

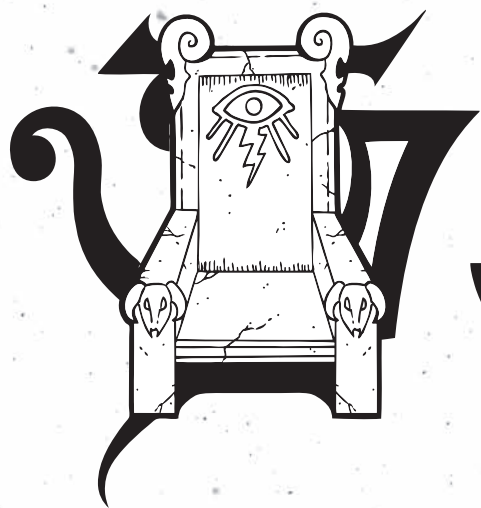
WISSEERS OF THE THRONE™



the World of Darkness



MAGE®
THE AWAKENING



SEERS OF THE THRONE™



*By David Brookshaw, Stephen DiPesa, Alex Scokel,
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OBEDIENCE

Wednesday, 10:27pm, the F3 Freeway, north of Sydney, Australia

Durriken dropped the BMW back a gear and planted his foot on the accelerator as he slid into the left-hand lane. The car screamed as it shot past the semi-trailer, the truck's running lights quickly disappearing into the distance.

"How far do we have to go now?"

Agathon flipped another card onto the book he had laying in his lap. He stared at it intently for a second, and then looked up.

"Hard to say. The signs are damn hard to read right now, although we're going in the right direction. The question is, are we going to find those Pentacle motherfuckers?"

Durriken glanced into his rearview mirror, and then slammed the car back into top gear as he

wove between two other cars, screaming across two lanes of traffic on the freeway. The Beamer's headlights lit up the sandstone cliffs beside the road as the car raced down the hill.

"We are if I've anything to do with it," muttered Durriken.

Agathon flipped another card, laying it across the top of the previous one. "Shit, looks like we might have trouble up ahead."

"I'm ready for it," said Namid, from the back seat.

The BMW shot across the Hawkesbury River bridge. As they raced past the ambulance station on the way up the hill, blue lights stabbed out of the darkness as the highway patrol car started to pull out into traffic after them.



Namid stared at it and smoke erupted from under the hood of the cop car. Durriken felt the ripple of magic before the car stopped dead in its tracks. "That should slow them down for a while," Namid said with a chuckle.

"Nice work," Durriken said, weaving the car between traffic as he continued to accelerate up the hill. His brow furrowed as he sped up the hill on the northern side of the river, weaving between traffic as he went. Something wasn't right. It was almost as if the Artifact was moving.

"What the *fuck* are those Pentacle cocksuckers up to, Namid?" he said, as he imagined the strands of Fate laid out in front of him as he drove. Releasing Mana into the Imago, Durriken felt a shift in the Seers' fortunes. It was almost as if the strands connecting them to the Artifact were thinning. Things weren't supposed to go this way; after all, the Exarchs had already indicated that the artifact would fall into his hands tonight.

"I'm having trouble seeing them. Whoever's shielding them is doing a fucking good job of it," Namid said. "But, by the looks of it, they've turned off a major road and are heading onto a back road somewhere."

"Fuck," muttered Durriken.

"They could be anywhere."

Sending some more Mana towards the Exarchs, he opened his mind to whatever signs his masters would deign to give him. *Please, give me something*, he thought.

Beside the road ahead, a portable sign flashed in the darkness.

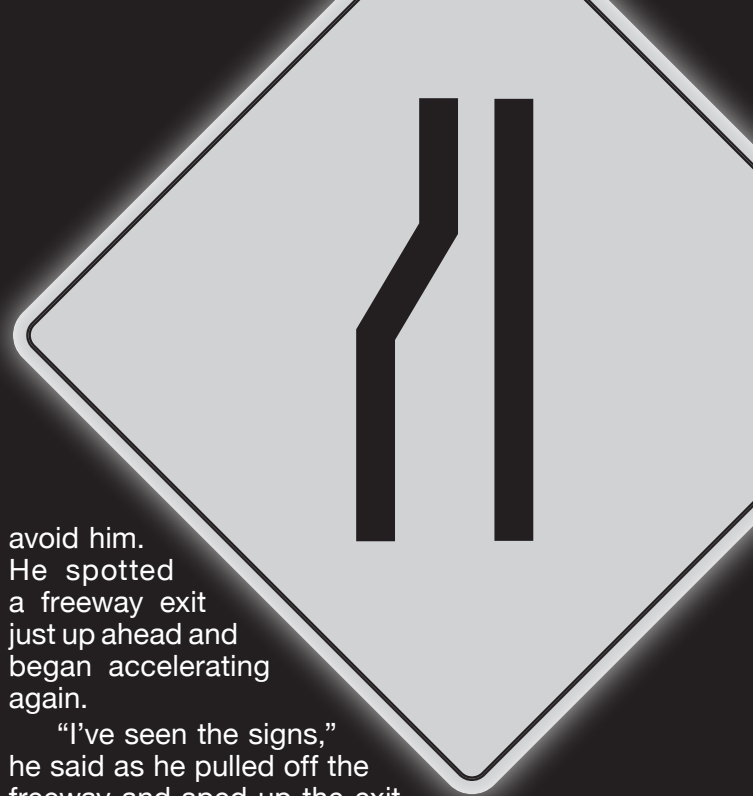
**Right Lane Closed.
Merge Left.**

Durriken felt a surge of relief wash over him. The Exarchs had come through for him again. He slammed on the brakes, the

BMW shuddering harshly as the ABS prevented the wheels from locking up.

Agathon looked up from his cards. "What the fuck?"

Durriken downshifted twice, and swung the car into the left-hand lane, in front of a family sedan, which had to brake hard to



avoid him. He spotted a freeway exit just up ahead and began accelerating again.

"I've seen the signs," he said as he pulled off the freeway and sped up the exit ramp.

Twenty-Four Hours Earlier, overlooking Sydney Harbour

Durriken stared out the window at the lights on Sydney Harbour. The Harbour Bridge was lit up, some of the arch's spans appearing to be made from silver. Beyond the bridge, the sails of the Sydney Opera House glowed softly against the backdrop of the city center.

"Did you even *hear* what I just said?" Lexia asked.

"Huh?" Durriken turned to face his supervisor in the Seers of the Throne. And his lover. "I'm sorry, hon. I got distracted."

"You've been doing that ever since we arrived in this stupid country," Lexia said. She brushed a strand of blonde hair back behind her ear, and sat back in her seat, taking another sip of her chardonnay. "What's eating you, sweetie?"

Durriken shook his head. "I don't know. I've just been feeling... well, like there's something wrong here. Everything I've seen here points to something big going on. I'm usually much more confident about what the Exarchs are saying, but here... here, everything seems to be upside down."

Lexia laughed. "Well, what do you expect? You *are* in the land down under, after all."

Durriken snorted. "Well, yeah, I guess there is that." He leaned back in his seat and rubbed his temples. "I just haven't been able to sleep properly since I got here."

"I *know!* You've woken me up a few times every night."



"I'm sorry, Lex. You know I'm not doing it deliberately."

Lexia leaned forward again. "What's going on? Is something bothering you, Durri?"

"I really *don't* know," Durriken said. "I've been trying to divine what's going on, what the Exarchs are trying to say to me, but it's not been working. All the results come out muddled. It may just be that I'm in a foreign country and that there's a lot of unfamiliar stuff going on here. Even if it does feel something like home."

"Well," Lexia said, "we'll be done here by Friday, and we can get back to L.A. I can't wait to be out of this hellhole!"

Durriken laughed and pointed out the window. "You call *that* a hellhole? You have got to be kidding me, right? You never did see Mogadishu, did you?"

"No, and I didn't need to. I've done my time in the trenches, and that's why I've earned the right to have people like you work for me now. It means that I don't need to worry about getting my hands dirty chasing Pentacle idiots all over the world."

"Somebody has to stop the Pentacle," Durriken said, his eyes narrowing slightly. "If all the Seers sat back and did nothing, those cocksuckers would find a way to rebuild the Celestial Ladder and overthrow the Exarchs."

Lexia leaned forward and kissed him gently on the cheek. "Ever the brave knight, aren't you, Durri? You need to keep the faith! The Exarchs will never let that happen, so there's no point in even worrying about it!"

She took another sip of her wine and sat back again. "Now, did you find out what the local tetrarch needed?"

Durriken shook his head. "Not yet. I've been working with a couple of the local Seers, Agathon and Namid. They have potential, but they need to be taught better strategies for keeping track of the Pentacle."

"Are you going to be finished by the weekend?"

Shrugging, Durriken finished off his own glass of wine. "I don't know yet. Like I said, it feels as though something is going on here. I'm worried that if we leave too early, the Pentacle is going to score a major victory in this country."

"And like I said, the Exarchs would never let that happen. You worry too much. Now, hurry up and finish, so we can get out of here. The tetrarch is expecting us for a harbor cruise."

Durriken sighed. Lexia never worried about anything, and it was going to be her downfall someday.

* * *

Durriken ran through the maze, the walls reflecting the intense white light that seemed to burn down from above. All the walls seemed the same, a featureless expanse of stainless steel. He paused momentarily at a junction, trying to figure out which way to turn next.

"*Durriken...*" A whispered voice echoed off the walls, but appeared to come from somewhere off to the right. Durriken sprinted after it, turning right, then left and then right again as he continued through the maze.



“Where are you?” he yelled, his voice echoing loudly off the walls.

Nothing. Just silence.

He ran on, hoping to find the source of the voice that had been taunting him all night. Taking another right, he followed a passage which doglegged twice until it ended in a dead end.

“Fuck!” he screamed in frustration as he ran back the way he came. He took the turn and expected to find the junction he had just taken. But the passage ran straight ahead into the distance, without a junction. The maze was rearranging itself.

“Durriken...” came the whisper again.

Durriken paused and listened to the echoes carefully. They seemed stronger to the right, although he wasn’t sure. He moved slowly down the passage, trying to pick up any noise other than his own footsteps.

“Durriken...”

He paused. The voice seemed to come through the walls. Perhaps...

Spreading his hands against the wall, Durriken pushed slightly. A line appeared on the wall, giving an outline of a door. Pushing against it with all his strength, the door opened onto a platform on the top of a massive structure.

Durriken stepped through and the door slid shut silently behind him. He was on top of a massive stainless steel, stepped pyramid, which disappeared into the clouds below.

“Durriken,” a voice whispered from above him.

He turned around and noticed the strings coming from his arms and legs. They went straight up, and he could barely make out a gigantic cross hovering in the dark sky above him. Something massive moved up there, and for a second, Durriken thought it looked like blonde hair.

“Why don’t you do something about that?”

Durriken’s head snapped to the right. Standing beside him, hovering in midair just beyond the edge of the pyramid, was a glowing figure. Durriken had to shield his eyes, as the light was so intense it was beginning to burn.

“What do you want from me?” he said, trying to make out who it was that was speaking to him.

“From you? We want obedience; we want faith; we want courage.” The figure pointed at something behind the mage.

Turning around, Durriken saw a long altar situated on the top of the pyramid. The top was slightly above waist height, and it was stained with something almost rusty in color. In the middle of the table lay an obsidian knife, its long blade so highly polished that it appeared to almost drink the light in from around it.

The glowing figure appeared suddenly on the other side of the altar.

“True power requires sacrifice, Durriken. You know what must be done...”

Durriken sat bolt upright in bed, sweat streaming from his forehead. His stomach roiled and he felt as though he was going to throw up.

He threw off the sheet and sat up on the edge of the bed. Next to him, Lexia rolled over, her breasts uncovered. She reached out for him in her sleep,



there's something important going on that I'm missing."

Lexia moved around to face Durriken and put her arms around his neck.

"Well, how's about you come back to bed with me, and I do something to take your mind off whatever it is that's worrying you?" She licked his lips to reinforce the message.

Durriken smiled. "Yeah, alright. I guess I'm up for it if you're good to go again."

Wednesday, 6:10am, Sydney International Airport

"Ladies and gentlemen," said a sultry woman's voice over the aircraft's PA system, "welcome to Sydney. The local time is now 6:10am and the temperature outside is already a very pleasant twenty-two degrees Celsius, heading for a top temperature of thirty-seven. For safety reasons, please remain seated with your seatbelts fastened until the plane has come to a stop at the terminal and the captain has switched off the seatbelt sign."

About fucking time, Kadar thought. Christ, I hate international flights. I really must get Machiko to teach me how to portal, so I don't have to waste so much goddamn time crammed in with all these fucking Sleepers.

"It's going to be good to get off this plane and have a proper stretch, isn't it?" said the obese man sitting next to him. "I hate long flights like these. I always end up so stiff and sore."

"Yeah," muttered Kadar, "something like that."

He put his head back against the headrest and closed his eyes. He imagined the face of his contact in Sydney, a tall, ebony-skinned mage named Solomon. Sensing the familiar tingle of a magical connection, he reached out with his mind.

Solomon?

Brother Kadar! came the friendly voice of his contact. It is so good to hear from you. I take it your plane has arrived finally?

Yeah, it's just touched down. I guess it'll take me at least an hour to get through Customs. Should I just get a cab to your place then?

Kadar felt as though Solomon was nodding. *Yes, that would certainly be the easiest. I'm in the middle of something here that I can't leave*

muttering something incoherent.

Durriken stood up, and silently padded out into the apartment's kitchen. Grabbing a glass of water, he wandered over to the windows and looked out over the harbor. Everything seemed so peaceful, and yet his mind was still reeling from the dream he had just had.

Why now? He thought. That dream had to have come from the Exarchs. It was too powerful for anything else. What was it that they wanted him to do?

"Hon?"

Lexia crept up behind up and put her arms around his waist, pressing her naked body up against his.

"What are you doing out here? I woke up and you were gone."

"It's nothing," Durriken said. "I'm just having trouble sleeping again. I can't help worry that

just yet, so if you could come to me, I can show you what I have learned recently.

I can do that, thought Kadar. How is your research going? Have you learned anything new?

Perhaps, brother, perhaps. I will explain all when you get here and have had some refreshments. It would not do to have you try to understand while you are still tired from your journey.

Fuck that noise, joked Kadar. I've wasted enough time. I only want to know what happened to Orenda!

Solomon laughed. You always were the impatient one! Very well, as soon as you are here, I will explain what I have found out.

Good man, Kadar thought. Have you run into any problems from the fucking Seers? Thanos was murdered by them in Bangkok three days ago.

Yes, I heard about that, Solomon thought, with a tinge of sadness. It is a crying shame. He was a good man and a superb Mystagogue. The order will miss him. But no, I have seen no trace of the Seers lately, not for many months.

Excellent, though Kadar. I've been worried they were going to ruin this as well. Let's hope they don't find out. Alright, I'll be at your place soon. I'll see you when I get there.

Stay safe, brother. I shall see you when I am looking at you.

Kadar felt the telepathic link close and he opened his eyes again. The plane had finally stopped moving and there was a ding as the pilot switched off the seatbelt sign. All around him, Sleepers were leaping out their seats to grab their belongings from the overhead compartments. *Idiots, he thought. No one's going anywhere for another fifteen minutes or more.*

Wednesday, 7:43am, North Sydney

Namid pushed open the door and walked over to where Agathon had a spread of cards laid out in front of him. He put the takeaway coffee down beside his friend.

"G'day, mate. How're things going today?"

"Meh," said Agathon, without looking up from the cards. "Not a lot to report from last night." He pointed at his card layout. "This looks ominous though. If I'm reading this right, something's going to happen today. Someone's arriving who is going to stir up some trouble."

Namid sat down and took a sip of his coffee as he looked over the cards. "Have you told the Yank yet?"

"Who, Durriken?" Agathon took a sip of his coffee. "No, not yet. I was waiting for you to arrive before I called him."

"Well, I'll check in on our African friend while you call the Yank."

"Gotcha," Agathon said, pulling out his cell phone and heading out into the kitchen.

Namid sat on the couch and flipped open a timber box on the coffee table. He flipped through a collection of index cards until he found the one labeled "Solomon". Taking it from the box, he settled back on the couch.

He rubbed the couple of hairs taped to the card, then closed his eyes and pictured the tall, dark mage. He concentrated on the feeling of his fingers on the hairs, and then he reached out with his mind, looking for Solomon.

Wednesday, 7:48am, Newtown

Kadar paid the cab driver, and then looked around. The area was only beginning to come alive, with the bakeries and cafés opening their doors to customers. It looked as though the street was going through a period of urban renewal. The buildings were old, but many had been renovated and given a new lease of life.

Picking up his bags, Kadar walked towards the unmarked door between the fruit shop and the café. He was about to knock when the door was flung open from the inside and Kadar found himself looking up into the dark face of Solomon, which was split by a wide, beaming smile.

"Brother Kadar!" Solomon said, as he hugged his friend. "It is so good to see you again. Please, let me take those bags for you!"

Solomon grabbed the bags and led the way up the stairs to his apartment. The African had decorated the place in brightly-colored rugs, mostly greens, yellows and reds. It gave the otherwise dull room a much more vibrant energy.

"I like what you've done with the place. It sure beats a dull off-white paint, that's for sure."

Solomon grinned again. "Thank you, I find resting in here makes me much happier. It helps bring part of the joy of magic into the world for me."

Kadar stretched and walked around the room a little. His legs were aching after the long flight from San Francisco. "So, did Ogun tell you why I was coming?"

Solomon shook his head. "He didn't tell me much at all. He said you would explain it all to me when you got here."

"If you get a pot of strong coffee going, I'll explain."

Wednesday, 8:49am, North Sydney

Namid sat up and opened his eyes. "Holy shit."

Agathon looked up at him. "See something interesting? You were gone for a long time. You don't normally Scry for anywhere near that amount of time."

"When's the Yank coming over?" Namid took a swig of his now cold coffee and rubbed his eyes.

Agathon shrugged. "He didn't say. He said he had to attend to some business first, and then he might come over after lunch."

Namid stood up and walked over to the phone. "Bullshit, after lunch! He needs to get here *now!* There's some shit going down that he needs to hear about." He punched the numbers into the phone. "Hello? Durriken? It's Namid here. I'm sorry to disturb you, sir, but I've just learned something that I think you should hear urgently... No sir, I don't believe that it can wait at all... Yes, sir, we'll be waiting for you as soon as you get here."

He ended the call and tossed the phone back onto the coffee table, before starting to pace up and down the room.

"What's gotten into you, man?" Agathon said. "You look like you've seen a ghost or something."

Namid shook his head. "Not a ghost. Well, not yet anyway. But it could be a lot worse than that."

Wednesday, 9:16am, North Sydney

Durriken sat down on the coach. "So, Namid, what's so important that you had to pull me out of a meeting with the tetrarch?"

Namid glanced out the window momentarily. "I'm sorry about that, sir, but you did ask for us to contact you if we should find out anything unusual."

"I did," Durriken said. "So, out with it then!"

"Well," Namid started, wringing his hands together. "I was doing my usual morning Scrying on a Pentacle mage named Solomon. Have you heard of him?"

Durriken nodded. "African Thyrsus and a member of the Mysterium, if my memory serves me correctly. Apparently fascinated by Australian Aboriginal Dreamtime knowledge."

"That's him," Namid said, nodding. "Well, we managed to get a couple of strands of his hair and we've been using it to keep tabs on him over the past couple of months. Until today, he hasn't been doing anything unusual. He visits the university library a lot and does his usual magical oblations."

"He's not aware of your Scrying, then?"

"No sir, we've been very careful to ensure that he doesn't realize we're there."

"So what's so different about today?"

"Solomon received a visitor this morning: a mage I'd never seen before. He was carrying bags when he arrived a bit before 8am, as though he'd just arrived from the airport. Solomon called him Kadar."

Durriken sat up and leaned forward. "Kadar? A tall white guy with a bald head and a salt-and-pepper goatee, probably about 40?"

Namid nodded. "That sounds like the guy I saw. Who is he?"

"He's a Moros, part of the Mysterium. I've run across him before. He's a Censor, and a fucking nasty piece of work. I've run across him before, not long after I joined the Seers. He'll happily kill mages, even Pentacle ones, who cross him. What's he want with Solomon?"

Namid shuddered. "Kadar is only in Australia for a day or so. Apparently, he's learned that a Mysterium mage, named Xanthus, has uncovered an intriguing Artifact somewhere north of Sydney and is keeping it a secret. Kadar is here to collect it."

Durriken nodded. "What is it?"

"I'm not sure. When he told Solomon about it, he only referred to it as a Tecpatl. I'd never heard of it before. I assumed it was some sort of tool."

"Jesus Christ," muttered Durriken, going pale. "It *is* a tool. A Tecpatl is actually an Aztec sacrificial dagger, usually with an obsidian blade." He shook his head, trying to get the memories of his dream to go away. "Did he say where it was?"

Namid shook his head. "Not exactly. He said a rogue Mystagogue had acquired it and was using it north of Sydney."

"Using it for *what*, exactly?"

"He didn't say, but he did say he suspected that the police would eventually find a stack of corpses. Kadar wanted Solomon's help to recover the artifact and stop Xanthus from racking up a higher body count. Kadar hinted that Xanthus may have gone completely off the rails and may actually be *eating* his victims."

Agathon looked across at Durriken. "So, are we going to help the Pentacle stop this guy?"

"Of course not!" Durriken snapped. "If a Pentacle mage has become unhinged enough to kill and eat people, then it's not up to us to stop him. However, we *are* going to recover that Artifact. More than anything, the Seers need to

prevent the Pentacle from getting their hands on it. Or perhaps even better, let them recover it, and then take it from them.”

Durriken stood up and reached into his jacket pocket for his cell phone. “You two did the right thing by calling me in on this immediately. Such service will not go unnoticed.

“Now, I need you to find out all you can about Solomon and Kadar’s movements today. If Kadar stays true to form, he won’t recruit any more Pentacle mages into the operation. He’s much more of a lone gun and I suspect that the only reason he even called on Solomon is he needs someone with local area knowledge.” He headed for the door as he started pushing buttons on his phone. “Be ready to move at any instant. The Exarchs are on our side, so by tonight, that Artifact should be in our possession. I’ll call on you guys later for an update.”

Durriken let himself out of the apartment and took the stairs down to the street. Getting into his BMW, he pressed the dial button on his phone.

“Lex? Hi, gorgeous. Listen, the guys have turned up a lead. The Pentacle fucks are up to something in town and I’m going to help the locals sort it out. I probably won’t make the meeting this afternoon... Yes, I know this leaves you in an awkward position, but this is why we came, wasn’t it? I’ll make it up to you somehow... Love you too. See you tonight.”

Durriken rested his head against the steering wheel and closed his eyes, remembering Lexia in bed last night. *Why does it have to be this way? Why??*

Thursday, 12:17am, near Mt White

Durriken switched the engine off, leaving the cabin of the BMW in darkness. “Namid, where is Solomon now?”

“Hard to tell,” came the voice from the backseat. “I’m having trouble seeing them in the dark. They’re in a car, and it would appear Solomon is badly hurt. He’s been stabbed.”

Who gives a fuck? thought Durriken. “Do he and Kadar have the Tecpatl with them?”

“I can’t see... wait. Yes. I think so. There’s a bloodstained bundle on the front seat. I’m guessing that’s it.”

“*Excellent.* It’ll be good to finally get my own back on Kadar.” Durriken sensed the threads of Fate again. They were strengthening, and fast.

Thunder rumbled overhead as storm clouds blew in from the east. “Oh, this just gets better and better,” said Durriken, with a grin. “Gentlemen, the Exarchs are smiling upon us tonight. They’re nearly here. You both know what to do?”

The two junior Seers nodded.

“Good. Then I suggest you go find yourselves suitable positions. Wait until I give the signal.”

Durriken got out of the car and strode to the middle of the road. *I want Kadar to see my face before he dies.*

The silence was broken by the sounds of a screaming engine, winding its way up the hill towards them. The bush was lit up briefly as the storm moved overhead, lightning flashes lit up the road as though it was day. Rain started falling, but Durriken didn’t care.

With a roar, a Chrysler screamed around the closest corner. Durriken waited, the car coming straight for him, its headlights almost blinding him. There was no way the driver couldn’t see him.

“Now!” he screamed. With that, he visualized all the oil in the car’s engine instantly evaporating. The Imago solidified in his mind and he unleashed the spell.

As he did, the area was lit up by an enormous lightning strike. Three bolts lanced out of the cloud above and struck an old eucalyptus tree by the side of the road. It burst into flames and started to collapse, just as the car’s engine seized with a hideous shriek and an enormous shower of sparks.

The Chrysler slid sideways and the tree trunk crashed down on it, crushing the roof. There was a sudden shattering of glass and then the hillside was covered in both darkness and silence once again.

Durriken strode forward to the car, his hands clenching and unclenching. He hadn’t realized



just how much he was looking forward to this.

As he reached the car, a man was struggling to free himself from the driver's seat. Lying half out of the car, his legs trapped underneath the dashboard, he looked up as Durriken approached.

"Hello, Kadar," said Durriken. "Fancy meeting you in a place like this."

"You... who are you?" said the mage, blood running down his face.

"What?" Durriken said, a little surprised. "You don't remember me? I was the young Seer you left for dead in Las Vegas about ten years ago. I spent six months in the hospital after that accident. You took something from me then, and now I'm going to repay the favor."

He walked around to the other side of the car, reached in through the shattered window and pulled out the blood-stained bundle. Flipping the cloth off, he saw the shiny obsidian blade that he had seen the night before in his dreams. *Dear God, this thing is real.*

Kadar groaned as he managed to free one of his legs from the tangled wreckage. Durriken walked back around and stood over the bloodied Mystagogue.

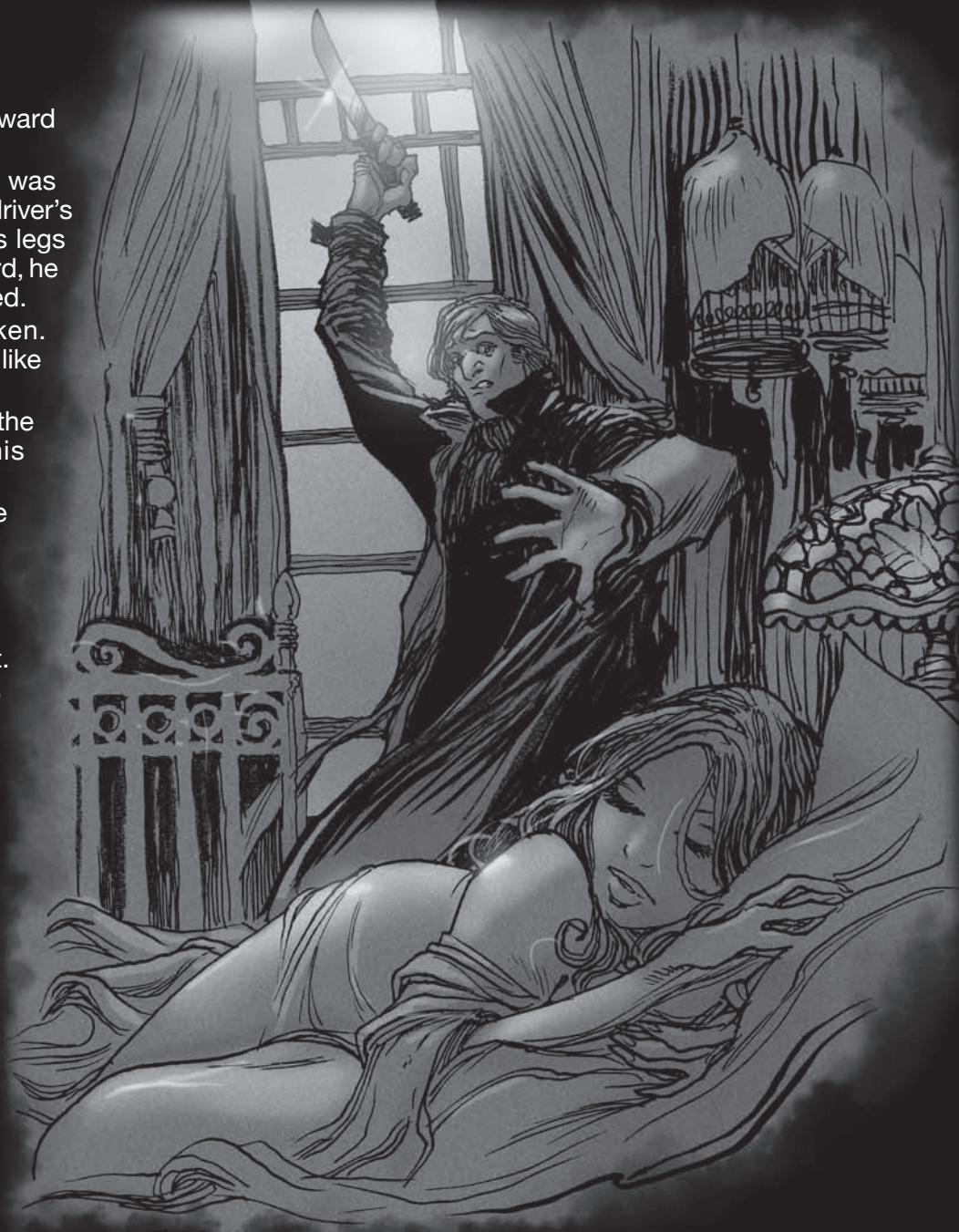
"It's such a beautiful piece. I do sincerely thank you for retrieving it for me." He knelt down and grabbed Kadar's chin with his free hand, so that he was looking into the mage's eyes.

"You see, once again, the Exarchs have provided us with something that you wanted for yourself. The Pentacle will never win. It's only a matter of time before the Seers of the Throne crush your orders once and for all."

With a swift flick of his wrist, Durriken slashed the obsidian blade across Kadar's throat. The blade almost drank the blood as Kadar's eyes went wide, before fading into lifelessness.

Durriken stood, and wiped the blade on the cloth that had been covering it. He turned to face the other two Seers.

"Gentlemen, I thank you for your assistance tonight. With your help, the Seers have recovered another Artifact from the hands of the Pentacle.



Such deeds will *not* be forgotten. But now, we should return to Sydney and leave this mess for the Sleepers to tidy up."

Thursday, 2:32am, overlooking Sydney Harbour

Durriken sat on the floor, tears trickling down his face as he watched Lexia's naked form sleep. The adrenaline and anger that had been coursing through him when he killed Kadar had gone, replaced by the enormity of the task ahead of him.

I don't want to do this! he thought. *I can't do this! This time, the Exarchs are asking too much of me!*

He held the obsidian sacrificial knife up to the light, watching as it gleamed softly. It seemed to

fit perfectly into his hand, almost as if it had been made for him, thousands of years ago.

He suddenly remembered the words of his mentor when he was an apprentice. "The Exarchs often demand much of us, and they expect our complete obedience. In return, they will reward us beyond our wildest imagination. But they will ask for things you may not be willing to give them. The cost of their patronage is often exceptionally high. Are you willing to do whatever they ask in return for your power?"

Durriken had sworn then that he was, and he felt the strength of his conviction return. He stood and wiped the tears from his face with his jacket sleeve.

Walking silently over to the bed, he looked down on Lexia's sleeping body. It was perfect in so many ways. She was perfect for him, the woman of his dreams.

And yet, she had forgotten what being a Seer of the Throne was all about. She had lost sight of what the Exarchs wanted of their servants.

Now, they had asked him to prove himself at her expense.

Lexia stirred beneath him. "Durri? Is that you?"

Durriken bend down and kissed her forehead lightly. "Yes, Lex, it's me."

"Mmmmm, I was dreaming of you. Are you coming to bed?"

"In a minute, there's something I need to do first." He kissed her again. "Always remember, I love you with my whole heart, more than any other person in this world."

She smiled up at him and his heart melted. "I know."

She was still smiling when he slammed the obsidian knife into her belly and forced it up through her diaphragm. Her eyes went wide and she tried to scream, but her lungs were failing.

With his spare hand, he reached inside her chest and tore her still beating heart from her chest and held it up in front of her.

Tears started streaming down his face again. "The Exarchs demanded it. I'm so, so sorry, Lex. I do love you, but sometimes we must sacrifice the very things that we love so they may triumph."

Her heart stopped beating and Durriken just stood there and let her blood run down his arm.

"Bravo, Mr Durriken. Bravo."

Durriken whirled around to find a portly man silhouetted in the doorway to the living room. "Who the hell are you?"

The man chuckled softly. "My name is Sharif. The Exarchs sent me to oversee your case. You have done exceptional work this evening. Not only have you recovered an Artifact from the hands of the Pentacle, you have used it to do the Exarchs' bidding, even though it has cost you very dearly indeed."

Durriken looked down at the eviscerated corpse of his lover. He dropped the knife and the dead heart onto her chest. "Was it worth it?"

Sharif laughed gently again. "You may ask that now, but in a year, or three, you will know with all your heart that you did the right thing tonight."

"The Exarchs greatly reward those who do what they are asked. True power, after all, requires sacrifice."



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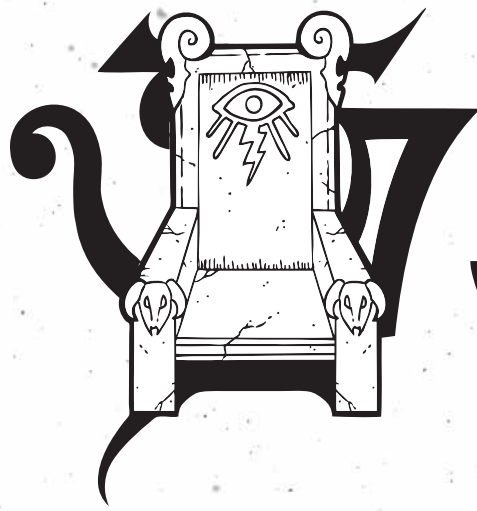
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SEERS OF THE THRONE™

Table of Contents

<i>Obedience</i>	2
<i>Introduction</i>	14
<i>Chapter One: A History of Loyalty</i>	16
<i>Chapter Two: Kings of the Lie</i>	36
<i>Chapter Three: Serving the Exarchs</i>	98
<i>Chapter Four: Heads of the Hydra</i>	144
<i>Chapter Five: Gifts of the Exarchs</i>	182
<i>Appendix: Antagonists</i>	202

INTRODUCTION

A great fortune is a great slavery.

— Lucius Annaeus Seneca

What would you do to attain power over the mortal world? Would you be willing to barter away your own freedom in order to gain control over the lives of others? Would you be able to make sacrifices if they guaranteed your place at the seat of Heaven's throne? Can you even put a price on mastery of the world?

The Seers of the Throne can, and they've paid it. As satraps to the Exarchs, they rule at the grace of another. They are granted power to compel obedience, for the simple cost of ultimate obedience to their Supernal lords. All they have to do is keep the world locked down, maintain the Abyss, keep humanity from achieving their potential. In return, the riches and delights of the material world are given to them on a platter. For their service, they can satisfy every ambition but one — the ambition to challenge even the Exarchs. It is enough.

Sympathy for the Jailor

For all their power, the Seers of the Throne are very human antagonists. Everything they seek to achieve, they do in the name of the same sort of self-advancement we all indulge in. A Seer wants job security, the confidence that tomorrow won't present challenges he's not ready for, the ability to achieve the kind of life he wants for himself. For some, it's really no more than this desire that drives them — they simply want security in a world that contains terrible powers, and they're willing to do whatever it takes, even brainwashing and murder, to remain safe and secure.

Some Seers come to the Iron Pyramid out of simple fear. The Exarchs are too powerful to be opposed, so much as they don't care for the order's methods, they feel they have no actual choice in the matter. Every unpleasant task, some reason, appeases their mysterious gods and staves off whatever terrible Old Testament wrath might otherwise erupt.

And of course, some Seers are driven by the same impulses that cause other humans to seek power. They

want revenge on a world that they feel treated them badly before their Awakening. They're addicted to the rush of power, the feel of control. They simply think they deserve to be above the huddled masses. And the price they pay? Completely worth it. Being subject to the Exarchs' will is nothing compared to the mastery over the material world it grants.

Representing a Seer of the Throne is ultimately quite an easy task, at least emotionally. They're us. They're the parts of us, personally and as a species, that we might not be proud of, but they're completely human in their motivations. And that may make what they do all the worse.

The Extent of Control

It's a fair question: exactly how much are the Seers of the Throne expected to hold under their sway in the World of Darkness? This question is examined in some detail in Chapters Two and Four, but it's also worth a look here, particularly in regards to the context of crossover and the intentions of this book.

Essentially, this book operates from the general perspective that the Seers of the Throne exert control and influence over the world on a sliding scale. Frequently you'll find the assumption that they have a *lot* of control, with their fingers in everything from global government to local trends. But you'll also see support for the idea that most of what humanity screws up, it screws up under its own power without outside influence. Both of these approaches are perfectly viable. More than that, either one might be out-and-out superior to the other, depending on your intentions.

Giving the Seers more control over the world is giving them teeth. The larger their numbers and the more subtle their plans, the more the Pentacle mages are going to have to fight just to survive, much less reach any of their lofty goals. This may be ideal for a game that stresses the idea of paranoia or the extent of the Exarchs' crimes against humanity. On the other hand,

having them be a less numerous, subtle force in world events may work better if you make heavy use of other World of Darkness games, or if your chronicle focuses on the culpability of ordinary mortals. Essentially, you should be able to decide whether you want the Seers to take the starring role as the chronicle's antagonists, or if you want them to be one of many potential problems. Either way is a fine path for a chronicle, and this book should help you with both.

How To Use This Book

If you managed to get some use from the other order books for **Mage, Seers of the Throne** may seem familiar to you. The same questions asked about the other orders are answered here, with a few new twists thrown into the mix.

Chapter One: A History of Loyalty presents the history of the Seers of the Throne as they themselves record it — which is often a contradictory, self-serving litany of fact mixed with propaganda. As Ministries rise and fall and pylons advance their own agendas, history may be rewritten to suit the victors. Here, however, you'll find some common threads as well as notes on the global concerns of the Seers today.

Chapter Two: Kings of the Lie lays out the foundation of the Seers' organization: the Exarchs and Ministries, as well as their interactions with the greater world. Here you'll find lore of the Archigenitors and other Exarchs, an overview of the Ministries and extensive detail on the four great Ministries: Hegemonic, Panopticon, Paternoster and Praetorian. The Prelacies of each of the Archigenitors are also revealed here. Here too is discussed many of the details of Seer tradition, such as their recruitment techniques and dealings with other mages and supernatural entities outside the Iron Pyramid.

Chapter Three: Serving the Exarchs details the philosophy and traditions implicit to the Iron Pyramid's culture. The various praxes and dogma that guide the Seers are laid out here. Here also is more information on their organization apart from the Ministries, from

ranks and status to the methods of communication and gathering.

Chapter Four: Heads of the Hydra maps out a few of the virtually countless sub-factions within the Seers of the Throne. Here we discuss Methodologies, a form of cross-Ministry faction that reduces internal rivalries in some areas and dramatically increases them in others. Three sample Methodologies are provided, along with an example of a pylon dedicated to each. In addition, there's some discussion of which Legacies from other sources a Seer might qualify for, and five Legacies designed for the Iron Pyramid in particular.

Chapter Five: Gifts of the Exarchs deals with the magical methods the Seers employ. Their forms of casting and magical traditions are detailed, as are a sampling of spells, Artifacts and Imbued Items that assist their cause.

The **Appendix: Antagonists** closes out the book not just with a listing of Seers of the Throne (both combatants and noncombatants) ready to be used in a chronicle, but also with details on the minions of the great Ministries: the Grigori, Hollow Ones, Myrmidons and Hive-Souls.

New Terms

Archigenitor: One of the four most powerful Exarchs.

heirodule: A member of the Paternoster Ministry.

Methodology: One of many cross-Ministry factions within the Seers of the Throne.

ochema: An avatar sent by an Exarch into the material world; considered a fragment of the Exarch's soul, or a partial reflection of the Exarch's power. Plural *ochemata*.

Oikoumene: A Seer Methodology focusing on the control of enigmas and the mandate to keep humanity safely Asleep.

Prelacy: The path of being chosen by an Exarch, somewhat akin to a Legacy. Power derived from one of the Archigenitors.

Skopoi: A Methodology focusing on actively invoking dreams and visions of the Exarchs' will.



27/10/19

CHAPTER ONE: A HISTORY OF LOYALTY

"My God, Inspector! Are you injured?"

"Ah, hello Sergeant. No, no, I'm quite unhurt. These poor devils were the ones that had the worst of it."

"Good Lord, sir! Is that...?"

"Yes, one of them had apparently been constructing some improvised incendiary devices, and in the heat of the moment he attempted to hurl one at me. Fortunately for me, it was faulty or more likely incomplete. A victim of his own destructive impulses, it would seem."

"And... these others?"

"Drew weapons upon me. I was forced to defend myself."

"Astounding, Inspector! As always, of course. Still..."

"Yes, Sergeant?"

"Well, sir, I can't help but feel a bit sorry for them. And... my word, is that a woman?"

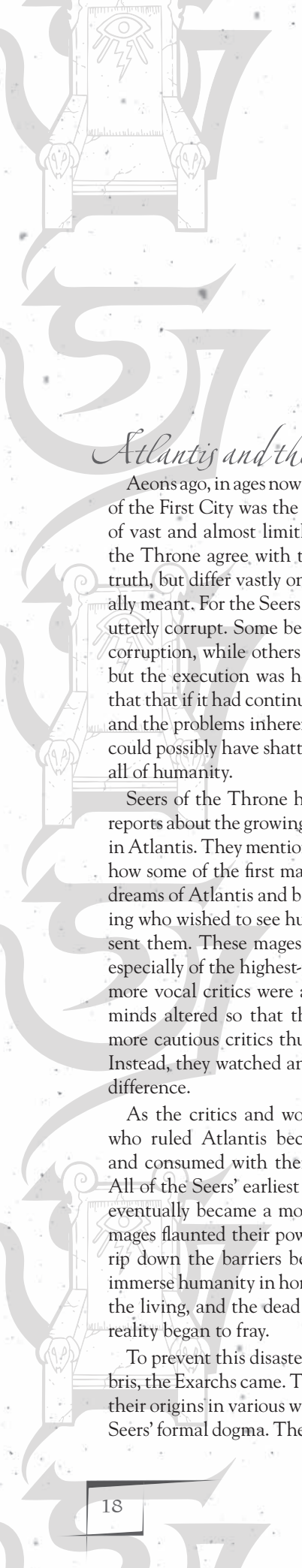
"A female indeed, Sergeant, though the knife in her hand may assure you she was no lady. That is, if her presence in this den of anarchists, occultists and pornographers was insufficient proof."

"Ah... well, you see... I just..."

"I assure you that I feel the loss of human life as keenly as any man would, Sergeant. However, a threat to the Crown such as this must be dealt with in the sternest and swiftest manner."

"Yes. Yes, of course, Inspector. I didn't mean to doubt your findings."

"Of course not. Now, Sergeant, perhaps we should leave this den of unfortunates. I've already got men on the way to take control of the evidence and clear things away. Would you do me the honor of being my guest at the Whelton while this matter is dealt with? There are yet a few things I'd like to discuss with you regarding the case."



History... is indeed little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind.

— Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*

Atlantis and the Fall

Aeons ago, in ages now lost in time, the spired metropolis of the First City was the greatest city in the world. Mages of vast and almost limitless power ruled it. The Seers of the Throne agree with the Pentacle mages on this basic truth, but differ vastly on what the story of Atlantis actually meant. For the Seers of the Throne, the First City was utterly corrupt. Some believe it to have been founded on corruption, while others believe that the idea was noble, but the execution was horribly flawed. Most also believe that if it had continued to exist the power of its magic and the problems inherent in its nature and construction could possibly have shattered the world and exterminated all of humanity.

Seers of the Throne historians tell their fellows of old reports about the growing hubris of the mages who dwelled in Atlantis. They mention that these same records also tell how some of the first mages questioned the source of the dreams of Atlantis and believed that some malevolent being who wished to see humanity destroy itself might have sent them. These mages became critical of Atlantis and especially of the highest-ranking mages who ruled it. The more vocal critics were all slain, driven off, or had their minds altered so that they forgot their objections. The more cautious critics thus learned to hold their tongues. Instead, they watched and waited for a chance to make a difference.

As the critics and would-be rebels waited, the mages who ruled Atlantis became increasingly bold, careless and consumed with their lust for ever-increasing power. All of the Seers' earliest records agree that the First City eventually became a monstrous abomination, where the mages flaunted their power and eventually threatened to rip down the barriers between the various realities and immerse humanity in horror where the lands of the spirits, the living, and the dead all co-mingled and the fabric of reality began to fray.


To prevent this disaster and as punishment for such hubris, the Exarchs came. The formal histories tend to record their origins in various ways, according to the needs of the Seers' formal dogma. The stories paint a glorious tale in all

cases. Striking as one, the Exarchs opened the vast Abyss that forever separated the mortal and Supernal worlds and thus preserved the borders of reality.

Some Seers consider the Exarchs as the saviors of humanity who ended the tyranny of the mages and view them as humanity's protectors and guardians. Others only care that the Exarchs are powerful beings who are to mages what mages or to mortals — beings of vast and ultimately unknowable power. Some believe the Exarchs were only protecting their own interests against the growing power of the mages of Atlantis. However, given that the Exarchs were the architects of the Fall, many Seers also secretly believe that the Exarchs could just as easily have completely exterminated humanity. They thus attempt to enforce obedience to the will of the Exarchs because doing otherwise risks turning the attention and the full power of these vast and terrible entities against the entirety of the human race.

The earliest records of the Seers of the Throne contain several contradictory stories of this order's origin. It's difficult to ascertain which one seems the most likely, given the predilection of the ranking Seer for telling her subordinates what she feels they need to hear. One particular story recounts that a small group of the most powerful mages in Atlantis was horrified at the excesses and immorality of the rest of their number and sought some solution to this problem. In some apocryphal versions, it's explained after decades of searching all of the many planes of reality for answers, they made contact with a group of strange and powerful entities from a profoundly alien reality. These alien beings were later known as the Exarchs. The mages struck bargains with these beings, giving them vast power over magic and the mortal world, in return for promises to help right the many wrongs that the mages saw. This particular belief is frowned upon by the Seers as a whole, but clung to by those few who prefer to avoid personal agency, instead putting faith of a sort in the idea of Exarchs that are too perfect ever to have been human.

Other records state that the Fall happened completely without warning and that afterwards many mages attempted



to discover the reason for this disaster. Most learned nothing, some became mind-blasted husks, and a very few learned terrible truths that caused them to forsake their previous allegiances and began serving masters far stranger and more powerful than any mage had previously encountered. While more commonly believed than the previous legends, this story primarily appeals to the most cynical and self-serving Seers. These same Seers are often inclined to doubt the reality of most or all alleged messages from the Exarchs that their fellows deliver. They instead believe that many messages that allegedly come from the Exarchs are the results of delusions or wishful thinking and most of the rest are nothing more than lies put forth by Seers who hope to use the Exarchs' authority to convince others to do as they wish. Such Seers distrust anyone who claims to have been contacted by the Exarchs. Theirs is a precarious position, however, for although they reap the benefits of the Ministries, they risk the wrath of their fellows — and potentially, even if they may not think so, the wrath of the Exarchs themselves.

However, the great majority of Seer histories follow the conventional wisdom of the Exarchs' origins. The Exarchs were mages once, those who dared all and won all as their reward. Their humanity was left behind like an empty chrysalis as they ascended to heaven, cast down whatever gods were in residence there, and became gods themselves. In the process, they remade the world. Unlike in many a conventional mythology, though, the human attributes of the Exarchs are downplayed and often even ignored. Who they were before they became the Exarchs is essentially irrelevant. Indeed, it may be that the Exarchs themselves have decreed that such old stories be forgotten.

In that moment of transition, the Exarchs gained both immense power and the undying loyalty of many of those mages left behind. Though none who remained on the mortal realm could be sure what had happened during the battle for the Supernal, soon the faithful followers of the proto-Exarchs began to receive visions and dreams from their now-ascended masters. The world had been remade. The Exarchs had taken control. But there were still mages out there who opposed their rule, and those who sided with the Exarchs were promised a place of power in the world to come.

The Fallen World

While the Diamond mages were still in shock at the loss of their power and their wondrous city, the first Seers began to plan. Guided by occasional visions from the Exarchs and their own ambitions, they saw even the first fumbling efforts of the Diamond mages to bridge the Abyss as a threat to both their own power and the dominance of their masters. The secret and deadly war between the

Seers and the Diamond dates from the earliest days after the Fall, and continues to this day. The battlefields and tactics change, but from the first days after the Fall to the modern era, the war remains essentially the same.

Guardians of the Abyss

In the newly Fallen World, the nascent Seers of the Throne and their disciples were charged by the Exarchs to maintain the Abyss. Later, commentary on these Seers' earliest writings as well as later visions and other communications from the Exarchs has led some Seers to believe that they should also attempt to widen the Abyss. However, the Exarchs' first and foremost command was to prevent others from repairing or reducing it.

While few modern Seers believe that even the most powerful archmages could destroy the Abyss, during the first few centuries after the Fall, the Abyss' true strength was far less obvious. The early Seers were forever vigilant against attempts by Pentacle mages to either bridge or otherwise circumvent or eliminate the Abyss. When members of the Mysterium first attempted to study the Abyss and perform various experimental attempts to recontact the Supernal world, the early Seers intervened to slay these scholars and to steal or destroy all of their research. Paradoxically, the Seers' dedication to protecting the Abyss has meant that from the earliest days of the Fall the Seers have also avidly studied it. If there were ways to either widen or bridge the Abyss, the Seers are determined to learn about them first.

Over the centuries, the Seers amassed vast troves of information about the Abyss, much of it stolen or copied from work done by the Mysterium. While various Seers have continued collecting Abyssal lore, most Seers suspect that the earliest data would prove especially helpful, since the Abyss has changed and widened since it first appeared. Therefore, being able to analyze these changes might reveal all manner of useful information. Unfortunately, some of this early information has been lost in ancient tomes buried in ancient and forgotten cities or lies hidden in carefully encrypted passages that no one remembers ever contained any coded messages. Much of the rest has been divided among the Ministries, each of which jealously guards their portion and refuse to share it with anyone but their highest-ranking members.

Many Seers dream of gaining access to a large amount of this information and making profound discoveries. However, ever since the Fall, this data has been split up and carefully guarded by Seers who are determined to protect their secrets from those that could, even potentially, misuse them. Some wonder if the ambition and dissention so common among their order in some way serves the Exarchs' will, because it prevents the Seers from working together to discover answers based on knowledge that only they possess.



Humanity's Jailers

In addition to guarding the Abyss, the first Seers were also faced with the question of dealing with the Sleepers. Suddenly, the great mass of humanity could no longer perceive Awakened magic and could also destroy it by their very presence. According to the doctrines the first Seers learned from the Exarchs, Sleepers had been deliberately blinded by the Exarchs, because they were not worthy to even learn of the existence of magic. Their blindness was one of the foundations for the Abyss.

The earliest Seers believed that it was their sacred duty to make certain that the Sleepers remained both blind and ignorant. At first, they did not hesitate to slay anyone who learned of the existence of Awakened magic. But gradually this seemed more and more of a waste of effort. Over time, they decided that a more critical and potentially effective tactic would be to control the Sleepers in secret, ensuring

that they remained ignorant of both Awakened magic and the Exarchs. Soon, the ambition so common among the Seers extended this mandate so that it was now seen as the right of the Seers to enslave the Sleepers and use them to both reinforce the Abyss and to serve the needs of their masters. However, this self-serving lust for power was both shaken and reaffirmed by a new message from the Exarchs.

Less than a decade after the Fall, several Seers who were investigating the Fall and attempting to attain more reliable contact with the Exarchs received visions which they took to mean that humanity as a whole was by its very nature dangerous. The nature of this danger was unclear, but included both the capacity some mortals had to Awaken, and other darker and more complex reasons that either the Exarchs never passed on to their servants or that no Seer has ever recorded. From this revelation, recorded as *The*

Atlantis and the Control of Information

Among the Seers of the Throne, not only is knowledge power, but it's a power not to be freely shared, and often not shared at all. Although literally no one knows the full extent of the Seer's total store of Atlantean records and Artifacts, most Seers assume that their order has at least as much information about Atlantis and the Fall as all the Pentacle mages combined. However, most of this information is apparently in the hands of the leaders of the various ministries and other equally powerful Seers. Much of the remainder is now scattered among various pylons or alliances of pylons, which each hold various fragments of information.

Most of this information is of minor interest on its own, but can be connected, in many important and occasionally surprising ways, to other similar bits of information. Many Seers and Pentacle mages are convinced that many of the secrets of Atlantis and the Fall would be revealed, or at least made far clearer, if someone could gather all of the information and Artifacts held by various Seers into one body of knowledge. However, the very structure of the Seers of the Throne, as well as the unwillingness of its most powerful and high-ranking members to share their precious stores of carefully hoarded information have combined to keep the vast majority of this information secret from all but a very few. As tightly guarded as this lore is, it can be difficult to tell what's true and what isn't without the freedom to compare one story with another.

Many Seers believe that freely sharing information about magic, especially about Atlantis and the Fall, risks allowing this information to fall into the hands of their enemies. More importantly for many Seers, information only has value as long as others cannot easily gain access to it. Therefore, most Seers are far more willing to share summaries of or small tidbits from their records rather than to allow anyone else to gain access to these records. They are very like many other mages in this hubris.

Since many Seers also give out tidbits of deliberately incorrect information to individuals they distrust or dislike, separating the truths from the half-truths and outright lies is difficult with any information held by important Seers, and even more difficult when this information concerns Atlantis or the Fall.

Many Seers only give access to information about Atlantis to their closest allies or their protégés. Even when dealing with their most trusted allies or students, some Seers demand a high price to gain access to their most secret records and Artifacts. Many Pentacle mages crave access to the information held by the Seers, but they also recognize that the distrust and greed so common among Seers of the Throne is one of the factors that helps keep the Exarch's servants from becoming even more powerful.



Threat, the Seers of the Throne understood that the Exarchs required them to act as humanity's spiritual jailers.

Over the centuries that followed, multitudes of Seers have speculated on the danger that humanity represents. Some fear that if unchecked all of humanity might eventually Awaken and rend the cosmos asunder. Other, more cynical Seers believe that the true threat represented by humanity is solely a threat to the Exarchs' power. Regardless of the reasons, the Seers developed two closely entwined mandates. They first and foremost dedicated themselves to widening the Abyss and attempting to eliminate or convert Awakened mages who opposed the Exarchs. They also began attempting to control humanity using both temporal and spiritual power.

The most apparent result of the revelation of *The Threat* and the decision of the Seers to attempt to control and constrain humanity was a concerted effort to hunt down Sleepers who are either accidentally involved with the Abyss or who attempt to make pacts with the twisted powers beyond the edges of reality (see **Second Sight**, pp. 123-149). Ever since the revelation of *The Threat*, some Seers have kept watch for both the activities of rival mages and dangerous Sleepers, while others hunted down and dealt with those threats, typically by killing all of the Sleepers involved and anyone they may have communicated with.

Meanwhile, other more subtle Seers have attempted to reshape mortal society and even mortal thought, planting seeds of doubt to turn the majority of Sleepers against the idea of magic, especially against the idea attempting to make contact with other spiritual realms. The results of these efforts aren't provable, but the Seers claim a tremendous victory. In a multitude of subtle ways, the Seers have effectively pruned mortal society so as to consistently reduce interest in and acceptance of various forms of magic and esoteric philosophies. Instead, the Seers have promoted philosophy and spirituality that rely upon unquestioned obedience to authority and a strict hierarchical control of ideas and information.

The Delusion of Control

In most of their official histories, the Seers of the Throne take credit for all manner of changes and trends in Sleeper society, claiming responsibility for everything from the Fall of Rome to the Enlightenment. In reality, the Seers of the Throne have been rather less influential than the official histories declare. Although they have certainly greatly altered the course of a few important historical events, in most cases they simply tweak or modify existing social trends to their own advantage. Over the centuries, the Seers of the Throne have assassinated dozens of important historical figures and have saved others from premature death. However, even the most skilled Adept of Time and Fate is incapable of understanding the complexities needed to make events fit some predetermined pattern, and so the Seers try many schemes to change the present or the future

but find that only a fraction work. Like their counterparts among the Pentacle mages, the most observant Seers who spend their time attempting to influence Sleeper society understand how little control over world events they truly have. For the most part, the great mass of Sleepers make history and the Seers find ways to exploit and influence their efforts.

The Fallen War

Regardless of the true nature of the events before the destruction of the Celestial Ladder, the history of the Seers after the Fall was clear. For the first few years, the Seers of the Throne were completely triumphant over the Atlantean mages. The Seers' enemies were in complete disarray, their morale broken and their confidence shattered. By comparison, the Seers were confident and certain. The Exarchs had destroyed Atlantis, and most Seers sincerely believed they would exterminate or convert almost all of the remaining Atlantean mages within the next few decades. Their optimism was initially bolstered by the fact that during the first years after the Fall, the Seers managed to recruit dozens of Atlantean mages who despaired of ever rebuilding the First City. As more mages grew to believe that opposing the Exarchs was a fruitless and doomed enterprise, the Seers' ranks swelled.

Unfortunately, only two traits bound the many Seers of the Throne together: an excess of ambition and a belief in the superiority of the Exarchs. Within a few decades, once the joy of the Exarchs' triumph started to fade, the Seers began to discuss the future. The only consistent answer to emerge was that most Seers thought they should hold positions of leadership within the order. Unfortunately, many Seers held firm but mutually incompatible plans about their order's future. Some wished to unify humanity and rule them overtly, others wished to become the powers behind the throne, and a few cared nothing about Sleepers and only concerned themselves with eliminating all rival mages and working to gain the power of the Exarchs.

The result of these differences of opinion was a civil war now known as the Fallen War. During this war, pylon battled pylon. While a few large factions had managed to form, most combatants belonged to small factions composed of a small number of allied pylons. Within a year, more than one in eight Seers was dead. Even more had gone into hiding to avoid their enemies. The survivors were simultaneously shell-shocked and confirmed in their ambitions. Instead of any single pylon or coalition of pylons winning this war, the result was a multi-way draw, where the various survivors agreed to cease hostilities because the only alternative was a slow but inevitable race towards mutual annihilation.

The war had two additional results. It gave the Atlantean mages a chance to recover and regroup, and it also forever ended the chance for the Seers of the Throne to have anything resembling the confirmed and established

hierarchy possessed by the Diamond mages. Instead, during the aftermath of the Fallen War, the Seers developed the loose, vicious and intensely changeable hierarchy that they retain to the present day. During this time, the Seers' unofficial policy was that power and authority belonged to anyone who could take it and retain it. Where there had previously been a new order of mages united by their victory and their beliefs, now there was a loose organization where individual pylons only helped one

another if it was to their advantage to do so, and where members were almost as happy to slay or enslave their fellows as their enemies.

The Truce

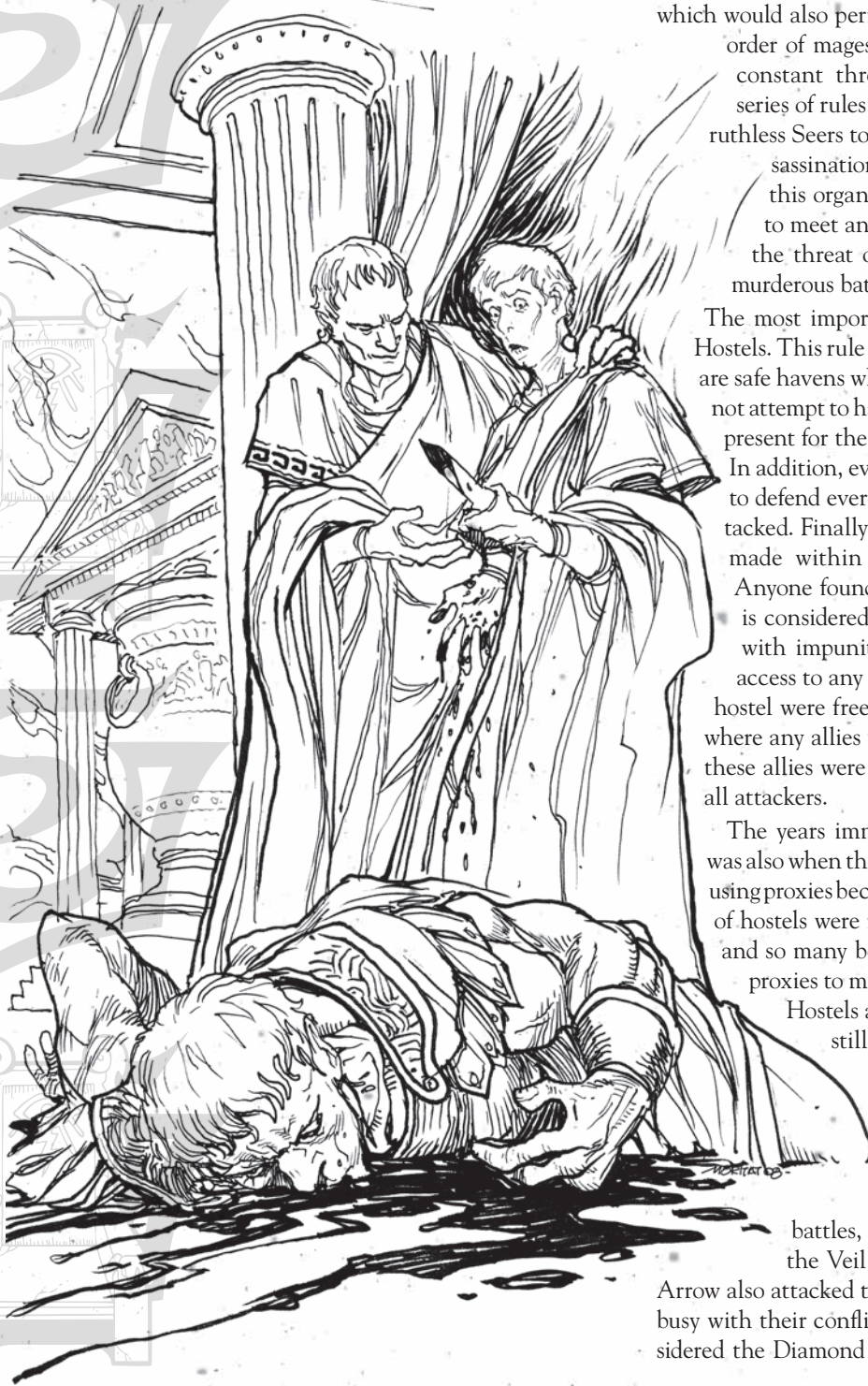
In the aftermath of their devastating civil war, the survivors realized they desperately needed to find some way to avoid similar conflicts in the future. The Seers sought a path that would not stifle or limit their ambitions, but which would also permit them to continue to exist as an order of mages who could work together without constant threat of betrayal. The result was a series of rules that allowed sufficiently daring and ruthless Seers to use blackmail, threats and even assassination as tools to advance their place in this organization, while also permitting Seers to meet and work on important issues without the threat of such meetings degenerating into murderous battles.


The most important of these rules was the Law of Hostels. This rule states that sites designated as hostels are safe havens where every Seer who enters agrees to not attempt to harm or magically control anyone else present for the duration of their stay in the hostel. In addition, every mage in the hostel is also bound to defend every other mage in the hostel if it is attacked. Finally, any freely-made oaths or contracts made within a hostel are considered binding. Anyone found to have broken any of these rules is considered an oath breaker who may be slain with impunity and who is forever more denied access to any hostel. Seers who were not within a hostel were free to attack it, but attacking a hostel where any allies were present was problematic, since these allies were bound to help their fellows destroy all attackers.

The years immediately following the Fallen War was also when the custom of especially secretive Seers using proxies became common. Seers who met outside of hostels were now aware of the dangers involved, and so many began to attend such meetings using proxies to minimize the danger. Both the Law of Hostels and the practice of using proxies are still used in the present day.

The Diamond Rebellion

The Diamond mages used the Fallen War as a chance to regroup and recover. At the height of these battles, both agents from the Guardians of the Veil and soldiers from the Adamantine Arrow also attacked the Seers. Given that the Seers were busy with their conflict and because they no longer considered the Diamond mages to be a serious threat, these





attacks inflicted heavy damage, killing a large number of Seers before most were aware that these deaths were caused by anything other than another of the various battles between factions of the Throne. The Seers quickly attempted to strike back, but fell prey to their own divisions. A few factions in the Fallen War revealed details of their rival factions' identities and locations to the Diamond mages, resulting in Seers being attacked simultaneously by two sets of enemies. Also, in the midst of the Fallen War, dozens of Diamond mages who joined the Seers returned to their original orders. Some decided that what they'd perceived as an inevitable loss wasn't so inevitable after all, and felt heartened enough to fight for their freedom again. Others proved to be covert infiltrators who had been waiting for an opportunity to strike against their enemies. The attacks and betrayals by the Diamond mages was one of the major factors in ending the Fallen War and the declaration of the subsequent truce.

The Diamond Rebellion also fueled a dramatic resurgence in both the power and the confidence of the Diamond mages. Seeing their enemies lose themselves in internal struggles, the Atlantean mages began to dream of rebuilding their lost city. In the decade following the Fallen War, the Seers spent much of their time regrouping and adjusting to their new rules, giving the Atlantean mages even more time to recover. Within 20 years, the Seers were once again ready to not merely defend themselves, but to actively strike back against their enemies. However, by this time the Diamond mages had recovered sufficiently to represent a serious threat to the Seer's dominance. At this point, the battle for supremacy truly began, and after many thousands of years it has not yet been decisively won or lost by either side.

The Foundation of Methodology

In the aftermath of the Fallen War, the remaining Seers organized themselves in ways that would mimic the specialization of the Pentacle orders. Previously, factions had arisen around charismatic leaders, with no greater view toward a given tactic or specialized goal. The Diamond Rebellion proved the efficiency of specialized organization, though, a painful lesson for the servants of the Exarchs.

Numerous histories report this as the foundation of Methodologies, a more concerted effort to focus the order's energies on specific tasks. The rallying point remained the charismatic leader, of course, but now there was a vital interest in broadening communication within the ranks and gathering those with similar aptitudes together.

Even with the power of magic by their side, of course, this took time. Communication was still slow from land to land. The greatest advantage the Seers had in tightening their organization, though, was the very one that had damaged the previous structures. Wherever the Diamond Rebellion had raged, those who'd survived did so for a notable reason. Warrior-mages who'd stood on the front lines

could hear stories of other veterans who'd done the same for their own cabals. Spies who'd ferreted out traitors began to follow similar trails of information to meet colleagues in other areas. Even those Seers who'd focused on damage control in the aftermath of the war extended more lines of communication and cooperation to more effectively tamp down on potentially troublesome Seer witnesses and properly deal with captured Pentacle mages.

The Law of Hostels and the other aspects of the Truce were largely focused on allowing Seers, regardless of faction, to work together in ways that reduced the risk of overt betrayal. In the decades immediately following the Truce, these growing Methodologies worked closely together to attempt to combat the Diamond Rebellion and the subsequent attacks to the newly revitalized Diamond mages. As the Seers proved to be far from invincible, the groups also had to face the threat of disillusioned Seers defecting and joining the ranks of the Diamond mages. These challenges helped establish the concept of Methodologies into functional organizations that could, when necessary, work together with military precision to fight common foes. However, whenever the threat of external attacks lessened, the various subgroups within each began seeking to obtain various advantages over their fellows, just as ambitious members began looking for ways to use each organization to their own advantage.

These early days of the Methodologies laid the foundation for the Ministries to later arise. Centuries later, for instance, the Seers dedicated to meddling in the affairs of Sleeper governments would unite under the overall guidance of the Unity, forming the first formal Ministry — the Hegemonic Ministry. In many ways, the Ministries were born at this time, at least in the most vital form. It would be a long time yet before the warrior-mages of the most militant Methodology would agree to formalize themselves as the Praetorian Ministry, but their goals and techniques were already coming into full bloom.

Disciples in Search of Masters

Shortly after the Fall, the first Seers of the Throne confronted an issue that continues to trouble some members of this order today. During and shortly before the Fall, the first Seers had infrequent but fairly regular contact with the Exarchs. Unfortunately, after the Fall, these contacts mostly ceased. In the Fallen World, the Seers of the Throne claim to serve the Exarchs, but few can reliably claim to have any form of reliable or regular communication with the Exarchs. Many others have boasted of the ability to do this, but have been proven to be either insane or (more commonly) self-serving frauds. Most Seers have no direct contact with the Exarchs, and even those who have experienced some message from their masters almost always receive nothing more than a handful of cryptic dreams, brief visions and other equally vague pronouncements.

The early Seers discovered the same answers still in use today. Many Seers care about nothing beyond preserving the current status quo and using it to further their own personal ambitions. They have little interest in mysticism, philosophy or the demands of distant and possibly legendary masters. Instead, these Seers concern themselves with thwarting the ambitions of the Pentacle mages to undo the Fall, while also making certain to place their own interests above all other causes.

Other Seers find this mixture of assumptions and self-interest to be both intellectually barren and, more importantly, to offer no hints as to how to better understand or emulate the Exarchs' vast power. To seek these answers, some Seers began delving deep into various forms of mysticism. Over the millennia, the Seers have been composed of both the ambitious and the mystics, with some attempting to be both at once. Much of the history of the Seers consists of struggles between the desires of the more ambitious members and the visions and theories of the more successful and charismatic mystics.

The Nature of the Fall

Many Seers of the Throne study Atlantis and the Fall as avidly as does any Diamond mage. Some wish to understand more of the methods and motivations of the Exarchs, while others believe in the obvious expediency of learning to understand their enemies' goals. Every Atlantean Artifact in the hands of the Seers is both an advantage to them and one that is unavailable to their enemies.

The majority of Seers believe in the same basic cosmology as the Pentacle mages — a First City ruled by magic that had a physical existence long ago, in some lost and somewhat nebulous era, and it was destroyed by the power of the Exarchs. However, a significant minority of Seers hold a theory that is considerably stranger and more exotic. They believe that Atlantis not only no longer exists, but that in some vast reality-altering act of will, the Exarchs edited it out of reality so that it never existed. According to this theory, the remnants of Atlantis that survived the Fall are nothing more than a few incomplete fragments of the previous reality that survived this change. As a result, these fragments literally have no place in the current reality — there are no records or archeological evidence of their manufacture or use and the symbols and writing on some of them have no connection to any historical culture. Instead, they literally exist out of time. Among the Pentacle mages, only a few hold remotely similar theories. However, the difficulty in dating and assigning provenance to Atlantean Artifacts or of determining when Atlantis existed has convinced some members of the Mysterium to also consider this theory. Seers who believe this theory claim that Pentacle mages who believe otherwise do so because they are unwilling to accept the true power of the Exarchs.

A History of Power

Ambition and ruthlessness are two traits that have become a hallmark of Seers' interactions with mortals. Although the nature of these interactions differs in details, Seers of the Throne regularly seek out powerful individuals and organizations and attempt to control or influence them. In many eras, this process was relatively straightforward. Either a pylon of Seers co-opted some powerful mortal through the use of a Profane Urim, mind magic or some similar method or they found a mortal with similar goals and a sufficient mixture of discretion and ambition to not ask how his secretive allies were able to deliver the miraculous events that they promised. Being able to work openly as a mortal leader's allies offers the Seers a chance to have some formal role in the organization they are controlling. Therefore, many Seers prefer to find mortal allies rather than to simply take over an unknowing puppet. However, the results of these two ways of dealing with mortals are quite similar since almost all mortal allies eventually become little more than puppets.

Throughout much of recorded history, most Seers of the Throne who wished to control important Sleepers could be found working as easily overlooked scholars or scribes working in the court of some prince. These Seers secretly controlled the prince's actions and thoughts but were overlooked because they lacked any formal status. However, many Seers worked more openly. Some served as a prince's trusted advisors. Others were unusually accurate Augers or inhumanly skilled diplomats who lived lives of luxury and used a mixture of magic, charisma, and a reputation for delivering reliable advice to direct their prince's actions and thus the fate of the kingdom. Hundreds of pylons over thousands of years held such roles in the courts of Greek city-states, warring Chinese kingdoms, Persian satrapies and small African states. In many of the smaller states, a single pylon of Seers effectively ran the entire city-state because they controlled both the ruler and most or all of the ruler's closest advisors and aides.

As the small principalities and city-states of medieval Europe began coming together into large modern nations, European Seers saw their authority diminish considerably. Having a nation ruled by single king or queen instead of dozens of minor princes meant that this leader was far more vulnerable to the scrutiny of Diamond mages who sought to thwart the plans and ambitions of the Seers. Also, even when the Seers were able to control an entire royal court, the vast amount of bureaucracy and the delegation of authority needed for a single royal court to control and direct the affairs of a large nation-state meant that Seers who controlled such a ruler had a far more limited influence on the day-to-day policies of the nation.

As parliaments and similar elected bodies became increasingly involved in national government, the Seers'

power was further reduced. Controlling the minds and actions of several dozen or even several hundred senators, members of parliament or similar officials was well beyond the reach of even the largest and better organized pylon. In such governments, the only way to control the number of people necessary to effectively direct affairs of state was to have half a dozen or more pylons working together. While this sort of cooperation was occasionally possible for short periods of time, after a few years, or more often a few months, the different pylons would develop increasingly divergent agendas and the alliance would fragment.

Theories of Power — Empire Builders vs. Empire Destroyers

Almost all Seers agree that Sleepers are worthy of little consideration beyond their usefulness and the effort needed to make certain they do not interfere with the Exarchs' plans. However, there are vast divisions among the Seers regarding precisely how and to what ends they should make use of the un-Awakened masses. One of the longest running of these divisions has been between those Seers who attempt to build and control large and stable empires, where the leaders are the puppets of the Seers and those Seers who seek to tear down nations and reduce them to squabbling bands of warlords and bandits. This division between factions of Seers has proven to be almost as violent as the division between the Seers and the Atlantean mages, with Seers on each side of this division doing their best to sabotage the efforts of the members of the other faction. Covert warfare between members of these two factions has been exceptionally bitter and prolonged. Both empire builders and empire destroyers can be found in every Ministry, and much of the history of the Seers of the Throne revolves around which of these two factions is in control of which Ministry.

For much of human history, a major source of tension within the Seers of the Throne was the different advantages gained by each faction's approach. Seers who were empire-builders could enjoy truly vast riches and command millions or even tens of millions of Sleepers. However, the degree of control they attained was always fairly small. Even if a pylon had near absolute control over a single despot or a handful of oligarchs, the ability of these rulers to affect the lives of millions of subjects was inherently limited. In contrast, a Seer or pylon who controlled an army of 10,000 nomadic warriors could exercise a great degree of control of these barbarians. However, life in a horsehide tent, among a people where even the wealthiest leader owned more than they could strap onto their beasts of burden was considerably less luxurious and less stable than that of a pampered noble whose huge marble villa had running water, huge storehouses of exotic foods and a treasury filled with gilded finery.

The Study of Reality Editing

In addition to the theory that the Exarchs removed Atlantis from reality being used as proof of their invincible power, this theory of reality editing is also the basis of an entire school of magical research. Because most Seers are motivated by power above all else, some consider the power that could be gained by learning to perform similar sorts of reality editing. Instead of defeating an enemy, a Seer could cause this enemy to have never existed in the first place, or at minimum learn to alter the world so that there was no evidence of this person's existence beyond the memories of various Awakened mages.

This theory and the possibility of its use by mages are supported by the fact that some form of reality editing continues to this day. Two of the most well known examples are the vanishing landscapes produced by the *Twisting Maze Intrusion* (see **Intruders: Encounters with the Abyss**, pp. 206-211) and the appearances and vanishings associated with the *Book of Transformation* (see **Grimoire of Grimoires**, pp. 38-44). The study of reality alteration is one of the more important and controversial topics among Seer scholars. Any mage who manages to achieve this so-far completely elusive goal would be in a position to either name their price for the secret or to simply take control of the entire order.

One popular theory suggests that only someone who has achieved archmastery of both Fate and Time has a chance of learning to perform any sort of reality editing. Other Seers claim that gaining the ability to alter reality in this fashion is the same as becoming an Exarch and pursue this goal with great fervor but with equally few results. No Seer is known to have ever performed any feat of reality editing and all theories about how to accomplish this feat are nothing more than hopeful speculation. However, if any evidence of a method of accomplishing reality editing was discovered, several dozen pylons would be exceedingly interested and might well fight over the evidence, even if the evidence was far from conclusive.



Power and Corruption

One of the central truths about the Seers of the Throne is that throughout history they have most often worked to increase human misery in the name of control. Some of their atrocities are due to their belief that humanity is simultaneously worthless and dangerous. However, not every Seer starts off as a heartless and brutal thug. A significant number of newly recruited Seers are idealists who honestly believe that serving the will of the Exarchs is the best path for humanity and that the alternative is either tyrannical rule by the Atlantean mages or uncontrolled magic that will destroy the earth. Over time, the vast majority of these idealists and would-be saviors of humanity began believing that the ends justified the means and that the most effective means to any are also often the most brutal. Both Seers and Pentacle mages occasionally wonder why the Seers of the Throne are often so closely associated with oppression and brutality. One of the most important reasons for this type of behavior is relatively easy to discover, but is also ignored by many Seers.

Throughout their long history, the Seers of the Throne have found despots, warlords, and other powerful and autocratic rulers to be the most useful type of individuals for them to control. These rulers usually have sufficient authority over their underlings to enable them to suddenly favor a new advisor without raising too much dissent, and can deal with opposition in a firm and often lethal fashion without arousing suspicion. More importantly, these rulers do not have to spend time and effort making their plans seem acceptable to some other branch of government that is not under the Seer's control. Also, some of the more ethical Seers honestly believe that puppeteering a brutal despot is morally superior to turning someone less corrupt into their Thrall, in part because these Seers often believe that they can help avert some of the evil that the despot would otherwise perform.

However, using autocratic despots and brutal warlords as puppets has one important limitation that many Seers overlook. Despots are expected to behave like despots. Extracting additional wealth from their subjects so that their puppetmaster can enjoy this largesse lies well within the range of acceptable activity for such individuals, as does obliterating their enemies, or even Atlantean mages who they claim to be traitors, spies or potential rivals. However, if a despot suddenly begins attempting to aid the populace or to promote justice and freedom, his advisors and second in command usually assume he has become delusional or incompetent. While most Seers dismiss and discount Sleepers and their opinions, any Seer who is puppeting a despot is constantly surrounded by people who willingly serve despots. These Seers are thus gradually conditioned to think and act like despots. Time and time again, many of the most ideological Seers who start out being dedicated to simultaneously serving the Exarchs and attempting to improve humanity's lot end up performing various atrocities

to advance their agenda. The histories of all of the world's empires are rife with examples of this sort of brutality as Seers become entrapped in the very horrors that some of them have sought to avert.

The Long War


One of the constant features of the long history of the Seers of the Throne is their continuing conflict with the mages who held true to the dreams of rebuilding Atlantis and undoing the Fall. Ever since the so-called Diamond Rebellion, the Diamond mages and later the Pentacle mages not only fought back against the Seers' attempts to destroy or forcibly convert them, but have also attempted to exterminate the Seers and to steal their knowledge and Artifacts in return. Many Pentacle mages hope that destroying the Seers and uncovering the secrets they have hidden away might finally make bridging the Abyss possible.

While most Seers now believe that all of the Pentacle mages are doomed to failure, none are absolutely certain that this is true, and many hope to curry favor with the Exarchs by thwarting these efforts. The first few centuries after the Fall were the time of the greatest conflict. Hundreds of Diamond mages worked together in several separate attempts to rebuild the mystical city of Atlantis, and each attempt brought forth organized opposition from the Seers of the Throne. Some infiltrated the ranks of their enemies, others organized mortals to attack the mages, and many of the Seers simply used their magic to attempt to destroy both these mages and their works.

The Battles of New Atlantis

As the centuries passed and the numbers and confidence of the Atlantean mages grew, they dreamed of rebuilding the First City, with its glorious spire and the grand palace-temples that once housed its mages. Hundreds of minor attempts have been made, the far greater portion of which were obviously doomed to failure from their very beginnings. However, a few of the efforts to rebuild Atlantis were well-organized projects that involved dozens or hundreds of mages and a deep understanding of magic and the Supernal. Some among the Seers of the Throne feared these efforts might undo the Exarchs' work and actually bridge the Abyss. In the Seers' records, three such attempts are recorded as having been especially close.

The first was approximately 3,500 years ago, and took place on the island of Santorini in the Aegean Sea. A group of Diamond mages, belonging primarily to the Guardians of the Veil and the Silver Ladder, began a massive project involving decades of preparation and the efforts of several hundred mages from all four of the Diamond's orders. This project also had excellent security; many Seers never learned the true nature of this project until its failure. Others attempted to infiltrate it, but only managed to obtain positions of minor importance. No records exist of any



Seers ever learning the identities of the mages in charge of this project, nor could the Seers cancel or seriously derail the Santorini project.

However, this attempt ended in a truly disastrous failure, with the island of Santorini being split asunder, the Aegean Sea being swept by terrible waves and earthquakes, and the Abyss widening significantly. Like many of the Atlantean mages who were involved, almost half the Seers who had infiltrated this project died that day, and the survivors reported that many of the spells that had been designed to create and stabilize the new city either turned back on their creators or twisted wildly out of control. Two of the surviving Seers claimed to have helped disrupt these spells. Both mages also acknowledged that a colleague of theirs, who is today known only as Thea, had promised that if she could find no other way to disrupt this vast ritual, she would attempt to turn the full power of it back on herself by purposefully causing her portion of the effort to fail in a particularly terrible fashion.

No surviving mage understood the reasons for this project's failure or how big a role the Seers played, but reports from some of the Seers who survived indicated that for a short while they feared that this effort might actually build a local bridge across the Abyss. Fortunately for the Seers, the failure of this effort seems to have made future attempts more difficult, and almost all of the mages who fully understood the plan behind this effort died or had their minds destroyed by the disaster that ended this effort. Even today, many of the more devoted Seers honor Thea's efforts, and the phrase "Thea's sacrifice" is often used as a term to describe deliberately giving one's life to defeat some important effort by the Pentacle mages. Of course, many of the more self-interested Seers loudly proclaim that finding a way to defeat their enemies that involved others dying is far superior to any form of pyrrhic victory.

The second major attempt to rebuild Atlantis occurred seven centuries later, on an island in middle of the North Sea. A group of Diamond mages known as the Five Kings assembled several dozen followers and attempted to transform this bleak and remote island into a new Atlantis that they referred to as Hyperborea. Before attempting to reopen a path between this land and the Supernal Realms, these mages attempted to reshape the weather to be more favorable than the island's normally windswept and frigid climate.

With the records of the previous attempt firmly in mind, the Seers were ready. More than a dozen Seers especially skilled in Fate, Forces and Time magic altered the surrounding weather patterns so that they would respond to the Five King's spells in a particularly violent and uncontrolled fashion. These efforts created a devastating feedback effect that caused preternaturally terrible storms to sweep down over this island. The resulting whirlwinds and waterspouts killed almost a fifth of the assembled mages and injured almost half the rest. Best of all, these mages believed that

this failure was the result of their own hubris and not any efforts by the Seers. Many Seers point to this "Hyperborean Deception" as one of their crowning glories.

The third effort to recreate Atlantis was the most mysterious. Five centuries after the Five Kings, a group of Mysterium mages from Greece, Egypt, Persia and the rest of the Hellenistic Oikemene, who were collectively known as "The Phoenix Brethren," worked together to create a version of Atlantis in the Shadow Realm. They called their ethereal city the Adytum. In a frighteningly short period of time, they succeeded in laying the groundwork for this vast and noble metropolis.

Some of the Seers' records indicate that these initial efforts took less than a week. In response to the construction of the Adytum, Seers from all across the globe began working on a plan to disrupt it by making deals with exceptionally powerful spirits. However, well before any of these plans came to fruition, the Adytum vanished and the few of its builders who returned to the Fallen world were broken in mind and body.

The Seers never learned why this effort failed, but only a handful of Seers were able to find the Adytum, and all returned with afflictions similar to those of its builders. The Seers then banned all of their number from searching for it, and declared that it had been cursed by the Exarchs. Today, many Seers suspect that this claim is based on nothing more than guesswork. Others look to the fate of the Adytum as proof that even if the Seers did nothing, their enemies would never succeed in rebuilding Atlantis because the very structure of the universe now opposes all such attempts.

Quiet But Deadly Battles

As the centuries passed and word of these three spectacular failures spread, attempts to reconstruct Atlantis became less frequent, but the bitter enmity between Seers and Diamond mages remained as strong as ever. However, the nature of this enmity and the structure of the battles between these two groups of mages have changed many times. In addition to the relative power of the Seers and the Diamond mages altering from one decade to the next, the structure of the conflict also changed. At various times and places, the Seers attempted to utterly eradicate the Atlantean mages. In other times and locations, Seers spent years or even decades carefully infiltrating the various orders of Diamond or Pentacle mages and working to either secretly suborn them or to convert their members to the Exarchs' cause.

The greatest example of this latter tactic was the Larvan Schism of the early 11th century, when an especially charismatic Seer known as Larva almost succeeded in taking control of the entire Silver Ladder. Although some of the more militant Seers consider such tactics both a foolish waste of time and doomed to failure, other Seers either enjoy the idea of corrupting their rivals or honestly believe that

their efforts will save their rival mages from error and will eventually convince them of true glory of the Exarchs.

Regardless of the exact motivation or the precise methods involved, the Seers of the Throne have been the enemy of the Atlantean mages for all of recorded history. In some eras, the two groups rarely came into contact, but in most of the great civilizations of the world, there has been an ongoing covert war between the Seers and their enemies.

Witch Hunts

Throughout the ages, the Seers often use similar tactics to deal, in large part because their ambition and their disregard for the fates of Sleepers have both been constant features since the Fall. One of their favored tactics for dealing with enemies, especially Atlantean mages, is to organize some sort of witch-hunt.

The target is usually some population to which they believe their enemies belong. If a pylon of Seers in pre-modern Europe knew that some of the Atlantean mages they faced either were or posed as Gypsies, they would encourage prejudice against the Gypsies and set the local Sleeper population hunting down or driving out all Gypsies. Even if some of their enemies did not belong to this group, the fact that the other mages will defend their fellows was often sufficient for the Seers to be able to identify and locate all of their enemies. When they knew they were dealing with Atlantean mages who cared about the fate of Sleepers, some especially ruthless Seer pylons would set the local Sleepers against an especially blameless or helpless minority simply because they were certain that their foes would intervene to help the people who were being attacked.


Knowing this aid would be forthcoming; the Seers would then be in a better position to identify their enemies and then set the Sleepers against them.

Rather than attempting to create some new prejudice, Seers usually preferred to take the path of least resistance and make use of the many of the Sleepers' existing prejudices and hatreds to their uses. Although the vast majority of the medieval and later pogroms against European Jews were purely mortal affairs, a few were instigated by Seers. Similarly, while most of the witch-hunts of the 16th and early 17th century had their roots in mortal greed and hysteria, some Seers helped encourage this brutal hysteria as a method to flush out individuals with too obvious an interest in the occult, who might either be Atlantean mages or their Sleepwalker assistants. The use of Sleeper hysteria about witches and black magic also represented a new policy, where the Seers began to seek out ways to eliminate all overt manifestations of the supernatural, a tactic that became the cornerstone for many of their later policies.

The Enlightenment and the Birth of Rationalism

The Seers of the Throne have rarely had the power to do more than change the course of mortal history in relatively minor ways. However, sometimes historical events conspire to aid them in their endeavors. One of the greatest examples of this aid began in the portion of the 18th century known





as the Enlightenment. During this era, an increasing number of educated Western European Sleepers began to turn away from ideas of magic and superstition and to embrace rationalism and science. Their ideas of rigid natural laws and a distant clockmaker god fit perfectly into the Seers' desire for mortals to know nothing of magic. Although the Seers could not take credit for the Enlightenment (though naturally some of their histories do anyway), they most definitely helped the ideas it birthed grow and spread.

By the late 18th century, the Seers of the Throne had largely decided that mortals ceasing to believe in the supernatural would both benefit them and aid the plans of the Exarchs. As a result, the Seers began working both overtly and covertly to help spread these ideas. With efforts ranging from using their magic to make actual supernatural manifestations seem to be faked, to using various effects to sway mortal audience listening to scientists or people speaking out against the dangers and foolishness of superstition, the Seers soon became a powerful force in the spread of the Enlightenment.

During the early decades of the movement, the Seers of the Throne held a series of meetings where they discussed the uses and spread of the new ideas of rationalism and the belief in science. Because of Disbelief, even before the Enlightenment, almost no mortals believed in Awakened magic. However, before this era belief in vampires, werewolves, ghosts, unAwakened mortal magic and similar supernatural oddities was fairly common. The rationalist philosophies of the Enlightenment went hand in hand with an increasing lack of belief in these supernatural phenomena. Prior to this era, the Seers of the Throne had no interest in whether or not mortals believed in the various supernatural creatures that crept through the streets of their darkened cities. However, the Seers soon realized that one of the ways they could best help to spread the ideas of the Enlightenment was to suppress evidence of hauntings, cryptids, hexes, and the undead.

By the mid-19th century, the Seers had successfully infiltrated the ranks of various groups of skeptics. In addition to various other efforts, the Seers of the Throne were largely responsible for discrediting spiritualism by using their magic to banish any ghosts that mediums managed to contact or summon and then using other spells to make it appear that the mediums had been employing various forms of trickery. The Seers have used similar methods to help discredit everyone from the ghost-hunters of the 1920s to the psychic researchers of the 1960s and 1970s.

As the basic ideas of the Enlightenment and the Scientific Revolution spread across the world and began more widely accepted, the Seers of the Throne increasingly began to infiltrate both universities and local governments in an effort to reduce belief in the supernatural and to do their best to cover up all evidence of supernatural manifestations. Many Seers still believe that increasing mortal disbelief in the supernatural would similarly increase the power of mortal

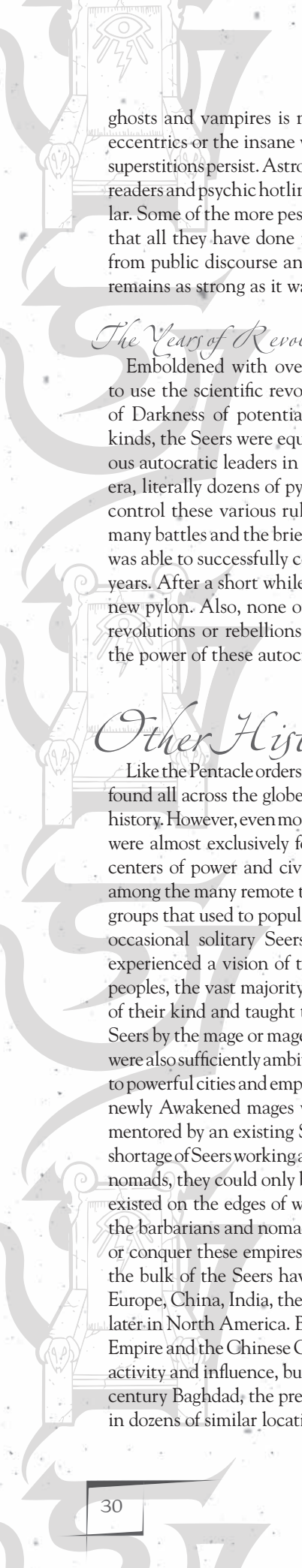
Disbelief against Awakened magic and could even widen the Abyss. However, solid evidence for this belief remains frustratingly vague and truly eliminating superstitions and a belief in the supernatural among the Sleepers has proven far more challenging than it first seemed 250 years ago.

The last two centuries have been filled with a frustrating mixture of progress and failure. While belief in magicians,

The Seers and Vampires — A Distant Alliance

The Seers of the Throne are aware of the existence of vampires, and some vampires know that there is a group of powerful and secretive mortals who seem to possess unusual powers. Although the members of these two groups largely avoid one another, on a few rare occasions they work together. Both the Seers and the vampires are interested in suppressing all evidence of supernatural phenomena since both believe that if mortals come to believe in any aspect of the supernatural, they might go on to consider that tales of magic or vampires might be true. Many of the higher ranking members of both groups are interested in keeping mortals completely ignorant of the many dangerous oddities that surround them.

As a result, a few members of both groups know how to contact members of the other that live in the same city and are sometimes willing to do so in times of great need. Most often, this occurs when a rogue vampire, a Pentacle mage, or some other individual either deliberately attempts to convince mortals of the reality of vampires or magic, or is sufficiently obvious and careless that there is some risk of mortals discovering various of these uncomfortable truths. Also, on even rarer occasions, members of these two groups work together to either eliminate or suppress evidence of a haunting, the actions of some unAwakened magician, or some other supernatural phenomena that might attract mortal attention. Friendships or even close working relationships between Seers and vampires are almost unknown, but since many members of both groups respect both power and ambition, members of one group may occasionally admire members of the other, and a few Seers and vampires have learned to respect how useful the other can be.



ghosts and vampires is no longer something anyone but eccentrics or the insane will admit publicly, all manner of superstitions persist. Astrology columns in newspapers, palm readers and psychic hotlines all remain exceptionally popular. Some of the more pessimistic Seers are now convinced that all they have done is to remove supernatural events from public discourse and that belief in the supernatural remains as strong as it was 300 or more years ago.

The Years of Revolutions

Emboldened with over-optimistic hopes of being able to use the scientific revolution as a way to rid the World of Darkness of potential supernatural opponents of all kinds, the Seers were equally pleased with the rise of various autocratic leaders in 18th century Europe. During this era, literally dozens of pylons competed for the chance to control these various rulers. Unfortunately, during these many battles and the brief victories that followed, no pylon was able to successfully control a ruler for more than a few years. After a short while, they were slain or deposed by a new pylon. Also, none of these Seers foresaw the various revolutions or rebellions that ended or greatly restricted the power of these autocrats.

Other Histories

Like the Pentacle orders, the Seers of the Throne have been found all across the globe throughout the entirety of world history. However, even more than the Atlantean mages, Seers were almost exclusively found in or near empires or other centers of power and civilization. Seers were rarely found among the many remote tribal, bands and other small-scale groups that used to populate much of the planet. Although occasional solitary Seers Awakened and simultaneously experienced a vision of the Exarchs among these isolated peoples, the vast majority of Seers were recruited by others of their kind and taught the history and philosophy of the Seers by the mage or mages who recruited them. Most Seers were also sufficiently ambitious that they naturally gravitated to powerful cities and empires. These are the locations where newly Awakened mages were most likely to be found and mentored by an existing Seer. Although there has been no shortage of Seers working among barbarian tribes and warlike nomads, they could only be found among those groups that existed on the edges of wealthy empires. These Seers used the barbarians and nomads to loot or to attempt to destroy or conquer these empires. For most of the last 1,000 years, the bulk of the Seers have been concentrated in Western Europe, China, India, the Muslim Caliphate and somewhat later in North America. Both the court of the Holy Roman Empire and the Chinese Court were frequent centers of Seer activity and influence, but the Seers were also active in 10th century Baghdad, the pre-revolutionary French Court, and in dozens of similar locations.

The Victorian Era

The Victorian Era presented the Seers of the Throne with a host of new challenges and possibilities. With the growth of global empires and the development of increasingly rapid methods of communication and transport, the Seers began to see the possibility to extending their influence across the globe. The colonial ambitions of Britain, France, Germany and the United States were all encouraged by Seers working behind the scenes in the halls of power of these nations. In addition, once these various colonial ventures had begun, other especially daring and ambitious Seers traveled along with the colonial soldiers and officials to seek to advance their cause and their ambition in the newly conquered lands.

In nations far from the established power-base of older and more established Seers, the younger and less entrenched could attain significant positions of authority either by becoming part of the colonial government or by taking one or more high-ranking colonial officials under their wing. Unfortunately, in both India and China, these colonizing Seers ran into native Seers who were controlling or working with the native power structures. Conflicts between colonizing and colonized Seers occasionally escalated into minor wars. The Boxer Rebellion in late 19th century China involved conflict between British and Chinese Seers as well as mundane battles between Chinese and British soldiers.

In addition, a number of Atlantean mages lived in many of the colonized nations and the mixture of colonial and inter-mage conflict became especially violent and intractable. These three-way battles between colonial Seers, native Seers, and native Atlantean mages added both complexity and violence to much 19th century colonialism. During colonial rule, many Seers attempted to spread distrust and disbelief in the supernatural to the conquered lands, while some Atlantean mages simultaneously attempted to bring local supernatural knowledge back to the colonizing nation.

Meanwhile, in the portions of the world that were in the midst of their industrial revolution, the second half of the 19th century was the era of the growth of government bureaucracies as well as the growth of modern corporations. Increasingly, laws and other rules constrained the actions of queens and princes, and by the end of the century even the mighty robber barons were beginning to see their power reduced. This change was difficult for many Seers to adjust to. Most of their previous tactics were based upon finding one or more important individuals and controlling their thoughts and actions. However, by the end of the 19th century, even the most powerful individuals had considerably less power because their actions were increasingly bound by the strictures of law and the growing power of committees and bureaucracies.

The 20th Century

The Seers' first reaction to the increases in bureaucracy and governmental complexity that came in the late 19th and 20th century was to attempt to reverse the trend by placing single individuals back in positions of absolute authority. In both Italy and Japan, several pylons of Seers joined forces to attempt to encourage authoritarianism and to control the leaders of both nations. Unfortunately, these efforts were limited by the fact that each of these pylons had their own agendas. These conflicts resulted in vicious infighting between the various competing pylons, which kept them too busy to defeat the Sleeper forces arrayed to defeat these authoritarian leaders.

World War II represented the last era when a large number of Seers attempted to control entire nation-states — an attempt that was unable to get any purchase in the shifting ground of the politics of the day. Since this time, the majority of Seers and pylons have focused their efforts on controlling individual cities, or in some cases entire corporations. In addition to finding such challenges far less difficult, these smaller scale manipulations are also far less likely to attract competition from other pylons or opposition from Atlantean mages.

Today

With instant communication and rapid transport now readily available all across the globe, many previously isolated groups of Seers are now in frequent contact and conflict with one another. Also, for the past several decades, an increasing number

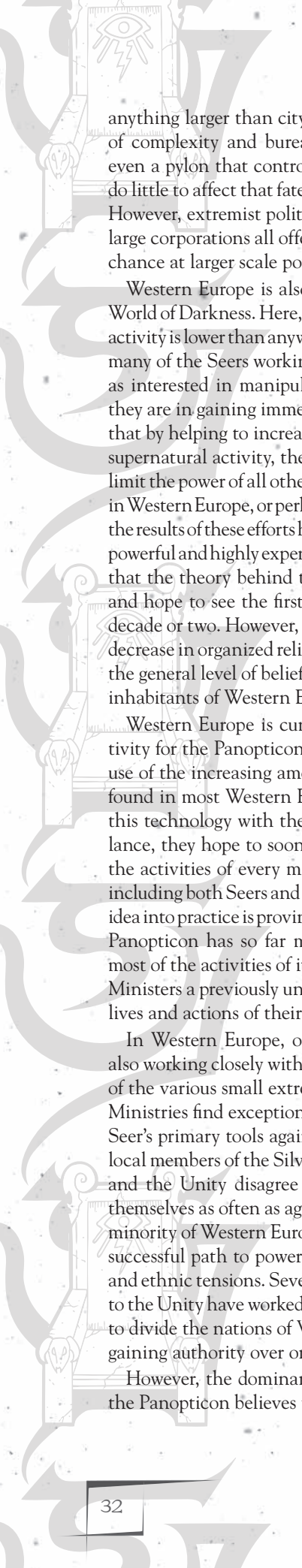
of Seers have abandoned attempts to attain access to political or religious leaders and are instead focusing on gaining control of various organizations that work across international borders. The two most common choices for puppets are transnational corporations and large criminal gangs. Legitimate corporations command vast sums of money and significant amounts of economic and political influence that can often affect significant changes in even the largest and wealthiest nations, while also being able to control the fates of many poor nations. Criminal organizations never have as much money or power as even moderately large transnational corporations, but are free to operate in ways closed to any legitimate business. Gaining control of a large criminal organization means that a pylon or even a single Seer could send half a dozen well armed and highly trained assassins to kill any individual they wished and can gain easy access to goods and information that would otherwise either be exceptionally expensive or impossible to obtain.

However, while the Seers have gained many new advantages, they also face an equally large number of new challenges. Factions that promote local rivalries, and attempt to splinter and destabilize nations have been finding their efforts increasingly difficult over much of the globe. Although there are obvious exceptions, regions where this sort of destabilization is possible have mostly become smaller, poorer and more remote. As a result, the would-be empire builders have increasingly eclipsed the faction of the Seers who have traditionally supported bandits, warlords, and similar figures. Furthermore, the modern superpowers like China and the United States possess extremely complex and heavily bureaucratic governments that are difficult for a small group of mages to have more than a small influence on.

Western Europe

Seers in Western Europe are in an unusual position. Most have abandoned efforts to manipulate





anything larger than city governments, because the level of complexity and bureaucracy is sufficiently high that even a pylon that controls four or five puppets can often do little to affect that fate of even a relatively small nation. However, extremist political parties, organized crime and large corporations all offer the most ambitious Seers some chance at larger scale power.

Western Europe is also the most secular region in the World of Darkness. Here, belief in all forms of supernatural activity is lower than anywhere else on the globe. As a result, many of the Seers working in Western Europe are at least as interested in manipulating the structure of reality as they are in gaining immediate personal power. Most hope that by helping to increase mortal disbelief in all forms of supernatural activity, they will help widen the Abyss and limit the power of all other supernatural beings, either only in Western Europe, or perhaps across the entire globe. So far, the results of these efforts have been inconclusive, but several powerful and highly experienced magical theoreticians hold that the theory behind this idea is fundamentally sound and hope to see the first obvious results within the next decade or two. However, cynics claim that the continuing decrease in organized religious faith has had no effect upon the general level of belief in the supernatural among most inhabitants of Western Europe.

Western Europe is currently the primary center of activity for the Panopticon. This Ministry makes extensive use of the increasing amounts of surveillance technology found in most Western European nations. By combining this technology with their own magical forms of surveillance, they hope to soon be able to identify and monitor the activities of every mage working in Western Europe, including both Seers and their enemies. While putting this idea into practice is proving difficult, the Western European Panopticon has so far managed to successfully monitor most of the activities of its own members, giving the local Ministers a previously unparalleled degree of access to the lives and actions of their subordinates.

In Western Europe, one branch of the Panopticon is also working closely with the Unity to track and make use of the various small extreme nationalist groups that both Ministries find exceptionally useful. These groups are the Seer's primary tools against the unification efforts by the local members of the Silver Ladder. While the Panopticon and the Unity disagree on methods and fight amongst themselves as often as against their enemies, a substantial minority of Western European Seers agree that their most successful path to power involves increasing nationalism and ethnic tensions. Several powerful pylons who are loyal to the Unity have worked out a loose agreement to attempt to divide the nations of Western Europe, with each pylon gaining authority over one nation.

However, the dominant faction in the local branch of the Panopticon believes this effort is both futile and inef-


ficient and is instead pushing for greater centralization and hopes to transform the EU into something resembling a single nation. For them, the goal of increasing ethnic tensions is to isolate the EU from the surrounding nations and to increase the degree of paranoia and social control within the EU. Although they continue to work together, tensions between the Panopticon and the Unity continue to rise and the two groups could break off their alliance at any time.

In an effort to forestall the Unity's efforts, several members of the Panopticon have infiltrated the European Silver Ladder and are aiding their efforts in this regard. The Seers who pursue this goal are hoping to combine greater centralization with high levels of surveillance and an increasing sense of paranoia, especially regarding non-Europeans.

Eastern Europe

The former Eastern Bloc nations have proved to be especially fertile ground for ambitious Seers. In both Russia and the many smaller Eastern European nations that it used to control, the sorts of power-hungry charismatic leaders that Seers favor as pawns are quite abundant. Sufficient ethnic and national tensions exist in this region to allow the Seers to manipulate public opinion using xenophobia as a tool. Such efforts prove a fine way to target their enemies and to distract attention from their own activities. Organized crime thrives in much of this region. The largest criminal organizations command amounts of wealth and power that many Seers find especially appealing. Even more promisingly, most Eastern European criminal organizations are exceedingly violent and under the absolute command of one, or at most a few crime lords. The larger criminal organizations now have activities and agents in Western Europe, the United States and an increasing number of other nations. Seers who manage to gain control of one of the leaders of such an organization have a small army of trained and dedicated soldiers at their command, as well as a source of income and information that stretches across the entirety of Europe as well as portions of the rest of the world.

Today, Eastern Europe is a contentious and difficult region for mages as well because it is a hotbed of activity for both the Praetorians and the Hegemonic Ministry. The Praetorians are heavily involved in several of the largest criminal organizations, while the Hegemon is deeply involved in various fringe religious and spiritual groups that appeared 15 or more years ago in the newly post-Communist nations and have since spread and grown more powerful. The Hegemon has found some of the most heavily nationalist groups to be especially useful. Widespread activity by both groups has resulted in them coming into frequent conflict with one another. In addition, the European branch of the Silver Ladder works extensively in Eastern Europe to help these nations integrate themselves with the EU. At the



same time, the Guardians of the Veil work with many of the same cults and fringe faiths as the Unity and the covert leadership of several of these cults have changed between the Seers and the Guardians of the Veil more than once in the last decade. Today, Eastern Europe is one of the major battlegrounds for conflict between the Seers of the Throne and the Pentacle mages, while also being a site of frequent conflict between the Praetorians and the Unity. Tensions have been further increased because the recent political ambitions of Russia have caused Seers in several small Eastern European nations to worry that Russia might soon attempt to subjugate the nation they are in.

Asia

Equally ambitious Seers flocked to Japan in the 1980s and to Malaysia in the 1990s; they are now taking a serious interest in China. The mixture of rapidly growing economic power, growing political influence and authoritarian rule makes China one of the most irresistible prizes for politically ambitious Seers. Unfortunately, it is also far too large and complex for anything but an alliance of more than a dozen skilled and closely allied pylons to obtain any degree of control over even a small fraction of its population. The Seers have always had a problem with large-scale cooperation, and their efforts in China are no exception. Multiple groups battle one another for supremacy of a single governmental department or local province and even the most successful manage to gain control of nothing greater than one of the smaller cities.

China is sufficiently large that several dozen separate and competing pylons are currently attempting to influence various provinces. The net result is that the Seers have had very little influence on China. However, the more successful pylons have managed to both hunt down a moderate number of Pentacle mages, while also doing an excellent job of making themselves exceedingly wealthy.

In vivid contrast to the conflict over centralization occurring in Western Europe, almost all Seers working in China are attempting to promote centralization of authority. A few of the most ambitious Seers dream of a vast Chinese empire that extends its grasp over most of Asia, and potentially even Africa or Eastern Europe, which is in turn ruled by a single powerful figure who is the puppet of a single pylon of Seers.

Meanwhile, the Middle East remains disputed territory that is also regarded as a great prize by many Seers. However, it is also an exceptionally difficult prize to obtain. In addition to rivalry between Seers, a number of the important leaders are exceptionally difficult to control due to their mixture of iron will and deep and sometimes fanatical religious faith. The Middle East is the part of the world where many of the leaders are the most resistant to being made puppets, which makes this region both frustrating and especially tempting for the Seers.

The unstable political situation has attracted the attention of both the Silver Ladder and the Free Council, who are both attempting to reduce the same tensions that the Seers are working to exacerbate. Although almost no Sleepers in the area have any knowledge of the nature or powers of the Seers or the Pentacle mages, some of them do understand that secretive outsiders are attempting to manipulate their nations. Although almost all of the Middle Eastern Sleepers working against the Seers' efforts have no connection to the Pentacle mages and sincerely believe their enemies to be members of various shadowy intelligence organizations, these Sleepers have recently managed to kill several Seers.

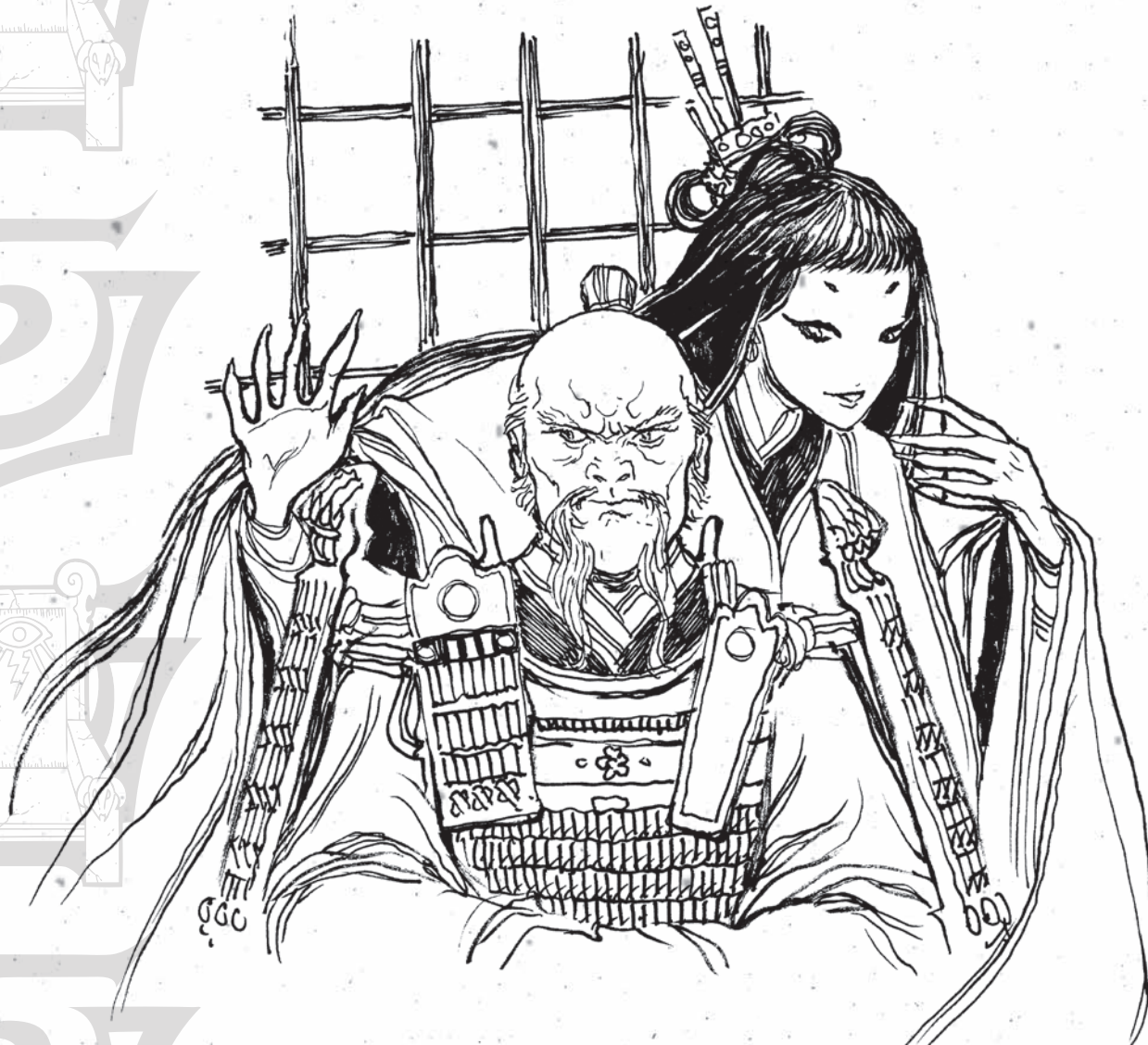
Africa

Africa is the strongest remaining bastion of the old-style Seers who have been backing warlords and bandit kings for more than 4,000 years. On this troubled and impoverished continent, individuals remarkably similar to the despots of antiquity rule many of the less stable nations. Recently, a few Seers have grown disgusted at the level of waste involved in the current state of affairs. Individual Seers and pylons regularly become fabulously wealthy, but the nations remain helpless against outside forces and many of these governments are exceptionally unstable. Also, many governments end in bloodbaths that often result in the deaths of at least some of the Seers who backed the previous government.

Within the past five years, some African Seers have begun using their intelligence about the activities of the Pentacle mages in Africa to covertly help various efforts to make several African nations wealthier and more stable. Unlike the more idealistic of the Pentacle mages involved in this effort, most of the Seers are motivated by a desire for personal wealth and power. However, this self-interest is moderated by a knowledge that if some of these nations better developed, far more wealth would be available for both the Seers and the Sleepers who live there.

One of the major battlegrounds among the Seers is in Africa. These reformers, who wish to become the puppet masters of nations that are wealthier and more stable, have begun to actively oppose the traditionalist Seers who continue to use petty warlords and despots as puppets. These disputes often erupt into open warfare. Africa is one of the last places where pylons regularly fight one another to the death. These battles involve secret magical attacks as well as house-to-house fighting using mortal soldiers and bandits. Many Praetorians work in Africa. Some back warlords and dictators, and the rest work as well-paid mercenaries for the various local Seers.

Violence between rival African Seers continues to rise. Recently, a few Chinese Seers have joined the Chinese development workers who have begun attempting to outsource business to various African nations. These Seers



have begun attempting to eliminate or circumvent the local Seers and seize the wealth and power of this continent for themselves. The Panopticon is watching developments in Africa closely. Many Seers worry that it could soon see the sort of open warfare between Seers on a scale that hasn't occurred for several centuries.


North America

As is still true in Western Europe, for several decades, the United States was becoming a nation ruled more by laws than people. The Seers found this change to be exceptionally frustrating because it made their attempts at control increasingly difficult. Fortunately, the increasing fusion of religious and secular authority that has occurred over the past three decades has helped reverse this trend. The rise of the religious right as a political power has opened up many opportunities for ambitious American Seers. The most ambitious Seers in much of the rest of the developed world are currently focusing their efforts on organized crime

or transnational corporations. Ambitious Seers occasionally take control of both religious and political figures and use these puppets as a means to attain impressive amounts of wealth and power.

A very few Seers have even forgone the use of puppets and have become religious figures themselves. These Seers are highly skilled in both Prime and Mind magic so that they can mask their presence from observant Pentacle mages. This sort of direct action is exceptionally dangerous, and many other Seers worry that it risks revealing the extent of their efforts to Pentacle mages and possibly even to especially clever Sleepers. However, directly controlling a Sleeper organization allows the Seer in control to personally enjoy her power and wealth far more easily and openly than if she had to hide behind a Sleeper puppet. As a result, those few Seers who are daring or foolhardy enough to attempt this gain many benefits from this tactic.

Within the past decade, three North American Seers of the Throne have become sufficiently bold that they are



now the heads of large churches and two other Seers have become heads of mid-sized corporations. None of these organizations are exceedingly large or well known, but they are public and in three cases growing. However, public sentiment has begun turning against wealthy churches and corporations that are openly attempting to influence politics; and all of these organizations are coming under increasing scrutiny.

The North American branch of the Panopticon is keeping a close watch on all of these Seer-run organizations and their enemies. The head of the North American office of the Panopticon fears that Pentacle mages may soon uncover one or more of the Seers who head these organizations. She is especially worried about the possibility of these Seers being captured and interrogated. The Panopticon has worked out a secret arrangement with the local Praetorians to help prevent this possibility. If any of these five Seers appear to be in danger of being captured by Pentacle mages, a team of Praetorians will attempt to apprehend the Seer and take her, willing or not, to safety. If this proves impossible, then the Praetorians are under orders to kill the Seer.

Central and South America

Much of South America is at the forefront of the Silver Ladder's plans for development and has thus become a covert battleground between the Seers of the Throne and the Pentacle mages. The Seers back dozens of local drug lords and dictators, while the Silver Ladder and their al-

lies are working to increase freedom and reduce poverty by aiding a combination of grass-roots political and social leaders and non-corrupt politicians. This conflict regularly results in secret battles that are most often fought between unknowing mortal agents on both sides. Most of the activity of the Seers in Central and South America remains hidden from the Pentacle mages, but Pentacle mages increasingly suspect widespread Seer activity in this region and conflict between these two groups has become increasingly open. In the past decade, Pentacle mage operatives have reclaimed much of Colombia. Six year ago, two of the four pylons of Seers who used to control the city of Medellín were all slain and the other two were forced to flee. The loss of this city and the drug profits it used to provide was a major blow to South American Seers and they are still recovering from this loss.

Both Central and South America are also hotbeds-of Banisher activity and while these Banishers are not particularly organized, they are just as dedicated and deadly as the rest of their kind. Although the Seers working in this region do their best to keep track of local Pentacle mage activity, Banishers often work alone and strike without warning, making them a particularly insidious threat to Seer dominance of this region. Central and South American Banishers hunt Seers of the Throne as eagerly as they hunt Pentacle mages, and most of these Banishers are religious zealots who care more about killing all mages who are not Banishers than they do about their own survival.



1902/03

CHAPTER TWO: KINGS OF THE LIE

I didn't understand why the Auger was into hookers until I came home and saw my wife again. I thought he was weak, that the power went to his head. I didn't like our money servicing his head, at least.

I got in, dropped my suitcase like it weighed a thousand pounds and kissed her hard. I was exhausted and relieved my mind and body finally occupied the same space again. I'd left to pursue the Prelacy. I finally walked through the bright door, where the Mechanism was. Every thought is a cog, a pulley — well, something words can't convey.

The kiss was a hint. Her lips felt uninspired.

We settled down for an evening in. I even watched TV with her, even though I haven't been able to stand it since I joined the Throne. A sitcom came on; she laughed when she was supposed to. The news was next. As I expected, the big fire in Boston got national coverage. They'd never identify the bodies.

The other stories told her what to feel. She was sad, charmed, appalled and moved, all on schedule. It was pathetic, but I'd never noticed before. I didn't know the Mechanism, but now I understand what every color and word was supposed to make her do — and she did it, every time. She cooed at a cat because of its big baby eyes. She got doe-eyed at a song because it hit a sentimental minor key.

I started finishing her sentences by 11 PM. I started saying them for her by midnight. She got angry with me at 12:08, exactly when I expected her to.

She was just another meat gear: part of the Mechanism.

I left while she was sleeping.

Next time, I'm going with the Auger. We lie all the time. I need a break from that. I may as well be honest about sex, and deal with someone who'll take our money, do their jobs, and relieve our flesh of a programmed need without the pretense of equally programmed romance.

As for my wife, I've made arrangements. She'll be a millionaire before the week is up. She'll like that. We made money to work that way.

It's part of the Mechanism.

*In every tyrant's heart there springs in the end this
poison, that he cannot trust a friend.*
— Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*

If you could only see the beauty of the world's structure, you'd see that it isn't Fallen at all. It's a brilliant diagram of power. Its threads are like rivers of light that flow from the Exarchs. The world regulates it into great tributaries, canals bordered by social structures and perfected wills and at the bottom, small streams of carefully measured power — just enough to slake a Sleeper's weak aspirations.

Another world existed before the Throne, before the current cycle of history, where there was no structure. There were dragons, gods and their appeasers. There was a half-wise Awakened City ruled by the willing slaves of Supernal intelligences. They followed dragons, honored gods and hoarded gifts from above. They bargained for just enough light to warm themselves, caring nothing for the darkness beyond their walls.

That's why they lost.

Don't misunderstand. This isn't a fairy tale about freeing the oppressed. It's about the power of oppression: the benefits of a world of servants. Atlantis' error mirrored the character of mages themselves. No other beings combine idealism and ambition the way sorcerers do. The Awakened hate half measures. If they

could not bring heaven crashing to earth, they would hoard enough of it to satisfy themselves.

The Exarchs found a third way. They didn't destroy the barrier between gods and humans. They *became* gods, and made the barrier unconquerable. They ascended divine thrones clothed in mortal flesh, and remade the cosmos in their image. They imposed order on chaos. Stones stopped moving. Trees stopped demanding the blood-price for their fruit. The Exarchs made a new age of mortal flesh; an age of the ax and the miner's chisel; of pain and toil, unanswered prayers and eternal death. Out of chaos and potential, the new world created limits and certainty: structure. In it, some will be slaves and some will be kings, but only initiates of the Throne see the secret shape of its power: the way to Ascend from iron chains to adamantine crowns.

This chapter explores that shape and how the Seers of the Throne explore it, travel to its heights and even define it. It is half pyramid, half maze, and if anyone could comprehend it fully, they would be like a god — they would be an Exarch.

THE EXARCHS

They whisper. They gesture. Millions obey.

The Seers of the Throne are an organization locked in a quiet, formal civil war. It's a holy war too. Seers build dogmas, rites and hierarchies to define the world and damn competing schools of thought. Among the uncountable Seer factions, differences often exist for the *sake* of difference. To have the gods on your side, you have to explain why the other side is wrong. Throughout all variations, however, there are a few points of common ground.

The Exarchs were human once. They crossed the Supernal threshold.

The Exarchs were human once. They defeated the gods, and broke the spine of the universe to their wills.

The Exarchs were human once, so anyone can follow in their footsteps. All they have to do is recognize the right gestures and obey the right whispers, and follow the trail that the lords of Creation cleared for them, long ago.

The Exarchs' Will

The Exarchs' methods are multifaceted and secretive, but their agenda is straightforward. Every Seer knows it and most other mages can guess it without much effort. They want to keep humanity Asleep and maintain their Supernal thrones forever. To do this, they send their slaves — Seers, cults and magical servitors — to attack these objectives:

Conquer the Watchtowers

The Oracles made the Watchtowers, and let a small trickle of Awakening survive in the world. The Exarchs can't destroy them, and even finds them useful — they are, after all, where new Seers of the Throne Awaken too. Control the Watchtowers and you control Awakening. Seers of the Throne explore the invisible world for paths to the Watchtowers. They study Awakenings intensely, looking for a way to climb the Watchtowers again and seize them from their five renegade kings.

Control Magic

Magic threatens to drive the Fallen World to a revolution or apocalypse. The Exarchs want neither of these outcomes, so they want to control every mote of Mana, every spell and every magical Artifact in existence. If the Seers of the Throne can't hoard magic, they'll destroy it. If they can't destroy it, they'll hide it.

Divide Humanity

United, humanity could solve its ordinary problems and look beyond, to the roots of existence. It might rediscover magic and oppose the Exarchs' rule. The Exarchs want to maintain a fractious social order filled with rivalry and resentment. The best way to keep humans weak and Asleep is to oscillate between cycles of oppression under a few powers, and chaotic interregnums where warring states bathe the planet in blood. Selfishness and strife are the Exarchs' allies.

Destroy the Pentacle

Atlantis created the Celestial Ladder. Its scattered heirs might do it again. That can never be allowed to happen. The Exarchs' Seers should enslave the Pentacle's mages and destroy its traditions.

Enslave the Gods

The old denizens of the Supernal Realms that the Exarchs cast down long ago, the mightiest spirits and other beings whose powers defy categorization, must all be brought to heel; they are powerful, uncontrollable elements. Petty supernatural creatures are tolerable, but their patrons might set their sights on the higher realms.

Protect Humanity

The Exarchs care about humanity. The motive is probably selfish; some mages believe that Sleepers shield the Supernal Realms from the Abyss' blandishments. From one perspective, the Void is a barrier between the higher and lower planes, but according to another point of view, the Fallen World is a protective aura that lies between the source of all truth and the chill of non-being. Otherwise, to let humanity die destroys the symbolism behind the Exarchs' reign — and in all sorcery, symbols matter. There are no masters without slaves.

Regulate the Abyss

The Abyss is a terrible threat, but it's also necessary. It makes Awakenings difficult, keeps the Fallen World a small, pain-ridden place, enforces the Sleeping Curse and gives rogue mages one more threat to deal with. Still, it can't be allowed to drown the world in darkness, so the Exarchs charge their agents with patrolling the borders of the Fallen World. Occasional incursions are permissible; full-scale invasions are not.

The Old Gods

The Supernal Realms have many gods. The Exarchs couldn't destroy them all (if they could, the Supernal Realms would probably be too barren to let the cosmos live, much less allow Awakenings) but they displaced enough of them to carve out their thrones. Gods don't die easily, and in some cases, were cast out of the higher worlds instead. Some mages believe that even the "dead gods" could not really die, and were banished to the Abyss instead.

The surviving exiles hide in the invisible worlds and occasionally, the material plane.

Some take familiar forms out of human myths and legends, but a few retain their Atlantean Age personas. Perhaps they're what allow mages to channel the Supernal through myths, since as former Supernal beings, they still carry a fragment of that purest essence.

The Exarchs fear the gods. They're random elements in the Fallen system, whose Supernal powers lie beyond the Throne's command. Not even the Throne can anticipate what would happen if Creation's old masters challenged them.

The Highest Names

Every Seer knows the names of the eleven major Exarchs, but none can pronounce them. Each name is a rune. The script is similar to the Atlantean language, but not the same. They were inscribed in the heavens when the Exarchs Ascended, and have never been spoken outside of the Supernal Realms. Seers call them the Iron Seals because they traditionally render the runes in that metal: a base substance to represent abasement.

Mages who know the Atlantean Tongue have tried to decipher the true meaning of each Iron Seal, but it's impossible. Some have gone mad after studying a particular sub-glyph too closely. They violate even the varied rules of Atlantean grammar, but this seems to be the product of innovation, not error. They are new words, forged in a gesture of authority over the language of magic itself.

Mages don't know the Iron Seals' ultimate meanings, but they recognize certain shapes and sections. Ever since they were born in the long shadow of the Exarchs' triumph, the Seers of the Throne have used these lesser meanings to name the Exarchs. Each Seal possesses one obvious connotation and other less implicit meanings and half-signs, so the names generate a galaxy of honorifics. Some titles come from insane Seers who studied the names in a trance, or claimed to have been visited by ochemata.

The best-known Exarchs are the Archigenitors: patrons of the four Great Ministries. Six of the seven remaining Iron Seals are held in similar esteem, but they don't speak to the world in any organized fashion. Some are former Archigenitors. Some are claimed as the patrons of lesser Ministries, though nobody knows if this is true or propaganda.

The eleventh Seal is The Gate. He is not worshiped, rarely spoken of, and always feared.

Below the Iron Seals, the Seers of the Throne populate choruses and legions of lesser Exarchs. They speak of 8 million recording gods, seven legions of Arch-Ascended under every Seal, ruling 77 ochemata and 777 secret masters of the world, and even universes within each Exarch's soul, huge enough to spawn infinite avatars. The Seers are generous in naming Exarchs, because to do otherwise would suggest that the path to Ascension isn't attainable.

The Archigenitors

In the old days, mortals slew dragons. They drank their blood, ate their flesh and broke the back of heaven. These first conquerors were the Archigenitors — or so the legend goes. In fact, political convenience has always determined how the Seers of the Throne recognize the mightiest Exarchs. Archigenitors rise and fall with their patron Ministries, though they never fall far enough to lose their Status among the Iron Seals. The four current Archigenitors benefit from the Seers' willingness to revise even their own history to fit their ambitions. Dogma has it that they were *always* the true Archigenitors, even if imperfect old chronicles say otherwise.

The Eye

The All Seeing, the Queen of Mirrors, the Four-fold Watcher

The Archigenitor of Panopticon is depicted as a great eye upon a throne, a pillar or a pyramid, or a sun disk veiled by clouds. They are all incarnations of omniscience and the ability to act from afar — even seeing is an action, because knowing the Eye is gazing upon you forces you to reconsider your plans. He sends visions encoded in the most intimate aspects of a Seer's life: code words in a lover's speech, or extra instructions written into a plan to overthrow the tetrarch. The Eye is associated with the Space Arcanum, the number four and the cardinal directions. She grants the Prelacy of Vision.

The Father

The All Judging, the King of Sacrifice, the Burning Trinity

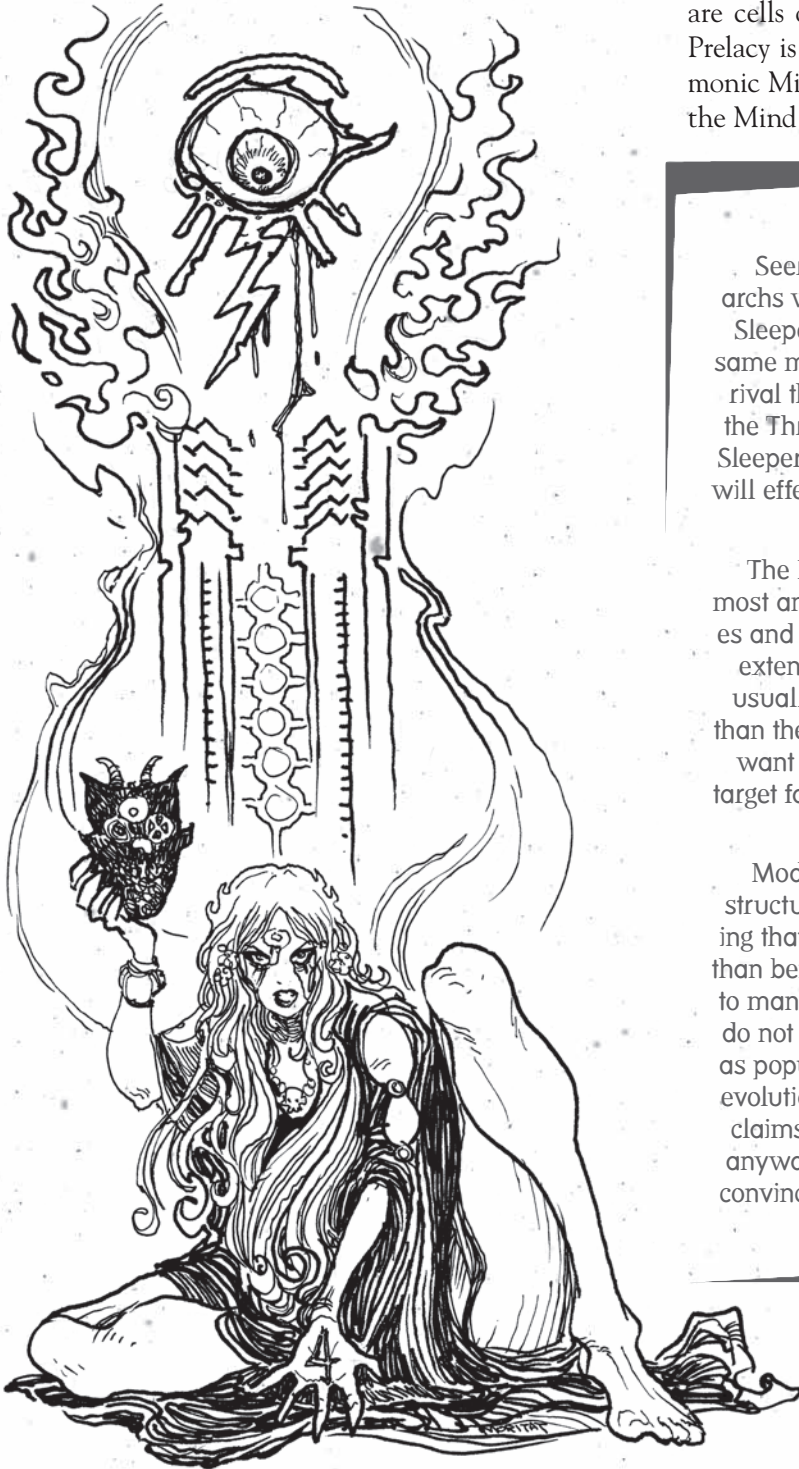
Unlike the other Archigenitors, the Father always has the male gender, and is often depicted in human form, as the ideal patriarch in any pylon's culture. He is the ruler of Paternoster and according to the Seers, the architect of revealed religion. He communicates through holy visions. He sits on a throne of angels or propels Seers through a dream of hell, filled with symbols representing what the Seer needs to do. He is associated with the number three and the Prime Arcanum, and grants the Paternoster's Prelacy of Doctrine.

The General

The All Conquering, the Queen of Fear, the Ever-Warring Dyad

He is Ares. She is Athena. The General is calculating strategy and red rage, both in service to the

power of violence: the way it drains entire nations of their strength and sanity, and divides them when they could otherwise find common cause, explore the world and find the source of their mutual damnation. The General manifests through patterns of violence and social unrest, so his followers meditate upon wars, mob violence and serial murder to discover his intentions. She is linked to the number two and the Forces Arcanum. His Praetorians learn the Prelacy of Fury.



The Unity

The All Encompassing, the King of Obedience, the Indivisible

The Unity cleanses humanity of individuality. People are weak alone, but together, acting under one will, they might taste the divinity they lost when they Fell. They need only sacrifice freedom. He whispers of the joys of conformity and manifests through impersonal institutions such as banks and governments. Humans are cells of the leviathan. Her number is one. His Prelacy is Obligation. He is the patron of the Hegemonic Ministry and is said to rule over Seers' use of the Mind Arcanum.

Divine Costuming

Seers of the Throne often identify the Exarchs with gods, spirits and holy figures that Sleepers know. This lets them harness the same mythic connections to the Supernal that rival those of mages. Furthermore, Seers of the Throne believe that if they can associate Sleepers' religions with the Exarchs, Sleepers will effectively bow their heads to the Exarchs when they come to worship.

The Paternoster Ministry practices this the most and is very skilled at subverting churches and temples, but all Ministries do it to one extent or another. Seers of the Throne are usually more interested in popular religion than their Pentacle counterparts because they want to assert control over the world. The target faith's occult properties are there for the taking as well.

Modern Seers interfere with atheist belief structures as well, using the simple reasoning that atheists have more cultural currency than before and that they are no more difficult to manipulate than anyone else. These Seers do not embody the Exarchs as divinities, but as popular scientific narratives: the stories of evolutionary psychology, for example, or the claims of memetics. Sleepers are all sheep anyway, and the ones that have thoroughly convinced themselves they aren't are, if anything, even easier to influence.

The Lesser Seals

The six permitted Lesser Seals do not directly oversee any major Ministry, though some lesser Ministries claim that one of them watches over them. To most Seers, the Lesser Seals are like patron saints or archangels, though every one of them understands that the Exarchs care more about the secret structures of the Fallen World than any individual mage. A wise Seer heeds their visions but watches for signs that they might cost him his Status, life or sanity.

The Lesser Seals are:

The Chancellor: The Exarch of Matter promotes corporate capitalism and the commoditization of every resource. Water, air, people — they should all have a price, owner, and the ability to be bought and sold for profit. The Chancellor's star rises under his Ministry

The Gate

Do not speak of The Gate. The Seventh Lesser Seal is the Dark Man, at the Crossroads. She keeps the passwords to the Abyss that a mortal might use to cross the threshold — or that something from the Abyss could speak to enter the material plane. The Seers of the Throne are afraid of him.

The Exarchs rose upon one great idea: they could rule a world with limits and Flaws. But before the Fall, the cosmos could not be defined or contained. It gave birth to limitless wonders and horrors, and beyond the will of Atlantis' mages, it made its own rules, unanswerable to even the High Speech.

The Gate changed that. The Gate found a world beyond the world, where mocking reflections existed, but no self-sustained existence. The Gate discovered the Abyss, or perhaps only named it — or maybe, these acts are one in the same. His name (or hers — few of the Exarchs have definite genders) is the legacy of this act. The Exarchs don't want to destroy the Fallen World, but it can't be their prison without the Abyss. They let a bit of the rot that dwells Beyond blind every soul.

They owe The Gate everything, but the other Exarchs' visions always say: *do not worship him. Do not speak to her in your dreams.*

Of course, not everyone listens.

of Mammon, and Seers whisper that he'll one day be recognized as an Archigenitor.

The Nemesis: This Exarch enforces the division between flesh and spirit. The Shadow represents an untamed part of the Fallen World that even the Exarchs cannot bring to heel. The Spirit Seal lets human ignorance and passions breed monsters in the Shadow, but it conceals the arts that shamans and traditional sorcerers use to placate and bind them.

The Psychopomp: Death's Seal commands souls. Barring them from Stygia's release, it condemns them to abide in numerous incarnations or erode into gray shades. If there is a heaven, the Psychopomp guards the way with a sword, and will only let the greatest Seers enter.

The Prophet: This Exarch's followers say Time is propelled by the actions of the elect upon the guileless masses. The ideal Seer is a "Great Man" who drives history toward an inevitable triumph; Sleepers must follow in lockstep or be crushed beneath the tide.

The Raptor: The Seal of Life promotes faith in natural law, unleavened by free will. The world is predator and prey, rot and renewal, and individuals are helpless to choose how they flow along the world's life cycle. Instinct and resignation replaces free will.

The Ruin: Fate's Seal is the entropy that destroys dreams, relationships and even civilizations. Mystic destinies create new opportunities, but the Ruin ensures that people are skeptical and cynical about the opportunities ahead of them.

The Tyrannical Mystery

As rulers, the Exarchs are neither quiet nor blatant. It's an article of faith among Seers that the Exarchs could amaze the world with pillars of fire or speak with the booming voice of God Himself if they wished, but it's easier for them to use visions and omens instead. If the Exarchs unleashed their full power they'd reveal that miracles are possible and perhaps shock some Sleepers into Awakening. Even the most fanatical follower of a Paternoster-dominated faith should always carry a seed of doubt.

So the Exarchs subtly direct people from all walks of life. For the most part, their messages get more straightforward as you move up the chain of command. A Sleeper with a function to perform might dream that his father told him to go to such and such a place and bring his gun. Meanwhile, a Minister's mind would be aflame with that maneuver, along with the other components of a grander plan. He knows the Sleeper will blunder into a mugging in progress, panic and

shoot the wrong person: a courier for the Pentacle. The mugger is another unknowing Seer agent. When he takes his victim's purse, he doesn't know a Super-nal Artifact is inside. The Minister sees his master's wishes and positions other Seer agents to block random elements and counter opposing maneuvers from other great powers. He supervises thousands to a particular end, all according to an explicit dream. His servants receive visions and mysterious orders suited to their tasks.

At this point, you might get the impression that the Exarchs continually send visions to all of their agents, but this isn't the case. Only the four great Ministers constantly speak with the Exarchs. Below that, Seers rely on the hierarchy of each Ministry. They usually follow orders from other mages, not dreams and coincidences. Nevertheless, the Exarchs can speak to anyone at any time, so their servants are always on the lookout for new omens, and are always aware that the Exarchs are watching them. When minor Seers experience a vision, they often assume it's because the Exarchs have orders they don't want the higher ups to know. Seers of the Throne routinely use visions to justify internal coups or pursue secret projects. Naturally, this adds an extra layer of suspicion to Seer politics.

Portentous Dreams

To voluntarily contact the Exarchs, a Seer of the Throne requires Seers of the Throne Status • and the Dream Merit (see *Mage: The Awakening*, p. 82). Seers of the Throne with Status • may learn and even increase this Merit's power during play.

This combination of Merits alters the Dream Merit in that it can now *only* be used to summon visions from the Exarchs (or what would *seem* to be the Exarchs). Seers with these traits also acquire a new Flaw: Mystery Commands.

Mystery Commands: Your character receives occasional omens and visions from the Exarchs: dreams, visions and coincidences woven into everyday life. These normally instruct her to perform certain tasks. She doesn't know the purpose of these orders, though she can sometimes guess what they might be. Their characteristics depend on her Status within the Seers of the Throne. Seers without this Flaw can still receive messages from the Exarchs, but they aren't as regular or onerous. Each listing notes the most extreme commands she might encounter — lesser examples than those associated with her current Status are always possible.

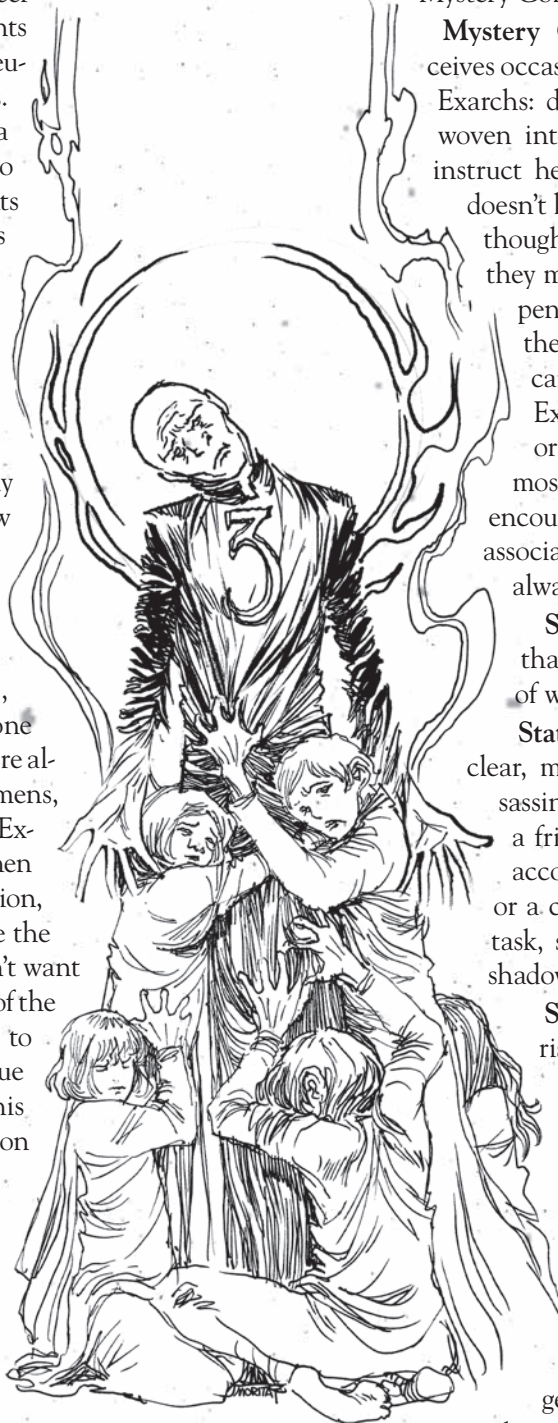
Status •: Vague omens and visions that could be interpreted in a number of ways.

Status ••: Messages that spell out a clear, moderately arduous objective (assassinate a weak Pentacle mage, spy on a friend for a tetrarch), but could be accomplished in any number of ways, or a clear message to perform a minor task, such as picking up a package or shadowing a certain person.

Status •••: Signs that point to a risky task (secretly betray a fellow pylon member, spy on a Pentacle Ruling Council) but again, provide great leeway in how to go about it, or specific instructions on a moderate task.

Status ••••: Omens and dreams about a dangerous task (assassinate a Hierarchy, for example) but flexibility on how to get it done, or specific instructions about a risky task.

Status •••••: The character is inundated with visions about multiple objectives, but may delegate and prioritize them as she sees fit. She may also receive very specific commands to perform a dangerous task.



Ignoring a Mystery Command is dangerous. The Exarchs may send another mage who has this Flaw to punish the offender, or may send false messages through the Dream Merit. Fortunately, using the Dream Merit to investigate a Mystery Command can uncover clues that may help her reach the ordered objective.

Like all Flaws, the player earns an additional experience point whenever a Mystery Command causes a significant problem for her character.

The Exarchs' Hate

The Seers of the Throne would have you believe the Exarchs' rule is absolute, but if that's true, why haven't they eradicated their enemies? Seer sects have formulated various explanations for this that resemble Sleepers' religious apologetics. A few believe the Exarchs' conquest is ongoing, and that they'll eventually perfect the Fallen prison. They either can't or won't use raw force to rule the world — most of the time.

Beyond the threshold of mystic Mastery, the Exarchs act openly against their mightiest rivals. They attack archmages, gods and ancient elemental forces from above and below. In the everyday world, their secret maneuvers deny these enemies access to resources and followers. Agents destroy a god's burgeoning cult, or

The Paranoid Option

This book isn't completely geared to player-controlled Seers, but we have kept the option in mind. The modified Dream Merit and Mystery Commands are examples of this. Not everyone wants to play a Seer who's constantly following strange visions, so it's just an option — not every Seer's personal albatross.

This matters to the Seers as an organization, too. Most Seers have felt the Exarchs' presence at least once, and a few hear them regularly, but there might be Seers who've *never* identified a message from them.

These varied experiences affect how Seers approach the sect. Some Seers know the Exarchs are manifest everywhere; others doubt they exist at all.

The degree to which the Exarchs influence Seers of the Throne is an open question. Obviously, something is issuing Mystery Commands — but is it really the Exarchs?

hide the special ingredients an archmage needs to complete his most important spell.

Acting from above, they use naked power: spells, monsters and spirit legions that would make the earth tremble if they weren't confined to secret planes of existence and lonely parts of the world. When a Pentacle mage progresses beyond Mastery she can no longer rely completely on the Exarchs' subtlety. They are her *personal* enemies, and if they can simply kill her, they will.

This conflict is hidden from human eyes and barely perceived by most mages. Some Masters have heard that it's called the Ascension War, and that battles between pylons and cabals are its critical maneuvers, but the rest of the war plays out in battlefields so vast, strange or abstract that only unimaginably powerful beings can even comprehend them. It seems that all sides in the Ascension War adhere to certain rules to protect the world against their full power. This Pax Arcanum is known to lesser mages, though its precise rules are not. The Exarchs are apparently permitted to blatantly oppose powerful beings, but can't directly influence the material plane except to oppose rivals who break the pact. There are signs that every side in the Ascension war *cheats* to one degree or another, too.

The Exarchs' chief instruments in the Ascension War are tetrarchies: councils of Masters and Archmasters that oversee Seers of the Throne around the world. They coordinate the Exarchs' two-pronged strategy of attacking from above and below, though they vastly prefer the former to the latter. Swaying economies and religions is much safer for them than taking to the field, and lets them cultivate the worldly influence they need to accumulate occult resources against the day intrigue fails, and they must assault the higher planes with elemental forces.

Ochemata

Exarchs don't enter the mortal plane, but they do send powerful servants to protect critical interests. These are the *ochemata*: avatars of their Supernal souls. Seer doctrine says that ochema are "sheaths" or "shells" cast off by the Exarch: a fraction of his true power. Archigenitors use ochemata the most; their Ministers often have them as bodyguards. Otherwise, ochemata descend from the stolen Supernal Realms to assassinate gods and Invisible Masters, kill cabals with mighty mystic secrets, or inundate rebellious nations with disasters: fire, flood and pestilence. The

Secret Battlefields

Where is the Ascension War fought? Participants charge lesser beings with the task of acquiring critical components or influencing worldly affairs to give them an edge, because even though they cannot use their full power on the material plane, ochemata, archmages and other beings utterly depend on the world for power and strategic assets. Their hidden realms all rely on material reality in one way or another. The Shadow and Astral Plane both reflect the mundane world, so when it changes, they change, and the otherworlds of high magic need material elements to persist.

There's always some earthly connection: a keystone, social organization or other crucial component that was either used to create it, or must maintain a particular configuration to sustain the realm. Destroy her church, and the goddess' realm fails. Steal the horn of a demon, and an archmage can't use it to build his secret dimension. Invisible Masters, ochemata and other powers also need these items to complete spells or bring arcane prophecies to fruition. See **Tome of the Mysteries** for more information about these *quintessences*.

In short, don't look at the Ascension War as the heart of the conflict. Archmasters rely on your players' characters. The high Mysteries can't change that. For all the great powers' desire to shape the world below, they are shaped by it in turn.

Pax Arcanum prevents an ochema from blatantly intervening in worldly events outside of a strict set of circumstances, so that last example is rare, but not unknown.

Like all the great powers, the Exarchs cheat whenever they can. They send ochemata on secret missions, where they usually possess mortal shells and only employ their elementary abilities. In truth, it's usually easier to send a Seer to do the same job, but there are times when an Exarch must guarantee success. If there's a vital secret or Artifact involved, an ochema is a perfect courier and spy.

Manifestations

When an ochema hasn't taken a particular form it is invisible, though it radiates unadulterated Supernal power. Unless an ochema uses magic to conceal itself,

a mage's unseen senses automatically perceive its presence to the point where the mage's normal style of perception (goose bumps, hairs standing on end) works on overdrive. The mage's hair turns white, or superficial lacerations rip across the back of his hands. The same effects apply to Sleepers with an Unseen Sense Merit tuned to sorcery.

Mage Sight spells sense ochemata based on their ruling Exarchs. For example, "Spatial Awareness" reveals the presence of a servant of the Eye. Under the Mage Sight, an ochema takes on a shape dependent upon the viewer's Path and beliefs, colored by the corrupt, controlling nature of its Exarch. For example, a Thyrsus sees an ochema of the Father as a blue-white fire enshrouding a raven. Its flight feathers are made of iron or heavy stone and its eyes have been plucked out. An Obrimos looking at the same ochema could see the classic representation of God — a bearded patriarch clothed in celestial fire — but His hands and feet are bound with heavy iron shackles that are in turn inscribed with prayers in a hundred Sleeper religions.

An ochema can take any form, cross into any realm and even conceal its Resonance, but even though it's an enslaved aspect of an Exarch's soul, nothing can perfectly hide its Supernal purity.

Game Systems

Every ochema has the following abilities:

Travel All Realms: An ochema can travel anywhere, as long as no being has intentionally erected a barrier against entry. In those cases, it must use magic, clever planning or brute strength to pass. It takes a material or ephemeral form appropriate to the plane. Only the Abyss is beyond the limit of this power.

Take Any Shape: An ochema can take any form with a Size of 20 or less. It must use magic to take a larger Size or otherwise alter its physical abilities. It can create clothing or simple equipment suitable to its role. However, it must use a supernatural power to disguise itself as a particular person or thing.

Supernal Perfection: Ochemata come from the Supernal Realms, where the archetypes of all things dwell, and it is of the Exarchs, who reign over the Fallen World. It moves and acts in accordance with the secret, true laws of things, combining Platonic perfection with the ability to exploit secret mystical currents. They gain the rote quality (re-roll failed dice) on all actions except for spellcasting.

Spirit Traits: Ochemata are not spirits, but the

systems for spirits serve them well. They use Power, Finesse, Resistance and Corpus as if they were spirits, but do not possess Essence. The weakest ochemata are the equivalent of Rank 4 spirits; some may have a rank of 6, 7 or higher. See pp. 217-222 of **Mage: The Awakening** for the relevant systems.

Magic: Ochemata do not have Essence or Influences. Instead, they possess a Mana trait equivalent to Essence and have the same Arcana as Awakened mages (not just Influences that duplicate them). A lesser ochema is a Master in the Arcanum associated with its ruling Exarch. (For example, an ochema sent by the Eye has at least Space 5.) It usually possesses at least 5 other dots in additional Arcana. Greater ochema are even more powerful.

Ochemata use Rank as their Gnosis. They know every rote related to their Exarch's primary Arcanum, but roll Power + Finesse + Arcanum for all spells, regardless of Arcanum. Ochemata *can* suffer Paradoxes and for this purpose are treated as if they had a Wisdom of 1.

An ochema may possess a few Numina as well, but these are usually trivial compared to its magical abilities.

This Is Not a Monster

Ochemata are fragments of the Exarchs, so don't incorporate them into your games lightly. Their Supernal Perfection ability alone is enough to annihilate mages who might otherwise look like they'd stand a chance. On the other hand, remember that as participants in the Ascension War, they're bound by the terms of the Pax Arcanum. Ochemata who casually kill and dominate people in the material realm invite retribution from other powerful entities. In many stories, they're guards and messengers, less responsive to brute force than a strategy that undermines their masters' goals.

Sample Ochema: Shadow of the General

Quote: *That's an order.*

Background: Nobody's sure who authorized Colonel Reginald Monday to take command of C Company. The paperwork was incomplete, but other officers deferred to him and in Afghanistan, you can't sit around for too long debating protocol. Requests for more information from CENTCOM never seemed to



reach the right ear, the company was isolated because of previous (and weird) orders, and for some reason communications gear never seemed to work right.

Strange things happened after he took charge. A month in, one of the men started crying blood. By that time, Col. Monday had acquired a group of very, very loyal junior officers. Two of them took that guy away for medical treatment. He was never seen again.

Ever since then, orders have stopped coming in through normal channels. Col. Monday set up wide patrols that somehow pissed off tribal irregulars. They had to kill a lot of them. Half the brigade is digging for weapons caches in the mountains, but they're supposed to look out for antiquities too. The colonel says Al Qaeda, the Taliban or whoever the enemy is (as far as anyone can figure, everyone hates C Company now) is selling them to fund operations.

Just last week, a dirty, burly guy knocked out two perimeter guards. He was dressed like a Ranger but he had the same big, odd tattoo — it looked like five arrows — on each arm. The guy went right for Monday's office but something happened, like he was hit with an incendiary grenade or something. The colonel got a guy from his inner circle to bury the body.

People are going crazy. There have been three suicides in the last week. Meanwhile, Col. Monday is planning

an offensive that'll probably stray over the border, right near Pakistani patrols. It'll be a political disaster, but when people try to oppose him they tend to either disappear or suddenly change their minds.

Appearance: As Colonel Reginald Monday, he looks like a fit, tall man with white hair and green eyes, dressed for the part. Nobody ever sees him eat and nobody hears him raise his voice, but he's always smiling. His teeth are perfectly straight, but a disgusting yellow-gray color.

The Acanthus Adamantine Arrow who knew his true nature saw a thin, sexless, white-skinned figure whose face had been flayed down to a steel skull, covered in Atlantean runes.

Storytelling Hints: The Shadow of the General skirts the edge of the Pax Arcanum. It's impersonated an American officer to search for an Atlantean Artifact and spark a violent incident between US, Pakistani

and Afghan forces. The General wants to turn the Afghanistan mission into a travesty, ruin some officers and replace them with Praetorian agents and in the long term, spark a major theater war with a hint of nuclear deployment. His ochema knows that it doesn't have much time left before its continued presence would definitely violate of the Pax Arcanum, so it's planning a real clusterfuck for C Company before it leaves.

Rank (Gnosis): 4

Attributes: Power 12, Finesse 8, Resistance 10

Willpower: 22

Mana: 25

Initiative: 18

Defense: 12

Speed: 27

Size: 5

Corpus: 15

Arcana: Fate 3, Forces 5, Mind 4, Prime 1

THE MINISTRIES

To rule a Ministry is to rule the world. To rule a Ministry is to be the most favored slave, and the most deeply enslaved. To be a Minister is to hold the reins of power over the Fallen World, but always with an Exarch's chains wrapped around every thought, word and deed.

At least, this is true for the great Ministries. Lesser Ministries like Mammon have surprisingly normal mages at the helm. They're weaker, and have less influence over the Seers of the Throne, but they're more capable of independent thought. Lesser Ministers are a combination of administrator and spymaster wrapped up in a mage who might be no stronger than an Adept. The great Ministers are high archmages, prophets babbling Supernal secrets learned from fever dreams, and are served by an inner circle of tetrarchs who act as high priests, corporate vice presidents and trusted viceroys.

They rule the Ministries: the Seers' great factions. Pentacle mages usually think of the Ministries as parallels for their own orders. The Guardians of the Veil spy, and so does the Eye. Warriors, scholars and politicians work on both sides, with their respective Ministries and factions. This is a simplistic view, however, because the Seers of the Throne have concerns far beyond the focus of the magic-obsessed orders, and ceaselessly compete for the Exarchs' favor.

There are not four Ministries or five, but dozens, ranging from isolated cults run by Ministers who

scarcely deserve the title to the four great Ministries that torture the world into Quiescence. Ministries are not the heirs of the Atlantean state. They are fully a part of the Fallen World's history. Some mages think the orders owe their continued existence to some primal blueprint that the Awakened City etched into the cosmos. The Ministries evolved within the Fallen World, and left no mark on prehistory. If Atlantis left an imperishable mark, the Ministries don't partake of it. They rise and fall with the times. They're born as small cults, grow into world-spanning conspiracies with mad Ministers at the helm, and die when the world passes them by. The Praetorians overthrew the Diadochi when crumbling empires eclipsed petty kings. One day, Mammon's money might replace the Hegemonic ideology.

There are currently four great Ministries. There have never been more, though there have been fewer, since the concept of the Ministry is a recent innovation, born of the Hegemonic faction's efforts. They struggle for supremacy on principle, but the prevailing wisdom is that none of them will ever dominate the others. They are too evenly matched. Thus, they expend far more effort keeping the lesser Ministries weak and divided.

Every Ministry has a specialty, but it is not a job description for its members. A Ministry's focus does give it an edge when it comes to accomplishing certain

tasks, but regardless of ideology, it takes all kinds to rule the world. The Praetorian Ministry includes the finest warrior-Seers, but it has its fair share of cowards, intellectuals and negotiators. Besides, the Paternoster Ministry has marksmen, too.

Cultural Ministries

The great Ministries are global organizations with numerous fronts. Lesser Ministries can be similarly spread out around the world, but many are confined to a single culture — even one city (though most Seers hold Ministries that small in contempt). Locally-focused Ministries often exert a great deal of power over their territory, even over larger counterparts, but their insular cultures often prevent them from expanding. Still, this focus makes them highly effective in their area. An Irish Ministry that expertly plays upon Catholic and Protestant tensions might amass considerable clout, but its quasi-Christian traditions and Gaelic language rites are hard for other Seers to understand.

Great Ministries encourage members to form local cults, but members must cleave to the party line. The current great Ministries are all biased toward Western cultural traditions for a very simple reason: they encouraged Western colonialism and took their place at its head. Of course, the great Ministries are old enough that their inner workings are as different from the modern Western mindset as they would be if they took ideas from the other side of the world, too. Ultimately, however, they're not loyal to any Fallen World culture. When its balance of power changes, so will they — and if they don't, they'll fall to a young, dynamic Ministry that rides the zeitgeist.

Ministers

The Pentacle orders are divided by city and region, run by squabbling Masters and their rough Consilii. The Ministries are different. They have global hierarchies that rise from the lowest cult to the Exarchs' voices: the Ministers.

When a Seer says her Minister is one of those voices, the exact meaning depends on her Ministry's Status and the Minister's personal power. Ministers who head lesser Ministries say they know the will of the Exarchs

through secret messages and well-defined philosophies. The rulers of the great Ministries are archmages who speak in riddles and mad rants, interspersed with commands that describe plots of incredible complexity and a genius that no Sleeper could ever possess.

Ministers provide inspiration, practical management and the final word on their Ministry's dogma, but many spend as much time defending their positions as using them. Personal loyalty is difficult to find and when all is said and done, a Minister is still a servant of the Exarchs. If a Seer thinks he can be a *better* servant, nothing in the Seers of the Throne's ideology prevents him from staging a coup. This is how the position traditionally changes hands. At times, Ministers create cults of personality and claim pontifical infallibility, but the propaganda is never ironclad, and anyone who could seriously contend for the highest position in any Ministry is cynical enough to ignore it and smart enough to justify his actions in spite of it.

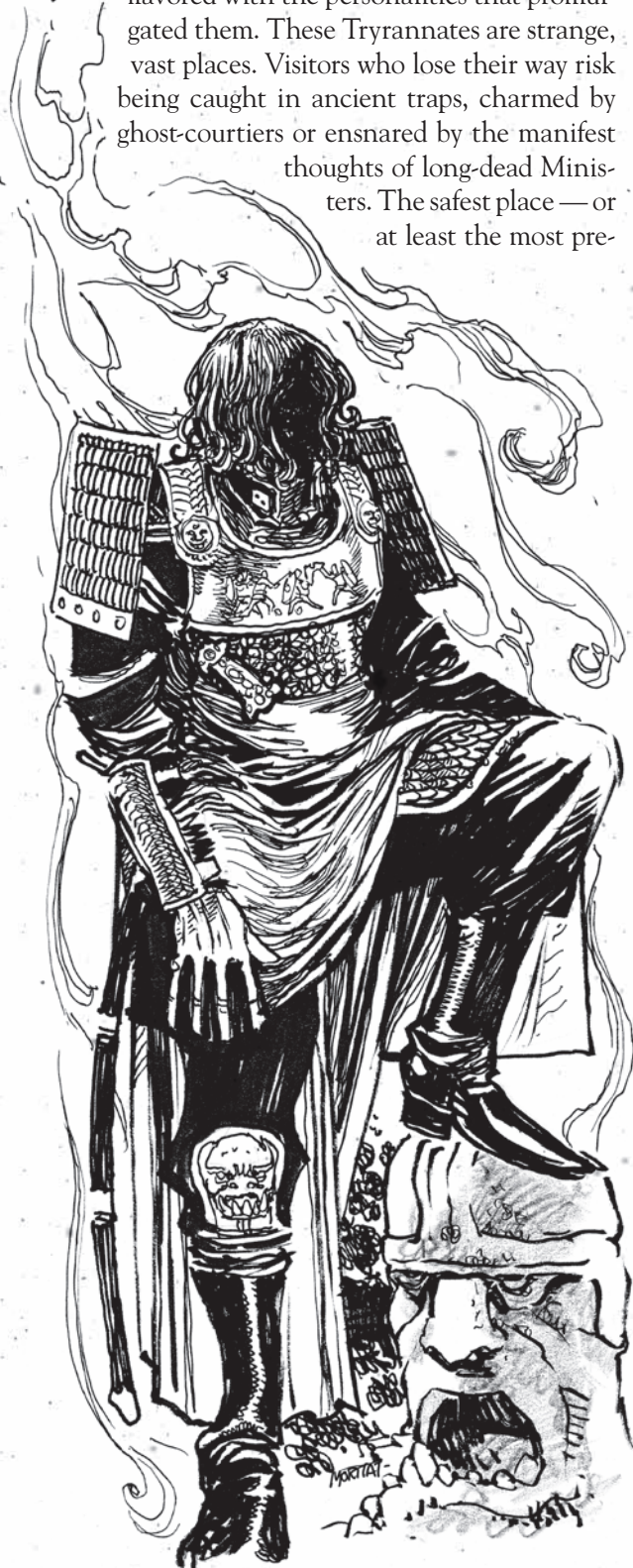
Heavy is the head that wears the crown — but it is a crown. Make no mistake: Ministers command vast resources and, from a certain point of view, might be said to rule the world. Large Ministries have a global reach; the Ministers are at the head of this network and need not concern themselves with the equivalent of a Consilium. Panopticon sends the Eye to every part of the world. Some lesser Ministries much limit themselves to a certain territory, but they're always planning to move beyond it. Caring about one Fallen shithole over another is terribly *provincial*. The Ministries are meant to govern an entire universe; from the view at the top, the world's cities and cultures are either ways to manipulate the weak, or points on a strategic map. They do not have intrinsic value.

Great Ministers

They are the viceroys of the Archigenitors: hollow souls, made so by the blazing, consuming fire of an Exarch's proximity. These are the rulers of the Hegemonic, Panopticon, Paternoster and Praetorian Ministries. One Seer says her Minister is a holy prophet, or a celestial emperor with the Mandate of Heaven. A rival says the Minister is a mere husk whose personality was long ago consumed by the Exarchs' glory. A third might say that both statements are true, and that there is no greater destiny than to be filled with the Exarchs and taken into their Supernal souls.

The great Ministers are archmages. They rule from special realms built from high magic. Other mages call them Chantryes, and tell legends of the Archmasters

crafting them from elements of their own souls. The great Ministries fortresses are slightly different, as they've been passed from Minister to Minister. Each adds part of herself to the realm. Over centuries, they've become reflections of their Ministries' ideals, flavored with the personalities that promulgated them. These Tryrannates are strange, vast places. Visitors who lose their way risk being caught in ancient traps, charmed by ghost-courtiers or ensnared by the manifest thoughts of long-dead Ministers. The safest place — or at least the most pre-



dictable — is the Minister's citadel. These are where the lords of the world dwell.

They are never alone. Aside from Seer heralds and petitioners, every great Minister is minded by at least one ochema and a large personal staff. To call appointment to a Tyrannate a thankless job would be an understatement; lesser mages were never meant to live so far from the Fallen World. They're twisted by the combined powers of living and dead Ministers' souls. In the Praetorian Tyrannate, servants turn into perfect warriors made of iron and crystal or screaming spirits of strife.

The Ministers don't mutate to fit the realm, but they aren't exactly untouched, either. The Exarchs speak through them. Not even the sublime mind of an Archmaster can withstand the experience without changing. Some babble prophecies and poems from their thrones. Seers faithfully record and interpret every word, converting them into coherent commands using traditional techniques and pragmatic considerations. In lucid moments, the Ministers might still speak in codes that will only make sense to Seers who've been contacted by particular Exarchs, or trained for the day a secret word will activate an old contingency. A Minister is only straightforward in an emergency. Even so, they display inhuman brilliance and foresight. This is to be expected; they are the greatest mages known to exist. Order archmages and mavericks may exist with even greater power, but they stay in the shadows.

Lesser Ministers

The heads of lesser Ministries can't claim ancient magical planes or bodyguards sent by the Exarchs. On the other hand, they're typically hands-on leaders who give clear instructions. These Ministers are usually surrounded by arcane Artifacts and veteran Seer servants, but if you take the Awakened element out of it, you're still left with an effective administration. Lesser Ministers have yet to be consumed by the full fire of the Exarchs, so they can rule with a human touch. Even though they're as likely to encounter signs of the Exarchs as anyone else with the same magical ability, they are not in direct psychic communion. It's a two-edged sword. The high Ministers are *never* wrong. They truly know the will of the Exarchs. Lesser Ministers have to think hard about what a portentous symbol or dream really means, knowing full well that if they're wrong, the Exarchs could arrange to remove them.

Some of these Ministers don't even want to attain the pinnacle of power. They fear an Archgenitor's

favor. This presents something of a dilemma, because their advancement determines how high their subordinates can rise. If a Minister is content to remain a Master, she can't control anyone searching for the secrets of Archmastery but can't let these talented mages leave the fold, either. Stagnation and tension rule the upper echelons. Subordinates wonder if they could climb higher if they eliminated the current Minister, and she's far easier to subvert or assassinate than counterparts in the Great Ministries. This can lead to a de facto rule by council. Several tetrarchs equal or exceed the Minister's power and demand a say in Ministry affairs.

Material wealth means nothing in the Invisible Realms, but lesser Ministers don't live there. They claim the opulence that is theirs by right — they're the world's wardens, after all. They work in secure, glittering buildings and live in mansions. They use magic sparingly. Ordinary wealth can supply many of their personal and official needs. There are always exceptions: Ministers who live like monks to show their piety to the Exarchs, and whole Ministries of beggars and light-traveling nomads. These Ministries are not very popular, however, because when all is said and done, the Seers of the Throne usually lure mages with the promise of wealth and power. It would take a compelling leader to convince any mage to surrender his freedom *and* material comfort.

Tetrarchies

The tetrarchs are lesser Archmasters and Masters who lay claim to a large geographical region. Germany has two tetrarchies. California has its own. Surface area, population and ancient tradition all influence a tetrarchy's borders, but they are almost always larger than single cities. Territories covering 30 million to 100 million Sleepers are typical. Traditionally, the term tetrarchy refers to both the council of tetrarchs and the dominion it rules, but this is an Artifact of simpler times, when a single tetrarchy influenced thousands of Sleepers, not millions.

The name "tetrarch" doesn't mean what it used to. In the past, it referred to the idea that there would be one tetrarch for each great Ministry. These would form a council of four rulers, each of whom claimed total control of their Ministry's purview. The classic tetrarchy still holds, but nowadays, any Master who commands several pylons can make a play for a seat on the tetrarchy, as can any Seer Master. Some now

assign an alternative meaning to the word "tetrarch," as they note that the Invisible Masters recognize four stages of Gnosis beyond the reach of Mastery but before the threshold of Ascension. The title is now often used to indicate initiation into that fourfold mystery, which is said to be to Awakening what Awakening is to Sleep.

Modern tetrarchies reflect the political makeup of their region. They all include representatives of the great Ministries, but in some domains small Ministries send Masters to claim a place. When enough of these lesser tetrarchs take their places, their influence can override that possessed by the great Ministers' servants. In the modern age, these arrangements are actually more stable than the traditional council of Archmasters. The world's population is greater than



ever, and where a tetrarch archmage used to be able to balance his studies of the deep Mysteries with the duties of ruling a protectorate, his modern counterpart must sacrifice his political power for his magical studies, or vice versa.

Tetrarchs act on their Ministers' orders with a great deal of discretion. Sometimes this is because the commands are cryptic; sometimes it's because they deal with a global perspective, so it's up to the tetrarchy to customize things in light of the situation on the ground. The tetrarchy also manages the Seers' worldly influences. Pylons build social, political and economic capital on the ground, but the tetrarchy invests it throughout the region. This is one of the reasons the Seers of the Throne enjoy so much influence over the Fallen World.

Every tetrarch has a personal stronghold. They rarely invest in a common tetrarchial headquarters. If enemies destroy a tetrarchy it cripples the Seers, so they can't afford a meeting place that can be identified, spied upon and sabotaged. An intelligent tetrarchy makes use of several sancta, hidden among the Seers' worldly assets. Tetrarchs meet in warded boardrooms, churches and government buildings. A few of them even have access to old Atlantean strongholds, but it takes a confident conspiracy of Seers to meet in one of these. In most cases, they were built by the Throne's ancient rivals. Who knows what ghosts and traps sleep there, defying even the most thorough magical precautions?

Pylons

Pylons are the local face of the Throne, where Seers keep the Sleepers Quiescent, the Pentacle crippled and the world under the thumb of the Lie with their day-to-day actions. There are roughly equal numbers of mixed and single-Ministry pylons. Each type has its own uses.

Every Ministry plots for ultimate power, but they acknowledge that each one has its specialty. Hegemonic and Mammon Seers acquire money and favors as easily as they breathe, but when Arrows hunt you, a Praetorian warrior is the one to see. The downside of a mixed pylon is that rivalries inevitably rear their heads. The group either collapses under the backstabbing or gets whipped into a small tyranny where one leader holds all the cards. Naturally, there are exceptions, too. Seers make friends among their own, and occasionally, fanatical devotion to the Exarchs wipes away all thoughts of dissent.

An Archmaster's Dilemma

A tetrarch is almost always a Master, at least. A few multiple-degree Adepts have taken the post on behalf of a lesser Ministry, but their more enlightened peers don't accord them much respect. Senior tetrarchs are archmages: initiates of terrible Mysteries that could alter the course of the world. Unlike counterparts from the orders, tetrarchs regularly work with lesser mages, but this creates a complicated situation for them. If they use their full power for the Seers of the Throne, they'll break the Pax Arcanum.

Some tetrarchs can't resist the temptation to use the high Mysteries to support their duties. They try to be subtle, but it's never easy to hide magic from the Awakened. Someone notices a stock market shift is a little too convenient for certain investors, or encounters Seer Soldiers with remarkable arcane enhancements. Enemy Archmages find out who broke the pact. Their response usually destroys the offender utterly. Sometimes, nobody remembers they ever existed.

Single-Ministry pylons are much more focused, but limited by a shared ideology. The Ministries are less specialized than the orders, but no Ministry can claim balanced expertise in everything the Seers do. To compensate, homogenous pylons often concentrate on establishing total dominance over a very small section of the Throne's mission. A Paternoster pylon subverts every church, mosque and temple. The priests and counselors tell the faithful to passively accept the injustice in this world, but to distrust members of other religions. Panopticon claims the surveillance infrastructure: every security firm, undercover police operation and FBI station they can get their hands on.

The pylon is the equivalent of a Pentacle cabal, but there's no local Consilium to which to appeal. Tetrarchies care about states and nations, not every urban center that might host a few Seers. Pylons can use the chain of command to request formidable resources, but there is no court to settle local disputes. Without local authorities to moderate things, pylons compete for local assets ruthlessly. Pylon disputes don't automatically turn into bloodbaths, however. The credo, "Me against my brother, my brother and I against the outsider," applies.



THE POWER OF THE THRONE

In the Seers of the Throne, Status measures more than one's place in the pecking order. Status is power over the Fallen World, won by the grace of a conspiracy that's subverted humanity's potential and skimmed from its labor for millennia. Even a neophyte enjoys luxuries that never would have been available to her before, and she doesn't even need to use magic to get them. Privilege is one of the Seers' strongest recruiting tools. The Throne offers sex, wealth and political power — and it only gets better as Seers climb the Iron Pyramid of power.

Pylons build and maintain temporal power through a combination of magical force, canny favor trading and the connections lent to them by their tetrarchies. The tetrarchs hold the true reins of power. They manage the numbered accounts and keep the databases of corrupt politicians. Few tetrarchies hoard it all, though, because these resources keep the pylons below them strong enough to boost their positions when they compete against one another, and because the average tetrarch has begun a journey that takes him away from the concerns of the material realm, in search of the raw power of the Exarchs themselves. Tetrarchs often discipline rogue Seers by cutting them off. It's an effective tactic, because lower-ranked mages are so often driven by the materialism that brought them into the fold in the first place. It's not as effective against elder Seers, who grow less interested in the power Sleepers see, than the power the Exarchs keep for themselves.

The Benefits of Status

Seers of the Throne possess two kinds of Status: one for the sect as a whole, and one representing Ministry affiliation. Purchase these Merits separately. Both types of Status Merit reduce the cost of certain other Merits. If the Seer invests at least one Merit dot of his own, she can divide a number of additional Merit dots equal to the applicable Status Merit between all qualifying Merit dots. For example, a mage with Seers of the Throne Status ●●● and Hegemonic Ministry Status ●● could add another dot of Artifact, two dots

New Merit: Luxury (●● or ●●●●)

Many Seers of the Throne possess this Merit. It doesn't represent flexible resources but the ability to live a privileged lifestyle without spending money. Seers acquire this through blackmail, favor trading and investments in businesses and other organizations that cater to the elite.

Effect: Your character lives like a millionaire or better, regardless of her actual Resources. She wears fine clothes, drives expensive cars and can always get a spot at exclusive restaurants and resorts. She doesn't pay for any of it through cash transactions. Instead, her social ties and backers provide these creature comforts.

The ●● version of this Merit provides the luxuries someone with US\$5 million in assets (or Resources 5) could enjoy without breaking the bank. She always flies first class or in a chartered plane. There's a Porsche waiting for her at the airport, and she can always get past the bodyguards at a nightclub. The ●●●● version of the Merit provides the kind of lifestyle that alternately fascinates and disgusts the rest of the world. The character has jets and helicopters at her constant disposal, rubs shoulders with celebrities and can count on a staff of assistants willing to cater to her every legal whim — and a few illegal ones (recreational drugs and prostitutes, for example).

Drawback: Your character's luxuries ultimately belong to somebody else. They are for her personal use. She can have guests, of course, but can't support them for an extended period of time. If she tries to resell or earn money using this Merit she finds that she either can't move her borrowed assets, or is punished with the loss of this Merit. This Merit cannot be used to acquire weaponry or illegal items.

of Resources and a dot of Allies, and a dot of Status in a government agency, as long as she has invested one of her own dots in each of these Merits.

Characters can shift these Status-granted dots around at the beginning of a new story. In an emergency, they might be able to switch them up with an emergency appeal to the tetrarchy as well. If the bonus dots contribute to a single item or indivisible benefit (such as an Artifact), the tetrarchy replaces the item, place or individual with one that fits the character's new, effective Merit dots.

The disadvantage of availing oneself of this benefit is that a tetrarch with superior Status of the applicable type can remove it whenever he wishes. This is not a supernatural effect; the tetrarch simply issues orders and spreads the rumors necessary to part the Seer from her bonus dots.

Status grants Merit dots as follows:

Status (Seers of the Throne): Artifact, Resources

Status (Hegemonic Ministry): Allies, Retainer (Hive-Souled), Status (Government Bureaucracy or Political Organization)

Status (Panopticon Ministry): Contacts, Retainer (Grigori), Status (Intelligence Agency or Organized Crime)

Status (Paternoster Ministry): Library, Retainer (Hollow One), Status (Religion or Cult)

Status (Praetorian Ministry): Enhanced Item, Retainer (Myrmidon), Status (Military or Police)

Status (Lesser Ministry): Lesser Ministries do not usually have access to special servitors (see p. 215) but they will usually have trained Retainers. Select one or two Sleeper organizations the Ministry has its hooks in. Seers from that Ministry can earn additional Status within them. A rising Ministry usually grants exceptional access to one other Merit.

The Iron Pyramid

There's a lot of hierarchical "empty space" between pylons and tetrarchies. The Seers of the Throne believe the Exarchs have designed a set chain of command that extends from the lowliest mage to the Ministers themselves. It's a matter of faith because the Seers believe that the Exarchs *must* give their servants a clear way to Ascend to the Supernal Realms. The secret, true design of the Seers of the Throne figures in its occult philosophy. The Iron Pyramid is a reflection of the cosmos. Sleepers toil at the base; the Seers rise through offices that parallel some facet of Fallen

reality: a secret substructure that reveals the laws the Exarchs have coded into the universe's structure.

That's the theory, at least. Seers compile lists of offices, titles ranging from the grandiose (the Duke of War) to the esoteric (the Vizier of the Ruby Tablet), along with instructions about each office's privileges, rank in the Iron Pyramid, and authority over Seers and Sleepers alike. These schemes frequently contradict each other, even when they're inspired by genuine visions. A few Seers believe that the Iron Pyramid will perfect itself through internal conflict. Rival hierarchies will clash, leaving only the purest expressions of the Exarchs' will to survive. Where orders and other Awakened societies divide Status into the rough categories of Neophyte, Famulus and Magister, the Seers use a maze of Byzantine titles and relationships.

To rise to prominence, a pylon claims offices from the Iron Pyramid. Sometimes the strongest pylon claims ascension to some group position. They're all Curates or Zealators or some such. Usually, however, the leader claims a specific office and her pylon rises with her. The oldest tetrarchies generally endorse one model or another, having already endured the debates, betrayals and rival revelations that led to their synthesis. Newer tetrarchies in the Americas and elsewhere still have a fluid conception of the Iron Pyramid. A powerful pylon stakes a claim on some high office within the model it favors and defends it from all challengers.

Astride the World

The Seers of the Throne are powerful and influential. They claim to be humanity's secret masters. Certainly, they have the wealth and power conspiracy theorists would expect.

Are they?

The answer is ultimately up to the Storyteller. It's a question she doesn't (and you don't) have to answer right away. Some Seers would love to rule openly and put the world under their heel, controlling every mortal urge, but the Fallen World mostly suits them just as it is. Few people Awaken. Every human organization strays from the path to perfection. The species has lost the example of Atlantis and teeters between petty empires and chaotic infighting. A few people suspect that greater powers twist their lives to a selfish end, but they're almost always written off as paranoiacs. In fact, Sleepers who guess the truth seem to be easier to manipulate. They feel so alone and frightened, so desperate for approval that any friendly gesture brings obedience. The Throne

The Bodhisattva Mandate

The Bodhisattva Mandate is one example of the Iron Pyramid in action. It's the accepted hierarchy of the Columbia Tetrarchy, which lays claim to much of the United States and Canadian Northwest. Its pylons supported rival traditions based on Freemasonry, traditional Chinese religion and the British Empire, among other things. When the struggle turned a bit too bloody for the Seers' good, the tetrarchs threw their weight behind four powerful pylons and commanded them to reconcile their "revelations." Fifty years later, the Mandate's traditions hold the tetrarchy together by assigning Seers the following ranks:

Worshipful Arhats: The Worshipful Arhats form the supreme pylon under the tetrarchs (who are the "bodhisattvas" of the Mandate). Each member of the chief pylon has this title, but conversely, each mage must be worthy of the title, or none of them get it. In game terms, this means that each and every member should have Seers of the Throne Status ●●● or above. The Worshipful Arhats serve as vice-tetrarchs and examples to the rest of the Mandate. This is a useful arrangement for archmages in the tetrarchy, who routinely allow the Arhats to rule for them while they ponder the high Mysteries.

Lieutenant of the Blue Lantern: The two Lieutenants (pronounced "leftenant" in the British style) and their pylons are responsible for indoctrinating outsiders into the Throne's fold. They recruit from the newly-Awakened and the orders, so they also serve as the Mandate's spies in other Awakened societies. To become a Lieutenant, the Seer must have a minimum Seer Status of ●●, and the rest of his Pylon must be Fellow-Craft members.

Order of the Earth Gods: A pylon whose members have all achieved Fellow-Craft Status can petition the tetrarchy for the Order of the Earth Gods. Each member is called a "knight" from that moment onward. They survey the tetrarchy for supernatural phenomena, including Verges, Hallows and hidden monsters.

Fellow-Craft: At Seers of the Throne Status ●●, a Mandate Seer becomes a Fellow-Craft, capable of ordering Red Pillars to assist her with personal and Seer projects.

Red Pillar: These are the low mages in the hierarchy. Pylons of Red Pillars are subordinate to other ranks. They are specifically responsible for perpetrating acts of violence on the Mandate's behalf and enforcing loyalty to the Throne, under the principle that zeal should rise from the roots of the organization.

uses them as a weapon against Atlantis' lingering bastards, telling them that the Pentacle's weak conspiracy is the Illuminati of their nightmares.

The Fallen World is very good to the Seers. Almost everything is going according to plan, so the sect doesn't need to act strenuously to enforce its will. They don't need to rig elections; ordinary people are free to choose between several equally harmless candidates. They don't need to keep people staring at the dirt instead of the glory of the Mysteries, because there's enough pain and fear in the world to occupy anyone for a lifetime. Essentially, you can leave the ultimate extent of the Seers' influence a mystery. The Seers of the Throne maintain the status quo, and only need the power necessary to do that. Do they have more? Maybe.

The Master Plan

The Seers' strategy differs from other Awakened conspiracies in several respects. First of all, it is institutional, not local. Their ultimate goal is to secure a two-handed stranglehold on key institutions. One hand

represents the pylons, grasping from the bottom. The other is the tetrarchies, closing in from the top. If all goes according to plan, the plot controls the target in such a way that no matter where it operates, it always fulfills the Throne's goals.

As an example, consider the IRS. Pentacle mages and other locally-focused conspiracies recruit agents from a single city's office. They convince them to lose paperwork, file fraudulent information and overlook financial irregularities. By contrast, the Seers send a pylon to help the local office outperform its peers. Meanwhile, tetrarchy agents point Washington's gaze toward the exceptional branch. They send other agents to copy their methods. The pylon makes contact, inspires petty rivalries and collects blackmail fodder. Eventually, the Seers may or may not dominate the entire IRS, but they've infiltrated it from top to bottom.

Seer plots also attack systems over individuals. At this point, it's useful to restate the sect's attitude toward Sleeper governments: They can have any useless leader they want. Who cares who the president

A More Benevolent Agenda

The Seers of the Throne seem like total bastards, don't they? If they really control the world, they're responsible for terrible events. Even if they don't, they encourage human beings to stick to their worst tendencies. Still, it would be an exaggeration to say that every member of the sect is cynically committed to keeping Sleepers mired in a dystopia. Individual Seers have moral boundaries they aren't willing to cross. Some pylons absolutely refuse to target specific ethnic groups; others will never crush the weakest members of their society into starvation.

Even Seers with a conscience might still believe that these manipulations serve the Sleepers. The Exarchs have charged them with protecting humanity. To most Seers, it means ordinary people can't be allowed to look beyond the Lie. Even if Sleepers don't Awaken, there's still a lot of supernatural power loose in the world. If Sleepers knew enough to seek out Artifacts, secret places, and hidden entities, they could wreck the delicate balance of the Fallen World. It's a far better thing to distract people with poverty, war and spiritually barren beliefs. The world isn't a paradise, but to the Seers of the Throne, it's the best place the unenlightened can hope for.

Then again, for every "Seer with a conscience," there's a dozen who just want to *believe* they have a clear conscience. In many ways, the above excuse doesn't really cut it — but it helps Seers sleep at night when deep down they know they're in it for the power.

is, as long as he believes the Lie? The Seers of the Throne do have a slight preference for regimes that breed intolerance because it divides humanity against itself, but if a position neither opposes nor helps the Throne, it's not particularly important. If they must subvert a leader's decisions, it's much easier to control her options than her choice.

Finally, the Throne guides human institutions into inequality and strife. These prevent Sleepers from looking beyond their political and social problems to the root suffering behind it. If ordinary people questioned why the Fallen World is so merciless to its inhabitants, they might dream of changing it — and the only way to do *that* is to Awaken. The best way to keep Sleepers

in their prison is to turn their attention from the bars. If a society follows an imperialistic or oligarchic model, this suits the Seers splendidly. It divides society into conquerors and the conquered, rich and poor, elites and outcasts. The powerful few waste their time defending themselves against the wretched many, and the wretches focus on taking their masters' place or simply surviving. If such a society evolves into something more egalitarian, it's time to divide and conquer. The Seers encourage racism, sexism, homophobia and religious bigotry not because they believe any of it matters in itself, but because it generates a constant hum of low level conflict that drowns out the Supernal.

THE GREAT MINISTRIES

The Archigenitors' hands are the great Ministries, but in turn, the Ministries ensure that these Exarchs are the first among their kind. The Seers of the Throne believe that the Archigenitors have always been the greatest Exarchs, even when one great Ministry falls and another takes its place. If someone confronts a Seer with the apparent contradiction, she'll probably argue that they had a less than perfect understanding

before, but *this* time, they know the truth. The Seers of the Throne use the same coping mechanisms as any other revealed faith to deal with changes in a supposedly eternal doctrine.

The sect rewrites its history to smooth things along. Scholars say new accounts are "more accurate." The Seers of the Throne rarely destroys evidence of its past, but when old histories fall out of favor they're

consigned to obscure archives. Surprisingly, destroying these embarrassing documents is out of the question, because they might contain some vital occult fact future revisions skip. Such is the drawbacks or a sorcerers' order, where written words hold mystic power. If a Seer digs deep enough, she can find old papers with surprising revelations: signs that the eternal hierarchy of the Throne can fall prey to ordinary historical forces.

Old Ministries fall from greatness; lesser Ministries take their place. The Seers hate to admit it, but their great factions are products of the Fallen World, unmoored to a higher truth. It disgusts the Seers that the confused, rag-tag Pentacle resonates with the legacy of the world before the Fall. Even the Free Council seems to hum with unnatural organizational strength, so that no matter how many times Seers tear it apart, or scatter the Atlantean remnant to the winds, it always reforms. It's shameful. Ministries are instruments of the Exarchs, god-kings of the world, but they suffer senescence and death.

The great Ministries fight to survive, to keep hungry lesser Ministries in their place, but they can only suc-

ceed for so long. Ministries are mortal, but the following four still cling to the summit of power.

Stakes in the Game

As Above, so Below. The Seers of the Throne believe this as much as other mages. This is why, in private, Seers wonder how much hierarchy of Ministries matters to the Exarchs. Sometimes, Exarchs send omens that command them to tear down a weak Ministry. Sometimes it looks like two or more Exarchs have goaded their proxies into bloody conflicts.

What if the Exarchs wax and wane in power with their Ministries, or vice versa? Maybe the Exarchs aren't a unified council of Ascended beings, but enemies waging a long, slow war, using the Ministries as their weapons.

THE HEGEMONIC MINISTRY

Servants of the Unity The State is the Soul

Love the flag, the anthem and the tribe. Hate foreigners and dissenters. Enslave legitimate moral outrage to ruthless politics. Flags, tribes and issues don't matter. They're channels of power, threads the Hegemonic Ministry tugs and weaves to suborn nations. It doesn't stop there, either. The Ministry loves rebellions too, when they turn revolutions into reigns of terror.

Governments have never been so complex and all-encompassing as they are now. There are no unclaimed territories and no frontier where a community can rule according to its own customs. They don't need to do it as often as other people, but even hermits deal with cops, bureaucrats and tax collectors.

If wasn't always this way. Most of human history is the story of tribes and strongmen. The Ministry says that its predecessors arose in China, Rome and Egypt. It talks about the Cult of Terminus, god of boundaries, and Awakened eunuchs who influenced China from behind the scenes. The modern Ministry formed in Western Europe during the 15th century. The early Renaissance provided fertile ground for the Unity's cult — several cults, in fact. These pylons let Italian city-states fight their battles for them. Florence, Milan and Venice prevailed.

At the dawn of the 16th century, Seers from each city met and formed *L'Hegemonie Secrète* (French was the language of the elite at the time) and from there,

followed traders, explorers and conquerors to the rest of the world, absorbing rival Unity worshipers as soon as they found them. Two centuries later, *L'Hegemonie* shifted its main strength to England and the Americas, and reached the height of power, going so far as to reshape other Seer factions in the image of the British Empire and the burgeoning Masonic societies of the colonies. A Ministry is called a Ministry today because of the hegemons; they never tire of pointing it out.

The Hegemonic Ministry's rapid rise (by Seer standards, at least) would be its undoing. States under its thumb grew and changed beyond easy management. The Pentacle enjoyed an upsurge in strength as it wormed its way into the very institutions hegemons had grown for their own use. By the end of the 18th century, the Minister knew he needed to revise the cult again — and made a serious strategic blunder. He invited the Nameless faction to marry its innovation to the Ministry's well-aged power. The war that followed nearly tore the Hegemonic apart and gave birth to the Free Council. The Ministry never recovered from its wounds, and younger, healthier successors wait for it to fail.

Overview

The Hegemonic Ministry is still powerful, but carries the stench of rot and entropy. It relies on cults of personality, cronyism and handshakes in an age where people plan coups by e-mail. It lays claim to economic affairs but lacks the competence to back up its ambitions. Mammon nips at its heels and demonstrates its superior command of money and markets. Primarily, though, it's failed by relying on patriotism, political dogma and the dream of empire, when nowadays people conquer through trade and salute-logos. The Hegemonic Ministry is a dying Leviathan; its end may come in less than a century, but as it thrashes about to survive, it may still prove dangerous enough to take any single challenger with it. Don't underestimate the Unity's cult.

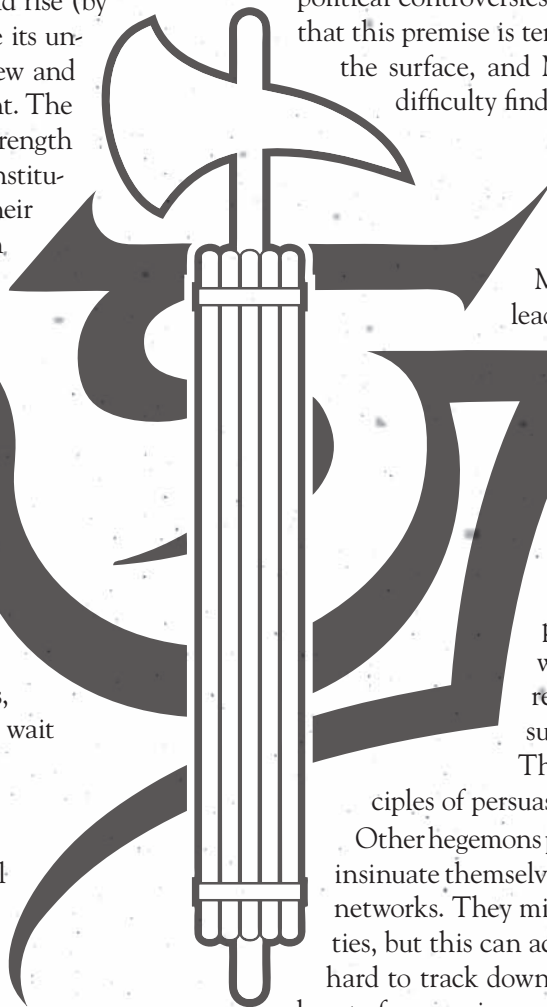
Hegemons are all politicians and bureaucrats of one kind or another, but don't underestimate the possible diversity. They are ideological chameleons where Sleeper affairs are concerned, willing to play anarchist or fascist as the situation requires. All Sleeper political structures are informed by the Lie, so there's no need to get sentimental about them. Hegemons agree that humanity exists to serve the Seers of the Throne and through them, the Exarchs, so there should never be political controversies within the fold. The reality is that this premise is terribly vague once you look past the surface, and Ministry members rarely have difficulty finding fault in their colleagues.

Members

Two kinds of mages gravitate toward the Hegemonic Ministry. The first are talented leaders. They've got natural charisma and know how to tell people what they want to hear. They come from the ranks of student activists, gang leaders and politicians. The Ministry trains them to expand their abilities beyond a particular subculture. A street-wise drug dealer picks up the refined language he'll need to subvert City Hall, for instance. The slang changes, but the principles of persuasion are universal.

Other hegemons prefer systems over people. They insinuate themselves into bureaucracies and social networks. They might have forgettable personalities, but this can actually prove to be an asset. It's hard to track down the faceless bureaucrat at the heart of a conspiracy, or blame someone who's skilled at hiding behind protocols and procedures. These Seers tend to work more effectively in larger establishments, but some of them can dominate small collectives as effectively as huge government agencies by instituting (and manipulating) formal policies and procedures.

The Ministry encourages members to develop skills outside of the leadership and administration fields. When all is said and done, organizations need more than rhetoric and paperwork to thrive. To run a medical corporation, a Seer should know about modern medicine. To corner the arms trade, he should learn how the newest weapons on the market work.



Philosophy

Utopia is attainable. Sleepers must never be allowed to attain it, can never know it's truly possible and above all, can never be allowed to find out that it used to exist. The Exarch of Unity embodies a perverse contradiction. To maintain Creation's oneness, human beings need to be split apart into warring tribes and castes. If they ever set aside their differences and Awaken, they could crack the cosmic firmament. The Abyss creeps in through acts of errant magic. If everyone could put their souls on the line the way sorcerers do, the Fallen World would disintegrate. Worse yet, they could travel to the Supernal Realms and profane the Exarchs.

Hegemons tame humans by subverting their politics. The Ministry uses specific methods that it classifies under the Three Instruments.

The Book of Mirrors: The Ministry's asfond of *laissez-faire* capitalism as hardcore Leninism. It loves rules that take on a life of their own and ignore individual cases. Ultimately, these systems are tools for the agendas of anyone smart and ambitious enough to take the reins: sociopaths, venal politicians and egotistical revolutionaries. The Instrument is called the Book of Mirrors because for all its pages, it contains no wisdom — just the reader's desires, reflected by whatever she takes out of the text.

The Golden Apple: Sometimes communities form around relatively pure, compassionate ideals. They start to get things done. The Golden Apple is the response. The Instrument is the philosophy of strategic discord. A hegemon preys on differences and doubts. She might tell one revolutionary cell that the other's going to strike a deal with the government, or spread rumors of an incipient power play in the local Consilium. If she does her job perfectly, it forces victims to find someone else to arbitrate — and hegemons stand ready for the task.

The Tethered Staves: The Tethered Staves are the classic Roman *fasces*. It's fitting, because the Instrument is fascism, pure and simple. To employ the Instrument, a hegemon backs an elite class to control resources and political power. These leaders warn everyone else against

ideological or cultural "impurity" or "decadence." They give the threat a face: an internal minority or foreign group. This Instrument fell out of favor from World War II to the end of the 20th century. Seers in those days believed Sleepers wouldn't fall for it so easily after the war. Hegemons now believe that people are as naïve as ever. In fact, the Instrument may work *better* now, because people believe that they can readily identify and counter fascism, even as they ignorantly warm to its tenets.

Rituals and Observances

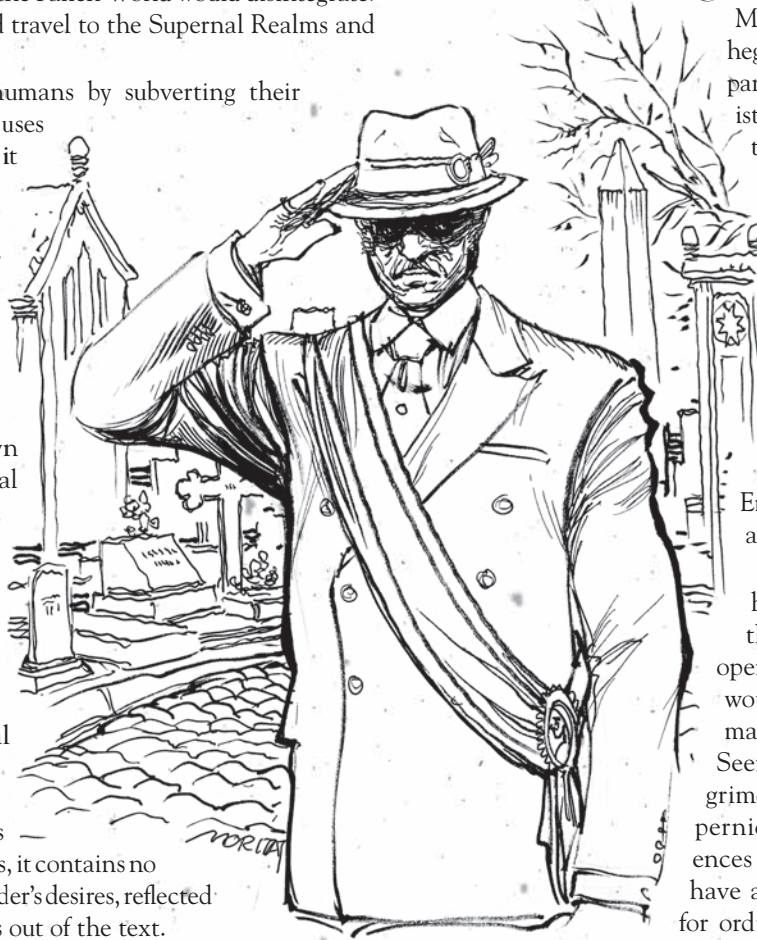
Ministry tetrarchs push lesser hegemons into three political parties: the Statists, Revelationists and Simplifiers. They have the following positions:

Statists favor the status quo; the Ministry should influence politics from behind the scenes and confine humanity to warring factions and social inequality. Their long-term objective is to confine human history to a set of predictable cycles. Empires and wars should occur according to schedule.

Revelationists believe hegemons should prepare the way for the Throne to openly rule the world. Success would reveal the existence of magic but the party thinks Seers can sanitize the world of grimoires, Artifacts and other pernicious supernatural influences beforehand. Revelationists have a great deal of compassion for ordinary people; they believe direct rule would let them abandon destructive divide and conquer strategies to kneel before the revealed Throne.

Simplifiers want to kick the human species back to the 16th century by wiping out years of political and technological evolution. They want to confine humanity to hundreds of rival city-states, leaving them incapable of expansion and progress. This would neutralize rogue supernatural elements because they wouldn't be able to extend their control beyond a small polity. This limitation already affects Pentacle Consilii, so it's logical to make this their only option, forever.

On the surface, these parties compete ceaselessly for control of the Ministry, but at the upper ranks adherents cooperate; there's no real conflict at the top. This is starting



Game System Summary

Membership in the Hegemonic Ministry confers the following benefits:

Prelacy: Hegemons may purchase dots in the Prelacy of Obligation for the same price as Path Arcanum dots. See p. 72 for more information on the Prelacies.

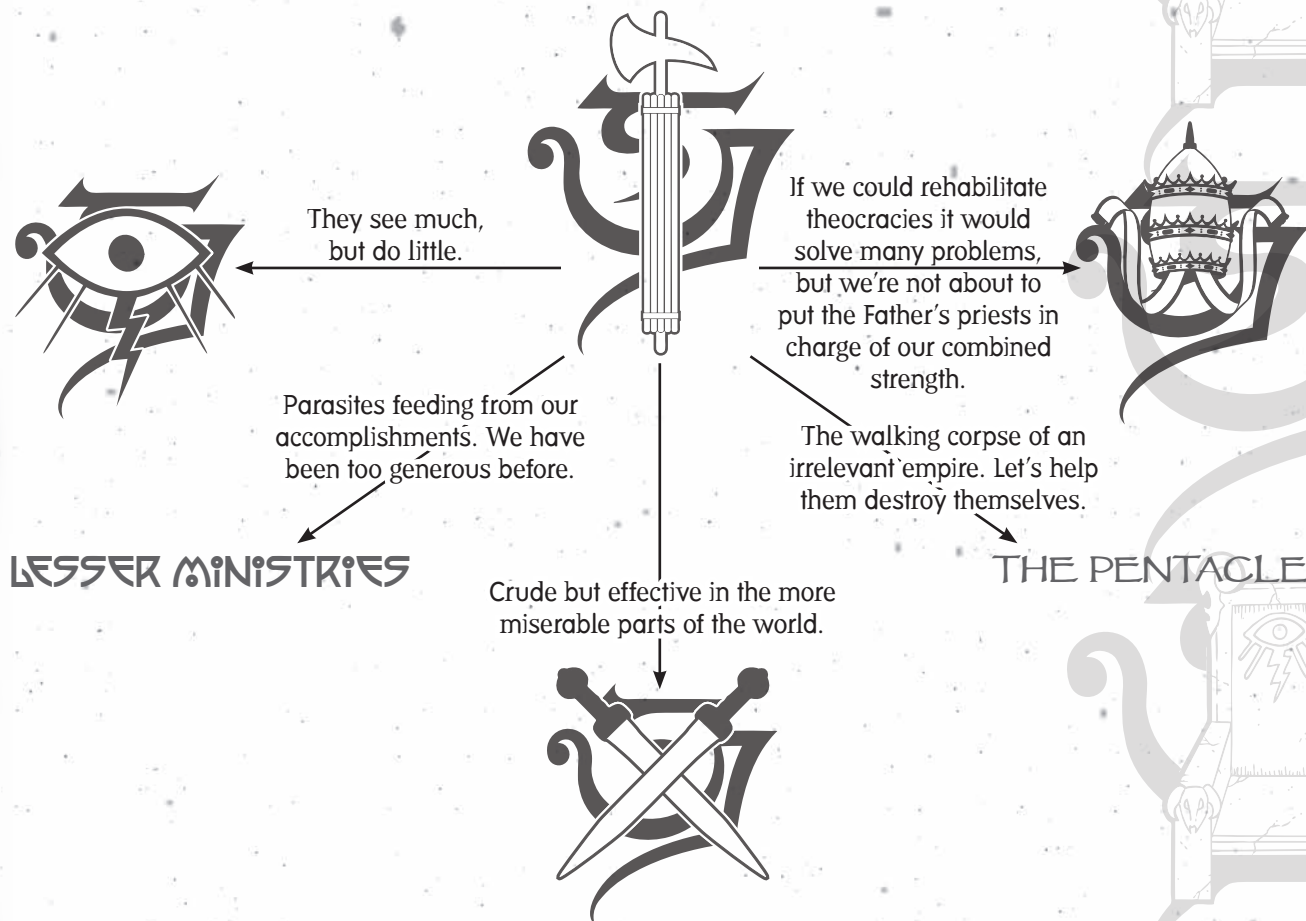
Rote Specialties: Politics, Persuasion and Empathy

Status Merits: Hegemonic Ministry Status dots can add to dots in the Allies and Retainer (Hive-Souled) Merits, and Status in government agencies and political organizations.

to change, however, as mages sense the Ministry's decline and press for real change.

Titles and Duties

Hegemonic titles signify a Seer's duties and reputation — often the latter, more than the former. Favor trading and petty politics seriously influence who earns a title.



Oligarch

Oligarchs are Masters who are expected to have demonstrated significant control over a political institution. They maintain this influence and advise hegemons working on similar projects. These days, many oligarchs are simply Masters with strong political ties who can take credit for the accomplishments of others.

Quaestor

A quaestor is often reviled as a "bean counter" with more loyalty to the Ministry's customs than to its members. Quaestors track the Ministry's resources for improper use and arbitrate disputes between internal factions. They have the power to levy sanctions: a fine, magical prohibition or in extreme cases, execution. Few modern hegemons will readily cooperate with a quaestor. They resolve disputes with informal agreements and discreet violence instead.

Ambassador

The Ministry's diplomatic corps is one of the few positions that still functions in accord with its stated purpose. Ambassadors represent the Hegemonic Ministry when it deals with other supernatural factions, including rival Ministries, vampires, werewolves and even Pentacle Consilii. The Ministry considers an ambassador's person to be sacrosanct and will use significant force to protect one, but the ambassador may not use his title for personal gain.

THE MINISTRY OF PANOPTICON

Servants of the Eye Vision is Power

It is the most ancient great Ministry, and credits its longevity to an eternal truth, passed down by the Eye: Vision is power. It's more than the ability to see threats and opportunities arrayed before you. When someone knows she's being watched, she changes. A mix of paranoia and exhibitionism subtly regulates her actions. Sleepers only understand that now, but the Ministry of Panopticon has used Vision's techniques since its inception, before recorded history but after the Fall.

Vision is the essence of the Ministry. As long its watchers adhere to its doctrines, almost any organizational structure is permissible. In ancient times, the Ministry was a confluence of cults. Proto-Panoptics included cults called the *Wedjat* (after the so-called Eye of Horus), the Mystery of Helios (the Greek god of vision) and the Akashic Sages. These cults were spread around the world, but they never considered themselves truly separate groups, for the Eye made distance and culture irrelevant. Thanks to the Space Arcanum, the evolving Panopticon was very familiar with its far-flung branches. The cults dreamed of each other and traveled across oceans to trade local secrets.

In the 18th century, the Panopticon became a Ministry at the behest of the hegemony. They originally did it to unite against the Pentacle, but the decision also gave

them the collective power to appoint a Minister and draw even closer to their Exarch. The new Ministry was the weakest of the four great sects, but not for long. Sleepers helped them

immensely; they developed the surveillance state and technologies capable of stripping privacy from entire populations.

Now, watchers don't need to rely on brute force magical methods to follow the Eye's philosophy.

They need only send operatives into CCTV networks, intelligence agencies and paranoid conspiracies. These tools multiply the Ministry's force. There's no need to risk a spell when a camera will do.

Overview

The Ministry of Panopticon is at the zenith of its power.

Sleepers obediently monitor each other — it's even popular entertainment. Big Brother's changed from a warning into a televised joke. It's a virtuous cycle for the Ministry. The more Sleepers rely on information networks the more information they want. The resulting traffic passes through the watchers' gaze. The Ministry's primary flaw is that it has trouble keeping up with the technological aspects of it, so it compensates with classic methods: informants, blackmail, connections with spies and criminals and, of course, magic. The watchers know that they need to increase their focus on technology, however, which makes them suspicious of the rising Pantechon Ministry. They hope to infiltrate, conquer and swallow it whole.

Raw information isn't the Ministry's sole purview, however. It promotes a culture without privacy. In a



private space, Sleepers have a chance to dream without fearing criticism and plot without drawing their enemies. When people think they *might* be watched, they control their speech and actions. Nobody even *needs* to be overlooking their lives — merely the possibility that someone with the power to punish them might open the file or raise their eyes to a monitor. The Fallen World becomes a prison without guards when its inmates shackle themselves with inhibitions.

Of course, you can't maintain control with surveillance alone. The world needs to know that someone's not only watching them, but can act on what they see. Some threats require a knife, bullet or spell — not just eyes. Watchers find direct action distasteful, but are prepared to intervene, though they prefer to hide their identities. They *will* leave traces of their work if they think they can get away with it. Panopticon mages cultivate paranoid subcultures and even falsify evidence to fuel speculation. Some pylons spend a great deal of time "stirring the pot" by planting bogus information about conspiracy theorist favorites like JFK's assassination and the September 11, 2001 terror attacks.

The Ministry keeps Sleepers in line this way but it also spies to protect them. It stays alert for other supernatural conspiracies, threats from the Abyss and even ordinary emergencies. Watchers anonymously call to local authorities when they decide someone's a threat to the community. They've even been known to tip off Pentacle mages about threats that the local pylon can't handle alone.

Game System Summary

Membership in the Ministry of Panopticon confers the following benefits:

Prelacy: Watchers may purchase dots in the Prelacy of Vision for the same price as Path Arcanum dots. See p. 72 for more information on the Prelacies.

Role Specialties: Investigation, Stealth and Subterfuge

Status Merits: Panopticon Ministry Status dots can add to dots in the Contacts and Retainer (Grigori) Merits, as well as Status in intelligence agencies (like the CIA, FBI and Russian FSB) and organized criminal conspiracies.

Members

The Ministry would love to recruit from the ranks of sneaks, spies and snitches exclusively, but Awakening doesn't favor any particular job description. It also doesn't help that some of the most effective members of these groups are difficult to control, as they come from intelligence agencies and criminal groups — fields that don't exactly reward principled people. Watchers don't think much of Sleepers, but they're loath to indulge psychopaths in their ranks. Such people pursue an increasingly extreme path of self-gratification, to the point of being risk takers who'll wreck Ministry projects to follow their obsessions. At some point, they stop caring about the Tree of Eyes. They'll go rogue or get eliminated by enemies. Panopticon favors a controlled coldness in its agents: a personality that stays objective no matter the situation.

Watchers were usually nosy people before they Awakened, or they were socially gregarious, able to extract intimate details with a smile and a friendly chat. After Awakening and induction, they learn to enhance these skills with magic. The Ministry increasingly favors people who are not necessarily adept at interpersonal relationships, but know how to create clandestine online networks. Still, spies and social manipulators dominate the Ministry.

A popular stereotype says that Seer assassins come from this Ministry, but that's usually not true. Praetorians tend to be better at it, and the Panopticon believes that violence should be a tool of last resort. The old cults of the Eye did perform clandestine killings regularly, but the modern Ministry usually provides support for other Seers' network instead. Still, there are a few violent watchers, and rumors that one of the old assassins' cults still hides in the ranks.

Philosophy

Sleepers should never Sleep alone. They fear non-conformity and unpredictability, so if they believe they're being monitored they'll forego any behavior that might make them stand out. The Ministry believes that every time people intentionally monitor each other (as opposed to casually seeing one another), they sympathetically strengthen the Eye. They transmit information into the Pantognosis: the web of mystic information that orders the Fallen World. The Eye is the god of espionage, and all spies and rumormongers unknowingly worship him. The watchers do this *consciously*, so they are privy to the Eye's gifts. The Ministry breaks this down into the

Three Gazes. Each one is a manifestation of the Eye in a human soul.

The Gaze of Helios

Helios is the resonance of those who spy upon subjects over which they have power. When a rich man spies on his servants, a parent on a child, or when police compile files on citizens, their ambitions and the satisfaction they feel upon uncovering secrets create a vessel for the Eye, which manifests like a sun: the emotional “heat” of being watched. To the Ministry, the sensation of being seen from behind is not a superstition or a psychic talent, but a manifestation of the Eye as Helios’ Gaze.

The Gaze of Pthonus

Pthonus is the envious gaze from below: what many Sleepers call “sousveillance” when it’s applied by the weak against the powerful. Panopticon manipulates the common belief that this can overthrow existing power relationships. Sometimes it does, but people under the Pthonus’ spell forget that the power of the Eye is more than uncovering unpleasant knowledge — it’s the ability to spur action, if necessary. Pthonus transmits rumors that enforce the social order. The powerful and meek both fear the masses’ judgment.

The Gaze of Hypnos

Hypnos is the resonance of shame and self-denial. It is the part of a person that watches itself for signs of deviance, foolishness or unrealistic-seeming ambition. It is roughly equivalent to the Freudian superego in the way it restricts impulses, but goes a step further by crippling desires that could lead to Awakening. Without elementary self-knowledge, magic is impossible.

Rituals and Observances

Panopticon is the most informal Ministry because it does not rely on titles and social niceties to regulate its ranks. Watchers understand these things are important inside the Seers of the Throne as a whole and don’t reject the Iron Pyramid, but their cult is more of a brotherhood than a secret government. Watchers know that lies and omissions infect human interaction, and so they value facts over etiquette. The following customs enforce this.



The Tree of Eyes

The Tree of Eyes is a simple tradition: every watcher should spy on and be spied upon by one inferior and one superior. At the bottom, a neophyte doesn’t have an inferior to study, so she learns everything she can about her contacts and the organizations she’s infiltrated. At higher ranks this isn’t strictly required, but most watchers keep tabs on “their” Sleepers anyway. In some tetrarchies every watcher knows who’s watching her. They perform rituals to formally adopt or change who they study. This sort of thing falls in and out of favor, because powerful Ministry mages often use threats and bribes to influence anyone observing them, leading to rogue branches of the Ministry. Elsewhere, watchers spy anonymously. This encourages distracting paranoia, but maintains loyalty to the Ministry.

Advancement Dossiers

To progress within the Ministry, a watcher has to prove that she’s ready for the job — or one of her superiors needs to step aside. An ambitious mage

compiles a detailed dossier about the watcher she wants to replace, and asks a trustworthy ally to spy on her, and testify to superiors that she's competent. This witness can't be the one studying her under the Tree of Eyes because senior members of the Ministry need two points of view to study. (If the mage unknowingly picks someone linked to her by the Tree, that watcher should pass the job onto a third party.) The superior secretly reviews each dossier and grants Status according to his findings. Sometimes, the judge has to deal with blackmail; ambitious mages spy on them, too.

Titles and Duties

The Ministry of Panopticon's titles are job descriptions. Titles don't affect a watcher's prestige by themselves, but it's hard for an incompetent mage to ascend to a formal position. Thanks to the Tree of Eyes; someone, somewhere in the Ministry, knows the mage's capabilities and failings.

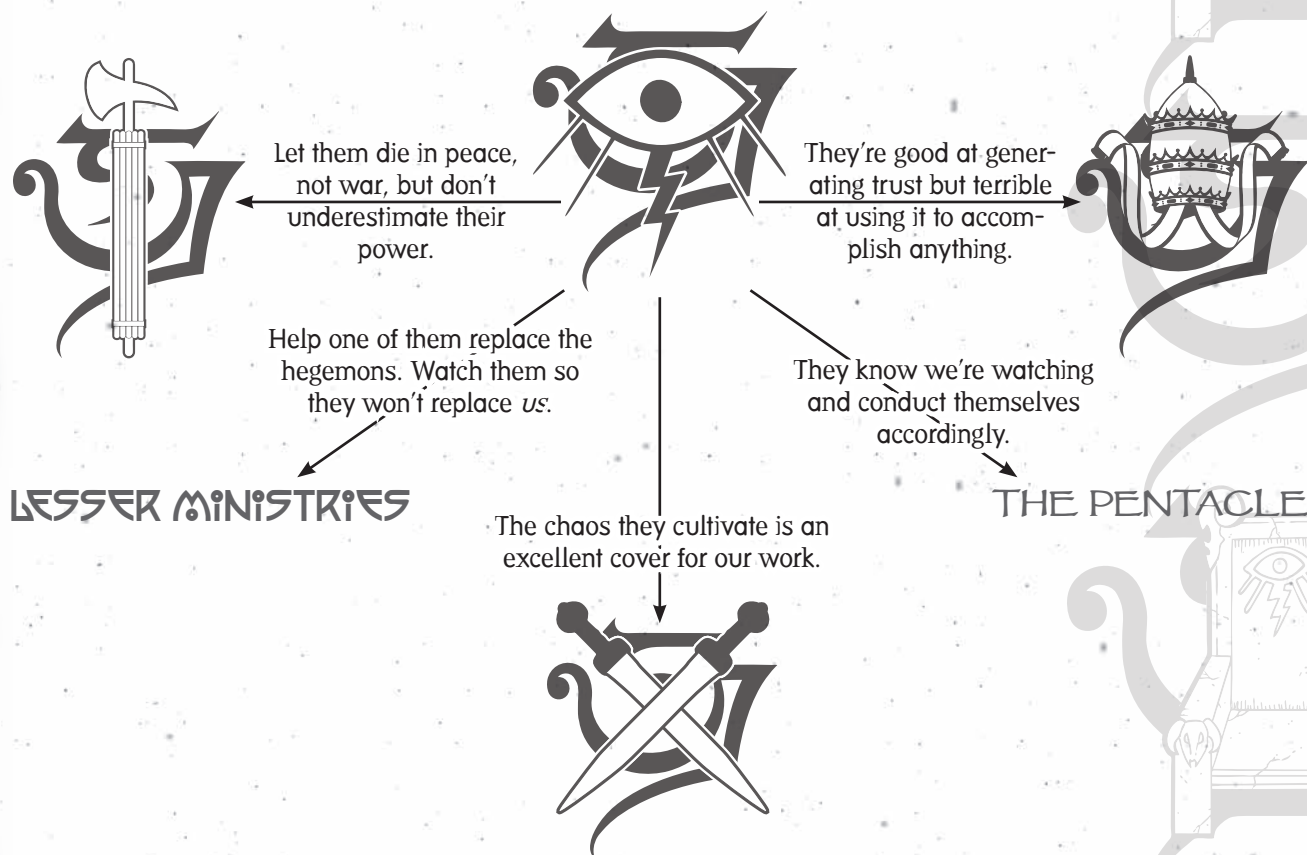
Apocrisarius

An apocrisarius infiltrates social networks with a combination of charisma and organizational skills.

His job is to worm his way into the confidence of either the most influential members of an organization, or the person who knows the most about it. Once a watcher knows his target, he can seize power later. An apocrisarius uses friendly methods whenever possible, but always prepares blackmail plots, just in case. Due to their social skills, apocrisarii usually double as Ministry emissaries.

Cryptomancer

Watchers tell lies to conceal the existence of the supernatural phenomena and Seer plots, but they also do it to spread the fear of surveillance throughout Sleeper and supernatural communities. This is a senior title, because cryptomancers need magical prowess to create false evidence: forensic traces, forged documents, fake magical auras and even implanted memories. When they must acknowledge the existence of the Throne, their stories exaggerate its power and reach. In fact, some Seers suspect that even internal estimates of the faction's strength might be cryptomancer lies.



THE MINISTRY OF PATERNOSTER

Priests of the Father Faith is an Unbreakable Chain

It takes faith to manufacture faith, and devotion to deceive the devoted. Look at any religious scandal and you won't see cynics at the top. The truly corrupt believe they're so holy that the rules they preach to the masses don't apply. Paternoster's faithful — the hierodules — effectively enforce the Quiescence because their faith is strong enough to conquer moral contradictions. The Father's elect believe that He mandates one religion for the Awakened, and many, many others for Sleepers. Let each kind keep to its religion and the world will abide in harmony. Sleeper religions are lies, true, but they're holy lies, designed by the Exarchs to keep their children safe and passive.

Paternoster is unique among the current Ministries in that it had no predecessor. The old cults of the Father died centuries before the Ministry's rise. As far as anyone knows, the last of them perished in AD 131, in a secret struggle masked by Hadrian's attempt to bury Jerusalem under the Roman colony of Aelia Capitolina. If anyone called to Him in the interim, they left no trace. Seers of the Throne did not create Paternoster. Pentacle mages did.

It was the Fourth Crusade. Mages often boast that they're above Sleepers' wars, but many European Awakened marched to the Holy Land. Most of these

mages were inexperienced Obrimos, filled with fresh visions of the Lord thanks to their recent Awakenings and a culture that inclined them to view spiritual experiences through a Christian lens. They were ready to seize Jerusalem from the Saracens and battle legendary Persian sorcerers. Instead, they

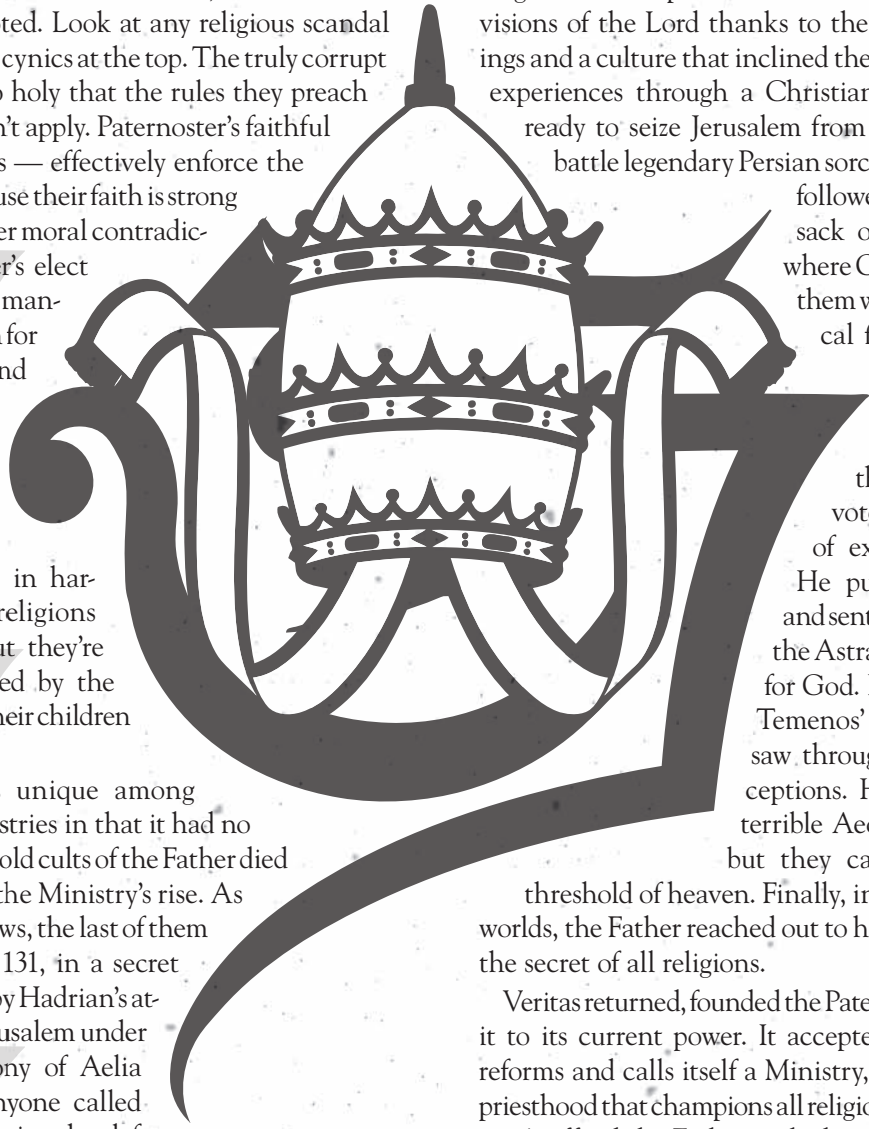
followed crusaders to the sack of Constantinople, where Greek Obrimos met them with hate and magical fire. The survivors fled to Rome.

After the terrible crusade, the theurge Veritas devoted himself to a life of extreme asceticism. He punished his body, and sent his soul wandering the Astral Plane. He looked for God. He questioned the Temenos' false angels, but saw through their sweet deceptions. He challenged the terrible Aeons of the Aether, but they cast him from the threshold of heaven. Finally, in the void between worlds, the Father reached out to him and taught him the secret of all religions.

Veritas returned, founded the Paternoster, and guided it to its current power. It accepted the Hegemonic reforms and calls itself a Ministry, but in truth, it's a priesthood that champions all religions, so that Sleepers won't offend the Father with their impure souls.

Overview

Hierodules are willing slaves of the Father. They manufacture religions in His name. They don't believe that Sleepers should learn the Father's doctrine because



they are imperfect beings, consigned to the prison of flesh. They'd insult the true God if they prayed to Him. The Father only wants pure, Awakened worship. Sleepers should practice false religions — but not all false religions. They can still blaspheme. If their false faiths include coded Supernal reality, or include tenets that hint of true, Awakened enlightenment, they presume upon the Exarchs' dominion. Mages outside the Seers of the Throne *could* properly worship at the Father's altar, but by opposing the Throne they reveal themselves as heretics. Convert them, or kill them.

Religions and myths still contain too much of it, however. These secrets emanate from the Watchtowers, Awakened blasphemers or ancient history, and worm their way into scriptures and sermons. Thus, hierodules are among the most dedicated occultists and mythographers. To conceal deep truths, you have to learn to recognize them, even when they hide inside metaphors and legends. The Ministry hoards myths, holy writings and grimoires to keep them out of impure hands.

The Ministry also uses religion to enforce the Exarchs' divine will. Sleepers should divide themselves into petty, dogmatic sects. Tolerance is an arrogant disregard for the Father's will. He wants squabbling cults — it's the Sleepers' ordained Path. The masses should learn morality from faith and habit instead of reason and evidence. Reason presumes to truth, but ultimate truth belongs to the Father.

The Ministry of Paternoster uses many Christian trappings, but it isn't a Christian sect. Veritas stopped believing in Jesus as soon as he met the Father, but he still kept the altars, robes and sermons of his old tradition. His descendants do the same, though they draw from all cultures now. Ironically, while modern hierodules scorn Sleeper religions, the Father doesn't tell His servants exactly *how* to worship Him. They must rifle through the Lie for Supernal traces as much as other mages. Over time, hierodules have constructed "pure" versions of several Sleeper religions, syntheses of multiple faiths, and cults of their own invention. These religions are not absolutely true but every element contains magically effective elements, so it draws adherents closer to God than the Sleepers' superstitions. Besides, it's as close to the Father's reality as his priests can get.

Members

A large number of hierodules come to the Ministry for the same reason that Veritas founded it: a profound crisis of faith. The Paternoster tells them their old religions troubled them because they were false, but

Game System Summary

Membership in the Ministry of Paternoster confers the following benefits:

Prelacy: Watchers may purchase dots in the Prelacy of Doctrine for the same price as Path Arcanum dots. See p. 72 for more information on the Prelacies.

Rote Specialties: Academics, Occult and Expression

Status Merits: Paternoster Ministry Status dots can add to dots in the Library and Retainer (Hollow One) Merits, as well as Status in mainstream and fringe religions.

that a new, secret true faith will grant spiritual succor. This makes a powerful impression on newly Awakened mages who've not only lost their faith, but stumbled into supernatural power. They're still reeling from visions and Mystery Plays. The Ministry's elegant explanation explains their past doubts and new powers.

An increasing number of members weren't religious at all. They were confused agnostics, die-hard atheists, lapsed Catholics and more. The Ministry has room for them all. The Father's religion is based on facts, not empty hope, and He gives His flock the ability to perform miracles. The sect prefers that its mages reenter the religions and other, belief-based groups with which they were once affiliated. Who else is better prepared to guide them away from the Father's light?

The Secret of the Apotheosian

Only a few tetrarchs know it, but the Apotheosian of the Paternoster is the only great Minister who isn't in direct communion with his Exarch. This makes him the most humane, comprehensible Minister, but it's still a shameful secret. By all accounts, the previous Apotheosian was a true avatar of the Father. He vanished, leaving behind the Teraphim (see p. 199).

The current Apotheosian uses it to commune with his Exarch. He's asked every question but one: "Father, why have you forsaken me?"

A hierodule is expected to be educated, well-spoken and absolutely committed to the Ministry. These abilities not only serve them well with Sleepers, but help them with the secondary duty of providing spiritual comfort to Fallen Seers of the Throne. Paternoster mages acquire trustworthy allies this way, but that isn't usually the only goal. A Seer's life is filled with difficult choices that seem immoral — from an unenlightened point of view. Most hierodules have genuine compassion for their brethren.

Philosophy

The hierodules' beliefs can be summed up in the Roman Creed. Veritas composed it in Latin, but the Ministry permits very loose translations. This symbolically acknowledges that only the Father knows the ultimate truth. These variants lead to divergent core doctrines, but most pylons agree on the basics below.

We believe in the Father, ruler of the Supernal Heavens and the Ashen Earth, and the Exarchs, many yet indivisible, who are emanations of God

The Ministry doesn't worship the Father exclusively. He is first among the Exarchs. The Iron Seals are considered to be many in one. Hierodules liken it to the Holy Trinity or the Hindu religious concept that many gods are God; the Father is the face of God that mages are supposed to approach; Seers who follow the other Exarchs are not blasphemers, but they've chosen a less efficacious path to enlightenment. The Father is sometimes thought of like the Christian, Trinitarian Father, but there is no Son who intercedes; that's a lie for Sleepers.

Who Awakened incarnate, Ascended into heaven, cast out demons and false gods and offered Atlantis in the first perfect sacrifice, for the purity of heaven

The Paternoster believes the Exarchs were predestined to Ascend and thus, were already God manifest, even while they dwelled in Atlantis. They Awakened to purify heaven, whose realms were ridden with false gods, and whose powers were stolen by the heretical Atlanteans.

Who for us and our salvation, offered the second perfect sacrifice of mortal flesh to become the face and voice of God

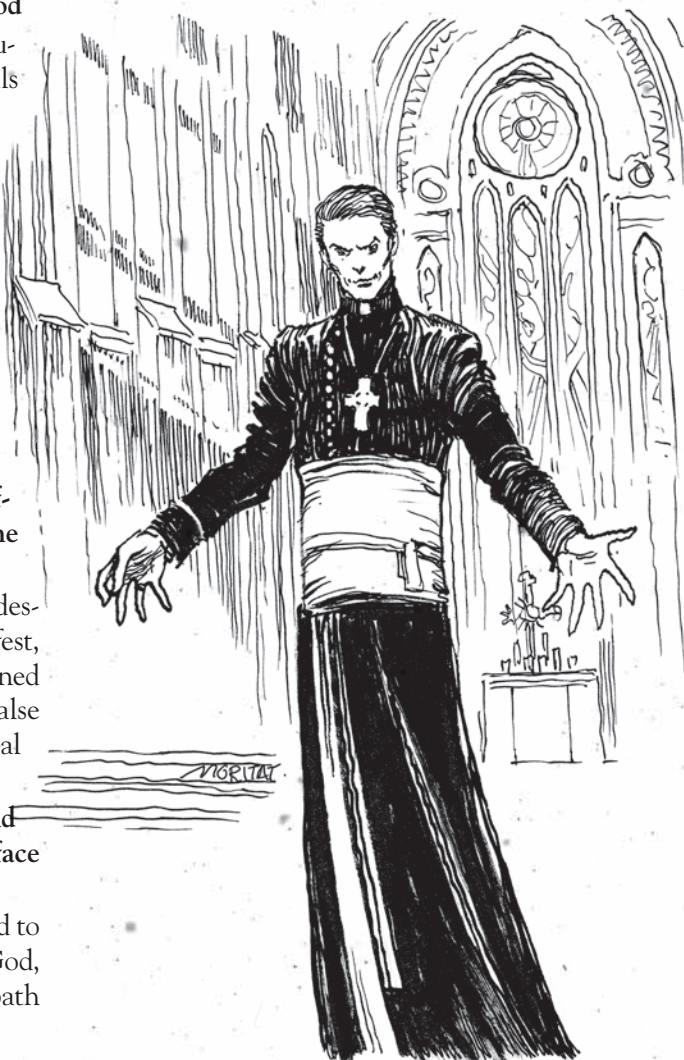
The Exarchs abandoned the flesh and Ascended to the Supernal Realms to become emanations of God, so that mages could worship them and travel the path to Ascension.

Who protect heaven from falsehood, and defend Creation from damnation

The Exarchs alone are responsible for checking the Abyss and guarding the Supernal Realms. Heaven can never be annihilated, but according to the Paternoster, God will withdraw the Supernal Realms if the Fallen World's blasphemy grows too powerful. This is the Paternoster apocalypse.

And who have demanded of us, the Awakened, a third perfect sacrifice, that we might Ascend.

Mages may worship the Exarchs and Ascend if they follow the Exarchs' example, by providing the third perfect sacrifice: the Fallen World. They must cleanse it of sin, including Sleeper magical knowledge and Pentacle blasphemy. Every sorcerer is responsible for a fraction of the third sacrifice. The gravity and specifics of every mage's duty is an open question, and the source of numerous arguments about dharma predestination and fate.



Rituals and Observances

The Ministry of Paternoster is filled with rituals and traditions. Most of them are limited to a single faction, tetrarchy or even pylon, based on whatever religion a particular group has built for itself. The following customs are universal, however. They cut across sectarian lines.

Holy War

It has many names. Crusade is a popular one. Jihad is a close second. Sleepers don't always apply these to violence. Jihad can be an internal struggle; crusade, any zealous project. The Paternoster isn't so flexible. To them, these words mean holy war. Pontifexes sound the call; their templars assault Consilii and sometimes whole nations to convert or kill Awakened unbelievers. They're rare, but devastating, for only a Ministry can call so many mages to war. The last time it happened was in 1917. Mages call it the Battle of the Maritimes. Sleepers call it the Halifax Explosion, and ascribe it to an accident that had the force of three kilotons of TNT.

Pontifical Archives

The Paternoster boasts the best academic occultists in the great Ministries because it's obsessed with keeping Supernal knowledge out of Sleepers' hands. Every hierodule pylon sends grimoires and notes to the Pontifical Archive. Hierodules study and sometimes even copy the collection. Some resources require a higher level of trust than others. The pontifex has final authority over what a researcher may examine.

Titles and Duties

The Ministry loves titles almost as much as rituals. The following are the most common:

Perfectus

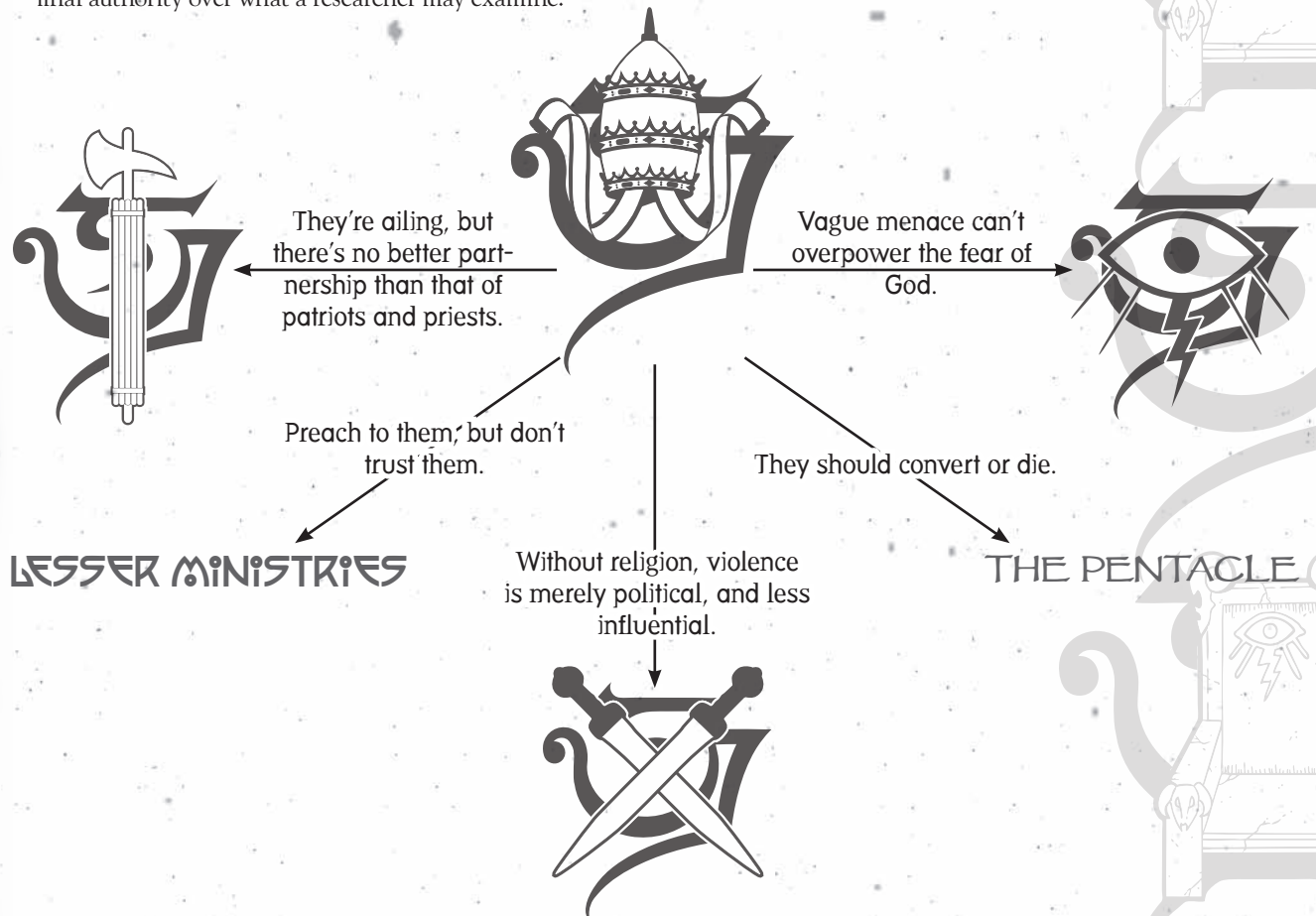
The perfecti are theological and philosophical chameleons. They learn to act, live as and master the doctrines of dozens of belief systems to the point where they can appear to be devout adherents of all of them. Many employ Life magic to replicate specific physical signs, such as a shaved head, ritual tattoo or unshorn beard. By matching and even outshining the most pious members of a community, a perfectus wins authority over it. These abilities also make perfecti excellent spies and occult investigators.

Templar

The Order of the Temple of Sophia is the Ministry's military wing, and was the first sect to rise from its founding. Despite the name, the templars accept any pontifex-approved interpretation of the Father's religion. It's not the chant that matters, but the sword.

Pontifex

The Ministry calls its tetrarchs pontifexes. They keep the Archives and have the authority to judge lesser hierodules. They are the penultimate authorities on doctrinal matters, second to the Apotheosian himself.



THE PRAETORIAN MINISTRY

Soldiers of the General We're Every Enemy, and Every Commander

War is a garden that grows red, nurtured by blood, moistened by a rain of sweat. The Praetorian ministry tends that garden and keeps it from running wild, but it also keeps it healthy, well fed by the world's violence.

Praetorians are soldiers, yes, but they're so much more: demagogues, executives, politicians and everything else that powers the machinery of violence. They don't carry a banner of honor, though they'll pretend to when it suits their aims. They aren't modern knights, samurai or the other honorable warriors that Adamantine Arrows idealize. Violence is not a crucible for character, but an instrument of the Exarchs. It siphons human creativity and destroys good will. It eats productivity and shits devastation. Divided against itself, humanity can never overthrow the Lie. The Ministry keeps those divisions vigorous and hate-filled, without letting them produce a global catastrophe.

Before the Praetorian Ministry, the dominant Western cult was the Diadochi: a society of petty warrior kings who seized the remnants of Alexander

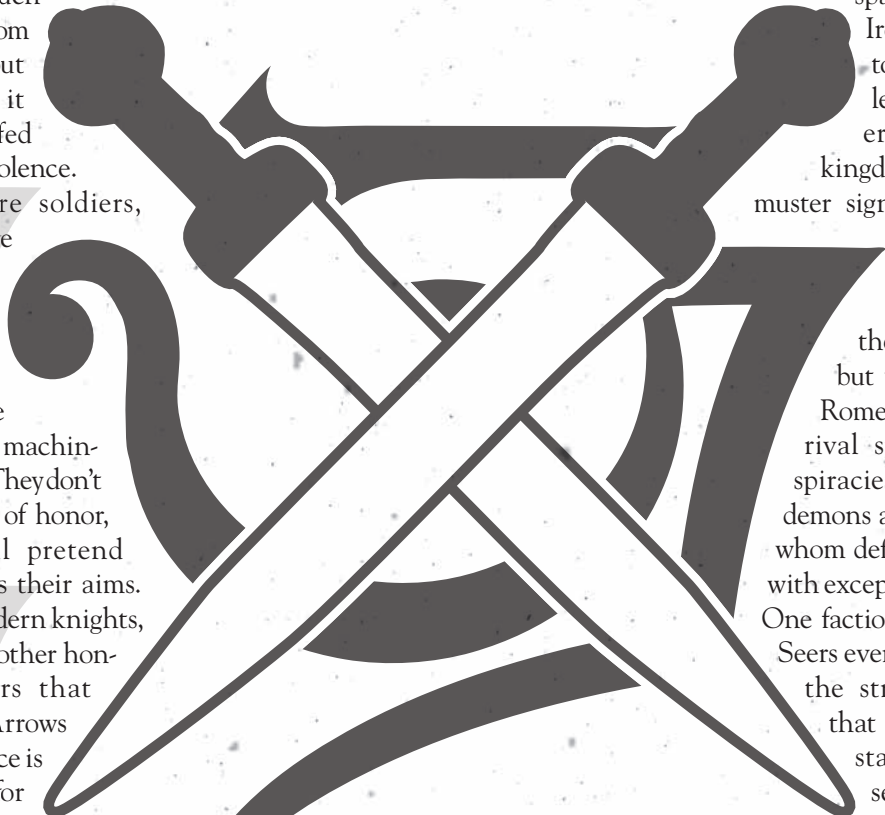
the Great's empire. The Diadochi believed that war should reduce human societies to petty fiefs. Its mages sparked war after war.

Ironically, they were too successful; they left behind degenerate, fragmented kingdoms that couldn't muster significant resistance to the Romans.

The cults then tried to dismantle the Roman Republic, but weren't successful. Rome was a nexus for rival supernatural conspiracies: a quagmire of demons and spirits, each of whom defended its territory with exceptional viciousness. One faction of the General's Seers eventually abandoned the struggle, reasoning that an expansionistic state would always serve the Exarchs' goals, provided it

committed itself to a doctrine of constant warfare. These mages insinuated themselves into high positions in Roman military as early as the time of Julius Caesar, but couldn't properly exploit them until the 3rd century AD, because this new faction — the first Praetorians — were too busy exterminating their Diadochi forbears.

By the reign of Aurelian, the Praetorians wielded considerable influence, but the Roman Empire was dying by inches: Even the Seers couldn't return it to glory, but that wasn't necessary any more. The idea of imperial power and eternal war left the cradle of Alex-



ander's Persia and strode through Rome and across the world. From then on, nations would always be restless and prepared to pursue it, given half a chance. That's what the Praetorian Ministry wanted, and that's the way the world is today.

Overview

The General's cults have always been popular. For every man or woman who wants peace or at least strictly controlled violence, there's been one who simply wants to *win*, no matter the cost. These pragmatists are the Exarch's core followers. Ironically, they learn that controlled violence is the key to power, not its obstacle. War and violence have changed over the ages, however. War materiel isn't made by villages or even individual nations, but by corporations that span the globe. On the grand scale, violence relies on transnational consensus: coalitions, networks and ideological movements.

The Praetorian Ministry maintains the global machinery of war and simulates ambitions that can only be realized by force. Praetorians infiltrate standing armies, guerilla groups and arms manufacturers. On a smaller scale, they're provocateurs in police forces, gangs and even protest groups. The Ministry ceaselessly ensures that societies always treat violence as a necessary tool, and keep the arms, people and ideology needed to slaughter their own people and their neighbors.

On the other hand, they don't want Sleepers to get *too* warlike. People have the means to destroy themselves, but the Praetorians don't want them going down that path. Omnipresent, controlled violence is the goal — not genocide. The Ministry considers the rise of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons their failure, but takes credit for global agreements against using them.

The Ministry promotes perpetual warfare to sow fear in the Sleeper population. Fearful people take comfort in authority. They don't trust their neighbors, and direct their thoughts toward practical, materialistic goals. Deep questions about the nature of things fall to the wayside. Violence is also wasteful. It creates scarcity. Billions go to maintaining armies and manufacturing weapons. If the global community forged a lasting peace, it could redirect these resources to solving the perennial problems of poverty, disease and hunger. Once it seriously deals with *those*, humanity has nowhere to go but up: to the Supernal Realms. A violent world guards the Exarchs from their prisoners.

Game System Summary

Membership in the Praetorian Ministry confers the following benefits:

Prelacy: Watchers may purchase dots in the Prelacy of Fury for the same price as Path Arcanum dots. See p. 72 for more information on the Prelacies.

Rote Specialties: Athletics, Larceny and Intimidation

Status Merits: Praetorian Ministry Status dots can add to dots in the Enhanced Item and Retainer (Myrmidon) Merits, as well as Status in military and law enforcement organizations.

Members

The Ministry recruits the soldiers and cops you'd expect them to, but they don't stop there. They want experts in every aspect of war and violence, including corporate VPs, black-market moguls in war-ravaged places and members of protest groups, especially if they're pacifists — infiltrators ensure they won't stay that way. The Praetorians are not for people who believe in an idealized warrior's code. Effective violence relies on deception and passion. Some mages believe in the ideal of the warrior sage. Praetorians believe in warriors as they are: desperate for pay, traumatized by experience and held back from the edge of atrocity by unevenly enforced policies. Many Praetorians are very skilled marksmen and martial artists, but they aren't particularly attached to the esthetics of these disciplines. These are professional skills, nothing more. A professional takes a certain amount of pride in his competence, but measures his abilities according to results, not metaphysics.

Above all, the Ministry wants mages who aren't afraid to get their hands dirty. That means a Praetorian should be comfortable overseeing the manufacture of a few hundred AK-47s, airlifting them to the Golden Triangle, selling them to the local narcotics warlord and if necessary, strangling the warlord's son to prove a point. Ministry mages are often versed in a number of criminal trade skills. These serve them in chaotic, war-torn territory. A Praetorian should be capable of refinement in the boardroom, savagery on a bullet-blasted street and everything in between.

Philosophy

Fear is the enemy of enlightenment. The Awakened may show superficial fear, but they possess a transcendent bravery that denies the Lie and crosses the Abyss. It's the Ministry's duty to cultivate utter fearlessness, but sow fear in the masses. As long as every Sleeper has at least a subconscious belief that someone could take away everything she holds dear, the unease will be sufficient to stifle Awakening, most of the time. This isn't an ideal solution, because there are always a few stubborn, desperate souls that are actually propelled into Awakening by fear, but the Ministry believes this is part of the Supernal design. Even Seers of the Throne should have enemies to test their resolve. Otherwise, they'll go soft. The Ministry despises softness. To the ideal Praetorian, mortal danger, social censure and moral condemnation are nothing.

Doubt is a mark of the Abyss. The Exarchs put it in human souls to keep them Asleep by making them afraid of their own power. Pentacle renegades overcome fear through selfishness. They crave power and erratically steal in from the higher worlds. Praetorians aspire to radical selflessness instead. They are the General's vessels, duly authorized to channel Supernal force in his name. Paradoxes are stains of doubt in their mission. Praetorians are ashamed when they experience them, because they're a sign of subconscious disloyalty to the Exarchs' regime.

Rituals and Observances

The Praetorian Ministry is a pragmatic group that lets individuals plan their own ritual worship of the Exarchs — with the General at the head of the pantheon, of course. They watch each other to confirm members' piety and loyalty, but that's it. Otherwise, the Ministry consistently devotes itself to a few common, practical projects.

Contingencies

Praetorians don't like hot-headed improvisation. They compile plans for everything, from how to kill a lone Acanthus Adept to battle plans that will take effect if the Abyss sends monstrous soldiers against the world. Areti formulate contingency plans at all levels of the Ministry, and distributes sealed portions of them down the ranks so that when the time comes, key



Praetorians will know what to do. Every contingency plan is only as good as the information that was used to make it, so they're most useful when they concern the author's specialty.

Armories

The Ministry has its hands deep in the global arms trade, and diverts some of its wares to secret armories around the world. Praetorians augment many of these weapons with magic, providing easy, collective access to enhanced items. A Praetorian in good standing can get her hands on small arms without too much trouble, but for anything heavier she must petition the Severix in charge of the facility.

Titles and Duties

The General knows her loyal officers when they display attributes that she herself possesses. These are the honors: titles that Ministry lore gives the General in worship. Praetorians aspire to the qualities embodied

in each, but they will usually only acquire one or two honors in their lives. These define the mage's duties, because she should serve the General in a capacity where she displays excellence. There are supposedly 99 honors, but only nine appear consistently in the sect's grimoires. Of those, five are commonly awarded.

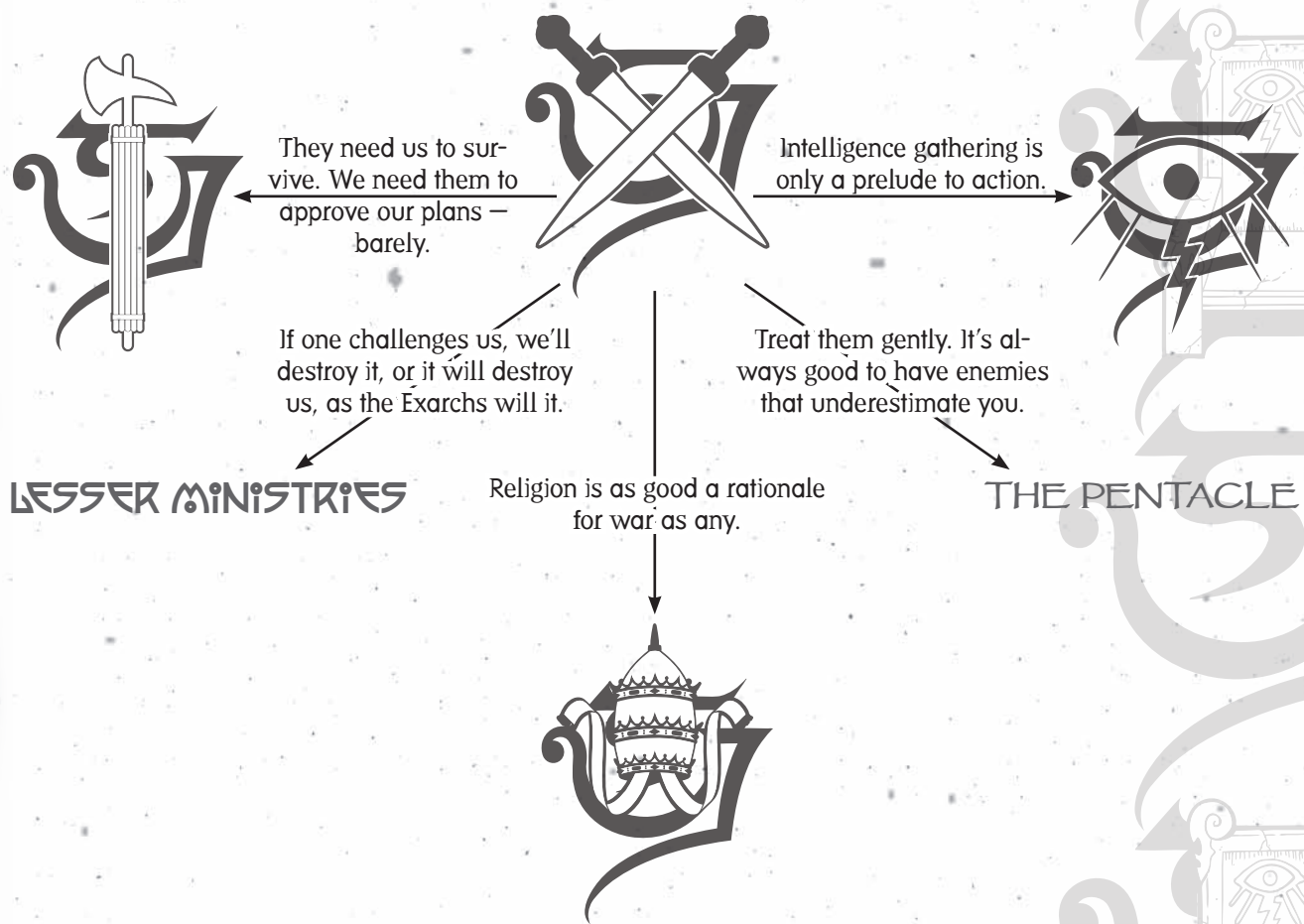
Alastor: "Avenger." A Praetorian with this honor vents the Ministry's wrath on anyone who injures it. No outsider who sees evidence of a weakness in the Ministry should be allowed to speak of it.

Albiorix: "King of the World." As the General rules over his soldiers, they should rule over Sleepers. An Albiorix cultivates a secret command over Sleeper cults, mobs and militias.

Aretus: "Excellent One." The Praetorian is highly skilled in a particular art, craft or science. The General represents universal excellence. An Aretus embodies this within a limited field. He teaches other Praetorians his special combat skills, sciences or other aptitudes.

Caturix: "King of Battle." Praetorians are not all warriors, but many are. This honor belongs to the most effective fighters. They lead other Praetorians on military missions.

Severix: "King of Discipline." A mage with this honor embodies the General's unyielding discipline. A Severix manages the Ministry's resources because he's trusted, and enforces order in the ranks. He imposes no standard he wouldn't apply to himself.





PRELACIES: THE EXARCHS' SECRET LAWS

The Seers of the Throne say the Exarchs assembled the Fallen World from the wreckage of prehistory. They hammered it into the Lie with genius and precision, and are responsible for every natural law, psychological urge and weak, twisted Supernal signal that makes it across the Abyss. The Celestial Ladder is gone; the old torrent of Supernal Energy is a strictly modulated trickle, designed to leave there merest whisper of magic — the Seers' Mysteries, and no one else's.

That's what Seers believe, but there's little evidence that the Exarchs' are responsible for everything. Outside the Throne, educated mages think the Fallen World is a consequence of the Celestial ladder's collapse, not spells to bind the whole cosmos. Perhaps the Exarchs twisted the catastrophe for their own ends, but they didn't rewrite all the rules.

Whatever the truth is, the Exarchs now exercise unique privileges over the Fallen World. They give some of their favored servants — the so-called Prelates of the Throne — access to part of this power: enough to keep the Seers faithful and their enemies fearful.

Learning Prelacies

Prelates are the sect's Augers and favored children. Virtually all Seers say they want to acquire the honor, but privately they fear the prospect of completely opening their souls to the Exarchs. When the Exarchs' gifts don't fall upon them, they loudly upbraid themselves for being unworthy, but they are secretly relieved their souls are still their own. They look at true prelates with a combination of awe and fear. Do Exarchs look through prelates' eyes, see the secretly faithless, and judge them?

Seers embark upon a separate quest for each Prelacy they adopt. To learn one, a trusted Seer of the Throne (Seer Status ●) must possess at least one dot of the Dream Merit. After that, she journeys into the Astral Realms to search for the Exarchs' favor. Some prelates find a door in the depths of the Oneiros. Ochemata guard it, but let the

seeker pass. They say that beyond the gate, an Exarch's Supernal citadel awaits. Prelates call the experience a second Awakening, but rarely describe it in more detail. Other prelates return after what they believe was an unsuccessful voyage, but coincidences stack to test their loyalty after the fashion of a Mystery Play, until they win the Prelacy. Some Seers just fail, of course, and some go mad, disappear, or die in strange circumstances.

Prelacies have experience point costs as well. Each degree in the Ministry's favored Prelacy has the same cost as a Path Arcanum. Other Prelacies' degrees have the same costs as common Arcana. Even though each Prelacy only has three initiations with known degrees, it's difficult to master more than a few of them. Seers of the Throne may only learn a maximum number of dots equal to their Status Merits plus Gnosis.

Every known Prelacy includes three initiations. These are purchased separately. Many factions call them the Crown, Sword and Temple. Each initiation represents a different aspect of the Exarch's power.

The Crown

Like a literal crown, the Crown initiation symbolizes authority. The prelate attains personal abilities in accord with the Exarchs' favor. These are innate powers, not Awakened spells.

The Sword

The Sword initiation consists of maddening, indescribable arcane secrets. The Prelacy's ruler wove exceptions into the rules of reality. The Exarch whispers them to the mage, or transmits them through omens and dreams. The prelate can see them now, and uses them to modify his spells.

The Temple

The world is the Exarchs' temple, but a prelate who knows the Temple initiation can truly sanctify it for his masters. If the Seer creates a soul stone (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 277) inscribed with the Prelacy's patron, she can use it to focus an Exarch's authority, sanctifying the area in his name. Once activated, the

Temple's soul stone has an area of effect equal to an extended spell with advanced duration factor successes equal to the Seer's Gnosis.

Temple initiations aren't spells; they can't be dispelled or nullified with supernatural powers. They're considered to be overriding, Supernal laws. However, the soul stone must be placed in a fixed location and activated with one hour of ritual activity and one point of Mana per degree the Seer wishes to exercise. A soul stone can only hold one of the owner's Prelacies at a time. Every 24 hours, a Temple stone must consume another point of Mana per degree or it loses its powers, though it's still a soul stone. Thus, Seers often keep them near a Hallow to recharge them.

The Temple's powers are nullified if the stone is moved or destroyed. Finally, a spell that targets the Temple stone nullifies its powers until the duration expires. As Seers cannot move or cast protective spells on Temple stones, they hide them with care and ingenuity.

Prelacies versus Legacies

Legacies and Prelacies are mutually compatible. A Seer can be both a prelate and a Legacy member. Still, they have notable similarities, and old records say that some Prelacies were once known as Legacy Attainments until the Legacy's patron Exarch attained Archigenitor Status. Occultists watch Seer Legacies closely, then. If a Legacy earns enough clout, it may transform into a full-blown Ministry. Even if its Patron Exarch already possesses a known Prelacy, the Legacy might develop a variation, culled from its Attainments. It is said that cults inside the current great Ministries teach these unique abilities.

The old tomes also say that at times, holding a Legacy and Prelacy can lead to unusual side effects. A soul can only undergo so many transformations before it distorts into something inhuman. Storytellers can use this fact to restrict certain Legacy/Prelacy combinations, or give characters with them strange "gifts:" mutations, derangements and bizarre powers.

Archigenitor Prelacies

They say all the Iron Seals have Prelacies, but only the Archigenitors routinely grant them. Regardless of Ministry, any Seer with the prerequisite Status and

Dream Merits can learn them. When a Ministry sees the rise of a particular Prelacy in its ranks, it's a sign of flowering greatness. When a Ministry's signature Prelacy falls out of favor, it's an ill omen; the Ministry will fall. The Hegemonic Ministry hasn't reached this point, but both members and outsiders watch for it.

Archigenitors grant the following Prelacies. Therefore, they're commonly used by members of the four great Ministries. Mages from lesser Ministries can also learn them for the same experience cost as common Arcana.

Doctrine

To the Seers of Paternoster, Doctrine isn't just a code of thought and speech, but a cosmic inscription that determines who may legally wield Supernal energy, and who approaches the higher worlds as a thief or heretic. By adhering to the pure codes of the Exarchs, a prelate's mind, body and spirit become powerful, living bridges between the Lie and the heavens. The Seer eschews profane occultism through meditation, ritual abasement to the Exarchs, and the study of each Iron Seal. To Doctrine's prelates, the runes are not just names, but codes of law.

Crown of Doctrine

(●) Brightness Within

The prelate disciplines himself, destroying errant thoughts that are irrelevant to the Exarchs' will. Without trivial obsessions getting in the way, Supernal power burns a clearer path into his Pattern. As a result, the mage can store one extra point of Mana in his Pattern for every dot he possesses in the Prime Arcanum.

(●●) Internal Purity

The mage's self-discipline increases. It eliminates spiritual impurities that slow the alchemical conversion of flesh to power, and vice versa. Pattern restoration now costs two points of Mana to restore a point of bashing or lethal damage. Pattern scouring now grants four points of Mana for one Attribute dot.

(●●●) Restore the Purified Form

The mage's Pattern retains his discipline, reordering itself to a semi-Supernal form. The prelate can transform his body into a transcendent form of Mana that's largely free of the Fallen World's corruption, and apply its purity to his injured flesh. He can now heal resistant bashing or damage (see page 124 of *Mage*) with Pattern restoration by using Mana previously scoured from his own Pattern. It costs four points of Mana to heal one point of resistant bashing or lethal damage. He can't heal resistant aggravated damage this way.

Sword of Doctrine

(●) **Bright Power**

The prelate sacrifices Mana to the Exarchs, invoking their power. By spending an additional point of Mana, the mage can add two dice to one spellcasting roll. The mage can do this on successive turns for extended casting, adding two dice to each roll. He is still limited by the number of Mana he can spend per turn, and can only spend one point of Mana per turn on this benefit.

(●●) **The Father's Light**

The prelate strengthens his spells with visualized runes that describe the Exarchs' codes. He constructs them with vortices of Mana but if he inscribes Supernal laws properly, they sustain themselves; the Mana isn't consumed.

When the prelate casts instant spells with a Mana requirement during a scene, roll the mage's Prime Arcanum dots as a dice pool at the scene's conclusion. Each success recovers one point of Mana that he spent during that scene.

(●●●) **Word of Authority**

The prelate can extinguish magic in the Father's name, banishing blasphemous charms from the earth. His Prime spells acquire the rote quality (reroll failed dice) whenever they're used to shield against or dispel magic. Furthermore, he can use Prime spells to destroy enchantments that would normally be immune to dispellation. The Storyteller determines whether a spell or other supernatural phenomenon is subject to this power. It can't affect living creatures or supernatural templates, but can for instance affect imbued and enhanced items, as well as spells that the caster has relinquished by spending a dot (rather than a point) of Willpower. If the prelate succeeds, he must spend a dot of Willpower (not a point) to solidify the dispellation.

Temple of Doctrine

The Temple of Doctrine places Supernal energy under the Father's direct authority. He punishes heretics, and authorizes loyal Seers (who by definition possess the Mystery Commands Flaw) to act in his name. In the area of effect, all magic cast by these Seers is covert, even if it would normally be vulgar. Sleepers cannot even trigger Paradoxes by making a covert spell improbable.

Other mages are not so lucky. *All* of the magic they cast is considered to be vulgar, even if it would normally be covert. Furthermore, unauthorized mages incur one additional die of Paradox per degree of the Temple's stone.

One would think that if Seers freely cast vulgar spells in the Temple, it would reveal the secrets of magic to the world, but Sleepers in the affected area are actually harder to impress with the Mysteries. Double the Temple stone's degree and reduce the effective Willpower of Sleepers by that amount for the purposes of Disbelief (see **Mage**, p. 274). Recording devices fail and break instead of witnessing inexplicable magic. Over time, Sleepers in the affected area grow more superstitious, but more hopeless. Some part of them knows there are wonders in the world, but they can't see, feel or touch them. Residents grow more religious, but somewhat faithless. They secretly believe that nothing will make them luckier and nobody's listening to their prayers — they feel separated from the power they sense.

Fury

Fury is the tornado, the torch and the physics of a gun. It's the techniques boxers use to make fists break bones, and the science engineers harness to build cluster bombs. In the world before the Fall, human beings could bargain with nature. They couldn't always get the upper hand, but sometimes they could make the storm stay its wrath, or ask a sword for mercy. Once, the elements were alive; Fallen, they're objects, whose trace sapience either obeys the Lie's physics or flees to the Shadow. Under the Exarchs' reign, natural energies sow suffering according to intractable natural laws — and the will of the Throne.

Crown of Fury

(●) **Break the Battle Drill**

The mage learns patterns in the chaos: the guiding hand of the General, who enforces the rules of destruction. When the prelate surrenders to these patterns, the General subtly seizes control over her movements. She easily slips out of the way of the most predictable manifestations of violence: codified forms of combat that were designed, mastered and ultimately limited by human imagination. Tugged and pushed by the General, her movements nullify an attacker's Fighting Style maneuvers. Her head bobs the wrong way for a crack shot, she slips out of the right position for a wrestling hold, or snaps a quick strike to a weak point in her opponent's defensive stance.

Reduce an assailant's effective Fighting Style Merit dots by the initiate's Forces Arcanum dots. This even applies when the initiate isn't aware of the attack. This only applies to maneuvers that modify attacks and defenses between the initiate and attacker. It doesn't

affect the attacker's prowess when it comes to attacking or defending against other combatants because the power represents the initiate's supernatural ability. It doesn't directly affect the attacker's training — it counters it.

(••) Command the Furies Within

The prelate can reorder Forces when they enter her Pattern. As soon as the spell makes contact, her knowledge of Fury lets her reconstruct it into a personal imago to modify with an intense burst of concentration. If she's adept and imaginative, she can twist occult firestorms in her favor, even immolating their creators with an arc of stolen flame.

Whenever anyone casts a Forces spell with a duration longer than Instant on the prelate's Pattern (not just an area), she can alter its factors. She can reshuffle a spell's Potency, duration or number of targets, trading one factor's power for another, though she can't increase one factor without reducing another, or vice versa. Roll Wits + Forces. Each success lets the prelate alter the spell's factors by one step on the spell factor charts per success. The mage can't reduce any spell factor to 0 (or no effect) this way, and she can't add new types of factors that aren't already a part of the spell's imago.

This power requires an instant action to focus the prelate's thoughts. It can only be performed once per spell.

(•••) Aegis of the General

The prelate knows the weak parts of dangerous energies. She moves where a bullet will freakishly bounce off a belt buckle, or where a fire's cooler than it looks. She backs it up with the General's authority, exaggerating the frequency of these coincidences.

This degree acts like the "Unseen Shield" spell (see *Mage*, p. 167) except that it only provides one point of armor (or 1 extra die against grappling attempts), stacks with other Shielding Practice magic and is always active. It is not a spell and doesn't consume a Spell Tolerance slot.

Sword of Fury

The Sword of Fury unleashes the General's command over the elements. The dull, remnant intelligences behind natural powers are the prelate's soldiers.

If the prelate casts an instant Forces spell that inflicts damage (typically using the Fraying, Unraveling and Unmaking Practices) while wielding a dedicated magical tool, she adds her degrees of initiation as points of damage *after* the spell succeeds. Do not add dice to the spellcasting pool beforehand. If the spell fails, the Sword of Fury does nothing.

Temple of Fury

The Temple of Fury focuses the General's attention on the area. Her will bends natural forces against anyone who isn't a trusted Seer. In the Temple of Fury, car accidents are common. Drunken brawls lead to involuntary manslaughter and stray bullets ricochet into family homes. Electricity is spotty; safe-looking wiring causes devastating fires. Give it long enough, and the area will look like a war zone — and in fact, the Seers often set up Fury stones in them, to keep fear and aggression at a fever pitch.

When anyone who doesn't have Mystery Commands Flaw rolls a Physical dice pool or uses Forces magic, roll a number of dice equal to the stone's degrees of initiation + 2. These dice have the opposite effect of the rote action effect; failed dice *replace* successes, reducing their total. If the victim ends up with 0 net successes, she suffers a Dramatic Failure. At the Storyteller's discretion, this might also apply to actions that use non-Physical dice pools but have a physical effect (such as piloting a vehicle by remote control).

Also, any attempt to counter or dispel Seers' Forces spells in the area of effect is not only considered vulgar, but incurs the Temple stone owner's degree of initiation in additional dice on the Paradox roll (see p. 123 of *Mage: The Awakening*).

Obligation

Obligation is the power to batter down riotous, varied thoughts and feelings into simple, predictable forms. This creates Unity; everyone is trapped in the Skinner Box of the Exarchs' prison, and dances to its pleasures and pains. Obligation isn't consent; it's the contract Sleepers make with the universe to stave off suffering and win fleeting pleasure. These strategies become habits and as habits, they're tools that control the world's prisoners. Prelates of Obligation learn the innermost forms of desire. They know the words and images that bring fear to all minds, and the shapes that trigger love and hate and the occult diagram of sorrow. They evoke these secrets with the Prelacy and internalize them, mastering the Exarchs' psychic laws.

Crown of Obligation

(•) Every Soul's Whisper

The Unity binds all emotions, for every passionate thought drifts to his dominion. The prelate's dreams and errant thoughts tap into the Unity. Through sounds and images, she learns humanity's collective

emotional laws and all the techniques that manipulate them. She earns a +1 bonus to all Social skills. Furthermore, even when she possesses no dots in one of them, she instinctively knows their fundamentals. She can always paint a picture or avoid a common *faux pas* in an unfamiliar culture.

(●●) Exalted Will

The prelate's can siphon power from the Exarchs' memetic machine. She transforms her passions into a command, and harvests a bit of that secret engine's Supernal power. Whenever the mage would earn a point of Willpower from satisfying a Vice, she may instead acquire one point of Mana per dot she possesses in the Mind Arcanum. The player must decide which benefit to exercise (Willpower or Mana) whenever the opportunity arises.

(●●●) Higher Passion

The Prelate communes with the Unity and takes an additional Vice from the human mass mind. She can use it to earn Willpower (though not more than one point per occasion, even if it stimulates both Vices), channel it into goetic spells and otherwise use it just as if it was her original Vice.

The presence of two "natural" Vices also makes it difficult to control the mage's mind. Add 2 to her effective Resistance attribute or any dice pool she uses to shake off mental control.

Sword of Obligation

(●) Command the Sleeping Masses

Sleepers' minds are made of simple habits. The mage knows the signs and symbols that command them, and the primitive responses that reveal their true thoughts: parts of the Exarchs' psychic machine. It manifests in subtle vortices and auras that only prelates can see.

Add one dot to the prelate's effective Mind Arcanum when he casts spells on anyone who lacks a supernatural template. He can use advanced prolongation factors, sympathetic magic and more advanced Practices than usual, as long as the target is a Sleeper. He cannot, however, learn rites that would require a true, extra dot of Mind. His expertise relates to Sleepers, not the Arcanum as a whole.

(●●) Unity of the Throne

The Unity opens the prelate's mind to an even more esoteric stratum of psychic existence. These are the thought patterns of Seers of the Throne. Seers inhabit a more complex psychic universe than Sleepers but by submitting to the Exarchs, they've internalized their own key words and signs — they're also influenced by Obligation's secret machine. When a prelate casts Mind spells

that harness Seers' memetic weaknesses, they gain the rote quality; re-roll failed dice whenever the target is a Seer of the Throne with the Mystery Commands Flaw.

(●●●) Tame the Inconstant Lie

The Unity trains the mage in a heavily-guarded Astral citadel, where the Exarchs' experimental thought forms evolve on a sanity-cracking proving ground. These symbol-engines are designed to correct Flaws in the Lie: rogue mages and other supernatural beings that stymie the Exarchs' plans. The prelate learns these advanced psychic strategies. It's an incomplete science, but it serves.

The prelate can now spend Mana to counteract the protective effects of supernatural power traits (such as Blood Potency, Gnosis, Primal Urge and Wyrd) against Mind magic. Each point of Mana he spends reduces the target's effective power trait by one dot for the sole purpose of resisting the prelate's Mind spell. The mage can spend as many points of Mana as his Mind dots or less to overcome the target's trait. Spending more Mana than the target's trait has no effect. His Gnosis determines how rapidly he can spend Mana. The prelate can spend Mana over multiple turns to maximize his efforts. This Mana does not provide other benefits, though the mage may spend additional Mana on typical effects (vulgar spells, sympathetic magic, etc.).

Temple of Obligation

Under the Unity's gaze, the psychic machine of dominion turns from a subtle to an overt presence. Corporate billboards shine with appeal; local residents buy whatever they advertise. Sleepers fall into stereotypical behavior patterns. They use repetitive catchphrases and meaningless quips. "Good citizens" abase themselves before titles and badges. Criminals are pointlessly rebellious.

In this environment, Seers of the Throne with the Mystery Commands Flaw add the soul stone creator's degree of initiation to all Social Attribute-based dice pools. This applies to mundane and supernatural actions, including rites. Any attempt to counter or dispel a Seer's Mind magic in the area of effect is not only considered vulgar, but incurs the Temple Stone owner's degree of initiation in additional dice on the Paradox roll (see p. 123 of *Mage: The Awakening*).

Vision

The Exarchs are omniscient. To Vision's prelates, it's a matter of faith. The Eye is rightly named; she's the source of Vision, the Supernal organ that transmits

the secrets of the universe to the Exarchs. Vision is more complex than Sleeper science or Pentacle mystics would have you believe. Prelates say that initiation immerses them in the Pantognosis: wires of sympathy that transmit knowledge to and from the Supernal Realms. The Pantognosis lies within the Tapestry's threads; in fact, instructions flow from the Exarchs, and command the Tapestry to obey the Fallen World's laws. Modern prelates say that the Fallen World is a program, and the Pantognosis is its programming; it sends data and relays instructions. This information — this Vision — is the purest form of command, and binds reality to the Exarchs' desires.

Crown of Vision

(●) Sense the Supernal Gaze

The mage understands her place in the Pantognosis and thus, her personal sympathetic connections. The result is an ability that duplicates the spell "Correspondence," (Mage, p. 232) but only applies to her own sympathetic connections. Roll Wits + Investigation + Space to determine its extent.

(●●) Follow the Web of Chains

Even though the smallest fragments of its flow pass through the mage's soul, the Pantognosis reveals the binding strands between Fallen things. If the prelate finds a strong sympathetic bond to start with, it acts as a terminal to the world's secrets. From that point, her intuition guides her.

Add the mage's Space dots to Investigation Skill rolls and research rolls (see the **World of Darkness** core, pp. 55-56) whenever she possesses an Intimate sympathetic connection to the subject of her inquiries.

(●●●) Adamantine Bonds

Even when a sympathetic tie withers and dies in the Fallen World, its Supernal signature remains. The mage can bind the substrate of eternal sympathies — the lingering, ageless information encoded in Pantognostic threads.

Consequently, the prelate can spend a Willpower dot (not a point) to permanently retain a sympathetic connection with one other target (this does not include Sensory connections). From that point forward, mundane events can never alter that connection. The mage might not see the target for decades (or ever) or might lose a material connection like a hair clippings or photograph, but it won't alter the bond. Supernatural powers can dampen or enhance the connection, but when they subside, it reasserts itself. The initiate can relinquish the bond reflexively. If she does, the sympa-

thetic connection reverts to the state it would have had if it had never existed. If she hasn't spent experience to recover the lost Willpower dot, it returns.

Sword of Vision

(●) Eye of the Exarchs

In the Pantognostic flow, emotions and social bonds are weak factors. Vision sears through them in favor of stronger connections like names, blood and birth. The prelate knows the information that describes and even commands the universe, and uses it to conquer the petty interference of celebrity and anonymity. Fame and Occultation Merits weaken. Reduce the penalties these Merits levy on sympathetic spells by the mage's Space Arcanum dots.

(●●) Cosmic Vision

The Pantognosis pervades every atom of the cosmos. Information flows through secret channels in the Tapestry. The mage's spells tap into it and acquire limitless reach.

At this degree of initiation, the prelate's sympathetic spells never suffer from an Unknown connection (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 114-115). The mage only needs to describe the parameters of her target ("A mage who wishes me ill," "the cult's leader"). If a target fits the description and the Exarchs permit it, she may cast a sympathetic spell as if the target was Described — not Unknown. If multiple targets qualify, the Exarchs (and the Storyteller) choose one possible candidate.

The Exarchs can nullify or modify this advantage at will. They'll do so when a sympathetic connection could stymie their plans, or reveal something they don't want the Seer to know.

(●●●) Commune with Omniscience

The mage easily casts sympathetic spells through the Fallen World's Pantognostic structure. She no longer needs to spend a point of Mana to cast a sympathetic spell, doesn't lose her Defense while casting them and doesn't need an extra dot in the requisite Arcana to cast sympathetic spells on a Pattern.

Temple of Vision

The Temple of Vision is a nexus of the Pantognosis. The secrets of the universe weave into a matrix of power here, but the Eye only permits loyal Seers to access it. Otherwise, the Eye reflects the collected information, dazzling distrusted interlopers. Sleepers grow paranoid when they stay in the Temple for any length of time. People spy on their neighbors, and cocoon themselves behind fences and shutters.

Seers with the Mystery Commands Flaw gain one dot of Occultation per degree of the Temple's soul stone. This benefit stacks with existing Merit dots, and can even exceed the normal three dot limit. Other characters can't hide so easily, as Seers with the Mystery Commands Flaw reduce resident targets' sympathetic distance by one step per degree of the soul stone. Any attempt to counter or dispel these Seers' Space spells in the area of effect is not only considered vulgar, but incurs the Temple stone owner's degree of initiation in additional dice on the Paradox roll (see p. 123 of *Mage: The Awakening*).

The Devil in the Details

Of course, while the grand plans of the Seers of the Throne as an organization are set forth within the ivory towers of powerful Ministries, they are executed in the streets and in the boardroom; in trendy nightclubs and sleazy motel rooms. These designs are advanced by the smaller (but no less important) works of individual pylons, and their various dupes, servitors and other resources. For the Seers of the Throne, the true conquest of the Fallen World begins with the grunts in the trenches. These men and women, their eyes opened to the will of the masters of all things, constitute the base of the Throne itself.

But how does the base of the Throne grow and thrive? How is it strengthened against the assaults of Atlantis' deluded heirs and the other enemies of the Ministries? What can each individual Seer do to bring the Exarchs' sublime Lie that much closer to perfection in the Fallen World? While all that which transpires above echoes downward, to be reflected upon the profane, so, too, does that which unfolds below filter upward, through ever increasingly rarified levels of existence, to influence all that — known and unknown, alike — which exists above. Thus, each pylon is a drop of water in an unimaginably vast sea, contributing only a tiny fraction of its mass. Taken together, though, these drops encompass the depth and breadth of the Seers of the Throne as a whole, no part irreplaceable, to be sure, but every one of them significant.

Recruitment

For any pylon to survive and thrive, it must be capable of bolstering and replenishing its membership. Because the Seers of the Throne lack any moral high ground from which to recruit, they must turn to the (often far more effective) stratagem of appeals to materialism and avarice. In some cases, this is nothing more elaborate


than offering a warm bed and a hot meal to a homeless Apostate, in exchange for a few hours of conversation over drinks. In others, however, gestures both subtler and grander, by far, are required. Save under the most surpassingly rare of circumstances, one cannot simply walk into the local Consilium gathering place and advertise the potential rewards of service to the Exarchs. Not only is this approach suicidally dangerous, but it also fails to take into account the individuals needs and desires of prospective converts, and the Seers are about nothing if not celebrating the possibility of individual gain.

Thus, many modern Seers tend to look at recruitment as a process analogous to marketing. One must define one's desired demographic and then specifically target that group with enticements that appeal to the sensibilities of its constituency. Of course, this approach need not take the form of a business model: secret societies, cartels, clubs, and almost any other even moderately successful fellowship adopt a similar approach, in one way or another. People — Sleepers and Awakened, alike — are relatively easy to control, once one has a handle on their wants, whether those be for companionship, power, safety, belonging, or any other commodity. The secret, then, lies in determining what a given mage desires and how best to give it to her... or, better still, to entice her to *seize* it.

Identifying the Target

Not every mage is cut out to be a Seer of the Throne; most aren't, in fact. The Seers want only the best and the brightest to offer up as chattels to their otherworldly masters. But what are the criteria? Naturally, that varies from Seer to Seer, pylon to pylon. One group might admire the combat prowess of the local leader of the Adamantine Arrow and resolve to court her. Another might recognize the disenfranchisement of local Libertines and Apostates and wish to capitalize upon that situation. Regardless of intentions or methods, however, opportunity is perhaps the most critical factor in narrowing the field for recruitment, as the Pentacle is often known to rebuff even the most casual of scrutiny with deadly force. While a potent Mystagogue may be a highly desirable acquisition, for example, the poaching process likely isn't worth the probable cost if he is regarded as a crucial resource by the local Consilium and, therefore, perpetually under guard.

This means that the majority of Seer recruitment comes not out of the Pentacle, but instead from the ranks of Apostates and those who have not yet had the opportunity to align themselves with the side, if any, they choose in the great struggle of the Awakened. Radical isolationists



are not preferred for this process, as they often have little to offer and can be more trouble than they're worth. The "undecided voters" of the Awakened world, however, are more numerous than most willworkers imagine and, like their Sleeper counterparts, can be a powerful deciding factor in swaying the balance of power. The trick is in determining which of them are merely resources and which are capable of actually bringing something to the Seers of the Throne as a whole.

By no means is this to say that the Seers don't target Pentacle mages for recruitment, but that they are much more selective and cautious about doing so. Typically, a Seer needs to feel that she's got a valid angle before attempting any such thing: knowledge of the mage's real name, or Sleeper family and friends; awareness of his secret membership in a Left-Handed Legacy; a pipeline to something that the willworker desires with an all-consuming lust. This sort of approach requires an extensive attention to details, making each individual Pentacle mage something of a unique project for Seers attempting to seduce them into the Exarchs' service. The Seers of the Throne who practice this sort of recruitment, however, claim that it can be much more personally rewarding than working on those who have nowhere else to go and nothing better to do with their Awakened lives; some equate it to acquiring a single penthouse condo in downtown New York City, as opposed to a few duplexes in Anytown — both can be equally profitable, but one has far greater individual value and, furthermore, *style*.

Selling the Throne

Consider the following: a newly Awakened mage, trying to make his way in the world and make sense of his new perceptions and abilities. While metaphysically exceptional, it is statistically probable that he is, in most other ways, relatively average. When the Pentacle comes knocking and all the initial smokescreens are finally drawn aside, its various orders offer differing degree of hardship, in exchange for a spiritually rewarding life. They talk about sacrifice, responsibility and the value of struggle. They tell the new mage that he can be part of something meaningful, but that it's going to be an uphill battle and that he carries the weight of the world on his shoulders. Enter the Seers of the Throne. They tell the willworker that he doesn't owe the world *anything*; in fact, the world owes *him*. It's part of his Awakened birthright to take that which he desires. Does he want to be rich? It can be arranged. Does he want pretty women? Pretty men? Done and done. Does he want the fear and respect that he's been denied as an anonymous nobody among the faceless masses? He

can have all that and much, much more. All that he has to do in exchange is bow down to other people *just like him* and whom he can one day become, if he but has the courage to pursue his ambitions. Sure, he's got to do some legwork, but he'll actually receive tangible, regular compensation for his efforts; he gets just as much out of the system as he puts into it, if not more.

Part of the lure of the Seers isn't merely that their promises are seductive, but also that they're *sensible*. More and more, the Fallen World turns away from the idea of service as its own reward and instead lavishes admiration and praise upon those who adopt a more mercenary lifestyle. In many competitive fields, jobs compete for potential employees, rather than the other way around, and the very state of being Awakened is to exist within perhaps the more competitive field of all. The Seers don't hide from that reality; they embrace it. They offer incentives and show what the Exarchs are willing to do for their servants, instead of what the Oracles ask of theirs. As it turns out, a *lot* of people are much happier to be offered everything than to be asked for anything.

Certainly, this approach *can* work with even the most dedicated Pentacle mage or most stubborn Apostate, but it tends to go best with those who are new to a willworker's life and flush with its power and promise. To sell the Throne to Pentacle mages, however, different tactics are usually called for. (See the individual write-ups for the different factions, below.) These are people who've already bought into (as the Seers think of it) the "lie of service"; they need to be immersed in the primal joy of taking all and giving back nothing, and that can prove to be a surprisingly difficult circumstance to establish. One ranking Seer likened it to trying to pitch the notion of switching sides to an enemy soldier on the battlefield, in the middle of a war: "It really doesn't matter if your ideas are good or bad when the other guy just won't bother to listen before he aims and fires. The point — and the difficulty — lies in overcoming the conditioning that compels the opposition to regard every word that comes out of your mouth as a dangerous deception, intended to do harm to him and his people. Until you manage to establish even the barest foothold of rapport, you can't win any ground in the hearts and minds of others."

Pylons

Every great empire throughout history has shared in a few commonalities. Perhaps most importantly, all of it — figuratively speaking, anyway — comes down to the building blocks: stones for castles and roads;

bricks for walls; columns and arches; and every other little piece that fits in, here or there, to contribute to a stable whole. Without these building blocks, the empire itself could not exist. So, too, is it with the pylon. Each such grouping is a single building block in the Exarchs' blueprint. Some are flagstones, meant to be stepped on by every passerby, while others are keystones, supporting the most elaborate and important of structures.

Lost Opportunities

As unfortunate as it may be, the Seers of the Throne can't manage to bag every potential acquisition on which they set their sights. What, then, do they do when a prized catch eludes their grasp? Whatever they can, of course, within the limits of their resources and the dictates of a sensible profit-to-loss assessment. If at all possible, the Seers attempt to neutralize the former recruitment prospect, killing him if such is within their means; better that *no one* should have him if the Exarchs cannot. If murder isn't possible, then they begin a concerted campaign of marginalizing the missed opportunity, making him the subject of Sleeper inquiries and otherwise attempting to turn him into a pariah within the Awakened community. If things get bad enough, he might be killed or driven off by the local Pentacle or he might come to the Seers of his own accord, finally pushed to the point of surrender. Of course, some few outsiders prove to be virtually unassailable in this respect and the Seers do their best to simply steer clear of these paragons (though what any right-minded Seer was doing attempting to recruit such a mage in the first place is highly questionable, in and of itself.)

Naturally, the society of the Throne is full of cutthroat politics and Seers are apt to steer rival mages — whether individuals or whole pylons — at “problem acquisitions,” whenever they can, so as to tie up their assets and to make them look bad in front of their peers and superiors. Also, some of them aren't above nudging the odds (whether magically or otherwise), so as to get their rivals within the Seers of the Throne killed by particularly dangerous prey. Any road to power is a valid one in the service of the Exarchs, after all, and one sort of lost opportunity may, in fact, be an entirely different kind of opportunity in disguise.

The inception of a pylon is a study in cost-benefit analysis. No Seer of the Throne wants to share the fruits of her ill-gotten gains with anyone else, but no individual mage can stand alone against the slings and arrows of Awakened life. Pentacle willworkers form cabals for mutual protection and benefit and, if Seers want to be able to keep up, then they also need to play the numbers game. Each Seer in a pylon does what she can to bind as much of her bad fortune as possible to the welfare of the pylon as a whole (thus foisting much of the burden of such off on her fellows), while distancing her good fortune from it (save to the degree to which such can expand upon the resources of the pylon in ways from which she will personally directly benefit.) Trust and friendship are rare within a pylon, since everybody is — with a rare few exceptions — genuinely out to screw everyone else over in the unapologetic pursuit of individual gain.

One particularly successful Warlock Seer who came up in the corporate world in the early 1980s likened the whole process to taking the most aggressive and amoral young go-getters in the company, putting them into a handful of work groups, and then telling them that only one promotion is available, but that said promotion will be awarded based on both group and individual performance. The members of each pylon work together out of grudging necessity, because every other person, in every other pylon, is also gunning for that one elusive spot at the top, and all of them have to make their own peers look good, while somehow managing to emerge as clearly the best among them. As with any gathering of this nature, these relationships are fraught with rivalries (both friendly and decidedly less so), cults of personality, base treachery, back-room dealings, appeals to moral weaknesses (such as a taste for the bottle or the temptations of the flesh), and anything else that can be used to put a leash — figuratively speaking, of course — on one's present compatriots.

Structure

The manner in which a pylon organizes itself says much about its members' beliefs, values, ambitions, and even upbringing. Certainly, some pylons appear in almost every way a dark mirror of a Pentacle cabal, but these fellowships are the exception to the norm. Cabals are, to one degree or another, almost invariably far more than mere alliances of convenience and opportunities to “keep enemies closer,” so this structure only rarely suffices for Seers of the Throne, who aren't looking for friends with whom to share the

Pressure to Perform

How is it that Seers of the Throne manage to survive in this dog-eat-dog world of internal politics? It seems that every single Seer is just looking for an angle to exploit, and that's basically the case. No one wants to share the Exarchs' gifts with anyone else; generosity is counter to the very spirit of the Seers as an organization. Rather, every Seer views the world through a lens of object selfishness and avarice, hoping to seize everything of value for herself and deny all of it to everyone else. It's not enough simply to rule the world — the rest of humanity, Awakened and otherwise, has to be made to bow down in slavish obeisance for this life (such as it is) to have any real worth. This is the price of the Exarchs' kindness and generosity.

Thus, it doesn't come as much of a surprise that it's unusually an extremely *lonely* business, being a Seer of the Throne. Addictions of various sorts (particularly drug, alcohol and sex addiction) are relatively common, and periodic nervous breakdowns are certainly not unheard-of. The misery of continually having to scale the mountain of competition — always looking up for handholds, while simultaneously looking back to see who's trying to drag you down — causes many Seers to break. Suicides are more frequent within the Seers of the Throne than in any other large-scale Awakened sub-society, as would be expected within any group so powerfully rooted in ambition. Only those who can carve out utterly their desire for genuine human companionship, willing to mercilessly press a boot heel down on the throat of the world as a whole, are fit to kneel before the celestial thrones of the Exarchs themselves and, maybe... just *maybe*... to occupy such a throne, in time.

grand adventure of Awakening; instead, they want useful associates, whose goals and interests parallel their own, just closely enough that each can advance the other's objectives and just distinct enough that there are (almost) always distinct slices of the pie for everyone. Only rarely, however, does one see a pylon devoid of some overarching commonality, a "theme" that informs its direction and the means that it uses to achieve its objectives.

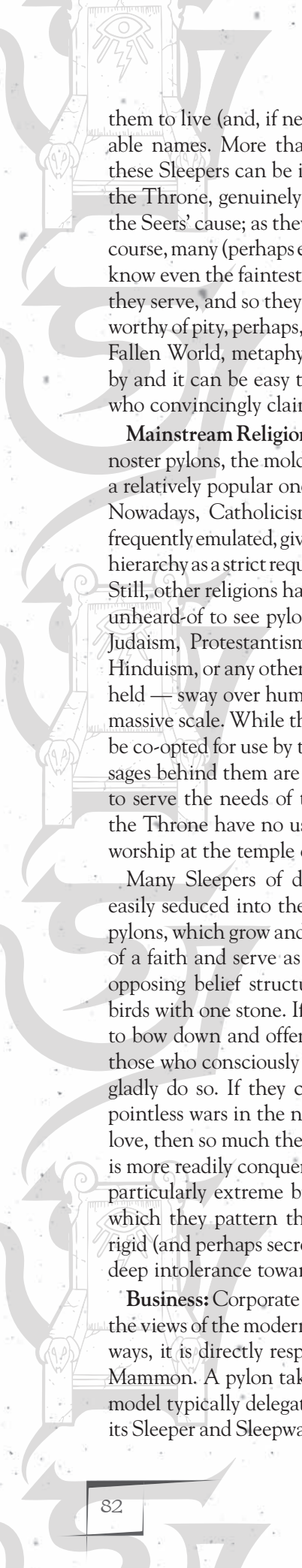
Some example structures for Seers of the Throne pylons:

Secret Society: Typified by layers of initiation, yielding up increasingly deep secrets of an often at least partially spiritual or mystical nature, the archetype of the secret society is a compelling one for a Seer pylon. Members may identify themselves by a ring, code phrase, tattoo (almost invariably in an inconspicuous location on the body, such as the inner thigh or sole of the foot), or any combination of the three, as well as by numerous other relatively innocuous symbols. Many such pylons are generational, having been handed down for decades and sometimes even centuries. Some few are alleged to date back further still. Particularly prestigious secret society pylons often inspire imitators and/or fragment into separate groups as some of their members ascend the Throne's hierarchy faster than others. In a few cases, young Seers claim to be sworn to secret society pylons in which potent tetrarchs once claimed membership.

The secret society conjures up notions of exclusivity and a "fast track" to the halls of power. Traditionally, its members look out for one another, furthering the ambitions of individuals and groups simultaneously. Needless to say, this speaks quite thoroughly to the Seers of the Throne; if one *must* work to others' benefit, then let it be in concert with a partnership guaranteed, by its very nature, also to advance the self. Such pylons are often surrounded by Sleeper and Sleepwalker "initiates," the overwhelming majority of whom never ascend to meaningful degrees of initiation and live out their lives as resources for the sole benefit of the pylon.

Cult: Similar in many ways to the secret society, the cult model is distinguished by a significantly greater emphasis on a religious or philosophical perspective on the world. Rather than being a group with an often-political mandate — which, despite its occult trappings, is typically the purpose of a secret society — the cult's avowed mission is the advancement of a spiritual goal. These kinds of pylons may preach universal love and peace (as a guise for universal control), self-actualization (thinly-veiled worldly ambition), faith in a particular religion, philosophy, or even guru (often, deliberately crafted by a Seer or, in the case of a guru, a living willworker capable of directly interacting with the faithful).

Many cult pylons are particularly skilled in the uses of Sleeper resources, indoctrinating them into the worship and service of the Exarchs — typically, by couching their masters in forms more readily understood by mundane sensibilities — and then convincing



them to live (and, if need be) to die in their unspeakable names. More than merely duped into slavery, these Sleepers can be incredibly devoted followers of the Throne, genuinely convinced of the rightness of the Seers' cause; as they understand such, anyway. Of course, many (perhaps even most) such Sleepers do not know even the faintest hint of the truth behind what they serve, and so they are, in many ways, innocents; worthy of pity, perhaps, but certainly not scorn. In the Fallen World, metaphysical truth is so hard to come by and it can be easy to buy into the rhetoric of one who convincingly claims to possess it.

Mainstream Religion: The hallmark of many Paternoster pylons, the mold of mainstream religion is still a relatively popular one among Seers of the Throne. Nowadays, Catholicism is certainly the faith most frequently emulated, given its dependence upon earthly hierarchy as a strict requirement of spiritual wholeness. Still, other religions have their admirers, and it is not unheard-of to see pylons cast in the image of Islam, Judaism, Protestantism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, or any other faith that holds — or has ever held — sway over human thought and emotion on a massive scale. While the symbols of these beliefs may be co-opted for use by the Throne, however, the messages behind them are lost, deliberately reconfigured to serve the needs of the individual pylon. Seers of the Throne have no use for divinities, after all: they worship at the temple of human will.

Many Sleepers of deep religious convictions are easily seduced into the service of religiously-themed pylons, which grow and thrive within the community of a faith and serve as a point of contention toward opposing belief structures, thus serving to kill two birds with one stone. If ordinary people can be made to bow down and offer up the fruits of their faith to those who consciously mislead them, then Seers will gladly do so. If they can *also* be made to continue pointless wars in the name of faiths of tolerance and love, then so much the better. A human race divided is more readily conquered. Thus, pylons usually favor particularly extreme branches of the religions upon which they pattern their structures, those given to rigid (and perhaps secretive) chains of command and deep intolerance toward divergent beliefs.


Business: Corporate culture has done much to shape the views of the modern Seers of the Throne; in many ways, it is directly responsible for the ascendancy of Mammon. A pylon taking its cues from the business model typically delegates responsibilities well among its Sleeper and Sleepwalker servants, rewarding those

who perform and “downsizing” (one way or another) those who leave something to be desired. Because this structure appeals so well to naked human greed, now a primary driving force for so many, it thrives within Western (and Westernized) societies. Such pylons commonly defer to a single leader from among their ranks, though many view all members as constituents of a “board of directors,” each with an individual purview of accountability and authority.

Business pylons often view other pylons as “rival brands” and work diligently to either acquire or devalue their resources. Their efforts are more brutal, still, when directed at Pentacle willworkers or others. Like any powerful corporation, such pylons will readily resort to espionage, assassination, and such, provided that they have the means to do so. On occasion, a network of business-oriented pylons works together, exchanging goods and services with one another and, rarely, trading members “between departments,” as the situation warrants. These arrangements, however, are unusual, even within Dominions (see below) organized almost completely along the business model, since “trade secrets” are such a valuable commodity to pylons crafted in this vein.

Family: Though rare, some Seers are drawn into pylons out of houses of Awakened *proximi*, with laws and traditions handed down through long years. These pylons are among the Seers' most dangerously fanatical, for they are bound together through ties of kin, marrying into and out of bloodlines like the inbred nobility that they are. Often taught that they are inherently superior to those simply recruited into the Exarchs' service, these Seers often allow themselves to believe that they are, as dynasties with sometimes centuries of faithful service to their names, somehow “worthier” in the eyes of their otherworldly masters and destined to act as princes and dukes in the Realms Supernal.

Family pylons are almost always rigidly hierarchical, controlled by a tyrannical matriarch or patriarch who rules until death (or until rendered politically powerless or otherwise irrelevant by an ambitious junior within the house). From the moment of Awakening — and, often, for years before — heavy expectations are set upon members of these houses. They are driven to be the best and achieve the most, proving to the Exarchs that they are worthy to be gifted with further generations of Awakenings and strong enough to stand astride the Realms Supernal as lords and ladies of breeding. The most ancient and extensive such families sometimes encompass *multiple* pylons, though these incestuous aristocracies are rare, indeed.



Gang: Increasingly popular among young Seers of the Throne from underprivileged (or merely violent) backgrounds, the gang model is actually a quite sensible pylon archetype, since it rewards fierce group loyalty while serving as a vehicle for individual ambitions. Members get out of a gang precisely what they put into it, until such time as they become venerable senior members, who are valued for their long contributions and wisdom, rather than their day-to-day works. Disloyalty in gang-modeled pylons is punished with a particularly harsh hand: physical disfigurements (severed fingers, facial scarring, the removal of ears, nose or lips, and the like) are common, as are vicious ordeals intended to “redeem” the offender in the eyes of the pylon — provided she survives.

Like a secret society, a gang often employs an outward identifier, such as a brand, tattoo, or uniform (which is often nothing more elaborate than a patch on a jacket or small strip of cloth), by which its members distinguish themselves from outsiders. And, in much the same vein as their Sleeper counterparts, Seer gang pylons are frequently quite brutal and openly exploitive toward those under their power, ruling over the weak with a heavy hand.

Military Unit: Generally found only within the Praetorian Ministry, the idea of pylon-as-elite-military-force is gradually becoming something of a rarity within the Seers of the Throne. While the hierarchy of military life is pleasing to Seer sensibilities, the very nature of martial conflict is changing and the worldly incarnation of the Throne with it. Technological advantage, sheer numbers, and raw national power are, as ever, the primary deciding factors in martial supremacy, but the roles of individual accomplishment and strategy have waned to very nearly nothing. Such a circumstance denies the fundamental glory of the Awakened state. Still, the model retains its proponents, particularly in parts of the Fallen World in which guerilla warfare, rather than conventional armed conflict, is the order of the day.

Pylons built in this mold tend to be fantastic resource managers, particularly when forced to make do with insufficient supplies (whether mundane or mystic). They are driven, focused, and goal-oriented. They may or may not make much use of outside personnel (Sleeper or Sleepwalker, whom some take to calling “civvies”), though those pylons that do are generally unsentimental in their deployment, using them in whatever way is most tactically sound, rather than to the express end of preserving their lives and

wellbeing. These pylons favor violent solutions, but prefer to use surgical strikes and blinding offensives, rather than engaging in protracted conflicts, as they sap resources and play to the Pentacle’s strengths in weathering long sieges.

Bureaucracy: Particularly popular within Unity and Hegemonic (though for entirely different reasons), the model of pylon-as-bureaucracy has long been a popular one. Government organizations are, of their very nature, almost always bureaucracies, but these are not the only such hierarchies: health care (whether physical or mental), volunteer organizations, academia, even sports teams and their management. Bureaucracies create limitations and oppress the human spirit; they transmute individuals into numbers, commodities that can be regulated and controlled. Seers who craft their pylons upon such a design seek to invoke that quality, categorizing people for their own good and thereby relieving them of the unpleasant obligations of self-determination.

Bureaucratic pylons don’t always have the best access to resources, though they often have a fantastic knack for *manipulating* such access — their own and that of others. Within its sphere of influence, a bureaucratic pylon can often utterly dominate who gets to have what, a power that they often exert over Pentacle mages and other Seers, alike. Sleepers are merely another thing that can be moved from one department to another, its productivity limited or expanded, at will. These pylons are typically quite patient, implementing their strategies with what seems, at times, to be an almost agonizing slowness. Where others unfold their schemes in a matter of weeks or months, these pylons often set their pawns in motion years before the endgame comes to fruition, reaping vast rewards for infinitesimal risk.

For some examples of how these structures play out, consider the following:

The Lark Meadow Ladies’ Club: A secret society pylon operating among the homemakers in a gated community, the Lark Meadow Ladies’ Club, is, as its name implies, an all-female pylon. While model husbands are at the office or away on long business trips, earning their six-figure salaries, their “quiet, unassuming” trophy wives meet over drinks to gossip, talk about their kids, watch soaps, and plot out next year’s projected developments in gradually creating a perfect Unity commune. They don’t need any shared symbols for mutual identification, since Lark Meadow is small enough that everyone knows everyone else on sight and the secrecy of their meetings is shielded by the

stereotype of the chatty, privileged housewife. Who knows if the new pool boy is just that and nothing more, or a Seer operative sent to deliver a message to the pylon? Likewise, other homemakers who want to break into their social circle may or may not be included (depending upon their usefulness) and no one thinks anything of it, one way or the other, since they're either "reaching out to the new girl" or "just being catty."

The Innovative Solutions Group: This pylon operates under the guise of a particularly successful quality assurance firm. The Innovative Solutions Group (or ISG, for short) has access to tremendous amounts of wealth (both its own and that of its expansive clientele), as well as almost any sort of information that could be of use to Seers of the Throne in building up an empire rooted in worldly concerns. While their esoteric lore suffers a bit for it, the ISG's membership isn't complaining. The pylon has its own "company jet," after all, and owns a small private island in the Caribbean. If any of its members really *need* that sort of research done, they can always pay off less fortunate Seers to look it up. Steadfastly devoted to Mammon, this pylon knows nothing of temperance and uplifts avarice as a virtue. They're smug (and why shouldn't they be? They're fantastically wealthy, skilled, and capable) and not very well-liked by the other local pylons, but they don't much care, one way or the other.

Likewise, a pylon may incorporate elements of more than one archetype, blending the strengths (and, unfortunately, weaknesses) of multiple models together. For instance:

The Castellani Family: Loyalty to this pylon must be absolute, but the rewards of unyielding fidelity are also commensurately vast: palatial mansions, staggering trust funds, fast cars, pretty companionship, and access to the halls of power (both legitimate and otherwise). This generational pylon's members are and always have been members of Paternoster (a Ministry particularly popular among the scions of underworld dynasties from out of traditionally Catholic nations), adding yet more complexity to the family's web of oft-conflicting obligations. Outsiders are only reluctantly admitted to the Castellani Family's Awakened minority and then only after proving their loyalty to the family, in a process that invariably concludes with marriage into the pylon (whether directly or, as is much more often the case, through a Sleeper or *proximus* relative).



Those who prove themselves disloyal have traditionally been murdered with a thaumium blade, long a family treasure, locked up in the vault beneath old Antonio Castellani's Tuscan-themed manor.

Victory Company: This pylon's history began back in the Korean War, though it wasn't a pylon when it started; at the time, it didn't even include any Awakened among its ranks. Instead, it was a cult of the General, begotten by Col. Andrew Charlton, a Sleeper born into the worship of the Exarchs. In the interests of his patron Archgenitor, he turned to the most bloodthirsty and fanatically loyal members of his retinue, gradually drawing them into his violent faith. Eventually, his secret organization, the so-called "Victory Company," was noticed by *actual* Seers of the Throne, who heartily approved. So heartily, in fact, that one of them — Lt. Gerald Swanson, otherwise known as

Ragnarok — assumed control of Victory Company in 1964, transforming it into a fully Awakened institution within a matter of a year and transitioning its Sleepers and Sleepwalkers back into a support role. Now in its sixth incarnation, Victory Company recruits directly out of Marine Corps Base Quantico, inducting eager young willworkers into the General's worship and transforming them into perfect warriors.

The Necessity of Diversity

Because the Seers of the Throne don't benefit from a partnership like the Pentacle Orders — the division of the Ministries doesn't quite provide the same sort

of support network, so much as competing perspectives toward the same objective — its pylons must necessarily encompass all of the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in any conceivable situation. While the reality doesn't often go this smoothly, Seers are, nevertheless, compelled to diversify their training, so as to prepare themselves for conflict on *all* of the Awakened battlefields of the Fallen World.

Some pylons accomplish this by specializing individual members in different pursuits, often (though by no means always) by Ministry: one Praetorian trains as a fighter, while a member of Panopticon concentrates on occult learning, and a disciple of Hegemonic explores the nuances of leadership and social engineering. This model enables the pylon to have a definitive expert on hand for almost any

situation, but it can constitute a glaring vulnerability when the pylon's authority on a particular subject is unavailable (whether merely stuck in traffic or swiftly dying of a sucking chest wound.) If enemy willworkers are able to target and neutralize the situational authority, then the pylon's overall effectiveness can be severely hampered, even crippled.

Other pylons opt for the "talented generalist" approach, with each of its members learning a little bit of this, a little bit of that, so that *everyone* has at least some basic competency at a majority of the situations in which the pylon might find itself. While this decentralization of knowledge helps to make the pylon less susceptible to precision targeting, it also decreases the heights of expertise to which its members might aspire at their respective pursuits. They exchange excellence for adaptability.



Unfortunately, neither approach is infallible, and Seers invariably end up lamenting at one point or another the fact that their pylon didn't go the *other* route. The foes that most consistently target a pylon's weak suit, however, aren't Pentacle mages, Banishers, rogue Scelesti, or anything of the sort; for the most part, they are other pylons that most frequently benefit from the opportunity and understanding necessary to most efficiently exploit their fellow Seers' deficiencies. In the interests of not destroying one another (and doing the enemy's work for them), most pylons keep these attacks to the occasional low-profile cheap shot (sniping a useful Sleeper, stealing control of a trust fund, or otherwise taking a valuable though replaceable recourse), but many a Seer certainly isn't above taking a deadlier opening when it presents itself, so long as she can figure out a way to get away with it.

The disparate Flaws of each system, taken together, constitute one of the more telling weaknesses of the Seers of the Throne as a whole; since pylons cannot often be trusted to deal fairly with one another (not even necessarily in the face of opposition), canny Pentacle mages able to nail down a given pylon's favored strategy can concoct plans to thwart its movements. This grim reality is, in fact, one of the strongest reasons for alliances of mutual convenience between pylons, as the remote lords of the Ministries can rarely be bothered to devote much attention to the grunts in the trenches. Instead, rival pylons look out for one another in the face of the Pentacle's aggression, because the bigwigs can't be bothered. It's by no means a perfect arrangement, given the tendency toward treachery within the Throne, itself, but the alternative is for each pylon to stand utterly alone against opponents who may well understand its most critical weaknesses. Still, the point remains that a structure standing on a single pillar is only rarely as sound as one that stands on many, and if there exists a quantifiable tactical advantage that the Pentacle holds over the Seers, it is in the Pentacle's long-standing culture of balance between diversity and specialization.

Cooperation

Obviously, without at least a modicum of cooperation, the Seers of the Throne would've long since fallen apart, collapsing into scores, if not hundreds, of warring factions. What, then, keeps this confederation of supreme narcissists cohesive? Fear, first and foremost: fear of the Exarchs and of the mages who speak for them in the Fallen World. If the Seers of the Throne were to explode under the pressure of internal ten-


sions, then the works of the usurpers of heaven could no longer be as successfully implemented on this side of the Abyss. Since the Exarchs consider that possibility to be intolerable, they mandate a certain degree of "team spirit" amongst their slaves. Seers don't have to like each other (in fact, it's generally better if they don't, as a populace divided is less likely to be able to rise up against the ruling class), but they *do* have to be capable of working together to advance the agendas of their hidden masters.

While the evidence of the Exarchs' will in this world is slim, stories are still handed down from mentor to student and pylon to pylon of the handful of times that terrifying Archmasters have acted to express the displeasure of their unseen lords, when the conflicting ambitions of disparate Seers of the Throne have strained the group's overall effectiveness, potentially compromising the will of the rulers of reality. Joining up with the Seers is an act that carries many hidden costs; the freedom to pursue one's own will to power is just one more sacrifice in what eventually becomes a lifetime of them. Likewise, the degree of relative unity evinced by the five Pentacle Orders (and the fact that enmity toward the Seers of the Throne is one of those subjects upon which they can almost always agree) serves as a powerful impetus for Seers to work in some small sense of harmony.

Thus, it's often mere pragmatism alone that inspires Seers to band together in common causes, creating a network of local pylons under a single political body — the Dominion — whose nominal leader may or may not be truly anything of the sort.

Dominions

Ministries, Tyrannates, tetrarchies, pylons: the divisions between Seers of the Throne are powerful and far-reaching. Indeed, it seems to be the very design of the Exarchs themselves that their earthly servants be as factionalized as the Sleepers they control. The rivalries, alliances, and perhaps even enmities between the Great Ministers and the mightiest of tetrarchs, however, are often of little concern to the average Seer of the Throne. Frankly, such lesser Seers have little appreciable power to affect these struggles in any meaningful way or, in most cases, even to perceive them. Instead, they receive orders from on high and respond appropriately (or not, and face the consequences). Thus, most of what the majority of Seers would think of as "internal politics" happens on the local level; among pylons within a large city, for example, or within a



small Ministry encompassing a single metropolitan area. Seers call these structures — roughly analogous to Pentacle Consilii — Dominions, and they form the backbone of the average non-Seer's exposure to the inner workings of the Throne.

Like many Consilii (and like tetrarchies to a much lesser extent), Dominions typically have well-defined political boundaries (New York City, Bangkok, or Nova Scotia, for example). Rarely does a Dominion encompass a population of fewer than one million Sleepers and some have jurisdiction over far greater numbers; sometimes, as many as 10 million. In many cases, the geographical perimeter of a localized Ministry is synonymous with that of the Dominion that overlaps its area of control, adding another layer of complexity to the web of intrigue and divided loyalty that Seers are expected to navigate. Often, in such a circumstance, the Minister and the political leader of the Dominion (most frequently called "Dominus" or "Domina;" somewhat similar to a Pentacle Hierarchy) are not the same willworker, though some particularly powerful and charismatic mages manage to pull off the balancing act necessary to satisfy both the expectations of the invisible rulers of the world and the clamor of rival pylons from below.

First and foremost, a Dominion is comprised of the pylons that reside within its territory. These Seers are, effectively, the local Domina's "constituency" and those whom she must either placate or subjugate, depending upon her abilities and resources relative to theirs. When rivalries between area pylons threaten local operations, it is to the Domina that most Seers turn — or the Domina who inserts herself into the situation, whether those pylons wish her presence or not — to set matters back on track. While Ministries plan and track grand, sweeping changes, someone must be mindful as to how all of these lofty designs actually unfold on the ground level, and that is the Domina's job. When a pylon comprised largely of Unity Seers is sent orders to move in territory claimed by Praetorians, she must find an equitable solution or, failing that, at least an enforceable one. The stability of the Exarchs' plan for the world, even if only in a very small way, depends upon it, and every detail out of place is a Flaw in their exalted Lie.

Dominus/Domina

As is the case with a Pentacle Hierarchy, the duties of a Dominus may be gratifying or quite thankless, depending upon the individual's ability to enforce his will on those of his lessers, either insidiously or

overtly. Internal rivalries within the Seers of the Throne are often far more volatile than within the Pentacle — even between such diametrically opposed orders as, say, the Free Council and the Guardians of the Veil — meaning that a Dominus must juggle the needs of the Throne with the relative power and position of each pylon under his authority, while remaining mindful of the disparate local movements of the greater and lesser Ministries, *in addition to* the maneuvers of the Pentacle, dangerous area Apostates, and any other threat, on whatever level, that clamors for his attention.

Why, then, would any sane person accept the duties of a Dominus? Personal gain, for one: Dominii enjoy a great deal of power, influence, and (commonly, anyway, for those that wish it) wealth. Not everyone is cut out to be a rising star within a potent Ministry and the relationship between Ministries and Dominions is probably best understood as that between church (the Ministry) and state (the Dominion); some societies choose to incorporate the two into a single entity, while others create a strong working relationship between the two, and others still succumb to strife between them. Taken together, the Ministries form the spiritual backbone of the Seers of the Throne, while the Dominions are the fiefdoms that answer to this bloated, monstrous church. Dominii are the feudal lords and ladies of those baronies. Seers who are of a more "secular" mindset and who are unwilling to step out from being big fish in small ponds to small fish in a vast, predatory sea often halt their ambitions at the level of the Dominion, content to exchange the possibility of mightier acquisitions for the promise of comfort and a somewhat greater degree of surety and safety. Also note that the position of Dominus is not tied to any particular level of Status among the Seers, so young go-getters sometimes angle for this position through vigorous politicking with senior Seers and other pylons, with the intention of using it as a stepping stone to bigger and better things. Some of them, of course, never quite manage to escape its inertia, but enough do that the practice persists.

Some Dominii (particularly the younger and less experienced ones) are puppets of one or more influential figures within local pylons, Ministries, or other interests, while some are iron-fisted tyrants, capable of enforcing their will on any local Seers who presume to oppose them. In a few cases, a Seer is more or less sentenced to duties as a Domina by a more mystically potent and/or political influential Seer (or body of Seers), in the hopes of sticking a controllable resource

with the dirty work of day-to-day operations, a dupe who's every move can be regulated.

A Dominus often appoints other Seers to offices within the Dominion (or has them chosen for him), though these appointments are highly individual to the needs of the Dominion. In one city, a Domina might feel the need for a master-at-arms (almost always a Praetorian, if one can be found), while another city's Dominus may have a shaky truce with certain influential members of the local Pentacle and be far more interested in retaining the services of a Panopticon spymaster. Unlike the staid, traditional society of the Atlantean inheritors, the micro-scale organizational relationships of the Seers of the Throne are much more fluid, informed by need, rather than custom.




While some of these offices are very desirable, most are not and reflect unpleasant necessities, rather than cushy “government jobs” for those named to them (or saddled with them, as the case may be). A Dominus must be careful in matching Seers to duties, however, since a particularly powerful willworker can simply blow off the appointment if it doesn't suit her sensibilities, badly compromising the Dominus' face and authority. Through a series of bad appointments, certain Dominii have made laughing stocks of themselves, relegated to the level of an authority figure who should be “seen and not heard.”

Interactions with the World of Darkness

The Seers of the Throne don't have external allies. They have partnerships of convenience; parties whom they attempt to use for all possible benefit before screwing said individuals or organizations over in the most decisive (and, preferably, final) manner available. They might have common goals with outsiders, but they aren't content to share the rewards. The culture of the Seers is one of such absolute selfishness as to render genuine cooperation a virtual impossibility. That said, however, Seers are always looking for a weakness to exploit and most of them are willing to break bread with even their direst enemies, if only for the chance to offer them a poisoned chalice.

Of course, any discussion of the Seers of the Throne's dealing with other Awakened necessarily entails the Seers' efforts to subvert or even recruit members of those rival factions. Conversion is a much more efficient means of eroding another group's power than outright conflict; rather than risking one's own assets for a potentially zero-sum (or even negative) gain, a pylon can simply add resources without the direct possibility of loss. Played properly, this strategy can create a domino effect within the non-Seer Awakened community, as individuals are brought (often covertly) into the fold, diverting the resources of their cabals, Consilii, and even orders, and gradually creating suspicion that undermines the ability of those groups to mount a successful resistance to Seer infiltration and conquest.

Likewise, the Seers' interactions with the other creatures that exist beyond the auspices of the mundane revolve almost entirely about what the Exarchs' servants can actually *get* out of them. They're not interested in noble struggles or the difficulties of living night-to-night as a monster; what Seers want are results and they don't particularly care about the hardships



that their inhuman allies endure in the process of obtaining them. So long as the Seers get to line their pockets (whether literally or figuratively) and can walk away, scot-free, then all is right with the world.

The Adamantine Arrow

The problem with the Pentacle's self-appointed military — from the Seers' perspective, anyway — is that they're, generally speaking, too damned honorable and forthright. The Arrow *knows* that the Seers will try to seduce its mages with wealth, power and mystical lore, and help them to cultivate a bulwark of propaganda and an ethic of selfless service against that sort of temptation. Ultimately, the Adamantine Arrow as a whole is viewed by the Seers of the Throne as a wasted opportunity; men and women so obsessed with giving of themselves for some "greater good" that they fail to look out for Number One. Truth be told, some of the Seers' deep-seated disdain for the Adamantine Arrow stems from a sense of jealousy and shame: jealousy at the fact that Arrows seemingly look beyond themselves with such ease, and shame at seeing the sense of reward that they appear to derive from doing so. The very act of bearing witness to earnest heroism can be painful for a sell-out.

Still, not all of the Seers' interactions with the Pentacle's army amount to frustration and self-loathing. Indeed, some Arrows become resentful of the way that their services — their continual struggle and bloodshed — get taken for granted in some Consilii. It's a short step, in some cases, between thinking of non-Arrows as "civvies" who need to be protected from their own weakness and naiveté, and thinking of them as parasites, leeching their sustenance off of the suffering of greater Awakened. It is precisely this latter mindset that the most successful Seer recruiters of Arrows attempt to cultivate; the sense that the Arrow could be doing *more* with her life, devoting her service to those who will not only appreciate her sacrifice with empty words, but also reward her aptly for her martial prowess and entrust her with *authority*, rather than merely the heavy burden of responsibility. If she's going to bleed for her lessers, the Seer asks, then why shouldn't she also be allowed to rule over them?

The Free Council

At first glance, the Seers of the Throne don't have a lot to offer the Libertines of the Free Council — they are, after all, representatives of an authoritarian cult, dedicated to the subversion of personal will and freedom toward hidden god-kings whose reciprocal devotion toward their subjects is highly questionable, at best. Putting

aside that one, admittedly vast, ideological distinction, however, several commonalities emerge between the Free Council and the Seers of the Throne. Both are, for example, fellowships formed out of a tacit rejection of Atlantean orthodoxy. Both embrace the methods of the modern world, casting an unsentimental gaze upon the past, and then look boldly toward a future shaped by the artifice of the Awakened. Both recognize the incredible importance of Sleepers, both as a resource and as a source of inspiration for magical advancements. At the end of the day, many Seers imagine the only *real* difference between the two groups is the distinction between giving the rest of the world a hand up, and forcing it to its knees.

But genius is so rarely appreciated in this world; people who do amazing things for others are labeled crackpots and malcontents, and marginalized by an anesthetized populace who only wants their reality television, their fast food, and the rest of their dismal status quo. After a while, it becomes hard to keep fighting for a better tomorrow for those who can't properly appreciate it, those who have *never* known even the faintest taste of freedom and who have no desire to experience it. The Atlantean Diamond spits on even the Libertines' best efforts, while the Free Council weathers assaults from Banishers and Scelesti alike, same as everyone else, and the Sleepers provide the occasional spark of innovation, but recoil from *truly* progressive thinking. It's enough to make *anyone* want to lash out at those short-sighted, hidebound, ungrateful sons of bitches, and that's precisely the sort of thinking that Seer recruiters capitalize upon.

The Guardians of the Veil

The Guardians of the Veil constitute a unique conundrum for the Seers of the Throne. Part of the order's very structure dictates that its membership will be justly despised for executing their thankless duty. The Guardians don't let anyone in the door who isn't comfortable with becoming an object of fear and hatred, forever outcast from the polite circles of Awakened society. Furthermore, they lack the delusions of honor that keep the Adamantine Arrow honest (and, to the Seers' philosophy, much more easily manipulated); Guardians are *supposed* to be treacherous creatures, who will betray a friend to save a dozen enemies, provided that all of them are — at least nominally — on the same side of the great war of the Awakened. Add to that the fact that they are phenomenal at infiltrating hostile factions and it leaves one to wonder: what can Seers of the Throne actually *do* to interact with

Guardians of the Veil in a meaningful (or, in other words, potentially profitable) way?

The easiest answer — and one that many Seers offer to younger and less experienced servants of the Exarchs — is, “Very little.” It’s not as simple as that, of course, but senior Seers don’t really trust their juniors to successfully out-spy the Pentacle’s dedicated secret police. By the time they’re finally allowed to gaze beneath the masque, Guardians have been tempted with power; offered (and successfully refused) a score of easy outs; and made to murder in the Oracles’ name. Certainly, members of the intelligence community occasionally switch sides, but it’s hard to tell when someone is sincerely jumping ship, as opposed to when he’s merely gathering information about his “new friends” for just long enough to sneak a critical message back to headquarters. Even when a Guardian *does* cross the border between the Pentacle and the Seers of the Throne, Seers are forced to devote more manpower ascertaining his true intentions and monitoring him for acts of treason than they gain by his presence among them, because a Guardian might just turn on them five, ten, or fifty years after defecting — at the very moment the local pylons stop thinking of him as a potential security risk.

The Mysterium

By and large, the Seers of the Throne *love* the Mysterium. Career scholars to a man, Mystagogues are often inquisitive to the point of incautiousness, willing to experiment for the sake of experimentation, and accepting of dubious avenues for satisfying their curiosity. In short, they’re everything that makes scientists and academics accept the devil’s bargains in the hopes of unraveling the great enigmas of the world. Furthermore, many of them are socially maladroit, rendering them more easily manipulated through the careful application of Seer subtlety than, say, the average Guardian or théarch. If a single, glaring vulnerability in the Atlantean Diamond exists for the Seers of the Throne to exploit, then the Mysterium would be that weakness. Some Seer pylons can offer Artifacts and lost knowledge like they’re going out of style, and the wisdom of the Supernal can belong to the Mystagogue who demonstrates the courage necessary to hear it from the very lips of the Exarchs.


In many Consilii, the majority of Pentacle converts to the Seers of the Throne come from out of the ranks of the Mysterium. When one’s lust for knowledge supersedes one’s love of fellow human beings, it can become a surprisingly easy matter to buy into the Seers’ persistent offers of dire secrets and powerful relics of the past. Further-

more, many Mystagogues are known to crave isolation for their studies and to go poking, alone, into all sorts of dangerous places, meaning that Seers have many more potential opportunities to access and tempt a member of the Dragon’s Wing, provided that they can keep an eye on her movements and get a feel for her specific fields of interest. Academics — particularly those on the fringe, like most Mystagogues — are often accustomed to the scorn of others and the resentment that builds from the sort of treatment that can push even the most devoted scholar into the Seers’ waiting embrace, provided that a given pylon can get her to realize that it is not enough that knowledge is used to uplift the worthy; it must also be used to oppress the *unworthy*.

The Silver Ladder

The wayward siblings of the Seers of the Throne, the willworkers of the Silver Ladder are the single greatest threat to the goals of the Exarchs in the Fallen World and the only Awakened faction theoretically capable of guiding both the Pentacle and the Sleepers to rise up as one against the Lie. That’s what the Seers themselves believe, anyway. Needless to say, this possibility doesn’t sit well with the Seers, who hold the subversion of théarchs to be something of a sacred mission. Already familiar with the nuances of power, mages of the Ladder only need to be brought, by hook or by crook, over the thin line dividing *noblesse oblige* from tyranny. It is the distinction between seeing power as a means to an end and seeing it as an end unto itself, free of any sense of moral obligation toward the governed. What the Seers of the Throne offer is the guilty, visceral thrill of actually acting upon one’s most worthy desires: using a spell to publicly and brutally silence an obnoxious, contrary Libertine; sending a devoted Arrow to destroy one’s personal enemies; overthrowing a smug old fat-cat of a Hierarch and selfishly claiming his seat by right of conquest.

The mandate of the Silver Ladder is the use of power, as tempered by the dictates of conscience, compassion, and Wisdom. That continual pressure of responsibility can get to a mage after a while, and all he wants to do is exercise his might without concern for the consequences. It’s a natural human desire, to cut loose and to throw off the obligations of authority, only to shamelessly indulge in its privileges. While the Ladder teaches its members to be better than that, *everyone* slips up, sooner or later, and the Seers try to be there to capitalize upon those errors of judgment. Sometimes, they promise all the power in the world, with which the théarch can do great good — if that’s what she feels like doing, once the power is hers, of course. At other times, they sym-



pathize with the heavy burden of leadership; how no one truly cares that the weight of the world rests upon the shoulders of the one who wears the crown. In the end, most Ladder mages stand fast against these tactics, but just enough switch sides, every now and again, to keep the Seers coming back for more.

The Pentacle Orders

Each Pentacle Order requires its own individual approach, of course, but only rarely can any one of them be approached as a distinct entity. Thus, many Seers hold it wise to also consider the five as one, in much the same way that numerous Ministries comprise the Awakened legions of the Throne. Interestingly, the divided loyalties of the Ministries — impelled by visions trickling down from different Exarchs, Archgenitors, Ministers, tetrarchs, Archmasters, Masters, and even Adepts with charisma and delusions of grandeur — make the Seers of the Throne, if anything, *less* efficient when working in concert. Each Ministry strives to eclipse the others and stand preeminent in the Exarchs' favor, while the hidden masters of reality send oft-contradictory dreams and commandments to different Seers; even those Seers working to the same purpose. The Pentacle, on the other hand, is decisively at its most powerful when working with a single objective. Perhaps it is merely something of a happy coincidence of the Oracles' policy of noninvolvement, allowing the Pentacle mages to work together in formulating the strategy that they think is most favorable, rather than making the best of the disparate ends to which they are *compelled*.

Thus, the Seers of the Throne advocate withdrawing from any situation in which the Pentacle seems strongly unified, assessing the possibility of alternate angles of engagement, preferably those that drive wedges between the enemy orders. Mistrust is relatively easy to sow among the foes of the Throne, so long as the Pentacle mages don't rally behind charismatic and idealistic leadership. In that sort of situation, powerful assistance can be called in from outside — sometimes even up to and including an ochema — though Dominii are often reluctant to do so, as this gives the appearance that they cannot manage their own backyards. When the Pentacle stands as one, however, that is occasionally *precisely* the case and most Seers would rather swallow a bit of pride than lose a Dominion to a persistent enemy advance.

Apostates

With a scant few exceptions, Apostates come in one of two varieties: proud iconoclasts and the dregs

that no one wanted. The former are virtually useless to Seers, save as something to throw in the path of enemy Awakened, while the latter are like beaten dogs, to whom one needs only to toss a few scraps in exchange for a lifetime of loyalty. Learned Seers counsel their juniors to quickly distinguish between the one variety of Apostate and the other; since many of the dedicated nonconformists came up in the Awakened version of the school of hard knocks, they are quick to take offense to being treated like second-class citizens and they know their way around a fight — magical or otherwise — nearly as well as any Arrow. (And most of them play a whole hell of a lot dirtier in a scrap, to boot.) On the other hand, the outcasts and the huddled masses can benefit greatly from a bit of the Seers' largesse and often become quite willing to do favors for their "new friends." In fact, this cycle often feeds itself, with Pentacle mages becoming suspicious of Apostates (due to the ease with which such willworkers are seduced by the Seers' rhetoric and gifts) and the Seers capitalizing upon the feelings of resentment engendered by that long-standing tradition of mistrust. The most capable of Apostates are eventually offered membership in the Seers of the Throne. Those that join quickly learn of the benefits (and drawbacks) of their new allegiance, while those that refuse are typically disposed of in the most expedient manner possible, as they often know too much at that point to be allowed to go free.

Banishers

The average Seer of the Throne dreads Banishers with the same intensity as any other sane Awakened. While their goal — the eradication of magic and those that practice it — can be directed to useful ends, they are often too violent and unpredictable to employ as effective pawns. Worse still, they are, for the most part, immune to the Seers' entreaties, since the spoils that the Exarchs have to offer (such as wealth, power, and mystic lore) are often of very little interest to them. Effectively, they must be treated like rabid dogs: unleashed and left to their own devices when they are among the enemy, and put down swiftly and without mercy when they start sniffing around one's own doorstep. Because Seers are almost universally unable to comprehend a desire to be less than they are (by losing the power that magic grants them), they have no basis for empathy with Banishers and can only wonder at what manner of madness makes a willworker regard magic as a curse to be shunned, rather than justification for a titanic sense of entitlement. Particularly clever and manipulative Seers sometimes get away with feigning

sympathy for a Banisher's goals and beliefs, but this is a dangerous game that almost invariably turns out badly for all save the most cautious and charismatic Seers.

The Left-Handed

Seers are divided on the subject of Left-Handed will-workers. Some believe that the degradation inherent to Left-Handed magic invariably erodes the value of the Fallen World as a prize and that, given enough time and resources, Left-Handed mages (particularly those sworn in service to the Abyss) can theoretically destroy the world, or else reduce it to the point that those who rule over it are left as kings of a lifeless wasteland. Other Seers, however, believe that magic comes with no inherent moral or ethical mandate; that power is power — neither good nor evil — and that even the most dangerous gifts can be wisely employed to the Exarchs' benefit. Wisdom is, after all, merely another commodity to be bartered away at a profit; the same as truth, love, hope, justice, honor, or mercy. The only *real* question to such Seers is whether what one gets in exchange is truly as valuable in the end as it seems at first glance. Thus, some Seers of the Throne openly practice Legacies that make use of soul theft, human sacrifice, Abyssal sorceries, and other such loathsome and aberrant magic. Other pylons decry Left-Handed practices on the basis that they are bad business (rather than on any moral or ethical grounds) and reject, and sometimes hunt down, those that cleave to such ways, whether Seer or otherwise.

Vampires


Hidden and supremely selfish monsters, slowly and subtly siphoning the life from an unsuspecting populace, vampires are an uncomfortable mirror for certain Seers of the Throne. Like Seers, they often exercise their will through elaborate networks of servitors — some knowing, but most of them ignorant — and continually cultivate greater power out of instinct, even in the absence of any clear and present use for it. Like Seers, vampires are not to be trusted by others, for they are continually seeking new and better angles with which to exploit others for personal benefit. Given these similarities, interactions with vampires are (for the few



Seers who know enough about such creatures to actually make halfway-safe contact with them) matches made either in heaven or hell.

If each side is careful to cultivate a situation of perpetual mutual benefit, then Seers and vampires can settle into a happy status quo in which the rich (so to speak) keep getting richer and the poor keep getting poorer. It can't — despite the incredible longevity of vampires — last forever, of course, but it *can* persist for a very long time, with each side laying exclusive claim to the extraordinary resources best suited to it and dividing more or less down the middle the more fully mundane spoils of the Fallen World. Since vampires generally have no use for Hallows and only the most gruesomely perverse Seer has a palate for human blood, this arrangement can go quite smoothly for many years.

When vampire and Seer clash, however, the results are almost invariably ugly. An invisible war, fought between mystically-compelled servitors and unknowing dupes, alike, unfolds in the back alleys and slums, as well as in the halls of power — both legitimate and otherwise. Here, a vampire's man on the inside in City Hall is found dead of a cocaine overdose; there, a Seer's prized inner-city gang leader winds up the victim of a



seemingly random drive-by shooting while on the way to visit his younger brother in the hospital. Politicians and captains of industry rise and fall on the uncertain tides of supernatural influence, while the frontline grunts (whether beat cops, mob enforcers, investigative reporters, custodians, teaching assistants, secretaries, or whatever else) end up with lives drastically rearranged (and, often, ruined), according to the ebb and flow of a conflict they cannot see and will never understand.

Most often, however, each side simply avoids the other, either consciously or otherwise. Seers and vampires alike know that, save under the most unusual of circumstances, no one faction can claim undisputed mastery over the Sleeper populace *and* supernatural resources of even a decently-sized city, and exploring who has fingers in what pies is a good way to expose one's own connections to harm, so both groups are often happy enough to gradually grow their disparate networks, moving around the structures of other power players (including one another), as necessary, in relative ignorance. This is, for the Seers of the Throne, perhaps the safest approach for dealing with vampires: not dealing with them at all.

Werewolves

An untamable instinct for a literally inhuman degree of brutality, married to an all-consuming racial holy war: what greater rationale could there possibly be for Seers to hate, fear, and avoid werewolves as a matter of course? What little the Seers of the Throne know of werewolves is cause enough for them to steer well clear of these savage killing machines. While potentially as easily tempted as anyone else by power and the various other wares that the Seers can offer, werewolves are much more readily accustomed to wresting said spoils out of the cold, dead hands of those who stand in their way than to be offered them in exchange for work as muscle for would-be “hidden masters.” After all, these primal creatures have their own strange gifts, as well as odd bargains with the denizens of Shadow that the Seers cannot (despite occasionally Herculean efforts) mystically influence, negate or replicate. Worse still are those werewolves who *do* understand a measure of subtlety, as they can combat Seers on comfortable and familiar ground, as well as having recourse to horrific amounts of violence when they don't get their way.

Prometheans

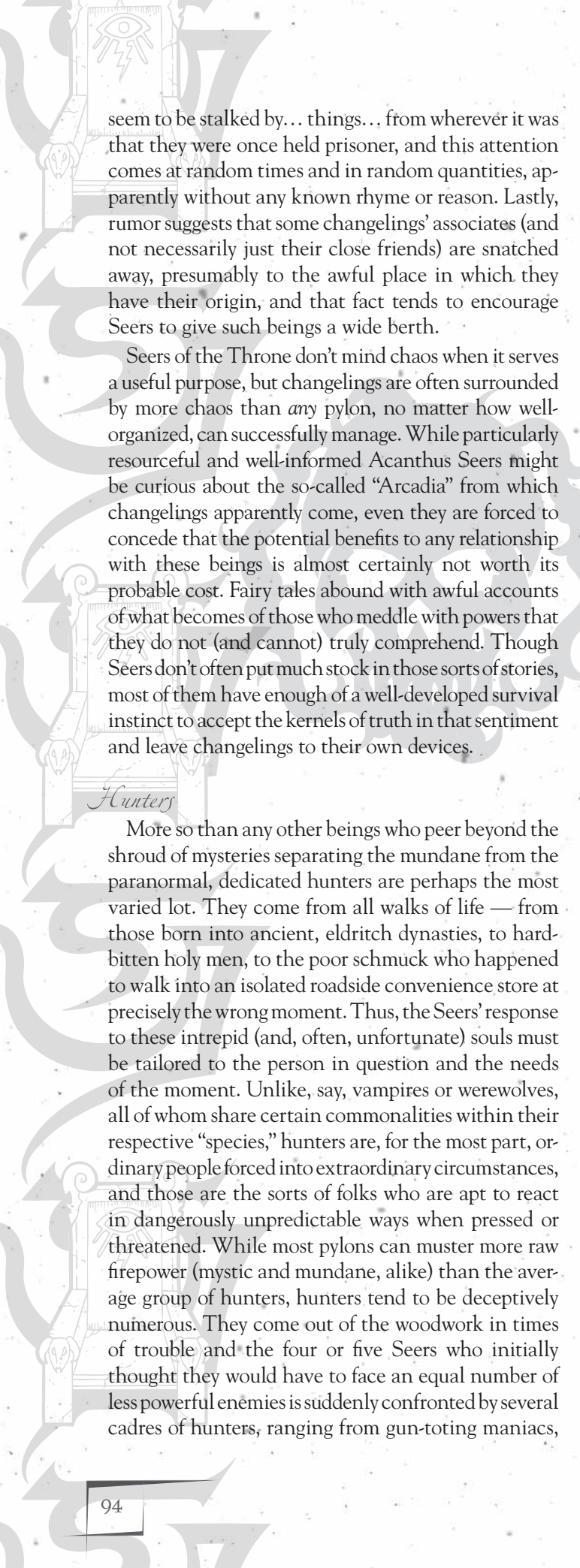
For the handful of Seers who even know of the existence of these lonely, half-living wretches, there isn't much appeal to them. Prometheans, by their

very nature, sow ruin and discord among the Sleeper populace, giving rise to situations that can demand prodigious resources to salvage. Furthermore, their potent supernatural abilities are often destructive in nature, making them exceedingly difficult to manage when their anger and frustration get the better of them (as is often the case). Still, they do have a very few redeeming qualities in the eyes of those rare Seers who know anything of them. They are typically desperate for friendship and sometimes willing to use their powers for the benefit of those who show them even the smallest of kindnesses. Also, those that are totally uncontrollable can be “wound up” and, with a little bit of thought and planning, thrown in the direction of the local Consilium. The Pentacle's willworkers will be so tied up with damage control, spin, and research that the Seers might be able to get some useful work done behind enemy lines, with no one the wiser.

Ultimately, though, many Seers aren't particularly interested in “making friends” in the first place, let alone with outcast created people whose very metaphysical qualities make them difficult to be near for any extended period of time. Some Obrimos Seers who know of these beings claim they *may* have some sort of connection to the Aether, though research on the subject remains even scarcer than Prometheans themselves. Still, if a non-Awakened source of Supernal energy can be found and exploited within the Fallen World, the possibilities would be staggering. Some of those that have attempted to explore the matter too deeply, however, return to their fellows with reports of encounters with bizarre spirits of incredible might, wielding Numina unknown to even the wisest sages of Shadow. Most of the rest do not return at all, and that knowledge alone is sufficient to dissuade all save the most obsessed of Seers.

Changelings

The Seers of the Throne, overall, aren't the sort of people who would clap to save Tinkerbell. What little they know of changelings seems to indicate that they're the supernatural equivalent of post-traumatic survivors of some magical land of make-believe that, as it turns out, is long on a wide variety of inhuman horrors and somewhat short on gumdrop castles and wish-granting fairy Godmothers. As they're not usually inclined to care about others' problems — save for the means by which said individuals might be exploited thereby — Seers generally disregard and ignore changelings (who appear, to a one, to be messy bundles of all sorts of issues, and probably more trouble than they're worth, even as bound servants). Furthermore, changelings



seem to be stalked by... things... from wherever it was that they were once held prisoner, and this attention comes at random times and in random quantities, apparently without any known rhyme or reason. Lastly, rumor suggests that some changelings' associates (and not necessarily just their close friends) are snatched away, presumably to the awful place in which they have their origin, and that fact tends to encourage Seers to give such beings a wide berth.

Seers of the Throne don't mind chaos when it serves a useful purpose, but changelings are often surrounded by more chaos than *any* pylon, no matter how well-organized, can successfully manage. While particularly resourceful and well-informed Acanthus Seers might be curious about the so-called "Arcadia" from which changelings apparently come, even they are forced to concede that the potential benefits to any relationship with these beings is almost certainly not worth its probable cost. Fairy tales abound with awful accounts of what becomes of those who meddle with powers that they do not (and cannot) truly comprehend. Though Seers don't often put much stock in those sorts of stories, most of them have enough of a well-developed survival instinct to accept the kernels of truth in that sentiment and leave changelings to their own devices.

Hunters


More so than any other beings who peer beyond the shroud of mysteries separating the mundane from the paranormal, dedicated hunters are perhaps the most varied lot. They come from all walks of life — from those born into ancient, eldritch dynasties, to hard-bitten holy men, to the poor schmuck who happened to walk into an isolated roadside convenience store at precisely the wrong moment. Thus, the Seers' response to these intrepid (and, often, unfortunate) souls must be tailored to the person in question and the needs of the moment. Unlike, say, vampires or werewolves, all of whom share certain commonalities within their respective "species," hunters are, for the most part, ordinary people forced into extraordinary circumstances, and those are the sorts of folks who are apt to react in dangerously unpredictable ways when pressed or threatened. While most pylons can muster more raw firepower (mystic and mundane, alike) than the average group of hunters, hunters tend to be deceptively numerous. They come out of the woodwork in times of trouble and the four or five Seers who initially thought they would have to face an equal number of less powerful enemies is suddenly confronted by several cadres of hunters, ranging from gun-toting maniacs,

to veteran computer hackers, to the guys who collect the garbage on Tuesday mornings.

The fact of the matter is that Seers of the Throne likely use, abuse, and discard hunters fairly frequently. Conversely, some of the people whom they employ as pawns in the great war of the Awakened (and who do not end up numbered among the various sorts of pseudo-supernatural minions kept by the Seers) may, through their experiences, be drawn into the life of the hunter. In some ways — much as they do for other willworkers, the same as with vampires, changelings, and the like — the very existence of hunters is a living consequence for the deepest moral outrages and excesses of the Seers of the Throne, as regular people strike back at the forces aligned against them. Since the Seers of the Throne are well aware that, despite their vast power, they are unable to stand against the entirety of humanity (even were the Seers to be able to stand as one, which they most certainly are not), those that know of hunters consider it simple good business to interact with them only through layers of intermediaries, and then only when absolutely necessary. Sometimes, even the most innocuous of interactions can have a way of going terribly awry on a mage, after all.

Ghosts

While the Seers of the Throne are quick to dismiss many of the hoary old traditions of Atlantis, the traditionalist stance of the Awakened with respect to the shades of the dead is one that sits pretty well with most pylons. Ghosts are objects — property, to those that can overpower and enslave them — rather than truly self-aware entities. (Not that most Seers of the Throne have any difficulty with enslaving the living, but the pill becomes just the slightest bit easier to swallow when one can fully rationalize away a ghost's right to self-determination by quoting millennia of precedent.) Ghosts can be used to do all sorts of interesting things, but they're at their best when being employed against Sleepers. A troublesome, squeaky-clean selectman can be driven mad with a malevolent haunting, allowing the Seer to be rid of a nuisance without every dirtying her own hands. A vicious poltergeist can be sent to rough up a théarch's younger brother, conveying a brutal message to the enemy, while remaining totally out of harm's way. A construction site sitting atop a Hallow can be cleared out pretty quickly when the workers start seeing the restless shade of a weeping woman out of the corners of their eyes; covered in blood and occasionally whispering a sepulchral rasp into a worker's ear, "He's coming. He wants to hurt you."



Ghosts also *know* things. They can call upon the experiences of their former lives when compelled to do so by magic, meaning that an enterprising Seer can be tutored in very nearly any field she'd like, without the hassle (and potential liability) of needing to seek out mundane instruction. Ghosts know secrets. An Arrow's recently-dead grandfather certainly remembers his grandson's real name, and the names and locations of some of his other relatives. Finding the specific ghost for the task at hand can be exceedingly time-consuming (particularly for rare and/or well-hidden knowledge), but Seers tend to be patient and, if they step carefully, are unlikely to tip anyone off as to their intentions, since ghosts are usually confined to very specific areas and have trouble — for various reasons — with getting anyone to listen to their woes. Feigning a sympathetic ear can work wonders for a Seer with the right Arcana, though most of them are more inclined simply to subjugate a shade for as long as it is needed and to destroy it when its needfulness is finished.

Spirits

The denizens of Shadow are a dangerous lot and Seers of the Throne make no mistakes about that reality. Spirits are utterly untrustworthy, interested only in advancing the alien agendas that define them, and devoid of any genuinely human understanding or compunction. While most Seers prefer to enslave spirits whenever possible, that objective is easier said than done. Some spirits are profoundly potent and *none* take kindly to those that seek to limit their freedom. Thus, Seers tend to suborn those spirits that they can and avoid outright those that they can't, unless a particularly powerful spirit has something that a given Seer genuinely needs (or wants.) In such a case, he will beg, barter, or do whatever he needs to in order to acquire the desired commodity and then put as much distance between himself and the spirit in question as possible. When it comes to spirits, it's better to be out of mind than in their thoughts.

Of course, Thyrsus Seers of the Throne usually see things somewhat differently when it comes to matters of Shadow. To them, spirits are a resource — one that must be carefully used and cultivated, like a feral animal or a lab for making dangerous explosives; but a resource, nonetheless. Shamans are simply more conversant in the language of spirit bargains than other Awakened, enabling Thyrsus Seers to establish more potentially beneficial long-term alliances with Shadow-dwellers. Though these deals sometimes blow up in the Shaman's face, they work out well enough, often enough,

that the practice persists among Thyrsus Seers of the Throne. Some of these pacts are old indeed, with histories stretching back centuries (and perhaps longer), from an ancient god offering oracular visions to Seers who sacrifice a finger upon its altar, to a lethal fetish handed down through the long years of a generational pylon, and many other possibilities, besides.

The Greatest Prize: Sleepers

More so than any other denizen of the Fallen World, a Sleeper is a resource to be mercilessly used and discarded when her effectiveness is exhausted. Sleepers are the mortar that holds the Lie together at its base — not *necessarily* in a metaphysical sense, but certainly in a practical one — and their ability to function in such a capacity only increases, the more vigorously and completely they are oppressed. They have been slaves for so long that most of them cannot even begin to imagine what it would be like to be genuinely free, and that's just how the Seers of the Throne prefer things to be. Instead, they mistake a choice of beers, compact cars, cellular providers, or cable television stations for real liberty, because they have become so enamored of the shadow-show that they no longer wish to look for anything better; a life of true worth, after all, requires hard work, and a Sleeper is defined, first and foremost, by the unwillingness to reach for anything worthier, if the reaching itself is difficult, painful, or otherwise devoid of the possibility of instant gratification. For the most part, Sleepers have dug their own graves and the Seers are merely escorting them into those plots, one by one.

The objectives of the Seers of the Throne with regard to Sleepers could be discussed at great length, but the simple fact of the matter is that Sleepers are already very nearly what the Seers (and, by extension, the Exarchs) want them to be: an ignorant and helpless flock, mutely waiting to be sheared. Exceptions exist, of course, but people tend to destroy their own heroes and saviors, rather than embrace the harsh changes that such would-be pioneers offer. Sleepers who attempt to seize a course of spiritual substance are typically marginalized or martyred by their own kind with alacrity that can often put the Seers' own propaganda engine to shame. Dismissed as crackpots, cultists, freaks, or any other label that can be put to them in order to radically devalue their revolutionary ideas, these outspoken Sleepers — these men and women who will not settle for the Lie and, subconsciously, struggle against it — come to constitute an easily-contained minority,

with no real hope of ever taking the reins of power from those ordinary people who profit so greatly by the ongoing degradation of the Fallen World. While some pylons devote time and energy to dealing with these malcontents, one way or the other, most simply allow them to carry on, confident that their efforts will, ultimately, amount to nothing.

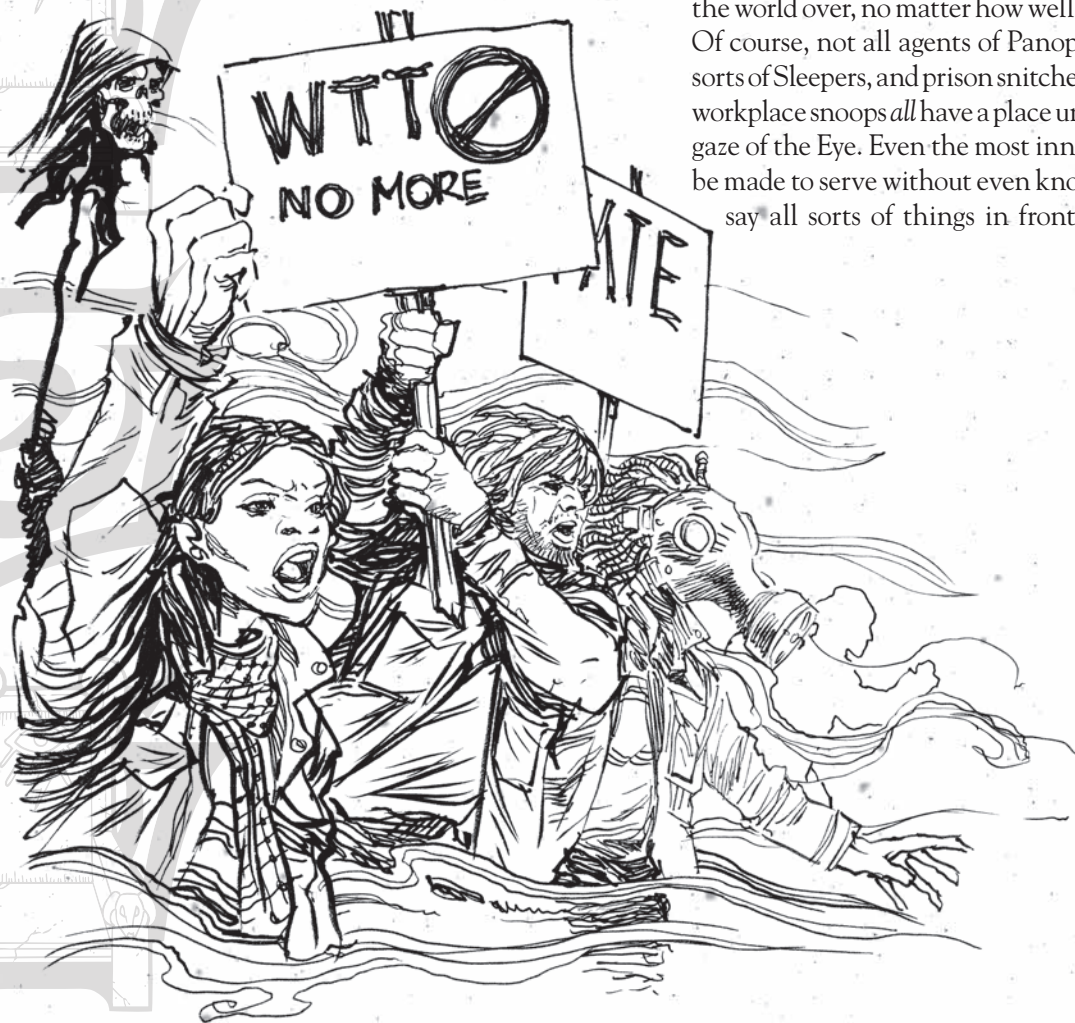
Of course, not all Seers of the Throne use the Sleepers in the same way. Some are more than content to ignore them until needed and then to control them through the use of magic, threats or whatever else is necessary to motivate them. Others cultivate Sleepers as a matter of course, some even going so far as to treat the “best” of them (however the individual Seer defines such) with the same care and attention to detail employed by breeders of prizewinning dogs or professional gardeners. Indeed, some Seers have elevated the mutilation of the human spirit to the level of a grotesque art form and this “artistry” can be glimpsed wherever the noblest of aspirations are viciously and remorselessly subverted, and people


wholeheartedly accept that which refuses them their inherent right to something better.

What are Sleepers to the Seers of the Throne? Grist for the mill; grease for the gears. By the estimation of most Seers, they deserve nothing better and wouldn't know what to do with it were such handed to them on a silver platter. Naturally, though, each of the four great Ministries uses Sleepers somewhat differently, as does the fifth, rising lesser Ministry.

In Service to the Eye

Panopticon prefers for Sleepers to be consumed by paranoia, forever suspecting their neighbors of wrongdoing, while themselves shamefully concealing their sins, both real and imagined. While law enforcement professionals used to be almost exclusively claimed by Praetorian, Panopticon now employs far more Sleepers in that field, given the simultaneous rise of global policing and invasive surveillance. Likewise, intelligence professionals and computer specialists have a special place in the Eye's service, with access to information the world over, no matter how well hidden or precious. Of course, not all agents of Panopticon use the same sorts of Sleepers, and prison snitches, gossipy clubgoers, workplace snoops *all* have a place under the omniscient gaze of the Eye. Even the most innocuous Sleeper can be made to serve without even knowing it: people will say all sorts of things in front of children, coma





patients, the mentally challenged, and other people who are believed — whether rightly or wrongly — not to fully understand what’s going on around them. By tapping into the memories or senses of these people, Panopticon Seers turn them into living intelligence-gathering stations.

In Service to the Father

The Ministry of Paternoster desires a fearful populace, down on its knees, faces in the dirt. Such is the love of the Paternoster for the Sleepers that it bestows upon them, the gift of certainty, devoid of the cruel burden of choice. Those positioned within theocracies or other religious hierarchies are favored by the Father’s Seers, though not exclusively. *Anyone* whose belief in a revealed religion can be used to bend her to the service of the Lie might be selected, and likely through a process that makes her feel “chosen” or “called.” The most important thing is *faith*: any symbol in which a Sleeper invests a sense of his soul’s identity and his spiritual wellbeing can be exploited by Paternoster, to the express end of making him a holy warrior, campaigning proselytizer, or even lamb for the slaughter. Because people of faith come from all walks of life, this Ministry has perhaps the most latitude in choosing itself Sleeper agents and the most uses toward which to set them. While this occasionally dilutes the focus of Paternoster operations, it also makes them incredibly flexible for an organization founded, in large part, upon profound intolerance.

In Service to the General

Soldiers are, were, and ever shall be the favored instruments of Praetorian, but the definition of just what a soldier is has long been a matter of some debate. Revolutionary movements and even prison gangs call its members “soldiers” with as much conviction as to be found in any legitimate national military. The police officer and the underworld enforcer, the schoolyard bully and the globetrotting assassin, the petty warlord and the asshole in the office who turns the place into a powder keg of tensions just to amuse himself; all of these are soldiers, and all are loved by the General, enfolded in the Archgenitor’s smoldering embrace. Likewise, those who support conflict may be employed by Praetorian: arms dealers and manufacturers, dirty politicians and slum lords, drug czars and government contractors of all stripes. Anywhere that people profit by the pain of others, Praetorian casts its appraising gaze, looking for Sleepers willing to heed the General’s call to battle, on fields both elusive and overt. Of course, because these

are the Sleepers most likely to be thrown into direct martial conflict with the enemies of the Throne, many Praetorians like to choose those (like children or other innocents) whose appearance will demoralize and cause hesitation in a foe, even in death.

In Service to the Unity

Throughout the entire course of human history, people have killed and died for their colors: tribe or clan, city-state, nation, or what-have-you. With each successive social development, the definition of a society grew larger and more encompassing, until the grand empires of the 19th and 20th centuries. Now, however, cracks are appearing in the foundations of the superpowers and Hegemonic aims to halt the slide into entropy, reminding people that the state is superior to the individual. Unfortunately, blind zealot patriots are becoming harder and harder to find. Many of them are dying off with the older generations, as people become more jaded about the state’s motivations and its ability to rule with moral as well as temporal authority. Thus, Hegemonic works to secure the ironclad fealty of statesmen and captains of industry, as well as old warhorses (those more interested in agendas than confrontations), party whips, faceless bureaucrats, mental health professionals, and anyone else trying to push a “one true way” that people should be and in which things should be done.

In Service to the Chancellor

The maverick would-be usurper, closing on the staggering Hegemonic Ministry, Mammon’s Seers prefer Sleepers who work with and encourage the reliance upon and proliferation (though not necessarily spread) of material wealth. Fortunately for them, they’ve got very nearly the Fallen World’s entire population to work with. That said, Mammon Seers prefer to employ those Sleepers who can enhance their own profits, while pushing systems of valuation upon various commodities, whether tangible or ephemeral. The most powerful and thriving industries draw servants of the Chancellor like flies to carrion — oil, tobacco, technology, diamonds, and such — as do the Sleepers involved and invested in such industries. Illegal vice trades are also vast economies unto themselves and attract the attention of such Seers, who pick up Sleeper servants at all stages of the process. Naturally, Mammon is also in the process of seizing global banking from Hegemonic and all of its ancillary industries (which are numerous, indeed), and it also actively recruits Sleepers as servants from all of these fields.



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CHAPTER THREE: SERVING THE EXARCHS

"I don't understand," Mahina said, shaking her head. "How do I learn which is the correct choice when I can't see what the choices even are?"

Vadin looked across to his apprentice and laughed. "It's quite simple. Open your mind to the surroundings and use your intuition. Listen to what the Exarchs are telling you and you'll find that the correct course of action is usually obvious."

The two Seekers crossed the road, and followed the sidewalk into Central Park. Thousands of Sleepers were enjoying the warm weather, completely oblivious to the magical reality of the world around them.

"But there's *nothing* around here that helps me," Mahina said. "I don't see anything that helps me figure out how to learn when those Pentacle cocksuckers are going to move Jaron's body from wherever they've got it hidden!"

"Then you're simply not looking!" snapped Vadin. He pointed out across the grass of the Strawberry Fields. "Look out there. Tell me what you see."

Mahina looked at the crowds of Sleepers. People were jogging, sunbaking, throwing frisbees and just generally relaxing in the warm afternoon sun. "Nothing but Sleepers doing irrelevant shit. Running around like ants."

Vadin smiled. "Now, the answer can reveal itself to you in the strangest ways. The Exarchs' wisdom surrounds us at all times, and we have to be conscious of what we're seeing and hearing, so that we may understand what they're trying to tell us."

He pointed across at an ice cream vendor, who was doing a roaring trade in the heat. "Look at that Sleeper, the one selling the ice cream. When does he get an ice cream out of the freezer?"

Mahina glanced across at him. "When the Sleeper buying the stuff has paid and is waiting to get what they paid for."
"Exactly."

He pointed at a dog leaping into the air to snatch a frisbee that had been thrown by a shirtless, well-toned yuppie. "What about the guy with the dog? When does he throw the frisbee?"

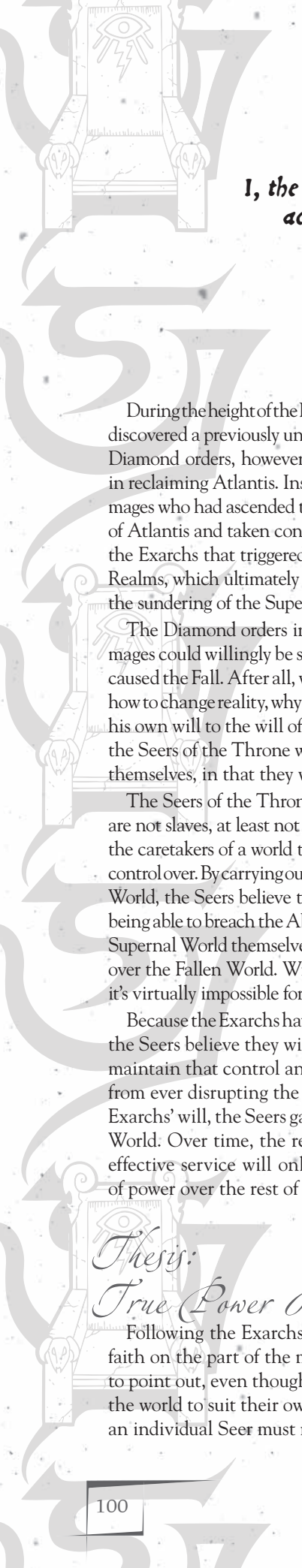
Lakina looked at Vadin, her brows furrowing. "Huh? What does that have to do with the guy with the ice cream?"
"Just answer the question."

"When the stupid mutt is looking at him and is ready for..." Lakina stopped suddenly. "The object in both cases doesn't move until the recipient is ready for the trade to complete."

Vadin grinned. "So when are the Pentacle going to move Jaron's body?"

"Only when they're ready to remove the Artifact he hid inside himself."

"Precisely. We know where their Athenena are in the city. Watch those for unusual activity and you'll soon learn when one of them is preparing to receive a new item. And until then, you need to meditate more on how the Exarchs tell us all the answers we need."



I, the Lord, search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.

— Jeremiah 17:10

During the height of the Roman Empire, the Diamond orders discovered a previously unknown order of mages. Unlike the Diamond orders, however, these mages were not interested in reclaiming Atlantis. Instead, they served the Exarchs, the mages who had ascended the Celestial Ladder before the Fall of Atlantis and taken control of reality. It was the actions of the Exarchs that triggered the magical war in the Supernal Realms, which ultimately led to the ladder's destruction and the sundering of the Supernal and the Fallen World.

The Diamond orders initially had trouble believing that mages could willingly be subservient to the tyrants who had caused the Fall. After all, when you had the ability to choose how to change reality, why would someone willingly subjugate his own will to the will of another? To the Diamond orders, the Seers of the Throne were little better than the Sleepers themselves, in that they were slaves to the will of others.

The Seers of the Throne see themselves differently. They are not slaves, at least not to their way of thinking. They are the caretakers of a world that the Exarchs have already won control over. By carrying out the will of the Exarchs in the Fallen World, the Seers believe they have a much better chance of being able to breach the Abyss and eventually ascend into the Supernal World themselves to sit beside their Masters, ruling over the Fallen World. Without the blessing of the Exarchs, it's virtually impossible for a mage to achieve Ascension.

Because the Exarchs have control in the Supernal Realms, the Seers believe they will be greatly rewarded for helping maintain that control and preventing the Pentacle mages from ever disrupting the status quo. By implementing the Exarchs' will, the Seers gain power and riches in the Fallen World. Over time, the rewards they gain for faithful and effective service will only increase, particularly in terms of power over the rest of the Awakened.

Thesis:

True Power Requires Faith

Following the Exarchs is not easy. It requires an act of faith on the part of the mage. As the Pentacle mages like to point out, even though a Seer has the ability to change the world to suit their own desires, the order requires that an individual Seer must not do that. Instead, he must fol-

low the guidelines of the order and work to advance the Exarchs' goals in the Fallen World.

The Seers believe the Exarchs themselves have a long-term plan for the human race and that using their magic to assist the completion of that goal will bring those plans to fruition faster. Because the Exarchs are so far removed from normal humanity — including the Awakened community — it's impossible for most people to fathom what the plan really is. Only a few of the order's most senior mages have anything close to resembling a proper understanding of the Exarchs' will.

One fundamental tenet of the Seers' belief is that by remaining faithful to the Exarchs' vision and resisting the temptation to give into their own desires, they will prove themselves worthy in the Exarchs' eyes. Eventually, they will be allowed to Ascend when they have reached the proper level of mastery.

Faith is also required when carrying out the order's work. In many cases, an individual Seer is asked to do something that makes little or no sense from their perspective. In some cases, it may even run contrary to the things they themselves consider personally important. However, each Seer must remain conscious of the fact that they themselves cannot see the whole picture, and the tasks they are given are only one small piece of a much grander scheme. If they were to fail in their tasks, then the risk of the whole plan falling apart is that much greater.

The true power of the order comes when the individual Seers believe in their Ministry's overall superiority and put aside their own personal agendas to ensure that the Exarchs' will is completed. When the whole organization believes in the same goal, working towards it becomes much simpler and the efforts of each individual are magnified.

However, most mages in the order fall short of the goal: all Seers are taught the folly of those who belong to other Ministries and how they have perverted the Exarchs' vision to their own personal agendas. Worse still, mages sometimes forget that they need to surrender their own will and choose to put their own vision before that of the order. Mages who fail to keep the faith and who cause the order's goals to fail are punished, sometimes severely.

Similarly, there are those who use faith not as conviction, but to shore up an absence of conviction. Many Seers, though

they rarely admit it even to themselves, have no faith in the Exarch's vision or personal drive. To them, trusting in the Exarchs is a means of relinquishing personal responsibility, doing the easy thing. They receive the protection and advantages of the Throne, but true power is sure to elude those without the will to actively trust themselves or others.

Thesis:
True Power Requires Obedience

If a mage is to rise through the Seers of the Throne hierarchy, he must learn to surrender his own will and obey those in power over him. While it is not impossible for the Exarchs to communicate directly with the rank and file members of the order, their desires are almost always communicated through the hierarchy of the order itself.

Because of this, individual mages must learn to submit to those placed in authority over them. For many, particularly those who have converted to the Seers from one of the Pentacle orders, this is one of the hardest lessons to learn. Being able to suppress one's own desires and ego in order to obey the will of the order is highly regarded, and is a prerequisite for anyone wishing to advance into the higher levels.

When a Seer is given a task to perform by his superiors, he is often not given the whole picture as to why the task is important, or how the task fits into the greater scheme of what the Exarchs have planned. Part of the reason is that each task given is a challenge to the Seer's faith: does he believe in what he is doing enough to perform without asking questions? Can he be relied upon when the task he's being asked to perform is something that might not mesh well with his individual goals or desires?

The same tenet holds true all the way up the Seer hierarchy. Even the Ministers themselves are required to believe enough in the Exarchs' vision that they simply obey their masters and do what they are told, almost always without knowing the real reasoning behind the requests.

Each mage is given tasks that are within her ability to perform. This is not to say that the tasks are necessarily easy; the tasks themselves might push the mage to the limit, either physically, mentally or emotionally. She might be asked to sacrifice something she holds dear for the good of the order. The ability to recognize that they are doing so for the Exarchs is highly regarded by the mage's superiors. In the past, those mages who have shown that they are obedient to the wishes of the Order, even when given a task that is extremely difficult for them to achieve, find that they are the ones who come to the notice of the Exarchs directly, and are sometimes asked by their Supernal overlords to perform a task that does not come to them through the hierarchy.

The power in the Seers of the Throne order comes from the mages who are obedient to the wishes of their superiors and can perform the tasks assigned to them without hesitation. If all the order's members are obedient to the Exarch's wishes

— regardless of the size of the role they are to play — then the more successful and powerful the order becomes.

Thesis:
True Power Requires Service

Those mages willing to lay aside their own desires to ensure the success of the order's plans are the ones most rewarded by the Exarchs. The Seers of the Throne give the best assignments to those who have shown they can be trusted to perform. Those who have failed to provide service to the order are diverted away from the main focus of the order's operations and given less important — sometimes completely irrelevant — tasks to perform.

From the moment they are inducted into the order, mages are taught that providing service to the order is one of the most noble of the sacrifices they can make. Performing tasks efficiently and without causing a fuss shows that a mage is not only obedient, but also that they believe what they are doing is right. Such performance shows that they understand where the true power of the order comes from.

Many Seers, particularly the newest recruits, often balk at performing menial tasks, believing such things are beneath them. But it is the mages who humble themselves and show they are willing to undertake even the most menial or demeaning of tasks that are the ones who are held in the highest regard and will rise further in the order's ranks than any other.

This is not to say that they have to do the whole job themselves. Mages at the midlevel of the order will often take on a task and delegate the actual work to those below them. Mages at the lowest level often use Sleepers — or perhaps even Pentacle mages if they are both careful and clever — to complete the tasks given to them. What is important is that a mage, regardless of the position they hold within the order, is willing to accept the tasks that are assigned to them and they work those tasks to the best of their ability.

Initiative is often highly regarded, particularly when a mage recognizes that a task needs to be performed and volunteers his services to see it through to completion. However, Seers need to recognize that what sometimes appears to be an obvious task that needs completing might actually be something completely different. The order may have set up that task as a trial for another mage, or it might be deliberately using the uncompleted work as a weakness that will draw the order's enemies into an unexpected trap. Because the order often does not let the rank and file know about everything that the Exarchs have going on, it prefers that mages volunteer their services and check to see if the task is open, rather than just going ahead and doing it, lest it derail other operations that are in motion.

Those who complete their service faithfully are rewarded. Not only do the tasks themselves generate wealth and knowledge as a byproduct — recovering an Atlantean Artifact from the Pentacle orders could gain the Seer access

to the Artifact as well as additional knowledge about the time before the Fall of Atlantis — but it also brings prestige to the mage herself. Faithful service to the order does not go unnoticed, and those who show they can be trusted to complete the tasks they are given are often rewarded with greater opportunities in the future.

Thesis:

True Power Requires Vigilance

Just because the Exarchs have already won the war for the Supernal Realms doesn't mean the Seers of the Throne can be complacent. The Pentacle mages are always looking for ways to strengthen their control over the Fallen World and to recover some of the power that has been lost since the Fall of Atlantis. If left unchecked, they may eventually grow strong enough to rebuild the ladder to the heavens and attempt to reclaim the Supernal Realm from the Exarchs themselves. Consequently, the Seers must remain ever vigilant to anything that would interrupt the manifestation of the Exarchs' will.

Seer mages need to carefully watch all of the other mages in their area; they need to keep tabs on anything that could possibly undermine the Exarchs' authority over the Fallen World and to prevent other mages from gaining too much power. Seer mages need to know everything they can about their quarry, *particularly* what their weaknesses are, so that if the time comes, those weaknesses can be exploited.

Recovering lost Atlantean knowledge and keeping it from the Pentacle orders is an important part of the Seers' long-term mission. Tasked with discovering and acquiring any knowledge — be it as simple as a new spell or as complicated as a missing Atlantean Artifact — Seer mages need to be constantly alert for any new information. The information might not be important in its own right; it may only become important when viewed alongside other data, so that the pattern they collectively form becomes visible. Being able to recognize and make sense of a pattern made from seemingly unrelated information is just as important and uncovering a single piece of lost knowledge.

Other mages are not the only things that the Seers of the Throne need to be vigilant for: they must maintain the



Seers from other Ministries

It is not only the Pentacle mages that the Seers must remain vigilant against. Seers loyal to one particular Exarch are often keeping tabs on the mages loyal to other Exarchs. The different Ministries within the order often work against the others, undermining them in order to gain the most favor with their own Exarch. In some cases, the rivalries between the Ministries are so intense that more energy is devoted to undermining other parts of the same order than is spent preventing the Pentacle mages from achieving their aims.

Lie at all costs, so it behooves them to keep watch out for anything that would upset the Quiescence. Moves by any mage or other supernatural power to upset the status quo need to be dealt with swiftly and decisively.

Sleepers are another thing that the Seers keep watch over. Although the order tend to view the Sleepers as nothing more than tools to be used, keeping the masses away from knowledge of true magic means that the Seers need to keep watch over any unusual activity that might indicate that people are getting too close to the truth.

Although many Seers believe that widening the Abyss is one of the most effective ways of preventing further Awakenings, the Seers still need to be careful about Abyssal intrusions into the Fallen World. Left unchecked, an intruder could pose a threat to the Seers' operations, or they may simply generate too much Sleeper interest, which in turn could lead to the Sleepers learning too much of the truth.

Thesis:

True Power Requires Discipline

Simply being in control is not enough. If those in power were to become complacent and inflexible, their weaknesses would give their enemies openings to exploit. If left unchecked, those exploits could ultimately lead to the collapse of the order itself.

Focus is vital to maintaining control over the Fallen World. A Seer mage needs to be self-disciplined enough to complete the tasks given to him within the time allotted. Other elements of the Exarchs' greater plan may rely on the task being completed and if any one of the intermediate tasks is late — or not completed at all — the whole project could collapse. Failure is not an option.

Seers also need discipline to ensure they see their tasks through to the end. While unexpected things sometimes crop up in the middle of a task, it's not appropriate for a Seer to simply

give up. Instead, she needs to have faith that the Exarchs will provide her with an alternative path. At other times, the job itself may be mundane or repetitive, leading to complacency. If a Seer lacks discipline, she may take short cuts or forget to perform a vital task, potentially leading to failure.

The Pentacle Orders all stand against the Seers of the Throne. Most of them have no established rules forbidding the use of lethal force against the Seers, especially if the Seers are actively working against their specific plans and goals. Seer mages need to understand the risks involved when dealing directly with the Pentacle and realize that keeping silent about the Exarchs' plans is vitally important if the order's security is to be maintained. Sometimes this is impossible, especially if the Mind Arcanum is employed. The Seer policy of only telling their mages as much as they need to know limits the liability to some extent, but an individual Seer still needs to have an iron will to resist — as far as possible — whatever torture or magic the Pentacle mages decides to use against him.

If a Seer has authority over other mages in the order, he must maintain the discipline of those under his charge. It's vital that he explain the tasks that are expected of the subordinates and to keep them focused in order to ensure the success of the current mission. Should the junior mages lose their faith, or lack diligence to see their tasks through to completion, the senior Seer must find a way to remotivate them.

He must also punish transgressions, to ensure that the junior mages understand the privileges they have been given may be taken away just as easily and that they are willing to do what it takes to see the order prosper. Other mages within the order need to witness the punishment, so that they may learn from the mistakes of the one who failed and realize the same fate will befall them should they themselves fail.

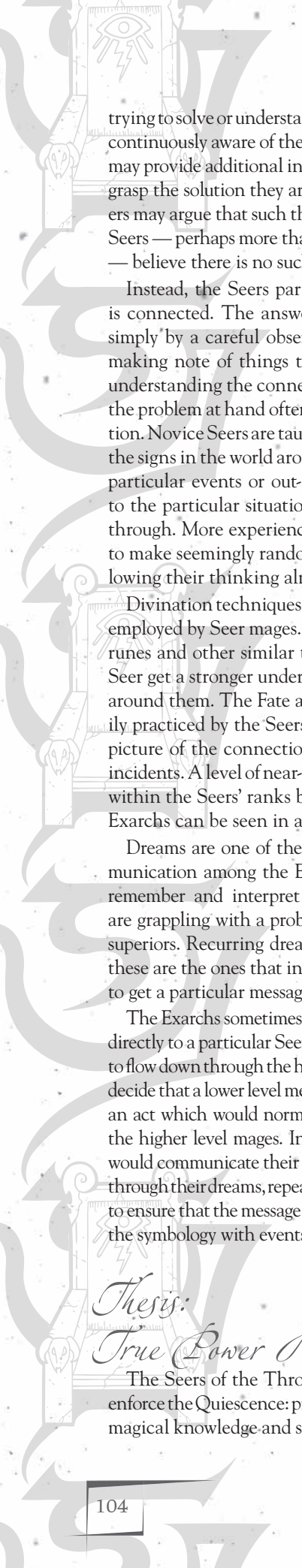
Thesis:

True Power Requires Understanding

The Exarchs rule from the Supernal Realms, but they do not make their rule manifestly obvious to the Fallen World. Their influence is much subtler, sometimes only visible with the benefit of hindsight, although the more connected a mage is to the Exarchs, the more the connections between things are going to be plainly obvious.

To function effectively, a Seer needs to be able to understand and react to the omens and signs he experiences. The Exarchs never spell out their wishes in unequivocal terms. Instead, a Seer needs to interpret the signs and draw his own conclusions based on the context. If a mage is to rise through the hierarchy, he must learn to not only recognize signs at the appropriate times, but also to act on them appropriately, so that the Exarchs' will may be manifest in the Fallen World.

Seer mages need to be constantly alert to information from the Exarchs. Whenever they have a problem they are



trying to solve or understand, it's important that they remain continuously aware of the world around them. The Exarchs may provide additional information that will help the mage grasp the solution they are looking for. While many Sleepers may argue that such things are merely coincidences, the Seers — perhaps more than the rest of the Awakened world — believe there is no such thing as a coincidence.

Instead, the Seers particularly believe that everything is connected. The answer to any problem can be found simply by a careful observation of the surroundings and making note of things that seem out of place, although understanding the connections between those things and the problem at hand often takes years of study and meditation. Novice Seers are taught how to notice and understand the signs in the world around them. Mentors will point out particular events or out-of-place objects and relate them to the particular situation that the new mage is working through. More experienced Seers use the same principles to make seemingly random intuitive leaps that makes following their thinking almost impossible at times.

Divination techniques popular with Sleepers are heavily employed by Seer mages. Dice, tarot cards, palm readings, runes and other similar techniques are all used to help a Seer get a stronger understanding of the events unfolding around them. The Fate and Time Arcana are often heavily practiced by the Seers, as they can give a much better picture of the connections between seemingly unrelated incidents. A level of near-superstition is quietly encouraged within the Seers' ranks by the belief that the hand of the Exarchs can be seen in almost anything.

Dreams are one of the most common vehicles for communication among the Exarchs. Seers need to be able to remember and interpret their dreams, especially if they are grappling with a problem given to them by their order superiors. Recurring dreams are particularly important, as these are the ones that indicate that the Exarchs are trying to get a particular message across.

The Exarchs sometimes use dreams to provide information directly to a particular Seer, without the information needing to flow down through the hierarchy. Occasionally, the Exarchs decide that a lower level member of the Seers needs to perform an act which would normally run contrary to the wishes of the higher level mages. In most cases like this, the Exarchs would communicate their wishes directly to the chosen mage through their dreams, repeating the content over several nights to ensure that the message was received, and often reinforcing the symbology with events or objects in the Fallen World.

Thesis:

True Power Requires Courage

The Seers of the Throne have three primary means to enforce the Quiescence: preventing Awakenings, destroying magical knowledge and subverting or killing mages before

they grow powerful enough to threaten the Exarchs. For the Seers to be successful, they need to believe in what they are doing to the point that choosing to do anything else would be unthinkable.

Most of the Seers have little trouble with the first of the means, which is why it is the mission that is pursued the most. Although the Seers need new members to continue to function, most Seers do not want to see their own influence diluted amongst a higher number of order members. The other two missions require a much higher level of personal courage and it is in pursuit of these two missions that most of the Seer failures occur.

Like the Pentacle mages, the Seers of the Throne have less access to the power of the Supernal Realm than they did in the time just after the destruction of the Celestial Ladder. Over time, as the Abyss has widened, it had become much harder for mages to perform magic.

And yet, the Seers are sometimes called upon to destroy the very thing that gives them the power over the Fallen World. They devote a huge amount of time and energy to track down magical knowledge and Artifacts, only to sometimes destroy them to prevent them falling into the hands of the Pentacle orders.

Carrying out that mission successfully requires a great deal of courage. While most Seers would rather such Artifacts be used to further the order's goals, sometimes it's impossible to keep the Pentacle from obtaining them. In that case, a Seer must put aside any personal desires and ensure that the Artifacts are destroyed, so they cannot fall into the wrong hands. No Artifact is *far* better than an Artifact in the hands of the Pentacle.

It is the third and final mission that causes the most trouble for the Seers. Most Pentacle mages are usually resistant to being converted to the Seers philosophy (although it is not unheard of). For those who refuse to serve the Exarchs — which is most of them — the only thing that can be done is to have them killed. Most mages balk at killing another, knowing that doing so risks damaging their own souls.

Still, when the time comes, the order calls for its mages to kill. There are few, if any, high-ranking Seers who have not done so at some point in their lives. Having the willingness to take another life at the Exarchs' request shows a great deal of personal fortitude and faith that such actions will not go unnoticed by the order hierarchy.

Seers willing to sacrifice for the good of the order are highly regarded and are often groomed for positions of higher authority within the Order, as they have shown a greater degree of trustworthiness. Any mages who have lost status are encouraged to recommit back to the order's basic principles.

Praxis: Maintain The Lie

Part of the human mind *wants* to believe in the supernatural. Since the dawn of time, mankind has invented gods and spirits to make them feel as though they have



a place within the spiritual realm. While Seers believe this is the case — the Exarchs are, after all, manipulating humanity's fate and using them for their own ends — they also believe that not everyone deserves to have the ability to manipulate the fabric of reality. In fact, the Seers believe that if everyone had the power that mages have, then the result would be complete and utter chaos, as those with opposing views would tear reality apart forever.

The Seers maintain that this *cannot* be allowed to happen. Instead, the Sleepers need to be convinced that magic isn't real and that the stories and anecdotes about magic are nothing more than fiction. The more people who believe in the Lie, the less likely any of them are to Awaken, which is just what the Exarchs would have. By keeping the spiritual side of humanity repressed, the Seers of the Throne can maintain their position over the Fallen World and help ensure that the Exarchs' will continues to become reality.

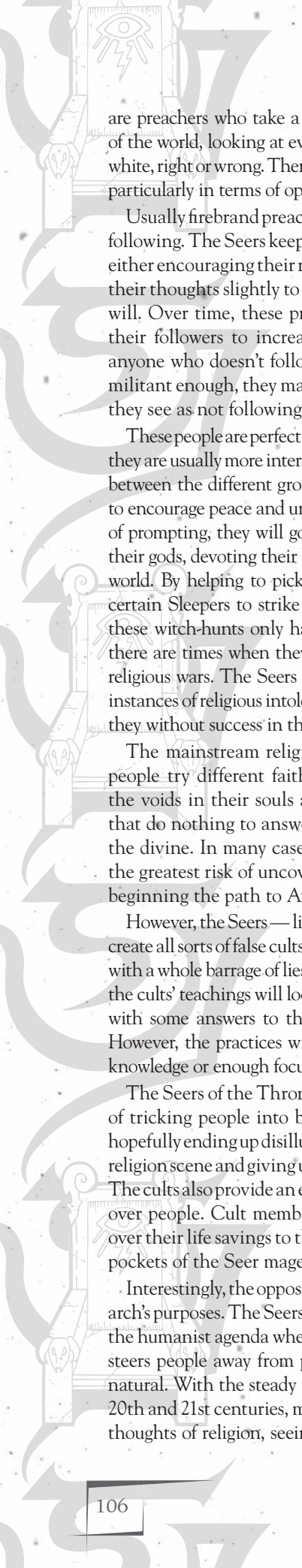
Manipulating Religion and Belief

Throughout history, only a handful of people have spent the time developing a real connection to the divine. These

people are always looked on as priests and prophets, used as mouthpieces of the gods to disseminate divine wisdom to the common man. Far too many humans simply cannot, do not or choose not to see the truths of the world behind the veil, and so they rely on the word of their spiritual leaders as the truth as given to them by the gods.

The Seers take advantage of this opportunity when they can do so subtly. By installing men and women they can control in positions of authority among the world's religions, they can insinuate the Exarchs' propaganda into the teachings aimed at the Sleepers. The congregations soak up the sermons and try to incorporate those teachings into their daily lives. Should the religious leaders speak out against magic and the occult, the congregations are inclined to take those words at face value and oppose anything that doesn't conform to the religion's teachings.

Nearly all of the world's religions preach acceptance of others. But they also maintain that others may be tricked into false beliefs by the forces of evil. Over time, the various religions have tried to codify what is evil and what isn't, insisting that they have the correct view of the world. Periodically, there



are preachers who take a more fundamental, absolute view of the world, looking at everything only in terms of black or white, right or wrong. There is no room for any middle ground, particularly in terms of opposition to the occult.

Usually firebrand preachers, they quickly pick up a strong following. The Seers keep their eyes open for such teachers, either encouraging their narrow thinking, or manipulating their thoughts slightly to make them closer to the Exarchs' will. Over time, these preachers use their influence over their followers to increase the antipathy and hatred of anyone who doesn't follow the same path. If the group is militant enough, they may even use violence against those they see as not following the one true way.

These people are perfect victims for the Seers' machinations; they are usually more interested in persecuting the differences between the different groups than working with the others to encourage peace and understanding. With only a little bit of prompting, they will go on holy crusades in the name of their gods, devoting their lives to rooting out evil within the world. By helping to pick the targets, the Seers can incite certain Sleepers to strike out in righteous fury. Sometimes these witch-hunts only happen on a small, local scale, but there are times when they can be escalated into full-blown religious wars. The Seers can't claim responsibility for most instances of religious intolerance, of course — but neither are they without success in the practice.

The mainstream religions are not for everyone. Some people try different faiths, looking for something to fill the voids in their souls and only finding empty routines that do nothing to answer the questions they have about the divine. In many cases, it is people like this who pose the greatest risk of uncovering the truth about magic and beginning the path to Awakening.

However, the Seers — like the Guardians of the Throne — create all sorts of false cults that are a seed of truth surrounded with a whole barrage of lies. To the gullible or impressionable, the cults' teachings will look like the truth and provide them with some answers to the questions they have about life. However, the practices will not provide them with enough knowledge or enough focus to see the world as it truly is.

The Seers of the Throne see the cults as a perfect means of tricking people into believing in a spiritual dead end, hopefully ending up disillusioned with the whole alternative religion scene and giving up their spiritual quests altogether. The cults also provide an excellent means of gaining control over people. Cult members are often encouraged to sign over their life savings to the cult leaders, thereby lining the pockets of the Seer mages at the same time.

Interestingly, the opposite of religion can also serve the Exarch's purposes. The Seers of the Throne strongly encourage the humanist agenda wherever they can, as it automatically steers people away from people thinking about the supernatural. With the steady march of technology through the 20th and 21st centuries, many people are putting aside their thoughts of religion, seeing them as completely irrelevant.

Portions of the Western world are seeing an exodus away from religious thoughts, with many people identifying themselves as either atheist or agnostic. Most of them refuse to believe in the supernatural at all, dismissing it as nothing more than the workings of a fevered imagination, stuck with the emotional baggage of the past.

Seer pylons across the world find they do not have to do much to encourage thought like this. If anything, they simply manipulate reality so that the viewpoint becomes increasingly relevant and acceptable to more people. As the concept gains strength within the collective unconscious, the greater the disbelief in magic grows.

Manipulating the Corporate, Political and Scientific World

In the modern world, much of mankind's energy is taken up in the machinations of the corporate world. Millions of people around the globe toil to make a profit for their employers, doing everything they can to line the pockets of the shareholders. In recent years, employees have been working longer hours, often doing dozens of hours of unpaid overtime every month. With the increased connectivity provided by the Internet and cellular phone networks, the division between work and home is rapidly disappearing. More and more people across the world are becoming complete slaves to their work.

For the Seers of the Throne, manipulating the machinations of the corporate world provides them with the perfect opportunity to ensure that millions of people are so distracted by the work that they cannot even find the time to think about spiritual matters.

Many pylons delight in causing corporate mayhem, spreading rumors about potential takeovers and leaking secrets to a company's competitors, or the authorities. Workers become so paranoid about their increasingly fragile employment that they are willing to sacrifice their lives to prove that they are worth employing. While this is going on, there is little likelihood of any of them Awakening.

Arthur C. Clarke once famously said that any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic. For the Seers of the Throne, this insight has proved to be an enormous boon. The gigantic gains in scientific knowledge during the latter half of the 20th century and the early years of the 21st century means that people now have a much easier time controlling the world through computers and technology than they have ever had before.

Knowledge now moves faster than ever and new devices for manipulating the world are being developed almost on a daily basis. Sleepers are constantly coming up with new equipment that lets them control the world around them in ways that until only a few decades ago might have been seen as magic.

The Seers of the Throne encourage scientific advances wherever they can. By diverting funds earned on the stock market into corporate research facilities, they can ensure that technology will continue to reduce mankind's need for

magic, as everything will be able to be achieved through completely mundane means.

Politics is another arena in which the Seers of the Throne are finding themselves increasingly influential. With the increase in communications technology, the world is practically growing smaller, and the fortunes of one county now have a much greater influence on the fortunes of others. By manipulating the different levels of governments in countries across the world, the Seers can have a dramatic effect on the way the Sleepers think and act.

The national governments — particularly those of the Western world — have an enormous degree of power in the mindset of the world's populations. If the leaders decide to go to war, thousands of people may die, and thousands more may end up exceptionally wealthy from supplying the material needed for the conflict. The basic decisions that the government makes can have a massive impact on the financial and living conditions of the population in those countries.

People also love to debate politics across the world. With so much attention focused upon the leaders and their actions, the Seers can change the minds of the general populace simply by changing the actions of a country's leadership.

Playing the Market

Many Seer pylons are quite interested in sinking their fingers into the goings-on of major corporations. Being able to sry into the heart of the corporate world to learn its secrets makes it pathetically easy for the Seers to make a killing on the stock market, even more so if the mage knows the Fate Arcanum.

With money comes increased power. The Exarchs themselves encourage the Seers to take control of the world's finances, as it allows their servants to easily manipulate the lives of millions of Sleepers without using much magic at all. To some Seers, the mundane power that comes with manipulating the corporate and financial worlds sometimes overpowers their desire to improve in magic and they become sidetracked by the trappings of the Fallen World.

Many Seers see their ability to control the Fallen World as a reward for performing the Exarchs' will. Their increased finances often brings the ability to guide the directions of particular companies, which in turn gives them more opportunity to further the Exarchs' will.

Seer mages do not even need to use magic to manipulate the leaders' minds; by using their financial, corporate and religious influence instead, they can bring pressure to bear on the country's decision makers, forcing them to change their policies to something the Seers find acceptable. In essence, they play the same game as many other political interest groups — they just keep their real motives a little closer to the chest. And of course, they are not above using blackmail to get their own way. Most politicians have skeletons in their closets they would like to keep hidden. For a Seer mage, probing the deepest corners of a politician's mind to get the dirt is relatively easy — though potentially risky enough that this tactic is used mostly if the highest levels of the hierarchy have approved it.

When the politicians turn corrupt and care more about their own interests than the interests of their constituents, the population gets upset. For the Seers, this provides a potential opportunity to sway the mood of the general populace, getting them to focus on mundane things and ensuring that the Lie is maintained. Should a politician make a "bad" decision, people start to worry about their jobs or sometimes even more fundamental things like where are they going to live or where is the family's next meal going to come from. All these mundane hardships take people's attentions away from spiritual



things, and often prevent them from understanding the way the universe really works.

The media and fashion are two more vehicles for the Seers to maintain influence over the Sleepers. People look to the media to let them know what's happening in the world and which issues are important. By carefully manipulating what the media focuses on, the Seers can divert people's attention away from subjects that will potentially lead them to Awakening. Like business or politics, the amount of influence that needs to be exerted does not have to be particularly great. Humans, by their very nature, will focus on mundane matters, particularly if the subjects are sensational or gloomy. It does not take much influence for the Seers to generate news. Likewise, the entertainment industry provides the Seers with an enormous opportunity to manipulate people's thinking and desires. Some Seer pylons divert their finances into funding movie projects that will have an impact on people's thinking.

Fashion is another area where the Seers can use their magical influence to start memes and come up with the latest trends that will have the Sleepers diving over themselves to acquire. When coupled with corporate interests and research, the Seers have the ability to make a fortune by subtly manipulating the desires of humanity. By constantly helping to influence the next big thing, the Seers can keep people's attentions focused on material possessions.

Preventing Awakenings

One of the Seers' primary missions is to prevent Sleepers from Awakening. Many pylons spend much of their time monitoring Sleepers who become interested in occult matters, and have the potential to Awaken. Because the Exarchs do not want anyone except for those they choose to become mages, the Seers work to divert the potential Awakened away from the truth.

This can be done in a number of ways. Some pylons recruit potential mages into false cults, or divert them into mainstream religious congregations where their thinking can be diverted away from the Supernal reality. Other pylons prefer to take control of other Sleepers using Artifacts like the Profane Urim and interact with the potential mage, distracting them at the precise moments when they achieve clarity and find the way to the Watchtowers.

These distractions do not need to be anything major. It might be as simple as causing children to fight outside, or knocking on the door asking for spare change. All that's usually needed is something that's going to cause the potential mage to focus back on the mundane world and away from the spiritual understanding. This tactic, sometimes called "the person from Porlock gambit," requires an incredible sense of timing and understanding of the potential target. It's usually best accomplished by Seers with a knack for Fate and Mind magic, who have some chance of finding these needles in the haystack before the critical moment.

However, on occasions, the candidate can sometimes find himself in a trance or other condition where his conscious mind cannot be easily distracted from their trains of thought, so more dramatic steps are necessary. The easiest way is to put the mage's physical body in jeopardy, by assaulting the potential mage, or by changing the environment around him. Causing house fires is often a favorite technique, with the Seer using their magic to cause an electrical short circuit or a gas pipe rupture. If the potential mage is approaching his Awakening in the wilderness, the Seer can utilize nature and cause a storm, forest fire or call a wild animal to attack him.

In the extreme case, the potential mage is simply murdered. The Seers often mentally manipulate Sleepers to do the dirty work, so they don't end up with blood on their own hands. It also isolates them from the case should the police investigate. Again, many pylons use a Profane Urim or other similar Artifact to take control of a Sleeper's mind and get them to do things they might not otherwise do. However, some pylons prefer not to use the Artifacts, instead relying on manipulating the Sleepers prejudices against them, getting them violently angry and then pointing them at the potential mage. Human nature normally takes its course and the potential mage becomes a statistic.

Manipulating Hunters

Some Sleepers get a glimpse of the supernatural and decide to do something about it. For the Seers of the Throne, these potential witch hunters pose a very large threat. Even if they are unable to actually identify any of the Seers, their interference can disrupt a pylon's operations, potentially tipping off the Pentacle orders as to what the Seers are doing.

Most Seers of the Throne who become aware of a hunter threat take it seriously. The order is frequently suspicious that an apparently autonomous cell of witch-hunters might be in the employ, unwitting or otherwise, of the Pentacle orders — particularly the Guardians of the Veil. Most established pylons prefer to keep a very low profile, so having the extra mundane attention from a third party is something they would prefer to do without. If the Seers can find a way to redirect potential hunters toward their enemies, or even to an innocent third party, they will take it. Some pylons are not above sponsoring (or even, with a well-staged attack, creating) their own hunter cells financially, providing both money and resources to allow the group to pursue their goals more effectively. The Seers recognize that the tactic could potentially backfire if the hunter cell turned around and started targeting order mages, but most pylons believe that by carefully monitoring the cell's activities and pro-actively guiding them, they can minimize any risk the cell might pose.

Praxis: Control Magical Knowledge

Since the Fall of Atlantis, the Exarchs have been working towards strengthening the Abyss, so that there is no chance



of the Supernal and the Fallen World ever rejoining. As the Abyss widens, the amount of magical knowledge and power available to mages shrinks. Without the power of the ancient mages, modern mages stand no chance of ever being able to truly threaten the Exarchs' reign.

But any existing knowledge that does not remain in the hands of the Seers is still a threat to the Exarchs. The Pentacle orders constantly seek out such knowledge so they can reclaim some of the glory from the Atlantean days, or — in the case of the Free Council — build an all-new knowledge base that will increase the amount of magic in the world. Either way, if left unchecked, the Pentacle orders could amass enough knowledge and power to undo all the work the Exarchs and the Seers have done over the past several millennia.

A major part of the Seers of the Throne's mission is to remove such knowledge from the world, either into their own secure storage areas or by destroying it completely. Many Seers tend to practice a "Scorched earth" policy, finding it easier and safer to destroy magical Artifacts and knowledge completely, rather than run the risk of letting it fall into the hands of the Pentacle.

The body of magical knowledge available to the Pentacle orders has been gradually shrinking over time. They are no longer able to read many — High Speech runes, and subtle meanings of the language eludes most living mages. It is also impossible for mages to create new Artifacts since the Fall, so it is vitally important that any leads on ancient Artifacts are followed down, so that the knowledge can be recovered and studied.

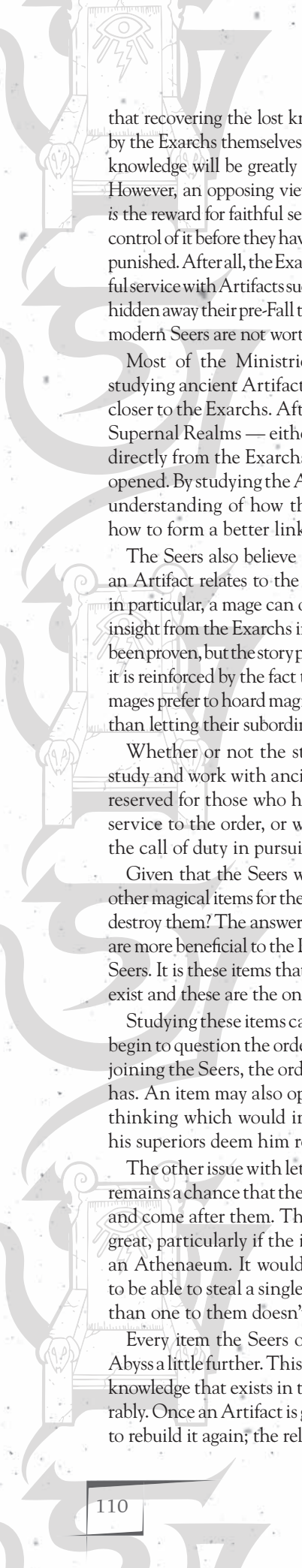
Given enough time, most Artifacts reveal some lost knowledge, thereby giving the Pentacle orders a chance to recover some of the power that has been gradually slipping away. Ancient temples and their wall carvings can provide new insights into the way the Atlantean mages viewed the world. They can also provide more information about the Exarchs and any potential weaknesses they might have.

The knowledge gained from Artifacts or other recovered knowledge could also contain information that would make it easier for Pentacle mages to ascend to the Supernal Realms, or even to find a way to get in touch with the Oracles directly. Should that happen, the amount of power available to the Pentacle orders would be increased dramatically and the Exarchs' rule could eventually be threatened.

For the Seers, this is a completely unacceptable outcome. The Exarchs won the war for the Supernal and they want to retain their control over it. As such, they have instructed the Seers to recover any ancient knowledge they can find and to destroy it if it appears it is going to fall into the hands of the Pentacle orders.

The Seers seek out Artifacts for much the same reason as the Pentacle mages: they want to increase the amount of magical knowledge they have. In their case, they want to have a better chance of controlling the Fallen World for their own ends, rather than using that knowledge to retake the heavens.

The Exarchs, before the destruction of the Celestial Ladder, hid Artifacts and magical teachings. However, knowledge of the caches has been lost to time, particularly with the constant assaults from the Pentacle orders; the Seers are constantly on the lookout for any new information that will lead them to the Exarchs' treasures. A certain viewpoint prevails within the Seers



that recovering the lost knowledge is a test put to the mages by the Exarchs themselves, and that anyone that recovers the knowledge will be greatly rewarded by the Supernal masters. However, an opposing view believes that the lost knowledge is the reward for faithful service and anyone attempting to get control of it before they have earned the reward will be severely punished. After all, the Exarchs already reward consistent faithful service with Artifacts such as the Profane Urims. If they have hidden away their pre-Fall treasures, then it must mean that the modern Seers are not worthy enough to use them.

Most of the Ministries within the Seers teach that studying ancient Artifacts and grimoires will bring a mage closer to the Exarchs. After all, all Artifacts come from the Supernal Realms — either before the Fall, or passed down directly from the Exarchs themselves since the Abyss was opened. By studying the Artifacts, a mage can gain a greater understanding of how the Supernal Realm operates and how to form a better link with it.

The Seers also believe that by better understanding how an Artifact relates to the Supernal Realm and the Exarchs in particular, a mage can open himself up to greater levels of insight from the Exarchs in the Fallen World. This has never been proven, but the story persists strongly within the order and it is reinforced by the fact that many of the higher level Seers mages prefer to hoard magical Artifacts for themselves, rather than letting their subordinates use or even study them.

Whether or not the story is true or not, being able to study and work with ancient magical knowledge is usually reserved for those who have provided many years of loyal service to the order, or who have gone above and beyond the call of duty in pursuing the Exarchs' will.

Given that the Seers will hoard and study Artifacts and other magical items for their own benefit, why do they need to destroy them? The answer is relatively simple: some Artifacts are more beneficial to the Pentacle mages than they are to the Seers. It is these items that the order deems too dangerous to exist and these are the ones that are regularly destroyed.

Studying these items can sometimes cause a Seer mage to begin to question the order's theses. With so few new mages joining the Seers, the order works to retain the ones that it has. An item may also open a mage's mind to new ways of thinking which would increase his magical power before his superiors deem him ready to take those steps.

The other issue with letting these items exist is that there remains a chance that the Pentacle mages will learn of them and come after them. The risk to the Seers' security is too great, particularly if the item is stored with other items in an Athenaeum. It would be bad enough for the Pentacle to be able to steal a single Artifact; potentially losing more than one to them doesn't even bear thinking about.

Every item the Seers of the Throne destroy widens the Abyss a little further. This is because the sum total of magical knowledge that exists in the world has been reduced irreparably. Once an Artifact is gone, there is no way to repair it, or to rebuild it again; the relatively low level of magical power

that exists in the Fallen World in modern times simply isn't high enough to allow for the creation of Artifacts.

While mages can still create grimoires and enchant Artifacts, doing so still requires an investiture of magical energy and time. Destroying these items robs a mage of potentially the only copy they have of such things, meaning that they will be years behind in their research, if they can actually recover it at all.

The hoarding of magical knowledge by junior Seers is frowned upon by the order. The Seers traditions mandate that any magical Artifacts or knowledge that is obtained by junior Seers is passed up the chain of command. The order believes that knowledge will come to a mage when the Exarchs are prepared for them to have that knowledge and not before. By knowing such knowledge exists but is not yet available to them can serve as an incentive for a young Seer to strive to better fulfill the order's mandates, so that they may gain access to the knowledge in time.

The rule exists to prevent junior Seers from being tempted by knowledge that could lead them from the order's strictures. If they were to gain too much knowledge too quickly without understanding the proper ways in which to use that knowledge for the good of the Exarchs, there is a very real chance that the mage could either lose the Artifact to the Pentacle orders, or that they would undermine or perhaps even undo the work that the rest of the order has underway.

However, this rule is often not followed. Some junior Seers feel as though they are ready for the greater knowledge before their superiors believe they are. In reality, many mid-level Seers try to suppress their subordinates, so that they will not be promoted above them. Because of this, junior mages will not pass on any captured Artifacts or knowledge, at least until after they have had a chance to study them in depth and perhaps learn something new from them. They always justify this by saying that the Exarchs would not have put the Artifact in their hands if they were not meant to study it.

Because the order demands that Artifacts be passed up the chain, many Seer mages often prefer to not tell their superiors that they have recovered an Artifact until such time as they have had a chance to study it in depth themselves. This is not always possible as the higher ranking Seers usually scry on their subordinates regularly to ensure they are performing their allotted tasks. Still many young Seers continue to try, even if only to get a brief period with an Artifact before they are forced to hand it over.

Sleepers and Magic

As far as the Seers of the Throne are concerned, Sleepers should never find out that magic even exists. They have no need to know about it, and if they should stumble across some positive knowledge of it, there's a very real chance that they could pose a threat to the Seers' interests. This is one reason why the Seers are careful to distract and mislead any Hunter cells that might be interested in Seer activities.

The Return of Power

For many years, there has been a story circulating amongst the Pentacle orders that there is another, more sinister reason that the Seers destroy Atlantean Artifacts. According to a defector that left the Seers of the Throne in the 1950s and joined the Free Council, there are particular ceremonies that the Seers use when they are destroying Artifacts. The item is actually sacrificed to the Exarchs, and the magical energy stored within the Artifact is released back into the Supernal World to strengthen the Exarchs' manipulations of reality.

Whether or not this story is true is unknown. Some Seers have heard of it and dismissed it as misinformation spread by the defector, who may have actually been a double agent for the Seers after all. Other Seers have considered the story and suggested that there could be some truth to the story, although it's unlikely that they are sacrificing the Artifacts to all the Exarchs. They did not elaborate any further, apart from saying that perhaps the Seers who follow the will of the Gate would stop at nothing...

However, Sleepers sometimes witness magic being cast, particularly when a mage casts a vulgar spell. Sleepers also have a distressing habit of stumbling across magical Artifacts or knowledge without realizing what it is they are looking at. Should they study this information closely, it's possible they could learn about the reality of magic and work at pursuing it.

Because of this, the Seers often work on the minds of any Sleepers who experience any magical effects at all. The mages work to sow seeds of doubt in the Sleepers' minds so that they come to believe that what they saw was something other than what it really was.

Sleepers themselves are often willing to go to extraordinary lengths to prove that magic doesn't exist. With the rise of scientific method, much of what used to be explained by supernatural means is now viewed as the product of perfectly mundane natural phenomena. As the body of scientific knowledge increases, there is less and less that cannot be explained by science. A classic example is the military saying that a UFO was only a weather balloon or was a pocket of swamp gas.

The Seers are often able to unleash a horde of scientific experts to explain away any sort of magical evidence that may happen to come into the public arena. Expert witnesses will often be called to convince people that they did not see what they believed they saw, instead explaining the same result using science.

Sleeper disbelief is often a potent weapon in the Seer arsenal. Because of the inherently magical nature of some Artifacts, or even Atlantean ruins, any Sleeper that comes across them can disrupt the magic and cause the spells to unravel.

The Seers often use this to their advantage, particularly when they are racing against the Pentacle mages to uncover an Atlantean Artifact. If the Pentacle mages are getting close to — or in fact have succeeded in — obtaining the object they seek, the Seers often send in mundane minions. Their disbelief often has a disastrous effect on the Pentacle's treasures, in many cases rapidly destroying that which had been hidden for so long. In most cases, the Seers simply have to give the Sleepers an incentive to explore the same regions as the Pentacle mages, and provide whatever resources are needed to equip the expedition and the Sleepers will undertake the archeology with gusto.


This tactic is often used as a matter of last resort, or when the Seers simply do not have enough resources in the field to be able to overcome the Pentacle mages. The Seers would prefer to recover the Artifact or knowledge and study it themselves first wherever possible, but because they are often spread out too thinly, particularly in the remote parts of the world where the Artifacts are usually found, they sometimes find that they have no choice.

Some Sleepers, however, see too much and cannot be persuaded that they saw something other than magic. Often this is the result of seeing a vulgar spell that did not incur paradox — there simply is no way that science can explain things that are blatantly impossible in the normal world. And of course, belief in the supernatural is still very strong in many cultures; a New Yorker might be an atheist with a contempt for superstition, but he just as easily might believe in miracles wrought by the hand of God or the Virgin Mary. When such a witness is privy to magic, the Seers are forced to implement other measures to keep the Sleeper silent, lest she start talking to other people about their experiences or even worse, start digging for the truth.

In some cases, the Seers will convince other Sleepers around the target that the target is insane and needs to be medicated or counseled for her own benefit. Peer pressure is often a potent weapon, particularly when the pressure is coming from authority figures. Often this is enough to convince the target Sleeper that she either imagined or hallucinated the magic, or that she's perhaps mentally ill.

If this tactic fails, the Seers are not above using covert magic to mess with the Sleeper's memories. This cannot suppress the knowledge permanently, but it can often sow enough doubt into the Sleeper's mind that she may instead begin to question what she saw and eventually let the matter drop.

If this tactic fails too, then the Sleeper may simply have to be eliminated. The Seers usually arrange an accident at the hands of another Sleeper. The target may be murdered in the course of a mugging, or the Seer may take control of an animal like a deer and run in front of the Sleeper as she's traveling home. The Seers always work to ensure that



the death appears to have nothing whatsoever to do with what the Sleeper has claimed to see, so there are no links to be traced back to the order.

Disturbing the Pentacle

Often the Seers' best leads on magical Artifacts or knowledge come from the Pentacle mages. Because their enemies spent so much time recovering lost knowledge, the Seers devote many resources to monitoring Pentacle activities and movements in the hope that they will lead the Seers to the treasures.

Seer mages regularly snoop on their Pentacle counterparts, hoping to learn about plans to recover lost knowledge. Whole pylons exist whose sole role is to watch Pentacle cabals and provide information to the order about what the Pentacle knows and what they plan on doing about it.

The Seers also utilize Sleeper resources to keep tabs on what the Pentacle mages are doing and where they are working. Mundane techniques like traffic analysis — the studying of movements or communications — can often provide the Seers with a wealth of information about what the Pentacle mages are planning, especially when combined with magical divination techniques.

Of course, the Pentacle mages are aware of the Seers' habits through past experience and will often do whatever they can to prevent the Seers from learning anything. Scribing spells are often traced back to the casters, so the Seers have to be exceptionally careful to ensure they remain hidden from the Pentacle mages' sight.

If the Seers learn that the Pentacle mages are close to uncovering lost knowledge or Artifacts, then they often summon incredible resources to prevent their enemies from succeeding. Senior Seers will often call in favors from other pylons to summon enough Seer resources to be able to either beat the Pentacle mages to the treasure if possible, or to attack them and take it from them if they cannot.

Regardless of the actual plan, the Seers know they need to move fast once the Pentacle starts to move, as there is only a limited window in which the Artifact or knowledge is in the open. If they do not move quickly enough, the Pentacle mages are usually able to get the item back into hiding in their own Athenea, and safely out of the Seers' hands.

Many senior Seers place a high degree of emphasis on the disruption of Pentacle plans. The rewards for success in such missions are usually high, and many Seer careers have been advanced by taking an Atlantean Artifact from the hands of the Pentacle orders at the moment of victory. However, the penalties for failure are often severe, and many Seer careers have been ruined by failing to stop the Pentacle mages from acquiring an Artifact.

The Seers place so much emphasis on recovering Artifacts before the Pentacle that they often encourage Seer mages to sacrifice their own lives to ensure that the mission is a success. Despite the relative scarcity of Seer mages, they are worth less

in the greater scheme than an Artifact; an Artifact has much more potential to do more damage to the Exarchs and their plans than a single Seer mage has to help them. The Exarchs can always provide the order with a new mage to replace the ones that die in the service of the order. This is particularly true of the lower-ranked members of the order, who are most likely to receive an order that may be tantamount to suicide.

However, the Seers are taught not to just throw their lives away needlessly. If the order cannot recover the Artifacts themselves, then it is acceptable to destroy them by whatever means is possible. The Seers believe that if they cannot have the Artifacts, then no one can. The use of Sleepers to destroy the Artifacts through disbelief is often highly recommended in such cases.

Because of this encouragement, the penalties for coming back from a mission empty-handed is often worse than death: numerous stories abound of Seer mages having their souls torn out by furious superiors. Seer mages often try to avoid these missions whenever they can because they know that such things can either make or break their careers as Seers, if not their lives.

Praxis: Destroy the Pentacle

A magical cold war exists around the world between the Seers of the Throne and the Pentacle orders. Neither side really has the upper hand, although both sides like to claim that they do. The Seers believe they hold the real power within the Fallen World because they have the power of the Exarchs behind them, while the Pentacle maintains it has the upper hand because they are not slaves to the will of some unseen overlords.

However, neither side has yet managed to muster enough resources or magic to destroy the other. Over the past several millennia, the conflict has raged across the globe, with many thousands of mages being destroyed in the process, along with untold masses of magical knowledge and Artifacts.

Still, the Seers of the Throne consider destroying the Pentacle orders as one of their three primary missions and many of the order's members devote their lives to helping bring about the complete triumph of the Exarchs and their mortal servants. Few of them are naïve enough to believe they are going to see the goal completed within their lifetimes; after all, if the struggle has been continuing since the Fall of Atlantis, it is sheer foolishness to believe that it is going to be concluded in the foreseeable future.

The Seers believe that, given the chance, most of the Pentacle orders would like to recreate the Celestial Ladder and take back the Supernal Realms from the Exarchs. Most of the Pentacle mages rail at the lack of magic within the Fallen World and the fact that the amount of magical power in the world decreases every year.

There are exceptions to this rule; the Guardians of the Veil sometimes form unwitting allies for the Seers in the struggle to prevent the Pentacle mages from trying to bridge the Abyss. In many ways, the Guardians and the Seers are



much closer in their thinking than the Guardians are with the other Pentacle orders. Even more strangely, much of the direct peaceful contact between the Seers and the Pentacle usually involves a Guardian mage.

The Seers of the Throne cannot afford to let the Pentacle orders get any stronger, as it would put the Exarchs' rule at risk, as well as putting their own privileged positions in jeopardy. The Seers need to maintain their current roles to maintain the current status quo.

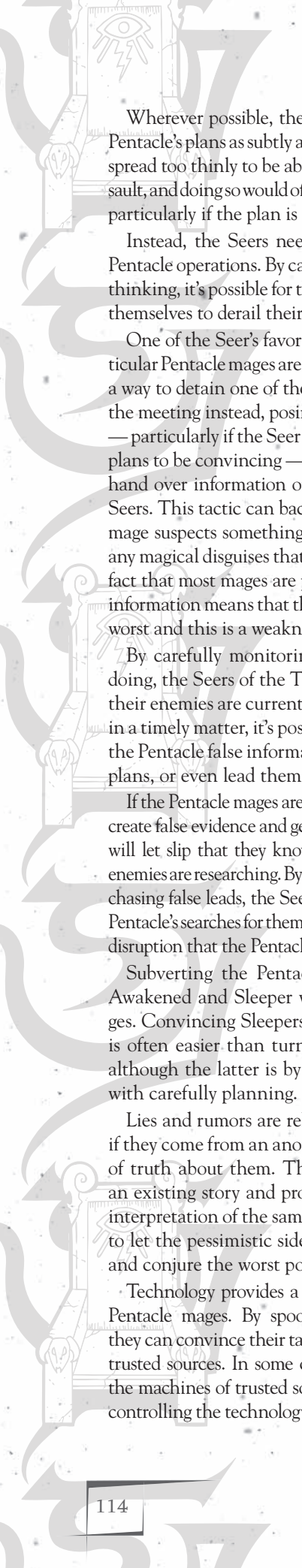
If the Pentacle orders were to gain too much power, they may find themselves in a position to interfere with the Seers work. At present, the Seers are able to hide much of their influence from the Pentacle's sight, allowing them to continue to manipulate the Fallen World for their own gain. Should the Pentacle mages be able to gain more power, they may be able to find a way to narrow the Abyss, which would ultimately end in more Awakenings.

The Seers need to keep a close eye on the Pentacle's interests. By watching what the Pentacle mages do and who they talk

to, Seer mages can get a clear picture of what their targets are planning, especially if they use magic to supplement the mundane intelligence gathering.

If the Seers are able to divine what the Pentacle mages are working on, they have a much better chance of being able to either disrupt those plans completely, or perhaps even subverting the outcome so that it benefits the Seers and the Exarchs, rather than the result that the Pentacle mages were looking for.

This is not always possible; more often than not the Seers are not able to completely disrupt the Pentacle's plans. However, any spanner they can throw in the works is often beneficial as it means that the Pentacle mages are not able to complete their plans as successfully as they would have otherwise been able to. Keeping a close eye on the Pentacle operation means that the Pentacle mages need to devote time and energy to keeping things hidden, which often means they do not have as much time and energy to devote to bring the plans completely to fruition.



Wherever possible, the Seers need to interfere with the Pentacle's plans as subtly as possible. Seer resources are often spread too thinly to be able to launch a full-scale frontal assault, and doing so would often raise too much Sleeper interest, particularly if the plan is taking place in an urban area.

Instead, the Seers need to be careful when disrupting Pentacle operations. By carefully manipulating the Pentacle thinking, it's possible for the Seers to get the Pentacle mages themselves to derail their own plans.

One of the Seer's favorite tactics is to find out when particular Pentacle mages are going to be meeting, and then find a way to detain one of them, so that a Seer mage can go to the meeting instead, posing as a Pentacle mage. In this way — particularly if the Seer knows enough about the Pentacle plans to be convincing — the Pentacle mages will willingly hand over information or even magical knowledge to the Seers. This tactic can backfire spectacularly if the Pentacle mage suspects something is amiss and is able to penetrate any magical disguises that the Seers are using. However, the fact that most mages are paranoid about sharing too much information means that they are often willing to believe the worst and this is a weakness the Seers can exploit.

By carefully monitoring what the Pentacle mages are doing, the Seers of the Throne can often determine what their enemies are currently working on. If they can do this in a timely matter, it's possible for the Seers to start feeding the Pentacle false information that will either disrupt their plans, or even lead them to outright failure.

If the Pentacle mages are doing research, the Seers will often create false evidence and get it into the Pentacle hands, or they will let slip that they know something about whatever their enemies are researching. By tying up valuable Pentacle resources chasing false leads, the Seers can either grab the object of the Pentacle's searches for themselves, or they can just cause enough disruption that the Pentacle plans fail to come to fruition.

Subverting the Pentacle order contacts, both in the Awakened and Sleeper worlds, is a priority for Seer mages. Convincing Sleepers that a Pentacle mage is a threat is often easier than turning mages against one another, although the latter is by no means impossible, especially with carefully planning.

Lies and rumors are relatively easy to start, particularly if they come from an anonymous source and have a degree of truth about them. The Seers have found that taking an existing story and providing a person with a different interpretation of the same facts is often all that is required to let the pessimistic side of the listener's mind take over and conjure the worst possible conclusion.

Technology provides a means for Seers to interfere with Pentacle mages. By spoofing electronic communications, they can convince their targets that messages can come from trusted sources. In some cases, the messages *do* come from the machines of trusted sources; it's just that the Seers were controlling the technology at the time the message was sent.

Digitally or even magically fabricated evidence is also highly useful to convince a target that something else is going on.

The Seers of the Throne highly prize spies within the Pentacle orders. These turncoat mages are usually the greatest resources the Seers have for learning what the Pentacle orders are doing. As it is in the Sleeper world, information from an inside source is an exceptionally valuable resource when keeping tabs on your enemies.

The risks for a Seer spy are enormous. Mage orders are notoriously paranoid to begin with, so anyone who betrays those secrets is going to be severely punished if they are caught, particularly if they are caught by the Guardians of the Veil.

However, with the power of the Exarchs behind them, the Seers can often make extremely tempting offers to Pentacle mages. The Seers normally target mages who are disgruntled with the order politics, or ones who bear grudges against other mages. The Seers will offer to help — usually through Sleeper intermediaries, but occasionally directly — often doing the target mage favors to convince them of their “honesty”. If the target mage takes the bait, they are slowly lured into revealing more and more secrets.


Some Pentacle mages offer information willingly as a means of revenge against slights real or perceived, without realizing they are selling out their order. The Seers are always on the lookout for mages who, in a fit of rage are looking for an easy way to get revenge. By providing the mage with the resources or information he needs, the Seers can buy his trust, which they can later exploit.

The Seers of the Throne know there is as much tension between the Pentacle orders as there is between the Seer Ministries. Because of this, the Seers often work in an area to create situations that act like metaphysical hand grenades: things that different Pentacle orders will react very differently to based on their individual biases.

For example, a Seer pylon might deliberately upset the spirits within a city area, causing them to lash out at the local Sleeper population. When the Pentacle mages begin to investigate and attempt to settle the spirits down, the Seers can manipulate some of the local Sleepers to interfere with the Pentacle spell casting, thus causing Paradox. The local Guardians of the Veil attempt to punish the offending mages and they demand that the Mysterium release an Artifact from the local Atheneum to help solve the spirit problem. This in turn will annoy the Mysterium mages, who are loath to let any of their Artifacts out of the secure storehouse.

For these sorts of tactics to be effective, the Seers need to be intimately familiar with the local Pentacle power bases, and learn what the trigger points for each of the local orders are. This can often take years of careful observation and probing, but the Seers believe that the end result is worth the time investment.

The conflict between the Seers of the Throne and the Pentacle mages is perpetually fought in secret. The Seers want to maintain the Lie and keep the Sleepers ignorant of



magic's very existence, while the Pentacle orders are afraid that Sleeper disbelief could invoke Paradox and widen the Abyss. Because of this, both sides try to keep any magical conflicts out of the public eye.

In most cases, this is not a problem. Most searches for Atlantean lore and Artifacts takes place in remote, largely uninhabited corners of the world. The few Sleepers in those areas makes it easier for the mages of both sides to work a little more openly, although the Seers still prefer to work from behind the scenes to disrupt the Pentacle plans wherever possible.

In larger, more populated areas, the risk of discovery is too great, forcing a much more subtle conflict. If magic is used in the struggle, it's usually covert magic, so that the Sleepers in the area are not bludgeoned by impossible happenings. The risk of a Paradox creating an Abyssal intrusion is often too great to make the risk of vulgar magic in a public place worthwhile.

Occasionally, an uneasy truce is declared between the Seers and the Pentacle orders in a particular region. This often happens in large metropolitan centers, where neither side has the upper hand. In cities such as London, the two sides dance around each other, but do not take action that could escalate into a full-blown mage war. Both sides know that the danger is too high should that occur.

This is not to say that the areas go without interactions between the two sides. The Seers will continue to monitor the Pentacle activity and continue attempting to subvert the Pentacle's plans in that area. The Pentacle mages also continue to undermine the Seers control and work to narrow the Abyss.

In some very rare cases, the two sides will actually work together to oppose a common threat. Such periods of peace are usually only brought about by the most extreme circumstances, such as a major Abyssal intrusion, or an extremely powerful Banisher working in the region. However, such cooperation never lasts long, and usually breaks apart as soon as the threat is neutralized. Both sides will try to use the break in hostilities to maneuver themselves into a more favorable position of power within the region, so they will have the upper hand once things return to normal. Communication between the two sides is usually through trusted emissaries, often Sleepwalkers, so that no magical compulsion can be used to interfere with the other side.

Convincing a Pentacle mage to betray their order and join the Seers of the Throne is looked upon very favorably by the order. While the Seers try to prevent Awakenings wherever possible, they realize that without new members, the order will collapse. Gaining new members by recruiting newly Awakened mages is one method, but the Seers are fond of working on a Pentacle mage's beliefs until they learn that opposing the Exarchs is folly and giving in to the will of their Supernal overlords is really the only sensible course of action.

Ex-Pentacle mages give the Seers a better understanding of the internal workings of the Pentacle orders, as well as the plans of the Consillium to which the mage belonged. Shortly after joining the Seers of the Throne, an ex-Pentacle

mage will be extensively debriefed so that the Seers may learn everything they can from them.

However, such mages rarely rise too far within the order, as they are never fully trusted by their new order. On occasion, mages have appeared to have surrendered their will to the Exarchs, and yet have been working as double agents for the Pentacle orders, hoping to destroy the Seers from the inside. It takes many years for an ex-Pentacle mage to earn even a moderate amount of trust within the Seers, and mostly they are relegated to the middle tiers of the order.

Schisms and Heresies

Although the Seers of the Throne mages are all servants of the Exarchs, the Ministry divisions within the order are often pitted against one another. For some Seer mages, the hatred for other Seer Ministries is almost — if not actually — stronger than that for the Pentacle orders. Each Ministry believes that it is serving the one true path of the Exarchs and that the other Ministries are actually corrupting or diluting the order's effectiveness.

There are however, at least two lesser known heresies within the Seers of the Throne. For the most part, they are not spoken of, and many within the order may never hear of their existence at all.

The Gatekeepers

The Seers admonish their mages to not listen to the Gate (see page 42). Although one of the Exarchs, the Gate created the Abyss and divided the Supernal from the Fallen World.

However, a small number of Seers *do* listen to the Gate. They form a small Ministry working to advance the Gate's goals within the Fallen World. The Gatekeepers are to most Seers simply a rumor; most mages in the order will never meet one of the members, and many believe they are nothing more than an anecdote told to new recruits to scare them. However, the Ministry does work in the background, their existence hidden from all but the most senior members of the order. Many of those that do know about them fear them and their work.

The Gatekeepers study the Abyss and believe that the void between the Supernal and Fallen World is very much a part of the Exarchs' plans for the Fallen World. After all, many pylons already try to prevent Awakenings by widening the Abyss. The Gatekeepers believe this is only part of the Gate's plans. They know that the Abyss is a tool to be used to further the Exarchs' actions, as long as it is carefully controlled.

Much of the Gatekeepers' work involves researching ways to use the Abyss as a tool to further the Exarchs' will. By keeping a tight rein on the intrusions, the Gatekeepers believe they can advance the order's goal of destroying the Pentacle mages much more efficiently. Where they can find a way to control the Abyss, they use it to cause as much disruption of the Pentacle orders as they possibly can.

The Gatekeepers use rites that were allegedly taught to their highest-placed members by the Gate himself. These rites allow the Ministry's mages to carefully manipulate the Abyss, without resorting to using Abyssal magic. It is not perfect control and the results of spell failure is often fatal for the mage and normally results in an uncontrolled Abyssal intrusion much greater than the one being created.

The Gatekeepers study any lore they can pertaining to the Abyss, with the exception of actual Abyssal magic itself. They keep the lore a tightly controlled secret, and they will often confiscate any lore that's turned up by the rest of the order. They usually turn up without warning and simply take what they want before disappearing just as quickly. Any mage who tries to prevent them is normally killed on the spot, without mercy. Those that aren't wish they had been — or at least the rest of their pylon do.

The sect's other major function is to bring Abyssal intrusions under control before they pose a danger to the Seers of the Throne. It is this role that has kept the Ministry from being attacked and hunted to extinction by the rest of the order. The Gatekeepers know more about controlling intrusions than the rest of the order, and they will simply appear once a major intrusion occurs, no matter where in the world it happens.

One task the Ministry does perform for the order — although it is rarely performed — is the punishment of mages who have displeased the Exarchs, particularly when the Abyss is somehow involved. Being handed over to the Gatekeepers is always a death sentence for the mage in question; no one has ever returned to explain what went on. Rumors exist that they feed the guilty to the Abyss, although other theories postulate that the Gate herself consumes the convicted somehow.

It's important to realize that the Gatekeepers do *not* serve the Abyss. In fact, any mage who succumbs and starts using

Abyssal magic is quickly killed to prevent the taint from spreading through the rest of the order. There is, however, a *very* fine line between using Abyssal magic and using the Abyss as a tool.

All of the Gatekeepers are apparently handpicked for the Ministry by the Gate himself. A potential Gatekeeper must have had a direct interaction with the Abyss in some way before the Gate will even notice her. If she survives with her sanity mostly intact, the Exarch appears to her in her dreams only once, and gives her cryptic instructions on how to contact the Ministry. If she is able to unravel the meaning of the dream and acts on it, she is inducted into the Ministry and effectively disappears from the rest of the order.


Playing with the forces of the Void puts an immense amount of strain on the sanity of the Ministry's mages. Many of them carry several derangements, and several are actually considered *completely* insane. Seers who come in contact with them are usually terrified of them, and many have reported nightmares after simply looking into the eyes of a Gatekeeper.

The life expectancy for a Gatekeeper is rarely more than a few years. No one is sure just how many mages belong to the Ministry across the world at any one time, although even the best estimates have more than two dozen active members. It's believed that the order has sometimes fallen dormant for long periods, only to be reactivated by the Gate whenever work needs to be done with the Abyss.

The Inclusionists

Orthodox belief within the Seers of the Throne teaches that the Exarchs rule the Supernal Realm and they are opposed by the Oracles, renegade mages who managed to enter the Supernal before the destruction of the Celestial Ladder. It was the Oracles who created the Watchtowers to allow new mages to Awaken, although the Exarchs have since subverted the towers, using them to Awaken mages for the Seers of the Throne.





In the early years of the 20th century, an alternate philosophy sprang up. Gemini, a Pentacle mage who had been a member of the proto-Free Council prior to the Great Refusal, defected to the Seers of the Throne after they approached his cabal and offered wealth and power.

Prior to his defection, Gemini had been obsessed with the concept of the Watchtowers and had interviewed dozens of mages to find out about their Awakenings. After defecting, he continued his research, this time interviewing all of the Seers who would agree to talk with him. He discovered there was very little difference between the Awakening of Seer mages when compared with Pentacle mages.

Although orthodox Seer teachings say the Exarchs subverted the Watchtowers for their own ends, Gemini began to wonder if that was the only possible explanation. Although a few Seers reported they had been forcibly dragged to a Watchtower against their will, the vast majority reported they had fought their way there of their own accord, just as the Pentacle mages had. Given there was little or no difference to the style of story, Gemini postulated that the Exarchs had actually created the Watchtowers, and not the Oracles.

As time went on, he further refined his theory. He eventually came to the conclusion that there *were* no Oracles, at least not as the Pentacle portrayed them. Gemini believed that the Oracles were, in fact, *part* of the Exarch pantheon. Instead of being the Exarchs' mortal enemies, the Oracles actually worked side by side with them and shared the same goals.

He claimed that this revelation had come to him in a dream from the Exarchs and he was to instruct the rest of the Seer order, so that they could stop working to destroy the Pentacle mages and start working on absorbing them. He believed that if the Exarchs and the Oracles were on the same side, then it was pointless having mages fighting amongst themselves and murdering one another, for they were all serving the same ends.

Gemini's teachings were lambasted by much of the Seer order, although a few mages listened to what he had to say and began to agree with him. The group — who became known as the Inclusionists — began working to absorb the Pentacle orders and the Seers of the Throne into a single overarching order that encompassed the teachings of all. Despite disciplinary proceedings from several Seer Ministers, the group pressed on in secret, looking for signs from the Exarchs in the Fallen World that what they believed was the truth and they were doing the right thing.

Gemini was eventually killed by a Praetorian tetrarch in 1937. Gemini had challenged the senior mage to an arcane duel after the tetrarch had ordered Gemini to cease his heretical teachings. Gemini refused, and decided on the duel to keep his honor. The tetrarch beat Gemini within seconds, and ordered that his body be magically destroyed, so that the rest of the Inclusionists would not have a physical memento of the heretic.

Since then, the Seers have persecuted the Inclusionists, trying to wipe out their teachings. Many of the group's

members have been executed for their heresies and many more have publicly renounced their former viewpoint and accepted demotions within the order in order to save their lives. Some, however, have continued with the teachings in secret, continuing Gemini's research and carefully watching the Fallen World for further signs from both the Exarchs and the Oracles that they are right.

The Inclusionists often make contact with the Pentacle mages, hoping to spread the idea into the opposing camp. To date, they have not met with much success, although they occasionally do find a Pentacle mage who is willing to entertain the idea for a while. The cross-pollination of ideas between the two sides sparks new avenues of investigation for the sect, but these usually peter out after the Pentacle mages realize that the Seers are looking to recruit them into the Seers of the Throne and make them slaves to the Exarchs.

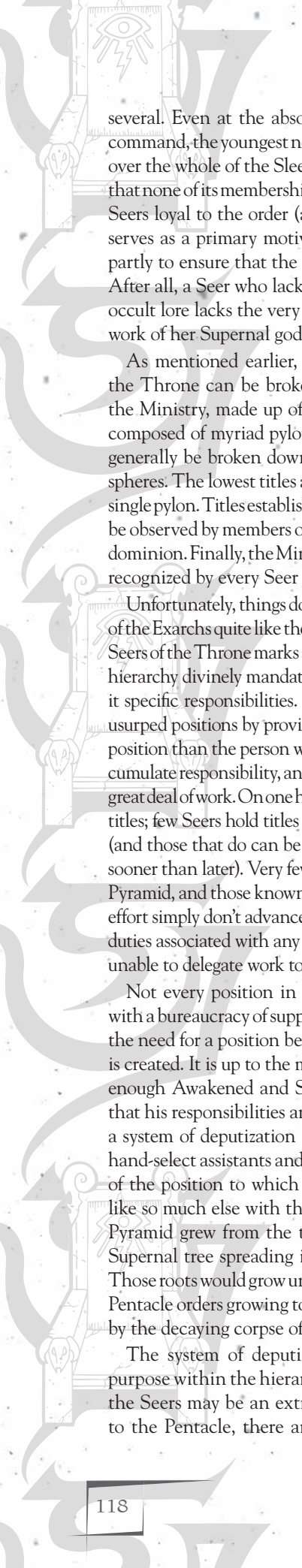
The Traditions that Guide the Jailors

Like any other magical order (such as those of the Pentacle), the Seers of the Throne are inundated with a long tradition that has led to numerous titles, pass phrases, secret ciphers and assumptions that define their society and color their worldview. These range from the relatively simple roles to which converts from other orders find themselves assigned to the subtle influences that a Seer's path has on his philosophy of dominion to the Byzantine collection of titles and relationships within the celestial hierarchy that stretches from the Sleepers to the Exarchs themselves. Unlike the Pentacle orders, the Seers exist as a product of the Fallen World. As part of the Lie, they have been shaped by history in a way that the Pentacle orders, whose organization reflects a Supernal truth, have not. The Seers of the Throne are not simply "like the Pentacle mages, but evil." Their every tradition marks them as the corrupt inheritors to the keys of the Fallen prison.

Titles and Duties among the Seers

Milton's Satan proclaims that it is "better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven." The Seers of the Throne, on the other hand, do the former as they aspire to the latter. They rule over the Fallen prison, a hell of their own creation, with iron fists in the hope that doing so will allow them to rise above it. The Seers also recognize, however, that service to a cause, godly master and occulted leadership is not mutually exclusive with mastery over others. In short, the Seers choose to both serve and reign on earth as it is in heaven.

The Iron Pyramid makes this possible. The pyramidal hierarchy of the Seers of the Throne ensures that one always seeks to move upwards, vying against others to supplant one's overseer. Yet no matter where a Seer is in the hierarchy, she answers only to a few individuals, yet has command over



several. Even at the absolute lowest level of the chain of command, the youngest neophyte Seers can claim dominion over the whole of the Sleeping populace. The order ensures that none of its membership remains powerless, partly to keep Seers loyal to the order (and, as might be expected, power serves as a primary motivator for those within the order), partly to ensure that the will of the Exarchs is carried out. After all, a Seer who lacks influence, wealth, Artifacts and occult lore lacks the very tools necessary for furthering the work of her Supernal gods.

As mentioned earlier, the organization of the Seers of the Throne can be broken down into three major levels: the Ministry, made up of numerous tetrarchies, which are composed of myriad pylons. Positions of responsibility can generally be broken down to apply within the same three spheres. The lowest titles are those recognized only within a single pylon. Titles established by the tetrarchs, however, must be observed by members of every pylon within the tetrach's dominion. Finally, the Minister appoints titles (theoretically) recognized by every Seer within the Ministry.

Unfortunately, things don't always work out for the servants of the Exarchs quite like they do on paper. Each title within the Seers of the Throne marks an established place within the iron hierarchy divinely mandated by the Exarchs and carries with it specific responsibilities. Over time, individuals have often usurped positions by proving that they can do more with the position than the person who currently holds it. The titles accumulate responsibility, and as a result, most positions require a great deal of work. On one hand, this results in a dearth of empty titles; few Seers hold titles whose duties they are not fulfilling (and those that do can be ensured that they will be replaced sooner than later). Very few lazy Seers ascend the steps of the Pyramid, and those known to shirk work or fail to put forward effort simply don't advance. On the other hand, however, the duties associated with any given title often overwhelm a Seer unable to delegate work to his underlings.

Not every position in the Iron Pyramid was conceived with a bureaucracy of support beneath it, however. Typically, the need for a position becomes apparent and that position is created. It is up to the mage that holds it to rake together enough Awakened and Sleepers under his sway to ensure that his responsibilities are fulfilled. The result has become a system of deputization in which holders of certain titles hand-select assistants and henchmen to carry out the duties of the position to which he cannot attend himself. Thus, like so much else with the Seers, the hierarchy of the Iron Pyramid grew from the top down, like the roots of some Supernal tree spreading into the soil of the Fallen World. Those roots would grow unchecked, were it not for the fungal Pentacle orders growing towards the heavens and nourished by the decaying corpse of Atlantis.

The system of deputization does serve an important purpose within the hierarchy of the Seers, however. While the Seers may be an extremely populous order compared to the Pentacle, there are hardly enough Seers to make

any but the very lowest members of the order expendable. There are no instruction manuals circulating among the Seers, and the fluid nature of the titles ensures that few widespread traditions exist to detail the function of any given role within the hierarchy. Thus, the vast majority of a Seer's understanding of a given role comes from the Seer's predecessor in that role and the expectations of the Seer that oversees that role. The system of deputization serves as a system of apprenticeship.

A Quaestor of the Hegemonic Ministry, for example, has the unenviable task of watching over the resources of the Ministry within a specific tetrarchy. Investigation of any wrongdoing (including collection of evidence and building a case), detainment and punishment fall to the Quaestor to handle. The Quaestor, wisely realizing that his duties are far too much for one mage to handle, appoints one or more Auditors from among the younger Seers to assist him. Those Seers move up the Pyramid and the Quaestor finds his workload significantly reduced. The Auditors learn the Quaestor's craft at his feet. Eventually, however, the relationship turns sour as the Auditors look to continue their ascent up the Pyramid and seek to supplant their master. The Quaestor finds himself left with two options: he either endlessly defends his position from below or he looks upwards, seeking a position that he can usurp to leave his Auditors to fight over the title of Quaestor.

The hierarchy becomes yet more muddled when one examines the conflicting nature of the Ministry and the tetrarchy. In theory, a Ministry rules over a myriad of Awakened, most of which operate primarily at the pylon level of politics; each of these Awakened should answer to a chain of command topped with a Minister. In other words, in a perfect world, each Ministry would be self-contained and members at the lowest levels would only answer to other members of the Ministry. This is, obviously, not the case. The tetrarchs of any given region represent multiple Ministries, yet their influence spans numerous pylons, many of which consist of members of multiple Ministries themselves, but some of which may belong to a Ministry with no representation among the tetrarchs. In other words, a great number of Seers exist that answer to members of Ministries (especially the great Ministries) other than those they belong to. The Iron Pyramid becomes a twisted, confusing labyrinth of religious responsibilities and political ties. As Seers rise through the ranks, they see more and more of the master plan unveiled before them and garner a greater understanding of their own position within that scheme, yet they also recognize that there's a great deal that they're *not* seeing. Everything they uncover serves to further underscore what they don't know.

Seers who have begun their ascent through the order's ranks quickly recognize just how open the system of hierarchy is to abuse. Between the fact that the Ministers provide very little oversight to the functioning of the hierarchy itself, the reality that Seers of the lowest levels have no way of seeing the greater overarching hierarchy in its entirety, and the practice of establishing new positions to aid in the further-

ance of a specific title, Seers realize that false stations can be crafted with relatively little difficulty. The number of reasons for doing so is endless (though the most common, by far, is to divert the attention of lesser Seers from a Seer's own position in the hierarchy), and numerous false offices exist like rust within the Iron Pyramid. Telling a false office from a true office can be difficult, even among the Seers, and a false office may outlive its creator and gain a purpose all its own, effectively making it a true office.

Alternatives and Deputies

Most of the offices below include sections labeled "Other Titles" and "Assistance." The former include a number of titles identical or similar to the one being described (some of which can be found in Chapter Two in the sections on the major Ministries). The latter include possible titles that a Seer in the listed office might create for her deputies. Any of the titles are free to be changed, as the Seers seem very different in Bangladesh than they do in Boston.

Ministry

The Ministry is a global organization, so its positions tend to be the most unique and difficult to attain. Only one Minister, for example, exists within any given Ministry. The influence of the Ministries, however, is limited. On one hand, each Ministry exists in a constant state of struggle over influence and resources with the other Ministries, some of which may have equal or greater power. On the other, the power any given Ministry has over the lesser members of its organization is limited by the pull of the tetrarchies. While few Seers consistently put the concerns (and orders) of their tetrarchs over the teachings of the Ministry to which they belong, only a fool would ignore the more local (and thusly more present) threat of the tetrarchs.

Finally, the Ministry leadership finds itself distracted by its very connection to the divine. Its eyes always turned upwards towards the heavens and the divine will of the gods, the Ministers have only so much attention to turn towards their followers. Furthermore, Seers that have ascended beyond the tetrarch level of the Iron Pyramid have almost universally achieved an archmastery of magical understanding. Such Imperial power draws the attention of Ministers and their closest advisors from the workings of lesser Seers much as the new awareness granted by the Awakening separates younger magi from the concerns of the Sleeping world.

Assuming that the Ministry is not paying attention, however, has led to the ruin of a myriad of Seers over the centuries. No Seer without an archmaster's understanding of magic can truly fathom the senses at the disposal of an archmaster or

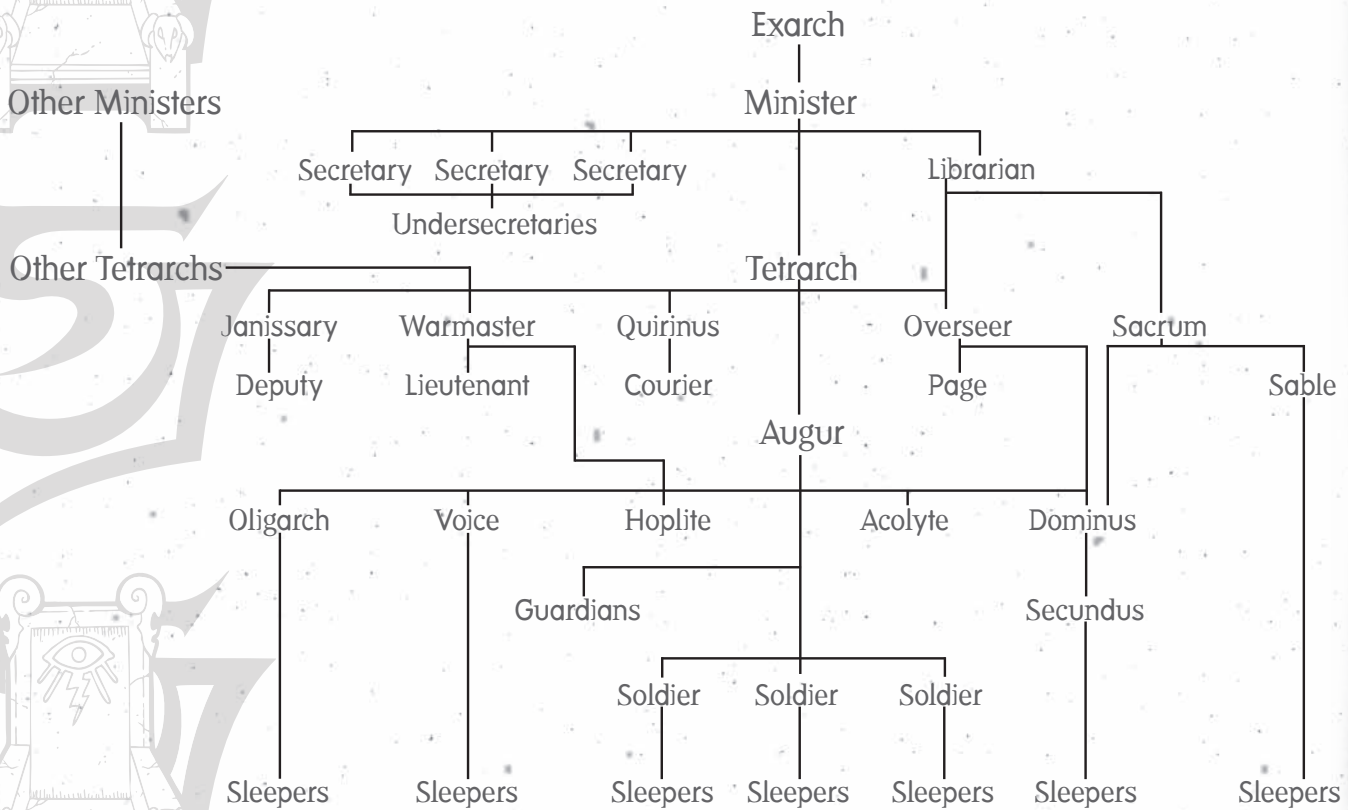
the board on which she plays the game of chess in which the other Awakened of the world are merely pawns. A Seer can rest assured that while a Minister may not always be attentive to her least soldiers, her divine gaze *will* inevitably fall upon them. They must strive not to be found wanting.

Minister (● ● ● ● or ● ● ● ● ● +)

The title of Minister designates the head of a Ministry. Ministers range in power from archmagi of godly power to mere Masters, a difference that typically reflects the disparity in overall power of the Ministries they lead. Ministers ascend to their vaunted position through a combination of Darwinian power politics, absolute faith in their Supernal patron and unwavering dedication to their own mystical and mundane ascendancy. As a result, most Ministers possess multiple Skills and even a few Attributes at superhuman levels (determined by their Gnosis). They have acquired and mastered the secrets of numerous potent Artifacts with which they inflict their dread will upon the world. Most have achieved archmastery in *at least* one of their Path Arcana and may have unlocked that level of power in three or four different Arcana (based again on Gnosis). At the minimum, the Storyteller can assume that a Great Minister can boast archmastery of two Arcana and mastery of four additional Arcana. Most Ministers have also forged their soul into a Legacy, and many enjoy the benefits of the third attainment thereof, granting them several powers that they can use without fear of Paradox (especially important, given the high Gnosis and abysmal Wisdom of such mages). Some Ministers are rumored to have reached the fourth attainment of their Legacies, but surely such urban legends are devoid of truth.

Furthermore, Ministers possess *dozens* of Merits, many of which represent Awakened followers who in turn have even more Merits. The amount of temporal power that a Minister can bring to bear is *terrifying*. African-American agitators in the Jim Crow South could expect to find their businesses suddenly rezoned, their financial records the interest of the IRS and their political leanings the subject of federal investigation, and that's what mere humans driven by racism can accomplish. Ministers can make a person disappear as if they never existed, her every record destroyed (birth certificate, marriage license, college transcripts — one tale even speaks of a young mage "disappeared" by the Seers of the Throne who found that class photos and yearbooks from his youth had been altered to exclude his presence), her job eliminated, her assets seized. All before magic even comes into play. Ministers rarely turn the brunt of their temporal power upon individuals, having too many other concerns to contend with, and even on the rare occasions that they do, they prefer to hound opponents with unpleasant investigations rather than pulling the thousands of strings necessary to effectively disappear an individual (which almost always leads to unpleasant complications, most notably by backing an enemy against the wall and ensuring that they have nothing left to lose, a situation in which even the most predictable nemesis behaves rashly). But they could.

MINISTRY HIERARCHY



Indeed, Ministers almost never involve themselves directly in the struggles of the Seers. Instead they issue orders, plot stratagems, place operatives and develop contingencies. They keep their eyes turned towards the heavens and their ears to the earth, seeking the will of the Exarchs. They occasionally utilize their own magic in the oppression of the Atlanteans, but always do so *obliquely*, covertly insuring that the odds are stacked in the favor of their chosen servants. Acting in a more overt manner is a surefire way to draw the attention of other archmasters able and willing to enforce the Pax Arcana.

This is not, however, to say that the Ministers will fail to defend themselves when assaulted by a cabal of lesser Awakened. Rash characters can expect to find their own powerful magic met with a torrential downpour of righteous heavenly judgment if they possess the hubris to throw themselves against the gods' appointed heralds in the Fallen World.

Only the weakest Ministers of the weakest Ministries possess only Status ●●●; after all, a Minister, by definition, is the most powerful and ruthless magus within a group of powerful and ruthless mages. Ministers generally require Status ●●●● or higher, and have numerous powerful magi at their beck and call, some of whom are willing to die for their faith.

Other Titles: Aleph, Apotheosian, Arhat, Basileus

Assistance: Librarian, Secretary

Secretary (●●● or ●●●●)

Each Ministry contains one to ten Secretaries, depending on the size and power of the Ministry. The position serves as a (sometimes uncomfortable) buffer between the Ministers and the tetrarchs. A small Ministry may contain but a single Secretary, in which case she probably acts as an advisor and vice-Minister, if not the power behind the throne. The four great Ministries contain at least five Secretaries each, and often more. All Secretaries act as advisory councils to the Minister, but they typically also possess a portfolio over some aspect of the Fallen prison in which the Ministry has an interest. The most simple manner in which a Minister may divide his Secretaries is into geographical regions (typically one for each populate continent), but most divide the Secretaries' spheres of influence into areas that he has a personal interest in (the Pontifex of Paternoster traditionally assigns his Secretaries into major religions, giving a final Secretary dominion over all of the small religious societies that rise and fall over time).

In addition to their roles as advisors and their duty to keep an eye on their portfolios so that the Minister can keep his gaze uplifted to the heavens, the Secretaries act as messengers and organizers, the voice of the Minister among his faithful. When a threat to the Exarchs arises that requires the collective effort of multiple tetrarchies, the duty falls to a Secretary to see that

So What If They Have It, If They Refuse To Use It?

Saying "the Ministers are totally bad ass, they just don't use all their bad ass power against the characters" can seem a bit of a cop out. What's the point, one might ask, of assigning dots to a character that will never get used?

And to an extent, you're right. It's not important to know exactly how many dots in what Merits a specific Minister possesses or how many dots he has through the followers that answer directly to him. All that is important (regarding Merits) is that if the Minister needs to accomplish something in the mortal realm, he almost certainly can.

A Minister's understanding of magic, on the other hand, is important even if he never uses magic beyond what has been printed in **Mage: The Awakening**. A Minister certainly doesn't possess the rote form of every spell effect he might want to cast, meaning that the specific traits of the Minister's Gnosis and Arcana are important for determining dice pools for improvised magic. Obviously, Gnosis determines things like the casting time of ritual magic and how many spell effects the Minister can combine into one, but archmastery further allows such potent characters to take advantage of advanced spell factors for Master level spells, determines the potency of wards and illusions, and makes even minor effects truly terrifying (for example, think of the Forces •• spell Control Heat on p. 165 of **Mage: The Awakening** and how dangerous it becomes when the mage casting it is rolling 14 or more dice).

In short, archmastery of an Arcanum makes an antagonist incredibly dangerous, even without the use of ever-more-impressive effects.

it happens. The Secretary meets with powerful tetrarchs so that the Minister doesn't have to, and she delivers his missives and speaks on his behalf when circumstances don't demand his personal presence and attention.

Each Secretary is expected to possess Mastery (at least) over one of the Arcana and typically identifies herself in relation to that Arcanum and the Exarch that oversees it. The actual name of the Arcanum varies between Ministries and has little to do with the duties granted to the appointed, so that Paternoster's Cardinal of Sacred Correspondences seems an almost entirely different posi-

tion from that of the Hegemonic Ministry's Secretary of Unified Space. Most Secretaries deputize a number of close supporters (often members of their pylons) to assist them in their work. These tend to be the most powerful pylons in a given Ministry.

Despite the obvious aid that the Secretaries provide to their Ministers, they also pose a grave threat. From below, the Secretary seems to be a Minister-in-Waiting position. The culture of deputization that pervades the order furthers this impression. The Secretaries keep a close eye on their masters, always ready to step forward and usurp the throne. The Ministers, on the other hand, recognize the hunger in the eyes of their followers, and work to keep them on task (which is to say distracted from the pursuit of power). After all, the Pyramid only goes so far up, and the Ministers recognize that they have nowhere left to climb.

Other Titles: Cardinal, Consul, Dean, Vizier

Assistance: Undersecretary, Viceroy

Librarian (●●●●)

It goes without saying that the Sleepers cannot be allowed to learn the truth about Atlantis or the nature of the prison to which they have been consigned. Nor should the Atlantean magi or the damnable Free Council have access to the potent Artifacts that slip from the Supernal

The Ministers are Liars

Whether or not Atlantis existed, it is possible that the Supernal Realms and everything associated with the destruction of the Celestial Ladder is a pretty falsehood designed to explain away the source of magic, Paradox, and why the World of Darkness sucks so much. Chief among the lies would be the Exarchs, heavenly boogiemens hell-bent on ruining everyone's lives.

But if the Exarchs don't actually exist, what are the Ministers in service to, and why do they continue to further the false mythology of the Pentacle mages? Is there perhaps some advantage to be gained by turning the Pentacle mages to the false history of Atlantis as there is keeping Sleepers occupied with questions of Christ and Mohammed? If the Atlantean myth is a beautiful lie to keep the unworthy from the true secrets held by the Ministers, why do they inundate their own followers with the same lie? What then, is the truth? What is the source of magic? What are the Seers hiding? Why is the world so dark, and why do the Ministers want to keep it that way?

and into the Fallen World. What the Librarians know, however, is that the Exarchs work to protect even their followers from the foul anarchy that the Oracles would sew through the cosmos.

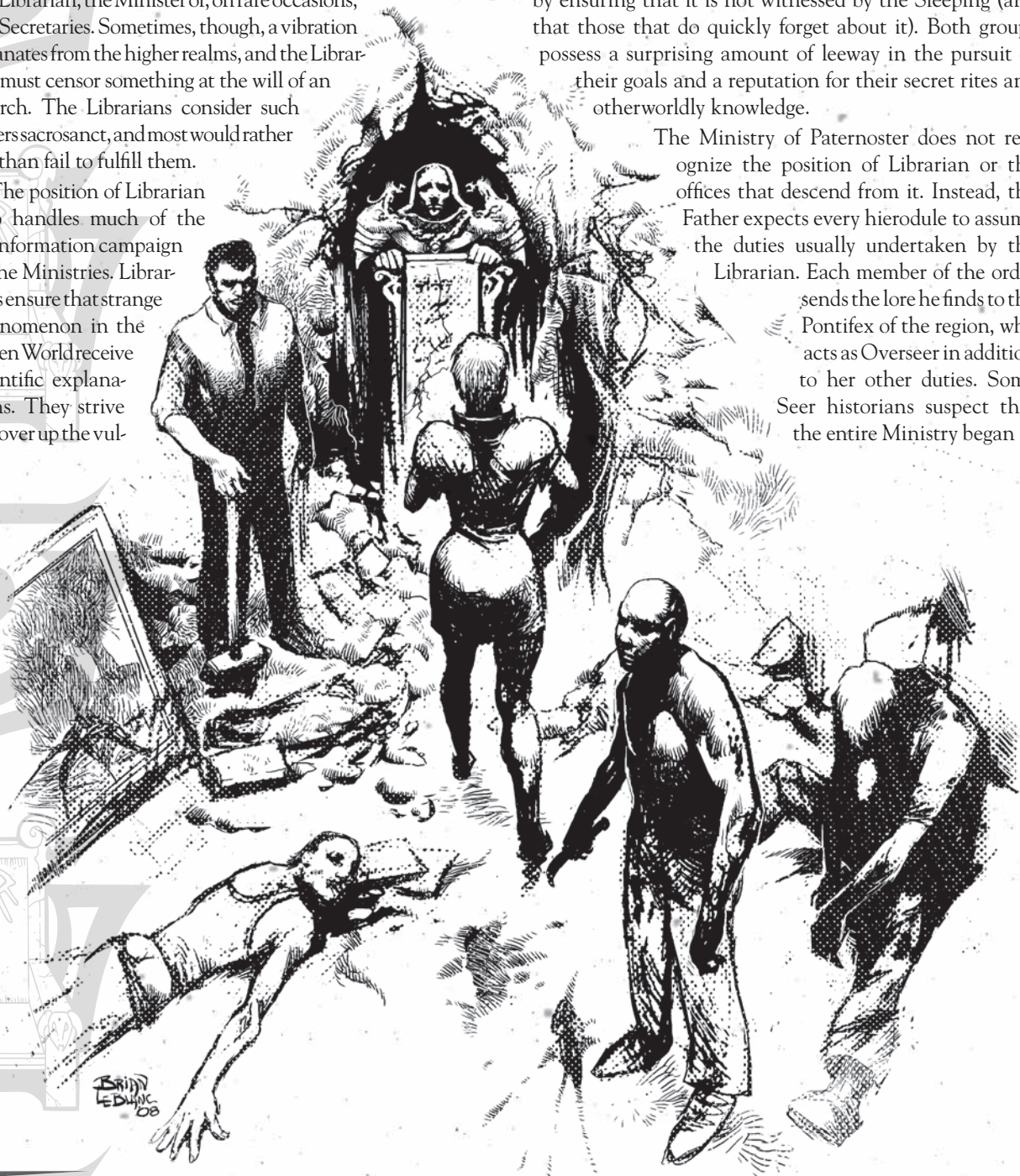
The Librarian takes up the mantle of censor for the jailors of the world. She keeps, hides or destroys any information that the Exarchs have determined is too dangerous to remain in the Fallen World. The position's jurisdiction stretches beyond the order, and Librarians often discover themselves tasked with stealing Artifacts or lore from the Atlanteans or even from Sleepers, some of whom don't even recognize what is in their possession. The precise works that the Exarchs deem unacceptable usually falls to a judgment call on the part of the Librarian, the Minister or, on rare occasions, her Secretaries. Sometimes, though, a vibration emanates from the higher realms, and the Librarian must censor something at the will of an Exarch. The Librarians consider such orders sacrosanct, and most would rather die than fail to fulfill them.

The position of Librarian also handles much of the disinformation campaign of the Ministries. Librarians ensure that strange phenomenon in the Fallen World receive scientific explanations. They strive to cover up the vul-

gar displays of mages among both the Seers and the Pentacle (and excess on either side might end in violent censure from the Librarian). Some go so far as to involve themselves in the societies of other supernatural creatures to ensure that they, too, maintain their secrecy. Even the revelation of vampires, they reason, would be enough to Awaken hundreds of new souls to the possibilities of the Supernal.

The office of Librarian usually extends roots that fall to the very bottom of the Seer Pyramid. This department maintains individuals at every level to further the Lie. One branch, headed by the Overseer, tends to the collection and classification of lore. The second, headed by the Sacrum, works towards maintaining the sanctity of magic by ensuring that it is not witnessed by the Sleeping (and that those that do quickly forget about it). Both groups possess a surprising amount of leeway in the pursuit of their goals and a reputation for their secret rites and otherworldly knowledge.

The Ministry of Paternoster does not recognize the position of Librarian or the offices that descend from it. Instead, the Father expects every hierodule to assume the duties usually undertaken by the Librarian. Each member of the order sends the lore he finds to the Pontifex of the region, who acts as Overseer in addition to her other duties. Some Seer historians suspect that the entire Ministry began as



an office of the Librarian of another group before splitting off, but the hierodules claim otherwise.

Other Titles: Conspirator, Cryptomancer

Assistance: Overseer, Sacrum

Tetrarchy

Much like a Consilium, a tetrarchy consists of a careful balancing act of ideals, motives, methodologies and personalities. Unlike the Consilii, the tetrarchy stretches its influence over a broad geographical region. Rather than attempt to bring the many pylons under its sway to a diplomatic table to discuss ways to resolve their conflicts, a tetrarchy remains content to allow the pylons to fight their differences out between themselves. Only when a conflict becomes disruptive to the greater efforts of the Seers do the tetrarchs and their advisors involve themselves.

While Consilii spend the vast majority of their time policing themselves, the tetrarchies attempt to maintain an offensive posture at all times. During the Sleeper's Crusades, the papal authority would call for a march on the Holy Land, but it was the local lords that gathered the troops, led them east, and ordered them against the infidels. The tetrarchs find themselves in a similar position, and thus turn most of their resources against the Sleepers and Pentacle mages under their dominion. Much of the rest of their time is spent working out differences in opinion on exactly how that should be done. At best, a tetrarchy manages the diverse talents of the Seers within their dominion in a way commensurate with those Seers' beliefs; at worst, it acts as a tyrannical general, marshalling forces to throw against the enemy with little concern for the soldiers' points of view. Most tetrarchies fall somewhere in between: a council of elder mages squabbling over how best to use their own followers and to whom to give the credit for its successes and blame for its failures.

Tetrarch (●●●●)

The title of tetrarch denotes a member of the council of Seer leaders who guide a region of Seer influence. They have risen through the ranks and mysteries of the order, survived and flourished in an environment of some of the most vicious political infighting in the World of Darkness. While the average Pentacle Hierarch achieves his position through cannily outmaneuvering his rivals and establishing sufficient allies to defend himself from attack, a Seer attains the position through brutally undercutting and overcoming (sometimes destroying) his rivals and ensuring that his allies have been sufficiently cowed into supporting him without seeking to supplant him. The Exarchs don't reward friendship and loyalty, only the unabashed will to power, so politics among the Seers tends to be significantly more cutthroat (literally) than among the Pentacle orders. This has the significant advantage of insuring that every Seer leader is one of the strongest magi around.

Every tetrarch is two things: a consummate politician and a powerful practitioner of magic. Not only do most tetrarchs

A Blaze of Light in Every Word

While the Ministry of Paternoster does not recognize the position of Librarian, it does maintain an office that is somewhat similar.

The Evangeline exists to ensure that truly inspired art, art that touches on the higher truth, is buried or destroyed. They work especially hard to find artists of Supernal talent before they become famous (at which point it becomes significantly more difficult to stifle them).

Detractors of the Evangeline among the Pentacle orders (especially the Free Council, which considers this form of censorship the gravest of sins against humanity) point to numerous modern phenomenon they claim as the handiwork of the Evangelines: the banality of modern pop music, the uninspired hymns that pack every hymnal, the proliferation of bad television and cinema and even the spread of illiteracy. They also name several failures, though such invariably depend on the personal tastes of the detractor. Common claims of failure on the part of the Paternoster include the poetry of John Keats, the novels of James Joyce and Samuel Beckett (a few Awakened claim vociferously that *Finnegan's Wake* and *The Unnamable* are grimoires containing powerful rites for Mind and Space respectively), the paintings of Van Gogh and Picasso, and Beethoven's 9th Symphony. Others dissent, claiming that while these are inspiring works, they're hardly the stuff of magic. These claim that the cannon of art by dead old white men was designed to trick the Sleepers into believing that art could be no better. They argue that were it not for the Seers, the world would be filled with art so transcendent as to make these works seem the very epitome of the mundane.

The Evangelines, for their part, keep silent about successes, mistakes and failures. Better, they reason, that their work go unnoticed than someone discover just what the Paternoster has been destroying.

possess a potent level of magical enlightenment (Gnosis 6 or above), they can typically bring to bear Mastery of one or both of their Path Arcana. Some have even gained archmastery, and many have forged their souls into Legacies. Tetrarchs tend to favor Mental and Social Skills, especially Politics, Occult and Persuasion, with ratings in these traits that go

beyond human potential. Furthermore, Ministers possess a level of influence among the Sleepers that rivals that of the Ministers. Many have fifteen or more dots in social Merits alone. Beyond these generalities, tetrarchs vary greatly based on their Path, Ministry and personality.

Communication remains a primary responsibility of the tetrarchs. Each serves not only to relay communication from the Ministers above to the pylons below, but also to coordinate initiatives between the Ministries active in the region. They also work to ensure orthodoxy within their own Ministry while simultaneously striving to induce Seers of other Ministries from their own paths. The Quirinus and the Janissary directly aid the tetrarch in these endeavors. As a result, the tetrarchs have little trust for one another and even less affection.

Other Titles: Ancestor, Bodhisattva, Caliph, Daimyo, Dictator, Pontifex

Assistance: Augur, Dominus, Janissary, Overseer, Quirinus, Warmaster

Overseer (●●●)

The Overseer, an individual responsible for the maintenance and management of a collection of lore within a tetrarchy, answers first to her Ministry's Librarian, second to the local tetrarch of her own Ministry and only distantly to the tetrarch of other Ministries. This grants her a relatively great deal of freedom in the Iron Pyramid but also makes her a figure of suspicion, her loyalties pulled in too many directions for her to be fully trustworthy. Furthermore, she trucks in the illicit, the otherworldly and the mysterious on a daily basis.

Overseers work to gather the texts found by Seer pylons into a single local repository. Their Pages, secretly deputized

The Shepherd and the Emissary: A Case Study

The Unshod Shepherd and the Immaculate Emissary both hold the position of Pontifex in the Ministry of Paternoster. The Immaculate Emissary, a Warlock, reigns as part of a tetrarchy that spans the southeastern United States. He finds his duty somewhat easy, given that his dominion includes a large number of undereducated and extremely faithful Sleepers. He takes particular joy in using the Mind Arcanum and old-fashioned persuasion to seduce faithful leaders of local churches, businesses, governments and communities to perform acts that leave them paralyzed in their own shame. When he then appears to them as a glorious and sinless mentor, they are all too willing to accept his guidance. Birmingham, Alabama, the so-called Magic City, acts as a particular thorn in his side, however.

The Silver Ladder of Birmingham has become particularly powerful over the last few decades through tactics similar to those utilized by the Emissary. While the Emissary mires leaders in their shame, however, the théarchs free them from the shackles of their false faith. While the Emissary would dearly love to simply wipe the upstart Atlanteans out, he lacks the martial power (most of the tetrarchy's focus is on nearby Atlanta and the hellish Miami and Orlando) or the raw magical strength to do so. Luckily, the Silver Ladder seems similarly hamstrung; witch hunters in Birmingham are particularly aggressive and extraordinarily violent, so the théarchs must move with extreme subtlety. The two magical orders face off across a chessboard of civic leaders, each making careful moves to advance their own agenda without alerting the local self-styled inquisitors.

The Immaculate Emissary focuses on Empathy, Expression, Persuasion, Politics, and Socialize.

On the other hand, the Unshod Shepherd, part of the tetrarchy responsible for the Pacific Northwest of the US, Awakened to the Aether. The situation in the tetrarchy, especially in Seattle, balances precariously. The Free Council has come to the fore in the area and has seemingly devoted itself to violently ejecting any Seer influence it uncovers. Worse yet, the Ministry of Paternoster has weakened in the area in conjunction with the rise of the tetrarchs of Panopticon, Mammon and Pantechnicon, who have formed a loose alliance interested in enslaving the populace with technology and luxuries. The Shepherd has been forced into an allegiance with the feeble Hegemonic Seers and the middling Praetorians. Through his political acumen, the Shepherd has remained a viable influence among the tetrarchs, but he aches to launch a full assault on the Free Councilors of the region (an urge furthered by both the followers of the Unity and the General). He has already conducted a few raids against Councilor Sanctums without the other tetrarchs noticing. It is only a matter of time before he strikes harder. If he can crush the Free Council through the force of a sacred crusade, he reasons, the Paternoster will regain ascendancy in the Northwest.

The Unshod Shepherd focuses on Academics (especially military tactics), Intimidation, Occult, Politics and Weaponry.

Seers of the same Minister within different pylons, aid them in this. Each Overseer is expected to be an expert in the occult, so that she may recognize and classify the esoteric when she beholds it. Furthermore, her masters expect her to be able to hide and defend a massive store of Supernal and occult lore; most Overseers possess at least Adept understanding in two Arcana as well as Apprenticeship in Prime. The Sanctum Merit (both Security and Size) is incredibly important for Overseers, and most possess sizable Libraries and several lesser Artifacts. Overseers typically develop these Merits *prior* to being appointed to their position; they must first prove themselves of the right mind and skill set to be given such a great responsibility.

The office of Overseer comes with significant freedom, power and influence, but it also carries with it considerable burdens. First, the lore in an Overseer's possession is never considered her own. She is expected to either give her own magical belongings away prior to stewardship of the local collection or donate them to the collection (she has no expectation of getting them back). She has access to many powerful Artifacts and a great deal of information, but she must be willing to lend it to her fellow Seers—and be responsible for getting it back from them. Furthermore, upon taking the office she becomes a primary target for Atlantean mages, many of whom would risk Paradox to crack open the Overseer's defenses and raid her massive library. Overseers typically cope by deputizing her entire pylon to assist in the defense of the library. They also tend to design intricate traps, erect powerful wards and establish magical guardians (including spirits, undead, ghosts, automatons of varying designs, mystically enhanced animals and contingent spells that transform simple house plants into poisonous insects and arachnids).

The similar title of Abbot exists within the Paternoster. Abbots answer only to the Pontifex and serve as his assistants within the pontifical library. Abbots deputize Clerks to assist them.

Other Titles: Abbot, Aretus

Assistance: Clerk, Dominus, Page

Sacrum (●●●)

Whereas the Overseer supports the Librarian by gathering, identifying and protecting lore, the Sacrum aids her by destroying it. The office of Sacrum has a terrifying reputation both among the Seers and their Pentacle enemies (who liken them to the Guardians of the Veil). The Sacrum's primary purpose is the furtherance of the Quiescence and protection of the Lie. He approaches it through tactics that vary between Ministries, but usually include campaigns of fear and disinformation.

Rumors portray the Sacra as mystical assassins, murdering those who have seen too much (or given too much away). In reality, the Sacra recognize that murder rarely serves as the least messy or most efficient solution to a problem. Instead, they prefer to be active in spreading the Quiescence rather than reactive. They don't wait for a magical disaster to occur or a blatant Paradox to be televised. They constantly patrol the

The Silent Scream

The cult of the Sacrum is particularly potent within the Ministry of Panopticon. There it embraces the Egyptian history of the Ministry. Members of the cult focus on the pauses between and within words (both spoken and written), the moments of break in which nothing and everything exists, as fundamental to their occult praxis. They call the perfect embodiment of their philosophy the Silent Scream.

streets, explaining away confusion in cold, rational terms and putting a blanket of boredom and disinterest over their Sleeping charges. Sacra that can control the weather are particularly beloved since the Hegemonic Ministry pointed out the efficacy of dreary weather on keeping a populace Asleep. At the very least, Librarians expect their Sacra to possess Disciple understanding of two Arcana and Initiate knowledge of six others (preferably all eight). The Mage Sight serves as one of the most important tools of the Sacra. Investigation, Persuasion and Occult are all particularly important to the Sacra (and the Sacrum adopts these as her Rote Specialties, regardless of her Ministry). Most Sacra pursue excellence in Subterfuge as well.

The Sacra serve their Librarians as a mystery sect combined with a kind of secret police. Like the Guardians of the Veil, they maintain a distance even from their own society, performing their rituals and observances in shadow and silence. Silence carries an important metaphysical weight among the Sacra, and their initiations tend to focus on experiences of ever-greater silence, culminating in a Silence-of-Existence they believe to be the most aware state short of joining the Exarchs in the Supernal. When one can be completely silent, more silent even than the dead, one can hear *everything*.

The Sacrum, appointed by the Librarian, rarely shares a tetrarchy with more than one other Sacrum of the same Ministry. She builds her cult around her, often beginning with her own pylon (a practice shared with the Overseer), initiating members and deputizing them. Neither the Sacrum nor her deputies have any official standing in the tetrarchy, but the fear of them often serves as well. Some tetrarchs attempt to eliminate them, but such impious actions quickly draw the attention of the Librarian and the Minister of the wronged Ministry. Pylons under the command of Sacra tend to quickly become isolated from Seer society. That suits them fine, for they feel they can hear the sins of their brethren better without the noise that comes from caring for them.

Despite their focus on silence, the Sacrum and her followers never adopt a vow of silence (though many strive to make as little sound as possible in their daily lives). The ability to speak is integral to the work of the Sacrum, much of which involves spinning lies for witnesses to magical phenomena or the media that investigates it; these men and women in black

endeavor to speak without saying anything. A hollow statement, they believe, can be more effective than one pregnant with meaning. They also work to preempt open-mindedness among the Sleeping populace by establishing paranoia and bigotry (to keep the Sleepers concerned about one another rather than their secret masters) and destroying the human belief in their potential for transcendence (by insuring that star athletes get injured, brilliant musicians die of heroin overdoses, and similar tragedies that illustrate just how quickly a bright star burns out).

Other Titles: Censor, Rex Sacrorum

Assistance: Dominus, Sable, Silencer

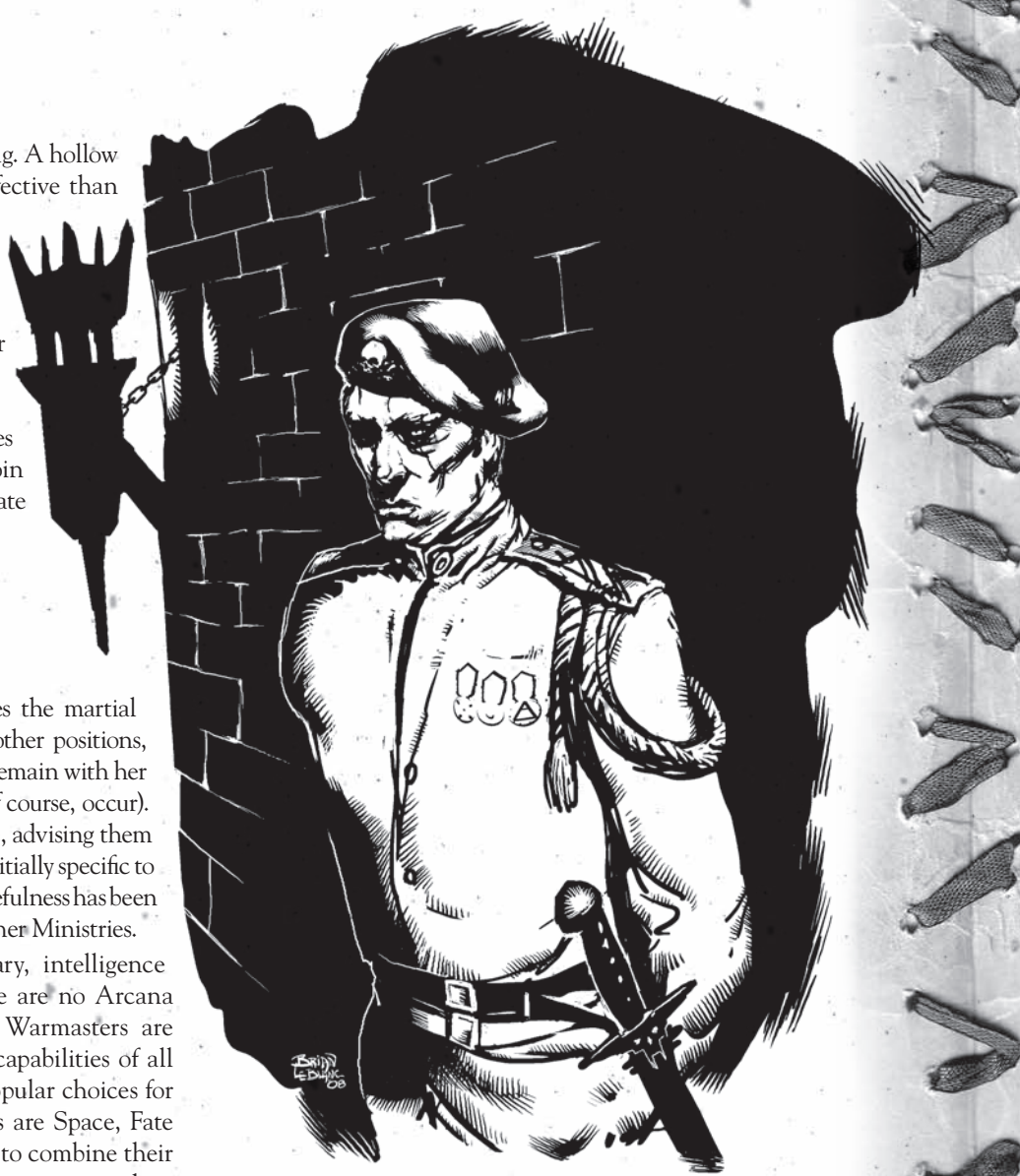
Warmaster (●●●)

The title of Warmaster simply demotes the martial leader within a tetrarchy. Unlike many other positions, the Warmaster's primary loyalty does not remain with her Ministry (at least in theory; exceptions, of course, occur). Instead, she serves the tetrarchs as a whole, advising them on military stratagems. The position was initially specific to the Praetorian Ministry, but over time its usefulness has been proven and it has been co-opted by the other Ministries.

Warmasters often come from military, intelligence or law enforcement backgrounds. There are no Arcana prerequisites for the position, though Warmasters are expected to be familiar with the basic capabilities of all of the Arcana. Forces and Mind are popular choices for development among the Warmasters, as are Space, Fate and Time. Tetrarchs expect Warmasters to combine their knowledge of the Supernal with their expertise in their field to provide reliable advice regarding matters of defense, distribution of resources, and offensive campaigns.

Warmasters earn more trust than most Seers, in part because they swear an oath (usually mystically impelled) to put the tetrarchy first in all things and in part because the tetrarchs examine a potential Warmaster's mind *thoroughly* with magic before appointing him to the position. As a result, the Warmaster gains access to a great deal of information regarding what resources each of the tetrarchs and their followers can bring to bear as well as a general knowledge of what Arcana the local Seer populace can bring to bear against a threat. Between this level of trust and the relatively low prerequisites for appointment, the office of Warmaster tends to be one of the best informed but mystically powerless within the Iron Pyramid. Warmasters plan and advise their leaders rather than order or act on their own.

Knowledge is power, however, and the Warmasters have quite a bit of it, including the names and motivations of many of the strongest warriors in the local Awakened community. They tend to deputize these individuals, primarily to get to know them better and have an open and immediate line of communication



with them. Warmasters *rarely* turn against their masters, but when they do, they can be frightening opponents.

Other Titles: Caturix, Seraph, Shogun, Sultan, Warlord

Assistance: Dominus, Hoplite, Lieutenant

Janissary (●●●)

The office of Janissary denotes an individual responsible for the maintenance of law, the upholding of punishment and the preservation of orthodoxy. Any given tetrarchy boasts at least as many Janissaries as it does tetrarchs, as no tetrarch would be so foolish as to be without one. While tetrarchs expect their appointed Janissaries to travel within the dominion, tetrarchs with multiple large populations of followers of their Ministry within the region may anoint more than one.

As with so many positions in the order, the obligations of the title vary widely between Ministries. Tetrarchs appoint Janissaries based on their devotion to the philosophy of their Ministry, dedication to its orthodoxy, faith in the Exarchs and loyalty to the tetrarch. Janissaries usually possess a strong level of combat ability (or can deputize those that do), but that is not always the case, especially

for the Hegemonic and Panoptic Ministries, whose duties revolve largely around information gathering. Regardless of the Ministry and tetrarchy, the primary duty of a Janissary is to root out failures to uphold the laws and philosophies of the Ministries and either punish them or bring them to the attention of someone who can.

As a result, Janissaries are rarely popular individuals within their Ministries. Janissaries typically deputize multiple individuals to assist them in their work. A favored tactic among subtle Janissaries involves deputizing an unsubtle bully who the Janissary knows will draw a great deal of attention while throwing his weight around. Meanwhile, the Janissary also secretly appoints several assistants who she is sure will be subtle in their investigations. In doing so, she manages to keep an eye on the right hand while performing her magic with the left.

Tetrarchs grant Janissaries unfettered jurisdiction over the geographical domain of the tetrarchy, which necessitates some travel on the part of the Janissary and her assistants. Furthermore, Janissaries have jurisdiction over every member of her own Ministry and any member of any Ministry that does not have its own Janissary in the region (usually because the Ministry doesn't have a tetrarch to appoint one). This means that Janissaries police their own Ministry and the lesser Ministries, but don't tread on the toes of the other powerful Ministries. In practice, Janissaries occasionally clash, sometimes over who has jurisdiction over the members of a specific minor Ministry, sometimes over whether or not each is doing a significant enough job of policing her own people.

Janissaries typically possess the authority to try and levy punishment on offenders without recourse to higher authorities. They tend to exercise this authority freely upon those with lesser Status than their own but bring Seers of equal or greater Status before the tetrarch or Minister (if he doesn't decide to look the other way entirely).

Other Titles: Archon, Commissioner, Inquisitor, Quaestor, Ronin, Severix

Assistance: Auditor, Detective, Investigator, Deputy, Dominus

Quirinus (●●●)

The Quirinus has a single primary duty: to quickly relay information from her patron tetrarch to the other tetrarchs and to her followers. She deputizes assistants to aid her in the latter. Like the Heralds of a Consilium, each tetrarch appoints as many Quirini as she feels necessary. Few appoint more than two and more than four (one for each cardinal direction) is unheard of. Tetrarchs often appoint Seers to the office of Quirinus because they have shown dedication to the Exarchs and to the order at the expense of their own wealth or influence.

Quirini are loyalists and true believers, but they must also be competent, intelligent and expressive, capable of speaking for their masters to such diverse entities as tetrarchs of other Ministries, Seers of other tetrarchies, members of other

supernatural societies and even the occasional Pentacle mage. A tetrarch trusts his Quirinus, granting her a great deal of leeway and freedom in her interactions with other parties. Often a tetrarch merely tells the Quirinus what he wishes for her to accomplish before sending her on her way.

A Quirinus typically puts a great deal of emphasis on Social Skills, especially Empathy, Expression, Persuasion and Socialize, though Intimidation (typically of the subtle variety) usually forms an important part of her arsenal. Quirini typically display Adept understanding of at least a single Arcanum, since a mage of lesser understanding rarely garners any respect or acknowledgement at all from powerful tetrarchs and Ministers. Most possess some knowledge of Mind, Prime and Spirit, each of which assists in the varied and bizarre meetings Quirini are often tasked with attending. Quirini develop Occult for the same reasons. Many Quirini choose to study the Space Arcanum to expedite their messages and travels, and a surprisingly high proportion of Seers in the office have begun the process of attaining a Legacy. Why, precisely, Legacies appeal to these mages so much remains a matter of debate, but many simply assume that the Quirini are exposed to so many strange traditions that they inevitably go native in some way or another.

Other Titles: Ambassador, Emissary, Proclaimer

Assistance: Courier, Legate, Runner

Pylon

Much of the efforts of the Seers of the Throne exist at the local level. Pylons uncover cabals of enemy mages, work to undercut their influence, and then swoop in to destroy them. With no city-level authority, multiple pylons often form alliances to ensure that other pylons do not destroy them over doctrinal differences. Such allied pylons are often, though hardly always, composed of magi of the same Ministry. Divergent opinions are not always limited to disagreements between Ministries, however, and bloody turf wars have been fought between two cabals with different approaches to a single Ministry's mission.

While rare in the past, multi-Ministry pylons become more common every year. While older Awakened claim that this displays a lack of moral integrity on the part of the youth, the new cosmopolitan pylons are more a result of a combination of a more open-minded approach to faith embraced by those mages born in the waning years of the 20th century and sheer pragmatic utility. While mixed pylons possess advantages over other groups (namely a wider spread of powers and resources), they lack focus (and sometimes cohesion). Adhering to one's Ministry and the teachings of the Exarch it reveres is difficult enough when one's regional authority includes tetrarchs of other Ministries; it becomes doubly so when one's closest friends and cohorts reject one's faith as false.

Even accounting for a level of orthodoxy in each Ministry, pylon offices tend to be wildly varied across even a single

region. Pylon leaders typically invent offices whenever they need something done but aren't always as quick to abolish them afterwards. Even when two pylons establish offices that ostensibly manage the same aspect of the pylons' interests, the assumptions regarding what defines the office and how it functions can be greatly divergent. For example, two Panopticon pylons in New York City include an office devoted to maintaining the subways and sewers under the territory claimed by the pylons. The Underkeeper, the officer in one of the pylons, spends much of his time underground, making heavy use of Life, Matter and Space to ensure that the tunnels remain clean and in good condition. He never leaves the confines of the tunnels during the day, becoming a master of his dominion. The Tunnelmaiden, the officer in the other pylon, has instead integrated herself into both the transit and sewage authorities, utilizing Mind to ensure that information from every work project, customer complaint and strange sighting comes to her. She used Mind to program several workers to place small baubles with intimate sympathetic connections to her throughout the sewers and uses Space to keep an eye on them when she feels she needs to. She's never been in the sewer herself.

As a result of these realities, positions within a pylon rarely gain authority outside of the pylon. They often gain recognition, however, as even a title as lowly as a pylon deserves respect. That respect is often commensurate with the reputation of the pylon, however, and even the leader of a weak pylon may not be treated with the same courtesy as an Oligarch of one of the region's supreme pylons. Unlike other offices in the order, pylon titles aren't abandoned as the Seer moves up the ranks. A Sacrum may still hold the title of Voice within her pylon, and a Secretary usually holds the rank of Augur.

Augur (●●●)

In the pyramidal structure of the Seers of the Throne, someone must rule at every level. The title of Augur signifies an individual Seer who has taken the mantle of leadership within a pylon. She has tasked herself with interpreting the will of the Exarchs for her specific pylon. On rare occasions someone other than the Augur may lead a pylon (a particularly militant pylon, for example, may follow the orders of a Hoplite, while the Augur fades into an advising role), but even then the Augur possesses an undeniable influence over the actions of the pylon.

The Augur also acts as a religious authority for her pylon. She establishes the pylon's doctrines, sets the rites that are recognized by the pylon and leads the divinations that she claims will guide the cult on its path to godhead. So complete is the Augur's influence that pylons inevitably tend to lean towards a philosophy in line with her Ministry, even if members of other Ministries claim membership.

Most Augurs develop the Time Arcanum, usually learning their Ministry's rites for the Augury, Postcognition and Divination spells. These rites often take the form of fallen practices

of divination, from the reading of entrails to the casting of the tarot. Augurs also garner Apprentice understanding of the Space Arcanum when they can. Modern-minded Seers also learn the Forces rote Tune In. Through these potent abilities, the Augur gleans information from the cosmos that they pass up the Pyramid and use to guide their pylon.

While Augurs do keep their attention turned towards their heavenly patrons, they also maintain a strong presence in the Fallen World. They may root through the ashes of a burnt sacrifice for clues from the divine when behind closed doors, but they also move among the Sleepers as they make deals and establish influence. Augurs often guide their pylons by example, and that involves getting one's hands dirty (through proxy, of course). Characters of the Pentacle orders witness the office of Augur in action more often than any other, if only because they recognize the Augur as "the Seer calling the shots" in any given pylon.

Augurs choose one within their pylon to take the office of Acolyte. Far from a second in command (the Hoplite, or Voice, typically fills this role), the Acolyte acts as a personal assistant to the Augur, aiding her in divine rites and whatever else the specific Augur needs.

Other Titles: Elder, Haruspex, Presbyter, Vicar

Assistance: Acolyte, Seminarian

Dominus (●●)

The office of Dominus is likely one of the most common in the Iron Pyramid. It denotes any Seer tasked with the upkeep and use of a powerful Artifact, often a Profane Urum. A Dominus Superior keeps an Artifact believed to be crafted or sent to the Fallen prison by the Exarchs. A Dominus Inferior controls any other kind of Artifact. A Seer can ascend to the office of Dominus in numerous ways. The most obvious is for the Seer to find an Artifact and convince the leadership of the order that they are best served by leaving it in his care.

Almost any Seer with an office at the level of Augur or higher (and who has an Artifact to grant to the uplifted Seer) can appoint a Seer the title of Dominus. This leaves the Dominus under a number of obligations within the Iron Pyramid. The Dominus remains obligated to the leader of his pylon, but he also becomes directly obligated to the tetrarchs, the tetrarchs direct servants, and the specific individual who appointed him Dominus (and who can rescind the appointment at any time). In short, a Dominus gains the power of an Artifact, but, as with so many other forms of power in the order, she becomes chained in more bonds of servitude.

A Dominus can be almost any member of the Seers of the Throne, so little can be said about the average Dominus. The only thing they all have in common is a proven dedication to the cause of the Exarchs.

Other Titles: The title of Dominus is surprisingly universal throughout the Western world. In Asia, the similar title tends to be *Fu Tsang Lung* (or a loanword derived from same).

Assistance: Each Dominus is expected to appoint a Secundus from within his pylon. This individual assists the Dominus in the upkeep of the Artifact and is expected to ascend to the position of Dominus in the case of the current holder's death.

Oligarch (●●)

The Seers of the Throne practice subtle control over the Sleeping populace. Unlike the Guardians of the Veil, however, who utilize vast chains of conspiracy to keep the Sleepers unproductive and confused, the Seers are perfectly willing to adopt a particularly competent slave into the very lowest echelons of their Iron Pyramid. The Seers responsible for the administration of these Sleepers is called the Oligarch. Each Oligarch has dedicated her focus to the control of a specific Sleeper institution (and has usually accomplished it before being granted the title).

Which institution varies based on the particular interest of the Ministry in question, but every Ministry contains offices dedicated towards the control of the Sleeping populace. While a Hegemonic Oligarch winds his influence through an investment banking institution, a hierodule Perfectus becomes the closest advisor of the regional Catholic archbishop and a Praetorian Albiorix integrates himself into a local FBI field office. Such institutions usually confer some kind of political clout to the Oligarch, even if they approach politics in an oblique manner. An Oligarch may control a media outlet, a church, a university or even a cult.

Through the Oligarchs, the Seers maintain one of their most efficient forms of control: they use Sleepers to control Sleepers. By carefully arranging their collections of organizations, mobs and cults, an intelligent Oligarch can set a complex plan in motion with a single act. Tetrarchs and Augurs may appoint a Seer the title of Oligarch. This usually occurs after the Seer in question has established control over her chosen organization. While the title of Oligarch carries no authority within the order, most Oligarchs recognize the sway they garner through their mastery of the Fallen prison. Oligarchs tend to wear their title on their sleeve so that their compatriots know whom to come to when they need a little pull among the Sleepers.

Successful Oligarchs nurture their Social and Mental Attributes and Skills (with an eye towards Politics, Persuasion and Socialize) and tend to garner a large number of Social Merits. Only the rare, incompetent Oligarch fails to garner the Luxury Merit (p. 52). Oligarchs exist throughout the ranks of Seer society, meaning that any given Oligarch may be a mere neophyte among their peers or a potent Secretary, answerable only to the Minister. Pentacle characters often run afoul of Oligarchs while seeking to expand their own influence among the Sleepers.

Other Titles: Albiorix, Apocrisarius, Perfectus

Assistance: Sleepers, Varies wildly based on the particular needs of the Oligarch

Hoplite (●●)

The title of Hoplite simply denotes the member of a pylon responsible for its overall military or security effectiveness. While most pylons recognize the position (or a variant thereof), the actual power of a given Hoplite varies based on the interests of his pylon. A pylon devoted to carrying out a holy war against the infidel Pentacle may give great authority to its Hoplite (possibly even deferring to him rather than the Augur), while a pylon devoted to the study of the works of the Exarchs within the Fallen prison and gathering of Supernal lore may find little use for the office.

Even pylons without a clear interest in military offense are well served by a competent Hoplite. These individuals insure that the pylon's Sanctum remains secure against threats both mundane and supernatural. They also offer training to other Seers in combat discipline and offensive use of the Arcana. Hoplites usually work with the Warmaster of a given region to gain a greater understanding of such skills, as well as the favored tactics of the Seers of the Throne when facing mages of the Pentacle orders. Warmasters tend to deputize competent Hoplites as their Lieutenants, which expedites communication between the martial forces of the tetrarchy but also bends the Hoplite's loyalty to his pylon. Hoplites, in turn, usually have authority over the various magical guardians established within their pylon's Sanctum.

Hoplites tend to be the most martially inclined members of their pylons (for which their Augurs choose them for the position). Most have a command of the Forces and Life Arcana, while Death, Space, Spirit and Fate are similarly popular, depending on the specific Hoplite's interests. Hoplites also develop Physical Attributes and Skills, especially Brawl and Weaponry, and often possess one or more Fighting Style Merits.

Other Titles: Alastor, Nemesis, Samurai

Assistance: Guardian

Voice (●●)

A pylon's Augur usually appoints the most charismatic and socially competent member of the group as the Voice. The Voice serves the Augur in many of the same ways that a Quirinus serves a tetrarch (and many Voices go on to take that office), acting as its public relations point and envoy to other Seer pylons. A Voice may also be responsible for interactions with Sleepers if her pylon heavily invests in them (and thus many Voices also claim the title of Oligarch). Some Voices even interact with members of other supernatural societies, and if a pylon has contacts among vampires or shapeshifters, it was probably the Voice that arranged them.

The Voice is often the single point of contact one pylon has with another. As a result, pylons are often judged by their Voices. A clever Voice quickly takes advantage of that, dressing in a manner aimed at implying certain things

about her pylon; she may dress in cheap, tweedy clothes to encourage another pylon to underestimate the martial prowess of her group or she may wear military gear and display weapons in order to intimidate. Many Voices, especially within Panopticon, adopt wholly different appearances (and even mannerisms) when speaking with different pylons. The Hegemonic Seers take the opposite approach, sending a different Seer as Voice to each meeting but having each dress and behave precisely the same.

The Voice cultivates her Social Attributes and Skills, especially Persuasion, Socialize, Streetwise and Subterfuge. Many enjoy a command of Mind, Life and Fate, in that order of preference. Some assist the local Quirinus of their Ministry, but that is not a requirement of the position.

Other Titles: Messenger, Visitor

Soldier (●)

Every member of the Seers of the Throne has been chosen by the Exarchs to Awaken to a higher truth and act as their archons within the Fallen prison. Each is a warden and jailor, while those with whom she once associated remain mere prisoners. Each member of the order gains a title. This elevates them above the rest of the Fallen World, not only above Sleepers, but also above Apostates and Pentacle magi. This title varies by Ministry (Soldiers in Praetorian, Wardens in Panopticon, Agents in Hegemonic) and even within a Ministry by regional or philosophical divide (the neophyte hierodules of the Ministry of Paternoster may be called Crusaders, Pilgrims or Fedayeen, for example).

These Seers stand at the very bottom of the Iron Pyramid, gazing up at the power above them with only the broken



backs of Sleepers to stand upon. They have sold out their former companions in humanity for a shot at true Supernal power but have found themselves enslaved to a higher will. They have become the fingers, the eyes, and the mouths of the Exarchs, wielded through the long arms of an ancient conspiracy. They *do* because they have hope and faith in their own ascension. They *do* because they have devoted themselves to a higher cause. They *do*, often without understanding, because their betters tell them to.

False Titles and False Duties

The growth of the Seer hierarchical structure is organic, established from the top down like the roots of a tree. Each Seer establishes offices as needed, appointing deputies to do work that she is unable or unwilling to do herself. The Seers who ascend to those offices, however, rarely remain contented with the table scraps thrown her way for long. As a result, Seers constantly strive to fend off challenges to their power from below (with varying degrees of success). One tactic that has become favored within the order is the false office.

Seers establish false offices to serve as a buffer between their hungry underlings and their own position. The Seers who take these offices then, of course, deputize their own assistants. The complexity and necessity of these faux departments varies greatly. One commonality among them is that they tend to be established in secret; the Seer who establishes it swears members of the fake conspiracy to secrecy. This is not terribly unusual among the secretive order, and leaders sometimes establish true offices in secret (especially within a Librarian's bureau of operatives).

More unusual (and this would be a dead giveaway, if the individual being duped could see the whole picture) is the tendency to divert false offices towards other real offices. For example, a Janissary interested in protecting his position from an ambitious Deputy might establish a Secret Office of Military Police, informing the Deputy that he now holds a position that keeps an eye on the Warmaster and his staff. If the Janissary is particularly canny, he may require that the Deputy attempt to infiltrate the Warmaster's staff, hint that the Warmaster is weak or otherwise imply that the newly-minted Secret Officer of Military Police devote his attention to supplanting the Warmaster.

When the Seer responsible for establishing the false office dies (taking the secret of the false office with him) or moves upwards in the Pyramid, he rarely dissolves the false office. He only occasionally warns his replacement about the existence of the false office, often leading to the replacement finding herself suddenly approached by a secret society devoted to some obscure service in the name of the position. The replacement typically uses these secret servants in her political maneuvers. A Seer forced to create a false title almost never appoints the holder of that title as his replacement in the case of his death or ascension. After all, that would recreate the original problem: an overly ambitious mage biting at his heels.

Status Among the Seers

Much of the faith of the Seers of the Throne is reliant upon a clearly defined hierarchy and the promise of being able to climb it. As a result, unlike Status in the Pentacle orders, which tends to be somewhat more fluid, Seer Status usually directly corresponds to the title held by the Seer in question. Many Ministries establish specific forms of address and manners of behavior for the various levels for when they interact with one another, further underscoring the importance of the many titles.

Thus a Seer likely possesses Status equal to the rating given above. The pylon titles, which may belong to Seers who possess other titles at higher levels, serve as the primary exception. (Thus, a Seer who has garnered a pylon title should have *at least* the Status given for those positions, and may have more based on an office she holds at the tetrarchy or Ministry level.) While this isn't an unbreakable rule (a weak Seer may have one dot less than his title suggests, for example), it is the rule.

Deputies who assist a Seer who holds an office typically either garner an additional dot of Status, to a maximum of one dot less Status than the office she is assisting.

Because Seers always establish offices to fulfill specific needs, false offices cannot be built without similarly false duties for the officer to fulfill. These can be anything, ranging from authority over innocuous and useless rituals to something that the Seer actually needs done anyway (blurring the line between true and false offices further). False offices usually require fewer duties than true offices (necessitating fewer deputies and thus limiting the number of Seers drawn into the false diversion), but again, this is not always the case. Often false offices somehow relate to a specific threat or problem that the Seer has with the local Pentacle mages; such characters would be shocked to learn how many of their problems with the Seers are merely the result of Seer overlords looking for something to keep their power hungry underlings busy.

Conspiracies within Conspiracies

As a magical order of liars devoted to maintaining the greatest Lie, Seers rarely gain much power within the Iron Pyramid without developing a healthy sense of paranoia. With so many secret offices, false titles and insular cults growing like cysts within the bloated order's hierarchy, Seers often become obsessed with ciphers, signs, code words and phrases and even secret handshakes and signals. These range from obscure bits of

The Supernal Pyramid

One secret cult within the Seers of the Throne speaks of the Supernal Pyramid, a heavenly hierarchy that mirrors the Iron Pyramid. Where the Minister reigns at the top of a Ministry, the Iron Seals (see p. 40) rest ensconced at the apex of the Supernal Pyramids. These hierarchies spread forth from their leader, filled with the legions of great Seers who have been pulled into the glorious heavens of their masters. Through the Supernal Pyramid, the Exarchs rule the Supernal in much the same way the Seers command the Fallen World.

Paternoster scripture to the carefully choreographed “dances” of a Panopticon Seer as he moves through a public space in a specific way to communicate his allegiance (he might, for example, make an elaborate ceremony of adding cream and sugar to his coffee, knowing that the mage with the eyes to see will recognize him as the man she came to meet).

No universal guidelines exist within the order (or even within the Ministries) as to how these phrases should be built (which would defeat their purpose). Instead, each Seer learns the specific codes she is taught by her superior, and then develops those ideas further when developing codes for her inferiors. Thus the codes each Seer uses become particularly personal. The downside of this system, of course, is that Seers from different hierarchies often have difficulty establishing one another as allies within the order. As a result, few Seers travel widely, despite the global reach of their organization. A Seer may have a few specific locales to which he travels to do business, and she limits herself to those locations. An Indianapolis Seer, for example, may travel to Chicago to meet with her superior, to Boston to confer with an ally, and to Rome to study at the feet of her mentor, but she never goes to New York, London, or Beijing—at least not without a good reason, the appropriate regional codes and letters of introduction.

The abundance of code phrases and ciphers that defines Seer hierarchy and resulted from the glut of secret organizations and cults within the order only tends to further the accrual of those phenomena. The morass of secret codes makes establishing secret groups far easier than it might be otherwise, leading to conspiracies that exist for a myriad of reasons, some more spurious than others. One conspiracy exists solely to hide information from a specific Seer. Another was formed to covertly discuss wiping out the local Pentacle orders in a sudden wave of violence and magic, despite the detente to which the tetrarch has agreed with the Hierarch.

Walking the Paths of Gods

The cult of the Exarchs is ultimately a revealed religion that posits the Supernal Realms as a revered heavenly abode to which the faithful may ascend through effort, loyalty and belief. The first taste of that paradise, the moment of conversion, the understanding that sets the Seer above the pathetic prisoners of the Lie, the Awakening colors the beliefs and magic of a Seer just as it does any other mage. Given the order's focus on the Supernal Realms as a goal in and of itself (and subsequent disregard for the Sleepers and their fallen institutions), many Seers cleave to their Path and the trappings thereof with a greater intensity than their Pentacle counterparts.

That hardly means that every Seer Warlock looks exactly the same. The Awakening is an intensely personal experience, whether one believes that they followed the call of the Oracles across the Abyss or that the Exarchs personally chose her to be exalted to a greater understanding of reality. While one Seer Obrimos Awakens to an Aether filled with righteous angels trumpeting his ascension, another finds a shining clockwork model of the cosmos, replete with controls awaiting his own hand. These unique experiences follow each mage for the remainder of her life.

Certain similarities *do* exist, however. Seers often experience Awakenings that emphasize the power and glory of the Supernal while undermining the importance of humanity in the cosmic scheme. Many begin somehow abased, often in chains, and only through breaking them do they prove themselves to the gods and become worthy of a return to the Supernal truth. The vast majority of Seers recognize that the rest of humanity shares the bonds that the Awakened have broken (and Seer Awakenings often involve the Seer stepping forth from the masses of ignorant humanity in some form either metaphorical or literal), but unlike the Pentacle mages, a Seer feels no responsibility to his former comrades in Quiescence.

The Awakening ultimately reflects certain truths about the mage's soul, and no two mages, even those chosen by the Exarchs, experience precisely the same thing. The result is a global conspiracy of coreligionists seeking different versions of paradise through the same cruel, self-serving praxis. Two Seers may not agree on the nature of the Primal Wild and what they will find when they finally return there, but they can certainly agree on the most brutally efficient manner in which to keep the Sleeping populace in line.

While Path determines much about the magic any given Seer of the Throne uses, each Seer tends to interpret her Path in the most controlling or domineering way, often with a focus on brutality. This aspect of their belief system bleeds into the resonance of their effects. Exceptions to the rule do exist, however, and some rare Seers actually care for their ostensible wards.

Acanthus

Among the Pentacle orders, the Acanthus have a reputation for being free-spirited and mercurial. They possess a deep and abiding faith in their own ability to get by with the minimum in planning or forethought, so they become creatures of the moment, intense and aware but flighty and inconstant. The Acanthus is the Fool, setting forth on his journey, his foot dangling over the precipice, as he trusts in blind luck to protect him. Her eyes and easy grace reflect something fey, her oracular abilities lending her the air of the mad.

Yet in the hands of a Seer, Fate becomes fascistic and uncompromising. It becomes curses and lies and tricks into oaths against free action. Fate limits, harms and controls. Time transforms into voyeurism without temporal bounds. The future and past of any person of interest becomes laid bare for the Enchanter to see. Time conspires with the Seer to hide her own actions and bolsters her, allowing her to move with a flickering grace as she opens the arteries of your cabal mates with a straight razor. Furthermore, Time serves as a primary form of communication between the Exarchs and their servants in the Fallen prison. Through augury, Acanthus divine the will of the Exarchs.

The Seer Acanthus take their cues from the dark fae of legend. Capriciousness does not imply harmlessness, and an Acanthus Seer can switch from one cruel delight to another at the drop of a hat. Their understanding of Fate enslaves them to it, but awakens their understanding of the inevitability of hardship and harm; the Seer Enchanter doesn't think twice before kidnapping the friends, children or lovers of her enemies. Some they abuse themselves. Some they ransom to the fae creatures that stalk the Fallen World, hoping to earn the respect of their Supernal masters.

For some, all things Fallen take on an air of absurdity; if the world doesn't play by the rules, they reason, why should they? These Enchanters take a vile pleasure in the harm and chaos they cause. They strive against fate in whatever way they can, believing that they have risen above supplication to What Will Be (a hallmark of the Sleeper). Yet others become slaves of fate, bound up in thousands of their own oaths, barely capable of acting without the entire house of webs collapsing in upon them. Their every action is considered and reconsidered, examined from every angle and inclusive of every possibility.

The Acanthus seek to enchant the world as the fae enchanted the sleeping maidens in their tales. They plan to twist it in the thorns of Fate before dropping it, naked and hungry, into the hedge maze of Time. The future and past become inscrutable in the Enchanter's Fallen prison, birth and death the only absolutes with naught but meandering confusion in between. The Sleepers have no control over their own lives, the Enchanters proclaim, so they shouldn't feel that they do. Such control is only for the Exarchs (and, of course, their chosen servants).

Within the order, the Acanthus serve as Augurs and prophets, making the future themselves when they fail to

Awakening to the Exarchs

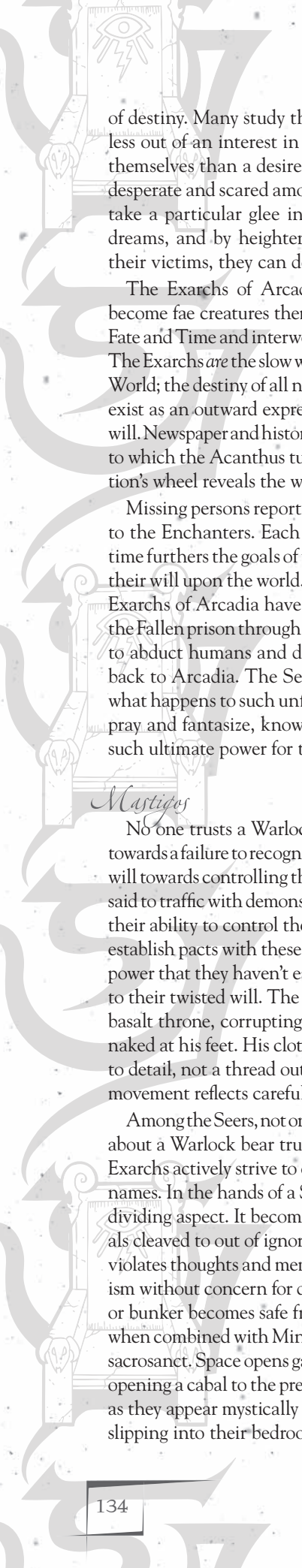
Throughout the various books published for **Mage: The Awakening**, there have been hints about Seers Awakening to the Watchtowers of the Oracles, different Watchtowers of the Exarchs, or having been pulled across by the sheer will of the Exarchs. The truth of the matter is up for debate. Not even the Watchtowers exist beyond a reasonable doubt, and the Supernal Realms, apparently proven to exist with each Awakening, may merely be an expression of a greater truism within the soul of every human who sees beyond the false veneer of reality. In short, when reality itself becomes a tool, the waters become muddied.

Whether or not the Seer Awakening is fundamentally different from that of any other Awakened remains in the hands of the Storyteller. Certainly, the occasional Pentacle mage turns traitor and joins the Seers and the rare Seer becomes disgusted with his own faith, breaking ranks and joining the Atlanteans. But couldn't these exceptions simply be mages who are finally finding the group their Awakening predestined them to? Or is each Awakening, though unique, ultimately the same metaphysical experience, leaving the choice between the Pentacle orders and the Ministries to the enlightened soul of the willworker?

Without a doubt, the Awakening reflects the soul of those that experience it. Perhaps those who believe that the Exarchs called them across the Abyss were predisposed to such beliefs. Perhaps those that feel a communion with the Oracles also feels like an appreciation for basic freedom that shudders at the thought of self-imposed slavery to a higher power.

Perhaps the Oracles and the Exarchs never existed at all, but serve as archetypal expressions of the two major approaches to Awakened power (a will towards free understanding or towards tyrannical control) blended with an ancient myth. The Awakened may never know

predict it. What Will Be serves the will of the Exarchs, and the Seers utilize that control to their own ends. The Enchanters often serve a pylon in a role of support: they predict the likely outcome of an action, ensure that enemies suffer the worst possible luck, and enchant the tools and weapons of their compatriots to strike with the inevitable weight



of destiny. Many study the secrets of the Mind Arcanum, less out of an interest in reading others or understanding themselves than a desire to heighten the emotions of the desperate and scared among the Sleepers. The Enchanters take a particular glee in breaking hearts and shattering dreams, and by heightening the hopes and emotions of their victims, they can do so most effectively.

The Exarchs of Arcadia, the Acanthus believe, have become fae creatures themselves, taking on the mantles of Fate and Time and interweaving them with their very being. The Exarchs *are* the slow wearying grind of time in the Fallen World; the destiny of all nations, ideas, creatures and people exist as an outward expression of the Exarchs' immaculate will. Newspaper and history books become the biblical tomes to which the Acanthus turn, sure that each turn of civilization's wheel reveals the whim of the ascended gods.

Missing persons reports take on a particular significance to the Enchanters. Each person so plucked from fate and time furthers the goals of the Exarchs of Arcadia, enforcing their will upon the world. Some Acanthus believe that the Exarchs of Arcadia have established some back door into the Fallen prison through which they send their fae servitors to abduct humans and drag them kicking and screaming back to Arcadia. The Seers do not dare conjecture about what happens to such unfortunates. Instead they work and pray and fantasize, knowing that someday they will have such ultimate power for themselves.

Mastigos

No one trusts a Warlock. Their magic predisposes them towards a failure to recognize the importance of privacy and a will towards controlling the very *thoughts* of others. They are said to traffic with demons, betting the price of their souls on their ability to control their own desires and dreams. Some establish pacts with these otherworldly entities, seeking out power that they haven't earned and subjugating the eternal to their twisted will. The Mastigos is the Devil, sitting on a basalt throne, corrupting others to sin and chaining them naked at his feet. His clothes display an obsessive attention to detail, not a thread out of place, and his every measured movement reflects careful planning and vicious cunning.

Among the Seers, not only does every foul rumor whispered about a Warlock bear truth, the Mastigos in service to the Exarchs actively strive to outdo the epithets spoken in their names. In the hands of a Seer, Mind takes on a controlling, dividing aspect. It becomes anger and hatred and false ideals cleaved to out of ignorance. Mind addicts, confuses and violates thoughts and memories. Space morphs into voyeurism without concern for distance or security. No home, car or bunker becomes safe from the prying eyes of a Warlock; when combined with Mind, not even one's thoughts remain sacrosanct. Space opens gateways and enables transgression, opening a cabal to the predations of an entire pylon of Seers as they appear mystically within the borders of their home, slipping into their bedrooms without a sound. Mind opens

the vast vistas of the dream world to the Warlocks, who brave it in search of the half-forgotten words of their divine masters. Space lays bare the enemies of the Exarchs and their fortifications. Through Scrying, Mastigos root out those who would destroy the prison of the Lie.

Seer Warlocks may be demons, but they are kings among the hellish host, breaking the wills of man and immortal alike. Their capacity for Space magic leads them to forget all respect they may once had for the boundaries of others. Mind magic ensures that they willingly transgress upon the most sovereign aspect of the human experience: the mind. The Warlock's tendency to ironclad self-control exists among the Seers; every cruelty they inflict they do with absolute understanding of the harm they cause. Furthermore, they see others who fail to live up to their own standards of will as less than human, failures in the eyes of the divine, utterly deserving of imprisonment at the hands of the elder gods. They care for humans only in as much as they make excellent sacrifices for the dark creatures they summon forth from the shadows of the world.

Others become absolute ascetics. The Fallen World is naught but base matter, whereas true reality, they believe, exists solely within the Mind. With sufficient enlightenment, they claim, all space converges at a single point and all minds are but one. This unified moment is the only truth, and all else is a flawed emanation. Only the Exarchs truly understand this, and only they exist at the unified convergence. These Warlocks dismiss the Fallen World as meaningless, even as they propagate the Lie. Such amoral individuals treat humanity as nothing but a collection of chemicals and compounds, oppressing and destroying people with the same casualness with which she sweeps the dust from her front porch. Yet many of them become lost in their meditations, delving deep into dreamscapes only to become lost.

The Mastigos seek to ensnare the world as Satan tried to tempt Christ. They seek out those few Sleepers with a willingness to see through the Lie, use Space and Mind to learn their basest desires, and offer themselves. Yet the Sleeping mind cannot accept the prospect of a gift without cost, and so the Warlock names his price, always something just easy enough to keep the Sleeper's interest but involving enough to keep his attention from the bars of the Lie. Others inspire paranoia through careful use of Space while enhancing it with subtle acts of Mind; others still turn the Sleepers' fear into hate, focusing it on an ethnic group, religion or organization. The Warlocks jail Sleepers through distraction, and Sleeping humanity is only too willing to oblige.

Within the order, the Mastigos serve as spies, comen and security experts, violating the rights of others even as they shore up their own borders. The Warlocks often serve a pylon as a chief source of information. Those with a strong understanding of Space ward Sanctums against intrusion and create gates that bypass the defenses of



their enemies. Many study the secrets of the Spirit Arcanum, which they use in conjunction with Space to summon forth and bind entities from every level of reality. All spirits serve the will of the Exarchs, even if such is beyond their limited understanding. Warlocks wrest packs from the spirits, setting them to guard Sanctums, gather information or harass enemies. A few Warlocks learn the secrets of Death for many of the same reasons.

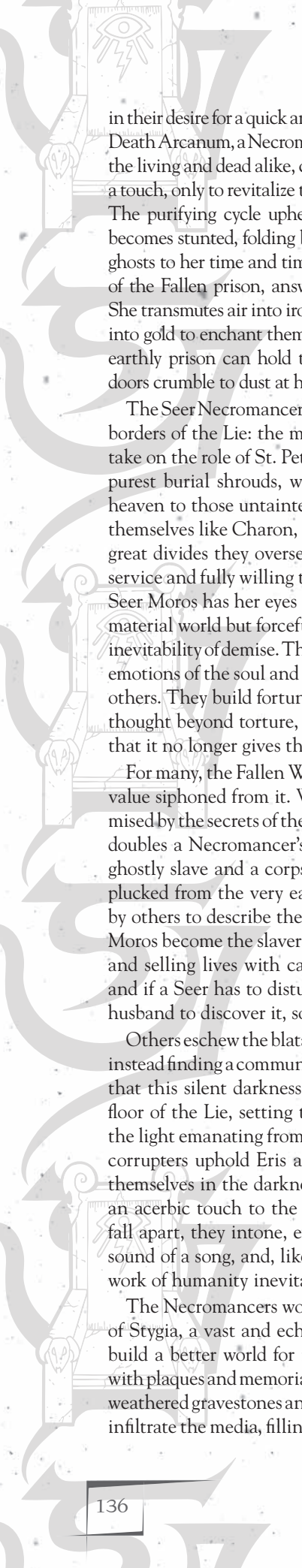
According to the Mastigos, the Exarchs of Pandemonium have become absolute tyrants of Space and Mind. The abode of demons contains only what one takes with them, and the Exarchs have freed their minds of all but the most effective tools for imprisoning the Fallen World, casting off their own fears and baseless hatred on the world below them. The Exarchs cast off their own xenophobic racism, petty jealousy and irrational dislike, and it infects the Sleeper populace like a plague. The Exarchs twist Space, keeping it inconstant, so that humans never feel they have too strong a grasp on whence they came, where they are going, or the time they've spent in transit. The Internet and global economies are tools of the Exarchs, shrinking the world in the minds of the Sleepers while isolating them

in front of computers and reminding them that the closer they get to the *other*, the more they have to fear.

Moros

Equal turns frightening and erudite, the Moros corner a peculiar corner of mage society, one which the other orders seem understandingly hesitant to approach: Death. They spend much of their time locked away, pouring over hoary tombs, drawing knowledge from dead languages and dead people alike, and practicing alchemy in search of transcendental materials for either wisdom or profit. These prophets of the dead always view things in the long term, their cold eyes always turned towards the ever-approaching horizon where life dips into what comes after. All things end, they whisper, and the Fallen World heeds them. The Moros is Death, pale and gaunt upon an emaciated stallion, picking his way among the dead and diseased; he comforts them even as his scythe inevitably falls. For among the Moros, an ending usually signifies a beginning of something else.

But entropy is also rapacious, consuming all that falls before it as quickly as it can manage. The Seers embody this hunger



in their desire for a quick and easy path to power. Through the Death Arcanum, a Necromancer inflicts her twisted will upon the living and dead alike, corrupting and destroying with but a touch, only to revitalize the dead and abuse them yet again. The purifying cycle upheld by their Pentacle companions becomes stunted, folding back upon itself as the Moros calls ghosts to her time and time again. Matter, the physical shell of the Fallen prison, answers the Moros's every command. She transmutes air into iron to ensnare her enemies and iron into gold to enchant them. Master of the greatest prison, no earthly prison can hold the Necromancer: walls melt and doors crumble to dust at her touch.

The Seer Necromancers stand guard over the two greatest borders of the Lie: the material and the inevitable. Some take on the role of St. Peter, deathly saints wrapped in the purest burial shrouds, willing only to open the gates of heaven to those untainted by the Oracles. Others shroud themselves like Charon, willing to bring others across the great divides they oversee, but in absolute control of the service and fully willing to dictate the steepest prices. The Seer Moros has her eyes opened to the possibilities of the material world but forcefully set beyond them towards the inevitability of demise. They become deadened to the higher emotions of the soul and hardened against the suffering of others. They build fortunes out of stone and torture those thought beyond torture, until each becomes so mundane that it no longer gives them pause.

For many, the Fallen World becomes pale and drawn, all value siphoned from it. When the living can be compromised by the secrets of the grave, when murdering a servant doubles a Necromancer's investment (by granting him a ghostly slave and a corpse servitor), when wealth can be plucked from the very earth, *worth* becomes a word used by others to describe the transactions of the weak. These Moros become the slavers of the Fallen World, purchasing and selling lives with casual ease. Everyone has a price, and if a Seer has to disturb the slumber of a target's dead husband to discover it, so be it.

Others eschew the blatant magic of the reanimated dead, instead finding a communion with the shadows. They claim that this silent darkness has been cast across the prison floor of the Lie, setting the prison's bars in relief against the light emanating from the glory of the Supernal. These corrupters uphold Eris as an agent of entropy, wrapping themselves in the darkness that dissolves light and bring an acerbic touch to the flimsy creations of man. Things fall apart, they intone, even the light of the sun and the sound of a song, and, like every great human, every great work of humanity inevitably falls into ruin.

The Necromancers work to make the world a reflection of Stygia, a vast and echoing tomb to humanity's will to build a better world for itself. They mark every building with plaques and memorials, and litter the countryside with weathered gravestones and ostentatious mausoleums. They infiltrate the media, filling the nightly news with images of

death and producing films in which heroes leave hundreds dead in their path (the message in the latter is clear: death is so inexorable that life becomes a meaningless blink of an eye, a few errant shots fired at the protagonist before he turns his deadly attentions to you. Better by far to never involve oneself, never to try to play the hero). Everything should serve to remind the Sleepers their own life has been measured out and only waits to be shorn by destiny. In their despair, of course, they turn to material wealth for comfort; there they find the Moros waiting.


Among the Seers, the Necromancers function as investigators and suppliers, always present at a scene of death and willing to clean it up—for the right price. They build guards and soldiers from the corpses of the deceased and summon forth ghosts for insight into the past. A Moros serves his pylon as an artificer, providing material wealth and enhancing items beyond the abilities of the world's greatest craftsmen. A sword may be a tool of death, but only a sword enhanced by a Necromancer ensures it. Many Necromancers delve into the messiness of the Life Arcanum. While many find the sloppiness of living creatures repulsive, some Moros take a certain joy in knowing that they can give life as easily as they take it. Through this, they stand astride the border between life and death, and this, they claim, is the secret to understanding and finding communion with the Exarchs.

The Exarchs of Stygia, they whisper, reign over kingdoms of ivory, lead and obsidian in which death no longer has meaning. The ancient shades of dead kings serve at the Exarchs' feet, bedecked in the finery they wore in life but painfully aware of how dull it seems in comparison to the glorious raiment of their immortal god-kings. Stygia, they claim, is the Supernal Realm closest to the Fallen prison, and the will of the Exarchs are reflected in every landslide, earthquake, eruption and manmade genocide. Seer Necromancers study these phenomena closely, abetting them whenever possible. Many pay particular attention to (and discreetly finance) recent studies of Pompeii, a site that has become almost sacred to the Necromancers. More than one Moros has decorated her Sanctum in the art of that lost Roman city.

Seers on the Path of Doom have elevated the act of murder to hallowed importance. The perfect moment of transition, when the willful mage utilizes the base matter of the Lie to cut short the thread of the living, is rendered in Path lore as an instant of sacred union between their two Arcana (and between the will of the Seer and her patron Exarchs). The gross meets the subtle; the vulgar touches the sublime. Necromancer Augurs scan newspapers for stories of murder, seeking out the will of their divine patrons while Moros summoners never hesitate to sacrifice a human life when calling forth a spirit of death.

Obrimos

Passionate and impulsive, Pentacle Obrimos banish illusions, imbue Fallen materials with Supernal power, and wield celestial and mundane fire with equal efficacy. They



perceive physical phenomena in ways few other magi can manage, plucking cell phone transmissions from the air or navigating through the dark with infrared vision. In many ways, the Obrimos embody the explosive ascendancy of the Awakened will over the Fallen World. Theurgists recall the towered wizards of old, inscribing esoteric tomes and calling lightning down upon their enemies. The Obrimos is Strength, the fair maiden who holds down a lion by force of will alone. She buzzes with energy, her strength readily apparent in her burning eyes.

For the Seers, Forces acts as their invisible hand of oppression, stealing secrets from the airwaves, twisting weather patterns into brutal storms, setting flame to the homes of the unfaithful and turning humanity's reliance on technology into their greatest weakness. Forces represents the unmitigated rage of primordial nature unbounded, and even the strongest human structure falls in the face of its onslaught. Prime lays bare the false bars of the Fallen prison even as it reinforces them, placing the jailors who understand the Arcanum's secrets above the Sleepers forever blind to it. Prime strips away falsehoods and lay bare the hidden nature of monsters, but it also secrets truth into thick grimoires and crafts illusions to fool the mind. Forces and Prime uplift and enlighten, but each also destroys and purifies. The Seers rain each upon the Atlantean rebels, burning their homes, libraries and very bodies to cinders. The Theurgists serve as the earthly hands of the Exarchs, and in their wake, they leave only ash.

Seer Obrimos take on the roll of the avenging angel, beings of incomparable light armed and armored in writhing flames. They boil blood, melt armor, and combust clothing, their souls singing hymns to their tyrannical gods. Where other mages study and make plans, the Obrimos act, stepping forward to root out evil and pluck it from the world. The raw power set in a Theurgist's hands corrupts her soul, leading her to believe that divine right has anointed her ruler of the Fallen World. She is the will of the gods made manifest, and the gods are very, very angry. The Obrimos tend to view the world in terms of extremes: black and white, right and wrong, good and evil, justice and villainy. They have witnessed the glory of the Aether, and each time they bring a fraction of it into the Fallen prison to punish an unruly ward, she feels uplifted.

While many see the Lie in terms of divinity and righteous condemnation, others worship at the feet of Forces and Prime, believing that they contain the floor plan for the divine prison as the Exarchs conceived it. Through Forces, the theurgist finds the laws of physics made manifest before her. When every action can be distilled to a series of mathematical formulae, everything takes on a mechanical quality. When all things are predetermined in a Newtonian nightmare ringed with absolute laws of numerical coldness, free human will vanishes into the ether. The Exarchs intended precisely this, the Seers proclaim. They study Prime, sure that it can reveal the Exarchs' goals for the Supernal Realms in much the same manner that

Forces unveils the laws of the Lie. Through these studies the Theurgists uplift themselves, refashioning their Fallen Patterns in the image of the divine.

The Obrimos intend to break the back of the world's remaining opposition to their heavenly masters. Let the other Paths deal with humanity, twisting about in their blanket of Quiescence as they Sleep soundly. The Obrimos have more important work to do, and they utilize Prime to hunt down the enemies of the Exarchs and Forces to blast them from the face of the earth. The most powerful Theurgists turn to weather to aid them in their work, bringing righteous judgment to the enemy and its support structures through awe-inspiring (and, the Sleeper meteorologists claim, freak) storms.

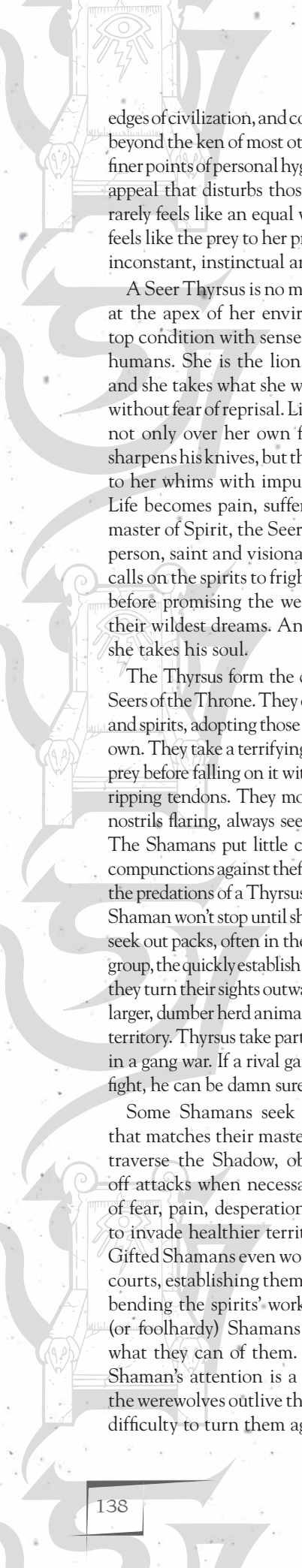
The Obrimos tend towards martial roles within the Seers of the Throne, often taking the position of Hoplite within their individual pylons and working towards Warmaster or Janissary. The Praetorian Ministry attracts Theurgists like moths to the flame, and Obrimos make up by far the largest proportion of that sect. Not every Seer Obrimos is a fireball-throwing, lightning-summoning maniac, however, and more academically inclined members of the group find work as Supernal lore keepers, monster experts and enchanters of weapons, armors and other tools. Many become experts on methods of mitigating Paradox, making pacts with bizarre spirits, creating rites and designing more effective magic tools. Many Obrimos Seers study the Time Arcanum, seeking the secrets and desires of the Exarchs from the skein of the future (nor do they fail to notice the combat utility of the Arcanum).

The Exarchs of Aether, the Obrimos preach, have no gods before them. They command legions of archons, powerful spirits clad in fiery raiment. Having become beings of pure magic and energy, they long ago abandoned their flesh. Now the regimented laws of the Fallen World reflect their will, constraining what the Pentacle mages are capable of and protecting humanity from a reality in which everything is in flux, reality determined by the consensus of the masses. Many Theurgists take an abiding interest in the sciences, especially physics, mathematics and chemistry. These so-called natural laws, they claim, contain the unadulterated desires of the gods.

The Obrimos also keep a close eye on natural disasters, especially those caused by storms and debris from space (though many find volcanic eruptions similarly interesting). Theurgists often embark on pilgrimages to such holy sights, basking in the glory of the will of their masters made manifest on so large and obvious a scale. Soon, they pray to themselves, such power shall be theirs as well.

Thyrus

Mages often find the Thyrus unpleasant. The Shamans possess an uncanny familiarity with the wet, raw stuff of life that humans (having been conditioned for so long to avoid such muck) find uncomfortable. They bleed, salivate, sneeze, piss and ejaculate, often taking very little interest in hiding these natural functions from their prudish brethren. They take comfort in natural cycles, establish Sanctums on the



edges of civilization, and commune with otherworldly entities beyond the ken of most other mages. They often neglect the finer points of personal hygiene, yet they exude a raw physical appeal that disturbs those who fall under their sway. One rarely feels like an equal with a Thyrsus lover; instead, one feels like the prey to her predator. The Thyrsus is the Moon, inconstant, instinctual and unpredictable.

A Seer Thyrsus is no mere predator, however. She stands at the apex of her environment, a physical specimen in top condition with senses beyond those available to other humans. She is the lion, a self-appointed king of beasts, and she takes what she wants from whomever she chooses without fear of reprisal. Life grants her the ultimate control, not only over her own form, which she hones as a chef sharpens his knives, but the forms of others, which she twists to her whims with impunity. In the hands of a Shaman, Life becomes pain, suffering, disease and mutation. As a master of Spirit, the Seer exalts herself as the corrupt holy person, saint and visionary, witchdoctor and mamba. She calls on the spirits to frighten her followers into submission before promising the weak-willed humans power beyond their wildest dreams. And if one of her followers fails her, she takes his soul.

The Thyrsus form the dark and bloody priesthood of the Seers of the Throne. They commune incessantly with animals and spirits, adopting those entities amoral worldviews for their own. They take a terrifying thrill in their hunts, stalking their prey before falling on it with fang and claws, tearing flesh and ripping tendons. They move with the feral grace of a shark, nostrils flaring, always seeking the scents of fear and blood. The Shamans put little credence in property, and have no compunctions against theft. When a Sleeper stands up against the predations of a Thyrsus, he becomes the new prey, and the Shaman won't stop until she has spilt his blood. Some Thyrsus seek out packs, often in the form of a gang. They infiltrate the group, the quickly establish themselves as the alpha. From there, they turn their sights outwards, leading their packs against the larger, dumber herd animals and clashing with other packs for territory. Thyrsus take particular pleasure in raising the stakes in a gang war. If a rival gang leader brings a baseball bat to a fight, he can be damn sure that the Thyrsus has a knife.

Some Shamans seek a mastery over the spirit wilds that matches their mastery over the material world. They traverse the Shadow, observing the spirits and fending off attacks when necessary. They form pacts with spirits of fear, pain, desperation and disease, encouraging them to invade healthier territories to spread their corruption. Gifted Shamans even worm their way into their local spirit courts, establishing themselves as viziers to the lesser gods, bending the spirits' work towards the Seers' goals. Brave (or foolhardy) Shamans study the werewolves, learning what they can of them. The first fact that comes to the Shaman's attention is a propensity towards anger; when the werewolves outlive their usefulness, it's usually no great difficulty to turn them against a neighboring pack.

The Thyrsus are quick to point out that animals don't Awaken. Thus, they reason, a populace dedicated merely to the basest animal instincts poses no danger to the Exarchs. When one's entire focus is on one's next meal, the predators outside of the comforting glow of one's fire, or the coming winter, one has little interest in higher realms and occulted secrets. Such would be a purer life, the Thyrsus purport, and closer in communion with the spirits. The Thyrsus pursue this vision with all of their power. They compel spirits to haunt humanity, ensuring that the flock remains terrified. They use Life to ruin crops, spread disease and infirmity, and heighten the fear caused by both.


Within the order, the Thyrsus often become generalists, capable of feats of survival, combat, investigation and medicine. They climb the Iron Pyramid with ruthless efficiency, not so much out of a desire to hold any given office, but to establish their dominance. Many become caught up in secret offices, however, and no small number of Seer Shamans has joined the cults of silence (see p. 125). Thyrsus Seers use Life to heal and bolster their companions in their pylon, adding supernatural claws and thick hides. They practice Spirit to keep their territories clean and orderly (in a brutally efficient manner, rather than a civil one) while protecting their Sanctums. Many take up the magic of the Prime Arcanum, interested in the flows of magic through their various territories.

The Exarchs of the Primal Wild, the Thyrsus murmur, have abandoned a fixed form of body or mind. They act eternally in the present, creatures of absolute instinct, apex gods attended by a multitude of spirit servants and totem familiars. The Exarchs of the Primal Wild are the strongest of all the gods; they teach, and the overwhelming presence of nature and the viciousness of the natural order in the Fallen World are their legacy. The Thyrsus turn their attention to food chains and spiritual ecologies, positive that the will of their gods can be gleaned from the bloody throes of nature. They immerse themselves in the wilderness, becoming one with the Fallen reflection of their patrons, positive that their dedication will one day uplift them into the celestial wilderness.

No Zealots Like Converts

While a relatively rare occurrence, the occasional Pentacle mage does see the error of his ways and turns his back on his fellow heretics. He seeks out the world's greatest conspiracy, beginning anew the ascent to power in an environment possessed of a far more Darwinian social philosophy than his former order.

Reasons for doing so vary, and the phenomenon remains rare enough to repel attempts to discuss such defections in broad generalities. A Guardian of the Veil may become so well indoctrinated by her order that she decides that the Pentacle mages simply don't understand the responsibility of wielding magic. A Mystagogue may be seduced by the



incredible power, lore, and collection of Artifacts in the hands of the Seers, converting in the interest of her own studies. A théarch may become embittered, turning on humanity and rejecting his previous beliefs that humanity *deserves* magic. Sometimes a mage simply gets caught up in a Seer plot, and by the time she understands how she has aided her erstwhile enemies, her former compatriots have rejected her and branded her traitor.

Conversion between the Pentacle orders and the Seers of the Throne is no simple matter. A mage that chooses to defect must navigate a largely unknown political minefield, a particularly terrifying prospect for mages, who work to *know* everything. Any mage joining the Seers can expect assassination attempts from *at least* their former comrades and a great deal of suspicion from their new associates. The Seers, for their part, appreciate converts. They don't trust them, however, and a convert can expect a long initiation before she can ascend the Iron Pyramid.

Adamantine Arrow

The Seers tend to dismiss Arrows as simple and easily manipulated. Thus they are surprised when an Arrow sees the light and attempts to convert to the side of the Exarchs. Seers tend to handle Arrow converts in largely the same way: they assign them to a Hoplite or Warlord (after a lengthy interrogation and initiation), typically a member of the Praetorian Ministry, and give him extremely limited access to Seer resources, information and training. The Seers view their Arrow converts as guard dogs, and treat them as such.

An Arrow who doesn't make waves and survives the many conflicts his new duties ensure that he experiences may actually advance in the Seers. Unfortunately, senior Seers take a perverse pleasure in throwing former Arrows up against their erstwhile allies in the Pentacle, resulting in particularly heated battles that more often than not witness the end of the Arrow in question.

Free Council

Free Councilors are treated to the most rigorous screenings and interrogations before being allowed into the Seers of the Throne. Even a few of those who succeed may simply be murdered if the tetrarchs determine that the power wielded by the convert does not justify the risk of granting him entrance. Converts from the Free Council are watched extremely carefully (only Guardian defectors experience more careful scrutiny) before eventually being given a minor task that suits them based on their particular mystical expertise.

Former Free Councilors have a particularly difficult time on the Iron Pyramid. They discover that they have very few willing allies against those who would usurp their positions (many defectors meet their end at the hands of an ambitious Seer). Worse yet, Seers seem to delight in

providing them false titles, many of which come laden with ridiculous amounts of duties. The fact that the former Councilor has few friends to call on as deputies only further harms his situation.

Guardians of the Veil

The Pentacle mages don't trust the Guardians. The Seers would be fools to do any less. A converting Guardian is given the most thorough magical interrogation that the Seers can arrange (typically involving an archmaster of Mind). If she proves reliable and true, she can look forward to a decade or more of grunt work at the bottom step of the Iron Pyramid. Certain similarities exist between the Guardians and the Seers, however, and Guardians often excel in their new order. If, with time, the former Guardian proves her loyalty, she *may* be allowed to ascend the Iron Pyramid. Such mages almost always fall into the orbit of the Sacrum, soon to be initiated into a cult of silence.

Mysterium

Seers understand the Mysterium. Both orders are secretive sects devoted to the experience and exploration of the Ars Mysteriorum. Both confiscate occult knowledge from Sleepers and other mages alike, hiding it away and sharing it only with the worthy. Yet they approach the Mysteries in similar ways but with fundamentally different goals in mind.

Over time, the Seers have learned that Mystagogues convert to the Throne only for two reasons: either they want more lore, Artifacts, or occult understanding than they seem able to get from their own order, or they have experienced a religious experience in the pursuit of magic that led them to believe that the Exarchs were right. If a potential Mystagogue convert claims either of these reasons for his defection, he's given a cursory (but still unpleasant) interrogation and turned over to an Overseer, who is responsible for putting him to work and keeping an eye on his loyalties. If he gives any other reason, he is summarily killed. This approach may have cost the Seers a possible servant or two over the years, but they feel the added security is worth it. Like former Guardians, converts from the Mysterium may be allowed to advance up the Iron Pyramid if they perform their duties under the Overseer well.

Silver Ladder

The théarchs lead a holy crusade in which they name the Seers their primary adversaries. When members of the Silver Ladder claim to want to defect, then, they obviously arouse the suspicion of the Seers. Most théarchs who seek conversion have either realized that the Silver Ladder is not quite the unscrupulous path to power they initially thought it was or they have been so thoroughly defeated in the political games of the consilium that they cannot safely remain among the Pentacles. The Seers admit such théarchs into their ranks,

giving them a similar initiation to that the Arrows enjoy and placing them at the dead bottom of the Iron Pyramid. Théarchs devoted to the Exarchs and the cause of the Seers (or at least to their own power) tend to excel in the order, quickly climbing the true ladder of power. Those that falter at the bottom rungs typically don't have the drive or desire to serve the order, and the Seers weed them out.

Occasionally, théarchs approach the Seers claiming some reason other than that listed above for entrance. The Seers handle these former Silver Ladder mages more carefully, much as they might a member of the Guardians of the Veil (they are, after all, probably spies).

Rites and Ceremony

Like any other secret society, the Seers have bound themselves within a complex web of personal traditions and secret rituals. These structures serve both to strengthen the order's community and to help them recognize one another. In a society as paranoid as the Seers of the Throne, a misspoken phrase can trigger an interrogation (or worse).

The order does span the globe, however, and like any world religion, this leads to variations between locales. A Seer sect with Vodouisant trappings in New Orleans, for example, might be shocked at the careful ritualism of the Tokyo Seer pylons. The Storyteller should feel encouraged to invent his own baroque or bloody rites. Here are a few examples of common rituals within the order:

Augury

Divination holds an important place in the culture of the Seers of the Throne. Augurs read signs and portents, casting bones and digging through animal entrails in search of the will of the Exarchs. Careful orchestration elevates these rites, often accompanied by rote casting of various Time, Fate and Space spells, above mere spellcasting. While a Seer may use a divination spell in a situation in which time is of the essence, tradition necessitates that actual auguries (in which the Seers seek to divine the will of the gods) be performed as extended castings, in secret, with only the Acolyte (or a similar assistant) present. Auguries take a myriad of forms and are often heavily influenced by the Ministry. Whereas a member of the Ministry of Pater-noster may carefully prepare and release a flock of doves to read portents in their direction of flight, a Hegemonic Seer might lock himself in a room with a stock ticker, reading the will of the gods in the numbers.

Communion

Seers seek unification with the divine and ascension to godhead. Many choose to celebrate this drive through a rite called Communion. An intimate ritual held in secret from the rest of the order, the Communion typically involves a single cult or pylon. The members of the cult wear thick robes and mask their faces before engaging in a shared extended ritual culminating in the summoning and binding of a powerful entity called forth from the Supernal Realms. The Seers

speak to it, asking questions of it for as long as it remains in the defiled prison of the material world. Afterwards, they meditate on what they have learned before going their separate ways. They never speak of it to others and do not discuss it among themselves. The Mystery of the Communion is one to be experienced, not spoken of.

Ascendance and Rank

The Iron Pyramid plays a central part in the intellectual and mystical lives of the Seers. Its hierarchy represents a path of Supernal understanding and powerful wisdom. Order members often identify themselves and one another by rank (the rather complex system of titles serves as yet another manner in which the Seers root out imposters), sometimes even within a single pylon (especially common in the Hegemonic Ministry): When members rise in the ranks, such must be recognized, and the Seer appointing the title calls for a gathering dependent on the rank being granted. The formation of a new pylon may only require a conclave, but the ascension of a new tetrarch certainly calls for a conference (see below). The appointing Seer calls forth the ascending party and presents her with a mask or knife appropriate to her new role. He presents her to those gathered, at which point she may appoint her own assistants in pursuit of her new duties. This first act of authority theoretically reverberates with the Supernal, cementing and ending the rite.

Oblations

Like other mages, Seers regain Mana by performing an oblation at a Hallow. While Path determines a great deal about a specific mage's preferred form of oblations (see "Walking the Paths of Gods," above for inspiration), the Seers do function as a single order, albeit a fractured one. Seers tend to involve the following in their oblation rituals:

Secrecy

Secrecy (and silence) bears an important metaphysical weight in the works of the Seers of the Throne. They almost always perform oblations in secret, usually without even telling fellow members of the pylon. Such secretive behavior is expected, and a Seer is more likely to arouse suspicion by announcing his intent than by hiding it. Seers dearly covet small, personal Hallows that they can utilize in utter privacy, but such are not always available. Pylons that share a Hallow typically erect a privacy screen around it. Paper-walled temples, similar to those utilized in Japan, have come into vogue throughout the order in recent years. Seers often perform oblations without light, typically dressed in heavy robes and masks that obscure their identities. Cloaks designed specifically for oblations bear numerous occult formulae, symbols, and designs, and may be embroidered with precious materials.

Worship

The Seers consider the Exarchs gods and Mana the sweet nectar that the gods graciously allow to seep into the Fallen prison. Seers recognize supplication as the proper way to

address the gods when giving thanks for their bounty. Worship may involve chanting in a foreign, ancient, or dead tongue (such as Arabic, Hebrew, or Latin) and may even include some of the rites of Fallen faiths (many members of the Ministry of Paternoster perform their oblations while facing east), but *never* call upon the gods worshipped by those faiths. Instead, the Seers universally revere the Iron Seals, with certain Ministries giving greater importance to certain Exarchs over others. Seers who have advanced in the Iron Pyramid often have access to the names of multiple lesser Exarchs over multiple choirs, and they direct their worship towards those entities as well. Exarchs do not worship the other denizens of the Supernal Realms, but may make sacrifices to them.

Control and Abuse

The Seer magical praxis focuses on control over Sleepers and lesser mages alike, so it is of little surprise that their oblations involve similar tropes. Control and abuse go hand in hand for the Seers, and they are quick to involve Sleepers in their dread rituals. Most often, the Sleeper suffers the torture in the name of the higher powers, and the Seer chains her and beats her, whips her, and otherwise abuses her. Unlike Sleeper sexual bondage or submission/domination play, in which the experience serves the enjoyment of both parties, the Seers care little for what little pleasure the Sleeper might take (if any) from the harm inflicted upon her.

On rare occasions, usually holy days appointed by the Seer's Ministry or Augur, the Seer reverses the roles, tak-



ing the beating himself. He is, after all, a mere slave in the service of the Exarchs.

Pattern Scouring

Similarly, Seers sometimes involve Pattern scouring in their oblations, drawing Mana from their own form as they suckle it from a Hallow. The Seer may strip down to nothing during these rites, binding himself in spiked leather and drawing sharp or rough objects such as stones or even kitchen graters over his flesh. Afterwards, in the service of secrecy, he hides their bandages, regardless of local weather conditions and comfort.

Sacrifice

Many Seers have no compunctions about sacrificing the living on the altar of the divine. They may sacrifice animals or humans to the Exarchs or to entities they are summoning into the Fallen World. When sacrificed as part of an oblation, the Seer silences and blinds the sacrifice, either by covering her head, blindfolding and gagging her, or cutting out her tongue and eyes. Other preparations vary by Path, Ministry and pylon. Once the sacrifice has been readied, the oblation begins. At the height of the ritual, when the Seer feels the divine essence coursing through his soul, he slaughters the sacrifice, reaping the rewards thereof.

This practice is so common that some Seers don't recognize that a sacrifice for Mana can be performed without an oblation.

Communicating the Will of the Exarchs

The secrecy inherent among the Seers results in a strong spiritual import being placed on those times when the Seers set secrecy aside. Communication between cults takes on a highly formalized and ritualized cast, even between pylons within the same city (unless those pylons are *extremely* closely allied). This ritual not only confirms to the Seers that those they communicate with are indeed who they claim to be, it also eases the inevitable tension that builds during tense negotiations.

Communication between Pylons

Pylons typically communicate through their Voices, Seers appointed expressly for that purpose (see p. 129). The Voices inundate themselves in Seers ritual, learning as wide a variety of methods of Seer communication as possible. They memorize hundred of code phrases and secret signs, many of which are incorporated into the mudras of the order's rites. Voices typically utilize disguise, and meetings between two Voices always occur in secret — only those two Seers know the time and locale of the meeting until after each Voice returns to her cabal to report. (Voices do customarily leave details of the meeting in a sealed container with the Augur. If the Voice fails to return, the Augur knows where to begin looking.) The Space Arcanum often assists in communications between Seer pylons, but Voices *never* open Scrying windows for this purpose within the pylon's Sanctum.

Seers do not usually communicate with members of other pylons through Fallen means such as the telephone or Internet save to arrange meetings. Such interaction cheapens the communication and heightens the likelihood of discovery by Sleeper authorities.

Communication within Ministries


Ministry communication often occurs in many of the same ways as communication between pylons. Whereas the Voice of a pylon is responsible for communication with other groups, Ministries typically contain two other offices with similar duties. A Quirinus essentially serves as a Voice for a tetrarch, while a Secretary handles communication on the part of her Minister master (though Secretaries typically hold the position of Augur in pylons of their own, in which case that pylon's Voice handles the actual communication). Seer envoys make much greater use of Space magic at this level, as the individual being communicated with may be a great distance away. Luckily, the hierarchical nature of the Iron Pyramid assists in this, allowing two Voices who know the appropriate rites and the title of the individual they are attempting to communicate with to claim a *Known* sympathetic connection with one another, even if they have never met. This applies only when both parties attempt to reach out to one another at the same time.

Conversely, occasionally a master must display her displeasure over the actions of a subordinate. In these instances, a superior Seer may utilize a combination of impressive magic to send an unexpected message directly to an underling. Space is almost always used (though Shamans often utilize Spirit and Life to send a physical or ephemeral messenger to the disappointing Seer), and the Seer combines it with Forces (for a booming voice or flaming words scrawled across a wall), Matter (to melt a statue into words or to animate it in conjunction with another effect), Death (to animate corpses to deliver the missive) or any other similar spell. Such magic usually has the desired effect of causing awe of the divine and terror at the power of the experienced Seers.

The Conclave

Ministries hold regional conclaves (typically called by the tetrarch of that Ministry) to discuss business related directly to the Ministry. Members of other Ministries, regardless of pylon, are neither informed nor invited to a conclave, save in instances when the conclave is organized to recognize a promotion in rank (see above), in which the gathering remains open to the entire order. Conclaves serve the tetrarchs as a powerful tool, allowing them to gather their followers away from prying eyes, especially in regions where the other tetrarchs apply too much pull on a lesser Ministry.

Conclaves involve much of the ritualism mentioned above, especially in regard to secrecy, costume and veneration of the Exarchs. Conclaves sometimes witness the sacrifice of a human to the Exarchs, though that, like so much about the conclaves, varies with Ministry. A



Panopticon conclave involves more than the usual amount of secrecy, perhaps even involving the members taking hotel rooms throughout the host city and utilizing Space to open a Scrying window through which to participate in the proceedings. Praetorian conclaves, on the other hand, cannot be opened until each of the invited participants stands with the others, dressed in uniform and baring a signifier of rank. If one of the invited has not arrived, the Praetorians organize a pylon to go and fetch him (often resulting in harsh punishment for the offender).

The Conference

Conferences dwarf the other forms of Seer gathering in terms of attendance, often necessitating the purchase of a large home or rental of a conference center for the duration (always through proxy, of course). The conference is a regional meeting of a tetrarchy, called by the tetrarchs in the face of some threat or other concern to the whole of the tetrarchy. Conferences tend to be more open, especially in terms of information, than most senior Seers find entirely comfortable, so they are rarely called for. Furthermore, conferences, perhaps owing to their rarity, lack the same level of complex and overarching ritualism that marks so many other Seer endeavors. This usually yields a low level of chaos, another facet that senior Seers find distasteful.

For younger Seers, conferences are a rare occasion to cut loose and “really get to know” their fellow Seers. Of course, Seers use false names (neither their Shadow nor their True Name) for the duration of the conference and often invent wildly elaborate falsehoods about their lives, but the sense of camaraderie remains. Various cult leaders, both appointed and unofficial, take the conference as an opportunity to perform their sect’s rites for anyone interested. Debates of theology break out regularly, occasionally devolving into mild violence. Drugs both natural and unnatural spread among the congregants, and sexual liaisons of varying size occur in hotel rooms, bathrooms and isolated corners of private gardens alike. Throughout all of this, the tetrarchs attempt to resolve some matter of business, sending their Janissaries and Quirini to restore order whenever necessary.

In many ways, one Seer once observed, a conference bears some resemblance to a gathering of a Pentacle’s consilium, if that consilium met only once every few years.

The Summit

The summit, on the other hand, is both the most common and most secretive of Seer gatherings. Summits generally

occur when the tetrarchs responsible for dominion over a given tetrarchy gather to discuss business. Such meetings, secret affairs involving only the tetrarchs (none of whom share Ministry affiliation) and their closest advisors are necessarily tense. Yet these are the meetings where the vast majority of the initiatives of the Seers of the Throne are set into motion.

Each summit remains a highly ritualized affair for the entirety of their length. They begin with a prayer to the Exarchs and a sacrifice, preferably of a Pentacle Awakened. Some summits include a performance of the Communion during the course of their opening rites, but such is not universal. Each tetrarch then has a given period to speak, after which each of the other tetrarchs has a ritually appointed period in which to respond. After the other tetrarchs have spoken, the first tetrarch makes closing remarks, and a vote is taken. Due to the highly formal nature of the discussion, tetrarchs typically discuss such business prior to the gathering of the summit, so that each may consider solutions beforehand. Saving a particularly damning piece of information until just before the vote is taken, of course, is a favored tactic among tetrarchs.

A Minister occasionally calls a summit, in which case as many of the tetrarchs within his Ministry who can (virtually all of them) are expected to attend to the Minister. While these summits open in much the same way as the regional gatherings, their attendance is significantly higher. During these summits, the tetrarchs, some of the most powerful mages in the world, are rendered mere audience to a discussion of global import between the Minister and his Secretaries. By the time a Minister has decided to call a summit, he has already discussed the important matter at hand with his advisors, communed with the Exarchs, and come to a decision. What the tetrarchs see is highly scripted and entirely for show. While the tetrarchs might find such a use of time wasteful, the opportunity to hobnob with other important tetrarchs and even listen to the wisdom of the Minister keeps their complaints unspoken.

A summit called by a Minister inevitably involves one of the tetrarchs deciding that the Minister is not as impressive as she expected and resolving to overthrow him. This usually causes some dissension within the order over the next few years until the matter is resolved. Ministers remain well aware of this probable series of events, which serve to a great extent the reason they so rarely call summits (and generally maintain a distance from their tetrarch followers).



45

12

CHAPTER FOUR: HEADS OF THE HYDRA

Glass crunched under the shoes of the man in white. He drew close to the tangle of metal, crouched down, and coughed quietly. His smile was patient, almost wistful as the broken woman's eyelids half-fluttered open.

"Hi," he said. "Please relax. Everything's going to be all right."

She tried to breathe deeply, but liquid gurgled in her throat. Her eyes flinched.

"Would you like me to help with that pain? It's the least I can do." He folded his fingers into a mudra of supplication, reached out with his mind and pulled. "There. That should do it."

"I... I need a hospital..." she choked.

"I'm afraid that won't do any good. The ambulance won't be here in time. It's a bad night for them to be timely."

"But..."

"Shh. Don't worry. I can't stay with you until they get here, but I can stay with you until the end." He bit his lip as he looked into her eyes.

"I really, really want you to understand this isn't personal." He smiled, his eyes questioning and almost hesitant. "I'm afraid I won't have very long to explain, which is why I hope you'll trust me. It's not about you at all. It's just... the way it has to be. The way it's always had to be."

She tried to speak again, but failed.

"I know. We've done this dance before. We'll do it again — or maybe we won't. Maybe we won't have to." He reached down, closed her eyes with his fingertips. Then he straightened up and walked away, glass crunching underfoot again. A few raindrops were starting to fall. He smiled a little wider.

Am I a god? I see so clearly!
— Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*

Infinite War

The Seers have many agendas. Some of them are the province of a devoted few. Not everyone hunts for the fallen gods or ransacks Atlantean ruins. Other objectives aren't as specialized. All Seers deal with the Iron Pyramid; all of them adjust the machinery of global control, but in these things, experts lead the way. For example, while anyone can study the Exarchs' omens, Skopoi are particularly devoted to the task.

But regardless of focus, every Seer of the Throne points to one common mission: the war on the Pentacle. The Atlantean remnant is the first, greatest enemy. The most faithful Seers believe the Pentacle's fall is preordained, and even that the Exarchs allow its continued defiance to test the resolve of Seers. The enemy can't win but it represents a moral challenge that Seers must fight, regardless. The majority is less zealous; it believes order mages are serious threats. Banishers and Apostates are dangerous rogues, but the Pentacle represents an organized opposition to everything the Exarchs have forged, from the Fallen World's delicate balance of natural law and creeping mystery, to the Exarchs' Thrones in the higher worlds.

Ultimate Objectives

Seers are called Soldiers for a reason: there's a war on, and as far as the Throne's concerned, there always will be. Seers dream of a lasting victory but most of them don't think that's realistic. A few don't even think it's desirable. A Seer's Ministry usually informs her position — or the position she's willing to discuss, at least. The Ministers rave prophecies and write long, allegorical screeds. Tetrarchs and trusted interpreters translate them, sending them down the ranks to create visions of victories, and the plans behind them.

The Hegemonic Ministry wants to enslave the Pentacle. Visionaries see a day when Pentacle mages pay the Throne a tribute in Mana and lore. They're Thralls in this future; they only cast spells to serve their masters. Destroying the orders wouldn't just be unnecessary — it would deprive the Throne of power. Pentacle servants would be the first into the breach in an emergency. Eternal apprentices of the

Throne, they'd devote themselves to the care of particular Seers. They'd be servitors, on par with Hollow Ones or Hive Men. Hegemons imagine a program of Fate-bound oaths and psychic modification powerful enough to be foolproof, but delicate enough to preserve the Awakened soul. These conquered mages wouldn't be permitted to repent and join the Throne. Religious conversion is the Father's business; the Unity is about structured power, where even order mages have a role — they just don't know it yet.

Panopticon's mages aren't interested in Thralls or converts. The Ministry's philosophy is a pragmatic, absolute dictum: kill them all. The Panopticon's obsession with knowledge determines the preferred form of extermination. The Ministry isn't just interested in eradicating order mages wherever it finds them — that's a futile strategy. The war must uproot networks and webs of influence. It must conquer every strand of them, from the greatest Masters to the most distant, unknowing servant. Panopticon strategists believe the best solution is to imprison Atlantean renegades, and interrogate them until they reveal every secret. All that will remain is a shell that submits to torturers utterly and accepts the death that follows. There will be no martyrs, because the victims won't just die in secret, but will welcome death — and even believe they deserve it. Some say the Ministry already has its sorcerers' prison and waits for the appropriate crisis to use it.

The Ministry of Paternoster wants Pentacle mages to convert or die. Hierodules don't act out their wishes in wild killing sprees, of course. Holy war is a calculated, organized activity predicated on practical as well as spiritual benefits. Conquest purifies enemy territory, but it's also *conquest* — it puts more of the world under the Throne's heel, and offers spoils to the victors. Crusades can be lucrative, so Paternoster's Templars don't always pay as much attention to converting heretics as the Father's doctrine says they should. Many hierodules aren't as callous. They'd rather bring order mages into the fold. The rule is "Convert, but verify." The Ministry monitors turncoats for signs of backsliding, and Seers might apply a bit of mind magic to help new Soldiers keep their commitments.

The Praetorian Ministry wants an eternal enemy: a hunted, desperate underclass in the Exarchs' dominion. It might be the most attainable goal of them all and in fact, some Seers believe it's already been won. Praetorians believe that enemies keep the Seers sharp and skilled. The Atlantean orders would play the same role that helots did for the Spartans. Helots were slaves of the military class, but they were also ritual enemies. The Spartans hunted them as a rite of passage and treated them so harshly that they frequently rebelled. The warrior-nobles said they were the living walls of their city, but in fact, they kept themselves ready for battle not to so much to defend their land from invasion, but protect their privileges from revolts — and they were successful, too. Praetorians would keep the Pentacle strong enough to keep Seers alert, but weak enough to control, should anything get out of hand.

Counting Soldiers

How many Seers of the Throne are there? That's an excellent question, if one only the Exarchs know. It's as difficult to measure the sect's numbers as it is to estimate the total number of Awakened mages worldwide. Hermits, hostile Apostates and sorcerers from cultural traditions who don't think they're mages are difficult to count. Even in the Seers, secret pylon and Sleeper agents are examples of groups that make any census impossible to trust. The Ministries conduct them anyway. At the very least, they learn who *can* be counted and who they can summon in emergencies.

The Seers don't know their true numbers but they have a rough idea of how many of them there are relative to other groups. The most common estimate is that barring huge, hidden populations on one side or the other, there are about twice as many Pentacle mages as Seers. This is superficially disturbing, but the standard propaganda line is that as the Throne marches to its inevitable triumph, the renegades' numbers should decrease. Tetrarchy screeds emphasize that the number of order mages relative to the global human population has decreased. The days of village miracle workers are dead and buried. They conveniently omit that the decline is as true for the Seers as their enemies. Tetrarchies quietly worry about the nature, meaning and ultimate limit of the trend.

Secret Mastery

After the conflict with the Pentacle, Sleepers are the other central aspect of Seers' lives. The Oikoumene focuses on this, but all experienced servants of the Throne have special advantages in the mundane world. Where does it all come from? How extensive is it?

This book includes multiple perspectives about the Seers' temporal power. We mention it several times from several angles because this is a critical issue when Storytellers develop their **Mage** chronicle's overarching structure, especially if it includes elements from other games such as **Vampire: The Requiem**. Chapter One says the Throne only *thinks* it influences everything. Chapter Two says it *might*, and this chapter, which puts the Oikoumene Methodology (p. 156) in charge of a major government institution, implies that they probably do. This may infuriate people looking for a "canonical" perspective but it's *all* true, depending on your point of view.

First, understand that Seers relentlessly inundate each other with propaganda. They don't even think of it as lying, really. They need to massage the truth for tactical purposes — to intimidate a rival or build morale, for example. The sect habitually takes credit for events they either didn't influence at all or at best, contributed something minor. They didn't kill John F. Kennedy, but they probably had a man at Dealy Plaza that day who could have acted, but didn't. As Chapter Two notes, the current system is what the Seers want, and it gives them all sorts of gifts without them having to lift a finger. Still, sometimes it's useful to claim responsibility.

On the other hand, Seers *do* meddle in Sleeper affairs. It's a fact. Even though they'd encounter a web of conspiracies vying for control of any organization, the sect's global scale and powerful sorcery practically guarantee that some of these efforts would succeed. It's up to the Storyteller to determine whether the Throne is habitually successful or whether institutions like Famous Gil (see p. 159) are oddities — rare concentrations of power in a world where conspiracies either cancel each other out or aren't especially effective. Remember that as Chapter Two notes, the Throne is more interested in systems than people. It's not the President that matters; it's the dossiers he reads to help him make a decision.

Official Business

Some gamers enjoy a default, "canonical" facts about the World of Darkness. Internet chats and large, networked live action venues (like the Camarilla fan club) sometimes benefit from an "official" nucleus of facts. In truth, there's no World of Darkness independent from your games. Contact with a game inevitably creates a new facet of the World

of Darkness, changing it in some way — but treating it as though there's a central, unchanging core can be provisionally useful. Players who don't know each other personally can share expectations about a common "universe" without having to check with a Storyteller. Therefore, it would be remiss to just throw out possibilities without providing some basic point of view. Tabletop players might find this useful as well, especially if they plan to portray experienced characters who already know some of the setting's secrets. Nevertheless, treat the following statements with caution. They are *in no way* meant to put your game in a straitjacket or provide a "right way" to look at the Seers of the Throne. It's a default position; the Storyteller can change it.

With this in mind, the following three principles encompass the assumed extent of the Throne's influence.

Option: Blind Control

Between the Seers' preference for systemic control and the tetrarchs' firm hand on Throne resources, Seers don't necessarily know as much about their social networks as mages who develop them through personal contacts. If you use player-controlled Seers, the following suggestion reflects that in the chronicle.

When Seers use Status, Allies or Contacts Merits they've earned from Seer or Ministry Status, don't tell the player who her important connections are. Instead, link Merits to code words and secret signs. The Seer doesn't know what the Throne's done in City Hall, but knows the passwords that remind staff of confidential procedures and backroom deals. The Seer knows that other servants of the Exarchs are all around, but doesn't know who they are except on a need-to-know basis, and when it's all over, their faces change.

Conservative Power

Through a combination of luck and deliberate effort, the Seers of the Throne have seen the world change from a realm burning with overt supernatural forces to a place where magic haunts the dark, and people can scarcely conceive taking it into their own hands. Seers say the world belongs to them. This is true in the abstract, at least, because the world is Fallen — a Lie. Humanity careens between rigid hierarchies and lawless, desperation. The only permanent relief is Awakening, but the masses don't know that's even possible.

Everything is as it should be.

Seers help their world stay the course. A regime change at the top of the ranks could change this, but only if a large number of radical tetrarchs decided to work together. In

concert, they could severely damage Sleepers' most important institutions. Seers who'd like to make humanity a technologically primitive species could probably succeed if at least two great Ministries (or three, if one of them was the ailing Hegemonic Ministry) cooperated on the project. That's right: the Seers of the Throne could theoretically destroy civilization. In fact, it would probably be *easier* to do this than to make lasting adjustments to governments, corporations and other power centers. Whether the Throne built the modern world or not, its institutions have accrued incredible power, complexity and resistance to change.

Systemic Power

The Seers of the Throne don't have their hands in every influential institution, but they dominate enough of them to ensure that any Seer with significant Status can expect financial support from at least one local, mundane organization anywhere in the bounds of her native tetrarchy. Additional influence is a function of the character's Ministry (reflected by Ministry Status and the added benefits described in Chapter Two) and personal contacts (based on the character's Merit dots). These wide-ranging benefits are a function of systemic control. The sect's leadership style favors faceless bureaucrats over elite executives and the mob over its charismatic demagogue. Once they have their hooks in, they transform basic policies: military rules of engagement, for instance, or the finer points of a religion's dogma. They dominate followers, not leaders — and those leaders often surprise the sect by making unanticipated decisions. The Seers of the Throne can influence society toward certain tendencies, but it can't dictate exact results except on a very small scale. For instance, it could insert a secret message into mass media, but it couldn't make a major TV network constantly broadcast subliminal propaganda.

When Seer conspiracies lock horns with others, the results are mixed. As most other conspirators work through key individuals they can often achieve their goals without interrupting the Throne's agenda. The sect usually doesn't care if a local vampire gets his pet blood-addicted alderman to rezone a building, and the vampire doesn't care if a copy of the paperwork is always redirected to a certain office. If the conspiracies' goals are at odds, however, the result would probably be a deadlock. Nobody would get anything accomplished. By default, the Throne supports the status quo, but in emergencies this would still be a major obstacle. Therefore, Seers usually keep their hands out of another conspiracy's territory. On the other hand, the Throne isn't so gentle with suspected Pentacle infiltration. They're more than willing to destroy a source of influence rather than let the Atlantean remnant have it. Order mages can inadvertently disrupt society by trying to affect it, because if they Seers can't have it, they might just burn it down.

Tetrarchs Hold All the Keys

If you worry that player-controlled Seers could exert undue influence, don't worry — they don't have a *carte-blanc*he to do what they please. Seers are often hedonists because

a life of luxury isn't a threat to anyone in power. They live in mansions, drive Lamborghinis and own private jets, but know in their hearts that none of it is meaningful, though it's certainly pleasurable. It takes bravery and political sensitivity to not just enjoy power, but use it. Otherwise, the mage risks offending his tetrarchy — and they're the ones that manage the Throne's influence.

Most tetrarchies adopt a reactionary stance. They've already got their hooks in; they don't want to jeopardize their control with radical actions. If a subordinate gets out of line, the tetrarch cuts him off. Most regions reserve a slate of inventive punishments for any Seer who foolishly puts the Throne's temporal power on the line.

Example Influence

Here are a few quick scenarios that demonstrate how the Seers' mundane connections work in the default World of Darkness.

- The Seers of the Throne can't rig elections but they'll tweak party politics to help voters pick from a roster of acceptable candidates.
- The Seers of the Throne can't make the stock market crash, but they can make stock market crashes more or less severe, or make them very likely to happen inside of a loose time frame.
- The Seers of the Throne can't start wars or end them, but they can help them spiral out of control, cool them down to a few skirmishes, or cause diplomatic incidents between countries that already have tense relations.
- The Seers of the Throne can't keep secret military arsenals and private armies, but they can borrow them from security firms or militaries that have been issued fraudulent orders.

Seers can step beyond these examples, but it requires a significant effort and might cause a conflict with another conspiracy, or risks exposing the sect to Sleepers — and most tetrarchs are loath to let things get to that point.

Methodologies

The Seers of the Throne includes a staggering number of secret sects, ceremonial lodges, minor Ministries and multi-pylon fellowships. The sect is overstuffed with them, and it's not uncommon for a Seer to affiliate herself with several organizations simultaneously. As the mage advances, she settles into a mix of factions that suits her talents and

beliefs, while minimizing the risks of divided loyalty. For the most part, every servant of the Throne knows that the Exarchs are the only inescapable masters. Beyond that, ceremonial alliances and games of dominance are only as important as the powers behind them — though some of those powers are very great, indeed. Major Ministries are among them. They're strong enough to keep members in line, but there are times when their size becomes an impediment, too. Traitors hide in the folds of special projects, isolated pylons and secret societies.

Every Ministry aims for self-sufficiency but if each of them developed specialized branches to cover every concern it would create political deadlocks, as yet another layer of society realigned Seer interests. Seers of the Throne naturally strive for power; a faction is an instrument to get it, but often becomes an end in itself. Define a faction, and it will try to conquer its Ministry.

Ministries have specialized positions, not organized divisions inside them. There are a few exceptions like the Hegemonic Ministry's parties, but these are generally intended to benefit the Ministry as a whole, not the sub-sect. (That's why, for example, the Hegemonic parties argue and sharpen their political skills, but their leaders are generally close allies.) The Throne prefers functional, cross-Ministry groups to Ministerial factions. These Methodologies formed to concentrate on practical objectives, but over time they've developed their own positions, customs and specialized resources.

Methodologies in the Hierarchy

A Methodology is typically a pylon-wide affiliation. There are occasional exceptions but for the most part if one pylon member is a Skopos or Oikoumene member, they all are. Seers are supposed to be loyal to their Ministries above all, but the reality on the ground is that a Methodology gives a pylon a compelling, shared purpose. Many care more about that than their Ministry's interests. This is particularly pronounced in the Oikoumene and Skopoi. The Oikoumene concentrate on the masses over the Iron Pyramid, while Skopoi often lose themselves in communion with the Exarchs.

Ministry elders are aware of the problem. They subtly hinder the political prospects of known Methodology-focused pylons. Unfortunately, these groups are goal-oriented veterans in their field. Blocking them from advancing sometimes deprives the Throne of expert leadership. Politicos with unrealistic plans rise to the top instead. This isn't an absolute rule — some tetrarchies are strongly meritocratic — but it does influence things enough to ensure that influence and pragmatism don't always go hand in hand.

Not all Seers belong to a particular Methodology. Some Seers don't want to bother with yet another fraternity, or their interests shift over time. Some of them just don't like any local Methodology representatives. A small number of

Seers drift from one Methodology to another, but that's not as common as it used to be. Each Methodology's suffered a bit of mission creep; they've evolved into complex occult societies. There's occasional rumbling from the Ministries about reforming the system, but organizational inertia makes it unlikely that they'll accomplish this in the future.

The Condecoi: Hostelers and Proxies

The Seers of the Throne have always found their path to power frequently paved with the bodies and minds of their enemies. However, the devastation caused by the Fallen War proved that without at least some rules and protections, the entire order would soon self-destruct. To prevent future conflicts from ripping the order apart and leaving it vulnerable to its enemies, those early Seers established a series of strict rules that governed their behavior. These rules, augmented with suggested practices, allow Seers to interact with one another in ways that permitted a modicum of security, while still allowing ambitious Seers to rise swiftly to the top of the order's hierarchy by any means they could successfully accomplish. Some seek like-minded comrades or fellow mystics and ideologues; others look for assistants for their various projects or allies who they can swear to treaties of mutual defense. A few of the most ambitious and ruthless care only about finding pawns and Thralls who they can use to their own advantage.

Regardless of their reasons, most Seers work best when they can easily gain access to their fellows, and some individuals and pylons seek advantage by making such interactions possible. Known as the Condecoi, these Seers are divided into two distinct and often opposing groups. Hostelers are powerful Seers who maintain secure locations where other Seers can safely meet one another. However, hostelers' services are far from free and any Seer using one of their hostels understands that the hostelers are listening in to their every conversations. In vivid contrast, proxies are Seers who avoid hostels and only meet by using Sleeper Thralls as puppets. In contrast, proxies have exceedingly informal networks that work to keep the members relatively safe.

Stereotypes

Oikoumene: They play well enough with others if you twist their arms into it. But how far can you trust people more interested in the Sleepers than their brothers-in-arms?

Skopoi: They aren't even good at cooperating within their own ranks. Too many of them want to be little baby Ministries instead of a properly united faction.

Hostelers

At the heart of the Condecoi Methodology is the rule established by the truce following the Fallen War, the Law of Hostels. This rule established that certain locations could be designated safe-havens where anyone who attended was bound to not just refrain from attempting to harm anyone present, but also to defend the other mages in this hostel. The establishment of this law soon led to the creation of pylons that gained both power and prestige from administering a hostel. To prevent themselves from becoming obvious targets, the vast majority of Seers who administer hostels do not also make these hostels their own Sanctums. Instead, their Sanctums are just as secret as those of any other Seer. However, information about the location of the hostel is freely available to every local Seer.

Means and Methods

The single most important qualification for administering a hostel is having a reputation for both power and competence. Successfully running a hostel almost always requires the efforts of an entire pylon, but these efforts are in vain if other Seers do not trust that the hostel will be relatively safe. Having a somewhat intimidating reputation also deters most Seers who might consider attacking the hostel as a way to eliminate their enemies. The necessity of having this sort of reputation means that any pylon that administers a hostel is one of the most powerful local pylons.

Hostels are primarily a means of powerful Seers gaining more power rather than a way for new or relatively weak pylons to establish their reputation. Typically, the most powerful pylon in the local area administers the local hostel. In many cases, these pylons also have a significant amount of control over most other nearby pylons.

Even pylons with a reputation for being powerful and effective must also prove their effectiveness and convince local mages to use their hostel. Most pylons use a combination of two methods. First, they make certain that any mage who attempts to attack or otherwise interfere with the operation of their hostel is swiftly captured or killed. Being able to effectively carry out this sort of retribution guarantees that only the most confident or desperate mages will consider attacking the hostel.

When they are establishing a hostel, many pylons personally approach all of the local Seers and use a mixture of bribery and intimidation to convince them to use and help support the establishment. Local Seers are sometimes offered access to some of the hostelers' resources, like Sleeper Thralls, contacts with various important mortal organization or similar benefits. On occasion, hostelers even promise to help patrons from rivals or Pentacle mages even when the patron is not inside the hostel. Mages who refuse these offers are sometimes threatened with various unpleasant consequences that can include active opposition from the hostelers. The more powerful the hostelers, the more likely they are to use threats more than promises.



Motivations

As is true with so much else about the Seers, being a hosteler is about power, specifically power over other Seers. A hostel is difficult and expensive to create and maintain. It must simultaneously be as secure as possible while also being easily accessible to all nearby Seers who wish to use it. Maintaining a hostel is both a path to power and a statement that the pylon administering it possesses an abundance of both power and confidence, and can easily defeat any rivals.

Seers who maintain hostels must constantly protect them against assassins, spies and agents of the Pentacle mages. It's an endeavor that demands vigilance and occasionally life-threatening risk. However, the rewards are substantial. Most large cities or similarly populous regions have a single hostel, which forms the unofficial center for Seer activity in this region. The prestige gained simply by providing a safe, secure and comfortable hostel is considerable.

More importantly, while many pylons who run hostels offer occasional access to local Seers free of any charge or obligation, regular use and any use by outsiders are both regarded as privileges that these Seers must pay for. This payment can take many forms, ranging from money, tass, Imbued Items or similar physical payments such as information, favors, promises of aid, or other intangibles. Also, by virtue of the fact that most local Seers will use their hostel, pylons that maintain hostels have an unparalleled opportunity to watch and influence other Seers. The hostlers can easily observe all interactions that take place in their hostel and almost all Seers who run hostels make certain that they can easily spy upon and record all discussions that occur with their hostel.

Being able to frequently meet most local Seers also allows hostelers to present their agenda to patrons. The fact that these patrons are making use of the hostel means that they understand that listening to the hosteler's proposals is part of the exchange involved in this service. Since hostelers are expected to also have considerable stores of knowledge about their patrons' weaknesses and vulnerabilities, requests for alliance or assistance from the local hostelers usually carries an implied threat to those who consider refusing.

Hostelers in Power

In most cities and other regions that support a hostel, the pylon or alliance of pylons that runs the hostel are the most powerful Seers in the area. In addition to having to be sufficiently powerful to resist almost all threats, hostelers' power is usually self-reinforcing. Because they run a successful hostel, these Condecoi can extract various payments from those who use it, enabling them to further increase their power and in many cases charge even greater fees for use of their hostel.

Powerful hostels sometimes are in a position to make certain that almost all local Seers attend their hostel at

least occasionally. They hold local meetings and "encourage" every nearby Seer to attend. Often this encouragement includes various veiled threats as well as promises of access to various valuable services.

Many hostelers hope to make their hostel into a Demesne, and the ultimate hostel Demesne is one where the needed soul stones come from Seers who use the hostel, and not from any of the hostelers themselves. Accomplishing this requires significant power and often equally great amounts of coercion, threats and blackmail. However, many of the most powerful hostels are based on Demesnes empowered by the soul stones of other Seers.

Competition

Attending hostels can be costly and also highly problematic if the agenda of the Condecoi pylon in charge is at odds with the visitor's own agenda. When faced with a hostel run by their opponents, some pylons found a competing hostel. However, unless the pylon is well supplied with resources and allies, this effort can be exceptionally difficult. Almost all pylons that run hostels consider any other hostels within the local area to be competitors that must be destroyed by any means necessary. Using tactics ranging from smear campaigns and espionage to open attacks or on rare occasions informing Pentacle mages of the location of the rival hostel, fights between rival hostels can be exceptionally fierce and deadly.

In some cases, this dispute can be resolved through some sort of alliance where the two rival pylons link their hostels and their goals and work together. In the most extreme cases, one pylon becomes the vassal of the other, or the two pylons actually join and become one. On other occasions, the situation eventually resolves itself peacefully because there has been an influx of Seers into the area, and more than one hostel is needed.

Unfortunately, most situations involving competing hostels are far more difficult to result. Often the only resolution is the destruction of one, or occasionally both of the hostels. If the two pylons and their allies are evenly matched, one group may either attempt to buy the other one off, encourage them to either set up their hostel in another city or close their hostel, in return for various services and payments. Powerful pylons sometimes set up rival hostels solely to threaten the power-base of the local hostelers and then bargain for a payment to close their rival hostel. If the rivals are significantly weaker than the hostlers they are going against, the result of this tactic is usually swift and deadly, but this tactic is often a rapid and highly effective method of obtaining various concessions from an evenly matched enemy.

The most difficult aspect of any conflict between local hostels is that by their nature these conflicts make both hostels considerably less safe. Few Seers wish to use a hostel when they know that by using it they are effectively making themselves the enemies of the pylon running the

Transport Nexuses

One service that the most powerful and well-connected hostels offer is that ability to teleport safely across the globe. Many of the strongest entrenched hostels are built on Demesnes. Because using the Space rites "Portal" or "Teleportation" to travel between two Demesnes incurs no Paradox, this is by far the easiest method of travel available to mages with access to such locations.

To create transport nexuses, hostels in different cities, or often on different continents must agree to create special locations within their Demesnes that Seers can use to move between using Space magic. These nexuses are always either located in separate and well guarded rooms within the Demesne, or if possible, in a separate building attached to the main building of the Demesne by thick walls and heavily reinforced doors.

Naturally, a transport nexus is always well defended. Many of these nexuses are imbued with various warding spells against divination as well as Prime magic to detect and dispel hostile magic. The rest are monitored by a Seer or perhaps a servitor like a bound spirit or ghost to make certain that no one shows up without permission and that the nexuses are not used as a focus for hostile magic.

Condecoi who use transport nexuses include or employ Disciples or Adepts of Space who are willing to transport other Seers for the appropriate payment. Typically, the passenger is blindfolded before she enters the nexus and scrutinized to make certain she cannot use magic to learn anything about either nexuses. Then a hosteler sends the mage to her destination. When the passenger arrives, the hostelers who run that transport nexus escort her out and removes her blindfold. Linked nexuses always contain intimate connections to all of the other transport nexuses they are used to connect to. Powerful hostels often contain transport nexuses that connect to half a dozen or more other hostels across the world.

The most difficult part of constructing transport nexuses is working out the alliances between the different hostels in the transport network. Most often, these alliances only occur between hostels where the mages involved are all part of the same Ministry. However, occasionally pylons from widely separated locations decide that their interests are sufficiently divergent that there is no reason to not ally with one another in this fashion. Pylons located on different continents gain much by sharing transport nexuses and rarely have a pressing reason for conflict.

competing hostel. Also, the risk of attack on a hostel is far greater during such a conflict. As a result, unless the competition between two local hostels has escalated into open warfare, both hostels usually do their best to publicly downplay any conflict.

Proxies

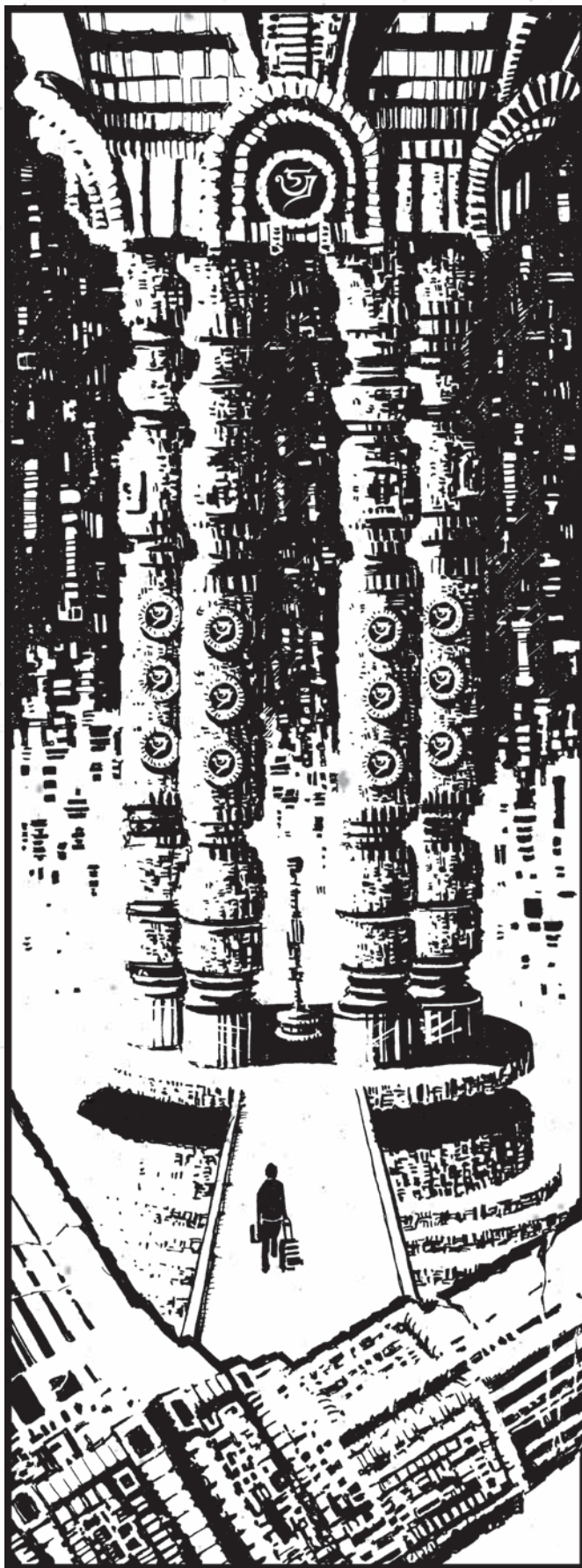
The costs of founding a hostel are, as mentioned previously, exorbitant. This can tempt Condecoi into breaking the Law of Hostels. In a few regions, the hostels are notoriously poor; anyone using them risks having their conversations overheard by their enemies and occasionally even being attacked by these same enemies. In more, any Seer whose goals are opposed to those of the mages running the local hostel knows that any plans made within this hostel will be overheard by the hostelers and used to advance their goals.

However, Seers need to meet, share information and find allies. Since the earliest days of the Seers, some have found an alternative to hostels — proxies. Proxies are pup-

pets, typically Sleeper Thralls. Any Seer who is either an Adept of Mind or possesses a Profane Urim can transform a Sleeper into a proxy. This Seer can then contact their fellows by various means and arrange for the Thrall they are puppeting to meet the mages' allies in some location. Some Condecoi specialize in arranging meetings of this nature, usually those who for whatever reason will not or cannot become hostelers.

This location need not be secure against attack, since at worst the result is a handful of dead or injured Sleepers who the Seers do not care about. Also, since the location need not be secure, it can be different every time and so the possibility of being spied upon by outsiders is quite low. Seers who are especially paranoid may use a different enthralled Sleeper each time they attend one of these proxy meetings.

One of the major challenges of using proxies is the issue of identity. The mage behind the proxy may claim to be another Seer's ally, but in reality could be anyone, including a bitter rival or even a Pentacle spy. Individuals



who meet as proxies usually share various bits of personal information with one another in an attempt to make certain that they will be able to discern if someone who claims to be a proxy they know is lying and also to make themselves difficult to impersonate. However, most Seers who use proxies are exceedingly cautious, if not overtly paranoid and worry about such personal details being used to learn their true identities. As a result, many of these personal details are lies, but they are sufficiently idiosyncratic lies that they function as useful tests of identity. As a result, many meetings of proxies begin with a short series of questions where each individual attempts to see if the individuals present are actually who they claim to be. Using proxies is cumbersome and sometimes relatively tricky, but it is also by far the safest means for Seers to meet.

Proxies vs. Hostlers

If too many local mages use proxies, then the local hostlers become increasingly marginalized and their power and status is reduced. As a result, some hostlers simultaneously use two tactics to reduce the number and importance of proxies. Many hostlers offer various useful services to their patrons. In addition, many hostlers attempt to keep track of the proxies in their local area and determine the true identity of the proxy users. Often, hostlers offer the identities of local proxy users who do not patronize their hostel for sale to their own patrons or refrain from doing so only because the proxy-user is willing to pay the hostlers for the privilege.

Although proxies are usually less powerful and organized than hostlers, most are determined to maintain their freedom from external control. While proxies rarely have the established power base of hostlers, the skilled ones remain completely anonymous and so are very difficult for their enemies to locate. In addition, they often use their Thralls to spy on hostlers and hostlers. In addition to attempting to find weaknesses in the local hostel that they will then relate to hostel users, they also monitor the hostlers and look for any hints that the hostlers are secretly using or plotting against their patrons.

If hostilities between hostlers and some of the local proxy users become sufficiently extreme, proxies can begin attacking the hostel or the individual Sanctums of the hostlers. In more stable regions, hostlers and proxies most often co-exist in a fragile and unofficial truce. Other Methodologies look askance at this schizoid split down the middle of the Condecoi, but the Condecoi have survived this far all the same.

I'd like to say I'd be happy to leave you to slit each other's throats. But I can't say that, because I have enough perspective to see that you killing each other would be ultimately pointless. Now put your claws back in, sit down, and have something to drink.

Condecoi Pylon: The Brethren of Meeting

Being able to use proxies for meetings with other Seers is widely regarded as the safest way to interact with anyone but one's closest allies. Unfortunately, the ability to do this is limited to a relatively small number of mages. Only Adepts of Mind, Seers who own a Profane Urim and to a lesser extent, Adepts of Space (who use Co-Location as an alternative to possessing a Sleeper) can meet by proxy. As a result, the ranks of Seers who use this method of meeting are heavily biased towards Mastigos mages. The Brethren of Meeting was founded in the early 19th century by a pair of ambitious pylons who had both been helping other Seers who were not skilled in either the Mind or Space Arcana to use proxies to attend meetings.

Both groups began creating items imbued with Mind or Space powers and selling them to other Seers in return for various sorts of payment, most often including favors or other forms of political advantage. One of the pylons who had been doing this was located in London, while the other was in Chicago, but once they discovered each other, the two pylons began working together and soon had amassed significant amounts of power.

In 1831, the two pylons formally joined and called themselves the Brethren of Meeting. Their first major project involved the creation of soulless, Sleeper Thralls who were devoid of Willpower. These Thralls were fitted with jewelry that allowed the owner to control them at any range. Although they still provide these Thralls, creating them and the imbued item needed to control them is difficult and time consuming. Over the next several decades, the Brethren of Meeting experimented with a number of alternatives to traditional proxies, including creating secure meeting places in both the Shadow World and the Underworld. Both of these meeting places also remain available today, but are also little used because the Brethren have developed better alternatives.

With the development and spread of telephone services and more recently the Internet, the Brethren developed conference call lines, chat-rooms and most recently, web-cam based real-time audiovisual communication. They render these methods of electronic communication exceptionally secure by using various protective magic to make certain no one can trace the location of any of the calls or use the electronic connection to target spells at any of the participants. With every imbued item, chat room or other service offered by the Brethren, they also offer the resources of their organization to defend anyone who is attacked or threatened due to any

fault in any of the services offered by the Brethren. However, their services are far from cheap.

The Meeting Realm

To facilitate confidential meetings between Seers, the Brethren developed a special hostel that was unusually secure and that could be accessed anywhere in the world. To accomplish both goals, they created a hostel in the Astral Realm. This same realm is also occasionally used as a meeting place between Seers and highly placed Pentacle mages who the Seers are attempting to corrupt.

The Brethren's small Astral Realm is the result of several decades of work by more than a dozen mages. It is located in an otherwise isolated portion of Temenos. In form, it is a huge and sprawling Victorian mansion with four floors and several dozen large rooms. This house has only tenuous connections to the rest of Temenos because it is actually a previously isolated realm (*Astral Realms*, pp. 68-69). The members of the Brethren of Meeting discovered, sculpted, and stabilized it by reconnecting it to another realm in Temenos. The Meeting Realm is now *Distantly Related* (*Astral Realms*, pp. 68-69) to a realm that is a version of early 20th century San Francisco just before the 1906 earthquake, and that realm is *Related* to the Metropolis. However, because the Meeting Realm has only one connection to the rest of Temenos, and this connection is not especially obvious to those inside, it remains very secure.

From the inside, the windows of the Meeting Room always reveal pleasant noonday seascapes, as if the house was located on a narrow spit of land almost completely surrounded by the sea; however, the windows cannot be opened. The front door also remains closed unless the person attempting to open it knows of the connection to the 1906 San Francisco realm. The back door has no connection to other realms, but is the most common entrance to the Meeting Realm.

Visiting the Meeting Realm is exceptionally difficult, unless the mage possesses a key. These keys are shortcuts to this realm (*Astral Realms*, pp. 56-57) and take the form of identical old brass house keys that are all identical except for a different number printed on each key. The Brethren create these keys in the Meeting Realm and then use Chimerical Conjunction (*Astral Realms*, p. 118) to transport them to the Fallen World. To use the key, the bearer need only spend a point of Mana and roll eight successes on an extended

meditation roll. Once the mage successfully completes this roll, she finds herself (and any companions she chooses to take with her) standing in the enclosed back porch of the Meeting Realm, with the key in the lock of the back door. The back door is unlocked, and the mage holding the key need only push it open to enter the realm.

The Brethren keeps careful track of each key. This process is aided by the fact that every key is part of a pair of identical keys, and the Brethren keeps the mate to every key they give out and use it as an *Intimate* sympathetic connection to the person holding the key. Naturally, the Brethren do not advertise this connection. Keys to the Meeting Realm may not be transferred to another individual without the explicit permission of the Brethren. The key will vanish if the holder attempts to transfer it to another person, and the Brethren will use Space magic to return it to them. Also, they forever refuse to work with anyone who flaunts their rules and gives a key to anyone without their permission.

Current Status

In addition to attempting to attract increasing numbers of proxy-users, the Brethren of Meeting also work with the possibilities inherent in the Astral Realm to add additional capabilities to their Meeting Realm. Specifically, they are seeking to create or steal an astral device similar to the *globe of transfer* (*Astral Realms*, p. 123) to allow visitors to this realm to temporarily switch bodies with sleeping mortals and mages. They are also attempting to create some form of physical or semi-physical gateway from the Fallen World to the Meeting Realm.

The Brethren of Meeting have also been making alliances with various powerful astral archetypes for protection and information. In addition to gaining various promises of aid if their realm is attacked, the Brethren also has four astral bubbles (*Astral Realms*, pp 118-119) that can be used to keep a target trapped in the Astral Realm indefinitely. As well as the threat of these items being used against attackers, the Brethren also offers to loan one of these items to regular customers in return for a sufficiently high payment. Such loans are typically for between one week and one month.

Today, the Brethren of Meeting is a growing organization with 21 members. It is controlled by Victoria Sanchez, the 67-year-old leader of the organization. The Brethren now possesses substantial wealth as well as a moderate number of useful Artifacts. However, several pylons that run conventional hostels are jealous of their power and two of these pylons are currently plotting against the Brethren. The potential for using a stable base in Temenos to spy on others has also not escaped the attention of the Panopticon, who have attempted to forge a close alliance with the Brethren of Meeting. The Brethren is perfectly willing to accept clients who belong to the Panopticon, but Sanchez and the other senior members have no interest in seeing their organization become a branch of the Servants of the Eye and thus reject all offers of an actual alliance.



The Oikoumene: Sentinels and Plutocrats

All Seers meddle in Sleeper power structures. The Oikoumene specialize in it. They're humanity's jailer-protectors. There is a natural dyad between Quiescent ignorance and Supernal purity; the Oikoumene preserve the divide, lest humanity sully the Exarchs' kingdom, pierce the Veil and destroy itself. In a more pragmatic mood, the same Seers will tell you that they just *like* power. They deserve it too; they're world's philosopher-sentinels. Luxury and power make the job tolerable and give them the tools they need to move the masses. The Exarchs promise Ascension to the worthy, but they lay onerous duties to those who'd climb their Iron Pyramid. Seers of the Throne don't believe in an ascetic ideal. Enlightenment isn't an ethereal state, but a material one. As the mage's insight grows, temporal rewards should manifest accordingly. The Oikoumene are always the first to seize those rewards. Doesn't that signify some secret insight to enlightenment? If wealth is virtue, the Oikoumene are the most virtuous Seers of all.

Guarding the Heavens from the Earth

Oikoumene Seers believe in two basic duties. First, they keep human beings from offending the Exarchs. Sleepers shouldn't utter the smallest syllable of High Speech or so much as touch anything that bends the laws of Fallen reality. These things are forbidden them. Paternoster members feel most strongly about this, but all Oikoumene feel a twinge of disgust when they contemplate stupid, blind mundanes thumbing through grimoires and calling spirits. The only thing that's worse is a Pentacle renegade stealing supernatural resources. Even when a Mysterium heretic "invents" a spell, she really steals Supernal thoughtforms from the Exarchs' dreams. Everything spills down from the Iron Seals' divine thrones; outside of the Seers, human beings are only meant to see the Fallen World's physics and vague fears. The ignorant and disloyal are forbidden true miracles; those are for the Throne alone.

Creation is full of mysteries. The Exarchs left behind hints to guide their servants or intrusions from unclean supernatural powers, but either way, they need to be hidden from profane eyes. The Oikoumene investigates strange phenomena for signs of the Exarchs' presence. If they can't find them (and they usually can't) they'll evaluate and classify an enigma as a useful resource, threat or both. If it's useful they seize it, using magic to remove rogue elements such as angry ghosts and foul resonance. If it's too dangerous for that, the Methodology either destroys it or binds its energies with spells. In either case, Oikoumene Seers hide these phenomena. They throw cloaks of illusion over misshapen forests and wipe cursed streets off the map.

The World Is Ours

The Oikoumene's second duty is to keep humanity safe, secure — and fast Asleep. However, just because they protect humanity doesn't mean that individual humans are particularly important. The Methodology's name is Greek for "the inhabited world" and represents the broadest perspective — a fitting point of view for an organization ensconced in the highest levels of politics and commerce.

This viewpoint allows them to approach the world with a different perspective than other Seers. Most servants of the Throne have a concept for Seers that leads to them choosing power structures over individuals. They just don't want to deal with petty Sleeper impulses. The Oikoumene is different; they love elite individuals, too. A factory worker or desk jockey doesn't matter, but her boss does; below the wealthy and powerful, individuals matter less — it's all about trends, demographics and the mob. One worker doesn't matter, but her union does. A city clerk is just a machine that processes paper and data, but City Hall is an organism made of dozens of people wearing the building as a skin. It has twitching nerves of data and unrealized group urges. The Oikoumene isn't arrogant enough to believe that the mundane mob is one, undifferentiated leviathan. There are ecosystems of great beasts: companies, governments, universities and political movements. They all require nourishment and excrete a specialized filth in their wake. The sect structures these animals into an ecosystem and spreads the excrement around. The result isn't sustainable, but that's by design. It wouldn't do for the Sleepers to run their own lives.

Let's drop the façade of concern for their welfare though, and state the obvious: power is glorious, and to the Oikoumene, richly deserved — a sign of the Exarchs' favor, in fact. They made the world to imprison humanity but structured it to reward the jailers, too. An outsider could call this attitude completely self-serving. The Oikoumene agree, because *that's the point*. Humility, frugality and restraint are all forms of social control. They're for Sleepers. Seers of the Throne are responsible to higher powers. They have well-defined duties that replace the Sleepers' abstract morals and ethics. If it is not forbidden from on high, it's more than permissible — it's a right. Sleepers are the garden from which the enlightened feed. All its wealth, power and beauty belong to the Throne.

Oikoumene in Power

Despite their high-handed attitudes about Sleepers, the Oikoumene love them after a fashion, and even prefer their company to other mages'. That's why they take a relaxed approach to the Iron Pyramid. Awakened politics doesn't matter as much as the mundane world. The Exarchs charged them with ruling the world, and they do it; they don't waste time sorting out the particulars with higher-ups. A few dissenters find this frustrating. Ascension into the Exarchs' arms is the goal, isn't it? Oikoumene mages justify lax ambitions with faith — or at least the appearance of faith. They're the

The Power of Money

Oikoumene pylons are either rich, or mocked. Wealth is almost always a prerequisite for a good reputation because even if Methodology members don't believe that wealth is the Exarchs' blessing, they feel compelled to *act* that way for political reasons: Desire wealth and you'll want the power to get it — and if you want that, you'll seize it and in doing so, serve the Oikoumene's agenda. Naturally, the Methodology doesn't give it away for free, either. Members will never give out loans. They will, however, participate in joint ventures and share wealth-generating tips: everything from insider stock hints to money-attracting magic.

Mages from the Ministry of Mammon make excellent Oikoumene. They typically enter the Methodology with superior financial skills and personal wealth. Rivals argue that Ministry training and resources constitute a form of "cheating" when it comes to measuring worth by wealth, but Mammon mages now control some of the Oikoumene's most impressive assets, and dominate key projects.

world's wardens. The Exarchs will know their service and reward them. Besides, it's not as if the fringe benefits aren't appealing, and Seers who secretly doubt the Exarchs are real or benevolent can at least take refuge in material gifts.

Oikoumene pylons don't like to directly assert themselves over other Seers, but they don't like to share their influence either. Inferior pylons discover that they just can't influence mundane affairs without the lead pylon's help. Influential Oikoumene cults are usually powerful enough to cultivate the mundane power they really desire, and they acquire an unparalleled understanding of the local "lay of the land," including political, economic and supernatural factors.

A strong pylon forges symbiotic relationships with other Methodologies. These aren't harmonious — every pylon still tries to dominate the others — but they still combine strengths. Oikoumene mages may not like internal politics but they understand its advantages, so they first forge alliances with Seers who have some influence in the greater Throne. The Oikoumene gain an advocate with the tetrarchy; the other pylon taps into its partner's wealth and connections. This web of power disorients Seers who are more used to a classic, hierarchical Iron Pyramid. This makes Oikoumene-dominated cities unstable places, where local pylons constantly barter over territorial matters, favor trading, and just like to test each other's resolve.

Oikoumene and the Veil

In the Methodology's hands, the Veil transforms from a pragmatic guideline to holy writ. Of all the Seer Methodologies, the Oikoumene is the most devoted to hiding the Art and the most conservative when it comes to borderline cases. In the main, Seers of the Throne don't want people to be utter skeptics (credulity and a belief in miracles are both excellent levers for control) but they don't want any mundane to get the idea that he can *control* mysterious forces, either. The Oikoumene severely punishes its own when they breach the Veil. It uses political connections to chastise outsiders, too.

The easiest way to control knowledge is to control institutions that disseminate it. The Oikoumene is certainly interested in media and academia, but doesn't believe that these are the only channels worth controlling. Any influential institution should either be theirs to command, or under the stewardship of other Seers who can be trusted not to screw things up. In truth, this broad approach to institutional control was originally more blatantly self-serving, and for a simple reason: members enjoy power.

This strategy ended up being a prescient one due to the way the Internet has decentralized communication. It isn't enough to control the networks; the "series of tubes" that drives online discourse need monitors and censors, too. Oikoumene also saturate all media with materialistic, fear-inducing propaganda. Someone needs to tell the wealthy to fear the poor, the poor to fear for their lives, and the middle class to either ward off poverty with the magic of credit and buy, buy, buy to *look* wealthy.

Remember that the Methodology also protects Sleepers, though. There's a conflict between keeping the masses weak and protecting them. A weak, ignorant human race is locked into an unsustainable pattern. This is partly intentional; should worse come to worse, the Methodology can throw a "kill switch" on Sleeper infrastructures. Occasionally, the Oikoumene must administer brutal "corrections" to keep civilization from collapsing. Inside the Seers, it's believed that Oikoumene mages prevented the Cold War from going nuclear and that the Methodology has a plan for global warming, too — though like the Cold War, the solution won't be comfortable. For humanity to live, some humans — sometimes, a *lot* of humans — need to die.

Stereotypes

Condecoi: Let them run the network. The Exarchs know our service is relevant to the world, and not just our own little club.

Skopoi: The Exarchs' want us to watch the Lie, not the Supernal Realms. Our masters will make their wills known — we don't have to ask them about it.

Appearance: Oikoumene dress well. They wear bespoke clothing, favor expensive jewelry and are never seen without some cutting edge symbol of affluence. Junior members of the Methodology often take this to extremes and look vulgar, *nouveau-riche*. They eventually get the hang of appearing gracefully affluent but rarely go for extreme understatement. There's no shame in wealth, as long as it's displayed tastefully. It's a mark of the Exarchs' grace. Consequently, Oikoumene use precious metals and gems in their dedicated tools. Rods of carved ivory and platinum pectorals remind them that there's power in the world, and that it has real, effective signs. Wealth is the least of them.

Sanctum: An ideal Oikoumene Sanctum includes luxurious living quarters for all members, guest rooms, dedicated ritual spaces inlaid with High Speech runes and the Iron Seals, huge offices, meeting rooms and a live-in staff who've been rigorously conditioned to obey their masters and keep their mouths shut.

The ideal Sanctum is impressive but it's also incredibly expensive. It needs a lot of space too: a mansion or the top few floors of an exclusive office building or condominium will suffice. Pylons that can't afford them go for less elaborate (but still, richly appointed) spaces, but it's embarrassing to fall short of the standard.

Background: Just as the Methodology believes wealth and power belong to the Exarchs' best servants, it holds to the converse: mages that are already rich or influential might be destined to join the cause, because they already enjoy the Exarchs' favor. This bias helps the Oikoumene in turn, because wealthy recruits channel their considerable wealth into Methodology projects.

On the other hand, the Oikoumene can't wait for politicians and plutocrats to Awaken, so it also looks for talented materialistic and ambitious mages — people who haven't necessarily been treated well in life, but have what it takes to turn things around. These mages aren't as well regarded as elite entrants but they can make up for their humble origins with hard work, especially if they use it to build pylon resources. The Methodology doesn't like it when they coast on Seer privileges instead, but it will usually wait until a lazy or unlucky member spends about a year failing before stepping in. After that, a novice had better command some impressive sorcery, lest his seniors suggest that he leave the Oikoumene for a less demanding organization.

Some neophytes still coast by on occult talent. The Methodology keeps these antisocial magical prodigies in the fold, but watches them. The Exarchs obviously have plans for them, but if so, they're outside the Methodology's core focus — a mystery that will reveal itself over time. These Seers traditionally serve as Arcanists.

Organization: An Oikoumene pylon distributes a standard set of positions among its members. In smaller



pylons, Seers assume multiple titles and balance their duties as best they can. If one pylon has another under its thumb, subordinates serve as deputy members of a shared office. Theoretically, no position confers more status than any other but as you read on you'll see that every title has a definite impact on the holder's reputation.

Arcanist: Arcanists investigate supernatural phenomena and direct responses to them. This is a job for the pylon's best occult scholars, but it usually falls on sorcerers who aren't the best at managing worldly influence, regardless of their esoteric knowledge. It's dangerous, complicated work; Oikoumene mages think it's a dead-end position. Occasionally, the Methodology changes its tune, however. When Arcanists uncover strong Hallows, close dangerous Verge or defeat marauding cryptids, they grow from obscure scholars to popular heroes — and once the deed's forgotten, they usually return to anonymity.

Comptroller: The pylon's most trusted Seer manages its wealth. The Methodology respects these Comptrollers for their prudence and (among fellow Seers) honesty, but the job lacks spectacular moments. Accounting just doesn't give the mage much to brag about. A Comptroller is a pillar of the Oikoumene and usually takes the role of advisor, or second in command. They rarely lead pylons, as they're thought to lack creativity and drive.

Emissary: This Seer deals with the interpersonal aspects of temporal power. She uses blackmail to squeeze executives. She lobbies politicians and on occasion, takes office

herself. Most Emissaries avoid the latter because it opens them to unwelcome scrutiny, but a few live perfect double lives. Like Comptrollers, Emissaries gravitate toward the second position in a pylon.

Exchequer: Comptrollers manage the pylon's resources, but Exchequers develop them with legal, criminal and magical schemes. They influence Sleepers' economic institutions for the pylon's benefit. They seize controlling interests in corporations, redirect money from government budgets and even skim a bit off the mob. Whenever the pylon has services to sell, the Exchequer makes the deal; she sets the price of Mana, spells and other offerings. Exchequers often lead their pylons because spectacular successes vault them to prominence — but when they fail big, they're finished.

Protector: A Protector ranges across her pylon's territory in search of threats to the mundane community. She isn't worried about ordinary problems like murderers and thieves, but supernatural phenomena, or hazards that endanger the community's existence. Perhaps half of this office's holders are capable fighters, but most of them just know how to direct pylon resources to defeat the danger. A strong Protector holds the pylon together because she needs to coordinate their abilities against significant threats, but they're not great leaders — they're too busy working.

Concepts: CEO, old money dilettante, parapsychologist, spin doctor, mob boss, accounting genius, stockbroker, political scientist

This is our world. Sleepers just live in it.

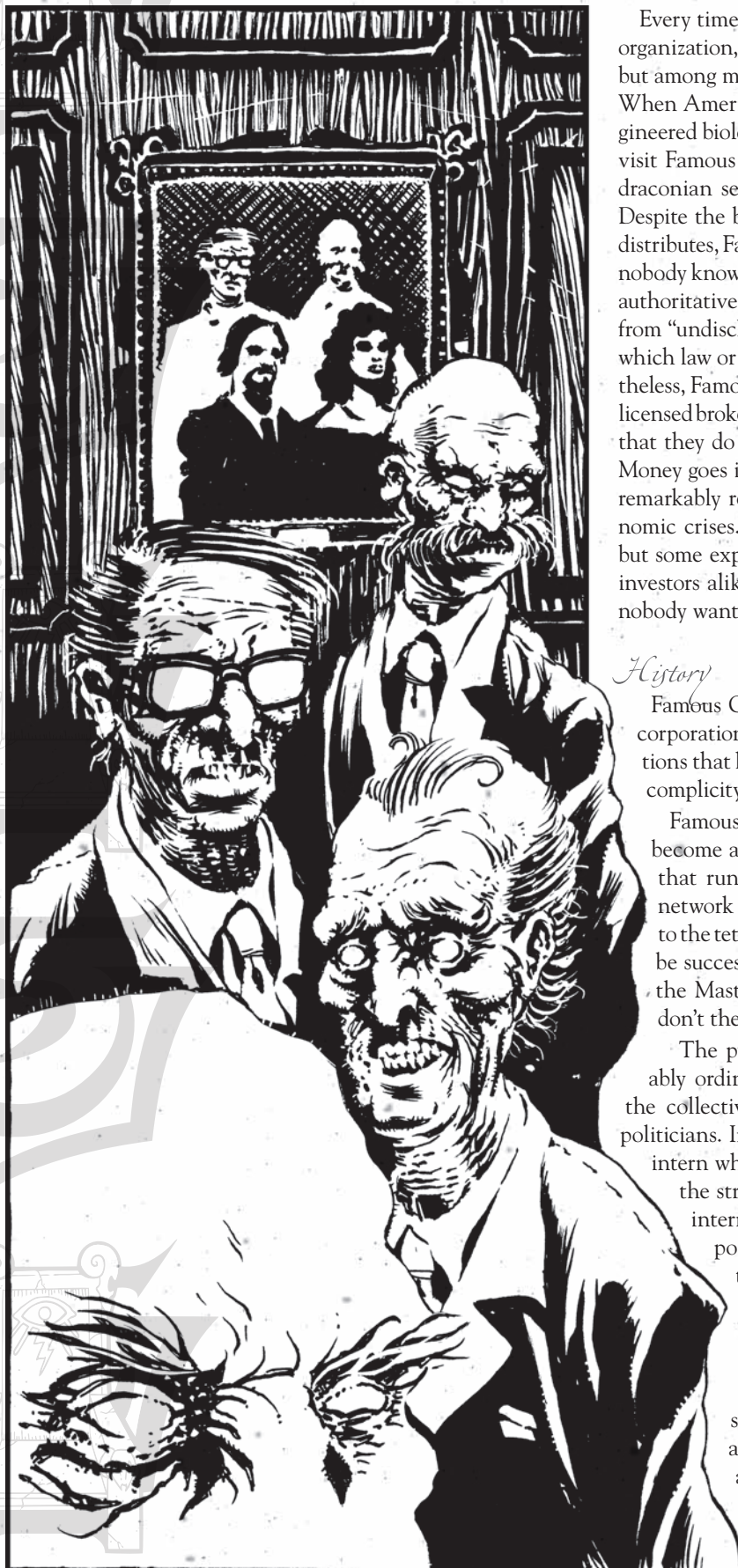
Oikoumene Pylon: The Board of Famous Gil

The Federal Management Agency for Government Industry Loans (FGL on the New York Stock Exchange) is the United States' most obscure government-sponsored enterprise. Insiders turned its acronym into "Famous Gil" out of irony, since it isn't well known at all. It isn't beholden to normal corporate reporting duties, rarely appears in the press and it discourages public discussion of its activities. Like other government enterprises such as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, Famous Gil now uses the nickname in its own branding and communications. Its right to secrecy and vague mission is spelled out in a Byzantine arrangement of riders on unrelated laws, executive orders and federal policy statements.

United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt laid the groundwork in 1940. He created a separate accounting structure for some aspects of war materiel production. The executive order was based on the idea that some production needed to remain secret in order to avoid Nazi espionage. The US was helping Britain at the time even though it

was technically a neutral power. Roosevelt issued the order quietly to avoid political complications. The executive order was never assigned a number and today it is only known to a handful of academics and politicians.

Secret military industries bloomed after America entered the war. Once history slid into the Cold War, these black projects turned into a secret parallel economy; a market driven by fantasy and fear, not normal economic demands. Famous Gil got bigger and turned into an essential economic service. It not only outlasted the fall of the Soviet Union but got even bigger, feeding from position papers about the need for "less lethal" weapons and innovative counterterrorism technologies. After the September 11, 2001 attacks, a few vague USAPATRIOT clauses and policy shifts solidified its autonomy from the government on the rationale that in an emergency, Famous Gil would control an alternative military-industrial infrastructure in case the economic system collapsed under terrorist assault.



Every time anyone came close to shedding light on the organization, new regulations popped up to keep it hidden, but among multinational corporations it's an open secret. When America wants stealth technology, genetically engineered biological weapons or particle beams, companies visit Famous Gil with hats in hand, willing to abide by draconian security policies in exchange for huge loans. Despite the bizarre projects it sponsors and the money it distributes, Famous Gil's books *look* balanced, but honestly, nobody knows enough about what they can see to make an authoritative judgment. Giant line items report earnings from "undisclosed investments," followed by a note about which law or policy bans the data from plain view. Nevertheless, Famous Gil is semi-publicly traded, in that certain licensed brokers can purchase stock with the understanding that they do not have conventional shareholders' rights. Money goes in; more money comes out. The enterprise is remarkably resilient and even performs well during economic crises. Famous Gil's portfolio is hard to estimate, but some experts place it at \$125 billion. For clients and investors alike, it's the world's most expensive gift horse; nobody wants to look it in the mouth.

History

Famous Gil has some advantages no other agency or corporation can boast of. One is the convenient regulations that hide it; another is the corporate community's complicity. Magic and petty ambition is to blame.

Famous Gil is an Oikoumene triumph, but it might become a victim of its own success. The four Masters that run it share little of their influence outside a network of loyal Thralls and show no signs of aspiring to the tetrarchy, retiring or dying. Nevertheless, would-be successors crowd around the organization because the Masters are old — they've got to die sometime, don't they?

The pylon began with a dream. It was a remarkably ordinary dream, but that's what let it fly under the collective radar of rival Seers, witch hunters and politicians. In 1938, founder Bozidar was a White House intern who Awakened and joined the Oikoumene on the strength of his connections. He wasn't a great intern or insightful sorcerer, but he knew how to pool both meager talents into something greater than their parts. His original pylon didn't have much hope for him. They gave him a vague mandate to "make us some money from the coming war, will you?"

His big chance came when a White House staffer couched the question of how to hide aspects of war production in a hypothetical allegory. He asked Bozidar what to do. The Seer's answer made it to Roosevelt and as a result, the young mage won a roomful of accountants and Top Secret clearance.

Line Items

Famous Gil has its hand in numerous black budgets, including those belonging to organizations that, if they knew who provided the funds, would probably try to take out the Board, dismantle the enterprise and hold accountable anyone who helped create this immense offense to democracy and applied economics. The Board not only doesn't care, but barely even scrutinizes these loans because they produce real products and services. These don't pay the same margins as fraudulent items, and don't need as much protection from whistleblowers.

The enterprise focuses on experimental military technology. It might have backed the small R&D firms that developed Task Force: VALKYRIE's equipment, or shot a few million to the Cheiron Group for no-questions-asked "human enhancement research." (See **Hunter: The Vigil** for information about these organizations.) The Board haphazardly audits its interests to claw in technology that might be useful. A Seer analyst might follow up on a note marked "R&D - TFV" and encounter "men in black" who are very, very unhappy to see her.

That gave him ideas. He recruited some junior Seers, cast a few spells and after the US entered the war, transformed his office into Black Budget Central for the United States. He gave his old pylon a few million dollars and left, and then he founded Famous Gil's Board. Over the next 60-odd years he nurtured it into the rickety financial powerhouse it is today.

Bozidar dealt with other Seers' inquiries with a direct approach: he bribed them. As Famous Gil acquired more protection from outside scrutiny (thanks to a mix of more bribes and some psychic tinkering by Chernobog, the Board's Mastigos) this got easier and easier to do, until the bribes transformed into legal loans, budgetary waste turned into experimental research and Famous Gil became a vital part of the military-industrial complex.

The Accountant Has No Clothes

The enterprise's ruling pylon theoretically has access to a number of strange and potent experimental technologies: cameras that see ghosts and gill implants, for example. Most of its investments are a bust, however. Particle beams still aren't cost effective and no drug can block Awakening. Fortunately, even these investments are useful. A lot

of powerful people owe Famous Gil their jobs, and loan kickbacks make every Board member a billionaire.

There's just one problem. There isn't any money — at least there wouldn't be under any sane accounting regime. There hasn't been any for about a decade. Antiterrorist fervor arrived just in time. Recent regulations practically guarantee that nobody outside the corporation can legally unearth its true finances. Some people suspect there are problems, but there's an overriding feeling that it's better not to investigate — that if Famous Gil goes down, it will take a huge chunk of the US economy with it. As that particular chunk is deeply entwined with the defense industry, American observers often believe that if they called for an investigation it would damage their country's military strength. It would be a dangerous, unpatriotic thing to do.

Americans aren't the only ones interested in the enterprise's fortunes. Famous Gil deals with espionage on a regular basis. Some spies come from foreign governments; the rest are from corporations that want an edge when it comes to dealing with the company. Awakened operatives tag along frequently. They're Seers looking for the piece of the action or mages who want to take it all apart. The Board's recruited more Seers, but its policies (see below) leave it with fewer sorcerers than it needs. It's only a matter of time before someone blows the whistle or the Board's enemies join forces to destroy it. Then again, there are many, many people who'd suffer if the status quo changed. They might have something to say about the situation.

Organization: The Board is the pylon proper. It consists of a dozen Hive-Men who've been surgically modified to blend in, including CEO and public mouthpiece Martin Adams, but true power rests with its four Seers:

- Bozidar, a second degree Obrimos Master of the Hegemonic Ministry
- Chernobog, a Mastigos Master of Mind and initiate of Panopticon
- Argus, a second-degree Thyrsus Master of the Praetorian Ministry
- Mirror, a Moros Master of Matter and another Praetorian.

The Board's Seers have a collective age of 380, but Argus' magic keeps them vital, healthy and looking a bland 60ish. They're all nondescript Caucasian men: the kind of people who adorn boring company brochures. Bozidar used to be rather swarthy and Mirror used to be a woman, but focus group studies determined that it made them too interesting-looking.

The Board has several other pylons in its pocket but never lets any of them into the company proper. They're "outsourced contract labor" that perform blackmail, theft and the rare murder to keep the board's hands clean. It only accepts Seers who are willing to abandon their pylons, take a Fate-strengthened oath of secrecy and surrender a soul

stone to the Board. Few mages are willing to do this, but not as few as one might think; Famous Gil “special analysts” become instant multimillionaires with the stock options and perks befitting a senior executive. It’s an analyst’s job to “mind the store,” so to speak, by maintaining a firm barrier of secrecy between business operations and the outside world. Recent recruits are trained in hand-to-hand combat and counterespionage. These are signs that something awful is going to happen soon, but the company’s benefits are just too good to pass up.

Sanctum: The enterprise’s headquarters is a squat black office building in Fairfax, VA. The pylon’s Sanctum fills five basement levels. It’s one of five such buildings, but it’s the only one with a Hallow. The main Sanctum includes every luxury the Board could stuff down a freight elevator shaft, along with a mainframe that stores Famous Gil’s real financial data. The information is invulnerable to conventional decryption because it’s magically scrambled, though it will decode itself in the presence of a Board member’s Nimbus and a command word unique to that individual.

The Skopoi: Soothsayers and Haruspices

The Seers of the Throne have always contained pylons that focus their efforts to capturing and interpreting the will of the Exarchs themselves rather than trust to the handed-down orders disseminated by their superiors in the Iron Pyramid. All Seers keep an open eye for omens from their Supernal Masters, and even act upon strange dreams or visions, but Skopoi are those Seers who actively go searching for such omens and conduct rituals to try to bring them on. The Seer ethos of taking power for oneself supports such a stance, and — much to the chagrin of those Ministers who would prefer to run a monopoly on Supernal wisdom — the Exarchs do seem to respond to such pylons’ efforts. Lacking the personal communion with the Thrones of a Minister or tetrarch, a pylon of Skopoi (singular “Skopos”) must seek the wishes of their lords in dreams, visions, omens and the thousand divinatory methods of Sleeper occultism, which unusually are seen as more reliable than Supernal methods of divination such as the Time and Fate Arcana; The Exarchs are subtle in their communications and hide their wishes in the movement of the Fallen World, so the rituals of the Fallen World are best used to focus them and draw them toward the seeker.

Grasping at Shadows

There are potentially as many different Skopoi factions as there are Exarchs and methods of divining those Exarchs’ wishes. Each Exarch has its favored means of communication (see Chapter Two for the examples of the Archigenitors and Chapter Three for some example rituals of communication),

and Skopoi try to master them all, constructing elaborate rituals to draw a given Exarch’s attention as necessary. Such rituals often double as oblations when performed in Hallows. For example, a Skopoi pylon focusing on a military concern might deliberately cause violence, sparking riots in order that their prophet might read the General’s wishes in the pattern of bodies, while one led by a Panoptic Seer might imprison a Sleeper prophet and subject him to constant scrutiny, faithfully recording his movements as a living form of the I-Ching.

The loose system of classification modern Ministries use to keep track of their Skopoi pylons was arrived at in Ancient Greece when many Skopoi pylons “went public”, stretching the Veil to the breaking point and hiding in plain sight as oracular cults. The naming system was then disseminated during the rise to power of the Dadochi Ministry.

A Skopoi pylon requires three things. First, regular communication from the Exarchs, called the Manteia. Second, at least one person proved to the pylon’s satisfaction as being able to perceive the Manteia (this person is called a Pythia when not an Awakened Seer and a Hariolus when fully blessed by the Exarchs). Third, a means of interpreting the Manteia, often an elaborate system of precedent and symbolic language arrived at through trial and error. The interpretation stage is considered the only one safe to use magic on; once the command is in the Fallen World it can be amplified, sifted out from background noise or otherwise made clearer, but attempting to use magic to force the Manteia across from the Supernal runs the risk of Abyssal interference or angering the Exarch.

Portentous Dreams Revisited

Chapter Two gives a system for voluntarily contacting the Exarchs that requires the Dream Merit, but Dream is not widely available, being largely restricted to mages, Sleepwalkers, Proximi and lesser mortal magicians. As such, the existing mechanics cover a Hariolus perfectly, but how does a Pythia receive her visions? Mechanically, she doesn’t. The Mystery Commands Flaw and the Dream Merit are possessed by the interpreting mage, not the Sleeper acting as intermediary. In rare cases, a Pythia might develop the Dream Merit without being Awakened, which the Skopoi take to be a sign of an exceptionally gifted prophet and an indication that they will Awaken soon. Alternately, the Storyteller may choose to alter the prerequisites for the Merit for the explicit purpose of patterning a genuine Pythia.

Endless Variety

Pylons of the Methodology vary wildly in expressed goals, internal ritual and external relations. Many onlookers are confused by the endless variety in divinatory ritual, attempting to distinguish Skopoi groups by Apollonian versus Dionysian practices, but the rituals are, if anything, the most exchangeable part of the pylon's rituals. Should a pylon lose its prophet or conclude that a particular method has stopped working, they may suddenly change ritual, trying a different means of reaching a different Exarch. A more useful definition is what the Skopoi do with their Manteia. Some Skopoi pylons are content to be the mouthpieces of the Exarchs, reading the signs on behalf of other pylons in exchange for patronage and protection, surviving on an economy of visions and whispered commands from Lesser Seals. The practice is frowned upon by the great Ministries as subversion of the lines of power except when the pylon reports directly to a regional tetrarchy or Minister, and some Skopoi pylons do very well out of such an arrangement. Other Skopoi are quite militant, following what they believe to be Supernal commands that they may not choose to share with their fellow pylons. Such pylons are seen as unpredictable and liable to disrupt the plans of more careful Seers. Others are rather more biased toward a particular great Ministry than a Methodology should be, and deal exclusively with the Archigenitor, passing interpreted commands up the Pyramid to their betters.

The Skopoi are stereotyped as being irrational and more prone to extreme beliefs regarding the Exarchs than more grounded Seers. The Methodology is the form of pylon most prone to falling to left-handed practices or the Abyss, with too many pylons turning to the Gate in their quest for omens.

Skopoi in Power

The lifecycle of a Skopoi pylon begins when a Seer either has a vision herself or notices someone who does, gaining strength as more like-minded individuals cluster. When low down in the Pyramid, they are carefully watched for insubordination and potential sources of heresy, but when they rise to the top they rise to the very top; more Ministers are Skopoi than any other Methodology, though that may be more down to the Skopoi being more often inspired to create splinter Ministries than other Methodologies.

A city dominated by a Skopoi pylon is an unpredictable place, the Seers directed according to no earthly design in operations that seem at once random and strangely effective to the local Pentacle Consilium. When the pylons are successful in their aims because (or despite) of the Skopoi directives, the other pylons become increasingly loyal to those that obviously have the Exarchs' blessing. When such pylons fail in their leadership role, however, their fall from power happens suddenly and often bloodily, denounced as heretics and false prophets by the other Seers.

Dubious Provenance

It's not just the Exarchs sending dreams and visions, of course, and the Skopoi would be fools to believe that they were. Vampires, faeries, spirits, ghosts, Astral beings, the Abyss, the beings the Abyss spawns and stranger things have all caused phenomena that pylons might pick up on as being an omen from the Exarchs. The Skopoi have a rudimentary form of "quality control" (see Organization, below), but mistakes do creep through, and the other Methodologies have horror stories of what happens when a powerful Skopoi group comes under the sway of a being with its own agenda.

For their part, Skopos magés "correct" such errors when they are discovered and the pylon can be persuaded to see the reality of the situation. Destruction of the creature leading the pylon astray is the usual form of correction, where possible. The most enmity is reserved for when the controlling being turns out to be another mage — cautionary tales are told of pylons coming under the control of Pentacle archmasters, but the most common culprit is another Seer of the Throne.

A "Forge", in Seer slang, is a Skopoi pylon formed around fake visions fed to them by a superior Seer, usually as a means of gaining cannon fodder or to accomplish some goal of the controller at arm's length. Skopoi react angrily to such betrayals when they detect them, and pylons go to war on one another for such insults.

Many Skopoi pylons fail to survive the life of their original prophet, disbanding to seek new sources of omens. Those that do stay together are those that have found some means of propagating themselves — the Pythia's last vision may have indicated a successor, for example. New pylons will eventually form with most of the original members, but often with wildly different rituals.

Skopoi in power tend to be scornful of "lesser" Seers, seeing them as rearranging their limited positions on the Pyramid rather than carrying out the Exarchs' direct will. Strangely, though, attempts to break Skopoi pylons out of the ladder of power themselves fail. There have been numerous attempts to create a Ministry of Fate, based on control of the Sleeper population through predictions of the future and organizing the Skopoi as a coherent group, but these have all failed, partly through the Skopoi's wildly

varying natures and partly through disinterest on the part of the Ruin to being their patron Exarch.

Skopoi and the Veil

Skopoi are the most likely Methodology to bend or break the Veil, purposefully or accidentally as a result of their practices. Other Methodologies may have more contact with Sleepers as a group, but they keep supernatural involvement to a minimum and follow the Exarchs' command to not reveal magic to the population. Skopoi, despite thinking of themselves as being the most loyal form of Seer, twist or ignore this command with regard to the Pythias when the Seers find themselves needing to somehow get a Sleeper prophet under their control. When the Veil can be maintained by happy chance or careful stage management, they may do so. But sooner or later the most careful pylon either tires of posing as confessors or psychologists asking after the dreams of their subject or grows weary of protecting that Sleeper from the other denizens of the Fallen World. Soon enough the Sleeper joins the other Pythias as a pampered prisoner within the pylon's Sanctum where the mages can control the situation to their satisfaction. Those pylons with Awakened prophets as members are looked upon by their Sleeper-dependent cousins with no small amount of jealousy. But the disadvantages inherent to having one Awakened member knowing that the others rely on her for their usefulness mean that Hariolus-hosting pylons feel the same wistfulness in reverse, longing for an inspired Sleepwalker or Sleeper that they can enslave without complication.

The most difficult situation for a Skopos to be in is to have identified a reliable prophet among the Pentacle Orders. The Exarchs work in mysterious ways, after all, and the Seer is left with the pitiable task of either managing to "turn" the willworker and recruit him to the Seers of the Throne or somehow acquire the Manteia safely. These situations are fraught with danger, and a Seer that gets too deep over her head may find her pylon disavowing her, leaving her to the angry Cabal of the mage she's been trying to recruit.

Appearance: The Skopoi are seen by other Seers as eccentric and extreme in their views, and dress accordingly when performing their ritual observances; a huge variety of robes, masks, accessories and props may be used. Outside

Stereotypes

Condecoi: Playing at politics and rearranging chairs. Advancement comes through obedience to the Throne's design, not through any Fallen struggle.

Oikoumene: Necessary in the Great Work, but miss the diamonds for the coal.

of the rituals, though, the Skopoi may blend in as much as any other Seer. Their Words of Power are usually themed towards revelation and to the Exarch they believe grants them visions.

Sanctum: Skopoi choose Sanctums close to their source of visions if that source is external, somewhere anonymous the Seers can use as an observation post. These Sanctums may even be open to Sleepers if the Pythia would spend time in such a place. Some Skopoi pylons following Dionysian methods of divination maintain drug dens where their Pythias can shoot up and babble prophecy, and other traditions see other, stranger forms of Sanctum.


If, however, the source of visions is a Pythia kept on hand or a Hariolus, then the Sanctum can be fortified and hidden away out of sight. With no dependence on external factors, the Sanctum ends up a blank-faced building that does not receive visitors, decorated inside with symbolic representations of the Supernal Realms and whatever instruments the Skopoi think are necessary for their auguries. When the Pythia is a captive, the defenses of these Sanctums are turned inward as much as outward, prisons for the prophet.

Background: Skopoi pylons are a mixture of those who see themselves as a priesthood of the Exarchs, and those that wish to serve the Supernal Lords but see themselves as bypassing the hierarchy of the Ministries and dealing with the Exarchs directly. Prospective Skopoi find themselves drifting to the Methodology for either reason, but often stay for a third factor — the willingness of the Methodology to tolerate more individuality in its member pylons. Skopoi stereotypically become increasingly eccentric throughout their lives, so a mage with a head start in the semi-heretical stakes will find a place for herself in the Skopoi easier than in other groups.

The Skopoi themselves, when they go recruiting, seek prophets to become Hariolus and mages wanting a more personal relationship with the Exarchs to serve as interpreters. Cynics have their place in the Methodology, to help with the eternal problem of weeding out faked or misattributed visions, but a prospect who questions everything and debunks all omens without putting forward any of his own will find himself steered towards a "lesser" pylon.

Organization: Given the waning and waxing influence of any given Exarch in a cross-Ministry faction, the Skopoi can be practically schizophrenic. Different Skopoi pylons conflict on points of doctrine, proper methods and the relative merits of their respective Exarchs. Pythia-based pylons call Hariolus-based ones "Forges", implying that they are the tools of other mages, while the Hariolus pylons call their counterparts "Delphians" and accuse them of the perversion of putting a Sleeper above an Awakened Seer.

What cross-ylon cooperation exists is for the purpose of combating the problems the Skopoi pylons face regarding heresy and being drawn away from the will of the Exarchs. The source of the omens and visions interpreted by the



pylon is a recognized danger, so conscientious Skopoi follow a system of disproving the omen, attempting to explain it by any other means until a Supernal origin is the only option left. These same processes are meant to guard against omens sent by the Gate or the Abyss. In practice, though, the checks are routinely skipped or hurried through as fast as possible. The Skopoi do not trust any other Seers to tell

them which omens are true, but the Skopoi themselves inherently want to believe that they're all true — a pylon faced with a Pythia rarely spends the time it should checking her for supernatural interference until it's too late.

Concepts: Drug supplier, Priest, Dream Interpreter, Psychologist, Futures Trader, Kidnapper, Guardian Angel, Hermit

Of course you don't understand — They don't speak to you. They speak to me, and I'm telling you, They want us to attack the Cabal on Fourth Street.

Skopoi Pylon: The Oracle at Delta Phi

Preston Clarke, college student, thanks God for every day. He wakes up in the fraternity house, next to his girlfriend, and thinks about the time two years ago when he contemplated suicide. His life, once on the verge of collapse, seems charmed. Things just seem to go his way. His tutors like him and he gets good grades despite not working quite as hard as he should. Even the nightmares seem better, when he talks about them to his girlfriend or to the Psych lecturer who's taken him under his wing. And, unknown to Preston, that's all according to plan. A pylon of Seers of the Throne have done their very best to make his life comfortable.

It's the least they can do; they need his dreams. But he's failing to deliver his side of a bargain he never agreed to, and things may be about to take a turn for the worse.

History

Two years ago, Preston's world was about to end. His mother had been diagnosed with cancer and a poor prognosis. His father had left years ago. Ground down by high school and stress, the nightmares he'd had since childhood went from occasional to nightly terrors. Always different, they featured him being propelled through a vision of heaven that on second glance became horrific — angels with faces of fire, dripping with blood, martyrs still burning at the stake or hanging from crucifixes, singing praises to a great empty throne. Towards the end of senior year, his grades in freefall, he wrote a lengthy description on a blog, and then he wrote of how he felt like he couldn't go on. He thought no one was reading.

The Convocation of the Red Branch had hit hard times. A militant Pentacle Cabal wiped out two-thirds of its number during a botched operation, and the survivors were clinging to the tatters of their status. The Father no longer responded to the prayers of the Augur, a Paternoster Acanthus called Elect, and they faced either finding a new place in the Pyramid or having one assigned by the tetrarchy. Elect used Time magic to determine how the pylon would arrive at a

new direction and declared that their new prophet would be found online. Weeks of random searching for writing about heavenly visions turned up Preston's dream-account, which contained symbols relating to the doctrines of Paternoster and coded references to the pylon itself.

An emergency request to the tetrarch gave the tattered pylon the resources it needed to spring into action. The first order of business was to prevent the newly identified Pythia from taking his own life. The Seers cured his mother's cancer, changed his grades and took Thralls among the students, guiding the young man through to graduation. Careful exploration of his Oneiros gave them more visions to work with and satisfy the tetrarch's need for results.

Preston's future beyond high school required compromises. With the upturn in his grades, he'd been accepted to college within the tetrarchy's reach, but the institution was the jealously guarded territory of a Hegemonic pylon. Careful negotiation reached a compromise: two Hegemonic Seers would join the Red Branch to supervise the pylon's activities in Academia, while Elect would join the teaching staff to teach Preston how to draw out his visions. Apart from Elect's role, both sides agreed contact with Seers in person should be kept to a minimum; Hegemony invited Preston to join a fraternity containing several Thralls, allowing them to observe via Profane Urim and introduce the young man into their social networks, while Paternoster prepared a more direct control factor: a Hollow One, carefully selected to conform physically to the fantasies found in Preston's Oneiros and mind-shaped to love him and report back to a Seer handler.

At first, everything went well. The Doll was introduced as "Kelly", a fellow student, and did her job admirably without suspecting herself that her feelings weren't real. Elect became "Doctor Morgan"; a friendly lecturer who took an interest in Preston and lent him books on lucid dreaming and meditation. To the Seer's surprise, the boy even did quite well academically, and the local pylon was satisfied they were being well compensated for the intrusion.

Complication

Over the summer after the first year, though, the dreams stopped; they'd been getting slightly less frequent as time went on, but the Seers weren't concerned. Preston and Kelly spent the summer at his home (Kelly's nonexusessent family being happy for their "daughter" to be away) and the pylon decided to decamp only one member back there as well to maintain Kelly's identity and remotely view Preston's dreams. The mage chosen was one of the original Paternoster members, a Mastigos named Chant.

Chant still doesn't understand what he might have done wrong — over the weeks, he became increasingly concerned that prophetic dreams weren't appearing. Back at the college for the new semester, they began again, but much, much more intermittent. After the initial relief, the Paternoster members of the pylon realized that the dreams were dying. Their goose no longer laid golden eggs. And their situation began to look precarious.

They hadn't seen fit to inform their Hegemonic brethren of what happened over the summer. Not wanting to cause trouble in the tense sharing of influence, Elect simply told them that there hadn't been anything for the Unity's servants in the visions for those months. That excuse worked the first time, but nine months later the host pylon are demanding to know where their Manteia are. The Paternoster Seers, watched suspiciously by the Hegemons in their ranks, don't want to be ejected from the college and watch Preston taken as just another Unity Thrall while they go begging to the tetrarchy again. But they don't know why the Manteia have stopped. Already, Preston has moved into the frat house and been befriended by senior students who've promised they'll help him get a good job when he graduates. Elect, in his cover identity, tries to sell a life of Academia to the young man while Preston's peers push politics.

The Seers have checked for Pentacle interference. They've scanned Preston's Oneiros for astral intrusion. They've made sure no one is casting spells on him, and that he's had contact with no supernatural beings other than themselves. In the end, Elect has been forced to conclude that something they have done has broken their Pythia. The only thing to do is to reverse their steps — undo everything that's gone right for Preston, item by item, until the dreams start up again. His grades will slip, his friendships will be removed, the Doll will leave him and if need be, they'll put his mother back under a death sentence.

Organization: According to their own rules and traditions, the Red Branch is to be led by an acknowledged Hariolus and then any Prelates within the pylon. Lacking either, leadership falls to Elect as the pylon's keeper of rituals. Elect performs the interpretations of Preston's dream-visions, translating symbolic images into commands using a library of cross-referenced texts on holy visions and



Fate magic to grease the wheels. Under Elect, the other Paternoster mages are assigned to maintain Preston's safety (using Time magic to foresee threats), keeping his health intact and — in Chant's case — ensuring the Hollow One has enough Mana to maintain her personality, which the pylon does not have the ability to replace. The Hegemonic Seers seconded to the pylon are in charge of influencing Preston's social relationships and smoothing his progress through college.

Externally, the pylon navigates through the Iron Pyramid thanks to its loyalty to a great Ministry, and their reporting of Manteia straight to the tetrarch avoids the criticism usually aimed at Skopoi pylons about subversion of the rungs of command. The pylon immediately acts when they discover a direct order to themselves among the visions from the Father, but otherwise they are too small and weak to influence the direction of the tetrarchy; hence their relationship with the Paternoster tetrarch. On a local level, they walk on eggshells around the interests of the Hegemonic pylon in control of the university, keenly aware that they remain at the Hegemon's sufferance.

Sanctum: Not allowed to maintain a Sanctum on campus (a source of some friction between the two pylons), the Red Branch are based in a townhouse as close to the university as security and the Hegemonic pylon will allow. The house is carefully neutral in appearance and the Seers take pains to avoid attracting attention in their comings and goings. The downside is that there is no Hollow, and with the one on campus already claimed, Chant, as the pylon's Obrimos, must travel to one three miles away on a regular basis to absorb Mana, which he then distributes to his fellows and the Hollow One. He worries about the potential for the operation's exposure to outside interests the arrangement involves, and wants to somehow gain access to the secured Hollow on-site.

Legacies

The Pentacle does not like to think of the Seers as having Legacies, for fear of legitimizing their enemies' claim on Supernal secrets. They especially do not like to think of the Seers as having claim on *their* Legacies, but to think this is to deny that some mages have, ever since the Fall, turned traitor on their orders and joined the servants of the Exarchs. Traitors bearing Legacies to the Ministries, stolen soul stones, grimoires, reverse engineering of Pentacle abilities and even a few cases of parallel development have all resulted in many Legacies having separate "spin-offs" existing within the Pyramid.

Up to now, supplements for **Mage: The Awakening** have conformed to the Pentacle's bias — where the orders eligible for membership in a Legacy are listed, the Seers have not been included. The following are those already-published Legacies that are suitable for Seers of the Throne. They either match up enough to Seer beliefs to have been created in parallel or have splintered off from the original line at some point in the past. When Pentacle and Pyramid members of the same Legacy meet, the result is often a burning rivalry and hatred that turns the war personal.

Mage: The Awakening — Orphans of Proteus, Subtle Ones, Walkers in Mists

Tome of the Watchtowers — Bokor, Ascended Adepts

Legacies: The Sublime — Clavicularius, Daksha, House of Ariadne, Scions of God, Stone Scribes, Transhuman Engineers, Fangs of Mara

Legacies: The Ancient — Forge Masters, Sphinxes, Thrice-Great, Echo Walkers, Logophages

Guardians of the Veil — Bearers of the Eternal Voice, Votaries of the Ordained

Free Council — Cryptologos

Mysterium — Eyes of Ain Soph, Reality Stalker

THE ARCHITECTS OF THE FUTURE

*We watch the currents and eddies of time and fate. We plan the rise and fall of nations.
A single robbery or the murder of a single Sleeper of no importance
can shape the destinies of millions.*

While all Seers of the Throne serve the Exarchs and attempt to shape the world to best accommodate both their ambitions and the Exarchs' desires, the Architects of the Future are especially dedicated to shaping the world to come. The goals of these mages are two-fold. They seek to examine the details of the future and then to prune it like

a bonsai. Their goal is to allow only those events to occur that further their particular aims. In addition to shaping the future to meet their needs, the Architects also attempt to quest deep into the Astral Realm, exploring the edges of the Anima Mundi for clues as to the wishes, desires and ultimately the nature of the Exarchs. They then incorporate

any insights they gain about the Exarchs into their plan for the future.

This Legacy is slightly more than 500 years old. It was founded in Florence in the late 15th century, when travelers brought back many previously lost or unknown texts from the Middle and Far East. A few of these seemingly mundane texts were actually long-lost grimoires that the founders of this Legacy used as the inspiration and basis for its attainments. When it first began, the Architects were exclusively focused on learning to shape the future in a precise and exacting fashion so as to advance their founders' agenda. The Legacy was crafted so as to provide members with both the knowledge and understanding needed to examine the future and discern the actions needed to obtain their desires. The Attainments also provided members with the tools needed to help them accomplish these actions. However, within a few decades some of the senior members of the Legacy began to question the wisdom of shaping the future in such a precise fashion with no regard to the plans of the Exarchs. Several argued that acting purely in the interests of the members might cause their agenda to contradict the wishes of the Exarchs, which could lead to utter disaster if the Exarchs decided to punish them. Also, a few of the more philosophically inclined members believed that the Exarchs have a divine plan for the Fallen World, and that it was the duty of the Architects to attempt to discover these plans.

Several of the founding Architects believed that the best way to contact the Exarchs was to explore the further reaches of the Astral Realm. To enable them to more effectively accomplish this, they forged a path to the Omphalos of the Anima Mundi that was only open to other Architects. From here, they could explore out to the furthest edges of the Anima Mundi, looking for clues and hints as to the Exarchs' plans and desires. Definitive answers are effectively impossible when exploring the Astral Realms, and Architects frequently argue about the nature and meaning of any discoveries one of their number makes when exploring the furthest depths of the Anima Mundi. However, they still treat these experiences as worthy of consideration and all Architects take an oath to record all of their journeys into the Astral Realm.

To attempt to make sense of the Exarchs and to keep track of their various manipulations of the future, the Architects of the Future created several large libraries containing records of every major prophecy and every astral journey their members have made for the last 500 years. These records are as much a source of power for the Architect as their attainments. This information also provides unique insight into both

the nature of the Anima Mundi and many details of success and failure when attempting to manipulate the future.

The Architects are an unusual Legacy in that only the most powerful members gain the knowledge and insight needed to divine the pattern of the future, create the plans needed to change it or to attempt to learn the Exarchs' desires. Less powerful and experienced members learn how to vastly increase their effectiveness in performing various tasks, but gain no special insights into how best to apply their efforts. Members begin as agents or foot soldiers and work their way to becoming leaders and planners.

Parent Path or Order: Acanthus or Seers of the Throne

Nickname: Architects, Spiders

Appearance: Most Spiders dress in clothing that is comfortable, utilitarian and that does not inhibit movement. Their clothing also always contains many discrete pockets where they can conceal weapons and other useful items so that they do not attract attention. Because junior members can be sent out to perform some mission at any time, most choose to carry concealed weapons and other useful tools like lock-picks with them at all times.

Regardless of their status in this organization, Architects also tend to dress in a relatively high-class fashion. They do this both out of a sense of pride common to members of the Legacy and the recognition that maintaining the appearance of having high social status is an excellent way to minimize Sleeper interference. Most Spiders regularly wear designer suits and athletic gear and other similarly expensive garments. They also possess clothing appropriate for a wide range of settings and activities. Because lower-ranking members often perform dangerous tasks, their jackets, coats and similar garments are often lined with Kevlar or similar materials to provide additional protection against attack.

Architects move with confidence and determination. Most appear to be important and charismatic individuals regardless of how they are dressed. They also display a keen awareness of tactical advantage. Intelligence operatives, soldiers trained in commando work, experienced police officers and others who share these traits often notice that the Spider acts like they have had training in combat or covert operations. To Sleepers who lack such training, Architects seem highly competent and possibly somewhat dangerous.

Background: Architects tend to come from physically active backgrounds. Some were soldiers or



security personal, others were serious martial arts enthusiasts or athletes and a few were professional criminals. The typical Spider was a physically capable individual who was previously not particularly interested in either philosophy or mysticism. Their Awakening usually came as a great shock and usually occurred during some moment of extreme physical stress. During their Awakening, Spiders suddenly become aware of the larger realities of the Fallen World and most develop a keen interest in pursuing mystical truths.

Spiders are highly ambitious and most are comfortable in structured and hierarchical environments. However, for some their ambition was something that grew out of their Awakening, as they suddenly understood how much more power they had than ordinary mortals. Many joined the Legacy as part of their search for answers to the various questions their Awakening raised. New members must be content to accept the answers provided by their superiors, but most are also eager to advance in this Legacy until they too can make plans rather than simply execute them. Spiders possess a mixture of comfort with physical activity, ambition and a relentless desire to both understand and shape the future.

Organization: This Legacy is one of the most tightly organized and hierarchical legacies available to the Seers of the Throne. Every member has specified duties that they are regularly called to perform. Members are free to go about their own affairs most of the time, but when one of the senior members sees some situation that requires alteration, they can call upon other nearby members for assistance. All lower-ranking members are required to assist them to the best of their capabilities; while such missions are always presented to members as “requests”, refusing results in a loss of both status and good will, and also a loss of access to the recorded prophecies and other records held by the leaders of this Legacy.

Advancing upwards in the Legacy grants members increased power and authority within it. At first, members are only given relatively easy assignments where they almost always work with others and are usually supervised by a more experienced Spider. Upon reaching the second attainment, Spiders start being sent out on important assignments and typically work alone or supervising a few lower-ranking members. The status of members who reach the third attainment changes radically. These Architects enter the Legacy's inner circle. They come together in secret meetings, where they discuss their shared goals and decide upon the missions that they will send others on. Members at this level only go out on the most important assignments and most often send lower ranking members to act upon their prophecies and visions.

The lower levels of this Legacy involve a moderate degree of physical danger from the members, and while the senior members never discuss this with their underlings, they keep careful track of any Spider who seems likely to reach the third attainment in the near future. Individuals who the senior members distrust or consider to be inap-

propriate leaders are discouraged from advancing in this Legacy. Those who refuse to follow these hints are sent on increasingly dangerous assignments. The vast majority of members who the leaders deem to be unsuitable for inclusion in their ranks die before they reach the third attainment of this Legacy.

Suggested Oblations: Cleaning and servicing weapons and other covert operations gear, creating detailed plans for a mission, praying to the Exarchs for advice.

Concepts: Ambitious spy, cat burglar, assassin, undercover police officer who got in too deep.

Attainments

The first two Attainments in this Legacy are designed to make the Architect exceptionally effective at carrying out dangerous missions planned by her superiors. These abilities provide immediate physical enhancements and protections. The third Attainment gives the Spider the means to devise the plans that her underlings can carry out.

1st Attainment: Spider's Edge

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Time 2, Investigation 2

The Spider learns to gaze briefly into the future to learn how best to attain her immediate goals. This ability is similar to the Time 2 “Glimpsing the Future” spell (**Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 259-260). The mage need not spend any Mana to use this attainment, but must spend one full turn examining his possible futures, and so cannot use this ability continuously.

Optional Arcanum: Mind 2

Spiders are often called upon to perform all manner of illegal and otherwise objectionable actions. The ability to be easily overlooked greatly aids them in both gain access to situations where they can perform such actions and in escaping afterwards. This ability is similar to the Mind 2 “Incognito Presence” spell (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 208). To use this attainment, the mage must make a Wits + Subterfuge + Mind roll exactly as if he were using the “Incognito Presence” spell. The effects of this attainment last for one hour.

2nd Attainment: Sensing Danger

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Time 3, Investigation 3

The Architect of the Future gains a continual sense of the future that allows her to avoid danger. This ability is similar to the Time 3 “Temporal Shift” spell (**Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 263-264). This ability functions continuously. Also, the Architect can temporarily impart this sense of the future to another simply by touching them and making a successful Manipulation + Investigation + Time roll. When used on another, this ability lasts for one hour. The Architect does not lose this protection when she bestows it on someone else.

Optional Arcanum: Mind 3

Quick thinking and careful planning are both necessities for the success of many of their missions. This attainment allows Spiders who study the Mind Arcana to accomplish both with great ease. This attainment allows the mage to perform any mental extended or instant action (except Spellcasting) while performing any other single mental or physical action. The mage could plan a speech while in the midst of a gun battle or carefully rehearse a plan of action during an intense debate or a heated car chase. This ability is similar to the Mind 3 “Multi-Tasking” spell (**Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 211-212).

3rd Attainment: Weaving the Future

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Time 4

The character is now truly an Architect of the Future. She can both look deeply into another individual's future to see what it holds and then examine the strands of time more carefully to discern how this person's future might be changed in particular ways. This ability is similar to the Time 4 “Prophecy”

spell (**Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 264-265), except that it can also be used to see the future before any changes are made, in a manner similar to the Time 3 “Divination” spell (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 262). To use this attainment in either fashion, the mage must meditate quietly for at least a minute.

Optional Arcanum: Mind 4

The Architect learns to cast his mind out to the furthest reaches of the unknown in an attempt to gain some inspiration as to the desires and plans of the Exarchs. By spending 1 point of Mana and making a successful Composure + Wits + Mind roll, her mind is instantly transported to the Omphalos of the Anima Mundi (**Astral Realms**, p. 74), while her body remains asleep where she left it. The Architect can take others along if they are in telepathic contract with her when she makes this roll, and either that person or the Architect spends one additional point of Mana for each person she brings with her. The Architect always arrives at the Omphalos, but can go further into the Anima Mundi or back to Temenos as she desires.

CHRYSALIDES

I grant you permission to worship me.

The Seers of the Throne carefully maintain the inequalities of society, dividing the Sleepers into haves and have-nots, kings and wretches. Some people just have “it”, whatever “it” may be, and the Western media bombards viewers with unattainable standards of physical beauty, telling the have-nots that unless they somehow look like *that*, they'll be have-nots forever and creating a world in which people take baths of bleach and mutilate their Supernally-given bodies. The tragedy of those that become Seers is that after Awakening to this truth they choose to side with those wielding the dividing knife as long as they get to be “haves”. Some new recruits to the Ministries, though, believe that they are incapable of attaining the life they wish to lead without aid. No amount of money will make them the person they want to be — beautiful, influential and desired. They feel that even as members of the secret rulers of the world, their rightful place is denied to them. Maybe they're the wrong height, wrong color, or wrong gender. Maybe they just have no social graces. Eventually, they may hear of a Legacy, first founded in the Hegemonic Ministry, which promises to turn members into members of the Elite. By sacrificing everything that makes them themselves, they can create new identities, like a caterpillar becoming a butterfly, and live the lives of luxury and adoration they have watched with envious eyes since their Sleeping days.

There is a difference between physical alterations that serve a medical need and chasing an unhealthy ideal, and the members of the Chrysalides Legacy are firmly in the chasing category. Every Chrysalis has a dual identity — the nature of the Legacy is such that they can transform from their real self, which they call the “Husk”, into an idealized self created from the imagination and self-loathing of the Seer. Each Chrysalis only has one “Ideal”, one alternate persona, chosen on joining the Legacy. After the initial act of creation, the Ideal can be improved further — granted beauty, cleverness, wit, physical superiority... Anything the Seer believes his real form lacks. But it comes at a price. Every improvement is taken from the real form, which degrades as the Ideal perfects, and there are no take-backs and no second chances. Eventually, a Swan becomes both Beauty and the Beast, the Ideal a living Goddess and the Husk a withered crone. The Legacy sees it as a worthwhile sacrifice, hurrying through the time they spend as the Husk before they are able to transform again. Other Seers shake their heads at the pettiness of the Legacy, muttering that the Awakened should have higher goals. The Swans, surrounded by fawning admirers, don't agree.

Origins

That the Fallen World is unfair and imposes impossible standards is evident even to Sleepers. Swans are born from

those mages who, in their Sleeping lives, were bullied or ignored in favor of some in-crowd. That the in-crowd suffered the same anxieties as them doesn't enter into it — prospective Swans are those mages who Awoke with jealousy in their hearts and a fantasy of returning the favor to those who kept them down, even if such persecution only happened in their imagination.

The Legacy was founded in Vienna during the organization of the Hegemonic Ministry in the 16th century, when a group of Hegemons were told they were not suitable for the deal-making, socialite roles they craved but should contend themselves with the back-room work to which they were more suited. The desire for power denied was as strong a motivating factor then as it is now, and the original Swans sought the Raptor in dreams, entreating the Seal of Life to release her grip on their bodies and allow them to choose their biological forms. It was a Thyrus named Kunigunde who finally received a vision in reply in the winter of 1530, shortly after the Siege of Vienna by the Turks. Following that revelation, in which the Exarch seemed to warn her that growth and death went hand in hand, Kunigunde sublimated her soul and became the first Chrysalis.

The Ideal Self

The process of joining the Swans is an occasion of much ceremony. The prospective member of the Legacy offers obsequious prayers to the Raptor, thanking the Exarch for allowing the transformation (it is unclear if she ever takes note of these prayers) before meditating on the person he wishes to be. The new person must be imagined down to the last detail as the supplicant's soul is linked to his mentor's, allowing the first Attainment to take hold.

Once in their new identity, the Swan finally enjoys the benefits of being one of the beautiful people — they become influence-peddlers and socialites, dominating whatever social circle he chooses to grace with his presence and supplying those around him with the twisted standards he himself failed to live up to as a Sleeper, taking great satisfaction in making others as envious and disheartened as he once was. But there are always improvements to be made, and little

by little the Swan becomes dissatisfied with his new life. Further improvements require reaching new attainments, and the Swan progresses, chasing some dream of a self nothing like the Husk. But the Raptor's price is that the Chrysalides can never truly forget who they were — the transformation is long lasting, but does not last forever. Sooner or later, a Swan reverts to their original body, made as wretched as the Ideal is glorious, and must recuperate before becoming the Ideal again.

Many Swans become more than a little unhealthy mentally, seeing the Husk and the Ideal as two different people and disassociating with their own identities. The self-loathing that drove them into the Legacy gnaws at them, and the Chrysalides become ever more obsessed with the pleasures they have twisted their real bodies and spent their souls' potential to acquire. If they were to admit that the new life they bought loses its attraction with time, they would be confronted with the horror of what they've done to themselves.

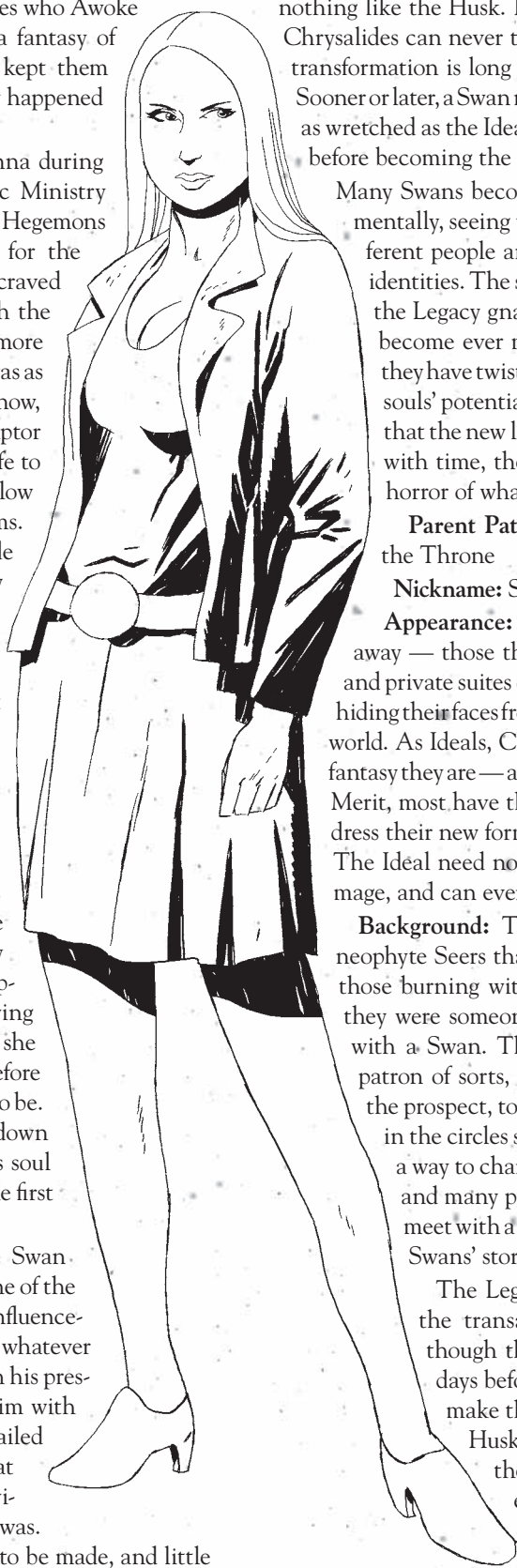
Parent Path or Order: Thyrus or Seers of the Throne

Nickname: Swans, Mirror-Gazers (Derogatory)

Appearance: As Husks, Swans hide themselves away — those that must leave isolated chambers and private suites do so wearing concealing clothes, hiding their faces from themselves as much as from the world. As Ideals, Chrysalides look like the figures of fantasy they are — all Ideals possess the Striking Looks Merit, most have the Luxury and Status Merits and dress their new forms accordingly in lavish expense. The Ideal need not look anything like the original mage, and can even be of a different gender.

Background: The Swans look to "save" those neophyte Seers that remind them of themselves — those burning with jealousy that wish deep down they were someone else, often because of contact with a Swan. The Swan introduces herself as a patron of sorts, revealing that she was once like the prospect, too — unloved and unable to move in the circles she deserved; they offer a way out, a way to change everything about themselves, and many prospects are interested enough to meet with a local Salon and listen to the other Swans' stories.

The Legacy does not hide the nature of the transaction they all make, however, though they do leave it until the last few days before a prospect joins the Legacy to make the revelation. A Swan reveals his Husk to the prospect, and explains that the prospect's old life will become equally withered and useless, but couches it in terms of a phoenix rising from ashes or a necessary



sacrifice to the Ruin in order to be granted the transformation they desire. A prospect who backs out is regarded with sadness, but let go — they will be condescended to by Swans that followed through for the rest of their life, but no worse than that.

Organization: The Legacy acts as a sort of social network, organized into local chapters named “Salons” within each tetrarchy, which keep tabs on one another and share gossip of accomplishment. Salons are supposed to be support networks to match Swans up with higher-Attainment mentors, but in practice they are backbiting groups of such cattiness that vampires would be ashamed, in which Swans make acid comments about outsiders’ shortcomings and reassure one another that they, on the other hand, are perfect.

Suggested Oblations: Sacrificing something dear to the Husk, maintaining a false identity beyond that of the Ideal.

Concepts: Frustrated Socialite, Would-be-Celebrity, Avenging Wallflower, Plastic Surgeon, Photoshoot Artist, Pin-up.

Attainments

The Ideal form of each Swan is designed upon achieving membership in the Legacy, and although its traits can be improved with experience and Attainments they do not otherwise change and it cannot be made to look like a different person from its initial creation without the use of Life magic. In all cases, the Ideal reacts as though it were the Seers’ real body to supernatural powers.

The transformation requires a single success on a Gnosis + Stamina roll and costs one temporary Willpower. When in the Ideal form, the Swan does not regain Willpower through rest (though still does through fulfilling her Virtue or Vice), and when all Willpower points have been spent the mage immediately transforms back into the Husk. To voluntarily become the Husk does not require Willpower, but does require the roll.

First Attainment: Spreading the Wings

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Life 2

The Swan gains the ability to transform between Husk and Ideal as described above. The Ideal is designed upon achieving this attainment and may look like any person the Swan can imagine — gender, height, weight, coloring, accent; all are modified, though it cannot be a duplicate of an existing person. At this stage, though, the difference between the bodies’ capabilities is only slightly more than superficial. The Ideal gains the benefits of the Striking Looks 2 Merit, while the Husk applies the same modifiers in reverse, suffering a -1 penalty to all Social rolls.

Optional Arcanum: Mind 2

If the Swan is also proficient in the Mind Arcanum, he projects an aura of confidence that makes onlookers feel worthless in comparison, the same feeling that led the Chrysalis to join the Legacy now projected out as a social weapon. The Swan adds his dots in Mind to the dice pool of the first adversarial social roll made in regard to an individual he meets for the first time.

Second Attainment: Perfection of Form

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Life 3

The Swan develops her Ideal self, purposefully degrading her Husk to shape the Ideal further into being the perfect self. The Ideal now gains the benefits of the Striking Looks 4 Merit, while the Husk’s penalty to Social rolls increases to -2. In addition, the Ideal receives the equivalent of a permanent “Honing the Form” spell, raising one Physical Attribute chosen when the Attainment is reached by a maximum of the mage’s dots in the Life Arcanum, while the Husk has the corresponding Attribute lowered by half of the bonus to the Ideal (round up). The dots exchanged in this way cannot lower the Husk to zero in the attribute or break the limit imposed by the mage’s Gnosis. If the mage increases the Arcanum and there is still capacity for the forms to change, the extra dot appears or is removed the next time the mage changes forms.

Optional Arcanum: Mind 3

If the Swan is also a Disciple of Mind, she gains the ability to exchange dots in one Mental Attribute as well. This follows the same rules as for changing the physical attributes of the Ideal.

Third Attainment: Pinnacle of Grace

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Life 4

The Swan now achieves perfection, or as close to it as she can. Upon reaching the Attainment, the remaining two physical attributes can be altered as by the second attainment, the mage assigning dots equal to his Life Arcanum to the two attributes that were not affected by the second Attainment, each of which is reduced on the Husk by half the bonus applied to the Ideal. The lower limit of the Husk and the upper limit imposed by Gnosis still apply.

In addition, the Ideal is now so attractive that the Striking Looks bonus is increased to +3, while the increasingly hideous Husk bears a -3 penalty to all social rolls.

Optional Arcanum: Mind 4

A Swan that is an Adept of Mind may perform the exchange in her remaining Mental Attributes as well, following the rules for Physical attributes above.

THE MASTERS OF DESTRUCTION

A single act of sabotage can be more useful and impressive than a thousand murders. In a single hour, I can turn a millionaire into a pauper or render a blackmailer powerless.

Although many members of the Seers of the Throne specialize in controlling mortals or slaying their enemies, there is as much need to destroy objects as people. A sufficiently powerful relic of Atlantis or a particularly revealing recording of a gathering in a hostel can both be exceptionally damaging to the Seers' cause. In addition, one of the best and most effective ways to manipulate events is by altering or destroying various objects. If an inventor is about to demonstrate his creation before an audience and the device has either been sabotaged or destroyed and replaced with a version that works either much less well, or perhaps much better, the results of that demonstration will be very different than they otherwise might. Many Seers have also become especially careful to make certain that humanity learns nothing about the supernatural. Destroying all such evidence, from the corpse of a vampire someone killed, to a camera phone containing images of Vulgar Awakened magic being used can be vitally important.

The Masters of Destruction swore their oaths to serve just this purpose. They are artists of decay and annihilation, understanding how to transform a diamond or a sturdily made safe into dust with a glance or a touch. The greater portion of members are Moros, since almost all Destroyers study both the Death and the Matter Arcana. However, they are less interested in death, ghosts or corpses than they are in objects, especially complex and valuable objects. Some Destroyers become obsessed with the mechanics of precise destruction and will acquire a dozen or more finely made intricate devices just so they can study various ways of destroying or sabotaging them.

One of the major tensions in this Legacy is between Destroyers who effectively serve as freelance mercenaries who sell their services to any other Seer who will pay their price, and those who regard their Legacy as a spiritual calling and have exceptionally strict and often highly idiosyncratic standards about what they will and won't tear apart. Since this Legacy is almost exclusively passed down from a single master to a single student, these two branches of the Legacy rarely interact, but when they do, the result is often bitter arguments, and occasionally violence. The most mercenary Destroyers are willing to work for anyone who will pay their price, even Pentacle mages (albeit not without some secrecy and rights of refusal). In vivid contrast, many of the more ideologically inclined Destroyers

regard the members of this Legacy as the Exarchs' sacred agents of entropy and consider any Destroyer who is more considered about payment than ideology or meaning as a traitor to this Legacy's sacred trust.

The more ideologically driven Masters of Destruction find destruction to be an almost sacred calling and in addition to advancing their own ends and what they see to be the will of the Exarchs, they occasionally destroy some object simply because they either have imagined a way to make its destruction especially impressive, beautiful or profound. They also sometimes destroy something simply because they decide that it needs to be destroyed for some, often difficult to explain, philosophical reason. Other Seers usually consider Destroyers to either be calculating mercenaries or half-mad fanatics and make certain to distinguish one sort from the other. Most Seers find mercenary Destroyers to be exceptionally useful, but they usually attempt to avoid the more ideologically inclined members of this Legacy because they fear, often not without reason, that one of their treasured possessions might be considered worthy of destruction.

Parent Path or Order: Moros or Seers of the Throne

Nickname: Destroyers

Appearance: Although the members of this Legacy are specialists in destroying important objects, this in no way means that they are not interested in precious and well-made objects. In fact, most members are actually fascinated by such things. While they do their best not to be too ostentatious, most Destroyers wear and use superbly made clothing and tools and have a preference for fine fabrics, precision metalwork and similar objects. In addition to simply enjoying such accoutrements, Destroyers also typically take great care to maintain their clothing and personal items in ideal condition. It is very rare to see one looking anything other than pristine. A Destroyer with rumpled or worn clothing or using poorly made or badly maintained equipment is either working undercover or in especially dire circumstances.

Most Destroyers are relatively quiet people, but they are neither withdrawn nor meek. Instead, they mostly come across as somewhat self-absorbed individuals who feel more comfortable with objects than with people. However, many Destroyers can be quite forceful and bold if faced with a serious challenge to their ideas or ethics.

Background: A significant number of members were burglars, amateur hackers, or trained intelligence operatives before their Awakening. Individuals with the skills and temperament for these occupations typically do very well in this Legacy. However, a surprising number of members were museum conservators, people who repaired precision machinery or others who made a career protecting or caring for various sorts of precious objects. During their Awakening, those who were drawn to joining the Seers of the Throne realized that some objects are simply too dangerous to exist. Such people often transfer their focus on protecting precious objects into a determination to rid the world of objects that are inherently dangerous or problematic. Other Destroyers were skilled craftspeople or artists, who now find that their calling has become the artistry of destruction. While their previous careers are highly varied, the one common factor of almost all Destroyers is an interest in, and often an obsession with precision.

Organization: Other than a loose system of apprenticeship, Destroyers have no formal organization. A significant minority are eccentric mystics, but most are freelance saboteurs, who offer their services to other Seers in return for various forms of payment. When a Seer needs something destroyed discretely and effectively, they often call upon a Destroyer and negotiate a price, which can include everything from cash, to information to an Imbued Item or occasionally even an Artifact.

Anyone who wishes to become a Destroyer must find a mentor. In return for this tutelage, the student is obligated to perform various favors for their teacher, most often favors involving aiding their master in her missions of destruction. In addition to teaching, the teacher also introduces her student to other Destroyers and informs other nearby Seers of the presence of this new Destroyer. Because the services they provide are fairly specialized and not in high demand, few Destroyers belong to a pylon that contains other members of this Legacy. Most often there is no more than one Destroyer in any city.

Although most Destroyers keep in touch with their fellows, sharing details of their various missions, these interactions are purely informal, and there are a few recluses who purposefully

isolate themselves. Most of the relatively solitary Destroyers are those who see this Legacy as a calling rather than a career. These mages are exceedingly selective when choosing apprentices and usually refuse to socialize with members of this Legacy who hold different views about its meaning and use.

Suggested Oblations: Repairing, servicing or destroying any complex object or device.

Concepts: Freelance criminal, destructive mystic, mechanic, architect, anarchist.

Attainments

In addition to strengthening a mage's talent for devastation, this Legacy also provides members with a method of gaining access to well-guarded objects and then departing without being observed or detailed. Destroyers who also study the Matter Arcanum gain even more tools for being able to evaluate, gain access to and destroy any object that they deem too dangerous or problematic to exist.

1st Attainment: Gaze of Weakness

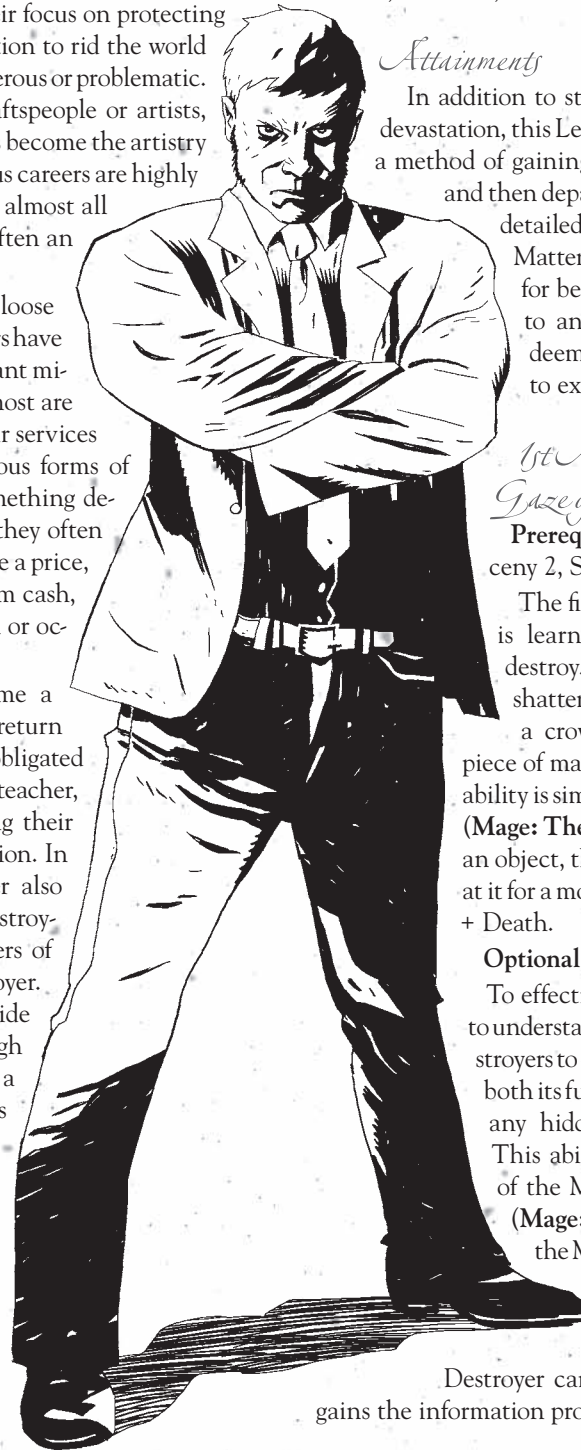
Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Death 2, Larceny 2, Stealth 2

The first step in mastering this Legacy is learning to make objects easier to destroy. Destroyers learn the secrets of shattering the door of a bank safe with a crowbar or destroying a well-built piece of machinery with a single blow. This ability is similar to the Death 2 "Decay" spell (*Mage: The Awakening*, p. 136). To weaken an object, the Destroyer need merely glance at it for a moment and roll Wits + Weaponry + Death.

Optional Arcanum: Matter 1

To effectively destroy something, it helps to understand it. This attainment allows Destroyers to examine an object and determine both its function and to know if it contains any hidden features or compartments. This ability is similar to a combination of the Matter 1 "Craftsman's Eye" spell (*Mage: The Awakening*, p. 194), and the Matter 1 "Find the Hidden Hoard" spell (*Mage: The Awakening*, p. 195). This ability functions continuously, any time the

Destroyer carefully examines any object, he gains the information provided by both spells.



2nd Attainment: Falling to Dust

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Death 3

With this attainment, the Destroyer truly lives up to his name. With a glance he can instantly cause objects to fall to dust. When combined with the previous attainment even the most durable and well-built object can swiftly be reduced to crumbling fragments. This ability is similar to the Death 3 “Destroy Object” spell (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 139), and like the previous attainment, the Destroyer rolls Wits + Weaponry + Death to use this attainment.

Optional Arcanum: Matter 3

Being able to destroy an object is only part of being a successful saboteur. Destroyers must also be able to gain access to their target, and this attainment helps them accomplish this. With a touch, the Destroyer can bend back a vault door or sculpt crude steps into a smooth wall. This ability is similar to the Matter 3 “Plasticity” spell (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 199). The effects of this attainment last for one hour.

3rd Attainment: Ghostly Intrusion

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Death 4, Larceny 2, Stealth 2

To successfully destroy an object, it is not sufficient to merely be able to turn it into useless dust. A skilled

Destroyer should also be able to enter and leave a location without anyone knowing she was ever there. Also, sometimes Destroyers don't just wish to eliminate an object, they wish to replace it with a similar one in such a way that no one will ever know that the exchange was made. This attainment allows the Destroyer to easily step in and out of the Underworld, permitting him to take shortcuts through the land of the dead or to vanish at a moment's notice if he is being observed. In addition, if an object proves too difficult to destroy, the mage can instead pick it up and transport it in the Underworld. This ability is similar to the Death 4 “Twilight Shift” spell (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 145).

Optional Arcanum: Matter 4

By studying both Matter and Death, Destroyers enhance their arsenal of destruction by gaining even more powerful ways to transform durable objects into fragments or even into dust. When used to completely destroy an object, this attainment leaves behind no traces at all — the object is simply gone. This ability is similar to the Matter 4 “Annihilate Matter” spell (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 201).

PRINCES OF THE MANY MASKS

There's nothing wrong with who you are, but consider who you could be. What would it be like to have the option to become someone else, anyone else, whenever you desired?

The Seers of the Throne wield considerable power because of their ability to infiltrate various mortal organizations. Instead of relying on mortal puppets, the practitioners of this Legacy excel at all manner of infiltration and impersonation. They have learned that both identity and even physicality are mutable quantities and that who you really are matters far less than who others think you are.

Some Imposters specialize in short term efforts where they gain access to a person or location and use this access to steal something or kill someone. However, many use their special abilities to replace an important member of an organization for months or even years. Typically, Imposters begin learning to perform short-term impersonations and gradually move on to more demanding and longer-term assignments.

For most Imposters, becoming someone else is not merely any exceptionally useful method of accomplishing various goals; this process is also either an exceptionally exciting challenge, a profoundly personal calling or often both. Few members of this Legacy use their abilities purely for professional purposes.

Most spend at least some of their leisure time impersonating someone else purely for the enjoyment of doing so. From appearing as a well-known celebrity, going to a fancy restaurant and asking for the bill to be put on your tab, to performing a daring daylight robbery, eluding pursuit for a moment and drastically changing their appearance or having half a dozen legal identities, each with a drastically different appearance, the ability to easily disguise themselves as someone else offers members of this Legacy a vast array of minor benefits for mages willing to freely change their bodies.

Parent Path or Order: Acanthus or Seers of the Throne

Nickname: Imposters

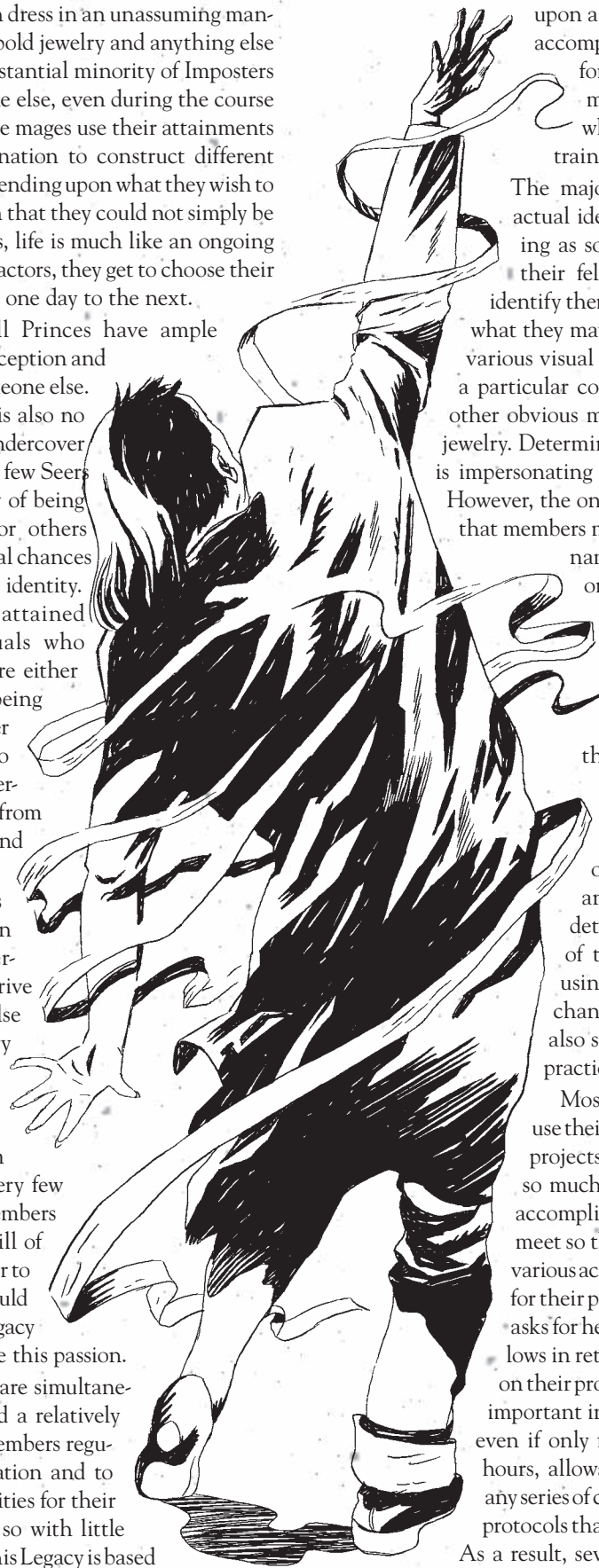
Appearance: Unsurprisingly, Imposters have no set appearance — they look like whatever they need or want to look like. When not impersonating someone or playing a role, most members of this Legacy appear somewhat drab, bland and easily overlooked. The majority only really seem to “come alive” when they are being someone else. When

being themselves, they often dress in an unassuming manner, avoiding bright colors, bold jewelry and anything else that might stand out. A substantial minority of Imposters choose to always be someone else, even during the course of their everyday lives. These mages use their attainments and their skills at impersonation to construct different identities for themselves depending upon what they wish to do, even if there is no reason that they could not simply be themselves. For these mages, life is much like an ongoing play, and unlike most of the actors, they get to choose their role and can change it from one day to the next.

Background: Almost all Princes have ample previous experience with deception and in particular with being someone else. Many are actors, but there is also no shortage of con artists, undercover cops or pathological liars. A few Seers come to this Legacy by way of being transsexuals, immigrants or others who have experienced radical changes in their personal or social identity. Regardless of how they attained this experience, individuals who are drawn to this Legacy are either inherently uncomfortable being themselves or find both power and freedom in the ability to become someone else, preferably someone very different from their normal appearance and background.

Although the attainments in this Legacy greatly aid in transformation and impersonation, the skill and the drive to pretend to be someone else must already be present. Every year a few hopefuls who see this Legacy solely as a path to both power and safety seek out instruction from one of the members, but very few are accepted. Almost all members feel a profound joy or a thrill of excitement when they appear to become someone else and would not consider teaching this Legacy to anyone who did not share this passion.

Organization: Imposters are simultaneously a highly secretive and a relatively social and active Legacy. Members regularly meet to share information and to exchange news of opportunities for their services. However, they do so with little formal hierarchy. Status in this Legacy is based



upon a mixture of skill and personal accomplishment and there are no formal leaders. Instead, every member is trained by a mentor who decides whether or not to train them.

The majority of members keep their actual identities secret, always appearing as someone else when they meet their fellows. Most members simply identify themselves by name, regardless of what they may look like, but some also use various visual clues, such as always wearing a particular combination of colors or some other obvious marker, like a unique piece of jewelry. Determining whether or not someone is impersonating another member is difficult. However, the one law among the Imposters is that members must reveal their true Shadow name if they are asked by three or more members of this Legacy at the same gathering. If two members arrived at a gathering, both claiming to be the same person, both would almost certainly be asked their true Shadow name by several others in attendance. All statements are checked by both personal questions by other members who know them and by Mind rites designed to determine the truth or falsehood of their answers. In addition to using meetings of their Legacy as chances to seek status, Imposters also seek out their fellows for more practical purposes.

Most Princes of the Many Masks use their Legacy in pursuit of their own projects. However, there is often only so much that a single individual can accomplish, and so Imposters regularly meet so they can both brag about their various accomplishments and request aid for their projects. Typically, an Imposter asks for help from one or more of her fellows in return for providing similar help on their projects. Impersonating multiple important individuals in an organization, even if only for a few days, or even a few hours, allows Imposters to bypass almost any series of checks and balances or security protocols that an organization has in place. As a result, several members of this Legacy

working together can obtain almost any information or steal almost any easily portable object with little chance of failure or discovery.

A few Imposters work as freelance contractors who offer their services to Seers who need help infiltrating some organization or impersonating someone else. The availability of Profane Urim and the widespread use of Mind rites to possess Sleepers means that the demand for such services is relatively small. However, actually impersonating someone offers a degree of precision and immediacy unavailable to mages who must rely on Sleeper puppets and Thralls. When another Seer who lacks the ability to easily impersonate others requires such a service, most contact one of the Princes of the Many Masks, who then either accepts the assignment or passes word about it to other members of this Legacy.

Suggested Oblations: Dressing up in a disguise, putting on a mask, rehearsing for a play, practicing the mannerisms and habits of a person or character.

Concepts: Actor, con artist, undercover cop, spy, party crasher, identity thief.

Attainments

Learning this Legacy requires the prospective Imposter to learn how to alter and reshape their body in increasingly radical ways, while also to fit into the mold of another's expectations. Members who also study the Mind Arcana also learn to manipulate others' beliefs and perceptions.

1st Attainment: Spy's Assist

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Life 2, Subterfuge 2

Infiltration can be a difficult and stressful procedure. This Attainment allows the mage to enhance her body to allow her to more effectively resist these stresses. This attainment is similar to the Life 2 "Body Control" spell (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 182). This attainment is always active and of infinite duration. Use the number of dots the Imposter has in the Life Arcana as the number of successes rolled. In addition to the other listed uses, the Imposter can also use this attainment to slow his heartbeat in such a way as to reduce all stress reactions to lying and fear. Altering her metabolism in this fashion allows the mage to gain additional dice equal to the successes used to add to any social roll designed to ally suspicions and to fool people. These dice can also be used to help the character fool mechanical lie detectors that are attempting to determine if the character is being truthful.

Optional Arcanum: Mind 2

Members of this Legacy who study Mind also learn to continually project an aura of trust and other positive feelings. This attainment is similar to the Mind 2 "First Impression" spell (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 208), except that it activates automatically and always provides the Imposter with a number of additional dice equal to the number of dots the character has in the Mind Arcana.

2nd Attainment: Mask of Flesh

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Life 3

Imposters who learn this Attainment truly deserve the title, since they learn to reshape their faces and bodies to fit their desires. This attainment is similar to the Life 3 "Two Faces" spell (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 188). To change his appearance, the Imposter need only make a contested roll of Wits + Subterfuge + Life to change his appearance. Once altered, the mage can maintain his new appearance indefinitely and can change it instantly by making a new roll.

Optional Arcanum: Mind 3

While Life magic can alter physical appearance, it does not allow the mage to seamlessly imitate someone's mannerisms, accent or other idiosyncrasies. However, Mind magic can directly manipulate an observer's perceptions. This attainment allows the mage to cause others to see him as someone other than who he is. This attainment is similar to the Mind 3 "Imposter" spell (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 211). To change his appearance, the Imposter need only make a contested roll of Intelligence + Subterfuge + Mind vs. any observer's Composure + Gnosis. Once established, the mage can maintain his new appearance indefinitely and can change it instantly by making a new roll.

3rd Attainment: The Ultimate Perfection of Disguise

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Life 4

In the modern day, sometimes high-security installations require various biometric scans, including fingerprints, retina scans, voice prints and various similar sorts of data. This attainment allows the mage to precisely imitate someone's appearance, including being able to fool all biometric scans. It is similar to the Life 4 "Doppelganger" spell (**Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 188-189). To imitate someone else, the mage makes an extended Intelligence + Subterfuge + Life roll once per turn. Once the Imposter has successfully altered her appearance, she can maintain this new appearance indefinitely, and need only roll again to change it.

Optional Arcanum: Mind 4

One of the greatest tools for successful infiltration is the ability to alter the memories of the people you are fooling. Targets of this attainment could be made to ignore having seen the mage break into a safe or to remember the person's superior introducing the mage to her and instructing the person to do everything possible to assist the mage. This attainment is similar to the Mind 4 "Breach the Vault of Memory" spell (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 214). All alterations to a target's memory last for up to an hour, but as long as the Imposter is in the person's presence when this hour elapses, she can cause the alteration to continue by making another roll. If the Imposter possesses Mind 5, this alteration of memory lasts for one day.

SECRET ORDER OF THE GATE

The unspoken word is the Lord upon which all else depends.

The Seers of the Throne have one great taboo: do not invoke the Gate. She is the Lonely Exarch at the borders of existence. He watches the Abyss, and in watching it, gives it form and power. She opened a terrible, necessary door to envelop the Fallen World in a spiritual desert: a cloak of madness that bars the Supernal Realms to all but a few powerful, eccentric wills.

That's the taboo. Like all taboos, people break it from time to time. Seers disobey, search and usually don't find anything. Sometimes, they're caught and punished. A few become Scelesti, and claim to serve the Gate. That's a lie — they're only slaves of the Abyss.

A few succeed. They find the Lonely Exarch. They join a Legacy that's had many names over the centuries. The Secret Order of the Gate is its latest incarnation, founded over 100 years ago by a pylon that lost three Soldiers to the Pentacle (especially Nameless mages who joined the Free Council) and two more to treachery — rivals who hit them when they were down. That sowed the seeds of doubt, fueled the quest for power beyond the accepted Iron Seals. In 1901, the last three found the Gate in Chicago. Some say they used an Artifact called the Celestial Flange to call her from the Place Between.

So began the Secret Order and its mission. It is the demi-Ministry of the Gate, the Warder, The Fearful Reconciler, King of Zero. They love him. They worship her utterly. That slowly, invariably drives them mad.

The Secret Order's inner doctrine speaks of the Serpent and the Tree. The Tree is the Fallen World, growing from filth up to the Supernal Sky. The Celestial Ladder was inevitable; the Tree always climbs, using the smaller life within in to manifest that fecund desire. If it ever grew too tall, it would envelop the heavens in its unclean tendrils and choke existence to death.

It must be pruned, dismembered and *hurt* from time to time. The Exarchs did it when they cut down the Celestial Ladder, and the Gate does it still, with the blackest, sharpest blade of all: the Abyss. That's the anti-reality's purpose. It's the Serpent, Niddhog gnawing at the World Tree — but it too must be restrained. The Serpent and the Tree live in symbiosis. Unbeing seeks being, and devours it. Being fills the void until it's either stopped, or suffocates.

That's why the Secret Order of the Gate calls Abyssal horrors into the world, and why it banishes them when they stay too long or eats too deeply into the Tree's heartwood.

They let the Serpent prune the world in small pulses of destruction, designed for symbolic import. Killing a city is excessive; killing the man who represents the city is good enough, and the manner of his ending is the rite that controls that symbolic power. So the world is left a smaller place — Fallen, but alive — without raising poisoned branches to the heavens.

The Secret Order believes in two paths of service: the Opening Way and the Warding Way. Openers summon Abyssal manifestations; Warders banish them. The perfect Gatekeeper performs both duties, but few can maintain the balance. They see too much. Their minds break in one direction or the other and they pick a side. The Gatekeepers call themselves the truest Seers of the Throne, and say the Ministries are foolish for denying it, and leaving the Lonely Exarch in exile.

The Parametric Language

The Parametric Language is the Gate's occult tongue. The Secret Order believes the Lonely Exarch used it to command the Abyss to open, and tame the newly-Fallen World — and to banish it, so that the fallen World would survive. It is a language that gives comprehensible structures to the Abyss' anti-entities. It's a tongue of negatives, that defines things based on what they are *not*, providing a general conceptual shape — even a prison — for Abyssal entities.

All Gatekeepers know the Parametric Language. They can conduct conversations in it, though its grammar makes this a slow, clumsy process. Its chief use is in dealing with the Abyss. Chanting it adds +1 die to spells the specifically target Abyssal entities or manifestations. It sounds like a series of chaotic, guttural syllables and hisses and objectively speaking, it *is* random noise; it can't be learned by mages who don't belong to the Legacy.

Parent Path or Order: Seers of the Throne of any Path are accepted. Pentacle mages, Apostates and other outsiders are not.

Nickname: Gatekeepers

Appearance: The Legacy is hard on members' psyches. After seeing the glory of the Gate, Gatekeepers stop caring about worldly things. Personal grooming begins to slide. Dirty, torn clothes are common, as long as these don't give them away. Secret Order mages understand that appearance-conscious Seers would treat these signs with suspicion, so they carefully prepare themselves for social occasions, adopting a bland mask to get them through trivial meetings.

Without these precautions, Gatekeepers would simply take the quickest route to their goals, subtly by damned. They'd mutter in the Parametric Language, kill anyone who stood in their way and in all likelihood, self-destruct after being found out. The Legacy is adept at maintaining a façade of normalcy, but it's still a façade; they don't care about the everyday world. If they could get away with it they'd give it nothing more than the cold glare, filled with unshakeable zeal—a look that hangs about them no matter what their appearance.

Background: All Gatekeepers are Seers of the Throne; all consider themselves loyal. The worldly Throne's failed them, but they haven't failed it. Most were on the losing side of political struggles. They fled the death-knell of some trivial Ministry or lost a bid for rank in the Iron Pyramid. Beyond that, Gatekeepers tend to come from academic backgrounds. It's hard to find the Secret Order, so to even start the journey, a prospective member has to explore locked archives and ask dangerous questions. To avoid the social stigma of studying the Gate, the mage also needs to know how to keep secrets and lie smoothly. These traits come in handy after initiation, both to hide her affiliations and disguise her damaged psyche.

Organization: No Gatekeeper shares a pylon for long. She leaves it, murders the other members or converts them. She already has to lie most of the time; increasing that by having "unenlightened" Seers nearby would be intolerable. If a Secret Order member manages to convert other Seers they form a pylon devoted to the Gate's mission. They'll spend an increasing amount of time away from the Throne's hierarchy. Ironically, their agenda helps them advance despite

this, because so many Gatekeeper pylons earn respect for fighting Abyssal intrusions — in most cases, intrusions they themselves created.

The Legacy isn't big enough for a complex organization but it does recognize the roles of Openers and Warders. An ideal cult contains a balance between the two. Openers have effectively thrown their lot in with the Abyss, though they'd never admit it. Instead, they believe that the Abyss needs to be employed more aggressively. Many Openers think humanity should suffer through a great Abyssal tribulation that ends in a smaller world with a less arrogant population. To the Secret Order, hubris is the Tree's desire for growth, expressing itself through its human components. Curing it with a lasting, terrible darkness would protect the Supernal Realms. Warders channel their fear of the Abyss into a passion for opposing it, though that doesn't mean they'll block the Secret Order's plans, either.

Gatekeepers believe that the three founders are still alive. One is the Lord Warden, one is the Lord Opener and the last is the hidden Minister of the Gate, who has attained true balance and lives in a crumbling citadel in the Place Between.

Suggested Oblations: Singing hymns to the Gate in the Parametric Language, drawing the Gate's Iron Seal upon the mage's body, meditating in the Place Between.

Concepts: Scholar, mystic, insightful madman, monster hunter, scholar of forbidden subjects

Attainments

The Secret Order of the Gate's Attainments pass through the Place Between: the border between reality and the Abyss. This is where the Gate dwells, and some Gatekeepers even believe that she is the realm. The Place Between looks like the material plane area from which a Gatekeeper enters, except that everything is twisted, rotting and corroded. New buildings are ruins covered in thickly-scrawled sigils. The sun is pale and the stars are red, arranged in unknown constellations. The Abyss manifests freely. Think of the Place Between as the shore, and the Abyss as waves of an inscrutable ocean.



First Attainment: Shroud of the Borderland

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Space 2

The mage partly enters the Place Between. He appears to be semi-substantial and his appearance also changes. He's close to the Abyss, and seems to mutate and ripple in its presence. He may look like he's bleeding from his eyes, or his arms might appear lengthen into spindly, clawed growths, but it's an illusion, formed of the interaction between his Nimbus and the Abyss' anti-existence.

This Attainment has two practical effects. First of all, he can follow another Gatekeeper who uses Walk the Place Between (see below), though he can't create his own doorways. Second, the Abyss is close enough to disrupt incoming magic, diverting its energies into counter-universes and corrupt metaphysical realms. Spells targeting the mage reduce their dice pools by the Gatekeeper's Space dots. This Attainment functions automatically, but costs a point of Mana to invoke.

Optional Arcanum: Spirit 2

If the mage has the second rank of Spirit, his proximity to the Abyss allows him to summon an Abyssal entity by making a successful Resolve + Occult + Spirit roll and treating the result like an Instant spell with a Prolonged (one scene base) duration. The entity has the characteristics of an Abyssal manifestation that appears when mages invoke Paradoxes connected to spells using as many Arcanum dots (see Mage: The Awakening, p. 273) as the gatekeeper's Spirit rating.

The manifestation is not well-disposed toward the mage, but doesn't necessarily hate him; rather, it uses its presence to twist and destroy something emotionally or magically significant. It does not always appear overtly, and might impersonate or possess a material plane native. The mage has no special ability to command it and doesn't need the mage around to sustain itself.

Second Attainment: Walk the Place Between

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Space 3

The Gatekeeper can enter the Place Between for a short period of time, using it to travel from one place to another. Roll Wits + Occult + Space. This functions as the "Portal" spell, but with several exceptions. After determining the entry and exit points of his journey, he must actually walk the Place Between to his destination before the Attainment's duration expires. Unless he plans on traveling very short distances, the mage must modify the duration factor of the Attainment.

Distance is a fragmented, tenuous concept in the Place Between. The mage uses esoteric insights to find shortcuts, so that even though he takes a normal pace in the Place, he moves much faster relative to the material plane. Roll

Dexterity + Occult; each success multiplies the distance the mage covers in the real world, as follows:

Successes	Material Distance Traveled
0	Normal Speed
1	2x Speed
2	4x Speed
3	8x Speed
4	16x Speed
5+	32x Speed

Another difference is that unlike the "Portal," other characters cannot pass through it unless they possess this Attainment or Shroud of the Borderland.

If the duration expires and the mage hasn't reached the exit portal, he's trapped in the Place Between. Abyssal manifestations easily enter and there's no clean food or water to sustain life, so the mage is probably doomed. On the other hand, possessed Gatekeepers occasionally come back....

Optional Arcanum: Spirit 3

If the Gatekeeper is a Disciple of Spirit he can selectively wrap himself in the medium of the Place Between. He can use this to touch Abyssal entities even when they're in Twilight, the Shadow or the Place Between, and can even reach inside people and objects to interact solely with the manifestation, without harming whoever or whatever it inhabits. He can strike the entity or pull it out of its host.

Third Attainment: Dwell in the Place Between

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Space 4

The Gatekeeper may enter the Place Between for extended periods of time. This behaves as the second Attainment, except that the duration is now Prolonged (one scene) and

Calling What Shouldn't Be Called

Summoning entities from the Abyss with Gatekeeper Attainments is an act of hubris. The mage not only calls an inherently dangerous entity, but judges whether its presence suits some abstract principle of cosmic balance. Consequently, using the Spirit 2 and Spirit 4 prerequisite Attainments are sins against Wisdom with an intensity based on the summoned entity's spiritual might. Subtract the lowest of the creature's Power, Finesse or Resistance from 10; the result is the sin's Wisdom threshold.

he may bring other members of his Legacy or Abyssal manifestations with him. Other beings cannot accompany him, but he can force fellow Gatekeepers and Abyssal creatures through. Roll Wits + Occult + Space — the target's Resolve + Gnosis or Resistance score, as appropriate.

Gatekeepers use the Attainment to communicate with Abyssal entities or banish them. Abyssal beings visit in the Place Between easily, but it forces them into the semblance of form they're forced to wear on the material plane. (If this wasn't the case, the entity would either be incomprehensible, or drive the Gatekeeper completely mad.) Gatekeepers strike pacts with the Abyss here, but they also use it as a dumping ground for creatures who've overstayed their

welcome on earth. These banished entities can return to the Abyss if they wish. Most do, though many still haunt the Place Between.

Optional Arcanum: Spirit 4

A Gatekeeper in the Place Between who possesses Spirit 4 may force an Abyssal Manifestation to do his bidding. This is treated like the spell "Spirit Guardian" except that the mage can also direct the entity to perform other services, though he must always specify a specific target. Roll Presence + Intimidation + Spirit - the entity's Resistance. The Gatekeeper may use the Space manifestation of the Attainment to bid the entity accompany him back to the material plane.





Vatche Mavjian

CHAPTER FIVE: GIFTS OF THE EXARCHS

I close my eyes, and listen.

I hear Michael Voight, who calls himself Darius in my service, speaking softly to himself as he sits in a car and watches the apartment across the road. He enumerates to himself the many faults of the woman he follows, many of which I am certain are born of his imagination. True or false, though, they harden him against her, and I welcome his determination.

I hear Carrie Lincoln, who calls herself Ephemeral in my service, breathing heavily in the embrace of her lover. He is too caught up in his rutting to read her breath, to discern that his touch is becoming as ash to her. Soon she will have nothing for him but contempt, and all the more to give to me.

I hear Jay Runyon, who calls himself Cormorant in my service, opening the bedroom window of a child. He whispers a lullaby I taught him, and the child does not stir.

I hear Danielle Polewski, who calls herself Violet in my service, and Genevieve Colan, who has not taken a Shadow name, speaking of me. "Don't touch the glass orb he keeps in his chambers," Danielle says. "Don't even look at it. He loves that thing as if it were his own son."

She is wrong, of course. I have had sons, but their tawdry needs and vulgar aspirations were nothing to love. They were gross fabrications of the Fallen world, and I am better to be free of them. The glass beneath my fingertips, though — it is Supernal, a creation of perfection. I am as unworthy to love it as my sons were unworthy to love me. But I will prove myself worthy yet.

**"Jones, do you realize what the Ark is?
It's a transmitter.
It's a radio for speaking to God,
and it's within my reach."**

— Rene Belloq, Raiders of the Lost Ark

Magical Methods

Just as with any other large-scale group of Awakened, the Seers of the Throne have their tried-and-true mystic secrets, beliefs and practices handed down through generations and centuries. Unlike some others, however, the transcendent influence of the Seers' insidious masters ensure that their mystic arts are forever evolving, adapting to the shape of the Lie, even as they serve to sculpt it in small, but meaningful, ways, in turn.

Tactics

Like any society of willworkers, the Seers of the Throne specialize in certain uses of the ten Arcana encompassed by — and encompassing — the fundamental energies of Creation. Perhaps most important to note is the fact that most Seers prefer to exert their will through intermediaries and so favor magic that enables them to remain safely entrenched behind layers of secrecy (and protection), rather than having to sully their own hands with work better accomplished by more expendable souls. Hand-in-hand with this creed of elitism and self-preservation is an overall aversion to directly combative spells; Seers (particularly members of the Praetorian Ministry) will certainly resort to them when the situation calls for such powers, but they are only rarely the first recourse for a Seer of the Throne well and truly indoctrinated into her society's philosophy.

Death

While the Seers of the Throne take exception to many aspects of traditional Atlantean mysticism, they don't disagree with that ancient nation's views on the unquiet dead: ghosts and their ilk are *things*; to be used, abused, and discarded, at a whim. Such entities make for useful resources in the Seers' long struggle, for death and the dead are feared, and it is certainly a kind of power, to wield what others dread. Some servants of the Throne delight in the knowledge that these beings are, in many ways, the direct result of the Exarchs' great Lie — in which death is a prison and the end of a journey, rather than merely one step upon


it — and exult in indulging their power and authority over the flesh and spirits of those who have passed.

For the more practical-minded among the Seers of the Throne, however, ghosts, zombies, revenants, and other such creatures are simply fodder. They act as spies, soldiers, assassins, and whatever else their masters require of them. Naturally, the Seers of the Throne put such magic to other uses, as well, though they tend to favor Death's more utilitarian options (such as destroying their own auras, shifting into Twilight, or concealing the truth of how a person died) to its martial applications. While the ability to disintegrate matter or even flesh can be quite useful, many Seers would rather resort to more mundane means for doing so, rather than running the risk of Paradox. It is Death's extraordinary capabilities, rather than those that can be replicated with everyday items (like sledgehammers and guns, for example), that are of interest to most Seers.

Fate

Mastery over the tides of destiny is a concept quintessentially of interest to Seers of the Throne, who often prefer to focus upon wider-ranging applications of the Fate Arcanum to those with narrower focus. Just anyone can be a better shot, for example, or otherwise incredibly lucky for a few moments, and these abilities are certainly *useful*, but they don't *resonate* with the vision of the Throne to anywhere near the same degree as the power to control fortunes on a wide scale or to know, at a glance, the final doom of a plan important to a Pentacle Consilium. That distinction, more than any other, serves in the minds of many Seers to distinguish those who merely use the Fate Arcanum from those who understand and genuinely master its nuances.

Seers of the Throne with recourse to such abilities often favor a combination of Fate manipulations and social controls in the effort to realize their masters' will, since those less skilled in either arena cannot adequately counter the Seers' moves. Small "enhancements" to fortune may be doled out to Awakened or Sleepwalker servants (those anticipated to meet direct resistance from the Pentacle, Banishers,



etc.), but these are a calculated risk, as the Seer who does so puts her individual resonance into play for enemies to discover, unless concealing it by other means. Of course, binding oaths and *geasa* are favored by many Seers (those with the power to create them, anyway), as is the magic used to twist such bonds into more useful shapes; whether secretly or overtly, as the situation demands.

Forces

Much as with the Seers' common attitude toward Death, so too do they tend to view the Arcanum of Forces as a means to acquire tools, rather than weapons. Scanning frequencies for cellular phone calls between Pentacle mages or troublesome Sleepers, shutting off the power in an enemy's Sanctum, and disappearing from sight; these are the ends to which many Seers of the Throne put the Forces Arcanum. While lightning bolts and lances of fire from the fingertips may be flashy and even intimidating, they don't do anything that a Seer can't accomplish with a handful of heavily armed thugs. Even pillars of hellfire or coruscating waves of radiation are nothing more than particularly advanced applications of the same crude philosophy, and the ends to which they're employed are almost invariably better accomplished with normal resources than magic.

Seers, for the most part, would rather employ Forces as an Arcanum of espionage and resource management than one of the battlefield. The flashiest (and, often, most combat-oriented) Forces spells are always vulgar in aspect and, in time of conflict, can do more harm than good for the Seer who employs them. Not only does Paradox inevitably take its toll, but, often, the Seer who comes to depend overly upon such obvious magic eventually comes to lose her skill with more insidious forms of mysticism. This isn't to say that some Seers don't resort to such tactics, but that magic is often relegated to the role of shock troops, dispatched when secrecy is neither warranted nor desired.

Life

The Arcanum of control over every organism native to the material realm, Life provides many opportunities for the wise Seer of the Throne. Those Seers skilled in its arts typically concentrate on one of two fields: adopting supernatural perceptions and creating subtle manipulations of living patterns; or the gross enhancement and even creation of life itself. Some few do cross over between the two disciplines, but this division is actually something of an ideological one among the Seers, the former group of which liken their uses of the Life Arcanum to the elusive stratagems generally preferred by the Throne, while the latter group maintains that their mastery of the mortal clay is a birthright bestowed upon them by the will of the Exarchs.

Those that tend toward more intangible uses of the Life Arcanum are often called to subtler vocations among the

Seers: duties that require a delicate touch and, typically, which demand a certain amount of continual interaction with Sleepers. The other sort, with its more grandiose manifestations of prowess, usually focuses upon direct methods of confrontation; modifying Sleepwalker and even Awakened agents, creating gruesome "pets" not meant for the Fallen World, and otherwise making monsters whose baneful attributes can be turned to the service of the Throne... provided such unruly things can be kept sufficiently in check and their abhorrent instincts leashed.

Matter

Once and, in many ways, still the Arcanum of mastery over wealth, Matter sees a great deal of use among the Seers of the Throne. To many Seers, such magic carries the seal of the Lie, being the secrets of control over the inert substance of the Fallen World. With these powers, Seers manifest riches, certainly; but canner servants of the Throne are also capable of more refined modes of thought. A hotwired Junker used as a getaway car turns into a high-performance machine, while an elaborate system of mechanical locks opens with little more than the wave of a hand. Despite something of a bias against (and justly-deserved fear of) vulgar magic and the cost that they necessarily carry, Seers — particularly those aligned with the up-and-coming Mammon Ministry — often make an exception for Matter Arcanum spells.

A supremely versatile Arcanum, Matter finds uses among Seers of all stripes. Assassins hone their weapons and create vicious poisons with whispered incantations, even as disreputable powerbrokers fabricate priceless antiques with which to dupe Sleeper clients. Even the more innocuous uses of Matter have their place: spells to discern the composition of things and to search out particular substances, enchantments for rendering pliant even the most stubbornly resilient materials, and sorceries that can cause an enemy's stoutest armaments and armor to fail her at the worst possible moment.

Mind

When it comes to applications of the Mind Arcanum, many Seers tend to adhere to a simple axiom: perceive before influencing, influence before controlling. Often, it is sufficient to know what a person is thinking or why in order to gain the upper hand in dealings with him. Failing that, a gentle nudge in one direction or the other can set such an individual upon a course desirable to the Seer, often completely without his awareness of his role in the plans unfolding. For such Seers of the Throne, it is only when all other avenues have failed that direct authority must be seized (since doing so leaves a much more obvious and direct path back to the willworker, opening her to investigation and reprisal) and the puppet's strings forcefully pulled.

Of course, a different breed of Seer revels in the power over others' thoughts and feelings, and delight in transforming even the strong-willed into virtual automata. These sorts often find work as interrogators, torturers, and "trainers" for extremely specialized minions. With enough time, experience and raw mystic prowess, some eventually become driving forces behind whole pylons and even important behind-the-scenes figures in Ministries, exerting telepathic influence over Seer operations on a wide scale and basking in the unadulterated glory of dominion over the human consciousness.

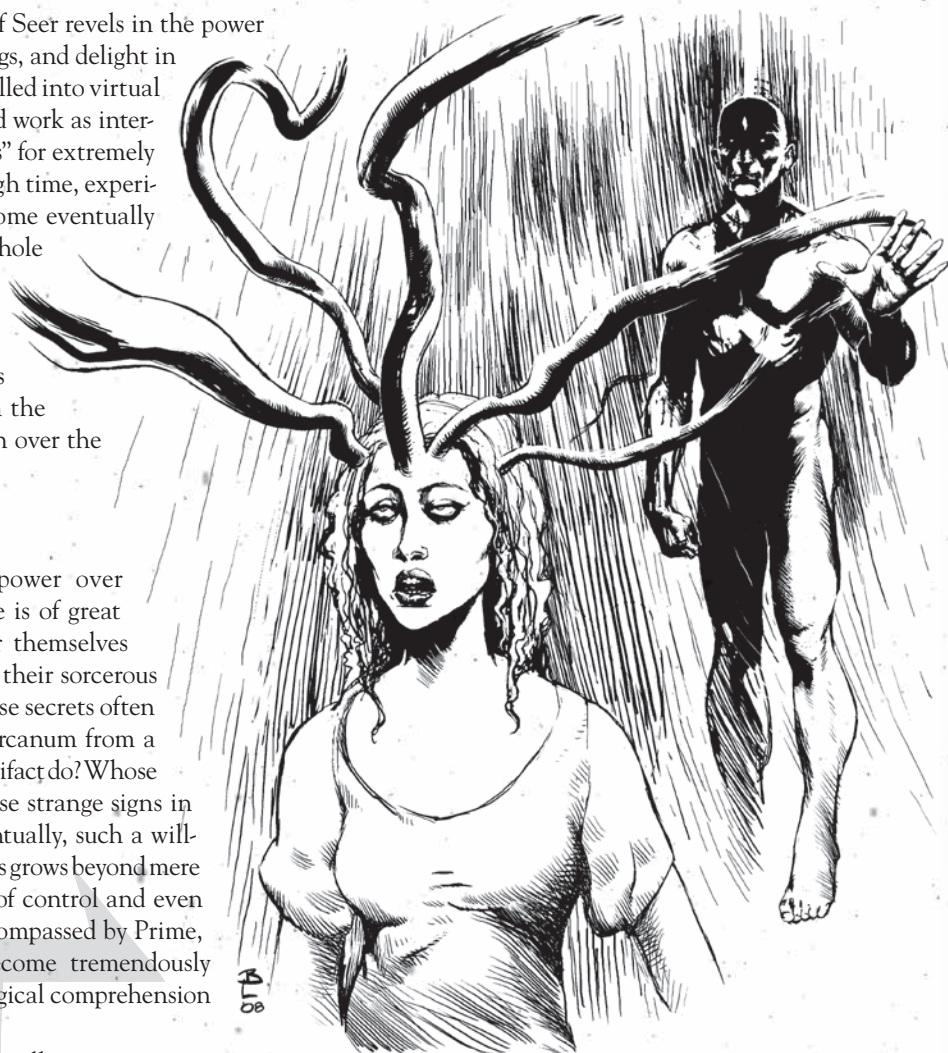
Prime

The Arcanum conveying power over the force of magic, itself, Prime is of great interest to Seers who consider themselves to be particularly discerning in their sorcerous practices. Seers who explore these secrets often initially approach the Prime Arcanum from a desire to *know*: what does this Artifact do? Whose resonance is this? What do those strange signs in that creature's aura mean? Eventually, such a will-worker's proficiency with such arts grows beyond mere perception and into the realm of control and even creation of the phenomena encompassed by Prime, and these Seers frequently become tremendously formidable in matters of raw magical comprehension and manipulation.

Seers who pursue Prime typically concentrate on its usefulness for resource control: Mana and tass, Hallows, Artifacts and Imbued Items, phantasms, altering the parameters of other magic or even dispelling it, entirely. Of course, Prime's offensive capabilities can be quite impressive, and certain Seers surely make use of them, but the majority of the Throne's servants prefer an approach with somewhat more finesse than brute force. Indeed, some especially powerful servants of the Exarchs can, with little more than an extensive knowledge of the Prime Arcanum, fabricate everything that an active pylon needs to carry out its plans in the Fallen World, at least in the short term.

Space

With proficiency in the Space Arcanum, a Seer gains the ability to act at a distance, mitigating significantly the need to expose herself directly to harm; a possibility that, of itself, inspires many Seers of the Throne to pursue its esoteric lore. Of course, Space is useful for so much more, allowing for control over the distinctions of place, senses that move beyond the constrains of the flesh,



and even the ability to affect the ties that bind people, places, and things to one another. By studying an enemy's spatial sympathy, a Seer can potentially learn far more useful information in a few moments than she could with months of intensive investigation and a cadre of agents working around the clock.

But what a Seer can do from far away isn't the only allure to Space; this multifaceted Arcanum enables a mage to do many things at his own location, as well. Particularly prized are the various options that Space offers for a Seer in a bad situation: gateways, teleportation, the power to transport needed commodities to one's location. Seers who pursue the mysteries of Space also develop their facility with these applications, enabling strategic deployment of assets at a moment's notice, from virtually anywhere. Conversely, the Space Arcanum's powers of misdirection and occlusion serve the Seers, as well, hiding willworkers from their foes and even shielding Sanctums against the intrusion of Pentacle assailants, Banisher madmen, and prying Sleepers, alike.



Spirit

In the days before the Fall of Atlantis, gods and spirits walked the earth with impunity, clothed in material form or the naked splendor of their true shapes, as the mood struck them. The arts of the Spirit Arcanum have been handed down from that primordial age. While the Seers' enemies have truck with the denizens of Shadow to many differing ends, the servants of the Throne do so to a single objective: dominion over the ephemeral entities of that other realm. Some Seers may be more genteel about their tyranny than others, but *all* of them who pursue this Arcanum aren't looking for friends and allies, but, rather, instruments through which they might make their desires manifest and by which they might attack those who would presume to stand against the power of the Exarchs.

Seers tend to use the Spirit Arcanum to build up a force of otherworldly servants, whose powers can only adequately be countered by another willworker skilled in Spirit (and then only if she knows specifically what sorts of entities she's dealing with.) In order to accomplish this, however, a mage must be capable of summoning, binding, and controlling any such army; cautionary tales circulate among various pylons regarding the inevitably nightmarish fates of those Seers of the Throne who failed to exercise discretion in the matter of managing their spirit minions. Fetishes can constitute unexpected munitions, allowing the servants of the Exarchs to bring spirits' alien powers to bear in time of strife.

Time

To the Seers of the Throne, Time is an Arcanum to be used extensively for its covert spells and sparingly for its more vulgar magic. With the former sorceries, Seers skilled in this Arcanum can read past or future with equal facility, discern the exact timing of specific events as they unfold, and defend themselves against the prying eyes of others trained in the use of such intricate willwork. Of particular interest to the Seers of the Throne are the abilities to study past and future, as these perceptions allow a mage to understand what has gone before and to learn (and, thereby, influence) what is *likely* to come to pass, all things being equal.

When it comes to the use of more blatant sorcery, Seers use Time to a variety of ends. Preternaturally swift movement — to the point of dodging bullets, even — certainly has its uses, as does the power to skip momentarily out of time... or to push an enemy into the emptiness between instants. Further, cunning servants of the Exarchs can certainly find interesting advantages in the power to make hours pass in a matter of seconds, or vice versa, to say nothing of the ability to “rewind” a poor choice, slow a rival's movements to a crawl, or catapult needed resources into the future, when they can be retrieved and employed to the greatest possible effect. Indeed, the mightiest prophetic capabilities bestowed upon one skilled

in the use of Time verge on predestination and *that* is a most satisfying thought to those Seers of the Throne who pursue its secrets.

Mudras

While Seers of the Throne employ the same patterns of gestures, facial movements, and other subtle motions intended to encapsulate a physical reflection of a spell's Imago as other Awakened, their interactions with this phenomenon are somewhat distinct from those experienced by Pentacle willworkers. The Ministries are issued their rote mudras — some of which are quite ancient and some of which are believed to be very modern, indeed — by the tetrarchs, who are, in turn, allegedly informed directly by the will of the Exarchs. Thus, a Seer is more likely to call her ritual gestures an “obeisance” (after a motion traditionally taken to express deep reverence toward a ruler) than a mudra; she is displaying a slave's proper deference toward her master with each such act, reinforcing the Exarchs' dominion over the Fallen World and the magnificent Lie that has devoured it.

Because mudras appear to cycle into use among the Seers with frequency simply not seen in any Pentacle Order, it is pointless to discuss the specifics of these movements. Indeed, some Seer mudras seem to lose their metaphysical qualities with time and degenerate to the level of inert gesticulations, indicating that they may be “retired” on some manner of schedule by the archmasters whose shadowy maneuvers mirror the inscrutable designs of the transcendent lords of reality. Seers who are in favor with the rulers of the various Ministries receive some foreknowledge of these transitions, while news travels more slowly to those that have earned the ire of their betters, or even just those who are virtual unknowns. Sometimes, inexperienced Seers are delivered information about changes in mudras long before older and more potent colleagues, and it is a matter of some debate whether these apparent errors are, in actuality, tests for the neophytes or for their superiors. Those who consider the matter at any length, however, typically conclude that it is almost assuredly a little bit of both.

Magical Tools

The primary magical tool of a Seer of the Throne is her “power phrase,” a series of sounds with which she identifies and through which she expresses her mystic will. The Seers of the Throne are among the most fervent believers in the magic of language; its power to sculpt belief and to limit the boundaries of the possible. This phrase is individual to a given Seer and almost invariably nonsensical to the outsider observer. Many Awakened — Seers and otherwise — have likened the made-up words to the fabricated phrases allegedly spoken by certain secret societies. This choice is

deliberate, making the listener feel ignorant of the phrase's meaning, which inherently implies a power possessed by the Seer from which all others are excluded.

This phrase may also be depicted visually, though not necessarily in any known language. Instead, abstract images or characters created by the Seer expressly for the purpose of expressing the power phrase may be employed. In effect, this becomes something of a personal seal for the Seer or a glyph denoting the authority bestowed upon her by the Exarchs. With the right sort of magic, another willworker can translate the depiction, but he can't usually do anything with it, as the image (as well as the spoken phrase associated with it) is actually metaphysically inert. It is, in effect, nothing more than a magical tool that simply can't be taken away from the Seer to whom it is attached (in the absence of the ability to alter or erase her memory, anyway.)

Other tools used by the Seers of the Throne include instruments of subjugation or control: manacles, crowns, thrones and the like. These can be deeply personal to the Seer in question. A dominatrix might use her riding crop or her thigh-high leather boots in this manner, while a

corporate raider employs his "power tie" or his lapel pin, and a Seer enforcer dedicates his heavy old revolver or the sunglasses that he always wears and which completely conceal his eyes. These objects must illustrate the Throne's reflexive suppression of noncompliance, even if they only make sense to the Seer who dedicates them; certainly, a red necktie doesn't seem particularly intimidating when balled up in the fist of a mage who's dressed down for casual Friday, but the Seer *himself* understands that it is a tool of oppression and this enables him to impress his Awakened will upon it and to express that will through it.

A Seer's Ministry may be reflected in the choice of power object. A member of Paternoster, for example, may use an opulent, gilded cross or other religious image to encompass her belief in the enslavement of the masses, while a Seer under the auspices of Mammon might use her "black" credit card for such a purpose. Again, so long as the item in question holds a symbolic significance to the Seer, resonating with notion of ascending to power at the expense of others, it can be dedicated in this way. Similarly, objects that have significance only to a given pylon can serve as magical tools. A group of Seers that focuses on control over local police might use a badge, while those invested in the drug trade may use the colors of the gang most heavily involved in the most lucrative trafficking.

Sacraments

The metaphorical (and, often, literal) burnt offerings employed in extended spellcasting, sacraments serve, for Seers of the Throne, as symbols intended to establish meaningful connections to the Exarchs in this world, drawing down their power and majesty in a real and quantifiable way, and so exalting the ambition of the individual. These ritual sacrifices establish a sense of identity with the Exarchs' greatness and the Seer's role as an agent of their domineering will, as well as denying hope and the promise of a higher spiritual reality to others. The most exceptional and precious of these items can yield a +1 bonus to a Seer's extended spellcasting roll.

Death: Breaking a bone taken from the body of a Sleeper killed as an incidental casualty of one of the Seer's own plans, or destroying a possession important to a now-deceased person dear to the Seer in her former life. Burning a relic commonly believed to indicate strong evidence of life after death, or personally sacrificing a Pentacle mage to the glory of the Exarchs (+1).

Fate: Burning an item intricately woven as an expression of faith in a benevolent higher power or a length of cord, cable or rope from an area claimed — whether overtly or secretly — by the Seer in the name of the Exarchs. Destroy-



ing an object associated with an inspiring humanitarian's rise to prominence, or shattering a centuries-old artwork depicting a deity associated with destiny (+1).

Forces: Smashing a vessel once used to hold fire for light and warmth by someone lost in the wilderness, or destroying an audio and/or visual recording of a speech by a prominent spiritual or political leader on the subject of human freedom. Dousing a long-burning light or flame with deep symbolic significance to an entire Sleeper population, or destroying the only copy of research on abundant, affordable energy (+1).

Life: Burning wholesome natural foods intended to feed those in need, or maliciously killing a wild animal. Destroying the preserved remains of a now-extinct animal, or tearing up an ancient genealogy chronicling the history of a family of *proximi* in service to one or more Pentacle Orders (+1).

Matter: Destroying an object passed down as a family heirloom, or a large quantity of money meant to go to the Seer's enemies or those dear to them. Dispelling the enchantments on an Imbued Item made by a prominent Pentacle mage and turning it back into a mundane object, or shattering a stone taken from an Atlantean Diaspora settlement (+1).

Mind: Burning a copy of a manifesto written by an idealistic revolutionary leader, or destroying copies of 10 major network news broadcasts intended to create fear and encourage conformity. Shredding an original copy of Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, or destroying a magical tool symbol of authority used by a rival Seer (+1).

Prime: Pouring out a vessel filled with fragrant oil suitable for anointing a king or holy person, or pulverizing an object taken from the physical location of another's Hallow. Burning out a ley line the presence of which is in some way beneficial to the Seer's enemies, or shattering an Artifact sacred to one or more Pentacle Orders (+1).

Space: Burning the only copy of a map detailing the accurate placement of at least half of an enemy mage's interests and operations or an item of irreplaceable personal value to the Seer, himself. Ruining an artwork believed to point to the location of an Awakened Atlantis, or systematically destroying or otherwise corrupting every sympathetic tie to a person in a position to effect genuinely positive change in the world (+1).

Spirit: Sacrificing an object painstakingly handcrafted by the Seer, herself, created in homage to an Exarch, or destroying an object with a powerful connection to any form of spirituality practiced outside of the Seers of the Throne. Forcibly binding and then meticulously destroying a spirit associated with liberty, or breaking the tools used by a théarch fetish-crafter in the course of his work (+1).

Time: Destroying a physical representation of a countdown until the Seer successfully seizes control of a desirable asset, or scattering sand made with a stone taken from a

structure conquered — in whatever way — by the Seer. Burning the last piece of evidence of the life and works of a prominent Pentacle mage at least a century dead, or smashing a relic of a moment historically significant to the cause of human freedom (+1).

Spells

In the course of a lifetime of service to the Exarchs, a Seer of the Throne is occasionally called upon to innovate in the field of magical research. These spells constitute some of the Seers' more notable advancements.

Death Spells

Shadow Flesh (Death ●●●●●+
Life ●●●●●, optional Matter ●●●●●)

Some mages favor grandiose displays of shapeshifting prowess, adopting all manner of fanciful forms: bird and beasts, other people, even the very elements. Certain applications of this ancient art, however, are considerably more insidious. Shapechanging willworkers in need of stealth and unimpeded movement might — with a considerable degree of mystic prowess — adopt a form particularly well-suited to such pursuits, transforming into living darkness.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Instant

Duration: Transitory (one turn)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

This spell takes effect in the turn following casting.

Since the mage does not transform into another form of life, he is in no danger of losing himself to an alien mindset. Instead, he becomes a mass of incorporeal shadows, retaining his human shape. He may remain three-dimensional (though still without apparent mass or substance) or change into a two-dimensional form. While in either form, he may move up to his normal Speed, though the latter shape can only move by clinging to walls and floors; without recourse to other magic, he cannot move on ceilings or otherwise defy the force of gravity, though he can slip under doors, through cracks, or other spaces too thin for a normal person to move through, provided that *any* unsealed seam exists. The character is effectively invisible in areas of either normal or supernatural darkness and can see perfectly well in either, though he is not blinded or in any way discomfited by sunlight (save for the possibility of Disbelief on the part of Sleepers who witness a disembodied shadow moving under its own power and quite possibly against the direction of the light.)

The mage's Attributes and other characteristics remain the same, though he cannot make any physical attacks

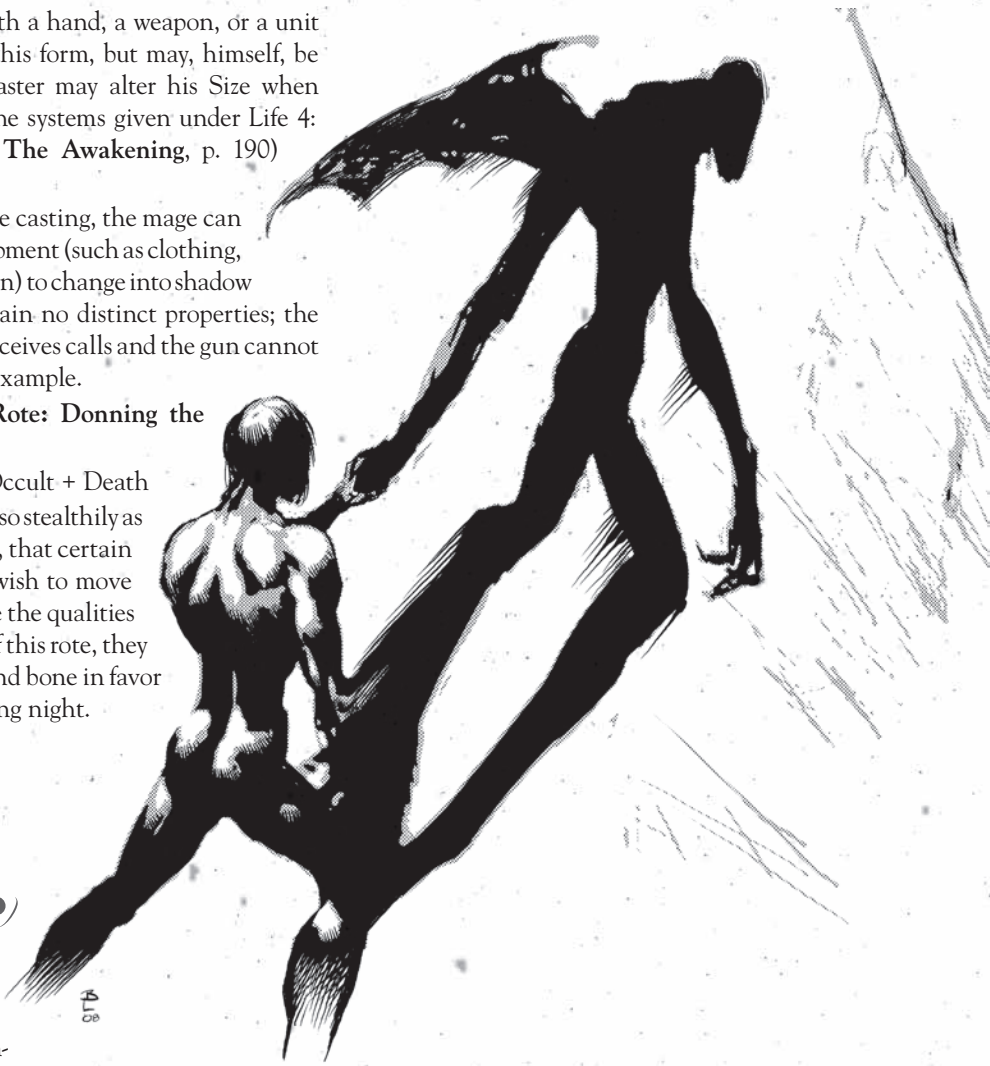
(any that require touch with a hand, a weapon, or a unit of ammunition) while in this form, but may, himself, be attacked normally. The caster may alter his Size when casting this spell, as per the systems given under Life 4: "Shapechanging" (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 190) for doing so.

By adding Matter 4 to the casting, the mage can cause all of his normal equipment (such as clothing, a cellular phone or a handgun) to change into shadow with him, though they retain no distinct properties; the phone neither makes nor receives calls and the gun cannot be used to fire bullets, for example.

Seers of the Throne Rote: Donning the Mantle of Night

Dice Pool: Stamina + Occult + Death

Little in this world moves so stealthily as a shadow. No wonder, then, that certain Seers of the Throne who wish to move in secrecy aspire to emulate the qualities of darkness, itself. By way of this rote, they may do so, shedding flesh and bone in favor of a form comprised of living night.



Fate Spells

Technology Curse
(Fate ●●●, Forces ●●)

Sleepers in the Western world increasingly rely on electronics to run their lives, and increasingly mundane items are controlled by microprocessors from cars to refrigerators. With this spell, a mage can render a victim unable to use these devices, banishing them from the modern world.

Practice: Fraying

Action: Instant, resisted by Composure + Gnosis

Duration: Transitory (one turn)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

Starting with the turn after casting, the targeted individual is surrounded by a magical field that disrupts electronic items. Any such item he attempts to use for the duration of the spell is subject to a penalty to its equipment dice equal to the successes on the spell, up to the caster's Fate dots. If the equipment dice are reduced to zero, the item does not function — computers shut off, electronic brakes in cars fail to respond and lights do not work.

Seers of the Throne Rote: Anti-Electronic Field

Dice Pool: Wits + Science + Fate

The Seers of the lesser Pantechonicon Ministry believe modern technology to be an excellent cage and controlling

mechanism for humanity. Central to their doctrine is the precept that humanity walks into that cage themselves. Sometimes, an object lesson is needed as to why technology is a good thing. Using the Anti-Electronic Field, the Seers demonstrate just what a life without modern conveniences is like.

Transfer Destiny (Fate ●●●●)

The mage transfers a Destiny from its original subject to another.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

The mage casting the spell may be the recipient, the donor or a bystander. If either party is unwilling and aware of the spell, it may be contested by Resolve + Gnosis.

Each success on the spell transfers one dot of the Destiny Merit from the donor to the recipient. At the end of the scene, the Merit transfers back to the donor, but if the

recipient has used any destiny dice within that chapter, the donor may not use them until they refresh as per the Destiny Merit rules.

The Destiny's bane also transfers for the duration of the spell — the donor also keeps the bane unless all her Destiny Merit dots have been lost to the spell.

The caster must touch both targets for the spell to take effect. With Fate 5 the spell can be cast at range.

Seers of the Throne Rote: Theft of Tomorrow

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Occult + Fate

The Seers of the Throne believe that history is made by powerful actors, individuals destined for great things, but they also believe that this mandate to influence the world can be stolen by the dedicated. As the Exarchs took the mantle of the Gods, this spell allows a clever Seer to take the mantle of mortal heroes.



Forces Spells

Insulate (Forces ●●)

Electricity is the hidden force animating the modern world and in its raw form the fury of creation itself. Seers that meditate on it as a metaphor for magic find the ability to protect themselves from the damaging effects of contact with electricity useful.

Practice: Shielding

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

The mage casting this spell becomes resistant to electrical shock. With Forces 3, it can be cast on others. The spell reduces the automatic damage inflicted by electricity by two points per dot of Forces of the caster. In addition, she automatically succeeds on the Strength roll to pull away.

Seers of the Throne Rote: Protection of the Second Name

Dice Pool: Stamina + Survival + Forces

Certain of the names of the General offer some protection against the fury of lightning, at least to a Seer that knows them.

Life Spells

Inflct Agony (Life ●●●)

Pain is a powerful motivator. Animals instinctively shrink back from causes of suffering; some scientists even believe that plants do so. Every living thing reflexively does what it can to avoid pain. Thus, some mages find benefit in magic intended to inflict harm upon others without having to resort to more lasting forms of violence, whether as a tool of interrogation or one of simple cruelty.

Practice: Fraying

Action: Extended and contested; target rolls Stamina + Gnosis reflexively

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

Successes accrued in the casting of this spell (as well as successes accrued to resist) are treated precisely like successes gained in the interrogation process (see *The World of Darkness*, pp. 81-2). At the Storyteller's discretion, *Inflct Agony* may be used to supplement other applications of the Intimidation Skill. Also, a Storyteller may choose to allow a character with the Iron Stamina Merit (*The World*

of Darkness, p. 113) to add her dots in that Merit as an equipment bonus to her roll to contest this spell.

At Life 3, this spell requires touch. With Life 4, it may be cast at sensory range and, at Life 5, it may be cast sympathetically. The use of this spell on an unwilling subject requires a check to resist degeneration when cast by any character with a Wisdom of 4 or greater (roll three dice).

Seers of the Throne Rote: The General's Burning Gauntlet

Dice Pool: Strength + Intimidation + Life

Seers of the Praetorian Ministry are often confronted with stubborn enemies, unwilling to reveal what they know when offered gentler forms of persuasion. Thus, torture occasionally becomes necessary in the pursuit of critical intelligence... or even just the "reeducation" of troublesome foes.

Matter Spells

Enhance Toxin (Matter ●●●)

The poisoner's craft is a distasteful one, but one that has, nevertheless, been practiced through centuries and millennia, by the Awakened as surely as by Sleepers. This spell amplifies the deleterious qualities of a toxic substance, rendering it even more lethal to its victim than it normally would be.

Practice: Perfecting

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

Each success assigned to this spell's Potency increases a poison's Toxicity by 1. Note that biological poisons and venoms may be enhanced by way of this spell, though not while still within the creature that produces them, unless the mage adds Life 3 to the casting.

Seers of the Throne Rote: The Fatal Drop

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Animal Ken (for a poison or venom still inside an animal) or Science + Matter

From their earliest days, certain among the servants of the Lie have resorted to the envenomed dagger and the poisoned chalice as tools of their masters' control. Even now, Seers continue this insidious science, refining the vicious tools of their trade to levels wholly unseen in nature.

Improve Quality (Matter ●●●●)

The archetypal rags-to-finery spell, this spell allows the mage to increase the worth (in mundane, monetary terms) of an object. Linen clothes become silk, decades-old cars become this year's model, old black and white televisions become plasma screens and personal cassette players become mp3 players.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

The object being transformed must retain the same basic function and description ("a chair," "a car" and so on, but the new expression of that description and function are up to the casting mage. The new form may (and frequently does) include precious substances. The efficiency in terms of equipment-modifiers of the object is not affected, so the spell is often cast combined with "Alter Efficiency."

At this level, the mage must touch the targeted object. With Matter 5, he can cast the spell at sensory range.

Seers of the Throne Rote: Midas Touch

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult or Science + Matter

"Alter Efficiency" is all well and good for getting uncommon results out of ordinary looking objects, but the Ministry of Mammon has a liking for objects that look and feel as good — or better — than they are. Seers of the Ministry use this rote to keep themselves in the luxury to which they are accustomed, updating their possessions to this year's fads and always having the latest designer gadget that does the same thing as last year's model.

Mind Spells

Euphoria (Mind ●●)

The mage can create a powerful feeling of euphoria that blocks out pain, allowing them to keep functioning even when grievously injured.

Practice: Ruling

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (covert)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

Each success on the spell both reduces wound penalties suffered by the target by one and applies a bonus die to any Stamina roll to remain conscious. The target may continue to make Stamina rolls to stay conscious even after the right-most health box has been filled with lethal damage, but the spell then becomes Improbable.

At Mind 2, the spell can affect only the mage casting it. At Mind 3, it may be cast on others.

Seers of the Throne Rote: Battlefield Bliss

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion + Mind

A Seer that can remain active until the very last moment is a Seer with an extra chance to escape whatever calamity has befallen her. A slave that can fight on in the face of terrible wounds is a slave buying another few seconds in which the enemy is not attacking his master.

Zeal (Mind ●●)

By using this spell, the mage eliminates doubt and banishes uncertainty, leaving only a clear determination for an action.

Practice: Ruling

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

The mage's Willpower is enhanced as the slightest traces of doubt are swept away. For the duration of the scene, the mage gains extra effect from Willpower expenditures. Each point gives five extra dice instead of three on a dice pool, or raises a Resistance Trait by three instead of two. Furthermore, all Morality (or Wisdom) checks are deferred until the end of the spell. The spell can affect a number of Willpower expenditures equal to the successes made on the casting roll. Any potential enhancements of Willpower that remain when the spell's duration ends are lost.

At this level of proficiency, the spell can only target the caster. At Mind 3, it can affect others. The benefits of this spell do not stack with the similar quality inherent to Hollow Ones.

Seers of the Throne Rote: Certainty of Purpose

Dice Pool: Manipulation or Resolve + Persuasion + Mind

The Seers of the Throne are well known as devoted followers of their cause, but even the most devoted suffer from doubt. By using this rote, the Seer can banish those last doubts from her mind, gaining the freedom of certainty in the Exarchs' cause.

Provoke Wrath (Mind ●●●)

The willworker may provoke a violent reaction in a target, overwhelming her ability to stay calm.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls Composure + Gnosis reflexively

Duration: Transitory (one turn)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

The spell reduces a target's ability to stay calm while simultaneously provoking feelings of rage, inspiring her

to attack. If she is unaware of the spell, the target focuses on the most likely cause of frustration — which can be a person or an object — and lashes out at it, attacking it for the duration of the spell. If the target is aware of the magic, the object of her wrath will likely be the mage himself. Any Morality checks called for by the target's actions are resolved at the end of the spell's duration.

Certain supernatural creatures are prone to berserk rages. Werewolves and vampires targeted successfully by this spell must make Death Rage or frenzy checks, with successes on the spell as the level of provocation.

Seers of the Throne Rote: The General's Whisper

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion + Mind

The General is the Exarch of anger, frustration and violence. His plans are found in the protest turned riot, the sudden outpouring of hate and the loved one struck down in a moment of madness. With this rote, the Ministry



of Praetorian and their Myrmidon servants bestow the General's gift on the unsuspecting masses.

Reinforce the Lie (Mind ●●●●)

Sleepwalkers are, to many willworkers, one of the most prized of resources: un-Awakened individuals nevertheless partially outside of the Exarchs' Lie, capable of beholding feats of Supernal magic without invoking the deleterious consequences of a Sleeper's presence. To the Seers of the Throne, however, the Lie must stand flawless and inviolate, especially when its power can hinder the Seers' enemies. This spell temporarily suppresses a Sleepwalker's resistance to the Lie, making her the equivalent of any other Sleeper when beholding vulgar magic.

Practice: Unraveling

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls Resolve reflexively

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

If this spell's Potency successfully overcomes the Sleepwalker's resistance, she counts as an ordinary Sleeper with respect to magic of vulgar Aspect for the spell's Duration.

Seers of the Throne Rote: Silence the Dream of Waking

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion + Mind

Long a favored weapon in the Seer's arsenal, this rote neutralizes much of a Sleepwalker's usefulness to another willworker, rendering her more a hindrance as a help when her Awakened keeper is forced to resort to vulgar spells.

Prime Spells

Manipulate Contingent Trigger (Fate ●● + Prime ●●)

A mage might make use of an Imbued Item for a variety of reasons: a way to carry magic that he doesn't normally possess or to cheat the limits of how many spells his pattern can tolerate, or perhaps even to give certain limited magical abilities to a Sleeper or Sleepwalker. By way of this spell, however, the contingent triggers with which many such objects are programmed can be temporarily altered, potentially making the invocation of an item's power difficult — if not impossible — for its possessor.

Practice: Ruling

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

This spell, if successfully cast, alters the contingent trigger of an Imbued Item that has one to a trigger of the caster's

choice. This trigger may be extraordinarily difficult to accomplish ("When sprinkled with lunar soil,") or very easy ("When grasped in hand,") but the item's powers cannot be rendered either completely inaccessible or continual. If the item is currently in the possession of an individual unwilling to have its trigger altered, then the spell becomes contested, with the possessor rolling Resolve + Gnosis in opposition to the caster.

Seers of the Throne Rote: Exchange the Secret Key

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult + Prime

While it is true that every advantage counts in a conflict, so too does every enemy advantage that a willworker can counter. Thus, Seers of the Throne who pursue the secrets of the Prime and Fate Arcana learn to rob their foes of access to the spells concealed within certain objects of power.

Space Spells

Duplicate Sympathy (Space ●●●)

The mage may assume the sympathetic connections of another, or grant another the use of her own.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant, unwilling targets contest with Composure + Gnosis reflexively

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

The sympathetic connection being duplicated must be known to the caster, either by common knowledge ("that between you and your mother") or by use of the Interconnections spell, but the identity of what the connection is need not be. The strength of the connection being duplicated determines the target number of successes:

Successes	Connection
-----------	------------

1 success	Described
-----------	-----------

2 successes	Encountered
-------------	-------------

3 successes	Acquainted
-------------	------------

4 successes	Known
-------------	-------

5 successes	Intimate
-------------	----------

Upon successful completion of the spell, the recipient gains a "Described" connection to the same thing as the connection being duplicated, which lasts for the Duration of the spell. Most casters then cast "New Threads" to increase the level of the new connection on a Lasting basis.

Seers of the Throne Rote: Thrall Trading

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Occult + Space

Seers of the Throne must rely on sympathetic connections to control slaves with Profane Vestments, to spy on the enemy and work their magic from places of safety. This rote allows a Seer to grant another the use of a Thrall he has cultivated, or to gain second-hand connections from those Thralls to new victims.

Sympathetic Tap (Space ●●)

Every interaction of a person creates a slight ripple in Space, the threads of sympathetic connections vibrating and strengthening when association reinforces them. This spell allows the mage to watch the connection of a target for those moments it becomes active.

Practice: Knowing

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

The spell watches a sympathetic connection (usually targeted after the use of Interconnections or similar spells) for “activity”, defined as the target being in the presence of, thinking about or otherwise acting on the relationship defined by the connection.

The strength of the sympathetic connection being targeted determines the number of successes required:

Successes	Connection
-----------	------------

1 success	Described
-----------	-----------

2 successes	Encountered
-------------	-------------

3 successes	Acquainted
-------------	------------

4 successes	Known
-------------	-------

5 successes	Intimate
-------------	----------

On successful casting, the mage becomes aware when any activity occurs but does not know exactly what is occurring — for that; they must cast “Scrying”.

This spell is detectable by anyone using Spatial Awareness on the target.

Seers of the Throne Rote: Watching the Threads

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation + Space

The Ministry of Panopticon is not content to merely watch their targets; they watch those target’s associations as well. The use of this rote allows a Seer to know when a target is meeting with a significant person, so that follow-up magic may be brought to bear.

Spirit Spells

Nullify Shadow Resonance (Prime ●●● + Spirit ●●●)

The Shadow Realm exerts a subtle influence over the material world, every moment of every day. In many cases, this ephemeral connection actually effects the way people act and can even touch their spirits in unquantifiable ways, filling them with hope, fear, understanding, love, honor, or whatever other emotion best encapsulates the dominant emotional fabric of the local Shadow. This resonance can lead people to believe in more than what their eyes reveal to them; aware, on some deep-seated, instinctual level, that wonders and horrors lurk beyond the limits of mundane

perceptions. This spell, however, negates Shadow’s rarified leverage over the material realm, significantly reducing its impact upon people and places.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

When successfully cast, this spell temporarily negates the influence of Shadow upon a physical location within the mage’s sensory range. Effectively, the resonance of the area (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 277) becomes perfectly neutral, exerting no influence over Sleepers, one way or the other, and making the place seem spiritually inert. Mages can discern this unusual “dead air” through any of the normal means of perceiving or scrutinizing resonance, and even Sleepers sometimes get a sense that such a place is somehow *off*, like something brand-new from the store, it has no individual character.

Note that this rote has no impact upon Twilight, the Gauntlet, or the powers of spirits (or others in the Shadow Realm) to interact with the material world.

Seers of the Throne Rote: Calm Waters

Dice Pool: Presence + Persuasion + Spirit

Every so often, the wind grows so calm that even a massive body of water appears still and smooth as glass. Such placidity mirrors the Seers’ (particularly, the Hegemonic Ministry’s) desired destiny for the Fallen World’s Sleepers and this spell serves to disconnect them from potentially unbalancing emotional chaos from the invisible realm, encouraging conformity and silent obedience.

Time Spells

Falsify Temporal Presence (Time ●●●)

Among the more treasured of the arts available to those who pursue understanding of the Time Arcanum is the ability to read the past or the future, learning what has already come to pass or what may yet be. Some mages learn to occlude their own pasts and futures from others’ scrutiny (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 261: “Shield of Chronos”), but simple concealment isn’t always sufficient; sometimes, deception is called for. Under these sorts of circumstances, mages skilled in Time’s magic can fabricate events in history or yet to come, deliberately leading enemies astray.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

For this spell’s Duration, the caster’s history and future reflect whatever she wishes when glimpsed by anyone us-

ing prophecy, divination or any other form of temporal Scrying to read either, unless the caster overcomes the Potency of this spell.

Seers of the Throne Rote: Lie to Yesterday and Tomorrow

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation + Time

Few things are as precious as one's history and future, particularly to Seers of the Throne who have pursued the mysteries of the Time Arcanum. With magic such as this, however, an enterprising servant of the Throne can skew an enemy's temporal perceptions when he turns them on her, allowing her to reflect whatever past or future she wishes.

Artifacts and Relics of the Throne

Servitude has its rewards. A Seer that pleases the Exarchs might follow whispers and signs from on high to an undiscovered Artifact, kept safe from the Fall. Another that rises to importance in his Ministry might receive a potent weapon, handed down from the tetrarch responsible for it's creation. Ministers receive mighty gifts, borne by ochemata, that may be shackles in disguise.

Members of all orders possess Artifacts and Imbued Items, precious relics of bygone ages, but they lack the means of manufacture. The Seers have contact, however limited, with the Supernal Realms. The Exarchs seed tools for their servants into the Fallen World, directing worthy Seers to the caches with hints and omens. Seer archmasters, capable of creating new wonders, remain visible within their hierarchy while those originating with the Pentacle must go into hiding. Supernal Artifacts are therefore rather more common among the Seers than among their rivals, though they are treated with no less reverence — every relic is a gift from the secret rulers of the world, and those rulers do not appreciate their gifts being wasted.

Coin of Lead and Gold (Artifact ●●●●●●●●)

Durability 4, Size 0, Structure 4

Mana Capacity: Maximum 12

Seers of Mammon uncovered this Artifact from obscurity among the personal effects of an Apostate Uncrowned King killed by a Mammonite pylon. The unfortunate original owner's notes described its acquisition from a group of Sleeper archaeologists in Turkey. The alchemist initially believed it to be the product of the Oracles, but upon seeing its powers and realizing what the markings on it's faces meant, he came to understand that it was a tool of the Exarchs and attempted to hide it away.

The coin is a metal disk approximately the size of a US Silver Dollar, one face made of gold and bearing part of the Seal of the Chancellor, the other made of lead and bearing part of the Seal of the Ruin. The coin has two properties, called the "Transactions" by the Mammon pylon that holds it. One power works on material objects, the other on living beings. Both are object lessons in the reality the Chancellor and the Ruin preach; in any transaction, there is a winner and a loser. When the coin is held out between two material objects, the mage holding it may cast a combined spell of "Improve Quality" (see page 192) and "Degrade Object", the former targeting the item on the golden side and the latter on the leaden. When used between two living beings, the combined spell is of "Bestow Exceptional Luck" on the golden side and "Evil Eye" on the leaden. The mage wielding the coin can be one party in the transaction, and it is often used in this manner — gold side to the skin of the holder — as a means of stealing others' luck.

Temenotic Obelisk (Artifact ●●●●●●●●)

Durability 7, Size 10, Structure 17

Mana Capacity: Maximum 11

Astral explorers have come across shrines in the Temenos that appear to have been constructed by the ancient Atlanteans as way stations or experimental sites. Many students of Atlantean lore have supposed that these were intended as some kind of mass mind control, pointing to such Astral landmarks as evidence that the inhabitants of the Dragon Isle could and did make "improvements" to the collective soul of humanity. The magical science behind such things is assumed lost, but there is one dedicated team of Seers eager to recreate their forebear's success.

A pylon of unaligned Seers retrieved the Temenotic Obelisk from the heart of an Atlantean shrine deep in the Inner Worlds in 1996. Those Seers have now declared themselves a Ministry, with allegiance to the Unity, though they are not allied with Hegemony.

The Obelisk is a crude but potent means of exerting low-level mental influence over a human population. It appears to be a ten-foot high stone obelisk, capped with a steel pyramid and carved with faintly glowing runes in the High Speech that, translated by the Seers, prove to be partial instructions along with a dedicative phrase offering glory to the Kings of Atlantis. It weighs several tons, though in the dream-logic environment of the Astral Realms there are ways to move such an object.

When brought to the Astral representation of a community or place, the Obelisk can be commanded to take root by casting a modified "Telepathy" spell conjoined with the Matter Arcanum on it and mentally ordering it to activate. The Obelisk then casts a spell based on "Dimensional Axis" to merge that Temenos realm with another of the user's choice, the activation roll being modified by the user's sympathy to

the target realm. Once the Axis has formed, the spell uses Mind and Prime magic to merge the resonance of the two areas, resulting in the community realm being flooded with foreign emotions and concepts. Back in the material world, everyone within the purview of the realm being warped is affected as though a spirit with a Power + Finesse dice pool of 8 were using the Strengthen Influence to instill the required emotion, including the contested roll. The effect is Prolonged, lasting a week until the Obelisk shuts off. After experiments with using the Obelisk to link a prison with a Temenos realm of peace, and linking the Temenos ideaform of a particular village in France with a Temenos realm dedicated to the concept of betrayal, the Seers are preparing to move it again and are searching for a viable target.

Profane Vestment (Artifact ●●●●+)

Durability 3, Size 4, Structure 7

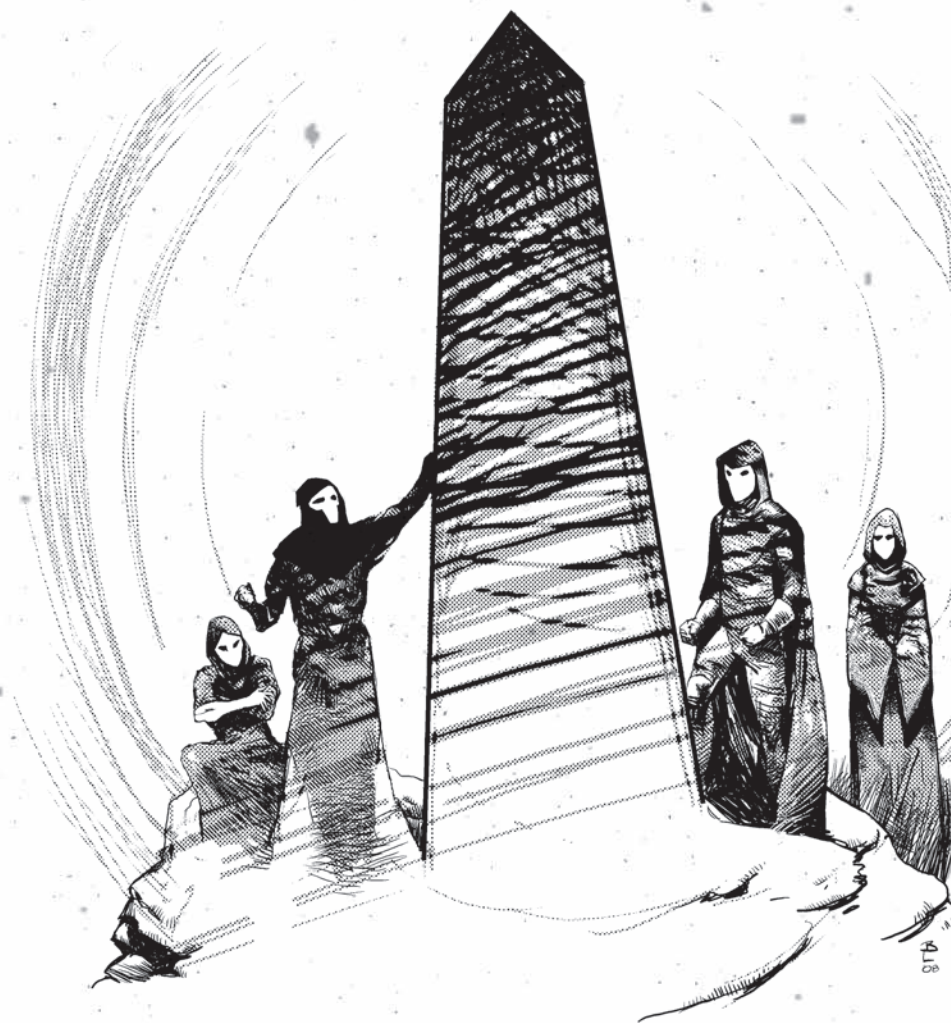
Mana Capacity: Maximum 12

The magical vestments that allow control of the weak-souled, granting the Seers the ability to wear the bodies of innocent Sleepers like clothing, are central in many Pentacle accounts of the Ministries. So ubiquitous are

they in stories of the Seers that many Consilii have a hard time believing their Seer rivals aren't constantly using such Artifacts against them.

The reality is that signature item or not, Profane Vestments are still priceless Artifacts of Supernal origin, and are somewhat more rare than the Pentacle supposes. Each Vestment bears the Seal-name of a particular Exarch. The Seers believe they are directly linked to their creators. A pylon that possesses a Vestment guards it jealously, using it in rites and oblations directed toward the patron Exarch whose Seal it bears. All ten permitted Seals have been witnessed, though the Greater Seals — particularly the Eye and the Father — grant more of these Artifacts to their followers than their lesser brethren do.

Vestments are all unique in design, though they share some common characteristics. They are usually worn draped over the shoulders — most examples take the form of short robes, cloaks, cloth breastplates or tabards though chains of office and scarves are also known. They are decorated with gemstones or sewn-on plates marked with arcane symbols and incorporate intricate patterns incorporating runes of the High Speech, with part of the Seal-Name of the Ex



arch granting them picked out or highlighted in some way. Vestments always have two powers at minimum — a spell to monitor the actions of a slave and another to influence those actions — and some are more powerful than others. The three most commonly seen power sets were codified by Seers of Paternoster centuries ago during their ascendancy to power and named after the biblical raiment of Israelite priests — the Ephod, Urim and Thummim.

A Profane Ephod costs five Artifact dots and is capable of casting “Aura Perception” and “Emotional Urging”. Profane Urims (the least rare Vestment) cast “Telepathy” and “Telepathic Control” and cost seven Artifact dots while Profane Thummim cost eight Artifact dots and cast “Telepathy” and either “Possession” or “Psychic Domination”. Some Urim and Thummim are capable of also casting “Read the Depths” at the cost of an extra Artifact dot. All Vestment powers are concentration-based and cast at sympathetic range using the Seer’s own sympathetic connection to the pawn being manipulated.

Variants include versions of the common three that can grant their powers to multiple Seers at a time, ones granted by the Psychopomp that can control Ghosts or the Nemesis to control Spirits (each plus one dot) and the Shrouds of Observation used by the Panoptic Ministry to create Grigori (discussed in Chapter Four, page 215).

The Vestments are named “Profane” as they deal with the control of the Fallen world’s inhabitants. Seer legend holds that the Exarchs themselves wear similar robes, referred to as the Sacred Vestments, which allow the puppeteering of the Awakened (see **Reign of the Exarchs** for an example of such an Artifact) and that the Profane Vestments are mortal reflections of these. Other Seers note that the Gate could create Vestment Artifacts just as well as his fellows, and wonder what powers such a thing would have.

The Mask of Eyes

(Artifact ●●●●●●●●)

Durability 5, Size 1, Structure 6

Mana Capacity: Maximum 12

The Artifact known as the Mask of Eyes is held as an example of the Ministry of Panopticon’s great favor with the Eye, and imitation (non-magical) masks are used by Panoptic Seers in their Oblations across the East Coast of the United States. The true Mask resides in the personal collection of the Tetrarch of Panopticon for that region,



used under strict control when the servants of the All-Seeing need to observe something that even Grigori, Profane Thummim and Seer specialists in sympathetic magic cannot bring into view.

The Mask is made of iron, marked on the inside with the 777 names of the Eye in minute scrimshaw and on the outside only with one central eye. There are no breathing holes, and no ribbon or strap to tie the Mask on with — when put to its wielder’s face, the mask adjusts its size appropriately and then merges at the edge with the wielder’s skin. It can be removed by speaking a word of command in the High Speech, but provides for the bodily needs of the user so that they do not starve or suffocate.

The Mask grants the use of a spell of deceptive simplicity. When wearing it, the user concentrates on anything she wishes to view. Her viewpoint then shifts, as though she were using a “Scrying” spell, to the view from the nearest representation of a human eye to the object of the Seers’ scrutiny. Actual living eyes are not eligible (though through experimentation the tetrarch has discovered she can view out of a human eye once it has been removed from the body), though photographs, drawings, statues, people depicted on TV broadcasts, paintings, the Panopticon symbol on US bank notes and even crude eyes of Horus made of makeup all work. The viewpoint can be switched at will, though

each (including the first) uses a point of Mana from the Artifact's supply.

Rather than just being an Imbued Item of "Scrying," the Mask seems to arrive by its powers through a more complex route that does not obey the known laws of sympathy. The Mask counts as having a "known" sympathetic connection to any image of the human eye, anywhere in the material world, Shadow Realm or Astral Realms; this is the level of sympathy used in its activation roll. Furthermore, it cannot be blocked by spatial wards with a Potency less than 8, "Quell the Spark" or "Dead Zone". If it creates a Scrying window, it has not been successfully detected—assume that attempts to see the window using "Spatial Awareness" fail. It does trigger the Unseen Senses of anyone in the vicinity of the image being seen out of, and under Mage Sight (4 successes needed on the Intelligence + Occult roll) the eye being watched out of changes and appears to be the eye of the Seer using the Mask.

The Seers that have studied the Mask believe it to have been somehow tied into the symbolic language of the Fallen World in lieu of a normal sympathetic web — clearly the product of archmastery or Supernal construction. That it allows the tetrarch that possesses it to handily spy on any Sanctum of Panopticon, thanks to the prevalence of images of the Fourfold Watcher found in such places, is a large part of that Seers' personal power. The Mask is loved and feared in equal measure. It could make (and has) a Seer of Panopticon a great leader, but if it were to fall into the hands of their enemies it would be a disaster.

The Teraphim

(Artifact ●●●●●●●●●●)

Durability 7, Size 2, Structure 9

Mana Capacity: Maximum 15

Most treasured possession of the Minister of Paternoster, the Teraphim is the means by which that hidden master of the world communicates with the Ministry's unseen God in the Supernal Realms. As one of the only known ways to reliably attract an Exarch's attention, the Teraphim is kept under heavy guard within the Minister's Sanctum. The one recorded occasion of it being stolen by an overly-ambitious underling saw an ochema manifest to retrieve it. After first being uncovered in the Sahara in the 2nd century, the Teraphim has been passed down from Seer to Seer, always the sign of an individual's dominance but never the means by which it is achieved — the Teraphim is the tool of a Minister, and one must be a Minister already before safely using it.

The Teraphim is a model of a human man's head, life-sized and made of some dark ceramic material that looks like terracotta but resists all attempts to mark or damage it. The depiction is exact down to the veins visible beneath the "skin", and the neck shears off into a flat plane so that

the head sits upright on a flat surface. The person depicted is bearded, of vaguely Mediterranean appearance but with features suggestive both of the Indian subcontinent and China that make it impossible to place. The eyes are open, the expression stern to the point of fury and the lips slightly parted as though the head were drawing breath. The Minister believes the person depicted to be the Father, in his mortal incarnation prior to Ascending the star ladder. If so, it is one of only a few representations of an Exarch in life known to exist.

When certain that the Father's names are spoken, the Teraphim casts "Create Hallow" on its present location, Mana rushing into the Fallen World from the Father's palace in Supernal Aether as the connection opens. The Teraphim begins to whisper in sibilant sounds that are perceptible as the native language of any persons listening. While the temporary Hallow lasts, anyone present gains the effects of "Prophecy" with five follow-on questions as the Exarch whispers his plans for the world. This is not without cost, however; all present react bodily as though in an ochema's presence, and the Father's plans are not requests — anyone using the Teraphim ends the encounter under the effect of a "Swearing an Oath" spell cast with a potency of 10 forcing them to perform the actions outlined in the "Prophecy" spell.

The Teraphim can also be used as the centerpiece of a ritual to summon an ochema of the Father (Rank 5), which takes 15 successes on an extended Intelligence + Occult action. The ritual is not magical, being the means by which this contingent effect of the Teraphim is activated, so it could theoretically be bypassed using "Activate Enchanted Item" but the likely reaction from the ochema summoned means that to date no one has dared. The ochema first delivers direct messages from the Exarch in the form of overwhelming phantasmal visions of Aether filled with religious imagery and is then empowered to answer appropriately servile questions. At all times, it demands the utmost respect from those present. Its patience for beings of the Fallen World — including willworkers — is short.

Imbued Items

Leeching ATM Card
(Imbued Item ●●●●)

Durability 2, Size 0, Structure 2

Mana Capacity: None

Invented by Seers of the lesser Pantechnicon Ministry as an experiment in manipulating electronic data by magic, the Leeching ATM card was discarded as likely to reduce Sleepers' trust in technology — precisely the thing the Pantechnic Seers do not want. To their considerable irritation, though, their rivals in the Ministry of Mammon,

who have no such qualms, picked up the idea among many stolen for their own purposes.

The card resembles a standard credit card of a premium or “platinum” amount, and has no credit limit because it has no credit. When it is used, the card casts a Forces and Matter spell that reads the authentication information off all credit and debit cards within 16 yards, divides the amount to be paid between them and uses them to conduct it’s transaction.

As a revenge tactic against the Mammon Seers that abuse their invention, Pantechnicon have now taken to giving known Mammon servants gifts of modified versions of the item that list the user as the beneficiary on the statements of the accounts stolen from. Law enforcement takes it’s course, and the “victims” are reassured that technology has prevented them from being robbed while the dupe of Mammon learns that there is no such thing as a free lunch after all.

Object of Desire (Imbued Item ●●●)

Durability 4, Size 0, Structure 4

Mana Capacity: None

A wise and devoted Seer of Mammon knows that the Sleepers do not need to be forced into slavery. People will enslave themselves happily for the latest toys or the newest fashion, selling themselves to a waiting Seer for the chance to own *that thing*, whatever it may be.

An Object of Desire is a small metal tag, lozenge-shaped and about an inch across, that can be attached to anything — a dress, a car, even a house — and easily palmed with sleight of hand when not in use. In the form used by Mammon the item attached to the enchanted tag is invariably expensive and notable in some way. Some Seers of Pantechnicon use the same enchantments on gadgets, computers and other consumer electronic goods.

Whatever the base item, the Object of Desire enchantment allows a Seer to cast “Emotional Urging” on a potential buyer, who then feels a strong desire to possess the item attached to the tag.

With repeated use, the Seer makes

the poor mark desperate to have it... At which point the item is sold for whatever price the Seer wishes to exact and the tag is removed, ready to be used on the next thing to be sold.

Shadow Telescope (Imbued Item ●●●●)

Durability 3, Size 2, Structure 5

Mana Capacity: None

The Seers seek omens and signs in many places, turning to all manner of divinatory practices in their quest for the Exarch’s hidden commands. Among those that both practice Astronomy and have knowledge of the Shadow Realm (such as Seer members of the Thrice-Great Legacy from **Legacies: The Ancient**), the divinations gleaned from the spirit world’s skies are highly prized. The spirit-stars are both clearer and unencumbered by the petty laws of physics, but the Shadow is not the safest of places to set up an observatory.

A Shadow Telescope is an imbued version of whichever telescope type the Seer uses (most often an old optical telescope, though some more modern-minded Seers create these items from more up-to-date kit) with a persistent “Peer Across The Gauntlet” spell and a contingent “Control Light” to amplify the light of the Shadow’s stars even further, granting views that for the material world would require computer processing to achieve.

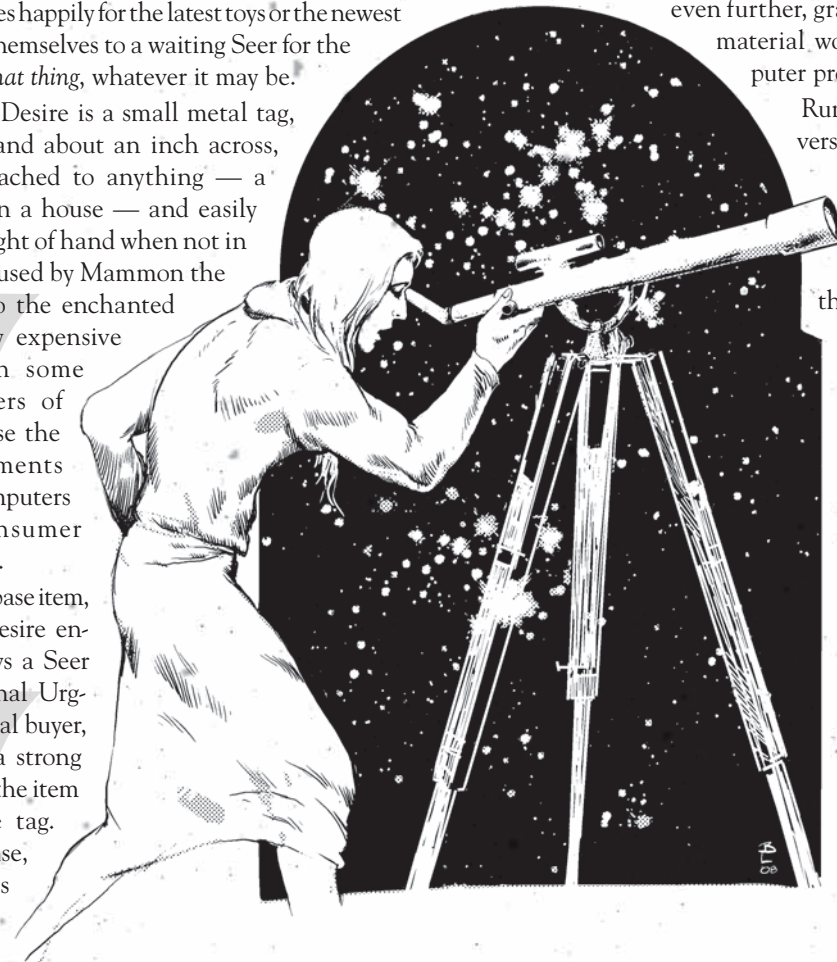
Rumor persists of an Artifact version of these items, the paradigmatic Shadow Telescope, which shows the skies of the Whorl, the Astral Realm of the stars within the Dreamtime.

Book of Secrets (Imbued Item ●●●●)

Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 4

Mana Capacity: None

Sometimes the light of the Exarchs must be hidden under a bushel. Whether it finds itself surrounded by enemy territory, or has a Sanctum such as a church or cult-house that Sleep-



ers may enter, a pylon may find itself having the need to hide the paraphernalia of Exarch worship in plain sight. The Book of Secrets was invented by Kramner, a Seer of Paternoster in Munich, Germany, after his pylon detected Awakened agents snooping around their Sanctum-church.

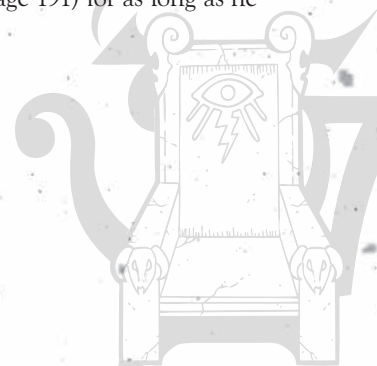
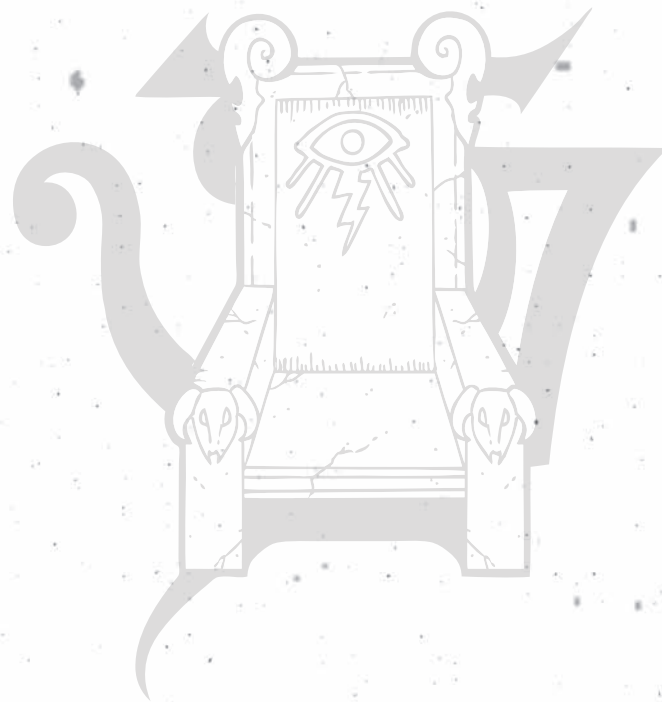
The Book is, when not active, an innocent if somewhat ornate volume — Kramner's original took the form of an illuminated Bible. When activated, the Book utilizes a Matter and Mind spell to rearrange the text into that of another work entirely, in Kramner's case the ritual book of his pylon, containing details of their oblations. The book incorporates Prime magic cloaking its own magical signature and hiding the transformation spell from casual use of Mage Sight. Those with Mage Sight active may make reflexive Wits + Occult rolls at a -4 penalty in order to notice that the Book is Imbued. To be doubly sure of it going unnoticed, the Book has no Mana capacity even though its transformation spell costs Mana. The mage using it must provide the Mana herself.

Thunderspear (Imbued Item)

Durability 3, Size 4, Structure 7

Mana Capacity: 15

The time for subtlety passes. The General is the Iron Seal of Forces, king of rage and queen of battle, and to honor Him a Seer of Praetorian created the Thunderspear, one of the mightiest Imbued items known. Used only in major engagements in isolated places, where lesser Praetorians lead their Myrmidons against the Adamantine Arrow in an engagement as part of the Ascension War, the Thunderspear is wielded by the senior Praetorian or Myrmidon. A steel spear, (Damage 3 (L), +1 defense against unarmed opponents), the Thunderspear is capable of casting the following spells, all as contingent effects; "Call Lightning", "Change Weather", "Thunderbolt" and "Electromagnetic Pulse". Additionally, as a persistent power, the wielder is under an "Insulate" effect (see page 191) for as long as he holds the weapon.



APPENDIX: ANTAGONISTS

The governments of the present day have to deal not merely with other governments, with emperors, kings and ministers, but also with the secret societies which have everywhere their unscrupulous agents, and can at the last moment upset all the governments' plans.

— Benjamin Disraeli

Non-Combatants

Abacomancer

Quote: *I will show you fear in a handful of dust.*

Background: No one's quite sure where the Abacomancer came from, just that he came to town some years ago and has been stirring up trouble ever since. A mystically minded Seer, the Abacomancer divines the will of the Exarchs in the ashes of cremated humans, and in his never-ending quest for suitable materials he has disturbed ghosts all over the city. He regards it as a side effect of his part in the Exarchs' plan, but others wonder — what if there is no plan beyond what he's already doing? What if the "side effect" were the desired result? And what could the Seers need with a gang of angry ghosts?

Description: The Abacomancer is filthy — long, matted hair merging with a straggly beard. He wears a rumpled, torn shirt beneath a stinking, mud-encrusted greatcoat. His fingernails are black with dust — or ashes — and he tracks muddy footprints wherever he goes.

Storytelling Hints: The Abacomancer is intently focused on his great work: the divination of the Exarchs' will. He speaks in a hollow monotone when spoken to, refuses as much interaction with other mages as possible and fidgets when he must, uncomfortable in his own skin until he's alone.

Path: Moros

Abilities:

Urban Survival (dice pool 6) — The Abacomancer must survive on his own addled wits alone, scavenging from trash cans and sleeping in secluded spots as he travels the city on foot, circling from cemetery to crematorium to churchyard.

Graverobbing (dice pool 6) — When no ashes are readily available, the Abacomancer must find human remains the old-fashioned way — by digging them up from their place of rest.

Summon Ghosts (dice pool 4) — The Abacomancer is attended by a group of unhappy spirits, their anchors disturbed in the course of his "work."

Bumbling Newbie

Quote: *So... uh... I'm supposed to... uh... do what, again?*

Background: She was full of big ideas as a kid, always so sure of what she was doing. In fact, her entire life, right up to the Awakening, was a deliberate march toward her ambitious goals. Then, something went wrong: she saw more of the truth of the world than she wanted to, perhaps, and it left her unable to cope with her new existence.

Description: She's far too thin and she always has been, no matter how much she eats. Her hair is dyed oxblood, though it's naturally dirty blond. She nervously chews her lower lip and tends to fidget. The Bumbling Newbie's closet is filled with classy outfits, though she presently favors clothing that keeps her from standing out.

Roleplaying Hints: Rarely, the Awakening traumatizes a competent, self-assured person, robbing her of that driving sense of purpose. Such is precisely the case with the Bumbling Newbie. Now, only a few months into her time as a Seer of the Throne, she has no idea what to do with herself or how to get her life back on track, leading her to hesitate, succumb to self-doubt, and continually look to others for guidance. Naturally, in the Seers' culture of upward mobility, she's something of an albatross toward those to whom she attaches herself.

Path: Obrimos



Abilities:

General Academia (dice pool 5) — While a lot of her natural talents have seemingly atrophied since her Awakening, the Bumbling Newbie still has a pretty good head for basic scholarship.

Riding Shotgun (dice pool 5) — The only real skill that the Bumbling Newbie has developed since Awakening is a knack for attaching herself (whether by approaching them directly or by pulling strings) to others who may have a better handle on any given situation.

Corrupt Medic

Quote: *I don't want to get your hopes up, but there is an experimental new treatment conducting trials, and you seem to be eligible to take part.*

Background: She had the best of intentions. She became an MD to try to help, but was frustrated at how little the people she tried to help trusted her judgment. As a mage she had a power to heal, but couldn't use it to her satisfaction — people, she realized, wouldn't believe a cure that came from nowhere. So she lies. She tells them that they've been accepted for a new treatment, takes their money and heals them with magic. She feels the satisfaction of doing good and the client comes away with faith in the medical establishment. Lately, though, she's fallen in with a group of like-minded mages, a pylon of those who believe that the people need to be shown that doctor knows best and that they can't just wait for suitable subjects to come along. Now she inflicts the conditions she later cures, telling herself that it's for the greater good.

Description: The Corrupt Medic wears a faded skirt-suit under her white coat, and her eyes betray a lack of sleep. She carries a selection of leaflets for fictitious drug trials.

Storytelling Hints: The Corrupt Medic has drifted into her current practices, and might be able to be shocked out of it by a strong enough argument. For now, though, she honestly believes that she is doing the right thing — by reinforcing the value of medical care in the minds of the Sleepers she's improving their lives. Perfectly logical... If only she could sleep at night.

Path: Thyrsus

Abilities:

Intimidate Through Science (dice pool 7) — In a consultation, she's calm and reassuring while outlining in clinical detail the horrors that await the patient that does not take her advice. She's confident she can bluff anyone but another doctor with her medical jargon.

Diagnose (dice pool 6) — The corrupt medic is still a medic, and she remains a healer at heart. She will do her best to diagnose real conditions so that she can cure them with her magic.

HR Rep

Quote: *I have someone perfect for your needs.*

Background: The HR Rep graduated *magna cum laude* from a prestigious business school and she didn't have to bribe, intimidate, or sleep her way to flawless grades. She did those things so that she could blackmail her professors after graduation. Her Awakening merely encouraged her to become more of a soulless social predator, forever seeking an angle to exploit.

Description: At first glance, she's pretty, but something about her is deeply off-putting. Her voice is sharp and hollow, utterly devoid of empathy. She drums her flawlessly manicured nails on her glass desktop, like a metronome metering out the last few seconds before you acquiesce to her terms. Her sculpted body and \$300 salon hairstyle can't hide the fact that she's a shark in human skin, and it shows in her every heartless mannerism.

Roleplaying Hints: As a consummate professional, the HR Rep will do whatever it takes to shift Sleeper resources to wherever they're most needed — and, of course, most potentially profitable to her. She'll move product for any willworker (Seer or otherwise), helping mages to meet their staffing needs, and she'll throw in what it takes to get a client to agree to her price: a couple of disposable thugs, a pretty young secretary, a genius accountant... even a night

with the HR Rep herself. But what she wants in return isn't anything as banal as money. She wants *power*, whether in the form of enchanted relics, service, binding oaths, or something similar.

Path: Mastigos

Abilities:

Sleeper Management (dice pool 10) — She understands how best to shuffle Sleeper resources so as to most effectively meet Awakened needs, and she has all the connections necessary to do so.

Appeal to Vice (dice pool 8) — The HR Rep targets and exploits moral weakness (of whatever sort) with tremendous skill.

Investigator of Miracles

Quote: *Show me where you saw the statue weep blood.*

Background: He's still a priest, or so he says, and an investigator too. Once a member of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, the branch of the Catholic church that investigates and validates or rejects possible miracles, the Investigator Awoke as a Moros in the service of the Father. Now he answers to a master of Paternoster instead of a Bishop, but the work remains much the same: travel the world to the sites of purported miracles, and determine if they are natural phenomena or a sign from the Exarchs.

Description: The Investigator dresses as an off-duty priest — his dog-collar and black shirt marking his status as a holy man, but worn with hard-wearing jeans and heavy coats. He cultivates a slightly wild, weather-beaten look, hair just the other side of untidy and stubble not quite a beard, as he believes it gives an impression of having seen the world to the believers he meets in his duty.

Storytelling Hints: The Investigator is never less than polite and respectful of the believers at the miracle sites he assesses. That's not merely part of his cover — he treats each potential omen with the reverence a possible sign from the Exarchs deserves. When declaring a "miracle" to be explainable by science, though, he is firm and secretly pleased. He knows that genuine miracle sites will be taken over by one of the pylons of Paternoster that follows in his wake, and eliminated shortly thereafter.

Path: Moros

Abilities:

Investigation (Miracles, dice pool 8) — The Investigator's bread and butter is the rigorous testing of miracle sites, looking for any human intervention in the signs displayed. Surprisingly for a priest, he often turns to science in his explanations.

Occult Knowledge (dice pool 7) — The Investigator has found his share of true omens and unexplained phenomena in his years of service, and is rarely phased by strange events as a result.



Inveterate Traitor

Quote: *Look, I just want out. Can you help me?*

Background: He's never stood for anything in his entire life. That's what made the Seers of the Throne such an ideal choice, but he's come to realize that maybe they're not the bargain they were made out to be. It might be his pylon that he's trying to escape or maybe his Ministry. Then again, maybe he wants out of the Seers *entirely* and he's willing to appeal to outsiders for aid.

Description: The Inveterate Traitor has rough good looks and a hunted expression in his soulful eyes. Though he's long since broken himself of the habit, he always gives the distinct impression of literally glancing over his shoulder every few moments. His wardrobe leans a bit to the shabby side and he could use a shave. He tends to speak in slightly hushed tones, as though whomever he's speaking to is already a co-conspirator.

Roleplaying Hints: This most recent betrayal is just a symptom of his sickness — a pathological need to bite the hand that feeds him. He's not to be trusted and he'll turn on any benefactor as readily as he did on the last people to take him in. The problem, of course, is that he's gotten damned *good* at getting away with treason. He's had to; only the visceral thrill of stabbing someone in the back makes him feel alive anymore.

Path: Thyrsus

Abilities:

Sob Story (dice pool 8) — The Inveterate Traitor can spin a tale of woe like nobody's business. He's always gotten the short end of the stick, to hear him tell it, and he'd *surely* be a better person/resource/friend/patsy/whatever if only someone would give him a hand, just this once.

Disappearing Act (dice pool 7) — Through a combination of mystic acumen and mundane skill, he dodges scrutiny like the cockroach he is.

Malevolent Whisper

Quote: *In the coin return of the phone, you'll find a key. This key opens box 1107 at First National. Go there, now. I'll contact you again, soon.*

Background: The Malevolent Whisper has long been fascinated by the power of anonymity. This motivated him (or her; the gender of the Malevolent Whisper is just as uncertain as any other aspect of the character's appearance) to settle into a comfortable niche as an information broker within the Seers of the Throne. What he gets out of this arrangement, however, is uncertain and probably a cause for some concern.

Description: A voice on the phone (sometimes male, sometimes female, and sometimes distorted beyond such distinctions); a text message from a restricted number; an e-mail with no "from" field — these are the Malevolent Whisper's face, build, and mode of dress. Always, a note

of omniscient menace colors the Malevolent Whisper's communications.

Roleplaying Hints: An entity utterly without known identity, the Malevolent Whisper motivates through anonymous tips, disturbing rumors, and — when necessary — verbal intimidation. Perhaps he (or she) is a mouthpiece of the Exarchs, though it's far likelier that this individual is merely another Seer of the Throne with a personal agenda. Still, the Malevolent Whisper's words occasionally hint at knowledge of deeper and more dangerous truths, concealed far beneath numerous layers of conspiracy.

Path: Acanthus

Abilities:

Anonymity (dice pool 10) — No one has yet been able to find the Malevolent Whisper on the far end of a cryptic phone call, whether through means mundane or magical.

Covert Operations (dice pool 8) — Finding out another Seer's phone number or e-mail address, having nameless operatives plant a parcel at a drop-off point, or moving money from a trust fund to an offshore account; these are all relatively simple tasks for the Malevolent Whisper.

Merchant of Fear

Quote: *Always give the people what they want!*

Background: The Merchant of Fear was a cynical hack before he Awoke in Pandemonium, and is now a cynical hack with power. Plying his trade in the right-wing tabloids, the Merchant stuck to an easy formula — immigrants, druggies, undesirables and house prices all draw the readers in. Always blame society's ills on those worse off than your readers. Quickly recruited by the Praetorians following his Awakening, he has risen to editor under their patronage; his only orders are to continue to stir up xenophobia and jealousy in the masses. It is a mission he heartily accepts.

Description: Filthy rich, the Merchant dresses in expensive tailored clothes and drives a prestige car. He flaunts his abuses of the paper's expense account in front of his minimum-waged employees. The mission begins at home, after all.

Storytelling Hints: The Merchant is cheerfully open about how he runs his business — everything is excusable as being in "the public interest", and his biases are a response (not the cause of) public opinion. He flaunts his hypocrisy as a badge of honor, daring anyone to challenge him. Secretly, though, he is as afraid of the Sleeper mob as his readers are of "undesirables". His excesses are driven through his own fears.

Path: Mastigos

Abilities:

Polemic (dice pool 8) — The Merchant of Fear is master of the ranting editorial, provoking hatred among his readers. The words themselves are not magical, though

he does sometimes use magic to enhance his ability to produce them.

Nightmare of Politicians (dice pool 7) — Politicians scurry in fear at the Merchant's approach, give him gifts and attempt to curry his favor, knowing that his endorsement can win them elections.

Petty Bureaucrat

Quote: *I can have that for you in... three weeks, maybe?*

Background: His Awakening was a fluke. He certainly can't think of any reason why it happened. One moment, he was getting mugged at an ATM and, when he came to, he was screaming about a tower in some other world. The Seers recognized his mediocrity, but they also saw in him a seed of envy that might have one day germinated into true greatness. It hasn't, though, and it never will. Thus, he's been relegated to the Awakened equivalent of the same dead-end job that he had back when he was a Sleeper.

Description: He's small, with a bit of a paunch, and in his early middle age. He's nothing special; so easy to overlook that he just blends into the scenery.

Roleplaying Hints: The Petty Bureaucrat is one of the low men on the totem pole, as far as local Seer operations go and, what's more, he knows it. He lacks the mystic acumen to ascend the hierarchy and is basically the whipping boy of his pylon, as well as every other Seer who happens to darken his doorstep. He's got some pull, though. Certainly nothing especially important in the grand scheme of things, but something just important *enough* that people come to him occasionally, and that's when he expresses his frustration at the hand life has dealt him. That's when *he's* in charge and he squeezes out every ounce of small-minded satisfaction possible, because the alternative is to go home and swallow a bullet.

Path: Moros

Abilities:

Sphere of Influence (dice pool 7) — Whatever it is that he's got purview over, he can control who gets it, when (or whether) it arrives, and in what condition. Further, he can use his limited clout to prevent others from using their influence to interfere with his bailiwick.

Resentful Minion

Quote: *Yeah, I can do that, I suppose.*

Background: What happened? He was a big shot in high school and was a promising track runner in college. Then, he blew out his knee and allowed his grades to plummet. He barely graduated and limped (both literally and figuratively) into a meaningless job, until he was "rescued" by the Seers of the Throne.

Appearance: He used to be fit and handsome. Now, he's still muscular, but his build has softened, and his menial labor for the Seers has left him looking despondent and

pathetic. He slouches into his hooded sweatshirt and his eyes are forever downcast, while his features seem to sag with the weight of thwarted promises.

Roleplaying Hints: The Resentful Minion *hates* his life — hates it with every ounce of his being — but he's given up on any hope for anything better. He'll grudgingly comply with most any request that's within his ability to perform, but he'll surely bitch about it, just as soon as the going gets tough. If he can find an excuse to get out of one job, in favor of an easier one, then he'll take it, provided doing so won't get him in too much trouble.

Path: None (Sleepwalker)

Abilities:

Drudge Work (dice pool 6) — He's gotten decent enough at taking care of the menial tasks that Seers need done. He unloads crates off of the docks one night, and then digs a shallow grave in the woods outside of town, the next.

Raw Athleticism (dice pool 4) — Though he's really let himself go, the Resentful Minion can still hold his own in endeavors requiring a combination of physical coordination, strength, and stamina. If he has to, he can still sprint, though he'll pay for it in the morning.

Rival Seeker

Quote: *We meet again, my friend. What a predicament you have found yourself in. I can speak to the Generalissimo on your behalf, of course, and have these charges dropped... But it will cost you your latest prize. Don't look like that — after all, I am sure you would do the same for me!*

Background: He's always there. Whenever you go after an Imbued Item, a grimoire or an Artifact... he's going after it too. He turns up at auctions you attend, and reads the same journals as you. Sometimes you get the "gold," sometimes he does. He's become the familiar face of the Ministries, your own personal rival, and he's willing to act against other Seers to prolong the game you're both playing.

Description: The Rival Seeker is an avuncular man in his early forties; dressed appropriately for whatever situation he appears in. His smile is a flash of white, too-large teeth and his expression (when he's winning) is insufferably smug.

Storytelling Hints: The Rival Seeker cares more about his relationship with the Pentacle Archaeomancer against which he's aligned himself than he does about the service of his Ministry or the work of other Seers. It's all a game to him, one he enjoys playing even when he's temporarily losing — but he expects his opponent to abide by the "rules" as well.

Path: Obrimos

Abilities:

Well-traveled (dice pool 7) — The Rival Seeker is a man of the world, and has an understanding of culture and custom that rivals that of the most learned Mystagogue.

Occult (dice pool 7) — The Rival Seeker is highly knowledgeable regarding the Occult, able to spot a fake Artifact at a distance and match wits with his opponent in contest for an Atlantean prize.

Charming (dice pool 8) — The Rival Seeker is a silver-tongued devil, able to act as though he is everyone's best friend. Most of the time, this is used against his Pentacle counterpart, though he can turn it against local officials, guards or anyone else he wishes to bypass peacefully.

Webspinner

Quote: *Shall we play a game?*

Background: The cabal isn't sure how they antagonized him — maybe they blundered through a scheme, or cost him a valuable Thrall. Maybe they attacked an ally of his, or maybe he was just ordered to harass them for no personal reason of his own. Either way, he's making their lives a misery. The Webspinner turns loved ones into Thralls, ruins the mundane lives of the cabal, turns allies against them and sends his minions to attack them when they're at their weakest. He taunts them through a Profane Vestment. He has become the sum total of the cabal's fears, and they've never so much as seen his face.

Description: The face his enemies never see is of light complexion; the legacy of spending so much time within his Sanctum. He is well groomed and well rested, neat and tidy. His eyes are relaxed and knowing.

Storytelling Hints: The Webspinner never directly confronts the cabal he's harassing, remaining safely within his Sanctum from where he directs his Thralls. He is nonchalant when addressing others through his Vestment, believing himself unassailable, and regards his campaign against the Pentacle cabal as an amusing diversion — a game with no risk to himself. Should that comfort be challenged, he will rapidly panic and be forced to improvise.

Abilities:

Trace Records (dice pool 8) — The Webspinner is adept at uncovering information about those that have earned his enmity. Everyone leaves a paper trail, and through contacts and a little hacking the Webspinner can read that trail right to a cabal's door.

Xanatos Gambit (dice pool 6) — The Webspinner has backup plans within backup plans, covers all eventualities and accounts for the abilities of his opponents. He has the time and leisure to do so, after all. Use this dice pool to determine if he has anticipated a course of action his opponents take.

Wicked Old Man

Quote: *A lost civilization linking South America and Egypt? Preposterous! Publish this and you'll never work again!*

Background: The unsmiling guardian of academic acceptance, the Wicked Old Man sits on the review panel

for several major archaeological journals. It is his special pleasure to browbeat, bully and harass anyone trying to publish inconvenient truths — truths like the possible existence of a culture in ancient prehistory that influenced other peoples worldwide before vanishing beneath the waves. Most are caught before they ever reach the Wicked Old Man; his threats take care of the majority that remain. Those that publish and be damned have their careers and reputations ruined, the Old Man using his years of contacts and favors in the scientific community to have the offender ostracized as a warning to others.

Description: The Wicked Old Man appears to be made of sharp elbows and lean muscle. Whip-thin, he wears slightly out-of-date suits and peers suspiciously at those with whom he interacts.

Storytelling Hints: It is said that the Exarchs have a place for every Seer in their plan, and the Wicked Old Man is content with his. A thoroughly unpleasant individual, he takes great pleasure in his work. Normally stern and distant, suggestive of a man who has more important things on his mind, his contempt for Sleepers shines through when he savagely takes a hapless academic apart.

Path: Acanthus

Abilities:

Academics (Archaeology, dice pool 9) — The Wicked Old Man is a world expert in his field, and could — if he so chose — provide a valuable contribution. Instead, his knowledge is used as a weapon against the work of others.

Web of Influence (dice pool 6) — The Wicked Old Man has contacts in universities and field units all over the world, and can easily have a troublesome academic ostracized for failing to believe the Lie.

Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

Quote: *I'm just glad to help!*

Background: She was always a mastermind. In school, she knew how to convince other kids to take the rap. At the office, she put on a big, bright-eyed smile when "innocently" telling the boss about her co-workers' misdeeds. All her life, she's been the poor, dumb, innocent girl with the sweet voice. To her fellow Seers, she's a dupe. To other mages, she might be an eager Apostate or new Awakening.

Description: Falling just on the cute side of average, the Wolf in Sheep's Clothing doesn't stand out, in terms of appearance. She wears ordinary clothes and often lets her wavy medium brown hair fall carelessly around her shoulders. It's her exuberance, more than anything else, which sets her apart; many can't help but to feel disarmed by her infectious (and wholly artificial) sense of joy and wonder.

Roleplaying Hints: The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing likes to give hugs. She establishes a sense of empathy through physical proximity. She sows mistrust against those who resist her charm with a familiarity that makes her manipulation

seem genuinely accidental, as opposed to deeply calculated. She continually uses the same tone of voice — minus the note of aggravation and condescension — that most people use on the phone in a professional capacity.

Path: Mastigos

Abilities:

Innocent Façade (dice pool 9) — If there's one thing in the world she know how to do, it's acting like a wide-eyed pawn, full of sweetness and light. She easily deflects suspicion and, when confronted with evidence of misdeeds, can break down so convincingly as to leave her accuser feeling like a horrible excuse for a human being.

Master Plan (dice pool 8) — It (probably) isn't even actively detrimental to the player characters, but she's gradually advancing some sort of scheme and they, like everyone else, are to her merely pieces on the board.

Combatants

Aeshma

New recruit

Quote: *The Exarchs' will be done!*

Background: She was ordinary right up until the moment of her Awakening: the youngest of three children, maybe a little bit spoiled, but certainly no one exceptional. Then, Nisha Saraswat became someone special. She scaled a tower of ancient stone and cutting vines, only to place her bloody handprint upon it. Before her otherworldly vision faded, she glanced up and thought she saw, for just an instant, the image of a radiant, powerful figure looking down upon her, and that it was smiling. If she'd been taken in by the Mysterium, she could've made a fine Mystagogue, but the Seers found her first and they cultivated in her the sense that a powerful benefactor *did*, in fact, watch over her — perhaps even one of the Exarchs — admiring her upward progress.

Description: Aeshma wears her thick black hair at chin-length, framing and narrowing out her slightly round face. She's neither strikingly attractive nor particularly unattractive; just another person that one might pass on the street. She tends to dress casually, preferring comfort to style, though she still occasionally indulges in perfumes (subtle, floral scents, for the most part) just a bit too expensive for her budget. Lately, Aeshma has been trying to cope with the sounds of voices from the Shadow, and the din of spirits speaking to her and even just *around* her often makes her appear at least somewhat distracted.

Her nimbus reveals itself in a rush of warm air, scented with jasmine, and a feeling of being watched by something unseen.

Roleplaying Hints: For the moment, Aeshma is full of potential, but short on accomplishment. She's got enthu-



siasm, but lacks Awakened knowledge and skill. She's new enough that she hasn't yet been recruited into a Ministry, but she'd be a good fit for Paternoster or even Praetorian, given a bit of time and education. Conversely, she's not yet so committed to the Lie that she couldn't potentially be talked out of her present loyalty to the Seers. Though she, herself, is unaware of it, this incertitude is central to Aeshma's current activities and interactions with others and it makes her try that much harder to seem genuinely devoted to the cause. Even her Shadow Name is a testament to her shaky spiritual footing; she chose "Aeshma" because it sounded cool, rather than on account of any deep-seated conviction.

Real Name: Nisha Saraswat

Path: Thyrus

Order: Seers of the Throne

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics (Research) 3, Computer 3, Crafts 1, Occult 1, Medicine (First Aid) 2, Politics 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Tae Kwon Do) 2, Drive 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1

Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Empathy 1, Persuasion 1, Streetwise 2

Merits: Barfly, Fighting Style (Kung Fu) 1, Language (Hindi), Resources 2, Sanctum (Security 1, Size 1)

Willpower: 5

Wisdom: 6

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Pride

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Health: 8

Gnosis: 1

Arcana: Life 3, Prime 1, Spirit 2

Notes: *Life* — Cleanse the Body (•), Body Control (••);
Spirit — Second Sight (•), Peer Across the Gauntlet (••)

Mana/per turn: 10/1

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool
Fist	0(B)	N/A	5

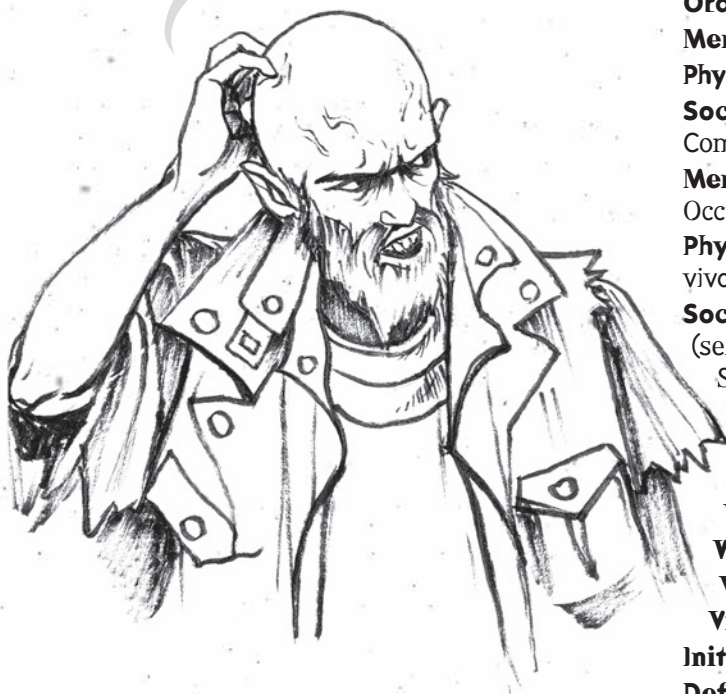
Armor: None

Penn

The Fearful Convert

Quote: *I'm sorry. I don't want to do this — but if I don't they'll do worse to me.*

Background: All Penn needed was for someone to lie to him, to introduce some doubt into his mind about what he experienced during his Awakening. A quiet, unassuming trainee priest, he was catapulted into the Aether where he experienced subjective months being hunted by creatures that looked like angels. The last guardian before the Watchtower of the Golden Key was a humanoid creature made of fire, wearing a crown and sitting on a throne of silver. After his Awakening, Penn was plagued with nightmares of its terrible visage. He was found by a particularly literal



cabal of the Adamantine Arrow, who taught him about the secret workings of the universe and informed him he had been drafted into the Oracles' service. Penn asked what the creature he'd seen had been, and they made the mistake of telling him; in all likelihood, it had been an Exarch.

Penn ran. He wasn't a hero. He couldn't possibly fight that. As he saw it, there was only one thing to do — he would serve rather than fight, and hopefully be spared. Now he is a probationary member of a pylon, performing the degrading tasks they demand of him without any enthusiasm. They watch him carefully for signs of disloyalty, but he needs their protection — his original cabal is hunting him as a traitor.

Description: Penn looks like a once comfortable man forced to become a paramilitary; his clothes are baggy, too large for him after months of not eating enough and going on the run. He's tried to change his appearance, growing a beard and shaving his head, and constantly scratching at his scalp. When nervous (which is often), he sweats and fidgets. His nimbus is a prickling sensation on the skin, phantom heat causing those around him to sweat.

Storytelling Hints: Penn is trapped between unpalatable options. His pylon forces him into confrontational situations, assessing his loyalty by sending him up against the Pentacle and ordering him to commit crimes against his conscience, but he sees no hope for himself. He vacillates, drags out decisions as long as he can and tries to worm his way out of doing "bad" things, but in the end he reluctantly follows through. He's simply too afraid not to, and is aware that he has no more bridges to burn.

Real Name: Daniel McIntire

Path: Obrimos

Order: Seers of the Throne (Paternoster)

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 4 (religion), Investigation 2, Occult 3, Politics 2

Physical Skills: Brawl 2, Drive 1, Firearms 2, Survival 2

Social Skills: Empathy 4 (listening), Expression 3 (sermons), Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: High Speech, Seer of the Throne Status 1, Dream 2, Occultation 1, Danger Sense, Language (Latin)

Willpower: 5

Wisdom: 6

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Envy

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Health: 8

Gnosis: 2

Arcana: Forces 2, Mind 2, Prime 3, Space 3

Notes: *Forces* — Receiver (◊), Tune In (◊) *Mind* — Aura Perception (◊), Alter Aura (◐◐) *Prime* — Dispel Magic (◊), Counterspell Prime (◐◐), Unseen Aegis (◐◐) *Space* — Scrying (◐◐), Untouchable (◐◐), Destroy the Threads (◐◐◐), Portal (◐◐◐)

Mana/per turn: 11 / 2

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool
Pistol	2	1	4

Armor: 3 (Untouchable)

Magic Shield: 3 (Unseen Aegis)

Dr. Charlene Castle

Conformity's voice

Quote: *I will free you of the burden of self and transform you into a number.*

Background: Layla Curtis, the girl who would one day call herself Dr. Charlene Castle, grew up in an average suburb, surrounded by white faces and hating the fact that she couldn't just be like everyone else. She was angry with her parents for being black, and she was angry with herself for not looking like the other cheerleaders at school. Even after she went off to college, in a city rather more ethnically diverse than her hometown, Layla desperately wished to look like the people that society told her were beautiful, successful, and socially dominant. Profound self-loathing led her to a brutal Awakening during her graduate studies in psychology, and, foundering in uncertainty, Layla was taken in by the Seers of the Throne, who taught her that it was all right to despise her uniqueness and desirable to conform to the images that the media raised up as icons for worship. In a crucible of intense physical training and social conditioning, Dr. Castle was born and Layla would never again have to be herself; she could, instead, be who she was *made* to be.

Description: Dr. Castle has resorted to extensive plastic surgery and magical procedures to lighten her naturally chocolate brown skin and to make her features look less African in origin and more Caucasian. Her flawlessly artificial beauty is perhaps greater than that which she once possessed, though it also encompasses far less individual character. She affects an accent vaguely reminiscent of American aristocracy and carries herself with a peculiar blend of stoicism and poise that makes her to seem very nearly inhuman. She is almost always attired in expensive pantsuits, of styles just behind the cutting edge of fashion.

Her nimbus makes colors fade slightly, while sounds become softer and take on a flat, neutral quality.



Storytelling Hints: What the characters see of Dr. Castle depends entirely on the circumstances under which they meet her. In her capacity as a psychologist, she is an ideological champion of conformity, pushing pills and a subtle doctrine of fear and shame intended to make everyone alike. She is, in this role, an insidious foe, undermining her enemies through cold logic and the machineries of society. When she is acting as an assassin for Hegemonic, however, the true depth of her sterile faith shines through; even her threats are dispassionate, delivered more as offers of mercy and acts of charity than as murderous declarations. The transition from detached medical professional to icy, gun-toting killer is eerily sudden, as though initiated by the flip of a switch.

Real Name: Layla Curtis

Path: Mastigos

Order: Seers of the Throne (Hegemonic)

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 5, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics 4, Computer 2, Investigation 3, Occult 2, Medicine (Psychopharmacology) 4, Politics 1, Science (Psychology) 4

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Drive 1, Firearms 4, Larceny 2, Stealth 3, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Empathy (Exploiting Weakness) 4, Expression 1, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Allies (Legal) 2, Allies (Medical) 3, Fast Reflexes 2, Gunslinger, Hollow 1, High Speech, Occultation 3, Quick Draw (Firearms), Resources 4, Sanctum (Security 3, Size 3), Status (American Medical Association) 3, Status (Seers of the Throne) 3, Striking Looks 4

Willpower: 8

Wisdom: 2 (Avoidance, Inferiority Complex)

Virtue: Charity

Vice: Envy

Initiative: 10

Defense: 4

Speed: 11

Health: 8

Gnosis: 4

Arcana: Life 2, Mind 4, Space 3

Notes: *Life* — Healer's Trance (◊), Pulse of the Living World (◊), Body Control (◐), Self-Healing (◐); *Mind* — Aura Perception (◊), Third Eye (◊), Alter Aura (◐), Emotional Urging (◐), Incognito Presence (◐), Misperception (◐), Telepathy (◐), Breach the Vault of Memory (◐◐), Read the Depths (◐◐◐); *Space* — Omnivision (◊), Destroy the Threads (◐)

Mana/per turn: 13/4.

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Light pistol	2(L)	1	Two attacks	10/8
Rifle	5(L)	3	—	13
Fist	0(B)	N/A	—	4

Armor: 4 ("Misperception," Mind ◐)

Wing

The Quiet Neighbor

Quote: *Of course I'll watch the girls! You have a nice evening, now.*

Background: June and Peter Armstrong have a good life — happily married with two daughters, they moved into the safety of suburbia from the big city three years ago. Everyone was welcoming, especially their neighbor Tony, who was new to the neighborhood himself. Caitlin and Jessica liked him, and he worked from home, giving June someone to talk to while Peter was at work. Now they're good friends, Tony being a drinking buddy, confidante and honorary uncle to the family.

Tony, though, is a fake.

Three years ago, Wing was called to meet with the leader of a pylon above his in the Pyramid and given a mission. He was to move to the suburbs, assume an identity they provided and live it 24 hours a day, giving no sign of being anything other than just another Sleeper. He was told that a family would be moving in next door to him, and that he must earn their confidence. And then, on a certain day at

a certain time, he was to abduct the eldest daughter and bring her to the tetrarch, far away across the continent. He did not ask why, and it was not offered.

So "Tony" smiles, plays host at barbecues, drinks with Paul and watches the 15-year old Caitlin carefully, marking down the days on the calendar. The appointed time is growing close, and Wing has to be ready.

Description: A Chinese-American man in his late twenties, Wing-as-Tony works from home as an architect. He is careful to not leave any outward sign of his Awakened status, though he does not believe any supernatural beings other than himself to be involved. He cultivates a casually trendy appearance, trying to blend in with his surroundings.

Storytelling Hints: Wing feels like he's been Asleep, and he's now starting to wake up. Years of secrecy are about to come to fruition, and at times he can barely contain his excitement. The conflict shows through in his body language — for the duration of his exile Wing has seemed to have no cares in the world, the assurance that comes of having nothing to worry about in the future, but now he gives the impression of being tightly-wound, barely holding onto control of himself. The Armstrongs assume he's got good news he's keeping secret for now. Maybe a new job.

There are times, though, when he wonders. Years of being in deep cover have taken their toll, and he's caught himself wondering why the Ministry wants Caitlin — is she supposed to Awaken? To have some kind of Destiny? Or was this all an elaborate test of his loyalty? He was told not to use magic around the family until the time was right, but the temptation to see if her Fate is unusual or to divine her future is growing. Surely the tetrarch wouldn't mind



that? He finds himself wondering what will happen to the rest of the family once he takes Caitlin away, and if he'll see her again after she's delivered to his master.

Real Name: Ken Zhou

Path: Acanthus

Order: Seers of the Throne (Panopticon)

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 2, Investigation 3, Medicine 2 (first aid), Occult 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Drive 1, Larceny 3 (lockpicking), Stealth 3, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Empathy 3, Expression 2, Persuasion 4 (silver-tongued), Socialize 3, Subterfuge 4 (false identity)

Merits: High Speech, Seer of the Throne Status 2, Destiny 2, Eidetic Memory, Occultation 3, Resources 3

Willpower: 7

Wisdom: 6

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Pride

Initiative: 6

Defense: 3

Speed: 11

Health: 7

Gnosis: 3

Arcana: Fate 3, Time 4, Space 2

Notes: *Fate* — Winds of Chance (•), Exceptional Luck (••), The Perfect Moment (••), Occlude Destiny (•••), Superlative Luck (•••); *Time* — Perfect Timing (•), Augury (••), Shield of Chronos (••), Temporal Dodge (••), Divination (•••), Shifting Sands (•••), Temporal Shift (•••), Prophecy (••••); *Space* — Spatial Awareness (•), Conceal Sympathy (••), Scrying (••)

Mana/per turn: 12 / 3

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
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Sap	1 (B)	1	Knockout	5
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Armor: 4 (Temporal Dodge)



links to the “struggle”, letting his audience imagine him as a Loyalist warrior. None are true. Peter Garr grew up on a farm in Cork, and the worst acts of violence he saw were the fistfights inherent to small boys. His brother, though, was the hard man; right up until he died in a knife-fight. Maelcon Awoke, blood on his hands, when he took revenge.

Decades later, Maelcon is a wandering teacher and recruiter for the Seers of the Throne and the Ministry of Praetorian. A devoted servant of the General and the Raptor, he teaches the lesson he learned in his childhood — civilization and comfort are ephemeral lies, torn away in moments of brutality. The only thing to do is be brutal, take power where you can and live without illusions of civility. He travels America and Europe, looking for those who Awaken to violent circumstances not of their making, and he teaches them that it was not an isolated incident. The unfortunates Maelcon targets for recruitment have their lives torn away, their families killed, their jobs destroyed, their homes invaded, until they accept that under the skin the world is made of blood and begin to struggle to take control. Before they know it, they're ideological Seers, and Maelcon introduces himself. It's a formula that has worked well in the past and, in this age of terror, shows no sign of going out of fashion.

Description: Maelcon is lean and muscled despite his age, his hair long and ragged and his beard flecked with grey. He speaks with an Irish Republic accent and doesn't so much walk as lope. His teeth are yellowing and broken in places, but seem sharp. He's often filthy, dressed in army surplus and scavenges for food when in a town. When traveling, he hunts. His nimbus manifests as a subvocal noise, sometimes

Maelcon

The harsh teacher

Quote: *We flinch at nature, inventing plans and laws. There are no plans, no laws and no justice. Life is birth and death, the cycle of predator and prey and absolutely nothing more. Are you willing to be the victim, or will you grasp enough power to defend yourself?*

Background: Maelcon likes to say that he's an Irish Gypsy, son of a rape by a townie, or an escapee from the violent inner city. In the 1990s, he was fond of implying

like a growl, sometimes like teeth scraping on bone.

Storytelling Hints: Maelcon isn't a werewolf, but would probably be just as at home among the shapeshifters as he is with his own kind. He often takes animal form while journeying between towns, and likes to lose himself in the wilderness. The Shadow has a particular delight for him — he understands the alien mindset of Spirits on a fundamental level. The other Praetorians regard him as a mad hermit of the Raptor, a holy man of the Brutal Exarch of Life. In person, Maelcon is as filthy in personality as he is in body. Deliberately offensive; he attempts (and succeeds) to provoke hostility in his audience. He has an animal confidence and a sadist's enjoyment of combat, crippling rather than killing, and enjoying the use of his powers to humiliate and terrify the opposition.

When breaking in a new candidate for the Seers, he works shapechanged as much as possible, hiding his involvement in the litany of disasters he inflicts. After they've hit rock bottom, he introduces himself with a display of power and offers to teach them how to survive, if they'll follow his instructions. He is not a gentle teacher — his students suffer more pain under him, shapechanged into prey creatures and left to fend for themselves until the magic wears off, thrown into the Shadow, torn by wounds as Maelcon demonstrates Fraying and Unraveling practices and left without the use of their senses until they learn to cast Mage Sight spells. When they fight back, they're ready, and he drops them off with the next Praetorian pylon he finds. If they break free and then demand he give them more power, he keeps them on as true apprentices for a while, regarding them as his real success stories.

Real Name: Peter Garr

Path: Thyrsus

Order: Seers of the Throne (Praetorian)

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 5, Resolve 5

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Crafts 3 (traps), Investigation 2, Occult 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Drive 2, Firearms 2, Larceny 2, Stealth 3, Survival 5 (woods), Weaponry 4 (knives)

Social Skills: Animal Ken 5 (predators), Expression 1, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3

Merits: High Speech, Seer of the Throne Status 3, Danger Sense, Fast Reflexes 2, Fighting Style: Boxing 5, Fleet of Foot 2, Iron Stomach, Contacts (Praetorian Pylons) 3,

Willpower: 8

Wisdom: 4 (Narcissism)

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Wrath

Initiative: 9

Defense: 4

Speed: 15

Health: 9

Gnosis: 5

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

Roles: *Death* — Grim Sight (◐) *Life* — Cleanse the Body (◐), Sense Life (◐), Control Base Life (◐◐), Organic Resilience (◐◐), Self Healing (◐◐), Self Purging (◐◐), Control Median Life (◐◐◐), Honing the Form (◐◐◐), Transform Median Life (◐◐◐), Transform Self (◐◐◐), Two Faces (◐◐◐), Animal Minion (◐◐◐◐), Enfeeblement (◐◐◐◐), Life Force Assault (◐◐◐◐), Shapechanging (◐◐◐◐), Supreme Honing (◐◐◐◐), Greater Shapechanging (◐◐◐◐◐) *Mind* — Aura Perception (◐), Emotional Urging (◐), Provoke Wrath (◐◐) *Space* — Scry (◐◐), Duplicate Sympathy (◐◐), New Threads (◐◐) *Spirit* — Ephemeral Shield (◐◐), Peer Across the Gauntlet (◐◐), Control Spirit (◐◐), Harm Spirit (◐◐), Spirit Road (◐◐)

Mana/per turn: 14 / 5

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Fists	0 (B)	N/A	N/A	8
Knife	1 (L)	1	N/A	9

Armor: 5 (Organic Resilience)

Magic Shield: 2 (Unseen Aegis)

Disputer

Mammon's champion

Quote: *I want what all men desire: more.*

Background: William Spence didn't come from wealth. No, he had to *seize* his fortune, turning the poverty of his youth into riches. He had to do some questionable things along the way, but he always believed that the ends justified the means. It was exactly this thinking that put him on the business end of a .45 and left him with a life-threatening gunshot wound. When he woke in the hospital, however, it was with a renewed sense of purpose, for his spirit had been guided by a figure garbed in shadows to a great tower of lead and there he was commanded to inscribe his name. Soon after, he was inducted into the Seers of the Throne and ascended the ranks through a combination of dogged persistence, force of personality, and sheer brilliance. What he couldn't make, he earned, and what he couldn't earn, he stole; through coercion, bribery, and treachery.

Description: Disputer is a late-middle-aged, broad-shouldered, stocky man of average height; barrel-chested and wide across the waist, with both muscle and a generous layer of fat. He dresses in sharp, dark, stylish suits that accentuate his powerful build. His hands are wide and thick-fingered and his features are strong and blunt. He wears his gray-streaked black hair down to just past his shoulders

and his face bristles with a meticulously groomed beard and mustache. His voice is a sonorous baritone. Dispater habitually wears two tasteful, understated adornments: a platinum ring on his right hand, set with a black star diamond, and an elegant pocket watch (also of platinum), complete with matching fob.

Diapater's nimbus manifests as a golden aura radiating outward from him, as well as a general feeling of heaviness, pressing down on all nearby.

Storytelling Hints: First and foremost, Dispater wants to be the driving force behind Mammon's ascension to the status of a greater Ministry. He is a devoted disciple of the Exarchs, wholeheartedly embracing the Seers' creed, though he doesn't come off as a zealot. Rather, he argues his perspective with reason, patience, and dignified conviction. Indeed, Dispater has a profound charm about him, for he has no desire to make enemies. It is, instead, his preference to make allies of those opposed to him and to the Seers of the Throne as a whole, by illustrating to them the many benefits of service. If he is compelled to act in violence, however, the fury of his magic is terrible to behold.

Real Name: William Spence

Path: Moros

Order: Seers of the Throne (Mammon)

Legacy: Uncrowned Kings

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4 (often enhanced to 9), Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

Social Attributes: Presence 6 (often enhanced to 11), Manipulation 5, Composure 7

Mental Skills: Academics 3, Crafts 6, Investigation 2, Occult (Alchemy) 6, Politics (Awakened) 4, Science (Metallurgy) 5

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Firearms (Pistols) 2, Larceny 4

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 5, Persuasion (Rhetoric) 4, Socialize 3, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 4

Merits: Allies (Criminal) 4, Allies (Menial Laborers) 3, Allies (Occult) 4, Destiny 3 (Bane: "The dog that snaps at your heel."), Hallow 4, High Speech, Iron Stamina 2, Language (Latin), Library (Alchemy, the Exarchs, Magical Relics) 3, Meditative Mind, Occultation 1, Resources 5, Sanctum (Security 5, Size 5), Sleepwalker Retainer (many), Status (Seers of the Throne) 5, Strong Back

Willpower: 10

Wisdom: 4

Virtue: Temperance

Vice: Greed

Initiative: 10



Defense: 3

Speed: 12

Health: 10

Gnosis: 7

Arcana: Death 4, Fate 3, Forces 2, Life 2, Matter 5, Mind 5, Prime 3, Space 1, Spirit 2, Time 1

Rotes: *Death*—Grim Sight (•), Ghost Summons (••), Soul Jar (••), Quicken Corpse (•••), Enervation (••••), Haunting (••••); *Fate*—Exceptional Luck (••); *Forces*—Nightsight (•); *Matter*—Alter Conductivity (•), Dark Matter (•), Find the Hidden Hoard (•), Alter Accuracy (••), Steel Windows (••), Unseen Aegis (••), Alter Integrity (•••), Jury-Rig (•••), Transmute Earth (•••), Alter Efficiency (••••), Transmute Gold (••••), Alter Size (•••••), Forge Thaumium (••••• + Prime •••); *Mind*—First Impressions (••), Multi-Tasking (••), Universal Language (••), Psychic Sword (•••), Psychic Domination (••••); *Prime*—Analyze Enchanted Item (•), Dispel Magic (•), Supernal Vision (•), Counterspell Prime (••), Armor of the Soul (••), Create Tass (••); *Space*—Spatial Map (•); *Spirit*—Lesser Spirit Summons (••); *Time*—Perfect Timing (•)

Legacy Attainments: 1st—Nigredo, 2nd—Albedo, 3rd—Rubido

Mana/per turn: 20/7

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool
Heavy pistol	3(L)	1	9
Fist	0(B)	N/A	6

Armor: 5 ("Unseen Aegis," Matter ••)

Servitors, Minions and Foot Soldiers of the Throne

The favored Seers of the four Archigenitors do not face the Pentacle Orders alone; each of the Panopticon, Paternoster, Hegemony and Praetorian Ministries employ creatures that are not quite human as personal servants, bodyguards, assassins, spies and agents. The Eye has granted Panopticon potent Artifacts, superior forms of the Profane Vestments, which transform Sleepwalkers into the Twilight beings known as **Grigori**. The Father, in His wisdom, directed Seers of Paternoster to enslave a being of the Lower Depths. Those Sleeper captives, often taken as children, have their souls eaten out by the monster become the **Hollow Ones**, slaves whose minds can be rewritten. The General grants Praetorian the command of the **Myrmidons** — a secret pre-Fall race of warriors and agents provocateur that were once the slaves of the Daidochi. Last, the Unity commands its Ministry of Hegemony to use their revered **Hive-Souled Men** in more and more front-line roles.

This IS a Monster

Grigori, Hollow Ones, Myrmidons and Hive-Souled Men are all designed to give recognizable, thematic antagonists on the level of a player character. They represent the horror aspect of the Seers of the Throne — the blend of power and inhumanity that can remake a human being into a lesser but stronger Thrall. Other such servant creatures may exist for lesser Ministries. They don't have a common origin, emphasizing the variety among the Ministries, but they are all recognizably human. Killing them has the same weight as killing a Sleeper or Sleepwalker.

Are they beyond help? Can a Grigori somehow be saved if the physical body is captured? Can a Hollow One be healed, or will one develop a true personality again over time? Can a Myrmidon rebel against the oath of her ancestors? These are questions the Pentacle, and your players' characters, have to answer.

Grigori

Watchers, Cyphermen, Shroud Pilots

The first Grigori was created in London, 1889, by a pylon who uncovered the first known Shroud of Observation in

a room with no doors deep under the city, breached by accident during the expansion of the London Underground. A large linen cloth, covered in runes of the High Speech and votive symbols of the Eye, it resembles a full-body Profane Vestment used to wrap around a body as a shroud. Recognizing the similarity to their own Vestment, excited by the symbols of the Eye covering it, the Seers sought omens on how to use it. Following their dreams, they took their own Sleepwalker servant — the brother of one of the Seers — and wrapped him in the Shroud before activating the Artifact.

When a Sleepwalker is wrapped in the Shroud, it pulls his mind and soul out of their body and fashions a Grigori out of him in an excruciating process that renders him unable to ever return to his physical form. The body remains safe, kept alive by Life magic woven into the cloth, but it serves only as an anchor for the Grigori, a way to find its way back to its masters after a mission. Over the years since that first Shroud's discovery, others have been found, in enough numbers that the Ministry believes the Eye to be seeding them into the world for them to find. As such, while Grigori are rare creatures it is not unheard of for a major stronghold of Panopticon to have more than one "on staff." The Sanctums of tetrarchs and the Minister are said to have entire squads of the creatures as lookouts.

Grigori watch. They observe. They descend upon a victim in their Twilight form, tasting her Sympathetic connections and relationships before using those connections as a wiretapper uses a telephone wire. To a Sleeper, a Grigori is an odd feeling on the back of one's neck, a strange glint in a lover's eyes or a strange reaction from a family pet. To a mage, the Unseen Sense exacerbates these signs; those closest to the mage feel wrong somehow, displaying occasional flashes of an unfamiliar resonance. To those capable of perceiving Twilight beings, though, the Grigori is revealed — a shape like a mummified person straining against its wrappings, covered from toe to head with shifting, blinking eyes and borne aloft by six shining wings made of smoke.

The mind of the Shroud Pilot is shattered by the transformation, splintered and reshaped into a consciousness that can observe several relationships at a time. Their bodies, locked away safely in a Seer-held Hallow, babble their findings in a stream of near-nonsensical words that the Seer handling the Grigori must interpret; for this reason, they are sometimes known as cyphermen. Still, they are obedient — Grigori obey the commands of whoever activates the Shroud. As well as their duties as spies, Panopticon sometimes send Grigori into the Temenos, where their ability to track the sympathy of a target allows them to find routes between realms that the Seers would otherwise be unable to perceive. Others set the creatures as watchdogs and lookouts, giving them an inanimate object or a place as a target instead of a person.

Shroud of Observation (Artifact)

Durability 3, Size 5, Structure 8

Mana Capacity: Maximum 13

The Shroud of Observation is a variant Profane Vestment that transforms the wearer into a Grigori by means of a modified version of “Astral Projection” combined with “Duplicate Sympathy” and “Sympathetic Tap” (see page 195). The wearer explicitly is not the person activating the Artifact — something the Seers are grateful for — and it requires a delicate balance in the subjects’ relationship to the Abyss. Awakened are immune to the process, while the Artifact refuses to alter Sleepers — and if forced to by “Activate Enchanted Item”, the Shroud is torn apart by Paradox.

The Artifact remains active and uses Life magic to keep its wearer alive as long as it can spend a point of Mana a day, which it is capable of absorbing from a Hallow; for this reason, the wrapped bodies of Grigori are normally stored in Hallows, sometimes for years. However, this comes at a price — if the wrappings are ever opened, the connection maintaining the Grigori is lost and the creature dies, leaving the body bereft of soul and mind forever. If there is a safe way to remove the Shroud, the Seers have not yet found it.

Game Systems

Grigori resemble ghosts in terms of game mechanics but are living beings. Spells targeting anything in Twilight will affect them though Death magic specifically targeting the dead will not.

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 4, Finesse 6, Resistance 5

Willpower: 6

Mana: Grigori use the supply of Mana within the Shroud in place of Essence.

Initiative: 11

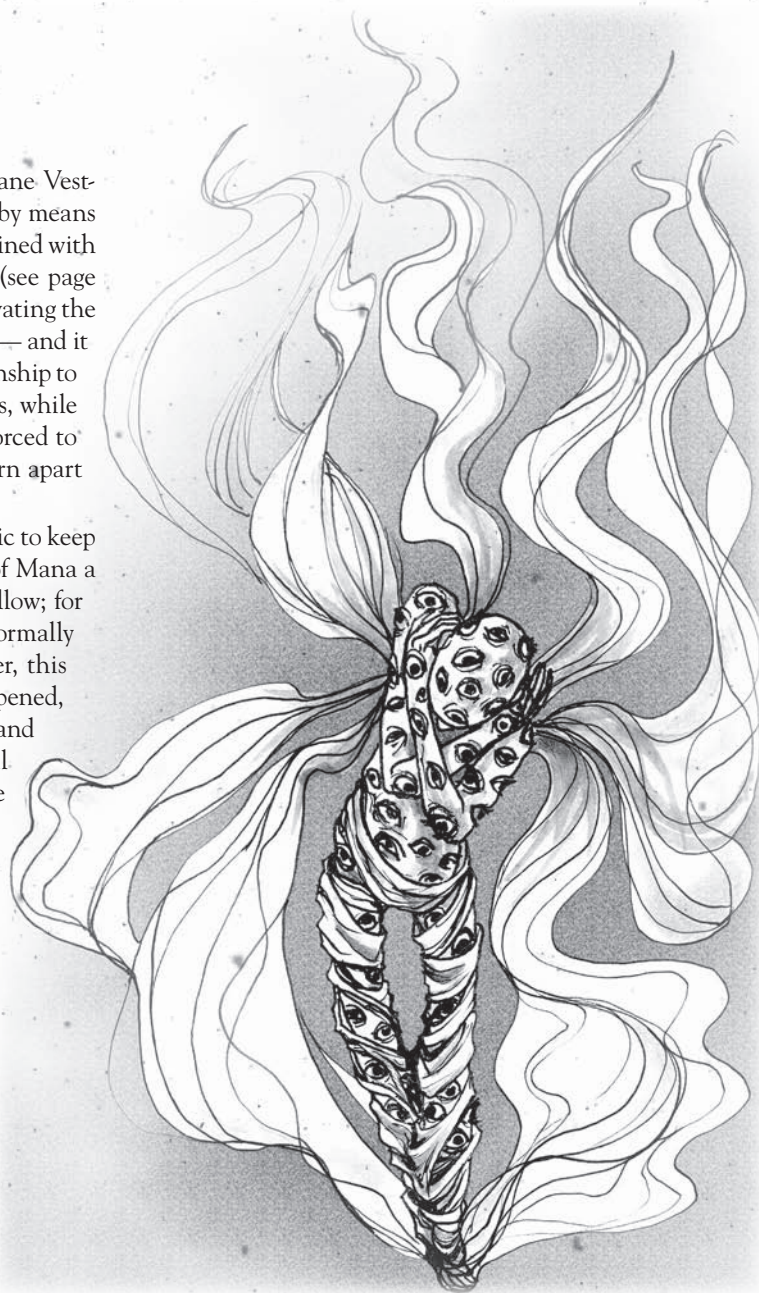
Defense: 6

Speed: 16

Size: 5

Corpus: 10

Influences: In place of Influences, Grigori can cast “Interconnections”, “New Threads”, “Duplicate Sympathy”, “Sympathetic Tap”, “Scry”, “Multi-Tasking” and “Telepathy” each with the expenditure of one Mana and the rolling of Power + Finesse. If the physical body is in a suitable place of power, the Grigori can spend one Mana to enter the Astral Realms, substituting Power + Finesse for the Meditation rolls.



Anchor: The Grigori’s own physical body serves as one anchor, with its current target as another. The connection to the target is given to the Grigori by allowing it to use Copy Sympathy to duplicate a Seer’s own sympathy to the target, in a manner reminiscent of a bloodhound picking up a track. Once it has a sympathetic connection to the target, the Grigori can spend a Mana to assign them as its roving anchor.

Ban: The Grigori cannot use its powers to affect its own body or directly affect (as opposed to watching by hijacking Sympathetic connections) its victim. Any Paradox the Grigori might incur affects the body. If the body dies or is removed from the Shroud, the Grigori is destroyed.

Hollow Ones

Dolls, Empty Men, Zealots

Some slaves go beyond the mere weakness of the soul of Thralls — they lack the human soul's very capacity to grow and change. Unwanted orphans of institutions controlled by the Seers or unfortunate captives that have angered the Ministry of Paternoster enough to suffer a fate worse than death, Hollow Ones have been spiritually crippled by a terrible creature that has been the Ministry's prisoner and guest for over 700 years. Left with a gaping wound in the soul that no magic can permanently heal, the Dolls lose their sense of self, memories, knowledge, and their entire personality within days unless reinforced with Mana that they cannot absorb for themselves. The Seers of Paternoster maintain a Hollow One's personality as long as it is useful, and then allow her to become blank before using magic to rebuild the slave's mind from scratch for a new role. Bought and sold among pylons, their minds rebuilt over and over again, the Dolls are trapped in servitude to the Father, unable to survive without the Seers' help and unable to realize what is happening to them.

The Seers are able to rebuild them so completely because of a happy (for the Seers) stroke of chance — the damage to a Hollow One's soul means that Mind spells cast upon them can be made indefinite in duration. Adepts and Masters of Mind within the Ministry Imbue spells to make popular personalities into gemstones, and do business with those pylons that have earned a Doll as a slave. To Paternoster, the Hollow Ones are the perfect servants: they believe what they are programmed to believe, with a simplistic clarity that the Seers intend the entire human race to one day have. As for the Seers' supernal patron, the Father shows no signs of being displeased about the Hollow One's origin, not when their slave-lives are almost hymns to His glory.

The Tutor

During the Eighth Crusade in 1270, Seers of Paternoster operating as Crusaders in what is now Tunisia followed strange lights in the sky and dream visions of Apocalypse, believing them to be signs from the Father. In the depths of the Tunisian Steppes, they discovered the entity known to their modern antecessors as the Tutor. Believing it to be an injured Ochema at first, they transported it back to a Sanctum in Tunis where the truth gradually came out over months of study. The Tutor is not from a higher reality — the opposite, in fact.

The Ministry now believes that the Tutor is a being from the Lower Depths, the distant and mysterious realm believed to be as far from the Fallen World as the Fallen World is from the Supernal. Whatever form it had in its native realm, the increased pressure of reality in the Fallen World renders it immobile and indistinct. It is half-materialized, half in Twilight, unable to communicate and difficult to look upon

for longer than snatched glances. It is a thaumivore, but it has another appetite as well: it eats the human sense of self. When a Sleeper enters the Tutor's prison the entity reacts to their presence by lashing out at their soul. When the effect was first witnessed in 1272, the Seer overseeing the creature reported it to his tetrarch as the unfortunate servant having been made "empty inside."

In modern times, the Ministry has Doll production down to a well-oiled machine; the creature rests within a fortified Sanctum somewhere in Northern Africa and victims are usually babies and children taken from orphanages in deprived countries, hidden by nominally twisted paper trails. The pylon overseeing the operation is not above reducing a troublesome adult to being a Doll as a special request, though. The process does not appear to work on Sleepwalkers, the Awakened or anyone else touched by the supernatural; the theory is that the creature is somehow attacking the part of a Sleeper that forms the Quiescence.

Consciousness Gem (Imbued Item) ●●●●●+

Durability 2, Size 0, Structure 2

Mana Capacity: None

Hollow Ones are normally programmed by adepts of the Mind Arcanum capable of casting as many of the Mind-enhancing spells combined as possible, but the process is a long one involving several ritual spells. A Consciousness Gem is a "stock personality" designed for a Hollow One; a suite of Mind spells intended to grant dots of skills, Mental Attributes and memories combined into one spell so as to reduce the impact on the Doll's spell tolerance. A five-dot version of the Artifact contains basic memories, 6 dots of Mental and Social Attributes and 8 dots of Skills. A six-dot version has 5 dots of Mental and Social Attributes, 16 dots of Skills and a more complex back story while a seven-dot version has 7 dots of Mental and Social Attributes, 24 dots of Skills and a full false history that seems perfectly real to the Doll. It may also change the Doll's Virtue and Vice.

Game Systems

Hollow Ones have the following abilities and weaknesses:

Unchanging Pattern: Hollow Ones do not count as living beings for the duration of Mind spells, allowing them to be cast at indefinite duration. They can never Awaken or become another kind of Supernatural creature.

Blank Slate: A Hollow One's Mind pattern cannot heal itself, but grasps desperately at anything introduced to fill the gaps. All Mind spells cast upon them use the advanced duration chart regardless of the skill of the user.

Free of Quiescence: A Hollow One counts as a Sleepwalker for the purposes of Paradox. They can store 5 points of Mana within their pattern, but have no ability to sense or absorb Mana without assistance; they are reliant on spells such as "Imbue Mana" or eating tass.

Worm-Eaten Memory: A Hollow One uses a point of Mana every time she wakes from unconsciousness, both natural sleep and being knocked unconscious through damage. If they do not have any Mana remaining in their pattern, all mental and social attributes reset to one, all skills and specialties are lost and their memory is erased. Any Merits that rely on training or knowledge are also lost, as is any unspent experience.

Simple Soul: Hollow Ones keep their Virtue and Vice unless changed, but express them in a much less developed way than a normal person. If you have **World of Darkness: Innocents** available, Hollow Ones have an Asset and Fault instead of a Virtue and a Vice. They believe so purely in the limited things their Seer masters allow them, though, that when a Hollow One spends Willpower to increase a dice pool she gains five extra dice instead of three. Spending to increase resistance traits increases the trait by three instead of two.

The Seers programming a Hollow One make use of the following spells, combined as much as possible; “Breach the Vault of Memory” to implant false memories, “Augment Other Minds” to raise the mental attributes and “Bestow Skill” (found in **Free Council**) to raise skills. If a master of Mind is available, the spells “Psychic Reprogramming” and a Mind 5 version of “Augment Other Minds” based off “Supreme Augmentation” may be used instead, but such an individual normally opts for a modified version of “Psychic Genesis” which, thanks to the Hollow One’s condition, can be cast as indefinite.

Myrmidons

Kindlers, Spearmen, Achilleans

Since time immemorial, The General has been served by a line of Proximi, a dynasty of not-quite human Sleepwalkers as drawn to violence and strife as violence and strife are drawn to them. They have served her fanatically since her Ascension, and he commands them to serve his earthly servants in his stead. They have no choice in the matter, for the oaths their ancestors took in Atlantis bind their souls. In ancient times, they were the loyal warriors of the Daidochi, but command of the dynasty has now passed to Praetorian. For their legendary obedience and martial skills, they are named Myrmidons.

The Myrmidons maintain their own safe houses, conduct their own secret rituals to which the Praetorians are not invited and keep their own histories. There are enough scions of the dynasty to avoid inbreeding, and marriages are carefully arranged by the dynastic elders to keep the bloodline pure. Violence and obedience are in a Myrmidon’s blood; a true-bred Myrmidon is trained and drilled from an early age in the use of weapons and his in-born powers. Their powers are not restricted to combat, though they do excel at it — Myrmidons provoke and inspire violence and hate in those around them. Praetorians use them as rabble-

rousers, directing their Myrmidon allies to spark violence in peaceful mass protests, inspire hate for opposing views and provoke frightened communities into becoming lynch mobs braying for the blood of the different.

Myrmidons can pass for ordinary humans, but share certain physical signs. Their features are harsh, with square jaws, wide mouths and heavy foreheads (“beetle brows”). Their hair is thick and feels strange to the touch, fibrous like chitin. And then there is the smell; Myrmidons give off a faint odor of formic acid.

The Ancient Compact

The Myrmidon’s relationship to the General is separate and distinct to that of the Seers of the Throne, and the Myrmidons — while giving the Praetorians no doubt as to their iron-clad loyalty — do not allow the mages to forget it. They worship the Exarch under the name “Aeacus”, and tell the following story of their origins:

In the time before the Flood, a great Warrior-King of Atlantis required a bodyguard for his Queen, for the Queen was beautiful as the stars and swayed the hearts of any men who looked upon her. At first, the King turned to his fellow Princes, but those who volunteered succumbed to her charms themselves. Then, he turned to the Adamantine Arrow, who made oaths freely but were seduced themselves, failing in their task.

“No mage can perform this task”, said the King, “for all mages burn with desire for that which is above the station of man, and to forbid something of a mage is folly”. He summoned an ant, least and most obedient of all creatures, and made it a man. “Swear that you will serve me,” he asked, and the Myrmidon swore.

Praetorian has noticed the similarity between the beliefs of the Myrmidons and the Adamantine Arrow — something which over-confident Seers have actually encouraged in the past as comment on the rightful place of such philosophies being beneath those with the will to give commands rather than obey. It is believed that the Myrmidons were once an Adamantine Dynasty serving the ancient Ungula Draconis in Atlantis. To say so aloud, though, is heresy for that implies that the General was an Arrow in life before taking his Supernal throne, and Praetorians have spent centuries convincing themselves that the Arrow are weak.

Myrmidon Oath-Tongue (Merit ●●, Awakened only)

The oath the first Myrmidons took to the General applies to their entire dynasty, and is the reason the Praetorians trust the secretive Proximi more than they even trust one another. The Myrmidon Oath-Tongue is a special code-language learned by Praetorian Mages that incorporates elements of the High Speech and the First Tongue of Spirits. A Myrmidon must obey all orders given in the Oath-Tongue, even to the point of his own death, unless the order is impossible to accomplish.

Game Systems

Myrmidons are Proximi, a family of Sleepwalkers that shares a set range of magical abilities. First introduced in **Mage: The Awakening**, Proximi were given full rules in **Silver Ladder**. For space, only the final expression of those rules pertaining to the Myrmidons is given here.

More than Sleepwalkers: All Myrmidons possess the “Sleepwalker” and “Proximi” Merits for no cost. They may purchase the Dream, Destiny, High Speech and Occultation Merits.

Supernal Health: Myrmidons may Pattern Restore and Scour as Mages, and live 25% longer than a human.

Mana: Myrmidons have a maximum Mana capacity of 5, and recuperate it by eating tass, scouring their own patterns and performing Oblations (which revolve around drilling with traditional Grecian weapons or re-affirming their oaths to the Exarch). They do not possess a Gnosis trait, so Oblations are performed only with the Myrmidon’s Composure.

Ant-Born Oath: Myrmidons must obey all orders given in the Oath-Tongue, even ones considered suicidal.

Capacity for Awakening: Myrmidons can Awaken (in fact, they are more likely to do so than a normal human), and always become Obrimos. They retain all of their inherent powers (even Blessings for which they do not have the Arcana) but cannot learn any more Blessings. The Ant-Born Oath also still affects them, though they can and do learn to speak the Oath-Tongue themselves and countermand orders they feel are abusive. Most orders are left to stand, though, for fear that if Awakened Myrmidons try to free their cousins and siblings from the Seer’s slavery, the General will revise the Oath’s terms to be even harsher.

Blessings: Myrmidons possess Blessings, magical abilities based on rote. A starting Myrmidon has 13 dots of rote, chosen from the following list. All Blessings cost one dot on top of the listed price, so a Blessing made of a one-dot spell costs two dots.

Forcespells — Influence Sound (●), Nightsight (●), Read Matrices (●), Influence Electricity (●●), Influence Fire (●●), Kinetic Blow (●●), Unseen Shield (●●) (grants two dots of armor), Turn Projectile (●●●)

Mind spells — Aura Perception (●), Emotional Urging (●●), Incognito Presence (●●), Misperception (●●), Provoke Wrath (●●●)

Prime spells — Activate Enchanted Item (●●), Counter-spell Prime (●●), Transform Aura (●)

When using a Blessing, Myrmidons use only the attribute and the skill of the rote’s dice pool and do not possess rote specialties. Their Nimbus is weaker than that of an Awakened mage.

Hive-Souls

Hivers, Manymen, Clones

Hegemony’s fortunes may be fading, but the old Ministry still has teeth.

Centuries ago, a tetrarch of Hegemony achieved Archmastery of the Life Arcanum and began experimenting with new forms of human existence, forms more suited to the Ministry’s vision of humanity’s future. Before she left the Fallen World (Hegemonic records indicate she joined the ranks of the Ascended Archmasters within the 6th station of the Unity’s Soul), she created a group of beings to serve as an inspiration to the Seers she left behind. Never common since their creation, those beings and their descendents were carefully managed by the Ministry, kept safe in the Sanctums of high-status Hegemonics as living signs of the Ministry’s rightness. In modern years, however, the need for the Ministry to maintain its grip on power combined with a happy development in Sleeping science has meant that these “Hive-Souled Men” or “Hivers” have been pressed into more active service.

A Hive-Soul is both a highly trusted servant and a group of highly trusted servants. One mind and one soul spread across multiple identical bodies, the Hiver thinks as one being (albeit one being enhanced to the point of being able to control multiple forms simultaneously), reacts as one being to magic but has more than one physical form. When a Hiver works on a task, it is an image of Unity’s supernal perfection with duplications of the same person all working together in smooth concert without the need for coordinating speech or management. They make for excellent managers of other slaves, sublime personal assistants, superior coordinating agents for pylons (where each group of Seers takes one of the Hiver’s selves with them) and deadly combatants.

The bodies of a Hive-Soul are eerily identical, beyond even that of identical twins or triplets, for they adapt over time to eliminate any differences that arise. If one body is scarred, the scar will appear on the other bodies of the same Hive-Soul over the course of a week. If one spends a lot of time at the gym, the others will lose fat and gain muscle. This is both a great boon and a great weakness — some Pentacle mages have realized that if one member of a Hive is badly injured, the others will heal backwards, wounds opening up to maintain equality.

The Progenitor’s Design

The tetrarch that made the first group of Hivers, who the Hive-Souled refer to as the Progenitor, built them to be able to reproduce with Sleepers. Human women impregnated by Hive-Souled Men give birth to a Hiver if the pregnancy becomes multiple, but there is only the normal roughly 3%

chance of that happening. Hive-Souled Women always produce a Hive if more than one of their bodies becomes pregnant by the same father; this was the means by which the race propagated in the centuries following their creation. The explosion in Hiver numbers in the last few years is due to the increased use of fertility drugs among Sleepers — realizing that they increase the chance of multiple pregnancies; Hegemonic Seers have been instituting a breeding program.

Game Systems

A Hive-Soul has a Merit, “Hive-Souled”, costing one dot plus one for every body in the Hive, so twins would be a 3-dot Merit, triplets a 4-dot and so on. They cannot Awaken or become any other type of supernatural creature. (It’s possible that if all members of a Hive-Mind were Embraced at the same time, they could become vampires, but their shared soul might be lost in the process. Or perhaps not. What’s known for certain is that if only one body is targeted for the Embrace, all die and the sole body cannot be reborn as a vampire.)

Hive-Souls have the following abilities and weaknesses:

Equality Within: A Hive-Soul is one character. Each member of the Hive has the same traits, and they do not have separate Willpower points or Morality.

Multiplicity of Action: Hive-Souls can control all of their bodies at once quite readily, allowing each body to make a separate action in a turn.

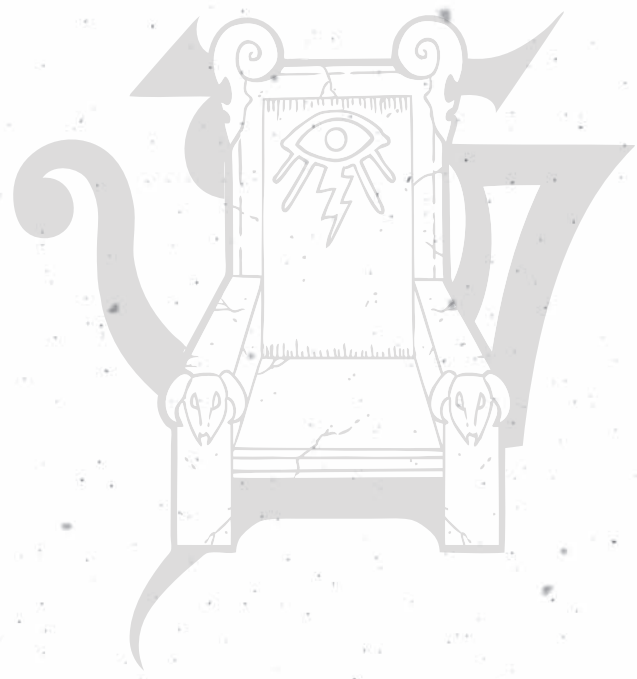
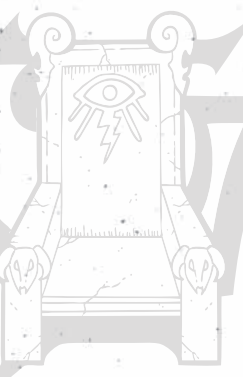
Equality Without: Physical changes to a Hive-Soul appear on all her bodies over the course of a week. Wounds inflicted on one body will spread to the others at a rate of one Wound an hour. If one body is killed, the other bodies develop one aggravated Wound per turn until they are all dead.

One Mind, One Soul: Hive-Souls have one mind and one soul for the purposes of magic. Stealing the soul of one body will see it vanish from all, for it is the same soul. Similarly, mentally controlling one body will see the others act out the same commands. A Hive-Soul is aware of what is happening to all of her bodies, and although the connection can be seen under Mage Sight as an exceedingly strong bond similar but different to that of a mage and his Familiar, it cannot be broken by magic, short of Archmastery.

Strength in Unity: Hive-Souls use the number of bodies in the Hive as a Supernatural Resistance Trait, substituting it for Gnosis when called on in spell descriptions.

Perfection of Coordination: When a Hive-Soul engages in teamwork with itself, the number of bodies involved in the action is added to the dice provided to the primary actor by each helping body.

Example: Jonas is conducting research for his Master, and has dedicated all three of his bodies to the task. The Jonas acting as primary actor adds six dice to those granted by the helping selves’ successes.



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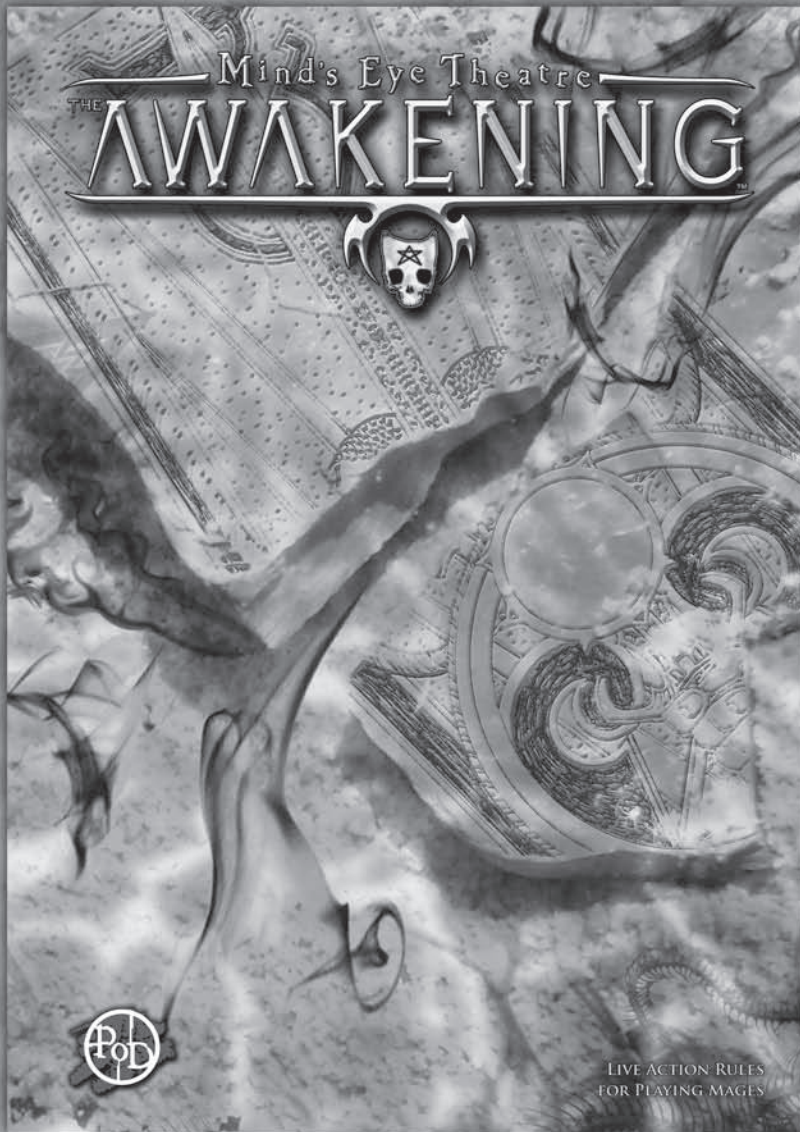


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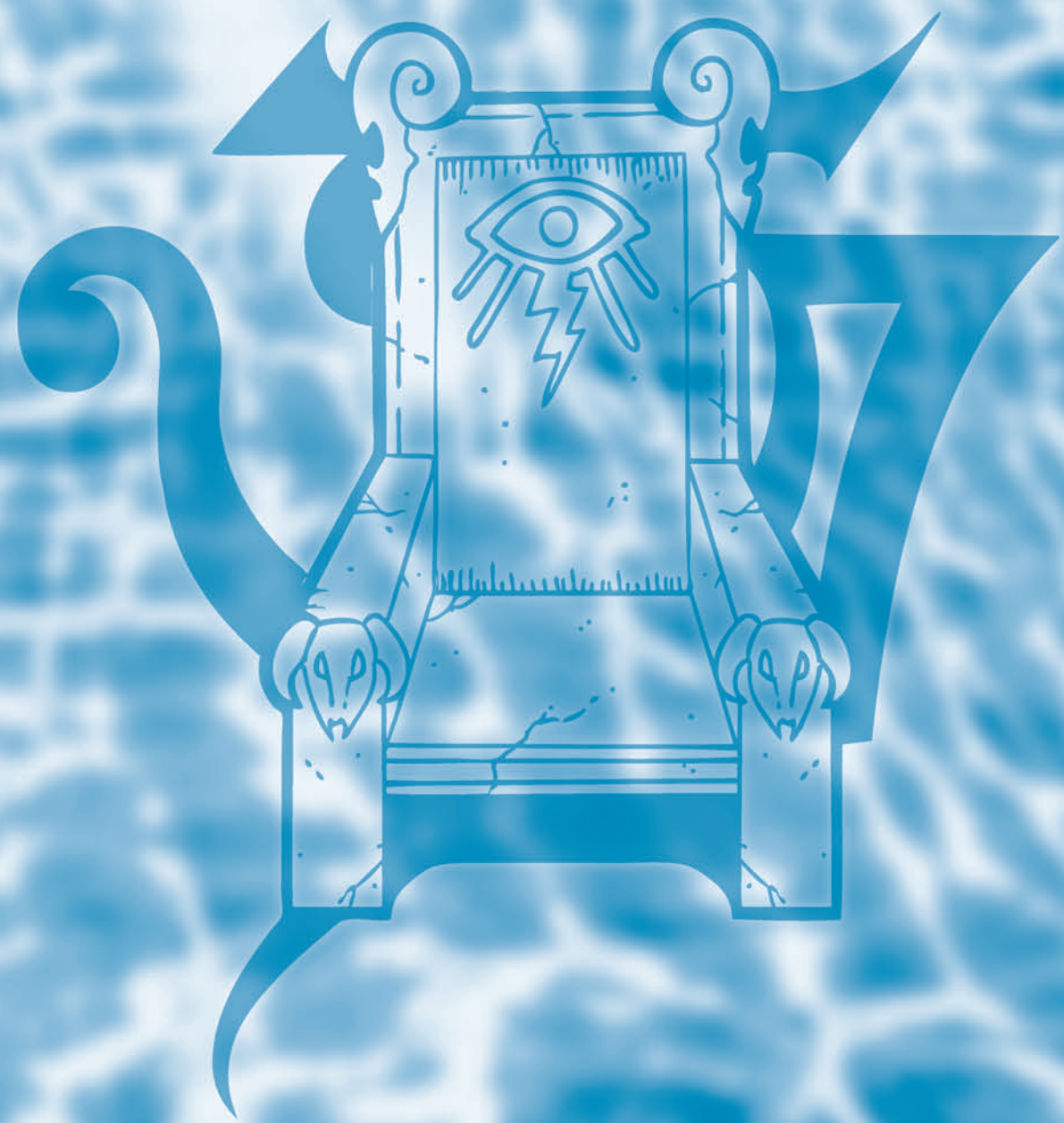
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