Aletheia

aletheia

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Chapter One

Introduction

All religions, arts, and sciences are branches of the same tree. All these aspirations are directed toward ennobling man's life, lifting it from the sphere of mere physical existence and leading the individual towards freedom.

– Albert Einstein

Scientists and philosophers have long tried to make sense of existence. How did the universe begin? Why are we here? Where are we going? The big questions are the most intriguing and the most difficult to answer.

Aletheia is a game of big questions.

Over the last few centuries, mankind's understanding of the universe has grown dramatically. From classical physics to quantum physics, the blurry picture of creation has come more into focus. However, there are still things in the world that remain mysterious and unexplained. Alien abductions, ghostly apparitions, crop circles, near death experiences, clairvoyance, and other unusual phenomena continue to exert a stranglehold on human curiosity. Most of these phenomena are hoaxes, products of overactive imaginations, or explainable by modern science. However, there are exceptions, things that defy empiricism and contradict mankind's understanding of how the universe works. But what if these things are not really unexplainable? What if humanity is only viewing these events from a limited and flawed perspective? Perhaps a simple, yet invisible, explanation underlies all such phenomena.

The Seven Dogs Society is a collection of scientists and philosophers who investigate strange phenomena, believing a single truth binds and underpins it all. They believe this truth also holds the answers to the big questions about our existence and meaning in the universe. By investigating the little mysteries, and discovering the truth behind the unexplainable, the society hopes to gain a more complete picture of reality.

The society is a small one, numbering only seven. A generous benefactor funds the society and provides each member with whatever he or she might need. With all material concerns and burdens removed, the society members can fully devote themselves to the search for truth.

THE GAME

Aletheia is a role-playing game about the weirdness at the fringes of reality. Spontaneous Human Combustion, automatic writing, ESP, the Bermuda Triangle, and other such mysteries are the heart of the game. In *Aletheia*, each player portrays a member of the Seven Dogs Society. Together, they investigate the anomalous phenomena and impossible occurrences that defy logic and commonsense. This includes conducting eyewitness interviews, on-site analysis and observation, and forming hypotheses – all in an attempt to answer the big questions at the heart of the game.

Aletheia supports three different formats of play. Firstly, its focus on investigating mysteries makes it ideal for one-shot adventures; the Gamemaster needs only to focus on a single case of anomalous phenomenon, jettisoning the game's other trappings. Secondly, everything about the game's setting is explained, and no other supplements will ever be required. This means that the Gamemaster will be in on all the game's secrets from the outset and can run *Aletheia* as one single, self-contained campaign. Thirdly, there are so many mysteries and plot hooks in *Aletheia* that the Gamemaster can choose to dole out the truth at a slow and deliberate pace, easily stretching the action out over multiple campaigns.

Eight other chapters round out this book. Players and gamemasters alike should read the next four chapters. They cover the history of the Seven Dogs Society, the society's headquarters, character generation, and game mechanics. The sixth chapter provides case studies of various anomalous phenomena. Though this chapter is primarily designed to spark the Gamemaster's imagination, it lacks any spoilers, making it safe for players to read. The final three chapters are intended for the Gamemaster only. One details the game's background material, including its many mysteries, and another provides tips and suggestions for gamemastering *Aletheia*. The final chapter is a sample adventure suitable as a one-shot investigation or as a campaign leadoff.

READER'S CAVEAT

Aletheia touches on two subjects that may offend some people: religion and drugs. If you are sensitive to these subjects, you should stop reading at this time.
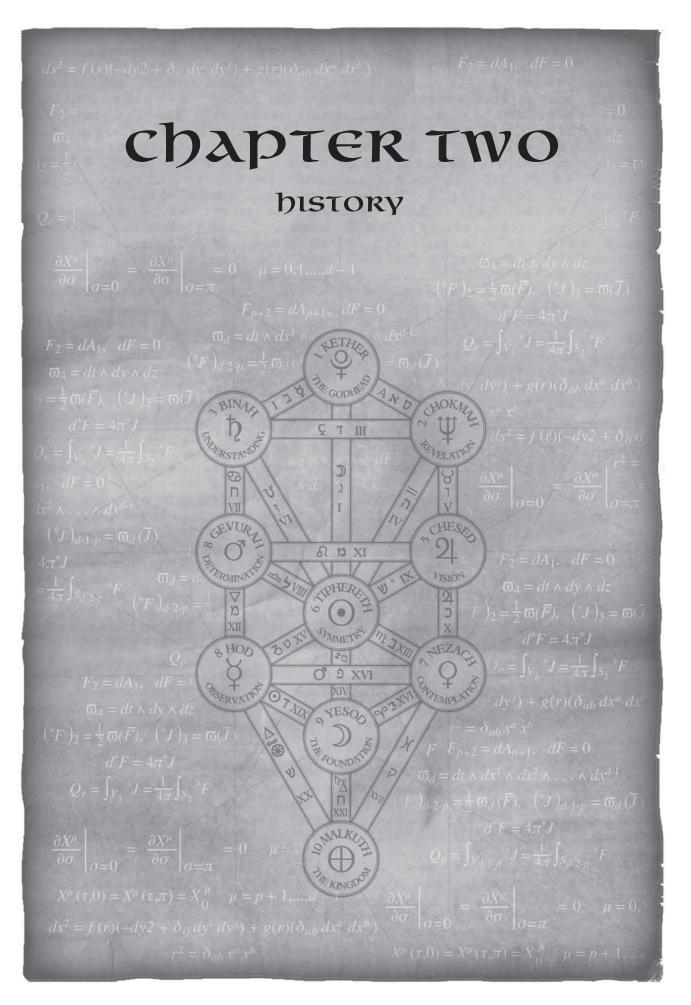
WHAT IS A ROLE-PLAYING GAME?

A role-playing game is akin to improvisational theater. Players assume the roles of characters (referred to as player characters or PCs) who are the protagonists of the play. In some regards, a role-playing game is like Radio Theater in that the story is told verbally and not physically acted out.

Players are the actors and actresses of *Aletheia*. They are the ones who bring its stories to life. Their characters are the principals of the drama. The players decide who their characters are, what they look like, what they do, and how they act; they fuel the dynamic that drives the game via the actions of their characters.

Being a player is more than being an actor because there is no script. In a play, the script tells the actor what to do. In contrast, a role-playing game is wholly freeform and improvisational. The player must decide what the character does and says.

In a role-playing game, one participant assumes the role of Gamemaster (GM). He or she acts as the director, establishing the setting, plot, and mood. The Gamemaster must set the stage for the story being told, creating the framework in which the players act. It is the GM's responsibility to relate the environment to the players; the GM is their eyes and ears, describing the world of *Aletheia* to the players. The Gamemaster also assumes the roles of all the characters with which the players interact outside their group. These GM controlled characters are known as non-player characters (NPCs). While the GM must create the initial framework of the story, the players will determine the ultimate direction of the plot.

In addition to helping the player characters interact with their environment, the GM also acts as referee. The GM must interpret the rules of the game in a fair and impartial manner to facilitate play. Thus, the Gamemaster should be familiar with the rules beforehand so that informed rulings can be made.

chapter two
history

Terrance Chastain founded the Seven Dogs Society in 1970. However, the seeds of its genesis were planted decades earlier. The society's work is built on the vision and labors of a man named Jericho Usher. It is with him that the history of the Seven Dogs Society truly begins.

PRODIGY AND MADMAN

Jericho Nathaniel Usher was born on January 9th, 1900 in Boston, Massachusetts. A child prodigy, Jericho demonstrated his incredible gifts at an early age. By seven, he was a world-renowned violin virtuoso, performing in dozens of countries. By nine, Jericho was solving calculus problems. At age thirteen, he was an accomplished painter… and also demonstrated startling expertise in myriad and diverse subjects such as botany, architecture, and philosophy. Jericho was also an exceptional athlete, though he seldom pursued competitive activities that would have won him fame in this arena. In 1919, Scientific American dubbed him the "Renaissance Man of the 20th Century." Jericho traveled the United States and the world, corresponding with the brightest minds of the scientific and artistic communities. The entire world was at his feet. Unfortunately, in just a few short years, everything would change.

In the fall of 1922, Jericho was diagnosed with *Stargardt's disease*, a macular degenerative condition that gradually destroys the vision of those afflicted. A horrifying side effect of the disease included a yearlong struggle with *Charles Bonnet Syndrome*, an odd condition marked by complex visual hallucinations that interfere with normal perception. In fact, Jericho's hallucinations were so vivid and persistent that he feared he was going mad.

In 1923, Jericho became friends with Charles Fort, an American writer and researcher of paranormal phenomena. Jericho became so fascinated by Fort's work that he opted to follow in his footsteps, zealously pursuing all manner of pseudoscientific research. While this period was personally satisfying for Jericho, it eroded his credibility among the scientific community and the world's intelligentsia. In no time flat, Jericho Usher went from wunderkind to crackpot.

The next twenty years were difficult. For a time, Jericho made a living as an architect, but boredom with current architectural trends drove him from the profession. Worse yet, every major university and scientific think-tank looked upon him with disdain. Though disheartened by his pariah status, Jericho's passion for learning never diminished. With his eyesight worsening each passing year, Jericho knew it was only a matter of time before the simple act of reading a book would become impossible. With this

USING THIS CHAPTER

The information in this chapter can be disseminated in two manners. The first approach is for the GM to allow the players to read everything contained within; doing so will give them a clear picture of exactly what they have signed up for. The second option is for the GM to share only the briefest outline of this chapter with the players. With this second approach, the PCs discover the background of the society during gameplay, learning its history at the same time as their characters. Regardless of how this chapter's information is dispersed, there is nothing in the following pages to ruin the players' enjoyment of the game.

unknowable deadline looming, Jericho frantically devoured a vast array of subject matter.

By 1946, Jericho's vision had deteriorated so badly that the written word was only a blur. Although he learned to read Braille, Jericho found few books of interest that utilized this writing system. Still in need of an intellectual outlet, Jericho teamed up with a young anthropologist named Terrance Chastain, accompanying him on a series of Mesoamerican expeditions. Chastain was enamored with Usher's reputation and all too happy for the companionship. During their three years in the field, the two became close friends.

Jericho and Terrance returned to the states in 1949. Though the two left the country with little to their names, they returned as very wealthy men. Rumors swirled amongst family and friends that they discovered something during their time abroad, a treasure left behind by some ancient civilization. Shortly after their return, Jericho and Terrance jointly purchased land in the tiny, Alaskan town of Seven Dogs. On their sprawling property, they began renovating a dilapidated, three-story Victorian mansion they christened *Hepta Sophistai*, after the Seven Sages of Greece. Although the majority of the construction work was finished within the first few years, endless tinkering and expansion stretched the project out for another twelve. Terrance saw to the staffing of the mansion while Jericho assembled an impressive collection of books for the library. During the initial years of this period, Jericho shared written correspondences with Albert Einstein, a professional acquaintance and steadfast friend from years past. The two intellectuals shared a mutual passion for physics, specifically Einstein's quest for a Unified Field Theory, a single theoretical framework that would unify all the fundamental forces of the universe into a simple equation.

By the mid 1960s, Jericho was completely blind as a result of *Stargardt's disease.* For reasons unknown, though most likely intellectual curiosity, Jericho began

experimenting with tryptamines, psychotropic drugs that alter consciousness and perception. After extensive experimentation, primarily with dimethyltryptamine and psilocybin, Jericho became convinced he was experiencing more than mere hallucinations – Jericho believed he was accessing another level of reality, a mercurial and alien landscape he named the Otherverse. Although Usher's Otherverse was only accessible through altered states of consciousness, he believed it to be as substantive as normal, accepted reality. Jericho was convinced he was on the verge of grasping some nebulous yet important truth, a truth that would explain the very nature of existence.

Jericho's entire life was a search for truth. All his studies, all his setbacks, all his experiences were the universe's way of guiding him to a higher purpose. Jericho long believed this. However, he had never been certain what this purpose was, how everything was connected. His discovery of the Otherverse gave him the clarity that had long been missing from his life. The Otherverse became Jericho's Rosetta Stone. *Charles Bonnet Syndrome*, Fort's anomalous phenomena, and Einstein's Unified Field Theory were all pieces of a much larger puzzle, one that Jericho was seeing in its totality for the first time in his life. Jericho said as much to Terrance, but never elaborated sufficiently for the other man to make any sense of it.

During the closing years of the sixties, Jericho was convinced that he had at last discovered the truth he had long sought, a truth he felt would define humanity's ultimate place in the universe. While under the effects of powerful psychoactive drugs, Jericho would often disappear for days on end. Curiously, he always did so without being noticed leaving and without being spotted in any surrounding location, a feat made more remarkable because Jericho was now completely blind. His reappearances were equally mysterious; he would suddenly walk out of a random room, with no explanation of where he had been or how he had managed to re-enter his home. Like a man possessed, Jericho began to feverishly make modifications to the house, despite his handicap. These architectural changes were made to the unoccupied western annex of the house, and Jericho made Terrance promise to never trespass there. Terrance agreed, though this was mostly to humor his friend who he feared was either going senile or insane.

After months of erratic activity, Jericho told Terrance that he had at last discovered the elusive truth he had been seeking. In overly cryptic fashion, Jericho informed Terrance that the final stage of his journey was upon him, a journey Jericho could only make alone. Terrance paid little mind to such talk, deeming it the ravings of a deteriorating mind.

It was important to Usher that others take up his work and follow in his footsteps once he was gone. To facilitate this, Terrance was given three things: a set of written instructions scribbled on a single sheet of notebook paper, a series of genealogies handwritten on reams of loose-leaf parchment, and nearly fifty pages of aged vellum bound between leather covers. Terrance Chastain was tasked with seeing to the continuation of Usher's work, even though he did not even understand the nature of what his blind partner had been working on for so many years. Though skeptical, Terrance agreed to attend to his friend's wishes.

On December 22nd, in the year 1968, Jericho Nathaniel Usher disappeared forever and without a trace.

THE ANNEX

Initially, Terrance honored his friend's odd request to stay clear of the annex. However, with Jericho's disappearance, Terrance saw no reason to continue doing so. In early 1969, Chastain walked the annex corridor for the first time. What he saw shook him to

his core. The hallway's nine doorways did not lead into the nine adjoining rooms. Instead, each opened to a strange and distant location. One doorway opened to the Mayan ruins of Lubaantun, one of the Central American sites visited by Terrance and Jericho years earlier. Another led to an archaeological site on a desert plateau. One doorway led to a frozen landscape and another to a jungle. Two doorways led to bathrooms that did not exist anywhere in the house, and another led to a junkyard. The final two doorways opened to unfamiliar libraries.

After closer inspection, Terrance realized that these doorways acted like one-way windows; he could see through these portals but those on the other side could not see him. More so, these doorways were not mere windows – they were gateways bridging distant locations to the annex. Terrance also discovered that the nine rooms the doorways were supposed to lead into were still in the annex, though they could only be accessed from the outside by crawling through the rooms' windows. Interestingly enough, once within one of the rooms, Terrance could enter the annex hallway as normal; it was as if these fantastic gateways only existed when standing in the annex's hallway.

After a few weeks, Terrance finally mustered the nerve to walk through one of the doorways. He chose one of the libraries as his destination, feeling it to be the safest choice. Once through the doorway, Terrance found himself inside the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the National Library of France. As he surmised, the portal was indeed one-way, disappearing from sight once he had crossed the threshold and entered the library. Terrance could not return the way he came.

During Jericho's final years, Terrance thought his friend's eccentric and erratic behavior was due to old age, worsening health, and a dangerous drug habit. The annex proved there was more to Jericho's madness. Jericho Usher was clearly onto something,

but what?

After returning from Europe, Terrance began executing Jericho's instructions.

A SOCIETY BORN

The first of Jericho's directives called for the formation of a society to continue his work. When it came to determining membership, the instructions dictated that the society's membership must always number seven, and that all members must be chosen from the genealogies Usher had personally prepared. Should something ever happen to one of the society, a replacement was to be chosen by Chastain as soon as possible to maintain an active membership of seven. To aide in the recruitment process, Usher had mapped out various family trees. Most went back a few centuries, though some reached as far as 150 BCE. Impossibly, all of the genealogies extended to the year 2012. With a mixture of surprise and awe, Chastain conducted his own research into the genealogies and proved them to be legitimate. Somehow, Usher single-handedly traced family lines back hundreds and thousands of years, and predicted births that would occur years, even decades, after his death.

The second, and most important, of Usher's instructions tasked the society with its purpose. The vellum manuscript, dubbed the *Usher Codex*, was to be given to the seven, and they were to use its insights to continue Jericho's research. The manuscript was an odd mixture of colored images, pencil sketches, and scribbled notes in the margins. Encoded within its forty-seven pages were the secret truths uncovered by Jericho, or so Terrance believed. By solving the mystery of the *Usher Codex*, Chastain believed that the society would discover whatever secrets Jericho had learned. Curiously, the codex included prescient references, with Jericho giving first hand accounts of many events that occurred after his disappearance.

Equally perplexing was the fact that laboratory tests dated the vellum to approximately the 15th century, though the handwriting and sketches were clearly made by Usher's own hand.

Continuing Jericho's work involved more than interpreting the *Usher Codex*. The society was to investigate and catalog anomalous phenomena and unexplained events. In his written instructions to Chastain, Jericho wrote, "*forteana, anomalous phenomena so named for my dear friend Charles, are echoes of higher truths; by solving these little mysteries, we can approach the greater ones*."

Terrance often wondered why Jericho did not simply come out and say what he meant. Why the obscure clue dropping? Though bewildered, Terrance nonetheless followed his friend's instructions as best as he was able.

The third and final of Usher's directives detailed the support the society was to receive. Firstly, the vast wealth accumulated by Terrance and Jericho was to be used to fund the society and support its members; they would want for nothing. Secondly, the house in Seven Dogs would be made available to the society; it would serve as lodging and headquarters, and the house's massive library would be at their disposal. Thirdly, Terrance was to assist the society in any way possible.

As instructed, Terrance scouted potential members from the genealogies. Private detectives were hired, and interviews were conducted. It took nearly two years for Terrance to assemble the society. A priest, two new-agers, and a quantum physicist joined because they were already seeking the truth, each in their own fashion. Two others joined because Jericho Usher's life and story intrigued them. The final member was a homeless man who simply wanted a roof over his head and food on his plate. In late 1970s, nicknaming themselves the Seven Dogs Society, this eclectic group began their work.

It didn't take long for the society to realize the commonality they shared. Although the seven were chosen from different genealogies (Jericho had researched and transcribed dozens of family trees) they all possessed startling, otherworldly abilities. Some were gifted with ESP, others could see into the future, and some had capabilities that seemed to defy definition. Although each possessed one or more unusual gifts, each had no inkling at the outset that they were not alone in this manner. The Seven Dogs Society, presumably by the design of Jericho Usher, was itself an example of the anomalous phenomena the society was tasked with investigating.

The society suffered its first setback in the fall of 1972, when a fire claimed a third of the house library. Among the casualties was the *Usher Codex*. Only four of the pages were saved from the flames; all others were lost.

The origin of the fire was never determined.

The society spent the next thirteen years pursuing Jericho's work. Paranormal phenomena were investigated and cataloged, the clues in the surviving manuscript pages were researched, and the locations beyond the nine doorways were explored. Jericho's puzzle was not yet solved, but the society was making progress.

In 1984, while conducting research at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, a missing page from the *Usher Codex* was found. How the page survived the fire was never explained. Likewise, the society never discovered how the page ended up in the foreign library. However, this development gave hope that other pages somehow survived the flames.

In December of 1999, the seven society members disappeared forever, presumably departing on the

same path walked by Usher over three decades earlier. Exactly where they went, Terrance would never know. Once it was clear the society was never going to return, Terrance turned to the genealogies to form a second iteration of the Seven Dogs Society.

It took Terrance over two years to reform the society. Unfortunately, this incarnation proved extremely short-lived – within a year, all seven members were dead. While walking the annex hallway one evening, Terrance discovered their bodies rotting in the jungle heat on the other side of one of the doorways. Chastain feared that someone or something had left the bodies in clear view for him to see, perhaps as a warning. This thought so unnerved Chastain that it took him weeks to gather the courage to travel through the doorway and tend to the society's remains. Inspection of the seven corpses revealed a bullet wound to each head.

THE PHOENIX RISES

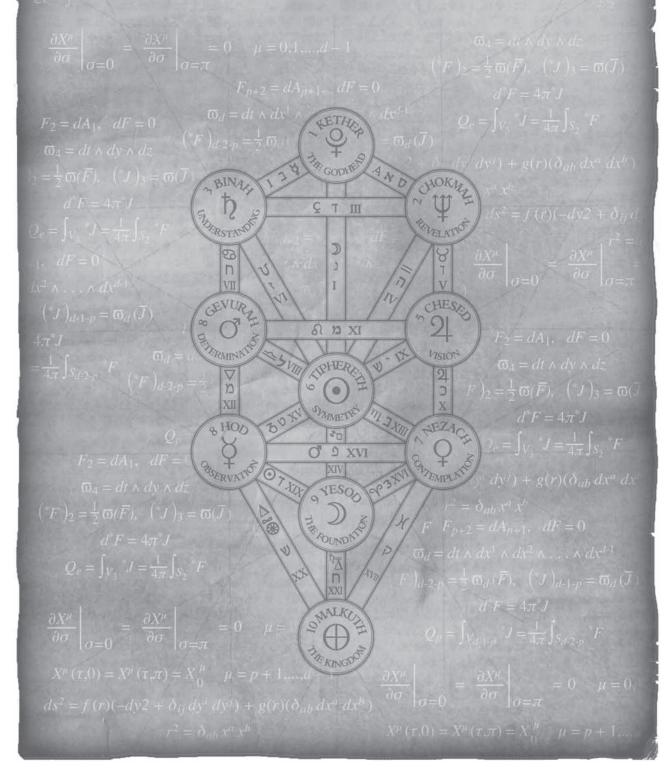One month ago, Terrance Chastain, now 83 years of age, finished assembling the society's third incarnation. The player characters are among the seven new recruits. In all likelihood, this is the last formation of the Seven Dogs Society. Chastain is too old and establishing the society yet again would be exceedingly difficult for him.

Jericho's truth awaits.

CHAPTER THREE

HEPTA SOPHISTAI

The town of Seven Dogs is situated on the east side of Maruak Lake, which drains into the North Fork of the Kuskokwim River. Originally a seasonal fishing camp of the Yupik Eskimo, the region drew the interest of the government of Alaska when gold was discovered in the Kuskokwim Mountains in 1912 and, with hopes of a second "Klondike Rush," a settlement was established at the confluence of the Maruak and the Kuskokwim Rivers. The Maruak River was dammed in that same year, to bring hydroelectric power to the community and serve as an airfield for floatplanes bringing in supplies from Fairbanks. Though the population of Seven Dogs rose to almost 5000, in three short years the gold dried up, and with it the town.

In 1949, when Jericho Usher and Terrance Chastain first came to Seven Dogs, the town had dwindled to 150 people, mostly Yupik. In addition, the plant was functioning only erratically and the dam was showing signs of long term wear. With the agreement of the Alaskan government, the two men purchased 1800 acres of land along the west side of the lake, including the plant and dam, and oversaw the repair of the hydroelectric facility. Usher and Terrance called upon the services of a friend and engineer, Jeremiah Talbott, to maintain the hydroelectric plant while a large manor, dock, and floatplane base were built further north along the shore of the lake.

With the refurbishment of the power facility, the town began to grow. As of the 2003 census, there are 520 people living in Seven Dogs. The plant, rated at 3.8 MW, supplies plenty of power for a town five times this size, though a significant amount of the excess energy is diverted to power the growing amenities of the manor house.

THE GROUNDS

Most of the nearly three square miles of land,

owned by the Seven Dogs Society, is virgin spruce forest teeming with moose, elk, timber wolf, and the occasional grizzly bear. Carved into the forest along the shoreline sits the house itself, a four story mansion including a central building, two wings, and an annex attached to the rear of the building. An unpaved road allows quads and snowmobiles access to the floatplane airbase and dock at the lakeshore, and to the hydroelectric plant facilities about a mile to the southwest.

Behind the house proper is a carefully tended Japanese Garden. The entrance, flanked by two large stone lanterns, faces due east; from this point, on a clear day, one can see the blue and white shading of Mt. McKinley in the distance. A path of fine stones traces a figure-eight through the mostly evergreen garden. The western loop of this path passes over two bridges, allowing visitors to cross over the garden's large pond and step onto an island. The pond is fed from a very realistic, though artificial, waterfall trickling down from the hill which marks the western boundary of the garden. The pond and waterfall are heated to prevent freezing in all but the coldest of winter nights and allow the water to be stocked with schools of carp and koi. At the center of the island is a teahouse, while several benches ring the perimeter to allow ample places to relax, meditate, or just get lost in the movement of the fish. Further removed from the house is a 12,000 square foot greenhouse, which is heated and lit for year round production. Nearly all of the fruits and vegetables that are consumed in the manor are provided by this massive onsite garden.

Three people are employed by Chastain to keep the grounds. Ichio Masuki, originally from Ishikawa, Japan, tends the Japanese garden and lives in a small three room *minka* which sits adjacent to the manicured plot. In addition, two Yupik brothers, Don and Mason Kitchuli, live and work at the ample grounds of the manor. Don tends the immediate landscaping and keeps the vegetable garden healthy and productive,

while Mason maintains the outer grounds. Mason spends most of his time prowling the woods surrounding the house, keeping the wolf population down, and bringing the occasional moose, elk, or bear in to be butchered.

HEPTA SOPHISTAI

The House itself is named *Hepta Sophistai,* in honor of the Seven Sages of Greek lore. The original structure was a three story Victorian home built to be the palatial residence of the mayor of Seven Dogs. After the mining bust in the area, the mayor left and the house was never occupied. The building fell into disrepair until Usher and Chastain purchased the land in the late forties. The structure was refurbished and a pair of two-story wings was added onto the house to serve both the society and the servants that were needed to support those living in the mansion.

Architecturally, the house is a strange mixture of Victorian and Classical themes. The first sight seen of the edifice, as one makes their way from where the floatplane has docked, is the large colonnade surrounding the home's wraparound porch. These columns support walking balconies on the second and third floors. Twenty-two of the columns, including the seven that form the portico, are carved in the forms of sagacious scholars watching inward. The remaining pillars are decorated with spiral work that could just as easily be Celtic as Mycenaean in design. As one looks up, however, Victorian influences take over. The roof is steeply peaked with dormered windows, while the gables themselves are decorated with spidery spindles and brackets. Two towers, one on each of the wings, rise up three stories to flank the center structure. Behind this center building is a third tower, towering four stories in height. This last tower rises above an annex which was the last construction done on the building.
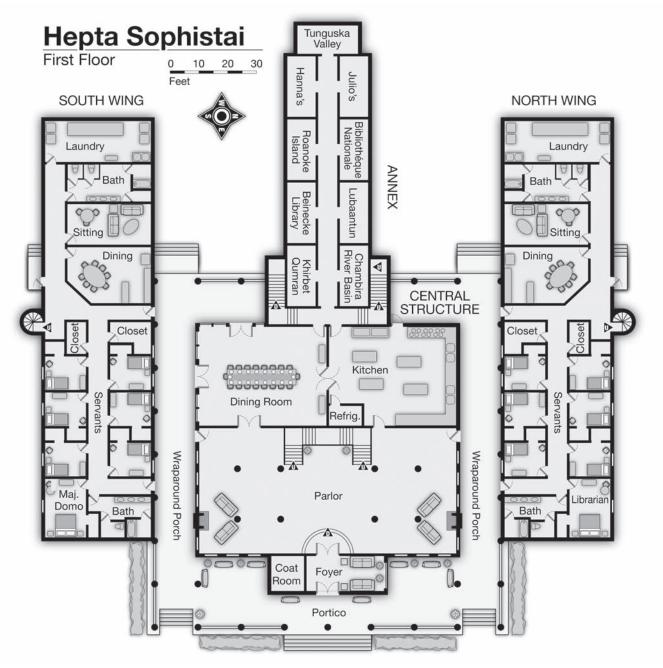
THE CENTRAL BUILDING

The central building is the oldest structure on the grounds, dating back almost a hundred years. Entering from the west, a visitor would likely be met by the butler, who calls himself Jeffrey in spite of his clear Russian heritage, in the front foyer. The foyer has a small adjoining coatroom where one can keep all the myriad of cold weather gear that is necessary in the Alaskan climate. From the foyer, two steps down leads into a sunken parlor, where the members of the society can engage and entertain their occasional visitors. The parlor has a marble floor where images from the Odyssey and the Iliad are carved in bas-relief. Along the walls hang pieces from the cubist painters Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso, interspersed with works from M.C. Escher. Along the frieze, lies a variation of the Bayeaux Tapestry carved in full relief by the surrealist sculptor Marcel Duchamp. Doors on the left and the right access the wrap-around porch which, even with the addition of the two wings, still completely surrounds the original structure. Two sets of stairs converge to lead to the second floor library. A double door on the back wall to the left of the stairs leads to the formal dining room, while a smaller door on the right opens to the kitchen.

Compared to the parlor, the dining room is an austere chamber dominated by a cedar table which can seat twenty comfortably. Large hutches, holding a variety of dishware and eating utensils, flank the set of swinging double doors which lead to the kitchen. Seven window alcoves line the east and south walls, allowing a place to sit away from the table for those wishing to take in the long summer days. Other than doors to the kitchen and the parlor, there are several exits to the wraparound porch and a door to the rear hall behind the kitchen.

The kitchen, unlike the antiquated look of many of the other areas, affords every modern convenience; the spacious room includes a walk-in refrigerator and freezer, three ovens, a six foot long griddle, barbeque grill, and four different islands for food preparation. Large chrome shelves dominate the northern wall and hold cookware, knives, and utensils for any necessary work of culinary art. Each island has a flat panel workstation connected to a private network and the internet. This network allows the cook to access not only the internal store of recipes, but the vast array of information that can be found on the Internet or the occasional feed from one of the myriad of cooking programs on the air. Besides the portals connecting the dining room and parlor, there is a set of stairs descending down to the pantry and wine cellar.

The central structure is completely surrounded by a wraparound wooden porch, which was part of the original construction. Now, with the current add-ons, the porch serves to connect the first floor of each wing with the central building. In addition, the wings are linked internally to the center structure via the second level, causing some of the encircling porch to be roofed. This creates an odd sense of enclosure adjacent to the wings and allows for a number of odd nooks and tunnels along one structure or the other. It also helps protect and isolate the porch from the extremes of weather and allows for quick access, when necessary, between the servants' facilities and the dining room or kitchen. The rear hall, connecting the dining room with the annex, was built partially upon the west side of the wraparound porch. This hall is quite short and then branches; a portal sits at this branch point, the door leading to the annex. Turning toward the left, the hall ends in a set of stairs which lead down to the gymnasium and game room. Turning right, the hall ends at a set of stairs leading upward. Presumably, this staircase would lead to unfinished construction above the annex, as the stairs rise 4 steps to a landing, turn left and climb 11 steps, turn left, and rise a final seven steps before ending at an empty wall. From the outside, this stairwell would appear to lead high up into the vaulted ceiling of the annex, but the original purpose or plan for the stairwell is unknown.
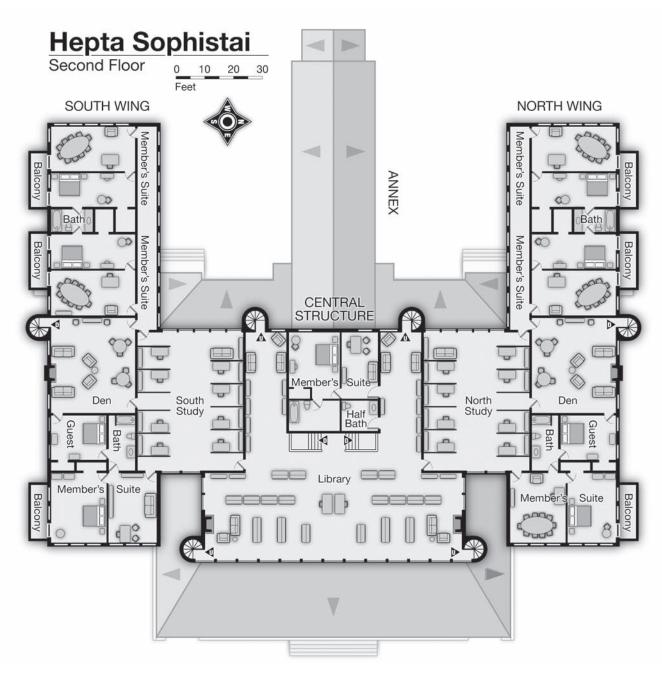
The second story is dominated by the library. Roughly shaped as a "T', the library occupies the eastern half of the second story and is dominated by large windows that offer splendid views of the Alaskan Range and the lofty peaks in nearby Denali National Park. Originally, the library was stocked primarily with texts and treatises on history, science, philosophy, and the paranormal. However, in later years it was expanded to account for the tastes of the various society members who have called this place home. Now, the library has collections from a variety of science fiction and fantasy authors, a large number of forties pulp magazines, and the largest collection of *manga* in Alaska. In addition, the librarian, Arthur,

Hepta Sophistai
First Floor

0 10 20 30
Feet

SOUTH WING

Laundry

Bath

Sitting

Dining

Closet

Closet

Servants

Maj. Domo

Bath

Wraparound Porch

Tunguska Valley

Hanna's

Julio's

Roanoke Island

Bibliothèque Nationale

Beinecke Library

Lubaantun

Khirbet Qumran

Chambira River Basin

ANNEX

Dining Room

Kitchen

Refrig.

Parlor

Coat Room

Foyer

Portico

CENTRAL STRUCTURE

NORTH WING

Laundry

Bath

Sitting

Dining

Closet

Closet

Servants

Librarian

Bath

Wraparound Porch

keeps subscriptions to a variety of professional journals ranging from *American Antiquity* to *Physical Review Letters*.

Most of the older texts are kept toward the stem of the "T", away from the windows. Comfortable chairs and couches are placed on the east side of the room and enable summer reading by the windows' natural light. There are two desks with computer terminals near the center of the room. These computers are connected to the general network that runs through the house, and allow for satellite access to the Internet and to the cataloguing system of the library. Three doors lie along the stem of the "T"; one leads to a society member's suite, identical to the other six located in the wings. The other two doors open to

Hepta Sophistai
Second Floor

SOUTH WING

NORTH WING

ANNEX

CENTRAL STRUCTURE

Den

South Study

Member's Suite

Half Bath

North Study

Den

Guest

Bath

Bath

Guest

Member's Suite

Library
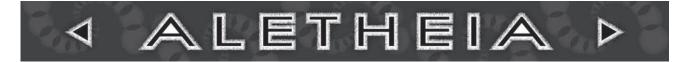
Member's Suite

Balcony

Balcony

private studies that join the central building to each of the wings. Four small portals lead to turrets enclosing spiral staircases, one on each side and two down hallways running alongside the studies to the western wall of the building. The ones on the north and south side connect to the observatory and the orchestral chamber respectively. One of the west facing turrets climbs two stories to the top of a floating tower and solarium. The final turret climbs 22 steep steps and ends at an iron door that gives access to the roof.
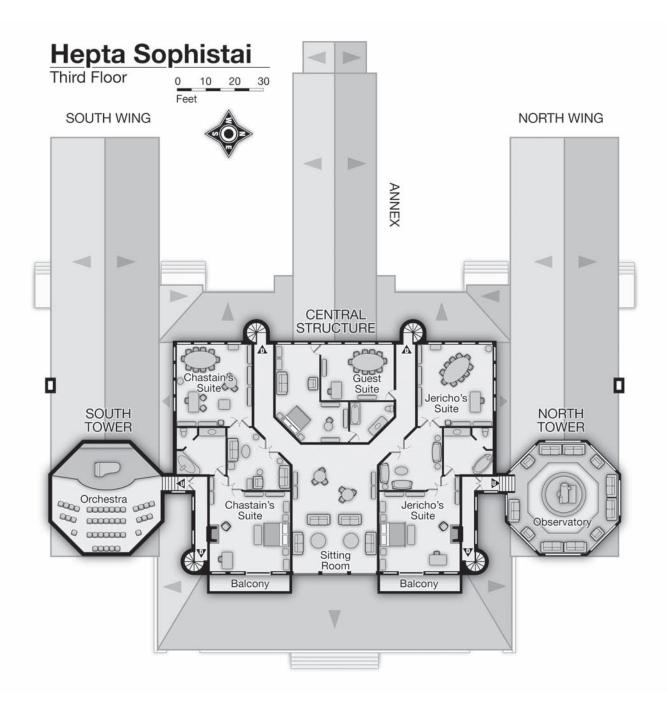
One study sits on either side of the library and each are quiet places to remove oneself from the activity of the rest of the house. Large floor-to-ceiling windows open to both the eastern front of the house and the western rear end of the house. Doors connect each study to both the library and the main hall, which runs the entire length of each wing. Both studies are decorated in cherry and mahogany, and are subdivided into eight cloister cells much like a monastic scriptorium. These cells are comprised simply of a desk enclosed on three sides, with shelf space to place books and connections for a laptop to hook into the local network. A dry-erase board is affixed to one wall in each cell to facilitate note-taking or inspired scribbling. The frieze in the southern room depicts, in bas-relief, many of the events in the Book of Genesis. The northern room has similar relief work, but the content is a little more difficult to decipher. Some depictions appear to be from the Book of Revelation, interspersed with icons of angelic origin. Also prominent in the carving are creatures of a distinctly alien nature, as well as unusual geometrical figures including Moebius strips and Klein bottles.

The third floor contains three bedrooms and a shared sitting room. Two small hallways emerge from the spiral stairs leading from the two west turrets. Between these hallways is a small guest bedroom that is rarely used, as it is reserved for special guests of Chastain. The halls emerge into a joint sitting room that offers incredible views of Maruak Lake, the town

of Seven Dogs, and the Alaska Range beyond. To the south of the sitting room is the bedroom of Terrance Chastain. In many ways, Chastain's room is like a living history of the explorer's life. The décor is an eclectic mix of oriental and Mesoamerican, with some splashes of the Australian Bush thrown in. Ancient artifacts occupy nearly every free space available in the room, and all manner of old manuscripts clutter shelves and drawers in every piece of furniture. The bookcases, the nightstands, the chairs, ottomans, and even the bed are decidedly British in design. However, the level of disorder makes it difficult to see the underlying style of the furniture, and it is nearly impossible to find something specific in this room. Fortunately, Terrance has a near photographic ability to recall the location of any of the hundreds of treasures he has arrayed throughout his chamber.

Jericho's room lies on the opposite side of the sitting room. The door is locked, and has been since Jericho left. Terrance keeps the key on a chain in a hidden compartment behind his nightstand. In contrast to the whirlwind of disorder that is Chastain's room, everything in Jericho's private quarters is arranged in meticulous order. Bookshelves are labeled in both English and Braille and are grouped alphabetical by topic. Strangely, many of the books have copyright dates that postdate Jericho's departure, implying that the room is still visited on occasion. Nevertheless, the chamber has a thick layer of dust covering nearly everything. Seven trunks lie beneath an equal number of curtained windows, holding carefully aligned treasures from a variety of locations. A small writing desk contains an assortment of inks and pens dating from modern to early classical periods. The lowest left-hand drawer holds a mix of paper, parchment, vellum, and a few sheaves of papyrus.

The northern rear turret leads up again from the third floor to a small hendecagonal tower, which sits above the house and is positioned over the annex. This room has windows on every side and affords an

Hepta Sophistai
Third Floor

SOUTH WING

NORTH WING

ANNEX

CENTRAL STRUCTURE

SOUTH TOWER

NORTH TOWER

Chastain's Suite

Guest Suite

Jericho's Suite

Orchestra

Observatory

Chastain's Suite

Jericho's Suite

Sitting Room

Balcony

Balcony

excellent view in all directions. Decorated in a style borrowed from Imperial Japan, the floor is covered in a complicated arrangement of *tatami* mats which perfectly fit this eleven-sided chamber. Hanging scrolls are placed above each window such that they can be rolled down to occlude the light; when in use, they do not so much darken the room as diffuse any incoming sunlight to a soft glow.

Two wings were added onto the original structure in the early fifties, shortly after the property was purchased. These wings are connected internally on the second floor of the structure and externally by the porch surrounding the original building. The first floor of each wing contains the residences and workspaces of the staff who maintain the house. This includes larger quarters for the majordomo and the

librarian, and smaller rooms for the butler, chef, head maid, and assistants. Each wing also has a laundry area, a sitting room, a small dining chamber, and two bathrooms.

The second floor of the wings is devoted to sleeping accommodations for the society members. In the center of each wing is a large comfortable den with a fireplace. The den contains plenty of seating, and a complete home theatre system with plasma television. These practically matching living spaces are each at the top of a turreted spiral stair, which leads down to the servants' quarters and the gymnasium below. Each wing also contains three large suites reserved for members of the society. These quarters are each well decorated in a relatively mundane British Colonial motif; ivory or jet ornamentation offsets the mahogany and rosewood furniture, which is otherwise quite streamlined. Each suite contains a large bedroom, including a writing desk and several plush chairs. A sitting room adjoins the bedroom, and contains a large desk, a television, a small bar with refrigerator and microwave, and enough seating for at least 10 people. Two large bathrooms are in each wing, one between two of the member suites, and the other between the den and the third member suite. Finally, each wing has a guest room which, although smaller than the member suites and without a sitting room, is decorated in a similar fashion. These guest rooms are located near the front of each wing, off of the study.

An octagonal tower rises up above each wing, and can be accessed from the stairs in the library. On the south wing, this tower room is an orchestral room. A third of the chamber is a raised stage, on which sits a grand piano. Towards the rear of the stage are several closets that hold an impressive panoply of different musical instruments. These closets are inset so as to not detract from the natural acoustics of the chamber. The roof is vaulted, but an internal membrane smoothes the eight edges of the roof into a curved, hyperbolic

dome to improve the auditory characteristics of the room. The north wing tower serves as a planetarium and observatory. This roof also comes to a sharp peak, to prevent snow accumulation, and each panel is made of glass. This allows excellent viewing of the winter aurora and gives plenty of options for the 14" reflecting telescope that is the centerpiece of the room.

BASEMENT

When the house was acquired in 1949, the rear part of the structure had begun to sag because of substantial thawing of the permafrost and inadequate support to handle such movement of the soil. Extensive construction was done to lay a secondary foundation along the rear of the house, and chills were placed along the exterior of this foundation to shunt away excess heat accumulation beneath the mansion, which could further melt the permafrost. While this work was underway, a large basement was installed which runs from one side of the house, beneath the annex, all the way to the other side. The central feature of this basement is a gymnasium that includes an exercise room, a multi-use court, a swimming pool, two racquetball/squash courts, a sauna, and two changing rooms with showers. This gym can be accessed from the center of the south wing which leads to the exercise room, from the rear hall near the annex which opens to the pool, and from the north wing which connects to the multi-use court. Separate to the gym is the wine cellar and pantry; this large room, accessed from the kitchen, serves primarily as food and drink storage for the household's needs. Behind the gymnasium, between the two changing rooms, is a large game room. Among its amenities are several pool tables, table tennis, a couple air hockey tables, a small alcove containing several dozen vintage arcade and pinball games, and a two-lane bowling alley. The game room also has a fully stocked wet bar and espresso bar.

THE ANNEX

The annex was the final construction completed on the house, designed entirely while Jericho was blind. Originally, the annex was conceived of in the late fifties to be laboratory space for some of the bigger spectrometers and microscopes that were being used at that time in analytical archaeology. The exterior of the large open structure was built, but Jericho's deteriorating condition made it difficult for him to set the lab up. During the closing years of the sixties, with inspiration blazing in his mind, Jericho began to work feverishly on redesigning the purpose of the annex. Nine small rooms, each 11' x 22', were fit into the construction, with a hall of doorways connecting the rooms. Each room contains a four-pane window and is floored in hardwood, but is otherwise completely empty. From the hall, however, this interior is never visible. Instead, each portal opens onto a different location not found within the mansion.

KHIRBET QUMRAN

The first doorway, going clockwise from the left, opens to a desert plateau overlooking what seems to be an archaeological site. In the distance a cave is visible, set into a steep cliff. This is Khirbet Qumran, an ancient settlement dating back at least to the second century BCE, perhaps even earlier. Qumran is located on an arid plateau about a mile from the northwest shore of the Dead Sea in modern day Israel's West Bank region. The construction at Qumran is believed to have once served as a civil and religious structure, then later to have housed both Roman and Jewish soldiers. The site currently is protected as part of the Qumran National Park. The park is typically reached by turning west off of Road 90, four and a half miles south of the Beit Haarava junction. Qumran National Park is roughly 15 miles east of Jerusalem and 5 miles south of Jericho. Though the Qumran site remains an archaeological curiosity and contains some of the best-preserved pottery to be found thus far, the locale is most famous for treasure found in the nearby cave… the location of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

PRESUMED HISTORY OF THE SITE

The site of Khirbet Qumran appears to have been occupied as early as the 7th and 8th centuries BCE. Several of the structures, including a deep circular cistern and a number of exterior walls, seem to date from that time. Most of the construction, however, appears to have been built late second century BCE, and includes several additional cisterns and a complex system of aqueducts, a few pottery kilns, and several buildings. The main edifice stood three stories tall and contained a large eating room, a stable, laundry facilities, several workshops and flourmills, and a room containing several tables perhaps used for writing. No sleeping quarters have been found at the site, though tents or caves along the nearby cliffs might have been used for shelter.

The site seems to have been vacated for a short time in the first century C.E. and then was subsequently inhabited by Roman soldiers during the Great Revolt by the Jewish people over the Roman conquerors. A Roman garrison was kept at the site for about twenty years and then apparently abandoned. In the middle of the second century, the site was reoccupied by Bar-Kokhba fighters in the second Jewish revolt against Rome.

DEAD SEA SCROLLS

Two Bedouin shepherds came across a clay jar in a cave near Khirbet Qumran in 1947. The jar contained seven parchment scrolls. These scrolls passed through the hands of a variety of antiquities dealers before being purchased by Hebrew scholars. The scrolls were written primarily on parchment, though a few were papyrus and contained copies of the books of the Hebrew Bible. When the scholars realized what had been found, they organized a search of the

caves where the original seven documents had been discovered. Many additional scrolls and thousands of fragments have since been found in eleven caves in the area. Although some of these documents were well cared for and stored in tubes or jars, many more seem to have been placed hastily in piles. The latter typically fell apart rapidly, requiring the archaeologists to exercise extreme care in reconstructing the documents. All told, the scrolls contain versions of all the books in the standard Hebrew bible, save for the book of Esther and the book of Nehemiah. There are additional books which were not included in the bible, such as the book of Enoch and the Testament of Levi. The books were primarily written in various dialects of Hebrew, though some are printed in Aramaic and a few in Koine Greek. Carbon dating of the documents places their origins between the second century BCE and the first century CE.

ESSENES

Until recently, the most prevalent hypothesis regarding the people living at Khirbet Qumran, and the origin of the Dead Sea scrolls, was that the scrolls were written by the Qumran people who belonged to a sect of the Jewish faith known as the Essenes. The Essenes were followers of a way of religious living that prospered around the second century BC and, by the time of the Great Revolt, were considered alongside the Pharisees and the Sadducees as the three prominent sects of Jewish philosophy. The Essenes practiced a mystical branch of Judaism, and led a communal life in many towns throughout the land of Israel. Strongly eschatological, they believed the coming end of days was near at hand, and only those who lived a pure and righteous life would be saved from divine damnation; it was believed these fortunate few would then create a new society for the future. The Essenes lived lives of celibacy and moderation… they were forbidden from swearing oaths, were expected to control their temper and carried weapons only in self-defense. Food wasn't

allowed to be altered (such as by cooking), so the Essenes were likely strict vegetarians.

CURRENT CONTROVERSY

Although the Essene connection has been the predominant theory regarding the Qumran community and the Dead Sea scrolls, no firm connection between the scrolls and the ruins have been established. The scriptorium, which is assumed to be in the main building at the Qumran site, is not a common feature of buildings of the same age in the area, primarily because scribes tended to write on tablets nestled on their crossed legs, and not on tables such as the ones found in the room. Additionally, the scrolls seem to have been written by several hundred different writers, more than could have been housed at Khirbet Qumran at any time. Many scholars postulate whether the scrolls instead could have came from the Temple of Jerusalem, or some other Hebrew library, and been simply hidden away prior to the Roman occupation. In this case, it's uncertain whether the people at Qumran were even involved in the storage of the scrolls. Regardless, two things seem clear; it seems likely that, even if not Essene, the people at Qumran followed a communal life very similar to Essene philosophy, and whoever stored the scrolls in the caves of Qumran, needed to store most of them in a hurry.

BEINECKE LIBRARY

The next doorway of the annex, continuing clockwise, opens to a set of red couches next to a shelf of well-used books. This is one of many study rooms at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, located in the center of Yale University. The Beinecke Library is the largest building in the world reserved solely for the preservation and storage of rare books and manuscripts. This six-story edifice boasts no windows; the walls are instead made of a translucent marble, which transmits diffuse lighting

within while protecting the tomes from the damage of direct sunlight. In addition to the six stories above ground, the book stacks extend an additional three stories into the earth. A sunken courtyard features the sculpture of Isamu Noguchi showing a pyramid, a cube, and a ring said to represent time, chance, and the sun respectively. The library has an exhibition hall displaying certain rare books that come into the collection, and includes one of the forty-eight Gutenberg Bibles in existence. The massive building also contains study rooms, reading alcoves, a microfilm area, various offices, and storage facilities.

FORT RALEIGH

The third doorway opens to dirty gray walls surrounding a pit toilet. The word "CRØ" is scrawled crudely on the left wall. This public bathroom is located at the Fort Raleigh National Historic Site. Situated on Roanoke Island, on the Outer Banks region of North Carolina, the site was built to preserve the location of the first English Settlement in North America. The tourist-focused local houses a reconstruction of the original fort, Elizabethan gardens, visitor center, and the Waterside Theatre. For over sixty years, the Waterside Theatre has hosted performances of the Paul Green play, *The Lost Colony*, which commemorates the founding of the first English colony and their mysterious disappearance in the latter years of the 16th century.

ROANOKE ISLAND

Roanoke is a lightly forested island, roughly eight miles long and two miles wide, that lies between the Barrier Islands and the mainland of North Carolina. The island contains two towns, Manteo and Wanchese, named after the first two natives brought back to England after the initial explorations of the Outer Banks region by Sir Walter Raleigh. Like much of the Outer Banks, most of the local industry is devoted to tourism, with numerous restaurants, bars and shops

nearby. A majority of the residential homes in the area are used solely for rental housing for the many visitors who vacation in the region. Roanoke Island lies about two hours south of Norfolk, VA, which is the nearest large city, and roughly four hours east of Raleigh, NC, the state capital.

THE LOST COLONY

Roanoke Island was first explored by the English in 1584, during an expedition funded by Sir Walter Raleigh and the crown. This expedition was tasked to explore the North American coast to find a site for a colony and fort from which to tap the latent wealth of the Americas, and to launch attacks against the Spanish treasure galleons sailing out of the Caribbean. The expedition, led by Phillip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe, sailed along the Outer Banks region before deciding that Roanoke Island would be an ideal site to launch raids against the Spanish. The two men explored the island, met with the local Algonquin people, and returned to England bringing with them various samples of the local flora and fauna, including two Algonquin men, Manteo and Wanchese.

After hearing the reports of Amadas and Barlowe, and seeing the wonders they returned with, Raleigh organized a colonizing expedition to return to Roanoke Island. The ships left England the following spring with a number of colonists, primarily soldiers. The grounding of a ship along the treacherous shoals of the Outer Banks initially ruined much of the food stores the colonists brought from England, which postponed their colonization efforts. The men instead focused on exploring the island, and later moved their exploration efforts to the mainland; this brought them into substantial contact with many of the local tribes there. Lack of food increased tensions with the native people in the area, and relations between the English and Algonquin people were poor at best. This was highlighted by an incident where several natives were accused of stealing a silver cup. Sir

Richard Grenville, the commander of the expedition, responded by sending his men to the last village they had visited and had the soldiers burn it to the ground, killing all who lived there. Feeling the situation tense at the nascent colony, Grenville tasked his subordinate, a man by the name of Ralph Lane, to finish construction without him. Leaving Lane with seventy-five men, Grenville sailed back to England, promising to return the following April with more men and fresh supplies.

The winter saw degrading relations between the colonists and the native tribes. On an expedition up the Roanoke River, Lane and his men had to repel an attack. In response, Lane assaulted the natives in their capital, killing the tribal chief, Wingina. The difficulties of winter waned as spring came into bloom, and the colonists waited hopefully for their reinforcements, but as spring warmed into summer Grenville's promised return never bore fruit. The colonists didn't see a single new Englishman until June, when a ship bearing Sir Francis Drake paused by the colony after a successful raid in the Caribbean. Seeing the colonists bedraggled and besieged, Drake offered to return the men to England, an offer they happily accepted. Like ships passing in the night, the colonists returned home while Grenville sailed back to Roanoke with the belated reinforcements. Grenville found the site abandoned when he arrived in July and decided to return, leaving a token presence of fifteen men to secure the site.

By the middle of the year, a return expedition was sent to colonize Roanoke Island. The colonists this time included women and children, and was intended to create a self-supporting colony instead of a military presence. This mission was led by an artist and friend of Raleigh's, John White. White was tasked with picking up the fifteen men left behind, restoring relations with the natives, and resettling the region. However, when the second wave of colonists arrived, the site was abandoned… save for the bones of a single man. White attempted to reestablish relations with the neighboring tribes, but the tribal leaders - aggrieved by Lane the year prior - wouldn't meet with the new colony. The sole tribe that was still friendly to the English was the Croatans, who lived south of the island on present-day Hatteras Island. The Croatans revealed to White that the English soldiers left at the site were attacked over the winter, but nine had survived and sailed north along the coast. However, tensions with the other tribes prohibited a search for the missing Englishmen. The second colony knew well the stories told by Lane about the troubles that befell the first colony. So when one of their own, George Howe, was killed by natives while searching for crabs along the Albemarle Sound, the panicked colonists beseeched Governor White to return to England and explain their plight. Even though his daughter had only recently bore him a granddaughter, the first English child born in the Americas, White acceded. In the autumn of 1587, White sailed back to England.

The voyage back was harrowing on account that the trip was undertaken so late in the season, and when White arrived in England he could not find any captains willing to sail in the encroaching winter. By spring, White's return to Roanoke was hampered when all English ships were commandeered by the crown to fight in England's deepening war with Spain. The Spanish war prevented White's return until 1590. White landed on Roanoke on August 18th 1590, his granddaughter's third birthday, to find the settlement deserted. Buildings were still intact, and there were no bodies… no sign of any struggle. Some ninety men, seventeen women and eleven children, vanished. The only clue was the word "Croatoan" carved into a wooden post of a fort, and the word "Cro" carved into a nearby tree. White assumed this to mean the settlers moved to the nearby Croatan Island. August, however, is the middle of the Atlantic hurricane season and a massive storm was brewing to the south. The sailors insisted on leaving while they still could. White watched on deck, helplessly, as the

empty colony on Roanoke Island receded as the ships sailed back to England.

THE MYSTERY OF THE COLONY

The remains of the Roanoke colony were never found and the fate of the colony after White's departure in 1587 is unknown. Recent evidence, taken from the analysis of 800 year old cypress trees suggest that the area experienced the worst drought in centuries during the time between 1587 and 1589. It is thought that in that time the colony moved, either as a whole or in smaller groups, to settle with native tribes that had been, or had become, friendly with the settlers. When colonists arrived at Jamestown in 1607, they were also tasked with finding the lost colonists. Native people told Captain Smith of Jamestown of people who lived within fifty miles of the site who dressed and lived as the English. In addition, Powhaten, leader of a local tribe, told Smith that he was forced to destroy the Roanoke survivors shortly before the arrival of the Jamestown colonists because they lived with the Chesapeake tribe, an enemy of the Powhaten people. He produced some English artifacts to back up his claim, but no English bodies were ever found. Another argument for assimilation into the native tribes comes from the Lumbee people, who live in coastal regions of south-central North Carolina and claim descent from the Croatan and Hatteras tribes. The Lumbee were only recognized as a Native American tribe in 1885. This recognition occurred so late because the tribe had many traits that seemed distinctly European. Physically, the Lumbee people are lighter skinned, with blue eyes not being uncommon. Their language bears similarities to English as well as linguistic dialects used by the Highland Scots and the Scots-Irish of Great Britain. Their oral traditions recall early interactions between presumed colonists and the Hatteras Island tribes, their names bear resemblances in cases to English surnames, and their religion bears similarities to Christianity. Though there is much evidence to show

a connection between the Roanoke colonists and the tribal people of Hatteras Island, the nature of that connection, whether the colony assimilated or simply influenced the native people, is unclear.

HANNA'S ROADSIDE GRILLE

The fourth doorway opens to another public restroom, this one tiled in red and white. The lavatory appears relatively clean and amply stocked with bathroom tissue, hand soap, and paper towels. The bathroom is part of a little diner by the name of Hanna's, located four miles out of Hopkinsville, KY, on the Jefferson Davis Highway, just before you get to a little town called Fairview. Catering mostly to truckers and other traveling folk, Hanna's isn't necessarily the finest of dining. Hanna herself manages the front, sometimes with a few of the local girls helping her. Brian, Hanna's on again, off again beau, keeps the back. Though the food is a little on the far side of greasy, Hanna always makes a fine cup of joe. At twenty-five cents a cup, Hanna's is the best deal on coffee from Paducah to Bowling Green.

In the last fifty years, no fewer than twenty-three different establishments have operated out of that building. Hanna set up shop a little over three years ago, taking over after a Mexican *taqueria* closed down. A wide variety of stores have set up shop in that location, from bars to bookstores, including serving as the office of a local newspaper, a pawn shop, and an adult video rental. Three times the building has burned down, only to have the next tenant rebuild and try again. In time, the new owners invariably lose their shirt, and the place sits vacant again. The three years that Hanna has been there is the longest anyone has stayed in over half a century.

TUNGUSKA VALLEY, SIBERIA

The doorway at the end of the annex hallway opens to a forest within the Tunguska Valley, a region

in eastern Siberia of remote location and relative isolation. This area includes the river system of the Podkamennaya (Stony) Tunguska river basin to the south, and the Chuya River to the north. In-between are rolling hills and dense taiga. Situated just south of the Arctic Circle, the Tunguska region is characterized by long winters with little daylight, and short warm, often stormy, summers. The region is rather desolate and few towns can be found to aide travelers. The primary settlement in the region is Vanavara. Set along the Stony Tunguska, this village houses only a few thousand people, a small airport, and limited accommodations. The nearest large cities in the area are Krasnoyarsk to the west, and Irkutsk to the south. Both are roughly 500 miles away on rugged, sometimes impassible dirt roads. Today, most of the interest in the region lies in the vast geological treasures the river basin holds. Tunguska sits on one of Siberia's largest coal reserves. In addition, the area is presumed to hold yet to be tapped petroleum stores, as well as other minerals including iron and platinum. These resources aside, Tunguska is perhaps most famous for the astronomical anomaly that brings scientists from around the world; as of yet, none of these visitors have conclusively determined what really happened that June morning in 1908.

THE TUNGUSKA EVENT

The clear blue morning of June 30th, 1908 started off like any other summer day in Siberia… a touch on the warm side perhaps, but not a cloud in the sky and nary a breeze. However, something happened that morning which changed the lives of the people living in the Tunguska region of Siberia, and shook the world. What took place, however, still is a mystery nearly a hundred years later. Eyewitnesses reported seeing a large white object, looking much like a cylinder, traveling across the sky. Following the object was a trail of light that split the heavens. The object descended and, when it neared the ground, faded into a giant billow of black smoke. The earth

shook and quake-like recordings were registered on seismographs across Europe and Asia; those as far away as Krasnoyarsk could hear a staccato rapping likened to artillery or cannon fire. Nearer to the epicenter, the blast sounded like thunder and was accompanied by a wave of heat so intense as to light treetops aflame. Windows shook in Kansk, and damage to buildings was reported in Kirensk. The shockwave was strong enough to throw people off their feet in Vanavara forty miles away. Radiating from the epicenter in a double lobe butterfly pattern, roughly thirty miles across, trees were toppled, their bark scorched from the heat. Strangely, the trees at the epicenter of this devastation still stood upright, barely singed.

The event ignited a massive forest fire, which raged over the next few days and devastated the area. In the cities of Europe the nights following the disaster were unusually bright, the sky light enough to read by even in the middle of the night. Observatories in Europe and the United States also detected a reduction in the transparency of the atmosphere, which lasted for several months after the event. Unfortunately, because of the remoteness of the location and the dramatic changes happening in the political climate of Russia at the time, a concerted effort and investigation by scientists and the government could not be organized for nearly two decades.

That expedition, which finally took place in 1927, was led by Leonid Kulik, a mineralogist at the Mineralogical Museum in St. Petersburg. Kulik's belief was that a meteorite struck the region that fateful day in 1908, but, even with a thorough examination of the blast area, no impact crater was found. After ten years of searching over three more expeditions, Kulik could find not even one speck of anything that was incontrovertibly extraterrestrial.

Dozens of official expeditions and thousands of visitors have trickled in through the years after the

event. In the fifties and sixties, small microspheres were sifted out of the soil which contained high levels of iridium and nickel. These are often found around meteoric impacts, but also can be unearthed around sites of volcanic origins, like Tunguska. Recently, however, a Russian scientist team reported finding an unusual object, a large block made of metal, near the center of the devastation. The team purports the block was a device of both technical and extraterrestrial origin. The reports from this team were published in both Pravda and the Moscow News, but the findings, especially the claim that the object is from some superior alien race, has been sharply criticized by most American and European scientists.

MANY THEORIES

The exact nature of the object flying over the skies of Siberia that summer morning is still under contention. The original meteorite theory faced trouble when no impact crater or debris was found. Speculation then arose that it was a comet that had entered the Earth's atmosphere. By analysis of the blast pattern, coupled with eyewitness accounts, it was determined that the object disintegrated and exploded five to six miles up in the atmosphere. Unfortunately, most comets wouldn't have the integrity to plunge deep enough into the Earth's atmosphere to cause the event's devastation. Whatever the object was, it had to be solid enough to survive a trip deep into the atmosphere, but friable enough to burn up just above the surface of the earth and to fall apart so thoroughly as to not leave any remains.

Other theories have surfaced from time to time to explain the event. Shortly after the theoretical prediction of the existence of antimatter by Paul Dirac, several scientists speculated that perhaps a large chunk of antimatter collided with the earth. However, all matter/antimatter reactions tend to produce large quantities of gamma radiation, and ambient levels of radiation at the site were within

normal levels. In addition, no large objects made entirely of antimatter have ever been observed in the universe to date, lending doubt to that theory. Others have speculated whether a small black hole (microsingularity) could have passed through the Earth. However, no similar event was recorded on the other side where the singularity would have exited the planet. Numerous speculators believe that the event had ties with UFOs; some theorize that a large asteroid was headed for the Siberian taiga that day, one certain to devastate human civilization across the globe, but was destroyed prior to impact by a beneficent superior race. This is the theory also held by the Russian team in 2004, and although the group did recover a strange metallic object, neither pictures nor the object has been released by the Russian government.

Some scientists hold to the theory that the event was purely terrestrial, a product of geothermal behavior, methane emissions, and atmospheric electromagnetic phenomena causing a massive explosion in the air. No evidence to support this has been found, but it of course remains a possibility. The extraterrestrial nature of the object still remains the predominant theory. However, whether that object was a comet or an asteroid changes as often as fashion styles in Paris. No theory put forth answers all the questions and so, nearly a century after the strange sundering of Siberian skies, what really occurred that summer morning still remains very much a mystery.

JULIO'S LOST AND FOUND

Continuing clockwise, the sixth doorway opens to a meandering maze cleared between stacks of cars in a variety of conditions. This labyrinth of derelicts is located within Julio's Lost and Found, home to the biggest pile of junk in New Mexico. The only sizeable salvage yard in Taos, people have been known to drive in from Albuquerque and Colorado Springs to sample Julio's selection. Julius, the owner and a

man with only a tenuous Hispanic lineage, started his operation when he inherited fifteen acres of land north of Taos off Route 522. Armed with a tow truck, and going by the name Julio, he undercut the local towing companies and became the man of choice for the local government's perennial need to move the wrecked or abandoned vehicles off the area's highways. With a willingness to work for cheap, and a personal charisma that is broadcast through the nearly continual advertising spots that show on local stations in New Mexico and three surrounding states, Julio has truly become the king of junk in the desert southwest.

Covering Julio's fifteen acres is a wide assortment of odds and ends. Ninety percent of the inventory consists of parts for nearly every type of automobile ever made, from the Model A to the Iroc-Z. Julio claims in his ads, "If it isn't here, it wasn't made," a claim that hasn't been proven false yet, at least in the category of automotive parts. Julio's collection, however, also contains three large garages to hold more sensitive

items. These include crates of china and cookware, children's toys, electronics and computer hardware, and sets of tools. These items are always used, and in a variety of conditions, but a little searching can sometimes turn up surprising finds. It seems that if there is something that's discarded in the desert southwest, it somehow finds its way to Julio.

BIBLIOTHEQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE

The seventh doorway of the annex opens to a small reading room at the Bibliothéque Nationale de France (BnF). Located in Paris, the BnF is France's National Library, meant to be the repository of all works published in France. The library traces its beginnings to the installation of the royal library in 1368 by Charles V "The Wise" in the tower of the Fauconnerie in the Louvre. During the reign of Louis XI, the library was removed from the Louvre and a new building was erected to store the accumulated books of the burgeoning French empire. This library was opened to the public in 1720 and acquired its current mission,

to store all published French works. The Bibliothéque was moved a number of times since then, culminating in 1988 when construction of a new site for the library was announced by President François Mitterrand.

There has been much controversy surrounding the new construction. The complex covers over 18 acres and consists of a large esplanade with four 24 story tall, L-shaped towers - vaguely reminiscent of open books - placed at each corner. In the center of the site is an enclosed garden covering nearly three acres. Though the complex was constructed with the goal of being one of the largest and most modern libraries in the world, the end result includes a number of unusual inefficiencies. Many consider the new building flagrantly expensive and not suitable to the storage of books. In fact, in many places boards have had to be placed in front of the grand windows in order to protect the aging manuscripts from the sun. The garden, while beautiful and containing a variety of species imported from around the world, is closed to the public and serves only as a decoration to those who can view it from inside. Finally, the library's structure is so grand and expansive, that both employees and visitors complain about the distance they need to walk to get to even the most basic of services.

LUBAANTUN

The eighth doorway opens to a Mayan ball court at the ruins of Lubaantun. Meaning "Place of Fallen Stones," Lubaantun is the largest Mayan site in modern day Belize. The crumbling structures date back to the late Mayan Classical period between 730 and 900 CE. Built upon a ridge between two streams, Lubaantun was rediscovered in 1875 by Civil War refugees from the southern United States. Word reached back to scholars and archeologists in the States, and the site was officially explored in 1915. The locale has seen numerous visitors since then, including the adventurer F.A. Mitchell-Hedges.

It was at Lubaantun that Mitchell-Hedges' adopted daughter, Anna, supposedly found the famous crystal skull.

THE ROAD TO LUBAANTUN

Lubaantun sits in the extreme southern portion, known as the Toledo district, of the present country of Belize. Most visitors to the site come by way of Punta Gorda, which is roughly 23 miles southeast of Lubaantun. The road leads west through tiny villages until it reaches the southern highway, a north-south thoroughfare that stretches from Punta Gorda to Belize City. Two miles north along the highway is the village of San Pedro Columbia. A left behind the church leads you to a small road that runs for about a mile before dead-ending at the site.

HISTORY OF THE SITE

Lubaantun was built and occupied in the early 8th century CE, and seemed to be a thriving commercial and ceremonial center. The site consists of eleven structures and three ball courts built around five main plazas. The largest building stands fifty feet tall and offers a breathtaking view of the Maya Mountains to the north, or the Caribbean to the east.

The construction is unusual in the fact that there is little ornamentation on the stones, and few decorations on the buildings; of course, such carvings could perhaps have been on wooden attachments that might have once adorned the tops of the pyramids, but which have since decayed away. The structures also are built from undressed stone, stacked without mortar, and feature distinctive rounded edges and corners. Although no clay stele have been found around the site, numerous musical instruments and whistles have been recovered. In addition, the presence of jade, obsidian, and the bones of marine animals would indicate that the site was once a trading center of the region.

Perhaps most controversially, the adventurer F.A. Mitchell-Hedges claimed his daughter uncovered a skull carved from a solid block of quartz in the ruins of Lubaantun. This skull, called the "Skull of Doom" by Mitchell-Hedges, is of impeccable craftsmanship and perhaps has occult properties. The skull was purportedly tested in the 1970s by Hewlett Packard, who noted that the skull was carved without consideration to the natural crystal grain axis, and aside from traces of mechanical grinding on the teeth, the skull had none of the scratch marks that would be expected by carving such a piece of quartz with hand made tools. Mitchell-Hedges and associate, Frank Dorland, estimate the age of the artifact as being around 12 millennia old, making it contemporary to the oldest stirrings of human civilization. Theories abound on whether the skull is the product of an advanced Atlantean civilization, or of extraterrestrial origin. Currently the skull, and any evidence of the analysis done on it, is in the hands of Anna Mitchell-Hedges, who has retired from public view.

CHAMBIRA RIVER BASIN

The ninth and final doorway of the annex opens to the Chambira River basin, which lies near the headwaters of the Amazon, in the northern rainforest of the Loreto district of Peru. The Chambira is a major tributary of the Marañón River, both of which begin as drainage from high in the Andes. At the confluence of the Marañón and the Ucayali rivers, the Amazon begins to wind its way 1500 miles to the Atlantic Ocean. The Chambira River basin is a physically remote and isolated location. This isolation has helped the local Urarina people retain their privacy and safeguard their traditions. The past twenty years, however, have seen industrial expansion into the jungle and palm swamps of the region, as outsiders to the area have pushed to get access to the rich crops of hardwood found along the Chambira river. Recent years have even seen geological assessors visiting the Urarina villages in order to ascertain the full extent of natural resources lying beneath the basin. These expeditions bring wealth in the form of goods, food, medicine, and technological curiosities to the Urarina people, but threaten to forcefully lead the villagers away from their centuries long traditions.

IQUITOS

Iquitos is the capital of the Loreto region of Peru and lies 120 miles downstream of the juncture of the Ucayali and Marañón rivers. Generally considered the largest city in the world that cannot be reached by road, Iquitos is the upstream terminus of shipping trade along the Amazon River. Over 400,000 call Iquitos home, and the city has seen an upswing economically by serving as the staging ground for tapping, and shipping, the vast lumber and oil reserves of the upper Amazon basin. Iquitos also supports a burgeoning tourism industry, with hundreds of different tours and guides willing to take visitors to all manner of exotic places.

Recently, Iquitos has drawn large numbers of tourists seeking existential experiences. Local tribal people living in the city serve as *curanderos* and prepare draughts of ayahuasca tea; this complicated drink is made from the ayahuasca vine and is believed to have strong psychoactive properties. The tea typically puts the drinker into a dream-like state, and is used by local shamans to produce visions for religious purposes. However, for every *curandero* who is skilled at producing this drought and guiding a vision, there are two more who are simply incompetent, and another who will rob the tourist blind… or worse.
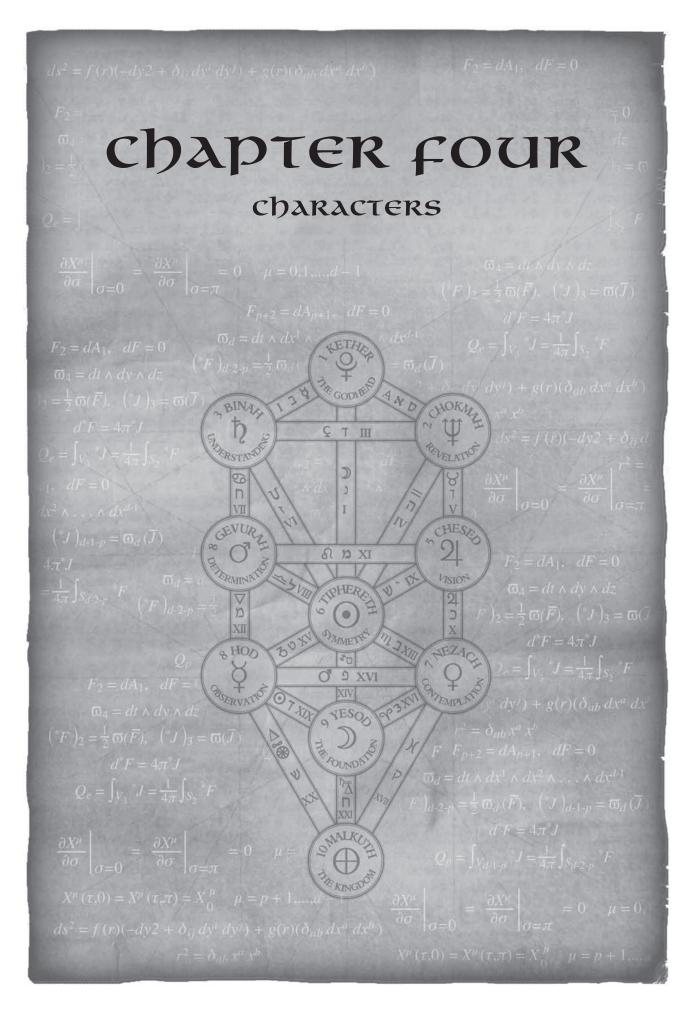
THE URARINA

The Urarina have lived in the Chambira basin for at least three and a half centuries. They know of themselves as the Kachá ("person") and are a semi-nomadic people who practice hunting and limited horticulture. Settlements tend to consist of longhouses

constructed on the higher, flood free regions of the Chambira basin. During the dry season, the Urarina stray into the flood zones in search of new forage areas and better hunting.

Culturally, the Urarina have a complex and mercurial political system that relies on a balance of familial ties, exchange relationships, and occasional political alliances. Urarina men are respected for their hunting ability and shamanic prowess, while women are prized for their production of woven products, including bed mats, net bags, and hammocks. There are no taboos against Urarina men keeping multiple wives, but the practice of bride-service, where the groom must perform some service to the bride's family prior to marriage, tends to limit the number of wives a man might acquire. Spiritually, the Urarina are highly animistic, with their beliefs revolving around the visions produced during ayahuasca shamanistic rites. The last few years have seen an influx of visitors to the Urarina villages. Though occasional tourists or missionaries still wander through, most of the new traffic comes from industrial interests. In most cases, the Urarina have welcomed the wealth of the changing times. Often, though, it is the Urarina who end up doing the hardest and most dangerous jobs required by the loggers or the oil investors. This continued contact with Western culture is causing a generational rift between the older Urarina, who follow traditional cultural mores, and younger Urarina who see and desire the luxuries of Western society.

chapter four

characters

ole-playing is collaborative storytelling. The Gamemaster (GM) creates the framework of the tale, and each player constructs a protagonist. These player characters (PCs) shape the manner in which the story unfolds. In other words, they are not a passive audience to the Gamemaster's story but, rather, are active participants. They have no script to follow, instead reacting to events and situations as they see fit. This is easy to do if the players have a firm grasp of their characters' abilities, motivations, strengths, and foibles.

Player characters should be dynamic, three-dimensional individuals with a variety of interests, hobbies, and job descriptions. Diversity among the player characters ensures that everyone has a valuable role to play and that the entire group is better prepared to tackle any problems that come along. However, some overlap of abilities and personality is to be expected.

In *Aletheia,* player characters are defined by a series of traits. These traits describe how smart, perceptive, skilled, etc. a character is. However, there is more to creating an interesting character than assigning abilities and ranks. Each should have a distinctive personality and unique opinions and motivations. Although they are extraordinary individuals investigating extraordinary phenomena, they must be grounded in the mundane. Hobbies, interests, and pet peeves breathe life into a character. Without these things, characters run the risk of becoming two-dimensional caricatures.

THE SET UP

One month ago, Terrance Chastain recruited the player characters to the Seven Dogs Society. These PCs can come from any walk of life, but a background in religion, philosophy, science, or investigative work is particularly useful. Each one understands the society's agenda and embraces it, though the reasons for doing so will likely vary from character to character. Unifying the group is their dedication to explore the strangeness at reality's fringe, and discover the truth spoken of by Jericho Usher.

All the player characters possess otherworldly abilities that set them apart from the rest of humanity. This means that the PCs are among the unusual phenomena they are investigating. They understand this fact, though as of yet do not have any answers to the mystery of their own existence.

DETAILS

There are a few practical details that every player must work out for his or her character.

- What is the character's name?
- Is the character male or female?
- How old is the character?

Additionally, players should take a few minutes to think about their character's background and personality. What are the character's likes and dislikes? Is the character an optimist or pessimist? Is the character compassionate or self-centered? Did the character leave behind any friends or family? If so, how did they react when the character left? Do they know what the character is really doing?

While it is impractical for a player to know every detail about his or her character, asking a few basic questions provides a skeleton to build upon during actual gameplay.

Since the player characters have been in the society for a month, they will have some familiarity with one another. However, there is likely much that they still do not know about their companions. It is assumed that the player characters have explored the grounds and chatted with Terrance. They will have some knowledge regarding the society's history (though the exact degree of familiarity is up to the Gamemaster) and they are aware of the mysterious annex. Each member has a private room at the house and unfettered access to the estate's library, including the five remaining pages of the *Usher Codex*.

Chastain tends to the society's material needs and funds any expeditions and investigations. Money is no object to keeping the society members happy, engaged, and supported. However, the *great work* provides little idle time to enjoy typical creature comforts.

MOTIVATION

What drove the character to join the society? It is up to the players to answer this fundamental question for their characters.

Here are some possible motivations:

- The character hopes that the society's work might explain the nature or origin of his or her own preternatural abilities.
- The character had a preexisting interest in anomalous phenomena.
- The character sees the society as a chance to leave the 9 to 5 rut of daily existence.
- The character was a social outcast and sees the society as a chance to belong.
- The character believes the work of Jericho Usher is vitally important and wants to be a part of it.
- The character is very spiritual, though not necessarily religious, and sees the *great work* as one step closer to understanding the nature of God and creation.
- The character comes from a scientific background and is interested in proving or debunking anomalous phenomena.
- The character has a checkered past, one that he or she is running away from.
- The character was a witness to a paranormal occurrence and hopes the society's work can explain the event.

If a player chooses a motivation from the preceding list, it would still be helpful to flesh the concept out a bit. After all, the more the player understands the character's motivation, the easier it is to suspend disbelief and slip into the role. If none of the above interests a player, or if a different motivation is more applicable to the background of the created character, then by all means be creative and create whatever character motivation best fits.

AGENDA

As members of the Seven Dogs Society, interesting adventures and investigations await the player characters. These include:

- Investigating and cataloging anomalous phenomena.
- Deciphering the *Usher Codex* and following its clues.
- Uncovering the fate of the society's first incarnation – did it really follow in Usher's footsteps?
- Discovering the origins of the society members' fantastic powers.
- Researching the genealogies – what is their significance and why are all society members chosen from them?
- Tackling the mystery of the annex.

- Solving the murder of the society's last incarnation.

As the characters explore the world of *Aletheia*, additional adventure types will likely emerge. For example, if the current society solves the murder of their predecessors will they seek to bring the killer(s) to justice, or will they exact their own measure of revenge? Perhaps they will let sleeping dogs lie? Could investigating the murder lead the killer(s) back to the current society? In other words, adventures

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A WORD OF ADVICE

Before character creation begins in earnest, players may want to read over this chapter in its entirety. By doing so, players will better understand all of their options before they begin assigning abilities and ranks to their characters. However, since character generation is outlined step-by-step, this is not required.

Additionally, a perusal of **Chapter 5: Mechanics** will give players a better understanding of how all the various traits are used in *Aletheia*.

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in *Aletheia* are not limited to the above list, and the actions of the PCs can lead to all sorts of interesting scenarios.

ATTRIBUTES

Attributes are the innate qualities possessed by every character in the game. They define a character's strengths and limitations. There are four *Attributes*:

- **Fitness:** This is the measure of a character's physical well-being. This *Attribute* is used for combat and actions involving strength, endurance, agility, and coordination.

- **Awareness:** This is the measure of a character's perception and wits. This *Attribute* reveals how alert characters are to their environment, their attention to detail, and their ability to think quickly while under pressure.

- **Personality:** This is the measure of a character's social skills. This *Attribute* is used to persuade, intimidate, and socialize with others.

- **Reason:** This is the measure of a character's intellect. This *Attribute* represents a character's accrued knowledge as well as his or her capacity to reason and draw conclusions.

All *Attributes* are assigned a numerical rank ranging from 1 to 5. A rank of 2 in any *Attribute* is average for an ordinary person. Therefore, a character with a *Personality* of 1 is a social bore while a character with a *Personality* of 3 might be the toast of the party. A rank of 5 is exceedingly rare, possessed only by a small minority of people.

Each character has 8 points to spread among the four *Attributes*, and no *Attribute* rank may be 0.

> *For example: A player who wants a socially awkward bookworm might assign 3 points to Reason and 1 point to Personality, splitting the remaining 4 points evenly among Fitness and Awareness.*

DESCRIPTORS

Though *Attributes* paint a portrait of the character,

they do so in the broadest of strokes. *Descriptors* add the detail. For example, while a martial artist and a football player are each physically fit, no one is likely to confuse the two. By attaching the word *nimble* to the martial artist and *burly* to the football player, a clearer picture of the individual forms.

Every character receives one free *Descriptor* per *Attribute*. Although a list of sample *Descriptors* follows below, players are free to invent their own.

Fitness Descriptors

- Agile
- Brawny
- Coordinated
- Fast
- Lithe

Awareness Descriptors

- Detail oriented
- Astute
- Vigilant
- Quick witted
- Eagle-eyed

Personality Descriptors

- Aloof
- Cool
- Personable
- Funny
- Sultry

Reason Descriptors

- Inventive
- Erudite
- Analytical
- Trivia king
- Logical

Descriptors do more than flesh out a character; they provide mechanical bonuses to all actions involving the character's chosen *Descriptors*. For example, if a character is trying to persuade someone to reveal a tidbit of information, and the PC's *Personality Descriptor* is sultry, she receives a bonus if the attempt is made through seduction. Alternately, if the PC had funny as her *Descriptor*, she would receive a bonus if humor were used to gather the information. Detailed use of *Descriptors* is covered in **Chapter 5: Mechanics**.

A WORD OF ADVICE

Having an *Attribute* rank of 1 does not limit the choice of *Descriptors*. For example, a character with a *Fitness* of 1 can still have *brawny* for a *Descriptor* – the character can be strong, but might easily tire or not be very coordinated.

OCCUPATIONS

Before joining the Seven Dogs Society, each character had an occupation. For some, their careers were their passions; for others, they were simply a means to pay the bills. Some jobs paid extremely well while others gave a monetary pittance. Though all of that is in the past now, the skills learned during that time can still be of use. In *Aletheia*, a character's primary skill set is determined by their former occupation.

> *For example: It would be reasonable for a lawyer to possess oratory skills while such skills would not be within the realm of the paramedic.*

> *For example: A counseling skill would fall under the purview of a priest or psychologist but not a*

firefighter or mechanic.

Twenty sample occupations have been provided. After the player chooses an occupation, the character automatically has access to all the skills that would be appropriate to that occupation. Common sense and GM discretion determine which skills would logically fall under the breadth of any occupational background.

Occupations are divided into five categories: 5-star, 4-star, 3-star, 2-star, and 1-star. Each occupation has three possible levels of expertise: Rookie, Professional, and Veteran. Obviously, the Rookie level provides the least benefit to characters during play, and Veteran level provides the greatest.

Players have 5 points to spend on their characters' occupations, and each occupation costs a number of points equal to its star rating.

For example: A 1-star occupation would cost 1 of the 5 allotted points, and a 3 star occupation would cost 3 of the 5 points.

Next, players purchase their expertise level from the remaining points. When purchasing an occupation, characters receive the Rookie level for free. Upgrading to the Professional level costs 1 point, and upgrading to the Veteran level costs 2 points.

For example: If a player takes a 1-star occupation at Professional level, it will cost 2 of the 5 available points. The occupation itself cost 1 point (equal to its star rating) and upgrading to the Professional level of expertise cost an additional point. The player now has 3 points remaining.

For example: If a player takes a 2-star occupation at Veteran level, it will cost 4 of the 5 available points. The occupation itself cost 2 points (equal to its star rating) and upgrading to the Veteran

level of expertise cost an additional 2 points. The player now has 1 point remaining.

For example: If a player takes a 5-star occupation at Rookie level, it will cost all 5 of the available points. The occupation itself cost 5 points (equal to its star rating) and the character receives the Rookie level of expertise for free. The player has 0 points remaining.

Please note: At this stage of character generation, the following is not possible:

- A 4-star occupation at Veteran level (this would cost 6 points – one more than allotted)
- A 5-star occupation at Professional level (this would cost 6 points – one more than allotted)
- A 5-star occupation at Veteran level (this would cost 7 points – two more than allotted).

Unspent points are not lost. They are used to purchase additional occupations and/or *Extracurricular Skills*. Additional occupations are purchased in the same manner outlined above. Information on *Extracurricular Skills* can be found on page 40.

5-STAR OCCUPATIONS

- **Doctor:** Likely to possess skills such as biology, chemistry, bedside manner, first aid, medicine, and surgery.

- **Forest Ranger:** Likely to possess skills such as fighting, firearms, first aid, law, interviewing, survival, tracking, and driving under hazardous conditions.

- **Crime Scene Investigator:** Likely to possess skills such as forensics, fighting, law,

interviewing, firearms, and observation.

- **Professor:** Likely to possess skills such as teaching, a field of academic expertise, oration, research, writing, and computer use.

4-STAR OCCUPATIONS

- **Law-enforcement Officer:** Likely to possess skills such as fighting, firearms, first aid, law, interviewing, street smarts, and driving under hazardous conditions.

- **Lawyer:** Likely to possess skills such as etiquette, fast-talk, law, oration, interviewing, and research.

- **Journalist:** Likely to possess skills such as interviewing, writing, research, street smarts, and computer use.

- **Priest:** Likely to possess skills such as counseling, etiquette, instruction, leadership, oration, theology, and Latin.

3-STAR OCCUPATIONS

- **Grifter:** Likely to possess skills such as con artist, acting, fast-talk, sleight-of-hand, and street smarts.

- **Private Investigator:** Likely to possess skills such as firearms, interviewing, research, surveillance, and tracking.

- **Psychologist:** Likely to possess skills such as counseling, psychology, interviewing, and sociology.

- **Researcher:** Likely to possess skills such as computer use, research (library and internet),

and writing.

2-STAR OCCUPATIONS

- **Computer Expert:** Likely to possess skills such as computer use, hacking, computer repair, and computer programming.

- **Paramedic:** Likely to possess skills such as first aid, and driving under hazardous conditions.

- **Salesman:** Likely to possess skills such as acting, fast-talk, haggling, and oration.

- **Taxi Driver:** Likely to possess skills such as street smarts, casual conversation (interviewing), and driving under hazardous conditions.

1-STAR OCCUPATIONS

- **Handyman:** Likely to possess skills such as repair and construction.

- **Auto Mechanic:** Likely to possess a variety of auto repair skills.

- **Businessman:** Likely to possess skills such as accounting, computer use, and business management.

- **Firefighter:** Likely to possess skills such as firefighting tactics and first aid.

The star rating for each of the previous example occupations is based on the number of skills they provide and the usefulness of these skills in *Aletheia*. However, depending on the type of campaign the Gamemaster runs, some occupations may become more or less valuable. In this event, the GM should lower or raise the rating of any occupation as

necessary.

Although a wide range of useful occupations has been included, some players may want an occupation not on the list. This is perfectly acceptable. However, the Gamemaster has final say in determining the occupation's star rating. The GM should use the twenty sample occupations as a guideline, and the breadth of skills granted by the occupation and their usefulness in the upcoming game should ultimately determine the star rating.

EXTRACURRICULAR SKILLS

People often possess skills outside of their paid profession. *Aletheia* represents this knowledge with *Extracurricular Skills*, which are packages of related skills that a character might possess.

Extracurricular Skills, like occupations, have three levels of expertise: Rookie, Professional, and Veteran.

As previously noted, unspent occupation points can be used to buy *Extracurricular Skills*. A Rookie level *Extracurricular Skill* costs 1 point, a Professional level costs 2 points, and a Veteran level costs 3 points. Players may also spend 1 point to raise their free *Extracurricular Skill* to Professional level or 2 points to raise it to Veteran level.

A sampling of *Extracurricular Skills*:

- **Art:** Includes skills such as art appraisal, painting, sculpture, and drawing.

- **Athletics:** Includes skills such as competitive sports, running, jumping, and swimming.

- **Biological Sciences:** Includes skills such as botany, ecology, chemistry, physiology, and zoology.

- **Business:** Includes skills such as accounting, banking, marketing, and management.

- **Computer:** Includes skills such as computer hacking, computer use, computer programming, and computer repair.

- **Fighting:** Includes skills such as brawling and self-defense.

- **Forensics:** Includes skills such as forensic science, forensic biology, and forensic anthropology.

- **Investigation:** Includes skills such as interviewing, observation, tracking, and research.

- **Medicine:** Includes skills such as pharmacy and surgery.

- **Music:** Includes skills such as competence with a particular instrument, reading sheet music, and music appreciation.

- **Outdoors:** Includes skills such as survival, first aid, and tracking.

- **Physical Sciences:** Includes skills such as chemistry and physics.

- **Shooting:** Includes skills such as competence with pistols and rifles.

- **Stealth:** Includes skills such as hiding and sneaking.

- **Surveillance:** Includes skills such as eavesdropping, spying, and shadowing.

It would be impossible to list every *Extracurricular Skill* a character might possess. The preceding list is

intended as a starting point only, and includes the packages most likely to come into play during the game. If a player wants a package not on this list, it should be invented with the Gamemaster having the ultimate approval.

All characters receive a free Fighting *Extracurricular Skill* at Rookie level. If a character's occupation includes a fighting skill, another *Extracurricular Skill* may be substituted for the free fighting skill.

HOBBIES

Everyone has hobbies and interests outside of work. Pastimes such as backpacking, poker, chess, and role-playing provide islands of escape from real life responsibilities. Knowledge of how one spends their free time also grants insight into an individual's personality. A person who plays multiple sports is likely to be a competitive individual, and someone passionate about crossword puzzles might be interested in cerebral pursuits. Most people, though, are not so easily pigeonholed. Their interests are diverse and may even seem contradictory to those

HOBBIES VERSUS SKILLS

It's important to note that hobbies imply an interest, not a skill. There is a big difference. For example, backpacking as a hobby indicates a passion for that activity – it does not grant the Outdoors *Extracurricular Skill.* It is possible for a skill to be a hobby though. For example, a law-enforcement officer skilled with firearms could also have skeet shooting as a hobby.

unfamiliar with the individual. This diversity makes real-life people all the more dynamic and well rounded; such diversity can likewise enhance and individualize a character's personality.

The players should choose a few hobbies to flesh out their characters. Combined with an occupation, they will help cement the character's personality, breathing life into the persona being created.

While there is no minimum or maximum amount of hobbies a character can have, players need to keep the list manageable and realistic; two to five is ideal.

SUPPLEMENTAL POINTS

Each player receives 15 *Supplemental Points* to spend on character creation. These points can be used to raise *Attribute* and *Extracurricular Skill* ranks and purchase additional *Descriptors* and occupations. However, most importantly, they are used to purchase the otherworldly powers possessed by all the members of the society (details on powers follow). Costs for raising or purchasing character traits are as follows:

- **Raising *Attributes*: 2 points per rank**
- **Buying a new occupation at Rookie level: 3 points per star rating**
- **Buying a new *Descriptor*: 1 point**
- **Buying or raising an *Extracurricular Skill*: 2 point per level**
- **Buying powers: 3 points per star rating (details on powers follow)**

Whether raising existing traits or buying new ones with *Supplemental Points,* the following rules must be observed:

- **Additional occupations can only be purchased at Rookie level. They cannot be raised to Professional or Veteran level**

during character generation.
- Only one additional *Descriptor* per *Attribute* is permitted.
- All characters must have at least one power.

POWERS

The members of the Seven Dogs Society have fantastic powers unexplainable by science. The origin of these powers is unknown, but Chastain believes they are connected to the genealogies prepared by Jericho Usher.

Powers are divided into five categories: 5-star, 4-star, 3-star, 2-star, and 1-star. The cost for purchasing powers is 3 points per star rating.

> *For example: If a player chooses a 3-star power, it will cost 9 of the 15 Supplemental Points.*

> *For example: If a player chooses a 5-star power, it will cost all 15 of the Supplemental Points.*

As noted earlier, every character must have at least one power. For those who would like to go as light as possible on the powers, to have more *Supplemental Points* for other traits, there are two 1-star powers to choose from. Each costs only 3 points, leaving the player with 12 *Supplemental Points* to spend elsewhere.

Characters are permitted to have multiple powers.

1-STAR POWERS

- **Presque Vu:** Creation is a series of interlocking patterns whose alignment constitutes a singular grand design. With *Presque Vu*, a character can sense if any event or incident is connected to this grand design, *i.e.* Usher's

truth. During investigations, this power alerts the character if the society is on the brink of an epiphany or revelation regarding its *raison d'être*.

- **Deja visite:** This power bestows instant familiarity with foreign locations. With *Deja visite*, the character will know details about any place he or she visits, without having any prior knowledge of the area. Features such as topography, major landmarks, and street layout will be as familiar to the character as if he or she had grown up there.

2-STAR POWERS

- **Remote Viewing:** Also known as clairvoyance, this power enables a character to see events transpiring in other locations, regardless of distance or physical barriers. By focusing on a person or place, the character will see flickering mental images of the relevant location. With *Remote Viewing*, the character can see events occurring anywhere in the world.

- **X-ray Vision:** With this power, a character can peer through any physical barrier to see what lies beyond. For example, a character could watch events transpiring in the next room or peer into the guts of a human body to search for tumors. A character with *X-ray Vision* can see through multiple barriers at once, perceiving everything between each. Any physical object within a character's line of sight is subject to this power.

3-STAR POWERS

- **Postcognition:** The entirety of history is viewable with this power. Time and space offer no resistance to an inquiring character.

While *Postcognition* enables a character to see any event and place in the past, peering into history can be like looking for a needle in a haystack. The more specific and recent a timeframe is, the easier it is to view.

- **Precognition:** Simply put, a character with this power can see into the future. However, the future is not written in stone – a character with knowledge of the future can alter it. However, if the character does not interfere in any way, events will likely unfold as predicted. With *Precognition*, a character can look at a specific time and place in the future.

4-STAR POWERS

- **Ghosting:** Solid objects present no barrier for characters with this power. *Ghosting* enables characters to move through solid objects as if they weren't even there.

- **Teleportation:** A character with this power can instantaneously move from one place to another without traveling through space. While there is no range limitation for this power, the more familiar the character is with his or her destination, the easier the journey.

5-STAR POWER

- **Time Travel:** As the name implies, this power enables a character to move backward and forward through time. No timeframe is unreachable with this power, but there are risks in journeying too far into the past or future. Traveling seconds or minutes in either direction is likely to have few ramifications, but not so with deeper *Time Travel* – the further one journeys, the more likely the character is to alter the existing timeline.

Rules for using powers are covered in **Chapter 5: Mechanics**.

WILL

With great focus and effort, a person can move beyond his or her limitations. The runner who pushes herself in the homestretch and the scientist who makes the impossible breakthrough are two examples. In *Aletheia*, *Will* represents this quality. Unlike other traits, *Will* is spent during gameplay and replenishes after time. By expending *Will*, characters can succeed where they ought to have otherwise failed. Rules for using *Will* are covered in **Chapter 5: Mechanics**.

A character's starting *Will* is equal to the sum of the star ratings of all the PC's powers.

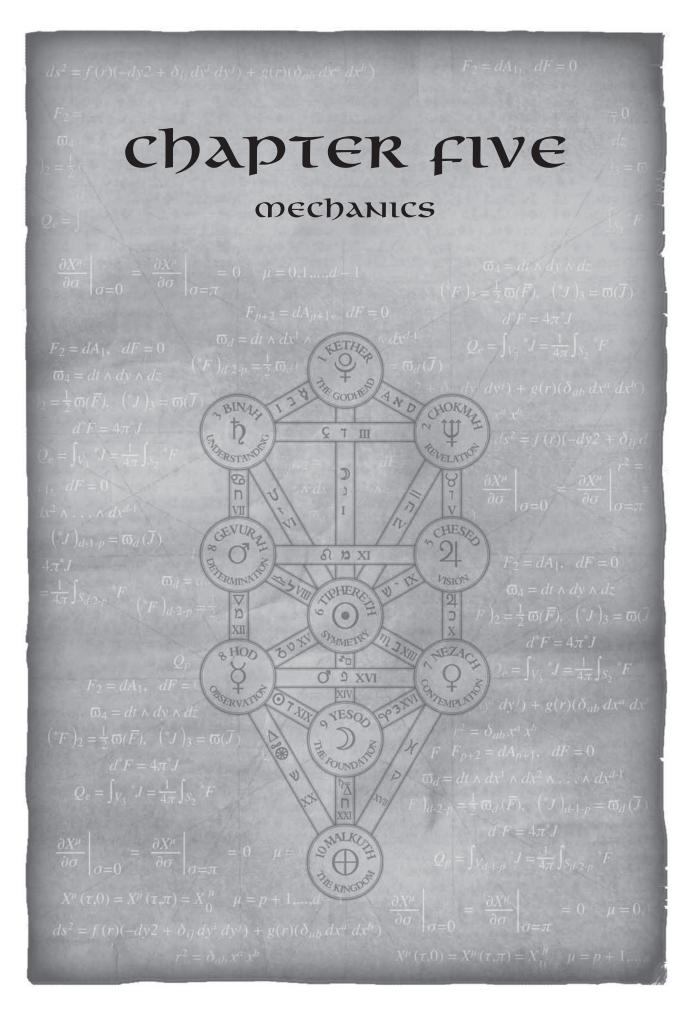> *For example: A character's only power is X-Ray Vision (**); his starting Will is 2.*

> *For example: A character has two powers, Remote Viewing (**) and Precognition (***); her starting Will is 5 (2+3=5).*

A FINAL THOUGHT

Everything in this chapter is merely skeletal outline. All the details about a character's life and personality should not be determined at character generation. Instead, they should be invented and revealed during gameplay as the character reacts to the situations and challenges that will be inevitably encountered. It's important that a character has room to grow beyond the player's original concept. People are shaped by their environment and the things that happen to them. Players should allow their characters to grow and evolve in interesting ways unforeseen when the character was generated.

CHARACTER GENERATION SUMMARY

1. Spread 8 points among the four *Attributes*.
2. Assign a *Descriptor* to each *Attribute*.
3. Choose a Rookie level occupation for the character.
4. Keep any unused occupation points or raise the occupation's level.
5. Assign free fighting skill.
6. Spend any unused occupation points.
7. Choose power(s) and spend 15 *Supplemental Points*.
8. Record *Will*.

CHAPTER FIVE

mechanics

I n *Aletheia,* characters will investigate anomalous phenomena, conduct research, interview witnesses, and get into a few fights. The game mechanics are the rules used to determine if these actions are successful or not.

To resolve actions, *Aletheia* uses standard six-sided dice. Gameplay runs smoothest if there are five such dice on hand, but any amount will do.

THE BASICS

Whether picking a lock, throwing a punch, or interviewing a witness, the same basic mechanic is used to determine success or failure.

- **A *target number* is set.**
- **The player rolls a number of dice equal to the rank of the appropriate *Attribute*, and each die that comes up 5 or 6 is considered a *victory*.**
- **If the number of *victories* equals or exceeds the *target number*, the action is a success.**

This basic mechanic is used to resolve all actions in *Aletheia*. The next few pages of text look at the process in greater detail.

ATTRIBUTES

Whenever an action is attempted, the player must determine which *Attribute* is appropriate for the action.

- *Fitness* **is used for actions involving coordination, strength, agility, and endurance.**
- *Awareness* **is used for actions involving perception and thinking quickly on one's feet.**

- *Reason* **is used for actions requiring mental acumen such as solving puzzles, recalling information, and reasoning through problems.**
- *Personality* **is used for all social interactions including interviewing, seducing, interrogating, lying, and socializing.**

Once the appropriate *Attribute* is determined, the player rolls a number of dice equal to the rank of that *Attribute*.

DESCRIPTORS

Although *Descriptors* add definition to a character, they also serve a mechanical function. If a character is attempting an action covered by his or her *Descriptor*, the character receives one extra die to roll.

> *For example: A character with a Fitness rank of 2 is attempting to break down a door. If he has a Fitness Descriptor such as brawny, he would roll 3 dice to attempt the action. If the Fitness Descriptor were coordinated, he would receive no bonus, rolling only 2 dice.*

> *For Example: A character needs to coax some information from a subject. If the character's Personality Descriptor were sultry, she would best attempt to do so with seduction – because she would receive an extra die for the attempt. If the character's Descriptor were funny, a few well-placed jokes would be likely to drop the subject's guard and gain the character an extra die.*

In most cases, it will be obvious if the *Descriptor* adds an extra die or not. If there is any doubt, the player should attempt to justify receiving the extra die bonus, and the Gamemaster can then rule on the matter impartially.

TARGET NUMBERS

The amount of *victories* needed, for any given action to succeed, is known as the *target number* (TN). In some instances, such as fighting, the resistance or proficiency of an opponent determines the *target number*. Most often, however, it is up to the Gamemaster to determine the TN.

Target numbers range from 1 to 7.

- **TN 1:** For actions routinely done with ease by mildly trained individuals.
- **TN 2-3:** For actions routinely done with ease by reasonably trained individuals.
- **TN 4-5:** For actions where the outcome is reasonably in doubt, even by highly trained individuals.
- **TN 6-7:** For extraordinary actions rarely done by highly trained individuals.

The default *target number* for most actions requiring a modicum of expertise (Rookie or Professional level) is 2-3. *This assumes that a character has a skill set appropriate for the attempted action.* Actions able to be accomplished by an unskilled layperson should have a TN of 1 or 2.

> *For example: The target number to pick a lock is 2. A locksmith will have a reasonable chance to succeed, but picking the lock is difficult for a lawyer.*

> *For example: The target number to administer first aid is 1. The paramedic can perform the action with her eyes closed, but the journalist has a chance of failure.*

AUTOMATIC VICTORIES

Characters who have an occupation that grants a skill appropriate to an action, receive a number of automatic *victories* towards that action. These are added to the *victories* earned rolling the dice.

> *For example: A forest ranger and a mechanic are tracking an animal through the woods. The forest ranger receives automatic victories, but the mechanic does not.*

> *For example: A forest ranger and a mechanic are making car repairs. The mechanic receives automatic victories, but the forest ranger does not.*

For every action covered by a character's occupation, he or she receives a number of automatic *victories* equal to the character's level of occupational expertise.

- **A Rookie level occupation grants 1 automatic *victory*.**
- **A Professional level occupation grants 2 automatic *victories*.**
- **A Veteran level occupation grants 3 automatic *victories*.**

Automatic *victories* give an edge to skilled characters and keep them from rolling for actions that are routine to them but not so for the layperson.

> *For example: Rebuilding a carburetor has a TN of 1. A Rookie level mechanic can do so with no dice rolling, while a doctor would need to roll to determine success or failure.*

If a character has two occupations that are appropriate to the attempted action, the occupation with the highest level is used. Only one occupation can yield automatic *victories* during any single roll.

In the absence of an appropriate occupation, a character can use a relevant *Extracurricular Skill*. The Rookie level grants 1 automatic *victory*, the

Professional level grants 2 automatic *victories*, and the Veteran level grants 3 automatic *victories*.

DEFAULTS

Characters who do not possess a relevant occupation or *Extracurricular Skill*, still roll the appropriate *Attribute* – but earn no automatic *victories*. However, there are times when defaulting to an *Attribute* is simply not possible due to the highly specialized nature of the action.

> *For example: A character with no medical background cannot perform a clinical autopsy by defaulting to the Reason Attribute*
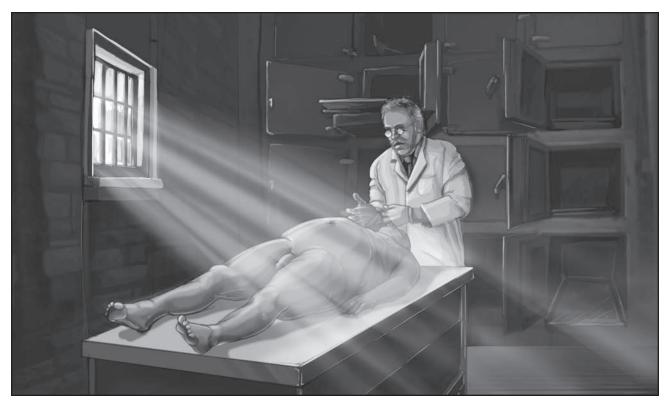
WILL

Sometimes, people overcome their own limitations. In *Aletheia*, *Will* represents this capability. By spending one point of *Will*, the character adds one extra die to any single roll. Other than a character's current *Will* level, which is the reservoir of points that can be accessed, there are no limitations on how much *Will* the character can spend on an action. However, once the reservoir is empty, the character has no more *Will* to tap. Since *Will* is slow to replenish, players will need to spend it wisely as not to be left shorthanded at crucial moments. Guidelines for replenishing *Will* are covered in **Chapter 8: Gamemastering**.

> *For example: A character with a Will of 3 can spend one, two, or three points on any single action. If the character spends one point, she will have two remaining points to spend at a later time. However, if the character spends all three points on a single action, the action has a greater chance of success – but the character will have no more Will to spend until her reservoir of points replenishes.*

During an action, *Will* may be spent one point at a

time; the player *does not* need to declare the total point expenditure at the start.

> *For example: A character is trying to break down a door. The target number is 2, but the character rolls only one victory. Rather than letting the action fail, the character opts to spend one point of Will and roll another die. Sadly, this result is 3. Since the action is still unsuccessful, the character can either live with the failure or spend another point of Will for another die roll. If so desired, this process can be repeated until either the character succeeds or is out of Will.*

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

> *For example: A character wants to break down a door. The Gamemaster sets a target number of 2 and decides that Fitness is the appropriate Attribute. Since the character has a Fitness of 2, the player rolls two dice. The results are 3 and 4 – the character scored no victories. However, the character's Fitness Descriptor is brawny, so the GM allows an additional die to be rolled. The*

> *result of this die is 4 – still no victories. Since the character is a law enforcement officer, the GM rules that his occupation is relevant to the action. With an occupational level of Rookie, the character receives one automatic victory. Unfortunately, he is still one victory shy of success. After deciding that his character really needs to get past the door, the player opts to spend one Will, and rolls another die. This result is 2: a failure. After some deliberation, the player opts to spend a second point of Will and rolls another die. This result is 5. The player has scored the second victory and the door comes crashing down.*

FIELDWORK

The Seven Dogs Society investigates a variety of odd occurrences and unexplained phenomena. The rules support this style of gameplay. In an investigative story, it is essential that characters gather enough clues, evidence, and information to proceed from one scene to the next. Should the PCs miss a vital piece of information, the entire story can derail. The mechanics of *Aletheia* are designed so that this will

BASIC MECHANICS SUMMARY

1. The GM sets the *target number*.
2. The appropriate *Attribute* is determined.
3. A number of dice equal to the *Attribute* rank are rolled.
4. If the *Attribute's Descriptor* is relevant, an additional die is rolled.
5. Every result of 5 or 6 is a *victory*.
6. If the character has an occupation or *Extracurricular Skill* relevant to the action, the character receives automatic *victories* based on the level of expertise.
7. If the total number of *victories* (rolled and automatic) equal or exceed the *target number*, the action has succeeded.
8. If the action has failed, *Will* may be spent one at a time to roll additional dice.

never happen.

INVESTIGATIVE WORK

In *Aletheia*, investigative work is defined as on-site analysis and observation – the society arrives at the scene of some reputed case of anomalous phenomenon and searches for clues and evidence. Often times, fieldwork will include gathering witnesses and conducting interviews; these activities are covered under **Interviewing** (pages 52-54).

ANATOMY OF AN INVESTIGATION

Investigative work is divided into scenes. A scene is the examination of a single site deemed noteworthy by the society. It might be a field where a crop circle appeared overnight, a farm where a UFO was reputed to have landed, or a playground where rats rained from the sky. Characters will scour the scene for evidence of the reputed phenomenon as well as clues that might explain it. The game mechanics are used to determine how much information the characters are able to gather.

Awareness **is always the** *Attribute* **used for investigations, and** *Descriptors* **grant a bonus die where applicable.**

Every scene holds a specific number of clues determined in advance by the Gamemaster. The number of clues is the TN for investigations.

> *For example: The society is investigating a crop circle. If there are three clues to be discovered, the TN is 3.*

> *For example: The society is investigating a supposed UFO landing. If there are four clues to be discovered, the TN is 4.*

On average, there are one to five clues to be found at each scene. Gamemasters can find advice for creating clues and scenes in **Chapter 8: Gamemastering**.

When characters begin investigating the scene, the *target number* will be unknown to them; they will not know in advance how many clues are present. This means that they will have to carefully consider whether or not to expend any *Will* on their investigative work.

Although every scene is likely to hold multiple clues, there is always one clue that will advance the story. This is known as the *vital clue*. If fieldwork consists of multiple scenes, investigative or otherwise, the *vital clue* is the link to the later scenes. The *vital clue* is often the primary evidence, but this fact is not an absolute. However, it is *always* the clue that most illuminates what really happened at the scene.

To successfully investigate a scene, PCs *do not* need to achieve a number of *victories* equal to the TN; the *target number* is simply the maximum number of clues that might be found. As long as characters achieve one *victory*, they will discover the *vital clue* necessary to move onward to other scenes.

> *For example: A character scores 3 victories while investigating a scene. She has discovered the vital clue and two additional clues.*

> *For example: A character scores 1 victory. He has discovered only the vital clue.*

Skills such as forensics, tracking, and observation are used in investigative scenes. Exactly which skills are useful to a particular scene is based on the nature of the clues.

> *For example: A strand of hair is one of the clues at an investigative scene. Forensics would be useful in locating it, but tracking and observation would*

not be.

For example: Animal tracks are one of the clues at an investigative scene. Forensics, survival, tracking, and observation would all be useful.

Sometimes, non-investigative skills can lead to clues.

For example: A mechanic would be able to identify a stain made by transmission fluid.

For example: A firefighter would be able to identify burn marks at a scene.

Characters only earn automatic *victories* when their skills are applicable to finding the clues. However, they can still earn *victories* on their *Awareness* rolls without an applicable skill.

For example: There are two clues at a scene: tire tracks and a scrap of clothing. A rookie firefighter rolls 4, 5, and 5. Although his occupation has nothing to do with the two clues at the scene, he discovers them with the two victories earned on the Awareness roll.

If a character's occupation or *Extracurricular Skills* grants any automatic *victories*, he or she does more than merely discover the clues – she gains information from them.

For example: A crime scene investigator scores two victories, which yields two clues: tire tracks and a scrap of clothing. Because the occupation is relevant to the clues, the character knows details such as the weight of the vehicle and the type of tire that made the tracks, and the type of fabric the scrap is made of, etc.

If a character's occupation or *Extracurricular Skills* are not applicable to an investigation, the character can still discover the clues with a successful *Awareness* roll, but would not gain any extra information.

For example: A grifter scores two victories on an Awareness roll. He has discovered two clues: tire tracks and a scrap of clothing. Because his occupation has no relevance to the clues, the character does not know any details about what was found.

If the Gamemaster is uncertain how much information an occupation or *Extracurricular Skill* would yield about a particular clue, the GM should opt to reveal only basic facts. A skilled character can easily come by more detailed information by doing a little research

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PARTIAL SUCCESS

If a character does not score enough *victories* to discover all the clues, the Gamemaster must determine which clues are found. As a general guideline, clues should be discovered in the following order:

- The *vital clue*
- Clues related to occupation and *Extracurricular Skills*
- Clues unrelated to occupation and *Extracurricular Skills*

after the scene (see **Research** on pages 54-55 for more details).

It is expected that at least one player character will have an occupation or *Extracurricular Skill* appropriate to finding the *vital clue*. Since the Rookie level grants one automatic *victory*, the PCs will always discover the *vital clue*. However, more *victories* mean more clues are discovered. This enables characters to better understand what really occurred and form a more accurate hypothesis regarding their fieldwork (see **Hypothesis** on pages 55-56 for more details).

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

For example: A forest ranger (Professional level) is investigating a crop circle. Since her Awareness rank is 3, she rolls three dice. Her results are 3, 5, and 5. The character has scored two victories. The GM rules that the character's quick-witted Descriptor is not applicable to the investigation, so the character does not receive an extra die. However, the GM decides that the character's occupation is applicable to the scene and the character earns two automatic victories (her occupation's level is Professional). The character has scored a total of four victories (two rolled and two automatic). This yields four clues (the vital clue and three additional ones). With so many victories scored, the player decides that spending Will is unnecessary.

INTERVIEWING

There is more to fieldwork than on-site investigation. Characters will need to gather witnesses and conduct interviews. Sometimes this is as simple as talking to individuals at the scene. Other times, the characters will have to knock on nearby doors, ask questions of the locals, or do research at a local library to find out who they need to speak with (see **Research** on pages 54-55 for more details). Once contact is made, the character can solicit information.

Personality is always the Attribute used for interviewing.

There are many ways to approach a subject for information. To begin with, characters should always conduct an interview that plays to their *Descriptor*.

For example: If a character's Personality Descriptor were flirty, she would role-play the scene in that manner to gain an extra die for the attempt.

For example: If the character's Descriptor were funny, a few well-placed jokes would be likely to drop the subject's guard and gain the character an extra die.

A WORD OF ADVICE

During interviews, *Personality Descriptors* should be role-played. If the character's *Descriptor* is *charming*, the player should role-play the scene in that manner to the best of his or her ability. However, this is done solely for the purpose of game realism – to help bring a scene to life. A poor bit of verbal acting will not undo any *victories* the character has rightfully earned.

As usual, a character's occupation grants automatic *victories*. Occupations such as law-enforcement officer, journalist, lawyer, and private investigator are the most likely to do so. However, if players can justify why their occupations would grant automatic *victories*, the Gamemaster should allow it.

Every interviewee knows a number of details about what he or she saw or experienced. Exactly how many details are known is determined in advance by the Gamemaster. However, on average, each eyewitness will know one to five details. Gamemasters can find advice on creating eyewitness accounts in **Chapter 8: Gamemastering**.

The number of details an eyewitness can potentially recall is the *target number*.

When characters begin interviewing a witness, the *target number* will be unknown to them; they will not have prior knowledge of how much the subject knows. This means that they will have to carefully consider whether or not to expend any *Will* during the interview. To complicate matters, eyewitnesses recount what they *think* they saw, which is not always the truth. Unfortunately, unreliable witnesses are a common occurrence. However, on-site investigation and research can go a long way to proving the veracity of a witness's statements.

Although witnesses know multiple details, there is always one piece of information that will advance the story. This is known as the *vital detail*. If fieldwork consists of multiple scenes, the *vital detail* is the link to the later scenes. The *vital detail* is often the information that most illuminates what really happened.

To successfully conduct an interview, PCs *do not* need to achieve a number of *victories* equal to the TN; the *target number* is simply the maximum number of details a witness might recall. As long as characters achieve one *victory*, they will discover the *vital detail* necessary to move onward to other scenes.

> *For example: A character scores 3 victories during an interview. She has learned the vital detail and two additional ones.*

> *For example: A character scores 1 victory. He has*

discovered only the vital detail.

In many instances, the witness will be open to sharing her story or will be only slightly guarded about her experience. In these cases, interviewing proceeds as outlined in the preceding text. However, there are times when a witness is unwilling to speak up or is downright belligerent. When this occurs, the interviewing mechanics differ slightly.

When the witness does not want to cooperate, the interviewer must score a number of *victories* equal to the witness's *Personality* rank to learn the *vital detail*.

> *For example: A witness to a UFO landing is adamant about keeping his story to himself. Since the witness has a Personality of 2, the interviewer must score two victories to learn the vital detail.*

Any *victories* beyond the *target number* are extra details learned during the interview.

> *For example: An uncooperative witness has a Personality of 2. The interviewer scores three victories. She has learned the vital detail and one other detail.*

Although players will not know the scene's *target number*, they should be informed of the uncooperative witness's *Personality* rank so they know how many *victories* will be needed to learn the *vital detail*.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

> *For example: A journalist (Professional level) is interviewing a farmer regarding a UFO sighting. Since the farmer knows three details about his encounter, the target number is 3. Complicating matters, the farmer is reluctant to share his experience. This means his Personality rank (2) will be the number of victories the interviewer*

will need to score just to learn the vital detail. To discover all the details, the interviewer will need to earn four victories (two for the vital detail + two for the other details). Since the interviewer's Personality Descriptor is charming, he conducts his interview with that demeanor, earning an extra die. The interviewer rolls 1, 5 and 5, scoring two victories. After adding in two automatic victories from his occupation, which is obviously appropriate to interviewing, the character's victory total is 4. He has learned all the witness knows about his unusual encounter.

RESEARCH

Knowledge is power. The more the society knows about a subject, the better prepared they are to approach it. Anomalous phenomena, people, places, and history are the most commonly researched subjects, though many more are possible.

Characters can conduct research before, during, or after fieldwork, and their research can take many forms. Local libraries and the Internet are commonly used, and the society's private library at *Hepta Sophistai* has a vast array of books relating to anomalous phenomena and esoterica. The two libraries linked to the annex are also excellent repositories of knowledge.

***Reason* is always the *Attribute* used for research, and *Descriptors* grant a bonus die where applicable.**

The Gamemaster sets the *target number* for research according to the rarity of the information sought. Common knowledge easily found on the Internet is likely to have a TN of 1, while information found in only the rarest of books might have a *target number* of 7.

As usual, a character's occupation grants automatic *victories*. Occupations such as journalist, researcher,

RESEARCHING THE USHER CODEX

Player characters will eventually turn their research skills to the pages of the *Usher Codex*. Some of the clues on that manuscript are easily researched, while others will be extremely difficult. Setting *target numbers* for the *Codex* pages is covered in **Chapter 8: Gamemastering.**

and professor are the most likely to do so. However, if players can justify why their occupations would grant automatic *victories*, the Gamemaster should allow it.

> *For example: Since the character is a mechanic, he should receive automatic victories for researching the type of tire treads found on a particular make, model, and year of car.*

> *For example: Since the character is a doctor, he should receive automatic victories for researching the history of a particular narcotic.*

Game mechanics for conducting research follow the same outline as the basic mechanics. However, there is one twist: If the character uses a research source appropriate to the information sought, the *target number* is reduced by one.

> *For example: A character is researching the writings of an obscure French philosopher, and the GM has set a target number of 2. If the research were conducted at the Bibliothéque Nationale de France, the target number would drop to 1.*

> *For example: A character is researching the*

history of an isolated Scottish town, and the GM has set a target number of 3. If the research were conducted at the town's local library, the target number would drop to 2.

> *For example: A character is researching Spontaneous Human Combustion, and the GM has set a target number of 2. If the research were conducted at the society's library in Seven Dogs, the target number would drop to 1.*

The Gamemaster determines the time needed to research a subject. However, the GM *must not* make research a vastly time-consuming task that derails an investigation and lessens the players' enjoyment.

HYPOTHESIS

Once an investigation is complete, it is time to summarize and collate all the information. To do so, players should bandy ideas back and forth until a consensual hypothesis is reached. Once the players have a working hypothesis in place, one they believe to be accurate, they present it to the Gamemaster. If the hypothesis is correct, each player receives 5 *Experience Points* (XP) for his or her character. If the hypothesis is wrong or only partly correct, dice rolls are require**d.**

When a hypothesis is wrong or somewhat in error, each player makes a *Reason* roll:

- **If a character scores 1 *victory*, the GM corrects any significant errors in the hypothesis and the character receives 1 XP.**
- **If a character scores 2 *victories*, the GM corrects any small errors in the hypothesis and the character receives 2 XP.**
- **If a character scores 3 *victories*, the GM corrects all errors in the hypothesis and the character receives 3 XP.**

If a character fails a hypothesis roll, **Will cannot be spent**, and the character receives no *Experience Points* from the roll. However, if the original hypothesis was fairly accurate, missing only a few minor details, the Gamemaster should award each player 1 XP. By doing so, players are not penalized for failing a dice roll when their original hypothesis was not too far off the mark.

There are other ways a character earns XP in *Aletheia*. **Chapter 8: Gamemastering** covers this in detail.

Since the society always numbers seven, there will likely be NPCs among the ranks. If so, the Gamemaster can have these NPCs chime in as well. However, their comments should crystallize the players' hypothesis rather than provide conclusions for them.

FIGHTING

While investigations are the focus of *Aletheia*, characters are likely to get into a few fights.

When handling all aspects of combat, *Fitness* is the appropriate *Attribute*.

ORDER OF AN ACTION

When a fight breaks out, the order in which all the combatants attack must be determined. To do so, all characters (PC and NPC) roll one die and add the result to their *Fitness* rank. The character with the highest total acts first, the second highest acts next, and so on and so forth.

> *For example: Two thugs have picked a fight with one of the player characters. The PC rolls a 3 and adds it to his Fitness of 3, yielding a total of 6. Each thug has a Fitness of 2, and they roll 3 and 6 respectively, giving one a total of 5 and the other a*

total of 8. Based on these results, one thug (8) acts first, the PC (6) acts second, and the other thug (5) acts third.

In the event of a tie, each tying participant rolls a second die, and the highest result wins. This continues until the tie is broken.

If a combatant has the element of surprise on her side, she rolls two dice and adds the sum to her *Fitness* rank.

> *For example: A player character is lying in ambush for an NPC. When the PC suddenly lunges from the shadows, she gets to roll two dice instead of one to determine the attacking order. Her die results are 3 and 5. This is added to her Fitness rank of 2, producing a total of 10 (3 + 5 + 2 = 10). Her opponent gets to roll only one die and the result is 6. This result (6) is added to the NPC's Fitness rank (2), producing a total of 8 (6 + 2 = 8). The player character gets the jump on the NPC, attacking first.*

If a character's *Fitness Descriptor* provides an edge, the character rolls two dice instead of one and keeps the higher result.

> *For example: A character's Descriptor is quick. Since this would help her get the jump on an opponent, she rolls two dice instead of one. The results are 2 and 4. The character adds the higher of the two results (4) to her Fitness rank.*

If a character has the element of surprise and an applicable *Descriptor*, he or she rolls three dice, keeping the two highest results.

THE ATTACK

With attacking order established, the next step is to

determine if a blow has successfully landed. In the case of hand-to-hand combat, the *target number* is the *Fitness* rank of the opponent. This also applies for handheld weapons, such as bats or knives.

> *For example: A character is swinging at a thug with a Fitness of 2. The character needs to score two victories to land the punch.*

> *For example: A character is trying to smash a bottle over a thug's head. Since the thug has a Fitness of 3, the character needs to score three victories to land the blow.*

Firearms are handled differently. Since no human being can dodge a bullet, an opponent's *Fitness* rank has no bearing on the attacker's chances to hit. Instead, the *target number* is set by the Gamemaster according to environmental and situational conditions.

Sample conditions that will affect combat include:

- **Reduced visibility**
- **The target is moving**
- **The target is a considerable distance away**
- **The target has access to cover**
- **The attacker is moving while firing**
- **The attacker is severely wounded or distracted**

The base *target number* for firearm combat is 1. Environmental and situational conditions should increase the *target number* by one or more. However, the *target number* can never exceed 7, and most *target numbers* should be 1-3.

> *For example: The opponent is standing nearby, so the target number is 1.*

> *For example: The opponent is a distance away, running from the attacker during an intense rainstorm. The Gamemaster sets a target number*

of 4.

> *For example: The opponent is a distance away, using trees for cover. The Gamemaster sets a target number of 3.*

If a character's *Fitness Descriptor* is applicable to landing a blow or firing a shot, the character adds an extra die to his *Fitness* roll.

> *For example: If the Descriptor were coordinated, the character would receive an extra die to roll.*

> *For example: If the Descriptor were agile, the character would receive an extra die for hand-to-hand combat but not for firing a gun.*

> *For example: If the Descriptor were brawny, the character would not receive an extra die.*

Occupations with fighting or firearm skills grant automatic *victories* in combat. *Extracurricular Skills* such as fighting and shooting do so as well.

Will can be spent to roll extra dice.

DAMAGE

For hand-to-hand combat, the damage done is equal to the number of *victories* scored by an attack.

> *For example: A player character punches an NPC, scoring three victories. The NPC receives three points of damage.*

If a character has a *Fitness Descriptor* applicable to inflicting damage, he or she may roll an extra die. If the result is 5 or 6, another point of damage is done.

> *For example: A character punches an opponent,*

scoring two victories. He has done 2 points of damage. However, his Descriptor is brawny, so the character rolls an additional die. The result is 6. The character has inflicted an additional point of damage, bringing the total to three.

For hand-to-hand combat with weapons, additional damage is added based on weapon type. Blunt weapons such as brass knuckles, chairs, bottles, and bats add +2 to damage. Edged weapons such as knives and axes add +4 to damage.

> *For example: A player character strikes an NPC across the head with a chair, earning two victories. The NPC receives 4 points of damage (2 for the attacker's victories + 2 based on the weapon type).*

> *For example: A player character stabs an NPC with a knife, earning three victories. The NPC receives 7 points of damage (3 for the attacker's victories + 4 based on the weapon type).*

Descriptors can also increase damage done by handheld weapons. If the Descriptor is applicable, an extra die is rolled, and if the result is 5 or 6, another point of damage is done.

For handguns and rifles, damage is equal to the total earned *victories* times four. For shotguns and automatic weapons, damage is equal to the total earned *victories* times five.

> *For example: A player character fires a pistol, earning three victories. The PC has done 12 points of damage (3 x 4 = 12).*

> *For example: A player character fires a shotgun, earning two victories. The PC has done 10 points of damage (2 x 5 = 10).*

Every character, both PC and NPC, can sustain 20

HIT LOCATION

The amount of damage done determines the hit location of an attack. If an attack does 16 points of damage (out of a possible 20), it can be assumed to have hit a vital organ. Likewise, an attack that only does 1 point of damage merely grazes a shoulder or some other non-vital area of the body.

points of damage before incapacitation.

By spending *Will*, a character can reduce the damage from any single attack to only one point. In essence, the attack merely grazed the character instead of going where it was intended by the attacker.

> *For example: A character receives 16 points of damage from a gunshot. Rather than take such a devastating blow, the character spends 1 Will to reduce the damage to 1 point.*

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

> *For example: A journalist gets in a fight with two thugs. The attacking order is the first thing determined. The journalist rolls one die and scores a 4; this result is added to his Fitness rank (3), producing a total of 7. The thugs' totals are 4 and 5 respectively. Since the journalist earned the highest total, he acts first. Quickly, he grabs a nearby chair and swings wildly at one of the thugs. Since the thug has a Fitness of 3, the journalist needs to score three victories. Unfortunately, he rolls only one victory. To make matters worse, the journalist's Fitness Descriptor doesn't permit*

an extra die to be rolled, and the character's occupation grants no automatic victories. However, the character does have fighting (Rookie level) for an Extracurricular Skill, and manages to earn an automatic victory that way. Even so, the character has still scored only two victories – one shy of landing his blow. After some consideration, a point of Will is spent and an extra die is rolled. The result is 6: a victory. This brings the victory total to three, enough to smack the thug upside the head. Since the journalist used a chair for a weapon, he inflicts 5 points of damage (3 points for the victories + 2 points for the weapon). Now it's the thugs' turn to attack.

TAKING DAMAGE

As previously noted, characters can sustain 20 points of damage before they are incapacitated. If the result of the injuries is due to fisticuffs or blunt weapons, the character is merely unconscious. However, if firearms

FALLING DAMAGE

For every ten feet a character falls, he or she sustains 2 points of damage. Characters can absorb some of this damage with a *Fitness* roll. 1 point of damage is absorbed for every *victory* scored. The *target number* for a ten-foot fall is 1, and each additional increment of ten feet raises the *target number* one more. Thus, a twenty-foot fall has a TN of 2, a thirty-foot fall has a TN of 3, and so on and so forth.

or edged weapons caused the damage, the character is on the verge of death. The injured individual *must* receive first aid treatment within half an hour, and

CALLED SHOTS

When a character is aiming for a particular part of the body, the target number increases. The degree of increase is based on the size of the targeted area. The *target number* for striking the head (or an area of similar size) should be one higher, and the TN for smaller targets such as an eye or a hand should be two higher.

A called shot to the head, while more difficult to execute, has some advantages. In the case of hand-to-hand fighting or blunt weapon combat, the character can opt to knock the opponent unconscious with a successful called shot. During gunplay, the character may add an extra 5 points of damage for a successful headshot.

hospital caliber treatment within the hour, or the character expires.

HEALING

Damage can be healed with the application of first aid. *To receive healing benefits from first aid, it must be applied within twenty-fours of the initial injury.*

***Reason* is always the *Attribute* used for first aid, and appropriate occupations and *Extracurricular Skills* grant automatic *victories*.**

For standard first aid rolls, the *target number* is never fixed. Instead, the number of *victories* (rolled and automatic) determines how many points of damage are healed.

For example: A priest applies first aid to himself. He scores one victory, healing 1 point of damage.

For example: A forest ranger applies first aid to himself. He scores one victory, healing 1 point of damage. Additionally, his occupation (Professional level) grants two automatic victories. The forest ranger heals 3 points of damage in total (1 for his Reason roll + 2 for his occupation).

After first aid has been successfully administered, a character will heal as follows:

- **If a character has 1 to 10 points of damage remaining, these points heal at a rate of 2 points per day.**
- **If a character has 11 to 15 points of damage remaining, these points heal at a rate of 1 point per day.**
- **If a character has 16 or more points of damage remaining, these points heal at a rate of 1 point every other day.**

As damage is healed, the healing rate *does not* change. For example, a character who sustains 12 points of damage heals 1 point per day, and this does not change to 2 points per day when his current damage is lowered to 10 points.

If first aid is not applied, a character heals damage at a rate of 1 point every other day.

A successful first aid roll is required to stabilize a character who has sustained 20 points of damage. The *target number* to do so is 2. If the *target number* is met, the character is stabilized but needs to be rushed to the hospital for immediate treatment. Once the injured individual reaches the hospital, the attending physician will make a surgery roll. The *target number* is 3, and the amount of *victories* (rolled and automatic) determines how many points of damage are healed. From this point, damage heals at a rate of 1 point

every other day.

For surgery, *Reason* is usually the appropriate *Attribute*. However, a character with a *Fitness Descriptor* such as *coordinated* or *sure-handed* may roll *Fitness* instead. With NPC surgeons, the Gamemaster should assume that the operating doctor has a rank of 2 in the appropriate *Attribute* and an occupation level of Professional. However, if a player character was mortally wounded by a bad roll, the Gamemaster can be more lenient, raising the operating doctor's *Attribute* rank and/or occupation level.

POWERS

The preternatural powers possessed by the player characters require special mention, as *target numbers* work differently for each power.

Awareness is always the *Attribute* rolled for using powers. *Descriptors* and occupations provide no mechanical advantages. *Will* can be spent as normal.

When using powers, the Gamemaster should handle all dice rolling, concealing the results from the players.

PRESQUE VU

With *Presque vu*, a character can sense if an incident, event, location, or individual is connected to the truth sought by the society. Most often, this power is employed at the site of reputed anomalous phenomena – as it lets a character know if a truly unexplained event has occurred.

A character must consciously employ *Presque vu*. In other words, players need to declare that they are activating the power. If there is anything within sight

that is connected to the society's work, and the use of Presque vu is successful, the character will sense the significance of the area or object.

The *target number* for *Presque vu* is always 1.

> *For example: A character with Presque vu activates her power at a reputed UFO landing site. Since the character has an Awareness of 3, she rolls three dice. The results are 3, 6, and 6. The character has scored two victories, which exceeds the target number (1). The Presque vu reveals that something otherworldly did indeed occur at the site, but exactly what is unknown.*

Although *Presque vu* alerts the character that something connected to the society's *raison d'être* occurred, it does not reveal the nature of the connection. Only solid fieldwork can do that.

If a *Presque vu* roll fails, the character cannot get a read on the subject, and a second attempt cannot be attempted.

DEJA VISITE

No matter how foreign the location, a character with *Deja visite* can always find his way around. After activating this power, the character will be able to navigate the area as if he has been there before.

The *target number* for *Deja visite* is always 1.

> *For example: A character with Deja visite activates his power in a foreign city, in hopes of finding the local library. Since the character has an Awareness of 3, he rolls three dice. The results are 1, 2, and 5. The character has scored one victory, which meets the target number of 1. The character is able to navigate the local streets and reach the library even though he has never visited the area before*

– the character simply knows the way.

If a *Deja visite* roll fails, the character's instincts will lead to a circuitous journey around the area without ever reaching the desired destination. It will then be time for the frustrated character to consider getting a map.

REMOTE VIEWING

Remote viewing allows a character to watch events occurring at another location, regardless of the distance between viewer and object. A character can focus on an individual, spying on them from a distance, or can opt to monitor a particular place.

The *target number* for *Remote Viewing* is always 1.

> *For example: A character with Remote Viewing wants to spy on a suspicious individual who is residing abroad. Since the character has an Awareness of 2, he rolls two dice. The results are 2, and 5. The character has scored one victory. With the target number met, the character watches the subject go about his business.*

> *For example: A character with Remote Viewing wants to spy on a room two counties away. Since the character has an Awareness of 2, he rolls two dice. The results are 1, and 5. The character has scored one victory. With the target number met, the character can watch events unfold in the area.*

There are no limitations with *Remote Viewing*. A character can watch any person or event no matter the distance. However, *Remote Viewing* always occurs in real time; watching people, places, and events in the past or future is covered by *Postcognition* and *Precognition* respectively.

Remote Viewing lasts until the character opts to stop

viewing or his concentration is broken. However, the character can take no other actions while using this power.

If a *Remote Viewing* roll fails, the character cannot watch that same location or individual again. They are essentially masked from the character's power. However, this blockage can be undone at the time of the failure or at any time in the future with the expenditure of a *Will* point.

X-RAY VISION

X-ray Vision allows a character to see through any solid object. If an object possesses multiple layers, the character can perceive all of them simultaneously. For instance, if a character were using this power to peer inside a human being, she could distinguish all the intricate layers of the body at once: muscle, organs, bones, sinew, everything.

The *target number* for *X-ray Vision* is always 1.

> *For example: A character wants to view events occurring on the other side of a wall. Since the character has an Awareness of 3, she rolls three dice. The results are 5, 6, and 6. Since the three victories more than exceed the target number (1), the action is a success.*

A character's *X-ray Vision* is limited by line of sight. However, if a character wants, she can simultaneously see through all barriers up to her line of sight.

> *For example: The character wants to see an event transpiring three apartments away and casts her X-ray Vision in that direction. If the character so desires, she can see the goings on in every room in between herself and the target location.*

X-ray Vision lasts until the character opts to stop

viewing or her concentration is broken. However, the character can take no other actions while using this power.

If an *X-ray vision* roll fails, the character cannot focus on her subject. All the layers of matter between herself and the subject blur together into one incomprehensible mes**s.**

POSTCOGNITION

With *Postcognition*, the entirety of history is viewable by the character. The character can peer into any location in the past and watch events unfold. Additionally, the character can focus on a particular event or individual. However, the character must decide how far back to look, and can take no other actions while using this power. Once contact with the past is made, events are viewed in real time unless the character opts to stop viewing or concentration is broken. In other words, watching the past for a length of time requires the character to spend an equal number of minutes to do the viewing. Therefore, if an event that occurred an hour ago is watched for one hour, one hour passes in real time – time never catches up with the character until he or she breaks off the viewing.

> *For example: A character wants to see what an NPC was doing yesterday. He focuses on the individual and declares a Postcognition start time of twelve hours ago. If the PC so desires, he can watch the NPC indefinitely, but he will always be watching twelve hours in the past as time passes normally around him.*

The farther a character gazes into the past, the more difficult the process is. *Target numbers* for doing so are as follows:

- **TN 1: Looking up to one week into the past**
- **TN 2: Looking up to one year into the past**

- **TN 3: Looking up to one century into the past**
- **TN 4: Looking up to one millennium into the past**
- **TN 5: Looking beyond one millennium**

If a *Postcognition* roll fails, the character cannot access that specific timeframe again; it becomes a hazy blur to the character. However, this can be undone at the time of the failure or at any time in the future with the expenditure of a *Will* point.

PRECOGNITION

With *Precognition*, a character can peer into the future. The character focuses on a particular place, individual, or event and decides how far into the future she or she wishes to watch. As with *Postcognition*, viewing occurs in real time. If a future event is watched for one hour, one hour passes for the character.

The further a character gazes into the future, the more difficult the process is. *Target numbers* for doing so are as follows:

- **TN 1: Looking up to one week into the future**
- **TN 2: Looking up to one year into the future**
- **TN 3: Looking up to one century into the future**
- **TN 4: Looking up to one millennium into the future**
- **TN 5: Looking beyond one millennium**

Precognition lasts until the character opts to stop viewing or concentration is broken. However, the character can take no other actions while using this power.

If a *Precognition* roll fails, the character cannot access that specific timeframe again; it becomes a hazy blur to the character. However, this can be undone at the time of the failure or at any time in the future with the expenditure of a *Will* point.

GHOSTING

Characters with *Ghosting* can move through solid objects as if they weren't even there.

The *target number* for *Ghosting* is always 1.

THE OBSERVER EFFECT

In quantum physics, if an event is unobserved, it exists in all possible states simultaneously. It is not until the event is observed that one state is chosen over another. Phrased more simply, the act of observation changes the phenomenon being observed. This has a very real application in *Aletheia*.

When a character uses *Postcognition* or *Precognition*, the act of observation changes the past or future. Most times, the changes are so subtle and minor that no one will ever notice them. However, the farther and longer one gazes across time, the more likely noticeable changes will occur. Therefore, characters should be cautious of how far and how long they look into the past or future. By doing so, they are actually altering what has occurred or will yet come to pass.

For example: A character wants to pass through a wall to the room on the other side. Since she has an Awareness of 2, she rolls two dice. The roll yields two victories, which exceeds the target number (1). The character walks through the wall as if it wasn't even there.

For example: A character wants to enter a locked car via Ghosting. Since he has an Awareness of 2, he rolls two dice. The roll yields one victory, which meets the target number (1). The character enters the car without opening the door.

With *Ghosting*, characters can opt to move hands, arms, etc. though solid objects, without shifting their entire bodies.

For example: A character wants to see what is going on in another room and opts to move only his head through the dividing wall.

Characters using *Ghosting* can carry people and objects with them, or bring items back from the other side of a barrier. The only limitation is how much a character can carry.

For example: A character moves through a solid wall, carrying another character in her arms.

For example: A character wants to steal money from a safe. The character moves his hand through the safe door and extracts it with money in hand.

If the Gamemaster feels the character is carrying too much weight, a *Fitness* roll can be required with a *Target Number* of 1.

It is important to note that *Ghosting* does not make a character immaterial; instead, objects are moved through as if they had no physical substance.

There are no ramifications to a failed *Ghosting* roll – the power simply fails to activate. However, characters are free to immediately try again, and can continue to do so until success is achieved.

TELEPORTATION

As the name implies, *Teleportation* allows a character to move instantaneously from one place to another without traveling through space. Characters have only to think of another location and, if successful, their physical forms will materialize at the visualized site.

The *target number* for *Teleportation* is always 1.

There is no limit to how far a character may travel with *Teleportation*.

A failed *Teleportation* roll sends the character to a location other than the intended one. The exact destination is up to the Gamemaster.

TIME TRAVEL

Characters with this power can travel forward and backward in time. There is no era, no epoch, unreachable with *Time Travel*. A character has only to focus on a particular location and time, and make a conscious decision to travel.

The further a character travels across time, the more difficult the process is. *Target numbers* for doing so are as follows:

- **TN 1: Traveling up to one week into the past or the future**
- **TN 2: Traveling up to one year into the past or the future**
- **TN 3: Traveling up to one century into the past or the future**

- **TN 4: Traveling up to one millennium into the past or the future**
- **TN 5: Traveling beyond one millennium into the past or the future**

A character with *Time Travel* is not limited by spatial concerns. When traveling across time, he or she can also travel across space. In other words, a character can appear at any place at any time.

A failed *Time Travel* roll sends the character to a time and place other than the intended one. The exact destination is up to the Gamemaster, though it should not be one that will indefinitely strand the character (such as sending a character with an *Awareness* of 2, millions of years into the past).

POWERS DURING FIELDWORK

Characters can use their otherworldly powers during investigations. They can look into the future or past to see what actually occurred or even travel back to the origin of the incident. However, doing so is not always reliable. As noted in **The Observer Effect** sidebar, the act of interacting with other times can have unforeseen effects – the PCs could accidentally change the nature of the very phenomenon they are investigating. Therefore, characters shouldn't use their powers during investigations unless they absolutely have to, and when doing so, they need to be overly cautious. If the fieldwork is tainted, the hypothesis can be inaccurate. This hinders the society rather than helps it.

USING POWERS CREATIVELY

Beyond their basic applications, there are myriad ways for powers to be used creatively by players. The following examples are merely a sampling of what is possible.

SURPRISE

The element of surprise can be valuable in certain situations, most notably during a fight (see page 56). With *Postcognition*, characters can know their opponents' plans as they are formulating them. With *Precognition*, a character can see how events will unfold and alter them to his or her benefit. With *Ghosting*, *Teleportation*, and *Time Travel*, a character can appear from nowhere and get the jump on an unsuspecting foe.
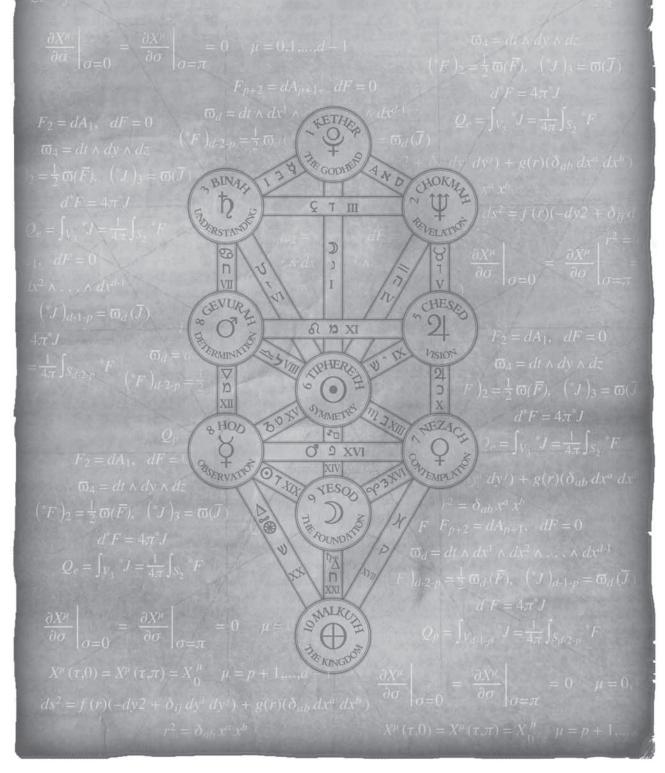
DODGING AN ATTACK

If an opponent pulls out a gun, and there's no available cover, a character can use *Time Travel*, *Teleportation*, or *Ghosting* to get out of the way before the shot is fired. To do so, the character must first make an *Awareness* roll (TN of 1) to react quickly enough to the situation. If this roll is successful, the character rolls to activate the power as normal.

CHANGING THE PAST AND FUTURE

Characters with *Time Travel* and *Precognition* have the ability to alter past or future events. If a friend is murdered, for example, a character with *Time Travel* can journey into the past and stop the crime. A character with *Precognition* might see the murder happening in advance and make sure it never comes to pass. Using powers in this manner is fine. However, players will need to keep in mind that there may be unforeseen ramifications to doing so.

chapter six

anomalous phenomena

Time: 11:30 a.m.
Date: December 20, 1999
To: tl_chastain@yahoo.com

Terrance,

I believe that something larger is on the horizon, that we are standing at the threshold of Usher's elusive truth. Although some of the society members may not think that we need to record our history, I believe that it is vital. You've always told us that we need to look to the past in order to prepare for the future. There's not much time left, and I know this is highly unusual, but I've taken it upon myself to document our methods, our investigative techniques, because I'm certain that future society members can benefit from the knowledge we have so laboriously compiled.

Per our previous conversation, I have mailed to you our remaining case files. I feel foolish advising you in such a fashion, but I hope you've picked an excellent location to store the documents. Those files have been my reason for being for almost thirty years, and now that I won't need pen and paper... it feels so strange to me that my work... our work... will be left in the hands of strangers.

I fear my emotions are getting the better of me, as I find myself unreasonably... reluctant to give you this vital information – my life's work. We both understand that this is the reason why the society exists, the reason why Usher was so obsessed with creating our society in the first place, but that doesn't make it any easier.

Within the attachments I have sent you, I've documented the heart and soul of the society's single-minded purpose. I have not written the results of our investigations, only the process by which we came to our conclusions, as I'm wary of our research falling into the wrong hands. Besides, it's probably best that future societies reach their own destination on these matters.

As you can read for yourself, I have included both generic and specific instructions for future investigators, including a small proffering of case studies. Some of these cases come from our earliest investigations and some from the recent past. Hopefully, all of them give future societies something to think about and a place to begin their journeys.

I wish I could share more with you Terrance, as you've been a good friend these years, but we both know that is impossible. Like Jericho before us, only a select few can understand or undertake this voyage. However, we are optimistic that, one day, humanity will be able to make the pilgrimage as well.

Yours in truth,

Judith Seales

AN INVESTIGATOR'S BIBLE

1) *Document everything:* Even the slightest detail could prove instrumental in determining whether or not activity is actually paranormal. Simple observations while gathering evidence have proven essential in determining fact vs. fiction.

2) *Collect evidence:* Archeology and criminology teaches us that sometimes even the smallest details can shed light on what actually happened at a scene. Scraps of fabric, discolored dust, and photographs of a scene are a few examples of useful evidence.

3) *Gather witnesses:* Although physical evidence is vital to an investigation, the people who see, hear and breathe an event can be even more important. Be sure to perform background checks on witnesses to gain insight as to whether or not the outside community may deem them credible.

4) *Catalogue and file:* An organized investigator is an effective investigator. Every shred of proof, every record made, needs to be archived using a logical inventory system. It is strongly encouraged that each member keeps a personal journal as well and, when in doubt, copy and save everything on an off-site computer.

5) *Remain unbiased:* The only appropriate time to come to any sort of a conclusion, theory, or hypothesis is after the investigation has been fully conducted. Any amount of bias can prove detrimental to a case, and can shift a recorded phenomenon from being credible to a joke in no time at all.

6) *Avoid outside influences:* From the media to family involvement, once an outsider becomes involved in a case, there is a chance that the evidence will be compromised. While our goals are serious, there are many individuals who would leap at the chance to sabotage evidence out of cruelty, or spite, or for their own misguided sense of humor. We also have reason to believe that other organizations pay informants and witnesses to plant distractions. Romantic involvements are strongly discouraged, as it's extraordinarily difficult to trust and interview witnesses when love is coloring your view.

The following paragraphs are to be used in the event of a new sighting or experienced phenomenon. All case studies begin in this manner, and it is helpful to craft your own checklist to ensure you are thorough, accurate, and sincere.

OBSERVE AND RECORD

Scientific observations should quantify and qualify the event. First, make a new file for the alleged supernatural event and assume nothing – even if the lead seems overwhelmingly staged. Sometimes the witnesses involved are persons addicted to the paranormal, people who seek out the strange and bizarre simply because they're enthusiasts. We suggest that you always carry a journal and pen with you, a small tape recorder, and a camera. Time is of the utmost importance following an event and we prefer that you arrive on the scene as soon as humanly possible.

After an alleged event has occurred, please proceed with the following:

1) *Arrive on scene in a timely fashion.* Generally, the society tries to be at the scene of an event within the first twenty-four hours of its occurrence, if not sooner.

2) *Photograph the scene.* Be sure to get multiple points-of-view, record your position, and photograph the event's origin whenever possible.

3) *Photograph the witnesses*. If you can, take pictures while the witnesses are unaware that they are being photographed. At a later time, go back and try to identify the subject(s). The more photos of the people involved, the better.

4) *Record the disruption on audio tape*. With advanced technology, we have the ability to filter out or listen in to what a crowd of onlookers might be saying.

5) *Take down the names and professions of all involved*. One of the interesting dynamics that occurs, on cases of this type, is the way people interact with one another. Law enforcement tends to be skeptical, while religious clergy tend to be more focused on religious implications. As an investigator, it is your job to determine not only what the phenomenon was but what the best way to describe that phenomenon might be.

6) *Interview as many people as you can*. Every possible eyewitness needs to be interviewed. Additionally, friends, neighbors, and relatives of the witness should also be interviewed; this helps establish the credibility of the witness.

7) *Set up a local base of operations*. Headquarters is wherever you can make a temporary home. Because some investigations take the society to remote locales, you should always be ready to stay in the strangest of places. Several times you may find yourself without the use of electronic equipment; many of us have an overnight kit and briefcase on-hand, for use at a moment's notice.

On Interviews: Potential candidates for interviews can come from a variety of sources. They may range from experts in the field of metaphysics to family members of the witnesses. Our experience, through trial-and-error, has shown that interviewees need to be handled carefully, if only because some people are very private by nature, while others would tell you their life story if they were given the chance. Interviews can occur in any number of ways – from the formal office meeting to the casual coffee shop repartee. It is up to you, the investigator, to utilize your people skills and make a decision as to the best way to proceed. Remember, that many professionals are very protective of their work – whereas a lonely housewife may be eager to talk to you because you're someone who will listen to her story. Whatever your decision, the goal of interviewing is to gather information, even if that information may be repetitive, and worry about the analysis later.

RESEARCH: AN INTELLECTUAL APPROACH

Depending upon where you are searching for information, finding accurate and non-biased descriptions can be a chore. The key to research is to implement a systematic and detailed approach that encompasses a scientific line of thinking. Asking the standard questions (*i.e.* who, what, when, where, how) can help start the process, but should only be used to provide a generic outline for filling in some of the blanks. The most tedious part of investigation comes after you retrieve your body of work: cross-checking sources and verifying that your information is accurate. For example, if you are looking into a potential alien abduction, once you gather all of the information from your variety of sources, be sure to record which statements are the same (or different) in every source. Only then will you have the perspective needed to go back and ask further questions of the interviewees. Be sure to read further for a suggested process on how to utilize scientific methods to ensure accuracy and remove your own, personal bias.

TYPES OF MATERIAL

While there are many different types of reference material that you may come across in your searches,

the two main categories can be classified as electronic and print media.

Print media (newspaper, magazines, books, photography): There are many places where you, as an investigator, can have access to several different types of print media to help in your research. You might travel to your local bookstore, library, or university or, you may be invited to a private auction or personal collection of occult books. The key to effectively utilizing print media is to first collect whatever you possibly can, on the subject at hand, and make your determination as to whether or not the evidence is "bogus" in your process of investigation – not beforehand. As such, you might come across material from disreputable sources, like tabloid newspapers or shady informants, which you might instinctively deem worthless. However, previous studies have revealed that truth can be found in the strangest places, so it's better to collect all the information possible and sort it out later. Do not, under any circumstances, try to "restore" older print material. Check with a scientist to see if the media will survive being copied, or simply handwrite as many details as you can so that the information can be preserved for later use. Only those with great knowledge of scientific methodology should attempt chemical or physical experimentation on ancient or damaged printed text.

Electronic media (tapes, videos, hard drives, Internet, etc.): Unfortunately, electronic media is often very difficult to work with – even though it is definitely easier to cross-reference. In the past, some electronic media did not survive the rigors of testing, being easily damaged through accidents or paranormal phenomena. If possible, the first step to preserving electronic information is to make a copy or translate it into print. Never rely solely on an original source. Sometimes, what is perceived as an electronic voice transmission or an otherworldly howling is actually nothing more than a distortion in the tape or recorder

itself. If you are browsing the Internet, gather as much information as possible including: who owns the site, the domain name, other links, cited source material, IP address, etc.

RESEARCH: A FIELDWORK APPROACH

Typically, fieldwork follows a series of steps that are vital to a smooth operation.

1) *Delegate responsibility and elect a team leader*. The various positions assigned should play to individual society members' strengths, casting aside all jealousy and doubt, and inspiring teamwork.

2) *Perform field observations prior to researching details*. Again, because timeliness is essential to an accurate investigation, fieldwork should come first. Assume that this step requires you to perform the full range of actions involved, including interviewing the witnesses.

3) *Cooperate with local law enforcement*. On more than one occasion, a small town sheriff or local priest has offered invaluable insight into these types of phenomena – because they have a finger on the pulse of the community. Respect their position, and they are more likely to be helpful.

4) *Gather any physical evidence you can find*. One of the most challenging aspects of documenting a phenomenon is gathering physical evidence, if only because there might be other factors involved in the case (like media or police). One of the ways to get around this is to study things from a biological perspective; it is always helpful to have a doctor or someone with a medical background on hand to draw blood and obtain hair and skin samples.

5) *Perform research based on field observations*. When practical, consult the library at *Hepta Sophistai*; it houses an extensive collection of

books on anomalous phenomena and other left-field subjects. Also, a local library or Internet cafe might shed some light on the nature or history of the phenomenon you are looking into. It is safe to say that many events have gone unexplained throughout the years, and a wealth of commonly occurring paranormal information can be found on the Internet.

6) *Conduct additional interviews based on research.* Sometimes, a scientist's paper or a witness's doctor may shed light onto a case. It helps to narrow your search after sorting through the piles of research you have initially gathered; however, this step can be delayed depending upon what the case study analysis turns up.

7) *Send copies of everything you have gathered to an alternate location.* Accidents (and petty theft) do happen; the society needs to ensure that it has multiple copies of everything. Having access to only the original shred of unique evidence can prove costly later on.

ANALYZING THE EVIDENCE

In order to preserve the scientific aspects of a paranormal investigation, you will be expected to test the material and cross-reference your written and oral documentation at great lengths. Any missed steps will hurt the investigation and waste valuable time.

1) *Test physical evidence, utilizing known scientific methods, and verify with an outside agent.* Regardless of a society member's scientific background, it is essential to verify the results with an outside laboratory or respected professor. After tests have been completed and verified, a report is commonly filled out that identifies the basic goals of the test and their results. This paperwork is then added to the phenomenon's growing body of evidence.

2) *Draw parallels between similar facts.* Once all evidence has been converted to written form (including transcripts of interviews), the information needs to be arranged in such a way that it will be easy to cross-reference. It is not uncommon for evidence, grouped and categorized in a logical manner, to be analyzed on a large drawing board. For example, if a case about a missing person reveals several pieces of evidence that mention what the individual was wearing, those details might be grouped under the category "Clothing." Of course, how you cross-reference your material will no doubt depend upon what you are working on.

3) *Draw relationships between person(s) involved.* Beyond the actual details, sometimes it helps to see how the witnesses are involved with one another, and in what way. By also drawing these relationships on a board, sometimes you can see patterns emerging between the facts of a situation and those individuals involved. While not commonplace, some investigators find themselves conducting another interview with a specific person based on the results of this step.

4) *Draw a detailed outline of events.* Chronology can be one of the more deciding factors of whether or not a phenomenon is a credible occurrence, if only because simple logic tells us that a person, theoretically, cannot be in two places at once. By using a skeptic's mindset, you will be able to build your theories based on reputable, scientific methods.

FORMULATE YOUR CONCLUSION

Sometimes the hardest thing in an investigation can be to take a step back and leave the room. Much of
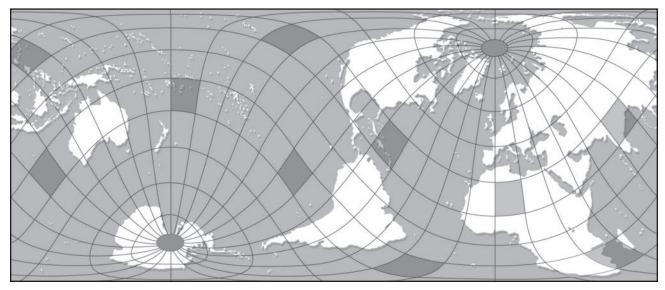
the time, however, that is exactly what you need to do. Once the act of cataloguing, gathering, and analyzing is completed, you are ready to look for common themes or repeated patterns in events. What you see may direct you to a particular person or place; however, it can also lead you into a dead end. Too much evidence can be just as confusing as too little, and there are times when all the random bits of data just seem… random. One method you can use is to rely on the timeframe of events. Nine times out of ten, the chronology of the evidence may reveal either a distortion of the truth, a misperception, or a bold-faced lie. Our rule has always been a hard one to follow: If you can not back up an observation from a witness with a piece of evidence or someone else's story, then simply throw out that data from your conclusion. The exception to this rule, of course, is the social phenomena that have no physical evidence. The society tends to take a wavering stance on investigations of this type, if only because as hard as they are to prove, they are doubly hard to present to the scientific community.

The most respected form of conclusion cites the catalogued evidence according to archived number, and explains things in an extraordinarily systemic manner akin to equations used in propositional logic; *i.e.* "if" this happened, "then" this "and" this leads us to believe "this." When a case does come to a pointed conclusion, it needs to have survived rigorous testing so that if the theory ever garners outside attention, there will be no question that the conclusion is not only logical, but accurate.

VILE VORTICES

One of our first objectives, regarding anomalous phenomena, was to determine whether or not there were specific geographic locations where events more commonly occurred. Although Charles Fort loosely originated a theory, one of his early followers, a man by the name of Ivan T. Sanderson, made the observation that disruptions in currents (both sea and air) led to various environmental anomalies. He called these areas the vile vortices; each local has different properties, some violent, some healing, some neutral.

For example, one vortex, the Bermuda Triangle, is a hotspot of violent activity that is likely responsible for the disappearance of several ships, planes, and other

physical objects. While much has been theorized and postulated about the Bermuda Triangle, both skeptics and believers agree that anomalies have occurred that remain unexplained. Other sites are, fortunately, more neutral in nature.

A vortex of healing activity can be found at Lake Baikal, located in Northern Mongolia. Baikal, meaning "Nature" in the Mongol language, is the oldest lake in the world; its deep, clear waters date back 25 to 30 million years to the late Palaeogene era. Also known as Dalai-Nor (Sacred Sea) in the Buryat and Mongol languages, this ancient southern Siberian sea contains over twenty percent of the world's fresh water, and more than ninety percent of Russia's fresh water. Baikal's soil and water are so uncommon, that many unique creatures make their home in and along its waters. Some people, native to the area, bring their sick and dying to the lake, submersing them in the ancient, healing waters. Myths and legends have sprung up, over time, describing the lake's origin.

Before there was a lake, there was a lush forest rich with game. Hunters had many prosperous seasons, making their way carefully through the trees in order to feed their hungry families. But then it was that the forest grew angry, and gave birth to a mighty bird. This bird was made of fire and smoke and ash. Its power was such that the breeze of its wings could smash a rock to dust, and the people grew afraid.

One night a child came down from the sky; he grew before the people's eyes strong and brave. The people raised him, fed him, and clothed him. In return, they asked the man he had become to kill the fiery bird, for they were hungry. The hero agreed. He took a sharp rock and carved it into a blade, chopping down three hundred trees to make his mighty bow and one straight arrow. The hero climbed to the mountain's peak, and with a sound like that of thunder he shot the bird from the sky. It cried out in pain, sending flames shooting to the heavens. The hero waved his hand and the skies opened; the people saw balls of water race

down from the sky, defeating the flames and filling the hole where their enemy of fire had fallen.

While this is just a popular myth, it is interesting to see a clear analogy to a potential meteor landing. Man did make his home along Baikal's shores; the lake is an archaeologist's dream, with its wealth of evidence and information relating to the Stone, Bronze, and Ice Ages cultures.

Whenever you investigate an incident, you may want to double-check to see whether or not it fits into Sanderson's theory that the Earth's energies are concentrated into specific areas. The majority of the phenomena that the society investigates may be classified as violent, something that disrupts the very essence of nature. However, some of those who experience extreme phenomena (*i.e.* abductions, etc.) find themselves drawn to so-called "medicine wheels" or "healing places" in the world, potentially to align themselves with medicinal or therapeutic energies.

SAMPLE CASE FILES

The following is a sampling of common case files that we have investigated over the years. You'll notice that there is very little in the way of conclusions provided, and I can only tell you that this was done for good reason.

It is essential that you take into consideration how common an event actually is; with only seven members, we simply don't have enough manpower to investigate each and every one. The bulk of our research and investigation in the field needs to take place within a short timeframe of when an actual event (not a hoax) has occurred. As such, many "cold cases" are simply researched, documented, and handled remotely – with the exception of interviews. While we still conducted phone interviews for some

of the older cases, we've seen that the best results are usually obtained from face-to-face visits.

VIRGIN BIRTHS

Cross-referenced: Alien Abduction
Location: Global religious or faith-based communities
Number of Occurrences: Rare, less than 10
Witness Count: 2

Also known as Parthenogenesis, virgin births occur when a female becomes pregnant and the embryo begins its development without male fertilization. Although this occurrence does take place commonly in nature, in some plant, insect, and animal species, it is theoretically impossible for this phenomenon to occur in human females. Virgin births are commonly associated with religious experiences, as Mary in the Christian tradition was purported to be a virgin when she gave birth to Joshua ben Joseph, popularly known as Jesus Christ.

In addition to Jesus, there are other recorded virgin births that are associated with other religions. Interestingly enough, all of the children were male. They are, in no particular order: Dekanahwideh (Huron Indians), Montezuma (Pueblo god-hero), Huitzilopochtli (Aztec god of war/sun), Hunahpu and Xbalanque (Mayan twin heroes), Sathya Sai Baba (South Indian guru), Cúchulainn (Irish figure), and Mithra (Persian god). Although some of the children are rooted in myth, and thus the reality of their existence is to be questioned, both Sathya Sai Baba and Dekanahwideh were clearly living, active members of their communities.

Unfortunately, there is a substantial lack of evidence for this phenomenon. In recent years, there has only been one known recorded instance of a virgin birth. Sarah Jessup, a forty-year old female from Bunker Hill, Indiana, gave birth to a son in July of 1982. She and her daughter, Mandy, both claim that the child is actually the by-product of a mysterious alien encounter, and that Sarah was post-menopausal when she got pregnant. Unfortunately, both women did not go through proper medical channels to document and monitor her pregnancy (Mandy acted as her mother's midwife). It is the society's belief that it is impossible to come to any sort of conclusion from this case, even with physical evidence from the child himself, because there are many issues surrounding the case that make it seem dubious.

UNNATURAL PRECIPITATION

Cross-Referenced: Animal Rain
Location: Africa, Asia, South America
Number of Occurrences: averaging 1 every five years
Witness Count: When an incident does occur, typically yields between 15-20 credible witnesses

Rain, hail, snow, and sleet have sometimes taken on unusual properties. For example, in the late 1960s, over the Republic of Congo in Africa, blood-red rain poured over a region stretching hundreds of miles. At first, scientists believed that the red pigment originated from a comet or from lichens that had somehow mixed in with the atmosphere. By the 1980s, some astrophysicists declared that the source of the rain was xenobiological in nature.

In religious or faith-based communities, many declare that food has rained down from the sky to feed the starving. Research has proven time and time again that in every case the "food" is actually a type of locust. In such cases, it is quite helpful to contact a sociologist or professor familiar with the local culture and customs in the affected region.

Because each occurrence tends to be unique in some

way, the only way to reach a conclusion in these cases is to study each one and examine as much evidence as you can find. Statistical analysis has proven most effective on cases like these. Unfortunately, the most common report the society receives of an unnatural rain is about precipitation that drops several animals (typically birds, frogs, and fish) from the sky. Please refer to that case study for more information.

SPONTANEOUS HUMAN COMBUSTION

Location: Typically occurs in a domestic residence
Number of Occurrences: 7 reported cases between 1980 and 1990, sporadic records before that time reaching back to the 1500s.
Witnesses: 1 witness, a handful of survivors

Spontaneous Human Combustion (SHC) refers to a process by which the human body burns with no identifiable source of ignition. The society has gathered a few, key pieces of evidence regarding SHC. With research and painstaking efforts, a few, recognizable patterns have emerged. First, only the person's body and clothing burn, other surrounding objects, including furniture, do not ignite. Second, firefighters have not been able to locate the source of the fire, even when the victim survives; their reports indicate that when a body does ignite, the fire burns at a hotter temperature than that of a normal house fire. Third, the majority of these cases occur to a specific age range of humans, those between 75 to 90, and seventy-five percent of these cases result in fatality.

In order to properly handle incidents of reported SHC, the society typically conducts its own tests, mimicking the conditions of the event in order to eliminate outside factors. Some cases have resulted in arrests for criminal involvement, some have remained unsolved, but more than a few have produced interesting results. One popular theory is that certain individuals have the potential to generate enough static electricity that they are prone to ignition under certain temperatures; with the right humidity and the

right materials, the human body can "spark" on fire due to its own fat content.

The challenge with SHC is that most, if not all, rational thinkers of our time regard it as nothing more than an urban legend. Typically, it is only amateur investigators or members of the media who seem to be interested in proving whether or not SHC is real. In their zeal for fame and glory, few of these would-be detectives follow any sort of outline or guidebook to conduct their investigations. As such, their research and their experiments are extremely faulty and no credible scientist, doctor, or firefighter will take them seriously. Indeed, when the society hears a report of a SHC, the usual first step is to involve outside experts as much as possible – experts in medicine, physics, criminology, and combustion.

AGRIGLYPHS

Cross-Referenced: UFOs
Location: Rural farm fields, heavy concentration in England
Number of Occurrences: First known occurrence in 1970, thousands known to date
Witnesses: Typically occur after circle is discovered

Agriglyphs, intricate designs seen from the air in fields of wheat, corn, barley and other crops, are commonly thought to be man-made and not mystical in nature. Several people have reproduced these designs using old farming equipment. Although many of the circles are widely known as fakes, there are distinct differences between the obvious man-made agriglyphs and the designs of seeming paranormal origin.

Man-made agriglyphs tend to occur after a fog or heavy rain, when the plant stems can bend easily. Designs are typically studies in circles, as the creator drags a wooden implement around in a 360° angle.

Research indicates that man-made circles are formed with the help of two to three people and occur in small, rural communities rather than at large, industrial-sized farms. Local farmers don't recall any known disturbances or signs that their field would be targeted. However, it is quite clear that most of the creators of the agriglyphs are younger males in their early 20s, and a careful investigator can often find evidence of footprints or materials left carelessly behind. Because crop circles affect the local farmers' livelihood, the society usually reports these vandals to the local authorities.

Agriglyphs that are thought to be the work of extraterrestrials, UFOs, or mythological creatures such as faeries, goblins, and trolls, occur at any time, regardless of weather. Close analysis of the design has revealed that no stalk (or stem) was bent by force; they simply appear to have grown that way overnight. To date, no footprints or telling evidence have been found at such scenes – with the exception of strange electromagnetic readings. It has been assumed that microwaves can affect plant matter from higher altitudes, and can be controlled to produce patterns. These glyphs rarely mimic letters and tend to be more intricate than the man-made circles, even producing geometrically accurate shapes that would be impossible to produce on the ground. Field owners of these circles have reported hearing high-pitched noises the night before, as well as strange flashes of light during the daylight hours.

Many of these cases remain inconclusive, if only because the circle sometimes isn't enough evidence in and of itself. The society fears that a true, anomalous phenomenon may go unnoticed due to the rise in mimicking these designs.

ANIMAL RAIN

Cross-Referenced: Unnatural Precipitation

Location: Europe and Africa
Number of Occurrences: Approximately 3 per year
Witnesses: Many, from all walks of life

The most common animal species to drop from the sky are birds, frogs, and fish. It is imperative to look at each one of these cases individually, for sometimes there is a simple explanation for the "animal rain." Tornadoes, hurricanes, and other strong weather conditions have been known to affect the environment in destructive ways, supplanting whole colonies of fish and dropping them, intact, miles elsewhere.

While some cases leave very little evidence behind, these "animal rains" present a difficult scenario, for at times there is almost too much evidence to properly categorize. Sometimes the society has to make hard decisions as to whether or not it should investigate activity based on other priorities. Meteorologists, amateur astronomers and weather experts, as well as storm chasers, have given the society some additional,

unexpected data, which has proven useful during investigations.

ALIEN ABDUCTION

Cross-Referenced: UFOs, Missing Time
Location: Primarily North America
Number of Occurrences: 27 confirmed abductions, over 300 unconfirmed since 1965
Witnesses: To date, this is a unique experience that is only "witnessed" by the survivors

Throughout history, different cultures have experienced social growing pains and have expressed their angst, their fears, and their joys, into myth and folklore. While UFO landings have been documented and remarked upon through several stages in human history, the idea that an alien can/would/and has abducted human beings is unique to modern culture beginning in the twentieth century.[1] Many fanatical

researchers have tainted this area of study, as science tends to fall by the wayside as desperate people reach for desperate pieces of evidence that we are not alone in the universe. As a result, there are many who believe that all of the modern cases are a joke, and they do not warrant further research. While the society does, regrettably, tend to agree with this opinion, one or two scientists have emerged that have helped bring an air of seriousness to these abductions.

One of these researchers is a Harvard psychologist by the name of John Mack, a man who firmly believed in the scientific method and did what he could to systematically investigate the survivors. Mack noticed that some of the survivors felt inexplicably changed by the incident, as if their entire outlook on life had evolved and they were suddenly more in tune with nature and their surrounding environment. Within this sub-group of people, he realized that the things these patients had experienced were extraordinarily similar to what the ancients called a "vision quest." He postulated that many people, even living in modern day society, are drawn to a more basal version of their psyche, a need to hunt, gather, and seek spiritual guidance through the surrounding natural world. Thus, he single-handedly justified both the individual's change in personality as well as whatever sensory experiences they may have had beforehand.

While many skeptics find this theory to be an acceptable one, some believers do not understand some of the more physical aspects of alien abductions such as: bizarre scarring, strange implants found within the human body, accidental nosebleeds during sleep, chronic insomnia in patients with no known history of the ailment, elevated levels of nitrogen in the blood, unidentified, malignant cells that appear to have metastasized overnight, etc.

The society's stance on alien abductions is that each case must be handled correctly – from the time the abductee reports their "reappearance" to the time the person is fully acclimated into their old surroundings. While many investigators will not turn down the chance to research even an older case, many of the purported abductions prove to be a painstaking amount of work that often results in no resolution. As such, victims of alien abduction are taken more seriously by our standards if and when there is any biological evidence present, especially when a full medical analysis has been conducted.

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

Cross-Referenced: Alien Abduction, Agriglyphs
Location: Worldwide
Number of Occurrences: Landings: 34 per decade; Sightings, 1,000 annually
Witnesses: Averaging about 5 to 6 per sighting, 1 to 3 per landing

One of the more fascinating aspects of a UFO sighting is that, up until recent decades, all sightings were attributed to an act of God or other deity. Much of the society's work in researching these sightings takes place in churches, historic archives, and museums, for many people have believed that what they saw was an angel or demon, not an alien by our modern standards. Evidence can take the form of pictures, drawings, photographs, newspaper accounts, soil samples, or eyewitnesses. There is more evidence for landings than there is for sightings, and many times a country's government may be responsible for the bizarre things that are seen flying through the air at seemingly unnatural speeds.

As a general rule of thumb, the society does not fully investigate UFO sightings because they are so common it is physically impossible to keep up with every single report. As such, the society pays for data accumulated by "chasers", people who photograph and follow UFO sightings whenever they can. If

information from a chaser has considerable merit, the society may opt to investigate further, though this is rare. The only time the society truly takes a sighting seriously is if a landing follows the incident.

UFO landings happen more frequently than the media and police care to relate to the public. Some of these landings appear to be orchestrated; we stumbled across a case where the citizens of a small town were moving an oddly shaped craft that had landed on an abandoned airstrip. While that town's populace refused to cooperate with our investigation, and the craft could not be acquired for study, we try to get as much physical evidence as possible for cases of this type.

NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCE

Location: Typically at the scene of an accident, following violent trauma
Number of Occurrences: 2,000 reported daily

Witnesses: Only the survivor

What can be called the most-common anomalous phenomena, a near-death experience typically happens when a person has been declared clinically dead and is then, through medical technology, brought back to life.

A survivor's near-death experience includes the following components:

1. Acknowledgement that they have been involved in a fatal accident of some kind.
2. Understanding that they have died.
3. The sensation that they are floating above their body and can see the details of the room they are in.
4. Feeling calm and at peace.
5. Drawn toward a dark, narrow tunnel.
6. Once on the other side, meeting deceased family members, loved ones, or another figure.

7. Visiting with a supernatural light.
8. During their encounter, the light presents them with a review of their life.
9. Feeling jolted or jerked back into their body.
10. Mumbling or arguing when they wake up that they did not want to return.

Pay special attention to item number 3. While many medical doctors classify this as an out-of-body experience (OBE), most spiritual gurus claim that a true OBE must have a willing participant. Unfortunately, because near-death experiences take place so often, many psychologists and sociologists agree that this could very well be a made-up or social dream scenario where people subconsciously expect to encounter all of these things simply because they have died and were brought back to life.

It is interesting to note that almost every single case that the society has investigated turned up the same results – with one notable exception. In the case of Tom Vargt, the subject encountered feelings of fear and anxiety instead of peace and love, and when he got to the other side of the tunnel, spoke with a being of pure darkness. The society investigated his past and found that he had a criminal predisposition to act impulsively, but that he had no criminal record and was a very religious man. Later, Vargt admitted to our investigative team that he knew he had a history of negative thoughts and depression, but that he strove to be a good person and often gave to charity. Was this a case that proved a predetermined destiny? The results of the case were inconclusive, but it did teach the society the value of paying close attention to discrepancies found within the homogeneity of near-death stories.

GHOSTS AND HAUNTINGS

Cross-Referenced: Electronic Voice Phenomenon
Location: Worldwide, concentrated in Europe

Number of Occurrences: Average of 1 reported per week
Witnesses: Average of 6 to 10 per occurrence

In order to understand ghosts and hauntings, we must first try to understand and define what a ghost is. The society has three possible theories.[2] They are:

1) Ghosts are spirits of the dead who do not travel on their natural course.
2) Ghosts are a psychic imprint, a traumatic event or a memory of the dead that is so strong it continues to reverberate.
3) Ghosts are fabricated by the living, and as such are manifestations fueled by strong emotional energy.

Regardless of what is believed on this matter, the society is of the opinion that it is more important to prove whether or not ghosts exist rather than why they exist. Investigators handle special equipment designed to pinpoint a ghost's location, record its energy signature, or capture it on film. Ghosts typically fall into a few categories, separated by class. They range from Class A, which would be considered a full manifestation that interacts with its environment, to Class M, which has merely sensory affects – like leaving behind a strange smell or changing the temperature in the room.

Ghosts typically haunt the places they had the strongest emotional attachment to in life, not the location where they happened to have died. Two decades of research have proven that ghosts have a reason for haunting a place, whether it's because they murdered another person in life or because they did not get a chance to say good-bye to loved ones. Some ghosts have been found to even follow the person they are trying to communicate with.

As is the case with UFOs, ghost sightings are so common that the society must pick and choose which

ones are worth its time and resources.

ELECTRONIC VOICE PHENOMENON

Cross-Referenced: Ghosts and Hauntings
Location: Not Applicable, may occur anywhere
Number of Occurrences: Indeterminate
Witnesses: a range from 1 to 7 per occurrence

While most legitimate paranormal activity occurs spontaneously, without human initiation, Electronic Voice Phenomenon (EVP) is a method used to gather evidence of spirits or ghosts by manipulating electronic audio devices to record their voices. Society members sometimes incorporate this technique into their paranormal investigations, but do not rely on it as incontrovertible evidence because the phenomenon is, no doubt, a questionable occurrence. Skeptics say that it is extraordinarily easy to mimic this phenomenon by adding in nonsensical, ambient noise; believers will try to find a pattern when there is really nothing but chaotic sound.

Most, if not all, of the equipment used for EVP is purchased new and then tested before use, so that skeptics cannot attribute the results to a mechanical problem. However, there are cases where amateur investigators use this technique out of their own curiosity. The society typically receives about ten of these tapes on a weekly basis. Each of the recordings is painstakingly catalogued and cross-referenced; if a tape comes from a local where a recognized haunting or other paranormal event has occurred, the case is reopened to include the new data.

THE HUM

Location: Taos, New Mexico
Number of Occurrences: Variable
Witnesses: Typically 20 to 30 at a time

In the town of Taos, New Mexico,[3] a number of residents described hearing a low-pitched humming noise that sounded like the rumbling of a truck's engine. The sound was reported to have lasted hours (if not days) on end, and, more significantly, no physical cause could be determined. The Hum (as it was nicknamed) was unable to be recorded, amplified, or manipulated in any way, it just simply... was. The phenomenon is quite repeatable, and every society member who has visited Taos since that time has heard The Hum whenever they have entered the region.

Although The Hum is not common throughout the world, it is evident that it appears in more civilized cultures, areas where technology reigns. Some proponents of The Hum believe that it is an experience that can only happen when machines meet man – that somehow, the mechanized objects we build are "sleeping" and that deep in the heart of their mechanical workings you might find a soul. To the believers, The Hum is an indicator of burgeoning machine sentience, and might even be their nascent attempts at communication with their creators.

There are many skeptics of this phenomenon, who range from renowned sociologists to computer experts. Behaviorally speaking, sociologists believe that The Hum does not physically exist. We hear it because we are told to hear it. They've conducted similar experiments with phantom smells and visual suggestion, and have had the same result. Technology experts have postulated that the whole phenomenon is simply the work of a few teenagers who have figured out how to manipulate the feedback on their stereos; therefore, The Hum is nothing more than a sound made by forcing audio equipment to levels that are audible, but too low to be recorded by any equipment that exists today.

AUTOMATIC WRITING

Location: Worldwide

Number of Occurrences: Common occurrence, numbers range based on type
Witnesses: Only the person experiencing it

Automatic writing (AW) is the process by which a person removes their conscious forethought and takes a pen to paper. The society has long felt that AW is too broad of a category to sort through, so it has sub-classed the phenomena into the following:

1) AWAKE: Subject is awake; compositions are of a genius or highly skilled caliber. Always coherent words, sentences, or music.
2) TRANCE: Subjects put themselves in a trance (intentionally or not) and the subject writes haphazardly during the semi-conscious state. Typically gibberish.
3) CHANNEL: Subjects put themselves in a trance and claim to intentionally channel a spirit, alien, or deity, writing down what they tell them to. Typically coherent words and sentences.

The challenge with automatic writing is that there is no true way of knowing whether or not the subject is aware of what they are writing. Some technology has proven effective in terms of measuring brain wave activities during different times of the day, but the data is frustratingly inconclusive. At this time, it is the society's goal to gather more of these cases and perform reputable experiments to further investigate the matter.

PSYCHIC SURGERY

Location: Brazil, the Philippine Islands, Haiti
Number of Occurrences: Reported: 837
Witnesses: Typically 10 to 20

While many phenomena involve medical science, psychic surgery is mired in folklore and belief. The "surgeons" claim to have supernatural powers and experience with magic; they make an incision, apparently using only the vibrations of their hand, and then remove (or repair) cysts, tumors, blood vessel blockages, etc. The American Medical Association has unanimously passed off this phenomenon as a hoax. To their credit, the AMA hired several magicians to reproduce the surgeries with all of the elements involved, and the results proved that the medical interventions were nothing more than elaborate methods of depriving individuals of their money.

To date, the society has witnessed three surgeries.[4] Two were deemed hoaxes, and one was declared a legitimate anomalous phenomenon. In this third case, a Philippines native named Lan Po invited two of our investigators to witness his miracles. In an interesting twist, we were permitted to choose the patient. To assure an unbiased result, we chose Harvey Wilson, a scientist and colleague of ours who was suffering from cancer.

Po did not perform his psychic surgery in the same way that we had previously witnessed; he utilized his surroundings and prepared what he called a "sacred space." No one was allowed in that space except for him and the patient. The investigators witnessed a bright, rosy-hued light as Po touched Harvey on various parts of his body, corresponding to the chakra points as we later discovered. When the light faded back to normal, Harvey immediately sat up and coughed for what seemed like hours. Once he stopped, Harvey said he felt "cleansed," but could offer no other information regarding his experience. On a positive note, physicians later confirmed that the cancer had completely disappeared form Harvey's body.

FOLIE A DEUX

Location: High concentration in domestic residences

worldwide
Number of Occurrences: Rare, about 1 or 2 every other year
Witnesses: The people involved, 2 or more

Translated, this phenomenon means, "a madness shared by two" and is an extraordinary psychiatric anomaly in which a delusion is transmitted from one individual to another, resulting in a shared delusional state. Sometimes more than two individuals may share the affliction; entire families have been known to succumb to a shared hallucination. Sometimes the strongest person in the group instigates the experience and the weaker-minded individuals submit to the fictitious vision. In some instances, drugs or other biological elements are contributing factors.

The hallucinations are never the same and range from seeing imaginary animals to believing that ninjas are infiltrating their home. There is no known treatment although it is evident that, with time, the delusion will pass provided the causal individual recovers or is removed from the environment.

The interesting thing about this experience is that it differs from mass hysteria in a number of ways. The hallucination is tangible, centered on the subjects, and is perceived by all parties involved in exactly the same way. The society has only investigated one of these cases, and it was interesting to note that the interview process resulted in identical responses – a factual boast that no other phenomenon can claim.

MISSING TIME

Cross-Referenced: Alien Abduction, UFOs
Location: Person's home
Number of Occurrences: Usually occurs with a reported Alien Abduction
Witnesses: Only the person experiencing it

Missing time is a supposed side effect of an encounter with an alien or UFO. Whole blocks of time are missing from the person's memory; the individual is not aware of where they were, what they had done, or who they had spoken to during a time that can last from several minutes to several days.[5] Psychologists have shed some light onto this phenomenon because people suffering from mental illness (specifically multiple personality disorder) commonly experience time lapses. Due to this fact, the society typically does not investigate a case of missing time unless it is partnered with other phenomena.

Some psychologists claim to have recovered the time through hypnosis, citing that these repressed memories are the mind's way of defending itself and that what occurred during the lost time was invariably traumatic. The society tends to disagree with these professionals, because some of the cases have yielded a string of suggestive thoughts planted by the hypnosis coach, which would likely have created false memories.[6]

[1] While the alien abduction phenomenon is a modern one, there are parallels to European folktales of faerie kidnappings. The two phenomena may be one and the same, though interpreted through different cultural lenses.

[2] To be more precise, these three theories are simply the most common among the society.

[3] The fact that one of the annex doorways is linked to a junkyard in Taos should not be chalked up to mere coincidence.

[4] There is speculation among the society that some psychic surgeries are being accomplished with the "ghosting" ability. However, the society's three investigations into this phenomenon provided no evidence to support such a supposition.

[5] Missing time is often reported as a symptom of multiple personality disorder.

[6] One member of the society has hypothesized that some experiences of missing time could be the byproduct of time travel.

Time: 10:30 p.m.
Date: December 20, 1999
To: jv_seales@yahoo.com

Dear Judith,

I sincerely appreciate your efforts to catalogue the society's investigative methods. Regarding the preservation of your painstaking work, I have received only one box sent to me via certified mail, and am unhappy to report that the contents are, sadly, missing. I'm assuming that, in your excitement for your upcoming journey, you misplaced the files. Please send me what you have at your earliest convenience, so that I may ensure that future members will have everything they need.

I wish you could provide me details regarding your plans. Although I am used to being kept in the dark after all these years, it's still frustrating, to say the least. Although I understand my place in the scheme of things, it would be nice to get some answers from time to time.

Yours in truth,

Terrance Chastain

CHAPTER SEVEN

REVELATIONS

In *Aletheia*, anomalous phenomena are merely echoes and shadows of a greater truth. The *Usher Codex*, the annex doorways, the society's powers, and the fates of Jericho and the previous societies are all tied to this truth. This chapter explains these mysteries and reveals the connections that bind them together.

COSMOLOGY

Humanity exists in a universe of four dimensions, three spatial and one temporal. Our experiences tell us that this is the whole of reality, but our experiences are wrong. The reality we know is actually a small four-dimensional membrane inset into a greater multidimensional space known as the Otherverse. Imagine a marble of three dimensions. Inside is a ribbon of plastic which has length and width, but is infinitely thin so as to have no real thickness. Our entire universe is that little ribbon of color. As immense as what we know of might seem, the Otherverse lies around us in a great vastness. There are other pockets, as well, in our hypothetical marble. Some are long ribbons, some are tiny flecks. All are different universes.

Although there is a great depth of dimensionality to the Otherverse, all of this is imperceptible to people walking around the Earth. This is because all that we see and feel is constrained to live on this thin four-dimensional membrane we call the universe. A ball, a desk, a computer, even the electrons that move information to and fro within the computer or the photons coming from the sun to bounce and bend until they finally reach out eyes… all these things are forced to move only along the four dimensions we are typically aware of. Because all we perceive is moving four dimensionally, we believe the world to be only in four dimensions. But this is not reality.

There are things outside our universe that aren't so constrained. Called ultraterrestrials, these beings occasionally interact with our membrane. These events are invariably beyond the scope of humankind's understanding and have through time been described alternatively as encounters with angels or demons, ghosts, or gods. Because of their multidimensional nature, these beings can do things that are literally incomprehensible, which we often describe as magical or paranormal.

In-between these two poles of existence, comprised of those things that are constrained to operate in a four-dimensional universe and those things free to fly through the multidimensional Otherverse, there exists a continuum. There has been a mingling between the two forms of life, and this has created a new creature, referred to as the Nephilim, who is only loosely bound to the fabric of known reality. These people, though born human, can access abilities through a higher dimension. Given time, they can even learn to free themselves of the confines of this reality and explore that which is beyond. This is the origin of the society members' powers; they are of Nephilim blood.

This is their story…

THE BEGINNING

Time began with the primal explosion that set our space-time into motion. However, the all of what we know, what we have come to call the universe, has proven itself to have much more depth than simple time and space. Modern science is offering glimmers of a more expansive notion of the universe, one where objects are not necessarily confined to movement in three spatial directions and the fourth dimension of time, but where multiple dimensions are the physical reality that most accurately accounts for the nature of the world we see around us. In some theories, these dimensions are small and hidden; in others,

ON STRINGS, TONES, AND THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES

Over the years, many attempts have been made to understand the harmony between the art of music and aspects of the greater world around us. First astrologers, and then early astronomers, found similarities to the periodic nature of the movement of planets and the harmonics of musical tones. In his treatise, *Harmonice Mundi*, Johannes Kepler found many connections between cosmology, astronomy, harmonics, and music. This look at harmonics has seen a resurgence in popularity with the development of string theories in high energy physics.

As opposed to Kepler's work, which made correlations to the orbital period of the planets, string theories postulate that the fundamental nature of matter, at its smallest level, is string-like in nature. Contrary to the prior belief that fundamental particles are point-like, without dimension, the fundamental particles in string theories have a finite length. This allows these particles to have a vibrational frequency. It is this variable vibration of the particles that gives the differences we see between, say, an electron and a photon.

In order for the string theories to be mathematically consistent and to yield results that model what we see around us, these theories must work in a framework of a certain number of dimensions. The number of dimensions can be calculated depending on the theory; most string theories predict ten or eleven space-time dimensions. This is quite inconsistent with the universe we witness with out senses, which has three spatial dimensions and one temporal dimension.

Current string theorists explain the discrepancy of dimensions in two different ways. The traditional explanation is to "compactify" the dimensions, *i.e.* make the extra dimensions so small that the effects of the extra dimension aren't perceptible to the large scales we typically work at. As an example, a sheet of paper is a three dimensional object, with a height, a width, and a thickness. However, the thickness is so small that for most considerations, subtle differences in the thickness do not amount to measurable changes. Most of the time, we can consider a sheet of paper to be a two dimensional object.

The other method of rationalizing the extra dimensions is to imagine that the world we interact with is simply a lesser dimensional subset of a higher dimensional universe. In this model, in addition to string-like particles of 1-dimension, there are multi-dimensional objects, called branes, which are membrane-like manifolds in the higher dimensional universe. Strings could have two different types of modes, either open strings or closed strings. Open strings, like a strand of spaghetti, would have two definite end points. Closed strings would be strings without a definite endpoint, such as what would be created by gluing together the two ends of a strand of our hypothetical cooked spaghetti. Both would be able to vibrate, and have different vibrational modes. However, the end points of the open string are required to be fixed to something, a higher-dimensional brane.

Continued on next page...

ON STRINGS, TONES, AND THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES
(CONTINUED)

Thus, particles made of open strings would be confined to move only on the brane, while closed strings could move freely through the bulk of the universe. This theory posits that our world is a four-dimensional brane in a larger universe, but nearly all the basic objects and forces we interact with are open strings confined to move only on the brane. When all we see, and all we are, is confined to move in four dimensions, the universe looks very four-dimensional to us.

The world of *Aletheia*, however, closes the strings and takes us on a journey to the hidden depths we can only mathematically imagine.

they are vast and mostly empty. But shadows of this multidimensional universe can be perceived through the complicated mathematical theories of high energy physics, or witnessed in the myriad unexplained phenomena that occur throughout the world.

But if the beginning of our universe is the moment when time began, then the story of the truth starts before that beginning. Before time, before that primordial big bang, the totality of the primal universe existed within a multidimensional sphere, a hypersphere, purely uniform and homogenous. And so this universe was for an eternal moment, perfect, timeless, and dull. The Creator, a being representing and being synonymous with the sum total of the universe, recognized that with perfection came monotony. So, to end the stillness, the Creator allowed differentiation to break the symmetry of its form. Like crystals in solution, membranes began forming in the bulk of this universe. These membranes were spaces of lower dimensions, like the strings and flat ribbons trapped within a glass marble.

With the slow differentiation of the universe, there came to be two classes of being. On one hand there were those objects which are trapped to a membrane, forever confined to experience only the limited dimensionality of the space they are on. Nearly everything we humans perceive is of this category, from electrons to galaxies. This is because we, too, are confined to a four-dimensional membrane… this limited thing that we call the universe. On the other hand, there are things that transcend the limits of the manifold we perceive as everything, and these beings are free to move above and about its confines. Humanity's limited experience with these creatures typically casts them in the role of angels, demons, gods, or extraterrestrials.

EDEN

As the latent energy of nucleation cooled on the expanding membrane that would later form the world we see around us, the Creator grew interested in a pair of creatures who inhabited one of the many planets. Fascinated by the spontaneous development of awareness from such a tiny aspect of creation, the Creator cared for these creatures and fostered them. With the Creator's attention, a paradise sprung up

to support the simple needs of the two, and they in turn worshiped the Creator for its benevolence. Inspired by the forms and temperaments of these first humans, the Creator fashioned for itself creatures who were similar, but who were not so confined as to travel only on the membrane. These new beings, the ultraterrestrials, could limit themselves to movement along a membrane or could swim the vast reaches beyond. The many dimensions lying beyond our membrane are known simply as the Otherverse, and this was to be the natural habitat of the newly created ultraterrestrials. Such was the will of the Creator, and

THE ARROW OF TIME

In all the modern theories, time is portrayed as another dimension similar to the standard three we are familiar with. This is more than scientific chicanery as much of *special relativity* focuses on rotations in four space-time dimensions, where differences in length according to one observer can be seen as a difference in time from a different perspective. This perplexing ramification of *relativity* has created no end of paradoxes, with which physicists can impress people at parti**es.**

This very real equivalence between time and space poorly accounts for the fact that, from the human perspective, time and space are very different things. Unlike space, where one is free to travel at will, in any direction, at whatever speed desired (as long as we don't outpace the photon), we are forced along a single path in the direction of increasing time, plodding forward inexorable as each second passes. However, there is a set of physical laws that do not recognize the correlations between time and space like *relativity* does. These laws have never found an exception since their inception a century and a half ago. These are the laws of thermodynamics, specifically the second law which states, *"The entropy of an isolated system not in equilibrium will tend to increase over time approaching a maximum value at equilibrium."* The entropy, a measure of the disorder in a system or, equivalently, a measure of how little information we have on the state of a system, will increase over time until the system reaches a balance. All that decays and falls apart, including our bodies, is part of the irreversible progression towards increasing entropy. An increase in entropy in an isolated system is equivalent to an increase in time. Thus the incessant drive towards greater entropy is the same as the constant movement towards increasing time. Since humanity is biologically bound to the second law of thermodynamics, the notion of a unidirectional "arrow of time" is literally a product of our physiology.

Of course, the ultraterrestrials transcend the confines of our four dimensional universe, and are not bound by the second law. This makes them, for all purposes, timeless. Time, for them, is simply another direction of motion. Just as distant locations can be viewed through higher dimensional shortcuts, so can distant times. For humanity, however, clairvoyance often comes easier than precognition. This is because, even by learning to transcend the limited dimensions of our four-dimensional universe, it is hard to break the biological imperative to view time as one-way.

so it came to pass.

With the creation of the ultraterrestrials, the primordial humans feared the waning interest of the entity they called God. Determined to restore their cherished place in God's eyes, they sought to emulate God's newest creation. They spoke with the ultraterrestrials, first asking, then demanding they teach them the secrets to fly in the spaces where God lived. God, ever watching, knew that the humans were in an idyllic state of unending bliss. But from this perfection there would never be change. No evolution, no growth could ever occur in their timeless state. So God took these poor perfect creatures, trapped to live eternally in four dimensions, and twisted their perception of one direction of motion: time. Decay was introduced into the world. Now, the membrane and all who resided upon it would be forced to greater and greater states of disorder. And all the creatures of that membrane would no longer perceive travel along the path of time as they would the other dimensions. This path would move inexorably forward at the pace of one second per second. Time, and along with it death, change, and evolution, had been introduced to humanity's universe. Banished from their static paradise, they would now be free to grow.

THE WATCHERS

Now removed from Eden, the Creator was still fascinated by this remarkable species. Several ultraterrestrials were sent to watch over and guide the growing race of humanity. These were known as the Grigori, and they stayed with the humans – sometimes ruling over tribes of them. In time, the Grigori came to love the humans, taking them as mates and walking the earth as humans would.

During this time, the Creator came to humanity once again. God's voice spoke with a child of Adam by the name of Enoch. Enoch was a wise and righteous man, and in those discussions with Enoch, the Creator felt the pain that humanity felt by their limited perspective. With sympathy, the Creator taught Enoch the secrets of the Otherverse, the different worlds that stretched beyond, and the timelessness that dwells in the bulk between the membranes. With this revelation, an amazing thing happened. Through contemplation of secrets revealed by the Creator, and viewing the world through the vision of God, Enoch learned to separate his fate from the membrane. And so it is recorded that Enoch left the world to walk with God.

In the years after Enoch's departure, the Creator assayed the actions of his watchers closely. As higher dimensional beings, the Grigori were able to easily accomplish many things that seemed miraculous to humanity, and the watchers became the worshipped. Children were born between the Grigori and humanity, creatures called the Nephilim, who were only loosely tied to the membrane of their birth. In time, dynasties were created under the rule of the Grigori, and much of humanity suffered under the excesses of Grigori and Nephilim power.

The Creator watched this and realized that the Grigori were asked to watch humanity from too near a vantage. So it was that God arranged to secure the safety of those humans who hadn't fallen under the influence of the Grigori, and created a deluge to wash clean the Earth of the Grigori cults. The Creator then tied the Grigori to a one-dimensional membrane, a string, removed from the human universe. This would serve as their eternal prison. While much of humanity was killed in the flood and the Grigori were imprisoned, many of their children survived on. However, after the deluge, the Nephilim were scattered across the face of the Earth. In the years after the waters receded, humanity thrived while the ultraterrestrials kept a distant watch on the Earth, and the Nephilim skulked around the distant periphery of the inhabited world.

THE NEPHILIM

The Nephilim were the angel-born, the giants of Genesis, the scions of humanity. Though bound to the membrane like all other humans, their Grigori lineage gave them access to many of the same magics possessed by the Watchers. Distance meant nothing to the Nephilim, who were able to expand their perceptions through both space and time. With effort, some Nephilim were even able to separate their fates from the membrane, and travel the heavens like angels.

In the ages before the deluge, the Nephilim lived pampered lives, basking in the angelic radiance of their Grigori sires. Though they could see signs of change in portents prior to the flood, they also saw their continued survival… so paid the omens little heed. It was only in the days immediately prior to the storm that the Nephilim finally saw what the Creator had in store for the world.

The Nephilim were still the children of humanity, and not the timeless creatures of the Otherverse. They were still creatures bound, however loosely, to the membrane of reality. They suffered the slow decay that afflicts all creatures of flesh, and so had good reason to fear death. In advance of the flood, the Nephilim loosened their forms from the tapestry of the world, and walked the passages of time to reappear after the waters had subsided. Removing the strings that bind time to the universe, however, is a difficult task, and the Nephilim did not return with the same cohesion as they left. Some stepped back onto the Earth several months later, others took centuries or millennia to return to time's natural flow.

This homecoming wasn't so much a concerted emergence as a slow trickle of the angel-born. The world they returned to was quite different, and their capabilities were objects of myth and legend, causing both fear and awe among the rest of humanity.

While some Nephilim would show their abilities and become revered, others were burned or stoned. In the end, most learned to be surreptitious about their capabilities and managed to once again enmesh themselves into human society. Regardless of their powers, the Nephilim could not long eschew their mortal heritage. In time they, too, grew old and died. But in the meantime, their lives were invariably spent covertly amassing power, influence, and luxury. Many took spouses and raised families. And to these children were given the inherent attributes that separated their ancestors from this world. Of course, with each generation the power of their blood was weakened with the growing dilution of their angelic heritage.

Each era and each culture reacted differently to the Nephilim of their generation. To some, they were heroes to follow, to others they were gods incarnate. However, to a growing many, they were witches and devils and heathens… creatures to banish and castigate. In this modern age of reason and skepticism, they are now only individuals to ignore; those who fail in their assimilation are merely mocked and ridiculed as superstitious or mentally unstable. And in this age, this time of waning Nephilim power, there came one child of the Watchers who sought a new path.

THE ASCENSION OF MAN

Like many of the recently born Nephilim, Jericho Usher realized at a young age that he was different. Blessed with an impeccable memory, a clever wit, and considerable athletic aptitude, Jericho was considered a wunderkind and a renaissance man. But for Jericho, his many accomplishments never seemed like enough. Jericho's path began with a growing sense of *Presque vu*, a feeling of being on the verge of a growing awareness or epiphany. These waves of disconcerting unease grew more and more as he slowly learned how to separate his fate from the confines of reality. For

Jericho, these flashes of insight, which heralded the reawakening of his ultraterrestrial heritage, served as the first threshold.

The second threshold occurred when Jericho was deep in the throes of *Charles Bonnet Syndrome;* while he was afflicted, his vision was also fading from *Stargardt's Disease*. Fostered by his body's diminishing eyesight, Jericho became able to subconsciously extend his vision far beyond his local area. Originally, this skill was uncontrolled… vistas of the canals of Venice or Andean mountains replaced the normal vision that Jericho was denied. At first, Jericho simply assumed he was going mad; his brain, deprived of clear sight must be making things up. It was only when he realized that he could reveal details of cities and sites he had never been to, such as graffiti decorating the side of a mosque in Turkey, did he realize that there was some deeper truth at work.

In time, Jericho learned tools to encourage the onset of these visions. Through a mix of fasting and meditation, Jericho found some measure of control over the hallucinations. Jericho would then visit the places he had earlier seen in his mind, seeking verification of the strange new gifts he possessed. He also pursued all manner of paranormal phenomena in the hopes of better understanding and enticing some personal greater awakening. Though the visions gave him sight to compensate his body's waning abilities, his visions were still solely voyeuristic, and Jericho was powerless to do more than verify their accuracy.

For nearly twenty years, Jericho gained more and more control over his visions. He learned to move his perspective, in a manner similar to lucid dreaming, while engaging his inner eye. Through these visionscapes, he discovered that his viewing position could change almost instantaneously. In this way, he could meditate and visit a boulevard in Machu Picchu, and then suddenly switch the venue to find an item in his study. Through this, he learned to compensate

for his eyesight, which had degenerated to the point that the world was left a blur to his natural eyes.

As he learned to master this new ability, Jericho initiated a partnership with the archaeologist Terrance Chastain. The two traveled extensively among the ruins of the Mayan and Incan tribes. Guided by the visionary powers of Jericho, the two uncovered many secrets of these ancient cultures and recovered numerous valuable relics, making them quite rich in the process. Chastain had no inkling of his companion's otherworldly gifts, assuming all the while that Jericho was merely blessed with keen instincts.

If the second threshold was perception, the third threshold was Jericho's dissociation. It was while mastering his control over his clairsentient abilities that Jericho learned that he could summon himself to the vistas his mental sight was gazing upon. Just as he could let the light and sensations, from far distant locals, stream to his inner eye, he could similarly let go of himself and slip away to another place along the membrane. After creating the secluded refuge outside of Seven Dogs, Alaska, Jericho fell into a time of contemplation of the meaning behind his abilities. He quickly learned to master the skill of slipping through space, at first simply passing through walls to travel to different rooms in the house. In time, Jericho was able to travel the world with ease, and even access different times. More importantly, by learning that all places and all times were accessible to him, Jericho uncovered many truths to the mysteries of reality.

Although his vision was nearly completely gone, Jericho's perception kept getting clearer. After watching the shamanic rituals of the Urarina people in Peru, Jericho began to experiment with ayahuasca tea. The chemical dimethyltryptamine (DMT), which is found in the ayahuasca plant, enabled Jericho to remove himself for much longer periods of time than the short slips he was previously performing. While

under the effects of DMT, Jericho could remove his entire awareness from the four-dimensional membrane and finally travel the Otherverse. It was during one of these episodes that he first made contact.

During this time, Jericho physically withdrew from the world to more fully pursue his continuing contact with the ultraterrestrials. The being Jericho primarily had discourse with, a creature called Lam, revealed to Jericho clues as to his Nephilim heritage. With the guidance of his mentor, Jericho learned of the multidimensional nature of the universe, the creation of a race of creatures only loosely tied to the fabric of reality, and the true nature of his own abilities. Through this continuing dialogue, Jericho came to realize that there existed an extensive population of people descended from ultraterrestrials, who only manifested a small glimmer of their true potential. He also learned of the story of Enoch, who was of pure descent from Adam, yet still was able to untie himself from the membrane of reality. Jericho became convinced that it should be humanity's goal to follow in the footsteps of Enoch and attain multidimensional freedom. And those who could best lead humanity into this new age would, of course, be those who are only loosely tied to the fabric to begin with: the descendants of the Nephilim.

Jericho began many projects to further this end. Realizing that one person alone couldn't accomplish the task of mankind's enlightenment, he researched the complicated genealogies of the children of Adam and their congresses with the Grigori. When the holes in the trees were too expansive, Jericho would venture back in time to trace the lines himself. With the assistance of Lam, Jericho also set about the creation of the annex to serve as clear evidence of the multidimensionality of the universe. Finally, he compiled a compilation of his discourses with the ultraterrestrials, his explorations of the Otherverse, and his postulation about the nature of reality and humanity's destiny. Written on vellum and bound in leather, he called it simply the *Usher Codex*.

On the longest night of the year in 1968, after finishing the myriad steps to the formation of a society to lead humanity into a new age, Jericho Usher left the world to walk with God.

THE OTHERVERSE

The world we live in stretches out in the three dimensions of length and width and depth. The dimension of time, which although it seems to behave very differently, can arguably be shown to be of the same stuff as the first three. This model explains nearly all we see, from the floating seed of a dandelion, to the frenetically spinning neutron star pulsing out energy many times per second. This view of reality seems to encompass the whole of human interaction. But there is more. There is all that lies just a quantum step beyond, if one can take that first leap in a direction orthogonal to the four dimensions which make up our reality.

The Otherverse describes the multitude of dimensions that lie beyond, and removed from, the four-dimensional membrane that maps all of what humanity knows as space and time. The Otherverse can be compared to the air that surrounds a scrap of paper fluttering on the breeze; while our universe and all that we know reside on the limited dimensionality of the paper. There are other objects, as well, wafting through the eddies of the Otherverse. These bits and pieces can be considered different worlds and universes, all subtly varying from one another. While they can interact as well, if the two objects don't share the same dimensions very little energy can be released between the two.

The ultraterrestrials fly unfettered throughout the Otherverse. These beings differ from humans in two

notable regards; they can only be described using more than four dimensions, and their fates are not bound to any membrane. They can, with effort, attach to the membrane of our universe, though we can only perceive but a shadow of their true form. In some instances, in order to make sense of the manifestation, the human brain fills in the details, imagining them as aliens, fairies, or angels. Since four dimensionality isn't the natural state for ultraterrestrials, they can only manifest for short periods of time. Humanity, on the other hand, lives and perceives in four dimensions while chained to the membrane of reality. With effort, it has been shown that humans can break their ties and begin to float beyond the membrane, although such knowledge or ability is obviously unusual and such voyages tend to be brief.

VEHICLE OF TRANSCENDENCE

There exists a certain chemical within the human body

that can help enact that moment of transcendence and at least temporary sever the cords that tie humanity to its limited dimensionality. This chemical is N, N-dimethyltryptamine (DMT) which is produced in small quantities in the pineal gland of the brain and is also found in certain plants. DMT closes the loops on the strings that form the bulk of our being, freeing us from reality and allowing movement away from the membrane. The small amounts of DMT, normally found in the human body, actually allow part of our being to operate unconfined from the dimensional limitations of the rest of our existence, causing us to have the sensation of observing ourselves and our actions. Thus, it is these small quantities in the brain that allow for human consciousness, and is the seat of what we call our soul. Greater amounts of DMT allow for greater degrees of separation between soul and body, which are sometimes described as out-of-body or near death experiences.

There are a number of methods to increase the amount

MULTI-DIMENSIONAL MAGIC

The powers of the ultraterrestrials and the Nephilim stem from their higher dimensional natures, and how that interacts with a four-dimensional reality. A higher-dimensional creature would exhibit fantastic abilities which would appear as miraculous to the four-dimensional beings of this world.

It is important to note that although experiments have been performed to determine that the local geometry of space-time is relatively flat, that lack of curvature only holds for the four dimensions we can experience. All manner of twists and convolutions could affect the membrane of this reality in dimensions we can't perceive and, thus, are unable to measure. In such a contorted environment, the shortest path may not be one traced out along the surface of the manifold, but one that takes advantage of the multidimensionality of the universe. Perceptions can be enhanced by drawing photons from a distant place through a shortcut dimension, instead of allowing those photons to move through the space-time trajectory they would normally follow. With the right skill, a four-dimensional creature could even be removed from this reality – and moved through a higher dimension – to be reconnected to reality in a far distant place. These skills are represented in *Aletheia* as the variety of powers accessible to those of the society.

Presque Vu: This ability represents an increased sensitivity to those objects, people, or events that resonate in a dimension higher than the four of the membrane. These things don't need to be limited to multi-dimensional objects, but could include items that were in close proximity to a higher dimensional event or merely be a person who witnessed such phenomena. This sensitivity is derived from the natural pull, on paranormal beings such as the Nephilim, to those things that further reveal the multi-dimensional nature of reality.

Deja Visite: In much the same way as *Remote Viewing*, the user has the ability to divert light and/or sound from a distant location and thusly perceive irrespective of distance. However, the use if *Deja Visite* is completely subconscious and unremembered. Those who have this ability routinely visit a myriad of locations while in periods of relaxation or sleep. When the character has a chance to physically travel, most destinations seem completely familiar – for reasons that lie beneath conscious memory.

Remote Viewing: *Remote Viewing* is similar to *Deja Visite*, although conscious and directed. Through the power of will, the character can choose a person or location and redirect light to allow for the translocation of perceptions. Even small amounts of matter can be diverted to the perceiving character – such as air pressure differences that result in sound, or the trace chemicals in the air which cause olfactory sensations.

X-ray Vision: Although similar in effect to *Remote Viewing*, *X-ray vision* instead allows light to have the same penetrating power as X-rays – by diverting light photons through higher dimensional short-cuts. In this

Continued next page…

MULTI-DIMENSIONAL MAGIC
(CONTINUED)

way, X-ray vision is more similar to the *Ghosting* ability, although with massless photons as the subject. Any light can be thus *ghosted* to be received by the character. If the lighting conditions of the viewed area are sufficient, only the reflected light would be affected by this power. If the lighting conditions are inadequate, light can be passed through the obstruction (for instance, inside the body of a human subject) to be reflected off the items of interest and then *ghosted* back.

Precognition/Postcognition: This ability is fundamentally identical to *Remote Viewing*, except that the subject is at some distant location in time. Although there isn't any practical difference about this ability when compared to *Remote Viewing*, humanity's perception of time and the tendency to view the past and the future as distinct entities makes these abilities more difficult to master than *Remote Viewing*.

Ghosting: Essentially the same as *X-ray vision*, this ability applies to subjects of mass. Photons are identical, massless particles, so are relatively easy to divert through the short-cuts of the Otherverse. *Ghosting* is a much more sophisticated ability which routes objects with mass and inertia, oftentimes in complex configurations, through a higher dimensional path – while still keeping the integrity of the pattern of atoms and molecules.

Teleportation: Where *Remote Viewing* would allow for the transportation of light, sound, and smells from a distant location to the character, *Teleportation* causes the transference of the complete pattern of molecules that make up the character. There isn't necessarily a limit on the mass that can be moved in this manner, but the power relies on the character's intimate and subconscious knowledge of his or her own pattern to effectively reconstitute it at the destined location.

Time Travel: This ability is essentially the same as *Teleportation*, except the destination is at a different time. It is only the character's ingrained perception of the distinct nature of time that makes this power more difficult to learn than *Teleportation*.

These powers represent a sample of the multi-dimensional abilities that could be developed by the characters. Gamemasters should feel free to introduce other abilities according to the needs of their stories. As a guideline, level 1 powers represent unconscious or subconscious awareness of the multi-dimensional nature of the universe. Level 2 and 3 powers represent the beginnings of manipulating light or massless objects through the higher dimension of reality. For example, a parlor trick that could brighten a room by harvesting photons from other areas, would be an appropriate level 2 power. Level 4 and 5 powers are abilities that move large and massive objects through the short-cuts of the Otherverse. In general, powers that move through time are rated at one level higher than would a similar power that operated only in the three spatial dimensions.

of DMT in a person's system. DMT production increases naturally during traumatic events, such as during the process of death. Certain psychological and physical effects can stimulate DMT production, including meditation, sensory deprivation, and electric stimulation of parts of the brain. DMT also exists in a natural form in certain plants, and can be absorbed into the body through inhalation of the vapor, injection of the distilled chemical, or ingested with a monoamine oxidase inhibitor (MAO-I) which facilitates the metabolism of the chemical. The influx of DMT causes vivid hallucinations as the user begins to separate from the fabric of reality and experience the realms beyond.

DMT is naturally produced at higher rates in the hybrid children of the ultraterrestrials. This allows them to be only loosely bound to reality and to more readily grasp the multidimensional nature of the Otherverse. Although external sources of DMT have

DMT

DMT is used in a number of spiritual rituals among indigenous people living in close proximity to the appropriate plants. These usually tribal folk routinely take DMT in the form of MT; common forms this might take are *Yopo*, a type of snuff, or *Ayahuasca*, a tea made of the ayahuasca plant containing a MAO-I, and chacruna, which contains DMT. However, DMT from external sources is quickly metabolized by the body and then released, meaning the effects last as little as 15-30 minutes when smoked and up to three hours if ingested in a tea. When the effects wear off, travelers find themselves reconnecting to reality.

the same effect on the Nephilim as on normal humans, they also benefit greatly from methods to increase the brain's natural production – such as meditation and ordeals. Use of these triggers can lead the Nephilim to master manipulation of the complicated geometry of the membrane, and to eventually remove even their corporeal forms from reality.

THE THRESHOLD

There is a boundary that protects the membrane from the forces of the Otherverse. Like a layer of oxide on a piece of iron, this boundary serves to inhibit passage from the membrane to beyond. In order to move from the membrane to the deeper waters of the Otherverse, one must successfully negotiate the convoluted layers of this boundary film. As this threshold occupies only a few dimensions, it is semi-transparent to the higher dimensional entities in the Otherverse, allowing these beings to move with relative freedom while restraining the movements of those who live on the membrane.

The protective embrace of the Threshold also serves to protect the souls of humanity. The small amount of DMT produced in the human brain infuses parts of the body, imbuing it with a multidimensional capacity. Allowing small sections of the brain to exist on a higher dimension grants humanity the capacity to perceive itself, by being slightly removed from the four-dimensional environment of the body. Were it not for this multidimensional aspect to specific sections of the brain, a person's experience would be wholly in the context of his or her environment, without any ability to reflect on one's own actions or to view oneself as a part of a larger whole. Thus, it is the DMT in the brain that gives rise to consciousness and self-awareness in humanity, and constitutes what is thought of as the human soul... that which exists beyond the body. Fortunately, the limited amounts of DMT produced in the brain, coupled with the

PERCEPTIONS IN THE OTHERVERSE

Much of *Aletheia* exists in a greater number of dimensions than we are familiar with. Trying to actually visualize four, five, or twenty-six spatial dimensions is a fruitless endeavor because we are wired to think only in three dimensions (excluding time here for an instant). Nevertheless, the Otherverse itself exists in a multidimensional framework (the exact number is never stated; various string theories describe it alternately with ten, eleven, or twenty-six dimensions). The Creator, then, would naturally have that same dimensionality. The objects within the Otherverse, including the ultraterrestrials, are of a lower order, perhaps existing in nine or six dimensions. The Threshold exists in six dimensions surrounding our four dimensional reality. Some objects might even have fewer dimensions to a minimum of zero (a mathematical point).

There won't be any attempt in this section to try to describe these structures in their full dimensionality. Human brains and sensory organs are four-dimensional objects, and thus all of humanity, including the Nephilim, can perceive only four dimensions to any object. Even higher dosages of DMT cannot change the functioning of the brain. What DMT does, however, is allow a person to change the four dimensions they can currently perceive. Like a CAT scan, which takes multiple, two-dimensional slices of a three-dimensional object, our brain interprets a four-dimensional cross-section of a higher dimensional object, and the DMT in our system allows us to rotate that perspective.

In the hyper-dimensional framework of the Otherverse, two objects don't necessarily have to share the same dimensions. Two strings (one dimensional objects) floating in a fishbowl of three dimensions can interact in a number of ways according to how many dimensions they share. They can be parallel and share their single dimension – causing the shadow of one on the other to occupy the whole line. If they aren't parallel, then they are in different dimensions, in which case the shadow of one on the other is a single point.

When dealing with four-dimensional objects, imagine the entirety of reality being spanned by four lines, each perpendicular to the other. This means the position of any object can be mapped out by describing a set of coordinates along each of those lines. These four lines, which form a set of axes, reside in a higher dimensional space of, say, ten dimensions. If another four-dimensional object interacts with the first in this higher dimensional space, there is nothing requiring the four dimensions of one to be parallel to the four dimensions of the other. This is because both objects can be rotated in the higher dimensional backdrop, much like the strings can be rotated in the fishbowl to be parallel or perpendicular. Thus, when the two objects interact, they would see each other as fully four-dimensional beings only if their coordinate axes were parallel and they shared all four

**PERCEPTIONS IN THE OTHERVERSE
(CONTINUED)**

dimensions. The objects would look three-dimensional if they only shared three dimensions, flat and paper-like if they shared two, line-like if they shared one. If they shared no dimensions (the two coordinate systems were orthogonal), they would not be able to perceive one another, since the shadow of one on the other is a mathematical point of no length. Ripples could be created by one of these objects, however, that might radiate to the other, causing affects in one realm which would seem to have no apparent source.

So, when humans venture deeper into the Threshold, they see four-dimensional cross-sections of the higher dimensional structures. These cross-sections carry with them a symmetry that underlies their higher dimensional structure; this symmetry causes these objects to be indescribably and unusually beautiful. The structures themselves are incomprehensible to the human brain, so the slices that are seen tend to have metaphorical overtones as the brain tries to make sense of what it is perceiving.

Navigating the Threshold (and other parts of the Otherverse) requires four-dimensional beings to change their perspective so that they perceive the appropriate four dimensions that allow them further passage. Orientating to the Threshold requires an *Awareness roll* with a *target number* of 2. The time to orient oneself is 1 minute if in a five-dimensional space, 10 minutes in a six-dimensional space, and 100 minutes in a seven-dimensional space. Each *victory* beyond two on the *Awareness* roll halves the time of orientation. This is important, because often trips in the Otherverse are of limited duration.

> *For example: A character scores four victories on an orientation roll in seven-dimensional space. She has earned the two victories necessary for the roll to succeed plus an additional two victories. The first additional victory cuts her orientation time from 100 minutes to 50 minutes, and the second additional victory cuts the 50 minutes to 25.*

physical and psychological barrier of the Threshold, keeps most human souls in close proximity to their bodies. Unbeknownst to most who work in modern medicine, many human psychological conditions stem from abnormalities in the human soul. Higher levels of DMT create souls that stray too far from their bodies, thereby inciting feelings of dissociation and "otherness"; smaller doses create souls that are too connected, leading to loss of empathy and psychopathic traits.

THE GLASS CHRYSANTHEMUM

The first boundary, the space that lies above the membrane but within the inner wall of the Threshold,

is a place of radiant beauty. The inner wall of the Threshold stretches around the traveler, appearing as multilayered translucent petals of a magnificent Glass Chrysanthemum, embracing the fabric of reality. Further movement away from the membrane brings the traveler closer to the Glass Chrysanthemum, revealing the petals to be a multifaceted, jewel-like barrier preventing progress to the deeper levels of the Threshold. Diffuse light permeates the flower and shadows of movement can be seen through the wall-like petals. Occasionally a flash of light is seen from one of the petals, ripples of interaction as objects move through the Threshold. A subtle sound resonates through the Threshold, much like a chorus of music but yet unlike any human voice or instrument; it strikes travelers as being a song they have heard for all time, and are only now aware of.

At the places of overlap, a change in perspective allows the traveler to breach the interior membrane and move through the bulk of the Threshold. Nestled against the walls of the Glass Chrysanthemum, and built directly on the iridescent golden strata that forms the Threshold, are cities and structures of inscrutable origin. The cities are seven in number, and the structures therein are highly perfected images of the types of construction seen on the membrane. The cities themselves are multidimensional reflections of the technology and architecture of humanity, aspects of which span every major era of human development. A metropolis of the Threshold would have architectural similarities to the city-states of Sumer and Ur from one perspective, while another would show the style of Rome at its height. One person visiting a city might see Machu Picchu in all its glory, while another might perceive the lights and hum of Times Square. The streets, though, will universally be empty, save for the occasional shadow of an ultraterrestrial passing through. Navigating the Threshold is difficult, as paths lead in directions of six dimensions; to a four-dimensional being, a path might abruptly end, only to open up with a change

in perspective (see the **Perceptions in the Otherverse** sidebar).

Throughout the cities, strange glyphs appear along the walls and sides of buildings. This esoteric graffiti seems to be symbolic in nature, where individual groupings of strokes represent concepts as opposed to individual letters. Gazing upon these runes, like looking upon much in these cities, evokes feelings of *Presque Vu*, and changes in orientation can offer the reader insight as the symbolic structures change with different perspectives. The runes are the symbolic representations of the equations underlying the great mysteries of the world, and describe the flowing symmetries that underlie the membrane. In order to capture the complexities of the four-dimensional universe, the equations themselves are of a higher order. These seven sets of equations form the laws by which the underlying universe operates, and truly understanding them would allow one to predict any phenomena found on the membrane.

Each city lies slightly skewed compared to the other cities of the Threshold. As one navigates from city to city, the traveler's perception subtly alters to match the natural orientation of the city. These changes in perception are necessary, for after the seventh such rotation, the traveler becomes aware of another direction of travel… a seventh dimension orthogonal to the six of the Threshold. This is the entrance to the Labyrinth.

THE LABYRINTH

Seemingly after a quick step, the traveler arrives at the shore of a vast swirling sea. Behind the traveler is the glassy structure of the Threshold, crushed into a fine dust by the churning ocean. The fluid of the sea is clearly not water, being slightly bluish in color with the occasional flicker of light as if lightning was coursing through the medium. A wispy, blue-white

fog emanates from the liquid and settles along the shoreline, occluding sight through the glassy material of the Threshold. As the traveler moves towards the churning sea, the water will be found to be viscous and will flows around the individual's body. Progressing farther, the traveler finds it possible to walk upon the surface of the churning sea, which seems to be a maelstrom of infinite proportion. Much as a traveler might try, no way can be found to permeate the watery surface and descend into the indigo depths.

Beside the traveler, on the glassy shore, stand colossal statues as tall as skyscrapers. The style they are carved in seems to be a mixture of Egyptian and Mesoamerican, with futuristic overtones. Six stand a silent vigil, though travelers will sense that a seventh was at one time present. These statues can be entered through doors at the base of the legs, if oriented in the proper direction. Inside each colossus are seven rooms, each with a single chair and a set of baroque controls. The first room is spherical, carved from a stone of coral red, with a raised platform to hold the chair and controls, and is located near the lowest point on the torso, at the base of the spine. The next one, further up, resides in the lower belly and is an icosahedral crystal of fiery orange. Farther along, halfway near the solar plexus of the statue, is a radiant room of bright yellow and shaped as a dodecahedron. Above this, in the center of the chest is the fourth room, an emerald chamber with eight facets, with a dais in the center for controls. The fifth room is a simple cube of bright blue located in the throat of the statue. Centered in the middle of the forehead, forming a triangle with the solemn eyes of the colossus, is a tetrahedral crystal of deep indigo. This room allows the person inside to see through one of the facets to the exterior of the statue, and is the only such area where external observation is possible. The final room sits just beneath the crown of the head, and is another sphere of the richest purple.

Each room sits orthogonal in one direction to every

other chamber, meaning the statues themselves are seven-dimensional structures. Although each room appears to be separated from another by vast internal differences, the rooms are actually superimposed on one another in a higher dimension. Traveling the path that runs the center of the statue and connects the rooms requires changing orientation as one moves further up. However, when seven are seated, one to each chamber, they can use the controls to cause the colossus to move. This requires the coordination of all seven pilots, which is simple once they realize the proximity they have in a higher dimension. These colossi were designed to be the vehicles for those humans who managed to penetrate the puzzles of the Threshold. As seven-dimensional structures, the colossi can permeate the fluid of the maelstrom to descend in its depths – the sea being the surface skin of the Otherverse beyond. The original Seven Dogs Society mastered the secrets of the colossi and took control of the now missing statue. The remaining six sentinels await the coming of another set of seven to leave the membrane and to sail on to the Creator.

INEXPLICABLE PHENOMENA

With all the advances of the scientific worldview in trying to rationalize the universe, there is still much in the world that doesn't have a clear reason. The fallout of the unexplained is all around us, in the form of UFO documentaries, ghost hunters on TV, and Bigfoot in the tabloids. Many scientists come out to specifically debunk a phenomenon by citing the examples that are clearly hoaxes, while believers cite the evidence that defies explanation. The Seven Dogs Society needs to straddle that middle ground in an attempt to find legitimate answers for the mysterious and the inexplicable.

The truth lies in the Otherverse, the set of dimensions orthogonal to our own which humanity, as a whole, is unable to interact with or perceive. However, even though imperceptible, events in the Otherverse can send ripples through the membrane of our world. In **Chapter 6**, gamemasters can find examples of anomalous phenomena which can serve as a starting point for an investigation. The following sections detail possible explanations for these phenomena. As with any aspect of *Aletheia*, the Gamemaster should feel free to change these explanations as desired. In addition, although a number of different phenomena are described here, this list is by no means exhaustive. However, if a GM introduces an anomalous event not listed here, an explanation should be decided upon in preparation for the characters' investigation.

Finally, just because there is an extra-dimensional explanation for a particular phenomenon, this doesn't preclude other, more mundane, causes for a similar type of event. Sometimes a UFO is just glint off of an airplane, or a weather balloon, or a hubcap. The Gamemaster should feel free to introduce whatever explanation is appropriate for the particular event that is being described.

AGRIGLYPHS

Also known as crop circles, these formations appear in fields of various cereal grains including wheat, barley, and corn. Though varied in complexity, they are highly mathematical in nature, with some exhibiting fractal dimensions. Although it has been shown how to forge simple agriglyphs in a single night's time, the more complicated ones still defy explanation. Agriglyphs occur when a higher dimensional object moves through the membrane of this reality. If the object doesn't share the same dimensions as our membrane, the two intersect at a point (imagine a line going through a piece of paper). From that point, ripples of energy spread out causing the strange patterns that are observed. The release of this energy can occasionally cause unusual damage to the stalks of grain as well as anomalous

electromagnetic phenomena in the region.

ALIEN ABDUCTION

Stories of alien abductions typically imply encounters with ultraterrestrials. If so desired, ultraterrestrials can easily untie the strings that bind a human to reality, and take them for a short time into the Otherverse. They have done this in the past as well, as there have been reports of angels who took prophets up to see the divine light before returning them to earth. In this present day and age, the human mind understands advanced technology better than divine intervention, so those who have recently experienced such an event see it in the form of space aliens and interstellar travel. In actuality, all of these accounts are visitations from ultraterrestrials. The mystery lies in their purpose. The original society dealt with the entity called Lam, who provided aid through cryptic clues. However, there could be other ultraterrestrials who are assisting humanity in a different method. These might involve infusing material from their own being into the humans in order to better allow these altered individuals the ability to free themselves from the membrane. This mixing of their essence with that of the abductee could explain the sexual overtones present in some abduction stories.

AUTOMATIC WRITING

Automatic writing is the writing of text without being consciously aware of the words being produced. This can occur when the author is in a trance-like state, but also takes place when the writer is fully conscious but not paying attention to the actions of the hand. In the majority of cases, automatic writing occurs as a product of the subconscious producing words and expressing emotion in ways it couldn't do consciously. However, as certain forms of meditation can increase the levels of DMT in the body, it can lead

the practitioner into a state of susceptibility to other locations and times. The words produced during these trances can tap into experiences far removed in time and space from the writer, or can be a conduit for messages purposefully sent from the Otherverse.

ELECTRONIC VOICE PHENOMENON

Often discovered in the presence of a haunting, this phenomenon is the capturing on some sort of media (digital or analog) voices and sounds that are not audibly present. Like hauntings, there are two primary explanations for this phenomenon. One, when a human undergoes the final stages of life, high levels of DMT are produced from the pineal gland. This is especially true if the cause of death was abrupt or traumatic. This influx of DMT allows aspects of the individual to slip free of the membrane and reattach in different places and in different times. Thus, the EVP recordings on the tape recorder can sometimes pick up the distant conversations and screams of those dying or near death, even from a different location or time. The second cause of EVP recordings is actual communications from, or between, the ultraterrestrials. As they don't typically have to modulate biological features in order to communicate, the voices of the ultraterrestrials always sound "off" compared to the more common EVP recordings. These conversations tend to either sound high and tinny, or a deep bass monotone. Some EVP can actually catch both phenomena at the same time.

FOLIE A DEUX

Literally a madness shared by two, this is a psychological term of a type of delusion or psychosis that is passed from one person to another. Folie a Deux is quite rare considering that it is a psychological disorder that can be spread. Cases of Folie a Deux can usually be traced to beings like the Nephilim who have an enhanced ability of seeing through the higher dimensions. If these individuals are already suffering from some psychological condition, like paranoia or delusions, their innate clairsentient abilities can reinforce their psychosis. In addition, their enhanced visions allow them to project their reality to others nearby. Thus, those around them are forced to see things that aren't really there, or hear strange voices conversing and plotting around them.

GHOSTS

As described in the EVP section, there are two primary explanations for hauntings. The first comes from the biological process of dying. Immediately prior to death, the body releases a large amount of DMT, which loosens the dying creature from the membrane. At the moment of death, the being can become multidimensional, leaving shadows in a number of locations and times. These shadows cannot interact but can give the appearance of responding depending on the actions they perform; they also may appear in any number of locations, not necessarily the ones associated with the original individual's death. However, these manifestations are diffuse enough that they are easily mistaken, by those who interact with them, for particular individuals who have died near to that location. The second form of haunting is actual contact with an ultraterrestrial. As beings not solely in our dimension, these entities often look translucent and ephemeral, as if we are only seeing a shadow of something real. If they choose, they can also collapse all of their form into our four dimensions. This causes an incredible release of energy often seen as radiating fire and a terrible roaring. This concentrated type of manifestation is uncommon, however.

THE HUM

The Hum is a set of phenomena that has occurred in

the United Kingdom since the early seventies and in the United States since the nineties. People who have heard The Hum report it as a very low frequency noise, feeling like an audible vibration through the air. For some, The Hum is accompanied by headaches, dizziness, and disorientation. The Hum actually originated from the multidimensional vibrations oscillating through the Otherverse when the first incarnation of the society entered the Labyrinth. This sent ripples of energy through the membrane both forward and backward in time. Because of the convoluted geometry of our four-dimensional membrane, pockets have formed that amplify the energy of these higher dimensional shockwaves. It is here that The Hum is heard most significantly.

MISSING TIME

Missing time is the sensation that a segment of time has disappeared and can't be recalled. There are a number of different explanations for missing time, including substance abuse, psychological repression of traumatic memories, and as a symptom of dissociative identity disorder. In addition, missing time can occur when a person has been separated from the membrane and doesn't return to their correct time. This can occur when high levels of DMT enter the system, either through meditative practices or through ingestion. Also, in some alien abductions, missing time occurs as the abductees are not returned to a time consistent with their experiences.

NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCE

As mentioned earlier, when the body begins to die the pineal gland begins producing prodigious amounts of DMT. This can cause a number of different experiences as the person develops a multidimensional characteristic. These incidents include the reliving of many different times simultaneously and the feeling of being separated from the body. Oftentimes, these NDEs can allow a person to experience and interact with ultraterrestrials, who are often seen as either a sphere of light or as angelic beings. Those who survive their death relate stories that include visitation with the spirits of the dead and/or angels, out of body experiences, and reviews of their life.

PSYCHIC SURGERY

Psychic Surgery is the act of removing damaged and diseased tissue without an incision. In most cases, this is simple chicanery and sleight of hand. However, applications of *Ghosting* can produce very real acts of psychic surgery.

SPONTANEOUS HUMAN COMBUSTION

SHC is a rare phenomena where the victim combusts with no known ignition source. SHC comes from many of the same forces that cause the formation of agriglyphs. It is a sign of the interaction between a higher dimensional object and the membrane. If a person is at the epicenter and the object is sufficiently massive, the energy can be enough for the person to immolate. Fortunately, most of these dimensional interactions occur nowhere near a person, and the damage caused by these occurrences is assumed to be from lightning or faulty wiring. However, in the case of a human victim, no amount of conventional investigation will reveal a mundane cause. It is also possible for a higher dimensional creature to cause this effect intentionally, by forcing interactions with higher dimensional objects and the membrane.

UFO SIGHTINGS

Most UFO sightings have very mundane explanations. However, those that appear as erratic floating lights

zigging and zagging around the sky occasionally are caused by similar phenomena as agriglyphs and SHC. When multidimensional objects collide in the sky, they can cause multiple shadows of the explosion, appearing as bright pinpoints of light. This is often why agriglyphs are seen on nights where these types of UFOs are also observed.

UNNATURAL PRECIPITATION

Various unusual things have been known to fall from the sky. There have been reports of dead birds, fish and frogs raining out of the heavens, as well as rain that looks like blood or oil. Many of the cases of this disturbing rain occur on days without serious storms. In these instances, the likely explanation is a paranormal event that has caused some (especially lighter) animals to slip into a different spatial (and sometimes temporal) position. Creatures that have been teleported into the sky will immediately succumb to mundane gravity, and fall as an unnatural rain. On the other hand, rain that is a distinctive color, such as red or black, simply comes from high levels of natural algae in the water.

VILE VORTICES

These are a set of twelve locations that are considered to have high concentrations of anomalous phenomena. The most famous of these are the Bermuda Triangle in the Mid-Atlantic and the Devil's Sea off the coast of Japan. Although the theory regarding the twelve is incorrect, there *are* areas of heightened anomalous phenomena on the membrane. These occur because the highly convoluted warping of the four-dimensional membrane causes the appearance of hills and depressions along the four-dimensional surface. The hills disperse energy incidents from the Otherverse, while the depressions collect and amplify this energy. This energy causes anomalous phenomena,

including energy releases into the surrounding environment or spontaneous dissociation of entities from the membrane – leading to teleportation and missing time events. Since paranormal events are much more prominent in areas where the geometry of the membrane amplifies the effects of this multi-dimensional energy, many of the twelve locals have become quiet well known.

VIRGIN BIRTHS

Though legitimate cases of virgin births are rare, they do happen. These births are brought about by the fertilization of a woman's egg by an ultraterrestrial. Those ultraterrestrials who have participated in such actions are perhaps doing this for fear that the children of the Grigori are too firmly attached to the membrane to affect the transcendence of humanity. The sires of these children have chosen means such as *Ghosting* to impregnate the woman, to avoid the complications and temptations of lying with the daughters of Eve. The children born from these births tend to be highly spiritual beings able to perform a host of inexplicable actions.

THE ANNEX

Jericho Usher spent his final earthly days feverishly working to complete the *Hepta Sophistai* annex. The intention was to create a trail for those who would follow in his footsteps – proof positive that there was more to the nature of space-time than human senses could perceive.

Under Lam's tutelage, Jericho bent and folded space at each of the nine doorways to create a series of hyper-dimensional bridges between the annex and its nine connected locations. However, these gateways were designed to operate in only one direction. A person can certainly travel from the annex to any one

CURVED SPACE

Imagine an ant on a sheet of paper. If that ant is walking in a straight line from one end of the sheet to the other, the distance it will travel is eleven inches. Now imagine that the sheet of paper has been curved so that the two opposite ends of the paper are now less than a millimeter apart, nearly forming a tube. If the ant is on the inside of the tube, moving in a straight line on the tube's interior surface, the distance it will travel is still eleven inches. However, if the ant could leap off the paper's surface it would see that the two ends of the paper are actually only millimeters apart – much closer than it realized. Unfortunately, since the ant cannot see or move in this hyper-dimensional direction, it does not realize that the surface of its world is actually curved rather than flat. If the ant could move off the surface of the paper, the distance between any two points would be greatly shortened. This is how Lam and Usher constructed the annex gateways. By bending space, they linked distant points together, creating a hyper-dimensional bridge between them.

of the linked locales, but the reverse is impossible; the gateways are inaccessible from the nine locations and, once there, are undetectable by human senses.

Although the annex gateways were created as a testament to the hidden physics that underlie reality, other purposes were intended as well. From a purely practical standpoint, the nine doorways make global travel quicker for the society, enabling it to investigate anomalous phenomena in a timelier manner, and two of the gateways grant swift access to libraries invaluable to the society's work. Additionally, the

other seven doorways are clues to the truth the society is dedicated to discovering. The relevance of these seven portals is discussed below:

Lubaantun: As mentioned on page 31, this Mayan ruin is where Mitchell-Hedges discovered the famous crystal skull. The skull is an ultraterrestrial apparatus originally passed down from Lam to Mesoamerican descendants of the Nephilim. By gazing into the crystal skull, those with Nephilim blood can peer directly into the Labyrinth, bypassing the outer layers of the Otherverse. Lam intended for seven Mayans to be the original vanguard of humanity's ascension, a function now passed down to the Seven Dogs Society.

Lubaantun was also one of the many Mesoamerican sites pilfered by Jericho Usher. With *Remote Viewing* and *X-Ray Vision*, Jericho discovered secret chambers,

THE CRYSTAL SKULL

When a Nephilim gazes into the crystal skull, he or she can peer directly into the Labyrinth with a successful *Awareness* roll (*target number* of 1). The character will instantly sense that the colossi are of profound importance, yet the nature of their value will remain unknown.

Although the crystal skull is in the possession of Anna Mitchell-Hedges, it would not be impossible for characters to get access to it, either by entreating Anna or through less scrupulous means. Of course, there is no reason why the Mitchell-Hedges skull has to be unique. After all, if the ultraterrestrials crafted one such artifact, might they not have crafted others?

absconding with countless valuables, which he later sold on the black market. These riches, and those from other sites, are the source of the funding that the Seven Dogs Society currently enjoys.

Roanoke: In the late 1500s, the English colony at Roanoke disappeared (see pages 24-26). Although historians believe the colonists to be the victims of drought or harsh winters, this is incorrect. The colony's fate was far different than anyone could imagine. After the colonists made friends of the nearby Croatan tribe, they discovered the truth about their new allies; the superstitious newcomers watched in horror as the Croatans performed impossible feats of magic, such as disappearing into thin air. Deeming the natives to be in league with the Devil, and believing themselves technologically superior, the colonists attacked. Naturally, the Croatans retaliated. However, since they feared that any signs of a struggle would only serve as a catalyst for English reprisal, they chose a different tactic to deal with their attackers.

The Croatan tribe was descended from the Nephilim bloodline, and their ability to access hyper-dimensional space was extremely well developed. Using their otherworldly talents, the Croatans snuck up on the colonists in small groups and dragged them into the Otherverse, leaving them imprisoned there. In a matter of days, the entire Roanoke colony was banished. Since the human mind is not conditioned to perceive higher dimensions, every last colonist was driven mad by the hyper-dimensional landscape. In the throes of insanity, many took their own lives. A few still wander the Otherverse, searching for egress.

Julio's Lost and Found: The junkyard itself is of no significance. It is the surrounding town that holds relevance to the society's work. Taos, New Mexico is home to the anomalous phenomenon known simply as The Hum. For more details on this phenomenon, refer to pages 82 and 105-106.

Qumran: In 1947, two Bedouin shepherds discovered

the Dead Sea Scrolls in a cave near Qumran. Supposedly, all of the scrolls have been published. This, however, is not true. One scroll has never been released to the public. Written on animal hide, this suppressed text tells the tale of the Nephilim. Mostly, the recounting varies little from the *Book of Watchers* (*Enoch 1*). However, there is one important deviation: the scroll states that the Nephilim survived the deluge by sidestepping time, returning to the Earth only after the waters had subsided. It also speaks of the Nephilim's integration with human society, and the progeny born of their human couplings.

The suppressed scroll is the only extant document of its kind, the sole written testimony that the Nephilim bore children and survived God's righteous cleansing. Currently, the scroll is housed in a secret chamber located beneath the Israel Museum.

Tunguska: In the summer of 1908, the barrier between two membranes ruptured in the sky above Tunguska, releasing a powerful burst of energy whose effects were felt for thousands of miles. The Grigori were responsible for this tearing of space-time. They were attempting to puncture a hole into the four-dimensional membrane in the hopes of escaping their prison. Although they succeeded in sundering the barrier between their one-dimensional membrane and four-dimensional space-time, the breach proved impossible to traverse and quickly sealed itself. Since then, the other ultraterrestrials have remained vigilant, anticipating another escape attempt by the imprisoned Grigori.

Hanna's Roadside Grill: This establishment is significant for its close proximity to the Sutton family farm, the site of a well-documented close encounter with the ultraterrestrials. On the night of August 21st, 1955, the Sutton family and guests were visited by beings from the Otherverse. Seven adults and four children witnessed the otherworldly incursion. Over the course of the night and into the early morning, the ultraterrestrials appeared and disappeared repeatedly, floating outside of windows, perching on tree limbs, and scuttling atop the roof of the farmhouse. More than once, the ultraterrestrials were fired upon and hit. At sunrise, the creatures disappeared for good.

The purpose for linking the annex to Hanna's Roadside Grill, was to lead the society to investigate the Kelly-Hopkinsville Encounter (as the incident has since been dubbed). With *Presque vu*, the Sutton family's experience in 1955 can be definitively linked to the truth sought by the society. This, in turn, can lead to the revelation that the ultraterrestrials have been visiting mankind for millennia, and that they are the fairies, aliens, gods, and demons that haunt humanity's folklore, myths, and religions.

Chambira: *Banisteriopsis caapi*, also known as ayahuasca, grows in this region of the Amazonian rainforest. The local Urarina people brew a powerful etheogen from ayahuasca that allows brief communication with the Otherverse.

MISSING PERSONS

History is replete with tales of people who seemingly disappear without a trace. From the crew and passengers of the Mary Celeste, to Ambrose Bierce, to Amelia Earhart, this phenomenon has occurred hundreds, if not thousands, of times over the centuries. Of course, such disappearances are not limited to the famous. In the United States alone, there are over 100,000 active missing persons records. While most of these cases have mundane and earthly explanations, some might be the handiwork of the ultraterrestrials or those of the Nephilim bloodline.

THE USHER CODEX

God has often communicated with humanity through intermediaries. The first among these were the ultraterrestrials. However, after the fall of the Grigori, the Creator more often turned to earthly prophets such as Ezekiel and Muhammad. In this way, Lam and his ilk were kept pure of the four-dimensional contamination that brought low the Watchers. Instead, the ultraterrestrials' primary purpose was to ignite the divine spark in certain mortals, creating prophets to carry the Word of God to the masses. Jericho Usher was one such prophet. The *Usher Codex* is his revelation.

The *Usher Codex* is a collection of Jericho's thoughts during his final years in four-dimensional reality. The text hints at humanity's destiny in the Otherverse, though it does so though obfuscatory text and imagery. It is so encoded to keep the ignorant away while enlightening the wise. By piecing together the clues of the manuscript, the society can share in Usher's epiphanies and acquire the tools needed to set humanity upon its spiritual voyage.

Though joining the godhead is mankind's ultimate destiny, communion is not possible without proper alignment. Alignment is the transmogrification of the human soul for hyper-dimensional existence. The *Usher Codex* exists to illuminate the path to alignment. However, the timetable for this momentous event is controlled, at least in part, by the ultraterrestrials. The human mind can only process so much of the truth at any given moment; history has shown that overload leads to madness. Therefore, when the society reaches too far, too soon, the ultraterrestrials hinder its progress. One notable instance of this was the *Hepta Sophistai* library fire of 1972. The first society was on the verge of learning and seeing things their minds would not be able to process, and to slow their progress, Lam set the library ablaze, using the conflagration to spirit away all but four pages of the *Usher Codex*. In doing so, the ultraterrestrial left behind enough of Usher's work to spur the society on, yet assured that they could not overstep their reach. If Lam had not interfered, the society would have met the same fate as the colonists at Roanoke who were ill prepared to experience the Otherverse (see page 109) and were subsequently driven mad.

After a time, Lam returned one of the missing pages, placing it at the Bibliothéque Nationale de France for the society to find. If needed, Lam will release other pages to guide the current society along its proper path.

The manuscript pages are indeed as old as they appear. Usher penned his thoughts on 15th century vellum secured by means of *Time Travel*. Once Jericho completed his codex, he returned to the 15th century and buried the manuscript in a secret location so that he could unearth it in the future. This elaborate process was undertaken to make the *Usher Codex* more than just a roadmap, but also an out-of-place artifact (see page 132) whose very existence would provide validation that there are things unexplainable by modern science. Portions of the text are prescient, referencing to things Usher viewed with *Precognition*, but never does he clearly state the final outcome of what will be accomplished by the society.

SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

Player characters occupy the center stage in *Aletheia*. They are the heart of the drama, their actions and decisions propelling the stories forward. However, every tale has its supporting cast, and *Aletheia* is no exception. During their adventures, the PCs will interact with a host of others, including friends and colleagues, eyewitnesses and enemies. A few such NPCs are detailed below.

NPCs who are not of Nephilim blood have a Will of 1. Since

they do not have access to the otherworldly powers of the Nephilim, this trait can never be increased.

SEBASTIAN DE VILLIERS

The first memories Sebastian has of his life were the strict Catholic nuns in the orphanage at *Notre Dame de la Secours Immuable*, a cathedral in Chaumont, France. Church records show that Sebastian's earliest years were spent in another orphanage in Shiltigheim, in the Alsace-Lorraine province. While he was likely born in the early 1950s, no actual birth records exist, nor did either institution have any record of who the boy's mother or father were – not that this was uncommon in the border areas between Germany and France in post-war Europe.

Early life in the orphanage was an ongoing ordeal for the boy. Although the refugees from Germany, who once formed a river through the war torn eastern provinces of France, had slowed to barely a trickle, the cathedral still served as one part hospital, one part hostel for the itinerant casualties of the war. Unfortunately, disease quickly spread among the refugees to the other people residing in the cathedral, including the children in the orphanage. It wasn't uncommon for a youngster to bed down for the night, only to succumb to a fever induced delirium from which the child would never emerge.

At the presumed age of 11, Sebastian was saved from this horror by the adoption into the de Villiers family of Auxerre. Jean-François de Villiers was a construction engineer who assisted the rebuilding effort in both eastern France and West Germany. With all the work that was needed to recover from the war, Jean-François was comfortable and successful, but money wasn't able to buy the one thing that fate denied Jean-François and his wife, Isabel… a child of their own. After years of trying, the couple looked at adoption and found their way to the town of Chaumont. In spite of the hellish conditions of the orphanage, Sebastian had shown himself to be a clever boy, with the temerity needed to withstand the harsh conditions and the charm needed to facilitate his escape. The couple fell in love with the precocious child, and welcomed him into their family.

The slow realization that he was different crept in with the onset of puberty. His trials in the orphanage left him with a spotty memory of his life before adoption. His clearest memento of his time in *la Secours Immuable* was his obsession for cleanliness and order. Sebastian also eschewed all things religious, a habit tacitly fostered by his atheist father. Sebastian had a keen mathematical mind and, in his teens, he devoured the works of Carl Friedrich Gauss and Georg Riemann. Even with his late start in education, Sebastian finished his primary schooling at the age of seventeen, and Jean-François sent the boy to the United States to attend Princeton. However, an accident in his second year of university ended the career of the young scientist and opened Sebastian's life to a much deeper mystery.

A strange event occurred late at night on the Princeton campus on January 19th, 1973. January 19th was the day Sebastian had first arrived at *la Secours Immuable*, so had been the date he celebrated his birthday. While coming back to his dorm, a car swerved off the road and onto the sidewalk, hitting Sebastian before pulling away. Witnesses called the police and Sebastian was taken quickly to the hospital. The car that struck Sebastian was found abandoned, several blocks away. Though he had numerous broken bones and a broken rib, his most serious injury was the head trauma which left him in a coma for nearly nine months.

Sebastian woke up a changed man. While unconscious, he felt he was visited by the Word of God. It retold to him the stories of Genesis and the time before the flood, when those angels sent to watch humanity

SEBASTIAN DE VILLIERS

Fitness: 2 (*Hardy*)
Awareness: 4 (*Prophetic*)
Personality: 3 (*Charming*)
Reason: 4 (*Intuitive*)
Will: 13

Occupation: *Professional* Priest, *Rookie* Scientist
Powers: *Pierce the Veil* (*), *Sever the Cord of Reality* (****), *Ghosting* (****), *Orthogonal Revolution* (****)

Pierce the Veil (*) – This ability allows the character to sense the presence of nearby dimensional anomalies. The power can determine if anything within line of sight has an extra-dimensional character to it. Generally, this is used to determine if a paranormal phenomenon is in fact extra-dimensional in nature, such as if a medium is actually speaking to ultraterrestrials, but can also be used to notice static phenomena such as the portals in the annex created by Jericho Usher or The Hum heard around Taos, New Mexico. Particularly subtle occurrences might require *Awareness* rolls (TN of 1).

Sever the Cord of Reality (****) – This ability allows the character to forcibly eject an object or creature from reality, closing the loops and severing it from the membrane. In order to use this power, the character must successfully grab the victim or object. If the victim is resisting and not restrained, this is a standard combat roll (*target number* is the opponent's *Fitness*). If the grab is successful, the subject of this ability disappears and moves away into the Otherverse. The effect lasts for 5 minutes per *victory* on the power user's *Awareness* roll. The victim can use any powers as normal, including movement abilities, to return to reality. This power can also be used on oneself.

Orthogonal Revolution (****) – This ability allows the character to forcibly grab someone and rotate them in a dimension perpendicular to the four dimensions of reality. In order to use this power, the character must successfully grab the victim or object. If the victim is resisting and not restrained, this is a standard combat roll (*target number* is the opponent's *Fitness*). If the grab is successful, the subject is twisted through higher dimensions and then returned to reality. The body is returned apparently unharmed, but the experience is quite harrowing for the victim and creates a permanent physical change. The victim now controls a body for which left is right and right is left. Motor coordination is difficult because attempts of motor control results in a right hand moving when the subject tries to reach out their left and so on. This effect is permanent unless reversed by the use of a similar power, however time does allow victims to adjust. For the week following the

SEBASTIAN DE VILLIERS
(CONTINUED)

incident, the victim has the *target number* of all rolls increased by 2. This can cause even simple tasks to fail while the victim becomes adjusted to their new orientation. Even after that initial week, simple tasks requiring coordination are difficult. For several months, the subject still has all *Fitness* and *Awareness target numbers* increased by 1. After this time, the victim has adjusted to his or her dimensionally shifted body, but is still a medical anomaly. A person who can move through higher dimensions (as with the *Teleport* or the *Ghosting* abilities) can reorient themselves with an *Awareness* roll at a *target number* of 1.

were seduced by the daughters of Eve. A race of giants was created, the Nephilim, who along with their human followers, led lives of corruptness and debauchery. These half-angels were so loathsome of creature, that the Lord sent many waters to purge the world of their blight. Though the great deluge destroyed many of the encampments and cultists who followed the giants, the Nephilim themselves survived. Now scattered, they continued in secret to work the downfall of humanity.

When he awoke, Sebastian was left confused. Much of the details of his visitation faded as he needed to deal with the difficulties of awakening to a world that had left him behind. However, during fitful sleep he continued to dream of the mystical revelations of his long coma. Three months after leaving the hospital, Sebastian suffered a breakdown which put him in a psychiatric facility for five weeks. There, the visitations decreased with his ever-increasing medication dosages. With the visions subsiding, Sebastian felt more coherent, but strangely lacking.

Sebastian decided to leave Princeton and devote himself to the study of Catholicism. Against the wishes of his adopted family, he became a monk at a monastery in Boston; while there, he feverishly studied scripture for support or refutation of his visions. In the monastic atmosphere, the visitations

began anew, this time revealing in significant detail the descendents of the Nephilim throughout time who had affected human society. Sebastian watched as Nero ordered the death of his mother, Agripinna. He saw the poisoning influence of Grigori Rasputin upon the family of Nicholas II in the years before the Bolshevik Revolution.

He also learned to sense those descendents of the fallen angels who still walked the earth. Their sin was almost palpable, as the taint of the Nephilim had spread and diffused through the human genetic code. Still, only a very few can trace their heritage to the sons of God, and of those few only a minute percentage are strong enough to revive the corruption and decadence of the giants of Genesis. Sebastian came to realize that his calling was to cull the scions of the Nephilim from the purity of humanity.

Sebastian is now a prophet of the voices that continue to call to him and demand the purging of the Nephilim. They have taught him the tools necessary to find both the decadent children and the presence of their passage. Underneath the reasoned outlook of a scientist, Sebastian has the fervent zeal of a man reborn.

Sebastian has no idea that it is not the voice of God or even the Heavenly Host speaking to him, but rather

he is in communion with the fallen Grigori. More so, he is completely ignorant to the true source of his powers, the very same Nephilim blood he wishes to expunge from the Earth.

Although middle aged, Sebastian retains the health of a man half his years. Sebastian typically dresses in fine suits and black leather gloves. Because of his experience in the orphanage, he prefers not to touch other people, especially those tainted by the blood of the Nephilim. Sebastian is well traveled, as his calling requires him to literally travel to the ends of the earth. He can sense nearby dimensional anomalies using the ability *Pierce the Veil*. He also tends to keep several

DIMENSIONAL REFLECTIONS

Imagine a crude hand-drawn image of a man, living in a crude hand-drawn world on an overlooked piece of paper in a child's bedroom. Furthermore, let us envision that there are other men and other women who all populate, live, work, sleep, etc. in this two-dimensional world. We could even imagine that life for these people would not be too dissimilar to the life we enjoy, save for it being limited to only two dimensions.

However, when we look closely at how this thriving civilization looks to us, a three dimensional race, we find some interesting phenomena. A one-dimensional object, a line, forms the inhabitant's skin to protect their internal organs from the outside. However, from our perspective we can see everything: their hearts, their lungs, even what they ate for dinner. They would live in houses, more lines with windows or doorways to allow entrance and exit, but even if they were to try and hide from us, we would still be able to examine every aspect of their lives.

These two dimensional people would also be limited in their physical transformations. Objects could move (translate) in space in a variety of lines and arcs, but they would only be able to rotate in circles along the plane. A mirror, another line, could reflect their image. However, by accessing the third dimension, magic happens. We can peel the poor two-dimensional person up and rotate him not along the plane, but perpendicular to it. When he is returned to the sheet of paper that is his proper home, we find that the paper person now has all aspects of his body reversed… his heart, for example, is now on the right instead of left. We, three-dimensional people might imagine we've laid the poor paper person face down instead of face up, however it is important to remember there is no down and up in the paper world. Only face-right and face-left, face-forward and face-back.

These traumatic rotations can happen in our world as well, by accessing higher dimensions. By rotating a person through a dimension orthogonal to the four dimensions they naturally move through, you invert all the aspects of that individual that were distinctly left or right dominate. The poor reflected person who was once right handed now recognizes that their left hand is dominant. Furthermore, instructions coming from the brain get mixed up in this orientation, causing the person to have difficulty coordinating their actions. Even simple things like walking prove to be difficult, as the wrong leg gets sent the signal to start moving.

bodyguards nearby, conditioned through use of the ability *Orthogonal Revolution*. Typically these guards are criminals and lowlifes who are willing to accept the Word of God, as spoken through Sebastian.

THE MIRROR MEN

Forced converts to the faith and charisma of Sebastian de Villiers, these miscreants and criminals have had their wills broken and now faithfully and solely serve their leader. Most previously had careers in illegal activities and range from simple thugs to smugglers and pickpockets, though a few held legitimate jobs including a bouncer and a cab driver. In order to break their wills, or undergo their "cleansing" as Sebastian presents it, de Villiers has repeatedly subjected them to *Orthogonal Revolution*. Repeated exposure to this agonizing experience has left these people psychologically distant and easily pliable. They now serve de Villiers as toughs and assassins in his quest to purge the Earth of the Nephilim.

Sebastian calls his guards the Mirror Men, because they have resulted from their prior selves being reflected in a higher dimension. He tends to only keep three or four at a time, and they all suffer from the disorienting effects of the rotation. Dressed in suits that match de Villiers, and wearing gloves and mirror shades to hide their crossed eyes, they shamble beside Sebastian with the forced gait of one awkward in their own body. Forming words is difficult for them in this condition, so they tend not to speak. Even with all these impairments, they remember well the skills from their previous lives, and tend to be well armed and heed de Villiers' every command.

URSULA THORNDIKE

Ursula is the owner of Thorndike Enterprises, a large conglomerate corporation that controls businesses that range from manure sales to high-end coffee products to military grade weapons to the latest in transparent semiconductor technology. At a young age, Ursula learned to trust her hunches, and developed an uncanny sense of what business would be the next big billion-dollar industry. While originally just vague premonitions, she has mastered the ability to the level of full-blown *Precognition* and *Remote Viewing*, abilities which help her corner any market she desires. This has made Ursula one of the world's richest people, despite her comparatively young age.

Ursula is in her mid-thirties with long straight black hair typically pulled back into a loose ponytail. She is immaculately dressed, and has ample funds to cater to any taste. She leads an active lifestyle, keeping fit as she flies around the world. Lately, however, she's been feeling a growing dissatisfaction with her life,

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MIRROR MEN

Fitness: 4 (typically *Coordinated* or *Brawny*)
Awareness: 3 (typically *Quick Witted* or *Vigilant*)
Personality: 1
Reason: 2
Will: 0

Occupation: Professional Criminal
Likely to possess *Extracurricular Skills* such as Athletics, Fighting, Shooting, Stealth, and Surveillance

Note: Mirror Men suffer from an increase of 1 to target numbers for all Fitness and Awareness rolls, and their Will is 0.

URSULA THORNDIKE

Fitness: 3 (*Lithe*)
Awareness: 2 (*Attention to Detail*)
Personality: 4 (*Professional*)
Reason: 3 (*Erudite*)
Will: 6

Occupation: *Veteran* Businessman
Powers: *Presque vu* (*), *Remote Viewing* (**), *Precognition* (***)

and the urge to divorce herself from the tedious operation of her business grows stronger. She has lately been having strange dreams incorporating Mount McKinley, the Colossus at Rhodes, and strange people she hasn't met. She thinks it might be time for an Alaskan cruise.

RAYMOND HALSTON III

Ray is the editor of *Unified Field Operations* magazine, a print and web periodical detailing the field experiences of ghost hunters and alien chasers all around the world. *UFO* is a monthly publication where each issue highlights seven different events that have recently occurred to various paranormal groups. The articles detail the occurrences, how the groups set up the investigations, and finally their findings. Interspersed among these articles are other columns that give all sorts of sundry advice useful to the enterprising investigator. Much of the back of the magazine is filled with advertisements from various suppliers that would be of interest to the paranormal investigator, from camping and travel gear, to high-tech detectors.

Most of Ray's subscribers would be terribly disheartened to hear that the bulk of the articles are completely fabricated by his "reporters". Ray once worked as a legitimate paranormal investigator; when he advertised in the local paper, he would get call after call to investigate all manner of events. At first he was surprised by the large amounts of paranormal activity that was obviously going on around his community, until he realized that most were hoaxes instigated by those who would call them in. It seemed that most people simply wanted to see if they could pull a fast one on the local "ghostbuster." Ray left fieldwork, and decided to start a magazine which focused on helping other investigators in their work. At first, he had numerous articles to pull into the magazine, coupled with advice columns and ads, but the case studies began to dry up. Fearing that his magazine would go under if good stories couldn't be found, he did the next best thing. He made them up. At best, maybe ten to twenty articles a year currently report actual events.

RAYMOND HALSTON III

Fitness: 2 (*Large*)
Awareness: 3 (*Keen-eyed*)
Personality: 2 (*Cool*)
Reason: 3 (*Trivia*)
Will: 1

Occupation: *Rookie* Journalist

BEVERLY SAUNDERS

Beverly was, at one time, a simple housewife in Prescott, Arizona. Her husband, Brandon, drove trucks from Barstow to Albuquerque, and she raised their two boys. Her life was pretty normal, until the space aliens came. Most aliens come at night, when

you're sleeping, but these took her up to their space ship in the middle of the afternoon, while she was planting flowers on a sunny spring day. Her kids

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BEVERLY SAUNDERS

Fitness: 2 (*Agile*)
Awareness: 4 (*Intuitive*)
Personality: 3 (*Motherly*)
Reason: 3 (*Analytical*)
Will: 10

Occupation: *Rookie* Accountant
Extracurricular Skills: First Aid, Self Defense
Powers: *Deja Visite* (*), *Remote Viewing* (**), *Ghosting* (****), *Projected Vision* (***)

Projected Vision (***) – This ability shares many similarities with clairsentient powers that allow the character to see at great distances; the difference is, with this ability people near the projecting character can also share that vision. The hallucinations, which can incorporate any of the five senses, can be experienced by any number of people that the character can clearly see. The projecting character can specify those individuals who are allowed or forced to see the vision, and can exclude others. If the recipients of this power are not accustomed to the nature of clairsentient abilities, this can cause unusual reactions… as the victims believe the visions are either delusions or actually occurring events. The *target number* for *Projected Vision* is 1, however instances of involuntary projection may occur.

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knew something was wrong when Beverly didn't show up after football practice. The boys walked home only to find nobody there. Their dad, Brandon, was on the road and wouldn't be back for a couple of days. The kids stayed with neighbors while the police searched for the missing mother.

Beverly showed up four days after Brandon returned, wearing the same clothes, the dirt still fresh on her dress. It was night when she walked into the house, and that's when the chaos ensued. Beverly couldn't remember the six days that had passed, while Brandon accused her of cheating. Their marriage never fully recovered from the disappearance, and the two were divorced three months later with Brandon getting custody of the boys.

After a nervous breakdown, Beverly underwent therapy and found out what happened during those six days. Space aliens took her in their ship and experimented with her. There were needles and material from one of the aliens was implanted within her womb, though she never became pregnant. They showed her a world of gold and flowers, and then returned her to Earth.

In actuality, Beverly is part of a program on the part of the ultraterrestrials to develop beings who are more strongly connected to the Otherverse than are the Nephilim. She is beginning to develop abilities that allow her to access and manipulate her hyper-dimensional nature. Unfortunately, the experiences have permanently damaged her sanity.

TERRANCE CHASTAIN

Terrance is the 83-year-old custodian to the estate of Jericho Usher. Once an archaeologist and companion to Jericho, they explored sights previously unseen by modern man. After Jericho's disappearance, Terrance took care of the house and oversaw the formation

TERRANCE CHASTAIN

Fitness: 1
Awareness: 4 (*Astute*)
Personality: 3 (*Disarming*)
Reason: 5 (*Logical*)
Will: 1

Occupation: *Professional* Professor

was only because of loyalty to Jericho's memory that he founded the third incarnation while a potential murderer was still on the loose. Terrance fears that he won't have the resolve to bring together a fourth if a similar fate befalls the current group. This might be a moot point anyway, as Terrance's health has been failing this last year. He spends much more time in his room in the *Hepta Sophistai* than he did in his younger days, though the greenhouse remains a sanctuary of relaxation for Terrance.

STAFF OF THE HEPTA SOPHISTAI

The Usher-Chastain estate requires considerable upkeep, so much so that the staff outnumbers the society itself. At Terrance's request, they are kept ignorant of the society's investigations and conclusions. Terrance fears such knowledge could put their lives at risk, a concern that has grown since the murder of the second incarnation. Though ignorant of the details of any particular investigation, the staff

of each of the three incarnations of the Seven Dogs Society. At first, he figured Jericho to be only slightly mad, but as the two men grew closer, Terrance came to realize that there was some very real secret to which Jericho was privy. What that was, Jericho kept unclear.

Although he has tried to keep healthy, the death of the second incarnation weighs heavily on Terrance. It

is fully aware of the society's purpose, to investigate odd anomalies; they simply do not comprehend the magnitude of the society's work. In general, the hired help views the society as a collection of eclectics indulging Chastain's fanciful interests. That said, the staff is dedicated to serving the Seven Dogs Society and count them as friends.

Although the staff is aware of the disappearances of the previous societies, Terrance has never spoken of their fates, always brushing aside such questions. This has created considerable speculation and rumor mongering among the staff. Adding to the gossip is the western annex. The staff is forbidden from entering that section of the house, and the door leading to the annex hallway is always locked; only Terrance and the society members have keys. Over the years, this and other curiosities have prompted inquiries from the staff, though none have ever successfully pried any answers from Terrance or the society. Those of lengthy tenure no longer even bother to ask questions.

Corrine Backstrom oversees all the staff and ensures everything is operating smoothly. She is the daughter of an associate of Terrance who was a professor at Stanford. Corrine, herself, holds a business degree, but enjoys the sights of Alaska and the time with "uncle" Terrance. She is a woman in her early forties who moves at a frenetic pace and seems always busy.

"Jeffrey" is the butler and the main driver/flyer for the society. If there is need to travel within the boarders of Alaska, Jeffrey will be driving the car or flying the floatplane to wherever the characters need to go. He also flies out for the monthly supply run to Fairbanks, which leaves him absent from the house three days each month.

Arthur Devons is an old English gentleman, only a few years younger than Terrance. Arthur maintains the vast library of the house. He still retains a lot of guilt for the fire that destroyed many of the older books, including the *Usher Codex*, and so works doubly hard to restore the library stacks. Arthur is a hairless and diminutive man, but carries an air of dignity and diligence to caring for and organizing the society's manuscripts.

Guy deRouille is the main chef for the house, and organizes the menu for the society members and the staff. He is also responsible for ordering the food that Jeffrey picks up once a month. Guy is a native Frenchman who graduated from one of the finest schools in Paris before coming to Alaska. He is in his late twenties, and shows the tell-tale signs of preparing rich dishes. Guy is assisted by two other cooks, Angela diPaola and Richard Duncan.

Helen Hardinger oversees the maid staff and ensures the society keeps a clean house. In her late fifties, Helen seems very much the kindly grandmother of the house. Isabel Kitchuli and Jeanne Lillitlu, two Yupik women from the town of Seven Dogs, assist her.

Don and Mason Kitchuli are older brothers to Isabel, and maintain the grounds and supply the house with fresh food. Don is the gardener, keeping both a vegetable and an herb garden to ensure the house is well stocked. Mason keeps the animal population in control in the forests surrounding the House.

Ichio Masuki is a master gardener from Ishikawa, Japan. He lives in a side building adjoining the Japanese Garden, and his sole job is to ensure the proper growth and development of that garden.

SOCIETIES PAST

The original Seven Dogs Society disappeared in late 1999. In their final correspondences, they spoke of discovering Usher's fate and their desire to follow the

path he blazed. Although the society did not come out and say it, Chastain knew full well that they were never going to return.

After decades of investigations, the society had come to understand the truth so cryptically spoken of by Jericho Usher. The mystery of the Otherverse and the ultraterrestrials was laid bare. Most importantly, they comprehended the true purpose of the Seven Dogs Society: to guide humanity's evolution to the Otherverse.
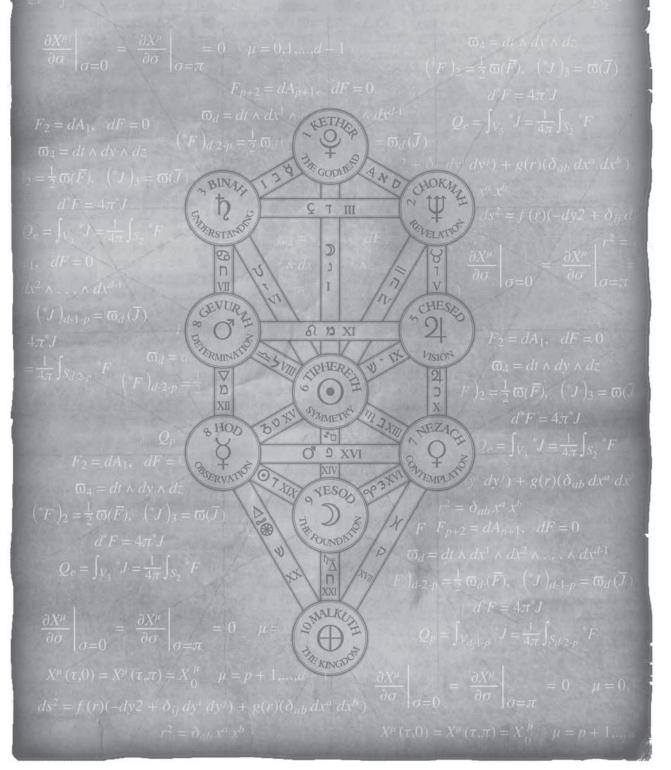
In the original society's final years, the members undertook dozens of journeys into the Otherverse. In time, they discovered the passage into the Labyrinth and the seven colossi. They recognized one of the statues from an illustration in the *Usher Codex* and, after repeated pilgrimages, divined the secret to activating the colossus. In December 1999, the society acted on this knowledge and descended into the waters of the Labyrinth.

Although Chastain believed that the society was never going to come back, he waited months to begin the reformation process. Assembling the society's second incarnation proved to be more troublesome than Chastain expected, taking two years to complete. Worse yet, Chastain's hard work bore little fruit – the second society was murdered en masse within the year, ambushed by Sebastian de Villiers and his mirror men during an expedition to Chambira.

Chastain is aware of this incarnation's fate, having discovered their bodies while walking the annex, but is unaware of the murderer's identity. More so, this means he is oblivious to the fact that the imprisoned Grigori are moving against the society.

chapter eight

gamemastering

T he Gamemaster has two responsibilities: storyteller and referee. Each is equally important.

STORYTELLER

The Gamemaster authors the story in which the PCs participate. However, role-playing is an interactive narrative jointly crafted by the players and the GM, so the story is more of a rough outline than a detailed plot. While the GM creates the initial plot hook that draws the characters into the action, it is the players who determine the outcome of events and forge the plot through their characters' decisions. Since players will often react to a situation in an unanticipated fashion, or approach a problem in a way that never occurred to the GM, Gamemasters must be able to think quickly on their feet, adapting to the changing narrative.

As storyteller, the Gamemaster is responsible for describing all environmental nuances to the players; time of day, weather conditions, where an event takes place, the location's appearance, etc. are not decided upon by the PCs. The GM should describe the scene

NPCS IN THE SOCIETY

The society's membership is always seven, no more and no less. Since it is unlikely that there will be seven players, the Gamemaster will need to create NPCs to fill out the ranks. When doing so, the GM should engineer NPCs with skills and abilities that complement those of the player characters, not overshadow them. The player characters, not the NPCs, are the protagonists of *Aletheia*. As such, the PCs should always be center stage.

in a manner that best evokes mood, while allowing the characters to act and react within the context of that setting. At the outset, the Gamemaster *does not* need to know every detail of the setting – the GM must simply understand the setting's basic structure. Over the course of play, the details will fill themselves in through character interaction and necessity.

The Gamemaster also bears the responsibility of creating and controlling all the NPCs with which the player characters interact. The GM defines their motivations and goals, what they say, what they do, and how they feel. For maximum effect, the Gamemaster should present NPCs as real people with private agendas and understandable needs.

REFEREE

Players may have questions, or argue over how a rule works, or debate whether a certain action is possible. To facilitate play, it is the GM's job to interpret the rules of the game in a fair and impartial manner. Thus, the Gamemaster should be familiar with the rules beforehand so that in the event of a conflict, an informed decision can be made. The GM's ruling is final in all matters.

BREAKDOWN

The remainder of this chapter tackles gamemastering *Aletheia* in greater detail. This includes:

- The basics of story construction
- Guidelines for creating investigations and conducting interviews
- Using the annex
- Researching and interpreting the *Usher Codex*
- Investigating the fate of the society's previous incarnations

INCORPORATING NEW PLAYERS

Over time, new players may enter the fold. Since the society must always number seven, this can be a tricky situation for the Gamemaster. There are two ways to handle this. The first approach is to have one of the NPCs of the society die or otherwise retire, with the new recruit waiting in the wings. To hasten the transition, the GM should assume that Chastain had a contingency plan in place should tragedy befall any of the current seven. In other words, the new recruit has already been interviewed and screened, and is able and willing to immediately join the society.

The second way to handle a new player, especially one who is only planning to participate for a few sessions, is to have his or her character be one of the society's existing contacts, associates, or allies. In this situation, the Gamemaster need not remove an existing NPC from the society, and lose a dynamic character, to make room for a player who will not be around in a month's time. This is a great way for players who might be new to the gaming group, or the concept of *Aletheia*, to decide if they want to commit to a regular game. It also gives a great role-playing boost to a storyline, as the tangential player character can have all manner of plot hooks, motivations, or even spectacular powers – for there are, of course, more Nephilim in the world than merely the seven.

- Advanced powers for characters
- Character advancement and replenishing *Will*

INVESTIGATIONS

Investigations form the core of most campaigns in *Aletheia*. As members of the Seven Dogs society, the characters travel all over the world to discover, investigate, and research all sorts of anomalous phenomena; their search, to piece together a greater understanding of the truth, is continual and far-reaching. Throughout the campaign the characters may start filling in the details of the backstory, however their greater epiphanies will typically arrive during episodes of investigative work.

An investigation is the fundamental building block of the myriad stories in *Aletheia*. In many cases, the Gamemaster can ignore much of the complicated backstory and metaplot to focus on a single episode, the exploration of a specific unusual or paranormal event. In this way, the Gamemaster can easily and quickly design a single investigation to occupy the players… without having to read too far into the "Big Picture" or trying to visualize warped five-dimensional pieces of paper. By focusing on the investigation, both the characters and the Gamemaster can ease into the world of *Aletheia; after all,* any one investigation will not reveal all the deeper mysteries of the universe. Only through the little epiphanies, promulgated by a series of investigations, will those truths be found.

ANATOMY OF AN INVESTIGATION

This section will discuss the various aspects that should be explored and decided upon while creating an investigation. Though this might seem like a cookbook recipe for creating an investigation, and in many ways it is, the Gamemaster is free to modify

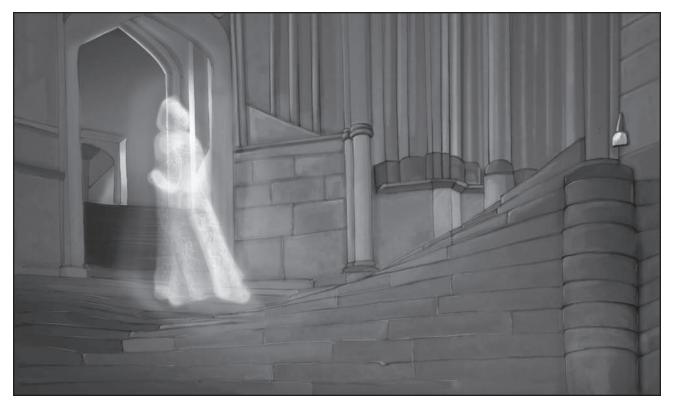the procedure to suit the campaign and the style of the players.

STEP 1: NATURE OF THE PHENOMENON

The first decision that usually needs to be made is to choose what sort of phenomena the characters will be investigating. **Chapter 6** describes a wide variety of different types of anomalous phenomena and can be used to jump-start ideas, as can any of a variety of Internet sites, movies, and television series. In addition, the Gamemaster should decide if this paranormal event is legitimate, or a hoax. The GM is free to include falsified events to keep players skeptical. Even for events of which there can be a legitimate echo of higher dimensional activity, such as reported sightings of a ghost, many of these encounters either have very normal explanations or are deliberately falsified. However, since legitimate encounters help to give the characters another clue to the true nature of the universe, investigations should be weighted towards legitimate encounters. A string

of hoaxes may serve to frustrate players who are searching for the truth. If the encounter is legitimate, then some thought should be given towards what the real nature of the phenomena is, and how this helps decipher the overall goal of the society. Some ideas for extra-dimensional explanations of various phenomena are given on pages 103-107.

> *As an example, Elisabeth is preparing a game for her players. She has always had a personal interest in ghost stories, and since her game is happening in late October, she decides to have the characters investigate a haunting. Thinking more about it, she decides that this haunting is a clue left by the ultraterrestrials. She opts to incorporate Electronic Voice Phenomena (EVP), deciding that it is the recorded whispers of the trapped Watchers, the Grigori.*

STEP 2: DEVELOP THE STORY

Knowing the type of phenomenon to be investigated,

the next step is to develop the history surrounding the event. This should include a brief setting description, details of the important characters, and a description of the actual incident. Were there eyewitnesses? If not, how was the event discovered? Is this paranormal activity recurring? Who was affected? In addition, the Gamemaster should decide how this information could be disseminated to the characters. Is it common knowledge? Or do only specific people know about the incident? Can the details be found by looking through old newspaper articles, historical archives, city records, or the Internet? These types of questions should be answered with a developed backstory.

Reading through the description of Sebastian de Villiers, Elisabeth decides to set the haunting in a derelict cathedral in the east of France. This cathedral once supported an orphanage, school, and hospital and was known as Notre Dame de la Secour Immuable. The last twenty years have seen hard times for the church; the congregation has largely abandoned the building and the cathedral is poorly maintained by an elderly priest, two nuns, and an aging groundskeeper. Over the last few months, a wing on the upper floor has been the site of some strange occurrences. The nuns have reported hearing muffled conversations in that wing, even though few people even enter the cathedral any more. These events have become more and more frequent, culminating in the appearance of an apparition floating through the halls of the wing. After the specter was seen, the wing was closed off and locked. Both the nuns and the groundskeeper have heard the voices. The priest, Father Marcellus, who is too old to venture up to the third floor, has never seen any unusual phenomena and is skeptical but willing to bring in investigators to assuage the others. The older nun, Ilse, was the individual who saw the apparition and promptly closed off the wing. Records exist in old newspaper clippings as to the history of the church and the reportedly haunted wing; more recent history can be gleaned from Marcellus, who has served this church for over fifty years. However, since there is no previous history of paranormal phenomena, few records of the cathedral exist on the Internet.

STEP THREE: SETTING THE SCENES

An investigation is a series of different scenes, each of which can produce a variety of clues to the truth of an event and can take a number of different forms. These scenes fall into three broad categories: on-site fieldwork, personal interviews, and independent research. On-site fieldwork deals with an actual physical investigation of the event's originating location, or sites related to the mystery at hand. This work tends to focus on the character's *Awareness*, and highlight skills such as forensics and observation. Personal interviews are scenes where characters question those individuals involved with the event. In many cases, these are eyewitnesses, but can also include other people who might be interested or involved in the event. These scenes tend to focus on the character's *Personality* and highlight skills such as interviewing, observation and perhaps surveillance. Scenes devoted to research involve independent investigation into historical lore, Internet websites, and data analysis. This can include the analysis of surveillance data gathered at a significant site, or the many hours spent poring over library records or relevant web sites. Research tends to focus on a character's *Reason*, and highlight skills such as surveillance, research, computer, and both the biological and physical sciences. Although a short investigation might only have one scene, most will include a number of different potential scenes. As a guideline, try to include at least one of each type of scene to ensure that no matter whether a character focuses in *Awareness, Personality,* or *Reason*, every PC can find a scene where they may excel. At this stage, it is important to know the potential scenes, but

not necessarily how those events link together. The next stage, developing the clues, will deal with the linkages between scenes.

> *Elisabeth has a few ideas of potential scenes. Most obvious is an on site investigation of the third floor wing. There could also be a couple of interviews with the staff - most likely the nun who saw the apparition, who serves as an eyewitness to the manifestation, and the priest, who can divulge some of the history of the cathedral. She finds it a little more difficult to come up with compelling research opportunities, but feels that likely some information regarding the post war period where the church served as a hospital and orphanage could be found in local records. Elisabeth likes the idea of having an intriguing newspaper article be found somehow, but isn't quite sure how to fit that in. She waits to see if a clever idea comes to her.*

STEP 4: MAPPING THE INVESTIGATION

This step encompasses most of the work entailed in setting up a good investigation. Now that ideas for scenes have been developed, and a broad overview of what sort of truth (or lack thereof) the investigation should reveal, linkages have to be drawn between the scenes. In this way, the set of scenes, and the links between them, serve as a map to guide the characters from the beginning of the investigation to a potential new insight into the true nature of reality.

If the scenes are defined as vehicles for gathering information, and the relevant abilities are simply what is needed to negotiate each scene, then the links between the scenes are the clues themselves. The mechanical process for pursuing an investigation is given on page 50, and each scene tends to net the investigators between two to five clues. At least one of these clues can propel the investigation to a new scene; this is called the primary path of the

investigation and the clue that leads there is called the *vital clue*. Since any successful investigation roll reveals at least the *vital clue*, the trail of *vital clues* gives the most probable path for the investigation to take.

The other clues can lead to secondary scenes to investigate, could reveal minor facets of the backstory, or lend more detail to previously learned information. They could also be red herrings, placed there to challenge the characters in their search for the truth. The other clues are there to add complexity to the plot and to give the players more information with which to base their perceptions of the metaphysics underlying the game, but they aren't required for the continuation of the story.

The first stage of this process is to determine which are the major scenes in the investigation and to chart the primary path. This can be done mentally for a small number of scenes, but more complicated investigations will benefit from sketching a diagram to map the interrelation between scenes. The scenes along the primary path should be considered major scenes, but other scenes off this route could be given prominence as well. These primary scenes should be the most developed, however, and should have a larger number of clues. The remaining scenes are minor scenes, should only have two or three clues, and less time needs to be spent developing these areas since they may not actually be used in the investigation. Finally, consideration should be given to other areas the investigation could lead into. Players are rather resourceful, and tend to take stories in a direction unplanned by the Gamemaster. Though it's a fruitless endeavor to attempt to plan out all possible avenues the characters might take, some ideas of stray branches can help the Gamemaster prepare for the unexpected.

> *The primary path of the mystery was taking shape; two potential entrances to the investigation seemed likely to Elisabeth. Either the characters would*

first interview the eyewitness, or they would do a physical inspection of the third floor wing. The interview with the nun would mainly be focused around the apparition, initially omitting reference to the ghostly conversations. In the investigation of the wing, several items would be found which highlight that the construction was at one time used as both a hospital and an orphanage. This should prompt an interview with Father Marcellus. Through the ensuing discussion, he will detail the history of the Cathedral, including the struggle with disease among the children. Independent research would be an obvious next step, as the characters organize adoption and autopsy records, and certificates of death issued by the local province.

A number of secondary investigations also seem to be probable. Research into hauntings would reveal not only that the cathedral has had no incidents of ghostly events prior to two months ago, but will also explain that spectral phenomena often is accompanied by changes in atmospheric temperature, the presence of spurious electromagnetic fields, and the occurrence of Electronic Voice Phenomena (EVP). This would precipitate another investigation into the wing – armed with field meters, thermographic imaging equipment, and tape recorders. While no spurious fields or abnormal temperatures would be noted in this secondary visit, snippets of a conversation would be heard on the tape recorder. These captured voices will be the voices of the Grigori speaking to the few who can listen.

A number of clues come out of the records. Disease killed a significant percentage of orphans in the fifties and sixties, any of who might be potentially haunting the place. A newspaper article describes renovations done on the cathedral in the late sixties, completed as charity work by an engineer by the name of Jean-Francois de Villiers. Characters

with Presque Vu will feel there is significance to this news article. These facts would lead to a second interview with Father Marcellus about the deaths, life at the cathedral, and the charity work of de Villiers. The players will learn that the engineer had adopted a child from the third wing in 1963.

To add to the tension, Elisabeth decides to have another scene play itself out after the retrieval of the newspaper article. Sebastian de Villiers (described on page 112-116) has learned of Nephilim investigating the old cathedral and has sent two of his Mirror Men to deal with them. She hopes the scene might come during the secondary investigation of the wing, to give a spooky fight as trained assassins interrupt the ghost hunting with gunfire.

Ideally, the end of the investigation should give the characters either a partial recording of the whispers of the Grigori, or more information about a major villain in the story… perhaps both.

To summarize, Elisabeth has the following scenes (vital clues in bold):

- *Interview with Ilse: Minor Scene (**Description of Haunting in Third Floor Wing**, Marie, the other nun, had similar though lesser experiences)*

- *Primary Investigation of Third Floor Wing: Major Scene (**A storage closet with medical paraphernalia,** an abandoned teddy bear, a room with beds and a number of simple cribs, an old journal written in German)*

- *Interview with Father Marcellus: Major Scene (**Church served as hospital and orphanage after the war**, large*

numbers of refugees came through during the forties and fifties, disease was a major issue, renovations were done in the sixties)

- *Public Records: Minor Scene (**Disease killed hundreds at the church**, Renovations done by de Villiers)*

- *Internet: Minor Scene (**Hauntings often have other phenomena present including thermal changes and EVP**, No history of paranormal activity at the church)*

- *Secondary Investigation of the Site: (**EVP of Grigori**)*

STEP 5: DETERMINE THE RESOLUTION

The final stage of planning an investigation is to decide possible ways for the investigation to end, and to determine success criteria. Generally, the investigation is a success if the characters come away with enough information to help them further decipher the mysteries of the world of *Aletheia*. For some investigations, such as hoaxes, there is no obvious chance for this type of success… but the scene can still helps reinforce the need for skepticism and diligence in the pursuit of truth. Of course, this is the reason that too many hoaxes can be unfulfilling to the players. The Gamemaster should closely control the balance between hoaxes, successful investigations that decipher the truth, and unsuccessful investigations and missed epiphanies. Finally, the Gamemaster should take note of potential lead-ins to further investigations, or changing relationships with recurring NPCs.

> *Success in this investigation is measured by attaining one of two key pieces of information,*

the words of the Grigori on tape, or clues to the origin of Sebastian de Villiers. Getting both pieces of information might be possible as well.

THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA

Now that the main bulk of the investigation has been mapped out, special consideration should be given to both the beginning and the end of the episode. Since the exact path along the map is rather freeform throughout the body of the investigation, it can be difficult to control the direction and the pacing during the bulk of the episode. This isn't so in the beginning, however, and a Gamemaster can typically decide many of the details regarding the players' entry into the investigation. Similarly, though the path they take to get there might be variable, the Gamemaster should have an idea of what is needed to succeed and the scene or scenes involved to achieve that success. Therefore, some time should be spent to more carefully sketch out what occurs to both lead into and to resolve an investigation.

ENTRY POINT

The Gamemaster should determine how to initially involve the characters into the investigation. How do they learn about the paranormal occurrence? Did they hear about the event through typical means, like a newspaper article or the Internet, or through more mystical channels, such as through communion with ultraterrestrials or by searching through the pages of the *Usher Codex*? Perhaps they were alerted to the event by a recurring NPC? Maybe this just happened to be a case of being in the right place at the right time.

Part of designing the entry point is determining what resources the players need to prepare for the next investigation. Especially if they will likely do

some initial legwork into researching the event, the Gamemaster should organize some information for the characters to acquire. This should include a brief history and description of the location, and any obvious recurring nature to the phenomena. This assumes, of course, that the characters would have access to any information that would immediately appear on a quick Internet search of the location or obvious key words.

This is also an excellent time to incorporate any friends, contacts, or allies the characters have made in previous investigations. Drawing upon prior stories helps to add a sense of verisimilitude to the investigation, and reinforces that the characters are part of a living, continuous world. Some investigations, especially those not involved with current events but instead with past archaeological phenomena, might be revealed to the characters by looking over past work, either done by previous incarnations of the society or detailed in the recovered pages of the *Usher Codex*.

CLIMAX AND RESOLUTION

There should be a point in the investigation where the distinction between success and failure is at stake. Ideally, this would be during a moment of tension, where the characters feel that much is in jeopardy. Often, this is a good time to introduce some adversary to potentially compromise the investigation. Though this opponent could take the form of physical opposition that the characters must combat, it need not be something so overt. An approaching storm could force a time pressure and increased difficulty in finding the necessary clues. A character might be torn by a conflict of interests between uncovering the mystery or taking care of an injured friend. Even if it is a person interfering with the characters, the individual might not be a combatant, but just be a nosy reporter or a belligerent law enforcement officer. However, to keep the tension high, some sort of opposition should be introduced to make success not feel automatic.

Scenes that involve combat also have the advantage in highlighting the *Fitness Attribute*, which isn't necessarily used in the other parts of the investigation. This helps to offer a way for certain characters to shine, where they may not have done so during the investigation. Especially if there are characters who have devoted a good part of their ability to physical impressiveness and combat skills, the Gamemaster should write into the story some scenes where these character can show them off. This helps to ensure that all the characters have some time in the spotlight and increases the players' enjoyment of the game.

The period after the climax is the resolution. In *Aletheia*, once the clues have been arranged, the players form a hypothesis (see page 55) as to what really occurred. This is a period of reflection, and the resolution of the investigation should, if successful, leave the players with something to think about. Finally, while the session is fresh in the mind of the Gamemaster, notes should be taken about how to tie this session into the greater tapestry of stories in *Aletheia*.

TELLING STORIES IN ALETHEIA

A story in the context of this game is a construct meant to entertain, explain, and give meaning to the characters' place in the world of *Aletheia*. A story typically lasts between one to three game sessions, or episodes, with the majority of investigations lasting a single episode. At its most basic, the Gamemaster should identify in the story the overall mood, basic themes to explore, and the general plot used to explore those themes. More complicated stories often incorporate subplots that highlight character involvement in the setting and use metaphors to allude to the deeper mysteries of the world.

CRAFTING STORIES

The first step in constructing a story is to determine the mood, theme, and plot of that story. These really can be done in any order, and developing details of one often helps to solidify the others. The theme(s) of the story are broad topics that the Gamemaster wants covered during the story. Stories can have more than one theme, but typically have a main theme with perhaps a couple of secondary ones. These themes should be brief, one sentence topics which the story can successfully address. For instance, the sample investigation described, starting on page 125, could have themes of "the mysteries beyond death" or "the horrors of post-war Europe" or even "the decay of Catholic influence." Themes help to define where the focus of the story will be. They lead the narrative into specific directions and determine which scenes are emphasized and which are glossed over. Understandably, a story that uses as its main theme, "the horrors of post-war Europe" will seem very different than one whose theme is "the mysteries beyond death."

Mood, on the other hand, is typically a one-word description that describes the overall feeling of the story. Words like dark, tense, optimistic, curious, and light-hearted all make very appropriate moods that a Gamemaster can work with. The mood helps to paint the scenes that form the basic building blocks of the story, and is a lens through which the entire story is viewed. As an example, here is a description of the same scene, filtered through two different moods:

> Street lights flicker and then darken, as you make your way through the litter strewn paths of the downtown park. A man and woman sidestep the leg of a homeless man snoring underneath a sheet of cardboard lying on the ground. The two hurriedly move past you, his hand pressing the small of her back, guiding her along. You, too, continue past the splayed form of the bum

> and press deeper into the shadows of the trees that swallow the path. A loud retort, perhaps a gunshot, snaps you out of your thoughts as you look around. The man who passed you before, this time without his lady friend, is moving hurriedly back up the path, clearly shaken.

> The fresh evening air is cool on your face as you make your way through the wandering trails of the downtown park. A couple makes their way past you, holding one another tight in the crisp autumn evening. Resting along the thick trunk of an elm, you watch the couple make their way to the street where a car is parked. Feeling quite the voyeur, you watch the young couple kiss, before the lady climbs into the car and starts it up. With a loud backfire, the car pulls away to get lost in the city streets. The noise wakes a homeless man, who snorts and coughs a couple of times before rolling back into the soft grass beneath a tree. When the taillights cannot be seen anymore, the man turns away and hurriedly makes his way back up the path.

Although the same scene, with many of the same setting elements, changing the mood can dramatically alter what information is registered in a scene, and can affect how the characters interpret what is going on.

Plot, on the other hand, is the basic outline of the story, the causal links that relate the different scenes and elements to create a cohesive whole. **Step 4,** in the creation of an investigation, is the development of a solid plot. If the mood describes how the characters will see the story, and the themes describe what aspects will be emphasized, then plot describes how to take the characters from prologue to epilogue. As was explained in the section regarding the development of the investigation, the plot isn't necessarily linear and will often require creating a map of scenes and their potential interconnections. Since the characters

of the story and the designer of the story are different people, it's often difficult to create a plot in the literary sense. Players often take a story in very different directions than what was originally planned. Thus, it is best to have a freeform plan of the scenes, that highlight the themes of the story, and let the players find their own way through.

If the plot is like a stream that surges quickly in some places, and slowly meanders to and fro in others, subplots are trickling branches that flow away to see new vistas and explore different terrain. A subplot is a smattering of scenes that tackles issues that aren't directly related to the main plot. Introducing subplots can add complexity to a story, but can also add a richness and depth, and help lead to further stories. Ideally, subplots can be designed to explore themes other than the main one, while still tying into the greater framework of the story. In addition, subplots can deal with details of specific characters, NPCs, or organizations the society interacts with; these minor plots can even wrap up some event that happened in a previous story or with past incarnations of the society. If the plot gives direction to a story, the subplots give the story depth and anchor it to the setting in which it is told.

TYPES OF STORIES

How to develop an investigation has already been discussed in a previous section. Along with investigations into paranormal phenomena, *Aletheia* allows for a number of different types of stories to be told. These ideas serve as possible settings and themes, but as with any story told in *Aletheia*, ideas should be developed as to how the stories reveal clues to a greater understanding of the nature of reality.

INVESTIGATING THE ANNEX

The annex is an intriguing mystery for the characters

to solve. The nine locations, which are connected via the annex, were carefully chosen to help give proof to humanity of the deeper aspects of reality. Some of these places have been locations of higher dimensional events, while others have contained information about the true nature of universe. Understanding the nature of these locations, and why Usher chose them, will help the characters learn more about the insights Usher had in his final years. The mystery of these locals can either be used as the focal point to a story, or serve as excellent backdrops and side plots for stories developing other themes.

INVESTIGATING OUT-OF-PLACE ARTIFACTS

Out-of-place artifacts are anachronisms, objects that have no physical means of being in a particular place and time. Usually these things are temporally inconsistent, either being objects from the future, or objects from the past that don't appear to have aged. Of this latter case, this can include objects that appear to be relics from a previous time, but don't date (through carbon dating or like methods) to the time they appear to originate from. Usually, in stories involving such items, the relics themselves come from times long past, and the challenge for the characters is to find proof that movement through time is the only plausible explanation. This is complicated by the fact that many items could be seen as replicas, and not original artifacts. Proof can sometimes be found by putting a number of pieces together, only to find an impossible whole (such as the ink of a book dating to the 12th century CE, while the book itself only appears 50 years old). Futuristic items can also be investigated. This includes the *Usher Codex* and the genealogies created by Usher.

RESEARCHING THE USHER CODEX

This manuscript is a compilation of the secrets learned by Usher before his departure, and he hoped it would serve to guide humanity's ascension. However, only

THE ANTIKYTHERA MECHANISM

The Antikythera mechanism is an ancient analog computer used for calculating astronomical positions. Discovered off the Greek island of Antikythera in 1902, this out-of-place artifact has been dated to approximately 100 BCE. The mechanism consists of three main dials and thirty plus gears, which display a level of miniaturization and complexity comparable to 18th century clocks. The intended purpose for these calculations remains speculative.

THE TECAXIC-CALIXTLAHUACA HEAD

In 1933, archaeologists working outside of Toluca Valley, Mexico made an extraordinary find. While excavating pre-Columbian graves, they discovered a bearded terracotta head that bore European features rather than Amerindian ones. Believed to be of Roman design, the existence of this sculpture hints at transoceanic contact centuries before the Americas were even discovered.

five pages remain. The rest have been lost since the fire that struck the library at *Hepta Sophistai*. Stories involving the codex could include analysis and research into the meaning of the intact pages. Powers such as *Presque vu* could be of help in guiding this process. The characters might also learn about the existence of other intact pages, and the resulting stories could involve travel around the world. Since the vellum of the pages dates to the 15th century, anyone owning a part of the codex would likely consider the manuscript a relic of the medieval period, and correspondingly very valuable. Recovering the page might be complicated by negotiations with the current owner, as well as other parties who might have an interest in the document.

Five sample pages from the *Usher Codex* have been included in this book. They can be copied and handed out to players as props. The data on each page can guide the characters to all sorts of adventures and investigations and give players and gamemasters a feel for the cryptic style of Usher's work. This is particularly useful to gamemasters who plan to introduce some newly discovered manuscript into their game, as the following can provide a template for GMs to work from when constructing their own pages.

The following text explains the various references on each of the five manuscript pages:

Page 1

- The figure occupying the left half of the page is one of the seven colossi (see page 102).
- The image in the upper right hand corner is a representation of the Labyrinth, the path to the Creator (see page 101-102). It is actually two symbols in one: the sun (representing enlightenment) and the spiral (representing the literal descent of the colossi into the whirlpool).
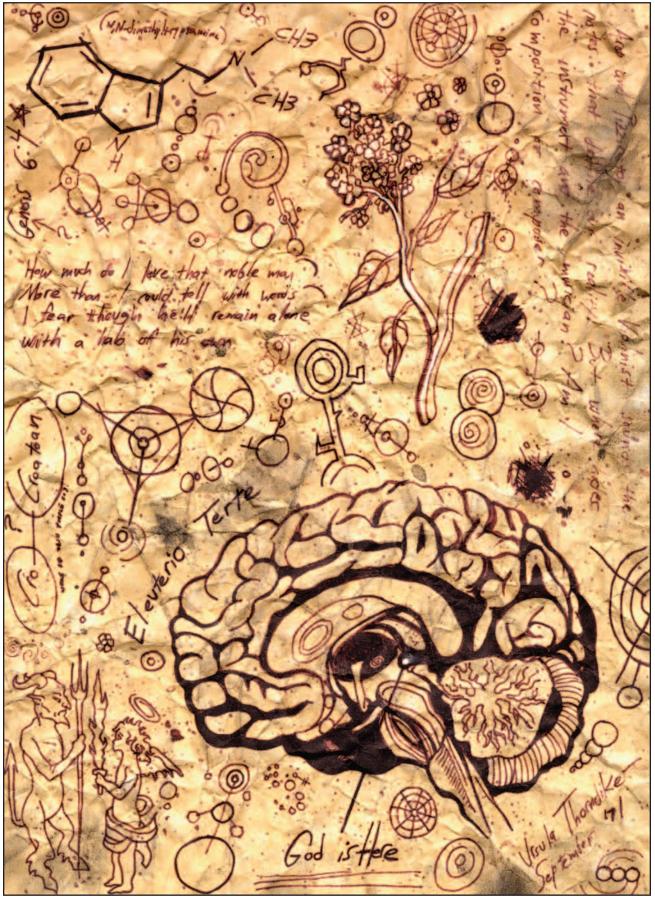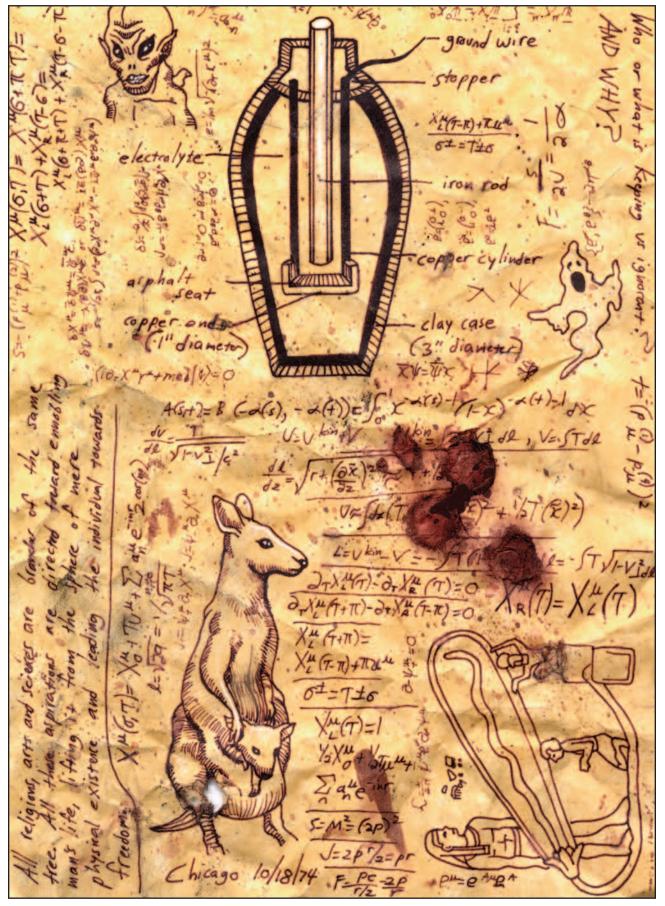- The seven Mayan figures represent the idea that seven Nephilim minds are required to

Un résident de la caverne (un
prisonnier, comm

(elle étaient) probablement
a vouloir faire la montée est-il
extrême ? Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?
le soleil symbolise-t-il dans
l'allégorie ? Et maintenant, je
n'a dit, laisse pour
monter dans une figure
qu'elle distance notre nature
éclairée ou (non éclairée
behold ! êtres humains
vivant dans un
repaire souterrain, qui
voudra ouverte vers
et atteindre toute le
repaire ; les voici de leur
enfance, et fort enchaîner leurs
jambes et sorte qu'ils
ne puissent pas se de et peuvent seulement
voir avant eux, étant à la chaîne de la
rotation autour de leur derrière
d'eux un feu flambe à distance, et entre le
feu et les prisonniers une manière
augmentée ; et vous pouvez regarder,
un bas mur construit le long de la
manière, comme l'écran que les
marionnette ont
eux, et devan desquels
monter le marionnettes.
vois. Et voyez-vous est-ce
que, j'ai des hommes
le long du
partout toutes
de
navires, et
figures des animaux
statues
et faits de
bois et matériaux en pierre et divers, qui apparaissent

ground wire

stopper

iron rod

copper cylinder

clay case
(3" diameter)

electrolyte

asphalt seat

copper rod
(.1" diameter)

Who or what is keeping us ignorant,
AND WHY?

All religious, arts and science are blander of the same tree. All these aspiration are directed toward ennobling man's life, lifting it from the sphere of mere physical existence and leading the individual towards freedom.

Chicago 10/18/74

$$\frac{dv}{dt} = \frac{T}{\sqrt{1-v^2/c^2}}$$

$$\sigma^{\pm} = T \pm \sigma$$

$$X_L^{\mu}(T) = 1$$

$$S = M^2 = (2p)^2$$

$$J = 2p \cdot r/2 = pr$$

$$F = \frac{pc}{r/2} = \frac{2p}{r}$$

guide a colossus. This also alludes to Lam's first attempt with seven Mayans (see page 147).

- Taken as a whole, the right column of the page shows the rise from base earth (represented by the pyramid in the bottom right corner, which is also a symbol of ascension) to the spiral/sun of the godhead.

Page 2

- This page illustrates mankind's spiritual growth from infancy (represented dually by the egg/infant) to the Otherverse (represented by the ultraterrestrial).

- The vine represents the ayahuasca vine (see page 98). Those climbing the vine represent man's ascension to the Otherverse with the aid of DMT.

- The surrounding text is a poorly translated French version of the opening words of Plato's *Allegory of the Cave* (see page 140). In the text, a group of prisoners have been chained in a cave since childhood, their limbs immobilized and their gaze permanently fixed to a wall in front of them. Behind them is a walkway. People traverse back and forth upon this walkway, carrying statues of plants, animals, and other things. Behind the walkway is a fire. Since the prisoners' eyes are fixed to the wall, and their bodies are immobile, they only see the shadows of the people and statues cast by the fire, not the objects themselves. Additionally, when the people on the walkway speak, their voices echo in the cave, appearing to come from elsewhere and not from behind the chained inhabitants. This is a metaphor intended to illustrate that man is a prisoner of limited perception, seeing only shadows and hearing only echoes of something much more substantial that is hidden from his view (the Otherverse).

Page 3

- In the upper left hand corner is an illustration of Lam, based on a drawing by Alistair Crowley.

- *John 20:26 – And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace be unto you."* In this passage, Jesus enters a room despite the doors being locked, a reference to the *Ghosting* ability. The image below the book and verse is a representation of Thomas inserting his fingers into Christ's wounds to verify his resurrection.

- *Acts 8: 39-40 – And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea*. In this passage, Philip is removed from the four-dimensional membrane into the Otherverse and deposited back to the membrane a great distance away.

- The mirror image of the man is a reference to *Orthogonal Revolution* (see page 158).

- This page contains the sketch of a tesseract, which is a four-dimensional representation of a cube – a reference to higher dimensions.

- Sketches of chrysanthemums litter the page – an allusion to the Glass Chrysanthemum (see pages 100-101.

- *Beyond the labyrinth, the sun forever rises* – this is a reference to enlightenment though union with the godhead, which lies beyond the Labyrinth.

- The nervous system is a means of communication with the Otherverse, it simply needs to be tuned to the right frequency through DMT.

THE ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE

Is a resident of the cave (a prisoner, as it were) likely to want to make the ascent to the outer world? Why would that person seek to escape… or, more pointedly, why not? What does the fire symbolize in our allegory? And now, as I have said I would, let me show in a figure how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened: Behold! Human beings living in an underground den, which has a mouth open towards the light and reaching all along the den; here they have been from their childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them, being prevented by the chains from turning round their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets.

I see.

And do you see, men passing along the wall carrying all sorts of vessels, and statues and figures of animals made of wood and stone and various materials, which appear over the wall? Some of them are talking, others silent.

You have shown me a strange image, and they are strange prisoners.

Like ourselves. And they see only their own shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave.

True, for how could they see anything but the shadows if they were never allowed to move their heads?

And of the objects, which are being carried in like manner, they would only see the shadows?

Yes, of course.

And if they desired to converse with one another, would they not suppose that they were naming what was actually before them?

Very true.

And suppose further that the prisons had an echo which came from the other side, would they not be sure to fancy when one of the passers-by spoke that the voice which they heard came from the passing shadow?

THE ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE
(CONTINUED)

No question.

To them, the truth would be literally nothing but shadows; and all logic would reinforce this truth.

That is certain.

And now look again, and see what will naturally follow if the prisoners are released and disabused of their error. At first, when any of them is liberated and compelled suddenly to stand up and turn, and walk, and look towards the light, the poor creature will suffer sharp pains; the glare will distress him, and he will be unable to see the realities of which in his former state he had seen in the shadows. Then, conceive someone saying to him, that what he saw before was an illusion, and that now, when he is approaching nearer to being and his eye is turned towards more real existence, he has a clearer vision. As his eyes water from the light and the colors swirl with a cacophony of brilliance, what will be his reply? And you may further imagine that his instructor is pointing to the objects as they pass and requiring him to name them – will he not be perplexed? Will he not fancy that the shadows, which he formerly saw, are truer than the objects which are now shown to him?

Far truer.

And if he is compelled to look straight at the light, will he not have a pain in his eyes which will make him turn away to take refuge in the objects of vision which he can see, and which he will conceive to be in reality clearer than the things which are now being shown to him?

Page 4

- The *God is Here* caption of the brain illustration points to the pineal gland, which produces DMT.
- The DMT molecule chain is in the upper left hand corner.
- Eleuterio Terte was the originator of the psychic surgery phenomenon (see page 83).
- The cartoon image of the angel and demon facing off references the idea that they are one and the same – human interpretations of the ultraterrestrials.

- *Ursula Thorndike – September 71* implies that the world-famous businesswoman is connected to the society's work. The date is the month and year of her birth. Her name can be found in Usher's genealogies (see pages 116-117 for more on Ursula Thorndike).
- *Cro* and *Croatan* were found carved into a fort post and a tree on Roanoke Island by those investigating the colony's disappearance (see pages 24-26).
- The ayahuasca flower from the vine of the

same name is depicted on the page.

- Various crop circle designs are scattered across the page.
- *Genesis 6: 4 – There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.* This is a reference to the Nephilim.
- The poetry near the upper left hand corner was written by Albert Einstein. The subject of the poem is Baruch Spinoza, a 15th century philosopher whose ideas greatly impacted Einstein's thinking and ultimately Jericho Usher's. Of note, the original poem's last line is actually: *With a holy halo of his own*. While Jericho shared Einstein's quest for truth and his belief that mastering physics would allow man to "know the mind of God," Jericho saw God as a symbolic representation of truth and omniscience rather than a religious icon. Thus, Jericho removed the *holy* from the poem to better reflect his personal beliefs.
- *Arco and Pizzicato, an invisible violinist sounds the notes that define our reality. But where hides the instrument and the musician? Am I composition or composer?* This is a poetic allusion to string theory.

Page 5

- The sketch in the lower right hand corner is a recreation of the Dendera light relief, found in an Egyptian temple. The relief, which dates back thousands of years, seems to depict a modern light bulb, making the relief an out-of-place artifact (see page 132).
- The sketch in the upper middle of the page is a diagram of the Baghdad battery, an out-of-place artifact dating to the first or second century AD.
- *All religions, arts and sciences are branches of the same tree. All these aspirations are directed toward ennobling man's life, lifting it from the sphere of mere physical existence and leading the individual towards freedom.* This is a quote from Albert Einstein that Usher was fond of. It eloquently summarizes Jericho's belief that all religions, arts, and sciences are actually quests for truth, and that the higher truth will be the only thing that can grant humanity true freedom.
- *Who or what is keeping us ignorant? And why?* This is a rhetorical question.
- The image of the ghost is both a reference to the haunting phenomenon and the *Ghosting* ability.
- The creature in the upper left hand corner is a depiction of an ultraterrestrial.
- The kangaroo image and its caption are a reference to a kangaroo sighting in Chicago's northwest side on October 18th, 1974. After being confronted by two police officers, the animal departed the scene. Over the next few weeks, multiple kangaroo sightings were made in the surrounding area. The kangaroo or kangaroos were never captured and their presence was never explained. This is a case of anomalous phenomenon, most likely *Teleportation*.
- The mathematical equations scrawled on the pages are string theory related.

It is up to the Gamemaster to set *target numbers* for identifying the references on the manuscript pages. For example, the quotes by Einstein would have a TN of 1, while other more cryptic references would have higher *target numbers*.

INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

There are a number of organizations out there studying paranormal phenomena. It is only a matter

of time before the society comes to interact with them. The nature of those relationships is determined by how the society deals with those they meet, which can be the focus of a story. There will be a tendency for these relationships to be slightly competitive and antagonistic as each organization wants to be the first to find the truth. In addition, these groups will have to deal with the very human tendency of believing that their interpretation is closer to the truth than others. However, these organizations often hold useful information, which the society could potentially tap to help them along their search.

THE SECOND SOCIETY'S MURDER

This event should be the hanging sword that underlies most actions done by the society, and preoccupies much of the mind of Terrance Chastain. The fact that there is a murderer (or murderers) out there who knows of the existence of the society, knows of the nature of the annex, and is willing to kill people whose

only connection is membership in the society, should concern the characters as they travel to different sites exploring various phenomena. Likely, finding the murderer(s) will be prominent on their list of things to do as soon as the characters get any leads. Clues, regarding the fate of the second incarnation, should eventually lead them to involvement with de Villiers – and successfully solving the murder case might quickly lead to confrontation.

INTERACTIONS WITH SEBASTIAN DE VILLIERS

Sebastian de Villiers is the right hand of the imprisoned Grigori. These fallen angels speak directly to Sebastian, posing as the word and the voice of God. He has learned some of the story of the scattering of the Nephilim, and works to put an end to the bloodlines that have descended from them. Sebastian serves as a good physical threat to the society, especially with the brutal end of the second incarnation by de Villiers and his mirror men.

However, Sebastian doesn't necessarily need to go after the characters to be a menace. Dealing with Sebastian could also be a theme of stories involving interactions with other paranormal societies or, even more powerfully, investigation into some of the entries in the genealogical record.

If harnessed, Sebastian is also a good (if dangerous) trove of information to the society. Sebastian views, correctly, that the society is descended from the Nephilim and has the blood of fallen angels (ultraterrestrials) running through them. He understands about the presence of another dimension which is the province of God and his heavenly host. This information can help put into context many of the mysteries embedded in the genealogies and the *Usher Codex*. Extracting that information from Sebastian, however, might be a challenge worth several stories itself.

RESEARCHING THE GENEALOGIES

The genealogies trace the flow of lineage of those born from the Nephilim. Though by no means historically complete – the farthest back the genealogies go is to Hellenistic Greece and most lines can only trace as far back as the Renaissance – they still serve as a catalog of those people who are born of the Nephilim, and thus are only loosely tied to four-dimensional reality. The genealogies are also an anachronistic tool, as entries include children who have yet to be born. Exploring the histories, and the stories, of those on the genealogies will show that the people recorded share many similarities, including a feeling of difference, a predilection to psychic ability, and an affinity for paranormal phenomena. Stories would likely include meeting some of the listed individuals; these encounters can help to set up potential recurring characters, either allies or enemies depending on how the interaction proceeds. They also serve as fertile ground for replacement characters if unforeseen things happen to society members.

DEALING WITH THE PLOTS OF THE GRIGORI

Ultraterrestrials trapped because of their longing for the pleasures of a four-dimensional life, they seek nothing more than to be freed. They perceive that the key to their freedom is the purging of their misdeeds. By removing the Nephilim from reality, they hope that they will be welcomed back into the Creator's light and be once again free to move unimpeded throughout the Otherverse.

Although physically trapped and separated from the membrane where humanity lives, they can still, with effort, affect their previous home. The warps and convolutions of the membrane serve to create areas which channel and amplify the limited amount of energy broadcast from the Grigori. In addition, the presence of the Grigori is far more noticeable to those who have descended from their potent blood. These two facts allowed the Grigori to whisper messages to an orphan child born of the Nephilim, during the plague-ridden nights of Eastern France and again in a New Jersey hospital room. The Grigori can, and have, spoken with others as well.

In addition to Sebastian de Villiers, stories can be told dealing with other individuals or organizations guided by the Grigori. These will always be led by someone who is born of the Nephilim, as these people not only can more easily hear the call of the Grigori, but their feelings of distance and importance compared to the rest of humanity make it easier to turn to acts of violence and murder. The primary goal of these groups will often be the purging of people with strange and unusual abilities, but it could also include institutions that publicly decry and deride paranormal phenomena. Interactions with anything from witch-hunters, skeptics' societies, and religious leaders could involve the direct influence of the

imprisoned Grigori.

INTERACTIONS WITH THE ULTRATERRESTRIALS

The society has had a number of interactions with ultraterrestrials. The entity known as Lam, who helped to guide Usher's development and his subsequent creation of the genealogies and the *Usher Codex*, has taken the most interest in the development of humanity and has had the most interaction with the society. It was Lam who helped guide the first incarnation through the epiphanies necessary for them to recognize the multitude of dimensions largely unexplored by humanity, which led to their subsequent departure from the membrane.

The ultraterrestrials should, in most stories, play subtle roles. They see their purpose as to gently guide humanity in the correct direction. Searching for ways to contact them for wisdom and guidance is an ideal way of leading into explorations of the Otherverse. However, the ultraterrestrials interact on a different level than humanity, and much of their wisdom should be cloaked in allegory and metaphor. They should never rely on a straight answer when a cryptic one can be had.

EXPLORING THE OTHERVERSE

Stories involving the Otherverse tend to be complicated, dealing in the realm of vision quests

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THE ULTRATERRESTRIALS

It was through "conversations" with an ultraterrestrial called Lam that the process for Jericho's creation of the society began. His continued discourses with the ultraterrestrials led him to develop the genealogies, pen the *Usher Codex*, and construct the annex. Further interactions with the ultraterrestrials were had with the first incarnation of the society, which led to the seven's rapid progress. In reaction, the ultraterrestrials dispersed the pages of the *Usher Codex* to slow the society's progress.

The ultraterrestrials have been well involved with humanity's ascension since the inception of the society. They can serve as valuable sources of information and advice when the characters are in need. Whole investigations can be initiated through discourse with these entities. Interactions with these beings, however, will never be mundane. When they actually are seen in this reality, they can appear as discreet as an ephemeral ghost, or as glorious as an avenging angel, wreathed in flame and heralded by cacophonous noise. Regardless of their appearance, mortals are only seeing four-dimensional cross-sections of a higher dimensional being. In many cases of contact, the human brain fills in the gaps in the image to better make sense of what is being viewed. For this reason, an ultraterrestrial may appear as an angel to one person or an alien to another, or something entirely different, depending on the psyche of the onlooker.

As higher dimensional creatures not of this reality, ultraterrestrials shouldn't be given statistics. Terms like *Fitness* and *Reason* don't particularly apply to them. They can be considered to have any dimensional manipulation power listed, having full control over the myriad dimensions available to them. They can also use these abilities to draw the society to important locations. If they see need of the society, to search a specific location at a certain time, they can easily cause a paranormal event to draw the characters to investigate.

and dreamscapes. Humanity wasn't meant to travel the many dimensions of the Otherverse, and even when they do, they can't perceive the realm in all its majesty and glory. Trying to grasp the complexities of the Otherverse is like trying to understand mundane human interaction by studying their shadows on the wall of a cave. However, if the characters can successful negotiate the convolutions of their travels through the Otherverse, they might find the clues necessary to unlock the potential of humanity. These clues, however, will undoubtedly be mired deeply in metaphor and allegory.

It is unlikely that a full session, or several sessions, will be spent in the Otherverse. As described on page 100, ventures into the Otherverse tend to have limited durations, and only so much information can be gathered at a time before the characters suffer from sensory overload. However, a venture into the Otherverse can make for some gripping scenes in a story, and the clues obtained will likely be among the most lucrative in helping the society achieve its goal.

DISCOVERING THE FIRST SOCIETY'S FATE

Discovering the fate of the first incarnation should likely occur as a culmination of a long campaign or set of stories. By learning of the fate of this group, the characters will also learn about their destiny to lead humanity into ascension. The first society, after discovering the truth of the Otherverse and developing better ways to move through the bulk for longer periods of time, left humanity to walk with God. This process occurred so quickly, that this first society didn't have time to lead others on the path, instead being so intoxicated by the exploration that they continued on alone. The speed with which the first society came to that final threshold concerned Lam and the other ultraterrestrials, so now they carefully play a more subtle role in guiding the

LAM

Throughout human history, Lam ignited the divine spark in a number of members of the human race. In ancient times, he spoke to the oracles of Greece and the prophets of Israel. In the modern age, he communicated with Alistair Crowley and Jericho Usher. Some understood his message more than others, and only Jericho understood the totality.

Lam has long sought to guide humanity to the Creator. Prophets and oracles are one rung on this ladder of progression. The colossi (see pages 102-103) are another. Through them, the Nephilim can walk with the Creator, and in time, lead humanity to its destiny.

While the original society was the first to descend the spiral of the Labyrinth, they were not the first to try. Centuries ago, Lam guided seven Mayans to the colossi. Unfortunately, the human brain was not yet sufficiently evolved enough to handle the journey, and the seven were lost to madness.

Lam continues his work, albeit off stage. The current society members are the next rung on the ladder, and Lam will do his best to make sure they succeed.

development of later incarnations. The scattering of the *Usher Codex* was done in order to prolong the experience of alignment.

Stories, then, that entail the uncovering of the fate of the first incarnation might even have the ultraterrestrials acting as obstacles to further progress. The information gleaned from them will become more cryptic, and might direct the characters towards false leads. Stories where this occurs will often deal with themes of betrayal as the characters can no longer trust the advice of the higher beings. Alternatively, the ultraterrestrials might confide (in their enigmatic and convoluted way) the failure of the first incarnation in the hopes that this third incarnation will not be similarly blinded by the excitement of new experiences. These stories might use the history of the first incarnation as an object lesson for later incarnations, to keep them to the overall goal of the society… the ascension of humanity.

ALETHEIAN CAMPAIGNS

When multiple stories come together to form a cohesive whole, interwoven with different story arcs, subplots, and recurring characters, this new construct forms a campaign. To compare to television media, an episode (or more in the case of two or three part episodes) would correlate to a story. The entire season (or in some cases, the entire series) would be a campaign. Campaigns have a greater scope than an individual story, and this affords the Gamemaster extra time to prolong the revelation process among the characters. The Gamemaster can slowly unveil certain secrets, over many stories and many sessions, building a sense of accomplishment and progression in the players.

LAYERED REALITIES

Individual stories can have varied goals – perhaps

the investigation of a strange phenomena or the resolution of a conflict with another organization. Campaigns, however, tend have at least one major goal, the revelation of the secrets of reality. The campaign might have additional goals as well, but the underlying theme in *Aletheia* is one of deciphering

the mysteries of the world, and so most long-term campaigns will deal with these themes. To do so, the characters should slowly develop a clearer view of the nature of reality, piece by piece, by uncovering clues through individual stories. Each story should have the potential to reveal some fragment of information

USING PAST SOCIETIES

Gamemasters can craft interesting stories around the society's previous incarnations. This includes following up on their past investigations, looking into their fates, researching their personal backgrounds, and more.

Although the murder scene is Chambira has long grown cold and is unlikely to yield answers, the original society left a considerable trail in their wake. Many of its past investigations were recorded in journals, on word processors, in archived emails, on audio and video recordings, etc. (**Chapter 6: Anomalous Phenomena** is one example). This means that the player characters can literally follow the path the founders walked, at least in part. Unfortunately, the original members only recorded their observations, never their conclusions. This was done to minimize potential damage should their documentation ever fall into the wrong hands.

Inquisitive players may opt to research the identities and backgrounds of their predecessors. Since Chastain recruited the previous societies, there is much he can share about their personalities and pasts. While **Chapter 2: History** states that a priest, a transient, two new-agers, and a physicist were among the original society, the backgrounds of the other two members are left unstated, and only one of the founders, Judith Seales, is ever mentioned by name. Additionally, the identities and backgrounds of the society's second incarnation are never touched upon. All of this gives the Gamemaster ample room to be creative and insert his or her own ideas. Of course, there is nothing to keep the GM from changing the composition of the original society to better suit a story's needs. After all, none of the minor details that have already been given are vital; it was the original society's transcendent fate that is most significant.

Usher's genealogies are available for the player characters to inspect. In doing so, the PCs will recognize their own names and those of past members. If so desired, the Gamemaster can have the players identify the names of relatives, celebrities, and/or historical personages; however, the GM needs to be careful not to go overboard with this. It is also not impossible for a player character to be directly related to a previous member. This can provide extra motivation for that character to investigate the connection between all the society members, both past and present. Observant players will no doubt surmise that their powers are somehow tied to these genealogies, though they will not know how. With further investigation, the player characters can potentially stumble onto the truth of their ancestry. Since the genealogies extend to 2012, they also serve as proof that Jericho Usher was clearly possessed of the same otherworldly gifts as the society, or at least privy to information regarding the future.

which, when accumulated, will allow the characters to have a more accurate vision of the truth. The world of *Aletheia* can be broken into a set of seven epiphanies, the realization of which unveils the true splendor of the universe.

THE FIRST EPIPHANY

There exists another realm, distinct from normal reality. The first epiphany is the recognition of the existence of the Otherverse. The Otherverse is a dimension separated from reality, but which in unusual circumstances can be accessed. This is often the easiest truth to understand, since the characters already have to deal with their own unusual abilities, which tends to imply that there is more to reality than what is typically accepted. This epiphany is often revealed by exposure to unusual phenomena, especially that requiring travel or perception through higher dimensions. This epiphany can also occur through meditative or psychedelic experiences. Upon realization of this epiphany, characters begin to question how this different reality affects the everyday world around them.

THE SECOND EPIPHANY

All the mysteries of the world are interactions with this unseen reality. While the first epiphany typically comes readily to the characters, the second epiphany tends to be the first major threshold in an *Aletheian* campaign. This is the realization that all of the mysteries are, fundamentally, connected. Usually this process begins internally, with an examination of ones own abilities. Characters will also notice that their powers, especially ones like *Presque vu*, seem inherently connected with the phenomena they are investigating. Other phenomena, such as hauntings and disappearances, can be viewed from a perspective of interaction with the Otherverse. Even

introspective exercises, such as meditation or reading about popular physics, can trigger small epiphanies which lead to the realization that the powers of the characters, and the mysteries they solve, are tied into the separate reality beyond the world they have known. Realizing the truth of this raises the question as to why are only a few able to manipulate these anomalous phenomena.

THE THIRD EPIPHANY

Those individuals in the world who can access the Otherverse share a bond of blood and lineage. After the connection has been made between the personal abilities of the characters and the Otherverse, it will become clear that they were chosen into the society based on their powers. However, the choice was also made through the use of the genealogical records compiled by Jericho Usher. These genealogies clearly map lineages of people who have a propensity for mystical ability… but through the lens of the first two epiphanies, these individuals also share a connection with the Otherverse. At this stage, a campaign should increasingly tell stories related to investigation of the genealogical records, perhaps including interviews with people who show up in those tracts. These investigations will lead to the understanding that there is more than just a connection of ability between these disparate people. Those who can touch the Otherverse are bound by genetic ties as well. This will beg the question, then, is there a common ancestor? Where do the roots of the family tree lead?

THE FOURTH EPIPHANY

Those who can most freely access the Otherverse are those who trace their lineage to the Grigori, a race of creatures from the Otherverse sent to watch humanity. Although the genealogies show an intact record of people born within the last century who are of the race of

THE TANGLED WEAVE OF TIME

With characters who have the power to flit throughout time, and dealing with entities to which time is simply another direction of motion, how is the Gamemaster supposed to keep any sense of causality in a game? This is a common concern in science fiction and is handled any number of ways, to varying effect. The tactic put forth in this setting finds its basis, like many things, in some of the more esoteric principles of modern physics. Multidimensional time travel is facilitated in this case by calling on the "Many Worlds" interpretation (MWI) of quantum mechanics pioneered by Hugh Everett and Bryce deWitt.

One of the fundamental peculiarities of quantum mechanics is the inherent randomness of the objects described by it. Quantum mechanics can predict probabilities of states and interactions of large sets of particles, but cannot usually specify what a single particle might be doing. More importantly, these particles don't seem to exist in any specific state until someone wants to measure them. An electron exists as a cloud of potential until the right experiment comes along and finds it in any of a number of possible locations. However, the principles of quantum mechanics state that both before and after, the electron can be anywhere. No trajectory can be mapped of sequential points that an electron traveled in its path around an atom, regardless of how much the human mind wants there to be such a tangible and knowable route.

This leads to questions of the true nature of matter and the role of the observer (the person making the measurement) in all of this. Paradoxes, such as the infamous Schrodinger's Cat, deal with the ramifications of the typical interpretations of these phenomena. Contrary to conventional thoughts on the "true nature" of quantum mechanics, MWI suggests that for each event which has a possibility of more that one state, such as the life or death condition of Schrödinger's cat, two (or more) distinct histories form to represent the total outcome of all possible states. According to MWI, in one world the cat has perished, while in another the cat lives on to suffer the depredations of more physical thought experiments.

These histories are distinct, and according to MWI there is no mechanism for interaction between these histories. Each time a system, an atom, a cat, even a human, undergoes a potential state change, their history splits to represent the potential choices. Philosophers extend this to conscious decisions: "Do I take the cab, or do I take the bus?" Each event happens in the framework of MWI, and each traces out a causal chain of events.

Fortunately for MWI, the world of string theory is an expansive place. When each potential history is attached to a thin 4-brane against the full richness of a ten or eleven dimensional universe, there is room for infinite alternate universes to contain all the possible histories for every object on our 4-brane. The different histories twist and entwine like strings leading to myriad different possible outcomes for any specific individual.

For the time traveler, things become a little tricky. It's easy enough to slip back in time and cause some event

THE TANGLED WEAVE OF TIME
(CONTINUED)

which could potentially cause a paradox. Killing your grandfather before he had children is something that would prevent your existence, and thus prevent you from going back and killing your grandfather. In this framework, the time traveler would have to be careful how she returned back to her present. If she simply returned back to the place she left from, her original present, which includes her existence and could only happen along the history where the grandfather wasn't murdered, the effects of her tampering on the past would not be seen. If she instead decided to follow the histories that branched off from her action, she would find a world with some distinct differences from the one she left, including the fact that she was never born. She could still venture into this universe, her ability to traverse the dimensions allowing her to travel where she willed, but she would be a non-entity with no family, no social security number, no proof of existence.

Gamemasters dealing with the ramification of time travel should feel free to let the characters lead with whatever changes they are trying to affect, and then add any other differences between their original world and the new one that is created. In general, small changes should cause small differences between the two realities while gross actions should cause a wildly different reality. In general, though, it should be relatively straightforward for a character who can travel through time to find their original reality and make their way back there if the situation is dire enough. Time travel provides an opportunity for the Gamemaster to throw in interesting and even unexpected changes to the environment, and can certainly provide a whole host of plot hooks and story directions.

Nephilim, there are many holes in the early records, and none of the lineages trace back to an actual angelic sire. Other evidence can be gathered to help support investigations into the origin of the Nephilim, however, including feelings of significance regarding sections of the Dead Sea Scrolls, archaeological relics that could date from civilizations living before the flood, and even encounters or observations into the past. By the time the characters are wrestling with the fourth epiphany, contact with the ultraterrestrials becomes more of a possibility. Dialogues with these creatures might also lend clues to the beginnings of the Nephilim. As the evidence begins to accumulate, the characters will realize that they are creatures half of this reality and half of the Otherverse. With this epiphany, they begin to question their place in reality, and what legacies of their heritage have been left to

accomplish the goal of moving beyond it.

THE FIFTH EPIPHANY

The Annex is a permanent construction that spans more than four-dimensional reality. Because of the bridges it has built through the Otherverse, it stands as proof to humanity of the higher dimensional nature of reality. The realization of their higher dimensional nature might spur the characters to try to find their place in the world. In so doing, the characters will begin to question the nature of the stranger aspects of the society, house, and annex. Many stories written in this stage will pursue investigations into the places connected to the annex, deciphering (or finding new sections of) the *Usher Codex*, and looking for the past

notes of previous incarnations of the society. The investigations should now focus on the origins and true purpose of the society, as opposed to external phenomena. In addition, communication with the ultraterrestrials might add some cryptic clues to foster realization. As the physical legacy of the old society is revealed, the characters will begin to question the deeper truth regarding the fate of Usher and the first incarnation.

THE SIXTH EPIPHANY

By learning to tread through the Otherverse, humanity can begin to walk with God. The first incarnation learned this and its members were able to transcend the passage to the godhead. Enough notes lie around from the first incarnation that characters can try to reproduce their experiences. During this time, further pages of the *Usher Codex* are found and investigated. Contact with the ultraterrestrials becomes more sporadic, as they fear the characters deducing the answers too quickly. Perhaps stories are played out where the ultraterrestrials attempt to hamper the characters' investigations, or lead them down wrong paths. However, in time, the characters can and should learn the truth. The first incarnation successfully transcended all the epiphanies, and traveled into the Labyrinth to unite with the godhead. Jericho also left the membrane and sailed the oceans of the Otherverse. However, evidence shows that he still returns. Might some of the first incarnation also return to the membrane, or are they now united forever with the Creator? All this leads to the question – why was the first incarnation not completely successful in accomplishing the mission of the society?

THE SEVENTH EPIPHANY

The mission of the society is to guide humanity into an understanding of the deeper nature of reality, and assist humanity in learning to walk with God. As the characters question their role in the society, they come to realize that the first incarnation was clearly not successful, at least not entirely. If the first did complete whatever it was the society was supposed to do, there would be no need for a second or third society. Explorations of the Otherverse, including standing at the very edge of the Labyrinth, might show signs of the first incarnation's passage.

ALTERNATIVE MAPPINGS

The previous example shows one way of layering the growing realization, among the characters, of the reality of the universe. This doesn't necessarily need to be the only method of doing so. The order of the epiphanies could easily change based on the preferences of the characters and the Gamemaster. Even the fundamental description of the map can be altered. The previous example was very linear, where one layer revealed another in a certain order. An alternative example might use more free form arrangements or other symbology.

Another interesting way to organize the campaign is to model the map on the Kabalistic Tree of Life. Using this as a visual representation, each sephiroth represents a specific epiphany that can lead to other realizations. This map is more interconnected than the previous example, allowing multiple paths for the characters as they travel from Malkuth (the physical reality) to Kether (unification with the godhead). The ten sephiroth are:

Malkuth: The physical world. This is the starting place for the campaign, the state where no deeper realities have been formed. Malkuth is connected to Yesod.

Yesod: The Foundation. This forms the beginning of the society's growing revelation on the nature

of the universe. Stories in Yesod revolve around the characters understanding the nature of their connection to the Otherverse. Yesod is connected to Netzach, Hod, and Tiphereth, as well as Malkuth.

Hod: The Power of Observation. Here the characters use their powers of observation to investigate anomalous phenomena. As they accumulate data on these events, they start to realize the role of the Otherverse on reality. Hod is connected to Netzach, Tiphereth, and Gevurah.

Netzach: The Power of Contemplation. Stories told in Netzach focus on introspection, as the characters develop a better understanding of the nature of their own abilities. This understanding leads them to recognize the other dimensional nature of their powers. Netzach is connected to Hod, Tiphereth, and Chesed, as well Yesod.

Tiphereth: The Beauty of Symmetry. Tiphereth represents the center of the tree, and a balance between the active left half (Binah, Gevurah, Hod) and the passive right (Chokman, Chesed, and Netzach). The characters may travel through Tiphereth many times as they move from sephiroth to sephiroth as they try to ascend to Kether. Stories in Tiphereth will subtly balance different epiphanies, giving the characters a broader range of data on which to transcend to the next stage. Tiphereth is connected to all the other sephiroth except for Malkuth and Kether.

Chesed: The Revelation of Vision. As the player characters reach the level of Chesed, they begin entering into a dialogue with the ultraterrestrials. These interactions, along with investigations on the anomalous history of the society and the unusual properties of the annex, lead the characters to recognize that the members of the society are fundamentally different than most other people. Chesed is connected to Chokmah, Gevurah, as well as Tiphereth and Netzach.

Gevurah: The Determination of Will. Characters in the sephiroth of Gevurah are ready to explore the ties that bind the people listed in the genealogies. Through this exploration, they learn of the connection the characters have with the Grigori and the ultraterrestrials. Stories told in the sephiroth of Gevurah often deal with the adversarial nature the characters have with the machinations of the imprisoned Grigori. Gevurah is connected to Binah and Chesed, as well as Tiphereth and Hod

Chokmah: Divine Revelation. At this level, the characters recognize that, because of their special heritage, they can transcend the confines of the four-dimensional world. Here they continue to seek out the truth by exploring the richness of the Otherverse. Chokmah leads to Kether, as well as Binah, Chesed, and Tiphereth.

Binah: The Love of Humanity. As they come to cope with the differences between themselves and humanity, characters in Binah learn to recognize that they can assist others in learning about the true nature of reality; this requires an acceptance of their eventual role as shepherds of transcendence. Binah leads to Kether, as well as Chokmah, Gevurah, and Tiphereth.

Kether: Ascension with God. As the characters learn they can leave the membrane, they realize that they are capable of walking with the divine force. The natural path takes the characters through Chokmah, through Binah, to Kether. It is possible to short-circuit, and move to Kether straight from Chokmah; and this is exactly what the first incarnation had done. However, to achieve the true mission of the society, the insights of Binah must be recognized.

STORIES IN THE THRESHOLD

The Threshold (see page 98) contains the keys to

many of the mysteries of reality, but these answers are in a form that is difficult to fathom because of the limitation of human perception. Stories told in the Threshold should be nearly as cryptic as dialogues with the ultraterrestrials. In addition to just trying to navigate the Threshold, there are plenty of opportunities to interact with the ultraterrestrials who frequent this area. In many ways, the cities were designed to be similar enough to the environs that humans are accustomed to, to allow an adequate meeting place between human and ultraterrestrial.

Stories told here should highlight the time pressure, to come to enlightenment and unravel mysteries, before the effects of the influx of DMT wear off. Even those who have developed techniques to increase DMT production through meditation or stimulation of the brain face limited durations, as the open strings that form the matter of humanity naturally seek to bind to the membrane. Only by negotiating the Threshold and slipping into the maelstrom can the traveler separate themselves enough from the membrane to not face the fear of reattachment.

Thus, the process of traveling to the Labyrinth will be a series of false starts, where the characters try to learn as much as they can in a single trip before returning to the membrane; each venture being an attempt to learn enough that they don't need to retrace their steps the next time they go in. Although the map

CAMPAIGN OPTION: CHARACTER DRIVEN STORYTELLING

A viable option of campaign creation is to leave the direction of the story in the hands of the characters. One method of doing this is to use props, such as pages from the *Usher Codex* and notes from previous incarnations, to give the characters seeds to base their investigations on. Other sources of potential investigations can come from any of a number of paper tabloids and paranormal Internet sites. It is possible to even have the characters search online for interesting locations and run an investigation after a modicum of research on the part of the Gamemaster.

This has the advantage of cutting down significantly on the Gamemaster's prep-work for a game, as well as giving the players a very real sense of control in the direction of the story. However, the lack of prep-work is balanced by the extensive amount of ad-lib construction of the setting and clues. It also requires self-motivated players, who are willing to take responsible control of the story. If the Gamemaster is comfortable running by the seat of his or her pants, and has a good group of players with well developed motivations and histories, this style of game can be very entertaining.

As a variant to this option, the style of the game doesn't necessarily have to be either one or the other. A game can slowly develop into a more free-form style of play, especially as the players grow more comfortable with their characters and the Gamemaster becomes more adept at investigation design. In addition, as the game progresses, the focus changes more onto the characters and the society, as opposed to external phenomena. The characters might have acquired more props – in the way of extra manuscript pages, notes from previous incarnations, and the genealogical records – that give them the springboard they need to build sustaining stories on. This would evoke a natural transition into a more player driven campaign

changes, partially on the mental state of the traveler, partially on the whim of the ultraterrestrials who are trying to lead the characters to new insights, certain key epiphanies will help the society consistently navigate the Threshold. The first of these capabilities is the need to orient oneself while traversing through the cities. Advanced powers can help characters on their orientation rolls (see page 100). In addition, although each metropolis offers numerous insights into the nature of reality, and many clues can be found there, the key purpose of the cities is to force the reorientation of the characters to recognize the path to the Labyrinth. The path to release from the Threshold, and to ascension, is orthogonal to the

THE FACE OF THE CREATOR

Very likely, a story set in *Aletheia* will eventually broach topics about the nature of God and the Creator's place in the universe. At some point in time, the Gamemaster should consider the effects the Creator has on the stories of the game. God can play a number of different roles in *Aletheia*.

On some level, God can represent the totality of the universe in all of its myriad dimensions. In many ways, God and the universe were identically the same in the time prior to the differentiation of all that was. However, representing God with this grand of scope can be unwieldy in many campaigns. As an alternative, the Creator could represent itself in a more limited aspect. This could be a God that is personified in a form accessible to humanity. This would be the God who walked with Enoch, and deliberated with Satan over Job – the God who could be seen to have a personality, with emotions and desires. Perhaps, with our limited capability to perceive in more than four dimensions, this is the only God that we can comprehend in any capacity.

The motivations of God would be equally unfathomable. The Creator is clearly not limited to thought in four dimensions, and would see past the trappings of time that humanity is confined to. Events that would seem causal to us would be seen as simply objects on a field, to be shuffled around as necessary. Jericho seemed to believe that a motivation of God was to witness the ascension of humanity. He had faith that the product of the sin of the angelic watchers, the Nephilim, would be the instrument of humanity's salvation, leading the human race in an exodus to join God. Clearly, Jericho's understanding of the Creator's motivations would be limited by the four-dimensional framework with which humanity perceives things. However, perhaps Jericho's evolution was such that he did indeed touch the mind of God, and it is the Creator's goal to see humanity join it in the full depth of the universe.

Any discussion of God, however, should be handled with tact and care. The writings in this book aren't meant to serve as a basis for philosophy or to probe into the true nature of divinity. The notions of God have a very real meaning for many readers of this book and those who play in games set in *Aletheia*. Clearly, the themes and plot will end up reflecting, in some manner, the beliefs of the Gamemaster running the story, but care should be taken to ensure that this vision doesn't offend the beliefs of everyone else around the table. The boundaries of *Aletheia* should stretch as far as pondering the mysteries of the universe and philosophizing about the nature of the divine is fun.

six-dimensional structure of the Threshold. This is managed through a set of seven rotations in the manifold of the Threshold to make apparent the extra dimension.

The quick way to penetrate the Threshold is to orient oneself in the direction orthogonal to the fabric of the Threshold and simply step above it. However, this isn't obvious from a four-dimensional perspective and thus the challenges of the Threshold, and the colossi of the Labyrinth, are there to awaken that realization in the travelers. However, this simplified technique is the method that extra-dimensional objects, including the ultraterrestrials, use to penetrate the Threshold. Once the Nephilim no longer need the crutches of the Threshold and the colossi, and can teach the truth to the rest of humanity – along with the tools needed to increase natural DMT production – the ascension of humanity will be at hand.

ENDING THE GAME

If the player characters succeed in descending the spiral of the Labyrinth, the game ends. This gives both players and Gamemasters a definitive endpoint. However, since the goal is a difficult one, there is plenty of time for the PCs to explore all the aspects of *Aletheia*.

Players may be curious as to what happens to their characters when they join the godhead. This is largely

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THE FORMULAE OF CREATION

The human brain is a large two-dimensional surface that is intricately folded into a three-dimensional space. This same logic applies to the ultraterrestrial brain, which is far more advanced and evolved than its human counterpart. For this reason, it takes seven human minds in combination to form the equivalent of an ultraterrestrial mind, and it takes seven humans to successfully guide a colossus. This is important, as the colossi are the only means for four-dimensional beings to descend into the maelstrom.

Even with increased DMT production, humanity will forever be limited to the Threshold. Since the colossi number seven, this fixes the ultimate amount of voyagers to the godhead at forty-nine. With such a restriction, how can the whole of humanity join the Creator? This is where the formulae of creation come into play.

Seven sets of equations form the underlying laws by which the entirety of creation operates (see page 101). By deciphering these formulae, humanity will at last perceive and comprehend the totality of existence and walk with God. They will become hyper-dimensional beings capable of traversing the Labyrinth without the colossi. However, the human mind cannot understand, let alone solve, these complexities without teachers. This is the ultimate role of the Nephilim. To unravel each equation requires seven minds working in concert. Within the godhead, the original society toils away at one of the seven equations, studying it from the only perspective that yields true understanding. In time, forty-two others (including the player characters) will join them in their work. Once the seven formulae are learned and fully understood, these Nephilim will return to the membrane and share their knowledge. Though it will take generations, humanity will come to grasp the complex equations that define creation and take their rightful place with the Creator.

up to the individual Gamemaster to determine. One GM may want to keep the voyage to the godhead an unspoken affair, allowing the players to guess as to their characters' fates. Another may want to provide an ambiguous ending, replete with unearthly imagery and quizzical symbolism. Of course, some gamemasters will want more concrete details. For those in the latter camp, please refer to the **Formulae of Creation** sidebar, for an example of what awaits the transcending characters.

While the Gamemaster is free to handle the game's conclusion in a variety of manners, there is nothing to say the game must ever end. Though stories are most satisfying with a proper ending, nothing restricts the GM or players from continuing the game in perpetuity. Such approaches are common in soap operas and comic books, and there's no reason this model cannot work in *Aletheia*.

ADVANCED POWERS

There are other powers learnable by player characters over time. However, these advanced powers are only available after characters have experienced the first epiphany (see page 149).

Pierce the Veil (*) – This ability allows the character to sense the presence of nearby dimensional anomalies. The power can determine if anything within line of sight has an extra-dimensional character to it. Generally this is used to determine if a paranormal phenomenon is actually extra-dimensional in nature, such as if a medium is legitimately speaking to ultraterrestrials, but can also be used to notice static phenomena such as the portals in the annex created by Jericho Usher, or The Hum heard around Taos, New Mexico. Particularly subtle occurrences might require *Awareness* rolls (TN of 1).

Orientation (**) – This ability helps the character to perceive the subtle differences in the image of a higher dimensional object, so that characters can readily orient their perceptions to see the greatest clarity. When dealing with higher dimensional objects and effects (including manifestations of the ultraterrestrials) in the membrane of reality, they can activate this ability as an *Awareness* roll with a *target number* of 2, to better perceive the object or being. This doesn't allow the character to see in more than four dimensions, so the full nature of an ultraterrestrial can still not be viewed, but the objects look like three-dimensional structures instead of seeming ephemeral or cartoon like. When used in the Threshold, the *target number* for all *Orientation* rolls is now 0, ensuring automatic *victory* and each *victory* on the roll lowers the time by half.

Projected Vision (***) – This ability shares many similarities with clairsentient powers that allow the character to see at great distances, however it allows those near to the character to also share that vision. The visions, which can incorporate any of the five senses, can be experienced by any number of people who can be clearly seen by the projecting character. The character can specify people who can see the vision, and exclude others. It the recipients of this power are not accustomed to the nature of clairsentient abilities, this can cause unusual reactions as the victims believe the visions are either delusions or actually occurring in their proximity. The *target number* for *Projected Vision* is 1, however instances of involuntary projection may occur.

Sever the Cord of Reality (****) – This ability allows the character to forcibly eject an object or creature from reality, closing the loops and severing it from the membrane. In order to use this power, the character must successfully grab the victim or object. If the victim is resisting and not restrained, this is a standard combat roll (*target number* is the opponent's *Fitness*). If the grab is successful, the subject of this ability disappears and moves away into the Otherverse.

The effect lasts for 5 minutes per *victory* on the power user's *Awareness* roll. The victim can use any powers as normal, including movement abilities, to return to reality. This power can also be used on oneself.

Orthogonal Revolution (****) – This ability allows the character to forcibly grab someone and rotate the victim in a dimension perpendicular to the four dimensions of reality. In order to use this power, the character must successfully grab the victim or object. If the victim is resisting and not restrained, this is a standard combat roll (*target number* is the opponent's *Fitness*). If the grab is successful, the subject is twisted through higher dimensions and returned to reality. Although no physical damage has occurred, the effect is harrowing for the victim. The victim now controls a body for which left is right and right is left. Motor coordination is difficult because attempts of motor control results in a right hand moving when the subject tries to move their left. This effect is permanent unless reversed by the use of a similar power, however time does allow victims to adjust. For the next week, the victim has the *target number* of all rolls increased by 2. This can cause even simple tasks to fail while the victim becomes adjusted to their new orientation. Even after that initial week, simple tasks requiring coordination are difficult. For several months, the subject still has all *Fitness* and *Awareness target numbers* increased by 1. After this time, the victim has adjusted to the bodily changes, but is still a medical anomaly. Those who can move through higher dimensions (as with the *Teleport* or the *Ghosting* abilities) can reorient themselves with an *Awareness* roll at a *target number* of 1.

Combust (*****) – This is a rare and difficult ability that requires the manipulation of hyper-dimensional objects moving in the Otherverse. The character scans for nearby objects in space and time, and directs these items to interact with the membrane at a specific location. The resulting collision releases a large amount of energy into that point, which radiates away as heat. This heat is enough to cause fires, setting small objects alight and doing damage to victims in the area. If there is a living being at the collision point, the energy diffuses into the poor individual, doing varying amounts of damage. The user of the power makes an *Awareness* roll, with a *target number* being the victim's *Fitness*. Every net *victory* inflicts five points of damage. If the epicenter is on an object, that object catches fire. If the epicenter is in air, a small explosion erupts, damaging those within 20 feet of the collision point. To determine the group's damage, the character makes an *Awareness* roll, to compare with the *Fitness* of each victim. Each *victory* over a victim's *Fitness* causes five points of damage to that victim.

Hyper-dimensional Bridge (*****) – With this power, a character can bend four-dimensional space and link two locations together, regardless of distance. Essentially, this is a fixed version of *Teleportation*. Creating a bridge through higher dimensions requires an *Awareness* roll with a *target number* of 2. However, the diameter of this gateway is only three feet. Creating passages large enough for a human to walk through is a *target number* of 3, and larger passages have even higher *target numbers*. The effects of *Hyper-dimensional Bridge* are clearly visible; the passage appears as a porthole through which the linked location can be seen. For this reason, such gateways are often concealed in door and window frames. Unlike the annex doorways, the use of this power creates two-way passages, traversable from either side of the bridge. Only the ultraterrestrials can fold space properly to create one-way bridges.

CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

Experience points (XP) are awarded to characters at the end of each role-playing session. For participating, each player character receives 1 XP. If the characters discovered one of the game's hidden truths (*i.e.* the hyper-dimensional nature of reality, the final fate

of Jericho Usher, the origins of their powers, etc.) each participant receives 5 XP. If the session entailed fieldwork, the PCs also receive XP for their hypothesis (see pagess 55-56 for details).

Experience points are used to improve existing character *traits* and purchase new ones.

- **The cost to improve an *Attribute* is 20 XP per rank.**
- **The cost to purchase a new *Descriptor* is 20 XP.**
- **The cost to improve an existing occupation is 20 XP per level.**
- **The cost to buy a new occupation at Rookie level is ten times the occupation's star rating.**
- **The cost to improve an *extracurricular skill* is 10 XP per level.**
- **The cost to purchase a new *extracurricular skill* at Rookie level is 10 XP.**
- **The cost to purchase a new power is ten times the power's star rating.**

When spending *Experience Points* a few things must be kept in mind:

- *Attributes* **have a maximum rank of 5.**
- **Characters may possess a maximum of two *Descriptors* per *Attribute*.**
- **Veteran is the highest level of expertise for occupations and *Extracurricular Skills*.**
- **Purchasing additional powers raises a character's maximum *Will*.**

REPLENISHING WILL

Characters regain *Will* at the rate of one per session. Additionally, when the society unearths one of the game's hidden truths, a character's entire reservoir of *Will* is replenished.

SUGGESTED READING

- *About Time* by Paul Davies
- *And He Built A Crooked House* by Robert A. Heinlein
- *The Archaic Revival* by Terence McKenna
- *Chariots of the Gods?* by Erich von Daniken
- *Childhood's End* by Arthur C. Clarke
- *The Complete Books of Charles Fort*
- *DMT: The Spirit Molecule* by Rick Strassman
- *The Book of Enoch*
- *Flatland* by Edwin A. Abbott
- *Hyperspace* by Michio Kaku
- *Mysticism and the New Physics* by Michael Talbot
- *Planetary* by Warren Ellis and John Cassaday
- *Quantum Reality: Beyond the New Physics* by Nick Herbert
- *Sex, Drugs, Einstein and Elves* by Clifford A. Pickover
- *Surfing through Hyperspace* by Clifford A. Pickover
- *UFOs: Operation Trojan Horse* by John Keel
- *Unexplained!* by Jerome Clark
- *The Voynich Manuscript*
- *Warped Passages: Unraveling the Universe's Hidden Dimensions* by Lisa Randall

CHAPTER NINE

FROM THE HEAVENS

T his adventure for *Aletheia* highlights a single investigation. The characters learn about an unusual event in a small college town in rural America. The townsfolk are verging on panic as reports are being made to the local authorities of alien abductions. Not just one or two people are making such a claim , but rather, dozens are coming forward and the number is growing as the days pass. The characters have to deal with an abundance of information, and a hysterical community, in order to try and make sense of the situation.

The story presumes the investigation takes place in the town of Manhattan, Kansas, home of Kansas State University. In addition, the plot will highlight the history of at least one of the player characters, referred to as the lead-in character. That character's cousin (or some other relative) currently attends K-State. Although that PC is referred to especially in the story, this doesn't presume any special position of the character in the investigation, and does not preclude other characters from having backgrounds that also tie into the adventure. In addition, although Manhattan is the default setting for the game, the Gamemaster can easily move the story to any relatively small town (less than 100,000 people) that houses a university.

INTRODUCTION

The story begins with the lead-in character getting a phone call. Annabelle Klein, the character's cousin and a student at Kansas State, is on the phone. Weird things are happening at school, and people are talking about being abducted. Although the anecdotes have been going around in the last couple of days, Annabelle had mostly been ignoring the situation; but just last night, her friend and dorm mate, Beth, staggered home and confided in her that she too had been taken. Annabelle concludes the phone call informing the lead-in character that she was calling for two reasons – firstly, she always knew the character was into that kind of "weird stuff" and would be interested, and secondly, since Beth's experience, she's genuinely scared and would like the character to come to Manhattan.

The first stage in the adventure is the preliminary investigation. This represents the initial steps the society members take to get background information on the case. This preliminary research will be done via the Internet. Occupations that highlight skills in Research will grant automatic *victories* to this roll. The *vital clue* for this scene is a video seen on the KCTV

KCTV CHANNEL 5 NEWS VIDEO

"Aliens invade K-State. Nope, not from south of the border, but from the depths of space. Police from Manhattan have reported receiving a number of calls from people claiming contact with extra-terrestrials. Officer Donnolly of the Riley County Sheriff's Department claimed, "We've received calls from a number of individuals, both students and other residents, of encounters with aliens. All of these claims describe being taken into spaceships. We're encouraging folks who call to go to the nearest hospital to ensure that they are medically sound." Donnolly adds, "I'm not in a position to say if E.T. is actually visiting Kansas State." Military officials from nearby Fort Riley have stated that they have seen nothing unusual in the skies over Manhattan, but declined to comment on any recent activities at the base."

Channel 5 news website.

Additional *victories* can reveal a YouTube video showing strange lights over Fort Riley, taken four days ago, and a blog entry dated from yesterday on one person's abduction experience. The individual, Jerod, whose username is jayblank04, was at a party when he felt a feeling like floating and found himself in a strange structure of translucent gold. Jerod's story is described in the **Interviews** section, but his blog entry can summarize what parts of the story the Gamemaster feels will draw the characters in.

THE INVESTIGATION

The society can secure a flight from Anchorage to Kansas City in as early as a couple of days. The flight itself is a long one – eight hours including a short layover. Manhattan is about two hours east of Kansas City along Interstate 70. By the time the characters have settled in, a total of twenty-three individuals have submitted statements describing abduction by beings not of this Earth. Both local law enforcement and university administrators have tried to limit media coverage of the event, though occasional pieces are slipping out. Although they are curious as to what is causing these strange accounts, they are skeptical that actual extraterrestrials are involved and are concerned with the effect this hysteria will have on continuing attendance at the university. If the PCs seem to be reputable, especially if any have medical, scientific, or academic backgrounds, either institution will eagerly welcome any additional investigation by the characters as long as it is kept discreet and legal.

The authorities have compiled lists and short statements given by the individuals who have claimed to be abducted. If the characters haven't secured the assistance of the local authorities, Annabelle can organize, through her network of friends at school, an abbreviated list of students and friends who claim to

have been abducted. Either should serve the characters as a good basis to begin getting information.

ENTRY POINT

With so many people having experienced an abduction in the Manhattan area, perhaps the first step is to arrange for some interviews to gather data and look for correlations. The GM should allow the lead-in character to make a *Reason* roll with a *target number* of 1, if the players themselves are having difficulties determining how to have the characters organize an investigation. Once the characters are ready to proceed, it should be decided how they will structure the interview – whether they have short 15 minute discussions with the victims, or develop a survey to draw forth written details of the event. In addition, the characters should decide what sort of data they want to capture in order to further their investigation.

After the group interview, there are a number of directions the story can take. The accounts given by the following three individuals will likely reach the characters, and their stories will provide a framework for further investigation. Jerod Blanchett, who might have been first introduced when the characters came across his blog entry of the event, seems to have been abducted in the middle of a fraternity party. Noah Soross is a local musician and, when he was taken, his band was playing at a popular hangout called the Old Kensington. Finally, Beth Caudell, the roommate to Annabelle, was abducted on her way home from a night with her friends. Those who are research focused might want to look into correlating the data and looking for commonalities.

If the characters decide not to begin with a formal group interview, they still have a number of individuals they have already been exposed to and will likely get information from. The characters can

just as well begin their investigation with a personal chat either with Jerod (if they learned about him in the preliminary investigation) or with Beth.

INTERVIEWS

While the PCs will end up hearing a number of tales of abduction, three stories stand out for a variety of reasons. Jerod's story is perhaps the first eyewitness account the characters had exposure to, through his blog entry, and might be the first person the characters decide to interview. The PCs might also choose to pay close attention to Beth's story, since Beth is connected to the characters through Annabelle – who would certainly use any influence she had in order to direct the characters to listen to her friend. Finally, Noah's story stands out as being particularly bizarre as he claims to have been abducted while performing in front of a roomful of people.

JEROD BLANCHETT

As with other interview scenes, a character should roll their *Personality* to determine the clues they receive as they pry into the details of each account. Occupations or skills in interviewing will garner automatic *victories*. Since Jerod has a strong interest in hunting and the outdoors, characters with skills in that area as well would garner additional *victories* in getting Jerod to open up. The number of *victories* reveals the following clues:

- 1 *victory*: Jerod's abduction occurred in the presence of a number of people, including a woman by the name of Stacey (?).

- 2 *victories*: Jerod, under advice of the police, visited the hospital the day after the event and was thoroughly examined. No signs of

JEROD BLANCHETT

"So, here's how it is. Sigma Chi was having a party to celebrate the pledges' initiation. I also heard that the tri-delt girls were going to be there, so it had all the makings of a great party. So, a couple of friends of mine were heading out to hit the frathouse at eight. The party was going alright. I had a few beers and was really working this girl, Stacey… at least, I think her name was Stacey… when all of a sudden I'm gone. I felt like I was floating away, and then, next thing I know, I was in this huge room. All I could see was this golden dome over me, with light coming through the walls. There were shadows outside the walls too, like things trying to get in. Sometime later, these… things were all around me. Big, grey, ET looking things, y'know, with the big eyes and no hair. I don't really know how many, six… seven at least, and they were poking me and moving my arms and legs. And just like that, they were done and I was lying up against a bush in the front lawn and it was almost morning. At first I thought someone slipped something into my beer, but after hearing the others… I'm sure I was actually taken."

damage or medical procedures were found.

- 3 *victories*: Jerod spoke with Annabelle Klein while at the party, and Annabelle introduced her friend, Stacey, to Jerod.

- 4 *victories*: Jerod and his friends were at the Old Kensington prior to going to the party.

BETH CAUDELL

A *Personality* roll can retrieve the following clues. An occupation or a skill in an academic area, as well as interviewing, will grant automatic *victories*.

- 1 *victory*: Beth was previously at the Old Kensington prior to this experience.

- 2 *victories*: Beth was examined by the hospital, and they found no unusual medical procedures that were performed on her. At her request they determined that she was definitely not pregnant.

- 3 *victories*: Beth had been at the Old Kensington to listen to a local band, the Black Orchids, play.

NOAH SOROSS

A *Personality roll* can determine the following clues and an occupation or a skill in music, as well as interviewing, will grant automatic *victories*.

- 1 *victory*: The event occurred over a matter

BETH CAUDELL

"Well, we were walking back from the Old Kensington when it happened. My girlfriends and I had just gotten back on campus, and I'd said goodnight as I headed back to West Hall. As soon as I crossed Mid-Campus, I saw the lights swirl around me and I was being lifted up. I was placed on a table in a large room. Light shined all over the place, and I could hear a low melodic song that almost vibrated through me. There were aliens there too; I could feel them near me, although they took their time to show themselves to me. They seemed curious with how I operated and touched my skin and moved my arms. After some time, they gathered around me and… I think they opened me up. It… it didn't hurt really, but I had the distinct impression that they reached inside of me. When they were done, I was returned. I didn't feel any pain but I was really scared, and was flipping out when I got to Annabelle. She took me to the hospital to get me checked out."

NOAH SOROSS

"Man, it was insane. My group, the Black Orchids, had a couple of sets to play at the Ole K', and we were finishing up the last one. It was a good night, the audience had a great vibe and it was helping us really hammer out those songs. I was up there, singing the intro to Krystale, you might have heard it on the radio, when all of a sudden I wasn't there anymore. I was flying around with the aliens, man, and they were riding a golden spaceship. I think they were taking me home. They had me lie back, made sure I was comfortable, and then flew off to Alpha Centauri or wherever they're from. When we got there, the weirdest thing happened. It felt like I was thrown out into space. I'm still not sure if they ejected me, or if it was some sort of virtual reality thing, but it sure as hell felt like I was in orbit of this strange planet. It kinda looked like a flower, a huge golden flower. Maybe an orchid. Who knows? Well after they took me on this cruise of the galaxy, they returned me back to Earth. I found myself just standing there on stage, the feedback from the guitars still humming low in my ears. It was quite the trip."

of a couple of minutes while at the Old Kensington.

- 2 *victories*: Although Noah perceived himself to be traveling vast distances, the only outward sign according to his band was that he'd stopped singing and seemed to have entered a trance.

- 3 *victories*: Noah visited the hospital, as did other victims. There were no signs of medical experimentation, nor were there any signs of drugs or medications in his system.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

After collecting all the data from their initial investigation, characters who are more interested in the analysis of information can look over the results to find correlations or similarities. The characters should roll *Reason* to determine the number of clues obtained. Occupations such as Researcher, Psychologist, or Statistician should grant additional *victories*. Depending on the number of *victories* scored, the following results are learned:

- 1 *victory*: Eighteen out of twenty-three cases happened in close proximity to the Old Kensington, either on the site or within six hours of leaving the location. Of the others, one happened at a bank, and one at a grocery story. Two events occurred at Sunset Park, and a final one happened on the drive between a local restaurant and a residence.

- 2 *victories*: Most of the events occurred in the presence of other people. Although the events

DINNER WITH ANNABELLE

At some point in time, shortly after the character's arrival but prior to the investigation into the Old Kensington, Annabelle will invite the lead-in character to dinner at the Ole K'. Although much of the conversation will be about school, her plans after school, and trying to get to know better what her cousin is doing, she will eventually talk about fears she's having about this whole abduction thing. Annabelle isn't sure what to believe, but the thought of being taken when you least expect it is upsetting a lot of people around school and there's been talk of closing the college for the rest of the term. Annabelle quiets again as the waitress, Beverly, serves them their food and the two begin eating. If the PC chooses to use the power of *Presque vu*, the character gets the sense that something very meaningful has recently happened.

After dinner, Annabelle excuses herself to the restroom. When she returns, she looks panic stricken and stunned. "I was just taken," she admits and wants the lead-in character to drive her to the hospital while she talks. According to her, as she was heading into the restroom, she felt a floating sensation and a feeling as if she was in another place. The room she found herself in was golden colored, and light surrounded her. After what seemed like hours, she was visited by half a dozen tall grey creatures. She was naked as they performed all sorts of examinations on her. It seemed that one of them injected something into her womb. When they were done, her next sensation was falling; she found herself sitting in a restroom stall. Although she states the experience spanned many hours, she was only gone a few minutes to the restroom. The hospital visit shows no signs of unusual medical experimentations.

seemed to have taken anywhere from hours to days from the perspective of the victims, observers only noted a period of minutes where the victim's attention seemed to drift off.

- 3 *victories*: The distribution of victims seems to match closely to the race/gender demographics of Manhattan.

- 4 *victories*: Twenty of the victims were under the age of 25.

PRIMARY INVESTIGATIONS

After the interviews, the characters should begin to note a couple of different issues with the stories. First, many of the accounts involve the Old Kensington in some way. Also, the details of what the purported abductees believe has occurred are inconsistent with the observations of others. Many victims report having abduction experiences in plain sight of friends and family, and while they experienced being away for at least hours, the eyewitnesses only observed a few moments of odd behavior. None of the abductees seems to have disappeared from sight. This might lead into secondary interviews with eyewitnesses, and these conversations reveal essentially the same information. While having their abduction experiences, the victims momentarily lose track of the conversation, break off eye contact, and stare into space. Since many of the events include the Ole K as a commonality, the next stage of the investigation will likely begin there.

THE OLD KENSINGTON

Once a hotel, this four story building is now a restaurant, bar, and stage for local entertainment. The top two stories have been renovated into apartments for employees or are rented by college kids getting out of the dorms. Called the Ole K', the place is about a half mile west of campus on Dickens St. The Ole K' has musical performances every Thursday, Friday and Saturday, while Sunday hosts a comedy routine. Tuesday is Karaoke night and Wednesday is an Open-Mike night where local talent can use the Ole K' as a venue to get their name out.

The Ole K' is run by Lorne Gurick, a man of about fifty years who tends to be gruff to both his customers and his staff. Fortunately for the patrons, they rarely have to meet Lorne, who spends most of his time in an upstairs office. If the characters want to pursue a thorough investigation of the place, the staff of the Old Kensington is hesitant to allow anything more than just looking around the property or the main floor common rooms. In the end, the characters must convince Lorne to allow the investigation. Although initially opposed to the idea, Lorne can be convinced if he feels these abductions could possibly be tied to his establishment and fears the negative ramifications of such. Getting Lorne's permission to investigate requires a *Personality* roll with a *target number* of 2.

During the investigation a character should roll *Awareness* with standard investigative occupations and skills granting automatic *victories*. The number of *victories* on the *Awareness* roll reveals the following clues:

- 1 *victory*: None of the typical signs of alien presence can be found around the scene, including strange behavior of nearby plant life, electromagnetic readings, or variations in soil composition.

- 2 *victories*: There have been no reports of strange lights or sounds among any of the staff, or the tenants living above the Old Kensington, during the time that the abductions have occurred.

- 3 *victories*: A cook and a waitress have been fired in the last two weeks. The cook, Jeremy diGrino, was arrested on possession of cocaine a week ago and is currently being held in custody. The waitress, Beverly Saunders, was fired after getting into an argument with a customer. She had a history of complaints from the clients of the Ole K' because of the strange things she'd say and her argumentative nature.

Note: The character cannot receive more successes on this Awareness roll than was received on the Personality roll to get Lorne's cooperation. The Personality roll, thus, serves as a cap on the maximum possible victories the characters can receive on the Awareness roll.

SECONDARY INTERVIEWS

LORNE GURICK

Lorne Gurick is a middle-aged man who doesn't like talking, and likes kids even less. However, he does appreciate business, hard work, and the money that comes from it. His business thrives on account of three things: the location, the good business practices instituted by Lorne, and the fact that he rarely ever speaks with the customers. He has a core of three waitresses who essentially manage the front of the store, serving as a buffer between Lorne and his income.

However, Lorne can become relatively loquacious if his business and livelihood is threatened. Following an investigation, the characters might want to initiate a more detailed look into the proprietor of the Old Kensington. If the PCs succeed at a *Personality* roll with a *target number* of 2, Lorne will accede to the interview. In the interview, if the characters ask about anything unusual happening at the Kensington in the last couple of weeks, Lorne might offer a number of different clues depending on the success of the *Personality* roll. Business related occupations, as well as interviewing skills, will grant extra *victories*.

- 1 *victory* or less: Lorne doesn't agree to an interview.

- 2 *victories*: He recently had to fire a waitress, Beverly Saunders, for her odd behavior.

- 3 *victories*: Lorne gives more details into Bev's dismissal, stating a female customer accused Bev of stalking her because of some of the information the waitress knew about her personal life. Also, Bev was very hostile to certain people who came in, while being perfectly friendly to others. Lorne is also willing to reveal the P.O. Box number her checks were sent to.

- 4 *victories*: Lorne admits that the other waitresses always felt weird around Bev, and she'd confront her fellow staff about the things they said about her behind her back – even when those conversations happened on her days off. Lorne is willing to give the contact phone number Bev supplied on her application.

BEVERLY SAUNDERS

Beverly is briefly described in **Chapter 7**. Since her abrupt separation from her family she has moved from town to town, taking a series of dead end jobs and trying to run away from the harrowing experiences of her abduction. The gypsy's path has taken her to Manhattan, where she's worked at the Old Kensington for the past three weeks. While traveling, she has developed some strange abilities, including the power to see things separated from her by both time and space. Her latest ability, the one

BEVERLY SAUNDERS

"Initially I felt a feeling of floating, followed by a sensation of being in a large room. Then I felt myself settling onto a hard object accompanied by a quick falling sensation. I then became aware that I wasn't alone. However, I was completely paralyzed, and incapable of really looking around. The room I was in was a faded gold in color, although light suffused through the walls from something bright outside. I heard a low hum, perhaps of engines although it had the hint of a melodic quality to it. After what seemed like hours, I noticed I wasn't alone in the room, but was surrounded by seven figures. One looked closely into my face, and I could see my distorted reflection in its glossy black eyes. Their skin was silver, and they had large heads to hold two large eyes. They seemed to be perhaps a foot taller than I am. Then they began to examine me, testing the motion of my arms and legs, and touching me in various places. They clustered around my midsection, and I think they made an incision right here (gesturing to her stomach). I clearly saw one of them reaching deep inside of me. The next thing I knew, I was floating in outer space, looking down on a planet, presumably their home world, made of the purest gold. The planet wasn't a sphere; instead it seemed almost in the shape of a bud of a flower, perhaps a rose. The flower opened and bloomed as I watched and I felt myself falling towards it. Next thing I knew, I was on the shore of the Verde River in Dead Horse Ranch State Park, about 50 miles from where I lived in Prescott."

causing so many problems, is a power to share those visions with other people.

Bev is currently staying in Room 207 at a local Econo-Lodge. She has learned to stay mobile since jobs haven't really worked out for her in the recent past. If the characters seem friendly, she'll be willing to talk with them but is leery of doing or saying anything that could incriminate herself. When the characters first meet her, she will greet them by name, commenting that, "They just felt like a…" whatever name the character goes by. Characters with *Presque vu* can notice that she seems to be of significance.

Occupations involving Psychology or Psychiatry, as well as skill in Interviewing, will grant automatic *victories* when conversing with Beverly.

- 1 *victory*: Reveals Beverly's basic history, including the fact that she was abducted in Prescott, Arizona about a year ago and she'd only come to Manhattan a few weeks ago.

- 2 *victories*: Reveals that she knows the names of every person who was affected; most were people she waited on but a few others she had met around town. For some reason, she can recall clearly the interactions with these specific people, including waiting on Annabelle and the lead-in character.

- 3 *victories*: Beverly admits to feeling strangely when she waited on the lead-in character in the **Dinner with Annabelle** scene, and all of the characters still feel strange and somehow wrong to her.

RESOLUTION

The resolution of this mystery should reveal to the characters that no real abductions have actually

occurred in Manhattan, Kansas. The abduction that happened was Beverly's, a year ago in Arizona, and she is unconsciously projecting a vision of the events onto people in close proximity to her. This is likely possible on account that Beverly's abduction gave to her something ultraterrestrial, allowing her easier access to the multidimensional nature of the world. This has gifted Bev with powers much like the ones the characters have. However, these powers are developing so rapidly that she is having difficulty controlling them. Her flashes of *Remote Viewing* and *Precognition* have gotten her in trouble with customers at the Old Kensington, and her recent development of *Projected Vision* is causing her to share her traumatic memories with others. The visions that are being dispersed are not from her interpretation of the event; instead, they are snapshots of the actual abduction. Because each human mind comprehends an experience into the Otherverse in different ways, each rendition of the abduction has subtle differences; the abduction event is being filtered through the lenses of many different human minds. Unfortunately,

Bev's visions are leaving her doubting her sanity and as the days pass she is becoming more paranoid and unstable.

OPTIONAL SCENES

From the Heavens is heavy on investigation and light on action. If the Gamemaster needs to spice things up, mostly for the sake of any characters designed with fighting prowess in mind, adding a physical encounter is easy enough to do. The GM can have a few of the more excitable locals, unhappy with the unwanted attention to the town, stir up some trouble for the society. This scene can be introduced at any time during the course of the adventure.

Another optional scene is to have one or more of the characters experience the abduction after interviewing Beverly. This would provide an even greater impetus for the society to search for more answers, and the Gamemaster can develop these

projections into a recurring subplot in future stories. Additionally, this can make a fine conclusion to *From the Heavens*, ending the adventure on an ominous note and providing the characters with their first glimpse of the ultraterrestrials.

EPILOGUE

Even with the realization that it was Beverly who was the source of the abduction visions, the characters have a tough time revealing what they found to the authorities. Although the city is loathe to accept that aliens actually abducted more than twenty of their citizens, they would have a difficult time believing that these visions were psychically projected onto these people; such a story might even cause the police to want to hold Beverly on "psychic" crimes, a difficult legal position to say the least. A possible resolution, especially for characters with psychological or medical backgrounds, is to spin the situation as an episode of mass delusion or hysteria.

Even after the situation has settled in Manhattan, the characters will need to solve the enigma of Beverly. No matter how well the interview proceeds with her during the investigation, she will be extraordinarily leery of persistent contact with the characters. Her doubts about her own sanity cause her to question whether she should be institutionalized, while her paranoia leaves here with an overriding fear of being put away. If the characters put any pressure on her to come with them, in order to better understand her abilities, she will likely simply disappear in the night. As she is now unemployed in Manhattan, she had been planning to leave for the next town anyway and the recent uproar makes her even more eager to do so.

The mystery around Beverly can lead to a number of other stories. In order to understand the Saunders case, the characters might intentionally pursue other alien abduction cases to look for similarities and perhaps rationalize the underlying phenomena. In addition, Bev is an anomaly herself, as she is the product of a different form of hybrid being created intentionally by the ultraterrestrials. Her apparent uniqueness will be immediately apparent, as she doesn't show up anywhere in the genealogies. Depending on the characters' understanding of the meaning of the genealogies, this might lead to investigations on the nature of psychic individuals not descended from the Grigori.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

At the conclusion of the investigation, the player characters must form a hypothesis (see pages 55-56). For the hypothesis to be considered accurate, the following criteria must be included:

- No actual abductions took place; all the abductees were experiencing the folie à deux phenomenon.
- Beverly is behind the folie à deux; she is projecting her own abduction experience into the minds of others.
- Beverly really was abducted by otherworldly beings one year ago.
- These otherworldly beings experimented on Beverly, and this experience granted her paranormal abilities.

If the players' hypothesis does not cover these four points, they must make a hypothesis role to determine what their characters actually know and are rewarded *experience points* based on the results (see pages 55-56).

Additionally, every character receives 1 XP for participating in the adventure.

◄ A L E T H E I A ►

NAME: _____

ATTRIBUTES

FITNESS: ____ _____
DESCRIPTOR

AWARENESS: ____ _____
DESCRIPTOR

PERSONALITY: ____ _____
DESCRIPTOR

REASON: ____ _____
DESCRIPTOR

EXTRACURRICULAR SKILLS

ART:

ATHLETICS:

BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES:

BUSINESS:

COMPUTER:

FIGHTING:

FORENSICS:

INVESTIGATION:

MEDICINE:

MUSIC:

OUTDOORS:

PHYSICAL SCIENCES:

SHOOTING:

STEALTH:

SURVEILLANCE:

HOBBIES:

OCCUPATION: _____ R P V

OCCUPATION: _____ R P V

MOTIVATION:

POWERS

1★	☐	PRESQUE VU	☐	DEJA VISITE
2★	☐	REMOTE VIEWING	☐	X-RAY VISION
3★	☐	POSTCOGNITION	☐	PRECOGNITION
4★	☐	GHOSTING	☐	TELEPORTATION
5★	☐	TIME TRAVEL		

WILL:

DAMAGE

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20

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ALSO AVAILABLE

Potter's Lake is a small, midwestern town where local legends, wives tales, and sightings of the supernatural abound. Practically every house that has been standing for more than twenty years has reported a haunting of one variety or another, and quirky doesn't even begin to describe some of the townsfolk. In short, Potter's Lake is a strange and unusual place. However, these bizarre happenings are only symptoms of a greater malady, a cancer that will consume this town then spread across the world. Something sinister is brewing in Potter's Lake, and if left unchecked, humanity itself stands at risk.

Heaven & Earth is a role-playing game of surrealism, horror, and absurdity. In the small community of Potter's Lake, strange things are afoot. Players assume the roles of ordinary people caught in an epic greater than they can possibly imagine. They will be swept into the extraordinary events that plague this town with frightening regularity. It is up to them to unlock the secrets of Potter's Lake and discover the truth of what is really going on before it's too late.

There is a place outside of normal existence called the Silhouette Rouge, a place where the conscious and subconscious merge, where the real and unreal are one in the same. The Sarcophagi, creatures lacking memory and identity, are imprisoned within this place. They walk the Silhouette Rouge hoping to divine its secrets for only revelation and enlightenment can grant them release.

Noumenon is a role-playing game of mystery and abstraction. Players assume the roles of the Sarcophagi, strange insect-like creatures trapped within the Silhouette Rouge. During their adventures, players will encounter bizarre entities and explore strange locations. The Silhouette Rouge, *Noumenon's* setting, is detailed enough to spark the imagination yet open enough to allow customization. In *Noumenon*, player cooperation is key. *Noumenon* uses a domino-based task resolution system that enables players to build upon each other's successes.

Transcendence or damnation? The Silhouette Rouge beckons.