ken. I just wanted you to know that I'm serious."

• • •

Anybody who says they love Milwaukee is telling half a lie. The city's like that lousy stuffed chair you bought in college. It's lumpy, covered in duct tape and anybody you live with wants you to dump it, and to be truthful you probably don't like it either, but it took so long to give up and settle for it that you'll be damned if you let it go now.

Kendall Hart sleeps in the very chair from which I derived that allegory. It's in a little place I keep in Avenues West, kitty corner from one of the Marquette U buildings.

It's been three weeks since Chicago. None of the cannibals have dropped by to ask after our health. Smooth Rex learned a lot about them. I thought he was dead, but he was really alive, extraordinarily unwell and hanging on a meat hook in DuPage. These "Red Word" members don't mind talking in front of their food. That'll be their undoing, as Rex and Potestas (Hierophant of Boston, don't you know?) are coordinating efforts to finish the Red Word off.

Rex and I are the only survivors of our cabal. Ophidian Logic's casualties managed to take eight of the Red Word along to the grave. That's worth remembering.

Ken wakes up while I cook pierogies. He's been a genial roommate (or prisoner, as he likes to remind me). He even helps out with the dishes.

Plus, he had a dream that showed me one of the greater keys to Space.

"Still on for ten o'clock?" he asks. It's seven now.

"Yes. Your wife should be by. You'll be living in my friend Rex's house. We agreed on five grand a month, didn't we?"

"Ten." He holds the colander for me and dumps the pierogies in the frying pan.

"Silly me. And of course you'll still get to write, as long as we get a look at the manuscript first. You want onions?"

There's a knock at the door. *The* knock. I turn the element off and pop the gun from my ankle holster. It feels a bit too slippery in my left hand. I shove it in my pocket but keep a tight grip. My mind's eye shifts to the hallway, and there they are: Grand Slam, Southpaw, Pennant and Melanie Hart.

I wedge the deadbolt between my good fingers and turn it. "Come in!"

So they do, all dolled up in Cubs gear. Even Ms. Hart's wearing a cap.

"This is the Brewers' town. Couldn't you have been less conspicuous?"

"No." That's Southpaw. She flicks her cornrows back and straightens her jacket. "We need to talk."

"Whatever for?" I can feel the vibrations in my bones. Magic. They're lit up with some shielding. Slam keeps scratching his stubble and glancing at the ceiling. They've obviously come early in case they need to hit me with the occult bum's rush.

"We took care of Ms. Hart here, didn't we? Over the past little while, we've had some time to think about the whole arrangement. We're going to have to change it."

"That's no good. Your man here attacked me. He broke our deal. You're paying me back, nothing more."

"Cut the bullshit! We know what Mr. Hart can do. He *knows* things — things that the Wise should share. Fuckin' Mysterymen, hoarding your secrets, then whoring them for a place in the Pentacle."

Pennant's a slight woman with long, straight black hair, twirling a bone ruler in her fingers. She clears her throat. "Mr. Hart, we want to reunite you with your wife. We can keep you safe. You can even move back to Chicago." She points the ruler at me. "This man has an agenda. You'll end up being his prisoners, no matter what he's told you."

My gun comes up. "They're free. Their secrets aren't."

Southpaw shoves her hands in her jacket. She's probably working mudras while she says, "Who the fuck is 'We,' fool? Last I heard, you're crew has two left — and one of 'em's in New England."

"Listen, Lefty."

"Southpaw."

"I don't give a shit. You've got big, brassy balls for threatening me in my sanctum. Lex gives me the right to execute you right here, but I'll be happy to let our fine, local Consilium arbitrate this."

Ken shoulders between us. "Mel and I will choose."

"No. I have no intention of letting you leave with this people. They'd email every word that comes out of your mouth to their network. As I explained, that is just never going to happen. You're too dangerous for unfiltered consumption, least of all by Team Fuckwit here.

"Besides, they know I can beat any of them in a duel."

Southpaw whips her hands out and says, "The great thing about the Free Council is that we don't have to obey your laws."

And it happens.

The first spell is actually Pennant's. They probably think her Death mojo will sneak right by my own particular God-fearing praxis. Thank God, indeed, or at least Smooth Rex. The counterspell he hung for me snuffs out the necromancy.

I shoot Southpaw (which won't do much) and think.

I've got two choices. First: kill Ken. That way, his secrets stay with his books. The Game of Geometric Perfection will probably back off. They can take me out, but they know I *might* be able to kill one of them first. Without Ken, it's just not worth it.

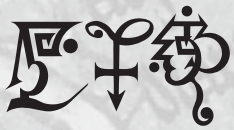
Second, I can try and use my newfound appreciation of Space to get Ken out of here. I don't think they'd hold Ms. Hart hostage. As usual, it somehow feels better to kill one of the Wise than some poor Sleeper. Melanie Hart will probably go a little crazy, and the Paradox will *hurt*. Using magic on Kendall Hart might to something to him. Awaken him, wipe out his talent. Who knows?

Killing him feels practical.

Southpaw slaps me in the face like a jilted lover, but it feels like a lead hammer. My jaw breaks.

The Breath of God kisses my will. *The Presence, the pattern, the Mystery that gives us everything and owes us nothing.*

Kendall Hart meets his destiny.



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Coming Next for Mage: The Awakening

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THE MYSTERIUM™

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INTRODUCTION

There is far greater peril in buying knowledge than in buying meat and drink.
— Plato

Awakening is more than a simple ascendance to power. Awakening is admittance into the ranks of the only real initiates that matter. Young men and women in universities "rush" their fraternities and sororities, secret societies put prospective members through trials before accepting them and religions have rituals that occur even before their members can remember.

But none of them really matter. There are mages who will swear to the importance of all of them, especially religion, but a baptism doesn't make one ready — even able — to take the first step into the Mysteries that underlie all of us in life, to understand the structure of the Supernal that is simultaneously within and above daily life — immanent and transcendent at the same time. Only a mage has the ability to take those steps, and only Awakening from Sleep and seeing what really lies behind the thin film of "reality" makes that possible.

So many mages see the Awakening as a goal in itself. Once a person has Awakened, her travails are over. She has overcome the Quiescence and etched her name forever into the Supernal World, which can never forget her. She is *done*.

To this, the Mysterium answers, "Awakening is only a beginning." It is not the first step toward enlightenment. Awakening is not a step at all, really, but standing before the first step, or seeing the path after years spent in a room of darkness. Awakening is an accomplishment to be lauded, certainly, but only as the crippled man's decision to enter physical therapy is laudable. If he can bring himself to walk again, that is a tremendous and worthy thing. Likewise, to Awaken is grand, but to truly understand the Mysteries — that is tremendous.

The Mysterium plays down this outlook when recruiting. No one wants to hear that the dramatic and soul-shattering passion play of revelation and reality shifting she just experienced is nothing but preparation for the true Great Work. Only the most self-challenging and naturally inquisitive souls can be caught that way. To most, the Mysterium is the order of gathered knowledge, and its members are happy to uphold that image. So they present themselves as the eternal seekers and guardians of knowledge, preventing the accumulated wisdom of ages from slipping through the cracks of forgetfulness and reclaiming what has been lost from when they failed in the past — or what is obscured by enemy action.

Because, as they are quick to say, the order has enemies. More than that, any who practice free magic have enemies. There are some who would prefer that you had never Awakened, that your eyes had never been opened to the world's true weave and that you never learned any more about this "magic." They destroy what the order seeks to collect and preserve, and only by finding it first can anyone enjoy these miracles.

It's remarkably effective. One of the greatest fears of most new mages is that the magic, the wondrous new thing they have discovered, will vanish in a harsh alarm and a fading dream. Even when it's frightening, it's almost always joyous and exalting as well.

Once mages are inside the order, the initiations show members of the Mysterium new ways to look at the world and at magic. It's more than an understanding that the world is a Lie, something that can be peeled away, reshaped and stuck back on by the force of a mage's will. It's the knowledge that there is something large out there tying it all together, that even magic has its principles, purpose and meaning. The order's initiations are enlightening, and that is hard to leave behind.

Theme

Unfolding mystery. Every answer begets five questions, some rewarding and some misleading. It's as likely, if not more, to find a worm inside an apple than to dig a pomegranate seed from deep within the apple's pith, but it may be as worthy a discovery.

Members of the Mysterium prize knowledge above all else, but not blindly. Information wants to be known,

but not free. To learn something without being ready for it is dangerous, and to learn something without being *worthy* of it is harmful to the recipient's soul and debasing of the knowledge itself.

A student of physics picks up a manual on quantum mechanics while still studying the basics of classical motion, and he incorrectly applies these principles and must work to forget what he has improperly learned. Parents try to teach their child healthy ideas about sex at a too-young age, and the child develops an unrealistic and possibly dangerous outlook on how society treats sex and how to be intimate with others. Military personnel guiding a foreign war keep secrets from nosy reporters who, without experiencing and understanding the subject, would betray carefully laid plans to the public for judgment and condemnation by the ignorant.

These are all accurate analogies to the Mysterium's outlook on the deepening Mysteries of magic. All members of the order, from the lowest *neokoros* on up, has undergone life-changing initiations that help reveal to them the truth about magic. And the truth that they learn is that magic is dangerous, harmful to and in hands that don't know what to do with it. If the student had first mastered classical motion, he would know where quantum mechanics fits. If the parents had waited until the child was prepared to think about sex, she would have functioned better in society. And if the journalist had experienced the military, she would not be so quick to bare what she learns.

Mood

What have you forgotten today? Just today, you have seen and heard much (even if you think you haven't), but how much of that is lost forever, to you and to anyone you might have told, simply because you weren't paying enough attention to bring it to mind — now, or ever again. Did you read the paper? What were the headlines? What happened downtown, in business, in sports?

Who died today, and how much do you think died with them? Anything in their rapidly cooling heads should have a separate obituary next to them on the page, so others can learn and remember what the dead knew, but the page doesn't. What they knew is lost, now. Gone forever, and you can't get it back. Stop worrying about it. No time. Every second you spend mourning one loss is a second you lose something else. It's out there, and it's getting harder to see and hear every moment, which is why you need to be looking for it. Find it, make it clear and permanent, and get on to something else. Hurry.

It's when there's one last flight home before Christmas, and if you run you *might* make it. The utter *certainty* that you just dreamed something brilliant and beautiful, but you're awake now and it's fading faster than you can write it down. It's Xanadu. When you watch your map go up in flames and know that getting home is going to be a *lot* harder than getting here in the first place.

The Mysterium understands this, if nothing else: we are always on the verge of losing something precious. There's magic hidden in history, and the terrible nature of life is that today overwrites yesterday. That magic has to be rescued before it's irrecoverable. Moreover, there's magic in today, too: but you have to recognize it when it turns up or it, too, will be washed away by the inexorable whitewash of human progress. The order feels each loss worse than dousing an original Cranach the Elder in turpentine.

Magic is simultaneously everywhere and disappearing from everywhere. The infinite nature of unknown magic is an order less than the infinite nature of magic a moment ago, and it is up to the mages of the Mysterium to capture and retain as much of that difference as they can.

How to Use This Book

Only a mage who knows she guards against ignorance and works for the enlightenment of all humankind is so righteous as the mages of the Mysterium. Mystagogues study all aspects of culture and history to ensure that they protect as much as possible. Their personal history is a trove of Supernal wisdom. The Mysterium culture guides them in their actions, keeping them to the right path.

Chapter One: A History of Wisdom

Even in Atlantis, City of the Wise, some mages knew better the danger of sharing magic with the uninitiated. These mages formed their own order, which promoted knowledge for all but carefully meted it out, sharing with the worthy. Within, they sought enlightenment through the experience of their Art and their knowledge. The Fall only complicated things. Throughout history, the Mysterium has guided the world toward a greater respect and desire for knowledge while the order guides mages for the same. This chapter is all about that epic saga, with a dash of where the Mysterium is now.

Chapter Two: Those Who Know

To the Mysterium, knowledge is not a commodity that can be bought and sold. Knowledge is something

that *must* be earned; to do otherwise befouls its purity and worth. This is just one of the beliefs that a mystagogue brings to her outlook on magic. They define the mages of this order as much as their practices do, and this chapter expounds on both.

Chapter Three: The Ladder of Mysteries

This chapter describes the organizational nuances of the Mysterium, both from a practical standpoint as well as focusing on the advancement of the members through the initiations of the Atlantean Mystery, granting greater and greater understanding and communion with the egregore — or group soul — of the Mysterium as a Supernal entity.

Chapter Four: Factions and Legacies

Not every member of the Mysterium is identical. Mystagogues all take part in the initiation ceremonies and work to collect and protect the Mysteries, but not in the same way. Different factions exist within the order, all with their own takes on how to best seek out new knowledge and protect it from the unworthy. The Mysterium also has a number of unique Legacies that the order has handed down from master to apprentice through the ages, some perhaps even from Atlantis itself. Alongside the mages who shape themselves for the betterment of the Awakened are some who do damage to the Mysteries through their actions and their magic, practitioners of a fell Left-Handed Legacy.

Chapter Five: Spells and Artifacts

Mystagogues have magic that few outside the order know. These mages have special spells relating to the order's focus, and the Mysterium has certain magical tactics that it advocates and teaches specifically. Their collection of unique mudras are a secret kept under close guard, as are some of the Artifacts they have recovered from lost ruins and begun using to their advantage.

Appendix: Allies and Antagonists

The Mysterium is more than just another faceless organization, just as any corporation in the modern world. Every person in the order is a mage, a person of raw will and powerful intention. They work together for grand results, and they butt heads to a standstill. The characters presented in this appendix are a sampling of those your cabal might get help from, or run up against, when you come on the scene.

Sources and Inspiration

The endless search for information is not an uncommon theme in stories. Humans in general often feel as if there must be something out there, whether it's something *more* or just something *hidden*, and so they go searching for it. Finding it is another matter: Some people know how to use what they learn, and the journey often serves as a trial by which they prove that worth. Others fail before the formation they find; unable to handle it, they leave broken. The recommendations below are just some of the many possible resources that might enhance a Mysterium game.

Books

The Cryptonomicon by Neal Stephenson. The book is a complex account spanning three different time periods all about information — its freedom and its rediscovery.

The Eight by Katherine Neville. Another book whose narrative cross time to describe multiple searches for and concealments of valuable information. The heroine tracks occult chess pieces from America into Africa and more.

Elizabeth Peters' *Amelia Peabody* series, popular mystery novels rife with archaeological connections. Mysteries are all about digging up information.

Any archaeology textbook, if that's where your game is going.

Film and Television

Alias. Ignore the bits about spies, and you have a rollicking series set in exotic locales digging up ancient lore and protecting it from people who shouldn't have it. Rombaldi is practically the Corpus Author (see p. 47).

Indiana Jones and anything, really. These are classic movies for anyone, even if you're not going to run a **Mage** game about ancient religious artifacts and the people who want them.

The Mummy. Either the old Karloff version or the newer one with special effects.

Stand by Me. Four children go on a journey to find a dead body. Their search and success serves as a coming-of-age and an initiation into the adult world.

Stargate. The movie, not the series. As fun as the latter is, it stopped being about magical (okay, technological) artifacts from Earth's past and lost cultures.

The History Channel. Their specials are chock-full of ideas.

Lexicon

Each term that follows refers to some important aspect of the Mysterium, be it a philosophy, person or practice.

A few of them are used only within the order, particularly those connected to principles or historical notes mystagogues rarely discuss with non-Mysterium, but many of these terms are in unrestricted usage. This makes them useful for any game that features the Mysterium, whether as the players' characters or as antagonists.

Acquisitionist: Mystagogue tasked with the dangerous work of recovering knowledge and Artifacts from the wrong hands and investigating strange phenomena.

Alae Draconis: See *Wings of the Dragon*.

Atlantean Mystery, the: The secret knowledge the Mysterium uses as a path to enlightenment; it is divided into the *Five Mysteries*.

Archaeomancers: Faction of the order, whose members devote themselves to archaeology Supernal.

Archivists: Faction of the order, which promotes preservation of lore over all else.

Athenaeum: One of the order's many repositories of lore and ancient Artifacts (Supernal or otherwise), watched over by a *Curator*.

Censor: Mystagogue who ensures that dangerous information is seen by none unless absolutely necessary.

Corpus Mysteriorum, the: Ancient grimoire known to the order, copied a hundred times over and of unknown authorship. This grimoire describes one of the Mysterium's core theses, that magic is itself a living entity, and also contains at least 14 recorded rotes.

Curator: Mystagogue who watches over one of the order's Athenaea, deciding who can access what within; usually influential within the caucus, if not the Consilium.

***dadouchos*:** Member of the order with moderate status, who likely sees to the order's organization and administration.

egregore: The theoretical spiritual "group mind" that comes to exist in any organization that embodies the goals and traditions of that organization or fellowship.

Egregori: Faction of the order, containing those members most dedicated to the order's mysteries and its spiritual aspects.

esotology: Mysterium name for the study of the supernatural outside of the Supernal, divided into *occultism*, *sidereology* and *teratology*.

exoterics: Mysterium name for the broad range of mortal academic disciplines.

factotum: Sleepwalker initiated into the lesser Atlantean Mystery and aware of the Mysterium as an order.

Five Mysteries, the: The five rungs of the ladder that is the *Atlantean Mystery*, each of which demands a separate initiation and conveys greater understanding of the entire Mystery.

four protocols, the: Four general ethical guidelines for dealing with life as a mage.

guanxi: Mysterium term for the social give-and-take between its members.

Hierophant: Member of the order with great status, who is generally above worldly concerns.

magosophy: Sub-discipline of *soriology*, focusing on the Awakened soul and morality from the Awakened perspective.

mystagogue: Generic term for a mage of the Mysterium.

***neokoros*:** Initiate of the order.

occultism: Sub-discipline of *esotology*, focusing on supernatural miscellany.

Pancryptia: Mysterium term for magic's nature to obscure itself in the meaningless noise around it. Part of the order's task is to fight this phenomenon by sorting magic from the dross.

Reclaimers: Faction of the order, promoting "reclaiming" ancient lore from those unworthy of it.

Savant: Mystagogue who focuses on preserving knowledge at all costs, to the extent of voluminous memorization.

Seekers: Faction of the order, primarily concerned with theory and magical research.

sidereology: Sub-discipline of *esotology*, focusing on the Astral Realms.

soriology: Mysterium name for the study of magic, divided into *magosophy*, *supernology* and *thaumatology*.

supernology: Sub-discipline of *soriology*, focusing on the Supernal Realms, the Tapestry and the why over the how.

teratology: Sub-discipline of *esotology*, focusing on the various supernatural creatures of the Fallen World.

thaumatology: Sub-discipline of *soriology*, focusing on the practical application of magic rather than the theory of it.

theonom: Elder mystagogue leading an initiate through one of the *Five Mysteries*.

Wings of the Dragon: Atlantean order from which the Mysterium evolved, as commonly accepted by modern mages. The order gathered, valued, protected and advanced knowledge of the Ars Mysteriorum in all venues. Unknown outside the Mysterium, its inner circle held initiation ceremonies to advance worthy members into ever more secret knowledge and toward enlightenment. The current order upholds both traditions.

CHAPTER ONE: A HISTORY OF WISDOM

It's like chasing snakes. The closer I get, the quicker and more elusive they become. And the trouble is, I wasn't even looking for these snakes in the first place.

Each of the accounts recorded in this book is worth reading on their own, let me make that clear. Two years ago I probably would have killed to read the first chapter alone. The Parable of the Two Vultures in itself would be worth a fortune to any Egyptologist worth the word, and none of them would even realize its true value. When you know what the parable's really about, then it's beyond price. And that's just one chapter.

But the real reason I've been missing meals and seeing the handwriting in this book behind my eyelids when I sleep is what lies between these chapters. The hooks. They're hard to determine, and they elude me like they're sapient, but if I can just catch all these snakes and weave them together, then it will all unfold.

I hope I can pull it off soon, before I start seeing them literally as snakes. Thankfully, I'm not to that point yet.

Honest.

History is a record of human progress, a record of the struggle of the advancement of the human mind, of the human spirit, toward some known or unknown objective.

— Jawaharlal Nehru

All roads lead to Rome. All people belong to Dharma. To the Mysterium, these are all examples of the influence the Supernal Realms, metaphors for the fact that all mages ultimately serve the same purpose, if some better than others, as they once did in ancient Atlantis. And in Atlantis, all roads led toward Wisdom.

Faded Parchments: Seeing Atlantis

There was never another purpose to the convening of mages in the City of the Spire. Thoughts of the isle crept outward through the Temenos and into the dreams of the receptive, the perceptive and the inquisitive. These dreams hinted at truth, promised to unveil what was hidden of the world, and seekers of that truth followed their dreams to the ocean spire, where they learned to seek the first revelations inside themselves. To these worthies, all besides enlightenment was secondary. Most mystagogues believe, though to some it is a Taoist refinement of the inner soul while others see it as a metaphor for knowing the Voodoun was more closely.

Time passed, and with it passed the first mages' purity of cause. They who had once wanted only to open themselves to what lay beneath the skein of the world now had other passions. They played at power of different kinds, power they could wield over people. Mages straying from the path of Wisdom practiced politics, or war, or voyeurism and forgot that their first duty was to truth.

Even in those days before the Fall, some mages saw the need to protect the unwise from secrets that would only harm them. It was the Alae Draconis, those who devoted themselves to the purely Supernal pursuit of studying the Mysteries, who saw most clearly. Masters of the order devised a multi-tiered system for separating the wheat from the chaff and admitting the worthy into higher levels of enlightenment.

It became an inner circle within the Wings of the Dragon, then a series of concentric circles. To the outer world, the order was devoted only to increasing the collective knowledge of workings Supernal — it was something every mage did, but at which these mages excelled. Within, the order concealed secrets that could not be taught; only through experience could an initiate truly understand the order's wisdom.

Chief among sages was the *hausamet*, literally the "nearest to truth," who held the honor of having known most closely the living nature of magic. In his Wisdom, he guided all of his order in advancing their enlightenment. Beneath him were the 10 *erunati*, each the foremost master of one Arcanum's aspect of the Essence Mysteriorum, some even surpassing the *hausamet* in a focused sense of enlightenment.

Beneath these archmasters were students of various ranks. The Atlantean names are lost, so they use the Latin terms *primus*, *secundus*, *tertius* and so on to refer to the order's degrees, from most junior on up. Supposedly, one part of advancing from one rank to the next was using a specialized spell of Knowing to discern the rites of initiation for the next degree and the figure of authority the student must seek to help perform those rites.

Only the Mysterium seems to remember this aspect of their prototypal order; none of the other modern orders publicly connect secrecy with the Alae Draconis. The Mysterium's perception of the order's origin is of a group of learned mages who collected and dispensed their knowledge wisely, beloved teachers to the rest of Atlantis. This may be because the Mysterium is only trying to justify the order's current structure in a myth of Atlantis, or because the order never speaks of its ancient or current practices to manage the Mysterium's image. After all, lying is harmful; silence is not.

An Echo Heard Through Time: The Fall and Diaspora

Mages of the modern Mysterium carry the weight of the Fall squarely on their shoulders. They know that the fault is their philosophical forebears, despite what the other orders might claim. It was the Wings'

knowledge of the Ars Mysteriorum that made the Celestial Ladder a possibility. Further, they believe it was a schism in their own ranks that inspired it.

Internally, the Alae Draconis constantly sought higher forms of enlightenment. As long as there was more of the Mystery out there, they reasoned, there were more rungs to climb before one could reach the innermost circle, the pinnacle of the order. There was no innermost circle. A precept of the order, withheld to the highest-ranked masters, was that there was always another step toward enlightenment; only by knowing all there was of magic could one truly stand in the center of their circle. The Buddhist state of nirvana is a common modern association with the ever-distant innermost circle.

This could not remain a secret for long. As explorers in other lands returned with clues and tantalizing half-answers, the order's most enlightened mages created another stratification to the process of mastering these freshly discovered secrets. Soon, it was not only the highest-ranked masters who knew that there was no end in sight, that the state of perfect knowledge intimated to initiates was an empty promise.

Some masters of the Alae Draconis could not accept that the path was more important than the destination. Whether or not they conceived of the ultimate hubris, it was they who unveiled the order's secret mysteries to make real the fantasy of the Celestial Ladder.

Even today, some Mysterium masters hold it was not the Celestial Ladder that was the true error; it was heaping secrets of the Mysteries on the clearly unworthy that created broke apart the Supernal from the material. Very few voice (or firmly hold) the belief that, if the worthy among the Wings of the Dragon had used their knowledge to create such a ladder for themselves alone, it should not have shattered and the world not Fallen.

But they did, and the world changed. Though the history taught within the Mysterium claims the order caused it, this history is considered secret and not spoken of outside the Mysterium. The order hides this secret out of pride, because other orders would laugh to think that only the Mysterium were responsible. And the Mysterium hides the secret out of shame, knowing that the order is to blame. It remains a point of pride that, though their weakness did something so terrible and irrevocable, the depth and breadth of their knowledge let it be done at all.

Prevention: The Athenaea Prima

The Wings of the Dragon knew that they could not stop the Celestial Ladder from going up. Knowledge, once unwisely given, could not be reclaimed until forgotten. They chose a fight they could win. All Alae Draconis were entrusted with copies of all the order's recorded lore for safekeeping in foreign lands, a truly vast enterprise. Mages of every degree of initiation went, to ensure that someone remained to initiate those below them and to protect the Mysteries until that time.

Only the initiates most skilled in war were allowed to remain. They knew only some of what had occurred, but desired to fight for wisdom. The order's eldest felt their shame keenly, but knew their duty was to the Mysteries. Without their guidance, their order would crumble and the greater truths ensconced within lost. Still, they could not allow the Ladder to stand unchallenged. The Wings of the Dragon went to the greatest nobles of Atlantis, whom the Alae Draconis had instructed as young mages and whom they knew would take the right path, and advised them in what would come. They, too, then left the island.

Some accounts suggest that the eldest of the order also shared some forbidden mysteries with Atlantis' nobles, in the hopes that it would avail them against the order's enemies. This, too, is considered a possible cause of the Fall. For the Oracles to know what they had not earned, as foreign as that thought is to some, was too great a flaw for the universe to remain whole.

The mages of the order fled in three groups, each led by one of their wisest, and where they settled they constructed repositories of lore and magic. This first wave, gone from Atlantis before the Fall, went where writing was known and accepted among the people, to better fit conceal their missions among the inhabitants. The mages built places where the Mysteries could remain protected from the unworthy but available to any who had the Wisdom to properly handle the Mysteries.

Though the system had proved to have flaws, the Alae Draconis had no finer way of measuring a mage than the symbols and code words taught within the initiations of their order. They used those liberally, as triggers for secret passages, deactivation codes for guardian spirits and automatons and passwords to release information otherwise withheld. The mages did not pause to think that their rituals of initiation might fade from use, or that the words and gestures used for identification within the order would change. They did not see the scope of evolution their order would undergo.

The designers of the Athenaea's predecessors did not leave everything up to programmed recognition

of secret phrases. The mages conceived of a multitude of precautions, using Mind magic to detect intent, spells of Prime to discern the Awakened from the Asleep, Fate to disregard those destined to misuse the knowledge therein and others. Each Athenaeum had unique enchantments laid in its very foundation, which themselves might be revealing to those who could examine the enchantments.

The Wings' foresight ensured that their three great storehouses were complete before the Fall, before the great decline in magic. If they still exist, these are the ones that the Mysterium expects to remain the most complete in the present day, having the greatest concentrations of Atlantean magic and the most resistance to the degradation of time. They would also be the most subtle and insidious in their defenses. Few of them hold (or originally held) much in the way of mundane information: the order thought only to protect the secrets of magic, not the sciences of the rest of the world.

Mystagogues who study these Athenaea Prima connect them to certain prehistory libraries. The mystagogues believe the collections of tablets known to exist in Sumer were inspired by a secret library of the Alae Draconis, given a public face to alert the Wise and conceal the library among imitators. The libraries of ancient Greece are thought of likewise. More than one cabal searching for the original Athenaea report clues that point to clues that were probably lost in the imitative libraries, perhaps coordinates or directions to the three secret locations.

Some suggest that Ashurbanipal's palace was built on this secret repository and search its ruins for signs of their treasure. A more common belief is that the famed Library of Alexandria was once one of the order's treasure houses of lore, somehow discovered and conquered by the people of ancient Egypt and the library's techniques used as a foundation for their own mundane recordings. No belief escapes controversy: nearly as many mages believe that Alexandria's library was a ruse to distract unworthy seekers from the "lesser" library of Pergamum, across the Mediterranean Sea. The proof, they say, is Pergamum's advance to using parchment while Egypt continued using the more fragile papyrus.

The other great assumption mystagogues make about the three Athenaea Prima is their method of instruction. Many mages assume that ancient ruins will be full of dusty tomes, cracked tablets and crumbling scrolls. This was not the way of the Wings of the Dragon. Mysterium mages are more excited to hear about ruins that talk about challenges and trials, that prove knowledge of the Mysteries through action and teach through experience. Some imagine chambers in Egyptian tombs where fantasies come to life simply to provide true experience to students.

Dawning Realization

Once the cataclysm of the crumbling Celestial Ladder struck, mages of the Alae Draconis revised their assessment of how secure their three repositories of lore might be. Struggling to master the changes in the Arcana, the three groups splintered further, sent by the remaining masters out to protect the information any and every way they could. They traveled to every place on earth of which they knew, every body of land where they could plant and nurture their seeds for the future generations of Awakened.

Efforts to place the diaspora in time relative to today are difficult and often based on guesswork. An "instant advancement" argument claims that the destruction of Atlantis could not have occurred more than 5,000 years ago, when most of humanity progressed from the Stone Age to the Bronze Age. The appearance of Atlantis's knowledge must have uplifted the helpless barbarians of other cultures and triggered their rapid (in comparison to the time spent in the Stone Age) advance in technology. These mages argue that no other event could be responsible for accelerating the advance of mortal societies worldwide.

Brother to instant advancement is the idea of "delayed advancement," in which the Fall took place anywhere from one to dozens of centuries before the rise out of the Stone Age. In this theory, the Awakened are still responsible for the metallurgic advances, but they spent time judging and insinuating themselves into the existing cultures before daring to push them forward.

Corollary to either theory is the attractive idea that the mages' exodus from Atlantis can be tracked by following the appearance of Bronze Age technology backwards in time. Before the latter half of the 20th century, the earliest indications of that level of metallurgy pointed to the Middle East, which supplemented nicely some mages' research proving that Atlantis was an island in the Aegean. More recent data date bronze in Thailand to 4500 BCE, throwing more fuel on the fire and prompting many to take back up arguments for an Atlantis in the Indian or Pacific Ocean. That the second-oldest bronze remains have been found in Turkey only makes the argument louder.

More commonly accepted is that the Bronze Age

Athenaea Prima: Up Close

Storytellers are encouraged to use the Athenaea Prima in their games as the holy grails of the Mysterium quest for Supernal knowledge. Here are a few ideas to help get the ball rolling if you do.

Finding one of the Athenaea Prima is sure to involve the sites of some of the oldest nations on Earth. Even though there were empires in South America long ago, the most ancient known civilizations are still centered around the Middle East. The nearer parts of Africa and Asia are also valid locales. They all have issues. They are troubled by war, bloody revolution, inconstant and/or insular governments and poverty. Imagine your players' faces when the evidence points them at Palestine, for example.

After pinpointing the Athenaeum Prima, a cabal must deal with the Athenaeum's current owners. Sure, it might be a crumbling façade in the middle of uninhabited desert, but it's much more likely (and interesting) to be beneath some current center of learning, grown in the fertile soil of the Athenaeum Prima's influence. Getting access to a private museum is difficult. Getting the freedom to search the place for and tear its secrets out into the light is much, much harder. Especially if a Seers of the Throne cabal knows of the Athenaeum. They could not destroy such a wonder, but they would acquire it to guard it against the Pentacle.

It's possible that the creators of these storehouses anticipated their loss, and intended one of the trials to be discovering it in the first place. Even if they did, the insides of an Athenaeum Prima are rife with challenges. The décor and layout of the interior are highly symbolic of the Mysteries. There may be a central chamber with 10 doors, each set at the point of a double Atlantean pentacle. There could be five passages that cross at the center, the Gross and Subtle Arcana at opposite ends. Or there could be a multitude of levels, each with deeper introductions to each of the Arcana.

The trials themselves range from the prosaic (hand signs and passwords common to the old Alae Draconis) to the overtly magical (spells that judge whether one is worthy of certain knowledge) to the experiential (trials that force one into a scenario and judge on one's actions, or delve into a person's memories for proof of specific efforts and understandings). Be creative with the high magic of Atlantis.

came to Greece around 3000 BCE, China around 1800 BCE and the Americas only around 1000 BCE. This pattern gives some weight to the argument that mages traveled outward from the Greek islands, bringing their knowledge to foreign lands only when the mages got there.

Counterarguments are many. There is no real evidence besides ego that drives mages to associate their presence with a society's advancement into the next technological age. Some who focus on the sociological aspects of historic peoples insist that mages, unless they formed a critical mass at a culture's center, could not produce enough social impetus to significantly alter its momentum — by introducing and making widespread the use of a new, advanced technology, for example. If the culture isn't already headed in that direction, the efforts of a single mage, cabal or even Consilium are not going to shift it.

Mages of the Mysterium especially lean away from the idea that their predecessors launched cultures technologically forward. The order's core ideals about knowledge and the worthy may focus on the Mysteries, but it applies universally. To give a people technological achievements they had not earned would be out of character. Mystagogues do believe that, wherever they started and wherever they went, they acted to preserve any information they could without dangerously standing out among various societies.

The places of lore took on every shape imaginable, strongly influenced by whatever proto-culture dominated in the region. In what would be western Europe, a mage hid most of his written information and wandered as a learned bard, introducing new people to the Mysteries as apprentices. Many think this necessity to be the ancestor of the Savants of today's order. Monasteries rose in the East, complete with monks focused on the study of philosophy and deeper

More Arguments of Origin

Proponents of the instant advancement theories of Atlantean diaspora have more to contend with than simple logic. Among the complications with their ideas is the Ishango bone, a simple tool dated to approximately 25,000 years ago, which exhibits possible understanding of simple mathematics. Since mages who argue for instant advancement are often among those who also claim that mages caused all or most logical steps forward in human civilization, this can be hard pill to swallow.

understanding and willing to teach. More enlightened areas saw the birth of academies and sages.

These storehouses contained information of all kinds, unlike the original three. Shocked by the severity of the Fall, the Wings of the Dragon did not know how much information might be lost in the dark times ahead. They recorded everything they knew or could learn, concealing their true secrets beneath and within piles upon piles of mundane knowledge. Also, despite the mages who manned or looked over their repositories, most mages also guarded against the event that none of them would be capable of teaching the libraries' contents.

Over the next age, mages of the Alae Draconis — or whatever it had become — returned to their storehouses. They were ever poorer in their understanding of the Mystery, and in time did not themselves understand enough to be considered initiates by those who had preceded them, but they learned what they could. While the other orders wrestled with what they must become in the new world, the Alae Draconis knew: they were, and had always been, keepers of lore and teachers. They kept the dark world from dimming to pitch blackness.

Lessons to be Lost: Memories Before Record

The Mysterium is an order of historians and archaeologists, but even they find the period directly after the Fall difficult to describe with certainty. What they do "know" they have reconstructed from bits and pieces turned up over the years and certainly do not comprise a full picture. That doesn't prevent the mages of the order from arguing their many different theories, of course.

Recovery and Repurposing

The mages of Alae Draconis had left doomed Atlantis and seen to the safekeeping of their knowledge. That vital task accomplished, they had to regroup and decide what would be the purpose and aim of their order in the future. Mages initiated into the order traveled from wherever they had been scattered, or sent representatives, to discuss the order's future.

Little solid proof exists that this Great Forum actually took place, despite centuries of searching and thorough investigation into locations such as Stonehenge, the Temple of the Sun at Teotihuacán and the Temple of Amon at Al Karnak, among others. In the end, it is a matter of belief that the order must have discussed its future in some form of massive conclave before the order's cohesion weakened to the point that such discussion would be impossible.

Two major schools of thought dominated the discussion. One insisted that the order had spent long enough — the time period between the Fall and the completion of the scattered mages' duties is unclear — protecting what the mages had. It was time to return to the order's original purpose, that of seeking the enlightenment Supernal. The mystagogues could not progress toward the center point of the innermost circle when the Mysteries still taunted them in the nature of the lands to which they now belonged.

Against them stood the mages who had seen the Fall as a profound change, not just in the nature of the world but of in the nature of information. The Alae Draconis had truth seen bits of information as diamonds in the earth, impervious to time and waiting to be harvested by those who could see them. But that had changed with the collapse of the Celestial Ladder. Where magic had once been truth in its purest form, magic was now dilute with confusion. As a horseless cart slowed to a stop, so, too, might knowledge dwindle to nothing. Just as the wings propelled the dragon, the Alae Draconis needed to fuel the continuance of their collected wisdom.

Neither group advocated abandoning their joint missions to store knowledge or to seek out truth, but each focused on different aspects. Simply storing knowledge, one insisted, would not be enough when pure knowledge was no longer sacrosanct. The other claimed that this "concealment of truth" was not a new thing, and that even when Atlantis still stood the order had examined the large and the small for revelation. In short, one group demanded that the order change with the shifts they perceived in the fundamental nature of the universe; the other resisted. Contemporary mages call the first group the Keepers of the Word after notes pieced together over decades; the second is known as the Pancryptiates, after the modern name for their idea.

While it cannot be proved that the event took place, there is evidence that this split in ideology was real. The following is an excerpt from a text believed to be from the Greek period.

Master: What you ask, child, has been asked by every child who pursues this Art. When the first star fell from the sky, two men stood over it and asked the

Physics and Magic: Analogy

Studying the physical sciences has proven fruitful for mages since the first rigorous philosophers began applying careful logic to their conceptions of the universe. Even when science fails to provide true insights into magic, science often serves as a variety of invaluable analogs for teaching these truths.

In particular, the analogy of an object's natural inclination to slow to a stop, and the gradual decline of the Ars Mysteriorum was a common one. Newton's formulation of the three laws of motion upset this analogy: now, objects left untouched by any external force would continue, speed undiminished. A prime example of where this might occur was among the celestial objects of space, outside the Earth's atmosphere and away from its forces of friction.

This was incredibly damaging to the common analogy. An object in the heavens should not diminish, and what were the Mysteries but objects of celestial import and nature? Why should they grow obfuscated and wear away naturally if this is their origin? It threw many into disarray, causing some mages to believe that the Mysteries they had uncovered for so many years to be false leads and others to disregard the safety of their information, again thinking it pure and safe for all time.

The solution came in a reshaping of the analogy. As a celestial object moves without hindrance, so do the Supernal Realms, their magical analogs. But the truth that mages deal with must deal with the "atmosphere" of the Fallen Realm (often equated with the Abyss in this analogy). Until mages can transcend the diminishing nature of the Fallen Realm, their truths will always incline toward disappearance in the world's all-consuming chaos. Mysterium mages established the altered analogy as the baseline for their order, and the status quo reestablished itself.

Centuries later, an ideal alternate analogy presented itself in the form of the second law of thermodynamics: entropy.

same question of themselves. One said, "The star is fallen; let us see to our livelihoods." The other said, "Things of the heaven can fall; let us see to our homes, that the stars do not fall on them." The two men, who had been as brothers and who raised the same cattle, did not speak again. The first man took all the cattle. The second man took both wives. Neither shared cattle or wives. Which survived to tell this tale?

Philosophy in Action

The two parties went their separate ways. Keepers returned to the original Alae Draconis passion of seeking and collecting new facets of the Mysteries, adding them to the Ars Mysteriorum and sharing out their wisdom within the order to those worthy. Keepers rarely considered Pancryptiates either "within the order" or "worthy," which contributed to the growing rift between the two groups.

Pancryptiates also sought out new or lost aspects to the Mysteries, just as they had always done, but their search was fraught with haste. The longer one waited, the more likely a clue would be obscured beneath layers of the mundane and the false. Pancryptiates also turned to their stores of wisdom and worried, because their core assumptions about the Fall suggested that their repositories were no more safe than the data yet unknown. Three different actions came of this concern; though they were not exclusive, mages tended to focus on one of them.

One group chose to use all its knowledge to prolong the lifespan of that information the group already possessed. It was an attempt to defeat the inevitable obfuscation of knowledge with sheer will and redundancies. These mages crafted books that copied themselves before they could degrade, wrote on imperishable media and used every spell at their disposal to protect their knowledge from being lost. It's possible (and widely believed) that the "Copy Grimoire" spell (see p. 48) came from this period. Much of this was done within the repositories the mages had already built, refining or refitting the repositories for the purpose — and some philosophers assume that the process saw the accidental destruction of information.

Others among the Pancryptiates saw in their hands a greater responsibility. Their order was not the only order, and their knowledge was not the only knowledge. The Alae Draconis may have led the Atlanteans in advancement of the Mysteries, but mages of other orders had always possessed their own secrets.

This realization split mages into two sorts. The first sought out other mages during this period and shared knowledge with them within the limits set by the order's initiations. These mages hoped to preserve the body of fundamental knowledge and thereby slow the loss of information held only by the other orders. With a firmer foundation, the Towers might be slower to fall. If the other orders could be persuaded to share information in return, that would be ideal.

The other faction, led by a mage initiated into the higher Mysteries, chose another route. They would get that information by any means necessary in order to preserve it within their own storehouses. Mages who agreed integrated themselves into foreign cabals and orders, or simply infiltrated them, and took the unique learning they found there. They were fewer in number than the other Pancryptiates, but many times more effective.

In the short term, the Keepers of the Word had a significant advantage. They were more unified in their purpose, that being to accumulate knowledge of the Mysteries from all corners of the world and from any source. They also had the advantage of practice, since this was the Alae Draconis's specialty before the Fall. (Records are unclear as to whether the mages of this period remained the generation that witnessed the Fall, but the records suggest that the mages were near enough to benefit from that collective experience.)

Both groups still retained the old methods of advancing through initiations within the order. This resulted in the Keepers advancing more members into the higher ranks and being admitted to learn greater Mysteries — which, in turn, gave the Keepers advantages in pursuing their ends and attracting new members.

The Pancryptiates, seeing their membership dwindling, evolved in order to survive. They revised the form of access to their Mysteries, limiting themselves to five distinct degrees of initiation. Having a set number of circles an initiate would have to traverse opened the deeper Mysteries to a greater number, returning the two groups to an equity in raw power. An achievable goal (i.e., the fifth degree) also made the Pancryptiate cabals more attractive than the idea of an ever-narrowing circle that grows no closer.

It may have been a dilution of the philosophy the Mysterium had held from Atlantis, but the order did not shatter over it. In fact, evidence suggests that there was never any great convocation over the matter of limiting the degrees of initiation. That suggests that many cabals or caucuses did so independently (probably with varying numbers of ranks) and the set-rank groups merged with one another over time, with one number of degrees winning out.

The other counter the Pancryptiates had to fight the spreading Keepers of the Word was reputation. Though the mages worked in different directions, enough of the Pancryptiates were devoted to the idea of educating other orders (limiting certain lessons to the worthy, of course) that they had allies in the difficult world after Atlantis. The Keepers were not liked in their Awakened communities and found help to be lacking when they needed it. In fact, other orders associated the Pancryptiate thieves and spies with the Keepers, because of the latter's aggressive search for new knowledge.

In time, the membership of the Keepers of the Word dwindled. Many cabals allowed themselves to be absorbed into the Pancryptiate, and eventually there was only one descendant of the Wings of the Dragon. No currently known records of the period give the victorious order a unified name. Some scholars suggest they continued using Alae Draconis, evidence being the references to "the order" and other indistinct references.

Before the end of this period, some documents made references to a group called the "Hand of the Mind." Whether it was a cabal or a split from the main order is unknown. Most of these documents condemn the group's activities as betrayal of the Corpus Mysteriorum (making these documents also the earliest known references to that work) and equivalent to spiritual suicide. The most common inference, an educated guess, from the texts is that a significant number of mages, already dedicated to preserving the wisdom of other orders through theft and deceit, decided that acquiring these Mysteries was evidence of the mages' worthiness to climb the rungs of the order. Rather than just acquiring and storing the information and later ascending to learning it, they considered the act of acquisition proof of advancement.

Available records suggest that all members of the Hand of the Mind were either killed or reformed in an internecine struggle that appeared to involve many of eastern Europe's and western Asia's mages — at least within the order. The shame brought on the practice of taking knowledge from others by underhanded means made it a rare practice for an indeterminate period. This practice was never philosophically condemned, and it has again become an accepted (even encouraged) practice in the modern day and found a home with the Reclaimers.

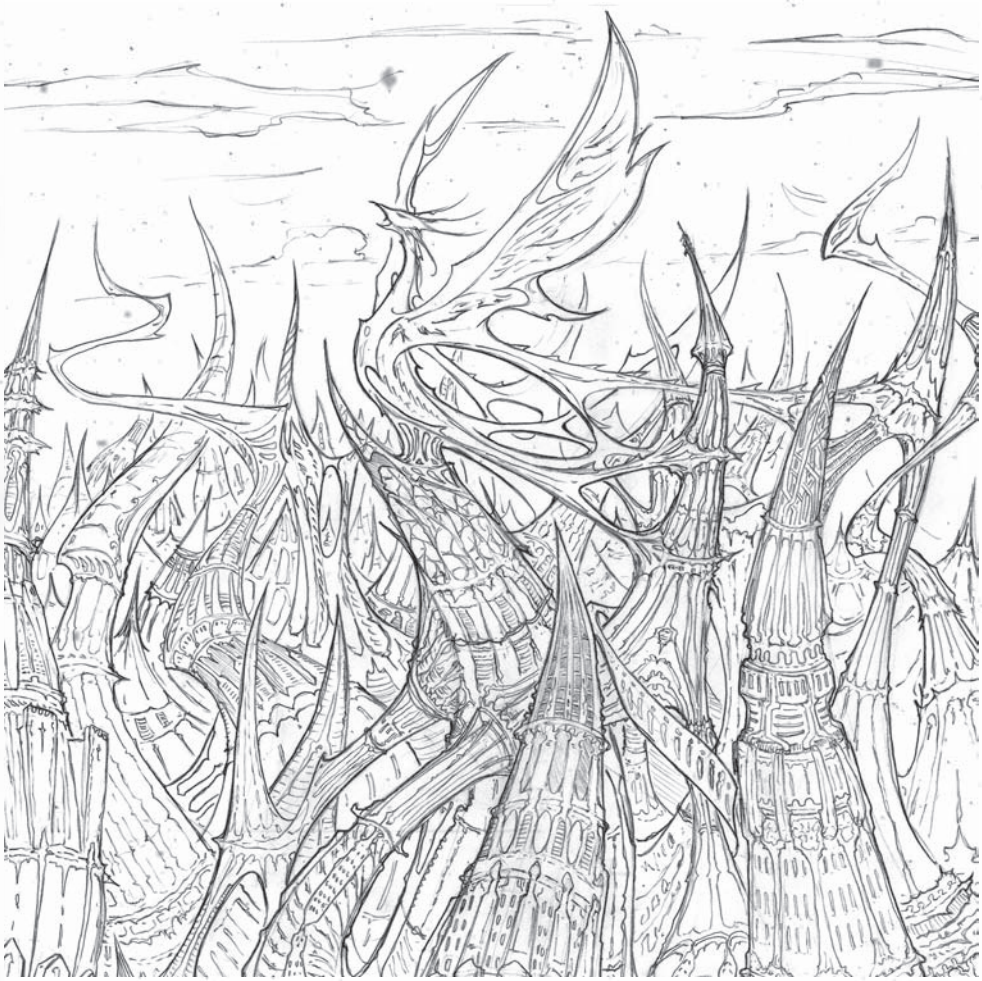
New Atlantis

Time passes, and the lessons of the past are lost or forgotten. This is one of the precepts of the order, but that doesn't make the Mysterium proof against it. Despite the immutable thesis that the universe tends toward mingling truth and falsities in indecipherable chaos, or perhaps because of it, a group rose from within the order that wished to combat that effect. These mages possessed significant political capital in the order, though the records leave the question of whether the capital came from legitimate politicking or unscrupulous manipulation in serious, almost purposeful doubt. Accounts refer to the group as the "Phoenix Brethren," or simply "the Phoenix."

The group proposed constructing something they called the Adytum of the Mystery, a place where knowledge could go eternally free of degradation, where the five degrees of initiation could prove worthiness and a place safe from the enemies the order suspected or feared. (At least one document mentions the "terrible, burning Silence," believed to be a connection to the Guardians of the Veil in whatever incarnation that order possessed during that period.)

Most novel about this theoretical feat was that it would take advantage of the laws of the Fallen World. The Phoenix Brethren's thesis, which they hoped to add to that of the entire order, was that the new universe was not flawed, but only constructed differently from how it had been during the time of Atlantis. The mages' proof would be in their permanent installation of undilutable knowledge, which would use a unique property of the Fallen World to function.

They built the installation in the Shadow Realm, the different laws of which they claimed would allow the mages to transcend the limitations imposed on the physical world after the Fall. The Phoenix Brethren "became as a seed does a mighty oak, but in a day." Though the source's choice of simile makes the author a probable supporter of the cause, there's little cause to believe the text lies about the group's rapid growth. It began with a small core of mages devoted to their ideals, masters of some Arcana but not all, and ended with enough Awakened manpower to make their dream a reality.



As the Phoenix flourished within its order and a group of mages collaborated on the Adytum's design, its purpose evolved. So many hopeful people could not contain their ambitions or dreams, and what was originally a repository of imperishable knowledge became the kernel of a New Atlantis. It was a campus that would begin life as a perfect library but, as the theory of perfection garnered more and more proof, it would become a center of learning for the city of mages who would accrete around it.

Texts recovered from that period indicate that the original core of the Phoenix Brethren approved or disapproved of the idea, depending largely on the author's opinion. Whatever the original

few thought, the plan went ahead. Magic forced back hungry spirits and dangerous allegory to carve an almost a thousand square miles from the Shadow wilds. Mages paved streets in the land of spirit and raised buildings, mansions, vast libraries, museums, walking gardens, speaking halls and anything else they desired on the plain they created. In the center, the mages formed a stair of thaumium, wide enough for five abreast, which lead to the physical world through enchantments the mages laid upon the stair.

Masters of Spirit bound the Shadow Realm's inhabitants to serve the Adytum of the Mystery. Records speak of a minor god bound to watch over the entire fledgling city, to keep the spirit wilds from swallowing it up in the absence of any effort from the city's mage inhabitants. Lesser spirits the mages bound as servants, commanding them to keep the streets and buildings in good repair and beautiful. Others were set to be guardians, librarians or anything else. The mages were not unwise: spirits bound to the streets were spirits of streets, and spirits tied to the libraries of spirits of knowledge and books. All were empowered to use their Essence and their Influences on behalf of the city or its inhabitants, and required to use their powers to maintain the city's store of wisdom.

To appease and feed the army of bound spirits, and especially the god, the Phoenix Brethren bound still more spirits. There was no shortage of them in the Shadow Realm, and they seemed to be the perpetual motion machine of the new age. This spirit corps would extract Essence from where it gathered and distribute it among those who could not leave the Adytum, keeping some for themselves. It was all to work like the finest clockwork.

The Phoenix Brethren encompassed anywhere from a tenth to a third of the order's worldwide membership, according to the spotty records available from the period. An enormous number of mages brought the first stage of their ambitious project to a close with the transferal or duplication of thousands upon thousands of documents into the Adytum of the Mystery. There it would be kept, maintained against decay by untiring spirits, for all the generations of mages to follow. Once the experiment was proved a success, the mages could further develop their theories and there work out how to bypass the negative influence of the Abyss or the weakening of the Arcana.

The Silent Fall of New Atlantis

The only real fact known about New Atlantis after this period is that the city was a failure. How the

Radiocarbon Whating?

If the Mysterium has all these records, messages, accounts and whatnots from the times and time periods of the Keepers of the Word, the Hand of the Mind and New Atlantis, how come the order doesn't know exactly when these things happened? There are techniques that give very accurate ages, after all!

There are two answers to this. First, mages of the Mysterium are fanatical about keeping their Athenaea from losing information. To this end, they make absolutely certain to copy texts that might fall apart into more secure forms. When possible, the mages use powerful spells that even copy hidden passages and enchantments to preserve everything. The mages use similar techniques when duplicating information to share with another Athenaeum. Copies won't provide the same proof of age as an original.

The other reason is, well, magic. Writing something on alchemical orichalcum will make it last a long time without visible degradation, and there's no scientist that knows what percentage of its atoms are radioactive or how quickly they decay. Similarly, Matter magic used on even mundane parchment or papyrus can change its physical properties in ways that make the object's age impossible to divine using normal science.

And why not use divination to determine such? It's just not that easy. Mages have to know when they're aiming a spell, and then usually be in the same place (or use commensurate Space). With the scraps the Mysterium has, finding the right times and places would require more guesswork and footwork than all the order could perform over a thousand years. Moreover, the same reasons apply — as the very essence of Matter was altered and transformed in some items or documents, making the use of that Arcanum useless in determining its age, the power of Atlantis and the mage-kings of that era could easily alter the ways in which Time magics work on an item or even event. At least two different Artifacts in Athenaea in North America alone both read as having not been created yet when Time magic is used on them.

city failed is a matter of great contention, both for the modern Mysterium and, apparently, the order's precursors. The irregular communications the order possesses from that time all offer different explanations for why the order abandoned the city. Reconstructive efforts over the centuries have led to the following general picture.

After completion of the New Atlantis, the Phoenix Brethren (who had reserved its construction to themselves) invited the rest of the order to join them in their victory. Most who sought the city never found it. Some followed directions given but still wandered through the Shadow Realm until forced to return to the material world. Others, choosing to take the stairs so thoughtfully provided by the Phoenix, could not find where the Adytum connected to the material world, despite their best efforts. Those few who found the Adytum returned to report it magnificent but empty, glorious but dangerous. The spirit wilds there, they said, were inhospitable to human life.

Some Phoenix Brethren mages reappeared. Many more did not, including the original few. The Phoenix mages who returned to the material world all suffered strange afflictions of the mind or body. Delusions of persecution were common, from an unnamed antagonist, with the mages involved displaying acute fear of all manner of mundane things. Some were weak of body, prone to Earthly illnesses and shortness of breath, others suffered from local paralysis of digits and facial muscles and still others had recurring fevers and hallucinations. No two were the same, and no mortal or magical agency managed to cure — or even accurately classify — the Phoenix Brethren's afflictions.

Caucuses of the order from across the world met with each other and discussed the issue. More explorers of the Shadow Realm, many of the order's best and most dedicated, tried to find the Adytum. Anyone able to locate the city and repair it would possess a tremendous source of lore, second only to the original three Athenaea. More importantly, some of the documents the Adytum contained were physically transferred there by ardent believers in the project, and existed nowhere else.

All mages who succeeded in finding the location returned damaged in similar (yet unique) ways to the members of the Phoenix Brethren. After more than two decades of attempts to revive the project, caucuses began forbidding their members to seek it out. After another four decades, the last of the people cursed by New Atlantis died, and the order began keeping the event a secret, even from their own members. Even today, Mysterium Curators keep the records of New Atlantis secret from their own members until one is ready to see them (Order Status •••+), and Curators never tell members of other orders.

Varying accounts tell somewhat different tales, distilled by mages into the above amalgam. Some insist that no one ever found New Atlantis after the mysterious event. One detailed journal records setting guards around the city's location in the Shadow and the physical world, touching off a series of small, internecine conflicts. Many suggest that all mages recovered from the city suffered identical afflictions, but none of those accounts agree on which. Most, at least, agree on the decision (whether made immediately or after years of further investigation) to keep the disaster a secret.

Even concealed by its order, some remnants of the disaster remain to the present day. The first is a general attitude of displeasure and distrust toward mages held by some spirits. All spirits might be suspicious of a human who can tread the Shadow, but spirits associated with books, records and lore are especially callous toward such humans.

The second is in the order's name. Despite the Phoenix Brethren's immense failure in building the Adytum of the Mystery, the project tied itself to the order in its members' minds. Accounts from the period following the aborted project self-describe various caucuses as part of the Mysterium. Common variants included the "Mysteriorate," "Mysteria" and the like, but the next century saw the names melt together until they settled on the single name that the order knows today.

More Arguments

Not all mystagogues agree that this is when the order's current name entered popular usage. Far from it. Many mystagogues point to scads of physical evidence that mages supposedly of the order's earlier forms rarely used a set name for the order as a whole and sometimes used other titles, possibly pseudonyms. Much of this evidence is datable, ranging from the 2nd millennium BCE to about the 1st millennium CE. This doesn't mean that the order's name didn't come in part from the Adytum, just that it's yet another hotly contested topic within the Mysterium.

The Roll of Years

Where the mages of the Alae Draconis went during the indeterminate period between the Fall and the beginning of recorded history is impossible to know. Only the Mysterium professes to know, and then only snippets, because the order's records are astounding in both completeness and authenticity.

Ghana

What little history knows about the early kingdom of Ghana is incorrect, or at least imprecise. It was ruled over the years by a continuing caucus of mages known as the Broken Wings, who claimed the title of "Lord of the Gold" for one member. There are no surviving written records from this time period in mortal hands, but Mysterium Acquisitors have returned from the region of ancient Ghana with sheets of lore, written in a language similar to both Latin and ancient Egyptian and imprinted on beaten gold.

The mages of the day presumably chose gold for its permanence and thaumaturgic purity, representing the importance of their lore. That so much of this "permanent" writing is now lost suggests that invaders and travelers of the day took home and melted down the nation's lore for their coffers, though conspiracy-minded mystagogues forward the idea that enemy mages, particularly Moros, might have transmuted the gold into baser materials and let time destroy them out of some animosity for the cabal and kingdom.

The Shang and Zhou

The prophecy important to the rulers of the Shang dynasty probably came indirectly from members of the broken Alae Draconis. Records from that period are recoverable from the bronze the mages used as their medium. When the records are combined in certain patterns, a code concealed within the writing may reveal a lineage unmentioned anywhere else in that period, with names that sound suspiciously similar to the proto-Western tongues adjusted to fit the regional language. Mystagogues who believe constantly argue about the true meaning of "Sutoru Misutiri," though the symbols that produce those words could also be read in other patterns and may be fabrications.

Mages consider that the kings' prophecies may have been predetermined by Awakened court diviners, who thusly guided the kingdom. It is also likely that the royal ancestors, who advised the ruler in dreams and laid curses on his enemies, were members of the above-named caucus or cabal helping guide the nation's future. The greatest question is what, if anything, was the mages' goal in so doing. The Shang's only great contribution to lore was an early form of the Chinese language, and few believe that wouldn't have developed naturally without interference.

It's possible that the Sutoru Misutiri had longer-term plans for the dynasty. If so, those plans were dashed

with the rise of the Zhou around 1st millennium BCE. That mages had a hand in the Zhou dynasty is far less questionable than their potential influence on the Shang. The *Shu jing* and the *Shi jing*, two major writings of the period that detail the Zhou's history and their poetry, hymns and folktales each contain exactly 10 anomalies, inconsistent with the period. Examination of an anomalous passage in one text reveals encoded reference to a passage in the other text, which in turn refers to a passage in another text and so on. Following this pattern to its conclusion spells out a brief (4,566 words) history of the efforts by a group known as Rebirth of the Rat.

Such evidence is independently verifiable and difficult to argue against (though far from impossible for a determined-enough historian). The history describes decades spent locating the people most likely to overturn the "foundation of misled wisdom" and the subsequent push made in early years to support the new regime and guide it toward an era that respected lore and knowledge. Certainly, the writings struck a chord of some sort, eventually becoming central to Confucianism centuries after their authorship. As a philosophy that forwarded equal education, among other tenets, the Rebirth of the Rat may have counted that as a success.

Their behaviors suggest one strong candidate for the difference in ideal between the Sutoru Misutiri and the Rebirth of the Rat. Actions of the former, gathering around a central power and using their power and knowledge to manipulate him, makes mages assume that it was the Sutoru Misutiri's intention to restrict their lore to themselves to maintain that influence. The latter's objection to this was that they did not "guard against intemperance but bear arms before the honorable quester." Most take that to mean that the Sutoru Misutiri kept their knowledge to themselves despite others' worthiness, but they cannot refute that it could simply be a feud started when one cabal chose not to share the Mysteries they knew — written by the victors, as always.

The Ambiguity of Modern History

You might be wondering why the history of the Mysterium, the order that prides itself on recovering, recording and saving information, especially in regards to magic, is full of discrepancies and disagreements. Simply put, it's because nearly every mage of the Mysterium qualifies as an expert on something, and if the mundane academic world is any example, experts can always find something to argue about.

History is necessarily an uncertain science, depending on the inferences of those who research it, and those inferences are going to conflict occasionally. When the researchers are all strong-willed mages, there are going to be discrepancies and disagreements. The Mysterium may have excellent records, many with centuries of annotations, but the mages still have to argue about what those records mean.

The other explanation is that no good researcher decides her theories are correct — they are only supported by the evidence. More evidence in favor of one answer makes that theory that much stronger, but by no mean proves it without question. We weren't there and we can't know, so certainty is a luxury the mages of the Mysterium can't afford. The fact that so many adhere to their theories despite contrary evidence just shows that though they can't afford certainty, they purchase it on credit.

External Wisdom of the Middle Ages

At least two separate Athenaea boast complete and original transcripts of multi-caucus meetings, set in Europe around the turn of the last millennium. The discussions amount to a series of arguments over how much information the Mysterium should share with the mortals that surrounded the mystagogues in everyday life. It was not a matter of creating greater conveniences for themselves but of advancing the human condition. Keeping mortal peasants in the mud while their unenlightened betters feasted and whored with impunity seemed unjust, especially when the knowledge the mages might dispense had nothing to do with the Mysteries.

The accounts come to approximately 1,200 pages, though the two Athenaea have different counts. (Each accuses the other of harboring a fake, which has resulted in the Curator of each Athenaeum denying the other — and any agent of the other, and anyone who has even seen the other account — from seeing her copy. This has not helped them resolve their differences.) Arguments range from discussions on whether this is an action harmful to the order or the Mysteries to exactly what sorts of information are acceptable to share. The accounts are rife with claims

that mortals must be left to discover things on their own, as their own trial of worth declarations that the order and other orders have been doling out data since the Fall, making another dribble fair game, and assertions that those at the top of the social ladder are blessed by God and therefore somewhat enlightened and deserving of their advantages.

It is noteworthy that all of the mages involved bore Latin shadow names. Many were based on potent, famous or infamous personages from one or two centuries before. A cabal of mages recently used the list of unrecognized shadow names as a clue in tracking down several additional footnotes in the history of Rome's late expansive period. This earned the mages mortal and Awakened accolades.

Each account also comes with unique endnotes. One declares that the cabals that argued against sharing information retreated from the debate and the region, returning to Rome's shrinking territories for a place where they were most comfortable. This puts the document's period somewhat in doubt, since common history suggests that the Western Roman Empire had completely disintegrated by that point. The other account's endnotes describe the cabals that lost the debate as acknowledging their political defeat and acceding, willingly if not happily, to the rest of the order's intentions.

Mysterium historians ascribe the blossoming of education that followed during the early Middle Ages to policies decided at these meetings. The number of monasteries that offered official education to youths dedicated to their order grew, as did the number and assortment of available lessons. Eventually, under the order's direction from behind the scenes, these monastic traditions became open to a wider range of people, and cities eventually founded their own grand institutions, grandparents to modern-day colleges and universities.

A variety of anecdotal records reinforce the idea that the Mysterium supported and helped bring about the growth of learning. They suggest that the caucus in Italy favored the study of mortal law and medicine, for example, while the mages in Paris thought philosophy and theology were more important subjects in the hope that some students might Awaken. Historians recognize the universities in those regions for those specialties, giving the Mysterium its sense of pride at advancing the world's overall learnedness.

Knowledge Handouts, Part One

According to the Mysterium, the order taught the world the concept of universities, invented libraries, created the Icelandic saga and maybe advanced societies from the Stone Age into the Bronze Age. (Not that the mystagogues would say so to any other orders.) And that's just what's in this book — there's more that they claim responsibility (usually credit) for bringing to the world from the vast stores of lost knowledge they saved from Atlantis.

So, where's all that preserved knowledge now? What miraculous technological advances does the order have but refuse to share with mortals? A cure for cancer, or the common cold? Clean, cheap electricity? A perfect system of government? Flying cars?

They answer is: they have none. Nothing contained in any of their many Athenaea hold technological or societal wonders that would, if released, alter the face of the world — except in the form of magic, which is kind of a given. Why would the Mysterium believe that it had such things back in the 1000s, or in the Stone Age? Good question.

Rise and Fall of the Northern Sagas

One path a group of Mysterium historians advocate is to "follow the writing." Where works of literature begin, they see the hand of their forefathers. When literature mysteriously vanishes, they see their enemies. It is an art of assumption, and one that earns significant scorn when there is no evidence in support of a mystagogue's assertion of Awakened influence.

Nowhere is this clearer than the dozens of wild theories surrounding the appearance and disappearance of the saga as a form of art and information in medieval Iceland. Few sagas have any known authors; most sagas easily account for this with the lack of accurate records, but mages seeking connections with the past are often too willing to see a mage's invisible hand. If true, then a mage (or series of mages) composed and set to paper the first of the region's sagas, prompting other written tales and poems. Or one mage in a position to influence the powerful people of the age shaped social policy to make recorded sagas a socially positive thing. Or any of the other similar theories, founded only in the belief that the emergence of the written word indicates the presence of the Mysterium.

The greatest reason that the Icelandic logogenesis theories are never permanently put down is the sagas'

disappearance in the 13th century. Enough examples of the texts remained extant for contemporary scholars to know of the sagas, but all invention and recording of the region's hitherto rich sagas and poetry ceased, practically overnight in historical terms. Worse, the sagas began to fade from libraries and from memory. Mystagogues who study these texts believe it is only because they were so widespread and once popular that any survived at all.

It is unlikely to be coincidence that this event came at the same time that the Norwegian king managed to tip Iceland into his pocket. His rulership of the region may not have been possible without the help of the church; despite almost two centuries spent educating the people of Iceland in the church's ways, the final push came at the same time as King Håkon IV of Norway. Secret texts, hidden beneath permanent illusions within the archdiocese at Nidaros, describe religion-driven burnings of heathen and pagan writings in Atlantean writing. Among those texts were copies of letters in the same language, describing the "successful elimination of troublesome influences" to unknown recipients in southern Europe.

These are all the Mysterium has in reference to that period in Iceland, but they are enough to keep the mystery open for now.

Written in Memory: Oral Traditions

A significant population of Mysterium mages disagrees with the concept of "following the writing" on a fundamental basis. The written word is not the only way to preserve knowledge, and assuming that it is the only important one is a major fallacy. They prefer the philosophy of "following the knowledge," with the implicit understanding that while the preservation of information includes writing, writing does not constitute the whole of preserving knowledge.

Natives of North America used an entirely oral system of passing on their history, traditions, stories and other information. They were so effective that it can be hard for the Mysterium to not suspect some Awakened influence in keeping the stories alive. Evidence reinforces this belief: some of the stories passed down through many generations and eventually recorded in writing (or passed directly to a mage of the modern Mysterium, in a few cases) contain references to mystical feats almost always directly duplicable by contemporary mages. Whether or not there is a secret pattern to the stories or hidden messages besides "We were here" has not yet been proven, but mages continue to try.

The Mysterium finds what may be the order's most influential position in mundane societies in ancient Africa. Vast quantities of information are encoded in the metaphors of African cultures' songs, riddles, poems and stories. The recitation of these reservoirs of knowledge was an integral part of the African social structure; this oral tradition has also proven resilient, still going strong in the 21st century. Recitations were huge events that centered around and glorified the tale-teller. If these people really were members of the broken Alae Draconis, or influenced by them, the prevalence and importance of the recitations may have given the proto-Mysterium the most guidance over a society that the order had anywhere else during these vague times.

Correlations between cultures that favored oral traditions and cultures that saw all the world as a joint living entity, similar to the Mysterium, draws great scrutiny from the order. Other examples of oral traditions (such as the Celtic bards and Icelandic skalds, who were known for prodigious memories as well as written works) are also objects of interest for the Mysterium.

Bringing Enlightenment

The Renaissance was a bountiful period for resourceful mages of the Mysterium. There are many primary sources of information on that time, and for once many of the order's mages agree: they brought it about.

Few would argue that the Mysterium created the movement from thin air and sat back to benefit. But many mages believe that the Mysterium had a significant influence on bringing Europe to a place where it could advance more rapidly and with a greater concern for history, historical accuracy and personal enlightenment. What the mages argue over is how they influenced the period.

Athenaea in southern Europe possess journals suggesting that many cabals, even entire caucuses, of Mysterium mages migrated west from the Byzantine Empire during and after its fall in the 13th century. Mages in the region that was once Byzantine and in the Italian and southern French caucuses that keep these Athenaea make the argument that the injection of classical scholarship from these dispossessed mages brought the education and texts necessary to jumpstart western Europe's Renaissance.

Mages of western Europe, including many in Italy and southern France who don't possess these notable

accounts, prefer to believe that their influence over the preceding centuries had been subtle but momentous. They hold dubious accounts of mages close to Charlemagne, other notable rulers of the day and religious leaders, increasing the importance of classical literature and study. The reason for this was simple: while the Mysterium in Europe had no great interest in the texts of Rome and Ancient Greece (from a magical standpoint, anyway), the mystagogues wanted to encourage the people around the mages to value what lay in the past.

Standing on the foundation of a society that set a greater value on history and ancient knowledge, the Mysterium could reach further when seeking the order's own antecedence. Mages traveled in the company of the wealthy, assuming the mages were not the wealthy themselves, and springboard from there to the research they actually wanted to do.

Many also assert that the order provided the information or motivation necessary to cause the technological advances of the age. The Mysterium, which had been studying everything magic with a critical eye since before even the mystagogues could remember, could easily provide the basis for more rigorous scientific method and more detailed exploration of natural phenomena.

Their intention was twofold. They wanted to make knowledge, as an abstract concept, more accessible to the common man by something achievable through pure logic (rather than expensive tutors). This would make knowledge more desirable to more people, which mages believed might cause more Awakenings and would bring more new Awakenings to the Mysterium's cause. Second, advance knowledge of investigative methods would reduce training time for new mages brought into the order. There are some who argue that this was a poor idea, as it decreased the perceived importance of intuition, but even they agree that the order was probably responsible for it and that it probably seemed like a good idea at the time.

Renaissance humanism is a source of conflict. Mages say that the Mysterium must have been behind the movement, and mages say that the order must not. The argument boils down to a disagreement about whether humanism is an appropriate basic mortal understanding of true path to enlightenment or it is a misleading philosophy that can only lead people (who might become mages) away from the true path.

The core of the former argument is that humanism empowers mortals in a faint echo of Awakening. Placing greater value on reason and proof connects to educated pursuit of magical knowledge, and the idea that beauty is close to God is a metaphor for faultless theories of science (or magic), which prepares a person for the Mysterium's path to enlightenment. The latter argument blames humanism for decreasing Awakenings, holding that humanism removed that to which people could aspire. They were excellent as-is, and did not need to Ascend. The dependence on reason detracted from the intuition and art that are also central to understanding magic; the "beauty" is superficial and fatalistic, disconnecting God (or enlightenment) from its true path.

There is little actual information on whether mages were actually responsible for Renaissance humanism. Mortal historians often associate the movement with the reexamination of Roman and Greek texts common to the period, making some responsibility unavoidable if the Mysterium claims to have triggered that.

One facet for which some historians criticize the Renaissance is that it potentially slowed the development of certain studies. Scholars of the age obsessed over classical purity, valuing original texts and untouched philosophies over modifications or further developments of those ideas. Evolution of the Latin language, up to then a still-living language, ground to a halt. Mystagogues consider this one of their forebears' primary motivations in causing the Renaissance: mages fought Pancryptia by instilling a glorification of unchanged sources and classical literature. This change in attitude preserved potentially thousands of references to the Supernal and Atlantis that might otherwise have been lost in translation or altered by evolutions (devolutions, to the mages) of philosophy. The Mysterium lauds this result almost to a mage. Even the Renaissance's greatest detractors in the order consider this a positive effect.

The Age of Antiquarians

The year 1572 saw the formation of the earliest recorded antiquarian society. One of the primary founders, Bishop Matthew Parker, is referenced in several Mysterium texts as though he were an initiated member of the order. The development of antiquarianism heralded the start of a drawn-out movement from referencing classical texts and philosophies to examining the artifacts of past societies and cultures.

For centuries after the movement's beginning, antiquarians valued the artifacts for their beauty

and artistic value. Historic background enhanced the worth of an *objet d'art*, but pieces were still rarely valued for the stories they could tell. Mystagogues expect that their predecessors were letting mortals acquire valuable pieces for their own, petty reasons and then taking advantage of the artifacts' nearness.

A series of letters between a pair of British and German mystagogues (known for their collectors' natures) expresses dismay at the condition of many artifacts returning from foreign digs. Further correspondence with mages who were actually visiting the locations of the excavations communicates horror at the way that excavators treated their sites, tearing them apart and potentially destroying future discoveries. "Attempting to promote the cautious and systematic treatment of historical locations through a colleague" was one mage's solution, possibly resulting in the work of Flavio Biondo in the early 15th century. The attempt failed to change the way most expeditions treated their destinations, at least during the author's and inspiring mage's lifetimes.

Similar entries in a journal discovered in Boston, Massachusetts, suggest similar influence with Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson performed a clean excavation of a Native American burial mound in 1784, with a technique advanced for the era. The authenticity of these claims is in question, in no small part simply because of the moment in being so relevant to a person so large in the United States' history. Such a grand claim cannot help attracting some adherents, and some feel it is likely to be true because of how far-fetched it is.

The Society of Antiquarians of London formed in 1707 and has existed to the present day. Mages consider it one of the greatest (and arguably most welcome) influences on modern archaeology, as the society's

Knowledge Handouts, Part Two

Maybe the mages of the Mysterium didn't bring knowledge to mortals from Atlantis as Prometheus brought fire from Olympus. But that doesn't mean that they didn't contribute greatly to the advances of science that have occurred within recorded history. A mystagogue (or any other mage, really) could have been there during the creation of gunpowder, secretly behind the founding of Platonic thought or conceiving of a democracy. After all, mages have spells that increase their Mental Attributes and increase their fate of figuring out that next big advance — isn't it logical for them to be behind it?

Not really. In the end, mages are a tiny, tiny faction of the human population, and there are thousands more mortal philosophers, politicians and scientists than there are mages doing the same things. Sure, mages may get more dice to throw, but there are a hundred other people whose characters are rolling dice at the same time. Eventually, one of them is going to roll all 10s three times in a row. That's why the mages aren't responsible for everything.

members were present through and assisted with the development of archaeology's many branches. Even during the more static periods, some of the society's members were always doing something potentially valuable to the Mysterium in a distant land. They often unknowingly had a mystagogue or two along, and the order claims that the society has never been without at least five Mysterium mages in the society's ranks.

Inspired by the Society of Antiquarians of London, Napoleon brought a horde of antiquarians and historians with him when he invaded Egypt in 1798. There he released them, and they swarmed over Egypt's ruins and ancient remains for artifacts and records of the past. The Mysterium suggests that the order had people among Napoleon's advisors, dominating the Egyptian digs that Bonaparte funded. The claim is even more audacious than that of being close to Jefferson, with similar effects.

Garbage In, Magic Out: Oxyrhynchus

In 1894, a British mage who styled himself as Fabulinus came upon the town of Oxyrhynchus, about a hundred miles southeast of Cairo. He immediately recognized the town for the unparalleled portal into the past that it was, but Fabulinus did not have the resources to exploit it by himself. His uncontainable excitement over the archaeological find led him to recommend it to a colleague, Bernard Grenfell, who began the process of excavating it.

First reports from Grenfell indicated that the site offered nothing of value, and it wasn't long before the small British team was preparing to leave for greener pastures. Fabulinus learned of this late and was appalled. It was unthinkable to him that even mortal explorers could miss the papyrus treasures buried just below the dunes in Oxyrhynchus.

Fabulinus returned to the Egyptian town to expunge the myth that the site was worthless for the advancement of Egyptology. There he disappeared, all communication ceased (and Fabulinus was a frequent correspondent). His worried cabal traveled to the town in haste. They discovered their friend a prisoner of enemy mages, obviously Seers of the Throne, and struck his captors without mercy.

The Seers vanquished (two dead, one captive and one fled), and the cabal dispelled the illusions and mental deceptions they had laid to misdirect Grenfell's team about the site's worth. Fabulinus led his cabal in safely convincing the mortal team to continue without revealing the presence of magic in their earlier misconceptions.

Action by the Seers convinced Fabulinus that there was more to Oxyrhynchus. He had originally thought it simply a location with thousands of discarded papyri, a tremendous find for archaeologists, but now he knew there had to be something more. Three separate British caucuses agreed to help finance an expansive, mage-heavy expedition to the site to supplement Grenfell's. Their discoveries were worth the cost, even though many of them remain attributed to Grenfell or the site's other mortal minders.

Among the clues to the Mysteries found in the millennium-old garbage dumps were fragments of what is known to the world as the Gospel of Thomas, a Gnostic apocrypha. It rang true with many Awakened who learned of it, especially within the Mysterium; the work holds special meaning for mystagogues, and the Egregori especially. One kept secret by the Mysterium is a set of lost annotations to the Corpus Mysteriorum, which revealed the key to one of the later five rotes decrypted from that tome. It also refines and comments upon the text of the grimoire proper.

Undesirable Developments

All good things must come to an end, and one such thing is the Western world's rapine exploitation of ancient artifacts in other parts of the world. American and European archaeologists enjoyed relative freedom from regulation up until the middle of the 20th century, crossing borders and escaping to museums with national treasures for nominal bribes.

The nations that possessed these artifacts, yet undiscovered or not, now go further in protecting what they see as their heritage — or simply theirs to keep. The vast records and saved correspondence from the last century make it clear that, though no Mysterium caucuses or cabals were causative in the change of national policies, there was a fierce conflict over their appropriateness.

Western mystagogues made the argument that it was better to have the artifacts all in one place. Considering that so many remnants of Awakened history remained in Western hands, these mages considered it evident that more should continue to accrue in their museums (or Athenaea). These mystagogues also used their access to more sophisticated tools and safer, less chaotic environments to supplement their arguments.

Mystagogues trying to defend their locations' histories — and their mages' access to traces of Atlantis

— also used the first argument, but insisted that the materials all be accumulated in Athenaea in their home countries. They considered the idea that they could not handle sensitive materials with enough care or keep them safe from worldly dangers insulting.

The issue eventually resolved in favor of the "home teams." It was unlikely that anything else could happen, as the local governments (and Consilii) could almost universally bring more force to bear at any given time or place than outsiders. There are still allowances in place to permit outside excavations, resulting in a compromise. Mages on both sides of the argument are still sensitive about it, and many older mages hold grudges that cross seas, even oceans.

Today

The Mysterium is a global organization (and always has been, depending on which academician you ask). Mages may focus in large part on local activity, but that is a matter of choice and the societal constrictions of being Awakened. The Mysterium is an order with a broader, more worldly outlook than other orders, necessary because of the traveling and research the order's members must do to accomplish their stated goals.

At least, that's what they'd like to believe. The reality of their situations is that only a select subset of mystagogues travels widely. These mages (usually Archaeomancers or Acquisitors) are the ones who experience and must learn to interact with other cultures. They are not often the most influential in their caucuses, because their time away from home prevents them from building substantial political capital.

It is also rare for even such a worldly individual to be truly familiar with more than two cultures, one native and one chosen. Most choose one distant location with historical significance as the focus for their digs and apply the perspective that culture gives them to their lives, experiences and study of magic. Even in a caucus with many such mages, the difference in outlook of one who studies ancient Ireland, another who oversees digs in Iran and another who braves China's borders for artifacts causes significant conflict.

Some Mysterium mages may have farther horizons, but they're often looking in different directions.

North America

The United States and Canada have some of the most prevalent and dominant systems of higher education in the world. A college education is something expected of or aspired to by many. That drive for learning and abundance of schools make universities highly valued homes for many mystagogues who choose to conceal themselves in academia. Many Mysterium mages may comfortably live mundane lives in the fecund scholastic environment while performing their various Awakened duties.

On the other hand, the North American culture has, for a long time, begun to focus on what knowledge can get as opposed to what knowledge provides. High school counselors recommend college on the basis that people with degrees earn more over their lifetimes. Students see their diplomas as little more than badges or value their time in college for the connections made instead of lessons learned. Combining the Mysterium reverence of knowledge with the professors' disappointment in uninterested students makes North America a difficult place, psychologically, for members of the order to spend all their time. Most endure, much as their mortal academic counterparts.

As much as North American mystagogues deny it, they cannot help but feel the influence of their roots. Their counterparts on other continents criticize North American mages for the way they increasingly objectify information. It becomes something to possess rather than experience, something to idolize rather than know. Mystagogues on the continent believe they have resisted their culture's effects more than mages outside their order; other mystagogues are less sure. Mysterium mages in other Western nations and nations increasingly influenced by North American culture have fewer legs to stand on every day, but that rarely stops them from making veiled comments when it suits them.

The division between secular and non-secular can often be fierce in North America, especially in the United States, and that also rubs off on local mages. Few mystagogues deny the usefulness of separating levels of worthiness by initiation and using secret signs and shared experiences as a method for identifying rank, but the extent to which advancement upward through the Mysterium relates to spiritualism and personal enlightenment is a topic of fierce debate.

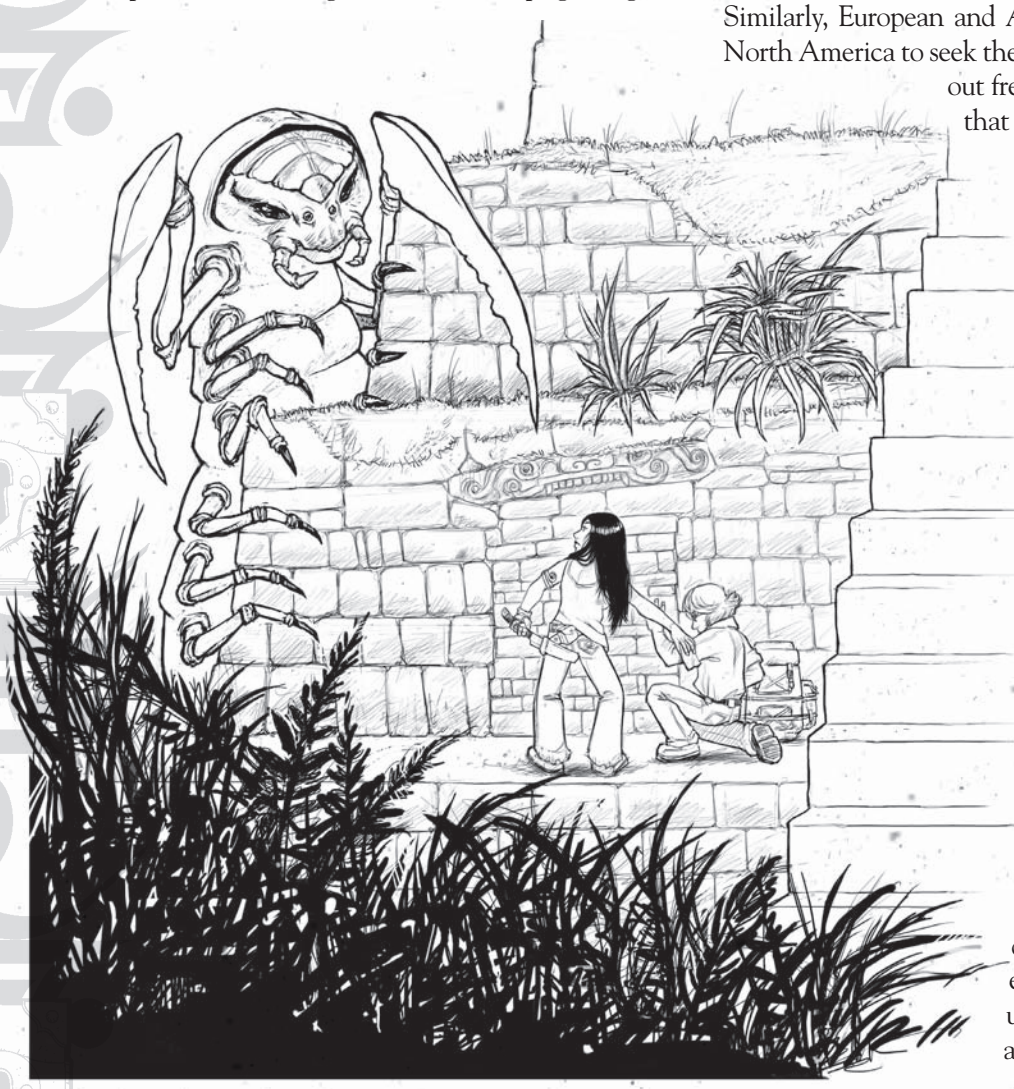
Members of the Egregori faction are strong and outspoken in many places, and they use that strength

to force enlightenment-focused policies within their caucuses. Equally outspoken are those mystagogues (fractions of most other factions) who take an underdog's stance in the conflict and leverage what they have to wield about as much power as the Egregori with whom the mystagogues disagree so strongly. The conflict has polarized many parts of the continent to one side of the issue or the other, making travel from one Consilium to another an even more grueling ordeal.

Mysterium mages in North America appreciate their proximity to the oral tradition-based cultures of the Native Americans. Many of those cultures believed in a single Great Spirit and considered all things interconnected and in some ways alive, both of which resonate strongly with mystagogues. Much work has been done by the Mysterium on recording the Native Americans' many cycles and legends.

There are also many European mysteries to explore. East Coast graveyards hint at the real reason the Separatists fled England and made pilgrimage to the New World. Florida's most ancient buildings and Native American tales contain clues to what the Spanish king really hoped to find when he allowed Ponce de Léon to conquer and colonize "Bimini." The Alamo was more than a battle for independence, and what Santa Anna found there may have led to his downfall. In western Canada, the true reasons the international conflict over the territory remain cloudy but tantalizing, as do the secret reasons for Russia's eagerness to sell Alaska to the United States. The influx of Chinese immigrants in 1848 may have had less to do with gold than with something more hidden.

Many of these mysteries are scant with answers. Many are sources of extended information or increased clarity for occulted clues based in Europe or Asia, and some history can be easier to dig up in North America because of its relative youth. American and Canadian mystagogues occasionally find that their research draws them across either ocean in search of greater depth. Similarly, European and Asian mages often travel to North America to seek the ends to some stories or sniff out fresher trails into the histories that interest them.



South America

Mysterium caucuses in the nations of Central and South America are less frenetic than their northern cousins. North American mystagogues sometimes consider South American caucuses lazy, even damaging to the order's cause, but the truth is that South American caucuses dig up as much about the past as any other mystagogues (in general). South American caucuses less anxious about losing information that could wait another day, but they aren't foolish about getting down to business when necessary. Their methods end up being just as effective as anyone else's.

The mystagogues' relaxed habits include attending and enjoying the cultural festivities in whatever part of the continent they live. They often enjoy these celebrations on a deeper level than the people around them, not just getting lost in the meaning of the party but also reveling in its historical and cultural importance and evolution from its historical origins. Many mages are sure (and mostly right) that North American and European mages don't share that level of appreciation for their own holidays, whether from being uptight or just too damn busy. South American mystagogues bring the same outlook to the eternal search for information and hints of Atlantean influence.

Differences between the spiritual and more worldly aspects of the order are less acute here. Religion is part of life and the community, work is part of religion and life, people are part of work and religion. Everything's tied more closely, and there are many fewer conflicts between the order's factions. Fewer mages specifically choose a faction, just focusing on whichever aspect of the order is best for them without giving it a name. A mage who does choose a faction effectively declares her interest to be limited to that faction's specialty; she rarely impinges her focus on other mystagogues, and the only stigma declaring a faction carries is that others of the Mysterium will expect her to be a true expert in her chosen field.

These distinctions are not universal. French Guiana and the Falkland Islands are still under French and British rule, respectively. Mages from Europe and the United States see these spots as ideal launch points for their own expeditions into the histories of South America, and bring along their own outlooks on life, magic and their missions.

In South America, the Mysterium is sitting on millennia of rich cultural and historical data. Mystagogues study everything from the relatively recent Incas and Aztecs to the older Mayans and the ancient Caral Supe and Chibchas. As in North America, the invasion of foreign cultures leaves some clues strung between cultures, but foreign mystagogues follow the trails to or from South America much more often than do the local mages. They have their own trails to follow ever further back in time.

Africa

African mystagogues often hold more defined roles than in other parts of the world. The keeper of lore held an honored and vital position in many older African cultures, and the Mysterium often still bears the weight and tradition that accompany such rank. Egregori and other highly spiritual mystagogues often have greater influence than those who prefer to pursue more mundane magical pursuits (such as sifting through ruins and deciphering old tomes). mages abuse that influence as often as not.

No mage finds life in Africa easy in the modern age. The constant political turbulence makes it difficult to live, let alone seek lost Mysteries. Standard operation as one of the Mysterium in these days is to either fly under the radar using magic as subtly as possible or to butter up a despot until he's permissive — and hope he doesn't change his mind.

That's mostly for foreigners. Natives have less trouble going unnoticed; their strong cultural ties with the locals give them all the camouflage they need. It's only when one of the nearby powers gets wind of something important that life can become rough for native mages.

Disagreements exist between mystagogues of Egypt and most members of the Mysterium in the rest of the world. Egypt is one of the richest locations for excavations and searches for lost clues to Atlantis; at least one Athenaeum Prima is probably somewhere in Egypt. Part to selflessly protect their nation's heritage and part to selfishly keep new discoveries (or at least the credit for them) to themselves, many mages in the region refuse foreign members of the order cordial visits. Some of this is fallout from the European and North American indiscretions in the 19th and 20th centuries.

There are also still mages who have no reason to align with any order. They Awaken as part of life with isolated peoples, such as the Khoisans, and integrate their experiences into their culture and daily life, usually becoming mighty shamans. The Mysterium has an ongoing conflict with the Guardians of the Veil (one of many) over these mages. The latter usually wants to eliminate them or integrate them into mainstream Pentacle cultures, to prevent them from performing vulgar magic in public. Mystagogues would rather preserve the mages in their original cultures and explore how they use magic, believing that mages "untainted" by Atlantean influences may provide insight into the Supernal. Either way, such mages may go unnoticed for years, even decades, when they Awaken into an isolated tribe.

No matter who does the searching, there is much to find in Africa. Ignoring the remnants from the Roman

and Greek periods in Egypt, Africa is largely considered to be the continent of origin for humans and its longest home. This promises a wealth of information to Mysterium seekers, and Africa delivers.

Europe

Europe's systems of education are just as advanced as those of the United States; European institutions certainly have the advantage of being almost universally older, rooted deep in rich history and traditions, which is very attractive to most mystagogues. The nations of Europe are also closer to some of the most fascinating archaeological sites on Earth, making it easier to survey such places for traces of Atlantis while still living in a "civilized" country. The advent of plane travel has made location much less of a concern in the last half-century, and European mystagogues have felt more encroachment from mages of the United States since then.

Unlike the United States, Europe has traditionally had a more comfortable relationship between the religious and secular. There are fewer sharp words between Egregori and less spiritually inclined members of the order; there are also fewer mystagogues who neglect the spiritually enlightening aspects of their initiations.

European mystagogues consider themselves worldly, as a general rule. There is some basis for this, since they live in a region where a dozen different cultures are no more than a day or two away by train (sometimes after a shot through the Chunnel). Mages in Europe also end up being more isolated other cultures, about which there are various sociological theories. Even the advent of the European Union hasn't made the nations of Europe a singular culture, and it likely never will. Many oppose such a destiny at every opportunity, hoping instead to preserve the cultures that make the European nations unique.

Such habits make the European mages no more effective as a whole than those in the United States who argue over religious or political ideals. Frogs, Limeys, Krauts and the whole gamut of dismissive nicknames argue about politics with each other, more venomous because they're so close.

It's worth noting that, though such countries are less often thought of, some parts of Europe are in economic distress or near nations that are. This gives mystagogues less leisure to worry about fulfilling their mission for knowledge. It also opens the region to the sort of abuses foreign mages historically inflict on weaker nations and population influxes from those departing weaker nations. Consilii in such places end up being more insular and defensive than others.

Mysterium researchers who choose not to leave the continent for their sources still have a great deal to investigate. Roman influence remains a popular discipline, and remnants of the Empire's invasion still hide in some remote corners of Europe. Investigations of the ancient Celts, Nordic history and other aspects of Europe's past are popular.

Asia

Asia is difficult to briefly categorize as a continent because of its great size.

India

Many are the secrets of the Indian subcontinent, and the Mysterium is there in force. A solid portion of the mysticism, religion and magical practices of pre-Christian Europe can be traced here. Many of those self-same practices also contained true Supernal Mysteries concealed within them, and since those practices were introduced to the Western world, there have been European Awakened in India, seeking for some clue to further Supernal truths. Indeed, many of the cities of India have two Consilii — one made up of foreigners and one made up of India's native sons. Rivalries between these groups are strong, though they have lost much of the racism that colored their interactions during the Victorian era. Now, their hatreds are often simply based on rivalries older than any of their current membership, and the refusal of some groups to share lore with others.

Russia

Russian mystagogues maintain a strong political structure in which responsibility drips from the top downward. This structure resembles the region's political and economic histories but remains more strict than the now-loosening market. Russian caucuses often welcome mystagogues from other countries but limit their freedom within the Consilium. Many caucuses inflict harsh punishments on any, including other members of the order, who break the caucuses' laws, even without their Consilii's approval.

China

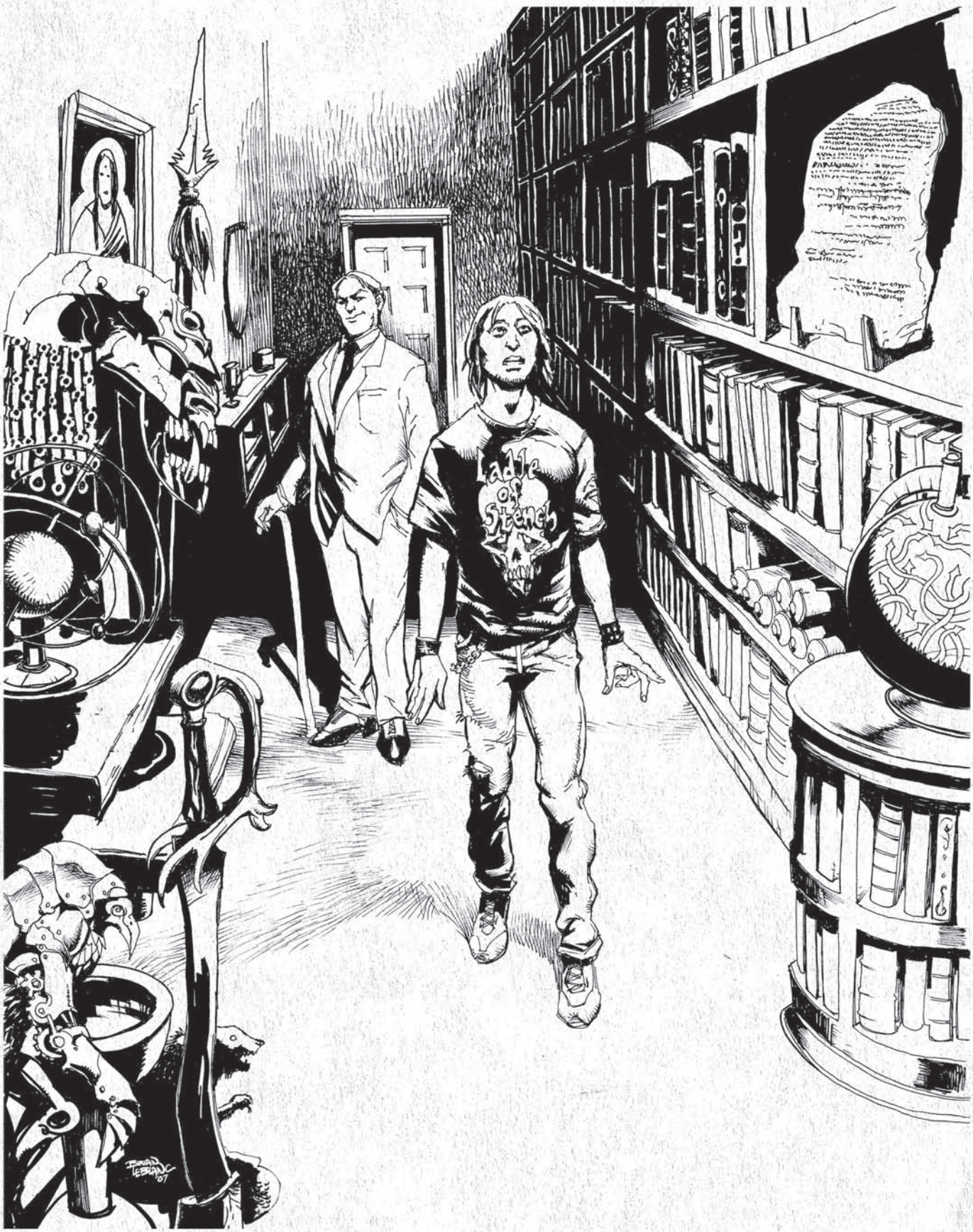
Mysterium caucuses in China vary widely, as might be expected in such a large population. Many still

use a variation on the bureaucratic entry exams used in ancient China as part of their admission and advancement; these tests require a great deal of classical training, such as Confucianism and calligraphy, and incorporate the fundamentals of Supernal lore and Mysterium literature, focusing on Atlantis and the Corpus Mysteriorum. These caucuses hold that their methods, preserved from ancient times, better determine a candidates suitability for advancement to the next degree.

Other cabals are more modern, using initiation rituals similar to those performed in Europe and North America. Mysterium cabals in China are more secretive than many outside, and only rarely allow their Athenaea to be accessed — or even recognized — by people outside the caucuses that maintain the Athenaea. More than a few Chinese mages suspect that the aggressions toward Tibet involve places of Supernal significance; many also believe that the actions are warranted.

Japan

Much of the Atlantean Mystery cult practiced by Japanese caucuses have been heavily overlaid with Buddhist and Shinto symbolism, permitting the performance of initiations within the shrines thereof easily and without suspicion even by well-trained onlookers. Japanese caucuses work hard to fund members' travels to other nations to pursue ancient artifacts and knowledge and are much more often willing to cough up the enormous modern bribes necessary to remove artifacts from their countries of origin. Japanese caucuses export significant discoveries with regularity, and many foreign mystagogues suspect these caucuses of keeping some back.


Fade of Silence
BRIAN LEBLANC '07

Chapter Two: Those Who Know

Blessings upon blessings, he finally shuts up. I will admit I was starting to have my doubts. I used to think the generation gap was over-exaggerated, but who could foresee a generation whose greatest exposure to the written word was the electronic scrawl of a billion idiot pedagogues? Even an appreciation for the latest hardcover drivel to flop across the Times bestseller list would have been something to work with. This boy, though… well, I had my doubts.

Technically, I suppose I still do. He looks at the mask first, and then the 1128 tapestry, and then his gaze lingers on the falchion. I cannot suppress a mild stab of anxiety. Will he reach out for it? Have I just opened the Athenaeum to some young fool who should have been off to the Arrow all along?

He looks back at the bookcase again, and I feel a bit of relief, but not much. They say he's a voracious learner, but how much appeal can these volumes have on a microburst attention span? Please, prove me right, boy. Don't affirm my ugly old gut feelings, show me why we let you in here in the first place.

And then, his eyes fall on the spine of a book. He reaches out for, bless me, The Migration of Alhk-Ur. And wonder of wonders, the first words out of his mouth are "Can I open this?"

Oh, good lad. Good lad.

Welcome, since it was not an evil destiny that sent you forth to travel this road (for indeed it is far from the beaten path of humans), but Right and Justice. There is need for you to learn all things - both the unshaken heart of persuasive Truth and the opinions of mortals, in which there is no true reliance.

— Parmenides, *One Nature*

Knowledge is power.

In 240 BCE, Eratosthenes estimated the circumferences of the Earth, laying the groundwork for a spherical vision of the planet. Ptolemy the geographer built on Eratosthenes's work. Centuries after that, Europeans developed new naval technologies, so that by the 15th century, explorers were ready to test the ancients' wisdom and find an ocean route to Asia. Columbus discovered the Caribbean, then the Americas. Unlike the Viking voyages of the past, his accounts spread through an evolving information infrastructure, powered by political customs and the printing press. Colonial powers used maps, guns and sailing ships to seize these lands, but these weren't the only assets they possessed. Domesticated animals gave the colonial powers biological warfare: lethal diseases in the colonists' blood and breath. Indigenous people died, and Africa made up the difference in slave labor.

Away from the heart of imperial intrigue, colonists developed their own culture. This distance served them well; they needed only participate in wars of their choosing, harnessing an industrial base untouched by the guns, rockets and bombs of two global wars. Brilliant minds collaborated and harnessed that power to its fullest extent at Alamogordo, New Mexico, where 18 kilotons of white-hot brilliance recalled gods of time and destruction: the end of one age and the beginning of another.

Yet all of that is still only the power of weak, Quiescent knowledge. Known history is a collection of petty tricks that harness the properties of the Fallen World. It's what you get when humanity explores the cage of the Lie. People discover that the mathematics of the bars allows for miracles — as long as centuries and civilizations can bear the burden of unlocking them.

To understand the power of magic — the purest knowledge, the utterest *gnosis* — is to remove the burdens of time and cooperation. Remove the cage of history and a single mage doesn't need Eratosthenes, Columbus or Oppenheimer. A mage requires only enlightenment in his soul and words that make real the pure Truth of the ineffable realms. By these alone, unhindered by nations, gods or time, his knowledge can evolve from a crude understanding of the world to the secrets of its destruction.

Only souls similar to his own can temper his dangerous path, and only by finding and understanding secret words: traces of Supernal wisdom that refine raw Awakened desire into spells. Discover that lore and you control it. Hide it and you guard the path of power from the mad. *Regulate* that lore, so that you're its master, teacher and agent, and you are one of the Mysterium.

Thesis: Knowledge Is Power

The Mysterium's core ideology is almost clichéd, isn't it? Of course, it also happens to be true. Though Mao Zedong said that power flows from the barrel of a gun, a collection of technological, social, political and psychological praxes precede the gun itself. These methods spring from a certain understanding of the world. Raw information and hard-won wisdom condense disparate branches of study into a gun: the contemporary symbol of death.

Knowledge and Mysticism

Mystagogues are sometimes characterized as book-smart academics who spend their time either reading dusty tomes or stealing them from improbably trapped ruins. In fact, order mages respect and employ meditation, extraordinary states of consciousness and other highly personal methods to collect knowledge as well.

The mystical state — a non-dualistic relationship with the universe — figures heavily in the order's approach to magic because spells are supposed to be thoughts that *are* the very changes they visualize. The mage must eradicate the barriers between thinking of magic and using it. This is one of the central tenets of the Atlantean Mystery and can take a lifetime to fully understand.

This Mysterium thesis not only concerns itself with information and wisdom from the point of view of scientists, archaeologists and other ordinary scholars but also from the perspective of the whole symbol, be it a gun, pentagram or goddess wrought in gold and alabaster. A symbol has the power of art and faith; a symbol signifies science or worldly discipline. When the symbol and its object are the same thing, that's *magic*.

To Mysterium mages, magic is the art of manipulating these "true symbols." These signs don't just represent an element of the Fallen World: they *are* that element. A spell's Imago isn't just a mnemonic aid, but a true description of reality transformed. On some level, mages do not simply imagine the Imago into being — they find that version of reality waiting for them in the infinite potential of the Supernal Realm, and use their own souls as the bridge between the Supernal reality and the Fallen one, allowing it to overwrite the reality of the Lie for just a moment. The Supernal Realms are the cosmos unmasked, freed from false metaphors yet charged with mythic significance. In the Fallen World, love diffuses into matters of brain chemistry, biological imperative, cultural rituals and poetry, but in the Supernal Realms, love is an irreducible force that is at once an image, a brain state and a word of power in the High Speech. A mage who truly comprehends something like love or fire understands all of the fragments that descend from it, be they scientific or artistic. She grasps a thing's secret meaning and doesn't confuse it for the thousand Fallen shadows it casts.

In essence, magic is powerful because it's *true*. It's the most authentic, untainted knowledge in all Creation. In fact, magic may well be the *only* authentic knowledge. If the entire Fallen World is nothing more than the combined emanations of the Supernal Realms, the Lie is merely a filter for the truth: a twisted construct that obscures magical wisdom, but depends upon it for the Lie's very existence.

That's why the Fallen World and its works merit study. The Lie twists the universe into an unnatural shape, but the Lie still descends from higher realms. Mysterium mages seek out true knowledge like a treasure buried in the very laws of the universe.

Thesis: Knowledge Must Be Preserved

True wisdom is eternal — or is it? Atlantean ancients may have believed that magic was the unbreakable bedrock of the cosmos, but the Fall demonstrated that this was an error. The Abyss puts the lie to it. Mages glimpse an edge of the universe and its roiling madness with every Paradox.

According to Mysterium dogma, magic is a form of knowledge that is one with its object. Just as a physicist uses his science to predict the movement of atoms, a mage

The Mysterious Cosmos

At this point you might be wondering about everything that *doesn't* fit into the cosmology of **Mage: The Awakening**. Vampires summon power from blood. Promethean alchemy calls very fire of divine creation "Pyros." If Mysterium mages collect knowledge, they have to know *something* about these "anomalies." How do they explain them?

Mystagogues continually study the rest of the supernatural world in search of definitive answers, but are not prepared to take supernatural cultures at their word. After all, mystagogues have excellent reasons to treat others creatures' general knowledge of the supernatural with suspicion. Most supernatural beings are, from an Awakened perspective, inherently narrow minded and psychologically damaged. A vampire has no innate interest in philosophy or metaphysics; a vampire's just a parasite looking to justify its own existence. It seems obvious that these creatures lack the perspective to deeply understand a wider cosmos.

Theories about the greater supernatural world fall in and out of fashion every decade or so. Current contenders include the following:

Archaeurgic Origin: Archmasters are said to create supernatural creatures and even strange, "secondary" magical laws. Atlantean relics might have similar properties. This morass of powerful and ancient magic could spawn all kinds of weird phenomena, including entire supernatural races who remember nothing of their true origins.

Chthonic Origin: The Supernal Realms are the source of all that *should* be, but not all that is. Strange phenomena and alien intelligences seep into the universe from its frayed edges, shaping nature in ways that violate the principles of Above and Below. Supernatural anomalies are the flotsam of the Abyss and represent influences from outside the proper design of the universe. Jnanamukti (see pp. 81) operatives often subscribe to an extreme version of this theory.

Exourgic Origin: The Shadow and the Astral Plane contain phenomena that fit within the Mysterium's general cosmology but encompass endless variety. Supernatural beings and events could very well spawn from strange junctures and magical accidents that bring astral and Shadow spirits into the material world. Werewolves provide some evidence for this theory.

exercises her will upon magical knowledge through the vehicle of an Imago. But unlike a physicist, this act of imagination doesn't just simulate reality in her head—she changes reality within the phenomenal world. The only way to destroy magical knowledge is to destroy its object, and this is where the Abyss becomes a terrifying threat to every mage. When the Abyss corrupts a soul or inflicts a Paradox on the world, the Abyss *destroys* a part of reality. Magic is knowledge and reality, so the Abyss destroys knowledge when it corrupts the world. It's a pervasive threat, because the Abyss has the potential to twist every magical act. In practice, however, mages simply exercise discretion and learn to live with the hazards of Paradoxes and Abyssal intruders.

Below the lofty concerns of occult cosmology, magical lore conceals itself though time, ignorance and the Quiescence. Mages also guard their Arts jealously, taking pains to hide their secrets from potential enemies. Magic is profound truth, but it's rarely spoken plainly.

Pancryptia

The Mysterium believes that magic naturally hides itself through fate and human actions. The order calls this phenomenon *pancryptia*. Pancryptia conceals magic within traditional legendry, ancient artifacts and scientific discoveries. One of the order's primary missions is to bring this knowledge back to its Supernal source and restore its status as original magical wisdom. Mystagogues separate Supernal "signals" from Fallen "noise" and carefully record the results.

Opinions differ as to the ultimate mechanism behind pancryptia, but mystagogues agree that it represents a fundamental threat to the Awakened and to the eventual salvation of the Fallen World. First of all, pancryptia is an ideological threat. The primary effect is to separate knowledge from its object. The secret name of Thunder becomes the name of a thunder god; its Imago turns into the god's petty myth. If mages lose sight of the unity between magical

knowledge and its power, they'll create a gulf between theory and action. In other words: they deny its reality — its magic. The Art isn't just an intellectual game of what *might* be possible if the mage had the proper tools and resources. It isn't a legend meant to inspire inconsequential dreams. The gulf between knowledge and action is a characteristic of the Fallen World: a Lie that keeps humanity under the heels of the Exarchs. Without purified knowledge, mages would lose access to the greater secrets of the Art, and Sleepers might not Awaken at all. Some believe that the process has already started. They point to ruins and relics that no modern sorcerer can duplicate as evidence that the modern era is a dark age for the Wise.

Pancryptia also scatters the source of magical knowledge. Even in the Fallen age, mages learn spells and secrets from organized cabals and orders. This common search for knowledge holds Awakened society together. If mages pieced together spells from the detritus of science, religion and myth themselves, they wouldn't feel any loyalty toward their companions. Indeed, this has been confirmed by the mages that do master magic this way — they're Libertines and Banishers.

Why the Mysterium Is Not the Free Council — Part One

The Mysterium and Free Council both seek out magical knowledge in the Fallen World. Both orders pay close attention to Sleeper myth and science. The similarities end there. The Mysterium searches for an *eternal* form of knowledge while the Free Council believes that humanity is genuinely capable of magical innovation. Libertines believe that the Fallen World has spawned its own, legitimate interpretations of the Art, while the Mysterium believes that the Lie spawns only confusion.

Both orders have convincing arguments. Free Council magic includes spells that Awakened history has never recorded before. At the same time, the Libertine order wastes a lot of time "reinventing the wheel." Mystagogues routinely enjoy scoffing at Free Council mages who demonstrate a "new spell" that merely duplicates magic that's hundreds or even thousands of years old.

If the Wise stand apart, they fall apart. Mages have too many enemies to tolerate disunion, including a universe that is *designed* to be hostile to them. Some mystagogues believe that apocalyptic legends really foresee a time when the Exarchs will capitalize on Awakened ignorance and disunity and strike down the Pentacle for all time.

Academia and the Structure of the Lie

Despite the primacy of magical lore, Mysterium mages include more experts in so-called Fallen academic disciplines than any other order. Mystagogues study everything from anthropology to theoretical physics. Pancryptia ensures that mages can't afford to be ignorant. Any field can hide a magical secret, but that isn't the only reason why an education is important. First of all, art and science are weak compared to their magical antecedents but have some power nonetheless, and the order regulates the power of *any* knowledge with an almost innate, corporate reflex. Ensconced in academia, a mage can challenge Quiescent biases and look out for students on the verge of Awakening.

As a product of the Quiescence, conventional knowledge supplies clues about the nature of the Lie. Mystagogues study the sciences and humanities to discover as much about the Fallen World as possible. Development along these lines has, for example, prompted new thinking about pancryptia. If, for instance, magical knowledge is subject to entropy, pancryptia could be understood as a state of increasing chaos that affects magic alongside the phenomenal universe. This leads to an interesting (if disturbing) theory: the universe will end when humanity forgets magic. One American cabal uses this as the basis for an "Eschaton Clock" that emulates the "Doomsday Clock" used by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. The clock was originally set at five minutes to midnight; the cabal sets the clock forward by a second every time the cabal receives evidence that the Awakened dwindle in number or lose magical secrets. Similarly, new mages and unearthed magic set the clock back, staving off the theoretical doomsday.

Theories such as these are common and varied, but all share a common theme: knowledge is the life's blood of Creation. Knowledge is the most valuable, potent and dangerous thing in the universe — and levies a toll on all who would use it.

Thesis: Knowledge Has a Price

Magic is not a gift. It doesn't want to be free. Magic isn't moral or inherently just. A wise sorcerer uses magic to break the bonds of the Lie and bring some peace and justice to the world, but magic itself has no bias toward any of these things. Magic is merely truth and power.

Throughout history, Sleepers and mages alike have been confused by the enigmatic, amoral nature of the Art. Sages and saints throughout history have wielded miracles, healed the sick and taught people to resist the illusions of the Fallen World. But the fact of the matter is that men and women such as these became miracle-workers *because* they were wise, while most modern mages seem to have it the other way around. Wisdom makes men and women magical, but magic doesn't make people wise. Buddhism warns adherents of this; buddhas and bodhisattvas gain *siddhi* powers as a side effect of righteous living, not because they set out to grasp them.

Unfortunately, magic makes it easy to confuse power with righteousness. Magic is an intensely personal Art. It demands ordeals that cut to the center of a sorcerer's soul, so it's only natural to believe that this also makes the mage a better person. The truth is that magic only *changes* a mage, shaping his spirit to accept Supernal lore. The type and extent of that change are that mage's responsibility. Some mages conquer personal demons during the course of their quest, while others give in to madness or avarice. *All* are forms of adaptation.

Mystagogues know the dangers of occult study and the gulf between power and morality. This is why the order's third major maxim demands a price for power. Mystagogues never freely share the secrets of the Art. Mages must pursue knowledge within a legitimate power structure that unites the Wise. To the order, the ideal Awakened culture is a society of scholars. They help each other — and watch each other, too.

The Basis of Authority

Reason, tradition and Gnosis form the tripod of a legitimate magical society. Each pillar has an equal influence on the regulation of knowledge, though the last is sometimes controversial. To the Mysterium, Gnosis is not the **Mage: The Awakening** game trait per se (though Gnosis arguably includes that trait). Gnosis is the realm of intuition, visions and mystical experiences. To many mages, this isn't much more than a synonym for raw power, for even a simple Knowing spell is an extraordinary vision. Ideally, Gnosis allows mystagogues to use vision quests, meditation and (it is hoped) subtle messages from the Oracles to inspire proper governance.

The primacy of tradition is less controversial, but is still hotly debated. Human mortality, Seer deceptions and pancryptia obscure the true origins of Awakened customs. Mysterium mages aren't too troubled by this, since it's a tradition ultimately proves itself by its long-term efficacy. The Consilium system is a legitimate tradition because it's worked for a very long time.

Reason balances the other two pillars. Magic is an Art rooted in Mystery, but magic obeys its own internal logic. Magic *must* be rational, or else it can't provide the basis for natural laws. If a decision appears to be irrational, it has to be supported by weighty traditions or powerful visions.

An organization that obeys the tripod is a legitimate Awakened society, capable of training apprentices and cooperating for the sake of the Art. Its members can exchange knowledge according to logical, time-tested customs. This is the ideological foundation of the order. Within that framework, there's no room for

Politics in Action

The Mysterium's political ideology is based on the structured dissemination of knowledge, but individual mages are left to explore their own political ambitions. The Mysterium endorses the Consilium and other traditional institutions for practical reasons, not because these institutions are inherently superior to other forms of government. Politics is a pedagogic tool, not an end in and of itself.

On the other hand, the Pentacle's traditions work pretty well. They encourage mages to work together and foster collective responsibility for the Art. That's why many caucuses support Silver Ladder policies — to a point. Most mystagogues prefer a balance of power over a single faction that might seize lore without properly earning it. Boston's Brotherhood of Ineffable Truth (see **Boston Unveiled**) is an example of this sort of political activism. That cabal serves as an effective counterweight to the dominant Ebon Noose.

impulsive, sentimental decisions and no such thing as "free" knowledge. Tradition lays down the obligations of apprentices. Reason dictates that magical knowledge must be reserved for capable, ethical sorcerers. Gnosis confirms the authority of the mystic Masters and the Supernal itself.

Structured Exchange

Mages must use their Arts responsibly and within a common fellowship. This means that they can never simply give magical secrets away. A sorcerer who thinks he's doing someone a favor by freely teaching what he knows isn't thinking things through. He's involved in a symbolic transaction that undermines the value of magic. Giving away something for nothing implies that it's *worth* nothing. Furthermore, any exchange between mages must benefit them both. In the case of an apprenticeship, the teacher gives the student her first exposure to the Art, and the student's services strengthen the teacher's ability to preserve and discover magical secrets. Among equals, the trade in magic passes rotes or other secrets along until almost everyone knows them. Once such secrets lose their value, mages go forth to find expand their knowledge. On a selfish level, this increases each seeker's magical "capital," but doing so forces mages to stave off pancryptia.

Why the Mysterium Is Not the Free Council — Part Two

Few things make a committed mystagogue seethe more than a Libertine Lorehouse. One Censor characterized them as "the gun shops next to the liquor stores of the Awakened world." Mysterium mages don't believe in egalitarian access to the Mysteries. Order mages have no desire to perpetuate the "occult oligarchy" of Free Council propaganda but do view an exchange of knowledge as a part of a wider system of Awakened responsibility. When magic is freely given, it imposes no responsibilities upon the recipient.

Libertines counter that the Lorehouse system does in fact ask users to contribute, but by Mysterium standards, such policies are based on self-interest, not the greater good. Lorehouse keepers don't charge to keep the art pure. They just do it to get paid.

Modern mystagogues tend to envision any system of free exchange as a form of capitalism, but the order developed its philosophy long before that ideology reared its head. Pure barter, feudal authority, familial bonds and potlatches have all served as the basis for structured exchange. One of the defining characteristics of the resulting mélange is that it is *not* a laissez-faire system. A mage's right to knowledge isn't defined just by what she has to trade but by her strength of character. Guanxi (see p. 57) is an excellent tool for this purpose, as guanxi bases all transactions on friendship and trust. Again, reason, tradition and Gnosis rule the trade in magical secrets. Oathbreakers can't buy their way to wisdom, an ill omen trumps any deal, and in the end, some secrets are just too dangerous to share for any form of compensation.

Thesis: The Corpus Mysteriorum

Magic is alive.

This simple statement is the foundation stone of the Mystery, profound in its simplicity. If you believe that magic is the hidden bedrock of reality, it follows that the entire cosmos is alive as well. Everything and everyone fit into a hierarchy of living systems and laws. Magic, then, is that art of knowing and changing that living system. Mystagogues call the living cosmos by a number of names. The Neuthasphere (named after Nut or Neuth, Egyptian goddess of the sky and rebirth) is bandied about by mages who draw parallels from deep ecology. Others call it the Metameme and the Ultraorganism, but the common term, first used in the 13th century, is the Corpus Mysteriorum, named after the grimoire of an archmage who erased most other signs of his or her existence. Order mages simply call him or her the "Corpus Author."

The Corpus Author synthesized positions that the order held from legendary times: that magic was inseparable from nature and demonstrated dynamic, even sentient properties. It should be noted, however, that the Corpus Mysteriorum does not use the Atlantean word for the Life Arcanum to encompass these properties, but a broader term that current scholarship defines as "the property of self-directed change."

The Grimoire

The Corpus is a familiar grimoire. Most Athenaea have a mundane translation of the text. Mystagogues usually get to see a "true" (magical) copy at least once, often during a Mystery initiation. Nonmagical translations are usually Greek or Latin and omit the rotes. True copies are written in Atlantean (see **Secrets of the Ruined Temple**). The Corpus Author inscribed its glyphs in several styles, incorporating them into drawings, fragments of Hebrew, Sanskrit and High Gothic verse, as well as instances of gibberish and mirror writing. Only fine alterations in the shape of characters, the composition of artwork and the negative space between scribblings reveal the Atlantean characters. Even mystagogues who specialize in the Corpus have trouble deciphering it, and it's thought that the book still keeps a few secrets from scholars. By the standards of **Tome of the Mysteries** (pp. 95–97), the book uses all four glyph transcription methods. The book requires an advanced understanding of Atlantean language *and* occasional Intelligence + Occult rolls to read. Although mystagogues discovered nine of its rotes shortly after its discovery, subsequent studies have turned up five more. The last rote to be found was a version of "Call Lightning." It used metaphors that could only be understood after studying advances in plasma physics that arose after 1928.

The Corpus is divided into 16 sections: one for each Supernal Realm, one for each Arcanum and the so-called Miscellany, which remains the least understood part of the grimoire. Except for the Miscellany, each section begins with a discussion of the Arcanum or Realm as part of a magical "organism," followed by rotes that represent applications of the theory. The Corpus's metaphors have far-flung geographical and even temporal origins. One passage likens magic

Copy Grimoire (Matter •, Prime •)

Practice: Compelling

Action: Extended

Duration: Lasting

Cost: None

The mage can copy an existing grimoire without knowing the rotes it contains or even how to properly read the text. The mage must have unimpeded physical access to the original grimoire for the duration of the spell. The basic threshold is one success per Arcanum dot, but the Storyteller may add additional difficulty if the grimoire is especially difficult to copy due to complex diagrams, confusing organization or even blurry text. In the case of some grimoires (such as the Corpus Mysteriorum), this makes it impossible to properly judge the difficulty and number of spells within.

The caster can't alter the language, organization or basic appearance of the copy from the original except for a few minor deviations in materials and penmanship. Once the caster is finished, the new grimoire contains all of the rotes of the original. The copy even retains any magical curses or safeguards contained in the original as long as those were part of a combined spell that created the original (or in the case of a copy of a copy, ultimately descends from an original work of this type). The copy functions just as a standard grimoire (described in "Inscribe Grimoire"), though it should be noted that this spell is often used to reproduce books that are difficult to understand.

This spell can't copy a daimonomicon (see p. 81) unless it incorporates the master-ranked Arcanum used to create that work in the first place.

Mysterium Rote: Illuminated Hand

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Crafts + Prime

Mystagogues copy grimoires such as the Corpus Mysteriorum to pass on its knowledge and demonstrate their devotion to knowledge. This rote is partly responsible for the order's great storehouse of magical knowledge, but this rote can also be used to copy cursed books, spreading a corrupt tome throughout the Awakened community. Some cursed grimoires include an enchantment that compels readers to learn and use this rote to copy the monstrous knowledge within them.

to a *stupa*: an Asian monument that depicts reality descending from immaterial to solid phenomena. Another section uses Olmec Long Count mathematics to estimate the duration of a "cosmic breath": a concept from the Hindu religion.

Game Considerations

The Corpus Mysteriorum is a bit of history, a Storyteller tool and a cultural trapping for Mysterium characters. Composed by an archmaster, the Corpus Mysteriorum doesn't follow all of the standard rules for grimoires (see "Inscribe Grimoire" on p. 220 of **Mage: The Awakening**). Anyone copying the Corpus can either do it without magic at all (in which case the rotes are indecipherable gibberish or error-ridden in subtle but crucial ways) or cast "Copy Grimoire," below. Copying the Corpus magically is a Herculean task requiring at least 50 successes, but the Storyteller may allow scribes to work at it in sections. "Inscribe Grimoire" always fails.

Storytellers should use the Corpus for the sake of plot and atmosphere. Aside from "Inscribe Grimoire" and "Call Lightning," add any rotes you wish. About half of the known rotes are common to every order (and are listed in **Mage: The Awakening**); the other half are more exotic. Furthermore, the grimoire might possess lesser known properties and secrets that benefit your chronicle.

The Living Mystery

The grimoire says that Supernal Realms can be likened to specialized organs or mental states. These regulate the core functions of magic. The Arcana are the equivalent of practical functions such as breath and circulation (a phenomenon that mages have known of since legendary times). Spells are no more than fleeting thoughts, heartbeats and other momentary impulses, while mundane reality serves as the stable "skeleton" upon which magic flourishes. Modern mystagogues extend these metaphors and reconcile them with modern science and philosophy. This has evolved into five major positions on the Corpus Mysteriorum:

Aletheianism: Aletheians believe that the pre-Socratic philosopher Parmenides describes a sparse but correct model of the Tapestry. Reality is a contiguous whole that only appears to consist of discrete entities because it's a dynamic thing. Destruction and separation are illusions borne from the interaction between subtle "etheric flame" and gross "ignorant night" — energies that some mages identify with Taoist yin and yang. Parmenides calls the realm between flame and night a goddess (*daimona*) called Dike (Justice) or Annake (Necessity). Most people only see surface appearances — objects, people and other discrete things — and not the underlying process. Intelligence (the *daimona*) is just one property of the vast system of living possibility.

Deus Ex Sorius: Strictly speaking, this phrase means "The god from Fate" but is understood to mean "the god from sorcery," because of sorcery's origin in the Latin word *sors*. Deus Ex Sorius is the belief that magic is the body of God (or the Goddess; gender is irrelevant to the core theory). Obrimos often rally behind this theory. To believers, spellcasting is a form of communion in which souls reach closer to the central divine Presence. Some adherents believe the Abyss is a dualistic Adversary.

Dharmakaya: This is derived from a Buddhist term that can be translated as the "body of the Law." According to this theory, magic is inseparable from the Ascended Masters and Oracles. These beings exist outside of time and karma. Like Buddhas, the Ascended are personalities *and* absolute principles, with spiritual bodies that encompass the entire cosmos. Oracles are bodhisattva-like beings who postpone ultimate unity with the Tapestry to maintain the Watchtowers. Most human beings lack the enlightenment to see the Law within the Lie, and few mages progress to Ascension itself.

Thaumacology: Thaumacology is the theory that magic is the heart of a vast metaphysical ecosystem. Viewed as a totality, it is an "ultraorganism." Mages are single "cells," though their exact function is a matter of debate. Some thaumacologists believe they're the cosmos's immune system. Others aspire to be the metaphysical gametes for a new Tapestry — a daughter for the universe. Similar to coral, magic supposedly exudes mundane reality to give itself a habitat. Many thaumacologists believe that the Abyss is the result of an imbalance in the magical ecosystem. Discovering and correcting this dysfunction vanquish the Lie.

Transmemetics: Transmemetics is the latest iteration of a movement that uses mathematics and Platonism to claim that magic is living information. Sleepers use meme theory to model ideas as if they were living things that evolve and reproduce in the minds of thinkers. Unlike memes, transmemes don't rely on thinking beings. Instead, transmemes are information structures that the Tapestry accretes around according to their "reproductive" viability. Magical and natural

laws are arbitrary structures that survive selection, reproduce and claim core importance within the Tapestry. Theorists believe that it's entirely possible for Arcana to "mutate" or even divide into "subspecies," but that this might rewrite the Tapestry in such a way as to erase evidence of the change. Some versions of the theory claim that the Abyss is either the home of unsuccessful transmemes or the root cause of adaptive pressures. Transmemetics is popular among mystagogues with Techgnostic leanings.

The Mythic Corpus

Mystagogues don't just treat the Corpus Mysteriorum as a dry, intellectual theory. The idea that magic lives has powerful spiritual implications. How should mages use a living power? Other orders base their ethos on the maxim that mages should not disfigure their own souls, but Mysterium mages come to an understanding that they have an obligation to the entire Corpus. Mythology is an important guide. It informs the order's Mysteries and, beneath the noise of Fallen tradition, points to an eternal truth about the nature of living magic. Mystagogues use myths to intuitively understand the Corpus. Meditation, ordeals and Mystery ceremonies supplement superficial, intellectual knowledge. The order enhances its understanding with the following myths.

The Bull of Heaven: Legends say that the universe sprang from a great sacrificial animal. Angra-Mainyu kills Ahura-Mazda's Bull of Heaven, but the moon channels its dying essence to create all animal life. In the Roman mysteries of Mithras, the bull's death brings forth the starry heavens and the good things of the earth. Gilgamesh, the Minotaur and horned Moloch reverse the order of sacrifice. In them, the bull is a solar deity that devours human.

What's behind these myths? If magic is the essence of the Bull of Heaven, are mages similar to Theseus and Mithras — or are mages anointed victims of the Minotaur? Mystics meditate upon these questions and images.

The Demiurge: Plato's *Timaeus* describes the demiurge. In contrast to the Gnostic conception of a corrupt, false God, the Platonic demiurge drives the cosmos to emulate perfect, eternal forms. Outside of the Western Tradition, Brahma rises from the lotus in the navel of Vishnu and creates the rest of the universe. Ten Prajapatis (divine beings) spring from his mind. Some mystagogues associate the Prajapatis to the 10 Arcana.

Brahma and the demiurge are both personifications of the Tapestry's conscious drive to order itself into a living system, but they are not objects of worship. The Platonic demiurge is only the visible face of the World Soul, while Brahma is the least popular deity of the Hindu trinity.

The Primordial Human: In the Vedas, Purusha is the Cosmic Man. The gods sacrifice this giant to create the universe. His breath is the wind, his eyes are the sun and his mind is the moon. Purusha's consciousness suffuses the cosmos, but human beings can only perceive its parts. In Norse myths, the gods create Midgard from Ymir's body and blood. Born of the Cosmic Egg, China's Pangu uses his axe to divide the earth and the sky. When he rests, his body dissolves into the rest of the universe. These myths imply that the structure of the universe is a macrocosmic mirror of humanity and warn that nothing can be created without paying a price in pain.

Praxis: The Sophiad

In the eyes of the Wise, the Mysterium is synonymous with formal magical study. While magic is indeed the central object of inquiry, the order's beliefs do not separate this from the nature of all things, Supernal and Fallen. Mages know some of the Mystery, but none of them are omniscient. To cultivate enlightened power, the Wise need to examine the world around them to uncover occult revelations. Contrary to popular stereotype, these projects aren't just academic exercises. Mystagogues crave experience as well as study. They employ meditation, drugs, ordeals and other rituals to ignite more intuitive, less systematic ways of knowing. The sum total of these endeavors is what Western mystagogues call the Sophiad.

To the Mysterium, an ideal mage reconciles reason and inspiration. She weaves them into a holistic method where passionate dreams inform complex thaumaturgic theories. The Sophiad makes the hero and storyteller into the same person. It makes a scientist the ultimate subject of her own experiments. Mystagogues constantly strive to balance between the intuitive and rational elements of the Sophiad. They tend to be restless intellectuals, ever dissatisfied with their own accomplishments and ideas.

Ways and Means

Personal and practical considerations spawn hundreds of distinct approaches to the quest. The order

uses prevailing academic customs to organize these approaches into formal fields. Western academic culture spawned taxonomies of study. These have been adopted by most of the world and influence the Mysterium's own classifications. Not every mage uses the system, but many do. Some mystagogues organize knowledge into a different set of disciplines or reject the conventional categories entirely out of personal inclination or devotion to an alternative wisdom tradition. Even when this is the case, these mages refer to these categories when the mages need to communicate with the greater body of the Mysterium.

Disciplines of the Mysterium

Modern Mysterium practice divides knowledge into three main divisions: Soriology is the High Path, the study of magic, mages and the Supernal Realms. Esotology is the Central Path, the study of the hidden, supernatural world and its denizens. Lastly, the Common Path of exoterics encompasses all the arts and sciences known to Sleepers. Ideally, no discipline is more important than any other, but it must be admitted that mystagogues sometimes rush to link studies to the High Path before examining them fully. Although it's given that the Supernal Realms form the ultimate template for the cosmos, it's easy to overlook the distinct complexity of individual phenomena.

Each field has multiple subcategories. Mystagogues usually use subcategories based on modern academic disciplines, but a significant minority believes that these classifications are a bit forced. Their contemporary names come from 18th- and 19th-century efforts to modernize Mysterium scholarship, right down to bastardized Greek and Latin nomenclature. Modern mages still use it out of familiarity; attempts to introduce multicultural, organic classifications have largely failed.

Soriology: The High Path

Soriology is a powerful discipline that examines the heart of Awakened existence. Soriology's secrets sometimes draw mystagogues away from the here and now, for high thaumaturgy, Supernal cosmology and the inner kingdom of the Awakened soul focus on the Wise but not the Fallen World they live in.

Magosophy: A mage's soul is a vast, complex esoteric territory. Multiple Arcana govern this most precious possession. Magosophy begins with the study of Awakened souls and progresses through psychology, sociology and moral philosophy, all from the perspective of the Awakened. The Wise face moral paradoxes inconceivable to others. What are the ethics of soul manipulation? Which forms of magic disfigure the self? How does the Awakened thirst for knowledge affect social structures?

Supernology: As you might expect, supernology is the study of the Supernal Realms but also includes the broad structure of the Tapestry, including the Abyss and the subtle layers of the Fallen World. Supernology searches for metaphysical laws that bind the cosmos together, especially as far as they govern transactions between the Tapestry's realms. The Atlantean orders agree on a rough structure, but it's still incomplete. Much of it explains *how* to shepherd phenomena between realms but not *why* magic obeys these loose rules. One supernologist devotes her studies to mapping Arcadia's "footprint" on the Fallen World; another searches for patterns within mad, Abyssal incursions. Scientific mages equate this discipline with Fallen esoterica such as string theory or computational physics, but more intuitive approaches still garner respect.

Territorial Disputes

Mysterium mages are famous for their efforts to find and study Atlantean ruins and artifacts. It's no surprise that this splits the study of Atlantis among several disciplines. Each discipline's adherents claim their field contains the proper basis for research, while the others should provide (at best) secondary input. Supernologists and occultists lead these disputes.

Supernologists believe that Atlantis is a metaphysical subject because the Awakened city constitutes a distinct — if inaccessible — plane of existence. Atlantis's historicity is less important than the city's place in the Tapestry. According to this view, Atlantis is a metaphysical realm whose material "shadows" manifest across time and space. In the most radical form, this theory postulates that Atlantis was never a historical place at all. Occultists scoff at the notion on the basis that material evidence trumps this kind of high-minded speculation. Artifacts, ruins and telling myths around the world point to a lost civilization. It's foolish to ignore the weight of evidence suggesting that Atlantis was an Earthly place and thus, a matter for occultists.

Thaumatology: Thaumatology is the study of magical technique, and thus, it's the preferred field for practically minded mages. Scholars study the origin and nature of spells, from the limits of the Arcana to the structure of rote Imago. This field includes the study of enchanted items, alchemy and the High Speech. Naturally, mystagogues who specialize in thaumatology want to get their hands on as many rotes, grimoires and magical wonders as possible. Successful thaumatologists tend to be some of the most influential mages around because of their collections.

Esotology: The Central Path

Esotologists study supernatural phenomena of all sorts. These include supernatural creatures, Fortean events and strange places with unusual properties. It's a weird world out there; it resists easy explanations and neat categories. Nevertheless, esotologists fit the bizarre corners of the Fallen World into an intelligible structure. The field has a reputation for danger. Scholars get eaten by cryptids, disappear into strange caves and fall under incomprehensible enchantments.

Occultism: In Mysterium nomenclature, the occult refers to miscellaneous supernatural phenomena. Awakened magic falls into a number of more specialized terms. Occultists study anything that lacks a confirmed connection to Awakened sorcery, including "hedge" magic, psychic phenomena and enchanted places. Legends, haunted places and people who've been touched by the supernatural are all occult topics. The goal is to examine supernatural phenomena and offer historical and metaphysical explanations for their natures. High theory usually comes last, after a sober assessment of the subject's wonders and dangers.

Sidereology: Sidereologists study the Astral Plane. Astral study has a mystical and psychological bent. Virtually all astral travel is a form of dreaming or meditation. Explorers must keep in mind that their experiences happen during an extraordinary state of consciousness. Astral events also tailor themselves to witnesses. It takes extraordinary mental discipline to remember that a traumatic astral dream about one's mother masks an astral spirit, domain or psychic current that transcends personal significance. In addition, alien beings roam the Temenos and Dreamtime. Some claim to be Supernal travelers: angels, demons and gods from on high. Others are acamoth and other Abyssal corrupters.

Teratology: Teratology ("the study of monsters") concentrates on supernatural creatures. Anything from vampires to cryptids is fair game for the field. Researchers concentrate on creatures' motives and capabilities before designing explanations for their existence. Over the last 30 years, mystagogues have called for this discipline to be renamed, since it supposedly displays an inherent bias against supernatural creatures. Conservative scholars caution researchers

Monsters and the Mysterium

This is the sidebar where we're supposed to remind you that mages don't know jack about other supernatural creatures, but when it comes to the Mysterium, that just doesn't work. Mystagogues don't just methodically research their subjects — they write down everything they can, cross-reference their work with other mages and contribute to a growing body of knowledge.

The Mysterium tightly regulates this sort of knowledge. Mages are meant to serve each other, not vampires or werewolves. The order doesn't want its members getting entangled by these creatures' politics. Vampires are especially dangerous because they offer easy wealth and influence to allies. The order closely watches anyone who studies vampires.

There are also limits to mystagogue research. Teratologists don't chronicle specific personalities and events unless they illustrate a larger point. Teratologists care that vampires make one of their own "prince," but don't care who the prince of Chicago is. The most reliable information comes from neophyte members of a supernatural "species." They provide accurate, if shallow, data. Old, powerful subjects are good at lying and notoriously hard to interrogate. If they discover they're being studied by outsiders, older vampires tend to kill mages, burn their books and use Consilium back-channels to suggest that the local Hierarch never, ever allow this to happen again.

To sum up, Mysterium mages can easily acquire what members of another supernatural group consider common knowledge, but after that, information gets sketchy and theoretical. For anything more, use the story factors above to drive your game's plot and, when necessary, maintain the balance of power in a crossover game.

not to be swept away by their subjects. Teratological research is extremely dangerous. Tactics include infiltrating supernatural societies and capturing specimens for experimentation — both bring mages into conflict with forces they may not fully comprehend.

Exoterics: The Common Path

Conventional arts and humanities are exoterics. Despite humble origins within the laws and limits of the Lie, exoteric disciplines guide the way to greater understanding. As much as they aspire to the heights of Supernal Ascension, mystagogues are mere mortals who understand the world through the framework of the Lie. Fortunately, the prison of the Fallen World can hide soul's potential, but can't injure its capacity for reason. Academic theories that study the laws of the Lie can serve more enlightened purposes.

Exoteric study is where the Mysterium's reputation as a collection of academic nerds expresses itself to the fullest. While the order respects its autodidacts, hermit-sages and hands-on explorers, it really *does* have a disproportionate number of members enjoying tenure at universities around the world. Some mystagogues use these positions to recruit apprentices and publicly (if subtly) question Fallen reality, but most just stick with it for the money and access to materials.

The Mysterium didn't need to invent exoteric categories. Quiescent scholars have produced an exhaustive list of disciplines to choose from and a set of global protocols that help academics from around the globe talk to each other. Mysterium specialists in a given discipline create their own think tanks, mailing lists and exclusive publications.

Following the Lore

Once a mystagogue decides to focus his Sophiad on a particular topic, his quest begins in earnest, but not to the exclusion of other knowledge. Many order mages are specialists, but none turn up an opportunity to learn something new about nearly any field. There are just too few mages to let anyone to turn up his nose at matters outside his personal interests. A fair number of mystagogues are true polymaths, well versed in a staggering array of scientific, artistic and occult disciplines.

Mystagogues attack the Sophiad with mental flexibility. The secrets are out there, waiting for a mage with the will and creativity to find them. A skilled thief has to feel comfortable examining ancient manuscripts. A linguist had better learn to disarm a museum's security system if she wants a good look at prized sarcophagi. Ideally, the thief and linguist work together, but circumstances don't always give mystagogues their pick of assistants.

Acquisition

Study and theory can only take you so far. Mysterium mages crave evidence above all: artifacts, sites

and eyewitness accounts of a strange world. Until the 20th century, mystagogues (especially Western mystagogues) piggybacked on colonial expeditions. They explored Atlantean ruins and other sacred sites alongside their explorers. The order is still quite skilled at inserting its own agents into archaeological expeditions — and tomb-robbing gangs. These groups are still an excellent way to justify a mage's presence in the most unlikely places. Better still, a mystagogue on the vanguard of an expedition can identify and hide anything that should stay out of Sleepers' hands.

Modern mystagogues don't enjoy the unfettered access of yesteryear. They live in a world that's been mostly mapped and where the rights of indigenous people hold more weight then they used to. Modern mystagogues also live in a world where the illegal trade in antiquities is far more sophisticated than it used to be. It's harder than ever to take a new artifact to the Athenaeum — but only when you obey the law.

Nowadays, acquisition is a job for an intelligent thief willing to combine exhaustive research with the ability to crack sophisticated security systems, haggle with well-protected fences and negotiate the global web of organized crime. While it's still possible to find tombs in forgotten parts of the world (which isn't *quite* as well mapped as Sleepers believe), these ruins are more likely to be found on someone else's property. Many ancient sites have been thoroughly ransacked, forcing mystagogues to track their stolen contents to the corners of the world. These artifacts are usually in the hands of wealthy, discreet collectors. Most are Sleepers, but strange relics have a tendency to find strange owners.

As you'd expect, Acquisitors (see p. 75) are the order's best thieves and explorers, but they don't have a monopoly on shady deeds and secret journeys. Supernatural forces are elusive enough to force any mage to seize any opportunity for study, even if it doesn't completely suit his talents.

A Matter of Perspective

Early European mystagogues treated supernatural artifacts as purely found objects. They didn't respect the claims of indigenous owners. If an object wasn't in an Athenaeum, the object was "lost." Indigenous mages, Sleepers and other beings naturally rose to defend their property, spawning violent confrontations that still influence order politics. For one thing, the artifacts' indigenous guardians included local counterparts to the order who followed local customs. Until recently, a Spanish mystagogue could "recover" artifacts from a Mexican "native ruin" without realizing that it was the local equivalent of an Athenaeum.

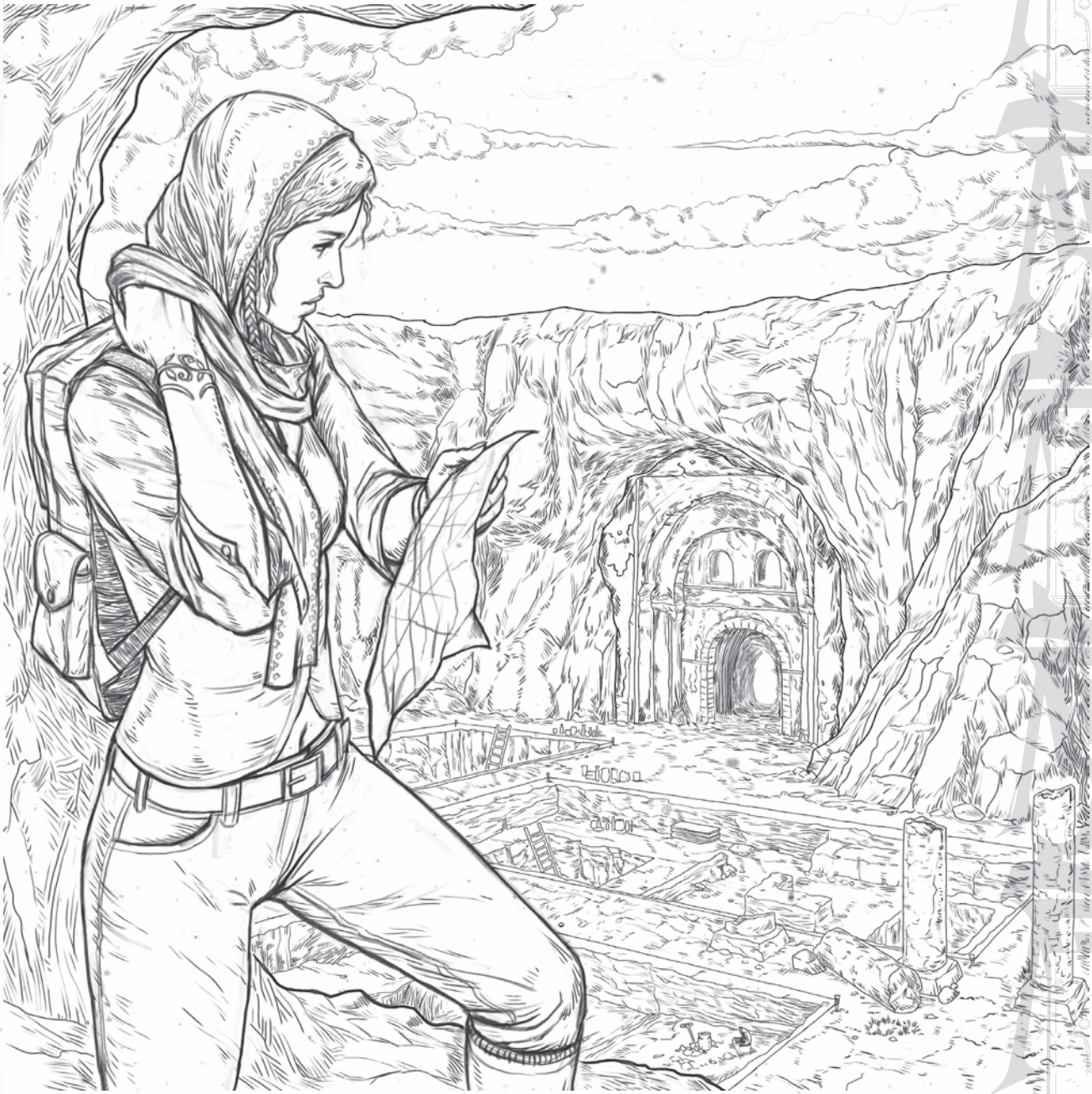
Modern Western thinking informs attempts to classify and store artifacts in a controlled environment, but that isn't a universal value system. Other mystagogues believe that fate and choice guided artifacts to a particular place for a good reason. Who knows what will happen if you move them? What if you disturb hidden forces, or even just offend local religious beliefs? If ancient and unusual things break, rot or fade away but fulfill the destiny that brought them to an "uncontrolled" environment, so be it.

Fieldwork

Acquisition and fieldwork are closely related. One concentrates on bringing back evidence; the other interprets phenomena from the source. Explorers seek out likely sites and put them through the most intense scrutiny possible. Although the stereotype is a musty tomb or hidden valley, mystagogues can find themselves in undocumented subway tunnels and geomantically significant high-rises in the urban center.

No matter the venue, a field researcher needs to master a number of practical skills to gather information. First of all, she needs to know how to safely enter and leave the site. This is more challenging than it appears, since supernatural places tend to host a number of physical and psychic hazards. Clichéd spiked pits are the least of a mage's worries. Spirits, ghosts, animated servitors and protective spells are a small sample of the possible hazards. Verges and powerful ley lines have innate dangers before anyone decides to lay traps. Some hidden realms even host predatory cryptids that classify intruders as prey.

Field workers also need to protect secret sites from contamination. They must change as little as possible. Ideally, the mystagogue leaves no trace, preserving phenomena for future generations. If the site is a sealed environment, the mage needs to make sure that nothing from the inside gets out, or (with the exception of researchers) vice versa. An innocuous modern insect can annihilate complex cryptid ecologies. A desiccated corpse in a sarcophagus might not stay that way if a stray drop of



blood stains the corpse's lips. Some contamination is impossible to avoid, especially if explorers have to pass through a physical barrier. Mystagogues do their best to restore the site to its prior state before they leave, but accidents happen. Sometimes, opening a door separates two halves of a rune that never should have been broken.

At the worst, contamination can unleash something truly horrific upon the world. If the Mysterium can't banish such threats, the order doesn't disturb them — but does subject them to as much additional security as the order can manage. Some Athenaea are actually built around these forbidding sites. The discoverers couldn't move the threat, so they moved themselves into a position to guard it.

Research

Along with the archaeologist-adventurer, the bookish scholar rounds out the order's stereotypes. Once again, there's some truth to the stereotype. The order really does collect tomes of forgotten lore — but that's not the only way to encode secret knowledge. Literate cultures aren't the only sources, and no society has ever restricted itself to keeping secrets using a single, predictable method.

That's one reason why Mysterium research is less monotonous and more challenging than many would expect. The order does its best to concentrate knowledge within Athenaea, but recognizes that copying information into a book won't always pass along a full understanding of the topic. Mystagogues usually try to keep primary sources intact. The order is old; it's been through so many incarnations that even it doesn't have a clear understanding of its own history. The Mysterium knows that time tends to twist human understanding, so that a minor error in a copy becomes official doctrine centuries later. That's pancryptia at work. Mystagogues never let the existence of copies and derivative works lull them into ignoring primary sources.

But what happens when the primary source is an oral tradition, an artifact or something even less amenable to transcription? Here, acquisition and fieldwork go hand in hand with research. In the case of a living source, the order tries to keep her wisdom tradition alive. The order helps families and cults that have kept such knowledge intact through the ages. Some of these informants have been profoundly altered by an occult history; many are Sleepwalkers and minor magicians (see **World of Darkness: Second Sight**). The order maintains similar ties with a small number of vampires and other potent supernatural beings. To effectively duplicate their knowledge, mystagogues try to initiate themselves into these secret traditions. Some forms of occult lore (such as Abyssal demonology) or the circumstances around its keeping (initiation into a ghoul family or a Wisdom-destroying cult) prevent these efforts.

Mysterium mages commit whatever they can to writing as well. In the modern era, multimedia techniques make it easier to preserve unusual sources, but the order rarely puts anything on a flash drive that hasn't been put on paper as well. Technologies come and go, but books endure.

Of course, not all books are the inert, harmless things Sleepers pick up from the local library. Athenaea libraries include grimoires and other books that carry strange properties. In some cases, the physical book isn't the real carrier of the supernatural effect. Instead, the very knowledge upon the book's pages induces strange phenomena. Disturbing runes, obscure even for the High Speech, impart horrific truths that only the most enlightened can accept. Lesser readers go mad. Other books reveal their dangers only when the reader tries to act on the information contained therein. For instance, the order keeps daimonomica (see p. 81) under lock and key, lest self-initiates degrade their own souls in the midst of the order.

The Ex Libris Rule

Over the course of the Sophiad, a mystagogue often stumbles on products of the Guardians of the Veil's Labyrinth. These false cults, ersatz myths and outright lies are a pernicious burden on any mage's search for knowledge. Mysterium mages believe that the Labyrinth accelerates pancryptia and violates the protocol of Right Scholarship (see p. 57).

Mystagogues don't want to deal with the same lie twice, so it's become common to actually *uphold* parts of the Labyrinth — but mark them for what they are. According to this "Ex Libris Rule," the mage intimidates a false cult with wonders and adds special symbols to its traditions — symbols that she shares with her local colleagues. These symbols act as a warning sign for other mystagogues so that they don't have to waste their time with falsities or endure Guardian surveillance.

Mysticism

The Mysterium values concrete signs of knowledge, but books and artifacts don't overshadow the order's mystical interests. The order believes that suppressing dualistic thinking can attune a mystic to the Corpus Mysteriorum itself so that she can touch the "mind" of magic.

Mystagogues record vivid dreams, prophecies, astral voyages and Awakenings so that others might interpret them. They use mystical exercises to attack questions that resist rational, dialectical solutions. Meditation, astral journeys and ecstatic practices twist the barrier between Self and Other. The end state is indescribable; mystics use cryptic metaphors and meaningless babble in the throes of a trance. Witnesses transcribe and interpret the results, but much of the time the mystic can only turn the experience into comprehensible wisdom after the fact.

Mystical wisdom is hard to pin down. In many cases, the results can never be decoded, or are nothing more than the result of a temporary psychological breakdown. Skilled scholars who study archives of prophetic and revelatory material find it easier to

separate real insights from delusions, but the process is still more art than science. Despite a tendency to manifest as allegory, mystical knowledge is sometimes remarkably straightforward and factual. Mystagogues ascribe useful results to a combination of unconscious knowledge, communications from other realms and a temporary joining with the Oracles — or even with the soul of all magic.

Praxis: Protocols and Guanxi

The Mysterium believes that secret knowledge is the cornerstone of Awakened existence. Knowledge is an economy, ecology and the source of authority. Mages need to control the dissemination of knowledge. Without universal customs, charismatic, amoral individuals acquire undeserved power. Clear traditions give mages a framework to teach, bargain with and protect each other.

Even though mystagogues uphold traditional structures, they don't believe that a rigid hierarchy is absolutely necessary. Politics is not an end, but a means to properly develop magical potential. Worldly authority should be fluid and mindful of the fact that temporal power is little more than a game within the Lie.

The Protocols

Mysterium scholars have written numerous treatises about the history and theory of Awakened customs. Nineteenth-century mystagogues engaged in a major project to reconcile hundreds of different cultural traditions. Two works — the *Siddhakarma* and *Magic, Society and Reason* — argued for a universal, synthetic system. The resulting consensus distilled centuries of study into protocols: rules that enforce useful customs. The four protocols are broad dictates that represent ethical rather than legal obligations.

The First Protocol: Right Scholarship

A true magus never lies to her colleagues about the nature and properties of secret knowledge. She may refuse to speak about a subject in whole or part, but must never mislead one of the Awakened.

— *Magic, Society and Reason*

Lies do not become the Art. Some mages trade in deception, diluting the sum total of Awakened knowledge. Their fraud damages occult studies for centuries on end. A counterfeit spell, a fake Artifact — all contribute to pancryptia and open up dangerous, false avenues of study.

Mysterium mages often find themselves at odds with Guardians of the Veil. Lies are a Guardian's stock in trade; he wraps up his secrets in falsehoods and riddles. A mystagogue might agree with a Guardian's intentions (they both want to keep magic out of unworthy hands), but not his methods. False scholarship inflicts long-term problems for short-term gain. Mystagogues don't have to reveal everything they know, but lies of omission are borderline cases. Most interpretations of this protocol say that it is permissible to admit sharing incomplete information, but that a mage doesn't need to admit that she knows more. She isn't allowed to pass on knowledge that *appears* comprehensive but isn't. For example, if a spirit-summoning ritual includes warding sigils that aren't conspicuous in their absence, the mage *must* pass along the sigil designs or admit that the spell is incomplete. Mystagogues are also allowed to lie about whether they know a particular secret but can't lie about the contents of the secret itself.

None of these obligations apply to Sleepers or other supernatural beings. Mages don't owe them any honesty at all.

The Second Protocol: Right Apprenticeship

The chela (apprentice) owes his guru (master) the full flower of Buddhi (Awakening). Even after he grows into his wisdom, he owes his guru lifelong homage. A guru must teach his chela wisely and fairly, imparting all necessary knowledge of Sat (truth) and Siddhi (magical knowledge). He may never allow the chela to live in dishonor or destitution.

— The *Siddhakarma*

The master-apprentice bond is sacred; it demands obligations from both parties. In this context, "master" and "apprentice" refer to social roles, not Arcana proficiency. A mage's "master" is the one who provided the bulk of the mage's initial training. In the 21st century, the master-apprentice bond isn't

as relevant to the reality of Awakened life. Modern mages often learn under a variety of ad hoc instructors. The Mysterium tries to buck the trend with strict apprenticeships and even organized magical academies. Mystagogues now apply the protocol to groups as well as individuals, lumping all of a mage's initial tutors into the role of "master."

According to custom, an apprentice supports his master's interests until one of them dies, as long as this support doesn't endanger the mage or his studies. In concrete terms, an apprentice shouldn't oppose his master in political matters. The apprentice should freely share rotes and esoterica with her. Masters who successfully impart these values to apprentices benefit from every rote and magical principle their students discover.

The master also has obligations. She must provide comprehensive training, including rotes, magical theory, the High Speech and a basic understanding of Awakened society. Masters are responsible for their apprentices until they've completed this basic training (in game terms, acquired the complete mage template). If the apprentice commits a crime, the master must answer for it, though not with the same severity as the wrongdoer. The master is also obligated to ensure ethical behavior from former students, even to the point of hunting them down and turning them over to the Consilium for justice. Lastly, a master ensures her students have the necessities of life. Mages should never suffer poverty.

The Third Protocol: Right Exchange

Magi must share secrets of equal value. The value of a secret depends equally upon its absolute power, rarity and the value ascribed to it by its recipient. The participants' satisfaction is not enough to justify an unequal exchange.

— *Magic, Society and Reason*

Outside of the master-apprentice bond, mages must trade secrets in balanced arrangements. The Mysterium doesn't believe in an unfettered "free market" for rotes and lore. In a laissez-faire scheme, the only thing that matters is a secret's relative utility: how valuable prospective traders believe it to be. Spells that conjure water generate more demand in a desert than a floodplain. Without this protocol, a mage could strike preferential bargains in the "deserts" of the world, exploiting mages he should be helping.

Magic, Society and Knowledge tempers raw utility with two other criteria: rarity and raw power. It's fair to demand an impressive boon in return for a master-level rote or a hitherto unknown application of Fate, but not for common, simple spells. Unfortunately, the protocol is vague when it comes to how one measures the rarity and power of a secret, especially when that secret isn't a rote. The protocol also doesn't say how to apply the balance between the three criteria in absolute terms. The order exhorts mages to apply reason and common sense to each situation. Curators offer their services to ensure a fair deal, using research and sorcery to uncover the true value of anything at the table.

The order disapproves of mages trading occult lore for mundane wealth and power. These exchanges don't provide any incentive to increase the sum of Awakened knowledge and open occult study to external influence. There are rich and politically connected mages, but there are also vampires and Sleepers with the same assets. They can't be allowed to affect Awakened society any more than they already do.

The Fourth Protocol: Right Authority

What are the qualities of a guru? He knows the ways of individual siddha (magical workings) and devotes himself to the pure dharmakaya (Corpus Mysteriorum)*. His wisdom shines in ancient formulae and spontaneous miracles.*

— The *Siddhakarma*

The Mysterium doesn't believe that a formal political system is always necessary. They know better than anyone that modern Consilii are historical phenomena. The Awakened world's been through Awakened feudalism, sorcerers' clans and warring lodges. The Consilium's the right solution now, but not for all time. All the same, democracy isn't for sorcerers. Mages with greater knowledge have more power. It's just a fact of life.

Mages should defer to the most knowledgeable among them. The protocol of Right Authority sets two criteria for knowledge: rote skill and spontaneous ability. A mage with a host of powerful rotes com-

mitted to memory doesn't necessarily have the same level of intuitive ability, while a powerful spontaneous mage with a handful of rotes doesn't have as much experience codifying and refining the Art. Each field corresponds to half of the Mysterium's focus. Academic skill and spontaneous revelations are both signs of magical proficiency.

All Awakened political systems should recognize magical skill. If there are any doubts about a mage's place in the pecking order, the system should be able to clarify things with examinations, duels and quests. Mundane, practical knowledge should serve as a "tie breaker" between closely matched rivals.

Mages should also respect superior knowledge on an informal, day-to-day basis. This can be as simple as handling a master's mundane chores, but often involves following his lead in politics. Proper deference encourages powerful mages to participate in Awakened society and lays important decisions at the feet of the most knowledgeable sorcerers. These elders must take responsibility for the good of the community.

Mysterium mages aren't naïve enough to believe that magical ability is the *sole* criterion for authority. Commentaries on the protocol specify that ruling sorcerers must be of sound mind, can have no truck with the Abyss and should consult with their inferiors. The primary business of powerful mages should be the cultivation of their lessers' magical skills. Powerful mages should be teachers, not lords. Mages who won't conform to this vision shouldn't get involved in politics, no matter how powerful they are.

Upholding the Protocols

Mystagogues don't use their collective intelligence and resources to promote the protocols among other orders. The Silver Ladder and Adamantine Arrow are the most receptive to these movements. Both orders believe in tradition and hierarchy. Some of their members disagree with the Mysterium over the criteria of fair exchange, but support a standard of conduct that limits internecine squabbling. Guardians of the Veil and the Free Council generally oppose the protocols. Guardians lie all the time and have no intention of stopping. Libertines believe that the protocols are just another way to concentrate power in a few hands. Libertine democracy usually violates Right Authority. Rotes for cash and communal learning "among equals" are also incompatible with the protocols, yet loved by Free Council factions.

The Mysterium overcomes these challenges using a number of tactics. First of all, the Mysterium is the "wealthiest" participant in the occult economy. No other order matches the Mysterium's raw, archived information. No one city stores all of the order's knowledge, but caucuses do share Athenaeum catalogs. A single Mystagogue might not have a spell on hand, but give her a few days and she might be able to find it. In the 21st century, order mages collect these catalogs into large, encrypted databases. There isn't a complete, central listing of everything the Mysterium's ever collected, but the order's research capabilities beat all competitors. The Mysterium uses these capabilities to attract mages looking for occult lore. Right Exchange means they can expect a fair deal, and Right Scholarship maximizes the information's reliability. A Curator may demand a burdensome service, but his client can be assured that she won't get ripped off. The Mysterium deals in truth or not at all.

The Mysterium encourages exemplary behavior from all of its mages. This is easier asked than done, but mystagogues usually respect their order enough to put up appearances. The ideal mystagogue never lies about magic, respects powerful mages from other orders and isn't too strict or free with his knowledge. Mystagogues prefer to keep internal rivalries behind closed doors as well. Taken together, these attitudes protect the image of an efficient, trustworthy fellowship. Order mages tend to be wary of politics for its own sake, but will get involved with a Consilium when they have to correct declining standards. Mystagogues usually prefer to be advisors instead of representatives. They make excellent Provosts and able Councilors. An old proverb says, "Put a théarch on the throne, but keep a mystagogue by her ear."

Interdiction

One of the most powerful punishments the order can levy on a community is Interdiction. A caucus employs this approach when local protocol violations are so common and severe that they threaten basic civility. The order understands that not all mages share their precise views but expects basic (if inconstant) adherence to *some* of them from any Awakened community.

An Interdiction is simple: until the offender capitulates to the caucus's standards or negotiates in good faith, no mystagogue in the area may share

her knowledge about any occult or academic topic. In some old European cities, this becomes a literal vow of silence, but North American mages usually just firmly explain that they can't say anything. This form of censure seems innocuous enough at first, but after enough time passes, targets discover how much they depend on Mysterium assistance. This even applies to mundane affairs. Mysterium mages tend to have better educations than other mages — educations sorcerers under Interdict can't benefit from. The cabal's Mysterium doctor won't issue diagnoses or help his friends visit his alma mater for research. If mages under Interdict respond with Mind magic or threats, the caucus declares a collective Right of Nemesis, refuses diversion into a duel and curses, kills or injuries the offender.

An entire city of corrupt mages can provoke an Interdiction, but so can a single cabal — even a lone mage. No matter the number of offenders, the ban applies to *all* mages in the region. The caucus usually explains who has offended them and why. This pulls the wrath of the Consilium down on troublemakers as well; mages resent suffering for others' sins. Mystagogues make these announcements shortly before beginning the Interdiction. Interdiction's a harsh punishment; the order never uses it lightly and rarely requires absolute adherence to protocol to end it.

Guanxi

Guanxi is a Mandarin Chinese term that refers to the personal, utilitarian connections between individuals. Guanxi encompasses a relationship in which one person can trade favors with another. Some mages are surprised that a Chinese concept has been universally accepted within the order, but despite the popularity of Western traditions (see **Tome of the Mysteries**, pp. 86–91 for the relationship between order traditions and regional cultures), the Mysterium is still a global organization, able to draw from a broad range of customs. Guanxi has parallels with the German *geimenschaft* (an organization based on a feeling of kinship and united belief) and the sociological concept of social capital. Guanxi ensures that no matter the politics of the day, Mysterium mages can operate within the bounds of the protocols. Guanxi within the order takes precedence over Consilium rule.

A mystagogue is expected to obey guanxi obligations no matter the judgment of their local Ruling Council. For instance, a mystagogue should protect a woman he has a strong guanxi with even if all of a city's mages demand her death. Granted, this would require *very* strong guanxi, but it would still defy the wishes of Hierarchs and Councilors. In practice, Mysterium guanxi doesn't usually violate local directives — or only does so subtly. Ideal guanxi doesn't even need to be stated aloud; partners in the relationship should learn to sense how obligations shift between them.

Guanxi is based on trust. A mage who wants to forge guanxi needs to earn her future partner's trust by supporting his interests for a time without expecting anything in return. This should appear to be motivated out of a sense of moral right instead of a naked attempt to curry favor. This stage is more burdensome when the desired partner has more magical wisdom or social status than the petitioner. Ideal guanxi is based on genuine feeling. Partners are expected to socialize outside of purely political functions, exchange gifts and learn something of each other's personal lives. Once partners have a natural, comfortable relationship, they're considered to have guanxi and may ask each other for favors.

A successful mystagogue has guanxi with several other mages. Each mage in the network has some knowledge of the others; guanxi includes a certain amount of openness about such networks. This allows a mystagogue to enlist one member of his network to help another, usually by introducing them and encouraging them to form their own guanxi. On the other hand, the middleman can also discourage communication between members of her network whom she thinks would come to blows (or worse, cooperate against the interests of the community). If two enemies have guanxi with the same mage, he's supposed to encourage peace between them. This preserves the integrity of his social network.

When a guanxi network suffers internal dissent, members rely on Right Authority to guide them. The most powerful mage in the network negotiates a compromise, marshalling his social capital to fairly compensate all parties.

Guanxi in the Mysterium

Mysterium guanxi directly supports the second, third and fourth protocols. An ungrateful apprentice is a member of the caucus in name only. Without Right Apprenticeship, he has no basis for guanxi — no history of loyalty. Guanxi lets mystagogues to share their research with colleagues who feel obligated to contribute in kind. Hierophants and Arcana masters keep the network stable, affirming the principle of authority through magical proficiency.

Guanxi also upholds Right Scholarship and the Sophiad, but the process is more involved. Guanxi networks cluster mages into groups with common values and interests. Members of a cluster trust each other more readily. Furthermore, guanxi helps mystagogues with their specialized pursuits. If not for guanxi, two mages with an interest in obscure Arcadian symbols might never meet. They might be the only mages in the world with this expertise and could even live on different continents, but their guanxi networks can extend their social reach to the point where they can discover each other and advance the study of magic together.

Grips and Signs

The Atlantean Mystery is important to mystagogue guanxi. Mysterium mages use their initiation ranks to assert authority in the network and settle arguments. The Mystery's secret symbols allow mystagogues to use guanxi very discreetly — a definite asset when the local Hierarch views such networks as a threat to the Consilium.

Thanks to the Mystery, a Hierophant can continue the business of the order under an oppressive regime. The signs and metaphors of the Mystery are an excellent secret language. Handshakes, gestures and metaphors hide the Hierophant's business from the uninitiated.

Guanxi in the Pentacle

Outside of the order, guanxi is a social ideal instead of a reality. Although many cabals have the bonds expected of guanxi relationships, other cabals are essentially small businesses, convenient political alliances and even masters and slaves. Even so, a mystagogue cultivates guanxi with her cabal first. A successful cabal is the nucleus for a wider network. Mages outside of the order are free to acquire guanxi with mystagogues, but outsiders rarely enjoy the same esteem as order insiders. Outsiders don't share Mysterium values, making them less trustworthy partners in the network.

Some mages oppose guanxi on ethical or philosophical grounds. More than a few Mastigos believe in strength through struggle — not cooperation. Libertines distrust informal, back-room alliances; they view guanxi as a particularly pernicious form of cronyism. Mystagogues counter that guanxi ensures the integrity of Awakened society regardless of prevailing political climates. If the Wise respect each other and trust their friendships, no amount of official corruption can force mages to bow to the Lie.

Guanxi in Action

Censor Khonsu visits Boston to track down the cannibal cult he fought while he was protecting a "living resource" (see this book's Prologue for details). He has some minor guanxi with Potestas, the local Mysterium master, but really needs to talk to the Hierarch Nemean again. The Nemean *hates* Khonsu, but has also been keeping confidential records about this so-called Red Word.

Potestas brings Khonsu to the next caucus meeting. The Censor provides fresh lobster for dinner. Thanks to Potestas, Khonsu knows it's attending Provost Chain Parris's favorite food. Khonsu directs caucus chatter back to Parris, who uses the extra time to mention a growing interest in Greek Orthodox icons. Parris invites Khonsu to dinner on the following night, where they discuss matters of mundane, personal interest. Parris mentions that a soup kitchen he supervises is running over budget; Khonsu cuts Parris a check then and there.

Khonsu alternates the next few days between social meetings with Parris and researching Orthodox icons. By the end, the Censor visits Parris with his compiled research in hand, attractively bound and fully indexed. Khonsu gives this gift to Chain Parris "for the Athenaeum." This gesture effectively asks the Provost if they've built up sufficient guanxi to ask a favor. Parris stows away the gift and asks if he can offer anything in return. Khonsu says he needs to speak to the Hierarch privately, noting that Potestas also thinks it would be a good idea.

The next day, the Nemean complains about Mysterium dithering but recognizes that two pieces of "friendly advice" from its mages constitutes a significant expression of political will. He meets the Censor with the prized dossier in hand.

Praxis: The Athenaeum

An Athenaeum is a temple, school, library and lab. It's a museum and a fortress. A Mysterium caucus preserves, develops and guards its occult knowledge here. An Athenaeum is the living heart of the order; the health and character of the Athenaeum reflect those of the mages who constructed it. Scholars obsessed with the dark side of magic collect cursed works about the Abyss, mad ghosts and caged, savage cryptids. Mages living under persecution secret battle-singed scrolls behind thick steel walls. Athenaea are collective projects: symbols of multiple Sophiads, laced together by guanxi and hard work.

Mystagogues usually feel rejuvenated in the presence of their collections. Many fondly remember the first book or artifact they ever added to the Athenaeum. Standing in the presence of the order's success refuels a mystagogue's resolve. Mysterium mages have martyred themselves for Athenaea, choosing to die instead of submitting to book-burners, soldiers of the Exarchs and, when necessary, other Pentacle mages.

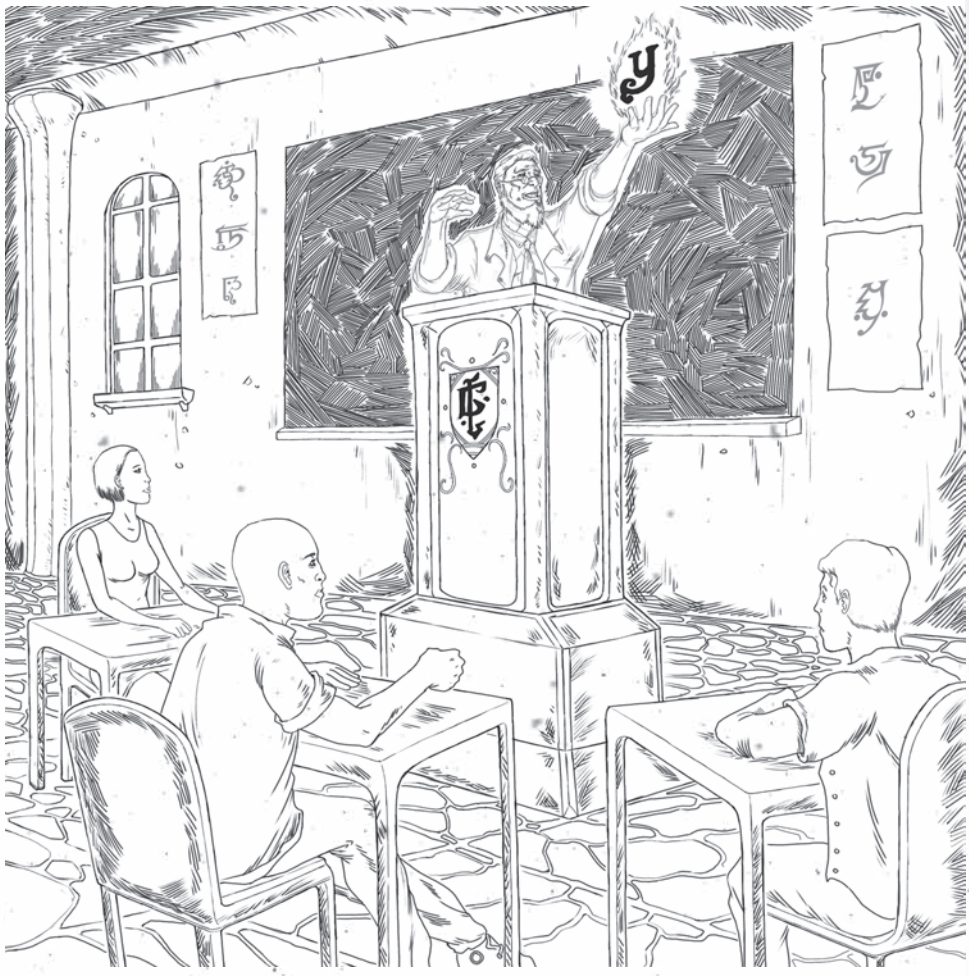
In theory, all Dadouchos-rank mages and up take responsibility for the Athenaeum closest to them, but nowadays a Curator and her close guanxi network manage the facility instead. This includes both esoteric and prosaic tasks. Somebody has to pay property taxes as conscientiously as he examines new grimoires.

Types of Athenaea

The Athenaeum is a powerful, flexible concept. Order mages develop Athenaea along multiple agendas. In a way, an Athenaeum reflects the Corpus Mysteriorum. Just as magic is living lore that responds to the Awakened will, the Athenaeum, too, is a living collection of knowledge that reflects its contributors' desires. The three varieties of Athenaea aren't mutually exclusive. Academies have Censoria in their "forbidden stacks." Archives have their students.

Academy

The most famous Athenaea are academies. Mages speak of the great *Collegia* of ages past, where masters taught apprentices en masse. Even confirmed Sleepers benefited from these ancient schools. Sleepers progressed to Sleepwalker status, learned hedge sorcery (see **World of Darkness: Second Sight**) or even just learned to appreciate the wonders beyond the Lie. Those days (if they existed at all) are gone now; magical study is a rare and dangerous, and only for those willing to bet their lives against the Fallen World's laws. But there are still a few academies left. Dedicated mystagogues train small groups of newly Awakened students, but modern Awakenings are rare enough to put a practical cap on the number of pupils. No known modern academy has had more than 20 enrollees. Most have six or seven.



The Academy Chronicle

Supernatural coming-of-age dramas are a powerful force in pop culture. An academy chronicle lets you to explore these stories in the **Mage** setting. *X-Men, Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and the *Harry Potter* series all provide detailed inspirations for these games — but so do darker examples such as *Ender's Game* and the *Hex* TV series. One of the core conflicts in these series is the tension between the brutal realities of the adult (or supernatural) world and the protagonists' search for stability, friendship and love. This isn't just a matter of growing out of youthful illusions; parts of the adult world are genuinely corrupt. Supernatural antagonists symbolize the flaws of the wider world.

This fits **Mage: The Awakening**'s themes well. Magic is a liberating force that reveals the truth but is also an Art mired in millennia of corrupt ambition. Student rivalries, orders, Paths and masters put young characters at odds. To survive, they must defy authorities that only nurture the young ones for the sake of the authorities' own Machiavellian plots and alarming prophecies. Friendship, humor and fey miracles have a place, but there's always a seething undercurrent of conspiracy and danger.

If you run an academy chronicle, you might want to play fast and loose with the setting to allow for larger student bodies, especially if you want a "supernatural high school" feel. Alternately, the academy can be a "special class" hidden within a Sleeper student body.

Create young characters a bit differently. Most of following guidelines handle characters ages eight to 10 until they "grow up" at ages 16 to 18. A few might apply to *all* new mages at any age, allowing you to gradually introduce Awakened powers.

Attributes, Skills and Merits: Preteens (up to age 12) pay double for the third and higher dots of an Attribute, Skill or Merit. Teenagers pay double for the fourth and fifth dots. The Storyteller can make an exception for a single Mental or Social Attribute and one Mental or Social skill. These represent precocious ability. As the character ages, the Storyteller should allow the player to redistribute dots without the extra price.

Advantages: Characters under the age of 12 have base Size and Speed species factors of 3; characters under the age of 14 have Size and Speed factors of 4. Fourteen year olds have standard human species factors.

Mage Supernatural Template: New mages don't have rotes or order-based advantages. They can perceive but not understand the High Speech, and cannot employ rote mudras or Atlantean runes. They must learn each of these abilities as if they're one-dot Merits, and never have them at character creation. They purchase order-based Rote Specialties at the experience price of standard Skill Specialties. Newly Awakened mages add one Attribute dot according to Path, just as standard characters do.

Arcana and Gnosis: Some mages spring to power in an instant; others benefit from arduous training. Storytellers can give young mages a full slate of Arcana, but for low-powered games, start young mages with three dots: two among their Ruling Arcana and one in any other Arcana. A new mage's Gnosis is 1; it can't be increased at character creation.

Modern academies usually take special care with Awakened children. The Mysterium values ancient traditions, but realizes that a medieval trade guild just doesn't provide the right model to teach the younger set. Awakened children (including teenagers) are rare and troubled. Their Awakenings only add to difficulties of growing up. The academy structure gives younger mages peer support and, more importantly, gives experienced mystagogues a way to control their charges' youthful exuberance.

Academies aren't just for children, though those that take children sometimes bar other students. Mages of any age can study and experiment on academy grounds. Adult students enjoy a wide range of facilities and guidance from managing mages. Wandering scholars seek certain academies out in order to master a particular field. These pupils are expected to pay some kind of "tuition" in original research, items of interest or special services. The mystagogue faculty also set up permanent labs and sub-sancta where they

devote their time to special studies. These mages can be rather paranoid about their privacy, to the point where their study areas are not really parts of the Athenaeum but autonomous facilities that just happen to share the same building.

Academy Athenaea have large, compartmentalized areas that separate classrooms and novice laboratories from the more dangerous parts of the collection. Some academies are boarding schools with accommodations for students and teachers. Most have extensive libraries and scriptoria, but only limited alchemical facilities and artifact collections. Most academies have relatively safe contents, but a few have old books, secret doors and oddities on the grounds that can swallow up overly curious students. The most dangerous academies are ancient Athenaea; they've been through so many mages and renovations that even the current staff don't know all of the Athenaea's secrets.

Academies are usually the only Athenaea that regularly admit members of other orders. The Mysterium doesn't automatically claim academy pupils. The order teaches them fundamental magical lore, but will pass them on to orders to which the pupils seem especially suited. Curators recruit reputable members of other orders to teach students. This minimizes tension with the other orders and seeds them with students who've experienced the benefits of Mysterium ideology.

Archive

Archives are Athenaea that secure and organize occult lore and artifacts. A dedicated archive is a "pure" Athenaeum; an archive simply stores the Athenaeum's contents for the benefit of Awakened study. Most Athenaea are dedicated archives, and all have something of a collection. The order's exact interests change with time, but the Mysterium's passion for knowledge never does. Archives tend to last, with the oldest claiming a heritage that recalls Pharaohs and Persian royalty.

An archive stores knowledge, but signifies more than its contents. An archive's history reveals the interests of mages from bygone ages. If an archive stands to last for more than a generation, the archive's governing caucus customarily adds a chronicle of the archive to the collection. An old archive's inheritors can read ancestral chronicles for insights about the archive itself as well advice about how to manage it.

Not every archive is so old and storied. Mystagogues regularly compile new archives. They win their own lore and give it a new home. Some new archives recompile the contents of older ones, as their buildings crumble or enemies attack the old sites.

Sometimes, old artifacts need to be moved to save them from time's ravages. Ancient wisdom doesn't always extend to preservation methods. Spells sometimes preserve old papyri and woodwork, but this

The Heist

Make no mistake: There are mages out there who'd like nothing better than to ransack an archive, make off with the best grimoires and artifacts and torch the rest. An archive is like an Awakened bank. Most people obey the terms for viewing a collection, but there will always be a minority who want to make off with the whole stash. That's bad news for the Mysterium — but good news for Storytellers in search of a plot.

You can play it in at least two ways. As mystagogues, you handle the Athenaeum's defenses, adding all the wards, locks and guards that you can. But security's more than just passively building a bunker; mages have to look out for nascent plots and known thieves, changing their plans to fit the threat. A violent climax tests the plan against the enemy.

The other side of the coin is obvious: Play the robbers. Characters don't need to be motivated by greed. A Libertine cabal ransacks the Athenaeum to "liberate information." Adamantine Arrows need a spell from the archive to fight a legitimate threat but can't afford the Curator's asking price. The Mysterium's leaders even decide that a Storyteller-controlled caucus is just too corrupt to keep its own Athenaeum. Hierophants ask players' mages to steal a laundry list of items, but to keep it quiet for the sake of the Mysterium's image.

If you have two groups, you could even play *both* sides of the heist. Switch back and forth between guards and thieves. You can use different groups of players for each, but some mature groups can play both sides without ruining their own fun. Let each side play off each other's plans until you hit the special night when they meet and it all goes to hell. Then again, maybe both cabals will find something in common — or discover a traitor who threatens them both.

magic seems to get less reliable with each passing age. Careless Curators can turn priceless grimoires into mold and dust. While a few purists prefer to rely on entirely magical safeguards, modern mages prefer scientifically tested, climate-controlled environments. These vaults fine-tune the surrounding humidity and temperature to best preserve their contents. Of course, a purely mechanical solution along these lines can be costly and easy to trace, so mystagogues often use a shortcut: they use science to determine ideal storage conditions, but magic to actually create them. A simple Forces spell can preserve an Atlantean statue from erosion with the same "curtain of air" that protects Michelangelo's David from contamination. Sleeper experts use fans to blow contamination away from the statue's skin — a feat magic can easily duplicate.

Archives contain extensive libraries, scriptoria and other collections. Archives tend to be utilitarian Athenaea that contain rather than exhibit. Nevertheless, most archives contain a detached area that serves as a viewing or reading room. This is the only part of the Athenaeum that mages from other orders are normally allowed to enter. Here, they avail themselves of archival materials subject to Mysterium approval and supervision. A canny Curator trades viewings for some new lore whenever possible. The client learns a new rote or occult secret, and the archive expands its collection. These transactions obey the protocol of Right Exchange.

Censorium

Short for *archivum censorium*, an Athenaeum so named contains things that the order is loath to share at any price. The Mysterium doesn't lie about the occult and doesn't believe that there are things "man was not meant to know." But there are spells, relics and names that *few* people should know, or should *only* know if it's absolutely necessary.

Unlike the Guardians of the Veil, the Mysterium doesn't destroy artifacts and lore unless the order has absolutely no choice. A mystagogue would only do so if he couldn't secure the source without dying — and even then, he might try. Accursed, Abyss-summoning grimoires sit under lock and key, unburnt and unaltered. The order wants to preserve such works for all time, but won't necessarily admit that they even exist. Libertine wags call the Censorium a "memory hole" and accuse the order of erasing occult knowledge from history. This is an inaccurate label, because even though the order has wiped *tangential* information about some things from Awakened recollection on several occasions, the Mysterium has rarely destroyed the original source. A Wisdom-wrecking spell is sacrosanct, but rumors about it aren't.

Censoria are fortified with conventional and magical security, mixing the mundane cutting edge with spells layered upon the place by its caretakers. Some of these safeguards actually use the forbidden knowledge of the Censorium itself. An intruder who bypasses a vault door and a suffocating halon fire suppression system might have to deal with a demon listed in the very pages she wants to steal. The Censorium wing of a greater Athenaeum usually has separate, dedicated security features. If the main Athenaeum security fails, the Censorium section stays safe.

Outsiders aren't allowed to view Censorium materials unless the managing Curator deems it absolutely necessary. Mystagogues often consult outside experts who've agreed to have their memories wiped after a viewing a censored item. In many cases, a caucus won't even admit its Athenaeum contains a Censorium. But there are times when the need for a dangerous spell is great enough, or the Awakened community has changed enough to bring censored secrets out into the open.

Just as other archives, Censoria can survive across generations, to the point where caretakers lose important information about their contents. The order tries its best to maintain continuous records but is hampered by the need for secrecy. Some Curators don't even trust successors with these secrets and simply note that they are to never, ever let a book or artifact out into the open.

What gets condemned to the Censorium? An order Censor makes the call, moderating her opinions with the order's loose standards. The Mysterium normally locks away the following:

Abyssal Material: If it invokes the power of the Abyss and its denizens, the order puts it away. This includes grimoires, artifacts and descriptions that would help a clever, immoral mage summon up Abyssal power. Censors sometimes release dummy versions and severely redacted texts to help demon-hunters and researchers. A scroll that described Scelesti abilities and activities wouldn't get censored; one that told the reader *how* to learn Scelesti "gifts" would.

Left-Handed Material: This category includes magical items and materials that threaten to distort a user's soul. The Mysterium used to routinely suppress information about how to construct a soul stone for this reason. These items are just too common now,

but if the knowledge were to vanish from the minds of most mages, the order wouldn't help them get it back. Left-Handed Legacy philosophies fall under this category, as does goetic and soul-stealing magic. Again, simulated and redacted versions are sometimes permitted.

Politically Sensitive Material: Free Council charges sometimes hit the mark. Censoria contain material that doesn't have much occult value, but whose release would light multiple political powder kegs. Boston's Secret Concord (see the **Mage: The Awakening** and **Boston Unveiled**) is rumored to be stored in Chain Parris's Athenaeum for such a reason. Prominent mages' sexual proclivities and demon-summoning follies fill Censorium records. The Free Council alleges that the Mysterium knows much more about the history of the Awakened than the order dares tell, and that the Mysterium hides evidence that could overturn Atlantean orthodoxy.

Powerful, Unpredictable Material: When all is said and done, the Mysterium conceals certain things to preserve Awakened society. This includes items that aren't *inherently* dangerous but are just so potent or weird that the order doubts anyone could harness such items without making serious mistakes. Some Chicago mages believe that the legendary Celestial Flange (see the **Mage** section of **World of Darkness: Chicago**) was never found because the order stole the object away. This category might include Atlantean weaponry and spells that appear to have been written by alien hands, but only senior Censors know for sure.

Building an Athenaeum

Athenaea take time and effort to build. A lowly caucus starts with little more than the mages' own rotes, notes and trinkets, all stored in a locked closet. In old cities and ancient Mysterium fastnesses, mystagogues enjoy the benefits of generations of labor, but those huge Athenaea started out as small seeds of knowledge.

Not every caucus manages a recognized Athenaeum. Groups that use the "lore in a closet" scheme don't usually describe their collections as true Athenaea, but dream of the day when they can. These mages usually visit the nearest established Athenaeum to study its contents and the techniques used to preserve them. Curators learn to efficiently organize and enhance their collections. Scholars learn more from a Mysterium Athenaeum than any equivalent archive, thanks to immaculate cross-referencing, logical categories and functional study spaces.

Menageries

Occult menageries were as much a status symbol as a serious academic pursuit. Wealthy, influential mystagogues collected living (or at least animate) specimens for these private "zoos." Intelligent and animalistic creatures were locked into cages in a special section of the Athenaeum.

Necessity and hubris turned menageries into increasingly complex installations. Vampires needed blood and reinforced bars; basilisks needed a complex arrangement of mirrors to safely view. Awakened artists enhanced cages with fanciful designs meant to simulate each prisoner's "natural" environment. By the 1800s, the largest menageries needed the staff and grounds of a sizeable mansion to operate. Modern mages either think of these menageries as products of bygone opulence or condemn them as symptoms of Victorian arrogance.

Some menageries collapsed under their own complexity, loosing deranged monsters that wasted no time avenging themselves on their captors. Others fell to the Free Council. Eager to flex new, magico-political muscles, the Libertines destroyed menageries as part of a general attack on Awakened abuses.

Barring a few well-hidden collections, the menageries are no more, but their legacy still troubles the Mysterium. Intelligent inmates remember their imprisonment and stalk the perpetrator's descendants — or any mage at all. Some creatures never abandoned the menagerie grounds. Cryptids, animated statues and revenants bedevil the current occupants.

In game terms, an Athenaeum is a collection of Merits that governs its size and contents. The Athenaeum Merit (below) mitigates the expense, representing the order's skill at collecting and organizing knowledge.

Merit: Athenaeum (•to •••••; special)

Prerequisites: Mysterium Status •, Sanctum •+

Effect: You can convert each dot in this Merit to *two* dots in the following Merits: Laboratory, Library and Scriptorium (new Merit; see below). You must use these dots to purchase at least two different Merits

from this list. You may stack these Merit dots with the same dots from standard versions of each Merit, but the derived Merits cannot rise higher than five dots (though there may be some ancient or secret exceptions to this rule).

Drawback: The materials that compose each Merit must occupy the same basic location. The Library must occupy the same building as the Scriptorium, for example. If you move component Merits purchased with Athenaeum dots to different locations, you can recover only half of their value as you lose the efficiency of combining resources.

Athenaeum materials and facilities also require space to be properly organized: at least one dot of Sanctum Size per two dots of Athenaeum (not component Merits).

Special: It's possible for members of a close-knit group (typically, a Mysterium caucus) to share this Merit. Members each contribute one or more dots and are considered to have common access to the Athenaeum.

The Athenaeum Sanctum

Every Athenaeum needs a home. That's why players must purchase the Sanctum Merit (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 86–87) for their Athenaeum. Remember to divide dots between Size and Security. Chapter Two of **Sanctum and Sigil** provides more detailed rules and options. The Athenaeum Merit may dictate a minimum physical size, but Merits acquired by other means do not.

Core Merits

Three Merits define any Athenaeum, and all Athenaea have one or more dots in at least one of these Merits. These dots can be derived from the Athenaeum Merit or purchased separately. They are the Laboratory (see **Tome of the Mysteries**, pp. 145–152 for information about the Merit and Alchemy), Library (**Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 85–86) and Scriptorium (see below) Merits.

Scriptorium (●● to ●●●●●; special)

The Scriptorium's name comes from the workspaces of monasteries and ancient scribe houses. The Mysterium uses this term to designate a facility where mages distill general magical knowledge into formal rotes. Scriptoria contain thaumatology texts, useful workspace and esoteric features such as mystic diagrams and geomantic layouts said to improve concentration.

Prerequisite: Sanctum •

Effect: Mages who compile rotes at a scriptorium can learn them more efficiently than elsewhere. Similar to the Sanctum Merit, Scriptorium has two aspects. These are Scriptorium Subjects and Scriptorium Depth. Divide Merit dots between each aspect, with a minimum of one dot in each one. These aspects govern the types of rote study that a given scriptorium can cover. Each dot in Scriptorium Subjects encompasses one of the 10 Arcanum. Each Scriptorium Depth dot represents the maximum rote rank in any Scriptorium Subject.

Mages who study applicable rotes in a scriptorium pay half the usual experience cost: only one point per dot of the highest Arcanum. Rotes that aren't covered by the Scriptorium's Subjects or Depth require the usual experience cost.

Drawback: A scriptorium isn't for the uneducated. An Awakened scholar needs academic training in order to make efficient use of the scriptorium's resources. This mandates Academics dots equal to the highest Arcanum rank in the rote she wishes to research. Without these research skills, the student pays the normal price for the rote.

A mage who invests experience in a scriptorium cannot add Subject Arcana that he does not know and can't raise its depth higher than his highest Arcanum rank. This limitation doesn't apply to the mage's starting Merit dots because these might represent a gift from another mage with different abilities.

Special: Similar to other collective Merits, several characters can combine dots to share a Scriptorium. This may not raise the Scriptorium's Subjects or Depth to more than five dots. Again, some legendary Athenaea might hold exceptions to this rule.

Occult Items

Athenaea also store occult items. Enchanted tomes and sinister idols don't just gather dust on their shelves. Mystagogues take the items down to study, clean and, when necessary, use in the field. Players can acquire these Imbued Items, Enhanced Items and Artifacts for their normal Merit costs, with one exception: Mysterium mages may combine dots on a single purchase if the item's primary home is the Athenaeum. Starting characters may not cooperate to add an item worth more than five Merit dots to their collection.

Other Features

An Athenaeum doesn't just store books and artifacts. Academy Athenaea have classrooms. Dedicated caucuses live in their Athenaea, adding domestic niceties to the space. Athenaea can be meeting places, ritual spaces and temples to the Mystery.

With that in mind, you can add the following Merits to the basic Athenaeum:

Hallow: Ritual chambers and magical experiments benefit from a Hallow, so many Athenaea are built around them.

Meditative Mind: Some Athenaea are carefully built according to the principles of *feng shui*, or model themselves on monasteries and other contemplative environments. Purchase the Meditative Mind Merit for an Athenaeum with these qualities, and the Merit's benefits apply to everyone in its environs.

Occultation: An Athenaeum can have Occultation dots. Mystagogues speculate that this property comes from the remnants of concealing spells, that concentrated, secret knowledge carries an aura apt to turn scrying away or point to the fact that reality seems to work to conceal the area as an example of pancryptia in action. The Merit applies to the Athenaeum and its contents, but not individuals dwelling within it.

Sanctum Merits: The following Merits from **Sanctum and Sigil** apply to Athenaea: Guardian Ghost, Guardian Retainer, Guardian Spirit and Sanctum Gauntlet.

The Miscellany

In addition to quantifiable Merits, any Athenaeum worth the name contains a large number of unsorted oddities, notes and jars with dubious contents. Although Mystagogues are excellent librarians, their love of knowledge often gets the best of their organizational skills. A small Athenaeum has one or two of these curios, but in large ones, these curios steal every spare corner, collecting dust, behaving strangely (by, for example, changing position when nobody's looking) and waiting for the day when they'll help or annoy the managing caucus. The Curator normally has a *rough* idea of what they do, but hasn't taken the time to index, study or organize them. These odds-and-ends might be supernatural, but usually aren't products of Awakened magic. They're detritus from the bizarre corners of the World of Darkness and don't follow any particular supernatural rules.

Here's an optional system you can use to make this miscellany affect the game. When a mystagogue's player wants to rummage through the miscellany for something useful, ask for a Wits + Occult roll. The player has to provide a general goal for his search ("I'm looking for something to help banish that ghost"). Unlike standard rolls, any roll of 1 subtracts a success from the total. A roll that garners *no* successes and at least one 1 on the die is treated as a dramatic failure, regardless of the number of dice rolled.

Storytellers should allow these rolls only once or twice per chronicle chapter. The system is really intended to give some significance to the weird, unclassified objects in an Athenaeum, not to act as a regular, reliable resource.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The mage doesn't find anything useful. Even worse, she disturbs a curio that will have a potent malevolent effect at some point in the future. Alternately, she *thinks* she's found a useful item, but when she uses it, it has some sort of useless yet perverse effect.

Failure: If the player didn't roll any dice that would have succeeded without 1s subtracting, the mage doesn't find anything useful. If the mage only failed because 1s removed successes, she finds a marginally useful item (see "Success," below), but it has a drawback that eventually troubles her.

Success: The mage finds a curio that provides marginal help — typically, a +2 dice equipment bonus to a task that would help the mage out, or a power equivalent to a one-dot rote or supernatural power. The curio is only useful in the context of the situation at hand; the curio works to banish *this* ghost, but no other, for reasons left to the Storyteller to determine.

Exceptional Success: The mage finds something that provides decisive help, turning the tide when it comes to meeting the desired goal. This could add a +4 equipment bonus to a useful die roll or the equivalent of a three-dot rote or supernatural power. Again, the benefit applies only to the matter at hand. Barring Storyteller discretion, the benefit is a one-shot advantage.

Possible Bonuses and Penalties: Athenaeum's highest Merit is less than four dots (–1 per dot less than four), Athenaeum is less than 10 years old (–1), Athenaeum's highest Merit is five dots or more (+1), Athenaeum has two or more Merits with five or more dots (+2), Athenaeum is disorganized (+1 — but penalize Research rolls), Athenaeum is more than 100 years old (+1).

Example: Khonsu learns of a three-eyed spirit that's been terrorizing a local apartment building. He doesn't have much ability in the Spirit Arcanum, so he rummages through the local Athenaeum for something — anything — that might help. Khonsu's player rolls a bunch of standard failures, an 8 and a 1. The 1 removes a success, but in an act of charity, the Storyteller decides that Khonsu finds a useful item with a drawback.

Khonsu spots a three-eyed idol that the Curator uses as a paperweight. Khonsu grabs it and shakes it, hears the sound of sand inside and quickly intuits that it might do the trick. He runs to the apartment, calling out the spirit, which materializes with a roar. Khonsu smashes the idol; dust surrounds the creature and turns it insubstantial for a moment — long enough to throw together some Celestial Fire.

He blasts the spirit and is immediately seized by a wracking cough. It feels like the dust got in his lungs. And when he closes his eyes, he sees disturbing things through a point in the center of his forehead, as if he had a third eye.

The Thing on the Shelf

Dark and troublesome collections are classic springboards for occult horror. The image of cluttered shelves with weird little statues and musty books suits the Mysterium. These strange items are just scene dressing until someone picks them up with a sense of purpose. That's when the story reveals the item's supernatural properties and history. The rules for miscellany reflect this kind of "narrative reality." If your group's filled with bean-counting types, don't use it; they'll just be frustrated that the Athenaeum has an unknown quantity of strange stuff.

For everyone else, an Athenaeum can issue an endless supply of MacGuffins and complications. One way to tell stories with these was used in Stephen King's *Needful Things* and the TV show *Friday the 13th: The Series*. An evil shopkeeper (a deranged Mysterium Curator?) passes along cursed items. The protagonists have to confiscate them before they do any more harm and have to track them to their points or origin, where the protagonists confront the devilish shopkeeper.

Alternately, Sleepers might find these items in the field, where they provide a powerful benefit at a horrible price. In these stories, characters collect these items against the wishes of their owners, committing the objects to a Censorium at the story's end.

Notable Athenaea

An Athenaeum's reputation depends on its age, contents and management. Some Athenaea have a sinister air about them: rumors that their dangerous contents drive visitors mad or that the Curator conceals bizarre experiments within.

The Coiling Stone

History: The Coiling Stone has always existed in Cardiff, Wales, but the Athenaeum's size, shape and the configuration of the eponymous stones have changed through the ages. The Athenaeum's oldest chronicles are nearly incomprehensible crumbling bits of vellum that are at least 1,500 years old. Tenth-century interpretations say that the pages recorded the arrival of the founder, "ablaze with the mark of Cain," who used his Art to carry the five "blood stones," so called for their reddish hue. The mage (who later chronicles just call Cain) spends a century carving strange symbols on the blood stones. He tells the inhabitants of ancient Caerdydd that the first person to read the stones' (Atlantean) writing will gain his heart's desire.

Over another century, 25 men and women fail and die; Cain cuts their throats on a local stone and adds it to his home. The 26th aspirant succeeds and wins the right to cut Cain's throat. Cain's blood pools in the middle of the stone circle (where the modern Hallow lies today) and whispers secrets to the boy, who takes the name Bran, bathes in the blood and grows to seven feet in height.

Wizards come "from the four winds" to challenge Bran, but he beats them all. He takes them as students and reveals the Mysteries to them. Bran dies at the age of 320; his blood goes to the Hallow, and a new stone marks his passing.

Since then, the Mysterium has built the Coiling Stone from more of these markers, moving them when necessary and adding to them when a Cardiff mystagogue dies. The Athenaeum's stones and contents have been scattered by thieves twice and entirely lost three times, but the Mysterium has always managed to get everything back.

The practice of placing the stones in a widdershins spiral started in the 15th century for unrecorded reasons, but subsequent chronicles laid out precise, geomantic rules for laying out the stones. These take future additions into account.

Description: A major archive and minor Censorium, the Coiling Stone is also a Mystery temple, where initiations take place in the glow of the Hallow's Supernal light. The Hallow appears as a pool or spatter of blood at the midpoint between the four blood stones and moves as the stones do, by way of an Art no modern mage has been able to comprehend. Some of the blood stones' runes translate to Prime and Death principles, but 90% of the artifact's writing is recognizably Atlantean, yet incomprehensible.

The modern Coiling Stone is laid out in a large, underground chamber near the Wales Millennium Centre. The managing caucus actually added plans for the chamber to the Millennium Center project and erased them from public knowledge shortly after completion. The Athenaeum relocated from a previous warehouse location in June 2005. Adjacent chambers include three offices, a reading room and a modest vault for censored material. These areas are well lit, but the central chamber and main archives are only weakly illuminated with low-powered fluorescent strips. This is intentional. The Coiling Stone is well hidden, but Curator Bran III knows that profligate power consumption would be a dead giveaway. Access to and from the Athenaeum is through a set of stairs that links up with the Millennium Center's service tunnels. Three local mystagogues have custodial positions with the Center, ensuring easy entrance.

Blood, stones, death and power are the specialties of the Athenaeum, but the archives aren't as sinister as that implies. Necromantic material emphasizes "priesthood beyond death," where ancestors guide the living to act with honor. The Athenaeum's Prime thaumatology focuses on the enigma of the blood stones. Mobile Hallows are extraordinarily rare. Even though mages do not completely understand the blood stones, they've inspired theories that apply dozens of lesser Prime spells. Most of the collection is laid out in shelves and cases between the monument stones. As mages walk closer to the four blood stones at the center, they may peruse more advanced material. Visitors from other orders are confined to the reading room. Bran III maintains that stories of trespassers being sacrificed to the "pool of Cain" at the center are absolutely unfounded.

Merit Dots (Includes Athenaeum Merit): Hallow 4, Library 4 (Human Sacrifice, Necromancy, Standing Stones, Welsh Myths), Scriptorium 6 (Depth 4, Subjects 2 — Death, Prime), Sanctum 10 (Size 5, Security 5)

Scuola di Otranto

History: The Sculoa di (School of) Otranto was founded in 1764, but claims to have been an Athenaeum since the 14th century. The first master of Otranto claimed a castle from a degenerate noble house, destroyed everything but a single tower and concealed it in the ashen mists that confront visitors to this day. Otranto (all Curators take this as their shadow name) allowed himself a single apprentice, who hunted Italy for occult texts and, in time, became the next Otranto. Until the 18th century, visitors suffered bizarre fates. They were devoured by ravens, buried alive or (in one case) crushed by a giant black helmet that fell from the sky.

Finally, an Otranto broke with tradition and said that he would accept visitors, including six Awakened students — no more, no less. This Otranto revealed that he was a potent Acanthus and offered a collection gathered over the ages to traveling mystagogues. Since then, the ruins of Castle Otranto (not to be confused with the fortress of the same name that's further down the coast) have held nine inhabitants at a time: Otranto, his or her heir apparent, one other resident teacher and the six students. Strange death still haunts the Athenaeum, striking visitors who stray from their expected locations. This has enraged allies of the victims, but on each occasion, Otranto's been able to exercise a curious amount of political clout. In 1947, the Hierarch of Milan revealed that the Otrantos often sent letters warning Italian mages of impending threats. Some of these cryptic, poetic missives spared Milanese mages the full brunt of the Second World War and made the Scuola's Curator a valued ally.

Description: The Scuola di Otranto lies 100 miles north of the town of the same name, on the northeast side of the Salento Peninsula — the "heel" of Italy's "boot." A single gravel road leads to the ruins around the crooked Athenaeum tower. It's not far from the highway, but the famous black mists (actually a light gray by day) make it difficult to see.

Students join the academy in two ways. Otranto may write a young Acanthus or her guardian a letter requesting attendance, assuring her that all of her needs will be met. There are no consequences for refusal, though academy graduates sometimes help or hinder her at pivotal points in her life. Other mages find their way to the tower by chance, often through the very mystery play that Awakens them. All students are Acanthus, and there are always six; a graduate leaves as soon as a student commits to staying. No student over the age of 18 enters the academy. The average study period is five years, with no time off for holidays. Students do visit Otranto, the town, and go on field trips with the visiting teacher.

The resident instructor can belong to any Path or order, but first submits to a magical oath (see "Sanctify Oaths" on pp. 157–158 of **Mage: The Awakening**) to never divulge what goes on within the tower walls. Instructors have stayed for a year or a lifetime and have never been known to break their oaths. Past instructors tend to have extreme destinies. They earn horrible deaths or exalted stations.

Graduates are closemouthed about their studies. They make vague references to experiments in Fate and Time, and one spoke of traveling through a gate to see "all the dooms of the world." The Scuola's alumni have a reputation for being skilled curse-smiths. They also tend to be laconic, melancholy eccentrics given to bouts of bad luck. The academy's heraldic device is a Roman helmet crested by a raven. Alumni incorporate the helmet into their personal and cabal heraldry. All join the Mysterium and have reputations as excellent Censors.

The current Otranto's sanctum is at the top of the tower. Beneath that, his apprentice and the visiting teacher share an apartment. Below them, the students occupy small cells. A trap door leads to a classroom. The rest of the tower is a huge, winding staircase lined with books and artifacts. Visitors rarely see these levels because they are usually confined to a reading room on the ground floor.

Visitors are free to explore the ruins, but without Otranto's leave, they take their lives and sanity into their hands. The Scuola's master usually allows mages to roam the ground freely, as long as they stay a dozen paces way from the tower and disturb nothing.

Merit Dots (Includes Athenaeum Merit): Library 3 (Prophecies, Fortean Phenomena, Faerie), Guardian Spirit 5 (the Doom of Otranto; see below), Occultation 3, Scriptorium 5 (Depth 3, Subjects 2 — Fate, Time), Sanctum 7 (Size 4, Security 3).

The Doom of Otranto

The Scuola's guardian spirit looks like a whirlwind of dark mist, crumbling stones, black birds and giant, bloody limbs. A huge Roman helm adorned with black feathers tumbles at its heart. The Doom of Otranto is huge; the helm alone is large enough to crush a human being.

Rank: 4
Attributes: Power 12, Finesse 8, Resistance 10
Essence: 25 (25 max.)
Willpower: 22
Initiative: 20
Defense: 12
Speed: 30
Size: 20
Corpus: 30
Influence: Doom 4
Numina: Blast, Discorporation, Fetter, Gauntlet Breach

One of the academy's secrets is that the first mage to take the name "Otranto" agreed to suffer a family curse in place of the castle's nobles. This curse takes the form of a spirit called the Doom of Otranto. It agreed to obey Otranto and his successors if they agreed to die at its hand every 30 years or if he kept a "family" of nine at hand to bear the collective curse. The 18th-century Otranto chose the latter option.

The Doom is flexible enough to account for temporary vacancies in the "family," but the Doom's patience is not infinite. If there are too many or too few residents for a year and a day, the Doom of Otranto will lay waste to the academy and kill its inhabitants. For now, the Doom protects the Athenaeum and, as an avatar of doom, helps Otranto teach students the finer points of Fate. This tutelage (and subtle bond to the Doom) gives them access to the following Merit.

Merit: Graduate of Otranto (•••)

Prerequisites: Acanthus Path, Mysterium Status •, graduate of the Scuola di Otranto

Effect: Graduates of Otranto understand doom. Add +2 dice to their spellcasting pools when they cast the "The Evil Eye," "Monkey's Paw," "Forge Doom" and "Great Curse" spells. At the Storyteller's discretion, this applies to other curses as long as they use the Fate Arcanum.

The mage can voluntarily forego this benefit and avoid its associated drawback, below.

Drawback: If the mage uses this Merit's benefit, she takes a bit of the target's doom onto herself. The mage gains an extra Paradox die, even if the spell was covert and appeared plausible.

Special: This Merit is an example of the type of Merits available to students of academy Athenaea. Storytellers should invent others to reflect the unique experience of studying at a particular academy.

Vault III

History: Vault III isn't one of three Athenaea. It's the third iteration of a facility designed to study and contain a Supernal Artifact codenamed Alpha-Zebra Mainspring. Censors familiar with the Athenaeum (and there aren't many) call the Artifact AZM for short.

AZM manifested on Earth at 12:00 AM on January 1, 2000, at the so-called Oregon Vortex. A publicly known phenomenon, the Vortex distorts the perceptions of depth and distance. The conventional explanation is that the Vortex is an optical illusion caused by the misperception of a slope (the "gravity hill" effect). The Vortex is, however, a Hallow that was claimed by a Free Council cabal called the Strange Rainbow.

That New Year's Eve, the Strange Rainbow held a small celebration for area mages. At the conclusion of the countdown, the Vortex's visual distortion effect increased. A spinning, spherical object appeared at the center of the effect. The Strange Rainbow mage called Looking Glass touched the object and immediately fell dead — as did everyone with an Intimate sympathetic connection to him. There were no signs of violence. This included the rest of his cabal and several guests. In the ensuing chaos, a Mysterium guest records call Handler 1 took a risk, wrapped the object in his coat and teleported to a caucus in Seattle.

Witnesses say that Handler 1 became aggressively protective of AZM, treating it as a living thing. He used the phrase "God's Womb" in reference to the Artifact on several occasions. Handler 1 aged rapidly, and began speaking of future events in the present or past tense. Two attempts to read Handler 1's thoughts caused instant death for one mystagogue and rapid physical mutation in another. The Seattle caucus built Vault I to study AZM and Handler 1. At 12:01 AM on January 1, 2001, Handler 1, physically aged to 115, used multiple master-ranked Arcana (although that he'd been a first-degree adept at the beginning of his isolation) to overpower his guards and obtain AZM. Once he touched it, his body rapidly decayed, though he remained conscious until he turned to dust.

A special council of Censors convened in Seattle and agreed to build Vault II in an abandoned Titan I

silo near Denver. Vault II lasted for 93 days; that is, until five Scelesti attacked. Two of them were later identified as apparently revived members of Strange Rainbow. With the Censorium compromised, its appointed caretakers abandoned the site and built Vault III.

Description: Vault III's exact physical location is known to three Hierophant-Censors: one in Mumbai, one in Maseru, Lesotho, and one in Seattle. Mystagogues can only visit the facility via teleportation; aside from airshafts and wells, the Athenaeum is sealed off from the outside world. Wards within Vault III block incoming *and* outgoing scrying. A magical ban prevents Space transportation outside of a small foyer. Visitors (or assistants who teleport them) navigate via sympathetic connection alone, using a photograph of the foyer. Once they return, the staff changes the appearance of the room and sends a new photo to one of the Hierophants (who never personally visit the facility). The returnee shares his memories of the visit with a Mind mage, who promptly erases those memories from the visitor. This prevents anyone with a deep sympathetic connection from returning without top-level permission.

Visitors relieve security staff or study Alpha-Zebra Mainspring. The Athenaeum has a compact, detailed archive related to the Artifact. This includes descriptions of AZM, theories and texts on Supernal theory and occult anomalies that appear to be superficially similar. The staff also keeps a few novels and board games around. The Athenaeum is essentially a concrete and rebar box, so it's easy to get bored. Vault III's ban and a Faraday cage prevent signal access in or out.

Vault III normally keeps a staff of six: two researchers, two "porters" (mages skilled enough in the Space Arcanum to facilitate transport and sever lingering sympathetic connections) and two combat veterans to act as guards. Living quarters (including a bathroom and kitchen) are just past the entrance room on one side. The library and general purpose room come next.

A locked door leads the way to the actual vault. A short hallway leads to the vault's door, which is three feet thick and made of Adamas-steel (see **Secrets of the Ruined Temple** for information on Adamas). The Vault rests on a foundation separate from the rest of the facility and withstand earth tremors. This necessitates a corridor around the Vault's walls, which resident mages use as a running track. The hall in front of the Vault door is an attached gym. The Vault combination is given to visitors on a need-to-know basis.

Vault III's security makes it an ideal storehouse for a number of items. It currently stores three grimoires on Abyssal magic, Handler 1's ashes and several boxes of miscellaneous sensitive documents. AZM sits in a locked, Lexan box on a steel table.

Alpha-Zebra Mainspring is a semi-translucent sphere about a foot wide. AZM's color is subjective; different witnesses see different hues. Upon close examination, it's possible to see shadowy, regular movements just under the surface, as if the Artifact contains some kind of machinery. Mage Sight detects different auras on different occasions, but always reveals powerful Time and Death magic. Current research protocols forbid physical contact or "invasive" forms of magical examination.

Merit Dots (Includes Athenaeum Merit): Library 2 (Time, Death), Occultation 3, Sanctum (Size 2, Security 5 + special; see description).

What is it? Where is it?

Vault III demonstrates the lengths the Mysterium will go to safeguard (and censor) information, but this Athenaeum has also been written to give Storytellers a great deal of flexibility when it comes to using it in a chronicle.

Where is Vault III? It could be anywhere where the order could do a great deal of digging and spellcasting in peace. These isolated areas could be anywhere from local farmland to a station above the Arctic Circle. Then again, there are a lot of bomb shelters left over from the cold war. Perhaps the order just sealed off one of these. If you use this option, Vault III could sit right below busy downtown streets, but there's a chance that mundane records still list it, compromising its secrecy.

What is Alpha-Zebra Mainspring? That's up to you, the Storyteller. It could be an item of apocalyptic importance. Perhaps AZM allows true time travel or resurrects the dead. What if it's the manifestation of a hitherto unknown Watchtower? Handler 1 called it "God's Womb." Does that mean it's incubating a Supernal being? Again, that's for you to decide. AZM can be your excuse to break **Mage**'s rules a bit. Raise the dead, travel through time — but beware the consequences.

The Studious

Mysterium protocols, Athenaea and Sophiads are grand projects, but they all fit within a practical framework. The order thrives because it reconciles workaday existence with the Great Mystery. Customs, titles, positions — these are fluid things, the latest solutions to ancient needs. The order's current traditions are outgrowths of its values, protocols and guanxi. Mystagogues aspire to be flexible, but not at the expense of core principles.

The Mysterium Caucus

The caucus unites most of a Consilium's mystagogues. There are exceptions. Some scholar-mages study the Mysteries alone, in hermitages or solo quests. Cities with large mystagogue populations sometimes have two or more caucuses. They are not always likeminded groups; camps of rival scholars can be surprisingly hostile to one another. Duels have broken out over the finer points of thaumatology. The order's culture tolerates these disputes because they often lead to new ideas. The order *doesn't* approve of rivalries over sex, wealth and political influence. Knowledge is worth dying for; sex outside of specific mystical applications is just recreation.

Multiple caucuses aren't always opponents. Friendly differences can create multiple caucuses. In cities such as Boston where the order is concentrates into a few large cabals, mystagogues use these preexisting bonds, excluding non-Mystagogue cabal members during order-centric meetings. There are also cases in which the order intentionally splits local members for the sake of a common project. A "wall of silence" encourages mages on either side to find unique solutions to a common problem — or protects one side from the other's disastrous experiments.

Meetings and Agendas

A Mysterium caucus sets regular meetings at intervals convenient for all members. There's no set rule, but in North America, a meeting a month is the common custom. Mystagogues meet at the nearest Athenaeum if it's suitable. This allows members to do quick research and fact-checking over the course of the meeting.

Meetings can be rough shouting matches or formal affairs, but in most cases, the senior Curator sets the agenda and moves things along. Unless there's an urgent issue on the table, members describe what they've done to further their Sophiads. They present original research and new questions and describe anything strange they've recently witnessed. If a member's written anything down that's reasonably polished or complete, she is supposed to submit it to the Athenaeum. This way, mystagogues engaged in active magical research benefit the entire caucus. If one mystagogue learns a rote, they can all learn it. Anyone who fails to regularly contribute to local research without having a particularly good excuse loses face; she can expect her guanxi to weaken.

The most difficult part of any caucus meeting is finding a way to moderate the often divergent interests of members. Acquisitors are usually more interested in describing what they've found than in listening to a Savant's theories about spirit metabolism. Mysterium meetings tend to run on, combining the worst features of university department meetings and volunteer boards. Mystagogues measure their clout by the friends they keep, so they can usually grit their teeth through a boring speech if it means they can count on the speaker's help. One way to keep discussion on track is to focus on the Athenaeum. It's the caucus's chief status symbol, so members are usually eager to plan improvements. This encourages further research and practical work, since the caucus needs money and good planning to make the best of its Athenaeum.

Politics and Censorship

Mystagogues also discuss the social health of the Consilium. They note bad bargains, failed apprenticeships and other protocol violations. The Curator notes these situations and discusses his plans to correct them. He might coordinate his efforts with other members to Interdict protocol violators, or he could just speak to Ruling Council members about the problem. Curators are expected to have good, extensive guanxi throughout the Consilium, but they'll sometimes ask another mystagogue to take care of a particular political issue. Order mages are quite conscious that this kind of friendly networking could be misconstrued as selfish politicking (and to be honest, it sometimes is just that), and do most of their business through private, informal meetings. In them, the mystagogue comes to the table offering services, knowledge (the Curator may authorize an agent to offer something from the Athenaeum) and a quiet suggestion that he can use his guanxi for or against the person he's talking to. A mystagogue hates challenging anyone to the Duel Arcane himself, but is smart enough to get someone else to do it for him instead.

Censorship is the most delicate of all political maneuvers. There's nothing mages hate more than being told that they can't handle a particular secret. A Censor has to deal with the "information wants to be free" prattle of Libertines and the knowledge-destroying ethos of the Guardians of the Veil, all the while collecting, suppressing and storing everything from cursed body parts to new, potent rotes. And if the secret has already made the rounds through a few local mages, it's up to the Censor to use bribery, Mind magic and occasional murder to preserve the area's magical hygiene. If this proves to be a major undertaking, a Censor discreetly recruits local mystagogues to help him. Even when a team is on the job, the order prefers to isolate public responsibility to one mage, minimizing damage to the caucus's reputation.

Positions

The ultimate measure of a mystagogue's status is her rank within the Atlantean Mystery, but the order doesn't directly tie rank to day-to-day responsibilities. For one thing, each level have its own signs and secrets. Acknowledging them in everyday life would cheapen them and risk exposing them to lesser initiates and outsiders. Initiation doesn't take specialized knowledge into account. Even a Hierophant isn't good at everything.

Still, if all else is equal and it boils down to a *dadouchos* or a mere *neokoros*, the *dadouchos* gets the job. Mystery initiation *does* stand for something. It adds another way to judge a mystagogue beyond her (often considerable) verbal and written cleverness. Magic is the intellectual challenge of a lifetime, but it's *also* wordless understanding, living metaphor and Supernal enlightenment.

The positions below have listed Mysterium Status levels, but these aren't hard-and-fast requirements. There's no minimum or maximum Status for any position, but there are strong social customs surrounding them. Below the listed Status, mages are considered to be "junior" or "temporary" occupants of a post, fit to be replaced as soon as a better candidate comes along. To garner the full respect of the position, a mage should have one dot of Status higher than the listed degree. Many mystagogues don't have a formal position at all; they do what the situation demands.

A position's significance varies from place to place. In Chicago, being Censor is a thankless job that gets passed to whoever's powerful and unpopular enough to merit it. In Paris, a Censor is *Le Chevalier de Livre Noir*, a "Knight of the Black Book" who has a unique Mystery initiation and a ceremonial mace of office. If the order's had a continuous presence in a city for at least 200 years, it usually gives some kind of occult ceremony to each position, but in modern times, there's been a movement to strip away these rituals — usually by those who don't partake in the duties the ceremonies invest.

Acquisitor (Status •)

To outsiders, Acquisitors should have the most popular position in the order. They're adventurers who travel around the world, rappel into tombs, avoid arcane traps and recover — or steal — wonders from their tombs and display cases. They combine brains and brawn into one charismatic package: Indiana Jones or Doc Savage for the Awakened. Good Acquisitors *do* have the whole package. They need to be tough enough to take a bullet or a Doberman bite in the leg and keep on running. They need to be charming enough to talk their way past guards and mob bosses and smart enough to recognize a lethal Atlantean rune, a hidden motion sensor or a tail from Interpol.

Acquisitor is the low rung on the Mysterium status ladder because Acquisitors do dangerous, dirty work. The job has an incredible burnout rate. Acquisitors have to maintain multiple identities to cross borders and ingratiate themselves with the illegal antiquities trade. Trespassing and theft are routine. Violence is rare but especially brutal, as nobody lets someone off with a beating for stealing a 6,000-year-old gold amulet. The trade in illicit antiquities is second only to the drug trade in terms of worldwide profit, and they are often linked. An Acquisitor's nemesis is less likely to be a rival scholar than a paranoid cocaine magnate. After a few years, these mages are usually happy to move on to other responsibilities.

The Acquisitor's ideal background doesn't help his status. The best Acquisitors were often thieves, failed academics and corrupt antiquities dealers before they Awakened. Joining the Mysterium redeems them after a fashion, but the order has a large number of respectable antiquarians who bear grudges against these crooks.

An Acquisitor's work has two simple goals. First: Find occult lore and artifacts that aren't in reputable, Awakened hands and bring them to an Athenaeum. Second: Explore secret places and investigate strange phenomena. There's a misconception that this always involves firsthand exploration, but just as all

mystagogues, Acquisitors know the value of guanxi. If they can buy artifacts, they will. If another cabal's visited an Atlantean ruin, they'll trade favors for the information. These indirect means rarely suffice for the Acquisitor's entire tenure. Eventually, she has to work in person. This is especially true when it comes to ruins and site-based phenomena. Secondhand accounts can't necessarily be trusted.

Acquisitors have a rule among themselves that governs whose Athenaeum gets a particular item. This is formally called the Rule of Occult Salvage — but it's irreverently known as "first dibs." The first mystagogue to identify a target for acquisition chooses its destination. She keeps this right for as long as it takes to attempt the acquisition once. If she fails, the right falls on the next Acquisitor to discover the target, on down until it comes back to the first mage. The order expects Acquisitors to cooperate, even when one of them strongly feels that the Rule would send the prize to the wrong Athenaeum. Unscrupulous Acquisitors have sabotaged colleagues' missions so that they can claim the prize for themselves. It's a major breach of trust, but it does happen.

Acquisitor Path Roles

Acanthus: Acanthus specialize in "naturally" reaching their objective by being in the right place at the right time. They make excellent smugglers because they always seem to avoid random searches and patrols. These mages prefer stealth and anonymity. They tend to be too eccentric for social occasions and don't like to apply social or physical force.

Mastigos: Mastigos find it easy to ingratiate themselves with thieves, collectors and just about anybody else who can help them to the target. But Mastigos only need others as far as they can point out a location, after which Mastigos's command of Space (and the Path's legendary tendency toward callousness) prompts them to drop their "friends."

Moros: Ancient stones and the dead themselves talk to a Moros, revealing a sacred site's history from a few bones and pottery shards. Moros often bribe their way past social impediments with a little alchemy. Some Moros even switch target artifacts with perfect material duplicates. The only thing missing is the magic, and Sleepers don't care about that anyway.

Obrimos: When things get a little hairy on the field, an Obrimos Acquisitor is in the best position to get out alive. Forces magic does more than injure or shield. It helps one of the Aether's chosen survive without a fire in the high Arctic and bound across rough terrain. If he has to fight his way out, few can stand up against his destructive ability and divinely-inspired conviction.

Thyrsus: Thyrsus mages can survive incredible hardship. Life-induced vigor and a strong bond with nature helps them track down mystic sites in deserts, forests and even underwater. A Thyrsus examines the local Shadow for strange resonance and commands the spirits to scout sites of interest. Thyrsus prefer to work alone; their companions just don't have the fortitude and sensitivity for his brand of "extreme archaeomancy."

Censor (Status ●)

Censors are the most hated branch of the order. They're often compared to Guardians of the Veil, but Censors themselves believe that if anything, they save the Awakened from Guardian excesses. The Mysterium doesn't believe that there are secrets that the Awakened shouldn't know, but that there are things that should stay hidden until they're truly needed. Censors keep the other orders from flagrantly abusing magic by holding onto its most extreme forms until the time is right. Magic that calls upon the Abyss is unjustified almost all the time, but it's conceivable that acamoth investments or controlled Befouling (see **Tome of the Mysteries**, pp. 181–182) could tip the balance in situations that threaten an entire Consilium.

The nature of dangerous secrets means that individual mages do *not* have the right to make these judgment calls alone. They should use this knowledge only for the good of a community, so it stands to reason that the community should decide when and how the Awakened use Exarchs' Artifacts, Abyssal magic, vampire occultists and other volatile resources. In an ideal world, the Mysterium would keep an open catalog of these secrets; the Consilium could draw on them at times of need, wisely debating the consequences. Unfortunately, the Mysterium's ethos just hasn't caught on widely enough to make this a safe, practical option.

Censors tend to have aggressive personalities. They know that other mages don't like Censors and don't try to make friends with anyone who obviously rejects their agenda. Ironically, this makes Censors some of the most charismatic figures in the order. Other mystagogues, ever mindful of guanxi, cultivate an artificially humble, non-confrontational attitude. Censors have nothing to lose by being bombastic straight shooters. Nevertheless, when a Censor does form guanxi with another mage, the Censor tends to make the most of the relationship, pumping contacts for rumors and favors. When this kind of passive intelligence doesn't work, he does a little legwork and gets in mages' faces. If that means he has to dole out a beating or fight a duel, he'll do it. Censors are the closest thing the order has to a formal security force. Caucuses either teach Censors how to fight or select battle-hardened mages to fill the position. Acquisitors often move on to Censorship positions because the jobs require similar skills.

But a Censor isn't just an extroverted thug. It's up to her to assess a magical item, spell or occult secret's possible dangers. Censors need a diverse occult education to identify the significance of potential targets. In a city rife with vampires, Censors need to know about the powers and vulnerabilities of vampire magic in case a mage decides to trade favors with the undead. Censors also keep in touch with local Curators, as their Athenaea ultimately store confiscated items.

Censor Path Roles

Acanthus: Acanthus excel at predicting the consequences of forbidden knowledge. A mage who wants to summon a major goetic demon can argue up and down that he can handle it, but an Arcadian mage has already seen that mage's greed consume him. An Acanthus fighting Censor often goes for spell-enhanced gunplay. Time and Space give her the fastest draw and the luckiest shot.

Mastigos: Mastigos are the most thorough Censors. Space-driven thievery and invasive Mind magic make it seem as if a forbidden thing never existed. Many exemplify the stereotype of the Censor as "magnificent bastard," but when it comes to the job, they do their best not to make an impression at all.

Moros: Anything that disturbs the dead raises an alarm for any Censor, but a Moros can study the problem firsthand. Ambition's as mortal as flesh, so a Moros is rarely swayed by mages who would put their own projects before the safety of a Consilium. Death turns ghosts and darkness into his allies. Mages are hard to bribe with gold, but a Moros can use Matter to break through walls and locks that bar the way to his target.

Obrimos: Obrimos Prime magic measures dangerous supernatural power, but the rest depends on the mage's commitment — and Obrimos are rarely lacking. They bring their religious fervor to the task and don't let anything stand in their way. Forces turns devotion into a veritable battering ram, blasting through enemies to the object's destined Athenaeum. Obrimos are capable of subtlety as well; warped light and illusions misdirect anyone who would seek out profane knowledge.

Thyrsus: Nobody delivers a back-alley beating like a Thyrsus on a Life magic power trip. Awakening doesn't render anyone immune to that kind of crude persuasion. Similar to Moros, Thyrsus can call on invisible allies, but this is a riskier gambit. Ghosts achieve a kind of stasis in death, but spirits are rest-

less and eager to feed from the energies of a situation. Just as a Thyrsus Acquisitor, a Shaman-Censor can track spiritual dangers to the most remote places on the globe.

Savant (Status ●●)

Savants hold the order's most ancient office. Legends say that the first Savants memorized Atlantean lore so that future generations would be able to learn the secrets of magic. Savants were persecuted by barbarians and monsters. Mages' enemies gloried in the downfall of the Awakened City and wished to keep its inheritors from ever reclaiming the Art's power. Throughout history, Savants have always saved knowledge from those who would destroy it. In China, Savants saved knowledge that would have been destroyed by the Qin emperor. In Europe and the Middle East, they memorized and copied Greek and Roman teachings. In North America, indigenous Savants resisted forced cultural assimilation. They kept old languages, stories and wisdom-teachings alive.

A modern Savant devotes himself to two fields: one occult, one worldly. A Savant connects these subjects with his own theories and meditations. One Savant devotes herself to ecology and werewolves. Through ecology's lens, werewolves are apex predators that affect human and spirit populations. Viewed through werewolf teratology, ecology is the visible manifestation of spiritual forces; Shadow politics, powers and mythic quests influence nature as often as genetics.

Savants are expected to record their lore to the best of their ability, but their primary purpose is to simply *know* it. Savants memorize everything, just in case their notes burn. Ideally, if every Athenaeum fell to the order's enemies, the order's Savants would reconstruct the Athenaea's contents from memory. Not everyone has the mental discipline (or the Eidetic Memory Merit) for the task.

These days, the Mysterium's holdings are too diverse and scattered to make this a realistic goal, but the order's mages still view Savants as the ultimate defense against persecution. In some cities, Savants still conceal their expertise, but most now discuss their studies openly, serving the order in the same fashion as Sleepers' professors. Savants are important assets; their knowledge can be traded to other mages for favors. Despite a common duty, Savants are a diverse lot. Some live cloistered lives, but just as many lead adventurous lives for the sake of original research.

Savant Path Roles

Acanthus: Acanthus Savants usually specialize in history and prophecy. They tend to produce bizarre writings on the nature of time and destiny. Time is a river with many branches; the Fate Arcanum senses and directs the strength of its flow. A Savant attuned to Arcadia accepts contradictions as a matter of course, following destiny's flow down many lines. He discovers a greater truth by contemplating the common points between many possibilities.

Mastigos: Mastigos explore extremities of consciousness: limits that mirror the ends of Space. Reality breaks down here, but it isn't an empty realm. Demons dwell in these distant physical and psychic dimensions. Mastigos Savants are the best equipped to study them. Their notes are rich in strange sigils and incantations. These represent emotional states, visualizations and impossible geometries. Outside of demonology, Mastigos are excellent teratologists of all kinds thanks to their ability to study a subject without being physically present.

Moros: Savants of the Leaden Coin are naturally suited to necromancy and alchemy of all kinds, including methods practiced outside the realm of Awakened magic. Moros Savants are also excellent historians and archeologists. Ancient ghosts tend to frame their stories around the passions that barred them from passing on, but artifacts provide more objective information. An artifact's shape and material composition contains a surprising amount of information about the society that created it.

Obrimos: Obrimos Savants bind truth as readily as lightning and Mana. They concentrate on the present, yoking the chaos of new information to a strong academic thesis. Many Obrimos believe that there's a divine plan behind all things. They balance curiosity with a desire to influence events in favor of their agendas.

Thyrsus: Thyrsus ecologists, biologists and naturalists are famous for their contributions to Mysterium knowledge. Although they compose spirit bestiaries regularly, Thyrsus Savants warn students that spirits change their outer forms on a whim. Descriptions only point the way to a spirit's true nature — and when the Shadow courses with new resonance, even that can shift.

Curator (Status ●●●)

Curators are usually the highest-ranked members of a Mysterium caucus. A Curator's official duty is to protect, enhance and organize the local Athenaeum. Her unofficial duties include promoting Mysterium values, protecting the order's political interests and approving major bargains between mystagogues and outsiders.

There can be several Curators in a single caucus, but this isn't common except in regions where the order is especially prominent. In these cases, the Curator with the highest Mysterium Status assigns her inferiors particular duties. In some cases, the head Curator isn't the most prominent Mysterium mage in the Consilium; she allows a colleague to take center stage.

A Curator needs to be a skilled manager. She isn't necessarily the most learned mage (though she's no slouch), but she knows how to direct others' expertise for the good of the order. She also needs enough money to pay for the Athenaeum's space and security. Censors determine whether or not Athenaeum content needs to be locked away indefinitely, but Curators decide who can see or borrow anything else. Curators often master the skills of mundane curators and librarians, but some believe that an Athenaeum should be *less* organized than Sleeper institutions. Some Curators organize the space using personal intuition so that the Athenaeum reflects their personalities. This also has the advantage of making a particular item difficult to find without their permission.

Curators approach politics from the standpoint of a learned advisor. They avoid overt power plays in favor of guanxi-based bonds. To learn a Curator's stance, examine her friendships. A Curator who favors a particular candidate for Hierarch will make friends with all contenders — but she'll accompany her choice on social occasions. Such a Curator will serve as a go-between and press for a state of affairs in which each hopeful gains a measure of respect from the rest. The Curator's resources let her smooth proceedings with bribes: lore and services from the entire caucus.

When emergencies arise, it's up to the Curator to pull the caucus together. Guanxi binds the order, but there are times when friendship and face don't cut it; somebody needs to give orders and expect them to be obeyed. In these cases, Mystery rank is the difference between quick obedience and dithering debate. A dadouchos needs to argue for her plan; a Hierophant and known Arcana master can send Censors to their deaths. The Mysterium will never match the military might, duplicity or fanaticism of other orders, but there's a lot to be said for knowledge and raw intelligence. Ideal Curators bring out the best in others and solve problems with the talent they have on hand.

Curator Path Roles

Acanthus: An Acanthus-run Athenaeum looks like a stereotypical wizard's haven. It's dusty, strewn with strange objects and has little in the way of a discernable organization. Nevertheless, the Watchtower of the Lunargent Thorn gives the Acanthus the luck they need to snatch an item in an instant. Politically speaking, Acanthus Curators favor unstable, fluid relationships. Even their strongest guanxi is flavored with a bit of unpredictability. These apparent whims look pointless, but eventually come around to serve the caucus's goals.

Mastigos: Mastigos direct caucuses with a strong hand. They're efficient managers, able to direct talent to its best end. The Path of Scourging produces iron-willed, upright leaders. Their Athenaea are laid out neatly and logically, but in a way that expresses the emotional significance of various topics. A great window of beaten gold accents a library of solar gods, while cramped spaces, sharp metal corners and a maze of shelves hold the lore of Pandemonium.

Moros: Moros Curators build sturdy Athenaea. They appreciate the value of Matter magic when it comes to preserving rare books and artifacts. They also tend to collect and preserve ghostly fetters. The dead serve the Curator, or they're his prisoner, bound to the Athenaeum so that they can't trouble the living. Moros Curators have a reputation for being blunt politicians, if a touch impatient. Archives are for the ages, but governments are merely mortal.

Obrimos: Obrimos Curators sometimes treat the protocols like holy writ. They favor discipline in the caucus, but don't necessarily hold the other orders up to that standard. It all depends on whether the Curator believes that her order is an exclusive priesthood or a society of learned friends who just spread the word among other mages. Obrimos Athenaea are temples to wisdom; many sit atop Hallows and occupy Sleepers' houses of worship. When necessary, Obrimos Curators lead the last stand to defend their Athenaea, marshalling destructive magic and the will to give their lives for their archives.

Thyrsus: A Shaman's social calling suits the role of Curator. Many Thyrsus are caucus doctors and spiritual healers. Spirit magic instills a sharp awareness of events that is invisible to other mages. Thyrsus use this knowledge to preserve the balance between the Shadow Realm and the material realm. A Thyrsus-led Athenaeum is a formidable archive of spirit lore but also grounds Mysterium esoterica in the lessons of the natural world. This Athenaeum is to be a vine-covered, vital place, filled with facilities designed to train the body along with the mind. Some Thyrsus Athenaea are natural spaces, such as sacred groves and mountain caves.

Schisms and Heresies

As befits an organization committed to seeking knowledge, the Mysterium tolerates a wide diversity of opinion. As long as members are committed to upholding the protocols and journeying along the Sophiad, they can find a place in the order. Few mystagogues ever feel the need to reject the order's loose rules. The exceptions are primarily split between political radicals and mages who follow their intellectual passions beyond the order's ethical barriers.

Defections

The Mysterium suffers from more defections than any other order. Errant mystagogues rarely feel as if the order is oppressing them. In fact, many would never leave a more restrictive order. Adamantine Arrows have their protectorates and Guardians of the Veil have secret laws and tenets, but the Mysterium simply commands its own to know themselves, learn the secrets of the cosmos and share their discoveries within the bounds of propriety. Some mages discover that the taste of freedom is too tempting to leaven with responsibility. Others desire more external discipline. They want to be a part of a powerful hierarchy in which their accomplishments earn objective rewards. A few defectors learn some terrible secret about the Abyss or the soul that compels them to either practice forbidden magic or join an organization that will take a strong stand against it.

Defection to the Free Council

The dawn of the Free Council touched off serious upheaval within the Mysterium's ranks. The order charged mystagogues to study anything that could inspire magical wisdom, but always returned to Atlantis to draw knowledge together into an ur-tradition. Over the centuries, the Mysterium studied dozens of myths, artifacts and new technologies. It unearthed Atlantean ruins with several different architectural styles and so many different artifacts that even the experts didn't know whether they all hailed from some Awakened city. After thousands of years of continuous study, mystagogues had to admit that they had no idea what Atlantis might have been like.

To a frustrated segment of the order, the Free Council was a sword through the Gordian Knot of Atlantean scholarship. Why bring it all back to a mythic city? Study magic in there here and now! Many mystagogues were more confident in exoteric fields than Atlantean lore. The Libertines offered these mystagogues a way to study magic without adulterating studies that they had grown to love.

Hand in hand with these defectors went mystagogues who chafed at censorship and guanxi. Mostly *neokoroi*, they felt cut out of the order's political process. They were tired of Censors locking up their work. Open Lorehouses and promises of democracy turned them into Libertines. Many mystagogues took their research with them, giving the Lorehouse system a tremendous boost during the Free Council's formative years.

The Free Council is still one of the chief destinations for mages who leave the Mysterium. The two orders' interest in intellectual exploration eases transitions, but the Libertines have few friends among elder mystagogues.

Defection to the Guardians of the Veil

After the Free Council, defectors are most likely to join the Guardians of the Veil — or at least try. The Guardians have intense, difficult initiation rites and do not offer them to mages from another order unless the Guardians are absolutely sure of the turncoat's new loyalties. The Eyes of the Dragon know how to exploit dissatisfied mystagogues without letting them beyond the Veils. A loyal agent with the right character can switch orders, but the Guardians try to keep the situation under wraps. A secret Guardian can infiltrate the Mysterium for years, destroying dangerous knowledge, filling Athenaea with nonsense and twisting the local caucus's activities to fit a spymaster's agenda.

Defectors usually approach the Guardians of the Veil if the mystagogues feel the Mysterium's gone soft on security. Perhaps the traitor witnessed his caucus trade a dangerous artifact to untrustworthy

mages or discovered a disgusting grimoire that he thinks should be destroyed. Former mystagogues are especially skilled at directing Guardian Labyrinths and assessing supernatural threats.

Defection and Corruption

An Athenaeum is a dangerous place. One Curator said, "Don't just think of it as a museum or a library. It's a biological weapons lab, a gun safe and a bank, too." Trusted members of the order have access to some of the most dangerous secrets in the world. Abyssal spells, channels to the Exarchs and dehumanizing soulcrafting techniques have found their way into many Athenaea. Censors and Curators make mistakes, letting the wrong mages see the wrong things. Some Censors and Curators miss magical compulsions and curses, or they confuse a student's amoral ambitions for innocent curiosity. A Left-Handed Legacy Attainment promises mastery over a spirit or the ability to cheat death; a spell that calls the Exarchs tempts an arrogant scholar to confront them.

Order mages don't like to talk about it, but Censors sometimes have to hunt down other mystagogues. If a mystagogue joins the Scelesti or becomes a puppet of the Exarchs, it's a Censor's job is to redeem the errant member if she can, kill him if she must and, above all, keep it quiet.

The Jnanamukti Heresy

The order doesn't have many heresies. It has eccentrics, radicals and antisocial members, but it takes exceptional effort to construct an ideology that offends the majority of the Mysterium *and* doesn't find its best expression in another order. Most of these troublesome mages find their way to the Free Council, but a few espouse agendas that cannot find any other harbor. Hierophants usually urge mystagogues not to

Daimonomica

A daimonomicon is a magical manual that can initiate a mage into a Legacy. Daimonomica are rare; most Legacy teachers prefer to train students personally and reap the benefits of the metaphysical bond (in game terms, the student's experience tithe). A benevolent teacher occasionally creates a daimonomicon to ensure her Legacy's survival, but it's far more common for Scelesti and other Left-Handed teachers to proselytize through the medium. The Abyss's servants sometimes enchant daimonomica with potent Mind spells that compel mages to study the text. Other Legacies are said to originate with the Exarchs; their books turn readers into slaves and Seer of the Throne quislings.

Regardless of Legacy, the Mysterium consigns almost every daimonomicon to the Censorium. This honors the rights of respectable Legacy teachers (who usually frown upon anyone learning the Legacy outside of the student-teacher bond) and bars mages from the lure of tainted power. Censorship isn't totally foolproof, though, and mystagogues have learned secretly learned forbidden Attainments before.

There are several types of daimonomica. The most common use a variant of the "Inscribe Grimoire" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 220–221). This spell requires five dots of Death, Mind or Spirit in addition to the spell's normal Prime requirement. Otherwise, a reader might superficially understand the daimonomicon but can't use it to shape his soul. Each Attainment adds to the target number as if it's a rote one dot higher than the Attainment's rank (the third Attainment is treated as a four-dot rote). Naturally, mages may not inscribe Attainments they don't know. Add 10 to the success threshold if the daimonomicon initiates readers into the Legacy's primary Arcanum. The author can spread the Legacy teachings out over multiple daimonomica, but the volume that holds the first Attainment must also include the new primary Arcanum. Higher Attainment works cannot be used by mages who haven't learned the Legacy's lesser Attainments.

Mages who study from these daimonomica still have to meet the Legacy's normal prerequisites, both to join the Legacy at all and to learn each Attainment. Instead of paying an experience tithe, students pay 10 experience points for each Attainment. The first Attainment includes initiation into the Legacy's primary Arcanum.

Other daimonomica use less conventional methods, from summoning up entities to teach the Legacy to tying the mage's soul to that of a living Legacy master. Some of these *do* use standard experience tithes. This raises the question of who (or what) benefits from these spiritual payments.

communicate with these groups and send a few angry Censors for good measure. But, like a bad penny, a few of these factions refuse to die. The Jnanamukti is one of them.

It began as a society of Mysterium mages with a deep interest in theosophy. In 1929, members disseminated a controversial work called *The Three Enemies* throughout the order. Mystagogues believe that the faction reacted to the actions of the theosophical messiah, Jiddu Krishnamurti, a year before. Krishnamurti renounced the mantle of "World Teacher," and shattered a pillar of theosophical belief.

The Jnanamukti ("Fist of Wisdom") had been committed to synthesizing a universal philosophy and religion from theosophy and other multicultural sources in the belief that truly Atlantean teachings would reveal themselves in the common elements of many belief systems. The call to arms in *The Three Enemies* represented a radical reversal. The Jnanamukti now supported an apocalyptic agenda, devoted to nothing less than the downfall of Quiescent civilization. They said that worldly culture was the metaphysical enemy of truth.

In the new scheme, Sleeping humanity didn't really remember higher knowledge — they were actively responsible for the lowly state of magic. The Supernal sympathy of mundane legendry was nothing more than a metaphysical waste product, left behind after Sleepers devoured genuine truth and spat out mythic waste. By destroying Sleepers' achievements and bringing them under the firm rule of the Awakened, the Mysterium could master Atlantean magic without being "infected" by the Lie. *The Three Enemies*' titular targets were the following:

Sleeper Civilization: Mages should undermine all Sleeper belief systems and institutions to bring about an age of nihilism and anarchy, in which humanity cannot survive without Awakened intervention. To receive salvation, Sleepers should worship the Supernal Realms and make mages the Sleepers' sole priesthood.

Sleeper Technology: All mundane technologies above the level of simple, human-powered machines make the Lie manifest. Deceptive physical laws replace the true principles of Supernal reality. Mages should destroy factories and universities to being the world to a common Neolithic technological base.

The Fallen Supernatural: Any supernatural being or phenomenon that has no direct Supernal origin is a foot soldier in the service of the Lie and is a competitor for ideological mastery of the world. Mages should destroy such beings wherever they're found.

The Three Enemies exhorts mages to begin a concurrent program of self-purification while they go about the task of destroying all barriers to truth. All mages have been corrupted by exposure to the Lie and should divest themselves of culturally imposed habits. The Jnanamukti suggested that mages invent a language derived from the High Speech until they could discover the full Atlantean lexicon. They should even retrain their body language to conform to the examples of mudras.

The Jnanamukti's recipe for political action never gained wide acceptance, but it did inspire mystagogues from the era to experiment with invented languages and traditions. The society itself carried out several

The Daksha and the Jnanamukti

More than ever, modern mystagogues suspect that the Jnanamukti are a political wing or offshoot of the Daksha Legacy (see **Legacies: The Sublime**, pp. 23–32). Both groups originated with Western interpretations of Indian religion. Both advocate Awakened supremacy and both supported the Nazis during the Second World War, albeit under slightly different premises. The Daksha supported the Third Reich on the basis of outright racism, while the Jnanamukti described it as one step toward destroying Sleeper civilization. Their eschatological tendencies complement each other. Daksha talk about a time when Atlantis will rise from the waves, while Jnanamukti push mages to violently rebuild an Awakened state. Besides, it just seems fitting that the Legacy would recruit a gang of violent dupes to do its dirty work.

These rumors have picked up steam in large part because younger members of the Mysterium have little use for the Daksha. The Legacy takes more than it gives the order and is an ideological embarrassment, to boot. The Daksha have never refuted or denied the allegation, either, treating the affair with their usual lofty contempt. Daksha forge strong guanxi (with magically enhanced sex, if the rumors are to be believed) with influential mages, which keeps them from falling out of favor.

violent attacks. Many supported home rule efforts in India, hoping to destroy the British Empire before turning on India and eradicating its culture. The movement had passed underground by the Second World War, but anonymous letters occasionally surfaced that expressed approval for Soviet and Nazi atrocities. The authors made it very clear that they weren't biased against the victims per se, but merely wanted it to be the first steps of a culture-annihilating movement that would claim the perpetrators as well as the victims.

No prominent mystagogue has ever supported the Jnanamukti, but the modern sect still seems to recruit members. In 2004, a Jnanamukti communiqué spoke approvingly of the invasion of Iraq, saving special praise for the destruction of large parts of Babylon and the loss of hundreds of Iraqi artifacts from state museums. Ironically, modern Jnanamukti propaganda refers to Sleeper culture as a "set of poisonous memes": a concept pioneered by mundane social scientists. The group hasn't taken credit for direct action in years, but mages strongly suspect that the Jnanamukti support terror and genocide campaigns around the world.

Ceremonial Mysteries

The Mysterium upholds a vast, complex occult tradition. The order has as many faces as the world's cultures, linked by common values and secret teachings. Mystagogues never reject the path of knowledge. The Sophiad is a mage's natural journey and the Corpus Mysteriorum is the path and end. The order supports variety to the point of contradiction. This kind of flexibility is a prerequisite to the pursuit of true knowledge.

The Mysterium doesn't cultivate a strict hierarchy or an unquestioned unity of purpose. The Atlantean Mystery has its degrees, but they don't dominate the order as much as bring them back to the goal of enlightenment. Mystagogues think, hypothesize, argue, meditate and study, producing magical traditions of remarkable depth and power. The order believes that magic is a form of knowing that is one with its object, but it is one thing to intellectually grasp the principle and another to feel it in one's soul. Only absolute understanding — if only for a moment — can merge a soul to a spell, and only that transformed soul can bridge the Abyss to draw down power. This suffices for most spells, but mystagogues know that symbols can expand this understanding beyond mere Imago and occult formulae. Mythic symbols connect mages to the emotional content of a spell. Supernal fire is more than agitated molecules. It is radiant joy and consuming rage: fragments of feeling from the mind of the Corpus Mysteriorum.

Just as all mages, mystagogues use tools and mudras to enhance the power of their spells. Chapter Five details these practices. Mysterium mages invent and refine these practices based on age-old truths, including the Supernal implications of worldly myths and legends. These teachings complete the order's understanding; magic becomes a divine Mystery instead of a mechanical form of visualization.

Gods of Knowledge

Mysterium mages seek out Supernal echoes in cultures that revere learning, but never at the expense of other traditions. All myths are worthy of study, but some reflect the order's values especially strongly. These traditions emphasize an academic and meditative path to power.

The Aether (Obrimos): Obrimos study belief systems that connect knowledge to a divine source. Kaballah and Gematria are two Jewish traditions favored by these mystagogues, either within the religion or through the Western Hermetic Tradition. The ideal rabbi — teacher, intellectual and spiritual advisor — is a powerful, appealing image. A Hermetic Obrimos invokes the will of God with secret symbols. Angelic languages and holy sigils call the Aether down. In Asia, Brahmin practices call to the Obrimos. The Vedas demonstrate that God can manifest through countless intermediary deities and can be called through medicine, astrology and verbal formulae.

Arcadia (Acanthus): Authentic information about ancient Druidism is incredibly difficult to come by, but Acanthus mages have kept enough of it alive to harvest its power. Druids preserved the traditional knowledge they learned over a 20-year course of study. Bards and their ilk succeeded the Druidic tradition, but their secrets had no less depth. Druidic and Bardic Acanthus emphasize oral traditions; their Athenaea tend to be little more than groves, stones and carvings that aid memory and certain astronomical calculations. Acanthus also use traditional Chinese religion in their spells. They especially respect Kui Xing, God of Examinations: an ugly dwarf who rose to greatness through sheer intelligence. Chinese religion links

natural phenomena to bureaucratic mandates, making it a natural avenue for intellectual miracle-workers.

Pandemonium (Mastigos): Tibetan Buddhism includes a vast corpus of medical, psychological and supernatural knowledge. The tradition balances mystical initiation with deep academic study. Mastigos mages are best able to survive contact with the tradition's psychic gods and demons. These mages agree with the Buddhist theory that these peaceful and wrathful deities are manifestations of psychological states. Other traditions also discuss a fearful gap between knowledge and enlightenment, including Aleister Crowley's Thelema and Babylonian rites. The god Lahmu and his sister Lahamu are favored patrons because they're the gatekeepers of Tiamat: in Mysterium lore, a monstrous aspect of the Corpus Mysteriorum.

The Primal Wild (Thyrsus): Thyrsus mages follow the so-called Stone Book: a repository of knowledge learned through ecstatic, shamanic methods. The Shaman's job is to quest beyond mundane reality to find secrets that benefit her people. Despite shamanic stereotypes, Thyrsus mystagogues find merit in the traditions of technologically advanced, literate cultures. Many Thyrsus participated in Victorian Spiritualism. Modern successors use trance channeling and automatic writing to learn the secrets of the Shadow. The Path's modern rites do not, however, alienate them from the most ancient myths. Australian aboriginal traditions exemplify the old Thyrsus approach to knowledge. Invisible patterns arise from the world to reveal secrets to an adept. Each place has a patron and a sign to show him. Learned aboriginals transcribe their visions into a *tjuringa*, whose lines mirror those hidden patterns. Thyrsus around the world use similar spirals and lines to turn the Earth's wisdom-lines into a true occult record.

Stygia (Moros): Stygia is the fortress of the dead; its bone and adamantine walls don't readily admit knowledge seekers. To find her way through its Watchtower, a Moros needs strong patrons and precise descriptions of worlds beyond the grave. Etruscan magic provides this precision, combining Greek mythology with structured rituals for building tombs, appeasing the dead and enumerating the demons of the nether-realms. Charun, the mallet-wielding devil-god, is a popular patron, as is Culsans, two-faced lord of the gates of death. The Etruscans had gods to watch over nearly every aspect of death, from Mania, goddess of ghosts, to the Lasa who protect graves. Stygians also study Egyptian writings on death and alchemy. Their spells invoke Thoth, Ptah and Osiris, among others.

Oblations

To the Mysterium, power is synonymous with understanding. The order's oblations symbolize knowledge

and learning. Mana is a literal "spark of inspiration." Mystagogues induce these epiphanies with signs of study and revelation. All oblations hold a number of symbols in common, but recognize that inspiration is a very personal thing. Mysterium oblations bridge the gap between the subject and object, forging an individual path to wisdom. Some mages integrate oblations into their everyday lives, copying texts to preserve than *and* to meditate on the Supernal source of their contents.

The following symbols are often used in Mysterium oblations. In addition, they play a part in many of the order's high rituals. If you use the spell factors outlined in **Tome of the Mysteries** (pp. 76–83), these symbols (and/or oblation actions) can be used to add a +1 or +2 factor bonus to the casting of certain rotes. Note that the listed oblations aren't the only ones associated with each symbol. Storytellers should encourage players to invent oblations that give their characters a distinctive magical style.

Art

Drawings, paintings and sculptures unify dedicated practice and spontaneous inspiration to transmit a message or emotion. This reflects the order's occult beliefs, where study and revelation go hand in hand. Some works of art use hidden geometry and symbolism to reveal a hidden truth or guarantee the work's beauty. Mysterium artwork employs the golden ratio and other forms of "divine proportion" that are mathematically interesting and aesthetically pleasing. Occult symbols, gods and mystical allegories work their way into mystagogue work as well.

Oblations: Creating art, restoring art, contemplating a beautiful or emotionally powerful artwork, deciphering the hidden symbols in an artwork, learning the specific techniques and materials used by a skilled artist.

Books

Books are the order's primary occult tools. They're used in oblations, ritual magic and Mystery rites. Most mystagogues are devoted bibliophiles. The few exceptions follow oral traditions and concentrate on spoken and musical oblations instead. A book represents the order, its mission to preserve knowledge and the knowledge itself. Remember, though, that even though knowledge is sacred, some knowledge is more sacred than others. A trashy paperback doesn't pack the same Supernal power as an ancient grimoire. Pop culture is a quick blip on the world's psychic radar; centuries-old holy writing and classical dramas are easier to use.

In addition to conventionally bound books, the order makes use of scrolls, stele and other repositories of written knowledge. Some experiment with e-books and other electronic files with varying degrees of success. Hard copies seem to be more reliable.

Oblations: Copying an occult text, translating a book, writing a new grimoire or other occult text, illuminating a manuscript, reading alone in a quiet place, reading from a holy or occult text to a group, rebinding a book (or creating a new container for a scroll, etc.).

Drama

Modern theatre has its roots in magical and religious rituals. These call down supernatural power for the benefit of the players and the audience and teach them stories about the secret world. Mystery initiation has dramatic elements as well; its rituals build a story that reveals Atlantean secrets. Mystagogues revive the dramatic traditions of ancient civilizations, even taking roles that symbolize a special form of wisdom. Original works are less popular but are more common than they were a few centuries ago. There is some controversy as to which Fallen works can be said to reflect Atlantean wisdom. Classical Greek dramas and South Asian temple dances usually qualify, but even they include vulgar, comedic elements that few mystagogues think dignified enough to summon Supernal power. Then again, comedy teaches wisdom as well.

Oblations: Acting in a play, writing a play that has occult symbolism, adding occult symbolism to a public performance, performing a ritual in the dress of a god or spirit.

Language

Language has an obvious Supernal sympathy that mages use whenever they empower spells with the High Speech. Mysterium opinion is divided as to whether the High Speech is the true language of humanity or was constructed for specifically magical purposes. Some mages contend that all early humans were Awakened. Magic always speaks the truth by bringing the imagination into being. Other languages have less magical significance than the High Speech

but can still summon a measure of power. Most are ancient languages that were born when humans still remembered their magical birthright. According to most sources, these include classical written Chinese, ancient Greek and Latin. Some mystagogues also use invented languages that emphasize semantic precision. A few even use ecstatic glossolalia. Writing and speech both have power to invoke a language's magical characteristics.

Oblations: Chanting in ritual languages (not in the vernacular), writing Atlantean runes, speaking in tongues, automatic writing. All of these writings should have occult significance.

Light and Darkness

Around the world, light symbolizes knowledge. Light gives eyes the ability to see and scholars the ability to read. Light from the sun brings life. Darkness sometimes stands for ignorance, but the Mysterium usually uses darkness to represent secret knowledge that might be hidden in a dark cave or only spoken of at night. Moving from darkness into light stands for rising awareness, while moving from light to darkness takes a mage on a lone, dangerous path to secrets that cannot be spoken. Note that these do not represent colors, but degrees of illumination. As colors, black and white are subject to cultural interpretation, but all human beings thrive in the light and truck carefully with the dark.

Oblations: Lighting candles and torches in succession to bring an area to light, meditating in a dark cave, moving a grimoire into darkness or light, laying ritual tools or an altar out in the sun, lighting a bonfire or brazier.

Journeys

Acquisitors know how a difficult journey can be an illuminating, rewarding experience. It's no stretch to change the object of their quests from a artifact into a metaphysical prize. Mystagogues also travel to explore the occult patterns of roads and paths. Sleepers lay them down in unconscious memory of Atlantis's huge, magical designs, so mages can benefit from walking them. A journey can push the mage's mind and body to their limits, until she needs Supernal inspiration to carry on. Going to an Atlantean ruin or an empty place that has rarely felt a human touch carries mystagogues away from the epicenter of the Lie. Ideally, such journeys should be made on foot, on an animal or with an Atlantean machine, but practical concerns force Mysterium mages to save this form of transportation for symbolically significant parts of the voyage.

Oblations: Entering an Atlantean ruin, tracing an occult diagram on foot, going alone into the deep wilderness, arriving at a crossroads, following a ley line to a nexus, going on a traditional religious pilgrimage or walkabout, recording esoteric insights in a travel journal.

Music

Just as art, music combines study and inspiration. Music is a mathematical exercise that also captures emotions. West African talking drums prove that music can be a language without human speech. As a sublime concept, music doesn't even require sound; the ancient music of the spheres was not a sound but the harmony of cosmic motion. Singing is a powerful metaphor for magic. Similar to a singer, a mage turns his body, mind and spirit into an instrument for creative power. Song encompasses the primordial Ohm and the divine poetry that gave all things their true names.

Oblations: Playing music that has occult or mathematical significance, singing in the High Speech, using a talking drum to impart magical knowledge, composing music according to precise mathematical principles.

Numbers

Gematria and computer science share the idea that the cosmos can be described with numbers. Mystagogues use mathematics and numerology to reveal the true forms of things. Platonism uses mathematics to describe the ideal forms of objects: the "ultimate ensemble" that exists prior to our flawed perceptions. Geometry reveals the structure of occult diagrams and suggests that there are strange realms beyond the dimensions humanity can see.

Oblations: Writing mathematical formulae, contemplating Platonic solids, spirals and other geometrical designs, creating mathematical models of magical and natural phenomena, drawing magical squares of numbers, studying the numerology of names and verses.

Teaching

It isn't enough to know something; mystagogues must teach it. Teaching has a great deal of symbolic power because teaching makes the mystagogue one link in a chain of wisdom stretching back through the ages, perhaps as far as Atlantis itself. Even Sleepers benefit from Awakened teachings, as long as they're couched in terms that Sleepers can understand and don't violate the Consilium's secrecy.

Oblations: Teaching rotes, teaching a Sleeper Supernal metaphysics, leading a Mystery initiation, opening a Sleeper's mind to the possibility of magic.

JERRAD LEBLANC '07

Chapter Three: The Ladder of Mysteries

The floor is cold. But he does not feel it.

The cavern is dark. But he does not see that.

The observers surround him, in the shadows, their presence unseen but unmistakable. But he does not sense them.

The theonom's voice is rich, like warm honey. But he does not hear it.

For him, there is no cold, no darkness, no warmth, no sound. Nothing exists in this small space but himself.

And within himself, everything.

The mystery of life isn't a problem to solve, but a reality to experience.
— Frank Herbert, *Dune* (Reverend Mother Mohiam)

The Mysterium has a firm foundation in tradition. Century upon century have shaped the modern Mysterium as eons of wind and rain shape a boulder. Time has eroded outcrops to nothing, leaving only a core of solid tradition that now serves the order well. It lost many of the Atlantean practices the Mysterium once considered sacred; mystagogues have retained some and created more new ones. The Fall fractured the order into a hundred shards, all of which kept some rites and forgot others. Reforming into the loose confederation of caucuses of today brought rituals of deep initiation to the fore and let others, no longer known, fade into the background or disappear entirely. Few consider abandoning any aspect of the order's current traditions — some believe in their mystical aspects with whole hearts, and others see the traditions as little more than tests to keep dangerous knowledge from the unworthy.

Initiation: Into the Mysterium

Initiation into the Mysterium's ranks is a personal and public act. A mage entering the order must undergo rituals that put him on the path toward the Mysterium's understanding of enlightenment. Mystagogues consider initiation the first step on that path and thus take it seriously. Even members who do not believe in enlightenment through the Mysteries consider the levels of initiation important; the traditions sift the gold from the sand, preventing the unworthy from access to magic and spells they should be forbidden.

Recruitment

Mysterium recruiters must act with balance and tact. Their unenviable duty is to draw new mages to the order, and the truth about the series of initiations and levels of admission into the Mysteries is enough to scare many prospective *neokoroi* away. Recruiters make an effort to lead with the carrot. They share that the Mysterium is an order devoted to knowledge in all its forms, preserving it, discovering it and teaching it to others. A new mage learns what the order does and has done to recover ancient wisdom and artifacts; she hears about Indiana Jones and midnight discoveries in dusty libraries.

Recruiters mention the Mysteries in certain terms only to mages receptive to hearing about spiritual aspects of magic; otherwise, the Mysteries remain a vague term for knowledge or aspects of magic. To these mages, recruiters describe the enlightenment of coming to understand the Mysteries through the order's perspective. Recruiters often give a personal (and *neokoros*-acceptable) account of their own feelings of enlightenment, which can be quite moving.

The stick comes out only after a prospective initiate is interested, and even then the recruiter waves it in the direction of others. There are *some* mages who would misuse the Mysterium's potent knowledge. Not only would they wield advanced magic unwisely, they would also misunderstand the Mysteries, and that would lead them astray. Dark futures await those who tamper with things they do not understand, which is why the Mysterium weeds out unworthy mages. A skilled recruiter makes the prospective *neokoros* know that, for *her*, the trials of initiation are a formality, but he never says it outright. Recruiters know better than to make false promises, especially to mages.

Finding Recruits

Mystagogues look for signs of the Mysteries in all facets of life, ancient and everyday. The same perspective that picks a universal truth about Fate out of bus schedules or the ravings of a homeless woman helps mystagogues notice the strange events that surround an Awakening. A mystagogue watches the news and the world around her for events with that peculiar twist that speaks of uncontrolled Supernal magic; when one speaks to her, she alerts the local mage in charge of recruiting, usually a Curator.

With regard to recruiting, the Mysterium maintains a presence in colleges and universities around the world. Other orders assume that any Awakening on campus is public knowledge to local mystagogues. It's an exaggeration not far from the truth: mages of the Mysterium hold more university positions than any

other order, and they are rarely far from the scene when a student Awakens. This skews their recruits toward people integrated into higher education and away from the most other portions of the human population, but mystagogues do not mind. It makes more of their recruits academics. The inclination to study exoterics bodes well for a mage's study of esotology and soriology, and also provides a strong basis for straining Supernal truth from the Fallen World's detritus.

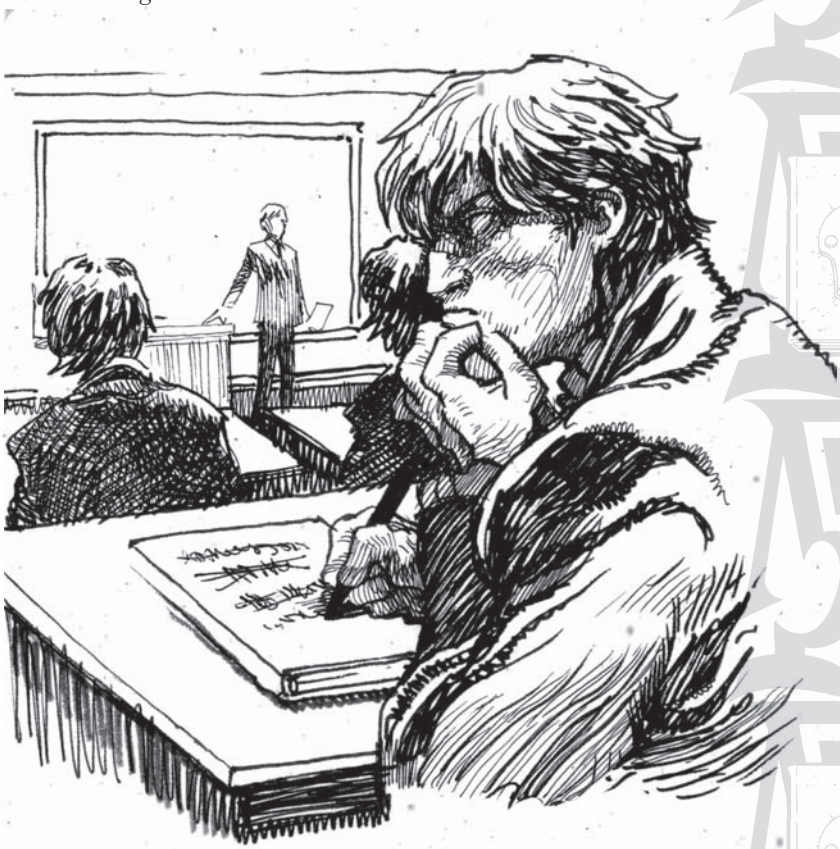
Not every new recruit comes fresh from higher education. So much of humanity is not currently attending an accredited university that picking simply from that population would result in an ever-dwindling supply of new mages for the order. Mystagogues use all resources at their disposal to discover new Awakenings. Easiest of these are the lists of university alumni, and the order has developed sophisticated (if still fallible) methods for determining which graduates are worth investigating. Students of the most prestigious universities disperse widely after graduation, so a mystagogue at one institution alerts the appropriate caucus when he has reason to believe a certain former student is worth investigating.

Mystagogues outside of the education system watch their circles for signs of the supernatural. A mage who works as a theoretical physicist (and derives greater understanding of the Mysteries thereby) keeps an eye on her colleagues; a psychologist watches his coworkers *and* the subjects in his studies.

Some disciplines have explicit reasons to be working with and running tests on various segments of the human population. This is a valuable source of information for Mysterium mages, allowing them to keep tabs on oft-large groups of people for sometimes extended periods of time. Mystagogues use the information they glean for its overt mundane purpose, but also to discover new mages and publish (within secret circles) studies on who does or does not Awaken.

Beyond these studies, the Mysterium largely ignores Sleepers in terms of their potential to Awaken. The order condemns feeding mortals scraps of knowledge from the tables of the Wise and teasing them with tastes of the occult to cause Awakenings. Besides that they cannot make it work reliably, it cheapens the Mysteries. Keeping back knowledge until after proof of worth, in the form of initiations, is irreconcilable with using bits of that knowledge as bait for Sleeping souls. The Mysterium's disapproval of misleading information in all its forms prevents mystagogues from drawing potential Awakenings toward the supernatural with deceit, as the Guardians of the Veil do. More than that, the Mysterium frowns upon attempts to hasten Awakenings; common thought considers the Awakening the first initiation into the Mysteries, one that is always personal and must be performed without assistance.

Mystagogues' constant search for clues to the Mysteries in mortal guise does lead them into branches of the Guardians' Labyrinth. In addition to marking those cults so that other mystagogues will not be fooled in the future, the mages remember and watch the false occult societies they find. This is as true for groups not linked to the Labyrinth as it is for those that are. Occasional Awakenings more than repay the effort, even if a mystagogue must sometimes compete with a Guardian for the new mage.



Introduction to the Mystery

A mage interested in the order is ready for the first initiation. The Mysterium caucus, usually led by a Curator, brings the mage into an Athenaeum. Caucuses without an Athenaeum use whatever place serves for their meetings and is secure enough for their peace of mind. The initiate still owes the order nothing, so she sees nothing the order would not show to almost any mage. The Mysterium recognizes that a new mage with this level of commitment to the order (Status 0) could still join any order, and teaches nothing secret.

The ritual varies by location but is always simple. It is a simple lesson in magic, often in part an effort to teach failure to new mages who are flush with their new power. The initiate is directed in casting successively more vulgar spells until she suffers a Paradox. The mages initiating her make it clear why the Paradox occurred and how it is possible to avoid it in the future; they then show her some evidence of a terrible Paradox, either collected when it occurred or saved in memory and shared by a disciple of Mind. Another caucus might do the same with a demonstration of counterspells, crushing the initiate's spells before they form to show her it is possible, then explaining some of the theory and providing an example of when it really endangered a mage.

This first ritual always serves a dual purpose. It first educates the new mage about something important, whether the dangers of a Paradox or the possibility of having one's spells countered. Second, the ritual serves as an introduction to the Mysterium's initiations that will seem unsuspicious to observers from other orders. The first initiation's formula is one that will repeat in later initiations.

Converts

Mages already part of other order present a different sort of problem. Other orders covet the Mysterium's collected knowledge, and many mages stoop low to acquire it without regard for the order's thoughts on their worth. When a mage comes calling for admission to the order, mystagogues vet her with care. They recall any interactions she has had with their order and judge her actions as wise or unwise, becoming of the Awakened or not, respectful of the power she wields or callous to its majesty. Casual use of magic, disrespect for the Mysteries and apparent fondness for the ideals of either the Guardians of the Veil or the Free Council are all grounds for a candidate to be forbidden initiation, as are any habits or statements that make uncomfortable the *daduchoi* in charge of the investigation. The mystagogues permit such things with their own, to an extent, but is much harsher on a mage who might betray them.

If the mystagogues object to nothing in the mage's public face to the Awakened, the investigation deepens. They ask mortal friends, family and acquaintances, if any can be found, about the subject's mundane activities and nature to see if she hides any great disdain or disinterest for the order's primary concerns. Last comes a direct interview, not to be confused with the initiation that follows if the order finds nothing worrisome about the mage.

A caucus may go out of its way to recruit someone already part of another order. It is rare for many reasons; that they invite displeasure and political repercussions from the mage's current order is one of the biggest reasons, for mages have long memories and long reaches. Mystagogues fear that their subject might choose to go along with them as a double agent, possibly encouraged by her order. Some believe that mages of other orders are too accustomed to their current magical practices, and that perspective will prevent them from accurately learning the Mysterium's praxis.

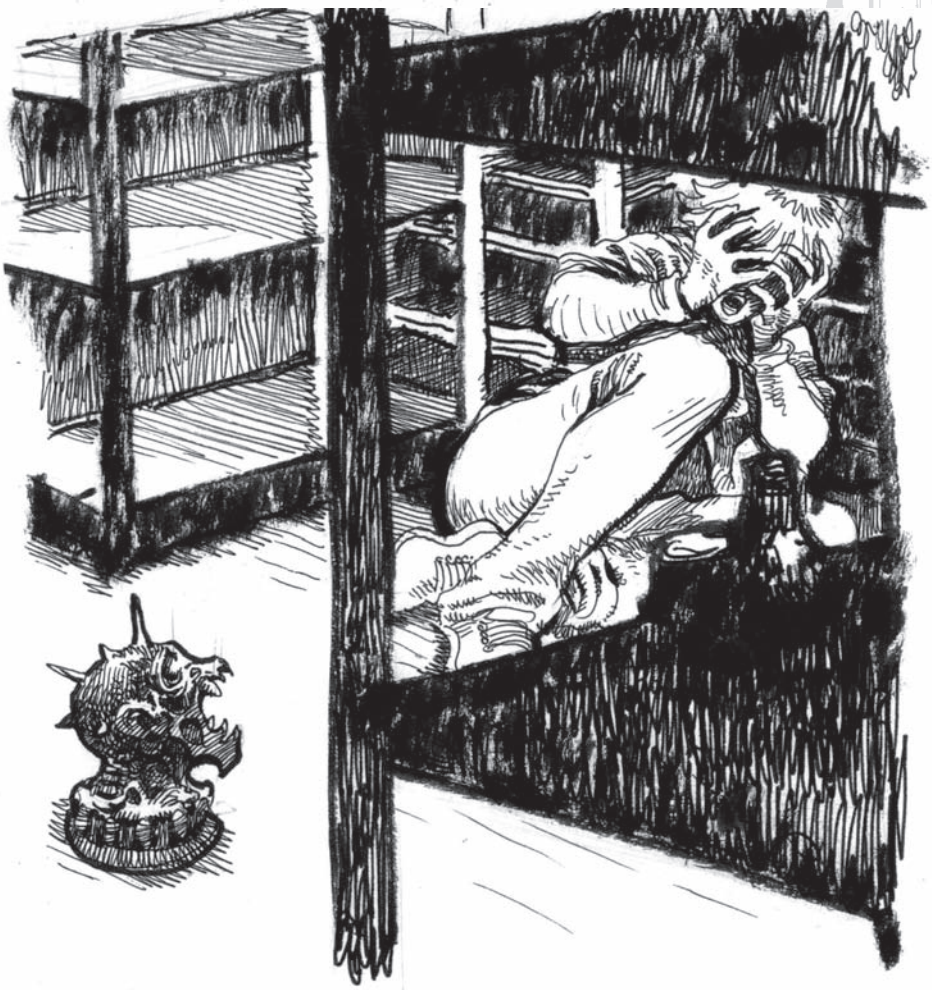
The order pursues mages who appear uncomfortable in their current circumstances and act as though the Mysterium may better fit them, if the subjects do not understand that the option exists or are otherwise limited from making that decision on their own. Only incautious or desperate caucuses try to poach mages who are content or dedicated to their current order. Reasons to try something so dangerous include the mage being an unmatched researcher, in possession of unique artifacts, bearer of a Legacy the order needs or something equally compelling. Caucuses end up redefining compelling based on what they feel they need at any give time.

Mystagogues are never too open when courting mages of other orders. A mage who is unhappy with her order and looking for a way out may go respond well to a whispered suggestion through a scrying window and join the Mysterium without delay. She is more likely to need weeks or months of quiet encouragement and promises of political protection before she agrees to anything. Mystagogues broach the subject with already-satisfied mages much more slowly, dropping hints and gauging interest. Few Curators approve anything more vigorous, which is only likely to bring trouble on the order.

Converts' Initiations

An experienced mage joining the order must have at least a nominal initiation. It introduces them to the order's methods without being obvious and revealing them to curious, watching orders; the initiation also marks the mage's transition from her previous life as an apostate or a member of another order. The challenge is to provide such an initiation that is not suspiciously remedial for an advanced mage.

An introduction to the rudiments of magic would be an obvious placeholder, devoid of real meaning. The order knows that an initiate needs to sense importance in the introductory ritual; the Mysterium also feels that the introductory ritual *should* be important. Teaching about Paradox or counterspells is important for a new mage; there must be something commensurate for a more knowledgeable mage.



Mystagogues compose first initiations uniquely for converts, choosing out some aspect of magic of which they consider the mage worthy and capable. Simple rotes see common use in this respect: mystagogues work with the convert until she can cast the rote successfully, then explain the mudras and fundaments behind the rote (which may just fill in the gaps of understanding) and share some failed rotes or mudras that are similar but not secret. Another method is to create a scare for the mage. Drawing on the lore and occult knickknacks in their Athenaeum (or another, if necessary), the mystagogues place the initiate in secured area (often a room of the Athenaeum designed for the purpose) with the mission of discovering her initiation. They intend her to discover something placed there — a flawed rote or an urn that causes bad luck, for example — and suffer minor ills because of it. They follow up the discoveries with a lecture on the initiation's focus and display it as one of the order's small treasures. Some of the discoveries are imbued items created for that express purpose, and a caucus in France possesses an artifact they believe came from Arcadia for just that reason. Mages go to and leave the initiation feeling it was a challenge of some sort rather than a baby step toward enlightenment; the Mysterium fosters that belief to protect the order's mysteries should the convert… reconvert.

Some caucuses feel that such contrived initiations insult the convert and demean the order — both the import of their mysteries and their appearance in the new initiate's eyes. These caucuses prefer to induct converts past the stage of a fresh *neokoros* immediately. It requires some form of leverage or security to ensure that the convert is unlikely to run quickly back to her old order, but otherwise brings the mage directly to the level of an advanced *neokoros* (Status •) through the standard first level of initiation. It's common for a convert treated so to share her true name with one mage (usually a Curator)

or give several *daduchoi* materials to form Intimate sympathetic connections with her.

Mystagogues make an effort to treat mages converted from other orders as equals, and sometimes succeed.

Guardians of the Veil

If the Mysterium had an official global position on accepting Guardians of the Veil into the order, it would be this: no caucus is ever to initiate a mage who is currently or has ever been a member of the Guardians of the Veil, without exceptions. Mystagogues are steadfast about supporting this rule that, though unwritten, has many recorded examples of why it is a terrible idea. But the order does not flawlessly uphold this rule.

Among mystagogues is a strong fear that any Guardian of the Veil who attempts to defect to the Mysterium is a double agent. It's also a reasonable fear. The Guardians and the Mysterium have a rivalry going back ages, possibly all the way to Atlantis. Their disagreements on fundamental treatments of magic and knowledge are legendary, as is the Guardians' habit of insinuating spies into the ranks of other orders. A known Guardian who approaches a local mystagogue and asks to join gets only a hearty laugh; if the mystagogue is feeling particularly respectful, he might only ask the Guardian to reconsider or otherwise politely decline.

Guardians of the Veil have been known to send spies into other Consilii where, unknown, the spies may integrate themselves into the Mysterium. So caucuses presented with unknown mages who do not appear to have just Awakened make a practice of asking nearby caucuses about the person and investigating with Mind magic to be sure. They believe they catch most Guardians.

The order may accept a former Guardian if the mage in question has been an apostate for a comforting length of time, usually at least two years. Former Guardians who have spent time as part of another order (though not the Free Council) create some distance from their previous distasteful profession and become acceptable initiates to the Mysterium. Thorough checks of intention, magical and mundane, are still the order of the day.

Some caucuses will consider even a current Guardian of the Veil if the mage promises to betray her order on some fundamental level. Rescuing dangerous knowledge from the mystical shredder is one example, even if the order sends the knowledge straight to the Censorium. Revealing the identities of double agents in the Mysterium (or Consilium in general), liberating potent artifacts, returning sympathetic connections collected by the Guardians for nefarious purposes to their original owners and disseminating secret ciphers and passwords are examples of other ways a Guardian might turn on her order, all to prove that she *might* not be a mole.

A Curator and Censor accept the mage on a probationary basis, keeping her safe from Guardian retribution and isolated from Mysterium secrets while they judge the nature of the betrayal. Information given must be dangerous enough for the mystagogues to believe that the Guardians really would destroy it, sympathetic connections must appear to have been collected for blackmail or offensive magic rather than being deceptively returned and people named as double agents must actually be guilty of the crime. Only then, and after standard investigations into the life and mind of someone not fully trusted, is the mage given an opportunity to join the order.

It would be foolish to actively pursue Guardians of the Veil for induction into the Mysterium, and caucuses almost never try. While few deny that it would be pleasant to have an ally hidden in the enemy camp for once, success would both be improbable and require active lies to complete the deception, more than the lies of omission mystagogues usually consider their limits.

Free Council

The Free Council is the other order that gives the Mysterium trouble, and caucuses hesitate before admitting a former Libertine into their ranks. At least the Mysterium and the Guardians of the Veil share the goal of protecting magic from defilement; both believe in protecting some knowledge from the unworthy, even if the Guardians are sorely wrong about how to do so. The Free Council denies the sanctity of the Mysteries, at least as the Mysterium sees it. The Free Council allows anyone to access the order's Lorehouses for a fee, providing knowledge to the wealthy instead of the worthy in a soul-damaging example of capitalism misapplied.

These philosophical differences make mystagogues wary of allowing a former Libertine into their ranks. It is in part the fear of duplicity: Free Council mages have proved themselves willing to use dishonest means to infiltrate the Mysterium, where they gain access to an Athenaeum and liberate the secrets contained therein. More, though, the Mysterium worries about

irreconcilable differences between the two orders and doubts that a mage indoctrinated by one can ever be a true member of the other. Any mage who once decried other orders' structures as supportive of the Lie makes it difficult to later join those orders. The Mysterium especially resents such accusations, as the order's hierarchy is designed for the safety of both magic and mages.

For just those reasons, mystagogues never actively recruit current members of the Free Council. There's no global moratorium on the act — too many Mysterium caucuses the world over refuse to grant the Free Council full status as an order for any party line — but the very idea disgusts most of the order's mages. To let a Libertine loose in their libraries is worse than loosing a horde of bookworms on them; the bookworms will do less damage, in the long run. There are mystagogues who believe a person can change his stripes; more than a few do, including those who came to the Mysterium from another order, but no mystagogues are willing to risk the damage if they are wrong.

There are always exceptions. There are Libertines who, disaffected with the flawed philosophies and the ineffective squabbling of Assembly, turn to the Mysterium's wisdom without dissemblance. It takes time, but other mystagogues eventually put aside the mage's early mistakes and treat her with the respect she is due.

Getting that far is travail. Many caucuses refuse to consider for membership any mage who is or was in the Free Council, forcing ex-Libertines seeking to join the order afield to Consilii where youthful indiscretions won't haunt them. Mystagogues check unknown applicants with nearby caucuses, as described for Guardians of the Veil above. The Mysterium goes further with the Free Council: when a Libertine disappears without known cause, some caucuses disseminate a description or an image to nearby caucuses, which sometimes share it yet again. Mages of the Free Council seeking to sneak into the Mysterium's ranks and innocents taken by the order's philosophy of enlightenment both must go great distances to achieve their goals.

When a Mysterium caucus accepts a Libertine as a prospective initiate, the process is as excruciating as it is for a Guardian of the Veil. Mages still associated with the Free Council must bring with them gifts of betrayal: knowledge stolen from Lorehouses, to be safely interred in an Athenaeum; bits of hair or blood from the most dangerous Libertines, giving the Mysterium leverage over the Free Council; that is what the Mysterium needs as assurance.

Even then, they cannot be sure. The Mysterium checks out everything for any hint of deception. The knowledge must truly be absent from any near the Lorehouse, and the sympathetic connections must be real. The mystagogues interrogate the mage with magic. Positive results still don't make them trusting: the Libertines may plot to give up information but reclaim it when the double agent throws open the Athenaeum doors. When information from a Lorehouse is the gift, the caucus often lends it to the Athenaea of nearby caucuses for a period until the former Libertine has earned trust — often several years.

No one ever said it was easy to switch sides.

Sleepwalkers

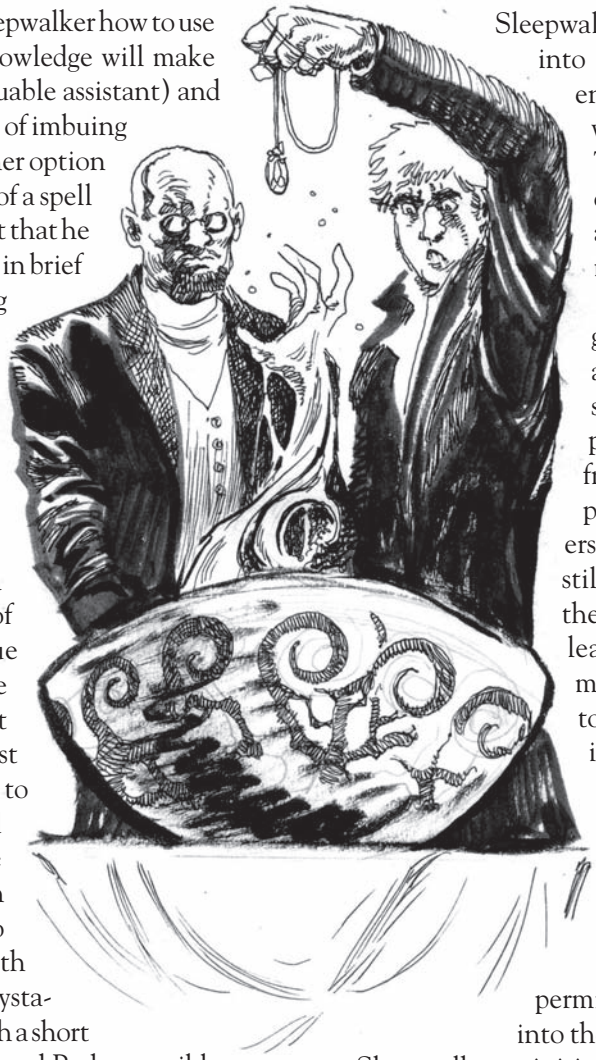
The Mysterium doesn't bother initiating mortals; why would it? Mortals are difficult to deal with and annoying to keep around. There's never any guarantee that they will Awaken and suddenly become useful, so all they do is obstruct vulgar magic and make it impossible to discuss anything *interesting* until they go away.

Sleepwalkers are another matter. Forces unknown make them able to look upon magic and hear the Mysteries without debasing either. As an order of philosophers in the classic sense, the Mysterium always has space and need for one more lab assistant. Mystagogues pursue Sleepwalkers as vigorously as any other mages do, and with as few scruples. There are no rules of conduct for dealing with mortals — which Sleepwalkers undeniably are — as there are for interaction between mages. A mystagogue may never lie about magic to another mage, but to a Sleepwalker? Definitely, if it serves a purpose.

How mystagogues draw Sleepwalkers to them depends on the mortals' intended uses. Mystagogues' domination of universities serves them as well here as it does for recruiting the newly Awakened. Sleepwalking students can be more open to the idea of the occult or, failing that, "special" courses of study. Curious Sleepwalkers are easy for the Mysterium to hook; mystagogues use suggestions of hidden truths and ideas never before thought (by the mortal, at least) to lure a mortal into service. Calling the Sleepwalker's position an apprenticeship is a common deception to make the person feel special — he is, just not in the way he thinks.

After a Sleepwalker has spent a short time in service, at least one month but not more than six, a mystagogue initiates a Sleepwalker into the least degree of the order. These initiations are unique to the mage, and usually to the event; the order does not regulate them beyond warning that even Sleepwalkers are not worthy of the order's true secrets. A Sleepwalker's initiation resembles that of a newly Awakened, allowing the mortal to experience something of magic before receiving a lecture about the very basics.

A mage may teach the Sleepwalker how to use an imbued item (which knowledge will make the Sleepwalker a more valuable assistant) and then sketch out the concept of imbuing an object with spells. Another option is to demonstrate the effect of a spell on the Sleepwalker, an effect that he can sense, before explaining in brief what is going on and sharing the symbol of the Arcanum involved; granting great mental clarity (increased Intelligence) or a boost of brute force (increased Strength) both see great use in this manner.



Other mages create a mystery play, a shadow of those experienced in true Awakenings, to give the Sleepwalker a sense of what could lie ahead of him. Most mages use Prime or Mind to provide the illusion of grand realizations, but creative uses of other Arcana (such as compelling an entity to conduct the mystery play with Spirit) can suffice. The mystagogue concludes the play with a short lesson on the Watchtowers and Paths, possibly displaying her nimbus after everything else.

Yet another possibility is to open the Sleepwalker's perceptions directly to the world of magic. Every mage of any training can cast a spell to bestow another with Mage Sight. It can be a world-shaking experience for a mortal to suddenly see the world in a completely new light. It can give the mystagogue an edge to choose a form of Mage Sight that would attract the mortal — a physics student would gawk at the play of Forces, while a student of history might drool over a sense of Time — but any Mage Sight is overwhelming enough to get the job done. A mage may cast a spell while the Mage Sight is active, following the demonstration with an explanation of why it appeared so to the Sleepwalker's enhanced senses. Such an initiation also often ends with a display of the mage's nimbus, or perhaps a grimoire containing the spell in question (illegible to the mortal, of course).

Advancement

Sleepwalkers receive limited admission into the secrets of the order. Some end up as little more than servants who don't induce Paradoxes. They learn nothing about the order; all they could share with an interested party was that magic exists and the form of the initiation they endured. Mystagogues make their retainers feel as welcome and respected as possible to retain their service and prevent even useless knowledge from escaping; a leak would reflect poorly on the master. Sleepwalkers who never receive real trust still know next to nothing about the Mysteries; the theories they learn from their masters about magic are never accurate enough to cause real trouble in the Sleeping world.

As time goes by, a Sleepwalker can earn the trust of the mage he assists and the order. After a period of loyal service greater than a year (and averaging three years), the mage may request permission to induct the Sleepwalker into the order. The common term for a Sleepwalker so initiated is *factotum*; additional terms are regional and denote a person admitted into company too good for him. "Honorary mage" is slang in use among younger mages. Permission comes from a Curator, as guardian of the order's knowledge; failing that, a *daduchos* must sign off on the initiation. It is only after the first of these initiations that a Sleepwalker learns of the Mysterium as an order. Each additional initiation requires explicit permission.

Each initiation is a shadow of those that mystagogues themselves experience; the Mysterium calls

it the lesser Atlantean Mystery, which is available and comprehensible to one not Awakened. See "The Atlantean Mystery," p. 98, for full details on what the mages go through. Sleepwalkers see something fainter but no less true — being accepted for initiation means the order considers the mortal worthy of learning the nature of the world in a superficial sense. He learns nothing as deeply as a mage must, but the mortal no longer has to leave the room before two mystagogues discuss the Corpus Mysteriorum.

Sleepwalkers need not bring the order priceless knowledge to earn advancement; exceptional service is price enough. Their exposure to the Atlantean Mystery is far more controlled than that of a mage, to ensure that the Sleepwalker comes out unharmed and with limited knowledge. Initiation into the lesser Atlantean Mystery comes with some respect from the order, even from other mages, because not many Sleepwalkers are considered worthy. Each level of the lesser Mystery a Sleepwalker experiences gives him the benefit of Order Status at one-half that value (round up). As valuable resources, Sleepwalker retainers are sometimes handed down to new masters when an old one passes on, retainers initiated into the order especially. Older, more experienced Sleepwalkers occasionally end up with more respect from the order and access to secret materials than the younger mages the Sleepwalkers now serve.

The Sleepwalker Retainer Merit represents a Sleepwalker loyal to the character who has no status on his own. Such a Sleepwalker has not been admitted into the lesser Atlantean Mystery. A player may purchase initiation into the lesser Mystery for a retainer; the price at character creation is one Merit dot per dot of Order Status the retainer possesses, to a maximum of three dots. No Sleepwalker can achieve as much fame as a mage in a magical society. During play, the price is half the normal experience point cost for Order Status. This experience cost must be paid by the player; even vivid and well-played retainers do not have their own experience to spend.

Uses

There are many uses for a willing helper who can see magic without shattering it, and many come easily to the mind of any mage. The Mysterium's academic tendencies cause their Sleepwalkers to commonly serve a more limited number of functions.

Aides: Mystagogues are academics at heart. Not all are absent-minded professors, but there's a reason it's the stereotype. Many mystagogues are thankful for assistants who bring them the dinner they would otherwise forget, have a cola or coffee ready for late nights, anticipate desired literature and have it ready (or simply know the library better than the mage) and return everything to order after long nights of frantic and distracted research.

Not all Sleepwalker aides end up being caretakers. Mystagogues who go abroad to do the order's more active work appreciate mortals whose presence won't harm a mage's investigative spells. It also always helps to have a companion who can discuss the real reason you're knee-deep in dust in Egypt. Those mages who get their artifacts illicitly equally appreciate partners in crime whom spells can assist without causing a Paradox — it helps to have someone naturally listening in on the police band without a scanner or watching for tripwires of invisible light.

Capital: As a facet of guanxi, Mysterium mages lend out their Sleepwalker Retainers. If a mage with whom the master has guanxi needs help that a Sleepwalker can provide — sometimes help *only* a Sleepwalker can provide — off the mortal goes. Mystagogues are usually respectful of their peers' retainers, especially peers with whom the mystagogues share guanxi.

Liaisons: Mystagogues of all sorts focus on their work, often to the exclusion of all else. It is the rare mage who gets to ignore Consilium politics, and members of the Mysterium are no exception. Sleepwalkers take the political pressure off studious mages with better things to do (or limited social skills) by acting as their liaisons with other mages, especially members of other orders or officials of the Consilium.

Sleepwalkers initiated into the lesser Atlantean Mystery become more capable of representing a mage and the order to other mages; they recognize what proposals are ludicrous, what spells are impossible and what suggestions are completely at odds with Mysterium philosophy. For politics within the order, the renown a Sleepwalker earns for entering the lesser Mystery makes him a better representative. And the deeper a mortal goes into the Atlantean Mystery, the better he understands and represents the order. Sleepwalker envoys sent into the presence of other mages, especially those envoys initiated into any level of the lesser Atlantean Mystery, receive magical protections (from Mind magic, mostly) before going out.

Mundane Research: A Sleepwalker makes a better research assistant than any mortal. Most mages have better uses for their Sleepwalking retainers than for tracking down obscure references in Biblical apocrypha or 20th-century papers on plasma physics — true Sleep-

ers usually perform those services admirably. When the work requires an eye that *actually* knows what it seeks, a Sleepwalker can save a mage the time.

Supernatural Research: Sleepwalkers are indispensable assistants for occult research. Some tomes contain too much truth to even show a Sleeper; others become dangerous when the Sleeper looks for specific patterns or references — but those are exactly what a mage needs her research assistants to find. Mages are too few for them to play research assistants, except in group projects and as young apprentices; Sleepwalkers are not much greater in number, but they help fill the gaps.

When it is necessary for research, mystagogues may enchant trusted Sleepwalkers with the Words from the Isle rote (see sidebar), enabling them to read High Speech and help with more esoteric research. This accounts for some stories of enchantments making books illegible to wizard's apprentices.

New Spell: Bestow High Speech (Mind ••• + Prime •••)

The mage fills a mortal's mind with knowledge of the Atlantean High Speech and opens the mortal's eyes and ears to the language of magic.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

Mortals, Sleepwalkers included, cannot comprehend High Speech in any form. This aspect of the Lie is usually a blessing — the Awakened can keep secrets safe from the minds that would destroy them. But Atlantean's automatic concealment is not always an advantage. A target of this spell can perceive the true form of High Speech for the duration; he can also understand and speak the language as if he possessed the High Speech Merit. This spell can be cast on one of the Awakened without using Prime.

Mysterium Rote: Words from the Isle

Dice Pool: Wits + Expression + Mind

Mystagogues use this secret rote on their most trusted Sleepwalker research assistants. It allows a Sleepwalker to read books written in High Speech, as many of the older and more valuable tomes are in the Atlantean language. Otherwise, many mages would be without research assistance when looking for the one clue to an important mystery.

The Mysterium assumes that the Guardians of the Veil would consider this rote a betrayal of the Veil and attempt to destroy all record of its existence. The order therefore keeps Words from the Isle a great secret.

The Atlantean Mystery

The Mysterium's practices of initiation may be the most intricate and involving of all the orders'. Other orders (as far as the Mysterium knows, anyway) recognize merit, dedicated service and mastery of the Arcana with promotion to higher ranks and greater responsibility. The Mysterium has more exacting requirements. A mystagogue can only gain status in the order through initiation into what the Mysterium calls the Atlantean Mystery: the experience of knowledge handed down from before the Fall, if the order's elders are right. They challenge the prospective mage to *accomplish* his advancement instead of *receive* it.

Experiencing the Mysteries

Each level of initiation requires a donation to the order and the Atlantean Mystery, always knowledge in one of its many forms. Lost grimoires, imbued items from ancient cultures, unknown artifacts, soul stones of long-dead mages, willing ghosts from the past and other treasures have all been accepted in the past. But not just any donation will do to earn advancement for any mage: the Mysterium divines what is necessary through magic.

As soon as a mage completes one initiation, be it the first (to Status 0 *neokoros*) or one of substance, his superiors in the order ask the future about his next level of initiation. A mage with Time 3 casts "Divination" to find out what the mage must do before he is worthy of advancement; the diviner always has at least Status ••. Common questions read similarly to "What will he donate to the order to signify his worth of the next Mystery?" The exact phrasing is highly ritual and depends on a number of factors: different regions importune different embodiments of Atlantis in their questions, and each different

Atlantean Mystery often has a unique phrasing that makes the inquiry more specific. Where an adept of Time is available and of high enough Status, she casts "Prophecy" instead, asking, "What makes the mage worthy of the next Mystery?" The order uses her visions to guide the initiate.

Mysterium caucuses with very low membership seek help from mystagogues in other regions when none of their members can see so clearly into the future. It makes learning the necessities of advancement more difficult, but low membership means that such predictions are less often necessary and that the caucus often shares the specifics of its initiations with the neighboring region.

Some mages use tricky language in their divinations. A phrase such as, "What does the mage bear when we initiate him into the next Mystery?" avoids the question of worth, leaving the decision of advancement in the mystagogues' hands. A few caucuses consider this an important aspect of the Atlantean Mystery, considering the human decision to initiate a student in some way holy. Most who use such language use it to concentrate power in their own hands and as an excuse to more quickly advance more mystagogues. Caucuses with that outlook do produce more mages with more advanced knowledge of the Arcana, but tend to more easily fray and come apart when stressed.

The divination's results are shared with the initiate. It is his right to know what he may seek to prove his worth, and part of that seeking, and the ambition that drives it, will make him worthy. More than that, not even his superiors know. The mage uses the clue of what he will donate, as detailed as the masters can provide, to decide his future exploration of the Mysteries. Initiates keep to existing paths and habits — an Archaeomancer continues searching ancient temples and a Reclaimer keeps his eye on existing collections of the esoteric. It's rare that the prophecy requires a mage to change everything to find his proper donation; the prophecy acts as a guide, leading the Archaeomancer to Egyptian rather than Roman ruins, for example, and a sign, suggesting that the mage should return to his elders to be judged worthy.

Predictions of worth are vague enough that a mage may donate much information before advancing to the next rank. A "decrepit Old German tome" is not specific enough for an initiate to be sure. Higher-ranked mystagogues use a balance of divination and their own judgment to decide if the mage is ready for the next level of initiation. Confidence in the mage overcomes an uncertain divination, and an explicit divination overrides uncertainty in the elders; a definite divination that disagrees with certain mystagogues makes for a loud and long debate. When the time is not right, the Athenaeum graciously accepts the donation and encourages the mage to continue his search. They expect the mage to be equally gracious that he is not yet worthy; this is not always the case, and the cause of some defections from the order.

Accelerated Advancement

When elder mystagogues believe that a mage must advance toward enlightenment swiftly, they take certain steps known as "giving the Atlantean life," or just "giving life"; it refers to forcing the subject to live the Atlantean Mysteries by forcing experiences upon him, rather than letting him discover that life for himself. Other names dominate in various regions, related to the dominant form the Atlantean Mystery takes there; one common among young mages is "applying the paddles," as if the elders were using a defibrillator to shock the initiate into life.

Giving life is publicly proscribed within the order as hubristic and consequential, but every mystagogue of Status ••• or greater has read accounts of when "giving life" was done. Orders to hasten a mage's enlightenment always come from a Hierophant, a mystagogue with the great insight to see the necessity and the respect to get it done. It is a difficult choice for any elder, as enlightening a mage in this hurried fashion can result in weak understandings of the Atlantean Mystery and the Mysteries in general. The techniques used to accelerate the mage's initiations also cause unforeseen ripples in the Tapestry, which inevitably return to haunt the initiate and any mystagogues involved in the decision.

A Hierophant directs *daduchoi* to give a mage life only when it is vitally important. To the *daduchoi*'s frustration, it is almost always vital in a way that only the Hierophant's elevated perspective makes clear. The Hierophant often knows of some glorious or terrible future that can be made real or defeated by ensconcing the mage deep in the order.

The process of giving the Atlantean life relies heavily on prophecy and Fate. Mystagogues use the most potent Time spells available to learn as much as they can about the subject's fate and what must be done to make him worthy of further initiation. They exhort the mage toward these events, telling him everything they think he needs to know to best reach that point. Older and wiser mages remain available to the important initiate on his journey, and they help him readily. Some emphasize that he is special and discourage discussing their focus with other initiates; other mystagogues stay silent, believing that he will not mention what he does not know is strange.

Mystically, they use any means necessary to direct him toward his goal. A powerful mage casts the Fate 5 "Forge Destiny" spell to bind the initiate to the next step of his initiation. Caucuses without access to such manipulation of Fate may use "Gift of Fortune" to bring the necessary donations to the mage or, on a lesser scale, "Fabricate Fortune" to help the mage *seem* destined to reach the goal — a trait that could smooth the way or make the road rocky, but was hoped to be better than nothing.

Giving the Atlantean life is controversial. The degree to which elder mages help a special initiate varies from caucus to caucus: some offer direct assistance but would never dream of altering his Fate, while others advise and tweak the mage's destiny but condemn overcoming his obstacles for him. There are almost as many true paths as there are caucuses, and every mystagogue ranked *daduchos* or higher has a firm opinion on where the boundaries are when applying the paddles, if it should be done at all.

A mage whose introduction to the Atlantean Mystery has been accelerated by his elders suffers discrimination for it in later years. Other mystagogues don't believe that he has truly earned his status and doubt his understanding into the mysteries he has experienced. Elder mystagogues responsible for a failed attempt to give life suffer loss of credibility in the eyes of their peers. A mage ranked beneath them does not treat their words with any less respect, but word spreads about how the elders tried to break their own rules and failed. That ignores the keen pain of failure: how the subject fared can be a source of personal misery for years or decades. Even success can bring condescension and suspicion from other Hierophants, if the effort becomes known.

The Five Mysteries

What is called the Atlantean Mystery as a whole, mystagogues divide into the Five Mysteries in private discussion. Each one relates to core tenets of the Mysterium philosophy and represents a deeper understanding of the Atlantean Mystery as a whole and together are more than the sum of the parts. A mage inducted into the fifth Mystery understands more than all the Five Mysteries: she understands the nature of the Supernal Tapestry and her position therein.

Each Mystery reveals additional aspects of the entire Atlantean Mystery to an initiate, bringing the mage closer to the enlightenment sought by the Alae Draconis in Atlantis. A *theonom* guides the mage on her initiation; the title means "governed by God," interpreted by the order as the will of the living magic (which many mages equate with God as He is more commonly understood). Theonom is not a constant office in a caucus, though the same mage may play it often. Mystagogues use this term to refer to the mage guiding a given initiation, a position often bestowed for a mage's skill as a teacher. Guiding more mages in their initiations is an honor, bringing strength and wisdom to the order and more students to the Mystery. Except for initiation into the fifth Mystery, the theonom is always a mage already initiated into Mysteries higher than the initiate.

Additional initiations provide mystagogues with greater rank and increased status within the Mysterium; mages initiated into a given level of the Atlantean Mystery acquire titles that describe their

Status and Honor

Mystagogues separate the concepts of accolades and status within their society. They recognize that outside the Mysterium, the two are often connected. One who does a great deed for England receives a knighthood; one who performs well in the office receives a promotion or a raise. But in the Mysterium, the respect a mage earns and her rank within the order are mostly two separate things.

Respect comes from accomplishment and dedication. A mage who many times goes forth into the world and returns with ancient knowledge earns respect. A mage who handles the other orders' lust for knowledge and difficulties with the Mysterium without giving away undue wisdom earns respect. A mage who masters her Ruling Arcana and is a skilled teacher earns respect. Other mystagogues know of her and think highly of her, appreciating that she is good at what she does.

Rank comes from experiencing the Atlantean Mystery that the Mysterium protects from the unwise and guards against disappearance. Understanding the Mystery marks a mystagogue as one of the worthy, one whose decisions are guided by her insight into the Mystery and who is capable of wisely learning greater spells. She therefore deserves greater responsibility in the order, and her direction benefits those less worthy than she.

Status represents induction into the Mystery first and being known second. A character will never get higher Mysterium Status without initiation into the deeper mysteries; members of the order may know of and respect a character with low Order Status, but she doesn't command the influence available to a mage who has been further initiated. Reciprocally, a character may be deep in the Atlantean Mystery and, even with few personal accolades, still demand significant respect and has more doors open to her than she did before those initiations.

mastery, are considered worthy of advanced teachings and learn codes and gestures that identify them to their brethren.

The description under each Mystery details the benefits to an initiate of that level. *Access* defines what an initiate may learn or study through texts available in Athenaea or private collections, or through mentors. This is only what the mage may see without question; special dispensation makes more available but is hard to get. Curators control access to Athenaea and are rarely questioned; they are expected to know enough *of* the repositories' contents to know what they should not read themselves. In general, if a character has enough banked experience to increase a linear trait (Arcana and Gnosis, especially), the Curator is likely to give the character the materials she needs even if her rank doesn't warrant it.

Titles are how initiates of that level are called. Only some of the given titles are common in any given region. *Signs* are some example gestures and special symbols taught to the initiate, and *phrases* are some of the encoded verbal messages initiates learn after induction into a Mystery; an initiate uses both to identify other initiates and make himself known to them. Signs and phrases are considered best used when they are natural to the situation; the more subtle the insertion, the more likely a mystagogue of the right rank will notice — but the less likely anyone else will. *Mystery Revelation* describes how the Mystery connects the initiate to the rest of the order in a tangible manifestation of the Five Mysteries' power (as well as indicating how many dots in the Mystery Initiation Merit the magus initiated into that degree must possess in order to comprehend and use this secret enlightenment; see the sidebar "Merit: Mystery Initiation" for more details).

Signs and phrases taught by the Mysterium allow a mage to state his rank in a manner that it clear to any other mystagogue who has achieved the same rank or higher. This exchange is not necessarily reciprocal: a fourth-degree mystagogue speaking to a second-degree mystagogue knows how far the second-degree mage has progressed; the second-degree mage knows that his companion has also achieved the second degree, but does not realize that the fourth-degree mage has experienced higher Mysteries. The fourth-degree mage can make it clear with a phrase or gesture that communicates, "I am more worthy than you" without stating the precise degree.

An initiate of a given degree has enough training and exposure to the phrases and signs of the Mystery that he picks up even subtle uses; Storytellers should only make players of mystagogues roll for their characters to catch phrases they have learned when it is dramatically important that the sign be hard to detect. Likewise, they should assume that, most of the time,

a mystagogue character is able to convey the signs without detection. Wits + Composure or Empathy and Dexterity + Subterfuge are appropriate rolls.

It is possible that a perceptive mystagogue will, over time, be able to pick out the additional phrases or signs from higher-ranked members that were going over his head, but there are enough such signals to make it a *very* difficult task. Incorrectly identifying oneself as a higher rank earns scorn and often punishment; doing it correctly suggests to superior mystagogues that an initiation might be in order — or that their codes need to be improved and the mage is just the one to do the work. This is one reason the signs are so hard to break as they are.

Merit: Mystery Initiation (• to •••••)

Prerequisite: Mysterium Status of at least equal the rating in this Merit.

Effect: All mages of the Mysterium go through the stages of initiation in the Atlantean Mystery that is the secret core of the order. Not all of them truly internalize the process, however. To some, it is simply an acknowledgement of the respect they are accorded, and an acceptance of further responsibility in the order. To others, however, undergoing the initiations into the Mystery unlocks some new understanding. Each initiation comes with a Mystery Revelation, some mechanical benefit that reflects the enlightenment that comes to those magi who deeply understand and connect with the Mystery communicated through the initiatory rites.

Mysteriorum Exemplum

The Mystery of Lessons; Status 0

This initiation is readily given, withheld only from the most unworthy. It takes place at a secure location, usually an Athenaeum chamber reserved for initiations if one is available. This initiation is the simple Mystery of the Mysterium's initiations, not a secret at all and disguised as a lesson in magic or a trial of worth. The initiation includes small revelations about magic or the supernatural, usually in the form of a specific phenomenon or object. Mages need not donate anything to experience the Mystery, though mages converted from other orders may need to provide proof of good intentions. Once through this initiation, a mage may be called a mystagogue; as known to anyone with Mysterium Status • or greater, this is not one of the Five Mysteries but an introduction, a stepping stone by which the Atlantean Mystery comes into reach.

Access: Arcana up to ••; this means that most of the character's lessons will be in her Common or Inferior Arcanum.

Titles: *Neokoros* (*neokoros* inferior rarely used), mystagogue

Signs: The initiate is permitted symbols and gestures that are public knowledge: the book and key, the golden pen and the sign language gesture for "M" (pinky to the ball of the hand, thumb tucked in, remaining fingers over the thumb). Mages discovered using such symbols without having experienced the Mysteriorum Exemplum (or after officially joining another order) may expect some retribution from the Mysterium.

Touching the pinky to the sternum indicates seniority above this level of initiation. A mage may hold his hat to his chest with the pinky at the right place or put his hand to his chest as if shocked to convey this sign.

Phrases: "I'm a member of the Mysterium!" More subtle, the character learns that working *wing* into conversation marks him as a member of the order: "I do love to see birds take wing, don't you?"

Mystery Initiation: An initiate of this Mystery fails to touch the Mysterium egregore.

Mysteriorum Arche

The Mystery of the Principle; the Mystery of Doom; Status •

This Mystery illustrates the living nature of magic, as described by the Corpus Mysteriorum. Mystagogues refer to this as the arche, the first principle from which all else derives. The impossibility of such derivation with the current sum of the Mysterium's knowledge is not a fault of the principle's theory but of the mages making the attempt.

This is one of the most difficult initiations, but necessity demands it be first. An understanding of the Mysteries' self-direction forms the foundation of all the Atlantean Mystery. No one spell or lecture can help the mage understand the arche; he must be ready to accept the truth, both as a facet of the world and as something internal to himself. That is what his elders judge with their magic and their wisdom.

The initiate eats a sacrament of some kind, often a small wafer but possibly three berries or a bitter

The Mithraeum

All Athenaea have a special room reserved for members' initiations into the Atlantean Mystery. Mystagogues secretly refer to the room as the mithraeum after the ancient caves of Mithras's cult, also used for initiations; no mage with less than Mysterium Status • ever hears the word. This chamber is always as near to the Athenaeum's center as possible, symbolic of the room's central importance to the Athenaeum's existence; the mithraeum is often underground, for security and for separation from worldly cares.

A mithraeum has no windows, only one door and is generally sparsely furnished. The walls are bare and, where possible, stone. Some are actual natural caves. The floor is the same unassuming material and has one modest covering; this is often a cheap but somber rug, but may be scattered straw, a reed mat or something else appropriate to the culture. A brazier supplies light to the room when necessary. A statue depicting knowledge is the only other adornment. In most mithraea, this is the Mysterium book and lock; in an oral culture, the statue might be the bust of a legendary speaker and wise man, while Eastern cultures may display a sealed scroll.

Theonoms lead their initiations in these chambers. Anything necessary to the rite comes in and leaves with the mystagogues. Even artifacts and tools used for initiation into every Mystery and nothing else reside elsewhere; the mithraeum remains pure and empty of all but knowledge. The Curator looks after the mithraeum as part of the Athenaeum, keeping the chamber unsullied and guarded against intrusion as she does for the rest of the building; she also often leads initiations.

The mithraeum's importance leads the Mysterium to secure the room strongly. Mages who are capable make certain to lay wards, often laden with bans, over the room. In regions where no such mage has the ability or the confluence of ability and availability, the caucus bargains (through Right Exchange, guanxi or both, as appropriate) with other mages for imbued items that can do the job. Ancient mithraea are sometimes imbued items themselves, ready to set wards when activated. One caucus in Kunming claims (in the Mysterium's private circles, of course) that their mithraeum is an artifact that wards itself against scrying, eavesdropping and peering through time. Mithraea are sometimes made Demesnes or built around Hallows to deepen the Supernal connection of the place; mithraea that are also Hallows are open to drawing out Mana. Since mithraea are dark, closed places, mystagogues also use these spaces for their oblations without violating them.

Some initiations have special demands that lead the mystagogues elsewhere, and some caucuses exemplify their initiations with specific locations; other than these exceptions, initiations all take place within the mithraeum. Mages without the order's trust either never see the mithraeum or visit it blindfolded.

leaf. Into the mithraeum come a large animal and a sharp knife. Bulls are the preferred animal of many caucuses because of their Mithraic connection, but rare is the caucus that can afford bulls with regularity. When bulls are unavailable, the caucus substitutes any noble animal of sacred appearance whose sacrifice can provide Mana; regional custom dictates which animals are considered noble.

At this early stage, many mages know the *possibility* of deriving Mana from a creature's death, but fewer have tried it. The ritual is a simple one: the initiate takes the knife and ends the sacrificial beast's life, absorbing the Mana released and feeling life-energy join with his mystical reserves. He follows that absorption by scouring his Pattern and health until he can hold no more Mana; he feels his own life wane as the life of his magic waxes. The theonom makes sure ahead of time that the mage will not need to suffer more than two lethal wounds to reach full capacity, and one is usually enough.

The initiate must have some form of Mage Sight active; Prime 1 "Supernal Vision" is ideal, and another mage may bestow it on the initiate if he cannot cast it. Some caucuses layer "Supernal Vision" with Life 1 "Pulse of the Living World," Death 1 "Grim Sight" or both, and mystagogues argue over the different spells' appropriateness — or those initiated to higher Mysteries do, anyway. Mage Sight allows the initiate to watch the flow of Mana out of the animal and into him, through the metaphysical pathway created by

the hand holding the knife. Through other senses, the mage can sense the transformation of his own sustaining force becoming Supernal: some experience it as a resonant tone like that of a deep bell, others as a physical pain or pleasure, some as an ideal taste and a few feel like they can see blood sublimating into Mana within their bodies. The Sight is also important for what comes next.

Sacrificing a beast for Mana is uncommon, but not something that *no* initiates have experienced. Scouring health is less uncommon. The true experience in the Mysteriorum Arche is the release of that Mana. At the theonom's direction, the initiate loses the Mana he just gained, at least half of all he can hold. It goes not into any spell or object but into the air, the ether, the Tapestry around him. By this point, the short-lived hallucinogen most caucuses put in the sacrament (and often tailor with Life) kicks in. With this and his Mage Sight, the initiate watches the freed Mana as it acts without direction. The Mana dances to its own tune under his observance, and before the Tapestry reabsorbs it, the Mana seems to roam the mithraeum to examine its boundaries: the various Mage Sight spells highlight different things. Life magic detects pulses toward the sacrifice and the mage, Death just to the animal. Prime displays the free Mana's movement with the greatest precision as it seems almost willful. As the Mana fades into the background, one point always returns to the initiate and his reserves.

Mana is something that few mages release without a purpose. Whether for Pattern repair, spellcasting, transfer to a vessel or another mage, Mana is a commodity for use, and few mages ever think to set it free. If they did, they would still not see what the initiate to the Mysteriorum Arche sees. It is a property of the ritual, of Mana just torn from life, in combination with the sacredness of the mithraeum and the Athenaeum that makes it possible. The single point of Mana that returns is also unique to the ritual; no mage knows of any other time when free Mana comes to a mage, apparently of its own will. Mystagogues sometimes return to the mithraeum and perform the ritual again, often using only the energy of their Patterns, in order to again experience the arche. Even Hierophants reunite themselves with the living Tapestry in this manner and encourage it in others; the mithraeum is open to any who wish to do so.

Once the Mana and the hallucinogen settle, the theonom explains what has just occurred. She describes the self-directed properties of magic, which the initiate just experienced. The theonom uses the theory most popular in the caucus, the theory she prefers or gives a more brief account of all major theories of magic's life. Theonoms are sometimes named for their ascription to one theory or another.

The initiation concludes with a display of the Corpus Mysteriorum; this is the first time the initiate is allowed to read, or even know of, that tome. Where possible, the theonom presents a true grimoire of the Corpus. She reads selections from the text, often from the sections on the initiate's Realm and Ruling Arcana. The initiate then holds the grimoire for the first time and lets it fall open to a random page, which he reads aloud. The theonom then shuts the book and kisses the initiate on the forehead, addressing him for the first time by an appropriate title.

The initiation takes about three hours: five minutes for the sacrifice and scouring, almost an hour to watch the Mana (which disappears quickly but leaves ripples for the drug-enlightened initiate to watch) and two hours for the lecture and the Corpus Mysteriorum's appearance. In the days after an initiation, elder mystagogues usually supply the initiate with Mana to replace that spent. Caucuses that believe in self-sufficiency or have little access to Mana don't offer.

Access: Arcana •••, rotes (• and ••), High Speech, Corpus Mysteriorum (mundane copies), imbued items ••• (examine) or •• (borrow), Gnosis ••

Titles: First-degree, Corax, Setian, Zelator, *neokoros* superior, initiate of the Atlantean Mystery, earth-minder, dirt-head (vulgar), cleanser, janitor (vulgar)

Signs: A closed fist represents the iron grasp the Mysterium keeps on knowledge. Two open palms, their planes perpendicular, form a book — but for secrecy, the two hands need not join or be near each other. A mage may take a faux martial arts stance with his hands flat and at particular angles to cast the signal. Any image of a bird may mark the presence of the order, the order's contacts or a gathering place for mystagogues. That symbol is too easily guessed, so a pig often substitutes.

A mage marks himself as senior to this level by preceding or following the pinky at the sternum with a

deliberate motion straight downward; the pinky must rest for at least a moment to register as part of this sign. It's trivial for most mages to conceal a deliberate slowness amid dropping the hand naturally after any application of the simpler sign of seniority, something other mystagogues are apt to pick up. Another disguise for it is as part of crossing oneself, with a barely perceptible stop of the finger during the gesture.

Phrases: Mentioning a bull references the sacrifice of the first Mystery, even if neither mage sacrificed a bull. Phrases such as "the market is bullish" or "that's a load of bull" qualify. The earth, the state of being beneath or the concept of foundations declares one past the first Mystery. "We're all down-to-earth folks here" is almost blatant; "the foundation's creaking again" is probably more subtle and may imply that local initiates into the Mysteriorum Arche are complaining or passing gossip about something.

Mystery Initiation: If the initiate possesses the Merit Mystery Initiation •, the experience of the ritual initiation brings the mage closer to other mystagogues in other ritual settings. When the character participates in a group ritual casting as a helper and all participants know the Mysteriorum Arche, he automatically adds one die to the primary spellcaster's final roll. The primary spellcaster benefits from no more egregore bonus dice than her own rating in the Mystery Initiation Merit.

Initiates and Drugs

The Mysterium uses certain chemicals in the order's ritual initiations to open the mind and enlighten the soul, though it's not common knowledge among other orders. Don't think that the order is a global society of junkies, or even a widespread group of habitual but self-controlled users. It's just not the case. Mystagogues who use drugs for whatever reason and with whatever level of dependency typically do so before their initiations as well as after; the initiation tends to change little, at least with regard to a mage's drug habits. Most drug-users have a favorite illegal substance, and the drugs used to fuel ecstatic enlightenment or unshakable focus are usually too obscure to *be* those drugs — and so get passed over for old favorites.

Some mages (usually not ranked more than *neokoros*) will always worry about addiction in relation to initiations, but the two are rarely connected: mages are strong-willed, and their access to Life magic gives them an advantage over your everyday street junkie. (They also get *better* drugs.) It's more common for a mystagogue to become addicted to the experience of *initiation* and try using the drugs as path back to that state.

Mysteriorum Anima

The Mystery of Soul; the Mystery of Ecstasy; Status ••

The Mysteriorum Anima demonstrates to the initiate his station as part of the living Ars Mysteriorum revealed by the first Mystery. Mystagogues debate what it means to be a mage within the vast complexity of a living universe, drawing comparisons to antibodies, fertilized eggs, proto big bangs, compressed computer files and stranger things. But the argument stems from a lack of words and examples, not from differences in their initiations. Each mage's experience being initiated into the Mysteriorum Anima, while superficially unique, is fundamentally the same. Everything else is interpretation.

Ideal theonoms chosen for this initiation are skilled astral guides. The initiate enters his Oneiros, where he will find his soul and learn its role within the greater soul of magic. Initiates unskilled at meditation are offered training beforehand without revealing the core of the initiation; this develops a character's Wits or Composure, or produces the Meditative Mind Merit (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 51). If the mithraeum is properly equipped (a Demesne or a Hallow), the theonom lights the coals in the chamber and burns pungent herbs. The smoke is calming and prepares the initiate for a travel deep into his own psyche and soul. The theonom continues burning that herb through the entire astral journey; if she travels with the initiate, an assistant does so for the entire initiation. The mithraeum provides a +3 equipment bonus to the meditation rolls, and the smoke's hypnotic qualities add another +2.

Athenaea not equipped for travel through Astral Space force initiates elsewhere. The order expects members who possess either Hallows or Demesnes to volunteer them for initiations into the second Mystery. Such places can be less well designed for meditation. They may also be uncomfortably public, restricting open burning of the sedative and hypnotic herb. In such cases, the initiate smokes or eats something with a stronger but shorter effect: +3 dice to the first three meditation rolls.

Before the initiate begins meditation, he does himself some injury. It can be a serious cut or a heavy bruise, as long as it causes one point of damage. He restores his Pattern with three points of Mana; the injury is not important, but the settling of Mana into the mage's Pattern is. Theonom and initiate spend little time in waking meditation or waking dreams after that point, moving into the initiate's Oneiros as quickly as possible. Being able to walk in another mage's meditation and Oneiros is not a common skill; a theonom who cannot remains awake and leads the initiate's meditation with her voice and by manipulating the mage's other senses.

While the initiate is in Astral Space for this initiation, he is forbidden to use magic. He walks his soul to see how *magic* moves *him*, not to command it. It is the theonom's task to quash any spell the initiate begins to cast. Even attempting earns a reprimand after the initiation; *successfully* casting reflects poorly on the theonom, however, and not the initiate.

Within the initiate's Oneiros, he seeks out his daimon, the teacher and antagonist for this trip. The daimon appears to him in a form it never has before and never will again (assuming the initiate has visited before or will visit later). While this form is highly personal, more than a few report the individual possessing the horns of a bull or ram, bearing a sword or a great spear, having eyes as deep as the ocean and wearing clothes that are only memorable as being impossible to remember. Mysterium doctrine states that this is a true expression of the mage's soul, more than a mere aspect of the psyche, and calls it as close as the Awakened can get to their Watchtowers.

The initiate follows his daimon through a series of dreamscapes and nightmares that illustrate the mage's position within the greater scheme. He is a component, part of something greater that cannot — yet — be comprehended. The initiate must play his role with skill and loyalty for the good of the Ars Mysteriorum. Part of that role is to seek out knowledge in the Fallen World; other parts become clear only as they become important.

After the dream space mystery play, which enlightens the initiate through symbols and metaphor, the daimon grants a greater vision. It vaults the mage's consciousness, complete with an awareness of the still-extant dreamscapes he has just visited, into the Anima Mundi, the world soul which many mystagogues consider to represent a greater aspect of living magic. In this last instant of initiation, the mage sees exactly how he and his large-seeming dreams fit into the infinite: he sees that he is small but vital, and his purpose is crystal clear for one moment. It is this moment that causes all the arguments, because there are no words to capture its meaning and the truth becomes mired in language.

With the initiate's awakening, the theonom clears the air and the initiate's head. She proceeds to explain the details of what just happened, including her personal interpretation of the Mystery. Instead of direct lecture, this portion is often a debate. It gives the initiate an opportunity to capture the sense of his place within the life of magic as best he can, using simple agreement or disagreement with the theonom's position to shape his own. It is effective, though mystagogues occasionally accuse theonoms of pursuing their own agendas within the initiations.

An archmage said to be of the Alae Draconis once delved into her own memories to perfectly recall her experience with the prototypal Mysteriorum Anima. Much of it was very personal to her and is said to have readied her for a private quest, after which she was never seen again. But the last moment she considered universal, and before she departed, she depicted the experience in oil on canvas. The artwork is bordered with abstract designs that still demand significant study, and the main body shows a small figure within a raging storm. Every aspect of the storm is immaculately detailed, and the figure is almost plain in comparison.

Today, the painting exists in Italy, under constant and extremely cautious restoration. Whether or not the painting came from Atlantis, the Curator who tends the work treats it with reverence. Artistic mystagogues pay homage to the painting in their art, and most Athenaea have a masterful copy or a high-quality print, which they reveal to mages who know the Mystery of Soul. The painting tends to bring back the feeling of that moment with near-perfect clarity, and legend states that a mage who meditates in the presence of the original can experience his initiation again in full. The initiation can otherwise never be repeated, but an Athenaeum's copy or print is available to any initiate of this Mystery by request.

The initiation requires one to five hours for the astral journey (the duration is unpredictable) and two to three hours for the subsequent debate.

Access: Arcana ••••, rotes (• to •••), High Speech, Corpus Mysteriorum (mundane), imbued items •••• (examine) or ••• (borrow), Artifacts •••• (examine), Gnosis •••

Titles: Second-degree, Nymphus, Theoricus, *daduchos* (*daduchos* inferior rarely used), apprentice of the Atlantean Mystery, sea-tender, salt-spit (vulgar), pilgrim, tenderfoot (vulgar)

Signs: Touching the closed fist of knowledge to the head, to indicate the high realm of thought. This can be as direct as the Thinker pose, as lighthearted as knocking on one's own head or as active as punching someone else right in the noggin. Using the image of the bird or pig, loose feathers carry additional knowledge. One feather indicates knowledge to be found, a bare feather indicates a source tapped dry; one full feather also indicates the mere presence of a mystagogue past at least the second Mystery, and an empty feather sometimes signifies a mage deceased. Two feathers indicates a Sleepwalker inducted into the lesser Atlantean Mystery at the location marked; three feathers indicates a Sleepwalker initiated into the *deep* lesser Mystery. Any combination of full and bare feathers indicates a cabal of (or mostly of) another order, numbering as many as all the feathers. Pig images sometimes substitute foods for feathers, such as full or eaten ears of corn.

While the pinky touches the breastbone or makes a deliberate descent, the thumb points directly upward. This persists for a short period before or after the central gesture and indicates enlightenment past that of the second Mystery. A mystagogue points the thumb innocently upward at the proper moment, then probably rotates the hand around the axis of the thumb to keep the proper orientation while drawing uninitiated attentions toward the movement of the rest of the hand (or the hat he's holding, for example).

Phrases: Mentioning either demons or storms, as references to the daimon-guide and the ancient artwork of the initiation, mark a mage as through the second Mystery. A second-degree identifies himself to a first-degree with, "That bull's like a natural disaster, or a storm" (very clumsy) or "this hurricane's really doing a number on the land" (storms for second-degree and earth for first; skillful, if relevant). References to water or the ocean also mark one as a second-degree initiate. "That storm came right in off the ocean" is ham-fisted and good only for second-degree initiates, but "eh, my basement flooded" puts together water and the earth or foundations effectively to alert both second- and first-degrees.

Mystery Initiation: If the initiate possesses the Merit Mystery Initiation ••, he has experienced his place within the soul of magic, and it connects him with his place within the Mysterium. He knows the order as well as he knew, for that instant, all of magic. The bonus to Social rolls from Mysterium Status applies between even between two members of the order who have never before met. The egregore does not inform the mage who is a mystagogue and of what rank, but once he recognizes another mage as Mysterium, all benefits of the Merit come across in full. His experience makes the order's concealed signs and phrases that declare worthiness easy to recognize and communicate: add Mysterium Status to Wits rolls to detect these signs, to Expression rolls to make them and to Subterfuge rolls to conceal them from unenlightened eyes.

Mysteriorum Barathrum

The Mystery of the Abyss; the Mystery of Nightmares; Status •••

This Mystery initiates a mage to the true meaning of the Fall. It was a moment of purest hubris, the action by which the Wings of the Dragon proved themselves unworthy of the heights they soared. They were careless in allowing advancement into the inner circles; in their eagerness to share the Atlantean Mystery with other mages, the Wings of the Dragon allowed the unwise access to knowledge too great for them. The Fall also demonstrates more of magic's nature. Magic cannot be bound: the Celestial Ladder chained the physical world to the Supernal World and the Supernal strained against it, shattering the Ladder and heaving away from mages, creating the Abyss between.

The Mysteriorum Barathrum provides a mystagogue with his first true glimpse of Atlantis itself. Theonoms for this experience are typically strong in at least two Arcana and have high Willpowers. The two mages stand in the mithraeum, with only the unlit brazier between them and the door closed. It is pitch black in the room without windows or lights, necessary for what follows. Both perform mirrored versions of an ancient Atlantean ritual; they intone the words together in Atlantean High Speech while tracing out intricate and opposite steps around the dark room. The ritual requires some advance practice to properly perform the ritual; the Mysterium egregore makes mystagogues able to remember the ritual immediately and able to perform after only a few days' effort.

Ritual complete, the theonom invokes the Duel Arcane with a casting of "Squaring the Circle"; another mage serves that duty if the theonom is unable. Both mages choose their strongest Arcana for sword and shield — the duel is no mere show, even if the theonom often outclasses the initiate. Each mage fights with honor and vigor, seeking victory. Thrusts and parries manifest differently than expected in a normal Duel Arcane: they represent the mage's understanding of magic and of arcane history — another reason the mages must choose their greatest Arcana is because those Arcana represent their best internalization of the Ars Mysteriorum.

The initiate lashes out at his theonom with his assertive misconceptions about Atlantis, the Celestial Ladder and the Fall. The theonom deflects these with gentle truths about the past and uses more frightening knowledge of the past to return fire. These break through the reassuring falsehoods about history learned from other sources that the initiate uses as a defense. As the battle goes back and forth, the pitch-black mithraeum is alight with energy. Each blow forms images of the two combatants' beliefs. A glorious city on the shores of a beautiful island rises behind the initiate; the Celestial Ladder rises in whatever form the initiate imagines it took and shivers into dust and Atlantis sinks.

Behind the theonom, the images are more detailed — looking from the initiate's beliefs to the theonom's knowledge is like going from a smear of green paint to a field rich with grass and clover. The theonom's imagery depicts the Celestial Ladder as pure ivory, fragile in appearance but strong to the touch, reaching up to infinity — and the philosophic battle makes clear that the latter is a powerful symbol of striving for the Supernal. It is part of the great spell that forces the Supernal to merge with the mundane, but not all of it. The true Ladder was within mages' souls. It breaks as magic refuses to be enslaved — it can be harnessed, but never broken — and defends itself with the Awakened who are wiser and more aware of the part they play in magic's system.

Over the battle's duration, each mage's images swell to fill the room and crowd out the other's. Thoughts made visible shiver into blackness as they are proven false or dispelled. When the initiate reaches zero Willpower, his imagery is gone, overwhelmed by the undeniable truth of the third Mystery. If the theonom first runs out of Willpower, as occasionally happens, the initiate has won by absorbing the knowledge of Atlantis's Fall faster than the theonom shared it and ripped the theonom's position of superior knowledge out from under her. Successful completion of the initiation is a fulfilling experience for both participants: both immediately regain one point of Willpower.

Energy ceases to light the room with the duel's conclusion, so the theonom lights the brazier. She then explains that the initiate has seen the truth of the Fall of Atlantis. He has also felt it tear into his mind, just as she felt the initiate's burgeoning understanding fighting back. The images have been handed down through this ritual for untold eons, originally from the mind of a mage who saw it all occur and knew the cause — one high in the Alae Draconis, none

doubt. It is not a revelation that magic is alive; the realization is in the degree to which the Mysteries can rise to protect themselves. Mages swarming the Celestial Ladders in Creation and in their souls, their ideas of what is right guided by the subtle impulses of magic's will. Magic itself bursting from the girdle set to hold it close to the lower world. And now, how magic shies away, stays at a safe distance from the mages who once hurt it. Whether or not the Abyss is a rift that can ever be repaired this Mystery leaves unanswered, but the question is there.

To end the initiation, the theonom reveals an abundance of tass in the form of a great tooth. The tooth looks as if it comes from a carnivorous creature and is larger than any such carnivore catalogued on Earth. The tooth is also sharp and looks very old. Mystagogues shape naturally forming tass into this shape through a secret process now available to the initiate. Doctrine states that the tooth, though created in the present day, is identical in nature to one that once formed naturally on Atlantis. Magic used to determine age sets the tass at uncountable centuries old, and attempts to use it to scry through time always fail.

The initiation requires a half-hour for the preparatory ritual, a half-hour for each turn in the Duel Arcane — the duel progresses much more slowly than normal duels — and an hour for the following explanation and revelation of the tooth.

Access: Arcana •••••, rotes (• to ••••), High Speech, Corpus Mysteriorum (mundane and grimoire), imbued items ••••• (examine) or •••• (borrow), Artifacts •••••• (examine) or •••• (borrow), Gnosis ••••

Titles: Third-degree, Miles, Practicus, *daduchos* superior, disciple of the Atlantean Mystery, gardener, tree-hugger (vulgar), empty one

Signs: Making the closed fist of knowledge with a little space in the center represents the void associated with this Mystery; using an object (such as a pencil, a rolled-up paper or a spoon) avoids making the empty space obvious by replacing it with a mundane object:

worth as much symbolically and magically as nothing at all. Therefore, a person holding a hammer tightly and tapping it against his head to mock another's intelligence may actually be referencing the first three degrees of the Atlantean Mystery. (Or he thinks you're dumb; it's good to double-check.)

The image of a tree joins the previous images to suggest the third Mystery. A bird in or a pig by a tree marks a member of the third degree. The sort of tree and its state inform aware mystagogues of the type of research performed in a region, in a building or by a mage. The rowan tree indicates soriology, and the season marks the branch: springtime — thaumatology, summer — magosophy, fall — supernology. A rowan in winter suggests that the researcher is bankrupt in ethics, wisdom or both. What trees and what seasons represent what disciplines changes by region and culture.

To indicate seniority to this Mystery, a mage obscures the pinky with another finger or other fingers: this represents that the mystagogue's knowledge eclipses that of the lesser initiate. To those who do not know this level of initiation, it comes across as a way of simply concealing the gesture. Some regions attach additional information to the specific finger or number of fingers used to cover the pinky, including being the student of a certain mentor, bearing a certain office (such as Curator or Savant) or focusing on certain disciplines of study.

Phrases: To mention a tooth is to bring to mind Atlantis and the Mysteriorum Barathrum. There are blatant ways to combine this with the earlier phrases ("a demon's tooth," "that hurricane's got teeth!") and more subtle ways ("This dental association is going way up on the exchange — a typhoon damaged some of their competitors!"). Mentions of plants and growth also signify the third Mystery. Saying, "ever since the rains flooded my basement, there's been this nasty mold there" is a good way to combine noteworthy concepts from the first three Mysteries, as long as it doesn't get overused.

Mystery Initiation: If the initiate possesses the Merit Mystery Initiation •••, he has experienced Atlantis and has seen the Fall. These things remain etched on his memory for all time, and they bring with them near-perfect recall of the Mysterium's history and members. Treat the character as having the Eidetic Memory Merit (**World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 108) when recalling members of the order and relationships between them, or just facts about the order. This only applies to information the character has actually learned — he cannot call up knowledge from the ether. A mage who already possesses the Eidetic Memory Merit gains no additional benefit. Mystagogues point to this aspect of the egregore as evidence that their path is best for recovering and preserving knowledge; it also serves the order well in tracking guanxi.

Leaving the Egregore

No mystagogue expects every mage initiated into the Mysterium to remain with the order forever. Mages are people, and people make mistakes, change their minds or make bad decisions. A mage can be worthy of the greater Mysteries one day and suffer a crisis of dedication the next.

When a mage initiated into any level of the Atlantean Mystery leaves the order (and loses his Order Status), he demonstrates a mindset significantly divorced from that of the standard mystagogue and the Mysterium as a greater body of co-aligned mages. It is impossible for the mage to remain connected to the Mysterium egregore when he thinks in such a manner. The disconnection is violent enough that the mage would have to re-experience the Five Mysteries in order to reacquire the egregore — and the trust of his peers. It occasionally happens that an older mage advances to the order's higher tiers before leaving and, upon return, finds her theonom to be a mage she herself initiated into the order long ago.

In short, a mage who leaves the order loses all egregore benefits and must re-initiate into the Five Mysteries.

Mysteriorum Calamitas

The Mystery of the Misfortune; the Mystery of Enchantment; Status ••••

An initiate at this level has pushed his senses outward to see the life in magic. He has looked deep within himself and seen his ideal relationship with that living magic, and he has seen Atlantis's perfection demolished in the betrayal of the Mysteries. In the fourth Mystery, the initiate reconciles his ideal soul — seen in the ideals of the second and third Mysteries — with the intrinsic flaws of the Fallen World.

For once, the mithraeum is full of light. The brazier burns merrily, full of coal and sprinkled with minerals that add color to the flames. Together, theonom and initiate concoct a drink made of farm-fresh milk, coarse-ground flour, a drop of blood and a mystery ingredient — the hallucinogen. Different cultures substitute their own important consumables but always involve a drug. After mixing the drink, the initiate consumes it while the theonom guides the initiate on his journey.

The initiate activates a version of Mage Sight. Fate 1 "The Sybil's Sight" is the ideal version for this ritual, alerting the initiate to the most relevant aspects of what he sees. Matter 1 "Dark Matter" is a close second, providing the most insight into the nature of the Fallen World's mundane construction. Using both at once is even better. The ritual also uses Prime 1 "Supernal Vision" to make Awakened auras visible; the theonom provides Prime-based Mage Sight if necessary.

Once the spells are cast and the drink is taking hold, the initiate examines himself in the strange light of the flames. Mage Sight, especially having more than one, reveals strange things about the mage's composition and character under the glow of his Awakened aura. One sparkle in the aura seems particularly relevant, and the mage dives into it to view his soul and aura from the inside. Or his bicep is transparent, not important to his magic and composed only of Fallen World flesh. The initiate may become aware of the backside of his retinas and see the individual auras of each rod and cone.

After a period of introspection, the initiate turns to a mirror produced by the theonom. He gazes into the reflections of his soul, his body, the magic dancing around him and examines them for every weakness, strength and truth. This process is similar to scrutinizing resonance in the way that swimming in the ocean is similar to swimming in a pool. The pool is tame and sterile; the ocean is alive, always moving and apparently infinite. It has a living taste and smell and rocks the swimmer with vibrations from the other side of the world. It is *primordial*.

That is how the mage feels. He sees his personal resonance as another mage might, his magical fingerprint, but each whorl reveals another miniscule pattern within it — and more within all those loops and lines — and the mage cannot stop until he has memorized the pattern because it is vital to his identity. He sees his nature, that of the Wise, but without the blinders of everyday life. He can see it pure inside him, then growing tainted with proximity to the outside world. The edge is important, too: the ritual provides a clarity that shows him every crack in his aura that lets the mundanity of the Fallen World seep into his essence.

The initiate goes on to examine the quality of his resonance. He sees it with more nuance than any other mage might, or that he might at any time. Where he would normally only see resonance of his body's composition and life, he sees countless resonances mingled within his aura and soul. Every disappointment, every joy, every strong or weak muscle, every association becomes evident to the initiate. It also becomes clear which of these come from within, where he is strong and pure and Awakened, and which come from external sources. He detects past attentions of other mages, respect or jealousy, popularity and its lack, obscurity or fame. Constant awareness from the theonom washes over the initiate's resonance, and he takes it into account. When it is over, he knows what is *him* and what is the Fallen World. Even the attention of other mages must pass through the Fallen World to reach him.

The introspection ends when the initiate begins to spasm and froth at the mouth, and the theonom applies an antidote to the deadly hallucinogen or purges it with Life. When the initiate recovers, the theonom discusses what the initiate saw. She offers interpretations of the mage's identifying aura and of his nature, and every speck of specific resonance has meaning in its quality. Books have been written about what mystagogues see in the Mysteriorum Calamitas, and the theonom recommends them now that they are open to him. Finally, she stresses that the Fallen World is the current state of existence. Though the initiate was briefly able to perfectly segregate the purity of his soul from the impurity around him, life is not so clear cut. Until magic again draws nearer the physical realms, the flaws around the Wise remain.

Discussion finished, the theonom shows the initiate an ovoid, translucent crystal. It is smooth, fits in the palm of a hand and contains what appears to be a small human skeleton inside it. This is a miniature replica of the real thing: a mage crystallized within his own aura that resides in Ghana. The crystal sculpture represents the mage's internal purity and the shield he has against external flaws. It is also a warning that even the Awakened cannot refuse the Fallen World; they are a part of it as much as it is a

part of the greater body of living magic, and cutting it out completely means death.

Access: Arcana ••••••, rotes (• to ••••••), High Speech, Corpus Mysteriorum (mundane and grimoire), imbued items •••••• • (examine) or •••••• (borrow), Artifacts •••••• •• (examine) or •••••• (borrow), Gnosis ••••••

Titles: Fourth-degree, Leo, Magister, Philosophus, Hierophant, adept of the Atlantean Mystery, flame-bringer, fireman (vulgar), drink-giver, wino (vulgar)

Signs: Mystagogues mark the fourth Mystery by combining the closed fist with a gesture suggestive of the core, internal power or purity. A mage might pretend to be sick, closing one hand around a thermometer and using the other to feel his forehead and tenderly touch his belly to communicate with initiates of the first four degrees all at once. Another might frame himself inside the picture of a celebrity posted on a wall — to relevant eyes, he appears within the larger person and leaves only the person's head visible. Clutching something in a fist completes the symbol.

Position becomes important in imagery. A bird or pig on the left of a tree indicates something wrong — blatant disregard for the order's protocols or even Left-Handed Legacies. An animal on the right suggests no special message. Directly above or in front of the tree is a demand for immediate help if the animal faces left, insistence that everything is fine if the animal faces right and a severe warning of danger if the animal is sleeping or dead. The last connotes no obligation to assist: it encourages mystagogues to leave the area and seek more information only at their own risk.

Indicating seniority to this Mystery means that one is a Hierophant superior, a rank whose rarity makes the signs of seniority less consistent. In one region, a mage displays a character of any sort with the gesture as reverence for the written word; in another, the superior mystagogue places his other hand on the thigh to confirm his grounding in the Fallen World. These tend to be common over a spread of Consilii before fading out and being replaced by others.

Phrases: Any word that brings to mind the self, purity, things internal and flaws mark one as a potential member of the fourth degree. Mentioning that "I was all alone in there…" is a start, and combining it with a reference to earlier Mysteries cinches the deal: "…and I really wanted to complain about this ache in my jaw." Flame and consumption are other words relevant to this Mystery. "The last rain flooded out my fireplace, and now the house is full of soot" serves for the second and fourth Mysteries, but "my chimney's got a leak" is better — it's shorter and less obvious.

At this stage, referencing all four Mysteries in a single sentence or concept becomes too burdensome. It is perfectly acceptable to release key concepts over the course of a short conversation as long as its not an emergency. The same goes for initiates of lower Mysteries who don't have any good covert way to work all the references in quickly. A mystagogue may mention leaf-burning season coming up in the fall, which connects to plants and fire, and later describe the sprinkler setup for his garden (working in water, earth and plants again).

Egregore: If the initiate possesses the Merit Mystery Initiation ••••, the flaws of the Fallen World are external to the Awakened, though the flaws unavoidably infect the mages' spells and souls. One method of purifying magic is by using magical tools to expunge flaws with sympathy to the Supernal Realms. Somewhere, a mage of the Mysterium connects more firmly than other mages to the Supernal through an appropriate symbol, no matter the time. Through the egregore, an initiate of this Mystery can take advantage of that. He is considered to be casting with a magical tool at all times.

Mysteriorum Focus

The Mystery of the Hearth; the Golden Mystery; Status •••••

This initiation is the capstone of the Atlantean Mystery. A mage who comes to this point has seen the life of magic in many aspects, remembered the glory of Atlantis and felt today's drear in stark contrast with the nobility of his own soul. Mystagogues initiated into this Mystery are not considered perfectly enlightened but are known to be on the brink of enlightenment. How they seek further connection to the living magic is up to them — and who could gainsay it?

Unlike the previous initiations, the theonom for this initiation is not already initiated into the Mysteriorum Focus; she is always a Hierophant, just like the initiate. Every couple of decades, elder mystagogues complain that the master of ceremonies for this initiation is not someone proven to be more worthy than the initiate — the loud mystagogues have never experienced this Mystery's secrets — and set off a round of arguments on the matter: if the order really needed higher-status members to initiate mages, how do any initiates of the Mystery of the Hearth exist in the first place? Hierophants superior, already rarer than DeLoreans, have better things to do with their time than be on call for initiations. It doesn't matter: a mage ready for this initiation tells his peers, and one volunteers to act as theonom. The initiate leads the ceremony; the theonom is there as the initiate's assistant and to learn from her fellow mage's ritual.

It is a testament to the Mysterium's Atlantean Mystery — or to the order's egregore — that initiations into the fifth Mystery all bear some similarities. The universal theme is that of a return to home and hearth. Initiates include a return to the first principle of magic and the Mysteriorum Arche. The theonom acquires and brings into the mithraeum an abundant collection of drugs, always including but never limited to the hallucinogen that opened the initiate's perceptions in the first Mystery. Specifically included are some variety of sedative and stimulant. The initiate consumes all three (and often more than three) for specific purposes: the sedative slows the mind and opens the inner realms; the stimulant accelerates the mind and sharpens awareness of what the mage is about to see. Those two drugs draw the mind in different directions, stretching it to better let it absorb the experience of the hallucinogen opening the mage's mind to things he could not otherwise detect.

Some rituals include other methods of filtering the initiate's mind into multiple levels. Rigorous exercise to weary the body, anesthetics to remove all sense of a physical nature, martial arts forms as a form of meditation, ritual sex to open pathways of ecstasy, flagellation or searing of the body to free the mind through pain and magical mental assault to prepare the mind for submission are all possibilities. Some methods require an open-minded theonom, as not all are ready to harm a respected mystagogue or have a sexual encounter in the mithraeum.

How the initiate progresses now depends on the path he chooses toward completing the Atlantean Mystery. To take the next step toward enlightenment, the mage must reside within Atlantis in his soul. The initiation bears resemblance to more than one of the previous four initiations. He begins by activating Mage Sight, often more than one version. Which are most appropriate depends on how the initiate chooses to approach the Mystery — it may be a timeless truth, a matter of perspective or any other cliché, but it's real to the mage and his interpretation is as valid as any (and more valid than most).

The initiate sits, his mind drawn thin by the drugs, and scours himself for Mana, as he did in his first real initiation. He immediately releases the Mana into the Tapestry around him, and this time the Mana does not dance with life. That lesson is already learned. The Tapestry absorbs the free Mana instantly, but this time the initiate's eyes can follow it. The surge of energy is too small for anyone not holding his mind open with ritual to see the Mana, and the path the Mana follows is so complex that only a mage so close to the Atlantean Mystery could successfully follow the path. The Mana flows into the world and behind the Tapestry, to a place all men dream. To continue along the path the Mana makes, the mage must dive into the Temenos.

When the mage casts his aquaster's eyes out over the collective unconscious, he can see the traces of Mana he released threading through the dreamscape. It still bears some of his resonance, which the initiate knows intimately from the fourth Mystery and can still remember. Some insist the meditation must take only seconds in the initiate's state for the Mana to still be within

eyeshot by the time he reaches the Temenos; other accounts describe the mage's perspective to be one of great metaphorical height, allowing him to see far across the plains of humanity's thoughts unobstructed.

Thus begins the hunt. The initiate follows the threads that his freed Mana weaves through the peoples' unconscious inside the Tapestry. He dashes past concepts monstrous and mundane, through the legs of gods and demons without apology to ensure that he stays on the trail. Some mages catch their quarry; others follow the path to its conclusion but find no evidence of living magic. Still more lose the trail and accept failure. An initiate who is ready for the last Mystery can do any one of these, or something else, but it will be the right choice for him.

He finds himself in the mithraeum, light and heat from the coals dwindling. The theonom is absent, but that never troubles the initiate. He still feels the sting of failure, the disappointment of ill-fated pursuit, the bewilderment of catching something not there or any other appropriate emotion, and he feels it strongly. What is important is that he looks out with his magical senses. The initiate's perceptions first take in what is most immediate, himself, and he is as he should be. His body and soul are what he remembers from the Mysteriorum Calamitas.

Then he looks outward — again, similar to the previous Mystery — and detects none of the flaws and cracks that should be in the Fallen World. His aura melds perfectly into the world that surrounds him, which has an aura and soul all its own. It is as richly textured and nuanced as the mage's aura, and it is so flawless that it deserves utmost attention. The initiate reads this aura for what seems like days, noting its neutral and willing resonance, able to encourage any flavor of magic. The flawless shape of this surrounding soul ends at the walls of the mithraeum, and it is there that the mage begins to sense the taint of the Fallen World seeping in.

After this close examination, the mage steps *through* the mithraeum into what lies behind it. The place moves from dim to darker, from cave-like to cavernous. It also becomes somewhat damp, but not unpleasantly so. It is the damp of breath, the damp after a warm rain. He is in a secret place in the Temenos where Atlantis remains whole and above the waves — yet more proof that Atlantis is still a part of every human on Earth, mortal or magical — and he walks from the cave to look out upon Atlantis in its unparalleled splendor, as it was and shall ever be.

Then the initiate wakes. The drugs eventually fade from his system, the memories fade, but the holiness of the mithraeum remains firm in his mind. It is his responsibility to seek out another mystagogue who has experienced the Mysteriorum Focus; this is a sort of quest, though one only to be pursued when there are not more pressing matters. When the initiate finds another Hierophant superior, the two peers discuss their experiences in the fifth Mystery. They discuss the nature of the mithraeum as a source of sympathy with the original Dragon's Tomb, the first source of enlightenment in the world and as a binding force for the order and for the Atlantean Mystery. Atlantis, after all, has been with the order all along — one revelation of the fifth Mystery is that what the mage needed was at home after all.

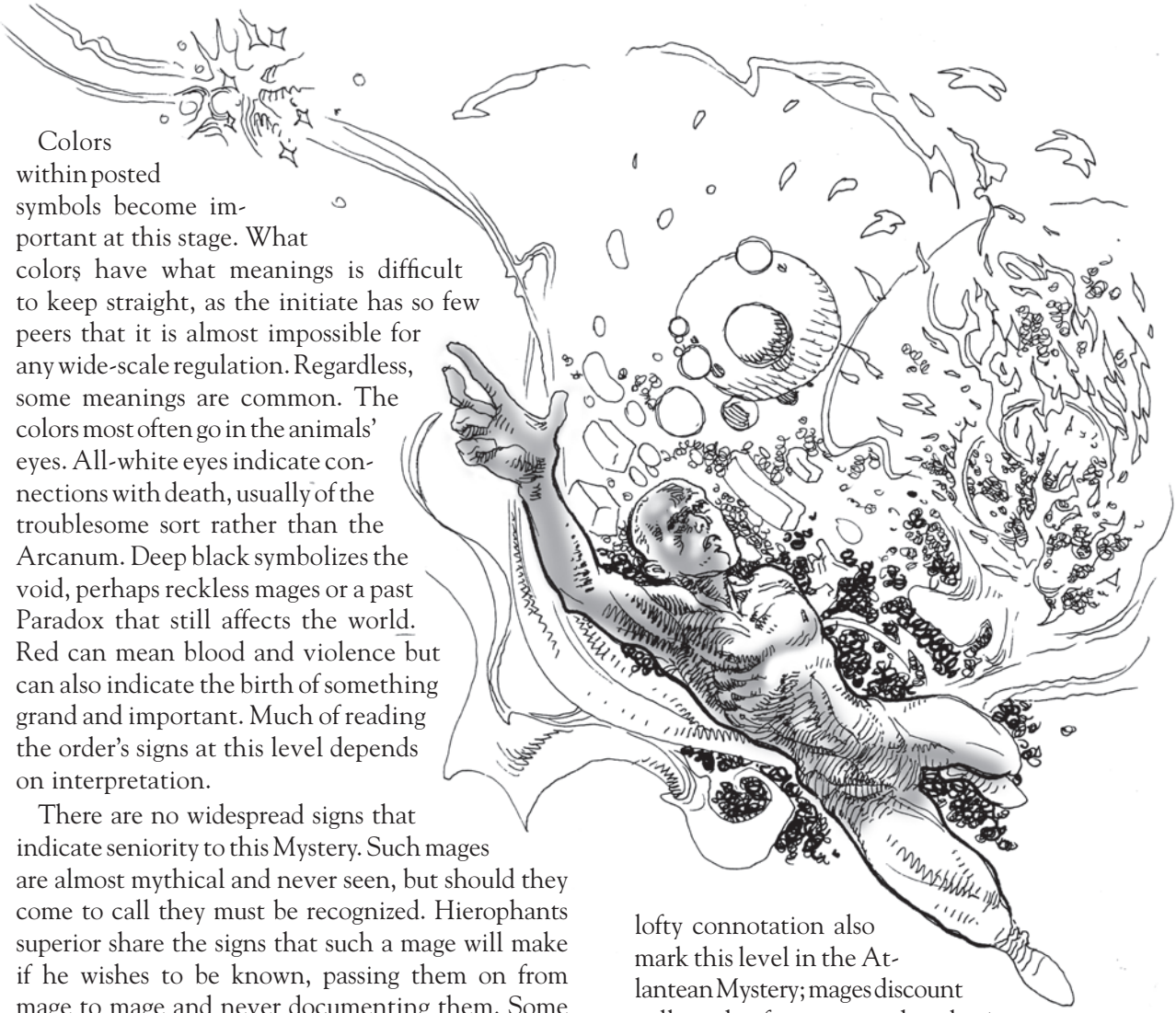
A mage who experiences the fifth Mystery must also take a journey; many combine the journey and the trip for discussion with a peer. Where he goes is unimportant, as long as he speaks with many people; how long he takes doesn't matter, as long as the journey is full. The initiate shows himself the dreams and natures of humanity through personal experience, which his initiation shows him in a new perspective.

The ritual portion of this initiation takes 12 hours; this is also the only Mystery that a mage can undertake and come out unenlightened, in which case he awakens after only four hours. Seeking out another Hierophant superior and journeying to see the face of the world takes an indeterminate period of time, often months.

Access: Arcana ••••• •+, rotes (• to ••••• •+), High Speech, Corpus Mysteriorum (mundane and grimoire), imbued items •••••• •• (examine) or •••••• • (borrow), Artifacts •••••• ••• (examine) or ••••• • (borrow), Gnosis ••••• •+

Titles: Fifth-degree, Pater, Magus, Hierophant superior, master of the Atlantean Mystery, gift of air, mouth-breather (vulgar), master of the hearth, homebody (vulgar)

Signs: Any gesture toward the floor or the general place occupied by the mystagogue refers to this Mystery; of course, initiates of the Mysteriorum Focus don't run into each other very often and feel little need to declare their status to the deaf. A simple stamp of the foot or dropped cigarette is enough to draw the attention downward and indicate the mage's status; standing in an outline of any sort, such as the four-square boundaries at an elementary school, is usually unobtrusive, though some outlines (the chalk outline of a corpse) are less so.



Colors within posted symbols become important at this stage. What colors have what meanings is difficult to keep straight, as the initiate has so few peers that it is almost impossible for any wide-scale regulation. Regardless, some meanings are common. The colors most often go in the animals' eyes. All-white eyes indicate connections with death, usually of the troublesome sort rather than the Arcanum. Deep black symbolizes the void, perhaps reckless mages or a past Paradox that still affects the world. Red can mean blood and violence but can also indicate the birth of something grand and important. Much of reading the order's signs at this level depends on interpretation.

There are no widespread signs that indicate seniority to this Mystery. Such mages are almost mythical and never seen, but should they come to call they must be recognized. Hierophants superior share the signs that such a mage will make if he wishes to be known, passing them on from mage to mage and never documenting them. Some are intricate convolutions of the little finger to the sternum, others are wholly divorced from that series of gestures. Explicitly touching the middle finger to the palm, projecting the ring finger perpendicular to the palm, pointing the fore and little fingers directly up and in the plane of the palm while touching the thumb to the first knuckle of the middle finger is one such sign, obvious but inscrutable to all but the most enlightened. Another is to reverse the seniority signs of the previous Mysteries, obscuring other fingers with the pinky, moving the fingers upward rather than downward and pointing the thumb elsewhere.

Phrases: Words that bring to mind enclosures, caverns, homes and hearths reference this Mystery. Working something as simple as, "it's dark in there" or "man, I'm homesick" into normal conversation can perk an initiate's ears, but he needs something more to make a positive ID. Following with even vague references to bulls, storms, teeth and the like attracts the mage's interest quickly. Air and words of lofty connotation also mark this level in the Atlantean Mystery; mages discount collected references to the classic western elements, but mentioning the cold front blowing in from the north and following it up with something similar to, "yeah, can't beat Ma Nature: if it's not the storms, you're on the San Andreas or buried under snow" includes a couple important references from earlier Mysteries.

Mystery Initiation: If the initiate possesses the Merit Mystery Initiation •, the mithraeum is a place of greater import than 99% of the Mysterium realize. It connects the Athenaeum to the Atlantean libraries of old through the mithraeum's resonance with the ancient caves in which Atlanteans meditated and practiced their arts. The mithraeum also connects Athenaea across the world through its shape, form and purpose. An initiate of the Mysteriorum Focus has an Intimate sympathetic connection to all mages of the Mysterium while within the mithraeum. This sympathy still degrades through lack of a true name, and does not somehow inspire the mage with names of mystagogues he has never otherwise heard of.

Mysteriorum Atlantis

The Atlantean Mystery; Status Supernal

The Mysteriorum Focus is the acknowledged peak of the Atlantean Mystery, but mystagogues recognize that there may be something more. If the Mystery of the Hearth is the metaphorical summit of the mountain, this Mystery is a step into the heavens above. Many mystagogues equate initiation at this level with Ascension into the Supernal World as one of the Oracles, and as many believe this Mystery to represent enlightenment made flesh. Interpretations vary wildly and are rarely discussed: it is something that the Mysterium takes on faith, not a matter that can be demonstrated and proven. Mages who have actually initiated into this Mystery are rumors of rumors, whispered to have been seen by a mystagogue known by a colleague in a distant Consilium.

Access: An initiate of this Mystery would be refused access to nothing, were he to make his nature known.

Titles: Heliodromus, Ipsissimus, Arcane Master, archmaster of the Atlantean Mystery, bodhisattva, *mathematikoi*, Oracle (rare; controversial)

Signs: A mage who has ascended past the pinnacle of the Atlantean Mystery knows all signs available to initiates of the Mysteries before. He surely knows the proper signs to make his exalted status recognized to those who must.

Phrases: A mage initiated into this Mystery knows all the order's code phrases. He works them into everyday speech in a manner subtle and revelatory.

Mystery Initiation: The Mysterium egregore for a mage at this level of initiation is unknowable by lesser mages.

Variation on the Theme

The Five Mysteries, as described above, convey the core meaning of each initiation and the standard rituals involved. Most caucuses add their own twists to the initiations, connecting them to a local artifact or legend that can further illustrate the Atlantean Mystery, or to something deep-rooted in the caucus's culture. These cultural aspects of the Mysteries are strongly held by the mages who experience them and influence how the local Mysterium holds the core Mystery. The culture aspects sometimes represent significant departures from the common view. These aspects of the Atlantean Mystery are taught only with the first real Mystery; initiates into the Mysteriorum Exemplum see nothing so important.

Example: God in the Machine

The Mysterium caucus of Athens lives within reach of an archaeological wonder and evidence of earlier wonders: the Antikythera mechanism. Modern examination and methods have revealed much about this astrological clock, but scientists continue to miss the mechanism's true purpose, something that the caucus reveals to its members as part of their multi-tiered initiations. The Matter 1 spell "Craftman's Eye" makes it simple for any mage to discover that the mechanism is designed to be an astronomical computer, but the spell reveals that it is meant to mark out a specific length of time before completing its purpose. No additional magic makes the issue clear.

Mystagogues take advantage of the positions they hold within the National Archaeological Museum of Athens to hold part of their initiation ceremonies before the Antikythera mechanism. Other local mages sometimes suspect the Mysterium of having an Athenaeum within the NAMA, or beneath it; neither is true, but the Athenaeum is near enough to make travel from one to the other easy. Tradition dictates that the initiate sleep one night within the mithraeum after the magic-based initiation and before the encounter with the mechanism, which usually takes place at midnight after the next day. The practice protects the museum's contents from drug-absorbed willworkers.

Mages of the caucus keep the importance of the mechanism to themselves. They allow other mages to examine it — a common request, and everyone knows that the local Mysterium has the care of the artifact — but its place in their Mysteries is unknown to anyone outside the order *or* the Consilium. Not even nearby mystagogues know, though some guess, given their colleagues' mechanical bent. A replica of the Antikythera mechanism holds an honored and secret place in the Athenaeum. Mystagogues often study the mechanism for clues to the Atlantean Mystery, but the artifact does not mimic any of the mystical functions of the original.

Mysteriorum Arche

After the revelation of magic's first principle, the initiate sits before the main body of the Antikythera mechanism and examines its working. This is the first time a mystagogue sees the device as a mystagogue; before, he has seen it as a mortal or an unaffiliated mage. Through magic, the theonom gives the initiate explicit understanding of the mechanism's purpose (requiring Matter 2 to bestow "Craftsman's Eye" on

another). She then leads the initiate in a portion of the procedure from the previous night: the initiate scours himself for Mana, then releases the Mana.

The free magic flows into the Antikythera mechanism, moving through its gears like motive power, and the initiate uses Mage Sight to watch. The mechanism is in pieces and damaged by age, so the magic quickly slips from its wheels and fades into the Tapestry. This is a demonstration of how living magic is more than a drug-dream in a dark place, and how mages serve the will of the living Mysteries. The mechanism interacts with living magic, and the mechanism's creation was directed by a mage obeying the life of magic, knowingly or not.

Mysteriorum Anima

The initiate of this Mystery has seen his relation to the whole of the living magic; he understands it for a moment, then forgets much and must remember it how he can. This enables him to see it again. His experience with the living magic is less complete than the first, but provides greater complexity than he would otherwise retain.

The theonom for this stage of the initiation is any mage with either the mortal authority or the magical ability to disable alarms surrounding the Antikythera mechanism, because the initiate must touch it and enter a waking dream. The presence of the mechanism impinges on his dream and takes him across the Astral Threshold into the mage's Oneiros. The initiate spends no Mana to make this journey. He explores a series of rooms and passages of increasingly radial and mechanistic design within his own mind before stepping out and away from it all to find himself in the Temenos. The mechanism of his own mind is a small portion of the great mechanism that is the collective unconscious — it is a metaphor and model for the mage's place within the living Mysteries.

Mysteriorum Barathrum

Having seen the Fall and developed an understanding of the Abyss, the initiate explores similar principles within the Anikythera mechanism. Time has destroyed it and time brought it to the Mysterium, and Time is but another facet of the living Mysteries. The initiate comes before all the assembled pieces of the mechanism and considers them as a whole. They possess their own Abyss: the gaps between the broken components are one; the missing gears are another void the mechanism would have to cross in order to function.

To contemplate the meaning of the Abyss and the broken nature of reality, the initiate reconstructs the shattered mechanism in his head. He uses no paper or recording devices, and the process often requires many nights sitting before the device, concealed from mortal view, before it is complete. Every night until the initiate completes this Mystery, he explains his progress to the theonom; if she judges that he has work left to do, she sends him to the mithraeum to sleep away the day. His final recreation of the complete machine is never physically accurate, but it is metaphysically potent. There is no magic necessarily involved in this step of the initiation, though mages do use magic to aid them. Mind is especially useful for sharpening the intellect.

Mysteriorum Calamitas

The initiate has compared the perfection of the Awakened soul with the flaws of the Fallen World. He now learns another lesson about the flaws of the physical realms. Coming into the presence of the Antikythera mechanism and activating his Mage Sight, he examines its resonance with as much care as he examined his own the previous night.

What he sees is shocking, at least for most mystagogues who have proceeded through the earlier Mysteries treating the mechanism as a holy object. It is riddled with the flaws of the Fallen World, with the Quiescence. Furthermore, the mechanism's resonance has a strong undercurrent of *failure*. It is a stark reminder that the device's intention was to mark off time until some specific date, and that the mechanism was irrevocably destroyed before its designed end. Initiates come from this Mystery with a renewed sense of frailty in the harsh realties of the Fallen World.

Mysteriorum Focus

Mithraea bind mages of the Mysterium together and to the Dragon's Tomb beneath the Awakened City. They focus the order's will and purpose and keep it whole. The Antikythera mechanism is a lesser metaphor for this unity. On a purely mortal level, the mechanism brings together scientists and philosophers across the world, giving them a solid foundation for collaboration. As a device, the mechanism unifies the motions of the heavens with the inhabitants of the Earth.

The mechanism is also an expression of Supernal will. So are all things. The initiate meditates upon the mechanism in its presence for three nights in a row. On the fourth night, he consumes a hallucinogenic compound, usually of his own design, and walks Athens. He sees aspects of the Antikythera mechanism in all things: all complex machines bear some relation to the device, and even the simplest devices use the same principles. The mechanism ties the caucus to all the world through the device's nature as a machine and demonstrates how magic acts in its own way, through even machinery as mundane as a bicycle.

This initiation is a moving testament to the power of magic's will and its ubiquitous design. When the initiate meets another Hierophant superior to discuss their mutual experiences, the initiate explains the local Mystery in full; leaving anything out would let the knowledge falter.

Example: Sròn an t-Sìtheinn, Nose of the Fairies

Publicly, Sròn an t-Sìtheinn is the Gaelic name for Strontian, a Scottish town on the map, for reasons relating to the discovery of strontium. The nearby Mysterium caucus often argues over whether this is a fortunate coincidence or a clever arrangement by one of their predecessors; most mages want to claim responsibility by the order, and the rest simply have trouble buying it.

Regardless, they appreciate the town's name because it draws attention away from the *true* Sròn an t-Sìtheinn, a mound dozens of miles away from any inhabited place and vital to the caucus's interpretation of the Atlantean Mystery. This caucus possesses a mithraeum but uses it only for the Mysteriorum Exemplum and the Mysteriorum Focus; all other initiations take place on the Sròn. Their initiations revolve around the will of the sídhe, or the Tuathaa Dé Danann or the ancestor-spirits who inhabit the mound.

To the local caucus, the concept is on par with the order's living will of magic, guiding the events of the world with a subtle hand that the initiated can detect. Their Atlantis was a time when these creatures were free to roam the Earth, before they were wounded, chased away, bound under the earth or otherwise forsaken by humankind. Unbridled magic went with them. What exactly the mound's inhabitants are does not much concern the mystagogues. Acanthus prefer fairy folk, Moros like to think of them as ancestor-spirits, Obrimos lean toward gods of some kind and the other two Paths choose whatever best suits them. The core principle is that of a guiding will and a source of magic, and their initiations are provably related to the concepts taught by the mainstream Mysterium.

Because of the caucus's significant deviation from the core Mystery, this caucus is somewhat insular. When its members do interact with other mystagogues, they are reluctant to discuss the Atlantean Mystery in concrete terms, knowing the discrepancies that will appear between their version and the official version. The concepts of the core Atlantean Mystery and this offshoot are very similar at their root; a mage of this caucus who discusses his experiences with a mystagogue from outside the region will find more common ground than the mage expects.

Mysteriorum Arche

On the Sròn an t-Sìtheinn, the initiate kneels and sends a gift of life — his and a sacrificial beast's — to the spirits of the mound. The initiation is nearly identical to that of the core Mysterium, but the bits of Mana moving of their own accord eventually melt into the mound. This is representative of a gift to the spirits; that the freed Mana does not flow into

the mound at other times indicates that the spirits approve of initiations into their Mystery rather than the simple sacrifice of life.

Mysteriorum Anima

The Sròn an t-Sìtheinn is a Hallow and a Demesne of ancient creation, making the Sròn one of the better-kept secrets on the British Isles. The local Mysterium works hard to keep it that way. This allows the initiate to attempt to reach Astral Space there. In the Oneiros, the mage has a series of mystery play-like encounters with four beings. Each provides a riddle to the initiate; the answer to one riddle becomes clear after the completion of each remaining Mystery, beginning with this one. The answer to this riddle comes in the form of an epiphany that perfectly describes the initiate's station relative to the mound's inhabitants and his duty to them. That revelation fades quickly, and the mage quickly shapes it into a form he can remember.

This initiation often expresses its riddles in images and events rather than words. Riddles are made public within the caucus, and the mystagogues argue the identities of the beings who pose the riddles endlessly.

Mysteriorum Barathrum

It is not the Fall of Atlantis that initiates view through the ritual Duel Arcane; it is the Forsaking. The Forsaking is what the caucus calls the time when those who inhabit the mound were forbidden to walk the world and confined to the Sròn an t-Sìtheinn, or perhaps when their children shamed them, and they left for their perfected home and closed the way behind them. Above that prison, closed door or whatever else it might be, the thoughts of the beings influence the clash of wills and reveal the truth about the Forsaking.

Images include 10 beings of infinite grace and beauty arranged around the mound, joined by masses of humans — probably mages. Some step forward from the crowd, becoming taller, more timeless, more beautiful, just as the 10 central beings. Accounts differ at this point: some say the approaching mages force their benefactors into the mound, others say that the 10 walk in of their own accord and scatter the assembled humanity to the far ends of the Earth, only to discover the mound again eons hence. Regardless of what the initiate sees, this is the point of division between a perfect world and a flawed world, when magic learns flaws for the first time. In this worldview, the Abyss is the metaphysical divide between the Fallen World and the land of the ancient benefactors beneath the mound — it is a punishment set by the gods, or a natural consequence of humanity's actions. Either way, it is deserved.

Mysteriorum Calamitas

This Mystery resembles the core initiation but has another step. After examining the interactions of his resonance and that of the Fallen World in endless detail, the initiate turns his attention downward into the mound. A superficial look at his soul and the world there shows the same boundary between perfection and flaw; looking deeper, the mage sees also sympathy, a yearning of like for like. The perfection of his Awakened soul calls to — or is called by — something within the mound. This is the ideal realm of the mound's inhabitants; the sympathy is their encouragement of his search for truth.

Mysteriorum Focus

Initiation into the Mysteriorum Focus is the only initiation for this caucus that occurs in their under-used mithraeum. Much of the ritual and the meaning is the same: the release of Mana, the hunt through Astral Space and the repeated examination of surrounding resonance all resonate with mystagogues from nearly anywhere in the world. But instead of the revelation that the Mysterium is bound together and to Atlantis by mithraea, the initiate sees how he and his order are always connected to the mound and the beings within — the sympathy is within him. Likewise, all the Mysterium is accepted by those beings, their versions of the Mysteries notwithstanding, and that is the universal bond of the order. Rather than stepping out of the astral mithraeum into the Dragon's Tomb, the initiate steps from the mithraeum to the Sròn an t-Sìtheinn, then steps backward to the time when its inhabitants walked the Earth and life was ideal. It is a brief experience.

There haven't been any Hierophants superior from this caucus in at least a century. Though the standing practice is to resist discussing the Mysteries with even other mystagogues, a mage initiated into this Mystery has the pull to break those taboos if he so desires.

Rank and Privilege

Mages advance in the Mysterium by proving themselves worthy and initiating into the order's Atlantean Mystery. Once initiated, a mage finds that privilege

comes with rank. These divide into three major stratifications of the Mysterium's social structure and have distinct ranks (called by various names around the world): *neokoros*, *daduchos* and Hierophant. Each rank has a senior status: mystagogues who bear a certain rank but have achieved enough recognition (and been initiated into the proper level) to stand just above their peers.

Neokoros (no Status Merit required)

Neokoros is the rank received when a mage enters the order and kept until he initiates into the second Mystery. The *neokoroi* perform the tasks that give the Mysterium its identity. They research collect lost data from the farthest reaches of the known world (and some reaches unknown), stand guardian over the order's forbidden knowledge, catalog and arrange an Athenaeum's contents at the Curator's direction. Of course, they also seek out more information about the Supernal and supernatural, picking up leads and following them as far as possible. *Neokoroi* also routinely accept menial tasks, guarding their elders' backs, cleaning the Athenaeum and serving as gofers or messengers. Zero Status *neokoroi* escape some of those chores, simply because the Athenaeum is kept hidden from anyone not initiated into the Mysteriorum Arche.

Neokoroi naturally do more than the simple grunt work. A *neokoros* is as individual as any mage, and chooses his own path as much as possible. *Neokoroi* pursue their own studies outside directed lessons from their superiors, chasing down lost knowledge whenever possible. Some disappear for months on digs in foreign parts of the world or treks across continents in search of wisdom. *Neokoroi* are the most populous segment of the Mysterium's members and often the least set in their ways. Wise *daduchoi* give headstrong *neokoroi* slack when leashing them isn't necessary; in return, the *neokoroi* provide more of the order's retrieved knowledge than the *daduchoi* (who blame it on being buried in administrative work).

Community

Interactions among *neokoroi* are much like those in an academic community, particularly graduate students at university. They are all in the same boat: being taught lessons by older and more experienced mages, doing tedious things in the name of their own growing knowledge, doing insulting things in the name of *others'* knowledge, being judged by their elders. *Neokoroi* compete for attention from the *daduchoi* and Hierophants, secretly desire to be the favorite student, publicly hate the teachers' pets and do the work because the *neokoroi* know that it's really good for them.

For all the natural competition, the only peers a *neokoros* has are other *neokoroi*. After all, they're the ones going through the exact same thing he's experiencing. *Neokoroi* hang out after discharging their responsibilities, work together to expand their knowledge of the Arcana, bitch about their teachers and generally shoot the shit. Relationships, from fair-weather friendships to deeply-felt romances form within the group. Clutches of *neokoroi* are small enough in most Consilii that these relationships tend to become incestuous. Dramatic television shows in which the characters never seem to interact with anyone outside the core group actually have some of it right.

Neokoroi are readily available to each other professionally. Even those who have intense dislike for one another acknowledge that advancing knowledge is the primary concern; besides, helping out a rival colleague means knowing what he's working on. *Neokoroi* focus their study on three or four disciplines: one of soriology, one of esotology and at least one of the exoterics. Some are more broad, but *daduchoi* encourage the less-experienced mages to limit themselves at the start. A *neokoros* who comes upon something he doesn't understand in his studies can ask another mystagogue with no loss of status; no mage can know everything. This comes up most often when a mage's studies lead him into a discipline outside his focus, so he approaches a colleague with more knowledge on the subject. Within a single discipline, complex problems can be more easily solved with two or sometimes three heads, or there may simply be an aspect of the problem that the *neokoros* is overlooking. Collaboration is a popular and important part of guanxi.

There is a natural but unfortunate division between senior *neokoroi* (Status •; they have experienced the Mysteriorum Arche) and their less-experienced brethren. With the initiation comes the knowledge that the *very* first initiation does not qualify as one of the Five Mysteries. It is a good lesson to the new mage and a first, indoctrinating step, but

it has no mystical importance and conveys no real understanding of the Atlantean Mystery. A mage who learns this suddenly sees his peers differently. They are worthy of membership in the order, but there is so much they have not seen. Elder mystagogues do gauge which *neokoroi* are able to handle the change without too much mistreatment of their peers and arrogance, and factor that into whether a mage should advance in the Mystery, but it is not the only thing they must consider. There will always be *neokoroi* who revel in being superior to their peers and treat those peers with scorn, though it doesn't take long for a *daduchos* to humble such a mage after learning of such behavior.

On the other hand, *neokoroi* are nothing but happy for a colleague who experiences the first Mystery and joins the ranks of the *neokoroi* superior. Exceptions exist: a mage who ascends through the first Mystery gets no cheers from his archrival. But the general case is that every *neokoros* is joyful that another mage has become worthy of the first true Mystery. The rest of the senior *neokoroi* throw a party for the initiate, unless it's really out of character for the initiate or the body of *neokoroi*. In some regions, the *neokoroi* superior have their own initiation that someone new to their ranks must endure. This ranges from frat house hazings or secret society introductions to things that only mages could do, such as accruing as many Paradoxes and living with the consequences. *Daduchoi* are obligated to put a stop to some of these activities if they officially learn of them, which is why keep their ears closed with regards to such things (after dropping hints about how to best stay away from the mortal authorities and the Guardians of the Veil).

Outside the Order

Connections can form between the *neokoroi* and people outside their clique, but it's never easy. Sleepers simply can't connect with the mage on the proper levels. Mages of other orders are more natural companions, but a mystagogue has to get past the fact that his friends or lovers don't have their priorities straight. It's only a deal-breaker when it comes to the Mysterium's two most hated orders. With any other mage (except a Seer of the Throne or a Banisher, naturally), relationships can work.

It gets harder once a mage experiences the first Mystery. The revelation of it and the introduction into the Mysterium egregore make the order's objectives and philosophy much sharper in the (now senior) *neokoros*'s mind. Giving other beliefs credence becomes more difficult, as does humoring the people who hold them. Mages still maintain or develop relationships with mages from outside the order, though; for many, it is a hardship on the order of a devout Catholic marrying someone of a very different religion and knowing that the spouse is destined for Hell. A mystagogue who cares for a mage outside the order may try to convert him; only some succeed.

The Mysterium has some standard warnings for *neokoroi* who insist on fraternizing with other mages. (Some exist for dealing with Sleepers, too, but these warnings are no different from most orders' and are expected to apply equally to Sleepers passed on the street and the most intimate lovers.) The order emphasizes that not all mages are worthy of all knowledge. It's the cornerstone of the Mysterium, but close relationships make this warning difficult to remember. Likewise, the order expects mystagogues to use *all* sources of information to increase the order's knowledge base; being in a relationship based on trust makes no difference.

Cabals are not a special case. A *neokoros* draws as much information from his cabal-mates as they make available. It does little more than fill the Athenaeum shelves with accounts of other orders' methods for teaching increased understanding of the Arcana or of the self — though Curators like having those, just in case. Tidbits about Legacies and order-specific rumors are more valuable finds from such sources. The Mysterium makes clear that, while it expects all *neokoroi* to record and share their knowledge for the greater good, cabals are more useful when not alienated. It is a mage's cabal that travels with him to examine the castle of Peter the Cruel or help him wrest memories from ancient spirits. Having a small group of friendly, willing mages is much more valuable than possessing yet another interpretation on the understandings of a disciple of Life.

Interaction with Daduchoi

To most *neokoroi*, a *daduchos* is a more experienced, wiser mage who pays his debt to the order by handling its larger concerns. A few see *daduchoi* only as mages who have gone through another initiation or two and resent their authority. The type of mage is the sort of mystagogue who either changes his perspective or soon leaves the order; most of these

are mages still waiting on the Mysterium Arche, and many change their minds when they experience the first Mystery.

One or two *daduchoi* watch over the *neokoros* community, and these are the ones whom *neokoroi* know best. The *neokoroi* receive assignments from these *daduchoi*, usually in the form of polite requests or suggestions. Being "recommended" for a period of self-examination through inventory of the Athenaeum's library is something *neokoroi* fear. (On the other hand, the request to inventory the Athenaeum's archive of uncatalogued supernatural artifacts is feared for an entirely different reason.) The *neokoros* also receive their lessons from the *daduchoi*, along with guidance about which disciplines to make their focus. A *neokoros* studies disciplines of his choice, but the *daduchoi* monitor his progress; a *neokoros* who does poorly with a given discipline receives a suggestion that he change to another, along with recommendations based on the *daduchoi*'s assessment of (or preference for) him. Being told that one should reconsider one's chosen field can be crushing for a hopeful student, and it serves as another motivation for the *neokoros* to impress the *daduchoi*.

These are also the *daduchoi* who reprimand bad behavior. They remember which *neokoroi* perform their duties with the accepted amount of whining, which fail to contribute knowledge to the order's stores, which are not social with the other *neokoroi* and which are otherwise not behaving acceptably. These *daduchoi* make recommendations to the mages who consider *neokoroi* worthy of initiation, but do not serve in that function. A caucus with three or fewer *daduchoi* makes the exception, in which case it is even more imperative to stay on the *neokoros*-keeper's good side — a different mage accepts the capsule report and then forms her own judgment, but a *daduchos* who already knows the potential initiate is harder to sway if she already dislikes a *neokoros*.

Beyond guidance and observation, the *daduchoi* let the *neokoroi* do their own thing. Too much regulation stifles creativity and insight, and every mystagogue is somehow in pursuit of knowledge. That sets them on the right path from the start, and a mage can't go too far wrong as long as that's still in his sights.

Interaction with Hierophants

Neokoroi see very little of Hierophants. Hierophants are rare to begin with and concern themselves with otherworldly affairs, so anything more than seeing them at caucus meetings is a surprise. Hierophants have needs that occasionally pull *neokoroi* near to them: ritual castings need additional casters, some experiments require one of the Awakened, journeys deep into the Astral Realms go easier with a minder on the outside, mages on digs use assistants for everything, some situations insist on muscle or many other things. But the Hierophant doesn't need the *neokoros*'s advice or input, though many make a point of listening — wisdom has come from far stranger places than the mouth of an inexperienced mystagogue. Because of this, *neokoroi* see Hierophants as inscrutable and wise: they are so advanced in the Atlantean Mystery that they are above doing actual work for the order and are supposedly communing with the universe or some shit, but they still listen to what a greenhorn has to say.

A *neokoros* attracts a Hierophant's attention in other ways. Precocious *neokoroi* who are advancing in an Arcanum or mastering their Gnosis very quickly may be tutored by a Hierophant, especially in smaller caucuses where there are fewer mages available to teach the adept and master ranks. For these *neokoroi*, Hierophants are eclectic but strangely effective teachers. Some *neokoroi* get even more attention, if the fates hold something special for them. Hierophants never know where they may find a mage who must be propelled quickly up the ranks of the order, and for this reason a Hierophant personally meets every new admission into the order. She isn't available on demand for the Mysteriorum Exemplum, but she comes by to see the *neokoros* soon. Others rely on the advice of their *daduchoi*, especially if the *neokoroi* have no experience with the Fate and Time Arcana. A *neokoros* singled out for rapid advancement probably grows sick of the extra attention before it fades.

Characters as Neokoroi

Most characters who begin play associated with the Mysterium be *neokoroi* superior. It is the easiest choice to make: Merit dots are too valuable to spend solely on rank in a single organization, but not purchasing at least a dot in an order robs the character of Atlantean High Speech. (*Neokoroi* inferior get very little benefit from their association with the Mysterium.) This means the character has experienced the Mysteriorum Arche and is familiar with most of the theses described in Chapter Two,

which lets you get the most out of this book for even a starting character.

It also puts the character in the position of having probably several superiors in the region. These Storyteller characters are rich story triggers. The direct route is for them to send the character on a mission or give him a general task to complete, an easy game starter for the Storyteller. The *daduchoi* also serve as teachers for Arcana, Gnosis and rotes, and as fonts of information when a cabal loses track of its objective or is doing backup research. The *daduchoi* also think they know best, so they may not always be entirely forthcoming.

Daduchos (Status ●●)

A mystagogue becomes a *daduchos* after initiation into the Mysteriorum Anima. It is a turning point for the mage; he may have been socially aware before hand, but now the ritual has opened his eyes to the ebbs and flows of the Mysterium. It is the perfect time to give him responsibilities of importance within the order. A *daduchos* directs the *neokoroi* in their basic services to the order, their educations, their pursuits of knowledge and their advancements in the Atlantean Mystery. *Daduchoi* play politics on the order's behalf, making the cloakroom deals and official dispensations necessary to keep the order afloat and allow it to pursue its mission. They guide the order in that, as well, keeping the Athenaeum secure and organized, and they name a Censor from among the *neokoroi* superior; the *daduchoi*'s judgment decides who of their order can access what of their secret knowledge, and they decide which other mages and which donations of knowledge are worthy of a peek at the order's preserved information.

All this they do publicly, giving of themselves for the advancement of the Mysterium. It is hard work, and many are stretched beyond their limits and suffer for it. But *daduchoi* do not sacrifice everything to forever become overworked administrators. They do not give up their habits and hobbies; anything that relaxes them becomes that much more important (and harder to find time for). *Daduchoi* continue to study the Supernal and mortal disciplines they have chosen; some broaden their expertise across additional disciplines (which becomes easier with the concomitant increase in access to knowledge), but more refine their knowledge in the disciplines they have already mastered. They refine their understanding of the Mysteries just as they did when *neokoroi*, if more slowly. It is difficult for most *daduchoi* to hare off on a search for some new and exciting bit of supernatural lore, given their greater responsibilities. They thus come up with donations to the order sufficient to warrant their advancement less often, though this isn't a problem: most mystagogues believe it takes longer (in general, anyway) to become worthy of initiation into each successive Mystery.

The exceptions to the rule are those mystagogues who refuse to give up their lives as archaeologists in the field and continue to search out old artifacts. It is a dirty and thankless job most of the time, and most *daduchoi* who wish to continue serving that purpose see no interference from their peers or superiors. After all, ancient ruins are one of the Mysterium's constant sources of interesting relics, and a *daduchos* is usually more practiced at getting to the truth than a *neokoros*. The only restriction is that a *daduchos* actively at work at excavations and reconstructions must maintain a larger team, training at least one *neokoros* in the art and coordinating the like efforts of *neokoroi* in the same region.

Community

If the *neokoroi* are graduate students, the *daduchoi* are their professors and have a healthy dose of priest mixed in. Rather than picking research topics and working them out to prove worth of advancement, *daduchoi* have already chosen their fields and stick with them. Their research is more a matter of steady exploration than a mission with a beginning and an end. And in that vein, the *daduchoi* resemble an academic community. They all debate each others' pet projects and theses, many of which have been on the table for years. This is routine to them, arguing over minutia within one's bailiwick and suggesting soriological solutions to magiosophical concerns (the equivalent of obnoxiously applying physics to a chemistry problem). It gets no backs up outside of the new *daduchos* who isn't used to the environment and the occasional but inevitable rivalries, some of which have survived from the mages' days as *neokoroi*.

The *daduchoi* also spend time discussing and debating the Atlantean Mystery. Unlike the Mysteriorum Arche, which is fairly straightforward, the Mysteriora Anima and Barathrum are far more open to interpretation. As the most available representatives of the Mystery, *daduchoi* have the responsibility to

prepare their students for enlightenment; it prompts their vigorous and eternal discussions on the matter. Newcomers to the rank are not as surprised by the debate as one might expect. Though they have rarely been exposed to it (as the *daduchoi* try not to reveal too much of the Five Mysteries before a mystagogue's personal initiation), they come out of the Mysteriorum Anima certain that their interpretations are just that. Thus, they are ready for debate when it arrives.

Daduchoi find a support network in their peers. They are closer than most *neokoroi*, one reason being that there are fewer *daduchoi* and comrades are too valuable to turn up. And most *daduchoi* are in over their heads, if just a little. The stereotypes of a wise teacher with broad and deep understandings of the Arcana and of the infallible administrator who has read every report and is familiar with every going-on is impossible to meet, making many *daduchoi* stressed and anxious over doing everything expected of them. With all the responsibility and worry the *daduchoi* bear for the Mysterium, the few opportunities for rest they find are all the more important. They try to help each other. A *daduchos* unable to teach a rote or instruct in a certain Arcanum that she should know passes the student to a peer, who covers for her. One frustrated over disobedient *neokoroi* switches responsibilities for a week, month or indefinitely, or starts sharing the duty. He certainly finds a shoulder to cry on (or at least an ear for bitching). Curators rarely let anyone else do their job, but they accept help from their peers when they can't take care of everything. A mage who needs time for personal issues (which range from a nasty divorce to hunting down the man who stole his son's soul) has his job covered by his peers.

Daduchoi in one Consilium often make decisions as a group. They make no pretense of democracy; even those *daduchoi* who once cast votes stopped when the Free Council came on the scene. Instead, *daduchoi* come to a consensus on important matters, closeting themselves and arguing over the resolution until all agree. Any disagreement blocks consensus and forces more discussion. Some groups allow one or two mages to "stand outside" consensus, publicly not agreeing with the decision without blocking it. Statements from *daduchoi* superior have greater weight when seeking consensus as elsewhere; even so, making consensus is a process of political give and take. The office of Curator is chosen by consensus; *daduchoi* approve a mage as a Savant likewise. A Hierophant sometimes appoints a mage to an office for reasons she doesn't share, but that is rare.

Outside the Order

Daduchoi's positions demand that *daduchoi* have more contacts outside the Mysterium than either *neokoroi* or Hierophants. *Daduchoi* are the order's political directors, and they have little choice but to develop allies, if not friends. Allies are also friends when circumstances allow, but Awakened society is turbulent and paranoid. Guanxi applies to the *daduchoi*'s allies on a much lesser scale. No *daduchos* feels compelled to stand with a mage from without the order against dangerous circumstances, let alone a kill order from the Hierarch — though a mage might do it to earn a favor or gratitude, or just out of friendship.

Cabals remain important to *daduchoi*, but not quite as they were before. They remain sources of information, presumably greater ones if the *daduchos*'s friends advanced at the same rate she did. They are more valuable for the connections they represent: one's cabal spread represents prepared and cared for links to other orders and other interests. Cabals are bonds that resist withering, unlike weaker links forged solely for political gain. (Having all a cabal within the Mysterium makes the group a significant fraction of the caucus and important movers in the local Mysterium, but that's not outside the order.)

No one oversees a *daduchos*'s interactions with mages from other orders. *Daduchoi* are advanced in the Atlantean Mystery and responsible enough to keep their mouths shut at the right times and know what secrets they can drop to draw out others. When it is obvious that a *daduchos* is being irresponsible with her knowledge, the *daduchoi* institute a volunteer watchdog service. Just starting it up is enough to stop most loose lips; when that's not the case, *daduchoi* other than the accused can censure her, reducing the information they give her and limiting her access to the Athenaeum.

Interactions with Neokoroi

Even though the *daduchoi* are above the *neokoroi*, *daduchoi* do not look down on the *neokoroi* as *neokoroi* superior look upon *neokoroi* inferior. *Daduchoi* are able to see their students' stage of enlightenment and, having experienced more of the Mystery, know that a

neokoros is simply on one step of a long path; *daduchoi* see the journey, rather than the sudden transition from nowhere to somewhere that *neokoroi* superior have just experienced. With this perspective, *daduchoi* consider a *neokoros* to be their responsibility to guide along this path, even to the point of realizing that enlightenment is a path. "Student" sums up a *daduchos*'s view of the *neokoroi*; especially "grad students" who represent an expense of effort (teaching) in exchange for cheap labor and research assistance.

One *daduchos* (sometimes more) bears the responsibility of teaching the *neokoroi*, and the relationship she shares with them is most like a professor-grad student and a priest-seminary student. They discuss all the magical and exoteric disciplines, and though the *daduchos* refers her students to books or other mages for lessons, she is not prepared to teach. She guides them in their understanding of the Atlantean Mystery, preparing *neokoroi* inferior for the first real step without giving away how little they've actually learned and helping *neokoroi* superior make sense of the first Mystery. Many of their discussions include the various real-world theologies. The perfect *daduchos* for this task is a master communicator, patient and highly educated; this is also the perfect *daduchos* for leading political efforts, which can mean that she is overworked or that one of the two goes neglected. Even though one *daduchos* spearheads these efforts, all *daduchoi* teach.

Interactions with Hierophants

Hierophants are far more accessible to *daduchoi* than Hierophants are to *neokoroi*. Hierophants serve many of the same purposes: guidance on difficult research wisdom to help a *daduchos* approach the next initiation. Hierophants have little to say on the more practical conundrums that face a *daduchos*; they have lived that part of their lives and now concern themselves with higher callings. *Daduchoi* see the Hierophants less as teachers (though they are) and more as devoted spiritual guides. Each Hierophant is taken with his own important project, something no doubt important to all Creation and incomprehensible to a *daduchos*. When a Hierophant pays attention to mere politics or *neokoroi*, what he says is important. And a Hierophant who lowers himself to the level of a *daduchos* and sees regularly to the order's everyday matters does not lose his mystique; his decision is so rare that he becomes more inscrutable as a result of his mundanity.

Even with the accessibility, *daduchoi* see Hierophants from the same perspective as *neokoroi* do: looking up. A Hierophant knows so much about the Atlantean Mystery and has such command over the Ars Mysteriorum that he is almost too great to be questioned. He would be the first to say that he is not Ascended, only further along the path, but it cannot prevent lesser mages from idolizing him. *Daduchoi* temper this feeling with their knowledge of what the Hierophants do and where their responsibilities and priorities lie, but few avoid it completely.

Characters as Daduchoi

Being a *daduchos* carries more responsibility than it does power. A character with that extra Merit dot in Order Status (above *neokoros* superior) gets a an additional +1 on Social rolls, access to the Mystery Initiation for that level, increased privileges and a lot of responsibility. Other *daduchoi* trust the character unless she proves that she needs watching, and they depend on her to support them in their need and to do her fair share of the work. She needs to be involved in Consilium politics or be performing valuable services (always including organizational and administrative functions) for the order.

A *daduchos* character has less free time than most starting **Mage** characters because of these responsibilities; other *daduchoi* help her when she needs to disappear for a while or needs immediate assistance with a problem (during the chronicle's highlights, for example), but consistent avoidance of her responsibilities changes that quickly. Storytellers should also be aware that she has authority over local *neokoroi*, especially if she is their official handler, and can bring in a lot of manpower when she desires. It probably earns her a reprimand and may even result in a shift of her duties and authority, but she can do it. Even a *daduchos* not directly in charge of the *neokoroi*'s education and enlightenment can request assistants.

Daduchoi also usually have more experience than a starting mage does. Because of the time required to advance through the Atlantean Mystery, the typical *daduchos* has a Gnosis of 2 or 3 and is at least a first-degree adept. She is expected to be able to help *neokoroi* increase their Gnosis or Arcana if she must, and to teach more than just a handful of rotes. An established mage about fits the bill for a *daduchos*, with perhaps a bit more experience to make a Status ••• *daduchos*.

But nothing says a starting, 0 experience mage can't be a *daduchos*. It happens more often than you think, which is one reason *daduchoi* are so constantly stressed and willing to cover for each other when it comes to Arcana and rote deficiencies. Most *daduchoi* know a bit more than a starting character, though, or so a starting character who is a *daduchos* should assume, if only because they've had more time at the rank. An inexperienced mage in a position of that authority is not in an enviable position, especially if you give her three dots of Order Status, but she is one who can be fun to play. You don't expect being a mage to be easy, do you?

The only thing that remains in that case is to figure out how or why your character earned such rapid initiations into the Atlantean Mystery. Is she being given the Atlantean life, pushed through the initiations by magic and encouragement from on high? Any mystagogue who hits Status ••• after rapid initiations wonders if that's the case; it usually isn't, but it might be, and if so, why your character? Or is your character simply precocious in terms of grasping the concept of a self-directing magic and the Mysterium egregore, and managed to donate knowledge enough to earn her the next step? Did she leave any rivals in her dust, and did she make any among the *daduchoi* with her quick rise?

Hierophant (Status ••••)

Initiation into the Mysteriorum Calamitas makes one a Hierophant of the Mysterium. This is almost the highest honor the order can bestow, and comes with a like amount of respect from other mystagogues. Her new awareness of the Fallen World's profound flaws and the danger they represent, to her and the Supernal World, gives her new responsibilities. She leaves behind administration and organization; it helped her develop her sense of priorities, of people and of the world, giving her the wisdom for her next step into the Atlantean Mystery, but she has more important things to do with her time now.

The Hierophant serves her order as the wisest of priests, helping *neokoroi* and *daduchoi* alike enlighten themselves with a few quiet words. She watches the threats of which her enlightenment makes her aware, seeing subtle movements in the Tapestry and acting to counter them before others become aware of the danger; sometimes her weapons are her Arcana, sometimes her order. And she never abandons her own research, education or enlightenment; making herself all she can be is as much a debt to herself and all her effort thus far as it is to the order.

When not secluded and untangling imponderable questions, the Hierophant guides her order. She leaves the detailed navigation to *daduchoi*; a light touch in the right place is enough to keep the order on course and saves her effort better spent on other things. That she is smart enough to do this is part of what keeps lesser mages in awe of her.

Community

Community among the Hierophants is sparse but always there. There are too few Hierophants for them to have many bonds with others of their ranks, but the few bonds they have are unbreakable. Their rivalries are equally legendary. Hierophants debate aspects of the magical disciplines esoteric even to most *daduchoi*, and passionately argue interpretations of the Atlantean Mystery that lesser mystagogues cannot possibly understand.

A Hierophant is confident in her decisions, but her peers are available when she desires a second opinion, overall advice or another head in her think tank. It is unusual for a Hierophant to request help too often, and repeated calls for assistance make her peers wonder what is going on in her region or research that she cannot handle. They are apt to suspect that she is not blameless. It's a recognized problem that the highest have the furthest to fall, and a Hierophant with misconceived notions of her duty can be extremely dangerous. Hierophants police their own more than the *daduchoi*, knowing the great temptations available to a mage of the Hierophant's rank and power. What Censor would keep any text from so enlightened a mystagogue? It is difficult to judge when a Hierophant has lost her way and when she is treating dangerous knowledge with the proper respect, but it is a judgment her peers must make if she appears to have lost control.

Part of the fifth Mystery requires the Hierophant superior to seek out another of her rank and discuss the initiation. This keeps those most stratified mystagogues bound to each other and grounded in reality. It also ensures that the greatest members of the order have wide-flung webs of associates and allies. They may not know each other well, but they share experiences and the egregore; it is enough for trust and cooperation.

Outside the Order

Hierophants are less public than *daduchoi*: it's just not the Hierophants' job. But they maintain a wide net of personal acquaintances, contacts and allies developed through their long years as mages, especially during their period as *daduchoi*. The Hierophant gains constant benefit from these contacts, picking up large quantities of information that may or may not be useful. Not all Hierophants are so personable, of course; some prefer to cut off contact when they achieve the rank or let their social associations wither as they focus on less worldly things.

Almost every Hierophant has at least a few personal relationships at least as strong as her bond to other Hierophants. Her cabal is the strongest of these. She and her cabal-mates have been companions a long time, and their shared experiences give them connections that very little could break. They are her best resources for magical assistance when she needs it; it even relieves any concern she has over being thought careless or dangerous by other Hierophants. Not all Hierophants have cabals, as some are old enough to have experienced a disbanding or to have outlived their friends, and those mages isolate themselves from other Awakened.

Interactions with Neokoroi

Neokoroi are useful, young mages with little knowledge but a lot of promise. They are the next decades *daduchoi* and Hierophants, and that potential deserves respect and care. But there's too much advantage in abuse of *neokoroi* for Hierophants to ignore it. *Neokoroi* are warm, Awakened bodies useful in any number of rituals and magical experiments but without the wisdom of a *daduchos* to tell them how dangerous something is, and *neokoroi* do not know enough to learn any forbidden parts of what they might see.

Despite and because of this, Hierophants treat *neokoroi* with respect and foster their intellect and enlightenment. Personal advantage is no excuse for hobbling the order's future, and every mage should know to treat her tools well. It's not considered wise to create rivals who will hinder you when they come into power.

When a Hierophant decides that a *neokoros* must be given the Atlantean life, she sees that *neokoros* as even more of a tool than usual and doesn't have the leisure to soften that perception. It is hard to avoid creating some resentment when doing so, and most Hierophants accept that in advance.

Interactions with Daduchoi

Hierophants know that *daduchoi* shoulder many of the responsibilities necessary to keep the Mysterium running from day to day and year to year. The Hierophants are grateful not to lift that weight (and to put it down after their time as *daduchoi*), because it would make their more important tasks so much harder. *Daduchoi* also give Hierophants a great deal of help. Besides just taking what is probably more than the *daduchoi*'s fair share of duty, they are willing to work with a Hierophant when she has need of experienced mystagogues with anything from research to cleaning out a cryptid infestation.

A Hierophant also teaches *daduchoi*. She helps a *daduchos* increase his Arcana and Gnosis, and instructs him in learning advanced rotes and magical theory. As important as all of these, if not more than, is guidance toward the *daduchos*'s next initiation. And the *daduchos* returns the favor by being a good student: the act of teaching a dedicated student refines the teacher's knowledge as well, and only a foolish Hierophant fails to take advantage of that.

In the end, a *daduchos* is a promising student, a valuable assistant and a relief all at the same time. Hierophants treat *daduchoi* with a great deal of respect and often affection. A *daduchos* who initiates into the fourth Mystery has allies already waiting.

Characters as Hierophants

Unlike a *daduchos*, a Hierophant has plentiful free time — perhaps even more than a neokoros. *Neokoroi* follow the directions of their superiors, and *daduchoi* obey the whim of necessity. A Hierophant answers to no one but her peers, and that only if she attracts their attention in the first place. The rank impinges little on players' choices to pursue this mystery or fight that supernatural threat. On the other hand, the character is expected to spend her free time exploring ignored avenues of the magical disciplines, hunting down the rarest of lost artifacts, watching the Abyss or the Shadow Realm or the Seers of the Throne on a large scale, *knowing* random things that can help her Consilium and order with the diverse situations that tend to come up when mages are involved. She needs to be smart, knowledgeable and powerful.

This means she must be experienced. Some are veteran mages, but more are the movers-and-shakers of the order and their Consilium (or even multiple Consilii). They have many Social Merits: contacts in many regions and areas of influence, allies all over the

place and almost certainly Consilium Status. Their Gnosis ranges from 4 to above 5, and they are at least a first-degree master, often a second-degree master. A Hierophant is an acknowledged expert on certain realms of supernatural knowledge (and often a few natural realms, too): one is an expert on manipulating souls and astral travel, another knows everything about making and interpreting prophecies and fluently speaks 10 languages.

It is difficult to play a Hierophant with a starting character — but possible, with four or five of the character's Merit dots. She can begin play as a mystagogue of great respect and renown but without the raw power, magical finesse and human connections expected of a Hierophant. The character will continually find herself in over her head. *Daduchoi* expect her to guide them with knowledge she does not have or cannot gather; her responsibility is to investigate the most rarified supernatural phenomena or create her own for examination and she doesn't have the Arcana to do so. When extreme situations threaten her Consilium or her order, mages expect her to combat them or have a secret that can save the day, and she likely doesn't. It is not an easy position.

The only way a character succeeds at the challenge is by relying on her cabal or being supremely lucky beyond the realm of the Fate Arcanum. Failing to perform her duties — being *unable* to perform those duties — attracts the negative attention of other Hierophants. They cannot demote the character, since she has experienced and understood some of the order's highest Mysteries, but they can limit her responsibilities, as her powers are limited. She can access almost any information about the Mysteries she likes, advancing her mastery of magic at her own rate, but other Hierophants take the important tasks in her stead and make sure she does nothing stupid with her magic. The only duty she can meet without oversight is providing spiritual guidance to other mages. Word gets out to the *daduchoi*, sometimes even the *neokoroi*, and respect disappears.

Just as being a starting character and a *daduchos*, this raises certain questions. Again, did external powers hasten the mage's initiations or judge her worthy prematurely? Suspecting so, does the Hierophant resent her peers for inflicting the unwanted honor on her? Was she simply a marvel of a mystagogue, digesting initiation after initiation and always somehow bearing the proper gifts to the order to earn the next one? She could be a shyster, convincing her superiors with silver tongue and some strange magic or influence that she is worthy of the next initiation — it is very difficult, but not impossible. Deciding why a starting character holds the rank of Hierophant (or even Hierophant superior) should create a wagonload of plot hooks; even though it makes a character's life complex, it's worth considering for that reason alone.

Politics

The Mysterium does not exist in a vacuum. Mystagogues do not like to find themselves dragged into either the power-plays or the intrigues that other orders seem to thrive on. Nonetheless, the fact that the Mysterium possesses the lion's share of what passes for magical power among the Awakened — that is, Supernal lore — means mystagogues will find themselves there, like it or not.

Extra-order Relationships

Every mage is entitled to her own outlook on the world around her. The Mysterium believes this strongly, because individual perspectives are the only things that make an extra mage more than just another pair of hands. She gets to forge her own relationship with those people and creatures she meets, and do with them as she will.

All the Mysterium *chooses* to offer her is guidance and advance knowledge. More-experienced mages share their encounters with those outside the order, and are sometimes able to make introductions or point our where to find members of those groups. Athenaeum libraries have many accounts and analyses of the groups that a mystagogue might associate with (by choice or not), including where they tend to congregate and what Arcana are best for combating them — at least as previously discovered. The Mysterium offers far more guidance and knowledge on the other mystical orders than the order does on supernatural creatures; in fact, some of that guidance has the force of custom behind it, and the knowledge occasionally has the ring of dogma.

But the Mysterium lends more than it chooses to a mystagogue's interactions with entities outside the order. It also has a reputation, consequences of past encounters that cling to the Mysterium. These are useful (other mages tend to assume the mystagogue

knows something about what's going on), hindrances (when the Silver Ladder mage has been robbed by a silver-tongued mystagogue in the past) and sometimes downright dangerous (when a mage rescued a spirit from the werewolf pack hunting it). Even more unsettling, the Mysterium doesn't even have complete control over the order's reputation with other supernatural creatures: a spirit doesn't give a damn if the mage who bound and abused it for years was an Adamantine Arrow and *you're* of the Mysterium — the spirit still wants to hurt you when you show off the same kind of powers.

The Consilium

The Mysterium pays only moderate attention to Consilium politics. Mystagogues keep their ears to the ground for three specific things: laws and orders concerning the treatment of knowledge, common treatment and use of magic and for arcane information floating around the Consilium in the hands of the unwise.

Regarding the first, the *daduchoi* see to it that any active laws concerning the dispensation or use of knowledge are to the Mysterium's taste. If possible, the *daduchoi* wrangle it so even the inactive and forgotten laws are in the order's favor, just so if anyone pulls out legal surprises with regard to knowledge, it's them. Their efforts ensure that no law is going to force the Athenaeum to share its contents through any method other than their own. Ideally, the laws in force limit the amount of knowledge that other orders can share with their students, but the Mysterium recognizes that such laws require a lot of political force to set and enforce, more influence than the order regularly has or wants to acquire.

The same *daduchoi* monitor the Consilium through their contacts, their allies and the footwork of their loyal *neokoroi*. The *daduchoi* keep track of the major and minor magical events, using the information to decide whether or not the knowledge shared out by the Curator is being used properly, with the wisdom the order expects and requires. If not, the Curator revises her opinion of who is worthy and limits the information she allows others to see. Extreme misconduct may be just cause for an Interdiction.

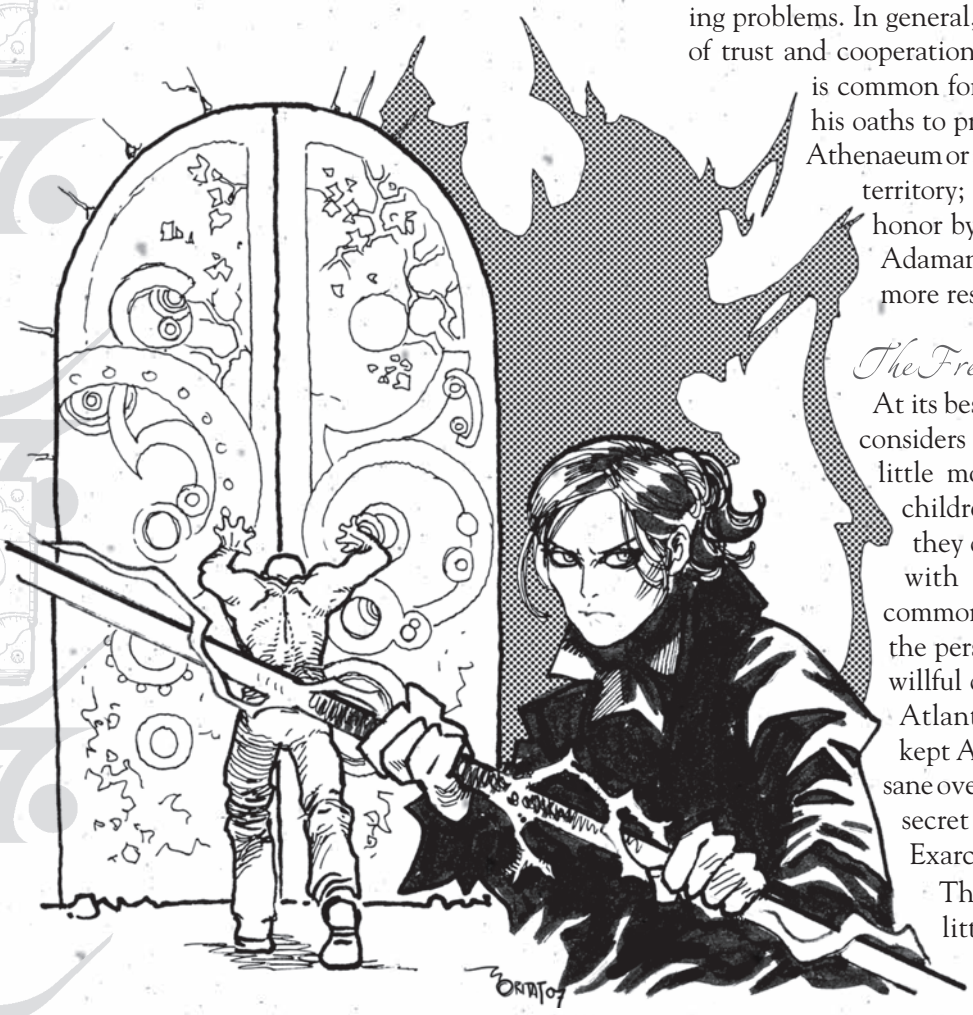
When a mage discovers something secret and potent, the Mysterium wants to hear about it. Whether the Mysterium is permitted or not, the order wants to know the information and judge its worth for themselves. Regardless, it must be recorded and protected in the Athenaeum. But not all ears and eyes are fit for all knowledge. Any secret is dangerous in the wrong hands, and if the Mysterium decides that those who possess it are unworthy, the mystagogues will take it and make it safe without compunction. This does not make them popular among other orders; only the fact that the information is available to other mages — often more available that it was with its original owners — makes it palatable. That, and the high degree to which mystagogues conceal their involvement in such confiscations; the Mysterium is happy to let other mages blame the Guardians of the Veil, which often enough doesn't know for sure that one of its members *didn't* run the operation.

Mystagogues regularly hold official positions in the Consilium, usually Councilorships. Few mystagogues have the right demeanor to be Sentinels or even Provost. Mystagogues would rather share their wisdom than enforce that of others. Mystagogues occasionally become Heralds, but for no especial reason. As Councilors, an office the Mysterium encourages its mages to hold, mystagogues influence the Consilium's politics and rule without being responsible for it. When a mystagogue ends up as Hierarch, it is often because the politics of the Consilium demand a Hierarch without strong political ambitions; most mystagogues are known to have an interest in the flow of knowledge and little else, making them ideal faux-Hierarchs. The Mysterium doesn't mind having a mage in the office for show, since it does provide some influence and keeps a member in a prime place to keep a finger on the Consilium's pulse.

The Adamantine Arrow

Mystagogues have a lot of respect for the Adamantine Arrow. Its philosophy is not far from that of the Mysterium: protect the Awakened from what threatens. That is something a mystagogue can respect, even if the Arrows fear the wrong enemies. They concern themselves with threats that could destroy mages health and society, fighting territory-claiming theriomorphs, the dominations of vampires, alien spirits from the Shadow Realm, Abyssal entities, Banishers, Seers of the Throne and weirder things: anything Arrows recognize that could kill mages, rob their will or devastate their souls.

The Mysterium admires that dedication, because the order shares one very like it. Mystagogues are the



true warriors against the true enemies of the Awakened: the loss of knowledge will destroy mage society if not stopped. Allowing the wisdom of Atlantis to fade and disappear reduces the mages' power too far for recovery; letting the flow of magic through the world dwindle slows Awakenings, and mages become too scarce to form Consilii. Without their strength and their social support, all magic dies and the Seers of the Throne win.

This gives the two orders a symbiotic relationship. Adamantine Arrows fight their battles, keeping mages of the Mysterium (and other orders) safe from dangers worldly and otherworldly. Thus protected, mystagogues carry out their task of retrieving and preserving the knowledge of ancient Atlantis. This protects the Fallen World from withering and drawing completely away from the Supernal World, in turn giving the Arrow the strength and organization to fight on.

Mysterium mages have no overarching with the Adamantine Arrow, though they may think its members are too combative when it comes to solving problems. In general, the two orders have an air of trust and cooperation, as much as is possible. It is common for an Arrow to swear one of his oaths to protecting a mystagogue, the Athenaeum or an expedition into unknown territory; the Mysterium returns the honor by blessing the mage and the Adamantine Arrow with access to more restricted knowledge.

The Free Council

At its best, the Mysterium party line considers Free Council mages to be little more than spoiled, wayward children, given gifts (Awakening) they did not deserve and playing with them irresponsibly. More common but far from the worst is the perspective that Libertines are willful despoilers of magic and the Atlantean traditions that have kept Awakened society whole and sane over the uncountable centuries, secret or duped servants of the Exarchs.

These labels ensure there is little love lost between the two orders. The Mysterium almost always refuses the Free Council any aid whatsoever. Libertine access to Athenaea is strictly forbidden in most regions, and even those Curators who choose to allow it require more valuable donations to prove a Libertine's worth and increase the security: the Free Council mage never sees the Athenaeum and its whereabouts are occulted, there are more mages watching over the released documents at all times, copying and recording devices may not be allowed and wards against scrying prevent other Libertines from riding piggyback. Because it's almost impossible to prevent the mage from *somehow* reproducing an entire text after leaving, even after all the additional effort, most regions still just say no.

Another aspect of the Free Council that the Mysterium despises is the cracked mirrors of the Athenaea, the Lorehouses. Mystagogues admit that a Lorehouse preserves and collects information, but perverts the effort. Libertines taint the worthy information they recover with inanities derived from faulty first principles, reinvented wheels and the masses of dross they sift from mortal society and call

magic. More, the order devalues everything it stores in its Lorehouses by making the knowledge available to any who meet the order's arbitrary definitions of acceptable — usually based on money. Making the Mysteries purchasable with worldly means threatens to make them as mundane as the money paid for them, and the very thought of this debasement is enough to enrage a mystagogue.

The two order's philosophies conflict so violently that it almost always reflects in the Consilium's politics. It is almost guaranteed that a mystagogue will oppose anything proposed by a Libertine and vice versa, even if they only spend political capital shutting down movements they actually consider harmful. An alliance between politically active members of the two orders is so rare that when it happens, other mages immediately take notice, giving any ideas both back a second or third glance. Cynical mages propose that the famous bias is just an act, an agreement since 1900 that would throw enormous weight behind a very few movements. The opposition is so real that even the most cynical don't believe it.

The Guardians of the Veil

Guardians are the other group the Mysterium strongly opposes. Where mystagogues burn with contempt for a Libertine, they smolder with anger for a Guardian and release little visible smoke. The Guardians have few gripes with the Mysterium, but the reverse is not quite true. The two orders do occasionally aid one another in the pursuit of knowledge that neither thinks should be public, but the Mysterium is never entirely comfortably doing so. The order keeps its involvement with the Guardians mum, protecting the Mysterium's reputation from tarnishing under association with the disliked order and preventing the Guardians from believing that they are actual partners in any sort of effort. Even when those worries do not concern mystagogues, they are always nervous that information ending up in Guardian hands may disappear completely and never *ever* be seen again. At least in the hands of a Censor, information is available should it be needed — but the Guardians do not think that far ahead.

Mystagogues see Guardians of the Veil as bastard half-brothers. Guardians protect knowledge from hands in which it would dangerous, much as mystagogues. The Guardians take that protection further than locking it up in a vault and knowing that it is there — they spread ambiguity around the information, conceal and break up trails leading to its discovery and, if necessary, destroy the information completely. To the Mysterium, even wildly dangerous knowledge must be preserved. Doing otherwise damages the Ars Mysteriorum. Mystagogues consider it a supreme irony that the Guardians of the Veil hold protecting the sanctity of the Mysteries and the Veil as their highest priorities and honor, but their actions in the Mysteries' name destroys it and Atlantis, bit by bit. It's not the funny sort of irony.

The Mysterium keeps track of Guardian movements and safe houses as best the order can, though it's hard to follow the devious Awakened police. The Mysterium's best sources of information are the mages who occasionally and unofficially work with the Guardians of the Veil. Mystagogues recover information they believe the Guardians have slated for destruction (or permanent and unbreakable interment, being equivalent); mystagogues work through proxies when possible, protecting their tenuous connection to the Guardians with thin cover stories.

The only real difference between the Guardians of the Veil and the Mysterium is the lengths each will go to protect the Mysteries. Mystagogues know that the Guardians' hearts are in the right place, but their minds cannot be changed; at the end of the day, the Mysterium looks at the Guardians with anger and sadness over the order's foolish beliefs.

The Silver Ladder

The Mysterium has a firm relationship of trade with the Silver Ladder. Théarchs wield their influence on the Consilium, mystagogues possess the richest knowledge in the Consilium and the two orders exchange influence for knowledge on a regular basis. In the Mysterium's eyes, this accomplishes two positive goals: it earns the order political coin to be cashed in when important policies come into question, and it increases the body of knowledge available to those mages most likely to lead or guide the Consilium's actions. The Mysterium does not believe in giving knowledge to any unworthy of that information, and the mystagogue who governs trade (usually the Curator) is clear on that. But it is always advantageous to lead from as informed a position as possible, and when the Mysterium can increase that advantage without breaking its own precepts, the order does.

Mystagogues' perceptions of the order as a whole are less cut-and-dried. Théarchs do not give information the respect information deserves — they value it as leverage and as secrets to unlocking the Mysteries, but the thought that neglecting

understanding might lead to the mages' downfall is alien to them. Political unity and cohesion are strengths that the Silver Ladder understands; it is necessary for reclaiming their lost glory and exalting humankind. A mystagogue values the political unit only so far as it enables the order to successfully recover and keep the knowledge of Atlantis, and the group that aids him the most in that is his order and nothing else. It's not that the Mysterium has no time for the Consilium as an entity, just that its importance is not nearly what the Silver Ladder believes it to be.

There will always be the belief that Silver Ladder mages guide the Awakened world without the enlightenment to do so. The Silver Ladder wants to make the entire world a place of magic without really understanding what that means. The Silver Ladder's glorious future empire is impossible without the knowledge of the Mysterium, just as the Celestial Ladder could never have risen without the Alae Draconis, and that analogy is enough to taint the théarch's goals in the Mysterium's eyes. Though the two orders get along well enough on the surface, few mystagogues like the Silver Ladder's ideals.

Apostates

There is a positive and a negative aspect to apostasy. On the plus side, an apostate can be convinced of the Mysterium's wisdom and initiated into the Atlantean Mystery. He is unaligned with any other order, making him potentially easier to attract to the order's revelatory series of Mysteries — the idea of revealing hidden knowledge and proving one's worth beyond a doubt is seductive to some.

On the other hand, apostates are not bound by the restrictions that all orders place on their members. The Mysterium does not agree with other orders' philosophies, but it appreciates that any order guides its members toward smart, if not always wise, use of their power. Because an apostate is unaligned with any order, no one limits him in this way, and the Mysterium cannot influence his magical habits without confronting him directly, which can make enemies or be outright dangerous. The order would rather manipulate other mages into wise use of their magic by exerting influence on their orders, which apostasy makes impossible; at best, they can refuse the apostate or his cabal access to their knowledge, which tends to antagonize.

Most mystagogues think the bad outweighs the good and consider an apostate to be a loaded gun. It's a valuable tool for whoever picks it up first, as long as that person actually knows how to wield it. Few mystagogues give apostates the credit of being able to wield and fire themselves, except for the individuals they develop trust or friendship with — which is rare, thanks to the order-imparted prejudice.

Teratological Phenomena

Vampires

Mystagogues are mostly interested in vampires for the mysterious supernatural powers the creatures wield. Expending blood for powerful and direct effects is very intriguing and worthy of study; if it can be harnessed by mages, it likely represents a new branch of Atlantean knowledge lost long ago and not yet recovered. Contrarily, mystagogues tend to have little interest in vampire society and culture. The political maneuvering and backbiting in which the creatures engage is the logical extension of immortality. The Mysterium takes a dim view of mages who study the vampires' immortality with too much vigor. It resembles the Tremere liches, and some mages believe that too much study of vampires and their magic can afflict one's soul with the Legacy.

Theriomorphs

Werewolves and their habits are much more interesting to the Mysterium. Not only do the creatures possess apparently natural shapeshifting and regenerative capabilities, but they also have a natural affinity for the Shadow Realm and powers of the spirit. Werewolves can speak the same language as the spirits without the benefit of the Spirit Arcanum, and unlike vampires, werewolves have creation myths and other stories of their history. Unfortunately, werewolves appear to be private creatures who are unwilling to share their culture or their supernatural gifts. Efforts to trade knowledge with them works only on limited bases, and trying to share information about the Shadow Realm in particular raises their ire.

Occasional efforts to reach a legendary storehouse of Mysterium knowledge in the Shadow Realm sometimes meet werewolf resistance. This has caused some bad blood between the two groups, especially in Consilii that have funded such expeditions. To the werewolves, though, it is just another human transgression, if a particularly difficult one to dispel. As far as the Mysterium knows, werewolves don't even

know the name of the order. And the Mysterium is okay with that.

Spirits and the Shadow Realm

These creatures are the minor and major gods of Creation, and the Mysterium tries to treat them with the respect due their power. The order cannot change that some mages summon and command spirits as servants or automatons, but there is a stigma against such behavior. Common belief is that the Shadow and its inhabitants were both present before the Fall; at least no doctrine suggests that the Spirit Arcanum did not exist or has significantly changed since then. That mages can birth their own spirits only displays their mastery over that facet of the universe, not that it is unreal. So, the Shadow Realm has a place within the ideal world of the Atlantean Mystery; though no initiation addresses it specifically, some mages claim to see or feel it before the Fall in the Mysteriorum Barathrum or in the Mysteriorum Focus.

BRIAN LEBLANC '07

Chapter Four: Factions and Legacies

The shouts of her pursuers rang out like the harsh barks of so many jackals, chasing her down the dank corridor. "Shoot her! Shoot her, you fools!" Cassie tried to drown it out. No point in getting worried until the first sharp reports of gunfire began, and they hadn't started yet.

She leapt around the corner, changing directions as easily as a hunting leopard. And there it was, oliveaceous and grim, standing at the end of the corridor in a pool of light filtered from cracks in the ceiling above. The idol had six arms, all raised in a position of pure menace, and its form was far too realistic to match the reliefs on the temple walls outside. Its face was that of the bride of Satan himself, lovely but with a malevolence that would rattle any living man. It stood on a dais marked with sigils — the sigils of Atlantis. So it was true!

Cassie took all this in without slowing down. If Krygen and his mongrels got their hands on the idol, it wouldn't take them long to tap into the power held with in. There was just one chance — a slim one, but all Cassie had. If she could reach it first, and tap that energy herself, she might be able to ward off her pursuers.

She was almost to the idol when a cry of "There she is!" announced that Kryger had turned the corner as well. With the only light in here being that covering the idol, she had to be presenting a beautiful backlit target to his hired guns. A terrible giggle told her that the mismatched knife-wielder called the Hyena was getting too close.

Then, as if the Devil's Bride was angered by the presence of intruders, there was a sudden rumble. The floor gave way just before the idol, a great yawning chasm reaching out for Cassie's feet. At the last moment she leapt, hearing the Hyena's frightened laugh for the last time…

Integrity without knowledge is weak and useless,
and knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful.
— Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

The Role of Factions Within the Mysterium

For an order based on mystery, ritualistic symbolism and the unknown, Mysterium factions may seem almost jarringly straightforward at first glance. Where other orders may divide themselves by philosophical differences or political agendas, the major Mysterium subsets seem to be almost simplistically organized by function within the order: librarian, reclaimant, archaeologist, researcher, ritualist. Similar to workers, drones and queens within a hive of like-minded insects, each faction at first appears to be little more than a specific job or role within the order, focusing more on "what we do" than "who we are" or "what we believe." Each seems to have its set duty to fulfill within the order's "colony," all working to serve the organization's primary goal — the acquisition and preservation of knowledge.

In truth, however, mystagogues, especially those who belong to a faction, are motivated as deeply by their own individual and personal philosophies as are the members of any other order's factions. Despite how Mysterium factions appear to outsiders, Mysterium factions are not groups of faceless workers going about their jobs to serve the order's greater goals. Each is called to his or her faction through deeply personal motivations that are tied not only to the mage's intellectual and philosophical views of Awakened society and the Invisible Truth, but just as deeply interwoven with his or her intrinsic feelings, instincts and intuitions about the greater mysteries that lie beyond and below the surface. While an Archivist may be seen as nothing more than one member of a legion of glorified librarian to those outside of the order (and, in truth, even by those of other factions within the Mysterium itself), the reasons that she is called to keep the ancient lore, how she sees herself and her role within the order and because of this, the way she goes about being an Archivist, may be significantly different from that of all other members of her faction.

Likewise, an Archaeomancer whose calling leads him to be part of Sleeper explorations of the deepest undersea ruins in hopes of finding solid proof of the location of Atlantis is likely wholly different in attitude, purpose and beliefs from one who has sought out the faction because he seeks to immerse himself in the solitude found only in studying civilizations long since passed into obscurity. Those who intrude upon the latter's solitude unannounced, or seek to turn the former against the Sleeper crew he's come to trust with his life upon will soon discover how different the respective magi truly are. Similarly, those who assume that one Egregori is much like any other simply because both specialize in rituals and mystery plays may not only find that their assumptions are mistaken, but their stereotyping may well have dangerous, even deadly, results.

ARCHAEOMANCERS

Quote: *"There is no such thing as new knowledge. Everything possible exists at this very moment. We only have to find it."*

Despite the best efforts of the Mysterium, more magic has been lost to the world in the past millennia than the combined knowledge of all Awakened mages alive today. The mystagogues know this, and one of their major factions is devoted to uncovering these lost mysteries. While Sleeper archaeologists study human cultures through the recovery, documentation and analysis of material remains, the Archaeomancers do the same for magic. By studying the past, they seek to recover, document and analyze whatever fragments might hold clues to the vast store of knowledge and magic that has been lost to modern magi. Some Archaeomancers, of course, are motivated to do so out of their own desires for power, or to find the key to proving their own pet theory to be fact.

Others (and the Mysterium at least publicly professes that the vast majority fall into this category) are genuinely motivated for the greater good. Lost knowledge serves only to maintain the Lie, and only through recovering what has been accidentally or intentionally obscured can the Truth be learned.

Thus the path of the Archaeomancer directly serves to thwart the Lie. In truth, however, Diggers know, as all mystagogues do, that knowledge is power. While other orders may squabble, barter and fight amongst themselves to gain a greater share of the commonly available lot of knowledge, the Diggers are the gold miners of the mystical world, braving hostile and unknown territories in hopes of unearthing some previously undiscovered vein of Supernal wealth.

Means and Methods

The methods used by Archaeomancers differ wildly. At times, a single mage may accompany a Sleeper expedition, either as a leader or team member, with plans to ensure that any information or items of Awakened interest are channeled back to the Mysterium right under the noses of the Sleepers on the team. Unfortunately, both for the mage and those unknowing members of the expedition, the targets of interest to mystagogues are rarely as innocuous as those of Sleeper excursions. While seasoned mundane archaeologists might consider themselves well prepared for whatever challenges await them, few who still exist under the burden of the Lie truly are. The same unAwakened team, which proved vital for the mundane exploration and excavation of a dig site, may quickly become a handicap when the vaults turn out to be guarded by powerful spells, hostile spirits or the minions of ancient, inhuman sorcerer-kings. Not only are the Sleepers extra (and largely undefended) targets for the enemy forces, but should the situation escalate to the use of overt magic, their presence threatens the Veil and increases the chances of a Paradox for the mage.

Because of the danger (to both mage and Sleeper) of involving those with no Supernal ability in excursions to recover Artifacts and lost Supernal knowledge, many Archaeomancers form cabals of like-minded individuals that serve as small dig parties on their own. Save for the Supernal methods used and the mystical nature of their focus, these Digger cabals could easily pass for traditional archaeological excavations. Awakened teams are often best suited for situations in which there is a certainty of encountering overtly hostile obstacles to their exploration: in areas known to be protected by supernatural foes, or those where mages' abilities would allow access to otherwise unreachable locations. These expeditions, composed entirely of Awakened seekers, are designed specifically to be self-reliant in the most remote ruins or hostile environment, ready to deal with any obstacles to achieving the party's goal, Supernal or natural.

While many Archaeomancers fit the Digger stereotype to a T, not all Archaeomancers are truly archaeologists. Some seek lost knowledge not in the depths of Amazonian jungles or Egyptian ruins, but in the forgotten places in, around and under modern cities. Some explore the claustrophobic mazes of abandoned underground streets beneath cities such as Mary King's Close in Edinburgh or Portland, Oregon, where entire sections of the city remain tucked away nearly forgotten beneath what is now the street level. Others seek knowledge in the ruins, dwellings and lairs abandoned by other supernatural creatures. These esotologist Diggers follow urban legends, folklore and ghost stories on the trail of lycanthropes, blood-suckers, ghosts, witches and other mysterious creatures, in hopes that in learning more about these aberrant beings, the Diggers may discover more about the nature of the Supernal itself.

Motivations

Some Archaeomancers seem to be born to the role. During her lifetime, Anna Miel, an Acanthus Digger, has discovered more than a dozen pre-historic ruin sites in Siberia, including the location of what is credited among the order as potentially the oldest known example of a carved representation of the legendary Celestial Ladder to the Supernal Realms. Miel often recounts stories of her childhood in Omsk, where she was called upon to locate lost items for friends and family members, and believes she was destined to discover the things she has. For her, joining the faction was merely a formality, a social acknowledgment of the role she'd spent her whole life fulfilling.

Others find that the faction is a natural fit for the person they've become. Job, an Obrimos Archaeomancer who has led his cabal on numerous expeditions to study uncharted peaks of the Himalayas and Antarctica, claims fate pushes him in his explorations. He is driven to explore, not by his own wanderlust, but by a curse leveled against him by an archmage of Fate during Job's young and impetuous days. He cannot stay longer than a few weeks in any one place, whether he'd like to or not, or bad luck begins to fall upon those around him. After years of attempting to undo the ban, he's found that the nomadic life of an explorer truly suits him, and together with his cabal, has turned what was once a curse into a benefit.

Other Diggers see the faction as less "who they are" and more "what they do." Those who Awaken well into their study of or career as an archaeologist, anthropologist, geologist or cartographer may well

continue their work after signing their Watchtowers. Others, who had an interest in these or similar fields but felt their unAwakened selves unequal to the physical or mental challenges that pursuing such challenging careers might require, may turn their new Supernally-enhanced potential to those same areas that they once felt were beyond their capability.

Archaeomancers in Power

The stereotype for a member of the Archaeomancers is a stalwart adventurer in khakis, bull-whipping his way through jungle ruins, a caricature that leaves little room for political or social ambition. At best, many Archaeomancers bear the status of Acquisitor, a popular, but not particularly powerful niche. Most Archaeomancers do not focus on politics, social manipulation or other traditional modes of "power" acquisition, instead concentrating on exploration, discovery and the acquisition and recovery of knowledge. At their heart, however, Diggers are mystagogues, and as all mystagogues know, knowledge is power.

Many Diggers profess that the thrill of discovery and the lure of the unknown drive them every onward to the most remote locations on earth. For some this is

truth, for others, the nomadic drive may be motivated by a feeling of not fitting in well with modern society, or a misguided need to redeem themselves for some real or imagined wrongdoing in the past. Regardless, it is true that many Archaeomancers do what they for predominantly selfless reasons.

Others, however, are motivated to the role of discovery out of greed or hunger for power. They seek out undiscovered treasures, long-forgotten knowledge and Artifacts of legendary might not out of concern for the greater good, but because they believe that the possession of such secrets that would ensure them not only a seat among the most powerful Awakened currently alive, but a name among the legends themselves.

Of those who seek such mystical wealth, few achieve their goals in this manner. The search for legendary Artifacts is not a new one. Centuries of Diggers, well meaning or selfish, have followed mystical and mundane trails that they hoped would lead them to their Holy Grail (literally or figuratively). Few have come near to the level of success they sought. Not only is the process dangerous, and the odds slanted against the treasure seeker, but the structure of the Mysterium has evolved to prevent a single individual from gaining massive amounts of power, no matter how phenomenal his discovery might be. A Digger who attempts to horde Artifacts or knowledge rather than turning it over to the appropriate Athenaeum quickly draw the attention of the order's Censors, and rarely repeat the mistake.

The potential does exist, however, for an Archaeomancer to earn political power and respect from their work. Among the Diggers who will be long remembered for his dedication and the merit of his discoveries is Shasu, whose shadow name means "wanderer" in Egyptian. Shasu was a late 19th-century Moros mystagogue whose primary focus was the reclamation of knowledge from the thousands of mummies that were being destroyed in Egypt at the time. Grave robbery was so prevalent during the late 1800s that thousands upon thousands of mummified remains were being uncovered, looted and then burned as fuel with no respect for the moral or historical import of this destruction. Shasu's work involved seeking out grave robbers, and "reacquiring" the bodies they had unearthed, or when he was unable to catch them in the act, acquiring the remains from those who salvaged the mummified bodies left behind by pillagers. Once acquired, the necromancer communed with the spirits of the long dead, questioning them about matters of magic and mystical knowledge that would have otherwise been lost with the destruction of their bodies.

It was through Shasu's firsthand conversations with the shades of the long dead that long-lost legends dating back beyond the early Dynasties of Egypt were recovered. Among these stories were tales of a island called Keftiu, "One of the Pillars That Holds up the Sky," which Shasu believed may well have been Atlantis. Keftiu was the legendary homeland of some of the most powerful magic workers and priests who were consulted by the pharaohs. This information was largely responsible for the formalization of the cult of Keftui, an Egyptian mystagogue group with heavy Moros influences.

While the preservation of lost mystical information was Shasu's primary goal, his work also led to the recovery of Artifacts, such as the Amulet of Sekhmet (see p. 205). While the Mysterium value these Artifacts, the stories that Shasu protected from being forever lost have earned him a place in the legends of the Awakened.

Archaeomancers and the Veil

Diggers walk a thin line where the Veil is concerned. Their goal is the discovery of knowledge and items that, almost without exception, pose a threat to the Veil and should remain safely hidden from Sleeper eyes. In locating these items and sequestering them away from those who are not prepared to deal with the implications of their Supernal nature, Archaeomancers protect the Veil. However, the process of investigating, locating and securing a item or secret can draw attention to something that had previously remained undiscovered for centuries, effectively thwarting the Mystagogue's efforts. Thus, Diggers must be careful that they do not rouse Sleeper attention as they go about the tasks at hand, not only in the actual extraction of their target, but in their study, investigation, research of and search for it as well.

A Small World

Part of the challenges facing modern Archaeomancers in regards to the Veil is the dwindling "size" of the planet. Few truly unexplored areas remain, and humanity is encroaching upon previously primitive locations with an alarming alacrity. Locations far from the eyes of civilization that were previously accessible only to those who could augment their abilities su-

pernaturally are now being explored by adventuring tourists seeking out the last vestiges of unexplored wilderness, inquisitive scientific teams hoping to make a name for themselves by exploring and recording new species of flora and fauna, anthropologists and archaeologists in hopes of being the first to uncover the newest ruin or lost city and with the recent advent of reality television, even ratings-hungry media moguls hoping that an exotic and unique location will tempt viewers to tune in to whatever inanities are on their new season line-up. This means that the areas where mages could once seek out the hidden knowledge of past ages without overt danger of being intruded upon by the unAwakened has been reduced exponentially. Not only has the potential increased for a secret to be discovered by a human explorer before the Mysterium can claim it, but the chances of a mage expedition coming into contact with a mundane one at a potentially dangerous (for both parties) time and location has increased as well.

Each year, advances in transportation, mapping and communication bring mundane technology closer and closer to the heights once achievable only through Supernal spells. Humanity has gained literal or virtual access to many locations that for centuries were accessible only to those with supernatural abilities to deal with their challenges. Global surveillance satellite systems, for example, have made it a simple matter for Sleeper archaeologists to grid out and explore all but the most inhospitable of terrains without fear of becoming lost or encountering unexpected terrain challenges. As well, even those areas that remain predominantly inaccessible are subject to examination and photography in rather alarmingly minute detail. Underwater exploration, both in shallow and deep-sea environs has boomed during the past 50 years, ensuring that not even sunken cities or shipwrecks are immune to this same break-neck paced race for discovery. While this same technology is often used by Diggers to reduce their need to rely upon their own Supernal abilities, it also poses threats to the Veil. No longer can an Archaeomancer rely upon the inaccuracies of human memory and word of mouth to cover up mage mistakes or inopportune Sleeper discoveries. Technology has increased the possibility that Veil-rending discoveries will be revealed, recorded and shared with the world at large more than at any time in the past, and so those whose job it is to uncover those discoveries must tread more carefully than they ever have before.

Stereotypes

Archivists: Protection of what has been gained is important, but without new discoveries, we learn nothing.

Bricoleurs: Children tinkering with toys. They are not brave enough to step outside of their sanctums and discover something truly new.

Egregori: They hamper themselves by ignoring the material for the ethereal.

Reclaimants: A necessary evil. If the librarians did their job right, we'd have little use for Reclaimants.

Appearance: Archaeomancers can come from any race, sex or culture, and their appearances are correspondingly diverse. Due to the requirements of their duties, they tend to dress in practical clothing, especially when on a project. Many have little in the way of fashion sense outside of work, and even those with a predilection for fashion rarely allow looks to get in the way of practicality. Some may, when traveling, adopt the clothing of the cultures in the areas they are exploring, especially where that clothing is well suited for the climate of the area. Others rely on standard exploration uniforms: boots, hats (for warmth or shade), light layers of durable fabric and whatever protective outerwear is best suited to the clime.

In terms of equipment, Archaeomancers also tend to be practical, using whatever tools are most appropriate to the task at hand. Some focus on the most modern of technological advancements to aid them in their explorations: GPS systems, satellite communication equipment, gyroscope-stabilized helicopters and all-terrain vehicles. Others exhibit a fondness for the classic accouterments of explorers: compasses, walking sticks, maps, globes and the like. Whether they prefer the old ways or more modern tools, most supplement the abilities of their chosen mundane equipment with Supernal spells to ensure that no piece of evidence, artifact or clue goes undiscovered, recorded and reclaimed.

Sanctum: With the exception of the Reclaimants, the Archaeomancers are the most likely faction of mystagogues to be predominantly nomadic in nature. Many Diggers have, at best, temporary facilities set up

New Sanctum Merit: Portable (•)

Archaeomancers, Reclaimants and other mages who travel extensively have learned to adapt their ability to set up a sanctum to a form that can be erected and taken down as needed to suit their nomadic ways. While portable sanctums require effort to create and are limited in some fashions, they give traveling mages a measure of safety that they might otherwise find sorely lacking.

The creation of a portable sanctum requires a knack for knowing how to combine mundane materials and supernatural sympathies to create a whole that is stronger and more secure than any of the elements would be separately. While not precisely a spell, the creation of a portable sanctum does require a great deal of concentration, time and effort. Those who frequently travel from one location to another, staying for days or weeks at a time, are those most likely to use a portable sanctum. An archaeologist who is out on a dig for several months may erect a portable sanctum to protect the Artifacts he hopes to discover. Likewise, a diplomat sent to parlay with a foreign Consilium may set up a portable sanctum in his hotel suite, giving her a modicum of sanctuary and privacy from prying eyes. A mage who is "on the run" and pausing only to catch a few hours sleep is unlikely to spend the time or energy required to create a portable sanctum in the cheap motel he is planning on leaving at dawn, although if the situation is dire enough, he may choose to sacrifice a few hours' travel for the extra security a portable sanctum may offer.

The creation of a portable sanctum is reflected in game mechanics by an extended roll. The player rolls an extended test of Wits + Crafts or Larceny with modifiers based on how defensible and hidden the location they have chosen is. A simple tent might offer a –3 modifier, while an abandoned military bunker might give a +3, with a standard wooden room serving as the "standard" (with no modifier). Each roll is one hour, and successes are used to "buy" the sanctum's traits as the area is set up, starting with Portability and Size and then moving into any applicable Sanctum Traits the mage's player wishes, to a maximum of the Sanctum Merit's normal ratings.

The Portable Merit can be combined with the following other Sanctum Merits: Size, Security, Guardian Ghost*, Guardian Retainer* or Guardian Spirit*. Because of this Merit's transitory nature, the Portable Sanctum Merit cannot be combined with the Sanctum Gauntlet Merit. (Note that those traits marked with an asterisk must be completely "purchased" through set-up in order to take advantage of them.)

Because of the impermanent nature of portable sanctums, they can be difficult to maintain. For every dot of Portable Sanctum in use, the Storyteller should roll that many dice each day. The Portable Sanctum loses one dot in one of its traits per success on that roll. If the sanctum is being used by more than one person, add one dice per person to this roll.

For example, a mage who has a Sanctum of 8 (Portable 1, Space 1, Security 4, Guardian Spirit 2) receives word that he's offended a local vampire. The mage begins work in the afternoon, setting up his sanctum in a brick pump house near the sight of the archaeological dig he's been working on. On his first roll, the mage's player roll two successes, allocating them to Portability and Size; by the end of the first hour, the mage has unpacked the small trunk of motion sensors, checked the angles on the room's entrances and windows, and generally gotten a feel for the place and figured out what he needs to do to secure it. The next hour (with the player rolling two more successes, which are placed into Security), the mage begins setting up his precautions, filling locks with grit to make them harder to pick, placing small mirrors in perfect locations to help spot those trying to sneak up and burning the specialized incenses that make the sanctum harder to find with magic. Then, with an hour until sunset, he decides to place the sanctum's interior into the configurations that will draw the guardian spirit bound to it; his player rolls again, placing the three successes he rolls into bringing the Guardian Spirit trait into play, and then placing a third point into Security.

A Mage may possess a portable sanctum and a permanent one, buying them separately as if spending points on both a shared sanctum and a personal one. Portable sanctums are personal, however, and cannot be bought as a shared sanctum.

wherever they are currently focusing their attention, and are less likely to expend energy and resources into fixed location Sanctums than they are to ensure they are well equipped and have access to easy and reliable transportation for their next journey.

While investigating a particular area, however, Archaeomancers may well make use of a sanctum that, unlike traditional sanctums that lose power each time they are moved, has been designed specifically to be activated on site as needed, and then deactivated until it is needed again. While the qualities of this type of sanctum are limited, for a mage whose primary work is done "in the field," a portable sanctum may be far preferable to no sanctum at all.

Background: Because of the technical skills required to track down, excavate and interpret historic sites without damaging them beyond the point of usefulness, Archaeomancers tend to come from academic backgrounds, or at least careers with experience in such fields. Many Diggers have at least the basics of a college education or the equivalent, acquired before, or in some rare cases after, their Awakening.

The exceptions, of course, are those for whom excavation is more of a philosophical rather than literal endeavor. An Archaeomancer whose field of focus is investigating and interpreting the former territories of werewolves or vampires in order to attempt to learn more about those species and the ramifications of their supernatural existences upon the rich and complicated tapestry that is the magical world would be less likely to need formal training in archeology or anthropology than one who focused on recovering magical artifacts of the Anasazi or Mayan cultures.

Concepts: Shovelbum, cartographer, research librarian, geologist, cultural anthropologist, dumpster diver, Amazon explorer, underwater archaeologist.

ARCHIVISTS

Quote: *"Knowledge is power — both knowledge used, and knowledge denied. The secret is to know when each is appropriate."*

Alone among the major factions of the Mysterium, the Archivists focus is not on the discovery of new knowledge, but on the protection of that which has been claimed by the order. To this end, the Archive is also the only faction that exists as a organized community, as well as a group of individuals dedicated to a common purpose. Most Curators, Savants and a good many of the Censors belong to the Archive, and because of this, as well as their organized structure, Librarians are most politically powerful of any mystagogue faction.

History

For millennia, mystagogues have been gathering information and items of power from the farthest corners of the world. Although Athenaea have existed virtually as long as the order itself, in the earliest days these sites were often little more than a well-secured library or isolated vault located wherever a branch of the order felt the need to protect its resources. With little in the way of communication or organization among those mystagogues tasked with the duty of protecting and maintaining these strongholds, the Athenaea, their warders and the valuable resources within them were largely vulnerable to any Sleeper or Awakened who got wind of them and was strong or cunning enough to wrest them from the order's protection. Until the advent of the Archivists as a formally organized faction, a great deal of the Mysterium's own energy was spent reacquiring items or information that had fallen into the wrong hands in this manner.

While individuals were certainly performing the same duties that modern Archivists dedicate themselves to long before the faction formally began, it was not until the middle of the 14th century, when plagues from China swept across Europe, that the Archive itself was created as an organization. In Asia and Europe, more than three-quarters of the population was wiped out, including a large number of Awakened or Sleepers with mystic, if not Supernal, knowledge. Artifacts and irreplaceable tomes of ancient lore were destroyed as buildings were burned to prevent the spread of the plague. Vowing never to allow such a loss of knowledge to happen again, archivists from around the globe fashioned an organization where knowledge was protected from loss by duplication and overlap, as well as through combining resources to assure that each Athenaeum was as secure and well protected as possible. Communication was established with each remaining Athenaeum, ensuring that in

times of need each could call on others for aid, and be called on in turn should need decree.

Means and Methods

While those outside the order may perceive the Archivists as a group of crusty, dust-covered Librarians intent upon sequestering valuable knowledge and powerful magical items away from the eyes and hands of those who might be better suited to use them, this is far from the truth. There are a multitude of roles within the faction, each carefully designed as one cog in the powerful machine that is the Archive.

Curators and Collectors

Librarians are most commonly associated with Athenaea as Curators, as this is the capacity in which most outside of the order encounter Archivists. Athenaea might be said to be the public interface of the Archive with those outside of the faction. Athenaea are in mostly accessible locales where those with sufficient status and connections may apply for permission to research or have information researched for them. In extenuating circumstances, with the blessing of the authorities in the area, an Athenaeum may even provide items of Supernal power, most often imbued or ensorcelled items, but in extremely rare and dire circumstances, sometimes even Artifacts, to aid in a particular cause. Because of this semi-public identity, few outside of the Mysterium realize that the Athenaeum is barely more than a façade behind which the true workings of the Archive happen. Part of the Curator's duty is to ensure that that façade is maintained. Curators are, in many ways, the stage managers of the faction, organizing not only the information and items within their Athenaea's collections, but also the resources, guanxi and political agendas of their local caucuses to ensure that the Archive is able to continue functioning behind the scenes as effectively as possible.

While Curators are always associated with a particular Athenaeum, other Archivists fulfill similar roles outside of Athenaea. Some may serve a curator function for their cabal, archiving and organizing the group's resources so that they can best be used and developed without waste or overlap.

Others, in the stereotype of the reclusive hermit, may direct only their own collection of information and artifacts (but rarely Artifacts, as collections of that sort are "encouraged" to be contributed to the mystagogue's local Athenaeum.) These would include book collectors, often with a preference for tomes that, while not overtly magical in nature, provide hints or potential reference to arcane lore. Some might be solely in charge of their own personal library, while others own used book shops specializing in rare works, or work in the archives of public or privately owned libraries or book collections.

Other collectors might focus on artifacts or material items. While a scrying mirror once used as by a legendary seer might not have any particular inher-

Frisbee Sylvester's Antiquities

Hidden behind a store window that has gone almost opaque from dust and grime, Frisbee Sylvester's Antiquities shop is a veritable treasure trove for those willing to brave the dust (and the proprietor's often gruff demeanor). While at first glance the contents seem as ancient and likely non-functional as the shopkeeper himself, each book, bit and bauble on the shelves of the antique store has its own history. Few of the items are even remotely related to actual magic, but together they embody the history of the area and its population. From love letters to skeleton keys and childhood dolls to no-longer functioning dueling pistols, the display cases and tables of Sylvester's Antiquities are the elephant's graveyard for the magical and mundane threads of fate for the area around the shop.

Those who are able to win the trust of Mr. Sylvester may well find that the Archivist knows far more than the citizens of the surrounding areas give him credit for. With the flotsam and jetsam of their lives as his touchstones, there is almost nothing that has happened in the past century or more that Sylvester does not have unique insight into.

While care must be taken to prevent the situation from turning into a Supernal Superstore, an eccentric curator-type character, such as Frisbee Sylvester, can be a useful addition to an ongoing chronicle. He can serve as a resource to shore up gaps in the cabal's knowledge or abilities, provide the Storyteller with an opportunity to introduce helpful (or misleading) pieces of information to the character group or serve as an interesting ally or adversary (sometimes both), depending on the motivations the Storyteller attributes to Sylvester.

ent power itself, the history and sympathetic bonds such an item holds might well earn it a place in an Archivist's collection, alongside the quill a noted archmage used to scribe his grimoires. An esotologist collector's treasury might include items of non-magical nature but supernatural interest: a vampire's fang or tuft of theriomorph's fur, for example, or a scrap of fabric believed to be a Fae queen's scarf.

Other Roles

While Curators and their support staff are often the most publicly recognized "faces" of the Archive, there are many other roles within the faction, each of vital importance to ensure that the organization continues to fulfill its own important role within the order.

While Archivists have a penchant for tomes, scrolls and written archives of all sorts, they are also well aware that physical items can be destroyed, lost or stolen. Thus, the Archive has developed a knowledge bank of individuals who have dedicated themselves to the intense study and memorization of a particular arcane field. These Savants, as a group, trace their history back to the days of Atlantis itself, when the earliest Savants memorized whatever knowledge they could of the doomed Awakened City so that future generations could learn magic. Each new Savant chooses her own focus, learning what she can from the existing texts and teachers available, but supplementing it with her own research, investigation and experimentation in the field. When a Savant grows old or infirm, she often seeks out a promising student with similar interests, and attempts to impart as much of the Savant's store of knowledge into the new vessel as possible before passing away. When a Savant is lost to violence or unexpected illness or has simply not found a suitable student, a Moros student is often found by the Archive, to attempt to learn what information he can from the departed spirit. Savants who die without passing on their knowledge almost always return as shades; the continuance of this information is their life's work, and few can find peace until passing on of the information is assured.

One of the subsets of the Archive that is rarely recognized by outsiders as part of the faction is the group collectively called the Vault. They serve as

security and safety specialists, lending their physical and Supernal protection to the other members of the Archive and to the Athenaea and their contents. Some act as literal bodyguards, protecting certain items or individuals when circumstances decree that they must enter into hazardous situations. Guards are as often skilled in preventing incidents as reacting to them, and frequently specialize in Fate and Time magics in attempts to predict the safest course in hazardous settings. Others rely upon more direct methods, using firearms or their skill with Prime or Forces to react to any given threat against their assigned client.

Others specialize in latent security, planning the mundane and magical defenses of Athenaea. Not all Archive buildings are used for the same purposes, and each has its own unique security challenges. Archive sanctums must provide security and privacy, whereas occult menageries must cater to a wide variety of potential inhabitants. Censoria, of course, must be unbreachable from without or within, while magical academia buildings need to be designed to encourage learning and yet give fledgling mages a place to safely practice their new Arts in surroundings that minimize the potential damage to themselves and others. Vault architects interweave technological and Supernal attributes in the manner best suited to each individual location's needs, and their expertise is often called upon when the order creates new structures.

Motivations

Perhaps more than any other faction, Archivists are united in a single primary motivation — the protection and preservation of knowledge. This goal has many forms. Some protect knowledge from discovery by those who should not know of its existence, guarding the knowledge safely behind locked doors. Others prevent obscure pieces of arcane lore from being forgotten entirely, by memorizing it and passing it on to others as appropriate. Some are social networkers, ensuring that the faction as a whole does not lose its knowledge of the rest of the order and the outside world, as the faction's internal focus sometimes threatens to bring about. In whatever manner they do so, however, loyal members of the Archive are bound together by their desire to guard against knowledge being lost.

Archivists in Power

Members of the Mysterium, and specifically the Archivist faction, are sometimes accused of attempting to horde all Supernal Artifacts and knowledge for their own exclusive use by those outside of the order. In truth, however, the Archive is organized in a manner that has precisely been designed to prevent any one member from making untoward use of the order's resources for overt personal gain. The need for this is clear. Any mystagogue knows that knowledge is power. The Archive, with every step it takes toward succeeding at its goal of protecting knowledge, has inherently grown more and more powerful. As a group, the Archive could be the most powerful faction in the entirety of Awakened society, a fact that the organization downplays to the best of its ability. While there are certainly Archive members who are seen as very powerful individuals, for the most part those who are perceived that way by those outside the faction are those whom the faction has chosen to present as powerful, not necessarily those with true power. In general, those who have the most access to the resources of the Archive tend to minimize public perception of it, although each sub-sect within the faction has its own reason for doing so.

Within the organization, Savants are highly respected for their single-minded dedication and the vital role they play in the firsthand preservation of knowledge. Few, however, are known as such outside of the order, in part to reduce the likelihood of them being targeted by those who would erase the Savants' knowledge through lethal means. Similarly, Censors and members of the Vault earn no small amount of respect within the faction, but neither group is considered particularly politically powerful outside of the order. Vault guards often consider it a matter of pride to remain innocuous and be underestimated by those of other orders, while Censors are, for the most part, too focused on their duties at hand to play the political manipulation games often required to garner political power in Awakened society. Ironically, those who are most likely to achieve notability with other orders are not those who are held in the highest regard by faction members themselves. Most of the truly powerful members of the Archive have little time or energy to spare for interacting with the world outside their duties, leaving those who work for them — the younger and less experienced members of the faction — to act as the public faces of the even the largest and most visible Athenaeum. Although these mages may bear the highest status among other Awakened orders, most among the Archivists realize that this role is more often than not a proving ground rather than a position of true power. This irony is often lost on those outside of the faction, however.

Archivists and the Veil

The Veil is of paramount concern to the Archive as an organization, and the vast majority of Archivists as individuals. Curators and Censors are well aware that while one Artifact or book of mystic secrets may well be a threat to the Veil, an entire collection, let alone a well-documented, organized and categorized collection, is a breech waiting to happen. Because of this, the Archive is based around an elaborate system of security checks and balances, including the roles of Censors and members of the Vault, which allows the Archive to ensure that any threat of inappropriate information falling into the wrong hands is minimized.

Perhaps the strongest resource the Archive has against violations of the Veil, however, is the borderline paranoia that has inherently been built into the faction. An organization that has invested heavily for centuries in establishing an elaborate system of Athenaea around the world is unlikely to advocate any actions that might violate the security of those sites and prompt hasty reactions that might lead to damaging or destroying their invaluable contents.

Stereotypes

Archaeomancers: Just as children, Archeomancers do not take sufficient care for the fate of what they have discovered, when the next new exploration beckons to them.

Bricoleurs: They place more value on what might be than upon what is.

Egregori: Convoluted etherialists.

Reclaimants: Worse than the Archaeomancers. At least the Diggers study their finds before going off to the next.

Appearance: While the stereotypical Archivist is the bespectacled librarian, in truth the appearance of an Archivist varies depending upon the role the individual plays within the faction as well as his own personal tastes. Censors and the more physical members of the Archive tend to dress conservatively but with an authoritarian edge that brooks no argument from those they may be called into confrontation with. Many maintain their physical forms with similar care, knowing that a situation handled through intimidation alone is one with far less risk to themselves and those around them than one that escalates to physical violence or magical combat. Librarians called to teaching duties may likewise wear authoritative garb, although, unless they are teaching combative arts, they are less likely to exert as much effort into maintaining high levels of physical prowess. Savants and Curators tend to more scholarly appearances, although this can vary widely, depending on the location they dwell within and their areas of study.

Sanctum: Librarians are the most likely Mysterium mages to not only have extensive sanctums, but also to identify very strongly with their sanctuaries. An Archivist may or may not live within his sanctum, but chances are strong that it will be where he spends the majority of his time.

For those who hold the role of Curator, the Athenaeum itself may fulfill the role of a sanctum, whether the individual possesses the Sanctum Merit itself or not. For others within the Archive, cabal sanctums are common, as are private sanctuaries.

Security, rather than size or comfort, is of primary focus for Archivists. Regardless of their role within the faction, many Librarians may have personal sanctums. They may be no more than a single room, outfitted from floor to ceiling in bookshelves or deep file cabinets designed for the organization of the mage's own important items and information, but regardless, they are almost always strongly defended with material means as well as wards and spells to keep out intruders or prying eyes.

Athenaea, on the other hand, can be quite large, but the primary emphasis is still on security. An Atheneaum, especially one used predominantly as a Censorium, may encompass an entire underground facility, where vault after vault of Supernal materials and information are cataloged for future use or sealed away where it can do no harm, or it may be a well-fortified brick brownstone that can be easily defended from mundane or Supernal attack. Most Archivist sanctums fall somewhere between the two extremes in size, but regardless, privacy and security are almost always highly planned and scrupulously maintained.

Background: Depending on the role Archivists perform within the faction, they can come from a wide variety of backgrounds, cultures and educational experiences. Many Curators, despite their dislike for the stereotype, do come from backgrounds with an emphasis on, if not library science, then at least organization and management. For some, this is formal training, in the education or military system. For oth-

ers, the skills were used in their pre-Awakening life; Saruaia, chief organizer of one of the largest Athenaea in Europe often attributes her skill as a Curator to having Awakened at 45, after having raised a family of six rambunctious children.

Many Censors and those who serve as members of the Archive come from military backgrounds, either as the children of armed forces members or having served themselves. Perhaps more surprisingly, an almost equal number come from backgrounds in organized religion of some sort. Among them was Mikail, a noted 19th-century Censor from the United Kingdom, who was also a Roman Catholic bishop. Although his duties for the Mysterium kept him from being as active in the church after his Awakening, he continued to believe faithfully and serve the church as best he could until his dying day.

Concepts: Artifact collector, cynical censor, paranoid guardian, manuscript collector, mnemonic savant, militant bodyguard.

BRICOLEURS

Quote: "*Yes, yes, I know it does that. But, what if we tried doing* this *with it?*"

There are those who say that there is nothing new under the sun, that all that ever will exist exists now and only waits to be discovered or re-found. The Bricoleurs disagree. While Reclaimants and Archaeomancers seek to recover knowledge and magic that have been lost in to the ravages of history or has fallen into the wrong hands, the Bricoleurs strive to take that which has been recovered, discovered and uncovered, and to create something wholly new with it. By combining known quantities in new and creative ways, they seek to expand the realm of what is possible. And, much to the chagrin of naysayers and traditionalists, sometimes the Bricoleurs succeed.

The Bricoleurs are not what most orders would recognize as a formal faction. Instead, being a Bricoleur is more of a philosophy, inclination or (according to traditionalists who look down upon their controversial efforts) a deviation. Each individual Bricoleur may share nothing with another of the faction, save for a penchant for thinking outside the box and an inability to be content limiting her vision of the Truth to that which has been identified, labeled and approved of by the generations that came before her. Bricoleurs are not all researchers or spiritualists or technomages or spell-tweakers or any one thing. Instead, they are a multitude of individuals and small groups united by a common need to look beyond the accepted and into the realm of possibility.

Means and Methods

In any field of scientific study, from astronomy to zoology, there are those who are content to work within the established laws and guidelines, and those who are not. For every "fact" proven to the satisfaction of most, there are those who are not content to accept the "given" and are compelled to look not only beyond, but behind, before, under and around each "fact" to determine for themselves the reality of the situation. And, it is thanks to these challengers, these dissatisfied few who cannot and will not content themselves with "givens," that the vast majority of new "facts" are discovered. By pushing the boundaries of what is accepted as truth, new truths are discovered (and challenged in their own turn).

Just as science is a system developed for the exploration of the natural laws that Sleepers mistakenly call the truth, magic can be seen to be a similar framework for studying and understanding the Truth that lies beyond the Lie. As with science, the vast majority of those who are aware of magic accept what is known about it at any given time as fact. Most spells and rotes are identical to ones used centuries ago, and with the exception of certain factions within the Free Council, most mages seem content to leave it this way.

Not so for the Bricoleurs. Where others may be content to learn spells and rotes wholly as they were taught by their mentors (who learned them as their mentors knew them, and so on, back presumably to Atlantis itself), a Bricoleur may see a spell as a compound of Supernal ingredients that can be broken down into their more primary parts and combined again to form something quite different from the original. Or she may conceptualize a rote as a song, and dedicate herself to researching how to blend spells together to create harmony, discord or syncopation where before there were only two unrelated

tunes. Whether Bricoleurs perceived their magic as a machine to be tinkered with, or a biological force that can be mutated and adapted to new situations, Bricoleurs thrive on blending seemingly unrelated Arcana to create whatever output a given situation (or their own innate curiosity) desires.

Others seek new uses and applications for ancient, even legendary items and artifacts. While it is a fairly simple matter to discern a magical item's powers via the Prime 1 spell "Analyze Enchanted Item," some enterprising Bricoleurs seek (and sometimes find) ways to expand an item's intended uses in new directions. Take, for example, Hermes' Wings, a pair of seashells that together form a Pandemonium artifact that allows a mage carrying one to communicate verbally with who ever carries the other, regardless of his location. Before the advent of telephones, this item was considered remarkable, allowing the mage who possessed it to speak with another member of his cabal on the other side of the Earth. With the advent of telephones, this artifact lost a great deal of its fascination and perceived usefulness. The artifact still had use, however, especially when mages were traveling away from civilization where phones were not available, but the creation and widespread availability of cell phones made the artifact almost entirely redundant. Recently, however, a creative Bricoleur began experimenting with the artifact and discovered that it would allow communication between its two halves even if taken into Twilight or the Shadow, allowing the time-traveling mage to retain communication with his compatriot in the physical world. While this certainly falls within the descriptive of the artifact, until the enterprising mage approached the item with an open mind and overactive sense of curiosity, the full breadth of the artifact's powers remained a mystery.

Not all Bricoleurs focus entirely on spells, however. Some, known as Tinkerers, specialize in blending technology, science and magic to create artifacts the like of which their Supernal forefathers would have never thought possible. These individuals are often compared by outsiders to several sects of the Free Council that likewise focus on the merger of technology and magic. There are differences, however. Philosophically, Tinkerers most often see technological devices or scientific theory as little more than the next generation of dedicated magical tools, whereas Libertines are likely to conceptualize the modern knowledge as their own form of magic. Bricoleurs, for the most part, are also thoroughly indoctrinated in the need to share new breakthroughs only with those individuals who are capable of understanding them and using them for the greater good, whereas radical Free Council members may not be so discriminating.

Motivations

If there can be said to be a single motivating factor behind the Bricoleurs as a group, it is insatiable curiosity. Not for them is the rote memorization of facts or the mindless acceptance of any given dogma. Instead, almost without exception, Bricoleurs are driven by a need to question, a hunger for more information and an intuitive knack for thinking outside of the box.

For some, these drives manifest as a desire to improve upon the status quo. For these Bricoleurs, a spell that allows a mage to double her strength is interesting only in that it provides the foundation for one that might allow her to treble it. Knowing that to the un-Awakened magic already seems to do the impossible, these far-thinking individuals are constantly probing at the accepted boundaries of what magic is believed to be able to do, looking for a loophole that will allow them to slip that theoretical leash and expand the boundaries of Supernal potential even further. Mages with these motivations tend to focus on spells with quantitative end results, seeking ways to enhance their potential through using mundane or magical items to channel or amplify the spell, by combining it with other spells as increase the intensity, or by seeking situations, modifiers or motivations that might "amp up" the spell's effectiveness.

Other Bricoleurs are motivated more by dissatisfaction with the existing explanations of why and how Supernal powers work. Seeking answers to questions that have traditionally been answered through dogmatic responses at best, these curious questioners may well offend more traditional mages (including those of their own order) in their desire to get at the truth of a given matter.

Bricoleurs in Power

Most Bricoleurs have little interest in leadership or power for power's sake. Many, because of their unconventional thought processes and radical approaches to the supposedly "known quantities" of magic in specific and reality in general, find themselves rubbing more traditionally minded mages the wrong way, thereby sabotaging any aspirations the Bricoleurs may have had for moving upward in the socio-political circles of Awakened society.

New Uses for Old Tools

One of the areas that Bricoleurs find of particular appeal is finding ways to modify millenia-old spells to new uses. While mages have used Space spells for long-distance communications for thousands of years, modern technology has made such practices virtually unnecessary. For those with the skill and resources to use computers and cell phones, these devices now allow instant global communication with little effort and no risk of Paradox if witnessed by Sleepers. Likewise, email and websites allow lengthy missives, documents, even entire books to be shared with innumerable others across the world within seconds, and word processing programs make duplicating texts an instantaneous process.

Unfortunately, such media are not completely secure, leaving more traditional or Veil-minded mages wary of using these media to their full potential. Even for Awakened on the cutting edge of technology, mundane methods of security are inherently vulnerable to being cracked, hacked or simply destroyed in transit. And, although mundane advances in security are being constantly made, on the Supernal side of things, computers and their associated technology provide a unique challenge, falling into an awkward middle ground between spheres.

Certainly, a computer itself is physically subject to the realm of Matter. The keyboard, case, monitor and internal workings are all physical things, and subject to the sphere of physical material. However, without electricity, a computer is little more than a metallic paperweight. Not only will a computer not function as designed to without power, but the information a computer holds is subject to the whims of electromagnetic force as well. A computer's data does not exist physically, despite the analogies used to describe it in the same terms as physical messages being sent from one location to another. Computer data is digital information, existing only at the whim of magnetic and electric current, and can be altered or destroyed through the use of electricity as well.

Thus, while the hardware of a computer system (or cell phone or PDA) falls within the realm of Matter, the information itself is Forces related, while the processing is an interaction in which the Forces (light, electricity, magnetism or radio waves) are traveling across and being interpreted and manipulated by physical (and thus Matter) presences. Thus, the heart of this technology is an amalgam of both Forces and Matter, and yet not wholly either.

Traditional spells, many predating computers by thousands of years, do not address this area of conjunction that is now nearly omnipresent across the globe. While Matter may well destroy a computer's physical body, or Forces short out its circuits, for those who want more delicate manipulations of the data within it, new spells must be created.

Since the inception of computers into mainstream society several decades ago, Bricoleurs have been turning their attention to this challenge. Their efforts have created spells for manipulating, altering, reading and protecting this electronic data, and items that can aid a technologically-minded mage in his efforts.

Within the faction itself, however, useful theories, creative breakthroughs and revolutionary insights are highly respected, even though they may bring one Bricoleur's pet hypothesis into conflict with his fellow mystagogues. Debate, disputation and occasionally outright argument are commonplace at Bricoleur gatherings, but it is often during these heated discussions, where radical thinkers conflict head-to-head over an issue, that the most remarkable insights are gathered.

Bricoleurs and the Veil

The responsible Bricoleur must admit that what he proposes to do — to tinker with aspects of the Supernal-Fallen World relationship, to experiment with ancient magics that no one actually understands, to apply old, dangerous sorceries in radically new ways — is dangerous. Thus, unlike similar experimenters and seemingly-mad scientists in the Free Council, the Bricoleur wholeheartedly supports the Veil.

Much of what the Bricoleur does is based on his intuition and gut-response. Such traits don't come naturally, though — they are part of immersion in the Mystery. Thus, to the Bricoleur, maintaining the Mystery is utterly important; once someone proves the wisdom and will to become one of the Awakened, he may find among them those who understand the repercussions and potential of their work. It may seem as simple of a concept as "the Veil separates the chaff from the wheat," but there is more to it — those who truly have something to contribute will make it to the other side of the Veil. Revelation of what lies beyond the Veil may simply frighten those with potential away from it entirely, or drive them mad.

Stereotypes

Archaeomancers: Discovering the thing is not nearly so vital as discovering its potential.

Archivists: They lock away a world of possibilities behind their barred doors.

Egregori: We understand, though they treat us as though we didn't. It's like they don't understand that the Mystery lies not just behind us, but before us.

Reclaimants: Rogues and thieves who steal as much for their own glory as for the greater good.

Appearance: Bricoleurs are perhaps the most diverse group of any Mysterium faction, sharing little more than an overtly inquisitive nature and a desire for experimentation. Because of this, their appearances are equally as varied. Those who approach their experimentations through ritualistic means may easily be mistaken for an Egregori, with ritual tattoos or scarification, elaborate talismans and amulets and occult or ethnic costuming. Unlike most Egregori, however, a Bricoleur's trappings are likely to blend wildly different cultures, eras and spiritual belief systems. It would not at all be surprising to meet a Bricoleur who wore a Thor's Hammer over a Middle Eastern *aba*, and beneath that his body bore Maori tattooing and Aboriginal scarring.

Sanctum: Bricoleurs, whether through their own motivation or at the insistence of those around them, often have some sort of sanctum to cordon off their experiments from the rest of the world. Traditional sanctums are designed to protect what is inside of them from outside influences. They offer the mage an additional layer of security and anonymity from the outside world. Tesla sanctums, however have an added purpose. While they serve as a safe zone to protect the mages from interruption or unwelcome intervention during their studies and experimentations, these sanctums also act as protection for the surrounding areas and those within them, should things go awry. Bricoleurs often use mundane methods (such as thick, reinforced walls or naturally reinforced locations) to protect the outside world from their experiments. Subterranean structures such as maintenance tunnels, underground caverns or former bomb shelters are often chosen by Teslas as the basis of their sanctums. Many also use highly potent wards and bans (similar to those used by the Guardians of the Veil to sequester hazardous areas (see p. 237 of **Mage: The Awakening**) that (the Teslas hope) will prevent untoward effects from affecting those outside of their sanctum.

Although overconfidence is a common Bricoleur trait, the powers they work with are potent on their own and used in traditional methods; none but the most foolish would fail to recognize the inherent danger in combining them in new and previously unexplored manners. Unlike other mages who predominantly are working with known quantities and have centuries of others' experiences to call upon to anticipate what to expect from a given rote or spell, the Bricoleurs are treading largely in unknown territories. The same "sum is greater than its parts" effect that is precisely what the Bricoleurs seek also inherently means that a very successful experiment may produce an effect so much greater (or at least more powerful) than what was anticipated. Because of this, more traditional mages are often cautious about interacting heavily with Bricoleurs, especially in their home territories. Cabals that include a Bricoleur member often insist that the Tesla limit her experimentations to her own sanctum, well away from the rest of the cabal's living and working areas. Not even separate quarters, however, will protect those who interact with an unlucky Bricoleur from all of the potential disasters that can come from unsuccessful experiments. It is fairly easy, relatively speaking, to protect outsiders from fire or explosions. Curses, malevolent spirits, Abyssal attention and Paradoxes are far more difficult to quarantine. Because of this, some

Background: Bricoleurs can come from any background, but as a group, their average age of Awakening is younger than other mystagogues. Many have possessed their unique way of approaching the

world since birth, a quality that can be a blessing or a curse, depending on the environment they were raised in. Some survived childhoods in which their unique ways of looking at things caused them no end of trouble. Labeled disobedient, destructive, ill-mannered, argumentative or even mentally disabled, their need to question rather than blindly accept facts given to them by parents, teachers or other authoritarians may have earned the freethinkers the animosity of those around them. They may have found themselves punished, stuck in therapy or medicated to deal with their "deviancy," or even institutionalized, should their rebellious questionings have led them into conflicts with the dominant paradigm.

Others, a fortunate few, were born into families or situations in which questioning assumptions and seeking new ways of doing things was approved of, or even encouraged. These lucky individuals may have found themselves receiving accolades and opportunities for the same types of activities that earned their less-fortunate compatriots only abuse.

Concepts: Mad scientist, crackpot theorist, tinkerer, cryptographer, experiment fanatic.

EGREGORI

Quote: *"The greatest Truths often lie just beyond what the eye can see and the mind can comprehend."*

There are secrets that cannot be taught with words, knowledge that cannot be written in books. There are places so holy that to visit them is to commune with the Divine and experiences so sacred that to endure them is to become Divine oneself. Not all information is quantifiable by even the most talented pen. Some things must simply be seen, heard, tasted, felt or experienced.

Since the beginning of time, humankind has known these truths. Early in humanity's history, these great Mysteries were not separate from one another. Religion, magic and spirituality overlapped with themselves and intertwined inexorably with sex, food, drink, birth, death and altered states of consciousness — those things that had to be experienced in order to be understood. After the Fall, this knowledge was weakened, and the ideas separated, until eventually not only were they no longer the same thing, but many Sleepers began to see these ideas as opposites of each other, mutually exclusive ideas that taint or pervert one another if combined.

Not all forgot, however. Some held fast, preserving the ancient truths and teaching them to those who walked after. Others stumbled upon these truths as often by accident or fate as by searching. They found the answer in caves and jungles, in cities and on the sea, in the deep of night with the howling wind calling to them until somewhere from the dark places within themselves, an answering cry lead them to the truth.

These teachers, seekers, wise women and sacred fools — they are the Egregori. Egregori are more than a faction. They are, collectively, an entity that serves and protects one of the great truths of the universe — that some things are beyond words, beyond measure — they simply are.

There is no one way to be Egregori, no single belief system or overriding principle. Even the term "faction" is truly an inaccurate descriptor for this collection of very individual and unrelated sects, religions, cults, teachings and belief systems — all that, to some degree or another, harbor, protect, promote or center around some variation of the great Truth at the center of the concept of Mystery: some things cannot be told of or written of in any way that communicates the fullness of that experience. They must be experienced.

An Egregori might be a voodoo priestess, a Thelemic will-worker, a Delphic Oracle or a Native American ritualist. She might practice the early Catholic Sacramental Rites, or the ancient Eleusian Mysteries or neo-pagan Wiccan initiatory mysteries or Freemasonry ceremonies. She may be called to other ways, paths to the great Truth that have long since faded from Sleeper memories, if the paths were ever discovered by the unAwakened. Each of these belief systems, and a thousand others like them, is founded around a glimpse of the great Truth, and the pursuit and preservation of that Truth, and the myriad means of reaching it, are the core of the Egregori "faction."

Means and Methods

Many Egregori cults seek to teach, or at least to offer the opportunity to learn. Few, however, use classes,

lessons or other traditional forms of education. For the Egregori, true knowledge is something that an individual must come to his own understanding of. A raven can echo back words, but is incapable of understanding the import of what he speaks. Likewise, a student who repeats facts but has no spiritual investment in the lesson has no real understanding of it.

Regardless of the particulars, many Egregori cults share some common attributes. Some will focus heavily on one aspect to the exclusion of others, and some will deviate entirely from these commonalities, but these are some of the most common tools or aspects of Egregori sects.

Initiation, Death and Rebirth

An initiation is a rite of passage, a ritualized marking of the change from being an outsider to being accepted wholly as a part of the group. For a mage, the process of writing one's name on the Watchtower is an initiation into the world of the Awakened. Other initiations, however, also form a very important part of many Egregori cults.

The initiation is the end of what has come before and the beginning of a new existence. The symbols of death and rebirth are, therefore, prevalent in many initiation rites. For some, this may take the form of a Mystery Pageant, where the initiate takes on the roles of Persephone, Osiris, Baldur, the phoenix, Tammuz, Mithras, Jesus, Cernunnos or Innana, dying, entering the underworld and returning transformed. A traditional play is a carefully orchestrated production in which the cast attempts to lure the audience into believing the stage production they are witnessing is, instead, the truth. A Mystery Pageant, however, is an interactive journey through which the initiate is given the opportunity to experience the great truths symbolized by the roles that she and the other pageantists fulfill.

In other sects, the initiate does not take on the role of another, but instead journeys as himself from life to death and on to rebirth. This journey can take many forms. Some initiates must run a gauntlet of physical hardship, being struck by those who have already passed their initiations and become full-fledged members of the group. The injuries sustained in this gauntlet are symbolic of a physical death. Others sects pass initiates through a test of trust, wherein they surrender their safety and well-being into the hands of the established cult members, trusting them to lead the newcomer through dark and dangerous situations and out into safety once more. In other groups, the initiation takes the form of a period of deprivation; the initiate may be taken into the wilderness and have to find his way to safety with no food, water or supplies, or he may spend hours, days or longer in isolation, eschewing all contact with the outside world until he has achieved the proper state of readiness to enter the group fully.

Sacred Food and Drink

For much of modern society, food and drink are, at best, a source of sustenance and a pleasurable indulgence. At their worst, they can be a symbol of self-hatred, a bothersome necessity or an unhealthy addiction. With a few exceptions, both food and drink have lost a great deal of their ties to the divine. As nutrition became a science and culinary skill an art, the ritual of consumption was largely lost. Many Mystery Rites call upon that oft-lost magic, whether literally, in the form of banquets and libations, or figuratively, in reclaiming the power of symbols such as the apple of wisdom, the fertility of grain, the holiness of wine, the sustaining power of bread and beer or the magical properties of chocolate.

Altered States of Consciousness

Tied deeply to the power of food and drink is the power of altered states of consciousness. Many Egregori recognize that Awakening itself is, in truth, permanently entering a state of consciousness that is different from that which humanity recognizes as "reality." Perhaps one of the most successful coups the perpetrators of the Lie have ever perpetrated is the profaning of all substances that encourage Sleepers to recognize that their shared paradigm is only one state of being. By labeling stimulants, hallucinogens, entheogens, opiates and, in many cases, even alcohol as sinful, wasteful, illegal, harmful or simply "wrong," those who would keep humanity blind to the Truth effectively stripped Sleepers of the tools that might aid them in seeing beyond the limits of normalcy. Many Egregori sects reclaim these tools and teach their use in positive fashions to expand perceptions and loosen the ties humanity (even the Awakened) often form to their perceptions of reality as a static and limited state.

Sex and Ecstasy

If the perpetrators of the Lie take pride in succeeded in black-balling drugs and alcohol from their once-sacred state, their crowning triumph must be in the sullying of all matters sexual. The act of sex, once not only seen as natural but supernatural as well, has been, in many modern cultures and religions, painted

so brightly with the scarlet hue of sin that even non-sexual acts that reveal more than an "appropriate" amount of human flesh are considered sexualized by association. The role of the hierodule, or temple prostitute, is one that has fallen so far from understanding that even many mystagogues have difficulty fathoming its role in the great Mysteries, leaving those Egregori cults that rely heavily upon sexual ritual to deal with more than their fair share of prejudice, both from without and within the order.

Motivations

More than any other Mysterium faction, the Egregori are separated into sub-sects and cults, each with its own paradigm, practices and self-perceived role not only in the order, but in reality as well. Some, such as the Ariege (named after the cave system in France where the famous Horned Sorcerer cave painting was found), are dedicated to preserving, studying and seeking meaning behind the religious and spiritual mysteries of long ago. Similar cults exist across the globe, many specializing in the rituals, beliefs and symbolisms of a particular culture or era. Unlike Archivists, however, the Ariege and others like them seek to make certain that the practices, lore and knowledge of these ancient cultures kept alive, rather than simply not forgotten. These sub-sects recreate, enact and live the sacred ways of former times, keeping the teachings in context with the experiences and ritual practices so that their deeper meanings are not lost.

Others cults, such as the Seekers of the Morning Star, strive to better understand the nature of magic by looking for universal truths. The Penta, as they call themselves, take their name from the five-pointed star that has been used as a religious and magical symbol by diverse cultures dating back to the Babylonians, and that, of course, is also the

symbol of the Atlantean orders. Although more involved with written teachings than many of the Egregori sects, the Penta reveal the deeper symbolism of the five-pointed figure in progressives stages, each accompanied by rituals of a more ancient origin than the stage before. Unlike many Mysterium cults, the Penta allow, even encourage, Sleeper initiates in the early stages of the cult's teachings. Only the final stage, when the symbolism and significance of the pentagram in relation to Atlantis as the Awakened City, is reserved only for those who have undergone their Awakening themselves.

Egregori in Power

The Egregori, being composed of a multitude of unrelated and non-interactive sects and cults, do not have an overarching power structure in the same way that the Archive, for example, does. Many of the sub-groups within the faction have hierarchies of power, and certainly many leaders or members of some of the Egregori cults are talented and powerful mages in their own right. While it is not inherently an Egregori trait to seek power or position, neither can it be said to be antithetical to the faction's goals. While some sects may eschew status, rank or personal power, others place a high value on achieving one's full potential in whatever endeavors the adherents may turn their attentions to, including that of sociopolitical manipulation and pure arcane power.

Egregori and the Veil

Some Egregori sects cater exclusively to Awakened penitents, believing that Sleepers are inherently incapable of handling the depth and intensity of knowledge revealed by their practices. The Lie, these Egregori state, acts as a protective measure to keep Sleepers from that which they cannot, by virtue of their inherent state of being, be capable of understanding in any meaningful manner.

Perhaps more than any other Mystagogue faction, Egregori cults often straddle the line between encouraging Sleepers to explore their own world to the fullest and actually breaking the Veil. Those sects that, such as the Penta, allow Sleepers to learn of the cults' existence, or even allow Sleepers as initiates, are considered by more conservative mystagogues to be a breech of the Veil waiting to happen. Those who encourage the practice point out that mystery religions have been a part of Sleeper society for thousands of years, and that only those who are capable of truly understanding the nature of Truth will glean enough from the mystery plays, rituals and ceremonies to peer through the Veil.

In this manner, many noted Egregori leaders have been ushered into their own Awakenings. Unfortunately, for every circumstance in which a Sleeper initiate Awakens when catching a glimpses of the Truth beyond the Lie, as many or more are not as fortunate. Some are driven mad by what they perceive, unable to reconcile their experiences with the rules of reality as it is known to the Sleepers. Others recoil from the Truth, separating themselves from the sect with denial-filled vehemence. The backlash of this separation is often complicated and messy for the Egregori, as former initiates level allegations of brainwashing, kidnapping or sexual abuse against those who encouraged the Sleepers to understand things they were not capable of dealing with.

Stereotypes

Archaeomancers: If they would only spend as much time understanding the "why" as the "what."

Archivists: They do the Guardians' work for them.

Bricoleurs: They look for possibilities, but blind themselves to Truth.

Reclaimants: Rogues and Thieves who seek adventure more than understanding. They will find only what they seek.

Appearance: Because of the fractious nature of Egregori, it is difficult to make any faction-wide statement about their appearance. Some dress and look just like any other member of whatever socio-economic and cultural group they belong to. Others affect the clothing, hairstyles and, in some cases, body modifications of the culture with which they most strongly identify. The use of special clothing, jewelry and other physical alterations is an important part of many Egregori's magical practices, and many use physical alterations as part of their dedicated magical tools, even if the Egregori's dress is indistinguishable from their neighbors when the sect members are not practicing. From masks and prosthetics to full nudity, what a mystic does or does not wear almost always

has deep significance and symbolism during the rituals and ceremonies.

Sanctum: Depending on the nature of the members' beliefs and practices, Egregori sanctums can be anything from a deep-earth cave to an elegant marble pseudo-temple. Some are small altar rooms, hidden behind a façade of normalcy and known only to their owners. Egregori sanctums may be a place for private meditation or a stillroom for the creation of psychotropic compounds. Others, especially those created by a cabal or the leader of a sect, might be used for group ceremonies, gatherings and rituals, and encompass an entire forest glade or the penthouse floor of an exclusive building in a metropolitan area.

Due in part to the symbolism of entering the underworld and emerging once more (as well as the inherent security they can provide), many Egregori sanctums are underground, although the forms they take can be quite varied. The psychedelic-era basement haven of a guru who seeks the Truth through "tripping" will certainly be very different from the stark dungeon of an Essemian goddess/priestess, which will in turn vary greatly from the subterranean chambers of an Orphic mystic.

Background: An ancient proverb states that "There are many paths to the mountain," and likewise there are many roads to Truth. Many Egregori begin their spiritual path into the Great Mystery well before their Awakening, although for some the Awakening marks the beginning of their journey, and for some the road to truth comes well after Awakening. Some had spiritual leanings or had been "touched by the gods" early in their lives. It is not uncommon for an Egregori to have spent her early years with a stronger-than-normal belief in that which modern society deems to be fantasy or "make believe." As many, however, came from lives where truth was something force fed to them in scientific tomes or religious tracts that left little room for questioning or contemplation. For these Egregori, their first experiences with anything beyond the hard-and-fast explanations that their backgrounds were built upon was often enough to rip aside the veil of the Lie and allow them to think, feel and truly experience truth for the first time.

Concepts: Delphic Oracle, tarot reader, whirling dervish, peyote tripper, tantric, hermit, dominatrix.

RECLAIMANTS

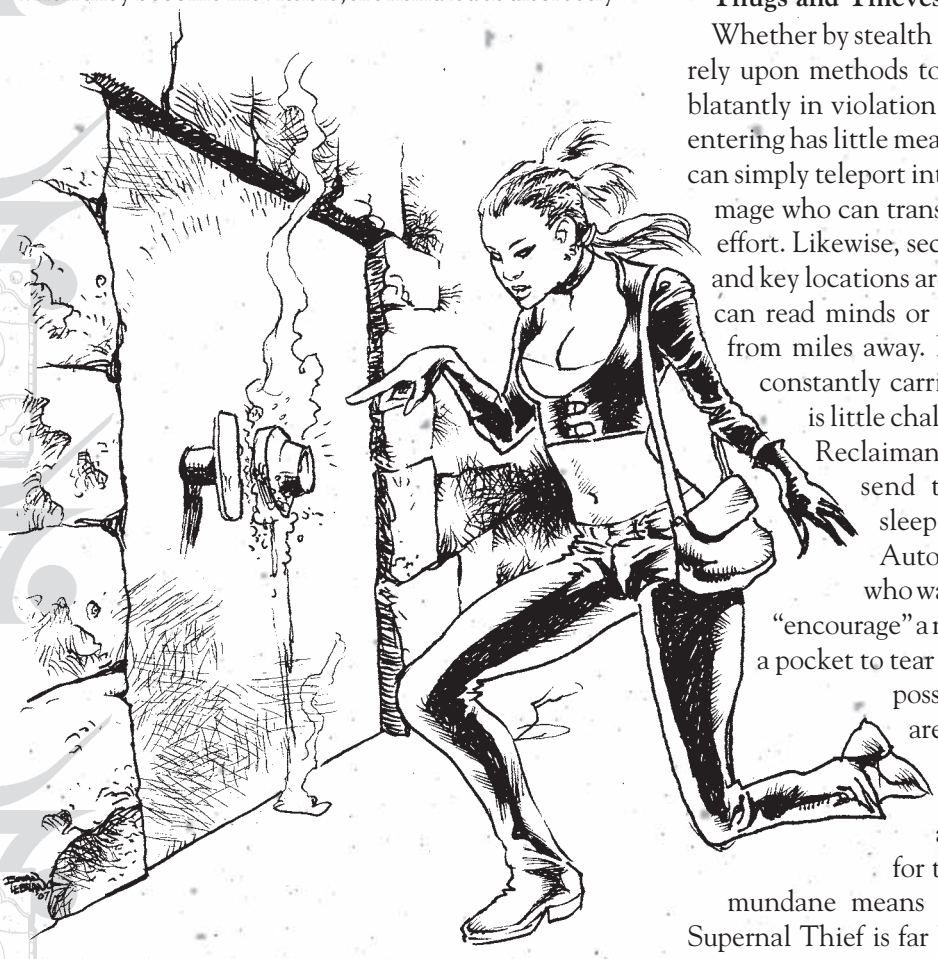
Quote: *"Where did I get it? Let's just say the former owner wasn't going to be needing it any more."*

While it is the goal of the Archaeomancers to ensure that every Artifact or bit of valuable arcane information that has been lost in the distant past is unearthed and returned to the care of those Awakened who can best protect the object, this goal is, at best, a pipe dream. There are simply not enough Awakened in existence to ensure that every piece of Supernal history is uncovered by mages and remains in their custody eternally. Sleepers, for all that they are blind, are numerous and widespread enough that sheer chance decrees that they eventually stumble across a multitude of things that the Mysterium would prefer they didn't, even if humanity were not motivated to seek out those same secret and powerful mysteries through their own curiosity and desire for knowledge, power and wealth. When an Artifact, sacred tome or other item that threatens the Veil (or would simply better benefit the mystagogues' cause if the item were within their control) is discovered to be in Sleeper hands, the Reclaimants' job begins.

Whether prowling the dark chambers of Sleeper occultists' secret lairs or hobnobbing with high society at art auctions, Reclaimants hold to a single creed: get the job done by whatever means necessary. An Artifact in the hands of a Sleeper is a blasphemy to the Mysterium. In most cases, the item's power and potential are wasted through the current owner's inability to wield the object or lack of knowledge of its nature. Or worse, the item may be being wielded wrongly: to promote the Sleeper's own power or in manners that bolster the Lie or threaten the Veil. Regardless, it is imperative (in the eyes of the order) that such items are brought into the hands of those who can use these objects for rightful causes — or in the case of some, protect the world from the items' use. The tool that the order uses in these cases is the Reclaimant faction, a group of mystagogues who specialize in removing powerful and forbidden knowledge

from the hands of those outside of Supernal society and returning the knowledge to the order, where the object can be used or archived safely.

Recovering an Artifact from Sleeper hands can often prove challenging, especially if the Sleeper is aware of its nature and has the ability to use even a part of the object's power to protect his claim to it. More difficult, however, is recovering more esoteric, but no less powerful, targets. When the item in question is not an item at all, but a memory, a piece of information or a ritual, special considerations come into play. Not only are different methods required than for missions that amount to little more than cat burglary or outbidding other buyers at an auction, but the Reclaimant must be certain that she is obtaining the entirety of the target. There is no margin of error on such missions, because in most cases, knowledge, once released, cannot be completely recovered without the most severe of measures. Many Sleepers who have discovered things they should not, have been "liquidated" in the name of protecting the greater good and sealing the potential information leak permanently. Such situations are, of course, best handled via prevention, and when they become inevitable, are handled as discreetly as possible. Rumors occasionally arise in regards to Awakened individuals who discover things that, for one reason or another, are an unacceptable security breech and are, consequently, "dealt with." In most cases, however, it is the Guardians of the Veil, rather than mystagogue Reclaimants, who are labeled as being behind such extreme measures, a blame-placing that the Mysterium has not, as of yet, publicly refuted. Nor, interestingly, have the Guardians.



Methods and Means

Over the centuries, Reclaimants have well earned their nickname of Acquisitionists (or simply Thieves, for those who are less approving of the Reclaimants' methods, if not the results thereof.) While not all members of the faction rely upon illegal means, most would agree that there are certainly times when stealth and deception are the most effective tools in the Reclaimants' repertoire. Smash-and-grab tactics are employed only by the most desperate or inexperienced of Reclaimants, in part because of their ineffectiveness as well as the likelihood of such methods resulting in the theft being noticed quickly and followed up on.

Thugs and Thieves

Whether by stealth or strength, many Reclaimants rely upon methods to fulfill their missions that are blatantly in violation of Sleeper laws. Breaking and entering has little meaning for an adept of Space who can simply teleport into a secure location or a Matter mage who can transform steel to butter with little effort. Likewise, security codes, safe combinations and key locations are easily accessible to those who can read minds or look over someone's shoulder from miles away. Even an item that is worn or constantly carried with a well-armed Sleeper is little challenge for the creative Supernal Reclaimant. A Life mage might simply send the individual's system into sleep mode (see p. 196 for "Trigger Autonomic Function") while one who was skilled at Matter could simply "encourage" a necklace's fastener to weaken or a pocket to tear at an opportune moment. The possibilities for Supernal thievery are almost infinite, and Reclaimants often adapt their inherent knack for certain Arcana to aid in their pilfering. In short, for those who must rely only upon mundane means to protect their valuables, a Supernal Thief is far beyond their capacity to ward

against, making the recovery of Artifacts from Sleeper hands a fairly simple matter.

More complicated, however, is the acquisition of such powerful items when they are possessed not by the unAwakened, but by other mages whom the order has deemed unworthy of the items' ownership for one reason or another. Few mages outside of the Mysterium would be willing to voluntarily part with a powerful Artifact or potentially valuable text for no more reason than "the mystagogues say you should." Even though the Mysterium does earn respect from many of the other orders for the mystagogues' dedication to protecting and preserving knowledge, members of the Silver Ladder, Free Council and Adamantine Arrow often see the Mysterium as attempting to horde the information and power for themselves, while the Guardians of the Veil believe that mages of the Mysterium are lax in the care of such objects and see themselves as more fitting protectors of anything that might be potentially dangerous (or valuable). At times, the order finds itself needing to recover magical items or knowledge, not from the mostly unaware Sleepers, but from an alert, prepared and powerful fellow mage, and these challenges often are the most difficult for mystagogue Thieves.

Sometimes the answer is a simple arms race. When confronting an adept of Forces, sometimes the best tool is a master or archmage of the same sphere. Unfortunately, however, one-upmanship is not always possible, especially if the target has access to the powers of the Artifact the Mysterium seeks to recover. Even an apprentice may well overcome a more powerful mage in a toe-to-toe battle if the apprentice is wielding an Artifact that amplifies her powers and gives her access to otherwise inaccessible abilities.

When might and power cannot win the day, however, cunning and guile often can. And, fortunately for the Mysterium, cunning and guile are what Thieves do best. Simple sneak-thievery is rarely effective with mages; it is simply too difficult to completely mask one's identity when the target may well have access to Time, Fate, Mind or Prime magics that can uncover even the most carefully masked tracks. Some Reclaimants, however, specialize in the types of tricks that overconfident mages may be particularly vulnerable to. With skill that would make even the most accomplished Sleeper con man weep with envy, these Mysterium Reclaimants are capable of using their Supernal skills and abilities to construct elaborate multidimensional "long cons" to separate the target item or information from its current owner. This can include fake-outs, such as switching the Artifact out for a duplicate one after convincing the owner that a certain action on his part will "break" the Artifact, and then pushing him into a situation in which he must take that action. Another cunning ruse involves orchestrating circumstances to lead the owner to believe that the item is cursed. If this is convincingly done, the order may find itself being begged to remove the item (and it's accompanying "curse") from the owner's hands.

Collectors and Connoisseurs

Despite the name, not all Thieves resort to entirely illegal methods to acquire items and information for the order. When a suspected Artifact or valuable tome becomes available for legitimate purchase, the order gratefully takes advantage of this low-risk method of acquisition. Such auctions and sale rooms, however, are often open only to those with certain social or financial credentials, and there are a number of Reclaimants who have developed exactly these qualifications in order to facilitate purchases on the order's behalf. By building a reputation as a well-heeled collector of medieval alchemy manuscripts, crypto-artifacts or prehistoric relics, the Acquisitionist may well find that legitimate and questionable would-be sellers actually seek him out when an item comes to their attention, rather than waiting for organized sales events or auctions.

Reclaimants of a scholarly bent may also find that making a name for themselves as the authority within a particular field — the religious beliefs of the Visigoths, for example, or burial traditions of the indigenous peoples of the Southwest — may mean that the Acquisitionists are called in to give their professional assessment when new finds are unearthed. While the ethics of mis-categorizing an item as academically unimportant so that it can be handed off to the order is muddy at best, it can be a very effective technique.

Motivations

Despite the allegations of those who do not understand the Reclaimants' role within the order, few Reclaimants are motivated by greed or personal profit. If a mage truly wanted to steal items and information for his own use, the Mysterium is one of the worst places to choose to do so. Almost without exception, a Reclaimant's "plunder" is handed over immediately to the appropriate Athenaeum for examination, experimentation, categorization and, should it be considered to be a threat, isolation. In exchange for doing so,

Reclaimants are lent or given whatever reasonable resources they require for completion of their duties. In some areas, the order looks the other way when Reclaimants turn their craft on other valuable, but not of Supernal interest or import, items. As long as the things that the Mysterium has an interest in are turned over to the order, other jobs are seen as the Thief's personal business and a way to keep his skills sharp. In other areas, the local mystagogues frown heavily upon non-necessary "acquisitions" seeing them as a risk to the Reclaimant, and hence to the order itself.

Reclaimants in Power

Although Reclaimants make up a decent portion of the Mysterium (especially the younger and more adventurous population), as a whole, few of their number ever gain significant political power within the order while they are following the faction. While the average Acquisitor is afforded a small amount of status out of respect for the service he provides the order and the danger he puts himself into, few gain more than this, at least until they grow beyond the hunger for adventure and excitement that lead them to the path of the Reclaimant in the first place. While many Thieves are motivated by the same sorts of power-hunger and cunning that might serve to rocket them to political power within other orders, the Mysterium as a whole tends to be more discerning about the true wisdom of their leaders. As an organization that values knowledge above all else, mystagogues tend to promote and value those of their members who have proved themselves wise, knowledgeable and discreet, three traits that are not necessarily in great abundance in the average Thief.

Reclaimants and the Veil

Subtlety is of the essence to most Reclaimants, not only because they understand and value the import of the Veil, but because prudence and stealth often are more effective tactics than indiscretion and brute strength. And, ultimately, Acquisitionists are all about getting the job done.

Whether a Reclaimant is attempting to convince an art aficionado that the Artifact in her collection is actually a duplicate, or sneaking in to the depths of a werewolf's territory to liberate a powerful relic from its current owner, the less notice the outside world takes of a Reclaimant's actions, the more likely he is to succeed. To this end, competent Thieves are rarely a threat to the Veil, having created plans, backup plans and contingency plans should their backup plans fail them, all of which are designed to minimize attention to themselves in any way. Since Veil-destroying activities are inherently attention-attracting, competent Thieves are rarely a threat to the Veil.

Incompetent Thieves, on the other hand, often put themselves (and others) at risk. Whether through overconfidence, poor planning or simple bad luck, an individual in a tight spot with the potentiality to draw upon Supernal powers to get out of it is frequently tempted to do so. Fortunately for the order (although unfortunately for the bumbling Thief), such situations are often self-correcting. Those who are inept at their work are often either killed in the line of duty, or quickly draw the attention of either Censors within the order or the Guardians of the Veil, and either re-educated or dealt with in more permanent manners.

Stereotypes

Archaeomancers: They waste time digging for the lost while the already-discovered falls constantly into the wrong hands.

Archivists: It's good that someone besides us is working to keep things where they belong.

Bricoleurs: Let them tinker with the things we've risked our lives to recover. It keeps them from getting in our way.

Egregori: Rituals and mystery plays will be of little consolation when the Exarchs stab the Egregori in the back with an Artifact blade.

Appearance: Reclaimants tend to vary in their appearances, wearing what is necessary to accomplish their missions. A good Reclaimant should be comfortable in a uniform, the latest fashions in high society, grungy street clothing or something simple and dark to help facilitate a break-in.

Sanctum: As Reclaimants' business often involves violating the sanctuaries and safe places of others, Reclaimants tend to have rather extreme views of sanctums themselves. Some Reclaimants eschew sanctums entirely, realizing that ultimately, there is no such place as a completely safe haven. They may incorporate many of the techniques they use in their

line of work to hide important items or information, from disguise to cryptography to hiding them in plain sight. A mystic tome on the same bookshelf as hundreds of other antique works is less likely to draw the attention of a casual thief than one protected behind a fancy security display case. Other Thieves may simply minimize their attachment to physical accouterments, realizing that any "thing" can be taken from them with the same ease that they take things from others. Minimalists to the extreme, these Acquisitionists give their Athenaea (and thus their order) not only the Artifacts and important information they recover but all but the barest minimums they require to live and perform their duties, carrying the entirety of their worldly possessions with them from job to job.

At the other end of the spectrum are those Reclaimants who see creating an impenetrable sanctum to be the ultimate challenge. Choosing the most defensible location as a basis, they use both mundane and magical means to reinforce their inner sanctuary to the penultimate degree. It is not unusual for Thieves of this mindset to spend vast wealth and effort to incorporate alarms, cameras, hidden chambers and even deadly traps and wards into their sanctums. Unfortunately, this behavior, combined with the pressures of Awakened existence, can all too easily escalate into an all consuming paranoia, diverting the Reclaimant from his ability to interact with the outside world for fear of giving away one of the secrets of his protection.

Background: It is impossible to draw a commonality in the backgrounds of Reclaimants — the range is simply too wide. It would be easy to assume that those who specialize in the (to mundane eyes) legitimate acquisition of items through auctions often have a history among moneyed families to draw from. In truth, however, just as many craft an appropriate background for themselves, relying upon charm, charisma and an almost limitless access to material resources (supplemented, of course, with supernatural skills) to ease their entry into high society and big business circles.

Likewise, it would be overly simple (and inaccurate) to assume that all Thieves come from impoverished, underprivileged or criminal backgrounds. Considering the order's strident regulations about turning any items of Supernal interest over to the appropriate Athenaeum, becoming a Thief is rarely the most expedient route to personal wealth or power. An Acquisitionist cat burglar is just as likely to have been drawn to her role out of an addiction to adrenaline and excitement or because she fell in with a mentor who saw in her grace and stealth an inherent knack for the role, as for a desire for personal gains. Others find themselves drawn to the path because of their honest desire to ascertain that powerful and dangerous items and information are given to the order that can most safely deal with it.

Concepts: Art thief, grave robber, confidence man, auction aficionado, artifact collector, cat burglar.

Cults

Within each faction, even one as organized as the Archive, sub-cultures and groupings often form. Sometimes these are created when an extremist view gathers followers, creating more-radical-than-thou movements within a group. Other times, a cult will form when a particularly unique spin is put on an commonly accepted belief. In many cases, these sub-sects are a localized phenomenon, existing for the most part isolated (by circumstance or intent) from the rest of the organization. Some are as small as a single cabal, while others may encompass the entire Mysterium caucus in a city or even larger region.

Archaeomancers: GOPHER

The Global Organization for the Protection of Historical and Ethno-cultural Relics is almost unique among Awakened organizations, being well-known to Sleepers throughout the world. Of course, while there are more than a million unAwakened members of GOPHER, none are privy to the organization's true goals.

The Façade

Nominally, GOPHER is an activist group dedicated to protecting sites of possible historical value from destruction. Across the globe, civilization expands further by hundreds of acres a day, encroaching further and further into the dwindling wilderness. This expansion can have devastating effects on the environment, especially in remote locations where little in the way of regulation exists to control or curtail the clear cutting of forests, diverting or damming of rivers and waterways, mining for metals or other valuable materials or the construction of roads, railways and new towns. While ecological preservation groups have lobbied for decades to reduce the environmental impact of such expansion, less groundwork has been established in many countries to prevent other, more

immediate damage from occurring. In these same areas, burial grounds, ancient ruins and sacred sites are at risk of destruction, as "progress" pushes forward with little concern for history. Few construction foremen in these remote areas are experienced enough with anthropological or archaeological evidence to recognize the significance of potentially unique sites their work may be disturbing. And, unfortunately, even among those with an inkling about what to look for, profit and deadlines often tempt them to look the other direction as their equipment and workers continue on their destructive path.

GOPHER, an non-profit organization with headquarters in the United States, but outpost branches in almost every country of the world, is a forerunner in working to prevent these losses. GOPHER lobbyists are present in the government forums of most national and international policy-setting quorums, lobbying for global guidelines for the handling of grave sites, cultural ruins and locations of potential religious or spiritual import. In areas where the indigenous people have no voice in the government to protect their own interests, GOPHER attempts to represent the people's interests and works for protection and preservation of known and as-yet-undiscovered culturally important locations.

As well, GOPHER recruits and supports a veritable army of volunteers and interns who travel the globe, informally forming expeditions in areas of suspected violations of existing laws and regulations, acting as an ad hoc deputy force to report discoveries that might otherwise get covered up by construction teams more motivated by finishing their project than preserving valuable locations or artifacts. Realizing that even in areas where unexplored cultural sites are protected by law, many of the same government officials who are tasked with investigating and policing suspected cultural ruins are often tangled up in elaborate bribe schemes with the developers and construction teams, GOPHER's field investigators circumvent the political power structure in these areas, reporting potential finds directly to GOPHER. The organization's anthropological and archaeological teams can then deploy to investigate the area and make immediate assessments of the potential value of a site, using scientific news media to bring attention if there is a strong potential that the site is of ethno-cultural or historic value. This procedure, while very unpopular with corrupt local governments, has proved very effective in forcing the situation into broader scrutiny, and has saved hundreds of sites and thousands of historically significant items that would have otherwise been steamrolled, leveled, flooded or otherwise destroyed in the name of progress.

Behind the Curtain

On the surface level, GOPHER is, in truth, exactly what it appears to be. The individuals, Sleeper and Awakened alike, who are involved with the organization are genuinely concerned with the issues at hand, which is perhaps why the group has been so successful at furthering its goals. Anything less than whole-scale commitment to the organization's stated purposes would have certainly rung wrong with at least a portion of those concerned citizens across the globe who have been recruited to the group's aid. Instead, the group's sincerity has aided GOPHER in rostering one of the largest volunteer information networks currently in existence.

It is at the next deeper level, however, where the Supernal aspect of the group comes into play. Among the ranks of those who are first contacted when a site of suspected import is reported are a number of mystagogue Archaeomancers. Depending on the location, ethno-cultural possibilities and environmental challenges involved, any one of a number of experienced Digger parties may be alerted by the Awakened members of GOPHER's infrastructure and tasked with covert investigation of the situation. After investigating the situation and commandeering any items of potential interest to the order, the first-wave team returns to the Atheneaum to record whatever information they may have gleaned from the site and safely sequester away any recovered artifacts.

While a Sleeper team (sometimes bolstered with an Awakened member or two if additional investigation seems warranted) will be assigned to investigate as well, they will, of course, be limited by the mundane requirements of travel, meaning that in many cases construction or development will have already done its damage before the team arrives. While this is unfortunate, and GOPHER is doing all it can to reduce response time by whatever mundane means possible, thanks to the Supernal first response team, loss of information and items of obvious Supernal interest is reduced.

Archivists: The First Scribe

Those outside the Mysterium sometimes believe that every member of the order has equal access to all of the information the order as a whole possesses.

A fledgling mystagogue, when asked for information that is beyond his knowledge, or his ability to access it from the Archive, might well respond with, "What do I look like, the First Scribe?" Even within the Archive, the First Scribe is thought of by most more as a legend or allegory rather than an actual person. When she is spoken of at all, it is only by those of insufficient rank or status to know the truth behind the stories. Those who have gained enough experience or knowledge to suspect the First Scribe's existence is more than folklore do not speak so lightly, and those who report to the First Scribe do not mention the name at all.

In truth, the First Scribe is not a single individual, but a tightly knit cabal of three Mastigos Savants who, are arguably some of the most powerful mages in existence, not because of their own Supernal might but because of the information they have access to. The cabal has existed for centuries, with each of the three members being initiated into the cabal when a former member passed away. Just as those who fulfilled the role before her, each new member will spend the rest of her life using Mind magics to learn and maintain an ongoing catalog and inventory of all known Artifacts in existence. The threefold aspect of the cabal has obvious structural significance, above and beyond the mystical import that many belief systems attribute to the number three. Three members are less likely to suffer simultaneous illnesses or lethal injuries at the same time than two might, a circumstance that would mean the end of a line of memorized knowledge that traces its oral tradition reportedly back to the time of the Great Fall. Likewise, a triat ensures that a new initiate can be taught one-on-one by each of the two remaining members of the cabal, who act as a check-and-balance system for each other, minimizing any chances of lost information or any one teacher's individual viewpoint overly flavoring the new student's learning.

The First Scribe's sanctum is rumored by some to be an elaborate Tibetan library nestled high in the peaks of the Himalayas. Others believe the First Scribe holds reign over the legendary vaults beneath the Vatican, using the Catholic Church as a tool for the order's higher goals. Regardless of the cabal's actual location, correspondence to the First Scribe is almost without exception a one-way affair. Those high-ranking members of the order who are "in the know" send reports of any Artifacts discovered or witnessed in their locale as appropriate to ensure that the First Scribe's work continues to be updated as completely as possible.

The First Scribe mentally archives each new Artifact as it comes to the Mysterium's attention, adding the Artifact to a complex oral database of information that dates back for thousands of years. Some of the information comes directly from established Curators who, knowing, keep their eyes and ears open to the items they encounter, and send reports as those who came before them have always done, by means of ritualistic spells that vary from individual to individual. Some involve arcane trappings handed down for centuries from Curator to Curator. The information may be written on a parchment and burned to ash under a dark moon, or whispered in High Speech in a particular location on the winter solstice. Other Curators use more modern methods: emails that appear to be sent to addresses that do not exist on any mundane computer server, or text messages to phone numbers no company has records of. Throughout the centuries, a few inquisitive individuals have attempted to track down the end point of these missives, but thus far, no one has been able to do so, or at least have not done so and returned to the rest of the order to tell of it.

It is rumored that, in particularly dire situations, high-Status members of the Mysterium have successfully petitioned for information from the cabal. Those of Status 5 or greater within the order can be assumed to have access to information that would allow them to send a request for information about a particular Artifact's location, or for additional details about the history or powers of a given item. There is no guarantee that, even for a high-ranking Mystagogue, the request will be answered. It is understood as well, should a response come, that the source of the information will not be spoken of. Those who have earned sufficient respect in the order to have access to the procedure for requesting information from the First Scribe also are assumed to have sufficient wisdom to realize how much danger they would put themselves and the rest of the world into, should the mental treasury the First Scribe holds fall into the wrong hands.

Reclaimants: The Great Take

The Great Take started near the beginning of the 20th century as little more than one Reclaimant bragging about his exploits to another. In the same sort of one-upmanship that begets "No shit, there I was" stories and legendary fisherman's lies about the one that got away, the pair of egotistical Acquisitionists

vowed to meet again in a year and compare notes as to their biggest "take" of the year. At their next gathering, each brought a witness, and the four agreed to meet again in what would become an annual event. Over the years, this gathering evolved into an elitist revel, an all-night storytelling session of the crème de la crème of Mysterium's burglars and bad boys. At present, more than a hundred Reclaimants gather each year, at a pub with a Great Hall in the hills of Ireland. No other patrons are served that night, and from dusk until dawn, those who have earned admittance to the event share tale after tale of their most dangerous, outlandish, cunning and complex acquisitions from the previous year.

As the sun rises, a consensus is made among the most senior of those gathered, and the previous year's winner presents the new one with a token to represent her triumph. The token, a small bit of silver jewelry that can be worn as a pin or a pendant, bears the mark of the Great Take (a stylized open padlock set against a rising sun). The item itself is fairly inconsequential, not of any particular monetary value. The token bestows a small blessing upon the wearer (see p. 213), but is of much greater social significance than Supernal. Having won the right to wear the pin is a private victory of the highest honor to a Reclaimant. Those who have won frequently make a point to wear the token openly throughout the year, and it is expected that she will protect it with her life and wear it to the event the next year so that it can be given to the next winner. An individual who wears the token of the Great Take is often given a bit of extra respect by other Acquisitionists, even those who have not yet earned the right to attend the event themselves. Stealing the token is considered a faux pas of the highest order, perhaps as part of a conscious effort to prevent the winner from having to spend the entirety of the next year doing nothing but protecting the token from would-be fame seekers. In the past, on the rare occasion when the winner has been killed or otherwise disabled (taken prisoner, imprisoned in the spirit realm, transformed into a marble statuary, etc.) the entirety of those involved with the event have turned their efforts to recovering the token (and the winner if possible, but the token is of primary import).

Invitation to the gathering that has come to be known as the Great Take is spread by word of mouth only. Being invited is a rite of passage for a Thief. Only once an individual has earned the respect of the elite through a particularly brilliant caper is she welcomed at the next gathering by one of the most well-established members of the group, and any fledgling "Taker" who blabs about the gathering or has the audacity to invite someone who hasn't been given the nod of approval from the "old boys" of the group may well find himself excluded from the event in the future.

In a society full of those with mind and space magic, hiding the location would be pointless. Instead, Takers rely on social pressure to welcome (or exclude) those who gain or lose favor in the eyes of the established group. Although the gatherings have spanned more than a century now, and the numbers grown up near to a hundred, the group polices itself very well, and an outsider or interloper tends to stand out like a sore thumb amongst those who know their own. Those who have violated the unwritten rules of the Great Take (by intentionally or unintentionally including someone who hadn't yet been "approved") are merely shouldered aside, not given a chance to tell their stories and generally shunned by the rest of the gathering. Those who show up uninvited as a result of the rules-breaker are asked to leave and, if they refuse, quickly earn the wrath of the entirety of those gathered, an often violent and always cunning and longstanding wrath that sometimes, but not always, ends with the death of the interloper.

The same bravado, risk-taking and sometimes abject lack of self-preservation that often earns a Thief her place among the Takers also ensures that each year at least one of their numbers falls prey to the overwhelming odds the group sets itself against. Each year's gathering also serves as a memorial for those who have fallen in the previous months, with their last stories being told by the senior-most members of the group as an honor to the fallen (and a lesson to those who might otherwise make the same mistakes).

Bricoleurs: The Feynman Collective

Modeling themselves after the freethinking physicist responsible for expanding several vital scientific theories in new and innovative directions, the Feynman Collective is a network of Reclaimants scattered across the globe who are working to define the very nature of magic itself. Inspired by Feynman's virtual particle models, wherein a theoretical particle is assumed to exist and behave in ways that no known or provable particles do to allow physicists to contemplate and

extrapolate out theorems that go beyond the limits of known fundamental physics, the Collective seeks explanations for the seemingly unquantifiable supernatural laws governing Supernal magic and how it fits within the Fallen world. Using theoretical attributes such as the Viking diagrams, formulated by a historically-minded Bricoleur to allow mages to get a better theoretical handle on the implications of the phenomenon of Inferior Arcana and their relationship to their respective Supernal Realms, the Collective seeks out theoretical explanations for the laws governing Supernal magic that will allow the Collective to better conceptualize the reality of Truth itself. There is no one particular focus for the Collective. Each member or cabal has its own particular pet theory or focal point, many of which overlap not only with each other but with some of the more abstract aspects of modern quantum physics, theoretical mathematics and epistemology (the philosophy of knowledge).

As a group, the Collective has only existed since the mid-1980s. Some members, however, have been attempting to perfect their pet theories on the principles of magic for far longer. Agrippa, an antiquarian Moros Bricoleur, who was in his 80s when the Collective was formed, had already dedicated more than five decades to his personal field of study — the correlation between medieval alchemical theories and the actualities of Supernal magic. Others, such as Tedivm, a newly Awakened programming student from a New England technical college sitting in the shadow of MIT, have only just begun to incorporate Supernal aspects to their worldviews, but were immediately drawn to the Collective after Awakening by virtue of years of questioning the rules of their reality on a daily basis during their Sleeping lives.

New members are freely welcomed into the Collective. Unlike many mystical orders, there is no initiation, no proving ground required to join. Nor are Collective members expected, for the most part, to keep their theories and philosophies entirely within the Mysterium, the exception being those who are experimenting in areas that are deemed too dangerous to be shared with those outside of the order. Collective members often find a great deal of resonance with the freethinking Libertines, and talk has been made of inviting select members of the Free Council to join the Collective. Consensus has been, however, that while the Libertines may have a great deal of insight to offer in the field of freethinking, as a whole, their philosophical dedication to knowledge as a resource that should inherently be available to all Awakened is at harsh contrast with that of the Mysterium as a group. Although the Libertines may have much to add to the process, and are certainly a valuable resource to be used as appropriate, they cannot be trusted to conform to the same standards of safety and discretion that the order demands for potentially dangerous discoveries.

Collective members are scattered across the globe, communicating through personal and group mediums: super-encrypted Internet messages, discussion forums located on Collective-run Supernal servers (see p. 212)

The Viking Diagrams

It is commonly accepted that each Path is associated with a particular Supernal Realm and Watchtower, and that each realm is associated with two Ruling Arcana and has one Inferior Arcanum that is more difficult to learn for those associated with the Realm. There is, however, no consensus on why this is true. Why does the realm of Pandemonium, legendary home of demons and chaos, give the mages who are associated with it a particular affinity with Space and Mind rather than Death or Fate? What is it about the Kingdom of Nightmares that makes those who sign the Watchtower of the Iron Gauntlet ill disposed to Matter, rather than Life or Time or Forces? Entire philosophical movements have formed within several Paths in reaction to the fact that certain mages are inherently more adept with certain Arcana than others, but no real answers exist as to why and how this phenomenon exists.

Rather than allow their contemplation and problem solving to stall out with the whys and hows of this improvable point, Technoviking, an Obrimos member of the Collective, theorized a virtual function to allow clinical discussion of the effects of this principle without relying upon a proven explanation for why the principle came about. This function, called the Viking diagrams after Feynman's diagrams that served much the same purpose in fields of quantum science, allowed the Collective to make several vital breakthroughs in the application of various Arcana to their fullest potential by circumventing the inherent frailties of a particular mage's abilities in an Inferior Arcanum through supplementary spells or conjunctive spells.

and face-to-face gatherings that are frequently run alongside scientific and pseudoscience events. Many of the more technologically minded members of the Collective get together each summer at an unrelated gathering of computer subversives and technical outlaws, enjoying the environment of free thought that both groups seem to thrive within.

Egregori: Thusu Bararu — The Pilgrims

Awakened legends speak of a time long, long ago when some of the Atlantean mages first left their island home and traveled back to the lands of their birth. As they traveled, they encountered others who had also Awakened, and shared with them the location of the Awakened City. Throughout the years between the time the first of those who had created the Awakened City left their ocean spire and the time of the Fall, many mages sought the fabled Atlantis. Few reached its hallowed shores. Many proved insufficient to the tests they encountered on the way, falling prey to hubris or their own internal demons on the way. One group, however, having learned all they could of the Supernal Arts on their own, set out on dutiful pilgrimage to Atlantis to learn to their full potential. They spent years traveling across the Earth, seeking the city-state they had been told of, and along the way they faced many temptations, but their hearts were pure, their spirits solid and they won against every challenge that fate set before them on their journey. At long last, they reached the shore and set

sail. For months, they braved the harshest seas and strongest winds until at last, in the distance, they saw the brilliant spires of the legendary city before them, and felt within themselves the answering gleam of their Supernal souls shining in response.

Just as their boat neared the shore, however, the sky over the pilgrim's ship broke open with a deafening crack, and lightning lanced down all around them. The sea began to boil, and as they watched in horror, the fabled city of Atlantis crumbled and was swallowed by the hungry ocean. And as the Awakened City's light shattered and was scattered beneath the waves, the Pilgrims felt the answering light in their souls break into innumerable shards as well.

The witnessing of the destruction of their spirits' homeland marked the Thusu Bararu, reportedly a term that means "Shattered Shards" in some long-forgotten tongue, not just for the rest of their lives, but for eternity. The Thusu Bararu believe that each of the original cabal members' spirits (called Alath) was purified by the trials and tribulations of their journey and that they had reached perfection at the exact point they reached Atlantis. At the exact moment of the Fall, Pilgrim doctrine tells that the cabal's souls were in perfect harmony with the Supernal Crystals at the heart of the city, and just as those crystals, were shattered and scattered to the four corners of the Earth. As new mages Awaken, a small number inherit the shards that were once a part of the original Pilgrim cabal's Alath, a trait that allows them certain abilities, such as recognizing other shard-bearers by the harmonic resonance between their souls. Only when enough of the shards have been Awakened into being and brought together will Atlantis be healed and the Abyss banished as all that was sundered becomes whole once more.

Modern members of the Egregori cult known to outsiders as the Pilgrims believe that they are the spiritual descendants of those unfortunate travelers whose journey brought them to Atlantis just in time to witness its destruction. They spend their lives seeking out other shard-bearers and communing together in prayer vigils in hopes that together they will be able to bring about the healing of reality. Although Thusu Bararu come from many different Paths and orders, all convert to the Mysterium upon joining the sect, out of respect for the legendary leader of the original cabal, a Thyrsus Mystagogue by the name of Uthsah.

Most of the information known to mages outside of the cult about the Thusu Bararu is a matter of hearsay. Most Pilgrims do not publicly identify themselves as members of the group, in part out of fear of the persecution that has risen up against them at various times during the cult's history. Nor do they actively proselytize to the Awakened public at large. Pilgrim beliefs deal entirely with the destiny of those who bear the shards of Alath, and they have no reason to share their philosophies or quest with "arsu," their term for those who are not shard-bearers. Instead, their members rely upon visionary trances, often supplemented by enchanted psychotropic substances, to reveal to them the location where undiscovered shard-bearers may be found. Although Pilgrim doctrine states that the souls of the descendants of the witnesses of Atlantis's Fall will call out to each other, making recruitment a moot point, accusations have been raised against the Thusu Bararu at various times during the cult's history (which reportedly stretches back to the Fall itself). Cabal and family members sometimes claim that those who discover themselves to be shard-bearers are actually the victims of a wide variety of mundane and magical brain-washing techniques used to trick them into believing that they are destined to be a part of the cult. Thusu Bararu doctrine states that the souls of the descendants of the witnesses of Atlantis's Fall will call out to each other, however, since perception of the harmonic resonance between Alath is only possible by those who bear the Alath, it is impossible for the Thusu Bararu to prove their claims to outsiders.

Outside opinion of the Thusu Bararu varies. Some perceive the Pilgrims to be a rather quaint and inoffensive sect following a pointless but harmless doctrine. Others, especially the friends and family members of recent Pilgrim converts, do not believe the cult to be so innocuous. These outsiders claim that the group specifically targets those who are having difficulty coping with their new role as mages, or those who have pre-existing social or mental quirks that alienate them from mainstream society. The Thusu Bararu claim that this is not a matter of predatory behavior but a recognition of the symptoms of being one of the Shattered. When the not-yet-recognized shard-bearer's Alath is alone, away from other Alath, it cannot serve its bearer well. It is but a part of a true soul, and only when it is united in harmony with others of its kind does it truly sing with life and vitality. This, the Thusu Bararu claim, is why so many of their kind are depressed, mentally or emotionally ill or even suicidal before being found. Only in conjunction with the rest of the Alath are their souls truly whole.

Legacies of the Mysterium

Legacies are tremendously common among mystagogues. Considered an excellent expression of Supernal truths put to direct application, the Mysterium rarely harbors the kind of squeamish tendencies that some other orders sometimes exhibit when it comes to the shaping of the soul. After all, many mystagogues argue, there is little inherently precious about the soul in its natural state. Rather, just as the value placed on every human life, its value is in its potential to achieve greatness and bring about wonders.

Eyes of Ain Soph

You can only understand the nature of magic by testing its limits.

Magic is at its heart a mystery. No one knows, or perhaps has ever known exactly how or why it works — why the 10 Arcana are arranged as they are, what creates the various limits on magic or why some few human awaken and most remain forever cut off from the Supernal World. The vast majority of mages consider these questions best suited for philosophers. Instead, most mages with an interest in theory focus their efforts on practical goals, such as creating new rotes, finding more efficient methods of harvesting Mana or easier ways to create imbued items.

However, just as Sleepers with an interest in science occasionally turn their intellects to abstract pursuits such as theoretical physics, some mages seek to investigate the nature of magic itself. The most devoted of these students of magic often choose to pursue this Legacy. The Eyes of Ain Soph are mages who dedicate themselves to learning to understand magic in its most complex and powerful manifestations. The Legacy is after the eternal and formless light that represents pure, raw divinity as yet unmanifested in the Kabalistic Tree of Life, a realm of perfect enlightenment and mystical understanding, the members of this Legacy seek to understand the totality of magic. As a result, their Attainments are a mixture of abilities that aid their observations and those that allow the mages to remain safe while performing these observations. Mages who pursue this Legacy are often obsessed with understanding the secrets and intricacies of magic.

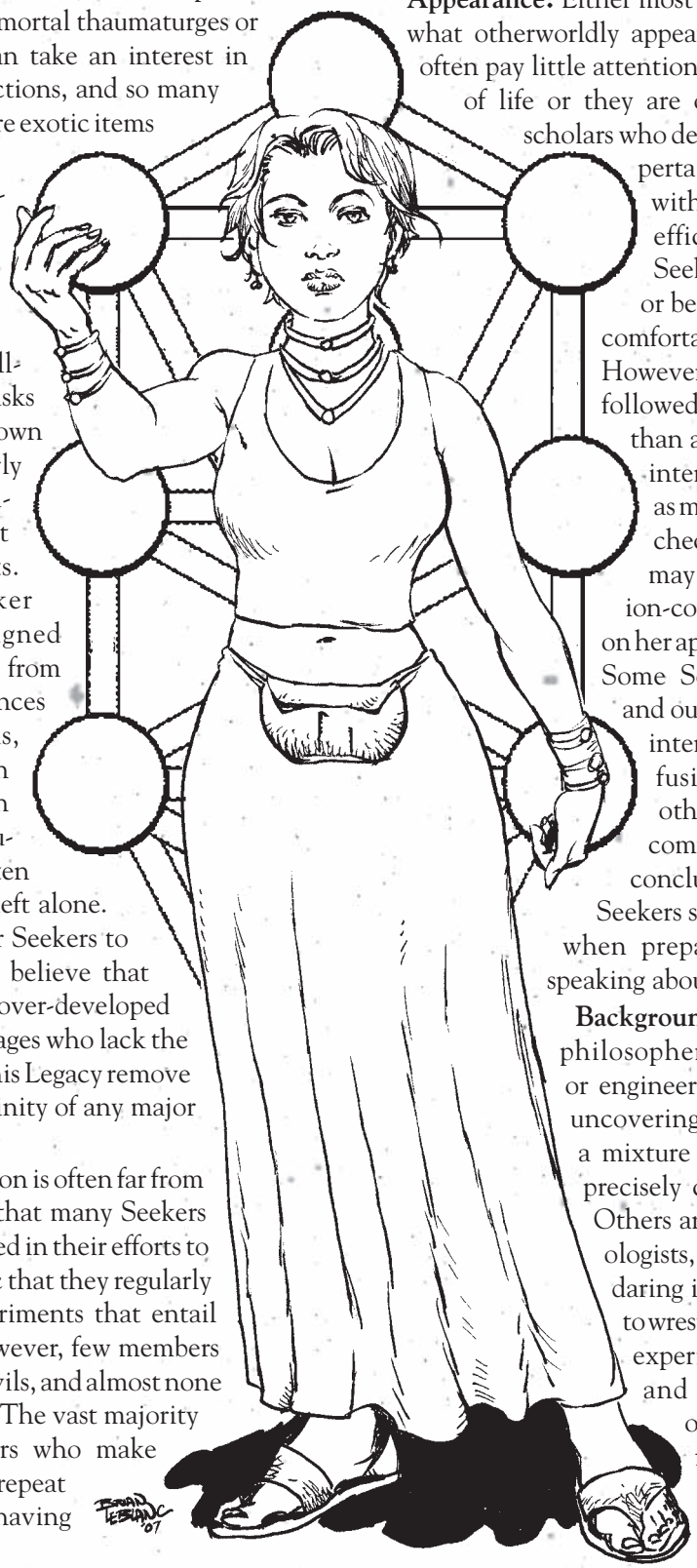
One of the central tenants of this Legacy is that the knowledge of magic is inherent in the structure of magic and so the best way to understand how and why the various Arcana work as they do is to experiment with them. A very few Seekers, as the members of this Legacy are frequently called, confine their efforts to working out lengthy theories about the nature of magic. However, the vast majority believe that theory cannot be separated from practice in any useful fashion and spend much of their time examining and experimenting with various unusual types of magic's and various unusual phenomena. Most members of this Legacy are tireless in their pursuit of new styles of magic. They regularly seek out the oldest or most obscure rotes they can find in the hope that some features in these magical formulas will reveal some deeper truth about magic. These mages tirelessly study newly discovered rotes and any notes about magical theory written by those who created these rotes. However, these same Seekers also actively experiment with any new rotes they find, seeking unusual quirks or advantages in their use.

In their efforts to further understand the nature of magic, many Seekers also attempt to learn as much as they can about the various other unusual phenomena found in the World of Darkness. Some study the limited mortal phenomena of thaumaturgy or psychic powers (see **Second Sight** for further information on both phenomena); others become fascinated with the Abyss and the various intruders into reality (see **Intruders: Encounters with the Abyss** for further information). Some Seekers attempt to learn all they can about the various other supernatural beings who also inhabit the World of Darkness, and many seek to learn all they can about Twilight, the Shadow Realm and the spirits that inhabit it. Because of these studies, many Seekers amass large collections of esoteric books

and occult relics, ranging from decades-old books on psychic powers, vials of vampire blood and strange relics physically retrieved from the Shadow Realm or the Underworld. Although most other mages care little for these exotic collections, various supernatural beings and occasionally mortal thaumaturges or even powerful spirits can take an interest in the items in these collections, and so many Seekers protect their more exotic items with potent wardings.

Although many Seekers are quite methodical in their investigations, some of their research is inherently dangerous, and most are perfectly willing to take significant risks when investigating unknown phenomena such as newly discovered artifacts, magically protected ancient ruins or unique spirits. Although some Seeker Attainments are designed to help protect Seekers from the negative consequences of these investigations, some degree of risk often remains, which has given the Seekers a general reputation as mages who often meddle in matters best left alone. A few outsiders consider Seekers to be dangerous, but most believe that Seekers simply have an over-developed death wish, and many mages who lack the protections granted by this Legacy remove themselves from the vicinity of any major Seeker investigation.

Although this reputation is often far from deserved, it is also true that many Seekers are sufficiently determined in their efforts to learn the secrets of magic that they regularly engage in magical experiments that entail some degree of risk. However, few members of this Legacy are daredevils, and almost none are particularly careless. The vast majority are obsessive researchers who make certain that they can repeat any successes and avoid having any particular failure or serious problem occur more than once.



Parent Path or Order: Obrimos

Nickname: Seekers

Appearance: Either most Seekers have the somewhat otherworldly appearance of dreamers who often pay little attention to the mundane details of life or they are obsessed and dedicated scholars who deal with most matters not pertaining to their research with a swift and functional efficiency. In both cases, Seekers care little for fashion or beauty and largely dress in comfortable, utilitarian clothing. However, most Seekers who have followed this Legacy for more than a short time have a keen interest in safety and spend as much time examining and checking any safety gear they may require as the most fashion-conscious dilettante spends on her appearance and grooming. Some Seekers are well-spoken and outgoing and express their interests with loud and effusive enthusiasm, while others are shy and are more comfortable recording their conclusions in writing, but all Seekers seem to come more alive when preparing for, engaging or speaking about their researches.

Background: Many are scholars, philosophers, research scientists or engineers who are interested in uncovering mysteries in through a mixture of careful thought and precisely controlled experiments. Others are explorers, field archeologists, naturalists and similar daring individuals who attempt to wrest new knowledge and new experiences from the untamed and little-known corners of the world. However, formal academic training and credentials are not a requirement for

membership. A sincere commitment to studying magic and an understanding of the techniques of scientific study are both considered far more important than where or how someone obtained his knowledge. As a result, some members are passionate autodidacts, and a few are mystics and shamans who seek profound truths and ultimate enlightenment through visionary journeys and deep and lengthy meditations or collectors of eccentric relics who endeavor to learn to use and understand the strange and sometimes dangerous magical oddities in their collection. Regardless of their methods, those who choose to pursue this Legacy tirelessly attempt to understand the world's most difficult and complex secrets through a mixture of theory and practice that requires a combination of time, dedication and occasionally significant risk.

Organization: Members of the Eyes of Ain Soph maintain close, but somewhat impersonal, contact with one another. Because many are scholars or academics of one sort or another, they are most comfortable with the trappings of academic culture. As a result, the members of this Legacy work together to discreetly published a journal (written partly in Atlantean High Speech to maintain secrecy), maintain several email lists and hold a yearly conference, where the various members share their findings and critique one another's research. This conference is also used as an opportunity for members to meet others working on similar projects and to organize joint projects.

Although many of the members of this Legacy have idiosyncratic theories and are most comfortable working alone, when they encounter a member working on a similar project, they almost always welcome the aid and alternative viewpoint that collaboration can bring. New members learn the secrets of this Legacy by working as assistants to other members. Members almost always take on only assistants whose ideas and theories are similar to the members' own. As a result, even once Visionaries have become fully members of this Legacy, they are often interested in working with their former teachers on projects of mutual interest.

The other major way in which the members work together involves dealing with the large collections of unusual magical relics that some members possess. While some Seekers keep their various unusual acquisitions to themselves, others are interested in both showing off their more interesting items and in having other mages provide insights into any possible revelations or theories that can be obtained by examining these items. Seekers are never simply greedy hoarders of magic. They wish to use the unusual items they often collect as tools to uncover hidden truths about magic. As a result, most consider permitting other serious scholars to access these items to be the best way to wrest the maximum amount of knowledge from any oddities they possess.

Suggested Oblations: Studying an Artifact or imbued item, finding or examining an ancient relic, formulating a scientific or occult theory, writing an academic paper, translating an ancient language.

Concepts: Mathematician, philosopher, archeologist, theoretical physicist, field biologist.

Attainments

To truly understand the nature of magic, an understanding of the Prime Arcanum is an absolute necessity, and so Prime magic forms the core of the study of this Legacy. However, to gain acceptance, members must also be serious scholars who also possess sufficient knowledge to impress their prospective teachers.

While by no means necessary to learn this Legacy, many members are also interested in the nature of the Shadow world and so study of the Spirit Arcanum is a useful adjunct to the study of Prime magics.

First Attainment: Seeker's Eye

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Prime 2, Academics 2, Occult 2

The mage attunes himself to the flows of magic so closely that he can see the subtle flows of magic. This Attainment duplicates the affects of both the "Analyze Enchanted Item" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 219–220) and "Supernal Vision" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 221). The mage can use both of these abilities at will, and many who follow this Legacy use both continuously so that they will never miss a chance to see some rare and unusual wonder.

Optional Arcanum: Spirit 2

If the mage also possesses Spirit 2, he can also use his same enhanced perception to see across the Gauntlet in a manner similar to the "Peer Across the Gauntlet" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 247). This same Attainment also allows the mage to see all spirits in Twilight, including possessing spirits. However, because looking past the Gauntlet can easily interfere with ordinary mortal perceptions, the ability must be deliberately activated. The mage must roll Wits + Occult + Spirit to use this ability, which lasts for a scene.

Second Attainment: Seeker's Aegis

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Prime 3

As the mage learns more of this Legacy, he can use his knowledge of magic to protect himself from the magics he is observing. The mage can call upon a protection similar to the "Controlled Dispellation" spell (see **Mage: Awakening**, p. 224) to avoid harm while not interfering with the operation of a particular fascinating magical effect. In addition to protecting himself from harmful magics, the Seeker can also protect others, but to do so, they must be in physical contact with him when he rolls to divert the spell. A mage only protect a number of others equal to his score in the Prime Arcanum.

Optional Arcanum: Spirit 3

Mages skilled in the Spirit Arcanum also learn how to protect themselves from the powers of spirits. The mage can call upon a protection similar to the "Numinous Shield" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 249–250). If a mage desires, when he creates this shield, he can invest it with Mana to fuel the shield's defenses.

Third Attainment: Seeker's Mastery

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Prime 4

Having now mastered this Legacy, the mage understands all forms of magic well enough to remove them with a wave of his hand. The mage can dispel any magic in a manner similar to the "Supernal Dispellation" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 229).

Optional Arcanum: Spirit 4

Mages who investigate the most profound and dangerous mysteries can always use potent guardians. This Attainment allows the mage to call upon such guardians as those summoned by the "Spirit Guardian" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 253). Most mages who bind spirits in this fashion also agree to make an offering of Essence, services or some other recompense in return for the spirit acting as a guardian, and many mages seek out spirits who are filled with curiosity and agree to share their knowledge with the spirit in return for its services.

SINGERS IN SILENCE

Sweet is the voice of those we have lost.
Sweeter still is the keen of one who has lost someone near and dear to them.
In such moments are the truths of existence found.

In ancient times, Gaelic funerary traditions included the "keening" of a lost soul, a tradition that, under other names, has also been found in some parts of eastern Europe and the Far East. After an individual died, women of his family, village, clan or tribe would gather together and enter into a formalized mourning for the departed. Unlike modern funerary rituals that are often somber and near-silent affairs, keeners wept and wailed, bemoaning the loss of the departed soul while extolling his virtues at great length and volume. They shared stories and songs of his wisdom, strength and generosity, accompanied by swaying, chanting or rhythmic clapping in ritualized mourning ceremonies that carried on for days. The more formal aspects of the keening were frequently interspersed with bouts of distraught moaning and tears as the keeners showed their despondency at the loss of such a great person. The more powerful, well-known or loved an individual was, the louder and longer his mourners would keen his loss, leading to long and often outlandish spectacles after the death of particularly popular people. Such bits of drama also provided something of an "emotional screen" — in the presence of such a spectacle, those who might not normally allow themselves to grieve could do so without shame.

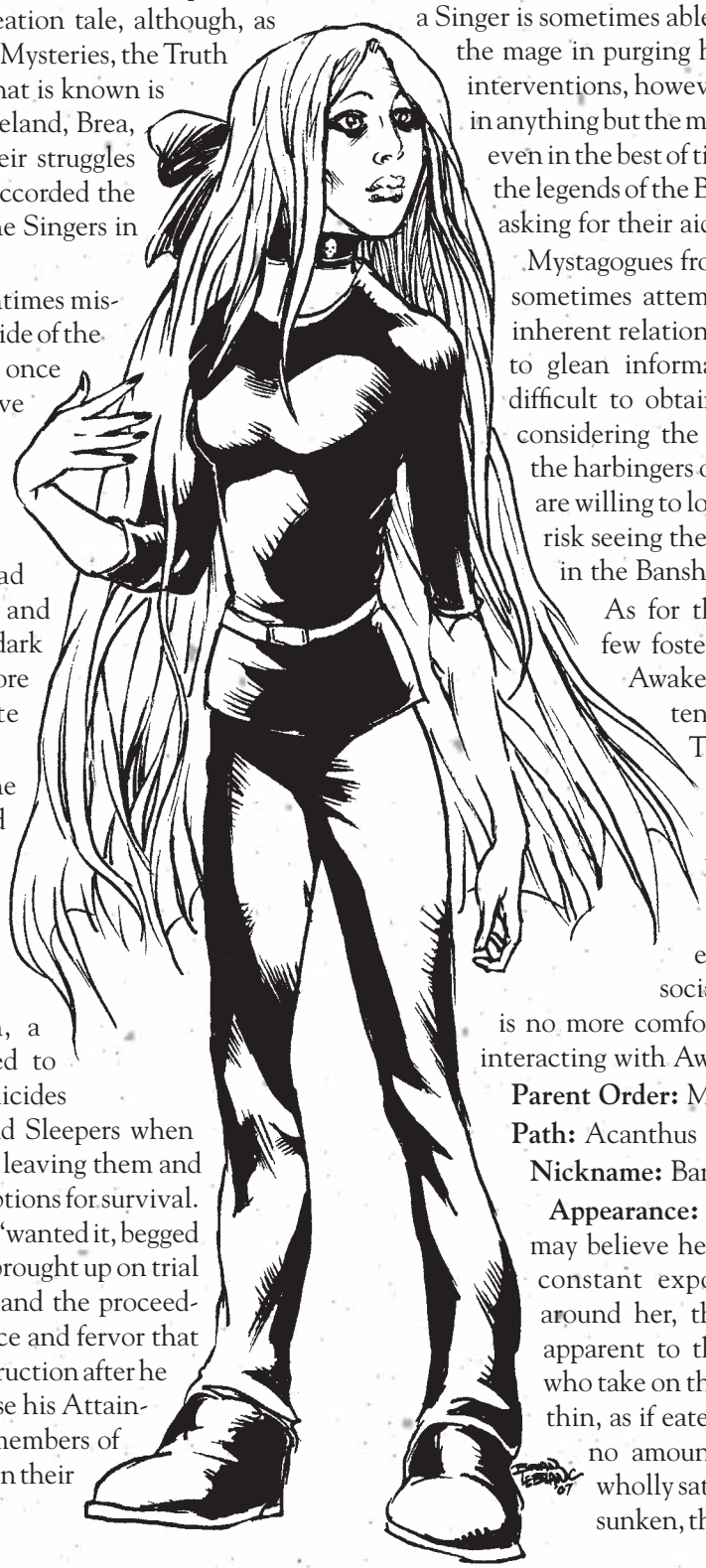
The more important the mourners at the funeral, the greater honor was accorded to the deceased. Thus, while a veritable army of mourners might attend a funeral, should noblewomen or other ladies of importance appear and mourn openly, they lent some of their prestige to the deceased. Some families even claimed that their families were so integral to the soul of Ireland that the fairy women came to mourn the passing of their scions. Some even claimed that the

fairy women mourned them before their deaths — such families have their own bean sídhe, or banshee, who presage their deaths.

Even among the Singers in Silence themselves, the origins of the Legacy are uncertain. Oral tradition has almost certainly enhanced and manipulated the facts of the Banshee creation tale, although, as with many of the spoken Mysteries, the Truth of the story remains. What is known is that a woman of early Ireland, Brea, who led her tribe in their struggles against the Fomorii, is accorded the honor of being first of the Singers in Silence.

The Banshee are oftentimes misunderstood by those outside of the Legacy, and more than once in their history, they have been in danger of being labeled as Left-Handed. In truth, however, while some Singers have certainly been driven mad by their Attainments and nudged well into the dark ways, the Legacy is no more Left-Handed than fate — or death — itself.

Favor (and fear) of the Bean Sídhe have waxed and waned during the history of the Pentacle. During some time periods, the Singers were actively hunted. During the Great Depression, a male Singer was alleged to have "aided" in the suicides of more than a thousand Sleepers when financial disaster struck, leaving them and their families with few options for survival. Arguing that his victims "wanted it, begged for it," the Banshee was brought up on trial by his local Consilium, and the proceedings erupted into violence and fervor that eventually led to his destruction after he publicly threatened to use his Attainments on not only the members of the jury council but also on their Sleeper families as well.



However, in other times, the Banshee have gained a reputation as useful and dedicated counselors: the life of a mage is rarely a peaceful one, and the costs of standing against the Lie are often high. When grief strikes deep within the heart of an Awakened, threatening to send him mad with rage or depression, a Singer is sometimes able to reach within and aid the mage in purging herself of the pain. Such interventions, however, are rarely called upon in anything but the most dire of circumstances; even in the best of times, few who have heard the legends of the Banshee are willing to risk asking for their aid.

Mystagogues from outside of the Legacy sometimes attempt to use the Banshee's inherent relationship with departed souls to glean information that is otherwise difficult to obtain or confirm. However, considering the Banshee's reputation as the harbingers of death, only the bravest are willing to look Singers in the eye and risk seeing the reflection of their death in the Banshee's gaze.

As for the Banshee themselves, few foster relationships with the Awakened with any more attention than with Sleepers. The particular flavor of Death Sight inflicted upon them by their Attainments shows no favoritism; doomed is doomed, whether Awakened or Sleeper. Thus, socializing with other mages is no more comfortable for a Singer than interacting with Awakened individuals.

Parent Order: Mysterium

Path: Acanthus

Nickname: Banshee

Appearance: Although a Bean Sídhe may believe herself to be inured to the constant exposure to the mortality around her, the burden is constantly apparent to those around her. Those who take on this Legacy grow skeletally thin, as if eaten away by a hunger that no amount of food or drink can wholly sate. Their features become sunken, their body bony and, by the

later Attainments, their skin pales to an ashen gray, regardless of their racial heritage.

While Sleeper legends attribute only feminine traits to the Banshee, not all Singers in Silence are female. Historically speaking, however, a disproportionately large number have been, and many traditional Bean Sídhe will not consider taking a male student in the Legacy. The reasons for this vary. Some, especially those who are most devoted to rediscovering and preserving the ancient mysteries of the British Isles, believe that to introduce men to the Legacy is an affront to the memory of Brea and her cabal sisters.

Background: Banshee come from no single background. While most experience a great tragedy immediately before entering the Legacy, for some this was a single traumatic event in an otherwise happy existence, while for others it was merely the culmination of years of misery and pain.

Despite the name, not all Singers were musically inclined before entering the Legacy, either. Their keening song is as often a product solely of their Attainment as it is a predisposition toward musical expression. Some, although certainly not all, had an interest in the Celtic culture or history before being approached by the mentor who would eventually induct them into the Legacy. A good number of these were involved, as mystagogues, in researching and preserving the oral traditions of early civilizations, but just as many were Curators or Censors, rather than directly being involved in the acquisition of lost knowledge.

Most of the Singers are female as well. However, in truth, Singers may come from any walk of life, culture, sex or race, and may be any age when entering the Legacy. Their commonality is more likely to be the tragedy that brings them to the path than their past history.

Organization: The mentor-student bond between generations of the Singers in Silence is the predominant link that ties the Legacy together; little organizational structure exists within the Legacy outside of those ties. Those who have first entered the Legacy tend to cling tightly to their teachers for a time; after all, few but other Singers can truly understand the burden their Attainments bestow upon them. Banshee mentors not only tutor their students in the Legacy itself, but also often act as grief counselors, aiding them in transitioning through the cataclysmic event that leads most Banshee to this path.

However, no matter how vital the Legacy was to their recovery from whatever tragedy goaded them into entering it, in time most Banshee come to resent their teachers with an unyielding vigor. The burdens Banshee receive as a part of their first Attainment are weighty, and eventually most students come to blame their teachers for having ever offered the Legacy to them. This reaction, and the resultant separation between student and mentor, is so common among the Banshee that the phenomenon has its own name. Students leaving are said to be "in waning," a separation that may only last days or weeks, but in some cases can go on for years. Almost inevitably, however, a waning Singer finds that her burden is, if anything, greater when borne alone, and will return to her mentor for additional training after a period of separation. This cycle often repeats itself after each Attainment.

Occasionally, a Banshee mentor will spend years or decades gathering a group of students around her to aid with resolution of a major or ongoing tragedy. These groups, called Choirs, sometimes stay together for lengthy periods, but most often go their own separate ways once the immediate issue at hand is resolved. This is in part because in proximity to each other the Banshee all suffer the effects of each one's personal torment: a malicious or mischievous ghost who plagues one of the Singer plagues them all, and when this is increased five- or six-fold the situation can quickly become unbearable. As well, a larger group of Singers is more likely to draw the attention of others (Sleeper and Awakened alike), who misunderstand the nature of Singers' Attainments. The likelihood of repercussions from those who do not understand or agree with Banshee duties is far greater when gathered as a group, while a solitary Banshee's impact on an area is more easily hidden.

Suggested Oblations: Singing, creating laments (songs, poems or stories), attending a funeral, playing a harp or hand-drum, preparing a body for burial, ritualistic prayers for the departed, performing euthanasia.

Concepts: Matriarch who has outlived her family, hospice worker, emergency room nurse, anthropologist, funeral director, nursing home attendant, vigilante, nihilist.

Attainments

The mystic gifts of the Singers in Silence drive an ever-widening wedge between members of the Legacy

and the rest of the human world, Awakened as well as Sleeping. Unlike many other Legacies, the first-level Attainment for the Singers in Silence is constantly active. It cannot be turned off, and is almost impossible to ignore. Because of the disturbing nature of this ability, once the first Attainment is achieved, Banshees typically spend less and less time among others. The reclusiveness caused by this change in perspective is only reinforced by the reputation that Banshee frequently earn as their Attainments progress, eventually leading most Singers to virtual hermitage. At the higher Attainments, many Banshees interact with humanity only under the most dire and unpreventable of circumstances. Those rare Singers who maintain regular interaction with others after attaining the highest level of Attainment within their Legacy often are only able to do so because they have established a great enough separation from their emotional reactions to what they see around them that they are no longer tormented by them.

First Attainment: The Knowing

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Death 2 (primary), Fate 1, Empathy 2

Students of the Death Arcanum can tell at a glance how Death in general interacts with an individual. But unless he is terminally ill, they cannot see when Death will come for him. When Fate decrees that death is eminent for an individual, however, those who have achieved the first Attainment of this Legacy are blessed — or cursed — with this knowledge, whether they want it or not. While this can be very useful, the form this knowledge takes is both vivid and disturbing. The dead and death-touched resonate with a Singer's soul, invoking lilting chords only she can hear. With respect to the dead, the mage can always hear and speak with ghosts as if she cast the Death 1 "Speak with the Dead" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 135) with successes equal to her Death dots, but she cannot actually see ghosts or perceive other entities. Additionally, the mage hears the silent dirge of death's touch, giving her the permanent auditory equivalent of the Death 1 "Grim Sight" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 134). Through Fate, this awareness also reveals whether a living being is cursed or fated to die within the next day, though the mage cannot predict fatal accidents or deaths that have no particular significance to the pattern of destiny. This knowledge comes upon the Banshee unbidden. It cannot be wished away or easily ignored, and there is no time or place where the Banshee is immune to the potential interference of The Knowing, a fact that colors members of the Legacy in body, mind and spirit. Because of this Attainment's distracting nature, Singers suffer a –2 penalty to actions requiring significant concentration (at the Storyteller's discretion) while in the immediate presence of more ghosts and/or doomed individuals than their Composure + Gnosis rating.

Second Attainment: The Calling

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Death 3 (primary)

When she wills it, the Singer's singing voice conveys haunting power. To the ears of ghosts, her music is both paean and requiem, beckoning all who hear to approach as if successfully compelled by the Death 2 "Ghost Summons" spell. The compulsion lasts only for the rest of the scene, but cannot be resisted. Those who are not ghosts experience such music with a vague sense of dread similar to a successful casting of the Mind 2 "Emotional Urging" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 207). Individuals with (Composure + Gnosis) less than the Banshee's Death dots experience this unease more acutely, suffering a –2 penalty to all non-reflexive actions for the rest of the scene. (This penalty is not cumulative with repeated uses of this Attainment.)

Optional Arcanum: Fate 3

If the mage also has Fate 3, her preternatural senses hear the implicit doom of incoming attacks. This momentary warning provides her with points of armor equal to her Fate dots that she may invoke or dismiss at will as an instant action.

Third Attainment: The Keening

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Death 4 (primary)

Although ghosts do not truly belong in the world, Singers understand that the dead must sometimes endure to complete important tasks before they seek final rest. Mages can use this Attainment in two ways. First, they may sing or cry out a wordless lament to any Sleeper who can hear them as an instant action. If that individual dies within a number of days equal to the mage's Death dots, his soul automatically lingers as a ghost with a single anchor representing the most pressing matters left unresolved by his death. As usual for ghosts created by unfinished business, the shade fades away as soon as it completes its task. The second use of this Attainment causes a Sleeper who died no more than a number of days equal to the mage's Death dots to rise as a ghost, provided the

mage sings at the site of the individual's death or his primary physical remains. Such ghosts likewise exist to fulfill unfinished business. This Attainment does not grant any control over the ghosts The Keening creates, except that they cannot voluntarily attack the mage who sung them into being.

Optional Arcanum: Fate 4

If the mage also has Fate 4, she may sing in the polyphonic chorus of every dead and doomed soul she has ever heard. Nothing can prepare a listener for the agony and horror of this cacophony. Each instant action spent crying out in this terrible voice inflicts one point of bashing damage to all Sleepers within earshot unless they have more Composure dots than the mage's Fate dots. Because this music damages the soul rather than the body, injuries inflicted by the Attainment leave no physical marks. As a purely cosmetic side effect, the music also causes everyone who hears it to think of his greatest personal regret, which occasionally prompts wayward souls to reform their behavior if they survive the experience.

Reality Stalker

A straight line is far from the shortest distance between two points — here, let me show you.

The World of Darkness can be a very strange place indeed. Occasionally creatures from the Abyss or other even less explicable phenomena warp and twist space in ways that can cause changes as small as altering the exact location of one of the interior walls in a house or as major as causing both an entire building, and all knowledge of it to vanish forever. Although such phenomena naturally erase themselves from the minds of Sleepers, mages notice and remember such events. This combination of warping both space and perception fascinates some mages who wish to learn how to duplicate these effects. Those mages who become sufficiently fascinated with these phenomena or with the more general idea of warping space and perception often learn this Legacy.

According to the doctrine of the Reality Stalkers, the structure of the Fallen World is filled with hidden cracks through which the practitioners of this Legacy learn to peer and eventually move. Known to outsiders as Sneaks, these mages often become obsessed with such distortions in reality, and some are convinced that ancient secrets and wondrous treasures are concealed in this fashion, including potentially a physical path to the Supernal Realms. However, most Reality Stalkers are not theoreticians or mystics interested primarily in knowledge or spiritual enlightenment. Instead, the majority of Sneaks are people fascinated by all manner of secrets and hidden objects and take great joy in uncovering them. As a result, Sneaks are eager to observe and gain access to the world's hidden places, including places purposefully hidden from thieves and intruders.

The major internal tension among the members of this Legacy is between those Sneaks who are fascinated by the various cracks and discontinuities in reality and those whose appreciation for these distortions of reality is purely practical and who find these cracks and faults in the Fallen World to be little more than exceptionally useful tools. Many Sneaks either seek to explore and understand the various breaks in reality or simply appreciate the beauty and wonder of such faults in space. However, an almost equal number see these cracks as little more than little-known and utterly invaluable paths to all manner of desirable goods. To many mages, Reality Stalkers have a reputation for being amoral thieves whose fascination with goods and knowledge belonging to others often verges on kleptomania.

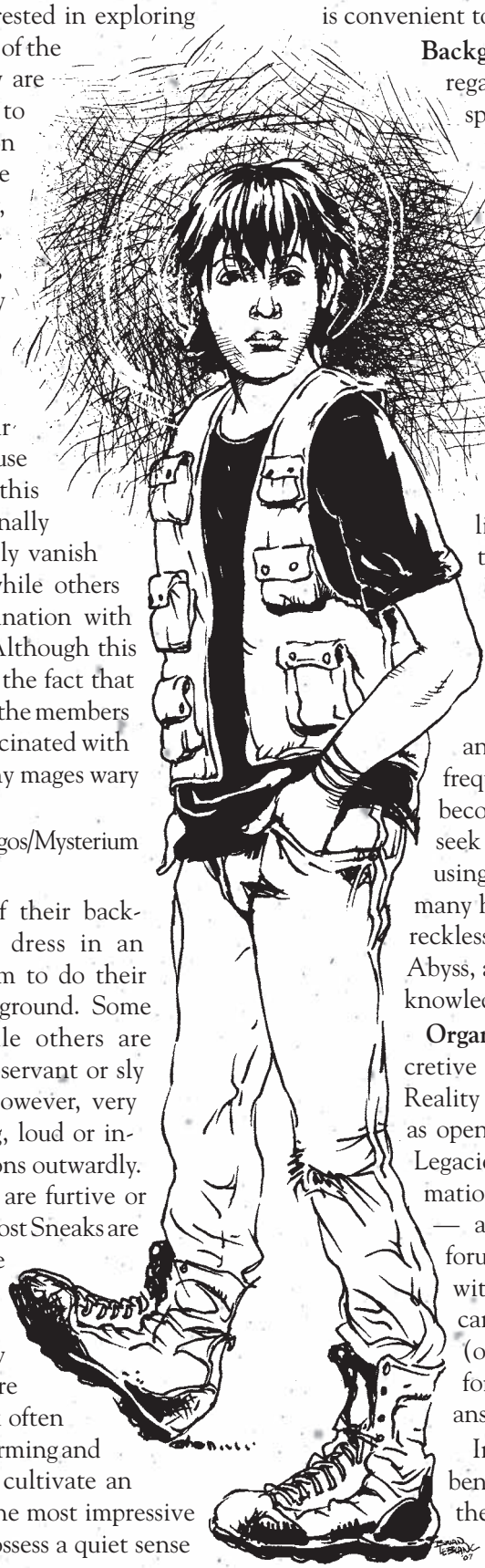
Many Sneaks are more than happy to use their knowledge of the secrets paths through the fabric of reality to study or steal all manner of precious and useful items. The ease with which they can gain access to locations that are effectively impossible to access via mundane means has caused the Mysterium to look upon the Sneaks as one of the order's primary tools in its continuing efforts to learn the secrets and collect the artifacts that others have hidden away. Because Sneaks' travels avoid all risk of Paradox, they are usually far more willing to use their particular forms of transportation than other mages.

However, almost half the members of this Legacy are dedicated, if often deeply eccentric and reckless, explorers who are more interested in exploring and understanding the nature of the fractures in reality than they are in exploiting them as a way to steal from others. In addition to taking great joy in using the Attainments of this Legacy, these mages also seek out various discontinuities in reality, including both ones created by ancient and powerful magics and those due to more exotic and mysterious causes, and seek to explore them using their Legacy and their magic. Because of the obvious dangers of this sort of exploration, occasionally members of this Legacy simply vanish and are never seen again, while others develop and unhealthy fascination with the Abyss and its denizens. Although this is not a Left-Handed Legacy, the fact that a not-insubstantial number of the members are either thieves or mages fascinated with the Abyss serves to make many mages wary of the Sneaks.

Parent Path or Order: Mastigos/Mysterium

Nickname: Sneaks

Appearance: Regardless of their background, almost all Sneaks dress in an unobtrusive fashion and seem to do their best to blend into the background. Some are shy and awkward, while others are simply quiet and carefully observant or sly and quietly manipulative. However, very few are flamboyant, outgoing, loud or inclined to express their emotions outwardly. Despite their nickname, few are furtive or suspicious-looking. Instead, most Sneaks are either people who are by nature easily and often overlooked, or they have mastered the difficult skill of knowing how to be unnoticed. Those who are not innately easy to overlook often learn ways of being quietly charming and seductive, and many Sneaks cultivate an air of mystery about them. The most impressive members of this Legacy all possess a quiet sense of authority and a soft-spoken charm, combined with a knack for avoiding the attentions of others when it is convenient to do so.



Background: Although stereotypically regarded as a Legacy for thieves and spies, such individuals make up less than half of its members. This is also a Legacy frequented by computer hackers and cryptographers, as well as a large number of people who became fascinated or even obsessed with the most obscure and sometimes frightening mysteries of the World of Darkness. For many members, their interest in these mysteries often predates their Awakening by at least several years. One of the little-known facts of this Legacy is that more than a third of the members had some direct experience with some inhabitant of the Abyss before they joined this Legacy. Those whose lives have been touched by exposure to such exotic and sometimes unimaginable events frequently join this Legacy. These mages become fascinated with these events and seek to explain and understand them by using this Legacy to explore the world's many hidden secrets. While most are not reckless seekers of knowledge about the Abyss, a fascination with secret or hidden knowledge is almost universal.

Organization: Sneaks are by nature secretive and relatively solitary. As a result, Reality Stalkers do not share information as openly as the members of many other Legacies. Instead of freely sharing information, most Sneaks trade information — arranging in-person and online forums where members who wish help with interesting or complex problems can seek out others and offer services (or preferably information) in return for assistance with their problems or answers to their own questions.

In addition to the obvious practical benefits, trading secrets is also one of the primary ways that members form social and personal ties with one

another. The act of sharing knowledge known to almost no one else can be quite powerful, and members who regularly trade secrets with one another often become friends and allies. To facilitate these deals, many Sneaks make an effort to keep in loose touch with the other members of their Legacy. However, some are sufficiently solitary and secretive that they avoid these efforts, and the majority do their best not to reveal any important truths about themselves or their interests to anyone, including other members of this Legacy.

Suggested Oblations: Cracking a code, learning a secret, breaking into a building, uncovering lost or hidden knowledge.

Concepts: Survivor of an Abyssal encounter, occultist, professional thief, spy, computer hacker.

Attainments

An understanding of the Space Arcanum is absolutely necessary to learn to find the cracks in reality. In addition, while not strictly necessary, a general fascination with secrets is also usually accompanied by study of the Mind Arcanum. Also, to truly understand this Legacy, members must also have some understanding of more mundane methods of secrecy.

First Attainment: Gazing Through the Cracks

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Space 2, Stealth 1, Subterfuge 1

The Sneak can perceive distortions in reality in a manner identical to the spell "Spatial Awareness" (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 233) and also learns to peer through the secret spaces of the Fallen World that are hidden even from Mage Sight. As a result, members of this Legacy can also observe distant locations as if they were using the "Scrying" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 235). However, the Sneak must scry through known flaws and cracks in reality and so must have seen the location he wishes to scry at least once before. As long as the mage has seen the location in person or in a high-quality photograph or video image of the location, he can scry there. To peer through the cracks in the world and observe the desired location (i.e., to open a scrying window), the mage's player makes a Wits + Stealth + Space roll as an instant action, modified by sympathetic connections, as normal. After he has established the window, a reflexive action is required to view through it.

Optional Arcanum: Mind 2

If the mage also possesses Mind 2, he can affect the flaws and discontinuities in minds of others just as effectively as he can manipulate cracks in reality. The mage can cause others to view him as being an unexceptional person unworthy of notice, in a manner similar to the "Incognito Presence" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 208). Becoming inconspicuous requires the mage make a Manipulation + Subterfuge + Mind roll.

Second Attainment: Cracking Open the Flaws

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Space 3

The mage can now briefly pry open one of these cracks in the world, creating an opening similar to the "Portal" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 238). The mage can either walk through this portal, or she can use it in a manner similar to the "Apportation" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 234), and reach through the remove or replace an object in the distant location. When this Attainment is used in the second fashion, the character can move anything up to Size 5 either way through the portal. To briefly pry open the cracks in the world and move herself or an object to or from this location, the mage's player rolls Dexterity + Investigation + Space as an instant action, modified by sympathy. This portal is invisible to anyone who cannot perceive magic and remains open for only one turn.

Optional Arcanum: Mind 3

Using various forms of perceptual distortions, the Sneak can perform an effect similar to the "Imposter" spell (see **Mage; The Awakening**, p. 211). Unlike the spell, this Attainment can be used to cause the target to not notice any chances in the inanimate objects around her. The target will not notice the sudden absence of a paperweight, the presence of an unobtrusive brown box on her desk or the fact that the ancient artifact she was getting ready to study now looks subtly different. Once the duration of the effect ends, mortals are almost certain to attribute any changes in the target object to faults in their memory or perceptions. To alter someone's perceptions in this fashion, the mage's player rolls Intelligence + Stealth + Mind vs. the target's Wits + Gnosis. If the target succeeds in this roll, she immediately notices that something is wrong. If the mage has four dots in Mind, she can use the advanced prolongation table for the duration of this Attainment.

Third Attainment: Tame the Flaws

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Space 4

The mage now has sufficient control over the cracks in reality to be able to hide objects in them. The mage can open a spatial pocket similar to the one created by the "Pocket Realm" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 239). This pocket has a Size of 20, and on a successful roll, the mage can either climb into it or place any object that he can physically maneuver into the opening into this space. If the mage places an object into this space, as long as the duration of the spell lasts, he can travel elsewhere and then pull the object out of the pocket. Just as the "Pocket Realm" spell, if the mage climbs inside or leaves and object inside until the duration of the space expires, the mage or the object reappears where the space was first opened.

Optional Arcanum: Mind 4

Expanding on his ability to cloud the minds of others, the mage can now render one or more targets unable to perceive himself or any object up to Size 6 that he designates. The mage cannot use this Attainment to hide any other living being, and using it on an object requires him to touch this object. Whether he is using this Attainment on himself or an object, the mage's player rolls Wits + Stealth + Mind vs. the Wits + Gnosis of anyone who views him while the Attainment is active. If the target succeeds in this roll, his perceptions are unaffected.

Unforgotten Scions

If existence is the sum of our thoughts and ideas,
why would you not cherish the power that makes of you a god?

Accomplished artisans and scholars often cling to the hope that their works will grant vicarious immortality in the canon of human civilization. Unfortunately, the whims of canon are fickle, and even the greatest geniuses might fall prey to censorship or obsolescence as newer discoveries supplant their work. While Awakened power affords more options, even willworkers can fall prey to desperation. Only then does the dream of the Unforgotten find them.

Rising from the murky depths of the Dreamtime to touch a mage's subconscious during sleep or deep meditation, the Unforgotten manifests as a vast, undefined shape moving beneath a cold, black sea or glimpsed in silhouette behind thick ice. Cloaked in such perceptual metaphors, the Unforgotten murmurs in the polyphonic cacophony of every genius whose works have perished. In this borrowed chorus, the Unforgotten communicates its respect for the mage's greatness and echoes his outrage that such greatness should ever fade from the world. The entity never bothers to surface unless a mage is already susceptible to such advances, but if rebuffed, it silently descends back into the Dreamtime until the clarion of desperation summons it again. Unless rejected, however, the presence remains, pressing gently at the back of the mage's mind with the intimacy of a lover's caress. Just as a perfect imaginary friend, the entity discusses its latest companion's interests, patiently waiting when the mage must attend to conscious matters.

As the dialogue progresses, the Unforgotten begins offering useful advice. The entity does not command or plead, but carefully suggests better ways of preserving the mage's ideas that culminate in the secrets of the first Attainment. From that epiphany onward, the new Dreamer joins the luminaries who have embraced the Unforgotten, bound inexorably and eternally to an idea greater than themselves.

New Unforgotten Scions feel increasingly justified to promote and preserve their works as a "greater good" that must not be contained by such artificial strictures as their order's rules or even morality itself. Over time, these mages grow increasingly erratic and frustrated that those around them do not share their fervor, or worse, try to block their creative efforts. Such frustration usually gives way to paranoia and social isolation. In the absence of external companionship, Dreamers place increasing trust in the Unforgotten as the only being in the world that really understands

and appreciates them. Its counsel becomes a constant companion, mixing practical advice with Socratic questions and the occasional enigmatic clue, encouraging scions to think for themselves and refine their own ideas.

Wait, It Does *What*?

Unlike most Legacies, the Unforgotten Scions exist as components of a self-aware ideology greater than the sum of its parts. In practical terms, this means a mage doesn't need another member of the Legacy to initiate her or teach her new Attainments, as most learn directly from the Unforgotten. While this arrangement means that Dreamers effectively have a "teacher on tap" and needn't worry about finding or maintaining contact with another member of their Legacy, the downside is that the link between "teacher" and student cannot be severed (voluntarily or otherwise) and does not break when a mage learns the third Attainment. Even the masters of the Legacy must pay an experience stipend to the dream they have become.

Whatever the Dreamers' interests and fields of study, the Unforgotten Scions are universally devoted to the genesis and propagation of their ideas. Any moral qualms that might limit such actions soon fall by the wayside as the madness of the desperate creator consumes them like divine fire. The Legacy's Attainments only accelerate this decay, providing tools whereby others can be set ablaze with similar madness. All the while, the gentle voice of the Unforgotten encourages and advises from deep within, equal parts muse and succubus, steadfastly faithful to the dreams of the Dreamers rather than those who dream them.

Membership in the Mysterium is not a prerequisite for becoming an Unforgotten Scion, but it is a high risk factor. The order's dedication to knowledge for the sake of knowledge opens the door for members to take that precept too far, losing their Wisdom to the incarnate hubris of the Unforgotten. Thankfully, long centuries of rooting out infections of the Legacy have given the Mysterium the practice and tools needed to do so. Mages who are too vocal in the promotion of their works past the point of reason can expect to be watched closely for the telltale Attainments and summarily dealt with if such evidence appears. While not as commonly afflicted, the Guardians of the Veil also lose their share of members to this Left-Handed Legacy when they allow the Mysteries they defend to become more important than the defenders themselves. Paradoxically, other orders suffer more when rare Unforgotten Scions emerge from their ranks, as the orders seldom have any idea what to look for and don't know how to deal with the problem until it is too late. Opposition to the Legacy is further complicated by the fact that knowledge of the Unforgotten increases the likelihood of contact, so the orders prudently restrict and censor such research. Unfortunately, this results in many mages who don't have the slightest clue what they are dealing with if it does find them.

Parent Path or Order: Any (especially Mysterium)

Nickname: Dreamers

Appearance: The Unforgotten Scions do not outwardly betray their all-consuming desperation, at least not at first. They can be anyone in any walk of life. Even as madness grips them, the Unforgotten dutifully warns and reminds its adherents to pay particular attention to their hygiene and mannerisms lest they attract the unwanted attention of those who do cannot understand them. Only as Wisdom degrades to its lowest ebb do Dreamers become so irrational that they ignore this counsel.

Background: A prospective Unforgotten Scion must be a creative individual who is more afraid of his works and discoveries being forgotten than he is of his own demise. Moreover, such fear must burn with overwhelming passion, so many Dreamers do not even attract the attention of the Unforgotten until they have developed derangements from lapsed Wisdom or Bedlam, especially Narcissism or Fixation. Beyond these basic and frighteningly broad criteria, the Unforgotten Scions can come from any background, with diversity only compounded by the unique method of their creation.

Organization: More than any other Legacy, Unforgotten Scions are defined by their lack of organization. Most members are so preoccupied with their own ideas that they don't have time for the works of others. In some cases, Dreamers are actually their own worst enemies, viewing each other's ideas as direct challenges to their own genius. The Unforgotten does nothing to stop such conflicts, as it cares only for its personal relationships with each Scion and is entirely indifferent to how they interact amongst themselves. The strangest of the Dreamers are those who embrace the Unforgotten in support of a collective idea, with

each member accepting that the work of the group is more important than themselves. These are most dangerous fanatics of the Legacy, though the colossal communal ego required to draw the attention of the Unforgotten makes such groups mercifully rare.

Suggested Oblations: Pursuing forbidden research, convincing others of the importance of the mage's works and ideas, making physical records of the Dreamer's works or forcing others to do the same, communing with the Unforgotten and heeding its advice.

Concepts: Mad scientist, obsessed artist, luminary of the age, mystic overachiever, lonely scholar.

Attainments

The Attainments of the Unforgotten Scions are among the most insidious known to the Awakened, arming them with the weapons to ensure they are as memorable as their Legacy's brazen name. Where Dreamers pass, madness and obsession follow, a plague all the more dire for the compulsion-laden texts and swarms of amoral spirits many Dreamers leave behind even after their deaths. Consequently, these mages are counted among the most frustrating and time-consuming adversaries of the Guardians of the Veil. Most of these Attainments carry the risk of degeneration simply by using them, providing a fairly direct spiral into madness.

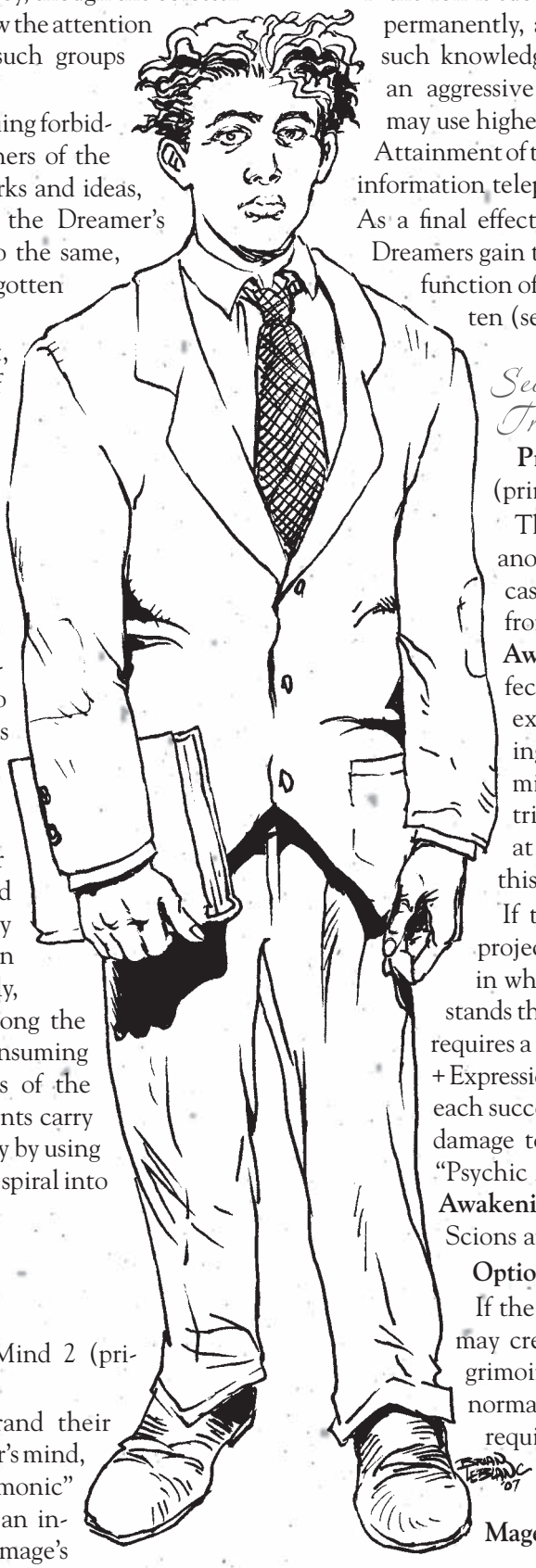
First Attainment: Indelible Intimation

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Mind 2 (primary), Expression 2

Dreamers can verbally brand their ideas into their own or another's mind, per the Mind 3 "Perfect Mnemonic" spell (p. 199). This requires an instant action and a roll of the mage's Manipulation + Expression + Mind, subtracting the target's Resolve unless the mage targets his own mind.

If the roll is successful, the knowledge endures permanently, and any Sleeper afflicted with such knowledge develops a derangement as an aggressive casting. Unforgotten Scions may use higher ratings of Mind or the second Attainment of this Legacy to communicate this information telepathically, if they wish.

As a final effect of learning this Attainment, Dreamers gain the Whispers Merit for free as a function of their conduit to the Unforgotten (see sidebar).



Second Attainment: Truths Best Unknown

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Mind 3 (primary)

The mage wordlessly speaks to another's mind just as a successful casting of the Mind 2 "Whispers from Afar" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 210), but this effect cannot be resisted. The target experiences discomfort while being spoken to in this fashion and might spontaneously bleed a small trickle from the nose, eyes or ears, at Storyteller discretion, though this is only a cosmetic effect.

If the mage wishes, she can also project thoughts more aggressively, in which case the victim still understands the communication, but this also requires a roll of the mage's Manipulation + Expression + Mind – the target's Resolve; each success inflicts one point of bashing damage to the listener per the Mind 3 "Psychic Assault" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 212). Other Unforgotten Scions are immune to this damage.

Optional Arcanum: Prime 3

If the mage also knows Prime 3, she may create a more advanced form of grimoire than conventional Arcana normally allows. Creating this text requires the usual rolls and effort for a rote casting of the Prime 1 "Inscribe Grimoire" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 220). If

New Mental Merit: Whispers (•)

Your character's mind has ripped open, allowing tendrils of underlying primordial truths to reach into his psyche. He can purchase the Dream Merit (see **Mage: The Awakened**, p. 82) even if he is not a mage, and may attempt to gain insights through that Merit as an instant action while conscious rather than requiring the usual hour of meditation or sleep. However, each time he accesses Dream in this accelerated manner further erodes his sanity, requiring a character with a Wisdom (or Morality) higher than five dots to make a degeneration roll.

the roll is successful, however, the text does not strip the rote from the mage's mind. More dramatically, mages *and Sleepwalkers* can use the cursed texts to cast rotes for spells they would otherwise lack the necessary Arcana to cast, rolling Gnosis alone (or spending a point of Willpower to gain three dice for the casting, if the reader possesses neither Gnosis nor Arcana). There is a catch, of course. Whenever a mage learns a spell from a Dreamer's grimoire or a character casts a rote by consulting such a text, she must reflexively roll Resolve + Gnosis – the text creator's Mind dots. If this roll fails, she develops a Fixation derangement to share the grimoire's contents with others like a Sleeper wounded by an Indelible Intimation.

Third Attainment: Eternal Dreams

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Mind 4 (primary)

The mage invokes a text or creative work he has personally made, unleashing its conceptual contents as a spirit to carry the idea out into the world. To do this, the mage touches the source material and invokes the power of the Unforgotten as an instant action; no roll is required. Upon doing so, the work glows and lifts off its medium, twisting together and imploding into a vague miasma that resembles the Unforgotten. The new spirit begins at Rank 1 as one awoken with the Spirit 3 "Rouse Spirit" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 250), but rapidly grows in power, gaining one rank per day until it has rank (and all commensurate power) equal to its creator's Mind dots. The entity intimately knows the contents of the work that spawned the spirit and exists only

The Unforgotten

Dreamers all carry a direct mental link to the astral entity they call the Unforgotten. The exact nature of this being remains unknown, but evidence gathered by the Mysterium strongly points to it being a kind of evolved concept spirit similar to those created with Eternal Dreams, embodying the idea of the Legacy itself as a central nexus of the viral meme. Even if this theory is correct, it doesn't explain where the Unforgotten came from, though that doesn't deter wild speculation of mad Oracles or the transcended daimon of the Legacy's original founder. About the only thing scholars can definitively agree upon is that the Unforgotten has no ties to the Abyss, which seems strange given its association with corrupting madness. The perverse truth is that Dreamers actually oppose the Abyss by preserving and disseminating magical lore through the world, though most Awakened would quite happily do without such "help," if given the choice.

While the full range of powers available to the Unforgotten remains unknown, it can definitely do all of the following. Storytellers can assign other capabilities as appropriate, keeping in mind this entity is as subtle as it is vast, and steadfastly avoids contact with non-Scion mages unless actively attempting to recruit them.

Telepathy: The Unforgotten can manifest an astral presence to any sleeping or meditating mage, through which the two may communicate in a lucid fashion. Such contact also permits the Unforgotten to teach a mage how to craft her soul as an Unforgotten Scion. In addition, the entity concurrently experiences the surface thoughts and comprehensive sensory input of all Dreamers and can telepathically communicate with any or all of them at will.

Psychic Shield: The Unforgotten hides itself quite well from detection, negating any mental effect that would detect any trace of its telepathic presence in an Dreamer's mind unless the attempt gains an exceptional success.

to promote and spread those ideas by all means at its disposal with Numina and Influence appropriate to that content. Collateral damage is not remotely a concern, though these spirits always hide or flee from perceived danger.

Typical Numina for mature spirits include Discorporation, Fetter (must target an item suitable for containing the work the spirit embodies; creating the fetter causes the item to become a copy of the work), Gauntlet Breach, Indelible Intimation (as Attainment, see p. 178; costs one Essence per use with a Power + Essence dice pool; can only target a living fetter or a character reading or otherwise studying an inanimate fetter), Innocuous and Living Fetter. The ban implicit in such beings prevents them from implementing or even conceiving of any actions not pertaining to their focus, plus the inability to attack their creator or target him with Numina (though they are not actually concerned with his welfare or otherwise obedient in any way).

Should an Dreamer create a spirit out of a grimoire scribed with Truths Best Unknown, the entity can teach mages the grimoire's contents just as any other mentor. In addition, the spirit can help a willing mage in physical contact to cast rotes as if she had the original grimoire on hand, but with all the usual dangers of madness associated with such accursed texts. Creating such a reckless and likely dangerous spirit with this Attainment is an act of hubris, requiring a mage with a Wisdom higher than three dots to make a degeneration roll.

WRAITHS OF EPOCHS

Those who forget history are doomed.

The modern world is not kind to magic. The Arcana taunt the descendents of Atlantis with miracles they dare not invoke for fear of Paradox or the mob rule of Sleepers. The Abyss yawns wider with every passing year toward grim apocalypse or the final severance of the Supernal. It is no wonder that many mages look back wistfully on bygone ages when they did not merely nudge the vagaries of chance by tremulous degrees, but invoked the cosmos with brilliance and courage.

Even as magic withers, the works of man give more cause for despair. For every wizard who marvels at the technological triumphs of the 21 century, there are those who lament such ubiquitous power, bitterly wondering what value their hard-earned rotes hold when anyone might fly or speak to another across the expanse of continents or lay waste to nations with forces wrested from radiant ores. What was once wondrous has become commonplace, no longer a reward of singular genius and invincible will. Worst of all, these advances threaten magic itself by offering mages quick-and-dirty alternatives to their Arcana.

While such pessimistic elitism is not uncommon among mages, most eventually reconcile themselves with some facet of modernity, or else ennui consumes them utterly. Far fewer have the emotional fortitude to fully embrace the power and burden of the past, challenging perceived inconsequence by crafting their souls in the likeness of history's echoes. As much antiques as antiquarians, history as historians, the Wraiths of Epochs have never found broad acceptance as a Legacy, though they are older than most traditions they preserve. From the Fall of Atlantis, they lingered among its ruins as living ghosts, anchoring themselves to the ideals of reminisced greatness. As history unfolded, they watched and remembered while the Abyss gnawed at the threads of human accomplishment and potential. The Wraiths of Epochs have become the self-appointed stewards of all things forgotten, waging an endless war to uncover what time erodes faster than time can destroy it. They do not accept that all good things pass, despite the grim preponderance of evidence to the contrary.

Despite their reputation, the Wraiths of Epochs do not reject technology out of ignorance or geriatric rigidity, and they aren't inherently antagonistic to every invention on principle. Rather, their philosophy lays blame at the *convenience* of technology to distract mages from exploring their own power, thereby atrophying what magic remains in the world. Raised in an age of cell phones and rockets, most Wraiths fully comprehend the seductive lure of the modern. The Legacy draws new members from those willing to surrender conveniences for deeper truths. In the

eyes of Wraith luminaries, mages unable or unwilling to make such ascetic sacrifices lack the devotion to advance in the Legacy's mysteries.

Because of their myopic focus, the Wraiths of Epochs find few recruits. It is not enough that a potential Wraith be enamored of history, as so many mages are. A disciple must also reject the modern world so fiercely that he is willing to cut himself off from its advances. Such rejection can stem from disgust or horror or even an irresistible longing for a better and purer time. Whatever the motivation, candidates must endure extensive trials to test their commitment before a Wraith will help them craft their souls. These tests begin simply enough, initially intended to inconvenience and annoy. If the candidate persists, successive trials gradually sever him from the aspects of modernity he most values. Only when a mage fully divests himself of distractions and embraces a lifestyle of contemplative isolation can he make the final sacrifice, forsaking future for past as he gives up happiness, prosperity and the comforting illusion that he matters in the grand design of the universe.

Within the mage community, Wraiths of Epochs generally go unnoticed unless someone wants to consult them on some aspect of the past or lure them out of passive research with the promise of new archeological finds. Although Wraiths seldom eschew politics entirely, having immersed themselves in enough cycles of civilization to recognize the dangers of total isolation, most find such endeavors distasteful as a matter of principle and prefer to hide behind heavy occultation and a reputation of disinterested neutrality whenever possible. The most politically active Wraiths work within the Mysterium to guide the order's research toward the secrets of the past rather than contemporary lore. From an adversarial standpoint, Wraiths violently oppose the Cult of the Doomsday Clock (see **Legacies: The Sublime**, p. 128), whose calculated disruptions threaten the past as much as the future. The Ticktock men reciprocate this enmity, as Wraith Attainments can pierce the truth of destroyed time in ways most magic cannot.

Among Sleepers, Wraiths of Echoes who maintain visible mortal lives typically find work as teachers, librarians, museum curators and other specialized jobs at the fringes of academia, allowing Wraiths to disguise their anachronisms as perfectly "normal" behavior for their profession. Those who break ties with the human society live almost entirely beyond its needs and notice.

Parent Path or Order: Moros or Mysterium

Nickname: Atavists

Appearance: Regardless of their actual health or age, Wraiths of Epochs tend to evince a visage of frailty and age. They can be handsome or hideous, beautiful or decrepit, but their prematurely whitened hair and the delicate wrinkles framing the corners of their perpetually haunted eyes give them a kind of scholarly gravitas that often serves them well in their chosen professions. Such frailty is only skin deep, however, as each Wraith's nimbus radiates an implacable primordial darkness that leaves onlookers feeling like children confronted with something impossibly and unknowably old.

Background: Not all Wraiths come from academia, but those who do not must have sufficient open-mindedness to pursue such studies before being considered for membership. Ultimately, it is each Wraith's devotion to the past that matters, whether that devotion manifests in a hoary armchair historian, a tribal shaman dedicated to preserving his people's traditions or an armor-clad SCA enthusiast.

Organization: Similar to mundane historians, Wraiths of Epochs tend to specialize in a particular period of history or the history of a particular geographical region. Consequently, the Legacy is haphazardly structured according to Lineages of related curricula, as each student continues or branches away from the studies of her teacher. Given their shared reverence for the past, younger Wraiths tend to defer to their elders as a matter of respect, but some break with this tradition and take a more egalitarian approach rooted in the idea that all Wraiths are children when compared with the sum and total of history.

Suggested Oblations: Studying historical documents or artifacts; teaching others (especially about the past); engaging in ceremonial behavior in accordance with longstanding cultural traditions; forgoing a useful convenience of the modern world; experiencing and meditating on important events via postcognition.

Concepts: Guru, Luddite terrorist, archeologist, archivist, enforcer of the old ways.

Attainments

The Wraith of Epochs haunt the crossroads of past and present, cultivating an aching awareness of everything lost. Ultimately, this awareness transforms them into its embodiment, accelerating the dissolution of flesh to spirit as they assume aspects of the restless dead.

With their first Attainment comes a revelation that many Wraiths find as profound as their Awakening. Any mage who dabbles in the Time Arcanum can glimpse the past; Wraiths of Epochs *become* the past

with an awareness equally rooted in Death. They cannot escape the fact that everything they witness is gone and forever beyond reach, any more than they can escape the pitiless inevitability that time will destroy them, too. Each Attainment that follows reinforces and expands upon this core epiphany, opening the vast stretches of the past as the Wraith assumes the spectral mien from which the Legacy draws its name.

As powerful as these Attainments are, the Attainments of the Wraiths of Epochs come at a price; the process of becoming one with the past metaphysically diminishes their ties to the present. For each Attainment a Wraith learns, she suffers a cumulative –1 penalty to all Skill rolls to use modern technology, defined as anything invented within the past century or so (the span of an uninterrupted human life). The exact reach of this threshold is left deliberately blurry for Storytellers to enforce as appropriate to specific inventions. Even as the rate of technological process advances geometrically in the post-industrial world, this century mark remains constant, such that today's Wraiths are significantly more out of touch than those who lived in centuries past. A Wraith would have no trouble wielding a flintlock rifle with Firearms or performing calculations with an abacus using Computer, but he would certainly have trouble wielding an assault rifle or researching on the Internet. This penalty also applies to all uses of the Time Arcanum to view or predict the future in any capacity.

First Attainment: All Things Lost

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Time 2 (primary), Death 1, Fate 1, Academics 2

The mage can witness the past events of any object by touching it (or reaching into its substance while he is in a state of Twilight). In the case of locations, touching the ground suffices. Once sufficient contact is established, he performs an instant action and specifies a date and time relative to the present; no roll is required. He must have at least a Described temporal sympathy connection to the target date, either through the touched object or personal knowledge. If these conditions are met, then for as long as he continues to concentrate, he experiences the events of the target object's past as if he cast the Time 2 "Postcognition" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 260) with successes equal to his Time dots. This effect bypasses the occlusion of the Time 4 "Erase History" spell (see **Legacies: The Sublime**, p. 133) unless that spell was cast by a mage with more dots of Time than the Wraith.

Unlike basic "Postcognition," a Wraith can alternately choose to allow his vision to be guided by Fate rather than choosing a specific time, in which case he witnesses the most important event that took place in the object's presence as decided by the Storyteller.

In addition to viewing fleeting glimpses of history, a Wraith also experiences the present through the inescapable lens of death. He cannot see a flower in a vase without knowing the bloom has already begun to wilt, and even the noonday sun radiates the dull red hues of its eventual expansion and demise. While much of this sensory alteration is purely cosmetic and a matter for Storyteller narration, such perception also duplicates all effects of the Death 1 "Grim Sight" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 134); this change is permanent and cannot be reversed. The only time this sense does not apply is when the mage experiences a vision of the past; only in history may he find brief solace from the certainty of decay.

Before the Fall

With an innate predilection for unraveling the secrets of the past, the Wraiths of Epochs were among the first mages to discover that the concept of "history" doesn't readily apply to the time or world before the Fall of Atlantis. At the most basic level, Atlantean events cannot be dated in relation to the present, but the problem is more complicated than that. Atlantis is as much allegory as fact, based on intertwined cosmological precepts that defy logical analysis and creative interpretation. Those mages who have managed to obtain sufficient temporal sympathy from scavenged relics to glimpse anything of Atlantis have offered contradictory accounts as rich in obscure symbolism as most tangled enigmas of Temenos, filtered as they are through the cracked lens of imperfect Gnosis and Wisdom. While such extraordinary visions can offer valuable insights, they are ultimately shadows of a more perfect truth that no mage alive can or perhaps even *should* understand. Given the difficulty of uncovering a vision of Atlantis in the first place, Storytellers should certainly reward the effort, perhaps with clues buried in metaphor or Arcane Experience or both, but they should not feel obligated to offer any absolute truths on the most profound mysteries of the setting.

Second Attainment: Never Forward

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Time 3

The mage suspends the flow of time through her Pattern, rejecting metabolic causality by anchoring herself to the past. Much like the sensory alteration afforded by All Things Lost, this change is permanent, duplicating the effects of the "Metabolic Suspension" spell (p. 196).

As an additional benefit of this Attainment, the mage no longer needs to concentrate to witness the past with All Things Lost. Instead, she experiences the entire vision in the time it takes her to perform the instant action necessary to invoke it. Furthermore, whenever she touches an object that carries strong resonance associated with a singular defining event in its past (as determined by the Storyteller), All Things Lost self-activates as a reflexive action, instantly imparting a vision of that event. Unsurprisingly, Wraiths with this Attainment tend to avoid physical contact with strangers, and many wear gloves to avoid undesirable visions.

Optional Arcanum: Death 3

If the mage also has Death 3, the suspension of her Pattern is as much a function of Death as Time. She can no longer be perceived or affected as a living being by the Life Arcanum, but may be affected by Death-based equivalents of Life spells requiring one dot higher than usual. For example, she could mend her own injuries with a Death 3 version of the "Self-Healing" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 183).

Third Attainment: Shadows of the Past

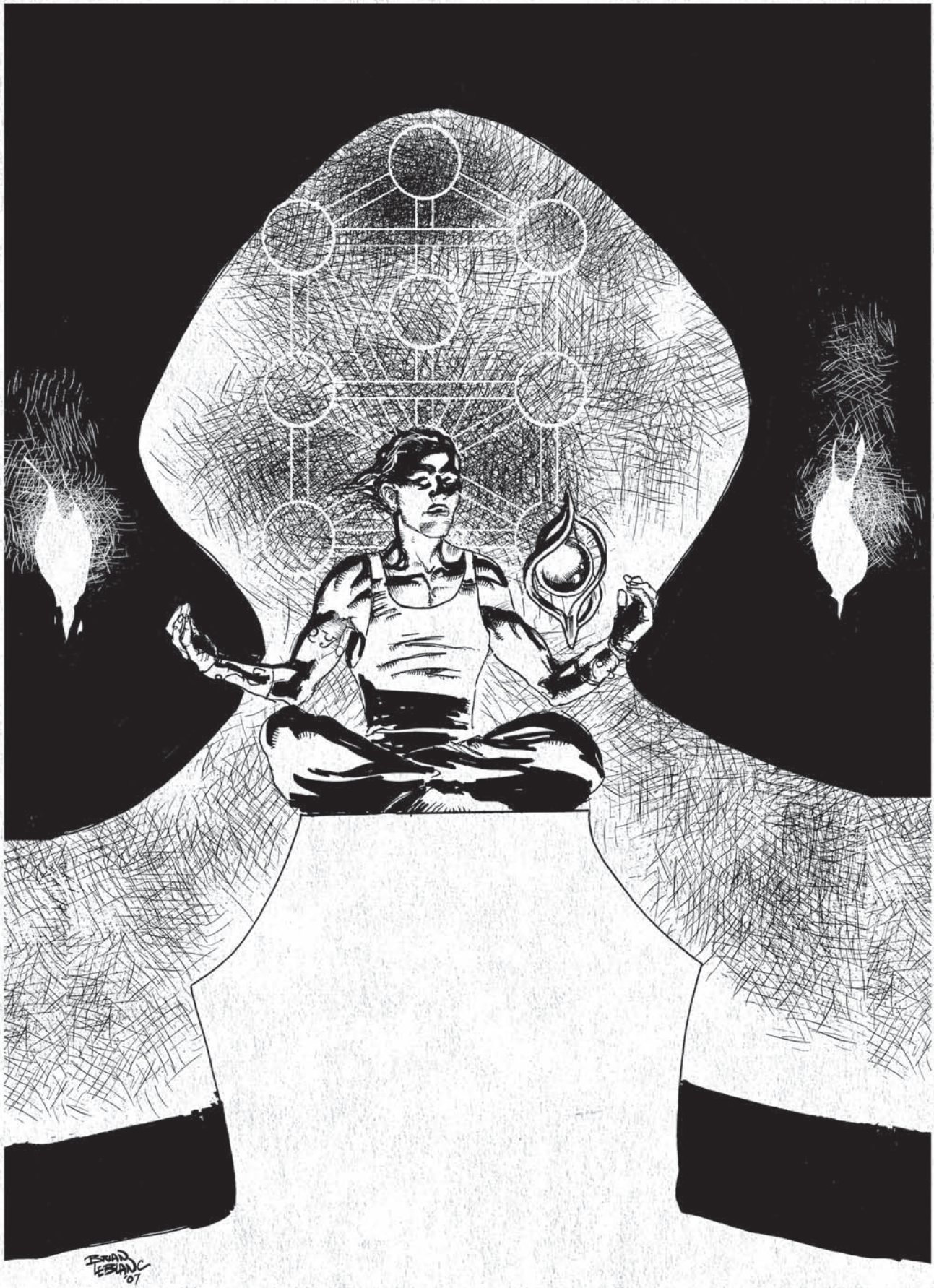
Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Time 4

The mage can reach within his awareness of the past to pull forth a shadow of something that once existed. In order to use this Attainment, a Wraith must first observe an inanimate object in a vision granted by All Things Lost. Once he observes the original item, he may thereafter copy it at any time by performing an instant action; no roll is required. The copy shimmers into existence touching the mage as if he cast the Prime 4, Time 2 "Temporal Phantasmal Weapon" spell (p. 202) with successes equal to his Time dots, substituting Time for Prime to determine the effect as appropriate. Conjured objects utterly disintegrate as soon as they are destroyed, an hour passes since their creation or the Wraith unmakes them with an instant action. A mage cannot use this Attainment while another object created with this Attainment still exists, and objects can't be copied out of visions of Atlantis.

In addition to the above, a Wraith with this Attainment can experience indefinite-duration visions of the past with All Things Lost, witnessing the flow of events until he decides to return his senses to the present. Such visions remain bound to the events surrounding the touched object. Although he can shift his vantage point at will to find the best view of each scene, he cannot "wander" to view concurrent events away from the object without finding another target to serve as an appropriate window. However, in conjunction with the experiential compression granted by Shadows of the Past, the mage can theoretically watch the passage of millennia flowing around an object or location in the span of seconds. Storytellers are advised to gloss over especially long visions with sweeping summaries and generalities, especially if a player abuses this power to put a game session on hold to wander through history; even Awakened minds can only take in so many experiences at once.

Optional Arcanum: Death 4

If the mage also has Death 4, he may perform an instant action to dissolve his body and personal possessions into a state of Twilight as per the Death 4 "Twilight Shift" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 147); no roll or Mana expenditure is required. He merely applies a moment's effort to surrender his flesh to the erosion of time or resume the illusion of lasting solidity.


BRIAN LEBLANC '07

CHAPTER FIVE: SPELLS AND ARTIFACTS

The orb appeared perfectly smooth to mortal sight, and out of respect he had begun with mortal sight. He had turned it over and over in his hands, feeling the surface for any imperfections. It had refused the warmth from his fingertips, which was interesting. Its coloration shifted in what seemed perfectly normal ways as well, letting the light through as expected, save for an occasional… could it be called a mistake? Color shifting just a second too late, or too early.

Finally satisfied that he'd observed as much as possible with mortal eyes, he entrusted the orb to the Petal. He let the Petal hold it there, levitating before him, and watched for a few minutes more.

As he opened his third eye, the orb coquettishly revealed more of itself. The surface was not smooth, after all, but multifaceted. A great many facets. He expected a hundred or so, and wondered idly which sacred number it might be. 99? 108? He began to count, the Petal turning the orb softly as he did so.

Not all of the facets were alike. Some were faintly discolored. That was interesting. He counted again, and a third time. 108 facets in all, and 14 of them just a bit off somehow. A combination? One to the power of one, times two to the power of two, times three to the power of three… perhaps one and four and nine, though that would discount a three in the process…

He reached out with his mind, suddenly taken with a sensation very like satori, and pressed down. The orb trembled slightly.

Ah, he thought with a sense of bliss. The pure moment of opening surrounded him, and he made a beginning.

The universe is full of magical things, patiently waiting for our wits to grow sharper.
— Eden Phillpotts

Magical Methods

Every Atlantean order seeks out magical lore, hoarding and trading such secrets as the core currency of mage politics. Where others play at mystical or temporal power-plays, most mystagogues hold themselves to a higher calling out of fear that the Abyss will consume the world soul by soul unless they can oppose the Abyss's entropy with Supernal wonders and propagation of transformative enlightenment. Within this overarching philosophy, mystagogues wield magic as a tool of education, evoking the unknowable grandeur of the Tapestry to instill proper reverence in their chosen pupils. For all that rotes and formal casting methods mitigate the worst dangers of willworking, nothing can change the fact that magic is strange and alien, its laws conjoined by syntax forgotten since the Fall. Glorious and terrible as such lore may be, it is the last hope of all that is.

Given the epic ideals of the Mysterium, no rote is too trivial or too complex. The aggregate knowledge of willworkers forms their chief bulwark against the Abyss, as the servants of chaos and darkness take many forms and require opposition on every conceivable front. Even so, mystagogues recognize that other orders are generally better suited to martial pursuits, and so the majority of Mysterium mages take the fight against the darkness to more abstract arenas such as education and collation of scattered secrets.

Pedagogy

Within the Mysterium, those who can, teach. Mostly, mystagogues teach each other, whether master to apprentice or peer to peer or even through dissemination of works to assembled cabals of like-minded scholars. However, the order is not nearly as incestuously clandestine as the Guardians of the Veil, and so the Mysterium's members also devote sizeable attention to their allies among the Atlantean orders. For a mage who wants a secret badly enough, the Mysterium can probably supply that knowledge, but never for free. Unspecified future favors make excellent currency in the shifting politics of Awakened society, though mystagogues prefer to trade lore for lore when they can seize an opportunity to expand their own knowledge.

From a magical standpoint, the most immediately valuable Arcanum is Mind. At the upper end, Mind 4 "Breach the Vault of Memory" can quickly imprint data without the tedium of a communicated lesson, where Mind 4 "Augment Other Minds" can induce flashes of dizzying (if transitory) epiphany. Less ostentatiously, Mind 3 "Universal Language" allows teachers to reach beyond language barriers to address potential students, while Mind 3 "Imposter" can disguise the source of a lesson when cryptic clues must reach the right ears. Subtler still, a combination of the Mind 2 spells "First Impressions" and "Emotional Urging" can establish a mage as a credible authority while allowing her to instill a passion for learning. Of course, a teacher isn't much use without a curriculum to teach, which makes spells such as Mind 3 "Augment the Mind" especially useful for accelerating the mystagogue's own learning process.

Outside of Mind, other Arcana generally afford better subjects for lessons rather than media for facilitating understanding. Various sensory enhancements — especially bestowed on others — can certainly provide a broad range of "educational" experiences, though students unprepared for such dizzying revelations seldom appreciate their value quite so much as mystagogues might like.

Fieldwork

Despite the Mysterium's reputation for bookish research and bizarre experiments cloistered in hidden sanctums, most mystagogues are not mere passive academicians. The study of relics and tomes is important to be sure, but ultimately irrelevant if no one goes out and finds those relics in the first place. Thus, the order boasts many intrepid archeologists and other fieldwork-driven scholars among its ranks who comb the world for magical treasures lost to the mage community. Such explorers must temper their array of sensory and study-oriented spells with more physical and even combative magic to survive the clever traps, guardian monsters and unholy abominations the mages routinely encounter in a day's work. Shielding spells from all Arcana is especially popular for this purpose, as are the various physiological augmentations made possible with Life. Almost every adventurer who survives long enough eventually tailors her repertoire toward a chosen specialty, such as conversing with (and defending against) ghosts

from long-dead civilizations or perhaps focusing on Space to better navigate mazes of catacombs. Really, anything goes, so long as it is remotely useful.

Combat Magic

Although the Mysterium is not known as a combative order, members of the Mysterium can generally hold their own when they have to. Knowledge is power, after all, and the Mysterium hoards more arcane knowledge than just about anyone else. This mystique is among the most subtle and powerful weapons in the order's arsenal, as opponents never quite know what to expect. It's one thing to know and plan for an Adamantine Arrow to be a competent war-mage. With the Mysterium, it's far more hit-and-miss. Odds are good that the venerable antiquarian with a penchant for quoting Chaucer is just an overenthusiastic history nut. On the other hand, the mage might just know an obscure rote for summoning spiked tentacles of violent intrusion that he learned from the hidden grimoire woven into a fifth century tapestry. Word about such exotic spells travels quickly and grows in the telling, such that Mysterium mages can sometimes avoid conflict simply by veiled threat alone. However, any bluff eventually gets called, and such tactics can end messily unless the mage can follow through.

Once combat actually breaks out, Mysterium mages rely on a combination of maximized intelligence, tactical awareness and unorthodox spells. As in so many other endeavors, the Mysterium employs arrays of sensory magic to precisely gauge the strengths and weaknesses of each adversary, often linking multiple detection effects together into a single spell to accelerate the preparatory process. More broadly, the Mysterium boasts an array of tactical scholars whose knowledge applies equally to magical and mundane conflicts, allowing the order to deploy specialized experts with the slightest foreknowledge (often generously assisted by the Time Arcanum).

If violence cannot be helped, the Mysterium reputation for wielding dark and terrible secrets is not wholly hype, though sometimes the slightest variation of a rote can render it unrecognizable. A lightning bolt is one thing. A murmuring vortex of pearly gray plasma is something else altogether. Both are Forces 3 effects, but the former is significantly more familiar. The moment a spell becomes unrecognizable, it becomes more dangerous, and the use of such variety increases the odds an enemy will overreact in response or do something stupid that leaves a tactical opening.

Of course, the downside to relying on tactical idiosyncrasy is that the same trick seldom works twice, forcing a mage to constantly expand his repertoire of rotes or improvise on the spot, which carries its own dangers. More importantly, the relative ease of Mage Sight can often call a bluff, so any show of power that doesn't correspond to its perceived danger assumes the associated risks. Sometimes, however, the moment of hesitation required to check a spell's resonance is just long enough for the mage to make an escape, or press the attack to capitalize on that pause. Finally, it cannot be overemphasized enough how paranoid many mages are, especially when it comes to the Mysterium's reputation for dangerous eccentricities; even when an opponent mage accurately analyzes an unfamiliar-looking spell, she might not trust her analysis, suspecting some sort of ruse woven into the magic itself.

Rote Specialties

As an order dedicated to the study and catalogue of arcane secrets, the Mysterium boasts access to a greater number of rotes than any of their Atlantean peers. However, not all rotes are created equal, and for every miracle of eldritch genius, there are at least two self-stirring teapots. The underlying Patterns of the universe unveil themselves in such teapots as much as grander endeavors, and so the hoarding process continues over the objections of those would eschew arcane minutiae for more portentous wonders. Wiser mages look to the Mysteries underneath the magic, seeking to understand why certain patterns of human thought lend themselves recursively to the study of such Patterns. Whether such structures are imposed constructs of aggregate formal study or inherent precepts of the Fallen World remains a subject for vigorous debate, but most members can agree on the basic principles empowering their magical inquiry.

Investigation

At the most basic level, no search for meaning can begin without a dedicated effort to analyze available evidence. Through mundane efforts, Investigation notes the deathtraps waiting to be sprung in ancient temples and finds the invisible imprint of a phone number left on a Post-it note pad. Adding in magic, Investigation rotes probe for virtually any sort of information, actively extracting meaning from the randomized chaos of the universe. Such spells invariably ask questions, embodying the restless and insatiable forward-looking aspect of the triune search for meaning.

Investigation rotes discovered by the Mysterium typically involve controlled eye gestures, with a syntax of blinks and REM flutters denoting the concatenated variables of inquiry. No search for truth can begin with unopened eyes, though some of the more advanced spells require mages to look past initial deceptions with inner eyes. To onlookers, it often seems that mages are nervously avoiding eye contact or concentrating to remember the visual layout of a memory.

Occult

While other skills lend themselves to greater familiarity or power over a facet of the mundane world, Occult bridges the gap between banal and Supernal. No other body of knowledge concerns itself with more pertinent and powerful secrets, or carries the same inherent danger. The closer anyone comes to supernatural truth, the more vigorously the champions of censorship and lies do anything and everything in their power to conceal and erase that truth. It comes as no surprise that the Mysterium wields greater mastery of Occult than other Atlantean orders; it is their lifeblood and the core of all they covet. However, this same strength breeds a complacency that constantly threatens the order's work. It is too easy to make assumptions, to rely on what is known rather than searching out what is unknown. If Investigation is the unknown waiting to be discovered, then Occult is the tiny corner of the unknown made known, the dominant and present aspect of the triune search for meaning.

Mysterium Occult rotes tend to be the most varied in their outward forms, standardized only in their lack of standardization. Any part of the body might suffice: a wiggled nose, a tapped earlobe, a pattern of scratches etched as if randomly on the forearm. Such variety heightens the order's mystique, since anything weird might be nothing — or it might be an Occult rote that turns one of the laws of physics inside out in some gratuitously vulgar fashion.

Survival

If Investigation and Occult highlight obvious aspects of the search for meaning, then Survival showcases the underlying durability of experience. Human beings have largely tamed the natural world, reshaping environments in accordance with human preference and need. Urban jungles replace those of trees and life, bereft of natural predators that could threaten human hegemony. Still, in the grand scheme of time and history, this state of affairs is relatively modern and undeserving of complacency. The Mysterium has seen great and advanced civilizations come and go and watched in despair as too many secrets died in the academic draughts of dark ages. The best way to preserve a secret is to preserve its keeper, and so the Mysterium retains emphasis on such skills alongside more obvious scholarly pursuits.

In the Mysterium's trinity of meaning, Survival embodies the legacy of the past, the aggregate and concentrated wisdom of humanity's rise to power and mastery over the natural world. The ephemeral search for answers cannot even begin without reasonably assuring basic necessities. For all the order's largely well-deserved reputation for erudition at any cost, the organization expects new members to master basic truths before advancing to abstract matters. Food. Warmth. Shelter. Without these, Sleepers cannot hope to set aside immediate animal concerns long enough to contemplate Awakening.

Mysterium Survival rotes invoke sharp, sudden flurries of movement that appear appropriately savage to their focus. Emulations of predatory acts: grabbing or clawing at the air, snapping of bared teeth and the like all serve to remind the mage of the fundamental and primal nature of such magic.

Rote Mudras

As the premiere scholars among occult scholars, members of the Mysterium delight in the intricacy and art of their magical craft. Mudras do not simply serve to accentuate a spell; these motions demonstrate deep internalized awareness of that spell's structure through wordless symbolic representation. More vainly, these motions afford an opportunity to show off a bit of the eccentric panache for which the order borders on infamy, not to mention providing a framework of secret signs through which members may recognize those of equal or lesser status in the organization. Most impressively, the Mysterium records record a unique hand gesture for every single Atlantean rune, making the totality of the order's mudras into an occult sign language capable of conveying the subtlest nuances of magical theory. If any mages know sufficient iconic mudras to fluently communicate Atlantean precepts, those mages certainly aren't telling anyone outside the innermost circle of the order's leadership, if that.

What follows are the dominant kinesthetic metaphors that have endured the test of time; less common practices exist in parallel to these as part of an extraordinarily diverse set of rituals, so players and Storytellers alike should take the following suggestions and guidelines as just that.

Death

Mysterium mages employ rotes drawn from such diverse inspirations as ancient funerary customs, the obscure rites of cults to chthonic things and the unnatural gliding motions of ghosts and stranger beings. Death holds mysteries even to the Mysterium, and so many of the order's mudras pay homage to the depths of that secret with closed or covered eyes, a bowed nod of respect or even a blessing of sorts for someone about to suffer horribly via this Arcanum. Irony and macabre humor is surprisingly common, taking innocuous gestures entirely out of context to pantomime the absurdities of life.

Examples: *Making a wistful sign of the cross to someone (before severing her soul). Pressing palms into the eyes past the point of pain until the mage sees spots (that quickly spread and resolve across her field of vision to show the presence of ghosts).*

Fate

The prevailing model of destiny taught within the Mysterium is that of a tangled cobweb, rather than the organized and patterned threads of a well-kept spider's home: in short, hopelessly knotted, with many threads trailing nowhere or dangling to fall between random elements of possibility. It's a simple model and not wholly accurate, but contains sufficient truth to work with in designing Fate mudras. Mysterium mages tear out handfuls of invisible strands from the air to impose curses, similar to brushing webbing from out of their path. For blessings, mystagogues pluck and arrange these strands more deftly and artfully, as if sewing fictitious imperial garments or practicing the finer points of embroidery. Still others prefer a verbal touch, scribing an ordained Fate directly into the wind by imagined stylus or calligrapher's brush so that the magic can spread and overwrite what was to pass.

Examples: *Disguising a woven blessing for a child by placing a hand on her head and ruffling her hair into deliberate tangles. Chewing on the tips of long bangs to sever the future hopes of a curse victim.*

Forces

In Mysterium doctrine, the principle and manifestation of energy matter more than its scope. A smoldering ember is no different from a bonfire, and a spark of static electricity isn't dissimilar to a lightning bolt, but for relative point of view. Thus, the actions associated to create minor manifestations may evoke grander permutations. By striking a match or scraping flint on steel — or even mimicking these gestures — a mage can create heat. By bringing hands together slowly, as if to resist a growing repulsion between them, a mage can invoke or modulate magnetic fields.

Examples: *Cupping hands around an unlit cigarette as if to protect its flame from the wind (thereby causing the cigarette to light in accordance with symmetry of sympathetic plausibility). Throwing hands out to either side with flattened palms in emulation of wings (to permit flight).*

Life

The forms of life are myriad past cataloguing, though that doesn't stop the Mysterium from trying. Mudras associated with the Life Arcanum dissect and probe with poking fingers wielded as deftly and nimbly as scalpels to target spells to specific elements of physiology or even micro-surgically alter the blueprint of a chromosome by "cutting" and "pasting" genes into new structures.

Examples: *Tracing a wound with a reverse motion as used to create the wound (to undo the damage via healing). Stabbing a forefinger aggressively toward a tumor to lance its ill humors as harmless ephemera (and thereby curing it).*

Matter

Much as weaving provides the dominant kinesthetic metaphor for Fate in Mysterium curricula, sculpting provides the primary vocabulary of gestures for Matter. Regardless of state, particles align themselves into fluid lattices of structure wherein solidity is a particularly persistent illusion, but no more real that persistence. Solid objects may be bent and twisted like soft clay, or symbolically pulled open to afford interior manipulations.

Examples: *Violently backhanding in the direction of an object, as if hurling a failed work of pottery from the wheel (to destroy or render something inoperable). Packing air extra solid with pressed thumbs (to create a shielding effect).*

Mind

Given the Mysterium predilection for all things cerebral, power over thought itself holds a kind of sacred awe that defines the order's mudras. Therefore, these rituals are among the most intricate, with each finger crooked and oriented *just so*. The actual gestures employed rely on sympathy of understanding between the mage and his target. To change another's thoughts, the mage must first understand those thoughts, which means replicating their structure and coherence as a model within his own mind. With each tap and spiral traced upon his own head, he attempts to isolate the pattern of neurons and burst of insights that might take form in the target, in a manner more sophisticated but not wholly dissimilar to a voodoo doll transmitting pain.

Examples: *Pulling the forefingers and middle fingers of each hand apart from the center of the forehead, as if tracing the slit of the closed third eye (to cast the spell of the same name). Grabbing at one's own hair and raking fingernails through the scalp in a frenzied motion of half-crazed duress (to inflict a psychic assault).*

Prime

Despite the order's reputation for hoarding and seeking answers, the Mysterium exists foremost to explore the great unknowns of the universe. Where every other Arcanum devotes itself to a principle or facet of the natural world, whether permutations of form or energy or the interstices of dimensions and continuity, Prime alone expresses a purer and stranger truth that flows out of the Supernal world. The mudras developed around this power show a peculiar nonchalance, with shrugs and noncommittal nods that convey simple permutations of "I do not understand." Such is the order's tribute to the Arcanum, that even ritual gestures proclaim the magic of magic an enigma.

Examples: *Raising one finger as if in preparation of making a ponderous speech, only to drop the finger quietly and passively in rejection of the notion that conflict is relevant (thereby unweaving a spell deemed beneath notice). Tossing an item made of tass lightly into the air as if setting a bird free (releasing its Mana back into the Tapestry).*

Space

The most common Space mudras taught in the Mysterium involve a paradigmatic representation of geometric contiguity as an elastic sphere. By variably mapping, rotating, compressing and stretching this imaginary sphere, either with one hand like a transparent stress ball or as a larger globe clutched between both hands, the mage orients and adjusts localized regions of the Fallen World's continuum. The visual representation of this interactive cartographical model actually appears in some especially vulgar order rotes as a kind of holographic construct of Atlantean runes forming a constellation outlines of a luminous orb.

Examples: *Cradling the notional sphere in both hands and poking middle fingers together through the center in a corkscrew motion (connecting two remote points of the sphere to establish a link for scrying or teleporting). Tapping the sphere lightly to "observe" the way the ripples spread and deform along the sphere's surface (revealing the presence of spatial anomalies).*

Spirit

In the conventional cosmological model of the Tapestry, the world of matter and its ephemeral shadow exist side-by-side beneath the loftier heights of the Abyss and Supernal Realms. By means of the Spirit Arcanum, the balance of matter and ephemera shifts like weights upon a dangling scale, and so the Mysterium teaches mudras involving open upward palms elevated and lowered relative to one another to perform intuitive calculations. Slight adjustments in the orientation of each hand and the slight angle of each finger joint define a vast syntax of possible modulations.

Examples: *In one of the erudest and more powerful gestures, the mage throws one hand down as the other raises high above his head, precipitously tilting the balance of form and spirit toward the latter and pulling him across into the Shadow Realm. More subtly, one hand may partially close and open gently as the other remains motionless, extending proximate awareness sufficiently to view immaterial spirits.*

Time

Mysterium mudras for the Time Arcanum seek to adjust the flow of chronology by invoking established methodologies of demarcating time's passage. A flip of the wrist can turn an imaginary hourglass, while a shadow cast by the position of a finger relative to a light source may emulate a sundial. More modern examples allow for the path of a clock hand to trace the coil of perpetual rotation, halting or accelerating that motion in accordance with the desired manipulation. Regardless of the mudra's technological inspiration, the mudras all seek to "set the clock" by the mage's own sensibility, imposing pattern by means of pattern.

Examples: *Pointing an accusatory finger at the source of calamitous distress, then rotating that finger counterclockwise to rewind events by several key seconds, circumnavigating an undesired nexus of causality.*

Magical Tools

Given the focus of the order, it is no surprise that the Mysterium strongly encourages its members to locate and hoard as many mystical trinkets and baubles as they possibly can, recognizing that every such item offers a clue to the inner workings of Supernal truths beneath the structure of the universe. More immediately and practically, the development and creation of the sort of dedicated magical tools most favored by the order — namely texts and keys — facilitates a personal approach to the search for meaning, thereby providing the Mysterium with a multiplicity of perspectives that might otherwise go unexplored.

From a textual standpoint, the order as a whole gives aesthetic preference to older media such as scrolls, inscribed talismans and books. This is not to say that no dedicated flash drives or CD tomes exist, since the intentional archiving of data is what makes a good Mysterium tool, not the method of recording that information. Whatever the chosen medium, textual tools tend to fall in one of two broad categories: venerated sources of authority and original work. The former are generally prized acquisitions dedicated to one or more magical subjects, typically penned by older or historical mages whose work the Mysterium member has taken time to study. By attuning to such a text, the mage metaphysically anchors himself to a lineage of truth that mitigates the cosmic lies of Paradox. Younger mages, lacking the necessary experience to write their own occult treatises, tend to prefer this type of tool. As they mature in confidence and wisdom, Mysterium mages gradually supplant favorite reads with their own journals and creative endeavors, boldly challenging Paradox on their own terms.

Precious keys — that is, those made from rare or precious materials — serve a slightly different function from texts. Where written words contain answers, locked doors represent questions in the duality of enigma. Every lock embodies an impediment to learning or a particular riddle whose solution lies at the heart of understanding. Even to the degree that a gilded key serves no practical purpose for lacking a lock designed to fit it, the very existence of such an object raises the distinct possibility that a lock does exist somewhere that it might unlock. That possibility is enough to lend symbolic power to such treasured keys. Of course, if these items actually fit a personally significant lock (for example, one binding the cover of a mage's grimoire or at the entryway of a sanctum), the connection resonates that much more strongly.

Sacraments

The Mysterium teaches that knowledge is power and that knowledge always has a price. This teaching is hardly proprietary to the order, but mystagogues do tend to take the precept farther than most when it comes to the sacraments they employ in extended

spellcasting. Any item suitable for use as a magical tool qualifies, but most mystagogues would sooner cut off an arm than burn their books. Only in the greatest duress, when all hope is lost and a mage truly believes her stores of knowledge will fall irretrievably or disastrously into the wrong hands, will she destroy a secret to preserve its integrity. Such an act is tantamount to a mother killing her newborn to spare him from slavery, and is similarly reviled by the order. Keys are another matter entirely, though there are practical considerations if the key in question is the only way to open an important lock. With this in mind, the following examples illustrate some of the more common ritual components employed by the Mysterium. Rarer sacraments have a (+1) listed beside them, indicating they provide a +1 equipment bonus to the ritual spellcasting.

Death: Dust scraped from a mausoleum illustrates the symmetry of tomb and library as repositories of hidden or half-forgotten secrets. The bones or other remains of erudite scholars (mystical or otherwise) highlight the transitory nature of knowledge-keepers and the permanence of knowledge in the face of death (+1 for the remains of a well-renowned or especially brilliant sage).

Fate: A bit of rubble from a structure that burned to the ground or otherwise suffered a the misfortune of natural disaster can serve as a focus for curses, while blessings might spring from a fragment of a scroll-tube or scrap of a book-cover that preserved a work of art in the face of some danger (+1 if it protected a masterpiece).

Forces: Any object used to store or conduct a singular manifestation of energy can suffice, such as a battery, magnet or sample of a volatile chemical (+1 if the vessel is particularly large or valuable, such as uranium rods for a nuclear reactor).

Life: Members of endangered or largely undiscovered species are living secrets of a sort, making the slightest tissue samples from such beings into valuable expressions of life's variety and extremes (+1 for a sample that requires the death of such a treasure, such as part of the heart or brain).

Matter: Pages torn from any book may suffice to extract the imprint of knowledge's power upon base substance, even if the content itself is as trivial as a phonebook. Other works of art or tangible mass media provide similar benefits (+1 to destroy something of personal significance to the mage).

Mind: Destroying notes or written lessons that the mage has already memorized and internalized to the point that the notes are no longer required. On the other end of the spectrum, a mage can use the Mind 2 "Memory Hole" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 208) to sacrifice a learned fact or secret in preparation for lengthier rituals. If the secret has actual or personal significance, then surrendering it is always worth +1. Destroying a thought that cannot possibly be retrieved (i.e., it exists nowhere except the mage's mind at the time of the sacrifice) merits a +3 bonus, but this practice is considered blasphemous and antithetical to everything the Mysterium stands for.

Prime: Anything of notable temporal value may suffice for this Arcanum, demonstrating that nothing is so valuable as pure truth. Taken to greater extremes, a sacrifice of tass with the Prime 3 "Dissolve Tass" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 225) can net a +1 bonus, provided the sacrifice achieves nothing else besides depriving the mage of tass he already owned and could have put to more immediately productive use.

Space: As centralized convergences of lore, libraries, churches and other archives anchor their secrets to fixed locality. A bit of mortar from such a structure's wall or part of a bookshelf can prove useful, with a +1 granted if the object in question borders on irreplaceable or especially antique.

Spirit: Destruction of a minor spirit's anchor in the material world. If that spirit is actually dangerous (and likely to retaliate), the mage gets a +1 bonus.

Time: Shattering an hourglass to spill its sands or cracking a watch face with a backhanded blow challenges the linear inevitability of Time (+1 for ruining a fine Swiss timepiece or toppling an old grandfather clock).

New Spells

If the Mysterium's currency is magic, it should come as no surprise that the order has quite an impressive repertoire of sorceries at its disposal. Though most mages take the Mysterium's library of secrets to apply primarily to rotes, artifacts and similar riches, the fact is the Mysterium contains some of the most dedicated experimental magicians in the world. These men and women are constantly pushing the boundaries of magical lore in two directions: toward the future, innovating new uses of magic never before seen in

the Fallen World; and toward the past, seeking to reclaim the lost sorceries of Atlantis.

Death

Healing the Dead Mind (Death ●●●)

Many ghosts don't realize that they are dead, much less retain any clear memory of the circumstances of their deaths or the events that have happened since. This is lamentable in that it holds them to a ghostly existence rather than allowing them to pass on to their final destiny. It is, however, also frustrating to mages who might otherwise gain a great deal of information from talking to a ghost. With this spell, the mage can grant self-awareness and intelligence to a ghost.

Practice: Perfecting
Action: Instant
Duration: Prolonged (one scene)
Aspect: Covert
Cost: None

This spells works similarly to the Mind 4 spell "Augment Other's Mind," except that this spell only functions on ghosts. The spell brings a ghost to a level of self-awareness at which it can remember how it died (if it was in a position to know; a person who died of poisoning might know that much, but not who poisoned it) and what has happened to it since its death. This spell in no way makes the ghost well-disposed toward the mage. In fact, many ghosts despise the person who showed them their deaths.

The mage must touch the ghost to use this spell, which requires the mage to be in Twilight, the ghost to manifest (see p. 210 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**), or the mage to cast "Touch of the Grave" (see p. 138 of **Mage: The Awakening**). At Death 4, the mage can cast this spell at sensory range, and can use advanced prolongation Duration factors. Some ghosts are self-aware to begin with, and this spell confers no further bonus on such shades.

Mysterium Rote: Thwarting the Waters of Lethe
Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy + Death

Ghosts see a great deal more than they remember, making them a valuable, but often untappable resource for those who seek lost knowledge or the location of long-forgotten (by humans) artifacts. The mages of the Mysterium frequently do not have time to waste in the slow (and sometimes fruitless) task of talking ghosts into remembering that they are dead so that they can query them about information. By using this spell, a mystagogue can cut to the chase, diving directly into negotiation for the information he needs.

Create Ghost (Death ●●●●●+ Mind ●●●●+ Time ●●)

Although masters of Death can summon ghosts from the underworld without the aid of any other Arcana, many of the dead do not leave ghosts behind and so cannot be summoned in this fashion, while other ghosts either fade over time or forget the experiences of their mortal lives. This spell reaches back into the past, to the moment of the individual's death, and calls his ghost into the present day.

Practice: Unveiling
Action: Instant
Duration: Prolonged (one scene)
Aspect: Vulgar
Cost: 1 Mana

To use this spell, the mage must have a sympathetic connection to either the person's place of death or to his body. Mages who cast this spell at the place of death, with a piece of the deceased's body on hand, receive a +2 bonus to this spell. This spell calls forth the dead person's ghost, exactly as it would have been if the person's death had created a ghost. In addition, this ghost appears exactly as it would have within a few hours or days after the person's death. As a result, the ghost is still very attached to the events of its life. The ghost always has a clear memory of these events, but this same attachment means that the ghost may want the mage to perform various tasks for it, in return for answering the mage's questions.

Mysterium Rote: Recalling the Ancient Departed
Dice Pool: Presence + Academics + Death

Although vast amounts of knowledge have been lost, someone once living once knew all of it. If a master of Death can find the bones or place of death of someone who once knew the desired information, the mage can call this deceased individual back so that she can reveal her knowledge to the living.

Fate

Reveal Enigmas (Fate ●●, Mind ●●, and possibly Matter ●)

This spell finds both uncovers patterns and temporarily enhances the mage's mind to allow the mage to understand these patterns, allowing him to solve complex puzzles and learn the answer to various secrets

that are hidden inside such patterns and puzzles. This spell can provide the answer to any puzzle that can be solved with an instant action. If used to solve a physical mystery, such as how to put together a jigsaw puzzle or the combination of a safe, this spell also requires Matter •.

Practice: Unveiling

Action: Instant

Duration: Instant

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

A single success is sufficient to allow the mage to reassemble a normal jigsaw puzzle, open a combination lock or know the answer to any one riddle. However, multiple successes are often necessary to solve one of the more complex and elaborate mechanical puzzles, such as a three-dimensional jigsaw puzzle. The mage may also require multiple successes to learn the answers to one of the many old and highly complex multi-part riddles. This spell also allows the mage to decode codes, with ordinary ciphers requiring a single success, and either subtle allegorical codes or complex computer-generated cryptography occasionally requiring between two and five successes.

Mysterium Rote: Unravel Simple Mysteries

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation + Fate

Some of the more secretive mages and scholars concealed their knowledge within riddles, puzzle-like allegories or in secret compartments hidden in complicated puzzle boxes. Some of these puzzles and mechanisms are designed so that only someone trained in various esoteric symbologies can open them. This spell cuts through these webs of secrets and trickery and allows the mage to find the solutions to these puzzles.

Forces

Supernal Hack (Forces ●●● + Matter ●●●)

Computer data is a unique amalgam of information stored in an Forces-based media within a Matter-based framework. Without an intuitive use of both Arcana, a mage is limited to using one sphere or the other in a brutish and possibly destructive way if he directs his Supernal attention to this delicate technology. By using both Arcana together, however, a skillful mage can manipulate, modify or delicately delete select pieces of virtual data while leaving the rest untouched.

Supernal Hack provides two separate effects. After casting it, an Awakened computer user can add additional dice equal to the number of dots he has in Forces to any computer-related rolls for the rest of the scene. As well, while Supernal Hack is active, any penalties inflicted by Supernal-security measures on technological devices the mage interacts with are halved.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

Mysterium Rote: Read the Virtual Tome

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Computer + Forces

In many ways, computers and data banks are the archives of the next age, holding untold secrets and

knowledge. Just as Mind mages can use "Telepathy" to read an individual's thoughts, mystagogues who are adept with both Matter and Forces can "read" the contents of an electronic disk or hard drive, intuitively sensing the interplay between magnetic, photonic or electronic markers and their physical components. Using a combination of the Matter and Forces Arcana in a technological version of telepathy, the mage can read computer files as if they were printed out on a monitor before them. Text document or database files are standard difficulty, reading data that has been intentionally given additional encryption may be attempted at a –1 to –3 penalty, depending on the complexity of the encryption used. Information can be read at the same rate as if it was being read in a text form.

Containment (Forces ●●●●)

Mages who regularly work with ancient artifacts or experiment with explosives, advanced technologies or unusual types of magic often risk injury or death if the device or spell suddenly reacts in some violent and unpredictable manner. This spell provides an automatic protection for the mage, her laboratory and her companions.

Practice: Shielding
Action: Instant
Duration: Prolonged (one scene)
Aspect: Vulgar
Cost: 1 Mana (optional)

The mage casts this spell in an area around himself. If the mage or anyone or anything within this area is attacked either physically or with magic, the spell activates. Once activated, the spell protects everything within a small radius (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 118) around the mage from harm by slowing down fast-moving objects, damping fires and harmlessly grounding dangerous amounts of electricity. If the mage notices any such danger, she can reflexively spend one point of Mana. Then, for the next turn, nothing in the area can move faster than a brisk walk (Speed 10), and levels of temperature and electricity remain safe for everyone inside this area. However, this spell is only useful on small- to moderate-sized threats. Even if a 20-foot-high, 10-foot-thick stone wall fell on someone fairly slowly, it would still (slowly) crush them. Also, once this turn ends, this protection instantly fades, unless the mage spends another point of Mana. The mage can continue spending Mana until she either runs out or the people inside the area cease being in immediate danger.

Mysterium Rote: Shield the Magical Laboratory
Dice Pool: Wits + Craft + Forces

Ancient magics are often even less predictable than modern explosives, and so this spell has saved the lives of more than one Mysterium experimenter who has had a rote or artifact react in a dangerous manner.

Life

Puissant Skill (Life ●●)

Muscle memory can aid the human body in accomplishing truly tremendous feats, allowing reaction with more speed and surety than the human mind can register. With this spell, a mage can perfect his muscle memory, drawing on even the most basic of training to hone his reflexes and responses to stunning and breathtaking perfection.

Practice: Ruling
Action: Instant
Duration: Prolonged
Aspect: Covert
Cost: None

The mage chooses a single Physical Skill when this spell is cast. For each success on the spellcasting roll, that use of the skill is considered a rote action Ability (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 134), allowing his player to reroll any dice that result in failures on non-magical uses of the skill. At Life 3, the mage may grant this ability to others by touch.

Mysterium Rote: Perfected Flow
Dice Pool: Dexterity + Medicine + Life

Certain members of the Mysterium find that the best tool for a given job is the human body — when faced liberating museums of Atlantean artifacts mistaken for simple archaeological finds, for instance. In such instances, the application of pressure to certain points in the body stimulates the flow of adrenaline through the body sufficient to prepare the body for upcoming action.

Body Mastery (Life ●●●)

This spell enhances mages' health, boosts the speed of their healing and lengthens their lifespan.

Practice: Ruling
Action: Instant
Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert
Cost: 1 Mana (optional)

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

Mysterium Rote: Enduring Body
Dice Pool: Stamina + Medicine + Life

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

Metabolic Suspension (Life ●●●, Time ●●●; or Life ●●●●; or Time ●●●●)

Where lesser mages enhance and reinforce their metabolisms with superhuman efficiency, mages with appropriate command of Life and/or Time may transcend such frailties outright.

Practice: Perfecting
Action: Instant
Duration: Prolonged (one scene)
Aspect: Vulgar
Cost: 1 Mana

A successful casting of this spell confers the following benefits: the mage does not require any sustenance, does not need to breathe and most of her internal organs cease functioning in any measurable capacity, providing complete immunity to non-magical diseases and toxins. This spell cannot suspend the aging process, as the inevitability of entropy carries more metaphysical weight than the mundane urgency of bodily functions. Although mundane medical examinations invariably diagnose a mage with this attainment as dead (and offer no rational explanation for how she can continue to function), magic still detects her Pattern as living unless she has somehow modified it with other magic. Mages with one more dot in the spell's required Arcana than listed above can cast a variant of this spell to suspend another's body with an enchanted touch.

Mysterium Rote: Life Between Heartbeats
Dice Pool: Stamina + Survival + Life/Time

Mysterium researchers cannot be troubled to take precious time away from their studies for anything so trivial as food or an insistent bladder. More intrepid members of the order use this rote to fortify themselves for hazardous expeditions without worrying about malaria, packing provisions or a pounding heartbeat betraying their location to a guardian monster's keen sense of hearing.

Trigger Autonomic Function (Life ●●●)

Certain bodily functions occur in response to various stimuli in natural situations. With this spell, the normally autonomic functions are triggered regardless of stimuli, bringing about various physical states that may be incongruous with the outside situation.

Practice: Weaving
Action: Instant and contested; target rolls Stamina reflexively
Duration: Prolonged (one scene)
Aspect: Covert
Cost: None

Sudden movement can send adrenaline jolting through a subject's veins, eliciting a startle or alert response well before the mind has time to identify the incoming stimuli as a threat or not. Appetizing smells cause the stomach to begin producing extra acids and the salivary glands to start functioning, even if the individual knows that the source of the stimulus is inaccessible. Dark, quiet settings or repetitive gentle motion can trigger a body's sleep reaction, producing melatonin to lull it into a restful state. These physical reactions are autonomic functions to external or internal stimuli, brought about by neural or chemical reactions without need for thought or emotion. By using Trigger Autonomic Function, the mage is able to trip his target's body's functions in

such a way as to elicit these responses without the need for outside stimuli.

With a touch, the mage triggers a chosen body function in the target. Examples include sleep, sneezing, coughing, elimination, arousal/orgasm and "fight or flight." This reaction is simple, physical and immediate, but with the addition of Time 2, this spell can be used on a delay of up to an hour, allowing the mage to cast it and then remove themselves from the area. Unlike "Trigger the Lizard Brain" (Life 4), this spell triggers only physical (bodily) responses, rather than instinctive emotional reactions.

Any living target capable of the chosen body function can be targeted. A guard dog could be put to sleep, a visiting dignitary made to soil themselves, or an attacking werewolf affected with a sneezing fit. Vampires or other undead creatures without autonomic functions are not affected by this spell. Supernatural functions, such as frenzy or Death Rage cannot be triggered by this spell, although successfully causing a "fight or flight" reaction may, at the Storyteller's discretion, prompt a test for supernatural functions.

Mysterium Rote: Inattentive Guardian

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Medicine + Life

An inattentive guardian has made more than one Mysterium Reclaimant's job much easier to complete. Putting an individual to sleep by means of this rote is less dangerous (for the target) than the stereotypical blow to the back of the head, and is much more effective for the mage as well. With a touch (or at sensory distance if Life 3 is used) the mystagogue can put one target life form to sleep. The target will remain asleep for a minimum of one scene, regardless of circumstances; however, after one scene the target may continue to sleep or be awakened normally by external stimuli (uncomfortable positioning, loud noises, etc.)

Skilled Triumph (Life ●●●●)

All mages know of the Collective Human Unconscious, the collection of human knowledge regarded as one of the many layers of the Astral Plane. Some of the Awakened, however, discuss a similar realm that is to the nuances of the human body what the Collective Unconscious is to the mind. A mage who uses this spell can tap into that place, where the body-memory of all the greatest physical feats of humanity is kept, allowing even the most strenuous of physical feats to become simple.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

For each success on the spellcasting roll, the mage gains one use of the rote action (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p.134) ability on any Physical Skill. This may not be used to augment magical uses of the Skill (such as rote activation). At Life 5, the mage may grant this ability to others by touch.

Mysterium Rote: The Olympian Collective

Dice Pool: Strength + Athletics + Life

To a viewer, it might seem that the mage who invokes this rote is simply stretching, or posing in some mimicry of athletes the world over. In actuality, the Mysterium mage draws upon his knowledge of the thousand-thousand athletes of history, assuming their poses, claiming their victories for himself in body posture and will.

Matter

Deceptive Appearance (Matter ●●)

Although the ability to change one substance into another is useful, sometimes merely the perception of change (without tinkering with the true components) is desired. With this spell, the mage can make an object appear to be made of something else, without actually changing the object itself.

Practice: Veiling

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

While the Matter spells that actually transform substance work on different types of substances at different levels, Deceptive Appearance can target any non-living, non-magical substance, regardless of rarity or physical state. This spell can change the appearance of any solid, liquid or gas object to that of any other simple substance of the same state. A complex object can be made to take on the overall appearance of any simple substance, but separate spells must be used to give the appearance of separate substances. Thus, with a single use of this spell, a pistol with a metal barrel and wooden handle might be given the appearance of being crafted entirely of gold. However, to give the pistol the appearance of having a gold barrel and ivory handle, two successful

separate spells must be cast. Deceptive Appearance does not change the shape of the object. A glass beer stein may be given the appearance of being made of stone or steel, but it cannot be made to look like a martini glass.

Successes are allocated to casting factor (Size). At this level, the mage must touch the substance in order to change its appearance. At Matter 4, Deceptive Appearance can be cast at sensory range and can use advanced prolongation Duration factors.

Note: The change granted by Deceptive Appearance is visual only. The spell will not change the actual density, weight, taste, smell or temperature of the substance. Wine that is made to appear to be water will still taste like wine and have its intoxicating effects, while lead that is spelled to look like wood will still sink if placed in water. The addition of Mind 2 to this spell allows a mage to grant a change the *perception* of taste, smell, weight or temperature. The spell does not, however change the actual weight, temperature or density of the object.

Mysterium Rote: Golden Gleam

Dice Pool: Wits + Subterfuge + Matter

When removing magical objects from the hands of the unworthy, sometimes guile works better than force, and an individual's own greed may well convince him that trading the simple box for that large lump of gold is a good trade, especially if he does not realize the box's magical potential. Mystagogues frequently use this rote to temporarily give a worthless item the appearance of value in order to trade the item for magical items, Artifacts or tomes containing mysteries that have fallen into undeserving hands. Although some might say the practice is immoral, the Mysterium feels it is sometimes a preferable alternative to violent or potentially deadly conflict over the acquisition of such items.

Reassembly (Matter ●●● + Space ●●●)

The mage calls and reassembles the widely separated parts of an item. The spell "Repair Object" repairs only objects when most of the pieces are present; this spell allows the mage to recreate a shattered vase merely by holding a single fragment of the vase and calling the remainder of the vase to it.

Practice: Unraveling

Action: Instant

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

The number of successes rolled determines the size of the object that the spell can restore. The size of the fragment and the number and distance of the pieces do not matter. As long as the mage is holding a piece of the object large enough to see and feel clearly (at least the size of a lentil or dried pea), she can call the remainder of the pieces of the object and reassemble them so that the object looks as good as when it were newly made. Each success (or additional target factor prefigured into the casting) allows the mage to restore an object of that size; thus, three successes allow a mage to restore an object of up to Size 3. If some pieces no longer exist, then the spell creates new matter to repair the missing portions in a manner similar to the "Repair Object" spell. However, at least half of the object must still exist in some form similar to its original state. If more than half of the object was utterly destroyed or transformed, such as metal being melted down or reforged, or wood being burned to fine gray ashes, this spell automatically fails, and the mage knows that the object is lost forever.

Mysterium Rote: Journey from Part to Whole

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Craft + Matter

For Mysterium archeologists, this spell means that finding a small fragment of an ancient artifact is the same as finding the entire artifact. Given the antiquity of many of the items these intrepid scholars seek, this spell has proven invaluable in their efforts.

Duplication (Matter ●●●●)

The mage creates a precise duplicate of a mundane object.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene) or Lasting

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana

When casting this spell, the mage must have a supply of raw material out of which the duplicate may be created. If these raw materials are of approximately the right sort (such as plastic, and bits of various sorts of wire for duplicating a computer) and of at least the same Size, then a single success creates a nearly exact duplicate, and further successes create increasingly perfect duplicates. With two successes, all of the print and images inside a duplicated book are identical to the original, and with three or more successes, the book also possesses exactly the same wear patterns. If the mage wishes to duplicate both a computer and the data on it, or to duplicate any other form of electronic storage,

then she must cast this as a conjunctional spell with Forces 2. Also, the maximum Size of the object being duplicated equals the mage's dots in Matter.

One unusual property of the spell is that if the raw materials are sufficiently close to the object being duplicated, then the Duration of the spell becomes lasting. Examples of these sorts of raw materials are duplicating a book by using a blank book of a similar size and shape and a quantity of ink as raw materials or duplicating a computer by using as raw materials another similar computer (which might be a considerably older model). To create a lasting duplicate, the raw material must be quite similar in both composition and form to the object being duplicated.

This spell can also be used to duplicate Artifacts, enhanced and imbued items if cast as a conjunctional spell with Prime 3; however, duplicates of Artifacts or imbued items made with this spell all have a maximum Duration of 24 hours and can never be made lasting, regardless of the raw materials or power level involved. This spell is the only known method for duplicating Artifacts, but none of these duplicated Artifacts can ever exist for more than 24 hours.

Mysterium Rote: Unwitting Loan

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Crafts + Matter

Occasionally, someone would notice the theft of a valuable artifact too quickly for the thief to escape and other times, even an ally may have an artifact worthy of careful study that she does not wish to part with. In these and other cases, the Mysterium employs this rote to allow the order to obtain a valuable item without depriving its owner of it.

Transubstantiation of Content (Matter ●●●●, Mind ●●●)

Despite the popular image of wizards poring over ponderous hoards of obscure and dusty tomes, many modern mages prefer the compact elegance of sophisticated electronic media. With this spell, a mage can freely mix and convert data across any storage medium, provided the original object stores deliberate data in some fashion.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Instant

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

With a successful casting of this spell, a mage can alter the medium of any data without altering the underlying meaning of the content. At the subtler end, this spell can recode electronic files so they must be read with a different operating system or translate a book written in one language to become written in another. More dramatic uses of the spell can condense a stack of tomes into a single flash drive or vice versa, though the total size of all objects before and after transformation cannot exceed 5, and the mage cannot create any data medium that he is not personally familiar with.

Mysterium Rote: Mutable Media

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Craft + Matter

For every young Mysterium scholar looking to upgrade inherited texts to more technologically-driven and user-friendly forms, an older or more traditional member labors to distill useful knowledge from meaningless technobabble and superfluous gadgetry. In short, this rote facilitates cooperation between colleagues who might not otherwise have a frame of reference to understand each other's efforts.

Mind

Perfect Mnemonic (Mind ●●)

Imbuing her words with arcane gravitas, a mage can brand an idea directly into a subject's memory. Should such a subject fall prey to dementia or brain damage, forgetting even his own name, he will never forget the ideas burned into the deepest recesses of his psyche.

Practice: Ruling

Action: Instant; subtract target's Resolve

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

In order to cast this rote, the mage must vocalize the intended knowledge to the subject, even if that subject is the mage himself. The presence of bystanders has no effect on the magic, though the speech must be targeted specifically at an individual rather than being a general address. If the spell succeeds, the subject never forgets that information without the interference of other magic or powers. Mind 2 is required for the mage to target himself; scribing other minds requires Mind 3. With an additional dot of Mind beyond these requirements, knowledge may be imparted telepathically rather than aloud. Resolve is not subtracted from the caster's pool if the target is aware and willing.

Although not widely known outside of the forbidden ranks of the Unforgotten Scions, this spell can also be cast more aggressively on a Sleeper target, in which case the spell costs one Mana point. If the spell succeeds, the target not only remembers the branded information forever but also develops a perverse fascination to share the knowledge with others per the Fixation derangement (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 97); this derangement potentially flares up whenever the subject of the information comes up in conversation or the target is actively reminded of it, promoting the usual Resolve + Composure roll to resist. Any new fixation implanted this way replaces all existing ones, so a victim only needs to worry about the most recent obsession. Furthermore, he may permanently overcome such madness by spending one dot of Willpower or raising his Morality; otherwise, such madness is permanent. Damaging a Sleeper's mind this way is an act of hubris, requiring a mage with a Wisdom higher than four dots to make a degeneration roll. More importantly, doing this is an excellent way to attract the attention of the Unforgotten and its enemies.

Mysterium Rote: Soul Scribing

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Expression + Mind

Although the Mysterium spends more time solving mysteries than protecting them, members also recognize that every secret forgotten is one that they must waste time rediscovering. Therefore, members make extensive use of this rote, to help themselves remember and to educate junior members in the order's regulations. The aggressive casting method is not widely known, but thankfully, mages cannot accidentally stumble on it unless they actually intend such harm.

Willful Process (Mind ●●)

Sometimes it is not enough to simply be smarter. With this spell, a mage can perfect his ability to remember and take advantage of what he's learned. Likewise, a clever mage may apply this bit of sorcery to his interactions with others, allowing his previous experiences in dealing with others to drive his instinctual responses.

Practice: Ruling

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

The mage chooses a single Mental or Social Skill when this spell is cast. For each success on the spell-casting roll, that use of the skill is considered a rote action (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 134), allowing his player to reroll any dice that result in failures. This may only be used on non-magical Skill rolls. At Mind 3, the mage may grant this ability to others by touch.

Mysterium Rote: Powerful Recollection

Dice Pool: Wits + Academics + Mind

Through a series of meditations and mental exercises, Mysterium scholars about to undertake extensive studies or research often use this rote to hone their personal skills. When time is of the essence, the mind must be sharp.

Eternal Now (Mind ●●●)

The mage temporarily removes the ability of the target to process new memories.

Practice: Fraying

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls Resolve + Gnosis reflexively

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

For the Duration of the spell, the target can remember any memories of experiences that occurred before the spell was cast, but cannot form any new memories. As a result, a turn after the target looks away from something or someone, he forgets about its presence, unless he expected an object to be in a particular place before the spell was cast. Also, while the target can have a perfectly normal conversation, once the conversation ends and the target either starts doing something else or the person he was talking to walks out of sight, the target completely forgets the conversation.

For the Duration to this spell, someone could greet the target, hold a conversation with him and walk into another room and the target would completely forget having seen this person. A target could also laugh at a previously unheard joke repeatedly, since each time he heard the joke would effectively be hearing it for the first time. Once the Duration of this spell expires, the target's ability to form memories returns, but any memories lost during the spell's Duration are gone for good. For the Duration of this spell, the target reacts perfectly normally and will not notice any problem with his memory unless someone points this problem out. Even if someone tells the target that he is having memory problems, he will forget this information a few minutes later. Because memory takes a short

while to process, the spell also prevents the target from remembering anything that occurred during the turn that before the spell was cast.

Mysterium Rote: Forgetting the Intruder's Presence

Dice Pool: Wits + Subterfuge + Mind

When looking through rare books or stealing ancient artifacts, Mysterium investigators who are discovered prefer to use this spell to keep the target from remembering their identity and even their presence.

Induce Sleep (Mind ●●● + Life ●●)

The mage can both prevent sleeping targets from waking and encourage tired targets to fall asleep.

Practice: Ruling

Action: Instant; subtract target's Resolve

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

This spell has no affect on anyone who is wide awake, frightened or otherwise not fatigued or sleepy. However, if the mage uses this spell on a sleeping target, unless the target suffers damage or significant pain, she will not awaken for the Duration of this spell. Even loud noises will not awaken her. As long as targets are not injured, they will not awaken if they are shaken, tied up or carried relatively carefully. If this spell is used upon a target who is awake but also exhausted, sleepy, drunk or otherwise in a state in which it is easy to fall asleep, the target gradually falls asleep over the course of around 15 minutes unless some person, loud noise or similar event prevents the target from doing so. Additional successes reduce the time required for the target to fall asleep.

Successes	Duration
Two Successes	10 minutes
Three Successes	Five minutes
Four Successes	Three minutes
Five Successes	One minute

Once the target is asleep, this spell also keeps her asleep; otherwise, the sleep induced by this spell is perfectly normal sleep, and once the Duration expires, the target can be awakened normally.

Mysterium Rote: Hypnos's Subtle Grasp

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion + Mind

The simplest way to deal with anyone who might object to the presence of an intruder is to either cause the person to fall asleep or keep an already sleeping person asleep. No one is surprised if a guard falls asleep at her post or if a wealthy person sleeps through his house being robbed.

Knowing the Dead (Mind ●●●● + Death ●●)

The mage can read the minds of ghosts.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls Resistance reflexively

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

This spell functions much as the Mind 4 spell "Reading the Depths," except that this spell works on ghosts. Learning any of the secrets of dying or any events the ghost experienced since its death is exceptionally difficult. Rolls to accomplish this always have always penalties between –4 and –5, and the experiences themselves are so alien to a living being that most of the information received is exceedingly sketchy and difficult to interpret. However, this spell also allows the mage to read the ghost's mind to learn about the events of the ghost's life. Since traumatic memories of life are less troublesome to the dead, any penalties for examining traumatic memories that would be present if reading the memories of a living person by using the "Reading the Depths" spell are halved (round up). Also, this spell can be used to uncover memories that the ghost may no longer consciously remember. If the ghost is willing to permit the mage to examine its memories, or if the mage has already used magic to control this ghost, then the ghost does not receive a Resistance roll.

Mysterium Rote: Memories from Beyond the Veil

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Investigation + Mind vs. Resistance

Questioning a ghost about the events of its life is useful, but actually being able to see and hear what the ghost saw and heard is a far more powerful tool, both because of the wealth of detail gained and because ghosts often forget some of the more intricate or subtle details of their lives.

Triumphant Will (Mind ●●●●)

The mage skilled in this spell is capable of merging a lifetime's worth of learning into a single reaction. Alternately, such a magus might place years of social interaction at the forefront of his mind, drawing conclu-

sions about the behaviors and the best way to influence those around him in a hundred different ways.

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

For each success on the spellcasting roll, the mage gains one use of the rote action (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p.134) ability on any skill in either the Mental Skill or Social Skill lists — the category of Skills must be chosen when the spell is cast. This may only be used on non-magical Skill rolls. At Mind 5, the mage may grant this ability to others by touch. At Mind 5, the mage may also cast a version of this spell that allows him to use both Mental and Social Skills with a single casting of the spell.

Mysterium Rote: Powerful Recollection
Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Mind

Invoking the powerful names of various gods of learning and knowledge, the Mysterium scholar literally takes all knowledge to be his province. Some Mysterium have a variation of this rote, using Presence + Occult + Mind, which invokes various gods of beauty and charisma to allow the magus to dazzle those around him.

Prime

Supernal Script (Prime ●●)

The mage extracts minute traces of tass from his Awakened Pattern, shaping the energy into an enchanted pigment invisible to normal senses. To the appropriate Mage Sight, however, the ink glows brightly and distinctly.

Practice: Ruling
Action: Instant
Duration: Lasting
Aspect: Covert
Cost: None

Upon casting this spell, the mage exudes invisible ink from any or all of his fingertips for as long as he continues writing. Once he stops work for longer than a minute, the magic runs dry, and he cannot continue without casting the spell again. While the magic lasts, he can mark surfaces using his finger as a stylus, or he may dip a quill or other writing implement into the plasm, depending on preference. The visibility of the text depends on the Arcana used to cast the spell. By default, the pigment glows brightly when viewed with all forms of Mage Sight. However, mages can also make ink that requires Prime-based Mage Sight to see, and may similarly specialize a text with the "color" of another Arcanum by incorporating a dot of that Arcanum into the casting as a conjunctional effect. It is worth noting that a mage cannot see his own Supernal Script without Mage Sight, so unless he intends to write blind, he must cast such a spell on himself first.

Mysterium Rote: The Enlightened Quill
Dice Pool: Wits + Expression + Prime

As the preeminent scholars of the Awakened, members of the Mysterium have regular need of bottomless inkwells, especially inkwells that help keep their secrets and mysteries out of sight of meddling Sleepers. The practical uses of this utilitarian spell are nearly limitless, from hiding a grimoire inside a mundane book to leaving mage-only graffiti as a subtle warning.

Temporal Phantasm (Prime ●●●+, Time ●●)

The mage summons a temporal echo from the past, imbuing the echo with solidity and fixed causality through infusion of Mana. The result is a nearly perfect copy of an inanimate object from the past, though a sadly impermanent one lacking any complicated features or supernatural powers of the original.

Practice: Weaving
Action: Instant
Duration: Prolonged (one scene)
Aspect: Vulgar
Cost: 1 Mana

This spell duplicates the Prime 3 "Phantasm" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 227) with the following exceptions: first, the created object must copy an object the mage has perceived in a vision of the past, as the Time 2 "Postcognition" spell (**Mage: the Awakening**, p. 260). Because of this limitation, the item is automatically convincing, since it physically duplicates the original object's external properties in every detail, down to the last nick, scratch, marking and resonance imprint. This makes books and other forms of writing particularly attractive targets for the spell, allowing a mage to peruse the contents of manuscripts otherwise lost to time. Once the spell's Duration elapses, the object dissolves back into the flow of continuity.

With Prime 4, mages can summon more durable and mechanically functional constructs per the "Phantasmal Weapon" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 228), though such objects cannot have any properties superior to the original object. Therefore, these

items are more limited than conventional phantasms, though there is a certain hubristic panache to stabbing someone with Brutus's knife still hot with Caesar's blood instead of wielding a plain dagger.

Mysterium Rote: What Was Lost

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Time

For an order dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the unveiling of mysteries, the usefulness of this rote requires no further explanation.

Suppress Enchantment (Prime ●●●●)

The mage temporarily suppresses the power of an Artifact or imbued item. This spell dispels any magical effects produced by the item and makes the item unusable for the Duration.

Practice: Unraveling

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

Each use of this spell affects only one of the powers possessed by a single Artifact or imbued item. If the mage knows the powers of the item, she can specifically cast the spell to affect one specific power; otherwise, the spell automatically affects the most powerful functional enchantment on the item. A single success temporarily removes one die from the dice pools of a contingent effect. If the number of successes equals or exceeds the number of dots of the highest Arcanum used in this power, then this spell temporarily renders this power unusable. For example, rolling three successes causes an item imbued with a single Life 3 effect to be temporarily non-magical. Persistent items are unaffected by any number of successes less than the number sufficient to completely suppress it. This spell can suppress the powers of an Artifact, but in all cases, powers on an Artifact require one additional success to suppress with this spell; suppressing a Life 3 spell on an Artifact would require the mage to roll four successes.

Repeated castings of this spell are not cumulative, but the caster can repeatedly attempt to suppress a single effect by making an especially good roll. Also, mages can cast this spell repeatedly on an item imbued with multiple powers in order to suppress each of these powers in turn. Because magic, just as life, is a phenomenon that is constantly in flux, it is impossible to cast this spell with an indefinite Duration; the longest possible Duration for this spell is one month (if cast using the advanced prolongation table).

Mysterium Rote: Restraining the Power

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult + Prime

Some enchanted items are sufficiently dangerous that they are difficult to examine safely. Whether attempting to avoid the affects of a dangerous, millennia-old Artifact protecting an ancient tomb or trying to study an eccentric and deadly imbued item created by a half-mad mage, members of the Mysterium often find themselves in need of a way to temporarily suppress dangerous magics that have been placed on an item.

Space

Locate Source (Space ●●)

The mage can determine the precise location where an object was made or an individual was born or died. Using this spell to determine an object's location requires Matter 1, determining where an item was enchanted requires Prime 1, determining where someone died requires Death 1 and learning where they were born requires Life 1. If Time 1 is also included, the caster will also learn precisely when this event occurred.

Practice: Unveiling
Action: Instant
Duration: Concentration
Aspect: Covert
Cost: None

The caster uses this spell and one or more maps to determine the location of the birth, death, creation or enchanting of the target. Each success allows the character to more precisely pinpoint the exact location. A single success is sufficient to pinpoint the location on a large-scale map, such as a detailed map of a continent or a large and extremely detailed world map, and provides the city, town or relatively precise section of country where this event occurred. Two successes allow the character to pin-point the location on a local map, determine the particularly neighborhood of a city or section of a town where the event occurred and provide an exact location on a street map. Three or more successes locate the event down to the exact square foot. This spell can also be used to determine where an item was destroyed or where a person or object was buried, if the mage has a connection to the object or body.

Mysterium Rote: Determine Provenance
Dice Pool: Wits + Occult + Space

Sometimes a single item from a large cache of important relics is found by accident, far from its source. This spell allows the mage to locate this cache, as well as allowing scholars to determine where and possibly when a particular object was made.

Spirit

Analyze Spirit (Spirit ●●)

The mage can look at a spirit and learn its strengths, weaknesses and some of the powers it possesses.

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

This spell allows the mage to both see and analyze a spirit in Twilight. If the mage also casts the Spirit 2 spell "Peer Across the Gauntlet," she can also use the "Analyze Spirit" spell to analyze nearby spirits in the Shadow Realm. A single success on this spell allows the mage to determine a spirit's Rank and most significant Influence, and also provides a rough estimate of the spirit's current Essence as well as the spirit's general appearance (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 317–318). Additional successes provide further information, including an increasingly precise knowledge of the spirit's Attributes, additional Influences, the level of its various Influences and (with three or more successes) knowledge of its more significant or powerful Numina. This spell provides no knowledge about the activities or history of a particular spirit, merely its capabilities. If the caster adds Mind 1 to the casting, she can also use this spell to gain information about individuals who are mentally projecting, and if she adds Death 1, she can gain similar information about ghosts.

Mysterium Rote: Ephemeral Classification
Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Spirit

The Mysterium's central maxim of "Knowledge Is Power" is never more true than when dealing with the strange and potentially deadly residents of the Shadow Realm. Mysterium mages who regularly use this spell often keep detailed records and sketches of the various spirits they have encountered and add these notes to the Mysterium's extensive catalogs of spirit types and varieties.

Time

Precise Dating (Time ●)

The mage can determine exactly when an object or living being attained its current form. This spell reveals when an object was made, when a raw gemstone was cut or a hunk of ore was mined, when a person or animal was born or when a body or fragment of bone died. Including Life • or Matter • reveals the date of the other major changes the person or object underwent — allowing a mage who finds a human skull to determine when the skull's owner was born and when he died, or holding a knife, and knowing when it was made and when the ore it was made from was mined. Also, if combined with Forces •, this spell can be used to determine the last time a piece of electrically powered or electronic equipment was used or when a computer file was created or edited.

Practice: Unveiling
Action: Instant
Duration: Instant
Aspect: Covert
Cost: None

For objects more than a decade old, a single success on this roll allows the mage to know the date within a month. For more recent objects, one success determines the date within a day. Each additional success narrows the time down further, in the progression listed below. If the object reached its final state very recently, then use the time listed below that as the starting point for the chart. For example, if someone died within the past hour, then one success allows the time of death to be dated to the correct minute, and two successes allow the time of death to be dated to the correct second.

Successes	Old Objects	Recent Objects
One	Month	Day
Two	Day	Hour
Three	Hour	Minute
Four	Minute	Second

Mysterium Rote: Temporal Forensics
Dice Pool: Wits + Science + Time

For the Mysterium's archeologists, learning if a shard of ancient pottery dates to the long-lost days of Atlantis, or is merely a 1,300-years-old relic of the Dark Ages is an invaluable method of separating fakes from real artifacts. This spell is also a swift and useful method of determining if a potentially interesting site is worth pursuing or if it is more recent, and therefore less interesting, than it looks.

Review History (Time ●●●, Mind ●● and Death ● or Matter ●)

During the course of a few minutes, the mage can review the entirety of a person's life by touching the person's corpse, or even holding one of her bones. Similarly, the mage can learn the entire history of an object by touching the object or a fragment of it. Using this spell on a corpse or fragment of bone requires Death ●; using this spell on an object requires Matter ●.

Practice: Unveiling
Action: Instant
Duration: Instant
Aspect: Covert
Cost: None

Even a single success allows the mage to gain a general understanding of the events of a person's life or the history of an object. Additional successes provide further details and a more complete knowledge of events. A single success provides as much information about the person or object as might be contained in a two- or three-paragraph, written summary. Two successes reveal an amount of information that might be written on a single page, and five successes provide approximately the same information as a 15- or 20-page monograph about the history of the person or object. Even if five successes are rolled, this spell does not provide all of the minute details of a person's life and is definitely not a substitute for the far more detailed information gained through the Time 2 spell "Postcognition." However, this spell can provide a breadth of information and a general outline of the history of the subject that require only a few minutes for the mage to absorb.

Mysterium Rote: Reading the Book of Time
Dice Pool: Intelligence + Investigation + Time

The histories written by Sleepers rarely include much information about magic and the lives of mages. This spell allows Mysterium historians and researchers to obtain general information about people or artifacts. This spell has allowed the historian of the Mysterium to understand the general outline of the history of magic and magical events. Also, this spell provides sufficient information to allow other researchers to target more precise spells (such as "Postcognition") to learn the details of events that this spell provides basic information about.

New Artifacts

Of all the orders, the Mysterium is probably most likely to come across strange and new Artifacts. They may find them in ancient ruins, in the possession of those who really shouldn't have them or even as the newest attraction at the Athenaeum.

Amulet of Sekhmet (●●●●●)

Durability 4, Size 0, Structure 5
Mana Capacity: 11

This delicate golden pendant is formed in the shape of a lioness's head, with tiny emerald stones for the eyes. A horizontal hole in the pendant's upper edge allows the pendant to be worn on a chain as a necklace. Whoever wears the amulet receives three levels of armor, as if under the benefit of the spell "Organic Resilience" for as long as the item is worn. In order to work, the pendant must be making skin contact with the wearer.

Similar, but non-magical, pieces have been found in many early Egyptian burial locations, predominantly worn as a supplication for the protection of Sekhmet, a lion-headed

goddess of hearth, home and magic. It is believed that the amulet originated in the realm of the Primal Wild, although whether it is the materials (gold and gems) or the entire pendant that came from there is a matter of debate.

Orb of Amnesia (●●●●●●●)

Durability 4, Size 1, Structure 5

Mana Capacity: 11

This Artifact is a sphere the size of a large orange made of some unknown pale-colored stone. This orb glows with an opalescent light as bright as a 100-watt incandescent light bulb. Although the carvings cannot be clearly seen because of its brightness, anyone touching the orb can feel that it is covered in complex, narrow carvings around half an inch deep. Anyone who can see either the orb or its light, or who has the light from the orb fall on any portion of his bare skin is affected by the Mind 3 spell "Eternal Now," which removes his ability to form new memories while he is within the orb's light. Only individuals who are also touching the orb are immune to this effect. A pair of people who each kept one hand on the orb at all times could yell at the top of their lungs and violently shove their way through a crowd, and the people in the crowd would forget about this pair the moment they were out of sight. Also, no one who is not touching the orb ever remembers anything about seeing it. Placing the orb in a light-tight bag or box instantly cancels its effect.

Stories of this orb go back as far as Mysterium's oldest records. However, there are also long gaps in the orb's unusual history because many who have seen it do not remember doing so. One of the most persistent stories about the Orb of Amnesia is that the loss of ability to remember is not its primary purpose or perhaps not even related to its actual purpose. Instead, some stories about this Artifact claim that it is only one part of a larger, more complex and far powerful Artifact that was disassembled into various parts millennia ago. No one knows what this original item did or where the other pieces are, but the deep carvings on the orb suggest that it might have been able to fit into a holder in some larger object.

Coin of Hiding (●●●●●●●●)

Durability 4, Size 1, Structure 5

Mana Capacity: 11

Occasionally duplicated, as an imbued item, by masters of Space, this Artifact is the oldest example of this invaluable enchantment. The Artifact is made in the form of an ancient and somewhat tarnished silver coin with a worn and almost unreadable inscription in an unknown language. The coin is slightly more than an inch in diameter and is pierced near the top with a small hole, suitable for nailing it to a wall.

To use this persistent Artifact, the user must place it on a wall that completely surrounds a location — the Artifact can be placed on the inner or outer surface of the wall. The Artifact can be used to affect an entire house, office building, shopping mall or even an entire manor house

and the large wooded estate that are all surrounded by a high brick wall. This artifact protects everything within these walls with a version of the Space 5 spell "Hide Space" with a Potency of 5. This magic affects everyone coming within 20 yards of the area who does not speak a certain password or trace a specific sign in the air.

The mage who affixes the item to the wall must spend a point of Mana to do so; at this point, he can choose what phrase or sign (or combination of both) that he wishes to use to allow individuals to enter the protected space without being affected by this magic. Removing this item immediately cancels the spell, but the coin need not be placed in any easily visible or accessible location and its location can be (and usually is) concealed with magic.

Mirror of Revelation (●●●●●●●●)

Durability 4, Size 2, Structure 6

Mana Capacity: 14

This Artifact is one of the oldest treasures of the Mysterium's vast Artifact collection. The Artifact appears to be a circular bronze mirror approximately a foot and a half in diameter, set in a simple frame consisting of two upright supports that allow the mirror to pivot and a flat base suitable for setting in a desk or table. The frame and supports are carved in a simple but exquisite representation of a type of vine unknown to science and magic. Some mages claim that this vine was once a sacred plant of great importance. Legends dating back to the earliest days of the order claim that this mirror was originally carried from Atlantis shortly before its Fall. Other than the fact that the Mysterium has owned this mirror since the days of its earliest records, nothing more is known about this object since it is immune to all magics (including its own) designed to reveal information about it. However, it can be used to reveal almost any other secret. The mirror contains a potent combination of scrying magics, which duplicate the effects of the Prime 1 spells "Analyze Enchanted Item" and "Supernal Vision," as well as the Space 2 spell "Scrying" and the Time 2 spell "Postcognition."

Using this persistent Artifact is quite simple. The mage merely looks into it and concentrates on what he wishes to view, and an image of the desired time or location appears within the mirror. While no roll is required to activate this mirror, the mage must be at least *Acquainted* with the target (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 114–115). In addition, mages often require a Composure + Wits meditation roll in order to focus their thoughts sufficiently on what they wish to view. Failing this roll means that the mirror displays something related to the mage's wishes, but exactly what is displayed is not under the mage's control. However, regardless what images the mirror reveals, these images also contain a multitude of details about any magics or enchantments on the displayed location.

These properties make the mirror both valuable and useful, but the reason for its almost legendary importance is that it sometimes acts on its own accord. Even when the mirror is not in use, it constantly displays images, typically consisting of a series of seemingly random locations and scenes. Sometimes, a mage will glance in the mirror without considering a target and will see something related to her life or desires within the mirror. This scene can be an image of her past, of a distant place known to her, the location of the object of her keenest desire or possibly just a random image whose meaning she may never learn, but in most cases, it turns out to be scene of great importance to the mage.

Mages often try to cause such images to appear by touching the mirror and not specifying a scene to be viewed. Usually, the mirror simply displays a random scene from the mage's life; sometimes the mirror reveals an image of what the mage unconsciously hoped or feared to see. However, occasionally, the mirror reveals some scene of great import to the mage. Scholars and archeologists of the Mysterium often request the use of this mirror in the hope that the mirror will reveal the location of what they are seeking, even if they have absolutely no clue of where to find it and lack any connection to the target. On rare occasions, the mirror reveals a vital clue that the mage would have now way of learning or looking for, thus ensuring that the mirror remains one of the Mysterium's most valuable artifacts.

Pillars of Enduring Creations (●●●●●●●●)

Durability 3, Size 2, Structure 6

Mana Capacity: 11

This ancient and strange Artifact is a series of four identical and complexly engraved black stone pillars. Using this persistent item creates an environment in which objects and creatures created using Prime magics, specifically those created using the Prime 5 spells "Create Complex Phantasm" or "Create Tulpa," can endure indefinitely for as long as they remain within the boundary of the space created by the pillars. Each pillar is a cylinder six inches wide and six inches high. To use this item, the pillars must be placed in a rough square or rectangle that is no more than 16 yards long on any of its four sides. As

soon as any items or being created using Prime magics enter this area, the Duration of the magic creating them is no longer relevant, and the creation endures for as long as the pillars remain active. The pillars only cease to be active if one or more of them is moved more than 16 yards from all of the others — if this happens, or if the object or creature leaves the space enclosed by the pillars, the creation's Duration continues from the time when it first entered the area bounded by the pillars. If a tulpa created with a Duration of two hours enters this area after an hour of this time had elapsed, even if the tulpa remained inside this area for three years, if the tulpa ever left, it would have another hour of existence remaining. Also, if the tulpa remained outside the area enclosed by the pillars for another 40 minutes and then re-entered this area, the tulpa could leave at any time and still have 20 minutes of existence left.

This item also contains one other property that has caused it to be coveted by many mages who are not experts in Mind and Prime magics. Anyone who meditates within the space enclosed by these pillars can use the spell "Create Tulpa" to create any being he wishes. However, beings created (rather than simple preserved by) this Artifact vanish forever if they ever leave this space or if the pillars are ever moved too far apart. Before this item came into the hands of the Mysterium, it was the cause of several murders, as desperate tulpas wished to obtain it in order to survive, and lonely and inexperienced mages attempted to gain control of it in order to recreate the semblance of a lost loved one.

Soulgate Tome (●●●●●●●●)

Durability 4, Size 1, Structure 5

Mana Capacity: 12

As any experienced reader knows, a good book can take you to another world beyond your wildest imagination. In the case of a Soulgate Tome, this precept takes on literal meaning, as the enchanted volumes project their readers' spirits across the Gauntlet to explore the Shadow Realm. While sojourning in the spirit realm, the mage can jump from passage to passage through spiritual space via the contiguities of selected narrative. The Mysterium hordes these relics, allowing members with access to a copy to explore the terrible wonders and glorious mysteries of the spirit world.

These Artifacts all appear as extremely old forms of written media, such as books, scrolls or even clay tablets. The magic within duplicates the Mind 5 "Shadow Projection" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 218), triggered by reading any passage of text from the tome. The artifact also provides readers with instant transport within the Shadow Realm per the Space 4 "Teleportation" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 241), the Mana for which is paid by the book itself. Readers trigger a jump by writing a narrative description of the intended destination on any surface (or even tracing the words in the ephemeral air with a fingertip, where they linger as luminous calligraphy until the mage finishes and the magic resolves). As Artifacts, Soulgate Tomes are unique and wondrous, with each focused on a particular location within the Shadow Realm. Readers always arrive at that emphasized destination.

It is said that a more sinister variation of this Artifact exists that does not take the reader until the Shadow Realm, but instead conveys his mind into the nightmarish darkness of the Abyss. There, the new arrival draws the attention of the acamoth, who swarm like locusts to tempt and corrupt him with the offer of investments, likely severing his silver cord to force him into negotiation. For obvious reasons, the mages of the Mysterium do their best to keep these cursed texts out of circulation, but the books have a tendency to appear in the strangest of places, using their embedded Space magic to self-teleport to random libraries. Among the most notorious of these tomes are the Manual of the Empty Page and the Tautological Codex of Thule.

Eye of Ahriman (●●●●●●●●●●●●)

Durability 10, Size 0, Structure 10

Mana Capacity: 15

One of the more sinister and understated weapons discovered among the ruins of Atlantis, the Eye of Ahriman is a scarab-shaped amulet carved of an unknown black crystal colder than ice. If placed over a suitable mage's eyeball, however, the device comes to life as an insect-like construct that burrows into the socket with its razor-sharp legs, inflicting one point of lethal damage. After painfully clearing out its new home, the Artifact latches its barbed legs backward into the brain, making the device impossible to remove without killing its bearer and disguising itself as a perfect copy of the eye it destroyed. Only a mage with Destiny 5 can awaken the Eye; it will not deign to join with a less cosmically important individual.

In addition to functioning as the eye the device replaces, the weapon also provides the following powers:

Darksight: The darkness gives up its secrets, duplicating the Forces 1 "Nightsight" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 163) as a persistent power. The mage can also shift his perceptions to the vantage point of a shadow

or a place shrouded in darkness by closing his eyes and concentrating, duplicating the Space 2 "Scrying Space" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 163), except that the power automatically fails if targeting a well-lit area.

Tenebrous Shield: The mage's own shadow rises and twists to interpose itself in the path of attacks, providing five points of armor as a persistent power, just as the protection afforded by the Death 2 "Entropic Guard" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 136).

Shadow Force: The mage can invoke tangible darkness per the Death 4 "Summon Shadows" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 142), triggered and controlled with evocative gestures automatically learned when the Artifact bonds to a host. The Eye can create any number of summoned shadows, but all evaporate to nothingness if touched by a single ray of sunlight.

Shadow Horde: The mage can whisper into the darkness, conjuring servitors of primal nightmares given form by his words. This power duplicates the Spirit 5/Death 3 "Shadow Slave" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 255), except that the creatures dissolve instantly if exposed to sunlight and the mage can forgo the usual Mana cost by siphoning power directly from the Abyss. Such cheating has a price, however, prompting a degeneration check as if he performed the least sinful act deemed unacceptable for his Wisdom rating.

The Mysterium discovered the Eye of Ahriman long before figuring out how to use it. The item remained forgotten in storage until a Scelestus wielding a sister Artifact attempted to steal the Eye and inadvertently tipped off its keepers to the means of activating its power. Ever since, it has served as one of the most powerful weapons in the order's arsenal, bestowed on a suitably auspicious willworker after each bearer dies in the line of duty.

Storytellers who wish to allow a new character to begin play as the Eye's wielder may lower the Artifact's rating by removing access to powers and recalculating the item's cost. Characters may then spend arcane or normal experience points to "raise" the merit's rating and thereby access new powers until the character unlocks everything it can do. For a more vicious twist, the Storyteller may also allow players to cannibalize dots from approved traits to apply the experience required to purchase the forfeited dots toward mastering the Eye. Any checks to avoid derangements following voluntary loss of Wisdom automatically fail.

Metachronal Clock

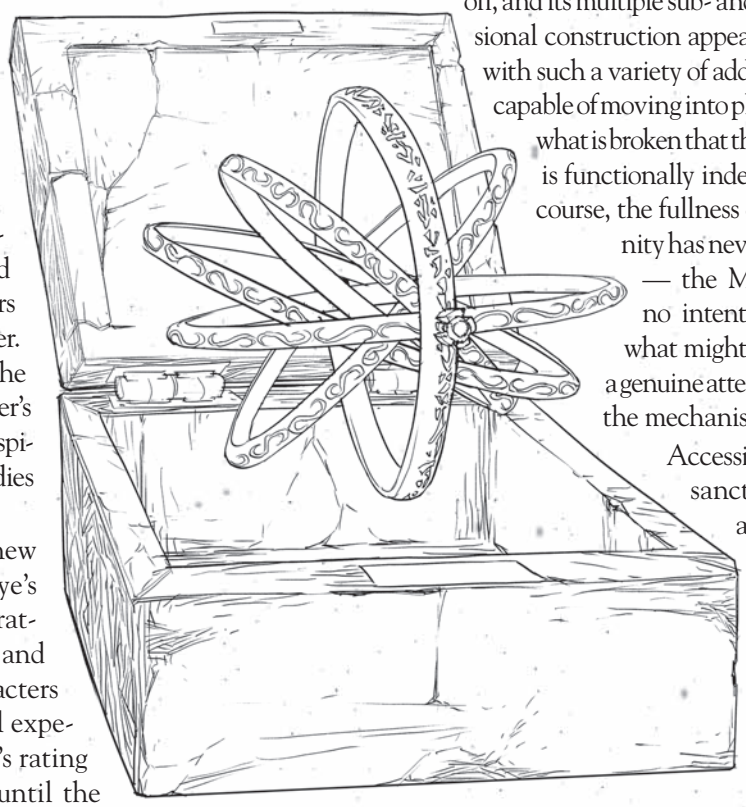
(●●●●●●●●●●●●)

Durability 12, Size 1/Unknown, Structure Unknown

Mana Capacity: 20

The Metachronal Clock appears as a complicated mechanism of gimbaled rings and gears forged of an unknown golden alloy. The machine automatically unfolds from a coin-sized disk to a vaguely spherical configuration whenever the device is tossed lightly into the air, arresting its ascent and beginning to spin along multiple axes without regard for gravity or inertia. Far from being a mere clever bauble, the clock exists in at least five spatial dimensions and probably many more, folded back on itself to converge in a spacious pocket dimension constructed as a sanctum completely isolated from the dominant continuum of the Tapestry.

The actual Structure rating of the Metachronal Clock is unknown; the object seemingly exists beyond such limitations. Parts consistently shift to replace any bits broken off, and its multiple sub- and over-dimensional construction appears to be filled with such a variety of additional pieces capable of moving into place to replace what is broken that the mechanism is functionally indestructible. Of course, the fullness of this immunity has never been tested — the Mysterium has no intention of seeing what might happen were a genuine attempt to destroy the mechanism made.



Accessing the pocket sanctum requires a would-be entrant to align the clock's rings in an exact configuration that changes with every attempt. Solving this enigma requires an Intelligence + Occult roll at a –5 penalty as an instant

action, with dramatic failure resulting in the user teleporting to a random and invariably undesired location without the device. However, those clever enough to solve the puzzle jaggedly implode through a vortex that dumps them and any intended passengers in the immediate vicinity (along with the clock's exterior structure) within its interior folds. Encompassing a labyrinth of chambers and tunnels connected with Escher-like stairwells and doorways built at apparently random gravitational orientations to one other, the sanctum complex houses vast collections of texts on virtually any conceivable subject, providing a +5 bonus to all research rolls and allowing a roll every 10 minutes. However, the amount of actual time spent researching is something of a moot point since events within the Metachronal Clock takes place "off the clock" with no time ever passing in reality from the point that the clock vanishes and reasserts inter-dimensional contiguity. Leaving the clock requires a puzzle solution similar to entrance, which returns the occupant and the clock's exterior manifestation to the place he left space and time, or else a random non-fatal location in the Tapestry that the user has never visited.

The dots assigned to the Metachronal Clock's rating assume the machine "only" provides its library, a virtually impregnable sanctum and an extremely powerful teleportation effect. However, the structure's interior contains many other wondrous enchantments and sub-artifacts that modern mages barely understand enough to guess their function, let alone operate (such as the fact that the entire structure seems to be alive according to "Life Sense" spells). The clock's rating should be considerably higher if a Storyteller makes any of these deliberately unspecified functions available as anything more reliable than a plot device.

Within the Mysterium, the Metachronal Clock is viewed with reverence and awe befitting the Artifact's power and significance as a functional vestige of Atlantis. Only the most high-ranking and trusted members of the order ever get to see the clock, let alone enter it. However, despite its obvious (and not so obvious) dangers, its keepers dare not leave it alone, since every time anyone has attempted to hide it away without exploring it, the clock subsequently translocated itself where a sufficiently curious mage could find it. Whether this behavior is a programmed feature or a sign that the structure has some sense of self-awareness remains undetermined, just as so much else about the machine. Storytellers should certainly feel free to assign whatever motives to the clock serve the story, since the Artifact's primary purpose within the setting is to facilitate stories about exploring the infinite mysteries of the cosmos. The machine is a game-defining plot point and does not pretend to be anything less, unless of course that's exactly what it's doing.

New Imbued Items

The opportunity to examine and research a wide variety of magics means that even if the mystagogue isn't able to find an item that does what she needs it to, chances are that she can find someone capable of making the things she needs.

Acquisitionist's Torch (●)

Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 3

Created by enterprising Reclaimants, an Acquisitionist's Torch appears to be an ordinary flashlight until the item is in the presence of a hidden compartment, room or other secret space. When the torch's beam is shone over any sort of hidden structure, the beam will pick out subtle clues that will betray the presence of the secret space to the bearer. A small shadow may reveal a hidden door, a hairline crack might appear in a box with a secret bottom or the trigger plate for a secret passage may look for a moment to be slightly depressed. This effect is identical to the Matter 1 spell "Find the Hidden Hoard," but is persistent, allowing the Thief to search an area without devoting his full attention to the spell or retain sight of the hidden area if distracted, as long as the torch beam remains in the proper area.

First Scribe's Censer (●●●)

Durability 5, Size 0, Structure 5

Mana Capacity: 11

Those without the ability to sense magical capability might well mistake this censer as little more than a small iron pot inscribed with Persian characters and images of demons entwined in battle around the base. Three rings are attached near the rim, with chains linking to a center ring from which the entire censer can be hung, and three small legs for a stand that will keep it upright should it be sat on a table or other horizontal surface. Little bigger than a teacup, this heavy metal vessel has only one purpose. When words are written on any flammable object and burned within the censor, the message is transmitted to the First Scribe (see p. 160). Despite what would seem to be an inherently sympathetic connection between this item and the cabal, the item cannot be used to amplify or target the cabal with other spells, or serve as a connection for the purposes of mundane or mystical tracking to locate the First Scribe.

Chalice of Consuming Vigor (●●● or ●●●●)

Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 3

A traditional Chalice of Consuming Vigor looks as grandiose as its name, typically fashioned as a heavy metal goblet encrusted with precious or semiprecious stones. However, many modern mages dispense with such gaudy and antiquated frippery in favor of more covert designs such as coffee mugs and sports drink bottles. Regardless of the vessel's form, a drink from such a vessel triggers its magic, igniting belly and soul alike with renewed passion. Mechanically, this rush of energy incorporates a specialized Life 2/Mind 2 effect that negates all penalties from sleep deprivation and obviates any risk of falling asleep for six hours without needing any roll or Mana to make the power work. Unfortunately, the chalice merely defers the inevitable rather than actually replacing the need for sleep, so sleep deprivation penalties continue accumulating despite being temporarily offset. Worse still, each draught inflicts one point of bashing damage to the drinker that cannot even begin to heal until she sleeps the full time required for her deprivation (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 180).

Slightly superior models of this item incorporate an effect such as the Matter 2 "Transmute Water" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 197). When stirred in careful spirals, all fluid in the vessel changes into a desired type of fluid, most commonly the mage's beverage of choice. Less scrupulous mages may create poisons or acid for any number of unpleasant uses. As an additional benefit of its magic, a chalice capable of transmuting liquids cannot be harmed by any substance it creates, such as the aforementioned acid example.

Enigma Sigil (●●●)

Durability 3, Size 0, Structure 3

Most commonly fashioned into elegant signet rings, these items allow mages to scribe and read hidden messages to one another. The enchantments within an Enigma Sigil duplicate and expand upon the Prime 2 "Supernal Script" spell (p. 202), allowing a mage to cover an entire surface of an object in sensory range with as much magic writing as its surface area can hold simply by gesturing and willing the words into existence. The mage can choose whether any text is visible to all forms of Mage Sight or visible only to a specific type of Mage Sight correlating to an Arcanum in which he has at least one dot. Alternately, he can make the text completely invisible unless an Enigma Sigil is within three yards, in which case the words appear to everyone, Sleeper and mage alike.

Pirate Map (●●●)

Durability 0, Size 1, Structure 1

As any child knows, X marks the spot where buried treasure lies. No doubt, such childhood familiarity spawned these items, with their deliberate and tacky resemblance to a Hollywood cliché complete with faded ink, moldering parchment and the obligatory warning of dragons spelled out in pseudo-period lettering. Despite their gauche appearance, however, the items are quite useful, combining the Matter 1 "Detect Substance" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 195) with Space 2 to locate deposits of a particular substance across vast distances. However, instead of actually displacing a user's senses in any way, such scrying updates the features of the map to match the overall topography of the area and marks the appropriate location(s) on the map with a large X. The triggers for these items vary, though a particularly common bit of whimsy requires the user to close one eye and shout "Arrr!" before unfurling the map. Of course, far more serious variants of this device exist with no change in function, but they lack the panache of their gaudier counterparts.

Talisman of Timely Research (●●● or ●●●●●)

Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 3

One of the primary limitations on research is the amount of time it requires. This persistent talisman duplicates the affects of the Mind 3 spell "Multi-Tasking" and allows the owner to engage in one extended-action knowledge task while simultaneously performing normal activities. The owner can literally drive a car in a high-speed car chase or play an active game of tennis while simultaneously composing a paper or performing any sort of research in which the character has easy access to the necessary information. Many mages who use this item keep small notebooks or PDAs filled with useful notes and documents on their person at all times and reference these notes whenever they can have a free hand and a moment to read something. This item is especially useful for mentally composing academic papers or speeches.

When engaged solely in research, the owner can perform three research tasks simultaneously, as long as all needed research materials are at hand. Some mages wear a more limited version of this talisman that duplicates the Mind 1 spell "One Mind, Two Thoughts," which allows the wearer to perform research (or other extended mental actions) simultaneously, but does not allow the owner to perform research while also engaging in any sort of immediate or physically demanding activities. Both versions of this talisman are usually made in the form of some sort

of item the wearer keeps with them constantly, such as a cell phone, a pair of glasses, a wristwatch or a ring.

Camera Tempora (●●●● or ●●●●●●)

Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 3

Mana Capacity: 11 or 12

This item is always made in a form capable of displaying images, such as an overhead projector, a computer monitor or even a pair of binoculars. The spell provides the user with the powers of the Time 2 spell "Postcognition" cast as a sympathetic spell. Depending upon the specifics of how the object is made, the user must either aim the unit at an object or touch the object to the item. In either case, after the user spends a point of Mana and activates the item, it displays an image of the object in the location where this object was most frequently used. These images cover various times in the past, starting with times when the item was used most frequently. Although mages in other orders often use similar devices to investigate crimes or to perform espionage, mages in the Mysterium most often use these items to observe how an item was used and who used it. The best versions of this item are also enchanted with a version of the Mind 3 spell "Universal Language," which allows users to understand any spoken or written languages present in the scene they are observing.

Excavator (●●●●)

Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 3

Usually made in the form of a small spade or a narrow metallic rod, this item is invaluable for Mysterium archeologists and artifact conservationists. This spell duplicates the powers of the Matter 3 "Alter Integrity" spell. In addition to using this item to reinforce especially fragile or ancient objects, this item also provides a covert way to make excavations vastly faster and easier. While other Matter magics can reshape or utterly destroy the soil, rock or other materials separating an archeologist from her goal, they all require risky vulgar magics, while this item provides a simple and entirely covert solution to this problem.

Implement of Understanding (●●●●)

Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 3

Understanding obscure, lost or ancient languages is one of the most essential parts of Mysterium research. Unfortunately, many Mysterium archeologists specialize in Arcana such as Matter and Prime and so cannot use powerful Mind spells. This contingent item duplicates the Mind 3 spell "Universal Language" and can translate both written and verbal communication. The older versions are made in the form of a pen, while some newer ones are made in the form of a cell phone, palmtop computer or PDA with a large enough screen to read moderately long messages. To use either version of this item to translate a document, the owner must touch the item to the document and then she either holds the pen loosely, touches it to paper and begins to write a perfect translation of the text or the screen of the PDA instantly displays a translation of this text. To use the item for spoken translation, the user can activate it when listening to someone speak and either write a translation of what she said or he can think or softly say a response and have the item translate this response into the speaker's native language. Today, most Sleepers assume that PDAs or similar items that translate languages are simply programmed with advanced translation software and so openly using this item does not provoke Disbelief.

Supernal Server (●●●●)

Durability 3, Size 2, Structure 5

Enterprising Bricoleurs, having first developed a conjunctional spell that allows computers to be the target of magic that was formerly limited to living targets, are now faced with the conundrum of how to defend against this same ability and make technological devices more secure for the use of the Awakened. One of their solutions is the Supernal Server, a magically enhanced computer hard drive.

Supernal Servers give the Awakened an added degree of confidence in using modern technology for communication and information archiving and transfer. Although they fall short of being an actual artificial intelligence such as is created with the Mind 5 Spell "Psychic Genesis" (see p. 218 of **Mage: The Awakening**), they use the power of Mind combined with Forces and mundane encryption and security programs to protect data held on their storage banks against illicit duplication or corruption. By recognizing the magical resonance of the individuals who have been established as legitimate users, the servers are able to reduce the likelihood of being activated or having their information "read" by unauthorized users, making Supernal Servers more resistant to hacking than unimbued computers. This protection works against mundane or Supernatural efforts to breech the server's security or the security of its files, but does not provide any extra benefit to physical attacks to destroy the computer hardware itself.

Hackers who seek to obtain information from a Supernal Server's hard drive or that which is being sent from one via email or data transfer must do so at a –3 penalty as the server attempts to compare their

magical resonance (or lack thereof) against that of its authorized users. Supernal Servers can be enhanced with other mundane or mystical defenses, which will add to these penalties, which represent only the inherent attributes of the imbued item itself.

While the Supernal Server can protect information the server is transferring to another device, even across the vast virtual information highway, once the information is received it is no longer part of the server's jurisdiction and loses the imbued item's protection (unless of course it is being transferred to another Supernal Server.) Likewise, once data has been transferred to an external storage device (a CD or thumb drive, for example), it is outside of the server's purview and no longer benefits from its protection.

Similar devices have been created using cell phones, PDAs, laptop computers and other technological information storage and transmitting devices as a basis.

Token of the Great Take (Imbued Item ●●●●)

Durability 3, Size 0, Structure 3

Mana Capacity: 11

This simple silver jewelry can be worn as either a pin or a pendant. It is round, approximately the size of a quarter and the front face bears a stylized open padlock in front of a rising sun, the symbol of the Great Take (an exclusive Reclaimant gathering, see p. 161.) Whoever wears this token receives the benefits of "Exceptional Luck" (Fate 2), gaining 9 again on two rolls of the player's choice per any 24-hour period. This benefit cannot be saved up to accumulate more than two rolls in any given 24-hour period.

While this benefit is certainly advantageous to the bearer, the true significance of the token is in the respect the token earns the wearer. Any mystagogue Reclaimant will treat the bearer as if he has Mysterium Status one point higher more than he actually does, as long as the bearer has earned the right to wear it. Likewise, anyone wearing the token who has not earned the right will earn the enmity of Reclaimants. Not only will he be treated as if he has two less Mysterium Status than he does by any other Reclaimants, but he may find himself plagued by those who wish to return the token to the proper owner (or to the event, if the owner has been killed or otherwise incapacitated).

Universal Key (●●●●+)

Durability 2, Size 0, Structure 2

While older versions of this imbued item tend to favor baroque skeleton-key designs, modern copies trade elegance for subtlety with unassuming modern templates. Regardless of their outward form, these items incorporate a variant of the Matter 3 "Plasticity" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 199), enabling them to resize and alter to fit any lock intended to be opened with a key.

Rarer and more powerful variants of these keys add one of the powers listed below, adjusting the cost of the device as noted in the power's description. The most wondrous keys occasionally have more than one of these powers, in which case the item's cost should be calculated according to the usual rules for imbued items (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 84):

Death: (●●●●●●) Turning this key harshly in a door's lock results a terrible screech of metal on metal like a cry of anguish. Once opened, the doorway roils with thick darkness and muted gray fog, creating a passage into Twilight, per the Death 4 instant casting of the "Ghost Gate" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 139). The mage cannot limit who may enter this gate, as it remains open according to its usual Duration or until the door closes, whichever comes first. Fortunately for a mage in Twilight, the key also works when inserted into a physical lock while immaterial, in which case the door flies open with a blast of cold wind to allow the mage's exit.

Space: (●●●●●●●) By inserting this key into a door and turning the lock past the unlocked position, the mage can unlock space itself, causing the door to lead somewhere else, per the Space 5 instant-action casting of the "Portal" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 238). The portal remains as long as the magic's normal Duration allows or until the door closes, whichever comes first.

Spirit: (●●●●●●●) Turned slowly and reverently, this key unlocks the Gauntlet itself, causing a door to open into the Shadow Realm, per the Spirit 5 instant-action casting of the "Spirit Road" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 251). The gateway endures until the door closes or the magic's Duration elapses, whichever comes first. Mages with such keys should be careful, however, as doors are not always easy to find in the spirit world when they wish to return.

Vault Gauntlets (Imbued Items ●●●●●)

Durability 5, Size 1, Structure 6

Mana Capacity: 12

Vault Gauntlets are commissioned by the Archive for the edification and support of those who protect the faction's members, possessions and properties. In most cases, those who serve as bodyguards for the Archive also perform their duties under the influence of various protective spells or physical enhancements, but these items are

created specifically to add an extra layer of protection as well as to enhance some of the abilities a Vault member may be called upon to use in the line of duty.

Vault Gauntlets are normally tailored to suit the personality and tastes of the member they are made for. Some appear to be expensive leather driving gloves, refined and understated. Others are made of finely articulated metal, either elegantly unadorned or engraved, embossed or inlaid with ornate ornamentation. They endow the wearer with two levels of magical armor (per the Prime 2 spell "Magic Shield"). As well, each grants the benefit of Puissant Skill (see p. 195) for Brawl, Firearms or Weaponry rolls, chosen at the time of creation to be most appropriate for the intended wearer. This grants a maximum of three rote action uses for that skill in one scene. Once chosen, the Skill benefit cannot be changed to another Skill type.

While the gauntlets cover only the hand area, their armor protection is not due to their physical protection, but the Prime spell they have been imbued with. Just as the spell, the gauntlets require one Mana each time they contend with an incoming spell, paid for by the gauntlet.

Amulet of the Enduring Body (Imbued Item ●●●●●)

Durability 3, Size 1, Structure 4

Usually made in the form of a ring or pendant that can be worn at all times, and containing an image of either a stylized human body or a human heart, this item provides a persistent version of the spell "Body Mastery." If the mage wears this item continually, her lifespan is 75 years longer than normal, she gains three additional successes on all rolls to resist poisons, diseases or drugs and all of her wounds heal eight times more rapidly than normal. This item is very popular among members of the Mysterium. The hearty explorers and archeologists who venture into the remote and dangerous regions of both this world and the Shadow Realm love the additional protection provided by an item that allows them to recover faster and more easily from the affects of the dangers of such places. In addition, these rugged explorers and the order's many bookish scholars greatly desire the longevity and freedom from decrepitude this item provides.

Amulet of Passage (Imbued Item ●●●●●)

Durability 3, Size 1, Structure 3

This specialized amulet is designed to allow the mage to create an opening in any barrier, using a version of the Matter 4 spell "Reconfigure Object." When the mage activates this item and touches an object, the object shifts its shape to allow him to reach through or even walk through it. If the mage tries to stick his hand into a locked jewelry case and remove handfuls of gems, the glass of the case simply folds back into itself, creating an opening large enough for his arm and anything he attempts to remove from the case. Similarly, if the mage tries to walk through a wall, the wall instantly reshapes itself to create an opening sufficiently large for the mage to walk through.

The object reverts to its original shape once the Duration of the transformation ends. Alternately, the mage can touch the reshaped object a second time and say, or even whisper "close" and the object instantly reverts to its former shape. This second usage is especially useful in both foiling pursuit and keeping Sleepers from noticing that anything unusual has occurred. Using this amulet to walk through a door protected by alarm system within the door or the lock is completely safe. If the mage succeeds on her normal Imbued Item activation roll (Gnosis + 4 in this case, with a penalty based on how advanced the security system is), the door always folds back upon itself in a manner that does not set off the alarm. However, in addition to other problems, if the roll results in a dramatic failure, the object's random and chaotic fluctuation almost always set off any alarms within it. This amulet is especially useful when combined with the spell "Find the Hidden Horde" or spectacles of discernment (see below), since these can locate hidden passages and compartments that the amulet can easily open.

Restorer's Brush (Imbued Item ●●●●●)

Durability 3, Size 1, Structure 3

Typically made in the form of a finely made brush of the sort that archeologists and art restorers use to clean precious artifacts and works of art, this item can be used in one of two ways. This item duplicates the Time 2 spell "Postcognition." If the owner activates this item and brushes it over an object, the brush creates an image of the object as it was when it was whole and new. This use counts as having a sensory connection to the object, so there is no penalty to this roll. If the mage rolls sufficiently well, this vision also includes visions of the object being used, visions of its construction or (if the object was broken or badly damaged) its destruction. Alternately, the mage can activate this item so that allows the mage to physically restore the object to this same pristine state by using a version of the Matter 3 spell "Repair Object." This artifact is especially popular with archeologists, who use it to examine artifacts and locations as they once were and to restore those items the mages deem worthy or restoration.

Scriber of Ownership (Imbued Item ●●●●●)

Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 3

Most often made in the form of a pen or a scriber used for engraving items, this item duplicates the power of the Fate 4 spell "Gift of Fortune." The user need only scribe the name or personal sigil of an individual (usually himself) on an item, and it will always return to him within the time period specified by the Gnosis + Fate 4 roll. As with the "Gift of Fortune" spell, use of this spell for theft is occasionally fraught with risk. Most commonly, mages use this item to mark their most precious possessions so that if these items are lost or stolen they will always return to their owners. Because this item must touch the item it is used upon, this version of the magic is not a sympathetic magic and requires no Mana to use.

Spectacles of Discernment (Imbued Item ●●●●●)

Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 3

This relatively common persistent item is always made in the form of some form of eyewear. Eyeglasses are the most common, but sunglasses, safety goggles and similar items are occasionally used. Regardless of the exact form, spectacles of discernment are designed to help the wearer carefully study objects. This object allows the wearer to automatically use of the Matter 1 spells "Craftsman's Eye" and "Find the Hidden Horde," as well as the Prime 1 spell "Analyze Enchanted Item." All of these spells work constantly, and so a mage can wander through a museum or archeological site and see details of the various artifacts construction, as well as any mundane or magical anomalies at a glance. Although many mages can easily use these spells, the ease with which this item allows the wearer to examine items or notice anomalies she might otherwise miss makes this item exceedingly popular.

Talisman of Unnoticed Intrusion (Imbued Item ●●●●●)

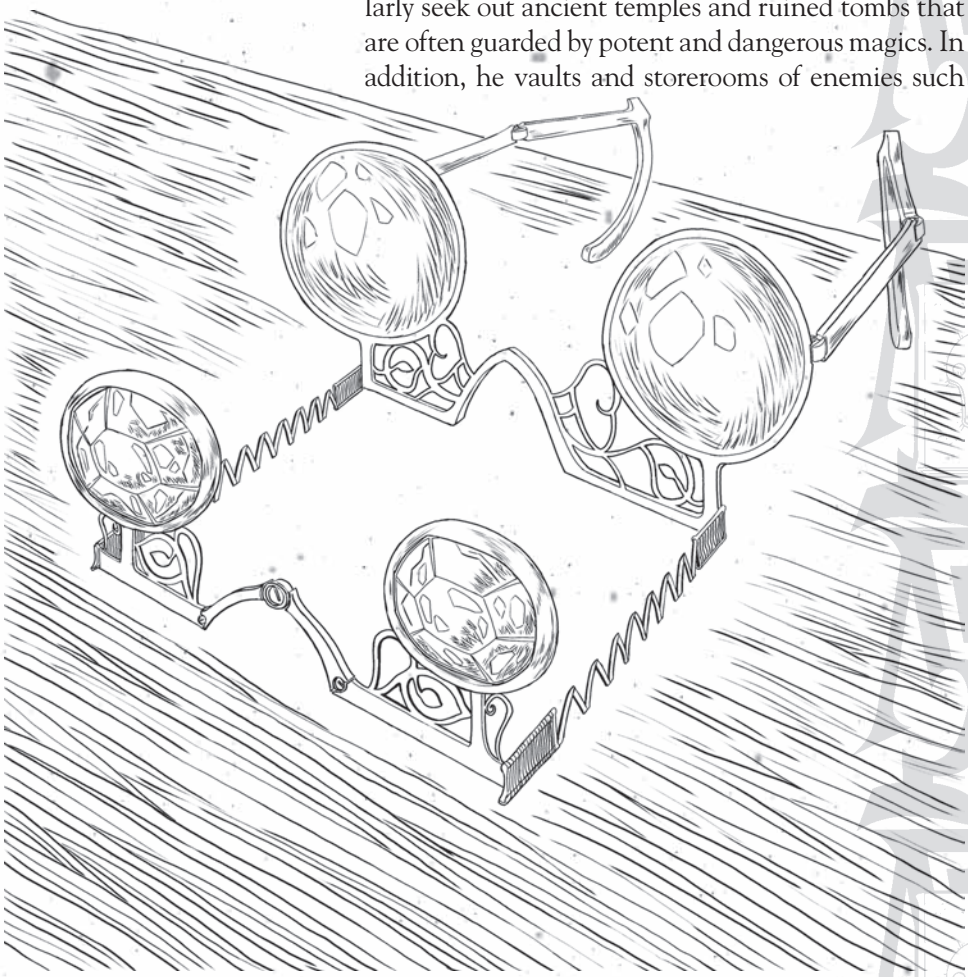
Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 3

Usually made in the form of a wristwatch, pendant or some other unremarkable item, this contingent imbued item duplicates the affect of two spells useful for avoiding notice when breaking into secure locations. The wearer can duplicate the affects of the Mind 2 spell "Incognito Presence" and the Mind 3/Life 2 spell "Induce Sleep." This item allows the bearer to covertly enter all but the most secure locations with little risk and is regularly used by Mysterium members who lack skill with Mind magics. Even if the bearer is detained for questioning, skilled use of this item can put tired or bored guards to sleep, allowing the user to slip past them and then become sufficiently unimpressive that other guards will simply allow the character to wander out of the area where he was being detained.

Band of Safety (Imbued Item ●●●●●●)

Durability 3, Size 1, Structure 3

The more daring members of the Mysterium regularly seek out ancient temples and ruined tombs that are often guarded by potent and dangerous magics. In addition, he vaults and storerooms of enemies such



as the Seers of the Temple also often hold valuable artifacts and their guardians tend to be even more potent. Finding a way through such defenses is often difficult, and doing so without alerting anyone that these magical protections have been dispelled is even trickier. This item is designed to allow wearers to safely deal with all such problems. Traditionally made in the form of a wide ring of polished quartz or mirror-polished steel, this imbued item is almost always created as a wearable item, such as a ring or bracelet, that is difficult to remove.

This item contains a persistent version of the Prime 4 spell "Controlled Dispellation." Because this spell uses Prime 4, it requires no requisites. As long as the item is worn, it protects the wearer from any spell cast by someone other than the wearer. The item has a Potency of 4 and protects the wearer from any spell with a lesser Potency. This effect protects only the wearer. In addition, the item always glows, vibrates or otherwise indicates whenever it is protecting the wearer from one or more spells, allowing the wearer to use Mage Sight or some other means to determine if she wishes to remove the item an allow herself to be affected by the spell.

Collector's Pocket (Imbued Item ●●●●●●)

Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 3

One of the best ways to succeed in a theft is to be able to steal the item without risking carrying it around. Similarly, the best way to keep someone from stealing a valuable item is to never allow it out of your sight or away from your person. This persistent imbued item provides an elegant solution to both problems.

Always made in the form of some sort of bag or carrying case, from a briefcase or purse to a small case for makeup or eyeglasses, this item is enchanted with a persistent version of the Space 4 spell "Pocket Realm" with a Size of 20. The space inside this item is perfectly climate controlled and free from all motion, so even the most fragile Artifact will remain safe and undamaged. While this item does not allow the mage to enter the space the item creates, if he is sufficiently skilled with the Space Arcanum, he can use spells such as "Scrying" or "Portal" to view or enter the space. In addition, the item also contains a contingent power similar to the spell "Safe Keeping" to transport items to and from this pocket realm. Especially careful mages outfit their Pocket Realms with special cases suitable for holding fragile and delicate items.

Wand of Duplication (Imbued Item ●●●●●●)

Durability 3, Size 1, Structure 3

While the members of the Mysterium rarely have compunctions about stealing valuable Artifacts from Sleepers or enemies, sometimes a theft is too dangerous or inconvenient. This item provides the solution to problem using a version of the Matter 4 spell "Duplication." Traditionally, the item is made in the form of an ebony wand with a gold tip. The user touches and item and then touches a pile of raw materials that the wand instantly transforms into a duplicate of the item, if the raw materials are suitable. Unsuitable materials are unaffected.

This spell is automatically performed using the advanced prolongation table and can also duplicate both electronic media and enhanced and imbued items. As with the original spell, as long as it is not duplicating an Artifact or imbued item, if the raw materials are sufficiently close in form and composition to the item being duplicated, the Duration of the spell becomes lasting.

Band of Timelessness (Imbued Item ●●●●●●●)

Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 4

Masters of Time create these rare and difficult to enchant persistent items as the ultimate method of keeping an item safe and secure for long periods of time. Usually made in the form of a circular metal amulet attached to either an adjustable cloth or leather strap or to a narrow steel chain, when the strap or chain is wrapped around a person or item and then buckled or clipped into place, this target is instantly subject to magic similar to the Time 5 spell "Stop Time." The target remains in total stasis, immune to all harm and still frozen in the second when this item was used upon it. The target may be picked up and moved normally — its weight is unchanged, but even a normally flexible object, similar to a piece of cloth that is frozen into place and cannot be folded or reshaped in any fashion.

The person or object remains in stasis until the strap or chain around it is unbuckled or unclipped. At this point, the target immediately returns to the state it was in the moment this item was activated around it. Because of the difficulty of buckling or clipping this item around a resisting subject, subjects will first need to be completely immobilized — this item cannot be used in combat to freeze someone in place. Although only masters of the

Time Arcanum can create these items, they are much in demand by the Mysterium, which uses them for purposes ranging from preserving delicate items for transport to putting researchers who were seriously injured in remote locations into stasis so they can be safely brought back for medical treatment or magical healing.

Remote Searcher (Imbued Item ●●●●●●●)

Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 3

There are many times that mages would prefer to safely investigate a location from a distance, but scrying is often not sufficient to allow a mage to examine a location. This item allows all mages to examine and manipulate a distant area. Typically made to be worn or easily carried in a pocket, this contingent item has three linked powers. It duplicates the effects of the Prime 4 spell "Marionette," combined with the Space 2 spell "Scrying" and the Mind 3 spell "Multi-Tasking." These latter two spells can only be used to see through the eyes of the phantasm created by this item and to allow the mage to direct this phantasmal creation while also engaging in other activities. All three spells are activated with the same Imbued Item activation roll (wielder's Gnosis +4), and the item is inscribed with Atlantean runes to increase the spells Duration by one factor.

This item allows the user to create a mobile construct and then to control and direct it, even when it is out of the mage's line of sight. In addition, the mage can also act normally while controlling this phantasm. If the user desires, the user can create two phantasmal animals at once and direct each one separately, but doing this means she cannot also act physically because the item does not grant the use the ability to simultaneously perform more than two instant actions. When exploring ancient ruins and similarly confined and potentially dangerous locations, mages belonging to the Mysterium sometimes use this item to create moderately small creatures such as large monkeys, birds of prey or spider-like robots the size of cocker spaniels to both explore places where the mage cannot and to walk ahead and locate any possible dangers.

Safety Box (Imbued Item ●●●●●●●)

Durability 5, Size 1–2, Structure 6–7

Mana Capacity: 10

One of the most basic and frequently manufactured items used by field agents of the Mysterium are the thaumium-lined steel boxes known as safety boxes. Created using the Prime 5 spell "Forge Thaumium," these boxes are most often made in two sizes: a smaller (Size 1) version approximately the size of a cigar box and a larger version that is typically made as a briefcase. Both boxes have their durability enhanced and contain well-made padding so they can be used to safely transport fragile items. These boxes also can store a sufficient amount of Mana to allow them to resist a variety of spells. In addition to being useful for transporting items that over mages might wish to locate, teleport away or destroy, safety boxes are also regularly used as a way to transport potentially dangerous Artifacts and imbued items that might endanger the person carrying them or others around the person. Even if the mage carrying the box lacks the ability to temporarily neutralize the powers of a persistent item, a safety box protects the wearer and those around her from the item's powers. The typical safety box is made by a mage with a Gnosis + Matter of 10, providing potent protection against magic.

Area Wards (Imbued Item ●●●●●●●●)

Durability 3, Size 1, Structure 4

Mana Capacity: 12

This persistent item is usually made in the form of either four small metal cubes or a thin metal chain between 10 and 15 yards long. To use this item, the owner must either place the cubes in a rough square or rectangle, with size no more than four yards long or arrange the chain in a circle or oval. The instant this is done, everything inside the circle is protected by a persistent version of the Forces 4 "Containment" spell. In addition, everyone inside is also protected by the Prime 3 "Magic Wall" spell. However, to activate this item, it must either draw upon the Mana stored within it or be supplied with Mana by the owner. If no Mana is supplied, the item does not function. Once it has been activated, this item proves potent protection against both magical and mundane dangers and is greatly desired by any mage heading into dangerous territory. Unfortunately, just as the "Containment" spell, these wards have not affect only anything moving speed 10 or slower, so enemies can easily walk into the protected area.

Commencement
Celebration

APPENDIX: ALLIES AND ANTAGONISTS

"Always remember that there is no such thing as Wisdom without context. Absolutes are meaningless; context can prove an exception to any rule. Genuine Wisdom is an ever-evolving thing, a quality that will be informed by all those around you: those that will increase your understanding with their own, be they enlightened or ignorant. Watch them. Listen to them. You will find another mystery caught in the webs that bind us to one another."

— Eratosthenes, Mastigos mystagogue

Despite the Mysterium's reputation as a haven for would-be pulp adventurers and stodgy librarians, the order attracts a wide variety of individuals. From scientists on the cutting edge of theoretical physics to reclusive hermits delving into old spiritual secrets: as long as one of the Awakened sees the true value of knowledge and its preservation, there is a place for her among the mystagogues.

Characters

The following archetypes are presented as a good starting point for Storyteller characters likely to be associated with members of the Mysterium, or to actually be Mysterium mages themselves.

Archeology Graduate Student

Quote: *"Sifting debris at a dig is dull and tedious, but there's nothing like the first glimpse of something that no one has seen for 3,000 years."*

Background: Her fascination with the past was spawned by various children's adventure novels, and grew into a passion that drove Lana Caseri to choose the difficult life of a field archeologist. Her greatest joy is finding artifacts no one has seen for centuries and then working out the details of their creation and use and the stories of the lives of the people who made and used them.

Her greatest disappointment in Awakening has been not being able to share the more unusual or magical relics that she finds with the general public. She consoles herself with sharing her knowledge with a community of mages who are interested in her discoveries, and then working with these same mages to reconstruct the history of the earliest days after the Fall largely makes up for the need for mundane secrecy.

Description: Lana is a muscular, outdoorsy-looking woman in her late 20s. She has blonde hair, blue eyes and a suntan that clearly comes from hard work under the tropical sun, rather than an overpriced tanning bed. Those portions of her wardrobe not scrounged from thrift stores come from one of the various outdoorsy catalogs. Her nimbus appears as a field of blackness filled with brief images of distant lands and lost ages.

Storytelling Hints: Although relatively quiet, she is clearly passionate about her interests and loves talking with people who are either interested in the ancient world or who understand the difficult joys of hard but rewarding outdoor labor.

Path: Thyrsus

Abilities:

Ancient Knowledge (dice pool 8) — With skill and training in the history of many ancient civilization and a knowledge of five ancient languages, she can answer almost any question about the history of Europe and Asia.

Understand Artifacts (dice pool 9) — From a fragment of a pot to the corroded and bent remains of a complex mechanism, Lana can pick up almost any object and tell what it was used for and, if it's broken, roughly what it was originally like.

Wilderness Survival (dice pool 7) — She is adept at everything from pitching a tent at night, during a storm, to finding fresh water in a desert.

Art Appraiser

Quote: *"The wonders of the world pass through my doors, but so does vast amounts of junk — it's up to me to find the few real treasures amidst all the dross."*

Background: Filled with a love of beauty, a fascination with antiquities and a keen eye, Sarah Rosenbaum started out as a buyer for a small auction house and worked her way up to senior appraiser of one of the largest auction houses in the world. Her Awakening was a lengthy mystery play, where a chance glimpse on the street of someone carrying a rare vase covered with mysterious inscriptions led to a lengthy chase around town to locate the vase and purchase it.

Her Awakening made her job far easier, as she now uses Time, Space and Matter magics to learn the most intimate secrets of the various items that pass through her hands. However, she is also a dedicated member of the Mysterium and keeps a constant watch for anything unusual enough to interest her order.

Description: She's a slender, somewhat delicate-looking Jewish woman in early middle age. She dresses in a manner that demonstrates her sense of fashion and her wealth, and regularly wears one of the various pieces of Roman or Classical Greek jewelry in her private collection.

Storytelling Hints: Although she is confident and well-spoken, she is more comfortable with objects than people and can easily become lost when examining the details of a particularly lovely or interesting item, sometimes completely losing track of what anyone around her might be doing or saying.

Path: Acanthus

Abilities:

Bargain (dice pool 8) — She is an expert at determining how much someone is willing to spend on or accept an item and persuading others to accept her offer.

Know Artifact (dice pool 9) — By carefully examining a work of art or some other potentially valuable item, she can find any hidden flaws as well as learn its age and a bit of its history, and its approximate value to collectors and museums.

Computer Engineer

Quote: *"The only way to find out what we can't do is to push the absolute limits of what we can, and these days those limits are pretty amazing."*

Background: Bruce Davis always loved electronics, especially ones that were on the cutting edge. When he discovered that he possessed the right combination of talent, brilliance and dedication to design and program the latest supercomputers, he jumped at the chance to do so. As many people in his profession, he typically works exceptionally long hours and often loses himself in his work. Spending his time working with some of the fastest and most complex computers on the planet, he writes programs so complex that most programmers can barely understand them.

The results of his earlier efforts were sometimes wonderful, occasionally disastrous and always seemed to verge on magic. In some ways, Awakening was almost a natural extension of his work, and he quickly learned to use his magic to allow the computers he worked with and the programs they ran to push the absolute boundaries of the hardware, often revealing unusual secrets along the way.

Description: Bruce is an exceptionally attractive and well-groomed man in his early 30s. Unlike some of his less stylish or socially adept colleagues, he has fully embraced the new "geek chic." He uses the large sums of money he earns to buy slightly ostentatious clothing, accented by the latest and most elegant

personal electronics. Others occasionally refer to his personal style as "metrosexual cyberpunk." His nimbus manifests as complex, fractal-like patterns appearing in the corners of people's vision.

Storytelling Hints: In social situations, he is intense and easily distracted, flitting from one conversation or one topic to another with a swift brilliance few can match, but which occasionally leaves the people he's talking to slightly confused. However, while he occasionally appears flighty, when faced with a difficult problem in computer architecture or magic, he focuses his complete attention on the problem at hand and regularly works for half a day without taking a break.

Path: Obrimos

Abilities:

Modify Electronics (dice pool 8) — An expert tinkerer, he can coax and modify a piece of electronics into performing almost any function vaguely related to its original purpose.

Programming (dice pool 9) — Whether writing, analyzing or hacking a program, he does so with unparalleled speed and efficiency.

Eccentric Mathematician

Quote: *"Math is more than a tool, it is quite literally the language of the universe."*

Background: Although she was socially backwards and shy growing up, no one ever doubted Diana Zemeki's brilliance, especially in the realm of numbers. To her, mathematics was a pure world of crystalline truths that was more profound and easier to comprehend than the social world she lived in. In time, her studies took her well beyond what all but her most brilliant colleagues could comprehend. However, she was also occasionally ridiculed for her studies of numerology, and for her occasional comments, questions and pronouncements about mathematics containing hidden structures that could reveal profound truths and hidden knowledge of the past and the future. She suspects that she Awakened more than a year before she realized that she did, spending most of that year almost literally lost in her work. Her primary joy in Awakening is to find others who share some of her more esoteric interests and who are willing to believe in the hidden patterns of the world, even if few mages can understand the equations and formulas she uses to describe some of these truths.

Description: A mousey-looking woman in her mid-20s, Diana makes certain to be presentable and

well groomed, but she pays little attention to her appearance beyond the basics and has no patience with fashion or other trivialities. Her nimbus manifests as the soft sound of someone performing complex mathematics aloud.

Storytelling Hints: For her, magic and the most advanced forms of mathematics are inseparably linked. Although normally quiet and reserved, she has an unmatched passion for discussing the more esoteric portions of the theory of magic and becomes outgoing and occasionally even flirtatious when she encounters anyone who can keep up with her ideas and who can help her extend her knowledge.

Path: Acanthus

Abilities:

Manipulate Figures (dice pool 9) — From precisely calculating the odds of almost any occurrence to being able to analyze numbers or equations, she excels at all possible uses of mathematics.

Numerology (dice pool 8) — Working with mathematics, even in a brief and casual fashion, allows her to gain glimpses of the past and the future.

Electronics Reviewer

Quote: *"Look at this, see how it fits well in your hand and the way the buttons are set."*

Background: With a degree in engineering, a passion for the latest technology and a skill at writing, Carlos Benfeldt ended up writing articles for various

prestigious magazines in which he reviewed the latest cutting-edge consumer electronics and discussed their impact on society. He attends all of the consumer electronics conventions, and many major manufacturers send him their latest devices to test and review. He's equally interested in new technology for its own sake and for the impact it has on society and the way people communicate and interact.

Even before his Awakening, he gave better recommendations to devices that he thought would help social interactions and ultimately society change in ways he found desirable. Now, he checks these intuitions with potent Fate and Time magics and hopes that various technologies can be used to gradually reshape peoples' thoughts and behaviors into ways he hopes are more conducive to encouraging Awakening and reducing Disbelief.

Description: A careful mixture of elegance and flamboyance are the hallmarks of his personal style. Carlos is a muscular, boldly tattooed Hispanic man in his mid-30s. His nimbus manifests as a sense of excitement, anticipation and wonder in those around him.

Storytelling Hints: Looking at and writing about the latest technology isn't just his profession, they are central to his life. He's sometimes described as an electronics evangelist, but he's never pushy and his enthusiasm for devices and technology he likes is contagious. Despite spending so much time working with electronics, he loves interacting with people, and excels at watching people interact and talking to people in a manner to helps him understand their points of view, while also subtly convincing them of his.

Path: Mastigos

Abilities:

Analyze Behavior (dice pool 7) — By carefully watching people, he can see the problems they are having and what sort of help (either physical or emotional) would enable them to solve these problems more effectively.

Persuasion (dice pool 9) — In writing and in person, Carlos excels at convincing others to modify their opinions and habits.

Use Technology (dice pool 7) — After spending a short while examining, Carlos can use almost any piece of electronics, swiftly using it to its maximum efficiency and discovering any hidden functions or problems.

Forensic Scientist

Quote: *"Evidence never lies — we may not understand, wish to accept, or sometimes even believe what it's telling us, but none of this makes the evidence any less true."*

Background: As someone fascinated by mysteries and puzzles, the lure of piecing together puzzles of scanty or conflicting evidence to solve crimes was irresistible. Maria Valducci was drawn to this line of work by her need to find answers and her passion for justice. Eventually, her interest in finding the truth led her to a series of recurring dreams about investigating the scene of her own death. Solving this case in her dreams led to her Awakening. At this point, she was confronted with another series of mysteries — many of the unsolved crimes in the World of Darkness are due to causes that are beyond the realms of science and mortal belief — magic, vampires, hungry spirits, werewolves or occasionally the walking dead or creatures from the Abyss all leave their marks upon the mortal world.

Today, she has the knowledge and the means to solve these exotic cases. In addition to her work for the police force, she works for the Mysterium, gathering information about crimes committed by corrupt mages and various inhuman creatures, in an effort to understand these beings from the evidence they leave behind. She also has the satisfaction of knowing that, when possible, the Mysterium attempts to deal with and eliminate threats unknown to mundane law enforcement.

Description: Maria is a short, Ruben-esque woman in her late 30s. She has a neat and somewhat formal style that simultaneously helps her appear competent and somewhat distant and reserved. Her nimbus causes everything she touches or examines closely to appear in sharp focus, making all surface details exceptionally vivid and easy to see.

Storytelling Hints: The meticulous habits of her profession are clearly evident throughout her life. With subtle efficiency, she orders and examines any space she spends time in. She is also an exceptionally keen observer and has a disconcerting habit of noticing small details of appearance that others miss and occasionally asking quiet questions about any inconsistencies in how someone describes an event to her. She rarely talks about herself and has a knack for asking more questions than she answers.

Path: Moros

Abilities:

Observation (dice pool 9) — She is an expert at noticing and interpreting the small details around her, such as the arrangement of cups on a table or the slight wrinkles in a heavy curtain that might mean someone is hiding behind it.

Scientific Analysis (dice pool 8) — Using scientific instruments in the most effective manner possible is the best way to reveal the most data about a crime scene.

Investigative Journalist

Quote: *"The heart of journalism consists of being able to uncover the truth and then knowing what to do with it once you have found it — not every story is fit to print."*

Background: After realizing that she lacked the patience to be a working scientist, Polly Tanaka decided on a career in journalism. She started as a science journalist and has since expanded her repertoire to also include investigating newsworthy government and corporate secrets. During the course of these investigations, she also uncovered records of government experiments with zoonotic viruses that transform survivors into animal-like human hybrids, secret, on-going psychic research by various transnational corporations and a host of other stories too exotic or unbelievable to see print anywhere except the most lurid tabloids. So, Polly continued her more normal investigations, while keeping a growing file of oddities.

When she Awakened and encountered other mages, she turned her files over to the Mysterium, whose eager researchers went to work on the projects and events that had been previously unknown to them. Finally having the right audience for her stories, Polly redoubled her efforts in these investigations and now maintains extensive files on all manner of exotic secrets.

Description: Polly is a short, stocky Asian woman in her early 40s. she has a talent for blending into her surroundings and can easily dress so that she appears to fit into almost any circumstance or occasion.

Storytelling Hints: Her relatively nondescript appearance is at odds with the charm and charisma she can radiate when she chooses to. She is obviously interested in people, their ideas and their pet projects, and has a knack for getting strangers to reveal details of their lives and interests to her.

Path: Obrimos

Abilities:

Breaking and Entering (dice pool 7) — From cheap suitcase locks to electronic security systems, Polly knows a great deal about getting into places designed to keep out intruders.

Bribery (dice pool 6) — Polly is can usually find out if someone has a price, and what that price might be.

Interview (dice pool 9) — Talking to people in a way to encourages them to relax and speak more freely than they otherwise might is an art that she excels at.

Librarian

Quote: *"It's lovely here — everything in its place. It's such a shame the rest of the world can't have the same courtesy."*

Background: As a bookish, and socially awkward young man, libraries were always Sam Worshowski's refuge, and so they were a natural choice for a job to earn extra money while in college. His skill and dedication then lead him to a degree in library science. His Awakening consisted of a long mystery play in which he wandered the library stacks all through on sleepless night. Although he initially kept information about his magic from everyone, a mage who was a patron in his library noticed Sam working some feat of minor magic and after talking to him, invited him to join the Mysterium. Today, he works in one of the Mysterium's larger Athenaea, organizing and cataloging the wealth of information they have collected.

Description: Sam is an immaculately dressed man in his early 50s. His clothes are modestly priced, but always well made, and his appearance is always immaculate. His careful, almost obsessive attention to detail extends to his appearance.

Storytelling Hints: He's somewhat obsessive-compulsive in his mannerisms, especially when under stress. When nervous, he often arranges and orders items around him, such as stacking coins in neat piles.

Path: Acanthus

Abilities:

Observation (dice pool 6) — To organize anything, first you must notice whatever is out of place.

Research (dice pool 9) — Finding a few useful fact amidst a wealth of information is vital to almost any endeavor.

Marketing Researcher

Quote: *"Not only does nothing last forever, damn little lasts longer than three months — it's here today and gone next March. You've got to be quick to ride the trends."*

Background: Growing up with a love of popular culture and mass media, the opportunity to turn this knowledge into a profitable and prestigious career was a dream come true. Larry Cronin now spends his time skimming the Internet and immersing himself in all of the latest mass media in an effort to uncover new consumer trends months before anyone else does. His work enables film producers, console game makers and ad agents to design their movies, games and products in ways that capture the popular imagination when they are released.

Amidst the wealth of information he exposed himself to, he occasionally found hidden trends and strange patterns invisible to others and his Awakening deepened these perceptions. Some were the manipulations of the Guardians of the Veil, others efforts by vampires and similar beings and a very few seemed to be messages from some unknown source — perhaps hints coming from the collective unconscious of humanity or communications from the Supernal World. Now his studies yield profits and tantalizing hints of knowledge that not even his efforts can fully decipher.

Description: Flamboyant, distinctive and always riding the cutting edge of fashion, Larry's clothes are one of the clearest reflections of his passionate neophilia and his keen awareness of popular trends. His nimbus causes brightly colored stills from films

and TV to appear on various surfaces, as if they were printed there.

Storytelling Hints: Larry is outgoing, expressive, attractive and funny. However, unlike many shallow extroverts, he's at least as good at listening and watching as talking. He has a knack for actively listening to people in a way that makes them feel like the center of his universe — a knack that causes many to talk about their thoughts and ideas in a way they might otherwise not.

Path: Mastigos

Abilities:

Predict Impact (dice pool 8) — When listening to a speech, watching a film or trying a new beverage, one of the most difficult things to do is to predict how others will like it.

Persuasion (dice pool 7) — Having opinions is useless if you can't convince others that your opinions are the correct ones. Larry excels at convincing people to share his opinions.

Non-traditional Artist

Quote: *"Art shouldn't be simple or easy — don't ask me what this means, look, consider and find out what it means to you."*

Background: After studying art and dabbling in the natural sciences, Joshua Averret found his calling building complex and unusual multi-media art installations, and eventually created a small alternative museum where his work is presented as the work of a fictional ethnic group that he also created. In addition to his work in his museum, he travels giving talks and performance installations by which he attempts to inform and enlighten people with his art. Awakening gave him new artistic tools and valuable new insights. Today, he creates art that reveals hints of hidden and valuable truths that will entice those who are interested into seeking further insights, while entertaining and distracting those who are unable to understand the esoteric meanings in his work. He also builds small eccentric creations that are unusually easy to imbue.

Description: Joshua is a slender dark-haired man in his early 30s who has a significantly alternative look. He has waist-length hair and numerous tattoos and body piercings. His nimbus causes his tattoos to seem to move across his body.

Storytelling Hints: He is intense, outspoken and exceptionally charismatic. He is always noticeable and can usually make himself the center of attention in any crowd.

Path: Acanthus

Abilities:

Enchantment (dice pool 7) — He creates art that is particularly easy to transform into imbued items.

Performance (dice pool 8) — Joshua can captivate an audience and create meaning and emotions with words, gestures and the objects he manipulates.

Symbolism (dice pool 9) — He can encode complex hidden meaning in his work and discern the hidden meaning in other work, ranging from alternative industrial music to centuries old alchemical illustrations.

Professional Translator

Quote: *"I'm sorry to interrupt, but you grew up near Barcelona weren't you? Your pronunciation of the "a" and "u" sounds are quite distinctive."*

Background: Growing up in the multicultural wonder of Los Angeles, learning languages was first useful talent and then an important hobby. The sheer variety and diversity of words and grammar intoxicated Jeremy Prasong. After studying three languages in college, he took a job as a professional translator specializing in Asian languages. His Awakening occurred after hearing a mage using High Speech — Jeremy could not get the half-remembered phrase out of his head and dreamed of endlessly wandering through crowds of people in an unfamiliar city, searching again for the sounds found in the short phrase he could not consciously recall.

Now, he also regularly works with languages so ancient that only mages still know of them, translating ancient books and the words of millennia-old ghosts. He especially love journeys into the Underworld, where he can speak with multitudes of antique ghosts in languages that no one living has spoken for many thousands of years.

Description: Jeremy is an average-looking but exceedingly well-dressed Asian man in his late 30s. He wears clothing that suggests refinement and moderate wealth. His nimbus causes all conversations around him to become louder and more distinct.

Storytelling Hints: Jeremy listens very closely, and if he hears someone speaking an unfamiliar or unusual language, he will often ask her about it. He also loves to talk to people and has an easy comfort when talking to strangers.

Path: Moros

Abilities:

Diplomacy (dice pool 8) — When talking to someone, knowing their language is only the first step; being able to swiftly discern and adapt to the habits of courtesy and politeness in an unfamiliar culture are vital to having any potentially delicate conversation go well.

Psychology (dice pool 7) — Reading nonverbal cues and unspoken tensions allows him to more fully understand the motivations of anyone he communicates with.

Research Psychologist

Quote: *"I'm not as interested in what you believe as why you believe what you do. Can you tell me about a time where you radically changed your ideas about some issue?"*

Background: Well before she Awakened, Elizabeth Grant was interested in the mechanisms of thought and belief. As a professor in a prestigious university, she works on the cutting edge of research on these issues and has performed sophisticated brain scans on meditating Buddhist monks, Pentecostal Christians speaking in tongues and people using powerful hallucinogens. The goal of her research was to understand the meanings and realities found in various subjective perceptions and states of mind.

After her Awakening, this research took on even more meaning — the mechanics of magic and Disbelief clearly showed that minds and thoughts have a power unknown to conventional science. Today, she uses her research to attempt to understand the mechanics of Disbelief and hopes to eventually create drugs that will allow people to become Sleepwalkers.

Description: A vivacious woman in her mid-20s, Elizabeth's appearance straddles the line between alternative and professional. She combines typical markers of status such as fairly formal professional clothing with eccentric jewelry and highly alternative

hairstyles. Her nimbus manifests as everyone around her hearing an unintelligible babble of the thoughts of those around them.

Storytelling Hints: She excels at professional interactions with colleagues and the subjects she is studying, but in less formal circumstances, she sometimes becomes nervous and ill at ease. She understands people exceedingly well, but sometimes has trouble translating that into actions in informal circumstances. Her speech is unusually direct, and she is exceedingly honest. Rather than lying, she prefers telling people that she either cannot or will not answer their questions.

Path: Acanthus

Abilities:

Psychiatry (dice pool 7) — Elizabeth can diagnose mental illness from casual observation and suggest how the individual will react and what treatments might be useful.

Psychology (dice pool 8) — Understanding the behavior of others from their actions and non-verbal cues is a key part of any interpersonal interaction.

Security Consultant

Quote: *"These days, if you're outside your house, someone is watching you."*

Background: After some youthful indiscretions involving illegal surveillance, hacking and breaking and entering, Scott Harris used his talent for electronics and his skill at evading them to learn to prevent the same sort of crimes he used to commit. Working as a freelance security consultant provides him with access to the security records of all of this clients and a wealth of sophisticated electronics. In addition to the thrill of pitting himself against skilled criminals attempting to crack the security he helps craft, he now has a legal method of satisfying his own desire to discreetly observe those around him.

During the course of his work, he saw many oddities that most mortals either refuse to believe or dismiss as meaningless oddities. However, he kept track of such events, and eventually Awakened in the middle of an intrusion by a creature from the Abyss. Now, he also devotes some of his time to working for the Mysterium, keeping track of anomalies and attempting to make their sanctums and Athenaea safe from all intruders.

Description: Scott Harris is a tall, handsome, well-dressed black man in his early 30s. He enjoys wearing fine suits and advertising his success. His nimbus appears as a series of visual distortions that briefly make specific images or sounds much clearer and more vivid.

Storytelling Hints: Although he almost always appears calm and relaxed, Scott is continually watching those around him. He is slow to trust anyone, but covers this with humor and his relaxed manner.

Path: Mastigos

Abilities:

Body Language (dice pool 8) — Scott can guess intentions and even details of someone's character and profession by watching her move and interact with others.

Computer Hacking (dice pool 7) — He can guess passwords and also find the hidden flaws in network security.

Electronic Surveillance (dice pool 9) — Scott is skilled at using electronics to covertly observe others and at detecting when others are doing so.

Statistician

Quote: *"Some form of natural laws govern even the Abyss and the Underworld; I can't be sure, but I think the patterns I've been studying are gradually revealing these laws".*

Background: The world is filled with patterns, some relatively simple and easy to understand, others so complex that they appear random and chaotic except when analyzed using advanced supercomputers. These patterns fascinate Paul Barron, and understanding them is his way of uncovering the truths of the universe. He works for the city government analyzing patterns of human activity — patterns in spending, travel, petty theft, traffic violations and a multitude of similar patterns that governments find necessary or at least valuable. Since his Awakening, he has also learned to look for other patterns, such as the location and timing of intrusions from the Abyss or the fluctuations in the strength of the Gauntlet.

His scientific training has now been applied to the world of magic and the supernatural, in an effort to understand more clearly the metaphysical laws of the universe.

Description: A tall, bald, dark-skinned black man of average build, he's in his early 30s and wears relatively thick glasses. His occasionally disheveled appearance marks him as someone who thinks little of his appearance. His nimbus is pale, precise and exceedingly angular — it is marked with numbers and unknown symbols.

Storytelling Hints: Despite being a mage, he remains a hardheaded rationalist, dismissing any suggestions that the universe deliberately reveals or conceals anything in the data he analyses. Instead, he sees magic as simply part of an additional set of natural laws that Sleepers remain unaware of. He has the exacting and slightly gruff manner found in some scientists, and is most comfortable with people whose precision of thought and language matches his own.

Path: Obrimos

Abilities:

Guess Trends (dice pool 8) — In situations ranging from watching the behavior of a crowd to predicting the future price of stocks or bonds, Paul can make exceedingly accurate forecasts.

Manipulate Figures (dice pool 8) — He can calculate the odds of almost any occurrence or discern any discrepancies in columns of complex data.

Observation (dice pool 6) — Noticing to details of the world around him is the first step in his being able making predictions about them.

Theoretical Physicist

Quote: *"I'm on the verge of proving that quantum tunneling involves particles interacting with the gauntlet in a time-like fashion."*

Background: Although Robyn never called it magic, the wonders of the quantum world fascinated her from the first time she read about them as a child. Unlike most mages, Robyn Xanthis Awakened in early adolescence and grew up seeing no real difference between the exotic quantum world and the secret world of magic.

Upon meeting other mages in graduate school, she began attempting to prove her theories that Atlantean magic is a natural consequence of quantum mechanics and that mages have a unique ability to collapse indeterminate quantum states in a non-random fashion. Having gotten a PhD in physics at the

age of 22, she now works at a private research center owner by the Mysterium.

Description: Robyn is a dark-haired woman in her mid-20s. She pays little attention to her appearance beyond attempting to be clean and to dress in such a fashion that it's obvious that she is an academic. She wears markers of her profession, such as T-shirts covered in obscure equations worn under an open white lab coat as identification and social armor. Her nimbus causes objects to leave faint colored trails in the air that indicate the direction they traveled and their velocity.

Storytelling Hints: She is exceedingly quiet, rarely talking about herself and her emotions and usually only talking in generalities about her work, even to other mages. When she does talk about her work, to mages and, to a lesser extent, to Sleepers, she regularly explains magic in terms of quantum mechanics and quantum mechanics in terms of magic, mixing terminologies as she sees fit.

Path: Acanthus

Abilities:

Observation (dice pool 8) — Robyn is a keen observer, noticing the physical details of the world around her.

Scientific Analysis (dice pool 8) — The ability to analyze unfamiliar situations and work of likely models of how they occurred lies at the heart of science.

Urban Planner

Quote: *"By placing this parking structure next to that plaza, we should be able to channel that ley line and the urban squalor it fosters harmlessly away into that park. Sure, it means that most of the local druggies and drunks are going to find that place as their new favorite hangout, but then at least your cabal can start cleaning up the streets around your sanctum, like you wanted. You've got to work with what you've got."*

Background: As someone interested in cities and adept at bureaucracy, Sandra O'Reilly decided to become an urban planner and took great satisfaction in helping to design and create plans for urban spaces that enabled people to lead happier and safer lives. Her Awakening added a new level to her work. Now, she sees that cities also have additional, little-known resources, such as ley lines, Hallows, Verges and loci. She now makes certain that plans for new development and urban renewal in her city avoid disturbing and of these valuable resources and, when possible, help create new ley lines. In addition, she also works to covertly protect the local libraries, sanctums and Demesnes used by the Mysterium and its allies. She is currently working with several scholars of magical theory to attempt to design urban spaces to reduce the local power of the Abyss.

Description: She is a red-haired, athletic woman in her early 40s. She dresses like an educated professional. Her nimbus manifests as sudden flashes of memory of random locations of the nearest large city.

Storytelling Hints: She is personable and outgoing, but is most comfortable with other educated professionals. She is less skilled at talking to people who seem uneducated and is significantly uncomfortable around anyone who actively reject social norms in his actions or appearance.

Path: Obrimos

Abilities:

Bureaucracy (dice pool 8) — Sandra can swiftly negotiate bureaucratic challenges and recruit laws and government to her aid.

Magical Theory (dice pool 6) — She understands the complexities of ley lines, Verges and similar locations, and also knows the latest theories about the nature of the Abyss and other similarly difficult questions.

Negotiate (dice pool 7) — Sandra is skilled at finding common ground with others and forging agreements with them.

Urban Shaman

Quote: *"The truest path to knowledge is through spiritual journeys that go deep inside ourselves and to the furthest reaches of the spirit world."*

Background: Growing up as a child with eccentric and increasingly esoteric interests, Star Conners came into her own in college when she found others who shared her interests. These contacts encouraged her to pursue her fascination with obtaining knowledge and enlightenment from visionary experiences and exploring the limits of subjective perceptions. After reading several books on indigenous shamanism and the various new age and neo-pagan variants, she spent a summer studying and learning from the shamans of a tribe located deep in the Amazon jungle.

She Awakened shortly after returning from her travels. Since then, her dedication to exploring various subjective states with magic, mediation, drugs, dance and similar continues. She teaches Sleepers yoga and basic shamanic techniques to make money and attempt to help more of them Awaken.

Description: Star is a woman in her late 30s who dresses like a modern-day hippie, wearing a profusion of beads, hand-woven clothing from South America and the occasional tie-dyed garment. She is obviously a free spirit who is not bound by conventional standards of appearance. Her nimbus manifests as half-seen, brightly colored hallucinations on the edges of the viewer's vision.

Storytelling Hints: Although not an academic or anyone's idea of a conventional member of the Mysterium, Star is well-read, intelligent and knowledgeable. However, she is also inclined to regard her own visionary experiences and astral journeys as being just as valid sources of knowledge as anything gained from reading ancient records or studying artifacts supposedly made in Atlantis.

Path: Thyrsus

Abilities:

Astral Journeys (dice pool 9) — Star excels at exploring the Astral Realms.

Practical Pharmacology (dice pool 8) — Star understands the effects of various drugs, can identify them by taste, appearance or initial effects and knows what drugs or techniques can enhance or neutralize their effects.

Wealthy Collector

Quote: *"I don't image you have seen one of these before, this artifact was made at least 5,000 years ago — I'm fairly certain it was made only a few centuries after the Fall."*

Background: Wealth has its privileges, and this is quite obvious when examining the course of the wealthy collector's life. Growing up as the pampered only child of a wealthy family, Iain Douglas was able to pursue his schooling and his hobbies with no regard for practicality or cost. His fascination with history led

him to extensive studies in college and on his own, followed by a growing passion for collecting antiquities. Traveling the globe and sending letters and emails to buyers even in the most remote corners of the world, he began to amass a collection of ancient and beautiful relics from the very dawn of civilization.

Even before he Awakened, he attracted the attention of the Mysterium, because two of the items in his collection were Atlantean. After he refused generous offers to sell the objects, one of them was stolen, and he began to obsessively guard and study the remaining artifact, precipitating his Awakening. His passion for collection now focuses on relics of the Fall. To obtain permission to study his collection, the Mysterium was forced to return the stolen artifact. Now he works with other collectors in this order, organizing and studying the many ancient and unique items, magical and not, that they have obtained.

Description: Iain is a handsome, athletic man in his late 40s. Although his personal style is never flamboyant or ostentatious, his wealth is immediately obvious to anyone who knows clothing or fashion. His nimbus causes any objects he considers precious or beautiful to appear exceptionally striking and set off from their surroundings.

Storytelling Hints: While his reputation and appearance are important, his collection is far more so. Although he rarely brags, his pride in his collection is obvious and genuine — he loves beautiful things, especially relics that are beautiful and ancient and filled with history. Neither people nor political intrigues particularly interest him, but he is always willing to examine or learn more above some interesting or exotic relic.

Path: Moros

Abilities:

Bargain (dice pool 9) — Bargaining consists of discovering how much the other person is willing to spend or accept and convincing her to spend more or accept less.

Understand Artifacts (dice pool 8) — By simply handling an artifact, Iain can judge its age and authenticity, as well as learning what is was likely used for.

Combatants

The following characters are more likely be come involved in risky or even violent situations. They are an excellent cross-section of some of the Mysterium's mages.

Silent

Quote: *"Theft is more than a simple act, it's also a statement to the victim and a precise and careful art."*

Background: Before her Awakening, Silent was one of the most skilled and infamous art thieves in the United States. Other than a shoplifting charge when she was 16, she had never been arrested, but her "work" was known in the United States and the EU, where she stole a wide variety of art, from recent and relatively minor works to paintings or pieces of jewelry made by the great masters. Her father was also a thief and trained her well, but by the time she was in her late 20s, she had surpassed him. As a committed pacifist, she makes certain her thefts will not kill or injure others. Her Awakening occurred immediately after a theft. She had just stolen a piece of jewelry that was also a potent artifact. While examining it in her hotel room, she had a vision of the artifact's power and history.

A few days later, she noticed the buyer she had stolen the necklace from looked different to her newly discovered and half-understood Mage Sight. Instead of merely selling the artifact, she freely gave it to him, in return for his promise to explain her newfound magic. Silent soon joined the Mysterium and advanced in magical prowess and reputation. She remains a thief but expanded her repertoire of targets to include all manner of valuable artifacts and rare occult tomes.

However, she has become more than simply a thief and has given much thought to the philosophy of theft, space and the nature of reality. She steals to obtain knowledge for her order and herself, but she also is

firmly convinced that the nature of the Fallen World indicates that such thefts are completely justified if the thief uses the stolen item to obtain knowledge and enlightenment.

Description: Silent is a short, muscular Hispanic woman with a buzz cut and a generally butch appearance. She dresses in expensively tailored but average-looking clothing and generally attempts a compromise between being comfortable and visibly well-off and being non-descript and easy to overlook. Her nimbus manifests as an area where shadows deepen slightly and sounds are somewhat muffled.

Storytelling Hints: She takes great pride in her work, and while she almost never boasts, she has a quick temper if anyone accuses her of being careless or ineffective. She is a thrill-seeker. Although she is always careful and never makes thoughtless decisions, she enjoys unavoidable risks and relishes the thrill of success over difficult odds.

Dedicated Magical Tools: An antique pair of wire-rim eyeglasses she wears constantly (Mind magic) and her small set of exquisitely made lock picks (Space magics)

Real Name: Paula Perez
Path: Mastigos
Order: Mysterium
Legacy: Reality Stalker
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 2 (Art History), Computer 3, Investigation 2 (Forensics), Medicine 1, Occult 2, Science 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 3 (Gymnastics), Drive 2, Firearms 1, Larceny 4 (Alarm Systems), Stealth 3, Weaponry 2
Social Skills: Empathy 1, Expression 2, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Occultation 2, Language (Spanish), Order Status 2 (Mysterium)
Willpower: 5
Wisdom: 5
Virtue: Prudence
Vice: Pride
Initiative: 7
Defense: 3
Speed: 11
Health: 8
Gnosis: 5
Arcana: Matter 1, Mind 2, Prime 1, Space 4, Time 2
Rotes: *Matter* — Craftsman Eye (•); *Mind* — One Mind, Two Thoughts (•), Emotional Urging (••), First Impressions (••); *Prime* — Analyze Enchanted Item (•), Supernal Vision (•); *Space* — Untouchable (••), Destroy the Threads (•••); *Time* — Flip of the Coin (••), Postcognition (••)
Legacy Attainment: 1st — Gazing Through the Cracks, 2nd — Cracking Open the Flaws
Mana/per Turn: 14/5
Weapons/Attacks:

Type	*Damage*	*Size*	*Dice Pool*	*Clip*
Stun Gun	n/a	1/P	6	
Ranged Stun Gun	–1 (B)	1/S	4	1

Armor: 4 ("Untouchable" Space 2)

Fossura

Quote: *"The answers to all of the questions of the past are hidden somewhere, we just need to find them. Myths and visions can guide us, but nothing substitutes for hard facts."*

Background: Unlike many academic disciplines, for most of the 20th century, anthropology was a field unusually open to female students and professors. Even in the mid-1960s, a few especially dedicated young women trained to become cultural anthropologists and archeologists. Patricia Waters was one of these pioneering women. She studied archeology at Columbia University and went off to archeological digs on Crete, Santorini and various small islands off the coast of Greece.

She earned her PhD in the early 1970s and settled down to what she assumed would be a long and productive academic career. Given her area of study, she had researched legends of Atlantis, but assumed they were nothing more than stories based on the catastrophic

bronze-age eruption on the Greek island of Thera. However, she recovered a few unusual artifacts from Crete, which appeared to be older than the great Minoan civilization there. One of these, a small engraved plaque made of carved sapphire, especially fascinated her because the symbols on it were not found in any other Greek artifact. One evening, she heard a noise coming from the room where this plaque was kept. When she investigated, she watched an unknown young man holding this plaque. A moment after she saw him, he and the artifact vanished into thin air.

Patricia could not get this incident out of her mind, and thoughts of it began interfering with her work. She began slipping into long reveries, imagining herself seeing strange patterns on every surface, like the writing on the stolen plaque. Eventually, she Awakened and soon met the same young man who had stolen the plaque. He recruited her into the Mysterium, where she applied her passion for discovery to the study of magic and uncovering the truth about the legend of Atlantis.

Although now in her mid-60s, she continues to work as a professor. However, she does considerably less publishing and mundane research than she did before her Awakening. Instead, she pursues secret research into Atlantis and the magical artifacts that survived the Fall. She is utterly devoted to the task of separating fact from myth and fiction and determining as much as she can about the physical and magical realities of Atlantis and the world before the Fall.

Description: Patricia is a slender, rugged-looking woman who appears to be in early middle age. Although she is in her mid-60s, careful use of Life magics allows her to appear to be in her mid-40s. To help disguise her youthful appearance, she dyes her short dark hair grey. Her weathered skin and deep tan indicate that she has spent much of her life outdoors. Her nimbus causes objects more than a decade older to sparkle slightly — the older the object, the more it glitters and glistens.

Storytelling Hints: She is a hardheaded rationalist who also happens to be a powerful magician. Patricia remains as intolerant and openly dismissive of superstition and pseudoscience as before she Awakened, and firmly believes that all the mysteries of magic can eventually be explained. She is an excellent teacher and loves explaining her discoveries and theories to anyone who is genuinely interested.

Dedicated Magical Tools: Hand lens (Prime magics), old silver pocket watch (Time magics).

Real Name: Patricia Waters
Path: Obrimos
Order: Mysterium
Legacy: Eyes of Ain Soph
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 2, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 4 (Archeology), Computer 1, Crafts 2, Investigation 2 (Artifacts), Medicine 1, Occult 3, Science 2
Physical Skills: Drive 2, Larceny 1, Stealth 1, Survival 2
Social Skills: Empathy 1, Expression 2 (Writing), Persuasion 1, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Eidetic Memory, Iron Stamina 1, Iron Stomach, Languages (Classical Greek, Latin, Italian), Status 1 (Academic), Consilium Status 2 (Mysterium)
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 8
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Greed
Initiative: 5
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Health: 8
Gnosis: 4
Arcana: Life 3, Matter 3, Prime 2, Time 2
Rotes: *Life* — Body Mastery (•••); *Matter* — Find the Hidden Horde (•), Unseen Aegis (••), Plasticity (•••), Repair Object (•••); *Prime* —Activate Enchanted Item (••); *Time* —Postcognition (••)
Legacy Attainment: 1st — Seeker's Vision
Mana/per Turn: 13/4
Armor: 3 ("Untouchable" Matter 3)
Magic Shield: 3 (Prime ••)

Numerus

Quote: *"This piece of paper, the chair you are sitting on, they are all information — crack the universe's code and everything can be reformatted — magic is only the first step on this path."*

Background: Randolph Chen grew up fascinated by numbers, puzzles and patterns. By age 12, he was on the Internet, and his brilliance and dedication got him accepted at MIT when he was only 16. By the time he was 25, he had obtained PhDs in computer science and mathematics. Specializing in cryptography and chaos theory, his skills were in great demand by the government and many private corporations.

Three years ago, he began experimenting with combining random number generators and sophisticated graphics programs in an effort to uncover further evidence of hidden order within apparent chaos. Many of his colleagues dismissed his efforts as nothing more than redoing the work that had discovered the geometry of fractals. However, Randolph became increasingly obsessed with these efforts, until his family and several colleagues feared that he might be suffering some form of mental breakdown. However, one night the numbers and images began making patterns only he could see — patterns that lead him to inscribe his name on the Watchtower of the Lunargent Thorn.

Knowing instinctively not to share his newfound knowledge with his colleagues, Randolph set about making his life and his research appear more normal, while spending much of his free time online seeking further information about magic and the Supernal Realms. Within a few weeks, he succeeded, and after the order discovered his brilliance, he was welcomed into the Mysterium. He soon made a name for himself in his research into the Astral and Shadow Realms, where he used a combination of his mathematical genius and various magics to attempt to find hidden order in seeming chaos of the Astral Realm and in the exotic geography of the Shadow Realm.

Randolph is convinced that deep truths about the Abyss, the Supernal Realm and the nature of magic can be found in the secrets of the Astral Realm and Shadow world. His personal obsession is finding a link between these two realms and eventually a path between them. So far, his explorations and calculations have yielded only tantalizing hints that some path between the two exists.

Description: Randolph is a conservatively dressed Asian man in his late 20s with a slender and somewhat geeky appearance. His nimbus manifests as an effect that transforms cracks and other small irregular patterns into complex but meaningless symbols

Storytelling Hints: Randolph is an exceedingly intense individual who is an eternal optimist, and someone who is absolutely convinced that he is destined to discover great things. However, the combination of his utter brilliance and the fact that he never acts superior to others makes most people find his eccentricities somewhat charming.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Fountain pen
Real Name: Randolph Chen
Path: Acanthus
Order: Mysterium
Legacy: Sphinxes
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer 4, Investigation 3 (Cryptography), Occult 3 (the Shadow Realm), Science 3 (Mathematics)
Physical Skills: Drive 2, Larceny 1, Stealth 1
Social Skills: Expression 1, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Dream 2, Eidetic Memory, Encyclopedic Knowledge, Meditative Mind
Willpower: 5
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Greed
Initiative: 5
Defense: 2

Speed: 9
Health: 7
Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Fate 2, Forces 1, Mind 3, Spirit 3
Rotes: *Fate* — Interconnections (•), Fortune's Protection (••), Shifting the Odds (••); *Mind* — Multi-Tasking (•••), Universal Language (•••); *Spirit* — Peer Across the Gauntlet (••), Spirit Road (•••)
Legacy Attainment: 1st — Hidden Meaning
Mana/per Turn: 12/3
Armor: 2 ("Fortune's Protection" Fate 2)

Libri Recondo

Quote: *"Look at this first edition of Ficino's* De Vita Libri Tres *— more than 500 years old, and in perfect condition — no, please don't turn the pages like that."*

Background: Alonzo Morales was a bright but somewhat shy child who grew up in Brooklyn. His first job was working at a friend of his mother's used bookstore. His love of books grew, as did his fascination with rare and valuable ones. By the time he was in his mid-20s, he was a rare book buyer working for a large bookstore, and before he turned 30, he had opened his own small used bookstore that specialized in first editions and other rare volumes. Alonzo's business generates a good income, while also helping him to locate and afford his most precious finds, most of which go into his private collection.

His Awakening consisted of a lengthy series of dreams about the search for a singular and perfect book, which he eventually found and signed a bill of sale for — this signature represented his signature on the Watchtower of his Path.

Once Awakened, his interest in books continued, only now he noticed that some books had been imbued with magic, while a very few were written in Atlantean High Speech. Alonzo is a member of the Mysterium, but not an exceedingly devoted one — he largely regards his association with the Mysterium as an alliance that benefits the order and himself. He allows Mysterium scholars to read and copy his books, and they give him access to the order's library. In return for his efforts in areas such as translation, cataloging and determining provenance, the local leaders of the Mysterium allow him first pick of some of the duplicates of their rare volumes, as well as partial access to several nearby Mysterium Athenaeums.

He belongs to the Mysterium far more because the order largely shares his goals than out of any feeling of camaraderie or shared purpose. While he would only

consider breaking his word to them if tempted with a particular fine and unique book, he will never go out of his way to help his colleagues, if this help would interfere with his own efforts in any fashion.

Description: Alonzo is a slightly scruffy-looking individual in his late 30s, whose keen intellect and passion for books are often concealed by his somewhat dingy-looking trench coat and two-day growth of beard. His nimbus causes those around him to be filled with greed and possessiveness for their personal possessions.

Storytelling Hints: Alonzo is obsessive about books, about the state and safety of his personal collection and about any opportunity to obtain a new rare book, especially anything connected with magic or Atlantis. He is also suspicious of people he doesn't know well and firmly believes that everyone has his price.

Dedicated Magical Tool: A Latin first edition of the medieval grimoire, the *Picatrix*
Real Name: Alonzo Morales
Path: Moros
Order: Mysterium
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 4 (Rare Books), Computer 2, Investigation 3 (Library Research), Occult 2
Physical Skills: Drive 1, Firearms 1, Larceny 2, Stealth 1
Social Skills: Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 1 (Buying Stolen Goods), Subterfuge 2
Merits: Dream 1, Library 5, Occultation 2
Willpower: 5

Wisdom: 5 (Fixation)
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Envy
Initiative: 7
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Health: 7
Gnosis: 2
Arcana: Matter 3, Mind 1, Prime 1, Space 2
Rotes: *Matter* — Discern Composition (•), Untouchable (••), Repair Object (•••); *Mind* — One Mind, Two Thoughts (•); *Prime*— Analyze Enchanted Item (•); *Space* — Scrying (••)
Mana/per Turn: 11/2
Weapons/Attacks:

Type	*Damage*	*Range*	*Clip*	*Dice Pool*
Pistol, Lt.	2 (L)	20/40/80	17+1	5

Armor: 3 ("Untouchable" Matter 2)

Ghost

Quote: *"The most carefully hidden truths are the most precious of all, but also the most dangerous to obtain."*

Background: While most mages must deal with the problems of leading a life in the mundane world and a second, secret existence as a mage, Ghost has the additional challenge of working as a covert government operative. Several years before her Awakening, Ghost traveled the globe infiltrating various organizations, gathering information, and occasionally engaging in various acts of sabotage and spreading disinformation.

Less than a year ago, her identity was compromised, and she had to flee from the small cabal of arms dealers she had infiltrated. She lost her radio and was shot in the arm, while fleeing across three miles of rugged African terrain on an overcast and rainy night. During this flight, the terrain was interspersed with images of a hellish landscape she had to fight her way through. Reaching the safe house where her comrades were waiting was also the end of her mystery play. Her final act before she collapsed at the feet of her supervisor was to inscribe her name in Pandemonium.

Today, she remains dedicated to locating dangers to freedom and democracy, and regularly uses her magic to aid in her work. However, she also seeks to uncover some of the most carefully concealed mysteries in the World of Darkness. Various governments, including her own, and a few of the larger and older organizations she works against possess fascinating tidbits of information — records of intruders from the Abyss, documents by informants who spend their time hunting supernatural monsters and, on a few rare occasions, communications from the monsters themselves. She and her superiors in the Mysterium believe that some of this information might reveal previous hidden secrets.

Description: Ghost is an exceptionally average-looking black woman in her late 20s who possesses the unobtrusive presence of someone who excels at fading into the background. She also has a knack for dressing appropriately for any occasion, appearing in a manner that fits in without causing comment or notice. Her nimbus causes things in her vicinity to become dimmer and unnaturally still.

Storytelling Hints: Ghost is free of the inherent paranoia found in many who share her profession. However, she is constantly watchful and does her best to unobtrusively position herself in a room such that she is near at least one possible exit, while also able overhear any potentially interesting conversations. When necessary, she can lie with sufficient conviction to fool most observers and many polygraphs.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Colt .45 pistol
Real Name: Jane Starlin
Path: Mastigos
Order: Mysterium
Legacy: Subtle Ones
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Computer 2 (Hacking), Investigation 2 (Body Language), Medicine 1, Occult 1, Science 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Drive 2, Firearms 2 (Pistol), Larceny 2 (Security Systems), Stealth 3, Weaponry 1
Social Skills: Empathy 1, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3
Merits: Combat Marksmanship 3, Dream 2, Occultation 2
Willpower: 5
Wisdom: 5 (Suspicion)
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Pride
Initiative: 7
Defense: 3
Speed: 11
Health: 7
Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Fate 1, Mind 2, Space 3
Rotes: *Fate* — Reading the Outmost Eddies (•); *Mind* — Emotional Urging (••); *Space* — Scrying (••), Untouchable (••)
Legacy Attainment: 1st — The Subtle Dance
Mana/per Turn: 12/3
Weapons/Attacks:

Type	*Damage*	*Range*	*Clip*	*Dice Pool*
Pistol, Hvy.	3(L)	30/60/120	7+1	9
Knife	1 (L)	n/a	n/a	5

Armor: 3 ("Untouchable" Space 2)

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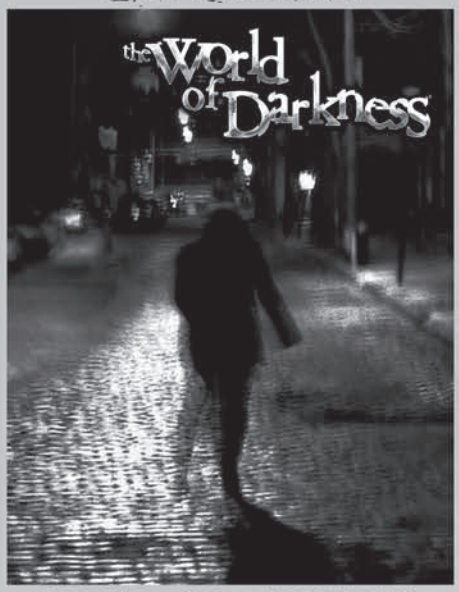

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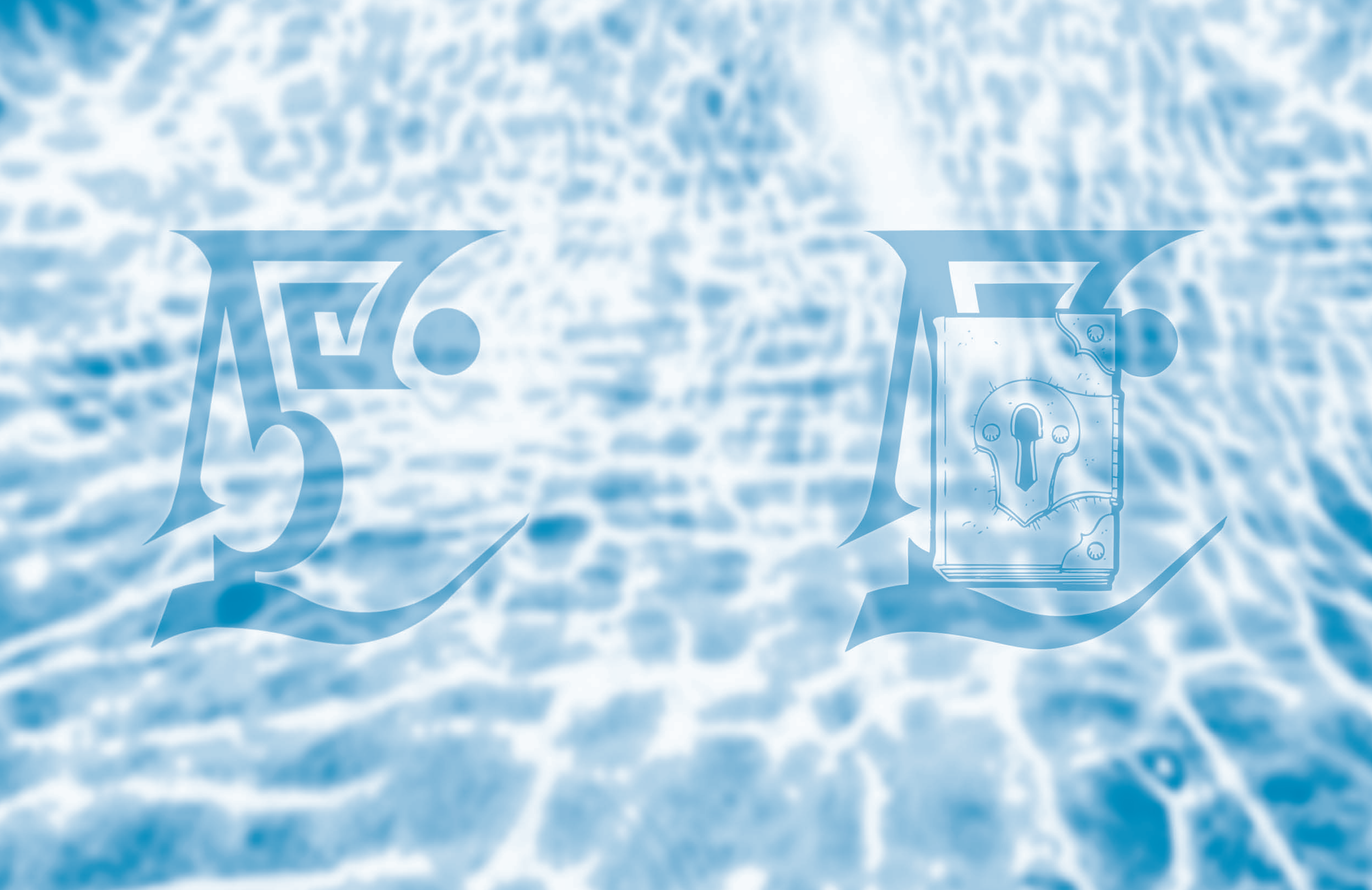
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