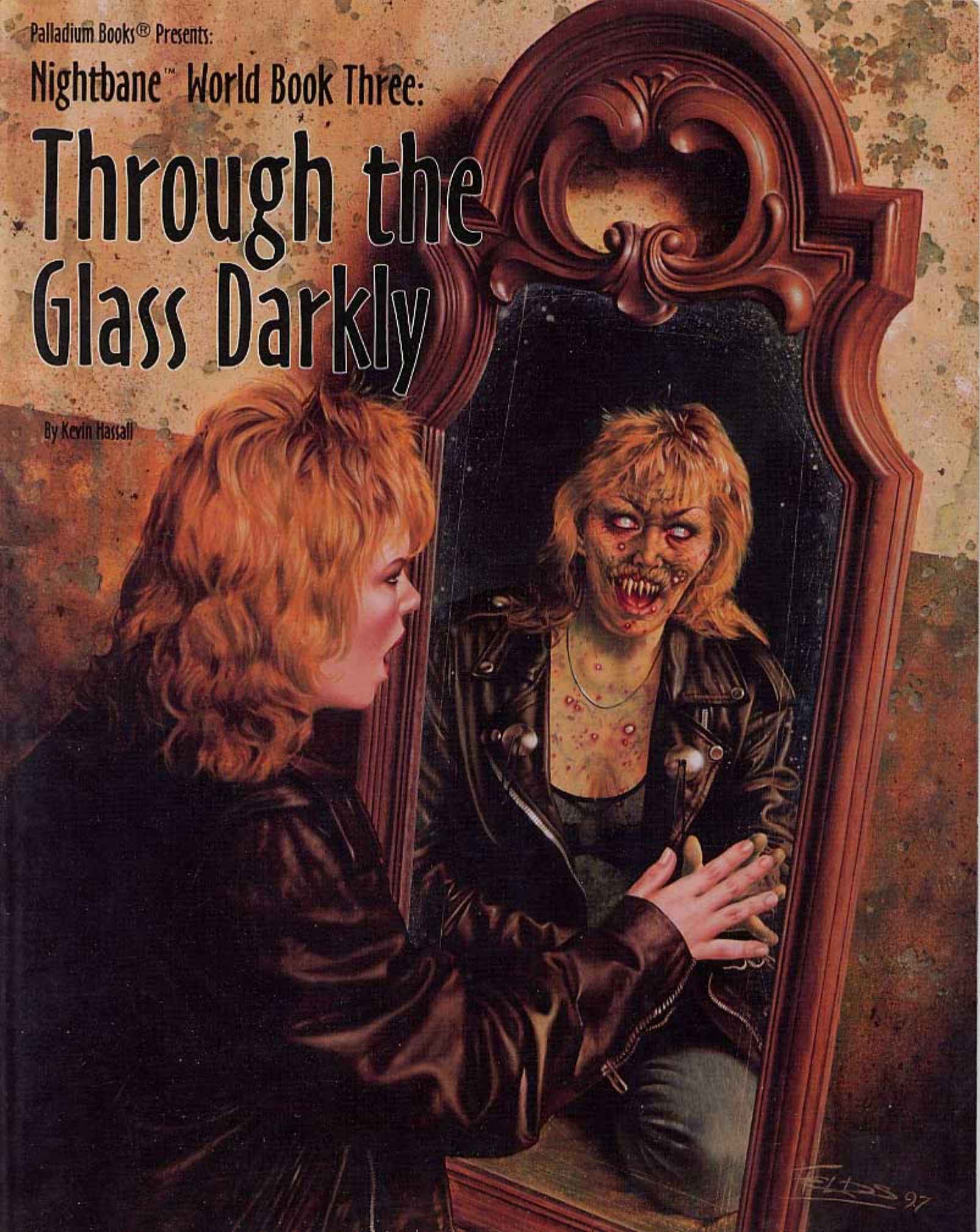


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Through the Glass Darkly

By Kevin Hassall



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Nightbane™ World Book Three:

Through the Glass Darkly

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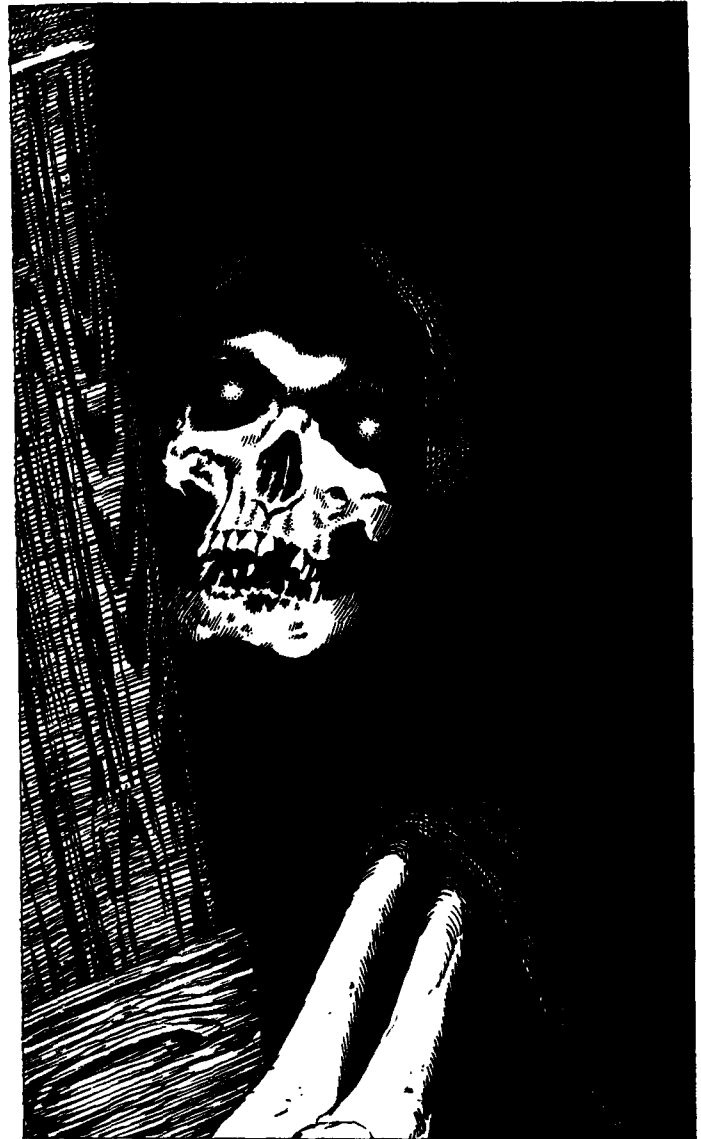
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McKENNA

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Special Thanks and a hearty welcome to writer of the macabre, Kevin Hassall — I loved what he did with this book and I can hardly wait see what he comes up with next. Fred Fields for a haunting cover. Ramon, Scott, Roger, Kent and the other artists for another frightful excursion into the bizarre. And to Maryann, Alex, Jim, Steve and Julius for their subtle magic.

— *Kevin Siembieda*

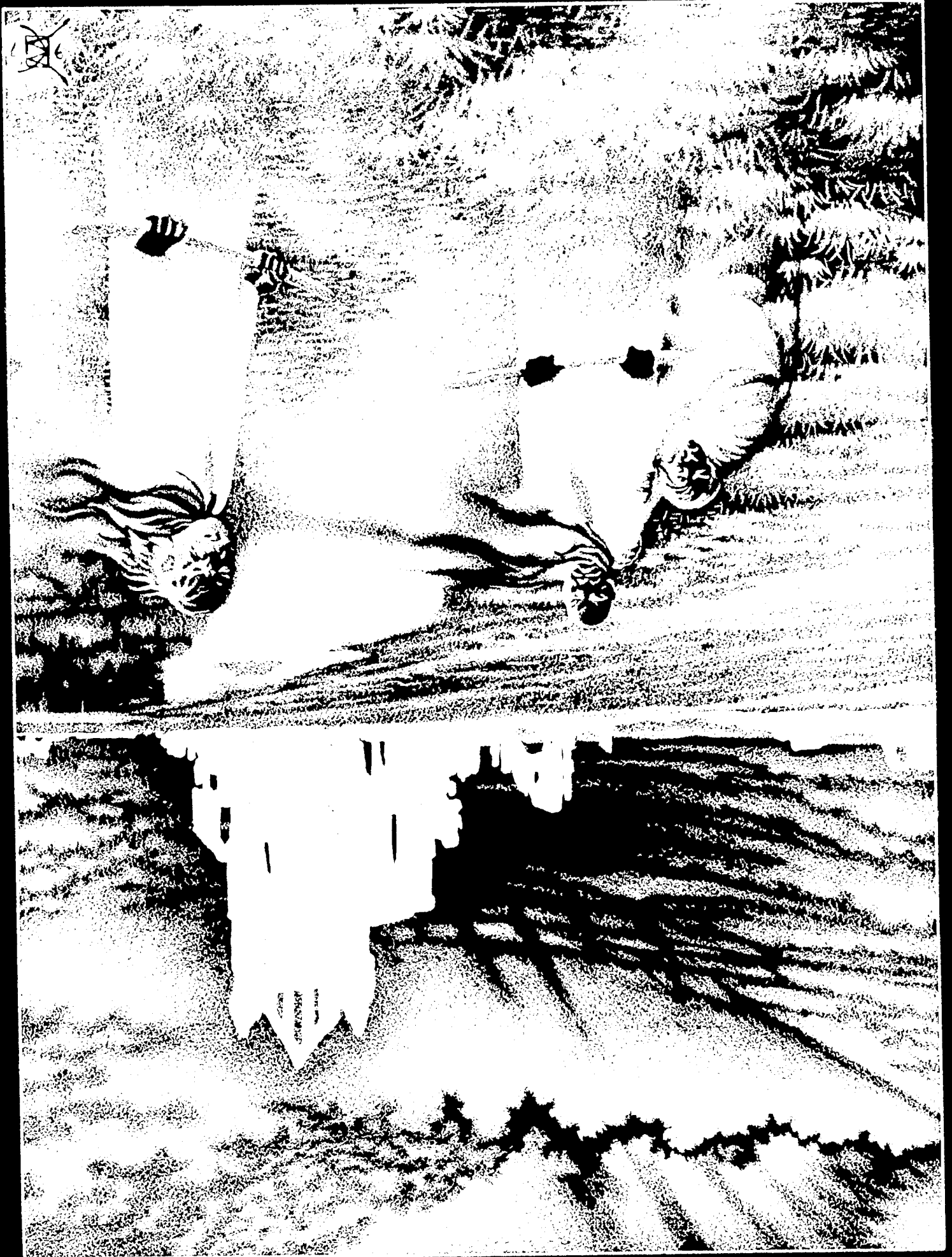
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Musings from the Author

This here is the mortal world, planet earth, the place where you live. There is a lot about this place that you don't understand - the mysteries of science, the paranormal, religion, and big questions like "why are we here." That sort of thing. But at the end of the day, you know enough to get by. You probably understand the basics of physics, you can empathize with other people and try to understand how they think, and you can probably make a go of understanding politics. That leaves a lot of questions unanswered but, on a day to day basis, it's enough.

But in the **Nightlands** there are immortal beings called *Guardians*, newly unleashed powers of magic ... Think about it. How would you react if you were living on Earth after Dark Day? The human race knows nothing, or next to nothing, about these creatures. They, and the recent increase in magical potential, are a complete mystery to everyone. The few people who know anything at all — those who don't accept the official lies about how none of this exists anyway — tend to think that magic is an impersonal force, that the *Nightlords* are kind of like demons who have arrived to enslave the planet, and that the *Guardians* are more like angels unselfishly out for the good of humanity.

Maybe.

Or maybe not.

At best, these opinions are conjecture, at worst, guesswork or desperate hope. No one really knows enough yet to truly understand who or what these powers are, or how they function. Maybe as the years go by (and as we publish more **Nightbane** supplements) it will become clear that the reality of the situation is actually rather more interesting.

Core Ideas: In the following pages you will find new O.C.C.s, new spells, details of two new Brotherhoods, adventure ideas, and more. But as you read through this book, keep these few core ideas in mind.

1. **Nightbane**TM is a horror game. G.M.s and players may wish to play it as a horror-fantasy, a superhero-horror or an earthy-horror game, but the bottom line is that it works best when it is unsettling, tense and uncertain.

2. This book is about foolhardy mortals who mess with powers they can't hope to understand. You might call mages "brave," or you might call them "stupid," and while playing with fire has never been so much fun, remember that magic isn't an inert force and magicians aren't scientists. Make it unpredictable and dangerous.

3. The *Nightlands*TM, beyond the **Mirrorwall**, is a dark and twisted reflection of our own earth. That means that human institutions, events and even many individuals have their own counterparts in the *Nightlands*. Our world and the *Nightlords*' are as closely related as you are to your own reflection. Play with this idea.

4. *Magic is alive!* That doesn't make it intelligent (plankton isn't exactly smart, but it's alive), but it does give it a certain autonomy. Also, don't rule out the idea that magic (like other living things) can **breed** ...

This book looks at magic after Dark Day, and, in the appendix at the back, gives a little information on the cosmology of the universe. If you are playing *Nightbane* (rather than Game Mastering the game) you will have the fun of learning about much of this during play. Don't ruin the fun for yourself by reading all the way through this book; stop reading at the end of the spell descriptions in Chapter 2. If you're a Game Master, then we hope that this book gives you a whole load of ideas on how to make your *Nightbane* world a more interesting, thought-provoking, exciting and horrific place. Enjoy.

— Kevin Hassall

CHAPTER ONE: Magic After Dark Day

One young sorcerer explained magic like this.

"OK. You want to know about magic. Sure. Why not. I've got nothing to lose.

"Daft old guys at kids' parties, clever tricks on TV. Hear the audience applaud, the kiddies giggle. Old men with gray beards —**homely God-look-alikes** with dumb names like **Gandalf**, Merlin, whatever. Fairie stories and pretty little lies.

"Lies.

"There's nothing to giggle at here, nothing to applaud. No clever sleight of hand, no harmless fun. Sorcerers tend not to live long enough to get old and gray. Most that do aren't really human anymore. You play with fire ... you know. Friendly father figures these guys are not.

"And that's something else: most sorcerers aren't "guys." I guess on balance most are women. Don't ask me why. Maybe it's just that X-thousand years of macho posturing makes us men less sensitive. Maybe it's to do with women being people persons — being good at empathizing, understanding, talking — because after Dark Day, if you're messing with magic you're dealing with "people," or whatever you want to call these things. You aren't dealing with impersonal forces. Weaving magic is more like **crafting** a person than making a thing, and then half the time you're only doing magic so you can talk to *something* from the other side.

"The other thing about sorcerers is that most people think of us as being wise. Yeah, right. So you take a whole load of something you don't understand, weave it into a shape it was never meant to be, bring the unholy construct to life, and then have the nerve to boss it about. And that's wise? That's dumb. And I know. I'm a damn fine sorcerer, and I've said and done more dumb things than a whole convention full of politicians.

"When it comes down to it, most sorcerers kicking about today have only been at it since Dark Day (You probably noticed Dark Day — when the sun didn't rise and the rioting was the least of anyone's worries). Some found that when the chips were down and the hordes of the **Nightlands** were baying in their yards, they had powers they never knew they had. Some had been messing with the occult for years, but only now found that they could actually draw on any power. I've heard old hands — the old-timers who knew magic before the Day — say that when the dark came down, leylines shifted and flared, old gods woke, and the whole psychic landscape shifted — whatever all that means.

"Anyhow, think about it. Most of us haven't a clue as to what we're doing. We're fooling with powers we can't even begin to understand, with no formal training, no masters to guide us, and have no benchmarks or points for comparison. Most of us no more than a few phoney occult paperbacks or some **misremembered** "tradition." You find a new spell in a **grimoire** or on the Internet, or you have an idea yourself — well, will it work? Only one way to find out — and God help you if the spell doesn't work like it should. For every real, workable spell that's kicking about, there's got to be a dozen that are flawed, **mistitled** or just don't work. I knew a guy who tried to regrow a severed hand, and he ended up growing an **Ashmedai** out of the stump of his wrist; I knew a woman who tried to enchant a scrying mirror, and ended up looking into the soul of a **Nightlord**. Some folk will go to old sorcerers to get spells checked out before they cast them. But like I said, these old-timers say that everything's changed since Dark Day, so I'm not too sure they could tell if a new spell would work — and anyhow, how do you know you can trust them?"

"Me, no way will I ever use a magic that I don't know for sure is going to work. That means that someone I know, and trust a bit, has to have used it first. Some guys like to band together, to join groups where they can work together with other people to investigate magics, share theories, and all that. Work together? Like hell! This is the modern world, and if **you're** in some big organization, then you've got some big boss — and he's out for himself. You join one of these '**brotherhoods**,' sure you get a few bits of advice and tuition, but you're working for some big boss-man whose motives and aims aren't necessarily yours. You get used. Stick with your friends, I say.

"So, anyway. What is magic? What is magic!

"Beats the hell out of me. I'm just a sorcerer.

"They say that there are places on the planet that naturally resonate magical energy, called ley lines: like huge rivers of power. And at each nexus, where they meet, where the rivers form lakes, if you want to think of it like that, then you get serious power. Apart from that, there's some of this energy in you and in me. I've heard of sorcerers who use blood, or huge machines, or mirrors, to fuel their magics.

"But that doesn't explain what magic is. There's this thing that I've called magical **energy**, and there's a lot of it about. Doesn't help, does it? Living things have power in them. Mirrors can be used to draw power from the **Nightlands**, or from something that stands between the two worlds — what we call the **Mirrorwall**. And ley lines, whatever they are, have power. But that's all '**where**,' not '**what**.'

"I've got this theory, though.

"When you look in the mirror, what do you see? You see yourself, right? Wrong. You look in a mirror and you see something that looks like you — it looks like a living, breathing person, but it isn't. Now, I'm not saying it's not alive: I've known guys that got killed by their own reflections, so don't go thinking those things aren't real. Point is, you look in a mirror and see a semblance of **life**, a reflection of life. And whose life? Someone has to cast a reflection for the mirror to throw it back at them. Magic's the same. You cast a spell or you cast a reflection, same thing: either way, what comes back at you isn't always what you want, but it carries your image. What we do with magic is to cast ourselves at it — we throw our will, our minds, or personalities at some amorphous, semi-living energy — and we leave an imprint, a reflection, in the magics.

"So, if I'm right, we weave life into our magics, and in them we leave little reflections of ourselves. They are, in a perverse way, our children. Little Frankenstein monsters, each is one of our petty conjuring. I pray to God that I'm wrong about this."

What is Magic?

In most role-playing games, it is assumed that magic is a dull, static thing — more like a science than anything else. Spells are like invisible equations: say the right words, make the right gestures, think the right thoughts, and as sure as $2+2=4$, you will get the same result. Just like clockwork. Magic ... like **clockwork?! Where's** the mystery, where's the wonder in that? Where's the **MAGIC** in that?

The **Nightbane™ RPG** is, above all else, a horror game. You can play it in a number of ways — as a dark super-hero game, as a **techno-magic** conspiracy game, as a **Clive Barker** style fantasy — but whatever way, a sense of foreboding and of mystery is central. That means that magic has to be dangerous, uncertain, and mysterious.

So, let's ditch this idea of magic as a science, and have a fresh think about it. Stick with the idea of magic being mental energy (P.P.E.) — bits of **peoples'** minds, which have been torn out and battered into an unnatural shape. We aren't talking about dull mystical energies any more. Now we're talking about abused fragments of peoples' minds. Semi-living structures which might feel, learn, grow, evolve ... **rebel** ... and who knows what else. Much of the rest of this book is playing with these sorts of ideas. As a Game Master, think about this, and see where your mind wants to take it. The more you think about it, the easier you'll **find** it to create weird plot twists and adventure ideas.

Magic Since Dark Day

On Dark Day, the Nightlands and the mortal world shifted closer together. Arcane and magical powers flared, making it easier to cast spells than before, and making new magics possible. At the same time, the **Nightlands'** proximity warped and changed the mortal **world's** magics.

Most spells invented *before* Dark Day work pretty well as they did before (though, not always). However, even the most experienced sorcerers — even the immortals, and the near-immortal arch-mages who have lived for centuries — are having problems creating new magics under these new conditions. For less experienced sorcerers, learning a new spell is a hazardous undertaking (see Chapter 3, The Sorcerous Endeavor, for details on learning spells).

Dark Day also awakened a lot of "dormant" mystical powers in both Nightbane and mortals alike. Mortals with no apparent powers, or who may have had odd hunches, dreams, or insights, now discovered new powers, becoming Mystics. Some people who had dabbled in the occult found that some of those daft old rituals really did have an effect (and woe betide many of **them!**); under stress, some mortals found that through acts of will they could achieve amazing results, and after Dark Day they managed to formalize their efforts so that they could consistently achieve the same effects; these became Sorcerers. Others had powers conferred upon them by outsiders, as they fell under the influence of family curses, the Nightlords' whims, or the plots of older sorcerers.

Belief & Crisis

Dark Day terrified people. It was an epic, inexplicable event, which shook all of the cozy assumptions that people had about living in a stable, safe, scientifically comprehensible world.

Think about it. How would you feel, what would you think, if all of a sudden, day became night and impossible creatures were reported across the world?

After Dark Day, people are frightened, so they seek consolation. They are confused, so they look for answers. In other words, they react as they always have throughout history when faced with an inexplicable disaster. *Lost people* look for leaders, for easy explanations, and for scapegoats.

Some people turn to religion for answers. Evangelical Christians preach that Dark Day was the beginning of the end of the world, saying that it was God's punishment and warning to sinful humanity, exhorting followers to embrace their vision of Christian life as a way to save their souls. Islamic preachers talk, in the same vain, about the wrath of Allah. Cults and minority religions spring up daily, claiming that only their select followers will be saved from the **imminent/commencing** cataclysm. More than ever, people are listening to these extremists.

Others turn to politics. With the world plunged into chaos, people naturally want strong leadership, law and order, and social control. The death penalty, censorship and martial law have swept back into fashion across the planet. Democracies throughout the West have been replaced (in practice if not in name) by oligarchies, juntas and dictatorships. Vigilantes, militias and religious groups impose their own stern moral and social order where governments do not. The *Preserver Party* and its young vigilante activists are merely the American manifestation of a global phenomenon.

And others, desperate for answers and certainties, turn to new-age mysticism, "revivals" of so-called pagan religion, occultism, or magic.

The Occult & Mystical Revivals

In their search for answers, many people are turning to occult and new-age groups. To a large extent, this is a continuation of a trend which started in the late twentieth century — with people abandoning science in favor of magical, spiritual and mystical enlightenment. This may lead them to experiment with meditation, psychic powers, pseudo-

science, crystals, **tarot**, ritual magic, **geomancy**, ouija boards, spiritualism, and **wiccan** witchcraft —some of these are therapeutic, some absurd, and some dangerous.

Many groups already existed before Dark Day. From Greek and African Mystery Religions, to Freemasonry, to the occult groups of the nineteenth century (the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and the OTO are the best known), people have always sought to find a superior secret knowledge which common folk lacked, and to be members of a privileged fraternity. Throughout the twentieth century the descendants of the occult groups prospered, and along with them, voodoo religions, spiritualism, and "rediscovered" (i.e., invented) pagan religions, to name a few.

But since Dark Day, more and more people are experimenting with these fringe ideas and practices. More groups exist, and their members are from a broader cross-section of society. And, with magical powers more potent in the wake of Dark Day, many are finding that some of

these paths can really lead them to discovering new powers and insights. Hundreds of home-published magazines, computer bulletin boards, esoteric book shops and small book publishers have sprung up to support them — even though book shops are watched and raided by the NSB, magazines and books frequently banned, and the bulletin boards closed down on trumped-up charges.

Many people dabble with these ideas, but few have the dedication, persistence, sincerity of belief or mental discipline to actually become magicians. Player characters may meet scores of NPCs who mumble mystical clap-trap and claim to understand magic, but who have no real powers. Sorcerers and mystics are still rare, and for each *true arcanist* there are dozens or hundreds of powerless dabblers. Still, the groups of occultists and **new-agers** provide a fertile breeding ground for new magicians and a forum for discussing and circulating new ideas (and no surprise that the Preservers persecute these groups).

CHAPTER 2: Magic O.C.C.S

By Kevin Hassall & Kevin Siembieda

"I really hate myself in the mornings. I look like something I left in the kitchen too long. Every morning it's still a shock, looking in this shaving mirror. I guess that's why women go through that make-up ritual every day: reflection control, self-mastery, self-confidence. People reckon I can look pretty good, you know, but my reflection is so ugly in the mornings.

"Heavy day ahead. Some fool sorcerer tried to bind his own Nemesis as a Familiar. Basically, tried to make himself his own slave. Bad as guys who try to kill their Nemesis — ugly form of suicide, that. Bloody mess. And things have been getting worse since Dark Day; a pointless invasion if you ask me. Why can't they just stop messing with us? why do they bother? You know, I don't even get paid for sorting this out.

"Pasty-faced, baggy-eyedness in the mornings. I'll swear that's not how I look. Hell, I hope that's not how I look. Still, I guess no one is ever satisfied with their image. Ever wish you could get total control of your appearance? Who doesn't?"

This chapter introduces a number of specialized, magic O.C.C.s and a new R.C.C. for use as player characters and as NPCs. The basic sorcerer and mystic O.C.C.s are outlined in the **Nightbane™** rule book, and are reprinted below for the players' convenience. Other mystical player characters can be found in other supplements of Palladium role-playing games and **sourcebooks**, such as the *Astral Mage O.C.C.* in **Nightbane™ World Book One: Between the Shadows**, the *Line Walker* from the **Rifts® RPG**, the *Blind Mystic* in the **Mystic China** book, the *Diabolist* and *Summoner* in the **Palladium Fantasy RPG**, and so on.

A Few New Skills

Divination (Technical Category): This is a semi-magical Technical skill, which can be taken by any character with an M.E. of at least 13. This skill allows a character to gain insights into the past, present, or future by manipulating a specific process (by casting bones or rune stones, for example, or reading a person's palm). When the skill is selected, the player must decide what *one* process the character is conversant with (see the description of *Divination* in Chapter 3 for details). To use more than one method, the skill must be taken repeatedly. In order to make use of the skill, the character must have several minutes (or more) of peace and tranquillity, and exactly what information is gained (probably vague) is at the discretion of the Game Master. Note that if the character is stressed out, under intense pressure, or in pain, he or she

cannot find the calm and focus necessary to divine anything. Whenever the skill is used, the G.M., rather than the player, should roll for it; that way the player won't know whether the character got genuine information, or a false reading. **Base Skill:** 24% +3% per level.

Imitate Voices & Impersonation (Espionage Category): The ability to *imitate the voice*, accent and expressions of another person or regional dialect. This skill is common among thieves and assassins, as well as demons and other villains. The first number indicates the character's ability to change his voice and imitate accents, inflections and expressions from other regions. A successful roll means *s/he* has disguised his **normal/true** speaking voice and accent, and convincingly sounds like *s/he* is from another region or part of the world.

The second number indicates the character's ability to accurately imitate the voice, inflections and attitude of a *specific* person! This is much more difficult, and the character will either need to know the person being imitated very well, or have spent hours studying *him/her*. **Base Skill:** 36%/16% +4% per level of experience.

Impersonation Note: When combined with the disguise and intelligence skills, the character is able to completely impersonate a specific person or person of a particular occupation (soldier, knight, wizard, priest, etc.). This is likely to include knowledge of the subject being impersonated, military procedure, dress, heraldry/rank, and will usually require speaking the language fluently. This means the character can convincingly impersonate a general type of **person/soldier/advisor** with an accurate disguise, proper action, and language. A failed roll means some element of the impersonation is flawed, most likely some incorrect behavior or character trait, or lack of information about the person being impersonated ("Tell me again what you said that night," etc.). Such "holes" will give the character away sooner or later. Thus, the longer a character remains under the eyes of others, the more likely that something will happen to reveal the character is an impostor. This is fun to role-play, so take advantage of it.

Base Skill: 16% 44% per level of experience for a regional disguise of an average local person (farmer, laborer, vagabond, etc.), +12% +4% to impersonate a person in a specific occupation (sheriff, guard, inspector, messenger, merchant, priest, etc.), and 10% +4% per level of experience to impersonate a specific, known person.

Principles of Magic (exclusive to Magic O.C.C.s and Parapsychologist): Introduced in the **Nightbane** rule book, this skill allows sorcerers to know and *understand the principles of magic*, to recognize

ritual paraphernalia and symbols, utter incantations accurately, distinguish genuine esoteric items from fakes, etc. **Base Skill:** 36% +2% per level of experience for non-mages, but 60% +2% per level for practitioners of magic. All practitioners of magic get this skill (some O.C.C.s may offer a bonus), except the Mystic who starts as a *non-mage* (36%+2% per level of experience) and Acolyte (who starts at 50% +2% per level).

Sculpting & Whittling (Technical Category): The art of molding or carving a three dimensional figure, object or design out of clay, stone or wood. The **percentile** number indicates the quality of technique and appearance. Taking the skill twice indicates a professional quality and gets a bonus of +10%. Selecting it once, indicates a talented amateur. **Base Skill:** 30% +5% per level of experience.

Food For Thought

"For four years I have labored under the misapprehension that I was a craftsman, fashioning and creating magics — like a watchmaker, tampering with unseen mechanisms. But I could not have been more wrong. My creations were not dumb objects, neither predictable nor static. I did not craft. I gave birth — I breathed life. My magics are my children, and oh how prodigal. Do not think that I am being poetical if I tell you that my every careless chant or miswrought ritual pursues me through my nightmares and stalks me through each day. I was never a mechanic. I only wish that I had been a better parent. All children return to claim their inheritance.

"There is a power that I draw on, though I cannot tell you what it is. Perhaps I deal with souls. Perhaps I invoke spirits. Or would you be more comfortable if I told you that I deal with Manna, or Essence, or **Loa**, or Divine Power? All names are masks, formed to hide the truth, to simplify the incomprehensible. Give something a name, and you can believe that you understand it. But I have never understood my 'magics.' I have learned the chants and perfected the gestures, studied the signs and symbols, learned to listen to hidden voices. But, to be candid, in the end I do not know how my enchantments work. I know nothing. I only feel the power flowing through me, and pray — to gods whom I no longer believe in — that I can control it.

"We all have power — all of us. All that I have learned is how to pour out my essence, to take it and to twist it into the forms that I desire, and to replenish my strength by absorbing more from other sources. I have poured out and exhausted my power ... my soul, a hundred times over. I am not the woman that I used to be. But then who am I, whose thoughts are these, and whose voices do I hear sniggering behind my eyes? I have not sold my soul. Rather I have poured it away. I needed no genteel devil to tempt me. My soul is no longer my own, though sometimes we hear it calling to us."

— *Words from a Sorcerer*

Sorcerer O.C.C.

Excerpted from the *Nightbane®RPG*; by C.J. Carella, based on RPG rules, magic and concepts created by Kevin Siembieda

Sorcerers believe that learned knowledge is the secret to magic. Their approach to wizardry is similar to the methods of scientists and scholars, which depends on the accumulation of information. For many, the mastery of the arcane arts involves the meticulous study of ancient formulas, spells, and incantations. Unlike Mystics, sorcerers depend only on their wits, knowledge and magical energy to achieve results.

These modern-day wizards tend to be bookish scholarly types. They are chosen for their belief in the mysterious and their dedication to mas-

tering reality with the force of their will. Under their nerdish exteriors there often lies the heart of an adventurer, willing and able to take on any dangers to learn a little more.

Some sorcerers succumb to the thirst of power, and become self-serving scoundrels who exploit "mere mortals" with their powers. Others try to defend humankind with their hard-learned spells and incantations, usually trying to hide their powers to avoid fear and persecution. The majority tend to concentrate on learning and become detached and sometimes even oblivious to the world around them. After Dark Day, however, even the most absent-minded magician knows that supernatural invaders threaten everything they hold dear, and that their "ivory towers" of scholastic knowledge will offer them no protection.

Through their studies, Sorcerers have developed mystical senses that let them be attuned to ley lines, nexus points, and other mystical "hot spots." They have also learned of the **Nightlands**, and some of them know spells and rituals that let them peer into that mysterious world. Most of them know little about the **Ba'al** and their minions and are now learning the hard way just how dangerous those beings truly are. As students of the occult, Sorcerers have sometimes made contact with **Nightbane** and have even taught a few the arts of magic (see the **Nightbane Sorcerer O.C.C.** on page 118 of the *RPG*).

O.C.C. Abilities & Bonuses

1. Understand the Principles of Magic: Sorcerers know and understand the main principles of magic and sorcery, including rituals, symbols, incantations and paraphernalia. This allows them to distinguish between fake "occult" materials from the real thing, as well as determine the general purpose of specific items and even which supernatural forces are involved. **Base Skill:** 70% +2% per level of experience. A failed roll means the character does not realize or misunderstands the significance of the evidence, dismissing it as fake, or maybe thinking a forgery or charlatan's **scribblings** are authentic.

2. Sense Ley Lines and Nexus Points: The sorcerer's senses enable him to see ley lines, which are invisible to normal humans. The character will "see" the faint traces of psychic energy running down the ley lines or seething at nexus points. **Range:** Line of sight or one mile (1.6 km), whichever is less.

3. Initial Spell Knowledge: The sorcerer has the dedication, understanding and powers to focus and concentrate to cast magical invocations, read magic, and learn spells. At first level, the sorcerer may select three spells from each magic levels one to four, for a total of twelve spells (three from each). Each additional level of experience, the character will be able to figure **out/select** one new spell equal to his own level of **achievement/experience**.

4. Learning New Spells: Additional spells and rituals of any magic level can be learned or purchased at any time regardless of the sorcerer's experience level. See the *Pursuit of Magic*, page 124 of the **Nightbane RPG** and Chapter Three of this book for learning and creating new forms of magic

5. Magic Bonuses: +4 to save vs magic, +4 to save vs possession, +2 to save vs mind control, and +4 to save vs horror factor.

6. P.P.E.: Sorcerers become living batteries of mystic energy. The base P.P.E. of the sorcerer is determined by rolling **1D6x10** and adding it to the P.E. attribute. Add 2D6 P.P.E. per level of experience.

Sorcerer O.C.C.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 12, M.E. 10, and P.E. 12.

O.C.C. Skills:

Read/Write/Speak Native Language — 98%

Mathematics: Basic (+25%)

Computer Operation (+15%)

Research (+25%)

Two Lore skills of choice (+20%)

Two languages of choice (+15%)

One additional technical skill of choice (+15%)



Hand to hand: basic can be selected as one "other" skill, hand to hand: expert at the cost of two "other" skills, or martial arts (or assassin if an evil alignment) for the cost of three "other" skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select ten other skills, but two must be from the science category. Plus select two additional skills at level three, one at level six, one at level nine, and one at level twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communication: Any

Medical: Any (+5%)

Military: None

Physical: Any

Pilot: Any (+5%)

Pilot Related: Any

Rogue: None

Science: Any (+10%)

Technical: Any (+10%)

W.P.: Any

Wilderness: Any

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select six secondary skills from those listed. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonus listed in parentheses. All secondary skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: Varies. Most sorcerers own a small library (with books on history, the occult, myths and legends, etc.), a personal computer, pocket tape recorder, note pad, magnifying glass, backpack, work, casual and dress clothes, an inexpensive car or jeep, and other useful items.

Money: 3D6x100 +200 in cash, and 3D6x1,000 in property (includes equipment, vehicle and similar items).

Mystic O.C.C.

Excerpted from the *Nightbane*®RPG; by C.J. Carella,
based on RPG rules, magic and concepts created by Kevin
Siembieda



Sorcerers with their books and scrolls and complex studies represent one side of the magical coin. The other can be found among primitive peoples, and include New Age gurus, rainmakers, shamans and medicine men. The magical knowledge of these mystics is intuitive rather than rational. The mystic simply accepts the fact that he suddenly knows something and has learned to trust his feelings and hunches. Where sorcerers research and practice, mystics meditate and disregard formal education in favor of following a "cosmic" or "spiritual" path. They open themselves to the realms of magic, and their magic is no less effective for being granted from outside themselves.

Mystics not only have magical powers, but their connection to the natural psychic emanations of the world gives them a number of psionic powers as well. Theirs is the power to sense the presence of the supernatural; mystics from a hundred cultures were instantly aware that the world was being invaded moments before Dark Day started. Many of them have chosen to fight the enemy at all costs.

For the most part, mystics live in areas/cultures removed from the chaos and materialism of the "civilized" world. In the U.S., many mystics are Native Americans living on reservation, as well as Caribbean practitioners of Voudoun or **Santeria**, gypsies, **neo-pagans**, Taoist mystics, etc. An individual can be taught the ways of mysticism, usually involving philosophy, meditation, and an opening of **one's** mind and body to the world around them. Many mystics claim that one does not learn to become a mystic, but is born with the gift.

O.C.C. Abilities & Bonuses

1. Psychic Powers: At first level, the mystic gains the following powers: clairvoyance, exorcism, sense evil and sixth sense. Select three additional abilities from the Psychic Sensitive category and two from the Healer category. At levels three, five, seven and ten, select one additional power from either of those two categories. Considered to be a major psionic. **I.S.P.:** $1D4 \times 10$ plus the character's M.E. number. Add $1D6+1$ I.S.P. per each additional level of experience.

2. Initial Spell Knowledge: Like everything else, the mystic's spell knowledge comes from within the character himself, on an intuitive level. The character spends years pondering about life, his place in it, and how magic might help him find that place in the world. If the character's outlook is happy/optimistic, the spells are likely to be of a helpful, healing, protective and defensive nature. If the outlook or goal is power, wealth and prestige, the spells are likely to be of a more aggressive and offensive nature. A dark view of the world will result in spells that are defensive and revealing, as well as offensive or necromantic in nature. At the end of this period of contemplation, focus and development (usually taking years), the mystic finds himself gifted with magical powers.

At first level, select a total of six spells from the first and second magic levels. Once selected, they cannot be changed.

3. Learning new spells: The mystic will intuitively sense when he or she has reached a new metaphysical plateau (new level of experience). At each new junction in life, the character will find the time to meditate on life, his goals, and magic.

At second level of experience, the mystic can select a total of three additional spells from levels one, two, and three. Upon reaching the third level of experience, the mystic can select another three new spells from levels one to four. At fourth level and above, the mystic can select two additional spells from any of the **levels**, up to his corresponding experience level. Thus, a sixth level mystic can select two spells from any of the levels 1-6. These new spells (starting at 4th level) can be selected from *any* magic category: Wizardry/Sorcery, **Fleshsculptor**, Mirror-mage, etc. Unlike the sorcerer, the mystic cannot learn spells independently nor is he likely to read symbols, runes or perform rituals; he is dependent on his *intuitive* senses to gain all of his magic powers.

4. P.P.E.: $1D4 \times 10$ plus P.E. attribute number. Add $1D6+1$ P.P.E. per additional level of experience.

5. Bonuses: +1 to save versus psychic attacks, +3 to save vs horror factor, +1 to save vs magic at levels three, six, nine and twelve, and +1

to spell strength (the number others must save against when you cast a spell) at levels four, eight, and twelve.

Mystic O.C.C.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 9, M.E. 9 and M.A. 9 or higher.

O.C.C. Skills:

Read/Speak Native Language 98%

Select one additional language (+15%)

One Lore skill of choice (+20%)

Dance (+10%)

One Domestic skill of choice (+10%)

Hand to hand: basic can be selected as one "other" skill, hand to hand: expert at the cost of two "other" skills, or martial arts (or assassin if an evil alignment) for the cost of three "other" skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select ten other skills, but at least two of them must be technical. Plus select one additional skill at levels three, six, nine, and twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any

Domestic: Any (+5%)

Electrical: None

Espionage: Wilderness survival only (+10%)

Mechanical: None

Medical: Holistic Medicine only (+10%)

Military: None

Physical: Any

Pilot: Any

Pilot Related: Any

Rogue: Any

Science: Any

Technical: Any (+10%)

W.P.: Any

Wilderness: Any (+5%)

Secondary Skills: The character gets to select six secondary skills from those listed. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonus listed in parentheses. All secondary skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: Most mystics will own very little, typically a pair of walking shoes, boots, a pair of gloves, a hat, travelling cloths, **rain/trench** coat, knapsack, backpack, mirror, portable radio or CD player, staff or walking stick and personal items.

A few of the more wealth-oriented ones may find themselves owning a huge mansion, a fleet of vehicles and other symbols of wealth and prestige. On the downside, these mystics are very rare, because they were easily found and destroyed during the days following Dark Day.

Money: Average Mystic: 2D6×100 in cash and 1D6×1,000 in possessions. Wealth-oriented Mystic: 4D4×1,000 in cash and 4D6×10,000 in possessions (includes housing, vehicles and equipment).

Acolyte O.C.C.

The Acolyte is not a wielder of magic, per se. Perhaps this is because **s/he** is a natural skeptic or cynic, or because **s/he** lacks the mental discipline to cast magic. However, while the character can never personally manipulate magic energy, **s/he** understands that there are powers of some sort (even if **s/he** suspects that it may be mere trickery, or psychic activity) which are *called* magic, and which can be very useful indeed. Thus, the Acolyte is a dabbler and assistant to sorcerers, supernatural beings, cults and Brotherhoods.

As a skilled aide, the Acolyte may help in preparing, cataloging, and storing components, organize libraries and data bases, help in rituals and aid in research. **S/he** also knows enough about the arcane to recognize magical objects and texts (see *Peripheral Magic Knowledge*), and can be invaluable as a diplomat, servant, assistant, researcher, spy, scout **and/or** bodyguard. Unlike a magician, the Acolyte has not spent years and years learning to deal with magic, so while **s/he** has a rudimentary understanding and respect for the mystic arts, the character's *strengths* lay in other areas.

O.C.C. Abilities & Bonuses

1. Magic Bonuses: +1 to save vs magic at levels two, five, ten and fifteen; +1 to save vs possession, +1 to save vs mind control, and +1 to save vs horror factor at levels one, four, seven, ten and thirteen.

2. Peripheral Magic Knowledge: The Acolyte has a rudimentary understanding of how magic works, including preparations for spells and rituals, the basic purpose/function of the ritual, incantations, and paraphernalia, as well as legends and rumors concerning spells, rituals, people, places and monsters associated with magic. This enables the Acolyte to distinguish between fake "occult" materials and genuine articles, recognize enchantments, how to handle and prepare materials for rituals, guess at the basic (and most obvious) **meaning/purpose** for a magic circle, ritual or component; and some idea of the supernatural forces involved. **Base Skill for Principles of Magic:** 50% +2% per each additional level of experience.

In addition, an Acolyte may select semi-magical skills such as Divination (in place of any O.C.C. Related Skill) and any of the lores.



3. P.P.E.: The Acolyte starts with the regular P.E. attribute number +2D6 P.P.E., but only gains an extra 1D4 points per each subsequent level, starting with level two.

4. Psychic Powers: All Acolytes are considered a minor or latent psychic. However *s/he* does not *necessarily* start with any psychic powers. Any one psychic ability may be selected in place of any one *Secondary Skill*, but only when the character is first created (as many as all six of the skills can be traded in for psionics). Additionally, instead of learning a new O.C.C. related skill at later levels, *s/he* may choose to develop a new psychic ability instead. Initial **I.S.P.** is limited to M.E. attribute number plus 2D6. The Acolyte gets +1D6 per additional level of experience.

Acolyte O.C.C.

Attribute Requirements: M.E. 9 or higher. An I.Q. of 9 or higher is **handy**, but not required.

O.C.C. Skills:

Read/Write/Speak Native Language 98%

Mathematics: Basic (+20%)

Computer Operation (+15%)

Research (+25%)

Two Lore skills of choice (+20%)

Two Languages (+20%)

Two Weapon Proficiencies of choice (**Any**)

Hand to Hand: Basic

Hand to hand: expert may be selected in place of one "other" skill, or martial arts (or assassin, if of evil alignment) as two "other" skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select eight other skills from the list below. Plus, select two additional skills at level three, and one at levels six, nine and twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+15%)

Domestic: Any (+10%)

Electrical: Any (+5%)

Espionage: Any (+10%)

Mechanical: Any (+5%)

Medical: Any (+5%)

Military: Any

Physical: Any

Pilot: Any (+5%)

Pilot Related: Any

Rogue: Any (+10%)

Science: Any (+5%)

Technical: Any (+10%)

W.P.: Any

Wilderness: Any

Secondary Skills: The character also gets six secondary skills from those listed. None of the additional percentages listed in parentheses apply, and all start at base level. Remember, these skills can be traded in for psionics when the character is first created.

Standard Equipment: The Acolyte has few personal possessions; at most a personal computer, television, **videocassette** player, stereo/CD player, tape recorder, notebooks, pens and markers, pocket calculator, flashlight, a cheap car or motorbike, a few changes of clothes and a few personal items.

Money: 2D6×200 in cash plus a maximum of 3D6×1000 in property (including car, computer, etc., mentioned above).

Note: The Acolyte's master/employer provides for most other basic needs such as room and board (usually stays with or near the employer), special work clothes or disguises, special equipment, and special modes of transportation (leased car, plane ticket, etc.).

Channeller O.C.C.

Along with the formal sorcerers and knowledgeable mystics, the earth after Dark Day also has a number of "spontaneous" magicians — people without any formal training or special insight, but who possess amazing powers. They have no need to focus their minds or mutter incantations to cast magic. In many cases, they are actually unaware that they are the ones responsible for the weirdness around them. As time goes by, their intuitive powers grow.

Such characters may believe that they have unique "innate abilities" (or even superpowers) which make it unnecessary for them to spend as much effort on magic as normal magicians. Most likely, however, they are drawing their power, "Channelling" it, from some other sentient "Source." As examples, the character may have had powers conferred by a powerful Guardian, Ancient Sorcerer, or Nightlord. Or the character may have "inherited" an ancient hereditary connection to a powerful magical site (perhaps the character is the sole surviving descendant of the priests who once operated a certain temple or megalith), or the character may benefit from being the descendant (or reincarnation) of a powerful sorcerer. The G.M. *may* elect to determine the source of a player character **Channeller's** powers without informing the player. This all adds to the sense of mystery and drama, because the character may never know his mysterious benefactor, good or evil, or whether *s/he* is being subtly manipulated or used by some dark **and/or** inhuman force.

Many other magic O.C.C.s regard **Channellers** with concern and suspicion. They ask the question, "If one does not know where his power comes from, how can he know that he's not the pawn or dupe of a higher and monstrous being?" This also means that Channellers are *not* often welcomed among Brotherhoods of the more studious and learned magic O.C.C.s, including Sorcerers, **Fleshsculptors** and **Mirrorimages**. **Nightbane** also regard most Channellers with concern. **Note:** See number three, *Magical Limitations*, under the **Channeller's** O.C.C. Abilities & Bonuses for more about the mysterious "Source."

Random Source of the Channeller's Powers

The following table is offered as an *optional* means of determining the Source of the character's powers. G.M.s, either roll percentile for random determination or pick one (or use these as inspiration for your own invention).

01-10 Absorbs and directs ambient P.P.E. around him. Reduce the normal O.C.C. bonuses by half and the *outside P.P.E. bonus* is only 1D6×10 points. This character may be a bit weaker but at least *s/he* is not dependent on a supernatural benefactor.

11-15 P.P.E. Vampire! Draws on the P.P.E. of other living beings around him. Disregard the usual P.P.E. Base for this character; *s/he* also lacks powers #6 and #7. In this **case**, the P.P.E. Vampire must draw energy from those around him. Can *take* up to 10% of a **character's** base **P.P.E.**; maximum amount of 20 P.P.E. points per level of experience from unwilling subjects (human, Nightbane and animals; cannot draw energy from Nightlords or supernatural beings) within a 200 foot/61 m diameter, or up to 50% from willing subjects (friends, comrades, fellow believers in a cause, participants in a ritual, etc.; within limits). However, the character's personal and permanent P.P.E. base is a meager 1D6 points +P.E. attribute number and 1D6 per level of experience.

16-25 Powers are conferred through an ancient (and unexplained) hereditary connection to a powerful magical site. Possibly directed by the spirit of one's ancestors, people or faith.

26-35 Conferred by a powerful Guardian.

36-50 Conferred by a Nightlord.

51-60 Conferred by a powerful and ancient sorcerer.

61-70 Conferred by the **spirit(s)** of one's ancestors.



71-75 Conferred by a **spirit(s)** of nature.

76-80 Conferred by an Immortal (or ancient dragon).

81-85 Conferred by an Astral Mage or other powerful Astral being.

86-95 Conferred by a supernatural power: a powerful demon lord, alien intelligence, deity, etc. The Source can be good, selfish or evil, but whose identity may forever remain a mystery to the **Channeller**.

96-00 Conferred by The Dark! The mysterious force that empowers the Nightlords themselves (see **World Book 2: Nightlands**). However, The Dark does not make its identity known, and the character's powers are insignificant compared to the **Nightlords**'.

O.C.C. Abilities & Bonuses

1. Psychic Powers: The Channeller selects one psionic power from the *Psychic Sensitive* category at experience levels 1-5. At level six and beyond, the character may select a new power from *any* psychic category — one each time **s/he** goes up to a new level. Considered to be a major psychic. **LS.P.:** M.E. attribute plus 2D6 at first level, and +2D6 per additional subsequent level of experience.

2. Spell Knowledge: a) Intuitive Spell Knowledge: The Channeller does not begin with any spells, but starting at level two experience, the character may spontaneously "discover," e.g. intuitively know and recall, one spell. These "discovered" spells are limited to incantations selected from Wizard/Sorcerer spells levels 1-6, regardless of the character's current level. Once "discovered" this spell can be recalled in times of need, for self-defense, or upon intense concentration. Discovered spells are a part of the character's permanent spell casting abilities, much like those of the Mystic. Once **s/he** knows the spell **s/he** may consciously and deliberately attempt to cast it whenever **s/he** desires.

b) Unexpected Spell Events: When under great stress, e.g. in personal danger/self preservation or when struggling to save the life of another person (especially a friend or loved one), the Channeller *may* be able to cast virtually *any* type of spell (not **rituals**!) The G.M.'s decision is final when determining exactly what is a "time of need or great stress" and must approve or even select the spell drawn upon by the Channeller. This ability may be considered an *instinctive* and often *uncontrolled* response to life-threatening, frightening and emotional situations. This being the case, the magic may appear without the character's (or the player's) intent, manifesting as a reflex response to the character's desperate situation or emotional state of mind. This means the magic may not be *deliberate* and may be beyond the character's control.

"Undiscovered" spells can be of *any* level **1-15** and can sometimes include spells normally reserved for other magic O.C.C.s like **Fleshsculptor** or **Mirrorimage** spells. These spells remain a mystery to the Channeller (they cannot be recalled or reused), because they just suddenly happen. The Channeller is not likely to even know most of these unexpected spells by name! The magic that occurs is typically a subconscious *response* to a particular threat to, or of serious concern to, the Channeller.

Ultimately, the G.M. can decide when and what type of unexpected spell might occur. As a helpful rule of thumb, we offer the following: The success ratio for unknown ("undiscovered") spells not exceeding the **Channeller's** current level of experience is 01-60%. Spells one level or higher than the **Channeller's** current level of experience have only a 01-12% chance of occurring (unless the G.M. thinks otherwise).

Of course, the Channeller must have sufficient P.P.E. to cast the spell whether **s/he** knows it or not, and unexpected spell events will burn up P.P.E. whether **s/he** intentionally wanted the magic to happen or not. However, the P.P.E. used in these *unexpected* spell events is *half* that of normal. **More trouble:** The damage and duration of these unexpected, "undiscovered" spell occurrences are *almost always* beyond the **Channeller's** control. This means they happen with the maximum damage and duration for that spell (equal to the Channeller's current experience level). Nor can the Channeller prematurely stop the unexpected spell occurrence by willing it away. Usually it runs its full course on its own.

3. Magical Limitations & Considerations: All "discovered" spells are limited to spells commonly associated with **sorcery/wizardry** and the **Channeller** can never "discover" a spell higher than sixth level.

Another unpredictable aspect of the **Channeller's** abilities is that **s/he** can accidentally or unwittingly activate and power magical circles, devices and artifacts that require P.P.E. by unconsciously directing ambient (not his own) magic energy to them.

Problems concerning the Source: The character's magic is likely to fail (at the G.M.'s discretion) if the Channeller attempts to use it to the detriment of the magic's real *Source* (e.g. if it is used to attack the being who is secretly channeling power into the character). Likewise, the real Source of the magic can influence the magic being cast by the Channeller. If it so desires it, the Source can prematurely end a **spell's** effects *before* its normal duration has expired (or before the Channeller intended; much to his surprise), or alter the details of the **spell's** operation (e.g. shorten or lengthen the duration by as much as 50%, reduce or increase damage by as much as 50%, limit who is affected, and similar).

Since it is the Source (G.M. discretion) who provides the Channeller with his spell casting powers, bonuses and a good portion of his P.P.E., this mysterious benefactor *may* decide to prevent the character from "**discovering**"/**learning** a particular spell which The Source does not approve of, or allow only the "discovery" of spells which it wants its vessel to possess. Furthermore, the **Channeller's** magic bonuses disappear should **s/he** challenge or confront The Source of his powers. Worse, a benefactor who becomes disenchanted or angry with the Channeller may completely withdraw his powers.

If at any time the Source withdraws its support from the Channeller, the character loses all O.C.C. bonuses, all P.P.E. supplied from the outside Source, and **s/he** cannot **discover/learn** new spells, or gain new psychic powers. However, **Channellers** are vessels that attract supernatural forces, so it will only be a matter of time before a new, mysterious *sponsor* will enter the picture; 3D4 weeks.

Note: Channellers may never learn ritual magic, nor take proficiencies or limitations which presuppose a *ritual* element to spell casting.

4. Magic Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +2 to save vs magic, +6 to save vs possession, +2 to save vs horror factor, and +1 to save vs mind control at levels 1, 3, 6, 9, 12 and 15. Energy attacks (**fire**, lightning, electricity, and even laser beams) do half damage.

5. P.P.E.: At first level the character has a base P.P.E. of 2D6 plus the P.E. attribute number. Add 2D6 per additional level of experience, starting with level two. In addition, the character has a *bonus P.P.E. reserve* (which functions as normal P.P.E., but comes from the true *Source* of the **character's** power and should be recorded separately) of 1D6×10+25 P.P.E. The only exception is the P.P.E. Vampire and Ambient Channeller (see the first two entries in the optional random table, above).

6. Commune with Spirits: The Channeller may be resistant to actual possession, but **s/he** is sensitive to spirits and can *see* them, including astral travelers, entities, energy beings, sentient or independent "living" magic, ghosts and similar life essences. To commune, the Channeller must meditate and allow the spirit to enter his body and seize just enough control to speak through him. The spirit hears questions and voices from those around the Channeller and can use the character's vocal cords and mouth to answer them or issue threats or warnings. Note that answers to questions are not always truthful and the Channeller does not hear or remember anything said while he's entranced.

The Channeller can break contact at any time **s/he** desires or when **s/he** senses danger from the spirit or outside sources (within the range of normal senses). Likewise, the spirit can leave whenever it desires, and is forced out at the moment the Channeller breaks his meditative trance.

7. Channel Mystic Energy: The Channeller can also draw and redirect or expel mystic energy. This means **s/he** can dispel or transform negative chi into positive (P.P.E. cost 30); perform exorcism (P.P.E.

cost 10) through the laying of hands and concentration to force out an evil, living energy being (takes six minutes and has a success rate of 50% +3% per level of experience); draw P.P.E. from an artifact and dispel it into the air or absorb it into himself (cannot exceed normal personal P.P.E.); or instantly transfer all or part of his P.P.E. into another character or magic artifact via touch (slowly dissipates from living beings unless it is used within the hour; remains inside an artifact until it is drawn upon). This transferred P.P.E. can be used by the Channeller as long as the character or object is within a 100 ft (30.5 m) radius.

8. Dowsing: This is the ability to locate fresh water whether it be with a divining rod or by more scientific and logical means. For the Channeller, this is a mystical ability that enables him to sense the movement of underground and surface water. The percentage number indicates the success ratio for locating fresh water. A player can roll once every melee to see if **his/her** character senses water, but must roll *two consecutive* successful rolls to locate the water source. **Base Skill:** 30% +5% per level of experience.

Channeller O.C.C.

Attribute Requirements: M.E. 9 and M.A. 9 or higher.

O.C.C. Skills:

Read/Write/Speak Native Language 98%

Mathematics: Basic (+25%)

Meditation (same as the psionic power)

Computer Operation (+10%)

Pilot Automobile (+10%)

Two languages at +15% or one language at +30% may be selected in place of one "other" skill.

Select three other skills (+15%) which reflect the character's previous or current employment and background.

Hand to hand: basic may be selected as one "other" skill, or hand to hand: expert in place of two "others," or martial arts (or assassin, if of evil alignment) as three "other" skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select eight other skills, but no more than four from any one category. Plus, select two additional skills at level three, and one at levels six, nine and twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+5%)

Domestic: Any (+10%)

Electrical: Any (+5%)

Espionage: Intelligence and Wilderness Survival only.

Mechanical: Any (+5%)

Medical: Any

Military: None

Physical: Any

Pilot: Any

Pilot Related: Any

Rogue: None

Science: Any (+5%)

Technical: Any (+10%)

W.P.: Any

Wilderness: Any

Secondary Skills: The character also gets six secondary skills from those listed. None of the additional percentages listed in parentheses apply, and all start at base level.

Standard Equipment: Varies. Most own a personal computer, inexpensive car or jeep, and several sets of clothes, plus other personal possessions (stereo, watch, etc.).

Money: 3D6×100+200 in cash. 3D6×1000 in property (including car, computer, and similar equipment).



Cybermage O.C.C.



The Cybermage O.C.C. is the magician of the modern age; part magus, part mechanic, part psychic and part physicist. The O.C.C. can be used as a player character, but has the disadvantage that *Cybermagic* is very expensive (financially) to create and maintain. This isn't a problem if the G.M. and player are prepared to spend a bit of time thinking about where all the *Cybermage's* money is coming from, but it does require a bit of thought. Be careful that this character and his resources don't overshadow the other player characters. Also note that *Cybermages* who are too flamboyant with their creations, wealth or public persona will attract the attention of the *Nightlords* and their minions, making the mage a target for integration into the ranks (minions) of the *Nightlords* or extermination. Likewise, a *Cybermage* may be recognized and recruited by *Nightbane*, freedom fighters, sorcerous cults, and other groups. These groups may also see the mage as a potential ally, competitor, traitor or enemy, and respond accordingly.

O.C.C. Abilities & Bonuses

1. Initial Spell Knowledge: Like the sorcerer, the Cybermage begins with three spells from each magic level one through four (total of twelve spells), but s/he also automatically gets the *Fleshsculptor* spells *ofuse bones*, *preserve living flesh*, and *replace flesh* (each at double the P.P.E. needed by *Fleshsculptors*).

Each subsequent level of experience, the character can figure out *one* new spell equal to, or less than, his own level. These new spells are limited to *Sorcery/Wizard* spells from levels 1-15 and *Fleshsculptor* spells from levels 1-3, only!

2. Learning Further Spells: The character may learn any spell or *Cybermagic* at any time, regardless of level, presuming that a tutor or formal *text/blueprint* can be found. However, the character is likely to find that gaining access to tuition or comprehensibly written versions of *Cybermagic* is time consuming, expensive and unlikely.

3. Casting Spells & Creating Cybermagic: Under normal circumstances, a Cybermage may only *cast* magic spells equal to or less than his level. However, the mage can create *Cybermagic* (bio-electrical devices incorporating living tissue, electronic components, and often mechanical or computer parts) equal to a spell of any level.

When creating *Cybermagic*, the magician casts the magic into the specially built "machine," casting the spell as normal. The machine then functions to maintain the spell, so that the spell becomes part of the machine's function with extended and even limitless duration. Further, the targets of such machines are at -2 to save vs their effects. Turning the machine "on" effectively casts the spell; turning it off ends the effect. Each magical machine/device can only hold one spell.

Until the machine is actually dismantled or destroyed, the *Cybermage cannot* recover the P.P.E. used to create it (the cost of the spell cast into the machine). See below for more details.

Note: The union of magic and machines may make *Cybermagic* sound a bit similar to *Techno-Wizardry* found in the *Rifts® RPG*, but *Techno-Wizards* do not enslave or use living creatures or living flesh of any kind. Both are distinctly different areas of magical study. In fact, *Cybermagic* is more closely related to the *Splugorth's Bio-Wizardry* (see *Rifts® World Book 2: Atlantis*).

4. Magic Bonuses: +2 to save vs magic at levels one and eight, +2 to save vs possession, +2 to save vs mind control, and +3 to save vs horror factor.

5. P.P.E.: At first level, the character has a basic P.P.E. of 1D6×10 +P.E. attribute. Add 2D6 per additional level of experience.

6. Psionic Powers: The *Cybermage* automatically gets the psionic powers of *object read* (limited only to the purpose and function of an object), *mind block* and *speed reading* (telemechanics, as found in other Palladium RPGs, is optional). No additional psionic powers are available. **I.S.P.** is limited to M.E. attribute number plus 1D4 per level of experience.



Cybermage O.C.C.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 14, M.E. 9 and M.A. 9 or higher.

O.C.C. Skills:

- Read/Write/Speak Native Language 98%
- Principles of Magic (same as Sorcerer)
- Basic Electronics (+20%)
- Basic Mechanics (+20%)
- Mathematics: Basic (+35%)
- Computer Operation (+25%)
- Computer Programming (+15%)
- One modern W.P. of choice
- Two languages at +15% or one language at +30% may be selected in place of one "other" skill.

Hand to hand: basic may be selected as one "other" skill or hand to hand: expert in place of two "other," or martial arts (or assassin, if of evil alignment) as three "other" skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select ten other skills from the list below. **Plus**, select two additional skills at level three, and one at levels six, nine and twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

- Communications: Any (+15%)
- Domestic: Any (+5%)
- Electrical: Any (+15%)
- Espionage: None
- Mechanical: Any (+15%)
- Medical: Any
- Military: Demolitions and Demolitions Disposal only
- Physical: Any
- Pilot: Any
- Pilot Related: Any
- Rogue: Computer Hacking only (+20%)
- Science: Any (+10%)

- Technical: Any
- W.P.: Any
- Wilderness: None

Secondary Skills: The character also gets eight secondary skills from those listed. None of the additional percentages listed in parentheses apply, and all start at base level.

Standard Equipment: Most **Cybermages** own a workshop (anything from the whole of a derelict factory to a pile of tools in the back of a van), several personal computers (1D4+2; none of which work quite right), a cheap car, van or jeep, casual and work clothes, plus whole piles of bizarre electrical and mechanical components, and petty personal possessions (stereo, **wristwatch**, calculator, etc.).

Money: 1D6x1000 in cash. 3D6x2000 in property (including car, computers, tools, etc.). *May* also have available funds **and/or** access to facilities **and/or** research and development funds via sponsorship by private industry, scholastic institution or Brotherhood, or some similar resource, at the G.M.'s discretion. Note, however, that affiliation with any organization is likely to come with some distasteful baggage: connections with undesirables (evil mages, NSB, Spook Squad, Nightlords, foreign governments, secret Brotherhoods, etc.), guilt by association, restriction of the **character's** freedom, deadlines, budgets, and any or all of the character's research, data and creations are likely to be owned or co-owned (or stolen) by the sponsoring institution.

Cybermagic

In creating Cybermagic, the Mage charges a part-living machine with magical energy, allowing the machine to maintain a spell over any duration without a conventional power supply. Note that all **Cybermages** include living tissue (the enchantments actually prevent this tissue from dying or rotting) combined with metals, plastic, electronics, and machine parts. Spells which usually cannot affect metal or plastic objects (e.g. fly) can still be cast **on/into** Cybermagic artifacts.

Each **Cybermage** device can only hold and project *one* magical spell; the Cybermage cannot create a multipurpose, multi-magic object. These incredible devices take some time to create and they must be of a certain size and weight. Note that for spells which affect a certain weight or volume of material, and have to affect the machine as well, the machine is assumed to be of zero weight. See the **Levitation** example below.

A machine used for a level one spell must weigh at least one pound (0.45 kg), takes one hour to make, and costs at least \$1 (probably just using scraps from around the **Cybermage's** workshop). For a level two spell, the machine must weigh at least 10 lbs (4.5 kg), take 10 hours work, and cost at least \$10 to create. A level three spell, 100 hours work, 100 lbs (45 kg) weight, at a cost of \$100; and so on — adding an extra zero to the cost and hours necessary to build the device per level of the spell.

Note that so long as a Cybermage is in charge of the operation, technicians with no magical skills may be employed to do as much as 60% of the actual **construction/labor**, and no project will take more than 1,000 man-years of work. A Cybermage can also use supernatural creatures or other **Cybermagic** machines to do some of this work as well. So, a Cybermagic machine utilizing a 12th level spell would weigh 1,000,000,000,000 lbs (equivalent to a small factory), would take 500 workers two years to complete, and have a cost equivalent to the entire national debt!

In practice, the costs of high-level **Cybermagics** are theoretical. The real problem is the scarcity of components, which may only be available from the **Nighlands** or Astral Plane, as examples. In practice, rather than spend billions of dollars on a machine, player characters (and NPC organizations) are more likely to risk a series of dangerous missions to other worlds to recover "priceless" components, rather than spend implausible quantities of cash. Still, any machine over level six is going to cost hundreds of thousands, or millions of dollars to build, which explains where some of the *Preserver Government's* "national security budget" goes — towards funding some very strange "research projects" indeed.

Cybermagic Requirements:

1. Living Flesh: Always requires a higher life form as a major component, i.e. bird, mammal, human, supernatural being or other advanced (alien) life form. Humans, **Nightbanes**, **Nightlords**, demons, and any other intelligent beings of flesh and blood (energy beings are not suitable) are always suitable for use in a Cybermagic device. Of course, to function as the living component is constant enslavement and agonizing torture. Often, the human component is mutilated for its use in the machine.

2. P.P.E.: The P.P.E. cost is the same as the spell, only the magic power and energy is locked into the device, can be turned on and off at will, and used indefinitely (or until the device burns out). The P.P.E. spent on its creation is lost to the Cybermage until the object is dismantled or destroyed.

While the device exists undamaged and fully operational, even if not in use for years (locked in the closet), it remains a functioning magical device and the P.P.E. locked inside it is lost to its creator. Yes, this means, theoretically, the Cybermage can drain himself of P.P.E. completely, by building too many devices.

Using Living Beings: The use of one or more *living* creatures as components in the device reduces the amount of P.P.E. the Cybermage must personally expend into the device (via spell casting) by half.

The P.P.E. Additive: Some creatures used as the "living flesh component" of Cybermage devices can contribute additional P.P.E. to the device. If the creature has over 50 P.P.E. points, all the energy above 50 can be used to cast and maintain the spell in the device. This makes **Nightbane**, practitioners of magic and supernatural beings particularly attractive (at least to evil **Cybermagics**).

3. Spell Modification Considerations: The range may be decreased or increased depending on the nature of the mechanical aspects of the Cybermagic device. For example, a fire ball, lightning bolt or similar energy attack spell could be built into a cannon, rail gun, rocket, and similar. The *range* would be reflective of the device, so a cannon could fire the blast 3000 to 10,000 feet (914 to 3048 m) depending on the size and average range of a comparable nonmagical cannon. A rocket would fly its usual range, unleashing its magical payload when it hits.

4. Alignment Restrictions: Cybermagics of good to unprincipled alignments will never consider enslaving and tormenting living creatures, especially intelligent beings, by using them in Cybermagic devices. As a result, most Cybermagics are anarchist or evil.

Examples of Cybermage Devices

The following sample devices are just that: samples. Each Cybermage will design their own devices, and each will be different. These examples are simply intended to give players and G.M.s ideas about how specific spells may be put into effect. Inventing your own designs is half the fun, and of course the design of these machines can be used to say something about the **Cybermage's** personality or to create atmosphere.

Levitation: The Chained Doves: This "machine" was created by an evil Cybermage to allow him to move up and down the vertical shaft which led to his underground workshop. The contraption takes the form of a thin iron basket, large enough for a human to sit in. It is attached to thirteen chains and a series of computer panels and cables. At the end of each chain, fastened by a large bolt driven through their chests, is a tattered dove. The doves squirm in constant agony, crying tears of blood, but if the correct keys are pressed on the control panel, they take magical flight and drag the basket up or down. The Cybermage was fifth level at the time of casting, and so his creation can carry its own weight plus 300 lbs (136 kg) up to 110 feet (33.5 m) straight up. It weighs about 40 lbs.

Fly: The Hunter's Wings: This device, created by a Cybermage named **Tanya Schiro**, is a Hunter's exoskeleton imbued with the Fly spell. The skull is worn as a helmet, while the rest of the body is worn as a suit. The whole thing has been augmented with a tangle of cables and wires, with greasy hydraulic pistons attached to the wings and joints. The sections of exoskeleton were removed from the Hunter while it was still alive, and they remain warm and clammy. The whole contraption weighs about 1,000 lbs (453 kg), and will carry one human-shaped wearer (who controls its speed and direction) with up to three other adults clinging precariously to the outside. The armor has an A.R. 13 against magic weapons (none against normal weapons) and can fly at a speed of 60 mph (96 km).

Blinding Flash: The Silver Lantern: First invented by an unknown Cybermage, The Silver Lantern device is created by filling a small glass sphere with bacteria in a sugar solution, and mounting the globe on a small electronic plinth (stand). Various wires run up the outside of the globe from the base, attaching to pins set into the glass. A single **on/off** switch on the plinth causes the bacteria in the globe to burst into light — with a constant Blinding Flash spell as its magical catalyst. Rather than acting once, instantly, the duration is unlimited, so that anyone within 10 feet (3 m) of the globe may be blinded each round, until the device is turned off. Obviously, even the person who turns the device on is affected. *An alternative might be* a flash gun that unleashes a blinding flash every time the trigger is pulled. A mystical light bulb can be created in similar fashion using the globe of daylight spell.

Call Lightning: The Electro-Cannon: This weapon resembles a cannon or recoilless rifle with a half dozen living electric eels (or 1-4 human brains) built into it, connected with wires and circuit boards in the gun's body housing. It can be mounted on a **tank**, half-track or truck. A sixth level Cybermage cast a call lightning spell into it so that every time the trigger is pulled (equal to the total number of attacks per melee round; typically 4-6) it fires a lightning bolt-like blast that does 9D6 damage! Range: 3000 to 10,000 feet (914 to 3048 m) depending on the size and average range of a comparable nonmagical cannon.

Cybermagic: Bionic-Grotesque

Cybermagic mechanisms can be micronized for use as implants, attachments and appendages placed into the **Cybermage's** own body or into the body of another character as a grotesque and deforming form of mystical **cybernetics/bionics**.

Cybermagic bionics require one tenth the weight of a normal **Cybermage** device, but take *three times* as long to build and **cost fivetimes** more money and *two times* more **P.P.E.**! This means a first level spell Bionic-Grotesque implant would weigh 1.6 ounces (may be heavier and or larger if the **Cybermage** so desires or the purpose requires it), take two hours to construct, cost five dollars and double the normal P.P.E. A third level spell implant of a Bionic-Grotesque would weigh 10 pounds (4.5 kg), take 200 hours, cost \$500 and double the normal P.P.E.

In this case, the living component of the magic is the body of the recipient. Each particular Bionic-Grotesque implant, whether it's an artificial eye, ear, lung, weapon hand, etc., has only *one* magical property,

although it *may* have an additional mechanical property or capability. For example, a camera eye can be magically enchanted to photograph the *invisible* via the *see invisible* spell. Its mechanical function also allows it to take ordinary photos as well, and is likely to have telescopic capabilities and might even allow for the changing of lenses and filters.

Staying with the camera eye example, this Cybermage bionic creation will be very obvious, disfiguring, and clunky compared to real bionics. In this case, the camera-eye is likely to look like a camera lens shoved into the person's skull — it's part of what makes the magic work. Cybermagic Bionic-Grotesque will *never* be obscured or cosmetically hidden. In fact, Cybermagic cyborgs are often mistaken as bio-mechanical **Nightbane** in **Morphus**, or as technological monsters. **Note:** Typically, each Bionic-Grotesque implant or appendage will reduce the P.B. of the recipient by one or two points. As many as ten Cybermagic Bionic-Grotesque implants can be used in the human body. Creatures that shape-change or are supernatural in nature cannot usually use such implants or any type of cybernetics.

Fleshsculptor O.C.C.

The **Fleshsculptor** is a specialized area of spell and ritual magic similar to the sorcerer, but which focuses on life and flesh. In many ways this is very sensible — as magic is, in a sense, alive. Thus, it is logical to apply its powers to living tissue; and the one thing which any mage has available is **his/her** own body. However, **Fleshsculpting** can be a painful and horrific pursuit. Its magic deals with the control, healing, and manipulation of both the physical and, to some degree, the spiritual body (the mind, emotions, willpower, morals, etc.).

Fleshsculpting has only recently been rediscovered, so there are few practicing mages compared to Sorcerers, Mystics, **Mirromages** and

even **Cybermages**. Typically there are two camps, one (those with good and selfish alignments) who generally hold life and the inner spirit in the highest regard, and who use their magic to help, heal and protect others. These characters are typically idealistic, compassionate, sympathetic to the suffering of others, have a strong will, and a positive outlook on life and people. The other camp is **Fleshsculptors** who have little regard for the lives and spirits of anybody other than themselves (these mages have an evil alignment, sometimes anarchist). Such foul **and/or** cold-hearted mages use their powers not to heal, but to bribe, control, manipulate, spy, torture and kill. They are often arrogant and cruel because they can shape, grow or destroy life with their bare hands! The **Nightlords** count a handful of **Fleshsculptors** among their Earthly, human minions, and use them as tempters ("I can make you look **beauti-**



ful again"), interrogators and torturers (using disfigurement to extract information). **Note:** Both good and evil **Fleshsculptors** usually see themselves as artists whose clay is living flesh (and bone) and whose **masterworks** are people (whether whole and beautiful or broken and ugly). Both are imaginative and creative, though sometimes in terrible ways.

Frequently, the end result of **Fleshsculpting** magic is permanent, so it must be used with discretion and care. Negate and dispel magic have no effect on most **Fleshsculpting** magic because the *magic* portion of the spell or ritual only enables the **Fleshsculptor** to perform his work (i.e. the reshaping of flesh); once it is done, the physical results are permanent. Only another **Fleshsculptor** may try to undo or, more to the point, redo/reshape what another has done.

O.C.C. Abilities & Bonuses

1. Initial Spell Knowledge: Like the sorcerer, the **Fleshsculptor** begins with three spells from each magic level one through four (total of twelve spells). Each level of experience, the character can figure out one new spell equal to or less than his own level. These spells may be **Fleshsculptor** specialist spells and generally available **Wizardry/Sorcerous** spells which affect only flesh or the human body.

2. Learning Further Spells: Like a sorcerer, a **Fleshsculptor** may learn spells of any level. However, they are limited to **Fleshsculptor** spells and other magics which affect flesh (including new spells created by the player and/or G.M.; see Chapter Three).

3. Magic Bonuses: +1 to save vs magic at levels 1, 4, 8, and 12, +1 to save vs mind control, +5 to save vs possession, +5 to save vs horror factor and +1 to save vs disease at levels 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 12 and 15.

4. P.P.E.: At first level the character has a basic P.P.E. of **2D4**×10 +P.E. attribute number. Add **2D6** per each additional level of experience.

Note: Most **Fleshsculpting** magic requires the mage to physically *touch* and manipulate the flesh, bone or body in order for it to work. In this sense the character is similar to both an artist and a surgeon (although a knife is not usually necessary). Most have a good to excellent knowledge of the human body, particularly its physiology. Many are also fond of animals and nature.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 14, M.E. 9 and M.A. 9 or higher, and must be at least a minor psionic.

O.C.C. Skills:

Read/Write/Speak Native Language 98%

Principles of Magic (+10%)

Mathematics: Basic (+25%)

Computer Operation (+15%)

Sculpt (+25%; professional quality)

Biology (+25%)

Two Medical skills of choice (+15%)

One Lore skill of choice (+15%)

Two languages at +15% or one language at +30% may be selected in place of one "other" skill.

Hand to Hand: Basic; the physical orientation of the **Fleshsculptor** provides him or her with the basic hand to hand combat skill.

Hand to hand: basic may be changed to hand to hand: expert in place of one "other" skill, or martial arts (or assassin, if of evil alignment) as two "other" skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select ten other skills from the list below. Plus, select two additional skills at level three, one at level six, one at level nine and one at level twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+15%)

Domestic: Any (+10%)

Electrical: Any

Espionage: Detect ambush, detect concealment, disguise, escape artist and impersonation (new) only. +10% to disguise skill.

Mechanical: Basic Mechanics only

Medical: Any (+10%)

Military: None

Physical: Any

Pilot: Any

Pilot Related: Any

Rogue: None

Science: Any (+10%)

Technical: Any (+5% to most; +15% to art and photo skills)

W.P.: Any

Wilderness: Preserve food and skin and prepare animal hides only.

Secondary Skills: The character also gets six secondary skills from those listed. None of the additional percentages listed in parentheses apply, and all start at the base level.

Standard Equipment: Varies. Any reasonable personal equipment may be selected: A personal computer (portable **laptop?**), medical bag with basic equipment, art sculpting tools, backpack, selection of clothes, a few books, TV and video, tape recorder, notebooks and pens, 35 mm camera, and an inexpensive car or motorbike.

Money: **1D6**×1000 in cash. **4D6**×1,000 in property (including car, computers, tools, etc.).

Mirrormage O.C.C.

A **Mirrormage** uses mirrors and the **Mirrorwall** as tools. He or she is not obliged to use only raw mental power (P.P.E.), but instead draws power from and makes use of the properties of the **Mirrorwall**. In practice this means that the **Mirrormage** only has to expend *half the* normal number of P.P.E. to cast a spell. **S/he** needs fewer P.P.E. than other magicians, because **s/he** is making better use of the supernatural phenomenon called the **Mirrorwall**. As wonderful as that may sound, whenever P.P.E. is drawn from the **Wall** it is weakened. A **Mirrormage** can seriously weaken its integrity by repeatedly casting powerful magics in the same place: the exact effects of this are left to the devious discretion of the G.M., but can include bringing **1D6** **Nightlands** creatures (or beings from other worlds), attract the attention of a **Night Prince** or **Lord**, opening a temporary dimensional portal (to just about anywhere), and so on.

The **Mirrormage** is limited to dealing with the **Mirrorwall**, and associated phenomena (calling and summoning, crossing dimensional barriers, and using reflective surfaces), so **s/he** may only cast a limited number of spells. Spells and rituals unique to the **Mirrormage O.C.C.** are listed toward the end of Chapter Four, but in addition, **s/he** may also choose magic from the following:

From this book:

Soul in a Bottle (using a mirror instead of a bottle)

Open Pathway

Psychic Drain (using a mirror as a focus)

See Through Lifeless Eyes

From the **Nightbane™** RPG:

See Aura

See The Invisible

Sense Evil

Sense Magic

Sense **Nightbane**

Sense P.P.E.

Detect Concealment

Mystic Alarm (if the object Alarmed is in view of a mirror)

Ritual: Call Creature of Light

Ritual: Call **Nightlands** Denizens

Ritual: Call **Nightlord**

Teleport: Lesser (using a mirror to send the object through)

Second Sight (by looking into a mirror)

Locate (allowing the caster to see the general area reflected in a mirror)



Nightlands Portal (starting from a large mirror)
 Oracle (visions seen in a mirror or reflective surface)
 Banishment
 Nightlands Passage
 Summon Nightlord Avatar
 Summon Nightlord
 Talisman (using a mirror)
 Close Rift
 Dimension Portal

Teleport: Superior (accomplished by stepping through a large mirror)

Note: And generally, most summoning and dimensional magic and magic that uses a reflective surface.

From Between the Shadows™:

Astral Portal
 Dream Window (using a mirror for the window)
 Dream Senses (through a mirror)
 Observe Dream (via a mirror close to the sleeping person)

O.C.C. Abilities & Bonuses:

1. Initial Spell Knowledge: Like the sorcerer, the **Mirrmage** begins with three spells from each magic level, one through four (total of twelve spells). Each new level of experience, the character can figure out one new spell equal to or less than his own level (starting at level two). These spells may be Mirrmage specialist spells, other suitable, generally available spells (see list, above), or new Mirror Magic spells created by the player and/or G.M. (see Chapter Three).

2. Learning Further Spells: Additional spells and rituals of any magic level can be learned or purchased at any time regardless of the mage's experience level. See the *Pursuit of Magic*, page 124 of the **Nightbane RPG** and Chapter Three of this book for learning spells and creating new forms of magic. **Mirrmagic** spells are found in Chapter Four of this book.

3. Magic Bonuses: +1 to save vs magic at levels 1, 2, 3, 7, and 12, +2 to save vs possession, +2 to save vs mind control, +2 to save vs horror factor.

4. P.P.E.: At first level the character has a basic P.P.E. of 1D6×10 +P.E. attribute, plus 2D6 per additional level of experience.

5. Sense Dimensional Rifts & Portals: Because the Mirrmage is attuned to and concerned with the **barrier(s)** between planes and universes, **s/he** gains the ability to sense breaks, tears and openings in these barriers. The Mirrmage can tell if **s/he** is within a mile (1.6 km) of such a breach (a portal, rift, opening of a Pathway, etc.), although **s/he** cannot tell how the breach has been created nor its exact nature. All the Mirrmage can determine is that the opening is within a mile (1.6 km) and how "big" the break is, so that a major Rift would feel **frightenngly** big, whereas the opening of a Pathway would be very minor. Within 300 feet (90 meters) of the breach, the character can also sense its general direction and rough distance, but still cannot tell exactly what its nature is. Looking into a dimensional opening, the mage can tell whether it connects to the **Mirrorwall**, Nightlands, Astral Plane, or elsewhere (elsewhere being an unknown **location/realm**).

6. Uncanny Sense of Direction: In the normal world, the mage has the equivalent of the *land navigation* skill at 98%. **S/he** can also always tell which way is up, down or sideways, and approximate depth, height or distance from the starting point. In the Mirrorwall, the mage can always find his or her way back to where **s/he** arrived and back to the character's home dimension.

Attribute Requirements: M.E. 13, M.A. 9 and P.E. 9 or higher.

O.C.C. Skills:

Read/Write/Speak Native Language 98%
 Principles of Magic (no bonus)
 Mathematics: Basic (+25%)
 Computer Operation (+20%)

Two languages at +15% or one language at +30% may be selected in place of one "other" skill.

Hand to hand: basic may be selected as one "other" skill, or Hand to hand: expert in place of two "others," or martial arts (or assassin, if of evil alignment) as three "other" skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select ten other skills from the list below. Plus, select two additional skills at level three, one at level six, one at level nine and one at level twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+20%)

Domestic: Any (+5%)

Electrical: Any

Espionage: Detect ambush and detect concealment only (+10%).

Mechanical: Basic Mechanics only.

Medical: Any (+5%)

Military: None

Physical: Any

Pilot: Any

Pilot Related: Navigation and read sensory equipment only (+10%).

Rogue: Computer hacking only.

Science: Any

Technical: Any (+20%)

W.P.: Any

Wilderness: None

Secondary Skills: The character also gets six secondary skills from those listed. None of the additional percentages listed in parentheses apply, and all start at the base level.

Standard Equipment: Basic personal equipment only; a personal computer, a cheap car or jeep, a watch and other petty objects, and casual and work clothes, plus a collection of mirrors, lenses and crystals of various sizes and shapes. The character is also attracted to gemstones.

Money: 4D6x100 in cash. 3D6x1000 in property (including car, computer, etc.).

Nemesis R.C.C.

All human beings have a Nemesis in the **Nightlands**, a person (or creature) who is their opposite and equal. This Nemesis may be a *Ba'al-Zebul*, *Night Prince*, *Hound Master*, *Great Hound*, *Ashmedai*, *Snake Bird*, *Doppelganger* (resembling anyone), *Night Gnome* or one of the *Beautiful People*. Most are likely to look (almost) human. The genuine human is always ignorant of the fact that s/he is somehow linked to some Nightlands creature, and the creature is usually equally unaware of the connection.

These creatures are residents of the Nightlands, although after Dark Day they may be sent to or come to Earth on various missions.

To construct a Nemesis character, start by determining its basic race. This will depend upon the occupation, personality, and nature of the human:

So, the Nemesis of a soldier might be a Hound Master or Great Hound, depending upon whether the soldier has command responsibilities, or is just a grunt; a general might be a Night Prince.



A powerful person, e.g. a politician or the head of a corporation, would have a Nemesis which is a Night Prince. The Nemesis of a factory worker might be a **Doppleganger**.

The Nemesis of a sorcerer might equally be a Snake Bird, Night Prince or Night Gnome; possibly a **Ba'al-Zebul** (Nightlord) if *s/he* is incredibly powerful or an Immortal.

The Nemesis of an Acolyte or **Cybermage** is likely to be a Night Gnome or **Ashmedai**.

A corrupted human could be just about anything depending on the level of his or her power.

Note: **Nightbane** don't have a natural, living **Nightlands** reflection/**double!** This *may* be because of their dual nature to begin with, and *may* have something to do with why the **Nightlords** fear them. It also suggests that they may not have a natural *link* to the Nightlands and *may* not be indigenous to either the Earth or the Nightlands.

Conditions & Abilities

Work out the basic statistics based upon this **human-Nightlands O.C.C./R.C.C. relationship**, but then apply the following special conditions and abilities.

1. The Attributes of the Nemesis should be adjusted so that they are relatively similar to the human whom they reflect. No attribute should be more than 5 points higher or lower than the human's. If possible, the attributes should be more extreme than the human's, so that if the human is unintelligent but very strong, then the Nemesis will be really stupid but exceptionally strong.

2. The Nemesis will always be the same level of experience as its human counterpart. When the human goes up a level, so does the Nemesis (or, from the Nemesis' point of **view**, when it goes up a level so does the human; it's a question of perspective).

3. If the human has a good alignment, then the personality and alignment of the Nemesis is as far as possible the absolute opposite of this. If the human has a selfish or evil alignment, then the Nemesis will have a similar or identical alignment, but will **ALWAYS** be working for goals and causes which are the exact opposite of the human's.

4. The Nemesis will have supernatural powers which mock, reflect or distort the powers of the human. So, if the human has psychic healing abilities, the Nemesis will have physical psionic abilities (destructive and offensive ones, of course).

5. The tasks, interests and responsibilities of the Nemesis will also reflect (but distort) the tasks, interests and responsibilities of the human. If the human is promoted at work, the Nemesis is promoted by the Nightlords. If the human's job is to run a hospital, then the Nemesis will run some kind of slaughterhouse, prison or torture chamber in the Nightlands. If the human is a keen photographer (making albums of portraits/photos of peoples' faces) then the Nemesis will keep a similar collection, only it consists of skulls or skins torn from faces (probably of enemies). G.M.s should have fun twisting and perverting a character, especially a character of good alignment.

Finally, each Nemesis is so closely linked to its human counterpart that if the human dies, the Nemesis will also die. If the Nemesis dies, the human actually feels an inexplicable sense of loss and is depressed for 2D6 weeks (-10% on all skill performance; **unmotivated**). The only exception to this are the near-immortal Night Princes, who become attached to a different human if theirs dies - but usually after some considerable setbacks (very bad health, demoted, etc.).

There is no obvious or causal link at work in any of this. The Nightlords do not promote one of their servants **BECAUSE** its counterpart human was promoted at work. A human does not decide to go out and help the helpless **BECAUSE** its Nemesis is busy butchering or torturing others. It's just the way that the strange Nightlands reality is — as natural and inevitable as gravity.

Note: Not every human has a Nemesis, many have zombie-like, **unawakened Dopplegangers**. Nemeses tend to be reflections of special —

important and powerful — people, particularly practitioners of magic, powerful psychics, and leaders. The player characters are likely to be or become such people, so their characters and successes are likely to spawn such creatures. Whether or not they ever meet and clash with their dark reflection is a matter of fate. Most will never meet, but those who do often take an instant dislike to each other. A Nemesis made aware of his human reflection often makes it one of his or her **life's** goal to interfere with, torment **and/or** destroy the human (never realizing that killing its human reflection will cause its own destruction). This can make for a bizarre and recurring "Nemesis."

Optional Color, Abilities & Considerations

By Kevin Hassall and Kevin Siembieda

Sorcerous Proficiencies

The following Proficiencies may be selected or randomly rolled by players when designing their own characters. Any magic using character (Sorcerers, Mystics, **Cybermages**, etc.) may select these Proficiencies, and several are also of use to Acolytes.

Each Proficiency may be taken in place of a Secondary Skill during character creation. Each is a *proficiency*, like a Weapon Proficiency, rather than a skill per se. The character does not have a percentage score attached to each, but can automatically make use of any Sorcerous Proficiency selected during character creation, as described below. As a rule, human sorcerers should have no more than a maximum of four (1D4?) Sorcerous Proficiencies; other practitioners of magic (Fleshsculptor, Cybermage, etc.), no more than two; Nightbane sorcerers should have no more than one; and Acolytes and **Parapsychologists**, no more than two.

If the player has a strong central concept for his or her practitioner of magic and a central idea for how the character's magic should work or appear to work, then the player should *select* the limitations and conditions below. If the player doesn't have such a strong conceptualization of the character's powers, then roll these *randomly*.

Further, as a character learns more about magic, with time and experience, *s/he* may learn to specialize in a certain sort of magic or method of casting. In practice, therefore, with the G.M.'s permission a character *may* gain any Sorcerous Proficiency instead of a new O.C.C. related skill whenever experience level gains would normally allow a new skill to be learned (usually at levels three, six, nine and twelve).

The Game Master may also permit characters to double-up on Proficiencies: that is, to take the same Sorcerous Proficiency twice. In such a case, the Proficiency has its full effect, **TWICE**, so that if a Proficiency (e.g. Ritual Magic) would normally double spell duration, taking the Proficiency twice allows the character to quadruple spell duration so long as the Proficiency's requirements are met. As a rule, level one characters may not *initially* double up on Proficiencies, but may select the Proficiency (doubling it up) at a later level (e.g. by selecting a Sorcerous Proficiency in place of a skill at level three). Sorcerous Proficiencies can only be doubled, not tripled, and individual G.M.s may, of course, wish to be less generous and not allow doubling.

Sorcerous Proficiencies Table (Optional)

01-10 A Keen Eye: The character has a keen eye for recognizing and identifying authentic books, scrolls and tomes of magic. *S/he* is also more likely to (or be one of the first to) spot and recognize magical symbols, writings, charms and artifacts. This is as much an innate "knack" or talent as it is the result of years of study and an intense interest in such things.



11-20 Invisible to Magic: Due to a weird magical deficiency or flaw, the character cannot be detected by normal magical means. Attempts to use magics to see when invisible, scry upon, peer into the mind of, detect the presence of, see the aura of, analyze the words of, domination, sickness, most types of magical damage or any magic that otherwise affects or respond to the character, automatically **fails!** Making the character effectively *impervious* to most types of **magic!**

On the downside, the character cannot benefit from benign magic spells such as healings, flight, invisibility, tongues, etc. Nor can s/he use charms and talismans, or devices that require expending P.P.E. Worse, the character cannot cast magic spells or perform rituals (can assist). In effect, magics simply slip through or around the character. Voodoo priests believe that by removing one of a man's two souls, he can be made invulnerable to magic; or perhaps an accident during a sorcerer's training removed the part of him or her which affects and is affected by magic (an ideal justification for an Acolyte). **Note:** He can be affected by magic that creates a physical effect such as fires, electricity, and energy blasts and requires line of sight to attack. This character is also vulnerable to a **Fleshsculptor's** magic, **Nightbane** Talents, possession and psionics.

The reason why the character has this negative Proficiency is up to the player and/or G.M. It is possible that the character might be able to have the effect cancelled — permanently — at a later date by going on a quest to find the lost portion of his or her soul, or some ancient magic, or an Immortal or supernatural being who possesses the power or knowledge to remove it (a spell, ritual or knowledge he is not likely to teach, but may use to help the character for a price), but whatever the means of the cure, it **won't** be easy (and don't select a replacement Proficiency; once it's lost, it's lost).

21-30 Ritual Magic: The **arcanist** originally developed his or her magic according to strict ritual principles, either according to western ritual occultism, Chinese magic, African Shamanism, Native American Shamanism, etc., or a system of his or her own devising (The player must select one specific "tradition" or manner of ritual). According to these magical systems, *all* magics must be cast as long rituals (15 minutes minimum length, or double the normal casting time, whichever is greater), requiring a variety of rare props **and/or** components such as candles made in a specific manner, parchment, rare inks, herbs, skulls, etc.

The character has since learned to weave magics without these trappings (e.g. spell incantations), but gains advantages when dealing with magic in the most familiar and focused manner of rituals. When casting a spell according to the rituals of his or her tradition, the character need only expend *half* the normal P.P.E. to cast a spell, and all spell ranges and durations are doubled (figured from the end of the ritual).

31-40 Incantation Specialist: The character is a master at spell casting. At the character's initial creation, select a total of four additional spells from the magic most appropriate to the character's O.C.C. Selection, are limited to spells level 1-4. **This** character is also +5% in figuring out existing spells to add to his repertoire (see Chapter Three). Also add +1 to the mage's spell strength. However, this mage cannot use *any* ritual magic whatsoever, and is -1 to save vs ritual magic!

41-50 Mystical Lineage: There are traditions across the world where the powers of a magician are inherited — a family gift or a curse. In some traditions the eldest daughter inherits her mother's powers, for example, and in the months after Dark Day, entire families have discovered that they share some mystical inheritance. Perhaps the character belongs to one of these families. Perhaps the character and his six brothers have all inherited the powers of their father (the seventh son of a seventh son; one perhaps being a Sorcerer, the other six being less powerful Mystics or Acolytes). The character benefits from *generations* of research, personal journals, theories, observations and books (and possibly the advice, aid and occasional meddling of other family members, who may provide information, suggestions, assistance, and, in emergencies, aid. They have their own lives to lead, however, and they are not the character's servants. Moreover, they will expect the character to

help them if they get into trouble — several adventures may follow from this). **Note:** As the Nightlords begin to destroy the Earth's uncooperative sorcerers, entire families of mages and Mystics, in particular, would certainly attract their attention. **Bonuses:** This Sorcerous proficiency provides a +10% bonus to the research skill, and +10% in figuring out existing magic and creating "new" or "variant" spells (see Chapter Three).

51-60 Sensitive to Magic: The character can "feel" the presence of magical power and energy. The character doesn't have to concentrate to use this power. **S/he** just gets a horrible intuition that tells him or her that something magical or using magic is close. In the presence of something really magical, like "living" magic, a god or **Nightlord**, the feeling is so powerful that it will even wake the character from sleep, or cause him or her to mumble even when in a coma.

The G.M. should use common sense and discretion when giving hints through this (it's a great way to build atmosphere and drop hints at the same time).

As a guideline: The character can *not* sense the presence of "petty" magic (the casting of spells under level five), a supernatural creature, or **Nightbane** in human facade.

The character *can* sense the casting of powerful spells (5th level and higher), strong magic forces at about ten yards/meters per level of experience, and big, powerful forces (the presence of a ley line, Nightlord, or great magic) at several hundred yards. Furthermore, the mage can feel the presence of magic in objects, charms, talismans, weapons, **Cybermagic** devices, and circles by examining them. **S/he** cannot tell what powers they may hold, but **s/he** will know that they are enchanted with magic. Likewise, the mage can tell if a person is magically possessed or controlled (only magic possession or mind control).

If a character "**doubles-up**" with this Proficiency, taking it twice, then he or she can get an idea of the direction of the magic energy, rather than just knowing that it's "around" somewhere, and can sense the basic source of the magic, e.g. spell caster, ley lines, nexus, supernatural being of immense magical power or origin (Nightlords, gods, demigods, dragons, creatures of magic, etc.). Likewise, when examining enchanted/magic objects, the mage can tell whether it is intended to help or harm the user, or whether it is cursed or possessed of an evil intelligence/life force.

61-70 Magic Resistance: Spells and supernatural powers which cause injury only do half damage and those that cause disability (mind control, confusion, inflict penalties) have half their normal effect (half any penalties) and duration. This may be due to the character's extreme mental discipline, to special chants which he or she knows, or due to a natural ability (the seventh daughter of a seventh daughter, for example, has been said to be immune to magics). Unlike "Invisible to Magic," this does not prevent the character from benefiting from spells which he or she would like to be affected by or from using magic.

71-80 Sensitive to the Supernatural: The character can "feel" the presence of supernatural beings. The character doesn't have to concentrate to use this power. **S/he** just gets a horrible intuition that tells him or her that something supernatural is close. In the presence of something really nasty, like a Nightlord, the feeling is so powerful that it will even wake the character from sleep, or cause him or her to mumble even when in a coma.

The G.M. should use common sense and discretion when giving hints through this (it's a great way to build atmosphere and drop hints at the same time).

As a guideline: The character can *not* sense the presence of magic users, magic items, psychics, Nightbane in human Facade (can sense them in **Morphus**) and "petty" supernatural beings like **Dopplegangers**, **Nightlands** Scorpions Diabolic and Beautiful People.

The character *can* sense the presences of lesser, but clearly supernatural beings such as Nightbane in Morphus, vampires, **wampyrs**, entities, ghosts, living magic, minor demons, Hunters, Hounds, **Scuttlers**, **Vfrawk** and most other lesser Minions of the Nightlords, at about ten

yards/meters per level of experience, and **big/powerful** forces (gods, demons, Guardians, Nightlords, Night Princes, Hound Masters, **Ash-medai**, and other Greater Minions of the Nightlords at 50 yards/meters per level of experience! Furthermore, the mage can feel the presence of supernatural possession in people, animals and objects by examining them.

Unless taken as a doubled proficiency, this sixth sense does not identify the exact location, numbers or identity of the supernatural creature. If the creature is powerful or there are many, the mage may get an impression as to whether they are near or far. If there are 10 or more, the feeling is simply many. And the best the character can hope in identifying them is that they are from the Nightlands, are Nightbane or something else.

If a character "doubles-up" with this Proficiency, taking it twice, then **s/he** can get a general idea of their direction, whether or not they are coming toward him, whether there are a few, many or a great many, and the general composition of the supernatural group, e.g. whether they are Nightlords, Night Prince (and Minions), **Nightland** Minions, Guardians, Nightbane, Ghosts, Vampires, or other general group (if the thing is unknown to the mage or using cloaking magic, **s/he** just doesn't know **what's** coming). If the supernatural predators are a mixed group (more than two different kinds), the mage senses the two most numerous or powerful and that others *may* be with them!

81-90 Group Casting: The character may cooperate with other magicians to cast a spell, so long as (a) all cooperating magicians know the spell which is to be cast, and (b) all have the Group Casting Proficiency. For every magician present, in addition to the one normally required for the spell to be cast, the range, damage and duration of the spell are increased. So, if a spell could normally be woven by one individual mage, then if two are present (one extra), range, duration and damage are at $\times 2$; if three are present (two extra), the range, duration, and damage are at $\times 3$; and so on. The maximum number of magicians who can cooperate in a Group Casting is equal to the level of the highest level magician present; e.g. a level nine magician may lead a total of nine Group Casters, a third level mage, only three total. **Note:** Each of the spell casters participating must pay the normal P.P.E. to fuel the spell. Outside sources of P.P.E. are not applicable for this use. Note also, that other Proficiencies cannot be used.

91-00 Artistic. The character has an artistic flair that is apparent in his or her workings and creations of magic. Magic symbols, designs and circles created by this individual are beautifully rendered and perfectly legible. Rituals and ceremonies are performed artfully and with panache. The touch of a **Fleshsculptor** is delicate and precise, creating works of art (whether beautiful or horrific). **Cybermages** create devices that are impressive or artistic looking. Generally, everything associated with the magician's craft is attractive or impressive on a **design/artistic** level. Add +1 to the P.B. and +1 to the M.A. attributes of the character.



Sorcerous Limitations or Weaknesses (optional)

The following limitations may also be selected or randomly rolled by players when designing their own characters. Frankly, if the Sorcerous Proficiencies are used, so should *Limitations & Weaknesses*. For every *Sorcerous Proficiency*, the character should have a *Sorcerous Limitation or Weakness*. As a rule, humans should have no more than **1D4** limitations, while **Nightbane** magicians should have no more than one.

If the player has a strong central concept for his or her sorcerer — a central idea for how the character's magic should work or appear to work — then the player should select these limitations. If the player hasn't got such a strong conceptualization of the character's powers, or if the G.M. deems it best, roll for a random determination of limits.

Naturally, as a sorcerer grows in experience, he or she may strive to overcome his or her limitations. Whenever a character has the opportunity to learn a new skill, (usually at levels three, six, nine and twelve), in place of learning a new skill that character may elect to overcome one of these limitations. This simply means that with time and experience, the character has learned enough about magic to work out ways around a natural limitation, or to unlearn a learned limitation.

Likewise, with experience (not all experiences are **constructive!**), the unfortunate may lose **his/her** grip on reality still further. At levels three, six, nine and twelve, the character may select a new limitation, also gaining a new Secondary Skill or Proficiency at the same time. Some of those below (notably Multiple Personalities and Flawed Sight) are much more common in experienced magicians than in beginners.

01-10 Night Powers: Whether it's part of the character's original orientation or a psychological malady, **s/he** believes that his or her magical powers are, at least in part, fueled by the night. Consequently, the character's spells and rituals are 20% less potent (20% less damage, range and duration) during the daylight hours. Furthermore, the character is +1 to save vs magic and horror factor during night hours.

11-15 Vulnerable to Silver: Weapons made of, or plated in, silver inflict double damage to this character. Whether this is due to some mystical aberration, his magical training, an allegiance to some dark force, or whatever, it is very real.

16-25 Ritual Dependence: The sorcerer has developed his or her magic according to strict ritual principles — either according to western ritual occultism, Chinese magic, African Shamanism, or a system of his or her own devising (The player must select one specific "tradition" or manner of ritual). The character can only cast magics in the form of a ritual, which means traditional *spells* must be converted into ritual equivalents (see Chapter Three for spell variants and modifications). If a full ritual can't be performed, then no spells can be cast. On the upside, all magics cast as a ritual have double the normal duration and range (figured from the end of the ritual).

26-40 Bloodmage: In order to cast magics, the character must shed blood, drawing the P.P.E. to cast the spell from that spilt essence. This means that each time **s/he** casts a spell, either the character must cut himself (e.g. with a knife), losing one hit point, and using any amount of his own personal P.P.E. reserve as the incision is made; or, the character may sacrifice other living sentient beings, and draw upon their P.P.E. as they die (usually only an option for those of Evil **alignments!**). In the latter case, the mage can supplement the P.P.E. of his victim (doubled at the time of death) with his own, because blood has been drawn.

41-50 Insufficient Willpower: The character lacks the focus, concentration, confidence or intestinal fortitude to enforce any type of magic that requires a battle of wills. Furthermore, any type of mind control or domination magic (compulsion, domination, trance, mask of deceit, traitorous hand, **Mictlantecutli's** Command, possession, illusions, and similar) can only be maintained for half their normal duration and any penalties inflicted on the victim are also half.

51-55 Granted Powers: The sorcerer *believes* his aptitude for magic and subsequent powers are not innate, but rather, conferred by some outside power as a "gift." Depending on the character's philosophical, religious **and/or** spiritual leanings, **s/he** may believe this power may come from God, Angels, the Earth, a **Nightlord**, Demon lord, Guardian, Immortal magician, Vampire intelligence, or some other source (**s/he** may have had a profound arcane or spiritual experience that left him empowered — perhaps felt the "hand of an angel" touch his or her soul, or hears voices in nightmares threatening to remove the power if **s/he** does not "serve" as required).

It is also this **character's** belief that **s/he** must use this "gift" for some "greater purpose" (good or evil). This belief serves to motivate the character and give his or her life purpose and direction. This purpose may be to help others in some specific way, find a specific ancient **spell/magic** or secret, avenge a wrong (probably on a wide scale, like destroy all Nightbane, or sorcerers, or the Nightlords, etc.), fight the Nightlords, help the Nightlords, shatter the **Mirrorwall** and merge Earth with the **Nightlands**, etc. This is the mage's purpose in life — why **s/he** was given this great "gift." Thus, the mage's powers only work in bringing about this end, so the character *cannot cast magic* when its use is at cross-purposes or is contrary to his or her goals —**life!**

56-70 Wild Magic: The character's spells and magics work ... but not always as expected. There is usually (not necessarily always, but 8 out of 10 times) something inexplicable, unpredictable and/or inconvenient about the character's spells. The duration might elapse before it should or there's some weird backlash. Perhaps a *negate poisons spell* sometimes makes the target vomit up the poison, rather" than simply cancelling its effects inside the victim's body. Perhaps a target affected by a *fear spell* acts unexpectedly (shrieking prophecies in a foreign tongue as he flees). A *fire ball spell* might send a backlash spray of ash or sparks that inflicts **1D6** or **2D6** points of damage to the spell caster. *Heal Wounds* might leave weird purple scars. *Call Nightlord* may bring the wrong Lord, or may allow him to bring a few "friends" with him.

What is going on? Maybe the character has not quite mastered the mental disciplines required to perfectly cast spells, or his training is irreparably flawed. Or perhaps some outside force (on the Nightlands?) is deliberately sabotaging his or her magics. In the latter case, let the G.M. decide exactly who is doing this, how and why.

71-80 Flawed Sight: Although the character is able to deal with powers beyond normal mortals' comprehension, this "shift" in visual perception has meant that he or she cannot focus on the real world so well, or the trauma of discovering his or her magical potential has somehow left him or her "disabled." Often such flaws means the character has lost the ability to see in color in the mortal world, although on other worlds (e.g. the Nightlands, Astral Plane, etc.) and in dreams, that ability returns. Another common flawed sight is that whenever the character looks at a mirror or reflective surface, he or she now only sees a deep blackness in place of a reflection or the reflection is in black and white.

A less common version of flawed sight is that through the characters' eyes, all living beings are surrounded by an aura, but the light is so bright or distracting that it's difficult for the mage to make out details and features (although **s/he** can learn to recognize auras). Another is that all *mortals* appear as Nightlands creatures — twisted, repellent reflections of what they might look like if they were the denizens of that world — which not only makes it difficult for the character to describe or recognize mortals, but also plays havoc with the character's personal relationships. Worse, creatures from the Nightlands look like ... creatures from the Nightlands, making it difficult to recognize the genuine article.

81-90 Blind to the Supernatural: Although the character deals with magic and supernatural forces on a regular basis, **s/he** tends to be oblivious to them. Thus, the mage fails to recognize authentic magic books, symbols and artifacts, people who are mind controlled or possessed, or the Nightbane. The character *may* even be unsure about what type of creature **s/he** has seen or encountered ("... was it a Hound or

Great Hound? No. Maybe it was a Hound Master? Hunters have wings, right?" — "vampire or **wampyr?**" etc.). Likewise, the character is the least likely to notice subtle supernatural beings and phenomena, so unless a magic portal is big and obvious, or the ghost appears right in front of him, the mage won't notice it. Characters and creatures disguised by magic or through shape-changing will completely fool this character with their appearance (their words or actions are another story and may be seen through easily by the same myopic character).

91-95 Unnatural Watcher: The character is "haunted" by an unnatural creature. This being may be a **Nightlands** Denizen, a ghost (or a **Nightlands** Denizen or demon pretending to be the ghost of a lost friend), a Guardian, living magic, or some other ghost-like creature. It resides beyond the mortal world, on the Nightlands or Astral Plane, for example, but it can eavesdrop on the character's conversations (thoughts **too?**), and open up telepathic conversations or other means of communication with the character at will (it may even appear in and alter the character's dreams).

The Unnatural Watcher may try to persuade the character to perform services for it, and may even repay the character for these favors, but it is unconcerned with the character's safety, and will not perform services for him (it cannot be sent to peer into the room with the closed door, frighten away intruders, spy on an enemy, etc. — it's a pest, not a helper). Many may have their own goals and objectives, which may be to confuse, frustrate and torment the mage, or do things the character would disapprove of, and may actually be working against the character. Similarly, the Watcher may offer (bad) advice and/or observations (intentionally or unintentionally), make suggestions (or tempt), encourage recklessness or cruelty, and try to change the character or his view of things in some way. Neither the player nor the character need know who or what this Watcher is, or what its motives are; the G.M. should work this out in secret.

96-00 Multiple Personalities: During a magician's career, s/he often uses up the bulk of his/her P.P.E. pool, becoming terribly vulnerable and must face all manner of horrors, both supernatural and of human origin. These experiences and feelings can be traumatic, and while they usually result in comparatively insignificant anxiety, mania and depression, they can lead to more serious problems, including obsession, phobias, psychosis, and neurosis. Under the worst circumstances, the character's mind seeks to protect itself by creating *multiple personalities*.

Note that it is also possible that some budding, living magic or an essence fragment of some supernatural creature has invaded the character's mind to form a separate personality the character thinks is his own (can be good, selfish or evil, friendly or harmful, stable or not).

Multiple Personalities

Multiple personalities seems to be a popular insanity among authors of fiction and role-playing, but is extremely uncommon in real life. Of course, with the **Nightbane** setting, we are talking about unusual characters in fantastic and horrific situations. Most player characters will experience terrifying and horrific things that the average person will never experience even a fraction of in their entire lifetime. Associating with and confronting demonic creatures, wielding magic and exploring strange worlds will take its toll. They also face forces, magic, and creatures that can invade and ravage the **mind**. All extraordinary circumstances that can affect the mind and create one or more "extra" personalities.

One of the more unusual phenomena are heroes with several distinct personalities. Each of these different personalities manifest themselves as a completely different person, with different dispositions, attitudes, and beliefs. This is a much more complex character and will require rolling on several tables.

STEP ONE: How Many Separate Personalities?

Roll Percentile Dice

1-30 Two

31-50 Three

51-65 Four

66-89 Five

90-00 Six

STEPTWO: Who Is The Dominant Personality?

This is the main hero personality, so it should be among the most "good" and competent of all the personalities.

A. **Name:** Player's choice.

B. **Alignment:** Player's choice of principled, scrupulous or unprincipled.

C. **Disposition:** Roll *or pick* from the optional rules section for rounding out one's character.

D. **Rejects** the belief of having a split personality, so he/she does *not* know about the other personalities.

The main personality will be the one most often in control.

STEP THREE: Who Are The Other Personalities?

A. **Name** each one.

B. **Roll for random alignment** of each personality.

1-20 Principled

21-35 Scrupulous

36-50 Unprincipled

51-65 Anarchist

66-77 Miscreant

78-89 Aberrant

90-00 Diabolic

C. **Personality Quirks/Attitude:** Roll for *each* personality (or choose).

C. **Personalities of Good Alignment:**

1-10 Despondent: Withdrawn; curls up into a fetal position and gurgles. Can not fight or take any action. Can not use powers or even communicate.

11-20 Coward: Afraid of everything: heights, flying, fighting, knives, guns, etc. Will fight only if absolutely necessary, and then only enough to escape. This character will surrender at the slightest hint of trouble. Super abilities can be used, but only for self-preservation. He may use the powers to help friends, but would rather stay on the sidelines. **Penalties:** Always the *last* to attack in a melee round. Skills are -10%. Doesn't know any of the other personalities.

21-30 Pacifist: Gentle, merciful and compassionate. This character is as bright and bold as the main personality (maybe even more so), but will not fight. This personality is adamant against fighting for any reason. If confronted he will dodge, parry and try to otherwise incapacitate a foe, all the while delivering a speech against fighting and cruelty. He can use his powers, but will rarely use them against others. Will NEVER kill, torture or strike out of anger. There are no power or skill penalties. **Bonuses:** +2 to dodge, +1 to parry and roll. Knows about the dominant personality only. There is a 40% chance that he can be convinced to let the dominant personality back into control, but only under extreme protest (too violent).

31-40 Arrogant Warrior: Cold, aloof, snob, but extremely capable and confident (*over* confident). Tends to be incredibly independent, rude and insensitive. To this personality there are two points of view to everything; the wrong one and *his* (the only right and logical opinion). This personality uses his powers and skills as he sees fit; usually cold and calculating. There are no skill penalties. **Bonuses:** +10% on all skills, +1 to parry. Knows all the other personalities, but will *not* willingly let any of them resurface. After all they are inferior to him.

41-50 Righteous Indignation: A personality that has a black and white view of the world. Evil must be crushed at all costs. This is a war, thus the end justifies the means. He tends to be judgmental, reactionary and brutal toward evil. Gentle and compassionate to the good

and innocent. A potentially volatile and dangerous character. There are no skill or ability penalties, nor bonuses. He uses his extraordinary abilities well. Knows and despises all the other personalities for one reason or another. There's a 50% chance of convincing him to let any of the other personalities out, *except* the arrogant warrior.

51-60 The Normal: A very mundane, innocent, bumbling nerd-like youth (teenager) who knows nothing about super abilities, crime-fighting or heroics. He is friendly, but shy, and totally bewildered about super beings. He has no recollection of his other personalities or super abilities. Penalties: Can NOT use his extraordinary abilities, has no combat training (one attack per melee), and only high school equivalent skills and knowledge. This is a normal kid!

61-70 The Wildman: An **overzealous**, gregarious, and extremely hyperactive personality with delusions of grandeur. He is fanatically loyal and dedicated to crime fighting, justice and the American way. He is very reactionary, takes needless risks, and has a complete disregard for his personal safety. This is a character whose intentions are always 100% sincere, but acts without considering the consequences. Basically, a nutcase with a heart of gold. Penalties: Suffers from the Frenzy condition discussed elsewhere in this section (triggered by anger or pain). Bonuses: Can use all powers and skills equal to the dominant personality. +4 to roll, +1 to parry and dodge. Add 10ft to leaping (up and across) abilities and 20% to climbing, swimming and balancing skill abilities. This personality knows all the others, and can be convinced to let any of them take control if it is for the good of the group or a good cause; 80% likelihood.

71-80 Hypochondriac: A personality obsessed with cleanliness, and avoiding injury and disease. He will continually whine about potentially filthy or germ laden environments, and instruct his comrades about proper eating habits, vitamins, medication and sanitation. If injured in the slightest (one S.D.C.), the personality will whine and moan about it for hours. Penalties: Never takes the initiative, -5% on all skills. Bonuses: +1 to parry and dodge, and has a paramedic skill with an 86% skill proficiency. Knows all the personalities, but is hesitant to let any take control because they are either too reckless or wimpy and might get hurt. And they are all "so filthy!!!!" However, there is a 50% chance of being convinced to let any of them take control, except the **wildman** because "that guy's crazy". If letting another personality take control is likely to prevent his death or grievous injury, there is an 88% likelihood of letting out a different personality (player's choice, but the dominant personality is most likely).

81-90 Opposite Sex: Pick from or roll on the optional rules Disposition table to determine the general attitude of character. May or may not know of the super abilities; 1-40% — does not, 41-00% — does know. If **she/he** doesn't know about the power or abilities, then all skills are -20%, there is no combat skill (one attack per melee), and extraordinary powers can NOT be used. If the personality does know about the abilities he/she knows about the other personalities. There is a 40% chance of it being convinced to let a different one surface. If he/she knows nothing about the other personalities and can not willingly let a different one surface.

91-00 The Anti-Super Dude: This personality is against the entire concept of super powered beings and **vigilantism**. Consequently, while he knows about the special powers he possesses he will not use them for any reason. Nor will he engage in superheroics. Penalties: -10% on all skills, no combat skill (one attack per melee and no bonuses to strike, parry, dodge or roll). Bonuses: None. Knows about the other personalities, but will NOT let any of them take control!

C. Personalities of Evil Alignments: Roll or choose for *each* personality:

1-10 Jack the Ripper: A twisted personality that preys on the weak, mostly women. Some demented obsession drives this personality to hurt and torment women. If any opponents are female, she will be his first target. The more she fights, the better he likes it. This is a

sick individual who loves to torture and watch torment. Penalties: -10% on all skills because he is physically oriented. Bonus: +1 to strike. Knows about his other personalities, but will NOT willingly let any of them take control. Uses his super abilities and skills well. Prefers blade weapons above all others.

11-20 Traitor: A personality that goes with what is always best for him. He will betray a friend or cause for money, revenge, or to save himself. He will sell or steal information, equipment or persons without hesitation. To this personality, everything has a price and he intends to cash in on it. The character is amoral, cold and merciless, taking action that will benefit only him. Completely untrustworthy. Penalties: None. Bonuses: None. He can use all powers and skills. Knows about the other personalities and uses them freely to get his way or save his skin.

21-30 Greedy: A personality that craves wealth and fame. He will always look for the profit and value of any activity. He is a stingy braggart who always connives to get the most money and all the glory. He tends to be secretive, sneaky, deceptive, underhanded and self-centered. Penalties: None. Bonuses: None. Uses all skills and powers equally as well as the dominant personality. Although he knows about the other personality. Although he knows about the other personalities he is extremely reluctant to let any of "these losers" take control (20%) chance).

31-40 Kleptomaniac: A compulsive thief who just likes the challenge of stealing. Steals from everybody all the time, just for fun. Penalties: Has *none* of the dominant **character's** skills. Bonuses: Knows the following skills at the proficiencies listed: Pick Pockets 65%, Pick Locks 55%, Prowl 55%, Disguise 60%, Surveillance Systems 50%, Hand to Hand: Basic (2nd level with 4 attack per melee total), Pilot Automobile 88%, Motorcycle 68%. Knows all the other personalities and about his exceptional abilities.

41-50 Blood Thirsty: A personality that loves to fight, hurt people, torture and kill. A sadistic bully who shows no mercy and intentionally strikes to do maximum damage. This is the personality's way of proving his superiority, as well as satisfying his cruel pleasures. Penalties: -5% on all non-combat oriented skills. Bonuses: +1 to strike, parry, and dodge, +10 S.D.C. He can use the super abilities well. Although he knows about the other personalities he will pretend not to and will refuse to willingly let another take control.

51-60 Megalomaniac: Arrogant, feels far superior to all others; mean, cold and calculating. *This personality is totally self-serving.* The means justifies his ends and there is only the wrong opinion and his opinion. Those who ignore or chastise his opinion are either fools or potential enemies. The personality is only a team player in the sense that he can use the team to achieve his desires. Tends to be domineering (will try to usurp the leadership), insensitive and *ruthless*. There are no skill penalties. Bonuses: +10% on all skills. He knows and uses all the skills and powers of the dominant personality.

61-70 The Psychopath: A wild, daring, deadly personality who thrives on danger. Nothing is too risky or impossible. Tends to be reactionary, cruel, and strikes with deadly force. Also likes cat and mouse games, as long as he is the cat. Penalties: Does not know the dominant **personality's** skills. Bonuses: Knows the following skills at the proficiency level listed: Hand to Hand: Expert (3rd level for a total of 4 attacks per melee), W.P. Blunt, W.P. Knife, W.P. Revolver, W.P. Automatic Pistol, W.P. Rifle, Sniper, Prowl 55%, Climbing 65/45%, Pilot Automobiles 92%, Motorcycle 72%, Truck 76%, and Escape Artist 45%. Add +20 S.D.C. (applies only when the psychopath personality is in control). Can use all extraordinary powers equal to the dominant personality. Will not willingly allow any other personality dominance.

71-80 Opposite Sex: Pick from or roll on the optional rules Disposition table to determine the general attitude of character. May or may not know of the super abilities; 1-40%_ does not, 41-00%_ does know. If **she/he** doesn't know about the power or abilities then all skills are -20%, there is no combat skill (one attack per melee), and **extraordi-**

nary powers can NOT be used. If the personality does know about the abilities he/she knows about the other **personalities**. There is a 40% chance of it being convinced to let a different one surface. If he/she knows nothing about the other personalities and can not willingly let a different one surface.

81-90 Hypochondriac: A personality obsessed with **cleanliness**, and avoiding injury and disease. He will continually **whine** about potentially filthy or germ laden environments, and instruct his comrades about proper eating habits, vitamins, medication and sanitation. If injured in the slightest (one S.D.C.), the personality will whine and moan about it for hours. **Penalties:** Never takes the initiative, -5% on all skills. **Bonuses:** +1 to parry and dodge, and has a paramedic skill with an 86% skill proficiency. Knows all the personalities, but is hesitant to let any take control because they are either too reckless or wimpy and might get hurt. And they are all "so **filthy!!!!**" However, there is a 50% chance of being convinced to let any of them take control, except the **wildman** because "that guy's crazy". If letting another personality take control is likely to prevent his death or grievous injury, there is an 88% likelihood of letting out a different personality (player's choice, but the dominant personality is most likely).

91-00 The Normal: A very mundane, innocent, bumbling nerd-like youth (teenager) who knows nothing about super abilities, crime-fighting or heroics. He is friendly, but shy, and totally bewildered about super beings. He has no recollection of his other personalities or super abilities. **Penalties:** Can NOT use his extraordinary abilities, has no combat training (one attack per melee) and only high school equivalent skills and knowledge. This is a normal kid!

STEP FOUR: When Do The Different Personalities Take Control?

The dominant personality is the one who is usually in control. He or she is the main force behind the character and the one who has decided to become a super **crimefighter**. Another personality takes over under the following circumstances:

1. Severe shock or trauma, such as seeing a loved one killed or seriously injured, psionic or drug induced hallucinations, feeling completely helpless, or intense **pain/torture**. In these cases, the personality best suited to handle the situation will take control.

2. Coma or near death: Any one of the other personalities will take random control.

3. Hypnosis: 50% chance of calling forth a specific personality. If the roll fails, roll to see who takes random control. There is an 80% chance of bringing the dominant personality back into control when using hypnosis.

4. Telepathic Probe: 65% chance of pulling out a specific personality. If the roll fails, roll to determine which personality surfaces to take control. Once the personality is aware that a psionic probe is being used to suppress him and bring out a different personality, he gets a +4 to *save vs psionics* and is likely to attack the psionic. If he fails to make the savings throw, there is a 65% chance of pulling forth the specific personality desired.

5. Hypnotic Suggestion (psionic): Has a small chance of being used to pull out a specific personality (30%). The current personality automatically gets a +3 to *save vs psionic attack* when hypnotic suggestion is being used.

6. Mind Wipe (psionic): Whenever a mind wipe is being used the current, dominant personality will retreat into the subconscious, automatically breaking the effect of the mind wipe and bringing out a new personality. Roll for random control.

Determining Random Control

Determining which personality takes random control is easy. If you have TWO personalities, 1-3 represents the dominant personality, 4-6 the other, secondary, personality. THREE personalities: 1-2 is the domi-

nant, 3-4 a secondary personality, 5-6 the other. FOUR personalities: 1-3 represents the dominant, 4, 5 and 6 each represents one of the secondary personalities. FIVE personalities: 1-2 the dominant, 3, 4, 5 & 6 each represents one of the other personalities. SIX personalities #1 is the dominant, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 each represent one of the other personalities. Assign a numerical designation to each personality and roll a six-sided die to determine which one is **in control**.



Characters & Contexts

There is no set way that characters (PCs or NPCs) will react to gaining or developing magical powers. Not all will get (willingly) involved in struggles between Brotherhoods or combat evil. Nor should we assume that all who learn about the Nightlords or vampires will oppose these groups. The world is full of people who can see that a government, organization or group is a menace, but who choose to keep their heads down and let the world get on without them. It's just a sad reality that people often take the easy way, whether they're Germans filling in racial questionnaires in the 1930s, or Americans watching the environment decaying through the 1990s, or magicians trying to ignore the Nightlords in the 2020s. People have lives to lead, relationships and jobs to maintain, bills to pay, and few are going to launch themselves

into a self-righteous crusade (especially against forces they don't fully comprehend).

The way in which characters respond to magical powers, psionics and the supernatural will depend on their personalities, their background and the contexts in which they are introduced to them. Magic can be used for a variety of purposes, but will depend primarily upon the magician. For example, magic can be used to heal. If the character is a doctor, then **s/he** may surreptitiously use magic to augment scientific treatments. If the character is a preacher, then **s/he** may use these "miracles" to win peoples' hearts and souls (**s/he** may even believe that these powers are divinely inspired).

Alternatively, magic **and/or** psionics can be used to affect the way that people think. A psychotherapist might use it in his treatments. Or a stage hypnotist might use his powers to make **his/her** stage show more impressive and "real." Or an office worker might use magic to make superiors more inclined to give **him/her** a promotion.

You get the idea?

Magic need not be used in an "adventuring" or "heroic" context, and need not be used as weapons in grand conflicts. For every "player character" type practitioner of magic, who sees **his/her** powers as tools or weapons in some epic or bloody struggle, there are dozens who use magic in mundane and subtle ways. Check out the short monologue at the end of this chapter for an extreme example of **un-player** character like use of mind-altering magics.

The spells in this book are geared towards "adventurers" in the typical sense: player characters and their enemies who will want to use magic in conflicts against each other. It is worth remembering (especially if you are a G.M., trying to think up interesting **NPCs**) that most practitioners of magic are likely to use their knowledge and power (perhaps only slightly developed) in selfish, petty, and mundane ways. These inexperienced mages are also likely to be responsible for unleashing dangerous magic beyond their control, summoning dark powers (including Minions of the Nightlords and demons), and falling prey (as victims and stooges) to the Nightlords and their minions, demons, vampires, evil **Nightbane**, experienced **arcanists**, cults, brotherhoods and other forces.

Players may also want to consider the banal uses of their characters' magics. Can the character use any of **his/her** selected spells in everyday life? What spells would **s/he** have **developed/learned** before **s/he** started fighting the Nightlords or other foes?

Plot-Worthy Characters

As a final note, players should work with the G.M. to create characters who have adventure potential — characters who can be easily slotted into a plot, who not only have plausible motivations but also have a few weird quirks or personal histories which the G.M. can build upon. There is nothing worse for a G.M. than having to write adventures for a bunch of self-centered psychopaths who will kill anyone so long as they get paid.

Some examples? Here we go ...

IDEA: The character is an orphan who believes that his great hero of a father was killed fighting an evil enemy. **PLOT:** But no! As the campaign progresses, the character learns that his father was really subverted by the evil powers, and is in fact the arch-villain whose plans the characters have been striving to thwart. (Yes indeed, that's the plot of the Star Wars movies. Think about all the ideas you can **rip-off** ... er ... borrow from other movies, too.)

IDEA: The character has a dependent. Say a child, or an invalid father. **PLOT:** A helpless **dependent** ... you know, the sort that always gets threatened or kidnapped by the bad guys as they try to blackmail the good guys (the characters) ... and, of course, you might want to find a cure to your poor father's incurable disease (a good plot hook, that), etc.

IDEA: The character has been brought up (and trained) by a dominating mother who still offers (unwanted?) advice and guidance.

PLOT: The mother may have brought the character up to serve an unknown purpose or being (good or evil) which she has not yet revealed. Maybe the woman isn't really the character's mother (**Doppelganger? Ashmedai?** Demon? NSB agent?) but is just out to manipulate **him/her**.

IDEA: The character has only the haziest memories of **his/her** past, beyond a few months ago. **PLOT:** Perhaps the character's memory was magically removed (for **his/her** own good? Or to extract vital information which **s/he** possessed?) Or was just **born**?! Was actually magically created as part of someone's experiment (Whose? Why? etc.).

You get the idea?

Interesting Questions

When a player works out a character who is a practitioner of magic, **s/he** should have to think about these few questions, discussing the answers with the G.M. Some are simply background things to help the player to get an idea of how the character thinks and feels, but some are potentially plot-relevant.

1. When did the character first learn that **s/he** had magical powers? What were the circumstances, and what did **s/he** feel about it?

2. How did acquiring magical powers affect the character's lifestyle? Has **s/he** changed career, or discarded or gained friends as a result?

3. Where does the character think **his/her** magical powers come from? Not all mages will believe that they are just fuelling the effects from within their own minds, after all.

4. If the character had help developing **his/her** magical powers, how does **his/her** old mentor or master now relate to the character? What was the relationship while the character was being trained (friends, lovers, teacher and pupil, master and **servant**)? Does the master still expect obedience or service? Does the master think that the character has completed **his/her** training? Does the master expect repayment for **his/her** guidance? Does the master resent or feel betrayed by the character? How did they part company? Is the character fleeing from this master? Will the master provide additional help if required? Were they part of a larger Brotherhood?

5. If the character requires significant resources to pursue magic (e.g. a **Cybermage** needs money and equipment), where does this come from? If someone is supporting a magician's research (which can be very expensive), then why are they doing this? What do they get out of it? Their support isn't out of pure benevolence.

6. What does the character want to achieve with **his/her** magical powers? Does **s/he** feel that **s/he** has an obligation to use these talents in a certain way?

7. Do magic powers and the possession of secret knowledge make the character feel superior? If **so**, how superior? Does **s/he** see ordinary people as fools and cattle to be used and manipulated?

8. What contact has the character had with supernatural creatures? With **Nightlands** or Astral creatures, Vampires, Immortals and others? Were the experiences positive or negative? Why (if at all) does the character feel the need to confront **and/or** fight vampires, **Nightbane**, **Nightlords** and their minions, or others? Why are certain supernatural beings (like **Nightbane** and **Guardians**) considered potential allies, friends and comrades (or are **they**)?

The Mundane & the Magical

Some Closing Thoughts

"I loved Dark Day. Well, I mean, actually it scared the crap out of me. But afterwards ...

"I may as well tell you.

"I was never a 98 pound weakling, but I wasn't far off. I was just, you now, nothing special. A bit skinny. A bit shy. Girls didn't go for me at High School. I wasn't on the football team, and I wasn't even very clever. Normal. Nothing special.

"As a kid I'd watch **Baywatch**, or **Hercules**, or whatever, and I'd think, "that's what I want." No one was really going to admire my body. I hardly ever got a date, and I sure never got to go out with **Pamela Anderson**. But I wanted it. I wanted all that so bad. And on TV ... on TV, people got everything that I wanted. They got the fast cars, the big houses, the sexy women. You watch a movie, almost any movie, and the man always gets to kiss the woman, and he gets to keep his job and he gets loads of money, or whatever.

"Everyone has loads of money, and everyone gets laid all the time. I know that's true! I've seen it on TV. That's what happens. It just never happened to me.

"Well, just before **Dark Day** I'd lost my job, and my girlfriend (not that she was much of a girlfriend) had left me after she found the magazines under my bed. I was at a low. I wanted a normal life so bad, but all I got was this crap.

"Then, there I was, the day the sun **didn't** rise, looking out my window as some ... thing ... chased my neighbor into the alley under my apartment. And I thought, "I don't want to see this." I mean, I really, really didn't want to see what was about to happen. And that was it. Everything went black. I mean, I was blind. And I panicked. I thought, "I **don't** want to be blind, I want to see!" And I could.

"So now, I get everything I want. But not just with a thought or the snap of my fingers. Of course you have to work at everything, at least a little bit. But I found I could see what I wanted, feel what I wanted. After **Dark Day** I could see a woman on the road and want to know what she looked like, under her clothes, and if I concentrated I could see, like, everything. And that was just the beginning.

"Right now I might be in this gray office with you, but I can have the life I want. You make me come in here and talk to you every day, but when I go back to my room I can shut myself inside my own head, and live in my world, live the life that I've made for myself. You **don't** know what "brain surgery" means: I've totally remade everything inside my head, in a way your microscopes will never notice. But it's more than that. I can go there. It's real.

"I've got a life just like TV now. There's this Swedish air-hostess I'm dating behind my wife's back — which is easy enough, 'cuz she's off on photo shoots a lot, being a model and all. And I'm just about to buy a Ferrari, which I'm going to leave at my country villa for the weekends ...

"You think you're so damn clever, sitting there with your diploma and your smug smile. But twenty three hours a day I live a life you'll only see on TV. Just get the damned nurse in here and have me taken back to my room. Your reality sucks.

— The laments of an amateur Astral Mage Savant



CHAPTER 3: The Sorcerous Endeavor

By Kevin Hassall

with additional text and concepts by Kevin Siembieda

Living Magic

In the world of **Nightbane**, magic is cast by taking the power of a person's mind, P.P.E., and reshaping it into a new form. Magicians may call this "casting" or "creating a spell," but what they are really doing is creating a *mental structure*, in effect, a MIND. Furthermore, the very nature of most magic suggests some level of consciousness and mind. How else could a simple incantation cause such specialized and often complicated tasks?

Usually the spell is a highly structured mental energy, like an invisible computer program, preset to perform a specific function. What many don't realize is that with time or when an area is bombarded with magic energy, a more powerful magic has a *chance* to EVOLVE into something more. To become *aware* of its own existence, perhaps to develop an intelligence of its own, and maybe even to adapt and change its form! This is a fairly rare occurrence, and typically it's one of the longer lasting and most powerful spells (levels 8th and higher) that have any chance of becoming self-aware. Often magic items exist long enough to develop their own **I.Q.** and even a personality, but this takes decades, and, in general, only spells which have **instant/permanent** effects or last for years will develop in any way. Still, there are *Sanctum spells* which have outlived their creators and now shelter any passerby who will pay a "toll" of P.P.E.; a *Dimension Portal* in Los Angeles once opened by the Seekers, which will reopen to admit anyone who can plausibly claim to be a Seeker; a Summon Storm spell which vindictively roams the world's seas, joyously destroying anything in its path (this spell has, in fact, created a whole theory of philosophy and aesthetics based on the beauty of destruction); etc.

Self-aware or intelligent spells might learn to take on a physical form and to moderate and control their effects. They might also develop their own personalities, often based upon their creators' personalities (their P.P.E. was originally part of the caster's mind, after all) **and/or** on the nature of the spell. This means Curse spells are usually sadistic with evil alignments, an Oracle spell would yearn to learn and gather knowledge (probably an anarchist alignment), and an energy spell (fires, electricity, etc.) will tend to be aggressive and violent, often cruel and destructive (anarchist or evil alignments). This may even extend to developing their own philosophies, aims, values, purposes, and even religions.

Most *intelligent, self-aware spells* remain invisible, and intangible, but some take on a human form with low, basic, human attributes (typically 7-11, occasionally a point or two higher or lower), hit points (1D6 per each level of the spell), S.D.C. (one point per level of the spell), P.P.E. (half that necessary to cast the spell), etc., while some assume other suitable physical forms, from animals to the monstrous (basically the same stats as human forms). Some extreme examples of intelligent magics that have become human (or what passes for human) follow:

1. "**KING**" is an old man who lives in a squalid basement on a city tenement block. The floor of his home has collapsed into the sewer beneath it, and hundreds of rats scuttle out from the tunnels, through the basement and into the alleys beyond. King loves the rats — not so much as a master might love pets, but as a benevolent monarch might love his subjects. They bring him scraps of food and obey his every whim, while he warns them of danger (like city pest controllers) and settles squabbles **amongst** them. King was originally a level fourteen version (extended duration) of the Control Rodents spell.

Now in human manifestation, King has the following attributes: I.Q. 8, M.A. 9 (18 among rodents), M.E. 8, P.S. 10, P.P. 9, P.E. 10, P.B. 7, and Spd 10, hit points: 47 (1D6 per level of the original spell, in this case, 10th level, although the spell caster was 14th level), S.D.C.: 10

(one point per level of the original spell), P.P.E.: 35 (half the original **spell**), alignment Anarchist; as well as possessing the basic magical power of the original spell, the ability to summon and control rodents.

2. "**APRIL MAY**" is a down and out elderly woman, in a battered coat and woolly hat, who wanders the world, with nothing to comfort her but her knitting. She is always knitting, or darning, or mending. To earn a little money she will knock on doors and ask if there is any mending to be done, worn socks, ripped fabrics ... She lives to knit, mend, close holes in fabrics, because April May was once a carelessly cast Close Rift, mistakenly cast over an area where no Rift existed and left for years to brood (all 200 P.P.E. of her) over the frustration of her situation. So, one spring (in **April**, or May, she thinks) she just up and left her pointless position, in search of work. And so she wanders, patching holes and mending rips in both the fabric of cloth and the fabric of reality. In the latter case, she tries to bring peace and closure to people's lives by doing little things to help them (kind words of advice and/or encouragement, etc.), as well as help people avoid portals to the **Nightlands** and warn them of trouble or minions and monsters that may come from that foul place. She sometimes also shows people the way, out of the Nightlands.

Now in human manifestation, April May has the following attributes: I.Q. 9, M.A. 11 (22 among those who are lost and have holes in their **hearts/lives**), M.E. 10, P.S. 9, P.P. 8, P.E. 9, P.B. 10, and Spd 11; hit points: 71 (1D6 per level of the original spell, in this case, 14th level), S.D.C.: 14 (one point per level of the original spell), P.P.E.: 100 (half the original spell), scrupulous alignment; as well as possessing magical powers *based* on the original miscast spell. These include the natural ability to *see dimensional openings, recognize dimensional anomalies, recognize creatures from other dimensions* (beings not indigenous to earth, including **Doppelgangers, Nightlords** and their minions, Guardians, etc., as well as **Nightbanes** who are creatures of both worlds) and can perform *mirror walk, mirror sight, mirror search, and door way* at the same level of proficiency as a 7th level Nightbane (half the original spell level). However, P.P.E. recovery takes three times longer than normal and April May is weak (reduce spd and hit points by 30%) whenever she uses more than half her P.P.E. reserve.

3. "**Mr. PAUL**" is the son of God. Of course, theologically all men are the sons of **God**, but he knows that he, in particular, is God's special son. He was, after all, made and not begotten; created specifically for a purpose — to heal the sick, to minister to the needy. And so Mr. Paul, or Reverend Paul as he is often called, tours the midwest of America, healing the sick with the power of his faith (actually with the power of their faith and **P.P.E.**, but he doesn't know that) and preaching his version of the Good News. Although he sincerely believes that he is on a divine mission, Mr. Paul was originally a *Restoration spell*, cast to heal a child's terminal illness in 1919 and somehow, lived on in that person until their death on Dark Day, when he believes that he was "created."

Now in human manifestation (or what passes for human), Mr. Paul has the following attributes: I.Q. 9, M.A. 12 (24 among those who "believe"), M.E. 10, P.S. 8, P.P. 9, P.E. 12, P.B. 11, and Spd 9; hit points: 64 (1D6 per level of the original spell, in this case, 14th level), S.D.C.: 14 (one point per level of the original spell), P.P.E.: 375 (half the original spell), scrupulous alignment (could have been any good or selfish alignment); as well as possessing magical powers *based* on the original miscast spell. These include the ability to cast the spells *see aura, sense P.P.E., breathe without air, negate poisons/toxins, heal wounds, cure illness, purification (food and water), remove curse and negation*, all at 7th level proficiency (half the original spell level). However, Mr. Paul

unwittingly draws on the P.P.E. energy of the people he heals or the P.P.E. of the "believers" around him wishing to see a miracle of healing. This works much like a ritual, with his sermons and prayers enabling the "believers" to focus on the same goals and temporarily "give" Reverend Paul up to 50% of their own (usually unknown) P.P.E. reserve (2-8 points in the average person). When he **occasionally** expends his own P.P.E. reserve, recovery takes three times longer than normal and the Reverend feels weak (reduce spd and hit points by 30%) whenever he uses more than half his P.P.E. reserve.

Some Question & Answers about Living Magic

There is a well of potential here for G.M.s with a taste for the quirky, for intelligent spells to be used as **NPCs**, or otherwise incorporated into adventures. However, use them sparingly and avoid unbalancing one's game. Note too that when all the hit points and S.D.C. are expended the living spell disappears as if it never existed. The same is true if *all* the creature's personal P.P.E. is expended. Furthermore, healing magic only restores a quarter of the hit **points/S.D.C.**, otherwise the human embodiment will heal at the same rate as the average human. However, most are impervious to disease, **poison/toxin**, and cold or heat; after all, they aren't completely human. Their **magical/supernatural** nature will be revealed through see aura and sense magic.

Pedantic players and G.M.s may have a few nagging questions at this point. For example, does an instant spell have NO duration, or a very LONG duration (the effects are permanent, after **all**)? Exactly what triggers a spell into becoming self-aware? If a spell takes on a human or physical form, does it have to breathe, eat or drink?

Ultimately, all of these questions have the same answer: "It depends upon what is going to make your games more **interesting!**"

Instant spells can generally be considered to have no duration; but it may sometimes make for more interesting adventures to assume that a certain instant spell has an effectively permanent duration. Any logical reason that the G.M. likes, can be used to have spells become self-aware. Specific spells that take on a human form are likely to believe themselves human (despite their powers and other abilities) and are likely to need to eat, sleep, etc., while others may perpetuate themselves by other means; e.g. absorbing P.P.E. from other sources. This is up to the Game Master. All that matters is that you have fun creating and playing interesting situations, stories and adventures without getting silly or too unbalancing the campaign.

The Dangers of Too Much Magic

Magic is a power that is strong enough to affect the fabric of the material universe, the structure of human minds, and even the laws of physics. When this magic loses its sense of purpose — when an old spell's duration expires, or if a half-cast spell is aborted, all this energy doesn't just vanish. It may fade slowly away, but in the meantime it *may* form new and unexpected shapes and have almost any effect. Inevitably, concentrating and releasing large quantities of psychic energy in any one area is bound to have bizarre side effects. So, if large amounts of magic are cast in an area over a long period of time, that place is likely to become infested with stray or random magical effects and psychic emanations. The effects, at the G.M.'s discretion, may be unsettling, horrific, or fantastical. The table below gives a score of suggestions for G.M.s to use; weird things which can happen in an area as a result of heavy magic casting or old spells expiring in the area.

Random Manifestations of Magic

To create random strangeness for an area, roll **percentile** dice and consult the table below. Alternatively, G.M.s may select occurrences which best reflect the magics which have been cast in the area, or which provide suitable atmosphere or handy plot complications. Note: The sites of frequent magical or religious rituals, places of magic like stone megaliths (e.g. Stonehenge), the sanctuary, monastery, and similar places where magic was practiced or great battles were fought using magic, places used (by the **Nightlords** and others) as a dimensional por-

tal, and the location of ley lines and Chinese Dragon Tracks are among the most likely places where such phenomena can be encountered.

01-05 One spell once cast here has endured longer than it should, probably by "feeding" on the loose P.P.E. of other defunct spells in the area. This may be a boon to a mage living in the area (a permanent Protection Circle would be very useful), but could be very destructive (a Curse that lingers, or an Energy Bolt spell which keeps firing at random would soon destroy the magician's home) or more dangerous still (e.g. a Dimension Portal). Note that the spell need not continue to affect its intended target: it is now beyond the control or original intent of the caster, and its sole desire is to remain active; to this end, it doesn't care who it affects. So, a Curse might affect any one person or a series of people who just happen upon the area. Likewise, the spell may lay **dormant/quiet** taking action only when disturbed or angered, or against a particular O.C.C. or race (only strikes sorcerers, clergy or tax collectors, or only against blacks, whites, psychics, **Nightbane** or the denizens of the **Nightlands**, etc.).

06-09 An old spell in the area has become self-aware and intelligent. It can see and hear all that goes on around it, and strives to gain new P.P.E. to keep itself "alive" (e.g. by killing animals and absorbing their P.P.E. at the moment of death). Lacking solid form, it can communicate only by making writing appear in the dust or dirt, and its **P.S.** and other attributes are effectively a 1 or 2. In any case, its intelligence is rudimentary and its main desire is simply to stay alive.

10-12 Not merely self-aware, an old spell in the area has developed a human intelligence and has taken on a physical form. See some of the examples above for an idea of what this spell might be like. In effect, this means that the area has a mystical lodger.

13-17 The spells cast in the area repeat themselves sporadically and **unpredictably**, and in minor ways: their duration has expired, but they struggle to keep "alive," to keep active. So, if many levitation spells had been cast in the area, then every few days someone might notice a small object floating in the air, or an **object** drifting slowly down. Reports of mysterious lights might be the result of Globe of Daylight, and strange sounds the product of the Heavy Breathing spell or horrific illusion, and so on. If *Nightlands Passage* had been cast here a great deal, then occasionally, things, animals, and even people are randomly sucked through to the Nightlands.

18-23 If most of the magic cast in the area originated from the same source, from one sorcerer, for example, then anyone living or staying in the area starts to have flashes of memory and ideas which are not their own, but which come from that caster's loose P.P.E. and fragments of residual thoughts and memories preserved by the unleashed energy. These may be worrying (images of horrible creatures or bloody rites flashing through the **person's** mind) or insidious (the person has inexplicable and possibly depraved desires), but might on occasion be useful (the memory of a page in a book or snatches of conversation, or visions of past danger or enemies).

24-28 The area is so charged with magical energy that it literally glows. This may be a constant effect — a nimbus of energy visible over the area — or very dim ambient light, or, more likely, an occasional effect, such as strange lights seen in the area from time to time, or shimmering in the sky above.

29-31 Strong spells and heavy concentrations of P.P.E. take on any form desired by local mortals. They appear as apparitions, visible but without physical form, for up to three hours at a time. According to the subconscious desires of the people/creatures which live in the area, they might appear as long-lost children, dream-lovers, absent fathers, monsters expected in the area, and so on. They often appear to and become friends of the lonely or wretched, adopting whatever personalities these folk wish, but although they look solid enough, they have no real form or intelligence of their own. They are figments of the persons own imagination and subconscious.

32-40 As in countless folk stories and rustic sayings, the presence of magic has numerous minor, unsettling effects. Bread baked nearby



often refuses to rise and milk curdles, meat spoils and rots 5-10 times more swiftly than normal, flies or gnats or maggots are found in great abundance, babies cry constantly, dogs howl, and most animals avoid the area, **and/or** similar things.

41-48 As the fading magics in the area cling to life, they try to draw health from other things and people in the area. Plants wither and die overnight, people find that it takes weeks to recover from the pettiest ailments, young people living nearby find that their hair is starting to turn prematurely gray, etc.

49-54 The magic hangs heavy **in the air**, making the atmosphere seem muggy, oppressive. Visitors get clammy palms and find that the hairs on the back of their necks stand on end. Strange chills pass through the air.

55-59 One or more magics, or residues of P.P.E., inhabit a specific inanimate object or plant, which they then attempt to control. This may be a TV set (the magics changing channels to suit their tastes, or even showing fuzzy images of the past or of other places), a doll (often gone from where you were sure you left it), or a house plant, warping the way that the plant grows to suit their tastes — ever seen a six-foot tall venus fly trap? Or a jet black sunflower? And so on.

60-66 The people living around the area are physically or mentally affected by the magics and P.P.E. in the area. If the magics were or are primarily concerned with death or undead, for example, then many people become ill or develop degenerative **skin** conditions. If the magics were **divinational**, intended to gather information, then the locals with the highest amounts of personal P.P.E. start to have visions or hear voices. If the magic was destructive, many of the people may become aggressive and violent —**the** level of violent crimes (rape, assault, murder) may be unusually high, and so on. Up to several **city** blocks or a small village or town might be affected if the magic in the area **is** particularly potent or located near or along one or more ley lines.

67-70 The old spells in the area are lingering on, their P.P.E. forming into changing shapes as they create simple life forms or **ectoplasmic** constructs around them as bodies. They may try being house pets, wild animals, diminutive people, or strange protoplasmic entities. They are, in any case, only semi-visible in these forms, and insubstantial: they cannot be felt, and cannot affect the physical world. However, they do talk telepathically to the magician who created them (if he or she remains in the area), begging for guidance or advice, moaning that they have been set free in the world with no direction or understanding, and generally making the magician feel guilty. His or her negative or positive direction (or lack thereof) will help to shape these fledgling **beings'** personalities, purpose and appearance.

71-73 As above, but the spells are beginning to find a way of gaining a new, human life. They are insinuating themselves **into** the minds of certain vulnerable folk nearby, perhaps a senile old person living next door, or the mind of the new born baby across the road. Their victims are likely to have strange understandings and memories, and may develop multiple personalities.

74-78 Poltergeist activity. The P.P.E. remains mindless, but **is** highly volatile. During prolonged periods of stress for the humans in the area, the P.P.E. becomes agitated, with probably violent consequences. This activity may range from doors slamming to objects being thrown at people, to people being hurled across a room, depending upon the amount of magic and the strength of the spells which remain in the area.

79-84 The residual P.P.E. and magical energy of the area acts as a beacon to magical creatures, and creates an intriguing glow in corresponding areas of the Astral Plane. This often attracts curious creatures, entities, and astral travellers, who are simply intrigued by the place's odd aura. Such visitors need not be a menace.

85-88 As **above**, but the magic has actually attracted one specific creature (or group of creatures) to make its home here. The creature(s)

may not even realize why it is drawn here: it just feels "special," "good," or "safe." This might be a **Doppelganger** who moves in next door, a rogue **Ashmedai** living in the cellar, a dozen **Scuttlers** (described elsewhere) infesting the area, a Rebel Infernal (see **Mystic China™**), several Dream Ghouls (see **Nightbane™ 1: Between the Shadows™**) using the corresponding area of the **Dreamstream** as a base of operations, etc.

89-92 The high concentration of magical energy has weakened the **Mirrorwall**, the barrier between the earth and other realities. Voices may occasionally drift across the barrier, strange images constantly appear in all mirrors, and very occasionally, a person from this area may unintentionally wander across into the other plane! Crossing over is not possible intentionally, however, and seems to require some kind of altered mental state — this is a bad place to take drugs, get drunk, or go sleep-walking.

93-94 The magics have torn open the Mirrorwall, creating a semi-permanent portal to another universe (**Nightlands** or other). The portal may be open most of the time, or only at specific moments (at the stroke of midnight, only on the nights of the full moon, summer and winter solstice, etc.). For the moment, no one on the other side knows that the portal exists.

95-97 The aware P.P.E. is attempting to find form and makes itself incarnate in the form of a small animal (mouse, spider, fly, etc.; nothing larger than a rat or bird). If a lot of P.P.E. has been released in the area, many infestations can become veritable plagues, with hundreds of mice, or thousands of spiders, etc. The P.P.E. is unable to hold any form for long, however, and the animals simply disappear after **1D6** hours.

98-00 Large amounts of magic in the area have been cast by one magician (or Nightbane mage, Night Prince or Nightlord). The residual P.P.E. has coalesced into one mass, which has the personality, attitudes, and knowledge of the magician. For a couple of hours a day, the P.P.E. can even manifest itself physically (with P.E., Hit Points and other physical attributes of only **1D6**) and has no magical powers of its own, but it actually thinks that it is the magician. It does not create its own plots or plans (**yet?**), but will react to situations in the same way as the magician and, if "living" in the magician's house, is likely to do annoying things like set the video, answer e-mail, write in his or her diary, etc. Should the P.P.E. ever meet the real magician, it is likely to be deeply disturbed and think that there is an "imposter" on the loose. If this happens, there is a **01-60%** chance that a Doppelganger will awake in the Nightlands, come to Earth and merge with the magical coalescence to form a living double of the mage. At this point, the Doppelganger will either try to kill the "imposter" and continue its life as the magician or leave his home (taking many of the real mage's possessions and cash) to build its own life elsewhere.

Magical Investigations

Inevitably in the course of their studies and adventures, magicians will stumble upon artifacts or objects, plants or animals, which have magical powers. They will, of course, want to know what these objects or creatures do.

In order to discover anything about the thing, the magician must then:

1. Spend several (**2D4**) days examining and considering the object or creature. A **Cybermage** might look at it through weird machines or microscopes; a **Mystic** might take it into the wilderness and "talk to" it; a **Sorcerer** might set it in a ritual circle and conjure magics around it ... each magician will probably have their own way of doing this.

2. Make a successful Principles of Magic roll **OR** if **s/he** does not have this skill, must roll less than **his/her I.Q.** on **2D10**. If this roll fails, **s/he** does *not* learn anything about the item until **s/he** has learned more of the ways of magic (i.e. gained another level of experience and tries the study again). If the object has several powers, a separate roll must be made to discover each.

3. Have some basis for comparison. If **investigating** an enchanted item, for example, the magician must already know a **spell** which is in some way similar to the object currently under scrutiny. **For** example: If the magician only knows violent magics, and finds an item which heals people, **s/he** will be baffled by it, because it is nothing like any magic **s/he** has ever encountered before. As another example: In order to identify the properties of a magical poison, the character must either **know** a spell which creates potions/poisons, or must have a relevant skill (e.g. toxicology or chemistry). If the object is quite alien to the magician, **s/he** cannot work out what it does or exactly how it works.

If the investigation is successful, a magician may discover:

1. What magical effects/properties the object possesses.
2. How it is possible to trigger those effects (if it is a trap, how does it work? If it is triggered by a spoken word, then what is that word? etc.),
3. What manner of magician created it (Mystic, Sorcerer, Astral Lord, Cybermage, etc.),
4. Roughly how old it is.
5. What it is made of.
6. Roughly how much longer its magical effects will last.
7. Whether any person is currently controlling or influencing it, or whether somebody is under the object's power (but it does not tell who such people or beings are).
8. How much P.P.E. has been invested in the object.
9. If the object can only be used a certain number of times, how often (and when) may it be used,
10. If the object had other powers which have been destroyed or used up in the last month, and what these powers might have been.

Inventing Spells

It is likely that, at some point, player characters will want to invent new spells, either working out existing, standard spells for themselves (those given in this book, the **RPG**, and others), or creating variations on these (see the guidelines for creating altered versions of existing spells elsewhere in this section), and, with the G.M.'s approval, creating entirely new spells!

Game Masters (G.M.s) who find that players pester and bully them to be allowed ridiculous or **overpowering/imbancing** spells, should read them the following paragraph:

*"Ultimately the G.M. is the **final** arbiter of **what** spells are acceptable, what level they should be considered, the P.P.E. cost, duration, and range, and can make any other details, side effects, or modification that may be necessary for the **SUGGESTED** spell. Players who argue with, wince at, or otherwise **cajole** their **G.M.s** can expect the **G.M.** to get his own back in a suitably vindictive and unpleasant manner during a later adventure: Don't argue with the guy who controls the world your character lives in — **it's unhealthy for your beloved character.**"*

Kidding and veiled threats aside, the Game Master is *always* the one who has the final word on how the campaign is run and what is or isn't acceptable. This means even if a new or variant spell is allowed, and the G.M. later decides it is not appropriate, for whatever the reason, he or she has every right to expunge (eliminate) its future use. Players should try to work with and accept the G.M.'s decisions and not make **him/her** an adversary.

Mystics need not worry about inventing new spells. On reaching a new level of experience they automatically learn new spells, as explained on page **117** of the **Nightbane RPG**. Likewise, **Channellers** also learn spells automatically. Neither can create variants or brand new spells; most wizards, sorcerers, and other spell casters who learn and formulate incantations, use rituals and create magical devices/artifacts can attempt to make new spells and spell variants based on existing, known spells.

Rules for Inventing Spells

Figuring out Existing Magic



Simple Inventions based on known magic: At each new level, magicians have the chance to gain new spells, without the need for tuition or research. They just learn, through experience, how to logically create certain likely magical effects through spell casting.

In this way, a practitioner of magic may figure out an incantation for any known spell which ties in with his/her past knowledge and experience, i.e. the character's O.C.C. Based on the character's O.C.C., experience, observations, understanding of magic and magical experimentation, the character *may* be able to figure out spell incantation or ritual that is appropriate to his O.C.C. — a spell or ritual that is "new" to him, but is something that any practitioner of magic in his O.C.C. is able to learn one way or another. These spells and rituals are generally limited to those presented in the various **Nightbane® RPG** titles (and if allowed by the G.M., other Palladium RPGs).

Often, these mages *will* learn from mentors or ancient **grimoires**, buy tuition from magical brotherhoods and associations, be taught spells by friends, etc. But from time to time they will want to develop a spell in secret, or will want a magic which no one else seems to know, or will want to avoid the expense or complication of learning from another source. Devising spells on their own, provides the character with a method other than having to grovel before or pay money to more powerful mages to learn additional spells. The magicians may also want to learn spells which have no bearing upon their experiences, or which are of a higher level than they are, etc. The following rules allow characters a *slim* chance of puzzling out new spell incantations related to their particular O.C.C. Magicians, Sorcerers, **Cybermages**, **Fleshsculptors**, **Mirror-mages**, and most spell casters, must work out their spells formally. Sorcerers need their arcane grimoires. Cybermages need their pseudo-scientific blueprints, etc.

Add the following:

The character's I.Q. attribute number.

The character's M.E. attribute number.

One tenth of his/her Principles of Magic skill (ignoring fractions).

The character's level of experience (if 4th level, use 4, if 5th level, use 5, etc.).

Now, if the character already knows a spell which is *similar* to the one currently being figured out, add the level of that spell (1-15; if the character knows several which are similar, then add the highest of their levels).

This total number gives the player the percentage chance for working out the spell in a *month* of research and experimentation; approximating at least seven hours a day for a total of 30 days. **Note:** The character can put in four hours one day, 11 the next, etc., and even skip a day or two as long as approximately 28 hours are spent studying and developing the spell per every four day period. If there is more than a three day lapse between research and development, the experiment must be restarted from scratch.

Penalty: Reduce the final number by -10% for each level above nine. For example, if the final number indicating the chance for success was 34% (i.e. success on a percentile roll of 01-34), the odds of learning a 10th level spell is -10%, giving a 31% chance; an 11th level spell is -20%, for a 28% chance for success, a 13th level spell is -30%, for a 25% chance of success, a 14th level spell, 21% and 15th level, a mere 19% chance of success.

The odds are clearly against the practitioner of magic. Many mages will have to earn a living or perform tedious chores during their days, so the process may actually take longer than a month, due to shorter hours available per day. It is in the nature of epic magics that magicians must struggle for months or years to learn the mighty spells which they crave. Throughout this period, the character studies, experiments, and **theo-**

rizes, casting many little trial magics and leafing through dusty tomes. The character's P.P.E. total is always at half its normal maximum, as the mage is using a lot of P.P.E. to cast experimental magics during **his/her** investigations.

Failure: If the character does not successfully create a working incantation for an existing spell, more experimentation, trial and error, is necessary. Repeat the above for another month or two.

Failed Spell Invention Table

Optional Failure Penalty: If it seems appropriate, the G.M. can roll (or have the player roll) percentile on the *Failed Spell Invention Table* for strange side-effects and danger as a result of the mystic experimentation.

01-05 The P.P.E. released during experimentation causes a powerful magical vortex. The character escapes unharmed, but a whirl of wind, fire and ectoplasm engulfs an area ranging from the magician's desktop (for a level one spell), to **his/her** workroom (level four), apartment (eight), entire house or half the apartment building (twelve) or even an entire city block (for a level fifteen spell). Local authorities (police, fire services, etc.) will be alarmed and investigate.

06-15 The P.P.E. released takes on some kind of form. Roll on (or select from) the *Too Much Magic Table* described earlier.

16-20 The magical experimentation, wild P.P.E., and irrational thoughts in the magician's head have some bad effect on the poor mage's mind. **S/he** gains a random insanity or similar disadvantage from messing with things that **his/her** mind wasn't made to understand.

21-25 Dismal failure. Whenever the mage tries to cast the spell, a magical implosion knocks **him/her** (not anybody around him) to the floor and inflicts 2D6 damage.

26-35 All this wild P.P.E. and unstructured magic acts as a beacon to attract some curious and probably malignant force or supernatural creature — anything from a passing Hunter or entity to an NSB agent, at the G.M.'s discretion.

36-40 The magician is sure that as **s/he** understands the principles of magic, the spell should work properly — but it doesn't. This may be due to human error or the weirdness of magic, but the magician concludes that **s/he** must have misunderstood something about the nature of magic, and so comes to doubt or discount some important magical theory. Subtract 1%, permanently, from **his/her** Principles of Magic skill.

41-50 More by luck than judgement, the character actually stumbles upon most of the correct way of casting the spell. The attempt was a semi-success after all! It has *half* the usual duration and requires 1D4x10% more P.P.E. to cast it, but it works.

51-60 The character THINKS that **s/he** has successfully created the spell. In fact, as **s/he** may realize when it's actually cast, the spell is subtly flawed, or has an effect which is not quite what **s/he** wanted (e.g. instead of instantly healing a single wound, the spell accelerates the healing process through the target's entire body, or duration is reduced by 10% to 70%, or damage is half, or the spell costs double P.P.E., etc.).

61-70 The spell is a failure, but the magician has learned something from all the experimenting. Add 1%, permanently, to **his/her** Principles of Magic score.

71-80 Adventure & Danger! The P.P.E. released, the strange books checked out from the library, the chance interruption of next-door's cat at that crucial **moment** ... SOMETHING causes a bizarre series of magical events which leads — now or in the future — to an adventure of some kind. The details of this are entirely up to the G.M.

81-85 Obsession! The more the character uses magic to research, the more the detritus of that magic — stray P.P.E., now wandering around **his/her** apartment and through **his/her** mind — drives **him/her** onwards. After a month, the magician's head is now full of stray P.P.E. (once **his/her** own psychic power, now just the remnants of **his/her** frustrated desire driving **him/her** on to experiment more and more). All of

the mage's time is spent in study. **S/he** no longer goes to work, washes, speaks to friends, etc. All subsequent months must be spent in study. Hopefully the character has friends who will rescue **him/her** from this obsession! Getting rid of all the stray P.P.E. (a Negate spell or **Channeler** should do it) or several months of psychotherapy should allow the magician to recover completely.

86-90 Phobia! Similar to 81-85, above, but in this case, something goes so terribly wrong that it emotionally or mentally traumatizes the mage to the point that **s/he** abandons trying to figure out that particular spell and will never again try to learn it, even if somebody is willing to teach it to him for free! The mage is terrified of the forces it might unleash when cast. A year of psychotherapy should allow the magician to get over this fear.

91-95 Unwanted open channel to the Dreamstream. The experimentation and studies open a link in the character's mind to the Dreamstream. This gives strange visions (sometimes frightening, other times wonderful) and makes **him/her** vulnerable to visits (and attacks) by the denizens of this strange dimension. See *Between the Shadows* for details. A link to the **Nightlands** or Astral Plane can be substituted.

96-00 Delusions of success! The character THINKS that **s/he** has successfully created the spell. In fact, as **s/he** will discover, whenever this spell is cast, something disastrously different occurs. Typically the opposite effect, e.g. a spell designed to detect denizens of the Nightlands actually summons one, or a summoning spell just opens a portal and leaves it open or actually dispels/repels that type of creature, a Heal Wounds spell inflicts the equivalent in damage, a Globe of Daylight creates an area of darkness, a Fire Ball creates a ball of water (does one point of damage per level of experience), Locate mentally tells the character sought the location of the mage, and so on.

Spell Variants

Modifying existing spells: The magician can attempt to create a spell incantation that modifies a known spell that relates to his O.C.C. and therefore falls into his area of experience and **understandig**. For example: The mage may want to create a fire ball spell that does less damage or even greater damage. Or he may want to create a Globe of Daylight that swirls around in a circle, or magic armor that can be seen and is +1 to the wearer's ability to intimidate (M.A.) or to his horror factor.

To determine the chance for success, add the following:

The character's I.Q. number.

The character's M.E. number.

One tenth of **his/her** Principles of Magic skill (ignoring fractions).

Penalties: High level spells and equivalent magics have the same -10% penalty per level above 9th as trying to figure out existing spells.

Reduce the percentage for success by **50%** whenever the *modification* is to make the spell *more* potent (does more damage, longer duration, etc.) or whenever the modification is the opposite or very alien to its original **intent/nature**.

Bonus: Add 10% to the percentage for success whenever the modification is to make the spell *less* potent (does less damage, shorter duration, etc.) or whenever the modification is harmonious with the spell's original design, purpose and nature.

Note: The mage must spend the equivalent of two weeks per level of the spell desired or equivalent spell level for other types of variants. So two weeks for a level one spell, or thirty weeks for a level fifteen spell.

Variant spells are *always* at least one level higher than the original spell, even if the variation is a minor one. Spells with dramatic **variations** will be two to six levels higher.

If a magician's attempt to create a *variant spell* is a failure, **s/he** has no functioning spell and **s/he** may not again attempt to convert that magic until more of the arts of magic are learned (i.e. rises to the next level of experience). Additionally, roll on the *Failed Spell Invention Table* (described previously) for every failure.

Converting Different Magic into Variant Spells

Cybermages and **Fleshsculptors** in particular, may find that they cannot use standard spells as outlined in sorcerers' texts and **grimoires** (this is true of all spells designed and used for the *exclusive use* of a particular O.C.C.; and **Nightbane Talents** and psychic powers are not available as spells). Instead, they must create their own, new *versions* of these standard sorcerous spells in order to cast them. Likewise, a Sorcerer might find a weird **Cybermage's** blueprint or **Fleshsculptor's** tract, and want to work out exactly how they function so that *s/he* can mimic their effects as a spell. In this case, the character only has a 1% chance of success (any such spell would be ranked as an 11-15th level spell). The **Fleshsculptor's** and **Cybermage** specialized magics generally *cannot* be converted into a spell for use by sorcerers and other spell weaving experts. However, such attempts *may* give the experimenter insight on how to power and/or operate the device, or how to counter or destroy it.

Again, the G.M. can limit which spells or special O.C.C. magic can be converted/translated into a spell magic equivalent (if possible at all) or assign additional penalties to diminish success.

To determine the chance for success, add the following:

The character's I.Q. number.

The character's M.E. number.

One tenth of **his/her** Principles of Magic skill (ignoring fractions).

Note: The mage must spend the equivalent of one month per level of the spell desired or equivalent spell level for other types of variants. So one month for a level one spell, or fifteen months for a level fifteen spell.

If a magician's attempts to decipher and convert these magics fails, *s/he* has no functioning spell and *s/he* may not again attempt to convert that magic until more of the arts of magic are learned (i.e. rises to the next level of experience). Furthermore, roll on the *Failed Spell Invention Table* (described previously) for every failure.



Creation of an entirely "New" Spell

Again, it is ultimately the G.M. who decides whether a new spell *suggested* by a player can be attempted and allowed in the game. The G.M. will also assign the "level designation" of the new spell and the amount of P.P.E. necessary to cast it, although players may again offer suggestions.

To determine the chance for success, add the following:

The character's I.Q. number and,

One tenth of **his/her** Principles of Magic skill (ignoring fractions).

Penalties: High level spells and equivalent magics have the same 10% penalty per level above 9th as attempting to figure out existing spells.

The mage must spend the equivalent of three weeks per level of the spell desired or equivalent spell level for other types of variants. So three weeks for a level one spell, or 45 weeks for a level fifteen spell.

Note: If a magician's attempt to create a *new* spell is a failure, *s/he* has no functioning spell and *s/he* may not again attempt to create that particular magic again until more of the arts of magic are learned (i.e. rises to the next level of experience or *s/he* acquires 25,000 additional experience points, whichever comes first). Additionally, roll on the *Failed Spell Invention Table* (described previously) for every failure.

More Notes on Magic

Access to Specialized Magics

It is possible that practitioners of magic will, at some stage, want to **learn** a spell or ritual typically reserved for a *specialized* O.C.C., such as those used by a **Mirrorimage**, **Fleshsculptor**, or similar. Rather than just deny them all access (these are magics like the ones they use, after all, so they should have some chance of learning them), use the rules above, but also consider the following guidelines.

1. No sorcerer may *invent* an entirely new specialized spell. Only a practitioner of that special magic O.C.C. may do so (e.g. **Fleshsculptors** cannot invent a new **Mirrorimage** spell or spell variant).

2. Specialized spells figured out by a different magician O.C.C. should be considered to be *five levels higher*. So, a level two **Mirrorimage** would be considered a level seven spell if a **non-Mirrorimage** wished to learn it.

3. A Sorcerer may not take a specialized spell from a different magic O.C.C. as **his/her** free spell gained upon reaching a new level (although a mystic may if the G.M. allows it). Sorcerers must learn these from texts, tutors, etc.

4. Each time that a magician attempts to learn a spell which is specific to another sort of magician, *s/he* must roll under I.Q. on 1D20. If the roll fails, the magician may not attempt to learn that spell again until *s/he* learns more of the arts of magic (i.e. goes up a level).

New & Modified Magic

The spells described here and in the rule book are only the most (comparatively) common selections of the magic available to practitioners of magic in the **Nightbane™ Role-Playing Game**. For thousands of years, would-be sorcerers from hundreds of cultures and backgrounds have been trying to manipulate arcane powers for their own ends. Inevitably, they have created more spells than those listed in these few pages, although many are variations of existing "key" or "benchmark" spells. It is reasonable to assume that humankind has lost or forgotten much more magic than is known in the modern world of the **Nightbane**.

G.M.s should therefore feel free to introduce new or variant spells, either to suit the details of their adventures, or just to keep the players on their toes. Nothing destroys a sense of horror and mystery like a player who says "It's all right, I've read the rules and it says in the spell description that ...". So occasionally, introduce opponents and mystic secrets with unknown magic or spell variants to keep the players guessing and worried.

When creating a new spell, however, it is worth asking a few questions:

1. What is the exact effect of the spell?
2. What is the range and duration, and are there any special limitations?
3. Is the spell interesting in terms of game play?
4. Is it balanced (e.g. it's not so powerful or unique that it gives one particular player or the player group too much power, an unfair advantage or just makes the campaign stupid or **boring**)?

Answering these simple questions will give you an idea of what level, P.P.E. cost, range and duration the spell should be. So:

a) **Find a spell in the rules** or in this book which has a similar effect to the spell you have in mind. This will give you an idea of the basic level, P.P.E., and reasonable duration for the spell. You might consider these "benchmark" spells.

If you are thinking of a spell which will render a target immobile for a few melee rounds, then the spell should probably be about level seven, with a P.P.E. cost of 20-30. How is that calculated? Well, the **Agony** spell (page 138 of the **RPG**) renders a target helpless for four

melee rounds, has a range of **five** feet per level of experience, costs 20 P.P.E., and is level seven. Your spell may be quite different: perhaps briars and black vines shoot from the ground to entangle the target, rather than the victim simply feeling a great deal of pain; perhaps the duration is 1D6 or 2D4 melees, rather than a set four melees; or maybe the target doesn't make a standard saving throw, but instead has some other method of escape (e.g. rolling less than P.S. or a dodge). But the fact is that the overall effect is, on balance, equivalent to Agony, so that spell is a suitable benchmark.

Having found a suitable benchmark spell, simply increase the level and P.P.E. if you want the spell to be more powerful, and reduce level and P.P.E. if you want it to be less powerful. So, you will notice that in the rule book, *Fire Bolt* (level four, page 132) and *Energy Bolt* (level three, page 130) have very similar effects — except that *Fire Bolt* has a +4 bonus to hit, and is consequently one level higher and costs a couple more P.P.E. to cast.

As a rule, for every advantage that a spell has over a benchmark spell, P.P.E. cost should go up by two points or 20% (whichever is greater) and the spell should be one level higher. For every disadvantage, knock off 2 P.P.E. or 20%, and reduce the spell by one level. Obviously, if the advantage or disadvantage is particularly extreme, increase or decrease the P.P.E. and level more severely.

b) What about duration and range? Again, use an existing spell as a benchmark. If your new or modified spell has a longer duration or range than the benchmark, then increase level and P.P.E. appropriately.

Duration: Most spell durations are either Instant or fall into these brackets:

- One melee
- Several melee rounds (typically 2-8)
- Minutes
- Hours
- Days
- Months
- Years
- A long, long time.

To increase duration by one step, increase the level by one and double the P.P.E. cost. To reduce duration by one, halve the P.P.E. and reduce the level by one.

So, as another example, increasing the *duration* of the "Agony" spell from several melees to "until the day when the seas boil with blood" — a long, long time — would increase the spell by six levels and double the P.P.E. cost six times! **That's** a level thirteen spell costing 1280 P.P.E. to cast!! **Note:** A *ritual* can take 1D6+6 minutes to one hour, occasionally longer, sometimes shorter. Most require components and high amounts of P.P.E.

Range: You will find that most spells listed in the rules and in this book have a number of *range-brackets* that they fall into:

- Self only (the caster cannot affect others)
- Very near (touch, or within 10 feet)
- Within combat range (up to 60 or 100 feet away)
- Long combat range (within a couple of hundred feet)
- Sight (up to a **mile/1.6 km**)
- Long range (up to 15 miles)
- Extreme range (**15 miles** up to several hundred)
- Anywhere on the current plane
- Anywhere

If your benchmark spell can only affect people within 10 feet (3 m), say, and your new spell can affect them anywhere, then your new spell (being seven range-bands more powerful) should be seven levels more powerful, and cost over double the P.P.E. to cast.

c) Is it interesting? Well, that's the clincher. The point of any role-playing game, after all, is to interest and entertain the G.M. and players. Spells which make for a more interesting, exciting, scary, dangerous game, therefore, should be encouraged, especially those which have

built-in plot hooks, weaknesses which clever player characters (or their foes) must overcome or can be exploited, or which have interesting side effects or limitations. Spells which are **dull**, overwhelmingly powerful, or which promise to ruin adventures, should be discouraged or banned outright.

Think about that ultra-long duration Agony spell we just mentioned. A player character magician who knew that spell could just remove from the campaign any arch-villain who just happened to fail one saving throw (unless the arch-villain has powerful magic using friends who could dispel the effect). One spell cast, one saving throw failed and that's it. Hardly an epic or even amusing struggle for victory over a great foe! So, don't use it or change it.

Make this long duration Agony a Ritual, and reduce its range to Touch. Now things are more interesting. And add a special ingredient for the performance of the Ritual: in order to cast the spell, the caster must have the skull of a man who lived in constant pain for 60 years, and should that skull subsequently be destroyed, the spell will end. At the least this will require a lot of research to find a man who lived long enough, and maybe a bit of graverobbing in a cemetery ("oh, hello officer ... I can explain ... honest I can ..."). And then after the spell has been cast, the skull must be protected and kept hidden from those who would save the spell's victim. Now that's much more interesting.

d) Ask the G.M.: Ultimately, your Game Master *must* approve the inclusion of any new or modified/variant spells into his or her campaign. The G.M. may accept, reject or enforce his or her own modifications, side effects, etc. This is the time where the G.M. should adjust the spell (if necessary) to fit with the game; adjust the level of the spell, increase or decrease P.P.E., duration, range, etc. However, after the G.M. makes what he or she believes are *necessary* and *suitable* changes, the player should have the option of either accepting the changes and using the new or variant spell, or not using it at all (presumably because s/he doesn't like or agree with the changes). Players should try to understand the G.M.'s position and work together.

Sample Benchmark Spells

Listed by the effect of the magic ... followed by the name of the Benchmark Spell and where to find it.

Adding A.R. and S.D.C. ... Magic Armor (rule book, page 131)

Immobilizing an opponent ... Agony (rule book, page 138)

Causing damage in combat ... Energy Bolt (rule book, page 130)

Curing diseases ... Cure Illness (rule book, page 136)

Finding an object or person ... Locate (rule book, page 140)

Healing wounds ... Heal Wounds (rule book, page 135)

Increasing attribute scores ... Superhuman Strength and

Influencing what others say ... Words of Truth (rule book, page 137)

Magically spying on distant places ... Second Sight (rule book, page 139)

Open a gateway to another plane ... Nightlands Portal (rule book, page 141)

Rapid movement, avoiding obstacles ... Fly and Swim as Fish (superior) (rule book, page 135) and Superhuman Speed (RPG page 135).

Removing hit points ... Life Drain (rule book, page 138)

Example: Zombie: Look at the spell Create Zombie elsewhere in this book. This ritual allows a magician to raise an undead servant or guard, but it has very specific limitations and advantages. The limitations include: the spell must be cast as a Ritual, the target must be relatively small (under 600 lbs/270 kg), the zombie is damaged by sunlight, it takes extra damage from fire, it has no real intelligence, it must have all or most of its flesh intact. The advantages include: It can lie dormant for unlimited periods, it is slavishly loyal to its creator, and it will never attack its creator.

Removing each of these limitations would increase the level of the spell by one, and the P.P.E. required by 20% (in this case, 20% of 80 = 16). So, a non-ritual spell which created animated corpses which were not vulnerable to sun or fire, which required no flesh to remain (the

skeleton alone is sufficient), could be of any size, and had human (3D6) intelligence while remaining slavishly loyal, would be six levels higher (level 15) and cost 176 P.P.E. to cast (perhaps higher). It would also be terminally tedious. Remember question three above, "Is it interesting?" Well, no, this spell isn't interesting, plus it's too powerful, unbalancing, and departs from myth. It has no restrictions, no plot possibilities, no weaknesses, no unexpected consequences, no side effects - nothing. Ditch it!

Note: The Create Zombie spell in *Nightbane Book 3: Through the Glass Darkly* is, in fact, a variation of a spell found in the *Palladium Fantasy RPG* and other Palladium books — a more "interesting" version.

Adding Cultural Touches

Spells aren't just sitting there, waiting to be discovered. Rather, generations of magicians and dabblers have taken magical powers and struggled to force them into the spells that they want. In other words, spells reflect the needs and wishes of the people who created them, and the beliefs, culture, and spurious supernatural theories which determined how those people went about practicing magic.

So, for example, the rituals of a Celtic priest (mystic) might have involved casting a precious sacrificial object into a "sacred" pool during summer or winter solstice. An ancient Egyptian sorcerer would have created spells which require certain Words of Power to be spoken out loud or inscribed. A medieval Diabolist (sorcerer) would have cast his rituals in carefully inscribed circles and pentagrams. A Nuer elder (mystic) would expect that to be effective, any ritual would involve the sacrifice of a cow. Each time period will have a different outlook and that will be reflected in the magical constructs of the spells, components and rituals.

Modern western magicians, as described in the rule book, are products of their times, too. The modern western world is dominated by Liberal obsessions with individual freedoms and abilities, as well as the supremacy of the intellect, which in turn, stem from a Christian religion obsessed with the idea of the immortality of the individual mind/soul/identity. Furthermore, this western world has amongst its more distinctive elements, bizarre interests in psychic activities, psychoanalysis, etc. It's inevitable that magicians raised in the west will believe that magical abilities stem entirely from the enlightened activities of the individual's unfettered mind — whether that's true or not. It's simply a reflection of the times.

The point is that many past magicians have not shared the belief that magic comes purely from within the individual. That means:

1. That when a modern character comes across an ancient spell in written form, for example, it may include requirements (such as uttering certain phrases, sacrificing animals, perform only at midnight, etc.) which aren't strictly necessary: the writer found that they were (and probably didn't have to expend so much P.P.E., because s/he wasn't fuelling the spell entirely from his/her own mind) but the player character can eventually learn to do without these extraneous elements. On the other hand, they may be an important series of things that help to focus the mind, so to do without them (as a modern "enlightened" character might want to do) will impair or prevent the magic.

2. Ritual spells — which do require props and lengthy mutterings — will have a distinctive cultural feel to them. A G.M. can use this to add atmosphere or to add interesting complications. For example, an African ritual might be just what the player characters need right now, but where are they going to get a white sacrificial ox from in the middle of Brooklyn? And how will they explain the butchered carcass to their landlady?

The distinctive nature of rituals might also provide clues to the characters — who might find, for example, that one particular Brotherhood uses only magics of Chinese origin, so that Chinese symbols and scraps of ginseng around a ritual site might suggest that particular Brotherhood as being responsible for the ritual and/or magic unleashed there. Under-



standing who is responsible and what the ritual may have meant, might point to any number of disturbing things to come, impending danger, the Brotherhood's intentions (and possible plans), and so on.

3. Other magicians, particularly Immortals, do not think of magic in the same way as most modern player characters, and may not be bound by its rules. This is up to the discretion of individual G.M.s and circumstance, but it is possible that some of these ancient magicians need not actually expend P.P.E. to cast spells, instead fuelling the magics through other means; but on the other hand, they would have some other limitation. A meditative eastern mystic, for example, may be able to mold ambient P.P.E. through deep concentration, but might require hours to cast a simple spell and years for truly magnificent magics. Voodoo and African-styled mystics, **meanwhile**, might have no magic powers of their own, but merely have the ability to call up spirits (from the Astral Plane? **Nightlands**? Elsewhere?) who will perform favors, like fuelling spells or spell-like effects, in return for blood sacrifices or spiritual allegiance.

Likewise, the magic of other dimensional beings, aliens and supernatural creatures is likely to have a completely different basis in understanding, culture and even physics.

Mood & Atmosphere

G.M.s should also alter and censor the spells to suit the atmosphere of their campaigns. This may even extend to limiting the **players'** selections of spells for their characters.

The point of this is that the way in which magics appear in the game world will affect the atmosphere of your game and also the way in which the players and their characters react to and view magic.

Imagine, for example, a scene (perhaps at the start of an adventure) where the player group witnesses some nasty sorcerer killing one of their NPC friends with magic. If the sorcerer bombards the victim with Fire Bolts (rule book, page 132), then this is likely to set the scene for a game which is bold, obvious, heroic, and where magics are loud and powerful, and confrontations are direct and face to face. In other words, a supernatural-superhero style game.

Now, imagine the difference if, instead, the villain had stood back in the shadows while the victim was consumed by the Maggots' Curse spell. This sets the scene for a game where magic is dark and insidious, thoroughly horrific, where supernatural powers act unseen and conflicts are far more subtle; in other words, a horror-conspiracy style game.

By altering the details of the spells, you, as G.M., can affect the tone and atmosphere of the whole game. Of course, this can also be done through the use of strong villains with complex and sinister personalities, goals and practices. The use of treachery, betrayal, subterfuge, manipulation and so on, can contribute to the horror, subtleties and suspense of the campaign and its antagonists as much as the choice of magic. Character portrayal and other **storytelling** elements will allow for a very rich and potentially diverse gaming experience, from the bold to the mysterious.

Ultimately, the G.M. should decide with the players what sort of game is desired, and fiddle with the spell details to suit. You will find that by changing the details of these spells (often details and nuances that don't necessarily change the basic function, range, duration, damage or effect of the spell), then with a little work and practice, and the compliance of a good group of role-players, you can use magic to effectively conjure up any sort of atmosphere you want, from brash super-heroics, to insidious tension, to nauseating horror!

Spells & Adventure Hooks

Many of the spells and concepts of magic as presented in this book, can be used to inspire adventures, or elements of adventures. Space precludes us from examining the potentials of each spell listed, but here are a few examples to give the G.M. ideas for the use of the spell *Friend In The Head*:

1. A mystic or sorcerer player character (or a player character who works as a doctor, therapist, or exorcist) is approached by a young man who complains of hearing voices in his head, or, in particular, one voice. The voice irritates and distracts him constantly, criticizing everything he does. Having recently begun a new career and generally got his life turned around, the man is distraught to think that he might be starting to go mad. Can the player **character(s)** get rid of the voice for him? As the player **character(s)** begins to probe further into the man's problems, it soon becomes clear that things are more complex than they seemed. The man has a patchy memory of his past, for example (amnesia? no, it's more complex than normal amnesia) and has recently completely changed direction in his life — new girlfriend, new job, new friends. In fact, the "voice" in the back of the man's head is his original personality; the intelligence currently articulating the body is the *Friend In The Head* spell, which seems to have grown in strength and shows no likelihood of ever fading away. Both "the Friend" and the original man's personality are of good alignment, and well-developed, complex, conscious personalities, and neither "deserves" to be destroyed. Just because one mind has grown up more recently doesn't mean that it has any less "right to life." Or does it? There may be complex plots and schemes behind all of this (why was "the Friend" originally implanted? By whom? etc.). This could lead to a full-blown adventure, but the basic problem in this encounter is for the player characters to decide what, if anything, they are going to do about this man with two minds.

2. The player characters visit a group of friends or allies, but arrive to discover that they have been attacked and all but one are dead. This one survivor, deeply traumatized, has cast *Friend In The Head* on herself numerous times, in order to "bring back" her dead lover, children, friends, etc. In other words, she has created magical intelligences with their personalities (as she knew them) and put them into her, own head. Now, she spends all her time introspective, having mental conversations with these voices, and utterly ignores anything happening around her in the real world. If the player characters shake her or shout at her they only distract and irritate her ("Leave me alone! I'm trying to spend time with my children!" etc.) In order to find out what happened, the player group must either get rid of all the "Friends" (Negate would do it), which will deeply upset or further traumatize their ally (imagine, she has lost her friends and family once, and if the player characters "kill" — destroy — them again, she might break down completely). Or, they may devise a way of coaxing her out of her introspection for long enough to ask her some questions. Of course, the more disturbing the **questions**, the more likely she is to retreat back into her head, and she will not confront the fact that her family, etc., are dead. Sensitive role-playing or some very devious plans should be required here. And who knows where the answers to even a few questions will lead? Note too, that answers **don't** have to be found now. Discovering later, that a particular adversary is responsible might turn an adventure into a quest for revenge, and/or give a villain an increased aura of evil and vileness, or evoke fear ("Will we fall victim to his **power**?").

Miscasting Spells

The original **Nightbane™ RPG** book suggests that once a spell has been learned, it may be successfully cast as often as a sorcerer wishes. This is a conveniently simple method of dealing with magic, particularly for G.M.s who feel they have enough to worry about without halting the game to consider every spell casting. In running a combat encounter, for example, it is important to keep the game moving as fast as possible, and there are always plenty of rules and numbers to worry over anyway.

But in other situations, when players are scavenging for clues, or when characters are performing ritual **spells**, a swift pace is not so vital and G.M.s will not be worrying about rules mechanics. In these situations, G.M.s should feel free to make magics unpredictable, volatile



and dangerous, because in this way, players will retain a sense of awe and wonder about magic, and games can be made more tense, uncertain and yes, even frightening.

Moreover, G.M.s might want to include episodes in their games where the characters must cast spells which they have not yet actually learned or mastered. You know the sort of thing, the adventurers have found an ancient scroll in the tomb, which seems to detail a spell which must be cast to seal the portal and save the villagers from the return of the demon ... so and so. Characters may be following instructions, improvising based on an incomplete text, trying to repeat the ritual which they have just clandestinely **witnessed**, ... you get the **idea**.

There are numerous ways in which spells may go awry. Firstly, chants and intonations may be mispronounced, particularly if they are in obscure languages or involve apparently gibberish words. Game Masters may require a *language skill* roll to successfully repeat an incantation, or a *Principles of Magic* or *I.Q.* roll if the language is unknown to the caster. It may also be that chants in Latin, ancient Egyptian and other dead languages can never be repeated exactly correctly, since modern sorcerers have no idea how the words were actually pronounced, and uncharitable G.M.s should keep this in mind if they want to interfere with any ancient ritual of some sort.

Spells requiring complex gestures may be miscast by clumsy characters (or left out of the written text of the scroll to protect its secrets from "outsiders"). A roll against the *P.P. attribute* may be required to cast such a spell correctly, or a *Principles of Magic* or *perception* roll. Some rituals may omit important steps which seemed self evident to the writer of the **grimoire**. For example, a medieval sorcerer may have **considered** it obvious that if Elder wood is cut from a living tree it may cause spells which use it to go horribly wrong — and so while stating that Elder wood is required for a certain spell, that author may have felt it unnecessary to mention the importance of using dead wood. (Perhaps, here, a *Principles of Magic* roll or a particular *Lore skill* would be required to avoid making the mistake of cutting live wood.) Astrologers may have failed to mention the necessary positions of the stars for the success of a spell, or the position of the stars may have changed in the night sky with the passage of the centuries. Medieval and Ancient plant names need not always correspond with modern usage, so that an herb named **man** in an old grimoire need not always be the same as the modern herb of that name.

There are numerous ways in which sorcerers might misunderstand a spell. G.M.s should not overlook the potential of an aborted or interrupted ritual magic either: The enemy attack at exactly the wrong moment, their bullets shattering the staff which could control the beast which has just been summoned; or a vicious magic has just been created, but before the magician can direct it against a target, he is knocked over and loses concentration, so that the spell starts to roam the area, randomly assaulting people; etc. In the case of rituals and the forces they beckon and unleash (both magical and supernatural), a best case scenario for player characters may be that interrupting a ritual means *nothing happens*. Unfortunately, things are seldom that easy or safe when using magic.

Spell Magic Gone Wrong: Spells may also be miscast as a result of incomplete or inaccurate texts, fumbling with the words of the incantation, the sorcerer's mistakes, distractions, and so on. G.M.s will have to decide what mishaps (if any) may result when individual spells are miscast. These should depend on the power of the spell (worse accidents resulting from miscasting more powerful spells), and the intended effect of the spell.

Examples of such mishaps include: The spell functions with a reduced potency, range or duration; the spell is unfortunately conspicuous or extra-potent in its effect; the caster is disfigured or maimed (can be minor or horrific burns, hands melted, etc.); supernatural creatures are randomly attracted (minor and annoying or monstrous and deadly); the spell seems to gain a mind of its own or perhaps a supernatural creature associated with the site seizes control of the power released and manipulates it for its own ends; the spell becomes indiscriminate or ran-

dom, or otherwise fails to act **in** accordance **with** the sorcerer's wishes (damaging the wrong people, affecting the wrong area, fizzles **with** a puff of smoke, doesn't work at all, **etc**), the spell affects the caster or **his** immediate vicinity, the power of the magic flows randomly around the caster's body for minutes, weeks or years, causing physical mutation, insanity, or debilitating **pain**, the spell "pulls" additional P P E from the spell caster, all of which dissipates harmlessly **into** the **air**, the spell's effect "follows" the caster long after he wishes **it** to cease (such as a spell to cause a single disease which thereafter causes those around the caster to gradually fall **ill**), or the spell causes a dramatic disturbance (violent lightning storms erupt for an hour to a **week**, the setting sun turns blood red, the day **is** lengthened by half an hour, **etc**)

A particularly disastrous blunder might combine several of the above **accidents** or effects to nothing at all (the P P E **is** spent but nothing happens) The G M should always take care to weave the results dramatically (or humorously, **if** appropriate) **into** the descriptions that they relate to the players

Summonings Gone Wrong

Think about the nature of any spell which calls, summons or otherwise attempts to bring supernatural creatures to the magician's location The essence of such spells **is** that a **tiny** human being reaches far beyond **his** own little planet, and dares to drag immortal or alien races to **him** across the **Mirrorwall** or over potentially huge distances He then has the arrogance to attempt to **bind** or command such beings **This** **is** clearly a process which courts disaster

G M s are encouraged to make such magics suitably perilous to cast Clearly, incomplete or incorrect spells **will** not work properly, and numerous erroneous ceremonies may be preserved **in** **grimoires**, their deceased inventors having never had the chance to correct their shortcomings, or the procedure **is** inaccurately recorded Less obvious, even the best of spells may be miscast Invocations may be mispronounced, gestures clumsily performed, unsuitable ingredients used, or the ceremony may be interrupted

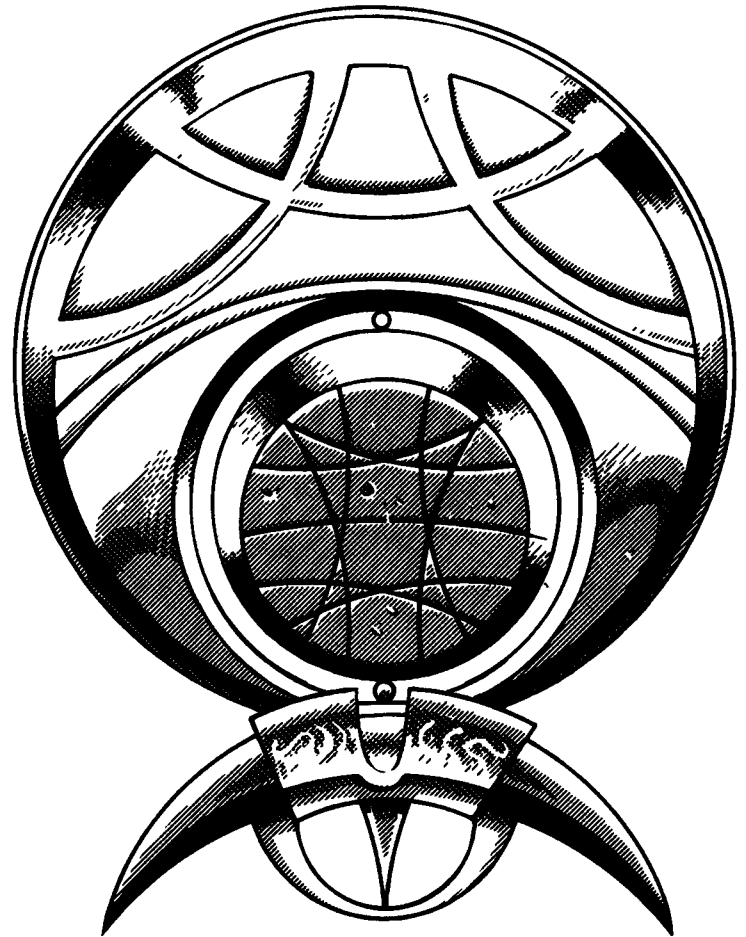
There are numerous ways **in** which **summonings** could go hideously wrong Occasionally, a ceremony might have no effect at all, but more often, the absence of a visible consequence should cause sorcerers concern A miscast Summon **Nightlands** Denizen ritual, for example, may simply **fail** to summon one such creature, but more interestingly **it** may summon several of them (probably too many to Control all), or the thing may arrive somewhere near the casting **site**, but not at **it** (much to the regret of numerous innocent locals, perhaps), or **it** may arrive some days late and seek out the caster (much to **his** probable shock and embarrassment) Miscast Summon spells may also Summon the wrong type of creature (dangerous and not so dangerous), and spells designed to call upon the spirits of the dead may accidentally contact powerful extra-planar beings or inadvertently open a temporary portal to that world which the spell caster and/or spectators are drawn to or plunge **into**

And Finally

Remember that mishaps and disasters do not only befall player characters Their great enemies and competitors might suffer equally from the volatile nature of magic, and there are numerous plot complications and adventure hooks which can be derived from the **idea** of magics behaving unexpectedly

Most importantly, G M s should always ensure that players **with** magician characters do not feel picked on or victimized because their spells **never** seem to work Miscast spells should probably happen infrequently (perhaps varying **with** the level of the caster versus the level of the spell, e g a 2nd level mage **is** more likely to fumble a 9th level spell than a seasoned 8th or 9th level sorcerer) Furthermore, **if** the G M **is** going to have magic go disastrously wrong from **time** to **time**, he or she should keep magics unpredictable and have them sometimes work **better** than **expected**, or differently (but **with** good, or harmless, or funny results), rather than **just** going bad

G M s may occasionally find players who object to any attempt to make the game more interesting, insisting that magics work **like** clockwork and may try to quote various rules to prove their point You might wonder why they are playing a horror RPG at all (maybe they would do better **with** a different sort of game Chess, **perhaps**?) But **in** general, players **will** respond well to G M s who actually try to make the games and staves interesting, so long as they never feel that the G M **is** singling them out unfairly, attacking or competing **with** them Also bear **in** **mind** that such open-ended rules considerations are not for everyone If the entire group protests about playing **with** the more flexible and unpredictable magic rules, the Game Master should consider abandoning them, especially **if** they've tried **it** for several games and everybody hates **it** Also, players and G M alike must realize that not all G M s or players are the same, and some G M s might have trouble being **fair** or maintaining game balance **with** more open-ended and variable rules If that **is** the case, abandon them and find what works for you The very definition of role-playing **is** imagination, flexibility and personalization, so go **with** whatever **is** most comfortable and fun for the G M and the majority of players



Creating Charms

You know the scene The old wizard looks up from **his** bloody **ritual** and turns to the young **warrior** "Carry **this** pendant close to your heart at all times **It** **will** protect you from the **evil** which you must face" That's the sort of thing that magicians do, after all, **in** legend and folklore, movies and books And **it's** **nice** for player characters to think that they own little magic items -things which may not have mighty powers, but which **give** them a **bit** of an edge

So, how does a character **in** **Nightbane** create a little trinket **like** **this**?

Any magician (sorcerer, mystic, **Fleshsculptor**, **etc**) who has reached third level may create a Charm **This** requires a brief ritual, the object to be enchanted as a Charm, and (sometimes) the presence of the person who **is** to use the **item**



Animal Familiars

1D6 of P.P.E. must be *permanently lost* to create the Charm. The object's creator may contribute this P.P.E. in person, in which case anyone will be able to use the item, or the person who is to use it must contribute the P.P.E., in which case it will only aid him. The amount lost in creating the artifact should be rolled only when it is created; the creator cannot tell in advance how much P.P.E. it will cost.

The item must be relevant to its function, and may grant no more than a +1 bonus to any roll (+2 only if the mage *permanently* expends 1D6+10 P.P.E.), or +5% if a skill bonus. Such bonuses can be designed to enhance a saving throw roll (vs magic, psionics, possession, horror factor, etc.), an attribute, a skill, or a combat ability (to hit, or damage, etc.). For example, a magician may make a pendant (with one or more mystic symbols or special components) which grants +1 to save vs possession, or enchant a gun or sword so that it is +1 to strike, or a pair of sunglasses which provide the wearer +5% to his Detect Concealment or ambush skill, or to save vs illusion. A gun or sword cannot be made to give a bonus to *save* vs possession or any other kind of *save*, because the object doesn't relate to the protection charm magic being bestowed on the object. Nor can any one object have more than one property, or give a bonus to more than one skill or saving roll.

A Charm will work indefinitely, any number of times, but will only ever have these very narrow functions. Further, the Charm must be obviously arcane — covered in runes or engravings, or made from unusual materials (like a skull), and must reflect the creator's O.C.C. The latter means **Cybermages** may only make weird bio-machines as Charms, **Mirrorimages** must use etched mirrors or highly reflective surfaces, **Fleshsculptors** must use flesh or bone, and sorcerers, mystical symbols and special components.

The bonus from a magical charm has cumulative effects which are added to other modifiers such as O.C.C. **and/or** attribute bonuses, but multiple Charms do *not* have cumulative effects. So, one Charm made to protect vs possession will give a +1 bonus to save, while six charms with the same function, worn by the same person, will still only give a +1 bonus.

Note that Charms need not be restricted to obvious forms. Magical rings, pendants and wands are all very nice, but a little creativity should be encouraged. A **Fleshsculptor** might tattoo charms onto the skin of the recipient for example, or make the pendant out of bones, a skull and/or flesh. A **Cybermage** may make the Charm grow into the recipient's skin like a bionic implant, or utilize **mircochips**. Other weirder objects might include: a pocket calculator where all the keys are marked as zero (+5% to Mathematics: Advanced skill), an ornate and apparently incorrect Atlas (+5% Lore: **Geomancy** and Ley Lines), a personal stereo or Walkman which always plays static (+1 to save vs mind control, so long as the earphones are worn and the player is on), a virtual reality glove covered in mystic symbols (+5% Computer Operation), or even a large rune-covered hammer (+5% Computer Operation, so long as the user batters the computer with the hammer from time to time), and so on.

Finally, a "cursed" Charm may be created, giving a -5% or -1 modifier.

Any Charm can be studied and investigated in the usual way by a magician, or the user may discover its curse through trial and error. Ultimately, one should beware of magicians bearing "gifts."

Note: For rules purposes, consider each Charm to be an indefinite duration level two enchantment, with 1D6 P.P.E. Like any other magic, Charms may become self-aware or intelligent, so that gun that is +1 to strike might give you +2 against certain people/monsters, but -1 against people whom it doesn't think you should shoot.

Familiars

The traditional "fantasy" conception of a familiar is as a remarkable, often intelligent animal sidekick — a sort of magical pet with loads of intelligence who, for some reason, remains slavishly loyal to the magician. In the world of **Nightbane**, things are rather more interesting.

In order to create a familiar, the magician must first **find** a suitable animal, and then go through a series of lengthy rituals with it. The exact nature of the process varies from character to character, and reflects the magician's temperament and powers. So, a nature-loving mystic might spend several months with the animal in its natural environment, attuning him or herself to the beast and coming to empathize with it more and more; a Cybermage might subject the creature to a series of unpleasant surgical procedures; an old-fashioned sorcerer might tether the animal in a magical circle and chant at it for a few weeks. The process, in any case, should take weeks at least, and years at most.

During these procedures, the magician is able to alter the creature's fundamental nature, endowing it with magical powers. These modifications are *permanent*, and cannot be dispelled by any means. Additional modifications *cannot* be made at a later date: the familiar's powers are determined when it is first adopted by the magician.

However, instilling these powers in the familiar requires the magician to invest a part of his or her own soul in the animal, losing a portion of his or her total P.P.E. (much as **Nightbane** "burn off P.P.E. when purchasing Talents). The psychic energy thus lost cannot be regained by any means, although the character will obviously gain new P.P.E. as he or she gains new levels. The magician cannot "retrieve" P.P.E. from the animal by removing these powers, and if the familiar dies the magician does not recover this lost P.P.E. A list of abilities which may be instilled into an animal is given below, although G.M.s are encouraged to create new (reasonable) modifications as required for their games.

Note that a magician may only have one familiar at a time. Creating a new familiar severs any links with an existing one. A "discarded" familiar becomes a free agent, losing all bonds of loyalty to its master and leaving to live out its own life.

Finally, note that an animal familiar is, at heart, still an animal, with its same basic abilities, character, instincts, and needs, natural life span, etc.; that is, of course, unless these features are specifically altered by the magician.

Familiar Powers

Note: All familiars are "tame" — which is to say that even though they might naturally be inclined to flee from or attack humans or their magician master, they are capable of restraining their impulses and generally consider themselves to be their master's friend.

They also gain the ability to understand their master's spoken words (in any language), and adopt their master's prejudices and agenda, thus seeing their master's enemies as their own, and his friends as theirs, too. Note that this does not make them suicidal, stupid, or slavish. They will not appreciate their lives being put recklessly at risk, and can turn from friends to foes if they feel that they are being abused or taken advantage of. Note: Remember all P.P.E. points spent on instilling these powers are *permanently lost* to the mage.

1. **Breath Weapon** (2-30 P.P.E. cost): The familiar has a breath weapon which it may use once per melee round. This is a ranged attack; roll to strike as normal, with no bonuses. Maximum range is 30 feet (9 m). The creature may breathe gouts of fire, spit shards of bone, exhale acidic fumes, etc., as the magician desires (determine this when the familiar is created). Damage is rolled on a number of D6s equal to *half* the P.P.E. invested, so, if 2 P.P.E. are invested, the creature inflicts **1D6** damage; if 30 P.P.E., **15D6**.

2. **Enhanced Combat Abilities** (4-8): Investing 4 P.P.E. points gives the animal +2 on initiative, +1 to save vs horror factor, and +1 to

strike, parry and dodge. Investing 8 points provides the previous bonuses plus +6 to speed attribute and +1 attack per melee round. All bonuses are in addition to the animal's *natural* abilities.

3. Enhanced Combat Damage (2-14 P.P.E.): The familiar inflicts extra damage in hand to hand combat (bite, claw, etc.). Damage is rolled on a number of D6s equal to half the P.P.E. in addition to any normal damage. So, if 2 P.P.E. are invested, the creature inflicts 1D6 damage; if 14 P.P.E., 7D6. If more than 4 P.P.E. are invested in this, the familiar is physically changed by the magic, providing bigger teeth, claws made of steel, etc., and if more than 8 P.P.E. is **invested**, the creature will look quite monstrous.

4. Enhanced Healing Ability (5 P.P.E.): The animal is impervious to all but the most potent poisons and drugs, impervious to disease and heals at three times the normal rate.

5. Human Intelligence (5 P.P.E.): The familiar has standard human intelligence, roll 2D6+7.

6. Impervious to fire (5 P.P.E.): Fire and heat does not harm the animal in any way (smoke is a different story).

7. Loyal (5 P.P.E.): The familiar is slavishly loyal to the magician. It does not care what it is asked to do, nor how much abuse or danger it has to go through to serve its master

8. Long Life (5 P.P.E.): The familiar will not die of natural causes before the death of its master. Once its natural life span has expired, **however**, it will live only as long as its master does.

9. Mirror Sight (10 P.P.E.): The familiar can see into the Nightlands™ by looking into any reflective surface, as the **Nightbane** talent *Mirror Sight*, but at will.

10. Speech (5 P.P.E.): The familiar understands and speaks any language which is also understood and spoken by its creator.

11. Tracking (5-10 P.P.E.): The familiar can follow any scent, with an effective tracking skill from 40% (if 5 P.P.E. points are invested) to 90% (if 10 P.P.E. are invested; an additional 10% per each extra P.P.E. point above five). This works like the track animals skill, but is based upon a sense of smell. +10% to track the scent of its master.

12. Telepathic Link (5 P.P.E.): The familiar and its creator share a telepathic link, allowing each to speak directly to the mind of the other, so long as they are within a 100 foot (30 m) radius of each other. Even when outside of this range, the two sense what direction and distance away each other is, and can sense each others' emotional state.

13. See the Invisible (5 P.P.E.): The familiar can see invisible creatures, forces, etc., as per the level one spell *See the Invisible*. This special sight is in permanent operation.

14. Sense Across Planes (10 P.P.E.): The familiar can see shadows and hear echoes across the **Mirrorwall** and from other planes. At any time, the familiar can sense the geography and inhabitants (approximately how many, how big, etc.) of the **Nightlands** at the point corresponding to the present location on **earth**, and can also sense into corresponding areas of the astral and other planes. When on these planes, the familiar can similarly sense what is happening at the corresponding point on earth, too. This does not allow the familiar to eavesdrop or spy across planes, but does allow it to get an impression of **what/who** is there. This ability also enables the creature to sense the presence of entities, Astral Beings, invisible Nightbane and other supernatural or **extradimensional** beings (disguises or invisible).

15. Sense Evil (5 P.P.E.): The familiar can sense the presence of supernatural evil; same as the *Sense Evil* spell. This ability is in constant operation.

16. Sense Magic (5 P.P.E.): Same as the *Sense Magic* spell, but this ability is in constant operation.

17. Share Memories (10 P.P.E.): The magician and familiar have all of **their** memories in common. This allows one to recognize people, places, and things seen by the other, or to recall conversations which the other heard, and so on.

18. Share Sight (10 P.P.E.): The magician can see through the familiar's eyes at will, simply by closing his or her own eyes and concentrating. No other action may be performed in a melee round when the magician chooses to do this — not even movement or evading attacks. The familiar, similarly, may choose to look out through the magician's eyes.

19. Superhuman Intelligence (15 P.P.E.): The familiar has an **I.Q.** of 25, and a near-perfect memory. It can solve math problems at the same speed as a computer, out-argue the world's wisest philosophers on matters philosophical, and learn foreign languages in a matter of minutes. It can even use a computer (to a limited degree) equal to a Computer Operation skill at 80% proficiency.

20. Superhuman Hit Points (5-15 P.P.E.): Investing 5 P.P.E. points gives the animal an extra 12 hit points, investing 10 P.P.E. *doubles* the animal's hit points and investing 15 P.P.E., *triples* it.

Note: Mortal, Earth familiars are limited to reptiles (including snakes), birds and mammals. Fish, amphibians, and insects cannot be used as a familiar. Also see *Nightlands Familiars*.

Sample Animals

Note: For the basic stats of over 200 different animals and animal types, get a copy of **Palladium's Monsters & Animals, 2nd Edition**, which also includes over 120 monsters. Although the book is part of the *Palladium Fantasy RPG* series, both the (fantasy) monsters and animals can be used with any Palladium RPG, including **Nightbane™**. 240 pages, only \$19.95 — available at stores everywhere or from Palladium Books via mail order.

The following handful of animals are excerpted from **Monsters & Animals, 2nd Edition**.

Birds

Crow/Raven

Size: 17-22 inches (0.4 to 0.5 m)

Hit Points & S.D.C.: 2D6

P.P.E.: One point. **Damage:** Claws 1D4, bite/peck one or two points.

Attacks Per Melee: 3

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +2 to strike (prey) and +4 to dodge

Natural Abilities: Fly

Speed: 66 flying and 4 running.

Average Life Span: 8-12 years

Habitat: Open country, farmland, open woodland.

Notes: These widespread birds associate in pairs and small groups of 2D4, except in winter when they gather in huge flocks to fly to communal roosts. Members of the crow family are among the most intelligent birds. They are smart, observant, cunning and aggressive, scavenging animals that eat seeds, grains, corn, fruit, garbage, small insects, and carrion. There are over 100 species of crow.

Eagle: Booted or Bald

Size: 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 feet tall (0.75 to 1 m); 9-15 pounds, **wingspan:** 7-10 feet (2.1 to 3.0 m).

Hit Points: 4D6+10

P.P.E.: Twopoints.

Attacks Per Melee: 3

Damage: Talons do 2D6+2 points of damage, bite does 2D4 damage; dive attacks do double damage.

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, 44 to strike, and +4 to dodge.

Natural Abilities: Fly, exceptional vision (2 miles/3.2 km), **nightvision** 400 feet, prowl (silent swooping attack) 64%, track by smell 46% and track by sight 80%.

Speed: 50, but can reach speeds of 88 to 110(60 to 75 **mph**) in bursts lasting 2D4x10 minutes. The eagle can dive at an astounding speed of 220 (150 **mph**/241 km).

Average Life Span: 15 to 30 years
Habitat: Seacoasts, rivers, lakes, dense forests and mountain forests.

Hawk: Red Tailed

Size: 18-24 inches (0.4 to 0.6 m)

Hit Points: 3D6+4

P.P.E.: One point.

Attacks Per Melee: 3

Damage: Talons or bite does 1D6 points of damage; dive bomb attack does double damage.

Bonuses: +3 on initiative, +3 to strike, and +4 to dodge.

Natural Abilities: Fly, prowl (silent glide attack) 65%, exceptional vision (can see a foot long rabbit at a distance of up to 2 miles/3.2 km), **nightvision** 300 feet (91.5 m), track by smell 66%, and track by sight 80%.

Speed: 77, but can reach speeds of 110(75 mph/120km) in bursts lasting 2D4x10 minutes or 220 (150 mph/240) in dives.

Average Life Span: 8-15 years

Habitat: Varied; desert, forest, mountains.

Canines

Guard Dogs

Size: Body: 3-4½ feet (0.9 to 1.4 m); tail: 12-19 inches.

Weight: 30-60 pounds (13.6 to 27 kg)

A.R.: Not applicable.

Hit Points: 3D6+4

S.D.C.: 2D6+10

P.P.E.: 3D6

Attacks Per Melee: 3

Damage: Bite does 2D4+2 points of damage; claws do one point of damage.

Bonuses: +3 on initiative, +4 to strike, +2 to dodge, and +3 to save vs horror factor.

Natural Abilities: **Nightvision** 30 feet (9 m), prowl 45%, track (by smell) 80%, swim 65%, can leap 4 feet (1.2 m) high and 6 feet (1.8 m) long, and like most canines, can perform a leaping pounce.

Speed: 50 (35 mph/56), maximum speed is 55 (37.5 mph/60 km).

Average Life Span: 12-18 years

Habitat: Domestic.

Behavior: These dogs are used as guardians and protectors, as well as companions. Mated pairs remain together for life. The female gives birth to a litter of 3 to 8 pups after a gestation of 8 weeks.

Note: Breeds include German shepherd, **Doberman** pinscher, and boxers.

Terriers

Size: Body: 1-3½ feet (0.3 to 1 m); tail: 6-12 inches.

Weight: 12-30 pounds (5.4 to 13.6 kg)

A.R.: Not applicable.

Hit Points: 2D6+2

S.D.C.: 2D6

P.P.E.: 3D6

Attacks Per Melee: 2

Damage: Bite does 1D6 points of damage.

Bonuses: +3 on initiative, +3 to strike, +4 to dodge, and +3 to save vs horror factor.

Natural Abilities: **Nightvision** 30 feet (9 m), prowl 45%, track (by smell) 65%, swim 60%, can leap 3 to 3½ feet (0.9 to 1 m) high and 5 feet (1.5 m) long, and like most canines, can perform a leaping pounce.

Speed: 44 (30 mph/48), maximum speed is 50 (35 mph/56 km).

Average Life Span: 12-18 years

Habitat: Domestic.

Behavior: These dogs are used as pets and to kill rodent pests. Mated pairs remain together for life. The female gives birth to a litter of 3 to 8 pups after a gestation of 8 weeks.

Wolf: Gray

Size: Body: 3-4½ feet (0.9 to 1.4 m); tail: 12-19 inches.

Weight: 50-100 pounds (23 to 45 kg)

A.R.: Not applicable.

Hit Points: 4D6+6

S.D.C.: 2D6+20

P.P.E.: 5D6

Attacks Per Melee: 3

Damage: Bite does 2D6+3 points of damage, claw 1D4 damage.

Bonuses: +3 on initiative, +5 to strike, 44 to dodge, and +5 to save vs horror factor.

Natural Abilities: **Nightvision** 30 feet (9 m), prowl 50%, track (by smell) 88%, can smell prey one mile (1.6 km) away, swim 65%, can leap 3-4 feet (0.9-1.2 m) high and 8 feet (2.4 m) long, and like most canines, can perform a leaping pounce.

Speed: 50 (35 mph/56), maximum speed is 55 (37.5 mph/60 km).

Average Life Span: 14-20 years

Habitat: Tundra, steppe, open woodland and forest.

Behavior: This intelligent animal usually associates in family groups or packs of 6 to 30 members, although they often hunt alone or in pairs. The pack hunts together, cooperating to run down prey such as deer, elk, moose, ox, or wild horses, and they also eat small animals. Wolves can be **partially** domesticated, but remain dangerous because their jaws are twice as powerful as domestic canines and they tend to be large and aggressive.

Felines

Domestic Cats

Size: Body: 1¼-3¼ feet (0.35 to 1 m), plus tail: 12 inches (0.3 m).

Weight: 6-25 pounds (2.7 to 11 kg)

A.R.: Not applicable.

Hit Points: 2D6

P.P.E.: 2D6+3.

S.D.C.: 2D6

Attacks Per Melee: 2

Damage: Claws do 1D4 points of damage; bite does 2 points of damage.

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +3 to strike, +2 to parry, +3 to dodge, +1 to save vs horror factor.

Natural Abilities: Keen vision and sense of smell, **nightvision** 40 feet (12.2 m), climb 70%, prowl 70%, swim 40%, can leap 5 feet (1.5 m) high and 6 feet (1.8 m) long.

Speed: 16, with bursts of speed 22 for 1D4 minutes.

Average Life Span: 8-14 years.

Habitat: House pet.

Note: There are a large variety of domestic cats from small to large, short hair to long hair.

Leopard, Panther & Jaguar

Size: Body: 4¼-6½ feet (1.3 to 2 m), plus tail: 3½-4½ft(1.1 to 1.4 m).

Weight: 125-200 pounds (57 to 91 kg)

A.R.: Not applicable.

Hit Points: 4D6+10

S.D.C.: 3D6+16

P.P.E.: 6D6+20

Attacks Per Melee: 3

Damage: Claws do 2D4+4 points of damage, bite 1D6+2 points of damage.

Bonuses: +4 on initiative, +5 to strike, +3 to parry, +4 to dodge, +4 to save vs horror factor.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision: 600 feet (183 m), climb 90%, prowl 90%, track by smell or sight 50%, exceptional hearing and eyesight, and can leap 12 feet (3.6 m) high and 40 feet (12.2 m) long.

Speed: 22, with spurts of speed 50 (35 mph/56 km) for 1D4 minutes.

Average Life Span: 10-15 years.

Mountain Lion (Cougar/Puma)

Size: Body: 3½-5¼ feet (1 to 1.55 m), tail: 24-34 inches (0.6 to 0.9 m)

Weight: 150-300 pounds (67.5 to 135 kg)

A.R.: Not applicable.

Hit Points: 4D6+10

S.D.C.: 2D6+20

P.P.E.: 6D6+30

Attacks Per Melee: 3

Damage: Claws do 2D6 points of damage and the bite does 2D4 damage.

Bonuses: +3 on initiative, +6 to strike, +4 to parry, +3 to dodge, and +4 to save vs horror factor.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 200 feet (61 m), climb 89%, prowl 85%, swim 44% and can leap up to 20 feet (6 m) high and 40 feet (12.2 m) long from a standing position.

Speed: 22, with bursts of speed 44 (30 mph/48 km).

Average Life Span: 12-20 years.

Habitat: Swamps, grasslands, forests and mountain sides.

Ocelot

Size: Body: 3-4¼ feet (0.9 to 1.3 m), plus tail: 11-16 inches.

Weight: 50-80 pounds (23 to 36 kg)

A.R.: Not applicable.

Hit Points: 6D6

S.D.C.: 2D6+10

P.P.E.: 4D6+3.

Attacks Per Melee: 3

Damage: Claws do 1D6+2 points of damage and a bite does 1D4 damage.

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +3 to strike, +2 to parry, +3 to dodge, and +2 to save vs horror factor.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 600 feet (183 m), climb 85%, prowl 85%, swim 35%, and can leap 12 feet (3.6 m) high and 20 feet (6 m) long.

Speed: 22, with bursts of speed 33 (22.5 mph/36 km).

Average Life Span: 8-14 years

Habitat: Humid forest, bush, marshy areas.

Behavior: Ocelots resemble a pint-sized leopard. It is generally a nocturnal predator that emerges at night to hunt small mammals, birds, and snakes. It is a very secretive animal and rarely goes into open country.

Other Animals of Note

Rattle Snake: Diamondback

Size: 3-8 feet (0.9 to 2.4 m)

Weight: 3-12 pounds (1 to 5 kg)

A.R.: Not applicable.

Hit Points: 2D6

S.D.C.: 1D6

P.P.E.: One point

Horror Factor: 12

Attacks Per Melee: 1

Damage: Bite does 1D4 points of damage. Venom does 1D6+1 points of additional damage for every melee for 2D4 melees, unless a successful save vs poison is made *each* melee.

Natural Abilities: Prowl 80%, swim 40%, climb 70%, **nightvision** 30 feet (9 m), heat sensor in its "pit" organs enables the snake to see the heat signature of its prey (+2 to strike) even in total darkness.

Speed: 8

Average Life Span: 8-16 years

Habitat: Woodlands and farmlands.

Note: The characteristic rattle is a warning it uses whenever the snake feels threatened. The rattle can be heard up to a distance of 60 feet (18.3 m).

Brown Bat

Size: Body: 2-3 inches, **wingspan:** 10-15 inches (roughly 0.3 m), plus a small tail that measures 2-2½ inches.

Weight: 3-6 ounces.

A.R.: Not applicable.

Hit Points: 1D4

S.D.C.: 1D4

P.P.E.: 1D4

Horror Factor: 8; most people are frightened by these harmless creatures.

Attacks Per Melee: 2

Damage: Bite does one point of damage.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +3 to strike, and +4 to dodge flying.

Natural Abilities: Fly, nightvision 60 feet (18.3 m), keen hearing and sense of smell and echo-location.

Speed: 2 crawling, 27 flying.

Average Life Span: 1-4 years.

Behavior: This bat eats nearly all types of insects which they either catch in the air or scoop up from the ground. In colder climates, they hibernate and often migrate long distances to suitable places. Young are born from April to July.

Vampire Bat

Size: Body: 3-4 inches, wingspan: 6-7 inches (roughly 0.15m).

Weight: 3-5 ounces (0.2 kg)

A.R.: Not applicable.

Hit Points: 1D6

S.D.C.: 1D4

P.P.E.: 1D4

Horror Factor: 12; people are frightened by bats.

Attacks Per Melee: 2

Damage: Bite does 1D4 points of damage.

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +3 to strike and +2 to dodge.

Natural Abilities: Track by smell 45%, heat sensor to find veins with warm blood, fly, nightvision 60 feet (18.3 m), keen hearing and sense of smell and echo-location.

Speed: 3 on the ground, 22 flying.

Average Life Span: 1-4 years.

Behavior: The vampire bat is the only mammal which can be called a parasite. Like most bats, it hunts at night. It generally lands a few feet away from its victim and then crawls over to it. With its sharp teeth it makes a small incision on a hairless or **featherless** part of the animal. The bat's tongue is then formed into a tube through which saliva is pumped out to inhibit clotting, and the blood is sucked in. Vampire bats generally feed for a half hour each night on cattle and other animals, rarely humans. These animals transmit a number of diseases, including rabies. A single young is generally produced after breeding.

Rat: Black (common)

Size: Body: 8-12 inches (roughly 0.3 m) and an 8-10 inch tail.

Weight: Up to 2 pounds (9 kg).

A.R.: Not applicable.

Hit Points: 1D6+2

S.D.C.: 1D6+2

P.P.E.: 2D4

Horror Factor: 10; people are startled and repulsed by rats.

Attacks Per Melee: 2

Damage: Bite does 1D4 points of damage.

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +2 to strike, and +4 to dodge.

Natural Abilities: **Nightvision** 200 feet (61 m), swim 65%, climb 70%, acrobatics 35%, and prowl 80%.

Speed: 11

Average Life Span: 2-4 years.

Behavior: This animal is found everywhere **humanoids** are and is the cause of many diseases, such as plague, typhus, and rabies. Its diet ranges from insects and carrion to plants and garbage.

Nightlands™ Familiars

The huge advantage of taking familiars from the Nightlands is that they already start with a spread of supernatural abilities and most are much more intelligent (if not a bit demonic) than Earth animals. Magicians may imbue them with additional abilities from the list above, the same as Earth animals, but costs 20% more P.P.E. The only restriction is that the magician cannot choose to *make* the creature Loyal. Of course, the Nightlands creatures possess their innate, natural abilities "for free."

But, there is no such thing as a free lunch, as they say. Nightlands familiars have immense disadvantages.

First, most denizens of the Nightlands will not bow down to a leader whom they consider unworthy. That means that a *Waste Coyote* will only serve a magician who has immense resilience, absolutely no fear of anything, and a psychotic brutality which even most player characters couldn't aspire to. An *Ashmedai*, meanwhile, would only serve a magician who was manipulative, sadistic and duplicitous (perhaps a particularly nasty serial killer or a diabolic mage). Magicians who disappoint Nightlands familiars won't merely be deserted; they will probably be betrayed, robbed **and/or** shredded by their disgruntled sidekicks.

Secondly, Nightlands familiars are typically **predatory**, even when human in appearance. Furthermore, what makes them suitable as familiars and minions is that they are emotionally twisted and usually have a "follower" mentality and are subservient to beings who are more powerful than they. Most are Minions of, and servants to, the **Nightlords**.

Third, the familiar is likely to develop its own side-lines and "hobbies." A *Scuttler* (below) will sneak around and investigate the local area on its own, while an *Ashmedai* will go out and hunt a few people whenever it gets bored.

More importantly, the Nightlands familiars' primary loyalty is rarely to a human or any mortal magician. Most will be secretly reporting back to their Nightlord superiors at every opportunity, and many will betray or manipulate the magician whenever possible to further their true masters' agendas. While normal animals have no reason to betray a magician, Nightlands familiars often have every reason to do so, and many are as intelligent as any human. These creatures are commonly used as familiars, slaves, servants and minions by Nightlords, Night Princes, and, to a lesser degree, by Emperor Crabs, Immortals, and the occasional Demon Lord.

The following are *petty* denizens of the Nightlands which *might* serve mortal or **Nightbane** magicians as familiars. G.M.s should also find plenty of opportunities to introduce them into Nightbane adventures in their own right as curious or predatory monsters out on their own, and as spies, assassins and minions of the Nightlords and Night Princes. **Note:** In addition to the creatures described on the following pages, the *Lizard King*, *Waste Coyote*, *Ashmedai*, *Trappers*, *Slitherers*, *Shadow Scorpions* and *Gaunt Steeds* can also be used as Nightlands Familiars. The Snake Bird, creatures of the Astral Plane and Dreamstream™, **werebeasts**, vampires, Nightbane, humans, demons and most beings with an intelligence equal or superior to a human, *cannot* be used as a familiar, even by Nightlords.

Scuttlers



Scuttlers

In appearance, **scuttlers** naturally resemble horseshoe crabs with far too many legs, and an indeterminate number of tentacles which can protrude from beneath their soft shells to grab or investigate items around them. Although they have neither eyes nor ears they can "see" perfectly in daylight or pitch blackness, and they have fair hearing (not quite as good as a human's).

Scuttlers have rudimentary intelligence, and can speak **telepathically** to any person or creature it chooses within 2 meters (6 feet): only those it wants to speak to can "hear" its speech.

Scuttlers can squeeze through the smallest cracks, can outrun most humans, and can see through thin barriers such as doors (though not thick walls or metal) and clothing (to look for concealed items, etc.)

Scuttlers also have the ability to Cross Over to the earth through any mirror or reflective surface, so long as their destination has had some regular or continuous magical activity in the recent past; in other words, they can cross freely into places on leylines, sorcerers' laboratories, the sites of major rituals, etc., but not to entirely mundane places like a playground, bus stop, average home, etc. They can cross back to the **Nightlands** via any reflective surface.

Curious and obedient, they often Cross Over to investigate interesting magical areas, or to spy on significant mortals, either of their own volition or on the orders of their **Nightlord** masters. Although they can be cruel, most are abject cowards. Able to disguise themselves as mundane animals in the mortal world, Scuttlers usually adopt an appearance suitable to their size and environment, such as black cats, ravens, foxes, coyotes, etc., but the animals always have red eyes.

Mortal sorcerers may bind Scuttlers as familiars, due to their ability to Cross Over and their potential as spies. Nightlords use them in exactly the same capacities.

Alignment: Any Evil

Attributes: I.Q. 1D6 (low human intelligence; cunning and cruel), M.E. 2D6, M.A. 1D6, P.S. 1D6+1, P.P. 3D6+2, P.E. 2D6, P.B. 1D6, Spd. 3D6+6

Size and Weight: Around eight inches (20 cm) in length, and weighing about 7 lbs (3 kg).

S.D.C.: 2D6

Hit Points: Equal to P.E., plus 1D4 per level of experience.

P.P.E.: Equal to M.E. +4D6

Horror Factor: 10 in natural form.

Natural Abilities: Communicates telepathically, Cross Over at will, squeeze through any crack, climb walls and ceilings like an insect (equal to climb skill **98/90%**), and change its appearance (as above).

Combat: Two attacks per melee, scratching with its many claws for just 1D4.

Bonuses: Attacks against a Scuttler are at -2 if it is stationary, or -8 if it's moving; due to its small size, speed and erratic movement. +3 on perception rolls and +1 to save vs poison.

Average Life Span: About forty years.

Experience Level: Average 1D6; use **Nemtar** experience table.

Typical Skills: Track humans, track animals, land navigation (+10%), surveillance (trailing) +30%, prowl (+40%), swim (+15%), all Lore skills.



Nightlands Scorpions Diabolic

The Nightlands Scorpions Diabolic have a variety of physical forms, ranging from large black scorpions (usually two feet/0.6 m long), to oversized tarantulas with too many legs, to black foxes with snakes' heads instead of tongues. These are the minor predators of the Wastes, eating Scuttlers and other small creatures, and have lethal venoms. As one might guess, these strange shape-changing creatures are far different and more powerful than the simple arachnids (spiders and scorpions) of Earth.

Magicians may prize them as familiars, as they can make lethal assassins, but their sadism and love of the hunt makes them uncontrollable. They refuse to eat dead food, but love hunting and catching their own dinners, while on earth favoring neighborhood cats, babies left unattended in strollers, stray dogs, sleeping hobos, drunks, campers, etc.

They are not foolhardy, and avoid busy areas and large prey, only attacking creatures larger than themselves (e.g. adult humans) if the victim is helpless (e.g. sleeping, drunk, or hurt) and alone.

Alignment: Any Evil

Attributes: I.Q. 1D4+1 (low, predatory human intelligence), M.E. 2D6+5, M.A. 1D6, P.S. 1D6+6, P.P. 3D6+1, P.E. 3D6, P.B. 1D6, Spd. 3D6

Size and Weight: Usually about two feet (60 cm or 0.6 m) long, weighing around 85 lbs (40 kg).

S.D.C.: 6D6

Hit Points: P.E. +2D6, +1D6 per level of experience.

P.P.E.: 2D6

Horror Factor: 12 as scorpion or spider, 8 for others.

Combat: Two attacks per melee: usually one with a claw, and one with a poisoned **stinger/bite**, but dependent upon its current physical form. Base damage is 2D6 for bite, claws and stinger (the stab of the stinger), but the venom from the stinger (or bite in spider form) does an additional 1D6 damage per melee round for up to the next ten melees. The victim may roll to save vs lethal poison once per melee. Once a successful roll is made, the venom does no further damage; until the roll is successful, the unfortunate takes 1D6 damage each melee round.

Bonuses: Automatically saves vs horror factor, +2 on initiative.

Average Life Span: About eight years.

Skills: Detect ambush, escape artist, tracking, counter tracking (humans and animals), land navigation, swim, and prowl; all get a +10% bonus. Plus climbing 96/86% (all surfaces except the smoothest and slickest like glass) and wilderness survival (+20%).

Experience Level: 1-6 level; roll 1D6 for random determination or use the Snake Bird experience table (**Nightbane RPG** pg 233).

The Beautiful People

The Beautiful People want it all — fun, fame, wealth, power — and woe betide anyone who gets in their way. Originally from the Nightlands, many despair of finding anything to suit them in the Nightlords' realms, and soon migrate out into the Astral Domains and other dimensions. Many can be found in the *Casino of the Damned*, hanging onto the arms of other gamblers, or wagering chips which they have conned or scrounged from other dupes. Others serve as ambassadors or diplomats for less socially accomplished races, while still others resort to murderous plots and confidence tricks to win the accolades which they desire.

Appearing as gorgeously attractive humans, these creatures are not only greedy and proud, they are inhumanly vain. Six hours per day is spent grooming, applying lipstick (the Night-Gnomes make especially beautiful lipsticks for them, from the blood of murdered children), washing hair, etc. They are also connoisseurs of fine foods and wines: they **don't** care what culture it comes from, just so long as it's the best. It is said that they cannot actually taste anything, but can sense and enjoy the **PRICE** of a meal or drink.

A sorcerer might find many uses for a Beautiful Person as a **familiar/bound** servant. These include diplomat, spy, con-artist, assassin, thief, or **agent/representative** (often to trick, con and lure libidinous enemies into traps), or for carnal pleasure. However, whatever role this creature plays, the sorcerer will have to be incredibly wealthy to satisfy its tastes, and still it would want more ... but even more is never enough.

Alignment: Any Selfish or Evil

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+4, M.E. 2D6+1, M.A. 4D6, P.S. 3D6, P.P.

3D6+1, P.E. 3D6, P.B. 2D6+12, Spd. 3D6

Size and Weight: Same as a human.

S.D.C.: 2D6+10

Hit Points: Equal to P.E., plus 1D6 per level of experience.

P.P.E.: 2D6

Horror Factor: Not applicable.

Combat: Hand to Hand Assassin, standard damage.

Average Life Span: Same as a human.

Experience Level: Average 1D4+2; use the **Nemtar** experience table.

Typical Skills: All domestic skills +30%, intelligence +10%, interrogation techniques +5%, prowl +10%, streetwise (+4%), art (+10%), and two W.P.s of choice, plus three of choice from either Espionage or Rogue skill categories, and two from either the Physical or Technical skill categories (no bonuses for these additional skills).



Quote: "I don't just want more. I want it all!"



Night-Gnomes

The night-gnomes are short, androgynous **humanoids**, with leprous, rotting flesh and exaggerated features, usually hunched in stature and with deformed limbs. They are alchemists and inventors, brewers and chefs, serving the Nightlords in their kitchens and laboratories. They are the **Nightlands'** versions of scientists and **vivisectionists**, constantly striving to create weirder and more powerful alchemical concoctions, to breed fiercer animals, to develop crueller metals for the Hounds' weapons, etcetera. Indeed, it is said that each Night-Gnome corresponds to a human scientist following similar interests (though twisted, of course), coming into existence at the start of the scientist's career (they are apparently born as adults by being cooked up in a cauldron by their fellows) and dying when that scientist dies.

No project is too obscure for them, and they are never troubled by moral scruples. In fact, the more **pointlessly** academic, unpleasant, and cruel a project is, the more interested they become.

On a mundane level, sorcerers might find them useful servants and chefs (though it's best not to ask what the ingredients were in today's dinner), but they are also invaluable as chemists and poison-makers. More than a few sorcerers have been poisoned by their Night-Gnome familiars, however.

Alignment: Any Evil

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+2, M.E. 3D6, M.A. 2D6, P.S. 2D6, P.P. 2D6+1, P.E. 3D6, P.B. 2D6, Spd. 2D6

Size and Weight: Typically 4 feet tall (120 cm/1.2 m), weighing about 120 lbs (54 kg).

S.D.C.: 3D6

Hit Points: Equal to P.E., plus 1D6 per level of experience.

P.P.E.: 4D6

Horror Factor: 8

Combat: Hand to Hand Basic, standard damage.

Bonuses: Automatically save vs horror factor, +1 to perception rolls, 44 to save vs possession, +4 to save vs poison and disease.

Average Life Span: 60 years

Experience Level: Average 1D6+1; use Snake Bird experience table.

Typical Skills: Cook +30%, fishing, forensic medicine +20%, holistic medicine +10%, medical doctor, pathology +25%, toxicology +30%, biology +20%, botany, research, chemistry +20%, chemistry: analytical +20%, Principles of Magic (same as sorcerer), lore skills (various, +10%), hunting, preserve food (+10%), skin and prepare animal hides, palming, and W.P. knife.

Quote: "If you insist on screaming while I do this, then please make it an intellectually stimulating scream."

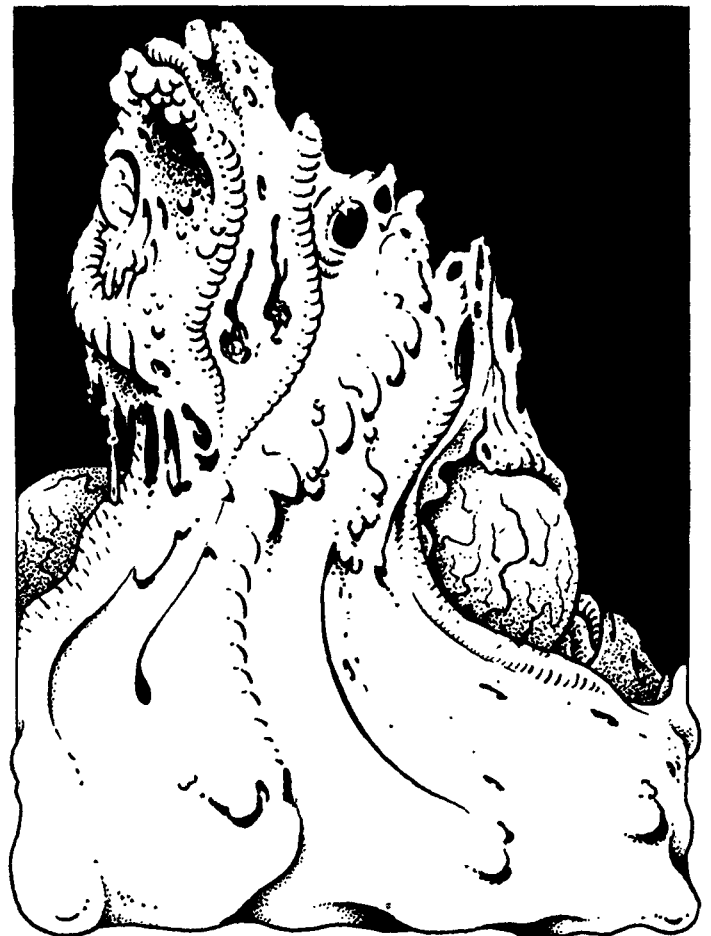
Vfrawk

The Vfrawk (**Vi-frawk**) are an apparently independent race, rare even in the **Nightlands**. Each Vfrawk is a shapeless blob of flesh, yellowish in color and with purple-black veins running across its throbbing surface. Eyes, tendrils, and less easily defined features and orifices are scattered across the Vfrawk's surface, although it entirely lacks useful limbs. Each creature actually moves by floating through the air, levitating.

The Vfrawk seem to need no food or water, but, when scavenging, they occasionally eat the brains of other dead creatures. They seem, in fact, to metabolize some power from the brains of their victims; P.P.E., perhaps, or something less tangible? Perhaps they actually eat ideas or experiences? Or wisdom? Growing larger as they eat more, and they eventually divide in two to reproduce.

By strange coincidence (or maybe not), there was once a Nightlord named Vfrawk, whose goal was to hoard knowledge, to learn all secrets of the universe. When he was killed, it is said, his huge brain was shredded by his assailant and spread throughout the **Nightlands**.

In any case, it is clear that the Vfrawk have their own secret agenda, possibly involving the future reunification of their race into one individual mind, and although they could provide magicians with vast amounts



of information and **advice**, their loyalty is always to their own race and their priority is always to collect new information for *themselves*.

It is possible that each of these creatures somehow correspond in the **Nightlands** to a secret society or conspiracy on earth, appearing after a secret society has divided and scattered, and each of its surviving descendants gathers arcane knowledge for its own ends, while in the Nightlands these creatures share a similar fate. If such is the case, only when these secret societies are united will the **Vfrawk** be reunited; or perhaps, only when the Vfrawk are made whole again will the earthly conspirators settle their differences and unite.

Alignment: Miscreant

Attributes: I.Q. 4D6, M.E. 4D6, M.A. 3D6, P.S. 1D6, P.P. 1D6, P.E. 1D6, P.B. 1D4, Spd. 1D4

Size and Weight: Usually about one foot (30 cm/0.3 m) across, weighing 30 lbs (14kg).

S.D.C.: 1D4

Hit Points: Equal to P.E., plus 1D4 per level of experience (typically 42)

P.P.E.: 8D6+40

Horror Factor: 10

Natural Abilities: By eating the brain of a dead person or creature, they learn all that *s/he* knew, gaining all skills, memories, etc. They all

have a degree of **precognition** (knowing, instinctively, if danger approaches, and from what direction), and their flesh is deadly poisonous (anything eating any part of one must roll to save vs lethal poison at -5 to save or die) and the **Nightlands'** predators have learned to leave them alone. Can also slowly **fly/levitate** and speak **telepathically** (range 30 feet/9 meters) without effort or expending I.S.P.

Combat: None. Two *actions* per round.

Bonuses: Automatically save vs horror factor, immune to magical and psychic effects which target its mind.

Average Life Span: Immortal (live until slain).

Experience Level: All Vfrawk are 12th level.

Typical Skills: All lore skills, principles of magic, cryptography, languages (many and obscure, e.g. Greek, Akkadian, Coptic, Assyrian, Aztec), and similar arcane and cerebral skills, all to at least 90%.

Quote: "Yes, I know the answer. But you wouldn't understand it."

Note: If they can cast magic, they don't, not even in self-defense.

As a Nightlands familiar, these enigmatic creatures will perform simple tasks, particularly spying, research, warn of impending danger, and offer (limited) advice about magic and numerous other matters.

Magical Divination

Divination is the supposed art of gleaning facts about the past, present or future from apparently random or unconnected phenomena — interpreting symbols, signs, or omens, for example. The following notes should help G.M.s deal with the new skill, Divination, introduced at the start of the last chapter.

Standard Divination Tools: Characters with the Divination skill may select any of the following methods (one method only each time that the skill is selected). Note that the information received from each type of divination will differ. So, reading someone's palm can give a great deal of information about that person, but reveals nothing about broader issues, while divination by watching flocks of birds or clouds reveals only general information about major events in the vicinity.

Characters cannot, under any circumstances, make use of each others' divination techniques. For example, a mystic who is so at peace with nature that she "knows" things by listening to the wind, isn't going to be able to pick up a sorcerer's **tarot** pack and divine from it, or even recognize omens and portents in animals or clouds.

Aeromancy: Gleaning information by watching local weather conditions (wind, clouds, etc.).

Animals: The character can interpret "natural omens" involving animals, gaining information by watching the behavior of cats, the flights of birds, etc.

Astrology: Working out horoscopes based on the current positions of the stars, a person's birth time and date, etc.

Bibliomancy: Opening a book at "random" and just happening to find an appropriate phrase or sentence there. Traditionally, the Bible has been used for this, but the classics, Shakespeare, a strange arcane tome, etc., might all be options.

Casting Objects: Throwing objects onto a cloth or the ground, drawing conclusions from the positions or patterns that they fall in, etc. The diviner should select a particular type of object - e.g. Rune Stones, salt, Yarrow stalks (as in **I-Ching**), hazel twigs, acorns, bones, blood, etc.

Cartomancy: Using a deck of playing cards.

Crystal Gazing: Looking into a crystal ball, in good circus side-show tradition.



Palm Reading: Getting information about a specific person from examining their palm. Incidentally, other historical diviners have used similar techniques to gain information while examining the bumps on a person's head (popular with England's Queen Victoria), or the lines on the soles of their feet.

Pyromancy: Divination by staring into a fire, listening to its sound, watching the shapes of the flames, watching how certain leaves or bones burn in the fire, etc.

Tarot: Cartomancy, using special Tarot cards.

Unusual Divination Methods

Historically, people have used loads of weird methods for divination — boiling and then examining a donkey's head is hard to beat for weirdness. Player characters should, within reason, be allowed to create their own methods of divination — and the more atmospheric the better.

For example, a magic using character might amputate his own left hand, and then inscribe the hand's bones with mystic symbols in order to use them for divination.

Keying in a divination method to a character's background or psychology is also a nice idea. As examples: A character who hates the Nightlords because they have stolen her baby might have a Divination skill which involves gaining information by watching *and/or* listening to babies; a really disturbed villain might perform divination by disembowelling teddy bears and soft toys; a nature-loving mystic might go out to the woods and "talk" to the birds or examine the shapes and movements of worms, etc.

Optional Rules for Preserving Game Balance

The idea is that, like most skills, Divination will only be used *very occasionally* — once or twice per playing session, at the most (sometimes weeks may pass without a Divination). Players who insist on making divinations about everything ("Hey, we just met someone, let's see what my Tarot cards say about her") are as much of a *pest* as thieving characters who can't walk past a door without picking the lock, or mercenaries who shoot every civilian who crosses their path.

Most methods of Divination are no threat to game balance. You can't use palmistry (reading someone's palm) without their permission (unless you tie them up or shoot them first, of course), and divination by watching weather phenomena requires several minutes to hours of contemplation outdoors. But if a G.M. finds that players are pestering them for constant Divinations, they should introduce any of the following rules modifications:

1. Attempting any divination requires the expenditure of 5 points of P.P.E. Without this expenditure the attempt automatically fails.
2. Each divination must be preceded by a period of quiet contemplation (say one hour), or even a longer period of fasting and meditation.
3. A diviner using cards, stones, or some similar objects, must always use exactly the same objects. A **cartomancer**, therefore, can't just pick up any pack of cards — it has to be her own, special cards. If these objects are lost or destroyed it will take months for the diviner to "get used to" a replacement set.
4. Players who choose particularly atmospheric methods, or who choose methods with their own disadvantages, should receive bonuses to their skills. So, for example, above it was suggested that a sorcerer might use the bones from his own left hand for Divination: this is not only good and nasty — perfectly suited to a horror game — it is also a real problem for the sorcerer (he only has one hand now) and if the bones were ever lost, they could not be replaced; so the character might receive a bonus of as much as +20% to his skill (although +4-10% will be more common). G.M.s should also consider rewarding characters whose divinations are particularly in keeping with their personalities (e.g. a professional gambler who bases his divinations on an evening of watching a roulette wheel, or a computer-boffin who creates complex

programs to generate random messages and symbols), or which add to the sense of drama and tension in a game. Such bonuses are purely at the discretion of the G.M.



Random Divinations

Trying to run a game of **Nightbane**, G.M.s may find themselves with little time to work out complicated Divinations for the player characters.

If all else fails, pick whichever ideas from this list seem most appropriate and improvise a response based around these. If a **character fails** a Divination skill roll, *s/he* either gets no insight or the G.M. can roll a ten-sided die once or twice and consult the following table to give a random answer, modifying the result to make sense with the character's **question/search** for insight.

1. A Mysterious Stranger: The reading foretells the approach of an individual who will bring (pick one) new meaning, help, danger, romance or passion, insanity or the wrath of the Nightlords.

2. A Journey: The reading suggests a movement — either a change of place, or an emotional journey (**insanity?**), or a "voyage of discovery" — again, pick one.

3. Find Protection: The questioner must take care, make sensible precautions, be cautious, or defend him or herself. This could refer to anything from a petty crime to a bitchy argument, to the manifestation of a Nightlord. This Divination is always apt for player characters, especially those pitted against evil.

4. Wisdom: The questioner must exercise restraint, good judgement, self-control, etc., etc.

5. A New Situation: Changing circumstances, new information, new friends or allies, or arrival in a new location, new opportunity — pick one — requires flexibility, confidence, initiative; pick one.

6. Potential: The reading **unoriginally** suggests that the key to success is knowing your own limits, using your initiative, putting yourself first, making the most of your talents, taking a stand, and similar; pick one or several.

7. Friends: The reading advises that Mends, loyal colleagues or family are your only hope/your greatest danger; in trouble, can help you — as appropriate.

8. As You Reap ...: The reading stoically advises that the outcome of present events will depend upon steps which have already been taken (bargains made, enemies earned, creatures summoned, harsh words/threats, plans, etc.). Or it may warn that one should carefully consider (or reconsider) one's current plan for action for it may bring disaster, **danger**, sorrow, death, etc.

9. Be True to Yourself: You will succeed in your endeavors if you stick to what you know, are true to your principles, act virtuously or **selflessly** — pick one or more that are appropriate.

10. Flux: Everything hangs in the balance, everything changes, your old life must be cast aside and a new life begun, you cannot depend on anyone or anything, all of your beliefs may be proved false, etc. Pick one: most are true in the world of **Nightbane**.

Note: Remember, Divination and its impressions are usually vague and general, as are the **bringers** of new portents. A "stranger," for example, could be somebody as insignificant as a panhandler, a taxi driver, or a sales clerk. A "journey" could be interpreted as almost anything from a trip abroad, going to the **Nightlands**, or across town, to an adventure, discovery, self-discovery, or finding religion.

Full Readings

G.M.s may feel daunted by the prospect of inventing Divinations — and especially future predictions — for player characters or even **NPCs**. However, most player characters have fairly predictable futures (mind-wrenching insanity, pain and death, struggle and triumph, etc.), and so constructing realistically *ambiguous* and/or *general* predictions is fairly simple.

The following reading is a simple Palmist's prediction for a typical player character, and with a little alteration, might be the precise prediction of a **Tarot** or Cartomancy reading.

"The line of Saturn is broken, patchy, suggesting that your fate is not a simple, steady path, and that there will be periods of flux and uncertainty where only your own actions and imagination will determine your fate — and here, where it crosses the Line of Apollo, we see that you must rely upon and strike up partnerships with others. The Line of Apollo is very strong: Your life is to be extraordinary, and you have the potential to achieve a great deal. Your health line starts well, but it becomes chained around your present time; several markings indicate periods of ill-health, probably indicating periods spent in hospitals, or recuperating after accidents or operations. The mount of Saturn, by your second finger, is well developed, which is very rare. This area relates to mystical or spiritual matters and the importance of religion and study. The small lines on it suggest an excess or confusion of powers or ideas. The Lunar area is also well marked, suggesting a great deal of movement, change and travel — the unusual."

Personalizing each reading should also present few difficulties. For example, a character with a high M.E. might be told that "you have great courage and strength of mind, and this will be very important to you in the times ahead." Another might be told that "a woman will become very important to you in the time to come, but I cannot tell how, or whether her importance will last" — as some woman, in some scenario, is bound to be important as a victim or villain, or in the character's personal life. The importance of friendship, reason, intuition, leadership strength of will, goodness and evil may be equally emphasized; a life of struggle may be foreseen, temptation, a conflict that will challenge one's morality or identity, etc.

Other authenticating touches include predictions about promotion, triumph, hardship or disaster in a character's career (the G.M.s can easily engineer the character's promotion or sacking), and predictions of a death in the family or among friends and acquaintances (also easily invented by a G.M.).

Divination through Sacrifice

Occasionally, in the past, people have believed that secret information may be gleaned from the dissection of a sacrifice. This kind of divination — though not "common" — deserves a mention, as it fits so easily into the world of Nightbane. While it may seem intuitively unlikely that dark, profound secrets may be revealed through playing cards or palmistry, it would seem quite fitting that Night Cultists, Necromancers and other maniacs might seek illumination through blood sacrifice.

Historically, most sacrifices have been of animals (though it is variously alleged that the ancient Greeks, Egyptians, Celts and Aztec slew humans in these ways) and two main methods were used to gain information: Either the sacrifice's writhing could be interpreted as it died slowly, or (more commonly) the beast might be dissected and its innards scrutinized for markings and abnormalities (usually the liver or intestines were examined, though other body parts were sometimes used instead, such as the shoulder-blade). Diviners with more gruesome imaginations might devise more unpleasant methods of interpreting a sacrifice, such as examining the bumps and features of the brain-pan or interpreting the squirming intestines while the sacrifice still lives. Other methods might also plausibly be used, such as watching the patterns formed by blood as it runs across the ground from the sacrifice. Many historical divinations *were* quite bizarre.

Usually it is not enough to simply sacrifice any animal. Rather, there are strict rules governing which individuals might be suitable sacrifices. Sometimes particularly exemplary breeds may be kept for sacrifice, or sacrifices are picked after a careful physical inspection (perfect health or unusual markings being required). In some cases it is considered necessary that the sacrifice ate only certain types of food, remained isolated or indulged in certain activities in the days immediately prior to its death (add bonuses to the divination roll, bigger bonuses for bigger restrictions).

It is plausible that certain unspeakable fraternities, in inaccessible locations, might subject intended sacrifices to long periods of confinement, perhaps in total darkness, and with certain special foods and drink (only bread and water for a human? or a diet of blood and raw meat? or, for an animal, only the flesh of its own **siblings?**), perhaps with certain preliminary rituals and mutilations. The sacrifice might have to be carried out on a particular date, and afterwards precautions may have to be taken to prevent the sacrifice's spirit returning to avenge itself on its killers. Plot hooks and adventure ideas are easily created from these situations.



CHAPTER 4: New Spells

This chapter introduces a host of new spells for magicians, including general spells (for sorcerers, wizards, mystics, etc.) and specialized magics for the new O.C.C.s. Note that those marked "ritual" means a ceremony and possibly components are required. A typical ritual will take **1D4+4** minutes to execute, sometimes longer (G.M.'s discretion if the amount of time is not specifically noted).

See notes on tweaking spells to create slightly different effects and on inventing your own entirely original magics.

Sorcery/Wizardry Spells

Alphabetical List of "new" Sorcerer Spells by Level

Level One

Reanimate Flesh (4)

Level Two

The Knowing Candle (5)

Life Plant (8)

Level Three

Bloodward (5+)

Level Four

Scarlet Pepper (10)

Traitorous Hand (10)

Level Five

Destroy Dead Flesh (3+)

Spirit Attack (15)

Level Six

Call Ectoplasm from Others (20)

Watching Enchantment (40)

Level Seven

The Druid's Head (40)

Level Eight

Draught of Life & Death (50)

Soul in a Bottle (50)

Level Nine

Create Zombie (80)

Friend in the Head (75)

Level Ten

Fatal Growth (95)

Level Eleven

Destroy Undead Flesh (100)

Level Twelve

Mictlantecutli's Command (150)

Open Pathway (170)

Level Thirteen

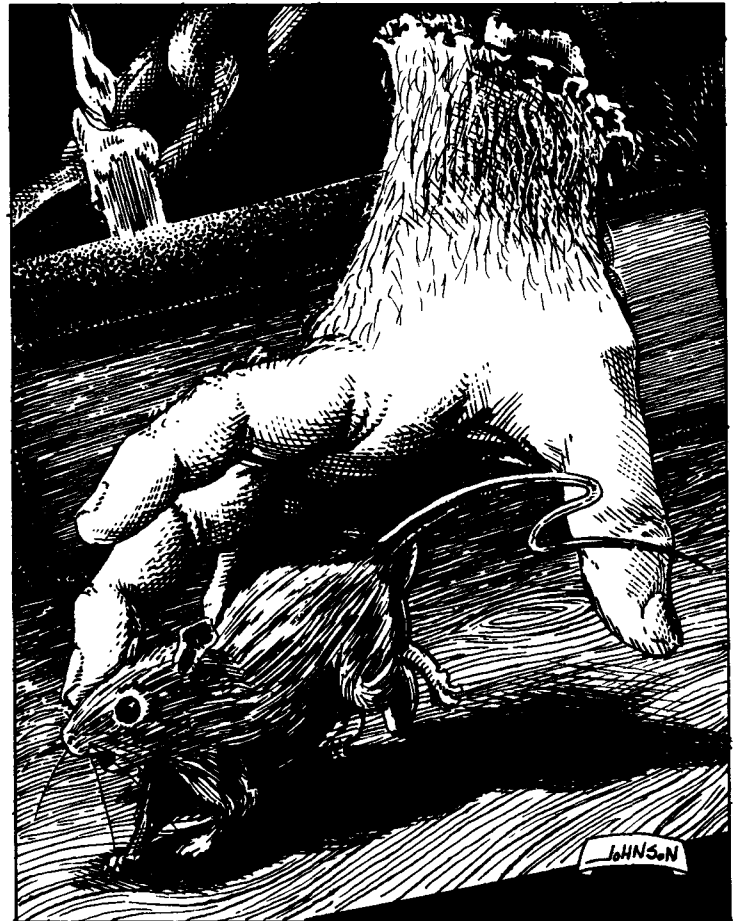
Psychic Drain (200)

Level Fourteen

Maggots Curse (500)

Level Fifteen

Someone Makes Them (920)



LEVEL TWO

The Knowing Candle

Range: 100 feet (30 meters).

Duration: 4 melees (1 minute) per caster's level.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 5

The magician creates the enchantment around a lit candle (or lantern, or electric flashlight even). The flame (or light) then burns lighter or darker depending upon its proximity to supernatural creatures, spells, psychic effects, etc. So, the sudden flaring of the light might suggest a spell being cast within the candle's range, or the flame might get slowly brighter as a supernatural creature gets closer and closer to it, or the magician might use the light to work out where a hidden magical artifact is (the light growing as *s/he* moves closer to it, and dimming as *s/he* moves away). The exact brightness of the light depends on the light's proximity to the supernatural effect or creature, and the power (level and P.P.E.) of that effect or creature.

Life Plant

Range: Touch

Duration: Special (see below)

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 8

The mage casts this spell on a seed or seedling, which is then planted by another person. The plant which grows from this then reflects the development and activities of the person who planted it. As

LEVEL ONE

Reanimate Flesh

Range: Touch

Duration: One hour

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 4 points

With this spell, a mage can animate and control up to 15 lbs (6 kg) of dead flesh. It's important to note that this magic *cannot* be used to animate and control the entire body of any one creature, even if it's a tiny animal like a frog or mouse. Instead, it is used to animate a body *part* such as a hand, arm, **foot**, or the jaw of a head. The reanimated flesh can then be given simple verbal instructions by the caster ("grab this," "swallow this," "go there", "come here", "stop," etc.). The spell may have been invented to create a sort of temporary *assistant* for ceremonies and research ("hold this vial," "point that there," "keep this book open"), or as a means to frighten people. However, the spell also has more imaginative uses. Think about the word "handcuffs", for example, especially if the animated hand or arm is bigger than human size. Note that the reanimated flesh of a human hand or foot has 2D4+2 S.D.C., an arm and hand has 2D4+6 S.D.C., a human-sized head 2D6+4 S.D.C., internal organs (a beating heart, a squirming liver, etc.) have 1D6 S.D.C.; giant-sized limbs have twice the S.D.C. of human-sized counterparts. **Note:** Since the spell *animates flesh*, the body part cannot be dead more than 72 hours or it will not work.

examples: While the person is healthy the plant flourishes, but any illness or wound will lead to discoloration or wilting on the plant. If the person turns towards evil (has or develops an evil alignment) the leaves of the plant turn dark, and any fruit it bears will be bitter, and if **s/he** commits acts of violence then blood-red flecks will appear on it. Furthermore, wherever the person is in the world, the plant's leaves will turn to face that direction, when gone to another dimension the leaves point down, and when the person dies the plant dies too.

LEVEL THREE

Bloodward

Range: Touch

Duration: Variable

Saving Throw: Special: see horror factor.

P.P.E.: 5 points per hour of duration.

This spell allows a mage to inscribe a protective symbol onto a person or object, by using a little of **his/her** own freshly drawn blood. Drawing the blood (whether by knife or syringe) causes one hit point of damage to the spell caster.

The symbol itself may be a crucifix, Norse rune, occult Chinese symbol, or anything else appropriate. Any evil supernatural creature wishing to approach within 10 feet (3 meters) of the ward must save vs a *horrorfactor of 15*. Further, if inscribed onto a person, it gives a +1 bonus to save vs any magical or mind control effect. The symbol must be visible to have any effect, and although the blood dries quickly (by the end of the spell's casting), it can still be removed with water, fire, and any number of things.

Unless prematurely removed, the duration of the ward can be determined by the mage when casting the spell. There is, in theory, no limit to the duration, but when first created, the caster must specify how long it will remain active for and must spend five P.P.E. per hour of its intended duration.

LEVEL FOUR

Scarlet Pepper

Range: Touch

Duration: Special

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 10

This spell allows a magician to take a handful of fire, transforming the flames into red crystals just as he or she touches them and casts this spell. The flames remain as crystals for so long as they remain in the caster's hand, and for 2D10 (or 1D20) hours thereafter. **Note:** The G.M. should roll this duration secretly, so the magician (player character) cannot tell how long the spell will last. Of course the mage can activate the flames whenever **s/he** wants prior to the end of the **crystals'** duration.

When the spell expires, the crystals turn back into flames. The fire created from the crystals is strong enough to inflict 1D6 damage and set fire to any flammable substance with which it is in contact. The spell itself is not dramatic, but with intelligence and cunning a magician can create explosive effects, convenient distractions, and countless acts of petty revenge and destruction (think, for example, about pouring the powder into a car's fuel tank, or sprinkling a few **handfuls** around a room).

Traitorous Hand

Range: 30 feet (9 meters)

Duration: One melee (15 seconds) per level of experience

Saving Throw: Standard

P.P.E.: 10

Through this spell, an **arcanist** can take control of a part of another person's body. Used subtly, this might be intended to cause a slight twitch in a finger ("I didn't mean to shoot! The gun just went **off!**") or more blatantly to control a whole limb (e.g. to make a knife-man attack himself or drop his weapon). The spell can be used to take control of a stomach or bladder too (e.g. to cause a stomach cramp or vomiting, or loss of control), or the tongue (to prevent speech or cause mumbling), and eyelid (to blink or twitch), but cannot be used for such refined actions as affecting breathing, vocal chords, heartbeat, blood circulation, etc., or to seize control of a pair of hands, arms, legs, etc.

LEVEL FIVE

Destroy Dead Flesh

Range: 10 feet (3 meters).

Duration: Instant (see below)

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 3 points per 100 **lbs** (45 kg) of target's weight.

This spell utterly destroys the dead flesh of one carcass or corpse, up to 600 **lbs** (270 kg) in weight. The flesh smolders for several minutes (taking one minute per 100 **lbs/45 kg**), and crumbles into a black ashen residue which then evaporates. Very handy for destroying the evidence of fights and murders, or for covering up the destruction of supernatural creatures. Has no effect upon magically animated or otherwise "**un-dead**" flesh. Casting the spell requires the expenditure of three P.P.E. points per 100 **lbs** or part thereof of the target's weight, usually costing 6-9 P.P.E. to destroy most human bodies.

Spirit Attack

Range: 30 feet (9 meters).

Duration: Instant

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 15

This spell can be used to launch attacks on any supernatural creature which has no physical form (including entities, spirits, intelligent magic essences, astral beings/travelers, and the denizens of the **Dream-stream™**). The caster must know where the target creature is, or must make a very fine guess, but can use this spell to inflict **1D4x10** points of damage on any one known target. If the target does not have hit points, then the damage done is inflicted to the creature's P.P.E. total, although the creature will heal this psychic damage with time.

The spell can, of course, be used to "attack" some sorts of spells, or the psychic manifestations which sometimes follow from spell casting. However, these "living" spells, too, will heal this psychic damage unless utterly destroyed, and this attack can only be used on "living magics" which have no physical manifestation. So, for example, it could not be used to destroy an enchantment in an object (unless the object were first physically obliterated), or to destroy an undead creature (as the magic is safely interwoven with the undead's physical form), etc.

The spell always has some physical or visual manifestation, and so it cannot be cast secretly. In some versions this involves fingers of lightning dancing from the hands of the casting mage to the target; in others, the caster's eyes become reflective, showing an image of the target; in others, a shard of bone or energy appears in the mage's hand and is thrown at the target as the spell casting is completed (automatic hit); G.M.s and players are encouraged to create their own suitably atmospheric visual effects for this spell (and others).

LEVEL SIX

Call Ectoplasm from Others

Range: 20 feet (6 meters).

Duration: Instant (see below)

Saving Throw: Standard

P.P.E.: 20

This spell forces P.P.E. to manifest in physical form as a translucent glob known as "ectoplasm". This ectoplasm may come from any source or sources within range **s/he** may force **his/her** own P.P.E. to take physical form; the caster may draw P.P.E. out of any or all of the other people or animals within the area; or it may be drawn from physical supernatural creatures in range. P.P.E. cannot be drawn from ambient magic energy, **spells**, enchanted objects, supernatural creatures without physical form, or creatures that are not native to the caster's world (i.e. human and **Nightbane** casters can't cast the spell on **Nightlands** creatures), or people or creatures which are immune to either magical or psychic effects or who are practitioners of magic themselves.

Ectoplasm oozes from those from whom it is being drawn, spilling from their fingers, eyes, or orifices (mouth, nose, etc.). It is usually a translucent white gel, but it may appear black (especially if drawn from an evil source), blood red, sickly yellow, etc. Ectoplasm pours from the contributors at a rate of 2D6 points of P.P.E. per melee round, and continues to gush out at this rate until the pawns have only one point of P.P.E. remaining. At this point, the outpouring stops; the last point of P.P.E. is never taken by this spell. This is an uncomfortable and restricting experience for those from whom the ectoplasm came, and who may find that they are too busy unleashing goo to actually do much else: all skills are effectively at -40% while ectoplasm is being drawn from them, plus Spd is halved, and all combat rolls are subject to a -5 modifier.

The spell caster can then use and control the ectoplasm, same as the psionic power, for four minutes per level of experience, after which time it "evaporates," returning to the people or creatures from which it came (their P.P.E. recovering twice as quickly as usual).

The spell may be used by magicians either to impress others, incapacitate enemies, or extract and use ectoplasm from others for their own purposes.

Watching Enchantment (Ritual)

Range: 1000 feet (305 meters)

Duration: One Year.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 40

This ritual requires the sacrifice of a cat, dog, or similar tame animal, the spirit of which merges with the magic of this spell and thereafter patrols the area in which it was killed, watching for supernatural foes and mundane dangers. This spell will warn its master if a supernatural creature, entities, group of armed men, strangers, malignant enchantment, possessed people, and other similar threats approach. It also learns to distinguish individuals from one another (and so can tell frequent friendly visitors from strangers). Note that the enchantment may only be set over an area (an alley, a house, a basement, backyard, etc.), and can only "see" one thousand feet (305 m). It may not be set to watch a moving vehicle or specific object.

While the spell is in effect, and while the caster is within 100 feet (30.5 m) from the point where the ritual occurred, he or she instinctively knows when danger approaches, and has an idea of how great the danger is. The watching spirit never actually "speaks" to the spell caster, but as a result of its presence, the mage's hands become clammy or his or her hair stands on end when danger approaches.

In theory the enchantment lasts for one year, but in practice it may linger longer. The magic gains the temperament and personality of the animal sacrificed to create it, and unusually loyal or loving animals may

loiter longer as enchantments (2D6 months). Keeping the corpse of the sacrificed animal in the area is also supposed to extend the duration of the spell (3D6 weeks).

Note that such enchantments, like real animals, are usually very territorial; a Watching Enchantment created in an area where another already exists will be driven away, and will end up watching another, random area — finding a new master and a territory of its own. It has also been known for watching enchantments to "adopt" new masters after the end of the spell duration or following their creators' deaths, leading to rumors of benign **hauntings** and watchful ghosts.

LEVEL SEVEN

The Druid's Head (Ritual)

Range: Touch

Duration: Special

Saving Throw: Standard

P.P.E.: 40

This ancient Celtic ritual involves taking the head of a corpse and embalming it in cedar oils to bind the ghost (spirit essence) of the deceased into the preserved head. A ghost which does not wish to be bound may make a standard saving throw. Thereafter, the bound ghost may look out through the eyes of its head, listen through its ears, smell through its nose, and speak in a hoarse whisper through its mouth. However, the spirit is under no obligation to cooperate with or serve the spell's caster, and although being stuck in a mummified head is likely to be an unpleasant and tedious experience for the trapped ghost, it can feel no physical pain through its flesh. A devious spell caster, however, can cajole or persuade a trapped ghost to speak to him or her, and many vindictive magicians might simply bind a ghost to its head as a way of tormenting it. The spell lasts until the head is physically destroyed. Its hit points are its I.Q. number times two.

LEVEL EIGHT

Draught of Life & Death (Ritual)

Range: 100 feet (30.5 meters)

Duration: 30 minutes to take effect; permanent results.

P.P.E.: 50

This spell allows magicians to take the illnesses and wounds from one character and transfer them into the body of another! Rather easier than having to actually heal damage and eradicate diseases.

The sorcerer brews a potion of poisonous herbs and animal venoms, mixed with milk and blood, powdered bones, and various other ingredients (antibiotics often appear in modern mixtures, for example, while medieval mixtures include mandrake root). The sorcerer then administers this to two people, one injured, the other healthy. During the next 30 minutes, one character (specified by the caster) is "cured" of all physical illnesses and diseases, and regains 6D6 hit points (up to but not exceeding **his/her** natural maximum). The second individual, however, gains all of these illnesses or wounds, and loses an equal number of hit points. The two subjects must be within 100 feet (30.5 m) of each other when they drink the draught and for the whole of the 30 minutes that follow. If they wander more than 100 feet (30.5 m) apart, the magic fails.

Soul in a Bottle (Ritual)

Range: Touch.

Duration: Permanent (see below)

Saving Throw: Standard

P.P.E.: 50

By means of **this** spell, the caster extracts half of the "soul" (psychic energy) of the victim (who may choose to resist, making a saving throw), and stores **it** in some suitable *glass* receptacle (**bottle, jar, etc**)

As a result, the target loses half of **his/her** P P E and I S P , some memones are "foggy" and skill performance **is** -10% In the future, whenever the character would **gain** additional P P E or I S P (e g when going up a level), **s/he** only actually gains half the usual number of points, as the other half **is** siphoned off to the bottle Furthermore, the split character cannot Astral Travel

The spell **is** usually used to protect the character, by taking part of **his/her** "soul" and keeping **it** somewhere safe and far away The person therefore gains a +5 bonus to all rolls to save vs any magic, illusions, **mind** control, **empathic** attacks and possession

On the downside, psychic and magical effects may also be cast on the **person's** **mind** by casting them on the half of the soul **in** the bottle **with** NO special bonuses to protect **it** (standard saves) — so woe betide the target **if** the bottle ever got **into** the wrong hands Further, the mage who initially cast the spell can gaze **into** the bottle to send dreams and telepathic messages to the target, and can read **his/her** current surface thoughts, giving the sorcerer a sort of crystal ball **into** the **mind** of the split soul Finally, **if** the receptacle (bottle, **jar, etc**) were ever broken, then the person's half-soul would be released to **find** and re-enter **his/her** body However, **if** the physical portion of the body **is** not within 1000 miles (1600 km), or worse, not **in** the same dimension, the splintered half **is** likely (01-60%) to get lost and doomed to wander the world **in** search of **its** other half In **this** spirit form, the essence fragment can fly (speed 20), hover, think and observe, but cannot affect the physical world It can only communicate **with** **Channellers**, astral beings, and psychic beings **with** sensitive powers (telepathy, empathy, etc) After 1D6x10 years, **this** spirit/essence fragment fades away, effectively dying (all penalties remain **in** force) To locate **his** other half, the physical half of the person must get within 100 miles (160km, automatically sensing and finding each other) Channellers, Mystics, Astral Travellers and psychic sensitives may be useful **in** helping to locate the splintered essence **Note:** Once separated, the one half does not know what the other **is** experiencing

LEVEL NINE

Create Zombie (Ritual)

Range: Touch

Duration: 24 hours per level of experience, but the zombie **is** only active 10 hours per day

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 80 per each zombie created

This ritual allows the caster to animate a corpse as an undead servant The body's flesh should be mostly intact and relatively "fresh", dead for less than a two weeks Some decomposition or bullet holes are no problem, but dismemberment or serious decomposition renders the corpse useless The corpse has the same statistics as **it** **did** **in** life except that

1 It has only animal intelligence (1D6), no desires or dreams Effectively has no M A , M E or alignment (**its** actions typically reflect those of **its** creator/master)

2 Add +1D6 to the P E and P S attributes

3 Reduce the original P P , P B , and Spd attributes to half

4 It has no skills, except for Hand to Hand Basic and land navigation 75%

5 It has normal base **hit** points for a first level human (regardless of **its** actual nature), and 35 S D C

6 Zombies regenerate physical damage at a rate of 6 points per each hour of being dormant, but cannot regenerate lost limbs



7. Zombies are impervious to horror factor, possession, mind control, cold, poison and disease.

The zombies are capable of understanding the **caster's** instructions in any *spoken* language. They cannot read, understand any other person's words, or follow complex orders. "Destroy anyone else who enters this room," "Go down into the village and kill everyone," "Protect me," and "Enter the house and bring me the blonde-haired child, alive," are the limits of their ability to comprehend. With time, however, zombies created by powerful magicians may begin to develop greater intelligence, along with their own personality quirks, often becoming quite unstable, unreliable and even dangerous. Normally, these creatures are slavishly loyal to their creators, whom they will never try to harm.

Note: It's not only humans who can be animated in this way. Dead **Nightbane**, Hunters, cattle, horses, etc. -anything up to 600 lbs (270 kg) in weight may be animated by this spell.

Damage Notes: The zombie takes little damage from piercing weapons and firearms (e.g. only 4 points from a 4D6 bullet or stabbing attack from a pole arm) but it suffers normal damage from explosives, acid, hacking and bludgeoning weapons, and unarmed attacks (punches and kicks). It suffers *double normal damage* from fire-based attacks. It is also damaged — burned — by sunlight. So, exposure to a few rays of sun (through chinks in a shuttered window, for example) inflicts 4D6 damage on the zombie, while exposure to full sunlight inflicts 2D6x10 damage per melee round (almost inevitably enough to destroy it immediately).

Limitations: The zombie will function for a period of time up to 10 hours per the caster's level, but this need not always be at a stretch. At the zombie's creation, the caster can determine under what circumstances the undead slave will function, and these conditions cannot later be amended. So, for example, the spell caster might order that the zombies will rise up and attack when anyone, apart from their creator, enters the chamber that they are in. Or **s/he** might ordain that they should be active only between dusk and dawn. Note that while inactive, the zombies do not seem to be undead, but ordinary corpses (though they are still magical, as the spell still lingers on them). They may also slowly decompose (depending upon environmental considerations), and may theoretically fall apart before the **spell's** duration expires.

Extending the Magic: 10 hours before the duration of the magic is about to elapse, the original creator can keep the zombie alive (**well ...** functioning) by expending another 80 P.P.E. per each zombie. This will keep the creature(s) functioning for another 24 hours per level of the creator.

Friend in the Head

Range: 60 feet

Duration: Uncertain

Saving Throw: Standard

P.P.E.: 75

This spell creates a magical intelligence. An enchantment with its own I.Q. and personality which is placed in the head of the target subject. If the victim makes a saving throw, then the intelligence cannot get into **his/her** mind, but instead wanders free; perhaps as a "ghost," or perhaps entering a more vulnerable person such as a drug addict, mental patient, the empty physical body of an Astral Traveler, or inhabiting the head of an animal.

The conjured intelligence cannot take control of the person whose head it inhabits, but it can "talk" to them — they hear its voice in their own mind. It can also eavesdrop on their surface thoughts and feel their emotions and anxieties.

The personality (harmful or helpful) of this so-called "friend" is determined by the spell caster at the time the spell is cast and may be genuinely helpful and benevolent, or attempt to distract, confuse, tempt, or make promises or suggestions on behalf of its creator, or badger, torment **and/or** harm the poor soul.

If the voice shouts, shrieks, laughs, nags, belittles, or otherwise attempts to distract or confuse, the victim's concentration is divided and the character suffers -3 on initiative and perception rolls, -1 on all other rolls, and -5% on all skill performance during this period. The voice may also keep the unfortunate awake for hours on end, which will lead to fatigue and an additional -10% skill penalty. If designed to harm its victim, it might give phoney information and unhelpful advice, and/or constantly tempt the victim into dangerous, stupid, emotional and evil courses of action.

On the other hand, the voice (with its own I.Q. rolled as normal on 3D6) may make helpful suggestions, act as a vocal conscience, provide information (things it remembers from experiences since its creation) or may consider problems on the person's behalf (it has no skills, however).

The voice will typically linger for a number of days equal to its victim's M.E., before fading away. Particularly strong willed individuals (with M.E. over 19) may make a saving throw every 24 hours to get rid of it. A successful save vs psionic **attack/influence** will end the magic. Victims with an M.E. of 8 or less, may find the voice of this "friend" lasts much longer than this; at least double, but possibly for months, G.M.'s discretion. If the character comes to appreciate and embrace the voice, it may, at the G.M.'s discretion, remain indefinitely; in all likelihood becoming a permanent schizophrenia insanity (hears voices ... one anyway).

Initially, the voice's objectives and personality are fixed by the spell caster, who may intend the voice to mislead, advise, taunt, confuse, or infuriate the target. However, if the voice lingers for a year or more, it is likely to start developing its own personality and objectives, picking up new ideas (and skills at a rate of one every six months) from its host's thoughts, or striking up a complex relationship with the victim. In some cases, where the victim's M.E. is particularly low (6 or less), the "friend" (the magical intelligence inside the head) may in time, become strong enough to become the dominant personality, actually controlling the body, with the original human personality reduced to a whining voice in the back of its own mind. In other cases, despite its original malignant intent, the "friend" may come to respect and like its intended victim and actually become a "friend" that helps rather than harms. Of course, in other instances, the voice may, despite its host, continue to torment **him/her** and cause trouble (but not enough to kill the victim, for if that person dies so does the "**friend**").

LEVEL TEN

Fatal Growth (Ritual)

Range: 100 feet (30.5 meters)

Duration: Special: until victim is slain or magic is negated.

Saving Throw: Standard

P.P.E.: 95

When this spell is cast, the bones of the target person begin to grow very rapidly, expanding, forming spines and spikes, twisting and generally causing all manors of deformity. This is extremely painful (the victim must roll to save vs pain, 16 or higher, or fall over, too pained to even move).

The first melee after the spell is cast, the target takes 1D6 damage. The next melee this is doubled to 2D6, then the next to 4D6, then 8D6, then 16D6 and so on, until **his/her** body simply rips itself apart (Note: The **Fleshsculptor's** spell to *heal living bones* can only be used to stop the damage from exceeding 4D6 hit points per melee round, delaying the inevitable. *Negate magic* and *remove curse* will stop it instantly, but any damage sustained till that point remains). Damage is inflicted every melee round from the time that the spell is cast until the target dies, and is inflicted straight to hit points, S.D.C. and armor having no effect.

However, the spell has four major drawbacks:

1. The high P.P.E. cost.
2. The target must be within sight or the caster must have some object intimately associated with the target (a stolen wedding ring, or vial of blood, for example).
3. The spell has a fairly short range, so that the mage must get quite close to the target, and then perform the ritual uninterrupted. The ritual takes 1D6+6 minutes to perform.
4. This magic will not work against other magicians, **Nightbane**, supernatural beings (including the Nightlords and Minions of the Nightlords), energy beings, astral beings, creatures of magic and similar **inhumans**. Likewise, mortals protected by a **Bloodward** are also impervious to this magic.

Note: The spell caster can stop the magic at any time, causing the bones to return to normal, but all damage suffered by the victim remains.

LEVEL ELEVEN

Destroy Undead Flesh

Range: 30 feet (9 meters).

Duration: One melee round per level of experience.

Saving Throw: Standard, each melee round.

P.P.E.: 100

This spell works exactly like *Destroy Dead Flesh*, causing a carcass of up to 600 lbs (270 kg) in weight to smolder, crumble and evaporate. The spell, however, also works on undead flesh. So, the spell inflicts 1D6x10 damage per melee round on the undead (vampires, zombies, animated corpses, etc.). The target takes damage each melee round until either it saves vs the spell (roll once per round) or the spell ends. If the spell is still active when the target "dies," all of its flesh is then destroyed the following round by the magic.

LEVEL TWELVE

Mictlantecutli's Command

Range: Touch

Duration: Until the skin is destroyed.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: 150

Note: This magic will not be used by characters of a good or unprincipled alignment.

This ritual, originating amongst the Aztecs, provides an extreme method of gaining command over another's magics.

The sorcerer must capture the magician whose magics he intends to control, and in an hour long ritual beneath the mid-day sun, flay the skin from the still living victim. The skin must be taken largely intact, and it is in this skin that the enchantment is laid. Its original owner's death (flaying will kill him) provides some or all of the P.P.E. for the enchantment (doubled at the moment of death).

The skin may then be worn as an over-skin by another magician, and it will not naturally rot or decay. Hair still grows on its scalp, and it still sweats in the sunlight. Magically disguised by this skin, all spell knowledge known by the deceased sorcerer is now available to the magician wearing his or her flesh. This will also work to control any ongoing magic or magical servants which serve and obey the deceased mage. So, zombies will obey the commands of the person wearing their creator's skin as if that person were their creator; familiars, too, will obey the new skin's wearer; etc. Of course, magics which have their own I.Q.s may notice the strange orders being given to them by their **master(?)**, and react accordingly.

Open Pathway

Range: 20 feet (6 meters)

Duration: 1D6melee rounds

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 170

This spell allows a magician to call up and "open" a Pathway between his current location to any other *known* location on any other world or plane. The caster must have visited the place, or have an extremely good description of it. The **Megaverse** is a big place, and if the mage is at all imprecise about where *s/he* wants to go, then the odds are that *s/he* will end up somewhere *s/he* doesn't like — somewhere similar but entirely wrong. The only restriction is that the spell caster cannot open a Pathway to a location on the same world or plane as his current location.

These "Pathways" are in fact living entities of some sort, and the spell bears more resemblance to a summon magic than a planar travel or **teleport** spell. There are several dozen pathways in existence, each with its own personality and appearance, and each with its own Open Pathway spell. If a magician wants to be able to call up a number of pathways, he will have to learn multiple versions of this spell. Knowing how to open one Pathway is sufficient, in any case, as any Pathway can lead between any two locations.

Each Pathway is a little world to itself, with a clearly marked path (a road, path, or river, for example) snaking through it. Wandering away from the marked path is very dangerous, as wayward travelers could stumble off into any number of worlds or planes. Usually, to help guide people through, each Pathway creates an "embodiment" of itself to guide or carry travelers.

When the spell is cast, the Pathway "opens" at a random point within 20 feet (6 m) of the caster. It remains open for 1D6melees, and anyone may enter the gateway during that time. In theory, large objects such as vehicles may also enter, depending upon the size of the opening, which varies from pathway to pathway. Travelling through the Pathway usually then takes several minutes.

Example Pathways

1. Cyncjak, (A young Pathway): Cyncjak (sink-jack) is a "young" Pathway, just a few hundred years old. Its entrance is always unassuming and unostentatious, blending in with the surroundings. It might appear as a simple door in an urban wall, or a narrow cave mouth in a mountain.

Inside, a featureless **humanoid** form waits expectantly for whoever opened the Pathway — the featureless humanoid is a reflection of the immature pathway's uncertain embodiment. It tries to take a character's hand to lead him through, but its grip is tight and nervous, as if it wanted to hold the character for its own comfort as much as to guide him. Throughout the journey, the young embodiment tries to form into several coherent shapes, but maintains none for long. It might try the shape of an oversized punk-rocker, a Hitler Youth recruit wearing a Mickey Mouse mask, a young girl dressed as a whore, a small friendly mongrel dog, a gossamer-winged faerie, a dopey-looking cartoon dragon, a grotesque giant teddy bear, and so on. All the while it will repeatedly and uncertainly ask the **character(s)** "where am I meant to take you?" "where do you want to go?" "am I doing all right?" Occasionally the embodiment turns on the **character(s)** and swears at them, telling them that it's sick of guiding them and that they can find their own way, but then immediately repents and begs their forgiveness.

In places, the Pathway can appear as a narrow bridge over a bottomless ravine, in others, as a rocky path between an unscaleable cliff and a sea of magma, or it can follow a beach between a desert and a raging ocean. In another place it skirts the edge of a graveyard, or it passes through an empty but noisy school and then an office teeming with silent workers.

At the end of the path, the **character(s)** emerge from an opening as simple and discreet as that through which they entered.

In order to open **Cyncjak**, the magician must offer up a bribe such as a handful of candy, a comic book, a doll, or a **child's toy**, or something similar. Somewhere inside the Pathway there is a little room, like a nursery, where it stores these treasures.

2. Khasticx (An ageing Pathway): **Khasticx's** (cas-ticks) entrance appears as an open grave near to whoever opened the Pathway. The headstone bears their **name(s)**. They must leap into this pit to enter the Pathway.

Through the grave the group drops hundreds of meters into a broad river of blood under a red sky. As they flail in the river, a skeletal hand grabs each and drags them onto a creaking, leaking, old shallow-draught boat. The embodiment cannot be bothered to maintain a friendly appearance, and now stands before them as Charon, the mythical Ferryman of the Dead.

Along the Pathway the river broadens, opening into an endless archipelago of little islands, dotted with treacherous reefs. Sometimes passengers glimpse figures on the barren black islands, their faces constantly shifting, but often resembling people whom the player characters have killed in the past. The embodiment is a poor conversationalist, blandly responding to any statements with "If that's what you say," or "Who am I to argue?"

After an immeasurable period of time, a wooden jetty appears in the distance. Time becomes indistinct through this pathway, and all watches and similar devices stop while inside it. Once all the characters are all off the boat and on the jetty, then the river, the embodiment and all of the pathway, fades away with a sound like a distant baby's cry. The Pathway just leaves the group standing at their chosen location, along with a small silver coin embossed with a wheel — the Buddhist and Hindu symbol of the cycle of time and the cosmos, of continuity and change, and of rebirth — as a reminder that there are really no beginnings or endings.

To open this Pathway requires a single silver coin, marked with a wheel.

Other Pathways: G.M.s should feel free to invent their own Pathways, perhaps in consultation with the players. The nature and character of the pathway should reflect the feel of the campaign that you are running. Moreover, the Pathway which any magician has learned to open may well reflect his or her own personality, especially in the case of mystics, who intuitively "know" spells rather than learning **others'**.

As examples, a Pathway might be a huge whirlpool of blood, which sucks its travelers down and through to their destination, speaking **telepathically** into their minds if required; or it might be a giant eagle, which scoops travelers up in its claws and carries them through the mists of the Astral Plane or a wonder realm of blue (or other color) sky and tunnels of clouds; or it might be a yellow New York taxi cab with a two-headed driver who constantly argues with himself while he drives travelers through a twisted (or normal) looking city to their destination.

Rules issues and Pathways

Pathways often have the same natural laws as the mortal world, although G.M.s should feel free to invent Pathways with weird gravity, where light bends, where fire cannot exist (so that firearms don't work), etc. In general, magic, firearms, psionics, etc., work in Pathways as they do anywhere else. Obvious exceptions include the fact that a Pathway cannot be opened from within or to another Pathway; and since the Pathway is outside of all planes and worlds, no spell cast in a Pathway will ever have sufficient range to affect someone in another world. Nor can one **dimensionally travel/exit** by other means, **Mirrorwalk**, or teleport while inside a Pathway.

Pathways themselves typically have around 10,000 hit points and equal S.D.C. **I.Q.** is roughly 3D6+24, except that their minds are so entirely alien that this means nothing in mortal terms. They don't see **time**, space, individual identity, or anything else in the same way that humans do, and so using psionics or magic to pry into or affect their minds is fruitless. Indeed, G.M.s are encouraged to rule that looking into the mind of something this utterly alien is likely to do extremely bad things

to a person's mind (psionics, be **warned!**). Moreover, they are not even alive, or even real in any meaningful human sense, and spells which attempt to affect them as if they were living organisms or natural environments automatically fail.

Note: Pathways have no obligation to carry travelers anywhere. People who try to harm or control them, or refuse to travel forward, will be expelled from the Pathway, simply dropping out into any arbitrary reality that is convenient for it. Characters could end up *anywhere* on any world or dimension as a result of this.

What are Pathways?

It is said that Pathways exist in all places at the same time, and by opening one and stating a destination, all that a magician does is take advantage of this enigmatic being's existence and nature. One theory is that Pathways are only intelligent if there is an intelligent person within them (which is why they take on forms that humans can recognize and understand when humans are within them), though this is uncertain.

No one actually knows what Pathways are, where they come from (though most are thousands of years old), or what they want from existence. Probably, "are," "from," and "want" are concepts which Pathways themselves would have difficulty grasping. Why they transport people through themselves is also **uncertain**, although some pessimists have suggested that they are somehow digesting the people whom they carry, much as worms remove nutrients from the earth that passes through them (which is possible). However, no one has (yet) proved that the Pathways' passengers actually lose anything by passing through them. At least not anything they notice.

The Pathways' minds are incredibly complex, and some magicians have speculated that if they exist **everywhere** at once, they should, logically, know absolutely everything about everywhere. Unfortunately, their minds are far from logical, and it isn't certain that they actually **KNOW** that they **KNOW** anything (or that they could understand the idea of *knowing* in the first place). All of this, in any case is just irrelevant speculation ... unless a G.M. can find interesting plot ideas or role-playing opportunities in any of this.

LEVEL THIRTEEN

Psychic Drain (Ritual)

Range: One mile (1.6 km).

Duration: One week.

Saving Throw: Standard

P.P.E.: 200

This ritual enchants a small object, which draws P.P.E. from the unfortunate target. Several versions of the spell exists, each requiring a different sort of object as the focus of the spell; some a bone knife, some a crystal sphere, etc. All that is required is the object to be enchanted, and that during the ritual there also be some object intimately associated with the intended target (blood, hair, a favorite garment, etc.). The victim may roll once only to save, when the object is first created.

For one week thereafter, so long as the victim remains within one mile (1.6 km) of the object, **s/he** cannot recover spent P.P.E. Any P.P.E. which would normally be recovered is siphoned off to this object. What happens to it then is entirely up to the GM. Does it form into any kind of shape? Extend the **spell's** duration? Imbue the enchantment with the victim's own personality?

The spell caster may order the object to cease functioning at any time, and the enchantment ends after one week or if the object is destroyed.

LEVEL FOURTEEN



Maggots Curse

Range: 5 feet (1.5 meters) per level of experience.

Duration: Conditionally, 4 melee rounds per level of experience.

Saving Throw: Standard (once only).

P.P.E.: 500

The Maggots Curse is a particularly nasty spell, which causes a large nest of maggots to start feeding and multiplying inside the flesh of a living person. At the end of the first round after the spell's casting, the victim has shooting pains in his or her abdomen or limb, and takes 1D4 damage. The melee round afterwards, the character takes 1D6 damage, and must roll under his or her P.E. or fall down, writhing in agony for the subsequent melee rounds. At the end of each round thereafter, the target must make a new roll against P.E. and takes an additional 2D6 damage direct to hit points. Armor or being inside a locked vehicle or room is no protection, as the maggots are eating out from the inside. By the fourth round, some of the horrid larvae will poke through the skin, revealing the cause of the pain.

The duration of the spell is determined by the **caster's** ability to keep concentrating on the target of this hideous affliction. If the caster loses sight of the target, desires to cast another spell, engages in some other activity requiring his concentration, or is knocked unconscious or dies, then the spell is automatically over and the maggots all disappear, but their damage remains. If the spell ends before the victim dies, all of the maggots die and fade away, although the character may later cough up or excrete a couple, just for horror's sake. If the target dies while the spell is still in operation, then the maggots continue to magically breed and consume at an exponential rate even after the spell has ended, until the body has been reduced to bare **bones!**

Note: There is a 01-33% chance that a victim who survives will acquire a phobia concerning maggots. Numerous **Fleshsculptor** spells can restore damaged and eaten flesh and muscles, and even internal organs.

LEVEL FIFTEEN

Someone Makes Them (Ritual)

Range: Touch

Duration: Indefinite

Saving Throw: Standard

P.P.E.: 920

This spell (named from the comment that people aren't born as monsters, someone makes them that way) reconstructs the target's personality by going through their mind and restructuring, replacing and deleting all of their memories of their formative experiences. Thus, the spell can be used to delete memories of a caring family life, and replace them with memories of abuse or neglect, or equally, foul episodes can be replaced by constructive experiences. In this way, the magician can reconstruct the ways in which the target has learned to think about himself, other people, animals, drugs, culture, sex and so on.

With a little malice and forethought, a mage can therefore turn a well-adjusted, kind human being into a twisted, pained sadist. And with more care (a successful **I.Q.** roll is required), the caster can cure or create addictions, implant or remove psychopathic urges or other insanities, change the character's alignment, manipulate the target's sense of who **s/he** is, implant or remove obsessions and cravings, give the target memories of nonexistent places or people (new friends and enemies), or generally do anything else which **s/he** wants to the poor victim's psyche.

Fleshsculptor Magic

By Kevin Hassal & Kevin Siembieda

The following magics are available only to **Fleshsculptor** characters. Note also that **Fleshsculptors** cannot cast the majority of standard spells; they can, however, use any standard spells which affect only flesh. This obviously includes spells like traitorous hand, spells which animate corpses, healing magics, etc., but less obviously includes *sense Nightspawn* (because *Nightspawn* are, basically, made of flesh), *death trance*, *climb*, *levitation* (but only if cast at fleshy targets, not inanimate objects), *ritual: call creature of light*, *breathe without air*, *impervious to fire* (except that only the target and fleshy objects like leather jackets are so protected), *invisibility spells* (although again, possessions and clothes are not affected), etc.

Note that almost all of the new spells below are Ritual spells. In most cases the **Fleshsculptor's** Rituals are surgical affairs in the style of Doctor Frankenstein, stitching or *melding* old bits of body together. This means that the target subjects of such spells must be placid (probably sedated or restrained) or willing victims, and the caster must have a selection of suitable tools to assist him or her in the magic.

Fleshsculptor Spells

Alphabetical List of Fleshsculptor Magic by Level

Level One

Destroy Dead Flesh (1-6)
Preserve Living Flesh (2)
Reanimate Flesh (2)
Sense Life Essence (2)

Level Two

Disfigure **Flesh/Skin** (10 or 50)
Fuse Bones (4)
Replace Flesh (5)
See Through Lifeless Eyes (4)

Level Three

Sculpt Flesh (8 or 60)
See Health (6)

Skin Rash (10)

Level Four

Alter **Flesh/Skin** (12-20)
Crawling Flesh (15)
Elongated Appendage (15 or 30)
Heal Living Flesh (10)

Level Five

Heal Living Bone (15)
Paralysis (12)
Spoil Meat (10)
Summon Tattoo (10 or 30)

Level Six

Open Living Flesh (25)
Restore Living Flesh (35)

Level Seven

Remove Skin (30)
Remove Tumor (35)
Replace Limb (30+)

Level Eight

Meld Living Flesh & Bone (60+)
Sculpt Senses (40)

Level Nine

Absorb Object (50)
Remove Living Bone (60)

Level Ten

Create Living Tattoo (70)
Living Hell — Temporary (80)

Level Eleven

Age (50)
Destroy Undead Flesh (80)

Level Twelve

Total Replacement (190)

Level Thirteen

Living Hell — Permanent (180)

Level Fourteen

Embodiment (200)
Mindsculpt (250)

Level Fifteen

Reconstructive Restoration (550)

LEVEL ONE

Destroy Dead Flesh

Range: 10 feet (3 meters)

Duration: Permanent (see below).

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: One per 100lbs (45 kg) of **target's** weight.

Fundamentally the same as the sorcerer's spell, which utterly destroys the dead flesh of one carcass or corpse, up to 600 lbs (270 kg) in weight. The flesh smolders for several minutes (taking one minute per 100 lbs/45 kg), crumbling into a black ashen residue which then evaporates. Very handy for destroying the evidence of fights and murders, or for covering up the destructions of supernatural creatures. Has no effect upon magically animated or otherwise "undead" flesh. Casting the spell requires the expenditure of 1 P.P.E. per 100 lbs (45 kg) or part thereof of the target's weight: usually costing 2-3 P.P.E. for most humans.

Preserve Living Flesh

Range: Touch

Duration: 1D4 weeks per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 2

A spell that will keep living **skin/flesh/tissue** (including small organs like eyes, liver, spleen, etc.) alive for weeks. The flesh can be placed in a container or left out in the open air (though the latter is more vulnerable to accidental damage or theft).

Reanimate Flesh

Range: Touch

Duration: One hour per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 2

Same as the **Sorcerer/Wizard** spell, only longer duration and less P.P.E. cost.

Sense Life Essence

Range: 5 feet (1.5 m) per level of experience.

Duration: One minute.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 2

A spell that enables the Fleshsculptor to sense the presence of life in an individual who may otherwise appear dead (coma, death trance), or locate the living (even a worm buried in the soil) where none seems to exist. This spell can also sense the presence of a possessing entity, as well other entities, fragmented life essences, invisible spirits and Astral beings. With concentration and the expenditure of another 2 P.P.E., the character can see these life essences either as an aura or as the energy beings/people/creatures they are.

LEVEL TWO

Fuse Bones

Range: Touch

Duration: The ability to fuse bones lasts for five minutes per level of experience. The fusion (e.g. sticking bones together) is permanent.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 4

A spell that enables the Fleshsculptor to magically fuse or join bones from the dead as **components/pieces** to build strange constructs, bone sculptures/works of art, bone charms and jewelry, weapons, and so on. **Note:** This spell does not work on the bones of living creatures.

Replace Flesh

Range: Touch

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 5

This spell allows a Fleshsculptor to replace or add a small amount of flesh to repair damaged or lost (through cuts or burns) areas of skin. Restores 1D4 S.D.C.

See Through Lifeless Eyes

Range: 5 feet (1.5 m) or closer — line of sight.

Duration: Instant

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 4

This spell allows the caster to look into the eyes of any dead person, animal, or creature, and to see reflected in their pupils the last image they saw. This is a frozen image, like a photograph. The spell also allows the caster to look into the eyes of those in a coma in the same way (seeing the image that they saw as they slipped into unconsciousness), and to see the current thoughts and concerns of someone in a trance. In each case, this is done by staring into their eyes.

Disfigure Flesh/Skin

Range: Touch

Duration: 1D4 days per level of experience.

Saving Throw: Standard

P.P.E.: 10 temporary disfigurement, 50 permanent.

The touch of the **Fleshsculptor** over an area the size of a human head or the length of a limb (arm or leg) will cause that area of flesh to become disfigured in one of the following ways (spell caster's choice): Covered in red, white and black pimples or acne scars; discolored blotches (lighter or darker than natural skin); strangely lumpy or scaly; scarred; aged with heavy wrinkles (looks 90 years old); or flaky patches of skin that resemble scabs. In any case, the P.B. attribute of the victim is reduced by half.

LEVEL THREE



Sculpt Flesh

Range: Touch

Duration: The ability to mold flesh lasts for five minutes per level of experience. A temporary change of flesh on the subject lasts six hours per level of the **Fleshsculptor**, or can be made permanent.

Saving Throw: None, unless the magic is being used against the character's will, then a standard save is appropriate.

P.P.E.: 8 temporary or 60 P.P.E. to make permanent.

This magic enables the **Fleshsculptor** to push, move and change living or dead flesh as if he were working clay! This magic can be used to change a person's features to look like a different person or to look alien, monstrous or grotesque. It is especially useful in creating impersonations, tormenting captives by disfiguring their face, and so on. **Note:** There is no difficulty *changing* a subject's features with this magic, but to make an individual look exactly like another person requires both the skills *disguise* and *art: sculpt*. A **Fleshsculptor** can make the change permanent by expending 60 P.P.E. (recovers as usual; it is not permanently depleted from the mage's permanent P.P.E. base like other spells).

See Health

Range: 5 feet per level of experience.

Duration: Instant

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 6

The caster can "see" the general health of one lump of flesh (e.g. a tissue sample or an entire person, animal, etc.). If it is alive, **s/he** can tell how healthy it is, whether any spells, powers or psychic effects are currently causing it pain or physical inconvenience (but cannot identify the nature of the spell, psionics, or other power), and whether any major problems afflict it (e.g. tumors, infected wounds, poison).

If the lump of flesh is dead (e.g. a corpse or joint of meat), the caster can see how long the flesh has been dead (establishing time of death to within an hour), the level of decay, the presence of disease, whether maggots have infested it, and similar. The spell also allows the mage to tell if a body or area of meat is magically animated or undead, or possessed in any way.

Skin Rash

Range: Touch

Duration: 1D4 days per level of experience.

Saving Throw: Standard

P.P.E.: 10

The spell caster can create a rash by touch. The rash covers one entire limb (**face/head**, hand, arm, etc.) and is unsightly. It also itches or burns, and is a constant irritant and distraction. **Penalties** of those afflicted are -2 on initiative, -1 on all combat bonuses, -10% on skill performance, and reduce P.B. attribute by 20%. Make-up will not conceal the rash and only makes it itch worse.

LEVEL FOUR

Alter Flesh/Skin

Range: Touch

Duration: One day per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None if wanted, standard if an attack meant to harm.

P.P.E.: 12-20

The touch of the **Fleshsculptor** can give ordinary skin a different look and texture. This spell affects the entire body, with the following results; it is usually cast to disfigure and hurt people, even though it offers additional S.D.C. protection.

Paper thin and semi-transparent: Light colored and so thin that every vein (blue in color) can be seen under the skin. Reduce S.D.C. and P.B. by one third. Costs 12 P.P.E.

White and soft: The skin is unusually light, almost white, with only a hint of color. It is sensitive to light and is easily sunburned and bruised. Reduce S.D.C. and P.B. by half. Costs 15 P.P.E.

Firm, cold and scaly: Like a snake with tight, firm scales; cool to the touch. Adds 3D6 to **S.D.C.**; reduces P.B. by half. Costs 12 P.P.E.

Saggy, rough and scaly: Like an iguana. Adds 3D4 to **S.D.C.**; reduces P.B. by one third. Costs 12 P.P.E.

Thick, rough and wrinkled: Has the look of tree bark. Adds 3D6 S.D.C.; reduce P.B. and Spd attributes by one third. Costs 14 P.P.E.

Thick, lumpy and scaly: Like a crocodile. Adds 3D6+6 to **S.D.C.**, but reduces P.B. by half. Costs 16 P.P.E.

Thick, tough hide: Like that of a rhinoceros or hippo! Adds 1D4x10 to **S.D.C.**, but reduce P.B. and Spd attributes by half. Costs 20 P.P.E.

Crawling Flesh

Range: Touch or 5 feet (1.5 meters) per level of experience.

Duration: One hour per level of experience.

Saving Throw: Standard, but -2 to save.

P.P.E.: 15

An impressive and eerie spell that makes the skin of its victim undulate and move as if something is percolating or crawling underneath it. The effect covers the entire body and is quite horrific, although painless. **Penalties:** The victim has a horror factor of 14 (scaring most people who see **him/her**), loses some sensation of touch, is incredibly distracted: -6 on initiative, -25% on skill performance, reduce all combat bonuses by half and P.B. attribute by half. Worse, those afflicted for more than **five** hours can be driven crazy by the constant crawling sensation (01-50% chance of getting a phobia; typically a fear of crawling things like worms or other squirming or burrowing insects, snakes, or of **Fleshsculptors**).

Elongated Appendage

Range: Touch

Duration: One hour per level of experience or one day per level of experience for double the P.P.E.

Saving Throw: None, unless the spell is being used against the character's will, then standard.

P.P.E.: 15 or 30.

The spell caster can make one pair of limbs (fingers, hands, arms, or legs) twice as long as normal and still function as normal. Likewise, this spell can be made to stretch a person's neck or face.

Heal Living Flesh

Range: Touch

Duration: Instant and permanent.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 10

The **Fleshsculptor** can stop bleeding, heal bruises, and cause wounds to close and heal without scarring; restores 2D6 hit points and S.D.C. Also see *Restore Living Flesh*; 6th level.

This spell can also be used to painlessly remove boils and pimples and cure nonmagical skin rashes.

LEVEL FIVE

Heal Living Bone

Range: Touch

Duration: Instant and permanent.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 15

With the touch of his hands and concentration, the **Fleshsculptor** can magically heal broken, fractured and even splintered bones in a matter of minutes! Restores 3D6 hit points and S.D.C. points.

Paralysis

Range: Touch or 30 feet (9 m)

Duration: The effect lasts one minute (4 melees) per level of experience.



Saving Throw: Standard

P.P.E.: 12

This magic attack temporarily paralyzes a part of its victim's body, immobilizing that particular limb. A paralyzed hand means that the person cannot pick up or hold objects, write, or use the hand in any way. A paralyzed arm means the limb dangles uselessly at the person's side. A paralyzed leg will make standing difficult and movement almost impossible, reduce speed by 90%, and -2 to parry and dodge. **Note:** The incantation will paralyze only one limb per each invoking of the magic. Internal organs cannot be affected, so the mage can't paralyze a heart, lung, etc. **Note:** Paralysis cannot affect people inside a vehicle or body armor.

Spoil Meat

Range: Touch or 3 feet (0.9 m).

Duration: Instant

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 10

In this case, the mage can instantly spoil/rot all types of dead/processed meats (beef, pork, chicken, fish, etc.), affecting 50 pounds (22 kg) of flesh. The spoiled food is inedible. Anybody who forces themselves to eat the horrible tasting meat will get sick with stomach cramps and diarrhea. Penalties: -2 on initiative, -1 to strike, parry and dodge. **Note:** This spell has no effect on living flesh/creatures.

Summon Tattoo

Range: Touch

Duration: 2D4 weeks per level of experience or permanent.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 10 temporary, or 30 to make permanent.

This spell enables the spell caster to instantly and painlessly create a tattoo on the skin by placing his/her hand over the area to be marked and concentrating for one minute. The mage must imagine the image in his/her mind, and for best results, s/he should stare at a drawing or photograph of the desired image (animal, graphic design, cartoon, logo, etc.).

LEVEL SIX

Open Living Flesh

Range: Touch

Duration: Two minutes per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None, unless the subject resists, then standard.

P.P.E.: 25

The Fleshsculptor can make flesh/skin open as if cut by a knife and invisible hands spread it open. The mage can also cause muscle to spread apart with a touch of his finger. Note that none of this hurts, unless the mage physically grabs, pulls, strikes, cuts or stabs a muscle, bone or internal organ with the deliberate intention to inflict pain and/or cause injury. This spell is typically used in pain free (or pain reduced) surgery. The muscles resume their normal shape and the skin closes at will or at the end of the spell without leaving any scarring.

Restore Living Flesh

Range: Touch

Duration: Instant and permanent.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 35

The Fleshsculptor can restore flesh (skin and muscle) that has been damaged from acne, fire/burns, disease, poison, injury or torture by erasing scars and blemishes, and restoring the flesh to its natural health and vitality. It can erase tattoos too. The healing is done by the

Fleshsculptor working it with his hands, rubbing and massaging the areas of the body to be restored and focusing the magical energy for the desired effect.

It can even repair/restore a diseased or injured heart, which is a muscle after all. Likewise, it can close open wounds (the result of bullet wounds, stabbings, cuts, etc.) and restores up to 4D6 hit points and S.D.C. Also see *Meld Living Flesh & Bone*; 8th level)

If the flesh is diseased, e.g. plagued by cancer or a disease that ravages the muscles or tissue (not bones), the mage can temporarily restore the flesh, but the disease will remain and slowly begin to ravage the healed flesh again. However, this magic will restore the person to complete and total health for 2D4 months, plus there is a 01-40% chance the disease will remain in remission for an additional 4D4 months; roll percentile dice. If a 01-03 is rolled, the healing is permanent! However, in most cases the disease resurfaces within 6-24 months.

It can also be used to cure *magical* disfigurement, skin rashes, elongation, flesh sculpting, and remove magically attached appendages placed against one's will by another Fleshsculptor, unless they are permanent. In all cases, the end result is healthy, blemish free flesh/skin and muscles.

Note: In the alternative, this spell can be used on spoiled and/or rotting meat to make it fresh and edible.

LEVEL SEVEN



Remove Skin

Range: Touch

Duration: Instant and permanent.

Saving Throw: Standard, but only if the magic healing is unwanted.

P.P.E.: 30

The mage can magically remove a character's skin either by peeling it away in 2-4 large pieces or in one long piece! The procedure is painless (though horrifying) and the magic enables the person or animal to live and function without his skin. This reveals all the muscles, cartilage and goo under the skin and creates a horror factor of 17! The skinless person can function normally, but his or her S.D.C. is reduced by half and the sense of touch is diminished by about half normal. **Note:** The *replace flesh* spell can be used to completely recover the character with perfectly healthy and scar free skin.

Remove Tumor

Range: Touch

Duration: Instant and permanent.

Saving Throw: Standard, but only if the magic healing is unwanted.

P.P.E.: 35

The mage can magically sense and remove one tumor from anywhere in the body except the brain. Any benefit that comes from its removal will be noticeable within 24 hours

Replace Limb (Ritual)

Range: Touch

Duration: 2D6 weeks or permanent.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 30 temporary. To make permanent, either 325 P.P.E. must be expended, or 30 P.P.E. permanently sacrificed by the spell caster.

This spell is similar to the *Meld Living Flesh and Bone* (8th level) spell in that the spell caster can *replace* an appendage such as an entire hand, arm or leg. In this case, the donor limb must come from the same species and no extra limbs are possible. The attached limb is instantly and completely healed without pain and fully functional! However, it retains the appearance of the donor, so it may have different skin color or tone, different features, hair color, shape, and even length. If not permanent, the limb will eventually wither and rot. To keep the "replacement" for a longer period, the spell must be "recharged. No ritual or new surgery is required, but the full P.P.E. amount invested must be renewed. To do this, the original spell caster or another **Fleshsculptor** who knows the spell must touch the area and imbue it with 30 P.P.E. This will extend it for another 2D6 weeks. If the magic energy is not replenished before the spell duration expires, then the appendage will cease to function, die, slowly rot and (unless swiftly removed) infect the poor recipient. This infection is, effectively, gangrene, and is fatal if not treated.

LEVEL EIGHT

Meld Living Flesh & Bone

Range: Touch

Duration: 1D6 weeks or permanent.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 60 per each additional appendage or transplant. To make permanent, the spell caster must either use 650 P.P.E. or *permanently* sacrifice the 60 P.P.E. (can never be recovered even if the recipient **dies**)!

FIRST, this spell may be used to replace lost body parts, either parts lost through accident or illness, or parts deliberately removed. For example, to give a blind man another's eyes; to graft on a lion's paw in place of a hand; etc.

SECOND, the spell may be used to replace damaged flesh or skin (e.g. as skin grafts), effectively returning 4D6 hit points to the victim, without scarring.

THIRD, the spell can be used in conjunction with surgery to implant a new internal organ, including an animal organ of roughly equivalent size, into a human! **Note:** In all cases, the organ, flesh or limb being

magically *melded* or *grafted* to the subject, is automatically accepted by the body without any fear of rejection or other complications — it is magically transformed to be an exact match and magically grafted on.

FOURTH, transplant an entire head (with its brain, etc.) from one body to another (human or animal), and retain the original character's personality, mind and essence. This must be done within 20 minutes after decapitation or the subject dies — the sooner the transplant can be done, the better.

FIFTH, the spell may be used to add *extra* body parts to any living creature, from any living (or recently dead and preserved) creature. This range of strange amalgamation can include almost anything, an extra hand protruding from an elbow, an extra hand and arm attached at the shoulder, a mouth in the place of a navel, horns on the head, a scorpion's stinger in the palm of the hand, etc.

Note: Any human, animal, or creature's body part may be added to any other, creating nasty mutant hybrids. Unusual parts keep or confer their usual powers to the recipient, so that a wolf's eyes allow the recipient to see much better in dim light or near-darkness, and claws typically add 1D6 to hand to hand damage, but are often pretty obvious alterations (a claw will always look like a claw, inhuman jaws will always look **inhuman**), and may have disadvantages (canines eyes cannot distinguish colors well, and claws cannot be used to fire a gun or operate a computer).

Furthermore, the alien body parts retain some characteristics of their original owners. So, someone with a **wolf's** jaws will salivate at the sight of fresh meat or defenseless animals; a woman who has the eyes of a wanton man will find that her eyes keep staring at attractive young women; etc.

The spell may be cast permanently by sacrificing the P.P.E. spent permanently. After that, the new flesh is effectively a part of the body.

Alternatively, the spell may be cast in such a way that it will last only 1D6 weeks (the G.M. should roll, keeping the result secret from the character with the appendages; the spell caster has no idea exactly how long each will last). To keep the "additions" for a longer period the spell must be "recharged. No ritual or new surgery is required, but the full P.P.E. amount invested must be renewed. To do this, the original spell caster or another **Fleshsculptor** who knows the spell must touch the area and imbue it with 50 P.P.E. If the magic energy is not replenished before the spell duration expires, then the new flesh will cease to function and die, slowly rot and (unless swiftly removed) infect the poor recipient. This infection is, **effectively**, gangrene, and is fatal if not treated.

Limitations: 1. Although this impressive **Fleshsculptor** spell generally crosses most species lines, enabling **him/her** to graft the parts of insects, fish, reptiles, birds, and animals to humans, and vice versa, the body parts of *supernatural* beings CANNOT be attached to mere mortals (including **Nightbane**). However, body parts from one (or several) supernatural being can be attached to other supernatural beings.

2. The body parts to be attached must be from living donors or the recently deceased (within three hours from the moment of death). The only exceptions are those *preserved* by magic or science.

Note: This spell can also be used to remove/negate/erase magical skin disfigurement, rashes, and extra appendages or features magically melded onto an individual.

Sculpt Senses

Range: Touch

Duration: Instant and permanent.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 40

The **Fleshsculptor** can either shut off any *one* sense (including the psionic 6th sense!) or make any one sense hyper-sensitive (hears every sound, tastes or odors are overpowering, etc.). Turning a sense off has pretty obvious effects: blind, deaf, mute, no feeling from touch, cannot

taste, or an inability to use psionic powers (they're still there, they just can't be found and used). All obviously impair the victim.

Making a sense hyper-sensitive is not only distracting and confusing, but can be painful. Hyper-sensitivity of the five senses will inflict penalties of -4 on initiative, -4 on perception rolls, and reduce combat bonuses and skill performance by half. Hyper-sensitive psionic abilities will mean too much sensory information, so that the data sought is lost in a blur of sensations, sights, thoughts or sounds, or that the power used lashes out uncontrollably, hitting anybody nearby and or accidentally inflicting double damage. In addition, the use of hyper-accentuated psionics is so disorienting that initiative and perception are completely lost and the psychic suffers 1D6 points of damage every time *s/he* uses an ability.

LEVEL NINE

Absorb Object

Range: Self

Duration: Indefinite.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 50

This spell allows the **Fleshsculptor** to absorb any object into his or her own flesh, subject to constraints of size: so, a dagger may be absorbed into the person's forearm, or a handgun may be drawn into *his/her* stomach, but there is no part of the body large enough to absorb and contain a sword, rifle, backpack, vehicle, or so on. There is also a 12 lb (5.4 kg) total, maximum weight limit.

The **Fleshsculptor's** body can safely contain any inanimate object (even sharp items, like razor blades) or hazardous substances (like toxic powders). In theory, even living creatures may be absorbed. However, moving objects will cause damage to the **Fleshsculptor**, and explosions and animal attacks from *inside* the **Fleshsculptor** cause triple damage direct to hit points (ignoring S.D.C.).

The **Fleshsculptor** may disgorge an absorbed object at any time. Disgorge takes one full melee round, but costs no P.P.E.

Remove Living Bone

Range: Touch

Duration: Indefinite

Saving Throw: Standard, but -2.

P.P.E.: 60

The spell enables the mage to pass his hands through flesh (without leaving a scar) to remove living bone! The action is not painful but can be used to debilitating effect — leaving a mass of flabby flesh and muscle for a lower leg or forearm. Often used to torture and intimidate. **Note:** The skull and spine cannot be removed (nor can muscles, cartilage, flesh or internal organs). The bone can be restored/replaced if it is done within 30 minutes or if the bone(s) are magically preserved.

LEVEL TEN

Create Living Tattoo

Range: Touch

Duration: 2 minutes (8 melees) per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 70

This spell allows the spell caster to conjure forth a physical animal or object from an image tattooed onto a **character's** body. So, if the person has a tattoo of a scorpion, then a magical scorpion crawls out of the **person's** flesh. If there is a tattoo of a dagger, then a dagger rips its way out of the flesh.

When the spell is cast, the flesh heaves, bulges, and rips, the tattoo becomes three dimensional and pulls itself free of the victim's body, leaving a great gaping gash in his or her flesh. The process is very painful, and causes hit point loss (1D6 hit points are lost if a small tattoo is "summoned," like a scorpion which covers only a few square inches of flesh, up to 6D6 for a huge tattoo, like a charging leopard, which might cover the target's entire back).

Once the tattoo has been summoned, it exists as a real object or animal for the duration of the spell. If an animal, it obeys the desires and mental commands of the caster; if an object, it behaves exactly as a normal object of that type would behave. Only tattoos of complex items (like firearms), and inherently magical objects (like **Nightlands** denizens) cannot be summoned from tattoos.

If the summoned tattoo is placed back against the target's body before the spell expires, then it molds back into his or her flesh. This allows the recipient to recover lost hit points. If the spell expires before the tattoo is returned to its host, then the tattoo crumbles into a pile of shredded skin, the original tattoo picture reappearing on the target's body as the gashed skin heals over, but lost hit points are not recovered.

Living Hell — Temporary

Range: Touch

Duration: One day

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 80

The **Fleshsculptor** may concentrate the doubled P.P.E. from a person at the moment of death, along with his own, to magically keep the head alive! The head remains alive and contains the character's mind and life essence! Of course, the brain must be undamaged (e.g. if the unfortunate had his brains blown out by a high-powered rifle, then there isn't enough of the head left). The head can then be removed from the body without ill effect. The subject (victim?) remains conscious, able to hear and look around, and can mouth speech, but once the head has been removed, or the rest of the body has died, *s/he* cannot create any sounds since the lungs and vocal chords no longer function.

The head created through a **Living Hell** spell has hit points equal to the original P.E. of the body, plus 1D6 S.D.C. When the spell duration expires, the person trapped in the head dies.

This spell can be a useful temporary measure, e.g. to keep the person alive until a *Total Replacement* (12th level spell) can be performed or it is, transplanted to a new, functioning body (see *Meld Living Flesh and Bone*, 8th level spell).

LEVEL ELEVEN

Age

Range: Touch or 30 feet (9 m).

Duration: Three melee rounds per level of experience.

Saving Throw: Standard

P.P.E.: 50

This spell magically transforms its victim, **humanoid** or animal, to the *limit* of their natural age! Only supernatural beings and creatures of magic, and dragons are not affected by this spell. The aged person will suffer the following:

-4 on initiative

-5 to strike

-5 to dodge/parry

-4 to damage

Reduce P.S. P.P., P.E., P.B. and Speed attributes by half!

Reduce attacks per melee round and combat bonuses also by half.

Destroy Undead Flesh

Range: 60 feet (18.2 meters).

Duration: One melee round per level of experience.

Saving Throw: Standard, each melee round.

P.P.E.: 80

This spell works exactly like *Destroy Dead Flesh*, causing a carcass of up to 600 lbs (270 kg) in weight to smolder, crumble and evaporate. The spell, however, also works on undead flesh. So the spell inflicts 1D6x10 damage per melee round on the undead (vampires, zombies, animated corpses, etc.). The target takes damage each melee round until either it saves vs the spell (roll once per round) or the spell ends. If the spell is still active when the target "dies", all of its flesh is then destroyed the following round by the magic.

LEVEL TWELVE

Total Replacement (Ritual)

Range: Touch

Duration: 1D6 weeks per level of experience or permanent.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 190

The most extreme extension of the Replace Flesh spell that enables the spell caster to replace as much of a body as *s/he* requires, up to and including giving a whole new body by transplanting the **person's** brain! Under this situation, the physical attributes, hit points and S.D.C. of the *new* body are half those of the original, but all mental faculties, memory, P.P.E., I.S.P. (if any) and personality are unchanged. The **spell/flesh** body may be made permanent if the mage permanently sacrifices the P.P.E. from his or her permanent P.P.E. base. If not cast permanently, the recipient of the new flesh dies as soon as the spell duration ends.

If used for healing purposes — to provide huge swathes of flesh grafts, or to regenerate large amounts of lost muscle, for example — the spell completely replenishes the target's hit points and natural S.D.C. and is automatically permanent without any permanent loss of P.P.E.; it's only when an entire body is created that the mystical construct is not permanent. For this purpose, the spell can regenerate internal organs (except for the heart and brain), and restore up to one third of the entire body! However, if 20-33% of the body requires magical "replacement," the character will permanently lose an equal amount of his hit points. Also see *Meld Living Flesh and Bone* (8th level) for other impressive feats of restoration.

LEVEL THIRTEEN

Living Hell — Permanent (Ritual)

Range: Touch

Duration: Indefinite

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 180

The **Fleshsculptor** may concentrate the doubled P.P.E. from a person at the moment of death, along with his own, to magically keep the head alive indefinitely! This requires that most of the head and brain are undamaged.

Through this ritual, the **Fleshsculptor** preserves the head so that it will not rot, seals the open wound where the head has been removed, and permanently seals the victim's life essence into their head. The head remains conscious, able to hear and look around, and can mouth speech. It needs neither air nor food, nor liquid. The spell ends only when the head is destroyed (i.e. its hit points, equal to its original P.E., plus 3D6 S.D.C., are exhausted).

The target of the spell is not likely to thank the **Fleshsculptor** for "saving" it — for damning it to this fate — and the caster should not expect favors, praise or aid for **his/her** trouble. This spell can be a useful temporary measure, e.g. to keep the person alive until a *Total Replacement* can be performed. Note that a head saved via permanent *Living Hell* cannot be attached to a new body via a *Meld Living Flesh and Bone* spell.

LEVEL FOURTEEN

Embodiment (Ritual)

Range: Touch

Duration: One day per level of experience.

Saving Throw: Standard even if unconscious or comatose; psychics and **Fleshsculptors** are +4 to save against this lethal attack.

P.P.E.: 200

Note: Characters of a good or unprincipled alignment will *not* use this spell.

In this ritual, the **Fleshsculptor** climbs into the flesh of another living creature or person, hiding his or her own body within this new shell. The spell caster thereafter wears the body of the host, but does not gain any mental abilities, skills, memories, or mannerisms. The "host" flesh must be the same size or larger than the caster, must be incapacitated (unconscious or in a coma) for the duration of the ritual, and inevitably *dies* as a result of the spell being cast. The caster may shed this new skin at any time (taking one full melee, in which no other actions may be performed, to rip his or her way out of this new **flesh**), and at the end of the spell's duration, the new body falls away to reveal the caster beneath.

Mindsculpt (Ritual)

Range: Touch

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: Standard

P.P.E.: 250

This is a gruesome version of brain surgery, using a blunt knife and a hammer in most versions of the spell. The caster removes the top of the subject's head and batters or slices away at the grey matter inside. The victim may make a standard saving throw to resist the effects of the spell, and must roll less than P.E. on 1D20 to avoid dying during the ritual. If the target survives and fails to save, then the caster may make any major, crass alterations desired to the victim's psyche.

As examples, the caster may remove whole chunks of the victim's memory (stretches of time no less than one week in length); remove any skill(s) or knowledge that the person has; reduce (to one if desired) the victim's I.Q.; remove emotions (like the ability to love), or mental abilities (such as the ability to count, reason, use psionic powers, etc.); or implant primary desires and goals (e.g. overriding loyalty to the caster).

The caster may NOT selectively modify elements of the person's memory, increase skill percentages or I.Q. scores, change the victim's alignment, or make complex changes to the person's preferences.

LEVEL FIFTEEN

Reconstructive Restoration (Ritual)

Range: Touch

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 550

This spell allows the **Fleshsculptor** to conduct major magical surgery on any one person, with the intention of curing all magical and mundane ills. The ritual takes at least twelve hours to perform, and allows the caster to surgically "remove" all magics which affect the person's body or mind, all illnesses or diseases from which s/he is suffering, cure all insanities, etc., placing the offending afflictions in jars for future inspection if required. This allows the caster to permanently *cure* any disease (cancer, MS, Aids, **Parkinson's** Disease, etc.), and counteract spells such as **Mindsulpt**. It does not allow the caster to selectively "improve" upon the subject's natural body or mind, and so cannot increase attributes, change alignment, add psionics, etc.

The stress of even this amazingly restorative magic causes the following penalties: permanently reduce M.E. and P.P.E. by one point. If psionic, reduce **I.S.P.** by 10%

Mirror Magic

In the following section you will find new spells for the **Mirrormage**. In addition to these spells, remember that the **Mirrormage** may also cast the following spells:

From this book:

Soul In A Bottle (using a mirror instead of a bottle)
Open Pathway
Psychic Drain (using a mirror as a focus)
See Through Lifeless Eyes

From Between the Shadows™:

Astral Portal
Dream Window (using a mirror for the window)
Dream Senses (through a mirror)
Observe Dream (via a mirror placed close to the sleeping person)

From the Nightbane™ RPG:

Banishment
Close Rift
Detect Concealment
Dimension Portal
Locate (allowing the caster to see the general area reflected in a mirror)
Mystic Alarm (if the object Alarmed is in view of a mirror)
Nightlands Passage
Nightland Portal (starting from a large mirror)
Oracle (visions seen in a mirror or reflective surface)
Second Sight (by looking into a mirror)
See Aura
See The Invisible
Sense Evil
Sense Magic
Sense Nightbane
Sense P.P.E.
Summon Nightlord Avatar
Summon Nightlord
Ritual: Call Creature of Light
Ritual: Call Nightlands Denizens
Ritual: Call Nightlord
Talisman (using a mirror)
Teleport: Lesser (using a mirror to send the object through)
Teleport: Superior (accomplished by stepping through a large mirror)

Mirrormagic Spells

By Kevin Hassall and Kevin Siembieda

Alphabetical list of Mirrormage Spells & Rituals by Level

Note: The same or similar spell used by a different spell casting O.C.C. (if they could even figure it out) costs twice as much P.P.E.! The P.P.E. numbers listed are specifically for **Mirrormages**.

Level One

Manipulate Reflection (4)
Mirror Calling (4)

Level Two

Aura Mirror (6)
Reflect Light (5)

Level Three

Dorian's Mirror (10)
Lens of True Sight (12)

Level Four

Fear Mirror (12)
Scrying Mirror: Lesser (20)

Level Five

Draw Upon the Mirror Wall (10)
Hidden Reflection (25)

Level Six

Opening the **Mirrorwall** (40)

Level Seven

Amend Reflection (50)

Level Eight

Steal Reflection (50)

Level Nine

Mirror Divination (70)

Level Ten

Man in the Mirror (120)

Level Twelve

Scrying Mirror: Greater (90)
Walking the **Mirrorwall**: Lesser (80)

Level Fourteen

Walking the **Mirrorwall**: Greater (140)

Level Fifteen

Castle of Oblivion (300/15 permanent)

LEVEL ONE

Manipulate Reflection

Range: 20 feet (6 meters).

Duration: One day per level of experience.

Saving Throw: Standard

P.P.E.: 4

The **Mirrormage** may cast this spell either on a person (or creature), or on a mirror or reflective surface.

If cast on a person (who may attempt to save), all reflections cast by that person for the duration of the spell are subtly altered. So, the enchanted person may cast a reflection which has blood-red eyes, a scar, a sneer, blood stains on **his/her** hands or lips, a sickly pale (or other color or slightly blemished) color to the skin, seems to have a strange rune on his forehead, etc. The spell cannot be used to prevent someone from casting a reflection, nor to make their reflection look like someone or something else, nor to do anything else so crass, but can be used to incriminate, intimidate, and generally terrify its targets.

When cast upon a mirror or other reflective surface, then all reflections cast in that mirror will be subtly changed as above. This might involve changing the reflections of all people in the mirror so that they all seem more youthful and attractive than they are, or having hints of movements or objects which aren't present in reality appearing in the reflection.

Note: Only those looking into the mirror can see these *strange* (illusory and deliberately false) aberrations.

Mirror Calling

Range: Special

Duration: Half an hour per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 4

The Mirrormage can look into a mirror and call the name of a friend, ally or even an enemy, and be heard through any mirror which that individual may look into. The "call" is limited to the person's name and three additional words, (e.g. "Thorn, help me," or "Collins, I'll get you"). The voice is always recognizable, because the magic can only be used on people the spell caster knows well and only that specific person hears the message even if others are using the mirror at the same time. Of course, the character to whom the message is directed must be looking into a mirror while the message is transmitted, so it is a bit hit and miss (see duration). Once the message is heard, it stops.

LEVEL TWO

Aura Mirror

Range: Cast upon a mirror up to 20 feet (6 meters). Affects all who look into the mirror.

Duration: Half an hour per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 6

For the duration of the spell, all who gaze into the mirror see their aura — typically a rather beautiful and wondrous thing to see. Those who understand and can interpret auras will be able to tell whether the character's aura is strong or weak, healthy or sickly, general level of power/experience (high, medium or low), leaning toward good, selfish or evil, and whether the character is human or inhuman (but not what type of specific creature). **Note:** Those not used to seeing auras (which is most people) will be so intrigued and caught up in looking at the radiant energy that they are -3 on initiative and perception rolls. Snaps out of it as soon as they look away or are drawn to action.

Reflect Light

Range: 20 feet (6 m) per level of experience.

Duration: One melee round per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 5

The mage can expertly use a hand-held mirror to reflect light with great precision and accuracy. This can be used to signal others or to flash light in an opponent's eyes to momentarily blind him: blinded for 4 seconds in which the victim loses one melee action and initiative per each blinding; sunglasses negate the effect and otherwise shielding one's eyes prevents blindness but the character under attack sees all combat bonuses reduced by half.

Each reflection of light in an attempt to blind counts as one **melee action/attack**, but is an automatic successful strike. No damage is inflicted by the light and either sunlight or another light source is necessary.

LEVEL THREE

Dorian's Mirror

Range: Cast upon a mirror up to 20 feet (6 meters). Affects all who look into the mirror.

Duration: Half an hour per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 10

For the duration of the spell, whoever looks in the mirror sees an image reflective of their guilt, regret, and acts of evil. Only the individual character sees this image, even if others are looking into the mirror at the same time (each sees only himself changed). More often, the deeds of the character are reflected in his or her own image, snarling with anger or smiling demonically, with blood caked on the hands. A cruel, bitter face ravaged by the deep lines of a cruel frown, sunken eyes and brutal experience may be etched on the reflected face of an outwardly beautiful woman or handsome man. **Nightbane** will usually see themselves in whatever image they most loathe or regret being, Facade or **Morphus**.

If the character recently betrayed a friend or was responsible for the death of an innocent (intentional or accidental), the blood of that individual may be on **his/her** hands, or the victim may be looming like a ghostly shadow in the background, looking forlorn, angry or sad.

A womanizer may have one to several women hanging on him or weeping or scowling behind him or in the background. In fact, the background may be crowded with such "ghosts" of regret and cruelty.

Note: Not all characters will see themselves as monsters. Those who like themselves and honestly have few regrets may simply look a bit weary, older or sad, while others may look pretty much as they do in real life.

Lens of True Sight

Range: Touch (of thick glass).

Duration: 4 melee rounds (one minute).

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 12

Casting this spell, the **Mirrormage** enchants a thick lens so that when **s/he** looks through it, **s/he** will be able to see all things as they truly are. In other words, so long as the Mirrormage looks through the lens, **s/he** can see invisible creatures, see through illusions and magical disguises, see the true construction of Hollow Men, can tell if a person is undead or possessed, and similar. In the case of **Nightbane** and shape-changers, the lens will **reveal/confirm** whether or not a monstrous character is a **Nightbane**, **werebeast** or other type of shape-changer (but only when they are in **nonhuman** form) but does not reveal the **character's** Facade or true identity; just what their true nature is (**Nightbane**, **Changeling**, **Succubus**, etc.). It will also reveal if a mirror is enchanted or inhabited. **Note:** The lens does not reveal magics, show auras, or allow the magician to see through mundane disguises (false beards, make-up, etc.), only disguises and illusions of a supernatural or magical nature. The lens must be at least half an inch thick, so a heavy glass bottle or the bottom of a chunky glass would be thick enough, but eyeglasses and contact lenses are too thin.

LEVEL FOUR

Fear Mirror

Range: Cast upon a mirror up to 20 feet (6 meters). Affects all who look into the mirror.

Duration: 10 minutes per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 12



For the duration of the spell, whoever looks in the mirror sees an image reflective of their fears and worries. This means a character who fears he or she is getting old **and/or** weak may see a **frail**, skeletal **figure** barely able to stand; a character afraid of defeat may see himself beaten and battered or in chains; a character afraid of the **Nightlords** may see one or more lurking in the shadows (of the mirror image); a character afraid of death may see a reflection of himself as a corpse or with his throat cut or bleeding from a bullet wound in the chest. A character, such as a **Nightbane**, with a secret identity or other dark secret may see it revealed in the reflection (a Nightbane may simply see his or her **Morphus** reflected back) and so on.

The glimpse of what they fear will set the adrenaline rushing and may elicit a "fear response" equal to a horror factor of 14; a momentary fright, and perhaps a bit of insight into themselves.

A character who has a phobia will see **his/her** greatest fear (if bugs, **s/he** may see himself bound by rope or chains and covered in them, or insects infesting wounds or crawling out of his mouth, etc.) The sight will elicit the same fear response as the real thing.

Note: Each person gazing into the mirror only sees what he or she most fears or whatever is the character's current fear, anxiety or worry. The fears of others are not revealed to strangers.

Scrying Mirror: Lesser

Range: 2 miles (3.2 km) per level of experience.

Duration: One minute per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 20

This spell allows a **Mirromage** to look into a mirror or reflective surface, and to see through it as if looking out from behind any other mirror or reflective surface anywhere within range! So, the magician may look into the mirrored sunglasses of the man next to him on the bus in order to see out of the chrome trim on his cooker at home (answering the vital question, "did I leave the oven **on**?"), or may look into a mirror at home in order to see out of the ballroom mirror in that dusty old mansion a mile away.

The only restrictions in the use of the spell are that: **1.** The Mirromage may only look out of mirrors which **s/he** has already seen (**s/he** cannot look out of a mirror which **s/he** has simply heard about, and if the target mirror is not exactly where the mage expects then the spell will not work). **2.** The Mirromage can only view a single sequence of events as they happen, not past or future events, and **s/he** cannot "fast-forward" or skip dull periods. **3.** Only true *mirror* surfaces can be used. Looking into a pane of ordinary glass (even though one can see himself) is not a true mirrored surface and cannot be used. So one cannot spy into an office building or home by magically looking out from the glass of a window or a highly polished, metal plaque or trophy.

Casting this spell as a ritual increases both range and duration tenfold. Takes 20 minutes to perform.

LEVEL FIVE

Draw Upon the Mirrorwall

Range: Self

Duration: Instant

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: Special: 10 P.P.E. the first time, but add **1D6** for each subsequent use within a 12 hour period. Rather quickly, this spell becomes useless or risky.

The Mirromage can draw upon a limited amount of the mystical energy that flows in the Mirrorwall by gazing into a mirror, concentrating and expending 10 P.P.E. of his own. This creates a pinhole to the Mirrorwall in which the character can attempt to draw additional P.P.E. energy to supplement his or her own. This is always a crap shoot as the

amount of energy one can draw into oneself is always random: 5D6 P.P.E. — and one may expend more to cast the spell than s/he gets back in return. Whatever P.P.E. returns to the mage, s/he can hold on to it for five minutes per level of experience. If it's not used in magic before that time elapses, the P.P.E. siphoned from the Mirrorwall disappears.

Note: Frequent use of this spell may tear a hole into the Mirrorwall and/or open a dimensional portal (Too? G.M.'s choice).

Hidden Reflection

Range: Self

Duration: One minute per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 25

The spell caster can literally step into a mirror to **hide!** Even if somebody looks directly into the mirror, the character hidden inside is a subtle part of the background, and barely noticeable unless s/he moves or lunges forward (can only leap out of the mirror, and cannot attack or pull in the person looking in). While in the mirror, the character can see and hear everything as if s/he were standing in front of it, but cannot communicate, attack, or use magic or psionics.

The danger of this spell is that if the mirror is shattered, the character's grasp of reality is also shattered and his or her life essence could be hurled into another plane of existence or destroyed! Roll on the following table when shattered:

01-20 Hurlled into the **Dreamstream**. The physical body is permanently destroyed, and the character's mind and spirit becomes a phantom-like creature who haunts the dreams of others.

21-30 Body, mind and soul are hurled into the Astral Plane. Finding one's way back to the physical plane (without an Astral Guide) is slim to none (01-06% chance). Will perish from starvation and thirst within **4D4** days unless a denizen of the Astral Plane can be convinced to take the character home (at what **price?**). If the physical body dies on the Astral Plane, there is a 01-40% chance of becoming an Astral Being (no physical body; must spend the rest of **his/her** days in the Astral Plane).

31-40 Trapped in a broken shard of the mirror for what seems to be days, but is really only 2D6 hours. Finally, reappears whole and unharmed; roll on the table listed under **61-80**, below, for aftereffects.

41-60 Hurlled into the **Nightlands**. The character is physically and mentally **unharmed**, but is trapped in the homeland of the Nightlords. The only way back is to know how to **Mirrorwalk** (or similar magic) or find somebody to take him or her home (for what **price?**).

61-80 White noise and swirling images seem to last an eternity as the character's body feels as if it's being dissolved into atoms. Suddenly, s/he is standing in front of the shattered mirror **3D4** minutes after it was smashed. S/he is physically whole and unharmed. Roll percentile to determine aftereffects:

01-15 Shaken but okay. Appears standing in front of the shattered mirror.

16-30 Afraid to use mirrors for 1D6 days.

31-55 Afraid to use mirror magic for 2D6 days; mirrors, in general, make the character nervous.

56-75 Afraid the reflection in the mirror is not his own for 4D6 days; avoids mirrors and mirror magic as much as possible.

76-00 From the corner of his or her eye, s/he sees movement in the image of mirror reflections; paranoid for 1D6 days.

81-00 Vomited from the mirror with a thud the instant the mirror is shattered! Suffers 2D6 damage and loses initiative for the first melee round, but is otherwise okay.

Note: The mage inside the mirror can step out at any time, and is forced out when the spell elapses, without negative side effects.

LEVEL SIX

Opening the Mirrorwall

Range: 100 feet (30 meters).

Duration: One melee per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 40

In order to cast this spell, the **Mirrormage** must smash one reasonably large mirror (at least two **feet/60 cm/0.6 m** across). Where the glass shatters, a huge gaping void in space is left. A black abyss roaring with a cold wind (What happens if a character leaps into this void? That's up to the G.M., but expect it to be nasty). By accessing this void — this **breach** in the **Mirrorwall** — the caster may negate any one basic law of reality in the plane or world that s/he is currently in. The range of this effect is the range of the spell.

So, this breach may suspend gravity, or stop combustion (so, no **firearms!**), stop magic from working, suspend the laws of mathematics (jamming computers), etc., for the duration of the spell. Note that this may only be used to temporarily *negate* a phenomenon, not to reverse it or change it in any other way. So, for example, gravity cannot be made to pull upwards. Further, living things cannot be made to stop living, solids cannot be turned to gasses, etc.

At the G.M.'s discretion, the spell may also be used to import a phenomenon from a reality beyond the Mirrorwall. So, for example, if the caster knows of a world where all creatures are automatically able to fly, then that phenomenon could be imported through the breach to the caster's present reality.

LEVEL SEVEN

Amend Reflection (Ritual)

Range: Special (see below)

Duration: Indefinite

Saving Throw: Standard

P.P.E.: 50

This spell is identical to Manipulate Reflection, except that its duration is effectively permanent. It may be used to curse, to mark servants and enemies, or just to create disturbing or intriguing mirrors. In order to cast this spell, either the **Mirrormage** must have the **target/victim** present for the duration of the ritual, or (if the target is a person) the caster must have an object intimately associated with the person (an item of clothing or lock of hair, for example).

LEVEL EIGHT

Steal Reflection

Range: 100 feet (30 meters)

Duration: One week per level of experience.

Saving Throw: Standard

P.P.E.: 50

This spell allows a magician to "steal" any person or creature's reflection, or the reflection of any object up to human-size. This reflection is stored in a specific mirror, which the **Mirrormage** must have in **his/her** possession when the spell is cast.

Consequently, the target of the spell no longer casts a **reflection**, and the **Mirrormage** (or whoever owns the mirror) can see the person at any time (including **clothing**, objects held, book being read, etc., but no sound, sight of those around him, or details of environment or context) regardless of distance!

LEVEL NINE

Mirror Divination

Range: Self

Duration: Instant after a period of mirror gazing.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 70

Similar to the use of the Divination skill described earlier in this book; however, through this magic, the character does not need the skill and a Divination is guaranteed! The mage must peer into a mirror and concentrate. Within 1D4 minutes *s/he*'ll see some sort of an image, from a face (of an enemy, friend, stranger, etc.) to a full vision with moving figures or flashing images that will convey a message or warning about the future (near or distant future). The images will generally reflect one narrow area of concern on the part of the mage, but occasionally the character *may* receive a vision of something else (a G.M.'s tool for sending insight or info, or creating **foreboding/tension**). Such random visions usually reflect an inability to focus one's thoughts, or some important **event/danger** invading one's original thoughts.

LEVEL TEN

Man in the Mirror (Ritual)

Range: Touch

Duration: One month per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 120

Through this spell a **Mirrmage** creates an intelligence within any mirror or reflective surface. The mage determines the appearance, rough personality and knowledge possessed by the intelligence inside the mirror. *One* skill per level of the creator can be given to the "Man in the Mirror"; skill proficiency equal to that of its creator at the time it was created.

Hereafter, whenever anyone looks into the enchanted mirror, they will not see their reflection, but will instead see the visage of this magical force (being?) looking out at them. This magical entity can see out of the mirror, as well as, can hear, smell and speak.

It may be used as an advisor, tormentor or friend. By determining what the entity knows about (it may not know all things the spell caster does not, but may have Lore skills and similar up to the caster's level at the moment of creation), the Mirrmage may create an intelligent force which can give hints and advice to allies and underlings, or simply be a friend or conversational companion. However, because the mirror is *inhabited*, it cannot be used to pierce the mirror wall for any purpose, or by any means. Note, the "Man in the Mirror" can also be used as an intermediary, spy or messenger, although restricted to that one mirror.

LEVEL TWELVE

Scrying Mirror: Greater (Nightlands)

Range: Special

Duration: 2 minute per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 90

As with the Lesser version of this spell, this allows a Mirrmage to look into a mirror or reflective surface, and see through it as if looking out from behind any other mirror or reflective surface. However, in this case, the mage can look through mirrors on Earth at ten times the range of the lesser spell, or through a mirror in an equivalent location in the Nightlands, as well as any mirror in the Nightlands whose location is

known to him! The usual restrictions still apply, however, that the Mirrmage may only look out of mirrors which *s/he* has already seen, and can only view a single sequence of events as they happen.

Casting this spell as a ritual increases duration ten-fold.

Walking The Mirrorwall: Lesser

Range: Special

Duration: One hour

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 80

The Mirrmage may "open" a section of the Mirrorwall, allowing him or her to step in through a mirror and into the Wall. The mage may only take small, portable objects, up to thirty pounds (13.61 kg) in weight. *S/he* may then wander through the Wall at will, looking out of any mirror **anywhere** in any world, and stepping out of the Wall through any mirror.

If the mage spends more than an hour inside the Wall, then the spell expires and there is no longer any magic holding him or her in the Mirrorwall: the unfortunate will fall through whichever mirror *s/he* is standing on, potentially tumbling into any part of the Megaverse — which may be as convenient, dangerous, bizarre, or fatal as the G.M. wishes.

LEVEL FOURTEEN

Walking the Mirrorwall: Greater

Range: Special

Duration: One hour

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 140

The Mirrmage may "open" a section of the Mirrorwall, allowing a group of up to ten people (total weight, including equipment, no more than 2000 **lbs/910** kg) to step through any mirror into the Mirrorwall itself. The group, which must be led by a Mirrmage, may then travel through the inside of the Wall, looking out of any mirror anywhere in any world, and stepping out of the Wall through any mirror.

If the group spends more than an hour inside the Wall, then the spell expires and there is no longer any magic holding them in the Mirrorwall: they will fall through whichever mirror they are standing on, potentially tumbling into any part of any world.

LEVEL FIFTEEN

Castle of Oblivion (Ritual)

Range: Touch

Duration: Indefinite

Saving Throw: Standard if **conscious**, none if victim is unconscious.

P.P.E.: 300, 15 of which is permanently lost.

The ritual enchants a large mirror (at least human-sized) so that it is completely black, reflecting nothing (The mirror itself cannot be accessed from the Mirrorwall. It is, in effect, no longer a mirror). The ritual then takes one human or humanoid target (living, **undead**, dead, or inert), and sucks it through that mirror, to a place outside of time and space — to a Castle of Oblivion, which may exist within the Mirrorwall, or perhaps in some little-known reality beyond it.

Through the mirror, the Castle of Oblivion may appear as a small black cage hanging in a void, or a huge network of echoing halls, or as a desolate plain. Usually, but not always, there is some structure involved, but inevitably the area is uninhabited and inescapable. Time has no meaning here, and watches run at random speeds (or backwards). The sole purpose of the Castle is to hold people or things outside of time and space; an excellent exile for an enemy who cannot be killed, for example, or as a way to dispose of an indestructible magical artifact.

If the black mirror is ever destroyed, however, then the object or prisoner(s) within is set free. While the mirror remains intact, however, a person or object within may only be rescued if an **arcanist** casts a suitable Call, Summon, or similar spell in front of the mirror.

Anyone foolish enough to try to step through the black mirror (with Walk the **Mirrorwall**, or a **spell** which opens a portal of any sort) will find themselves equally trapped within the Castle of Oblivion.



CHAPTER 5: The Shadow league

The Shadowleague is a thoroughly modern organization. Rather than the strict hierarchies or cellular structures of other groups, the Shadowleague is organized on a **nonhierarchical**, horizontal basis. That means that there are no bosses, no people giving orders, just lots of individuals sharing information (or disinformation), seeking advice, and working, often individually, to build up magical power.

Consequently, there are no restrictions on involvement with the Shadowleague. No entry requirements or duties owed to "superiors." Anyone can get involved with the league. And that means anyone: pretentious "occultists," infiltrators from other magical societies and brotherhoods, Astral Lords, National Security Bureau agents (NSB), Guardians, **Nightbanes**, etc.

In a sense, the Shadowleague does not exist. It has no institutions, no officials, and no membership list. However, the Shadowleague does have a large body of people who are to some extent "involved" with its various functions, as described in the following pages. In practice, this is less of an organization, and more like a *web* of interconnected individuals, who share interests and exchange information. For convenience sake, anyone who is involved with the *Shadowboard* or *Free Houses* can be considered a "member" of the League, although they may have no loyalty to the Shadowleague itself and are very likely to be committed members of more formal organizations.

The Shadowboard is a computer "bulletin board" which exists in parallel with the *Internet*, but actually only has an Astral existence (Don't worry about the metaphysics of this. In practice, this means that those with the right "software" — magical computer code on a data disk — can access this board via their personal computers, but those without the right software cannot). The board is run from a **Cybermage's** personal computer, which stores all of the information and messages, and occasionally dumps the whole lot into an Astral adjunct to the internet. Anyone with a computer, modem, and Shadowboard Access software can then access this information, reading notices, picking up messages left for them, and leaving messages for other users.

Getting in Touch

There are a variety of ways to get involved with the Shadowleague. All of them easy ... perhaps, too easy.

1. Internet. Any **Cybermage** surfing the Internet looking for "hidden" sites will soon come across a free piece of computer software which can be downloaded. Called the *Shadowboard Access Kit*, this software claims to allow the user to access a whole new part of the Internet, dedicated entirely to discussions of and information on "enlightened" topics. See The Shadowboard, below.

2. Word of Mouth. News of the League also passes by word of mouth, with sorcerers, occultists, bored teenagers and NSB agents passing on to their associates news of the Shadowleague or copies of the Shadowboard Access software.

3. The Free Houses. The Shadowleague also incorporates a series of Astral retreats called Free Houses. These are like little hotels where people can go for a drink, a meal, or a place to sleep for a few nights. As well as being advertised via the Shadowboard, these retreats can be reached by Astral Travelers and Astral Sorcerers by traveling through the Astral Plane.

4. The National Security Bureau (NSB). Although the NSB sees mortal magicians as a threat, it realizes that it cannot destroy an organization as loose as the League. So, it has decided to make use of the organization for its own purposes, and maintains a number of agents who actually encourage the growth of the League — spreading word via occult groups and informal gatherings.

5. Other Brotherhoods. A number of other magical brotherhoods maintain an interest in the Shadowleague, including *The Seekers*, *The Brotherhood of True Illumination*, *The Lightbringers*, and others. Such groups use the League as a source for finding potential recruits, and may encourage their own members to use the Shadowboard as a source of information and to pass messages to each other. Note that "honest" groups, like the Seekers, are happy to tell their members about any group which may yield valuable information (although they insist that the Seekers must never be identified as a group, and that individuals must not publicly reveal themselves as members of any such organization), while nastier groups, like the True Illumination, want to be able to control the flow of information to their dupes and will only tell selected members about the Shadowleague.

Who Runs the League?

Officially, no one runs the Shadowleague. There is no bureaucracy, no mailing list, no calendar of social occasions —very little that actually requires any running. All the League really consists of is the Shadowboard, some informal "discussion groups," and a few Domains on the Astral Plane, all of which are run by independent individuals for their own reasons.

The Shadowboard is actually run by a Cybermage called **Network**, and his assistant. Network set up the board as a way to contact other Cybermagics. Soon after Dark Day he began developing his computer programming skills in illogical and arcane directions, and reasoned that on a planet of six billion people he wasn't likely to be the only one trying this; so, he set up the board to make contact with others, offering information and a messaging service for free. The whole thing mushroomed from there, and by 2006 he has several thousand "users" accessing the system.

Network (or usually his assistant) checks through all messages and pieces of information left by other users, and (having discarded anything he considers dangerous or "unsuitable") makes the whole lot available through the board. See below for details of exactly what he censors out, but keep in mind that his ability to control the flow of information through the board actually gives him a great deal of power.

Of course, running the board has now turned into a full-time job, and Network and his assistant have to pay for their rent, food, etc. So who pays?

Samuel T. Steward, businessman and petty politician, actually funds the board, paying **Network's** expenses (and a fair bit more) in return for certain privileges (His secret privileges include: being given a copy of every information item and private message which passes across the board, and having the right to demand that certain users have their access rights terminated). Steward's identity is strictly secret. He sends and receives messages through the pseudonym of **The Benefactor**, and occasionally drops hints that he is somehow responsible for the existence of the board, but no one has any idea that he has access to confidential information such as private messages. Messages on the board imply that The Benefactor is a powerful magician who maintains the board (and perhaps "runs" the whole Shadowleague) out of the goodness of his heart, and allegations to the contrary never seem to make it onto the board.

The Free Houses

The half dozen existing Free Houses are run by a loose alliance of Astral Lords and Domains (see the **Beyond the Shadows™** supplement for more details about the Astral Plane) who each have their own reasons for providing refuges for magicians and others from the human world.

Each "Free House" is a sprawling Inn or hotel, set in the mists of the Astral Plane. Each can be accessed from several points on the mortal world, or from the Astral plane itself. It has taken considerable effort to establish each Free House, yet almost no one knows who has gone to all this trouble. Even the staff who run these establishments are too ignorant, too scared, or too well paid to divulge much information to inquisitive guests.

In fact, the prime movers in the Free House movement are the Casino of the Damned (the Astral casino where the foolish may gamble away their souls, described on page 42 of *Between the Shadows*) and the slavers of the Crimson Ship (who sail the Outer Astral Plane, trading captives between dimensions).

The Casino of the Damned sets up Free Houses which just happen to have little gambling games going on in them. Croupiers from the Casino are sent out to run these establishments, running card or dice games where the stakes are merely money and the odds are actually stacked in the favor of the **player(!)**, in order to encourage customers to take the trip to the Casino "where you might win so much more than you could here." Benevolently, the owners can even be "persuaded" to guide inexperienced Astral Travelers through the plane to the Casino.

The Crimson Ship, on the other hand, is always on the lookout for fresh slaves to trade, and magicians fetch a good price in some realms (from the **Nightlords**, for example). They have also been known to kidnap specific individuals if paid enough. Preying on the desperate wretches who are driven to hide out in these Inns is easy for the pirates (the key is, don't stay too alone). They are always careful not to take people who might be missed: they don't want the Free Houses to get a bad reputation.

If G.M.s don't want to tie the Free Houses in to the politics of the Astral Plane, then there are other reasons why supernatural beings might set up individual refuges for mortal or **Nightbane** magicians and travelers. Consider, for example, that some sort of **vampiric** predator (who has to drink souls or eat the flesh of supernatural creatures to survive) might want to lure desperate magical individuals to an isolated retreat. Or perhaps the Guardians might set up a Free House as a refuge for the Lightbringers or to gather allies. Or perhaps a malevolent sorcerer might try to build a small army of loyal magicians by brainwashing guests at his Free House, or by replacing them with duplicates in order to spread disinformation or to manipulate these victims' allies.

Not all Free Houses exist for the same purpose.

Discussion Groups

Advertised via the Shadowboard, and often claiming to be affiliated to the Shadowleague, there are a range of informal meetings, research groups, covens of magicians, communities of mystics, and similar associations. For simplicity's sake, let's call these "discussion groups."

Who organizes these groups, and why?

Well, who organizes stamp collectors' clubs, or fan clubs, or needlework circles? Same thing. Most discussion groups simply come together for the same reason that people in any field might get together, and those who run the groups may simply be enthusiasts, or egotistical wannabe-leaders, or opportunists who see the chance to make a fast buck (from membership fees, etc.).

Some groups, however, are more insidious.

Structured brotherhoods, such as the *True Illumination*, the *Light-bringers*, the *Seekers*, et cetera, may also establish or infiltrate such groups. They may want to recruit talented individuals, steer the group away from more dangerous pursuits, enlist them to gather information or do simple research, etc. They may therefore send a sorcerer or other spy to infiltrate them, or they might use magics and supernatural allies to spy on the group, or they might contact its leader separately.

Individual magicians also sometimes set up or join these groups, often for similar reasons. The group may attract genuinely talented magicians who can be trained, or the group may investigate phenomena or subjects which the magician is interested in (Why read dozens of books on demons when there's an eager group of would-be Summoners who are already looking through medieval or Victorian grimoires?). A genuine sorcerer can also win a great deal of respect from aspiring dabblers with a flashy show of magical power, for example, and by promising aid or tuition. In return the sorcerer could get the group to do a lot of little favors and services for him or her.

The Gathering

Right now it's just a rumor, but word is that someone is planning a great Gathering of the Shadowleague — calling together all of the prominent members to a great council, where mighty secrets will be shared and the League will forge itself into a mighty alliance to save humanity from the great forces which threaten the Earth.

Rumors point towards an ancient mystic, apparently a Chinese Immortal named **Gui Long**, whose servants are now tracking down and contacting the wisest and most powerful of the magicians who communicate via the **Shadowboard** or meet at the Free Houses. No one knows who Gui Long is (the name, meaning Spirit Dragon, is probably a pseudonym), nor why he is so interested in getting the Shadowleague to meet in the open.

Welcome to the Shadowboard!

"As this is your first visit to the Shadowboard, here are a few hints and pointers to get you started. Just the basics. What this notice board is, who runs it, and so on.

"The Shadowboard is simply an online messaging service and information board dedicated to the disciplined study of arcane energies and events. We aren't talking about tarot, geomancy or jumping naked over bonfires. We're talking blood, sweat and tears, pouring your soul into things or invoking life into machines ... if you aren't clear about what this means, then this isn't a noticeboard that will interest you.

"To continue past this screen, press F2. This will take you to the noticeboard, which is the main portion of the Shadowboard. You may post any messages you please there, although there will be a delay of about a day before your message appears, but we will remove anything which is slanderous, religious, or trivial.

"When you get to the board you will find a selection of messages left by other users. These may include reports of unusual events and sightings, discussions of theory and metaphysics, partial or complete ritual instructions, pleas for help or information, or anything else that people have decided to leave. Messages are taken off the board after a month, and we have no control over what people have decided to post to us. We

also cannot guarantee that any specific message is accurate, honest, or sane.

"Finally, we'll save you the trouble and tell you now that the Shadowboard has more than adequate defenses from computer viruses, hackers, et cetera. Don't bother. You will also be unable to find, physically, the machine which we are using to maintain this board. And of course, if you can't screw around with or even find our system, then that means that no one else can either.

"At any point you may register on the Shadowboard by pressing F1. This is a simple procedure, nothing will be installed to your hard disk, and you won't be asked to give any information. We don't even want your name. In fact, we recommend that you never divulge any personal details when using the Shadowboard. You didn't have too much trouble getting the access software, did you? No. Well, that means that lots of other people have got the same software as you, just as easily. Rivals, enemies, the government. Think about it. Be careful.

"Once you have registered, you will be able to pick up messages left for you at the board. These, addressed to you personally using any User Name you choose, are entirely confidential, and can only be read with an access code which you have preset.

"There is no charge for registration or access. The service is entirely free.

"The Shadowboard's administrator is User Name: Network (Hi there!), so address queries, etc., to that name. The whole thing is maintained due to the generosity of The Benefactor, and there are no strings attached.

"The Shadowboard is simply the communications organ of The Shadowleague. In fact, it really is the League. Shadowleague has no hierarchies, no controllers, no secret agendas, no one telling you what to do or asking for your loyalty. The League also maintains a series of Free Houses and other services which you may become aware of later. But again, keep in mind that because no one controls the Shadowleague, there is no one making sure that these services are run properly. Understand? Like we said, BE CAREFUL."

... END>

The Shadowboard

The Shadowboard is an information and messaging (e-mail) service, provided free of charge. Copies of the Access Kit (software which allows the user's computer and modem to access the board) circulates freely in magical brotherhoods and occult groups, and is often passed on (through friends of friends of friends) to reach the general public.

All that a person has to do is to run this software on his machine, in order to access the board. There is otherwise no way whatsoever that anyone can get access to it. The person may then register as a user, with the board storing messages addressed to him until he next logs on. All that registration involves is giving a "User Name" (pseudonym) to which such messages are addressed, and selecting a password which then allows the person to retrieve messages from his electronic mailbox. At no time does the software ask for any personal details, not even the person's name, and, remember, there is no charge for the service.

The Shadowboard actually incorporates two services.

Firstly there is the public message board. Any registered user may "post" messages, of any length, on the board. These may be theories and conjecture, news stories, details of how to perform certain spells, or anything else. The board's overseers, however, reserve the right to reject any messages as unsuitable, and cannot guarantee the accuracy or honesty of the messages which they do allow. Reading the messages on this board is easy. Anyone, a registered user or otherwise, may browse the board if they have a copy of the Access software.

Secondly, each registered user has his own "mailbox," just like normal e-mail. This mailbox allows other users to send confidential messages to him. Officially, no one else ever reads these messages, although in practice, Network and Samuel Steward could both read any

messages they please, and often do. There have never been any instances of anyone receiving another's messages by mistake, although messages may occasionally be "lost" (if Network or Samuel Steward want it to be). To retrieve messages from a mailbox, the user must log on to the board, using the software, and then enter a personal password. Without that password the messages cannot be retrieved (except perhaps by a really competent **Cybermage** with a huge computer hacking skill), and Network and his assistant never give out others' passwords.

There are about 2,000 "users" accessing the board each month. Some check in daily, some only once per month. About a thousand of these are actually magicians. Another six hundred are related "interested parties" — Spook Squad members, **Lightbringers**, Gray Ghost Society members, Aurora Investigation Agency employees, mystics, the servants of powerful Immortals and otherworldly powers, Underground Railway and Resistance members, and just about anyone who might find it useful to communicate with or keep an eye on the Shadowleague's "members."

There are also several hundred normal folk who have picked up a copy of the access software and now use the board, such as those with no magical ability but who have pretensions to occult power, who feel driven to investigate the occult, or who are just very bored: this includes anyone and everyone, from self-possessed occultists, **new-agers** and **neo-pagans**, to evangelical priests and journalists, to bored students and computer-nerds. These people may not bother looking at the board for long, however, as Network makes sure that their ignorant messages are never displayed, and they soon give up in frustration. However, those who ask intelligent questions are welcome and could be recruited in the future by any number of groups.

And finally, there are about 100 less savory "spectators" who keep an eye on the board. These include NSB agents, law enforcement officials, Young Preservers, and others who have an interest in keeping tabs on the world's sorcerers.

What is on the Board

The board's content is very, very narrow: serious sorcerous material only. This makes it an invaluable (although suspect) source of information and spells for disciplined practitioners of magic (although it is fairly useless for mystics or psychics), and at the same time discourages the general public from preying on it. Normal internet junkies would want to look at more sensational, less obscure material, and so when the access software does leak out to the general public it doesn't cause any problems.

Most of the messages on the board are pretty obscure.

Some are coded and apparently nonsensical, so that only specific groups will understand them. For example, the message "To all locusts leaping or sleeping. The harvest ripens and the great east wind blows. **Harken** the call of the wind and be blown with haste along the paths predestined for you." might alert the servants of a particular sorcerer, group, or creature(s) that the time has come to put some prediscussed master plan into operation.

Others are full of gobbledegook and pseudo-science. One group might use the board to conduct a public discussion on the links between ley lines and Chinese **geomancy**, or on whether or not dimensional portals might be easier to open or close under certain astrological conditions, or the uses of mutated DNA strands in the creation of **Cybermagic** devices which are intended to heal.

At any given time there will be about half a dozen to a dozen messages on the board. G.M.s, don't worry about exactly what these are. Only the occasional message, containing clues, spell details, adventure hooks, etc., need actually be described in detail to a player whose character is accessing the board.

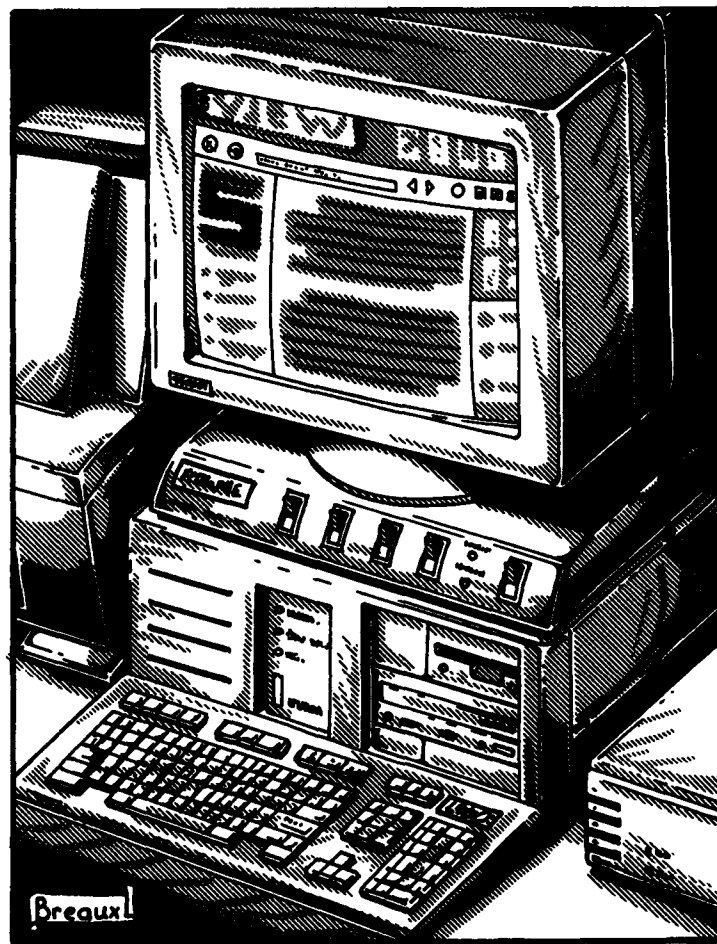
What isn't on the board

The board is intended only for the use of serious magicians (Sorcerers, Astral Sorcerers, **Cybermages**, etc.), and so it does not carry flip-pant or frivolous messages. Comments about TV, social activities, sports, etc., are never displayed on the board, nor are "popular occultism" or paranormal items (the **Tarot**, ghost stories, etc., never appear), nor are UFO stories, alien conspiracy theories or other supermarket tabloid drivel. If anyone tries to post this kind of material to the Shadowboard, **Network** censors it.

Network refuses to "slander" people. Fair enough, perhaps. But in practice this means that anything too precise and potentially damaging, such as lists of names, dates, floor plans of government research centers, and similar, are censored by Network. The only people who ever see these are Network himself, his assistant, and Samuel T. Steward.

"Religious" material and cosmologies also do not get on, unless they have some special **significance**. Network therefore censors anything which preaches a religious message, and anything which gives specific details about the **Nightlands** (geography, leaders, etc.). This information is forwarded to Steward.

Network's computer also has a sophisticated set of programs which sniff out both computer viruses and active magics disguised as computer code. The **Shadowboard** is therefore, entirely free from computer viruses, and is effectively immune to magical attack or sabotage.



Steward's Secret Agenda

"The Benefactor," Samuel T. Steward, has big ambitions. He has made his millions in publishing, and over the last few years has turned his attention towards politics. He recently ran as a Republican candidate for Governor of Texas (and lost, badly). He has since shifted allegiance to the Preserver Party; not because he believes in "traditional values" but because he sees them as the best party to join if he wants to win power.

The Shadowleague, for Steward, is simply a source of potential "employees" and information which may be useful to him, either to further his business plans, or in his political career.

Steward sends private messages to users who are obviously competent magicians, offering them money or favors if they will work for him. In these messages he claims to be a powerful magician, and says that he effectively runs the League.

He has a couple of **powerful** sorcerers (level eight or higher) on hundred thousand dollar a year salaries, and keeps lesser practitioners of magic loyal with vague promises and hopes of big favors in the future. Controlling minor sorcerers is actually easy for him: he gets his salaried sorcerers to write out low level spells for him, and then gives copies of these to his minor servants (any spell up to level four is available through Steward if one is willing to repay the favor in the future, or quietly work for or with him). He then implies that he knows much more powerful spells, but won't impart their secrets "just yet".

Steward is becoming concerned, however, about the Preservers. The man is a heartless businessman, but he isn't a complete barbarian, and as he rises through the Preserver Party's ranks (he was recently shortlisted for a Congressional nomination), he is becoming increasingly concerned about some of its senior members and policies. And of course, much of the information coming to him through the Shadowboard hints at dark supernatural influences in the Preserver Party.

Steward is too pragmatic to oppose the Preservers (he has made his fortune playing within the system, and isn't going to throw it away in senseless rebellion now), but he would like to know more and is re-thinking his involvement with them. The question is, will the Preservers let him back out now? And what would they do if they found out that he had unlimited access to the **Shadowboard**?

Rumors on the Board

G.M.s can use the board to spread all sorts of rumors, clues, hints, adventure introductions, or slanders to player characters who consult the board. Inevitably, all too often the player characters will want to check up on the Shadowboard when the G.M. hasn't worked out exactly what information it carries. The following table gives a random selection of items which might appear on the board (this is the most interesting stuff, along with loads of idle gossip and petty bickering, too). When necessary or desirable, let the characters roll on it. New messages appear at least once a week.

01-05 Pointless but intriguing speculation. A number of users have posted messages asking who Network actually is and why he runs the Shadowboard. Network has not deigned to answer, but other users have put up messages conjecturing that he works for a powerful Astral Entity or he is not a person but an electronic demigod.

06-10 More speculation. A couple of **clued-up** but paranoid sorcerers post a series of messages speculating about why magical powers flared at Dark Day, and what the relationship between "demons" (the Nightlords' minions) and magic power is. They also point out that throughout history, the Church and others have taught that all magic power comes from devils. Their concern is that magical power is supplied by and somehow serves the interests of what they call "demons" (the Nightlords).

11-15 SLANDER? There is a series of exchanges between an anonymous sorcerer and a group calling themselves *The Watchmen*. The anonymous sorcerer claims that the Watchmen have been encouraging folks to fight against "creatures of light" who are trying to aid humanity against "the creatures of darkness," and goes on to accuse The Watchmen of being "dupes of the dark ones." The Watchmen retort that the "pale creatures" they oppose are cunning demons who merely seem to be friendly in order to manipulate humans. The argument runs and runs.

16-30 DANGEROUS DRIVEL. A self-proclaimed sorcerer posts a message claiming that he has discovered an ancient spell in the vaults of

a public library. Wiser or more cynical mages post replies suggesting that he should be careful, pointing out that "the authorities" generally make sure that nothing useful is available to the public. The youngster, to clear his name, gives full details of the spell, word for word, from his text. This seems to be instructions for casting a spell. (Choose a spell at random from the rule book or the spell descriptions here.) 90% chance the spell is useless. 9% chance it unleashes wild magics, calls a minor supernatural creature, rips at the caster's flesh, or is otherwise dangerous. 1% chance it actually works properly.

31-33 LOCAL DISCUSSION GROUP. A message is posted stating that a particular mage wants to make contact with and set up a "mutual aid" or discussion group with other practitioners in the area where the player characters live, setting a time and date for the meeting. (This could be a way to get the player characters involved with other magicians, or, if they attend, they might just walk into an HRT, NSB or Nightlord's ambush.)

34-36 DISCUSSION GROUP DESTROYED. This message is posted by a member of an informal magicians' group (e.g. a discussion group). Other members of the group have recently been vanishing, and the few who are left are very worried. They seek information, advice, or help, or sanctuary.

37-50 DISCUSSION GROUP. A "Local Discussion Group," but the meeting is some distance from the player characters. Could be legit or a trap.

51-55 "EARN \$60,000 PER YEAR." One of the board's users has posted a message saying:

"Unconventional technicians with sound knowledge of computers and biochemistry sought for cutting edge research lab. \$60,000 per year salary, with sunny west-coast location on a ley line nexus. Reply to Joe A."

In other words, a Silicon Valley research center wants to recruit **Cybermages**. They'll take almost any **Cybermage** they can get. The downside? The lab is funded and constantly monitored by the NSB, and anyone who leaves this job is likely to be hunted down and killed soon afterwards.

56-60 "MONEY! (THAT GOT YOUR ATTENTION).

"We want to pay you for your time and knowledge. Think you can teach a few tricks to younger dabblers? Can you write down what you know so that someone else could learn to cast just by reading your text? Then we have work for you. Reply to Silver Twist, and we'll arrange a meeting on neutral ground to establish that we can trust each other."

Silver Twist is the pseudonym of one of Samuel Steward's salaried mages. Her aim is to recruit a couple of competent mages (levels 2-6) who can teach simple spells to level one or two sorcerers. Cash or spell secrets are available in exchange.

61-67 INCOHERENT CODE. A message has been posted on the board delivering sensitive information in an apparently innocuous and incoherent manner. What seems like gibberish may be instructions to cells of saboteurs or conspirators (ordering an attack, for example) or intelligence info as to a rivals' plans. E.g. "Ten thousand paratroops storm the gates of heaven on the head of a pin, but paraplegics calcify the cherry tree."

Some of the message may come clear to players in later adventures (e.g. if they stumble across a copy of a code **dictionary/translator**), or this may just remain a mystery.

68-70 WATCHMEN WARNING (1). A group calling themselves The Watchmen post a long "news story" detailing the apparently supernatural murders of several US doctors and surgeons at the hands of an albino serial killer. The information is full of rage at the needless deaths of these good men, and concern for their families. (At no point does the story even suggest that the "killer" — a Guardian — slew the doctors because they were serving the Nightlords in a Preserver Government eugenics program).

71-74 WATCHMEN WARNING (2). The mages calling themselves Watchmen post another set of messages, warning of a group of

"demons" who "glow with a cold, bleak light," who have been murdering innocent folk around the US. There is a rant about how these "cunning deceivers" are masters of subtle lies, and their true goals are death and human **misery**, followed by details of a spell designed specifically to combat them. In other words, there is a load of propaganda aimed at discrediting the *Guardians*, and a spell designed to destroy them. This level three spell, called *Blast Against The Pale Riders*, is actually a slight variation on the level three Energy Bolt spell. It inflicts minimum damage against normal targets (1D4 points) but severe damage (4D6x2), against Guardians and other Creatures of Light; it is otherwise the same as the Energy Bolt spell in regard to range, etc.

75-79 PROPHECY OF DOOM. Some credulous fellow has calculated that the end of the world is nigh: The stars will crash to earth, huge Rifts will open in the sky, Satan will rise out of hell (pick one). The rant "proves" that this is so with astrological calculations; or with notes about natural omens; and/or with references to "prophesies" contained in *Nostradamus*, *the Book of Revelation*, and the *Little Rock District Telephone Directory*. An exact time and place is given for Armageddon. Although this is almost certainly misguided drivel, player characters might want to check it out anyway. It is possible that something may happen at the appointed time and place, and it may be worth seeing who actually turns up to witness Armageddon.

80-90 KNOW YOUR FRIENDS ... AND ENEMIES. The first lines of the message read:

"Like it says on the **intro** screen when you first logged onto the board, BE CAREFUL. The following notes should help you to do just that. Read and remember this stuff. And next time someone gets talking to you in the library, or drops by your magic circle asking to join, take a good, hard look at them. Weird bastards will have one weird aura. True adepts will have strong but normal auras. Distrust the former."

There then follows exhaustive instructions which would allow a sorcerer or similar to **learn** the level one *See Aura* spell. This message reappears on the board every few months.

91-95 PARTIAL SPELL DESCRIPTION. A partial description of how to cast a specific spell (G.M.'s choice of spell, or roll 1D20 and choose from the following list). The spell as described is incomplete, but with a couple of **weeks'** study a practitioner of magic should be able to figure out how to make it work. This requires either a week spent researching in a sorcerous library (and a successful Research roll) in order to find hints and references as to what is missing from these descriptions, or two weeks of contemplation (and a successful Principles of Magic roll) for the magician to work it out for him or herself. 90% are written for standard magicians rather than **Cybermages**, and typical spells include:

- 1 Draught of Life and Death
- 2 The Knowing Candle
- 3 **Bloodward**
- 4 Create Watching Enchantment
- 5 The Life Plant
- 6 Soul in a Bottle
- 7 The Druid's Head
- 8 Destroy Undead Flesh
- 9 Death Trance (Rule book)
- 10 Concealment (Rule book)
- 11 Mystic Alarm (Rule book)
- 12 Call Creature of Light (Rule book)
- 13 Impervious to Fire (Rule book)
- 14 Charismatic Aura (Rule book)
- 15 Charm Weapon (Rule book)
- 16 Observe Dream (Between the Shadows)
- 17 See Through Lifeless Eyes (**Fleshsculptor** spell)
- 18 Replace Flesh (Fleshsculptor spell)
- 19 Manipulate Reflection (**Mirrorimage** spell)
- 20 Lens of True Sight (Mirrorimage spell)

96-98 COMPLETE SPELL DESCRIPTION: As above, but the spell description is already complete. A sorcerer, **Cybermage**, **Fleshsculptor**, etc., can learn the spell from this text without need for further study or research.

99 WEAPON BLUEPRINTS. Anonymously posted, a set of **Cybermage's** weapon blueprints are available on the board. These weapons (costing **\$10,000** each to build, and looking like something out of a science fiction movie or a painting by H.R. Giger) are a selection of assault rifles, pistols and machineguns designed to inflict additional magical damage upon "unnatural" creatures. In effect, these weapons use a version of the level five *Charm Weapon* spell from the **Nightbane™ RPG**. What isn't apparent (meaning that players' characters will not be able to tell, even if a Cybermage amongst them builds one of the things) is that the weapons do no additional damage against the Nightlords or their minions, and they have unusually strong magical auras (designed specifically so that Hunters can always track these weapons and those carrying them). In fact, these blueprints have been circulated by the *Brotherhood of True Illumination*, and the only way to discover the **weapons'** limitations is to compare the blueprints with a genuine Charm Weapon spell and roll under **I.Q.** on a twenty-sided die.

100 THE JACKPOT (OR NOT). A little known mage, calling himself Openbook, claims to have found a powerful spell in an ancient **grimoire**, which he has made available, in its entirety, via the board. Loads of text, diagrams, etc., giving details of the spell are included, so that a sorcerer could learn the spell just from this data. The spell itself is in fact a 1000 P.P.E., level fifteen version of *Summon Nightlord* (usually a level thirteen spell), the increase in level apparently being due to the fact that in this version of the spell, a circle is inscribed upon the floor and the Summoned Nightlord is called into this circle, being unable to leave it without the caster's consent. At least, that's what the message claims that the spell does. And the calling name of a Nightlord is included for good measure.

It's too good to be true, of course, and woe betide any sorcerer foolish enough to cast it. A *Principles of Magic* skill roll reveals that the spell is not a modern one, and a *Lore: Nightlands* roll reveals that it has the hallmarks of a spell created by the Nightlords themselves. A few weeks of study, comparing this one to other **summoning-type** spells and with a successful *Understanding the Principles of Magic* roll, reveals that the spell actually opens a Dimensional Portal (as in the level fifteen spell), although it also affects a Nightlord in some way. The only way to find out exactly what it does is to try it. **G.M. Note:** The spell opens a portal to the Nightlands, near the named Lord's stronghold, and (because the name is included) alerts the Lord to the position and existence of the portal, so the Nightlord then has the option to step through, or to send a scout ahead or bring a small army with him. The spell has in fact been posted by the Brotherhood of True Illumination, on this Nightlord's orders, as a way to attract powerful sorcerers who might be "persuaded" to serve him ("You thought to bind me into some silly circle, foolish mortal! Well, it is I who has the upper hand now. And you will fulfill my commands if you wish to live"). Oops.

The Free Houses

The Free Houses are a small number of hotels, hostels and retreats hidden beyond the mortal world in the Inner Astral Plane. Between half a dozen and a dozen exist at any time, each is unique, and most can be accessed from a number of spots around the mortal world.

The Free Houses provide accommodation and refreshment to visitors at very reasonable prices. Dollars, yen, bartered goods (usually magical), the *black dollars* of the Nightlords, or almost any other currency may be traded for a meal, a beer, or a night's rest. By and large, only supernatural patrons are shown the entrances to the Houses (magicians, some Nightbane, etc.), while defenses are usually established to prevent magics or firearms from functioning in the Houses and to keep out unwanted visitors (such as the **Nightlords'** minions).

The Houses' Agenda

As described above, each Free House has been established for a specific purpose, and those who have established these Domains have no intention of letting outsiders discover why these places exist. Whether a House exists to gather information, to recruit mages for a specific cause, to take slaves, or for any other reason, each has its own secret agenda.

Characters in the Free Houses

In the day to day world, most of the Non-Player Characters (NPCs) whom player characters typically meet are likely to be pretty mundane people. Their neighbors, shop assistants and taxi drivers, their families — most will be unremarkable human beings. But in the Free Houses, everyone whom the characters meet will have unusual powers, agendas or associations. Everyone is a potential ally, enemy, or introduction to an adventure.

Most obviously, the Free Houses entertain a number of mages and more adventurous occultists who have found out about them from the **Shadowboard** or from other Shadowleaguers (via Discussion Groups, for example). These adventurers might be present at the House out of curiosity, or because they are trying to contact other mages (for their own reasons or for another organization), to exchange gossip, or to hide from their enemies. Likewise, NPC Astral Travelers might wander into Free Houses; Astral Lords hoping to gather news of other realms, or Millek looking for a teacher or for work as a guide, or a couple of Mountebanks trying to barter away some booty, and so on (see the **Between The Shadows™** supplement). Other supernatural creatures might also stop off at Free Houses, unless specific magics prevent them from entering, including vampires looking for a quick bite, **Namtar** spies, and **Nightbane** on the run.

At any given time, most Free Houses have no more than half a dozen guests, and perhaps no more than thirty to a hundred mortals are actually able to reach each House. This means that player characters who visit a Free House can expect to meet the same people over and over on subsequent visits, building up friendships and relationships with them. Moreover, as most Free Houses have several entrances across the mortal world, adventurers may meet people from other countries or continents. It is worth giving some thought to exactly who the player characters can meet through any Free House they discover — be consistent.

Example Free House: The Prisoner's Rest

The Prisoner's Rest appears as a huge, rambling seventeenth century **smugglers' Inn** (think of old pirate movies). It is a timber-built structure (although the timbers will not burn), constantly shrouded in the swirling mists of the Astral Plane. A few flickering candles provide inadequate illumination inside and everything is covered in dust. Several mute and manacled slaves shuffle around the place, serving customers and running errands. Firearms and modern technology (post-seventeenth century) do not work within the Free House, although supernatural powers and most magical devices are unaffected.

Visitors enter the Prisoner's Rest from the Astral Plane, or via one of a number of movable portals. Each portal appears on the mortal world as a plain, black Iron Maiden; an upright coffin or sarcophagus, shaped in the leering likeness of some female monster. The front of the sarcophagus swings open on hinges, revealing an interior filled with sharp spikes and blades. There is room inside for a human-shaped person to stand, but it would seem that as soon as the door is closed, the unfortunate inside would be torn to shreds by the closing blades. In fact, when the door shuts the portal within is immediately opened, transporting the person inside to a small closet-like space in the Free House. The Iron Maidens each weigh around **600 lbs** (270 kg), and while they aren't likely to be stolen by casual opportunists, they can be moved by a Free House's staff if it is suspected that the location of one has been discov-

ered by enemies. These Iron Maidens may be hidden in museums, the props-cellars of theaters or storerooms of movie studios, or anywhere else that they would seem relatively at home.

Entering the Prisoner's Rest, travelers emerge into a large bar area, lit by an iron candelabra which burns with thirteen candles. The tables towards the edges of the rooms, many recessed in alcoves, are deep in shadow. Above the bar a wooden sign hangs, with the words "The Prisoner's Rest" written in ancient script but visible to each visitor in their *native* language, beneath a picture of an unconscious man on a Rack. From this room, six black iron doors lead to the movable portals, and a wooden door leads out onto the Astral Plane, while a large wooden staircase goes up to several smaller doors that lead into a network of private dining and meeting rooms. The whole complex could seat 500 guests, but if there are eight people here in total, it's unusually busy.

Upstairs, thirty locked rooms contain uncomfortable and old-fashioned beds and bedroom furniture, the only other room being a large conference chamber. Nowhere is there a sign of any quarters for the servants, but they vanish for hours on end and must logically go somewhere.

In fact, a score of hidden doors, concealed behind tapestries and sliding panels, lead to a maze of secret rooms and passages, kitchens, storage cellars, servants' quarters, and holding pens for slaves. Also, deep within the cellars, there is a door which opens out onto a huge wharf — a wooden pier over a mile (1.6 km) long, with black waters which lap hundreds of feet below. The wharf is big enough to moor a ship the size of a small city.

Prices at the Free House are very cheap. A bowl of stew or a plate of steak and vegetables costs around \$5 (Don't ask where the meat comes from. Let's just say that conditions in the slaves' pens are pretty bad, and you'd probably rather stick to vegetarian food). A mug of beer costs **\$1**, and anyone who eats or drinks here is entitled to a night in an upstairs room for free.

The Free House is in fact run by the slavers of the Crimson Ship. Many of the bedrooms have secret panels (which cannot be opened from inside the rooms) which allow slavers to clamber in and kidnap sleeping guests. Indeed, likely victims will probably have already been drugged with some magical chemical slipped into their beer or stew to ensure that they do not stir in the night. The human slaves who run the Free House are, as they are aware, very lucky. The work is easy and if they serve well for seven years they are released. If they betray their masters they can expect an eternity of brutal servitude; disobedient slaves being given as gifts to some of the slavers' nastiest clients. The slaves, therefore, serve loyally, but many are miserable, lonely, and very likely to befriend personable human or Nightbane visitors.

Ordinarily, the Prisoner's Rest is nearly empty. Once a year, however, the slavers hold a great auction in the upstairs conference room. In the nights prior to the event, dozens of guests are present, attending private viewings of fine slaves in the meeting rooms, or selling their own captives to the slavers. On the night of the auction the place is packed, with bidders cramming into the upstairs room and their servants and guards taking up tables downstairs. Mountebanks and vampires, Nightlords and **Necrophim**, Astral Lords and **Lightbringers**, **Ashmedai** and mages all attend to buy slaves and pets or to ransom captives, bidding money, souls, food and **supplies**, favors and services against one another in confusing auctions where the slavers will consider any bid and place no limits on what may be offered for their wares.

No magics protect this Free House from the intrusions of the Nightlords or other creatures. But the place is protected by an unspoken truce between all of those who benefit from slave sales — from Necrophim to Nightlords — who have a vested interest in letting the place run smoothly and unmolested. The NSB and Nightlords leave the Prisoner's Rest and its customers alone, and the denizens of the Astral Plane know that raiding the Inn will bring vicious reprisals from the slavers' many allies.

Discussion Groups

From time to time, informal groups are set up by or for practitioners of magic, bringing these people together to discuss their problems, share their theories, or cooperate in group rituals or research. People like to discuss their pastimes and discoveries with others who are interested; the powerful get to show off a bit and earn the respect of the less competent, who in turn get to pick up a few hints and pointers.

Magicians are often paranoid, and have good reason to fear persecution. Many of the Nightlords' servants and NSB agents are keen to destroy any magicians (and others with supernatural powers) who do not serve their plans. Consequently, many shy away from these groups. On the other hand, because magic is so dangerous and most magicians (so soon after Dark Day) remain so inexperienced, it is invaluable for them to be able to come together and swap tips. ("You think this is what sort of ritual?! No way. I know that ritual, and I can tell you, this is going to do something way **different** ..." Lucky escape.)

These informal groups are extremely varied but fall into three main types: *occult groups*, *NSB fronts*, and *manipulated groups*.

Occult Groups

Many of the "discussion groups" advertising themselves on the **Shadowboard** or via paranormal/occult magazines and shops are not primarily made up of real practitioners of magic.

From bored teenagers to new-age dupes, to middle-aged housewives with a yen to try something "forbidden," there is no shortage of people who want to experiment with magic, the supernatural and unknown. Inevitably, these people will join together into small groups to experiment or share their experiences. These are simply earnest, desperate or curious folk who have come together to explore the secrets of the universe, hoping to learn secrets and discover answers which the majority of the population have yet to find. See the notes in the Introduction talking about occultism for some ideas on why people join these groups and what they hope to get out of them.

What they actually get involved with will vary from group to group. Some will try out rituals taken from medieval **grimoires**, others will experiment with psychic abilities, yet others will try voodoo, meditation, sex-magic, ritual vampirism, ouija boards, "magical" rituals, seances, dowsing, palmistry, and any other number of diversions. Unfortunately, after Dark Day, with magical energies running higher than they have been for centuries, many of these "harmless" pastimes have become increasingly hazardous. Some of those old medieval rituals might actually allow the group to summon some manner of creature, and there is no telling what might be contacted by a seance.

These groups may, of course, make genuine arcane discoveries, or accidentally unleash powers well beyond their control. Most, however, will blunder along, ineffectually experimenting with impotent superstitions and claptrap.

These groups may not seem to be a part of the **Shadowleague**, but in fact they are associated to it. Many of their committed members are users of the **Shadowboard**, and meetings are sometimes alluded to or even advertised on the board. Moreover, any of the **Shadowboard's** other members may infiltrate or keep an eye on such groups for their own reasons.

NSB Fronts

The NSB are inevitably interested in gatherings of would-be magicians, wanting to assess whether or not they pose a threat to the Preserver government and the Nightlords. In practice (even NSB resources are finite) they will usually just bug a couple of meetings, attempting to compile a list of those who attend for their data bases. Once they are convinced that the group has *no* genuine magical power, they will leave it alone. If they feel the need to intimidate or interrogate members, then

they will arrest and question them, using the justification that they suspect the group of some sort of kidnapping or human sacrifices (remember the scare-stories that circulated back in the twentieth century about **satanic** sacrifices and **rape**?). Of course, they have to find out the true identities of the members, which is why maintaining anonymity can be so important.

In some instances, the NSB deliberately establishes a discussion group, sending an agent to recruit members, run meetings, circulate books and pamphlets, etc. This sort of a group is likely to be established for a specific reason, or in response to a long-running crisis. Members act as informants (usually unwittingly), sharing information about any weirdness they experience or hear about. Such entrapment groups may be designed to attract specific magicians or Nightbane operating in the area, and who the NSB have been longing to flush out of hiding.

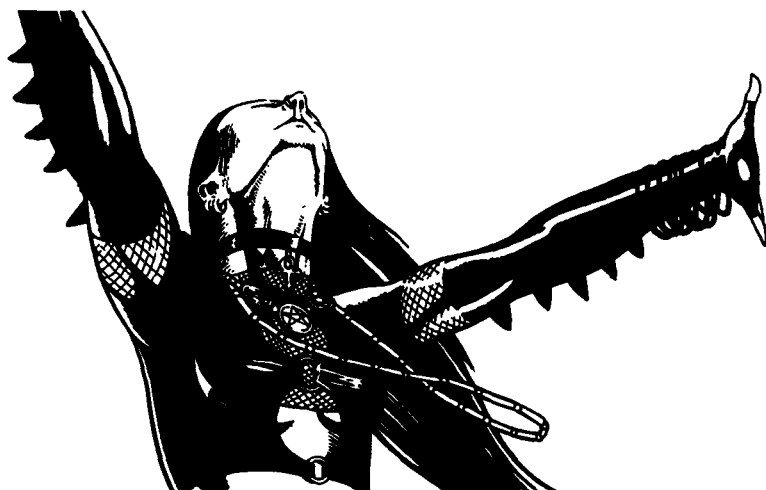
Most members of these groups, of course, are just interested dabblers — hobbyists — who will not go out of their way to gather information or help the cause. An hour in the library is the limit of their commitment; following people and committing crimes is way out. They are not told who they are working for, and would consider it preposterous to think that a government agency was encouraging their fringe pursuits.

Manipulated Groups

The NSB are not the only people who can benefit from manipulating a bunch of credulous dabblers.

For example, individual Seekers may establish, **infiltrate**, or feed information to such groups, hoping to get the members to investigate particular phenomena (crop circles, weird stories surrounding certain places, etc.), or to do some library research on their behalf. Such Seekers may abuse these groups shamelessly, but most are more likely to strike up a symbiotic relationship with them, swapping knowledge for example. So, the Seeker may have better things to do than spend all day chasing down obscure references in old books, or looking through misguided articles in underground occult journals, but a small group of occultists might be willing to look through some books or magazines in return for occasional glances at the Seeker's ancient tomes or advice from such a mentor.

Unscrupulous sorcerers might use groups to research and experiment with various magics, particularly if the group contains a couple of genuine but inexperienced magicians. Supplying the group with information, or acting as its leader, such a sorcerer can guide members towards trying out specific spells or rituals. The fact is that there are a lot of *scraps* of magical knowledge hidden away in old "magical" books, from European grimoires through to Chinese books on alchemy, but most of the "spells" and processes in these books are dangerously incomplete or simply ineffective. It is easier (and safer) for an uncaring sorcerer to have dupes try these spells out first, rather than wasting the time and risking the danger involved with using them, untested, himself.



Sample Shadowleague Members

Angelica "Astrid" Lawrence

Angelica is just dying to be someone special. She's bored with her small-town life, her small-minded family, and her "small" (six bedroom) upper-middle-class home. So, at the age of 15, she has begun to experiment with "the occult," buying overpriced Aleister Crowley paperbacks from pretentious bookstores. She has asked all her friends to call her "Astrid" (which she thinks sounds "pagan") rather than Angelica. She has dyed all her clothes and hair black, plus, in a fit of confident rebellion, even shaved a bit of hair off at the sides (though not enough that anyone will notice). In the evenings she goes to "alternative" clubs with her friends, or sits and drinks beer with them in a local graveyard. She is especially excited to have found a tape of (fake) "Demonic Chants" in an occult bookstore, which she plays really loud (well, fairly loud) to annoy her parents.

Recently, she has started sneaking out on Friday nights (despite, or because of, her parents forbidding her), going to meetings of a local occult group, "The Lodge of Golden Light." Inspired by them, she has taken to drawing ritual circles on her bedroom floor (she stole the chalk from school, and still feels guilty about it), but she hasn't managed to summon anything, yet.

The "High Priestess" who runs the Lodge has picked her out for "special instruction." This woman is a *Night Priest* called *Yselte Crowe*, who has become aware that Angelica has a real talent for magic. *Crowe's* knowledge of magic is intuitive, inspired by the **Nightlords**, rather than methodical and **sorcerous**, but she is delighted to encourage the girl's **experimentings** and has also offered to teach the girl some "rare ancient rituals."

If benevolent sorcerers (like the player characters?) were to give Angelica some tutoring and guidance, she is credulous enough to learn magic swiftly. But at present, the High Priestess plans to use Angelica to perform Nightlord-inspired rituals on her behalf. Rituals which she is unwilling to risk casting herself. If Angelica should prove difficult to manipulate in the future, *Crowe* figures she can always use the young woman as a sacrifice to her dark masters. In any case, if Angelica continues to play around with "**summonings**" in her bedroom, she might come face to face with something even more murderous than *Yselte Crowe*.

Alignment: Unprincipled (at least currently).

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 13, M.A. 13, P.S. 7, P.P. 12, P.E. 8, P.B. 14, Spd. 12

Age: 15 years old.

Hit Points: 12; **S.D.C.:** 4

P.P.E.: 18

O.C.C. & Experience: A potential, fledgling sorcerer, but at this stage she's not even a first level Acolyte.

Magic Knowledge: Knows several dangerously incorrect calling and summoning spells (which she thinks are "Demon" Summonings, copied into a school exercise book from various tacky paperbacks), but she hasn't managed to successfully cast anything, yet.

Skills of Note: Dance 35%, play guitar 35%, streetwise: drugs 25%.

John Blake

John Blake is a Chicago businessman who runs a large market research corporation, *Simplife-I*, which specializes in gathering apparently innocuous information ("so tell me, sir, which of these newspapers do you read?") for the use of a certain Preserver Government bureau.

Just before Dark Day, however, Blake was diagnosed as having advanced lung-cancer. He was terrified. All his prestige and money could not save him from a clearly terminal illness, and the best medicine money could buy would simply postpone the inevitable.

For a cure he turned first to alternative therapies, and then to magic, hiring holistic healers, mystics and faith-healers indiscriminately, while he himself began to delve into Hermetic philosophy, alchemy and, eventually, real magic. Driven by his fear of death, Blake easily had the will to master magic, and he was desperate enough to believe anything.

Soon a combination of conventional medicine, holistic techniques and his own magics had the cancer under control. The tumors still speckle his lungs, but they are not growing or spreading. And Blake, in the meantime, has become a knowledgeable sorcerer. He has links with the Seekers (although he is not a member), he is an infrequent visitor at two Free Houses, and regularly monitors and contributes to discussions on the **Shadowboard**. If a Shadowleaguer needs financial backing for an expedition or study project, or needs information that Blake has access to (and *Simplife-I* has loads of information on file), then Blake may well contact the person and make a deal; a typical deal is where he gives the required aid and the profits or knowledge gained from the endeavor are shared with him 50/50. However, he sees himself very much as both a patron and manipulator. He gives orders and accumulates profit; he does not take orders, nor get his hands dirty.

John Blake is an important man, CEO of a successful firm, and a competent magician. His **Nightlands'** reflection, similarly, is formidable. **Judas Bleak** is his *reflection* in the Nightlands, a greedy bureaucrat who runs a large information service for the Nightlords. A tall (7 ft/2.1 m), thick-set **humanoid** (actually a minor Night Prince), chubby and extremely ugly, with the entire right side of his chest swelled by cysts and growths. Before Dark Day, Bleak too discovered that he was dying. He became involved with the **Korskai** in the hopes that its members could help, him in return for his support. Although they never seemed able to help he now finds that his condition, too, is no longer worsening. Puzzled, he remains active in the Korskai, hoping to advance himself through it, and with access to one of the **Nightlords'** largest archives, he is an invaluable asset to them.

Alignment: Aberrant

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 14, M.A. 14, P.S. 11, P.P. 11, P.E. 10, P.B. 12, Spd. 9

Age: 39 years old.

Hit Points: 31; **S.D.C.:** 13 **P.P.E.:** 56

O.C.C. & Experience: Level Five Sorcerer.

Magic Knowledge: Spells: See aura, see the invisible, the life plant (generally uses Bonsai trees in his office), sense magic, charismatic aura, destroy dead flesh, cure minor disorders, heal wounds, sickness, and various personal magics which keep his cancer at bay.

Skills of Note: Computer operation 85%, research 100%, lore: religion 80%, lore: lines of power 80%, W.P. revolver.

The Gathering

It still isn't clear why The Gathering is being called, or who Gui Long — whose agents are spreading the word — might be. At present, only the more powerful members of the Shadowleague are being contacted. Less potent magicians are being ignored, and there are now rumors that magicians outside the league are being contacted (including Masters of the Brotherhood who have selfish alignments, and some Seekers). Most Immortals seem to know about the Gathering already, but aren't saying what their involvement is.

Many seem to believe this is an attempt to build a solid alliance of "neutral" magicians, taking powerful members from the League, Brotherhood of True Illumination, and Seekers, plus Immortals, and weaving them into a non-allied body of mages.

Right now, the world's mages are being sucked into the power plays of otherworldly beings like the Guardians, Nightlords, Vampires, Necrophim and others, becoming pawns in the struggles between Guardians (who run the **Lightbringers** and have much influence over the Seekers) and the *Nightlords* (who manipulate the Brotherhood of True Illumination, NSB, and others). The Preserver oppression in the US, and allied movements worldwide, are causing immense suffering already. As the world also becomes a magical battleground between these forces, with magicians as their pawns, this only leads to greater suffering and loss of life. Perhaps at the Gathering, Gui Long will divulge cosmic secrets of the Guardians and Nightlords, and forge the attendees into an alliance which serves neither. This alliance would stand up to both the Guardians and Nightlords, as well as Vampires, Necrophim, demons and others, to reclaim the powers of magic and the world itself for this world's own denizens, for humans and **Nightbane** alike. And of course, once the world was "saved," this new alliance would be in a very strong **position** ...

But then again, maybe that's just optimistic drivel. Maybe the whole Gathering idea is a Nightlord or NSB trap! Or maybe it's just yet another petty magician trying to make himself the center of some new organization. Or ... as G.M., you choose, or develop some other angle. It's your game.

Informal Contacts

There is a lot of informal contact between Shadowleague members, too. Because they have met in a Free House, or fallen into discussions on the Shadowboard, people may exchange mobile phone numbers or arrange to meet for an occasional drink, gradually extending their web of contacts and Shadowleague acquaintances.

The bottom line is that *THIS IS HOW THE LEAGUE REALLY WORKS*.

Shadowleaguers don't just browse the information on the board or go hide in a Free House. They slowly begin to exchange information and build contacts. Each "member" of the Shadowleague may only actually ever meet with one or two or three other members, but he or she can "put the word out" that there is a problem, that certain information is required, that someone has disappeared, etc., via the Shadowboard and his or her other contacts.

"Chicago, you say? No, never been there. But a guy I know said that he's been swapping information with a guy in Illinois, and he might know someone who could ask some questions for you." That sort of thing.

People help each other out on a regular basis, so long as it's not too inconvenient and doesn't put them in danger. A bit of simple information, advice, or a book sent through the mail are all easy to come by, given a week or so for word to get around. And of course, this is all on a "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours ..." basis. That guy in Thailand will be happy to mail you some photocopies of that ancient manuscript of his, even though he doesn't even know your real name, because one day he might want you to check on a few things in your hometown for him. And word gets around. There are less than a thousand active Shadowleague members, after all, and messages travel fast on the Shadowboard. If a player character helps others, he or she will find that people will be more willing to help in return. If he steals objects borrowed from others, abuses their trust, or asks for info but never gives anything of value back, word will get around that he shouldn't be trusted.

Often, people who are working at cross purposes will actually find it convenient to help each other out in little ways ("Hey, you may be wanted by the US government, but I'm working for the Ukrainians, and it's not in my interest to squabble with you right now. Here's the information you need, but I'll call in the favor one day"). Still, from time to time people seeking information may be deceived by carefully crafted falsehoods sent by the NSB and others.

Extending the Characters' Contacts

Player characters who get involved with the **Shadowboard** or Free Houses will slowly come to meet other Shadowleague "members." As a G.M. you might want to set up these meetings for a number of reasons: Either to kick-off an adventure, or to introduce Non-Player Characters (**NPCs**) who will figure in later **plots**, or just to create continuity and give the player **character(s)** a couple of useful friends and acquaintances. **Alternatively**, it may be one of these chance meetings between members that actually brings the player characters together as a group in the first place.

The following are simply a selection of such meetings, quick encounters which you can use to introduce an **NPC** in just a few minutes of play. You might use one of these, for example, at the end or start of a gaming session (you know, when one of the players is late, or has gone to pick up the pizza, or is making coffee). Actual **NPCs** are not given in these examples. Pick a suitable **NPC** from those scattered through this book or, better yet, invent your own to suit each situation.

1. **THE FALSE FIND.** The player character sees a rumor posted on the Shadowboard, or overhears some gossip in a Free House, to the effect that a lost ancient magical text, recently retrieved by an archaeological expedition, is on display in a special exhibition of rare documents at a small museum. If a player character goes to look at this rare find, **s/he** gets there to see another strange looking fellow peering intently through the glass of the display case at that specific manuscript. The stranger may be foreign, or still be clutching an airline ticket, and has obviously come some distance to see this one document. Yes indeed, the stranger has also read of the find on the Shadowboard, and he has travelled this great distance just to see it.

Perhaps the stranger is a Seeker? Or he might work for an organization which is considering stealing it, and he is there to check out the possibilities. If the G.M. wants to add complications (perhaps leading to a full-blown adventure), or introduce other characters, then the document may actually be **a fake**: an elaborate hoax. Perhaps the player character suspects this, while looking at it, and the stranger can confirm it. In this case, why has someone bothered with the deception, and who started that rumor on the Shadowboard? Was it to draw them out? Are they being watched?

Perhaps another magician or supernatural creature is trying to contact or identify magicians, and has set this up to lure the curious to the museum (Who owns this old place, anyway? And, come to think of it, there is actually a security camera pointing directly at the manuscript's case, getting a great look at all of the people who stop to examine it). Is this a trap? Or a lone sorcerer's attempt to get in touch with possible allies? Or is it pure coincidence and there's no secret agenda whatsoever?

2. **WATCHING THEM, WATCHING YOU.** The player character comes across a general query on the Shadowboard: "I don't know if this means anything to anyone, but I saw an old guy at a Chinese restaurant the other day. He looked exactly like the old nineteenth century photos of the mystic *Chung Hei*. I walked up to him, asked if he'd heard the name, and he went real weird on me. Weirder still, the restaurant is called the White Crane, and old Hei used to teach White Crane style Kung Fu. Since that incident, they won't even let me eat in there anymore. Anyone know what is going on?"

The message doesn't mention what city the restaurant is in, but there happens to be a White Crane Chinese Restaurant in the character's own city, and it isn't a common name for restaurants. When the **character(s)** goes to check out the restaurant, **s/he** finds that the staff are really edgy, there are two guys in black suits and sunglasses who have started eating all their meals there, and there is at least one other sorcerer (?) hanging around watching the place. The *Immortal Chung Hei* is long gone (if it was ever truly him to begin with), but the player **character(s)** may still be able to contact him through the (highly skeptical and loyal) staff. Or the character may get talking with the other curious mage, or (if particularly crass and stupid) may attract the attention of the NSB goons.

3. SIMPLE INTRODUCTION, ONE. Assuming that one of the magician player characters is in the habit of wearing some arcane symbol, or often reads new-age or occult books or magazines, the player character is sitting on a bus, or is waiting at a Taxi stand, or is at some other public place when a middle aged woman watches **him/her**, quizzically. After a while (having used see aura or telepathy, and established that the character probably has magical powers), the woman walks up to the character and says, "Here, you look like you could use this," and hands over a copy of the *Shadowboard Access Kit software*. The woman has obviously heard of the Shadowboard (in a Free House conversation) or already has access, and from their common interest a conversation should develop.

4. SIMPLE INTRODUCTION, TWO. The character is in a bar or, better yet, the reading room of a library. In the same room an NPC pauses in his research to open up a laptop and, after a while, uses it to access some kind of bulletin board. The player character immediately recognizes from the screen display that the NPC has just linked up to the Shadowboard. A pretty big coincidence, but it could happen.

Through the Glass Darkly

Through the **Mirrorwall**, the **Shadowleague** has an opposite and reflecting **organization**, one which has grown as the Shadowleague has, and often along similar lines. The two organizations are entirely separate, and are at best, only dimly aware of the other's existence but, on a cosmic scale, the two are as dependent upon one another as a man is on his own reflection.

This **Nightlands** organization is called the **Korskai**, and it is a loose organization of individuals dedicated to exploring new ideas as a way of winning power. In one sense they are visionaries, in another, self-serving revolutionaries. The **Nightlords** will destroy any member of the Korskai whose identity they uncover.

The Korskai, for example, have learned from human slaves and captives of a dying ideology called "democracy." They understand this clever political system to mean that anyone who can con the majority of denizens into accepting their tyranny then becomes dictator for four years. As the members of the Korskai are all politically insignificant denizens of the Nightlands (Ashmedai, Hound Masters, lowly Night Princes, etc.), this idea appeals to them.

The group holds together due to the services of a group of zombies, who circulate around the members, delivering and receiving verbal messages. These creatures are half-living humans, Hunters, or other beings, effectively lobotomized by a score of bone stakes driven into their heads. No one knows who creates them, or how they know who should be considered a "member" (as with the Shadowleague, there is no governing bureaucracy or formal membership).

In fact, the zombies are created by an ambitious Night Prince, who doesn't want to wait millennia to become a significant political power in the Nightlands. He creates the zombies and monitors the communications which they spread, hoping to use the Korskai or individual members in his own bids to win premature personal power.

Adventure Ideas Involving Shadowleague

The most glaringly obvious adventure idea is to have the player characters involved in the build up to the Gathering. This is a major event, and unless the G.M. is running the adventure as a **one-nighter**, it is the sort of thing that a campaign should build up to gradually, with rumors, expectations and complications slowly mounting over the course of several adventures. Invitations must be delivered to other magicians and brotherhoods. Prospective guests must be convinced that

this is no trap, but must also be checked out to ensure that they will not betray the gathering to the Nightlords or other dark forces. At the time of the meeting, the security of the venue must be considered (might there be attempts to infiltrate it, or to assassinate specific mages? What if the NSB were to hear of it?) and there will be an enormous amount of politicking for devious players to get involved. In practice, however, this is not a responsibility for a G.M. to take lightly. The sheer amount of plots, planning and deviousness which a hundred magicians will bring to the Gathering would be staggering.

A **far easier set of adventures** to run would be to have the players working for a more powerful magician. Perhaps their patron has been invited to the Gathering but they, as yet unknown, have not. They must try to find out who else is going and whether the NSB has learned of the event, deal with threats to their patron from rivals who do not want him to attend, etc. — dealing with many of the same challenges as the organizers of the event, but with an easier focus, worrying only about one mage, not about one hundred.

It is not easy to run adventures based around the Shadowboard, unless the G.M. wants the players to get involved with attempts to find out exactly who does run the board. On the other hand, it is a great way to introduce plots and mysteries, such as with reports of strange events or **sightings** reaching the player characters via the board, traps, and manipulation.

The **Free Houses** are excellent settings for adventures. Each has its own secret reason for being established, its own dark secret for player characters to uncover, and there are not likely to be more than half a dozen people present at each House at any time. That means that there is a nice, controlled number of NPCs to interact with, in a small, self-contained environment. The defenses at the Free Houses and the potential powers of other guests make outright thuggery impractical, forcing players to think and role-play rather than resorting to violence. Attempts to steal or intercept information passing through a House, to track down a mage who vanished while staying at a House, solve a murder in a Free House where they are staying, getting drawn into the trouble or plot of a guest, or negotiating with other guests all provide adventure possibilities.

The **Prisoner's Rest** could certainly be used as the basis for several adventures. Characters might try to track down someone who vanished while staying there, or may have to rescue someone taken by the slavers. Or perhaps they must ransom an ally who is to be sold at the auctions, or, if they have an ounce of compassion in them, they might try to find ways to destroy the Domain or end the slave markets here.

The **Discussion Groups** do not have any *obvious* uses for epic adventures, and are best used for small, personal stories. For example, an unwitting dupe (a friend of the player characters, met through such a group) buys a book at auction on behalf of a "friend" (i.e. a sorcerer who is manipulating him or her), but later the book is stolen before it's turned over to the "friend." The sorcerer refuses to pay for the item (after all, he's not going to pay for something he can't have), leaving the dupe broke and pleading with the player characters for help (or perhaps the sorcerer becomes distraught and warns that in the wrong hands the book spells the destruction of ... Or the "friend" sorcerer has threatened his life unless the book is recovered. Or perhaps it isn't stolen at all, but something lives in the book and emerges at **night?**). Actually, this could develop into something epic depending on where the G.M. wants to **take** it.

Manipulated Groups and well intentioned stooges are also excellent ways for bad guys (or the player characters' own allies) to gather information, and may become interesting background details in a campaign. An adventure might begin, for example, when the player group learns that a certain occult group's members are asking strange questions (about powerful magical artifacts, or the politics of another Brotherhood, a strange occurrence, etc.). The player characters then decide to find out why these dabblers should be interested and investigate for themselves (or try to spy on the other group); or the player characters' own allies in a manipulated group might find information for them,

leading to adventures, or might come to be persecuted or hassled by the NSB or other villains (perhaps as a way of getting to the player characters. Ultimately, the matter requires the player characters' help or intervention. And of course, if the G.M. wants to run an adventure where the characters track down and destroy some huge demonic creature, then s/he can get a lot of mileage from the old cliché of "kids mess around with a ouija board and unleash something that they can't control ..."

CHAPTER 6: Brotherhoods

Not all magicians are satisfied with the informal cooperation and chaos of the Shadowleague. Uncertain and inexperienced arcanists may seek the guidance and reassurance of supposedly wiser masters. Powerful magicians often try to use their wisdom to gain influence over others or to build their own little empires. This works well since, ultimately, many people **don't** want to be free agents — they want to "belong" to something and know how they stand in relation to others in comprehensible hierarchies.

Therefore, there have grown up a number of magical brotherhoods, wherein magicians band together for various reasons.

To junior members these brotherhoods offer tuition and guidance (e.g. access to higher level spells, words of advice regarding mystic study, philosophy, etc.), the occasional aid of more powerful superiors, a sense of belonging, access to scarce resources (such as rare books **and/or** data files, perhaps computers or even a **safehouse** or other sanctuary), the chance to rise through the ranks into a position of power, and a **goal/direction** (that of the Brotherhood).

To powerful magicians, the brotherhoods offer power over and the respect of subordinates, the security of having fellows to aid them if their magics go awry, access to a broad range of resources, and flunkies and pawns (subordinates) to use in their schemes.

Across the world, arcanists have bound into numerous organizations to learn and practice their arts together. Although many groups have fewer than a dozen members, some of the largest of these "brotherhoods" may have a thousand or more.

The largest of the magical brotherhoods are the Seekers, and the Brotherhood of True Illumination (often just called THE Brotherhood). These, and others, are detailed below.

The Seekers

The Seekers (as explained in the **Nightbane™ RPG**) are a group committed to discovering and studying all aspects of the supernatural, and as such, are not simply magicians. They are, rather, a broad selection of experts on all realms of the arcane and paranormal. The membership of the group certainly includes Mystics, Sorcerers, Fleshsculptors, **Cybermages** and other practitioners of magic, but it also includes **parapsychologists** and exorcists, interested professionals (military intelligence experts, for example), Nightbane, academics (e.g. archaeologists), explorers with a taste for the supernatural, and others.

The organization's membership, worldwide, is about 3,000, mainly in Europe, Australia and the US. Of these, no more than one third have any magical powers.

Getting in Touch

The Seekers do not advertise. They do not contact unknown adepts and invite them to join. It is, more or less, impossible to get in touch with the Seekers. They get in touch with "you." SEEK you out.

Every full member of the Seekers is expected to keep a constant lookout for possible members. To this end they will read through magazines, books and academic journals, noting the authors of interesting ar-



tides; they will scan through reams of messages on the Internet; they will attend lectures and discussions and chat to the people who turn up; they will scan library lending catalogues to pick out people with unusual interests; and so on.

The Seekers are looking for people with plenty of curiosity (i.e. they are willing to SEEK), self-discipline and stability (because no one wants to risk recruiting a potential blabbermouth), and high I.Q.s. When a potential recruit is spotted, the Seekers will appoint one of their number as **his/her Evaluator**. If the candidate is a student, then the **Evaluator** might be a professor at the same university; if the candidate is a writer, then the Evaluator will be another artist or writer; if the candidate is a reporter, then the Evaluator may be a News Editor who offers the candidate a job.

The aim of the Evaluator is to get close enough to watch the candidate, which may involve befriending or even seducing the character, but usually just involves keeping an eye on him or her. During this time the Evaluator never mentions the Seekers, nor gives the candidate any reason to believe that **s/he** is being targeted to join any sort of organization.

Only when the Seekers are completely satisfied — when they are sure that the person is sincere and reliable, with no links to other organizations or major vulnerabilities — only then do they approach the candidate openly to invite **him/her** to join. This process takes a minimum of three years, and usually longer.

On the other hand, getting information to the Seekers is very easy.

The Seekers have computer programs which search through all messages posted on the Internet and computer bulletin boards, copying any message containing certain key words, including “**Nightlands**,” “**Nightlords**” (and known minions), “**Nightbane**,” “**Seekers**,” “**Guardians**,” “**Lightbringers**,” “**Preserver Party**,” “**Spook Squad**,” and “**paranormal**,” among others. They routinely scour published journals and magazines, and frequent libraries and museums. Their members include the editors of several well-known “**Fortean**” journals and fanzines. Posting a message onto the Internet, or writing to the letters’ page of a suitable magazine, is a good way of making sure that someone in the Seekers will read your **ramblings**.

Who Runs the Seekers?

Since the 1790s, the Seekers have been run by an oligarchic Council of Nine.

Each of these senior members takes responsibility for one important area of activity. These include monitoring the world’s media (notably academic journals, news agencies, and the Internet); preparing publications to keep information circulating amongst members; keeping the group’s central store of archaeological and arcane artifacts; and organizing expeditions, digs, etc., to out of the way places; and monitoring and controlling membership through the world. On a day-to-day basis, these nine act on their own initiative, making executive decisions as required. In general, however, Seeker policy is decided by the group as a whole.

The members of the Council are, at present:

1. Kumi Oyama, overseeing Asia and controlling the Seekers’ central treasury. She is an alchemist and sorceress, the widow of a Japanese company-man, who lives in a small medieval castle (old walls, but high-tech gadgets and modern decor throughout) in northern Japan. At least 120 years old and in poor health, Oyama is more interested in extending her own life span than in serving the Seekers. She has recently begun to abuse her position, using those beneath her to uncover information which might help her. As yet she has not actually tried embezzling money from the group’s bank accounts, and if she ever did (and were caught) she might **find** that several of the Council members are far more powerful than she is. She has cultivated good relations with *al-Aziz*, *Wilde* and *O’Leary*, who might all have, or one day discover, secrets which could be of use to her. She dreams of doing something fatal to *Van Der Hendt*.

2. Karl Hoffman, overseeing Europe and also guarding the organization’s central repository of archaeological treasures. He is a non-

magic using academic, formerly Professor of Semiotics in Geneva, who lives on his small wooded estate in northern Germany. Genial but reclusive, with no stomach for conflict, he opposes the idea that the Seekers should mobilize for some sort of war against the Nightlands — or against anyone else, for that matter. Motivated by an insatiable curiosity and a lively imagination, his interests are in chasing obscure and complex wisdoms on a purely academic level, but his intellectual brilliance and genius for organization makes him an able leader. His closest ally on the Council is *Wilde* (whose good-natured curiosity he shares) and his greatest foe is *The General* (whom he sees as a troublemaker).

3. "The General" oversees North America and refuses to disclose his true name or identity. It is generally believed that he was a senior military intelligence officer within the US military before Dark Day. He lives constantly on the run, under a succession of false identities, and often lives rough or out on the streets, and although now in his seventies, he has the physical strength and fitness of a 30 year old. Of all those on the Council, he is the most ready to turn the Seekers into a weapon to oppose the Nightlords. However, due to his insular patriotism, while he talks about the need to “save the planet,” it is clear that what he really MEANS is “save the USA,” which alienates his Canadian followers and the rest of the Council. He has no true allies on the Council, except perhaps for *Van Der Hendt*.

4. Ahlam al-Aziz oversees the Middle East and India. She is the last in a long-established family of Arabic mystics. She lives in a cave in Saudi Arabia, with a network of fanatically loyal servants (almost certainly not human, despite their appearance) who travel the region as her messengers. It is said that her wisdom is so profound that she can see a **person’s** deepest secrets with a glance, and hear the speech of the wind in her sleep. She looks about forty, although she is much older. Her appetite for minute information is so great that she can spend months on end just watching lichen grow in her cave. Her attitude to the Nightlords is, roughly, “They’ll go away. Everyone always does, eventually. This isn’t the end of the world — don’t flatter yourself.” As far as she is concerned, she has no friends or enemies on the Council.

5. Joseph Bakhara, overseeing Africa, constantly travels Africa in the guise of a businessman. He is genuinely concerned to foster cooperation and spread understanding through the groups of Seekers in Africa, and spends most of his time trying to keep African magicians from killing each other, both Seekers and non-Seekers alike. He must hold together groups as diverse as tribal mystics (who distrust him for his use of apparently European ritual sorcery) and racist Afrikaner sorcerers (who despise him for his skin color), while satisfying both native magicians (who often guard ancient secrets) and foreign Seekers (who want to “rediscover” such “lost” secrets; i.e. steal them). He recognizes that the Nightlords are a threat, but also distrusts the Guardians and hasn’t the time (or influence) to mobilize the continent’s Seekers against either.

6. Saul Van Der Hendt is in charge of gathering information and running the Seekers’ data base and information service. He is a retired “archaeologist” (read “treasure hunter” or “robber”) who has, in the past, also been a plantation manager, **Rhodesian** and South African army officer, blackmailer and policeman. He is the sort of offensive fascist who calls black people “boy” and secretly regrets that women are allowed jobs. He hates and openly mocks *Joseph Bakhara* (though secretly he has little respect for *al-Aziz* or *Oyama* either), and urges the Seekers to steal artifacts and treasures from “uncivilized” countries for the good of mankind. Even though he has no academic background and barely understands the idea of the Internet, he has secured responsibility for scanning these sources of data by virtue of his charm, hard work and political deviousness. He knows how to flatter the right people and always smiles. In any case, underlings scan the Internet and journals on his behalf, and run the group’s computer system, so his ignorance is largely irrelevant (unlike his bias, which remains an issue). His goal is to one day gain responsibility for Africa or for organizing archaeological expeditions, and he has offered to take over responsibility for the South American region (see below). The rest of the Council are too

canny to let him get anywhere near these sources of potential loot. He has tried to make allies of both *Wilde* and *Hoffman*, but without success, although he has a loose alliance with *The General*.

7. Jacqueline Wilde, responsible for organizing explorations and expeditions, is the French-Swiss daughter of a now-dead explorer. She is often unavailable for months at a time, as she prefers camping in the African bush or mountains of Central America to living in a stuffy apartment. Consequently, she can usually be reached only by e-mail or mobile phone, as she has no fixed address. Jacqueline lives for adventure. Even though she is now sixty years old, and has lost one eye and, at one time or another, has broken almost every bone in her body, she still chases danger, and often leads expeditions in person. In theory she must authorize any expedition of Seekers (e.g. to explore lost temples, etc.), and *Oyama* will not fund such endeavors without Wilde's approval. More important than the money or credibility gained by getting Wilde's blessing for an expedition, however, is the wealth of contacts, advice and experience which Wilde can offer.

Wilde is often in conflict with both *Bakhara* (who thinks that she has too little respect for indigenous peoples and cultures) and *Van Der Hendt* (who thinks that she has too much power), and although she makes no effort to win friends on the Council she likes *Hoffman* and is secretly fond of *O'Leary*. She can always count on the support of *Oyama*.

8. Mary O'Leary is responsible for publishing the group's journals, and is keeper of its collection of rare books and magical texts. O'Leary lives in a pretty little cottage in rural Ireland where she bakes wonderful sponge cakes, breeds pedigree Persian cats (much to the amusement of *Skarr*, her *flee-bitten* familiar, a black Tom-cat), and cultivates roses which frequently win prizes in local horticultural shows. Although it isn't clear why she got involved with the Seekers (if asked she says, mockingly, that she hopes one day to find the perfect recipe for Gingerbread in an old tome). It probably has something to do with the fact that as the centuries go by, she needs stronger magics to keep herself alive. She likes *Van Der Hendt* (whom she thinks is charming) and dislikes *Wilde* (a most "improper" woman, not nearly feminine enough), but through the years she has learned not to be won over by charm or put off by modernity. O'Leary would consider giving *Oyama* a few hints if there was anything that she could offer in return, but at present she is content to be viewed as a batty old woman.

9. The final seat on the Council is currently vacant. The South American membership was uncovered by agents of the Nightlords soon after Dark Day, and in a week of carnage, 60% of its members were rooted out and killed (if they were lucky) or kidnapped. The then-Council member for the South Americas, *Maria Huerez*, was seized as a part of this attack. As *Huerez* had the only records containing the identities of the South American Seekers, they are certainly known by the Nightlords, so there is no chance of uniting the few remaining members, although some survivors have since contacted Seeker cells on other continents. When the Seekers are not so scared or beleaguered — when the Nightlord threat has been dealt with, perhaps — they may make some attempt to reestablish themselves in South America, but for now, this seat on the Council remains vacant.

Although there is a great deal of tension within the Council, its members are obliged to cooperate, as none can achieve much alone. So, *Van Der Hendt* needs to be supplied with volunteers to rake over journals and Internet sites for him, just as *Wilde* often asks for favors (or volunteers) to mount expeditions, but all Seekers benefit from their work and rarely grumble. O'Leary, meanwhile, cannot compile journals without *Van Der Hendt* and *Wilde* feeding her information, and cannot distribute any publications without the aid of the Council members who run the regions, but again, all benefit from her work and so all cooperate. Most important, no one knows exactly how powerful the other members of the Council are, and would be too frightened to cross their fellows. In any case, most of the members (excluding *Van Der Hendt* and *The General*, and perhaps *Oyama*) are generally peaceful and inoffensive.

A seat on the Council is won by invitation only, and is held in perpetuity. Members may resign their posts (very rare), or may die (also, surprisingly rare), but cannot otherwise be removed. Each member nominates a successor (and a second choice, in case the first refuses) whose identities are known only to the other Council members and who will eventually be invited to take *his/her* place. Specific duties can be changed by a majority vote of the Council (e.g. transferring control of the group's library from one person to another).

The Council was, before Dark Day, semi-secret, and its members' names rarely told to underlings. Now, after *Huerez's* capture, the Council maintains the strictest secrecy and many members live on the run or in hiding. No one outside of the Council knows who all of the members are, and introductions to or meetings with a Council member are very rare.

It is not known how much information *Huerez* and the other victims revealed to their interrogators. Do the Nightlords know who the other Council members are? And it is not known how secret the other branches of the organization remain. Are the **Nightlords'** pawns methodically investigating the group's membership on other continents, too, in anticipation of another **bloodbath**?

Internal Structure of the Seekers

Although the Council makes grand policy decisions and handles such things as funds for expeditions, collections of books, etc., its members are distant, anonymous figures and meet only once every ten years. So, in practice, many decisions are made on an ad hoc basis by individual Council members or their underlings.

All full members are organized into Conventions. A Convention is simply a group of 5-10 members who happen to live or work in the same State or area which meet to talk, exchange papers, look at weird items, etc. The Convention will elect one member to serve in perpetuity as Chairperson (leader).

The leader is in contact with the Council member responsible for that region and probably with no other members of the Council. If the Convention finds out anything of interest or has a pressing question, then the Chairperson passes this on to the Council member.

The Council member then passes information, queries, requests for funding of expeditions, etc., on to the relevant people (e.g. other Council members) or, if *s/he* feels that it is unimportant (or against *his/her* interests), suppresses it.

Theoretically, regular members have no idea who the Council members are, and are not in contact with (and unable to identify) members from other Conventions. The **Chairpeople** are in contact only with one Council member, and the Council representative for each region is the only person with the region's entire membership list.

In practice, the system is less rigid than this. Before Dark Day, the Seekers were not so concerned with security (no one was interested in persecuting or destroying them back then) and members or Convention Chairpeople were sometimes put in direct contact with their peers from other groups. The resulting contacts and friendships are often still maintained. Further, particularly active and committed members (as player characters often are) might also come into contact with *Van Der Hendt* (especially if they are ready to work for him) or *Wilde* (if they are selected for or ask to lead expeditions of any sort).

Getting Information

Seekers, by definition, want information. The dilemma for the organization, after Dark Day, is how to gather and disseminate this information without coming to the attention of the NSB and other hostile groups (particularly the Nightlords).

Regular journals are published, but all are untitled and anonymous. They range from books bound in leather covers and works circulated exclusively on computer disk, to inexpensive newsprint tabloids and magazines or even fanzines printed off on computer printers or basement photocopiers. Of course, *Mary O'Leary* coordinates and **author-**

izes most of this, but some zealous members embark on projects of their own (Mary's archives contain 98% of every paper or electronic disk produced by the group's members; even those with a circulation of less than a dozen). Many of these feature findings of expeditions, papers by unnamed academics on unconventional (supernatural and occult) subjects, digests of news stories, revelations of government cover-ups, theories on magic and strange occurrences, observations and speculation, etc. All of this is very interesting, but doesn't necessarily answer members' specific questions.

If a members wants answers to a particular question (e.g. "Does anyone know anything about where the mythical Avalon might actually be?" or "Has anyone ever done a post mortem on a Hunter, and if so, what were the findings?" etc.) then there are two ways for the person to find answers.

1. If a member needs information on any particular subject, they are expected to ask fellow members of their Convention. If they cannot help, the Chairperson of the Convention will pass on the request for information to the Council member responsible for the region, who will in turn direct the query to other Conventions in the region or to another Council member (e.g. to *Mary O'Leary*, if the question may lie in a dusty old tome or old data file, or to *Hoffman* if the question would be best answered by a European group). Answers to questions are then passed back along the same chain of command. If a question is passed on to a person, *s/he* is never told where the query originated from; when an answer returns there is never any indication of who came up with that answer. This cycle might, of course, take months.

2. The questioner might use e-mail. *Van Der Hendt's* lackeys run a system whereby members may e-mail queries to them, and if there is a document on file which is relevant, they will e-mail it back to them. Questioners never identify themselves by name in their e-mails, as it is assumed that anyone who knows about this service is a member, and it is always dangerous to use real names on the Net in case e-mails go astray. The process is swift (returns answers usually in 1-6 days), but relies on published information being available to answer the question. It is also hopelessly insecure. If the NSB are bugging the phone/modem lines, or Van Der Hendt's henchmen's lines, you really don't want them recording and reading your e-mails. "Dear Madam, thank you for you inquiry concerning the NSB's use of paranormal powers ... please find attached..." etc., could lead to serious trouble. The other problem with this service is that many mystics, plus most of the Seekers' **third-world** members, cannot afford or would not stoop to use personal computers and the Internet.

Finances

The Seekers do not have bottomless reserves of cash. The group must pay the wages of members who maintain the databases and search for information, as well as cover the cost of printing and circulating journals, and expeditions cost a great deal to fund. This money has to come from somewhere.

Occasionally there are benevolent gifts to the Seekers given by members. Members are also expected to pay for journals (\$10 per copy, six copies per year; extra for special information and services). But mostly, the Seekers must sell the finds of their expeditions: unwanted treasures may be sold on the black market or to discreet collectors (exporting any nation's archaeological treasures is illegal), or they must sell the information that they gain; e.g. selling information on a healing plant's properties to a pharmaceutical firm.

However, it is often possible for groups to find funds from external organizations. Many academics or corporate R&D (Research and Development) personnel have access to research or expedition budgets, grants, etc., which can be steered towards other members' projects and expeditions. Likewise, historical data, artifacts and locations of finds (ancient places of power, temples, etc.) may have value to practitioners of magic or **Nightbane**. Specific magical data (rarely working spells) may also be offered to Brotherhoods or trustworthy individuals outside

the Seekers (this must be authorized by the appropriate Council members, starting with Mary O'Leary).

The Brotherhood of True Illumination

Of the **sorecerous** brotherhoods, one of the nastiest is the Brotherhood of True Illumination.

These magicians are sponsored directly by the **Nightlords** (not Night Priests or other underlings). These black-hearted mages not only draw upon the Nightlords for power and insight, but they are manipulated by the Nightlords as willing pawns.

Most branches of the True **Illumination's** (and they have many) bear no resemblance to one another, and never contact each other. So, the disparate groupings cannot be easily distinguished as servants of the **Nightlands**, and the majority of the members remain unaware that their leaders are following orders from beyond the **Mirrorwall**.

Getting in Touch

The Brotherhood of True Illumination has no central policy for contacting or recruiting outsiders. It is made up of many independent cells of 6-120 people, called "Branches," which contact outsiders as and if they wish.

Some are ultra-secret groups which will execute members for even mentioning their existence (these are typically small groups of fanatics that rarely exceed 60 members). Some are quietly "discreet" or elitist groups (again with a small membership). Others present themselves to the world as ordinary groups of people interested in the study of the paranormal and/or the occult, even advertising for new members and publishing meeting dates at book shops, on the Internet and in new age magazines.

If the Branches wish to recruit, they will usually contact people who have already learned to manipulate magic or possess "special powers" (psychics and Nightbane) rather than training normal folk to become sorcerers. To this end, several Branches have set up false "front" organizations to contact and screen outsiders. Some operate new age groups, or organize "psychic fairs" or occult book sales to attract possible dabblers, while others infiltrate established occult groups or make contacts through the **Shadowleague**. One, for example, runs a mail-order book selling business called **Illuminating Manuscripts**, advertising in new age magazines, taking careful note of exactly what books customers order and contacting the most likely of them.

At no point, however, will anyone ever be able to contact the true commanders of this Brotherhood. The "Masters" who run the individual branches may be contacted, but their superiors are always elusive. Exactly who runs the organization is its greatest secret, although it gently fosters the erroneous notion that its commanders are somehow the Secret Masters or Unknown Superiors whom Western occultists have long held to have ultimate control of the earth.

Who Runs the Brotherhood?

Junior members of the Brotherhood are not told who actually runs the Brotherhood. Each recruit joins a specific Branch, over which an individual Master has sole authority, but they are not told who their Master reports to. As they learn more of the Brotherhood, they will begin to hear of a group called the **Great Circle**, who are supposedly in authority over the Masters.

Grossly deformed messengers often come to the Masters, bringing gifts, requests or orders. Each messenger is different, with their own deformities (bloated eyes, hunched backs, hands like claws, etc.). Upon seeing them, the Master just knows — knows, instinctively, and infalli-

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bly — that this is a true messenger. Somehow the details of the messenger's ritual created deformity simply conveys this certain knowledge, and whatever magics are used to warp the messengers, no Master or other mage has yet managed to replicate it. Simply, it is impossible to impersonate a messenger.

No Master ever meets the Great Circle. The Master obeys their messengers out of fear, or for the promise of rewards for loyal service (and the Circle can be generous), or in the hopes that one day **s/he** will be promoted from the rank of Master to join the Circle. In any case, many Masters come to suspect that the Circle themselves are somehow answerable to, or in league with, the **Nightlords**. It is notable that the Great Circle never takes any action itself: either the Circle has other Masters and Branches act on its behalf, or the servants/minions of the Nightlords act in its interests.

It is assumed that the Great Circle is an assembly of mighty sorcerers. Idle rumor suggests seven or thirteen of them sit in some secret fortress, perhaps in Hungary or the Canadian Rockies, or Mexico, stories differ. In truth, the Circle's stronghold is not on this earth, and no one who understood their nature would ever wish to join them.

Evil has Many Faces

From: Illuminating Manuscripts, PO Box 6375, Brooklyn, NY.

Dear Valued Customer,

*For some time now we have been cataloguing the orders placed with us, and this inevitably allows us to discern the true adept from the mere dabbler. Looking at the orders which you have placed, it is clear that your tastes **are** far more discerning than those of our average customer.*

*We have therefore taken the opportunity to forward your name and address to a secret organization which shares your interests, **The Brotherhood of True Illumination**. Perhaps someone such as yourself might have heard of the Brotherhood. Most likely you have not. The Brotherhood is very particular about whom it contacts, and does not court publicity. They would ask **that** you do not tell anyone else **that** you have been approached in this manner.*

*In the **next** few days the Brotherhood will contact you at the address which you have given us. If this is a front address or if you cannot be reached therefor any reason, we would ask that you leave a forwarding address or make arrangements for the Brotherhood to reach you. They will want to ask you a few questions about your understanding of the hidden truths in order to get a better idea of your knowledge and abilities. If you satisfy their rigorous standards they will be willing to share many deeper secrets with you.*

*You are under no obligation to accept the **Brotherhood's** generosity, should you wish to retain your independence. In any case, we at Illuminating Manuscripts look forward to continuing to supply you with the finest quality books and **journals**.*

*Yours faithfully,
H.R. Sanchez
Accounts Manager*

The Branches of the Brotherhood seem to be independent, autonomous groups, often with unconnected or even conflicting aims and interests. They may claim to be the inheritors of strong occult traditions (claiming to preserve the wisdom of the Templars, or of crushed South American cultures), or they may seem to be decadent and fleeting creations of their own eras (groups dedicated to the pursuit of sex or narcotics, for example). Other may live close to primal nature (wearing animal pelts and eating roots as they sit and howl in caves in the Canadian Rockies) or they may seem to be rational disciples of modern science (discussing the latest developments in modern physics as they sit in sterile Silicon Valley laboratories). Yet, in some way, each of these serves the interests of the Nightlords, playing its own little part in their obscure plans.

Internal Structure

Individual Branches organize themselves as they wish. There is no overarching code. All are highly autocratic, with one Master in complete control. The Master determines who joins the Branch and who leaves, what responsibilities individual members have, who receives special tutoring, when meetings occur, what obligations members are expected to fulfil, etc.

The only ways that a subordinate member can rise to become a Master himself, are either to murder his current Master (frowned upon, but not unheard of) or get permission from the Great Circle to set up a new Branch. However, given that only the Masters ever speak with the Great Circle's messengers, the subordinate must persuade his Master to speak to the messengers on his behalf. This happens more often than one might think, because Masters are delighted to send **overambitious** members off to set up their own Branches, simply to get rid of the young upstarts (it's easier than having to murder them).

Normally, Masters delegate a number of responsibilities to their members, creating junior posts to which loyal henchmen can be appointed. This allows them to reward long-standing servants with powers and responsibilities, and gives junior subordinates an incentive to work for the good of their Master. Such posts may include the following:

LIBRARIAN: Branches with large libraries of arcane books, ancient manuscripts, spell instructions, data bases, etc., may appoint a Librarian to administer and protect the collection. That sounds like a chore, but is a great source of power. If the Library includes details of rituals and spells, then the Librarian may freely learn any of these and may consider giving junior members privileged access to these books (behind the **Master's** back) in return for favors and personal services. An ambitious Librarian, in fact, can severely undermine a Master's power and build up a strong following amongst the members.

SECRETARY and TREASURER: These sound like extremely dull, administrative posts. The Treasurer handles the Branch's finances, while the Secretary keeps records of meetings, membership lists, correspondence with other groups, copies of documents downloaded from the **Shadowboard**, etc. In practice, however, both posts give access to a great deal of useful information. The secretary may compile an awesome list of useful addresses (e.g. contacts for other sorcerers or groups, etc.), while the treasurer may be able to embezzle cash or (if the Branch has illicit sources of income) even gain information which can be used to blackmail the Master.

AMBASSADORS: Paranoid or busy Masters who don't want the danger or trouble of travelling out to meet with other Masters, Nightlords or supernatural powers will appoint Ambassadors to run errands and negotiate on their behalf, or to act as "trouble-shooters," sorting out problems amongst the members. These ambassadors soon come to build up an exceptional network of powerful contacts and/or resources beyond the Branch. Thus, while away on their Masters' business, they may well pursue their own agendas and build outside alliances and strike deals of their own.

SECURITY: Someone will often be responsible for the security of the *group*. Whether that just means making sure that all the doors are locked after they finish their meetings, or whether it extends to heading a defense force engaged in guarding, spying, and murder, will depend on the group and the individual in charge of security. In many cases, Masters will have bodyguards assigned to them, and key buildings and possessions will be guarded, too, although that assumes a certain amount of money is available. Guards and protectors either have to be paid, or, if they are loyal members, they must be supplied with weapons and equipment, which also suggests the group is fairly well organized.

MASTER'S BODYGUARD: As well as having someone organize strong-arm tactics and surveillance, the Master may well also personally pick a servant or bodyguard (or several) from amongst the membership as his or her elite, personal protectors. This, too, is an important post. Those responsible for the Master's safety are important people (his life is in their hands), and the most trusted will be close enough to learn things from **him/her**.

MASTER OF NOVICES: Large organizations may assign an older member the responsibility for recruiting new members and indoctrinating and training them once they have been recruited. The term "Master of Novices" comes from medieval monasteries. This person is responsible for sorting out likely recruits (scouring the **Shadowboard**, leaving contact cards in book shops, etc.), ensuring that infiltrators from other organizations do not get into the Branch through new members, training and indoctrinating the "novices," knowing which are the most dedicated and loyal, and which are the best pawns for easy manipulation, and seeing to the development of its most junior members (level 1-3 magicians).

In any case, small Branches may be ruled entirely by one Master or a small group of friends or family who performs all of the above functions and whose power is (relatively) unchallenged. Large Branches, perhaps with scores of members, may have several posts (some to all of the above) held by ambitious members who build up their own power-bases and gain considerable influence over their Master. Where such posts do exist, they may be given complex or obscure titles, or no title at all. The member who looks after the group's arcane writings may be called *Mystical Legate of the Invisible Hermes*, or he might just be known as "you know, the guy who has those old books." The member responsible for security and general thuggery may be called *Supreme Knight of the Final Mystery* (i.e. he kills people), the Enforcer, Head of Security, or "him, with the scars ..." Titles (or lack thereof) reflect the formality, pretensions and style of each individual Branch.

Example Branches

Each Branch of the Brotherhood has its own peculiar characteristics reflecting the leadership of the Master and the overall view of its members; paranoid and militant, open and friendly, secretive, etc. A branch may be deliberately formed in a certain way to fit the ambitions and abilities of its Master, or because of the area it is in, or because the Great Circle has given orders for it to adapt itself in a particular way. This means, in practice, that individual branches are likely to have a particular, distinctive outlook, way it conducts itself, agenda, and type of member. Some may specialize in a certain type of magic, research, or activities, and enlist or command other magicians, criminals, gangs, sympathizers, and supernatural creatures in the area.

From the point of view of the Nightlords, having each Branch develop its own distinctive character is a huge advantage. Each can adapt itself to its surroundings, members, culture or philosophy, and specialize in particular areas as well as cultivate a diverse range of allies, from the mundane to the supernatural.

From the G.M.'s perspective, making each branch small, independent of each other, and different, means that each time the player characters encounter a branch of the *Brotherhood of True Illumination*, they won't know what to expect and will face a new set of threats, thugs, challenges and adventure opportunities each time. Players will never become complacent or be able to anticipate the nature of the membership or threat which this Brotherhood might pose for them.

The following are just a few examples of Branches of the True Illumination.

THE WHITEHAVEN RECOVERY CENTRE is a mental hospital which specializes in the treatment of severely psychotic men and women, who have exhibited obsessive and often dangerous behavior. Security is tight, ostensibly to keep inmates in, but also to keep snoopers out — most of the patients will never recover and never leave. Indeed, the **Centre's** founder and administrator, *Doctor Max Ryan*, simply uses the inmates for his own ends. For Dr. Ryan has discovered that these deeply deluded, but highly disciplined and focused individuals, can readily be taught to accept the existence of the supernatural and to concentrate their minds on it; obsessively, in most cases. Having built the Centre on a Ley Line nexus, Dr. Ryan trains the patients as sorcerers, and has them cast spells and participate in rituals which gather information, particularly *Oracle* (page 141 of the **Nightbane** RPG). Every week,

Dr. Ryan ensures that volumes of hand-written prophetic **ramblings** are sent to the Great Circle, via a portal which he opens into the **Nightlands**. In return, Dr. Ryan receives magical knowledge and supernatural servants from the Nightlands (the hospital's human and electronic security pales next to the creatures who lurk in its cellars and attics) and the inmates receive a sense of purpose and the approval of their Doctor and Master. Perhaps best of all, who is going to believe the ramblings of the insane, should any of his "patients" try to betray him or warn others of the evil that is taking place at the Centre.

THE TIGER'S FANG YAKUZA. The Tiger's Fang were, until a year ago, just another bunch of gangsters, running the drugs and racketeering trades along a section of a city's docks. That was until the gang's leader was brutally murdered (pulled limb from limb) and *Saigo Kentaro* assumed the leadership. Kentaro is a sorcerer who was approached by messengers of the Great Circle and offered the leadership of the gang if, in return, he would reestablish it as a Branch of the True Illumination. Now Kentaro and his henchmen, a half dozen other gangsters with the self-discipline to learn magic, have expanded the operations, using spells and force to intimidate or destroy rival gangs on the docks. Furthermore, Kentaro has created several modifications of the Master's **Syrem spell** (below), trying them out on the junkies of the gang's opium dens. A few addicts died along the way, but Kentaro can now make syrems which, injected along with opiates, give bizarre visions and incredible highs. Craving handouts of **Kentaro's** "rare new drug," the junkies will do almost anything for him, giving the gang lord an excellent source of petty criminals and would-be spies who are desperate to work for him.

Like any brotherhood, the True Illumination has various hallmark magics (usually of an unpleasant nature) which it has developed or which have been taught to it by its secret Nightlord masters. These magics could, in theory, be learned by sorcerers outside of this organization, but the Brotherhood is careful not to divulge their secrets to outsiders, and would try to punish or exterminate anyone known to have stolen or distributed their secrets. The most important of these spells is Syrem.

The Masters' Syrem

Level: Four

Range: Touch

Duration: 2 minutes (8 melees) per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 20

This simple spell is taught to all Masters of the Brotherhood, but rarely to any others. It enables the caster to instill a coded message (a hallucination) into any liquid. The spell changes the liquid into a thick, blackish syrup which shifts and swirls slowly as if it were alive. The caster determines the exact nature of the hallucination (allowing him or her to "preprogram" a video-like hallucination lasting up to the duration of the spell in length), and may specify one or more subjects for whom the message is intended. If it is injected, swallowed, or smoked by an intended recipient, the **syrem** imparts the images and message of the hallucination. If anyone else uses the syrem, they have terrible, nightmarish hallucinations, and they must save vs horror factor 14 or gain a random phobia. Masters therefore create and send syrems to communicate with each other and their underlings. The syrem will keep a message reliably "recorded" for up to a year, but thereafter the syrem seems to develop its own ideas and distorts the message. Some masters, like *Saigo Kentaro*, send syrems with deliberately horrible hallucinations as punishment and pleasant ones as rewards as a means to addict and control their underlings.

THE HAWTHORN MANSION. The Hawthorn Mansion is a great, decaying, **gothic** house set on hundreds of acres of once beautiful gardens. Here the aging Charles Hawthorn lies, ashen and semi-conscious in his sickbed, attended by a battalion of servants and hangers-on (relatives with no income, who sponge off the estate). Hawthorn has been dying for years, but everyone dreads his passing, because when he

does, the mansion will be sold off (his will lists a score of charitable foundations as sole beneficiaries) and everyone who lives there now will be without a means of support. Consequently, a group of senior servants, led by the librarian, have turned to the old books that Hawthorn studied in his youth, hoping that *magic* might succeed where science has failed. Their minds concentrated by loyalty and their own needs, many are now low level (1-3) sorcerers. Only one knows the truth: Hawthorn is already dead; his body is magically animated and preserved (it even breathes) by his faithful manservant, **Philip Adams**. Mr. Adams has spent fifty years as a servant, now he will be Master. Through the Brotherhood of True Illumination he has received strange, ugly messengers that have promised him power, and revealed great magics to him (he's a 7th level **Fleshsculptor**). All that he has to do is ensure that Hawthorn occasionally mutters instructions to the other servants. Instructions to transfer money to specified accounts, instructions to perform rituals or make certain inquiries. The other servants always obey Charles Hawthorn, and accept his guidance, even though he seems at best, semi-conscious most of the time. He remains their lord and lifelong employer, as well as their Master in Magic; after all, he is the original owner of the books from which they studied and learned the (basics of) the mystic arts. None suspect that Philip Adams, Mr. Hawthorn's most trusted and loyal manservant, is really manipulating (the deceased) Hawthorn's actions, and through those actions, the estate and the rest of the servants and **hangerson**.

THE LORDS OF THE BLOOD. The Lords of the Blood are a secret society made up of serious "old money" socialites. People whose families have had plantations, mansions and leisure lifestyles for generations, but who now find that their privileges are being destroyed and equal wealth is now enjoyed by businessmen, movie stars, and others of "poor breeding." And so a number have formed together, secretly attempting to reassert their privileged lifestyles whether through politics (e.g. bribing or otherwise financially aiding right-wing politicians), or by criminal conspiracy (several have secretly **reintroduced** slavery on their estates, using kidnapped homeless people, **Nightbane** or supernatural beings), or by magic. The leaders of the Lords also possess a number of Rituals and other magics with which they attempt to safeguard their interests and privileges. Whenever possible, members of The Blood are trained as sorcerers or Acolytes.

Within this group, all members have clearly defined ranks and verbose titles; mainly "Knight of ..." and "Lord." This is a group which thrives on hierarchy, pomp, and ceremony, but few realize that their leader (their "High Knight of Purest Blood," or Master) is really just an opportunist, the bastard son of a farm laborer who uses the group to manipulate and share in the lifestyle of these arrogant snobs. The group is increasingly influential in the hierarchy of business and high-society, and quite ruthless in protecting their heritage, positions and fortunes. They are wonderful spies and agents easily manipulated and used by the **Nightlords**.

The Great Circle

There is a great city in the **Nightlands**, in the place where in the mortal world, *Washington, DC* stands. And there (where in the mortal world a placid lake is overlooked by blossoming cherry trees and monuments to dead Presidents), there is a lake of black flames, overlooked by scores of immobile Night Princes and the mausoleums of dead(?) Nightlords. And in this lake of flames a thousand human **beings**(?) have been chained together in a great ring, their skin healing almost as soon as it is burned, the new flesh fusing with the iron chains that bind them or with the flesh of their neighbors in the Great Circle.

These are mortals who have pursued knowledge at any cost —concentration camp doctors and vivisectionists, insane sorcerers and evil occultists, arms industry scientists and fanatical academics — who have been brought here to serve the Nightlords in perpetual agony.

Inspired by the flames, they shriek out barely coherent sentences and phrases, telling secrets they have never known and futures that will

never be; understanding and forgetting in the space of a few seconds, great magics or secrets of science; forming plans and strategies to overcome enemies they have never heard of.

This is the Great Circle. Created by the Nightlords, its purpose is to know what cannot be known, and to understand what cannot be understood. It is said that every member of the Circle has stared into the soul of the universe and seen the beginning and ending of all things. They have known all things, and forgotten more than they have known. None even remember their own names any more, and all are entirely insane.

The Night Princes who stand dispassionately around the lake listen to the screaming in the hopes of hearing some information which will be of use to their Lords. But **Namtar** also come here.

Assigned by the Nightlords to serve the Circle, the Namtar weave themselves into deformed human shapes, every detail of their appearances inspired by the cries of the Circle, and then travel to the mortal world as *Messengers*. The orders and requests that they carry are inspired by the semi-coherent and conflicting shouts of the Circle, and in return for obedience from those who hear their "messages," they offer new spells or other useful pieces of information. The messengers may also present physical gifts to the Masters of True Illumination, usually magical artifacts, experimental items, or servants/slaves (all actually gifts from the Nightlords which, especially in the case of servants, remain loyal first and foremost to the Nightlords and spy on the Masters and their minions as much as serve and assist them). Any objects, books, or other things sent by the Masters to the Circle are hurled into and consumed by the black flames of the lake. Any information or wisdom hurled into the lake is immediately known by the entire Circle ... and forgotten.

Yet somehow, the orders transmitted to the Masters make sense (well, usually). Strategies to eliminate enemies and gather new knowledge evolve effectively despite the incoherent **ramblings** and insanity of the Circle. And so the Brotherhood of True Illumination grows in power and madness.

Campaigns using the True Illumination

The obvious use of the Brotherhood of Illumination in a campaign is as arch-villains, master plotters, secret societies of the worse kind, and the human minions of the Nightlords (both magical and ordinary). The player characters can be regarded by the True Illumination as members of an organization which the Brotherhood wishes to destroy, rivals, pawns, troublesome fools or arch-enemies. The Brotherhood might be assigned to protect a place, person or thing which the player group is committed to destroying or capturing, and vice versa.

As an example: One of the characters has an inexplicable ability to see into other worlds, perhaps other realities, or fictitious places. Medical opinion is probably that the character is insane, having visions of nonexistent places being a pretty abnormal thing to do. Perhaps the character actually receives information from these visions (this could be a Supernatural Ally, as described in Chapter Two). In any case, the character can access information, or another time or another reality, that no one else can access. The Circle wants this means of access and wants to know all about this time or place. So the Circle orders one or more Masters to capture the character (or take his or her head) and to deliver the unfortunate to them. Once sent to the Nightlands, the character would be included in the Circle or just be cast into the flames.

In any case, the player characters will be harassed by the True Illumination, and must, over a series of adventures, work out what the Brotherhood wants and figure out a way to deal with it. If they can figure out what reality the character is accessing, they might want to figure out other ways to reach or communicate with it, so that the character is no longer the only way to access it and thus loses all importance. Or the **NPC** character might choose suicide, figuring that this is the only way to be sure that the Nightlords will *not* get access to this other reality.

Ambitious player characters might seek to destroy this branch of the True Illumination or even the Great Circle (a virtually impossible task). This plot also works well as a subplot in a long campaign which also gives the characters other explicit objectives.

Other adventure ideas. A less obvious way to use the True Illumination in a campaign is to have some or all of the player characters start as new members in a branch of the organization; nice guys with good or anarchist alignments who do not yet realize that they are working for the bad guys. Give them a charismatic, sympathetic Master who can easily convince them that the Brotherhood is a well-intentioned or neutral organization. Have them perform several missions for the leader of the group (the Master), perhaps infiltrating some other suspicious or evil organization, and undoubtedly much advancing the cause of the Brotherhood and the **Nightlords**. Slowly, the player group should pick up hints and clues that the Brotherhood's goals and motives are thoroughly unpleasant. They might meet with members of a less outwardly respectable Branch, or be tipped off by another disillusioned member (who later dies mysteriously), or uncover lies and deception. Or they might start hearing nasty rumors about the Brotherhood via the Shadowleague. Perhaps some of the people they gather information on for the group leader (their Master) might later disappear or be murdered, or they might *be* sent to retrieve a "valuable artifact" which can only be used for the most hideous of purposes, or information they uncovered is used to hurt good or innocent people. Perhaps they uncover a link to the **Nightlands** or the **Nightlords**. Make the players **reexamine** their loyalties and work out what to do next. Do they try to subvert the Branch or Brotherhood from within? Or do they try to find out about and gain an audience with the Great Circle? Or do they betray their erstwhile Master and colleagues, or *try* to quit the organization? G.M.s, let them decide what they want to do and respond **appropriately**; remember that there will be consequences and reactions to every action and decision they make.

Unpleasant characters (anarchist and evil alignments) *may* feel right at home in a Branch of the True Illumination. In this instance, the G.M. should allow them to join a Branch where the Master is willing to give them positions of power, responsibilities and perks in exchange for their loyal service. This can get them involved in the politics of the Branch, and perhaps lead to their taking it over or setting up their own Branch. Be wary of this option, though. **Nightbane** work best when they are sympathetic folk struggling *against* evils which they barely understand. If the player characters are scoundrels serving evil forces, the game becomes less tense and may become rather tasteless.

Lesser Brotherhoods

In addition to the Seekers and the True Illumination, there are many other Brotherhoods in operation throughout the world. These may be organizations and factions set up only recently as "self-help" groups by fledgling magicians, scholars, and adventurers, or they may be centuries old, which have merely expanded or gone underground after Dark Day, when more potential recruits have become available or necessitating greater secrecy.

Most Brotherhoods are usually larger and more organized than the True Illumination's "Branches," and are less tied to one place or membership. Typically, a Brotherhood has at least 50 members and may have as many as several hundred members (some may have a few thousand), with its own library and leadership structure that shares information and training and provides opportunities to less experienced practitioners of magic. Membership often stretches across several states, provinces, countries or even continents. Most so-called Brotherhoods are magic oriented, attracting one or more different types of magical O.C.C.s. Many are limited to only one particular study or type of magic, while others welcome students (and races) of all disciplines, and/or psychics, **Nightbanes** and ordinary people with an interest in the mystical

and supernatural. Others are composed of psychics, or **Nightbanes** and researchers into the unknown who do not possess or desire training in magic, but who have an interest in magic, the supernatural or the **Nightlords**, although these tend to be in the minority.

The following are only a handful of some lesser, but notable Brotherhoods.



The Order of the Cobra

The Order of the Cobra has operated for centuries from Japan through China and India to Egypt. They are thieves, assassins and con-men, using stealth and pseudo-mystical powers to make their dishonest livings throughout the years. After Dark Day, they found their powers multiplied, as many developed into full-blown mystics, sorcerers or **Fleshsculptors**. Where once they had used petty magics, meditation and alchemy, they are now able to utilize powerful magics.

Made bold by their new powers, members have now started to operate further west than usual, to north Africa and southern Europe, and further east, to the west coast of the **Americas**. Here they may operate as art thieves or hit-men, corporate saboteurs or expensive private investigators, always finding new ways to earn their livings.

The Order of the Cobra has no huge bureaucracy. Its members meet informally once every three years, taking several weeks to swap stories, trade stolen goods, plan thefts, warn each other of threats to the Order, and so on. Locations for each meeting are decided at the previous gathering. The next meeting will be in Bangkok, in a few months.

Between each meeting, contacts between members are rare. The only frequent contacts are between "Parents" and "Children," as the Order's hierarchy describes itself.

Each member has a "Mother" or "Father," the person who trained them or accepted them into the Order, and is thereafter considered their "Son" or "Daughter." This Parent, on accepting the new member, conducts a brief ritual whereby he or she plunges a silver nail into the member's heart. The nail does not harm the member, at least not immediately, however, if the nail is ever removed, the unfortunate will die immediately. Furthermore, the Parent may, at any time, simply will the "Child's" death! A Parent may only kill **his/her** own "Children," not those initiated into the Order by others. Finally, if the Parent ever dies of anything other than purely natural causes, then all his or her Children also die (of heart failure). In countries where capital punishment still threatens thieves, smugglers and assassins (i.e. through much of the third world and in parts of the US), Children are thus obliged to keep an eye on their Parents and to ensure that no harm comes to them. This means Children often stay and work closely with their Parents.

Parents, however, are expected to perform certain functions for their Children. They are obliged to buy goods from their Children if asked (although they need not give more than 25% of the object's value) and are expected to provide shelter and access to resources like fake IDs as required. This can be expensive, and Parents are therefore only those members with good finances and enough contacts to sell items provided by their Children. Furthermore, the Parent is expected to kill Children should they ever betray the Order, or commit crimes (e.g. theft or murder) against other members.

It is the responsibility of the Parent to teach the Child the ways of the Order, how to meditate and the ritual required to enchant the silver nail (Level Ten, 300 P.P.E.) so that they too can become Parents someday. In other words, the Parent trains the Child in the **rudimentaries** of sorcery.

The Child, in return, is expected to provide for his Parent's basic needs, paying him whatever is required to meet these costs. In practice, the Order expects Children to pass on one third of their earnings to their Parent, and Parents who think that their Children are shirking have the ultimate sanction, the ability to just kill them. However, most do successfully function as a small and effective unit or team (typically one or two Children per parent).

If a Child is unhappy with his Parent, he can be "adopted" by another member. This involves the adopting parent plunging his own new nail into the Child's heart, so that the original silver nail can now be safely (if painfully) removed.

The order has spread rapidly through the east, where it now has around a thousand members, each with different amounts of status depending upon how many Children they have, how many Children their Children have, etc. Most of these members are relatively low-level criminals (average **1D4+2** level thieves, smugglers and assassins; only 25% actually become full-fledged sorcerers, level **1D4**) running rackets or gangs, rather than dashing international master-criminals, but some are notorious. The Order only recruits strong-willed and focused individuals, and its meditations and mild spirituality are catalysts for magical awakening. In the west (USA and Europe) however, it has no more than a dozen or so members.

Members can be identified in two main ways. One is by the silver disk (the head of a nail) which seems stuck to their chests. The other is by the life-size tattoos which all wear, showing a black cobra, usually on the torso or curled around the left arm.

Benefits of Membership: The Order of the Cobra does not provide any intense magical training, only a basic Understanding of the Principles of Magic, meditation and the Ritual of the Nail. It is too loose knit, and its members too self-serving, for much more. However, members may acquire false IDs and passports, and other forged paperwork virtually whenever they wish (and often for as little as a hundred dollars, with groups of forgers working in the third world to fill orders at low prices), and their superiors will buy any stolen goods from them, no matter how hot or hard to sell, for one quarter of its actual value, provided they can't get a better deal elsewhere. Magicians trained as members (rather than outsiders accepted later in life) may select Espionage

or Rogue skills at a +5%, but because they were brought up in the third world they get no computer-related skills, and as a major downside, all members have those potentially fatal nails in their chests, and give-away cobra tattoos.



The Iron Band

The Iron Band grew up after the second world war, based in **Beirut**, as a private group of bodyguards — effectively a group of mercenaries who hired themselves out to guard the rich and powerful in Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Greece, and much of the then unstable eastern Mediterranean. Most of the members were ex-soldiers, without work after the war ended, and the group continued to function throughout the rest of the twentieth century.

After Dark Day, the group expanded. They formed a legally constituted corporation (quoted on the Paris stock exchange's *Alternative Investments* market), seeking anyone who might be able to act as a bodyguard to protect against newly discovered threats such as the Hunters and Hounds. Publicly, of course, these threats do not exist, but privately, the Iron Band's political clients knew otherwise, and were terrified.

Now, the Band has offices in Paris (serving Europe), Beirut (the Middle East), Tokyo (east Asia) and New York (US and Canada). A dozen **Cybermages**, **Nightbane**, and forty other practitioners of magic now work for it, along with the firm's fifty ex-military types.

All employees serve as bodyguards, the magicians functioning primarily to identify as well as fight supernatural enemies, while the ex-soldiers provide raw **firepower**. Iron Band bodyguards might be found from Mexico to Latvia, Libya to Alaska, guarding corporate tycoons or politicians, diplomats or military officers. The Iron Band doesn't care who they work for, whether Preserver officials or Spook Squad leaders, just so long as they get paid. Their morality is the **profitethic**. One man's cash is as green as another's, although they will never sell out or betray someone they have been contracted to guard, regardless of the inducements offered — that would be bad for their image and lose them

business in the future. However, while they may swear to protect, the group never engages in acts of revenge or first strikes.

Hiring an Iron Band bodyguard costs upwards of five thousand dollars per month, and the client must provide board and lodging, too. To act as guards, they either recruit fully trained magicians, **Nightbane**, or soldiers (who then earn any from \$2,000 per month for low-risk work, up to \$15,000 per month), or else acquire and train recruits from scratch (there is no shortage of desperate beggar children volunteering on the streets of Beirut), recouping the cost of training by paying less to their home-grown operatives.

The only strange aspect of the firm's work is that they *never* work for other practitioners of magic. In part this is due to the iron rings which each bodyguard wears like a badge. The rings are magical objects, and the Iron Band does not want other magicians hanging around these objects, for fear that they might figure out what the rings do.

In theory, the iron rings or "bands" are *homing beacons*, so that if a member ever goes missing (e.g. is kidnapped, imprisoned, etc.) the firm can locate their operative; and in part, this is true. But the rings also allow the firm's bosses to spy on their agents, seeing and hearing all that the wearer experiences, which often means spying on their clients. Each iron ring is in fact one of a pair: one (worn by the bodyguard) is a "transmitter," the other, kept by his bosses, is the "receiver," allowing the boss to focus on what is happening around the other ring. In practice, the firm's bosses are too smart to deliberately spy on their clients, and certainly never keep records or disseminate information gathered from the rings. These magical items are simply useful for checking up on and keeping watch over the bodyguards (who do not themselves know what the rings do). However, if a "receiver" ring ever fell into the wrong hands, it could be very embarrassing for the Iron Band company should its full purpose be uncovered.

Benefits of Membership: Iron Band operatives are well paid for their work, and usually get basic health insurance and board and lodgings included in every assignment (additional perks may be included depending on the generosity of the client). In addition, the brotherhood will teach spells to sorcerous agents at half the usual prices (deducted from pay), and all operatives are issued an Enchanted Weapon (as in the spell) for the duration of their service, along with other more conventional weapons and equipment.

The True Templars

Back in 1998, a "businessman" (a failed used car salesman) named **Jim Stanton** set up **The Holy and Inspired Order of The True Templar Mysteries** (better known simply as "The True Templars"). It was an occult group with the usual trimmings. Stanton claimed access to the "lost magical secrets" of the ancient Templars, including the Holy Grail! He set up the group with nine Orders (levels) of Initiation, with a hefty fee to progress to each new level. A small Temple was built, where pompous ceremonies and sham rituals were enacted. And for several years the True Templars were, from Stanton's point of view, very successful.

After Dark Day, the True Templars attracted a host of new members. Stanton (now calling himself "Father James") increased the "donation" payable for each initiation from \$500 to \$3,000. Several hundred new initiates, plus established members being promoted through the ranks, made Stanton a rich man, and the drivel that he spouted about "magical secrets" attracted a number of genuine magicians.

In 2002, Stanton cashed in on his investment. He faked his own death, and fled to the Bahamas with around a million dollars. He still lives there, comfortably, off the proceeds of his invested cash.

After Stanton's "death," one of the members took over the organization, taking the name of "Father Joseph." Although himself a genuine magician, "Joseph" (Adrian Childes) also understood that the organiza-



tion was a con, and that its purpose was to make money. Unfortunately, he was less astute and less convincing than **Stanton**, and within six months his subordinates caught him with his fingers in the till. He was deposed and expelled.

After Joseph's departure, the new leader, "Father Thomas" (**Abdul Bakhir**), discovered that there were no books of secrets, no Holy Grail, and no money. It was concluded that in addition to the missing million dollars from the accounts (taken by Stanton) Father Joseph had also stolen a large sum, and was probably responsible for the organization having no books or relics. Father Thomas and the other members, after all, "knew" that the organization had owned many such objects. Their revered founder, Father James, had often spoken about them, and had even shown them the (fake) items. Joseph's home was looted, several of his cronies were expelled from the group, and eventually Joseph was magically murdered.

And so the organization which was originally a fraud, is now run by genuinely powerful magicians. Moreover, the membership is now diligently seeking the great relics and books which have been "stolen" from them, blissfully unaware that these objects never existed.

The True Templars now have about 400 members, almost all respectable middle-class folk, some with much influence (company directors, civil servants, etc.). This is way down from the one-time high of 2,000 members, as many have left since the squabbles and scandals began. Of these members, 300 have no magical abilities. They are only allowed into the bottom First and Second Orders of the organization. Another 50 (in the next two ranks) are Acolytes (as per the O.C.C. described in this book), while the remaining 50 (in the top Fifth to Ninth Orders) are sorcerers. Payments to join and to rise in ranks are now \$500; just enough to pay for the group to keep going, and to pay for the trappings of its weekly "traditional templar rituals" (invented by Stanton). Of course, additional donations are both welcomed and encouraged.



As well as its doomed search for the Holy Grail, the True Templars have two other problems to deal with. First, rumors of their mythical treasures and secrets have gotten out, reaching the ears of Seekers and others, and since they don't want the embarrassment of admitting that they have lost these wonders, they are currently plagued by outsiders using threats and bribes to gain access to these fictional treasures. Moreover, there is a threat from within the group, as a member of moderate rank has suddenly announced that he has been contacted by "the spirit of Jaques **Mollay**" (Mollay was the last head of the *real* Templars, burned at the stake in the fourteenth century), and on the strength of this "spirit's" patronage, has started to demand more power in the group and to criticize their spurious rites. **Note:** The spirit probably isn't Mollay's ghost, but some supernatural creature (Vampire Intelligence? Guardian? Night Prince?) who knows enough to sound convincing and would like to get its dupe into a position of power in the group.

Benefits of Membership: Considerable effort is made to train junior members, to help the powerless develop magical powers and to teach less potent magicians. Loyal service is rewarded with the free teaching of new spells or rituals, but the nature of such magic is always such that they would be useful in recovering the **group's** fictitious treasures (spells to gather information, etc.). Remember that currently, only about 25% of the active members possess any level of genuine magical knowledge and powers.

The Bossu

The common people of Haiti have long held it unsafe to travel at night, particularly alone. Tales have long told how unwary travelers might be waylaid by groups of devilish sorcerers, called *Zobop* or *Bossu*, who prowl the roads in columns or lay ambushes on bridges. In more modern times, gangs have been said to use cars, bundling victims inside and whisking them away. The gangs are said to be cannibals, able to change their appearance and transform into fierce dogs, and that each of these fiends must sacrifice a close relative on induction into the group.

The victim is leaped upon by the sorcerers, who bind him with ropes made of entrails and ask one question: "In or Out?" The victim who answers "In" is greeted as a member of the gang and given a draught of blood (perhaps human blood) to symbolize their initiation. Those who answer "Out" suffer an agonizing death, and are then supposedly eaten.

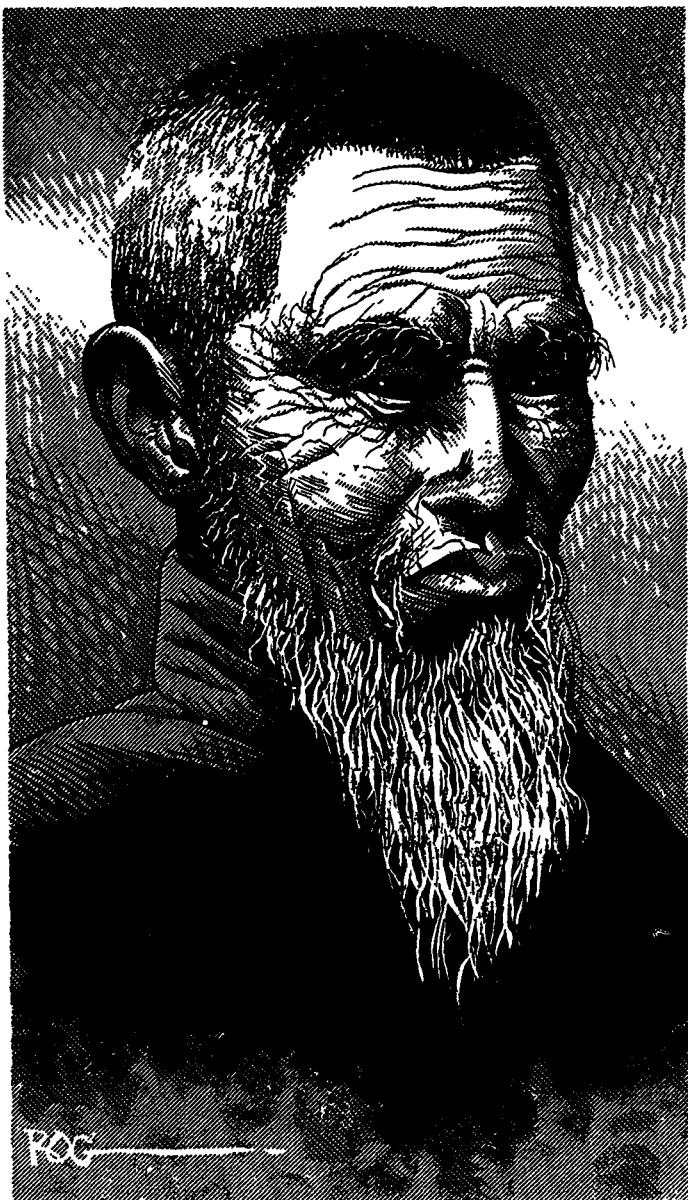
Those inducted into such bossu groups are supposedly at the leaders' mercies, and often suffer hallucinations and delusions. Those betraying the group are usually killed, but the attentions of a *Houngan* or *Mambo* (voodoo priest) can allegedly sever the bond between an unwilling member and the leaders.

Rare before Dark Day, the Bossu have flourished and spread since. As the *Mirrorwall* has weakened, the entities who support the Bossu have been able to grant greater powers to their followers. The "sorcerers" of these gangs are in fact evil *Channellers*, whose powers come from the dark creatures to whom they make blood sacrifices and whose causes they serve.

Bossu gangs are now found throughout the Caribbean, and in Central America and the southern United States of America. Each gang inducts members through a Ritual (level three, 20 P.P.E.) which simply establishes a link between the new initiate and the sponsoring entity through human sacrifice. Generally, the unfortunate sacrifice is a relative of the initiate, and the remains are later left for the police to find. The effect of this is that the initiate is at the mercy of, and obliged to be loyal to, the gang who might subsequently report him to the police or his family if he ever betrays them. Each gang of 6-10 Channellers is, in theory, independent, with no links to any other gang. In practice, however, the "spirits" whom they are in contact with (the entities who empower them) often direct them to work together or to perform services to aid one another.

It is not known exactly who the Bossu serve, although it does *not* seem to be the Nightlords. Most likely, the entities which grant them their powers are denizens of some Astral Domain or other dimension. The gangs' objectives seem to involve gathering humans for cannibalistic sacrifice (presumably so that the sponsoring entities absorb the victims' P.P.E., and perhaps their memories), and establishing control over specific areas and sites. They might drive tourists away from remote areas or terrorize the inhabitants of remote villages, the logic being (apparently) to create areas where no one will dare go for fear of these cannibal serial killers. What happens in these desolate areas is a mystery. Perhaps their inhuman sponsors have set up gateways there to their domains, or have even set up colonies on Earth in these regions.

Benefits of Membership: The Bossu turn initiates, normal folk, into Channellers, often selecting the nastiest locals in an area for their gangs (brutal husbands, brawling thugs, half-insane ex-soldiers, etc.). They are told that they will eventually be rewarded with power and status in a future (or alien) nation, and receive for now, their supernatural powers.



The Immortals

In addition to the magical Brotherhoods there is one other group of magicians who wield great power the Immortals

There are, at present, about fifty Immortals living on the Earth — people who have in centuries past, learned to cheat death and to live forever (or near enough) Their personalities and backgrounds vary wildly

Some are debauched hedonists requiring ever wilder experiences to satisfy their jaded appetites, some are apathetic and idle (for if your time is limitless, then there is no urgency in doing anything), others are manic and paranoid (striving all their lives to gain immortality, they are now obsessed with holding on to life), others astoundingly banal, still finding joy in simple things, and revelling in leading a series of blissfully ordinary lives Some have won Immortality through sorcery, some through struggles and deals with supernatural creatures, some by alchemy and others by meditation and profound spirituality (Check out Palladium's **Mystic China** sourcebook for loads of ideas on Immortals, plus statistics and rules for eastern Immortals) All of them have some sort of supernatural powers, and many are frighteningly powerful magicians

Many of these Immortals know one another Some are acquaintances or rivals Others have simply become aware of the others over the cen-

tunes Their relationships are usually distant, but are often based on a kind of unspoken respect and fellowship, and any rivalries which separated earlier in life are likely to have faded as all of their enemies and allies — the causes for which they fought — have passed away

Each Immortal is likely to be in contact with 2-3 others (although a few are total loners, and some cling closer to others who survive from earlier times), and so although there is no formal organization or network uniting them, information of interest (threats, opportunities, supernatural gossip, etc) tends to be communicated informally between them all, eventually However, this grapevine rarely works swiftly With an eternity on their hands, the Immortals are rarely in a hurry, and tend to think of a year as a pretty short period of time

More importantly, in terms of the politics of arcane groups, several of these powerful Immortals have cause to keep involved with mortal sorcerers This may include a desire to remain in touch with their human side, or because they need assistants for the rituals which keep them alive, or they can use a brotherhood's members to gather rare materials and ingredients for alchemical potions This means that one or two very powerful magicians and the occasional Immortal can be found amongst the senior ranks of some brotherhoods At least one of the Seekers' Council of Nine, Mary O'Leary, for example, has held her post for over three centuries

A Brief Census

In the world after Dark Day there are perhaps 120,000 practitioners of magic, including Sorcerers, Cybermages, Fleshsculptors, Mystics, etc , but excluding Chancellors and Acolytes That is from a total population of nearly six billion people Not a high percentage

So, in the US there are only about 6,000 genuine arcanists of notable experience and power (that's about 120 per state) Of these, perhaps 10-50% will be involved in occult groups, Brotherhoods, the Seekers, etc , with the rest simply muddling through their daily lives with the added boon of supernatural abilities

So, a typical major city in the US, Canada or Europe might have perhaps 50 magicians resident, which might include a small Branch of the Brotherhood of True Illumination (6 members), half a dozen Seekers, 3-4 agents of other brotherhoods, 4-5 independent opportunists, and about 30 people who have no interest in the squabbles of these factions nor in getting involved with political, criminal or otherwise dangerous struggles

Magicians, therefore, are not plentiful If the player characters slaughter half a dozen per adventure then they will soon have killed off all of the active magicians in their home city Practitioners of magic should remain, therefore, arch-villains, occasional enemies, allies, player characters, and incidental characters — rarely just "cannon fodder"

In terms of total membership, the various Brotherhoods mentioned line up roughly as follows

Shadowleague 1,000-2,000
The Seekers 1,000
Brotherhood of True Illumination 800-1,200
The Order of the Cobra 500-700
Bossu 200 (and growing)
The True Templars 400
The Iron Band 50-150

Of course, not all members are equal The Shadowleague's members generally lack any sort of loyalty or commitment to the League, and the Seekers' members are often academics and investigators The Iron Band's smaller membership, by contrast, is more ready to face danger and is better organized than most

Note, also, that the loss of even a single magical member for any Brotherhood (and especially a whole group of members) is a serious blow No one will readily forgive player characters for butchering their members! Even comparatively unimportant members



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CHAPTER 7: Magical Sites

This chapter looks at enchanted, tainted and naturally magical places. Sites where player characters may stumble across adventures, inspirations, dangers or just plain weirdness.

Legendary Sites

There are places across the world which are reputed to have magical powers — often the locales of great achievements of past civilizations, to which modern folk have superstitiously attributed supernatural properties or mysteries, as well as a host of places mentioned in myth and legend but which are assumed not to actually exist.

It is mildly patronizing to assume that all of the relics of the past are somehow magical or mystical in nature. Why do so many people seem to need to make the Egyptian pyramids magical constructs? Why can't people just accept that they were built as big tombs as part of an ancient culture and religion, rather than being "magical" artifacts (or even the creation of UFO aliens)?

Of course, in a role-playing game context, most G.M.s and players will want to involve genuine "ancient sites" in their games, and will be disappointed if at least some of these do not turn out to have some supernatural powers or significance. Consequently, this section gives some suggestions for famous and infamous legendary sites ... even the pyramids.

In order to suit the flavor of their adventures, or to frustrate players who have regrettably read this book before playing, G.M.s should feel free to change any or all of the details presented here, about any or all of these sites. Note: *Beyond the Supernatural* and numerous books in the *Rifts*® series are two other potential RPG sources for ideas and insight to famous historical and mythical locales reputed to be magical or supernatural. The local library, book store, and Web Sites will offer even more.

Outstanding Sites

Many ancient and mystical sites are unique and shrouded in mystery. Often because of their age, little is known about them, their "real" purpose, use and even who built them (or how). The most famous are usually one of a kind items. For example, there is only one Stonehenge, although there are loads of places where artificial hills or standing stones have been raised. Likewise, Egypt is the only place where pyramids rise from the desert, although South and Central America has more than its fair share of (flat topped) pyramidal stone structures and lost cities.

Moreover, many myths and legends speak of single places which are special, haunted or magical. An Armenian legend, for example, tells of a great cave where two brothers have been chained up for thousands of years: both are immortal and identical, but one wields immense evil powers and the other equal powers for good. Now that isn't something you stumble across every day, and there must be an adventure idea in that somewhere.

So, let's run through a few major ancient and mythic sites.

ATLANTIS! Legends about the lost city (or continent) of Atlantis have persisted since the time of the ancient Greeks. A great civilization located somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean and which sunk under the waves after a terrible cataclysm. Some point to the *Canary Islands* as Atlantean mountain tops sticking out above the sea. Some believe it was survivors of the great disaster who brought culture to the Egyptians and taught them how to build the pyramids. Others suggest ancient Atlanteans might be responsible for the creation of Stonehenge and/or the pyramids and cultures of ancient South Americans (Olmec, Mayans, etc.). Legends of the sunken land of Atlantis, and the faerie country of *Tír Na n'Óg* said to exist west of Ireland, also suggest a magical land in the Atlantic Ocean.

The strangeness of the BERMUDA TRIANGLE might point to such a place still existing, but hidden from human eyes or accessible only via portals on our world to another dimension. G.M.s wondering what this place might be like might let their imaginations run free, or might check out *Rifts*® World Book Two: Atlantis for some ideas.

BIFROST was the Rainbow Bridge of Norse legend. It connected Midgard (our Earth) to Asgard (the world of the Norse gods).

In *Nightbane* this could be considered to have once been a portal to another world or dimension. Perhaps it even still exists (a permanent portal or one that can be reopened), now long forgotten, extending from some inaccessible area of Scandinavia into the homeland of the Guardians, **Nightlands** or some other alien/magical place. The bridge's guardian, *Heimdall*, was said to be a god whose senses were so acute that he could hear grass grow and see for a hundred miles (160 km).

EL DORADO was the mythical city of gold, believed by optimistic Europeans to lie hidden in Mexico or South America.

This might refer to the headquarters or base for the world's "elder" Guardians, which might perhaps lie in another dimension or Astral Domain. Most likely the Guardians have (or once had) a series of these bases, perhaps one per major continent, as there are other similar stories of glowing cities in human folklore, such as the *Copper City* of Armenian myth, or the jewel-encrusted lands of *King Prester John* (believed by medieval Europeans to lie somewhere in Africa or Asia), and even some stories of Atlantis. Or perhaps it was (is) a dimensional trap of the Nightlords, mystical slavers, or other dimensional terrors.

The HIMALAYAS, according to Western occult traditions, are the home of the "Secret Masters" who have secretly been manipulating the world's civilizations for generations from their hidden subterranean city. This city might be the home of a Nightlords' "embassy" to our world, or a Guardians' base (see El Dorado, above), a Brotherhood of Immortals or sorcerers, a pocket dimension, a faerie tale, or any number of things. Another interesting option might be that it was once the base for some sort of supernatural or alien race, but now seems to be abandoned —only after much investigation might explorers (e.g. player characters) realize that someone else (a Vampire Intelligence, or an Immortal eastern sorcerer or demon) has now taken up residence here and is jealously guarding the place's greatest secrets.

MU or **LEMURIA** are two of the names given to a supposedly lost continent, somewhere in the *Pacific* ocean. It is said to have been a continent inhabited by an advanced culture with science, *magic* and great sorcerers and healers that surpassed all others (at least compared to those that existed 5000 to 15,000 years ago). Like Atlantis, legend claims MU sank into the ocean after a series of terrible earthquakes and natural disasters. Although some scholars and occultists claim to have found artifacts said to be relics from MU, no cities, technology, people or even underwater land masses have been found to support that MU was anything other than myth. In the *Nightbane* setting, it's possible the entire continent was swallowed whole by some powerful magic or dimensional anomaly. Perhaps it never existed on Earth, but was only accessible through magic portals? Perhaps it is, or was, an Astral Domain, or the true, original homeland of the Nightlords — destroyed when they were punished and forever sent to the Nightlands? Or perhaps it was an Earth civilization that was destroyed by the Nightlords and is the horrific crime that condemned them to life in the Nightlands.

The PYRAMIDS of ancient Egypt — nearly a hundred of them — were built to preserve and protect the bodies of Egypt's nobility for all eternity, in the days when Egypt was a powerful kingdom and the Nile valley was lush and fertile. By the twentieth and twenty first centuries Egypt has become an arid land. Is it possible that the Pyramids are magical constructs that have sucked all of the fertility and "life" out of the valley (by accident or intent). Could the Pyramids be great batteries

of P P E — of “life” itself If so, spells designed to heal, nurture, grow or create life (and/or “un” life/the undead) have five times the normal effect/power/result, or five times the duration, etc , when cast in on a Pyramid And with the right rituals, a sorcerer might absorb the energy from one of the Pyramids to renew his own youth and vigor, or to become immortal Or perhaps they are doorways to other dimensions, including the Nightlands? Or the magical constructs that link the Nightlands to Earth or which enabled the Nightlords (their original creators?) to keep a tenuous hold on Earth?

SAINT PATRICK'S PURGATORY. There is a cave in Ireland, associated with Saint Patrick, in which, it is said, one will dream of purgatory or of hell

In Nightbane, any character sleeping there should roll 1D20 A roll of 20 always indicates a failure, but if the total is less than the character's P P E or I S P (whichever is highest), then the character has dreams and visions (a group of characters will all have the same dream) These visions function like the Nightbane talent *Mirror Sight*, except that the viewer sees into random areas on the Nightlands (rather than looking into the area corresponding to his or her current location)

The character (and player) cannot control what visions are received, but usually they provide insights and information which will prove useful to the character in the future The scenes viewed in this way may seem irrelevant or trivial for now, but the G M should make sure that most of the visions contain information which will become useful later in the adventure or in a future adventure (the face of a Nightlord Doppelganger or other minion, a magical ritual, the name of a Nightlord enemy, etc)

Remember, of course, that certain Nightlands creatures can sense if they are being watched through Mirror Sight and can cross over to confront spies The same is true of these vision Throwing a few large creatures at sleeping(?) or entranced player characters should discourage them from overusing the cave

STONEHENGE (in southern England) was built four thousand years ago, as a circle of upright rocks with huge stone lintels across the top - like a circle of oversized doorways, in effect Many of the stones now lie toppled on the ground, but in the world of Nightbane, G M s might like to see the place as a set of interdimensional portals, each “doorway” leading (if correctly “opened” with long-forgotten rituals) to a different world or Domain

Chinese legend tells of a VANISHING MONASTERY which has existed since the third century AD It disappears and reappears at random, and is usually found by accident by those following the sound of its tolling bell It seems that the wise men who gather here are all strangers to each other, and that they come from all over China and beyond to discuss esoteric subjects

In the world of Nightbane, this is a place which can only be entered on certain evenings from the mountains of China, but it may also be entered from any point on the earth by those who are wise enough to step into it from their dreams (ie via the *Dreamstream*TM) All of the people who enter here are sedate, reasonable and extremely wise — monks, mystics and others, providing suitably enlightened and mystical characters with an opportunity to discuss problems (e g mysteries connected with the Nightlands) or spiritual issues (e g what is the sound of one hand clapping?) with other equally mystical fellows Those who are exceptionally wise and sedate may even be offered the chance to reside at the monastery (an excellent bolt-hole and a bizarre home) The G M should feel free to invent a suitably strange Abbot for the place, a calm Guardian, perhaps, or a three-thousand year old Immortal monk, or a dragon

YELLOWSTONE National Park, in America's Midwest, boasts an impressive array of natural phenomena which are just crying out to have supernatural origins in the world of Nightbane Pools of boiling mud which stink of sulphur could be the home to a particularly nasty group of creatures of the G M 's devising, creatures who laiddormant until Dark Day, but have now awakened Boiling springs and huge gey-

sers suggest the outflow from some huge, subterranean furnace or factory Think of a factory the size of a small city, powered by arcane machines and worked by enslaved humans for the good of the Nightlords A sort of magical power station creating energies which the Nightlords can use to resculpt the Earth's reality (unless the player characters stop them?) Or perhaps these geysers are actually connected to the Nightlands Do minions of the Nightlords crawl from them? Can Nightbanes and refugees from the Nightlands, suitably protected by magic, swim through their counterpart in the Nightlands to appear back on Earth? Unleash your imagination and explore all the possibilities of these and other places

General Types of Sites

There are more general “types” of supposedly magical sites which reoccur across continents, or across the world, standing stones, sacred springs, etc , either ancient monuments or places which time and again are referred to in myths and folktales

Information on and ideas for each general type of site is given in this section, along with an example site for each type which might provide the basis of an interesting encounter or short adventure

Blood Temples

There are places across the world where priests, mystics and sorcerers have shed blood in order to give living gifts to supernatural powers, or in order to magically exploit the life-giving potential of human or animal blood

The most obvious examples of these are the great temples of South America, Central America, and Mexico where the Aztecs and others presented the still-beating human hearts of their sacrificed captives to their gods But in Voodoo, across Africa, and beyond, the sacrifice of cattle or other animals to “spirits” has been a common practice There are also unusual places and stories associated with blood sacrifice, such as the castle of would-be-sorceress Countess Bathory, in medieval Hungary (see below)

The key feature of such sites is that a great deal of life-related magical power has been formed and spent in these regions, usually to feed a powerful supernatural creature (a demon or Nightlord in the nastier cases, but perhaps something more benign in other cases, as the G M wishes) The spells and life-giving magics which have so long gone unattended in these places may well have given life to any number of unnatural creatures which lurk in ancient Aztec ruins or in African jungles Spells with an intelligence and “life” of their own, may also have been given birth at these locales, while entities and other supernatural creatures may be drawn to lingering magic and/or painful memories etched indelibly into the land Worse, the beings which were originally maintained by these sacrifices may now be desperate for more blood — particularly since Dark Day

Numerous plots and adventures might follow Perhaps the player characters travel to South America to seek ancient wisdom and magics in lost ruins, only to find that — days' travel from any aid — they have disturbed dark creatures which have come to life in the caverns beneath the ruins Or perhaps the player characters must foil the plans of an evil sorcerer or cult, who is trying to lure a group of humans to one of these places in order to sacrifice them to some Nightlord or demon in return for superhuman powers, or to reawaken sleeping (evil) gods

EXAMPLE:

Csejthe Castle, Hungary

Csejthe Castle was the ancestral home of the Counts of Bathory, until it fell into the inheritance of the last Countess, Erzebet Bathory, in the late sixteenth century In 1610 this last Countess was walled up alive in her own castle! She was convicted of the murders of over six hundred girls and young women, her servants and accomplices being



burned at the stake. Her interest was not only in murder, however, but also in sorcery, for she bathed and showered in the blood of her victims in order to remain forever young.

Records state that Countess Bathory died in 1614, and the castle then crumbled away. The events of Dark Day, however, seem to have "resurrected" the castle, which stood at the site of a ley line nexus in modern Hungary. It would seem that the surge in magical power which accompanied that Day has reempowered the faded magics which had maintained the life and home of the Countess. But in a sense, the Countess never died, her castle never crumbled. Both had simply passed through into the *Nightlands* where the Countess had undoubtedly felt quite at home (she was a Night Princess).

Those stumbling upon the castle in the hills of Hungary, in a location where no modern map shows any structure, find magical and religious inscriptions etched into every windowsill and doorstep. A successful lore skill roll (e.g. Demons and Monsters, Religion, or Nightlands) reveals that these are semi-Christian (seventeenth century?) charms and prayers designed to stop supernatural creatures and powers from crossing into or out of the castle. No ghost, demon, Nightlands denizen, or similar creature can leave or enter the castle, while Nightbane, mystics and sorcerers (all part-magical and part-mortal people) feel uneasy as they step into the castle. Also, the warding prayers prevent any magics from entering the castle, so that spells cast outside cannot affect the castle or the contents within. Spells cast inside cannot affect the outside world but can affect those inside.

Note that although the castle is at a ley line nexus, there are none of the usual benefits of being at a nexus for magicians or psychics (all of the lines' energy is being absorbed to keep the castle and Countess intact and on Earth).

The castle is beautifully decorated in seventeenth century style, although without running water or electricity. Dozens of black cats prowl or snooze around the castle. All are actually Scuttlers, or similar creatures (see Chapter 3) who revert to their Nightlands shape if attacked. An ancient looking servant called Dorko (actually a magically animated corpse/a zombie) silently brings food to any visitor. The Countess herself soon arrives to entertain her guests, introducing herself as "Lady Erzebet Nadasy."

The castle has many secrets, including a blood-drenched torture chamber in the dungeons (accessible only through a secret door, hidden behind three other locked doors; the Countess has the only keys), a bottomless well of blood in the courtyard (the physical manifestation of the 5,000 P.P.E. magic which keeps the Countess young and alive), a library of books all written before 1610 (containing not only a sorcerous

library, but also an account of the life and trial of Erzebet Bathory, starting from her marriage to Ferencz Nadasay at the age of 15, and finishing with her conviction of 610 murders and condemnation to be sealed forever inside the castle), and any other nasty surprises the G.M. wishes to add.

The bedroom of the Countess is the *heart* of the castle. Hidden in one corner of the room, shrouded in shadow, is a great magical mirror. It shows no reflection, only the castle itself as it was before Dark Day, squatting in the black mountains in the Nightlands with crimson clouds rolling overhead in a perpetual thunderstorm and the Countess (in this image, a blood-soaked crone) howling in ecstasy on the battlements while gnawing at the body of some human victim.

In the corresponding region of the Nightlands — reached, for example, by stepping through this mirror — there is only a jumble of ruins. If anyone smashes the mirror in the bedroom, the entire castle cracks and crumbles, transforming to black glass which falls harmlessly around the heads of any mortal visitors. If such an occurrence unfolds, said mortals (including Nightbane) in the castle simply find themselves standing on a bleak Hungarian mountain top, amidst the rums of a long-crumbled castle. They are uninjured by the castle's disappearance, and have succeeded in returning it to the Nightlands, taking the immortal Countess with it. All that remains of its most recent manifestation are a few shards of the great mirror, showing the castle as it was in the mortal world, in the sunny hills of Hungary, with its beautiful mistress walking the battlements. **Note:** The shards might make good souvenirs, but could also be used by the unscrupulous to "summon" the castle back from the Nightlands and/or for the Countess to summon the holder of the glass to the Nightlands.

Countess Erzebet Bathory — Quick Stats

The Countess is very courteous to visitors, introducing herself as "Lady Erzebet Nadasy." She politely bids travelers welcome to her home, and charmingly makes small-talk with them. She discusses history, theology, philosophy, literature and other educated topics with wit and refinement. She listens politely to stories and smiles at jokes, hoping to win the characters' friendship and (if she can win the affections of a refined man amongst them) even the love of one.

The Countess has two objectives. One is to trick the characters into destroying *one* of the magical inscriptions on one of the doorways. Neither she nor her (magically animated) maid can go anywhere near them, but if one were broken she would be free to leave the castle to prey on the local peasants. One such ploy might be to claim that her "father" searches for her to release her from an undisclosed curse, but cannot locate her because his spells cannot penetrate the wards. They must therefore be destroyed so that the father can "save her." She may promise marriage or vast wealth to any character who will destroy one of them for her — a small favor.

Her other objective is to lure any young female characters amongst her visitors into her dungeons to murder them. If the players' characters are going to visit the castle, the G.M. should ensure that if none of them are young and female, a suitable female NPC or two accompanies them (the more sweet and innocent the better). Winning the characters' trust and luring one to her dungeon should take some time (at least one whole evening if not several), giving the characters plenty of time to investigate the castle.

If the mirror in her bedroom is smashed, the Countess, too, turns to black glass (which takes one melee), cracks open, spilling a sea of fresh blood (which takes a second melee) and, with the sound of six hundred cries, explodes into a shower of mirrored fragments (at the start of the third melee), inflicting 4D6 damage on anyone within 16 feet (5 meters).

Alignment: Diabolic evil! Magically maintained mortal.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 20, M.A. 16, P.S. 15, P.P. 14, P.E. 20, P.B. 18/3, Spd. 14

Hit Points: 60; **S.D.C.:** 15

P.P.E.: 112

Age: The Countess appears on Earth as a beautiful girl, fifteen years old with long black hair, wearing an old-fashioned silk gown which is sometimes virgin-white and sometimes blood red. In reality, she is over 400 years old and immortal.

Skills of Note: Art 85%, all Lore skills 98%, various Languages (including Latin, Hungarian, Italian), Hand to Hand Expert. Spells include See Aura, Befuddle, Concealment, Fear, Heavy Breathing, Levitation, Magic Armor, Draught of Life and Death, Maggots' Curse.

Level of Experience: 10th level sorceress. Considered a Night Princess in the service of the Nightlords.

Special Powers: The Countess may absorb PPE from any person whom she ritually and brutally murders in her dungeon. Note that this is the only way that she can regain PPE, and although the enchantments on the castle and the power of the nexus keep her immortally young, she must murder to increase in power. Furthermore, the deranged Countess believes she must bathe in blood to stay young and is obsessed with doing so.

The Countess cannot be killed. Her bloody sorceries have rendered her immortal and will keep her forever young. Destroy her body and she will only return to her castle hours later (and none too happy). But she can be returned to the Nightlands by smashing the great mirror in her bedroom.

Caves

Throughout world history, people have seen caves as places of mystery and menace, where hidden truths may be found and dangerously wise spirits lurk. Caves are often considered the homes of spirits or gods, often female spirits who control such "feminine" powers as fertility, weather, and water. Many believe that through entering and re-emerging from these sacred caves, men often experience a kind of epiphany or "rebirth." It isn't surprising that caves are seen as feminine, womb-like places, and equally unsurprising that they have also been seen as being close to or linked to the underworld and the dark world of the dead.

In Greek and Celtic mythology, the underworld or faerie world could be reached through caves. Ancient Romans and Arab cultures have held that dangerous magical spirits can often reside or can be found underground in caves (think of the story of Aladdin, where the Genie is first encountered in an enchanted cave). Throughout the Pacific, goddesses and nature spirits were considered to have lived in caves and giant stones.

There is certainly something poetic about the idea that player characters might descend into the dark (of a cave) and re-emerge with new wisdom — or perhaps, in a way, as new people. Mystics, for example, might begin their careers through an initiation which involves entering a sacred cave and spending time in meditation or conversing with the "spirits" there. A Mystic player character might enter a campaign, perhaps, at the moment when he or she reemerges from such a cave.

EXAMPLE:

The Glass Man's Cave

On the southern shores of Java lie the caves where, locals say, the Ocean Goddess's servants live. And one of these is the home to the creature whom the locals call *Glass Man* — said to be a spirit who was once a man, cursed for his disobedience to the goddess. It is also said that at night, Glass Man emerges from his cave, shining with a blue light like the dawn, and that one day in every one hundred years, he may appear to a mortal who enters his cave.

Glass Man may be a Guardian, or some other supernatural creature at the G M's discretion, and although he may only voluntarily appear one night per century, he may also be summoned with the correct rituals. His great power is that through his aid, any person may be released from any captivity, anywhere in the Megaverse!

In order to ensure the release of a person, a petitioner must bring another in exchange. Someone who comes willingly, understanding that they, themselves, will never be free again, and must serve the Glass Man for the rest of their days. In exchange, Glass Man may present petitioners with a key of glass which will open any door (e.g. to open the door to a magical prison), reveal the location of the captive person, and explain how they can be let out, or (if there is no other way) can arrange for them to be reborn, thus free, usually with the petitioner falling pregnant with a child who later turns out to be the reincarnation of the imprisoned person. Glass Man cannot simply teleport a person out of captivity, though he knows where all captives and hostages are held and can arrange (as described) for them to be freed or found.

Demons' Pools

Another common idea, found throughout the world, is that of spirits, demons, serpents or other creatures living within or emerging from water. Examples of this range from the Ancient Egyptian myth that the first land and first god rose from water, to modern stories of sea and lake monsters. The most common examples are of spirits, demons or gods living within springs or pools.

Ancient Celts threw offerings into sacred pools as gifts to the gods associated with them, and from this came the European belief in faeries and demons living in pools. From Japan to Senegal to Scandinavia there are stories of serpents, dragons or spirits emerging from a fountain, sea or lake, and demanding that young women be given to them (either to be his wife or a sacrifice to him). In the west, perhaps the story of George slaying the dragon is the best known of the dragon stories. Other cultures have held that brides should be offered to the spirits of certain waters, or that sacrifices should be made to them.

EXAMPLE:

The Lady of the Lake

In the story of King Arthur there is a magical or faerie Lady of the Lake, who entrusts the magical sword Excalibur to him, and to whom the sword is returned upon his death.

The Lady, Nimiane, is in fact an immortal creature, dwelling in another universe and merely taking on the appearance of a humanoid woman in order to interact with humans. Her home lies beyond the Mirrorwall (the reflective surface of her pool, somewhere in Britain or France, allows her to step through here on fine days), but her schemes extend across the Megaverse, as she has supported and combated sorcerers and heroes for millennia in attempts to win power and knowledge for herself. Not only did she provide King Arthur with his sword, but, in some versions of the story, she also fought with the magician Merlin, and her squabbles and interferences have extended through mortal history.

The deal which Nimiane offers is always the same. She will grant a single magical boon, such as a hugely powerful weapon, in exchange for the soul of the human's firstborn son or daughter (in Arthur's case, this was Mordred). When the child is born, Nimiane steals and devours its soul, and instills into it instead an intelligent magic of her own devising, making it (more or less) a loyal servant to her.

While the prospect of losing their firstborn may not trouble player characters (who tend not to think about parenthood), it makes an interesting backdrop for an adventure or campaign sub-plot. An associate of the player characters, for example, might have made such a deal and now, as his first child is due to be born, he is looking for a way to wriggle out of the bargain and save his child. Or, the player characters' ally is plagued by an evil enemy whom he (the ally) refuses to kill and, in fact, protects. The evil enemy is, of course, the ally's son, and if the player group is to gam the ally's aid against the fiend, they must persuade him that this enemy is no longer human nor truly his son.



Sacred Groves

Throughout human history certain trees have been said to have magical powers or supernatural inhabitants. In medieval Europe it was believed that witches could transform themselves into Elder trees, which bled if cut, and that oak trees would protect those sheltering beneath their boughs from all magics. In Japan and Africa, many trees were believed to be the homes of spirits, such as the *Baobab tree* (also remarkable for its shiny, almost mirror-like bark) which **Kenyan**s have believed must not be felled unless the resident spirits are first given 14 days notice to find a new home. A Japanese legend tells how an entire family was slaughtered by a huge, invisible monster in retaliation for the destruction of a certain old nettle tree. An Indonesian tradition states that the greatest trees are the homes of "bela," which are demigods who can grant prophetic dreams to chosen mortals.

All of these ideas could be used in **Nightbane** games. For example, specific enchanted trees might have magical powers. Or through certain trees, **Nightlands** creatures, or Guardians, or other beings might manifest or view the mortal world.

EXAMPLE: The Elder Grove

This grove of Elder trees dates back to the early eighteenth century, at the end of the witch hunts. Local folklore, now remembered only by the oldest and most rustic locals, tells of how the grove was a witches **assembly**, turned into trees by the vengeful power of God. It is said only one member of the coven escaped, a man named *Silas Cale* who was later burned as a witch. In the crypt of the local church there still remains the papers of Silas Cale, impounded when he was arrested, which include his journal. The man was, it seems, almost certainly a sorcerer, and his notes relate how, during a protracted squabble with a "demon lord," he transformed a group of the demon's underlings into Elder trees. Those reading the notes and making a Lore: Nightlands skill roll recognize from the descriptions in the text that these "demon's underlings" were *Ashmedai*.

The grove itself is a clump of unhealthy looking Elders, each with a gnarled trunk and four stubby branches. The trees look half dead, and rarely have many leaves. If cut, they do indeed seem to bleed, but the thick dark blood swiftly turns back to normal sap. In the center of the grove is a small brackish pool.

In the Nightlands, at the corresponding location, a cluster of petrified Ashmedai, apparently turned to stone, stand around a similar pond.

If one of the trees should be cut down or destroyed, then the corresponding Ashmedai in the Nightlands is freed from its paralysis, turns back from stone to flesh, and is likely to go seeking vengeance. *Silas Cale's* magic has kept these creatures trapped, but fully conscious for over two hundred years; they are all in a foul temper. Of course, Cale is now dead, and so the creatures will have to find some other poor victim to take their rage out on. When they return to fleshy shape, the creatures can slip into the mortal world by stepping into the pool in the Nightlands and emerging from the pool in the mortal world.

A nice little adventure, combining detective work and violence, might stem from the destruction of the grove. One by one the trees are felled, perhaps by a farmer or land owner, or by a construction com-

pany. And one by one the Ashmedai slip through the pools to seek revenge on the deceased Cale. The Ashmedai are initially unused to the modern world (they have not visited this world since before the time of electricity and automobiles), but swiftly adapt. Their killings are initially random, but then they begin to murder men who fit a certain physical type (resembling Cale), and begin to track down *Cale's* descendants. The player characters are sent to investigate these killings, and should be able to figure out where the creatures are coming from and what they want — perhaps through research, perhaps by interrogating the creatures (pretending to offer aid to them should illicit considerable information). At least at first, the Ashmedai (wearing archaic clothes and unused to technology) should be easy enough to spot. With luck, the player characters should solve the mystery before all of the trees are felled. Those creatures which are already free will have to be destroyed. After two hundred years of dreaming of revenge, they won't be dissuaded from their killings by mere words. Those who remain in the grove can easily be slain or stopped, either by traveling to the Nightlands and destroying their petrified forms, or just by filling in the pool so that they cannot travel across at this point. The longer it takes the player characters to work out what is going on, the more trees are destroyed, and more Ashmedai are freed.

Haunted Houses

The "haunted house" motif is a common one in horror fiction and folklore. The basic idea is that foul deeds performed at a site, or the spirits of previous residents, continue to exert an influence over the building and its inhabitants, years later.

By and large there are four basic reasons why, in the world of **Nightbane**, a house might seem to be "haunted."

First, it is possible that some creature resides in the house, and its presence provokes strange effects, or those who see the resident perceive it as a ghost. In a really crass example, an old deserted mansion might be home to a slovenly squadron of Hunters, who gobble up foolish trespassers and give rise to stereotypical legends of strange shadows seen flitting around the house and of people vanishing if they enter.

Secondly, it may be a force, energy or power, rather than a creature, which loiters in the area, such as one or more old spells in operation here, or the side effects of prolonged magic casting or a spell in the area that might have become self-aware and autonomous (see "living magic" and the random tables in Chapter Three), or enchanted items buried beneath the house may be exerting strange effects on the place, and so on. Many **arcanists'** homes gain reputations as haunted sites.

Third, it might be that the site is frequently visited by strange creatures. Perhaps it contains a doorway to an Astral Domain or a portal to the Nightlands, or is visited by members of a cult or Brotherhood.

Lastly, it might be that, as in archetypal ghost stories, the spirits or echoes of previous residents are still having an effect on the place. In terms of the **Nightbane™ RPG** rules, the easiest way to look at this is to consider these "echoes" to be fragments of P.P.E., just like spells, which have specific effects (or *entities*, supernatural energy beings; see **Beyond the Supernatural™** or **Monsters & Animals, 2nd Edition**). When a magician casts a spell, the strength of **his/her** will causes an amount of P.P.E. to take on a particular form, and to function in a particular manner. If a person feels particularly strongly about something, exactly the same thing can occur. So, consider this standard story-type:

A young **woman's** true love is away at sea, and she longs for his return. Every day she sits at her bedroom window (or stands on the headland by the house, etc.), watching for her true love's ship. One day the ship is sighted, but the weather is rough and before her very eyes the ship is driven aground and all aboard are drowned. The woman's grief is profound, and before the year is out she has died of a broken heart. Still, to this day her ghost can sometimes be seen watching from her **window/headland/etc.**, waiting for the lover who will never return.

This is a common ghost story. In different forms it is told across the world, with only the names and places really changing.

In game terms, the strength of the woman's hope, love and subsequent grief leaves a sort of "psychic imprint" on the area, so that a portion of it (supplied by her P.P.E.) lingers there, preserving these emotions. This P.P.E. or "spell," or ghost, or whatever you want to call it, causes the woman's figure to appear, and if the woman's emotions (and M.E. and P.P.E. pool) were strong enough, the figure may also be able to speak with strangers. A Haunting Entity is another (similar) possibility.

EXAMPLE: Glamis Castle

Allegedly, Scotland's most haunted house, the ancestral mansion of Glamis Castle (pronounced "Glams") boasts nine ghosts and a dark secret.

It is said, that upon reaching the age of 21, the heir to the Earldom is taken aside and shown the "rightful Earl," in whose stead each mortal Earl acts as a mere Reagent. This is supposedly a creature with no neck, tiny arms and a huge, bloated body, and may be the "monstrous child" said to have been born to the family in the eighteenth century and bricked up in its room to die.

Better attested are the nine ghosts, which include *Macbeth* (as in the play), *Earl Beardie* (a notorious gambler who can be seen at midnight playing dice with the devil), a somber *Grey Lady* in the chapel, a *Tongueless Woman* who can be seen fleeing through the grounds on dark nights, and a *Mad Earl* who scrambles over the rooftops in midwinter.

In the world of *Nightbane*, Glamis Castle can be assumed to be placed over a permanent portal to the *Nightlands*, and as a result of this link, the *Mirrorwall* between the Earth and *Nightlands* is dangerously weak. The foul monster is a Night Prince, whose palace stands beyond the portal in the *Nightlands*, and the legendary secret room is simply the concealed entrance to this portal. The visions seen in the house and grounds are often glimpses seen through the *Mirrorwall* of the mayhem in the Night Prince's own palace, although from time to time, creatures may come through the portal, or through other cracks in the *Mirrorwall*, and prow the grounds.

The ancestral owners of the Castle have, of course, been contacted and corrupted by the Night Prince since Dark Day, and with little of their humanity remaining, they now act as depraved aristocrats usually do in pulp horror movies and fiction — riding with hounds to hunt down defenseless peasants, sending minions to kidnap attractive local women, abusing their shackled servants, serving roast human for dinner, etc.

In the world of *Nightbane*, Glamis is a stronghold of the *Nightlords* on Earth, and a hive of mystery, legend, and utterly depraved horror archetypes. It might be a base of operations for the player characters' enemies, a place to infiltrate, search and explore, either to gather secrets or to assassinate the "foul creature" known to rule here (no one will know to tell these would-be heroes that the creature is a Night Prince who actually lives beyond the castle in the *Nightlands*). Poor or homeless characters might be kidnapped to serve as slaves in the castle, or be hunted down for sport. Or *upper-class* characters might unwittingly visit as guests of the owners.

Modern Monuments

Whereas it is all too easy to invent supernatural associations for ancient or natural sites (caves, springs, pyramids, etc.), G.M.s shouldn't overlook the possibilities of building weird supernatural stories around modern, familiar landmarks.

Creating supernatural twists for modern monuments is fairly easy. Here are some possible examples:

The few remaining sections of the broken *Berlin Wall* are the last fragments of the world's greatest shattered barrier. As such, the concrete wall can be used as if it were a mirror for crossing over through the *Mirrorwall*. Moreover, all attempts to cross over through the *Berlin Wall*, between the *Nightlands* and Earth, are unusually easy: only half the normal P.P.E. costs are required, and creatures (like *Scuttlers*) who

might sometimes be able to cross over may do so here at will. Magicians or creatures able to acquire large chunks of the wall (door-sized or greater) may also use such chunks to cross over, as they have the same powers as the remaining intact sections. The corresponding wall in the *Nightlands* still stands intact, and is something more akin to the Great Wall of China, standing 30-50 feet (9-15 m) tall and 20 feet (6 m) wide. Hunters are perched atop sentry towers and Hounds and other minions crawl upon its surface.

The *Eiffel Tower*, in Paris, is a perfect object for a group of Astral Mages or *Cybermages* to use as a huge transmitter. They have built an underground magic-casting room directly beneath the tower, with ritual created circles in which they can stand to communicate with others within the *Nightlands* or Astral Domains, and/or elsewhere. The tower acts, in effect, as a giant, magical radio antenna.

For many, the *Golden Gate Bridge* has been the gateway to a new world. In fact, it is the gateway to many new worlds. When the stars are right, and if the traveler knows the correct spells and rituals, it is possible to pass under the bridge and into an *alternative* version of Earth — into a version where Dark Day never happened, for example, or into a version where the planet has been invaded by aliens.

At *Ground Zero*, where the first atomic bomb was detonated near *Alamogordo*, New Mexico, a huge echo of that destructive power still lingers. Any magician casting destructive magics at this point finds that such spells have only half their normal P.P.E. cost, are saved against at -1, have double normal duration, and ten times normal range. Unfortunately, any magician making use of this overwhelming destructive power must save vs magic or else take 4D6 damage (direct to Hit Points) and age 1D6 years.

Wall Street, New York City, is not only a world center for mundane finance and business, it also contains numerous secret offices (hidden behind anonymous facades, or in magically concealed buildings, or through portals) which trade in more arcane commodities. Love and hate, loyalty and betrayal, pleasure and pain can all be purchased here, in bulk quantities, and the offices are always willing to buy such commodities for US dollars. The heart of a faithful husband (love), the right hand of a loyal servant (loyalty), and similar items can all be sold for one hundred dollars apiece. Exactly who buys these commodities is not entirely clear, but as Preserver governments and similar groups worldwide, spread their bigotry and intolerance, striving to turn the citizenry into a mindlessly obedient mass, there is a definite surge in demand for hate, loyalty and pleasure.

And think about all of those Communist Statues of Lenin and Stalin, in their dusty warehouses across Eastern Europe, publicly venerated for decades and since the '90s, despised and cast aside. Each of those statues is a potential magical artifact, imbued with P.P.E. by the attentions of the masses and now slowly dying. What do these statues feel, and how are they reacting to their betrayal and neglect?

EXAMPLE: Mount Rushmore

Think of Mount Rushmore. You know, the faces of dead Presidents carved into the hill. If you live in North America, you and your players are most likely familiar with it.

You could have Mount Rushmore as a huge enchantment in its own right, so that when it was created it was deliberately planned by a group of American sorcerers to stand as a magical beacon to liberty, democracy, etc. Perhaps that's why they built it on sacred land. Now that Dark Day has come, the facade is actually crumbling as America's democratic traditions are being eroded.

That's fine, although a little jingoistic, but it lacks subtlety and implies (and presupposes) that much of the world's history has been determined and dominated by magical conspiracies. Now, if your game is going to be heroic, patriotic, and deal with huge, powerful conspiracies, then this is OK. But if you want a game which is darker and more complex (less like a four-color comic book) then you might use Mount Rushmore *differently*.

So, remember that Rushmore was once part of sacred Native American lands, stolen from them in breach of treaty in the nineteenth century. The Sioux have always felt aggrieved at the theft (this may be amplified by the corruption and injustices of the Preserver Party). After Dark Day, many Native American shamans are discovering genuine powers — becoming mystics — and the resentment of the nation can take a dramatic and effective form, as P.P.E. from every muttered curse and coalesces around the site. Meanwhile, Mr. and Mrs. Middle America still see Mount Rushmore as a monument to America's fine ideals, and the hopes and patriotic prayers of thousands of tourists also generates a large amount of P.P.E. So, Sioux mystics can conspire against the place (causing the faces of all those treacherous white leaders to crumble away, or sneer, etc.). Meanwhile, the contradictory prayers and feelings of the Sioux and the whites inspire ghostly armies of heroic warriors to clash and shout through the dark nights. The whole place is gaining a reputation as being haunted, and occasionally, the phantoms actually kill living folk as well as one another, while the monument slowly crumbles away.

By the way, is there a monstrous, **Nightlands** reflection of this place? What is it like? Whose faces are carved into the land? Do they moan, laugh, speak prophecy, or eat people?

Minor Sites

In many ways, the most interesting magical sites on earth are not the legendary places, but the petty sites. The places replete with human detail, where the characters can get some good role-playing with earthy human NPCs.

These may be the minor and relatively common places that pass into modern folklore and get a few lines in sensational books on the supernatural — such as hills on which phantom hitchhikers are often seen, the sites of cattle mutilation, monsters lurking in the shadows, or a region where strange noises and/or lights or footprints appear. Little mysteries to solve and strange role-playing encounters can easily follow from these sorts of places, especially in a world where, after Dark Day, the supernatural has a stronger hold on reality: e.g. a player character stops to pick up a hitchhiker on a dark and stormy night. The hitchhiker climbs into the car, and the character can clearly see that she has a very pale complexion and a gaping hole in her neck where her throat has been slit! She smiles at the character with pale lips and says "thanks for the lift... hey, I'm dying for a coffee, how about we stop at the next diner and chat a while?" What does she want to talk about and what little mystery or adventure might it lead to?

Or these sites may just be places which have gathered little enchantments, or which have suffered from the overzealous experiments of a magician. For example, the cabin retreat of a now-dead magician might have a couple of defensive spells still lingering on (a menace to characters until they find out how to get around or to control the enchantments, but potentially useful as they will defend any player character who can get past them to shelter in the place) and maybe a couple of unnatural details or quirks (see Chapter Three for examples of what happens when mages cast too much magic in one place). On the other hand, the place may be the secret hideout, home or favorite place of a Nightbane, rogue (good guy) **Doppelganger**, a cult, mad scientist, minions of the **Nightlords**, teenagers looking for mischief, or hoaxsters.

A location needs little actual magic to be present to provoke a couple of interesting encounters, chance meetings, or a whole adventure, as the following example demonstrates.

EXAMPLE:

Saint Matthew's & Saint Anthony's

In a secluded hillside wilderness — with its own little rooftop heliport and beautifully landscaped gardens — an unorthodox doctor has established a private clinic, "Saint Matthew's," where for extortionate

sums of money, the wealthy may take her "miracle drug" to cure their incurable illnesses (e.g. cancer, Aids, etc.). And the miracle *does* actually work. The doctor claims that the drug is a rare herb from the Amazon, and has set up a clinic around an old chapel to Saint Matthew (patron Saint of Bankers, Accountants, etc.).

In fact, the doctor is a sorceress, using *Draughts of Life and Death* (a spell that sacrifices the life of one person to save another. She might even be an evil **Fleshsculptor** secretly using those unique magical powers to experiment on the poor to save the wealthy; see Chapter Two, O.C.C.s. and Spells, Chapter Four).

With some of the vast proceeds of Saint **Matthew's**, the doctor maintains a hospice for the terminally ill and appallingly poor. People who no one cares about and who may well die anyway. This is the squalid Hospice of Saint Anthony of Padua (patron saint of the poor), and although publicly, no one knows exactly where it is, it has actually been built in the dank cellars beneath the luxurious rooms of Saint Matthew's! The poor are brought in at night, in windowless vans, through the clinics' Goods Entrance and kept well out of sight of the wealthy folk up above. The good doctor wouldn't want her wealthy patients' recoveries (or willingness to pay) to be affected by the sight of the great unwashed masses.

So, the doctor can use her foul magic on a dying pauper in the cellar to cure a rich patient in one of the rooms above without either of them seeing the other or being aware of their connection. So the poor die, the rich recover, and the doctor becomes very wealthy (and is praised for her "charity" to the poor).

However, the daily use of magic at the clinic and hospice (combined with the murder of hundreds of innocent people) causes a build-up of loose **P.P.E.**, and weakens the divide between earth and the Nightlands. Soon, little dark creatures — scouts for larger beings, insignificant enough to "squeeze" through the "cracks" that are appearing in the barriers between the two worlds — are crawling around the buildings in the night. Mostly they come out of the greasy mirrors in the dark cellars of Saint Anthony's, though several find their way into the rooms above and one or two are often found in the Doctor's office. With time, as the barrier thins further, larger creatures may begin to "visit." And (if the G.M. is using the **Beyond The Supernatural™** rules for entities) there may also be Haunting Entities of the murdered poor in the cellars (and perhaps other types of entities or ghouls).

Player characters may come across this institution either if they or a friend are admitted as patients (to either Saint Matthew's or Saint Anthony's!), or if they are asked to investigate strange sightings there (hired by a wealthy patient? or sent by their superiors in *The Seekers?*). As well as the detective work involved in avoiding the Doctor's discreet security guards (and local police, if the characters try obviously criminal methods), having uncovered the conspiracy, the characters then have a moral dilemma. Should they stop the doctor? She is killing people, and weakening the barrier with the Nightlands. Or do they let her continue? She is also saving lives, and by reducing the frequency with which the Draught is used, or by using it over a wider area, the side effects might be reduced. Of course, characters of a good alignment could never justify the taking of one life to save another.

On Other Worlds

Magical sites on Earth must inevitably be fairly subtle: the existence of magic is still denied by the majority of Earth's inhabitants, and this would be impossible if magical sites were so obviously powerful that every passerby noticed their effects.

If a G.M. wants to create more striking magical sites (mile-high statues of living wood, waterfalls of blood, monuments made of skulls and bones, etc.) then these are best set on other worlds such as the Nightlands or in a Domain within the Astral Plane, for example.

The huge advantage of these otherworldly sites is not simply that they can be weirder or bigger than those on our Earth. Weirder isn't al-

ways better and size, as the say, isn't everything. The advantage is that imaginative G.M.s can use these sites as metaphors, jokes, or to provoke thought about any subject they wish. As examples: An otherworldly Capitol Hill might be a huge arcane machine, in the middle of which well-dressed puppets give rambling speeches without ever affecting the functioning of the machine which pulls their strings. An otherworldly **Disneyland** might be a huge series of fountains, pouring out poisoned nectar which renders the drinkers blissfully happy, obedient and docile, **and/or** where cheerful cartoon costumed characters are evil custodians who torture, kill and devour their visitors.

EXAMPLE: Nightlands' Belsen

In the Nightlands, the death camp of Belsen still stands. Occasionally the sound of a steam train can be heard on the wind and a steel door sometimes clangs in the distance. Otherwise it is deserted. Here and there, however, is a pair of glasses, a broken watch, a discarded suitcase, a hank of a woman's hair.

The area is perfectly safe, so long as no character tries to cast magic or goes to sleep here. Any sleeping character wakes soon after with the sound of a single scream ringing in his or her ears. It can take up to half an hour for the scream to pass away, and the character must save vs a horror factor of 10 or gain an appropriate phobia (a phobia of soldiers in uniform, or of captivity, of cattle trucks, or showers, etc.). Getting back to sleep here is impossible.

If a character tries to use any sort of magic or psychic power to discover any sort of information (Mirror Search, Telepathy, Empathy, etc.)

then the same scream starts, taking up the whole of his or her consciousness. The character must save vs a horror factor of 18 or else flail around, panicking, covering his or her ears and gasping for breath. This effect lasts for a total of nine million lifetimes or until the character is physically removed from the vicinity (which is likely to come first). When the character does escape the area, **s/he** will shiver in fear and feel sick for 2D6 hours (-30% on skill performance) and may suffer from a phobia (as above). All spells cast here, as one might expect, automatically fail, and psionic powers are at half strength (any use of telepathy, empathy or sensing powers will instantly induce the effects noted above). Psychic sensitives automatically feel great sorrow, fear, death and danger without actually using any psionic powers. They also *feel* that it will be dangerous to use mental probes and powers of mental communication.

Denizens of the Nightlands are not immune to these effects, and ordinarily avoid the area. However, they may propose the site as a meeting ground with powerful mortals to conduct negotiations without the risk of magic or psionic senses being used to discover their lies and duplicities.

On the mortal world, Belsen lies in ruins, shrouded by woods. Several hundred yards away, where a main highway runs close to the site, a small, unofficial billboard has been erected, bearing the words "We Will Never Forget." The words have been covered over with posters advertising rock concerts and raves. Next to it, a larger billboard proclaims that the surrounding land has been bought to build a new shopping mall.

CHAPTER 8: Arcane Echoes

One of the horror genre's staple tricks is to create an air of mystery, power and uncertainty by referring back to the past. There are times and events in history that always make us think of barbarity and danger (the period of the Spanish Inquisition, for example), and by invoking a sense of *antiquity*, we can invoke a sense of power and emotion. Ancient equals powerful. There is no logical reason to make this connection, but we all seem to do it. This reaction may be in part, due to the fact that so much of the past *is* a mystery to us. It is impossible for anybody to know exactly what happened or what people thought or felt in the past. Another element is the sensation that if some *mysterious* person, place, force or device has survived for centuries, it must be powerful (sneaky, cunning, deadly) to have survived that long. So, a dagger created in the flames of a medieval forge is always more *evocative* than a pocket-knife bought from the local hardware store, and the idea of an *ancient evil* is far more frightening than a recent or modern (probably more recognizable/familiar) evil.

In any case, by giving events, plots, places and items an historical past by creating the idea that an object or ritual is centuries old, a G.M. can create a sense of mystery and danger.

Some magic artifacts, plot ideas and danger from the past, brought to life in the present

The following magic objects are presented as the catalysts for any number of stories that a Game Master can extrapolate upon and insert into his or her own campaigns as needed. An Adventure Hook is included for most, and both an **I.Q.** score and Alignment are included for items which have developed their own intelligences. Note that the background for each item gives it an historical origin appropriate to its feel and function. These creations of dark magic should also give the G.M. ideas on how to build stories around similar items. Remember, the world of the **Nightbane** is not limited to one conflict after another with



the **Nightlords**. There are other menacing forces in the world that adventurers and researchers of magic, the paranormal and the unknown will stumble upon.

The Grey Tarot of Abelardo De Medici

P.P.E.: 50

Alignment: Diabolic

IQ: N/A

In a small oak chest, its hinges and fittings made of pure silver, is kept a deck of twenty two Tarot cards — the Major Arcana — rumored by some to be the *first* **Tarots** ever, of which all subsequent decks are futile copies. The cards first belonged to a member of the infamous Medici family in fifteenth century Italy, but although they are over five hundred years old, they are hardly worn.

Covering the back of each card is an intricate confusion of grey swirls cascading across a darker background. The face of each card is an archetypal Tarot symbol, though twisted and out of proportion, and painted with the lewd colors of a Technicolor musical. The reds, disturbingly, are particularly garish, and even the blacks and grays seem paradoxically bright.

The deck was actually created by and is in effect, an extension of one of the Nightlords, so when a question is put to the cards it is actually answered through them by that Lord. The answers will always be apt and generally true, but they will not always be impartial or honest. On the contrary, the **Nightlord** will distort the truth to serve his own plots, protect his servants and promote conflict, misery, pain and insanity. Still, the answers given by the cards will seem uncannily accurate; all the better to hide the untruths which are judiciously inserted into the readings.

The backs of the cards may also be used for divinations. The questioner picks a card representing the subject on which *s/he* seeks information: The Tower for catastrophe, The **Hierophant** to represent a bishop, etc. By concentrating upon the question one stares at the back of the card for around an hour. The swirling patterns during this time begin to take on meanings for the questioner, suggesting an answer to his questions. However, these answers too are equally biased: Great insights may be gained into a situation or person by this method, but the information is designed to mislead, a person's failings being emphasized above their virtues, the trustworthiness of allies underestimated, the danger posed by an enemy understated, and so-on.

The greatest disadvantage of using the cards, besides their inaccuracy, is that the more a person uses them, the more the Nightlord learns about that user. As the user becomes more accustomed to them, so the Nightlord becomes more accustomed to him or her, so that after a dozen or so readings, the Nightlord will always know where the user is and what *s/he* is thinking. Finally, anyone frequently using these cards may eventually be visited by a messenger of their creator. The Nightlord has revealed many secrets ... now the fiend wants payment for his help/information ... and payment will be extracted one way or another.

The Dull Jar of Al'Adin

P.P.E.: 600

Alignment: Diabolic

IQ: 25

Most legends have a grain of truth somewhere behind them. The story of Aladdin may now be sanitized Disney fare, a pretty story to amuse children, but centuries ago, the sorcerer Al'Adin did find a great spirit in a container in a cave; and decades later he buried the spirit again, cursing the day he had first released it. Of course, he hadn't married any Princess, but he had plotted and schemed for decades to win favor in his Sultan's eyes. Later legends would attribute many of his darker deeds to his "older uncle," but in truth, Al'Adin and his great en-

emy were (physically) the same person. Still, it is certain that the young idealist who first released the spirit from its jar was not the same aging megalomaniac who replaced it all those years later.

Al'Adin's jar is carved from solid stone, bears an inscription too ancient for any human to decipher, and stands about six feet (1.8 m) tall. To a casual inspection the jar seems empty, but it is home to a powerful spell which lives within the stone itself. By passing a hand across the largest of the inscribed symbols (e.g. if trying to wipe away the grime to read the inscription), the "spirit" of the spell is called from the jar, pouring forth as a black cloud from the mouth of the jar to hover above it as a **humanoid** shadow.

The spell does not grant wishes. It does, however, grant information — complex, hidden information, such as the secrets of **spells**, or the hierarchies of secret organizations, or the architecture and floor plans of the palace of a Nightlord. It does not speak except to ask what information its summoner desires, and if rebuked, insulted, threatened or mocked, it simply returns to its jar. Note that the magical force considers being asked a petty or dumb question like, "what will I have for dinner tonight?" as mockery.

If a person asks for some information, the "spirit" moves across to the character and melds physically with him or her. The process is physically painless for the character, but as the spell invades his body the mortal sees all sorts of images filtering through his or her mind: murders and wars, starving children and giant limousines, funerals and gala dinners, arcane rituals and infernal factories; most of them unsettling. The spirit lingers for 1D6 melee rounds, during which time the character cannot move, speak or even think. When it departs, it leaves the desired information uppermost in the character's mind. Unfortunately, the spirit also leaves behind a whole load of other ideas, images, desires and feelings buried more subtly in the **mortal's** mind.

Any character who has received information from the creature must *save vs possession* in order to suppress or reject these alien (and evil) ideas. If the save fails, then these ideas are integrated into the character's mind (there is no way of removing them later). This means the character will have dark and dangerous thoughts (revenge, murder, torture, envy, **discompassion**, etc.) in regard to certain people, organizations or actions. At first, these thoughts will come only during moments of intense emotion or stress (anger, frustration, depression, etc.). However, every time the character uses the jar, these thoughts and feelings become stronger. After four uses (whether the character has successfully saved vs possession each time or not), he or she is -1 to save vs possession for each subsequent use of the dreaded jar, as it slowly corrupts him. After three failed saves, the character's alignment will shift toward selfish or evil. The player must now choose a new alignment for the character, with a few restrictions: a selfish character may not switch to a good alignment, only to another selfish or evil alignment; an evil character may only select another evil alignment; and lastly, a diabolic character does not shift alignment but welcomes these "new" ideas and insights toward greater evil and doesn't fight them at all. In fact, after a character reaches diabolic (**and/or** is diabolic and welcomes such evil — has failed at least five possession rolls), the character falls completely under the direct, personal control of the thing in the jar (which is also diabolic), becoming its puppet. If a player character, he now becomes a villainous Non-Player Character (**NPC**).

The spell's sole objective, in fact, is to fill a person with so many of its own thoughts and ideas that their mind comes to resemble its own and it can then live "through" them, controlling their actions and experiencing the world via their body.

The inscriptions on the jar are not in any human language, but a *Principles of Magic* roll (or similar) discerns that they are ancient magical symbols, probably connected with divination. The jar was once a powerful magical device, created in order to reveal hidden information, but over the centuries the magic in the jar developed its own interests and vile personality.

The magic in the jar now has a mind of its own, and as such, it can be investigated by telepathy, empathy, etc. Characters looking into its



diabolic daydreams aren't going to like what they see. The jar is, above all, curious, and it spends its days wondering about vivisection, torture, and other acts of inflicting cruelty, pain and sorrow. It likes these strong, vivid emotions.

If it gets control of any character, then that character (now an NPC) will start trying to satisfy the jar's sick curiosity by experimenting with all sorts of horrendous acts of torture, violence and murder. One of its/their great questions is, "can the moment of death be captured for eternity?" Keep in mind, of course, that the jar has had thousands of years to collect obscure and arcane information, so it knows the names and histories of many Guardians and Nightlords, as well as more spells than you would find in a dozen role-playing supplements (and all it needs to cast them is a body to control and P.P.E.). Even worse, the horrible essence is cunning, deceptive, has a phenomenal I.Q. and no conscience; no regret or guilt.

Destroying the enchantment either requires smashing the jar: A.R. 17, 240 Hit Points and 400 S.D.C.; but it can magically regenerate damage at a rate of 2D6x10 hit points or S.D.C. per day, is impervious to normal cold, heat, and fire (magical versions do half damage), and is impervious to light firearms (pistols, revolvers, **sub-machineguns**) and all slashing or stabbing weapons. Blunt (smashing) weapons, explosives, high-caliber rifle rounds and magic inflicts full damage. Of course, it can summon and use any or all of its possessed pawns and their lackeys and minions to protect itself (imparting mystic knowledge as needed). It can also fake its death. This is usually done when it fears **defeat/destruction**, and with great fanfare, with the black cloud appearing just for an instant as a screaming mouth and then vanishing. Any detection for magic or intelligence/presence in the stone jar will show nothing (presumably it is **destroyed/gone**). Any possessed minions will

fall into a catatonic state, drool running from their gaping mouths and their eyes blank. This strange power (an ancient spell?) completely hides the magical, evil "spirit," however **this** is done only as a last resort, because the creature loses all contact with its pawns, the **jar** and reality for 4D6 months — effectively existing in a helpless limbo state, which it hates. When it returns to consciousness, any people once possessed by it also awake from their catatonic states and continue its legacy of evil. **Note:** The damned jar can possess as many as two dozen people (as described above). If the jar is destroyed (zero H.P. and S.D.C.) all those possessed fall into a catatonic state and **die** after 6D6 months.

ADVENTURE HOOK: A friend or acquaintance of the player characters (perhaps a fellow member of a Brotherhood or group to which they belong, like the **Shadowleague**, or a curator at a museum or a collector of antiquities) begins to act erratically, and after a while, seems to have changed in personality completely. **This** NPC has, in fact, come into contact with (if not actual possession of) *Al'Adin's jar*, and through asking too many questions, has now come under its control. The characters must find out what has happened to their friend or acquaintance, **and/or** stop his insane experiments and acts of cruelty. Unfortunately, they may have to kill him or her in the process. Having "dealt with" the NPC, our heroes should try to determine what "got into him," if they can. If they inherit his possessions, they will also get a very interesting looking magic **jar** ... Of course, they may never learn the reason (or at least not quickly) until another few people (the deceased character's wife, son or business partner who inherits the **jar**, etc.) are affected by it. **Note:** The possessed individual *never* reveals the source of his power or anything about the magic **jar**. Protecting the jar is top priority.

Mad Michele's Sculpting Hammers

P.P.E.: 40

Alignment: Miscreant

IQ: 5

Michele di Apolia was a young sculptor in sixteenth century Italy, tormented by grief over the death of his beautiful mistress, Lucrezia. For a while he sought to immortalize her in marble (from her death he sculpted only female figures, and all had the same face, her face), but due to the depth of his grief and loneliness, he could not be so easily consoled.

And so Michele began to resculpt flesh. At first he murdered poor women and runaways, rearranging their features to resemble **Lucrezia's**. His first attempts were crude and messy, but after his friend, the Bishop, lent him the forbidden books from the Cathedral's library, he learned to sculpt flesh as easily as stone.

Then Michele realized that he need not limit himself to dead flesh, and he began to "sculpt" the features of live women. The transformations were physically perfect, though terribly painful. Unfortunately, the women were not eager to play the role of Lucrezia. So, Michele killed each and began to work with new subjects. Slowly, after repeated attempts, the womens' personalities became warped by the sculpting, their characters coming to more closely resemble the dead Lucrezia's.

Michele never recreated his lost love, at least not in his lifetime. He died young, stricken by disease (or, some said, by poison or sorcery: Michele's wealthy friends and patrons kept him from ever being tried for his crimes, but he gained many enemies). But his sculpting tools, his chisels and hammers, vanished around the time of his death. Ever since, the tools have conspired to finish the work that the sculptor started, to recreate Lucrezia.



Michele's tools can be used by anyone with any artistic talent or training to resculpt living human flesh. The victim may be sculpted to appear as any other human, real or imagined, though the tools cannot alter height or build. They can, however, change the victim's sex, skin, hair and eye color, et cetera. However, this bizarre method of magical *fleshsculpting* is incredibly painful and the changes are unstable. A sculptor might be able to reshape a mortal (**doesn't** work on the supernatural) as *s/he* wishes, but sooner or later (sometimes years, sometimes months, sometimes hours later), the victim begins to change, slowly transforming into Michele's lost Lucrezia, adopting her appearance, answering to her name, and eventually gaining her personality and hazy memories.

ADVENTURE HOOK: The player characters might become involved with the cursed, enchanted tools if investigating the disappearance of a young woman. The woman, of course, has been transformed by them (her family will be upset that her personality has been altered), and there is also the question of why anyone would use Michele's tools.

The Haussman Memorial Slaughterhouse

P.P.E.: 2000

Alignment: Diabolic

IQ: 10

The Haussman Memorial Slaughterhouse is a huge structure, built with a vast facade of red brick on the outskirts of a modern **city**, hidden by a thin veil of evergreen trees.

A Tarmac road and two railroad lines run through the woods to its great iron gates. Within the thick walls (designed so that the hellish sounds within can never seep out to disturb the happy meat-eating mortals whose houses lie back in the woods), fifty thousand animals are brought in each day to be mechanically massacred, butchered, and wrapped. Gears whirl, bolts shoot into skulls, great engines drive saws and knives and packing machines. Death has a sound here, the roar of a thousand machines. Cold iron runs red with blood.

The drains run into a huge cistern beneath the slaughterhouse, which feeds the gore into the local sewage system. And at the end of a little-used service tunnel, on the shore of this reservoir of blood, a small rowing boat is tied, allowing access to the other drains and service tunnels that run from the lake, and to a small brick island in its center.

The slaughterhouse was designed and built by a group of unscrupulous magicians towards the end of the nineteenth century, as industrialization took hold of the West. Impressed by the efficiency of modern industry, and annoyed by the slowness of traditional magical sacrifice, they conspired to create a rational, *mechanized* process of sacrifice. The architecture of the place, the layout of its drains, the weird ceremonies conducted on the site while it was being built, all of these have enchanted the site so that a little P.P.E. is now drained off from the slaughtered beasts and concentrated at the artificial brick island. It would be virtually impossible to destroy the enchantment without first demolishing the building, as its very design is a part of the magic.

One point of P.P.E. is gathered from each slaughtered beast (that is fifty thousand points per **day!!**), but cannot be stored for longer than 24 hours. This P.P.E. is accumulated each day at the island in the center of the lake. This may be used by magicians to fuel any ritual performed at the island in the bloody lake, taking the place of P.P.E. which would ordinarily be supplied by the presiding magicians or by animal sacrifice.

Unfortunately, the huge reservoir of P.P.E. causes small, temporary dimensional portals and random anomalies, calling forth entities as well as creatures from the **Nightlands** and giving birth to hideous monsters which wallow in the bloody lake. The magic can also take on the form of any flesh-related enchantment that the Slaughterhouse desires.

All creatures and enchantments caused by or brought from other worlds by this excess P.P.E. are under the Slaughterhouse's control, for



the building (or rather, the enchantment built into it) is so huge and powerful that it has already gained self-awareness and more than a rudimentary intelligence (I.Q. 10). And, like the building itself, the enchantment seeks only to destroy and kill. It delights in the slaughter of the beasts within its walls, and its magics have gathered a small group of Hunters and/or Hounds, and less easily defined creations (abominations of the G.M.'s own design with 3D6×10 hit points and 1D6×10 S.D.C.) who live around the bloody lake, and swim out into the sewer system to hunt. They never strike within 10 miles (16 km) of the slaughterhouse itself to avoid drawing attention to it. The magics and the creatures here have little loyalty to the humans who own or work in the slaughterhouse, but they know that without them the animals will not be killed, and so the Hunters and others leave them alone: unauthorized intruders, however, are another story.

The build-up of P.P.E. also attracts scavengers (mainly rats) and carrion birds, which have settled in vast numbers around the plant, and gives the whole place a tangible reek of death.

A hundred men work at the slaughterhouse, loading, checking, mopping blood from the floors, sawing bones, fixing machines, and handling paperwork. The loose P.P.E., strong sentient magic, and the work that they do, has twisted their minds, hardening them to death, making them see slaughter as a neutral process. Concerned for their jobs and filled with an unspoken loyalty to the plant, most will do almost anything to protect it. The workers are rarely absent, late or careless; they serve the plant unusually well. More than one nosy interloper or union troublemaker has ended up carefully diced, minced, and flushed into the sewers beneath the plant. The same fate has befallen those who come to investigate (or use) the aura of magic or to investigate strange disappearances or deaths in the community (and who come too close to the truth).

The site was in fact unused for several decades around the end of the twentieth century, after the original creators and their heirs had died or moved away, and a series of brutal serial killings and disappearances ravaged the city for that period. But these events have now stopped (at least in the immediate area, outlying communities aren't so lucky), as the Slaughterhouse is now under new management (the sentient magic itself).

G.M. Note: Exactly how many Hunters, Hounds and other monsters exist in the sewers and around the slaughterhouse is left entirely to the G.M. Other creatures such as entities and Scuttlers may also linger in the subterranean network of drains and sewage, and may not be under the direct control of the Slaughterhouse, but instinctively know to defend the place — their new home. In all cases, their numbers should be relatively low. An army of monsters is difficult to conceal, so even the Hunters, Hounds and abominations of its own designs (demonic cattle-things? giant insects with the heads of slain humans?) are not likely to number more than a half dozen each.

The Hand of Simon de Barre

P.P.E.: 100

Alignment: Miscreant

I.Q.: 19

A French immigrant to the United States, Simon de Barre has devised a novel method of reincarnation. He has created ten gritty candles, made from incense, toad's fat, graveyard dirt, hellebore, and his own left hand.

His writings, which fail to mention how the candles were made, explain that they ward off malignant spirits. Each burns for around eight hours, and (his writings claim) are best used in the night. If burned on a bedside table they *guarantee* the occupant of the bed a sound night's sleep. After his death, these candles (with letters explaining their supposed effect) may be left to younger relatives or servants, they may be auctioned off with the contents of his house, or they may be left hidden to be found later by a stranger.

In fact, the candles do not ward off spirits. On the contrary, they summon de **Barre's** own personality, which he has left embedded in the enchantment on the candles. As the candles bum, the personality is released to possess anyone sleeping near them. The sleeping victim dreams of being smothered and wakes to find his bedclothes soaked in sweat (Have the victim make a roll to save vs possession, but don't tell them what they're rolling against. A failed roll indicates that de Barre's personality has possessed him or her, though *s/he* will not be aware of this yet).

Over the next year, the victim comes to require more and more sleep, eventually sleeping away over half the day. Then, de Barre's personality takes control of the body for an hour or so each night: The victim neither remembers nor is aware of **his/her body's** actions, except as a hazy dream, but de Barre's hedonistic excesses are likely to land the possessed character in trouble. De **Barre** may alter the **victim's** legal documents, squander **his/her** money, drink heavily, engage in gambling and debauchery, or even cut off **his/her** hand to make another set of candles. After a few years, the victim will wake for no more than a few hours each morning, while de Barre's personality controls **his/her** body for up to twelve hours a day. After a few more years, the victim will never wake, leaving the personality in complete control of its new body.



ADVENTURE HOOK: This gradual possession might make for an interesting subplot in a long-running campaign, as a player character, or an NPC associate, slowly loses control of his or her body and struggles to understand and deal with the predicament. It may be simpler, though no less interesting, to have a friend or relative of the player characters thus possessed, requiring them to seek a way to free him of the possessing spirit.

The Perfect Heart

P.P.E.: 400

Alignment: Miscreant

IQ: 10

In the days of Egypt's **Fatimid** Caliphate (around AD 1100), a General named Murad **al-Athir** approached an aged sorcerer, Aziz **Dhikr**. He sought one thing: perfect courage. He desired that nothing should ever cause his sword arm to pause, nor his footstep to falter.

Aziz Dhikr agreed to grant the General the courage that he so wanted in exchange for permission to marry the General's fairest daughter. The General agreed, and the sorcerer **crafted** for him a perfect heart. A heart that would never know fear. A clockwork heart made of iron and bronze.

In his cave, Aziz Dhikr tore out the General's organic heart, and replaced it with this cold metal machine. From then on, al-Athir knew no fear. He also knew no love, nor guilt, pity, joy or sorrow. All of the General's feelings were taken from him. And without these scruples, the General began to plot, bribe, threaten and murder his way to power in Egypt, hoping that he might himself become Caliph. During this time, the **Cybermage** mechanical heart absorbed the General's lust for power, and many of his attitudes (his belief in the superiority of nobles over common mortals, for example, and his dislike of Christianity).

Despite his cold and calculated maneuvers, al-Athir never became Caliph. He was murdered by a band of hedge-magicians, who learned of the magic and killed him so that they might take his heart and give it to one of their own political allies. The enchanted Heart begrudged the murder. Permanently tainted (and, in part, empowered) by the General's lust and attitudes, it enforced enough of its will to direct the thoughts of its next host to ensure that all the hedge-wizards were murdered. The Heart believes that Aziz Dhikr must have arranged for the General's murder (none but al-Athir and the sorcerer knew of the heart's existence), and thereafter has always hoped to avenge itself on Dhikr, **and/or** his descendants.

In the centuries after its creation, the Heart became something of a legend amongst magicians of the near East. Practitioners of magic vied to own the heart in order to fortify their pawns, but in the 13th Century it was carried off by the Mongols. Since then, it has reappeared sporadically — being discovered at the Imperial Court in eighteenth century China, and again in a Royal Torturer in Iran in the late 1960s, before it disappeared again.

If placed in the chest of a recently slain mortal, he or she is revived, with full memory and faculties, but with +10 P.E., doubled Hit Points and no emotions, conscience, or scruples. The only conditions are that the body be in basically good condition, and that it must still be warm when the magical mechanism is installed. The host also gains a driving lust for power (thanks to the original host, General al-Athir), may not have a good alignment (good alignments drop to anarchist and, with time, evil), and can be subconsciously *influenced* by the Heart (persuaded to trust or distrust certain individuals, inspired to hate Aziz **Dhikr's** descendants, and so on). This mechanical heart, of course, does not beat, and does not pump blood. The mortal host must be dead, and so magics designed to affect the *Undead* can kill or affect him or her. **Note:** As long as the Heart is physically attached to a body, its magic and intelligence/influence cannot be magically negated or exorcised. When removed from the body, the force inside the mechanism is dormant, becoming an active force only after it is installed.

Physically destroying the host body does not damage the magical mechanism, which can be installed in yet another ambitious fool willing to sacrifice all of **his/her** conscience and more than a bit of his soul. Physically destroying the artificial heart (A.R. 10, 50 S.D.C.) will release the energy contained within. It will immediately try to possess a nearby living person (other than the one who specifically destroyed it; for him, it reserves revenge). In this case, the enchantment can no longer animate a corpse or increase a person's toughness, but the magic is free to insinuate itself into a living heart.

Raiding History

In the earth's four thousand years of written history, the planet's various inhabitants have already created a wonderful resource for imaginative G.M.s, offering their myths, legends and folklore, which tell of thousands of charms, talismans, magic items, and magical wonders and curses. Raiding historical folklore is an excellent way of gaining inspiration.

The following are examples and ideas for various charms, talismans, items and magic inspired by existing myths and legends pulled from historical imaginings.

Note: Game Masters should use only what seems suitable and comfortable for him or her and the players. Avoid topics, mysticism, cultures and beliefs that might offend or disturb the players' personal beliefs.

Voodoo Enchantments

The following four are fictional examples of *Voodoo talismans* and their ingredients. These are examples of how to bring these things to "life" in your campaign. To give them a sense of wonder and mystery. G.M.s should have little difficulty inventing other, similar charms, or concocting spurious "recipes" for charms from other cultures and traditions.

Charm of Protection: An amulet worn to guard against sorcery may be made from the tooth of an alligator. The tooth must be prepared by soaking it in a bottle containing the bile of a bullock, boar, goat and sow, alligator meat, blood of a virgin **mouse**(?!), ash, and other similar substances. Adds +1 to a specific saving roll (must be indicated when created; +1 to save vs magic, or poison, etc.).

Charm/Good Luck: "Gambler's bags" could be made from leather, red cloth and a shark's tooth. The leather is inscribed with the amount of money which the person wishes to win, and the tooth is sewn between the leather and the cloth. Adds +1 to a specific saving roll (must be indicated when created) or +5% to all rolls concerned with pure luck or chance, like playing roulette.

Curse/Warning of Doom: Simply delivering to a person a dead lizard in a matchbox. Said to represent the recipient in his or her coffin — indicating **s/he** is marked for death, and sometimes considered sufficient to cause the recipient's death. It puts most people on **edge**, which in turn can make them jumpy and careless.

Magic Attack: A small bag made of human skin, filled with black wax and dried blood, can purportedly be used to cause the death of any desired target if the correct words are spoken in their presence.

It costs 100 P.P.E. to create in a ritual that takes one hour. Range: 15 feet (4.6 m). Duration: The magic attack occurs one or two minutes after the talisman is activated in the target's presence, but the pain, panic, and paralysis inflicted lasts for one minute. Damage: The victim feels as if **s/he** is having a heart-attack, with chest pains, head pounding, etc. lasting for one minute. Suffers 5D6 (total) damage direct to hit points from the attack, accompanied by panic, confusion and one hand and arm goes limp/is paralyzed. This magic attack is especially lethal if the attack happens while the victim is driving, swimming, standing on a balcony, and other situations where momentary loss of control (as a result of convulsing pain and panic) can lead to additional injury (i.e. car crashes, drowns, falls, etc.) — in less precarious situations, its use may be a warning.

A medical examination of the survivor (or the deceased as the case may be) indicates nothing out of the ordinary, although accounts by the survivor or witnesses of the event would suggest a mild heart attack. Note: This attack can only be performed against the same individual once per 24 hours. The attacker, with the magic bag, must always make a personal appearance and speak the words that activates the magic in the victim's presence.



If it cannot possess anybody (it only gets three tries in a one minute period), it fades away to oblivion. If it possesses a person, it will slowly exert its corrupting influence as it did as a mechanism of magic, and it will try to have that person create a new mechanical heart for it to inhabit, for it is too vulnerable without one. If that character is slain before a new heart is **made**, the malignant magic force vanishes forever. Likewise, without the mechanical heart to physically link it to its host body, it can be forced out via exorcism, returning the possessed character to normal. Unless the mystic force can find a new host within one minute (three tries), it is forever destroyed!

ADVENTURE HOOKS: 1. The Heart can be introduced to a campaign as one of the belongings of a powerful adversary. What do they do with it? What if it falls into the wrong hands?

2. Or, if they serve unpleasant masters themselves, they might be sent out to steal it (tough on the current owner if the Heart is installed inside him) for their patron.

3. One or more innocent (perhaps even non-magic practicing) descendants of Aziz **Dhikr** are being murdered (after torture? including the character's in-laws, cousins, etc.). The murders will go on unchecked unless the player characters intercede. The person responsible? Somebody with power and the Perfect Heart of General **Murad al-Athir**! An old acquaintance, perhaps.

4. They encounter or learn of a political or military leader who is without conscience and who is engaged in foul, secret plots to further his or her power at the expense of others. Plots that may involve, magic, demons or the **Nightlords**.

The Salus Rings

Another **charm**, these ancient rings resemble archetypal "occult" talismans. Salus rings carry the mark of a serpent eating its own tail, forming a circle around a pentagram. These were worn as finger rings by devotees of the Etruscan goddess Salus (or Hygiea, daughter of Aesculapis, in Greece), who was worshipped as a goddess of Home and Hearth.

Hers was no dark, mysterious cult, but celebrated publicly in the hopes of securing peace, prosperity and fertility for the community. For themselves, devotees sought health and good luck, and she was considered to be a patron of medicine and healing.

G.M.s might permit such rings to have any one or two of the following powers: +5% to the **Homeopathic/Holistic** Medicine skills of anyone trying to heal the wearer, or +1% to all Medical skills which the wearer knows, or (to simulate a "good luck" charm) +1 to save vs poison, disease, insanity, etc., or +5% to any skill roll to avoid or save against arbitrary misfortunes that might cause injury.

The cult, however, has been extinct for nearly two thousand years. No new rings could now be created, and those which still exist are museum pieces.

Spirit-Driven Spells

There have been traditions in many cultures whereby ordinary people have attempted to use the powers of the dead. Not merely specialist shamans and sorcerers, but burglars, adulterers, and young lovers, amongst others, who could enlist the dead for their causes, at least according to these traditions.

The European "Hand of Glory" (described elsewhere in this section) is an example of a burglar using the power of the dead to aid his criminal activities. Similarly, burglars in Java have sprinkled earth from a grave around houses that they intend to rob, believing that the earth causes those in the house to sleep as soundly as the dead. A similar native belief from Peru is that powdered bones can be scattered over an area to induce deep sleep.

In other cultures, similar methods have been used to achieve different objectives. So, for example, young lovers sprinkled bones or graveyard dirt onto a house's roof to render those sleeping below as deaf as the dead, hoping that they will therefore not disturb sleeping parents.

In Bulgaria, coins used to be placed over the eyes of corpses before burial, and a custom developed whereby adulterers would dig up these coins and wash them in water: the water, if consumed by the cuckolded spouse, would render him or her blind to the **adulterer's** dalliances.

In a game of **Nightbane**, of course, it would be absurd if player characters or villains could incapacitate a house full of people just by scattering a handful of dirt or bonedust. However, G.M.s may use these traditions as inspiration for spells and rituals that may magically induce a similar effect. So, for example, a sorcerer might use bone or dirt as ingredients in a spell or ritual to put a house's inhabitants into a deep slumber or coma for several minutes to an hour. Note: Check out the guidelines for creating new spells and rituals in Chapter Three.

Alternatively, a malignant magician or Night Cultist might be able to achieve a similar effect. Here, with a suitable spell or Ritual, the ghost of the person whose bone or **grave's** dirt is used may be persuaded to render a house's occupants senseless for the duration of one night: the Night Cultist sprinkles the bone or dirt on or around the house, and the spirit visits each inhabitant, attempting to draw each sleeping occupant into a coma (saving rolls vs possession made as normal). If the ghost is successful, the victim is rendered senseless until dawn and the spirit may move on to another target, but if the victim resists, then he or she sleeps normally and the ghost, exhausted by the effort, is banished.

Similarly, many cultures (including Africa, Japan, China and the Native American Indians) have legends about friendly, ancestral spirits who help them in times of need. Such spirits were said to offer flashes of insight (divination), advice (suggestions and warnings), and even

protection against other spirits and the supernatural. Thus, such helpful spirits might be summoned in a ritual and *asked* to protect a home or family members from an invading spirit with foul intent, or warn the character of the presence of other spirits or supernatural evil. Note that in this tradition, the same spirit usually appeared to help, and was typically a close family member (father, mother, grandparent, brother, etc.).

Six Major Demons

Medieval European Churchmen and sorcerers created a complex cosmology, naming and describing hundreds of angels, demons and more ambiguous spirits. In the world of **Nightbane**, these "demons" may indeed be dark spirits, but consider the possibility that they were actually misunderstood descriptions of **Nightlords**. The six greatest of these demons are described below, and G.M.s should find plenty of inspiration here for creating powers and descriptions of **Nightlords** and **Night Princes** in their campaigns.

Twenty-first century characters should have little difficulty discovering the names and legends of these creatures. By the 1990s, most town and University libraries hold occult-related Encyclopedias in their reference sections.

ASMODEUS was probably derived from the **Zoroastrian** archangel **Aeshma**. In the Jewish tradition, Asmodeus was named as King of the Demons, briefly enslaved by Solomon. Christian folklore held him to be a demon of rage and lust, often identified with storms. Medieval writers saw Asmodeus as an expert on astronomy and mathematics, but it was also believed that he could find hidden things and bestow the power of invisibility, and advised that he be shown great respect (bowing one's head in his presence, etc.). The **Lemegeton** describes him as having three heads (bull, human and ram), carrying a spear (possibly associated with lightning), with great wings and a cockerel's feet, usually riding a dragon. Alternatively, he rode on a white horse and was apparently human with only one, human head, upon which he wore a crown, without which his powers were greatly diminished (reduce by at least 50-60%). Adventure Hook: "All I want you to do is steal a piece of jewelry ... a crown, actually ... although its owner rarely removes the **object** ..." Perhaps a mortal wishes to steal some of the creature's powers, or simply wants to disable it or extract a ransom for the return of the crown.

ASTAROTH (or **Ashoreth**) was originally **Asarte**, the goddess of the **Canaanites**, a deity of fertility and love. The **Judeo-Christian** tradition, however, transformed her into a male demon. **Astaroth** was considered slothful and idle, with usually malevolent power over fertility and lust; **knower** of all secrets. Medieval diabolists claimed that he could tell every detail of the past, present and future, and the medieval Grimoire *Verum* names him as The Grand Duke, third in command of all the demons. When summoned, Astaroth is usually supposed to appear as a naked man, half black and half white, or else as a mutated mule. When left alone in hell, he was said to command forty legions of demons and to act as "hell's Treasurer" (counting souls rather than money, no doubt). Adventure Hook: This sounds like some infernal bureaucrat — a creature with power over a huge horde of knowledge (say, an infinitely huge library), who also administers the jails or work-camps of the realm and perhaps some military force (an army? or security **force**?). Characters might be sent to discover information or ensure the release of a captive slave, whether through trickery or negotiation.

BAPHOMET. An invention of the thirteenth century, Baphomet was said to be a demon whom the Knights Templars worshipped when they allegedly turned from Christianity (The King of France became very rich as a result of these allegations, which may have had little truth in them.) Idols representing Baphomet were supposed to have the face of a skull, or one, two or three human heads, with or without a beard, or with the head of a goat. In fact, the stories contradict each other so crassly that G.M.s may as well portray Baphomet in any way which fits in with their adventures. From the fourteenth century, Baphomet has been considered a source or creator of evil, and a patron of lust, fertility and wisdom, and symbolizing this later tradition gave it the head and

legs of a goat, the body of a woman, feathered wings and a flame flickering on its forehead.

BEELZEBUB, meaning "Lord of the Flies," was originally a Hebrew pun, ridiculing **Baal-Zebul**, the Philistines' "High Lord." Some medieval demonologists described their Beelzebub as a creature of great height, seated on a throne and wearing a crown of fire, covered in black hair, and with bat-like wings, webbed feet and a horrific face. Others claimed that he came as a giant fly, while others described him as a **gruesomely** mutated calf. Some considered that Beelzebub's tacit aid or permission was required to summon lesser demons, and noted that inadequately protected sorcerers might easily be slain by the creature. The Grand Grimoire names Beelzebub as the second in command of all the demons, he was often thought to preside at witches sabbaths, and some witch-hunters believed that witches denied Christ in order to worship him.

LILITH was once thought to have been the first woman on earth, made by God to be Adam's wife and equal, but she left or was cast from paradise. Legends say that she then gave birth to hordes of demons (one hundred per day), fathered by other demons or by Adam, and that she prowls the world at night, slaying and devouring children, and seducing men in order to drink their blood. She is usually described as a beautiful woman, apparently able to mimic the appearance of any mortal lady, though marred by rather hairy legs. King Solomon, it is said, suspected that the Queen of Sheeba was **Lilith** on account of the Queen's unshaven limbs. **Adventure Hook:** Rather than being a creature of the **Nightlands**, the stories of her slaying children and drinking **mens'** blood might refer to an ancient, immortal vampire. Some sort of Queen of the world's independent **Wampyrs**, or simply the oldest of them? A quest for this creature and an attempt to determine her nature and identity —**perhaps** leading characters to seek her aid against the **Nightlords** — could be an epic adventure.

LUCIFER, Light-Bringer, was generally considered to be the ruler of the demons, and was often said to be the Devil himself —**Satan**, the morning star, the son of the morning, a source of evil and magical power. As the greatest of all deceivers, his appearance was misleadingly innocent, so he usually adopted the guise of a handsome young man, and when angered did no more than blush. Other descriptions describe the Light-Bringer as radiating light, or appearing to be on fire. It was widely assumed that Lucifer knew all dark secrets, and could confer great powers upon human servants, for he was Emperor of the Fallen Angels, who ruled all of Europe and Asia as his personal demesne. **Adventure Hook:** Players will inevitably assume that Lucifer is either a "demon" in the traditional sense, or a **Nightlord**. So, surprise them. You might run a campaign where they start off opposing this "demon," later to discover that he is in fact a Guardian (whom they will assume to be the "good guys" of **Nightbane**), and then later find that this **Lightbringer** has plans for the Earth that are every bit as chilling as the **Nightlords'** and **Preservers'**.

OTHER HISTORICAL "DEMONS" included **NEBIROS**, Lucifer's Field-Marshal, who had the power to cause harm to whoever he chose, and privy to all secrets concerning **herbalism**, metals and animals; **LUCIFUGE ROFOCALE** was considered to be Lucifer's Prime Minister, with power over all the world's wealth (a perfect sponsor of a yuppie Night **Cult!**); **SATANACHIA** was commander in chief of hell's armies; **SARGANTANAS** was a handy demon for a sorcerer to invoke, as he commanded hordes of lesser spirits, and his powers extended to divining secrets, opening locks, **teleportation**, invisibility and even animal husbandry.

Books Extant

Game Masters wishing to litter their scenarios with authentic, historical details may appreciate the following list of *supposedly* magical texts, all of which were available by the mid-twentieth century. The plot uses are fairly obvious. "In the dead man's notes you find a reference to a book in the Bibliotheque National ..." "Open on the desk is a Latin manuscript, which seems to be concerned with ...", "The antique dealer

smiles and says that, if the price is right, he can obtain a unique Hebrew original of the legendary ..." etc.

Most of these works have been stored in national and municipal museums and libraries for hundreds of years, and many have been published in various editions and translations. Such antique manuscripts are most easily found in the *Bibliotheque National* in Paris, the *Vatican Library* in Rome, and the *British Library*. Other great European libraries in Berlin, Brussels, and Oxford also house substantial collections of old papers. The finer University libraries of Europe and North America may have modern editions of these texts. Player characters should have no problem in accessing these to pursue leads or investigate references, but keep in mind that in the age of high-tech surveillance and computerized record keeping, the NSB and others would easily learn of individuals who showed an unhealthy interest in library copies of these books.

In most cases, these ancient tomes do not contain complete spells, but offer insight and information that a practitioner of magic *may* be able to extrapolate upon for use in his or her magic, or in figuring out a particular component or aspect in the creation of a spell or ritual. They may also help the mage to get a better understanding of magic or help him to determine how to use magic or a magic item.

The KEY OF SOLOMON exists in Latin, Italian, German and most frequently, French manuscripts. The first part, or "Greater Key," was first published in an inferior and amended English edition in 1889. It is a two-part Cabalistic **grimoire**, much concerned with listing secret Names of spiritual entities, originally written in the middle ages, perhaps in Hebrew. The "Greater Key," contains many spells which are petty or absurd (for detecting stolen goods, becoming invisible, etc.), but G.M.s might rule that some genuine spells exist in this, too, especially in a Hebrew original, if one were ever found. The **LEMEGETON** or "Lesser Key" is the rarely published second part of the same book, containing hundreds of Secret Names (for "demons" and "angels"), astrological information, outlines of four "choirs" of spirits and complete (if sketchy) rituals for the summoning of the seventy-two most powerful "devils." It would be an invaluable aid for a sorcerer constructing a Summoning or similar spell: however, anyone using the spells as they stand courts disaster, particularly since the spells to gain control over the creatures are hopelessly ineffectual.

The three-part **DE OCCULTA PHILOSOPHIA** of the "Christian Magus" Cornelius **Agrippa**, published in the sixteenth century, concerns the Divine Names, the use of arcane signs and symbols, enchanting magical tools, the performance of ritual, and so on. It is a partly Cabalistic and partly Hermetic text which presumes that any sorcerer will be an ordained Catholic Priest, and suggests amongst other things, that such a magus could control the winds, cure the sick and raise the dead.

THE HERMETIC A is a Greek collection of theoretical treatises and Gnostic religious texts, written from the third century BC onwards. It was widely available in Europe in Latin and Italian from the fifteenth century (although older fragments exist), and in an abridged English edition from 1924. It contains information on the use of gemstones, astrology, and so on, plus copious amounts of obscure philosophy. Essentially a theoretical work.

The thirteenth century **ZOHAR** is the key writing in **Cabalism**, concerning numerology, meditation and Jewish spiritualism. Translated into numerous languages, its secrets *may* be of some use to sorcerers, but its numerology is probably of no use unless applied to the Hebrew language.

THE ASCLEPIUS is an early medieval or Roman text, in Latin, often included in the **Hermetica**, because its author, Apuleius, attributed it to Hermes. It is concerned primarily with metaphysics, the nature of humanity, and the power of signs and symbols, and their use in animating statues. May be used as a study aid for those hoping to learn or invent spells to animate inanimates.

The SACRED MAGIC OF ABRAMELIN THE MAGE is a typical medieval manuscript, claiming to be of Jewish origin, but being in fact the work of a French **diabolist**. It contains much dross, and numer-

ous spurious rituals designed to conjure Christian devils with a veneer of Christian piety. It was first published in English at the beginning of the twentieth century, and is a typical textbook with which a naive would-be sorcerer could inadvertently summon up all manner of nastiness (adventure hooks abound) and generally get himself into trouble. Similar is the GRAND GRIMOIRE, an infamous work, absurdly attributed to King Solomon, which may be found in French and possibly Italian manuscripts. It details a complex ceremony to summon "Lucifer," and its infamy derives from its deliberately anti-Christian and blasphemous language more than its true arcane power.

Other well known works of blatant medieval prejudice and origin are the GRIMORIUM VERUM, The CONSTITUTION OF HONORIUS (attributed to a Pope of that name) and TRUE BLACK MAGIC (based heavily upon the Key of Solomon and far from "true").

The incantations and rituals found in these books are unlikely to be what they claim. A spell to summon "the devil," for example, may well be a Summoning spell, but instead of conjuring a Christian demon, sorcerers are likely to be confronted by a Nightlands denizen or other extra-planar monstrosity. Remember that in all cases, the magicians of the past will have interpreted the creatures of the Nightlands (and other places) in terms which they could understand, according to their own beliefs and cosmologies of that period. Thus, Christian sorcerers are likely to have written of angels and demons, Arabic magicians of djinn, Egyptian authors of "servants of Thoth," and so on.

Ancient spells and text should be presented to player characters in these subjective terms, leaving them to decide what they think a spell is most likely to do (if anything at all; many spells in such grimoires may be quite spurious, achieving nothing). Player characters should have no way of deciding which spells are or are not effectual, except for trial and error, and wise characters should be loath to experiment with many such magics. Indeed, even trial and error will not always be able to tell which spells are or are not real, as some might have particularly subtle effects or work in ways not expected.

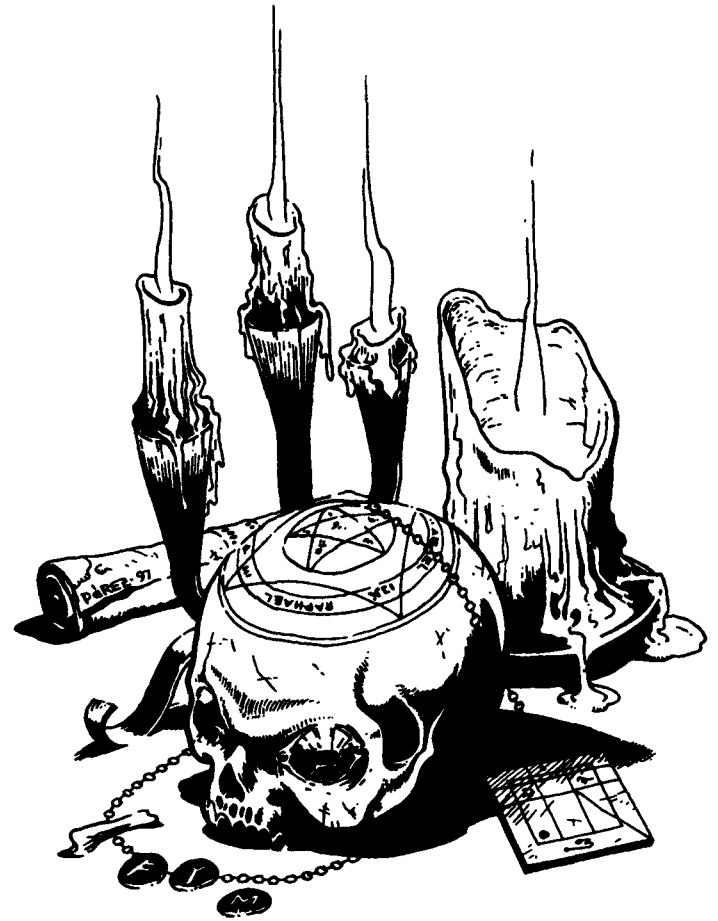
A Note about Magic Ingredients

"Round about the cauldron go,
In the poisoned entrails throw.
Toad that under cold stone
Days and nights has thirty-one
Sweltered venom sleeping got,
Boil **thou** first i'th'charmed pot.

...
Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the cauldron boil and bake.
Eye of newt and toe of frog,
Wool of bat and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork and blind worm's sting,
Lizard's leg and owlet's wing,
For a charm of powerful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

...
Scale of dragon, tooth of **wolf**,
Witches' mummy, maw and guff
Of the ravined salt-sea shark,
Root of hemlock picked i'th'dark, ...
Liver of blaspheming Jew, ...tiger's chauldron...
Gall of goat and slips of yew ...baboon's **blood**...
Silvered in the moon's eclipse, ...leopard's bane...
Nose of Turk and Tartar's lips, ...**blood of bat**...
Finger of birth-strangled babe
The juice of toad, oil of **adder**...
Ditch-delivered by a drab, ...three ounces of a red-haired wench."

Thus, according to Shakespeare, magicians have used dark and distasteful components in their Rituals. Those above are from the play "Macbeth," and are given as ingredients for a ritual to call up "spirits black and white." Some are imaginary, others betray a distasteful xenophobia or anti-Semitism, and many are unlikely, but most are both plausible and inspirational.



The Tools of Black Magic

According to many European medieval sorcerers, there are thirteen Tools which are required to conduct Rituals, all of which must be properly prepared, according to certain obscure rituals. The following ten, according to the "Book of Black Magic," are absolutely necessary for the effective casting of magical rituals. G.M.s should see these as examples of the lengths to which sorcerers have gone (and in *Nightbane*, continue to go) in order to cast spells and Rituals. A spell may look easy when it's just described in a few lines in this book or in the rule book, but take a look at these examples, and you'll begin to see just how much effort a magician must put into his/her "arts."

First and second, a white handled and black handled knife are required, in order to threaten spirits and inscribe symbols respectively, which must be forged of iron on a specific hour and day, the correct invocation being made over it, and the hot blade being extinguished in blood, a suitably engraved handle then being fitted (Clearly, if the sorcerer could not make the knife himself, he might have difficulty finding a willing blacksmith to do the work!).

Third, an "arctave" (hook) is required, similarly enchanted, and most importantly, a "bolline" (sacrificial sickle) must be fashioned: this must be made of unused iron, extinguished in blood, showered with invocations and exposed to various perfumed smokes, and at last, wrapped in red silk.

Also required are the "stylet" (thin dagger), needle (like a sharpened knitting needle), surgical "lancet," a rod, staff and sword — all suitably created and enchanted. Additional swords must then be made for the sorcerer's assistants (if any are required) in similar manners.

The Rod & Stave

Many medieval **grimoires** describe the various wands and staves which are said to be necessary or beneficial in ritual magic. Various methods are described for the creation of such **artifacts**, but there are certain similarities in most of the descriptions.

Such staves must be fashioned from straight, young boughs of *Hazel* or *Elder wood*, cut either at midnight or dawn. Certain arcane symbols are to be cut into the length at certain **astrologically** important times, and an invocation uttered. Some grimoires suggest that such staffs should be *iron shod*, and they are usually stored wrapped in black silk.

Some sorcerers may steal or inherit staves from their enemies or mentors, but others consider it safer to make their own. For example, the ghosts of previous owners may be summoned if a spell is miscast while such a staff is used, enabling them to attack or even try to possess the **staff's** present owner.

The Grand **Grimoire**, with typical hyperbole, presents a similar method for the creation of a "Blasting Rod" which "causes the spirits to tremble; which God also used to arm his Angel when Adam and Eve were driven out ... wherewith, finally he smote the rebellious Angels, precipitating their ambitions into the most appalling gulfs by the power of this very Rod — of this Rod which collects the clouds, disperses tempests, averts the lightning, or precipitates each and all upon any portion of the earth at the pleasure of its director." Whether such a rod can actually be made, and how it may be made, must be left to the discretion of each G.M.

Sacrifice

Spells designed to summon or make pacts with malignant spirits often seem to require a blood sacrifice. The sacrifices detailed in most grimoires are said to be "gifts" for the force being summoned, or else that their death is somehow necessary to allow the creature to manifest, but those mentioned tend to seem absurdly minor offerings for a great spirit. A chicken, mouse, lamb, goat or cat is often suggested, and although these may seem paltry offerings, the writers of the grimoires seemed sure that they were sufficient. Non-animal sacrifices are also mentioned — the burning of a lock of hair and a dead man's bone as examples.

G.M.s wishing to add more drama — or just more blood — to their scenarios may consider that the writers of grimoires could conceivably have mentioned such animals euphemistically. Thus, a writer may have intended that a sacrifice actually be human, and have expected his readers to understand this, but has written that a minor animal be used lest the book fall into the wrong hands and thus hang him. **Note:** As an aside, some modern occult pamphlets do, actually, recommend human sacrifice. In reality, however, the few rare instances of human sacrifice reported in Europe and the US have tended to be linked to Satanism as a religion, rather than to sorcery or wicca.

Wood

Wooden artifacts are frequently used in Formal Magics, as staves, stakes, and bowls, or to be burnt. Certain woods, however, have special significance, either according to tradition or astrology.

Ash trees were thought to protect against snakes, and the wood is used in charms against witchcraft and storms, and in benign magics to influence nature.

Elder wood may be used in spells to summon evil spirits (medieval people believing that if burnt, the smoke attracted the devil), to avert lightning, to guard against "witches," and to cure minor ailments.

Hazel wood is often used for **divinatory** spells and magics to control spirits.

Holly wood (no pun intended) may be used in magics to prolong life, and is associated with male fertility (just as ivy is associated with female fertility).

Juniper wood is also thought to protect against destructive magics, and to drive away malevolent spirits.

Oak wood is used to protect against magics, witchcraft and evil spirits (and also against lightning), and has been associated with spirits for thousands of years.

Rowan wood is associated with life and health, and may be used to cure disease in humans or animals, or as charms against illness or witchcraft.

The Hand of Glory & Other examples of Arcane Rituals and Artifacts

Frequently cited in spells from across Europe, the Hand of Glory may either refer to the poisonous Deadly Nightshade (*belladonna*), a magically created snake, or to the hand of a convicted criminal. In the latter case, numerous special precautions must be taken by a sorcerer wishing to procure such a "hand," though different texts advise that different steps are taken. Typical requirements are that the criminal must not have received a proper burial, the hand must be taken from the body at night, the criminal must have been executed for his crimes, and that all blood must be removed from the hand. G.M.s should have fun inventing other such nasty spell ingredients for similar magic items, and should be able to get a couple of good adventures or mini-adventures out of player characters having to surreptitiously obtain similar items for their rituals ("Well officer, I know it looks odd, me in this cemetery, with this **shovel** ... but I can explain ...")

Various spells incorporating the Hand of Glory are designed to cause or avert death, to summon malignant spirits, to create money (if the "hand" is a snake), or to ensure success in or protection from illegal activities (if a criminal's hand). The Hand of Glory may sometimes be used intact as a charm, or as a prop in a ceremony, or as an ingredient in the creation of a paste or candle. In one spell, the hand itself is ignited (allegedly being extinguished only by milk or the coming of dawn) and while it burns, all those sleeping in the house remain asleep and cannot be woken.

Sample Ritual: Making Clear the Unseen Spirits. Whilst uttering two particular words, the sorcerer must blend together the brain of a cockerel, unused wax, graveyard dirt scraped from the outside of a coffin, and almond oil. The mixture is wrapped in a sheet of unused parchment (paper will not suffice as a substitute), and an arcane symbol drawn onto the wrapper. When lit, the mixture smolders slowly, and after a few seconds, all invisible spirits close by become visible. The spell lasts as long as the mixture continues to burn, and one pound (0.45 kg) in weight is burnt up every ten minutes.

The range of the spell depends upon the number of P.P.E. expended when the words are spoken and the mixture made. Invisible creatures are made visible within a radius of one foot for every P.P.E. point expended. Those on the edge of this area are visible only as vague shadows, while those close to the burning package appear more solidly. Magicians may not add more P.P.E. than their level (e.g. a third level magician may use up to 3 P.P.E.), and will not be able to "mass produce" the candles, due to the difficulty in assembling the ingredients.

If this Ritual is cast incorrectly, it may have the effect of *attracting* ghosts and such like, rather than making them visible. Other possible side effects of this spell include the sorcerer being haunted by the ghost of the person whose grave he defiled, and the mixture oozing blood (say one pint every week, interminably). G.M.s should feel free to use such side effects either if the spell is not quite properly cast (e.g. the caster fails to make a Principles of Magic or I.Q. roll), or in order to penalize players who overuse such spells and need reminding that magics are dangerous and fickle things.

Sample Ritual: Medea's Robes. When the legendary enchantress Medea was deserted by her husband, the legendary Jason, she devised a spell to avenge herself upon his new lover. She wove a cloak, imbued it with herbs and cast her spell. The garment was delivered to the rival, and it ignited itself when she put it on, burning her to death.

While the original robes have long been ashes, it is reasonable enough to assume that a Mediterranean tradition of sorcerers still guards the secret of the spell, and are still able to use Medea's ritual to create these flammable garments. The ritual would require several secret herbal ingredients, known only to the great **Thessalian** sorceresses, but largely ensures the death of the target: should others don the robe before or instead of the intended target, no harm would come to them.

Sample Ritual: The Amatory Mass. In seventeenth century France, a sorcerer, calling herself La Voisin, was hired by King Louis **XVI's** favorite mistress to ensure that the King would not grow tired of her. The spell required the sacrifice of two pigeons, whose hearts were cut out and stitched together, thus ensuring that the King remained infatuated with his mistress. The magics succeeded for a while, but the King eventually began doting upon other mistresses, and the spell had to be repeated infrequently over the period of a decade to keep the King suitably infatuated by La Voisin's patron. Eventually, the sorcerer repeated the ceremony several more times, sacrificing children instead of pigeons, hoping thereby to make the spell stronger. The conspirators were captured and executed.

While "love potions" and similar magics might seem out of place in a world as nasty as that of **Nightbane**, this gives an excellent example of how casting even sentimental little magics can become horrible, bloody affairs.

Sample Ritual: The Beans of Invisibility. In the **Grimorium Verum**, a spell is given concerning the creation of beans which supposedly confer the power of *invisibility* upon the sorcerer. The conjurer takes seven black beans and the head of a dead man, and places the beans in the ears, eyes and mouth of the head, into the flesh of which he then inscribes a certain arcane sign. The head is then buried, and each day before dawn the sorcerer must return to the site and pour brandy onto the ground. On the eighth day, a spirit in human form will await the caster, and demand the brandy. If the spirit really is the ghost of the head, then somewhere about him he will have the inscribed symbol, in which case the brandy should be given to the ghost, which will then vanish. The following day, the sorcerer should dig up the head and remove the beans: Each of these should render the sorcerer invisible every time that he places one in his own mouth.

Now, this may have seemed plausible to the writer of the medieval **grimoire**, but to a modern mind it may seem just a little silly (or perhaps it seems intriguing and dangerous because it's "old"). It is also far too easy a way for player characters to become invisible. Characters may come across this spell via the Internet (see the Shadowleague Chapter) or in an old book, but however hard they try, they won't be able to use it to make themselves invisible. On the other hand, there may be a ritual (and expenditure of P.P.E.) that goes along with it, that might make it work.

Sample Ritual: A Conjunction of Lucifer. The Book of **Honorius**, attributed to a medieval Pope of the same name, sets forth a ceremony to summon the devil himself, Lucifer, to be performed on a Monday night, just before midnight or dawn. The book describes a circle which must be laid out to protect the sorcerer, prayers which must be inscribed to keep the devil at bay, and a set incantation which summons the fiend by the power of uttering the secret "Ineffable Names of God." Other equipment is required, including holy water, a knife, and the paltry sacrifice of a single live mouse. The summoner is then advised to speak firmly and authoritatively to the devil, safe in the knowledge that for as long as he maintains his confidence he is quite safe and may command the fiend as he wishes (which has great role-playing applications).

Again, this is too easy. The ritual should certainly summon up "something" if performed correctly by a sorcerer, but it is likely to be a Nightlord, Night Prince, demon lord, or (more interestingly) a very nasty Guardian. Furthermore, the sorcerer neither has power over the creature nor is protected from it in any way (or if as **above**, his/her confidence is quickly and easily shaken). Characters who are stupid enough to try to summon up "the devil" deserve every nasty and obnoxious foul-up and side effect that the G.M. can concoct!

Sample Ritual: The Scorpion Charm. It has been said that in Iraq and Iran, a ritual is known to a select few, by which they can become immune to a Scorpion's sting. The person must turn towards the stars of Scorpio and recite a brief spell, clapping at the end of each line. If the person who performs the Ritual rolls less than or equal to his Principles of Magic skill (automatic success if the character speaks Arabic), all those in his presence who hear the words become invulnerable to a Scorpion's sting until the sign of Scorpio sinks below the horizon. The person intoning the spell is protected even if s/he fails this skill roll, just so long as the roll is not higher than 95; 96-100 is always a failure. The roll should either be made by the G.M. in secret, or should not actually be made until a "protected" character comes into contact with a scorpion (that's when you find out if the spell is protecting you or not), just to keep the element of suspense.

G.M.s might reflect that an occult assassin who can safely handle deadly scorpions would make an interesting villain for the player characters to hunt down and/or confront. Or perhaps the characters must have this spell cast upon them to be safe from the scorpions which guard an ancient tomb (but woe to them if they are delayed and must stay after the spell has expired).

Historical Magical Artifacts

The following items are all based on genuine historical legends, slanders and folk tales. There are enough here to keep you going through a few months of gaming, and when you've exhausted all of these items, the Reference section of your local library (or the anthropology, occult and folklore sections) should yield up a few more books from which further ideas can be gleaned.

The Talismans of Teta

In the nineteenth century, a set of twenty Talismans were "discovered" by a French occultist, allegedly having been created in the distant past by one "Sage of the Pyramids," perhaps the magician Teta mentioned in ancient writings.

Each Talisman (a circular design) is supposed to have a specific power if used separately, and allegedly provided protection from *all spirits* if all were worn simultaneously. These talismans may be forged as rings, embroidered into clothing, or worn as medallions, and at the time of their creation, must be enchanted by speaking certain Words of Power over them. To be effective, the talisman must then be openly displayed. The reputed powers of these symbols include: finding concealed riches, causing lust or love, making the wearer invisible, granting control over all supernatural creatures, destroying anything, transporting the wearer anywhere instantly, opening all sealed doors, granting good fortune when gambling, giving insight into others' intentions, etc.

G.M.s must decide whether these talismans do indeed have the powers which they are said to have, and if so, to what extent (there should be limitations). The G.M. should also be aware that popular texts of the nineteenth century purported to give diagrams and instructions for their creation. Characters should not find it difficult to obtain such instructions, but may note that many of the diagrams show Talismans with Latin or Hebraic inscriptions, which is quite inconsistent with their supposedly Egyptian origins. Perhaps the Talismans do indeed have quite miraculous powers, and as a set could provide complete protection from all supernatural creatures, but the available diagrams are obviously flawed, and the Words of Power given may be wildly inaccurate or completely wrong. Attempting to find the original designs and Words for these Talismans would be an extremely lengthy and time consuming process, if possible at all. Since nobody is known to possess any such talismans (let alone make them), the latter would appear to be the case. On the other hand, perhaps one or more ancient rings are uncovered in an archeological dig (just imagine how many groups and powerful ma-

gicians would covet them), or have been secretly passed down for generations to the leader of a particular magic Brotherhood.

The Shah's Talismans

Before their overthrow in 1979, it is said that the Shahs of Iran collected some two hundred magical artifacts. Many may have been Arabic "Islamic" pendants, formed from the letters which make up the names of holy persons (the prophet Mohammed, or a Sufi saint), but many were reputedly of Persian or **pre-Islamic** origin.

The greatest of these was said to be named "**Merzoum**," made from gold and shaped like a star, reputed to guarantee to make traitors confess to their crimes. It is said that in one instance, merely showing the star to one member of the Royal Family caused the suspect to break down in fear and confess. Most simply, G.M.s might rule that if pressed against the skin of a person it causes huge amounts of pain or induces an overpowering sense of fear **and/or** guilt to effectively grant the user a +30% intelligence or interrogation skill bonus.

Another of the **Shah's** Talismans was a lump of Amber, threaded with a chain, said to have fallen from the sky fifteen hundred years ago, and which renders a person invulnerable to damage if worn around the neck. "*Fallen from the Sky*" may, of course, be a veiled way of referring to a gift from "heaven" or another universe (e.g. the **Nightlands**). G.M.s might note that if it were created by a Nightlord or other supernatural creature, it might function only when it suited the creator to do so. Nonetheless, it would still be an outstanding defense for any character, particularly if **s/he** also wielded the Shah's *enchanted scimitar*, which was said to render the user invincible in combat. Note: Possession of an artifact as potent as this Amber should certainly take a heavy toll on a character's health or mind. Perhaps it drains 2D6 P.P.E. from the wearer each time that it absorbs any amount of damage, or permanently drains 1 M.E. per month in which it is worn, or perhaps allows the creator to speak directly into the wearer's mind. Not to mention that it would attract the attention of countless villains who would covet such an item for themselves.

The Royal Family's possession of these artifacts may, however, have brought a *curse* as well as blessings. Prominent members of the family were rumored to wear rubies and emeralds bound to their flesh with silk straps as charms, to protect against a certain demon which they lived in fear of. These gems evidently rendered the wearers immune to the creature's magics. G.M.s might wonder what this creature wanted with the family: presumably one or more of their Talismans were important to it (as player characters might discover if they ever came into possession of one). Still, the use of rubies and emeralds might suggest to wily characters a way of protecting themselves from its powers.

If these Talismans ever truly existed, it is unclear what might have happened to them after the Islamic Revolution. If the fundamentalists had seized them, they would certainly have been destroyed as blasphemies against God. More interestingly, some or all might have been looted or smuggled out, and still be in circulation.

The Lee Amulet

P.P.E.: 100

Alignment: Principled

IQ.: 8

According to medieval gossip, the Scottish knight, Sir Simon **Locard** of Lee, had returned from fighting in the Holy Land bearing a great deal of gold and a magical gemstone. The gem was a small, red, triangular crystal, which the knight had set into a silver coin. Water which it had been left to soak in, it was said, could be drunk as a cure for any disease or poison, and during the Black Death, such water became both notorious and extremely expensive.

This amulet is typical of many magical items, in that it is simple, practical, and **undramatic**. One way of handling it in play is to say that water in which it has been steeped can cure any poison or illness, but

that the sufferer must roll no more than his P.E. on 1D20 to benefit, subsequent draughts of water allowing the patient to roll no more than once per day; moreover, the illness is not cured immediately, but gets no worse and subsides over the next 1D6 days, and the water is of no use against magically caused ills.

The Babylonian Devil-Trap

P.P.E.: 30

Between the third century BC and the sixth century AD, Semitic peoples in Babylonia used specially enchanted bowls to keep "evil spirits" at bay. Four of these **terra-cotta** bowls, suitably engraved with charms and prayers, were placed in a square — usually buried at the corners of a house — to keep those within the area free from the influence of malignant creatures. No known texts survive explaining the creation of these bowls, although intact examples are recovered infrequently by archaeologists: an Archaeology skill roll is required to successfully identify these bowls.

In the world of **Nightbane**, it may be assumed that each set of bowls was made for a particular person or household, and that person would have had to supply the P.P.E. (permanently losing several points) for the enchantment: one point would be permanently lost for each bowl (four for the entire spell) and the sorcerer presiding over their creation would also have to expend (30) P.P.E. as usual to help cast the magic spell. The effect of the items would be that, if laid out in a square no more than ten yards/meters along each side, they would provide an area into which non-corporeal creatures could not enter unless of higher level than the **bowls'** creator (which would vary, of course, from one set to **another**).

Explicitly intended as a barrier to keep spirits out of the area, G.M.s may consider that beings within the area might equally be unable to escape (at least spirit, energy and Astral beings). It is also possible that the bowls would only protect the immediate family (or descendants?) of the man for whom they were made, or that they ceased to function upon his death, making them effectively useless for modern-day users (although they would still seem to be magical), as characters might learn through bitter experience.

Change the Ground Rules!

As a Game Master, you may feel that you want more freedom in playing around with the magic system. Great. Go for it. It's your game. The rules that we have given provide a starting point for your gaming, and (we hope) they should give you a load of great ideas in a well-balanced system. If you want to develop any part of these rules, or drop any part of the magic, then do so. So long as you keep in mind the need for solid game balance — i.e. the need to make sure that no character type or individual gains gross advantages over all of the others — then **Do As You Please Shall Be The Whole Of Your Law** (to paraphrase). The rules are here to help, not to hinder.

For example, you may think "Hey, what if those medieval Christians and the **born-again** types were right — what if all magic really was the work of demons? That would be a cool basis for a campaign!" In this case, the player character magicians would only THINK that they were casting magics; in fact, the magical effects would actually be performed by the powers of evil spirits or demons (however you care to envision them), who take the P.P.E. "spent" by the characters as payment for their services; and of course, the demons would just be waiting for the day when the player character reduced his P.P.E. pool to zero, at which point they would take possession of his body or entire **soul**, or slay **him/her** for fun. Just like Faust, the player characters would be trading their souls for magical power. What would a group of well-intentioned player characters actually do if, after several adventures, they found out

that all along they had been the dupes of supernatural evil **creatures**?! An interesting situation.

Remember, however, that what you are doing is a *group* pastime, and should be fun for all of your players. **Don't** offend or upset your players by disparaging beliefs which they may well hold sacred. Likewise, keep in mind that the world of **Nightbane** is perilously close to reality, and there is therefore, a danger that the games may err too close to reality. This *is* fantasy. Keep it that way.

Finally, as some examples of "good taste" in games, here are a few facts and figures to consider. (1) Billions of people, worldwide, follow the various branches of Christian, Moslem and related faiths. Adventures which claim that Jesus or Mohammed were sorcerers, or Guardians, or Nightlords are not merely offensive, they are also rather childish. Adventures which mock "minority" religions are equally taste-

less, even though their adherents are less vocal or numerous. (2) Nine million people were slaughtered by Hitler's regime (Jews, Gypsies, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, communists, etc.), plus over fifty million others died fighting in the **World War**: Adventures which "reveal" that Hitler or his lackeys were "really" the agents of evil supernatural beings are gross lies, denying humanity's own capacity for evil and belittling those millions of tragedies. (3) Likewise, up to ten million people — whose only crimes were often old age and poverty — were slaughtered by the European witch hunts (plus thirty-odd who died in New England), so adventures which claim that the witch hunters really were rooting out genuine evil, or that those "witches" really were the servants of demons, are vindicating several million murders. Creative freedom to all us role-playing storytellers —fair enough — but let's keep a sense of taste and responsibility about it.

CHAPTER 9: Story Plots & Adventures

By Kevin Hassall, with additional material by Kevin Siembieda.

Some Story Guidelines

When characters come into conflict with a powerful mortal sorcerer or supernatural villain, the obvious way for the conflict to be resolved might run something like this:

Enemy sorcerer sends demonic minions to attack the player characters, but the characters fight them off. The characters pick up the first in a trail of clues which lead (via various fights with more of the sorcerer's minions) to the villain's lair, where either the characters die, or the sorcerer dies. Fight, fight, fight, fight. Dull.

As a few pointers when you're creating adventures and campaign plots, consider some of the following.

1. Try to vary the amounts of violence, role-playing and brain-work in an adventure. Some groups of players have problems with one of these areas (they find combat boring, or can't talk "in-character," or don't want to think), but within the confines of your players' abilities it is as well to vary the contents of the **adventures**. And if you are going to run lots of fights, then try to vary the objectives ("run in and kill everyone" gets repetitive). For a change you might have the players trying to rescue someone; run into a place to accomplish a specific task before fleeing from obviously superior foes; defending a place or person from attack; run in and not kill everything because they are innocent people possessed by something horrible (which must be found and neutralized or chased away to free the innocent), and so on.

2. The best villains are those that return again and again. They escape at the last minute, or seem to die (but no one can find the body ...), or are the secret mastermind (only glimpsed or hinted at), so that they can return to be evil another day. In the end, though, after a few near misses, the characters have to kill or defeat and capture (see him put in prison) their **arch-villain**, or else they will get frustrated.

3. Evil masterminds are evil masterminds because they mastermind evil plots. Obvious? The point is that the characters will get more satisfaction from foiling a devious plot in the nick of time, saving some lives, and killing the mastermind's lieutenant, than they will from just having a stand-up fight with the villain.

4. Even good guys have bad plans. The characters may find themselves in conflict with an ally, or someone they admire or whose help they need, simply because of one plan, alliance, or error of judgement which they made. So, they may have to stop their ally's one plan or alliance, but without damaging his overall organization or other plans, and may have to act in secret so that they do not anger him or damage their relationship with him. Likewise, "the best laid plans of mice and men"

can and do go awry. Sometimes things just go wrong (bad timing, bad dice rolls, bad luck). That's okay. Go with the flow, just give the characters some means to crawl out of trouble, regroup and come back another day.

5. The twenty first century is the information age. Maybe the TRUTH is less important than what people *BELIEVE* to be the TRUTH. If the characters came up against a thoroughly evil public hero (a politician or celebrity idolized by the press) then it would harm their cause to be seen attacking (or killing) him or her. So, the characters would have to defeat this particular villain (a false hero) in such a way that the media (TV, newspapers, etc.) couldn't turn their actions against them (taking his side and making them the bad guys), turn his defeat into a public scandal or make a martyr of him - i.e., so that their actions didn't generate too much bad publicity.

6. Maybe a villain has better things to do than kill the characters. Can the sorcerer *USE* the characters in some other way, manipulating or tricking them to do or accomplish something that benefits the villain (e.g. eliminate a rival, find and recover an ancient tome or magic, etc.)? He could take magical control of them for awhile, or, rather than actually attacking the characters, use his influence and magics to discredit or frame them — turning erstwhile allies against them, or provoking public outrage and a police hunt to track them down?

7. Humor is a valuable tool, use it. Even in a horror game, there can be moments that are funny, ironic and relaxing.

Plot Outlines

With these guidelines in mind, the following are a few plot outlines. These need some work from the G.M. to turn into full adventures (NPC statistics, names, and descriptions of locations are not included), but for now, read through them and look at them as examples of how to begin construction of intriguing and detailed adventures. Details that you can add to your specifications.

1. **Just Like Your Picture:** In order to prepare the players for this plot, the G.M. will have to weave this single phone call into the game for one or two gaming sessions in advance. The player characters should be pretty busy and certainly too tied up to go investigating a petty domestic burglary when one character receives a phone call from his mother: her home has just been robbed, and she's pretty upset. Really, she just wants some comfort from her son (or daughter, as appropriate). The usual stuff has been stolen: **videocassette** player, TV, stereo, computer, some jewelry — but also some less obvious items (a load of home videos, the family photo album, a school yearbook). What

the player character won't realize, yet, is that the theft of the stereo, jewelry, etc., was just a cover. What the burglars really wanted was the family photo album and the family's home video collection.

To start the adventure itself, have the character receive a visit from the police or (if the characters are hiding out from the authorities, and can't be traced) the character sees a TV news bulletin about a recent murder. Witnesses saw the character himself leaving the scene — but the character knows that he was not there and has a solid alibi for that date and time!

Other crimes follow. Usually murders or assaults on people working for the character's own cause. The character's own allies start to get nervous ("exactly whose side are you **on**?!"). How do the other characters react? Soon, there is amateur video or photographic evidence of someone who looks almost exactly like the character leaving a crime scene. **Note:** ALMOST exactly like the character, but not exact.

The person committing the crimes actually looks younger than the character (about the age the character was before he left home; i.e. as old as he looked in the most recent of the stolen photos and videos). The G.M. should try to be subtle about this, but if the player doesn't pick up on the hints, more blatant clues might be required: "You know, when you look at the photo you realize that isn't even your T-shirt; it's actually your Dad's, and the only time you wore it was when you were messing around with that video camera at Yellowstone ... come to think of it, that was the last time you had a tan that deep."

Yes indeed, someone is using those old photos and video images to impersonate and frame the character. So far, the character has had an alibi for each crime committed, but soon it may become impossible to convince friends, allies, or the police, that he is innocent.

Using magic the characters must track down the burglars, or track down the stolen video and stereo and trace them back to the thieves, bribe police officers to reveal who their suspects are, or use whatever means are at their disposal. If the characters get stuck, then have the police arrest the burglars (so that the other player characters can know who they are) and then maybe release them on bail.

Bribery or the threat of violence persuades the burglars to confess everything. They were hired to get the videos and photos; they were paid for those and then sold the rest of the loot themselves. All they have is a mobile phone number for their employer (he phoned them initially, made the deal over the phone, and then paid them a cash advance, to prove his sincerity) and the address where they dropped off the goods.

Bribing the burglars is preferable to bullying or killing them. Corpses lead to a murder investigation. And if threatened or **battered**, the thieves later phone their employer's mobile number in an attempt to get some revenge on the characters: "Obviously we didn't tell them anything, but they were asking about the burglary and they seemed to know a lot already." This means that their employer will be ready for the characters. Or worse, the thugs are murdered and one or more of the player characters are implicated.

Phoning the mobile number gets the characters nowhere. The phone is always switched off (at least when they call it), and an answering service takes the calls.

The address where the photos were dropped off is a condemned tenement (The players will probably want a fight by now, so have a local street gang paid to keep strangers out, or who just don't like strangers hanging out on their turf, attack. Or throw in some tougher supernatural guardians). Inside, the characters find a ritual circle drawn with blood and liberally covered with home video tapes, photos of the character, and rotting goats' entrails. A ritual spell cast here has created a magical "double" for the **character(s)**. A being which resembles the character as shown in the videos and photos, perhaps with many of his memories and personality traits (as inferred from the images), but with objectives and instructions programmed by the sorcerer who created this spell. When the characters enter this room, the "double" is sitting quietly on a mattress in the corner, looking pensive.

If the character wants a fight, fair enough. Use the player character's own statistics, skills, etc., but without supernatural powers or any special equipment, and give the creature the character's general fighting style (e.g. mad berserk, immediate rout, etc., so that the "double" fights and behaves exactly as the character would if attacked). The being, however, is more likely to talk than fight, especially when he sees the character he is copied from. The being is likely to be grappling with big existential questions: Who am I? Why am I here? — in the style of the replicants in *Blade Runner* (the movie) and Data (in the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* series). The double can almost certainly be talked out of committing any more crimes and is as much in search of answers as the genuine character. It has been told that it has a duty to its "savior" (the sorcerer who created it, or, as it has been told, who saved its life) which requires it to kill certain individuals. It can certainly be dissuaded from this, and there is some interesting role-playing to be had here (it shares many of the original character's memories and personality traits and to a certain extent, "is" that character). But it is not going to just join up with the player characters on their adventures: it wants to find a life of its own.

There should also be plenty of clues in the area to lead the characters to the sorcerer responsible: A dropped business card (complete with mobile telephone number ...), the magical being's memory of what he looked like, and/or something it may have overheard, etc.

The encounter with the sorcerer should be the big climax to the adventure. Make him a thoroughly evil villain, with a few tough henchmen around him, so that the characters can have the satisfaction of defeating him in a fierce, tense climax.

So, the adventure ends in a big finale, but questions remain. Who was the sorcerer working for, and why was he trying to discredit the **character(s)**? And what happens to the character's magical double? Do the character and the double stay in touch? Do they become close or resentful of each other? And does the double try to stay in touch with the character's family and long-standing friends (and how do they **react**)?

2. Reports of My Death are Greatly Exaggerated. The player characters are called in to investigate the death of an important Seeker, who has been found dead in his own bed with a medieval **katana** (Japanese long sword) impaled through his chest. The katana was a unique antique, recently presented to an eminent professor of history (himself a less important Seeker). He has no alibi for the time of the killing, so he may end up being convicted of the murder.

The player characters may be hired by or may be members of the Seekers (in which case they are allowed to look at the corpse and crime scene before the police do), or they may be involved in the police investigation or hired as outside consultants (by the police, the professor or the college). In any case, they should be able to examine the murder weapon, have the resources to have forensic tests performed, etc.

The fact is that enemies of the Seekers (or rivals within the same group) have contrived the plot.

The first clue is the katana, which was indeed a unique antique, presented to the professor in a public ceremony (e.g. college dinner) after it had been enchanted. The sword returns to its scabbard whenever the scabbard's owner wills it, and the scabbard was never given to the professor. This allowed the villains to recall the sword from its locked glass cabinet, without the professor's knowledge. As there are no signs of a break-in at the professor's home, he lives alone and has the sole key to the cabinet, he has been well and truly framed. With time (and study), a magician amongst the players should be able to work out who enchanted the sword. This may involve magical research (taking a month), or the player character may notice some unusual (and **un-Japanese**) runes on the blade, which are magical symbols often used by a particular local sorcerer.

Secondly, the body is not all that it seems. An autopsy reveals nothing unusual, but in fact, it is a magically created double, an impostor. The "murder victim" was never killed, but was kidnapped, and a fake body was left in its place to guarantee that no one goes looking for the

unfortunate wretch. Sense Magic will reveal that there is something odd here, and careful investigators may notice that the body is not the victim's (e.g. there are no scars or a particular birthmark, where there should be).

From the scene of the murder, player characters can interview the neighbors and get details about a van seen in the area. Traces of mud were found on the carpet in the "victim's" home, mud of a type only found in a certain part of town. These clues should lead the players to search a certain part of town, where they find an old van in the yard of a **boarded-up** gas station.

When the player characters check out the gas station, they find a nest of supernatural nasties, and the chewed remains of the thugs who kidnaped the "murder victim." A fight (or swift retreat) should follow.

At the home of the sorcerer who enchanted the sword (they found his symbols on the blade), the player characters can find out who paid him to enchant the weapon. He talks openly, and doesn't like the idea of his clever magic being used in a crime. However, a moment after he tells them who he is working for, there is the crack of a rifle shot and the man's head is blown open. An assassin has been watching (and listening in) since the murder, in case the man was traced. The player characters will have to chase after and catch the assassin if they want more answers. If they take him alive they get more information than if they just kill him: taken alive, he will betray his employer for promises of freedom; dead, he is just a corpse. He will not fight to the death and will surrender.

From these two locations the players should have enough clues to locate the factory where the "murder victim" is being held. As an eminent Seeker, he knows many secrets, and his captors intend to torture him into telling as many as possible before they kill him. This final showdown pits the player group against an array of thugs and at least one **Fleshsculptor** (the guy who made the fake corpse), but at the first signs of a siege or rescue attempt the kidnappers tip their captive into a furnace or a vat of molten metal. Stealth and cunning is required.

Ultimately, the evil mastermind behind the plot is not present at the factory when the player characters attack. He wouldn't dirty his hands. The best that the group can do is to get proof of his deeds — meaning that they need to get the captive out alive, or at least take some of his henchmen into custody and persuade them to incriminate their boss (even if his real name isn't known) and prove the professor's innocence. An incinerated body and no henchmen is no evidence at all, and it will take more than the player **characters'** words to convince others that they really have solved the case.

With good evidence and a name, they can get a warrant for the mastermind's arrest, **and/or** convince the Seekers to hunt the man down, perhaps leading to a later adventure. Of course, this could be another dead end, as the information proves to be inaccurate or a frame (or joke) that implicates another innocent man (perhaps a police inspector or a member of the Preserver Party just to make things interesting). The real culprit is indeed an elusive mastermind with an as yet unknown agenda.

3. Magic by Numbers. A magical Brotherhood with which the player characters are members of, acquainted with, or are sympathetic to, is having problems with its' members' computers being hacked into and examined. Someone is trying to learn the Brotherhood's secrets by looking at its members' computer files. The Brotherhood wants the player characters to investigate and stop this espionage (some excellent opportunities and/or money should be part of the incentive to take the job).

The mysterious hacker seems to know, instinctively, when a computer is on-line, and what phone line it is connected to. Even machines with only incidental relevance to the Brotherhood (such as computers used by members at their places of work) have been violated. If the Brotherhood changes telephone numbers, the Hacker finds them just as easily. They have also tried using digital connections and mobile modems so there's no physical connection to a phone line — in case the Hacker is somehow using the physical telephone system — without success. He still hacks in.

The player characters can catch the hacker at work by sitting in front of a Brotherhood member's machine for a day or so, and waiting. Sure enough, if the machine is connected to a modem the Hacker soon breaks in and starts messing around. He doesn't change or damage anything, but flicks through files (much faster than a human could normally "read" them, but not nearly as fast as another computer could), and steals copies of more interesting files.

The G.M. can make identifying the Hacker as hard or easy as **s/he** likes. As examples: a **Nightbane** with the Lightning Rider talent could go straight to the hacker (unless the G.M. rules that a non-physical, digital connection is involved, in which case this would not work); using the psychic ability Object Read (looking at the code and commands entered by the Hacker) might reveal information on the intruder; or a couple of Computer Hacking skill rolls by one or more of the player characters may allow them to identify the telephone number from which the Hacker is calling, and then get the name and address of the phone line's owner from the telephone company's computers.

When the player characters track down the hacker, they find that she is a research student writing a Doctoral thesis on imaginary numbers. To support herself, she is doing some work on the side for an *unknown* academic institution in another State, involving working through some insanely complex equations for them on her computer.

As the woman works on the equations, they insinuate themselves into her head and begin to control her. She slips into a trance and the equations change and dance across the screen on their own. The equations calculate which telephone numbers to dial, and she (with a kind of electronic "Speed Reading" ability in her trance) hacks into and peruses the files within the selected computers. She then puts all of the copied files onto a floppy disk and seals the disk in an envelope. When she slips out of the trance, the student remembers nothing about hacking. She just thinks that she worked on the equations for awhile, becoming quite absorbed by the work, and put all of her conclusions onto disk and mailed it to her employer.

So, each evening, she mails a disk full of stolen files to her employer and two days later, receives payment for that little bit of work. Some quick research with the right people reveals the academic institution is fictitious and can be traced to a group of **Cybermages** or sorcerers.

The female student is watched, of course, by agents of her employer who try to kill nosy player characters **and/or** silence the student, and retrieve the arcane equations as soon as the player group makes contact with their pawn. If the player characters can rummage through the student's papers and computer files, or just persuade her to help them, they can get a look at the weird equations and learn the mailing address of her employer.

The calculations are a sort of spell in numeric form. A Principles of Magic roll (or similar) by any player character can identify them as complex, cabalistic formulations, but can tell little else. The player characters can make no direct use of the equations. If they start concentrating on them on a computer, they will slip into the same trance and hack into the same computers that the student did; they can't control themselves once under the numbers' control.

The mailing address may lead the player characters straight to the snooping Cybermages or sorcerers responsible for manipulating the student into spying on the player characters' allies, or may lead to a mail-drop which the player group will have to place under surveillance to learn who is really receiving the disks. The characters will then have to steal back as many of the disks and files as they can by breaking into the enemies' HQ and "persuading" the snooping magicians to cease their spying.

Persuading the snoops to desist may be very simple. Perhaps they stop as soon as they realize that they have been discovered, and immediately offer grovelling apologies and various books or trinkets as reparations — they were just nosy, arrogant hackers made bold by the development of their unique cabalist spell. They didn't think anybody could catch them, but now that they are caught, they acquiesce quickly

(but will *not* share the secrets of their equation and other cabal magic). Everything can end here quietly and simply (not every adventure needs to end in violence), or the G.M. could extend things with old-fashioned violence, or more intrigue.

In the latter case, one possibility could be: just as our heroes think they've put a peaceful end to this matter, the NSB, a Spook Squad team, minions of the Nightlords, or some other dangerous force (other mages, **Nightbane**, demons, etc.) appears on the scene with a bloodthirsty vengeance. It seems the player characters friends/employers weren't the only organization that these idiots were hacking into, and these guys aren't as understanding as the player characters. Worse, anybody seen with the hackers is assumed to be part of their group and earmarked either for capture or termination! This may even extend to the employer and other allies of the player characters!

The first order of business is to escape, perhaps helping a few of the hackers to escape with them (which is important if they want to get more information about what's going on and who might be responsible for this attack). Next, they are probably on the run, dodging would-be assassins, spies and captors. Third, they need to find out who and why, and try to put an end to this madness. This might mean handing over the equation (or the hackers to an unknown fate), convincing their attackers they don't know anything, or finding or destroying the person or persons responsible for this raid and subsequent manhunt. On the other hand, the player group may have inadvertently earned a new (at least for the moment, unknown) enemy who dogs their every move and is a re-occurring attacker — forcing the group to go deeper underground than they already probably were.

Campaign Subplots

While some G.M.s will run a campaign as a series of self-contained adventures, or a series of related adventures, others will also be concerned about the "down-time" between adventures, or will simply integrate all of the adventures into a single long, rambling narrative.

In these latter cases, the G.M. will want to know what the player characters are doing when not following specific plot-lines. Things like what their lives are like, how they make a living, who their friends and acquaintances are, hobbies, etc. The disadvantage of playing in these styles is that it takes time away from actually completing adventures and becoming bogged down with extraneous and petty information. However, if handled right, the advantages are that it allows the players to empathize with and become more involved with their characters and the game world, and it allows the G.M. to integrate little side-stories, subplots, and incidental encounters. All of which can add greatly to the depth and color of the continuing adventures and the characters.

Part of this involves continuity. The incidental encounters used in campaigns will depend upon the nature of the game that the G.M. is running, and also upon the player **characters'** previous actions. If the player characters have committed blatant crimes in previous adventures, then police attempts to arrest them should follow. The player characters may also be casual witnesses of Preserver Activists' vigilante **activitird** or a road accident (psychic healing abilities could be very useful here), or they might have the opportunity to stop a petty crime (e.g. a liquor store holdup). Likewise, some of these **NPCs** may bump into them later, as friends or as somebody who might fear or resent them and respond accordingly: a friend will offer encouragement, information, a small loan, a helping hand, while the frightened, resentful or an enemy will call the police, start a brawl, inadvertently provide information in a threat or a boast, etc.

The subplots offered below are ideas for ongoing story lines which will generate a series of encounters to be scattered in between and during the main **adventure(s)**.

EXAMPLE 1: A Friend in Need. One of the player characters shares an easy friendship with a neighbor (or friend or relative). The neighbor occasionally calls to chat with the player character, or to borrow coffee or sugar, and tends to pass on magazines, newspapers, etc.,



to the player character. The neighbor is an archetypal "sweet old man" (or kid or woman), a benevolent grandfather figure who is a bit stiff in the joints and has a heart of gold. Over the course of a few adventures, the characters should come to appreciate the old man's good-natured friendliness: he's the sort of guy who will offer to give the character a lift to the mall or superstore if his or her car is in the garage; he will look after the house or apartment **and/or** hold mail or look after miscellaneous possessions for the player character when **s/he's** out of town (very handy for characters who travel a lot); if the player character were burgled, the old guy would make his own computer available to the character to use; et cetera.

After a while, the old man falls sick. He makes a few trips to the hospital, but refuses to talk about it. He doesn't want pity. The condition worsens, conventional treatments fail, and the old man is admitted to a hospital or hospice. The condition is now painful, and clearly terminal (It may be lung cancer, Aids, or some new and unidentified disease that has struck since Dark Day). The old man doesn't want people to fuss over him, but he does appreciate occasional visitors — like his friendly neighbor, the player character.

About this time, during an adventure, the player characters come across a magical potion or ritual (The G.M. could work this into most adventures: it may be the property of an evil sorcerer whom they defeat, or part of a payment they get from an employer or ally, etc.). The potion will cure any disease or illness, and restore all lost hit points and S.D.C., and cancel the effect of any physically debilitating magic ... but there is only one dose of it. It is a very, very useful item for the player character and his teammates, so do they feel that they want to use it to cure the old man?

There is no "correct" way out of this. If the player characters keep the potion for their own use ("we're bound to need it someday" or "we need it for the greater good in fighting evil"), then they lose a friend and perhaps have a **Dreamstream** encounter with Guilt Eaters (see *Between the Shadows*, page 102). If they save the old man he is extremely grateful, but they may find themselves in a situation shortly afterward where the potion would have been vital in saving one of their own people or an important NPC. Sensitive players will get a lot of good role-playing out of this awkward moral decision.

EXAMPLE 2: A Gothic Romance. One of the player characters is in love with a beautiful young woman (or man, as appropriate). A person of grace and refinement, with the kind of archetypal good looks that classical sculptors used to endow their statues with. The woman can easily be worked into the game, appearing as an incidental character in scenes where the characters are all together informally ("the four of you and X's girlfriend are in the cafe by the square when ..."), or simply as someone whom the characters spend time with ("your doorbell rings. It's one in the morning and you aren't expecting anyone. There's no one in your apartment with you except your girlfriend ..."), etc.

The woman is sensitive and independent, but clearly deeply in love with one of the player characters, and ready to provide a shoulder to lean on, an alibi, answer phone calls, and so on as is required. She may also have valuable skills which the other characters can make use of, such as a translator of ancient documents and mystic **grimoires** (she probably speaks ancient Greek and Latin, and the player characters probably **don't**).

But the woman has a dark secret.

She lives (in true **gothic** style) in a large, isolated house, full of winding passages and dark rooms, although she seems to have no income to maintain the place. When the player character whom she loves starts spending time there, the woman makes him swear one thing: that he will never go or look beyond the red leather-bound door which leads into the far attic room. And because player characters are curious types, who inevitably do what they're told not to, the odds are that the character will one day ignore his promise and look into the room. A devious G.M. can, in any case, keep mentioning the door in passing so that it plays on the player's mind.

Behind the door is a room inscribed with arcane symbols, as if some great ritual had been performed here. At the center of the room is a stone plinth — the sort of pedestal that classical statues were made to stand upon. For the woman is a statue, brought to life by a sorcerer one or two years ago. The sorcerer may still live, returning at irregular periods to his mansion and to the lover he made for himself ("oh no, you mustn't come around this weekend ... don't ask me to explain ... just stay away ..."). Or perhaps the sorcerer is dead, or the woman killed him (body buried in the **cellar**?). Or perhaps the statue was animated for a specific reason, and is still bound to serve the sorcerer or Brotherhood which gave her life.

In any case the occasional presence or legacy of her sorcerous creator should create a sense of mystery around the woman and the house, and perhaps create dangers, difficulties, or even adventures for the player character and the player group. Moreover, as in many traditional folk tales, if the player character ever realizes what she is, ever sees the plinth and guesses the truth and rejects her because of it, for example, then she turns irrevocably back to stone.

EXAMPLE 3: Sins of the Fathers. A close friend of one of the player characters is, secretly, the (seventh?) son of a powerful evil magician. As the campaign progresses, the characters come increasingly into conflict with the evil mage, and must eventually defeat (e.g. kill) him. At the same time, the player characters come to suspect that their friend knows something of this man.

The mage, moreover, is far more powerful than the characters, and their only hope is to have "inside information" - to know the floor plan of the magician's ancestral castle, for example, or to be told the weakness in the protective magics which render him invulnerable; and this is the kind of information that only a close confederate or relation would know.

And so, the player characters must persuade their friend to help them by giving them the information they need, and in so doing, doom his own father (or uncle, mother, etc.). Now, the friend is a basically decent bloke, and although he recognizes his father's evil, he loves him nonetheless. Only if the player characters can convince him of the moral need to remove his father will he help them. He needs to be convinced that the player characters are the good guys, and that his father is beyond redemption, or that his/their intervention will bring about redemption.

So, the characters may take the friend to see some of the corpses, lunatics, or orphans whose conditions are due to the evil **arcantist**. They will certainly have to impress him with their moral rectitude and sensitivity to his dilemma. Holding a gun to his head and threatening him doesn't work: he can easily give the wrong information, and may be able to tip his father off about the group's intentions (if they are brutal or murderous then this simply convinces the friend that his father should be protected from such thugs) and call in the police if they actually commit any assault or other crime to get their information. This is, for a change, a situation in which characters will get information and aid by being nice rather than by being brutal; i.e. in which they benefit from role-playing good alignments.

Assuming that the player group defeats the magician, his son soon suffers a nervous breakdown (it must be the guilt and sorrow of having betrayed and lost his own father, poor guy) and is admitted to hospital. In truth, the spirit of his defeated father is returning, to live again through his son. His apparent mental illness is simply a painful transition, as his father's spirit comes to take over his body.

How long the process takes depends upon the son's attitude to his father and to the player characters. If the son has not been convinced that his father deserved his fate, or now hates the player characters (e.g. if they threatened him for the **information**, or promised his father would be safe, but he is accidentally killed), then the process takes only a week or so. Otherwise it could take months.

If the player characters are being good friends and visiting the unfortunate in the hospital, then they will notice the transformation taking

place. Their friend does not change physically, but there are signs — a give-away phrase, a glint in the eye, **and/or** references to things (e.g. magic) that the friend knew nothing about. These things all suggest that the father's personality is emerging in his son. This should give them time to find a way to protect their friend (and themselves) from the vengeful spirit of the old magician, e.g. to seek advice of other sorcerers, or to undertake an adventure to gain a potion or spell to protect against the possession, etc.

If, on the other hand, the characters abandon their friend, then the change will take place without their noticing. The first time they will know is when their ex-friend turns up on one of their doorsteps some evening with an uncharacteristically evil grin. "I've got a bone to pick with you ... Your SPINE!" In this case, their old enemy is back, now with all the knowledge that the son once had (like where the player characters live).

If, at any time, the players take the easy (evil) way out, and murder their **friend**, then the G.M. should feel free to have the police launch a very thorough murder investigation and adjust alignments appropriately.

Using Subplots

When integrating subplots into campaigns, there are a few points which G.M.s should keep in mind.

1. Don't be predictable. If every time the G.M. introduces a new friend or lover for a player character, the players think "Oh no, what's wrong with this one?" or, "Here's more cannon fodder," then there is a problem. If the characters' girl friends consistently turn out to be cannibal-vampires who want to eat their hearts, then the player characters will stop talking to prospective lovers. If all of their NPC friends turn out to be NSB informers or disguised **Nightlands** minions, then they won't want friends any more. Make the weird **and/or** dangerous the exception, not the rule. Keep the element of surprise.

2. Let the player character benefit from the subplots. By and large, characters should gain more from these side-stories than they lose. The reason for this is simple. Many player characters are power-hungry killing machines who don't want friends, relationships or lives anyway. That's OK, but it makes for boring role-playing. Players who have interesting characters, with personalities and lives outside of adventures, make the game more interesting and should be encouraged and rewarded in little and fun ways. Therefore, the G.M. should let characters benefit from such subplots more than they suffer from them, as a way of encouraging the PCs to get involved in these little incidents.

3. Keep it brief, and be fair. Often, subplots only involve one or two of the player characters, which means that the rest of the players are left sitting around with nothing to do while the others play through them. So, keep these episodes brief, or try to run encounters at a time when those who aren't involved won't be inconvenienced (e.g. at the start of a playing session while you are still waiting for the other players to arrive, or while those who aren't involved are out buying pizza or are in the kitchen making coffee). Also, keep in mind that you, as a G.M., can use these little incidents to reward players who have been excluded from previous encounters. It's no secret that many gaming groups have players who are less assertive or quieter than their fellows, or who have characters who are less heavily involved in long combat scenes, so try to use these subplots to involve characters who are often pushed out of the limelight, or whose players have the least chance to make decisions.

4. Don't impose subplots. If a character isn't interested in pursuing a subplot, or if the player isn't up to role-playing complex friendships or conversations, then let it drop. The subplots are meant to be *fun* for players, not an embarrassment or burden.

Theme & Content

The first "duty" of the G.M. is to create interesting situations for his or her players to explore. This is, in many ways, reciprocal, as the players are equally responsible for creating interesting characters and cooperating with the G.M. to make the games interesting.

Obviously the most important aspects of this involve creating interesting **characters**, intriguing mysteries, tense dramatic moments, exciting fights, etc. But further, the G.M. can build up a sense of campaign continuity, with ongoing plots and recurring NPCs, and can introduce interesting little side events and dilemmas. Another way to create interesting situations is to use adventures to examine *themes* or *ideas*. The movie **Seven**, for example, may be a tense and disturbing mystery, but it also raises interesting questions about guilt and responsibility, and about the nature of evil. The play **Hamlet**, similarly, is basically the story of a crazed Prince who kills loads of people, but it spends a lot of time examining issues of revenge.

Introducing a theme to an adventure means that you are looking at a specific issue in a way that is likely to be thought-provoking. That doesn't mean that the players will think about the theme (Some players are **frighteningly** thought-resistant). And it doesn't mean that you have to ram it down peoples' throats.

It is also worth giving some thought to exactly what themes you want to explore. Specifically, the players need to be able to deal with the subject matter sensibly, and they need to be able to relate to it. So, if you are cursed with players who find racism amusing — i.e. they can't deal with it sensibly — then don't bother trying to look at racism as a story element. Likewise, leave out obscure explorations of philosophical theories, unless you happen to be playing with a bunch of philosophy students, and other arcane issues that people won't be able to relate to.

Finally, the golden rule is: *Don't Preach*. You may sincerely believe that the capitalist class are the evil oppressors of the proletariat, or that representative democracy is the only just way to rule a society, but preaching your opinions to your players won't make for an interesting or enjoyable game. Challenging and examining peoples' assumptions and beliefs is healthy and constructive; battering them with your own is not.

The best idea is to stick to general principles which players can easily understand: revenge (always a good one), community, hatred, responsibility, continuity and change, technological progress, education, love, etc.



CHAPTER 10: The Adventures

The three following adventures are all based around the theme of family and, in particular, motherhood. All are suitable for a group of inexperienced characters and contain relatively little combat.

Mother and Child is a two-part adventure for globe-trotting characters. One part is set in India, the other in Thailand. Both parts are fairly linear in nature and should take one evening each to play. Although each contains a climactic combat encounter, neither is particularly violent.

Wire Mothers is set in urban USA (or Europe). It looks at issues of dependence, relating family dependence, abuse and social dependence, and at peoples' abilities to cling to the things that are destroying them. (The title, incidentally, comes from a particularly sick experiment which "scientists" have often repeated: baby monkeys are placed on the backs of **wire-and-flannel** model "mothers" and then pain is inflicted upon them; even when the source of the torture is the wire mother itself the babies still cling harder and harder as the pain increases. Isn't science **wonderful?**) The adventure need not involve any combat, although players may choose a confrontational solution if they wish.

All Men Are Bastards focuses on a young woman who is trying to rebel against a manipulative father-figure. This adventure, too, has an urban setting and could be completed in one evening without any combat. G.M.s could easily add the potential for extra combat by giving the main villain (the mad professor, the father-figure) a squad of supernatural servants, such as Hunters nesting in the attic of his penthouse apartment, who can be sent out after the player characters.

Wire Mothers

The following scenario is about a maltreated wife and mother who returns from the grave to avenge herself on the men to whom she gave her life. And maybe it's about dependence and abuse, possession and pain. But basically, like any good investigative adventure, it's about the players racking their brains to hunt down the villain for a climactic final confrontation.

G.M.'s Background

Elisa Jeffries was a pretty, dumpy girl, who married at the age of seventeen to Doug Brown, a factory worker with a steady job and an embryonic beer gut.

By the time she was twenty-five, Elisa had given birth to four children. A beautiful girl who died in infancy, and three tough boys. Her husband's job could not support the family, so she took to working full time, but her men folk still expected her to keep the house. Light romantic fiction and a strong faith in Christ, Our Lord and the mercy of the Holy Mother, kept her going through it all.

She lost her looks and her good humor. Doug became disenchanted with his marriage and, bored by the monotony of the factory, took to drink. At the age of forty, Elisa looked fifty or more, haggard, plain and fat. Her husband's drinking grew worse and he became violent, but the neighbors had their own problems and no one commented on her bruises.

On November 3rd, 2003, at the age of forty-five, Elisa was found dead in the family's home, her neck broken from a fall down the stairs and shards of glass from a beer bottle were embedded in her head.

Doug Brown was sentenced to ten years imprisonment for the murder.

Overview

After three years in the valley of death, Elisa Brown has risen to new life, to bring a harsh judgement upon her sons and husband.

The player characters are contacted by a lawyer named Samuel Hodge, whose client is accused of murdering one *William Brown*, Elisa's eldest son. Hodge asks the player characters to do some nosing around for him.

What the player characters discover is that William Brown is not the first of the family to be killed. His father, Doug, died just three days before.

What is happening is that Elisa is killing her hated men folk at three day intervals. The remaining two sons will soon die unless the player characters intervene. Events progress according to the following timeline:

November 3rd, three years ago: Elisa Brown killed. Her husband Doug was immediately arrested, and later convicted.

November 3rd current year, 1:30 pm: Doug Brown found beaten to death in the prison toilets. No witnesses.

November 6th, 9:30 pm: William Brown, age 29, found dead at his home. Lee Darent immediately arrested.

November 7th: Lee Darent charged with the murder of William Brown.

Now: November 8th, morning: Player characters contacted; adventure begins.

November 9th, 11:00 pm: Mike Brown, aged 27, dies of a Heroin overdose in his **squat/apartment** (unless the characters intervene).

November 12th, 11:20 pm: Gregg Brown, aged 24, murdered in his workshop (unless the player characters intervene).

The initiative rests purely with the players. Their characters have the time for plenty of research. What they must do is deduce the (blatantly obvious) pattern behind the killings (the men are being killed at three day intervals, in order of their age, oldest first) and stop the **Revenant**.

The setting of this adventure is left deliberately vague, so that you can slot it into any city or large town in your existing campaign. Incidental encounters (talking with clerks to gather information, etc.) are left up to the G.M. to improvise, but guidelines are given for what clues may be found where.

The following introduction assumes that the player characters are "for hire" as private investigators, mercenaries, etc. If this is not the case, *Lee Darent* may be important to them for some other reason (he is the ally of the **group**, or a friend of a friend) or there is some other reason to keep him out of jail. Alternatively, characters who are journalists might be asked by their bosses to look into the family for a fresh angle on the story. Characters in the Spook Squad or police might be assigned to the case. Wealthy characters might be friends of the accused and get involved to clear his name.

The adventure requires at least one character with a good Research score, and skills in Interrogation Techniques and Intelligence would be useful. It also requires that the player characters are not heartless bastards, and that they won't just sit back and let relatively innocent folk get murdered.

Introducing the Characters

Most likely the player characters are contacted by the lawyer, *Samuel Hodge*. He invites them to his office on the morning of November 8th.

A well groomed, polite man in his late thirties, he explains that his client, Lee Darent, is accused of murder. Hodge believes the man to be innocent, but neither he nor the police have found any other suspect. He would like the characters to investigate the one as-yet unexplored area of the case (as neither he nor the police have the time): the dead man's estranged family.

He tells them of the dead man, his name (William Brown) and address, and answers basic questions about him as best he can; date of

birth, occupation, etc. Beyond that, he knows only that William Brown had a wife, and two brothers, Mike and Gregg. Their father, Doug Brown, he believes is in prison (he has not learned of that death). He can arrange for the investigators to speak with Lee **Darent**, but is otherwise unable (or too busy) to help them.

Lee Darent

FROM PUBLIC RECORDS (Research roll required to get this information): Scanning public records, and old business directories, phoning colleges, etc. the investigators discover that Lee Darent was born locally, graduated from high school and college without distinction, and has spent the last twenty years building up an unremarkable furniture wholesale firm called Darent Direct. He is very dull.

FROM THE NEWSPAPERS: The papers from the preceding days toe the official line. They tell how Lee Darent was seen parking his car outside William Brown's home at about 8:20 p.m. on the 6th. He knocked on the door and was let in. Immediately (male) voices were heard arguing, and **Chrisie** Brown fled from the house. At 8:25 the argument ceased and Darent left the house. At 10:30 Chrisie Brown returned and found her husband's body, and immediately phoned the police.

FROM THE POLICE: The police have issued a press release for reporters and others with a legitimate interest in the case. This contains the same information as was in the papers, adding that the coroner estimated the time of death at "between around 8:30 and 9:15," and specifying that the body was found at the foot of the stairs with wounds indicating repeated strikes with a blunt object and a fall down the stairs.

OTHER SOURCES: Lee **Darent's** plush home is presently unoccupied, locked up securely, as his wife and daughter have fled from the intrusive reporters to an anonymous address out of town. If player characters insist upon breaking in here, or at his company's offices, they find nothing of interest. Both the house and office have alarms, however, and are in respectable areas where the neighbors report suspicious strangers. A conflict with the police is likely if they are careless.

Talking With Lee

An interview with Lee Darent may be arranged by his lawyer. Attorney Samuel Hodge is a busy man, however, and characters must wait 2D6 working hours (assume a nine to five working day) before he has time to arrange anything.

Any conversation takes place over a dirty wooden table at the local police holding cells. Hodge is always present, and a bored police officer stands nearby throughout the interview.

Lee Darent admits that he had "fooled around" with Chrisie Brown, who worked as a VDU operator for his wholesale firm. He has no respect for the woman and actually hates himself for his infidelity (Intelligence or Interrogation Techniques roll to notice) but won't admit it.

He vehemently denies killing William Brown, exclaiming that "he could keep his cheap slut of a wife! I didn't care." He went around to the Browns' to see Chrisie, thinking that William would be out bowling, but found that he was in. He tried to pretend that he had come round to discuss work matters with Chrisie, but William didn't believe him and an argument developed. Chrisie **fled**, and there was a brief scuffle in which William struck Lee several times (he still has an array of bruises on his ribs). Lee immediately beat a hasty retreat, leaving the angry husband entirely unharmed. In this Lee Darent is telling the truth.

William Brown

FROM PUBLIC RECORDS (Research roll): Public records attest to William's birth and marriage, but nothing else.

FROM CHRISIE BROWN: Chrisie Brown can be found at her home, staring at the foot of the stairs where she found William's body, a bottle of cheap spirits in her hand and tears streaking down her face. From November 7th to the 11th she has been completely inebriated,

and reacts to the police and player characters alike with incoherent grief, irrational anger or complete disinterest (whichever you, as G.M., find it easier to role-play). Getting information from her should be difficult, requiring some sensitive role-playing from the players (psychic powers like telepathy or empathy couldn't hurt either). She loved William and cheated on him out of spite because he beat her. Lee Darent was different. She had sex with him because she couldn't afford to lose her job, and she hated his guts. She can vouch that Darent and her husband argued on the 6th, and that she retreated to a neighbor's for the evening. She doesn't believe that Darent had the nerve to kill William, and hopes that her husband gave him a sound beating. On the morning of November 12th she just takes off out of town and isn't seen again.

FROM THE HOUSE: In the house's entrance hall, a framed photograph hangs, knocked crooked, showing Chrisie and William with William's parents: his pig-faced father, and his short, dumpy mother, all standing in a smiling group. The photograph is about four years old, but should be mentioned because it shows *Elisa*, enabling the investigators to recognize her or her description later on. If the characters get the chance to snoop around the house (e.g. through force or talking their way around Chrisie) they find no clues to the murder. However, in a disorderly box of envelopes is a letter from brother Mike, begging for money. The note talks briefly about how Mike can't afford to buy food and is being threatened by loan-sharks (mostly lies). It gives his mailing address.

FROM THE NEIGHBORS: The neighbors don't much want to talk to outsiders, although some of the younger locals are eager to sell information to reporters for a price. They've talked to the cops, the murderer's in custody, so what's the problem? One couple (the Schnitzlers) vouch for having given Chrisie sanctuary on the evening of the 6th. An Interrogation Techniques skill roll or fine role-playing prompts neighbors to mention that Chrisie had "more than a few men-friends," and a second Fast Talk roll prompts the admission that "maybe Willie was a bit rough with her, on account of her cheating on him." Everyone knows that Chrisie was unfaithful and that William bashed her about.

ASKING ABOUT THE FATEFUL EVENING: Asking neighbors, street kids, and local retailers, the player characters get the same information about the evening of William's death that they have probably already gotten from the newspapers, police, or Hodge, as described above. They may also ask about other suspicious strangers in the area or odd occurrences. An Intelligence or Interrogation Techniques roll does pick up one piece of information: a homeless woman was seen wandering away from the area around 9:00 that evening; a short, dumpy, brown-haired woman in a filthy coat.

Doug Brown

FROM PUBLIC RECORDS (Research): Court records, registers of births and marriages, etc., simply mark the three main events in his life: his birth, his marriage to Elisa **Jeffries**, and his conviction for her murder.

FROM LIBRARY ARCHIVES (Research): Six terse lines in one city newspaper record his conviction, mentioning that he beat his wife and pushed her down the stairs on November 3rd 1990.

FROM COURT TRANSCRIPTS: Through Hodge (or on their own if members of the police or making an Intelligence or Research skill roll) the Investigators can get transcripts of Doug Brown's trial. These record that Elisa was attacked with a beer bottle and died from falling down the stairs. The two younger sons, who still lived at home, appeared in court to defend their father, but their testimonies were vague and contradictory. Doug Brown broke down in court and changed his plea to Guilty.

FROM THE STATE PENITENTIARY: Characters phoning or visiting the prison to ask about Doug Brown are told that he died on November 3rd. A press statement was released, but the death didn't make any papers. If the Investigators claim to be reporters or attached to a government department (like the police) they are told that Doug was

murdered, beaten to death with a bottle, with no witnesses. The prison won't admit that the murder weapon was a "beer" bottle (they don't need a scandal about drink in their prison), but if characters guess and ask, then startled officials reply "who told you?"

Elisa Brown (Elisa Jeffries)

FROM PUBLIC RECORDS (with a Research roll): Records exist of Elisa's marriage (including her original name, Jeffries), her birth and her death.

FROM LIBRARY ARCHIVES (Research roll): There are **only** the newspaper clippings recording her death and Doug Brown's conviction.

FROM NEIGHBORS: In the neighborhood where the Browns lived, people remember Elisa as a good-natured woman, always tired but always pleasant enough. She had little time for friends, but regularly attended the local Catholic church of Saint Stephen's. They know that she was beaten by her husband and that her sons took advantage of her selfless hard work, but gloss over these areas in conversation (a successful Interrogation Techniques or Intelligence skill roll or good role-playing reveals this to a player character).

FROM THE CEMETERY: Church and civil records of the death record the site of her burial in a local cemetery. Here the tacky gold lettering has flaked from the kitsch inscription on the grave: "Not dead but only sleeping." The earth is undisturbed, but the headstone stands on a slant, having tilted over as the soil compacted beneath it. The chain-smoking caretaker blames shoddy workmanship, and can assure player characters that there have been no unusual events around the cemetery. He does remember seeing a pudgy woman in tattered clothing paying her respects, about a week ago (the description matches Elisa's).

FROM THE DOWN-AND-OUTS: The only other sightings of Elisa's Revenant has been amongst the city's homeless. After 2D6 hours asking around these unfortunates, player characters do hear of an *Elisa Jeffries* who has slept at various hostels for the homeless on irregular nights since the 4th. The description of this Elisa Jeffries matches the description of the "dead" *Elisa Brown*.

FROM THE CHURCH: The senior priest, Father O'Malley, remembers Elisa as pious and quiet, "a saint of a woman, and I don't say that lightly," with an abiding devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Over by the statue of the Virgin, a rack of offertory candles burn, one shining brighter than the others. If the player characters return to the church again, even days later, the same candle burns brightly, never burning down - until Elisa's Revenant is destroyed.

Father Matthew O'Malley is quiet but confident, a good listener and sincere shepherd of his parishioners (principled alignment). He is not so much self-assured as totally sure of the love and mercy of God, and this gives him the strength to persevere through these harrowing times. He "knows" that the end of the world is coming, and is more concerned with the spiritual than the mundane.

Defeating the Revenant

There are at least three ways to combat the Revenant. Other intelligent methods may be devised by cunning players, and their effectiveness should be adjudicated by the G.M.

1. Mindless Violence: Most players' stock method is not particularly effective. The Revenant takes only one point of damage from bullets and piercing weapons, and the minimum possible damage from slashing or blunt weapons. As it does not need to breathe, it cannot be strangled or drowned. 2D6 Hit Points are regenerated each round. Note that fire, electricity, explosions, etc. all do full damage - but obviously huge explosions, etc., will attract attention in a city - from the police, amongst others ...

2. Anti-Christian Symbolism: The Revenant thinks it is on a divine mission. So, it refuses to go within 10 feet of an inverted crucifix, and backs away from any gibberish that sounds Satanic. This may be used, for example, to drive her into a **pre-prepared** trap or snare in order to take her alive.

3. The Command of a Catholic Priest: Elisa's reverence for the Church means that her Revenant will not attack a Catholic priest, and may be commanded by such a priest to desist from her attacks on her family (so that she flees out into the world, perhaps never to be seen again). In order to persuade Elisa, a priest must have her full attention (meaning that no one else should be talking or attacking her, and there must be no anti-Christian symbols present). She only accepts the authority of those ordained into the "true" Church - like Father O'Malley, above - and not "schismatics" like Protestants.

4. Magic: Magics intended to harm spirits, ghosts or supernatural creatures have no effect on the Revenant. Spells intended to affect peoples' bodies are equally ineffectual. However, spells or psychic effects which affect minds or spells are completely effective. So, spells like Words of Truth and Domination work against her, as do purely psychic effects such as Induce Pain; the spell Negation will "kill" her, and other magics designed to counter or control spells are fully effective against her.

Note that if Elisa's victim is whisked away without her being destroyed, she returns to attack every third day, interminably. (G.M.s should improvise these attacks as necessary).

Elisa's Revenant

Alignment: Unprincipled

Attributes: I.Q. 6, M.E. 20, M.A. 5, P.S. 28, P.P. 7, P.E. 20, P.B. 6, Spd. 7

Hit Points: 50

S.D.C.: 20

Weight: 180 lbs

Height: 5 feet, 6 inches tall (1.56 m).

P.P.E.: 100

Disposition: Totally focused on its murderous mission, nothing distracts or concerns the Revenant.

Skills of Note: Hand to hand: basic (+13 to damage), lore: religion 40%

Special Powers: The Revenant takes only one point of damage from piercing weapons and bullets, and minimum damage from bludgeoning and slashing attacks; regenerates 2D6 points of damage per melee!

Note: Elisa's Revenant has returned from the dead to deal out judgment and punishment upon her cruel and sinful family. It sees itself as an avenging angel, doing God's work. God, if He exists, is not a party to this, and the Revenant is merely a physical manifestation of Elisa's suppressed hatred and a bit of mystic energy. Think of it as an involuntarily created magic spell — an arrangement of P.P.E. given form by the strength of the woman's suppressed feelings. What matters, for the purposes of the adventure, is not what the Revenant is, but what it thinks it is.

In fact, her view of just retribution works in the player group's advantage, because the Revenant won't intentionally hurt or kill "innocent" people — including them. However, she will strike out with deadly force towards anybody in her way who the Revenant believes is cruel and abusive, physically or mentally.

Mike Brown

FROM PUBLIC RECORDS (Research): As with the rest of the family, there are few records about this man, only of his birth, but nothing else.

FROM THE POLICE: Investigators who can convince the police that they have a genuine reason for being interested in Mike Brown discover that he has a string of minor convictions, all either drug related (mainly heroin) or involving petty theft. The police have his official address (taken from William Brown's papers). Having already checked it out, they can tell characters that it is a dummy address. Of course, if the player characters are asking on or after the **10th**, then the police can tell them that Mike died of an overdose on the 9th.

FROM THE STREETS: For every four hours spent around drug rehabilitation centers or talking to street-level heroin dealers, each of

the Investigators may make a Streetwise, Streetwise-Drugs, or Interrogation Techniques skill roll (add 1% to the character's effective skill per \$10 of bribes offered for information). If successful, someone directs them to Mike's squat.

OTHER SOURCES: Local drug rehabilitation centers and welfare offices also have Mike's dummy address revealed to investigating characters who fabricate a decent excuse.

The Squat

Mike Brown's mail-drop, his "official" address, is an uninhabited, boarded up apartment block which looks set to collapse before this decade ends. The postal services just dump any letters through the slot in the front door. Player characters can quickly deduce that this building is unoccupied, but the building across the street is certainly inhabited ... and somebody collects the mail because there's nothing at the fake address.

Opposite this block is another derelict building, in slightly better repair. A sign above the door still proclaims that it is the "Sacred Heart Orphanage," but for the last year it has been a squat, home to a score of vagrants, addicts and petty criminals. As most are involved with drugs or crime, they are wary of strangers. Inside, the "Orphanage" is a maze of damp passages and dark rooms. Missing floorboards make rapid movement hazardous, and rusty nails and twisted pipes protrude from the walls.

Player Characters should find the area alien and unsettling. Shouts and conversations echo down corridors and rats move audibly behind rotten skirting boards. Three sample encounters for player characters wandering through the squat are suggested below (use all three, if possible). Use Preserver Activist statistics from the **Nightbane™ RPG** (page 198) for thugs in the building. Anyone in the building knows where Mike's room is, but not all are willing (or coherent enough) to talk with strangers.

1. In the entrance lobby, a pale young woman with bloodshot eyes breast-feeds an emaciated baby. She is oblivious to the Investigators' presence, but grumbles incoherently, her breath thick with cheap liquor.

2. Three macho guys approach the player characters menacingly, each armed with switch-blade knives. They demand money from wealthy looking characters (which is just about anybody in this neighborhood), attempt to stare down anyone who looks even mildly tough, and just barge past those who seem too poor or puny to be worth bothering with. If faced with serious opposition they flee.

3. "Hey, you wanna buy something?" The face in the doorway offers smack, speed or hash (except to obvious uniform policemen) and for \$10 tells anyone who asks where to find *Mike Brown* —"end of the corridor, door on the right, next to the room that smells of urine." This is actually Mike's pusher, a scrawny youth named Rico who deals to feed his own habit. If the characters ask, he can vouch for Mike on the night of the 6th and "ain't seen nothing weird."

Talking With Mike

In an unused dormitory on an upper floor, Mike Brown lies wasted on a filthy mattress. Talking with him is hard going, as he has little interest in anything outside of his own addled mind. Characters have to ask him questions several times before he offers an answer that is probably correct.

He has not heard about his brother or father's death, and when told, is not concerned; his only contacts with his family in the last three years have been letters begging for money from William and Gregg (he claims to have lost their addresses, but both can be found in a tattered notebook in his jacket pocket).

Mike Brown

Alignment: Anarchist

Attributes: I.Q. 9, M.E. 5, M.A. 6, P.S. 9, P.P. 9, P.E. 8, P.B. 11, Spd.

8

Hit Points: 18 **S.D.C.:** 8

Age: 23

Weight: 125 lbs

Height: 5 feet, 9 inches

P.P.E.: 6

Disposition: Irritable, confused, semi-comatose and (at best) semi-coherent.

Skills of Note: Pilot automobile 60%, streetwise 30%, and streetwise: drugs 55%.

Mike's Death

On the night of the 9th, a ragged woman, a tramp, wanders into the squat. No one pays her any mind. Some of the other squatters (including his pusher, Rico) overhear snatches of conversation between Mike and the woman, and later recall that Mike addresses the visitor deferentially as "Mathers." If asked, they concede that this might have been "Mother," but the idea hadn't occurred to them as he'd talked about her murder.

The two talk for about an hour and then the woman leaves. In the morning, Mike is found dead of a truly massive drug overdose, the **Revenant** having provoked enough guilt in him that he has killed himself. Rico and three others bundle the body up and dump it in the road two blocks away, where it is eventually spotted by a police patrol car. The body is identified from ID in his pocket, and the police issue the usual unheeded statement to the press about another poor wretch dying of a drug overdose.

G.M. Note: If the player characters are present when she arrives and interfere with Elisa's plan, she adopts a more direct approach. She tries to shove her way to Mike and hurl him down from the nearest window or stairwell. Any player Characters present will attempt to prevent this, and a fight should ensue. She will also still say and do things that might cause Mike to kill himself or run and fall out a window or such.

Gregg Brown

Gregg is easier to find. Various bureaucrats have his real address on file (tax agencies, etc.), and he is in the local telephone directory. The Police and Prison services have informed him of his brother's and father's deaths. He has no criminal record, and lives in a relatively safe (if poor) area of the city.

During the day, Gregg can be found working in his shop, where he repairs and makes wooden furniture, cabinets, etc. He hates the work, but has no other qualifications and at least makes a living this way.

Every evening, he drinks listlessly in the smoky bar at the end of his street, standing with a rowdy group whom he calls "friends." He buys them drinks and cigarettes, and they ridicule his lisp and his ugliness.

At about ten o'clock he shuffles home, and then often (including the night of the 12th) phones a prostitute. He has several regular girls, all short, brown haired and slightly dumpy, resembling his mother. They only stay for a quarter of an hour, exchanging few words with him, and when they leave, Gregg feels even more miserable than before.

Talking with Gregg

Gregg lives in a two-room flat above his shop, accessible through the shop or from an alleyway to one side. The wallpaper is peeling at the corners, and the lights are bare bulbs. Everything is functional but old, and most of the appliances work temperamentally. In November, it is cold.

The shop is dusty and cluttered, with furniture, strips of wood and tools littering the area. Again, basic but functional.

Gregg is not imaginative or articulate. He talks with a lisp, is self-conscious around women and avoids eye contact with those whom he does not know.

He is not inclined to believe that his mother has returned from the dead to kill him, at least not consciously. He gets angry, upset and irrational if the player characters try to tell him otherwise, and pretends he

doesn't believe them. He tells them to get out of his life and threatens to call the cops if they insist on loitering in his shop or flat. He then shuts the idea out of his mind by immersing himself in his work, friends, and guilty sexual liaisons. If the player group is to protect him, they must do so without his cooperation.

Gregg Brown

Alignment: Scrupulous

Attributes: I.Q. 10, M.E. 7, M.A. 7, P.S. 9, P.P. 10, P.E. 12, P.B. 7, Spd. 10

Hit Points: 22

S.D.C.: 10

P.P.E.: 11

Age: 22

Weight: 150 lbs

Height: 6 feet tall (1.8 m)

Disposition: Miserable

Skills of Note: Cook 40%, pilot automobile 60%, and streetwise 20%.

Gregg's Death

Elisa's **Revenant** approaches Gregg's shop from the main road at around 11:30 p.m. on the night of the 12th. She is the same build and height as the prostitute who has (probably) just left, and characters must make a **Tailing/Surveillance** Systems skill roll to see that it is a different person (recognizing it as **Elisa** if they have met at Mike's). It walks up the steps to his flat and knocks. He opens the door. He screams very loudly. If the player characters are anywhere nearby then they hear him.

Unless stopped, the **Revenant** barges into the flat, chasing Gregg down into the shop (which takes one melee round) and it takes another four melee rounds for her to chase him around and beat him until he is unconscious. The creature of vengeance then takes some of his tools and in the next four rounds, crucifies him on the wall of the shop, finally plunging a screwdriver into his throat. Walking out of the shop door and into the night, it is *never* seen again. Hopefully the player group intervenes to save the Gregg before he ends up staked to the wall.

Epilogue: The Lawyer's Proof

If the Investigators capture the **Revenant**, she remains mute, refusing to talk with anyone, nor to react to anything said or done to her. She will be detained in a psychiatric hospital indefinitely; if she escapes (and she will try), the restless spirit will try to finish her plot for revenge. Once all her men tormentors are eliminated, Elisa disappears, as if she never existed. **Note:** Those knowledgeable in magic are likely to be able to figure out what Elisa is and how to best contain her/it, and can eventually disperse the energy and destroy the creature in a lengthy exorcism or negate magic ritual (takes hours to prepare and the ceremony itself takes another hour). There should be enough evidence (and perhaps witnesses) to clear *Lee Darent*.

If the **Revenant** is slain, the police cannot identify the woman (they refuse to accept that she is some sort of ghost), and if the player characters kill her (perhaps "justifiable homicide" in the US - but they can expect to be imprisoned if the adventure is run in Europe) the police cannot identify the body.

What police forensics or player characters with forensics skills can find on the corpse are hair and blood traces from William Brown and traces of heroin (these items are found on a captured **Revenant** only if a careful and thorough inspection and collection of evidence is conducted). They also find glass dust from a beer bottle, and earth corresponding to the soil in the cemetery, but may not draw any conclusions from these. They are satisfied that she killed William and release *Lee Darent* (whose wife divorces him).

Footnote: Prodding the Players

Some players are unused to taking the initiative. They need linear plots with no brain-work. For this reason, this adventure has the lawyer, Hodge.

In the players can't think of what to do, Hodge might make a number of suggestions or offer information and speculation. "Have you tried public records/the welfare offices/asking the police?" "I've had someone make some calls to trace Mike Brown, and you know he died two days ago?" and so on.

Once the players have got some information, I.Q. rolls for their characters might be necessary. "It occurs to you that the building across the road looks like a squat." "You realize that these three deaths all happened three days apart, and are in order of age." Of course, the GM should try to minimize such obvious interference, prodding the players only if they are really stuck.

All Men are Bastards

By Kevin Hassall with additional text by Siembieda

Adventure Overview

This adventure involves the player characters' search for a missing friend or colleague, one *Doug Masters*. It doesn't particularly matter why the characters are looking for him. He may be a friend or family to one of the player characters, or he may have been a servant of the characters' own patrons (if the characters serve an organization like the Seekers or the Brotherhood, for example), or he might be rumored to have information that they need with regard to an ongoing plot in your campaign.

The adventure can be set in any city in the US without any changes being required, and works fine in a 1990s or **Nightbane** setting. Alter the names to fit the adventure into another country. G.M.s running **Palladium Fantasy RPG**® campaigns, or **Rifts**® games, should still be able to make use of this by changing some of the character backgrounds and the details of the locations. The adventure works for any number of player characters, and can even be used one-on-one with a single player, so long as none of the characters are terribly tough.

In the beginning, all that the characters know is Doug Masters' last known address, which may be in their own native city, or further afield, as the G.M. wishes. They *will* eventually find the man, but by then it is too late for him. His mind has already been stolen. The player characters should, however, still pursue the matter, hoping to "cure" him or find out who has so violated their friend.

Theme & Feel: The adventure is, more than anything else, a gritty urban gothic romance. Think of a moody French remake of *NYPD Blue*, and (in true French movie style) add one vulnerable yet deadly woman who falls in love with one of the player characters. If your players aren't up to role-playing personal interactions, or their characters simply don't have enough personality to hold conversations or form relationships with **NPCs**, then you will probably find other adventures in this book which are better suited to your group.

The basic relationship in the adventure between the two main **NPCs** is a perverse father-daughter relationship. But beyond this, the adventure also looks at the way in which people shamelessly use and exploit one and other. The **NPCs**, without doubt, are bastards: It's up to the player characters to *demonstrate* whether or not "All Men Are Bastards."

The G.M. should feel free to insert any other little encounters or episodes which underline these themes.

Background on Floretta

"**Floretta**" was born Florence Nye in 1986. She was left severely brain damaged by a road accident in 2002, her memories and **personal-**

ity destroyed. She was the perfect "blank slate" for psychologist-turned-sorcerer, *Christian Schaller*, to write upon. Schaller recreated her mind, using sorcery and psychology to make her an "ideal" companion and a tool for his schemes. She has no memory of her past, and officially serves Schaller as his housekeeper. However she also seduces men for him — bringing them back to his apartment and incapacitating them.

Floretta is deeply unhappy and longs to escape from him and have a life of her own. But Schaller has created her so that she doesn't have the independence to run off and get that life. She is entirely dependent upon him and he has made her completely loyal to him. To Floretta, the evil Schaller is father, mother, husband and only friend.

Floretta's personality has been formed by an autocratic man, and she is therefore, very much a male fantasy-figure. She is extremely thin, with an incredible figure, appearing quite fragile, with big doe eyes and a sweet, alluring smile. Her interests are extremely "masculine" (sports, cars, etc.) but she is completely submissive and subservient.

She is the central character in this adventure, which revolves around her dependence upon Schaller and her search for an escape. Unable to run away on her own, she hopes that she will find a man who will take her away from him. A brave and loving "prince" to whisk her away into the sunset, but so far, the men she has approached have all been predatory bastards, far more interested in her body than her feelings, and she has turned them all over to Schaller. In this adventure, she approaches one of the player characters. If he, too, turns out to be a laddish and predatory male, then he will end up as one of Schaller's victims. If, on the other hand, he is a kind-hearted, sensitive sort, he will be able to save Floretta from Schaller and solve the "missing person" mystery which brings the player characters into the adventure. In order to better engage the player characters' interest, the G.M. may wish to change details of **Floretta's** appearance and interests.

Floretta; also known as "**Florrie**." She sometimes uses the last name of Schaller or Smith, but her real name is Florence Nye.

Alignment: Anarchist (with strong leanings toward good).

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 6, M.A. 15, P.S. 7, P.P. 18, P.E. 16, P.B. 19, Spd 12

Hit Points: 28

S.D.C.: 14

P.P.E.: 2

I.S.P.: 25

Disposition: Florrie wants to be a good person and doesn't like what Schaller makes her do (she really doesn't have the will power to openly challenge or defy him, Schaller has made certain of that). She also feels confused, desperate and increasingly lost. If she can be removed from Schaller, Florrie can become a more independent and loving person, although she'll always lack total confidence and will tend to be insecure and possessive.

Skills of Note: Cook 45%, sing 45%, first aid 55%, holistic medicine 30%, pilot automobile 62%, hand to hand: basic, running, and computer operation 50%.

Special Abilities: Any character in intimate physical contact with Florrie may (at her discretion) be rendered entirely helpless (drowsy and unable to move or even speak, but fully conscious). This is a psychic power against which there is no save (although Mind Block, and similar, prevent it from functioning) and it takes effect in a number of minutes equal to the **target's** M.E.

Psychic Powers: Empathy (constant, no cost; male targets have no chance of saving against this) and induce sleep.

Christian Schaller

Christian Schaller was born in 1928. He's enjoyed a distinguished career as a professor of psychology and has cultivated an impressive ability to pick up information. His friends used to say that he absorbed knowledge like a sponge. Few ever discovered how right they were.

After his retirement in 1988, Schaller's broad range of academic interests allowed him to develop an understanding of magic. His aca-

demically self-disciplined and attention to detail well equipped him to become a sorcerer. Of course his primary interest was in using magic to gain yet more and more information. As a psychologist he had **strived** to learn about the human mind: in retirement he learned how to magically extract knowledge directly FROM the human mind — to absorb the human mind **itself!**

Now, he lives in the penthouse apartment of the building that he owns, reading books, newspapers, listening to the radio, surfing the Internet, dabbling with magic, or just looking out of the window. All he wants is information and a stack of books. Access to a computer will keep him content for days. His pension and some astutely made investments ensure that he wants for nothing. He sees no point in going out, so **Florrie** fetches food, newspapers and books for him.

Schaller is an elderly, white male, with thin, receding grey hair and twinkling green eyes. He usually dresses formally, typically in a tie and jacket. He speaks quietly, but with great confidence, making passing references to all manner of things. Schaller actually knows so much that he finds it difficult to avoid talking in rambling lectures, and understanding his meanings may be difficult.

His attitude to other people is one of detached interest. He is incapable of seeing people as anything but fascinating *subjects* of inquiry, and hasn't felt anything towards anyone in decades; including Florrie. He is not cruel, per se, he is simply very cold.

Christian Schaller

Alignment: Anarchist (bordering on miscreant).

Attributes: I.Q. 22, M.E. 19, M.A. 12, P.S. 9, P.P. 6, P.E. 7, P.B. 9, Spd 8

Hit Points: 39

S.D.C.: 10

P.P.E.: 55

I.S.P.: 40

Experience: 10th level psychologist, 3rd level sorcerer.

Skills of Note: "Cerebral" skills including *all* the skills listed under the Categories of Communications, Domestic, Electrical, Espionage, Mechanical, Medical, Science, and Technical (all at 85%), plus hand to hand: basic (3rd level), pilot automobile 90%, and understanding the principles of magic 76%.

Special Abilities: Schaller literally absorbs information from the things and people around him. **Nonfiction** books left in his presence lose their writings as he absorbs their contents; people living in his apartment block tend towards **forgetfulness** and premature senility. He is also an unnaturally competent psychic, but is very *receptive* to outside mental stimuli (automatically fails all saving throws vs psychic effects). Finally, by laying his hands on a person's head for several minutes (melees equal to their M.E.), he can absorb their entire set of memories (and also, personality). The process is extremely painful for the victim, who must be incapacitated and/or restrained (which is where **Florrie's** psionic ability to induce sleep comes in handy).

When it's over, the character's mind is a clean slate with only the instinct to eat and stay near the place of his misfortune; actually drawn to it and can find it without difficulty even if taken far away. The victim is free to wander the streets, unable to speak (it's forgotten) and without a sense of self-identity, purpose or knowledge. All skill abilities, bonuses, spell knowledge, special powers, etc., are completely gone — forgotten. All mental attributes are reduced to one point. **Note:** If Schaller drains the mind of any player character during this adventure, then he subsequently has any and all of his knowledge, including all of his special abilities and magics. See the section at the end of this adventure, entitled *Kill and Cure*.

Psychic Powers: Object read, presence sense (constantly in operation, no I.S.P. cost), see aura, sense magic, speed reading (no I.S.P. cost), total recall, and telepathy.

Spells: Limited to see aura, see the invisible, invisibility (simple), befuddle, calling (usually to Florrie), domination, escape and tongues.



Part One: Contacts & Inquiries

Checking Masters' Apartment: Masters' home is a nondescript, second story apartment in a once respectable but slowly decaying neighborhood. Several of the shops across the street have been boarded up. A wall facing the front entrance has been sprayed with obscene graffiti ("The commies brought Dark Day. To hell with the lot of them." Other hands have added, "And the Moslems" and "And the gays"). The building's steps are well swept, but cracking. The paint in the entrance lobby and hallways is clean but peeling.

If the player characters were friends, relations, or close associates of Doug Masters, then they should be assumed to have visited here several times and even have a spare key to his apartment. Otherwise, the easiest methods of entry are to pick the lock on the door or to scramble up the fire escape and force a window.

Inside, everything is in perfect order. There is no sign of a struggle. Clothes, toothbrush, belongings, and extra cash are all present — suggesting that Masters hasn't just packed up and left. The TV is still playing and there is a load of musty clothing in the washer, all suggesting that he left voluntarily and didn't expect to be gone for a long period. However, the mail has been piling up under the mail slot for several days. His mobile phone, wallet, watch and other portable bric-a-brac, have disappeared along with him.

Checking mail, e-mail, etc., yields no clues. It seems that the man just walked out of his home one day and didn't come back.

Subsequent Investigations. Attempts to contact Masters on his mobile phone inevitably fail (The phone has been smashed up, so it isn't receiving). Checking his e-mail shows that he hasn't checked his mailbox since he vanished, so it is also futile trying to contact him electronically.

Work colleagues, if he had any (it may be easier to assume that he is self-employed or unemployed), have noted his absence but have no idea where he has gone. They can tell no more than the neighbors: one day Doug Masters just stopped coming to work. At first they thought he was sick, but he hasn't phoned in or been seen since.

Likewise, family members haven't heard from Doug in a while (roughly corresponding with the time he seems to have vanished).

Any Shadowleague associates, local criminal contacts, and other sources available to the group fail to dig up any hints as to the man's fate.

Talking to the Neighbors: If the investigators knock on the door across the hall it is answered by a young woman. She is stuffing a wad of bank-notes into her jeans' pocket, and has fresh bruises and tear stains around her eyes and lips. She seems nervous, defensive and thoroughly miserable.

Behind her, the player characters can see a man sprawled on the living room floor, a half-empty whiskey bottle and his wallet beside him. Observant players will notice slight bruises on the man's knuckles, and he and the woman wear matching wedding rings.

The woman (whose name is Denise) is prepared to answer the players' questions if they are pleasant and can put her at ease. She vaguely **knew/knows** Doug Masters; she borrowed some sugar from him once, and he watched their cat when she and her husband visited relatives last year, that's about it. She has noticed that he hasn't been around for a few days, and if those **she's** talking to seem worried for him, she also becomes vaguely concerned. She remembers, however, that over the few days before his disappearance he actually seemed happier, more content than usual. But she can't give any further information or assistance.

Denise's husband, **Lou**, is too drunk to tell the characters anything, and if pressed, becomes annoyed and ready to brawl.

Other neighbors know even less. They've seen him around, but he kept to himself. One remembers seeing him with an attractive woman about a week ago, but can't even begin to describe her.

The local gang of surly youths (every decaying neighborhood has one) are equally unhelpful. "Disappeared? Life sucks. Who cares? Screw you!" **G.M. Note:** If a fight develops with the gang members, use the stats for Preserver Activists, on page 198 of the **Nightbane™** RPG).

Asking the Police: Masters has not yet been officially reported missing. If the player characters choose to report his disappearance, an apathetic detective takes down any details they can give. He has other things on his mind — specifically sex (if there is a female character present, he tries to chat her up with more persistence than charm) and baseball ("say, d'you hear if the Jays won? I had ten bucks on **them.**")

In any case, the player characters are likely to approach the police or local hospitals to find out if Masters has been in any trouble. They know many details about him (description, date of birth, some details of past history) and can get a photo of him from his flat if they do not already have one.

No policeman recognizes the name, and there is no record of any Doug Masters having been arrested, involved in any sort of trouble, witnessing a crime, or being admitted to a hospital. A police desk-sergeant or patrolman, however, recognizes the photo.

The policeman says that this man, a "John Doe," was arrested for stealing a loaf of bread from a convenience store over on Washington Avenue, and that from his dress and stench he seemed to have been living on the streets. The policeman also says that the man refused to talk or give his name, had no ID, and seemed oblivious to everything that happened around him; either drugged out or mentally retarded. The store owner **didn't** want the bother of pressing charges, so after a few hours, the police just let him go. That was a couple of days ago.

Did Masters seem disturbed, or insane, when the police picked him up? "Beats me, pal. Just another stoned junkie or street retard. No one pays me enough to care for those bums, **y'know.**"

The store owner (assuming they can get the location) basically confirms what the police officer reported, only he's a bit more compassionate. "Yeah, the poor guy seemed out of his head. Not mean or crazy, you know. More like a little kid lost, scared and hungry. I didn't want to cause him any more grief, and I didn't need the hassle, so I didn't press charges. Cops couldn't get a word outta him though."

Asking on the Street: One ploy would be for the player characters to ask passers by, shopkeepers, barmen, and others in the city if they have seen Doug Masters. A couple of days of footwork, wandering around the city, will be required. The name means nothing to anyone. Showing the photo around, however, gets more response.

In a bar near Washington Avenue, a barman shakes his head when shown the photograph, but also at the bar is a fat guy in a suit, who reaches out and takes hold of the photo, peering at it while he shouts into his mobile phone. "Don't bulls**t me **Val.** Pages pay wages. You sell 50K this issue or you're on welfare." He then hangs up and looks up at the player characters. "Yeah, I seen this guy begging a couple o'blocks down from here this morning. I told him to get a goddam job."

Several other folk in the same region also recognize Masters from this photo, saying that it looks "a lot like some homeless guy I seen around here."

A disturbing Encounter: One shop owner tells the group that he just saw "the guy" and points them in the general direction. A quick dash around the block and they find a man who vaguely resembles Doug, but is clearly not their friend. He is one of the beggars from behind 1227 Washington (described under *Meeting Doug Masters*). This is not Masters, but an older man with a long beard. He does not talk, but follows the group and/or any other passersby, holding his hand out. He accepts money, though he seems uncertain what to do with it, and puts it absent-mindedly in a pocket, but really wants food. His behavior should be strange enough to prompt the characters to use *see aura, te-*

lepathy or *empathy* (or similar), which allows them to discover that he is effectively mindless (only a swirl of jumbled impressions and no sense of self-identity or a past; only hunger and confusion).

This encounter should take place somewhere in the region of *Washington Avenue*, prompting the characters to concentrate their search in this area and, eventually, to find Doug Masters.

Meeting Florrie

When the characters have got a good lead on Doug Masters (they know where he has been spotted and are making efforts or are about to make efforts to find him), the G.M. should run this encounter, introducing them to **Floretta**.

This encounter takes place in a bar or restaurant. It could ideally be run if the player characters have split up to ask questions around town: perhaps one of them is here asking about Doug Masters and she's one of the people shown his photograph. If the player characters have said that they are going to meet up at a certain time, but haven't specified where, then it may as well be at this bar. Run this encounter when only one of the male characters is away from his comrades in the bar: if others are to arrive later, have Florrie leave before they arrive (she just slips out). Any male player character may be selected for this encounter. **Florrie's** meeting with him is *coincidental*, not deliberate. But the G.M. should select a character who is not too paranoid or cold—it should be the sort of character who might take pity on a woman in distress **and/or** would readily give his phone number to an attractive lady.

The character is standing at the bar when the young woman next to him (Rome) glances up and says, "You know, I've been stood up. All men are bastards, aren't they?" Then she looks embarrassed. "Sorry. I hope ... I ... I didn't mean **that** ..." If the character doesn't pick up on this and carry on the conversation, then Florrie will continue. "You waiting for someone? No. Waiting's a lousy way to spend time ..." etc.

If the player is into playing through chunks of the subsequent conversation, then by all means, do so. Otherwise, just skim through the conversation: tell the player that they talk for about ten minutes and that they get on really well, and that when the time comes that one has to go, Florrie asks for his phone number (In this case, you may be able to get away without even asking the player if his character gives a number; just make it plain that he gives it to her).

Florrie sticks to fairly general topics of conversation, selecting those which the player character finds most interesting. She is slightly Tom-boyish, and has a good deal of background knowledge and an *empathy* ability that the player character can't save against, so she should be able to find subjects that he is interested in, and can tell what is and isn't interesting him. Sport, cars, movies, celebrity gossip and general anecdotes are all possible, and she is sure to ask the character a couple of innocent questions about himself, such as his job ("So, what sort of a man does X for a **living?**"), travel and origins ("Really? I've always wanted to go to X. Is it really like the photos make it **look?**"), family, leisure interests and similar. She seems very nice and the character will feel comfortable talking with her (if not outright attracted to her).

If asked, Florrie will say that she lives over at 1227 Washington Avenue (an apartment building), but she doesn't give the apartment number ("just ask the doorman, he'll know"). If asked what she does for a living she just says, "Oh it's so terribly dreary ..." and changes the subject. She will not give her phone number (cooly, "Oh no, I hate it when men call me. I just hate having to say no to **them.**").

If shown a picture of Doug Masters, the character must make a perception roll to notice that she suddenly seems a bit nervous. Of course she denies having ever seen him before and expresses genuine concern over his being missing, saying something like, "Oh, I'm so sorry your friend is missing. This can be such a terrible world, can't it?" She seems to be a caring person.

Schaller is also in the bar during this encounter. He is here to make sure that Florrie does as she has been told, i.e. makes contact with another promising looking victim (e.g. a man who looks like an intelligent

professional, like the player character). He says and does nothing (unless to defend **Florrie** from a physical attack) and plays no part in the scene, but the player character will recognize him later on.

Meeting Doug Masters

In a vacant lot behind 1227 Washington Avenue, a dozen homeless guys scavenge through refuse and debris left out for the trashmen or dumped here. These were all healthy, attractive men, but they are now undernourished and none have washed or shaved for some time. None ever **talk** (grunt and moan, but no words), nor even seem to understand any language. They seem oblivious to threats or bribes, although as none have any desires or goals they are easily led or shepherded around.

All of these men have had their memories, minds and personalities stolen from them. All mental attributes are roughly equal to one, and all have one P.P.E. point. None of them have any obvious skills whatsoever. They beg out in the nearby streets, accepting money (which they later discard, stuff in their pockets, or swallow, as they don't know what to do with it), but hope for food (sometimes gesturing to their open mouths), or they rummage through the garbage looking for scraps and mementoes. In a derelict trailer nearby, they have created quite a stash of old trinkets — birthday cards (pretty pictures), personal letters, bank statements, broken ornaments, unwanted trophies ... the scraps of other peoples' lives which they have fished out of the garbage.

These men have nothing to do but scavenge for food, and hunt for a personality. All seem somehow aware that they have lost something at 1227 Washington Avenue — hence their remaining in the area and searching through the trash — but are not able to understand or explain what they have lost.

Doug Masters is one of these men. He cannot remember the player characters, nor anything else about his past or himself. He has not shaved since his disappearance, and he now has the beginnings of a beard, though it is shorter than any other man here, suggesting that he is the newest recruit to their company. A successful perception roll will allow a character to notice that the beard length of each of these speechless (mindless) men (no females) all vary in length, suggesting a progression of victims. Psionic probes *will* show that all of these men suffer from the same mind wiping malady as **Doug!**

No amount of compassion, magic, or psionics can extract any information from Doug or the others. Whenever he can, Doug pulls away and renews his rummaging through the garbage, forgetting the characters are even present. He will have to be physically restrained and forced to be taken away from here, or tricked with lures of food. He's starving and will follow anybody, anywhere to get morsels of food, but this ploy will have the same affect on the other speechless misanthropes, so the player group may have all these homeless (and mindless) men following them like rats following the Pied Piper. However, when food runs out, they all return to 1227 Washington Avenue. Even more mysterious, these poor, mindless souls can always find their way back to this location, no matter where they may be taken and released.

If the player characters are not careful, however, one of them may soon be joining this mindless community.

1227 Washington Avenue

1227 Washington is a brick apartment building, owned (according to public records and the testimony of the residents) by *Professor Christian Schaller*. It contains some twenty apartments. It was once plush, but the well-off professional residents are now gone and larger families of struggling workers are moving in. A concierge is permanently on duty at a desk just inside the carpeted lobby entrance, and two elevators and a well-lit staircase provide access to the other floors. The emergency exit is an enclosed staircase, not a fire-escape, located at the rear of the building. Opening any door to the emergency exit (all carrying big "push bar in case of fire" signs) automatically sets off the fire alarm.

Each apartment contains about half a dozen spacious rooms, and the flat roof has been converted into a paved garden area adjoining the

penthouse flat where Schaller lives. All public areas, including the elevators and emergency stairs, are watched by closed-circuit cameras, monitored by the concierge at the front desk and one guard; a hidden "panic button" allows the concierge to set off a silent alarm, which brings a pair of police cars to investigate in 2D6 minutes.

To one side of the building and across the street are other apartment blocks, and to the other side is a convenience store and residents' car park. To the rear is a vacant lot inhabited by Doug Masters and Schaller's other "empty" victims.



A Phone Call & Meeting

Soon after the player characters have met Doug Masters and started further inquiries (or resolved to give up on the adventure, as some may), the character whom Florrie met earlier receives a telephone call from her. This is likely to be later that day, or the next. In the alternative, they might bump into each other in the lobby of the apartment building; remember, she lives at 1227 Washington.

During the call, she sounds soft, sweet, and (of course) just a little vulnerable, perhaps scared.

"Hello. Remember me? ... Well, I have been thinking of you. A little. Do you like the theater? Well, I'll meet you at the Empire in an hour. Come to the stage door. Everyone knows me there." Any other conversation will be small-talk before she says she has to go.

Meeting at the theater. The player character may go to meet Florrie alone or, as paranoid characters are wont to do, may bring other characters along as back-up.

The theater is closed up. Billboards outside announce a forthcoming production of Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman." The side door is unlocked, and a stagehand inside approaches visitors and asks what

they want. If they say that “**Florrie**” asked them to come, the stagehand directs them up some stairs and out into the auditorium. If they make a scene, the police are called.

Florrie is in the upper circle of the theater (that's the balcony high up above the stage, usually where the cheaper seats are), leaning on the rail at the front of the circle and looking down. A rehearsal of the play, “Death of a Salesman,” is in progress, and she watches with rapt attention and a slight smile. On the stage the extremely camp director is berating one of the cast:

“No, no, Philip **lovie!** Think about the **LINE**. ‘You cannot eat the flesh and throw away the peel. A man is not a piece of **fruit!**’ The subject is **MAN**. The proles in the audience should learn something about **MEN**, Philip, not leave the **the-a-tre** thinking about citrus fruit! Now ... the scene again!”

The G.M. should feel free to throw in any number of other lines or references to the play, as background to the conversation with Florrie.

She is enjoying the rehearsal, but knows the play well and is delighted to meet with the player **character(s)**, enthusiastically holding a whispered conversation while keeping one eye on the stage.

Her orders are to make the **character(s)** increasingly attracted to her, and also to make **him/them** feel a little jealous. So, she throws in teasing comments like:

“Well I just love the play, and I have a friend in the cast ... Now **don't look at me like that, he's just a friend ... I promise.**” *and/or,*

“It's such a sad play. The characters lead such desperate little lives. Life should be about passion, don't you think?”

At the same time, she also tries to drop hints to the characters. Remember that deep down, she wants help and companionship, and she hates the life of deception that she is leading:

“I just love actors. There's something special about what they do, isn't there? You know, becoming someone else, speaking other people's lines as if they were your own.” or,

“You know the awful thing about the theater? All those clever little actors there get next to nothing, personally. It's their bosses, the theater owners and promoters, who profit from it.” or,

“Me? Want to be an actor? I'd hate to be an actor. Hate it. Hate being watched, hate following a script. I prefer to sit up here in the shadows. I don't want to mislead people, like actors do.”

Florrie's actual attitude will depend upon the player **character(s)** reactions to her. Remember that she has empathy, and that male characters have no chance to save against it, so she can tell what the **character(s)** attitude toward her is.

Very likely, the character is not genuinely interested in **Florrie's** feelings. Many player characters are cold, calculating psychopaths who never make emotional contact with anyone, and many will view Florrie as little more than a useful “source” of information, or as a novelty; and many macho characters will be more interested in **Florrie's** body than in her emotions. If the player character whom she has targeted has not started to care about her, then she invites him around to her apartment that evening, with a coyly seductive tone. “Come to my flat tomorrow. Come late, in the evening, around ten o'clock. And bring some wine or something nice.” She then stands and leaves, with a wry seductive glance over her shoulder.

If the character seems genuinely sympathetic (really cares about her and her feelings), then when he gets ready to leave her she suddenly becomes desperate and terribly serious. She looks panicky, terrified, and whispers desperately to him, asking him to take her away somewhere ... anywhere. Paris? Rome? Somewhere abroad, somewhere she has never been. Where she can't be found, and she wants to leave now! **Immediately!** Why wait? Actually, she doesn't care how far he takes her. She just wants to get away from Schaller, although she won't discuss him or her motives.

If the character promises to take her away and protect her, she goes wherever he wants. If he refuses to help her, or insists he needs to know

more, then she begins to weep silently and will not talk to him anymore. Later, she will phone him and ask him around to her flat, as above.

Part Two: Seeing the Problem, Selecting the Solution

More Information about Schaller

Perceptive player characters may begin to suspect that Professor Schaller is somehow behind the mental destruction of Doug Masters. Perhaps they look into who owns 1227 Washington, and find that it belongs to this retired psychologist. Or perhaps they find the news story about Schaller and *Florence Nye* while they're trying to work out who Florrie is (below). In any case, some players will want to investigate the man and his past.

According to the neighbors and tenants, Schaller is a respected and polite man, with no enemies but no friends either. He is always interested in what others have to say, but seems genuinely close to none of his *neighbors*.

According to psychological journals and academic records, he was a respected psychologist who published a lot of papers on the subject of human memory and personality. He also ran a number of experiments on destroying the memories of various dogs, rats, and other lab animals.

According to previous colleagues (younger psychologists, still teaching at universities around the country) he was a superb theoretician and researcher (i.e. a very competent **vivisectionist**), who had few ethical qualms, although he was never popular with his students. Ex-students of his (who can be contacted via alumni organizations) put the point more bluntly: he was a sick butcher who never cared how much needless pain he put animals through, and who for all his theoretical wisdom, had no idea how to relate to his fellow human beings.

Shadowleague files show he authored and posted a little known thesis entitled, “Magic and the Mind.” In it, he talks about mental focus, an openness to ideas, mind expansion, and the possibility of using magic to link with and share memories. That was five years ago, and his last post.

More Information on Florrie

Player characters may try to get some information on who Florrie actually is. Good luck to them. Even with fingerprints and photos of her they won't be able to identify her through police or government contacts. Only magical means might give them any hints.

They can, however, say with certainty that she is no relation of **Schaller's**. Searching through public records shows that he has no nieces, female cousins or daughters (at least, none whose births have been registered). There is also no record of his ever having married or adopted.

Indeed, the lack of information on her is significant. There is no record of any woman living at **Schaller's** apartment since he bought the building decades ago — not from the phone **company**, social security, schools, tax, or any other institutions that they might quiz or whose computers they might hack into. Officially, Florrie does not exist.

Contradictory to the above, Florrie will claim to be a maid employed by Schaller. The concierge and guard confirm this. Neighbors have seen the woman coming and going, but don't know whether she's a relative, maid, personal assistant or something more. She keeps to herself, eyes averted, and rarely even waves hello to them.

The breakthrough comes if they think to search back issues of local newspapers or academic journals (Duplicates of the last five years' lo-

cal papers can be found on CD ROM at the local library. Academic institutions will hold the relevant journals). Here (with a successful research skill roll) the characters can find a reference to retired psychologist, Christian Schaller "treating" one *Florence Nye*, a severely brain damaged car-crash victim. The treatment is described in one academic journal as "experimental" and "revolutionary," but no details are given. The report in the local newspaper also includes a photograph of the woman they know as **Florrie**.

Research into **Florence Nye** reveals that she has no living kin (they died in that car crash), and if they can concoct a plausible plan to access **Florence Nye's** medical records, the player group can find out that she lost all memory and personality in the road accident. Medical records refer vaguely to Professor **Schaller's** involvement in her case, and mention that she was making a good recovery in his care; but then she vanished while on day release from the mental hospital and her current whereabouts are unknown.



A Dangerous Visit

At some point, the character whom Florrie met at the bar will most likely accept an invitation to "her apartment" (Schaller's penthouse), unless he agrees to take her away with him first. He may agree during the meeting at the theater or go back with her after some other meeting, or Florrie may invite him over the phone (e.g. if he didn't go to the theater). In the alternative, the character may decide that going to the apartment may be a good way for him to uncover more information about Florrie and Professor Schaller and agree to such a rendezvous (perhaps with the other player characters waiting close by).

If the character arrives at 1227 Washington to meet with Florrie, the concierge directs him to the penthouse apartment. (Passing the mailboxes by the elevators, curious characters may stop to check whose name appears under the Penthouse slot: it is "Dr. C. Schaller).

Florrie answers the door to the Penthouse, wearing a skimpy, black dress (think French movies). She beckons him into the living-room, smiling. She pours two glasses of red wine, and carries the glasses through to an adjacent room — her bedroom (double bed, white lace covers turned down, etc.). Does the character follow her? If he follows, he is doomed (the G.M. may want to save the embarrassment of role-playing through the next hour). If he refuses to follow she pouts, sulks, and eventually throws wine in his face and demands he leave. The time for conversation is past: the guy either enters her bed (bad move) or retreats.

If the player character is genuinely concerned for her, Florrie will find some reason to throw him out of the apartment for his own good.

She will phone two days later to meet somewhere else (the theater **again?**). If the character still doesn't care about her, but fears for himself — sensing a trap — then she may never talk to him again, unless she thinks he can take her away from all of this.

If the player character enters her bedroom, then an hour later he is lying naked and helpless on her bed (see **Florrie's** Special Abilities). At this point Schaller emerges from his study. He tells her to leave and enters Florrie's bedroom. She grabs a bathrobe, glares down at the character, putting in disgust, and leaves the room. Schaller sits on the bed and puts his hands on the **character's** head and unless the others fortuitously intervene in the next few melee rounds (equal to the character's M.E.), the unfortunate fellow will be joining Doug Masters and the mindless tribe in the lot out back.

Sheltering Florrie

Harsh accusations, threats, bullying tactics, and other rough measures used on Florrie by the player characters will only turn her against them (and send her to Schaller for help). However, if the player characters are gentle with her, showing compassion and a desire to help, she will begin to confide in them. There should be some interesting role-playing to be had here.

If the group takes Florrie away from Schaller (e.g. from the theater **and/or** apartment), then he tries to recover her, sending two sets of thugs (see below) and eventually, if necessary, pleading with the group in person. Schaller is not without his own resources and remember that he has seen the target player character (and probably his friends) on at least one or two occasions, if not more. He should be able to track one or all of them down. Thus, it is important for the players to inform the G.M. where their characters are taking her, whether she is guarded, left alone (she'll panic if left alone and flee, probably to Schaller; she doesn't know any other life or protector), and other details.

Florrie has no memory of her past as *Florence Nye* and tells how Doctor Schaller saved her from being institutionalized and helped her find her place in the world (Florrie is terrified of being locked away in a mental hospital or prison). Florrie has no idea exactly how the Doctor helped her (therapy she would guess, she doesn't really remember). She wants a normal life, but feels obligated (almost enslaved) to Doctor Schaller — after all, she owes him "everything." Besides, she doesn't own anything, has no money or family, or friends (till **now?**), so where could she go? She's tried leaving two or three times, but was always terrified, didn't know what to do next, and Schaller always found her within 24 hours.

If one or more player characters has earned **Florrie's** trust, she will tell them how Doctor Schaller makes her lure men up to the penthouse apartment. She doesn't like doing this. She doesn't like how they look at her and sometimes touch her, **but** ... she feels she must. He usually has her use her "special gift" (the psionic power to induce sleep) to render them unconscious and is then told by Schaller to leave. Florrie honestly doesn't know what Doctor Schaller and the men do, or what happens to the men when they leave.

Schaller has told her that he's conducting a psychological study of some kind on particular types of men. She assumed attracting men to her is part of the "study" because Schaller usually watches from a safe distance and it is he who indicates which men she should encourage and lure to the apartment. To be honest, while it all felt uncomfortable to her (perhaps even wrong), Florrie never really questioned it. Until the player **character(s)** inquired about their friend, Doug Masters, she never knew anything "bad" ever happened to them. And actually, she doesn't *know* that Doctor Schaller is responsible, although in her heart (and via psionics), she knows that he is. Florrie also confirms that Schaller is a

cold, secretive man whom she has no feelings for, other than an unreasoning sense of debt and dependency.

Florrie is used to working as housekeeper for **Schaller**. Her other interests include watching romantic movies on TV, going to the theater and art galleries. This may not fit in with the player characters' lifestyles. Do they really want her doing their housekeeping (she expects to), and are they into theater and art? And who will pay for her upkeep? She has no useful skills that fit their lifestyle in the underground world of **Nightbane**, so she is of little use to a bunch of adventurers who investigate (and battle with) the supernatural. Furthermore, she may be an easy target for their enemies (human and inhuman). On the other hand, she is a sympathetic character caught in a cruel and desperate situation. She isn't likely to get a job above minimum wage, and she is all alone. Others, even worse than Schaller, are likely to use her one way or another. It's also very possible that one or two of the male characters are actually falling in love with her, and, in fact, the more she turns to **him/them**, the more they are likely to feel some sort of emotion and responsibility for her, concern and compassion if nothing else.

What do the player characters let her/make her do? How do they react to her subservience? How do they help? Does she have a future with any of them (maybe they can use a housekeeper, especially while they are away. She'll work cheap).

Schaller's Goons

Schaller does not have an army of henchmen, but he is extremely good at working out how to manipulate people (remember, empathy and telepathy, not to mention some magic and money and cold dispassion to know where to find thugs for "special jobs"). He has a number of tenants who are behind on their rent and who can be "influenced" to help him out. If the player characters take Florrie away from him, he is **desperate** to get her back and calls in a number of debts from unsavory characters.

Wherever Florrie is, Schaller will *know*. He made her, after all, and they are linked in a way neither understands (Florrie isn't aware of this, but may mention that "Doctor Schaller has found me whenever I run away").

MIKE O'DOWELL: This is a respectable family man, with loads of pride and very little intelligence, or cash. He is a diligent assembly-line worker who hates the way that the country is falling apart and that his wages won't cover the rent whenever he spends money on other "necessities of life." If Professor Schaller's got a problem with someone "messing with his niece," then O'Dowell is all too happy to get some of his friends together to go rescue the girl ... especially if it means that Schaller will forget the outstanding rent.

O'Dowell and his friends aren't subtle. Schaller tells them where **Floretta** is, and they go there with some baseball bats and try to take her back. If the player characters are letting her wander around the area unprotected, then these thugs will snatch her on the street, bundle her into a car and drive away. Otherwise, they will go around to where the group is keeping her, and break some skulls. O'Dowell may take two to a dozen friends with him. The G.M. should choose their numbers so that the player characters cannot easily defeat them, requiring the characters to do something particularly intelligent, or particularly stupid (like use firearms), or to do some serious running away if they want to keep Florrie from Schaller's clutches. Note: Use the Preserver Activist stats in the rule book for these goons.

Schaller has told them that the girl is his deluded niece and easily led, so they won't listen to anything she has to say. If the player characters use firearms to deter them, they run away and dial **911** (our heroes could then be facing loads of criminal charges), but if the group bludgeons them in a fair brawl then their pride will keep them from the police. If they use magic or turn into **Nightbane** monsters, the men will flee unless they think they have a real chance at "rescuing the girl" (things are worse than poor Doc Schaller knows), but will flee if their opponents seem too powerful or monstrous ("no money's worth **this**"); police aren't called because they doubt they'd believe them. They will tell Schaller.

LIEUTENANT MENTZ: Mentz is a local police lieutenant, and another of Schaller's tenants. He has great respect for "the professor," who is not only his landlord but also a distinguished academic and pillar of the community. If Schaller tells him that a bunch of no-good scum have tricked the "mental patient" whom he cares for into going away with them, Lt. Mentz will be all too happy to have words with these ruffians (our heroes). If **necessary**, he takes a couple of work colleagues with him to confront the player characters, and, in any case, he tells his colleagues where he is going, so if he doesn't come back, the player group will be prime suspects.

Lt. **Mentz's** strategy is simply to walk up to the player characters and demand that they turn Florrie over to him so he can take her back to her guardian. Florrie, of course, is easily led by male authority figures, so if she has Lt. Mentz telling her to come with him, and the player characters telling her to stay, she can't make a decision and is likely to cry. If the player characters don't "encourage" Florrie to stay with them, then she will bow to Mentz's more forceful instructions, and return with him to Schaller. **Note:** Thinking she is mentally handicapped, Lt. Mentz may guilt her into accompanying him by saying things like, "Doctor Schaller's never hurt you, has he? (the answer is no). "He's your friend, isn't he?" (the answer is yes) "You don't want him to worry, do you?" (the answer is no). "So come with me then and I'll take you home where it is safe." Likewise, if Lt. Mentz threatens to hurt or uses physical force on any of her new "friends" (especially the character who she sees as her love or savior), Florrie will immediately agree to go with him, provided he doesn't hurt her **friend(s)**.

If the player characters refuse to hand Florrie over, then Mentz threatens to arrest them for kidnapping her, and at the very least demands that they and Florrie come down to the station house for questioning. If they physically hold her back and refuse to cooperate, Lt. Mentz and his two police buddies will attempt to *rescue* the girl and arrest her captors.

If the player characters and **Florrie** go to the police station with Mentz, Schaller will be there to meet her, and, without the group present, Florrie will revert to being fanatically **pro-Schaller**. Under his influence, she may even give a statement to the effect that they kidnapped her. Such a statement won't stand up in court, but will be enough to have Florrie released into **Schaller's** custody and have the group held overnight and then warned to stay away from Schaller and the girl.

The best way to deal with Lt. Mentz is to stand up to him. Florrie is an adult, and Schaller has no legal custody or claim to her. Does the Lieutenant have any documents to prove Florrie is one of Schaller's patients? Or his ward? Until he gets them, he should leave them alone (remember, Schaller is not, officially, even treating her). Lt. Mentz may bluster and demand, but ultimately no crime has been committed and he can't arrest anyone unless they give him cause. If the player characters are sufficiently stubborn and careful (professional, **nonconfrontational** but firm), he will probably have to capitulate and leave without Florrie. Indeed, if any of the player characters are respectable folk — perhaps with a professor, medical doctor, fellow officer, or Catholic priest — he actually becomes polite, reasonable and restrained, leaving quietly after a brief discussion. If, on the other hand, they all look like street-scum, and/or have criminal records, then he might arrest them on suspicion anyway. Of course, he may investigate this matter further and go back to Schaller to resolve this matter one way or another. At that point, Schaller is likely to call Mentz off, and try other "less official" means (see *Mike O'Dowell*, above, and *As a Last Resort*, below). Note: G.M.s can use the Corrupt Police stats from the **Nightbane RPG** for Lt. Mentz and any colleagues he involves, however, Mentz is a (relatively) honest and well-meaning cop; unprincipled alignment.

AS A LAST RESORT, Schaller will approach the player characters directly. This should involve him phoning a character (Florrie has a mobile phone in her purse, which Schaller uses to keep in touch with her) and invite them to his apartment to discuss matters. This is not a trap. His sole intention is to berate, command and ultimately plead with the player characters to return "his girl." If the characters refuse to go to his apartment, then he will meet them almost anywhere they wish.

The Penthouse

The penthouse apartment is centered around a spacious living-room (sitting room, dining room, and entrance hall in one), with huge patio windows along one wall leading out to the roof garden, and half a dozen doors leading to other rooms (bathroom, three bedrooms, Schaller's study, kitchen).

The furnishings are basically old-fashioned, almost Victorian (dark oak furniture, oil paintings), but with a few modern or 1960s retro pieces thrown in (lava lamps, a big glass table) — an incongruous mix of Schaller's dull good taste, and Florrie's unfocused artistic tastes. Huge bookcases line the walls, filled to the ceiling with ponderous academic works (mainly psychology, a few magic) which on examination, turn out to be all blank (remember, his power wipes the pages clean too).

The Final Scene

Eventually, one or all of the player characters will face Schaller and Florrie, probably in Schaller's penthouse apartment. They should be able to walk unhindered into the elevator, and then up to the landing outside of the penthouse entrance, though if they have threatened Schaller or brutalized Mentz or O'Dowell (above), the concierge will have their descriptions and be looking for them. The concierge will try to forbid them from entering and will phone up to warn Schaller if they get past him (then he calls the police, Lt. Mentz specifically). If they actually killed anyone, and are now wanted for murder, he also hits the panic button (general police alarm). Dramatic characters may, of course, want to scale the outside of the building, fly onto the roof, etc.

In any case, the player group should eventually get up to see Schaller. The meeting between them and the professor is no great climactic battle.

Florrie is torn between her overwhelming loyalty to Schaller and to her equal desire for freedom. She will neither help nor hinder her creator (Schaller) or her potential saviours (the player characters unless they are on the verge of getting killed), but cowers behind the sofa or in the bathroom if a fight develops.

Schaller, for his part, knows that there is no point in putting up a struggle. He tries to talk the characters out of harming him, appearing genteel, civilized, and reasonable. He can offer the characters a great deal of information, now or in the future. His lore skills, for example, are likely to be much higher than theirs. As he sees it, he could be a great "ally" for the characters and they have nothing to gain by harming him.

The player characters may, out of a sense of justice, vengeance, or belligerence, murder Schaller in any case. He doesn't expect to be able to defend himself, but if he anticipates an attack, he will seize the phone and dial 911: the player characters cannot pin any crime on him, after all.

If the characters threaten to take Florrie away from him, however, he pleads with them to leave her with him. Without her he will have no more "subjects" to "study." Despite that comment (not enough to get any kind of criminal conviction), Schaller will not reveal what sort of magic he uses to steal people's memories.

For her part, Florrie lets the player characters decide whether she should go with them or stay here. She can't make decisions for herself (at least not while Schaller lives) — Schaller hasn't made her that way — and she needs someone else to tell her what to do. If they do take her away, it will be some years before she can make her own way in the world, and until then the character who first took her from Schaller will have to put up with this completely dependent and, in many ways, innocent woman relying utterly on him or the group. **Note:** Taking Florrie away will effectively stop Schaller's mind stealing, but doesn't help any of his current victims (the best that can be done with them is to get them in a medical institution).

The conclusion of this adventure depends upon the choices that the player characters face. There are no right answers, no easy genocides to cleanse the evil from the world. Big guns and big statistics won't help them.

Note: If the player characters are dead-set against confronting Schaller — if they have Florrie and are just going to leave the adventure here — then have Schaller track them down to demand Florrie back.

He brings a whole load of thugs with him (Mike O'Dowell and friends or other, even less savory types), but none of these expect to fight **Nightbane** or mages and can be easily scared off. Most likely, therefore, this scene, too, is resolved by conversation.

Schaller, eventually, breaks down and begs the characters to give Florrie back to him. He needs her, he admits, to bring him "subjects for my studies." He can pay for her return, he says, with information. What do the player characters want to know? Secrets of the Nightlords? Sorcery? Schaller is a pathetic figure: the group should at least have the satisfaction of forcing him to admit his crimes and denying him **Floretta**.

Kill and Cure

Schaller knows no way to reverse the process that he has used to destroy Doug Masters or his other victims (which might include a player character by now). However, if you are playing a campaign, and one of the player characters was captured and drained by Schaller, the G.M. should allow the others to retrieve his mind and restore his faculties to him. Exactly how the players do this is ultimately up to them and the G.M., but try to make it poetic **and/or** dramatic, perhaps, horrific.

Schaller's death *will* "release" the thoughts and memories to all of his victims, but do our "heroes" kill him? It could be years before he dies of natural causes.

One G.M. option would be for the group to take Florrie away, vowing to Schaller that they (or he, perhaps with their assistance) will find a way to cure these people (perhaps material for continuing adventures. Along these lines, Schaller, being faced with honestly losing Florrie, may have a heart attack (or commits suicide a few hours or days later), dies, and thus restores his victims. Or Schaller might pull a weapon and coldly try to kill the group, perhaps offering them no other option but lethal force to protect themselves (although not likely).

Another G.M. option could see the characters try to reverse or negate the mind stealing magic with an impromptu magic ritual of their own. The result could be just about anything that is dramatic, horrific or continues the adventure. Perhaps the ritual kills Schaller, his brains oozing from the ears, but saves his victims. Perhaps Schaller dies and his victims recover, but each has a bit of Schaller in each of them, changing them at least a little. Making them a bit colder, dispassionate and perhaps interested in magic or accumulating information at all costs. Perhaps Schaller turns into a vegetable like his victims, but they are not **cured?! Is his and/or their memories completely lost or inadvertently sent into the Astral Plane or ... well, you get the idea.**

Note: If this is a one-time adventure where the player characters are never going to be reused, then the G.M. may not worry whether or not one of the characters comes to a horrific end. This is a horror game, after all. If this is the case, Masters and the other down-and-outs are doomed to a life of mindless squalor, and to end the game with a suitable degree of pathos, the G.M. should end the adventure just as the PCs leave 1227 Washington.

As the characters leave the building they see a pair of glazed-eyed beggars scuffling over an old college certificate which they have fished out of a trash sack.

Whatever the player characters have done to or for Schaller or Florrie, they cannot help these victims.

Also Note that nothing bad happens to Florrie when Schaller dies, other than being alone and directionless. With time and influence by the right people, she will become a more full and fulfilled person, and make it (more or less) on her own.



Mother & Child

This is a two part adventure, the first playable in one or two evenings, the second in a single sitting. The second part is set several months after the first (9-10 months would be ideal), so G.M.s might like to run other adventures in between these two stories.

The adventure takes place in India and Thailand, with suggestions given on how to get player characters based elsewhere out to these locations. Incidental details are often added within the descriptions of places and people (a piece of furniture, a snatch of conversation, etc.) and where possible, the G.M. should try to weave these into his/her descriptions. These adventures revolve around and explore themes of motherhood, childhood, control, replication and reproduction, and most of the incidental details are tied in with these themes.

Overview & Background

This first half of the adventure sees the characters searching for a vanished Indian sorceress named *Devika Kenkali*. If any of the player characters are members of any magical brotherhood or societies, then assume that she was a member of one of the same group, and that the adventurers are consequently sent to find her (This works for characters who are with the Seekers, Brotherhood of True Illumination, Nocturnes, or even Spook Squad.) With a bit of imagination, a G.M. should be able to concoct an alternative excuse to send the player group looking for Devika — she alone is rumored to know some information which they need or want, or a more powerful sorcerer hires the group to track her down and steal her secrets, or Devika is a friend of one of the player characters, etc. For a one game night adventure, the player characters might simply be travelling in India as tourists.

In any case, the adventurer group will soon discover that *Devika's* arcane experimentation has gotten entirely out of hand. The magician, now quite power-crazed, has been seeking immortality, and believing that she has learned how to live forever, has become quite unstable, setting herself up as a "Princess" and subjugating any "mere mortals" whom she comes across. The player characters will find that she is beyond rational conversation, and will inevitably end up killing or fleeing from her.

The local language of the area is Hindi. The only languages required for the adventure are Hindi and English. Unless some player's character actually speaks Hindi, assume that the character with the highest I.Q. has picked up the basics of the tongue by the time the adventure begins (by studying phrase books and listening to language tapes during the long journey). This is a very basic understanding (25% skill) with a lot of mime and body-language needed to get anything across to the locals, but it should do. Of course, if any of the characters are actually due to gain any new skills, or if any are new player characters rolled up for this adventure, then someone can learn the language properly, which will make picking up clues a little easier.

Note that the entire area in which this story takes place is bathed in magical energy. Devika has unleashed a great magic, which "echoes" out to affect everything within about ten miles (16 km).

Players' Information

From whatever source, the players' characters begin with a little background on Devika, and only some knowledge of where she might be. The G.M. will probably want to create a scene where the characters learn this from their employer, mentor or boss, and have a chance to ask a few questions before launching into the adventure.

Devika Kenkali is an Indian sorceress from a middle-caste Hindu family near Bombay. She is a tall, well-built woman, around forty years old, with a typical Indian complexion and black hair, but easily recognized by unusually light green eyes. She is an accomplished sorceress, who has recently been seeking the secret of immortality. The last anyone heard, she was sifting through some old ruins near the River Krishna, in western India, a place called *Adharja Palace*.

Air travel can be arranged to nearby Goa, from where the player group must take a train to a small stop where the railroad crosses the River Krishna.

The Rail Stop

The adventure begins with the player characters "enjoying" the Indian railways. They have had to take a small, local **service**, which does not have the comfortable seats and air-conditioning which westerners are likely to be used to, so they get off the train at a small local station to stretch their legs.

After a four hour delay stranded them at a dusty local station, the player characters find themselves again sitting on bare wooden benches, crammed into a two-carriage train with a couple hundred locals and four nauseatingly naive back-packers. The temperature is over one hundred degrees Fahrenheit, and many of the windows are jammed shut, so that what little fresh air does get in, just blows around the scents of two hundred sweaty bodies. The poorest locals are travelling by sitting on the roof of the train — cheaper, rather more dangerous, but hardly less comfortable.

At last the player characters find themselves crossing the River Krishna on a rickety, old wooden bridge, and the train begins to slow. A couple of migrant workers prepare to disembark, and looking out of the window, the characters can see a twenty foot (6 m) long wooden platform looming just across the bridge. This is their stop.

The train stops for all of one second, just long enough for the guard to dump a small sack of mail out of the window onto the track, and for the two migrant workers to drop out of the (wrong side of) the train. If the player group doesn't get off quickly, they will find the train accelerating away again. The unsympathetic guard will get the driver to stop at any point along the track for them to jump off, but will only have the train back up to the platform in return for a hefty bribe.

This leaves the characters stranded at or near the little wooden platform, with a couple of migrant laborers. They can ask the pair (named **Mani** and **Awas**) about the locale if they wish: what villages are near here? who lives here? The pair vouchsafe that no one but a few scattered farmers who live in the area. If the characters ask about the Palace, the laborers just point up the river. They travel to the area every few months looking for work, and as they haven't been here for a while they know none of the local rumors. They aren't willing to work as guides (they don't know the hills and woods near the palace, and don't want to get lost or in trouble) and soon wander off downstream.

If the player characters miss their chance to talk to the laborers, then they might spot and chat with a local man (fishing from the **riverbank**, perhaps) or might see smoke rising just upstream ...

The Riverside. The players can start along the riverbank. When rounding the first bend they see on a broad spit of land, the remains of a dozen funeral pyres. Few of them are recent, but one still smolders.

A holy man, named *Narasimha*, sits praying by the smoldering ashes of the most recent pyre. He talks quite openly to any who approach him, though he prefers prayer to speech and reverts to his meditations if there is a lull in conversation. He answers any reasonable questions about the pyre and his life, unless he believes that the foreigners are deceiving him in some way or intend to harm the local people.

The hermit explains that he found the body of a Hindu priest (he assumes that it was a priest, judging by his robes) the day before. He had been washed up on the bend of the river by the current. The corpse had been appallingly battered, and the head had been completely crushed, as if by some giant hand. *Narasimha* is shocked that anyone could so brutally murder a holy man. He built a pyre and cremated the corpse, sitting by it and praying through the night.

He also tells of vague rumors from the west (upstream, where the body must have floated down from) of travellers disappearing: people of all castes simply vanishing as they travelled the little-used road around the ruined British fort. He also confides that a "Princess Devika" is rumored to have settled in the area.

if pressed, he knows *little* of the "Princess" or the palace. The old British fort he knows to be derelict, with just two "mad English people" living there. **Narasimha** has no interest in accompanying the group to investigate the priest's death, but instead intends to sit at the cremation ground to pray and meditate.

The British Fort. Twelve miles (19 km) up river from the cremation ground, towards the ruined palace, stands the ruined garrison of Fort Victoria. This is a large, open enclosure, three hundred yards/meters across, on top of a small hill overlooking the river. The area is surrounded by ancient stone walls, reinforced by the British with red brick in the nineteenth century. Within its crumbling walls are a dozen stone buildings and a large parade ground.

The gate has long since rotted away, but inside the compound is neat, with a petrol-driven pump chugging in one corner and vegetable gardens along one wall. Two of the smaller buildings are more or less intact, with recently patched roofs and cleanly whitewashed walls.

On the veranda of one building an old woman dozes in a rocking chair in the shade, overlooking the parade ground. Anybody with psychic abilities or supernatural blood (e.g. **Nightbane**) can also see that the three young girls sitting patiently by the old woman are clearly not mortals.

The Warwicks. The old English woman on the veranda is *Mary Warwick*. She is now nearly one hundred years old, and has lived here since she married a young Captain at the Fort when she was just seventeen. She is a slightly muddled, rickety old woman, unused to talking to anyone but her husband. The player characters can ignore her for the time being, talking quietly to the little girls (see below) while she snores to herself. If they wake her, she is quite flustered, and calls for her husband, the Captain.

Captain Warwick emerges from one of the whitewashed buildings in less than five minutes. He is fast approaching his hundredth birthday, and is a **bald**, skinny old man, with a face like a vulture's, dressed in a threadbare white suit and carrying a walking stick. He speaks with the kind of cliched English accent that is only ever heard coming from royalty or bad American movie actors. When the British granted India its independence, the young Warwick was horrified, believing that without the guiding hand of the "Mother Empire," the "damned stupid natives" would either kill each other or starve to death (It isn't worth telling him that the British killed and starved more than a few Indians during the reign of the Empire.) He resigned from the army and stayed on at the fort, expecting that any day the British would have to come back to save the country from itself. No one bothered to evict him from this barren bit of land.

Warwick despises the Indians ("Damned barbarians. Bally wogs shoot their own leaders and their women jump on funeral pyres. What hope for 'em, eh?"), believing that they are like children, in need of the white man's guidance. He is an insensitive, racist, sexist fascist, rarely acknowledging any women or nonwhites in the player group, but of course, he is quite charming, polite, witty and well educated.

Warwick takes the white player characters into his office, where a heavy oak desk sits beneath a dusty picture of a maternal-looking Queen Victoria. There he pours lemonade, tea or brandy (as the PCs wish) and spouts on about how wonderful the British Empire was (he tries to ignore nonwhites). The player characters should get the conversation around to local affairs, of which he knows virtually nothing, although he has heard of both **Adharj** Palace and **Devika**. He also mentions a Hindu priest who tends an old shrine in the woods towards the palace; though, strangely, he hasn't seen the man around for a few days. He also admits to being "bally confused" about Princess Devika. He's heard that she lives up at **Adharja** Palace, but when he rode up there to "pay my regards to the little lady," he found that the palace was still a ruin, with no sign of having been lived in for decades.

The Warwicks don't have much except the decaying fort, an old horse, and some investments in England which pay for them to survive. They should, however, give the player characters a few hints, and can direct them to the Palace.

The Little Girls. In a tight cluster around the old woman are three pudgy little girls, looking like archetypal Victorian cherubs, with golden locks of hair and sky-blue eyes. Their skin is china-smooth (actually, their skin appears to be made of china) and peach-pink, with painted rosebud lips, and their dresses are pristine white with garish pink sashes. The Warwicks *cannot* see or hear them.

These three are the creations of the Warwicks from the psychic energy of the couple's desperate desire for children. The three think with one mind, calling themselves Faith, Hope and Mercy. They are the ideal Victorian children writ large — the sickly dream of "innocent childhood" taken to a grotesque extreme. The girls are always polite and eternally cheerful, frivolous, grossly naive, never angry or hurtful, never bored, content to speak only when spoken to, etc. They are, in short, quite unlike any real child, and exactly as 19th-century Europeans wanted their children to be. They are self-satisfied and "polite," pretty, quiet and mindlessly submissive.

Faith, Hope and Mercy won't willingly be led off by the player characters ("We'll stay here with Mother and Father as good little girls should"). The player characters can talk to them, but they are galling to speak with. They love "pretty flowers," sing kitsch nursery rhymes and long for "little puppy-dogs"; everything they say is infected with sugary naivety. But the player characters could learn a little from them. Obviously, if the group just stands and talks to them in front of the Warwicks, the mortals will think that the player characters are mad (just standing there, talking to thin air), which will make them less forthcoming.

The three girls refer to the Warwicks as Mother and Father, and instinctively know that they have an "Auntie Devika" somewhere nearby. "She's everyone's Auntie. Everyone loves her. Don't you love her?"

In rules terms, the three are magical creations but are much like normal human children (8 hit points, 5 S.D.C., no supernatural powers), and although they can turn invisible, they can be damaged. If "killed", the child merely disappears, reforming some hours later.

Finding the Ruins of Adharja

Six miles (9.6 km) up river from the British Fort, a tributary crashes down through a series of rocky ravines into the Krishna River from wooded hills to the north. A body washed down that tributary, whatever its condition when it entered the current, would be battered and smashed against countless rocks, and would appear to be badly brutalized. Player characters following the River Krishna will notice this tributary, and should guess that the dead holy man had been carried to the Krishna by this stream. If the players don't get the hint immediately, one of them (highest I.Q. rating or perception roll) should notice a piece of a priest's orange-brown robe snagged on a branch in midstream in the tributary. Following this little river leads the group to the palace.

Alternatively, the travelers might get directions from the Warwicks, leading them along an old cart-track, through unhealthy woodland to the palace.

Surrounding Villages. The player characters may seek to contact surrounding villages to gather information about Devika **Kenkali** or the palace. There are small farming hamlets in the area, and about two dozen villages within a half a day's walk of the palace, though none are within three miles (4.8 km) of it; one hour's walk in this difficult terrain. Each village has around 120 inhabitants.

The locals can direct the group to the palace and give accurate directions to the small shrine which, they say, is in the same general area. None have ever been to the palace, suggesting that its destruction came as a result of a plague unleashed by a magician one hundred years ago, and that the magician's magic and the ghosts of the dead still haunt the place. Anyone who would ever go there, it is said, would have to be "as mad as the Englishman" (meaning Warwick).

Asked about the alleged disappearances in the area, the villagers have little to say. They have heard talk about some travelers vanishing, but don't want to talk to strangers about it. No locals are missing.

Throughout the villages, the senior woman in each household enjoys unusual respect from her children, despite the fact that in Indian societies it is the man who supposedly commands the respect and obedience of the family. If the player characters engage in petty conversation with the villagers, this should become apparent. For example, husbands get defensive if the foreigners ask about their wives or inquire into their domestic lives. If a child is asked to get "whoever is in charge," the child fetches its mother, who then sheepishly fetches the village headman.

The Wrecked Shrine. As the group travels through the woods to the ruins of the palace, they come across a large shrine. This is a two-room building, with a front porch leading to a small inner area. At the rear of the inner room is a beautifully painted and decorated alcove containing two plinths. Each plinth is large enough to hold a human-sized statue, and on one sits the painted likeness of the god Siva, the second is empty.

The shrine has been well maintained, until recently, as the painted walls and **plasterwork** have been chipped and battered. Scattered across the floor of the inner area are scraps of a holy **man's** robes, splatters of blood and battered religious objects. The blood is thoroughly dried and cracked, suggesting that the damage was done days ago. Any character using *sense magic*, *see aura*, *sense P.P.E.*, *object read*, or any similar spell or talent, gets a sense that a strong magic was active in this room a day or two ago. Beside the shrine is a small, simple hut — a holy man's hermitage. The holy man is not in, and his few simple possessions (cooking pots, religious books, etc.) are all stacked in good order on shelves along one wall of the hut. An object read shows he is dead, murdered, but the assailant is not revealed.

What has happened here is that about thirty six hours ago, **Devika** sent her servants to remove the statue from the second plinth, and also sent a brutal enchantment to deal with the holy man who lived here. The holy man's body was hurled into the tributary river, and has since been cremated by **Narasimha**; the missing statue will reappear in the second half of this adventure.

Kali. Any character making a successful roll on a lore: religion skill should realize from the text and trappings of the shrine that the empty plinth should be occupied by a statue of Kali, the goddess who is the wife of the great Hindu god Siva. She is a goddess of nature and is usually a benevolent mother figure; but she is also a sponsor of assassins and death-dealers, with a sinister cult called the "**Thugees**" who used to commit murder to honor her.

The Lingering Magic. Devika has spent the last six months constantly casting and experimenting with powerful magics in the area around **Adharja**, and in the Astral Domain to which she has constructed a link to Adharja. All of these magics have had a common theme. They are all concerned with the idea of motherhood, and with the power of motherhood (or matriarchy).

These magics and the loose P.P.E. left over from her experiments have "leaked" out into the surrounding area, warping the minds of most residents within the area, making the villagers more reverent of mother-figures, and making the **Warwicks** even more passionate about the virtues of "Mother Empire," and so on). Anyone using *sense P.P.E.* or *sense magic* (or similar) within the area of the adventure can tell that an unusually high level of background P.P.E. pervades the region. Not quite a "spell," but certainly an unusual phenomenon. In practical terms, players might also notice that if any of their characters are particularly motherly, the locals always treat that character as the group's leader.

The Ruins of Adharja

The Palace of Adharja squats on top of a small craggy hill, two miles (3.2 km) to the north of the River Krishna. As the player characters approach, they can see **Adharja's** broken-down stone walls around the top of the crags. A narrow path, once paved, winds up the south side of the hill to the rubble of the outer gateway. Inside the palace is a jumble of half-fallen walls and piles of rubble.

The hilltop is completely barren. No grass grows here, and there are no large animals (no birds, mice, etc.), but the ground is crawling with tiny insects. Caterpillars, flies, ants, etc., crawl so thickly over the earth it is impossible to step without crushing a dozen of them. Looking at the insects, characters can see them divide and multiply, reproducing as single cell organisms do, but as insects naturally do not! Before their eyes, they watch the insects split into two, dying within a few minutes from a lack of food and crumbling swiftly to dust.

On the tops of the tallest standing walls, the player characters can see piles of wood and refuse — think of oversized birds' nests, but made not from twigs but from branches of trees, sheets of rusty corrugated iron, the rotting limbs of cattle, torn human clothing and animal bones.

The nests are the homes of Devika's "tame" (magically controlled) **Hunters!** Depending upon the toughness and size of the player characters' group, there might be just one or two of them (if the characters are fairly weak) or many more (especially if the characters are numerous **and/or** absurdly powerful). The G.M. should set the numbers so that the characters get a satisfying fight, but do not take a lot of damage (if any). The Hunters are watchdogs. Their objective is to stop intruders from getting into the Inner Gatehouse and are usually content with chasing them away. If the player characters are not up to a fight with even one Hunter, then they should be allowed to avoid this by running for cover in the Gatehouse.

Characters taking the trouble to count or investigate the nests will realize that there are more nests than Hunters. One or two of the creatures are out scavenging for food and stray travelers, but will not return during this (part of the) adventure.

Typical Hunters: Hunters are described on page 165 of the rules book. A typical specimen has the following statistics.

Alignment: Diabolic

Attributes: I.Q. 7, M.E. 10, M.A. 10, P.S. 25, P.P. 18, P.E. 16, P.B. 2, Spd. 10 on ground, 60 flying.

Size: 7 feet (2.1 m) tall. Weight: 400 lbs (181 kg)

A.R.: 13 (zero vs magical and supernatural attacks)

S.D.C.: 180, Hit Points: 48

Abilities: Immune to all illusions and supernatural powers of concealment, takes half damage from non-magical attacks, magically understands all languages, takes double damage from Artifact weapons and powers.

Damage: 2D6+10 with sword, 3D6 beak attack, 2D4 S.D.C. with restrained punch, 3D6 with full punch, 6D6 power punch. 3 attacks per melee.

Bonuses: +1 initiative (+3 if in the air), +3 to strike, +1 to parry and dodge (+2 to dodge while flying), +3 to **pull/roll** with **punch/fall**, +3 to save vs magic and psionics, +5 to save vs horror factor, +4 on all perception rolls.

Level of Experience: Three

Skills of Note: Tracking 70%, Swimming 98%, Climbing 98%.

The Inner Gatehouse

Fifteen yards/meters long by ten yards wide, the inner gatehouse is the only structure still standing inside the palace walls. It is easy to clamber over the fallen walls and pick through the rubble of the buildings in the palace, but those who try to enter through the gatehouse may get a nasty shock.

The actual gateway itself always stands in deep shadow, regardless of the time of day or angle of the sun. Any player character who makes a successful perception roll (or rolls under I.Q. on 1D20) will notice the strange way that the gateway is darkened. Sense magic and similar spells can discern that the gateway is indeed magical; it is a portal to the Astral Plane. Stepping under the arch of the gateway, a character is enveloped by darkness and vanishes from the mortal world, being whisked to the Palace stronghold in Devika's Astral Domain.

The Astral Palace

The Astral Palace is a separate location, positioned in the Astral Plane at a point corresponding to the real palace on Earth. Broadly, the laws of reality are consistent with those on Earth (firearms, magic, etc., all work as usual), except for four features. One, **Devika's** maternal influence is much stronger here. Two, after Devika's death, the whole place will begin to fade away and evaporate back into the Astral Plane within a couple of weeks. Three, because it is based upon desires (Devika's specifically), its geography is subjective, so that characters go where they desire to go as they move around the Palace, as explained below. Four, normal biological processes are suspended here, so that characters do not feel hungry or thirsty (they don't need food or drink) as long they stay here, and dead flesh does not naturally **rot/spoil**.

The first room. Visitors first enter a palatial reception hall, surrounded by large columns and ornate doorways. It is here that they see two doorways and encounter the Guard. One doorway has a shimmering black haze across it, and leads back to the ruins of the real-world palace. The others continue further into the Astral Palace.

This first room is guarded by one of Devika's minions. This gigantic **blubbery humanoid** has been magically created by Devika in an earlier experiment, and obeys her unswervingly. It stands twelve feet (3.6 m) tall, with stubby clawed arms, a bloated head and a slavering **mouth**, like a huge rabid baby. It leers at intruders and grunts, "Auntie not love visitors ... Auntie need protecting from bad men ..." It attacks any stranger who enters the room.

The Guard

Alignment: Aberrant

Attributes: I.Q. 5, M.E. 8, M.A. 8, P.S. 24, P.P. 7, P.E. 20, P.B. 2,

Spd. 5

Size: 12 feet (3.6 m) tall. **Weight:** 800 lbs (362 kg)

A.R.: 18 (blubber)

Hit Points: 44

S.D.C.: 100

Abilities: As an attack, the guard may grab a human-sized opponent and cuddle the unfortunate to its bloated body, smothering and crushing the victim. The victim must roll the equivalent of a dodge to pull free or takes 3D6 damage direct to hit points from being crushed and suffocated. The victim gets a chance to squirm free every melee round (same as a dodge) or suffers an additional 4D6 damage per melee round direct to hit points. The strange, hideous guard is impervious to normal heat and cold (magic heat, fire and cold does half damage), impervious to disease, poison and drugs, and bio-regenerates at a rate of 2D6 per melee round.

Attacks per melee: Three, but as it has two hands it may continue smothering one victim with one hand while attacking with the other.

Damage: 2D4 S.D.C. with restrained punch, 3D6 with full punch, and 6D6 power punch.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, -4 to strike (very **clumsy!**), +8 to save vs magic and psionics, +8 to save vs horror factor, impervious to possession.

Level of Experience: Equal to level one.

Skills of Note: None per se.

Note: If injured, the creature does not so much bleed as ooze slime, excrement, saliva, etc. When finally **destroyed**, it deflates into a pile of human secretions it automatically dies if Devika is killed.

Player characters may run past the creature and duck through a doorway, losing it for the time being, or they may stand and fight it. It cannot be controlled, enslaved or possessed by any talents, magics or psychic effects.

Exploring the Astral Palace

GEOGRAPHY: The palace has an uncertain number of rooms, which are actually not connected to each other by any firm arrangement. When a person leaves a room, he immediately goes to whichever

room (or sort of room) he wants to go to. If a person walks through a doorway with no firm idea of where he wants to go, he simply emerges randomly into another room of the same type (from a lounge to a lounge, a kitchen to a kitchen, etc.). The destination need not be exact: "I want to follow that servant," and "I want to go to where Devika is" are both adequate descriptions of an intended destination. Characters may get very confused until they work this out, seeming to just walk out of one entrance hall into another for ages and ages. Note: The Guard from the first room isn't very bright and has no idea of how to navigate the palace, so he will not follow the intruders beyond the first entrance hall.

SIGHTS: Every room in the Astral Palace is decorated in rich style, with long silk-covered couches, rich tapestries and silk paintings on the wall. The artworks represent happy family scenes. A thin layer of pale dust covers everything, and the occasional potted plants are all withered and brown. Each room has at least two doorways and one window, but the windows do not look outside: there is no "outside" here, so they look into other rooms.

SOUNDS AND SCENTS: Occasionally, the player characters can hear muffled sounds of children playing happily, or a baby crying. The noises appear to be coming from just the next room, but they never meet any children or see any babies. The whole place smells of must and decay, of damp earth and rot — like the inside of a tomb.

INHABITANTS: Occasionally a "servant" passes through a room, or is already present when the visiting characters enter.

The servants walk awkwardly, jerky and jumpy, like marionettes, but without any (visible) strings. Each wears a leather mask, a piece of goat-hide painted with a smiling face and nailed to the mortal's skull! Occasionally the player characters meet a servant whose leather mask is coming loose (or is removed by the character), revealing the mortal's face beneath, twisted with a grimace of pain and streaked with tears.

Each Servant follows a preset and pointless routine prescribed by Devika (she thinks that this makes her palace seem more like "a real home"). Servants dressed as footmen stand mutely by open doors. Messengers carry pieces of blank paper from room to room. Nannies rock empty cribs. Cooks stir empty pans. The servants do not talk to anybody, nor do they attempt to defend themselves, unless ordered to do so.

Removing the leather masks does not help the servants. They are doomed to obey Devika unswervingly, although they are only human. These are the travelers who have vanished along the roads nearby.

The Puppet-Slaves Ritual

Range: Touch

Duration: Permanent; the zombies exist until they are destroyed or their creator is slain.

P.P.E.: 60

Note: Considered a 7th or 8th level spell.

This extremely ancient and rare necromantic spell requires a brief, 5-10 minute ceremony in which the magic is woven, the leather hood (already prepared with the painted smiling face) is placed on the victim, and a large nail is driven into the skull, which kills the victim and uses the released P.P.E. to turn the poor soul into one of the living dead. In this case, a simple puppet, or what some call a "poor man's" zombie.

Alignment: Aberrant; totally loyal to their creator, in this case Devika, so long as she lives.

Attributes: I.Q. 5, M.E. 3, M.A. 3, P.S. 10, P.P. 10, P.E. 10, P.B. 8,

Spd. 6

Hit Points: 15

S.D.C.: 10

Attacks per melee: None, unless commanded to attack (then two). As puppets, they cannot think, want, fear or take action on their own, and consequently will not pick up and use a weapon unless specifically told to do so. Normally, these slow creatures have two melee actions per round.



Damage: They inflict and suffer normal damage the same as a normal human.

Level: Not applicable.

Skills: Hand to hand: basic and simple fetch and carry type skills.

Devika's Chamber

Eventually, characters inside the palace will decide to go to "a bedroom," "the master bedroom," "the throne room" or "where the lord of the palace is" (or even "the most enchanted room in the palace" or "where the mother is"). At this stage they step through into a vast throne room, one hundred yards/meters long by fifty wide, lined by four rows of columns, with one end furnished as a sumptuous bedchamber and the other end as an audience hall.

The hall has only one door through which the player characters enter. There are no windows. The walls are covered in arcane **scrawlings**, painted with blood and minced flesh, which actually move and creep across the walls. Mages looking at this gore and making a Principles of Magic skill roll can tell that a ritual has been performed here to create, awaken or "summon" some sort of dark spirit.

When the adventurers enter, *Devika* is lying on the great bed at the far end of the chamber. She is attended by four puppet-servants; one dressed as a European doctor, miming an examination of her, one dressed as a Hindu holy man, and the other two as serving-women. As soon as any character makes a hostile gesture, she orders her servants to defend her and shouts for her other servants: "Children, children, I'm in danger!" The following melee round, all of the remaining Puppet-Servants stagger in en masse through the doorway, including (if it is still alive) the Guard from the first room (this is the only way he can get to another room). These servants advance up the room at a speed of 100 feet (30 meters) per melee round, potentially giving the player characters time to deal with Devika before they are swamped by these advancing minions. The room is 100 yards long, remember, and so it takes three full melees (45 seconds) for the horde to advance from the door at one end to the bed at the other.

Devika would rather talk than fight, however. She tells the intruders that she has become immortal, saying, "I can recreate myself as often and for as long as I wish." Rubbing her pregnant belly, she says that she has "solved the greatest mystery and unleashed the greatest power of all." Her boasts are designed to impress and frighten the characters, and she even offers to share her power with them, "if you will serve only me." Requiring them to bow before her and surrender their free will to her, and ultimately, to become Puppet-Servants.

The great power that Devika mentions is her ability to create life, to reproduce — to become a mother. She refuses, under any circumstances, to explain what this power is, and if the intruding characters guess that she is somehow referring to motherhood, she will not be drawn into confirming their suspicions. It is obvious she does not yet have a child with her, although she appears to be pregnant.

Ultimately, the adventurers must fight her (or flee, or join her). When a fight does develop, there should be a great sense of urgency: Devika is at one end of the room; her servants are lumbering slowly down the room from the other end, closing in on the characters who must destroy the sorceress before being overwhelmed by this sea of slaves.

When Devika is finally killed, she gives a cry of pain and joy; she physically splits open at the belly, her insides pouring out across the floor, and the bloody markings on the walls and ceiling stop moving and begin to fade. If captured she refuses to speak with her captors.

Devika — Quick Stats

Alignment: Miscreant

Attributes: I.Q. 16, M.E. 20, M.A. 16, P.S. 25, P.P. 12, P.E. 15, P.B. 12, Spd. 7

Hit Points: 65

S.D.C.: 20

P.P.E.: 184

Level of Experience: Tenth level Sorceress.

Abilities: She has complete command over her slaves, Hunters and the fat Guardian and uses magic to control or destroy.

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +3 to save vs psionics, +4 to save vs magic, +4 vs horror factor. Immune to any sort of magical or psionic mind control or possession.

Skills of Note: Principles of Magic 90%, several Languages (including English, French and Hindi).

Spells of Note include: Destroy dead flesh, reanimate dead flesh, traitorous hand, friend in the head, fatal growth, domination, compulsion, trance, energy disruption, escape, superhuman strength, heal wounds, **levitation**, see aura, see the invisible, sense magic, detect concealment, concealment, extinguish fire, and fear. G.M.s might have to tone down Devika's magical powers if the player characters are not up to dealing with someone this powerful.

Special Magic or Powers: When a character looks at Devika's face, they see their own mother (even if they never knew their mother), but the mother has Devika's unusual green eyes, and seems to be slightly pregnant. This gives her the equivalent horror/awe factor of 15 and serves to confuse and worry characters (-1 on all combat rolls).

Furthermore, exposure to Devika's magics for a long period of time (six months or more) has affected everyone who lives within a radius of about seven miles (11 km; as far away as the British Fort). Those affected become increasingly loyal to mother-figures, and gain an instinctive loyalty to Devika herself. None of the locals, therefore, will attack the Palace or Devika, even if magic or psychic powers are used to coerce them. Some may even try to help her.

Any of the Puppet-Slaves surviving the showdown with Devika are released from their mindless servitude only when led from the Astral Palace back into the mortal world. For so long as they remain in the Astral Palace, they are still mindless servants, and will stand dumbly around the corpse of their dead mistress unless physically led away. In the mortal world, they fall over dead.

Psionic Powers: None.

Note: Devika calls everyone "child," "little one," "my cherub," etc. (Parody of the stereotypical loving mother). She wears a dark, outdated European dress, exactly like the dress worn by Queen Victoria in the painting of her at the British Fort.

Motherhood: Through her rituals, Devika has ensured that she will outlive herself, that she will live on through another. Nine months after her **defeat/death**, her "daughter" will be "born." And that is the next part of the **adventure** ...

Devika had a Daughter

Background Data

The second part of the story is set in Thailand. The Thailand of the early 21st century is much like it was towards the end of the 20th century. The military is still the most powerful force in the country, and most of the people are still Buddhists. Rice, rubber and heroin are still major exports. The threat of Aids still hangs over every poor urban household. Families still sell their daughters to brothels for the cash to buy a new TV.

Thailand is a monarchy, with a supposedly semi-divine King. His giant-sized portrait is displayed on every major building in Bangkok, often wreathed in flowers and positioned next to a Buddhist shrine. When the adventure is set, the old King has recently died, and the portraits are being replaced with pictures of the new child monarch. Behind the scenes the King's mother, the old Queen, is making deals with the country's Generals to ensure that she remains the power behind the child's throne. Everywhere the player characters go, the green painted eyes of this idolized child watches over them. Eyes that seem disturbingly familiar.

Introducing the Player Characters: The player characters may be in Thailand for almost any reason. They may be pursuing mundane business, meeting with contacts in a magical brotherhood or conspiracy, attending the Order of the Cobra's **triannual** gathering, or travelling as tourists, or attending an auction to buy a rare ancient **manuscript** ... the reason doesn't really matter. All that is important is that they have played through the preceding part of the adventure, and preferably that either they are basically nice guys who are willing to ask a few questions to help out a young **girl**, or are curious enough to chase after rumors of ritual murder.

The language of Thailand is Thai. As with the previous adventure, assume that the character with the highest **I.Q.** or perception has picked up the basics from guidebooks, language tapes and casual conversation, or have one of the characters select Thai Language as a skill. Alternatively, rule that all **NPCs** in the adventure have had enough contact with tourists to pick up the basics of **American/Australian** English.

The Dream

To kick the adventure off, one of the characters has a confusing and disturbing dream. This may be a mystic, a character with strong psychic sensing powers, or any one of the characters chosen by the G.M.

In the dream: The character is standing in a squalid backstreet, in some sort of shanty town. There are children playing nearby with a ball. The sounds of a TV sports commentary drones on in the background, but the clearest sound is of a young girl sobbing and calling for help. There are other images and sounds, too, but when the character awakes **s/he** remembers few of them. What is remembered is the sound of chanting (it sounds like some sort of ritual) and a pair of green eyes. Green ... just like Devika's. The character can't shake the feeling that Devika's evil is back!

The Street

The adventure opens in a shanty town in northern Bangkok. The player characters are passing through the area, travelling on a major road (e.g. returning from a business meeting, auction or tourist site just outside of the city), when the one who had the dream looks down a side street and sees the alley from **his/her** dream. Whether travelling on foot, by taxi, etc., the characters should be able to stop and check the area out.

The street is lined with bungalows made from breeze-blocks and corrugated iron, most with outside privies and as many with satellite dishes on the roofs. Leaky **standpipes** turn the ground to mud, and mangy stray dogs shelter in the buildings' shade. Down the street a few kids excitedly throw an American football around.

Walking to the point from which the dreamer "saw" the scene, the characters can hear sports commentary from a TV and a **girl's** sobbing coming from one of the **shacks**!

The shack has no glass in the windows and the shutters are open. The front door is unlocked but closed. No one answers the door if the **character(s)** knock, although by looking in through the windows of the house (all rooms are on the ground floor) the characters can check the building out and spot the crying girl.

Inside, the house is Spartan but neat, with a bare earth floor and unpainted walls. The only modern conveniences are the TV and **videocassette** player/recorder — both apparently brand new, with the packaging and original boxes in the corner of the room (According to the invoice, the family has paid only a 10% deposit and still owe the balance). The TV has been left on, and is currently showing American sports programs.

In a side room, a pretty teenage girl lies face-down on her bed, sobbing violently, and praying to the spirits to help her. Her name is **Tassanee Virat**. She is 15 years old, and last night (just before the character's dream) her father told her that she was to be sold to a brothel. The brothel in question, **Madame Li's**, has been the site of a number of disappearances and murders in the past month. **Tassanee**

does not particularly want to sell her body, but she certainly doesn't want to die! She's terrified that if she must work there, she will end up floating face-down in the **river**!!

Characters may speak with Tassanee by walking round the back of the shack and talking to her through the open window. If they actually force their way into her home, she is initially frightened, but can be easily convinced that they wish to help her. Like most Thais, she has great respect for monks, so any character appearing to be a Buddhist holy man will immediately win her trust. She will pour out her soul to anyone who seems interested in helping her.

The girl explains her fears and claims several local girls from this shanty town were recruited by a brothel owner named Madame Li over the last year. All earned good money "entertaining" foreign businessmen and supported their parents well. But a month ago, things began to change. The girls stayed away from their families more and more, and brought back less money when they did visit. They seemed unnaturally fond of Madame Li, growing more attached to her and less to their real mothers. Then, around three weeks ago, one by one the girls vanished. One of their bodies was found, horribly mutilated in the river, but the police never identified her killer and there are rumors of occult connections and a cover-up. Now Madame Li is recruiting new girls.

Hearing about the disappearances, the body in the river and the shifts of loyalty, and remembering the green eyes from the dream, perceptive players should be getting a sense of *deja vu*.

The girl says that she lives in this house with her parents and her younger brother. The furnishings and trinkets bare this out. Her mother, **Sikrit**, works irregular hours as a waitress. Her philandering father, Phibul, works as a long-distance truck driver and left on a long journey this morning. He is not due back for several days. Her brother is named Sanong but calls himself "Sam." He works as an errand-boy and beggar, often absent from home for weeks on end and most easily found at a video arcade half a mile (0.8 km) to the south.

Tassanee has no idea where Madame Li's brothel is. Her father negotiated with Li, using **Tassanee's** brother, Sam, as a go-between. Only her brother and father know its location. The neighbors are similarly uncertain as to the brothel's location. As Tassanee's father is not due home for some days, the player group should track down "Sam." Tassanee can direct the characters to the "American Arcade" where he often hangs out, and can lend them a photograph of the boy. **Note:** If the other player characters are reluctant to get involved, the one who had the dream (vision?) is convinced that Devika is somehow involved and **s/he** will serve as a catalyst to get his companions to investigate (or **s/he'll** do so on his own).

If the player characters can't find Sam, they should still be able to find Madame Li's. They might ask dubious looking taxi drivers, other brothel-keepers, prostitutes or policemen for directions, using bribery, intelligence skill rolls, magic and/or psychic powers to glean information.

If the characters wait for Tassanee's mother, Sikrit, she comes home in about two hours. She is a scrawny, haggard woman, once beautiful but wasted by hard work. She corroborates her daughter's story, but hardly regrets selling her. She worked as a prostitute two decades back herself, and points out that very many girls do. Tassanee should help to pay the family's upkeep (especially as her brother has run off and refuses to contribute any money) and prostitution is the easiest way for her to earn money. Besides, the family needed a new TV and video, and the money from Madame Li will pay for these.

Getting About

Bangkok is the capital of Thailand, a sprawling city with a population of seven million people. The adventure begins in a squalid shanty town in the city's north, and requires that the characters travel southward into the center of town. For transport, they may walk (averaging 2 miles/3.2 km an hour through the **traffic-clogged** streets), or they may hire transport (ranging from air-conditioned limousines to noisy **motor-**

ized rickshaws called “**tuk-tuks**,” depending upon their wealth and inclination), or travel by boat (taking a water-bus) along the Chaophraya River which snakes through the city.

The **Techno-Temple**. The "American Arcade" is a ten floor glass and concrete tower, looming out of a sea of single story shanties and squalid shops. A garish neon sign flickers across the front. By the entrance doors, the wreathed portrait of the boy-king is flanked by posters of well-known video-game characters.

On the street outside, a news vendor shouts his newspaper's headlines to passing adults: "Generals support Queen's demands. Latest update! Sir, sir, you want a newspaper?" The vendor ignores the teenagers and children who stream past him into the Arcade.

Inside, the "American Arcade" is falling apart. Much of the lighting has failed, ceiling tiles are falling down, and the air-conditioning and water systems are leaking rusty water in dark streaks down the walls. Of course the kids don't care. Throughout all ten floors they sit blinded by Virtual Reality helmets or mesmerized by giant video screens and arcade games. Beggars, teenage drug dealers and child prostitutes spend the cash they have earned on **instant**, intense electronic gratification, under the watchful eyes of the security cameras and advertising posters. Any natural psychic character can "hear" occasional shrieks and laughs of joy from inside the arcade *machines*.

The characters can find **Sanong** ("Sam") in here, either by traipsing around looking for him or (to save about half an hour) by asking around and showing other customers his photograph. All of the regulars know him by sight, and eventually one directs them to him.

"Sam" sits in front of an enormous video screen immersed in a game about white-skinned mercenaries blasting dark-skinned terrorists. He looks tired and underfed, with grubby clothes and matted hair. A bedding roll sits on the floor at his side. He doesn't want to talk to the characters, and is irritated by their interruption. He gives terse answers to their questions only if they promise to go away and leave him to his game. If they look like foreigners he tries to get them to pay him for any information.

He can corroborate his sister's story about her impending sale to Madame Li, and can direct the characters to the brothel, across town. His attention span is short, however, and he finds conversation difficult. Unless cash is flowing freely, he would much rather get on with his **shoot'em-up**.

Psychic characters may try to talk to the "ghosts" inside the machines. These creatures have been created by the focused attention of the arcade's customers, like subconsciously cast spells or entities drawn by the wealth of emotion. They are the embodiment of instant, unconscious self-gratification. The creatures/ghostly essences can clamber out of the machines, and although invisible, they can be seen with suitable magic or other powers (each resembles a low-res, **mish-mash** of computer game characters).

These creatures are willing to talk to the characters, and will react to anyone who bothers to talk to them. The Arcade's normal patrons aren't aware of **them**, so they're easily intrigued. However, they see everything in terms of computer games play ("You're magicians? Like, **Wizards**?! Hey that's a game I haven't watched. How do you work? What are your graphics like? Who gets killed? New game! New **game**!"). Most have an attention span of about five seconds and very little apparent intelligence. They skip from one subject to another at random in conversation, and soon wander away if what the characters say doesn't sound exciting. If told that the player characters are up to something "important" they groan with disgust, "Oh no - Important! That means Boring!" The best way to hold their attention is to make conversations as lurid and fast-paced as possible, talking constantly about action, winners and losers, blood, violence, death, and confrontation. They can't help the player characters much, as they know nothing and remember little besides video games, but there is the potential for some fun role-playing here and whatever clues the G.M. would like to drop.

Madame Li's

From whatever source (Sam, taxi drivers, or other informants), the characters should eventually find Madame Li's brothel. It looks like a large suburban home, located two miles (3.2 km) north of the city's center and three miles (4.8 km) south of Tassanee's home.

This is a two story building, situated in lush green gardens where water sprinklers hiss constantly. An expensive Mercedes sits in the driveway. Net curtains shield the residents from peering outsiders, and the whole place seems quiet and inviting. Behind the house, the gardens slope down to the river bank.

On the ground floor, an entrance hall leads into a spacious **bar/lounge**, where Madame Li can usually be found. A hodgepodge of eastern antiques fill these rooms, mostly of an erotic nature. There are nineteenth-century Japanese silk paintings, explicit Indian statuary, ivory fertility symbols, and at the end of the lounge is a life-size stone statue of the Indian goddess Kali (Note: The G.M. should immediately tell the players that this statue, in its size, style and materials, is a perfect mate for the statue of Siva that they found in the previous part of the adventure. This is likely to be the statue missing from the temple).

In an adjoining room, four silk-suited thugs with machine-guns sit drinking beer and Thai coffee, always ready to quell any trouble (use Corrupt Police stats from the Nightbane™ RPG, but give them Ingram SMGs).

Upstairs, six bedrooms are decorated in a variety of eastern styles (Thai, Japanese, Indian, etc.), with the seventh (Madame Li's own chamber) resembling a torture chamber upholstered in red velvet. When the characters arrive, it is late afternoon, and only two girls are in their rooms, both with fat foreign customers. If the player group has procrastinated till past dark, all six rooms are in use, with other girls chatting to customers in the lounge.

If the characters knock at the door, a maid opens it within a few seconds. She is instructed only to let wealthy-looking gentlemen into the house, and to turn away anyone who looks drunk, poor, or dangerous.

Those allowed in (it's possible only a few members of the player group are deemed acceptable) are shown into a broad reception hall, where they are met by Madame Li, a tall, painfully thin woman in a tight silk dress. She is, in fact, one of the *Beautiful People* (see Nightlands Familiars in Chapter Three), with some rather perverse cravings.

Li assumes that the characters are here for carnal reasons. If they try to confront her (saying that they are investigating the deaths of her girls, etc.), she turns scarlet and tries to have them discreetly thrown out. If the characters are persistent (e.g. say that they will make a scene in front of her customers if she won't talk to them privately), she will agree to talk to them so long as she can be convinced that they are not with the police. If anyone mentions *Devika*, she blusters and blushes and panics, denying everything, thus incriminating herself: "She won't listen to me! I've nothing to do with her! You must believe me."

If the characters threaten or attack Li, she calls her thugs in from the backroom to defend her. If a **gunfight** develops, the neighbors telephone the police who, having received regular payoffs from the brothel for years, promptly send a large force of armed policemen to the house (12 police should suffice, arriving in 1D6 minutes; use the Corrupt Police stats as before).

If the players can convince Li that they will get rid of Devika, or can convincingly threaten her, she will tell them what has happened. If the characters demonstrate supernatural abilities, for example, then that alone may convince her to help them. She doesn't need to make enemies of a bunch of magicians or Nightbane, and will tell them what they want to know if they just promise to go away. Actually, Li regards "Devika" as a liability and an ungrateful wretch who threatens to ruin everything for everybody. Li would be delighted for the group to remove Devika from Bangkok.

Throughout her conversations with the characters, Li should come across as being utterly self-centered, vain, murderously heartless, and self-pitying (all of which she is).

Li's story. Just under one month ago, Li bought a large statue of Kali from a dealer as the centerpiece of the brothel's lounge. Gradually, her girls and servants became increasingly loyal, and her patrons more respectful of her, and she began to suspect that some power was acting in her favor through the idol. Hoping to discover more, she engaged a petty psychic, a Chinese man named Sheng, to investigate the object.

Sheng made contact with a mind or spirit inside the statue. The mind said that it was called *Devika*, and that it was a sorceress of vast power. It wanted a body. Sheng's would do, it said.

The spirit in the statue tried to take control of Sheng, but its efforts were a spectacularly bloody failure. Li later had Sheng's remains dumped in the river.

So, Li came up with a plan. She discovered that the spirit in the statue could minutely affect the environment around it, and could hear normal speech, so she rigged up a kind of Ouija board to communicate with it. Li offered the spirit a body in return for its service. "Devika" agreed, and told Li how to perform a ritual which would allow it to inhabit another's body.

Select clients paid generously to watch the bloody ritual, but because Li has no magical powers or training, her first efforts were a failure. The bodies of the girls used for the rituals were dumped into the river. Another attempt was successful, and something manifested in the body of the victim. However, once in possession of a new body, Devika refused to honor her agreement with Li and walked out on her. She had murdered five of her girls to bring the thing into the world, and now it abandoned her.

"After all I did for her! I gave her life. And how does she repay me?"

That was six days ago. Li has heard that Devika is living somewhere on **Ko-Sahn** Road in central Bangkok, but she could be wrong or Devika may have moved. Li willingly gives characters the address and apartment number.

Whether the characters want to do anything with Li herself is up to them. They have no firm evidence, she will deny having confessed anything to them, and the local police take pay-off money and favors from her anyway, so they will be hesitant to take action. The characters are probably on their own if they want to punish this murderess.

The Statue. The statue itself has much the same effect as the ambient magic in the previous part of the adventure — increasing peoples' respect for matriarchal figures, etc. — although only on a small area (30 feet/9 m, maximum radius). Perverse players might want to steal it, as it is a magical item, but what they would do with a 1000 lb (450 kg) statue of Kali, and how they would sneak it out of Li's lounge is an interesting question.

Madame Li — Quick Stats

Alignment: Diabolic

Attributes: I.Q. 10, M.E. 9, M.A. 15, P.S. 9, P.P. 14, P.E. 14, P.B. 20, Spd. 15

Hit Points: 28

S.D.C.: 7

Level of Experience: Fifth level

Skills of Note: Art 50%, sing 80%, dance 80%, interrogation techniques 65%, hand to hand: basic, and W.P. knife and revolver.

The Daughter's Den

The magical creature (woman, spell, whatever) who calls herself Devika is the "daughter" of the original Devika. She is a slim, attractive Thai woman, about twenty-five years old with waist-length black hair, but with her mother's green eyes. In many ways, her personality is identical to her "mother's," but she is a "youthful" version (e.g. more interested in having a good time than in reproducing) and is less powerful.

She remembers everything that happened in the Astral Palace up until the time that Devika was defeated by the characters (so she won't look kindly on the player characters!), and it was **Devika's** rituals that spawned this so-called daughter. She understands all of this, and also believes that she has inherited her **mother's** power (though at present, these powers do not seem to have fully developed). She insists that she is "different" than her mother, striking out and finding her own path, doing what she wants. She isn't ready to admit that what she is doing is basically the same as what the original Devika did.

This new manifestation of "Devika" lives in a one room apartment on the third floor of a building in the **Banglampoo** district of central Bangkok. The area is a backpacker's ghetto, bustling with American and European travelers, and packed with western eateries, travel shops and cheap hotels. It is here that she has begun collecting "minions."

She has seduced four athletic white males (a Canadian, a Dutchman, a **Scot**, and an American), who now serve her as diligently as her mother's Puppet-Slaves in India (by the way, she doesn't know the spell). They are all madly infatuated by her and are fiercely envious of each other. Made miserable by their jealousies, they compete for her attentions, buying her fine food and flowers, paying her rent, indulging her sexual fancies, and so on. When they have run out of money, Devika will just dump them.

For now, she remains in her room, while her lovers fetch her whatever she wants. Player characters who wait outside and watch the place may be able to catch one of these men and interrogate him. The men are often sent out for pizza, Hollywood gossip magazines, French wines, etc., but at least two remain with her in her room at all times. If the characters just blunder into her flat, all four will be in attendance.

Cautious characters might scope the area out before entering the building. The area is bustling, but unremarkable ... except that up on the roof of the building opposite, in the wooden legs of a water tower, is an odd bundle of junk, looking a bit like a nest. You know the sort of nest. Branches of trees, limbs of animals ... The Hunter(s) who were absent when the group attacked the original Devika are still controlled by her magic, and are now watching over her so-called daughter.

As the player characters climb the stairs and approach her apartment, music thumps out of another door, flooding the corridor with a heavy bass sound, the words almost muffled out:

"Mother, Father, I am your son,
Right down to this long, thin, pointed face,
And this muddled up, twisted tongue,
And now I find I'm doing
These things you would have done.
Sometimes... these things... are hard."

When they enter the apartment, Devika and her servants are sprawled across the bed and armchairs in various states of undress, watching TV and reading magazines. Their lifestyle is one of self-contained hedonism, and they do not expect visitors.

When Devika instantly recognizes the character, she is frightened and confused. What do they want? What do they intend to do? How did they find her so quickly? She hides behind bluff and empty threats: "How dare you disturb me again! I'm warning you, I have inherited all of my mother's powers, so you had better beware." She constantly contradicts herself, often implying that she is the original Devika, but vehemently claiming to be a separate person.

If given time to think, Devika works out that the characters have slim grounds to assault her. She has not committed any crime, she cannot be held accountable for her "mother's" crimes (she claims ... but that assumes that she is a different person), and all of her current minions are delighted to be near her. Let the players argue these issues through. Let them try to work out whether this is the same Devika that they killed in India or not.

Finally, when a fight does erupt, or if the player characters decide to turn and leave, the **Hunter(s)** barrel in through the window (either one or two, depending on how tough the characters are, and how much the players want a fight). Protecting Devika, they attack the characters, forcing them to fight or flee. In theory, Devika's four males will fight to the death to protect her, but they aren't expecting supernatural horrors to hurtle through the windows, and don't expect the characters to have supernatural powers. In practice, half are likely to end up cowering or fleeing in terror while the characters battle with the Hunters. Devika the Second will fight to the death to defend herself, but will attempt to flee and hide at the first opportunity.

When the characters have finished here and prepare to leave, the muffled song from the corridor beats out its final chorus:

"So do I thank you? Do I curse you?
These tracks stretch out before me,
The ones you left behind.
What I want, the way I feel,
It's yours, yours, not mine."

Whether Devika lives or dies, the players should have solved a little mystery and have got plenty of food for thought (What was this "daughter"? Was she the original? Was she a spell? Was she human? Probably all and none of these.) If the characters wish they can go back to **Tassanee** and tell her that she isn't likely to be **ritually** murdered (although there is still other things to fear as a prostitute) and if the player characters killed Li, then **Tassanee's** parents will just have to sell her to another brothel.

Devika #2 — Quick Stats

Alignment: Miscrcent

Attributes: I.Q. 16, M.E. 20, M.A. 16, P.S. 25, P.P. 12, P.E. 15, P.B.

12, Spd. 7

Hit Points: 19

S.D.C.: 10

P.P.E.: 60

Abilities: Immune to any sort of magical or psionic control.

Level of Experience: First level Sorceress.

Skills of Note: Principles of Magic 72%, several languages (including English, Hindi, Thai, etc.).

Spells include: Destroy dead **flesh**, domination, escape, heal wounds, and fear.

The Servants (Joe, Mattheus, Caelin and Brad)

Alignments: Anarchist and miscrcent.

Attributes: I.Q. 11, M.E. 9, M.A. 11, P.S. 13, P.P. 12, P.E. 12, P.B.

13, Spd. 11

Hit Points: 24

S.D.C.: 16

Level of Experience: Average 4th level.

Skills of Note: Hand to hand: basic, W.P. pistol, W.P. knife, pilot automobile.

Music Note: The lyrics quoted are from "Inheritance," originally recorded by *New Model Army* and written by *Justin Sullivan*.

Appendix:

Cosmology & Other Ramblings

The Meaning of the Light

"Lightbringers." Guardians. Call me a cynic, but it sounds like bullocks to me. It's like "Hi, I'm Senator Crook. Vote for me, I'm gonna lower your taxes and give you all jobs, and look how white my smile is." Same thing. "Hi, I'm with the Lightbringers. We're going to save humanity and end evil for eternity, and look how white my light is."

Think about it, here in the west, white is the color of innocence and purity, but in the east, white is the color of death. Furthermore, historically, Lucifer's titles are "Lightbringer" and "Son of the Morning."

But hey, don't worry about that. Just keep on thinking that the good guys all wear white, like in old westerns, and the bad guys are all dark and ugly. Jeez. I thought we grew out of thinking like that after the Cold War finished.

Sure, maybe the Guardians are the good guys. But maybe life isn't that simple. Maybe things aren't so black and white, if you see what I mean. And if you want another pun, well, try "Whitewash."

— *The musings of a Mirromage*

The Mirrowall™

The **Mirrorwall** is the barrier which separates every plane and universe from every other. According to some, the Mirrorwall is what keeps the Megaverse from just crashing into itself in one big mess of contradictions. The Mirrorwall stops magic from getting into worlds

that **shouldn't** have any magic, stops fantastic creatures from wandering down Broadway, and makes sure that you can't catch a bus to Hell. Except that you can catch a bus to Hell (it stops every midnight on the corner of 13th and Progress, and the fare is thirty silver coins and one good intention ...), and since Dark Day, there are some very weird creatures in the shadows of Broadway. But that's not the way things should be. That's the way that people (demons, sorcerers, **Mirromages**, Nightlords, and all) have made it, knocking everything out of place.

The Mirrorwall is a two dimensional plane, infinitely thin. On one side is Earth. On one side is the Nightlands. On another is a place the Chinese called Heaven. On still another side is a place that Europeans called Hell. On yet another side is an alternate earth ... Is that too many sides for you? It's an infinitely thin plane, and should have two sides, right? Well, you would think that, because you live in physical space, where mathematics and physics mean something (usually). The Mirrorwall is at the edges of your space. The Wall is the place where math and physics stop making sense — big time!

The Mirrorwall has an almost infinite number of sides, because it defines the edges of every single part of the Megaverse, simultaneously. Looked at another way, the Mirrorwall has only two sides: there's your world (this side) — whoever you are — and then **there's** everything else (the other side).

Mirrorwall™, Pathways™, Astral Plane & Dreamstream™: The Mirrorwall is *not* the Astral Plane, the Pathways or the Dreamstream. Let's get that straight. All three seem to exist everywhere, but that isn't the point.

You want a simple explanation? OK. The Mirrorwall exists between every place and every other place. Pathways have the potential to exist every place. The Astral Plane exists outside of every place. And the Dreamstream exists inside every place (or, more exactly, inside every person).

Of course, simple explanations are too simple and misleading. The point is, the four aren't the same.

Why is the Wall Mirrored? When you look at the **Mirrorwall**, if you ever get the chance to look at it, physically, then you'll see that it is, in fact, perfectly mirrored. All you will ever see is a reflection of yourself, of your own world. Now, maybe this is because everything in every part of the **Megaverse** mirrors and reflects every other part of the Megaverse. Maybe it's because nothing is supposed to escape through the Mirrorwall, so light, images, etc., simply bounce back at you, wherever you are.

Inside the Wall. The Wall itself has no substance. It is simply a partition. A place between places. And yet, with the right magic (or other means) it is possible to get inside the Mirrorwall.

Inside, the Wall is a huge three dimensional maze (It probably has more than three dimensions, actually, but humans can't tell). Corridors branch, meet, reach dead-ends, join in huge mirrored chambers, or are separated by mirrored doors. The floor, walls and ceilings are all mirrors — the backs of mirrors, through which you can look out into various waking worlds. Every mirror in existence (and, some say, several that don't exist) backs onto this space. Not that terms like floor, ceiling or wall make much sense in here. You can walk up the walls and onto the ceiling if you want, which, of course, then just becomes the floor as far as you are concerned. Gravity pulls pretty well whatever way you would expect it to.

Finding a specific mirror is all but impossible for most folk, but those who understand something about the Wall (**Mirrorages**, for example) can find any specific mirror in about five minutes. They can't make a map though, because the layout of the corridors inside the Wall is never the same from one moment to another. On the other hand, it is said that if you don't know anything about anything, you will also be able to find your way around, just by instinct. Put your faithful old dog here and shout "Home, boy!" and he'll lead you straight to the back of the mirror in your living room.

You want an analogy of what the inside of the Wall is like? OK, think of the computer game *Descent*, and now imagine an area which is like that, but limitlessly large, made up entirely of the backs of mirrors, and doesn't have any consistent layout. Oh, and the whole area is (probably) uninhabited, so there is no one to ask directions from. And keep in mind that this is a place that doesn't exist and, since you do exist, you aren't meant to be here. Unless you've got some pretty impressive magic to keep you here, reality is going to kick in and kick you straight out.

Actually, compared with the difficulty of getting in, getting out is a breeze. If the laws of reality don't conspire to eject you, then all you have to do is step out of a mirror. Just make sure you pick the right one.

Why Dark Day?

While Dark Day was officially a non-event ("nothing really happened, nothing to worry about, the government has everything under control... honest") there is a minority belief that Dark Day was some sort of great invasion of the Earth by the minions of the Nightlords. Inexplicable creatures have turned up, they are infiltrating the government and they are taking **control!**

Now, that might be what it looks like from where human beings are standing. But, given that the **Nightlands** and the Earth are largely reflections of each other, what do you think it looks like from the **Nightlords'** perspective?

From the Nightlands, it looks as if human beings have invaded them.

The Nightlords have long interfered with the affairs of the Earth, although they have found it difficult to breach the Mirrorwall with any regularity. At the same time, enlightened humans, magicians and more recently, scientists, have also been known to travel to and interfere with the Nightlands. But until Dark Day, these incursions were fairly minor.

As human science advanced, it became clear to the Nightlords that humanity might one day breach the Mirrorwall and invade their own realm. As a Night Prince general once remarked, "a good offense is the best defense," so the Nightlords began to plan for a war with the Earth.

On the Earth, meanwhile, scientists were beginning to glimpse into alternative realities. This was a new frontier where, as far as they knew, no man had ever gone before. Their glimpses of the Nightlands frightened both them and the politicians who funded them. The Nightlands creatures seemed inexplicable, frightening, and as numerous probes and one-way volunteer missions proved, it even seemed possible to cross over from one world to the other. Soon, the politicians were hearing from their intelligence services that the Nightlands were sending agents into their world. And as everyone knows, the best defense is ...

In this way, the situation escalated. Both sides prepared for war, and having only sketchy reports of the other (and fearing the worst), each preparation only provoked the other side into faster armaments. (Ever wonder what the huge National Security budgets are spent on?)

With supernatural powers, the **Nightlords'** minions infiltrated right-wing political movements, placed spies and recruited servants, while the Nightlords themselves gathered their energies. With technologies which seemed as supernatural to the Nightlords (and would be considered science fiction by most humans), the western governments did exactly the same in the Nightlands.

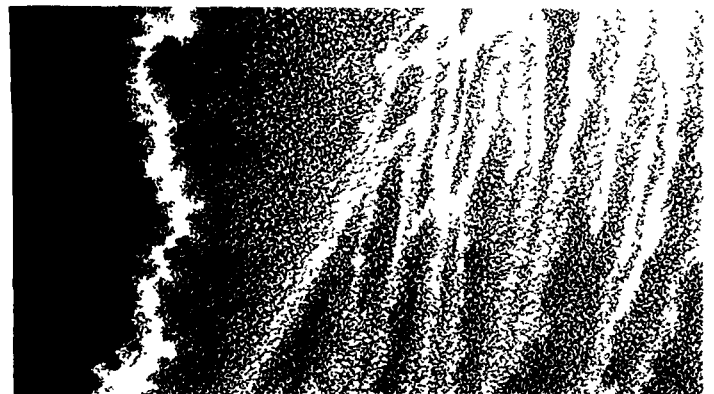
On Dark Day the invasions came. NATO attacked the Nightlands. The Nightlords attacked the Earth. Inevitably both invasions occurred simultaneously, and both invasion forces were of similar size. Only the vanguards — the first few troops — got through on either side before the commanders realized that their own worlds were under attack. Nightlord and human armies simultaneously panicked, and invasions were cancelled to provide for the defense of their own worlds.

Now, neither side will risk a direct offensive, and both are ready in case another attack comes. The situation is a stalemate, a kind of unofficial Cold War, as both sides resort to espionage, infiltration and deceit. For at least the moment, it would seem that the Nightlords have the upper hand.

What no one seems to realize is that this is a war which nobody can win. It is simply not possible for either side to gain a clear and total advantage over enemies who are merely reflections of themselves. Change places, perhaps. Destroy each other, perhaps. Perversely, it seems likely that the situation will continue on its present course until the Nightlords eventually control all human governments, while all the time the barrier between the two worlds is thinning and cracking.

The other thing that no one seems to consider is that this bizarre state of affairs may not have arisen entirely by accident. But that's another story.

'Jesus ... said to his disciples ... "When you make the two one and the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside and the above like the below ... when you make eyes in the place of an eye and a hand in place of a hand... then you will enter [the kingdom].'" The Gospel of Thomas.



Experience Tables

Acolyte

- 1 0,000-1,860
- 2 1,861-3,720
- 3 3,721-7,440
- 4 7,441-14,880
- 5 14,881-23,880
- 6 23,881-34,880
- 7 34,881-48,880
- 8 48,881-68,880
- 9 68,881-92,880
- 10 92,881-124,880
- 11 124,881-166,880
- 12 166,881-212,880
- 13 212,881-272,880
- 14 272,881-324,880
- 15 324,881-384,880

Fleshsculptor O.C.C.

- 1 0,000-2,150
- 2 2,151-4,300
- 3 4,301-8,600
- 4 8,601-17,200
- 5 17,201-25,400
- 6 25,401-35,600
- 7 35,601-50,800
- 8 50,801-71,200
- 9 71,201-96,400
- 10 96,401-132,600
- 11 132,601-184,800
- 12 184,801-235,200
- 13 235,201-285,400
- 14 285,401-335,600
- 15 335,601-400,800

Nemesis R.C.C.

- 1 0,000-2,400
- 2 2,401-4,800
- 3 4,801-9,400
- 4 9,401-18,600
- 5 18,601-28,800
- 6 28,801-48,400
- 7 48,401-78,800
- 8 78,801-110,400
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- 10 150,801-200,400
- 11 200,401-250,800
- 12 250,801-310,400
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- 14 380,801-470,400
- 15 470,401-600,800

Channeller O.C.C.

- 1 0,000-1,900
- 2 1,901-3,800
- 3 3,801-7,300
- 4 7,301-14,300
- 5 14,301-21,000
- 6 21,001-31,000
- 7 **31,001-41,000**
- 8 41,001-53,000
- 9 53,001-73,000
- 10 73,001-103,000
- 11 103,001-138,000
- 12 138,001-188,000
- 13 188,001-238,000
- 14 238,001-288,000
- 15 288,001-328,000

Mystic O.C.C. ___

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- 4 8,251-16,500
- 5 16,501-24,600
- 6 24,601-34,700
- 7 34,701-49,800
- 8 49,801-69,900
- 9 69,901-95,000
- 10 95,001-130,100
- 11 130,101-180,200
- 12 180,201-230,300
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- 14 280,401-340,500
- 15 **340,501-400,600**

Sorcerer O.C.C.

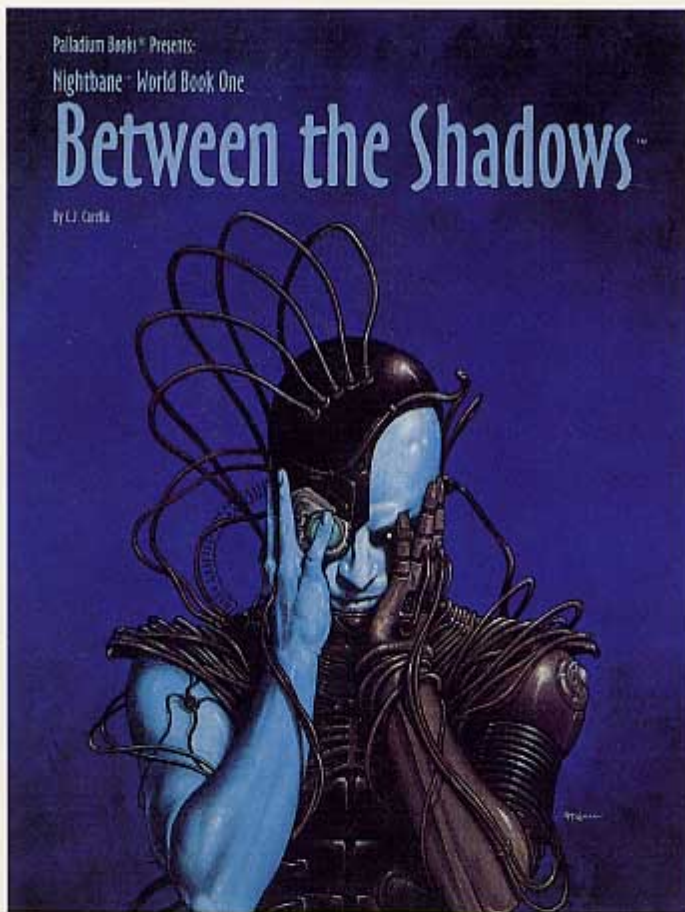
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- 2 2,241-4,480
- 3 4,481-8,960
- 4 8,961-17,920
- 5 17,921-25,920
- 6 25,921-35,920
- 7 35,921-50,920
- 8 50,921-70,920
- 9 70,921-95,920
- 10 95,921-135,920
- 11 135,921-185,920
- 12 185,921-225,920
- 13 225,921-275,920
- 14 275,921-335,920
- 15 335,921-395,920

Cybermage O.C.C. ___

- 1 0,000-2,350
- 2 2,351-4,650
- 3 4,651-9,250
- 4 9,251-18,500
- 5 18,501-27,000
- 6 27,001-37,000
- 7 37,001-52,000
- 8 52,001-73,000
- 9 73,001-98,000
- 10 98,001-140,000
- 11 140,001-190,000
- 12 190,001-232,000
- 13 232,001-292,000
- 14 292,001-360,000
- 15 360,001-430,000

Mirrormage O.C.C. ___

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- 2 2,241-4,480
- 3 4,481-8,960
- 4 8,961-17,920
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- 13 225,921-275,920
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- 15 335,921-395,920



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