

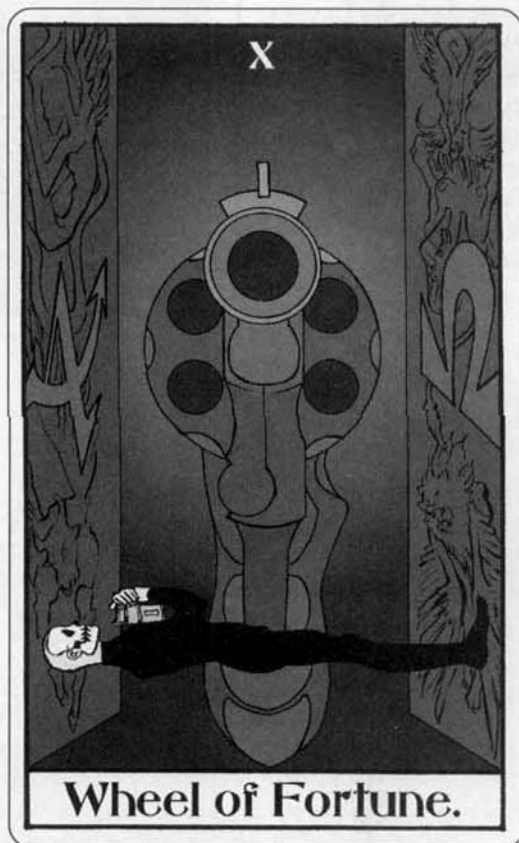
T R A D I T I O N B O O K :

EUTHIANATOS™



T R A D I T I O N B O O K :

EUTHANATOS™



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AUTHOR'S DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the memory of my father, Glenn Sheppard. Dad passed away while I was writing this. He was fifty years old. As I write this now, his ashes are on display in a Toronto Buddhist temple. In three days I'll go to see him for the last time.

He was an artist, a poet, and a peace activist. He loved being close to nature, but compassion for others stayed on his mind even in the midst of a deserted path. He campaigned for human rights with the most effective tool he possessed: his words. He was an eloquent writer and encouraged me to develop my own abilities.

When I told him I was writing for a game where people's beliefs could change the world, he smiled.

It was right up his alley.

— Malcolm Sheppard



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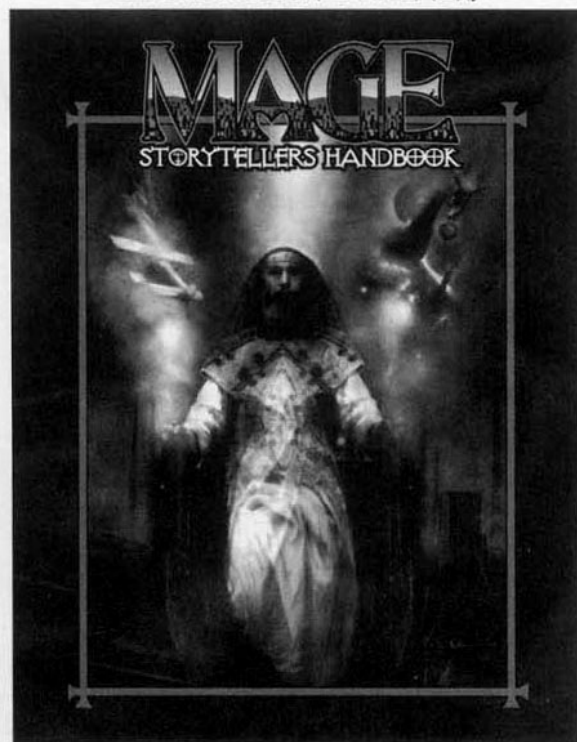
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PROLOGUE: WALKING ON KNIVES

Karma is justice without the satisfaction.

— Christopher McQuarrie, *The Way of the Gun*



APRIL 7, KALI SIO2: KILLERS ON TOUR

Murder job on the North Shore tomorrow. Truce doesn't want me to call it that, says it screws up your resolve. I'll be damned if he isn't trying to get into my head, read me with those big brown eyes of his.

"I don't have any qualms about it. Victim's a serial rapist, right?" I'm working the knife on the whetstone as I talk.

"He's a *target*, Evelyn. And he rapes children. Vid-eotapes it, too; that's how we found out about him. Anyway, let's go for a walk. I want to see these big ol'redwoods up close."

"You a nature lover, Truce?"

"What's natural? It's quiet out here. It's a place I can cope with. It has people I can cope with."

I squint and wheel my head around. "I don't see anybody."

"Exactly."

It's a place I can cope with. I remember what they told us in the beginning — when the killing began to etch itself into your mind, you had to find a quiet place, away from everything that was evil in the world.

"The most important thing," said Truce, as we cashed in a lottery ticket to pay for the bus here, "is to find something where the rot can't get to you. I don't care if it's casual sex, hang-gliding, or babbling mantras 'till you're blue in the face. We can fix the repercussions of all of those." He frowns a bit in thought.

"But when the poison seeps into your Atman — when Jhor seizes you — it's irreversible."

So you find a way to cope; a place where the death-taint can't touch you.

It's harder than you think.

We spend an hour walking through the trash; I kick beer bottles and crack vials aside. A used needle emits a bleak hiss when I listen just right; it killed someone two or three days ago. Truce points out the bear tracks and I put a clip in the .44. Garbage bears associate people with food. If you haven't left enough half-eaten sandwiches and candy bar wrappers behind, they'll try to jack you up directly.

We break over a ridge and leave the last rotting tire behind us. The ferns on the other side are green waves in an emerald sea. Two ancient redwoods sprout from them. I think of pillars dividing the known from the unknown, the living from the dead.

Truce sits, and the sun hits him just right as he braces against the huge root to get comfortable. He breathes the breath of a god and the golden light frames him as if it recognizes his strength: the right to do what we do.

Then the root blackens and the tree shakes and the green sea around him turns brown and withered. Truce opens his eyes, and I can tell — he knows that despite the bullshit he's been feeding me about coping, you can't find a place where the doom won't follow.

Not here — not anywhere on Kali's earth.

APRIL 8, KALI SIØ2:
TWO TO THE BODY, ONE TO THE HEAD

Click-click. Click.

"That's the way you do it. Now put the clip in."

"I'm not much of a shooter, Truce."

"Sleeper like this is a good chance to upgrade your skills." We hustle up to the door. My knife's in one hand and my gun's in the other.

It's a nice little cabin. A cool, moist wind blows through the trees. The moon makes the pines glisten, and I can hear the ocean whisper.

A silent count to three and we kick the door open. We run through to the living room, and there he is, snoring in front of a glowing TV set. Truce spins and cracks the guy's cheek with the butt of his gun. The victim (excuse me, *target*) howls.

"Wake up, fucker!" I can't believe I'm saying it. I can't believe my boot's just caved in the bastard's knee. He rolls off the couch and lands in a kneel.

"Oh God!" The words sputter from a face full of tears, snot and blood. "Who are you? Lord... my money's in the kitchen. In a little brown box in the kitchen. Oh, sweet Jesus..."

Truce says, "Jim Houle, you're a child molester. You can't be reformed or redeemed." He's got a steady, professional voice. I kick Houle again to provide a screaming counterpoint.

Other Traditions think we're stone-cold pros dispensing arms-length justice, but that's not how it works. You have to believe in the Good Death with your heart. Objectivity's a scam; do you think we'd do it if we didn't *want* to? You can kill competently *and* passionately. Denying your feelings just makes it easier for Jhor to creep in — at least, it does in my opinion.

"No! God, no. It isn't me!" he wrings his hands together. On his knees like that, it makes him look like he's praying — which he very well might be.

"We're going to kill you, Jim. It'll be painful, because death always is. Remember that pain, because *you will live again*."

I push him into a support beam with my knife and lash him to the varnished pine.

"Remember *how* you died, and remember *why*. We're giving you a new life — a new chance."

Oh shit. I can hear feet running up from the basement. I run to the sound while Truce keeps his gun trained on Houle.

A door opens. A woman in a dirty blue bathrobe runs out. "Jimmy?" she asks the air. "Number three

won't stop scratching himself." She peers down the hall, sticking her head out next to where I'm standing. She doesn't see me. I grab her and yank her toward me by a fistful of brown hair.

"What the fuck, Truce? Is he *married*?" I march her into the living room, throw her down, straddle her and duct-tape her wrists.

"Guess so, Eve."

"You left this salient little detail out of the prep? Well, fuck. What do we do?"

"Turn her over."

Of course, Jim Houle's screaming away: for his wife, for God, for his life. It'll lessen the impact of the Good Death if we knock him out, so I just train the gun on him, put my finger to my lips and stare.

Truce sifts through her soul for a little nugget of conscience. He looks into her eyes with his Big Browns and whispers in Sanskrit. Houle shuts up. After a silent moment Truce says, "She's salvageable — helps him out of fear for her life. Plus, there are three kids trapped downstairs." He lets out a sharp breath. "In his studio."

He takes the red cord of his rumal from around his neck and touches it to Mrs. Houle's neck. She passes out. "I'm going to free the kids. They'll need my siddhi to ease their pain. You finish Houle."

He brushes a spider plant on the way to the basement; its leaves are brown by the time he's down the stairs.

I point the gun at Jim Houle.

"You're going back to the Unmaking, Jim. You're going to have a new life, new chances. Don't take the evil with you. Keep this death in your next heart. Take this lesson into your eternal soul."

"I'm so sorry," he says.

"But you aren't."

Bang-bang.

Bang.

APRIL 9TH, KALI SIØ2:
ONE BIG HAPPY FAMILY

Here's the Burton Family! First out of the jeep are little Leo, Therese, and Johnny, followed by their parents, Truce and Evelyn. Lastly there's Aunt Janine, who's all tired from our fishing excursion on the North Shore. Ain't vacations grand?

No, I don't buy it either, but it's the best cover we could come up with on such short notice.

Never mind that the kids don't look anything like each other, and I'd have to have been squeezing them out since the age of fifteen to be their mother. If anyone

asks, I'll say that we adopted them out of compassion. At least there's a kind of truth to *that*.

The real Burtons were probably a pair of yuppies out to look at whales and assuage their environmental guilt. It only took me a minute to jack the lock while Truce finished prepping the rest of the "family" for travel. I jinxed the jeep so the cops would take a while to catch on, but you never know when some canny Sleeper's going to see right through all the mystical chicanery and screw you over.

Thankfully the drowsy teenage clerk at the motel's desk doesn't bat an eye when we check in. We stroll down to our little yellow room. There are two beds; I sit the kids on one and Truce helps Janine Houle to the other.

Leo's eight. I'm changing the dressings on his wrists when he looks over to Janine. He starts to hyperventilate and clutches the blanket with his free hand.

"Truce? The invocation's starting to wear off. You've got to do it again."

He snaps his cellphone closed. "None of the Vancouver Choristers are by the phone right now."

"Did you leave a message?" Now Therese begins to whimper in long sobs that are too deep for her age.

"Like what? 'Hi, I'm using mind control and luck to parade a child molester and her victims to safety. Could you please lend a hand?' They're based out of a community center, Eve. I'm not exactly free to speak my goddamn mind."

"Relax! You don't need to bite off my head for thinking out loud." I'm about to continue when another voice joins the dirge; now all of the kids are crying, cowering.

My eyes hit the floor with shame. "Shit. I'm sorry. I'm wasting time."

"It's OK." Truce takes a cloth square from his pocket: a woven yantra he uses for Manas workings. "Go out, win a lottery, and get everybody some new clothes and some food."

Janine curls into a ball on the bed and turns away from the kids, but Truce's arm whips out and takes a hold of her jaw. He yanks her head back around.

As I walk out the door he says: "Watch them cry, Janine. Remember that part of this is your fault. Unless you suffer with them, you'll never be cured."

I bite my lip on the way out. Like the Wheel itself, Euthanatoi don't often forgive.

Karma always comes to collect.





INTRODUCTION: DRINKING FROM THE SKULL

*Souls are numbered
and given by degree*

— Glenn Sheppard, "Faithless"



We can't accept death. We can't accept accidents. Chaos is an offense against us. Misfortune claims our friends: She loses her job and he loses his father to cancer. The most terrifying thing to consider is that, underneath the semblance of chance, there might be *reasons* for these things: inescapable karma.

We can't accept these things, but the Euthanatoi can. At the very least, they try. Karma — Fate — is inescapable, and the Euthanatoi know that Fate has its reasons.

The Euthanatos might be the easiest Tradition to play superficially, but the hardest to play sincerely. As players or Storytellers, it's easy to work up false callousness and bravado. Some portrayals of Euthanatoi have been unbelievably grim and others have been apologist to a fault. While some fate mages do stand at these extremes, the majority are men and women who've decided to take ultimate responsibility for destiny's tides — in themselves and others. It's an unrewarding task, fraught with

self-doubt, dehumanization, and even the madness of Jhor. Why would anyone join the darkest Tradition?

Somebody has to.

They kill; we can't deny it. It would be convenient to say that they kill the right people, every time — that the terminal patient wants the sweet release of death, or that the abuser can never be reformed. After all, Euthanatoi can look into people's hearts and weigh their chances to heal or redeem themselves. But that supernatural perception comes from human eyes, human minds and human hearts. Anger can cloud such sight, and detachment can erode the basic empathy a Wheel-turner needs to do her job.

Fortunately, the Euthanatoi are more than killers. Modern "death mages" study probability strings, kismet, economics and rehabilitation. The Good Death is at the end of a series of escalating responses, and wise Euthanatoi learn that the knife and garrote are tools of last resort. Yet these tools see more and more use as the World of Darkness groans under the weight of too much injustice and atrocity. Jhor is turning into more than a personal hell: It's becoming the state of the world.

THEITIE: RENEWAL IN THE FACE OF DESTRUCTION

The Euthanatos braces for a new Coumatha: a point where the decisions they make will change their Tradition forever. The existence of the Avatar Storm suggests that the Cycle of Ages will come to a premature close unless they intervene, and it seems hopeless to solve the crisis by intervening in individual lives. Yet this crisis is a blessing in disguise.

For too long, the Tradition has allowed flaws to creep into its methods. Jhor perverts the noble efforts of the Chakravanti, causing the other Traditions to fear them. Other Traditions suspect them of passing judgement upon their allies, and they're right, although until now there wasn't any solid evidence. Recent events have changed that, but that crisis gives the Euthanatoi the opportunity to rid themselves of the problems that have hampered pursuit of a difficult, but essentially just, mission.

How will the Euthanatoi implement this? Will they abandon Sleepers to their own devices to search for a more numinous solution to the world's problems, or will they redouble their efforts to liberate the souls of the world? The first option seems callous; the second won't make a difference unless the Tradition can find external support and new ways of inflicting the old Good Death.

MOOD: OUTRAGE, DETACHMENT AND JHOR

Hand in hand with these choices is the approach to the Euthanatos mission itself. The death mages regularly encounter the most desolate and diseased parts of the human landscape. How should individual Chakravanti cope with the horrors they experience?

Euthanatos philosophy encourages detachment from the Good Death. It states that anyone who kills or interferes in another life out of selfish catharsis will take a small piece of corruption back into herself. Ideally, Euthanatoi only kill according to objective criteria, and never for personal satisfaction. At the same time, forced tranquility in the face of executions and euthanasia prevents Wheel-turners from releasing the often-powerful emotions that accompany the Tradition's practices. Unexpressed, the light of anger, sadness, and fear dies out, and the mage's detachment turns into callousness.

Too much or too little feeling in the face of death leads to Jhor. Euthanatoi are beginning to realize that the problem is more widespread than they thought, and that there is no wholly reliable protection against it.

How will your character cope? Will she risk putting her heart into acts of retribution until she's consumed

by them? Will she cut herself off from her true feelings, until she loses the ability to empathize with others? Or is there a third path, tranquil and sincere, through which she can wend her way?

CONTENTS

The Euthanatos Tradition has many roots but one purpose: to tend the Wheel of creation and destruction and to end unnecessary suffering. It's a hard duty, but a vital one that requires that Wheel-turners break cultural taboos, deceive outsiders, and sacrifice their own Ascension to further the interests of Sleepers and the safety of the Tellurian as a whole.

Necromancy and assassination are despicable acts in most cultures, but more than that, few societies will accept a doctrine that acknowledges that all of their great works must crumble. Most Euthanatoi are the descendants of marginalized mystics from around the world, from *geas*-laying witches to tantric deceivers. Storytellers can learn more about these groups through research and enhance what's written here.

Look behind the scenes when you read about Thug practices, or when the Furies punish an errant Greek hero, and you'll find inspiration for the Euthanatos. Simply keep in mind that, in their own way, Euthanatoi are every bit as heroic as their "straight" counterparts. In some ways they are more so, because while holy warriors and activist pagans receive accolades for their actions, death mages can only take comfort that the Wheel has turned another inch toward a just destiny. The following chapters explain the Tradition's hope for that destiny, their current travails, and how you can make them a part of your **Mage: The Ascension** chronicle.

Chapter 1: History is a Tightening Noose explores Thanatoic history from the Tradition's point of view, including persistent mysteries, current troubles, and how they inform the Euthanatoi of today. With this perspective, the Tradition deals with current events, other Traditions and supernatural creatures, and adapts its frightening beliefs to the modern world.

Chapter 2: Ascension's Knife introduces the reader to Thanatoic beliefs, from their ethics to the mystical practices that guide the way to Ascension. The fate mages' organization, from factions to the administration of justice, reveals the depth of the Tradition.

Chapter 3: All Flesh is Ashes discusses the death mages in the field: what their objectives are, the key themes for a Euthanatos chronicle, and important figures in the Tradition's past and present. A sample cabal, advice for all-Euthanatoi adventures, and character templates round out this chapter.

LEXICON

Acarya: A Mentor or Master.

Agama: The journey between the worlds of the living and the dead. Agama Te refers to the initiation ritual (which sends a shravaka through a short or little death), although it also applies to greater travels beyond the Pana. In the modern era, actual trips to the Underworld are rarely used as Agama.

Atman: The Avatar. An indestructible self joined to the whole of creation.

Avatara: A divine being embodied in human form. An Oracle. Not to be confused with the Traditions' term for the mystic self, or Atman.

Chakra: The Wheel of creation and destruction that regulates the Tellurian. Also a cabal of Euthanatoi.

Chakradharma: The sacred duty to the Great Wheel that empowers a Thanatoic mage and charges her with helping all others to adhere to their own dharmas (duties).

Chakravanti: Alternate name for the Euthanatoi, favored by an outvoted faction during the Grand Convocation.

Chela: A talented student, such as a Disciple or Adept.

Chodona: The Euthanatoi belief system and legal code, derived from the *Eight-Spoked Wheel of the Law*. The agreement that bound fate- and death-aspected mages into one Tradition.

Coumatha: Literally "Crossroad", the point at which a Euthanatos' old life ends and her new life begins. Sometimes used as a term for the Awakening, Coumatha usually refers to some life crisis that leads to a bigger revelation — like an Epiphany. Also a major event in Euthantos history, such as the White Coumatha that sparked the Himalayan War.

Diksha: The near-death experience that leads a Euthanatos into his new life as a mage. The Thanatoic Awakening.

Euthanatoi: The proper plural form of "Euthanatos." Often ignored, even within the Tradition, in favor of the more accessible common name, but preferred in formal contexts.

Jhor: The inward-turning taint and callousness that comes from casual acceptance of death and

destruction, a powerful negative energy that pervades Euthanatos who become too callous, too revenge-motivated or too distant from the eventual hope of rebirth. Jhor taints the thoughts and eventually the body and spirit. It can strike anyone but by nature of their work Euthanatos most commonly experience it.

Kali Yuga: The final Age of Iron or Darkness that precedes the end of the universe. Hindus calculate the Kali Yuga as having begun in March 18, 3201 BC. Therefore, the years 2001 and 2002 AD are Kali 5102 and 5103 according to the Yuga reckoning. Many Euthanatoi believe that the Yuga will conclude sooner than expected, ending the current Cycle and, for all intents and purposes, destroying the cosmos.

Lohka: The Tellurian.

Marabout: A Chantry. Often refers to one of the ancient ancestral temples in India, although some young Euthanatoi use the name for their own dwellings.

Naraki: The Fallen (Nephandi); also used to denote corrupt Euthanatoi.

Ojas: The mystic energy flowing within all things; Quintessence.

Pana: The Shroud (Gauntlet) between the material world and the spirit Penumbra.

Paramaguru: An Archmage or Thanatoic master of great ability or repute.

Samashti: A grand meeting that most Euthanatoi are expected to attend.

Shravaka: An Apprentice or Initiate; one who has only recently undergone the agama, or little death, ritual.

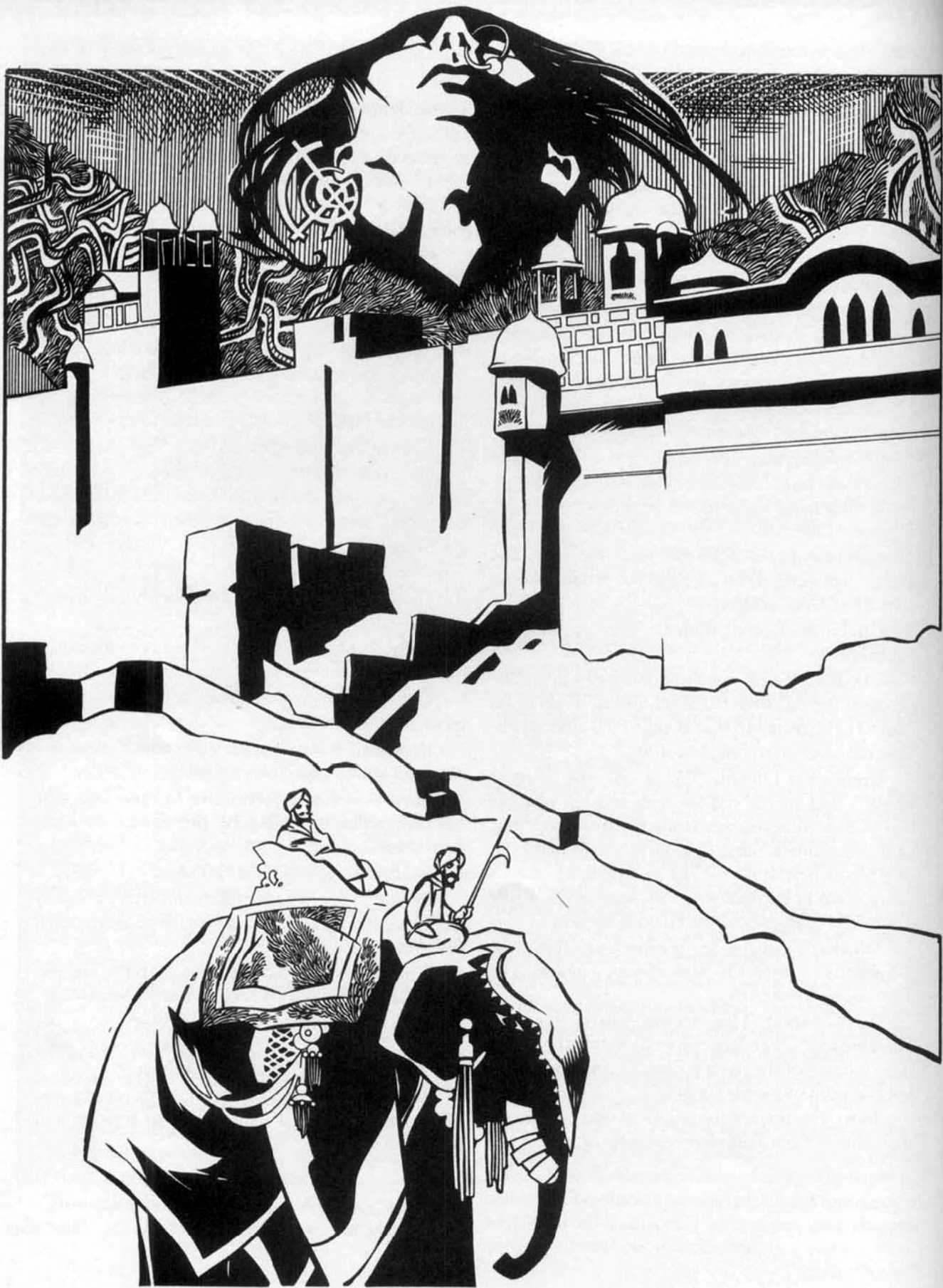
Siddhi: A general term for magic.

Smrti: "That Which is Remembered"; a vision technique in which a Euthanatos calls up memories of past incarnations.

Thanatoics: A modern, casual term for the Tradition's ranks. Also **Wheel-turner** or **Death Mage**.

Vrata: A formal oath, often bound to a life promise. To break it is to court disgrace, exile or even death. Also an elite faction of Euthanatoi.

Wheel: The great Cycle of birth, death and reincarnation. Used as a metaphor for creation and the living world.



CHAPTER ①: HISTORY IS A TIGHTENING NOOSE

For ages beyond time, the gods conspired to contain this black power that they had created. It was circumscribed, propitiated, and hidden in the pantheon, but its essential nature could not be denied. It alone — she alone — grew in strength as other divinities faded from mortal memory, for she alone embodied the dark underside of an essentially benign universe — a universe whose reality had been forged through the millennia by the consciousness of men and gods alike.

—Dan Simmons, *Song of Kali*



"Pack it up, pack it in, kids." I try for a maternal smile and get three blank looks in return. Leo stuffs a whole cheeseburger in his mouth. The rest of the kids chow down and toss their toys and clothes into the back. (I went a little overboard; hell knows I always wanted one of those pink convertibles; all the better to drive your Ken-doll off a cliff.) Janine sits in the front with Truce. I squeeze into the driver's side with the Dufflebags O'Death under my feet. I'd rather not have her in arm's reach of the small arsenal inside them.

Truce buckles their seatbelts as the red SUV lurches onto the road. "So here's the deal, Evelyn. The Choristers will definitely take the kids off our hands, but everything else is up in the air."

"Meaning?" I wrench the wheel and the car lumbers on to the highway.

"Meaning they were happy to help some children in need, but they don't want us around."

"Nothing new."

"Something very old." A pause. "Cops are coming. Pass me a cigarette?"

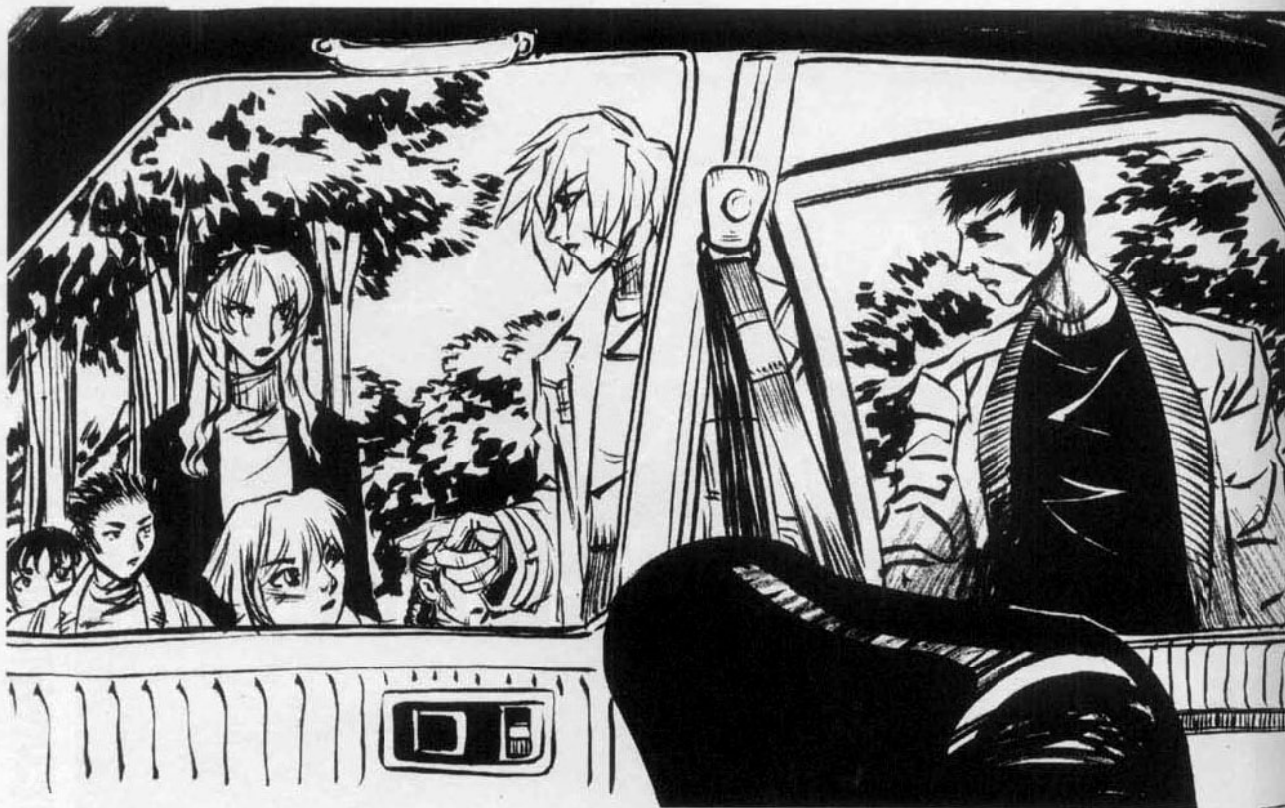
"Yeah sure.... What?" And what do you know, he's right. Two squad cars hover a few chevrons back and a couple of flat-grey four-doors with sirens resting on the sash slide closer. "What are they, grayfaces?"

"Doubt it." He presses in the dash lighter. "We saw them first."

Torc time; I touch the bronze filigree wrapped around my neck and pull a hard swerve to the right just as the sirens come on. The kids gasp.

I run my fingers around the rampaging Morigu, etched there so long ago by an Aided craftsman. *Two handfuls of blood to doom Indech*, whispers the knotwork on my torc. *The enemies of Ulster cannot stand*. The red-haired Phantom Queen slides through me and out into the flow of the road.

I'd watch it, officers. Traffic's pretty hairy this time of day. Closest thing to chaos you've seen. Oh yes.



An asshole in an Acura drops his cellphone and bends over chasing it just long enough to slip his pretty red car into the rear corner of the frontmost cruiser. Shattered plastic from its bumper bounces off the hood of a station wagon, flies through the open window of an unmarked car and knocks a cop's scalding super-sized coffee into his lap. He elbows the wheel as he burns. His car obliges; it spins and flips into the way of another cruiser.

Amazingly, no one's injured — unless you count the coffee burn.

The last guy avoids the whole mess and rips through the shoulder. Gravel rains on us as he pulls alongside.

"Truce? I didn't get them all. You mind helping?"

He takes a long drag of his smoke. "Getting my groove back, Eve. In my soul's eye there's a wheel of light spinning, changing..."

The cop yells over a bullhorn, "*Pull over the vehicle and come out with your hands up!*"

"Truce!"

"All right." He reaches over, whips a Beretta out of the dufflebag and aims out the passenger side window. He trains it on the cop's head for a second...

"What are you doing?"

... and jerks it down, blowing a tire out with one shot.

He whispers, "Take the next exit."

"Goddamn! You're the original Sikh Cowboy." I crack a grin to speed past the thought we're both having.

Jhor.

"Thanks." He looks pale. The kids are crying again; I guess he had to drop the spell keeping them calm to shoot.

We ditch the SUV by a patch of rocky woods; I know Fate's smiling here. She manifests as a deserted family van. I punch it hard right below the driver's side door and the lock drops.

"A lot of late-eighties models have this flaw." There's tugging at my sleeve. It's Leo.

"You aren't policemen." He drops his hand and his big brown eyes to the ground.

"No, kiddo, we aren't."

"Yeah, no shit," Janine says with a defiant little whine. "Who the fuck are you?" She plops down on a boulder.

"Get in the van."

"No. I though you were somebody Jimmy'd pissed off; Mob guys or some East Coast kiddie-diddler ring he cheated. But you aren't, are you? You're vigilantes."

"Yeah, Janine. We just haven't figured out how to puni —"

"And you have powers."

Well, shit.

"Yes," Truce says, "we have special gifts. You're very perceptive to have seen them." He gives her a long glance. "I saw into your heart, Janine. I know you didn't want to hurt these children."

"No." She grips her face with her hands. "It's just — sometimes you have to do... things... just to live. Bad things."

"I'll tell you about us," says Truce. He ignores my warning stare. "We're vigilantes, yes. Healers too. And we do some bad things, Janine. Some bad, necessary things.

"I'll tell you our story. Maybe it'll comfort you, maybe it'll hurt you. But something tells me I should."

"Truce...."

"Something tells me I should."

SHIVA ⊕ OPENS HIS EYES



"How do you think the world began?" asks Truce.

"What?" Janine sits up, genuinely surprised.

"Uh, Big Bang?"

"Bullshit."

I sit on the hood of the van. "What he means to say is that a pat "Mister Science" explanation doesn't mean anything to you. The universe isn't an impersonal thing. It cares, it punishes, it *means* something." *May as well go with the flow here.* "Listen to this then. The world began with a cry. The Celts called it Abu

— the primordial war cry. In India, it was the Om."

"The emptiness dreamed," says Truce. "It saw the past, saw what will be. The Void had a great longing for being in its heart. It cried that longing out into a sound; the sound became form."

"That's right." I remembered when first I heard the teachings; the Tellurian made a little more sense that day. "In my family, we believed the cry made Danu and Donn; the first gods. Their children killed Donn because in those days the gods were great, static things, choking the young universe."

"We call the First Sacrifice Purusa," says Truce. "They divided his body and soul; these parts began the Cycle."

Janine frowned. "What's the point of all this?"

"Who do you think did the cutting, did the killing?" I remembered the drill from my Acarya.

Truce glances at me and nods. "Who do you think did that awful, necessary thing?"

"People like you?" asks Janine.

"Like all of us," I say, "doing what we must to survive. It's the way of humans, gods, and cosmic forces, all struggling to accommodate Fate."

"But that's not good enough, Janine. The suffering you create, no matter how *necessary* it was for you, will come back to hurt you. In our view you should have killed yourself before you helped that bastard lay a hand on the kids."

"What?" She looks at me with wide, frightened eyes. "Then... then you might as well finish the job."

"Too late for that," Truce says as I go over to check the children. "Now you've got a chance to heal yourself. You just have to kill the thing in you that would let you do it again."

"Fuck you. Maybe you guys are — I don't know — psychic or something, but it doesn't mean I can't tell bullshit when I hear it. What do myths have to do with me?"

My turn to talk. "Because like most Sleepers you think everything — creation, destruction, the way the world works — is inflicted on you. You don't think it means anything or that it has anything to do with you. You sit and watch the Wheel turn without seeing your hands doing the turning. It's why so many of you are nothing but natural-born victims."

"You wouldn't claim your own power by dying," Truce says. "Now you have to claim it by living. Get in the van."

She does.

LIFE AND DEATH BEGIN TOGETHER

The Euthanatos creation myth is a sanguine amalgamation of the Greek, Celtic and Hindu stories. The First Samashti brought together mystics from all of these places and more besides; they examined the similarities between their stories and developed a more universal myth to draw from for political and ritual purposes.

The Celts, Greeks and Indians were especially apt to amalgamate their stories because all three groups drew from the Indo-European cultural stream. The creation myth is primarily their tale augmented with mystical insights and, above all, common sense. This doesn't mean that the consensus is universal; the Madzimbabwe and other African, Mesoamerican, and modernist death mages still cling to their own conception of the primordial creation. The most accepted story has these features:

The Primordial Sound: The Wheel turned from diversity to unity. Sentience (accrued from the previous Age) existed without form. Some Hindu Chakravanti personify the primal sentience as Brahma or Shiva. Others call it Akasha, Pandemonium, or simply the Void, and refuse to say anything further about it, reasoning that the utter emptiness of Creation can't be understood through anything less than meditative absorption.

The emptiness cried out a sound that was more than a sound: a vibration that generated the very first karma of the new age, encompassing all that would come after it: the sound of Om, Abu, or whatever it was (all agree that it can't be duplicated by the human voice). This act created the first divine beings. Danu and Donn, the Trimutri, the Titans — whatever their names, many Euthanatoi think of them as hazy memories of the Pure Ones.

The Cosmic Sacrifice: The first created beings interfere with the progress of the Wheel, intentionally or otherwise. In Celtic myth, Danu and Donn were so great that there was no room in creation for other beings to thrive. To the Hindus, Purusa — the primordial man — split his body into parts that became the cosmos and the different castes. In Greek tales, Zeus opens the belly of Kronos to free the gods. Finally the primordial being is sacrificed to create the phenomenal world. He (the sacrifice is usually male) is rent asunder; each part Resonates with a fragment of the primordial sound and becomes the Tellurian. This is the dawn of the lesser gods; the wholeness of the Pure Ones is replaced by the dominion of spirits representing fire, thunder, the stars, and the other wonders of material universe.

THE TITLE BEFORE DEATH: A FAIRY TALE

"What happened to the Bad Man?" I'm sitting in the back with the kids this time. They'd been quiet so far, but Therese's question makes me smile. It means they're starting to trust us.

"He's gone, kiddo. You don't need to worry about him any more."

"He's dead?"

"Yeah, sweetheart." Now I don't like the direction this is going. "He's dead."

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

Despite the creation of the world and the first turn of the Wheel, the Tellurian had yet to achieve its final form. Though the spirit of the Om had divided into many things, and those things had their distinct spirits, everything was preserved against change, so close were they to the enduring power of the Pure Ones. The fates of beings could not intertwine; each was eternal, unchanged by any external force. All gods feared the memory of the first Sacrifice except for one: Death. Death was made from the eyes of the Sacrifice and saw things clearly. He fought the other gods and broke the stasis that held creation in thrall, but at a price: All the things that were eternal, perfect in themselves, would forever be weighted towards death.

Euthanatoi believe that this is the reason Entropy tends towards destruction instead of simple balance, and why Jhor is a taint instead of a blessing. Behind the metaphor, it appears that Dynamism brought all things into existence, then Stasis fixed them in rigid states. To keep the Wheel turning, Entropy became more powerful — perhaps *too* powerful — and gave everything a tendency toward corruption and doom.

At the same time, this corruption was necessary, even vital to the creation of the Tellurian. Mages may complain about foul Resonance and shapeshifters might prattle on about the Wyrms, but the Euthanatoi know that without Entropy's icy hand, there would be no history, no death and no true life.

"He always said he'd kill us. You know, like if we yelled too much or tried to run away. Maybe we shouldn't have been afraid, like you told that lady." At this Janine looks back, opens her mouth as if to say something, then turns to stare out the windshield again, speechless.

"No, Therese... death's a complicated, grownup kind of thing, you know? You don't *ever* want to go there. It's a place for grownups only. But at the same time, you shouldn't be afraid. Do you kids want to hear a story?"

It's night again. The rain tosses a drowsy beat on the windows; Leo had already followed it all down to sleep. Blond Johnny nods mutely and Therese settles in against my shoulder.

"Once upon a time nobody ever died. The trees never dropped their leaves, people didn't grow old — even a fire, once lit, lasted forever. There wasn't even a word for death; the gods (*don't want to give them any pagan craziness until they're older, Eve*) — I mean, the angels kept the very idea a secret from the beginning of time.

"Now kiddo, what would happen if you had a birthday party in your house and nobody ever left?"

"Um, they'd eat everything? They'd take all my toys and make a mess?"

"Basically. Dying is kind of like leaving a house before you wreck everything. If you haven't eaten all the cake and made a big mess it isn't time for you to go, right? But you'd just bust a place up if you never left.

"So the first people crowded up the world. The green, green grass groaned beneath their feet. They had to make human pyramids just to have enough room. They couldn't eat or drink anything because there was never enough. They got sick but couldn't get the rest of sleep, much less death.

Then an angel — some call him Finn, others call him Yama — decided that the secret of death should be shared with the world. His brother and sister angels fought against him because they knew it would

make the world a sad place, where people would wonder what happened to their friends after they passed away. Most of all, they knew he served an even greater angel called Shiva or Donn. They feared him because he would do the things no other angel would do, and because maybe, just maybe, he spoke with the voice of the true God."

AT THE SAFE HOUSE

They all fell asleep mid-way into a cleaned up version of Durga and the Asuras. An hour later we made it to the Chorus hideaway. Two people were there to receive us. One took the kids; the other explained that the "committee" was busy and they'd see us tomorrow. This polite chap showed us to our bunks and even offered to take our bags (Truce firmly declined). Like a good consor or flunky or whatever the hell they call them, he ordered us a pizza and then stayed the fuck out of our way.

Now that we're here, I move the houseplants out of the room and unpack. I always keep something lethal at hand when I'm somebody else's guest. There are only two bunks, since they thought we'd have ditched Janine by now. She takes the floor without saying a word.

I can't sleep and I keep staring down at her. The kids' faces fade in and out of my mind; they'd been rushed away so quickly, you know? So I shake my legs out an hour later and get a glass of water.

When I get back, Janine's up.

I whisper, "Go to sleep."

"Who are you people, really? I got the parables, okay? Now I just want to hear about where you people come from." Her voice gets a whiny edge at the end, the unspoken "please" I usually hear from people who are on the other end of my knife.

"It's a complicated question. Come into the other room and I'll put the coffee pot on."

I feel a weight in my hand; I'm holding my bedtime knife.

I guess she really was at the other end of it.

FATE AND THE RIVER

"You said we have powers, and you're right. It isn't a matter of being psychic or anything like that. We know how to do magic — well, at least what most people would call magic. In other words, we wave our hands, say some mumbo-jumbo, and something happens. Except in our case the 'mumbo-jumbo' is Indo-European mysticism with a twist. You follow me so far?"

She nods and pours the coffee.

"Truce told you about the myth of the world's beginning, and I told those kids a story about death, but that isn't the end of it. Those sacrifices were never finished.

"In India, Persia, Greece and elsewhere, there have always been people who knew that you had to cull the herd, use the stick instead of the carrot. Along the Ganges and the Sarasvati, the people see life and death in the passage of the water. They thank the river when it irrigates their crops and bribe it to flow when it dries up. These are people who listen with their souls: they can sense what the Wheel of creation and destruction will do and even how it works. Sometimes they can even nudge things in the right direction, so their people get a little more food or a little less disease. This is how magic always begins.

"They aren't *great* mages. They only nudge things a little bit because they don't want to anger their gods. They're like you in that they see themselves as slaves to the river, the sun and their duly incarnated representatives. They take small risks and get small rewards, until braver people come to challenge them."

THE ARYAN INVASION

"This is where the other half of our magic comes in. The Aryans — not to be confused with Nazi bullshit — invade India through the Khyber Pass. They're tough nomads who know that nature doesn't forgive and that the gods need brutal offerings. Better yet, some of their mystics claim that the gods are just purified souls. An Avatara — a human being who merges his soul with divine virtue — could be a god on earth.

"What do you get from this? The idea that purity and cruelty aren't necessarily opposites.

"They introduced gods that were complete, realistic beings. You have Shiva who creates and destroys; his consort, Kali who kills demons out of bloodthirst as much as to serve the Wheel. Some gods, like Shiva, were simply completed by Aryan thought. The gentle god of fire and dance put on the mantle of creator and destroyer because the beliefs of the nomads and the river people were, individually, incomplete. Together they found a new strength.

"That's the wonder of it. The Aryans, for all their wisdom, needed to learn about the cycles of the river, and understand that bodies, souls and everything moves in one continuous flow, ripples of karma creating a wave or a turn of the Wheel.

"The Aryans did this everywhere they went. My Celtic ancestors learned the same things. They discovered that life needs death, and that justice needs vengeance. I use the Morrighu — a bloody goddess like Kali — to do my work. She enjoys the act and I enjoy the results.

"It happens like this everywhere. The nomads settle and change their beliefs to account for the cycle of life and death. Of course, they pick up a bit of softness. Temples replace tents and they end up changing their religion to accommodate the fear of death. In India, they develop the caste system. Priests who soften the impact of the Cycle on people's lives are the most revered. The people closest to death — corpse handlers, butchers, priest-killers and the like — are at the bottom of the heap. That's where we come from.

"Those groups — the people who are called *dalits* in modern India — can see the old gods and their appetites. They remember Kali's thirst for blood and Shiva's dance of destruction and connect it with the deaths they see every day. They learn that Rudra the Divine Archer makes arrows strike true into cowardly or evil hearts when they prepare the pierced bodies of unjust men. They can see the Cycle at its most primal, and over time they learn how the Wheel turns — and how to help it turn.

"So we started off as a collection of small, outcast cults: heretical healers, charnel-ground keepers, meat-eating ascetics who

drink from stripped skulls — that sort of thing. All of us know that the gods — no different from our souls — turn the Wheel with pain, killing, and other acts that common people call sins. The difference is that, in the service of justice, those sins are blessings we share with the world. A bandit with a garrote merely murders; an enlightened strangler turns the Wheel another inch towards hope.

"Our magic serves the Great Wheel and comes from it. It turns from life to death, passion to murder, and we ride it with just intent. That's why we have our powers, and that's why I put a bullet in your husband's brain.

"Now I'm ready for bed."

WAR IN THE MORNING

The Choristers arrive at eight in the morning. Truce is already up, meditating in the corner with a fresh black turban on his head.

TIMELINE: PREHISTORY

The earliest death mages sprang from two sources: The Dravidian people of India and the Aryans who settled with them. The former learned the secrets of the Wheel of Ages, but preferred what later mages would call the "right-handed path" preferred by Indian Choristers. They used the metaphor of the cycle of life and the river to teach moral lessons and humility. The nomadic Aryans had a more sanguine conception of the universe; the gods were brutal, but generous. Brave souls could serve the gods thoroughly enough to become one with them by relying on the inherent divinity of their own souls.

4000 BCE: The oldest memories of the Euthanatos recall the people of the Indus valley moving from animist beliefs to a more abstract appreciation of the cycles of nature. Priests teach morals, read omens and perform funeral rites.

2700 BCE: The Harappan civilization develops sophisticated cities and an artisan class. The first conceptions of some Vedic gods (such as Shiva) date from this time. The IVC (Indus Valley Civilization) pictorial script is developed; its meaning is a mystery to modern archaeologists, but mages with Harappan incarnations use it as a secret code to the present day.

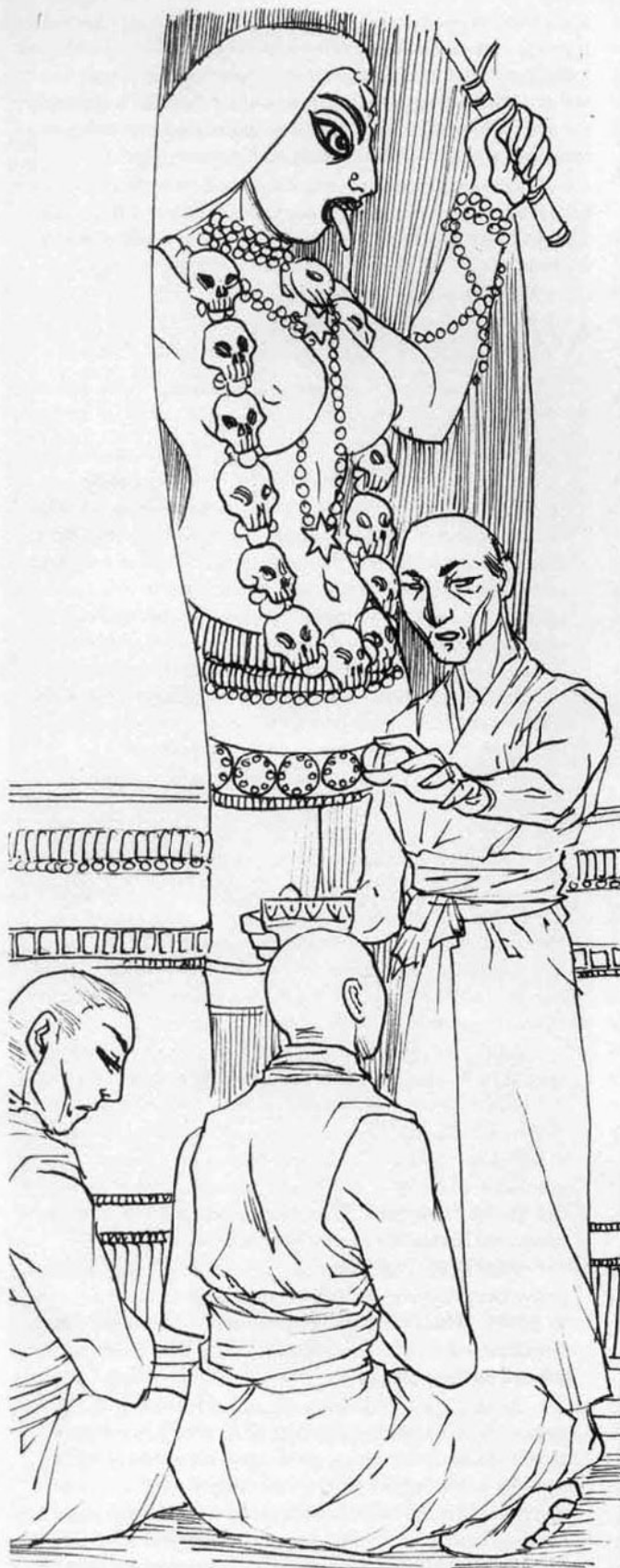
2000-1500 BCE: A period of chaos in the Indus Valley, marked by flooding and wars with nomads. Euthanatoi know that both events spring from one cause, as Yehnn (later called Aryan) mystics and Harappan priests use the rivers as weapons in sorcerous combat. The Yehnn prevail only because their poor understanding of the Wheel causes ecological devastation to the Harappans. They must solicit wisdom from the conquered Harappans to rebuild civilization.

1000 BCE: The Vedas are written down, synthesizing native Dravidian and Aryan wisdom. The Bharata tribe comes to power, centralizing the Aryans under one culture and formalizing the *jati* (caste) system. Most Dravidians aren't affected by these events.

As the Epic Civilization (so called because it is documented in the *Mahabharata*) flourishes, it eschews the more primal elements of Aryan spirituality, stigmatizing contact with the dead. Rishis (sages) on the fringes of Aryan civilization preserve the mystical teachings of the Cycle, resisting new taboos. These outcast priests form small cults and fellowships. The Handura, Idran and other proto-Chakravanti evolve with similar beliefs, but without any common organization.

ELSEWHERE

Most Euthanatos scholars use Indo-European migration to explain and promote common ties between the different factions. Not all Euthanatoi agree on this emphasis. The Madzimbabwe point to the fact that their ancestors developed an understanding of the Great Wheel without one whit of Aryan influence. They see the founding of Great Zimbabwe in 600 CE as the defining moment of their sect and an important milestone in Euthanatoi history, and speculate that the Indo-centric history of the Tradition vastly exaggerates the importance of a few heretical Hindu cults. After all, despite their antiquity, the cults of epic India hardly constituted a Tradition.



One of the Choristers wears a turban as well. He glances at Truce as he walks in; my partner opens his eyes and stands. The other — some SHARP Christ-punk — offers Janine a donut and starts talking at her in animated, proselytizing tones. She just sits in the corner and chews on a honey-glazed.

The turbaned Chorister folds his hands. "Sat Siri Akhal. My name's Govinder; I've been looking forward to meeting you." He shoots a hand out; Truce shakes it with stiff politeness.

"Just call me Truce. I don't use the name my parents gave me." He smiles. "I'm not a very good Sikh; I'm not going to misrepresent a Sikh name."

A frown twitches across Govinder's face.

"Let's be honest; you don't like me very much and you think my affiliation with the Chakravanti spits in the face of what we were both taught by our families. Am I on the right track?"

"Yes. Yes, you are. Why do they call you Truce, anyway?"

"It's an ironic nickname. Do I sound like I'm bringing any peace right now?"

Govinder clears his throat. There's a lengthy silence.

"Anyway, the kids are in good hands. They're with some nice, normal families we've screened with Mind Arts. Now all we have to do is find a way to bring that woman to justice." With a certain severity he adds, "then you two can move along to your own — Marabout, isn't it?"

"That's right, and no. Janine's coming with us."

Then it comes: the whisper that isn't a noise, the feeling of motion that makes my head spin when someone's using magic. The punk. I take a step to the corner where Chelsea-for-Christ is whispering to Janine, whose donut's dropped to the ground. Truce raises a hand to stop me.

"What do you have in mind, Govinder?" he says. "You must know what an utterly stupid idea it would be for either of us to make trouble." He inhales sharply. "Hmm. Manas — I mean, Mind. What are you up to?"

"We're just making sure she feels guilty enough to confess and go through the courts. This is a problem for you? Frankly, I'm surprised you didn't kill her, but I understand how you might be confused. You rejected the Oneness of God — why should you even remember what it is to be moral?"

"That hasn't changed. This woman has a destiny, and it isn't right for you to stand in its way."

"Destiny. Right."

"In your terms then: God has a purpose for her. Do you really think that God only needs the pure and the virtuous?"

"I think you and I both know we're not going to come to blows over this. It would harm the relationship between our Traditions over something that's relatively trivial. So go ahead with your argument! Maybe one of us will collect a little wisdom from this mess."

Since he admits to the deadlock we all relax, pull up chairs and sit. Janine sleeps and the punk brings us some cold rice and coffee. Then we all look at Truce; there's a sudden light in his eyes and he speaks:

"Let me tell you about how God — how fate — really works."

PORTENTS FROM THE EAST: THE AKASHI

"I remember that life well," Truce says, "and the day they came from the mountains: hard-eyed easterners who spoke to each other

without moving their lips. Their hands — all rough and callused — just made simple signs and they all nodded together. We called them Warring Hands, but they called themselves Meru'ai or Akashi.

"I was watching the waves on the river and the trails snakes left in the dust. There were powerful omens there that, as an ascetic, I just couldn't ignore. I had been living in the wild for so long it was a part of me, and the portents were a stirring in my own soul.

"In those days the Akashic Brotherhood settled north of the Ganges, but they never really seemed to be of the world. I asked one why and she said 'illusion,' gesturing to the jungle and the mountains beyond. We — the Handura — learned so much from them. They opened our eyes to the transitory nature of the world. We showed them how, as true as that was, everything acted according to its karma.

"In some ways, they were very naive. An Akashi would meditate on the beauty of a lotus blossom floating in the water, relishing the perfect moment. I'd point out to them that the blossom rots and that rot makes the soil black and fertile.

"His reply: 'In that one moment it manifested itself in all of its states, perfect in its mutability. Why should I grow attached to each of its states, when all of them will pass on?' They had no sense of the importance of things — and people — in the turn of the Wheel. Everything was empty to them, so nothing was worth paying attention to. Unless, of course, it outraged them.

"So we outraged them."

PLAGUE IN THE WEST: THE WAR BEGINS

"Our old Primus, Taksang, liked to characterize the Himalayan War as a misunderstanding. Well, let me tell you something: We knew exactly what we were doing. The Handura were social rejects who handled the rites Brahmins wouldn't soil their hands with. The Akashi stayed in aloof camps arrayed like Arjuna's army. We were going nowhere fast, and at night I dreamed that the Wheel stopped, and Naraki — demons — cavorted in the rusted iron of its great, silent spokes.

"So the Dacoits showed them death. The Akashi, you see, had mastered their *prana* — life force — to such a degree that they never suffered disease or disability; I think common people mystified them with their ailments and wounds. No wonder they were so remote; why value life when you live yours so painlessly?

"So, we let a small plague run its course. Instead of catching it right away and finding the source of the poison, the Dacoits simply healed and killed to control it. Maybe they wanted to show the Akashi something about life and death that couldn't be so easily dismissed. Maybe they just followed their destiny.

"My lives during the war are hazy; it's that way for a lot of Euthanatos. There are fragments: swords, garrotes, screaming. But I also remember clasped hands and drinking from strangers' cups. We, the rejects of Bharata's empire, finally *belonged* to something greater than ourselves. To hear from an outsider that we weren't madmen, fools, or devils incarnate — that we should defend death with death — gave us a common identity and purpose instead of lonely philosophies.

"You should sympathize. You wear a dagger yourself, don't you? It symbolizes that as a member of the Khalsa your community is important enough to defend, and that the tools to defend it should always be with you."

Govinder opened his mouth to speak, but Truce continued.

"I respect Taksang's diplomatic efforts, but consider this: Would the greatest masters of Mind and Fate be so blind to the consequences of their actions? You see, we *didn't even know* that we

were one people with one belief in the Wheel until marauding Warring Fists herded us together at spear-point. Think of the Ahli-Batin, who never would have existed if it weren't for the war. The war created two Traditions and gave the Council the strength it needed to survive. The Wheel turned, and you could hear the singing of the gods in each bloody revolution.

"They sang through the plague.

"They sang through the war's first murder, and in all the killings afterwards.

"They sang in every soul barred from its liberation by hate, just to keep the war moving toward its destiny—one that each and every Traditionalist owes their survival to.

"In all that pain and sin, in every act that kept us from being what you'd call good or just, we worked toward one fate — in the service of God.

"I saw omens in the air and earth the day the Warring Fist arrived; you'd have to be a fool to think I was the only one.

"And you, Govinder Singh, are so concerned with one matter of petty justice that you'd stop that glorious, terrible song in its tracks."

CONSEQUENCES

That seems to win the argument, if only because the Singers realize Truce is willing to push harder than they are; it's a quality Euthanatoi have always cultivated. We know how to suffer — and inflict suffering.

So the Choristers back off and leave us with Janine. Or rather, me. Despite his speech, Truce just stares blankly at her then heads outside for a cigarette.

She's asleep; whatever Mind work they did to her must have been pretty severe, and I doubt they took the time to undo it properly. Truce is outside contemplating his long, strange trip. So be it; I don't have his skill, so I may as well use old-fashioned talk to see what's still rattling around inside her head.

"Janine, wake up."

"Oh God." The tears start streaming as soon as she opens her eyes. "I'm so sorry. Please, just let me rot away. What have I done?" Her sobs are short and sharp.

"Damn." I should tell her that the punk Singer did a mindjob on her, probably whispered something about repentance and a bit of pithy Scripture. Would it make any difference? They jacked up the real guilt in her. Even if the late, unmourned Jimmy Houle beat her, even if he had a gun that he trained on her when he got booze and hate into him, it wouldn't lessen the feeling. After all, she's human.

My hand creeps to the back of her neck, and soon I'm stroking her hair. I can feel coarse grooves in the scalp: scars, maybe a few untreated fractures.

"Janine...."

"It doesn't matter! You keep telling these goddamn stories about making sacrifices and making up for what I did, but it doesn't fucking matter. *I helped him do it.* I helped him make the movies and shut them up.... Oh God, I don't even want to tell you what I did.

"I was so scared, but just doing it, no matter the reason... I deserve to rot. You go ahead and kill me, or let me take the charge with the cops. Give me something where I get what I deserve."

"Did you bandage them too?" *You're going soft, Eve.*

"What?"

"You went upstairs the night we killed Jimmy to tell him Johnny cut himself. Were you going to bandage his cut?" My voice

TIMELINE: THE HIMALAYAN WAR

Scholars of the Himalayan War suffer from two impediments. First, many of the events of the War are heavily warded against Time perceptions. Some wards were originally placed to prevent strategic precognition; others were created by the modern incarnations of participants. Many of them have pasts bound up with the war that they'd rather keep to themselves. Second, the Himalayan War is a politically sensitive subject; both the Euthanatos and the Akashics discourage active study of the war and steer apprentices with strong incarnations from the period to special tutors.

Nevertheless, modern Euthanatoi are more likely to study the war and less likely to obey the restrictions laid down by the old Acaryas; some of them may even go to Akashics for help, and vice versa. A study of the war by modern death mages provided this chronology:

950 BCE: Akashic Brothers enter India. Doctrinal differences with Awakened Brahmins encourage them to stay in their northern camps. Only the proto-Thanatoic Handura, Dacoits, and others interest them. Akashic scholars record the similarities between the sects they meet and each group's doctrine evolves from the exchange.

900 BCE: *The White Coumatha*. Plague strikes near an Akashic camp in Bhutan. An Akashic Brother named Smoke Tiger kills the Dacoit Ranjit and accuses the Dacoits of murdering those destined to oppose the sect. Meetings between Dacoit Acarya Natadeva and Vajrapani Sifu Chan Ng halt hostilities, but tensions remain high. One year later, General Chan reverses his position and orders an attack on all the death mages along the Ganges.

850 BCE: Beginning of *The Wheel of Swords*. Thanatoic Scholars document vendettas between warriors who have never met, and conclude that souls from each side are carrying their anger into future incarnations. Infernalism and insanity plague these rage-ridden Avatars, many of whom manifest in the bodies of young children. This goes hand in hand with magical innovations spurred by the war. Necrosynthetic magic becomes a high art among the Idran, who use it to become the half-dead Nagaraja.

790 BCE: *Battle of the Three Rivers*. Akashic troops press the Thanatoic cults to the Sarasvati, Ganges, and Krishna rivers in three simultaneous engagements. The death mages use the mystical power of the rivers to hold back the attack, but in doing so they anger Brahmins in all three regions. Ascetics and tantrikas are expelled from major population centers; the timing is such that the displaced mystics meet and rapidly form an alliance.

535 BCE: Enlightenment of the Buddha Sakyamuni. Exposure to the Buddha's teachings and physical presence produces several spontaneous Awakenings, but mages find themselves unable to use destructive magic near the Awakened One's disciples until after his death. These moments of peace allow both sides to negotiate a peace. Unfortunately, Thanatoic disunity and battle-hardened Avatars mean that only a minority agree to cease hostilities.

514 BCE: *Night of Fana*. Handura troops pursue Warring Hands Akashics into Afghanistan. The Warring Hands meet the Darwushim; a rite between the two produces the entity called the Khwaja al-Akbar. The Handura arrive too late, and are obliterated by Celestial Singers who mistake them for the Darwushim. For more information see *Lost Paths: Ahl-i-Batin and Taftani*.

500-384 BCE: *Years of the Shroud*. This era continues to thwart scrying attempts by scholars. After 384, the Akashic Brotherhood is largely contained by the Sapindya Sadananda (or Consanguinity of Eternal Joy) and the Natatapas. The Natatapas were founded by the charismatic Vedavati, while the Consanguinity's origin is lost to the Shroud Years and the sect's secrecy.

354 BCE: The combined mystical prowess of Grand Harvester Subranamian and Vedavati of the Natatapas manifests as the Shivasakti Ayavatara or "Iron Avatar." The incarnation of Shiva and Kali's combined power destroys the last Akashic stronghold south of the Ganges and ends the war. The Natatapas and Sapindya Sadananda unite, forming the core of the Chakravanti: the first true incarnation of the Euthanatos Tradition.

is softer than I'd like: comforting. "You didn't want to hurt them. You were wrong. What you did... I'm not sure you can be forgiven."

"Yeah."

"Truce was telling a story about us when you were out of it, about a war that our people fought a long time ago."

"I think I heard it. It was just like I was in a different place, you know. I was just thinking..." She starts crying again.

"Calm down." I kept stroking her hair, until she was down to muffled sobs. "Back then, some of us were tempted by hardship, pain, fear — all the things you felt. They lost their moral center and decided to do whatever they could to survive and kill their enemies."

"There are other people with special powers, Janine. Monsters, too. Some are as evil as you can imagine, and some of our ancestors were so hurt that they bargained with these monsters for safety, power, and anything else that could take the hurt of ages away. Some of them got so used to the pain they decided they liked it, and their souls twisted to match."

"Your husband's soul was twisted. Yours isn't. You don't have to bargain with monsters, and as far as you're concerned that includes us."

THE AWAKENED ONE

"It was around that time that the Buddha appeared. He urged people to give up their attachment to hate and desire and live simple, moral lives. We agreed with some of these teachings; they gave many of us a new purpose. We gave up killing for revenge because he warned that attachment to our feelings would trap us in a cycle of constant suffering. The war proved to us that he was right."

"On the other hand, he denied the existence of the soul and didn't think the gods were particularly important. It was a strange time to be a Chakravanti — that's what we called ourselves back then — when an obviously holy man contradicted some of our deepest beliefs."

"What about Mahavira?" Janine's voice surprised me with its steady tone. "Um... I read about him in college."

"The founder of Jainism? You're right; he talked about the same things but he prescribed asceticism to cure desire. The trouble is that we've always emphasized the raw beauty of the Wheel and see death and suffering as a part of it. Mahavira said we should turn our backs on the things we pride ourselves on accepting."

THE NARAKI

The death mages of the Himalayan War paid severely for their tenacity. Carrying the trauma of previous incarnations, many of them bowed down to demons, Jhor, or creatures that offered them surcease in exchange for slavery. The Chakravanti branded these lost Thanatoics *naraki*, or “demons,” though only a few were actually infernalists.

The first Naraki were branded as such by the Consanguinity of Eternal Joy. The Sapindya Sadananda recorded 18 Naraki cults; of these, three returned to the fold after proving their innocence and five were destroyed to the last adherent. Between the chaos of the Himalayan War and the current state of Helekar's brood, modern Euthanatoi are skeptical that every cult was truly corrupt.

The number of factions listed is deceptive. Euthanatoi have never been any more or less infernally inclined than anyone else, but they keep excellent records of the corruption in their ranks to prevent it from happening again.

Six ancient Naraki sects are unaccounted for. Three of them have never surfaced in the Common Era. The remaining three are:

Nagaraja: Masters of necrosynthesis, the Idran studied vampires because they represented a natural convergence of life and death. The Idran learned to mimic the undead state; half-death also gave them the Resonance necessary to cross into the underworld with ease. These capabilities made them fearsome soldiers; hard to kill and even harder to evade or corner. The most adept became *yamasattvas*: what Hermetic scholars would call lichens.

Still, this was not enough. Vampires under their tutelage proved more capable of crossing the Shroud and better equipped to deal with the terrors within. Eventually the Idran became vampires themselves, reasoning that a second ritual death made them the holiest beings on earth. Now freed of the division between life and death, they could cultivate spiritual perfection. They called themselves the Serpent Princes in anticipation of final enlightenment.

It never came.

The Nagaraja were *vampires* now, and it didn't take long for them to become ensnared in the intrigues of the undead. Able to cross the Shroud freely, they became valuable allies. They joined a conspiracy of necromancers and faded from view. Most Euthanatoi believe that the storm-ridden Underworld finished them off, but this has never been confirmed.

More frightening is the thought of mortal Nagaraja. Freed from their old masters, the former slaves of the corrupted Idran may continue where their masters left off. Reports of mages scouring Greece and the Near East for the Lichedom Rite (see **Dead Magic**) raise the possibility that the secrets of death in life are still pursued — and perhaps even mastered.

For more information on the Nagaraja and their ties to the ancient conspiracy called the Black Hand, see the **Vampire Storyteller's Handbook**.

Apad-Dharma: The Law Under Distress was composed of Himalayan warriors who felt the Chakravanti would be an undue constraint to their twin goals: defending their homeland (now modern Bombay) and pursuing antinomian Tantra to its proper extremes. Many found that the ultimate expression of the left-handed path lay in the service of Mara, the Tempter of Indian legend, while others tested themselves by purposely accumulating Jhor.

The Apad-Dharma are ruthlessly territorial and given to truly bizarre practices. Strangely, infernalists and (theoretically) free-willed mages work together; all of them are pursuing an experiment in rebellion and evil together.

Vizvadagni: The All Consuming Fire fell prey to demons masquerading as Vedic gods in 503 BCE. The “gods” passed on simple philosophy: while it's all well and good to escape the suffering of the Wheel through meditation and insight, the compassionate thing to do would be to annihilate the Wheel itself. Then, the “gods” claim, they can create a new, eternal world, just as humans wish. The teaching, along with stanzas on the perfect world the gods will build, is recorded in the *Anachakra Veda*, dictated to the cult's leader by “Vishnu” — actually the demon Taraka.

The Vizvadagni still has a sizeable mortal following; their religion appeals to materialists and revolutionaries since it will replace the old, flawed world with one where the illusion of life will manifest as the cosmos' true face. The cult's leaders now realize that they serve demons instead of gods, but they've long ceased to care. They *do* believe that their masters will build a paradise in the shards of the Wheel, but that only the souls of loyal mages will reincarnate in the new cosmos. Naturally, they don't share their beliefs with the lower tiers of the cult.

The door flies open and smashes against the drywall. Truce steps in, staring through Janine. He's carrying a black dufflebag and he doesn't look happy.

DEATH \oplus PENS THE WAY

He kicks the door shut and says, “Hold her down.” I've already got her hair in my hand before I wonder why.

He reaches in the dufflebag. “Time's up!” he shouts as he pulls out a set of cheap handcuffs, the kind you buy in second-rate sex shops. “You remember these, don't you? It's what you made the *kids* wear.” There's absolute venom in his voice now.

“Truce?” I shove her forward a little hesitantly. “What are you doing?”

“You were right, Evelyn, and I was wrong. Time to kill the bitch.” He doesn't even look at me. “Janine! Put these on or I'll give

“Buddhism couldn't satisfy us for similar reasons. The Wheel is beautiful; why go to all the trouble to escape it? Why can't you just accept suffering as a necessary, even holy condition?”

“Isn't asceticism a kind of controlled suffering?”

Good. She's coming out of it.

“No. It's a way to turn adversity into pleasure. Take two people: Both of them wither from eating once a week, maybe once a month, but one of them is doing it voluntarily. He's the ascetic. The other one's just starving.”

“You think people deserve to starve?”

That gets my hackles rising. “I don't mean it like that, but — yeah, Janine, I do. Sometimes.

“My *point* is that you should look on your guilt as a lesson. Trying to punish yourself is just as selfish as ignoring what you did.

“Besides, there's always karma to correct you if you screw up. And us.”

you a double helping of the kind of trauma the God Squad shoved in your head back there."

He stares her down. She puts the cuffs on with shaking hands.

"Truce!" I let go of her hair because she's dropped to her knees. He closes his eyes and whips the necklace-cum-garrote off of his neck.

He takes a deep breath, and I hear his Manas-voice, whispering in my head.

Go with me on this, Evelyn.

Truce? Is this some kind of Mind-work? Punishment? What?

It's Destiny.

He flips the cord over her silent, crying eyes and down to her throat. Then he pulls, and I know what happens next.

Your eyes bulge and you get a mad grimace. Your hands come up to claw the thing off your throat in panicked spasms. Janine can't do it though, because I push her bound hands down while Truce works the killing cord.

Normally he does it fast and neat, but he's pulling it slow, even loosening it at times to let her get out a frightened hiss. Then it wraps tighter, and tighter again, until I feel her hands go limp.

Truce says, "Keep her on the cusp. Use Life-work to keep her on the edge of it."

He steps aside, and as Janine hits the floor I'm there, working the chakras, feeling the weak vibrations spasm up the body.

The navel chakra grows dim, then the flower of the heart closes. Then the *prana*-fire ebbs in the throat, and by the time the third eye closes I have the yew figure in my hand. I dab a bit of spittle on my left index finger.

I touch the top of the figure with it and her soul stops the journey to her crown — and the Wheel is denied, at least for a moment.

I take a deep breath. "That was close, Truce. Her brain's gonna die soon."

"Soul's not in the brain, Eve."

"For our purposes it is. You mind telling me what the *fuck* is going on?"

"How'd you join the club?"

"The Agama. Death, and life again."

He gestures to Janine's still body.

"You don't think —"

Her eyes open.

WALKING FATE'S THREADS



"Awakened." I glance at Janine. She's sitting silently in the back of the car. This one's actually ours; the Marabout wired us the money the moment Truce called to explain the situation. She looks around with curious, illuminated eyes, blinking slowly.

"I sensed Destiny's threads wound tightly around her and I wove my actions into them," says Truce. "I didn't know how it would turn out, but yes, she is."

I take a breath and let it sink in. He must have done the work while we were sleeping, bound his mind to the flow of the Wheel — to her destiny — with his own siddhi.

"That's why the talk turned to history, why you seemed so impulsive. You think she was one of us in a past life?"

"Possibly. Death pushed her to the brink and she came back with her own magic. That being said, we have to lock down any siddhi she might manifest."

"I'm here," she says. "Don't talk about me as if I'm not. I've never been *here* before, so solid, so sure of myself... and I can see —"

"Everything," says Truce.

"Tell me more. Tell me everything about you — about us."

I frown. "You aren't one of us yet."

She closes her eyes. The car trembles ever so slightly. Truce reaches into a dufflebag and gives her a frowning look.

"Brakes gonna fail? Or will a random spark hit the fuel tank? You don't get to take us with you, Janine. Hell, you don't want that at all. You've already had your suicide."

"Tell me more then. Give me something to be reborn with."

"Wise words." A clicking gunmetal sound issues from the bag and he takes his hand back out. "Evelyn? Tell her more." He hits the gas the car lurches, eating chevrons faster than before.

"Make it a road story."

WALKING THE CROSSROADS

I take a minute to ease my breathing and my recall.

"Yes, we all wandered. When you learn to look into the weave of your life you'll see a different time and place in each knot. As it is for each of us, so it is for all of us.

"You know our origins now. After the wars, and after we recognized the sacred truths we all shared, our Tradition struck out from India to find other Wheel-turners.

"Alexander the Great tried to take India in 327 BC. Priests from Persia and Greece followed him, comforting his dead by the side of the Indus a year later. The Chakravanti saw their rites and felt a certain kinship even as we cursed Alexander's troops with sickness and misfortune.

"Our emissaries followed the army's retreat into Persia and Greece. Their reports entered the dreams of gurus in Nepal, Baghdad and Bengal, and from these ancient Marabouts poured other travelers, determined to see the foreign mystics for themselves.

"Alexander's Persia glorifies him as an aspect of Apollo while he lays in his sickbed, placing him alongside the other imported and artificial gods of his empire. We had little respect for contrivances like Serapis, the death god created by his politicians out of Greek and Egyptian stock.

"The Persians themselves surprised us. You have to understand that to the ancient Chakravanti — to most people at the time — the idea of a personal God was bizarre at best, and arrogant at worst. The Godhead revealed itself through intermediaries or spiritual exercise.

"The Zoroastrians we met there puzzled us with their devotion, but we saw the shadow the Wheel cast on their beliefs. Like the Tibetans, they gave their dead to the scavengers. Like the Indians, they took care to protect themselves from the death taint."

"Death taint?" asks Janine.

"We call it Jhor. It —"

"No need to scare her with it yet, Eve," says Truce, turning onto the highway.

"Anyway, they didn't believe in reincarnation — only the holy fire of the purified mind. Their wizards drove us into hiding. We left a few explorers to monitor the place and followed the trade arteries of Alexander's empire to Greece.

"Amidst the olives and marble we saw that things weren't so different for them. Like us, they refused to turn their faces away from death and like us they were feared for it. They worshiped comical Olympians without thinking of the chthonic gods that rumbled beneath their playground. Their necromancers listened to the hidden currents of the earth and paid the Ferryman their due. Where others cheered Herakles, they gave offerings to the Erinyes, punishers of those who cheated Hades of his subjects.

"So we rejected the rich altars of Zeus and his kin and worshiped in the caves with the chthonic priests. We agreed on the necessity of death and the possibility of renewal. The Gods of the

Underworld — Hekate, Hades, Persephone, and dark-robed Thanatos himself — joined the Vedic powers in our rites.

"We traveled far and learned that the truth of the Cycle don't limit itself to one culture. Rome was a great teacher; our ancestors walked their roads before and after the empire fell. Some mages came the other way looking for us; my Celtic ancestors saw the Morrighu in the Furies and Kali. Toward the empire's end, mystery cults flourished honoring strange gods from the east. I'm sure some vain and empty-headed gentry treated it like the ancient equivalent of a trendy gentleman's club, but the imported gods hidden in the caves touched a few of them.

"Then the imperial flood-waters of Rome receded, leaving a few of us dark little reeds scattered along its territory. We left Chakravanti — or Euthanatoi, as some of the Greeks would say, in Gaul, Byzantium, Iberia — pretty much everywhere except for Egypt. Most of us returned to the Hindu nations where we had been born."

GREECE AND THE CHAKRAVANTI

Following Alexander's legacy back to the source, the Chakravanti found death-priests practicing in the shadow of their more popular Olympian counterparts.

While most Hellenes dreaded death and saw fate's work in the capricious antics of the Olympians, worshipers of the Chthonians (the gods of the Underworld) ascribed to a more sober creed. Misfortune and death were primal forces who rarely displayed the vigorous drives of Olympians, but obeyed a purpose higher than men or gods.

The Chthonians include:

Hades: Brother of Zeus and Poseidon, Hades was given the underworld when the three drew lots to divide the rulership of the cosmos. He ruled alone over a realm of seven rivers until his marriage to Persephone: Acheron, river of sadness; Cocytus, river of lamentation; Lethe, river of forgetfulness; Phlegethon, river of fire; and Styx, river of hate. Some modern Euthanatoi see this as a metaphor for the Legions of the Dead organized by the now-defunct Empire of Stygia, but others treat the rivers as metaphors for destructive karma.

Persephone: Hades was so smitten by the daughter of Zeus and Demeter that he abducted her, dragging Persephone down into the Underworld. Demeter (goddess of fertility) let the crops wither as she frantically searched for her daughter. The Fates decreed that Persephone could go free as long as no food from Hades' realm touched her lips, but she took a pomegranate offered by her captor and was thus bound to him. To prevent the destruction of the world, Zeus divided the year into seasons of growth and death. In the spring Persephone would return to Olympus, but autumn would take her back to the Underworld.

This myth is particularly significant to the Euthanatoi, especially the Pomegranate Deme. Many death mages see the myth as a metaphor for the Wheel and use it in rituals.

Thanatos: Death himself is rarely personified, though Herakles wrestled him for the right to enter the Underworld. While he sometimes appears as a dark-robed, somber faced man, he's more often described as an impersonal force — a servant of Fate that even the Olympians must acknowledge.

Hekate: Hekate (or Hecate) is the goddess of crossroads and nighttime travel, as well as the mother of the monster Scylla and

the patron of Medea. Modern Euthanatoi honor her at these intersections when they want to invoke her powers: sending visions, divination and conducting souls.

The Erinyes: Traditionally thought to be three in number, these are the Furies that mete out the punishments of the gods and Fate alike. When executing Fate's decrees, no Olympian or Chthonian may interfere.

Radamanthys: The gentle, fair brother of tyrannical Minos and fierce Sarpedon, Radamanthys was charged with judging the Asian dead after his own death in the fall of ancient Crete. He is the patron of the Knights of Radamanthys and symbolizes their own commitment to fair judgement.

Charon: The Ferryman of the Dead accepts two oboli (Greek coins — though "obolus" is also the name for the Underworld's soul currency) in payment for passage. The ancients often interred a body with fare for Charon, and this is the origin of the phrase "pennies in your eyes" (though coins were often placed in the mouth instead). The white haired, withered man (sometimes bearded, sometimes masked) pilots a skiff along the river Styx.

Learned Euthanatoi also know Charon as the former ruler of the Western Underworld. It is said that he created a class of semi-divine spirits called Ferryman to assist souls caught in the storms that plague the lands and seas of the dead. Long vanished, Charon's empire fractured in the soul-storms of the Reckoning. Euthanatoi who journey into the Tempest keep watch for Ferryman, since they know the safest routes through the black chaos.

The Moerae: The three Fates are Atropos, Lachesis, and Clothos. Daughters of Night, they reside in a fortress of brass inscribed with the records of all that occurs in the world. As representatives of Destiny, their decrees cannot be disobeyed by any being, even Zeus. Clothos spins the thread of life, Lachesis measures it and assigns each thread its destiny, and Atropos cuts it, sending men and women to their deaths. Tyche, goddess of luck, was said to be a sister to the Moerae, but was ill-suited for their serious work.

To the Euthanatoi, the Moerae represent the spiritual face of the Cycle. Sometimes the Fates' orders are painful to follow, but to do anything else would throw the cosmos out of balance.



CELTIC DEATH

Celtic culture once spanned most of Western Europe, from Gaul (France) and Spain to the British Isles. At the westernmost limit of Indo-European migration, they retained many similarities with their Iranian and Indian forebears. Celtic civilization was never unified, so their gods went by different names in different places. The following names are those most often used by the Aided.

The Celts believed that there were several stages of the afterlife. Tech Duinn was an underwater realm where the spirits of the dead gathered. The gates of Tech Duinn were guarded by a pair of ferocious hounds: one black, the other white. From there, the virtuous dead undertook a voyage west to Tir na Nog, the Land of Youth, where they spent the rest of existence at play with the gods. Others reincarnated to learn the lessons of another life. Reincarnation as a totemic animal or into one's previous bloodline were common events. The dishonored dead returned as Sluagh, mockeries of the truly alive.

The death gods guided souls through this cycle. They include:

Donn: The lord of Tech Duinn is the echo of the First Sacrifice. Donn reincarnated as ruler of the Milesians, and repeated his sacrifice by drowning in the ocean, where he established his domain. He lives in a cairn from which he judges the dead and send them to their destinies.

Diancecht: The physician of the gods, Diancecht could raise the dead at will but was not exclusively a healer. When Morrighu was to give birth to a terrible child, Diancecht killed it and burned the three great serpents he found in the child's heart. He also created a silver arm for Nuada, king of the Tuatha de Danaan.

Morrighu: The bloody handed Phantom Queen chooses who will die, particularly on the battlefield. She represents bloodlust and sovereignty over the land of Ulster. She doomed the hero Cu Chullain, and she appears as a hungry crow or iron-taloned crone — the precursor of the banshee.

"Why not Egypt?" Janine's tone is neutral instead of miserable, and I can't feel the prickly tension of restrained magic any more.

I'm on a roll here.

I smile. "You know Janine, that's a damn good question. Why is that anyway, Truce?"

"What?" He glances in the rearview mirror. "Sorry, caught up in planning the border crossing. Anyway, I have no idea. Ask an Acarya. They won't know either, but they have plenty of theories: angry mummies, sin-eaters, proto-Celestials. Actually, I'm surprised nobody's worked ancient astronauts into the mix."

"That would be more of an Etherite thing." *At last, some levity.*

"What's an Etherite?"

Truce turns his gaze back to the road. "You'll find out soon enough. Just keep listening."

"It's so hard." She presses her hand against the wet window. "I look out and... see that bridge? The bolts are rusting, and that one..." Her hand wipes a clear streak along the glass to point it out. "That's going to break and the bridge will fall. I can see it. Everywhere things are breaking and rotting."

EGYPTIAN MYSTERIES

Despite what would seem to be a natural affinity, the Euthanatos has never had much significant contact with Egypt. Even with Egypt's elaborate funeral practices and rich magical traditions, Chakravanti envoys found the place to be a dangerous, unrewarding assignment.

It was here that the Chakravanti encountered true immortals. The Shemsu-Heru were powerful sorcerers who were utterly disinterested in Thanatoic overtures. Chakravanti were fascinated by mummies because they flowed so easily across the boundaries of life and death, and frightened because their natures so closely matched the ideals of the doomed Idran. Powerful in life and death, the Shemsu-Heru blocked Chakravanti necromancy. Every Agama Sojourn attempted in Egypt failed, and without its initiation rites the Tradition could never establish a permanent presence.

The handful of Chakravanti who passed through Egypt also discovered a Craft with ethics similar to their own. The Hem-ka Sobk hunted evildoers with a familiar set of criteria, and their sin-eating practices mirrored the cannibalism practiced by some of Kali's faithful. Unfortunately, the Craft wanted nothing to do with the Chakravanti; the judgement of Sobk was incompatible with belief in the Wheel.

Finally, Batini antipathy drove the Tradition out of the region for good. Despite the Subtle Ones' supposed disappearance, few Euthanatoi returned to Egypt.

In 2001, Euthanatoi scholars discovered a greatly changed magical landscape, charged with ordered flows of Quintessence and bereft of the Hem-ka Sobk. A new cannibal cult had taken their place. These "Reapers" dedicated their victims to the Egyptian god Apophis without any regard for morality, but otherwise bore an eerie similarity to the vanished Craft. The Tradition is too alien to the region to study the matter any further, though a few Euthanatoi are understandably concerned. What could so utterly corrupt a magical society so similar to their own?

"Somebody's going to fix that bridge first," I say. "Think of it; that's why bridges aren't collapsing left right and center. They decay and we repair. They fail and we rebuild. The bridge isn't a straight line, but a wheel, turning back to new bridges. You don't just cross it and leave it to rust at your back. We're on this earth to fix what we can and destroy what we can't, before that rust poisons that water and wrecks everything."

"People too, right?"

"Especially. Listen up."

ONE GOD BRINGS THE SWORD

"Janine, do you know anything about the history of Islam?"

"It was founded around 600 AD? It spread right through to, well, India, right?"

"Right. What do you think a devout Muslim would think of a couple of pagans like us? Better yet, what do you think a devout Muslim warrior who lived about a thousand years ago would think of us?"

"What happened?"

"Carnage. They swept down, killed priests and leveled temples; our ancestors weren't 'People of the Book' so they didn't respect our beliefs at all. It didn't help that another group of mages followed them, eager to wipe us out in the name of cosmic purity.

"These Ahl-i-Batin were Islamic mystics — whirling dervishes and such — and they believed that we worshiped the corrupted part of Creation. You see, they thought that your bridge rusts because it's part of a flawed, cursed universe, not because it's in its nature to do so. They'd rather change the world to make rust impossible than get out the proverbial wrench.

"Of course, they brought the usual package of conservative mores with them: the kind of thing that makes it socially unacceptable to dance with a skull or touch a leper. We've always been taboo-breakers, so we were among the first to suffer in the purge. Another group of mages called the Sahajiya had the same kind of problem; their magic is based on sensation. Ritual sex isn't something the invaders were going to tolerate, either. We forged an alliance with them called the Ananda Diksham and kept each other alive through the worst of it. Since then the Ecstatics have been our allies. If you need help and can't find one of your own, they're the best people to turn to."

"So there are more of these secret societies of yours?" Janine asks.

"Sure," says Truce. "You already met the Celestial Chorus welcome wagon. Think hard about how they treated you. For now, I'd say we're all you have.

"I'd also like to point out that despite what Evelyn just said, Muslims aren't all fanatics and the ancients weren't all bloodthirsty idiots. I'm a Sikh of sorts. My religion reconciled Hindu and Muslim ideas. The Babur rulers did the same thing. By and large, I'd say the first wave hit us hardest; after that, the Chakravanti learned to keep quiet.

"I just needed to get that in, Evelyn. Go on."

I tap my fingers on the dashboard a few times to release the agitation. *Patriarchal enough, Truce? Maybe I should tell her all about Jhor.* Then I try to follow the angry thought back to its origin and I hit the memory of withered plants and a gun trained on a cop's head. Then it occurs to me that Truce can read my mind and I blurt out the next part.

"So we had to hit the road again and go back to the old flood plains of the Roman Empire, which of course wasn't Roman or even much of an empire anymore. The Greek Euthanatoi barely remembered us, and the rest were legends. Christianity was everywhere, so you couldn't really advertise your belief in the Wheel — unless you were ready to ride a pyre to your next life. The Himalayan War taught us to unite for survival, but how could we get these mystics together? The world's a whole lot bigger than India.

"Then, in 1297 the Sirdar Rustam Awakened. You remember the Zoroastrians? Islam dominated Persia now, and Rustam made his money shipping Parsi cousins to exile in India. Aside from the people, he moved silver, spices — anything that would fetch a good price after sailing the gauntlet of Christian and Muslim nations.

"He fought his way through as best he could, but he eventually took a sword in the shoulder. The wound festered until a Natatapas — that's one of us — saw Destiny flashing in his eyes and healed him. He Awakened, just like you, Janine. Unlike you, he didn't try to take the sword that cut him and finish the job."

"He sounds like a hero," says Janine. "I'm not a hero."

"Then aim for being a human being instead of a maudlin lump," hisses Truce. "You think you're helping any of those kids this way? You're spitting on their memory when you throw away the power you can use to help them."

"They're dead."

"There are lots of Jimmy Houles out there. I meet a handful of them a year. Sometimes I take the time to remember where I burned each of their bodies, or the bones I found under their houses. You had

bones under your pretty little house, too, didn't you? I see your hands on the shovel, Janine. Did you bury those boys and girls?"

"Shut up." Her eyes look straight through him.

"You know what else? Some of them have their own Janines, ready to use the shovel so their arms won't be broken, or so the smack will keep on dripping into their veins. Is that what you are?"

"Shut up." Magic — her magic — fills the air. It feels cloying, like fearful sweat, drifting unimpeded through the car.

"I've burned them too, but maybe this time I don't even need to do the job myself. I don't care anymore, Janine. Kill yourself if you want. If you do, just remember that you wasted an opportunity to give those kids' torment a little meaning, because you have more power to stop it than I ever could. You know how it works from the inside. You could save where I burn."

The scent of Entropy passes. She slowly wraps her hands around her eyes and shudders.

"The Skull Baby," she says.

"It talks to you, doesn't it?" Truce turns, eases the car around a corner as he talks.

"She... it agrees with you. I saw her when you brought me back. Who is she?"

"Your soul, Janine. *Atman*. Avatar. Listen to it, but rest now. We'll sleep in the car and take a ferry to Seattle tomorrow."

I open my window. The salt smell of the Pacific stabs through the stagnant air of the car.

THE FIRST SANTIASHTI

The ferry to Seattle is rocking back and forth. My eyes drop from the hazy skies to look at her. Janine's got heavy, wrinkled eyelids and her hair never seems to fall right. There's a thin-lipped tension in her even as she naps, back pressed against the metal back of the bench.

"Wake up, Janine. Been dreaming?"

"Yeah." She opens her eyes, pushes herself upright, and glances back and forth across the pale gray of the empty deck.

"That's how it was for me, too. Lots of dreams, vivid enough to make you twitch in your sleep."

"And everything else? This is what happened to you?"

"Not quite." There's a pause. "Listen, Truce is down below working on some ritual or another. Just relax, and I'll give you more history to chew on."

"Again, the history." She sighs and smiles a bit. "Well, we've hit the Middle Ages now so I suppose the end is in sight."

"You have to occupy your mind with it. Words and ideas have real meanings. They're powerful. Add them to your own dreams, and you won't see yourself as any different than Rustam, Chalech, or the rest. You'll have their lives strengthening you, just as your own past lives will — once you learn to listen to them."

"Past lives?"

One step at a time, Evelyn. "We'll talk about it later."

"The Sirdar Rustam was already a seasoned traveler: half merchant, half explorer. Fate's mission pushed him harder and drew him farther away from home; to Japan, the very tip of Africa, and Ireland. Everywhere he went he saw Fate and Death's children — usually despised, working in secret, and glad to find brothers and sisters.

"In decaying Byzantium, alchemist-assassins pruned the city of its decadence and prepared it for destruction. There's a lesson for you Janine: Cities need to fall instead of fester. Otherwise, they'll poison whole civilizations — defile the dream that civilization is built on.



"So the Sirdar met the Golden Chalice. These Greeks kept the chthonic rites but incorporated Galenic medicine and Roman alchemy into the mix. You'll learn about those later too, and the Hermetic mages — allies of ours — who use them the most.

"In Africa the Madzimbabwe tended the restless ghosts of the Shona and guarded the people against witches — or *were* witches. When curses or plagues were the best solution to a problem, they didn't hesitate to use them. Of course witches were despised — still are — but African witchcraft is often an anonymous affair. The Madzimbabwe healed in the daylight and punished at night. Like all of us, they knew that the Wheel's need was stronger than any custom.

"Rustam came to Ireland and saw the blood-bearing Morrighu: Kali's Western sister. They're my own spiritual ancestors. Julius Caesar wrote about them; criminals burning inside wicker men, kings bleeding on to stone tables — but you have to consider the source. We don't engage in human sacrifice. Renewal isn't something that's offered up to any god except for maybe God himself, if you believe in Him, Her or It. Souls need to be freed when they can't do it themselves. Sometimes you just need to push someone in the right direction, but some people can't renew themselves with any amount of intervention. The Verbena — that's another Tradition of mages — do offer sacrifices to the gods, but for us, the act of killing serves its own purpose.

"Everywhere he went he delivered one simple message: *you are not alone*. He didn't just preach to Wheel-turners, either. Rustam was one of the first mystics to see his counterparts as colleagues instead of heathens or rivals.

"The Sirdar returned to Persia and waited. In 1304, the emissaries came. Greek cultists skulked out of their caves and catacombs. Red haired Celts sweated in the Iranian summer to share the secrets of *Geasa* with Karma-weavers who wore the ash mark of Shiva. This was the First Samashti: the Red Coumatha of the desert."

"Coumatha?"

"A time and place on the verge of transformation, when the basic nature of things are changed. On the human scale of existence, things like birth, death, passionate love..."

"... abuse, trauma," she says.

"Yeah, Janine, abuse and trauma too. These things are all human Coumatha. On the scale of nations we have wars, migration and storms, and so on, right up to the scale of universes, spinning through the birth and death of stars, the opening and closing of Shiva's eyes — all a part of the Wheel.

"This was the start of a Coumatha for the Chakravanti. We met and argued, struggled to understand each other, until we finally realized that we shared a common language: Death, Rebirth, Fate

THE CHODONA

Gopaya

We have been given our insight and power for a purpose: to be guardians of humankind and of the world. This is our sacred duty from which we still stray only upon pain of death and the loss of our souls. We will guard the Wheel and those caught in its thrall, regardless of the danger to our mortal existences or the suffering it may cause us.

Sadhana

One cannot remain pure without being controlled of the senses and the spirit. Hence, we vow to always seek our own spiritual betterment. We shall practice the rites, sing the sacred songs, and subject ourselves to trials to strengthen the body and will. We will resist the temptations of desire, no matter the form in which they come to us.

Daya

It is impossible for us to complete our duty if we close our hearts to the suffering in the world around us. To attempt such would be to open our doors to corruption and evil. Thus, we must never close our eyes to the pain of others, or to the pain our own actions cause.

Tyaga

Since action done for pleasure and one's own gain carries with it always the danger of corruption, we shall forego such action. Our duty shall be done in the name of the cosmos, and offered in sacrifice to the cosmos. We shall eschew action that is created purely by our desires, for such action would threaten our souls and our duties.

Diksha

One cannot properly enter a new life without a death, and one cannot serve that which one does not understand. All those who care to join our number, as part of their rite of entry, before they receive their names, or their mantras, or their sacred tools, must walk on the other side of life. They must lay curled within the belly of death and return to us before we will count them in our number.

Properly called the *Eight Spoked Wheel of the Law* or the *Chakradharmasamhita*, the *Chodona* was composed at the first Samashti in 1314. It marks the first appearance of the Euthanatos as a singular Tradition. At the First Convocation, Tradition elders added commentaries and clarifications that became the foundation of Euthanatos law, beliefs and ethics.

The core principles (called the Eight Spokes) of the *Chodona* follow.

Preamble

Before the eyes of heaven we write this code: We, who know the dance of life and death, and who have been chosen to guard the Wheel of the world, do avow before all present powers that this is our law, to be held sacred forever.

Prevabhnavā

We testify to the existence of a Cycle of birth, death and rebirth that pervades the cosmos with its rhythm. We testify that souls of humankind and all animate beings are conducted through this Cycle towards an eventual end. We testify that this Cycle is the Law of the universe. We swear to support this Cycle, and prevent its stagnation or corruption.

Hiranyagārgha

We believe in the fundamental unity of all that exists, and that Creation springs from One original source, to which it will return. We further state that all animate beings carry within them the pure seed of this original source, no matter how corrupt their outer shell might be.

Kala

We avow that Decay and Entropy are part of the natural Cycle, and that all things must eventually decay to dust so as to return to the womb of the universe. We accept this as part of our existence, and vow that we shall not cause ourselves undue pain in a futile battle with this principle. Rather, we shall harness the endless Wheel of Time and the secret Web of Fate as our allies in guarding the structure of the universe.

and the Wheel. The Indian Chakravanti took the lead; only there could Wheel-turners practice openly. The rest of us hid in the shadows of Islam and Christianity.

"No matter what our origins were, we knew a common truth and followed a common mission. It didn't matter how much the people of our homelands hated it. Of course, the delegates didn't hug and kiss from the start. At first they held fast to the trappings of their practices. Perseppata of Greece and Paramaguru Chelech argued about burial rites for a year. She was aghast that he'd cut a body to pieces for the scavengers to take. He, of course, thought that anything good enough for his sister should be good enough for anyone." I smile at this last bit; it's a bit of lecturer's humor that I picked up from my own teacher.

"So they accused each other of disturbing the dead and meddling with the Wheel's proper course, until the Sirdar rightly remarked that this was *exactly* the same treatment each delegate heard from their native cultures. Everywhere he traveled, death mages complained that people feared their rites because they didn't know their true meaning. Ironic, isn't it, that a bunch of Wheel-turners got together and made the same mistake?

"So they stopped arguing about technique and started talking about their common purpose. Ten years later they wrote that purpose down in a document called the *Eight-Spoked Wheel of the Law* or just the *Chodona*. In 1314, the Wheel of the Chakravanti stretched out to embrace siddhi from the slopes of Nepal to the coast of Eire. We were prepared for the next step of the Coumatha: the Council of Nine."

CANNON, DAGGER AND CONVOCATION

"Over a hundred years earlier, a group of scientists and Christian warriors leveled a Hermetic stronghold called Mistridge. They had the spark of magic in them, but they used science instead of mysticism. It's the same thing really; earnest desire and inspiration can change the universe through a thousand different vehicles. Science simply tells you that you don't have to be a better or special person to use their method. You just need the right tools."

"But who makes the tools? I mean, anybody can cross a bridge, but it takes an engineer to build it."

"You catch on fast. With science you have to choose whether you want to be a slave to the engineer or spend 20 years in meditation and float over. This gives scientists and engineers a sacred trust which they've thoroughly betrayed."

Janine shoots me a skeptical look.

"Okay, many of them have. Everybody loves TV and hygiene and running water. Never mind that there are a lot of people who don't have those things. They get poison clouds over Bhopal and death in the rains of Bangladesh instead, and don't you forget it. And through it all those same scientists pull the strings and decide whether you're allowed to cure cancer.

"So it's a fight between the haves and the have-nots, and Mistridge was one of the flashpoints for the whole thing. By 1314 the Chakravanti was a strong Tradition with roots all over the world. We could see the little wars joining hands.

"Witches burn and hang more often. The miracle-working Templars fall beneath the heels of the Church. We avoid the brunt of it, but it's the rise of a trend. The Sirdar taught us to look beyond our Tradition, and so we can see the tide of hate that threatens to destroy all mystics, everywhere. In 1325 the scientists unite to form the Order of Reason. Eventually, they'll change their name to the Technocracy.

AFRICA

By the 14th century the Shona people were masters of an empire covering over a thousand square miles. The fortress of Great Zimbabwe is a testament to the empire's sophistication. This huge building of 20 foot thick walls and conical towers was the product of a wealthy civilization, rich in gold, copper and iron.

Shona beliefs were barely touched by Christianity or Islam until the rise of the slave trade. The Shona believed (and many still do believe) that upon death, a spirit (*mudzimu*) wanders, homeless, until his or her family welcomes it back to the household. This typically takes place about a year after death. By this time, one family member (usually the eldest son) will serve as the medium (*svikiro*) for the deceased. Sometimes, the spirit will choose its own medium by inflicting the candidate with an illness that can only be identified by a traditional healer (*n'anga*) who advises the family that the afflicted person is to be the new medium.

The spirit is offered food and drink. If the ceremony is successful, he or she returns to the family as an ancestor spirit.

In the 16th century the Portugese disrupted trade, weakening Shona civilization. The slave trade prompted more traditional Madzimbabwe to leave the Euthanatoi to tend their own people, while assimilationists were absorbed into the other factions and practiced their Arts as personal variations on the Tradition's mainstream.

With the gradual revival of Shona political power in Zimbabwe, many have returned to the death mages, increasing the ranks of acknowledged Madzimbabwe in the Euthanatos. As the only well-known Madzimbabwe from the faction's pre-colonial membership, the Archmage Senex gains even more prestige as these returning Wheel-turners look to him for guidance.

They get organized and get cracking with the witch-fires, cannons, and thumbscrews: persecution on a scale never before seen. It's obvious: we can't survive alone. Fortunately, we're not the only Awakened that think so, or else they'd toss us in those fires themselves.

"Sh'zar of the Ecstasies comes to us first out of respect for our old agreements. That's in 1425. He travels around the world and finds that the Reason's wrath isn't just limited to Europe. Even the Akashics come. Things are going to be messy when all these 'enlightened ones' gather, but the best alliances are full of chaos. They may be a bit ragged around the edges but you can weave them into new forms when you need to.

"A quarter century later we meet mages from all over the world. At the end of some heady arguments, everyone unites as the Council of Nine Traditions. We already had our act together, but some of the others were herded together for the Council's convenience. Some Europeans try to call everyone who's magic they don't understand a "Dream-Speaker." The funny thing is, in doing so they created a group powerful enough to keep them on their toes. I think they're still kicking themselves over it.

"We were too organized to suffer that, and some of the African delegates wouldn't stand for it either. Among them were the Madzimbabwe, who we only knew of through Rustam's journals. The Shona ghost-keepers are pretty rare; most of them are direct disciples of Senex, the de facto leader of our Tradition. It's hard to say what they're up to; the Old Man keeps his own counsel on most things.

"Of course, that wasn't the only problem. Old Akashics thought of 'Chakravanti' as a swear word, and we wanted the other Traditions to dwell on similarities instead of differences. Everyone knew their Greek, so we called ourselves Euthanatos — "Good Death" — from the name Greek Wheel-turners used for themselves.

"They hated us. The Celestial Chorus hated us for taking death into our own hands, the Akashics hated us because of the war, and everyone else hated us because we got our hands dirty, messed with the dead, and told them that the Great Wheel was bigger than their pride or their laws.

"Thing is, though, they needed us. Belief is the strongest force in the cosmos. It powers magic and shapes reality. Their beliefs told them

that there were taboos that couldn't be broken, and to abandon those beliefs would be to abandon magic itself. We had a different set of beliefs, and with it we could call the dead and kill with surety. They knew the war to come would need some less than lily-white gloves at the helm, and our dirty, powerful hands were the right ones for the job.

"So here we are: the Euthanatos. The whole world's that rusty bridge of yours, Janine, and we're doing the best we can to fix it, bolt by bolt, tearing out the worst ones and making room for strong, bright replacements.

"Some of those bolts are ideas and some are institutions. Most of them are people."

AFTER THE CONVOCATION

If nothing else, the Euthanatos were admitted to the Council out of practical necessity and, perversely enough, fear. Many of the mystics that joined the death mages were outcasts from groups that would eventually become the modern Traditions. Pagans destined for the Verbena found Aided rites too obsessed with the death principle, and shamans found the Madzimbabwe's willingness to play witch as much as healer disrespectful. None of these groups wanted to face internal schisms, and encouraged their dissidents to find a place in a separate Tradition.

Furthermore, the Council needed the Euthanatos. They knew that, with trouble on the horizon, they needed a group of mages who would act where others tarried. The other Traditions could safely wash their hands of the dirty business of the Ascension War and let the Chakravanti do the "dishonorable" necessities.

The Tradition has always been aware of how they fit into the scheme of the Council, and with the Ascension War ended (or at least changed beyond recognition) they're ready to reject exploitation in favor of new duty: policing of the Traditions. The Euthanatoi want respect, and the following Thanatoic opinions of the other Traditions reflect this.

Akashic Brotherhood: "Ancient enemies. Right. They treat us with new respect now, so we accord the same to them. We cooperated to end the war, and now we can win the peace. Sometimes they're too obsessed with the abstract and do little to relieve real suffering, but nowadays, there's nobody I'd rather have at my back. Mind you, given the way things used to be, I'll still keep an eye over my shoulder."

— Chela Truce, giving a briefing.

Celestial Chorus: "When I was a boy, I used to marvel at how the crops drank up the sun to grow strong and straight. When I was a boy, I'd cry as the sun withered our fields when it grew too powerful. Yet, it was the same sun. Ascribing all of the good to one entity and all the evil to another cannot describe God in full any more than half a wheel can move a cart or half a sun can grow a crop."

— Paramaguru Senex, during a lecture on the *Chodona* and Euthanatos doctrine.

Cult of Ecstasy: "I love you, Samantha. I'll weep while I'm away from your arms and all of the physical wisdom you've taught me. But there are more important things than the bliss you've shown me. They're sad, but necessary."

— Shravaka Alan Shona, in a love letter to Ecstatic Samantha Rice.

Dreamspeakers: "Fine, I'll leave you and the spirit falcon alone. Why does it detest me? Rosa, you have to learn that these

dreams of nature are limited in scope. They don't encompass the whole Wheel of renewal. The dead sing their own song and you would do well to listen to it. No Rosa, I don't listen to it 'too closely.' My mind is open. Now hurry up."

— Chela Mitchell Pratts in conversation with Dreamspeaker Rosa Valdez.

Order of Hermes: "Therefore, in the interest of maintaining relations between our Traditions in the midst of this crisis, I have advised the temporary withdrawal of Euthanatoi Heralds from the abovementioned Chantries until a Tribunal can justify our actions. I advise you to read the attached dossier detailing the Janissary threat at once."

— Guru Alexander Moro, letter to the Deacon of the *Fors Sapiientiae* Chantry.

Sons of Ether: "Doctor Nieman and I perfected the device after we realized that karma could be expressed as a psychodynamic probability curve proportional to the Millsian utility of the subject. Doctor Nieman jokingly suggested that we look at the rest of the research team through the Ethoscope, but I'd like it if he adjusted it for more liberal moral parameters first. The math brings us together, but our sensibilities still differ."

— Shravaka Maia West, diary entry.

Verbena: "You play with the Morrighu. I am the Morrighu. Do you really think she wants literal sacrifices? Your beliefs lack sophistication. Gods require more than worship; they touch parts of the eternal soul. Instead of bowing down, we assume their mantle. Now if you'll excuse me, the Morrighu and I have a plane to catch. I'm sure she won't mind — or care — if you want to dance skyclad for her while we're gone."

— Chela Evelyn Kinsella, leaving a Verbena Coven in Eugene, Oregon.

Virtual Adepts: "The Lakshmists in our tour group were treated to a crash course in object-oriented programming, but they found the resultant models somewhat empty, perhaps because they couldn't simulate chaotic effects as well as your tried-and-true bone-shaking invocations. You wanted us to suck up to them, Guru, and we're doing it. We just need to offer them something in return that their materialistic minds can understand. No, I'm not being mean, Guru."

— Chela Archie Das, phoning with his Acarya.

Hollow Ones: "Piss off. I came here for a drink, not to teach you how to talk to ghosts."

— Chela Jamie Lightwood, at the Waydown.

⊕ OTHER CREATURES

If the Euthanatos weren't essentially humanistic they wouldn't bother themselves with tracking and influencing the sins and fates of Sleepers. They do acknowledge that other beings have their place on the Wheel's rim—or hinder its progress. Here are some common views on the supernatural.

Vampires: Most Euthanatoi view the undead as violations of the natural progression of human life, but many Euthanatos remain fascinated by vampires. Their bodies and minds are a union of life and death, but while a mage might use such a state to travel the Wheel and understand his place in the cosmos, a vampire simply refuses to progress at all. This was the error of the Idran, which modern Wheel-turners have no desire to repeat.

Kuei-jin are viewed in much the same light, though it's acknowledged that some of them use mystical techniques to break out of their natural stasis. Unfortunately, research into these vampires has been cut short by the devastation of the Reckoning. Indian Chakravanti have better things to do than to look for the undead.

Shapeshifters: Shapeshifters strike the Euthanatoi as hypocrites. They seem to despise Jhor, but freely engage in the bloodthirst that's a hallmark of the death taint. Still, they seem to direct most of their wrath toward enemies of the Cycle, so as long as they're avoided (they have a tendency to accuse veteran Thanatoics of being "servants of the Wym," whatever that means) they ultimately do the world some good.

Imbued Hunters: Hunters are a mysterious irritation. They track busy Euthanatoi, interfere with the giving of the Good Death, and attack Wheel-turners with a bizarre array of minor powers. They appear to be resistant to deception and mind control, so more physical measures are often used to get rid of them. Most Hunters are decent people, which ironically makes

things even harder. Since the *Chodona* prohibits unnecessary killing, Euthanatoi have to evade and hinder them without the tools of magical deception. Some death mages lack the restraint to pull it off, fueling the ire of the Imbued.

Changelings: The Aided have had some dealings with these creatures. Few fae share any significant interests with the Euthanatoi. The eastern faiths practiced by so many death mages warn them to be on guard against illusion. For their part, changelings have little truck with Euthanatoi, save on the rare occasions when a talented artist is marked for the Good Death. The fae patrons of these rangers often resemble the evil dreams they've been devouring and are loathe to allow a Wheel-turner to end their fun.

Wraiths and the Walking Dead: Wraiths refuse to go quietly, and so suffer in a spirit storm of unimaginable proportions. Euthanatoi sympathize for the plight of these ghosts; benign necromancy is used to help (or force) them to find closure. The Madzimbabwe are particularly active in protecting lone ghosts from harm, usually by joining them to a living family that will give them comfort and respect.

While some ghosts have always tried to reclaim their bodies, the last three years has shown a dramatic rise in such incidents. Euthanatoi oppose the Walking Dead because they move against the turn of the Wheel. Destruction, exorcism and funeral rites are used to deal with the problem, though some death mages have helped more coherent "zombies" do what they must do to rest.

Mummies: Although the old Shemsu-Heru kept the Tradition out of Egypt, Euthanatoi would dearly love to learn more about these beings. Their numbers seem to have increased in recent years, and their natures have changed. In fact, there have been two cases where recipients of the Good Death have returned wielding Egyptian ritual magic—free of the soul-stains that caused them to be killed in the first place.

REVELATIONS



My feet tingle every time the ferry bumps the harbor. We're in Seattle now. Truce walks upstairs with a tired stride, a duffel bag on each shoulder.

"None of this thieving now," he says. "The Knights were kind enough to rent us a car and a hotel room."

I stretch my legs and trot down the metal ramp. "You were talking to them? Why can't we hook up with the multi-Tradition Chantry here?"

"We can't shack up at the Conjuror's Cubbyhole. They lost their guest accommodation to the Avatar Storm. Not that they'd want us." He smiles and ushers us to a cab.

The cab hits the rental agency, we get in a tiny Neon and make the hotel in no time. It seems that we've been in and out of these anonymous little boxed beds all our lives, hopping from death to death. We're like insurance adjusters in reverse. In Pittsburgh a mob sniper gets his case downgraded from death to blindness; in Reno a woman beating her kids gets moved up from a mindjob to a fatal illness, because she's working up the bravery to poison them. That sort of thing.

Then we get to Jimmy and Janine. Jimmy gets the death-cure, and Janine? Well, her claim's starting to look better and better.

Down go the duffel bags. Janine sits on the bed beside them.

"I want those handcuffs," she says.

"Sure." Truce opens a bag and hands them to her. "Why?"

"I need them."

"Why?"

"I just need them."

"Fine. Evelyn and I have to talk in private. Call room service if you need anything."

"How are you going to keep me here?"

He opens the door and glances back. "We're not keeping you here. You have a will of your own now. We're not going to keep you here against it."

THE CHALICE AND THE MASK

"So what is it?" I dangle my feet over the dock and look over to him. Truce taps the concrete edge with his boots and looks out into the noonday sun.

"What do you know about the Golden Chalice?"

"I failed the screening twice, Truce. I don't know enough alchemy for their rituals and they think I'd take the work too personally."

"Alchemy, eh? They have all sorts of convoluted practices. Comes from their association with Byzantium. They're heirs to the Classical Arts, just like the Order of Hermes."

"What are you getting at?"

"In the arcana of the Chalice there's the legend of the Ixos: wizard spies who brought about the fall of Troy. They followed the old gods: Fate, Discord —"

"Just like the Knights and the Pomegranate."

"Yes. Byzantium was a great place for an assassin to ply his trade. The Golden Chalice was born there, immersed in the mystic cultures of caliphates and kingdoms. As the city fell, the Chalice stretched to those places to ready themselves for the future. The alchemy and proto-science they learned made them valuable assets for the Order of Reason."

"What?"

"Science and death: It's a useful speciality for an organization that kills dissidents in its midst. They called themselves the Ksirafai."

"Never heard of them."

"Nobody had until a year ago. The Faithful Crow cabal hit an abandoned Construct in Egypt — something killed all the grayfaces there — and found some old records in a warded leather folio. They were written in an obscure code: a forerunner of the Chalice's own alchemical cipher. It's a metaphorical language based on a poem called the *Song of the Ixos*. They just switched the Greek Gods with the Angels of Wrath.

"One of the Crow — Alex Moro — is a Chalice member; he translated it. The papers describe how the Ksirafai were taking over the Janissary class in Egypt. In fact, these were the same group of Janissaries who joined the Order of Hermes later on."

"So you mean that an *entire House* of Hermes are Technocratic insurgents?"

Truce smiles. "Not anymore."

SWANS FOR JANISSARY

"Moro contacted the Chalice. They began to monitor Janissary communique, and guess what! It was *another* mutation of the Ixos cipher. The Locksmiths learned how to duplicate the variant and told the House that they had an emergency meeting scheduled in Cameroon. Did you know that the Old Man cleaned the Jhor out of the Monkey's Heart?"

I tensed at the name. It had been a Node for the House of Helekar. "No."

"I used that 'holiday' I had in January to use help them coordinate the ambush with my Manas skills. The Albireo did the rest. With help from the Monkey's Heart, we hit them hard. A few got out; there were running battles all over the Western Hemisphere. It's a pity it wasn't a clean shot. The fallout from it won't be pretty."

And when you got back the plants started to die. "I see. Are there many left?"

"Oh yeah. We figure that most of the younger ones weren't involved in the conspiracy."

If there was a conspiracy. "I take it we have to hide from the Hermetics until this blows over. Jesus Christ, Truce! What if the Storm comes down? Do you *know* how many Archmasters could be there to melt our goddamn bones? If Caeron Mustai's still alive he'll —"

"As far as anyone knows he went down with Doissetep. Besides, Albireans have already hit every influential Traditionalist they can find. They may not be happy, but they didn't want Technocrats in their midst any more than we do.

"We've been weeding out the Traditions for centuries. This is the first time the job's been so big that we've had to admit to it. If the response is positive then we'll be able to keep the Council clean without having to skulk around."

"And if they want our heads on sharpened stakes?"

"There's already a plan. The Old Man's sent his Chela to explain it to us."

"Who? Amanda? Mitch Pratts?"

"No. Theora Hetirck."

"Say that again?"

DREAMING THE GOOD DEATH

I don't understand.

Hetirck of Helekar. Hetirck, slave of Voormas, who almost got us thrown from the Council when the Consanguinity of Eternal Joy stained our reputation. I remember her photo: a little waif in a starched schoolgirl dress with dead coals for eyes. If she added a year to her youth for every life she ended she could be that little girl forever.

"This is supposed to help us?"

"I think he wants to show her off as some kind of sterling example. It'll tell them how far we've come in healing ourselves of Helekar and demonstrate the merits of his plan."

"I contacted her while you were talking to Janine. She told me to share everything with you about the Janissaries, but she wants to explain Senex's plan personally, especially in light of our new Shrivaka."

"We should get back to her, Truce. We can't trust her newfound common sense forever."

"No need. The other thing I did while I was camped in the Ferry's cargo hold was to link to her thoughts and tweak them a little. Did you know that she's an educated woman? History comforted her by bringing her back to her school years: a time when she controlled her own life.

"We've taken her up to the Renaissance. She's familiar with all of the Sleeper history after that. Everything else is locked deep in her mind, waiting for an act of will to bring it forth.

"Come join me in the car, Evelyn. I think it's time Janine talked to the Skull Baby."

We close the door and breathe. The black yantra spins, and we're with Janine.

THE SKULL BABY



She digs and digs under the shed because every time Jimmy's done there's a new one to bury. She used to say no but he'd grab her arm, twist so hard, and pull. Then there would a dark corridor, a swinging, sputtering lightbulb, and pain. Pain in the middle of the woods where Mommy and Daddy could come and save her, just like the kids. She's almost mastered the art of floating high out of herself when the pain comes. Almost. Sometimes there's burning, and sometimes something breaks. Jimmy always makes her fall back into the pain.

So she digs under the shed, looking for a new spot to bury them. Boys and girls with open, glassy eyes who just want to rest under the blanket of that earth stare up at her. It isn't like the movies; it's hard to push their eyes after they're gone.

Today the spade hits something. She digs around it and scrapes the earth away with her cupped hands.

The little skull grins back. She shakes off the earth. And lifts it out. Other little bones get dragged out with it.



And she thinks: *I've dug all the way around the shed. This is the first one. The first little skull baby and I don't remember her name. I don't remember her name.*

"Janine. Hold me." The little jaw moves and the Skull Baby talks, because this is more than just a memory.

WISDOM FROM THE BONES

"I'm so sorry."

"I know Janine. Your heart stirs; I float in its deep black water. I see the memories you obscure, and many more things besides. I'll have no name until you remember, but my own memories will complete you." The bones knit together, tiny under the Skull Baby's jaw. It takes an unsteady newborn's step to her.

"Show me. I'm seeing things... I know I'm somewhere, dreaming this... but it's so *real*. My dreams, my thoughts — they can do things now."

"Dreams, memories — they create you. You remember the time before you were trapped, don't you? You remember school — you were proud of your education."

She sees flashes of it: talking to friends, writing, looking in her mirror with steady eyes before going out. Even the dingy rooms were brighter than the haze that came down after Jimmy. The sounds were sweeter, even the slow lectures in history class.

"History. Everyone's been telling me history, teaching me about these... Euthanatos?"

"And you're educated. You know part of what you must. I know the other."

COLONIALISM

She arranges the old lessons in her head.

She says, "The colonial era comes next. They told me about India. The Portugese, then the British in India. They turn everything upside down. They want sugar, opium and an empire in the East."

She sees this: Turbaned travelers rest in a sunburnt glade, radiant in white summer robes. They laugh together, then a few look to each other. Their hands flex.

The next part happens in a single quick beat. A man pins his companion's hands to his sides, while a coin-weighted cloth wraps around the victim's neck. Another man's eyes bulge as he chokes, dropping a purse that's caught and pocketed before it — or the man, dead seconds later — hit the ground.

Then night falls. The killers talk softly and bury the bodes with pickaxes.

"People defy them. Did you ever hear of the Thuggee? They killed to resist, and killed for profit. They knew the times and places to kill, and buried their victims with the sanction of Kali."

"Kali. They told me about her." She sees the killers bow before an iron statue. Four arms and the curve of the Goddess's hips are framed by the moonlight.

"Some of these Euthanatoi who would teach you were once Thugs — or were trained by ancient men and women who drank the sacred sugar and used the rumal to stop their enemies' breaths. Can you believe they were all holy bandits, revolutionaries of a kind?"

"No."

"Good." The Skull Baby smiles as always. "Some Thugs — many Thugs — fell to greed. Gold tempts everyone, but those Awake to the fires of their Atman — like you are Awake, Janine — are tempted by souls as well. They drink the power of life and

turn Naraki — or perhaps they had always been Naraki, and hid their hearts to partake of murder's profit.

"In Africa, Great Zimbabwe fell to plague and then slavery. The Madzimbabwe ghost tenders left your Euthanatoi and returned to guarding their own people. Some Awakened across the sea, in the Americas, with the power to smash chains and comfort the restless spirits of those who died in them. The British hand gripped Ireland tightly..."

"...and between Catholics and Protestants, Evelyn's beliefs were diminished. Who cares about old gods when the new ones demand that you fight?"

"You're finishing my sentences. We're growing together, Janine. Hold me." The Skull Baby staggers closer. Janine's in the hotel room now, lying on her bed. Bones caress her feet and she sits up. She shivers as the Skull Baby crawls along her leg, and her arms drop to welcome the cold, dead child to her.

THE TAIN OF WAR

"Rock me back and forth." The empty sockets look up at her, and she complies. Her arms swing in nervous jerks.

"Tell me about war and I'll tell you about war," says the Skull Baby.

"Okay," whispers Janine, "there's World War One, touched off by the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand of —"

"There's mustard gas. Death drifting in heavy clouds. There's horses screaming as the new machines run them down, sweet Janine. The outraged dead fill the Underworld to the brim; a black storm rises from the combined killing, and throws the society of ghosts into disarray."

Janine feels a burning in her throat. The walls of her room dissolve and an arm's length away, khaki-clad men stride over and landscape of mud and broken wood. They wear gas-masks; their black goggles look down at the litter bodies stretched in their final agony.

"Some Euthanatoi are swept up in the ghostly typhoon, and bring back the death taint — Jhor — with them, if they return at all. The ghost tenders become living ghosts themselves, and who can blame them? Men carry the power of death gods now: mist that burns the lungs of enemies, and metal eggs that explode into a thousand iron knives. In the past, death was comprehensible, but now it has a new horror. It comes from the sky and the land, as if the earth itself has turned against humanity."

One man shoulders his rifle and hops a burnt fence. The ground screams, and like magic, his left leg vanishes. His companions are showered with pieces of him as he looks down and shudders.

"Euthanatoi can sense the change; everyone becomes a little more callous and some of the old Chakravanti speculate that the Kali Yuga will come to an early end. This is the final age, set with atrocity, when people defile the Wheel. This is the last age before Shiva comes to destroy it all with purifying fire." As it speaks, the Skull Baby buries its head in Janine's armpit, the way a frightened child might.

"Then the Second World war must have confirmed it," says Janine. "How many angry ghosts did Auschwitz create? We — I mean, the Euthanatos — must have come to those places to comfort them, or to kill the ones responsible. Why didn't they use their magic?"

She smells smoke. In her mind's eyes she follows a line of barbed wire and the curve of an iron rail, then looks away. She already knows the place, and knows the lying motto on the gate: "Work Will Make You Free."

"Not all mages are people of virtue," says the Skull Baby. "Some ignored the gas chambers, slave camps and ovens. Others supported it or even took part in it. To the ancients, Death was a person, or a natural force. You honored it with the Good Death, rites, and prayers.

THUGGEE

Historically, Thugs were bandits who strangled victims along the roads of rural India. No one (except, in the World of Darkness, the Euthanatos) knows how old Thuggee (a word derived from the Sthanga — "to deceive") is. Myths date them back to the beginning of this world's Cycle. Though most Thugs worshiped the goddess Kali in one aspect or another, not all Thugs were Hindus. Muslim and Sikh Thugs saw no contradiction in killing for Kali (and profit) and attending their mosques and temples. Local governments often turned a blind eye to Thug activity. Their patronage protected them from Thug attack and inconvenienced the British by disrupting local trade.

Like the Euthanatoi, Thugs practiced Chakrapuja (taboo-breaking rites), and were thus despised by right-thinking Hindus. To protect themselves they used a secret language of Hindi slang and metaphor called Ramasee. While the rimal (coin-weighted garrote) was their signature weapon, Thugs weren't averse to killing with blades, poisons, or other implements.

Thugs first looked to omens to determine the correct time and place for a murder. Two to three Thugs would be assigned per victim; junior Thugs would restrain the victim while the seniors would kill them. The bodies would then be cut at the joints with a pickaxe and buried. Thugs tended to bury their victims in the same location repeatedly, though some claimed that in the Kali Yuga (reckoned to be the post-colonial era) the Goddess herself devoured many of the bodies.

By 1840, British authorities had eliminated the Thugs as a pervasive force in India. Most Euthanatoi were relieved, since the British tended to capture pretenders and profiteers along with a few Apad-Dharma members. Thugs who stood against British colonialism simply changed their tactics, raining bad luck and political assassination upon Order of Reason members and colonial officials alike. This isn't to say that the Tradition didn't make a bit of coin from the killings. After all, death mages are loathe to waste a resource.

Now Death is a machine, presided over by technicians. There's nothing sacred about it any more, so none of the old morality applies."

"But most of the people killed in the Holocaust were from groups that people had persecuted for centuries. What difference does it make to the killers how it happens? What difference should it make to mages?"

"When you take killing and torture out of your own hands, and relegate it to a system, you feel a sense of false purification. You aren't brandishing a torch out of hate, but ticking off columns on a clipboard. You're 'only following orders.' That detachment is its own poison; you're stained by evil karma and you can never redeem yourself, because you can't awaken the spark of conscience inside you to feel regret.

"Of the mystics, only the Euthanatos fully guard themselves from such callousness, since they can see the Jhor in it. They present undeniable proof of the atrocity to their colleagues, but it's too late. The poison has already insinuated itself into the other Traditions. Then, starting in 1943, eight mages known to sympathize with the Axis die, the obvious victims of magic. In Poland, a Hermetic allied to the *Thule Gessellschaft* burns to death in a cube of fire. In Nanjing, a ghostly swordsman decapitates an Akashic Brother who tortured for the Japanese army. Then the Traditions act. They band together and banish the demons and evil mages that worked behind the scenes of the war.

"You see? Murder has its virtues."

ATROCITY REVEALED

In 1942, Michael "Firecracker" MacPherson uncovered undeniable proof of the Nazi concentration camps in the person of Fritz Auchmann, ghost and victim of the Dachau labor camp. An unknown party (Auchmann simply described him as "a rabbi") marked Auchmann's body with a plea for help and compelled him to travel West.

Auchmann told the young Knight of Radamanthys about the camps. MacPherson relayed the information to the rest of the fiction and eventually campaigned the Traditions for assistance. With the unseen assistance of "the rabbi," Auchmann named mages from all sides of the Ascension War who assisted the Holocaust. After the Albireo killed the Traditionalists on Auchmann's list, the divided Council moved to oppose the Axis.

In 1946 a joint tribunal of Technocrats and Traditionalists tried and executed Awakened war criminals and discussed the dispersal of magical resources. A tainted Node near Dachau divided the tribunal. It needed to be guarded; who could be trusted to contain, rather than use, its corrupted power?

A compromise was reached and the Node was handed over to the Consanguinity of Eternal Joy. The tribunal reasoned that foreign mages (at the time most of the House of Helekar were Indians) would be least likely to abuse the Node's power, and as one of the only Traditions to stand against the Axis from the start, the Euthanatos seemed ideal.

Decades later they would see how misplaced their trust was.

WEATHERED IN A LOTUS OF FIRE: THE RECKONING



*If the radiance of a thousand suns
Were to burst at once into the sky
That would be like the splendor of the Mighty One
I am become Death*

The shatterer of worlds

— The *Bhagavad-Gita*.

"But there's still the Kali Yuga," says Janine.

"Yes, stoking Shiva's power, preparing God for the end of everything. The wars are one sign, and they never truly end. The poisoning of the world is another."

"What about the human rights? Justice? What about the lessons we've learned? Are Ghandi or Martin Luther King examples of degeneration?"

"The Age of Iron isn't evil, dear Janine. Chaos rises, and new ideas are born, freed from the stifling hand of tyrannical rulers and dogmatic teachers. Many Euthanatoi learned to appreciate life and deliver just deaths because of teachers like the ones you mentioned, even if those teachers wouldn't necessarily agree with the Good Death. But good or bad, the end will come just the same. Human beings spin the Wheel ever faster. The friction of its motion is like a hungry spark."

"Then," says Truce as he and I enter the hotel, "there comes a fire."

SHIVA NARROWS HIS EYES

I clutch the wall for a second, disoriented as I see double: my eyes and Janine's mind. Truce cuts the Manas-link and I slump against the chair. Janine's rocking her arms back and forth, comforting her invisible Atman.

"Nuclear weapons are one of the final signs, Janine," says Truce. "In 1945 the bomb dropped in Hiroshima wrecked the Underworld again, but for a different reason. The pain and rage of descending souls created the storms of the past, but the first atom bomb was an insult to the fabric of the universe itself. Oppenheimer quoted Shiva's voice in the Vedas: *I am become Death, destroyer of Worlds*. Science finally discovered the primal fire that ends worlds."

She looks down at her Skull Baby for a second, nods her head and replies: "The Cold War's over. Why would it still make a difference?"

"Were you listening to your Atman? People have cut themselves off from the Wheel. They separate themselves from the consequences of their actions with mechanical procedures and protocols that numb their consciences.

"Our way discriminates between right and wrong, euthanasia and murder. The Technocracy and the scientists they back lost sight of these distinctions, and the Bomb is the result. They use the tools of the gods without the wisdom to know when to use them.

"A case in point: Do you remember the cyclone that killed thousands of Indians and Bangladeshis back in '99?"

"Yeah, I was going to ask about it, since we originally came from there. I heard that it damaged some kind of chemical storage facility, like the Union Carbide disaster in Bhopal."

She said "we."

I look at her a little closer. She's breathing calmly; sitting up straight with mobile hands and an alert expression.

She isn't the woman we pulled out of Jimmy Houle's house any more.

"That wasn't just a storm," says Truce. "It was a series of nuclear weapons, used to destroy a demon and covered up by the Technocracy."

"Oh." A skeptical expression overcomes her nervous face. Truce opens his mouth but I get my word in before he can speak.

"Do you want to know the result?" I angrily ask. "There was another storm in the Underworld, stronger than the others. Now the dead don't rest as easily. The fortunate ones cling to their corpses and crawl out of their graves. Others had their souls torn to pieces by the blast. The shards of their spirits wound anyone who tries to cross into other worlds. They broke the universe, Janine.

"We lost one of our oldest marabouts; everyone was killed, and we can't even mourn them. The Natatapas had to conceal it with all kinds of lies to keep the people from panicking. They're gone, Janine. Their souls have been destroyed and they can never reincarnate and strive for wisdom again.

"Have you thought what will happen then? Thousands of souls, destined to change the world, will never do so. Will the bodies they were destined to enter be born without the spark of Atman? Did the Technocracy destroy someone who could heal the world? We don't know."

EUTHANATOI AND THE RECKONING

In 1999 a vampire-demon variously known as Marasakti, Zapathasura and Ravana rose from the ground near the India-Bangladesh border. The Natatapas stronghold of Nagachakra suffered intense psychic and Entropic disturbances and elected to evacuate, leaving a skeleton crew to observe events and staff the Marabout as a staging area for Traditionalists. The Varghese Knights of the Celestial Chorus and a team of Ecstatic Aghori warriors attempted to contain the disaster and strike back. Storms and nuclear weapons eradicated them all.

When the Natatapas returned, they discovered that their Node was free of the taint and evil Resonance that wracked the land. They surmised that the Traditionalists had put their dying effort into preserving Nagachakra. The Node is now the eye of a receding mystic storm. The Avatar Storms don't affect those passing through what Indian mages have come to call "Ravana's Navel."

The Natatapas realized that Technocratic attention would deprive them of this gift, so they assisted the massive coverup of the battle; Entropy magic and bribery dealt with much of the physical evidence. Now the restored Nagachakra Marabout is working to eliminate the mystical and psychic effects of the disaster. Mind Effects and cleansing rites comfort the survivors and remove the signs of supernatural intrusion.

HOPE IN THE AGE OF IRON

"It was worth it," says Truce.

He lights a cigarette and squats down on his duffel bag. We're in the hotel driveway. Janine wanted some privacy and according to Truce we have to leave soon anyway. Hetirck's expecting us tomorrow. I've got this feeling that I've forgotten something.

"I know, but I can't believe there wasn't any other way for the grayfaces to do it. We're the scalp and they're the gas-powered goddamn chainsaw. I mean, what do we have to show for it? Atmanshards? Walking dead? Maybe even soulless babies?"

"It's just another sacrifice. You should be used to them by now."

"Yeah. Our history, our sacrifices. I'm just tired of it, Truce. I'm tired of seeing good Chakravanti go the way of Voormas. I'm tired of the evil people we pare away from the world, who come so fast and thick that it's like trying to carve a statue out of a river. And all for what? The Wheel? That ephemeral thing that turns everything right? Well it isn't, Truce. It's broken."

"Maybe so, but maybe we can even fix that. When the Consanguinity of Eternal Joy turned Naraki we dealt with them."

"Voormas is still out there."

"Yeah, but what if he'd remained in the Realm of Entropy? He could have 'broken the universe' by bending all Tamas, everywhere, to his will. Now the Consanguinity's gone and Senex is the realm's custodian. If anyone could find a way to repair the damage, it's him. The Wheel renews. Destruction brings possibility. You know these things, Eve. You just have to feel them in your heart again."

The hotel doors open and we turn. Janine's there. She's wearing a manacle on each wrist; the chain is broken. She takes my duffel bag off her shoulder and hands it to me.

"You forgot this," she says. "You were right." She holds her hands up. "The handcuffs are mine. It's my history, I guess. I thought I was its prisoner — and yours."

"History's funny that way, You can't escape it. You can only change your perspective. I guess that's how you renew yourself, and that's what the Wheel is all about." She looks to us with an unwavering gaze.

"I don't know," says Truce, as he taps the last cinder of his smoke to the ground. "Ask your Skull Baby."

"She's not a Skull Baby," says Janine, frowning. "Her name is Evelyn. Let's go."

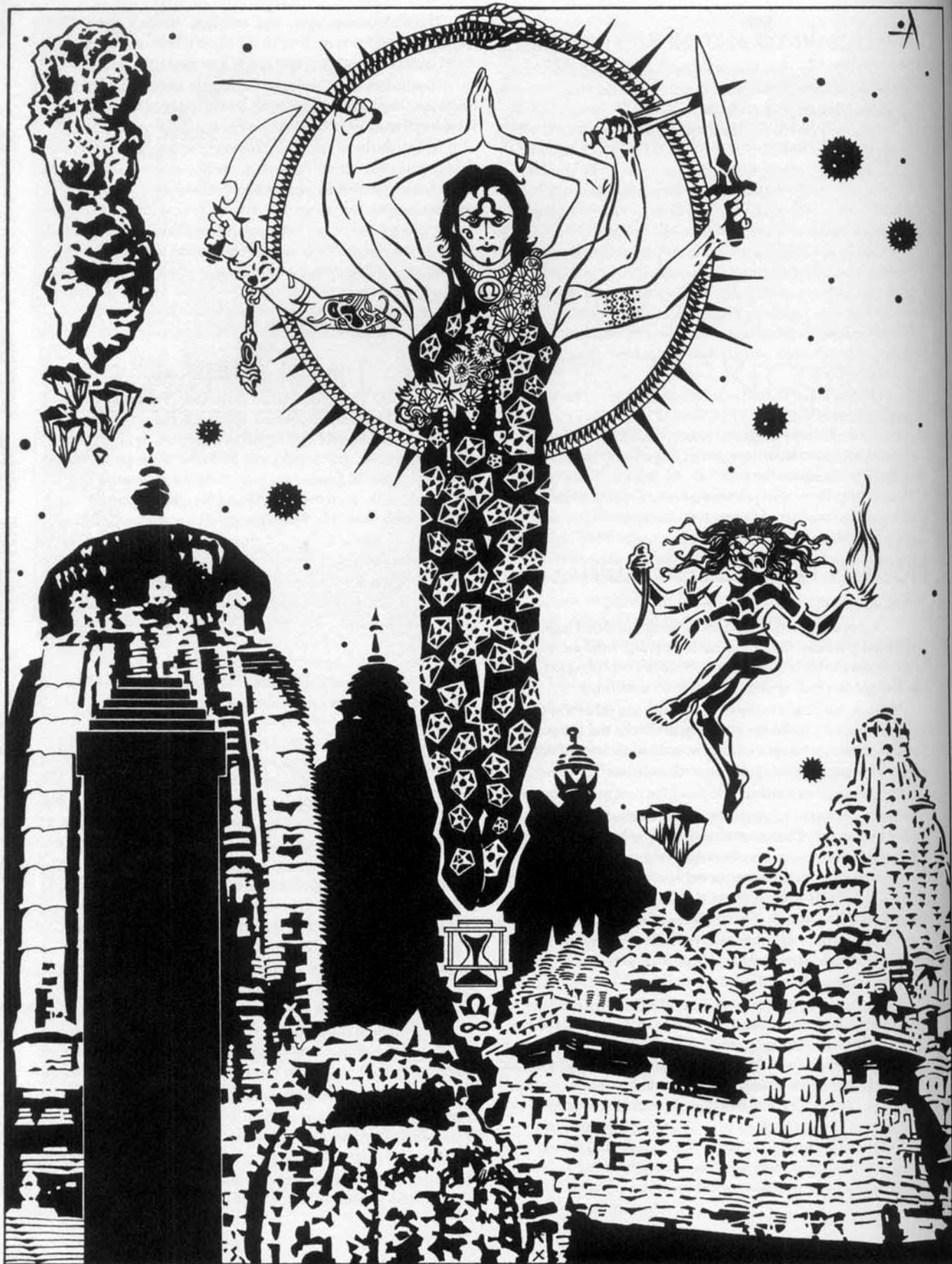
THE FALL OF HELEKAR

In 1990 Hermetic Mark Gillan (see **Tradition Book: Order of Hermes**) discovered the mutilated and Quintessence-drained body of a young girl in Capetown, South Africa. Gillan traced the murder to Richard Somnitz of the Consanguinity of Eternal Joy, and from there unmasked the truth about the secretive sect. Grand Harvester Voormas was insane with Jhor. His followers shared his madness, killing mages and mortals alike for personal satisfaction and the arcane demands of House Helekar's master.

Protected by corrupt Hermetics and embarrassed Euthanatoi, the House of Helekar (an alternative name for the Consanguinity, referring to the magical fortress that served as the cult's headquarters) resisted formal investigation until 1996, when attacks on the Verbena and the Sons of Ether prompted the Council to arrest Voormas'Adept, Theora Hetirck, for crimes ranging from murder and rape to theft and sabotage.

Because she acted out of fear of the Consanguinity, she was cleared of most of the charges and was remanded to Senex's custody for an indefinite period. Council forces converged on the House of Helekar only to find that the fortress and its master were long gone. Senex accepted stewardship of the newly deserted Shard Realm of Entropy, and cabals were sent to capture the remaining members of the cult. Of the House's three cabals, the Abyssians were killed to the last mage by the Knights of Radamanthys, while elements of the Freedom Razor and the Friends of the Soul are still at large (though Richard Somnitz was killed by Senex's student Amanda). Paramaguru Voormas' whereabouts are unknown; the thought that the mad archmage could be anywhere fills most Euthanatoi with a subtle dread.

For information on the House of Helekar, see **Mage Chronicles Volume 1**, which details the Consanguinity as it was before their corruption became a matter of public record.



CHAPTER TWO: ASCENSION'S KNIFE

*O ye of true strength, make this thing manifest by your greatness — strike
The demon with your thunderbolt.
Conceal the horrid darkness, drive far from us each devouring fiend.
Create the light for which we long.*
— The Rig Veda.



Janine scratches her wrists under the broken shackles and bites into a burrito. The spicy smell makes my nose wrinkle. I want to laugh at the mundanity of it. She glances at me but I look away and grab the bags.

The rocky beach and its sole cabin have passed through a dozen owners since anybody thought to draw up a deed for it. All of them were Traditionalists; even the Awakened have timeshares, don't you know? The cabin itself sits on a spur of sharp shale about twenty yards away, and has the kind of sagging redwood and battered tile you'd expect from sentimental builders.

Janine looks around and shoves the burrito wrapper in her pocket as Truce knocks on the door. I take a deep breath as it opens. Hetirck's face stares out.

"Come in," she says. "We have a few things to talk about."

HETIRCK

We settle in the big wooden chairs she's laid out for us and take the tea she quietly hands us. I can't look away from her face; it's familiar yet surprising at the same time.

When Helekar fell, they passed her picture around to us. It was a doll's face: unlined, pale and sharp, with huge eyes that followed

your every move. It was as if the woman in front of me now was drawn by an artist who'd seen the photo and wanted to depict her with a little more softness and mercy.

But she still killed for the House. I ease into my seat and try not to stare.

"Truce told me about the situation, so I'm afraid this is going to be a bit one sided. Senex is sending me along to cabals all over North America to try to explain his intentions.

"The war is finished and the Wheel is crumbling. What does the Cycle do to compensate? It moves ever faster, toward a final conclusion. Senex has foreseen that the Lokha — all that is — will resolve itself in our lifetimes unless something is done."

Janine lowers the cup from her lips. "Resolve itself?"

"End," says Truce. "The world's going to end."

"Not necessarily," says Hetirck. "He has a plan.

"We're now the guardians of the Shade Realm of Entropy. Naraka Voormas knew how important it was; he planned to use it to flood the worlds with Jhor and bring about the end himself. That's why he sought out Earth's corrupt Nodes. Sympathetic ties between Earth and the Forbidden Lands of Helekar would let him channel the world-killing rite."

I shake my head. *More delusions of grandeur.* "Right, Chela Hetirck. I'm sure you would know all about Voormas' plans."

"Intimately." Theora Hetirck doesn't bat an eye.

So my voice goes up a tone. "If it was a credible threat, why hadn't some sort of demon or Nephandus or *something* tried this before?"

"Some of them were constrained to their own Realms by cosmic laws. The others lacked the power."

"You don't mean that he could have —"

She gives the smallest nod.

I have nothing to say.

"Senex's Madzimbabwe have been purifying the Nodes that once strengthened Helekar. He believes that we can do the opposite of what Voormas intended. The power of the Forbidden Lands can reach through those Nodes and return the world to its proper balance, but it will take an army of Awakened souls a long time to accomplish."

"How many of us?" asks Truce, tapping a cigarette out of his pack.

"All of us," says Hetirck. "All of the Euthanatoi."

THE GHOST CITADEL OF THE FORBIDDEN LANDS

The Shade Realm of Entropy was colonized by the Consanguinity of Eternal Joy in 412 C.E. The second Grand Harvester, Helekar, built his house on the bone and rust plain at the center of the Realm. The Realm seethes with the power of Fate: energies reflected on the Horizon by the Shard Realm on Pluto.

In 1996 the Consanguinity fled the Forbidden Lands in the face of a Council assault. The Forbidden Lands were managed by the Primi until the Fall of Doissetep, after which Senex was able to secure jurisdiction over them.

The Ghost Citadel is a stone fortress built in the fashion of Senex's own Great Zimbabwe. Thick walls and conical towers of black rock stand guard over Mahaghat ("Great Pyre") Plain.

As the Madzimbabwe return to prominence, the Ghost Citadel has become a kind of "Ancestral Chantry" because it was built by the oldest of their sect. Madzimbabwe scholars occasionally visit it to learn from the Archmaster himself. The Ghost Citadel was designed to accommodate far more mages than it currently holds. It seems that Senex is expecting company.

Smoke from Truce's cigarette fills the room. Hetirck waves it out of her face; he nods and walks outside.

I follow him, catching the door before it closes. The stars are out; Truce looks up at them.

"Well?" My fists are clenched.

"Well, what?"

"Can you believe this shit?" I kick a flat rock aside. "Mighty Senex wants us to abandon Earth so we can indulge his attempt to spin the Big Wheel? He's not my Guru, Truce. I don't have to listen to a goddamn thing he says."

"You should have a Guru. I should have a Guru. I agree with him."

"I know what you mean. Bastard trips out past the Gauntlet and now he —" *Wait a minute.* "What did you say?"

"I agree with him. We can only do so much. You know Janine's thing with the bridge? That's the world, Eve. We keep polishing and replacing the surface, but the supports are crumbling beneath us. There's just too much damage to repair the old way."

"Let me get this straight. You're saying that we've been wasting our time?"

He points to the sky. "Look over there. Track down and to the right from Polaris."

"I don't see anything."

"Look with Citta sight."

I breathe, feel the flower open in my temple and look.

The spirit-star is the red of a bead of blood, swollen from the vein and ready to splash earthward.

"I've only read about it. This is the first time I've seen it myself."

"The signs are here. Akrites'Moloch. The rise of demons and dead things from the roots of the earth. Now this; the Ixos Folio calls it the *Eye of Iblis.*"

"We followed the old ways, sowing and reaping souls with care and moderation — and it *didn't* work. Since the fall of Helekar and the Reckoning, real Gurus have been in short supply; technically, we don't even constitute a genuine Chakra, you and I. How do we know that wiser people than ourselves haven't wanted us to change our ways before? Now we have a Chela from a real Guru — perhaps the only Guru we can count on — telling us that there's a new direction to take.

"How long do you want to play it safe, Evelyn? If this isn't a time for grand gestures — if *this* isn't the time to scourge the world — I don't know what is."

"So we just let the Sleepers wither on the vine?"

He grimaces and sweeps his arm toward the distant lights of Seattle. "They had their chance to redeem themselves and refused it! This is the Age of Kali. The prophecies tell us that they'll forget true dharma. In that respect they've proven to be literally correct. They treat the poor like pigs, the rich like gods and grind their world underfoot.

"Fuck 'em. I'll take Senex up on his offer and help his rite burn away the rot in the Wheel. Sleepers can either change their ways or get caught in the tide!"

"You've got the Jhor running deep in you, Truce."

"Don't I?" he says, marching for the door. "Doesn't the world?"

THE CIRCLE OF THE LIVING: ORGANIZATION



The Euthanatos is a loosely organized Tradition at all but the highest levels. As a syncretic Tradition they never came to any easy consensus beyond the precepts of the *Chodona*; asking for a rigid chain of command would offend many of the factions' internal customs.

Nonetheless, the Tradition clings to its most ancient origins when it comes to recognizing ability, favoring the ancient ties between Guru (mentor) and Chela (disciple). The student/teacher bond is paramount, because it is seen to be the most important and sacred relationship that one fate mage can have to another. Being a Euthanatos mentor is no easy task; guiding apprentices to the brink of death and instructing novices in their sacred duty can be an adventure — or horror — all its own.

THE DIKSHA: DEATH AND LIFE AGAIN

Many (though not all) Euthanatoi Awaken through a near-death experience. Regardless of the circumstances, all Euthanatoi must undergo the near-death of the Diksha rite before they are considered to be members of the Tradition. Without the Diksha, one may not even call herself an apprentice of the Tradition. Before the event, an Acolyte is allowed to leave the Wheel-

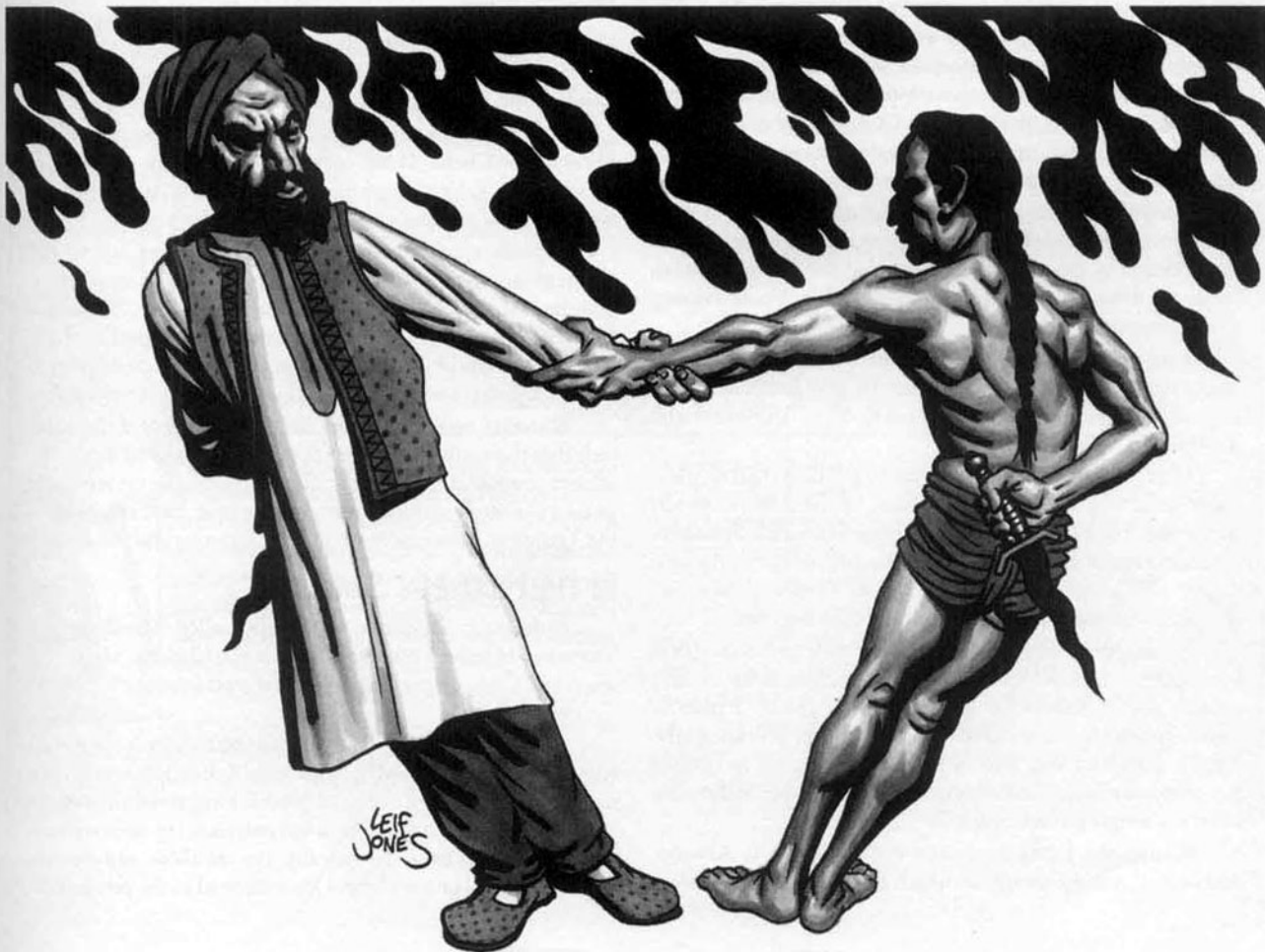
turners whenever she pleases. After the Diksha, she bears the mark of the Tradition and is expected to obey its codes.

Every Diksha is unique. Some sects prefer solemn ceremonies, such as the three priestesses who watch over a Pomegranate Deme initiation or the excruciating impalement and hanging Diksha of the Gallowsmen. Others prefer to take the quickest route off the mortal coil and use a convenient method that won't permanently damage the initiate.

Before the Reckoning, the vast majority of Diksha — regardless of form — were performed with the Agama rite. The new death mage experienced existence as a ghost for a brief period, then returned to the upper world with a renewed sense of the value of life and death's vital place in the turning of the Wheel.

Now that the Underworld is a howling wind of shearing spirit-stuff, however, the Agama Sojourn is difficult to perform without risking the subject's soul. A number of haphazard replacements are slowly being formalized into new rites. These include temporarily shutting down an aspirant's vital signs, filling his mind with the emptiness of un-being, or merging his consciousness with a dying person or a wraith.

Progressive Euthanatoi treat the Diksha as they would any other act that alters a person's destiny. Instead of making all students undergo the same "death," they prescribe different Diksha



depending on the aspirant's mental state, physical condition and magical talents. If the student is particularly precocious, a teacher may ask her to perform the rite herself while he stands by to guide her. These more personalized methods seem to preserve the mental health of new Shravaki (apprentices). The Diksha stops being a deadly ordeal and becomes an exploration of what it means to live.

THE BONE-LITTERED ROAD

Rank has its privileges, but in the Thanatoic system it carries the twin responsibilities of teaching and guarding the Wheel from corruption. Thus, rank determines what these responsibilities are above conferring any other benefits. Skilled death mages are recognized for what they do instead of their political skills—though in any close race for recognition, political acumen is certainly an asset.

A **Shravaka** is an apprentice of the lowest level. Shravaki are given intense magical tutelage and rote training in the *Chodona*. They are absolutely beholden to the orders of their mentors—but Gurus rarely exercise this authority beyond laying down some common-sense laws. Shravaki “graduate” when they learn either more than one Initiate-ranked or one Disciple-ranked Sphere. They may not pursue assassinations; their magical skill and moral discipline is thought to be insufficient for the task.

Chelas are the disciples of a particular Guru, and are allowed to administer to Good Death. At this stage, they are left to pursue magical training as they see fit, consulting with their mentor for advice when they need to. Their training emphasizes moral principles. Religion, philosophy and law teach a student to stick to the *Chodona* in the face of rage, fear or selfish temptations. According to Council standards, a Chela would usually be considered a Disciple or Adept. Even a very capable Wheel-turner may remain at this stage, however, if he can't internalize Thanatoic ethics. Technically, a Chela may leave his Guru as long as another is willing to take him in, but the lack of qualified mentors means that many skilled Euthanatoi make their way without them.

Many Chelas defy the custom out of necessity; there simply aren't enough suitable Gurus to go around. Most Wheel-turners are saddened by this, but others claim that this has potential to excise the flawed customs that let mages such as Voormas creep into the system.

An **Acarya** has proven himself to be trustworthy enough to no longer require supervision by a mentor. He may gather a circle of students if he wishes, but isn't required to do so. An Acarya who does teach is called a **Guru**.

Most Acaryas proved themselves by fulfilling their dharmas under some duress, ensuring that most of them are magically competent. The average Acarya is an Adept of multiple Spheres or a Master of one of them. In addition, a Guru should be familiar with the accepted interpretations of the *Chodona*, Tradition history and an assortment of mundane skills useful to their students.

Paramagurus are almost always Thanatoic archmages (or at least Masters of several Spheres). This distinction, however, isn't granted out of respect for a death mage's power. Rather, a Paramaguru is considered to be a peerless teacher who knows the deepest secrets of the Wheel. For this reason, all recognized Paramagurus teach. The Euthanatos may have other archmages, but those simply go unrecognized.

Finally, the Euthanatos term for an Oracle is **Avatara**. Although this is the term from which the Council derived their

name for the sacred Self, the Thanatoic usage refers to a living manifestation of the Wheel: a divine being who appears in human form to guide human beings to ultimate liberation.

IMPARTING WISDOM AND JUSTICE

The **Chakra** (“circle”) is the basic Thanatoic social organization. It traditionally refers to a group of Chelas and Shravaki studying under one or two Gurus, but the term has since been widened to include any group of Euthanatoi that number three or more. “Chakra” and “cabal” are used equally to describe these groups.

Organized teaching has become more difficult in recent years, so a teaching Chakra may include a group of squabbling Chela and one confused Shravaka, an Acarya hermit being hounded by Chelas, or a number of other variations.

Justice is administered in the context of the Chakra. The accuser and defendant each choose an Acarya (if they are of Chela or Shravaka rank) or Paramaguru (if they are of Acarya rank) to represent them. These advocates agree on a judge of equal rank who decides the verdict.

There is no set presumption of innocence or guilt. The judge simply decides the punishment according to the principles of the *Chodona*, his learned discretion and the needs of all parties involved. He might refer to precedent but isn't bound by it. Be that as it may, most judges (called *Pramatar* by the Chakravanti) make decisions based on past rulings. This is sometimes difficult, as there is no single canonical reference to draw from.

PUNISHMENT

Euthanatoi generally rely on two loose tiers of punishment, but there aren't any set standards. The only guides are the *Chodona* and how Acarya-ranked Wheel-turners interpret it.

Minor offences are punished with reduction to the rank of Shravaka or Chela. These “new” apprentices are given to an Acarya of the judge's choice for supervision. The Acarya imposes any additional punishments or restrictions she wishes.

Any offence that represents an affront to the *Chodona* and results in serious harm to the Tradition (or one of its members) is punished by a quick death at the hands of the judge. Accusing a fellow Wheel-turner of a crime this serious to arrange their death is also punishable by death. The judge executes the guilty party so that the karma generated by his decision won't affect anyone else.

Branding may supplement either punishment if the judge feels that the accused will attempt to escape justice or repeat the offence in another incarnation. The Euthanatos never sentences its own to Gilgul, as this contravenes the most basic teachings of the Tradition. How can death redeem someone without a soul?

IN THE HOUSE OF SOULS

Euthanatos Chantries are usually called **Marabouts**. A Thanatoic Marabout consists of at least two Chakras. The Gurus select one mage of Acarya rank to stand apart from them and lead the entire body.

A Marabout holds at least one **Samashti** every lunar month (the new moon is preferred by followers of Kali and Hekate). Every member of the Marabout is allowed to speak. Most modern Marabouts resolve matters with a free vote or by consensus, but more authoritarian exceptions exist. Technically, custom allows the Acaryas absolute power, but few of them are interested in the privilege.

VARIATIONS

Although the structure remains the same from faction to faction, many Euthanatoi use different titles depending on their cultures and the symbols they use to touch the Great Wheel. The titles above are defaults that are used for intra-Tradition gatherings and internal documents.

The informal, pedagogic nature of Thanatoic society is not to every member's taste. The great latitude given to mentors and the rough justice system strikes them as ironic, given that the Tradition has very strict policies about the Good Death and the treatment of Sleepers. Some factions prefer punishments (like the banishment and werewild customs of the Gallowsmen) that fall outside of the system. Others simply want the Tradition to conform to 21st century standards.

If the Euthanatoi want to enforce the Council of Nine's laws, some reform will be necessary to ensure that they apply consistent standards of justice to their own ranks. After all, how can they claim the privilege if they can't prove that they police their own ranks fairly?

SCARED DUTY AND DOUBT

"I'm not coming along." The words come out of my mouth as soon as I get through the door. Truce is already sitting, leaning forward on his knees with impatience.

"You think this has all been a game, Evelyn?" he says, snapping his head around to look at me. "Maybe you need a goddamn reminder. Maybe the Diksha didn't take in your case."

He leans back to look at the three of us. Janine's looking at me with her mouth open, as if she want to ask a question. Hetirck straightens in her seat with an neutral, almost reptilian expression. One of her hands slowly slides along the broad green leaf of a potted plant and then drifts down to her lap.

"What do you want to say, Chela Truce?" she asks. "I haven't spoken to anyone in the Golden Chalice about this yet and I'd like to know your opinion."

I knew it. He got into the Chalice behind my back.

"Opinion? I've never been shy about sharing those," he says. "I think the whole Tradition is drifting from true knowledge of the Chakradharma. I know we've been coddling this woman." He nods at Janine. "Not telling her the honest truth. Well, here it is."

"We're the only people who will take you, Janine — the only people who *should* take you. You've Awakened, but you aren't safe from your responsibilities. If you're Chakravanti — if you're a Euthanatos like us, you have to be ready to do anything to keep people from straying from their moral duty. You have to lie, cheat, steal and kill as the occasion demands. You think your situation was special? Your Jim was just another sinning face — and it got some dirt thrown on it just like all the others. Eyes open or stitched shut, it all ends the same."

"Tell me, Janine: are you ready to do that? Or are you just going to stick to burying babies?"

Janine stare for a moment, then chokes out the word: "No. I... I can't."

"You can't?" He spits it out with mock sympathy. "What, do you think that we actually *forgave* you? Just because you came back from the dead doesn't mean that you didn't deserve death. You brought yourself back because your soul has a little extra spark. It can evolve and become something greater if it takes the right path. If you're willing to do it takes to keep the world from collapsing — and you know what? You don't get to choose how you go about it!"

"No. There's has to be another way. You — you told me about the bridge, that you could fix things piece by piece before it all collapsed. I can do that. I can help people. Let me help people!" She looks up at me and clenches her fists. "Please, Evelyn! Help me do this!"

I lean in a little and look into her eyes, but I don't know what to say. Then Truce says his piece.

"Then you've gotta die, sweetie. Duty calls, and if you're not up to it, you've gotta meet the Wheel for your sins."

With a little sling step, Theora Hetirck stands, her knees slightly bent as if she's expecting an attack.

"I'll be the judge of that," she says.

FATE'S THREADS: THE FACTIONS



The Euthanatos formed in response to a desire to preserve magic that might not have survived the orthodoxy of its members' cultures. The rites of death and fate were proscribed, driven underground and scorned — even by other mystics. From the Himalayan War onward, the Tradition has always identified itself with a set of vital practices that the world has always tried to persecute.

While this common thread unites them, each culture brought into the Tradition has its own approach to the Wheel-spinning arts. All death mages feel that the similarity between these practices reveals a powerful

underlying truth about the Lokha (Tellurian), but they feel that they must seek the truth through a diverse set of practices. In fact, this diversity proves that the truth of the Wheel is greater than any single paradigm.

There are two factions that do not normally accept Shravaki. The first is the Golden Chalice. One must earn one's place in the Chalice, or be blessed with assassin's talents that the sect cannot afford to ignore. The other is the Albireo. They are the Tradition's elite diplomats; no Wheel-turner is invited to join without having proven her commitment to Euthanatos ideals. These two sects (and, it is rumored, others whose very existence is a secret) are the Vрати ("oaths," or "directives").

CHAKRAVANTI: TENDERS OF THE ETERNAL

Oldest of the organized Thanatoic sects, the Chakravanti define the Tradition's identity. These Euthanatoi trace their descent to the Himalayan War and the successful repulsion of the Akashic Brotherhood from southern India. Already ancient at the time of the Grand Convocation, the Chakravanti have always maintained their ways while encouraging the Tradition to find the Wheel's path in an ever-expanding array of cultures and methods.

This has split the sect in two directions. The Natatapas and other traditionalist Chakravanti are content to let new beliefs merely confirm the truth of the Cycle. They assign innovation a secondary role in magical practice. Meanwhile, Lhaxmists prowl the cutting edge of technology and metaphysics. They argue that new ideas don't just confirm the old orthodoxy — they call it into question. These radical mages want to update the Thanatoic paradigm for the 21st century.

Philosophy: The Chakravanti adhere to the core of Euthanatos belief. Souls are eternal and reincarnate through the ages. Human lives prosper or wither according to the karma that they accrue. Siddhi are the fruits of enlightened knowledge and allow a competent mage to contact the oversoul, exchanging her karmic attributes for that of a divine being or universal property.

Titles: The Chakravanti conform to the system of titles used by the Tradition as a whole because these titles originate with the sect. They do, however, recognize a number of other positions. A *Muni* ("sage") serves as an advisor and spiritual counselor for Chakravanti Marabouts. A *Pramatar* ("judge") is an Acarya who is regularly called on to decide matters of law and whose interpretations of the *Chodona* are considered authoritative.

Sects: The Chakravanti have a common identity in their cultural origins, but they don't administer themselves as a single body except when the occasion demands it. The last time there was a specifically Chakravanti gathering was during and after the Reckoning, when the Indian sect met to plan their response to the horrors of the time.

There used to be many more Chakravanti sects. Under Akashic pressure the Handura disintegrated, while the Dacoits degenerated into bandits and killers for hire. In recent times, the Sapindya Sadananda (Consanguinity of Eternal Joy) were outed as Naraki. Few of its members survived the subsequent purges; most Euthanatoi consider the extermination of Helekar's offspring to be an ongoing concern.

The *Natatapas* ("holy dancers") are the single oldest Thanatoic sect in existence, going back to Vedavati and Subranamian's victory over the Akashic Brotherhood in 354 BC. In the ashes of the Akashic fortress of Ayamandala, the allied proto-Thanatoics united under the two Acaryas, forming the Consanguinity of Eternal Joy and the Natatapas. Each sect would complement the other, just as their leaders had united to create the Iron Avatar that won the war.

Following this doctrine, both sects originally divided themselves by gender. The Natatapas were the female half of the divine union. As the Chakravanti grew they eventually abandoned this scheme, but *Dakini* (female Wheel-turners) still oversee most of the sect's major rites.

The Natatapas are the most conservative Thanatoic sect. Their arts focus on merging with Vedic gods and goddesses, and channeling that power to change the world. Most Dancers specialize in a handful of deities, though a few dedicate their lives to uniting with a single manifestation of the godhead.

The sect also cleaves to the traditional Agama sojourn to perform the Diksha. This is a little easier for the Natatapas because of their access to the Tradition's most potent Marabouts, but it still claims the lives of many apprentices as the whirlwind of screaming souls claims its due. This has led to a decline in the number of fully initiated Natatapas. The survivors are hardened mages who preserve the lore of the Underworld.

Even though it clings to ancient roots, the *Devasu* ("divine arrow") is the newest sect in the entire Tradition. With the fall of the Consanguinity of Eternal Joy, the Natatapas decided that it needed a new counterpart. Several Natatapas assassins united with a few independent Indian death mages to form the sect in 1997.

As replacements for the House of Helekar, the *Devasu* have performed an admirable job. The sect formed just in time; their talents were pushed to the limit during the Reckoning, when Technocratic squads attempted to seize Chakravanti territory around the demon-king's battlefield. While the Chakravanti were sympathetic to the Union's desire to monitor the region, the *Devasu* prevented the operation from turning into a wholesale occupation by cursing and killing Technocrats who strayed too close to Thanatoic holdings. While the confusion of the time helped make this a success, it remains to be seen whether or not the Technocracy will retaliate.

The Devasu's magic focuses on Rudra: archer of the Vedic gods, father of the purifying spirits known as the Maruts and aspect of Shiva. They use yogic discipline and martial arts to channel Rudra's power in defense of the Euthanatos' traditional lands and Marabouts. Unlike the old Consanguinity, the Devasu does not have a mandate to ward off internal threats. This is left to the Albireo.

The *Lhaxsmists* are the most revolutionary sect of the Chakravanti, if not the entire Euthanatos. Originally a subcult of the Natatapas, the sect expanded their devotion to the Goddess of Fortune to include other manifestations of chance. As mathematics and quantum physics arose, the group's ranks swelled to the point where their parent sect recognized them as a separate body.

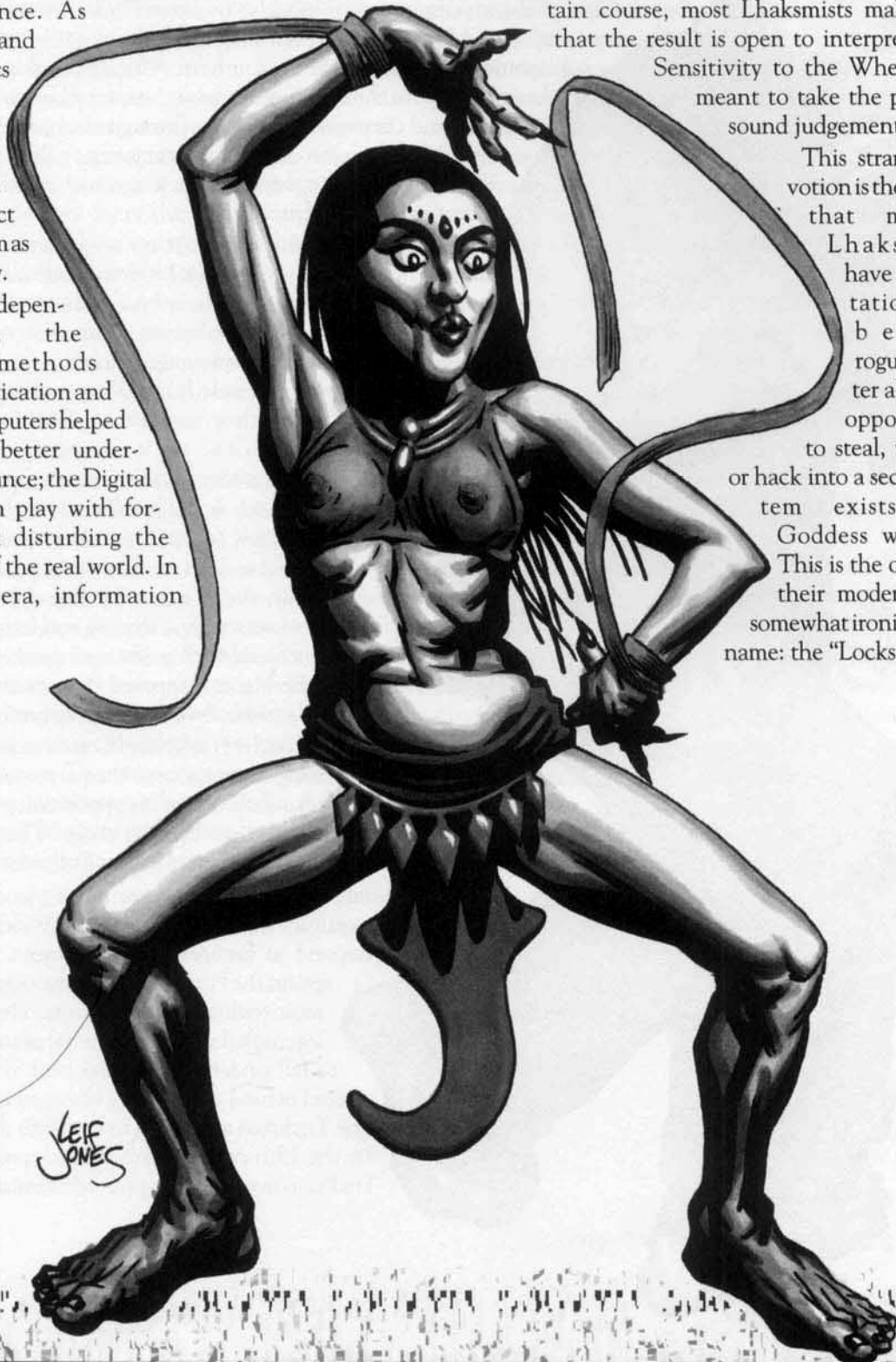
As an independent sect, the *Lhaxsmists*' methods grew in sophistication and diversity. Computers helped them gain a better understanding of chance; the Digital Web let them play with fortune without disturbing the karmic flow of the real world. In the modern era, information

theory, chaos mathematics and gambling are all seen as signs of the Goddess at work.

The *Lhaxsmists* follow an unusual dharma. They believe in trusting Lhaxsmi to the point where a roll of the dice or flipping a coin will settle an important decision. This isn't as arbitrary as it might seem. For one thing, command over Entropy means that "trusting to luck" manifests as testing the mage's enlightened desire against the dictates of karma. If a *Lhaxsmist* can't flip a coin her way then she isn't meant to take the path she desires. Furthermore, while chance may dictate a certain course, most *Lhaxsmists* make sure that the result is open to interpretation.

Sensitivity to the Wheel isn't meant to take the place of sound judgement.

This strange devotion is the reason that modern *Lhaxsmists* have a reputation for being rogues. After all, if the opportunity to steal, win big or hack into a secure system exists, the Goddess wills it! This is the origin of their modern (and somewhat ironic) nickname: the "Locksmiths."



MADZIMBABWE: THE COURT OF GHOSTS

Popular legend tells of the Madzimbabwe arriving at the Grand Convocation in search of the "Zeerda Rostam." Apparently, the Sirdar Rustam had visited Africa on his final voyage — from which he had never returned. Euthanatos history portrayed the Madzimbabwe as a young faction brought into the Tradition's fold during the Grand Convocation.

In fact, the Madzimbabwe existed for many centuries as an organized group with shared beliefs. Like Thanatoic mages everywhere, they were rarely appreciated by their own culture.

History and legend tell the story of Great Zimbabwe, the citadel at the heart of a sub-Saharan empire. Madzimbabwe traditions link them to the site, which was inhabited as early as 200 AD. They maintain that Great Zimbabwe was a common meeting place for southern Africa's Awakened; as such, it benefitted from their wisdom. Iron and strong stone strengthened the people, and they spread their arts through trade, warfare and philosophical discourse. Smaller structures, called *madzimbabwe* ("courts"), still dot the region as a testament to the accomplishments of the ancients.

The name of the faction is no coincidence. Many of the "courts" housed powerful Nodes. Modern Madzimbabwe still prize these sites, which represent their heritage as well as a source of mystical power. The Madzimbabwe claim that once prosperity flowed into the courts, some mages turned to power for its own sake. These *Ngoma* counseled their Sleeper patrons to grasp for more power than they needed, contributing to Great Zimbabwe's fall.

As the Mwene Mutapa and Rowzi empires waxed, the Madzimbabwe took it upon themselves to cleave to the ancient ways. They listened closely to Great Zimbabwe's ghosts. When the dead couldn't find peace, the Courts would seek out the reason why and eliminate it, using anonymous means such as disease and barren land. They fulfilled the role of both priest and death-dealing witch. Naturally, the *Ngoma* opposed them, seeing corruption where the Madzimbabwe enforced natural law.

Both groups approached the Grand Convocation. The *Ngoma* abandoned the gathering in response to the patronizing attitudes of the Council, but the Madzimbabwe saw an opportunity to reclaim the place of honor long denied them by their rivals. They accepted the basic tenets of the *Chodona* and joined the Euthanatos.

Madzimbabwe Euthanatoi were never plentiful. From the 17th century on, the Courts were divided over how to respond to European encroachment. While victory against the Portuguese was encouraging, it drew the most traditional mages away. The problem only intensified when the sub-Saharan nations began to fall under the colonial heel. The mages who stayed behind were largely absorbed into the body of the Tradition and began to lose their distinctive style. By the 19th century, only Senex's presence kept the Tradition from declaring the Madzimbabwe defunct.



The 20th century saw the fall of the old colonial regimes. Freed from that struggle, the Madzimbabwe took a fresh interest in the Euthanatos. Now Madzimbabwe numbers are on the rise, and African Euthanatoi are returning to their roots.

Philosophy: Madzimbabwe are the secret benefactors of their people. Ancestors are to be revered, and guidance of the dead plays a vital role in the affairs of the living. Thus, ghosts and spirits must be propitiated and honored. Magic taps into both sides of the Cycle by using the wisdom of the dead to guide the living world. This also counteracts the influence of evil spirits, whom the Madzimbabwe paradigm holds responsible for physical ailments and bad luck.

Death is a sacred tool that should never be used to intimidate. Madzimbabwe witchcraft is anonymous. Plague and poisoning are the favored tools to dispose of those who serve evil or reject the teachings of their ancestors. People may decry the witch that brings ill-fortune upon them without ever realizing that he's their neighbor and ultimate benefactor.

Titles: The Madzimbabwe use their own titles when speaking to one another or discussing themselves apart from the rest of the Euthanatos. A *Sviriko* is an apprentice who has just begun to commune with her Avatar (often identified with a spiritual or blood ancestor, particularly in the case of the Ta Kiti). A *N'anga* is (in addition to the name of the continental stream of the Madzimbabwe) a fully initiated mage capable of venerating the dead and guiding the living.

Sects: The Madzimbabwe consider the *N'anga* to be their orthodox sect. It is the one to which Senex belongs and isn't even given a separate name unless it's necessary to differentiate them from the Ta Kiti. The faction's revivalist movement also uses sectarian titles to denote members of the Courts who cling to ancestral practices. Since many Madzimbabwe combine their Arts with common Thanatoic methods, this is sometimes seen as unnecessarily divisive. After all, "non-traditional" Madzimbabwe have been holding the fort while their brethren were elsewhere.

The *N'anga* are shamans and the direct inheritors of Great Zimbabwe's cultural riches. *N'anga* Madzimbabwe are usually devoted to one or more of their ancestors. They watch closely for the influence of evil spirits, to which the *mudzimu* spirits they honor are sensitive. These spirits may be wraiths, Umbrood, or even projections of the mage's Avatar. *N'anga* eschew making precise classifications and believe that all of them issue wisdom from the same source.

This lack of differentiation is not a policy that is pursued out of ignorance. *N'anga* are perfectly aware that there's a difference between each type of entity. They prefer to take the long view, looking at the supernatural forces that spirits represent as parts of the movement of the larger Cycle. This actually provides some advantages, as these Madzimbabwe will examine their own Avatar's urgings as critically as they would the testimony of a ghost or nature spirit.

Ta Kiti are Thanatoic Voudunists and Santerians who trace their origins back to the Shona, and thus the original Madzimbabwe. This sect has declined in recent times, as its members either drift into the Dreamspeakers and Cult of Ecstasy or simply pursue solitary magic in their home cultures. The *Ta Kiti* call on Iwa or Orishas: spiritually advanced (some would say Ascended) ancestor spirits who can see the full course of the Cycle. These spirits provide the powers of prophecy and preternatural skill to their devotees. Other Euthanatoi believe that they merge with a divine being, but the *Ta Kiti* think that it works the other way around.

Modern *Ta Kiti* tend to be torn between the advantages that membership in a Tradition has to offer and the purity of their own beliefs. The Euthanatos take an abstract view of gods and ancestors that isn't entirely compatible with *Ta Kiti* views. Over time, they've distanced themselves from their *N'anga* cousins.

Nonetheless, *Ta Kiti* practices have had a tremendous influence on the Euthanatos. Many death mages use Voudun or Santerian methods. Whatever happens to the sect, their Arts will continue to be an important part of the Tradition's magical repertoire.

HIEROCHTHONOI: PRIESTS OF FATE

The Euthanatos use Vedic customs to define themselves, but the Greek Arts have always influenced the Tradition. Still, these are not necessarily the methods favored by other Greco-Roman pagans. The Hierochthonoi ("priests of the earth") don't offer traditional sacrifices or conventional worship; they'd rather sacrifice themselves by doing their duty.

The chthonic cults trace back to the Homer's time. Besides the twelve gods of the Olympian pantheon, there have always been other, darker gods and goddesses, toiling at the business of regulating life and death while their cousins used the Earth as both plaything and battleground. After Troy fell, sages talked of the *Ixos*, a cult of sorcerer-spies who carried out Cassandra's prophecy. It was said that they ensorcelled Myrmidons to pass invisibly through Iliion's gates, inspiring the "Trojan Horse" of popular myth. *Ixoi* were also rumored to be the true cause of Agamemnon's death and Odysseus' tribulations, making them more than just Achaean servants. Were they mercenaries, or impartial followers of Necessity?

Chthonic gods like the Fates were usually worshiped far from the cities, in caves or natural sanctuaries where the presence of the Underworld and the wordless flow of nature could be felt. By the time Alexander pushed his army to India, the cults had established common rites. Though distrusted at times, the early Hierochthonoi were employed as healers and necromancers by Alexander's generals. In India, they first encountered the Chakravanti: death-wise enemies with skills similar to their own. This touched off exchanges between the two groups. By the fall of Rome, each was somewhat familiar with the other.

The decline of the Roman Empire cut off further communication until the First Samashti. By that time, Christianity and Islam had forced the Hierochthonic cults underground, but the old popularity of chthonic mystery cults prepared them for the difficult times ahead. Of these, the Pomegranate Deme rose to preeminence and became the overall name for the chthonic Euthanatoi.

At the Grand Convocation, the Pomegranate Deme were only too happy to renew ties with their Indian brethren. As Europeans, they gave the fledgling Tradition a stronger position in the Council. In return, their roots were honored when the assembled death mages agreed on the name of their Tradition and its heraldic sign: the Omega. Their guardian order strode out into the field of the Ascension War. These Knights of Radamanthys learned to cooperate with other Traditions and gave the secretive Wheel-turners an honorable face.

Philosophy: Fate gives its proper portion to each being, but the foolish and prideful overstep their bounds by violating propriety and the natural order. Wanton destruction, desecration of the dead and betraying the laws of hospitality are all examples of hubris and punishable by misfortune or death.

Magic draws upon the power of the chthonic gods who regulate *moria* (fate) and *thanatoio* (the portion of death that comes to all). By living a life of *arete* (excellence according to one's station) and *eleos* (compassionate wisdom and piety) the mage earns the right to take on divine attributes, manifest the power of the Furies and stand as the representative of Fate and Death.

Titles: Hierochthonic Euthanatoi switch freely between ancestral titles and those that are standard to the Tradition as a whole.

As key players in the formation of the Euthanatos they feel that either convention suits them.

A death mage of any rank is called a *Mantis*. *Eyrines* ("Furies") are mages who dispense the Good Death. A Master is an *Anax Mantis* ("ruler of the wise") and the greatest mages are *Tarchuoi* ("godlike"). The head of the Pomegranate Deme is known as the *Triops*; her counterpart in the Knights of Radamanthys is the *Basileus*. Both positions remain unfilled, waiting for the mage wise or heroic enough to earn the respect of an entire sect.

Sects: The Hierochthonoi are not an organized body, but a classification based on cultural affinity. Despite their common origins, the Pomegranate Deme and Knights of Radamanthys are independent bodies and approach the Tradition as separate factions.

They are strong allies, however, and extend their friendship to other Wheel-tuners who share their origins. From time to time, Euthanatoi outside of either sect learn Greco-Roman practices, either as solitary practitioners or members of marginal cults. These Hierochthonoi are usually respected as "cousins" of both sects.

The *Pomegranate Deme* are an amalgam of pre-Christian mystery cults centered around the worship of the Triple Goddess of Persephone, Kore and Demeter. The modern sect recognizes these goddesses as a metaphor for the larger three-fold cycle of creation. The magical aspect of the Cycle is embodied as Hekate, God-



ness of magic and death, while the fundamental structure of reality is regulated by the Moerae (Fates). In all cases, the Maiden represents primal potential of Creation, the Mother gives birth to its form, and the Crone presides over its necessary end.

A few Pomegranate Deme have mastered the Arts of eternal life. They hide their numbers, but are rumored to belong to a secret organization known as the *Cabiri*. By binding her avatar to a virtuous shade, the mage uses both halves of the Cycle to regenerate and reinhabit her old body. She loses the ability to use Sphere magic, but learns potent linear arts to compensate. Game information about these Thanatoic "mummies" can be found in **Mummy: The Resurrection**.

The *Knights of Radamanthys* originated as symbolic "judges of the dead" in Pomegranate Deme mystery rites, but grew into their own during the middle ages, when their parent sect needed a guardian order to protect them from church authorities. In 1144 they formed a chivalric order called the Knights of Nyssa. Supposedly dedicated to seeking out and protecting the holy places of Asia

Minor, the order served as cover and protection for the chthonic cults of Greece and Persia.

After the Grand Convocation, the Knights took on their new title (no deception being needed among their equally persecuted comrades) and were tasked with fighting the Ascension War alongside the other Traditions. They proved to be almost as skilled as the Akashic Brotherhood in the arts of battle and were easier to find in the West, so their services were in high demand. To this day, the Council pays the Knights in Tass (normally one pawn per rank per week) to fight outside of their own cabals.

The Knights' magic centers on vows of loyalty to their patron. They promise to exercise his wisdom when the judge who should live or die. This combines the knightly sacraments with adulation of the chthonic gods (often disguised as saints or specific images of the Madonna). Travel among other Traditions opened them to other influences, so they tend to be more open minded about magical techniques. Mobile and cosmopolitan, they use the Wheel-turning Arts that suit them.

THE ORPHIC CIRCLE

One would expect that a Grecian death-cult — the Pomegranate Deme — would've heard of other, similar organizations. The Orphic Circle, a hidden remnant of an ancient organization of priests and mystics, certainly fits that bill. The Orphic Circle formed in response to the manipulations of ancient vampire-priests combining their necromantic knowledge with prophecy and a following of willing mortal sorcerers. Bound by powerful oaths, the members of the Circle maintained a shrouded existence from which they exerted subtle influence across the lands of the dead and carefully avoided entanglements with other supernatural entities. Given that the Orphic Circle was also prone to meddling in ghostly and infernal matters, the Greek Euthanatos would naturally be expected to step in and "correct" this group of malicious magicians. Despite the Pomegranate Deme's vigilance, however, they spent most of their existence unaware of the Circle's exploits.

With their prophetic foresight and combination of supernatural allies, the Orphic Circle has consistently managed to sidestep the Euthanatos. Early in the formation of the Tradition, a few members even fell to the blandishments of the Circle and used their influence to cover its existence. Later, the Circle became painfully aware that Euthanatoic magic might be able to break its oaths of secrecy, and switched to a different tactic: Keeping the Euthanatos busy with *other* problems.

Any time the Pomegranate Deme came close to investigating Orphic affairs, a Technocratic agency — conveniently alerted by "friends and sympathizers" who were themselves friends of associates of distant string-pullers among the Orphics — would show up. As far as the Pomegranate Deme were concerned, any time they undertook an investigation of mysterious death-magics tied to old Grecian rites, they found out about it at the same time as the Union. Characteristically, the Union didn't leave much behind in the way of evidence. By the time the Union showed up, the Orphics had already cleared out their holdings, and the Euthanatos didn't even have crumbs left over to research. End

result: the Union, since it doesn't understand the basis of the mystical conspiracy, chalks it up to the leftovers of some deviant group; the Euthanatos, who might be able to put the pieces together, never get the evidence they need to do so.

When the Orphic Circle's conspiracy blew up (literally), they no longer had the influence to pull off the aforementioned sort of dodge. Instead, they turned to giving the Euthanatos a bigger internal problem. Since the Underworld contains copies of all important destroyed records, it was a simple matter for the Circle's members to stumble across some old occult writings. The writings pointed to hidden conspiracies that later impacted the Euthanatos and their Tradition-mates.

While the Circle neither knew nor cared about the Traditions as a whole, the Euthanatos needed deflection if the Circle was to have any chance at rebuilding — so a few documents were carefully released. The Euthanatos discovered a still-extant library of others, and suddenly an entire House of the Order of Hermes became a problem for the Euthanatos. In the resulting conflict, the Circle managed to keep the Euthanatos firmly affixed on their problems with the rest of the Traditions and on *internal* policing, instead of hunting down outside magicians whose practices are tainted.

So now it's war in the Traditions — but the outcome may not be all that's expected. Surviving Janissaries have noted that all the information about the Janissary-Ksirafai connection is dated, at best. Euthanatoic agents have realized that some new Janissary recruits have nothing Technocratic about their modern magical training and beliefs. As a result, the Janissaries may survive after all, while the Euthanatos may become the *de facto* internal security of the Traditions. If that happens, the remnants of the Circle may be in for a very rough time, as both groups start questioning where the whole fight started and put their significant investigative capabilities to work.

For more about the current Orphic Circle, see **Hunter: First Contact**.

AIDED: BARDS OF THE DEATH-TALE

Despite being at the far end of Indo-European migration, the Aided ("death tale") nonetheless bear strong similarities to their Chakravanti cousins. The riotous history of Celtic Europe has left them with little inkling of their origins, but the remaining old Ogham writings recall druids responsible for the ritual sacrifice of kings. This was supposed to guarantee the procession of the natural cycle by "killing" the winter, allowing the growing months to appear. Related duties involved the declaration of Geasa. While most of these prohibitions ensured the well-being of the people, restrictive Geasa bound to doom prideful kings and heroes were also granted. These would humble or destroy those who tried to cheat the Wheel of its due.

By the rise of Rome, the Chakravanti had an inkling of their Celtic counterpart's existence. The Sirdar Rustam followed the rumors and discovered Aided in the British Isles. The Death Tale could still practice openly there, but they felt the fist of the Church and Reason clenching. In response, they sent a cautious delegation to the First Samashti. Their leaders hid among the delegation and let their apprentices speak for them.

At the Grand Convocation, the Aided earned a reputation for contrariness that has followed them to this day. The wit of the Aided's Thistle of Pwyll flushed out Nephandi and Templar spies, but also made it perfectly clear that the faction had no love for either Christians or their fellow pagans. The Verbena attempted to recruit them, only to be told that their Arts were founded upon a lie. "If the gods revel in life," said the Thistle, "doesn't it strike you as odd that they like to take it away so very often?" Instead of celebrating the power of gods and heroes, the Aided preferred to meditate upon their dooms.

Modern Aided continue to be outspoken about pagan theology, death and the nature of the soul. The faction is at its strongest in Ireland and North America's Celtic diaspora, but have little interest in promoting a Celtic revival. Part of the reason stems back to the Order of the Black Willow.

Two hundred years ago, the Aided allowed a popular movement called the Order of the Black Willow to promote their teachings among the English gentry. Unfortunately, the Order was tempted by the wealth (most of them were poor Irish) and decadence of their new surroundings. They abandoned Aided doctrine for a selfish ethos of their own devising. The rampant infernalism that came to infest their ranks made them fodder for the Death Crane Aided; the experiment has not been repeated. Compounded with the Aided's rejection of conventional pagan values, this has made Aided recruiting and apprenticeship a careful, secretive process.

Philosophy: The Aided believe that every being is bound by Geasa that direct each individual to true destiny. Great rewards are balanced by severe Geasa, so a fate mage should be humble and passive outside of her chosen path. Fools who break their Geasa doom themselves and proceed to a new incarnation.

Occasionally, the gods will task a cunning man or woman with administering their interests on earth. In this case, the god takes on the mage's doom and she can act freely — but abandoning a god's path is even worse than straying from your own.

Titles: A *Vate* is an Aided of Apprentice or Initiate rank who learns her own Geasa and essential magical skills. When her training is complete she



joins the *Tuatha de Medb*. As children of the crone that betrayed Cu Chulainn, they are freed from adherence to the pagan virtues of valor and set about their tasks. The Aided use the standard Thanatoic titles to distinguish power among outsiders, but largely ignore distinctions or rank amongst themselves.

Sects: The Aided have a strong group identity, but do distinguish between different professions. Individual Aided may switch from one practice to another, devote equal time to both or simply pursue a more obscure aspect of the faction's magical heritage. Most Aided have a very practical outlook toward their Arts. For this reason, they are known for their ability to dispense the Good Death with a minimum of ornament and distraction. Other workings display the same hard-nosed utility; the Death Tale keeps spiritual matters to itself; they use magic to get results, not demonstrate their "enlightenment."

Corriguinech ("death cranes") are the Aided's killers. Most follow the Morrighu: the Celtic Triple Goddess of war and death. Their name comes from a spell used by the god Lugh to draw martial strength from the Otherworld. This "crane magic" is the sect's stock in trade, combining poetic curses, hand to hand combat and the "Sack of the Fianna." This last is filled with tools that, aside from their practical purpose, represent the

treasures of the gods. Traditionally they include a knife sacred to Manannan the sea god, bones representing the death price for Lugh's father and an iron hook consecrated to Goibniu (which doubles as a grappling hook or a weapon in a pinch).

Aside from these foci, the Death Cranes use rage to enhance their physical abilities and channel the Triple Goddess. When given the opportunity, most take additional mystical Geasa upon themselves. These enhance their abilities but eventually result in their doom, making the most dedicated *Corriguinech* among the shortest-lived.

Filidh are seers and practical wizards. When they can, they carry yew staffs or distaffs (a staff with a forked tip) as foci and badges of office. Many Sleepers who have been raised in a Celtic culture know to trust the mage that carries one. Weathercrafting, dowsing and animal husbandry are the community-oriented arts that rural members prefer. In the city, moneymaking magic and protective spells fill similar needs. *Filidh* watch over small communities and tend to resent interference. Dianchecht is a popular patron, though Donn is given his due when one of the flock dies. In that case, the *Filidh* watches over the grave to prevent the deceased from rising again — a phenomenon that's become all too common these days.

VRATI: ⊕ATHBOUND TO THE WHEEL

If the other factions are thought of as the Euthanatos' roots and branches, the Vrati (Sanskrit for "directives") are its flowers. Each sect is supposed to represent the Thanatoic ideal in its purest form. The death mages are a more democratic Tradition than most, but they recognize that the Chakradharma is a difficult duty. In sensitive or grave situations, that duty can only be entrusted to a few.

Each Vrata has a single purpose and selects Euthanatoi who will best fulfill it. For the most part, this means that Euthanatoi never undergo initiation or apprenticeship in a Vrata. Instead, they earn their place by excelling in another sect. The sole exception is the Golden Chalice, who will occasionally take a *truly* exceptional Shravaka and give them intensive training in the assassin's arts. These "born killers" rarely fail the Tradition, but younger Euthanatoi question the practice on the grounds that it promotes Jhor and stunts spiritual development.

Vrata are banned from one activity: providing leaders to the Tradition. While the Euthanatos is rather decentralized; individual factions and prestigious Gurus work for a rough consensus under the terms of the *Chodona*. The Vrati are supposed to exempt themselves from this process and simply obey the popular mood and the advice of notable Wheel turners outside the elite sects.

At least, that's the way it's *supposed* to be. The Albireo and the Golden Chalice took direct action against House Janissary without consulting any other Acaryas. This is controversial among both Euthanatoi and other Council mages. Some Euthanatoi fear losing their autonomy to an Albireo junta, while others applaud the swift response to a threat to the Traditions—one that, some argue, should have come when the House of Helekar turned Naraki.

Sects: The Vrati are separate from one another, but share information with each other more readily than with other factions. They trust those who undergo the ordeal of membership. Still, most Vrata Euthanatoi retain close ties to their old faction. This encourages the other factions to trust them and keeps the magical skills that they learned as Shravaki from getting rusty.

The *Golden Chalice* are assassins who trace their origins to Byzantium and ultimately Troy, claiming kinship with the legendary Ixos of the Homeric Age. The classic Golden Chalice Arts specialize in alchemy and the invocation of the planetary powers. Perfected in the last bloom of Rome, their magic has a some-

what Hermetic air about it. Contemporary members of the Chalice combine these methods with their native magic and bleeding edge technomancy. The Golden Chalice aggressively embraces new technology and the latest espionage and covert operations methods.

The Chalice specializes in neutralizing powerful Nephandi and the corrupt elites of Sleeper society. It divides itself into the Alpha and Omega Protocols. The Alpha Protocol deals with subtle missions, such as infiltrating Nephandic Labyrinths or corrupt governments. Members are trained in disguise, misdirection and poisoning. A few specialists also use computer hacking to gather information and attack systems through both the mundane Net and the Digital Web.

The Omega Protocol enters the scene when subtlety is undesirable or unnecessary. Magically enhanced marksmanship, demolitions and wilderness skills all serve them as Thanatoic soldiers. Hostage retrieval is their specialty; captors are executed and the hostage is rushed to safety.

Unfortunately, the Omega Protocol is hindered by a chronic lack of funds. While they may have the skills required to use all of the tools of special operations, they usually have access to a bare minimum of equipment.

Both Protocols are headed by "Iago." This sexless, bronze-masked figure has existed throughout the sect's history and has never been replaced, leading most members to believe that he, she, or it is actually a succession of anonymous Euthanatoi.

Chakramuni ("Sages of the Wheel") track the passage of avatars through their incarnations as mages. They are most knowledgeable about Thanatoic incarnations but attempt to keep soul chronologies of as many mages as possible.

Many Euthanatoi study the passage of the Atman as a hobby, even if it only includes researching their own past lives. Chakramuni make this their primary profession. They hope that the study of avatars will lead to new discoveries about the nature of karma and the Lokha. On a more practical note, the Chakramuni also uncover ancient dangers and enhance the Tradition's understanding of its own history. There are rumors that the Sages mark some mages for elimination based on the forbidden knowledge that may lurk in their sacred souls, but few believe such hearsay.

The Chakramuni have a peculiar relationship with the Akashic Brotherhood and their own Avatar scholars, the Karmachakra



ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

Except for the Golden Chalice, characters may not belong to a Vrata unless they've proven themselves in another sect and pass a strict set of entrance requirements. Characters without the required expertise but who excel in another discipline (whether magical or mundane) will occasionally be asked to provide training and support for a Vrata Chakra. This may even include active participation in a Vrata's project, but the arrangement is still a temporary one. Sometimes these operations can help a character get in, but they can also reveal the character's weaknesses. Both good and bad behavior is taken into consideration.

Golden Chalice: The Euthanatos' elite assassins hold tryouts once a year. Candidates meet in a large European estate (the location changes every year) and are subjected to what one (failed) candidate called "a combination of SEAL training and Borgia palace intrigue." Punishing physical tests are complemented with surprise attacks, alchemical enigmas and role-played scenarios of deception and betrayal. The test lasts 24 hours a day for two weeks.

In game terms, the required Traits are: a rating of 4 or better in any five of the following abilities: Dodge, Subterfuge, Stealth, Melee, Firearms, Technology, Enigmas and Occult; and two Spheres at rank 3. Finally, the prospect must have one other exceptional Trait (polyglots and elite hackers are in high demand) or a rare mystical aptitude (such as the *Stormwarden Merit*). These Traits do not guarantee success; the fortnight of testing includes ethics and sheer hard work as well as technique. Ultimately, the character must wait for an invitation that could come a day or several years later — or never.

(see **Tradition Book: Akashic Brotherhood**). While a project to track and eliminate the avatars of "repeat Technocrats" failed, joint projects researching the Himalayan War and the Asian Mythic Ages are ongoing.

Other concerns include the effects of the Reckoning on reincarnation and the ultimate destiny of Gilguled Avatars. If spirit-shards remain after souls are rent asunder, what happens to mages who undergo the process by Council fiat?

The *Albireo* are named after a star in the constellation Cygnus to honor Cygnus Moro of the First Cabal. His diplomatic efforts and bravery in the face of Heylel Teonim's Great Betrayal solidified the Euthanatos' position in the new Council of Nine. In their official roles, they can be identified by the silver swan pins they wear. Each is enchanted with a sympathetic bond to its owner and spells that prevent them from being counterfeited.

The Swans represent Euthanatos interests in the Council, leading diplomatic missions to Chantries and defending Thanatoic perspectives. It's a difficult job; the Wheel-turner ethos has few

The Golden Chalice will occasionally train an exceptional novice. This is subject to Storyteller approval, but such characters will usually have at least two exceptional Traits and a powerful Avatar.

Chakramuni: The Scholars of the Wheel value both academic and magical skill. Candidates approach an Acarya-ranked member for testing. This includes an oral and written exam as well as one exercise: track one Atman of the teacher's choice through 18 incarnations. This can lead prospects on a globe or Realm-trotting adventure as they search for clues. Aside from the Avatar study, the Traits required are straightforward: Academics (History) 4, Enigmas 4, Linguistics 3 (must include Sanskrit and Ancient Greek), Occult 4; the third rank of Spirit and Mind and the second rank of Time.

Albireo: Potential Swans must spend at least a year doing probationary work. They can say that they represent the Albireo, but may not wear the silver swan or finalize any deals made with another Tradition on behalf of the Euthanatos. If the candidate does more than her duties require and can be trusted with Thanatoic secrets, she is advised to learn certain skills representing the following Traits: Leadership 3, Subterfuge 4, Etiquette 4, Investigation 4, Law (Traditions) 4 and the first rank of the Mind Sphere (to prevent mental intrusion). A successful prospect is told the true purpose of the Albireo and may wear the silver pin. Mystically binding oaths are often laid upon the new Swan, but this is left to the discretion of the candidate's supervisor.

friends outside the Tradition. Many are Heralds (see **The Bitter Road**, p. 117). The Albireo oath to uphold the bond between the Nine Traditions is well known.

The Albireo take another, secret oath as well: to eliminate internal threats to the Council. This used to be an unbroken secret; the Euthanatos were willing to let the Consanguinity of Eternal Joy go unpunished for years to keep it. Recent conflict with the Hermetic House Janissary has revealed the Albireo's secret mission to the Council at last, but amidst the controversy and running battles, the Swans revealed incontrovertible evidence that the Warrior House were the modern incarnation of the Order of Reason's spymasters: the Ksirafai.

Although the Order of Hermes is understandably incensed, other Traditions have risen to the Albireo's side. Praising their effectiveness, a vocal segment of the Council argues that the Swans should be tasked with policing the Traditions. At present, the Albireo watch and wait; their actions could lead to civil war or a new role as the Council's guardians.

⊕ OTHER DESTINIES, ⊕ OTHER ARTS



The way of the Great Wheel cannot be confined to a single culture or set of arts. The Euthanatos protect what they consider to be a universal principle. Distrusted by orthodox mages and feared by their Sleeping flock, the Tradition has always sought an external confirmation of its beliefs. When a new culture takes to the Thanatoic cause, it increases the death mages' confidence in their path and adds a new ally against the enemies of the Good Death.

The Grand Convocation showed once and for all that the Chakravanti were not alone in their respect for the vicissitudes of life and death. Early initiatives to add diversity to the Traditions were renewed with vigor. Many new sects entered the fold; while most were absorbed into another faction, a few have maintained their distinctive qualities over the years. Some of them have allied with the Wheel-turners out of convenience. Others want to expand their understanding of the occult by linking with a more diverse body.

Yggdrasil's Keepers: The Gallowsmen follow Odin and the beheaded giant Mimir. Each keeps the secrets of transcendental wisdom that only come to one who has suffered death and returned. Each hangs upon the tree as the All-Father did when he searched for the secrets of the runes. So empowered, they help

others seek out their destiny — or prevent them from avoiding it. *Wyrd* (fate) manifests most strongly on the battlefield, for the gods take note of glorious violent deeds and have little use for the meek life of a householder.

Over the past 200 years, Yggdrasil's Keepers have expanded the definition of "battle" to include any situation where one's mental, physical and spiritual reserves are stretched to the limit and the risk of death is great. Modern Gallowsmen monitor firefighters, paramedics and other high risk professionals — and become them. They study the arts of healing to help the brave return to the fray and give cowards a second chance at heroism.

The Gallowsmen do consider themselves to be full Euthanatoi, but reject the titles and customs of the Tradition with the exception of the *Chodona*. Many work with the Knights of Radamanthys as combat medics.

Pallottino: This family of Italian death mages are direct descendants of the Etruscan priesthood. As such, they preserve magic that has been lost to the modern world. Only the Pallottino family remembers the Etruscan language and the exact rituals used to propitiate their ancestors — and that the graves of former rulers of Italy's must be kept absolutely sacrosanct. The hum of High Mythic magic (its nature and purpose unknown) inundates these secret crypts, rising to a crescendo whenever they are disturbed. In



1443 a family of Venetian necromancers tried to rob a number of the graves. Since then, the Pallottino family had held a special hatred—and fear—for the offenders, whose necromantic skills rival their own. They revere the divine spirits of their ancestors (who often appear as their Avatars) and worry what might happen if they were to rise from the slumber of death.

The Pallottinos each carry a part of their ancestors, such as finger bone or tooth. These connect family members to the line of succession that leads back to the Golden Race (see *Dead Magic*) and gives them power over the phenomenal world. Over time, they have amassed the wealth necessary to guard the tombs. Initiation into the family mysteries and careful marriages with the mystical talent of Europe has given the family guarantees that one or two mages and a number of sorcerers are among them at any given time. Most join another faction upon discovering their magical talents. Their exceptional skills often recommend them for membership in the Vрати.

The Pallottino have their own family traditions and lineage, and only a tenuous trade of information from several generations back keeps them in touch with the Euthanatos at all. Most Pallottinos consider the Euthanatos little more than a curiosity, a group of outsiders.

Yum Cimil: Rejected by every other Tradition, followers of the Mayan death god Ah Puch allied with the Euthanatos at the Grand Convocation. The Yum Cimil (“lords of death”) then returned to their homes and never approached the Euthanatos again.

Searching for the Yum Cimil is something many Thanatoic Chakras attempt in the course of their existence. Insects, dysentery and the chill of the Andes are their only rewards—except that sometimes, these hazards seem to bypass the magical protections that more thoughtful death mages use before setting off.

Instead of finding the Lords of Death, Euthanatoi are found by them, usually to relay some important piece of information or to notify the Euthanatos of a particular ritual or proscription they must perform if they want to be allowed to travel through Central America.

Many Euthanatoi are curious about the whole situation. What are they doing? Why don't they want their supposed allies to know about it? Is the world really going to end in 2012?

For more information about the Yum Cimil's magic, see *Dead Magic*.

FOLLOWING THE SACRED FLOW: EUTHANATOS SORCERY



Euthanatos sorcerers often come to the Tradition to escape disapproval from their own cultures. Most contemporary cultures despise cursing, necromancy, and grave robbing—the bread and butter of their practices. At the same time, their adherence to taboo-breaking Arts often makes them excellent scholars and local informants. Most of them have hidden their practices for long enough to know which rules to bend or break and who to pay off for the privilege of doing so. The Tradition respects them in that role, but rarely invites them to

deliver the Good Death or involve themselves in Council politics. Most of them prefer it that way; they've learned that the limelight can be a dangerous place in which to linger.

Isolated from the larger occult community, Euthanatos sorcerers use strange ingredients and unusual Paths. Divination, Fortune and necromantic Summoning, Binding, and Warding are their stock in trade. The Storyteller is encouraged to create more or modify common Paths to give Euthanatos sorcery its own unique flavor. For more information about sorcery and its power see *Sorcerer Revised*.

THE ARGUMENT FOR DEATH

Janine's sitting now, clutching the sides of her chair. Truce paces back and forth while Hetirck pushes a little table in front of her seat: her bench. Then she walks over to my “client” and draws a short length of bone from her shirt. She passes it in front of Janine's face and whispers to her to complete the counterspells. She won't be using her magic during this trial—if you can even call it a trial.

In a beat up little cottage like this, we look like little children playing at law, shouting out mock legalese while the parents are away. The whole thing would be absurd if a woman's life wasn't on the line. It'd be laughable.

Do you remember the time we hit that snuff film ring down in San Jose? We busted in when they were striking the set and killed those undead meat puppets and their Naraka contact, and the last guy, the cameraman—he just films the whole thing while we're going at it. You remember what he said, Eve?

“I know you're gonna do me, but send the tape to my brother. It's gold! He'll make enough money off of it to buy himself a new liver!”

Four dead in that particular operation, and we laughed our asses off over that for weeks. Don't play little miss compassionate with me.

“You can't do that,” says Truce. “Our dharmas, our call.”

“I agree with her, Truce,” I say with a slow, satisfied drawl. “Let her be the judge.”

“You were hardly rooting for her before!”

“One accuser, one defender,” says Hetirck. “Good enough.” She sweeps a hand out to Janine and says, “So Chela, you think that this woman deserves the Good Death? That her soul can't strive any further in life without causing suffering?”

“You're no Guru,” he says.

“You can assume that I speak with *Paramaguru* Senex's voice. You were willing to do it before.”

Janine bolts up from her seat and reaches back for the door. The knob won't budge. She whips her hand away from it and backs up into the cool, dark wood of the cabin.

“You... you told me I could live!”

“I'm going to help you, Janine,” I say as I take a slow step her way. “She's going to help you.”

“I'm going to judge,” says Hetirck, settling back into her seat. “I want to hear what Chela Truce has to say.”

⊕ JHOR

Jhor is a form of Quiet that seeps into a mage's consciousness in response to Entropic Resonance related to killing, the dead or the Underworld. While any mage can suffer from Jhor, Euthanatoi tend to encounter it more often while they follow the Chakradharma.

Several misconceptions exist about the death taint. Since the Euthanatoi have studied it thoroughly, they are often aware of the myths surrounding the condition. Denial and wishful thinking, however, still claim their share of the educated.

Far and away, the most common myth is that Jhor manifests as a kind of judgement on the morality of the mage's actions. This isn't so. All magic dealing with killing and the dead has the potential to inflict Jhor. Even the most ethically defensible necromantic or killing Arts can poison a mage's mind. This doesn't mean that every spell will generate the death taint. The fact is that the subject of the mage's working, not his intent, is what determines when Jhor strikes.

Another myth is that Jhor only manifests in response to using the Sphere of Entropy. Some mages have simply refused to learn it while spiraling down into their own personal hells. Lethal Entropy Effects do tend to lead to Jhor, but that's because they directly sap a target's vitality and thus seethe with Entropic Resonance. Spirit and Prime Arts lead to episodes of Jhor almost as often, as one is used to call up the dead and the other can disrupt the fundamental structures of the Tellurian. Spheres that simply attack one Pattern with another (like strikes with Forces) are less likely to trigger a Jhor episode; the mage is usually (though not always) directly accessing the energy of decay when the death taint strikes.

Finally, Jhor does not always manifest as cold, death-obsessed behavior, but tends to reflect the intent of the mage when she triggered the event. All Jhor erodes a victim's empathy, but this can show itself in bursts of rage, an obsession with revenge or even self-centered melancholy. Jhor is often associated with Paradox flaws that fit with the theme of the Quiet. Decay, social breakdowns and accidents tend to follow a mage suffering the later stages of the death taint.

"Get the fuck out of my mind, Truce."

He gives me an unkind little grin and sidles up to Hetirck's table. Our judge takes out a battered binder and a ballpoint pen.

"Janine Houle was an accomplice in the torture and murder of at least twenty children."

"Not the kidnapping," I say, "and she never participated in any of those acts."

"She buried the bodies, fed the children while they were held captive and made no attempt to put an end to it. That sounds like the work of an accomplice to me."

Janine shakes her head.

"No! I tried at first. He... he didn't tell me what he did until we were together for a while. He'd already started beating me and we moved up to the cabin and by the time I found out... I couldn't get away. Do you understand? You can read minds, you know what he did to me! You said —"

I raise a hand to interrupt.

"You said that she was redeemable, Truce. Bringing her was your idea. Pramatar?" I hope that's the right title. "He's doing this because of me. There's something he wants out of this, because this is a different tune than the one he was carrying before."

Like all forms of Quiet, there are no magical solutions for Jhor. Mind Effects can assist the sufferer, but the mage must ultimately defeat the madness herself.

SKIRTING DAMNATION

Jhor is handled like any other kind of Quiet; see **Mage: The Ascension**, pp. 199-201. A Storyteller might choose to inflict Jhor when a mage:

— has more Entropic Resonance than any other kind and kills with magic.

— uses an Effect that directly destroys a victim's mind, body or Avatar.

— travels to the Underworld or affects the bodies or spirits of the dead.

— is traumatized by torture or the death of someone close to her.

Storytellers shouldn't inflict an episode of Jhor lightly or often. Paradox backlashes, powerful Primordial magic or a continuous string of small episodes should lead up to attacks of the death taint. Jhor can also manifest as Paradox Flaws appropriate to the size of the backlash and the nature of the Quiet creeping up on the mage.

Jhor Hobgoblins (called *Pretas* by Indian Euthanatoi) take the form of hauntings, animated body parts, demons and other horrors drawn from the mage's paradigm and personality.

Mind Effects may be used to strengthen a victim's resolve. Each success on a ••• Mind Effect provides a bulwark of mental Resonance. This lowers the difficulty of rolls to resist Jhor delusions by 1 per success, to a maximum of 3 (see "Magic Enhancing Abilities," in **Mage the Ascension**, p. 155. The casting mage must have one Trait of Static or Dynamic Resonance per effective success, as she is "transmitting" it to the subject. Tass or a Node may sometimes substitute for her personal Resonance; each point of Quintessence powers one success.

"I made a mistake," he says. "I thought I'd read into her soul, but I see now that I mistook her fear for regret. Can someone who's unwilling to redeem themselves through the Chakradharma really be feeling remorse? I think she's playing the battered woman to get her life back. There's no Atman in her — just a Naraka waiting to grow into power.

"If she was willing to acquiesce to evil so easily before, why wouldn't she do it again?"

"She's Awakened. You saw her communicate with her Atman, Truce!"

Theora Hetirck looks up from her notes.

"A deception, thrown up by a mind clever enough to disguise years of evil acts. It's proven by her refusal to follow her duty now.

"The *Chodona* says that it's impossible for us to complete our duty if we close our hearts to the suffering in the world around. We must never close our eyes to the pain of others, or to the pain our own actions cause.

"Genuine remorse is always followed by a desire to make amends — but she doesn't exhibit that impulse. I have the Manas-skill to look into her mind and I can assure you that it's the truth, even if I let my own hope blind me to it before. That means the Good Death is the only option for Janine Houle."

SPINNING THE SOUL: THANATOIC MAGIC



Other mages find it hard to understand the Euthanatos. They can appreciate the rationale for their Arts; many Traditions agree that an all-encompassing cycle governs the Tellurian. What they don't understand is the Wheel-turners' insistence on being its guardians. Can't they use their magic without clinging to a controversial and dangerous ethos?

What they fail to understand is that the *Chodona* is more than a moral duty added to a magical style. Duty is what makes the Euthanatos sacred and powerful. It is what allows them to use magic at all. After all, the soul must be pure to connect with the Akasha that serves as the hidden, formless foundation of reality, or the mage is confined to her small thread on the skein of Fate.

THE ATTIAN: SACRED SELF

All Euthanatos believe that, barring Gilgul, the Atman (Avatar) is indestructible, divine and the font of infinite potential. It learns to realize its own nature over countless incarnations. In some births it learns a little more of its true nature, and no longer follows the laws of karma it did as a Sleeper. Awakened, the Atman has the potential to achieve godhood or even Moksa — Ascension.

KARMA AND THE SKEIN OF FATE

If all sentient beings could pierce the veil of reality and manipulate its undercurrents, the universe would quickly dissolve into primordial chaos once more. The Wheel provides the structure of the Lokha (the Tellurian) by enforcing the laws of cause and effect. Materialists claim that these are limited to physical phenomena, while Wheel-turners believe that the mystical universe follows causal laws. These precede and inspire what happens in the material world. Different Euthanatoi have different names for it, but the Tradition as a whole calls it karma.

Karma is inescapable and it affects everything. Nothing short of Moksa can contravene its laws. It is the mechanism by which all things occur. When sentient beings stray from the path to liberation, karma punishes them. When they fulfil their duty to their Atman, they are rewarded. The Lokha reacts to the collective karma of Sleepers and the physical laws and events occur. Unfortunately, the state of affairs in the World of Darkness has led many Euthanatoi to believe that the Sleepers are too far gone to save. Having followed immoral leaders and selfish impulses, they reap the sorrow of ecological collapse, war and, in the end, Armageddon. The Hierochthonoi call this folly hubris — and mages are more than capable of nurturing it.

DHARMA: SACRED DUTY

The Wheel turns on and on, toward a purpose that is only fulfilled at the conclusion of every Cycle, when gods of destruction dissolve the Lokha and recreate the primordial harmony. All souls cultivate themselves to this end along specific paths. Indian Euthanatoi call this path a dharma, though other terms (such as the Aided Geasa) are used as well.

Dharma is the duty mandated by the Atman and the Wheel. Every being has a duty to urge their Atman toward Ascension. If they take falter in that duty, the Wheel turns to punish them with painful karma. If they succeed they are rewarded with good fortune and, in time, divine union.

The Euthanatoi are special in that they have been given the hardest, most sacred duty of all: the Chakradharma as revealed by the *Chodona*. To attain liberation, they must enforce the dharmas of all other beings. Subtle workings and the Good Death are tools to be used in following their sacred law. Adherence allows them to refine their connection to the Atman and touch the divine state themselves, even if it means that their dharma sometimes offends the sensibilities of other mages.

In their roles as enforcers of dharma, Euthanatoi must confront unpleasant realities about the people they influence and the Wheel that sets all things in motion. Destiny may be ultimately moral, but it sometimes carries dark truths that must be obeyed to serve the greater good.

SIDDHI AND DIVINE UNION

Siddhi (magic) is not the cunning manipulation of impersonal laws, but a state of being brought about through careful adherence to a dharma. While karma is inescapable, spiritually advanced beings are permitted by the Wheel to access the primordial Being — called Akasha, Om or the Cry of Creation — before it is woven into the Patterns and cycles of the Lokha. If they use their privilege to unravel the Lokha, they interfere with the dharma of countless Sleepers as well as their own sacred purpose. Karma punishes them — and Paradox backlashes occur.

A newly Awakened mage is barely more than human. Her dharma doesn't allow her to manipulate the Akasha by herself. Instead, she must use rituals to merge her Atman with a god or an entity that symbolizes the aspect of the Lokha that she wishes to change. Her foci allow her to achieve a state of meditative absorption where she gains the liberated consciousness of a god. She can then use its attributes to alter reality. As she advances in her dharma, she becomes more and more able to do this without rituals; her consciousness becomes divine on its own.

The Euthanatoi have always recognized the traditional gods of the ancient world. As the Tradition grew, new gods and primordial symbols were added. Catholic saints, important mathematical formulae and figures from local folklore were added as new death mages tapped into the prevailing power of their cultures. A modern Lhaksmist might flood her consciousness with probability theory as a new aspect of the Goddess; a Chakramuni could use the divine face of Jungian archetypes to explore past lives.

LIBERATION

As a mage masters her dharma, she learns to accept the divinity of her own Atman. She begins to discard her tools and abide in her soul's connection to the uncreated cosmos.

At some point, the choice comes: Will the Wheel-turner become one of the gods herself, or unite with the body of the Creator? The former option is a rewarding one; the mage masters

one aspect of the Cycle and guards the flow of that primal power. Going on to join with the Presence that guides the Cycle is Moksa: final liberation from karma.

Of course, a few mages reject both options and decide to teach other how to strive for liberation. The Avataras must be subtle ones, because despite the stories there are few traces of their work — especially in these final days of the current Cycle.

TOOLS OF POWER

Eathanatoi see foci as a way to merge themselves with one of the attributes of the Wheel. While the older factions prefer to personify these elements as gods, more progressive death mages use mathematics and abstract symbols of chance. They elevate their awareness to the point where they can spin unformed Creation into new designs.

Their foci include:

Asceticism: Asceticism divorces the soul from the flesh, allowing it to attain a higher state of being. Specific practices direct the Atman to perform different feats. Because the goal is to liberate the soul, these practices can be very extreme, including cutting, piercing the flesh with iron nails (said to be sacred to Kali) and extreme fasting. Many Eathanatoi eschew ascetic practices as dishonest (voluntary suffering isn't the same as the real thing); most use them for specific occasions rather than as a lifestyle. **MET Ability:** None. Mortification of the flesh inflicts

one lethal health level of damage. To state the obvious, under no circumstances should you ever do anything that could harm yourself or others. Simply describe and/or mime the practice and mark off the lost health level, if applicable.

Bells and Drums: Rhythm captures the pulse of the Cycle, marking out its moments and inducing mystical trances. This practice is popular among the Natatapas and Madzimabwe. **MET Ability:** *Performance*.

Bones and Corpses: Corpses symbolize the impermanence of life's thread and have a sympathetic link to Primordial energies. Aside from their obvious use in necromantic rites, body parts also represent the flow of beings across the Wheel as they discard old shells for new. **MET Ability:** None.

Computers and Mathematics: Digital representations of Fate's design and structure pulls a Thanatoic mage's concentration toward symbolic reality. Simple forms are to be changed according to their ultimate models. Computer literate Eathanatoi run mathematical models on their systems that plot out the destinies of people, objects and whole communities. **MET Ability:** *Computers*.

Dance and Gesture: Body movement mirrors the motion of the Wheel and can imitate the acts of the gods. Yogic postures and exhausting, ecstatic dance also drives the soul to realize its potential. **MET Ability:** *Performance*.

Drugs and Poisons: Wheel-turners use specific drugs for each rite. Instead of seeking a general expansion of consciousness,



they tailor their drug intake to match the divine attribute they wish to take upon themselves. Poisons have a practical use in the execution of the Good Death, but they also symbolize mortality and the motion of the Wheel. Taken in small quantities, they allow Euthanatoi to see themselves as part of an always living, always dying reality. **MET Ability:** *Medicine*. Under no circumstances should you have an illegal or toxic substance with you. Use item cards to represent them.

Elements: Earth, Wind, Fire and Water represent the hidden, mystical properties of objects. Greek Euthanatoi associate death with the earth; Orpheus passed through a cave to the land of the dead. Other mages appreciate the earth for life that grows from and returns to it. Fire is associated with cremation and transcendence; flash and matter transform into bright energy. Water represents the ebb and flow of Destiny and the gods to which specific rivers are dedicated. Wind and storms are natural forces of destruction that coalesce from worldwide events, like the flutter of a butterfly's wing or the slow breathing of an ascetic hermit. Indian Euthanatoi believe that Akasha is an element that manifests as the clear night sky. **MET Ability:** *None*.

Eye Contact: As "windows of the soul," a person's eyes will reveal their karma. Wheel-turners can also project their Atman through their gaze to influence another person. This isn't just catching a brief glance — it's actual *contact*, staring into the eyes of another person who shares the gaze back. **MET Ability:** *None*.

Funeral Objects and Property of the Dead: Gravestones, offerings, cemeteries and charnel grounds all have a special tie to the Underworld. When using Kalananda magic (see below) a death mage would do well to have something valuable to the dead on hand; wraiths are protective of the things that once belonged to them. Aside from these obvious uses, funeral objects sanctify death for the benefit of living. This teaches others not to fear death and triggers a deeper understanding of the Wheel. **MET Ability:** *Occult or Wraith Lore*.

Games of Chance: Lots and dice have been Thanatoic foci since time immemorial. The results may *seem* random, but they actually follow the subtle laws of karma. Modern Euthanatoi use the Tarot and the I-Ching. A few Lhaxmists find high stakes gambling to be an effective (and profitable) way of working magic. Whether or not mundane cheating (as opposed to *siddhi*) is proper application of this focus is cause for some debate. **MET Ability:** *Hobby/Professional/Expert Ability: Gambling* for some uses.

Mantras, Songs and Spoken Poems: All language comes from the sacred sound that brought the Lokha into being. The chant of creation manifests in all things. Specific gods and natural laws have their own verses. Mantras focus the soul on one divine

attribute, while sacred songs and poetry power magic that resembles their subjects. **MET Ability:** *Meditation* for mantras, *Performance* for songs and poetry.

Meditation: Breathing and mental discipline connects the mage to the internal divinity of her Atman. This guides her thoughts to the sublime principles of the Wheel. **MET Ability:** *Meditation*.

Mystic Designs: Mandalas, yantras, Celtic knotwork and the *Veves* of Voudunistas all represent the essential forces of the cosmos. These can be simple designs drawn in sand or flour, or elaborate pictograms representing the whole of the Wheel and its gods. **MET Ability:** *Crafts*.

Purification: The Euthanatoi follow the hardest dharma of all. To keep selfish intentions or impurities such as *Jhor* from warping their magic, they purify themselves. Washing, fasting, a period of hermitage and even confession can all remove the stains of avarice or destructive karma prior to a working. **MET Ability:** *None*.

Sacrifice: A widely misunderstood practice, Thanatoic sacrifice is in no way related to the Good Death or the propitiation of an external power. What it does do is connect the mage to the god or power being honored. Both share in the sacrifice, so their natures are bound together. Animal and plant sacrifice is common, while willing human sacrifice is rare but does occur. Unwilling sacrifice is forbidden by most interpretations of the *Chodona*. Gaining mystical power from the Good Death is seen as a conflict of interest at best; it is a common road to corruption. **MET Ability:** *None*.

Staves: The sign of an Aided Filidh and a rune-working Keeper of Yggdrasil, staves (including wands, the forked distaff, and scepters) represent divine law and the ability of the mage to punish transgressors or reward the virtuous. **MET Ability:** *None*.

Sex: In a way, sex won the Himalayan War. The union of Kali and Shiva is expressed through sexual metaphors; Euthanatoi emulate Vedavati and Subranamian's joining, hoping to reach a divine state through Tantric practices. Sex magic recalls fertility (the pouring of power into the Cycle) and death (the movement of the Wheel to new possibilities). Abstinence is a common feature of purification rituals and collects creative potential within the chaste. **MET Ability:** *None*.

Weapons: Holding a weapon with the intent to use it is a mark of seriousness and commitment. Different weapons are also signs of different gods. Shiva is symbolized by his trident. Rudra and Artemis the Maiden are both notable archers. Furthermore, combat brings a mage face to face with mortality and the ethics of killing. Euthanatoi consecrate their weapons to the Chakradharma with special inscriptions or by smithing the tool themselves. **MET Ability:** *Crafts* is used to create a weapon or give it a custom design.

THE ARGUMENT FOR LIFE

Theora Hetirck writes it all down in a quick, fine cursive and looks up at me. "Chela Evelyn Kinsella. Please present your argument."

I look around and stand, too aware of the sudden stiffness in me; the tension pulls at my back, vertebra by vertebra. On my right, there's terror in Janine's eyes as her white hands grip the sides of her chair. On my left, Truce rolls his shoulders back and shifts into a relaxed posture. Ahead of me, Hetirck's blank eyes seem to take in the whole room.

"Yeah... well, Janine Houle deserves to live and merits a place among the Wheel turners. Things are always in motion, and we have to accept that we can't apply the old obligations to every Euthanatos.

"We follow the Chakradharma. We swear to uphold the duties given to all beings by the Wheel. We've always understood it as the ability to make any sacrifice and perform any act in the defense of true dharma. We prevent stagnation and tear corruption from the thread of Creation.

"Why do we think that the Chakradharma is somehow exempt from the Wheel? It has to change with the times. We can't expect every member of the Tradition to kill any more. The Awakened are too precious for that, and Janine is Awakened.

"Truce — I mean, Chela Truce is right; no other Tradition would accept her. Our experience with the Chorus proved that to me beyond a reasonable doubt. Should we let her go to the Good Death and force her to live again, ignorant of her soul's true nature?"

"Pramatar, you own Guru has rehabilitated Wheel-turners before. He took you in from Helekar. His other Chela — Amanda — was a Nephandus in a previous incarnation, and —"

"He killed her," says Hetirck. "He killed her infernal incarnation without hesitation. I can't accept an analogy that would bring shame upon Senex or create a precedent that would bind the hands of other Euthanatoi. The Atman is fundamentally pure, Ms. Kinsella, but sometimes it belongs to an unregenerate monster who must be divested of it."

"As for me, there were matters much greater than my own well-being at stake. I believe I explained them to you when I relayed Senex's message, Chela."

Well, I said the wrong thing, didn't I? I drag my nails through my hair and stare at my boots for a second.

"All right then." I'm sorry, Truce.

"Chela Truce is lying. I think he knows that Janine Houle wants to do the right thing and to atone for her complicity. I think he knows that she helped her husband out of fear for her life. I can't read minds, but I've spoken to her. I trust my intuition — but I know that you need proof. So I want Truce's claims to be investigated by you — or if you don't have the siddhi to do so, another Euthanatos who does."

"Do you know what you are accusing him of?" asks Hetirck. "Do you know that you can be punished for making a false accusation, particularly if it's about a Vrata Chakravat?"

"Yes."

"Then Chela Truce, you will open your mind to me."

He straightens in his seat. "You can easily measure the Tamas in my words, Pramatar."

"No. Too easy to counter and too easy to hide among the siddhi that are keeping Ms. Houle from escaping or tapping into her Atman. I also want to share what I see with Chela Kinsella."

"Pramatar, my thoughts are my own. I've earned by place in the Euthanatos and the Golden Chalice. You should take me at my word."

Hetirck slides to one side of the table and takes long, confident steps to Truce.

She says, "Look at me," and grabs one of his wrists in her little pale hand.

He does, and the room spins. This is *Shruti*, "That which is remembered." I can see —

— *Eve's bones working, the strong core of her holding up the meat as she pushes Jimmy around. The red aura of her anger warms me as I watch her drop the woman. It's so bright and pure — the only thing that keeps me warm since I got back from the Monkey's Heart.*

— *The threadbare sinews on my hands as I look at this scared bitch. We need a third to hit the Janissaries in Baltimore and I can hear the little whisper of Atman under her numb flesh. I say, "She's salvageable." Who cares if it's true? She worked for Jimmy and now she can work for us.*

— Janine filled with the fire of Awakening, her remorse and hope destroying the pliability that made her useful. I'll have to find someone new.

— *The garrote biting into her trachea. Rise up for me, Atman. Rise up and we'll wipe away our enemies, the useless filth, the meat. Show me your core, your strong bones. Do as you're told.*

— *Hetirck's skull filling up my gaze. Do you know that it's time to purify this world? That there is no final salvation as long as we bind ourselves with arbitrary ethics for the sake of the other Traditions?*

Then the room rushes back into my eyes. Quick as a cat, Hetirck jams two stiff fingers into the notch between Truce's collarbones. He spasms and falls halfway through drawing his gun. Hetirck kicks it across the floorboards.

I pick up the gun. My hips drop a little and my wrists align with the weapon.

Truce taught me how to shoot. I didn't know the Jhor was this bad in him and now — Hetirck judges him? Hetirck of goddamn Helekar and murderer's-tool Janine Houle take him away?

I step back and point the silver .38 at Hetirck as she kneels over Truce's body, then to that trembling little woman, Janine.

"Evelyn."

You're too weak to stand up for yourself, so my man takes the fall. My finger slides behind the trigger guard.

"Evelyn."

I exhale and it feels like hot smoke floats from my lungs. It's Hetirck's voice.

"He's unconscious," she says as she stands, releasing his wrist.

"I disrupted the prana flowing to his upper chakras. Nobody's dying tonight."

SIDDHI: THE PULSE OF THE SOUL



As a synthetic Tradition, the Euthanatos is a strong collective proponent of the system of nine Spheres. Individually, Thanatoic groups tend to use their own classifications for magical effects, but since magical styles vary so widely within the Tradition the Council system is used to regulate faction to faction communication.

Prior to the rise of the Spheres, Chakravanti believed that siddhi were not "spells," but the inherent capabilities of an aspirationally advanced being. It was common for a Wheel-turner to have one or two permanent magical powers. Odd Merits (such as Parlor Trick, Medium and others) that

belong to Euthanatoi with several incarnations in the Tradition are a lingering manifestation of the old style.

Ultimately, the Spheres are manifestations of the Atman's inner divinity and its ability to take on a divine shape. As the gods change, so do their manifestations. Sentimentality isn't a common Thanatoic vice; most are content to move with the Wheel and adopt new ways to follow their dharma and seek liberation.

CORRESPONDENCE — ANYA WIN, "THE WHOLE."

Primal threads connect all things. As the Wheel turns, karma moves things across space, disturbing everything else along

the weave of eternity. All motion is a part of the great game of the Wheel that drives all souls along the road to liberation.

Sympathetic magic acknowledges the hidden connections between objects on Ariadne's skein. Karma binds everything together; such ties are never easily broken.

ENTROPY — TAMAS, "DARK INERTIA"

This is the Sphere that both inspires and troubles the Wheel's servants. Tamas is the breakdown of creation. Everything that wanes or disintegrates owes its fate to the dark hand of Entropy. Thus it has always been, even though the modern age seems to breed a mountain of decay for every mote of innovation. Tamas can be accelerated or restricted, but it is never truly cheated. Yet that dissolution paves the way for renewal.

Euthanatoi make extensive (though by no means exclusive) use of this Sphere by calling upon the gods through any number of foci or simply calculating the odds and giving things the appropriate "nudge."

FORCES — TEJAS, "THE SHINING POWER"

Energy is immanent in all things. The Wheel turns, and its motion becomes fire, darkness, wind and all of the powerful manifestations of the natural world. These elements can be brought out of hiding and manipulated by merging with the gods that control such things. Whirling dance, weapons and staves bring forth the active elements of the Lokha.

While Euthanatoi are quite adept in using lesser manifestations of this Sphere, they tend to avoid mighty workings, especially Adept- or Master-ranked feats. That sort of magic belongs to the realm of the gods. It should only be called upon when a mage is wise enough to no longer need external tools. In any event, Tejas manipulates the base elements, while Euthanatoi concern themselves with the overriding laws that govern the Wheel itself.

LIFE — PRANA, "LIFE BREATH"

Manifesting its own divinity, the Wheel brings forth life to know itself and rise up through rebirth and struggle. Life moves through the whole Cycle, always changing. Death is nested in life; one gives the other meaning and completes the circle of being. The energy of life moving from being to being is called Prana. The Wheel-turners learn to savor it, so that taking it away will seem that much more grave and protecting it that much more holy.

Yoga, drugs and dance attune a Euthanatos to her own Prana. Asceticism shows her how the energy bleeds away and teaches her how to move it from being to being. Looking deeply, she seeks the internal chakras that spin with different aspects of life and how they connect to the Great Wheel.

MATTER — PAKRITI, "FORM"

Without Prana or the eruption of Tejas, matter is an inert form consisting of silent atoms holding themselves in place. Still things come into being as the result of karma, to reward or punish with its form. By understanding the purpose of a thing and its connection to the Tapestry, a Euthanatos can affect it.

Spontaneous creation is a common way for Gurus to demonstrate their powers. Meditative and prayerful siddha shower wealth on the worthy, while sinners watch their possessions melt away to nothingness, leaving them to consider their errors.

MIND — MANAS, "MIND"

Manas is the part of divine nature that interacts with the Lokha, making sense of the Wheel, learning its lessons and taking them along to new births. Without consciousness, the Atman is truly Asleep, unable to understand the obligations to which it must adhere in order to reunite with the cosmos.

Eye contact, mantras and songs all discipline the mage and touch other minds, reminding them of their duties and pointing them down their proper dharma.

PRITIE — VAC, "SPEECH"

The Primordial Sound brought this Cycle into being and sacrifice gave it form. The vibration and lifeblood of these acts permeate every person, object, thought and spirit in the Lokha. The gods can hear the primordial sound in everything. A Wheel turner who wants to do the same attunes herself to the mind of the most powerful gods: the trinity that create, preserve and destroy the cosmos.

Euthanatoi draw symbols, dance for the gods and purify themselves to open their being to the sound of all things.

SPIRIT — CIT, "CONSCIOUSNESS"

Consciousness is in constant motion. Ultimately, it manifests as symbols, either of the thinkers who bring them into being or as elements of primordial truth. All consciousness ascends to a divine state, at one with the Wheel that birthed it. Failing their dharmas, some may fall from the path and become demons. Flaws in the Cycle may poison primal spirits and give rise to spiritual blight. Calling on her Atman, a Euthanatos may force beings back into their proper dharmas or walk into the realms of other spirits.

Dance, asceticism and purification guide the way for Citta magic. Ghosts are most in need of assistance; they have halted their journey to enlightenment and need to be helped along. Other spirits may need to be helped back to their proper path, but they are often so alien that an average death mage has trouble figuring out what that path might be.

TIME — SAT, "BEING"

Time is the Wheel's motion and gives meaning to existence. Even the gods go through their own cycles. Durga defeats the Asuras through countless Kalpas; the Maruts destroy all impediments to the Final Days again and again. The gods, however, perceive time differently; all the world's history is a single eyeblink to Shiva. Similarly, different states of spiritual attainment change a mage's relationship with time. Once she truly understands the Wheel she can even travel to different points along it, relying on the still, perfect nature of her Atman to provide an anchor.

Dance and song connect Wheel-turners with the powers and give her their perspective. Studying the Wheel, she can see the events that occur again and again, and can step across to parallel points in the Cycle.

AKASHA — PRIMORDIAL EXISTENCE.

The Great Wheel consists of everything that exists, has existed and will ever exist, but even it is grounded upon something more fundamental. Akasha is raw creation, too formless to even be called Quintessence, but brimming with all possibility. It is the spiritual substance that connects everything and carries

karma across the gulf between entities. Within this sea of chaos lies the seeds of all potential — and perhaps a sublime will that directs it all toward a higher purpose.

Akasha seeps into the world in flashes or slow, subtle streams. It was one of these streams that the Akashic Brotherhood found and cultivated into a garden for their own minds. The Euthanatos see great hope for their tenth Sphere in that, but are also frustrated that the Brotherhood has so little inkling of its significance. After all, they mistake the noise of their own minds for the power that contains it.

SONGS OF DØØTI AND LIBERATION: THANATOIC RØTES

Some occultists would accuse the Euthanatos' magic of having contradictory goals. The Tradition sees itself as the healers and tenders of the Wheel, yet they possess a formidable array of techniques designed to end life.

The Wheel turners don't see any conflict. Death is a part of the motion of the Wheel that sustains all life. It completes the cycle and allows things to renew themselves and possibility to arise after stagnation rots away.

The following rites are a small sampling of Thanatoic magical practices, from the grand and vulgar to the subtle, yet effective. Despite their controversial approach, Euthanatoi know and practice magical techniques common to all of the Traditions as well.

VIEW THE SCATTERED LØTUS PETALS (• ENTROPY, •• TIME, OPTIONAL •• CORRESPONDENCE)

This rite is a more sophisticated version of the prophetic magic common to many Traditions. The mage follows Fate's threads along several paths at once and learns about the many possibilities that the future might hold. Some Wheel-turners use dice or lots. Others prefer elaborate computer simulations and meditation.

System: Entropy allows the mage to read along several different time lines instead of the single thread allowed by conventional prediction. After spending successes on the target (the subject of inquiry) and the length of time into the future she wishes to look, each success reveals one possibility. These are usually fairly vague, but spending additional successes for each possible future affords visions of greater clarity and detail. Adding Correspondence allows the mage to use this rite at a distance.

MET: Apprentice *Entropy*, Initiate *Time*. Optional *Initiate Correspondence*. After spending a full turn meditating or playing a game of chance, you can see two possibilities that could occur during the next scene/hour. A Narrator should tell you what might happen based on her privileged access to what's happening during the game. If you use *Correspondence*, you can affect a target at normal Correspondence range or through an arcane connection. *Grades of Success:* Each grade of success allows you to extend how far into the future you may look by one grade.

IRON AVATAR (••• LIFE, ••• MATTER, •• MIND, •• PRIME, OPTIONAL •••• SPIRIT, •••• TIME)

The Shivasakti Ayavatara was once considered to be one of the rites that defined the Euthanatos. An homage to the appearance of the holy Avatara on the final night of the Himalayan War, its meaning has since been corrupted by its most ardent user, Voormas of Helekar. The rite is still occasionally used by the Natatapas; the Aided are known to employ a variant that calls of the power of the Morrighu.

The rite turns the caster into a four-armed killer with a wrathful divine visage formed from the combined attributes of Kali and Shiva. She sprouts up to 10 feet in height and her skin turns the color of wrought iron, while menacing weapons appear in each of her four taloned hands. These are usually swords, although different manifestations have conjured nooses, lotus blossoms that burn with divine fire and skulls that devour the Ojas of the mage-god's foes.

System: Aside from duration, the caster must also devote success to increasing Strength (to a minimum of 6), at least three successes to soak lethal and aggravated wounds (at soak dice per success) and two to sprout extra arms capable of being used in combat. These arms add four additional dice to the mage's Unarmed and Melee dice pools, though each extra success can be used to enhance co-ordination (adding an additional two dice to armed and unarmed combat dice pools per success). Three successes are spent adding an aura of supernatural terror to the mage's already fearsome appearance. This causes most Sleepers to flee from the field. All others must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 6, 3 successes required) to maintain their composure. Finally, the mage must spend four successes to create the weapons that she can handle effectively in her new form (one for each arm) and expend one success and three points of Quintessence to power the entire effect. The weapons are usually swords, but variations on **Holy Stroke** (see **Mage: The Ascension**, p. 183) are sometimes used as well. The weapons inflict aggravated wounds due to Prime enchantments.

Since this rite is time consuming, Euthanatoi often combine it with the Sphere of Time so that it can be called upon as a hanging effect when the mage is in need. The most dangerous variant of the rite involves the Spirit Sphere, where the caster invites a spirit of destruction to enter her body. The mage gains full use of the spirit's Charms, but anything less than complete success opens her to possession.

Few Euthanatoi have the ability to reliably cast this spell by themselves, so it is often a group working that enhances the fighting ability of a Marabout's protector. Needless to say, it's vulgar magic.

MET: Disciple *Life* and *Matter*, Initiate *Mind* and *Prime*. Optional *Adept Time* and/or *Spirit*. You must compile an additional grade of success to use this rite at all.

You take half an hour to perform a ritual dance that symbolizes the gods of destruction. At its conclusion you become a ten foot tall manifestation of those gods, sprouting two extra arms, four swords blazing with *Prime* enchantment and a fearsome visage. This form grants you seven additional Physical Traits (in addition to the Traits gained for being armed) and the ability to

ignore one level of damage from any attack with a Simple Test. Blows with the swords inflict aggravated wounds. You may also spend one turn terrifying one enemy. If you defeat him in a Social Challenge (using *Intimidation* as a retest) he must flee in fear and cannot approach you for 10 minutes. The rote lasts for one scene.

Grades of Success: Each grade of success extends the duration of the Effect by one grade. If you have the Adept rank of *Time* you may spend a grade of success to make this spell **Contingent Effect** (see **Laws of Ascension**, p. 168). If you have the Adept rank of *Spirit*, you may call a spirit of destruction into you and use its Charms for the duration of the Effect. See **Laws of the Wild** for details on Spirit Charms, or simply assume that the spirit grants you the ability to use a Disciple-rank Effect in a Sphere that you doesn't know. This new power does not incur Paradox, though the Effect that granted it does.

GIFT OF PRANA

(•• ⊕R ••• LIFE, ••• PRIME)

Euthanatou are healers as well as killers. By meditating on the Great Wheel and its effects on the ebb and flow of prana (life energy), a Wheel-turner can transfer extra vitality to an ally. This is bound into the subject's chakras until he's injured. When the body's energetic balance changes in response to the wound, the extra life energy flows into to proper place and repairs the damage. Chanting, herbal treatments and bloodletting are all common ritual tools in the creation of this Effect.

System: After spending success on duration and targeting, and spending a point of Quintessence (effectively "enchancing" the target) each success creates a "healing pool" of two health levels. If the subject is injured before the end of the rote's duration these health levels automatically heal the injury as much as possible. Healing bashing damage is coincidental, healing lethal wounds is usually vulgar (minor injuries are an exception) and healing aggravated wounds is always vulgar. The mage must decide what kinds of injuries the spell will heal and whether or not it works around witnesses as she is casting it. This determines the rote's difficulty. The •• Life version affects only the caster, while the ••• Life Effect can be used on others.

MET: Initiate or Disciple Life, Disciple Prime. After acting out consuming a herbal formula and spending a point of Quintessence, you may regenerate one health level of damage inflicted upon you during the next scene. You must decide whether this will be vulgar with witnesses, vulgar without witnesses or coincidental when you cast the Effect. If you attempt to regenerate injuries in a fashion that is not covered by the type of casting (such as a sucking chest wound in the middle of a crowded mall after you've cast this as a coincidental effect), it fails to work until you are in the proper circumstances (such as a *Sanctum*). With *Disciple Life* you may cast this rote on someone else. **Grades of Success:** You may use a grade of success to add another health level of regeneration, extend the duration by one grade, or affect one additional target.

MAGIC BULLET (•• ENTROPY, •• FORCES)

An intersection between technological and mystic mythologies, this rote is cast a number of ways by Euthanatou who are comfortable with incorporating modern technology into their magic. Lhaksmists work mathematical formulae into the stocks of

their rifles. Irony-minded members of the Golden Chalice inscribe "to the fairest" on their bullets in archaic Greek.

The end result is a bullet that, once it strikes a target, takes advantage of improbable — but possible — permutations of physics to travel in unusual directions, ricocheting into secondary targets and baffling investigators. A skilled death mage can dispatch a group of scattered targets with a single shot.

System: Forces and Entropy direct the kinetic energy of the bullet in potent and highly improbable ways, allowing the mage to strike multiple targets with a single shot — even if, in a sane world, the secondary targets would never be in the bullet's trajectory.

Each success allows one additional target to be struck by the same bullet. The player must split his character's Firearms dice pool to take advantage of the ability to shoot multiple targets, although the mage isn't restricted by the gun's normal rate of fire. This rote is often combined with *Time* magic to enhance the shooter's accuracy. Using Correspondence allows "indirect fire," as the bullet rebounds into a target that the mage can't see (but can perceive with Correspondence). Believe it or not, this rote is usually coincidental.

MET: Initiate Entropy, Initiate Forces. After preparing your firearm ahead of time, the next time you shoot an opponent you may immediately target another opponent whom you can see (or pinpoint with magical senses). You must make a Physical Challenge (or a Mental Challenge if you have the *Firearms* ability) at a 2 Trait penalty against this secondary target. This extra "shot" is considered to have happened at the same time as the first shot. **Grades of Success:** Each additional grade of success allows you to strike one additional target, but with a cumulative 2 Trait penalty. For example, with one extra grade of success you could shoot your original target, one extra target at a 2 trait penalty, and a final target at a 4 Trait penalty.

RUDRA'S BOW (••• LIFE, •• FORCES, OPTIONALLY OTHER SPHERES)

Natatapas emulate the power of the archer-god Rudra as well as the legends of the Kshatriya (warrior caste) archers of ancient India. Other Euthanatou draw power from their own legends, such as Pomegranate Deme warriors who concentrate upon Artemis' ways. In doing so, the Euthanatos makes his bow supernaturally powerful and grants himself the strength to pull it. This rote retains a surprising degree of popularity because of the availability and silence of the weapon it enhances.

Depending on the divine attribute the caster invokes, the arrows have additional effects. Rudra was the plague-bringer of Vedic India, so his arrows typically pass on a potent disease.

System: Each success adds two dice of damage to a single bow shot. Arrows of Rudra deliver Aggravated damage (using ••• Life) as disease tears through the target's body. They require twice as many successes per shot as well as a single success to affect the target. Other divine arrows burn their enemies, fill them with terror or otherwise inconvenience them. Additional Spheres are needed to activate these Effects.

MET: Disciple Life, Initiate Forces. After singing the hymn of a god of archery, you increase the strength of your bow and give your arms the power to pull it. When loosed, your arrow delivers an additional Health Level of injury. **Grades of Success:** You may add an additional health level of damage to your bow shot or choose to make the injury your bow delivers an aggravated wound.

GEASA (••••• ENTROPY)

The Aided know the importance of ritual taboos. Even though they're a hindrance at times, they can also grant extraordinary power, such as in the case of Cu Chulainn's battle-might.

Typically, a Wheel-turner lays one or more *Geasa* after examining the weave of Destiny around the subject; Astrology and Omens are typical foci. The mage then asks Fate to give the spell's subject its attention. *Geasa* are often laid at birth, but it isn't unprecedented to acquire them or even seek them out in exchange for a special blessing, or *Buada*.

The rite of laying *Geasa* also includes the granting of *Buada*. The Wheel-turner doesn't have to magically create the *Buada*; Destiny reacts to the fundamental change brought about by accepting the taboo and the new blessing complements it.

System: Every two successes allows the mage to place one level of the *Geasa* Flaw (see **Mage: The Ascension**, p. 298-299. Use an inverse value to the point cost listed in the book. Unlike the standard Flaw you may use it to get a Merit or Trait "for nothing.") upon a willing subject. Spending five additional successes makes the taboo permanent. Interestingly, the mage has no control over what sort of *Geasa* manifest, although she knows what they are upon releasing the spell.

For every point of *Geasa*, the character gains an additional Freebie Trait. This is the *Buada*. The caster chooses the general nature of the *Buada* but cannot determine specifics. For example, he can cast the rite to foster *Buada* that make the subject a better warrior, but he can't specifically grant improved swordsmanship. The player and Storyteller should discuss what the *Buada* are. These benefit the character for the duration of the Effect.

Multiple *Geasa* (and attendant *Buada*) can be laid on a subject, but these have a tendency to go awry, resulting in contradictory *Geasa* that can't be properly obeyed. Since the casting mage doesn't know what the *Geasa* will be until the rite is completed, the only thing she can do to prevent the subject from being entangled by them is to refuse to grant them.

Breaking a single *Geasa* dooms the subject with Flaws or negative Freebie Traits (spend those to reduce character Traits) equal to twice the value of all of the *Geasa* that she's accumulated. Instant Gilgul and a Dark Fate are two examples of what can befall a *Geasa*-breaker.

MET: Master Entropy. After reading omens or the stars, you may impose a magical ban of the Narrator's choice in exchange for granting three Free Traits to the subject. These enhance her according to the general aim of the spell and the Narrator's ruling. This lasts for the duration of the Effect. Examples include increasing fighting ability, luck or mystical wisdom.

If the subject breaks the ban, they lose six Traits of the Narrator's choice for the duration of the Effect. Casting the ritual takes 30 minutes. The effects last for one day. *Grades of Success:* Each grade of success grants another three Traits in exchange for another magical ban (and risks losing an additional three Traits for breaking it) or increases the duration of the spell by one grade.

PERSEPHONE'S NECTAR

(••• CORRESPONDENCE, ••• LIFE, •• MATTER)

The signature rite of the infamous Golden Chalice, Persephone's Nectar turns an ordinary liquid into a poison that is keyed to a single target's humors. The Euthanatoi use alchemy (substances that mirror the target's mystical "chemistry") or sympathetic magic (blending hair or bodily secretions) to create a poison that will only affect a single, predefined victim. This is usually added to a beverage; anyone who drinks it will notice something unusual about the taste. Depending on the victim's alchemical balance, the brew might be a tad sweet, bitter, or salty, but not to any degree that's out of the ordinary.

Variants of Persephone's Nectar are used with foodstuffs, household cleaning supplies and gasses. Some versions also mystically age their targets, put them to sleep, or induce visions. Some Euthanatoi create artifacts that have the power to create Persephone's Nectar at will. The Golden Chalice was well known for their eponymous devices, but golden goblets have fallen out of fashion; most Sleepers don't use them and many of the Awakened don't trust them.

System: To create the nectar, the player must score enough successes to connect the target to the toxin (as per the Correspondence Range Chart on p.209 of **Mage: The Ascension**) plus successes to inflict injury (2 unsoakable aggravated wounds per success spent) and duration (after which the poison loses its potency).

Correspondence prevents the substance from injuring anyone else (as a **Ban**) and Life and Matter compose the supernaturally potent toxin. The presence of the nectar's magic can be detected with Awareness or the appropriate mystical senses; most Euthanatoi use additional magic to mask it if the target is a mage.

MET: Disciple Correspondence, Disciple Life, Initiate Matter. Using alchemy or a part of the victim's body (such as a lock of hair; remember to roleplay taking it instead of violating the No Touching rule), you create a poison that can only effect her. The poison stays potent for one scene and inflicts one aggravated health level of injury. *Grades of Success:* Each additional grade of success inflicts one additional level of aggravated damage or increases the length of time the poison stays potent by one grade.

WONDERS FROM THE HANDS OF FATE



Euthanatoi are well aware that decay is inevitable for all things, and thus don't commit themselves to too many material attachments. All the same, the Tradition's exotic concerns allow them to create Wonders with unique properties. Many Thanatonic enchantments tend to be closely tied to a single culture's myths so as reap the karmic impression left by history and legend. Yet the number of exceptions to this rule are growing, as

Lhaxsmists and other free-thinking Wheel-turners capitalize on modern metaphors.

TORC OF DONN

Seven point Artifact; Rare.

These artifacts were built by the Aided of old to assist them in their travels to Tech Duinn, the "Land Under the Waves" where the Celtic dead once dwelt. They are gilt torcs made of

whalebone, each with carved knotwork depicting a procession of dead souls making their way to Donn's stone palace.

Each torc allows its owner to travel to the Underworld by submerging herself in the sea. The torcs give their wearer the ability to breathe and pass freely through the waters of the living and dead planes. They mark a clear pathway to Tech Duinn.

The secret of making Torcs of Donn has been lost; the last one was made in 1876 by the late Aided witch Niall Mac Callum. A firm believer in oral tradition, Mac Callum never wrote down any of his techniques. Nowadays, Euthanatoi pass Torcs of Donn down to their apprentices or use them for Diksha initiations.

System: A •• Matter, •• Forces Effect allows the torc's wearer to breathe and move underwater as if she were on dry land, while a unique ••• Spirit Effect allows her to bodily enter the Underworld. It can also take her on a relatively safe path to Tech Duinn. She may deviate from the path if she wishes, but the torc then provides no special protection.

THIRSTY BLADE OF KALI

Arete 4; 11 point Fetish/Talisman

This infamous Talisman enjoys a varying reputation among different Euthanatoi. Each Thirsty Blade steals vitality from its victim; the Quintessence released from the injury is passed on to the wielder. Some death mages consider this energy to be inherently Jhor-tainted; others believe that if you're going to

kill a sinner anyway, you may as well use their power to bring about some good.

Thirsty Blades of Kali are made of black iron and come in many shapes, from wavy-bladed crises and khatars to the ritual pickaxes used by Thugs to dig graves.

System: A ••• Prime, •••• Spirit Effect delivers Strength+1 aggravated damage and channels sacrificial Quintessence to a spirit at the rate of two points per success on the Arete roll, to a maximum equal to the damage the weapon inflicted. Despite the weapon's popular name, the spirit need not be related to Kali (in fact, as a goddess respected by three quarters of a billion people, it is much more likely that a manifestation of "Kali" is actually a mask the spirit wears in reaction to the mage's beliefs); Greek- and Celtic- visaged Umbrood dwell in these blades as well.

The spirit absorbs the Quintessence and passes part of it on to the mage, removing *most* of the negative Resonance associated with unwilling sacrifice (see **Mage: The Ascension**, p. 184). The mage receives half of the Quintessence (1 point per success). This should be marked as coming from the blade.

If this Quintessence is ever used as a part of a magical Effect intended to harm another being, the mage gains an Entropic Resonance Trait (for the harmful Effect, not each point used) for the duration of the Effect. If the Effect kills another being, the trait becomes permanent. Paradox backlashes that result from use of the Thirsty Blade or its Quintessence usually manifest as Jhor



episodes. The Quintessence is always the first to be spent on an Effect and the last to be used to ward off Pattern bleeding.

Some Thirsty Blades of Kali (particularly the ones employed by the late Consanguinity of Eternal Joy) possess other powers appropriate for an assassin's tool. Using these powers naturally imparts dark Resonance to the wielder, but it's so damn convenient...

DHARMA BOMB/APPLE OF DISCORD

Charm; 5 per 2 Background points.

Although it's an old Charm, this has grown more popular with younger Euthanatoi who feel that it's important to show someone the error of their ways before resorting to the Good Death. It also makes for an amusing prank: "Dharma Bombing" embarrasses rival mages by revealing their emotional weaknesses.

The older Apple of Discord is inspired by Greek myths. It's a golden apple with "to the fairest" inscribed on it in ancient

Greek. The Dharma Bomb preferred by Lhaxmists is a firecracker that explodes into a pinwheel of garish, hypnotic colors. Each version aggravates the emotional weaknesses of its victims, who proceed to act in a rash, petty and embarrassing fashion.

On a more serious note, the Charm is also used to "out" Nephandi and Jhor-ridden mages, who often have suppressed urges that tend toward the macabre. It can often shock mages out of mild cases of Jhor by showing them how twisted their thoughts have actually become.

System: A •• Entropy, •• Mind Effect exaggerates the emotions the target is least able to control. Petty jealousy, venal selfishness and immodest pride get acted upon instead of suppressed, unless the victim's player succeeds at a Willpower roll (difficulty 6). Multiple Charms tend to have a synergistic effect on a group. Affected parties indulge in outrageous contests, bitter arguments and (in extreme cases) the odd murder attempt.

KALANANDA: THE STAFF OF DEATH



Kalananda is the Euthanatos term for true death magic: what others typically call "necromancy." Necromancy (properly used only to describe the art of communicating with the dead) is only one of many techniques that bridge the gap between life and death.

The term also alludes to the fact that the dominion of death is ultimately beholden to the Lord of the Dead: Yama in Vedic lore, Hades to the Greeks and other names to other, far-flung peoples.

His staff is an emblem of authority that sharply divides the realms of life and death. When a death mage blurs the line with magic she does so by seizing that authority, either by merging with the god itself or enacting a rite of defiance — as Orpheus did when he journeyed to the Underworld to save his wife.

Transfiguration and rebellion, however, have their rules as well. Orpheus broke them and suffered for it. The Euthanatos have compiled them as an oral creed. While the exact precepts change from teacher to teacher, some of them are consistently passed down by most Gurus. They are:

Respect those who walk alone in the Underworld. Anyone who travels alone in the lands of the dead is a force to be reckoned with, and may not even be a wraith at all. Ferryman are definitely a different kind of spirit being altogether, and some storm-riding creatures are so warped that it's unlikely that they ever existed in the lands of the living. Lone travelers should be left to go on their way.

Furthermore, the Euthanatos should respect his own solitude. Ghosts have strong drives and desires, and a death mage should remain aloof to their demands unless they serve the Chakradharma.

Necessity is never defied twice. A Euthanatos may enter the Underworld with divine authority or in brave defiance of the order of nature, but there's always a limit as to what she can accomplish. Orpheus may pass through the gates of Hades, but he'll hardly be permitted to look upon his wife in defiance of the Death God's bargain.

Essentially, Euthanatoi are told to be brave enough to do the right thing, but smart enough to accept a compromise. When bargaining with the dead, he should accept the first reasonable offer. When using divine magic, he should take on a Geasa or other stricture in return for his privileges.

For the dead, matter and spirit are one. This saying has a triple meaning. First of all, some ghosts use a special power to render the souls and bodies of the dead into coins, protective walls, swords, and other goods. These soulforged goods are one of the only two sources of "matter" in the Underworld. The other source comes in the form of things that have been destroyed in the lands of the living, but carried a great meaning that persists. The second interpretation of this saying simply observes that spiritual significance becomes material reality beyond the Shroud.

Finally, many wraiths are themselves influenced by objects from the lands of the living. Items that meant a lot to a ghost in life can influence its spiritual condition after death. For many wraiths, their bodies, former homes, and lovers are what keeps them bound to the Underworld. To destroy or claim these "Fetters," according to the precepts of the *Chodona*, is to do justice to both the living and the dead.

Even the brightest siddha is a dark mirror for the dead. Euthanatoi may not improve a wraith's fortunes with the Sphere of Entropy. Wraiths carry an exceptionally strong and dedicated karma that no amount of magic can alter. Even a simple spell to help a ghost find his way though the Maelstrom will bring out its self-destructive side. Consumed by darkness, these ghosts are dangerous to the living and the dead and will pass to the Great Unmaking without resolving their karma.

That's why a death mage should only interfere with a wraith's destiny when a greater good is to be gained. Like mages, ghosts resolve matters of the spirit alone.

Live in dead flesh. This saying contains two vital lessons. First of all, a mage traveling in the Underworld should either conceal her true nature or de-emphasize her connection to the living world when she's speaking with the dead. Some ghosts resent the living while others are simply saddened by them, so it's best to be subtle and considerate.

Secondly, a death mage shouldn't be too concerned for his physical safety. As Krishna told Arjuna, the Atman is eternal and unconquerable. The body is only a shell, and consciousness a trick to mark the passage of time and space. A mage who forgets that is likely to become a ghost herself.

With these principles in mind, the Euthanatos speak with the dead, cajole corpses and spirits into action and merge with the death-principle itself. Necromancy, Necrourgy, and Necrosynthesis are the most common fields of study. Others exist as the speciality of a select few or the obsession of a Jhor-tainted Chakravat.

ENSCORCELLING GHOSTS

For **Mage: The Ascension** purposes, the summoning and binding of wraiths is governed by the Spirit Sphere. Ghosts are treated as spirits, with the following additional guidelines:

Required Knowledge: The Dark Umbra is a mysterious place. To use any form of magic that crosses the Shroud (the Gauntlet separates the "Skinlands" of the living from the Underworld) requires at least two levels of *Wraith Lore*, three levels of *Cosmology*, or four levels of *Occult*.

The Lure of Decay: Entropic magic and Resonance has a marked effect on wraiths. While Entropy magic cast into the Underworld is at a -2 difficulty, each success increases the strength of the wraith's Shadow — the destructive spirit that wishes to drag it to Oblivion. For each success, roll one die at difficulty 9; three successes indicates that the Shadow has dominated the wraith in question unless it succeeds at a Willpower roll (difficulty 8). A shadow-dominated wraith can hide its condition or display its malevolence for all to see, but in either case it is filled with hatred for the mage as well as itself and will act on those feelings with all of the powers at its disposal.

If you are using **Wraith: The Oblivion**, Entropy magic that crosses the Shroud generates a point of temporary Angst for every success.

The Agama Sojourn: Usually, a living being enters the Underworld by dying. Stepping Sideways can't normally be used to enter the Underworld. Fortunately, Agama magic (detailed below) puts the mage in a state of half-death, able to enter the Sunless Lands and return while her body is kept on the cusp of death. The Avatar Storm does affect the passage, so most Euthanatoi enchant their bodies to resist wounds before crossing over.

Mages *have* walked the Underworld in their living bodies. Orpheus is an oft-cited example. In the Mythic Ages, brave or foolhardy mortals could walk into the lands of the dead from dark Shallowings. Some of those may still exist. Theoretically, a mage could also enter the Middle Umbra and find the secret paths that lead to the Underworld, but such journeys require extensive cosmological knowledge or a competent guide.

A few mages (those with the *Deathwalker Merit* and *Torcs of Donn*) can bodily enter the Shadowlands. A living traveler's nature is obvious to any wraith who cares to look. Most ghosts resent people who enter their domain clothed in flesh as it reminds them of their loss and smacks of tourist rubbernecking.

THE WALKING DEAD

Ever since the Underworld shattered with the force of a thousand imploding nihil, the storms have blown spirits across the Shroud. As a result, the dead have returned to the lands of the living in heretofore unforeseen numbers. Some inhabit dead flesh, becoming little more than zombies. Others find themselves forced into the corpses of animals, or even into objects. A few retain a sense of self, and many have uncanny ghostly powers. Quite a few are crazed due to the traumas of death and the terrible destruction in the Underworld; others are malevolent and wholly given over to dark impulses.

While the Euthanatos have long sought to remove suffering from the living by sending them on to a new incarnation, these things that come unbidden are a new and troubling nuisance. True, in the past an occasional tortured spirit would return from the grave and wreak its vengeance, but they were few and gravely driven, and when their tasks were done they would often return to the earth. The shambling, crawling, walking dead have no such motivations — they are *forced* back to Earth by the hellish Maelstroms that sweep the Underworld. And many of them are quite angry about it.

The Euthanatos have scrambled to deal with this emerging problem effectively. Response was slow at first — most mages had more pressing problems than worrying about the fact that a neighbor's car seemed haunted. As the Euthanatos pay more attention to tales of zombies, hauntings and errant "gremlins" in everyday items, they have come to realize that the problem's both far-reaching and of potentially dangerous scale. These walking dead can prove a great threat to the living; as they're already dead, some Euthanatos posit that they are outside the wheel of karma until their next living incarnation, and thus they can irrevocably alter the karma of the still-living.

Euthanatos who encounter these sorts of walking dead often go out of their way to lay such creatures to rest — either by completing unfinished tasks, by banishing souls back across the Shroud, or by destroying their bodies. It's a dangerous and thankless job, like all Euthanatoic work. So far, the Euthanatos haven't figured out how to stop it, either; they can only deal with the walking dead on a case-by-case basis. Thus far the other Traditions have turned a blind eye to the problem — but as the unbidden continue to grow in numbers and strength, this may change....

NECROTIANCY

Communicating with the dead is an art that exists in most cultures. The Euthanatos jump into the practice headfirst, since they rarely fear death or sacrilege.

The Spirit's Caress and **Call Spirit** are the fundamental tools of a necromancer. The former allows her to project her voice across the Shroud, and the latter allows her to call a ghost for conversation. Some ghosts resent the intrusion, but many are willing to talk to the mage — provided she does something for it in return. An item that was important to the ghost in life is likely to persuade it to come; the necromancer enjoys a bonus for sympathetic Resonance, as described on page 208 of **Mage: The Ascension**. Furthermore, it is considered to be a part of the wraith; Correspondence ranges are adjusted accordingly.

In the Age of Kali, the dead walk the earth. Whatever upheaval caused the dead to rise isn't well known, but modern Euthanatoi have started to adapt. Correspondence, Matter and Entropy are used to summon the Walking Dead, and Mind is used to turn their confused cries into comprehensible speech.

THE SONG OF FLIES

(•• MIND, • PRIME OR • MATTER, •• TIME)

No death is ever truly forgotten. Some Euthanatoi can pluck the vibrations of an event from the cosmos by chanting the Om and opening their minds to the sudden whispers of death that remain. Others examine the pallor of the deceased, the pattern of a spray of blood, or the paths that corpse-flies flitter to learn how someone died.

Death mages use this rote to hunt down murderers and investigate questionable deaths. It's common to use this rote to

examine the victims of neophyte Euthanatoi; their seniors can determine whether a Good Death was skillful or merciful enough.

System: The Mind/Prime version of this rote is used to examine the scene of a death for psychic impressions and magical Resonance. The Matter/Time version is used on a the subject's corpse, as the mage looks back through time to discover what killed the victim. The first version of the rote cannot directly identify a murderer, though it can point out the emotional state of any nearby parties and their specific Resonance Traits. Clever mages can use these facts to find a killer or bystander. This version requires 3 successes.

The second version requires 2 successes as well as enough successes to look back in time to the moment of the victim's death. It provides straightforward information but it can be blocked by Time wards.

MET: Initiate *Mind*, *Apprentice Prime* or *Apprentice Matter*, *Initiate Time*. You spend 1 minute examining a corpse. After that, you can determine how the object of your study died. The first version of the rote lets you determine the Resonance Traits of anyone who was with the victim at the time of death as well as the presence of magic activity. The second version lets you look back in time to the moment of the victim's death, but it can be blocked by the *Time Ward* rote (*Laws of Ascension*, p. 168). *Grades of Success:* No effect.

NECROURGY

Necrourgists attempt to master the dead through binding, warding, and compulsion. The Euthanatoi use it to banish evil ghosts, create lifeless servitors and to force recalcitrant wraiths to fulfil their destinies. *Call Spirit*, *Awaken the Inanimate* and *Affix Gauntlet* are common necrourgic rites, capable of summoning, trapping and dismissing wraiths. Adept-level Mind magic is used on the sentient dead; in conjunction with *Spirit* it forces ghosts into servitude. Pattern Spheres are used to master corpses without the interference of their former owners.

REANIMATION

(•• SPIRIT, ⊕ OR •• FORCES,
•• MATTER, AND •• PRIME)

A dance. A shake of the rattle. A rhythmic chant. All of these carry their vibrations into the earth and sky and remind the world of the secret motion that floods all creation. In those sacred moments the still hidden things — the dead things — shake off the inertia of ages and dance to the hidden music of the Iron Wheel.

Reanimation imbues human remains with the power to move in the semblance life. There are two generally accepted ways to do this. The first is to call a spirit (not necessarily the former owner of the corpse) to rouse the old flesh and bones. The second is to rekindle the fire of Ojas in the bones themselves so that they rise under their own spiritual power. In ancient times the Pomegranate Deme and Natatapas both used permanently animated skeletons, but the Paradox-prone nature of that rite makes it a rarely used one.

System: If a mage knows an appropriate spirit (though the use of an appropriate Knowledge or in-game experience) then he can use the first version of this rote to call it to the body and bargain it inside. Note that there are a few spirits who get a kick out of animating corpses: spirits of fear and the wraiths who used to wear the bodies in question tend to be enthusiastic volunteers, though a mage may be getting more than he bargains for in both cases. The second version rouses the latent Quintessence in a body and uses it

to impart motion. As a rough guide, a corpse (or parts thereof) has as many health levels as the Storyteller sees fit for it to have and has a Strength of 2 per success spent (up to the maximum amount of force the body could bring to bear without breaking or tearing). The caster must score three successes, plus one per animated target.

MET: *Initiate Spirit* or *Initiate Forces*, *Matter*, and *Prime*. By making rhythmic noise (shaking a rattle, dancing, or chanting) for a full turn you can cause a corpse to move about. The first version of this rote is identical in all ways to *Animate the Dead* on page 169 of *Laws of Ascension*. The second version of this rote gives the corpse three Physical Traits of your choosing with which to act, following your commands literally, for one minute/conflict. It has health levels equal to a healthy person but takes no wound penalties. *Grades of Success:* For the second version, each grade of success adds three physical traits to any corpse enchanted with the rote, increases the duration by one grade, or allows you to animate another corpse.

SALT ON THE EARTH

(••• CORRESPONDENCE, • ENTROPY)

Indian and Greek traditions recognize the purity of salt. Necrourgists use it to ward off the predations of ghosts. Some do so to defend the innocent from a terrifying haunting, while others simply evade the due that meddling with the Underworld earns them. The mage casts a circle of salt and calls to the gods of the living and the dead to keep their territories separate and sovereign. In turn, the circle marks this strengthened boundary; those within it are warded from the powers of the Underworld.

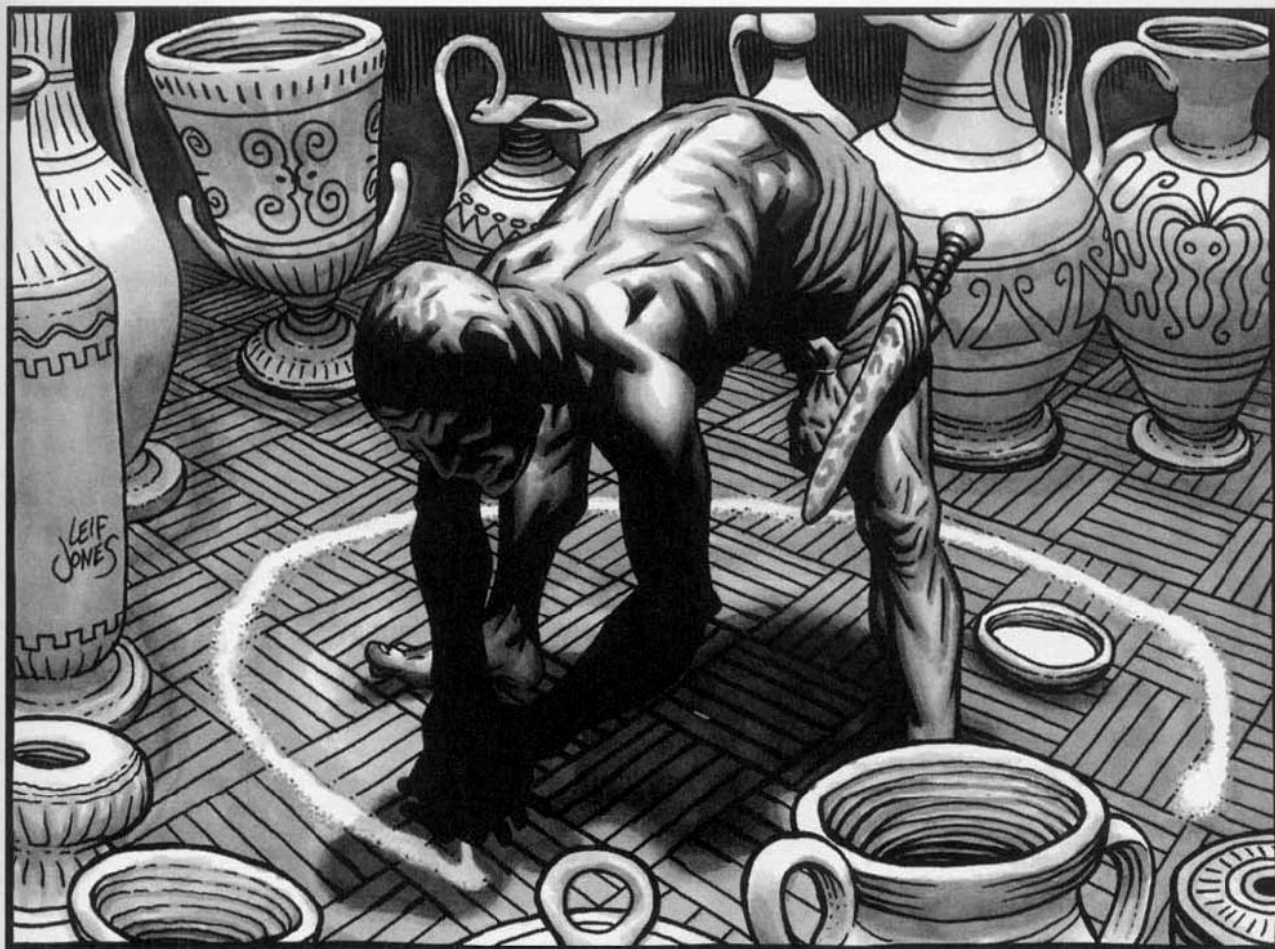
System: This variation on a *Ban* prevents Entropic energies from crossing a boundary of the mage's choosing (typically a circle of salt). Since ghostly powers (such as Arcanoi) carry the flavor of decay, they may not pass the barrier. This only applies to supernatural powers that manifest in the lands of the living; the ghost may use its powers or pass freely through the affected area as long as she remains in the Shadowlands. A wraith can't simply walk across the barrier in the Shadowlands and wreak havoc from the inside; the magic permeates the affected area, not just the circle.

After spending 2 successes and any successes on duration and/or the number of additional Patterns protected, the rote typically subtracts one success from the use of an Arcanos (or Gift, if you treat ghosts like spirits) per success spent on the ban's potency. At the Storyteller's discretion, very devious or powerful ghosts may be able to evade this. The rote has no effect on the bodies of the Walking Dead (and similarly animated bodies), who can shamle into the area at will.

MET: *Disciple Correspondence*, *Apprentice Entropy*. You cast a circle of salt around you and wraiths find it difficult to affect you with their Arcanoi. You gain a free retest against any Arcanos that affects the physical world so long as you are standing in the circle. This lasts for one minute/conflict. *Grades of Success:* Each grade of success allows you to protect one other person (give them the benefit of the retest) in your circle or extends the duration by one grade.

NECROSYNTHESIS

The most dangerous branch of the Kalananda merges the states of life and death. Even the Agama Sojourn is rarely entered into lightly. Necrosynthesists bind the forces of decay to the vibrant Patterns of life in order to study where one begins and the other ends. By making death a transition rather than an abrupt ending, Euthanatoi can utilize both sides of the cycle and leave one for the other without fear.



The past masters of the art were the Idran, who hoped to blur the transit between life and death to a continuous cycle. Because they were utterly corrupted, advanced necrosynthesists are looked upon with some suspicion by the Euthanatos as a whole. Their *Yamasattva* (also known as licheedom: see *Dead Magic*) rite may be lost, but its use is nonetheless punishable by death. The Pomegranate Deme are rumored to have created a balanced version of the *Yamasattva* ritual, but none have come forward to confirm this.

Entropy Effects (particularly **Blight of Aging**), Matter, and Life define the limits of life, death, and decay. They tend to be the Spheres in which necrosynthesists specialize. Most necrosynthetic magic consists of exotic conjunctions; the field challenges a cosmic boundary that only complex magic can cross.

IVTAMARANA ("DEATH IN LIFE") YOGA (•••• ENTROPY OR MATTER, •••• LIFE)

The Knights of Radamanthys and the Devasu make use of this rote when they are forced into direct combat. Special breathing and ingesting a near-fatal dose of a barbiturate brings the mage to the *Coumantha* between life and death. In this in-between state, their corpse-like bodies feel no pain and they can shrug off horrific injuries.

System: This rote requires 3 successes plus successes spent on duration. For the duration of the rote, the mage becomes something very much like a walking corpse; he can soak lethal damage (difficulty 6), halves all bashing damage before soaking, and suffers no wound

penalties. The mage's Life Pattern becomes indistinct; Life Effects targeted at the mage have their difficulty increased by 1.

This strength has a price. The mage's body is insensitive to tactile stimulus and he automatically fails most applicable Perception-based tests. His withered, pale visage reduces his Appearance to zero. Finally, the mage possesses an additional Entropic Resonance Trait for the duration of the rote.

MET: *Adept Entropy* or *Matter*, *Adept Life*. You spend a full turn breathing deeply and you (pretend to) ingest an (imaginary) drug. This puts your body in a half-life where you don't need your normal physiology to survive and you feel very little pain. You take half damage from all bashing attacks, suffer no wound penalties, and gain an additional Healthy health level, but you gain the Negative Social Traits: *Ghastly* x 3 and cannot bid any Appearance-related Social Traits. You also gain the Entropic Resonance Trait: *Cadaverous*. Both the benefits and hindrances of this rote last for one minute/conflict. *Grades of Success:* Each grade of success extends the rote's duration by one grade.

DUKHAMARANA MOKSA ("RELEASE OF AGONIZING DEATH") (•••• ENTROPY, ••• LIFE)

This form of the Good Death is used on particularly sinful or destructive candidates. Some Euthanatoi believe that sometimes

the Good Death alone isn't enough to dissuade an evildoer; his death must be a lesson in of itself. The intense pain that Dukhamarana Moksa creates as it kills is said to discourage a victim from committing evil acts in his next life. Since the spell corrodes victims to dust, it also counters the unnatural hardness of some supernatural creatures.

By chanting the Dukhamarana mantra and declaring the victim's sins, the Euthanatoi concentrates all of the target's destructive karma and channels it into his body. The dark karma takes form as spontaneous lesions, rotting, and disintegration.

System: After spending a success to affect the target and a success to collect his tainted karma, each success inflicts 2 unsoakable aggravated wounds. Furthermore, any injuries created by this rote will not heal without special intervention; the target's ability to replenish its Pattern with Quintessence has been destroyed. A Prime 3 Effect will allow the target to heal naturally for as long as its duration lasts, and a vulgar Life 3/ Prime 3 conjunctive Effect will heal a target just like a standard healing rote. Finally, anyone killed with Dukhamarana Moksa is turned into lifeless dust. The victim's body cannot be recreated by any means short of the resurrection power of a mummy or by using the dust's Resonance as a blueprint to create life out of nothingness (requiring Mastery of Life and Prime). Creatures normally immune to Life Pattern magic are similarly unaffected by this rote, though variations that affect them might exist.

If the Euthanatoi uses this rote to kill a victim, she automatically gains one Trait of Entropic Resonance. Thus, most death mages use this rote to wound a particularly evil supernatural target and mundane means to finish it off.

MET: Adept Entropy, Disciple Life. You chant a mantra (a repetitive phrase) and declare one of your target's sins. His body begins to rot to dust, inflicting one level of aggravated damage. This damage cannot be healed with time unless the target is enchanted with Disciple-level Prime while any normal or magical healing takes place. If this rote kills the target, only Mastery of Life and Prime can restore the body. *Grades of Success:* Each grade of success inflicts an additional level of aggravated damage or affects an additional target.

AGAITIA RE SØJOURN / AGAITIA TE SØJOURN
(•••• ENTROPY, •• LIFE, •••• SPIRIT /
•••• ENTROPY, •• LIFE, •••• SPIRIT)

This famous rote used to be cast upon almost every new Euthanatoi as part of the near-death initiation. As the Maelstrom rages in the lands of the dead, however, many consider the old method too dangerous and use other means to initiate apprentices into death.

The effect puts the subject at the cusp of death, "tricking" the Underworld into accepting his passage over the shroud. The traveler becomes a wraith of sorts, clothed in the spiritual body of a ghost while his mortal flesh lies in the stillness of (hopefully) temporary death. Agama Re carries the mage. Agama Te allows the mage to bring companions or send another mage across.

System: This rote has a threshold of seven successes, in addition to any successes dedicated to the spell's duration or extra "targets." Entropy and Life imbue the mage with the physical and mystical attributes of death, while Spirit allows the mage to traverse the Shroud (the Gauntlet of dread that separates consensual reality from

the Shadowlands). No magic is needed to create the subject's wraithly body; the natural laws of the Underworld clothe dead souls.

The subject's spiritual body (called a *corpus*) resembles his self-image. A mage's corpus will often manifest features of his Avatar's Essence and appearance as well. The subject now has 10 health levels and doesn't take wound penalties. Since she is no longer housed in a living Pattern, she can no longer be affected by Life magic. She must use the Spirit Sphere to heal any injuries sustained to the corpus. Ghosts can sense that the mage still carries the spark of life with a Perception + Awareness (or a Gnosis) roll, difficulty 6. Like a ghost, the subject can walk through walls or ignore anything from the living world that would harm her by expending a single health level per barrier or hazard.

If a mage loses all of her health levels, two things happen. First of all, she immediately gains a new, permanent Entropic Resonance Trait. Secondly, the mage is drawn into a *Harrowing*.

In **Mage** terms, a Harrowing is a kind of anti-Seeking. The mage undertakes a symbolic visionquest, but instead of spurring her personal growth it seeks to torment her to the point where she loses hope and takes refuge in Oblivion. The mage's Avatar often takes the role of a victim or companion, but it has no influence over the events of the Harrowing. Instead, malefic forces attempt to separate the mage from her Avatar, inspire her to betray it, or cause her to reject the possibility of Ascension.

If the mage keeps to the ideals of Ascension and stays true to her Avatar, she returns to her mortal body. The spell is finished, regardless of its duration. If Agama Te was used, any companions under the effect return as well.

If the mage fails (betrays or rejects her Avatar or denies Ascension), the player must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 9). If the roll is successful, the mage returns to her body just as if she'd succeeded. If the roll is a failure, the mage returns to her body and loses a level of Arete. (She has, after all, denied Ascension and/or her Avatar.) If the mage botches, Oblivion consumes her soul and she becomes an evil ghost, or Spectre.

Wraith: The Oblivion details Harrowings and the nature of ghosts in detail. Storytellers interested in running extended games in the Underworld may want to find a copy of the game in order to give them more from which to draw.

MET: Adept Entropy, Initiate Life, Disciple (for the mage) or **Adept** (for others) **Spirit.** After fifteen minutes of deep meditation, your body falls into a deathlike trance and your spirit travels into the lands of the dead for up to an hour. When the spell ends, you are pulled back to your body. You can only end the spell before its duration expires by walking back to your body.

As described above, you have a spirit body and must use the Spirit Sphere to perform the functions of the Life Sphere. You have 10 Health Levels and never take wound penalties. You may expend a Health Level to walk through a barrier. If you lose all 10 of these, you undergo the anti-Seeking (Harrowing) described above. If you fail, you must make a Static Willpower Challenge against a difficulty of seven Traits. If the test fails, you lose an Arete Trait and return to your body as the spell ends. If you succeed in the Harrowing or the Willpower Challenge, you simply return to your body. In both cases, you gain a new Entropic Resonance Trait.

Since the psychodrama of the Harrowing can take time, Narrators may wish to simply perform the Willpower Challenge

first. On a failure, the Narrator and the player can act out the scene at a more convenient time and levy the Arete loss later.

Grades of Success: If you are using Agama Te, you may spend a grade of success to bring a companion. Otherwise, each grade of success increases the rote's duration.

MARKS OF FATE: MERITS AND FLAWS

The newly Awakened often seek out the Euthanatos, looking for answers. Why has Fate given them a special mark? How can they use their newfound talents? These are more than abstract questions; bizarre magic, strange luck or even morbid strangeness blesses or inflicts itself upon the Wheel-turners with surprising regularity. What follows is a sampling of the special gifts and persistent curses that manifest in the Tradition.

MOURNER'S CHANT (3 PT. SOCIAL MERIT)

Your mage has a gift for relieving people of their despair when they are confronted by death. He might be a professional mourner in a traditional society, a grief counselor or even just a compassionate soul willing to listen to and reassure anyone affected by death. His skill is such that the presence of ghosts and the walking dead bring no fear to his charges, so long as he can speak to them in a clear, unwavering voice.

The character gains a -2 difficulty modifier on all Social rolls when trying to comfort someone struck by grief, rage, or any other emotion brought on by death. When ghosts and the walking dead approach, he may make a Manipulation + Expression roll (difficulty 7) to steel his charge against terror. Each success adds one point to the subject's effective Willpower when resisting the horror. This does not cover vampires or the use of fear-causing supernatural powers, only the shroud of fear that surrounds these beings. You may split your dice pool to comfort multiple people.

See **Mummy: The Resurrection** and **Werewolf: The Apocalypse** for some sample systems for supernatural horror. Otherwise, simply assume that the subject flees or is paralyzed with fear unless he makes a Willpower roll, difficulty 9.

MET: You have the bonus Social Trait: *Empathetic* whenever you deal with the effects of death. This can bring your total number of Traits above your normal maximum, but only when you are dealing with this subject. In any situation where a ghost or animated corpse would terrify your charge, you may spend 2 Social Traits to temporarily remove your charge's fear of the creature. You may only do this for as many people as you can afford to spend in Social Traits.

DEATHWALKER (4 PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Your character has a special tie to the Underworld. While most mages must die or undergo the Agama rite to cross into the Shadowlands, you can use the third rank of Spirit to Step Sideways, just as if you were entering the Middle Umbra. Your aura turns pale and you take on the spiritual imprint of one of the dead. You aren't affected by the Avatar Storms when you cross over; they ignore your "dead" soul as it passes by. You are affected

by the Avatar Storm when you venture into the Middle and Astral Umbrae; only the lands of the dead are excepted.

MET: You can use *Intermediate Spirit* to enter the Underworld just as if you were using it to enter the Umbra. You don't take any damage from the Avatar Storm when you cross over to the Shadowlands, but you're still affected if you go into the Umbra.

CALLING CARD (2 PT. MENTAL/ SUPERNATURAL FLAW)

Maybe your character has a self-destructive streak or maybe it's just bad luck, but she can't seem to keep from leaving some trace of her presence anywhere she doesn't want to be connected to. This persistent clue of her involvement can be found at crime scenes, abandoned safe houses or any number of compromising places. Dogged investigators can recognize the signs she leaves and soon learn when she's been around.

You should choose some sign or set of signs the character leaves behind, like butts and packaging from her favorite brand of cigarettes, odd signs of her Resonance, or even an actual calling card that she has a compulsion to leave behind. Finding the calling card usually takes two successes on a Perception + Investigation roll (difficulty 6), but once the investigator finds the sign twice it drops to a single success. The calling card also reveals some minor detail about the character, such as her habits or musical tastes.

Finally, this is a "hole" in the *Arcane* Background, which doesn't stymie the use of Abilities to glean information or find the calling card. Magical attempts are countered as usual.

MET: You leave behind a minor clue to your identity whenever you *don't* want it known that you were around! You should keep a set of cards or sticky notes whenever you leave a location that you traveled to clandestinely (usually, any place requiring *Stealth* or *Streetwise*). These notes tell whoever finds them to speak to you.

When another player encounters the note, they should make a Challenge against 5 Traits with you. They may retest with Investigation. If they win, they find your calling card. Give the player an item card describing what it is. You should keep multiple calling cards. Each is an identical item. If a player has found two of your calling cards, the difficulty of the test to find them is reduced to a Simple Test, and he may expend a level of Investigation for a retest.

TOUCH OF CHAOS (1 PT. SUPERNATURAL FLAW)

Disturbing things happen when your character's around. This is one persistent manifestation of decay or randomness that, while not immediately apparent, will give away your occult connections. Withering plants, signs of pestilence, or wild, inconvenient luck could each be the one thing that always happens when you've been around. This occasionally irritates others and makes it harder to hide your nature.

MET: You have a negative version of the Euthanatos Tradition Advantage. Instead of being interesting, the one mark of Entropy that follows you is a nuisance or hindrance, though it isn't immediately obvious.



CHAPTER THREE: ALL FLESH IS ASHES

As he sang these tender strains the very ghosts shed tears.

— The Story of Orpheus in Thomas Bullfinch's
Bullfinch's Mythology, Volume One: The Age of Fable



The World of Darkness is filled with people who bring Fate's wrath upon themselves. Can the world heal from the mystical and spiritual insults that have been inflicted upon it? Do the answers lie in an esoteric Ascension, or in the defiled places that the Euthanatos, above all others, choose to tread?

The Wheel's relentless spin is a curse and a comfort. It impedes rapid change but it blesses the Tellurian with the chance of renewal. Jhor, the scouring of the Janissaries, and the sins of Helekar make it easy to forget that opportunities reveal themselves through the Cycle's spin. There is hope for the Tradition and the world. Ends are beginnings; chaos shakes up our old assumptions and opens the door to new possibilities.

The cycle is not just a metaphysical possibility. The death mages have finally revealed that they cleanse the Council of spies, Nephandi and other enemies. They can now make a play for official

recognition as the guardians of the Traditions. The other Traditions could finally understand the motivations of their bleak, mysterious cousins, and opening the door on these secrets would keep the disease that quietly rotted the heart of Helekar from finding a new, dark place to take root. With better relations with the Akashic Brotherhood and a Council in need of policing, the Wheel-turners are poised to accept new responsibilities.

As Euthanatoi become more aware of the danger of Jhor and more in touch with the emotions (or lack thereof) that lead them to death-obsession, they are adjusting their lives and work to match. "Death mages" learn mathematics, psychology, meme theory and modern ethics to treat Jhor before the Good Death becomes necessary. This doesn't mean that the Tradition has rejected killing; the Golden Chalice is busier than ever, and Radamanthys bodyguards are ever in demand, selling their services for Tass and favors. The difference is that the Euthanatos is ready to pursue a more balanced vision. The Wheel may be crumbling, but its guardians are not.

SOULS AND SIDDHI: EUTHANATOI OF NOTE



The Euthanatos are diligent about keeping track of their members. Always vigilant for corruption, they keep as close a watch as they can on their own. Aside from revealing the Jhor-poisoned members of their Tradition, this also allows Euthanatoi to recognize their exceptional members. Euthanatoi rarely exhibit outright reverence for anyone less than an archmage, but they do recognize that experienced or hard-done-by Wheel-turners pay their dues. Serving the Cycle without falling prey to damnation or simple pessimism is no easy task.

The Thanatoic life is comparable to a street cop's, in that they're exposed to the worst failings of the human spirit and must constantly guard their thoughts from hopelessness and cynicism. Those that ward off callousness and come to love the Tradition's sacred mission are treated with the respect that only mages who've shared those experiences can give.

EVELYN KINSELLA

Background: Evelyn Kinsella grew up in a staunch Irish-Catholic household in Boston — or so she thought. Her family had served the Aided for generations, and when they saw the spark of magic in her they notified their patrons.

Evelyn was 16 years old at the time, a devout Catholic. Despite that, she worked her first magic through simple superstitions: broken mirrors, black cats, and the like. Her guilt and confusion was only compounded when the Aided came for her. She spent her apprenticeship struggling with a crisis of faith and the feeling that her family had betrayed her. When she underwent the Ananda Diksha, however, everything changed. In that moment her Avatar revealed itself as the bloody Phantom Queen, and she rejected everything she'd grown up with.

The sudden about-face only intensified the rift with her family (who, despite their allegiance, really were devout Catholics). She plunged headfirst into pagan magic and Thanatoic philosophy. She took to assassination with enthusiasm, releasing her built-up resentment on human refuse who deserved the Good Death. Traditional Euthanatoi kept her at arm's length, believing that her attitude would plunge her into Jhor, and her temper kept her out of the Golden Chalice. In frustration, she decided to work alone and hone her magical talents.

In the wake of the Reckoning, the Euthanatos couldn't afford to exclude anyone anymore. Evelyn was courted by a number of cabals during 2000. Overwhelmed by the attention, she chose Truce Singh as her sole partner. Part of the appeal was his brusque temper and the fact that he wanted nothing whatever to do with diplomacy or abstract work to "heal the Wheel," while part of it was the workload; Truce was one of the most prolific Chela-level assassins in the Tradition.

Neither of them cared about friendship or social niceties, so they were able to pack a lot of killing into a short period of time. Their only contacts were like-minded individuals: cold or angry mages who were determined to burn away the world's impurities. It was only after she noticed how many of them were unnaturally cold or how few of them had living friends or family that she began to wonder if she'd fallen into bad company — or whether the Jhor that she suspected ran thick through it would creep into her soul.

Image: Evelyn has a lean runner's build, high cheekbones and luminous blue eyes. Her expression typically alternates between a

sowl of repressed anger and a look of wistful regret. She likes to dye her blonde hair in stark, unnatural colors, but when she's "on the job" she returns it to her natural color and grows it out. On cold days, she wears a high-collared gray leather jacket with dark comfortable clothes and navy blue steel-toed boots. The jacket's collar conceals an ornate torc set with bronze images of the Morrighu, her principal tutelary goddess. A wicker figure, a length of braided cord and a white-handled combat knife are the other foci she normally carries.

Evelyn walks with a smooth, quick gait, rarely slowing for anyone or anything. She looks directly at the person to whom she's speaking, and can move from calm conversation to brutal forcefulness without hesitation.

Roleplaying Hints: You don't have a middle switch. You're either incredibly hostile or quietly contrite. Your "fun" side is mostly biting sarcasm. Sometimes you feel the need to reach out and nurture the victims and bystanders you encounter. You have trouble keeping at it, though, especially when there's some bastard on your to-do list. Anger's much more satisfying.

Speak intelligently but with a share of profanity. In your calm moods you affect a rather unemotional voice, but you describe your doubts and feelings in detail. You quietly enjoy healing, charity, and counseling, and you'd have a talent for it if you weren't so caught up in being a vengeful assassin.

Your magic is quick, relying on portable foci and a few spoken invocations to the Morrighu and Celtic myths. You prefer to be spontaneous and react to the matter at hand, so — aside from rituals where you channel your anger and strength of purpose into added vitality — you rarely have prepared Effects.

Faction: Aided

Essence: Questing

Nature: Caregiver

Demeanor: Bravo



Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4 (Quick), Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 4 (Alert), Intelligence 3, Wits 4 (Instincts).

Abilities: Academics 4 (Celtic Mythology), Alertness 4 (Surprises), Awareness 3, Athletics 4 (Running), Brawl 3, Drive 3, Firearms 2, Linguistics 2 (Gaelic, Sanskrit, Bengali), Melee 3, Occult 3, Stealth 4 (Quick Movement)

Backgrounds: Avatar 3, Arcane 3, Destiny 3.

Arete: 3

Spheres: Entropy 3, Life 3, Prime 2, Spirit 1.

Willpower: 8

Quintessence: 3

Paradox: 0

Resonance: (Dynamic) Stormy, (Entropic) Wrathful

THEORA HETIRCK: HERALD OF SENEX

Background: The infamous Theora Hetirck grew up in a family of Baltimore morticians. The Hetirck family specialized in open-casket funerals for people who'd died from severe body trauma. Grisly death was the family business, and Theora was used to it by her teens.

She Awakened at the age of 15 when one of her "clients" sat up, affected by Theora's unconscious magic. The animated corpse was once a Euthanatos mage. Theora merged with the soul of the incoherent thing as it shambled out of the funeral home and smashed itself to pieces in the traffic of a nearby highway. Thus, Theora underwent a kind of Agama and learned the fundamentals of Thanatoic magic without ever having a proper mentor.

She experimented on her own, reanimating corpses and taking them as her playthings. One day her father discovered her at play with the dead and, thinking her possessed, began to beat her. Theora picked up a scalpel and slit his throat.

She wandered the streets for a year before Voormas picked her up. The archmage shielded her from other Euthanatoi and trained her in his own perverse ethics, torturing her when she fell out of line. It was a combination of talent and terror that turned this small, shy woman into one of the Consanguinity of Eternal Joy's best killers.

When the Council started to investigate the Consanguinity, they assigned her to high-risk missions, hoping she would be captured and take the blame for Helekar's crimes. She was captured, but the Primi chose not to take her as a sacrificial lamb. Instead, she was given to Senex as an apprentice.

Over the next few years, the Old Man removed Voormas' mental controls and healed most of her emotional trauma. In the wake of the Reckoning, he chose her to be his personal Herald. Although she's widely despised by Traditionalists, her actions have managed to uphold the dignity of her master and the Euthanatos as a whole. Many speculate that Theora was chosen to symbolize the Council's hope for the future. After all, if *she* can heal old wounds and return to the ideals of her Tradition, there must be hope for everyone.

Image: Theora is a slender woman in her late 20s. Her large eyes used to give her a childlike quality; now they add depth to her gaze. Nowadays she usually wears blue jeans and oversized shirts with a set of prayer beads. She smiles slightly while she speaks. Her voice is kind, confident, and slightly tired. Her dark brown hair is shot through with gray — a testament to the horrors she's endured. She is never armed.

Roleplaying Hints: You have a tough job ahead of you, complicated by your past. You don't have anything to prove to anyone about yourself, so steer the conversation away from you and back to the matter at hand. Troubled mages have a special place in



your heart; hear them out before making any judgements, but don't let your sympathy get the better of you.

The business of being a Herald is tiring, especially since you haven't completely overcome your problems. You rarely sleep (you don't like your dreams) but you enjoy time to yourself. Display your old petulance and iciness if someone interrupts you while you're getting a little peace and quiet. In a crisis, take a second to consider what you'll do; your reflexes were honed by Voormas, and they might betray you.

Faction: Nominally Madzimbabwe. Hetirck's own magic favors Greek and Indian rites.

Essence: Questing

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Architect

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4 (Steady), Stamina 3, Charisma 4 (Sympathetic), Manipulation 4 (Disarming), Appearance 4 (Innocent Looking), Perception 5 (Empathic), Intelligence 5 (Memory), Wits 5 (Unhesitating).

Abilities: Alertness 4 (Blind Side), Athletics 4 (Balance), Awareness 3, Brawl 5 (Strangulation), Computer 2, Cosmology 3, Dodge 3, Drive 1, Enigmas 4 (Ethical Dilemmas), Etiquette 3, Expression 3, Firearms 4 (Light Pistols), Intimidation 2, Investigation 4 (Counter-Forensics), Linguistics 3 (German, Sanskrit, ASL, Parsi, Arabic, French), Medicine 3, Meditation 4 (Therapeutic), Melee 5 (Knives), Occult 1, Research 3, Stealth 5 (Shadows), Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3.

Backgrounds: Avatar 4, Arcane 5, Destiny 5, Mentor 5, Dream 1.

Arete: 4

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Entropy 3, Forces 1, Life 3, Mind 3, Prime 2, Spirit 2.

Willpower: 9

Quintessence: 16

Paradox: 4

Resonance: (Entropic) Nightmarish, (Entropic) Livid, (Static) Calm, (Dynamic) Curious

OTHER EUTHANATOI

With their illustrious and tragic history, the Euthanatos have a number of mages who are well known to the rest of the Traditions. They are treated with anything from sympathy to murderous hatred by their fellows. These are some other death mages of note:

SENEX

Dour Senex, given to metaphors and telling silences, remains in his own Horizon Realm, Cerberus. The August Madzimbabwe is the custodian of the Realm of Entropy where House Helekar once stood, but rarely directly intervenes, preferring to let his many apprentices (some of whom are Adepts in their own right) and his undeniable influence over his Tradition do his work for him.

Over 500 years ago, Senex studied the magic of his native Great Zimbabwe. He joined the Euthanatos along with his Madzimbabwe cousins and remained with it after most of the ghost-tenders returned to Africa. His true name is unknown; Senex ("Old Man") was the name given to him by his friend, Akrites Salonikas of the First Cabal.

Supposedly, Senex prefers to teach instead of meddling in the affairs of mages. He's infamous for taking in troubled members of his own Tradition as apprentices. Other mages carefully watch his charges, both because of their dangerous histories and because they tend to express the Old Man's desires more directly than he does. Messengers like Theora Hetrick pass along his plan for the Euthanatos to camp their ranks on the Horizon without ever directly relaying his words, but experience has shown that Senex's Heralds never contradict his wishes.

Senex is a five-century-old archmage, but wields his tremendous power as subtly as his words. A black man with a soft, resonating voice, Senex appears to be aging for the first time in centuries. This, too, is a subtle affair, adding a few small creases to a face that looks in its mid-forties.

AMANDA

In 1809, a young woman by the name of Mercedes Awakened on a bloody battlefield in Spain. She apprenticed under Senex. Her natural wisdom guided the knives that became her weapon of choice. She was a prodigy even among the Old Man's elite students, and certainly worth the risk he took in coming to Earth for her.

In 1896, she went to the Cauls. In 1923, Senex killed her himself.

Almost a century later, the Old Man took in Amanda. She took to the Art like she had been born into it — and she also favored knives. In 1995, evacuees from Fors Collegius Mus arrived in Cerberus. Some recognized a certain... pedigree in Amanda. When she was accused of being a Widderslaite by a senior Hermetic, Amanda was away on a secret mission. Rumors placed her in Shangri-la, the Moons of Mars and on the threshold of the Eastern Hells, pursuing a mission known only to herself and the Old Man. It is known that the Consanguinity of Eternal Joy is interested in her whereabouts. Senex's representatives curtly informed the mages investigating the Consanguinity's crimes that she killed Helekar's Richard Somnitz, but refused to provide any other information.

Amanda is a skilled Euthanatos Adept who uses a variety of subtle tools, but usually focuses on her knives, which do double duty as assassin's weapons and a medium for her Art. Because she's skilled at altering her features, the twin blades act as her most distinguishing feature.

VOORMAS

Dark Voormas works toward one goal: to claim the aspect of Shiva and join mystically with Kali, the Black Mother. His gods

are not those loved by Hindus, but more brutal and ambivalent beings. To him, this union can only come about at the resolution of the Kali Yuga: Armageddon. He plans to bring about the end sooner than the Vedas predict — much sooner.

Voormas was a Kapalika: an ascetic devoted to the fearsome aspect of Shiva, the Destroyer. Carrying a brahmin's skull as a begging bowl, he collected alms and bodies for his god. Nobody knows how ancient the mage is; by the 15th century he was a Master and the second in command of the Sapindya Sadananda, serving the Greek Euthanatos Helekar until the day his master met Voormas' sword. He took the mantle of the Grand Harvester of Souls in 1709.

Blackmailing Doissetep's finest granted him access to some of the foulest Nodes in the Tellurian. Studying the old secrets of the Idran, he tried to command the raw Entropy of these places. He wanted to master Death itself — the one thing he still feared after centuries as a Chakravanti. The gods appeared to him then, and told him that true Living Death could only be achieved when the whole cosmos was united by annihilation.

Finally, the efforts of several Tradition mages revealed the true scope of the Consanguinity's corruption and Voormas was forced to flee, taking the House of Helekar with him. No one has ever been able to detect a pattern in the Consanguinity's crimes, but they assume that there was a higher plan. Some Euthanatoi speculate that he awoke the demon Zapathasura. Asian infernalists know that he was the *guest* of the Yama Tou Mu — not her slave. He is, perhaps, the most powerful archmage of any Tradition. He wants ecstasy and eternal life in the death throes of the cosmos. He's insane.

Needless to say, the Euthanatos are very, very frightened.

Voormas appears to witnesses as an ancient Dravidian man resting on a cane of fused vertebrae topped by a child's skull, or as a giant, six-armed fusion of Kali and Shiva.

ALEXANDER MORO

The descendant of Haroun Cygnus Moro, Alexander is as cheerful as his ancestor was grim. The Parsi death mage is a jovial, well-traveled man and a font of occult knowledge — as befits an eclectic member of the Golden Chalice. He worked hard to distance himself from the legacy of Haroun's First Cabal; some say that his pleasant demeanor is a ruse contrived for just this purpose.

A multi-talented Adept and natural linguist, he was the perfect person to decipher the *Ixos Folio*. Many of the tactics used to lure House Janissary's quislings out into the open were his idea. As a reward, he's been granted probationary membership in the Albireo.

Moro prefers to direct from the sidelines. Skill in Correspondence and Mind help him supervise several tasks at once. This has its downsides; he wonders of the Janissaries were *really* guilty of anything or simply the recipients of an unfortunate pedigree. Of all people, he knows how much influence one's ancestry can have.

Moro is currently working to preserve the Euthanatos' reputation in the face of the Janissary purge. His talents — and the motivation of guilt — have helped him excel in this task. Representatives from the Akashic Brotherhood and the Verbena have both warmed to the idea of Wheel-turners acting as the Council's police.

Alexander Moro has wild, curly black hair, golden skin and a bit of a paunch. He's in his early thirties and prefers loose, bright clothing, with a penchant for loud vests. Despite his casual, pleasant demeanor, he knows when to assume a formal stance — and like most Euthanatoi, he won't hesitate to deliver the Good Death if it's warranted.

ALL-EUTHANATOI CHRONICLES



Euthanatoi have a number of reasons to work in exclusive cabals. Other Traditions don't always understand the necessity of the Good Death and won't be as willing to waste time and resources on killing for the sake of something other than survival or revenge. Euthanatoi also appreciate the company of mages who've been through the trauma of near-death and have skirted the edges of Jhor. Who else would understand the struggle to preserve the Wheel?

Euthanatos games can be multi-faceted affairs without detracting from some of the narrative strengths of the Tradition. Death mages have the advantage of having clearly defined motives. A Storyteller can gear an entire Chronicle around an assassination or punctuate an ongoing game with missions. All the same, Euthanatoi don't need to be stuck in the loop of killing, collecting Jhor, and purifying themselves. They can be as dynamic as any mage — and as human.

THE MORAL STRUGGLE

It is the privilege and curse of Euthanatoi to preside over the end of things. Lives, dreams, and cultures breathe their last in the presence of these mages. Many mages seek something numinous and eternal in the world. Wheel-turners have no such comfort. So why do they do it?

Moral duty is a strong force in the Tradition. Thanatoic ethics aren't chosen, they're given to a mage by the Wheel itself. Hindus call this kind of moral imperative *dharma*, though Celtic *Geasa* and other codes make the concept familiar to all death mages. Dharmas aren't compromises that can be modified to suit the times, but moral laws that reflect the workings of the cosmos. Even then, ethical dilemmas occur. The different aspects of a death mage's moral imperatives can conflict with one another.

SACRED DUTY

For the Euthanatos, the Good Death is more than a metaphysical need — it's a moral duty. Even though the Indian Chakravanti came from the rejected and despised elements of their society, they never forgot the principle of *dharma*: the duty given to a person by their station.

In Hindu societies, *dharma* is a pervasive social force. Everyone has a moral duty based on their heritage and station that is more than a social responsibility. *Dharma* is ingrained into the structure of the cosmos itself, and Euthanatoi see it as the most personal manifestation of the Wheel. Typical facets of *dharma* include reverence for one's family, spiritual reachers, and local manifestations of the gods. *Dharma* also includes the sanctity of caste. For example, sharing food with someone of a lower caste is sometimes thought to degrade a high caste Hindu's standing.

Indian Euthanatoi don't feel the same reverence for caste. Some of them come from ascetic traditions that ignore those distinctions entirely, and some of them have suffered in lower castes. On the other hand, many of them do recognize that different people have different dharmas and don't interfere in others' lives except to correct a transgression. Euthanatoi won't necessarily intercede if someone follows their life's path to a bad end — as long as nobody else gets hurt.

Euthanatoi from other societies have similar views. The Aided often use *Geasa* as a metaphor for the sacred duty that everyone has to the Wheel. *Geasa* can be troublesome and contradictory — Cu Chulainn died because he broke one *Geasa* to keep another — but it doesn't make them any less sacred.

All Wheel-turners believe that their own dharmas are set in motion by Awakening, confirmed by the Agama rite and encoded in the *Chodona*. This means that their actions derive from the authority of the Wheel itself. The code of the Euthanatos is a hard one; it embraces contradictions and upholds virtues that many death mages are hard pressed to honor.

For example, a Knight of Radamanthys decides that a cruel NWO interrogator deserves the Good Death. The rest of his cabal tracks the wily Gray Man, only to be captured, horribly tortured and brainwashed. The death mage despises his enemy now. If he kills him, he'll feel the joy of revenge — something forbidden by the *Chodona*. If he stays his hand, he'll violate the Thanatoic code by allowing the Gray Man to live and hurt others.

What can he do? Many Euthanatoi refer such cases to an unbiased colleague, but this isn't always possible. In the end, our troubled Thanatoic might be forced to kill his enemy and suffer the Jhor that comes from joyful murder.

A MATTER OF DEGREE

Between the Good Death and inaction, there are a number of things a Thanatoic can do to safeguard the smooth turn of the Wheel. Applying them is the problem; Euthanatoi aren't given much guidance when it comes to nonlethal, non-necromantic solutions. While the Tradition has had centuries to develop an ethos of rehabilitation through reincarnation, other forms of correction are modern ideas. A few senior death mages struggle to implement a uniform ethos, but most Euthanatoi are left to exercise their moral sense on a case-by-case basis.

Left to their own devices, many Euthanatoi use the institutions around them to guide their choices and assist their missions. Modern Wheel-turners cultivate ties with law enforcement, social work, and health-care communities. These professionals provide advice according to their training and take in people that an individual Thanatoic might not have the expertise to help — or punish.

Scholarly Chakravanti compose lengthy legal codes, while other death mages just stick to a few simple principles and make up the rest as they go. Practical considerations make a difference; Euthanatoi can't tie people up and leave them in front of police stations like a comic-book vigilante, so they have to come up with inventive forms of intervention.

Manas (Mind) magic is a useful tool for correcting troubled thoughts, but nonmagical psychological techniques also see wide use. A skilled Wheel-turner can remove unhealthy desires and direct a subject to a more compassionate life. Some Euthanatoi use psychodrama, inflicting emotional trauma in order to break someone out of a corrupt mindset. Less severe cases may just merit counseling, which the mage either does herself or refers to a trusted ally.

Curses and other nonlethal punishments are the next step up from prevention. Euthanatoi craft curses with care, ensuring that the punishment fits the crime. A stalker may find himself dogged by the ghosts of his ancestors, and a spouse batterer may find that old friends come to him with violence on their minds. The poetic justice of a properly laid curse purifies the victim and gives him an insight into the hurt that he's caused. After the mark's suffered enough, a Thanatoic mage or ally often steps in to help him understand the cause of his misfortune and point the way to redemption.

Finally, the Good Death exists to give even the most corrupt souls another chance. Different factions have different ideas on how the Good Death should be implemented. Some Natatapas favor an elaborate ritual killing that begins with the reading of omens and finishes with a different technique depending on the sin, sex, and caste of the victim. The Knights of Radamanthys usually just tell targets why they're going to kill them and admonish him not to make the same mistake in their next lives.

Because the Euthanatos views death as a transition instead of an abrupt end, most death mages do ritually guide their victims into their next lives. The *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, Catholic Last Rites, invocations to Charon, or a few, simple soothing words help recipients of the Good Death find their way into new lives where they won't sin again.

In Mage games, the Euthanatos' traditional mission can frame a brisk, goal oriented chronicle that needn't just jump from one assassination to another. How would your Wheel-turner assess a subject? How would he help or punish her? How do the mage's religious beliefs, upbringing, and personality influence her decisions?

THE MYSTERIES OF FATE

The Euthanatos care about more than the individual passage of lives along the Wheel. Death mages also search for patterns in the Cycle itself to predict the future and to determine how they should respond.

History, ecology, social trends, divination and interpreting prophecies are all methods by which Euthanatoi try to determine the

course, nature and ultimate purpose of the Tellurian. Just as death mages must cope with the worst in humanity, they must react to the grim discoveries they make about creation's flow.

The Reckoning affected the Euthanatos more than any other Tradition. The mystical assault on their homeland was only part of the problem. Wheel-turners have never seen such a gross assault on the cycle of birth and death. Thousands of souls were shattered and denied new incarnations. Nobody knows what the ultimate implications of this are, though symptoms such as the Walking Dead indicate that something vital to the Wheel may have been irreparably damaged. What else has the Reckoning changed? Have souls vital to the survival of the Cycle been shattered? Some Euthanatoi go so far as to speculate that a generation of children will be born without souls, signaling the end of the Kali Yuga.

THE BLACK YEARS

Many Chakravanti follow the Vedic reckoning of time. According to this, the lifespan of the cosmos is measured by the divine count of days, years, and lives.

The Kalpa measures one full turn of the Wheel of creation and destruction. It a single day in the life of Brahma, the Creator, and the time it takes Shiva, the Destroyer, to open and close his eyes: over 8 billion years. Kalpas are divided into Mantavaras, Mahayugas, and finally Yugas of varying lengths. By the Hindu reckoning the world is in the Kali Yuga, the final period of this Kalpa.

The Kali Yuga began on a February New Moon in 3102 BC. 1999 marked the 5100th anniversary of this Iron Age, the last period of history before the Brahma's slumber and the closing of Shiva's eyes.

THE EUTHANATOS IN SOCIETY

Beyond belief in the necessity of the Good Death, Euthanatoi have a wide spectrum of beliefs regarding how society should operate.

Despite the Thanatoic attitude toward death, not all Euthanatoi support capital punishment. Many simply distrust Sleeper authorities who can't look into the souls of the guilty. Others believe that state-sanctioned killing puts the karmic burden on all citizens, infecting society as a whole with callousness. These mages think the death penalty should be an anonymous, secretive act, but acknowledge that secret executions would keep the state from being accountable. Many death mages *do* support capital punishment as something that's on the right track even if Sleeper governments don't know the reasons why.

Other issues generate the same variety of opinions. Some Euthanatoi believe that welfare and socialized medicine impede the natural progress of karma, while others hold that social services give every member of society extra merit. Most Euthanatoi place a high value on compassion, but are also leery to intervene in the lives of others without there being an overriding benefit to all. Wheel-turners think that if they were to grossly intervene in others' lives, they would prevent the resolution of personal karma. Where compassion ends and interference begins is an unresolved question for the Tradition as a whole, so individual death mages just try to keep to the *Chodona* and follow their hearts.

There are a few issues upon which most death mages hold a rough consensus. Most Euthanatoi despise ethnic and class-based discrimination and uphold the principles of universal, impartial justice. The Tradition identifies with people who have been unfairly judged and punished, and want society to administer justice with the same fairness that they (ideally) do.

DESTINY'S GUARDIANS

The Euthanatos respect individual destiny (as represented by the *Destiny* Background and certain Merits and Flaws). It's common for Wheel-turners to watch over those marked by Fate.

Entropy perceptions are used to determine an individual's importance and, more importantly, to find out when the death mage should and shouldn't interfere in the natural course of events. Most Euthanatoi don't believe in predestination *per se*, but the laws of karma build up a certain potential in some people. Chakravanti try to ensure that the Wheel receives its due and that this potential isn't squandered.

Death mages who take on this duty become counselors and bodyguards for Fate's chosen. The Knights of Radamanthys excel at this; their inter-Traditional ties and practical skills help them identify and care for their charges.

Custom discourages intimate contact with those with strong destinies, because there invariably comes a time when the Thanatoic protector must stand aside to let fate take its natural course. Sometimes their charges are destined to suffer for the good of the Cycle, and if a Euthanatos fell in love with one of them, she might be tempted to interfere.

Despite such admonitions, close ties do develop. In those cases, both parties suffer the strange, dramatic adventures that are often the lot of the fate-touched. In Mage games, Thanatoic mages can engage in contradictory and emotional behavior around destiny-laden comrades. Ties of friendship and love can conflict with the knowledge that, eventually, the Wheel-turner may abandon his companions for the sake of the Cycle.

Tradition holds this is the degenerate Yuga when humanity forgets dharma and clutches to harmful, materialistic lives — signs that the Euthanatos see in all walks of like. If the Kali Yuga follows the natural rhythm of the Cycle, it will conclude at the end of the 4300th Century. This is obviously not a clear and present danger to the Tellurian, and the Tradition believes that the natural end of the cosmos is something to look forward to as an ultimate renewal of possibility.

Unfortunately, the Wheel turners suspect that the Age of Kali has fallen from its predetermined course. Nuclear weapons, pollution and turmoil in the Underworld all point to a premature apocalypse — the destruction of the Wheel rather than its natural rotation. As the magical structure of the universe crumbles, the Tradition looks for ways to head off a catastrophe.

One school, led by Senex, believes that the material world has simply grown too corrupt to accept help. They argue that the Thanatoic mission is too fixated on the destinies of individuals — that cosmic problems require cosmic solutions. Key Realms such as the Shards of Entropy and Prime should be safeguarded against

Naraki and the destructive Resonance of an ever-decaying earth. This isn't simply the result of hidebound isolation. Voormas still roams free, and the displaced souls of the storm-tossed Underworld and the Avatar Storm demand an intense magical response.

Other Euthanatoi refuse to abandon the material world. They study people with strong destinies, note global trends, and keep on the lookout for a worldwide Coumatha. They hope to use key times, places, and people as levers to yank the Cycle back to its proper rhythm. Such mages emphasize importance of individual destinies over the movement of the whole Wheel. Just as a single falling stone can change the movement of an entire lake, select assassinations, subtle Entropy magic and a little intelligence could make more of a difference than any grand magical gesture.

Euthanatos characters can align themselves with either school of thought or even both, preparing the way for Senex's followers with her own earthbound efforts. Neither plan is superior to the other; each has its flaws. A clever Wheel-turner could find a third way to fight the crumbling Cycle and convince the Tradition to follow it.

CABAL: POLITICAL TRIAGE INTERNATIONAL



A violent yet compassionate cabal, Political Triage International (PTI) combines healing and killing in one efficient, world spanning organization. This isn't unusual for a Euthanatos cabal, but PTI worked harder to modernize its methods than most. It combines the practical discipline of mercenaries with the front-line charity of battlefield doctors and relief workers. PTI is also unusual in that, for a Euthanatos operation, its actions are fairly well known — even infamous — among the people who live and fight in the developing world's most violent regions.

HISTORY

Political Triage was created out of a brainstorm between younger members of the Madzimbabwe, Golden Chalice and Knights of Radamanthys.

The Madzimbabwe Arthur Effiong left his cabal in 1968 to visit the Republic of Biafra, which had declared independence from Nigeria a year earlier. A member of the Igbo ethnic group that founded the state, Effiong returned to see what his people were doing. The Madzimbabwe were still a relatively unnoticed group in the Euthanatos, and he saw the opportunity to help his people and showcase what the oft-ignored African sect of the Wheel-turners had to offer.

When he arrived, Biafra was already in the thick of a devastating war with Nigeria. Outmoded planes and rusting jeeps were no match for the larger and more sophisticated Nigerian army. Nigeria cut off food supplies and crushed provisional capitals almost as soon as they were established. Through starvation and violence, the people of Biafra began to die. Effiong was the only Thanatoic in the country; as the death toll peaked at over a million and the final splinters of resistance fell to Nigeria, he wondered why fellow Wheel-turners hadn't come to ease the pain of the nation's passing.

The truth of the matter was that his Tradition was in the thick of the Ascension War. The fragile truce of the Second World War was long gone, and the Chakravanti were busy. Every available knife pursued the throats of Fallen mystics or powerful scientists, leaving nothing for the War's backwater, where Effiong walked among broken buildings and wailing ghosts. Jhor consumed him; at the

height of his madness, he bound any Igbo ghosts he encountered to himself and walked the dark paths of the Underworld to Calcutta.

In 1971, he arrived at the Ancestral Marabout. Jhor and massive possession had left his body little more than an empty shell for the ghosts of Biafra, but his diary and the faint psychic imprint that remained was enough to tell the Acaryas what had happened, what he'd wanted, and why he'd come bearing such terrible passengers. They granted him the Good Death.

Twelve Knights of Radamanthys took his body back to Biafra's ruins and laid the ghosts to rest. They vowed to take up Effiong's mission and work on behalf of the Sleepers who'd been ignored in the agenda of the Ascension War.

This loose cabal watched over Africa, Asia, and South and Central America as best they could, but they suffered from a lack of resources and the resentment of their charges. Traditional, secretive Thanatoic ways meant that they rarely made the contacts they needed to continue their mission, and suspicious mages from the places they visited discouraged interference from the dour, unaccountable group.

Frustrated, three of the founders transferred to the Golden Chalice in 1976. Four years later, two of them returned to the group. Only four of the others remained; The rest had fallen to Jhor or despair at having given their tainted comrades the Good Death.

Elizabeth Bharati and Sekaye Leblanc of the Chalice returned with the modern tools they needed to revitalize the cabal. Leblanc was a skilled surgeon; he researched combat medicine and gathered the drugs and supplies that the cabal would need to be a globetrotting hospital. Bharati learned about small arms, guerilla warfare, and the mercenary trade. In the Golden Chalice, they learned these skills to perfect themselves as modern assassins, but in their native cabal, they combined their experience to turn themselves into militant medics, able to go where the Red Cross feared to tread. The only obstacle left was the expensive nature of the expedition.

They asked the public for donations.

Political Triage International is a registered charity in 18 countries, including India and most of Europe but excluding North America, where the US State Department has banned the organization from soliciting funds. Officially founded in 1983, the group has offices in London, Zurich, Athens, and Bombay.



Under Bharati and Leblanc, the group adopted the agendas of many human rights and aid organizations. The difference is that while some groups act through letter writing or impartial medical aid, PTI takes direct action against any group that they deem responsible for suffering. While a conventional medical aid organization will treat the wounded but otherwise stay away from politics, they use their hospitals as command centers to topple warlords and liberate villages.

Since '83, PTI has increased its numbers to eight Awakened Euthanatoi, 18 office staff and a total of 40 doctors, nurses, and combat veterans. After reorganization, the group abandoned the Ascension War completely. The Reckoning barely affected them; with ethnic violence on the rise worldwide, the group's been too busy to notice.

Unfortunately, their success may lead to ruin. PTI has always used double-talk and spin control to hide the true extent of their interference with unjust regimes. People simply know that enemies of the group seem to come to unfortunate ends and that PTI, while not claiming responsibility, doesn't deny it either. Aside from Sleeper threats, the sheer size and audacity of the organization is bringing them attention from the one group they've always ignored: the Technocracy.

MISSION

A CNN documentary on Political Triage International described them as "the Red Cross with teeth," and that accurately sums up what the cabal does. PTI sends doctors and medical supplies to strife-ridden areas, backed up by armed guards and "evacuation and refugee consultants," which is a polite term for "paramilitary support."

Originally PTI offered unsolicited help, but these days the majority of their aid projects come from requests by refugees and dissidents. PTI sets up medical stations in the midst of the crises and aggressively enlarges an armed perimeter around them. These "safe

zones" supposedly exist to allow safe treatment, but they usually end up inconveniencing or even repelling the faction that PTI decides is in the wrong. PTI also reserves the right to retaliate in the event of any interference with their medical missions. Attacking PTI personnel, injuring someone who's been treated by them, or challenging the safe zone are all considered forms of interference.

PTI selects its work according to a set of criteria inspired by Effiong's dream and phrased in the language of modern relief and human rights organizations. Their thirty page mission statement lists torture, ethnic violence, governmental collapse, the use of child soldiers, sexual and ethnic discrimination leading to bodily harm and the use of prison camps as conditions in which they'll intervene. They never take on more than one project at a time.

Privately, the cabal's goals are much more straightforward. They use their resources to heal the sick and wounded, then kill the unregenerate perpetrators of suffering. Warlords, thieving generals and corrupt civil servants suffer an inordinate number of fatal accidents when PTI comes to visit. Like most Euthanatoi, they work hard to ensure that their victims can't be rehabilitated before they decide to kill them. In the cases where they can be redeemed, they're divested of whatever gave them the power to cause harm, relocated, and left to their own devices. PTI are many things, but they aren't therapists, and most of them believe that people have to work out their own salvation anyway.

If it's at all possible, PTI allies with local authorities to legitimize the more aggressive aspects of their work. While they're willing to quietly break international law, they aren't going to flout it outright. They're not willing to endure too much international scrutiny, and will soften their tactics if pressed by observers or the anger of a major industrialized nation. All the same, PTI exploits whatever it can out of these situations, from assisting peacekeepers

EUTHANATOI WORLDWIDE

The Euthanatos is a smaller Tradition than most, but they benefit from a diverse and widespread membership. Destinies resolve themselves everywhere and the Wheel-turners follow, doing what they can to set things right. Political Triage International is just one example of the Tradition's international scope. A Euthanatos-centered **Mage** game can take characters around the world. Wheel-turners rely on their ancient heritage — or take the Good Death into new territory — in the following places:

Europe: The Tradition has an ancient and subtle presence here. The Aided keep to a few covens in Ireland, the Pomegranate Deme hold sway over the mages of Crete, and the Golden Chalice simply goes wherever it's needed. The legacy of the British Empire helped create a large Natatapas Marabout in London, which serves as the defacto headquarters for the Tradition in the Western Hemisphere.

Africa: Knights of Radamanthys pass through regularly, but only the revived Madzimbabwe truly call Africa home. The faction is expanding beyond its old tribal range, and may be the fastest growing element of the entire Tradition. PTI is the best-known cabal to walk the continent, but a few quiet mages have revived rites in the shadow of Great Zimbabwe itself.

Asia: Old conflicts with the Akashic Brotherhood and the territorial mages of Asia mean that the Euthanatos have only a tenuous foothold here. The Vedic cultures of Southeast Asia teem with potential Shravaki and Acolytes, so once the matter of the Himalayan War has finally been put to rest, the death mages expect to rapidly expand into the region. Death mages regularly pass through northern Asia, but Afghanistan is a barrier to passage. Aside from the bother of the Taliban's Islamist policies, Taftani warlords prefer to keep the region to themselves.

India: The Euthanatos have more power and influence here than anywhere else on earth, but the confused supernatural politics of the region make retaining this power a constant

struggle. Calcutta is their city; an enemy of the Tradition would be lucky to walk five steps before falling prey to a gruesome "accident." By contrast, Bombay's Apad-Dharma mocks the death mages with their very presence. Once the matter of the Reckoning is dealt with, they'll have the full force of their old Tradition to deal with. The Chakravanti who aren't mobilizing to eliminate the Naraki in their midst make the pilgrimage to Ravana's navel. Some travel from there to Cerberus (leading to the impression that Senex's call was a "back to India" campaign), and others to meditate in a holy place.

The Americas: All the Thanatoic factions are well represented here. The Tradition is growing. In the Americas, apprentices can often choose their Tradition from the membership of mixed cabals, and more of them are choosing the death mages. Whether this is out of the fire of idealism, anxiety about the fate of the world or both is the subject of intense partisan debate among Tradition-alists. Miami hosts a veteran Euthanatos cabal that's taken up residence in one of Helekar's bolt-holes.

In Guatemala, the Yum Cimil practice Mayan death rites but otherwise stay out of Thanatoic politics. They joined the Tradition so that they could worship in peace, and by and large they've gotten their wish, occasionally acting as informants for visiting death mages out to serve the Wheel in the South.

Elsewhere: Istanbul hosts a persistent population of Thanatoic visitors. The Golden Chalice practices a few private ceremonies among the relics of Byzantium. Greek Euthanatoi also visit the ruins of Troy regularly, so Turkish hotels usually have a few death mages staying over at any given time. The Wheel turners are reluctant, however, to settle in any Islamic nation. Though the Ahl-i Batin rarely show themselves, Euthanatoi remember how much the Subtle Ones hate them and keep a respectful distance.

to blackmailing diplomats. That aspect of their work has become more common over the last decade, leading some mages to wonder whether or not the Technocracy will finally deal with the bold cabal.

ORGANIZATION AND POLITICS

Political Triage International uses a combination of military discipline and medical protocol to make decisions and act in the field. While every member of the cabal is skilled in both areas, Sekaye Leblanc is the head of medicine while Elizabeth Bharati is ultimately responsible for military matters. When it comes to direct assassination, both of them reach a consensus before presenting it to the rest of the Euthanatoi, who vote on the matter. In case of a tie, they all draw lots; the death mage with the short straw decides. Using any form of magic to influence the decision-making process is grounds for dismissal. Nobody's ever tried.

The rest of the cabal oversees the efforts of its large Sleeper staff. Jorge Royo serves as Leblanc's second, and Alice Fitznemeth is Bharati's. Angela McCullen deals with funding and public relations. Officially, none of them are particularly important in the charity's hierarchy, which employs a rotating crop of heavily vetted but ultimately forgettable bureaucrats as directors. McCullen does speaking engagements and fundraisers and tours the charity's offices. Technically the group's spokeswoman, she secretly hires and fires Sleeper staff.

Military and medical staff work strictly according to their respective hierarchies. The Sleeper troops are all veterans who joined PTI in gratitude for their help. In fact, PTI magically helps qualified, morally sound candidates as an inducement to join. Eight doctors and ten soldiers know that magic brought them over; the rest simply recognize that when PTI stepped in their lives improved, but they can't trace it to a supernatural cause.

The cabal is very organized and cohesive. Leblanc and Bharati have been lovers for years, and time and magic have only made the bond tighter. Their collective charisma infects the rest of the group, which in turn emboldens them. The pair make more radical decisions and take bigger risks with each passing year. McCullen is the only member of the cabal who spends the majority of her time dealing with the public, and who thus has a sense of how reckless their actions are becoming. Unfortunately, her objections are downplayed; the cabal nearly worships its leaders, and finds dissent nearly unthinkable.

All major decisions are made in the presence of a portable shrine to Arthur Effiong, replete with his photograph, a Biafran flag, and his bleached lower jawbone. Because of the circumstances surrounding Effiong's death, ghosts flock to it. Many of them died in the strife that surrounds PTI and occasionally they add their advice to the mix. Wraithly opinion is highly respected, and one of the few things that will sway the cabal away from Leblanc and Bharati's opinions.

THE CABAL

In such a tightly knit, disciplined group, few are wont to stick out of the crowd. At the same time, don't mistake Political Triage's International's obedience for stupidity. Every member of the cabal has experienced danger and dealt with it intelligently and effectively. Unfortunately, between the cult of personality surrounding the cabal's leaders and their supreme confidence, hubris is sure to strike.

Angela McCullen: Angela's an attractive, well-spoken woman and a skilled Knight of Radamanthys, who favors Greek and Celtic mysticism combined with media technology. She has the broadest perspective of the cabal; as PTI's spokeswoman, she's left the battlefield and knows that some of the group's actions have garnered more notoriety than praise.

Alice Fitzmeth: This Knight is Elizabeth Bharati's executive officer. She uses subtle Nordic Arts to improve logistical support and give the group's weapons a little extra kick. She's a quiet, overburdened woman most of the time, but she can belt out orders when she needs to.

Jorge Royo: This Mexican Aided mage left medical school and a Thanatoic apprenticeship to help indigenous militias in his native country. After Leblanc lost his old assistant to a stray bullet in Burma, he tracked down Royo and offered to complete the mage's education in exchange for joining PTI. Now Jorge Royo is a skilled trauma surgeon and Euthanatos. The bespectacled man rarely laughs.

Jendayi Ndlovu: This Madzimbabwe is one of the newest members of the cabal. The statuesque woman wears African textiles and specializes in ghost-calling. She serves as the cabal's intelligence analyst, tracking information from both the living and the dead.

Suchart Ransinbrahmanikul: This Thai Natatapas is also a recent addition, having joined in 2000 as a concession to a Akashic cabal who, for some reason, wanted Thailand to be Euthanatos-free for the year. Buddhist and Hindu mysticism guide the tough, wiry man, who's done everything from running guns to managing Thai boxing matches. He has the most highly developed wilderness survival skills in the cabal.

Anastasia Logaris: A Pomegranate Deme, neurosurgeon and painter, Logaris brings medical skill and pure genius to the cabal. This middle-aged Greek woman hammers out the fine details of many of PTI's operations.

LEADERSHIP

PTI's leaders have been with the Cabal from the beginning. A steady attraction grew between them over time, and it was only natural for them to join the Golden Chalice together, only natural for them to return to the cabal with a new vision and only natural for them to express their bond on a mystical level.

Shared stress and group rituals have generated a strange Resonance between the two of them. Individually, each would have suffered Quiet, but together their mystical power is a force to be reckoned with.

In **Mage** terms, the couple has a perfectly balanced collective Resonance; their **Effects** are never adjusted unless one of them chooses to manifest a Resonance Trait or they are separated. In the former case, the other partner also manifests a Resonance Trait (applying the usual adjustments to magic). In the latter, both mages' Resonance acts at full force. This would be disastrous.

Bharati is very close to a serious episode of Jhor. While Leblanc's own mystical personality contains her death-taint, he is hardly free from it himself. When separated from her, his own eccentricities manifest as he grows callous with his patients and becomes unable to distinguish between the living and the dead.

This interdependence is reinforced by an Mind/ Correspondence Effect that permanently keeps them in telepathic contact, so long as each of them drink from the same source of water (such as a river, spring, or two canteens filled from the same source) each day. If this link is severed and they are more than a mile away from each other, then each begins to go mad.

Fortunately this hasn't happened in several years, giving the two of them time to build Political Triage International up to its current strength. To do this, they've spend most of that time in the field and have lost touch of public perception. When McCullen warns them of the public's (and the Technocracy's) growing intolerance, they've simply turned to each other for moral support. Unless someone gets through to them, the whole cabal could pay a dear price for their hubris.

ELIZABETH BHARATI

The daughter of a British merchant and an Indian hotelier, Elizabeth Bharati grew up in Calcutta, unaware that she lived in the shadow of the Euthanatos' greatest stronghold. In fact, it was her misfortune to be hit by a car right in front of the Ancestral Marabout. While the man who'd hit her interrogated her about her caste, she Awakened on the cusp of death. Thanatoic mages took her in and trained her.

She was a Shravaka on the day Arthur Effiong came with his ghosts. The experience moved her so greatly that she became a Knight of Radamanthys and strode out to fulfil the dead mage's wishes.

It wasn't easy. Poverty, Jhor, and poor morale followed the cabal on haphazard missions. A brief tour of Cambodia in the 70s nearly drove her to Quiet, but Sekaye Leblanc helped her through it. When she decided to go to the Golden Chalice, he followed. They eventually fell deeply in love. They returned to the cabal together.

During her stint in the Chalice, she specialized in small arms tactics and hostage retrieval. She ingratiated herself into mercenary culture to enhance her skills and used the experience to reform her old cabal. With the help of modern networking skills and military training, she rebuilt its structure from the ground up. Her connections also allowed her to recruit skilled Sleepers for PTI's paramilitary.



The callousness she picked up in Cambodia, though tempered by Leblanc, manifested itself in an uncompromising position regarding the cabal's strategies. Despite the positive results, she wishes that the group could be more or less autonomous from the interests of donors. She'd prefer to drop the deception that keeps the money coming in because it restricts what she can do with the formidable military force at her disposal.

As she loses patience with these strictures, the cabal's operations look less defensive and more like self-righteous ambushes. Her ability to think of the larger picture is limited by her mental state and militant obsessions, but that focus also makes her a highly effective leader.

Image: Bharati is a physically fit, fifty-year-old woman with dark skin and cropped brown hair, usually held back by a dark bandanna. Her face has a few tiny scars from years of crawling through shrapnel-filled terrain. She wears military fatigues in colors appropriate to the situation, with colonel's insignia and a patch with the PTI logo: a dove flying in a red triangle. She usually keeps a combat knife and a light submachine gun with her on the field, preferring accuracy over sheer firepower. She has a powerful, articulate voice and emphasizes her words by snapping her fingers.

Roleplaying Hints: There's a shadow of a thought that's telling you drop mercy completely and focus on victory, but some time with your lover usually cures that. With anyone else, you prefer giving orders to having conversations. You love your troops, but that doesn't mean that you're going to take any shit from them, either. You're a fan of gadgets, especially mobile communications and vehicles. On the field you like to sneak away from your command post and pick off intractable enemy — well, you're supposed to just call them "interfering" — elements.

Your magic comes from a deep devotion to the goddess Durga combined with the Golden Chalice's Western Alchemy. You're always looking for new ways of combining your magic with the modern technology. You'd like to get a Lhaxmist in to tutor you, but you're too busy right now.

Faction: Golden Chalice

Essence: Questing

Nature: Judge

Demeanor: Director

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 4.

Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Awareness 2, Brawl 4 (Striking Eyes), Dodge 4 (Gunfire), Intimidation 4 (Understated), Leadership 5 (Inspire Confidence), Streetwise 3, Drive 3, Firearms 4 (SMGs), Melee 4 (Knives), Stealth 4 (Jungle), Survival 4 (Jungle), Technology 3, Academics (Politics) 3, Investigation 3, Linguistics 3 (English, French, Bantu, Chinese, Thai, Spanish, German) Medicine 3, Occult 3, Science (Chemistry) 3.

Backgrounds: Avatar 3, Destiny 4, Resources 4.

Arete: 4

Spheres: Entropy 4, Life 2, Matter 3, Forces 3, Time 1.

Willpower: 8

Quintessence: 9

Paradox: 2

Resonance: (Entropic) Corroding, (Entropic) Consuming, (Entropic) Liquefying, (Entropic) Suffocating, (Dynamic) Energetic.

SEKAYE LEBLANC

Sekaye Leblanc is a tired man who holds himself together with love and unshakable discipline. Leblanc Awakened at the age of 11

in an Igbo village. His first experiments with magic terrified his community. He ran away, joining the French Foreign Legion (from which he gained his last name) as a teen and using his healing skills as a medic. By his 20th birthday, his talents came to the notice of the Euthanatos, who schooled him in their ways and inducted him into the Knights of Radamanthys.

Leblanc spent the next decade refining his magical skills, tending wounded death mages, and forgetting all about his origins. When his birthplace was incorporated into the nation of Biafra he didn't pay much attention, and during the nation's fall he skipped headlines about the war. It was only after Arthur Effiong came to Calcutta that he took notice of what had happened to his old homeland. He was seized with despair and a sudden appreciation for his people. He joined Effiong's honor guard in penance, and, in an impassioned memorial speech, laid down the ground work for what would eventually become PTI.

All the same, an old resentment for the way his people had treated him festered in his soul. When Elizabeth Bharati almost went into Quiet, he saw it as an opportunity to abandon the project completely. Out of love and a lingering grudge, he retreated to the Golden Chalice.

The Chalice sent him to medical school and trained him to lead a team of assassins. Since he could provide medical support as well as leadership, this was thought to be an efficient arrangement. In practice, it meant that he had to save lives and give orders at the same time, dividing his attention during critical moments. In truth, he was almost talented enough to handle it. Elizabeth wanted to return to their old cabal, however, and he felt he had unfinished business there as well. Together, the two of them reshaped the cabal into Political Triage International.

These days, Leblanc heads the cabal's medical operations with a strict, if not enthusiastic, hand. He's 70 years old now, though magic and an active lifestyle make him look about the same age as Elizabeth Bharati. He feels incomplete without her. In truth, his rigid thinking and lingering childhood trauma have barred him from Seeking for years, and only his lover's needs interest him any more.

Image: Sekaye Leblanc wears plain khakis most of the time with a pair of worn parade boots and a black bag usually slung over his shoulder. He's completely bald, and the white metal frames of his bifocals offset his dark skin. He has a lean build and large, gloved



hands. His soft, articulate voice issues from a mouth that never frowns or smiles. His face is more wrinkled than you'd expect from a man of his apparent age (he looks about 50), but less than his full 70 years. As a side effect of the Life magic he uses to keep himself in top shape, he's missing his fingernails, toenails and all body hair. His skin has an unnaturally smooth quality, like stone.

Roleplaying Hints: You work, you spend time with Elizabeth, and you keep PTI's medical staff working. There may be more to life than that, but the last time you contemplated any of *that* was a long time ago. Best not to think about your confused, directionless childhood, though you're plagued with irrelevant dreams about it on most nights. Maybe you should look into those dreams, but it would waste your valuable time. Take care of your responsibilities and see to your lover.

You use classical Thanatoic magic as practiced by the Golden Chalice and Knights of Radamanthys. You could use a few childhood-based Effects stemming from your Igbo heritage, but you see it as a primitive practice compared to the magic you've learned from the Wheel-turners.

Faction: Golden Chalice

Essence: Primordial

Nature: Caregiver

Demeanor: Director

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3, Perception 5 (People), Intelligence 4, Wits 4.

Abilities: Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Leadership 4 (Medical Staff), Subterfuge 4 (Playing Down Dangers), Drive 3, Firearms 2, Melee 2, Stealth 2, Survival 2, Academics (Geography) 4, Technology (Medical) 4, Computer 3, Enigmas 4 (Alchemical Metaphors), Linguistics 2 (Igbo, French, English, Hindi), Medicine 5 (Combat Medicine), Occult 4 (Supernatural Healing), Science (Biology) 4.

Backgrounds: Avatar 1, Dream 3, Library 2, Resources 4.

Arete: 4

Spheres: Entropy 4, Life 4, Mind 4, Prime 2, Spirit 2.

Willpower: 10

Quintessence: 5

Paradox: 3

Resonance: (Static) Imperishable, (Static) Sustaining, (Static) Minimalist, (Static) Edged, (Dynamic) Colorful

USING POLITICAL TRIAGE INTERNATIONAL

Political Triage International is an example of hubris in action. Unless someone intervenes, the cabal will undertake ever more radical missions until they offend a group with the power to stop them. Aside from the fact that the Technocracy frowns on Traditionalists overthrowing the governments of small nations, Sleeper governments are likely to intervene with sanctions or even military force. Player characters could steer the group in a more reasonable direction. They could even serve as antagonists, if the Council decides to intervene with a sentence of Censure or worse and they're called to execute the sentence.

The characters can best help the cabal by helping its leaders. Bharati is on the cusp of Jhor, and Leblanc, apart from being close to Clarity, has reached an impasse in the quest for Ascension. Unless he comes to terms with his past, further Seekings are impossible. What happens when his lover grows too powerful for his calming influence? Characters could intervene, heal them, and rejuvenate the cabal.

The cabal can also direct characters into a military chronicle. PTI picks regimes that are genuinely corrupt, but not everyone (and certainly not the child soldiers that many of these dictators use) who's fielded against them deserves the Good Death. How do Euthanatoi follow their morals in the chaos of the battlefield?

PTI has formidable resources. Each of their offices can double as a safe house for mages on the run, and the cabal itself can muster an impressive amount of military force, on par with the backup used by Technocracy amalgams. These are battle-hardened soldiers and medics who are absolutely sure that their cause is right. PTI has never used their troops in the service of the Ascension War, in the Umbra, or in the developed world. Characters who want to 'borrow' PTI's troops have to pay in Tass or prove that their proposal fits with the cabal's larger mission. They might need to train them to cope with any unusual environments that they might encounter (such as a Horizon Realm or inner-city Detroit).

LEGENDS OF THE EUTHANATOS



A Tradition with ancient roots, the Euthanatos has its share of legends and prophecies. Death mages pay attention to their stories, since they reveal underlying patterns in the working of the Wheel. With their cyclic view of the Tellurian, many Euthanatoi believe that a mythic tale can repeat itself or that a prophecy talks about the present as much as it does the future.

RUDRA: HERALD OF ARTIAGEDDON

Rudra is a Vedic god responsible for raining down plagues and commanding demons. Rudra's children were the Maruts: demons created when the Gods, fearing the power of Rudra's offspring, shattered the god's unborn child into seven pieces. The bow is Rudra's weapon. He uses it to rain disease, thunderbolts, and howling winds on humans and gods alike. His Maruts were onyx-skinned warriors, girt in bronze and masters of the wind. He has an

ambivalent aspect; mortals prayed to be spared his arrows, but he was also the patron of animals and hunters. After the rise of the Brahman caste, Rudra was absorbed as an aspect of Shiva, the Destroyer.

In Thanatoic legend, Rudra is also the name of the Avatara that will guide the world to its end. In this sense he's the counterpart to Kalki, the form that Vishnu will take during the final days of the Kali Yuga. While Kalki saves the people, Rudra rains his arrows down on the corrupt. He's the dark messiah of the Chakravanti, symbolizing the righteous destruction for the sake of renewal.

Just as a spoke of the Wheel moves to its original position over time, the Rudra Avatara will create itself in a reversal of the original legend. Seven powerful souls — the reborn Maruts — will merge to create the mage-god's Atman. Each soul-shard will spend one lifetime in a state of utter corruption. Paradoxically, this will purify their souls, for they will have an intimate knowledge of the evil that they will one day come together to eradicate.

Old rumors about the Euthanatos alluded to this legend. Traditionalists whispered that the Good Death was meant to engineer a messiah, and that the serial killers and mass murderers of the modern age were the Tradition's work gone awry — or not.

While the Chakravanti aren't in the business of creating the horrors they work so hard to eradicate, even they wonder of elements of their Tradition aren't using the Good Death to further a greater end. Evidence of this has come to light. The Consanguinity of Eternal Joy ritually murdered each new incarnation of their old Grand Harvester, Helekar, and Senex has always been interested in mages who led Fallen or Jhor tainted lives before entering into his service.

Certainly, an ancient, determined group could point certain souls toward corruption. They might even be able to pull them out again, given careful application of the Good Death over many lives. Were the Tradition's masters secretly bringing Rudra into being? If Voormas was killing and corrupting, and Senex is bringing wounded souls into the fold, are they secretly cooperating? Has the rise of the Avatar Storm broken the conspiracy at some dangerous midpoint?

The rise of Sendings also implies some truth to the myth. Are the Maruts powerful Avatar Shards who are coalescing into an apocalyptic god? If so, the situation is grave, for there are thousands of years to go before the Cycle is supposed to finish. The early arrival of Rudra could end the world — and the Rudra of an early final age could be an agent of the Oblivion instead of the Wheel.

WATERS OF WISDOM, WATERS OF DEATH

Greek and Celtic myths talk about the mystic waters of forgetfulness. From the sacred springs of the Aided to the Greek River Lethe, humanity drinks the sacred water and forgets the memories of previous incarnations. Both Celtic and Greek myths talk about

the few who choose to forego the waters. In *The Republic*, Plato mentions Er, a Pamphylian warrior who refuses the waters of Lethe and is reborn with all of his memories intact.

There are also springs in the Underworld that endow a drinker with supernatural wisdom. The Greek dead were instructed to drink from the cypress-shaded pool of Memory, and the Celtic sage Finn draws supernatural power from the cup of the Sidhe demigod, Culienn.

Other Thanatoic sects have their own takes about the twin streams of Forgetfulness and Memory. Nordic Gallowsmen contemplate the Hel-river, Gyoll, and its counterpart, the well of wise Mimir, where Odin learned the secrets of the runes. The Natatapas hold fast to the magic of the Sarasvati and Ganges.

The Euthanatoi believe that some souls avoid Lethe, allowing them to remember their past lives. A rare few pass the ordeals that allow them to drink from wisdom's cup; these are the Awakened. Indeed, Awakening by near-death is thought to be the most direct path to the well of power. Instead of waiting for life's thread to be cut, the Thanatoic apprentice plunges into death to taste it.

Aside from its value as a metaphor, the waters of forgetfulness and wisdom are often the subject of Thanatoic quests. The alchemists of the Golden Chalice try to isolate the residue of these substances in living subjects. After all, if they can wring the last drops of forgetting from a mage they can open her up to her past lives, and if they can find the elixir of wisdom in the Patterns of living mages, they could Awaken acolytes at will.

Other death mages search for the waters with external quests. Aqueous anomalies in the Underworld, strange liquid Tass and the tears of sages all fall under the scrutiny of Euthanatos scholars. If the spiritual imprint of the waters could be found at all, they would be an awesome resource.



PRODIGAL KILLER

Quote: *Some people juggle ten digit numbers in their head. Others are violin virtuosos. I... do this.*

Prelude: You were a quiet, restrained child, but not for any particular reason you could fathom. Your family treated you well enough, and your friends, though few, treated you with a deferential respect for which you never asked. One of them described you as “nice, but vaguely threatening,” and you left it at that.

So you went through life with a quiet sense of confidence. You sampled each subject in school with polite interest, but nothing ever kept your attention, even when you were good at it. For example, even though a single gymnastics class taught you to do backflips with ease, you ignored the pleading of your teachers to join the team. There was something vital missing from your pursuits. They were amusing, but they didn't suit your purpose in life — whatever that was.

Despite your lack of enthusiasm, you got into college a year early. In a new town, the people weren't going to look at their feet when you passed them by — at least until they got to know you. One night, as you walked back to your dorm, you saw three men bullying a classmate of yours. You thought that they'd back away, but you didn't seem to have your usual affect on them. You stepped in, and the world shifted into slow motion.

In those few seconds, you learned what your real talents were. Your opponents were just meat; you thought nothing of gouging out their eyes or smashing their faces into a metal rail. Your compassion was a switch you could turn off at will, keeping you from showing the reflexive restraint that most people have when they confront violence. They were so slow, and the arcs that your body made to avoid and cripple them were beautiful. This was your gift. This was the art you were looking for.

Then you took back your compassion, saw what you'd done, and fled. Fortunately, the Euthanatos found you and taught you to make sense of your talents. Now you can practice the art of violence without losing your mind or staining your soul.

Concept: In your late teens, you have a gift that you can only indulge as a death mage. If you were a painter, you might have been the next Van Gogh, but you're a killer — it's the art you were born to do. You aren't cruel or evil, but you're able to ignore your sense of empathy and strike with dispassionate brutality when the need arises. In many ways you're an inno-



EUTHANATOS

NAME: CHRONICLE	NATURE: Autocrat ESSENCE: Primordial DEFINER: Perfectionist	FACTORY: Golden Chalice CONCEPT: Prodigal Killer CABAL:
ATTRIBUTES		
PHYSICAL		MENTAL
Strength: ●●○○○	Charisma: ●●○○○	Perception: ●●○○○
Dexterity: Fast ●●●●●	Manipulation: ●●○○○	Intelligence: ●●○○○
Stamina: ●●○○○	Appearance: ●●○○○	Wits: Alert ●●●●●
ABILITIES		
TALENTS		KNOWLEDGES
Alertness: ●●○○○	Crafts: ●○○○○	Academia: ●○○○○
Athletics: ●●○○○	Drive: ●○○○○	Computer: ●○○○○
Awareness: ●○○○○	Escapade: ●○○○○	Cosmology: ●○○○○
Brawl: ●●○○○	Finances: ●●○○○	Enigmas: ●○○○○
Dodge: ●●○○○	Meditation: ●○○○○	Investigation: ●○○○○
Expression: ●○○○○	Melee: ●○○○○	Law: ●○○○○
Intimidation: ●●○○○	Performance: ●○○○○	Linguistics: ●○○○○
Leadership: ●○○○○	Stealth: ●○○○○	Medicine: ●○○○○
Streetwise: ●○○○○	Survival: ●○○○○	Occult: ●○○○○
Subterfuge: ●○○○○	Technology: ●○○○○	Science: ●○○○○
SPHERES		
Correspondence: ●○○○○	Life: ●○○○○	Prime: ●○○○○
Entropy: ●○○○○	Matter: ●○○○○	Spirit: ●○○○○
Force: ●○○○○	Mind: ●○○○○	Time: ●○○○○
ADVANTAGES		
BACKGROUNDS		ARETE
Avatar: ●●●●●	Mentor: ●●●●●	Willpower: ●●●●●
Resonance: Dynamic ●○○○○, Entropic Whispering ●○○○○, Static ●○○○○		Quintessence: ●●●●●
Experience: []		Paradox: []
		HEALTH
		Bruted: -0 <input type="checkbox"/>
		Hurt: -1 <input type="checkbox"/>
		Injured: -1 <input type="checkbox"/>
		Wounded: -2 <input type="checkbox"/>
		Mauled: -2 <input type="checkbox"/>
		Crippled: -5 <input type="checkbox"/>
		Incapacitated: []
		CERTIBAT
		Progress: []
		Efficiency: []
		Damage: []

cent; you never kill out of malice. All the same, you find an artist's fulfillment in the act of murder, a purely aesthetic joy that you fear will keep you from ever relating to other people normally.

Roleplaying Tips: Talk quietly and study hard. You've learned your true purpose and you aren't about to squander the lifetime of development that awaits you. Thanatoic ethics give your work a purpose, but it's the act itself that you enjoy. In some ways this violates the *Chodoma*, but in others it holds to it more deeply that most Euthanatoi do, since you never feel any malice toward your victims. A Guru from the Golden Chalice (your Mentor) watches you very closely for signs of callousness. Sometimes you find his surveillance a nuisance, less for the invasion of your privacy than the fact it makes you realize that you have very little to hide from him.

Magic: You use mantras, meditation, and eye contact to focus your Arts. You're a minimalist, preferring to augment your incredible talent with magic instead of blasting an enemy with vulgar Arts. You focus on uniting your body and mind to the task at hand. You want to be the artist and audience at the same time and you don't let any of your tools stand in the way.

Equipment: Barret .50 sniper rifle, silenced Walther PPK, various garrotes and knives, cellphone, wireless glasses

STUDENT OF PARADOX

Quote: *I suffer so that you won't have to.*

Prelude: Philosopher or mathematician? You excelled in both fields but couldn't commit to either. One was always missing something that the other supplied. Your grasp of probability and quantum states was formidable, but without metaphysics it was a meaningless game. Conversely, philosophical rambling meant nothing to you without the figures to back it up. You looked for something deeper, plumbing the depths of computer models and wearing out your copies of Plato in late-night lab sessions.

Your head was in the clouds as you drove home. You pondered a vital equation long enough for a truck to broadside you, breaking your body and throwing you into a deep coma.

Your mind roamed while your body healed. You crawled from Plato's cave and stared into the heart of Fibonacci spirals. When you returned to consciousness, a woman you'd never seen before smiled by the bedside. She told you that you'd come face to face with death and had returned changed — Awakened.

$\alpha^2 = \phi^2 4 + 2i$
 $\frac{1}{4e^2}$

You endured the torture of physiotherapy while the woman taught you how the cosmos worked, but you noticed that there

were some answers that even she didn't have. You could see the luminous forms of creation now, but she told you that pulling on the tapestry with too much strength would punish you with Paradox. Why? She gave you a vague answer, so you decided to solve the problem of Paradox yourself.

You've learned to suffer. It's the key to your studies, because beyond the math and metaphysics there's the missing third of the formula, the one you always tried to ignore before you Awakened. There's the sacred Self, breaking under the weight of the Wheel. Some day, you're going to teach the Euthanatos how to ride it instead.

Concept: You Awakened into pain, and you return to it for fresh insights, using your Avatar as the lab in which you test theories about the nature of Paradox. You model what happens with occult terminology and mathematics, following a tripartite model. You combine probability studies and metaphysical theories with inquiries into the human spirit. Is Paradox a simple natural law, a sign of mortal frailty, or both? Your experiences put you in a unique position to find out the truth.

Roleplaying Tips: Hurt yourself. On any given day you bear the bizarre wounds of a Paradox backlash. These are marks of pride. Even if you haven't gleaned any new statistics, the experience of suffering through a backlash teaches you something all by itself. Most mages are reluctant to discuss their experience with 'Dox, but you know that they're just hiding the weakness that all Awakened share. Listen to others' experiences and compare them with your own. Dare to attempt ever more vulgar Effects, but catch yourself on the edge of danger. You don't want to die — just learn.

Magic: Entropy allows you to analyze complex systems and unravel them. Does the excess chaos of a vulgar Effect return to its caster? Prime attunes you to the flow of magic itself, and in a pinch can help you defend yourself. You favor computers and bloodletting as your foci: one provides a model of the universe, the other injects raw human feeling into the Cycle.

Equipment: Battered laptop, baggy and torn clothes, first aid kit, set of scalpels, lots of notebooks and dog-eared philosophy, occult and mathematics textbooks

EUTHANATOS

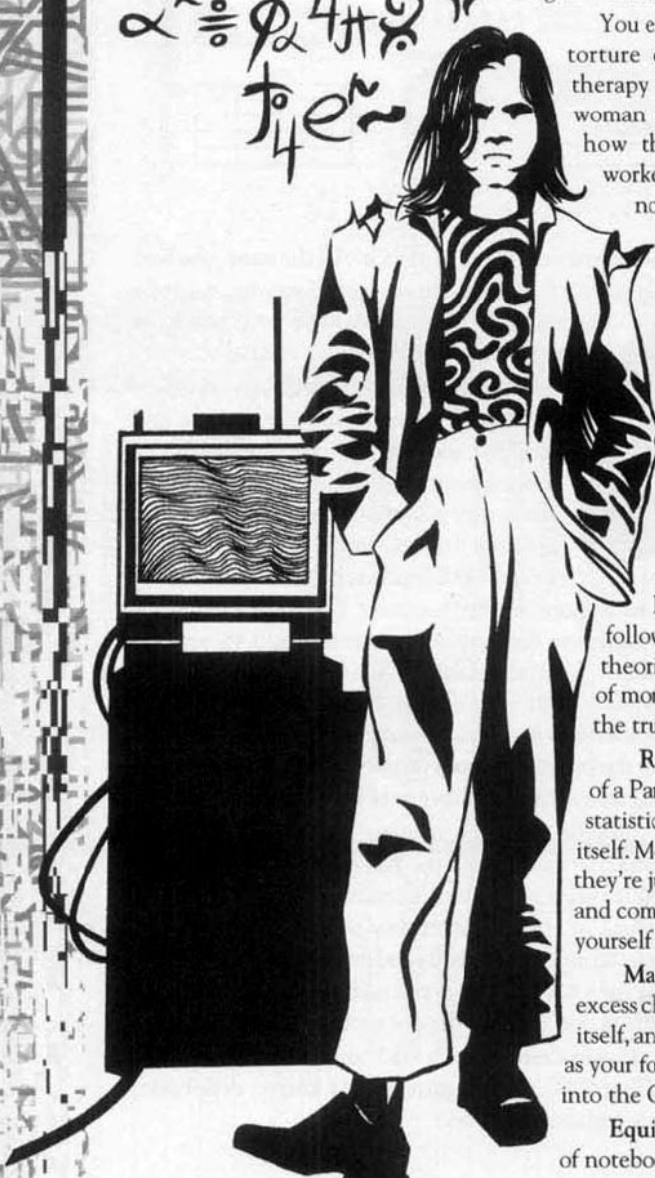
NAME: _____		NATURE: Visionary	FACTION: Lhaksmist
PLAYER: _____		ESSENCE: Pattern	CONCEPT: Student of Paradox
CHRONICLE: _____		DEITY/ANOR: Martyr	CABAL: _____

ATTRIBUTES		
PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	MENTAL
Strength: ●●○○○	Charisma: ●●○○○	Perception: ●●●○○
Dexterity: ●●○○○	Manipulation: ●●○○○	Intelligence: ●●●○○
Stamina: ●●○○○	Appearance: ●●○○○	Will: ●●●○○

ABILITIES		
TALENTS	SKILLS	KNOWLEDGES
Alertness: ●○○○○	Crafts: ●○○○○	Academics: ●●●○○
Athletics: ●○○○○	Drive: ●○○○○	Computer: ●●○○○
Awareness: ●●○○○	Etiquette: ●○○○○	Conjology: ●●○○○
Brawl: ●○○○○	Finesse: ●○○○○	Enigma: ●●○○○
Dodge: ●○○○○	Meditation: ●●○○○	Investigation: ●○○○○
Expression: ●●○○○	Melee: ●○○○○	Law: ●○○○○
Intimidation: ●○○○○	Performance: ●○○○○	Linguistics: ●○○○○
Leadership: ●○○○○	Strength: ●○○○○	Medicine: ●○○○○
Streetwise: ●○○○○	Survival: ●●○○○	Occult: ●●○○○
Subterfuge: ●○○○○	Technology: ●●○○○	Science: ●○○○○

SPHERES		
Correspondence: ●○○○○	Life: ●○○○○	Prime: ●●○○○
Entropy: ●●○○○	Matter: ●○○○○	Spirit: ●○○○○
Forces: ●○○○○	Mind: ●○○○○	Time: ●○○○○

ADVANTAGES		HEALTH
Avatar: ●○○○○	ARETE: ●○○○○○○○○	Bruised: -0 □
Library: ●●○○○	WILLPOWER: ●○○○○○○○○	Hurt: -1 □
Arcane: ●○○○○	RESONANCE: ●○○○○○○○○	Injured: -1 □
Dynamic: ●○○○○	QUINTESSENCE: ●○○○○○○○○	Wounded: -2 □
Entropic: ●○○○○	EXPERIENCE: _____	Mauled: -2 □
Static: ●○○○○	PARADOX: ●○○○○○○○○	Crippled: -5 □
		Incapacitated: □



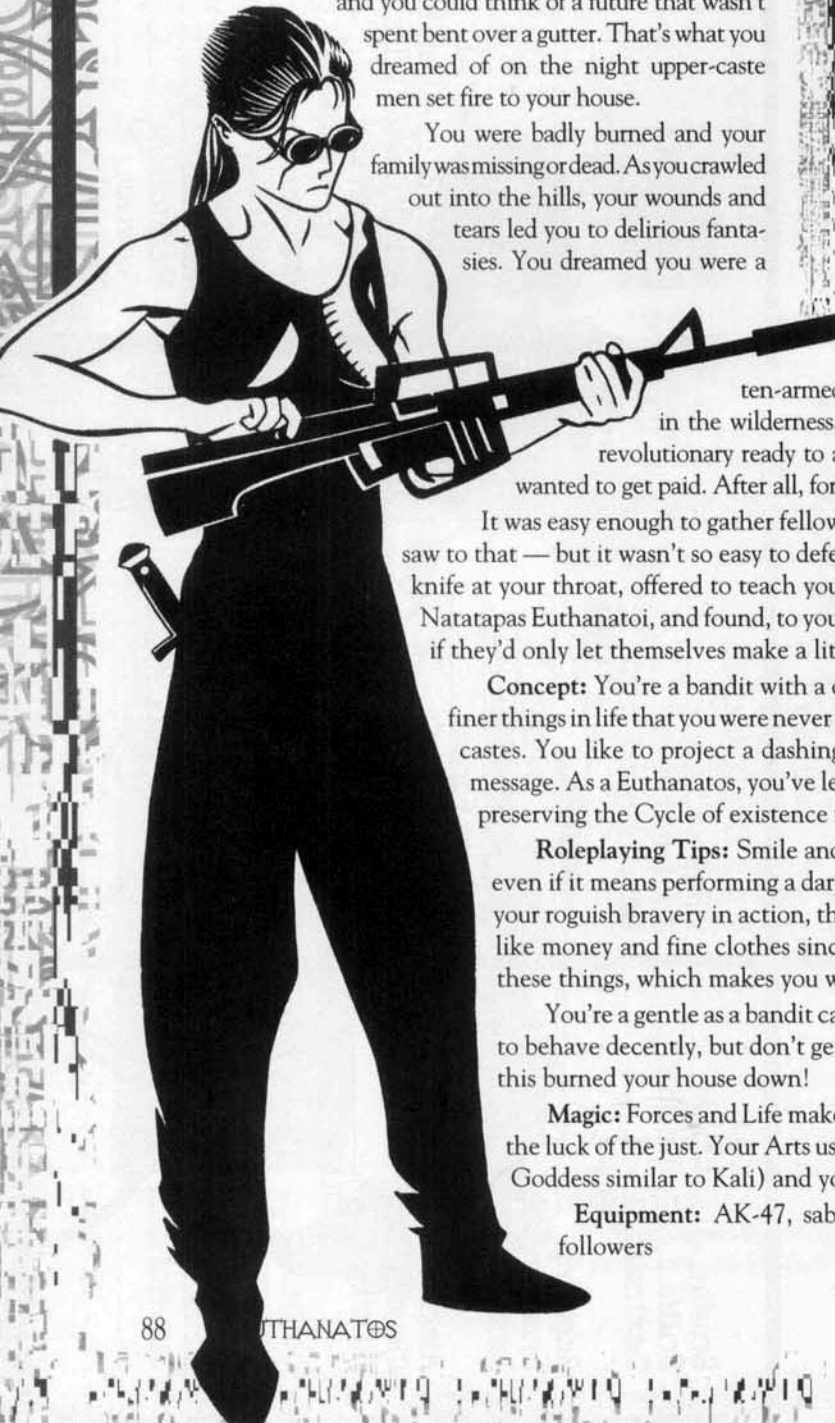
MODERN DACOIT

Quote: *In Durga's name, stand and deliver!*

Prelude: You were born in a small, ancient village. You grew up without any prospects. Caste distinctions had been entrenched over generations and you were Untouchable — at the bottom of the heap. You cleaned human filth from the sewers with your parents, waking before dawn to do the job lest your betters wake up to find you still there. After all, your mere presence was an offence to them.

The sickness and poverty you confronted gradually inspired a political consciousness, but you couldn't put words to the feelings until an Untouchable activist toured through your town, encouraging your people to vote and take their destiny into their own hands. Inspired, you organized voters and protests, and you could think of a future that wasn't spent bent over a gutter. That's what you dreamed of on the night upper-caste men set fire to your house.

You were badly burned and your family was missing or dead. As you crawled out into the hills, your wounds and tears led you to delirious fantasies. You dreamed you were a



ten-armed goddess, bearing iron weapons against your enemies. There, in the wilderness, you decided to pursue the life of a Dacoit: a bandit and revolutionary ready to attack the corruption in the system. More practically, you wanted to get paid. After all, for an Untouchable, wasn't wealth rebellious?

It was easy enough to gather fellow highwaymen together — your Goddess-inspired powers saw to that — but it wasn't so easy to defeat the quiet man that came to your camp one night and, knife at your throat, offered to teach you how to be a *real* Dacoit. So you learned the Arts of the Natatapas Euthanatoi, and found, to your joy, that their ideals and yours weren't so far apart. Now if they'd only let themselves make a little profit....

Concept: You're a bandit with a conscience and a revolutionary agenda. You also like the finer things in life that you were never allowed to have when you were under the heel of the upper castes. You like to project a dashing image, but that's so you can spread your revolutionary message. As a Euthanatos, you've learned that justice is more than a social issue — it's key to preserving the Cycle of existence from corruption.

Roleplaying Tips: Smile and shout! You want to inspire others to better themselves, even if it means performing a daring stunt to grab the attention of the media. If people see your roguish bravery in action, they'll learn to develop those attributes in themselves. You like money and fine clothes since they, too, are rebellious. Untouchables aren't allowed these things, which makes you want them all the more.

You're a gentle as a bandit can be, but you're practical too. Give your victims a chance to behave decently, but don't get yourself into trouble out of mercy. After all, people like this burned your house down!

Magic: Forces and Life make you a tough, athletic opponent, while Entropy gives you the luck of the just. Your Arts use prayers to the guardian Goddess Durga (an aspect of the Goddess similar to Kali) and your weapons.

Equipment: AK-47, saber, rugged and fancy clothes, tough black horse, loyal followers

EUTHANATOS

NATURE: Coregiver		FACTORY: Natatapas
ESSENCE: Dynamic		CONCEPT: Modern Dacoit
DETIEMOR: Bravo		CABAL:

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL		SOCIAL		MENTAL	
Strength	●●●●●	Charisma	Inspiring ●●●●●	Perception	●●●●●
Dexterity	●●●●●	Manipulation	●●●●●	Intelligence	●●●●●
Stamina	Tough ●●●●●	Appearance	●●●●●	Wisdom	●●●●●

ABILITIES

TALENTS		SKILLS		KNOWLEDGES	
Alertness	●●●●●	Crafts	●●●●●	Academics	●●●●●
Athletics	●●●●●	Drive	●●●●●	Computer	●●●●●
Awareness	●●●●●	Etiquette	●●●●●	Cosmology	●●●●●
Brawl	●●●●●	Firearms	●●●●●	Enigmas	●●●●●
Dodge	●●●●●	Meditation	●●●●●	Investigation	●●●●●
Explosion	●●●●●	Melee	Swords ●●●●●	Law	●●●●●
Intimidation	●●●●●	Performance	●●●●●	Linguistic (Sanskrit, Spanish)	●●●●●
Leadership	Gangs ●●●●●	Stealth	●●●●●	Medicine	●●●●●
Streetwise	●●●●●	Survival	●●●●●	Occult	●●●●●
Subterfuge	●●●●●	Technology	●●●●●	Science	●●●●●

SPHERES

Correspondence	●●●●●	Life	●●●●●	Prime	●●●●●
Entropy	●●●●●	Matter	●●●●●	Spirit	●●●●●
Forces	●●●●●	Mind	●●●●●	Time	●●●●●

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS		ARETE		HEALTH	
Allies	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	Brained	-0 □
Avatar	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	Hurt	-1 □
Resources	●●●●●	Willpower	●●●●●	Injured	-1 □
●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	Wounded	-2 □
●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	Mauled	-2 □
●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	Crippled	-5 □
●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	Incapacitated	□

RESONANCE

Dynamic Whirling	●●●●●
Entropic	●●●●●
Static	●●●●●

EXPERIENCE

QUINTESSENCE

PARADOX

CERTIBAT

Progress	Mileage	Damage

PSYCHOPOMP

Quote: *There's only one journey that matters.*

Prelude: They shouldn't come back.

When your lover died, you fantasized that it had all been some dream or mistake. Someday she'd come back to you, the two of you would laugh about the funeral and your tears, and everything would return to normal. You knew that this kind of denial was a healthy part of grief, so you didn't obsess over the feelings. You didn't deny them either, and let yourself indulge this private fantasy for as long as it would hold the deep sadness of your loss back.

Then she came back.

There was the smell of earth and something acrid — formaldehyde? — as she shambled through your door. The sutures tore her lips as she opened her mouth to tell her she loved you. She held you in a tight embrace; you felt the air squeeze out of your body until everything faded.

Then you were with her in a shadowy place, watching your semi-transparent bodies lying in the rotted skeleton of your home. Your love smiled, grabbed your hand, and pulled you along as she drifted toward

a gray horizon. You tried to pull away, you yelled and pleaded — nothing worked. Then you spoke to her in a soft, singsong voice, full of ancient words. She turned, listened, and dissolved into a fine, sweet-smelling mist.

You awoke just as the paramedics were throwing a blanket over your head. You tugged it back down and saw a scowling cop standing behind the ambulance crew. He wanted to know why your girlfriend's exhumed corpse was in your home, and you weren't in any position to give him a straight answer.

A different cop guarded your hospital bed, where they were keeping you for 24 hours of observation. He was there to make sure you didn't run, but instead he sat by your bed and talked to you about Greek myths, magic, and your experiences. When they discharged you he was there, and you followed him into the Euthanatos. You discovered that there were many, many ghosts who'd lost their way, and you were meant to guide them to their next births — just as you had in previous lives.

You still miss her, but now you know that she's not really gone. As you wander the streets singing for lost souls, you sometimes take the time to look in

EUTHANATOS

NAME: PLAYER: CHARM:	NATURE: Architect ESSENCE: Primordial DEITY/ANGEL: Caregiver	FACTUM: Pomegranite Deme CONCEPT: Psychopomp CABAL:
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ATTRIBUTES		
PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	MENTAL
Strength: ●●●●●	Charisma: ●●●●●	Perception: ●●●●●
Dexterity: ●●●●●	Manipulation: ●●●●●	Intelligence: ●●●●●
Stamina: ●●●●●	Appearance: ●●●●●	Wits: ●●●●●

ABILITIES		
TALENTS	SKILLS	KNOWLEDGES
Alertness: ●●●●●	Crafts: ●●●●●	Academics: ●●●●●
Athletics: ●●●●●	Drive: ●●●●●	Computer: ●●●●●
Awareness: ●●●●●	Esquatte: ●●●●●	Cosmology: ●●●●●
Brawl: ●●●●●	Firearms: ●●●●●	Underworld: ●●●●●
Dodge: ●●●●●	Meditation: ●●●●●	Enigmas: ●●●●●
Expression: ●●●●●	Melee: ●●●●●	Investigation: ●●●●●
Intimidation: ●●●●●	Performance: ●●●●●	Law: ●●●●●
Leadership: ●●●●●	Stealth: ●●●●●	Linguistics: ●●●●●
Streetwise: ●●●●●	Survival: ●●●●●	Medicine: ●●●●●
Subterfuge: ●●●●●	Technology: ●●●●●	Occult: ●●●●●
		Science: ●●●●●

SPHERES		
Correspondence: ●●●●●	Life: ●●●●●	Prime: ●●●●●
Entropy: ●●●●●	Matter: ●●●●●	Spirit: ●●●●●
Forces: ●●●●●	Mind: ●●●●●	Time: ●●●●●

ADVANTAGES		
BACKGROUNDS	ARETE	HEALTH
Avatar: ●●●●●	●●●●●○○○○○	Bruised: -0 □
Dream: ●●●●●	●●●●●○○○○○	Hurt: -1 □
Mentor: ●●●●●	●●●●●○○○○○	Injured: -1 □
●●●●●○○○○○	●●●●●○○○○○	Wounded: -2 □
●●●●●○○○○○	●●●●●○○○○○	Musled: -2 □
	●●●●●○○○○○	Crippled: -5 □
	●●●●●○○○○○	Incapacitated: □

RESONANCE	GRUNTESSENCE	CERIBAT
Dynamic: ●●●●●	●●●●●○○○○○	Progress: []
Entropic: ●●●●●	●●●●●○○○○○	Delivered: []
Static: ●●●●●	●●●●●○○○○○	Demise: []

EXPERIENCE	PARADOX
[]	[]

babies' eyes and wonder: *Is she in there?* It's none of your business, but it's a harmless fantasy to entertain and it channels your sorrow. Instead of mourning for her, you now grieve for the dead who can't find their way back to life.

Concept: You're a psychopomp: someone who conducts souls to their proper place in the afterlife and eases their transition into new incarnations. Your partner came back from the dead because she didn't know the path to the Unmaking. You followed her part of the way and serenaded her to her final destination. Now that you know the right path, you can help other souls along it. Nowadays the underworld's a confusing place, and some of the dead stay trapped in their bodies instead of taking the grim journey to the afterlife. It's up to you to coax them out of their rotting shells and into a fresh start.

Roleplaying Tips: Let your eyes wander. You know that the invisible world is all around you, with only its barest whispers extending into mundane life. You have to pay attention to the subtle stirring of the dead. When you find a lost soul, talk to it with a soft, compassionate voice, but don't be afraid to use harsher tones if the situation warrants it. Sometimes you fight hard to leave a legacy for your charges, but you're just as often called to sever them from the things of the living world to which they cling.

Magic: Entropy lays open the nature of decay. With it, you can destroy the things that tie the dead to the material world. Spirit allows you to call ghosts to you. You use rural Greek magic with a smattering of shamanism to do your work. Many of your methods come to you in dreams.

You cannot directly enter the Underworld yet, but you've heard legends of routes from the Middle Umbra to the Dark. It would be an epic journey, worthy of Orpheus — but look what happened to him.

Equipment: Simple formal clothes, curved knife, ash staff, ornate bronze mask, several antique Greek and Roman coins

CENSOR

Quote: *Bad Idea.*

Prelude: You were an enthusiastic journalist and a vigilant defender of free speech. You hated racism, yet you wrote an op-ed piece defending the Klan's right to hold a rally in your town. You believed that open argument was the best way to solve society's problems, and that anything else was just an attempt by elites to bend the climate of ideas to their favor. You married young; your husband was impressed by your idealistic fire. When your son was born, you promised to yourself that he'd learn to argue instead of suppress others' opinions.

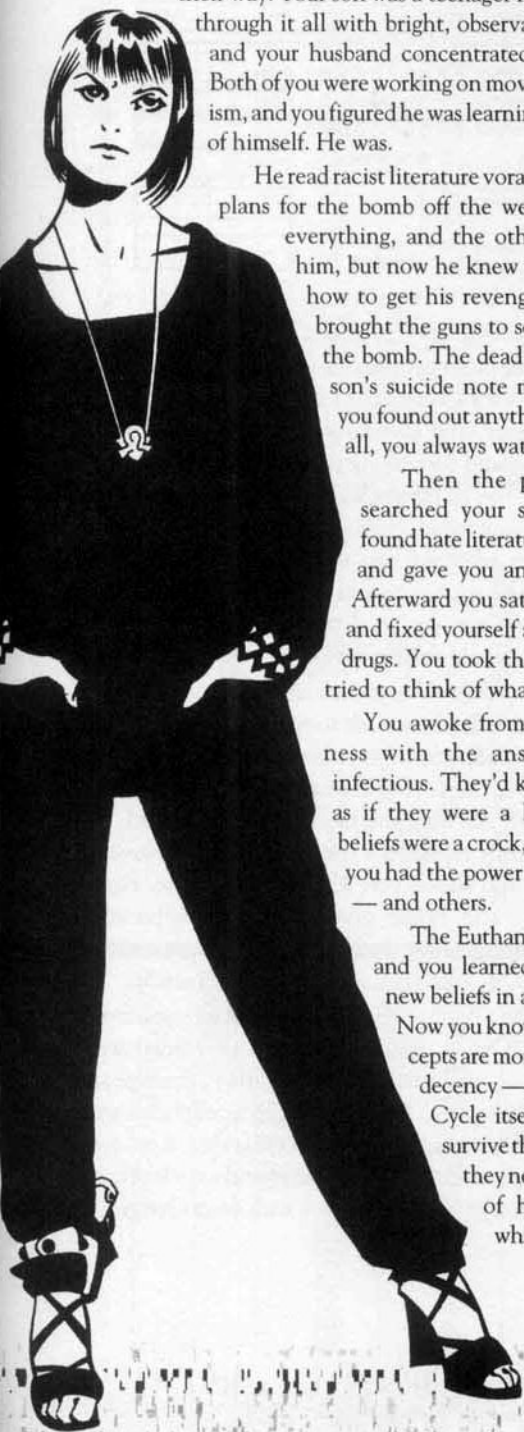
When the racists set up a small press down the street from you, you figured that as long as they didn't hurt anyone they had a right to say whatever they wanted. When they pamphleted your neighborhood, you'd argue with them but you wouldn't get in their way. Your son was a teenager now, and he passed through it all with bright, observant eyes while you and your husband concentrated on your careers. Both of you were working on moving to TV journalism, and you figured he was learning how to take care of himself. He was.

He read racist literature voraciously and got the plans for the bomb off the web. He was failing everything, and the other students hated him, but now he knew who to blame and how to get his revenge. His best friend brought the guns to school. He brought the bomb. The dead students and your son's suicide note made CNN before you found out anything about it. After all, you always watched CNN.

Then the police came and searched your son's room. They found hate literature and bomb plans and gave you an accusatory stare. Afterward you sat among his things and fixed yourself a cocktail of lethal drugs. You took the suicide dose and tried to think of what went wrong.

You awoke from an endless blackness with the answer. Ideas were infectious. They'd killed your boy just as if they were a lethal virus. Your beliefs were a crock, but you knew that you had the power to change yourself — and others.

The Euthanatos came for you, and you learned how to put your new beliefs in a larger framework. Now you know that certain concepts are more than offensive to decency — they endanger the Cycle itself. For Sleepers to survive the dark times ahead, they need to cling to ideas of hope. You'll find whatever opposes that



EUTHANATOS

NAME:		NATURE: Architect		FACTIBIN: Knight of Radomanthys	
PLAYER:		ESSENCE: Pattern		CONCEPT: Censor	
CHRONICLE:		DIRECTION: Director		CABAL:	

ATTRIBUTES		
PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	MENTAL
Strength: ●●●●●	Charisma: ●●●●●	Perception: ●●●●●
Dexterity: ●●●●●	Manipulation: ●●●●●	Intelligence: Analytical ●●●●●
Stamina: ●●●●●	Appearance: ●●●●●	Wits: ●●●●●

ABILITIES		
TALENTS	SKILLS	KNOWLEDGES
Alertness: ●●●●●	Crafts: ●●●●●	Academics: Media ●●●●●
Athletics: ●●●●●	Drive: ●●●●●	Computer: ●●●●●
Awareness: ●●●●●	Etiquette: ●●●●●	Cosmology: ●●●●●
Brawl: ●●●●●	Firearms: ●●●●●	Enigmas: ●●●●●
Dodge: ●●●●●	Meditation: ●●●●●	Investigation: ●●●●●
Expression: Journalism ●●●●●	Melee: ●●●●●	Law: ●●●●●
Intimidation: ●●●●●	Performance: ●●●●●	Linguistics: ●●●●●
Leadership: ●●●●●	Sealth: ●●●●●	Medicine: ●●●●●
Streetwise: ●●●●●	Survival: ●●●●●	Occult: ●●●●●
Subterfuge: ●●●●●	Technology: ●●●●●	Science: ●●●●●

SPHERES		
Correspondence: ●●●●●	Life: ●●●●●	Prime: ●●●●●
Entropy: ●●●●●	Matter: ●●●●●	Spirit: ●●●●●
Forces: ●●●●●	Mind: ●●●●●	Time: ●●●●●

ADVANTAGES		
BACKGRIBUNDS	ARETE	HEALTH
Avatar: ●●●●●	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●	Bruised: -1 □
Contacts: ●●●●●	WILLPOWER	Hurt: -1 □
Influence: ●●●●●	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●	Injured: -1 □
●●●●●	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●	Wounded: -2 □
●●●●●	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●	Mauled: -2 □
●●●●●	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●	Clipped: -3 □
●●●●●	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●	Incapacitated: -4 □

RESONANCE	GLIINTENSENCE
Dynamic: ●●●●●	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
Entropy: ●●●●●	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
Static: Incribed ●●●●●	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

EXPERIENCE	PARADOX
●●●●●	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

COTIBAT	
Enemy	Difficulty/Chance

and erase it from the Consensus. Your primary target is organized hate, but blind faith in science, the state and ideologies is also in your sights. You don't want anyone to make the mistakes you did.

Concept: You're an assassin all right, but you work on a more fundamental level than most — you kill ideas. There are certain concepts that limit human vision and drive people to madness and despair. It's your job to keep Jhor from infecting the spiritual makeup of society. Unlike a Technocrat, you don't believe that people should be told what to believe about the nature of reality. Instead, you guard the ethics of Sleepers. The world can believe whatever it wants, as long as it doesn't use hate or willful ignorance to empower itself.

Roleplaying Tips: Affect a cool, discriminating air about you. Keep a bunch of newspapers on you; you use them to analyze current trends. You're obsessed with the spirit of the modern age. In some ways it's more noble than anything that's come before it, but there's so much that goes unstated (racism, culturally condoned violence and the rest) and so much you need to work on eliminating from public discourse. Occasionally try to catch up with your now estranged husband (your *Contact*).

Magic: You use a synthesis of Thanatoic methods to track down purveyors of hate or naivete. Curses and sympathetic magic are your specialties. Correspondence lets you listen in as propagandists try their next trick, and Entropy lets you screw up the machines they use to transmit their garbage. Mind lets you in on the intentions of your victims. Are they being ironic, or do they really believe in the bile they spew on society?

Equipment: PDA with a PCS Internet hookup, formal clothes, tiny pistol (just good enough for putting a hole in a hatemonger's head)

KNIGHT OF DESTINY

Quote: *I've sworn to protect you... For a time.*

Prelude: You didn't fall in with the Euthanatos — you sought them out. You were just a child when the haggard man broke into your home, grabbed you and dragged to his car. You never knew what he had planned for you next, because she appeared: a woman with quick hands who tore your kidnapper from you and dragged him away in a flash of sharp steel and blood.

One image was burned into your mind: the stylized Omega sign that dangled from her neck. You knew that she'd saved you from something horrible, and from that day forward you looked for a sign of your savior. You wanted to thank her. You wanted to *be* her.

So you studied rumors about secret societies and trained your body to emulate the quick grace you saw on that night. You adopted a code of honor you thought she'd approve of. Little by little you put the pieces together, until you stored up enough courage to approach the "Euthanatos" you'd read about in an obscure text. They were quite surprised when you showed up at the door of their Marabout.

They looked into your soul and said you were fit to help them, but that wasn't enough. You demanded to be initiated as a full member of the Tradition even though you showed no signs of Awakening. With reluctance they performed the Agama and they were surprised again: you Awakened. The Knights of Radamanthys welcomed you into the fold.

Though you weren't naturally inclined to magic, your sincerity pushed you through your studies. They found a use for your untalented Atman and your code of honor. You were to guard someone with a strong destiny. Your weak soul meant that you weren't likely to warp your charges' fates, and your ethics would compel you to stand guard until the time came to let Necessity run its course.

Now you stand guard over someone who's destined to change the world. Will you be able to step aside when the time comes?

Concept: You're a bodyguard for the Knights of Radamanthys, charged with helping the one under your care fulfil their place in the Cycle. You've pursued this goal with enough will to surpass the expectations of tutors who thought that you could never Awaken in this lifetime. You have a straightforward nature and a strong code of ethics. You make a poor assassin but an excellent guardian — the epitome of a modern knight. Your charge could be a Sleeper or another mage with a high rating in the *Destiny* Background.

Roleplaying Tips: You're sworn to defend your charge's destiny with your life, but that doesn't mean



EUTHANATOS

NAME: NATURE: Gallant FACTION: Knight of Radamanthys
 PLAYER: ESSENCE: Pattern CONCEPT: Knight of Destiny
 CHRONICLE: DEITY/ANGEL: Martyr CABAL:

ATTRIBUTES		
PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	MENTAL
Strength: Power ●●●●●	Charisma ●●●●●	Perception ●●●●●
Dexterity ●●●●●	Manipulation ●●●●●	Intelligence ●●●●●
Stamina ●●●●●	Appearance ●●●●●	Wits ●●●●●

ABILITIES		
TALENTS	SKILLS	KNOWLEDGES
Alertness ●●●●●	Crafts ●●●●●	Academics ●●●●●
Athletics ●●●●●	Drive: <i>Evasive</i> ●●●●●	Computer ●●●●●
Awareness ●●●●●	Etiquette ●●●●●	Cosmology ●●●●●
BaseL ●●●●●	Firearms: <i>Heavy Pistol</i> ●●●●●	Enigma ●●●●●
Dodge ●●●●●	Meditation ●●●●●	Investigation ●●●●●
Expression ●●●●●	Melee: <i>Swords</i> ●●●●●	Law ●●●●●
Intimidation ●●●●●	Performance ●●●●●	Linguistics ●●●●●
Leadership ●●●●●	Stealth ●●●●●	Medicine ●●●●●
Stereovise ●●●●●	Survival ●●●●●	Occult: <i>Secret Societies</i> ●●●●●
Subterfuge ●●●●●	Technology ●●●●●	Science ●●●●●

SPHERES		
Correspondence ●●●●●	Life ●●●●●	Prime ●●●●●
Entropy ●●●●●	Matter ●●●●●	Spirit ●●●●●
Forces ●●●●●	Mind ●●●●●	Time ●●●●●

ADVANTAGES		
BACKGROUNDS	ARETE	HEALTH
Resources ●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	Bruised -0 □
Wonder ●●●●●		Hurt -1 □
		Injured -1 □
		Wounded -2 □
		Mauled -2 □
		Crippled -5 □
		Incapacitated □
RESONANCE	QUINTESSENCE	CERTIBAT
Dynamic ●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	Wound
Entropy ●●●●●		Difficulty/Change
Static: <i>Stalwart</i> ●●●●●		
EXPERIENCE	PARADOX	

you'll ignore other people who need your help. You try to follow your (somewhat idealized) memory of the death mage who saved you by looking out for the helpless and destroying the evildoers who prey on them. You're no skulker; leap into the fray and speak your mind! Some day, you'd like to find the woman who set you this path and thank her. Between your thoughts of her and your duty to your charge, you're a little remote when it comes to personal relationships.

Magic: You pray to the fates and the judges of the dead to work some of your magic. The rest comes from periods of ascetic denial, as you try to refine your karma to the point where you can act with the blessing of the Wheel. Entropy represents the force of these blessings and shows you when to intervene. Forces and Prime give you an extra boost in combat and link your weapons to the fundamental power of Creation.

Equipment: An enchanted gladius (a short, wide-bladed sword that does Strength +2 damage and is a 4 point *Wonder*), .44 Desert Eagle, a cellphone with voice activation and a headset, Kevlar vest, steel-toed boots, tough clothes, a day planner and a deck of cards for when you're waiting around with your charge.

ENTROPHOBIC RITUALIST

Quote: *By this crossroads, by Thine threefold will, let it be done by Thee, not me.*

Prelude: You were a shy teenager. Smart but directionless, you cut class to avoid the anxiety of school and hid out at the library. Classics interested you; the more you read the Greek myths, the more you identified with the era of heroes rather than the here and now. You knew, however, that you weren't hero material — an adolescence filled with social failure and physical weakness proved that to you. Instead, you rooted for the impersonal forces that laid heroes low. When Patroclus was struck down, you felt no remorse — you identified with Fate doing its brutal, powerful work.

You dropped out of school and developed a healthy contempt for the academic institutions from which your truancy had barred you. This didn't hinder your appetite for knowledge, but it did direct you toward fringe science, conspiracy theories and finally full-blown occultism. You'd come home from your minimum-wage job to pore through small press books and odd web sites. After a time, you were convinced that there were mystic forces pulling the strings — and there had been ever since Ancient Greece. You put these theories on a modest web page and were surprised when it garnered thousands of visitors.

Your wild theories were elaborate enough to attract a small following of paranoiacs, bored netizens looking for something weird to peruse — and a cabal of Hierochthonic magi. Unbeknownst to you, they were picking up on the bizarre theories you posted, following up on them and finding hard evidence. Eventually, they decided to pay you a visit to express their gratitude and discovered that you were Awakened. You were stunned when they told you your knowledge was supernatural, not imagined.

Validation of your theories terrified you. All along you thought you'd been playing an elaborate game, but now you knew that it was real and that you were a part of it! To protect yourself from the mystic forces that *really did* control your destiny, you developed an elaborate style of magic. Signs and omens are all around. You have to work hard to keep them out of your personal circle of power.

Concept: Most Euthanatoi combine practicality and bravery into a magical style that accepts innovations if they serve the Great Wheel. You aren't one of them. You prefer a complex system of arcane correspondences that leaves nothing to chance. You may see the Wheel as the great actor of history, but that doesn't mean you want to get caught up in the struggles that destroy heroes. You second-guess yourself constantly as you perfect a system of rites designed to honor the Triple Goddess. If you know the correct rites and serve the Wheel faithfully, you might avoid being crushed under Her feet.

Roleplaying Tips: If it isn't worth doing correctly, it isn't worth doing. You're very shy but have the curiosity of the paranoid. You catalogue every possible threat to yourself and your companions and berate yourself for imperfection. Because of this you're a walking library of useful knowledge. Unfortunately, you rarely want to act on what you know unless you have the complete support of other mages and have absolutely clear objectives. Fuzzy plans make you nervous.

Magic: You begin any magical working with purification rituals designed to placate Hekate, then move along to inscribing the signs that correspond with the proper planet and reading omens that might affect the working. Precise and ornate, your magic takes form in subtle and persistent effects. After all, if you were to lose control and cast an off-the-cuff spell, you might bring hubris — and destruction — on yourself! That's why you prefer healing Effects and Entropy magic that strengthens predictable Patterns. Neither of them can get you into trouble.

Equipment: Ritual robes and a knife, staff and bone wand. At home you keep a modest Library, your computer, DSL Internet connection and the bare necessities of life.

EUTHANATOS

NATURE: Director NATURE: Pattern FACTION: Pomegranite Deme
 PLAYER: ESSENCE: Survivor CONCEPT: Entrophobic Ritualist
 CHRONICLE: DETHEANER; Survivor CABAL:

ATTRIBUTES		
PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	MENTAL
Strength ●●○○○	Charisma ●●○○○	Perception ●●○○○
Dexterity ●●○○○	Manipulation ●●○○○	Intelligence ●●○○○
Stamina ●●○○○	Appearance ●●○○○	Wits ●●○○○

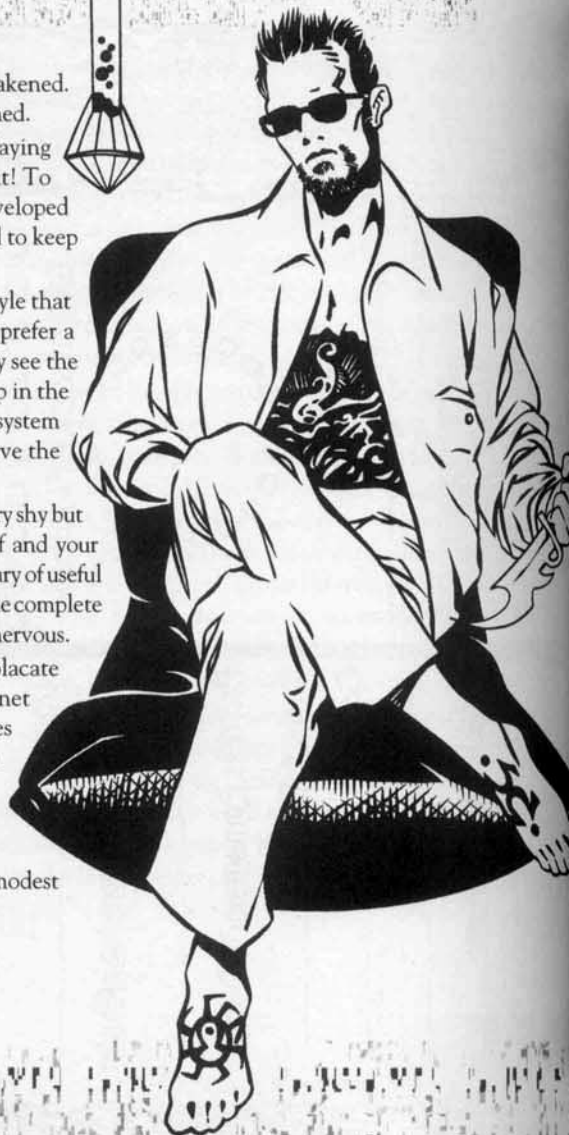
ABILITIES		
TALENTS	SKILLS	KNOWLEDGES
Alertness ●●○○○	Crafts ●●○○○	Academics ●●○○○
Athletics ●○○○○	Drive ●○○○○	Computer ●○○○○
Awareness ●●○○○	Etiquette ●○○○○	Cosmology ●○○○○
Brawl ●○○○○	Firearms ●○○○○	Enigmas ●○○○○
Dodge ●○○○○	Meditation ●○○○○	Investigation ●○○○○
Expression ●○○○○	Melee ●○○○○	Law ●○○○○
Intimidation ●○○○○	Performance ●○○○○	Linguistics ●○○○○
Leadership ●○○○○	Stealth ●○○○○	Medicine ●○○○○
Streetwise ●○○○○	Survival ●○○○○	Occult ●○○○○
Subterfuge ●○○○○	Technology ●○○○○	Science ●○○○○

SPHERES		
Correspondence ●○○○○	Life ●○○○○	Prime ●○○○○
Entropy ●○○○○	Master ●○○○○	Spirit ●○○○○
Forces ●○○○○	Mind ●○○○○	Time ●○○○○

ADVANTAGES		
BACKGROUNDS	ARETE	HEALTH
Avatar ●○○○○	●●○○○○○○	Bruised -0 □
Dream ●○○○○	Willpower	Hurt -1 □
Library ●○○○○	●●○○○○○○	Injured -1 □
Resources ●○○○○	●●○○○○○○	Wounded -2 □
●○○○○	●●○○○○○○	Mauled -2 □
●○○○○	●●○○○○○○	Crippled -5 □
●○○○○	●●○○○○○○	Incapacitated □

COMBAT	
Weapons	Attacks/Defense

EXPERIENCE: PARADOX:



GAMBLER

Quote: *It's not luck, just pure talent.*

Prelude: You've had lucky streaks before, but never *this* lucky.

Everyone who gambles full-time has their rituals. From the smart set of Monaco to the slot machine junkies of Atlantic City, everyone in the life has a superstition or two they use to try and sway Lady Luck to their side. You thought you were different. Instead of superstitions, you had a "system." You'd lost big a couple of times when the numbers three, seven and thirteen had come up. It didn't need to have anything to do with the game you were playing. Having three people at a table or playing blackjack after your fifth martini could do you in.

Obviously, prime numbers were somehow cursed — but "curses" seemed superstitious to you. Between wins, you invested in a bleeding edge laptop and educated yourself in a dozen different disciplines, from psychology to probability theory. The bizarre fruit of your research was a computer program that looked at astrology, biorhythms and the rules of any game you planned to play to come up with a recommendation on the winners and losers. In quiet moments you'd try to explain the convoluted logic to your system, but the people you talked to simply waved their rabbit's feet in your face and smiled knowingly. Primitives.

You kept on winning. Maybe your program didn't make any logical sense to anybody else, but the output seemed absolutely reliable. You got rich — then you got cocky. You took one house in Las Vegas for over a hundred and fifty grand. When you staggered home you found your hotel room ransacked and your precious computer missing. Of course, that problem was small potatoes

compared to the two Mob leg breakers waiting in your bedroom. They tied you to a chair and hefted their tire irons, and you knew that you'd never work in this town again — except from a wheelchair.

Luckily, the two thugs didn't seem to mind when a young man walked in, asked them to let you go, and took you to a cab. As you drove for the airport, he produced your laptop and told you that you needed to exercise your gift with more discretion. You traveled with him and learned that, lucky as you were, you had a lot to learn. Months later, you became a Euthanatos. After the Diksha, you saw enough weird shit to make you admit that Lady Luck is real. Her name is Lhaksmi, and she holds all of reality's purse strings.

You just have to find the system that works for Her.

Concept: You're a wealthy eccentric who wants to master the odds. You think that you're partway there now, but you need to learn more of this mystical mumbo-jumbo so you can strip it to the core and add it to the ever-expanding formula programmed into your computer. You think of mystical symbols as another way of expressing abstract mathematical or psychological concepts. Privately, you see your quest for a perfect "system" as a search for transcendental truth, but you don't want you give anybody the impression that you're irrational! Still, once you work it out in your head, you can play out the game in a mystical language, still assured that you understand the hidden patterns within.

Roleplaying Tips: Don't give up an opportunity to gamble. Before you Awakened, it gave you cash and entertainment; now it's what you do to learn how the universe works. You have some patience for straight-out mystics because you've seen their methods work, but you think that underneath all the ritual dross there's a little kernel of truth waiting to be exploited. You view Euthanatos ethics as good common sense, and after spending a day dead to get in, you're now convinced that reincarnation is possible. Now you have to add these new variables into the equation.

Magic: Your computer and its rapidly expanding model of the Wheel is the primary focus for your magic. Based on its information, you carry a few things with you that tend to be "probability triggers." Never mind that they include a rabbit's foot and a bulletproof bible — only a rube would call them "lucky" when they have a proven effect!

Equipment: An offshore bank account holds your riches. You buy expensive suits and rent fancy cars whenever you can. You carry a top-of-the-line laptop and a satellite phone with you everywhere you go.

EUTHANATOS											
NAME: Visionary	NATURE: Dynamic	FACTORY: Lhaksmist									
PLAYER: Dynamic	ESSENCE: Dynamic	CONCEPT: Gambler									
CHARACTER: Bon Vivant	DEITY: Bon Vivant	CABAL:									
ATTRIBUTES											
PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	MENTAL									
Strength: ●●●●	Charisma: ●●●●	Perception: ●●●●									
Dexterity: ●●●●	Manipulation: ●●●●	Intelligence/Calculation: ●●●●									
Somnium: ●●●●	Appearance: ●●●●	Wit/Assessing Odds: ●●●●									
ABILITIES											
TALENTS	SKILLS	KNOWLEDGES									
Alertness: ●●●●	Crafts: ○○○○	Academics: ●●●●									
Athletics: ○○○○	Drive: ○○○○	Computer: ●●●●									
Awareness: ●●●●	Etiquette: ○○○○	Cosmology: ○○○○									
Brawl: ○○○○	Firearms: ●●●●	Enigma/Onyx: ●●●●									
Dodge: ●●●●	Mediation: ○○○○	Investigation: ○○○○									
Expression: ○○○○	Melee: ○○○○	Law: ○○○○									
Intimidation: ○○○○	Performance: ○○○○	Linguistics: ○○○○									
Leadership: ○○○○	Strength: ○○○○	Medicine: ○○○○									
Streetwise: ●●●●	Survival: ○○○○	Occult: ●●●●									
Subterfuge: ●●●●	Technology: ●●●●	Science: ●●●●									
SPHERES											
Correspondence: ●●●●	Life: ○○○○	Prime: ●●●●									
Entropy: ●●●●	Matter: ○○○○	Spirit: ○○○○									
Forces: ○○○○	Mind: ○○○○	Time: ○○○○									
ADVANTAGES											
BACKGROUNDS	ARETE	HEALTH									
Avatar: ●●●●	●●●●●●●●	Brained: 0 □									
Library: ○○○○		Hurt: -1 □									
Resources: ●●●●		Injured: -1 □									
	WILLPOWER	Wounded: -2 □									
	●●●●●●●●	Maddled: -2 □									
		Crippled: -5 □									
		Incapacitated: 0 □									
RESONANCE	QUINTESSENCE	CURBAT									
Dynamic/Spinning: ○○○○	○●●●●●●●	Progress: <table border="1"><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>									
Entropic: ○○○○		Misc: <table border="1"><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>									
Static: ○○○○		Damage: <table border="1"><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>									
EXPERIENCE	PARADOX										
	○●●●●●●●										



PHYSICAL
 Dextrous _____
 Quick x2 _____
 Charismatic x2 _____
 Charming x2 _____
 Witty _____

SOCIAL
 Charismatic x2 _____
 Charming x2 _____
 Witty _____

MENTAL
 Attentive x3 _____
 Clever _____
 Rational x3 _____

ABILITIES
 Academics _____ Subterfuge _____
 Computer _____ Technology _____
 Dodge _____
 Enigmas _____
 Firearms _____
 Science x2 _____
 Streetwise _____

BACKGROUND
 Avatar x2 _____
 Library x1 _____
 Resources x5 _____

SPHERES
 Initiate *Correspondence* _____
 Initiate *Entropy* _____
 Initiate *Prime* _____

ROTÉS

PHYSICAL
 Tenacious x3 _____
 Alluring _____
 Charming _____
 Fearsome _____

SOCIAL
 Alluring _____
 Charming _____
 Fearsome _____
 Witty _____

MENTAL
 Determined x2 _____
 Disciplined _____
 Insightful _____
 Rational x2 _____
 Reflective _____

ABILITIES
 Academics _____
 Awareness _____
 Enigmas _____
 Medicine x2 _____
 Streetwise _____
 Subterfuge _____
 Technology _____

BACKGROUND
 Avatar x2 _____
 Library x1 _____
 Resources x5 _____

SPHERES
 Apprentice *Entropy* _____
 Disciple *Life* _____
 Initiate *Spirit* _____

ROTÉS

EUTHANATOS

NAME: _____
 CHARACTER: Gambler
 CHRONICLE: _____
 FACTOR: Lhaksmist
 ESSENCE: Dynamic
 CABAL: _____
 NATURE: Visionary
 DEITY: Bon Vivant

RESONANCE
 DYNAMIC Spinning
 ENTROPIC
 STATIC

ARETE
 WILLPOWER
 QUINTESSENCE/PARADOX

EUTHANATOS

NAME: _____
 CHARACTER: Necronaut
 CHRONICLE: _____
 FACTOR: Lhaksmist
 ESSENCE: Primordial
 CABAL: _____
 NATURE: Martyr
 DEITY: Visionary

RESONANCE
 DYNAMIC Flowing
 ENTROPIC
 STATIC

ARETE
 WILLPOWER
 QUINTESSENCE/PARADOX

NECRONAUT

Quote: *If my heart stops, use the defibrillator. If my brain flatlines, you may as well start dinner without me.*

Prelude: You never could stand to lose a patient. Medical school was easy enough, but your internship was pure hell. It was one thing to poke around in a body someone donated to science, and another thing entirely to see someone's last breath turn them from a person into an object.

The dying came through in an endless flood. You "prescribed" yourself morphine, and rode out the sadness with a constant high. Of course, you needed more and more of it and your medical skills were starting to fail. Finally, you screwed up; a patient bled to death under your drug-warped care.

You knew that they'd find out about your habit, so you prepared one last hit, put the spike in your vein, and overdosed.

It was just like the talk shows. There was a bright light; you floated up to it, barely pausing to glimpse at the limp form draped over your chair. You thought you could hear your grandfather calling.

Then there was a sudden tearing. The light split in two, and a masked face looked through the tatters. It reached a clawed hand into your world. Then an irresistible force pulled you back.

You woke up in a hospital bed, but not in a hospital. A man with cold hands checked your pulse and told you that you had a second chance, but you know that the only chance worth anything lay on the Other Side.

Still, suicide is ridiculous. You want to explore death and see what you're missing. The Euthanatos taught you all about the Underworld, but you want something you can see and touch. They taught you the spiritual secrets of death, but you can combine them with modern medicine to learn the whole story. Besides, you'd like to reassure yourself that the dead really do go to a better place.

Concept: You explore death. You aren't morbid about it (yet) but you do want to learn everything about the voyage from one life to the next. The Underworld is only part of the domain you want to explore. What's it like to reside in a dead body? What about Heaven? Hell? Is reincarnation truly universal, or do some people go on to afterlives that "death mages" haven't even imagined? For now you satisfy yourself by simulating physical death, but you have big plans.

Roleplaying Tips: Reassure people that you don't have a death wish. Check your equipment meticulously because if it fails the consequences could be... well... grave. Interview ghosts and talk about your experiences with morbid enthusiasm. Other people skydive or climb mountains to discover themselves. You do it by spending time as a corpse.

Magic: You go through medical procedures with the solemnity of a mystic ritual, because that's what they are. Prolonged meditation, chanting, and careful doses of poison (and morphine) bring you closer to the edge of death. Detached from existence, you have the power to change the phenomenal world. Spirit lets you see the Other Side you want to visit, Life allows you to increase or reduce your physical vitality and Entropy lets you touch the power of Unmaking itself.

Equipment: Hospital bed equipped with state of the art diagnostic and anti-trauma gear and a fridge stocked with medical morphine, tucked away in an old warehouse; DVD copy of *Flatliners*.

EUTHANATOS

NAME: Martyr		NATURE: Primordial		FACTIUM: Lhakmist	
PLAYER: CHRONICLE		ESSENCE: Visionary		CONCEPT: Necronaut	
DETHEANOR: Visionary		CABAL:			

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL		SOCIAL		MENTAL	
Strength	●●○○○	Charisma	●●○○○	Perception	●●●○○
Dexterity	●●○○○	Manipulation	●●○○○	Intelligence	●●●○○
Stamina	●●○○○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wisdom	●●●○○

ABILITIES

TALENTS		SKILLS		KNOWLEDGES	
Alertness	●●●○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Academics	●●●○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Drive	○○○○○	Computer	○○○○○
Awareness	○○○○○	Esperanto	○○○○○	Cosmology	●●●○○
Beast	○○○○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Enigmas	●●●○○
Dodge	○○○○○	Meditation	●●●○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Expression	○○○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○	Performance	○○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Leadership	○○○○○	Stealth	○○○○○	Medicine, Reanimation	●●●○○
Streetwise	●●●○○	Survival	○○○○○	Occult	●●●○○
Subterfuge	●●●○○	Technology	○○○○○	Science	○○○○○

SPHERES

Correspondence	○○○○○	Life	●●●○○	Prime	○○○○○
Entropy	●●○○○	Matter	○○○○○	Spirit	●●○○○
Forces	○○○○○	Mind	○○○○○	Time	○○○○○

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS		ARETE		HEALTH	
Avatar	●●○○○	●●○○○○○○○		Bruised	-0 □
Contacts	●●○○○	WILLPOWER		Hun	-1 □
Resources	○○○○○	□□□□□□□□□□		Injured	-1 □
	○○○○○	RESONANCE		Wounded	-2 □
	○○○○○	Dynamic: Flowing ●○○○○		Mauled	-2 □
	○○○○○	Entropy: ●○○○○		Crippled	-5 □
	○○○○○	Static: ●○○○○		Incapacitated	□

EXPERIENCE

EXPERIENCE	

PARADOX

PARADOX	

CERIBAT

Weapon	Difficulty/Charge



EPILOGUE: FOUR FATES



"Can he be cured?" I can still see the afterimage in Truce's mind — the burning red lotus of my rage on the night we killed Jim Houle. I grab an arm and a leg and we sit him down in Theora's little blue Volkswagen. His eyes are closed; wisps of iron-gray hair poke out from beneath his turban. Glancing over my shoulder, I can see Janine loading our bags into the other car.

"I don't know," says Theora Hetirck. "It's more than the mind that suffers death taint. The impurities seep into your soul. There are Akashic sages who know how to alter the mystical stains that collect on the

Atman. Perhaps Senex can contact one of them. After all, we've been getting along better with the Brotherhood lately.

"I think that he wanted to be cured. There was a lot of madness in what he said to both of you, but a lot of wisdom too. We need to bring that wisdom back into his heart."

"Yeah. He said he wanted a real Guru." I force myself to look away from his face. "So, you're going to drive this thing all the way to Cerberus?"

She smiles at that. "No. I borrowed a private jet from a Lhaxmist who has more money than he knows what to do with. It'll get us to India. From there we can get safe passage to the Otherworld.

"Are you sure that the two of you don't want to come with us? Cerberus and the Ghost Citadel have many great Gurus. They could help Janine develop her talent. You know that we could use you for the rituals Senex has planned. We need as many Euthanatoi as possible if we're going to make it work." Theora puts her most persuasive voice behind the request — a feeling of real conviction that it's the best solution.

"I'll take my chances here on Earth, Chela Hetirck. As for Janine, I think she needs to get out into the world and do some good. Acaryas and Paramagurus might be able to do that with great siddhis, but the rest of us have to be content to use our hands. In her case, she needs to see suffering up close; it'll purify her for the next time her Atman calls.

"I want to see what she does with our Arts. I want to see a pacifist defend the Wheel," I finish.

"Are you going to renounce the Good Death?" Theora inquires.

"No. It's how I defend the Wheel. Janine will do it in her way, you'll do it in yours, and I'll keep my knife ready for when it's needed. For now, I'll keep in mind that the Wheel is full of other duties, other destinies than the ones I sharpen it for."

Janine waves to me. I give Theora Hetirck a quick nod and start the rental car up.

We drive out into the countryside. The roads array themselves in a great lattice, full of choice, brimming with destinies to be fulfilled with the Good Death — and life as well.

AUTHOR'S NOTES



Thanks for reading. This wasn't an easy book to write.

THE USUAL DISCLAIMER

You'll see the anti-idiot disclaimer on a lot of White Wolf products. This isn't an indication of the number of idiots in the world, so much as it is the fact that a lone idiot can do a lot of damage. Bearing that

in mind, we reiterate:

There is no such thing as the Euthanatos. You are not one of them. Their occult philosophy doesn't exist in the real world, nor should it. You should not emulate the fiction you see here. This book is not telling you that it is right to kill people or that you should kill people. If you feel that it does, then you should see a doctor.

No, really. Go make an appointment or deposit yourself in an emergency room. Now.

REFERENCES

The following resources provided information and inspiration for **Tradition Book: Euthanatos**. See what you can get from them, draw your own conclusions and customize the Tradition for your own use.

Fiction

The Dead Zone, Stephen King. The movie, starring Christopher Walken, is one of the better adaptations of one of King's novels. The main character has psychic powers that tell him that one man will bring about Armageddon. Will he find the strength to kill him? Should he?

Deathbird Stories. Read "Paingod," "The Deathbird," and "Basilisk." From Jhor to the Good Death to Thanatoic morality, each story has something you can add to your portrayal of the Euthanatos. Aside from that, Ellison knows how to take ideas and make them cry and sweat, and this collection is worth reading for that reason alone.

Soldier of the Mist and *Soldier of Arete*. Gene Wolfe attempts to describe Ancient Greece from the perspective of someone living in it — someone who just happens to talk to the gods. The book's first charm is that it makes its subject seem ordinary instead of romantic. The second is in how it depicts the gods. It's full of material you can use to expand on several Thanatoic sects.

Song of Kali, Dan Simmons. This is a bracing, frightening novel. If you want to see what Jhor looks like and examine some of the paradoxes in Thanatoic practices, read it. It's also a damn fine book in its own right.

Nonfiction

Bullfinch's Mythology, Volume I: The Age of Fable. This is where I got my first taste of mythology. Dense, informative reading.

Oxford World Religions: Eastern Traditions. This is a wonderful all-around resource with an extensive section on Hinduism. Keep in mind that while the Euthanatos may use the Vedic deities in their Arts, they don't represent any current, real world belief system.

Fundamentals of Mainstream Buddhism. This book provides an in-depth look at Indian cosmology in a

straightforward but detailed fashion. It also provides some historical context for the emergence of Buddhism — in *Mage*, that takes place in the middle of the Himalayan War.

The Vedas. You should be able to find a translation of the web. The Rig Veda and Atharva Veda would be the ones Storytellers would find most useful. The former

lays out the Indian creation story and the latter details the mystical practices of the early Aryan age.

The Iliad. Again, look around and you should be able to find a copy for free (though it wouldn't hurt to own one). Passion and destiny collide in the siege of Troy. Check it out.

PIECES FOUR FATES



EUTHANATOS™

NAME:
 PLAYER:
 CHRONICLE:

NATURE:
 ESSENCE:
 DEMENTOR:

FACTION:
 CONCEPT:
 CABAL:

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL		SOCIAL		MENTAL	
Strength	●○○○○	Charisma	●○○○○	Perception	●○○○○
Dexterity	●○○○○	Manipulation	●○○○○	Intelligence	●○○○○
Stamina	●○○○○	Appearance	●○○○○	Wits	●○○○○

ABILITIES

TALENTS		SKILLS		KNOWLEDGES	
Alertness	○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Academics	○○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Drive	○○○○○	Computer	○○○○○
Awareness	○○○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Cosmology	○○○○○
Brawl	○○○○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Enigmas	○○○○○
Dodge	○○○○○	Meditation	○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Expression	○○○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○	Performance	○○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Leadership	○○○○○	Stealth	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Survival	○○○○○	Occult	○○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Technology	○○○○○	Science	○○○○○

SPHERES

Correspondence	○○○○○	Life	○○○○○	Prime	○○○○○
Entropy	●○○○○	Matter	○○○○○	Spirit	○○○○○
Forces	○○○○○	Mind	○○○○○	Time	○○○○○

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS	ARETE	HEALTH
○○○○○	● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Bruised -0 <input type="checkbox"/>
○○○○○		Hurt -1 <input type="checkbox"/>
○○○○○		Injured -1 <input type="checkbox"/>
○○○○○		Wounded -2 <input type="checkbox"/>
○○○○○		Mauled -2 <input type="checkbox"/>
○○○○○		Crippled -5 <input type="checkbox"/>
○○○○○		Incapacitated <input type="checkbox"/>
		RESONANCE
		Dynamic ○○○○○
		Entropic ○○○○○
		Static ○○○○○
		EXPERIENCE
		<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 20px;"></div>

OTHER TRAITS

○○○○○
 ○○○○○
 ○○○○○
 ○○○○○
 ○○○○○

WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

QUINTESSENCE



PARADOX

EUTHIANATOS™

MERITS & FLAWS

MERIT	TYPE	COST	FLAW	TYPE	BONUS

MAGIC

PREFERRED EFFECTS

RATES

COMBAT

Maneuver	Roll	Difficulty	Damage/Effect

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage	Range	Rate	Clip	Conceal

ARTIST: _____

EUTHIANATOS™

EXPANDED BACKGROUND

ALLIES

LIBRARY

CONTACTS

MENTOR

DESTINY

NODE

INFLUENCE

RESOURCES

POSSESSIONS

GEAR (CARRIED)

EQUIPMENT (OWNED)

FOCI

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WONDERS

FAMILIAR

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PAST INCARNATIONS

EUTHIANATOS™

HISTORY

AWAKENING

GOALS/DESTINY

SEEKINGS:

QUIETS:

DESCRIPTION

Age:

Apparent Age:

Date of Birth:

Age of Awakening:

Hair:

Eyes:

Race:

Appearance/Nature of Avatar:

Nationality:

Height:

Weight:

Sex:

VISUALS

CABAL CHART

CHARACTER SKETCH

T R A D I T I O N B O O K :

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